

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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April 28, 2004

To: Planning and Transportation Committee

From: Commissioner of Urban Development Services

Subject: Graffiti Transformation Grants Program: 2004 Recommendations

Purpose:

To recommend grants to 19 organizations for the removal of graffiti and the transformation of vandalized surfaces into murals.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

Funding for the recommended 2004 grant allocations of \$309,300.00 for the Graffiti Transformation Grant Program is available within the approved 2004 Consolidated Grants Budget.

The Chief Financial Officer & Treasurer has reviewed the report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Graffiti Transformation Program grants be allocated to the community groups as outlined in Appendix A of this report;
- (2) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto, and
- (3) Council deem these grants to be in the interest of the Municipality.

Background:

The Graffiti Transformation Program is an annual grants program addressing youth unemployment as well as neighbourhood planning, improvement and revitalization issues. Youth are hired by local organizations to remove graffiti and resurface the walls with attractive murals. Staff of Urban Development Services are responsible for reviewing proposals and recommending allocations.

This report provides an overview of the Program, including its purpose, past results and funding, and makes recommendations for allocations to community groups for 2004. A report recommending a comprehensive graffiti abatement strategy as part of the Clean and Beautiful City Initiative will be forwarded to Council in the near future and will include proposals to better align the Program with other proposed activities. Notwithstanding the timing of the forthcoming report, it is important that these grants be approved at this time since the program operates during the summer months when youth are out of school and cheques must be issued shortly to ensure a timely start up.

### Comments:

#### 1. Program Purpose

Toronto is justifiably proud of its clean, safe and vibrant neighbourhoods. However, a community suffers when areas previously enjoyed by everyone are perceived to be taken over by graffiti writers as residents feel uncomfortable about using the space. People begin to avoid areas when "tagging" becomes common. This can make an area feel unsafe, since there is none of the informal surveillance provided by those relaxing on park benches or moving through the laneway after parking their car. In turn, this lack of surveillance can encourage more graffiti, thereby creating a vicious cycle.

The Graffiti Transformation Program is what is referred to as a diversion strategy. It provides funding to local community agencies to create training and business experience for youth in the field of graffiti removal and outdoor art. In this way, neighbourhood deterioration is ameliorated and, since much of the graffiti is done by youth, they learn about the adverse effects on retail and residential neighbourhoods. In the process, valuable skills are learned in remediation methods, commercial art, business practice and community relations and they are offered an alternative way of expressing themselves.

Most funding is provided by the City, however, additional amounts are raised through donations, other funders and from contributions from property owners.

#### 2. Program Results

Since the program's inception in 1996, over 7,300 individual tags have been removed, 288 sites have been cleaned and 383 murals have been created. More than 1,100 youth have received paying work as well as training in the technical aspects of graffiti removal, outdoor art, and business skills.

Over the seven year life of the program, the City has provided approximately \$2,300,000 in grants. In turn, the participating organizations have raised a further \$875,000 from sales, donations and other funders. This

leveraged amount varies from year to year depending on the number of new groups who must develop both the quality of their work and their fundraising skills.

Beyond the remediation of graffiti, it has always been a program objective to create opportunities in this field for the youth employed under the program, and the ingenuity of the participating organizations in pursuing and developing opportunities is commendable. For example, two groups have developed back lane identity programs (street numbers in laneways to assist emergency vehicles in locating addresses). As skill levels increase, other groups are finding a niche market in commissioned art, such as paintings, indoor murals, banners for street festivals, posters and panels for use on stage and in festival settings. The "Lonely Planet" tour guide to Toronto chose a photograph of a mural executed by one of the groups for its 2001 edition's cover and recommends mural tours as a highlight for visitors to Toronto. This year, the program was featured in a German publication. These constitute impressive recognition of the Program's achievements and the participant's contributions to the City's image.

In addition to community interest, which is evident from donations and sales, youth involved have experienced many indications of approval from their respective communities - kind words, assistance, applause - as well as being drawn into the fabric of the community in a way many may not have previously experienced.

#### 2003 Program Results:

In 2003, funding was provided to eighteen local community agencies which, in turn, provided training and employment opportunities for 166 youth. Program results included:

- removal of 1,773 individual 'tags', usually from street installations such as benches and newspaper boxes (the actual number removed is higher because when a whole wall is comprehensively treated, the number of tags removed or covered is not counted);
- cleaning of 25 sites, one group accounting for over 60,000 square feet of cleaning; and
- creation of 50 murals.

In addition to funding provided by the City, the groups leveraged a further \$95,340 from sales, other funders and donations, increasing the money available by almost thirty percent.

### 3. 2004 Program Funding and Recommended Allocations

The 2004 approved budget for the program is \$309,330 which is included in the Consolidated Grants Budget. This report recommends Council approval of funding for 19 groups in 2004. The recommended recipients are listed in Appendix A.

In making these recommendations, staff assessed the proposals based upon the following factors:

- experience working with youth;
- training to be provided to youth;

- number of youth to be employed; and
- anticipated impacts on neighbourhood enhancement.

In addition, in line with Council's policy, new programs proposed for previously unserved areas of the City are given priority where funds allow. Although the program budget has been flatlined since 2002 when a \$2,300 increase was approved, this effort to improve availability City-wide continues.

The recommended funding amount for each group is based on factors such as:

- experience and ability to raise funds from other sources;
- age of and disadvantages faced by the youth to be employed (this can result in higher supervision requirements); and
- overall funding requirements to permit the program to operate efficiently.

Of the 19 groups recommended to receive funding under the Program this year:

- 18 groups received funding last year;
- 1 group (Jane Finch Family and Community Centre) that received funding in 2002 and completed that work in 2003 is recommended for further funding this year;
- 10 groups funded in 2003 are recommended for the same amount in 2003; and
- 8 groups are recommended for reduced allocations due to priority setting and budget restraints.

Conclusion:

This report provides an overview of the Graffiti Transformation Program, including its purpose, past results and funding, and makes recommendations for allocations to community groups for 2004. A report on a comprehensive graffiti abatement strategy will be before Planning and Transportation Committee on June 28<sup>th</sup>.

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Paul Hamilton  
Acting Chief Planner and Executive Director

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Paula M. Dill  
Commissioner

City Planning Division

Urban Development Services

List of Attachment:

Appendix A –2004 Recommended Allocations

[p:/2004/uds/pln/pt043482.pln]

**Appendix A**

**2004 Recommended Allocations: Graffiti Transformation Program.**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>2003 Allocation</b>	<b>2004 Request</b>	<b>2004 Recommended Allocation</b>
Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services	\$10,000	\$13,812	\$10,000
Rexdale Community Health Centre	\$8,780	\$11,715	\$8,780
Jane Finch Family & Community Centre		\$15,400	\$11,000
Urban Arts ( Formerly Arts York)	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre	\$22,140	\$22,140	\$21,140
Cecil Community Centre/Harbourfront Community Centre (joint project)	\$22,140	\$29,369	\$21,140
Community Centre 55	\$21,140	\$21,140	\$21,140
Ralph Thornton Centre	\$10,355	\$14,605	\$10,355
Art Starts	\$13,700	\$13,700	\$13,700
Scadding Court Comm. Centre	\$10,000	\$14,000	\$10,000
Mural Routes	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$5,000
Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Centre	\$17,000	\$17,000	\$17,000
Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre	\$22,640	\$24,024	\$21,140
Lakeshore Area Multi Service Project	\$22,640	\$22,640	\$21,140
West Scarborough Community Centre	\$22,640	\$23,140	\$21,140
Native Child & Family Services of Toronto	\$22,640	\$35,000	\$21,140
Pape Adolescent Resource Centre	\$22,640	\$24,500	\$21,140
Homo Air Ectus	\$22,640	\$32,960	\$21,140
St. Christopher House	\$13,235	\$13,798	\$13,235
Style in Progress		\$4,097	
Syme Woolner		\$5,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$309,330</b>	<b>\$384,040</b>	<b>\$309,330</b>