



City of
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California

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News from: **Community & Economic
Development Agency**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 18, 2011

**Innovative Graffiti Abatement Program Cleans Up
Oakland while Providing Training for Young Adults**

Oakland, CA – The Oakland Redevelopment Agency (ORA) has created an innovative program to combat graffiti on private property along neighborhood commercial corridors while providing young adults with training opportunities. Initially launched in the Coliseum and Central City East Redevelopment Areas, the Graffiti Abatement Program (GAP) has proven so successful that the Agency is now expanding the program to three additional Redevelopment Areas. The presence of graffiti has a negative visual impact on pedestrians and motorists along Oakland’s commercial corridors. Graffiti also deters economic investment and development in areas where it is unchecked.

Launched in June 2011, GAP began with a single contract between ORA and East Oakland-based Men of Valor Academy for the removal of blight in the Coliseum and Central City East Redevelopment Areas. With a main focus of commercial corridors, Men of Valor Academy crews have scraped paint off windows, repainted stucco walls and used lots of elbow grease and liberal amounts of soap and water to visually improve these corridors. Since June, the program has removed 114 graffiti markings from 88 businesses along International and Foothill boulevards.

“The crews from Men of Valor did a great job removing graffiti from our building,” said Saleem Jackson, manager at the Razor Sharp Barber Shop on International Boulevard. “With their help, we can stay ahead of the taggings and create a more visually inviting neighborhood.”

By mid-October, an ORA contract with the Cypress Mandela Training Center (CMTC) will bring GAP to West Oakland’s commercial corridors. The cleanup activities will be part of the hands-on training students receive during CMTC’s 16-week pre-apprenticeship program for Bay Area men and women over 18 years old. The program helps prepare youth for jobs in today’s construction trade industry.

A similar contract with Peralta Service Corporation (PSC) will cover the Central District and Broadway/MacArthur/San Pablo Redevelopment Areas beginning in October. PSC was formed for the purpose of providing training and work experience to help Oakland residents find good jobs with a living wage and benefits. As in other areas, graffiti removal will focus on the most visible commercial corridors.

“In the coming months, Redevelopment staff will work on enhancements to the Graffiti Abatement Program including additional community partnerships,” said Gregory Hunter, Deputy Director in the Community and Economic Development Agency. “We are looking to build a comprehensive program to not only remove unsightly graffiti, but also to prevent it from occurring.”

(more)

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The Oakland Redevelopment Agency is spending \$260,000 on GAP in the five Redevelopment Areas. The funding for this and other Redevelopment programs comes from Tax Increment Financing, not the City of Oakland's General Fund. When a redevelopment plan is approved by the Oakland City Council, which also serves as the Redevelopment Agency Board, the property tax value is assessed for the plan's area. After redevelopment, if the property tax value increases, the bulk of the additional tax revenue known as tax increment goes back to the redevelopment agency to cover the cost of the improvements. In other words, the improvements help pay for themselves.

For more information on the various programs of the Oakland Redevelopment Agency, including the Graffiti Abatement Program, visit business2oakland.com/redevelopment.

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