



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Hannah Young, Law Clerk
Amanda Guile-Hinman, City Attorney

DATE: January 9, 2025

RE: Research Update: Graffiti Rewards Program

I. INTRODUCTION

This memorandum provides an update on the proposed graffiti rewards program for the City of Wilsonville. The goal of graffiti abatement serves Council's public safety initiatives outlined in its 2025 Council goals. The purpose of this process is to explore a rewards incentive for Wilsonville residents who report graffiti to aid efficient and responsive abatement.

Potential abatement programs were presented to Council at the August 15 Work Session, where Council requested additional research and information regarding this program. Although currently no Oregon cities have an active process, staff identified several California cities and others with a program in place. This memo discusses the various findings from those programs and proposes an alternative to best fit Wilsonville's needs.

II. CALIFORNIA RESEARCH:

Staff identified three California jurisdictions with graffiti rewards programs currently in place. In Oregon, ORS 131.892 authorizes an organization, association, or person to offer a reward for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of any person who has committed a criminal offense. Like Oregon, California law grants statutory authority to offer rewards in return for information that may lead to another's arrest and conviction of a crime. *See*

Cal. Pen. § 594(a)(1). California Government Code specifically authorizes local agencies and cities to offer and pay rewards for information leading to abating misconduct. In addition, the cities selected have implemented municipal code granting officers of the City authority to do the same for violations of the municipal code. Staff reached out to individual departments regarding the success and efficacy of the programs discussed herein; however, as of January 9, received no response.

A. San Francisco, California

San Francisco Public Works Department, in collaboration with the District Attorney's Office and Police Department, offers a \$250 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of graffiti vandals. Potential applicants of the reward are instructed to report all active vandalism to 911 and existing vandalism to the Police's non-emergency line. To apply for the reward, applicants must file an application for the reward within 90 days of the imposition of the penalty. This Claim Form is attached to this memorandum as **Attachment 1**. To be eligible for the reward, disclosure of the applicant's name and cooperation with law enforcement are required. Additionally, the applicant must be willing to testify as a witness. To receive the reward, the District Attorney's Office will make recommendation to the Public Works Director to authorize payment based on accuracy and any resulting convictions. Payment will not be issued until the suspect's case is resolved successfully. The entire trial process can take up to a year from incident until receipt of the reward, or longer.

1. Public Works Fund

Section 10.100.234 of San Francisco's Public Works Code establishes a littering, nuisance, and graffiti violation reward fund. The fund receives administrative penalties authorized and collected by the Police, Health, and Public Works code. Charged penalties that

contribute to the fund are infractions or misdemeanors ranging from \$80 to \$1000 and are used exclusively by the Public Works Director to fund the rewards program.

B. West Covina, California

The City of West Covina Police Department administers a graffiti reward program to encourage community members to report vandalism to the Police. Community members who report graffiti acts in progress are eligible for a \$100 reward if the following conditions are satisfied: (1) the community member notifies WCPD that the graffiti is occurring; (2) the graffiti act is in progress, just occurred, or is about to occur; (3) the graffiti act occurred within city limits; (4) the suspected violator is detained and arrested; and (5) the charge is for graffiti vandalism or possession of vandalism tools. Notably, the West Covina process does not require that the resident waits until a conviction before receiving the award.

C. Hayward, California

The City of Hayward's graffiti rewards program offers up to \$500 for any information that leads to the arrest and conviction of a graffiti vandal. Information is collected via a rewards hotline. Qualifying useful information includes names and descriptions of vandals, specific tags, or markings, when and where the graffiti was done and anything that assists police in making the arrest. If the information proves to be helpful and leads to an arrest and conviction in a graffiti case, an individual will be eligible for the rewards.

III. POTENTIAL UPDATES AND PROCESS

Previously, at the August 15 Council work session, staff offered several potential programs to address graffiti and vandalism within Wilsonville. Overall, Council expressed interest in considering the following alternatives: subsidizing or reimbursing private property owners whose property is vandalized; offering in-house supplies for loan; coordinating volunteer

efforts towards vandalized private property; and City removal of qualified graffiti or vandalized locations. If Wilsonville remains interested in a graffiti rewards program, staff will provide draft programs for all alternatives in an upcoming work session.

Given the number of alternatives that will have financial implications (subsidies, supplies, City removal), along with a rewards program, an abatement and reward fund may be needed to ensure that the City has adequate resources to fund these programs. Many cities have established abatement funds. Several Oregon jurisdictions, including Gresham and Happy Valley, have instated general nuisance abatement funds that have proved successful in maintaining overall abatement programs within their cities. The graffiti reward program could be implemented and would work alongside any of the previously covered alternatives, with appropriate funding.

If Council decides to move forward with a graffiti tip rewards program, Council must determine an appropriate amount for the reward, the process of obtaining tips—whether that be a hotline, or instruction to Clackamas County/Wilsonville police department or other City staff. Additionally, since there are not any similar jurisdictions in Oregon that have currently implemented, careful consideration should be given to program design, administrative oversight, and evaluation criteria to ensure the program is effective, equitable, and aligned with the City's enforcement and budgetary frameworks.

IV. CONCLUSION

Establishing a graffiti tip rewards system within the Wilsonville Code could encourage community reporting while supporting the City's broader graffiti abatement efforts. Careful consideration must be given to evaluating all graffiti abatement alternatives and to ensuring that any adopted programs are appropriately funded and administered.