

LONDON N. BREED

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Contact: Conor Johnston
conor.johnston@sfgov.org
415.554.7630

Supervisor London Breed Introduces Comprehensive Overhaul of San Francisco's Graffiti Policies

San Francisco— District 5 Supervisor London Breed introduced a comprehensive overhaul of San Francisco's graffiti policies today at City Hall. Based on a nationwide study of best practices, the new policies will streamline evidence-gathering, enable the City Attorney to pursue civil lawsuits against the worst graffiti offenders, save the City money, and tighten graffiti controls in City parks and on Muni—all without harsh, ineffective criminal charges.

Supervisor Breed was joined by City Attorney Dennis Herrera, SFMTA Director Ed Reiskin, Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru, City Administrator Naomi Kelly, 311 Director Nancy Alfaro, SFPD Deputy Chief Hector Sainez, SFPD Officer Martin Ferreira, Graffiti Advisory Board (GAB) Chair Larry Stringer, GAB members, SF Arts Commission members, artist and GAB member Melorra Green, and SF Beautiful members and staff.

"Graffiti costs San Francisco taxpayers *at least* \$19.4 million per year," said Supervisor Breed. "That's money the City could use to fund nearly 100 affordable housing units, purchase 30 new hybrid buses, or pay DPW's street tree maintenance budget ten times over."

"It's a big problem," Breed continued. "But in developing this legislation, I did not wish to follow the path of those who view every crime as an opportunity for yet harsher punishment. We crafted a plan that will both reduce graffiti offenses and provide better outcomes for graffiti offenders."

Supervisor Breed's proposal will enable the City Attorney to pursue civil cases against repeat graffiti offenders: "taggers" who commit the overwhelming majority of offenses. The plan will centralize evidence collection by having the City's graffiti abatement employees, particularly at DPW and MTA, photograph offenses with their smart phones. They then will submit those reports to SFPD via the 311 app. 311 is customizing its interface to streamline this reporting and provide SFPD the best possible data with the reporter's name, date, size of offense, type of material, etc. Reporting employees will no longer have to make specific estimates of damages, as 311 will calculate it automatically based on newly-created cost matrices. The SFPD will curate the database of offenses, and with the help of a new crime analyst, will identify serial tags and taggers. Those serial cases will be referred to the City Attorney to underpin civil suits for monetary damages and/or community service.

Several jurisdictions in Southern California are using an enforcement system similar to this, Supervisor Breed noted. “Pico Rivera in East Los Angeles, for example, reportedly saw its graffiti abatement areas decrease from 300,000 ft² to 137,000 ft²—a 55% drop—in the first four years. If that happened in San Francisco it would be a savings of \$11 million.”

Supervisor Breed’s plan also includes legislation to tighten graffiti controls and codify the new procedures. Her legislation will:

- Revise the City’s “Graffiti Ordinance” so it can be used against the perpetrator of graffiti, not just the victim, i.e. the property owner;
- Codify the City Attorney’s authority to pursue civil damages;
- Revise the Park Code to ban the possession of spray paint, etching tools, and “slap tags”* in any City park;
- Revise the Police Code to prohibit anyone with a recent graffiti conviction or plea from carrying spray paint, etching tools, or “slap tags” on Muni vehicles; and
- Add a general policy that City departments will collaborate on graffiti and pursue all effective enforcement avenues.

“It is inspiring to think that with a lot of collaboration and a little technology, we can solve some of the City’s most vexing problems,” said Breed.

“Supervisor Breed is introducing a smart and effective new approach that will improve enforcement, speed abatement and create intervention aimed at discouraging graffiti rather than solely punishing it,” said **City Attorney Dennis Herrera**. “I applaud Supervisor Breed for her leadership on this issue, and my office is committed to being a full partner in the multifaceted approach she is proposing.”

“The approach proposed by Supervisor Breed provides us another important tool to go after the perpetrators and repeat offenders who blight our neighborhoods,” said **Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru**. “By bolstering the collaboration among City agencies with improved reporting and information-sharing, we boost our chances to hold graffiti vandals accountable for their illegal actions and hopefully deter them from tagging again.”

“We are grateful for Supervisor Breed’s leadership,” said **SFMTA Director of Transportation Ed Reiskin**. “By helping the SFMTA reduce its costs for fighting graffiti, which run more than \$15 million per year, this thoughtful and proven approach to graffiti enforcement should ultimately reduce the incidence of graffiti, which will help us make Muni service more reliable and enjoyable for all our customers.”

**Slap tags are a new form of graffiti in the form of marked stickers that are applied liberally upon vehicles, structures, etc. and are very arduous to remove. Supervisor Breed’s legislation marks the first time San Francisco law will directly address them.*

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