
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Bob Donovan
(414) 708-2096

Ald. Tony Zielinski
(414) 286-3769

City Neighborhoods Face Crisis As Anti-Graffiti Funding Dries Up, Alderman Says

*Cut of 80% in Recent Years Has City Anti-Graffiti Programs Losing Ground; News
Conference Wednesday to Outline Public Safety Importance of Graffiti Fight*

The health and future of some Milwaukee neighborhoods may very well depend on whether the city can find funding for endangered anti-graffiti efforts, Ald. Bob Donovan said.

In fact, Ald. Donovan, chair of the Common Council's Public Safety Committee, is so convinced that securing funding to fight graffiti is critical to ensuring safety and vitality in city neighborhoods he's hosting a news conference tomorrow (Wednesday, March 5, 2008) to draw attention to the issue. **The news conference, which will also include Ald. Tony Zielinski, law enforcement officials, local business people, representatives of community organizations, and neighborhood stakeholders, will take place at 11 a.m. at S. 31st St. and W. Greenfield Ave. (an area plagued by graffiti vandalism).**

With Police Chief Edward Flynn and the Milwaukee Police Department moving forward with area-specific crime reduction initiatives emphasizing the importance of restoring order, the Common Council "must do its part and step up to make sure the city doesn't lay down in the fight against graffiti," the alderman said.

"There is no more visible sign of disorder than graffiti," said Ald. Donovan, vice chair of the city's Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee. "And if we don't take a proactive role in making sure it's removed then I guess we're just surrendering whole parts of our city to a cancer that signifies disorder."

Records from the Department of Neighborhood Services show reported incidents of graffiti rose 20% from 2004-2005 (4,000 incidents) to 2006-2007 (5,000 incidents).

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Funding Needed To Battle Graffiti/ADD ONE

But city records show funding for anti-graffiti efforts has plummeted from \$445,000 in 2004 to \$95,000 in 2008. The Milwaukee Christian Center, funded with city Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds at \$300,000 in 2004 for staff and supplies to abate graffiti on the city's south side, has been funded at \$0 in 2008, Ald. Donovan said.

"Funding our total anti-graffiti programs at the lowest levels since their inception is doing a disservice to the citizens we've sworn to fight for and protect," the alderman said.

Ald. Zielinski, chair of the Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee, said the chronic and relentless exploits of graffiti vandals warrants a comparable response from the city.

"We're not going to defeat graffiti with a half-hearted effort," he said. "We have to find the dollars to stop it – no 'ifs, ands or buts' about it," Ald. Zielinski said.

Ald. Donovan said colleagues Ald. James N. Witkowiak, who helped create the Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee, Ald. Terry L. Witkowski (also a member of the Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee) and Ald. Joe Dudzik are supportive of his effort to restore full funding for city anti-graffiti programs. Committee work will prevent both Aids. Dudzik and Witkowski from attending Wednesday's news conference, he said.

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