

## Graffiti to Greenery

The City Heights Town Council's Mission Statement is:

*'Advocate for our neighborhoods through building relationships among neighbors and creating safe, attractive neighborhoods to improve the quality of life for our residents.'*

The City Heights Town Council Inc. 501©3 (CHTC) is applying for the Politifest grant to expand a past program that was very successful. Specifically, the program combats graffiti by planting low water use plants below or above walls that are repeatedly covered in graffiti. As the plants grow they cover the wall with greenery. Neighbors who apply agree to water the plant. This improves the quality of life and appearance for all of our neighbors.

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** City Heights is a densely populated urban community of about 69,000 residents and covers approximately 6 square miles. The community is made up of 16 traditionally underserved neighborhoods. City Heights is frequently both a first point destination and a new long term home for residents. Many individuals are refugees, who come from around the world and bring with them a rich multicultural base with a broad range of cultural diversity. The residents speak more than 16 languages with almost 50 dialects spoken in the schools. Just over 50 percent are Hispanic but the community also hosts East and Central Africans, Vietnamese, South East Asian, Iranian and Myanmar populations. The community has a higher proportion of youth under the age of 18 than any other area of San Diego and hosts 12 elementary, 3 middle and 2 high schools. It is also a walking community with substantial pedestrian activity. Every school aged child is on the free USDA breakfast and lunch program.

Two groups, City Heights on Patrol (CHOP) & the Police Problem Solving Meeting provide opportunities for community residents to share information with police. CHOP consists of a group of community residents who support the police by patrolling in cars with two member teams at night. They become the extra 'eyes on the street'. Both groups report graffiti as a significant ongoing issue. In addition, our police boundaries have been reconfigured and residents are reporting increased gang activity. The gangs use graffiti to declare their turf.

**SUCCESSFUL PAST PROJECT:** The corner of Chamoune and Dwight streets, here in City Heights, was repeatedly covered with graffiti. This area is heavily trafficked because it is between an elementary and middle school. Parents walk their children to school every morning and again in the afternoon. The wall had been repeatedly tagged and painted out.

In 2010 President, Kenton F. of the Fairmount Village Neighborhood Association (FVNA) wrote a small grant to purchase plants. The wall at Chamoune and Dwight is in his neighborhood. After diligent research into using possible native drought tolerant plants, the group chose the Creeping Fig (Ficus Pumila). All plants were purchased from a local merchant, 'City Farmers' at Euclid and Home Ave, San Diego, CA 92105. Altogether, 50 creeping figs plants were bought along with 2 bags of soil/compost. The neighbors planted the vegetation along 100 linear feet of ground below the wall. Since then the plants have grown up and covered the wall. Plants

could also be established at the top of a wall to hang over depending upon the necessity or available space. A similar project covers the south wall of Fairmount Ave between Home and Ridgeview. Unfortunately the north wall was not planted and has been repeatedly tagged.

**PROPOSAL:**

1. Create Applications for interested Home owners, Renters & Businesses. Translate into at least 3 languages. Applications stipulate that they will promise to take care of their plants for a year.
2. San Diego Police Department (SDPD) and CHOP will provide a list of graffiti areas/ gang boundaries. Officer Luis Roman has offered us the SDPD Facebook page where officers can post sites as well as reports we currently receive from Urban Corps.
3. City Farmers Nursery offers one gallon containers of creeping fig @ 9.95plus tax = \$10.75 as of June 7, 2013. We would purchase soil amendments @ 4.99 per 1 cubic foot bags plus tax = \$5.39 per bag.

ITEM	QUANTITY	COST PER ITEM WITH TAX	SUBTOTAL
Creeping Fig( 1 gallon)	300	10.75	3225.00
Soil Amendments (1 cubic foot bags)	150	5.39	808.50
Multiple deliveries			75.00
Water/snacks to distribute to students	10 flats H2O (24 bottles) 10 large boxes(36)	50.00 50.00	100.00
Administration Fee			\$250.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>4458.50</b>

4. Plant greenery to deter graffiti using community volunteers from SDSU, Hoover and neighborhood residents. Create and offer documentation of volunteer hours to students.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH & EXECUTION:** Use Interns from SDSU Social Work 120 and Masters Level MSW Program to plant, guide and run ‘. Graffiti to Greenery’ from CHTC centrally located office. Use resident students from Hoover High who would work towards their Volunteer Hours. Both schools have been contacted and the SDSU student interns have a past history of working with the CHTC. Purchase plants/ compost from ‘City Farmers’. Partner with San Diego Canyoneers to use their tools. We already have a relationship with their director Linda Pennington.

<p><b><u>TIME LINE:</u></b> Stage monthly work parties and plant from September thru early March 2013 to coincide with the rainy season in San Diego.</p>
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