

Addressing Graffiti in Baltimore City Local Historic Districts

This informational sheet is intended to provide a quick understanding of the requirements to address graffiti on designated historic properties in the City of Baltimore. In general, CHAP follows the information provided in National Park Service [Preservation Brief #38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry](#) - available on-line.

IMPORTANT!

- Historic material requires gentle cleaning! Always begin with the least aggressive option and escalate as needed and appropriate.
- All exterior work in CHAP Historic Districts and to City Landmarks require an [Authorization to Proceed](#).
- Test any products on the material in a small area that is not highly visible prior to more widespread use.

1. Identify the graffiti type

Minor Graffiti: Typically, pressure washing with wide wand or a cleaner/ solvent.

- Chalk
- Pencils (graphite and colored), Ball point pens
- Wax and oil crayons, lipstick
- Stickers

Serious Graffiti: May require stripping and pressure washing with wide wand.

- Aerosol spray paints
- Brush applied paints: latex house paint typically
- Permanent felt markers (black or blue Sharpie most common)

2. Identify the underlying material

- Soft Stone: limestone, marble (polished and unpolished), sandstone, brownstone, brick
- Strong Stone: Concrete, granite (polished and unpolished), glazed brick
- Wood: Painted
- Stucco: Painted

3. Identify the treatment method

- Soft Stone: Contact CHAP staff for best method of removal.
- Strong Stone: Begin with the least aggressive option and escalate as needed. Hot water & soap is the most effective treatment for any type of waxy graffiti, chalk, and some paints. Stone is easily damaged, so no metal scrapers or brushes should be used. Always use a wide wand pressure washer tip at wand distance of 2 feet.

Minor Graffiti

1. Wash affected area and surrounding areas with a scrub brush and mild detergent.
2. Rinse thoroughly using low pressure. **DO NOT TRACE OUT THE WORDS OR GRAFFITI!**

Serious Graffiti

1. If graffiti remains, Mineral Spirits, Toluene, MEK, Acetone, Xylol can be applied by rag or brush to the graffiti/grease stains and worked in gently with a brush. The World's Best Graffiti Remover and Prosoco are two brands that offer acceptable products.
2. Follow all instructions for product used.
3. Please also use product on the surrounding area so that the treatment blends in. Do entire stone to make cleaning uniform if possible.
4. Please note - these products are toxic and can also produce negative effects on the stone. Total dwell time should be 10 minutes. Do NOT leave on stone longer than recommended because many cleaners will permanently etch or bleach stone.
5. Pressure (or Hose) Wash after product application: Spray area down with water so stone is saturated. If pressure washer is available, use a low pressure up to 1000 psi, at wand distance of 2 feet with a wand tip (green).

Don't Forget!

Use these precautions with the pressure washer:

- **Do not start spraying directly on stone.**
- **Keep a safe distance!**
- **Fan the entire area gently. DO NOT TRACE OUT THE WORDS!**
- **Blasting too close and tracing will etch all stone & leave shadows of the graffiti words FOREVER, and cause permanent, potentially worse, damage!**

Painted Masonry, Wood, & Stucco

1. Re-paint over graffiti with paint that matches the color of the existing base layer.
2. The paint coating should be thick enough to prevent the graffiti from showing through.

4. Use of Graffiti barriers and sealants

Typically the use of barriers and sealants is discouraged as they can cause further issues to historic buildings. CHAP staff can discuss specific products with property owners as needed.

For more information:

Contact CHAP staff at (410) 396-7526 or

Visit chap.baltimorecity.gov.

**Information in this sheet was provided by Christine Djuric in briefing for NY Department of Parks and Recreation, and National Park Service [Preservation Brief #38: Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry](#).*