

## Chapter 15

# Vandalism and Depreciative Behaviors

The major theme of this book is on how to design space to create the desired experience. For the most part it is viewed as a positive experience. In contrast, vandalism and depreciative behaviors detract or depreciate the positive experience which the designer of space is trying to create. Plumb (2005, p.263) defines vandalism as “*the willful or malicious destruction or defacement of property.*” This chapter focuses on these negative or depreciative behaviors with the purpose of diminishing the experience. Unfortunately, vandalism and depreciative behaviors affect the design of space also. Also, the chapter presents a counter point where some forms of vandalism are really the recreational expression of the park users creating their own experiences.

### Impacts of Vandalism

Vandalism has a significant impact on the economy. In 1990, the cost of vandalism was eight billion dollars. By the late 1990s, the cost of vandalism was estimated to increase to 15 billion dollars a year in the U.S. In 2008, the cost increased to 25 billion dollars annually. Although the source didn't indicate the types of vandalism involved and how the amounts were calculated, the inference was that the impact of vandalism is significant.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, those arrested for vandalism were white males under the age of 25 years (van Vliet, W., 1992). Analysis of selected socio-demographic characteristics of arrested vandals reveals that 72% of those arrested were below 25 years of age and 43% were below 18 years of age. Ninety percent of those arrested were males. Whites comprised 70% of those arrested. Blacks were 20%, and Hispanics were nine percent of those arrested. The data is a broad brush analysis and doesn't differentiate between gangs expressing themselves with graffiti and young couples harmlessly carving their initials in the gazebo,

### Graffiti as a Form of Expression

In general, vandalism has been viewed as a negative impact that needs to be expunged. There is a counter opinion. In terms of the theme of this book, the issue goes to the heart of a philosophical question regarding who designs the park. Is it the park designer with his image of the experience, or is it visitors with their image of the experience? In some cases, vandalism and in particular, graffiti are considered the free expression of the visitor's experience. In the chapter on theme parks, an important criteria for the success of a playground is that people are able to manipulate elements within the playground to create an individualize experience in the image of the visitor. The sandbox typifies the place where people can create their experience (Huzingia, 1955). Reflecting the principle of the sandbox, vandalism and graffiti can be considered the free creative expression of visitors seeking to escape the restrictive confines of urban living only to find out that parks have the same types of restrictive confines.

Vandalism and in particular graffiti have taken on cultural significance. It has been the topic of sociology and anthropology. Man has sought to express himself and the remnants of these expressions line cave

walls, rock faces, and bridge abutments (figure 15.1). The term “*graffiti art*” captures the dilemma. It is a potential oxymoron comprised of two potentially opposing terms. Traditionally, graffiti is a form of vandalism to be expunged. Art is a form of cultural expression that needs to be preserved as a record of cultural expression. As demonstrated in the gazebo example in the next section, the graffiti can often overshadow the primary focus of the facility and become significant in and of itself.

Building on this theme, Michael Morrissey (1976, p.34) suggests that “Vandalism is also a form of communication. The vandal is saying to the designer, management, or even to society – ‘I don’t like what you have done and I’m going to change it.’” He suggests that vandalism is often the desire of recreationists attempting to free themselves from the stifling rules and regulations of society. This is a common philosophical theme (see Nash, 1978, and Chapter 4). He notes that vandalism usually takes the form of carving, burning, spray painting, littering, breaking, dismantling, or shooting, and that these acts are often directed toward signs, trash cans, restroom facilities, and other man-made facilities (figure 15.2).

Like the native American graffiti painted on the rock wall, modern graffiti can become a living history monument to past users. Two examples are provided where graffiti and depreciative behavior can become a significant part of the experience in a park and where the graffiti has become institutionalized as part of the park experience by the park management. The first is the Gazebo and the second are the graffiti-art walls at Venice Beach in California.

<b>CCC Gazebo – Built in the 1930s as part of a Civilian Conservation Corps project in New Germany State Park in western Maryland, the gazebo illustrates how graffiti can become a significant part of the experience in a park (Riley, 2014). It has become important to visitors because of its graffiti (figure 15.3 and figure 15.4). Users leave their mark by carving their initials into the seats and beams of the gazebo. Typifying the significance of these carvings, a wedding couple had their wedding in the gazebo. It was the site of their first date. On their first date, they carved their initials surrounded by a heart into one of the gazebo’s posts. The importance of the park, the gazebo, and the graffiti in their life came full-circle with their wedding.



**Figure 15.1 – Indian Paintings (Graffiti)** – Caption: These early native American paintings on the rock surface are actually graffiti. Man has always sought to document his presence and to record his culture through pictures and graffiti. This early native American graffiti illustrates the problem that graffiti has historically always been present. – Middle Fork of the Salmon River, Idaho. – Source: author – [file:\DSC\_0067.JPG]



**Figure 15.2 – The Deer Sign Shooting** – Vandalism as a Form of Communications? – Caption: Philosophically, some of the literature suggests that one source of vandalism are recreationists seeking to free themselves from the oppressive rules and regulations of urban living only to find the park experience equally confining. Are the hunters taking aim at this deer sign expressing their hostility toward authority or simply frustrated hunters? – Source: Author – [file:\DSC\_0024.JPG]



**Figure 15.3 – Gazebo Graffiti** – Caption: Graffiti in this gazebo has become a living history monument to past users. A couple held their wedding in the gazebo. It was the site of the wedding couple’s first date. On their first date, they carved their initials surrounded by a heart into one of the gazebo’s posts. – New Germany State Park, Maryland. – Source: author – [file:\NG370[vg][20].JPG]



**Figure 15.4 – Gazebo Graffiti** – Caption: Pictured is one of the entrance posts to the gazebo that has become a living history monument to past users. – New Germany State Park, Maryland. – Source: author – [file:\NG371[vg][20].JPG]

Sometimes, seemingly minimal maintenance efforts can essentially cover up the depreciative behaviors, in this case the older carving on the seats and supporting beams. The Maryland Park Service applied a dense dark stain to the structure. It covers up or diminishes most of the carvings. Fresh carvings stand out because of the contrast between the dark brown stain on the supporting beams and the blonde wood tones of the exposed wood underneath the stain. All of the old carvings are still there. Because of the uniformity in color provided by the stain, they are blended into the structure and don’t stand out like the freshly cut carvings. From a distance, they look like insect damage at worst. It is only upon closer inspection that the carvings are carvings and not insect damage.

In figure 15.3, examine the vertical support columns on the right with those on the left. There are equal number of carvings on both entrance columns. The carvings on the left column have been stained over and looks normal. The carvings on the right column have not been stained and the contrast is evident in the closeup photo of the carving in figure 15.4.

<b>*Venice Beach Graffiti-Art Wall* – The second example is the Venice Public Art Walls at Venice Beach in Venice California (figure 15.5). The art walls are managed by Creative Unity, a Venice based arts organization that has been responsible for managing the walls since 2000 (Venice311). The organization seeks “to serve the people by inspiring positive lifestyles through alternative artistic endeavors.” (veniceartwalls.com) Built in 1961, the art walls are the remains of the Venice pavilion torn down in 1999. Although illegal, graffiti-based art painted on the walls of the pavilion throughout its history was tolerated and became part of the local culture. In 2000, it became legal to create graffiti-based art on the remaining walls of the pavilion. The walls are part of a larger program of graffiti-based art work that enhances the walls of buildings in the city (figure 15.6).

The graffiti-based art demonstrates two principles. First, the managed walls seek to channelize and manage graffiti-art. A review of the rules for the creation of graffiti-based art on the remaining pavilion walls indicates a balancing act between civility and providing people freedom of expression. There are content restrictions. Artwork cannot include hate speech, pornography, illicit drug references, gang references, profanity, or extreme or gratuitous violence (veniceartwalls.com rules). In addition, protocols are established for the artists. They may need to submit sketches of the artwork and painting can only occur during the weekends. Enforcement of the rules is by the LAPD.

Second, the graffiti-based art walls address the previously discussed Huizinga's play principles. Like the sandbox, the graffiti-based art provides opportunities for people to manipulate elements in their environment to create a desired experience. It is the accommodation by the park designers and managers of the park users. Like the gazebo example, it is an example where graffiti and vandalism become institutionalized as part of park experience.

<b>Norm Crystallization – The public's attitude toward graffiti and depreciative behaviors is normative. This means that people's attitudes and perceptions are variable and can be changed. Also, it means that education and interpretation can be used to mold, modify and influence behavior. Manning (2007, p.52) notes that often there is a crystallization or consensus regarding these norms. The gazebo, Indian paintings and the graffiti-art wall in Venice Beach are examples consistent with the concept of norm crystallization. Today, these examples of graffiti are valued by and protected by the public and resource managers. Under different circumstances and in different settings, these experiences could be considered undesired vandalism and expunged. These examples illustrate that societal norms determine the public's attitude and perception toward graffiti and depreciative behaviors.

In contrast with the normative depreciative behaviors identified by Manning (2007) associated with litter and graffiti, these examples represent the crystallization of positive normative attitudes by the public for what would normally be considered depreciative behaviors. In addition, the graffiti art walls illustrate Huizinga's principles of play where the players on the playground can manipulate elements to create the desired experience.



**Figure 15.5: Venice Beach Graffiti Art Wall** – The graffiti-wall art represents a balance of providing local residents creative expression in the park and what the park designer envisioned the park experience to be. Venice Beach, California. Source: Author – [file:\Venice304[gd].JPG]



**Figure 15.6: Venice Beach Wall Mural** – This building mural is one of many that adorn the walls of building in Venice, California. Source: author – [file:\Venice314[gd].jpg]

<b>*Tagging* – Tagging is a form of communication used by gangs to mark their territory. Where graffiti-art tends to be less readable, more artistic and more elaborate, tagging is designed to be read and to communicate a message of territory or ownership to others (Martinez, 2012). Often, taggers will write their crew, followed by their name and they will often include the number of members in their group. Compare the graffiti-art on the wall in figure 15.5, the graffiti on the trail sign in figure 15.7 is writing and most likely an example of tagging by a gang or other group.



**Figure 15.7: Tagging** – Tagging is the marking of territory by gangs or other groups. It tends to be readable, less artistic and more functional than graffiti-art. Compare this graffiti with the graffiti-art in figure 15.5. Source: author – [file:\GAP000trail015.jpg]

## Antiquity Act of 1906

In the national park movement, vandalism was historically rampant in many of the parks. As indicated in the account below by historian John Ise, vandalism was particularly rampant in the Southwestern parks. The looting of Indian pottery and other artifacts in Mesa Verde Park for sale led to the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 (figure 15.8). The passage below clearly indicates that the vandalism was a case of acquisitive vandalism described in the next section.

Dr. Jesse Nusbaum, for years Superintendent of Mesa Verde Park and perhaps the greatest authority on the archeological ruins, described conditions in the early years as follows: “The heyday, during the 1890's, of wholesale commercial looting of archeological sites in the Southwest by ‘pot hunters’ to meet increasing market demands for artifacts and comprehensive collections caused prodigious damaging, destruction and loss of archeological sites and values, since the pot hunters sporadically searched ruin sites solely for maximum salable loot by the most expeditious methods of unscientific excavation.” From a letter to the author (John Ise), February 11-12, 1959. (Ise, 1961, p.145)

The reports of vandalism were so egregious that it led to legislation championed by Representative John Lacey. The Antiquities Act of 1906 or commonly known as the Lacey Act was passed and signed into law. In terms of the park movement the Act was highly significant. First, it protected parks including Mesa Verde against acts of vandalism. Second, it authorized the President to create National Monuments which would protect historic spots, landmarks, and other historic and archeological rich resources. Where the creation of a national park requires an act of Congress, the creation of a National Monument only requires the action of the President. Third, this transfer of power from the legislative to the executive branch eventually resulted in an expanded use of the Antiquities Act to create National Monuments on Federal lands where protection was sought but where there was questionable need for historic, archeological or scientific protection. For example, Jimmy Carter used the Act to declare 56 million acres in Alaska as a National Monument on December 1, 1978.



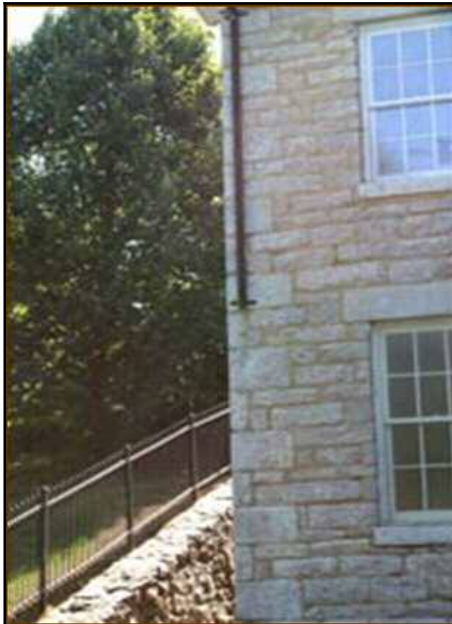
**Figure 15.8: Mesa Verde National Park** – The removal of artifacts at Mesa Verde resulted in the passage of the Antiquities Act of 1906 which enabled the President to create national monuments. Using the living history technique, the interpreter is portraying the wife (Aileen) of park superintendent, Dr. Jesse Nusbaum who is quoted in the text. Dressed in the period of the 1920s, the interpreter is pointing out the preservation efforts of the park to a group of visitors. Source: author – [file:\MV002[vg][org].jpg]

## Types of Vandalism

Generally vandalism and depreciative behaviors are categorized into four categories: acquisitive, tactical, vindictive, malicious, and erosive (Plumb 2005, p.263). These categories attempt to encompass the motivation or reason why the perpetrators commit the act of vandalism. To a degree, the categories also determine the approach used to eradicate the vandalism or depreciative behavior..

**Acquisitive Vandalism** – In acquisitive vandalism, the vandal destroys property for money or material gain. Its focus is on destroying property for *monetary* or *material benefit*. The looting of the Southwest parks discussed in the previous section was clearly an example of acquisitive vandalism. It led to the Antiquities Act of 1906. Today with the high cost of copper, there is an incentive to strip buildings of their copper down spouting and sell it for its scrap value (figure 15.9). Usually, the lower section of the down spout is replaced with an inexpensive PVC pipe.

Located on parkland in Roswell, Georgia, vandals used acetylene torches to disassemble a historic electric generator for the copper wire used in to wrap the armature (figure 15.10). At the time, the ruins were remote and the vandals had to carry the acetylene tanks through the woods to the ruins. The recreation and park department built a trail to the historic site which along with increased visitor use has reduced additional vandalism to the site.



**Figure 15.9 – Copper Down Spouting** – Caption: The lower section was pulled off and sold as scrap. – Source: Internet – [file:\CopperDownspouts.jpg]



**Figure 15.10 – Electric Turbine** – Caption: Vandals used acetylene torches to disassemble this electric generator for its copper wire. Building a trail to the historic site along with increase visitor use has reduced additional vandalism. Roswell, Georgia. – Source: Author – [file:\Mill013.jpg]

<b>*Tactical Vandalism* – Tactical vandalism is premeditated vandalism designed to gain *attention* or *publicity*. The efforts of Greenpeace in sabotaging whaling operations (figure 15.11), or tree-spiking are examples of tactical vandalism (figure 15.12). Tree-spiking is the act of driving a large nail or spike in the tree to render the tree useless at the sawmill. In order to avoid detection, ceramic spikes have often replaced steel nails.



**Figure 15.11 – Greenpeace** – Caption: An example of tactical vandalism, Greenpeace has used their small boat to disrupt whaling vessels and to bring publicity to its efforts to save the whales. – Source: (internet) – [file:\Greenpeace.jpg]



**Figure 15.12 – Tree Spiking** – Caption: An example of tactical vandalism, tree-spiking involves purposely driving ceramic or metal spikes into trees to destroy the saw blade at the saw mill and to sabotage the lumbering industry. – Source: (internet) – [file:\TreeSpiking.jpg]



<b>*Vindictive Vandalism* – Vindictive vandalism occurs when people seek *revenge* against an individual, organization, or the system. Often the revenge may be spurred an employee being fired, a team losing a sporting event, or a similar event. For example, a discontented employee purposely destroyed play equipment in a Baltimore, Maryland park (figure 15.13).

Many of the eastern parks were carved out of privately owned lands. Many of these lands were purchased at bargain basement prices during the depression. In parks like Shenandoah National Park, displaced people simply moved down the mountain off of the park lands. Compounding the issues is that the locals couldn't hunt on the lands on which they had previously hunted. They could not cut firewood on lands where they could once cut firewood to heat their homes. And, there is always a whisper in the wind that the Park Service would expand the boundaries to the park and force them further down the mountainside. To add injury to insult, young affluent urbanites wearing down jackets and driving expensive foreign cars become the users of the park. These visitors are surprised if they park their car in the wrong area and find their tires slashed, or a forest fire is mysteriously started on Old Rag Mountain in Shenandoah National Park by one of the dissatisfied locals. Even forty years later after the creation of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River a dissatisfied landowner next to the park expresses the intrusiveness of the National Park Service on the local economy with the sign a side of his barn expressing "NPS Get Out" (figure 15.14).



**Figure 15.13 – Vindictive Vandalism** – Caption: This playground equipment was destroyed by a discontent employee. Baltimore, Maryland. – Source: Internet – [file:\BurntPlaygroundEquip.jpg]

**Figure 15.14 – NPS Get Out** – Caption: Parks displace previous landowners, preclude prior land uses, and often introduce new uses and users. Although there is no evidence that this farmer ever was involved in vandalism to the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, his dissatisfaction is typical of an attitude by locals which often can lead to vandalism. Narrowsburg, New York. – Source: author – [file:\DSC\_1003.JPG]



<b>*Malicious Vandalism* – In malicious vandalism, people derive *satisfaction* and *enjoyment* from destroying things. Often this includes gang behavior, intoxication, and deviant behavior (p.263). Traditionally, people think of graffiti covered walls and objects (figure 15.15 and figure 15.16). However, malicious vandalism includes the malicious destruction of park and recreation facilities such as broken restroom fixtures (figure 15.16). In addition, it includes the wedding carvings in the gazebo discussed earlier also.



**Figure 15.15 – Traditional graffiti** – Caption: When most people think of vandalism, they think of traditional graffiti which is a form of malicious vandalism. – Source: NPS, C&O National Historic Canal – [file:\C&Ocanal01 .jpg]



**Figure 15.16 – Broken toilet** – Caption: Malicious vandalism can be extremely destructive and costly as demonstrated in the destruction of this restroom facility. – Source: Friends of the Rappahannock – [file:\MaliciousVandalism01 .jpg]

In January 2009, an arson burnt to the ground over 50% of the Millennium Park in Lake Charles, Louisiana (figure 15.17). Although a suspect was arrested, he eventually was found not guilty and the case is still open. Although the park was destroyed by a malicious act, the local population rallied, pitched in, and rebuilt the park as a community project (figure 15.18). The park was reopened in December 2011.

**Figure 15.17 – Arson at Millennium Park** – Caption: Millennium Park in Lake Charles, Louisiana was burnt to the ground by an arsonist and then rebuilt by community participants – Source: [Carter pwrpt] – [file:\MillenniumPark01.jpg]



**Figure 15.18 – Millennium Park Rebuilt** – Caption: Through community efforts, the park was rebuilt by December 2011. – Source: [Carter pwrpt] – [file:\MillenniumPark02.jpg]



<b>*Erosive Vandalism* – The last form of vandalism which is really more of a depreciative behavior is erosive vandalism. It results from the *lack of knowledge* or *user ignorance*. It covers a wide range of behaviors. Typically, the visitor responds “I didn’t know...” or “had I known, I wouldn’t have done it.”

Historically, the National Park Service has wrestled with the bear problem in Yellowstone National Park. Before their change in policy during the 1970s, seeing a bear in Yellowstone was considered a major



**Figure 15.19 – Feeding the bears** – Caption: There was a time when there were bleachers for visitors at Yellowstone to watch the bears feeding on garbage. Source: (NPS) – [file:\bears01.jpg] – [file:\bears01.jpg]



**Figure 15.20 – Trail erosion** – Caption: Hikers compact the soil leading to erosion and and exposed roots. – Source: Author – [file:\slides-trails\DSC\_0141.JPG]



**Figure 15.21 – Homelessness in the Park** – Caption: Parks often attract homeless people which in turn can lead to other forms of vandalism and to disuse by the general public. – Source: author – [file:\homeless03.jpg]

attraction for visitors. Yogi Bear and Jellystone Park is a weak disguise for Yellowstone Park and the bear problem. Yogi was always getting in trouble with Mr. Park Ranger. In order to facilitate seeing a bear, areas were created where trash was dumped on the stage to attract the bears and bleachers for spectators lined the area (figure 15.19).

In a second example of depreciative behavior, continuous hikers walking on the trail cause erosion of the duff leaving the tree roots exposed and the trail eroded down to the bed rock. Hikers will often avoid the mud in the center of the trail and trample on the dryer area at the side of the trail. This results in an ever widening of the trail as shown in figure 15.20. Through proper interpretation, hikers can be educated that the environmentally correct way to hike is through the mud in the center of the trail.



**Figure 15.22 – Park bench** – Caption: Would you attempt to steal this park bench? It is designed not to be stolen. Greenbelt, Maryland – Source: Author – [file:\greenbelt\DSC\_0013.JPG]

Non-conforming uses in the park like homelessness use the park in a way for which it wasn't designed. In addition, homelessness can result in other forms of vandalism and it can lead to the disuse of the park by its normal visitors (figure 15.21).

## Solutions

There are several solutions or approaches to dealing with vandalism and depreciative behaviors. These include design and construction, law enforcement, maintenance, and education and interpretation.

<b>*Design/Construction* – An unfortunate reality is that the design of recreation and park facilities needs to incorporate possible vandalism and depreciative behaviors in terms of their design and construction. It is a fact of life in designing the experience. Often, it need not be so draconian that it impedes the experience being sought. For example, simple modifications in the design of a park bench makes it attractive to sit upon, but too heavy to move and remove from the premises (figure 15.22). Danielian (1976, p.41) provides a primer of design considerations to increase security and reduce vandalism in the design and construction of any facility.

- **Parking next to building is not recommended** – Vehicles act as screens to hide behind and the close proximity of the vehicles to the building makes it easier to get away.
- **Parking lot lighting** – Provide good lighting well spread out throughout the parking lot to discourage dark areas.
- **Use security lighting around buildings** – is a standard practice that discourages vandalism.
- **Place lighting at vulnerable points** – If total lighting around the entire building is not affordable, lighting can be concentrated at exterior openings, such as entry doors, windows, intake/exhaust louvers, grills, panels, ladders, etc.
- **Consider security fences** – Fences and walls are additional physical barriers to overcome. Fences can be complemented with lighting and security cameras. Consider open-type ornamental iron or chain-link fencing because they allow for visibility.
- **Minimize and/or consolidate outbuildings** – Outbuildings and storage areas both provide hiding places and opportunities for vandals. Consolidating and minimizing these facilities helps to reduce opportunities for vandals.

- **Doors** – Consider using solid-core or metal exterior doors set in heavy duty wood or metal frames. Doors that open outward should have locking hinges or non removable hinges.
- **Install alarm devices** – Significant improvements have been made in alarm systems. These include wireless motion sensors that can be linked to security with phone or cell phone connections.
- **Use hardened materials** – Plastic windows can be installed in place of glass windows. If glass windows are required, consider using tempered glass which is harder to break. Use shiny metal mirrors instead of glass mirrors.
- **Install security bars and grills** – can be placed on windows and doors to prevent intrusion. Care must also be taken not to create entrapment in case of a fire or other emergency.

<c>**Lighting** – As a rule, increased lighting decreases vandalism. In addition, increased lighting increases pedestrian use which also decreases vandalism because few people will commit acts of vandalism in a populated location. Two examples are provided. Both are at night. These are Centennial Park in downtown Atlanta, and the River Walk in San Antonio (figure 15.23 and figure 15.24). Examine both pictures and ask yourself if you would feel safe in these parks. Most people would. There is ample ambient light present, and there are people present in both parks. The lighting makes a significant difference in people feeling safe and secure in an area.

<c>**Urban Feudalism** – Crime and vandalism affects architecture and design. Drive through an urban blighted area. The prevailing architecture is typically the same. The architecture represents that of a medieval castle. The windows on the first floor are filled in with concrete blocks or bricks. Those windows that remain have bars on them. Solid metal doors with several deadbolts on them guard against entry. Usually, there is a solid type of garage door that is pulled down over the storefront making the building impenetrable. The only thing missing to make the building impenetrable is a moat around the building.

There is considerable literature discussing the design of recreation and park facilities, particularly restrooms in parks. It seems as if restrooms are prone to attack by vandals. A variation of urban feudalism, the design and construction of park facilities has been significantly influenced by vandalism. The



**Figure 15.23 – Centennial Park** – Caption: A well lighted park helps with safety and security. – Source: author – [file:\Centennialpk025.jpg]



**Figure 15.24 – River Walk at Night** – Caption: A well lighted park helps provide safety, security, and participant comfort. Examination of the San Antonio River Walk reveals that the River Walk is well illuminated during the evening. – Source: author – [file:\SA284[vg]a.jpg]

following are some suggestions to consider in the design and construction of park facilities (Shroades 2006, and Grosvenor 1976)

- **Replace ceramic fixtures with stainless steel fixtures** – The initial cost is higher, but they pay for themselves over time because they are more durable.
- **Use touch-free and hands-off fixtures** – There are fewer moving parts. Their use prevents overflow.
- **Towel dispensers** – Towel dispensers have an average life span of two years. So choose dispensers that are cost efficient rather than the most durable. Flush-mounted dispensers seem to have longer life expectancies.
- **Consider installing surveillance cameras** – Consider installing surveillance cameras to determine who is entering and exiting the restrooms. Often the mere presence of the camera acts as a deterrent. The cameras should work. If dummy cameras are used, people will often feel betrayed.
- **Repair all vandalism and graffiti within 48 hours** – Vandalism begets vandalism. Consider it an urgent emergency. Make it a maintenance priority. Consider removing graffiti within 24 hours and repairs within 48 hours.
- **Use sensor plates rather than thermometer covers** – Vandals will simply knock the thermometer covers off the wall. In contrast, sensor plates are flush with the wall and more difficult to vandalize.
- **Remove interior wood paneling** – Interior wood paneling encourages carvings.
- **Use building materials that deter vandalism** – Consider using block walls or similar durable building materials. Paint and seal the walls and floors with two-part epoxy paint.
- **Eliminate windows and add skylights** – To bring light into restroom and bath facilities, consider building with skylights rather than windows. Windows are more prone to vandalism.
- **Choose well lit interiors** – Aesthetics affects vandalism. Lighter colored interiors that are well lit and constructed of durable materials seem to fare better with the public and deter vandalism.
- **Drinking fountains** – Consider using drinking fountains that are simple and ruggedly designed that are constructed from durable materials. Use maintenance free materials.

<b>*Maintenance*

– Maintenance complements the design and construction of facilities. Usually, maintenance is what the park manager does after the vandalism or act of depreciative behavior occurs to remove the effects of the act. Research shows that in terms of graffiti, graffiti tends to beget more graffiti, and the removal of graffiti tends to reduce the creation of additional graffiti. Regardless, it is a never ending battle for the maintenance crew within a park.

- **During the design and construction phases, consider maintenance** – Maintenance complements the design and construction phases. Poor design can lead to increased maintenance and increased operational costs. Most of the bulleted items in the previous section on design and construction have significant maintenance implications.
- **Repair all vandalism and graffiti within 48 hours** – This was noted in the previous section and is noted again here. Research shows that vandalism begets vandalism. Consider it an urgent emergency. Make it a maintenance priority. Consider removing graffiti within 24 hours and repairs within 48 hours.
- **Carry In, Carry Out** – Some developed campgrounds have gone trashless where visitors are expected to take their refuse with them.
- **Maintain maintenance and maintenance schedules** – Cutting back on maintenance and maintenance schedules can result in visitors inadvertently participating in vandalism. The trash

piled around the barrel in figure 15.25 is really a maintenance problem that resulted from not emptying the trash can in a timely manner. Where should visitors put their trash but next to the trash can.



**Figure 15.25 – Trash Overflow** – Caption: This trash pile is really a maintenance issue. If the park provides trash cans and the trash can becomes filled, people will tend to pile their trash next to the trash can. From the visitors’s perspective, this would seem to be a reasonable practice because this is where the trash is supposed to go. – Source: Author – [file:\SE213-Trash.jpg]

Often removing graffiti is an ongoing maintenance task that can become a highly specialized and costly endeavor. For example, the Tagaway® process is a specialized process that removes graffiti from brick, rock, and concrete surfaces (figure 15.26 and figure 15.27). It can be used on smooth and painted surfaces. It has an effective temperature range between 10-100°F. In addition, it is biodegradable and is not listed on the EPA hazardous air pollutant list or on the Clean Water act Pollutant list.

Sometimes graffiti cannot be removed and the most practical approach is to simply paint over the graffiti. An example of this was done on a stretch of the C&O National Historic Canal in Georgetown, near Washington, D.C. (figure 15.28)



**Figure 15.26 – Tagaway® Before** – Caption: Graffiti before being removed with Tagaway®. – Source: – Tagaway Website – [file:\TagawayBefore.jpg]



**Figure 15.27 – Tagaway® After** – Caption: The same sign after the Graffiti removal with Tagaway®. – Source: – Tagaway Website – [file:\TagawayAfter.jpg]



**Figure 15.28 – Paint Over Method** – Caption: Example of vandalism to an interpretive sign. – Source: – C&O National Historic Canal – [file:\C&Ocanal02.jpg]



<b>**Law Enforcement**

– Consider the principle of “*education triage*.” Triage is a WWI medical term where casualties were divided into one of three groups based on the prospect of surviving their wounds. The first group of visitors knows what they are doing and behave appropriately. For them the interpretive or educational message reinforces what they are already doing. The second group includes visitors who aren’t doing the correct behavior but if provided with the proper information will behave appropriately. For them an interpretive or educational message usually works well. The third group of visitors aren’t doing the correct behavior and they have no intention of changing their behavior either. For them an interpretive or educational message is usually ineffective. From a management perspective, they need law enforcement. If interpretation and education are the *carrot*, law enforcement is the *stick*.

Some people simply need law enforcement to help them comply with the rules and regulations or to remove them from the park or facility if they don’t. The San Antonio River Walk example later in this section illustrates this point. However, law enforcement provides other important functions. It creates a “*presence*” which is important for the safety and security of many visitors. When they are integrated into the park setting, they provide interpretation and answer questions about directions and the location of restrooms. These are important functions for visitors. A summary of some of these benefits is provided below.

- **Law enforcement needs to have a presence** – To be effective, police and security need to be visible and have a presence in the park. It is the concept of the policeman on the beat. Consider using alternative methods of transportation such as bikes moped, or Segways®. These vehicles help to extend the reach of the police (figure 15.29). Also, they tend to integrate law enforcement with the visitors more than police cruisers do.
- **Alternative motive methods can extend the reach of the police** – Using alternative methods of transportation can provide several advantages in parks. They don’t need an eight-foot wide right-of-way and they can travel the same places where the people can travel on trails. They can extend the effective range of security of law enforcement. The range of a bicyclist or officer on a moped is considerably greater than an officer walking the beat. If connection with automobile patrols is needed, normal radio communications can provide this connection.
- **Law enforcement are interpreters also** – When law enforcement is removed from automobiles, they mix better with the public. They answer questions and give directions. The NPS ranger on the moped is mixing with the public (figure 15.28). A benefit of this is that their presence makes visitors feel safer and more secure.



**Figure 15.29 – Moped on Patrol** – Caption: National Park Service ranger uses a moped to help patrol the C&O Canal towpath. Its use greatly expands the patrolling capability of the NPS ranger. In an interpretive role, the ranger can chat with visitors and answer their questions also. Monocacy Aqueduct, Maryland. – Source: Author – [file:\Monocracy001.jpg]

- **Indirect surveillance has its place** – Indirect surveillance (e.g. cameras, alarms, motion sensors, etc.) can complement the physical presence of police and security. However, don't expect indirect surveillance to solve issues of creating a "presence" such as the situation depicted on the River Walk.

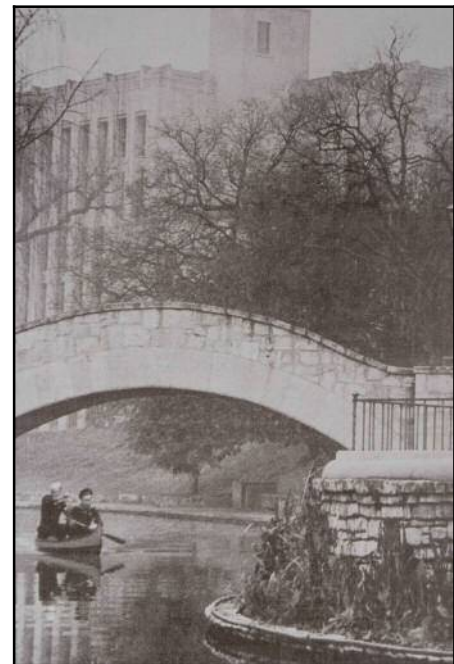
Law enforcement works in concert with the other approaches and it can be the critical link in the success of a park or facility. Illustrating the importance of law enforcement and supervision in the parks, the San Antonio River Walk during the 1940s and 1950s fell into disuse, in part, because it lacked any security for visitors (figure 15.30). Although part of the problem resulted from a design issue, a major part of the issue was one of law enforcement. From a design perspective, the River Walk is located below street level of the city. This makes the River Walk isolated. Without proper security and law enforcement, the area is inherently prone to vandalism and security issues.

From a security perspective, the River Walk was so unsafe during this period that it was considered off limits to the nearby military bases. The City solved the problem by organizing a volunteer effort utilizing retired policemen who patrolled the River Walk to help create a safe environment. The result was that with the addition of retired policemen, the public returned to the River Walk.

The River Walk situation is depicted in the carrying capacity model in chapter 10 for a city sidewalk (see figure 10.xx). When there are very few people on the sidewalk, there is slight dissatisfaction. If no one else is on the River Walk, people will feel like they may be accosted and they will feel less secure. As more people use the River Walk, there is safety in numbers and people will increasingly feel safe, if only because there are more people there. This is reflected in slightly satisfying experience. If the walk becomes too crowded people can't move easily and they will again become dissatisfied.

<b>*Education and Interpretation* – In terms of “*educational triage*,” there are two categories for which education and interpretation are most effective. The first is where the visitors behave appropriately and simply need information to assist them in their experience. An educational message reinforces their behavior. The second group is visitors who are not behaving correctly, but would do so if provided with the appropriate information. Much of the erosive vandalism is really behavior belonging to this second category of education triage. From a management perspective, education and interpretation is a good approach to changing visitors whose behavior in this category. Also, it should be noted that historically outdoor practices and philosophies change, and the public needs to be brought up to date with these changes. And, there is always law enforcement for the third category, if needed.

As noted, educative and interpretative efforts work well to counteract erosive vandalism. A general proposition is that most visitors want to do what is right and if they are informed that their behavior is harming the resource, they will attempt to change their behavior to help protect the resource. For this



**Figure 15.30 – Off limits** – Caption: During the 1940s and 1950s, the River Walk in San Antonio was so unsafe that it was declared off limits to the nearby military bases. Volunteer retired policemen were organized to police the area and people returned to the park. – Source: Zunker, V., (1994) – [file:\002canoe.jpg]

group, education and interpretation can be very effective. For those who don't want to change their behavior, law enforcement can complement the educative efforts to help change behavior.

In terms of erosive vandalism, perhaps one of the most successful educative campaigns to change user behavior has been the Leave No Trace movement (figure 15.31). The Leave No Trace ethic resulted from a series of initiatives developed by the Forest Service beginning in the 1960s in response to carrying capacity and sound management practices. One of the recommended practices, "Carry In, Carry Out" went against the grain of the common practices at the time. The normal practice was to bury the trash. To carry out what a camper carried in required the carrying of the extra weight and volume of the trash. And it was not the common practice. The movement changed the camping culture from one of burying trash to one of carrying it out. It was a success story of how an education campaign changed people's behavior.



**Figure 15.31 – Don't Feed the Animals** – Caption: Raccoons and other scavengers are always on the lookout for food. Part of the Leave No Trace ethic is to protect your food and water from their nightly pilgrimages. Everglades National Park, Florida. – Source: Author – [file:EV07\_323.jpg]

The carry in, carry out philosophy has had several interesting spinoffs. When trash cans are provided, people will use them. When the trash can becomes full, they will often stack their debris next to the trash can (see figure 15.24). If the trash is collected animals will break into the bags or they will be knocked over. Several parks have extended the backpacking philosophy of carry in, carry out to more developed campgrounds and outdoor facilities. There are no trash cans. The costs of trash collection within the park is significantly reduced. Philosophically, it does nothing to reduce refuse since it merely transfers the refuse from one landfill to another. However, it does lower costs to the park.

<c>**Point of Entry Interpretive Signs** – Point of entry interpretive signs are interpretive signs that provide users entering the resource educational information to provide them with a safe and enjoyable experience. Interpretive signs are useful in educating visitors to changing behaviors regarding vandalism and depreciative behaviors. For example, a park implementing a carry-in, carry-out philosophy would find point of entry interpretive signs useful.

There are two conceptual components to point of entry interpretive signs. The first is that it is interpretive. It presents a message. It is informative, and it is educational. Normally, it does so in a non-threatening manner. At the put-in on the Middle Youghiogeny River, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission placed several signs placed several sign including the interpretive sign in Figure 15.32. The purpose of the sign is to present to canoeists, kayakers, and rafters with the proper attire, equipment and practices that they should consider on their pending river trip. It is educational without being prescriptive. However, it suggests the common practices of boaters on the river. Boats can compare and contrast their attire and equipment with what is recommended on the sign.

Second, the sign in Figure 15.32 is a sign at the point of entry to the experience. This means that the message is delivered to the user at the point of entry into the river. When taken by itself, the problem

**Figure 15.32: Point of Entry Interpretive Signs** – A point of entry sign is the last chance of providing visitors with information before embarking on their experience. Confluence, Pennsylvania. Source: Author – [file:\rmct-sign02b.jpg]

with this sign is that it is more useful in educating users for their next river trip. Few people will abort their trip for the day based on the interpretive contents of sign. Regardless, the interpretive sign is still important because it is at the point of entry and it is the last chance to convey any important messaging. For this reason, it should be one tool in a mix of messages provided to users prior to their experience.

## Summary

This chapter introduces the impact of vandalism and depreciative behaviors on designing space. Types of vandalism include acquisitive, tactical, vindictive, malicious, and erosive vandalism. Approaches to deal with vandalism and depreciative behaviors were also provided including design and construction, maintenance, law enforcement, and education and interpretation. In general, vandalism and depreciative behavior was considered a negative impact on the experience approaches were suggested on how to avoid or minimize its impact. It is important to address vandalism and depreciative behaviors in all phases of the park and recreation facilities. Proper design and construction impacts maintenance. Proper design can reduce the need for law enforcement efforts and poor design can result in the need for more law enforcement efforts. It is important to approach these problems and issues early in the design process.

However, the chapter presents a counter opinion regarding vandalism also. Morrissey (1976) suggests that people who are constrained in civilized society are seeking opportunities to express themselves and leave their mark. This has been and is still a common theme in why people go outdoors. It is through their recreational experiences including some forms of vandalism that they are able to express themselves. Morrissey (1976) goes one step further. He raises the question regarding whose experience is the park experience anyway. Is the park designer’s experience, or is it the visitors? With this counter point or “tease,” the discussion returns to the thesis of this book: designing the experience.

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