

# Police making effort to cleanup South Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Taking possession of a rundown house in the city limits may provide funding to better enhance the look of areas throughout South Lake Tahoe.

That is the goal of Police Chief Brian Uhler.

Code enforcement and graffiti eradication in large part fall under his department's purview. But time and money are limited. And the problems keep increasing.



An open dumpster and one with graffiti on it sits outside the Forest Manor apartments in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/LTN

A surge in graffiti is typical this time of year. Those who tag don't like being in the snow and cold. They seem to hibernate a bit in the winter.

Uhler says much of what is showing up on buildings and other

locations is not gang related. An area on Ski Run Boulevard and Pioneer Trail was hit a few weeks ago that resulted in the arrest of two teenagers and four others who may be behind bars soon, he said.

"F- the cops" has been seen on both ends of town – near the would-be convention center and on the might-be TJ Maxx.

"We have someone who has some dislike for us," Uhler said of those tags. "Someone out there feels the need to express that."

Profanity gets covered up the quickest.

But what Uhler hopes to do is take the property on Chris Drive that the owner gave to the city, sell it and use the money to hire a full-time code enforcement officer who would be driving a vehicle bought with the property proceeds that is fully equipped to abate graffiti.

A few things need to happen first.

Firefighters plan to use the structure to train on after asbestos and any other hazards are removed. Then the debris will be hauled away and the lot put on the market.

Plus, the council needs to approve of how the money would be spent.

At one time city officials talked about turning this lot into a pocket park, but upon further discussion it was deemed not to be the best location for open space and would be more beneficial to the city to sell it – which also means getting property taxes.

A part-time code enforcement officer is in the process of being hired, with the idea that person's work will pay for his job. The same would be true if Uhler is able to convince higher ups to hire a full time enforcer.

Uhler wants to take each of the five councilmembers on a tour of the city so they see firsthand what officers see. Then he wants consensus on what they want done.

The city has ordinances on the books about signs, trash, graffiti and other items that would fall under code enforcement, but the council recently has been a bit wishy-washy and tends to side with people who appeal the decisions made by staff.

“There are interpretations as they relate to aesthetics, but trash and debris piled up and loose are clearly violations of our ordinance,” Uhler said. “We will go after general piles of trash, junk, boxes. There are things piled up in places all along the Highway 50 corridor. Then we’ll go into neighborhoods. Our effort is to make our town more closely be aligned with the beauty of our natural environment.”