

CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT

2006 MAY 11 PM 6:24

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Deborah Edgerly
FROM: Oakland Police Department
DATE: May 23, 2006

RE: **A Report from the Chief of Police on Emergency Prevention and Intervention Strategies and Actions to Address the Current Increase in Crime Particularly Related to Armed Robberies and Vandalism Caused by Youth**

SUMMARY

This is an informational report that provides an overview of the Oakland Police Department's efforts to address the current increase in robberies and vandalism caused by juvenile offenders. To effectively address this problem, the efforts of several enforcement and investigative units have been drawn together and include: Strategic Area Command officers, Campus Life and School Safety Unit (CLASS), and the Oakland Park Rangers Unit.

FISCAL IMPACT

Robbery and Vandalism Reduction Strategy projects shall be accomplished within the Department's current FY 2005/07 budget. The Department does not anticipate any additional O&M costs associated with these actions.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several months, robberies have increased dramatically; particularly in Police Service Areas (PSA) I, III, and IV. Overall, incidences of robberies in the City have increased approximately 58% compared to the same time period in 2005. There were a total of 34 juvenile offenders arrested for robbery during the first quarter of this year, compared to 15 during the same time period in 2005. Six juvenile offenders were arrested for vandalism during the first quarter this year, compared to eight arrested during the same time period in 2005.

The Department is concerned about the recent surge in robberies, and juvenile crime as a whole. In an effort to reverse the trend, the Department is concentrating its efforts and resources on developing pro-active solutions.

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KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

There are three factors that make a robbery possible. These factors are common to most crimes and are often referred to as the crime triangle: suspect, location, and victim.

The three primary areas that must be targeted in order to address the robbery problem and break the crime triangle are:

- **Education**

The Department currently uses Yahoo internet groups throughout the City to update the community on crime trends and suspect information. Composites and/or pictures of suspects are also disseminated over the web sites. At community meetings, Problem Solving Officers and Neighborhood Services Coordinators teach community members and business owners how to become *victim hardened* (i.e., be educated on how to prevent becoming a victim of crime). Community members are given updates on crime trends occurring in their areas, and information on how to become the *eyes* of public safety. Community members are urged to become more involved in their neighborhoods and learn to be more vigilant when they travel. The Department also provides crime prevention brochures to the public.

- **Environment**

Officers, citizens and members of the business community must pay particular attention to their surroundings, and monitor overgrown trees and shrubbery, insufficient lighting, blighted properties, and open air drug markets. When street lights are out, or a tree is overgrown, it must be reported immediately to the appropriate agency. Community members must call the drug hotline to report narcotics activity in their area. The same is true for reporting prostitution or any other quality of life issues. Problem Solving Officers work with other City agencies through their Service Delivery Systems to expedite repairs and maintenance on issues such as trees and lighting.

- **Enforcement**

PSA commanders review crime statistics and the Police Department daily log to identify robbery trends and make decisions on staff deployment and operations accordingly. PSA commanders also communicate with citizens and local businesses for additional input, and recognize that robbery target areas are usually close to a drug hot spot. As a result, commanders closely monitor the drug hot line calls as a source of information.

The majority of apprehended suspects are either on probation or parole, and have prior arrests for drugs and/or theft offences. Recently, the age of the suspects committing

crimes has centered on teenagers between 14 and 18 years of age. Additionally, there is a growing trend in the use of the drug known as ecstasy. It has been the Department's experience that a majority of the young adults and teens committing robberies are under the influence of ecstasy. As a result, in March 2006, Strategic Area Command officers received training on how to identify people under the influence of ecstasy and other restricted narcotics.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Strategic Area Command

The Strategic Area Command (SAC) consists of the following six units:

Crime Reduction Teams (CRT)
Problem Solving Officers (PSO)
Traffic Enforcement Unit
Special Events Unit
Tactical Operations Section
Alcohol Beverage Action Team (ABAT)

The SAC Division is primarily responsible for responding to emerging crime trends, such as robberies and vandalism throughout the City.

The following operations are used by Strategic Area Command personnel to deter robberies:

- Saturation of known robbery target areas is an essential deterrent. Marked police cars patrolling these areas are a huge deterrent to suspects entertaining the thought of committing a robbery. Officers walking the target areas are also a strong deterrent.
- PSA commanders use grant-funded overtime to deploy additional officers in areas where crime trends have been identified in certain specific cases.
- Police decoy or *sting* operations have been used to apprehend particularly active suspects.
- Partnerships have been established with allied law enforcement agencies, such as BART Police, California Highway Patrol, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, to work with the Department on both educational and enforcement operations.
- Surveillance cameras are now being activated in a number of business areas including Chinatown and East Oakland. Private security companies are also communicating and working with the Oakland Police Department in target areas.

When robbery suspects are arrested, Criminal Investigation Division (CID) investigators respond to the scene to gain intelligence and determine the suspect's possible involvement in other crimes, as well as their association with other suspects. Problem Solving Officers frequently communicate with CID investigators to assist in locating witnesses and suspects.

Campus Life and School Safety Unit

The Campus Life and School Safety Unit (CLASS) is staffed with one lieutenant, one sergeant, and nine officers. They are primarily responsible for the enforcement and investigation of all crimes in and around the City's public schools. As time permits, CLASS officers, aided by the Truancy Enforcement Plan, pick up truant youth throughout Oakland to:

1. Increase student enrollment within the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)
2. Reduce instances of adverse social behavior associated with skipping school, including the commission of robbery and, acts of vandalism.

From February through April of this year, **577** truants have been taken to the Oakland Truancy center.

In addition, officers refer first time youth offenders to the Donald P. McCullum Youth Court (MYC), which is designed to change young lives through collaborative peer justice. MYC was founded over ten years ago by a group of judges, district attorneys, and educators, and is designed to interrupt intergenerational cycles of crime and incarceration. MYC addresses all juvenile issues except those related to drugs, and is operated by peers. According to the MYC, less than 18% of youth who participated in MYC within the last four years have re-offended.

The CLASS Unit also oversees the Gang Resistance and Education (G.R.E.A.T.) program, which is in place at Cole Middle School and Hoover Elementary School. The program promotes gang resistance and teaches juveniles how to make positive choices.

Oakland Park Rangers Unit

The Oakland Park Rangers Unit is responsible for patrolling the City's 142 parks from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 a.m., seven days per week. This unit is comprised of one sergeant and five rangers. In addition to routine patrol of the parks, this unit conducts quality of life projects which enlist a multi-agency response to solve problems. Rangers work closely with the City's Public Works Agency to correct maintenance issues observed during their patrols. These issues include, but are not limited to blight, graffiti and homeless encampments. Park Rangers also work closely with Parks and Recreation staff to identify crimes or crime trends existing in the parks. They evaluate environmental designs in the parks and other facilities to ensure the design is not contributing to a crime trend. In addition, they work closely with PSA Commanders to target areas of high criminal activities within parks and the surrounding areas. Additionally, the Rangers Unit has 12 volunteers who patrol Oakland parks and report criminal activity.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic

Proactive crime prevention activities will enhance the City's efforts to reduce crime and provide a climate in which economic development can flourish.

Environmental

There are no environmental opportunities associated with this report.

Social Equity

The enforcement actions taken by the Department are designed to respond to the upswing in robberies and vandalism by juvenile offenders. This specific crime reduction strategy will help identify and remove juvenile criminal offenders and increase public safety. The education actions should help young people make wiser choices in avoiding anti-social or criminal behavior.


DISABILITY AND SENIOR CITIZEN ACCESS

There are no American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or senior access issues contained in this report.


RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends acceptance of this report.

Respectfully submitted,


Wayne G. Tucker
Chief of Police

APPROVED FOR FORWARDED
TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE


Office of the City Administrator

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