




Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR
December 12, 2006

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From:  Phil Kamlarz, City Manager

Submitted by: Douglas N. Hambleton, Chief of Police

Subject: Quarterly Report: Crime in Berkeley

INTRODUCTION

The City Council has directed the City Manager to provide quarterly reports on crime in Berkeley and the goal of reducing property crime by ten percent each year. The report will also provide information on the increased police presence and enforcement in the Telegraph Avenue area.

DISCUSSION

Most law enforcement agencies in the United States report their crime statistics to the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation using standardized reporting methods that were developed in the 1930s. The Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook breaks crime events down into consistent measures that can be used to compare crime statistics from year to year and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The statistics that are used for comparisons are listed as Part I Crimes. These are sometimes listed separately as Part I Violent Crimes: Homicide, Rape, Robbery, Aggravated Assault and Part I Property Crimes: Burglary, Theft, Auto Theft and Arson.

Crime Statistics

The overall crime rate has been declining in Berkeley over the past several years. This was a trend that had been consistent throughout the Bay Area. A new and disturbing trend this year has been the increase in violent crime. Based on informal contacts with other local agencies it appears that crime, particularly violent crime, has increased in nearby cities during 2006. Some nearby cities are experiencing significant increases in homicides, robberies and aggravated assaults. Accurate statistics regarding recent trends in other cities will not be available from the Department of Justice for some time. This local trend is consistent with reports from the FBI that show increases in violent crime in many parts of the country.

As reported in the last quarterly report, the Part I crime rate in Berkeley had remained fairly constant for the first half of 2006 compared to the first half of 2005. Since then the crime patterns have been changing. During the third quarter violent crimes, particularly robberies and aggravated assaults have increased while property crimes have decreased. The decline in

property crimes is a good sign; however, considering the stable crime rate for the first half of the year it is too early to determine if this is a continuation of the crime reduction trend that we have seen over the past few years. Through the end of September 2006 there had been an increase of 59 Part I violent crimes, primarily due to robberies and aggravated assaults compared to 2005.

There have been 27 more robberies for the first nine months of the year compared to the same period in 2005. The increase is disturbing and the police are vigorously investigating these cases. Robbery investigations are a priority and there have been several recent arrests of individuals who have committed multiple robberies.

There was an increase of 28 aggravated assaults, which were mostly due to random assaults with paintball guns. These assaults occurred during the summer months and involved youth driving around town and shooting paintballs at pedestrians or other motorists. The paintball attacks usually resulted in a small bruise or welt on the skin. These crimes are classified as aggravated assaults because there is a potential of more serious injury, thankfully there have not been any serious injuries in any of our cases.

The Part I Crimes for the first nine months of 2004, 2005 and 2006 are shown below.

PART I CRIMES REPORTED

Crime Category	2004 (Jan-Sep)	2005 (Jan-Sep)	2006 (Jan-Sep)	Change 2005 to 2004	Change 2006 to 2005	Change 2004 to 2006
Homicide	4	2	4			
Rape	14	15	17			
Robbery	270	256	283			
Agg. Assault	111	128	156			
Total Violent Crime	399	401	460	+0.5%	+14.7%	+15.3%
Burglary	1032	945	834			
Theft	4719	4184	3979			
Auto Theft	1005	970	873			
Arson	32	26	26			
Total Property Crime	6788	6125	5712	-9.7%	-6.7%	-15.8%
Total Part 1 Crime	7187	6526	6172	-9.2%	-5.4%	-14.1%

Crime Reduction Strategies

There are many social causes of crime and the police regularly work in collaboration with other City Departments and local service providers to address crime problems. Social conditions such as the state of the economy, poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, availability of youth programs, educational opportunities, and employment opportunities, particularly youth jobs are some of the factors that impact crime rates. Demographics are another factor that affects crime since many crimes are committed by those between the ages of 14 and 24, sometimes referred to as the crime prone years. These same factors in neighboring communities impact our crime rate since criminals travel throughout the region and many of those arrested in Berkeley reside elsewhere. As noted in the last quarterly report, close to 50% of those arrested for Part I crimes reside outside Berkeley. The ability to impact these people's criminal behavior through Berkeley social services is limited.

Use of Existing Resources

Other than the \$100,000 that Council approved for policing Telegraph Avenue there are no new resources available for Berkeley's crime reduction effort. The Police Department has not made substantial shifts of staff from existing enforcement programs. In particular, narcotic enforcement by the Special Enforcement Unit (SEU) has been effective at combating street level drug dealing and the related violence and disorder that is associated with illegal drug trafficking. The priorities of the SEU will remain on drug enforcement. To the extent that property crimes are related to drug use, the SEU has been tasked with narcotic enforcement in areas that have high property crime rates.

Officers from Patrol, Bikes, Detectives, Community Services and other units have been asked to be more proactive in addressing property crimes utilizing traditional law enforcement techniques as well as non-traditional means. For example, on October 12, 13 & 14, 2006, Berkeley officers from the traffic unit coordinated a drug influence enforcement program with officers from several other agencies including the University Police. Over the three day period twenty-five individuals were arrested for being under the influence of narcotics, a misdemeanor violation of section 11550 of the Health and Safety Code. Eleven of these arrests were in the Telegraph Avenue area. The police are following these cases in the courts to determine the results of the arrests. One of the goals of the operation was to get drug users off the streets and into court ordered treatment programs. Since drug users often support their habits by committing property crimes, the hope is that this type of program will have an impact on crime.

The police are now using more crime analysis and crime maps to target high crime locations and identify crime patterns. Officers are also receiving regular e-mail bulletins listing suspects and showing photos of those involved in crimes. The increased internal communications have resulted in many arrests.

Public Education and Prevention Strategies

The Community Crime View program has been on the police website since late February. Staff feels this is a good tool that community members can use to increase their awareness of crime in their neighborhoods.

The Department has purchased steering wheel locks as part of their auto theft prevention efforts. Many locks were given away to Berkeley residents during National Night Out, August 1, 2006. Another 250 have been given away to those who registered with the Community Services Bureau. Additional locks are available and the give-away program will continue.

Property crimes are more concentrated in the south campus area and in past years crime has been highest in August and September when students return to the University. Both the Berkeley and University Police made efforts this year to get out the crime prevention message in the student community. They are also working on expanding neighborhood watch programs among student living groups and the ASUC is also involved in this effort.

Telegraph Avenue

The Berkeley and University Police Departments have been working together for many years to provide joint patrols on Telegraph Avenue. For the past few years each department has assigned two officers who work in pairs providing late morning to early evening coverage seven days per week. The University Police have an additional five officers and a sergeant assigned to full-time patrols in the South Campus.

In July Council approved \$100,000 for police overtime to address conditions in the Telegraph Avenue commercial district. Half of the money was used to fund undercover narcotics enforcement. The Special Enforcement Unit (SEU) has been conducting undercover operations in the area resulting in over thirty-five arrests for narcotics possession and sales, including one high volume crack cocaine dealer. These undercover operations have confirmed reports from the community that much of the illegal trafficking is associated with People's Park. The SEU will continue working the South Campus as part of their routine operations; however, the police will not be able to maintain the higher level of attention that was possible while utilizing the overtime.

The other half of the money was used to fund thirty hours of additional foot patrols each week. Two officers were assigned to the area for five hours on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. These patrols have been discontinued until after the first of the year. At that time the rest of the available funds will be used to continue the patrols for another month. During the holiday season Telegraph Avenue will be receiving over 80 hours of additional foot patrols each week. These holiday patrols are scheduled every year in many of our business districts, funded by the regular police overtime budget.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

If the current trend continues it may be possible to achieve the goal of a 10% reduction in property crimes for 2006. The ability to achieve this goal may be limited in the long-term by available police staffing and overtime for special details such as the recent south campus enforcement as well as other City resources needed to address the social causes of crime. Due to the cuts in available grant funding and other City budget cuts, the Police Department has reduced staffing from 203 sworn positions in FY-2001 to 186 positions in FY-2007. Other City Departments have had even more significant budget reductions. These reductions may impact the City's ability to respond to the social conditions that result in crime.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

This report does not have any specific funding proposals; however, there could be significant costs depending on the types of future programs that might be considered.

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