



Internal

BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLÍN
DISTRICT 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
Nov. 30, 2021

Public Safety Committee

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Taplin, ~~Councilmember Wengraf (co-sponsor)~~

Subject: Community Policing: Flex Team for Problem-Oriented Policing Under the Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA) Model and Other Applicable Community Engagement Models

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager the establishment of a Flexible Team for Problem-Oriented Policing in the Berkeley Police Department, following the SARA model and other applicable community engagement models, including Berkeley Ceasefire.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Establishing a Flexible Team for Problem-Oriented Policing is a Strategic Plan Priority Project, advancing our goal to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city.

By November 31, 2021, there were 47 confirmed reports of gunfire in Berkeley, with 19 solved cases. By the same time in 2020, there had been 37 confirmed gunfire reports with 23 solved cases. This represents a 22% Year-To-Date decline in the clearance rate for gun-related criminal investigations, from 62% in 2020 to 40% in 2021.

According to the City's 2020/First Half of 2021 Crime Report, there were:

- 40 confirmed shooting incidents in 2020 versus 28 in 2019.
- 38 confirmed shooting incidents in the first nine months of 2021 versus 26 incidents in the same timeframe in 2020.
- Auto Thefts increased 64% from 492 cases in 2019 to 805 in 2020. Auto Thefts increased 52% from 339 cases in 2020 to 514 during the same timeframe in 2021.
- Aggravated Assaults increased 20% in 2020, with 210 reports, compared to 175 in 2019. Aggravated Assaults decreased 13% in 2021, with 96 reports, compared to 111 in the same timeframe in 2020.
- Burglaries increased by 3% in 2020, with 797 reports as compared to 771 reports in 2019. Residential burglaries increased by 8% while commercial burglaries decreased by 7%.

While Part One Violent Crime decreased by 13% (81 crimes) and Part One Property Crimes decreased by 11% (738 crimes), the aforementioned categories of crimes saw marked increases.¹ Despite these trends, 87% of all reported uses of force in 2021 resulted in neither injury nor complaint of pain. From October 2020 to September 2021, searches conducted by BPD saw a 44.23% yield rate, recovering 135 weapons and 31 firearms.

According to the Berkeley Police Department, Berkeley had 34 accidental deaths in 2020, of which 10 were from fentanyl (29.4%) whereas in Alameda County there were 732 accidental deaths, of which 138 were from fentanyl (18.8%). These deaths do not include poly drug incidents where fentanyl was present with other drugs.

In October 2021, the Berkeley Police Department had 149 officers on the roster, not including officers out due to injury or other types of leave. This is a lower level than in 2017-2018, when the department experienced a “staffing crisis.”² In 2017, the Department was forced to disband its Special Enforcement Unit (known elsewhere as a Crime Suppression Unit) due to insufficient staffing.

In response to an increase in gun violence and certain categories of property crimes, the Berkeley City Council voted unanimously in June 2021 to fund a Bike Patrol for South and West Berkeley in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. In November 2021, the City Council voted unanimously to fund the establishment of a Berkeley Ceasefire program in the Annual Appropriations Ordinance (AAO #1). The SARA model can be used to supplement bike patrols and a future Ceasefire program with long-term investigations, flexible interventions, and community engagement to solve serious crimes and improve community relations.

BACKGROUND

According to a quasi-experimental study in Boston conducted by Cook et al (2019), the higher clearance rate for gun homicides (43%) relative to nonfatal shootings (19%) was “primarily a result of sustained investigative effort in homicide cases made after the first 2 days.”³ This suggests that long-term investigations can improve the clearance rate for solving violent crimes.

Contemporary proposals for police reform include best practices for law enforcement officers focused on solving crimes. The National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR)’s New and Emerging Models of Community Safety and Policing Report, submitted to the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force,⁴ includes the following

¹ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2021/10_Oct/Documents/2021-10-19_Item_01_BPD_Annual_Report_pdf.aspx

² Raguso, E. (2021, Oct. 20). Officials vow to increase police staffing, with available officers at historic low. *Berkeleyside*. Retrieved Nov. 1, 2021 from <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2021/10/20/berkeley-police-staffing-increase-city-council-crime-report>.

³ Cook, P. J., Braga, A. A., Turchan, B. S., & Barao, L. M. (2019). Why do gun murders have a higher clearance rate than gunshot assaults?. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 18(3), 525-551.

⁴ <https://berkeley-rps.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/New-and-Emerging-Report-10.29.21-FNL-2.0.pdf>

description of the SARA model for Problem Oriented Policing (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment):

The Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA) model was created in Virginia in 1987 to facilitate the problem-oriented policing procedure. The cornerstone of this model is a priority on outcomes; the model outlines four steps that are necessary for a proper police response to problems within their jurisdictions. To ensure proper implementation, a significant facet of this method is that officers must be ready to build trust between the community and the police department through the establishment of interpersonal relationships.

Scanning. This step consists of pinpointing and then triaging repeated issues that necessitate a response from the police department. Frequent problems that occur in the community are given priority. Relevant outcomes of the problem are matched to their corresponding cause. For example, examining which properties in a given area have the highest number of calls for service in a year or given time period is an important initial step in the SARA model.

Analysis. Here, law enforcement officers examine the root causes of the issue, community sentiment regarding the problem, and gather needed contextual data. This step also involves assessing the status quo response to the problem and identifying the shortcomings of that strategy. Ultimately, the cause of the problem and potential solutions are determined during this phase.

Response. Officers utilize collected data to ascertain potential intervention strategies. When determining strategies, a thorough review of implemented interventions in different areas with comparable issues is critical. Once a strategy is selected, clear goals must also be established. Execution of the chosen plan is the last part of this step.

Assess. After a plan is implemented and officers have attempted to address a problem, the police department must analyze the efficacy of their strategy. Continued evaluation of the intervention is necessary to guarantee lasting success. Alternatives or additions to the strategy are considered as well.

Many police departments have incorporated the SARA model into their interventions. In San Diego, the police department reported that a trolley station was the location of gang fights, violent crimes, and narcotic activity. A squad of officers collected information to show the local transit board that the design of the station contributed to crime. Based on the information provided by the officers, the transit board agreed to provide funds to redesign the station.

The Berkeley Police Department has a long history of targeting high-level crimes with a Special Investigations Bureau (SIB) and Special Enforcement Unit (SEU). The Special Investigations Bureau dates back to the early 1960s, when the unit was only staffed with 2 officers. The operations and community partnerships mission and goals of the Special Investigations Bureau ~~has~~ evolved over the years in response to local concerns and regional trends. At its peak in 1989, the SEU was staffed with 25 officers, including a Drug Task Force (DTF). The DTF was disbanded in 2016.

In the 1960s, the Special Investigations Bureau was responsible for coordinating investigations into gambling, prostitution, alcoholic beverage, and narcotic offenses that were prevalent in the community in that era. In 1968, the BPD Special Investigations Bureau logged over 2,000 narcotics arrests. This was a year that saw collaboration with the State Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement (Formerly known as Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, which disbanded in 2012), and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drug Control (the predecessor agency to the Drug Enforcement Agency).

In the 1970s, the Special Investigations Bureau quantified their successes by the street value of narcotics seized. In the early 70's nearly every year the Bureau would seize roughly a million dollars in illicit narcotics. In 1983, Annual Crime Reports begin to highlight the growing presence of open-air drug markets with individuals congregated on street corners selling narcotics. In 1987 the Annual Report mentions the rapid increase in the use and sales of crack cocaine, most notably in South and West Berkeley. In April of 1987, the Berkeley Police Department's Drug Task Force (DTF) was created. During this time, nearly all of the actions taken by DTF were based on calls from citizens. The Special Investigations Bureau augmented DTF by serving over 110 search warrants. In 1989, the department completed a reorganization, which now included the Special Enforcement Unit, which contained a SEU commander, Special Investigations Bureau which had a Sergeant and six detectives, a Narcotics Admin Unit which contained an Inspector (supervisor) and two detectives, and two DTF teams, both containing a Sergeant and six officers. This unit was fully staffed with 25 Berkeley Police Officers.

In the early 1990s, the SEU began to focus on drug "hot spots" wherein their approach was more narrowly focused. The Unit also now moved more towards a community-based response with the creation of the Citizens Against Rock Sales (C.A.R.S) which was a successful partnership with community members seeking an improved quality of life. In 1993 SEU members partnered with Community and Merchant Associations to help take back their communities, this included cleaning up the streets, and graffiti abatement. This effort helped mobilize and unify the community and police efforts to confront these challenging times.

In the 2000s, the Special Investigations Bureau (SIB) detectives began relying on confidential reliable informants to further narcotic investigations. By 2001, the SEU was staffed with one Lieutenant, one administrative Sergeant, three field Sergeants, and nine officers for a total of 14 BPD Officers, down from the 25 officers in 1989.

After 2010, the SEU further reduced staffing to a Lieutenant, one officer in Narcotics Admin, SIB Sergeant and three detectives, DTF Sergeant, and four officers for a total of 11 officers. During the next seven years, the SIB would continue to target the drug dealers, and work to disrupt the supply of narcotics that were feeding Berkeley drug users. However, detectives quickly adapted to the reality that drug dealers would often be involved in other crimes that would further exploit unsuspecting victims, often in various types of fraud. By 2015, the DTF only had one Sergeant and two officers, and the narcotics admin was staffed with one officer. Eventually the DTF was disbanded in 2016. In 2017 the last SIB Sergeant and two detectives were loaned to robbery,

[~~Flex Team Crime Suppression Unit~~]

property crimes, and sex crimes as SIB was completely disbanded. After this, the entire SEU was no longer in existence.

The Berkeley Police Department currently does not have staffing resources to conduct special investigations to address violent crime and drug trafficking as it did before, despite shootings and drug overdoses rising. By using problem-oriented policing models in NICJR's New and Emerging Models of Community Safety and Policing Report, including the SARA model and a Ceasefire program, the City of Berkeley can increase its capacity to address violent crime with compassionate and data-driven best practices that are responsive to the manifold needs of a diverse community in the 21st Century.

Pursuant to Article VII Section 28(c) of the Charter of the City of Berkeley, the City Manager has the authority to establish a Flex Team for Problem-Oriented Policing~~Special Enforcement or Crime Suppression Unit~~ in the Berkeley Police Department.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

None.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments:

1: Annual Reports from Berkeley Police Department

Internal