

Crime climbs, arrests fall in Tenderloin

Police Commission hears stories of how cops, community cooperate

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less than the 5,149 in 2004. Only adjacent Southern police district, which contains SoMa, had more arrests, yet the Tenderloin is 1% the size of Southern and has 5,200 fewer people.

Just about all her year-end TL crime statistics are related to drugs, she said. In introducing her report, Brown's word choice drew an unexpected laugh — albeit a dark one — when she said, "Narcotics is the most prevalent crime in the Tenderloin — and drug activity continues here with such enthusiasm."

DEALERS COMMUTE TO TENDERLOIN

Tenderloin is known around the Bay Area as drug trafficking turf, Brown said. It attracts an increasing raft of "commuter" dealers from Oakland and Richmond. She cited the hot spots: Market Street, U.N. Plaza, and most Lower Eddy street corners.

Dealers commute to TL because the consequences of arrest "are minimal here," Brown said, a point that has been a consistent theme at her monthly police meetings. "They get arrested and are out the next day." Drug arrests, 25% of the TL total, were 2,224 in 2005, up 5.8% in a year.

"Almost as soon as officers leave the station, they are making arrests," Brown said. "I don't know how it's possible to make any more." Every officer averages about 34 drug arrests a year.

Brown's idea to clean up the scene is to clean up the addicts.

"Drug addicts bring a violent element to the neighborhood, and we as a city have to make rehabilitation available," she said. "It has to be mandated instead of jail time. It should be at the top of our priorities."

"When there are addicts, they create crimes," Brown said. "And the calls for service have gone up."

In 2005, Tenderloin police got 76,370 calls for service, a 6.5% increase over 2004.

Robberies increased over the previous year, 335 in 2005 compared with 288; aggravated assaults, 273, up from 254; homicides, 7, up from 5; stolen vehicles, 153, up from 144; and a spike in rape cases, 20, up from 9.

About half the assault cases resulted in arrests. But in other categories, unless an arrest is made at the crime scene, or soon afterward, the case is turned over to special units to investigate.

But there were half as many arson cases in 2005, just 5, compared with 11 in 2004, usually fires caused by the homeless, Brown said. And burglaries, down 22%, were 238 in 2005 compared with 306 in '04.

The Office of Citizen Complaints received 75 complaints from the TL in 2005, nearly half again more than the 53 in 2004. Use of force allegations were down by a third, to 31 in 2005.

DIVERSITY REQUIRES SPECIAL HANDLING

Add to the addicts, the dealers who prey on them, the homeless, the poor, parolees, seniors, disabled and a rainbow of ethnicities and you have an unusual diversity that requires special handling, "tolerance, listening and compassion," Brown told the commissioners. Among the 90 TL station personnel at least one speaks: Armenian, American Sign Language, Cantonese, Gaelic, German, Italian, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Toisan and Vietnamese. And the way recruits learn the ropes in the TL, she

said, is not through Police Academy courses but by on-the-job training on the street where they also meet the "vibrant" law-abiding side of the neighborhood and its "hard-working" folks.

After TARC's Wilson concluded his comments with a plea for sidewalk needle receptacles, so "we'd see less of them on the street," most of the residents who followed continued with complaints. But they also praised the police presence and requested more foot patrols.

"I have never seen such aggressive drug peddling," said one woman who works for Clean City and employs people in recovery. "And it's in public places. We need to walk and play in the neighborhood."

Two store owners complained of "increased drug activity." One, turning to address the police brass in the front row, said: "It's your black eye. This thing goes on after you leave. I walk my kids on Taylor and when it's clean (clear), I thank you."

"To what extent is the community involved with arrests?" asked Commissioner David Campos.

"The community isn't reluctant to step forward," Capt. Brown said. "People are willing to say what they see."

"Would additional beats have a significant effect in reducing crime?" asked commission Vice President Theresa Sparks, chairing the meeting for absent President Louise Renne.

"Yes," Brown said, "Boeddeker Park is an example."

Dealers had returned to the park a few months ago, and citizen complaints led Brown to put an officer in the park five days a week. "In a month," Brown said, "it was pristine," sans dealers.

Commissioner Joe Marshall said the resident cooperation Brown gets is enviable.

"I'd like to hear this from other districts," he said. "I don't know what you're doing, but I'd like to see it elsewhere."

SOLVING A LATE-NIGHT PROBLEM

One example of community policing Brown cited was at Ellis and Taylor. Presentation Senior Community and Glide are working through the Police Department to solve a late night problem. Presentation residents had complained about sidewalk encampments, noise and shooting up in the Glide parking lot.

"Glide is going to its budget committee for flood lights," she said. "And DPW is getting on board with sidewalk cleaning. It's all part of community policing. Our part is law

enforcement. But everyone puts something into the pie."

Within the last year, Brown said, U.N. Plaza has become a bazaar of stolen goods. Police have increased their patrolling and work in collaboration with the fencing detail. It's common for thieves to rip off department stores such as Macys, Neiman Marcus and The Gap, and sell the goods at the plaza within an hour. One recent arrest, she said, led to an apartment filled with stolen goods estimated at \$150,000, store price tags still attached.

Elaine Zamora, general manager of the North of Market Community Benefit District, told the commissioners that the Tenderloin is a victim of a self-perpetuating image. Zamora related a joke going around about how the mayor was jogging through the neighborhood and could see the drug-dealing all around him. The question arose: What can be done about it? The answer: Don't jog in the Tenderloin.

"The perception outsiders have," Zamora said, "is that it's okay to come to the Tenderloin and misbehave. We have to combat that on a daily basis."

Brown acknowledged Zamora and activists David Villa-Lobos, the brothers Michael and John Nulty, and Terrance Alan for their vigilance on behalf of the neighborhood. She in turn received a certificate of recognition for her work from Villa-Lobos' Community Leadership Alliance. From the Alliance for a Better District 6, she accepted a plaque honoring the Tenderloin Task Force which preceded creation of the TL police district and station in 2000. Brown was a Task Force sergeant in the 1990s.

As the meeting concluded, Sparks said the commissioners would take the neighborhood's sentiments to the mayor.

"I hope you'll support us in putting more police on the street," she said, pretty much pledging what everyone wanted to hear. ■

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