

Notes from Police Briefing at Tribeca Flashpoint Media Arts Academy  
13 June 2011

Attendees:

Police:

Chicago Police Department:

Ken Angarone, Commander 18<sup>th</sup> District

Matt Tobias, Deputy Chief of Police

Sergeant Ray Palcynski, Community Liaison Officer

Northwestern University Campus Police

Loyola University Campus Police

Aldermen:

Brendan Reilly, 42<sup>nd</sup> Ward

Michele Smith, 43<sup>rd</sup> Ward

Gold Coast Neighbors:

Tom Thilman, President

Gregg Malicki, Member of Safety Committee

Other Neighborhood and Business Group Representatives

Presentation:

1. Alderman Reilly hosted this meeting to update our neighborhood regarding recent criminal activities. He indicated how necessary it was that we ensure that the downtown area of the city is safe and is perceived to be safe, not only to reassure residents, but also to reassure the large volume of tourists and other visitors who visit us. He has made the case to his fellow aldermen that over 50% of the city's total revenues originate in our area, so allocating police resources to the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Wards is not just playing favorites at the expense of the rest of the city.
2. Alderman Smith also emphasized that her highest priority is the safety of Lincoln Park and downtown.
3. Commander Angarone made clear that his concern was not only making the downtown safe, but making sure people knew it was safe. He said that the new superintendent, Garry McCarthy, advocated the "broken windows" philosophy (if you let vandalism/petty crime occur, it will lead to more serious crime) from his many years with the New York City Police and he supports a tough response to lawlessness.
4. Commander Angarone stated that the police are not racially profiling potential offenders, but they are profiling criminal behavior. Most teenagers coming downtown want to enjoy the beauty of the city and safety of the neighborhood, especially compared to the neighborhoods where many of them live. We should not pre-judge them.
5. Commander Angarone discussed the recent history of trouble in our area.

- a. In 2010 the term “flash mob” came into use as thousands of gang members congregated on North Avenue Beach on Memorial Day, 25 May. The police closed the beach after numerous fights and other criminal behavior.
  - b. A few days later, on 28 May, Catholic Schools released students for the summer and many went to Oak Street Beach, which the police also had to close.
  - c. This year on Memorial Day weekend, the police again closed North Avenue Beach, but the closure was in fact for safety reasons despite speculation to the contrary. Over 750,000 people crowded onto beaches from Ohio Street to Fullerton; overcrowding and illegal alcohol consumption created several heat-related incidents and medical personnel had difficulty responding. There was only one “call for (police) service”, due to a fight.
  - d. After Memorial Day, Michigan Avenue stores, especially in Water Tower Place, were hit by groups of 20-30 shoplifters in flash mobs (now termed “multiple offender incidents”).
  - e. There were several incidents of pedestrians having been accosted, beat up, and robbed near the Chicago Avenue Red Line station and in Streeterville. Most crimes are being committed by teenagers coming into the Gold Coast area on the Red Line from the 2<sup>nd</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> Police Districts on the South Side of the city, or, to a lesser extent, on the Blue and Orange Lines from the West Side.
6. Commander Angarone then explained what’s being done to correct the situation.
- a. Extra police have been assigned to the 18<sup>th</sup> District and are patrolling in a highly visible fashion, to include 15-20 bicycle riders, the horse mounted units and uniformed police at beach underpasses (who also check back packs for alcohol).
  - b. The Chicago Police helicopter has been flying low over potential trouble areas on regular observation patrols.
  - c. Uniformed and plain clothes police are especially watching the Chicago Avenue Red Line station.
  - d. Plain clothes police are also monitoring large groups of teenagers as they wander into the area.
  - e. Camera trucks have been positioned near Michigan Avenue to monitor the street, as well as to watch the other cameras there.
  - f. Water Tower Place has tripled its security force during the peak period (4 PM to close on Saturdays).
  - g. Northwestern and Loyola University campus police have increased their numbers and presence in their areas.
  - h. Police are monitoring Facebook to anticipate any mob gathering. On that site they are also able to find “friends” of offenders to further identify other potential or existing criminals.
  - i. Extra administrative officers have been assigned on the weekends to process arrested teenage offenders and to turn them over to their parents.

7. Commander Angarone showed the results so far.
  - a. There have been fewer 911 calls for service.
  - b. There were no incidents at the recent Blues Fest.
  - c. There has been a generally positive response by parents of offenders.
  - d. Citizens, including teenagers traveling in from the South and West Sides of the city, have been thanking the police for their presence.
8. Further steps we can take.
  - a. If anyone in the area sees anything amiss, he/she should immediately call 911. Not only will there be an instant response, but the police track these calls for service and it helps them to allocate resources to trouble areas.
  - b. Residents should attend hearings for offenders to act as “court advocates”, ensuring judges know that the community is concerned and expects tough action.
  - c. All citizens should spread the word that action is being taken and that Chicago is a safe city. The news media has been fanning the flames of this story.