

Crime plan focuses on City Heights area

San Diego Union Tribune - Thursday, June 21, 1990

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A San Diego City Council committee yesterday recommended establishing a pilot crime-fighting program in City Heights that would involve coordinated efforts by several city departments.

On a 4-0 vote, the Rules Committee agreed to recommend that the full council act on the proposal by Councilman John Hartley, who represents the area.

"I think we need a multi-level attack on crime," Hartley told the committee. "I'd like to see a coordinated campaign using all city facilities."

Hartley said the neighborhood has "the feel of a war zone" and that there is "an increasing crisis in City Heights" with "more and more gang members, drugs, graffiti."

In fact, according to Deputy Police Chief Manuel Guaderrama, overall crime in the neighborhood decreased during the first five months of this year compared to the corresponding period in 1989.

Violent crime is down slightly compared to last year, he said, but nonetheless City Heights has twice as much violent crime as the city average.

Still, there are other neighborhoods with higher crime rates, Guaderrama said.

Councilman Bob Filner, who represents the southernmost part of the city, made the same point, but supported Hartley's proposal anyway.

"We all have neighborhoods in similar or worse shape," Filner said.

Hartley's plan calls for the clearing of abandoned houses on 40th Street; city support for Neighborhood Watch programs in the area; a Park and Recreation Department study of the correlation between after-school programs and crime reduction as well as an anti-gang program in that department; development of an overall plan to fight crime and drugs; and a quarterly report from city officials on the City Heights anti-crime program.

Hartley and others said that if the pilot program works in City Heights, it could be expanded throughout the city.

"Let's have a small victory," said Councilwoman Abbe Wolfsheimer immediately after the vote. "Then we can carry it citywide."

Hartley also told that committee he would like a state of emergency declared in City Heights as a prelude to trying to get state and federal funding to fight crime there.

Councilman Ron Roberts reminded him that the council last year declared the whole city to be in a state of emergency because of drugs and crime.

Hartley also asked that the committee recommend budgeting almost \$147,000 for a pilot after-school recreation program. Committee members said the full council should consider that proposal during its regular budget deliberations.

Memo: Head Varies

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