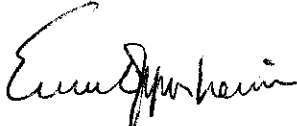


BRIEFING MEMO FOR ACTION

CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

TO: BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

FROM: ELLEN OPPENHEIM  
General Manager 

SUBJECT: COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ON PARK SAFETY

At a press conference in Bellevue Park on Monday, February 11, 2002, Mayor James K. Hahn announced his intent to implement measures to increase safety at neighborhood parks. In a letter addressed to the Board of Police Commissioners on the same date, the Mayor called upon the Police Commission to assist his efforts to implement these measures (Attachment A). The Mayor has asked the Police Commission to work in cooperation with the Recreation and Park Board of Commissioners in this endeavor to ensure that park safety is a shared priority of the two Departments.

The Mayor has asked that the LAPD send appropriate high-ranking officials to the February 20, 2002, Recreation and Parks Commission meeting at the Granada Hills Recreation Center, and that the LAPD appoint two high-ranking command officers to sit on the Recreation and Parks Commission Task Force on Park Safety. He also asked that the LAPD immediately develop a plan to significantly increase Police Patrols in 20 parks that have been identified as most in need of additional resources (Attachment B). The Department of Recreation and Parks General Manager has invited the LAPD to attend the study session on park safety and report on:

- Crime statistics in parks
- Current methods employed by the LAPD to make parks safe
- Plan to enhance Police patrols in 20 parks
- LAPD Transit Group Model
- Venice Beach Substation Model

The Mayor requested that the Task Force on Park Safety consider several key measures.

### Dedicated Park Police Unit

Specifically, he asked the Task Force to develop a strategy and implementation plan for a dedicated Park Police Unit within the LAPD similar to the existing LAPD Transit Group. It is expected that this Unit would work in cooperation with and complement the existing Park Ranger Unit. The LAPD has been asked to report on this model, as well as, the Venice Beach Police Model at the study session.

Department staff has surveyed other cities for applicable models and several are detailed below.

### NYPD Central Park Model

The NYPD has the primary responsibility for law enforcement within the City. They have a dedicated Central Park precinct that exclusively patrols and provides regular Police service in that area. A total of 115 NYPD officers are dedicated to Central Park.

Unarmed Peace Officers make up the Urban Park Ranger Unit of the Parks and Recreation Department. Within the unit is an unarmed Park Enforcement Patrol (PEP) that specializes in quality of life crime enforcement 16 hours each day. PEP officers are empowered to enforce all Municipal and State Codes and defer calls to NYPD when the individual Park Ranger feels the situation has become unsafe. 45 Urban Park Rangers provide interpretive education programs at park nature centers, while 189 PEP Rangers are enforcement oriented. Approximately 90 PEP units are dedicated to specific parks that provide community partnership funding for coverage. NYPD handles overnight park coverage as needed. Park Rangers are not dedicated exclusively to Central Park and focus on response to locations where services are immediately needed.

Central Park encompasses 840 acres. In contrast, we have more than 15,600 acres in the Los Angeles park system including Griffith, the largest park, with 4,200 acres. Since introducing a new policing model in the early 90's, New York claims a 74% reduction in crime in Central Park (Attachment C).

San Francisco Model

The San Francisco Police Department has the primary responsibility for law enforcement within the City/County. Each of the 10 San Francisco Police Divisions dedicate a park car to enforce the law in City parks. The park car handles all levels of enforcement when they are on duty. Each division dedicates at least one and sometimes two officers to dedicated park enforcement (at discretion of division Captain). Accordingly, each division dedicates either 40 or 80 hours of coverage, minus emergencies, to park enforcement activities. The dedicated park car may be pulled away from park enforcement to handle emergencies as needed. During off times, regular sector units handle park calls.

The Parks and Recreation Department maintains an unarmed, non-sworn Parks and Recreation unit that employs 10 full-time Park Patrol Officers and 1 Head Park Patrol Officer to respond to and report problems, warn and cite for municipal park code violations only. Staff works a 4/10 schedule and is deployed to cover 20 hours, weekdays (including overnight), and 24 hours on weekends. Patrol Officers respond to calls throughout the City park system (230 facilities, 3400 acres) but spend approximately 70% of their time in Golden Gate Park.

"Crime Free Parks"

Additionally, the Mayor specifically asked that the Task Force identify a second tier of 20 parks in need of increased patrols. He also asked that the City Attorney research and draft the appropriate ordinances necessary to establish "Crime Free Parks" legislation similar to the "Drug Free Zones" in our parks and adjacent to our schools.

Other initiatives that staff has identified that may be appropriate for the task force to consider include:

- The installation of surveillance devices and alarms at Recreation Centers
- Additional security, safety, gang intervention, conflict resolution, etc., training for Department employees
- Enhanced communication equipment for Recreation Center employees

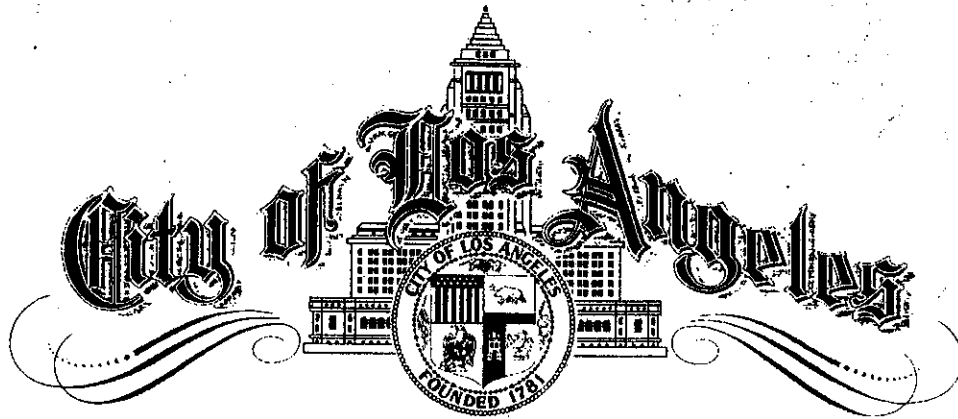
Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners  
Commission Study Session on Park Safety  
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- Greater community involvement in developing safe park environments including increased Park Advisory Board awareness and the introduction of "Park Watches"
- Enhanced communication and sharing of crime statistics and crime analysis between the LAPD and RAP
- Increased involvement by Recreation and Parks staff in the City's gang intervention efforts
- Identify the parks in need of enhanced security lighting and fencing
- Identify what security elements should be standardized as components of Department construction standards (i.e., alarms, cameras, fencing, lighting)

The General Manager has designated Assistant General Manager Jim Combs to lead the Task Force for the Department. He will be assisted in this endeavor by Chief Park Ranger Gary Newton.

After conducting the study session, it is recommended that the Board direct staff and the Task Force on Park Safety to develop recommendations for the implementation of park safety initiatives to include any and/or all measures identified in this report and others as deemed appropriate by the Board, and report back in 30 days. Additionally, it is recommended that the Board direct the City Attorney to research and report back to the Board regarding the appropriate ordinances to establish "Crime Free Parks".

cc: Board of Police Commissioners  
Bernard Parks, Chief of Police  
Val Paniccia, Commander, Juvenile Services Group



CITY HALL  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

JAMES K. HAHN  
MAYOR

February 11, 2002

The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners  
150 North Los Angeles Street, Room 150  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

Several serious incidents have occurred in our City parks during recent months, causing great concern among residents. On November 28, 2001, a 13-year old boy was shot and killed in the lobby of St. Andrews Recreation Center. A few days later, a shooting victim seeking help ran into Lincoln Heights Recreation Center. On December 15, suspected gang members shot up Wilmington Recreation Center, sending more than one hundred patrons running for cover. On December 26, Green Meadows Park was the scene of a confrontation between two gangs that resulted in gunfire. On February 5, 2002, staff at the Jim Gilliam Recreation Center had to barricade themselves and patrons inside the building when a shooting suspect was chased into the park. In addition to these incidents, there have been a number of threatening acts committed upon park employees or their property.

In response to this alarming number of serious incidents, the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners acted recently to form a Task Force on Park Safety and assigned Commissioners Christopher Hammond and Christina Sanchez Camino to lead this effort. I am asking the Board of Police Commissioners to assist by designating high-ranking LAPD command officers to join this Task Force to ensure that park safety is a shared priority of the two Departments.

Over the years, a number of plans have been implemented to increase safety in parks and recreation facilities throughout the City of Los Angeles. Recent programs include Urban Impact Parks, Safe Parks, and CLASS (Clean and Safe Spaces). Each effort has improved the appearance, security, and patron experience at various parks. However, there still remain significant issues of security and safety at many of our parks.

In spite of the previous efforts of the Department of Recreation and Parks and LAPD, security remains a significant concern in many of our city parks. The "control" of certain neighborhoods by gangs has discouraged family use of the parks within those areas. Serious incidents of violence in or around City parks are reported regularly to the Park Rangers and the Police Department. The sound of gunfire is not uncommon in some parks.



The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners  
February 11, 2002  
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Over a two-year period, violent crimes have increased in our City by 17.3%. This past year, calls for service to Park Rangers point to an alarming 21% increase in crime in parks compared to the prior year.

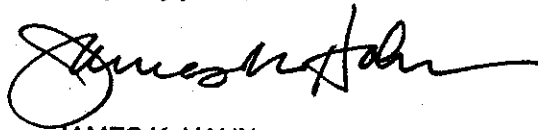
The recent increase in criminal activity in City parks is unacceptable and serves as a call for action to ensure that our park resources remain available for the residents of Los Angeles. It is my intent to implement initiatives that will make our City parks safe havens for children, families and all residents of our community. I am calling on you for your assistance and leadership to develop an LAPD rapid response plan to address incidents of violent crime in our parks.

The Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners will focus on park safety at its next meeting on Wednesday, February 20, 2002 at 5:30 PM at the Granada Hills Recreation Center. LAPD should participate at this meeting. I would like the Task Force to examine the concept of establishing a dedicated Park Police Unit within LAPD, similar to the LAPD Transit Group. I am convinced that this is one of the most effective actions that can be taken to maintain safety in our parks. I would like to see recommendations from the Task Force submitted to both Commissions within 30 days.

I will also ask the City Attorney to research and draft, and the City Council to enact, the appropriate ordinances necessary to establish "Crime Free Parks," similar to the "Drug Free Zones" adjacent to our schools. These legislative changes will increase the penalties and fines for crimes committed in parks. And finally, in the interim, I am asking for the Commission's support to have the LAPD immediately develop a plan to significantly increase police patrols in 20 parks that have been identified as most in need of additional policing (attachment) and ask the Task Force to identify the next tier of crime-plagued parks.

I call upon your support, innovation, and leadership to help provide this critical response. I am confident and determined that, by working collectively, we can maintain our park system as a treasured resource for all our citizens, one that is safe and free from crime.

Very truly yours,



JAMES K. HAHN  
Mayor

JKH:rmy

Attachments

Cc: Chief Bernard C. Parks, Chief of Police, Los Angeles Police Department  
Rockard J. Delgadillo, City Attorney  
Ellie Oppenheim, GM of Recreation & Parks  
Board of Recreation & Parks Commissioners  
The Honorable City Councilmembers

## TWENTY PARKS MOST IN NEED OF POLICE PATROL

|                                          |                                              |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Algin Sutton CD# 8 – Southeast Div.   | 11. MacArthur CD# 1 – Rampart Div.           |
| 2. Bellevue CD# 13 – Rampart Div.        | 12. Normandale CD# 15 – Harbor Div.          |
| 3. Branford CD# 2 – Foothill Div.        | 13. Pecan CD# 14 – Hollenbeck Div.           |
| 4. Elysian CD# 1, 13 – Northeast Div.    | 14. Rancho Cienega CD# 10 – Southeast Div.   |
| 5. Fred Roberts CD# 9 – Newton Div.      | 15. Runyon CD# 4 – Hollywood Div.            |
| 6. Griffith CD# 4 – Northeast Div.       | 16. Sepulveda CD# 2 – Devonshire Div.        |
| 7. Hansen Dam CD# 2, 7 – Foothill Div.   | 17. Slauson CD# 9 – Newton Div.              |
| 8. Hubert Humphrey CD# 7 – Foothill Div. | 18. South Park CD# 9 – 77 <sup>th</sup> Div. |
| 9. Lincoln CD# 1 – Hollenbeck Div.       | 19. Sylmar CD# 7 – Foothill Div.             |
| 10. Lincoln Hts. CD# 1 – Hollenbeck Div. | 20. Wilmington CD# 15 – Harbor Div.          |

THE NATION; DISPATCH FROM NEW YORK CITY; No More Running Scared in the Park; Central Park: Gone are many of the fears after a jogger was raped 11 years ago. Since 1993, crime has dropped 74%.

The Los Angeles Times; Los Angeles, Calif.; Sep 3, 2001; JOHN M. GLIONNA;

Full Text:

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The sun is already long gone as solitary jogger Pat Stewart suddenly breaks stride on her nightly Central Park run, casting a catlike glance at the shadowy spot that once put many New Yorkers on edge.

"I know what happened here," she says breathlessly. "Everybody does, especially women. It's where they got the Central Park jogger."

Eleven years ago, a 28-year-old investment banker on a similar evening run was raped by a gang of roaming youths just off this jogging path near Harlem. In what became known as the "wilding" attack, the teenagers crushed one of the woman's eye sockets in a beating that left her unconscious for more than a month before she recovered.

But while Stewart remembers the terror of that summer, she now feels completely safe running here and just about anywhere else in Central Park.

"That was a different time and this is definitely now a different park," says the 45-year-old fashion industry worker. "This place no longer scares me like it used to. Now I consider it my sanctuary."

Like the rest of New York, Central Park is on an anti-crime comeback. Once shunned by both residents and tourists as the city's most likely place to get mugged, the 840-acre park is being touted by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani as the safest turf in New York.

Since 1993, crime in Central Park has plummeted 74%--a rate that tops even the City's much-envied 63% crime drop, police say.

In the eight years since Giuliani took office, Central Park rapes, robberies and assaults have dropped at least 70%, prompting the mayor to list it among the safest urban parks in the nation, despite 20 million visitors a year.

Even the number of murders has fallen from two to none during the same time period, mirroring a citywide trend that has seen homicides drop from 2,245 in 1990 to 673 last year. "Central Park remains a haven" from crime, says Eric Monkkonen, a UCLA history professor and author of the new book "Murder in New York City."

"For dumping bodies and cleaning up their mess, New Yorkers have always had several rivers at their disposal. They don't need the park."

But locals know they can never let their guard down in the 143-year-old swath of rolling green fields and woodland. One morning two weeks ago, a Manhattan woman narrowly escaped being sexually assaulted in one of the park's busiest areas when a policeman on his lunch break heard her screams and arrested her attacker.

Despite a 1 a.m. curfew, brazen crimes sometimes seize the tabloid headlines--such as when a would-be robber grabbed a 6-year-old boy in 1998 and held a screwdriver to his neck as the youngster's family watched in horror. Or the woman who fought off a 15-year-old attempted rapist as she walked her dog one spring morning in 1999.

Central Park also made news on a day in June 2000 when 56 women were drenched with water, grabbed, stripped or robbed by a roving mob.

"Hey, this is New York City, so bad things happen--even in Central Park," says Myron Magnet, editor of *City Journal*, a publication of the conservative Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. "But when crimes occur today, people are genuinely surprised. Ten years ago they would have just shook their heads and said, 'Well, what did you expect?'"

Experts attribute the park's remarkable turnaround not only to increased police vigilance but also to sweeping renovations privately funded by the nonprofit Central Park Conservancy.

Since it formed in 1980, the conservancy has raised \$300 million for a range of improvements, from planting trees and resodding public fields to replacing broken lamps and increasing unarmed security.

Nowadays, along with about 115 New York City police officers who patrol the park around the clock--waging both undercover and sting operations--there are 50 "urban park rangers" and 220 park enforcement patrol officers.

"Ten years ago, this place was like a dust bowl," says Vinnie Kane, a 37-year-old New York City firefighter as he skates through the park one evening after work. "Much of it was trampled down and unmaintained. It was dangerous and threadbare, exhausted of nature. Now look at it."

The park has evolved into a sports showcase that features countless joggers, bicyclists, bird watchers and rock climbers. It's the site of 15,000 softball games each year and the setting for romantic movie shots of the sweeping New York skyline, which rises from all sides.

Central Park is now more Woody Allen's New York than the mean streets of Martin Scorsese.

New Yorker Robert Garcia remembers when he would keep his head down to avoid making eye contact with the drug dealers and their unleashed pit bulls, the men drinking beer on park benches and the teens who raced their bikes in packs, whooping and screaming.

Now he considers his visits a true walk in the park.

"I no longer feel this impotent rage when I come here," he says. "I'd see the lowlifes who had taken over and see that nobody was doing anything about it. I was in exile in my own city."

In the new Central Park, workmen now scramble to replace broken lights and erase graffiti--often within hours.

"We call it the broken window theory of discouraging antisocial behavior," says conservancy spokesman Rick Lepkowski. "If kids walk by a house with a broken window, they're more likely to break more windows. So the more we keep the park clean, the more people respect it."

Officials also encourage runners and cyclists to use the park to inspire a sense of community and discourage crime. Having more people in the park makes crooks think twice, they say.

New York law allows dogs to be unleashed after 9 p.m., so many residents will walk their pets in the park, encouraging families to continue picnics well after dark.

"On any day, Central Park is like one of those French impressionist paintings," Magnet says, "a Democratic urban dream where people of every class pursue every conceivable avocation in a marvelous urban ballet."

Central Park has always suffered from a bit of schizophrenia. Designed in 1858 by Frederick Law Olmsted as a rectangular refuge from the chaos, congestion and concrete of Manhattan, it has remained relatively safe by day but a dark, foreboding place after nightfall.

Olmsted once observed that after sunset he would "answer for no man's safety in it from bullies, garroters or highway robbers."

Even today, says the conservancy's Lepkowski, "we don't encourage people to go there at night alone with money jiggling around in their pockets."

After spending a night camping in Central Park for a 1999 New Yorker magazine story, writer Bill Buford reached this conclusion: Only a fool goes there at night.

"Other parts of New York have this reassuring grid, but Central Park doesn't have that," he said. "It's a confusing place of unsettling noises that come from the bushes."

On a recent night, Adam Kaufman, the conservancy's director of weekend and night operations, cruises slowly in his SUV. Along Harlem Meer, a lake at the park's northern end, he beams with the wonder of a kid in a theme park.

"Do you see any trash, any graffiti?" he asks. "I mean, this is Harlem, and there's no graffiti. There are families still here and people fishing. Amazing."

Nearby, a couple rise from a blanket to cautiously approach Kaufman's truck. "Is it safe here?" asks Heidi Vollmer, an organic chemist at New York's Columbia University. "We don't usually hang out in the park at night."

Vollmer says that while she waited in the park for tickets to an outdoor theater performance recently, a body was found in the bushes nearby. "I gotta admit that gave me the creeps. But I just wrote it off as a typical New York experience."

At the site of the Central Park jogger attack, police Officer Brian Winrow stands as a blue-uniformed legacy to one of the park's more ominous chapters. "Ever since that attack, we've had a cop here 24 hours a day, seven days a week," says the 29-year-old officer.

Winrow finds his 3 p.m.-to-midnight shift dull.

"This is like working a small-town beat. It's usually pretty quiet. I don't get to make many arrests."

So would he ever come to Central Park after dark?

"No way," he says. "I don't care how many lights they got in here."