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Improve robbery clearance rates

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the Metropolitan Police Department to compare its robbery investigation procedures to those in other, comparable cities, in order to understand why the robbery clearance rate in the District is substantially lower than the nationwide average for cities of similar size, and possibly to determine how the District's robbery clearance rate could be brought up to those nationwide averages. Furthermore, ANC1D advises the Council of the District of Columbia to pay close attention to this statistic, and to encourage and assist the Metropolitan Police to achieve a higher robbery clearance rate.

Why: Robbery is the crime of violence that most seriously threatens District residents of peaceful lifestyles. In Mount Pleasant, two-thirds of all violent crimes are robberies. In the Third Police District, two-thirds of all violent crimes are robberies. Because many of the other categories of violent crime involve persons acquainted with each other, whereas the victims of robbery are almost invariably chosen at random on the street, robbery is by far the crime that most seriously threatens residents of peaceful lifestyles.

The District does not do well at identifying and capturing robbers. The rate at which robberies are cleared by arrest in the District is currently (FY2009) a mere 16.1 percent, well below the nominal MPD target of 22.5 percent. It is understood that robbery, because the victim virtually never knows his attacker, is among the most difficult crimes to solve, but the average for U.S. cities of 500,000 to 999,999 population is 21.5 percent, representing one-third more robberies closed by arrest than is accomplished here. This ANC first brought this deficiency to the attention of the MPD in 2004, when the District's robbery clearance rate was a dismal 14 percent. Little progress is evident in improving this parameter, six years later.

Improving the robbery clearance rate would be doubly valuable for decreasing the threat of violent crime to District residents. Robbers do not commit one crime and stop, but commit repeated robberies, until they are caught, or simply age out of the high-crime age bracket. Hence, removing a robber from the street prevents numerous future robberies. Secondly, the best deterrence to crime is a reasonably high probability of being caught. The District's low robbery clearance rate suggests that it is too easy for young men to commit robberies and escape with impunity.

Other cities evidently do better than the District in solving robberies and arresting the perpetrators. ANC1D advises the Metropolitan Police Department to compare its practices with those of cities with higher robbery clearance rates, in order to learn how to improve this statistic. ANC1D furthermore advises the Council of the District to monitor this performance closely, for the benefit of the residents of this city.

Passed by 4 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on October 19, 2010, with a quorum present. Voting "yes": Commissioners Bosserman, McKay, Edwards, Lepanto.