



## **Frequently Asked Questions: Public Safety in San Leandro**

*Updated Monday, Sept. 13*

### **Is crime on the rise in San Leandro?**

Overall, year-to-date, violent crime is down 11 percent from 2020. However, there have been increases in the following categories:

- Carjacking – up 75 percent (14 so far in 2021, compared to 8 same time in 2020)
- Robbery with firearm – up 29 percent (53 so far in 2021, compared to 41 same time in 2020)
- Larceny – Up 9 percent (488 so far in 2021, compared to 448 same time in 2020)
- Arson – up 63 percent (13 so far in 2021, compared with 8 same time in 2020)

Detailed information about crime statistics is available on our website at [https://www.sanleandro.org/depts/pd/crime\\_stats/default.asp](https://www.sanleandro.org/depts/pd/crime_stats/default.asp)

### **What is the current staffing situation with the Police Department?**

The San Leandro Police Department budget authorizes 90 sworn positions. 25 of those positions are unfilled, bringing the deployable staff to 65 officers.

Of the 25 unfilled positions, 12 of those positions are vacant, three are in the Police Academy, and 10 are off due to workers' comp injuries. This brings deployable staff to 65 officers.

### **What are the impacts of the staffing shortage?**

Beat coverage and response time on lower-level calls for service have been impacted due to the staffing shortage, as the department must focus its resources on serious and violent crimes.

### **What is being done to hire more police officers?**

The PD Recruitment Team is working with Human Resources and other City partners to ramp up recruiting efforts and has developed several innovative strategies:

- Research on hiring bonuses. This has seen some success in other cities; San Leandro is studying further.
- Sending the SLPD recruitment team to the State's police academies to target academy attendees.
- Expanding advertising and outreach to be more culturally and ethnically diverse; includes utilizing new platforms and groups using social media, paid advertisements, and SLPD members.



- Connecting with colleges and universities and military out-processing centers to connect with a broader pool of applicants.
- Reaching out to community groups – faith groups, advocates, community groups, students, etc. - asking them “To Be the Change they want to see at SLPD!”

Nationally, and locally, we are seeing a significant drop in recruiting success throughout law enforcement. Significant numbers of officers are either leaving departments that have a perceived lack of support, or even leaving the profession altogether.

This can be ascribed to many factors, including: the amount of scrutiny and anti-police sentiment arising out of the events of the past several years, and very high levels of personal and professional risk during a global pandemic amidst rising violence and gun crime.

### **Why are we hiring police officers and not reallocating those funds to other non-sworn services immediately?**

The current staffing of only 65 deployable officers brings us to a dangerously low amount of coverage for the entire city, and poses a risk of officer burnout due to excessive overtime required to cover all the current shortages.

San Leandro’s new Police Chief Pridgen arrived on September 13, and one of his first priorities is to conduct a staffing needs assessment. *(A transcript of his remarks following his Oath of Office on September 13 is included at the end of these FAQs).*

There are enough projected vacancies - due to the current high vacancy rate, projected retirements over the next 6 months, and the onboarding time of about one year to bring a new officer into the department- that the Chief will have ample flexibility to respond to any changes in staffing deployment as a result of the outcomes of the staffing study.

### **Why did the City take funds away from the police? (defund the Police question)**

The City reallocated \$1.7 million from the Police Department budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21 to be used primarily for human service programs such as mental health and homeless services. The ongoing reallocation is about \$1.5 million.

The reallocation represented approximately 4 percent of the department’s budget, and resulted in the elimination of three police positions, including one lieutenant, one sergeant, and one officer, and overtime costs.



## **Is there any truth to the rumors of a slowdown?**

No. San Leandro Police Officers' Association President Michael Olivera issued the following statement on Friday, August 27:

It has come to the attention of the San Leandro Police Officers' Association (POA) that there may be perception of a work slowdown. The POA does not support any concerted effort to reduce services or response to calls from the community, and in fact, has been working with the administration and city officials to improve upon the level of service our members provide by filling the many vacancies.

Our members are dedicated to professional, constitutional policing, are committed to serving our community, and have continued to diligently work throughout the pandemic placing their own lives and families at risk to protect and serve the community.

Our members are under enormous pressure with the current staffing vacancies and have stepped up to fill the voids to continue to provide the highest level of service to the community. The POA has not seen anything that would indicate a work slowdown; rather it has seen the opposite. I am currently assigned as the swing shift patrol sergeant and continually see examples of how dedicated our members are to public safety.

The POA has recognized the concerning increase in armed suspects and has cautioned the city and the public since at least August of last year. Our members continually arrest dangerous, armed suspects almost daily. We believe the dramatic increase in violent crime is due to many factors which include the global pandemic, decriminalization of "low level crimes," criminals' access to firearms, zero bail, the police department staffing crisis, and the anti-police rhetoric.

The police department continues to have very fast response times to serious crimes, and many times locate and arrest the suspects. Recently, there was an incident in which several officers entered the cold bay waters at night in an attempt to save the life of a motorist whose vehicle was fully submerged. This act of bravery showcases the dedication and commitment our members have to this job and public safety.

Our members are as dedicated as they have ever been and are determined to serve the people of this community. I am proud of our members' work ethic and resiliency throughout this pandemic and the other challenges along the way. The POA is dedicated to partnering with the city, police department, and the community to fill the current vacancies, increase training, and provide the highest level of service.

Michael Olivera, President  
San Leandro Police Officers' Association





***Transcript of remarks by Chief Abdul Pridgen at the Sept. 13 City Council meeting, following the administration of his Oath of Office***

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Before the zoom meet this evening, I was discussing my remarks with my wife. She perceived I was a little uneasy and shared some words of wisdom to settle me. She said, “Don’t try to be too charming, too witty, too spirited, or too intellectual, just be yourself!” If it were not for her love, support, encouragement, and counsel, I would most certainly not be in this position. So, a very special thank you to my wife—I love you beyond words.

City Manager Robustelli, thank you for trusting me to help lead the San Leandro Police Department. With you leading our city, I know we will accomplish great things. Mayor and members of the City Council, I was honored to receive your unanimous endorsement. I am excited to work with all of you to improve the lives of those who live, work, and visit in San Leandro.

If you indulge me in advance of my comments to the police department and community, I want to share a little about who I am and a few recent experiences—they frame how I see the tremendous opportunity in front of the San Leandro Police Department.

Over time, you will come to learn that I am a fair, open, honest, authentic, and approachable leader who cares about people and is wedded to the principles of procedural justice. I am going to spend a moment on PJ because they form the basis of my philosophical approach to leadership. Procedural justice encompasses four fundamental tenets: 1) treating people with dignity and respect; 2) giving them a voice; 3) being neutral in decision making; and 4) conveying trustworthy motives. Research indicates people are more concerned with how they are treated during an encounter than the outcome of that encounter. A 2011 study found citizens were less likely to cooperate with police, even when they considered terrorism a severe threat, if they felt police were targeting residents in their community. Also, they were unlikely to assist if they believed police were using unfair procedures, denying them a voice, and treating them discourteously. So, procedural justice heightens citizen satisfaction, increases cooperation, and enhances trust. Even in neighborhoods with abject poverty, steeped in disadvantage, void of a positive role model or hope, procedural justice was a strong predictor of police legitimacy, which is the public’s willingness to obey and cooperate with the police.

Outside of the City Manager and Captain Torres, I did not know anyone in San Leandro and was unsure how quickly I would adjust. In late August, I attended a city-sponsored executive retreat. After the day-long retreat, the facilitator asked us to describe how we felt in a word. The word I used was **home**. During our exercises and engagement that day, the



executive team was so genuine, humble, and collaborative that it felt unmistakably like family. After having met some police staff and community members, that feeling has only become more fervent.

It is through the lens of togetherness that I see a chance to strengthen family bonds and capitalize on our abounding potential, which has not been fully tapped. That said, I recognize there are people within and without the organization who do not feel a part of the family. It is our collective responsibility to change that. Everyone who lives, works and visits in San Leandro should feel that their humanity is acknowledged and valued.

Truthfully, I pondered how to modify my message to internal and external stakeholders. It wasn't easy because our common objectives and desires are inextricably linked. We all want a safer and more inclusive San Leandro. However, there are a few delineations.

Members of the San Leandro Police Department, I recognize the unique challenges we face and the intense scrutiny. Given the broad legal authority bestowed on us, it is understandable we are held to a standard virtually unmatched in society. There is no question that we can meet the moment. The conversations I have had with staff have been extraordinary, and I know we are poised to accomplish great things. You have my unwavering commitment to ensuring you have the resources, training, and guidance to succeed.

Community, we hear you. We understand how historical and contemporary interactions shape how you perceive us, and we know it is not always in the most favorable light. We are devoted to reshaping your experience through procedural justice, meaningful engagement, and co-producing a safer community. We are in it together. The sooner we concede, embrace, and leverage our commonality, the swifter we will realize our vision.

I am honored and grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside the members of the San Leandro Police Department as we endeavor to exceed expectations. It will take us all working together and amplifying all voices. Based on a remarkable alignment of desired outcomes and working in partnership, I am confident we will prosper. I know we have the ability, the compassion, and the conviction to make San Leandro a shining example of what present-day policing must be.

It is my privilege to serve you. Each day will be a new opportunity for me to prove myself worthy of your trust. I am eternally thankful for this fantastic opportunity. Thank you!