City police announce program to combat drug sales

City police on Thursday announced a special program to combat drug trafficking in low-income neighborhoods. Mayor Screen and Police Chief Pat Bonanno said the special four-part program, called “Operation Cleanweep,” will give special attention to the area of 38th and Cain streets.

Operation Cleanweep will increase the use of plainclothes and undercover officers and the recruitment of black officers to work in minority neighborhoods, Screen said. He also declined to reveal how many officers will be assigned to the special units.

A similar program was conducted by city police in January of this year, and it resulted in a 22 percent reduction in drug trafficking. This year’s program was discontinued because “it required a tremendous amount of manpower. We couldn’t keep it up,” Screen said.

But Bonanno said that the new program will be easier to maintain because “officers will be able to keep their regular duties.”

He said the program will be expanded with interdepartmental fund transfers and next year’s revenue sharing budget.

The first part of the program “will be the recruitment and training of additional black officers into our undercover operations,” the mayor’s press release said. “The second part of the operation will be the organization of a special task force called the ‘Special Narcotics Action Patrol’ or SNAP. The officers working on this task will be plainclothes officers ‘specialized in narcotics operations and assigned to place a heavy concentration of patrol effort in designated neighborhoods,’ the release said.”

The third phase will be establishment of a special “database” for use by people in drug dealers. The fourth phase will consist of an expansion of our computerized crime analysis functions. This will involve the processing of crime and arrest data for the proper deployment of personnel,” the release said.

“Also, the crime analysis unit will gather and evaluate information on the drug dealers and other criminals through a ‘known offenders’ file. This will assist the officers in the field by locating and matching drug dealers, burglars, and robbers to the crimes being committed.”