

LAPD: Mission accomplished

First new division in 27 years opened

By Jason Kandel
Staff Writer

MISSION HILLS — With the theme song from "Mission: Impossible" playing in the background and a team of SWAT officers rappelling from a helicopter, hundreds of residents and police officers on Saturday celebrated the grand opening of the LAPD's 19th division, the Mission Area Police Station.

A block party unfolded in front of the 54,000-square-foot station, near Sepulveda and San Fernando Mission boulevards. The \$15 million station, the Los Angeles Police Department's first new division in 27 years, will house about 250 personnel and large state-of-the-art work stations, watch commanders' stations and a community room.

"This is truly an historic event," said LAPD Capt. Kirk Albanese, the commander of the new division, who helped work out last-minute repairs, some caused by rain, to get the station opened.

The station's first roll call will be held at 6:15 a.m. today. In a show of community outreach, Albanese said, all of his officers will head out into the community to greet some of the 200,000 citizens who live and work in the 28-square-mile area that the officers will patrol.

"Isn't this great to have the first new police division in over 27 years here in the city of Los Angeles?" asked Mayor James Hahn at Saturday's celebration. "Isn't it great to see this new station out here in the San Fernando Valley where we need it?"

"This station really is a testament to that faith and belief that things aren't impossible, that if we have the will to do them we can achieve them."

City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo told the crowd that the new station represented more than just a new place for police to work. He called it a new home where the police and community can partner up to continue to make the streets safer.

"I'm inspired by this edifice coming out of the Valley floor, but I'm more inspired by what I see in front of me — the community, the people who care about this place," he told a sea of residents and police in the crowd.

The ceremony Saturday came nearly two weeks after officials celebrated the opening of the new West Valley station in Reseda. The 55,000-square-foot station replaced a smaller, outdated station where officers worked in cramped offices, temporary trailers, and even closets and shower rooms. All the 315 West Valley officers will also be deployed from their new station today.

The stations are among several public safety improvements funded by Proposition Q, a \$600 million bond issue approved by voters on March 5, 2002.

The stations are designed to hold hundreds of officers and are built for future growth in mind, and will help cut down the Valley's historically slow response times.

Chief William Bratton said the Mission and West Valley stations represent the latest in a

series of planned improvements for an LAPD that's moving into the 21st century.

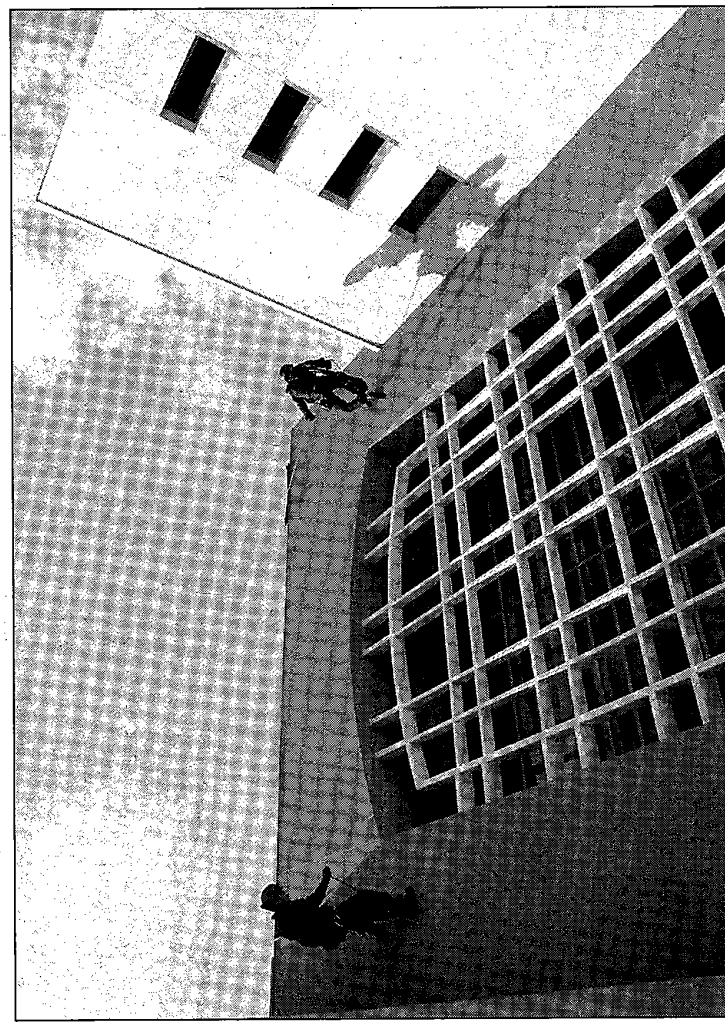
He said that almost \$1 billion worth of construction projects are under way — including new

stations in Hollenbeck, Ramon, the L.A. Harbor, Koreatown and Canoga Park.

He also said the department is set to open a new \$130 million crime lab, and a \$300 million police

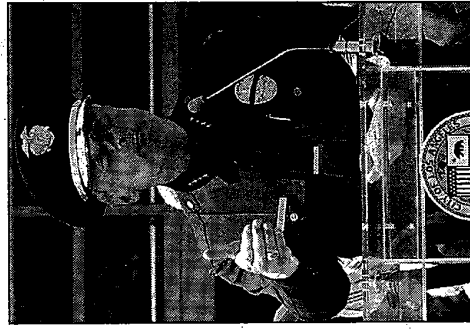
headquarters downtown.

"As we move into the 21st century, this city's leadership, this city's voters, this city's residents are ensuring that that obligation is being fulfilled,"



Joel P. Lugavere/Special to the Daily News

Mayor James Hahn and Councilman Alex Padilla unveil the Mission Area Police Station sign on Saturday.



Members of the LAPD SWAT team, left, landed on the station's roof by helicopter and rappelled down the side of the building. Above, Police Chief William Bratton speaks.

Bratton said. "You have the best police force in the world, in this city."