

# Normand: Long-term approach on crime

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## **Sheriff outlines some immediate steps too**

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By Brian Friedman

Whether or not he ends up serving as long as his well-known predecessor, newly elected Jefferson Parish Sheriff Newell Normand is focused on the long term when it comes to fighting crime in the parish.

Speaking to a meeting of the West Jeff Civic Coalition Monday night, Normand said that stemming the tide of poverty, improving education, greater code enforcement vis-à-vis blighted property and dilapidated motels, and increasing mental health and detox resources are just a few of the big-picture elements that will be crucial to fighting crime in the parish.

"We're not going to incarcerate our way out of the (crime) problem," said Normand, who spent the last 27 years as Harry Lee's chief criminal deputy and administrative assistant. "There needs to be a more holistic approach."

In time, improving the economic climate of the parish and reducing poverty "will turn the crime situation around faster than anything else," Normand said, vowing to "marry himself to the business community" to help the process along.

This holistic, long-term approach shouldn't induce criminals to get too comfortable, however, as Normand also outlined some immediate measures -- some of which are already implemented -- to clean up the streets.

The Street Crimes unit is back in existence, while an additional 24 two-man units have hit the West Bank hard.

Quality-of-life roundups are under way, with the department focusing on run-down houses and hourly-rate motels, which are breeding grounds for criminal activity.

"We've got to go at (those properties) from the regulatory side and root that out of this community," Normand said.

Particular attention also has been paid to convenience stores, especially their surveillance equipment.

"On our nickel, we've given them equipment to enhance their video capability," Normand said, adding that advanced facial-recognition software is imminent that vastly will improve the department's ability to identify repeat offenders and get them off the streets.

Responding to the improvements, criminals already have started adjusting their tactics, Normand said, with stick-up artists moving outside to store parking lots to wait out their prey.

**To stay one step ahead, Normand has reinstituted helicopter patrols to try to ferret out these types of offenders.**

Additionally, and without downplaying the crime problem, Normand suggested that a slight shift in perspective may be in order. While New Orleans is known, from both without and within, as a crime hot spot, the community of East Baton Rouge recently outpaced Jefferson Parish in homicides. And the state with the highest per-capita rate of violent crime? Not Louisiana, but South Carolina.

"But you don't hear about that," Normand said, "because they don't beat up on themselves like we do.

"We've lost some of the pride in where we live, and we need to get it back."