

Mayor Landrieu, Nopd And Hospitality Industry Announce Plans To Improve French Quarter Security

NEW ORLEANS, LA (AUGUST 21, 2014) — Today, Mayor Mitch Landrieu announced additional steps the City, hospitality industry and community are taking to improve and enhance public safety and quality of life for French Quarter residents, employees, and visitors.

The package announced today includes a NOLA PATROL program to improve public safety and quality of life enforcement and presence in the French Quarter, to be paid by a self-assessment on hotel bills and clearer guidelines and a more streamlined Vieux Carre Commission process for businesses and residents wishing to install private security cameras in the French Quarter. Mayor Landrieu also reiterated his request of Governor Bobby Jindal and the State of Louisiana to provide resources for public safety in New Orleans, and the City is working with businesses and the French Quarter Management District on private details for commercial areas paid for by businesses themselves.

Mayor Landrieu said, “The French Quarter is an important economic engine for the city, region, and state, and we all have to do our part to ensure that is a healthy neighborhood. I sincerely appreciate the support the State has provided in recent weeks in the form of the Louisiana State Police patrols in the French Quarter and in downtown New Orleans; however, continued LSP support and manpower is critical to both the people of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana. In recent weeks, we have also stepped up to provide additional overtime for NOPD officers and are working with the hospitality industry and French Quarter businesses to all have skin in the game. We all have a responsibility to ensure our city is safe for residents, employees and visitors alike. These measures are a great first step.

NOPD Interim Superintendent Michael Harrison said, “These additional resources provided by our partners in the hospitality industry will be an asset to our 8th District and will help reduce some of our manpower pressures on 8th District officers. It is also a way for NOPD to be more engaged with this community on quality of life issues.”

District C Councilmember Nadine Ramsey said, “In light of the recent violence experienced in the French Quarter, I believe it is imperative that local and state police provide continued support and manpower to keep the neighborhood safe. Additional resources provided by the hospitality industries operating in the French Quarter area will be a helpful asset we can rely on. The French Quarter is one of the most visited areas of the city not only for tourists, but also New Orleans residents. Keeping our residents, employees, and visitors safe is our number one priority, and these measures are great first steps.”

NOLA PATROL

In 2013, the Louisiana Legislature authorized hotels in New Orleans to add a voluntary self-assessment 1.75% hotel/motel tax that could be added to hotel bills at participating hotels. Of that, 1.5% would be split evenly between New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation (NOTMC) and New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) for marketing purposes, with .25% going to the City for services for the French Quarter. The .25% is expected to generate approximately \$200,000 per month for these City services. Mayor Landrieu is proposing using the funds, which will be subject to an agreement with the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau that must be approved by the City Council, for an NOPD Grounds Patrol Officer program for the NOPD 8th District called NOLA PATROL.

The NOLA PATROL will be a contingent of 50 civilian Grounds Patrol Officers that can assume traffic control and other non-emergency tasks that currently require a Police Officer. NOLA PATROL will be assigned to the 8th District and will be utilized primarily in the French Quarter and immediate adjacent high traffic areas. The program is designed as a cost-effective and timely method of supplementing NOPD manpower and freeing up NOPD resources to respond to and investigate serious crimes. It will also allow for a contingent of NOPD employees to focus on traffic and quality of life enforcement including traffic control, automobile accidents that do not result in injury, illegal parking and oversized vehicles, illegal dumping and sanitation, illegal vending, illegal taxicab operations, among other items. They will be able to respond to non-emergency calls for service and quality of life complaints. Allowing NOLA PATROL to resolve many of these minor incidents will improve police response times for both emergency and non-emergency incidents. The program will also serve as a recruitment pipeline for fully certified NOPD officers. And having a contingent of officers dedicated to these tasks in these highly-visited areas will allow for NOPD's district patrols to maintain an appropriate size during large and special events.

NOLA PATROL will be uniformed and their vehicles will be decalated, but will be easily differentiated from sworn officers. They will not be armed. Delegating non-emergency policing tasks to civilians is a model successfully deployed in several other major cities, including most prominently in Times Square with NYPD's Traffic Enforcement Agents. The program will launch in late 2014 following City Council approval of a cooperative endeavor agreement (CEA) between the City and CVB.

"The NOLA Patrol pilot program crafted by the City is an exciting public/private partnership that should dramatically affect the safety and quality of life in the French Quarter, said Stephen Perry, President & CEO of the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau. "The hotel and hospitality industry is proud to be generating sustainable funding to drive this innovation by the City in perpetuity. The winners here are the residents, our employees, and every visitor to the city. This is truly a huge step forward in public safety and quality of life."

"The NOLA Patrol Program as designed should meet one of the most important goals of our industry, and that is to increase the quality of life for the French Quarter's residents and businesses," commented Mark Romig, President and CEO of the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation. "The City, NOCVB and the Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association are to be commended for moving forward with this critical program."

David Bilbe, General Manager of the Westin Hotel and President of the Greater New Orleans Hotel and Lodging Association said, "The hotels of this city made a major statement by partnering with the CVB to levy an assessment on our folios that will be the first dedicated private funding stream ever to enhance public safety and quality of life in the French Quarter. This is the kind of profound, impactful step we can take when the city and the hospitality industry forge a partnership to benefit the public.

"The Orleans Legislative Delegation was critical in making this initiative a reality.

District 93 State Representative Helena Moreno, who represents the French Quarter, said, "While we all wish that additional NOPD officers were available to be on the streets, I am very encouraged to see that Mayor Landrieu is taking proactive steps to think of new options to help improve security in the French Quarter. I look forward to hearing more details as the plan develops."

Speaker Pro Tempore Rep. Walt Leger, said, "NOLA Patrol meets many of our City's most pressing needs. I am pleased that hospitality leaders and city leaders have come together to provide additional resources to the 8th district, to supplement, support, and free up NOPD assets to address other more serious public safety issues. Supplementing the ability to address quality of life issues and providing a great source for recruiting the police officers of the future makes this a win for residents, businesses, and visitors."

State Senator JP Morrell noted, "Our delegation is fully committed to public safety in New Orleans. I am pleased that this initiative gives increased flexibility to the NOPD 8th District to meet its public safety needs.

”State Senator AG Crowe commented, “I totally support the NOLA PATROL program and its goal to improve public safety efficiencies through the use of civilian ground patrol officers.”

State Representative Jeff Arnold said, “The NOLA PATROL initiative will allow NOPD officers in the 8th District to strengthen their focus on responding to more serious crimes while increasing policing efficiencies across the board.”

VIEUX CARRE COMMISSION SECURITY CAMERA GUIDELINES UPDATE

The Vieux Carre Commission (VCC) has a number of requirements establishing standards for design and installation of private security cameras on buildings in the French Quarter, just as it does with any change to the exteriors of buildings such as signage or paint color. Residents and business owners who wish to install security cameras must obtain a permit from the VCC. The purpose of the VCC security cameras policy is to address size, location, mounting, wiring, integrated lighting, among other considerations.

Security cameras have proliferated in the Vieux Carre as cameras have become more affordable and miniaturized, with variances in size related to image resolution. Cameras serve a wide variety of security functions, and, if selected and located properly, can fit appropriately in the historic streetscape and building fabric. Through the approval process, the VCC staff encourages neighbors to work together to provide each other with the best security options.

Today, Mayor Landrieu and the Vieux Carre Commission announced new standards and processes for approvals of private security cameras, whereby most applications now only require a staff-level review, rather than a review by the Architectural Review Committee and the full Vieux Carre Commission. Only the highest-level, most-historic buildings will have to go through a multi-step approval process. Additionally, the VCC will begin posting camera models, types and installation vendors that have been used in accordance with the VCC regulations over the past 6 months to make it easier for residents and businesses to understand what is necessary for approvals.

VCC Executive Director Lary Hesdorffer said, “The Commission is in the process of reviewing and updating all of our guidelines, but security cameras is the best place to start given the public safety concerns of our residents and businesses. We will continue to work to make our processes more user-friendly. We want to encourage rather than discourage property owners to take steps necessary to protect the integrity of the Vieux Carre, which includes public safety. We have a great staff who will be doing all we can to walk residents and businesses through the process as quickly as possible.” ###