

Councilman proposes crime 'red zones'

By Chris Sykes
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At Large Councilman Rayfield Morton is seeing red and it's not in anger.

In the wake of the mayoral decision to re-deploy police personnel to "hot spots" for crime in the city, Morton wants the City Council to pass an ordinance he said would combat drug use and sales, prostitution, illegal weapons possession and gun violence, and "other criminal acts."

Morton said his proposed "red zone" system is designed to combat crime by preventing it from happening. The way to do that, he said, is to prevent the "criminal element" from outside the city from coming into Orange.

"This is an introduction of the red-zone system that will eventually eliminate our

continuous criminal acts taking place on our city streets," Morton said. "These acts are being performed by individuals from other cities each and every day. What we need in place is something to deter them from coming into our city to do their dirty work."

Morton said the ordinance he is proposing would assure Orange residents that they would have "peace in the streets." He claimed it would occur by producing a large decrease in crimes within the first 18 months of its installation.

Under the proposed system, areas within Orange would be identified as "red zones." They would have signs posted at each end to identify the area and explain why no one should be in them "if you don't live in them." Morton said if his proposed ordinance becomes law it would mean entering a "red

zone" on foot or in a car would subject suspect individuals to the new law.

For individuals who are caught committing criminal activities, punishment not only could include the standard sentence issued by a court, said Morton, but include a ban from the specific area where they were arrested.

"After being arrested in a 'red zone' twice, we will process you to be restrained from the complete city," Morton said. "These areas will have posted signage informing all people they are entering a high-crime area and they will have high visibility of police presence."

Morton said any suspects who are arrested may be incarcerated or put on probation, "but definitely given a restraining order." The court order, he said, would assure law enforcement and the public the person would

no longer be able to legally be in the designated area.

"If at any time this person is seen in the arresting area by the residents of police, they can be picked up and arrested," Morton said. "We can arrest them for being in an area where they are under a restraining order.

"The police will not need probable cause to detain this person," Morton claimed. "They can execute this at will and eventually the drug dealer will have to move on because at that point he would be facing 364 days in the county lockup and constant aggressiveness from the police."

Under Morton's plan, streets such as Oakwood Place, from Central Avenue to Wilson Place, and the area surrounding the intersection of Lincoln and Central avenues in the West Ward could get the designation.