LAFAYETTE – Northeast Lafayette welcomed its new Police Department substation Friday, where a new 3,600-square-foot Precinct 4 was built to be manned by 28 police officers whose presence already has stemmed crime.

The substation, which sits at the corner of Moss and Mathieu streets, was an $840,000 endeavor that some nearby residents waited years to see. Though the opening was celebrated Friday, city police have manned the substation for more than a month. “We want to make (Precinct 4) a fully functioning police station,” Police Chief Jim Craft said at the official opening Friday.

Craft said some Lafayette officers and those who live in the area started clamoring 10 years ago for a more visible police presence to quell crime.

“It took us a long time,” Craft said.
The building has a reception area, offices and a break room. In the rear of the building is a metal vehicle-processing facility.

To its side is a ramshackle tin structure that, one day, might provide the space needed to build a crime scene analysis facility for city and parish investigators, Craft said.

Longtime Lafayette officer Capt. Cornell Montgomery will be in command of the substation and Precinct 4 patrols.

Though city police will continue to dispatch calls from headquarters on University Avenue, the phones at Precinct 4 will be manned 24 hours a day by officers. Residents who want copies of police reports can drop by the substation for service.

The substation site, where a branch of Iberia Bank had stood, was slated to be a Greyhound bus station. But in 2008, area residents protested the plan and continued to ask for more police officers in their neighborhood.

“That just did not sit well with the residents here. We heard them loud and clear,” said City-Parish Councilman Kenneth Boudreaux, whose District 4 is part of Precinct 4.

Boudreaux said crime in the area almost prompted long-established business Acadiana Trophies to relocate.

“They said, ‘Kenneth, we have to do something about the crime,’” Boudreaux said. He said placing Precinct 4 less than a quarter-mile from the business convinced the owners to stay put.

Lafayette City-Parish President Joey Durel noted the long journey and the hurdles that had to be cleared to get the substation, where construction began in summer 2013.

“We have tried to put our police officers close to the people,” Durel said.

When City-Parish Council members blocked Greyhound’s plan to locate a terminal at the site, Lafayette was sued. To settle the case, Lafayette bought the Moss Street site from Greyhound for $540,000 and offered the bus company space at the downtown Rosa Parks Transportation Center.

Alzina Dural, who lives less than 2 miles away, operates a day care near her home. One day, as she was putting a baby into a car, there was a drive-by shooting.

Dural said the incident led her to become a captain in her local neighborhood watch organization. She was recognized Friday for her role in lobbying for the substation.

“We don’t want to be fearful in our own community,” Dural said.