



# Ft. Pierce Police Department News Release



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**R. Sean Baldwin**

*Chief of Police*  
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Ft. Pierce, FL

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## Code Enforcement and Police unite to rid city streets of abandoned vehicles

**FORT PIERCE** - On a daily basis beautiful cars of every make and model traverse the streets of our fair city, however when they're resting lifeless and abandoned to the weather and the weeds they become an eyesore.

In response to requests from residents living in the city's northwestern neighborhoods to address the problem of abandoned vehicles, the Code Enforcement Department and the Police Department joined forces with Lincoln Park Mainstreet in March.

"Crime and blight have a symbiotic relationship - they feed off of one another. The police department cannot successfully fight crime in a blighted community, and code enforcement cannot successfully fight blight in a crime ridden community," said Chief R. Sean Baldwin. "The current effort to eliminate abandon vehicles is a perfect example of how collaboration between the police and code enforcement department's can improve the quality of life for our citizens."

Since implementing the abandoned vehicle sweep, a total of 219 vehicles, including cars, trucks, boat trailers and unmarked school busses, have been tagged due to being inoperable, unregistered or both. Of those 219 tagged vehicles, the city has only had to tow 27. The remainder were either brought into compliance or voluntarily removed within the time frame provided by city ordinance (10 days), said Peggy Arraiz, City Code Compliance Manager.

"This program has been a much larger success than I ever envisioned," Arraiz said. "It has been embraced by the community and the large number of vehicles brought into compliance or voluntarily removed shows the neighborhood's willingness to work towards improving the area as a whole."

In addition, the project received quite a bit of media attention and it was that awareness that caught the eye of the American Association of Code Enforcement. The stories generated were e-mailed to cities nationwide as an example of pro-active code enforcement and departments working together to improve the quality of life of city residents, she said.

This operation is part of a larger effort that will eventually work its way through the entire city. The areas being targeted are based on established police patrol zones. Before the initial sweep, teams of police and code compliance officers scanned city streets between U.S. Highway #1, Orange Avenue, 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Avenue and Avenue Q to identify vehicles which fit the criteria. Next, the communities in the eastern portion of the community will be targeted, said Officer Martin Ortiz.

According to Officer Ortiz, most of the residents, who had vehicles tagged were very cooperative by either registering the vehicles or getting rid of them. However, some residents resorted to moving there unregistered vehicles to other locations. Those individuals "assumed" that we did not have documentation on there vehicle when we initially tagged it.

"We were forced to break the bad news to them that even though we tagged it at one location and they moved it to another, it still gave us the right to tow, so we did," Officer Ortiz said. "I am pleased with this new program. I look forward to continuing this effort in hopes of eliminating all of the "eye sores" in our area."

An unexpected outcome of this special operation is the development of better relations between Code Enforcement and the Police Department, something both departments agree is vital if we want to have a positive impact on the City of Fort Pierce. The success of this effort could not have occurred had it not been for the participation of Andy Avery,

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