

# Fort Pierce Police Department

## Capital Improvement Proposal



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## **Introduction**

The City of Fort Pierce, especially the Lincoln Park Community, face a number of challenges in reducing crime and maintaining trust in law enforcement. To compound this problem, the City has experienced a drastic reduction in revenues generated from ad valorem taxes since 2008. As a result, City departments were required to implement annual spending reduction plans in order to lower operating and personnel costs to meet budget shortfalls. As a result, the police department has lacked capital funding to maintain or purchase essential technology equipment used to combat criminal activity, and provide transparency in daily operations.

Public safety is at the forefront of our city's needs. However, due to budgetary restraints, it is recognized that funding support is needed and must be addressed through comprehensive and collaborative efforts. For these reasons the Fort Pierce Police Department (FPPD) and the City of Fort Pierce is requesting financial support from the Allegany Franciscan Ministries. We are submitting a \$500,000 proposal to purchase essential equipment that will allow the FPPD to be more effective and efficient in providing law enforcement services while continuing to develop safe neighborhoods through transparency in our community.

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## **Project Description**

### **I. Statement of the Problem**

The City of Fort Pierce is located in Saint Lucie County on the east coast of South Florida, and encompasses a total of 29 square miles. Historically, Fort Pierce has suffered from disproportionate levels of crime, particularly violent crime, when compared to other jurisdictions nationwide. So much so, that the FBI listed Fort Pierce as number nine (9) on its list of the most dangerous cities in Florida (2014), and the Huffington Post listed Fort Pierce as the 64th most dangerous city in the nation. The law enforcement agency responsible for addressing the high levels of crime that have caused Fort Pierce to appear on these lists is the Fort Pierce Police Department (FPPD). The FPPD has 36 support staff and 121 sworn officers who provide law enforcement, crime prevention, and protective services to the 42,000 residents of Fort Pierce, Florida. The FPPD is committed to its motto “In Honor We Serve” and is dedicated to providing a safe and secure place for families and businesses to live, thrive, prosper, and grow. Although the City experienced a recent reduction in overall crime, the Lincoln Park Community continues to suffer violent crime, gang activity, and a lack of trust in law enforcement.

### **II. Project Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to increase the FPPD's capacity to be more effectively proactive in violent crime related matters, continue to develop safer neighborhoods, and build community trust and partnership through transparency. In order to execute appropriate proactive measures, additional capital equipment will be necessary.

In an historical review, in 2008, the City of Fort Pierce experienced a drastic reduction in revenues generated from ad valorem taxes. As a result, City Departments were required to implement annual spending reduction plans in order to lower operating and personnel costs to meet budget

shortfalls. The yearly spending reduction plans implemented regarding the police department from 2008 – 2011 resulted in a \$4 million budget decrease, which has remained to date. As a result, the police department has lacked capital funding to maintain or purchase essential technological driven equipment to combat criminal activity for safer neighborhoods.

Recognizing the strained relationship in the Lincoln Park Community, the FPPD is increasingly looking for ways to use technology in order to increase efficiency and transparency in the performance of our duties. The budgeted items proposed in this project will enable a more transparent, tactical and proactive approach in crime reduction, while increasing the likelihood of solving crimes and arresting suspects in a more timely fashion. This will allow the residents to see the efforts toward crime reduction and enhance the confidence in the police department as we build a safer community together.

### **III. Budget**

**Grand Total: \$500,000**

#### **A. Security Camera Equipment (39 units and 1 storage unit)**

**\$320,000**

The security camera equipment systems will consist of both stationary and portable units, and a storage unit for the data gathered. These camera systems will be covert. They will serve multiple purposes including enhanced safety, deterrence of crime, aid in the rapid response to disturbances, use as an investigative tool in crimes, and use as a transparency resource to resolve complaints.

The security camera systems will also be provided to small businesses and homeowners throughout the Lincoln Park Community. Many of these owners have been victimized by illegal activity around their business or residence. This funding would allow the FPPD to partner with approximately thirty (30) small businesses and homeowners in the Lincoln Park

Community to provide owners with overt security camera to create a safer environment for the community.

- \$100,000 5 portable covert systems (\$20,000 each)
- \$100,000 4 stationary covert systems (\$25,000 each)
- \$ 90,000 30 overt systems for small businesses and homeowners (\$3,000 each)
- \$ 30,000 software/storage

**B. In-Car Camera Systems (10 units) \$69,500**

The police department purchased ten (10) new patrol cars. The in-car cameras have become another valuable tool for police officers and show the public we are transparent in the performance of our duties. The cameras capture both intended and unintended video proving their value in an assortment of investigations and complaints from citizens. The video recordings have resulted in convictions, serve as training videos for police departments and academies, and provide a means to expedite or resolve citizen complaints. Most video provides documentation of our officers doing their jobs and conducting themselves as professionals even under adverse and hazardous conditions. The 2004 IACP In-Car Camera Study demonstrated that 97 percent of the citizens polled across the U.S. support the use of in-car cameras for law enforcement. While law enforcement views the acquisition of camera technology as a means to demonstrate their professionalism and increase officer safety, the public views cameras as a means to guard against abuse. The cameras have become “the Silent Witness.”

**C. Traffic Messages Boards (2 units) \$35,500**

The traffic message boards will be used as tools to enhance education and safety. The message boards will be positioned in areas of need to assist in reducing non-violent crimes such as

burglaries, auto burglaries, and auto thefts. Many times these crimes are precursors to more violent criminal activity. The message boards will also be used to promote crime prevention tips, job fairs, and community events.

**D. Licensing Plate Readers (LPR) (3 units) \$60,000**

Non-residents cause many of the criminal acts that occur in Fort Pierce. The License Plate Readers (LPR) system will assist in identifying criminal elements that the residents of the community may not be familiar with. The LPR's are also used to combat auto theft, recover stolen license plates, find Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) identifying information, and assist in investigations to include violent crimes and gang activity.

LPR use falls into two general categories: reactive and analytic. Reactive use involves instant alerts that may be associated with the license plate in real time and can be used for serious or longer-term criminal investigations, such as murder, narcotics, or kidnapping. Analytic use involves the exploitation of the database of stored license plates to benefit ongoing investigations. Additionally, the database can be used to search for license plates known to be associated with criminal activity, such as gang or drug networks, and provides officers with critical alerts notifications of potentially dangerous individuals.

- \$20,000      1 - mobile unit
- \$40,000      2 - fixed units

**E. Community Relations Campaign \$15,000**

In order to enhance safer neighborhoods and build community partnerships, the police department and the Lincoln Park Community need to bridge the gap between them. This gap is due to an apparent lack of trust in law enforcement. To foster a sense of community

responsibility, pride, and rebuild trust with the Lincoln Park Community, the FPPD proposes to use these funds to develop a problem solving community informational and public awareness campaign. This campaign includes community meetings, neighborhood forums, advisory committees, publications (newsletters, bulletins, posters), and public service announcements via local newspaper and other news media. The intent of the FPPD is to develop community-based cooperative relationships and include as collaborative partners the following:

- Young Adults of the Lincoln Park Community
- Parents , particularly parents of victims and offenders
- Community Residents and Leaders
- Local Support Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses
- Pastors and Clergy from local religious organizations
- Coaches and Assistants from area teams/leagues
- Local Law Enforcement and Federal Partners when needed

#### **IV. Area Served – Lincoln Park Community**

This Ongoing Project will serve the Lincoln Park Community which is continuously experiencing violent crimes, to include gang activity, gun violence, and mistrust of law enforcement. Although Lincoln Park is approximately a three square mile area of the City's approximately 29 square miles, these concerns disproportionately effects the citizens and business owners in that community in comparison to the rest of the city. Evidence suggests that a focused approach in this geographic area will help leverage resources and make a greater, measurable impact.

The racial and ethnic composition of Lincoln Park is:

- 91% African American,
- 9% White
- 6% Hispanic/Latino

## **V. Economic Overview of Lincoln Park**

Lincoln Park residents face a dire economic environment:

- 28% of households earn an income of less than \$10,000
- 16% of the labor force is unemployed
- 37% of households receive Food Stamp/ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

## **VI. Economic Impact**

The accomplishments and triumphs experienced in the Lincoln Park Community will directly and positively impact the economy not only in the targeted community but also the entire City of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County.

## **VII. Conclusion**

This ‘work in progress’, is designed to reduce violent crime in the Lincoln Park Community, provide transparency in police services and build trust and community partnership. The rewards of this project from humanistic and statistical vantage points will include a reduction in violent crime and gang related activity, serve to build a safer community, develop trust in law enforcement, and provide an overall benefit of safety to all the citizens and visitors to the City of Fort Pierce.