



**ESCAMBIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
Pensacola, Florida

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**Ron McNesby, Sheriff**

## Operation Brownsville

Not in Escambia County. Not in Pensacola. Not in my Neighborhood.

On February 8, 2007, the Escambia Sheriff's Office, working with several other county agencies, began Operation Brownsville. The operation targeted a 40 block core area in the Brownsville Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) for a joint enforcement effort that targeted the following concerns:

Crime	Escambia Sheriff's Office
Dilapidated Structures	Escambia Code Enforcement
Refuse on roads	Escambia County Road Department

The design of Operation Brownsville from a law enforcement perspective was to send a message to the individuals that were involved in drug dealing, prostitution, and other criminal activity that those types of activities were not going to be tolerated, and that violations were going to be vigorously enforced. To accomplish this plan, officers would be a visible deterrent as well as conduct enforcement activities.

Additionally, the objective was to remove garbage and clean vacant lots, and where appropriate, either force property owners to clean their area, or obtain the legal authority to enter and clean the property.

**Scanning**

Escambia County, known as the Western Gate to the Sunshine State, is the first stop for people traveling to Florida from the west. The county is bordered on the south by the Gulf of Mexico, the east by Santa Rosa County, and the north and west by Alabama. It covers approximately 661 square miles of land, has an additional 64,000 acres of waterways and an approximate population of 300,000.

Escambia County has grown, and as happens throughout the country, older communities are absorbed into a metropolitan area. In Escambia County, the metropolitan area is known as Pensacola. The smaller communities that have been absorbed are still known by their original names, such as Ensley, Brownsville, Myrtle Grove, Beulah, etc. In many cases, families bought homes and raised their families in these communities because of the desirable atmosphere and living conditions. Some parts of these communities have fallen into disrepair and are infested with drug dealing, prostitution, and other violent crimes and these original homeowners now find themselves living in areas that are not the same community that they moved to years ago.

One area of Escambia County known as Brownsville had fallen into disrepair and was infested with drug dealing, prostitution, and other violent crimes. A tour of the Brownsville area quickly showed that there were homeowners and residents that still took pride in their homes and yards. Just as quickly, however, it is obvious that there were many vacant homes and buildings, overgrown vacant lots that had not been cleaned in recent years, garbage of all sorts piled on the right of ways, and clusters of young people on street corners. In some cases, the drug dealers openly sold drugs in the street, at times causing traffic to stop until the drug transaction is complete.

## **The Final Straw**

On January 18, 2007, a group of young people were standing around at a convenience store in the Brownsville area. A customer drove up to cash his check and left the driver's door unlocked. This group had made a decision to rob this customer when he returned with the cash. They opened the driver's door and unlocked all of the doors on the car. When the customer returned to his car and got in, one of the group armed with a weapon got into the car in the backseat. Another member of the group got into the front seat with the customer. The scene was set for the robbery, and the individual in the back seat attempted to shoot the victim and missed. This allowed the customer to escape from his car and keep his money. This attempted robbery, including a gunshot, took place in daylight, there were other customers arriving at the establishment, and one individual that was walking in the parking watched the group unlock the car. No call reporting this incident was made until the victim returned to his vehicle after being shot at and called.

A camera installed by the Sheriff's Office captured the entire incident. The camera was utilized to identify the offenders and a timely arrest was made resulting in admissions by the violators.

While this incident was closed with arrests, the fact is that this incident could easily have been a homicide committed by a group of youth that had no fear of committing this type of act in the middle of the day on a heavily traveled road in the Brownsville area. An especially disturbing part of incident was watching a young boy, elementary school age, mingle and be accepted as a part of this group that attempted to rob a person. This crime

problem does not appear to be headed to an end any time soon when parents allow their children to be associated with groups of young criminals like this one.

This incident certainly was not an isolated event, but capturing the entire episode on camera presented a visual picture of the brazen and casual attitude towards committing a crime and if necessary, killing another human being. And people watched and did nothing.

Thus, the conclusion: not in Escambia County, not in Pensacola, not in the Brownsville neighborhood.

## Analysis

Brownsville had a continuous problem with prostitution since the early 1980's. Drugs has been a problem too, but became more prevalent in recent years. The Brownsville area was plagued with drug dealing, prostitution, robberies, burglaries, home invasions, buildings in various states of despair, vacant lots that are unkempt, and garbage abandoned throughout the area.

The Sheriff's Office designed a process to retrieve crime information from the 40 block core area originally targeted for Operation Brownsville. Calls for service were tracked for five (5) months prior to the beginning of Operation Brownsville.

<b>Category</b>	<b>5 Months Prior</b>
Calls for Service	1916
Drug Arrests	49
Aggravated Assaults	7
Robbery Arrests	8
Burglary Arrests	7
Total Arrests	144

## **Historical Brownsville Attention**

The Brownsville area has been targeted for attention several times in the past. This attention has involved the Escambia Sheriff's Office, the Escambia County Road Camp, and Code Enforcement. The following summaries reflect historic efforts that generally cover a period of time from shortly after Hurricane Ivan (September 2004) until August 2006.

### **Escambia Sheriff's Office**

The Escambia Sheriff's Office responds to over 250,000 calls each year for service throughout the county. During the period of July 2006 through the end of January 2007, the Escambia Sheriff's Office made 70 arrests in the Brownsville area. Green Street accounted for 20 of those arrests including 11 for narcotics violations. There were 45 offense reports completed for Green Street during this time. Garnet Circle produced 6 arrests of which 4 were for narcotics violations. Mobile Highway produced 32 arrests, of which 13 were for narcotics violations.

The Escambia Sheriff's Office Narcotics Unit initiated a narcotics investigation that targeted an organization that was supplying the Brownsville area with drugs. This long term investigation continued to the juncture where there was enough probable cause to initiate a wire tap. The wire tap and other investigative efforts resulted in 40 arrests, 15 vehicles seized, \$56,966.25 seized, 8 firearms seized, and the execution of 17 search warrants. A quantity of cocaine, marijuana and other assorted drugs were also seized as a result of this investigation.

The above summaries reflect the two methods of attacking the drug problem in the area: the street level approach which takes violators off of the street corner, and the long term approach which targets organizations that supply drugs. Both methods are important and produce a desired result.

### **Office of Environmental Enforcement (Code Enforcement)**

The Office of Environmental Enforcement currently has 18 officers for the entire county. The office typically handles 10,000 - 15,000 complaints a year. They have 44 open cases in the target area.

### **Escambia County Road Camp/Roads and Bridges Division**

The Roads and Bridges Division and the Road Prison share a compound in the Cantonment area. The Roads and Bridges Division maintains the county's network of roads and storm water drainage systems. Additionally, they do all the mowing, road shoulder repair, right-of-way clearing, tree cutting, and fence maintenance throughout the County. They operate from two locations: the main camp in Cantonment and a camp near the town of Century in the northern end of the County.

The County Road Camp provides the labor force for Roads and Bridges from an inmate population housed at the Road Camp.

The Roads and Bridges Division cleaned refuse from the targeted area at least 10 times with the assistance of the Road Camp inmates. These efforts resulted in the removal of cubic yards of refuse from vacant lots and right of ways and expending many work hours.

## **Conclusion**

Drug dealers, armed robbers, prostitutes and pimps had taken over the area. Crimes were committed openly without fear. Some residents were afraid to go outside of their homes. Others became complacent and stood by and watched as major crimes were committed and lives were threatened. Children wanted to associate with the criminals. Many buildings were in various states of despair. Vacant lots were unkempt and garbage had been abandoned throughout the area. A collaborative community corrective action was needed.

## **Response**

Operation Brownsville was a continuation of the efforts that have been ongoing by the Sheriff's Office, the Road Camp/Roads and Bridges, and Code Enforcement. The difference this time is that it was a joint effort, planned and executed jointly in an attempt to do three things:

1. Make a statement that drug dealers, prostitutes and other criminals are not welcome and will not be allowed to continue to operate in the area.
2. Property owners will realize that allowing their property to become a haven for illegal activity will not be tolerated.
3. If property owners do not take care of their responsibilities, the county will take the steps necessary to demolish their buildings, haul them away and file a lien on the property, and to come on private property and clean it up, again filing a lien on the property.

## **Concept of Operations**

This operation was a joint endeavor between:

- ◆ Escambia Sheriff's Office
- ◆ Office of Environmental Enforcement
- ◆ County Road Department
- ◆ County Property Appraiser

## **Agency Objectives**

### **Escambia Sheriff's Office**

Provide security as needed for the operation

Provide 24/7 coverage with marked cruisers in target area for the duration of the operation

Provide a Mobile Command Post as an operational headquarters

Provide Incident Action Plan (Operational Plan)

Provide call history to support the Office of Environmental Enforcement as needed

Provide staffing for the command post

Provide portable lighting as needed

Provide air coverage and support as appropriate

Provide inmate labor and equipment to clear vacant lots

Provide Incident Commander for the operation

Provide logistical support as appropriate

Provide record keeping for operation

Produce after action report

**Escambia County Road Camp**

- Provide crews of inmates to assist where needed
- Provide heavy equipment for clearing lots and right of ways
- Provide mowers and other small tools to clear vegetation
- Provide reports of daily activity
- Provide operational control over road and bridges operations

**Office of Environmental Enforcement (Appendix B)**

- Arrange for legal process regarding vacant buildings for destruction
- Arrange for legal process to conduct cleanup of private property
- Arrange for contractual removal of condemned buildings
- Oversee removal of buildings as appropriate

**OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

The operational objectives are to provide a concentrated law enforcement presence in the area for the duration of the operation. The Sheriff's Office will provide their Command Bus which will be positioned to provide a centralized location for operational needs. The Command Bus will be staffed to provide support for the Sheriff's Office as well as the other Escambia County agencies participating in the operation. The Sheriff's Office will attempt to locate the remaining 10 fugitives from the wire tap previously conducted. The Sheriff's Office will continue to review intelligence reports from various sources for information on criminal activity that may have originated or destined to the affected area.

The property that will be cleaned up includes right of way, and private property. The

objective is to remove garbage and clean vacant lots, and where appropriate, either force property owners to clean their area, or obtain the legal authority to enter and clean the property. Buildings that are vacant and are condemned will be torn down and hauled away.

This operation is not about numbers of arrests, but rather a unified approach to a community that needs help in taking back their neighborhood from criminals, and cleaning the area to remove areas that are conducive to criminal activity.

## **Results**

### **Original 40 Block Area**

#### **Drug Violations**

The statistics reflect that during the five months prior to Operation Brownsville, officers made 49 arrests for drugs in the 40 block core area. During Operation Brownsville there were 32 arrests for drugs. The numbers also reflect that during the five months since Operation Brownsville, officers have made only 20 arrests for drugs. Obviously there are still drug violations occurring, but the frequency that officers encounter these situations has dropped since Operation Brownsville. Again, the increased numbers of officers present as a visible deterrent and taking enforcement actions is making a difference.

#### **Aggravated Assault**

The number of arrests for aggravated assault has increased from 7 for the 5 months prior to Operation Brownsville to 14 for the five months after Operation Brownsville. This is a 100% increase in arrests from the five months prior to Operation Brownsville. Again, the increased numbers of officers present is making a difference in these crimes against

persons.

### **Robbery**

There were 8 arrests for robbery for the five months prior to Operation Brownsville, and only 1 for the 5 months after Operation Brownsville. Again, the increased number of officers present is making a difference in the number of robberies.

### **Burglaries**

There were 7 arrests for burglary for the five month prior to Operation Brownsville, and only 3 for the five months after Operation Brownsville. Again, the increased number of officers present is making a difference.

### **Number of Calls**

There were 1916 calls handled for the five months prior to Operation Brownsville, and 2304 calls for the five months after Operation Brownsville.

### **Continuing Operation**

While the original operation was in progress, negotiations were under way to establish a Brownsville Annex Precinct.

On March 19, 2007 the Escambia Sheriff's Office began a second phase of Operation Brownsville by opening a precinct annex staffing it with a Sergeant and two Deputy Sheriff's. The assigned staff was supplemented with officers assigned to the adjoining districts.

As a result of Operation Brownsville, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) made the decision to make funding available to the Escambia Sheriff's Office to hire off duty deputies to expand the focus beyond the original 40 block core area to the entire Brownsville CRA.

This funding became available and the next phase of Operation Brownsville began on September 7, 2007, with hiring off duty deputy sheriff's to work shifts in the Brownsville CRA to further supplement the enforcement efforts already in place. The schedule focus was to hire 1 extra officer for the 8A-4P shift; 3 officers for the 4P-12M shift; and 1 officer to work the 9P-5A shift.

## **Summary**

One result of the increased numbers of officers in the area is an increase in the number of calls that are handled. Some of the increase is due to simply more officers being present, and these officers are making self initiated contacts in addition to the calls that they are dispatched to handle.

An example of this is the number of Citizen Assists, (1,458), that occurred between March 19, 2007 and the beginning of the supplemental funding in September 2007. Another example is the number of suspicious persons/vehicles, (1,014), that occurred during this same time.

Another possible reason is that the citizens in the area realize there are officers assigned to the area, and they feel confident that when they call, there will be an officer close by to address their concern.

The improvement in Brownsville is certainly not limited to the crime problem, but also

the refuse, dilapidated buildings and general appearance of the area that has improved dramatically. The memories of the expressions of gratitude from the Brownsville residents; the food brought to the command bus by residents; and people out cleaning up their yards have all been dimmed somewhat by time. The fact is that the joint efforts to address the Brownsville area have made a difference.

No amount of police presence can make a city or a community crime free. The Sheriff's Office is continuing to aggressively address the crime problems in Brownsville, and will continue to do so. Calls for service will be handled regardless of who calls, or what the call involves.

Due to the success of Operation Brownsville, other Community Redevelopment Areas in Escambia County are planning similar operations.

## Appendix A

# Statistics

Category	Mar - Sept 2007
<b>Suspicious Persons</b>	1014
<b>Citizen Assists</b>	1458
<b>Agency Assists</b>	196
<b>Warrant Service Attempts</b>	58
<b>Warrant Services</b>	120
<b>Traffic Stops</b>	537
<b>Traffic Stop Arrests</b>	37
<b>DUI Arrests</b>	3
<b>Narcotics Arrests</b>	37
<b>Weapons Arrests</b>	0
<b>Prostitution Arrests</b>	8
<b>Total Arrests</b>	253
<b>Total Calls</b>	4818

Reportable Category	Oct-Dec 2007	Jan-Mar 2008
<b>Assists to Citizens</b>	516	489
<b>Suspicious Persons</b>	776	599
<b>Neighborhood Watch Checks</b>	763	796
<b>Warrant Service</b>	155	180
<b>Aggravated Assault Arrests</b>	14	8
<b>Simple Assault Arrests</b>	40	2
<b>Drugs Arrests</b>	64	35
<b>Weapons Arrests</b>	4	3
<b>Burglary Arrests</b>	7	9
<b>Prostitution Arrests</b>	6	15
<b>Traffic Offense (Other or Arrest)</b>	622	608
<b>DUI</b>	10	9
<b>Total Reported Arrests</b>	237	222
<b>Off Duty Officer Calls for Service</b>	2851	2721
<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	5657	5293

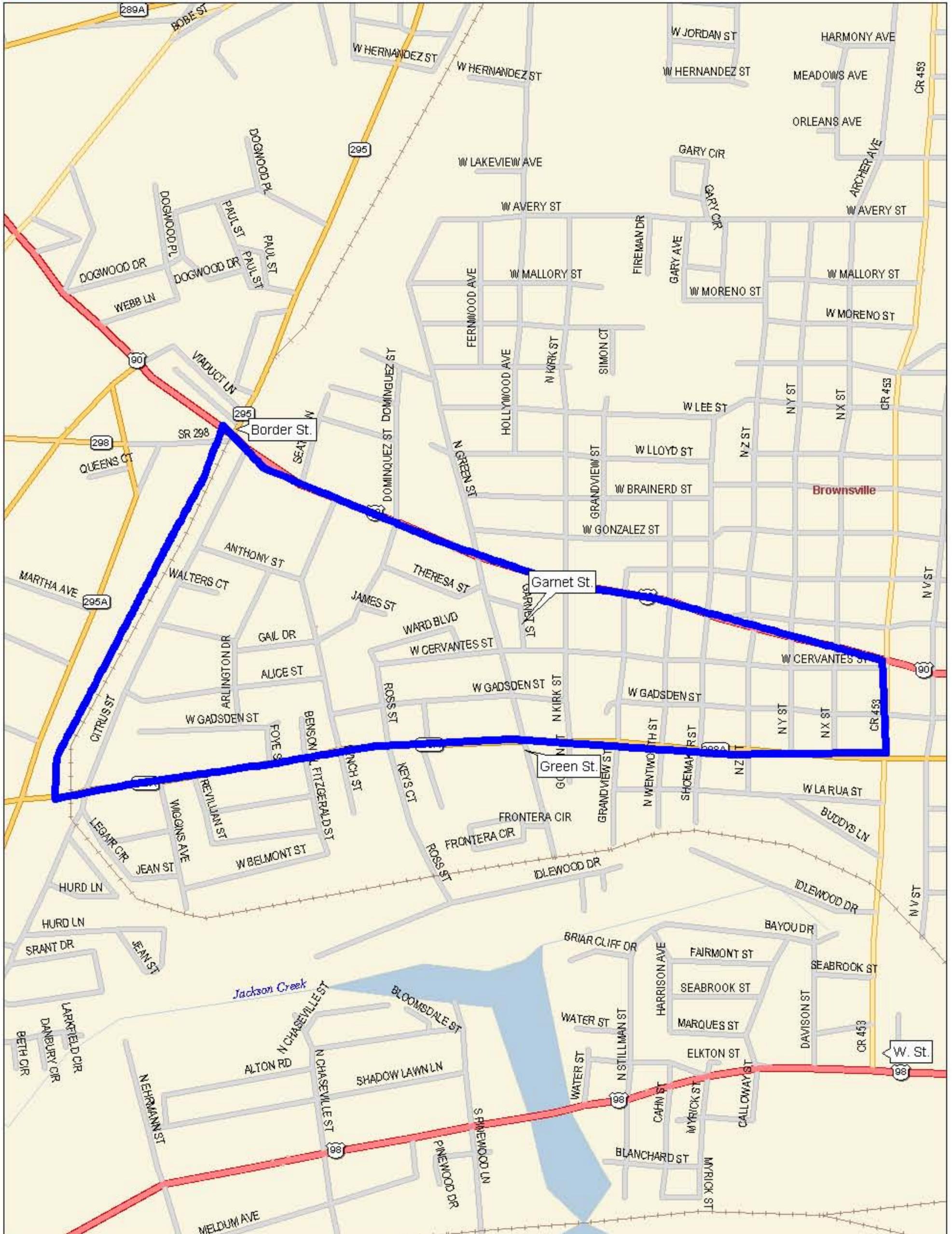
Operation Brownsville Cumulative Totals  
02/08/2007 – 03/10/2008

<b>Reportable Category</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Suspicious Persons/Vehicles</b>	3351
<b>Assists to Citizens</b>	3280
<b>Agency Assists</b>	637
<b>Warrant Service Attempts</b>	157
<b>Warrant Service</b>	355
<b>Traffic Stops</b>	1978
<b>Traffic Arrests</b>	104
<b>DUI</b>	18
<b>Narcotics Arrests</b>	148
<b>Weapons Arrests</b>	5
<b>Prostitution Arrests</b>	65
<b>Miscellaneous Arrests</b>	162
<b>Total Arrests</b>	857
<b>Miscellaneous Calls</b>	3314
<b>Total Calls for Service</b>	14,144

## **Appendix B**

### **Timeframes for Issuing Violation Notices**

- ◆ Unsanitary Conditions (Household garbage) 24 hours
- ◆ Obstruction of Right of Way 24 hours
- ◆ Overgrowth 5 days
- ◆ Inoperable Vehicle(s) 5 days
- ◆ Trash and Debris 5 days
- ◆ Dilapidated Structures 10 days











# Campaign proves to be a success



She's pulling weeds in her yard as a member of the county's Operation Brownsville campaign.

and other ways of transporting funds to a number of the county's most in-need areas. The campaign is expected to last through the end of the year, with the goal of making the county a safer place to live.

## Sheriff: We won't lose Brownsville

**By [Name]**  
Brownsville

The Brownsville Sheriff's Office has a lot of work to do in the coming weeks, according to Sheriff [Name].

"We're going to be busy with the [Name] case, and we're going to be busy with the [Name] case," Sheriff [Name] said.

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### Coming Sunday

A group of the community and other groups are planning a [Name] event on Sunday.

• [Name] will be the main attraction.

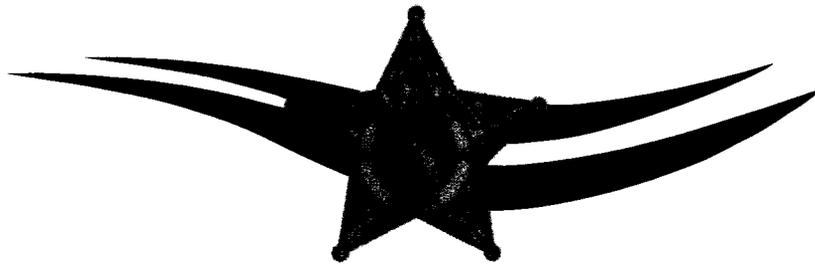






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**ESCAMBIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Ron McNesby, Sheriff

June 2, 2008

Rob T. Guerette, Ph.D  
School of Criminal Justice  
Florida International University  
University Park, PCA 366B  
11200 S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, FL 33199

RE: 2008 Herman Goldstein Award

Dear Mr. Guerette:

Attached is the Escambia Sheriff's Office submission for the 2008 Herman Goldstein Award. It is my great honor to submit this nomination on behalf of the men and women of the Escambia Sheriff's Office, the Office of Environmental Enforcement, and the Escambia County Road Camp/Road and Bridges Division. The members of these agencies conducted a life-changing, community project in one of our most troubled areas.

Operation Brownsville transformed an area that was a drug-infested, prostitute alley with buildings in various states of despair, unkempt vacant lots, and abandoned garbage into a livable community once again.

The collaborative effort of several agencies made the difference and is one of the most effective Community Policing Projects I have seen. Due to the success of Operation Brownsville, other Community Redevelopment Areas in Escambia County are planning similar projects.

I am proud to represent the Escambia Sheriff's Office in the submission of this application for the Herman Goldstein Award.

Sincerely,

RON MCNESBY, SHERIFF  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Enclosure