

Sheriff has no place to store seized vehicles

By Tona Kunz Daily Herald Staff Writer

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Naperville police have more than 100 impounded vehicles stored throughout the city.

Oak Brook stopped seizing vehicles because there was nowhere to put them.

By law, the DuPage County sheriff's police is supposed to house those impounded vehicles, but the sheriff's lot off County Farm Road in Wheaton is full. Agreements have had to be made with local police to help out.

The sheriff says that constitutes a problem. Not everyone agrees.

The sheriff's office, which owns no land, has been pleading with the county board for more than a month to find space to store 300 overflow vehicles. Officials asked for help again Tuesday.

"That is not our problem," said Patrick O'Shea of Lombard, public safety committee chairman. "We are not going to drive around the county and find him a spot."

The sheriff last month suggested building the impound lot near the wastewater treatment plant adjacent to the Greene Valley Forest Preserve near Naperville, but was quickly shot down. County and local officials said the lot would detract from the preserve and nearby neighborhoods.

The sheriff's office has no other spots in mind, a spokesman said.

Not all police departments are worried about that. West Chicago police officials said they have room to store the one vehicle a month they seize.

Oak Brook would consider seizing more cars if the county had room, but officials aren't sure it's worth it. The state allowed police departments to seize vehicles starting in July 2002, but it didn't turn out to be the revenue boom many hoped.

Many of the vehicles are "beaters," said detective Sgt. Jeff Weber and their sale barely covers the seizure costs.

"We stopped seizing vehicles in April 2003 and we are still trying to get rid of them."