

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AN OPEN INVESTIGATION

Exploring Police Consolidation in Milwaukee County's North Shore



WISCONSIN
POLICY FORUM

Over the past decade, the Wisconsin Policy Forum (WPF) has conducted more than a dozen service sharing and consolidation studies for local governments seeking to explore the benefits of collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions. These governments approached us for a variety of reasons, including the hope of creating new efficiencies that might reduce the cost of service upgrades.

Perhaps no area in the state has been more successful in recognizing the benefits of service sharing and consolidation than Milwaukee County’s North Shore, which has seen its seven municipalities consolidate fire, public health, and dispatch services. However, while being subject to several previous studies by individual communities, police is one of the few large functional areas that has not been consolidated.

In late 2021, the city of Glendale’s mayor approached WPF to re-examine this issue. After consulting with top elected officials and managers at the six other North Shore municipalities and confirming their openness to a study, WPF and city officials agreed on a research plan to model options for a consolidated North Shore Police Department (NSPD) and broadly assess its financial and service-level impacts.

In this high-level analysis, we lay out the factors that should be considered when it comes to police consolidation in Milwaukee’s North Shore. We do not endorse any one plan or model, but hope this report will be instructive to leaders in the seven communities as they seek to provide high-quality law enforcement services at a reasonable price for their citizens.

Overview of Participating Agencies

Each North Shore municipality operates a police department that is headquartered within its own boundaries. The combined sworn strength of the seven departments is 162 full-time-equivalent employees (FTEs), ranging from 11 in River Hills to 41 in Glendale (see table below for more detail). The majority of those FTEs – 95 in total – are general patrol officers.

Sworn strength staffing overview

Department	Total FTEs	Patrol FTEs	Sergeant FTEs	Command FTEs*	Other FTEs**
Bayside	13	9	0	1	3
Brown Deer	31	17	6	3	5
Fox Point	17	10	4	2	1
Glendale	41	23	6	3	9
River Hills	11	7	2	2	0
Shorewood	25	14	6	3	2
Whitefish Bay	24	15	4	3	2
TOTAL	162	95	28	17	22

* Command staff includes chiefs, captains, and lieutenants that have command or administrative assignments.

** Other includes detectives, community liaison and school resource officers, and some lieutenant positions that are not “command” in nature but instead are part of a patrol bureau.

The North Shore departments all organize their patrol officers by three shifts – day shift (around 7am to 3pm), early shift (around 11pm to 7am), and night/late shift (around 3pm to 11pm). We asked the chiefs to provide their best guess with regard to average staffing on each shift, and the ranges they provided are summarized below.



- Day shift: 2 in Fox Point, River Hills, and Shorewood to 5 in Glendale;
- Early shift: 2 in Fox Point and River Hills to 5 in Glendale;
- Late shift: 2 in Fox Point, River Hills, and Shorewood to 3.5 in Glendale.

In total, on an average day in the North Shore there are 20.5 patrol officers on the day shift, 22.5 patrol officers on the early shift, and 17.0 patrol officers on the late shift.

Collectively, the seven departments also employ 18.3 non-sworn staff, or civilians. Their breakdown is shown in the table below.

Non-sworn staff

	Clerks	Community Service Officers	Admin	Total
River Hills	-	-	0.3	0.3
Bayside	-	-	0.7	0.7
Fox Point	-	-	1.0	1.0
Shorewood	1.0	2.0	1.0	4.0
Whitefish Bay	1.0	2.0	-	3.0
Brown Deer	2.0	-	1.0	3.0
Glendale	5.3	-	1.0	6.3
Total	9.3	4.0	5.0	18.3

Service Demand

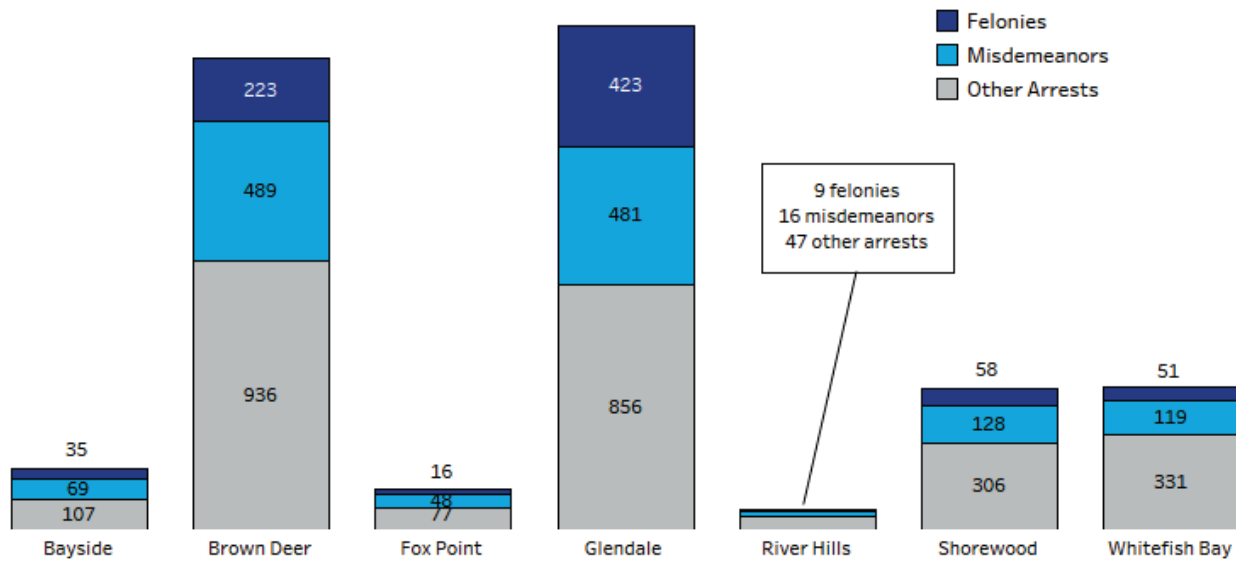
The Bayside Communications Center handles calls for all seven North Shore police departments and logged 66,563 individual events in 2021. By far, two departments logged more of those events than the other five: Glendale (16,802) and Brown Deer (15,491). Fox Point (5,900) and River Hills (5,872) had the fewest events; the other three departments all fell between 6,000 and 9,000.

Together, traffic stops (18,615) and vacation/business checks (10,373) accounted for 43.5% of all events logged in 2021. This shows that a substantial portion of patrol work in the North Shore involves “officer-initiated” activities or other activities that do not involve calls from citizens that may necessitate an immediate response. It also reflects a sentiment voiced by chiefs that responding to various resident needs outside of immediate and direct response to crime-related incidents – as well as simply maintaining a visible presence – are top priorities of police in the North Shore.

In 2021, the seven North Shore police departments made 4,825 arrests. The vast majority – 3,408, or 70.6% - occurred either in Glendale (1,760) or Brown Deer (1,648). Only two other departments – Whitefish Bay (501) and Shorewood (492) – averaged even one arrest per day (see figure below).



Arrests in the North Shore, 2021 Data



Far more frequently than they arrested people, the North Shore departments issued citations. The seven departments combined in 2021 to issue 23,241 citations, or nearly five times the number of arrests. Just over half of this combined amount involved traffic-related citations: 11,721, or 50.4%.

Finally, North Shore departments frequently collaborate when it comes to responding to calls for service, especially in cases that require more capacity than a single department can handle. Glendale logged the most “Assist Other Agency” calls in 2021 (309), but five of the remaining six departments logged at least 180 calls under that designation. This indicates that mutual aid is given or received by most departments on a majority of days each year (including mutual aid to and from departments adjacent to the North Shore, like Milwaukee and Mequon).

Modeling a North Shore Police Department

The key questions in considering what a consolidated North Shore Police Department (NSPD) might look like are how the department would be staffed and how staff would be deployed across the North Shore. The answers to those questions are not driven solely by demographics or crime rates, but also by several less quantifiable factors such as:

- *perceptions* of crime in the community
- *perceptions* regarding the benefit of police patrols as a method of deterring crime
- the prioritization of public safety relative to other needs
- the willingness of municipalities and their citizens to spend on public safety services

We gleaned helpful context for our modeling from a review of six Wisconsin police departments that serve communities that are similar in population and other characteristics to the North Shore (see the table on the following page). Those departments have an average of 112 sworn officers – 50 fewer than the collective number in the North Shore. That is explained partly by the fact that the North Shore’s seven individual departments are unable to achieve economies of scale realized by larger departments.



Characteristics of comparable cities and police departments

	Population	Crime Rate (per 1,000 population)*	Area (square miles)	Sworn Officers
North Shore	67,695	57.3	24.6	162.0
Appleton	74,255	61.4	25.3	113.0
Eau Claire	69,086	68.7	34.1	99.0
Janesville	64,682	61.4	34.8	105.0
Oshkosh	66,753	52.3	28.0	105.0
Waukesha	72,419	25.9	25.8	124.0
West Allis	59,778	85.6	25.3	126.6

* Includes crimes against persons, property, and society
Source: WI Incident Based Reporting System, 2021

Police consolidation studies often use a “workload staffing model” that considers how much time officers ideally should be spending on community-generated calls that require an immediate response versus conducting officer-initiated activities, responding to non-emergency citizen requests, or simply patrolling the streets. For smaller departments, however, which have lower call volumes and perhaps higher expectations with regard to police visibility and community engagement, a model based on minimum staffing may be more appropriate. In light of this divergence, we decided to create two hypothetical models for a consolidated North Shore Police Department:

- Model 1** represents a “status quo” scenario with regard to patrols. It maintains the identical patrol capacity in each of the seven communities that exists today. This model reflects the input we received from chiefs and village/city managers and administrators regarding minimum staffing and their perceptions of citizen expectations. Consolidation still presents some efficiencies since a larger department would be able to reduce the number of command staff, patrol supervisors, and non-sworn staff.
- Model 2** reduces patrol capacity in light of the ability to organize patrols without regard for municipal boundaries and adds other capabilities that may improve police response. Patrol staffing levels are based on a workload staffing model that reflects what we would deem to be an appropriate ratio of community-generated versus officer-initiated and non-emergency police activities in the North Shore. Again, additional efficiencies are achieved through reductions in command staff, shift supervisors, and non-sworn staff, but we add several positions that hold potential to enhance police services.

While our models provide details on personnel-related fiscal impacts, **we do not provide cost estimates and comparisons for other elements of the hypothetical consolidated department – such as those associated with vehicles, facilities, supplies, and commodities – because of the highly speculative nature of such estimates.** Those who would like to see greater detail on the assumptions and calculations behind each model should refer to the full report.



Model 1: Retain Current Patrol Capacity

As noted above, Model 1 assumes the status quo in terms of patrol capacity, but it adjusts command staff, sergeants, and non-sworn staff to reflect economies of scale from consolidation. The table below summarizes the sworn staffing levels in Model 1 and shows sworn officer FTEs are reduced by 16 from today's collective level, from 162 to 146.

Model 1, sworn staff

<i>Command</i>	Current	Model 1
Chief	7	1
Assistant Chief	0	1
Captain	6	3
Lieutenant	4	3
<i>Patrol</i>		
Lieutenant	8	3
Sergeant	28	20
Officer	95	101
<i>Other Sworn</i>		
Detective	9	9
Community Liaison/School Resource Officer	5	5
Total Sworn	162	146

Some important notes associated with this model include the following:

- To maintain existing patrol capacity, we actually increase the current number of patrol officers in the North Shore to 101. This adjustment reflects the current use by some departments of sergeants and lieutenants (and even more senior command staff) to patrol occasionally. We do not anticipate such usage in the larger consolidated department so we added six patrol officers.
- The number of sergeants in our model is reduced from the current 28 to 20. This reflects a commonly accepted standard of one sergeant supervising every five officers on patrol.
- Command staff is reduced from 17 to 8. Our model includes one assistant chief, three captains, and three lieutenants who would have general administrative or department-wide responsibilities but generally no supervisory responsibility over patrol shifts.

We also envision a patrol framework that would divide the North Shore into two patrol bureaus: one covering Bayside, Fox Point, and River Hills with the same number of officers that patrol those communities today, and the other covering the remaining communities. Officers patrolling in one bureau would not respond to incidents in the area covered by the other bureau unless an emergency incident necessitated such a move. Such a framework would seek to ensure the smaller communities that the higher number of incidences in the larger communities would not result in a reduced number of patrols in their jurisdictions.

With regard to non-sworn staff, we examined administrative staffing for the North Shore Fire Department (NSFD) as well as the comparison police departments to model the support staff that would be required for our hypothetical NSPD (see table on following page).



Model 1, non-sworn staff

	Current	Model 1
Admin Assistant	5.0	2.0
Records/Property Clerk	9.3	6.0
Community Service Officer	4.0	3.0
Records Supervisor	0	1.0
Finance/HR Dir	0	1.0
HR Specialist	0	1.0
Fleet Manager	0	1.0
Mechanic	0	1.0
IT Specialist	0	1.0
Total	18.3	17.0

It was necessary to add several administrative and other positions to reflect our assumption that the NSPD – like the NSFD – would be a freestanding department. Those include a finance/human resources director and HR specialist, an information technology specialist, and a fleet manager and mechanic. The creation of these positions in the NSPD would reduce workload in each of the seven municipal governments and create possibilities for eliminating certain staff positions, but because we cannot reliably determine those estimated savings, our model does not include them.

We applied an average salary schedule to the number of FTEs for each position category to calculate an estimated salary cost for our model NSPD. We also added an estimated overtime cost, which reflects a 15% reduction in current collective budgeted overtime costs in light of a larger department's increased ability to redeploy staff to cover for unanticipated time off; and a fringe benefit cost, which we estimate at 43.4% of salary costs based on the current average. This yields a total estimated annual personnel cost of just under \$22 million, which represents an estimated annual savings of \$677,000 from current collective personnel expenditures, as shown below.

Model 1, estimated annual personnel cost

	Current	Model 1
Sworn Salaries	\$14,006,559	\$13,560,000
Non-Sworn Salaries	\$894,751	\$1,017,000
Overtime	\$714,000	\$606,900
Total Salaries and OT	\$15,615,310	\$15,183,900
Total Benefits	\$6,774,559	\$6,529,077
Total Personnel Expense	\$22,389,869	\$21,712,977
FTEs	162	146
Difference		(\$676,892)

It may seem counter-intuitive to see such a relatively small personnel savings given the total reduction of 16 FTEs in our model. However, the reduced savings can be explained, in part, by our use of higher average salaries for most positions than the existing departments are currently paying.



Model 2: Redesigned Police Staffing Framework

Model 2 imagines a consolidated NSPD that takes advantage of the elimination of municipal boundaries to reallocate patrol capacity while also fortifying specialized areas of police operations. We were originally inclined to apply a commonly-used standard that no more than 60% of officer time should be spent on community-generated calls and 40% on officer-initiated activities to determine appropriate patrol officer staffing. But in light of the sentiment we heard from chiefs regarding the importance of general patrol time, we instead modeled a staffing level that aims to ensure that 33% of patrol officer time is spent on community-generated calls and 67% on officer-initiated activities.

Based on that assumption, our model indicates that total patrol staffing should be 75 FTEs, or a reduction of 20 from current levels. Our use of a 5:1 ratio for sergeants to patrol officers results in a further reduction of five sergeants (to 15). We keep command staff the same but add three community liaison officers to provide additional capacity for community engagement.

Model 2, sworn staff

Command	Current	Model 1	Model 2
Chief	7	1	1
Assistant Chief	0	1	1
Captain	6	3	3
Lieutenant	4	3	3
<i>Patrol</i>			
Lieutenant	8	3	3
Sergeant	28	20	15
Officer	95	101	75
<i>Other Sworn</i>			
Detective	9	9	9
Comm. Liaison/School Resource Officer	5	5	8
Total Sworn	162	146	118

With regard to non-sworn staff, Model 2's roster grows by seven FTEs to 24 (see the table on the following page). We added three community service officers to bulk up functions like parking enforcement that do not require sworn staff. In addition, we added four non-sworn "specialized" positions that would be determined by department leadership but that could include positions like public information officer, crime analyst, or behavioral health specialist/social worker.

Model 2, non-sworn staff

	Current	Model 1	Model 2
Admin Assistant	5.0	2.0	2.0
Records/Property Clerk	9.3	6.0	6.0
Community Service Officer	4.0	3.0	6.0
Records Supervisor	0	1.0	1.0
Finance/HR Dir	0	1.0	1.0
HR Specialist	0	1.0	1.0
Fleet Manager	0	1.0	1.0
Mechanic	0	1.0	1.0
IT Specialist	0	1.0	1.0
Specialized Positions	0	0	4.0
Total	18.3	17.0	24.0



The next table shows our estimated personnel cost for Model 2 and compares the total to current personnel expenditures and those estimated for Model 1. The substantial estimated annual savings of \$3.75 million reflects the sizable reduction in patrol officer costs, which are only partially offset by the added non-sworn staff.

Model 2, estimated personnel cost

	Current	Model 1	Model 2
Sworn Salaries	\$14,006,559	\$13,560,000	\$11,011,757
Non-Sworn Salaries	\$894,751	\$1,017,000	\$1,417,000
Overtime	\$714,000	\$606,900	\$606,900
Total Salaries	\$15,615,310	\$15,183,900	\$13,086,505
Total Benefits	\$6,774,559	\$6,529,077	\$5,605,332
Total Personnel Expense	\$22,389,869	\$21,712,977	\$18,640,989
FTEs	162	146	118
Difference		(\$676,892)	(\$3,748,880)

By presenting two models, we aim to provide North Shore leaders with distinct approaches that hopefully will assist them in framing a decision on whether to pursue a consolidated department:

- **Model 1** shows that staffing efficiencies and personnel-related cost savings could be produced by consolidation even if patrol capacity is kept the same for each community. These savings are somewhat modest, however, and it is questionable whether they would overcome the perceived negative elements associated with loss of local control over police services.
- **Model 2** shows that substantial additional savings might be reasonably achieved under a patrol and staffing framework that erases municipal boundaries. This model would reduce the number of patrol officers on the street at any one time in the North Shore but it would add other capabilities that do not exist currently in most departments.

The table below shows that patrol staffing in both models still would exceed such staffing in the six comparison departments. However, consideration of these numbers also should take into account the expectations of North Shore citizens and their willingness to pay for law enforcement services.

Patrol staffing, Models 1 and 2 vs. six comparison departments

Patrol Staff	Lt	Sgt	Officer	Total Patrol
NS Model 1	3	20	101	124
NS Model 2	3	15	75	93
Appleton	12	0	60	72
Eau Claire	3	9	60	72
Janesville	3	9	65	77
Oshkosh	3	9	65	77
Waukesha	3	8	71	82
West Allis	3	9	68	80



Conclusion

One of the foremost concerns we heard from the North Shore chiefs was that efforts to take advantage of economies of scale under a single consolidated department would conflict with the expectations of North Shore elected officials and citizens with regard to police presence in their communities. We appreciate and have reflected considerably on that concern, which prompted us to develop our two distinct models.

There is no clear-cut answer as to whether consolidation should occur. In the end, the prospects for creating a single NSPD may come down to the following two questions that cannot be settled solely by number crunching and modeling nor by the preliminary analysis we have conducted:

- **How will my own community be impacted?** From a service-level perspective, a real concern for the smaller communities with regard to either model (but particularly Model 2) is that the much higher volume of calls in the larger communities would leave them with a vastly reduced patrol presence. Even Whitefish Bay and Shorewood may share that concern given their lower call volumes and comparative lack of commercial and hotel/motel activity. The question is whether those concerns could be sufficiently alleviated via the patrol framework established by the consolidated department; whether some of the service-level benefits associated with consolidation would offset those concerns; and whether the potential financial savings would make it worthwhile for the smaller and less commercialized communities to consolidate, particularly given their low crime rates and relatively high per capita police costs.
- **How important is local control?** Each of the North Shore municipalities is accustomed to deciding for itself the level of policing that its citizens desire and wish to pay for, and that element would be diminished under a consolidated department. It would be logical to assume that a freestanding Board of Directors with equal representation from each municipality would be created to govern the NSPD and establish its annual budget. On the one hand, North Shore elected officials and residents have already experienced that paradigm for other local government functions and appear to be largely satisfied with it. On the other, the differences in police service and activity levels among the seven communities – as well as distinctions regarding citizen needs and expectations – are more pronounced than for other services that have been successfully consolidated and may not be as easily accommodated for a NSPD.

Overall, we hope our analysis has provided North Shore leaders with useful and balanced information that will prompt further thought and discussion. We would be happy to assist with any further analysis or facilitation that may be helpful.

