

Public Safety Consolidation

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Executive Summary

In the years since the Great Recession of 2008, municipalities have looked for ways in which to cut spending while still providing fundamental public services that comply with the needs of the communities they serve. Naturally, attention should move to public safety which oftentimes comprises a large portion of city spending. All the while, larger entities such as counties look for ways to meet their budget needs without risking politically unpopular measures. The result has been a renewed emphasis on a process known as consolidation.

Consolidation is the process of combining and reorganizing municipal functions for the purposes of cost reduction and decreased redundancy. While dozens of municipal entities are consolidated, police and fire services are often the most public, most controversial, and the most impactful on the broader budget (Grammich & Wilson, 2012).

Consolidation, however, is not for everyone and tends to follow a pattern in its use. Cities utilizing the process tend to be small, less than 100,000 residents, and have a lower crime rate than many larger cities. The consolidation process known as contracting is particularly popular in Southern California, due in no small part to its initial founding in the City of Lakewood in the mid-1950s (Bournes & Nelligan, 2011). The public safety model of consolidation is also popular, but tends to remain most prominent near its epicenter in Michigan. This leads to the unanswered question: what are the public safety model and contracting?

The public safety model is a process of combining police and fire services into one unified entity either through a central management structure or the dual usage of officers.

- **Nominal Consolidation** involves the unification of the police and fire chief into one single Director of Public safety.
- **Functional Consolidation** involves a greater unification of the hierarchy of police and fire organizations, but still maintains a strict delineation between officer functions.
- **Partial Consolidation** involves a unified hierarchy and some officers that serve as both police and fire officials.
- **Full Consolidation** involves a unified hierarchy and a large majority of officers serving a dual function (Grammich & Wilson, 2012).

This dual functionality is done through a process known as cross training, in which police and fire officials are trained in both capacities in order to serve as the broader “public safety officer” (PSO).

The second model, contracting, involves a set agreement between two public entities to provide a public service. There are two types of contracting:

- **City-City Contracting** involves an agreement in which one city provides police or fire services to another city (Hernandez, 2013).
- **City-County Contracting** involves an agreement in which the county provides police or fire services to a city (Baca, 2009).

Both of these types of contracting are agreed to under the impetus that they reduce cost, redundancy, and maybe even improve the service being provided, but not everyone agrees that this is the result.

Contracting out requires extensive evaluation of the city’s needs. Contracting out to other government entities, also known as the Lakewood Plan, allows larger city governments to charge a per unit price. This promises and often results in cost-saving services for the contracting city in the long run (Hilvert & Swindel, 2013). The Public Safety Model also produces some benefits through cross-trained personnel, promoting efficiency among the departments which have consolidated their police and fire under one agency (Grammich, Weiss, & Wilson, 2012). Some of the implications of contracting and the public

safety model are in regards to the initial costs of the services. Cities that decide to contract out to larger city or county governments often experience high initial start-up costs and operating costs based on initial city evaluation. Overtime, cities that contract out may need to reevaluate their contracts to meet the changing needs of the community. In addition, city governments that decide to consolidate their public services using the public safety model will experience high variable costs in the short run for branding, equipment, cross training, and transitions costs. Ultimately, cities must continually evaluate the needs of their community in order to maximize utility of the services being provided (Hilvert & Swindel, 2013).

Research indicates that the general public is uncertain about the potential benefits and consequences of public safety consolidation. People tend to assume that once their public safety departments merge, the quality of services would weaken; therefore, they tend to have a negative view of consolidation (Heinonen & Wilson 2013). The general public is also unaware of some of the impacts of consolidation. Labor unions such as the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) have taken a stance against consolidation because they assert that it, among other things, leads to high costs, inadequate training, poor personnel development, and creates ineffectiveness on-the-job (Hadley & Morley 2013).

I. INTRODUCTION

Austerity: perhaps it is the word that best describes the years since the Great Recession of 2008. With a destructive decline in property values and massive job losses, the coffers of state and local governments teetered on the point of insolvency requiring public officials to make crisis-based decisions on how to balance budgets. This, compounded with the rapid increase in pension costs, left cities with little other option than to consider drastic changes to the way in which they provide services. Many municipalities saw a potential solution in public safety consolidation, a method of moving public safety services into a larger, more inclusive unit. This comes as public safety entities had suffered from continued divisions. While Canada has only 80 independent law enforcement entities, the United States has approximately 18,000 state and local law enforcement agencies (Grammich & Wilson, 2012). This massive fragmentation has advantages as many communities treasure the local control that comes with

having a local public safety agency, but with the economic crisis requiring the most stringent austerity, such treasured ideas are often reconsidered in favor of consolidating with another government entity. The process is not without controversy, but even public opinion is ignored when the monetary solvency of a municipality is at stake.

II. WHAT IS CONSOLIDATION?

Consolidation is the process of reformulating public services into a less redundant and hopefully more efficient form by combining with another governmental entity. Some forms of consolidation involve combining forces with larger size entities such as between counties and cities, while other forms of consolidation involve combining forces with similar size or internal entities within a city. While consolidation takes place in public services as wide and variant as trash delivery and district attorney services, for the purpose of this article we will focus on the consolidation of police and fire services; the most academically prominent and often most controversial of consolidation proposals (Grammich & Wilson, 2012).

SECTION 1: Where Is Consolidation Most Prominent?

There are a number of geographic considerations that correspond to the characteristic consolidated city. Most cities that opt for some sort of consolidation tend to have a population under 100,000 people, particularly with the contracting model (to be discussed later) (Bourns & Nelligan, 2011). These cities also tend to exhibit steady growth in population due in large part to the reality that a boom cycle of development may not allow for city services to adapt to changing realities (Barnett, 1973). This may or may not be anticipated since many consolidated cities begin consolidating immediately upon incorporation. In fact, the contracting model of consolidation began largely as a means by which small communities within the growing county of Los Angeles could provide necessary services without paying the extra cost incurred by cities with their own departments (Miller, 1981). Many of these cities do not exhibit patterns of increasing violent crime, and instead exhibit characteristics of cities where low crime rates mean the limited necessity of a police presence (Bourns & Nelligan, 2011).

Geographically, the areas using the two most prominent forms of consolidation, the public safety model and contracting are diverse. Beginning in Gross Point Shores, Michigan in 1911, the public safety model has largely expanded to communities in the Rust Belt extending from Minnesota to Pennsylvania (Hadley & Morley, 2013). Some communities outside of the Rust Belt such as Sunnyvale, California have utilized the public safety model, but they are largely the exception (Grammich, Wilson, & Weiss, 2011). In the West, the contracting model has expanded with a ripple from Los Angeles County where the system was developed in the 1950s (Miller, 1981). Counties such as King County, Washington have also utilized the model to great effect fitting a general trend of counties with large cities such as Seattle or Los Angeles and smaller suburban cities such as Federal Way and Lakewood opting to contract (Grammich, Wilson, & Weiss, 2011).

CASE STUDY 1: WALKER, MI

Profile:

Population in 2010: 23,000*

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: Nominal Consolidation

Transitioning From: None

EFFECTS:

- Increased collaboration between departments
- Small reduction in costs



* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

SECTION 2: The Public Safety Model

CASE STUDY 2: PEORIA, IL

Profile:

Population in 1992: 120,000

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: Partial Consolidation

Transitioning From: None

Effects:

- Fire losses increased
- Increased public dissent
- Increased expenditures



* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

One of the most prominent modes of consolidation is the so-called **public safety model** in which police and fire are combined into a quasi-unified or full-unified entity. Beginning in 1911 through the unification of the police and fire departments of Grosse Point Shores, Michigan, the public safety model has remained prominent in the state for much of the past one hundred years, but has spread slowly to municipalities outside of the state (Hadley & Morley, 2013). Ultimately, the public safety model rests on the combination of police and fire administration and/or service delivery. Consolidating these entities relies on a series of different techniques. Efforts to consolidate police and fire professionals will ultimately lead to the creation of public safety

officers who serve a dual role, providing both services i.e. police and fire protection. This is done through a process known as **cross-training**. Cross-training involves educating public safety officers in the duties and responsibilities of both police and fire so that they may respond to both types of emergencies. Only the most complete forms of consolidation involve cross-training of public safety officials, as it is often expensive.

Public safety model consolidation comes in a variety of degrees. The first, and least restrictive, is **nominal** consolidation in which police and fire services are not combined, but share common training facilities and administration. In some cases of nominal consolidation both police and fire services share a common department chief, often referred to as a “Public Safety Director,” and dispatch services, but are never trained together and rarely share resources and often have separate administrative hierarchies below the combined public safety director. This was the form of consolidation chosen by the City of Walker, Michigan when, in 2010, the city decided to encourage coordination between the two departments through the creation of a Director of Public Safety position while still maintaining two separate entities (Fire Subcommittee, 2010).


The second least restrictive means of consolidation is **functional** consolidation in which, like nominal consolidation, police and fire services are not cross-trained, but a larger group of administrators are shared between services. Unlike nominal consolidation in which the chief directs both police and fire services,

CASE STUDY 3: WILL & GRUNDY CO, IL

Profile:
 Population: 685,000 in Will, 50,000 in Grundy*
 City Type: Suburban
 Consolidation Type: Functional Consolidation
 Transitioning From: None

Effects:

- Formation of a Major Crimes task force
- Copied Illinois model that had success
- Shared costs with 37 municipal entities

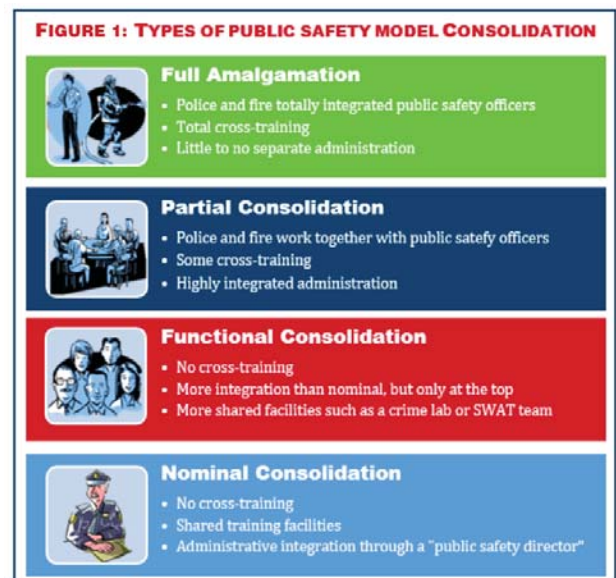


* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

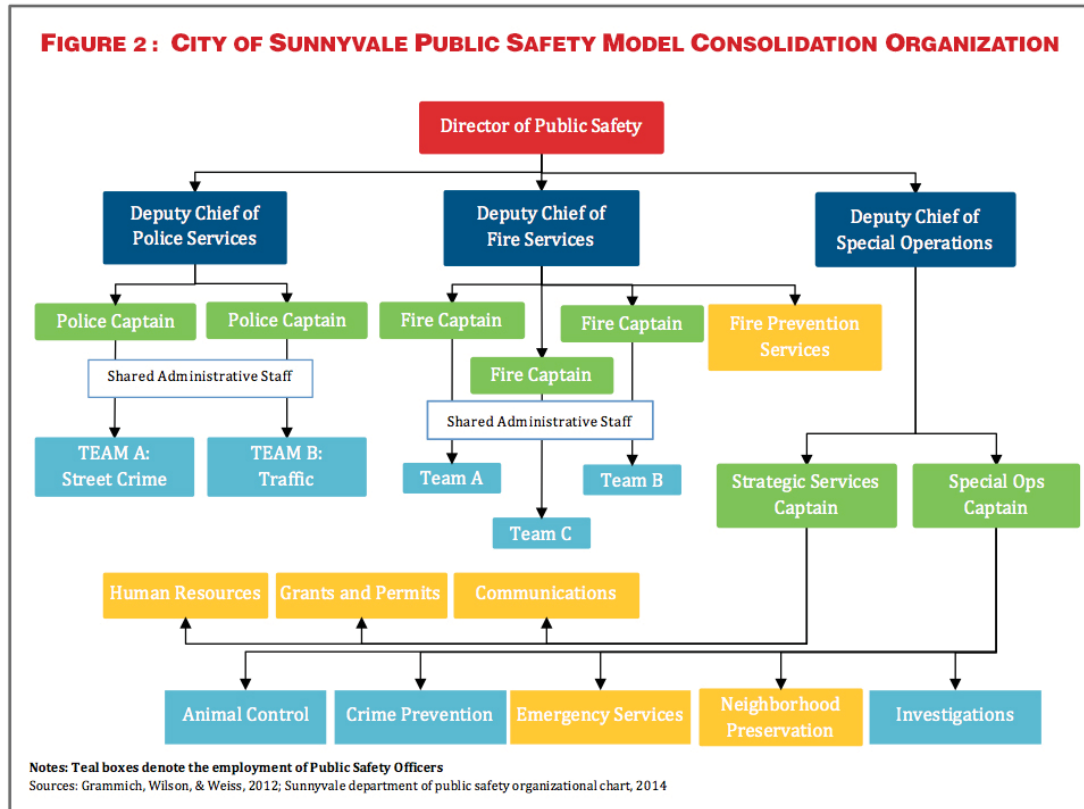
functional consolidation carries consolidation of administrative hierarchies into middle management. Functional schemes also utilize greater sharing of facilities and specialized services such as SWAT and crime labs (Grammich & Wilson, 2012). The most prominent example of functional consolidation is Will and Grundy Counties in Illinois. Both counties, along with thirty-seven municipal law enforcement agencies, combined resources to form a Major Crimes Task Force. Fees paid by the thirty-seven entities go to hiring staff and funding equipment for the consolidated officers. This scheme, modeled after the South Suburban Major Crime Task

Force outside Chicago, does not however combine fire and police resources, but is solely a consolidation of police resources (Glasgow, 2009).

The third degree of consolidation is **partial** consolidation in which a more integrated police and fire service share an even greater degree of administrative integration. Partially consolidated departments often cross-train separate public safety officers to work alongside personnel trained solely as police and fire professionals (Grammich & Wilson, 2012). Frequently, these public safety officers are confined to a certain region of the city where a strong patrol presence is less necessary. Partial consolidation was used in the city of Peoria, Illinois in 1962 when aldermen of the city decided to consolidate police and fire services while still maintaining separate officers. The program proved to be unpopular as fire losses grew along with expenditures leading to a return back to the original system by 1970 (“Police and Fire Consolidation: Ineffective Use of Resources”).



The final and most restrictive form of consolidation is **full amalgamation** consolidation in which police and fire professionals are cross-trained to serve as “public safety officers.” In conjunction with a joint workforce, administrative positions are also streamlined totally with no differentiation between police services and fire services (Grammich and Wilson 2012; Grammich, Weiss, and Wilson 2012). One of the most prominent examples of full consolidation comes from the City of Sunnyvale in the San Francisco Bay area. Formed out of an existing volunteer department in 1950, Sunnyvale’s Department of Public Safety was seen as a cost effective alternative to splitting an already consolidated department into two functioning units. The City implemented a rigorous cross-training program with 240 hours of police training and 96 hours of fire training required in the first year of training. As the city grew to its current peak of 146,000 residents, the Department expanded services to include divisions such as HazMat and



SWAT. Sunnyvale’s careful development of the arrangement led Chief Frank Grgurina to describe the process of switching between fire and police functions “seamless” (Grammich, Wilson, & Weiss, 2012; pg. 6). The city currently hires 195 personnel, but is also supported by upwards of 50 volunteers with more than 4,000 hours of service donated annually. While public safety officers are paid more than department counterparts, Grgurina contends that the city pays significantly less than equally situated cities (Grammich, Wilson, & Weiss, 2012).

SECTION 3: Contracting

Contracting is the system of consolidation most familiar to California's public agencies. Beginning in the city of Lakewood in the late 1950s, the plan was seen as a way small communities in urban and suburban areas could incorporate while still providing affordable police and fire services which had previously stood as a costly barrier. Southern California became the focal point with dozens of cities incorporating in a short period of time. Contracting became a fundamental relationship between cities and other public service entities to provide public safety services without incurring financial hardship in the process.

City-County Contracting takes place when a city opts to utilize county fire or sheriff's department officials as opposed to setting up their own departments. This has proved extremely popular in cities incorporated in recent decades as the city has no cost to convert from a single municipal department to a county contracted department. According to a 2009 report compiled by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department, 30% of California cities utilize the city-county contracting model with 40 out of the 88 cities in Los Angeles county contracting with the sheriff's department (Baca, 2009). The city of La Habra opted for the city-county contracting model in 2003 when, despite being located in North Orange County, elected to contract with Los Angeles County Fire which outbid Orange County Fire Authority (Valencia, 2003).

CASE STUDY 4: YORBA LINDA, CA

Profile:

Population in 2010: 64,000*

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: City-County Contract

Transitioning From: City-City Contract

Effects:

- Decrease in annual costs
- Transition costs for Sheriff's office
- Large public disapproval
- Major loss in revenue for City of Brea



City-City Contracting takes place when a group of cities contract to provide a similar service with the intention of reducing costs through a shared municipal service. Often these cities are similar in their population sizes, geography, and economic demography making community policing relatively uniform across the aggregated region (Hernandez, 2013). The City of Yorba Linda, California utilized city-city contracting with the city of Brea for much of its incorporated history contracting until 2013 when it

TABLE 1: CITIES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY CONTRACTING METHOD

	Police Departments			Fire Departments		
	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>
ORANGE COUNTY						
Aliso Viejo						
Anaheim						
Brea						
Buena Park						
Costa Mesa						
Cypress						
Dana Point						
Fountain Valley						
Fullerton						
Garden Grove						
Huntington Beach						
Irvine						
La Habra						
La Palma						
Laguna Beach						
Laguna Hills						
Laguna Woods						
Lake Forest						
Los Alamitos						
Mission Viejo						
Newport Beach						
Orange						
Placentia						
Rancho Santa Margarita						
San Clemente						
San Juan Capistrano						
Santa Ana						
Seal Beach						
Stanton						
Tustin						
Villa Park						
Westminster						
Yorba Linda						
LOS ANGELES COUNTY						
Agoura Hills						
Alhambra						
Arcadia						
Artesia						
Avalon						
Azusa						
Baldwin Park						
Bell						
Bell Gardens						
Bellflower						
Beverly Hills						
Bradbury						
Burbank						
Calabasas						
Carson						
Cerritos						

TABLE 1 CONTINUED: CITIES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY CONTRACTING METHOD

	<i>Police Departments</i>			<i>Fire Departments</i>		
	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>
LOS ANGELES CONTINUED						
Claremont						
Commerce						
Compton						
Covina						
Cudahy						
Culver City						
Diamond Bar						
Downey						
Duarte						
El Monte						
El Segundo						
Gardena						
Glendale						
Glendora						
Hawaiian Gardens						
Hawthorne						
Hermosa Beach						
Hidden Hills						
Huntington Park						
Industry						
Inglewood						
Irwindale						
La Canada-Flintridge						
La Habra Heights						
La Mirada						
La Puente						
La Verne						
Lakewood						
Lancaster						
Lawndale						
Lomita						
Long Beach						
Los Angeles						
Lynwood						
Malibu						
Manhattan Beach						
Maywood						
Monrovia						
Montebello						
Monterey Park						

TABLE 1 CONTINUED: CITIES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BY CONTRACTING METHOD

	<i>Police Departments</i>			<i>Fire Departments</i>		
	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>City-County</i>	<i>City-City</i>	<i>Department</i>
LOS ANGELES CONTINUED						
Norwalk						
Palmdale						
Palos Verdes Estates						
Paramount						
Pasadena						
Pico Rivera						
Pomona						
Rancho Palos Verdes						
Redondo Beach						
Rolling Hills						
Rolling Hills Estates						
Rosemead						
San Dimas						
San Fernando						
San Gabriel						
San Marino						
Santa Clarita						
Santa Fe Springs						
Santa Monica						
Sierra Madre						
Signal Hill						
South El Monte						
South Gate						
South Pasadena						
Temple City						
Torrance						
Vernon						
Walnut						
West Covina						
West Hollywood						
Westlake Village						
Whittier						

Created using data from OCGov.com, Fire Departments in Orange County, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Dept. - Contract Law Enforcement, Police Departments in Orange County, Services provided.

transitioned to city-county consolidation. The move sparked an emotional controversy as the forty year contract with Brea was outbid in competitive negotiations with Orange County Sheriff's Department and the City of Anaheim (Fields, 2012).

III. COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Any argument for or against consolidation requires a critical analysis of how changing the fundamental structure of a public safety entity would mold and shape the natural effectiveness and the true costs of that department. On this question, a great many factors come into play including the nature of the agreement forged between the public safety entities. Ultimately any discussion about the effectiveness of public safety consolidation must be prefaced with the realization that these pros and cons are in no way universal truths and are only observations from a variety of tests across the nation. The two primary forms of consolidation discussed in this research (contracting and the public safety model) effect police and fire outcomes in different ways so they must be treated separately.

SECTION 1: Benefits Of The Public Safety Model

Effectiveness in the public safety model of consolidation centers on the process of cross-training. As Grammich, Weiss, and Wilson (2012) reiterate, cross-training allows for a more effective use of time and resources. A typical call for emergency medical services, for instance, in a non-public safety department will often lead to a response from both a police officer and a fire department with paramedic. While often the police presence is unnecessary, potentially valuable evidence will often be neglected or disturbed in the event of a simple paramedic call. Since only the police officer is trained in rigorous evidence collection, the call must lead to a dual response from both departments. This leads to a gross inefficiency of time management. Especially in communities with resource allocation concerns,

CASE STUDY 5: WOODBURY, MN

Profile:

Population: 63,000

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: Full/Public Safety

Transitioning From: Partial/Public Safety

Effects:

Improvements in:

- Cardiac Save Rate: 50%
- Red Tape Reduction
- Faster Response Times



* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

extra personnel on an otherwise routine call lengthens critical response times. Costs also increase as the engagement of two vehicles and the tools that comprise them are sent to respond to a simple request. This is the problem combated by cross-training.

A public safety officer can be trained in both the duties of a police officer and fire official enabling them to assess the concern and utilize the necessary tools without the need of another trained professional. This inevitably allows one officer or team to respond to a call without the necessity of engaging additional valuable resources. As Grammich, Weiss, and Wilson (2012) suggest an increase in effective use of resources and time may even lead to an increase in community police work in which police officers take a pro-active community oriented approach to crime prevention. This community orientation is important as many residents of public safety model cities perceive that consolidation will lead to a less engaged force (Heinonen & Wilson, 2013). With a unification of police and fire administrative staff, consolidation under the public safety model often reduces administrative redundancy, thereby increasing administrative effectiveness and lowering pension liabilities.

The benefits of public-safety model consolidation can be seen in the example of the city of Woodbury, Minnesota. A city of 63,000 in the suburbs of St. Paul, Woodbury began the process of consolidation of not only police and fire services, but emergency medical services (EMS) in 1996. Within a few years, the city saw an improvement of cardiac save rates to above 50%. With the success of partial integration, Woodbury moved to full consolidation in 2004 under the “Public Safety Integration Model” drafted by a citizen committee. After four years under full consolidation with cross-training, the city saw a significant decrease in response times while streamlining administrative red-tape and costs (City of Woodbury, MN, 2009).

PUBLIC SAFETY MODEL BENEFITS

- 1. Cross-training:** Officers can increase access to staff for any given assignment while adding flexibility within the Public Safety Department (Grammich, Weiss & Wilson, 2012)
- 2. Quality of Service:** Providing broadly trained personnel often helps public safety agencies address the community’s evolving needs.

3. Reduction in Costs: The PSM often reduces the number of staff with cross-trained personnel, which in turn allows fire and police officers to be more efficient within the community.

SECTION 2: Costs Associated With The Public Safety Model

Many factors drive arguments against the public safety model. The most controversial is the nature of cross-training. Many officials worry that in a dual service department, ineffective training may lead to a reduction in the quality of one or both of the public services, reinforcing public assumptions that consolidation leads to inferior service. Additionally, some say that the **team approach is lost** when firefighters are forced to work in the role of police officers. These dual functions may even lead to confusion when law enforcement and fire fighting procedures are necessary at a scene (“Police and Fire Consolidation: Ineffective Use of Resources”). Public safety officials trained in the tasks for both police and fire must also carry the same gear as both services leading to a glut of extra equipment that often slows down service delivery (Grammich, Weiss, & Wilson, 2012).

It is also true that **police and fire services have different cultures**; they are trained differently, think differently, and act differently. There are often cases in which police officers and firefighters have conflicts with each other and cases such as these could potentially cause serious problems when communities are considering consolidating their public safety services. If the personnel themselves cannot get along, there is no guarantee that consolidation will be successful. Therefore, an important aspect to keep in mind when considering consolidating departments is the organizational cultures of the departments. Culture to an organization is what personality is to a person; it is a distinct identity that sets them apart from others. Law enforcement and firefighters have differing cultural organizations and communities must be cautious when merging these two departments because not only is it difficult on the administration, it is also difficult on the personnel; they are the ones who have to work with people of different mindsets, training, and cultures on a regular basis (Stinchcomb & Ordaz, 2007).

This prompts one of the most prominent conflicts in public safety consolidation: dealing with union pressures against the process. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International Association of Firefighters **unions are both routine opponents** to public safety consolidation schemes

citing inefficient training, conflicting roles between fire and police personnel, and the neglecting of fire services as an important community entity (Hadley & Morley, 2013). The IAFC argues that without complete training in proven firefighting techniques, public safety officers lack the skills to adequately fight fires, leading to a much **higher rate of fire damage**. One study cited by the IAFC found that insufficient training characterized by cross-trained officials corresponded to higher rates of property damage and officer and civilian injuries and deaths often due to a lack of necessary equipment when first arriving on the scene. Even **fire prevention suffers** in public safety model consolidation as community based prevention programs such as public education, safety inspections, and emergency medical services take a back seat when fire duties are relegated to public service officers. IAFC continues by arguing that cities are incentivized to cut necessary training as public opinion rarely understands the necessity to spend money for intensive training (“Police and Fire Consolidation: Ineffective Use of Resources”).

Opponents also argue that public safety model consolidation is bogged down by the economic and service delivery **costs associated with the transition**. Cross-training and the technology to go with it often mean large upfront costs with little immediate benefit to appease voters (Grammich, Weiss, & Wilson, 2012). With unions often adamantly opposed to public safety model consolidation, cities frequently use pay incentives to entice police and fire fighters into cross-training. As the IAFC argues, many of these benefits are unequally distributed leading to resentment and dissent within the department. This often leads to a **reduction in morale**, which IAFC argues is endemic in consolidated cities. The economic costs of offering better benefits and pay often replace the cost reductions incurred when fewer personnel are needed (“Police and Fire Consolidation: Ineffective Use of Resources”).

One of the early reversals in police public safety consolidation took place in Buena Park, California in the mid-1950s. After its incorporation in 1953, the city utilized a form of dual police and fire services. Problems arose as the officers arrived to the scene of a fire only with a squad car and some light equipment. It would often take several

CASE STUDY 6: BUENA PARK, CA

Profile:

Population in 1953: 14,000

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: Department

Transitioning From: Full Consolidation (1953-1956)

Effects:

Costs of Full Consolidation:

- Confused service delivery
- High turnover of officers
- High insurance rates due to poor fire service



* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

more minutes before adequate equipment would arrive to fight to fire, which by then had already caused considerable damage. The incoming chief recognized the situation and found that few of the officers had any real desire to be public safety officers, instead hoping for future careers as police and fire officers creating a destiny for the department as one with few long term officers. These troubles tended to grow with the increasing population, leading voters to authorize separate departments in 1956 as the city broke 14,000 residents (Barnett, 1973).

COSTS OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY MODEL:

- 1. Cross-Training:** often leads to some skills being neglected as the skills of both a fire fighter and police officer must be taught. Different cultures of police and fire departments often result in a loss of team spirit and a constant collision of interests. This prompts a reduction in morale and often a high turnover rate.
- 2. Quality of Service:** lack of necessary training and inadequate equipment on arrival may lead to a reduction in fire save rate and other inferior services.
- 3. Increase in Costs:** transitioning from a department model to a public safety model is often expensive with a variety of expensive transition costs.

SECTION 3: Benefits Of The Contracting Model

The benefits of contracting largely center on the decreased costs of public services, but some studies also mark a marginal increase in effectiveness. The most important question formulated comes from the idea that the reduced costs lead to a reduction in service quality. This ultimately has not been proven to be correct. In a 2009 study, researchers found that of the contracting cities within Orange and Los Angeles counties, there was a significant increase in the number of arrests of violent crime in contract cities in comparison to cities with their own department. This was coupled with virtual parity between contract and department cities in clearance of property crimes (Bourns & Nelligan, 2011). In the end, the main incentive of contracting is often not to increase effectiveness, but instead to lower overall costs. Ultimately, the contracting model will not change the actual procedures and methods of public safety, but is simply a change in the level of independent community control (Kerlin, 1973).

Contracting public services outside to local county departments has become a trend for cities since 1954. Due to the 2008-2009 economic recessions, many local governments have found it difficult to maintain and provide full functioning public services. The concern for both city and county governments are the economic costs and efficiency that comes with contracting services. The public services that are typically contracted out are fire and police service. Among the reasons for contracting out are cost saving mechanisms that allow government entities to practice **economies of scale**, this in turn gives city governments an opportunity to save in the long run; however many other factors go into contracting out.

Many city governments have turned to county agencies to provide them with police and fire services. Several studies of contracting have been solely focused on the city-government contracting out and not the service-providing entity, whether that is a county or a larger city government (Mehay & Gonzalez, 1985). When contracting out to county governments, county sheriffs replace police services and county fire departments replace fire services. Under normal circumstances the county only provides service to its sponsors (board of supervisors) in exchange for one lump sum. However, if a county decides to sell its services to cities under the Lakewood Plan (applies to all California counties), it is forced to “cost-out” each service, which means they sell the service at a per-unit cost that covers expenses. Once the price is determined, the same price must be charged to all cities.

BENEFITS OF CONTRACTING OUT TO LARGER (COUNTY) GOVERNMENTS:

1. Contract Bidding: the government that is pursuing a contract with a larger government is able to assess how many units of police and fire they will need, and because it is a per unit cost, local governments will be able to save more by reducing the size and cost of local government. The city government will also be subsidized by the county government. (Stenberg, 2011).

2. Greater Economies of Scale: by contracting out to larger governments the local government is able to cut cost down costs without reducing the quality of services, or in more extreme cases raising property taxes (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013).

3. Collaboration and Cooperation: Service contracts are popular tools for intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships. It allows the two entities to collaborate on what the contract city needs. Most importantly, it stimulates innovation, improves working relationships, and improves the problem-solving process (Hilvert & Swindell, 2013).

SECTION 4: Costs Associated With The Contracting Model

Many of the problems faced by contracting cities are shared by cities within the public safety model. Like public safety cities, contracting cities routinely run afoul of unions in the buildup to writing a new contract. While many county fire and police unions may support consolidating, unions representing city department employees adamantly do not and frequently use political clout within the community to organize against the proposition. The most important characteristic of a contract city though is the nature of who is in control. In city-county contracting, it is ultimately the county who will have the most impact on the effectiveness of their employees and it is therefore the nature of the county's culture and management leaving the city often at its mercy. Such was the case in the City of Santa Fe Springs in the late 1990s.

The city had been contracting with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department for police services, but with an extraordinarily high attrition rate city leaders were unhappy with the contract. Ultimately, the city changed from city-county to city-city contracting in a negotiation with the nearby city of Whittier (Chotkevys, 2013).

Many contracting efforts are doomed because of the lack of local control. With a skeptical public already looking unlikely to support consolidation efforts, many cities revert back to previous arrangements. Such a situation took place in King County, Washington when the city of Federal Way decided to end a

CASE STUDY 7: SANTA FE SPRINGS, CA

Profile:

Population in 1998: 15,000

City Type: Suburban

Consolidation Type: City-City Contracting

Transitioning From: City-County Contracting

Effects:

- High attrition rate reduced
- Increased perception of local control
- Budget costs reduced



contracting arrangement with the County. The dispute centered on uniforms which made the sheriff's officers look as if they were not part of the city. Local control continued to plague the King County Sheriff's department until they agreed to let contract cities determine the badges on the deputies' uniforms and allow the cities to choose a local chief from a list of qualified Sheriff's department employees (Grammich & Wilson, 2012).

1. Transition Costs: The costs of contracting out will be greater in the short-run for the city government, because police and fire employees will have to relocate to an agreed central location and be retrained to the standards of the city.

2. Quality of Service: Contracting out public services to larger government agencies is a form of consolidation. It can be an effective way to save on costs of public services; however the effects of utility can be reflected on a basic economic model of **Diminishing Marginal Utility**. The initial need for public services increases in the short run but slowly diminishes in the long run. This can affect the number or quantity of services needed in the long run and can determine the increase costs of the service or good. For example, when a contracting city purchases services from the county sheriff department it determines how many officers will be needed, however that may change over time and contract obligations will need to be reevaluated or the result may be that the contracting city will experience diminishing marginal utility for every additional officer they hire, which means the service-providing government might employ more or fewer officers than actually needed; resulting in increasing cost and inefficiency.

CASE STUDY 8: KING COUNTY, WA

PROFILE:

Population: 2 Million

City Type: Urban, Suburban

Consolidation Type: City-County Contracting

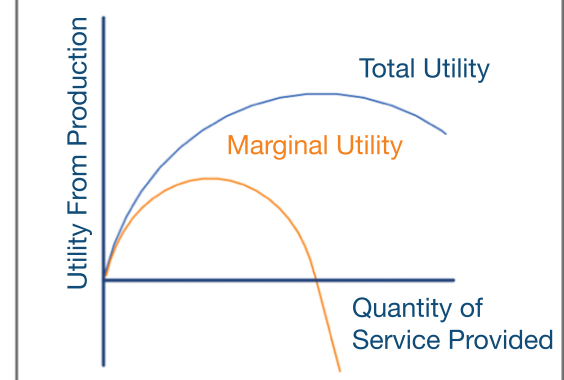
EFFECTS:

- Jurisdictional uniform issues leading Federal Way to leave the contract
- Result was King's redesign of uniforms per individual jurisdictions



* (US Census Bureau, 2010)

FIGURE 3 : DIMINISHING MARGINAL UTILITY



Consolidation of public services is only beneficial in the long run because initial costs of consolidation are high due to costs related to: transitioning, new branding, technological equipment, and other variable costs. Some entities will experience lower variable costs in the long run, which will result in higher profit yields and lower variable costs.

3. Information Disadvantage: The supplier county may not be familiar with the demographics or needs of a city, which in turn can compromise the efficiency and effectiveness of the public services being provided. Participants must consider the compatibility between departments before contracting out their public services or considering a merger (Wilson, 2013).

TABLE 2: COSTS AND BENEFITS OF BOTH CONSOLIDATION MODELS

	<i>Public Safety Model</i>			<i>Contracting</i>		
	<i>Negative</i>	<i>No Effect</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>	<i>No Effect</i>	<i>Positive</i>
Response Times						
Efficient Use of Staff						
Efficient Use of Equipment						
Attrition Rates						
Union Pressure						
Cultural Differences						
Local Control						
Training						
Special Programs						
Transition Cost						
Overall Costs						

IV. PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND POLITICAL PRESSURES

Like all aspects of municipal government, consolidation efforts face incredible political pressures and are often greatly affected more by the political realities of city councils and county boards than the true costs and benefits put forward by the proposals. With considerations of public opinion, the political makeup of the councils, and the thought of losing some aspect of local control, consolidation efforts are not without opposition.

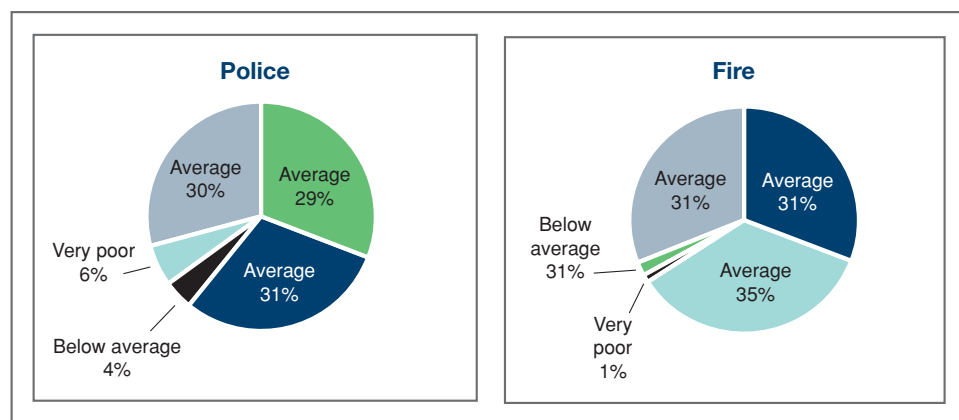
SECTION 1: Public Opinion

Although there is little information regarding public opinion in regards to consolidation of public safety services, people generally tend to have mixed feelings about consolidation. In a study conducted by the Program on Police Consolidation and Shared Services (PCASS) of the Michigan State University (MSU) School of Criminal Justice, researchers asked Michigan residents in 2012 for their ratings of their local police, fire, and emergency medical services as well as how they believe consolidation could affect the quality and cost of public safety services.

In regards to the first part of the survey, the ratings of individual services, most Michigan residents rated each service favorably with the majority of people rating them as average, above average, and excellent in their communities.

FIGURE 4: MICHIGAN STATE STUDY OF MICHIGAN RESIDENTS' OPINIONS OF LOCAL POLICE, FIRE, AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Sample Sizes: Police: n=1,010; Fire: n=987

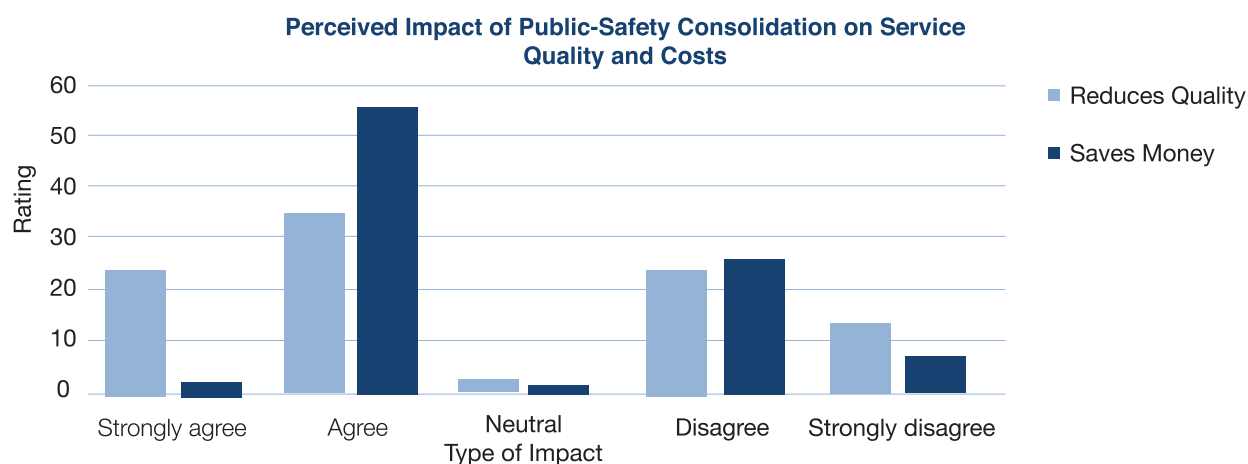


In regards to the second part of the survey, the public opinion of consolidation, the results were quite diverse. Approximately two in three Michigan residents believe consolidation of public-safety services would save money yet two in three believe that consolidation of these services would reduce the quality of these services. Therefore, many residents are aware that there is a tradeoff: public-safety consolidation would save money but it could also reduce the quality of services. However, one in four residents believe

consolidation would save money but don't think it would diminish the quality of public safety services whereas one in five residents believe it would reduce the quality of these services but don't think it would save money.

FIGURE 5 : Michigan State Study of Michigan Residents' Opinions of Local, Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services

Sample Sizes: Reduces quality: n=998; Saves money; n=997



The results of this survey make it clear that residents are uncertain of the impacts that consolidation of public safety services could have on them and their communities. If local governments or public-safety departments were to consider consolidating these services, they would need to be aware that the public's opinions of police, fire, and emergency medical services may change and they would need to evaluate the perceived and actual impacts of this kind of consolidation in their communities.

V. CONCLUSION

Consolidation is a decision that must be made on the merits of individual negotiations making a theoretical evaluation simply a starting point in a broader discussion about public safety. Communities considering merging their public safety services should measure the perceived and actual effects that consolidation would have on their personnel, quality of services, and residents. The participants who are considering consolidation should weigh the costs and benefits of the process by carefully analyzing their budgets and making a proper assessment of the needs of their community. Participants must also note that savings will not occur immediately, but more so in the long-run.

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The Center for Public Policy at CSUF is a nonpartisan research institute dedicated to exploring public policy issues in Orange County and the surrounding area. The center conducts public opinion surveys and provides a setting for faculty and student research on applied policy relevant to the region.

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