Common Ground
Enhancing Community Oriented Policing in Milwaukee

Wisconsin Policy Forum
November 14, 2024

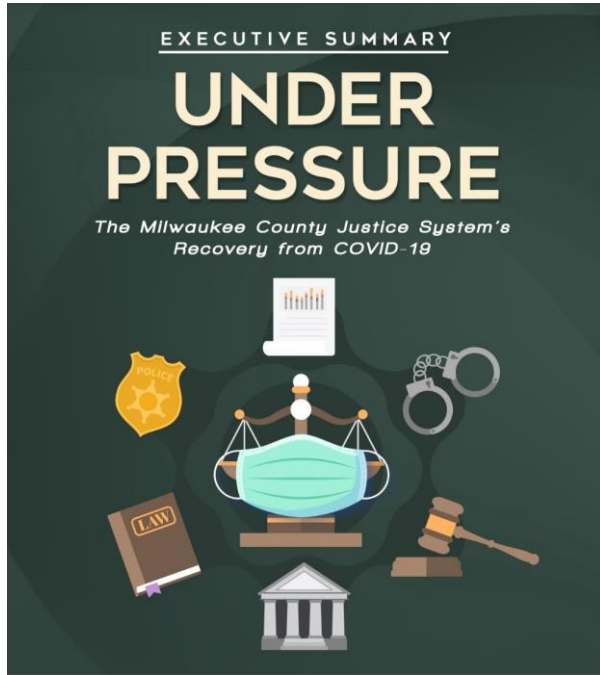**WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM**

- Nonpartisan, non-profit state and local policy research organization

  - Main office in downtown Milwaukee, second office on Capitol Square

- Main areas of research: government finance, education, economic development

- Publish independent research as well as client-based reports on a wide range of topics

- Formed by a 2018 merger of the Milwaukee-based Public Policy Forum (founded 1913) and the Madison-based Wisconsin Taxpayers' Alliance (founded 1932)
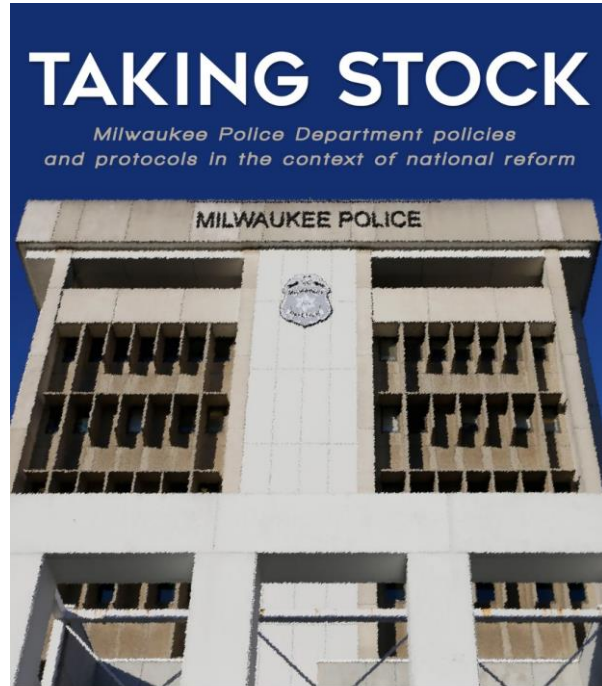
Background

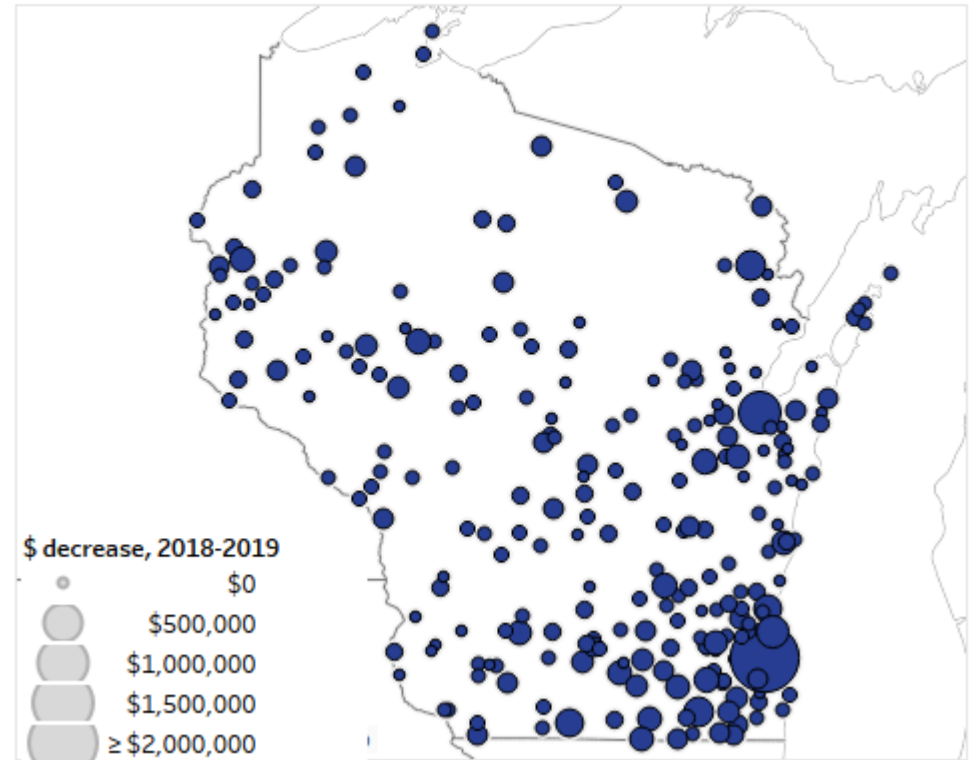- Collins Settlement established in 2018 regarding alleged unconstitutional stop-and-frisk practices

  - Certain terms of settlement require a definition of community oriented policing (COP), which was established via the creation of SOP 003

  - Remaining needs: build out SOP 003, create Community Oriented Policing Plan

- Summer 2022: Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission (FPC), and resident-led Community Collaborative Commission (CCC) kick off listening sessions in each city aldermanic district, to receive input that will satisfy those needs

Background

- COP: use of community partnerships and proactive policing to address conditions that give rise to public safety issues

- SOP 003 includes basic info on COP; most work on community-police relationships within MPD is done by the department's Public Information Office, Office of Community Relations, Engagement, and Recruitment, and Community Liaison Officers

- 16 listening sessions held July 2022-January 2024 to solicit feedback to inform build-out of SOP 003 and COP Plan

Community Listening Sessions

- 16 total held; generally 10am-2pm on the last Saturday of the month

- Led by independent facilitator and MPD

- Questions asked of community members:

  - Characteristics of a safe community

  - Solutions to bring those characteristics to your neighborhood

  - What is MPD doing that you like/would like to see more of

- Attendance ranged from a handful of individuals to ~40

Themes from Listening Session

- 1) The Scope of Policing

  - Discussion of budget size and service provision; how MPD responds to crime and how it interacts with Milwaukee residents

  - Positive interactions with MPD do not always involve officer responses to calls

- 2) Accountability and Transparency

  - Transparent, accountable, and communicative policing; calmer and timelier interactions that build trust

- 3) A Friendly, Neighborly Society

  - Residents want to trust their neighbors; have space to foster relationships

Themes from Listening Session

- 4) Clean Neighborhoods and Parks

  - Cleanliness allows people to be in public spaces together; blight draws them apart

- 5) Well-Resourced Neighborhoods

  - Basic resources, but also public spaces, money, knowledge of what's already available, and police when they could help out

- 6) Lighting and Noise

  - Good lighting attracts use of space and deters crime; excessive noise can make people feel less safe

Themes from Listening Session

- 7) Youth, Entertainment, and Recreation

  - Giving youth things to do that are productive and fun; recognizing school as a critical space for growth, but acknowledging the need to have after-school programming

  - Special youth-based session hit on needs for "trauma-informed care," "safety," "inclusivity," "proper communication," and "safe adults"

- 8) Safety from Violent Events

  - Prevalence of firearms, car thefts, and reckless driving are major concerns

  - Gun violence in particular mentioned in many areas of the city

Themes from Listening Session

- 9) Safe Streets

  - Reckless driving a concern in many corners of the city; many would like pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks and bike lanes

- 10) Mental Health

  - Pandemic as a breaking point for many individuals; need for resources both for residents and MPD officers

- Other items outside of law enforcement scope: civic society, public works, transportation, housing, health, hunger/food, and employment

COP in Other Cities

- Milwaukee is already doing much of what other cities consider to be COP:

  - Crisis Assessment Response Team (CART)

  - Block Watches

  - Public Safety Cadets program and Citizen Academy

  - Police Athletic League

  - Community Connect Milwaukee (camera-sharing program)

  - LGBTQ+ Safe Place program

COP in Other Cities

- A) Service Provision to Other Communities in Need

  - Connecting homeless residents with food and shelter/HOT units; recreational activities for youth and youth enrichment; programming for seniors

- B) Deployment of Volunteers or Non-Police Staff for Public Safety Needs

  - Residents volunteering for school zone safety/safe passage from schools, deployment of civilian staff for various social services

- C) Victim Services and Forums

  - Victim response teams to help file paperwork or connect residents with resources, programs about crime and trauma, dedicated staff to help with cases of domestic violence

COP in Other Cities

- D) Resident-Led Policymaking

  - Civilian oversight with resident participation on an application (not appointment) basis; can even be district-specific

- E) Collection and Use of Data

  - Tracking metrics other than crime/arrests; using data to inform where and how to deploy department services; discussing data and making sure all employees are aware of trends

- F) Creating a Safer Built Environment

  - LED streetlights, vacant lot refurbishment, but PD participation in these efforts

COP in Other Cities

- G) Comprehensive COP/Community Engagement Plans

  - Examples from Baltimore and Cleveland – both of which specify a percentage of patrol officer time that *must* be spent engaging in proactive and/or community policing

- Takeaways:

  - MPD could do more to target neighborhoods and individuals most in need of attention

  - Data plays a key role in COP in peer cities

  - COP requires active participation by community members and participation from all police department personnel

Policy Considerations

1. Expand COP practices to include every sworn and non-sworn member of MPD

2. Increase data collection and sharing

3. Take a more active role on social media, and organize the MPD website(s) in a way that is more user-friendly

4. Continue to study the ways in which MPD could take a more neighborhood-specific approach to patrolling and COP

5. Continue to build out the assets the department offers, particularly in the area of youth engagement, by collaborating with existing community organizations

6. Continue to develop strong working relationships with relevant city agencies to solve problems that detract from public safety