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## MEMORANDUM

To: Ald. Scott Spiker  
From: Dave Gelting, Legislative Fiscal Analyst – Lead  
Date: November 15, 2024  
Subject: Police Recruitment Elsewhere

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On November 6<sup>th</sup> you requested information regarding what other cities are doing to have successful law enforcement recruitment efforts, who is having success meeting their recruitment and class size goals, and why.

The research for this memo begins with information from an October, 2024 report from the City of Minneapolis Auditor's Policy and Research Division.<sup>1</sup> In March, 2024, the Minneapolis City Council Public Health & Safety Committee directed the Division to conduct a landscape review of law enforcement recruitment, hiring, and retention practices in comparable jurisdictions. Information from the Minneapolis Auditor's report, along with additional research, for a number of cities is presented below. This report begins with studied cities that are having success with recruitment and is followed by those that are not, despite their recruitment efforts.

After that analysis, information from a 2023 Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission (FPC) memo on police officer hiring bonuses and financial incentives is presented, concluding with information on police officer recruitment best practices from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

### **Cleveland, OH**

The number of police officer applications in 2023 (1,299) was the highest it had been since public-safety recruiting was centralized in 2021.

- Offered a \$1,000 hiring bonus, a \$1,000 academy graduation bonus, and a \$3,000 field training completion bonus.

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<sup>1</sup> Minneapolis Office of City Auditor, October 7, 2024, "Law Enforcement Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention" <https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/media/content-assets/www2-documents/government/PAR-Report---Law-Enforcement-Recruitment-Landscape.pdf>

- Partnered with a local advertising company to develop marketing guidelines along with a recruitment strategy.<sup>2</sup>
- Leveraged partnerships with television and radio stations.
- Engaged the community at every opportunity presented - broke a record for the number of events attended within a year - visited recreation centers, libraries, grocery stores, fast food establishments, and many other places across the city to find new applicants.
- Worked with Civil Service and the National Testing Network to adjust the assessments.
- Held rotating information sessions at several recreation centers.
- Held weekly physical conditioning camps; had 192 attendees in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (a record).
- Added 2 recruiters, including one bilingual, for a total of 8 (across all public safety recruiting).
- Executed a three-day hiring event, attracting over 600 applications online, and more than 300 people in person.

### **Seattle, WA**

In January thru March 2024, the Seattle Police Department averaged 8 applications per day,<sup>3</sup> up from 5.6 per day in January thru March 2023.<sup>4</sup>

- \$7,500 hiring incentive; \$30,000 hiring incentive for lateral police officer hires (increased to \$50,000 incentive for lateral officers in September, 2024).
  - There is local competition regarding hiring incentives,<sup>5</sup> where nearby agencies offer up to \$15,000 bonuses for new recruits, and up to \$40,000 for lateral transfers.
  - A new hire survey of 60 individuals found that all but two hires selected incentive pay as having some level of importance in their decision to become a police officer.
- In August 2023, launched a new branding and marketing campaign with a local advertising agency.
- Created new initiatives to inspire and maintain candidate interest, such as a new applicant workshop (261 attendees in 2023) and a ride along program (47 participants in 2023).
- Retention: Moved to a 4 days/10 hours patrol schedule that prioritizes employee wellness.

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<sup>2</sup> Cleveland Department of Public Safety, 2023 Annual Report, <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/clevelandohio/files/finance-docs/documents/Public%20Safety/PublicSafety23AnnualReport.pdf#page=7>

<sup>3</sup> SPD Recruitment Project, Presentation, March 12, 2024 <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12742897&GUID=04CE5A3F-723A-45B5-96AD-F24056EF8071>

<sup>4</sup> SPD Recruitment & Retention Project Update, Presentation, March 28, 2023 <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11786977&GUID=28099071-9497-4C46-BE27-22C2E7F29CAA>

<sup>5</sup> SPD Officer Hiring Incentives, Presentation, September 16, 2024 <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=13305399&GUID=390B7E44-1F97-42B8-A5B0-022A11034962>

- Reduced the hiring wait time by half—from 5-9 months to 3-4 months.

### **Minneapolis, MN**

In 2023, the Minneapolis Police Department had 693 Police Officer applications. As of October 21, 2024 they had 1,125 applications. Before 2020, MPD would average about 2 lateral transfers per year; in 2024, there have been 10 by October.

- The Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) has a recruiting team of 2 sworn officers and 5 civilians.
- In March, 2024, the City of Minneapolis launched a \$1 million recruitment campaign for police officers and 911 dispatchers, contracting with a consultant for the campaign.<sup>6</sup>
- In 2024, handpicked police liaisons traveled all over the state and country to find interested candidates.<sup>7</sup>
- In July, 2024, a new police union contract was approved that made MPD one of the top 5 highest paid departments in the state, and increased the starting salaries for rookies to more than \$90,000 per year.

### **Baltimore, MD**

As of May, 2024, Baltimore was short nearly 600 officers from its authorized 3,100.<sup>8</sup> This represents a decrease in the number of sworn officers, despite the recruitment and retention efforts below, after being nearly 500 officers short in April, 2023.<sup>9</sup>

- \$1,000 starting bonus, and \$10,000 academy graduation bonus.
- Referral bonus of between \$2,500 and \$7,500 per employee per hire.
- A property tax credit of up to \$2,500 per year for officers who live in the city.
- A \$12,000 relocation incentive (\$1,000 per month for one year).
- In 2023, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) established a partnership with an association of local talent acquisition and human resource specialists known as the Greater Baltimore Steering Committee (GBC), to evaluate and recommend changes to BPD recruitment and retention efforts.

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<sup>6</sup> MPR News, “Minneapolis launches \$1M recruitment campaign for MPD” March 6, 2024

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2024/03/06/minneapolis-launches-1m-recruitment-campaign-for-mpd>

<sup>7</sup> Star Tribune, “Minneapolis police herald recruitment efforts as applications up 45% compared to last year” August 30, 2024 <https://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-police-herald-recruitment-efforts-as-applications-up-45-compared-to-last-year/601135079>

<sup>8</sup> Maryland Matters, Capital News Service, “It’s police recruitment season, but filling vacancies is a struggle across Maryland” May 22, 2024 <https://marylandmatters.org/2024/05/22/its-police-recruitment-season-but-filling-vacancies-is-a-struggle-across-maryland/>

<sup>9</sup> Fox News Baltimore, “Law enforcement experts weigh in on what's causing Baltimore City's officer shortage” April 14, 2023 <https://foxbaltimore.com/news/local/law-enforcement-experts-weigh-in-on-whats-causing-baltimore-citys-officer-shortage>

- In 2022, BPD contracted with a local marketing firm to execute a digital marketing and advertising campaign.

### **Austin, TX**

In May, 2024, there were 326 police officer vacancies.<sup>10</sup> This represents a decrease in the number of sworn officers, despite the recruitment and retention efforts below, after having 264 police officer vacancies in February, 2023.<sup>11</sup>

- \$2,500 hiring bonus, \$5,000 academy graduation bonus, \$2,500 field training completion bonus, \$5,000 probation completion bonus (total = \$15,000).<sup>12</sup>
- In September, 2024, the Austin Police Department (APD) launched a youth recruiting program. In this program, up to 60 high school students will be paid \$21.63 per hour for up to 30 hours to collaborate with police officers, non-profit groups, school officials, local consultants and marketing specialists to develop the a new police officer recruiting model.<sup>13</sup>
- The department adjusted the physical fitness assessment process in 2023 to accommodate cadets who don't meet the standards on their first try.
- In September, 2023, the Texas Legislature eliminated the maximum age cap for police officer applicants (it had previously been 44 years of age).

### **Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission Memo**

A July, 2023, memorandum written by the FPC's Research and Policy Analyst includes the following information about police officer recruitment:

1. Signing bonuses for new recruits:
  - a. Washington, DC, offers a \$20,000 bonus, added to a recruit's first-year salary (2022). Applicants receive \$10,000 upon hire and before beginning training. They receive the second \$10,000 upon completing training. Applications have increased since announcing the program.
  - b. Baltimore offers a \$5,000 signing bonus.
  - c. New Orleans offers new recruits \$30,000 in bonuses over their first three years on the job (2022).

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<sup>10</sup> KXAN, "APD hosts recruiting event, hopes to fill hundreds of vacancies" May 18, 2024

<https://www.kxan.com/news/local/austin/apd-hosts-recruiting-event-hopes-to-fill-hundreds-of-vacancies/>

<sup>11</sup> CBS Austin, "Austin Police not alone in needing to recruit more officers, improve retention" February 28, 2023  
<https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/austin-police-not-alone-in-needing-to-recruit-more-officers-improve-retention-texas-dps-staffing-defund-reimagine>

<sup>12</sup> KVUE, "Austin Police Department offering bonuses and incentives for new cadets" August 7, 2023  
<https://www.kvue.com/article/news/police/apd-bonuses-new-cadets/269-1658d566-7de6-4382-ab7d-2a46d3d92416>

<sup>13</sup> KLBJ, "APD Launches Youth Recruiting Program" September 3, 2024  
<https://www.newsradiokljb.com/austinlocalnews/apd-launches-youth-recruiting-program/>

- d. Ithaca, NY - \$20,000 bonus for new recruits.
  - e. Seattle - \$7,500 for new recruits.
  - f. Warner Robins, GA, offers \$4,000 for new recruits.
2. Bonuses for lateral recruits. These can be cost effective because the cost to train a new, inexperienced recruit is far higher than the cost of a lateral, experienced officer's bonus.
- a. Portland, Oregon has begun offering \$25,000 bonuses for lateral recruits from other departments and lesser bonuses to new recruits. The city has still had trouble finding qualified applicants.
  - b. Seattle - \$30,000 for experienced officers.
  - c. Wauwatosa - \$5,000 signing bonus for transferring officers. (This could be a retention issue for Milwaukee.)
  - d. San Diego's Lateral Police Officer II Incentive Program provides \$15,000 to applicants looking to transfer from another California agency who qualify as a Police Officer II classification and are applying to SDPD after the start of the program. The payments will be dispersed in \$5,000 increments upon hire date, upon successful completion of Phase training, and one year of continuous employment following successful completion of Phase training.
3. Rental/moving assistance
- a. Washington, DC offers \$6,000 in rental assistance and puts any officer moving from more than 50 miles away in a hotel for up to two weeks while finding housing.
  - b. Baltimore offers \$1,000 per month in housing assistance for the first full year of full-time employment if recruits live within the Baltimore City limits.
4. Student loan assistance
- a. Baltimore offers an additional \$5,000 per year to help pay down student loans.
5. Referral bonus
- a. Baltimore PD offers \$5,000 per employee per referral with no cap.
  - b. San Diego began a recruitment incentive program in 2022. It is available to active, sworn SDPD Officers, Sergeants, Lieutenants and Captains who refer candidates for Police Recruit, Police Officer I and Police Officer II positions in the following amounts: • Police Recruit and Police Officer I referrals – up to \$3,000 • Police Officer II referrals – up to \$4,000.

## **Police Executive Research Forum**

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) released a report on this topic in September, 2019 which opens with the statement “Most law enforcement agencies are sensing a crisis in their ability to recruit new officers, and to hold on to the ones they have.”<sup>14</sup> By August, 2023, PERF continued to sound the alarm about police recruiting and staffing in another report, opening with the statement “Police agencies face no greater challenge today than recruiting and retaining enough qualified officers to meet rising demands to provide services and address violent crime.”<sup>15</sup> The guidance highlighted in the 2019 report includes:

- **MONITOR YOUR WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS:** To stay ahead of current and future changes, agencies need to monitor workforce trends, collect and analyze data on their staffing needs, and adjust their recruiting and retention strategies accordingly.
- **BUILD TRUST IN YOUR COMMUNITIES:** The policing profession has seen a period of dramatic, relentless change. Five years after the events in Ferguson, MO, the profession is still undergoing soul-searching. This may have had an impact on recruiting.
- **SEEK RECRUITS WHO ARE COMFORTABLE WITH 21ST CENTURY POLICING, AND HAVE THE SKILLS FOR IT:** Today’s police agencies are taking leadership roles on a wider range of social issues than ever before. And today’s policing requires officers who enjoy technology and know how to use it.
- **MORE TRAINING MAY BE NEEDED IF YOUR WORKFORCE’S OVERALL LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE DECLINES:** Many police agencies are feeling pressure from both sides of the workforce equation. Fewer people are applying to become police officers, and more officers are leaving before they reach retirement age. This is creating a crisis in both numbers and talent.
- **DEVELOP NEW STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING OFFICERS WITH NEEDED SKILLS:** Traditional approaches to recruiting and retaining police officers are insufficient to meet the need for officers who possess the skills and temperament needed for modern policing. In addition to looking at the traditional sources of officer candidates, such as the military, departments also need to seek non-traditional candidates.
- **FIND NEW WAYS TO RECRUIT A DIVERSE WORKFORCE:** Agencies continue to struggle with recruiting women and members of minority groups. The first step toward improvement is to recognize and address barriers to recruitment among minority communities and women. Police and sheriffs’ departments should establish partnerships with religious institutions, organizations of minority groups, and women’s groups that may be able to help develop pathways for members of minority groups and women to join police agencies.

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<sup>14</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, September, 2019, “The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It” <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Police Executive Research Forum, August, 2023, “Responding to the Staffing Crisis: Innovations in Recruitment and Retention” <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/RecruitmentRetention.pdf>

- **ENSURE THAT YOUR RECRUITING MESSAGES REFLECT THE REALITY OF POLICE WORK:** Recruitment videos, webpages, social media, and brochures must reflect the philosophy and values of the agency and provide a realistic view of what police work involves.
- **ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY DELAYS IN THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS:** In today's competitive job market, a faster, more efficient application and hiring process is critical for success. Many potential job applicants who need to find employment are unable to wait for a police recruiting process that takes many months to complete. Tech-savvy applicants will be turned off by an online application system that is clumsy, illogical, or difficult to navigate because of a poor design or technical problems. Agencies also should invest in personal outreach to help potential recruits through the process.
- **RETENTION OF OFFICERS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT. USE EXIT INTERVIEWS TO LEARN WHY OFFICERS LEAVE YOUR DEPARTMENT:** Because most voluntary resignations happen within the first five years of an officer's career, agencies need to better understand why employees leave, so they can develop strategies to address the issues that result in early resignations.
- **OFFER EMPLOYEES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:** Agencies need to assess what their officers want in a career and explore ways to broaden officers' experiences and career planning opportunities.
- **AIM TO MEET EMPLOYEES' NEEDS FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WELLNESS:** Work-life balance and officer wellness are keys to retaining and developing employees at all ranks and experience levels. Agencies should consider more flexible scheduling systems and wellness programming to meet employees' needs.
- **BE WILLING TO RETHINK OLD WAYS OF DOING THINGS:** Changes in technology and the nature of police work should cause police agencies to rethink long-held assumptions about their organizational structures and how police work gets done. Agencies need to be open to new ideas on police organization and staffing.

The additional guidance in PERF's 2023 report includes:

- **RE-EXAMINE HIRING PROCESSES.** The inefficient and exclusionary hiring practices that agencies relied on when they were flooded with applications are no longer viable now that applications have slowed. Further, those processes shut out promising non-traditional applicants and drive away many younger workers — two groups that agencies must make greater efforts to attract. In many areas it can take eight months or more to hire an officer, which is simply too long.
- **ADOPT INNOVATIVE RECRUITING STRATEGIES.** Some agencies are using social media — including light-hearted and entertaining TikTok videos, Instagram posts, and Facebook pages — to reach a younger, more diverse audience.
- **“GO UPSTREAM” TO IDENTIFY FUTURE OFFICERS.** Programs like police explorers, cadet programs, and internships are becoming more common as agencies seek to nurture

the recruits of the future by identifying youth currently interested in policing or even cultivating an interest in youth to move into the field of policing.

- **UPDATE HIRING STANDARDS.** Some candidates who are qualified and good fits for the needs of modern policing might not meet the traditional profile of an officer and might previously have been screened out through agencies' hiring standards. Successful agencies are carefully considering whether their standards — in areas such as education, physical ability testing, and personal appearance — match the actual capabilities needed for the job.
- **OFFER RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES.** Benefits such as take-home vehicles, child care support, and education reimbursement can make an agency more attractive to potential candidates. Agencies are offering a range of such benefits.
- **BE WARY OF LATERAL RECRUITMENT.** Many agencies are offering cash incentives to attract officers from other agencies. These incentives can be effective, but they are costly and intensify the competition among agencies over the limited number of individuals available.
- **SHARE BURDENS TO HELP ADDRESS UNDERSTAFFING.** The choices agencies make about how to operate while understaffed can affect — in positive or negative ways — their ability to recruit and retain officers. Extended periods of mandatory overtime can cause officer burnout, so some agencies have taken steps to lessen overtime burdens.
- **MAKE GREATER USE OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF.** A number of agencies have shifted low-priority work from officers to civilians.
- **TO BOOST RETENTION, HELP OFFICERS IMPROVE THEIR WELL-BEING.** Most successful agencies have found that retaining officers requires ensuring the department is a place where officers want to work — a place where they spend their careers, where they can grow and thrive, and where they can earn respect and honor.
- **BUILD COMMUNITY SUPPORT.** How a community thinks about its local police can make a huge difference in the agency's ability to recruit and retain officers.

Please let me know if you would like additional information on this topic.

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