

CASE STUDY: CITY-COUNTY POLICE MERGER
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Unlike some local government consolidations in other cities, Louisville Metro merged just about all of its departments, including city and county police, on Day One of the new government. Former Louisville and Jefferson County departments in January, 2003, still had differing locations, union contracts, policies and procedures, and computer systems, but the new government was launched with one director for each of the departments that were to be merged. In the case of Louisville and Jefferson County police, the differences included separate communications systems, and an information technology system that was developed separately from those in the other agencies of local government.

The man recruited by Mayor Jerry Abramson for the daunting task of bringing the two police departments together is Robert C. White, a veteran of almost three decades in law enforcement who has served as Chief of Police in Greensboro, NC; Assistant Chief of Police in Washington, D.C.; and Director of Public Safety for the District of Columbia Housing Authority. Chief White now heads the Louisville Metro Police Department, the 22nd largest in the country with more than 1,200 sworn officers and nearly 700 civilians. (The Sheriff of Jefferson County, unlike some other counties in the U.S., does not deliver police services in Jefferson County, but primarily serves the state-run court system in the community.)

Within his first 60 days as Chief, White created a Public Integrity Unit to investigate cases of alleged criminal misconduct by police officers and other city government employees, and added a Community Relations unit to develop and coordinate outreach programs to citizens. A belief in decentralization as a way to prevent crime meant putting the Metro Police Department's resources as close to citizens as possible, and holding top managers accountable for results. Specialized units working out of police headquarters were downsized to put more officers in the districts and on the streets, and more detectives were assigned to the districts that directly serve neighborhoods. A major redistricting plan redrew all police beats and sectors to fit the new city and improve communication between citizens and officers. Established neighborhoods and business areas that were previously divided among city or county police districts are now served by a single police district.

SPEAKER

Robert C. White is making history as the first Chief of Police of America's newest Top 20 city, with the largest police department merger in the U.S. in many years. Chief White came to Louisville from Greensboro, NC, where he served as Chief of Police for 3-1/2 years, managing a force of more than 600 sworn and non-sworn personnel. His law enforcement career began more than 30 years ago when he was appointed an officer with the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department. Rising through the ranks, he commanded the department's emergency response team and planning and research division, then headed the Fourth Police District until his retirement in 1995.

After retirement, White was appointed the first Director of Public Safety for the District of Columbia Housing Authority, covering 55 housing developments and 25,000 residents. He created an independent police department and security agency of more than 150, resulting in a dramatic reduction in crime in public housing. In 1997, he was asked to help revitalize the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C., returning as Assistant Chief responsible for all patrol functions. Crime was reduced significantly, and an aggressive attack on open-air drug markets helped restore public confidence in the department.

White holds a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration from the University of District Columbia, and a Master's degree in Applied Behavioral Science from Johns Hopkins University. He also has completed the Contemporary Executive Development Program at George Washington University. He is married with three children, and is a proud new grandfather.