

Assessing Feasibility of Improved Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Delivery System



Photo courtesy of Coconut Creek Fire Rescue

Case Study

The Client

City of Coconut Creek, Florida

The Project

Transitional Study for Fire and EMS Services

The Opportunity

The City of Coconut Creek has been contracting for fire and EMS services with the neighboring City of Margate since 2004 through an increasingly expensive interlocal agreement (ILA). Coconut Creek has continued to face escalating costs as the budget has increased 94 percent since the two cities began working together, with Coconut Creek paying more than 50 percent of the annual \$22 million fire budget. Despite the increased costs, the cities struggled to address operational issues noted by Coconut Creek, including a lack of call data sharing and slower-than-acceptable 9-1-1 call processing response times.

Two years before the ILA was due to expire in September 2021, Coconut Creek sought an experienced partner to conduct a Transitional Study to assess the feasibility of a new, city-managed fire rescue department in the City of Coconut Creek. The City selected Public Consulting Group (PCG) to carry out the full scope of work based on successful engagements PCG had previously led for communities facing similar challenges. Backed by extensive experience, PCG's Fire and EMS Team was well positioned to partner with Coconut Creek and lead its Transitional Study, which officially kicked off in December 2019.

The Solution

To ensure the City of Coconut Creek had a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities, challenges, costs, and other pertinent issues involved with establishing a city-managed fire rescue department, PCG employed a multi-pronged approach to conduct the study. PCG's approach included:

- ✓ Collecting and reviewing data (e.g., geographic mapping, billing, budget, dispatch, and other data) for fire and EMS services Coconut Creek delivered through the ILA. More than 60 documents were reviewed to inform the study, including data from Coconut Creek, Margate, the Margate-Coconut Creek Fire Rescue (MCFR) Department, Broward County, Coral Springs, and North Lauderdale.
- ✓ Conducting extensive interviews with key stakeholders in Coconut Creek, Broward County, and the neighboring cities of Coral Springs and Margate.
- ✓ Establishing service benchmarks and performance targets based on numerous national fire and EMS standards and best practices.
- ✓ Developing response time performance and response coverage maps using GIS technology.
- ✓ Completing a cost analysis to define recommendations for the City of Coconut Creek to maintain their own fire and EMS department by the start of fiscal year 2022.
- ✓ Completing a five-year budget projection for the new Coconut Creek Fire Rescue Department.

This methodology enabled PCG to objectively assess the existing delivery system and determine if the City could feasibly establish – and more importantly, sustain – a new, cost-efficient fire and EMS delivery system that provides an equal or better level of service to the Coconut Creek community, compared to the current system.

The Result

Final recommendations were presented by PCG to the City of Coconut Creek on time and within budget—a trend consistent with PCG’s prior engagements serving communities facing similar fire and EMS challenges. PCG’s report included considerations for start-up costs, implementation timeline, staffing, training, equipment and facility requirements, EMS dispatch services, incorporation of Margate/Coconut Creek ILA separation provisions, and other important information. Notably, the results of PCG’s analysis were well aligned with the financial analysis that Coconut Creek conducted independently. PCG’s analysis indicated a total cost within \$500,000 and total staffing needs within 1-2 personnel of the City’s findings, thereby reflecting the consulting team’s expertise in data analysis and industry knowledge.

Based on the results of the study, PCG determined that the City of Coconut Creek could provide emergency medical and fire protection services at a cost equal to or lower than the existing delivery system. In agreement with PCG’s recommendations, Coconut Creek made the decision to invest in its own fire and EMS department and sought additional implementation support. While the official contract has ended, PCG continues to provide implementation support and guidance as the city looks to establish their city-run Fire and EMS facility by October 2021. As with every engagement, PCG strives to exceed the partner’s expectations by continuing to deliver exemplary customer service and support as needed.

“PCG’s team of Public Safety Consultants provided a comprehensive analysis of the cost and implementation process for fire and EMS services, that helped our city officials reach a decision that was in the best interest of the residents and visitors to our City.”

- Jeffery Gary, Fire Chief, Coconut Creek Fire Rescue



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To learn more about PCG’s fire and EMS consulting services, including Transitional Studies like the one conducted for the City of Coconut Creek, contact us today.

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