

Proposed budget cuts include 3 cop stations

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ABSTRACT

Mayor Rahm Emanuel plans to close three police stations, consolidate police and fire special units, and have the Fire Department move in with the Police Department, the administration said Tuesday.

FULL TEXT

Mayor Rahm Emanuel plans to close three police stations, consolidate police and fire special units, and have the Fire Department move in with the Police Department, the administration said Tuesday.

The police stations on the chopping block are Wood, which would merge with the Monroe District on the Near West Side; Belmont, which would merge with the Town Hall District on the North Side; and Prairie, which would merge with the Central District in the Loop and Wentworth District on the South Side.

Police from those districts say the stations likely were chosen because of their low crime rates and demographic changes in the neighborhoods. Shutting those stations, however, is not expected to go over well with residents or affected aldermen.

"If you absorb one of the safest districts in the city into one of the most violent, how are you going to maintain safety in the 21st District and continue to reduce crime in the 2nd District?" said Ald. Will Burns, 4th, whose ward is served by the 21st District Prairie station. "The administration has got a lot to do to prove this up, and at this point I'm not supportive of the plan."

Erick Guzman, who said he lives near the Belmont station, is worried about how the closing would affect the neighborhood's crime rate and police morale.

"Closing it down doesn't make much sense," said Guzman, 49. "When it comes to police, I think more is better, not less."

The Fire Department will move into police headquarters at 35th Street and Michigan Avenue. And the departments will merge special units, including bomb and arson squads and the marine and anti-terrorism units. And Chicago's five detective areas will be divided into north, south and central bureaus, according to sources.

Those moves are expected to save a nominal \$300,000 in Emanuel's first budget. The mayor's office maintains that the changes weren't made to save money, but to "increase coordination," according to an Emanuel spokeswoman.

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Credit: By Kristen Mack and Jeremy Gorner, Tribune reporters Tribune reporter Ryan Haggerty contributed.

Illustration

Caption: Photo (color): The Belmont District, whose station is at Belmont and Western avenues, would merge with the Town Hall District under the plan. PHIL VELASQUEZ/TRIBUNE PHOTO

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