



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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The 2016 Budget is a demonstration of Milwaukee County turning the corner towards a sustainable and better future. Despite facing a \$26.2 million deficit, my recommended budget increases services and rewards employees while holding property taxes flat. Our goal is to make lives better, and we do so through job training programs, increasing support for underserved populations, and deeper investments in public safety.

Job development is a cornerstone of this budget. Our transit system is connecting more people to jobs through added links to employment centers, without raising fares or cutting service. Training programs at the House of Correction and through our Uplift MKE program will ensure that residents of our poorest neighborhoods obtain training and access to jobs.

My recommended budget maintains our commitment to ending chronic homelessness in Milwaukee by 2018. It also prioritizes public safety through investments in emergency management, the District Attorney's operation, and the Sheriff's training academy. Our child support program is a national model, lifting children and families out of poverty by helping fathers get the training they need to achieve economic security and provide for their kids.

Milwaukee County employees are the reason that Milwaukee County can provide these great services and more, which is why this budget adds \$7.6 million in salaries over the 2015 budget to thank employees for the important work they do building strong communities. Despite fiscal challenges, we are able to accomplish this generating new sources of revenue and increasing efficiency in our delivery of services.

Milwaukee County has made incredible strides in the past five years, but tremendous opportunities still lie ahead of us. This budget invests in programs that ensure we can continue our forward progress and improve quality of life for people in every corner of Milwaukee County.

The following pages highlight key initiatives from my Recommended Budget.

Chris Abele

## Turning the Corner

Five years ago, Milwaukee County faced a dire fiscal outlook, and the Public Policy Forum asked of County government, “Should It Go or Should It Stay?”<sup>1</sup> Today, Milwaukee County is setting performance records and is poised to serve as a model government. Thanks to thoughtful analysis, disciplined decision making, and principled budgeting, the County’s fiscal outlook is strong, and this budget demonstrates the rewards of hard work. In 2016 Milwaukee County will increase support of key community programs, offer meaningful growth and advancement to its workers, and uphold its responsibility to taxpayers. Further, it continues the prudent and responsible operations that have led to this improved outlook.

## Improving Services and Increasing Support for the Community

The discipline and rigor of the last four years are now paying dividends, as we are able to improve and expand services across the County. Highlights include:

### Improving Economic Opportunity and Quality of Life

Providing “economic opportunity and quality of life for its entire people” is a cornerstone of Milwaukee County’s Mission and of the 2016 Budget. In the face of persistent and high rates of poverty and falling real incomes<sup>2</sup>, we seek every opportunity to improve opportunities and the quality of life in Milwaukee County. Among the initiatives included in the 2016 Budget are:

**Supporting Children.** Milwaukee County’s Child Support Services (CSS) Department is launching an innovative program to increase support for some of our community’s poorest families and children. Research confirms that children with both parents supporting families have brighter prospects than those without such involvement, and the CSS department helps identify and involve noncustodial parents in their children’s lives. A team within CSS will focus on two of the County’s poorest neighborhoods with some of the lowest rates of child support to increase support for children. This team will employ a variety of best practices to work with families, including case management to help reach right-sized and mutually-agreed-upon support agreements. The goal is to increase child support collections by at least 20 percent over the next three years.

**Linking People to Jobs.** Another strategy to improve economic opportunity for residents of Milwaukee County is to help workers reach employment centers using public transit. During 2015 the Milwaukee County Transit System (MCTS) added links to industrial parks in New Berlin and Menomonee Falls. Seasonal ridership on these routes exceeds 1,150 weekday passengers. During 2016 MCTS will pilot an extension to new job sites in St. Francis, adding 20,000 route miles—all while holding fares steady.

Also in 2016 MCTS will work on two important initiatives to continue to improve access to key regional job centers. The budget includes funding to investigate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), an innovative way of improving transit service. With BRT, buses operate in reserved lanes with stoplights set to turn green as buses approach. The buses stop at fewer locations and are able to achieve much of the speed and

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<sup>1</sup> Public Policy Forum, “SHOULD IT STAY OR SHOULD IT GO? Exploring the potential for structural reform in Milwaukee County government,” January 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, “Poverty keeps tight grip on Milwaukee, new census figures show, Sept. 16, 2015.

effectiveness of light rail without the same capital investment. MCTS is evaluating the use of BRT to link downtown Milwaukee to large employers on the west side of the County including the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center. MCTS also will explore options to address “the last mile” issue in transit. Fixed route systems, such as MCTS operates, rely on large numbers of travelers going to and from similar destinations. Often suburban employment centers lack the density to support fixed route service. This initiative will identify options to address this issue, based on best practices and innovations around the country.

We are especially happy to be able to fund all these improvements in transit service while holding fares flat – as they have been for the last four years. We recognize how critical affordable fares are to those who rely on the system to travel around the community.

**Expanding and Supporting Good Jobs.** While rates of unemployment have fallen since 2009, still too many people who want to work are unable to find full-time, family-supporting jobs. To address this issue, the County is spurring development and employment within the County. The Milwaukee Bucks are the first employer to pledge to target not only construction jobs but also ongoing jobs at those most in need, and more employers are expected to follow suit. The UpLift MKE partnership between the County, City, Milwaukee Area Technical College and the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board will provide residents from some of the poorest areas of our community with training and access to those jobs. To jump-start this initiative, a mid-year 2015 budget amendment has been submitted to the County Board.

**Improving Skills for Re-entering Citizens.** Milwaukee County operates the House of Correction (HOC), a correctional facility designed for individuals remanded to custody for up to one year. Part of the mission of the HOC is to ensure that those in custody are “afforded the opportunity and encouragement to reach their full potential.” To that end, the HOC has created numerous programs since May 2013 to improve opportunities, including GED classes, job training programs, as well as Alcohol & Other Drug Abuse (AODA) programs including cognitive services and treatment.

In 2016, officials at the HOC will continue to expand opportunities. They expect to increase the percentage of Huber/work release inmates who are employed outside the facility. The 2020 goal of employing 33 percent of the total number of Huber/work release inmates has nearly been achieved: 42 inmates who were unemployed when they entered custody now have full time employment that can continue once the inmates are released. The HOC is also increasing opportunities for inmates to give back to the community by joining off-site community service work crews. Participating in community service allows inmates to engage in productive activities, as well as to reduce the length of their sentence and lower the costs of incarceration. And in 2016, the HOC will launch an initiative to promote and encourage 100 percent of eligible inmates to participate in at least one educational, job training, or personal enhancement program during their period of confinement.

### **Continuing the Strong Focus on Public Safety**

Over the last four years, public safety has been a consistent priority, and the 2016 budget continues this focus with additional investments in emergency management, the District Attorney’s operation, public safety operations, and the Sheriff’s training academy.

**Improving Public Safety through Emergency Management.** In 2015, we consolidated four divisions previously housed in three different departments into the single Office of Emergency Management

(OEM) for better coordination and efficiency. This effort is already creating benefits and implementing best practices, such as integrating the FEMA Incident Command System into the governance of the OASIS Public Safety Radio System that supports our first responders. The OASIS radio network is also adapting system protocol to meet the needs of local hospitals and gaining efficiencies within the county's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. Additionally, EMS is relocating its communications center into the County's 9-1-1 communications center, creating a successful consolidation as well as increasing opportunities for employees.

The 2016 budget continues technology investments to improve service coordination across the County with nearly \$1 million for the upgrade of the OASIS radio system. This partnership between Milwaukee County and 17 of the County's municipalities is a joint effort to move from analog to digital technology, which will improve coordination between dispatching organizations and will position the system to continue to provide excellent emergency responsiveness.

**Protecting Citizens.** The District Attorney's Office is responsible for promoting public peace and safety through just and vigorous prosecution. In response to the growing workload in the department, the 2016 budget provides a net increase of 3.5 FTE positions. These increases, which add Victim Witness Advocates as well as investigative support, help address the following areas: crime investigations, witness protection, domestic violence, and prosecution requirements.

**Improving Management of Inmates.** The Budget includes 2 additional FTEs and continuing support for the implementation of a new system that will, among other functions, provide a new Correctional Management Solution to help oversee approximately 2,400 inmates between the House of Correction and Sheriff's Office, including arrest, booking and inmate management.

**Upgrading Training Facilities for Law Enforcement.** The Office of the Sheriff manages a facility for initial and ongoing training for the Sheriff Deputies as well as law enforcement units statewide critical to ensuring the safety of both officers and the public. The budget includes nearly \$750,000 in capital improvements to maintain the Sheriff's Academy for law enforcement training.

## Increasing Support for Underserved Populations

Milwaukee County operates numerous local, state, and federal programs for residents who need support living healthy, independent, and safe lives within our community. This has been a core responsibility since its early days, when Milwaukee County was a pioneer in establishing facilities for orphans, the poor and the ill. Milwaukee County continues to be an innovator in this regard, and the 2016 budget funds important initiatives to help those in need.

**Ending Chronic Homelessness.** The Division of Housing this year announced a plan to end chronic homelessness by 2018, and this budget includes funding to address this goal, which is also being supported by the City of Milwaukee and its Housing Authority as well as by private sources. Based on local data from 2014, Milwaukee has a population of roughly 200 individuals and families who are chronically homeless, that is, who have been continuously homeless for a year or more or who have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years<sup>3</sup>. These individuals and families will be assisted first with housing and then with additional case management services to help

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<sup>3</sup> Defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

them remain in housing. This innovative approach pioneered in New York City has shown remarkable success. Included in the 2016 budget are funds for four additional staff to support this program.

**Employing the Disabled.** Also in 2016 the Division of Disability Services will launch a three-year effort to provide employment connections for all graduating high school students with disabilities. By collaborating with municipalities, school districts and other stakeholders, the County will link graduates to job coaches and job developers. This will enable young adults to participate in employment that focuses on their strengths and abilities, not their disabilities.

**Moving to Community-Based Services.** Milwaukee County continues to embrace service models to care for individuals within the community, rather than in institutional facilities, wherever possible, while maintaining or improving public safety. Research and experience have demonstrated that individuals have better outcomes when they are treated in less-restrictive and community-based settings, and the County is moving swiftly to align with best practices nationally. The Behavioral Health Division continues its move to community-based services by increasing funding for mobile crisis services and for community-based mental health and substance abuse services, as well as by funding the creation of a north-side community access hub. The Delinquency and Court Services Division plans in 2016 to increase community-based services to selected adolescents in a secure community-based facility, rather than a secure detention facility.

**Improving Accessibility across Milwaukee County.** In celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in July, we recognized that while we have made good progress in making Milwaukee County accessible to all of its citizens, some of our facilities remain difficult to enter or navigate. In the 2016 we are dedicating \$500,000 specifically to improve access to our facilities for all citizens.

### **Supporting Active and Healthy Lifestyles**

Milwaukee County offers rich and varied recreational and cultural attractions that are important elements in our quality of life. The 2016 Budget continues investments across these facilities, including key improvements in our parks system, the Zoo, the Public Museum and other cultural institutions.

**Walking for Wellness – and Fun.** In 2014 the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture surveyed residents about their usage of County parks, and walking in the parks was the number one activity residents reported. With over 114 miles of pathways within parks, 120 lane miles of parkways, and 150 miles of multi-use trails spreading across the County, the County park system offers a wide variety of walking – as well as running and cycling – opportunities. Recognizing the importance residents place on these trails, the budget targets \$1.4 million of the planned \$5.2 million in new capital spending for improvements to walkways and trails, including both resurfacing and expansions.

**Trumpeting the Elephants.** Did you know that the Milwaukee County Zoo has been continuously exhibiting elephants since 1907 and has the only collection of elephants in the upper Midwest? The next nearest collection is in Indianapolis. This makes the Zoo's Adventure Africa exhibit an important undertaking not just to the community but to the region. The budget includes nearly \$1 million as part of the \$16 million being raised by public and private partners, including the Zoological Society, for the first phase of this exciting project. The subsequent phase, including another \$15 million investment, will focus on improvements and renovations to the hippo, rhino, zebra, and giraffe exhibits.

**Supporting Cultural Institutions.** Milwaukee County is a key participant in the cultural life of our community, and the budget continues to make significant investments in these assets. The budget allocates nearly \$7 million in operating support for cultural institutions, generally based on ongoing agreements with the organizations that operate them, as well as another \$6.7 million in capital support to help maintain facilities.

## Offering Growth and Opportunities to Employees

Employees remain at the heart of our mission and success: they are the vibrant connection between the programs we offer and the people we serve. This budget recognizes their essential role, as well as their support in helping transform Milwaukee County government over the last four years. We are pleased to increase support of employees by \$7.9 million in the proposed budget over the 2015 adopted budget.

### Stabilizing Take Home Pay

A key priority in this budget is improving compensation for employees, and this budget allocates \$3.9 million more in base salaries for employees than in the 2015 budget. This results from a planned one percent increase in salaries in mid-2016, on top of the 1.5 percent increase during 2015. Further, the budget holds medical premiums, deductibles, coinsurance, and office copays unchanged, and it proposes a \$1 match for every \$2 employees contribute to a Flexible Saving Account. At the same time, state-mandated employee pension contributions are also rising<sup>4</sup>, to ensure that promised benefits will be available to employees at retirement. The net result of these changes is that take home pay for general employees will not erode in 2016 and most employees will see increases, especially coupled with the other investments in employees described below<sup>5</sup>.

### Recognizing Accomplishment and Supporting Advancement

In addition to increasing salaries by 2.5 percent over the start of 2015, the budget also includes two new programs to recognize County employees. We believe that this additional \$1.5 million investment in our employees is well placed and recognizes the significant role that employees play in making Milwaukee County a model government. New in 2016 are:

**Lump-Sum Increase.** The budget creates a one-time pool of 0.5 percent of salaries that will be awarded as a lump sum to employees. This means that employee salaries in 2016 will be 3 percent above 2015 budgeted levels.

**Tuition Reimbursement.** The budget envisions a major overhaul of the County's employee Tuition Assistance benefit. In the past, employees could borrow up to \$1,500 from the County to pay for tuition and then repay the interest-free loans over ten bi-weekly installments. Under the new program, employees will be eligible for reimbursement up to \$2,500 annually to attend classes to further skills for their current roles or to develop new skills to advance their careers.

### Addressing Market Compensation and Pay Equity Gaps

Along with \$5.4 million in salary and benefit increases for employees, the budget includes \$2.5 million to address imbalances in pay equity. The following proposals are designed to ensure that employees in critical roles, such as corrections officers, victim witness advocates, highway workers, human service

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<sup>4</sup> For 2016, general employees shall contribute 6.5 percent of salary to the pension plan (up from 5.0 percent in 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Public safety employees' compensation and benefits are subject to collective bargaining.

workers, and administrative support personnel, along with all other employees are treated fairly and respected for the valued role they play in our community.

**Meeting Market Minimums.** Over the last two years the Human Resources (HR) Department has evaluated jobs across the County to ensure that every job has an accurate description and that the salary ranges for all jobs are fair and competitive, based on market data for comparable jobs. In this process, the HR department discovered over 500 employees with salary levels below market ranges. The funding in the budget will allow HR to ensure that no County employee is paid below the market range for the position filled.

**Assuring Pay Equity.** In reviewing all positions and descriptions, our HR department also identified circumstances where employee compensation is not well aligned with employee experience. The 2016 budget also includes funds to begin addressing any issues of pay equity between employees.

## Maintaining Accountability to Taxpayers

In every budget since 2012 we have proposed a flat property tax levy, and 2016 is no exception. Taxpayers expect us to be frugal with their hard-earned money, and we continue to follow best practices in managing the County's finances. Taxes levied by County government represent about 16.5 percent of total property taxes levied on County taxpayers, and we are working hard to do more with the resources entrusted to us without relying on additional tax contributions from hard working residents.

### Holding Property Taxes Flat While Growing Revenue

Despite keeping the County tax levy flat, total expenditures and revenues are expected to increase modestly by 2.8 percent in 2016. To assure that our core programs receive adequate funding, we are investing in new sources of revenue for County operations. We are adding a Grant Coordinator in the Department of Administrative Services to help smaller departments secure and manage additional funding. To support our parks we are adding a full time development officer to secure additional funds, and we are funding the Parks Amenity Matching fund to ensure that we can accept grants with matching requirements.

### Managing County Finances Prudently

While under State law Milwaukee County is unable to maintain operating reserves, the County is able to maintain reserves for debt service to ensure that the County can meet its debt service payments. These reserves are funded by any surpluses generated from County operations. The County's Comptroller has set a minimum target of \$10 million for reserves. Under standard accounting practices, reserves should generally be used for one-time expenses, rather than for ongoing operations. The 2016 budget proposes to lower reserves by \$17.25 million primarily to increase funding for our employees' pensions and to offset reductions in shared revenue from the State of Wisconsin.

## Working "Better, Faster, Cheaper"

Our improved performance and stronger fiscal outlook rest heavily on the disciplined approach we've taken over the last four years in understanding community needs and designing solutions. We will continue to approach our responsibilities in that vein, relying on several approaches to improve performance and outcomes in the community, including:

### **Adopting best practices**

Across the County we are transforming our operations by adopting state-of-the-art approaches to meet needs. As described earlier, the Divisions of Delinquency and Court Services and Housing are each adopting best practices to improve outcomes by increasing secure community-based support for juveniles and by adopting the Housing First model to address chronic homelessness. The Behavioral Health Division is pursuing Joint Commission Accreditation to ensure that its hospital operations meet national standards for quality and performance. Today the Zoo supports and participates in over 50 conservation programs; over the coming years it will increase its support of world-wide conservation practices in keeping with the standards of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The Department on Aging will continue to examine the sites it operates for senior meal programs, based on feedback from seniors themselves, to ensure the locations and programming available continue to meet their needs and expectations.

Departments supporting County operations are also moving quickly toward best practices. The Human Resources Department is planning for 360 degree feedback tools for managers to ensure that they have opportunities to continue to develop and grow as leaders. The Information Management Services Division is adopting standard project management methodologies to ensure the successful completion of technology projects. And the Economic Development and Real Estate Division will introduce a sealed bid disposition process in 2016 for foreclosed properties, a best practice to help ensure that foreclosed properties revert to private ownership as fairly and effectively as possible.

### **Reducing and managing the County's footprint**

Earlier this year we successfully vacated the City Campus facility, and today plans are underway to redevelop that property into an engaging and attractive asset to the community. This budget includes over \$4 million to continue to fit our footprint to our needs and to bring unneeded and under-used assets back into community life – and back onto tax rolls. The Facilities Management Division will support and guide the changing needs of the County by creating a new team to oversee space usage and planning, a standard practice for an organization with over 14 million square feet of facilities to manage.

### **Seeking efficiencies**

Across the County we seek – and implement – more efficient operations. Examples of projects funded in this budget to spur efficiency include the project to consolidate as many as eight work order systems into the single City Works platform to improve information sharing and functionality as well as the project to move to digital radio systems to improve emergency response. Within the Department of Administrative Services, consolidation of safety program managers into the office of Risk Management, rollout of an automated procurement system, centralization of business services into the Central Business Office, and planning for an Enterprise Resource Planning system to replace aging and obsolete core systems are more examples of steps we are taking to operate as efficiently and as effectively as we can.