



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
Milwaukee County
CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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County Executive Chris Abele Introduces 2017 Executive Budget

Budget Commits to Building a Stronger Community with SAVE Transit Plan, Investment in Youth Programs and Public Safety, and Path towards \$15 Living Wage

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele today introduced his 2017 Executive Budget, a proposal that makes critical investments in building a stronger, safer, healthier community. The county executive believes this can be accomplished while maintaining a strong record of fiscal responsibility.

County Executive Abele's \$1.19 billion budget reflects his commitment to tackle the challenges facing Milwaukee County, invest in sustainable programs and infrastructure that help people live better lives, and continue building the foundation for a better future.

This budget also demonstrates that investing in our people and in our communities doesn't have to come at the expense of fiscal responsibility; by making smart, but tough, decisions we can add millions of dollars in neighborhood development and public safety initiatives while still protecting the taxpayers.

In 2017, the county executive focuses public safety investments on a set of strategies proven to reduce criminal justice involvement while providing opportunity to those in need and keeping people who don't pose a threat to the community out of the system in the first place. Included in these investments are targeted case management for individuals with mental illness, community-based alternative programming for at-risk youth, and access to employment and programming for adults through electronic monitoring.

Abele also makes significant investments in programming at the Behavioral Health Division, to include: expansion of the hours at the Crisis Resource Centers to 24/7, creation of a northside location for services,

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expansion of MPD and mental health professional teams, a \$2 million expansion of the ending homelessness initiative, and additional resources to address the opioid epidemic.

Recognizing that economic justice goes hand-in-hand with social justice, this budget includes an additional \$665,000 investment in Milwaukee's neighborhoods with the highest poverty and unemployment rates to fund programming and services that will support young people in the community. Through a partnership with Employ Milwaukee and the Boys & Girls Club, we will expand opportunities for career development at the Mary Ryan Boys & Girls Club in Sherman Park and similar neighborhoods.

But just having a job isn't enough; the County needs to invest in ways to put people on the path to a family-sustaining career, which is why the county executive's budget puts a stake in the ground in Milwaukee County by establishing a sustainable path to a \$15 per hour minimum wage for County workers and contractors by 2021.

In order to have a sustainable path forward on a living wage and have the resources needed to invest in expanded public safety and workforce development initiatives, the County needs to be serious about expanding revenue options. In the past five years, the county executive has been able to substantially lower the County's structural deficit and pay off debt, but this improvement can't continue without new revenue. That is why the 2017 budget holds steady the 2016 Adopted Budget property tax rate, and adds in the amount of net new construction in the County, which yields an additional \$4.1 million. Milwaukee County is growing and the county executive believes that new economic development projects (for example, the Mayfair Collection) all around the County should pay their fair share in funding critical priorities. This will have no impact on the average household and is consistent with the methodology that is used in Waukesha County.

Without new revenue and some operational changes, the transit system in Milwaukee County is also at risk; fares could rise, service could be cut, and routes could be eliminated. Doing nothing also jeopardizes the County's overall bottom line.

County Executive Abele is not willing to undo the progress we've made or put our system at risk waiting on someone else to fix this problem. As State revenue to local governments decrease and the County's share increases, we have to look at alternatives. Yesterday, the county executive released his SAVE Transit plan -- a cornerstone of the 2017 Executive Budget -- that generates millions in dedicated funding for transportation, transforms the GO Pass from a costly and inefficient program into a more sustainable program that ensures our most vulnerable citizens have the service they need without raising fares on low-income working families, and invests in the future with Bus Rapid Transit. This proposal has received support from both

business groups and transit advocates. The County Executive is also looking at ways to make sure that any
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new revenue source is affordable to low-income families. He is convening a taskforce that will make recommendations for how to achieve that goal.

Other highlights of the budget include:

- **Expansion of witness protections in the District Attorney's office:** The 2017 budget expands witness protection efforts by adding an investigative analyst and an advocate to support witnesses.
- **Drowning prevention efforts:** The Parks budget funds an initiative to develop strategies to address racial and ethnic disparities in drowning rates across the community.
- **Expanding Energy Assistance:** The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program, which assists low income households in meeting their energy needs, will expand from four to six locations for customers to apply for assistance and add additional program staff.
- **New benefit, pay increase for County employees:** In addition to establishing a sustainable path towards a \$15 per hour living wage by 2021, this budget includes an across-the-board one percent pay increase for County employees as well as \$2 million for performance pay and equity adjustments to help retain our best employees. The budget also adds a new benefit – vision insurance – based on feedback the county executive received from employees as he visited worksites over the past year.

The County Executive's 2017 Recommended Budget is available [here](#).

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