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For Immediate Release:

Milwaukee County Parks Receives Innovation Award *Green Infrastructure Projects at The Domes*

Milwaukee, WI (May 7, 2015) The Mitchell Park Domes, “Milwaukee’s Living Landmark,” has been named winner of a BizTimes I.Q. Award for Innovation for recent green infrastructure projects that manage rainwater. This is the second award this year that The Domes has received for these projects.

“Our forward-looking projects continue to be recognized,” said County Executive Chris Abele. “Combined, all of the infrastructure improvements make the Domes more sustainable, energy efficient and better equipped to be a part of the solution for improving our rivers and Lake Michigan. The water-recycling components alone significantly reduce the amount of water Milwaukee County must purchase— savings that can be passed on to taxpayers.”

Infrastructure improvements include a rain-harvesting system, permeable pavers, and a green roof, all of which manage water where it falls.

“Green and sustainable—that is the future for this facility,” said Parks Director John Dargle, Jr.

Seven new greenhouses use a Sky Harvester system to capture rainwater from the rooftops. The water, as a resource, is collected in four cisterns, each holding 20,000 gallons. The water is run through a filtration system which includes UV light. The purified water is then used to irrigate plants and seedlings in the greenhouses. The greenhouses are used not only to nurture plants for displays in the Tropical, Arid, and Show domes, but also to overwinter delicate plants for the Boerner Botanical Gardens.

“Using just the water from the cisterns, we were able to go seven months before we had to buy city water for irrigation,” said Sandy Folaron, Director of The Domes.

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Also, near the main entrance of The Domes, a plaza made of permeable pavers replaces the old ponds. Rain filtered through the pavers is collected not only to keep it out of the sewers, but also to use in the plaza's nine fountains during the summer months. In addition to managing storm water, the Parks Department has created a space for visitors to unwind.

A green roof, the first of the green infrastructure projects to be implemented, was installed in 2012. Vegetation and soil components hold thousands of gallons of rainwater. Specialized plants help filter pollution, while the green roof as a whole provides heating and cooling savings for the facility and extends the life of the roof. This project was partially funded by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD).

Green infrastructure components also provide for unique educational opportunities for students and the public at large. Each year, more than 25,000 students tour the building and attend educational field trips. In addition, the annual Green Living Festival celebrates sustainability, including green infrastructure.

Earlier this year, The Domes received a Green Luminary award from MMSD. Each month MMSD selects an inspiring leader in sustainability to receive the award. According to MMSD's award description, these leaders are champions who recognize not only the need to manage storm water, but also the need to innovate and grow, to create lasting good works that connect people and prosperity to the environment.

Awards will be presented at a luncheon Wednesday, May 20, from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., at Potawatomi Hotel and Casino.

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