

BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Adopted Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	24,524,355	32,999,392	26,078,706	26,903,188	824,482
Operations Costs	14,602,947	14,472,318	15,525,843	15,398,920	(126,923)
Debt & Depreciation	937	3,181	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	1,665,948	2,341,322	1,862,741	1,730,000	(132,741)
Interdepartmental Charges	5,912,215	6,063,910	5,695,983	6,553,273	857,290
Total Expenditures	\$46,706,401	\$55,880,124	\$49,163,273	\$50,585,381	\$1,422,108
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	28,179,741	28,804,260	26,188,718	28,930,824	2,742,106
State & Federal Revenue	183,523	457,353	699,407	400,000	(299,407)
Indirect Revenue	11,382	5,589	0	0	0
Total Revenues	\$28,374,645	\$29,267,202	\$26,888,125	\$29,330,824	\$2,442,699
Tax Levy	\$18,331,756	\$26,612,922	\$22,275,148	\$21,254,557	(\$1,020,591)
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	283.00	301.00	311.00	309.00	(2.00)
Overtime \$	368,553	444,306	168,417	229,200	60,783
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	3,780,505	4,567,094	6,361,361	6,756,115	394,754

Department Mission:

To steward a thriving park system that positively impacts every Milwaukee County Park visitor.

Department Vision:

To foster dynamic connections through parklands and community, heighten the quality of life in the County, and lead as a model park system.

Department Description:

Milwaukee County’s park system is diverse and multifaceted. Comprised of parks, facilities, and services, it directly supports the community by providing opportunities for recreation, health, wellness, environmental stewardship, and improved quality of life.

Milwaukee County Parks manages over 15,500 acres including 153 parks and parkways, and over 215 miles of trails. The system offers year-round recreation activities located throughout the County: natural areas, trails, beaches, marinas, playgrounds, athletic courts and fields, community recreation centers, horticultural facilities, golf and disc golf courses, aquatic centers, swimming pools, wading pools, splash pads, dog parks, an indoor ice rink, and food and beverage locations.

Milwaukee County Parks is organized into three divisions: Administration & Planning, Operations & Trades, and Recreation & Business Services.

Department Goals:

Equitably balance the parks system to make it sustainable in services, facilities, staffing, and funding.

Advance racial equity and enhance accessibility to support Milwaukee County as the healthiest county in Wisconsin.

Grow and retain an engaged, diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of Milwaukee County residents.

Invigorate community health and wellness to heighten the quality of life through recreational experiences.

Actively engage community to cultivate creative partnerships, and volunteerism to expand communications to employees, stakeholders, and the community.

Department Objectives:

Racial Equity: Continue to advance the County vision that by achieving racial equity, Milwaukee is the healthiest county in Wisconsin. Support public health, open spaces, and healthy recreational experiences.

Diverse & Inclusive Workforce: Ensure Parks staff is diverse and representative of County residents.

Customer-focused Design: Equitably provide the services the public needs and wants.

Employee Perspective: Ensure employees are heard, safe, supported, and confident in what they do.

Improved Performance & Equitable Practice: Provide that decisions are equitable, sustainable, and positive.

Fiscal Health: Ensure Milwaukee County Parks works toward the establishment of long-term Parks resources.

Major Changes

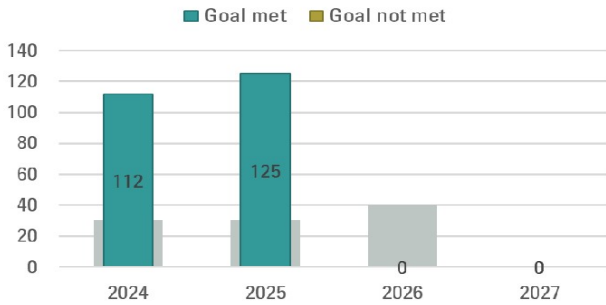
- Milwaukee County Parks is working in 2026 to delist the Milwaukee Estuary from the Area of Concern. In partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Parks plans to continue habitat design, restoration, and wildlife enhancement projects throughout the County. In 2026, Area of Concern activities will include Little Menomonee River Parkway habitat restoration and wildlife enhancement and Kohl Park wildlife enhancement projects. South Shore beach ongoing maintenance of revegetation areas will be occurring. Planning and design contracts will continue for several wildlife enhancement and beach restoration projects.
- Milwaukee County Parks will continue to work with the Milwaukee Parks Foundation in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding approved by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors in 2022. Milwaukee Parks Foundation has pledged support to the department in 2026 in the amount of \$560,391.
- Rental rates and fees are minimally increased for various golf and foot golf rounds, pools, picnic areas, and pavilions, as well as facility rooms at horticulture and recreation center sites, dog exercise areas, special events, and sports permits.
- \$200,000 of tax levy in the Parks Department is replaced with General Transportation Aids (GTA) funding in the 2026 Budget. The GTA allocation provides funding for roadway work done in Parks in collaboration with the Department of Transportation. This includes but is not limited to roadway painting and sweeping, asphalt and mastic work, catch basin cleaning and repairs, and salting in winter.

The following contracts are included in the 2026 Budget in lieu of separate review and approval from the County Board during the fiscal year:

Vendor	Contract Description	Contract Amount
Northern Ground	Website and marketing support.	\$60,000
Granicus	Parks engagement software subscription.	\$25,000
Northern Light Drones Show (BCI Entertainment)	3rd of July drone show.	\$150,000
Volgistics Inc.	Volunteer Management Software Solutions	\$6,000

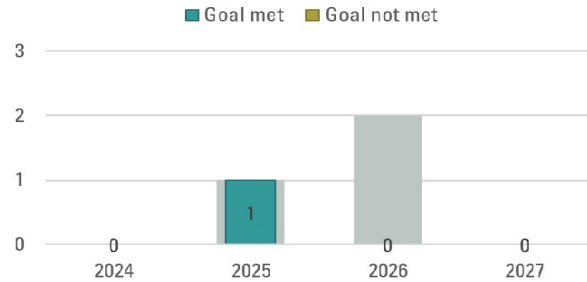
PARKS DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

Increase acres of natural areas



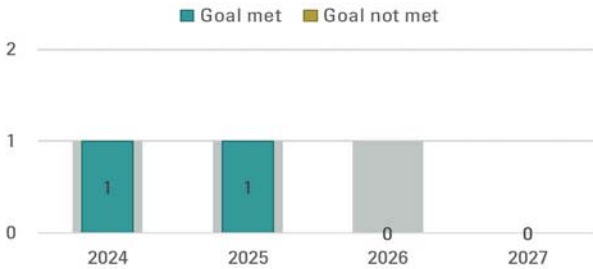
Increased acreage of designated Natural Areas includes the conversion of turf grass to natural areas.

Implement three recommendations from the Aquatics facility plan



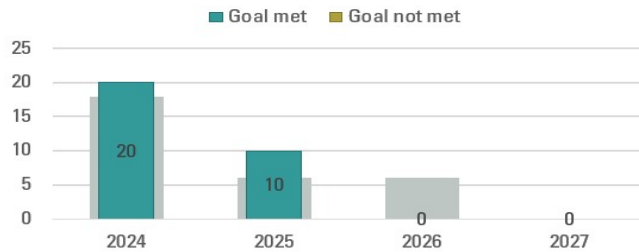
Implementation of aquatic facility recommendations is guided by the Aquatics Facilities Plan.

Create three pickleball court sites with one in each region



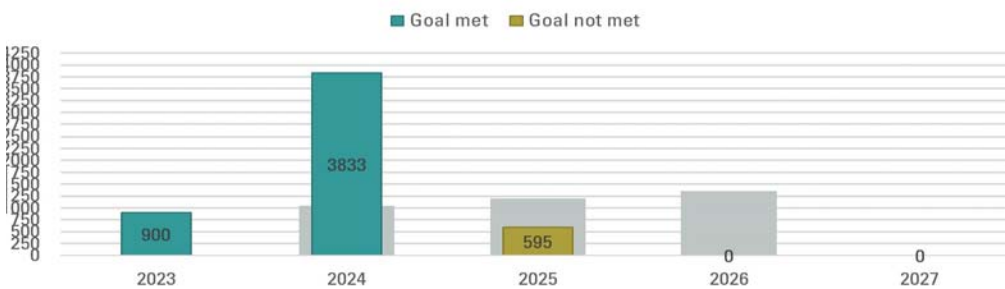
New pickleball facilities with at least one in the North, Central and South regions of the County.

Increase free picnic sites and fields by 8-10 in each region



Increase in free to use picnic sites and athletic fields covering the North, Central and South regions of the County.

Increase the number of volunteers helping in Parks to 1350



2025 data is accurate as of May 12, 2025.

Strategic Program Area: Administration

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	4,065,784	5,089,614	3,286,082	3,169,091	(116,991)
Revenues	327,407	653,031	1,033,344	1,373,657	340,313
Tax Levy	3,738,376	4,436,583	2,252,738	1,795,434	(457,304)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	39.00	49.00	47.00	50.00	3.00

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Number of Active Friends Groups (Increase by 20%)	50	55	60	65
Number of Volunteer Hours Served (From 16,000 to 24,000)	16,000	12,649	24,000	15,000
Number of Volunteers (From 900 to 1,350)	900	3,833	1,300	4,600
Trail System Miles (Increase by 10 Miles)	135	140	145	145

Strategic Overview:

The Administration and Planning Division is comprised of the Director’s Office, Marketing and Communications, Finance, Community Engagement, Contract Management, Safety, Security and Training and Planning, and serves as a liaison to both Human Resources and Risk Management.

The Director’s Office provides overall department management, guidance and communication on policy, strategy, operations, and programs. Additionally, the Director’s office is focused on special projects, external relationships, communications, and engagement with the Board of Supervisors.

Marketing & Communication oversees marketing and public relations for the park system and its facilities, events, and services. This section also manages branding, marketing strategy, promotion, social media, media relations, print and digital marketing, web administration, content development, and graphic design.

Finance is responsible for the proper and timely reporting of Parks’ financial transactions in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and Governmental Accounting Standards for operating and trust fund accounts. Finance also manages purchasing and receipt of goods and services, requests for payment of obligations and invoices, recording of revenues, receivables and deferrals, petty cash management, and the proper reporting of fixed assets in accordance with County policies.

Community Engagement serves as a liaison to Parks’ many friends groups, encourages and organizes volunteerism throughout the parks system, supports public outreach on capital and other projects, and builds strategic partnerships with community groups.

Contract Management oversees the development and compliance of Parks’ agreements, memos, letters of understanding, easements, management agreements, and other contractual documents applied for and manages grants, and serves as the public records custodian. These tools outline the obligations and opportunities of the department and are building blocks with external partners, and support public-private and intergovernmental relationships.

Safety, Security, & Training maintains safety and order in Milwaukee County Parks through interactions with patrons, park neighbors, fee compliance tasks and various law enforcement. Additionally, this section oversees training and professional development for Parks employees, administers the Milwaukee County Learning Management System (LMS) for Parks, administers the Park Ranger program, and collaborates with County Risk Management.

Planning provides parks long-range planning, capital project management, in-house design, and supports the maintenance and acquisition of parkland in accordance with Parks mission. Efforts include property disposition, development review, evaluation of park improvements and resource protection areas, needs assessments, easements, right-of-entry permitting, maintenance of Parks Geographic Information System (GIS), administration of grants, records and archive retention, and evaluation of third-party project requests.

Administration and Planning supports Milwaukee County strategic focus areas of applying a racial equity lens to all decisions, enhancing the County's fiscal health, and sustainability and dismantling barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

Goals & Objectives:

Increase awareness and promotion of parks and park improvement projects.

Strategic Implementation:

- Enhance the fiscal health and sustainability of Parks.
- Foster and seek out creative partnerships with outside entities to sustain and build the fiscal health of the department.
- Grant management for the entire Parks department including seeking out grants and other outside funding sources.

Additional Program Details:

Select right of entry fees have been increased in 2026 to be more in line with industry standards and a new hotline renewal fee has been added to the fee schedule.

There are no service level changes in 2026.

Strategic Program Area: Park Operations & Trades

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	21,379,139	26,443,199	24,144,711	23,835,222	(309,489)
Revenues	1,066,157	1,045,052	1,769,033	1,475,450	(293,583)
Tax Levy	20,312,982	25,398,148	22,375,678	22,359,772	(15,906)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	153.00	168.00	165.00	155.00	(10.00)

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Actively Managed Natural Areas (Increase by 100 Acres)	9,582	9,606	10,092	10,106
Actively Managed Park Lands (Decrease by 100 Acres)	4,860	4,860	4,750	4,728
Square Footage of Buildings Maintained (Decrease by 5%)	1,370,000	1,360,000	1,301,500	1,315,500
Trees Planted (Increase by 1,350)	1,531	1,690	2,140	2,500

Strategic Overview:

The Park Operations & Skilled Trades Division is responsible for the operation of Milwaukee County Park facilities and is comprised of Park Operations, Golf Operations, Land Resources/Natural Areas, and Skilled Trades.

Park and Golf Operations activities include the management and maintenance of general access to parks, park grounds, trails, land and natural resources, landscaping, and golf course turf maintenance; storm water facility maintenance, sports fields, playgrounds, wading pools, splash pads, picnic areas, agricultural lands, pavilions, and parkways; and equipment and fleet maintenance. Additionally, Operations provides customer service and special events support; coordinates with elected officials, partners, citizens, community groups, volunteers, friends groups, other stakeholders, and user groups; and responds to concerns regarding maintenance, encroachments, forestry issues, stream blockages, and safety issues.

Land Resources/Natural Areas provides technical services to meet the Parks stewardship obligations for significant natural resources on approximately 15,200 acres of Parks land. This includes coordinating all the department's forestry work, directing the department-wide efforts to protect, manage, and interpret natural resources and implementation of the agency's Ecological Restoration Management Plans, Urban Forest Sustainability Plan, and Natural Resources Management Plan. Staff also supports volunteer activities related to natural resource management and reviews county development plans for natural resource impacts.

Skilled Trades is responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and improvement of more than 460 buildings, structures, and mechanical systems throughout the parks system; ensuring health, safety, and code compliance of park facilities; and providing preventative and corrective maintenance on park assets. Staff supports building and infrastructure systems such as HVAC, electrical, mechanical, carpentry, and plumbing through a combination of in-house and contracted services.

Park Operations and Skilled Trades are essential to maintaining the availability of public spaces to support the mental and physical health of Milwaukee County citizens while investing upstream to address root causes of health disparities.

Goals & objectives:

- Provide relevant training opportunities for operations staff.
- Expand outreach programming and naturalization/stewardship within the park system.

- Continue implementation of the Milwaukee County Parks Urban Forestry Management Plan by addressing the impact of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) while also working to restore the system's tree canopy.
- Implement the 2023 - 2034 Natural Areas Management Plan developed by the Natural Areas Team.
- Develop a new Trails Network Plan and continue to expand the Oak Leaf Trail and improve connectivity to other trail networks in Milwaukee County.
- Continue efforts to improve sustainability of the park system by implementing the department's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.
- Continue implementation of the CityWorks Work Order and Asset Management System.

Strategic Implementation:

- Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government – Create multiple new entry-level positions to build a pipeline of new, diverse workforce from prior seasonal and job training programs.
- Determine what, where and how services are delivered based on the resolution of health disparities and apply a racial equity lens to all decisions. Continued refinement and utilization of the Parks' Equity Index.
- Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities.

Additional Program Details:

There are no service level changes in 2026.

Strategic Program Area: Recreation & Business Services

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2025/2026 Variance
Expenditures	21,261,478	24,347,311	21,732,480	23,581,068	1,848,588
Revenues	26,981,081	27,569,119	24,085,748	26,481,717	2,395,969
Tax Levy	(5,719,602)	(3,221,808)	(2,353,268)	(2,900,649)	(547,381)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	93.00	97.00	99.00	104.00	5.00

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2026 Target
Improve 3 aquatics facilities in three years	0	0	1	3
Pickleball Courts (Three New Sites/One Per Region)	0	2	2	3
Picnic Areas (Increase Free Picnic Sites by 8 Per Region)	17	25	30	41

Strategic Overview:

The Recreation & Business Services Division is comprised of Aquatics, Food & Beverage, Horticulture, McKinley Marina, Public Services, Recreation, Golf, Organized Sports, and Special Events. The division seeks to enrich the community by providing recreational services and programming throughout the Milwaukee County Parks system.

Aquatics oversees pool programming and operations, management, and maintenance of indoor and outdoor deep well pools and family aquatic centers. Trained lifeguards staff these facilities to keep swimmers and patrons safe.

Food & Beverage operates and sells food and beverages at 56 facilities throughout the system including Juneau Park Beer Garden, South Shore Terrace, Whitnall Park Beer Garden, the Vine at Humboldt Park, the Traveling Beer Garden series, golf courses, ice rinks, horticulture facilities, pool and aquatics facilities, recreation centers, and events. In addition, the food & beverage team offers catering options in conjunction with golf outings and other facility rentals.

Horticulture includes Boerner Botanical Gardens, Wehr Nature Center, and the Mitchell Park Conservatory (the Domes), as well as the Mitchell Park Greenhouse Complex. These facilities provide an opportunity for visitors to experience nature in both formal and natural environments, through passive recreation or educational offerings. They also offer rental rooms, on-site facilities, and serve as host to special events.

McKinley Marina operates, manages, and maintains the marina infrastructure including floating docks which house 655 slips for season-long tenants and transient boaters, buildings, grounds, and the marina basin. The marina offers slip rentals, fuel sales, launch permits, and storage space for rent on a seasonal basis.

Public Services facilitates the rentals of park pavilions, picnic shelters, and open space picnic areas. This area is responsible for the sale of disc golf permits, dog park permits, and all on-line boat launch permits.

It is the policy of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture to dedicate all dog park-related revenue toward the maintenance, operation, and management of the County's dog parks. Any surplus funds remaining after primary needs are met shall be reserved exclusively for maintenance or capital improvements within the same park areas, including, but not limited to signage, parking, landscaping, seating and other amenities that support or complement the dog park facilities. It is the intent to codify this policy within Chapter 47 of the Milwaukee County General Ordinances - Parks and Parkways.

It is the policy of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture to dedicate all disc golf-related revenue toward the maintenance, operation and management to the County's disc golf courses. Any surplus funds remaining after primary needs are met shall be reserved exclusively for the maintenance or capital improvements with the same park areas, including, but not limited to signage, parking, landscaping, seating, and other amenities that support or complement the disc golf facilities. It is the intent to codify this policy within Chapter 47 of the Milwaukee County General Ordinances - Parks and Parkways.

Recreation encompasses the Kosciuszko and Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Centers, the Wilson Park Recreation Center, and the Milwaukee County Sports Complex. Recreation manages, operates, and maintains these facilities, while providing a variety of recreational opportunities including sports leagues, exercise areas, room rentals, camps, classes, trainings, and events.

Golf oversees golf course operations and management, clubhouse management, facilitation of golf tournaments, outings, leagues, and merchandise sales at 13 courses. PGA professionals provide expanded services at the six main courses.

Organized Sports and Special Events manage the permitting and coordination of organized sports leagues, athletic field rentals, sport courts, and special events.

Recreation and Business Services provide numerous opportunities for Milwaukee County residents to recreate and support the strategic focus areas of investing upstream to address root causes of health disparities while enhancing the Milwaukee County's fiscal health and sustainability.

Goals and objectives:

- Maintain concessions through improved services and offerings.
- Increase opportunities at horticulture facilities through increased programming, special events, and partnerships.
- Continue implementation of digital transactions with the expansion of the on-line sales platform to include picnic site rentals, dog parks, and par three golf courses, as well as boat launch and various sports permits.
- Continue improving the quality of user/customer service interaction using surveys, feedback, and interactions to drive more efficient processes.

Strategic Implementation:

- Reflect the full diversity of Milwaukee County at every level of (County) government – Focus on equity in hiring practices.
- Determine what, where and how services are delivered based on the resolution of health disparities - development and utilization of the Parks' Equity Index.
- Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions - development and utilization of the Parks' Equity Index.
- Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities by providing recreation programming to enhance individual and public health.
- Invest "upstream" to address root causes of inequity in swim ability.
- Enhance Milwaukee County's fiscal health and sustainability – invest in revenue generating activities.

Additional Program Details:

Staffing level changes included in the 2026 budget:

1.0 FTE Horticulturist is created to assist in plant care and maintenance at Boerner Botanical Gardens, as this location is seeing an increase in admissions, attendance, and special events.

3.0 FTE Park Maintenance Workers are created to support golf course activity, with one position each assigned to north, central, and south regions.

Summary of service level changes:

Rental rates and fees are minimally increased for various golf rounds, Domes admissions, pools, facilities and pavilions, as well as rooms at community centers and recreation center sites, dog exercise areas, special events, and sports permits. McKinley Marina storage fees will also increase, and dinghy fees will be implemented.

2026 will also see continued implementation of free picnic areas and sports fields, as well as strategic creation of pickleball courts. This budget funds three to four outdoor pools or aquatic centers, with locations yet to be determined based on staffing numbers and recruitment efforts, as well as pool maintenance and mechanical issues that may arise.

Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory

Per Milwaukee County Ordinance 47.32, current fees for Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory are included in the table below. The Parks Director is authorized to adjust the dates of free or discounted admission as needed. Visitors have the opportunity for discounted access of \$5.00 admission on the last Thursday of each month in 2026.

RATES:

Adult Resident (13+ years)

\$9 - County

\$10 - Non-County

Youth (3-12 years)

\$6.50 - County

\$6.50 - Non-County

Student (w/college ID)

\$6.50 - County

\$6.50 - Non-County

Adult with disabilities

\$6.50 - County

\$6.50 - Non-County

Child (0-2 years)

Free - County

Free - Non-County