

BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Recommended Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	32,999,392	27,910,338	26,903,188	27,993,311	1,090,123
Operations Costs	14,472,318	15,364,846	15,398,920	15,126,943	(271,977)
Debt & Depreciation	3,181	218,058	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	2,341,322	2,384,495	1,730,000	1,701,091	(28,909)
Interdepartmental Charges	6,063,910	6,301,311	6,553,273	6,615,174	61,901
Total Expenditures	\$55,880,124	\$52,179,048	\$50,585,381	\$51,436,519	\$851,138
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	28,804,260	30,434,822	28,930,824	29,470,745	539,921
State & Federal Revenue	457,353	764,378	400,000	753,000	353,000
Indirect Revenue	5,589	0	0	0	0
Total Revenues	\$29,267,202	\$31,199,200	\$29,330,824	\$30,223,745	\$892,921
Tax Levy	\$26,612,922	\$20,979,847	\$21,254,557	\$21,212,774	(\$41,783)
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	301.00	311.00	309.00	310.00	1.00
Overtime \$	444,306	193,866	229,200	231,323	2,123
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	4,773,820	6,361,361	6,756,115	6,797,622	41,507

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 200 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 four 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.

Community-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

- In 2027, Area of Concern activities will include the continued Implementation Phase of the Little Menomonee River Parkway Section 2, 3, & 6 Habitat Restoration Project and the Planning and Design phases of the following Wildlife Enhancements Projects: Little Menomonee River Parkway Section 1, Little Menomonee River Parkway Sections 1-6 (Aquatic Enhancements), Kohl Park, Kletzsch Park, Menomonee River Sections 5 & 6, and County Grounds Park. The Planning and Design Phase of the Bradford & McKinley Beach Improvements project and the maintenance phase of the South Shore Beach Rehabilitation Project will continue.
- New revenue is needed to offset the structural budget deficit that Milwaukee County Parks experiences. New revenue in 2027, \$450,000 in direct cuts to aquatics would be required, closing pools and half of all splash pads and wading pools. In order to avoid these service reductions in 2027, Milwaukee County Parks will pilot an expansion of its existing parking revenue collection program at some lakefront locations and in the area around American Family Field. Parks expects to generate net revenue of \$670,000 by charging fair market value for parking in these locations.
- 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 2027 in the amount of \$600,000.
- 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. McKinley Marina storage and boat slip fees will also increase.
- The 2027 Budget includes \$276,417 in salary and social security for skilled trades positions to more closely align with the regional labor market and address recruitment and retention issues, Human Resources will recommend and process the final pay adjustments in 2027

The following contracts are included in the 2027 Budget in lieu of separate review and approval from the Mental Health Board during the fiscal year. The contracts listed below are for 2027 fiscal year only, unless otherwise noted:

Vendor	Contract Description	Contract Amount
Northern Ground	Website and marketing support.	\$50,000
Granicus	Parks engagement software subscription.	\$31,000
Northern Lights	Drone Show	\$150,000

Strategic Program Area: Administration**Service Provision:** Discretionary**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	4,062,779	3,356,749	1,428,545	1,553,300	124,755
Revenues	367,403	467,821	1,200,657	1,644,180	443,523
Tax Levy	3,695,376	2,888,928	227,888	(90,880)	(318,768)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	37.00	35.00	36.00	35.00	(1.00)

Strategic Overview:

The Administration Division is comprised of the Director's Office, Marketing and Communications, Finance, Contract Management, and Safety, Security and Training, and serves as a liaison to both Human Resources and the Department of Administrative Services.

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, multi-lingual signage, 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.

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.

Administration 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.

Manage contracts and grants for the entire Parks department including seeking out grants and other outside funding sources.

Additional Program Details:

There are no service level changes in 2027.

In 2026, Parks created a new strategic area named Planning. This new strategic program area previously existed within the Administration division.

Strategic Program Area: Park Operations & Trades

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	26,443,199	24,480,112	23,835,222	24,720,659	885,437
Revenues	1,045,052	1,725,256	1,475,450	1,479,198	3,748
Tax Levy	25,398,148	22,754,857	22,359,772	23,241,461	881,689
Full Time Pos (FTE)	159.00	165.00	155.00	155.00	0.00

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Actively Managed Natural Areas (Increase by 100 Acres)	9,606	10,092	10,106	10,119
Actively Managed Park Lands (Decrease by 100 Acres)	4,860	4,750	4,728	4,715
Square Footage of Buildings Maintained (Decrease by 5%)	1,360,000	1,301,500	1,315,500	1,262,715
Trees Planted (Increase by 1,350)	340	482	2,500	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 & 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 - continued refinement and utilization of the Parks' Equity Index.

Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions - 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 2027.

Funding has been allocated to promote implementation of Parks strategic plan.

Funding has been allocated to traffic calming projects funded from additional parking revenue.

Strategic Program Area: Recreation & Business Services**Service Provision:** Discretionary**How We Do It: Program Budget Summary**

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	24,347,311	22,761,052	23,581,068	23,429,936	(151,132)
Revenues	27,569,119	28,873,748	26,481,717	26,970,367	488,650
Tax Levy	(3,221,808)	(6,112,697)	(2,900,649)	(3,540,431)	(639,782)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	96.00	99.00	104.00	106.00	2.00

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Improve 3 aquatics facilities in three years	3	1	3	0
Pickleball Courts (Three New Sites/One Per Region)	2	2	3	0
Picnic Areas (Increase Free Picnic Sites by 8 Per Region)	25	30	41	0

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 daily 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.

Recreation encompasses the Kosciuszko and Dr. 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 - providing recreation programming to enhance individual and public health.

Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities - address root causes of inequity in swim ability.

Enhance Milwaukee County's fiscal health and sustainability – invest in revenue generating activities.

Additional Program Details:

The following position changes included in the 2027 budget:

1.0 FTE Volunteer and Community Engagement Coordinator is created at Wehr Nature Center to help recruit, retain, and solicit community assistance and volunteers to support the existing staff and grounds. 50% of this position will be funded by the Friends of Wehr Nature Center.

1.0 FTE Head Lifeguard position within Aquatics is abolished.

Additional funding is added for Seasonal Head Lifeguard positions within Aquatics to provide additional flexibility to improve our service delivery at multiple pool facilities during peak seasons of the year.

Summary of service level changes:

Rental rates and fees are minimally increased for various golf rounds, horticulture admissions / permits, pools, facilities and pavilions, as well as recreation center sites, dog exercise areas, disc golf, ice skating, special events, and sports permits. McKinley Marina storage and slip fees will also increase.

Aquatics is projected to open four to five outdoor pools in 2027 focusing on safety. This number of facility openings is consistent with what was operated in 2026. Parks has 30 wading pools and splashpads. In 2027, all of these are budgeted to open, minus any which may have mechanical issues.

Golf course availability and fees may be reevaluated as the Whitnall Golf Course capital project has been approved. Whitnall's capital project will cause accessibility issues as contractor work can cause disruption of play.

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 will again have the opportunity for discounted access of \$5.00 admission on the last Thursday of each month in 2027. These fees and free days may also change midway through the year as the facility transitions from being operated by Parks to be operated by Milwaukee Domes Alliance (MDA). MDA will then be responsible for all operations and maintenance costs while developing their programmatic calendar and collecting all admissions revenues. Once MDA assumes operations of the Domes, admission rates are no longer reviewed and approved per MCGO 47.32. The parks Operating budget assumes 8 months of County operations in 2027 with the Lease Agreement with MDA beginning in September 2027. If this date of transition changes, additional fiscal changes will be needed during the fiscal year.

RATES:

Adult Resident (13+ years)

\$9 - County

\$10 - Non-County

Youth (3-12 years)

\$7.00 - County

\$7.00 - Non-County

Student (w/college ID)

\$7.00 - County

\$7.00 - Non-County

Adult with disabilities

\$7.00 - County

\$7.00 - Non-County

Child (0-2 years)

Free - County

Free - Non-County

Strategic Program Area: Planning

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	1,026,836	1,581,135	1,740,546	1,732,624	(7,922)
Revenues	285,629	132,375	173,000	130,000	(43,000)
Tax Levy	741,207	1,448,760	1,567,546	1,602,624	35,078
Full Time Pos (FTE)	9.00	12.00	14.00	14.00	0.00

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Number of Active Friends Groups (Increase by 20%)	55	60	65	70
Number of Volunteer Hours Served (From 16,000 to 24,000)	12,649	24,000	15,000	18,300
Number of Volunteers (From 900 to 1,350)	3,833	1,300	4,600	5,600
Trail System Miles (Increase by 10 Miles)	140	145	145	149

Strategic Overview:

The Parks Planning Division 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.

Community Engagement staff serve as liaisons to Parks' many friends groups, encouraging and organizing volunteerism throughout the parks system, supporting public outreach on capital and other community projects, as well as building strategic partnerships with community groups.

Planning supports Milwaukee County strategic focus areas of applying a racial equity lens to all decisions and sustainability and dismantling barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

Goals & Objectives:

The goal of the Planning Division is to identify the existing and future needs for recreational and open space within the County's geographic area and to develop a workable plan that can effectively meet those needs. Park and open space planning guides long-term park management and maintenance, as well as connecting and considering community needs. The conduct of park and open space planning indicates an appreciation of the value of a well-developed system of park and open space sites within a community and provides guidance and rationale for long-range planning, a critical part of meeting the health and recreational needs of those who live in Milwaukee County.

Strategic Implementation:

Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity.

Invest "upstream" to address root causes of health disparities.

Enhance the fiscal health and sustainability of Parks.

Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions.

Additional Program Details:

Right of entry fees will increase in 2027 to reflect changing industry standards and also reflect requests that take substantial staff commitment towards third party efforts.

The easement fee minimum for telecommunications will increase to \$2,000.

There are no service level changes in 2027, but Planning seeks to expand GIS resources relating to asset management based upon both recent audit findings and to modernize inventories to reflect current software and technology capabilities.