BUDGET SUMMARY

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Requested Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures					
Personnel Costs	12,786,163	10,275,873	11,174,290	11,838,043	663,753
Operations Costs	8,035,511	8,108,699	9,899,251	10,117,715	218,464
Debt & Depreciation	0	0	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	1,114,002	735,258	552,797	461,655	(91,142)
Interdepartmental Charges	848,617	874,839	1,037,831	1,003,683	(34,148)
Total Expenditures	**$22,784,293**	**$19,994,670**	**$22,664,169**	**$23,421,096**	**$756,927**
Revenues					
Other Direct Revenue	19,039,400	19,282,353	22,668,006	23,313,024	645,018
State & Federal Revenue	0	0	0	0	0
Indirect Revenue	0	0	0	0	0
Total Revenues	**$19,039,400**	**$19,282,353**	**$22,668,006**	**$23,313,024**	**$645,018**
Tax Levy	**$3,744,893**	**$712,316**	**($3,837)**	**$108,072**	**$111,909**
Personnel					
Full Time Pos (FTE)	165.10	168.10	168.10	172.50	4.40
Overtime $	191,124	147,884	312,072	312,072	0
Seasonal/Hourly/Pool	661,715	1,251,257	1,663,539	1,750,072	86,533

Department Mission:
Inspire people to conserve wildlife and wild places.

Department Vision:
A world where wildlife and people thrive.

Department Description:
Milwaukee County Zoo is organized into five key divisions that work collaboratively to support the mission and daily operations of Wisconsin's largest accredited zoological park. These divisions include Administration and Finance, Marketing and Communications, Facilities, Animal Management and Health and Operations. Each division plays a vital role in advancing the Zoo's strategic priorities, which are guided by three key commitments: Care - Enhancing wellbeing and pursuing the highest standards in veterinary care, husbandry and zoo habitat design; Connect - Immersing people in nature and creating memorable, educational experiences that inspire empathy and environmental action; and Conserve - Saving wildlife and wild places here and across the globe by leading and partnering on conservation projects. Together, these divisions support the Zoo's mission to inspire people to conserve wildlife and wild places.

Major Changes
- The Zoological Society of Milwaukee (ZSM) is the Zoo's primary supporting partner, providing educational programming that helps meet Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accreditation requirements. ZSM also supports the Zoo through its membership program, fundraising, conservation initiatives, and graphic design services. Together, the Zoo and ZSM operate as the Zoo Coalition, guided by a shared strategic plan centered on three key commitments: Care, Connect and Conserve, supported by three Foundational Principles of Culture, Community Impact and Financial Strength and Stewardship. These priorities align with Milwaukee County's strategic focus areas and strengthen the Zoo's ability to deliver exceptional guest experiences while advancing wildlife conservation and education.

- The 2027 budget reflects and incorporates the County's focus areas of Inclusion, Bridging the Gap, and Investing in Equity through the following:Creating Intentional Inclusion: The Zoo's Flex Pricing Plan continues to enhance affordability and accessibility. In 2025, the Zoo offered 34 accessibility programs, representing a community value of $1,336,605 and reaching 14% of total visitors. The Zoo is committed to fostering a more inclusive community by strategically marketing to broader and more diverse audiences and by expanding outreach to underrepresented groups, including Native American, Hmong and Spanish-speaking communities. In partnership with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, the Zoo continues to expand its joint accessibility initiative, Access MKE Zoo, to provide increased access for individuals and families facing barriers. The Zoo has established a goal of awarding 22% of time and materials contracts to Targeted Business Enterprises (TBEs), in alignment with County equity and inclusion targets.
- Bridging the Gap:During the annual exit survey, guests are asked: "Why do you visit the Zoo?" The most common response is "To be with family and friends". The Zoo will continue to support this through a safe, welcoming environment and outstanding guest service. Paid internship programs will continue in 2027 within the Animal Management and Health Division. A partnership launched in 2024 with Cristo Rey High School that brought four student interns into the Administration and Finance, Marketing and Communications, and Facilities divisions. This program will continue through the 2026-2027 school year with three interns, providing career exposure and job training for local youth. The Zoo actively gathers and incorporates feedback from guests and community members to ensure it remains a welcoming and inclusive destination for all.
- Investing in Equity:The 2027 budget is designed to increase attendance and revenues, reducing reliance on tax levy support. Attendance is projected at 1,328,427 visitors, representing a 2% increase over the 2026 budget. The 2027 Marketing Strategy continues to prioritize Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion goals. It targets 20% of social media impressions to diverse and underrepresented audiences and 15% to new audiences to boost attendance and broaden engagement. The Zoo's Flex Pricing Model continues to balance revenue optimization with accessibility. In 2025, it enabled 34 accessibility programs that reached 168,079 guests, 14% of total attendance, providing a measurable community impact valued at over $1.3 million. The Zoo and ZSM remain committed to serving children and families experiencing high economic need through ongoing joint programming and outreach initiatives.
- An updated economic impact study completed in 2024 revealed that the Zoo contributes an estimated $241 million in total direct and indirect economic impact on the four-county region. This includes $80 million in earnings and 2,927 jobs. The Zoo remains a significant economic driver, playing a vital role in the financial health of Milwaukee County and its surrounding communities and the State of Wisconsin.
- The Zoo's 2027 budget meets its tax levy target primarily through attendance growth, targeted fee increases and expenditure cuts. After years of implementing cost-saving measures, additional reductions would directly impact animal care, guest services and operations. As a result, the Zoo's long-term financial strategy is centered on sustainable revenue growth rather than further budget cuts.
- The Zoo's revenue strategy focuses on increasing attendance through daily visitation and special events, through selective fee increases, and through enhanced guest experience. The Zoo's revenue budget is cognizant of economic conditions, which continue to place pressure on household budgets.
- A review of the past three years shows that a growing share of attendance has come through free admission opportunities, placing additional pressure on the Zoo's earned revenue model. In 2027, the Zoo will evaluate its accessibility programs to ensure they continue to provide meaningful public access while achieving an appropriate balance between accessibility and the admission revenue necessary to support operations. This balanced approach will help preserve affordable public access while ensuring the Zoo has the resources needed to fulfill its mission and maintain a high-quality guest experience.
- Beginning in April 2026, the Zoo implemented a new entrance process as part of the Front Entrance Capital Project, with the full project scheduled for completion in July 2027. The new design features free-flow vehicle entry, allowing guests to park before purchasing admission at a walk-up ticket booth or entering directly through the Gathering Place using online tickets or memberships. This streamlined approach improves traffic flow, enhances the guest experience, and strengthens security by creating a single pedestrian entry point. The Gathering Place also serves as a welcoming gateway to the Zoo, improving guest circulation while increasing revenue opportunities.
- In 2027, the Zoo's special exhibit will feature Dragons, an immersive experience showcasing 20 life-sized animatronic dragons and other mythical creatures. Drawing inspiration from legends and folklore around the world, including Native American traditions and Chinese culture, where the term kung lung has historically referred to both dragons and dinosaurs, the exhibit explores how these legendary creatures have been interpreted across civilizations. Each animatronic dragon combines imaginative features inspired by lions, serpents, birds, and even prehistoric reptiles. Guests will encounter creatures that move, roar, breathe smoke, sing, and tell their own mythic stories, creating an unforgettable experience that blends entertainment, education and cultural exploration.

- The Zoo's facilities plan remains focused on updating habitats to meet or exceed standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), while also enhancing the overall guest experience.
- The 2027 Capital Budget Request includes the following projects:Primate Building New AC System: The Zoo is requesting $100,930 in design funding to install air conditioning in the Primate of the World building, providing consistent environmental conditions during periods of extreme heat and poor air quality. Current temporary measures to increase airflow are labor-intensive, unsustainable, and make it more difficult to maintain optimal conditions for animals. It will also enhance the guest experience by providing additional air-conditioned space while visiting the Zoo. As extreme heat events become more frequent, a permanent climate-control system is needed to improve animal care, indoor air quality, and operational efficiency. Installing air conditioning will also support accreditation readiness, as the lack of climate control was identified as a concern by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums during its 2024 inspection. Addressing this issue before the Zoo's 2029 reaccreditation will strengthen animal welfare, improve working conditions for staff, and ensure the facility remains resilient to changing environmental conditions.
- New Carousel with Enclosure: The Zoo is requesting $1,975,640 to replace its 32-year-old carousel and provide design funding for an enclosed facility and related site improvements. The existing carousel's aging electrical and mechanical systems pose an increasing risk of failure, jeopardizing approximately $310,000 in annual revenue. Replacing this key attraction will protect an important revenue source while enhancing the guest experience. The new enclosed, fully accessible carousel is expected to increase ridership by approximately 20% through year-round operation by eliminating weather-related closures. The enclosure will also reduce maintenance costs by protecting the carousel from the elements, extending its useful life, and preserving a popular family attraction that supports the Zoo's long-term financial sustainability.
- Zoofari Building Roof & HVAC Replacement: The Zoo is requesting $2,985,640 to replace the Zoofari Building roof and aging HVAC system. The existing HVAC units are more than 30 years old, well beyond their 20-year useful life, and frequent breakdowns disrupt revenue-generating rentals. The project will replace three outdated air handling units with a single energy-efficient variable air volume rooftop unit, reducing energy consumption, lowering maintenance costs, improving occupant comfort, and increasing system reliability. The roof is also in critical condition, with approximately 90% of its surface deteriorated and multiple leaks causing recurring service disruptions, interior damage, and costly temporary repairs. Replacing the roof will eliminate ongoing failure and protect the building from further damage. The Zoofari Building generates approximately $80,000 to $100,000 annually through rentals and also houses leased warehouse space for retail and food inventory, making a safe and reliable facility essential to protecting revenue and meeting lease obligations. The roof replacement also creates an opportunity to pursue grant funding for a future solar energy system, supporting Milwaukee County's sustainability goals while reducing longer-term utility costs. This investment will protect critical revenue streams, reduce operating and maintenance expenses, improve energy efficiency, and ensure the facility remains dependable for guests, tenants, and community partners.
- Zoo Aviary Building AHU Unit 3 Replacement: The Zoo is requesting $74,900 in design funding to replace the air handling unit serving the indoor penguin habitat. Installed in 2001, the unit is now 26 years old and well beyond its expected 20-year useful life. A leaking chilled water coil has already been taken out of service, reducing system capacity and increasing the risk of failure. Reliable temperature control is essential to penguin health, as the habitat must maintain tightly controlled environmental conditions and penguins cannot safely tolerate temperatures above 50 degrees Fahrenheit. When the system fails, staff must manually cool the habitat by carrying in bags of ice until repairs are completed. Although the unit remains under a service contract through 2027, maintenance costs are expected to increase significantly as parts become obsolete and more difficult to obtain. Replacing the unit before a catastrophic failure occurs is the most cost-effective approach, ensuring reliable climate control, protecting animal welfare, reducing emergency repair costs, and maintaining operational continuity while supporting the Zoo's commitment to the highest standards of animal care.
- Underground Voltage Feeder Replacement: The Zoo is requesting $193,080 to replace underground voltage feeders originally installed in 1958 that have exceeded their reliable service life and are now failing testing. These feeders are critical to distributing power from the Zoo's backup diesel generators during outages. Without replacement, emergency power cannot be relied upon, creating a significant risk of a full site power loss. Such an outage would immediately jeopardize life-support systems essential to animal health, including temperature control, ventilation, water circulation, and habitat systems. Replacing these feeders is a critical risk-mitigation investment that protects animal welfare, maintains operational continuity, and safeguards the Zoo's primary revenue streams. A prolonged outage could force partial or full closure of the Zoo, resulting in lost admissions, concessions, memberships and event revenue. Replacing the feeders through directional boring will eliminate this critical point of failure, reduce the risk of costly emergency repairs, and protect both the Zoo's conservation mission and long-term financial stability.

- Oceans Connections Pool Area Demolition and Design Funds: The Zoo is requesting $274,370 to complete the demolition of the former Oceans pool area and provide design funds for a picnic shelter in its place. Although the former sea lion show area has been removed, the existing pool remains, creating ongoing safety and operational risks, including standing water, a 20-foot -deep open structure, and potential mosquito breeding. This project will demolish and backfill the pool, eliminating these hazards while repurposing the space for a covered picnic shelter and natural play area. The new shelter will primarily support the Zoo's growing school group program, which welcomed more than 92,000 students and generated $715,571 in revenue in 2025. It will provide a safe, weather-protected space for lunches, addressing the loss of available indoor space in the Gathering Place when the new front entrance opens in 2027. The facility will also be available for rentals during evenings, weekends, and outside the school season, improving the guest experience while creating additional revenue opportunities.
- Zoo Macaque Holding Area - AC Unit 2 & AHU Unit 1 Design: The Zoo is requesting $65,870 in design funding to replace the HVAC systems serving the Macaque holding area. Air conditioning unit #2 and air handling unit #1 are both approximately 20 years old and have reached the end of their useful lives. Operating in a demanding animal care environment, these systems are exposed to dust, hair, moisture, and debris that accelerate wear and increase maintenance needs. Reliable HVAC systems are essential to maintaining proper temperature, ventilation, humidity, and air quality to support animal health and wellbeing. Although the units remain under a service contract through 2027, maintenance costs are expected to rise significantly as equipment ages and replacement parts become more difficult to obtain. Replacing these systems before a major failure occurs is the most cost-effective approach, improving reliability, reducing long-term maintenance costs, minimizing the risk of emergency repairs, and ensuring the stable environmental conditions required to meet animal care and accreditation standards.
- Watermain Pipe Replacement: The Zoo is requesting $3,604,820 to replace its aging underground water piping system, which has experienced recurring water main breaks that disrupt operations, threaten animal health, and cost between $80,000 and $250,000 annually in repairs. Recent failures include a major 2023 break near the seal habitat that required excavation 22 feet below ground, three additional breaks in 2024, and five more in 2025. Replacing the system with piping installed at a standard six-foot depth will reduce future repair costs and improve long-term reliability. Reliable water service is essential to animal habitats and life-support systems, particularly in areas such as the Aquatic and Reptile Center, where a water main failure could endanger aquatic animals. Water main breaks also disrupt guest access, waste significant amounts of water, and increase operating costs as utility rates continue to rise. Replacing the underground piping will protect critical infrastructure, improve operational resilience, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and support the Zoo's sustainability goals.

The following contracts are included in the 2027 Budget in lieu of separate review and approval from the County Board during the fiscal year:

Vendor	Contract Description	Contract Amount
2-Story Creative LTD	Advertising Services	$125,000
2-Story Creative LTD	Website Hosting & Search Optimization Support	$71,136
Culture by Design LLC	Entertainment Booking Services for Milwaukee a la Carte	$351,549
Dino Don Inc.	Special Exhibit	$300,000
DNP Imagingcomm America Corporation D/B/A Innovative Foto	Picture Booths - Revenue Share	$35,000
INFLOW INC	Parking Services - Revenue Share	$2,100,000
INFLOW INC	Parking Services Technology Fee	$13,444
JK Rentals Inc	Tenting Exclusivity - Revenue Agreement	$15,000
Mary Kazmierczak DBA MEK Consulting LLC	Library Services	$25,000
McClure International Consulting LLC	Elephant Foot Care	$12,250

The following contracts are included in the 2027 Budget in lieu of separate review and approval from the County Board during the fiscal year:

Vendor	Contract Description	Contract Amount
Mold-a-Rama Inc	Molds - Revenue Share	$140,000
O8O Leasing LLC	Hurricane Machines - Revenue Share	$30,000
Personality Portraits Inc	Face Painting, Caricatures, Henna & Airbrush Tattoos	$105,000
Traditions LLC	Event Lighting	$300,000
VenuPlus, Inc	Mobility Rentals, Medallions, Penny Press - Revenue Share	$154,800

Strategic Program Area: Administration & Finance

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	3,765,858	3,304,784	3,818,049	4,133,127	315,078
Revenues	51,174	74,041	323,495	707,516	384,021
Tax Levy	3,714,685	3,230,743	3,494,554	3,425,611	(68,943)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	12.60	12.60	11.60	11.00	(0.60)

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Accessibility Days	123	119	100	100
Accessibility Programs	30	34	30	30
Zoo Attendance	1,244,762	1,213,095	1,302,379	1,328,427

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Average Visitor Spending (Total Revenue/Total Attendance)	$15.30	$15.90	$17.41	$17.45
AZA Accreditation Status	Unaccredited	Accredited	Accredited	Accredited

Strategic Overview:
The Administration and Finance strategic program area provides effective leadership, guidance, and oversight for all Milwaukee County Zoo operations, aligning efforts with the County's and the Zoo's strategic goals. This division ensures organizational excellence through direct oversight of a wide range of essential functions, including: Accreditation compliance and standards, financial and capital project planning, business analytics and cash management, accounts payable and receivable, personnel and payroll administration, information technology systems, contract review and administration, program evaluation and performance measurement, community engagement, oversight of the Operations Division, coordination and facilitation of the Guest Experience Committee, management of diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion initiatives, oversight of school field trip programs, partnership management with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, continuous process improvement and government affairs, oversight of Service Systems Associates LLC (the Zoo's concession and retail partner) and general administrative services and office operations. Additionally, this division is responsible for determining all Zoo pricing strategies, ensuring a balanced approach to accessibility, revenue generation and market responsiveness.

Strategic Implementation:
The Milwaukee County Zoo partners with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee's Education Department to provide seven programs serving children and their families attending schools with high economic need. In 2025, 13,911 students were served from Milwaukee Public Schools, non-MPS schools in Milwaukee County and various other public and private schools. This partnership continues in 2027.

Flex Pricing, implemented in April of 2022, has proven to be an effective strategy for increasing admission revenue while providing guests the flexibility to choose visit dates that align with their budgets and schedules. This dynamic pricing model also allows the Zoo to adjust daily admission rates in response to market conditions and external factors. The 2027 budget allows for the Zoo to increase or decrease fees as needed to respond to local market conditions, weather, attendance demand and other operational considerations to maximize revenue while still proving accessibility.

Milwaukee County residents will continue to receive reduced admission prices on Wednesdays beyond the discount for purchasing online tickets. To provide Milwaukee County residents with the flexibility to visit on a weekend at a larger discount, the Wednesday rate will be offered one Sunday each month in April, May, and September.

The Executive Zoo Director or designee, maintains the authority to adjust rates up or down, discount or waive fees and provide one or more free admission days. Historically, free days are offered in January, February, March, October, November and December. In 2025, the value of the free days to the community totaled $413,747.

In 2027, the Zoo is implementing a transaction fee of $2.99 for online purchases and a ticket exchange fee of $3.99, for a net increase of $172,534 in revenues.

Revenues are reduced by $41,797 due to the loss of cell tower revenues.

Repair and maintenance funds and revenues are budgeted at $200,000 for Zoo improvements funded by private funds.

The budget increases $100,000 due to not realizing the savings on credit card fees from the Zoo's new point-of-sale system.

Additional Program Details:
Staffing level Changes:

Transfer one Community Engagement Coordinator to the Marketing and Communications Division.

Strategic Program Area: Marketing and Communications

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	3,196,110	2,979,116	3,710,440	3,869,984	159,544
Revenues	4,011,276	4,392,570	5,271,179	5,451,930	180,751
Tax Levy	(815,166)	(1,413,455)	(1,560,739)	(1,581,946)	(21,207)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	10.75	10.75	10.75	11.75	1.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Advertising Expenditures	$696,263	$658,886	$762,300	$812,375
Group Sales Revenue	1,823,708	1,940,062	1,925,800	1,961,422
Number of Public Special Events	18	18	25	25
Number of Sponsorships	22	22	25	25
Social Media Followers	411,747	438,033	455,000	460,000

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Attendance at Public Special Events	260,951	232,941	288,978	295,731
Attendance for Special Exhibit	154,310	143,067	140,534	143,067
Guest Educational Value Survey - Extremely or Very Educational	95%	91%	90%	90%
Guest Experience Survey - Extremely or Very Satisfied	97%	98%	90%	90%
Sponsorship Revenue	$342,054	$384,759	$513,750	$476,250

Strategic Overview:

The Marketing and Communications (M&C) strategic program area is responsible for promoting the Milwaukee County Zoo and enhancing its public image through a variety of outreach efforts. This division manages programs and materials that market the Zoo through general advertising, media relations, social media engagement, community events, sponsorships, promotional campaigns, public special events, and private event rentals. Staffed by both full-time and seasonal employees, the M&C team focuses on increasing public awareness, visitation, and overall enjoyment of the Zoo. These efforts directly support the Zoo's strategic goals by driving attendance, strengthening community connections, and generating revenues through expanded visibility and engagement.

Strategic Implementation:

Personal Services increases $90,314 due to the following: $25,623 for the adjustments from the December Human Resources Compensation Study and $64,691 from transferring the Community Engagement Coordinator from the Administration and Finance Division to this division and changing the position to full-time. This change is made to focus the position on fostering positive relations between the Zoo and the community, local partners, businesses, and organizations. This role involved participating in outreach programs and events to engage and inspire a diverse range of individuals, families and local organizations, aligning our brand objectives and marketing goals with meaningful connections. This role will also help with sponsor retention and prospecting for future sponsorships.

To support the Zoo's two percent attendance growth goal for daily admissions and events, advertising expenditures are increased by $50,075.

A key component of the Zoo's 2027 revenue strategy is increasing attendance at special events. To support this goal, the entertainment budget for a la Carte increases by $51,549 to attract higher-quality performers and enhance the guest experience. The additional cost is fully offset by projected attendance growth, and a $1 ticket increase for Friday and Saturday admissions. The Zoo will also introduce a VIP admission option to provide an enhanced guest experience while creating an additional revenue opportunity. These changes increase admission revenues by $88,439.

Another key revenue strategy for 2027 is expanding attendance at the Zoo's popular Boo at the Zoo event. The event schedule is being redesigned from Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings to Friday evening and all day and evening on Saturday, concentrating attendance into higher demand time periods while reducing operating costs. The combination of increased event attendance and the shift from daily admissions to event admissions is projected to generate an additional $80,912 in revenue.

In 2027, the Zoo will expand its advertising strategy beyond its core audience by intentionally placing and presenting ads to reach more diverse, underrepresented and previously unengaged community members. The Zoo has established goals that 20% of advertising media impressions target diverse and underrepresented audiences and 15% target new audiences, supporting the broader objective of increasing attendance by 2%. By attracting first-time visitors and expanding demographic reach, the strategy aims to diversify the Zoo's guest base and create opportunities for sustained long-term growth.

Sponsorship revenue is budgeted $446,250 in 2027. The transfer of the Community Engagement Coordinator to this division and moving it to full-time creates an opportunity to expand the Zoo's sponsorship program by building new corporate relationships and strengthening existing partnerships in collaboration with the Zoological Society of Milwaukee. As the position is filled and these relationships mature, the Zoo expects to grow sponsorship support in future years.

Picnic rentals increase by $37,722 to $144,111 to offset the cost of operating an entrance during the picnic season. See the Operations Division for details on the costs.

Additional Program Details:
Staffing level Changes:

Transfer in one position of Community Engagement Coordinator from the Administration and Finance Division and change the position from part-time to full-time.

Strategic Program Area: Facilities

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	5,971,176	5,577,647	5,974,589	6,093,061	118,472
Revenues	233,055	227,379	238,340	243,540	5,200
Tax Levy	5,738,121	5,350,268	5,736,249	5,849,521	113,272
Full Time Pos (FTE)	48.00	50.00	50.00	54.00	4.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Dollars Spent on Asset Maintenance	$2,001,199	$1,549,590	$993,219	$897,447
Number of Energy Savings Projects	13	5	5	5
Number of Work Orders Completed	476	1,411	950	2,400

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Electricity Usage Reduction	-5.40%	3.40%	-5.00%	-5.00%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Cleanliness	98%	96%	90%	90%
Natural Gas Usage Reduction	-8%	9%	-5%	-5%
Percentage of Time and Material Contracts Awarded to Targeted Business Enterprises	64.00%	42.00%	22.00%	22.00%
Water Usage Reduction	8.40%	-12.60%	-5.00%	-5.00%
Work Orders Completed in a Timely Manner	71%	48%	90%	90%

Strategic Overview:
The Facilities strategic program area is responsible for maintaining the Zoo's buildings, grounds, and overall cleanliness of the Zoo, and supporting the management of capital improvement projects. The condition and appearance of the Zoo's physical environment play a vital role in visitor satisfaction and encouraging repeat attendance. This division oversees a wide range of operational functions, including mechanical systems, preventative maintenance programs for equipment, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), minor electrical and plumbing repairs, housekeeping, horticulture, forestry management, and general cleaning services. The Zoo's expansive 190-acre park includes 62 buildings requiring HVAC maintenance and an additional 137 structures needing ongoing upkeep. Facilities also coordinate volunteer efforts from local businesses and community groups, offering opportunities for public engagement while enhancing the Zoo's appearance and operations.

Strategic Implementation:
The Facilities Division FTE count increased by four Maintenance Worker positions to reflect the action taken during the December 2025 County Board cycle. The impact of this action increases Personal Service by $224,772, which is fully offset by a reduction in building repair and maintenance costs, as additional staff can handle more in-house projects, reducing the need for outside contractors.

An increase of $70,604 in Personal Services is primarily due to the impact of the Human Resources Compensation Study approved in the December 2025 County Board cycle.

Waste disposal costs increase by $66,000, for a total of $184,000. This increase will be absorbed within the Facilities Division to meet the Zoo's tax levy target.

A key goal of this division is implementing a successful preventative maintenance program that establishes consistent practices to improve the performance, safety, and longevity of Zoo buildings and equipment. By extending the useful life of assets, this program reduces the need for capital replacements, improves operational efficiency by minimizing downtime, and lowers energy costs through more efficient equipment performance.

Additional Program Details:
Staffing Level Changes:

Reflects the December 2025 County Board cycle that created four new Maintenance Worker positions.

Strategic Program Area: Animal Management & Health

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	7,394,603	6,124,874	6,493,880	6,737,134	243,254
Revenues	121,436	118,139	187,617	183,099	(4,518)
Tax Levy	7,273,168	6,006,735	6,306,263	6,554,035	247,772
Full Time Pos (FTE)	81.75	82.75	82.75	82.75	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Dollars towards Conservation/Research	$352,802	$442,655	$376,300	$379,371
Number of Species in Collection	366	334	325	310
Number of Specimens in Collection	2,195	2,280	2,100	2,300
Value of Staff Time on Conservation Messages	$93,519	$100,465	$300,554	$300,554

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Participation in AZA Species Survival Plans	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percentage of Budget towards Conservation and Research	2%	3%	3%	3%
Reduce the Number of Exhibits that Appear Empty with No Reason	15%	14%	10%	10%

Strategic Overview:

The Animal Management and Health strategic program area is responsible for the expert care and management of the Zoo's diverse animal population. This includes ensuring the health and wellbeing of over 2,300 animals, spanning more than 310 species of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates, through species-appropriate nutrition, safe and enriching environments and comprehensive preventative and clinical veterinary care. Animal habitats are designed to support natural behaviors while also serving as dynamic spaces for educational and engaging guest experiences that foster connections to wildlife and wild places. These experiences play a vital role in advancing the Zoo's Conserve key commitment by inspiring stewardship and promoting public awareness of global biodiversity challenges. This program area also facilitates collaborative opportunities with approved local, regional, national and international researchers conducting behavioral, cognitive and psychological studies. These partnerships contribute to broader conservation science and enhance the Zoo's role as a leader in animal wellbeing and research-based care.

Strategic Implementation:

The 2027 budget includes position actions that will be submitted during the September 2026 County Board cycle to strengthen animal care leadership and support strategic priorities. These actions abolish one Behavioral Husbandry & Ambassador Animals Curator position, create one Behavioral Husbandry Coordinator position, reclassify the Assistant Curator, Large Mammals to Curator of Carnivores & Behavioral Husbandry and reclassify the Assistant Curator, Family Farm to Curator of Family Farm & Ambassador Animals. These changes improve leadership by dividing the Zoo's largest animal care unit into more manageable sections, elevating oversight of the Family Farm and expanding ambassador animal programs such as Wild Connections, while creating dedicated leadership for behavioral husbandry to advance the Zoo's strategic plan and meet evolving Association of Zoos and Aquariums accreditation standards for animal wellbeing.

The increase in Personal Services is primarily attributable to the Human Resources Compensation Study adjustments approved in December 2025.

Support from the Zoological Society of Milwaukee increases by $15,482 to a total of $31,508, to fund one-half of the costs of the Zoological Medicine and Surgery Resident position, reflecting a full year of support for the residency program in 2027.

The Zoo has a goal of contributing the equivalent of three percent of its budget to conservation and research efforts. This is realized through dollars expended and in-kind value of participation in field conservation, education, staff programs and training, green practices, scientific research and contributions. For 2027, the goal is $679,925.

Additional Program Details:
Staffing Level Changes:

Reflects the September 2026 County Board Cycle:
Create Behavioral Husbandry Coordinator
Abolish Behavioral Husbandry and Ambassador Animals Curator
Reclass funds

Specimen Expendable Trust Account (Org 0319). The Specimen Fund exists for the purpose of recording receipts from the limited sale of animals and other revenues. Disbursements are made for expenditures related to animal transports and shipments. For 2027, expenditures and revenues total $106,280.

Conservation/Research Program Trust Account (Org. 0330). The Conservation/Research Trust account was created to record donations and contributions that support conservation, research and green practices. The account allows for expenditure authority to support these functions in addition to supporting other expenses for the benefit or improvement of the Zoo and to support the Zoo's mission. For 2027, expenditures and revenues total $286,000.

Strategic Program Area: Zoo Operations

Service Provision: Discretionary

How We Do It: Program Budget Summary

Category	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2026/2027 Variance
Expenditures	2,456,545	2,008,249	2,667,211	2,587,790	(79,421)
Revenues	14,622,459	14,470,224	16,647,375	16,726,939	79,564
Tax Levy	(12,165,914)	(12,461,975)	(13,980,164)	(14,139,149)	(158,985)
Full Time Pos (FTE)	13.00	14.00	13.00	13.00	0.00

What We Do With It: Activity Data

Activity	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
General Admission Revenue	$7,720,699	$8,101,000	$10,127,848	$10,355,829
Revenue Partner Commissions	$3,301,403	$3,321,275	$3,522,464	$3,401,367
Society Membership Revenue	$3,397,075	$3,418,546	$3,541,563	$3,612,394
Zoo Rides Revenue	$1,935,338	$1,959,499	$2,060,551	$2,238,287

How Well We Do It: Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2024 Actual	2025 Actual	2026 Target	2027 Target
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Food Service	93%	84%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Gates/Admissions	98%	93%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Retail Outlets	99%	93%	90%	90%
Guest Survey - Excellent or Very Good Service at Ride Locations	98%	96%	90%	90%

Strategic Overview:

The Operations strategic program area provides leadership and oversight for key functions that support the guest experience, including customer service, reception, radio dispatch, safety, security and coordination of the Zoo's Safety Committee. The division plays a central role in revenue generation, managing core attractions such as admissions, parking, the train, Zoo Expeditions, carousel, special exhibits, skyride, zip line and ropes course. Operations also oversees all revenue-generating contracts and leases with third-party vendors, ensuring compliance, performance, and alignment with the Zoo's financial goals.

Strategic Implementation:

Personal Services in the Operations Division increase by $42,544, primarily due to staffing needs associated with the new front entrance, including $56,305 for seasonal parking ambassadors to assist guests with the new third-party parking system. This cost is fully offset by the parking fee increase effective July 1, 2027. An additional $29,016 is included for seasonal admissions and security staff to support special access to the south picnic sites, with these costs offset by increased picnic rental revenue. These increases are partially offset by the discontinuation of the VR Theater in 2027, eliminating $42,000 in seasonal labor and related expenditures, resulting in no net tax levy impact.

Beginning in late April 2026, the majority of parking operations transitioned to a revenue-share partner, who is responsible for collecting parking fees and remitting applicable sales tax. In addition, the 2027 Budget includes a $2 parking fee increase effective July 1, 2027, upon completion of the Front Entrance Capital Project, increasing automobile parking from $15 to $17 and bus parking from $20 to $22. The combined impact of the new revenue-share agreement and the parking fee increase is projected to increase net parking revenues by $111,465. Sales tax was also adjusted by $8,185 for the final 2027 sales calculation.

Admission fee revenue in the Operations Division increases by a net $31,652. This reflects a $121,872 increase from the Zoo's goal of a two percent attendance growth, a $45,011 increase from a higher share of online ticket purchases, and a $15,751 increase from changes in field trip attendance, partially offset by a $114,405 reduction from the projected mix of free versus paid admissions and a $36,577 reduction related to the Saturday Boo at the Zoo schedule change (see Marketing and Communications Division for additional information on the Boo event).

The 2027 seasonal exhibit will feature an outdoor display of robotic dragon creatures. Admission remains at $4 per person, with the exhibit running from May through the October Free Admission Day.

The 50/50 membership revenue split with the Zoological Society increases $70,831 from $3,541,563 to $3,612,394 to align with the Zoo's two percent attendance growth goal.

To meet the Zoo's tax levy target, Deputy Sheriff coverage and Office of Emergency Management services are reduced by $38,037.

Additional Program Details:
Staffing Level Changes:
Create additional Zoo Worker and Zoo Security Worker hours

Railroad Expendable Trust Fund (Org 0320). The Railroad Fund exists for the purpose of recording the receipt of all revenue derived from the operation of the Zoo's miniature passenger railroad. Expenditures include personnel costs for engineers and operators, repair and maintenance of locomotives and other commodities and supplies and for the benefit or improvement of the Zoo and to support the Zoo's mission. For 2027, expenditures and revenues total $1,596,986.