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DAVID CROWLEY

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

County Executive David Crowley Budget Address to County Board September 29, 2022

Introduction

Thank you, Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson, Clerk George Christianson, Comptroller Scott Manske, and the entire County Board.

It is a pleasure to present the 2023 recommended budget to you this morning. Before we begin today's discussion on the 2023 Recommended Budget, I'd like to welcome the new members of this deliberative body and thank you *all* for once again taking on the challenge of creating a budget for Milwaukee County.

In the past two years, we've worked together to create budgets that reflect the values of our organization. The 2021 budget was the first to implement a county-wide strategic plan in two decades. The 2022 budget continued to implement a racial equity-focused plan. This budget builds on that momentum while making fiscally responsible decisions that continue to advance the County's strategic plan.

I'm proud to say that once again in the face of many obstacles, the 2023 Recommended Budget remains a reflection of our shared values and our organizational vision of achieving race and health equity.

This budget recognizes the long-term, generational neglect at all levels of government that left communities behind and set them up for catastrophic impacts in the wake of a major crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. It addresses those issues with targeted investments in our vision and strategic focus areas by prioritizing funding in public health and safety, mental health and substance abuse resources, youth services, public transportation, parks and neighborhood amenities.

The 2023 budget closes a budget gap of \$12.6 million with no major cuts to services our community depends on. The gap was closed through a combination of issuing a flat tax levy target for all departments, a projected \$8.8 million increase in prescription drug rebates compared to last year, a 10 percent growth in sales tax revenue compared to the 2022 Budget, and withdrawal of debt service reserve.



However, budget gaps will continue to persist because of a growing structural deficit—a perfect storm of the growing cost of state-mandated services and legacy costs we are still paying off today as a consequence of imprudent decisions made by leaders decades ago.

Right now, over 70 percent of our local tax dollars support state-mandated services, and our options for increasing revenue are extremely limited and undesirable. The costs of state mandates are growing twice as fast as our ability to pay for them. Without change, state mandates are projected to consume all of our local tax dollars, leaving no funding for local priorities.

In the last two budgets, Milwaukee County has been aided by federal emergency dollars to respond to the immediate needs of our community during the public health emergency. However, those were one-time funds that were not enough to match the scale of our pandemic-related revenue loss – let alone the scale of our structural deficit. Furthermore, nearly 80 percent of American Rescue Plan Act funds have already been allocated to address revenue loss, community support, and COVID-19 mitigation.

Despite these challenges, this budget is a demonstration of Milwaukee County's commitment to best utilize the resources at its disposal to advance its strategic vision in the coming year.

Strategic Focus Area Examples: Bridging the Gap

The budget prioritizes moving resources upstream to bridge the gaps in health disparities that currently make ours one of the least healthy counties in Wisconsin.

To advance this strategic focus area, Milwaukee County is designing an organization that puts our constituents first so that anyone can access County services in a way that meets their needs. A part of this strategy is to break down silos across County government and advance the “No Wrong Door” model of care.

The “No Wrong Door” model has proven to be successful in elevating the needs of our residents and making sure they get the care they need. Earlier this year, one of our social workers received a call from the mom of a 15-year-old son the social worker supervises.



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The mother was in a bad situation and looking for housing resource to help her catch up on her \$3,100 rent and water bill. She had received a 5-day eviction notice and was due in court in two weeks for the eviction. Our social worker got in touch with Supportive Housing and Homeless Services to connect the mother with Community Advocates.

A Community Advocates worker attended the zoom eviction court hearing with mom, they paid the \$3,100 owed so she could stay in her home, and an additional three months of future rent to help her out of survival mode and into planning mode. Thanks to No Wrong Door, she was able to focus on looking for work with a wage that could support her family.

The “No Wrong Door” model maximizes the access to, and the quality of, services offered to residents. Our budget builds on this success by putting more resources in the heart of communities that need them the most.

2023 will be the first full year of operations under the new emergency psychiatric services at the Mental Health Emergency Center. The new center is a significant milestone in this work to bridge gaps in health disparities. It will serve to bring health care resources to parts of our community that have been traditionally underserved or excluded.

The emergency center is part of a behavioral health redesign that saves taxpayer dollars through public-private partnerships. This facility meets people where they are and makes a needed service accessible using unique and nationally-recognized models of care.

And, it is opening at time when our community could use it the most as emergency calls for suicides are at high-levels and we are on pace to tragically have more overdose deaths than in 2022.

The new facility is located in proximity to the homes of more than 70 percent of the patients currently served by Behavioral Health Services.

It answers the call from advocates and the community to provide services closer to those who need them most. Often, one of the largest barriers to receiving support is knowing where to go for help, which is why providing a



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center that offers easily accessible, mental-health-specific services right in our community is so important.

By realizing the full potential of this resource, we will also improve public safety outcomes by reducing the number of interactions between law enforcement and residents experiencing a mental health crisis. Those reduced interactions will allow law enforcement to address other public safety issues.

I know that public safety is at top of mind for many residents and that's why I'm glad this budget makes several investments in making our neighborhoods safe and helping law enforcement do their jobs effectively.

This budget features a joint project between the Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Wisconsin State Crime Lab to fund a new building for Forensic Science and Protective Medicine located in the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center.

The project is funded with over \$14,000,000 allocated in the previous three County budgets and \$20 million in county American Rescue Plan Act Funds. The total amount of bonding by Milwaukee County is further reduced by \$20,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds from the state. The partnership is cost-effective to meet the needs of both parties and the individuals who will occupy the building.

The special-purpose facility is a necessity as current spaces for the Medical Examiner's Office and the Office of Emergency Management have deteriorated to the point of being barely useable, particularly as caseload and complexity of cases increase. Currently, the Office of Emergency Management is split between two facilities which hinders growth potential internally.

Having the entire office in the same facility will ensure faster collaboration and coordination. In addition, in emergency situations, the space will provide a central location and build a central structure for municipalities to utilize when they need to coordinate quickly.

Co-locating the Medical Examiner's Office, the Office of Emergency Management, and the State Crime Lab will take emergency response coordination to a level never previously seen in Wisconsin by allowing us to



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provide services to roughly 20 different counties throughout the state. This will enhance public safety, save lives, and allow for more efficient and cost-effective responses to emergency situations.

Locating this new facility on the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center campus will allow building users to freely and productively interact with staff at Froedert and Children's hospitals for services and training purposes. It also places users in close proximity to our academic partner, the Medical College of Wisconsin.

In addition, for the Medical Examiner's office, a new facility will be an effective recruitment tool for filling the many shortages in specialized professions within the forensic science community. This new state of the art center will allow Milwaukee County to attract, train, and retain top tier forensic science professionals and address the shortages in our county, state, and across the country.

You may not know that Milwaukee County has the only fellowship program in the state accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners – but we do! The added benefit of a new facility is the potential to become a destination for the next generation of Wisconsin Medical Examiners. We can attract and retain them right here in our own backyard.

Thank you to Governor Evers Administration, the Milwaukee County ARPA taskforce, and the County Board for making these important investments. So many tragic instances of death in Milwaukee County are inequitable deaths. This is a huge step forward on the road towards race and health equity.

The average age of mortality for Black residents in Milwaukee County is twenty years younger than their white counterparts. Total homicide deaths of Black residents are nearly 8 times that of white residents. Meanwhile, white residents are more likely to live longer and die of natural causes than their Black and Brown counterparts. Increased collaboration will allow Milwaukee County and its partners to focus more intently on bridging the gap in these health disparities and identify strategies that ensure all residents have opportunities to live long, successful lives.



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Often, when we think of public safety, we only think of law enforcement or in the former case, crime labs, but an element of public safety is meeting the needs of our residents, so they are safe and secure. This includes residents who have entered the criminal justice system. We know that if we can meet the needs of individuals when they are in our care, they are less likely to recidivate and engage in risky behavior that can put themselves or others at risk.

That's why in the 2023 budget, we will rename the House of Correction to the Community Reintegration Center (or CRC) and make important investments that ensure individuals who are in our care are connected to the tools they need to re-enter society, lead productive lives, and not recidivate. The change reflects a full reflection of the mission, vision, and core values of the facility.

Individuals housed at the CRC are serving less than a year and often find themselves in the care of Milwaukee County due to an unmet need. Whether it is an economic, educational, or medical need the CRC exists to help justice-involved individuals comprehensively address those needs and increase the likelihood they will become productive citizens.

Being removed from the community is the actual punishment for justice-involved residents. Once they are in our care it is Milwaukee County's job to provide a structured rehabilitative environment that prepares individuals to return to their community in a better place than they were before. This results in safer communities in Milwaukee County.

Entering our care shouldn't mean that opportunities to better yourself, earn an education or marketable skill, and prepare for re-entry disappear.

Currently, the CRC partners with Marquette University on the Education Preparedness Program. The programming introduced this year is committed to developing, strengthening, and providing educational opportunities to formerly and currently incarcerated populations, expanding traditional boundaries of higher education by emphasizing collaboration across the Milwaukee community.

The Family Engagement Center is additional programming added to the CRC this year. The Family Engagement Center offers pre-release parenting



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education, mental health and wellness education, and more. The Center also focuses on providing holistic family services, facilitating visit family visits, family mediation, and assistance transitioning back into society upon release.

In addition, the CRC offers financial literacy in a partnership with Chase bank, Driver's License Recovery, Housing Navigation assistance, and assistance entering the workforce through a partnership with Employ Milwaukee.

In addition to the rebrand, the budget makes a \$100,000 investment in allocation for a Peer Specialist vendor contract with expertise in dealing with mental health issues. It creates both a Psychiatric Social Worker and Community Outreach Coordinator position to ensure residents and their families have the resources they need upon reentry; \$11,000 also has been added to CRC budget for the purchase of 12 new computers in a new computer lab being built to support resident IT training. And finally, it includes a 10% increase in the food budget to ensure residents are getting the proper nutrition they deserve while in our care.

This is a significant step forward for Milwaukee County to ensure our residents receive the assistance they need to reduce the likelihood they'll return to the CRC. Most importantly, it helps rehabilitate and reform those who find themselves in the system -- making our neighborhoods safer and communities more productive.

Strategic Focus Area Examples: Creating Intentional Inclusion

Milwaukee County is intentionally working to diversify our workforce at all levels of our organization so that County government reflects the full diversity of the community we serve.

The 2023 Budget builds on previous efforts to increase representation, include more perspectives at the decision-making table, and equitably compensate individuals. The Diversity Recruiter position created in 2022 has worked with internal stakeholders at Milwaukee County to define, engage and set-up sourcing and job posting relationships with 323 external diversity and affinity community partners.



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Milwaukee County cannot deliver the essential services our community depends on without our employees, and it is up to County leadership to ensure our workforce is engaged, supported, and adequately compensated for the work they do to advance our shared goals.

This budget includes nearly \$70,000 to elevate talent acquisition efforts and adds an additional Diversity Recruiter in the Department of Human Resources to aid in hiring qualified individuals of diverse backgrounds historically underrepresented in Milwaukee County government.

It also includes a two percent wage increase for general employees, removes the six-month wait time for new employees to use sick time, and increases vacation allotments based on years of service. The County also implemented its first Paid Parental Leave Program in 2022. Together, these efforts make Milwaukee County more competitive in the marketplace and help in retaining and recruiting exceptional employees. As always, we strive to keep benefits affordable and aligned with market trends.

Milwaukee County's efforts to create intentional inclusion extends to our relationships with business in the community and the contracts offered for County work. Community Business Development Partners will change to the Office of Economic Inclusion to accurately describe the work being performed. The Office of Economic Inclusion will maintain an active role in the overall equitable contracting discussion for Milwaukee County, while continually seeking and identifying opportunities the division believes will lead to county departments increasing overall spending with minority and woman-owned businesses in both the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program and Targeted Business Enterprise Program.

In addition, the Office of Equity has done an incredible job in its first year elevating the voices and lives of marginalized communities, building bridges between community and government partners, and working to increase the County's presence and visibility in hard-to-reach communities.

The 2023 Budget creates a full-time Information and Outreach Coordinator to support the Office of Equity's purpose by facilitating community outreach, public information sharing, and resident connection to ARPA community



support projects.

Strategic Focus Area Examples: Investing in Equity

The 2023 budget continues reimagining how Milwaukee County invests its resources to address the root causes of problems and eliminate barriers so residents can live successful, healthy, full lives.

The Behavioral Health Redesign and closure of the Mental Health Complex allowed us to make significant investments in programming aimed at mental health services and substance abuse services to tackle the increase in overdose deaths.

The budget makes a \$21 million investment in community-based mental health and substance abuse systems for adults in Milwaukee County.

This is an important investment addressing an acute need for Milwaukee County residents as we work to meet people where they are and connect them with the tools to address their health needs. The shift to trusted, culturally competent community-based services is a critical strategy in eliminating the racial health disparities we see in our region.

In addition, the budget expands the Credible Messengers program with an appropriation of \$1.7 million for advocacy, mentoring, emotional first aid, community engagement and violence mediation for justice system-involved youth in 2023.

This is an important investment in a program we know is working, but it could use more resources to reach more of our youth. Of the 65-intervention youth with the credible messenger pilot program, 77 percent have not reoffended since beginning the program.

That is an amazing statistic, and I can only imagine the impact we could have with more messengers on the streets connecting with our youth unlocking their true power and potential.

And for the past three years, DHHS has been working in collaboration with the State to increase the number of children participating in the Children's Long-Term Support Program. As a result, we've experienced steep growth in its program enrollment which is on pace to hit 2,900 in 2023 and reflects a 45



percent increase in the number of kids who will receive services. The State estimates that approximately 12,000 to 14,000 Milwaukee County children are potentially eligible, so growth in the program is expected to continue into the future.

As a result of the increased enrollment, the budget reflects additional service expenses and offsetting revenue of \$20 million for a total budget of \$32.4 million.

Along with the increased number of children enrolled in CLTS, there has been an increase of children and youth dually enrolled in the program and in Comprehensive Community Services. In 2022, the program averaged about 15 dually enrolled cases a month and will continue to increase into 2023.

To support the increase in enrollment, a Human Service Worker, Disabilities Services Coordinator, and Financial Analyst positions were created for the office last year. This budget creates an additional two more Human Service Worker positions and an Assistant Financial Analyst position. The cost for all of these positions is fully offset by \$500,000 in additional administrative funding.

After two years of the pandemic disrupting life in Milwaukee County, a highlight of the past nine months has been seeing a sense of normalcy return to our region. We took a step-wise approach to re-opening County facilities and continued to give residents the tools they needed to keep themselves healthy and safe.

As we re-opened, we saw more residents return to using services like our Milwaukee County Transit System. This year, our transit system has seen an increase in ridership with over 1 million more riders than last year. The number of riders who boarded an MCTS bus using a mobility device also increased by 14 percent.

Recovering the riders lost due to the pandemic shows transit is an essential, everyday, quality-of-life service for Milwaukee County residents and points to the need for a well-funded transit system to keep Milwaukee County healthy, growing, and contributing to the success of the region.



The Milwaukee County Transit System will undergo major developments in 2023. The East-West Bus Rapid Transit, Battery Electric Buses, and WisGo Fare collection systems are scheduled to launch in the summer of 2023. These modernization efforts are designed to both improve the rider experience and attract new riders.

In addition to bus ridership, the Transit Plus van service is seeing growth. Transit Plus provides paratransit service for individuals with a disability that prevents them from using fixed route bus service. Van ridership increased over this same time last year by 27 percent, to 186,000 riders.

The van contract for paratransit will be re-bid in 2023, with a focus on consolidating the previous two providers into one for efficiencies starting November 2023.

While riders are coming back to our transit system, residents never stopped hiking on our trails, booking tee times, and enjoying our County Parks.

In 2023, the Parks budget is increased by \$1.52 million. Revenues are projected to increase by \$1.1 million as other areas of the department outside of Golf and Food & Beverage are returning to pre-pandemic levels of activity.

Milwaukee County Parks has experienced a steady reduction in full-time workforce since the 1980's and has increasingly relied more upon seasonal employees to help maintain parks and recreational offerings. The demographics of Milwaukee County have changed over time resulting in a smaller population of young adults eligible for hire to support Park operations. This reduced labor pool has caused intense competition for staff, high turnover, and service level reductions. Despite our work together to raise lifeguard and seasonal park worker wages, vacancy rates remain high, and parks are understaffed.

In response, this budget includes seventeen new full-time positions, many of which are offset by a reduction of funding previously used to hire seasonal staff. Staffing level changes in 2023 include an Assistant Golf Course Superintendent funded entirely through an agreement with First Tee of Southeastern Wisconsin for Noyes Park and nine additional parks maintenance workers.



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Use of the MKE Airport also continues to recover the pandemic. Projections show we'll see 5.5 million passengers fly in or out of the airport this year. It is great to see an important part of our community continue to bounce back. MKE Airport supports 26,000 total jobs in our area and generates more than \$3 billion in annual revenues for our region.

MKE Airport makes sure to give back to our community through the Aviation Careers Education (or ACE) summer internship program that gives up to 35 MPS students valuable summer employment opportunities around the airport. This program is funded by the State of Wisconsin Bureau of Aeronautics and supported by MKE and Milwaukee Public Schools.

So far, it's been successful at finding untapped talent in our schools and introducing them to careers in aviation, transportation, and hospitality.

Before ACE intern Jadiel Ortiz started the program, he didn't even know that the Airport had a firehouse. After completing his internship in 2021, Jadiel secured permanent employment at MKE with Prospect Airport Services. In August, he was officially accepted into MATC's Firefighting and Training program thanks to his experience with the ACE program.

Then there is ACE Intern Soyata Diallo spent the summer with Delta Air Lines in a customer service role. That experience inspired her to enroll in business classes at MATC and make plans to become a flight attendant.

The stellar job done by all the hard-working MKE Airport employees was honored earlier this year with its first-ever ACI World Airport Service Quality Award. This award represents the gold standard in airport satisfaction. MKE was one of only eight airports in the US and the only airport in Wisconsin or Illinois to receive an ASQ Best Airport Award this year.

Unfortunately, there was a bit of bad news too. Earlier this year, we learned the Runway Dog Exercise Area had to be permanently closed to bring General Mitchell Airport into compliance with Federal Aviation Administration requirements. To remain eligible for federal grant funding, airports must agree to assurances or obligations for the life of the facility.

As a dog owner myself, I understand the disappointment that many residents in the surrounding community feel about losing this cherished neighborhood



amenity. That is why the 2023 budget includes funding for a site selection review of county land for planning on the replacement of Runway Dog Park.

Several fee increases are also included in the 2023 budget to address expenses associated with providing services and to align with other providers in the market. Fees are increased for McKinley marina slip rental, standard golf rounds, season golf passes, golf cart rentals, horticultural admissions at Boerner Botanical Gardens and Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservancy and selected facility or room rentals.

I'm proud of the progress this budget makes in advancing our strategic plan, but its priorities are rooted in the reality of Milwaukee County's fiscal constraints.

Tough Decisions and Fiscal Future

Earlier, this year, Governor Evers, the Department of Corrections, and the Committee on Joint Finance allocated funds to expand Vel Phillips. This is a move that will allow us to finally close Lincoln Hills and keep our youth close to home where they can receive the services and programming needed to get back on the right track.

However, we could not put this budget together without making some tough decisions concerning programming for justice-involved youth.

After years of reduced correctional placements, these numbers are climbing due to state-mandated court orders. The result is we've had to shift funding away from community-based service investment to corrections.

The budget assumes an Average Daily Population of 35 or an increase of 18 compared to the 2022 Budget resulting in an additional \$7.8 million for State correctional charges.

Along with an increased number of youth being ordered to State corrections, the number of youth within the Detention Center at the Vel Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center is also growing. Since September 2021, the census in the detention center has been gradually rising and averaged 131 youth in the first six months of 2022 compared to 89 over the last 10 years.



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In response to this issue, the budget includes additional funding of \$257,000 for food and medical care as well as \$1.5 million in additional service supports.

The budget also includes an increase of \$1.7 million to support the operation of the detention center at the Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center which is similarly experiencing a rise in its census. The majority of this funding is being applied to strategies intended to divert youth from detention.

The budgetary impact due to the increased census both at the State facilities of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Schools and Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center as well as locally at Vel Phillips has necessitated a \$2 million reduction to community-based investment to achieve a balanced budget.

Think about it – those are dollars that could have gone to expanding the Credible Messenger program for example – a program we know is working to keep youth from re-offending and re-entering our facilities.

This budget also makes tough decisions concerning MCTS. In addition to the elimination of freeway flyers and festival service as outlined to the Transportation Committee earlier this year, MCTS will be lowering frequency on four routes. One bus will be removed from each of routes 52, 92, 34 and 88, decreasing the frequency by an average of approximately 8 minutes.

The tax levy for transit services is also increased by \$514,000 to incrementally address a fiscal cliff for transit forecast for 2025.

While it is expected that future budgets will be challenging, the role of transit in Milwaukee is critical now and in the future. An inclusive and accessible transit network benefits all users and transforms communities by connecting people to opportunities. Through MCTS, the County is providing a strong transit network that supports economic growth and competitiveness for the region. Ongoing investments in transit will help us realize a future where an individual's race no longer predicts one's success while also improving outcomes for everyone

As you can see, although there are no major cuts to public-facing services in the 2023 budget, Milwaukee County is having to do more with less year over year as the structural budget gap persists. These were tough decisions for us



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to make, but it is indicative of the many tough decisions that may lie ahead if a new revenue stream is not introduced to close our annual structural deficit.

Each year, the budget gap is caused largely by stagnant state aids, an inability to raise revenue to meet the growing cost of state-mandates, inflationary cost increases, and increasing costs associated with legacy issues like our pension and health care.

In the last decade, Milwaukee County closed its structural gap through over \$300 million in expenditure reductions. This averages roughly \$30 million per year, more than the entire tax levy funding for our parks department, district attorney's office, and emergency management services combined. Each year, departments rise to the challenge, closing these annual gaps by creating efficiencies, streamlining services, and making the county leaner. But these cuts — year, after year, after year — are unsustainable.

Even with those savings realized, the County still faces a structural deficit moving forward as state aids remain stagnant. In just a few years, Milwaukee County will not have enough money to fund essential services not mandated by the state like public safety, parks, bus routes, emergency services, arts, senior services, disability services, and youth services.

In addition, preliminary revenue loss estimates for the next three years far outpace the amount of federal dollars. Federal funding has been essential to addressing the immediate public health and economic crisis caused by the pandemic, but it cannot be relied upon to solve the County's ongoing budgetary crisis.

The tough decisions made in this budget should serve as a preview of what lies ahead if Milwaukee County isn't given the tools to raise additional revenue and fund local priorities.

The federal dollars we have received to combat the pandemic, meet essential worker needs, and reclaim lost revenue were helpful to respond to the immediate needs of our community during the public health emergency. However, those were one-time funds that were not enough to match the scale



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of our structural deficit. Furthermore, nearly 80 percent of American Rescue Plan Act funds have already been allocated to address revenue loss, community support, and COVID-19 mitigation.

Milwaukee County is continuing to build on the momentum generated by the Move Forward MKE coalition, a partnership between the business community, state legislators, municipal governments, and community groups that advocate for allowing Milwaukee County to pursue a 1 percent local option sales tax, with property tax relief. The County needs a sustainable funding solution to support critical services for the long-term.

Milwaukee County continues to advocate at the state level for a local option sales tax increase to decrease property taxes, address legacy costs, and preserve critical local services. Even with a 1 percent increase in the sales tax, the County would maintain one of the lowest sales taxes in the nation for a community our size and generate \$180 million in additional revenue – matching the scale of the problem at the lowest cost to taxpayers with no budgetary impacts on the state budget.

Capturing revenue from commuters and visitors from outside Milwaukee County to support services consumed is a no-brainer. Especially if we can use those dollars to lower our residents' property taxes.

Ideally, at least 25 percent of the revenue generated would be set aside for property tax relief. The remaining revenue would be used to address local priorities within the County.

Milwaukee County taxpayers with a home valued at \$150,000 would receive an average 14 percent reduction in property taxes, the largest property tax relief in recent memory.

Rebalancing the funding structure provides real benefits to the County, municipalities within Milwaukee County, and for households seeking relief from burdensome property tax rates. And looking long term, it can ensure that in the future we aren't starting our budget process with plans for cuts, and instead planning for investments. Eventually, we can eliminate the largest fiscal issues harming the county and put us on a path to invest more dollars into quality-of-life services such as parks, public transit, mental health and



substance abuse care, rehabilitative services, senior services. It will also help us maintain valuable assets, like the Milwaukee County Zoo, which allow us to be a globally competitive metro region.

A strengthened partnership between the state and Milwaukee County will allow us to continue supporting our region and the state's economic success as Wisconsin's economic engine. By providing us additional tools to address our local issues, we can continue powering the state's economic growth.

If Milwaukee County is provided the ability to leverage our economic growth, we can put those dollars to work, investing in regional assets and county services to improve the quality of life that attracts energized talent, new businesses, and capital investment.

Conclusion

Given the persistent challenges we faced this year and the financial constraints facing the County, I'm pleased to recommend a budget that builds on the victories in equity we've achieved so far and addresses acute community needs.

This budget makes key investments in public health and safety, mental health services, youth services, public transportation, parks and neighborhood amenities that immediately improve the lives of County residents.

This past year we have demonstrated through our organizational performance the ability to address emergency community needs and improve the lives of County residents. The County Board has my continued commitment and support as we work together to achieve our goals.

Now, the budget is in your hands, the members of the County Board. As an optimist, I like to remind others that we all have the power to create change and the members of this body have the power to come together and advance our collective vision and take the next steps forward on our journey to achieve our goals.

Together, we have every reason to believe that we can navigate the challenges ahead and continue to make important investments in equity that improve quality of life for all of our residents.



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As we proceed through the budget process - through committee, and through departmental meetings - I truly look forward to working collaboratively with all of you.

My office has always been and remains available to Board Members.

Please feel free to reach out to me, at any point during the process, with questions about this recommended budget.

Thank you.