



Milwaukee County Senior Centers FAQ – September 2022

I heard that Milwaukee County will be closing its senior centers – is that true?

No. Milwaukee County has no plans to close any of the five buildings it operates as senior centers: Clinton Rose, Kelly, McGovern Park, Washington Park, and Wilson Park.

Will Milwaukee County be ending or curtailing programming for seniors at any of the Milwaukee County senior centers?

No. Milwaukee County provides programming for older adults at the five Milwaukee County owned senior center facilities through a contract with Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin and at several other area senior centers through different agencies. These programs will continue and we are developing plans to expand, not curtail, programming. In addition, all of these senior centers will continue to serve as Older Americans Act funded senior dining sites for the foreseeable future.

What is being done to address the building maintenance backlog at the five Milwaukee County owned senior centers?

Funding for capital improvements at Milwaukee County facilities is extremely limited. The County faces nearly \$1 billion in deferred maintenance projects. Nevertheless, in addition to dedicated maintenance personnel for the facilities, Milwaukee County has invested more than \$1 million in major capital improvements over the past five years. The County is proposing to invest more than an additional \$2 million over the next five years.

Who is planning for the future of the senior centers?

For nearly a decade Milwaukee County has been planning for the future of its senior centers. The county commissioned studies of the senior center facilities, programming, and funding models in 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2020. Extensive public listening sessions regarding the future of the senior centers were conducted in 2016 and 2019.

In 2020, the Commission on Aging established the Select Committee on Senior Centers to study the results of this assessment process and make recommendations regarding senior center programming, facilities, partnerships, and funding. In 2021 and 2022 the Committee met publicly 35 times to consider a wide range of issues and formulated a vision statement and set of attributes for senior centers that were confirmed by the full Commission on Aging.



What are the next steps?

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging will consider the recommendations of the Select Committee on Senior Centers, solicit public comment, and provide leadership for a path forward to ensure continued investment, renewed facilities, and expanded senior center programming. The Commission on Aging is working with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Parks and Recreation, Administrative Services, and the County Board to create a sustainable and robust future for the senior centers in Milwaukee County. This will be a long process. The county will not move forward with any plans without strong community engagement and feedback from current and future senior center participants.

I heard that McGovern Park and Kelly senior centers will be closing – is that true?

As stated above, there is no current plan to close either McGovern Park or Kelly senior centers and the centers will continue to be maintained.

Since neither McGovern or Kelly were designed as senior centers, several options are being considered to provide current and future senior center participants in these areas with access to a facility that can meet the Commission's vision for attractive, accessible, and fully upgraded buildings and programming. These options are currently in the exploratory phase and no changes, if there are any changes, will take place for several years.

Isn't the County building a new senior center in Westlawn to replace McGovern?

No. The Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee is in the planning phase for a potential new mid-rise affordable housing complex on 64th and Silver Spring. During the conceptual phase, HACM envisioned the inclusion of a community wellness center – open to the public – on the ground floor of this building. The City of Milwaukee asked Milwaukee County for a letter to support a special Congressional appropriation to fund the project. The concept proposed a wellness center with services provided by UWM's allied health colleges and the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services.

Mention was made of the possibility that senior center programming would be provided in this new center as an alternative to the McGovern senior center. However, no congressional appropriation has been made and planning for the facility is on hold. No decision to move forward in this partnership involving senior center programming will be made without the consent of the Commission on Aging.