



MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARKS 2022 FRIENDS GROUP FIELD GUIDE



Friends Group Field Guide – A handbook for existing, new, and Yet-to-be Friends Groups of our Parks!

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1a:

HOW TO USE THE FIELD GUIDE



HOW TO USE THE FRIENDS GROUP FIELD GUIDE!

Like many field guides, this handbook is not intended to be read beginning to end. Rather, use the table of contents to determine which resources and guidelines are the most useful for your situation!

Are you interested in starting a Friends Group in your local Milwaukee County Park? You might want to check the Friends Group directory in Section 2d to see if your Park has a Friends Group. If there is one, feel free to reach out to them! If you don't see your Park, the "Becoming a Friends Group" information provided in Section 3 is likely the most useful section for you.

If your Friends Group would like to host a Special Event, you will find the information you need in Section 4c. Or maybe you are looking to start a concert series at your Park – we have a reference guide for just that! – see section 5a.

Perhaps your Friends Group is thinking about becoming its own 501(c)(3) organization – we'd suggest reading Section 3b, Section 4e, and Appendix A to familiarize yourself with the requirements of a 501(c)(3) Friends Group.

And if it's a rainy Saturday, feel free to curl up with a warm cup of tea and flip through the whole field guide! We hope you find inspiration, guidelines to working with Milwaukee County Parks, and other useful resources, but in general the guide is designed to respond to frequent questions and to connect Friends Groups with the most commonly needed Friends Group resources.

Milwaukee County Parks will periodically update this Friends Group Field Guide, so if there is information you feel is missing or could be helpful, please send your comments to Parks Engagement Manager at parkpartnerships@milwaukeecountywi.gov. We will send around an updated copy of the Field Guide if and when we make any changes.



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Milwaukee County Parks
9480 W Watertown Plank Road
Wauwatosa, WI 53226
parkpartnerships@milwaukeecountywi.gov

The Park People
10300 W Wisconsin Avenue
Wauwatosa, WI 53226
director@parkpeoplemke.org

Parks Administrative Office 414-257-7275

Parks Special Events Office 414-257-4503
Andrew.Krueger@milwaukeecountywi.gov

Parks Public Services Office 414-257-8005
Nick.Spence@milwaukeecountywi.gov

Parks Engagement Manager 414-567-8310
Antonio.Giron@milwaukeecountywi.gov

The Park People 414-273-7275
director@parkpeoplemke.org

Park Ranger 414-273-7275

Milwaukee County Sheriff's Non-Emergency 414-278-4788

Thank you for your service – we look forward to seeing you in the Parks!



2a:

WHAT IS A FRIENDS GROUP?



WHAT IS A FRIENDS GROUP?

Friends Groups are integral to the success of a thriving Milwaukee County Parks system. While Friends Groups come in many shapes and sizes, they often share the common goal of wanting to improve a Milwaukee County Park, trail, or other amenity. Some groups improve their parks by volunteering to help maintain the Park on a regular basis while others might conduct targeted fundraising campaigns to finish a specific project.

Many groups also conduct signature events and programming to engage the community, bring new volunteers to their efforts, and showcase the benefits of a great Park. Friends Groups are also able to advocate for their Park and its amenities by bringing the community together to have their collective voices heard. One way to describe Friends Groups is as the “eyes, ears, and hands” of a park.

HERE ARE SOME ACTIVITIES A FRIENDS GROUP MAY TAKE ON:

- Fundraise for playgrounds, trees, building improvements, or other recreational amenities.
- Host concerts or movies in the Park.
- Volunteer to regularly cleanup their Park.
- Host volunteer days and implement service projects.
- Conduct Park tours or other reoccurring programming.
- Build relationships with Supervisors, Alders, and other community leaders.
- Engage neighbors in being active Park supporters.
- Maintain natural areas or Forked Aster Trails in partnership with Parks Natural Areas team.
- Secure sponsorships for Park programming or Park improvements.
- Maintain gardens or special landscaping features.
- Organize Weed Out® programming.
- Plan special events such as Park cookouts, dances, and festivals.
- Share best practices with other Friends Groups or serve as Friends Group mentors.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY ABOUT 35 ACTIVE FRIENDS GROUPS IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARKS.

Many of them formed to address a specific concern in a Park (underused park, crime, broken equipment, etc.) or to celebrate a specific park asset (monument, history, etc.), or some combination therein. Friends Groups are often comprised of neighbors who live near a specific park, or other members who have a special interest in the Park. Almost all Friends Groups operate as volunteer entities with individuals contributing their time, energy, and resources to making their Park a better community asset, an effort many volunteers find very fulfilling. Some groups have only a handful of volunteers while others have 100+ members.

As for organizational structure, most Friends Groups are “fiscally sponsored” under the umbrella organization The Park People (more information on the benefits of fiscal sponsorship in Section 3b.). Some larger Friends Groups have acquired their own 501(c)(3) status.

Finally, Friends Groups acquire a quasi-public status due to their affiliation with Milwaukee County Parks. Friends Groups serve as an important connection between Milwaukee County Parks and local neighborhoods. They understand that the County Budget limits the staff and capital resources available to maintain or improve Park assets, and they, as Friends Groups, play an important role in ensuring Milwaukee County Parks are accessible to all and sustained for generations to come.



2b:

ACTIVATION AND IMPROVEMENT



At their core, Friends Groups activate and improve their Parks. Here are just a few examples of great Park Improvement Projects, service projects, and events Milwaukee County Parks Friends Groups have completed!

PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Over the years, Friends Groups have fundraised for projects across the Milwaukee County Parks system and have implemented and maintained their projects to benefit the community. Park Improvement Projects can range in size from purchasing new picnic tables for a Park to renovating an entire Park Pavilion! Finding the right size project for your group is key.

- Friends of Estabrook Park completed the reconstruction of three wooden staircases. The total project cost was \$20,800 and many volunteers helped get the project done!
- Friends of Grant Park installed educational signage to inform park users about the Seven Bridges Trail (\$5,660 total project cost).
- Humboldt Park Friends remodeled the Humboldt Park Pavilion and restrooms (\$54,009 total project cost).
- Friends of Pulaski Park – Cudahy replaced the expansive bay windows in the front of the Park’s historic Pavilion (\$10,837 total project cost).
- Park Improvement Projects are reviewed twice each year, volunteer projects are managed through our engagement office, and events and programming require 90 days-notice and need to be permitted through our special events office. Be sure to reach out to ParkPartnerships@milwaukeecountywi.gov if you have questions!

VOLUNTEERING AND SERVICE

Friends Groups are often the greatest stewards of our Parks. Whether through spring cleaning, special service projects,

or regular trash collection, Friends Groups play an important part in keeping our Parks welcoming for all.

- Friends of Lincoln Park has a fleet of dedicated volunteers who walk the Park regularly – sometimes daily! – picking up trash and helping keep the Park clean.
- Lake Park Friends gave the storage shed at the Lake Park Golf Course a fresh coat of paint.
- Friends of the Monarch Trail built and are committed to maintaining the Monarch Trail which weaves its way through the County Grounds.
- Various Friends Groups lead Weed-Out® programs whereby volunteers help remove invasive species from natural areas throughout the Parks system.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

Many Friends Groups develop signature events which they host year after year, and some groups also host regular programming as a way to bring neighbors out to the Parks on a regular basis.

- Friends of Morgan Triangle host Food Truck Friday’s each summer and fall, filling one of our tiniest Parks with neighborly love and tasty food!
- Sheridan Park Friends hosts an annual flute concert which has quickly become a signature event!
- Juneau Park Friends regularly hosts “Poetry in the Park” bringing people together around spoken word from a variety of local poets.
- Many Friends Groups host movies in the park and summer concerts bringing family friendly activities to the center of their neighborhoods.



CASE STUDIES



FRIENDS OF LINCOLN PARK AND FRIENDS OF ESTABROOK PARK: CONNECTING OUR PARKS

In 2010 several community partners worked to develop the Milwaukee River Greenway Master Plan, a vision for connecting recreational spaces along the Milwaukee River. One component of the plan included closing a gap between Lincoln and Estabrook Parks so that the two Parks would be accessible by a connecting trail. These two Friends Groups – with many community partners and volunteers! – worked tirelessly to dig the trail by hand through forest and prairie, meandering beneath highway infrastructure and along the shore of the Milwaukee River. The trail is open today and maintained by Friends Groups, community volunteers, and local organizations. The effort highlights the importance of Friends Groups in building and connecting communities in Milwaukee County, and is a perfect example of Friends Groups as the “hands” of our great Parks.

THE FRIENDS OF LINCOLN PARK



FRIENDS OF CENTER STREET PARK: WINTER ACTIVATION

When several neighbors noticed that the Park across the street from their homes was largely unused, they decided to do something about it. Friends of Center Street Park is a group comprised mostly of parents from the surrounding neighborhood working to activate and improve Center Street Park. Each winter, the Friends Group secures sponsorship from local businesses to run a very popular outdoor skating rink used for hockey and open skating. The group shows that with a little dedication from the community, our Parks can be filled with activity year-round. A core group of volunteers work to set-up the ice rink each year in addition to hosting regular events and raising funds for projects at the Park. The group jokes – and it’s probably true! – that Center Street Park is busier in winter than in summer, and in Milwaukee, that is quite the feat!

LAKE PARK FRIENDS



LAKE PARK FRIENDS: 20 YEARS OF A FRIENDS GROUP

In 1994 the community around Lake Park celebrated the Park’s centennial honoring the history of the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed Park. The celebration prompted the community to gather around the idea of starting a “friends of the park” group, and in 1996 Lake Park Friends was incorporated. The group has led many impressive efforts since they started, included fundraising for bridge restorations, maintaining natural areas, hosting summer-long concert series, providing regular cleaning and polishing of the Park’s monuments and statues, and volunteering to help maintain Park infrastructure such as sheds and trails. Their signature event, Cirque du Lake Park, raises thousands of dollars each year to support historical preservation projects throughout Lake Park.

THE FRIENDS OF CENTER STREET PARK



2d:

RECOGNIZED FRIENDS GROUPS & DIRECTORY



RECOGNIZED FRIENDS GROUPS & DIRECTORY

FISCALLY SPONSORED FRIENDS GROUPS

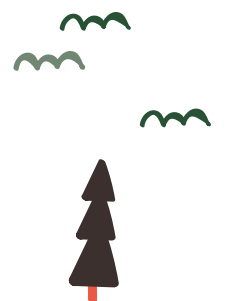
- [Friends of Bay View Park](#)
- [Friends of Brown Deer Park](#)
- [Friends of Cooper Park](#)
- [Friends of County Grounds Park](#)
- [Doctors Park Friends](#)
- [Friends of Grobschmidt](#)
- [Friends of Estabrook Park](#)
- [Friends of Grant Park](#)
- [Humboldt Park Friends](#)
- [Friends of Honey Creek Parkway](#)
- [Friends of Jacobus Park](#)
- [Friends of Johnsons park](#)
- [Friends of LaFollette Park](#)
- [Friends of Lincoln Park](#)
- [Friends of McCarty Park](#)
- [Friends of Milwaukee County BMX](#)
- [Friends of Milwaukee County Trails](#)
- [Friends of Mitchell Airport Park](#)
- [Friends of Moody](#)
- [Friends of the Monarch Trail](#)
- [Friends of Morgan Triangle Park](#)
- [Friends of Pulaski Park-Cudahy](#)
- [Sheridan Park Friends](#)
- [Friends of Smith Park](#)
- [Friends of Tiefenthaler Park](#)
- [Friends of Valley Park](#)
- [Friends of Wedgewood Park](#)

501(C)(3) FRIENDS GROUPS

- [Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens](#)
- [Friends of Center Street Park](#)
- [Cathedral Square Friends](#)
- [Friends of the Domes](#)
- [Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool](#)
- [Friends of Hoyt Park and Pool](#)
- [Friends of Kletzsch Park](#)
- [Juneau Park Friends](#)
- [Lake Park Friends](#)
- [Friends of Mill Pond and Oak Creek](#)
- [North Point Lighthouse Friends](#)
- [Friends of South Shore Park](#)
- [Friends of Wehr](#)

NEW/EMERGING GROUPS

- [Friends of Rose](#)
- [Friends of Sherman](#)



3:

BECOMING A FRIENDS GROUP



BECOMING A FRIENDS GROUP

Are you interested in making a difference at a Milwaukee County Park? One excellent way to organize community support for a particular park (or trail!) is to establish a Friends Group. Friends Groups come about for a variety of reasons: a concern at a Park, a safety concern, wanting to complete a major project, celebrating a park amenity, or generally just supporting the ongoing care of a neighborhood park. They also come in a variety of sizes and styles: small, grassroots groups with a handful of active participants to stand alone organizations with paid staff and hundreds of active volunteers. All Friends Groups can provide positive impacts to Milwaukee County Parks!

THE PARK PEOPLE OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY, INC.



If you did not see your Park on our list of Friends Groups, you might be interested in establishing a new group. The Park People has more information on starting a Friends Group, but in summary, the process looks like this:

- Review materials about Friends Group from Milwaukee County Parks and The Park People to see if starting a Friends Group seems like a good fit for your Park and community.
- Create a core group of “Friends”. This will most likely include residents of the neighborhoods surrounding your park, but it might also include people who visit the park regularly for an activity or for specific amenities.
- Identify some priorities the group/neighborhood is interested in addressing (a few realistic goals are easier than getting overwhelmed with too many ideas!).
- Identify at least 2-4 “Friends” who are committed to taking on leadership roles within the Friends Group.
- Connect with Milwaukee County Parks Engagement Office at 414-567-8310, and The Park People at 414-273-7275 to hold an introductory meeting with both organizations and Friends Group leadership.
- Complete the appropriate paperwork with The Park People to receive fiscal sponsorship.
- Review the Milwaukee County Parks Friends Group Field Guide and sign the acknowledgement in Appendix B.



3a:

THE PARK PEOPLE



THE PARK PEOPLE

The Park People are a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating stakeholders about Milwaukee County Parks, encouraging park improvements through Friends Groups, and leading several community programs in support of the Parks. They serve as the umbrella organization for many of Milwaukee County Parks' Friends Groups.

THE PARK PEOPLE WAS FOUNDED IN 1977

As talk of disbanding the Milwaukee County Park Commission surfaced. In 1981, the Park Commission was disbanded by the County Board, and The Park People set out to support and advocate for the Parks. In 1982, The Park People introduced a bench program and a tree tag program, and similar programs still exist today. In 1984, the first Friends Group formed under The Park People umbrella with several more coming on board in the 1990's.

The Park People held their first Weed-Out® event in 1996, another signature program which lives on to this day. Throughout the years, they have brought volunteers and funds to a variety of projects and initiatives across the Milwaukee County Parks system.

As of September 2019, The Park People serve as an umbrella organization for 24 fiscally sponsored Friends Groups, run the Oak Leaf Discovery Passport program, continue to spearhead Weed-Out® programs throughout the system, offer a memorial tree and bench program, and support Friends Groups in getting started.

If you are interested in learning more or starting a new Friends Group, refer to The Park People resources below:

- [START A FRIENDS GROUP](#)
- [GET INVOLVED - WEED-OUT®](#)
- Email: director@parkpeoplemke.org
- Phone: 414-273-7275
- The Park People Offices: 10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Wauwatosa, WI 53226



3b:

ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES



ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES

Friends Groups fall into two organizational types: Fiscally sponsored, or 501(c)(3) organizations. Fiscal sponsorship is often the organizational model followed by new and small Friends Groups. Through fiscal sponsorship, a Friends Group receives its tax-exempt status and legal standing via an agreement with another 501(c)(3). Fiscal sponsorship allows Friends Groups to receive many benefits such as the ability to solicit and receive donations, insurance coverage, and accounting and other administrative services.

501(c)(3) Friends Groups are typically larger and more established groups, and they are responsible for upholding all requirements of their 501(c)(3) status as required by law and by Milwaukee County Chapter 13 Ordinance.

The Park People offers the valuable service of providing fiscal sponsorship to Friends Groups, allowing Friends Groups to function more efficiently. Based on Milwaukee County Parks' observations of Friends Groups over the years, we recommend new Friends Groups establish themselves as a "Fiscally Sponsored Friends Group" for at least a few years while they work to build capacity, accomplish projects, and solidify themselves as a Friends Group. The administrative burden of starting a new 501(c)(3) organization and maintaining that status can sometimes cause new groups to dissolve before they ever get started. While fiscal sponsorship comes with a small cost, we find the benefits outweigh the costs. Your group can always secure 501(c)(3) status in the future.

THE FRIENDS OF LINCOLN PARK



ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES

	Fiscally Sponsored Friends Groups	501(c)(3) Friends Groups
Insurance	General Liability Insurance covered by The Park People (needed to complete projects or hold events).	Must secure and pay for own insurance plan annually and provide proof of coverage to Parks.
Banking & Finance	Financial services, including banking, accounting, and financial reporting, provided by The Park People.	Must provide, pay for, and manage own financial services.
Financial Audit Services	Annual audit requirements provided by The Park People.	Must conduct a 3rd party financial audit (an annual cost of approximately \$4,000) if annual revenue exceeds \$50,000 (see Chapter 13 for more revenue-based audit requirements).
Nonprofit Filing Requirements	Annual filing requirements for retaining 501(c)(3) status – and ability to receive tax-deductible donations – completed by The Park People.	Volunteer time or paid staff must complete all administrative requirements needed to retain 501(c)(3) status and comply with Chapter 13, including annual registration with the State of Wisconsin, IRS filings, and financial audits.
Parks Contractual Agreement	Contractual agreement with Milwaukee County Parks provided via The Park People umbrella.	Groups must complete and sign an agreement directly with Milwaukee County Parks.
Raffle License	Raffle license provided by The Park People.	Must secure and pay for own license if conducting raffle activities.
Administrative Costs	The Park People charges an 8% administrative fee on all deposits to provide the services outlined above to fiscally sponsored Friends Groups.	While there is no administrative fee, 501(c)(3) groups are responsible for their own administrative, governance, and fiduciary responsibilities outlined above.

4a:

ANNUAL PLANNING AND REPORTING



ANNUAL PLANNING AND REPORTING

All Friends Groups recognized by Milwaukee County Parks are required to complete an Annual Service Report (submitted by February 1st) and conduct an annual planning meeting with Parks staff.



Annual Service Report

Each year, we ask that Friends Groups report their activities for the past year. The Annual Service Report helps summarize the accomplishment of Friends Groups over the past year, including volunteer hours contributed, projects completed, events hosted, etc. In general, the Annual Service Report should include activities that occurred from last January 1 – December 31st. The Annual Service Report is due February 1st.

The Annual Service Report is [available online](#) or by contacting the Engagement Office at 414-567-8310

Annual Planning Meeting

Each year we ask that Friends Groups set up at least one meeting with Milwaukee County Parks Engagement Manager (and with The Park People Executive Director, when applicable) to discuss the upcoming year and other long-term planning goals for the Friends Group. This provides an opportunity for Parks and the Friends Group to collaborate on various project ideas or efforts which are mutually beneficial to both groups, and for Parks to provide updates on Park-specific priorities.



To schedule a planning meeting, please contact parkpartnerships@milwaukeecountywi.gov

4b:

PUBLIC SERVICES OFFICE & FEE REDUCTION



GUIDELINES FOR FRIENDS GROUPS

Milwaukee County Parks provides select County Parks facilities, such as pavilions and buildings, to recognized Friends Groups for one (1) Friends Group meeting each month, to be held on a Monday – Thursday, at no charge. Friends Groups must contact the Public Services Office at 414-257-4506 each year to reserve their regular meeting dates for the upcoming year (we recommend having a reoccurring meeting time, such as 6:00PM on the third Tuesday of the month, for example). In addition to reserving meeting spaces, Friends Groups must complete a Fee Reduction Request form annually for their regular meetings. Meeting renewals and the accompanying fee reduction form should be submitted to Public Services by December 1st each year to reserve meeting space for the following year.

All fee reductions must be made in writing on the Milwaukee County Parks fee reduction request form and submitted to Milwaukee County Parks Public Services Office along with supporting documentation - 9480 W. Watertown Plank Road, Wauwatosa, WI 53226 or via fax at (414) 257-8044. The submission of a fee reduction request form does not guarantee a fee reduction. The review and approval/denial process for Public Services usually takes two to three weeks. Incomplete forms will not be processed.

PROCEDURE:

Friends Groups must submit fee reduction request forms for their regular monthly meetings by December 1st each year to reserve meeting space for the subsequent year. All other fee request forms (for other meetings) must be submitted at least 90 days in advance of the event date. The fee reduction request form can be found in this handbook (Section 5), or can be requested by calling 414-257-4506.

During the review of any fee reduction requests for the use of Park facilities for Friends Group meetings, the following guidelines will be followed:

- **Friends Group Qualification:** the organization must be a recognized Friends Group (Section 2d).
- **Rental Qualification for Fee Reduction:** Meetings and events hosted by Friends Groups which do not

provide benefits to Milwaukee County Parks may not qualify for fee reductions (e.g. a fundraiser benefiting a different entity, a private birthday party). Final decisions are determined by the Public Services Office.

- **Weekend Policy:** Pavilion, shelter, and picnic rental permits on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday may require a minimum \$50 processing fee for Friends Groups. Weekend rentals are very important revenue sources for Milwaukee County Parks. The minimum \$50 weekend fee provides some reimbursement of staff labor and other building related expenses.
- **Friends Group Governance Meetings:** Friends Groups are granted one (1) meeting per month on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday at no charge. One (1) fee reduction request form shall be completed for up to 1-years' worth of Friends Group governance meetings. Additional meetings held on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, or Thursday require a flat \$25 fee per date. All meetings require the use of staff time and resources, both of which are limited. This minimum fee for additional meetings helps offset extra staff time requirements. Friends Group may also choose to meet at other locations in the community such as members' homes, libraries, or restaurants as needed to supplement regular monthly meetings.

4C:

SPECIAL EVENTS & FEE REDUCTION



GUIDELINES FOR FRIENDS GROUPS

All Special Events hosted by Friends Groups require a Special Events application. The Special Events Application must be received by the Special Events Office at least 90 days prior to the event (see Section 5 for the Special Events Application). In addition to completing the Special Events Application, Friends Groups interested in fee reductions must also complete a Fee Reduction Request Form.

All fee reduction requests must be made in writing on the Milwaukee County Parks fee reduction request form and submitted to Milwaukee County Parks Special Events Office at least 90 days prior to the event date (9480 W. Watertown Plank Road, Wauwatosa, WI 53226 or via fax at (414) 257-8044). The submission of a fee reduction request form does not guarantee a fee reduction. Incomplete forms will not be processed.

PROCEDURE:

Friends Groups must submit both the Special Event Application and the Fee Reduction Request Form at least 90 days prior to the special event date. Both forms can be found in this handbook (Section 5), or can be requested by calling 414-257-4503.

During the review of any fee reduction requests from Friends Groups for Special Events, the following guidelines will be followed:

- **Friends Group Qualification:** the organization must be a recognized Friends Group (Section 2d) and must provide proof of insurance.
- **Event Qualification for Fee Reduction:** Special events hosted by Friends Groups which do not provide benefits to Milwaukee County Parks may not qualify for fee reductions (e.g. a fundraiser benefiting a different entity, private events such as birthday parties). Final decisions are determined by the Special Events Office.

- **Friends Group Special Event Fees:** Special events hosted by Friends Groups which use reservable spaces (pavilions, picnic areas, picnic shelters, recreational facilities) or non-reservable building facilities (i.e. non-reservable pavilions or buildings) on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday may be charged a minimum \$50 fee. There are some facilities which are not available for a reduced fee on Friday, Saturday, Sunday. This determination is made by the Special Events Office.
- **Additional Costs:** There are some fees associated with Special Events which cannot be reduced, such as vendor fees. The final fee is determined by the Special Events Office. Further, there are additional permits not granted by Milwaukee County which, when applicable, still need to be secured and paid for by the Friends Group (examples include Noise Variance Permit for the City of Milwaukee, beer and liquor licenses, etc.)



4d:

501(c)(3) FRIENDS GROUPS



GUIDELINES FOR 501(c)(3) FRIENDS GROUPS

In accordance with Chapter 13 “Guidelines for County Departments Establishing Partnerships with Support Groups,” the following requirements apply to 501(c)(3) Friends Groups. For additional details, refer to Chapter 13 (Appendix A).

501(C)(3) FRIENDS GROUPS ARE REQUIRED TO:

- Have a signed, written agreement on file with Milwaukee County Parks. The agreement must be approved by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. Any 501(c)(3) Friends Groups without an agreement on file cannot be approved for Community Project Requests, including Park Improvement Projects, cannot enter into project-based contracts with Milwaukee County Parks, and do not qualify for fee reductions for special events or rental permits. Exceptions can be granted for groups in the process of having agreements completed and approved.
- Provide proof of 501(c)(3) status, including IRS determination letter or
- Have a conflict of interest policy approved and adopted by the Friends Group governance board (IRS example: [Click for link](#)).
- Be properly insured and provide proof of insurance annually to Milwaukee County Parks.
- Follow donor intention of funds donated as outlined in Chapter 59 of Wisconsin Statutes.
- Fulfill all IRS and State of Wisconsin requirements associated with acquiring and retaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, including but not limited to:
 - Adopted bylaws
 - Hosting public meetings
 - Annual registration and annual financial reporting with the State of Wisconsin
 - Other requirements outlined by the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions can be found [online here](#).
- Complete financial reporting and audits as required by the State of Wisconsin and in accordance with Milwaukee County Chapter 13 Ordinances.
 - o If the Friends Group’s annual gross receipts exceed \$50,000, a certified, independently audited, financial statement reporting an audit performed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) is required to be submitted to Milwaukee County Parks each year.
- Understand they acquire a quasi-public status and are often perceived by the public as functional parts and representatives of Milwaukee County Parks.
- Pay special event permit fees and public services rental permit fees as outlined in Sections 4b and 4c.
- Submit the Annual Forecast report outlining the coming year’s activities, and an Annual Service Report summarizing the past year’s accomplishments. Annual forecast and annual report forms are available by link in this handbook (see Section 4a), or by calling the Milwaukee County Parks Engagement Office at 414-257-4794.



4e:

WEED-OUT®



WEED-OUT®

Weed-Out® is a volunteer program ran by The Park People to remove invasive species from our Parks. Each spring, Weed-Out® focuses on removing herbaceous invasive plants such as garlic mustard, dame's rocket, etc., and each fall it focuses on removing woody invasive plants such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Each year there are about a dozen Friends Groups who host Weed-Outs at their Park, and about 40 distinct Weed-Out events are held across the Parks system.



Weed-Out events take advanced planning. To participate in Weed-Out, your Friends Group should contact Ken Solis of The Park People at kensolis@drjump.com to express your interest. Additionally, all Weed-Out service days require a "Weed-Out Coordinator" who has attended special training provided by Milwaukee County Parks. The Park People can often connect new sites with Weed-Out Coordinators, or Friends Groups can have 1-2 representatives attend the training to become Weed-Out Coordinators. Trainings are offered twice each year in preparation for the spring and fall Weed-Out seasons.

Friends Groups are responsible for recruiting volunteers for their Weed-Out events. Milwaukee County Parks will help make connections and recommend community groups/individuals to participate, but Friends Groups are ultimately responsible for recruiting for their respective events. Corporate teams from area businesses, Scout Troops with parents, local colleges with service-learning programs, and churches are all good prospective partners for recruiting Weed-Out volunteers.



5a-d:

RESOURCES FOR FRIENDS GROUPS



MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARK RESOURCES FOR FRIENDS GROUPS

A) CONCERT GUIDE

Over the years, several Friends Groups have hosted concerts in the Parks, either as an annual summer -event or sometimes as part of a summer concert series. The InTune Concert Guide, [available online here](#), provides information about planning and hosting a successful concert.

B) COMMUNITY PROJECT REQUESTS: PARK IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

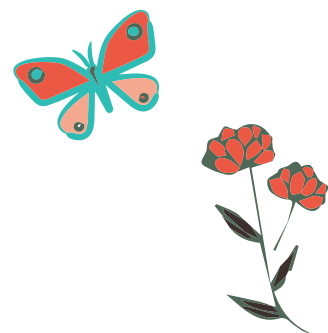
Park Improvement Projects are one way that Friends Groups can leave a lasting impact on their Park. Through the Park Improvement Project process, Friends Groups raise funds for and implement park improvements such as renovating a park pavilion, fixing key Park infrastructure such as stairways and trails, or otherwise improving park amenities. Take time to carefully plan your project, and be sure to review the Community Project Request Guide [here](#) and the application form [available here](#) well in advance of applying. While you can submit your application at any time, we only review applications twice each year, in May and November. The review process can take 4-6 months depending on the size, scope, and complexity of the project

C) SPECIAL EVENT APPLICATION FORM

As outlined in Section 4c, Friends Groups must complete the Special Event Application at least 90 days prior to holding a Special Event in Milwaukee County Parks and must provide proof of insurance. Information about hosting a Special Event is [available online](#) and the Special Event Application is available [online here](#).

D) FEE REDUCTION REQUEST FORM

The Fee Reduction Request Form must be completed 90 days in advance to holding a Special Event. For monthly Friends Group meetings, the renewal date for submitting the Fee Reduction Request form is December 1st. Monthly meetings are reserved via the Public Services Office at least 414-257-4506. Refer to the fee reduction guidelines outlined in Section 4b and 4c for more information. Final fees are determined by the Special Events Office for Special Events, and by the Public Services Office for meeting room reservations. [Click link to view form as a PDF.](#)



6: APPENDICES



Appendix A: Milwaukee County Chapter 13

Milwaukee County Chapter 13 is available online at: [MILWAUKEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES](#)

Chapter 13 - GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS WITH SUPPORT GROUPS

13.01. - Declaration of policy

The role of friends groups is important to many county departments. Some departments possibly could not survive without full participation of the private sector in furnishing additional funding for capital projects, special programs and operating needs. Friends groups add substantially to the limited resources available from the tax base. The general public is greatly benefited through improved facilities and programs. The county has always welcomed and encouraged the establishment of friends groups. By establishing these guidelines, the county hopes to enhance mutual understanding of particular needs and concerns with its friends groups, and establish a fair and consistent policy with them, thus assuring a successful, cooperative effort and relationship.

13.02. - Applicability

(a) The provisions of this policy are applicable to all county department and agency heads in interacting with private support organizations (friends groups) formed to provide financial support and volunteer services for an activity of the county or any of its departments or agencies.

(b) The relationships with those private support organizations that provide only volunteer services, interpretive and educational assistance, and additions to collections, but do not provide financial support or have a fiscal relationship, shall be established in a memorandum of understanding with the county department head.

13.03. - Organization—County

The county public facilities are owned and managed for the benefit of the people of the entire community. Responsibility, authority and accountability for their activities lie in the county executive and the county board; active management lies in the designated department head. The county cannot delegate or contract away its statutory powers and responsibilities. Accordingly, organizational internal controls within a county department are the responsibility of the department head who must adhere to all applicable ordinances, procedures and ethical standards of county government. Acceptance of all gifts to county departments by department heads shall be conditioned upon approval by the county executive and county board, or within parameters established by ordinance.

13.04. - Organization—Friends groups.

Friends groups are independent organizations having their own governance and fiscal structure. In order to achieve county-wide consistency and fiscal accountability, all friends groups shall be or shall conduct their fiscal affairs through a nonprofit, nonstock Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation, structured through articles of incorporation and bylaws to support, assist and promote the activities of a county department or agency under the provisions of a written agreement approved by the department head, the county executive and the county board.

13.05. - Role of friends groups

Friends groups, in cooperation with the county department head and within policies, programs and goals of the department, may raise funds and may provide volunteer assistance and support, both in terms of physical facilities and programs. Friends groups may be considered by the county department head to be the lead volunteer organization for the department, but it shall not prevent the department head from accepting assistance from other groups where there will be no conflict with agreements executed with friends groups.

13.06. - Relationship—Friends groups

Because of their close relationship with public institutions, friends groups acquire a quasipublic status. The public often perceives them to be a functional part and representative of a county department. Public confidence and support is best maintained by adequate

disclosure of all activities. Basic to the quasipublic nature of friends groups, the department head shall negotiate a

written agreement with each friends group for approval by the county executive and the county board, including:

(a) A statement of purpose and outlining its program activities and related utilization of county facilities, personnel, utilities and equipment.

(b) A provision that if the friends groups participate in a capital improvement program, they be a party to a separate written contract setting forth the nature, scope and ownership of the improvements, together with the responsibility and accountability for planning, fundraising and construction.

(c) Recognition that the county board endorses a policy of open meetings, open records, affirmative action and its code of ethics, and expects county employees to understand and comply with such policies in working with friends groups. Friends groups, their agents and employees shall comply with all applicable federal, state and county laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest. Recognition that county employees are responsible to disclose promptly to the county executive and county board information concerning proposed capital plans, operating support, promotional plans, programs and activities of friends groups.

(d) Filing annually, with the office of the comptroller, for public record:

(1) If the organization's annual gross receipts exceed four thousand dollars (\$4,000.00), a copy of its state form 308 (charitable organization annual report) submitted to the state department of regulation and licensing to comply with s. 440.41, Wis. Stats.

(2) In addition, if the organization's annual gross receipts exceed twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00), a copy of its IRS form 990 (return of organization exempt from income tax).

(3) In addition, if the organization's annual gross receipts exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00), a certified, independently audited, financial statement reporting an audit performed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

(e) Limiting its employees to those engaged in the administration of friends groups and those providing interpretive, educational and visitor services where such activities are specifically set forth in the agreement and are not within the jurisdiction of the county employees. All other persons engaged in county department activities, or who control county funds, assets, employees or programs, shall be county employees whose compensation may be funded by friends group allocations.

(f) Encouraging all county employees to be a member of friends groups, but avoiding any conflict of interest;

employees shall not serve as officers or directors of the friends groups.

(g) Designating a coordinator or liaison person for the department and the friends group. The department head or designee shall be the county coordinator and shall have authority to administer the agreement on behalf of the county. Friends representative shall be available to county for consultation and assistance.

13.07. - Fund management

(a) Friends groups have authority to solicit, retain and expend funds they determine are appropriate to their programs and goals. Funds donated to the county by friends groups shall be managed so as to assure funds raised are used as intended by the donors consistent with ch. 59, Wis. Stats. Funds transmitted to the county treasurer by friends groups, with a description of the intended use, shall be identified as deposited for that purpose and shall be expended only after a fund transfer consistent therewith is authorized.

(b) The department head and designees have authority to solicit funds they determine are appropriate to their programs and goals. Such funds shall be payable to the county and may not be accepted by friends groups. Funds payable to the county shall be immediately deposited with the county treasurer in accordance with county procedures. An "appropriation transfer request" by the department head will be required for the release of such funds. The department head, and designees, may participate in solicitations when requested by a friends group.

(c) There shall be an accounting with the department of the use by each of the other's real or personal property, personnel, utilities, equipment and similar expenses, and provision for the reimbursement of reasonable value thereof.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY :

ALL SECTIONS EFFECTIVE UPON PASSAGE AND PUBLICATION UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED.

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13.06(D). AMENDED - MAY 24, 2012, J. PROC.

HISTORY NOTE:

ORD. NO. 12-14, § 3, 5-24-12



**Appendix B: Milwaukee County Chapter 13
Ordinance Friends Group Acknowledgement**

On behalf of _____ (Friends Group),
I _____ (Friends Groups Representative) acknowledge receipt of the Milwaukee County Parks Friends Group Handbook and the Milwaukee County Chapter 13 Ordinance provided in Appendix A and will abide by the guidelines and policies outlined therein. _____ (Friends Group) understands we acquire a quasi-governmental due to our close relationship of working with Milwaukee County Parks.

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Signature of Friends Group Representative

Date



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MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARKS BY THE NUMBERS



157

Parks & Parkways



125

Miles of Trails

15,357

Acres of parkland



5

Permanent Beer Gardens



15

Beaches, Marinas & Boat launches

170

Rentable pavilions, areas and shelters



15

Golf Courses

49

Pools, splashpads and water parks



135

Friends Groups & Partners



114

Playgrounds



7

Off-leash Dog Parks

(414) 257-PARK (7275)

countyparks.com

Milwaukee County

Parks, 9480

Watertown Plank Road,

Wauwatosa, WI 53226

