



CHRIS ABELE, MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
JOHN DARGLE, JR., DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

Date: May 22, 2017
To: Jason Haas, Chair, Parks, Energy and Environment Committee
From: John Dargle, Jr., CPRP, Director, Milwaukee County Parks
Subject: **Milwaukee County Parks and Urban Ecology Center partner to update the Washington Park Master Plan (INFORMATIONAL)**

ISSUE

Informational report regarding an update to the master plan for Washington Park in a manner that coincides with the mission statement of Milwaukee County Parks while considering the fit and interests of its collaborative partners including the Urban Ecology Center, Milwaukee Kickers, Washington Park Partners, and other community stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Washington Park became a County park in 1937 and is a 134.8-acre site of metropolitan significance. The initial design for the park was done by Frederick Law Olmsted, the nationally renowned landscape architect, who among his accomplishments, designed Central Park in New York City. Today, the park contains a multi-use community building, which has housed a satellite center for the Urban Ecology Center (UEC) since 2007. This building is adjacent to a lagoon which provides for fishing in the summer and serves ice skaters in the winter. The park also contains a swimming pool, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, basketball and tennis courts, sand volleyball, play equipment and numerous picnic areas. Additionally, the park contains a major senior center, which is operated by Milwaukee County's Department on Aging.

Following an in-depth study and analysis that began in 1999, a master plan for the design and redevelopment of Washington Park was introduced in June 2000. Its major objectives were to increase user safety and to improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation. Among the plan's recommendations were new lighting and asphalt paths, new children's play equipment, picnic shelters, a restroom and concessions building, an overlook area, park and directional signage, an improved drainage system, general landscaping improvements and a clean-up of the lagoon. Furthermore, the existing elements of Washington Park, such as park paths, drives, parking areas and soccer and athletic fields, were recommended to be improved through redesign, expansion and/or removal and relocation. Initial project design development was funded in the 2001



adopted Parks Department Capital Improvement Budget. The first of a six-phase implementation plan was carried out immediately following the Master Plan. However, due to budget constraints the full scope of this plan was never realized and should now be reviewed and updated.

Milwaukee County Parks in partnership with UEC seeks to update the 2000 Washington Park Master Plan to present a vision and conceptual plan for the future path and sustainability plan of Washington Park, as well as acknowledge and address the history of the park and the neighborhood in which it sits. It is envisioned that the plan will include a feasibility study of elements including, but not limited to programs offered by park partners, park facilities and structures, park operations, park safety and security, and plans for the sustainability of park resources for the future. The study should identify park strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and conflicts, as well as the political, economic, social, and technological factors of the current park and identify several options to manage and conserve park resources for the future.

Since 2007, UEC has been an integral partner of Milwaukee County Parks in Washington Park and the sustainability of the Parks mission. UEC provides outdoor science education to urban youth, assists in the management and enhancement of public natural areas, promotes community by offering resources that support learning, volunteerism, stewardship, recreation and camaraderie, and serves as a model of environmentally responsible behavior. They are one of the reasons why people visit and re-visit Washington Park because of their programs for school children.

UEC wishes to expand their program offerings in Washington Park, allowing them to reach even greater numbers of children within the community. To do this, UEC proposes to build a larger, new and improved community building on the current Boathouse footprint. Milwaukee County and Urban Ecology Center have agreed that a Washington Park planning process is necessary to determine what is in the best interest of future park sustainability. This process will allow all park partners to consolidate the park's various uses and plans into one comprehensive master plan for the future of the park so that together we will have long-term success. During this process, Milwaukee County and UEC will also be negotiating the terms and conditions of the new building's lease. This process will include at least two public outreach forums that include meetings, workshops, and similar events with community stakeholders. This lease and the report resulting from the master planning process will be brought to County Board for future review and approvals.

It is anticipated that Parks would prepare Requests for Proposals to be released in July 2017 and that the planning process and lease negotiation will take approximately a year to complete.

RECOMMENDATION

No action requested. Informational item unless further action required.

Prepared by: Megan Haeger, MSL, Contract and Project Manager

Approved by:



John Dargle, Jr., CPRP, Director

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Aerial Map of Washington Park
- Attachment 2 – Washington Park Master Plan June 2000

Copy:

- Chris Abele, County Executive
- Raisa Koltun, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office
- Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors
- Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors
- Marcelia Nicholson, Vice-Chair, Parks, Energy & Environment Committee
- Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
- Jessica Janz-McKnight, Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller
- Jeremy Lucas, Fiscal Mgt. Analyst, Admin & Fiscal Affairs/DAS

