

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: February 17, 2023

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Guy Smith, Executive Director, Milwaukee County Parks

Subject: From the Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks providing an update on the proposed partnership with The Ability Center to improve Wisconsin Avenue Park

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

From the Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks providing an update on the proposed partnership with The Ability Center to improve Wisconsin Avenue Park

POLICY

§ 59.17(2)(b)3., Wis. Stats., states that the “county board may continue to exercise the authority under s. 59.52(6) with regard to land that is zoned as a park...”. In the law of property, authority over “land” includes authority over all rights appurtenant to the land.

Wisconsin State Statutes:	59.17(2)(b)(3)
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BACKGROUND

Milwaukee County Park (MCP) provided an informational report in September of 2022 in File No. 22-928 regarding the possibility of a partnership with The Ability Center (TAC) to construct a Universal Park at Wisconsin Avenue Park (10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue) within the Milwaukee County Parks system. Progress on this relationship continues to move forward and should result in an Action Report in the next few months so MCP and TAC wish to provide an update on the progress since September.

To recap the September 2022 report, MCP and TAC are proposing the first entirely accessible park in Southeast Wisconsin. This would make an entire Park (not just a playground) – all 17 acres – accessible to EVERY visitor to the Park. This project will be a collaborative effort with many partners including GameTime, one of the country’s leading recreation industry equipment providers, and the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee. Wisconsin Avenue’s Universal Park will set the inclusion standard for future parks and provide accessible equity for Milwaukee, and an entire region.

The Park project is proposed to be completed in two phases. The first phase will include

changes to the park clubhouse, universal fields, improved and accessible restrooms, and adjacent accessible playground spaces, which will be designed for all abilities to play side-by-side on all play elements.

Phase two of the proposed project will include a meandering half-mile path through the hardwood forest, fitness stations, activity areas, an inclusive challenge course, and sensory destinations. The trail will provide enjoyment throughout this currently underutilized area of the Park.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$7M, with all funding being provided by public and private funders. The YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee has committed to help fundraise \$1M, and the project is actively engaged with many other organizations.

UPDATE:

- Architectural planning for the park pavilion, park design, topographic surveys, nature preservation and trees surveys are in their initial phases.
- Fundraising has ramped up with \$2.5M from the George F. Moss Charitable Trust, \$500,000 from the YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee, and \$100,000 from the Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust.
- The park is currently named after the street where it is located, Wisconsin Avenue. Renaming is under consideration to reflect the universal nature of the park and exceptional contributions to the project. Any proposal for renaming will follow the process as adopted in File No. 21-922 and published in the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances under Section 47.37
- Public input meetings are being planned and dates will be shared as soon as they are available.
- A plan for the ceremonial groundbreaking to occur on July 26, 2023, which is the date the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law.

Related File No's:	18-869, 19-60, 19-444, 22-928
Associated File No's (Including Transfer Packets):	21-922
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

This proposal supports the strategic plan of Milwaukee County through objectives:
2A – Determining what where and how we deliver services to advance health equity
3A - Investing “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
3C – Dismantling barriers to diverse and inclusive communities.

In Wisconsin, opportunities for children and adults with disabilities to be fit, active and healthy are not only limited, but they leave much to be desired when compared to our

surrounding Midwest states (2A). This Park will be a catalyst for change in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the country.

In addition to economic difficulties, Greater Milwaukee needs to, and can do, better for a population that comprises 11.5% of the population in Southeast Wisconsin; approximately 247,000 people in this area report a disability. That includes nearly 189,000 people in Greater Milwaukee (17,700 children), with about 50% residing in Milwaukee County alone (123,000 including 11,000 school-aged children). This is just those with a disability; statistically 2 out of 7 families are impacted by disabilities and seeking opportunities to play, TOGETHER. These are just some of the tens of thousands of reasons why TAC has forged ahead over the last decade to create inclusive spaces (3C).

This group also sees a significant increase in health disparities across all categories — from physical and mental health to secondary conditions of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Health care services as a whole are far from equitable. With disability on the rise in America (1 in 4, 26%, 61 million people) and disability-associated health care expenditures accounting for 26.7% of all health care — the need for equitable, DAILY, and hourly access to programs and services that provide an outlet for those with disabilities to be well are vital to a sustainable economy, community, and healthcare system (3A). 54% of people with disabilities engage in no leisure-time physical activity and youth are leading increasingly sedentary lifestyles, exacerbating existing and future health issues.

FISCAL EFFECT

None

TERMS

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

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PREPARED BY:

Erica Goblet, Contracts Manager, Milwaukee County Parks

APPROVED BY:

Guy Smith, Executive Director Milwaukee County Parks *Guy Smith*

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation

CC:

David Crowley, County Executive

Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office

Sheldon Wasserman, Supervisor District 3, PEEC Chair
Steven Shea, Supervisor District 8, PEEC Vice Chair
Felicia Martin, Supervisor District 7, PEEC Member
Juan Miguel Martinez, Supervisor District 12, PEEC Member
Steve Taylor, Supervisor District 17, PEEC Member
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Mgr, Office of the County Clerk
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services
Joseph Lamers, Fiscal & Budget Director, DAS
Vince Masterson, Fiscal & Strategic Asset Coordinator, DAS
Pamela Bryant, Capital Finance Manager, Comptroller's Office
Justin Rodriguez, Capital Finance Analyst, Comptroller's Office
Kelsey Evans, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk
Ciara Miller, Research & Policy Analyst, Office of the Comptroller
Anthony Rux, Budget & Management Analyst, DAS-PSB