

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION**

**DATE:** November 14, 2025

**TO:** Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director, DAS  
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, DHHS

**SUBJECT:** An Informational report from the Executive Director, Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Executive Director, Department of Parks, and Executive Director, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), regarding the existing facilities, programming and financial conditions surrounding Milwaukee County's five owned Senior Centers and two Wil-O-Ways facilities.

**File Type:** Informational Report

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**Background**

Below is an overview of Milwaukee County's five senior centers and the two Wil-O-Way facilities. These sites play a vital role in our mission to support older adults and persons with disabilities across Milwaukee County, offering social connection, wellness and nutritional services, continuing education and community.

The report outlines significant and growing financial and infrastructure challenges—challenges that require a strategic discussion about how to best meet community needs.

The County's five senior centers and two Wil-o-Ways facilities (all located in county parks) serve as one of the most visible public-programming platforms for serving community needs. The facilities, all more than 40 years old, are reaching an age and condition that demand near-term and substantial investment if they are to continue to be part of Milwaukee County's facilities portfolio. Facility structures and systems are approaching or already beyond their useful lives.

These centers are beneficial and well loved: the facilities help reduce social isolation, offer opportunities for fitness, learning, community engagement, and contribute to independent living. Milwaukee County recognizes the value of these facilities, and the services provided therein while also acknowledging the necessity of adapting both the built environment and programming to the changing profile of our constituents.

In addition to capital costs, the programming and maintenance of these sites are funded almost entirely by County tax levy. Meanwhile, Milwaukee County faces broad constraints: significant deferred maintenance across its infrastructure, limited borrowing capacity due to the County’s self-imposed bonding cap, property tax levy limits, and demand for other public-services feeling the same inflationary pressures.

We are at a crossroads. The report below provides an overview of facilities conditions, programming and funding challenges across all seven facilities. The goal is to ensure a clear understanding of the unsustainability of the current operating model and the need to explore alternatives.

**POLICY**

|                                                            |  |                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------------|
| Milwaukee County General Ordinances                        |  | Chapters 53 and 75                              |
| Milwaukee County Board Informational Reports               |  | Files 25-593, 25-414, 24-730, 19-448, 14-47;    |
| Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Informational Reports |  | HRA Files: 18-144,19-193, 21-141, 23-66, 24-166 |
| Wisconsin State Statutes:                                  |  |                                                 |

**Overview**

**Facility Condition and Needs**

The Department of Administrative Services – Facilities Management Division (DAS-FMD) manages the facility operations of five senior centers; Clinton Rose, Kelly, McGovern, Washington, and Wilson; and two Wil-O-Way facilities; Grant and Underwood.

The County’s Senior Centers and Wil-O-Way facilities were constructed between 1956 (Kelly Senior Center) and 1982 (Clinton Rose Senior Center). Facility sizes range from 10,350 square feet (Underwood) to 36,820 square feet (Washington Park). Table 1 provides details for each facility. Refer to Appendix A for photos illustrating current conditions and representative facility needs.

**Table 1: Basic Facility Data**

| <b>Facility</b>                                | <b>Size (Square Feet)</b> | <b>Year Constructed</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Clinton Rose Senior Center                     | 35,706                    | 1982                    |
| Kelly Senior Center + Kelly Nutrition Building | 17,010                    | 1956                    |
| McGovern Park Senior Center                    | 12,983                    | 1974                    |
| Washington Park Senior Center                  | 36,820                    | 1967                    |
| Wilson Park Senior Center                      | 35,540                    | 1980                    |
| Wil-O-Way Grant                                | 11,400                    | 1979                    |
| Wil-O-Way Underwood                            | 10,350                    | 1964                    |

**Operating Expenditures**

Operating expenditures that cover items such as utilities, fire protection and regular building maintenance have averaged approximately \$790,000 per year across all facilities over the last several years. Note this average may increase with inflation and as capital investment requests are not fully met. Also note that the 2025 emergency HVAC repairs at the Wilson facility were funded through the operating budget rather than capital funds for \$350,000, which skewed Wilson's average operating costs higher than those of other facilities. Refer to Table 2 for additional details.

**Capital Investment**

Capital investment has averaged approximately \$890,000 per year across all facilities since 2014. That number is skewed upwards by the recent one-time \$4 million State/Federal Flexible Facilities Grant awarded for the Clinton Rose Senior Center. Exclusive of the Flexible Facilities Grant, the annual capital investment across all seven facilities averages approximately \$520,000.

**Table 2: Senior Senter Capital and Operating Spend and Capital Needs**

|                             | <i>Capital Investments 2014-2025</i> | <i>Avg Capital Investment / Year</i> | <i>Avg Operating Spend / Year</i> | <i>5-Year Capital Needs *</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clinton Rose Senior Center^ | \$5,116,537                          | \$465,140                            | \$156,607                         | \$2,938,058                   |
| Kelly Senior Center         | \$609,967                            | \$55,452                             | \$60,993                          | \$3,022,158                   |
| McGovern Senior Center      | \$643,158                            | \$58,469                             | \$86,373                          | \$3,123,878                   |
| Washington Senior Center    | \$1,525,526                          | \$138,684                            | \$138,386                         | \$5,246,158                   |
| Wilson Senior Center        | \$1,099,819                          | \$99,984                             | \$237,464                         | \$4,738,508                   |
| Wil-O-Way Grant             | \$355,195                            | \$32,290                             | \$43,934                          | \$1,552,500                   |
| Wil-O-Way Underwood         | \$386,793                            | \$35,163                             | \$68,748                          | \$2,931,500                   |
| <b>TOTALS</b>               | <b>\$9,736,995</b>                   | <b>\$885,181</b>                     | <b>\$792,506</b>                  | <b>\$23,552,761</b>           |

^ Includes one time \$4 Million Flexible Facilities grant in capital spend.

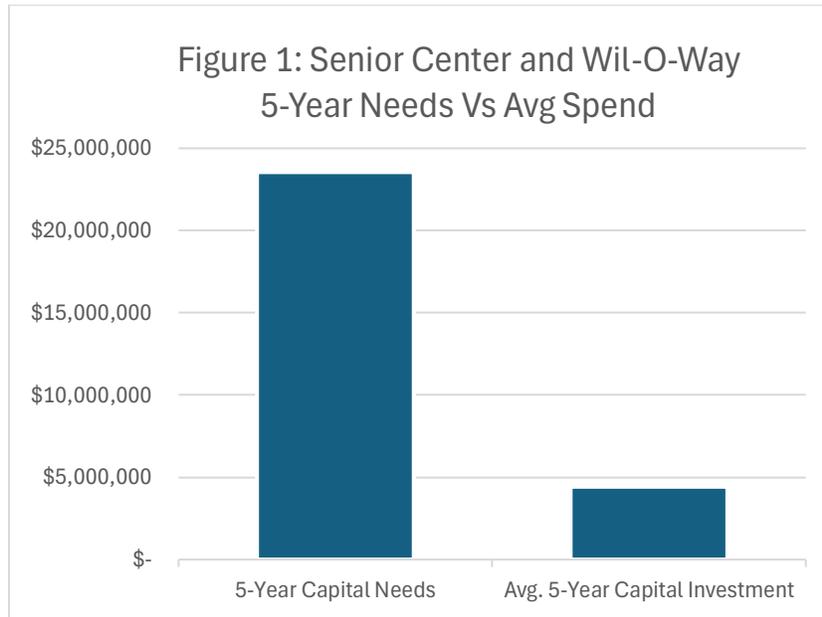
\*Excluding splash pads and playgrounds

**Identified Facility Needs**

The current DAS-FMD five-year capital plan identifies approximately \$23.56 million in facility needs across all Senior Center and Wil-O-Way sites. Major projects include security and fire protection upgrades, roof replacements, HVAC and electrical system improvements, building envelope repairs, and window replacements.

**Funding Gap Analysis**

Assuming the historic average capital investment of \$890,000 per year continues, the County is on track to fund approximately \$4.43 million in capital improvements over five years, leaving an estimated \$19 million gap compared to identified needs. Figure 1 illustrates the five-year needs versus average spending levels.

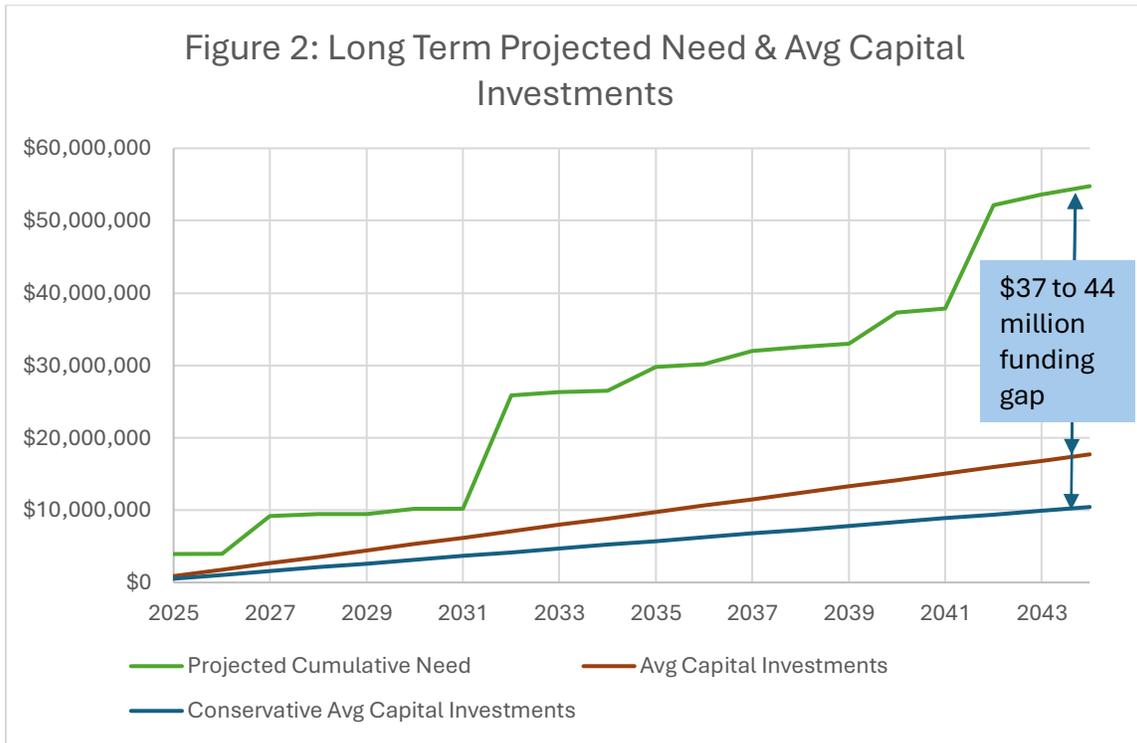


Long-Term Outlook

Milwaukee County’s Facilities Condition Assessment team periodically inspects each building and maintains a 20-year outlook for major maintenance and replacement needs. While these assessments do not perfectly align with the County’s five-year capital plan, they provide a strong indication of long-term facility needs. The projected 20-year capital need across all Senior Center and Wil-O-Way facilities is approximately \$54.8 million.

Assuming the historic average annual capital investment rate (\$890,000 per year), the 20-year shortfall is projected at roughly \$37 million. Using the estimate of Milwaukee County investment, exclusive of grant funding (\$520,000 per year), the gap increases to over \$44 million. Figure 2 illustrates the long-term needs versus average spending levels.

To meet the estimated 20-year capital need across the facilities, Milwaukee County would need to allocate approximately \$2,740,000/year without adjustment for inflation. That’s \$2.2M more than is invested by Milwaukee County in these facilities each year. It’s important to reiterate that these capital projects compete against other worthwhile capital projects throughout Milwaukee County.



In Process

On a cost per square foot basis, capital investments have been distributed relatively evenly across all Senior Center and Wil-O-Way facilities, except for the recent one-time grant awarded to Clinton Rose. Each year, DAS-FMD prioritizes capital needs across its entire facilities portfolio, which also includes critical infrastructure supporting operations at the Criminal Justice Facility, Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center, and the Courthouse. After prioritization within FMD, these projects then compete for funding alongside all other County capital needs during the annual budget process.

It should be noted that Milwaukee County faces a capital backlog estimated at more than \$1 billion. In 2026 alone, over \$100 million in capital requests went unfunded. This ongoing shortfall continues to compound over time. Historic staffing reductions have also limited the ability of Facilities Management staff to remain on-site and proactively address routine maintenance needs. Thin staffing and limited capital funding have contributed to the growing backlog of deferred maintenance at each of the seven Senior Center and Wil-O-Way facilities, consistent with trends seen across the County’s broader property portfolio.

The data and visuals in Figures 1 and 2, along with the photographs in Appendix A, illustrate that current funding levels are insufficient to keep pace with ongoing facility deterioration and capital renewal needs.

## Programming and Operating the Centers

Milwaukee County supports programming in five facilities designated as senior centers that it owns and maintains within County parks: Clinton and Bernice Rose, McGovern Park, Washington Park, Wilson Park, and Lawrence P. Kelly in Warrimont Park and two facilities designated for recreational programming that supports residents with significant disabilities: Wil-O-Way Grant Park, and Wil-O-Way Underwood Creek.

The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging also supports senior center programming at the All-Nations (Indian Council for the Elderly), Milwaukee Community Crossroads, and United Community Center senior centers, as well as senior dining at several other municipal and non-profit senior centers.

Milwaukee County contracts with a non-profit agency at the senior center facilities to coordinate a comprehensive array of services and activities for older adults that are person-centered and incorporate the seven dimensions of wellness: Emotional, Environmental, Intellectual, Physical, Social, Spiritual, and Vocational. The County contracts with two different nonprofit providers to provide adult day services and recreational opportunities, including summer camps, for both children and adults with disabilities at the Wil-O-Way sites.

In Process

### Milwaukee County Senior Centers

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging desires to support creative spaces where mature Milwaukee County residents can gather to live fully engaged lives. These centers serve as focal points for the Aging Network where advocacy, arts, conversation, craftsmanship, cuisine, exercise, education, information technology, recreation, services & supports, health & wellness, and most importantly – community – is readily accessible.

The Milwaukee County Senior Centers were originally operated by the Milwaukee County Parks Commission. The Department on Aging was established in 1991, incorporating the Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging from the County Executive's office. Over time, the County Board transferred authority of the senior centers to the Department on Aging: Washington Park in 1995, McGovern Park in 1999, and Kelly, Clinton & Bernice Rose, and Wilson Park in 2002 to better align the provision of senior center programming with services provided through the Department on Aging.

By the time of transfer, these facilities faced significant maintenance needs. From 2006 through 2008, the County appropriated \$300,000 for ongoing major maintenance. In 2009 the amount for major maintenance was reduced to \$150,000 and in 2010 to \$100,000. In 2020, the responsibility for major facility maintenance and utility costs at the senior centers, along with \$300,000 in tax levy transitioned to the DAS Facilities Management

Division. These amounts do not include major projects funded over the years through the County *capital* budgets, as previously outlined.

Provision of senior center programming is discretionary and not mandated by the Older Americans Act, state law, or county ordinance. Programming allocations for the senior centers were provided principally through tax levy in the Department on Aging’s budget.

| Year – Sen Ctr Budget  | 2000    | 2005      | 2010      | 2015      | 2020    |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Tax Levy - Programming | 403,808 | 1,012,182 | 1,347,601 | 1,330,874 | 936,867 |

By 2016, facing a growing aging population, infrastructure needs, and fiscal pressures, the Commission on Aging decided to undertake a comprehensive review of both the facilities and programming offered in the Milwaukee County senior centers.

In 2017, The Department of Administrative Services commissioned a comprehensive Facilities Condition Assessment report by a national firm specializing in facility assessment. This report detailed conditions and likely facility and building maintenance needs over the next twenty years for each senior center building. The report concluded:

*“[w]hile these buildings are currently in acceptable condition, they are of an age where building systems need to be replaced. The current cost of repairs or system replacements needed in 2017 and 2018 is approximately \$680,000. That same total through 2022 is \$9.5 million and through 2036 is \$23 million. . . These numbers do not include any soft costs or contingencies. For planning purposes, an additional 50% increase could be considered on top of these values to cover those items.”*

In 2018 a companion assessment from the Department on Aging detailed the programming offered through its vendor at the five Milwaukee County senior centers, as well as programming that was occurring at 25 other local municipal and non-profit senior centers and senior recreation programs, as well as the two Milwaukee County community centers, Kosciusko and Martin Luther King, Jr. A series of sessions with participants was also held to assess satisfaction with and ideas for future programming. That assessment concluded that while the programming at the Milwaukee County senior centers had stagnated, it was generally satisfactory to the participants and collectively offered more programming than offered at any other senior center or recreational site in the county.

Having in hand a complete assessment of the current state of senior centers in Milwaukee County, the Commission on Aging next commissioned a study by the Wisconsin Policy Forum to review how other counties and AAA’s similar in size to Milwaukee County addressed senior centers. Their 2019 report, *Young at Heart*, surveyed five counties in particular Allegheny (Pittsburgh); Dane (Madison), Franklin (Columbus), Hennepin (Minneapolis), and Arlington. The Forum found that nationally, almost all senior centers are owned and operated by municipal or private entities, not by Area Agencies on Aging or counties, with a few exceptions. Most senior centers had additional dedicated funding,

such as Ohio's county senior services tax levy and charged a membership or participation fee. The report concluded by asking several questions:

- What is the best use of limited Milwaukee County tax dollars for seniors?
- Should Milwaukee County own and pay for programming in large facilities dedicated exclusively to senior services?
- Should Milwaukee County consider multi-generational senior centers?
- Should Milwaukee County only fund programming in senior center facilities owned and operated by other municipalities and partners?
- Should Milwaukee County let other partners such as municipal recreation focus on senior centers to preserve resources for other priorities?

The Department on Aging presented the *Young at Heart* report to the Commission and its Aging Advisory Council. The Commission, realizing that Milwaukee County was in a unique position, determined to provide an answer to these important questions. The Commission asked the Aging Advisory Council to survey the public, particularly older adults from across the county and age continuum, and pose these questions, along with their suggestions for preserving, enhancing, or diversifying participation, programming, and senior center facilities. More than five hundred residents responded to an online and paper survey process and participated in a dozen focus groups held across the county.

With this feedback in hand, the Aging Advisory Council presented *Envisioning the Future: Milwaukee County Senior Centers: 2020*. This report catalogued the public's response and their many ideas to promote the centers, differentiate programming, improve access, envision new models of design for programming delivery and facilities, and generate more revenue. The Council concluded with several recommendations to the Commission, noting that there was vibrant support for senior centers in Milwaukee County and that the Commission should advocate for a dedicated base of support for senior center programming including through a partnership with the State of Wisconsin, and, while exploring other models, it should maintain the existing senior centers and improve them to promote equity and build greater access and participation.

The Commission then established a Select Committee on Senior Centers with the goal of digesting the report and its many recommendations, answer the questions posed by the Wisconsin Policy Forum, develop a plan for senior center facilities and programming, and ascertain the resources necessary to carry out these plans. After meeting for eighteen months, the Select Committee produced a fifth report in 2023: *The MKE HUBS: Reimagining Senior Centers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

The MKE HUBS report concluded that spaces set aside as senior centers were singularly important places to promote the health and well-being of older adults, advance equity, address isolation and loneliness through engagement, and encourage democratization through socialization with neighbors across our many social divides. To do so, the report concluded, the County "must embrace a future with new partners, welcoming spaces, exciting programming, and a willingness to conceive of new public places that better serve both existing participants and an entirely new multicultural base of residents."

Importantly, the Committee also provided answers to the most important questions facing the Milwaukee County senior centers:

*Will senior centers as currently constructed attract participation from new generations of older adults?*

While the existing Milwaukee County owned centers, as currently constructed, are well loved by the participants who utilize them, significant improvements encompassing the design, programming, and functionality of buildings currently in use must be made to meet the Attributes we envision for future senior centers.

*Should Milwaukee County continue to own and operate all five existing Milwaukee County Senior Centers for the next decade?*

No, Milwaukee County need not continue to own and operate all five existing Milwaukee County senior centers for the next decade. Milwaukee County should commit to maintaining programming at five senior center locations, open to the public aged 50+ and coordinated by Milwaukee County. If the design of non-Milwaukee County owned facilities meets the conditions laid out in the attributes, it is not critical that Milwaukee County own these facilities, as long as it maintains a vested interest in the programming that occurs in those spaces consistent with its vision.

*Should Milwaukee County consider the construction of new senior centers to supplement or replace existing centers?*

Milwaukee County owns three strategically located senior centers (Clinton Rose, Wilson, and Washington) that, with some thoughtful renovations and additions, can be upgraded to support the intent of the attributes contained in our Vision Statement. We recommend that the County maintain, renovate, and operate these facilities as senior centers. Two smaller facilities (Kelly and McGovern) were not designed to be used as senior centers and meet few of the attributes contained in our vision. In congruence with prior structural studies, these two facilities would not be easily renovated.

New expanded facilities, built to meet the intent of the attributes from ground up, could better serve existing participants, while at the same time expanding their reach and accessibility. In the short term, we recommend maintaining the use and programming at the smaller facilities until such time as new centers would be fully operational...

*Should Milwaukee County consider expanding the use of the existing Senior Centers to multi-generational community centers in the hope of expanding the benefits of such facilities to the broader community?*

These centers are not intended to be day care centers, after school centers, nor youth recreation centers. Multi-generational refers to the many generations of older adults, aged 50+ who already are invited to participate in our senior center activities and who have different interests. However, wellness studies do point to measurable benefits from the interaction between older adults and youth and there are many unexplored intergenerational programming possibilities for senior center participants and young people to share knowledge and skills in a thoughtful, controlled environment.

Moreover, current usage patterns suggest that there are many hours that the centers are idle of human activity and thus pose an increased safety risk and decreased potential to recruit new generations of users to their core programming.

*Senior Centers in municipalities of Milwaukee County other than the City of Milwaukee and Cudahy are operated by those municipalities. What role should the cities of Milwaukee and Cudahy or Milwaukee Public Schools have in operating Milwaukee County senior centers?*

Many participants currently utilize or visit more than one senior center based upon their offerings. An enhanced opportunity exists to further a discussion with all senior centers about “regionalizing” programming across the entirety of Milwaukee County and encouraging cross fertilization and sharing of programming between centers.

*Should the Commission on Aging support programming in all senior centers across the county utilizing Older Americans Act funding, including in the Milwaukee County owned senior centers, rather than rely upon steadily declining Milwaukee County levy funds?*

It is the sense of the Committee that Milwaukee County should commit to long term funding of public senior center programming aligned with the stated attributes in at least five sites supervised by Milwaukee County. Given the uncertainty of County tax levy in future years and the fact that senior center programming is discretionary, the Committee recommends

shifting some additional Older Americans Act Title IIIB funding over time to the Milwaukee County senior centers while aggressively pursuing other grants, partnerships, and funding sources, including some element of sliding fees for certain activities or for certain users of the facilities.

For all senior centers, the Committee recommends a new vision for programming as well as infrastructure. The Committee emphasizes that programming is as important a consideration as infrastructure. New approaches to programming as well as new modes to deliver such programming, including virtual options and the invitation of other collaborative partners to provide programming within existing facilities must be pursued.

Based upon these recommendations, Milwaukee County Departments of Administrative Services, Health and Human Services, and Parks and Recreation engaged in extensive discussions of how to sustain and improve both senior center programming and the environment in which such programming occurs.

As a result, the program guidelines for services in the Milwaukee County senior centers were revised to incorporate the attributes and increased expectations for programming and partnership contained in the MKE HUBS report. These guidelines call upon the provider to create a welcoming environment consistent with the attributes. At their core they require the provider to develop, promote, manage, and sustain participant-driven recreational, social, fitness, supportive, cultural, and educational programs designed to address the seven dimensions of wellness for older adults, reduce isolation, and advance the engagement of older adults in the community, including at a minimum:

- Recreational, social, and educational programs designed to lessen the isolation of older adults.
- Exercise, physical fitness, and services supporting mental health.
- Senior Dining five days per week; Facilitate other nutrition programming such as Meals on Wheels distribution, Stockbox distribution, and nutrition education.
- Coordinate outreach; Refer older adults in need of services to appropriate service agencies and recruit and train volunteers to provide needed services.
- Implement two different programs per year per site that meet the criteria for OAA Evidence Based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Programming.
- Host at least one Medicare Outreach event annually at each Milwaukee County Senior Center sponsored by the MKE SHIP (State Health Insurance Assistance Program Collaborative), or a Milwaukee County Benefit Specialist.
- Coordinate information and assistance to participants seeking to obtain social services from Milwaukee County through the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Adult Protective Services, OATS and other local social service agencies.

Participation at the Milwaukee County senior centers has generally rebounded since the closure of the centers during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The centers are open to older adults aged fifty (50) and older without any membership fee or condition. The following chart demonstrates participation by center across demographic categories from 2024:

| Senior Center | Black        | White        | Asian     | Alaskan/Am Ind | Haw/Pac Isl | Other     | Missing    | Latino     | Missing    | Female       | Male         | Total        |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Rose          | 700          | 42           | 2         | 16             | 2           | 12        | 57         | 11         | 38         | 554          | 277          | 831          |
| Kelly         | 31           | 763          | 9         | 11             |             | 13        | 23         | 38         | 15         | 566          | 284          | 850          |
| McGovern      | 251          | 32           |           |                |             | 2         | 445        | 7          | 359        | 521          | 209          | 730          |
| Washington    | 595          | 250          | 3         | 10             | 4           | 14        | 50         | 28         | 55         | 630          | 296          | 926          |
| Wilson        | 74           | 1,258        | 16        | 27             | 2           | 58        | 98         | 131        | 63         | 1,006        | 527          | 1,533        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>1,651</b> | <b>2,345</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>64</b>      | <b>8</b>    | <b>99</b> | <b>673</b> | <b>215</b> | <b>530</b> | <b>3,277</b> | <b>1,593</b> | <b>4,870</b> |

While minimum requirements are provided in the Program guidelines, each senior center has a participant advisory council and provides additional programming, events, and activities that meet the needs and desires of current participants. Programming at the centers is also guided by the size, layout, and assets available at each senior center. Each center has exercise equipment, sewing machines, pool and ping-pong tables, a serving kitchen and dining area, a main hall with stage, and computer lab.

Additional unique aspects include:

|                     |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wilson</b>       | Woodworking shop, model train layout, long-arm quilter, glass kilns, ceramic kilns, terrarium, enhanced AV in main hall |
| <b>Washington</b>   | Woodworking shop, demonstration kitchen                                                                                 |
| <b>McGovern</b>     | Lapidary equipment                                                                                                      |
| <b>Kelly</b>        | Ceramic kilns, grand piano, baseball dartboards, bird watching                                                          |
| <b>Clinton Rose</b> | Dance room, model train, enhanced AV in main hall, long-arm quilter                                                     |

Many special events, such as Black History month and holiday celebrations, Art of Aging fairs, Community Health and Fitness Days, and craft sales, are also held at the centers. Several of the centers are also used for other county functions, including hearings sponsored by the County Executive’s Office, County Board Supervisors, state and federal representatives, polling sites by the City of Milwaukee, and shelters during emergencies by the Office of Emergency Management.

Programming is further enhanced by fundraising and partnerships developed by Serving Older Adults of Southeastern Wisconsin, Inc. (SOA), our current programming vendor. Under the terms of the contract, the programming vendor is allowed to rent the facilities to others during evenings and weekends when the senior centers are not programmed. While the County explored bringing this function in house, we did not have capacity to

manage facility rentals. Thus, in addition to the resources provided for programming under contract with the Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging, SOA raises additional revenue:

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Facility Rental         | \$85,322         |
| Grants & Foundations    | \$272,600        |
| Gifts and Contributions | \$412,301        |
| Sales & Program Revenue | \$32,342         |
| Non-OAA Program Revenue | \$47,896         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>\$850,471</b> |

Programming services in the Milwaukee County senior centers is rebid every three years through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. In 2024, Milwaukee County AAA did not receive a response to its RFP for Programming and Meal Site Supervision in the Milwaukee County senior centers. Negotiations with the current provider, Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin, Inc. (SOA), resulted in continued programming in the senior centers by SOA in 2025 for \$1,225,000, including an allocation of \$200,000 in DHHS contingency funding to support the contract.

As an alternative, Milwaukee County DHHS considered a plan to staff, program, and operate the five Milwaukee County senior centers with county staff and determined that this alternative was not cost effective. Serving Older Adults of Southeast Wisconsin, Inc. responded to the RFP re-released earlier this year and this response is currently being evaluated and scored. The DHHS contingency funding is not available in 2026. The anticipated contract award in 2026 for programming and meal site supervision at the Milwaukee County senior centers is \$1,075,000.

From a facilities perspective, the County has invested in and pursued alternatives at each senior center in response to the Commission on Aging’s call to reimagine the centers. In addition to new exercise and crafting equipment, outdoor signage, and LED lighting at all the senior centers, several large-scale projects were pursued at each senior center:

|                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |             |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Clinton & Bernice Rose | Installed new AV system in main hall;                                                                                                                                                                                                            | \$ 60,000   |
|                        | Façade repair;                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | \$150,000   |
|                        | Flexible Facilities grant to renovate the center, including demonstration kitchen, open dining area, wellness clinic, exercise area, technology/education classroom, fiber-optic internet, crafting/makers space, accessible restrooms/entryway. | \$4,100,000 |
| Kelly                  | Secure larger enhanced site at Bucyrus campus with CDBG funding.                                                                                                                                                                                 | TBD         |

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                             |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>McGovern</p>   | <p>Pursued two enhanced facility alternatives coupled with affordable housing: first with HACM at Westlawn Gardens and then with Jewish Family Services in McGovern Park; addressed dumping of trash at center; partnered with JCI community foundation;</p> <p>Entry door replacement.</p> | <p>\$2,000,000</p> <p>but neither alternative approved.</p> <p>\$67,000</p> |
| <p>Washington</p> | <p>Renovated and upgraded a demonstration kitchen with AV;</p> <p>Programming partnership with the Urban Ecology Center;</p> <p>Boiler Replacement</p>                                                                                                                                      | <p>\$365,000</p> <p>\$115,000</p>                                           |
| <p>Wilson</p>     | <p>Installed a new AV system in main hall;<br/>Build out of employee wellness clinic;<br/>Replaced HVAC controls</p>                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>\$60,000</p> <p>\$400,000</p> <p>\$350,000</p>                           |

In 2025, the Commission on Aging Senior Center Committee engaged in a strategic planning process with the guidance of DHHS’s Strategic Initiatives and Transformation Director. The Committee has selected four focus areas (Program Enhancement, Messaging, Innovative Spaces, and Fund Development) to drive the continued implementation of the MKE HUBS report vision and recommendations. The Commission looks forward to continuing to work with County leadership and the County Board to support and advance this vision in the future.

Wil-O-Way Centers

Milwaukee County partners with Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin to deliver inclusive recreation, respite, and skill-building programs at Wil-O-Way facilities, serving individuals with disabilities across the lifespan. The Easter Seals contract budget for 2026 is \$280,284, matching the amount budgeted in 2025.

Milwaukee County’s DHHS: Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD) collaborates closely with Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin to provide year-round programming at the Wil-O-Way Recreation Centers located in South Milwaukee (Grant Park) and Wauwatosa (Underwood Creek). This partnership reflects a shared commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and community engagement for individuals with disabilities.

Programming, Camps & Events at Wil-O-Way

Together, OPD and Easterseals host a variety of recreational and enrichment activities designed to foster independence, socialization, and fun:

- Seasonal Recreation Programs
- Offered in spring, summer, and fall
- Include bowling, ceramics, cooking classes, community outings, and Friday night dances

#### Summer Camps & Respite Services

- Respite Camp offer immersive experiences for youth, teens, and adults
- Activities include outdoor adventures, goal-setting, and inclusive group sessions

#### Special Events

- Holiday-themed dances, talent shows, and family-friendly gatherings
- Events often include adaptive equipment, accessible transportation, and support staff

#### Tap the Potential Program

- Focuses on skill-building and community integration for adults with disabilities
- Includes volunteer opportunities, social outings, and personal development workshops

#### Populations Served by Easterseals

Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin serves a diverse range of individuals with disabilities, including:

- Youth & Teens (Ages 3–18): Through camps and after-school programs focused on social skills and recreation
- Transitioning Young Adults (Ages 15–25): Via Transitions Camp, which supports life skills, independence, and vocational readiness
- Adults (Ages 18+): Through Adult Recreation Programs, employment services, and community engagement
- Older Adults (Ages 40+): Specialized sessions designed to promote wellness, connection, and continued activity
- Easterseals also supports individuals with mental health challenges, AODA concerns, and those seeking workforce development opportunities.

This partnership allows Milwaukee County to:

- Expand inclusive recreation across age groups
- Provide respite for caregivers
- Support transition planning for youth and young adults
- Offer community-based programming that reflects the needs and interests of participants

Together, OPD and Easterseals create a welcoming space at Wil-O-Way where all abilities are celebrated, and barriers are removed.

## **Conclusion**

Milwaukee County's five Senior Centers and two Wil-O-Way facilities continue to provide valued opportunities for connection, health, learning, and inclusion for older adults and persons with disabilities. These sites reflect Milwaukee County's long-standing commitment to wellness, equity, and dignity for the people we serve.

Conditions across the seven facilities are challenged, with many systems beyond their useful lives, identified five-year capital needs exceeding \$23.5 million and a projected 20-year requirement approaching \$55 million. At the County's current rate of investment—averaging less than \$1 million annually—the long-term funding gap could surpass \$37 million. This level of deferred maintenance threatens their continued operation.

At the same time, County funding for programming and operations remains constrained and reliant almost entirely on property tax levy, leaving little flexibility to address inflationary costs or changing program expectations. The Wisconsin Policy Forum's *Young at Heart* report (2019) and the Commission on Aging's *MKE HUBS* report (2023) both affirm that Milwaukee County must reimagine how it delivers services for older adults—through new partnerships, shared facilities, diversified funding, and more inclusive, modern spaces.

The report helps to ensure shared understand of these concerns and the unsustainable fiscal path before Milwaukee County.

## **Fiscal Effect**

This is an informational report without fiscal impact.

## **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Sean Hayes, Facilities Director DAS-Facilities Management

Tina Anders, DHHS

Dan Idzikowski, DHHS

Jacqueline Formanek, DHHS

Aaron Hertzberg, DAS Director

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director

**PREPARED BY:**

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**APPROVED BY:**

Aaron Hertzberg

Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director, Department of Administrative Services

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Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix A: Facilities Condition Photos

*Young at Heart*, Wisconsin Policy Forum Report 2018

In Process

cc: County Executive David Crowley  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County  
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director, Comptroller's Office