



# Mitchell Park Domes Request for County Commitment

July 2025 | Committees on Parks and Culture, Finance







# Request

Parks is seeking County Board approval of the County Financial Commitment to the Domes Reimagined Plan (\$30 million over 6 years)

Implementing the policy established in 2025 Budget Amendment 06

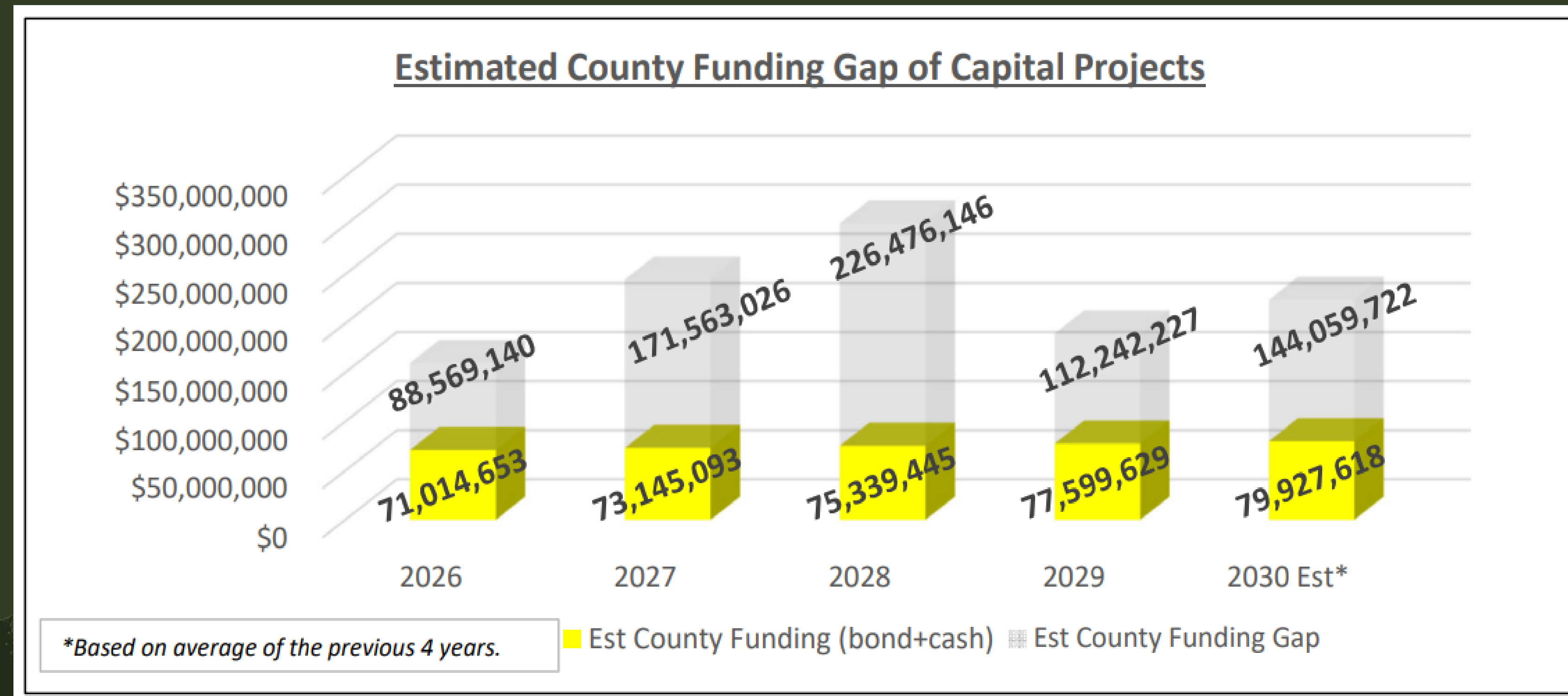
Further approvals will be requested on a new Lease Agreement and Development Agreement to transfer the Mitchell Park Domes to the Milwaukee Domes Alliance (fka Friends of the Domes)



# Milwaukee County Fiscal Situation

## Operating Budget Structural Deficit –

- \$46.7 million in 2026, potentially growing to \$171.6 million by 2030
- Expenditures growing faster than revenues
- Exhaustion of federal stimulus funds
- Rising salary costs
- Need to address deferred maintenance on infrastructure





# Sustaining our Legacy at Milwaukee County Parks

- Milwaukee County stewards a Parks system that was built between 1900-1980 when Milwaukee County was growing
- For more than 40 years, declining public sector resources struggle to keep pace with obligations
- Over time, the civic sector has grown - private, non-profit entities that provide or supplement services provided by the public sector


Photo by Eddee Daniel



## Sustainable Future – Public Private Partnerships

- Reduce Operating Expenses
- Leverage private funding sources to address deferred maintenance and capital projects
- Sustain and improve services with well-designed partnerships
- Mission-driven, place-based partnerships create long-term dedicated resources for public spaces



An architectural rendering of a park renovation project. In the background, two large, geodesic domes with a metallic, grid-like structure are visible. In the foreground, a modern building with a long, low profile and large glass windows sits on a grassy hill. A wide, paved walkway with a blue-painted section runs through the center of the image. People are shown walking, pushing a stroller, and sitting on a bench. The sky is overcast.

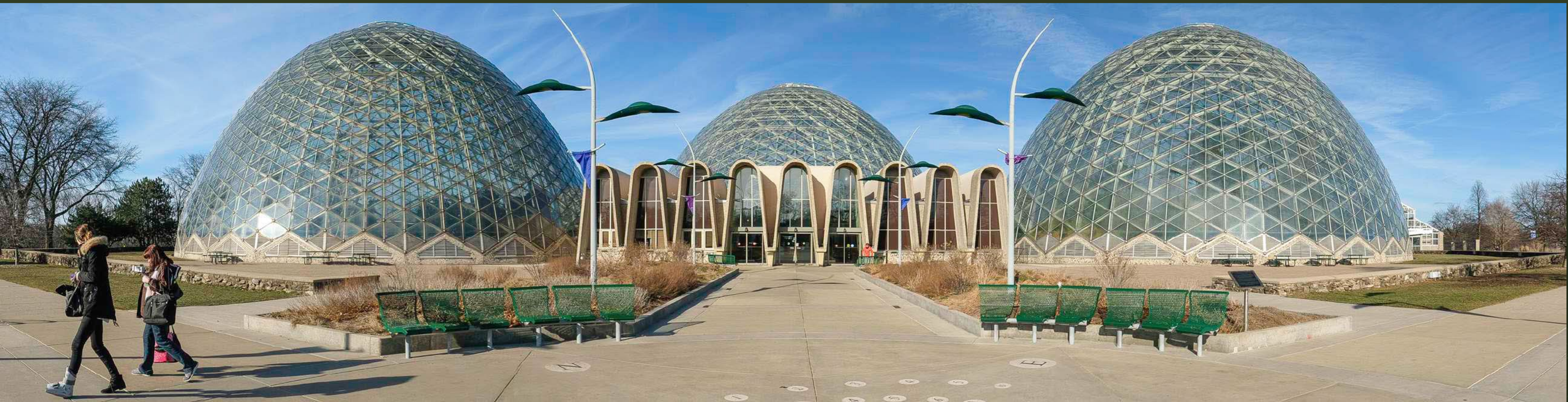
## Sustainable Future — Domes Reimagined

- The Domes Reimagined Campaign is built on a public-private partnership that moves the Domes to a more sustainable future
- By making a financial contribution, Milwaukee County is able to gain a greater than 2 to 1 leverage of private resources
- Non-profit, dedicated effort to enliven Mitchell Park and the Domes



# Implementing the Vision

- Following through on 2025 Budget Amendment 06
- Completing Lease and Development Agreement Negotiations
- Building a dedicated effort to revitalize the Domes through historic preservation and targeted improvements





# Structure of the Domes Reimagined Project

- Reduce Operating Expenses

- Day to day responsibilities and obligations shift from Milwaukee County to the Milwaukee Domes Alliance

- Leverage private funding sources to address deferred maintenance and capital projects

- Current and future operations and maintenance shifting from Milwaukee County to the Milwaukee Domes Alliance
  - County Commitment of \$30 million leverages \$84 million in private investment for a net \$114 million investment in the Domes and Mitchell Park





# Structure of the Domes Reimagined Project

- Sustain services with well-designed partnerships
  - MDA/Friends of the Domes has been our partner since 1989, Mission and Value alignment
  - The Alexander Company has demonstrated success with historic preservation projects – Soldiers' Home at the VA, Beloit Powerhouse, Milwaukee Fortress, Goodman Community Center in Madison
  - Fundraising feasibility analysis has shown the capacity to raise private funds





# 2025 Budget Amendment 06



“Milwaukee County authorizes and directs the Director of Parks, Recreation and Culture to:

- Collaborate with the Office of Corporation Counsel and other relevant departments to develop an agreement (“Agreement”) with the Friends of the Domes for the implementation of the “Domes Reimagined” plan, subject to County Board review and approval. The Agreement shall, among other things, include the following elements:
  - Creation of a long-term lease which places Friends of the Domes in charge of operations for the facility, while Mitchell Park remains the property of the County Parks Department.
  - Support for County efforts to have the Mitchell Park Domes listed on the National Register of Historic Places after the restoration process has commenced.
  - Clearly defined benchmarks, contingencies and conditions that must be met before County funds are released, expended or redevelopment begins.
  - A commitment by Milwaukee County to allocate \$30 million over a six-year period toward the project.
  - Provide a progress update on these initiatives to the County Board no later than the May 2025 meeting cycle.”



# Implementation



*“Creation of a long-term lease which places Friends of the Domes in charge of operations for the facility, while Mitchell Park remains the property of the County Parks Department.”*

- Parks and Milwaukee Domes Alliance (fka Friends of the Domes) are making progress on a long-term lease
- To be presented to the Board for approval in a following cycle
- Approval of this County Commitment is contingent on approval of the Lease and transfer of the facility



# Implementation



*“Creation of a long-term lease which places Friends of the Domes in charge of operations for the facility, while Mitchell Park remains the property of the County Parks Department.”*

- Term Length – up to 99 years
- Ownership – Milwaukee County would continue to own and lease the land
- Maintenance and capital replacement – Milwaukee Domes Alliance would be responsible
- Term begins – Milwaukee Domes Alliance leases from the County as soon as funds are raised to begin Phase 1A of the project (Show Dome and targeted interior improvements)
- Operations transfer – Milwaukee Domes Alliance will assume all building maintenance and operational responsibilities upon completion of Phase 1A
- Milwaukee Domes Alliance would be responsible for all revenue and expense associated with facility operations



# Implementation

*“Support for County efforts to have the Mitchell Park Domes listed on the National Register of Historic Places after the restoration process has commenced.”*

- Submitted Part 1 documentation of the Historic Preservation Certificate Application.
- This is a pre-requisite to attaining Historic Tax Credits
- Accepted – May 2025

Maps — Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1  
Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory (AHI 52569), Milwaukee, WI 53215



FIGURE B: Map showing the relationship of the Domes (in brown) to the park and surrounding streets. South Layton Boulevard is also known as South 27th Street. None of the historic park buildings are extant. The site boundary, which follows established roads, fencelines, and pathways, is outlined in a red dashed line.



# Implementation



*“Clearly defined benchmarks, contingencies and conditions that must be met before County funds are released, expended or redevelopment begins.”*

- Parks and Milwaukee Domes Alliance (fka Friends of the Domes) are making progress on a Development Agreement that will outline the terms of releasing County funds
- To be presented to the Board for approval in a following cycle
- Approval of this County Commitment is contingent on approval of the Development Agreement



# Implementation

*“Clearly defined benchmarks, contingencies and conditions that must be met before County funds are released, expended or redevelopment begins.”*

- Milwaukee County funding will be released based on the ability of the Milwaukee Domes Alliance to produce the funding match from other sources.
- Future funding for future phases will not be released until the prior phase is complete

	TOTAL
<b>Sources</b>	
Milwaukee County Capital	\$30,000,000
Donor Capital Campaign	\$35,000,000
New Market Tax Credits	\$4,200,000
Federal – Historic Tax Credits	\$17,204,160
State – Historic Tax Credits	\$11,620,000
National and State Appropriations, National Funders	\$16,926,959
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$114,951,119</b>
<b>Uses</b>	
Pre-development costs	\$3,532,135
Phase 1A	\$49,785,506
Phase 1B	\$30,863,804
Phase 1C	\$30,769,680
<b>TOTAL USES</b>	<b>\$114,951,125</b>





# Project Sources and Uses

Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	TOTAL
Sources								
Milwaukee County Capital		\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$30,000,000
MDA Other Sources	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$12,500,000	\$36,372,288	\$16,252,895	\$9,825,936		\$84,951,119
TOTAL SOURCES	\$5,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$17,500,000	\$41,372,288	\$21,252,895	\$14,825,936	\$5,000,000	\$114,951,119
Uses								
Pre-development costs		\$3,532,135						\$3,532,135
Phase 1A			\$22,372,791	\$24,136,308	\$3,276,407			\$49,785,506
Phase 1B				\$500,000	\$17,060,949	\$13,302,855		\$30,863,804
Phase 1C						\$16,580,037	\$14,189,643	\$30,769,680
TOTAL USES	\$0	\$3,532,135	\$22,372,791	\$24,636,308	\$20,337,356	\$29,882,892	\$14,189,643	\$114,951,125



# Implementation



*“A commitment by Milwaukee County to allocate \$30 million over a six-year period toward the project.”*

County Capital Commitment "Made Available"				
Phase	Year	Amount	Made Available amount	Phase Total
1A	2026	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000	
	2027	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 5,000,000	
	2028	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 2,900,000	\$ 12,900,000
1B	2029	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 7,100,000	
	2030	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,300,000	\$ 8,400,000
1C	2031	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 8,700,000	\$ 8,700,000
				\$ 30,000,000

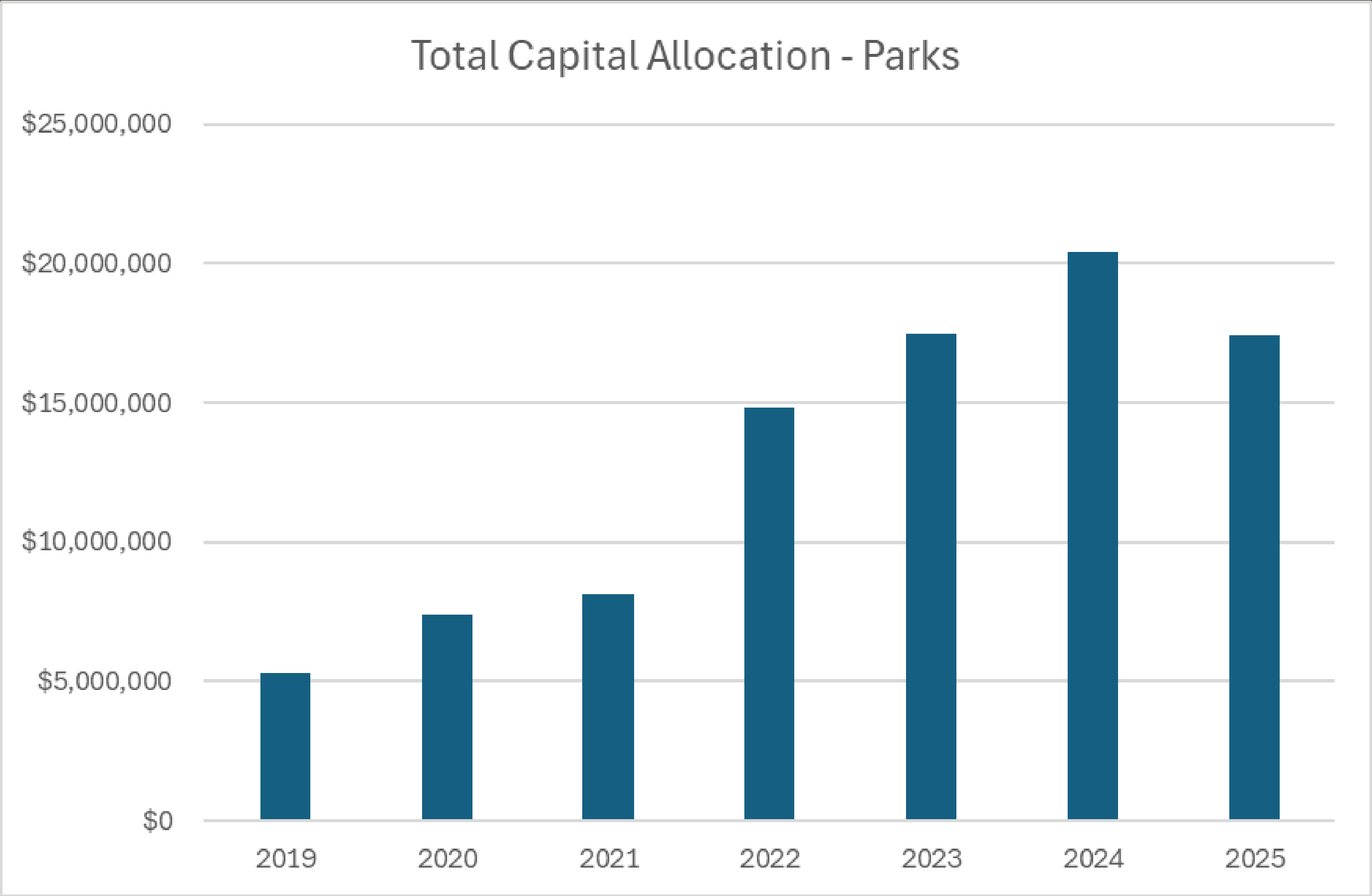


# Milwaukee County Parks – Capital History


Will include a 2026 capital request if approved

Will make it harder to fund other park improvements

Year	Total \$	# of Projects
2019	\$5,293,779	4
2020	\$7,397,900	17
2021	\$8,111,606	17
2022	\$14,831,690	14
2023	\$17,478,819	21
2024	\$20,430,935	15
2025	\$17,399,490	7





An architectural rendering of a park area. In the background, there are two large, geodesic domes made of a grid-like structure. In the foreground, there is a modern building with a long, low profile and a glass facade. A paved walkway runs alongside the building, with several people walking and sitting. There are trees and greenery throughout the scene.

## Request

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Questions?



# Phase 1A Projected Costs

Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	TOTAL
Show Dome		\$ 12,087,357	\$ 12,087,357				\$ 24,174,714
Little Sprouts Dome		\$ 1,848,056	\$ 2,310,070				\$ 4,158,126
New greenhouse		\$ 2,461,620					\$ 2,461,620
Garage/support area		\$ 463,239					\$ 463,239
Gift Shop		\$ 212,779					\$ 212,779
Lobby			\$ 961,937	\$ 480,969			\$ 1,442,906
Entry			\$ 556,429				\$ 556,429
Back of the house/MEP			\$ 3,711,281	\$ 1,237,094			\$ 4,948,375
Café			\$ 1,558,344	\$ 1,558,344			\$ 3,116,688
Garden Enhancements		\$ 500,000					\$ 500,000

	Construction Total	Fees Based on %	Total per Phase
Phase 1A (includes 2 condos)	42,034,873	6,986,331	49,021,204
Phase 1B (includes 1 condo)	27,912,913	4,549,238	32,462,151
Phase 1C (includes 1 condo)	28,756,053	4,711,711	33,467,764
Phase 1 Total			114,951,119



# Phase 1B Projected Costs

Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	TOTAL
Desert Dome				\$ 12,769,041	\$ 12,769,041		\$ 25,538,082
Education area and office				\$ 645,072			\$ 645,072
Hall improvements				\$ 162,132			\$ 162,132
Landscaping and site				\$ 533,814	\$ 533,814		\$ 1,067,628
Garden Enhancements			\$ 500,000				\$ 500,000

	Construction Total	Fees Based on %	Total per Phase
Phase 1A (includes 2 condos)	42,034,873	6,986,331	49,021,204
Phase 1B (includes 1 condo)	27,912,913	4,549,238	32,462,151
Phase 1C (includes 1 condo)	28,756,053	4,711,711	33,467,764
Phase 1 Total			114,951,119



# Phase 1C Projected Costs

Year	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	TOTAL
Mitchell Park					\$ 1,040,000		\$ 1,040,000
Tropical Dome					\$ 13,182,830	\$ 13,182,830	\$ 26,365,660
New restrooms					\$ 850,394		\$ 850,394
Garden Enhancements					\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000

	Construction Total	Fees Based on %	Total per Phase
Phase 1A (includes 2 condos)	42,034,873	6,986,331	49,021,204
Phase 1B (includes 1 condo)	27,912,913	4,549,238	32,462,151
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