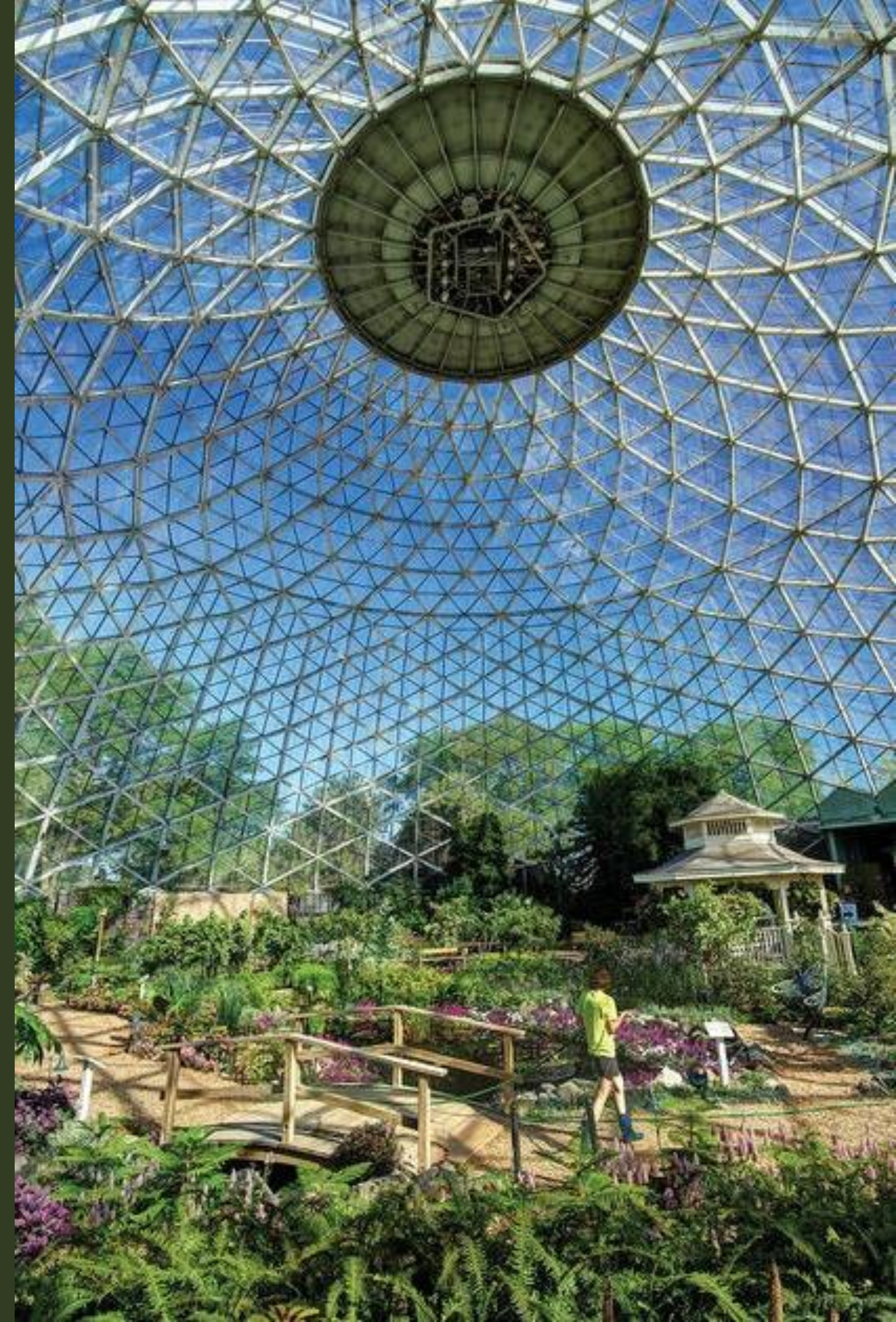




# Mitchell Park Domes Lease and Development Agreements

September 2025 | Committees on Parks and Culture,  
Finance







# Request

Parks is seeking County Board approval of the Lease and Development Agreements that will enable the Domes Reimagined Project

Implementing the policy established in 2025 Budget Amendment 06 and File #25-458

Allow for the project to occur, transfer of obligations from Milwaukee County to Milwaukee Domes Alliance

# 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



# 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.”

# Development Agreement



- The Development Agreement governs the construction of improvements and rehabilitation of the historic Domes structure that is to be managed by the Milwaukee Domes Alliance.
- It outlines the requirements of the transaction that need to be met for it to move forward. The Development Agreement is also the operative agreement during the period of the project before the Lease Term begins.



# Development Agreement



- Release of County funding – Milwaukee County funding will be released based on the timing of the phase of the project and the ability of the Milwaukee Domes Alliance to produce the funding match from other sources.
- Project Financing Structure – the Project will -
  - Require creation of condominium units tied to specific project phases. All condominium units would be subleased by affiliates of MDA. This is necessary to secure Historic Tax Credit funding to the project.
  - Include a capital campaign implemented by MDA
    - Pledges and fundraising contributions will be subject to financial review and reconciliation by Milwaukee County.
  - Other sources may include construction loans, proceeds of the sale or allocation of Historic Tax Credits, bridge loans for New Market Tax Credit financing, and other State, City or other sources.

# Development Agreement



- Phase 1A: Show Dome, Transition Dome, Family Bathrooms, Building Mechanical Systems, Lobby, Gift Shop, Entry, Café
  - Estimated start date = Spring 2027 (no later than end of 2028)
  - Estimated cost = \$47.8M
- Phase 1B: Desert Dome, Education Center Offices, Hallway to Bathrooms, Landscaping
  - Estimated start date = Spring 2029 (after 1A, no later than 2034)
  - Estimated cost = \$31.5M
- Phase 1C: Tropical Dome, New Restrooms, Mitchell Park improvements
  - Estimated start date = Spring 2030 (after 1B, no later than 2034)
  - Estimated cost = \$32.5M
- Phase 2: New education, event, and visitors center
  - To be built once all of Phase 1 is complete
  - Located adjacent to Domes facility, south of the Tropical Dome
  - Fully funded by the Milwaukee Domes Alliance, no County funding contribution

# Development Agreement



- County Financial Commitment by Project Phase –
  - Milwaukee County funding would be made available on a pro rata basis determined by the total cost of the phase. The total County financial commitment by phase will include –
    - Phase 1A - \$12,900,000
    - Phase 1B - \$8,400,000
    - Phase 1C - \$8,800,000
- Targeted Business Enterprise participation – achieve the County’s goals set for TBE participation (25% for construction, 17% for professional services)
- Project phasing and plan review – Milwaukee Domes Alliance would manage construction while Milwaukee County would have plan review oversight in two primary stages – conceptual plan review and detailed plan review. Project phasing and plan review will also include a budget assessment to ensure that funds are available to begin work and release County funding commitments.
- Reporting – MDA will provide quarterly reports to Milwaukee County related to the capital campaign and other fundraising activities and overall progress.



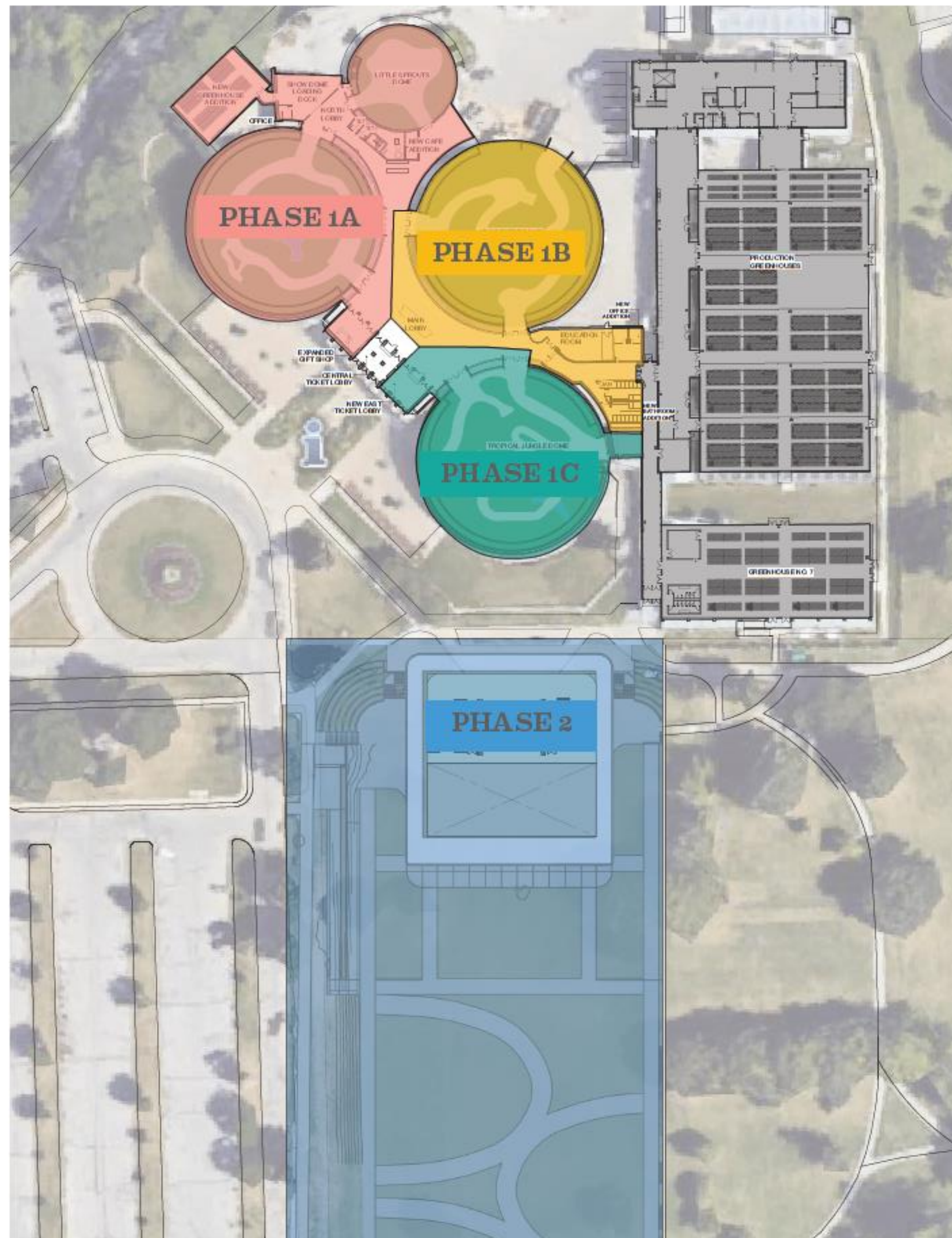
# County Capital Commitment



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



# Project Phases



Domes Reimagined: Preliminary Project Phasing Diagram



# Project Phases



## PHASE 1A

- Show Dome improvements, including:
  - Glazing replacement
  - Precast concrete structure (patching as needed)
  - Removal of existing safety wire mesh
  - Updated mechanical systems
  - Updated show lighting system
  - Updated plant collection and interpretive plans
  - Path updates to comply with accessibility codes
  - New exit doors to comply with code required egress
- Transition Dome (Little Sprouts Dome) improvements, including:
  - Glazing replacement
  - Steel structure improvements (paint/repairs as needed)
  - Updated mechanical systems
  - Updated lighting system
  - Children's garden equipment and educational installations
  - New entrance to Dome from Cafe
- Loading Dock
  - Updated mechanical and electrical
  - Updates to storage systems as needed
  - Required separations between loading dock and public spaces
- New Cafe Addition
  - Enclosure of existing roof space to create a cafe space
  - Provisions of food and beverages, menu to be determined
  - Areas of seating
- New Family Toilets
  - Two (2) new family toilets to serve the cafe and Little Sprouts Dome
  - Provision of changing tables and designed to accommodate adult and children's use
- Expanded Gift Shop
  - Relocation of existing office space to allow the gift shop to expand
  - Create a more open and connected gift shop entrance
  - Updated HVAC and lighting
- Lobby
  - Updates to ceiling and lighting
  - Restoration of existing historic skylight

## PHASE 1B

- Arid Dome improvements, including:
  - Glazing replacement
  - Precast concrete structure (patching as needed)
  - Removal of existing safety wire mesh
  - Updated mechanical systems
  - Updated show lighting system
  - Updated plant collection and interpretive plans
  - Path updates to comply with accessibility codes
  - New exit doors to comply with code required egress
- New Office Space Addition
  - Small building addition to provide for office space relocated due to gift shop expansion
  - New storage space for building storage as needed
- New Multi Stall Toilet Rooms Addition
  - New multi-stall toilet rooms in existing exterior space between buildings
  - Provides updated restrooms that are fully accessible
  - Provides updated janitors closet and necessary building maintenance spaces
- Improved Access from Greenhouses
  - Updates to pathway between Domes and Greenhouses

## PHASE 1C

- Tropical Dome improvements, including:
  - Glazing replacement
  - Precast concrete structure (patching as needed)
  - Removal of existing safety wire mesh
  - Updated mechanical systems
  - Updated show lighting system
  - Updated plant collection and interpretive plans
  - Path updates to comply with accessibility codes
  - New exit doors to comply with code required egress
- Expanded entry

# Project Phases



## PHASE 2

- New Nature Learning Center Building in Sunken Garden
  - New offices for MDA
  - New event space
  - New education facilities
  - Sustainable building
- New Sunken Garden "Fourth Ecosystem"
  - Stormwater garden to manage site runoff
  - Educational programming



# Lease Agreement



- The Lease Agreement governs the long-term operations of the Mitchell Park Domes by the Milwaukee Domes Alliance.
- The Domes are currently owned by Milwaukee County Parks and are operated with assistance by the Milwaukee Domes Alliance for programming, education, and support.
- In the future the Milwaukee Domes Alliance would provide all operating support for the facility with the County only continuing to maintain Horticulture operations.

# Lease Agreement



- Term Length – 99 years
- Ownership – Milwaukee County would own and lease the land and transfer the improvements to Milwaukee Domes Alliance
- Public access – the Domes and leased areas will remain publicly accessible and for a public purpose
- Greenhouse Lease - Milwaukee County Parks will maintain Horticulture operations within the greenhouses, the Lease requires a separate agreement to govern the use of the facility for County staff
- Plant Collection Lease – Milwaukee County will lease to the Milwaukee Domes Alliance the plant collection that is currently shown at the Domes.
- Maintenance and capital replacement – Milwaukee Domes Alliance will be responsible for all building and facility maintenance
- Maintenance reserve fund – MDA will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a reserve of funds dedicated to building maintenance
- 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



# Lease Agreement



- Operations transfer – Milwaukee Domes Alliance will assume all building maintenance and operational responsibilities upon completion of Phase 1A
- Phase 2 Lease – Milwaukee Domes Alliance could lease from County additional land for the building expansion contemplated in the project's second phase, pending certain contingencies including the full completion of Phases 1A, 1B, and 1C
- Milwaukee Domes Alliance would be responsible for all revenue and expense associated with facility operations
- Reporting – MDA will provide annual reports to the County with a report to the County Board once every 5 years

# Leased Premises

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.





Request

Parks is seeking County Board approval of the Lease and Development Agreement





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
Phase 1C (includes 1 condo)	28,756,053	4,711,711	33,467,764
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