

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: March 21, 2025

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

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Executive Director, DHHS
Guy Smith, Executive Director, Department of Parks
Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director, Department of Administrative Services

Subject: An informational report providing an update on the study to determine the feasibility of an MKE Hubs project at McGovern Park

REQUEST

This report is for informational purposes only.

BACKGROUND

Under the advisement of the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging and the Milwaukee County Board Committee on Parks and Culture, Milwaukee County has begun a project to determine the feasibility of a MKE HUB development within McGovern Park. The full project scope will be refined in the coming months and will consider the development of a new senior/community center with health and wellness amenities that support the full range of attributes identified in the Commission's MKE HUBS report, with flexibility to serve the broader community, supported by affordable housing focused on older adults.

The exploration of this proposal addresses three long standing community needs:

- The fiscal unsustainability of maintaining an aging county-owned facility.
- The desire for a purpose-built community center in the northwest sector of the county that can accommodate a growing population of older adults.
- The dire shortage of safe, accessible, and affordable housing for older adults.

After nearly a decade of study and community assessment regarding the sustainability and value of Milwaukee County owned senior centers, the Commission on Aging's Select Committee on Senior Centers presented its "MKE HUBS" report reimagining senior centers for the 21st century. The report imagined innovative and vibrant environments programmed and designed to encourage a holistic approach to an engaged life, with spaces, activities, and experiences created to support the vital and active lifestyles of new and existing generations of mature Milwaukee County residents. The HUBS report imagined sites that are accessible, available, enjoyable, and sustainable. with attributes that include:

- a covered entry canopy and welcome center.

- attractive dining space with a cafe or coffee shop.
- life-long learning space with full technology capabilities for virtual/hybrid options.
- a modern fitness center and recreational space.
- a wellness center that promotes physical, mental, and social health.
- creative makers space that expand arts and crafts into the 21st century.
- programming that is accessible and available beyond 8:00am-4:30pm.

To ensure a well-rounded Project Team, Milwaukee County Economic Development issued a Request for Qualifications in October 2024 to seek a real estate development partner to collaborate on this feasibility project.

There were 11 qualified respondents. After careful evaluation, Jewish Family Services (JFS) was unanimously chosen as the recommend partner because of their experience in both real estate development and social services and because of their mission-alignment. The partnership with JFS was further solidified with the full project team at a county-led introductory meeting with JFS in mid-January of 2025.

Key Points on Jewish Family Services

JFS is a 158-year-old nonprofit agency that provides housing and a range of services to vulnerable populations in Milwaukee County, including low-income individuals and families, at-risk older adults, and persons with disabilities. JFS' core service areas include affordable housing, social services, and mental health services. JFS offers community-based programs and housing that improve the health, personal well-being, and level of independence of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, age-related disabilities, and chronic mental illness. JFS provides services to nearly 2,500 clients annually in multiple locations throughout Milwaukee County.

Examples of relevant real estate projects from JFS include:

Deerwood Crossing Senior Residences Phase I and Phase II

This 96-unit residence is both a Section 42 property and a Residential Care Apartment Complex that is licensed through the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The residence was designed to meet the urgent need in Milwaukee County for housing with onsite social services, personal care services, and health services to support seniors to age in place through both independent and assisted living.

Bradley Crossing Supportive Housing Community Phase I and Phase II

Bradley Crossing is a five-building complex that consists of 114 units of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom apartments, half of which are reserved for households with a member with a disability. The property has two Housing Assistance Payments Contracts with Milwaukee County for a total of 58 project-based Section 8 Vouchers. In addition, Bradley Crossing houses the Lois and Tom Dolan Community Center, a 6,000 square foot space that is leased by the Village of Brown Deer. The Center contains a dance studio, meeting spaces for community groups and an event venue.

Woodale Crossing Supportive Housing Community

Opening in July of 2025, Woodale Crossing will contain 56 units of senior housing, including 14 units that are dedicated for referrals from the Milwaukee County Housing Division for persons with disabilities who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. The County has supported the development of Woodale Crossing through ARPA funding, HOME funding, and a Housing Assistance Payments contract. JFS will provide on-site supportive services.

JFS also offers a variety of community-based mental health and social services, some of which includes:

- Late life Counseling: in-home mental health services for Milwaukee County older adults funded by the Area Agency on Aging
- Disability Case Management
- Supportive Housing Programs: free educational, social engagement, and social service programs to promote inclusion, personal safety, wellness, and housing stability for residents living at our housing communities.
- Supportive Services: services for adults experiencing mental health challenges, substance use disorders, or both. This includes contracted case management with Milwaukee County and the Sandy Naimon Breakfast Club, which provides peer-based emotional support for individuals diagnosed with a severe and persistent mental illness.

Beyond their experience in both real estate development and social services, JFS demonstrated mission-alignment with Milwaukee County, a partnership mindset, and an understanding that joy and fun need to be incorporated into the results of our efforts.

Next Steps

Over the next several months, the full project team (including JFS) will:

- Work with the Commission on Aging, its Senior Center Committee, the Parks Department Milwaukee County Transit Services, the Department of Health and Human Services, and community stakeholders to develop a strategy for community outreach and input.
- Analyze project risks for real estate development on County parkland.
- Determine the extended partnerships necessary to facilitate a successful project including programming to meet the goals of the MKE HUBS report (healthcare, food service, social service, philanthropy, etc.).
- Create initial concept designs for the project that consider the location and size of the development.
- Develop an initial proforma that considers both capital and operational expenses for the potential project.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for informational purposes.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

FISCAL EFFECT

This report is for information purposes only.

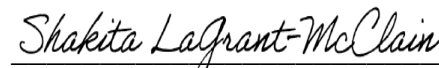
VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, DHHS Director
Emily Kenney, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Transformation, DHHS
Guy Smith, Executive Director, Department of Parks
Celia Benton, Director of Economic Development, DAS


PREPARED BY:

Celia Benton, Director of Economic Development, DAS
Emily Kenney, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Transformation, DHHS

APPROVED BY:


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


Guy Smith, Executive Director
Department of Parks


Aaron Hertzberg, Executive Director
Department of Administrative Services

ATTACHMENTS:

None

cc: David Crowley, County Executive
Sup. Willie Johnson, Jr., Chair, Finance Committee
Shawn Rolland, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
Liz Sumner, Comptroller
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors
Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Madeline Fruehe, Budget and Management Analyst, SBP