

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: October 15, 2024

To: Members of the Finance Committee

From: Jim Tarantino, Deputy Director, Milwaukee County Parks

Subject: Parks Department response to budget hearing questions on October 10, 2024.

Supervisor Taylor (17) requested a listing of the expenses and revenues associated with each open pool and splash pad in 2024.

Labor expense for splash pads is challenging to separate out from our seasonal labor budget as these facilities are staffed with seasonal park workers. These positions are funded as lump sum amounts for each operating unit and do not have discrete budgets for pool operations as a standalone activity. It can be said that costs associated with splash pad and wading pools increased substantially in 2024 as the Parks Department was able to open 31 of these facilities while only 18 opened in 2023. The following information relates to larger pool facilities – outdoor deep wells, water parks, and indoor pools.

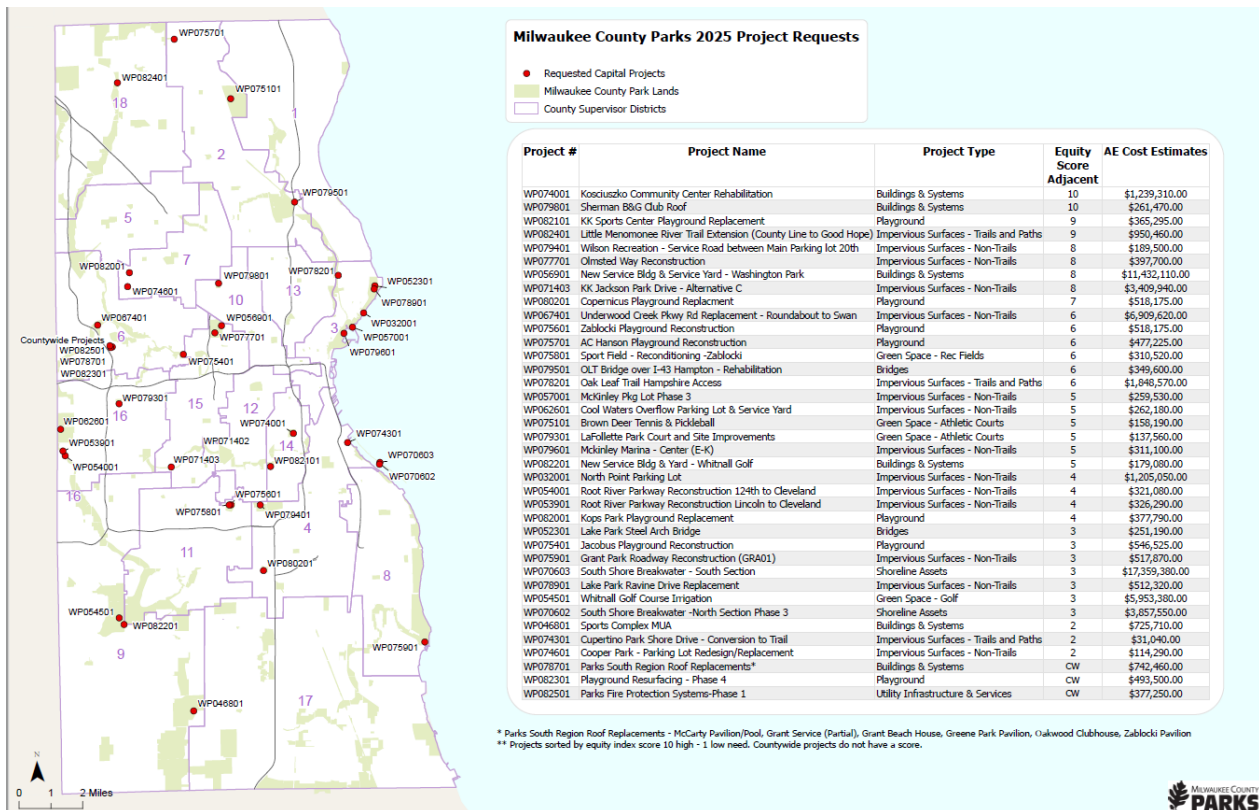
Pool Name	Total Admission Revenue (as of 10/11/2024)
NOYES INDOOR	\$26,149
PULASKI INDOOR	\$85,793
COOLWATERS	\$376,857
LINCOLN	\$132,645
SHERIDAN	\$62,061
WILSON	\$18,220
PELICAN COVE	\$30,549
TOTAL	\$732,275

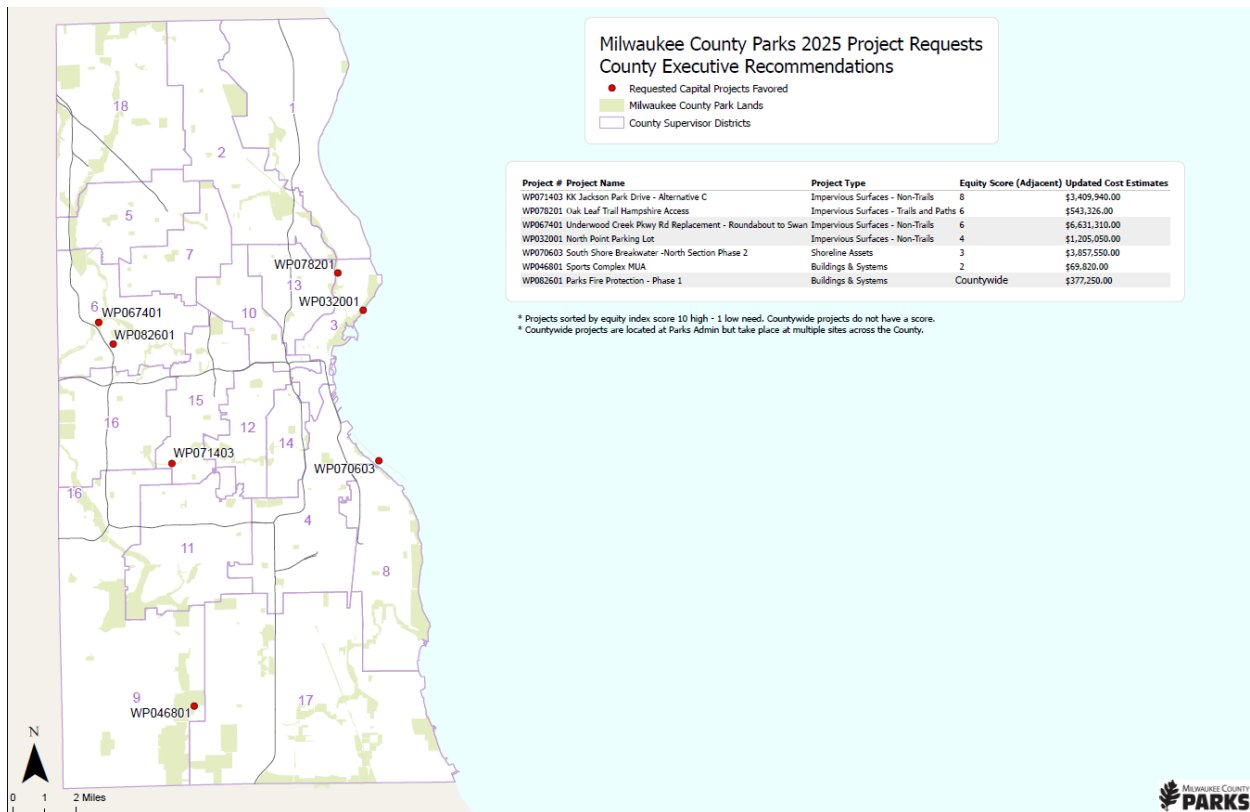
Expense (Aquatics – Org 9167)	Amount (as of 10/11/2024)
Personnel	\$1,585,086
Commodities	\$538,781
Maintenance	\$247,314
TOTAL	\$2,371,181

Net Tax Levy Support	\$1,638,906
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Supervisor Bielinski requested information regarding the lack of capital investment in parks within the 16th Supervisory District for calendar year 2025.

The images below include maps of Milwaukee County that show 1) 2025 Parks Department requested capital projects, and 2) 2025 recommended Parks capital projects. Each requested project is ranked according to its location by the Park Equity Index. There are 3 projects located within the 16th Supervisory District that were requested for capital project funding – planning and design for Root River Parkway reconstruction (2 sections), and design for Cool Waters and Greenfield service yard parking lots. Due to competing priorities, structural deficits, competition for limited capital funding, and the rising cost to the County to fund mandated services, Milwaukee County Parks continues to experience challenges in funding its non-mandated capital needs.





Supervisor Taylor (5) requested a listing of parks receiving or scheduled to receive lighting updates, including facilities and along parkways.

The following is a list of projects that are upcoming, Milwaukee County Parks has been systematically upgrading lighting to LED throughout the parks system for years.

- Sherman Park – Boys and Girls club building lighting
- Milwaukee River Parkway -50 parkway lights
- Kinnickinnic Parkway - 43 parkway lights
- Root River Parkway - 74 parkway lights
- Lincoln Creek Parkway – 24 parkway lights
- Lincoln Park – 17 pathway lights
- Jackson Park – 13 pathway lights (southern part of the park, outside the MMSD scope)
- Carver Park – 11 pathway lights
- Beckum Park – 4 parking lot lights, 20 pathway lights

Supervisor Taylor (5) requested a listing of parks that have or will have a friends group, and/or friends groups sponsoring multiple parks.

Park	Friends Group Name
Bay View	Friends of Bay View Park
Boerner Botanical Gardens	Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens
Bradford Beach	Friends of Bradford Beach
Brown Deer	Friends of Brown Deer Park
Cathedral Square	Cathedral Square Friends
Center Street	Friends of Center Street Park
Chippewa	Friends of Chippewa Park
Cooper	Friends of Cooper Park
County Grounds	Friends of County Grounds Park
Dineen	Dineen Park Neighborhood Association
Doctors	Doctors Park Friends
Domes	Friends of the Domes
Doyne	Friends of Doyne Park
Estabrook	Friends of Estabrook Park
Gordon	Friends of Gordon Park
Grant	Friends of Grant Park
Greene	Friends of Greene Park
Grobschmidt	Friends of Grobschmidt
Hales Corners	Friends of Hales Corners Park and Pool
Holler	Holler Park Neighborhood Association
Hoyt	Friends of Hoyt Park and Pool
Humboldt	Humboldt Park Friends
Jackson Park	Jackson Park Community Assn
Jacobus	Friends of Jacobus Park
Johnsons	Friends of Johnsons Park
Juneau	Juneau Park Friends
Kletzsch	Friends of Kletzsch Park
Kops	Kops Park Revitalization Team
LaFollette	Friends of LaFollette Park
Lake	Lake Park Friends
Lincoln	Friends of Lincoln Park
Lindsay	Friends of Lindsay Park
Lyons	Friends of Lyons Park
Madison	Friends of Madison Park Disc Golf
McCarty	Friends of McCarty Park
Milwaukee County BMX Trails	Friends of Milwaukee County BMX Trails
Milwaukee's Trails	Friends of Milwaukee County's Trails
Mitchell Airport	Friends of Mitchell Airport Park
Mitchell/Clarke	Friends of Mitchell Clarke
Morgan Triangle	Friends of Morgan Triangle Park
Monarch Trail	Friends of the Monarch Trail
Moody	Friends of Moody Park
North Point Lighthouse	North Point Lighthouse Friends
Oak Creek	Friends of Oak Creek Mill Pond and Watercourse

Pulaski-Cudahy	Friends of Pulaski-Cudahy
Rainbow	Friends of Rainbow Park
Riverside	Riverside Park Friends
Rose	Friends of Rose Park
Saveland	Friends of Saveland Park
Sheridan	Sheridan Park Friends
Sherman	Friends of Sherman Park
Smith	Friends of Smith Park
South Shore	Friends of South Shore Park
Tiefenthaler	Friends of Tiefenthaler Park
Tippecanoe	Friends of Tippecanoe Park
Valley	Friends of Valley Park
Walker Square	Friends of Walker Square Park
Washington	Friends of Washington Park
Wedgewood	Friends of Wedgewood Park
Wehr Nature Center	Friends of Wehr Nature Center

Supervisor Taylor (5) requested information regarding the status of all projects currently underway, or scheduled, at Atkinson and Indigenous People’s Park.

Atkinson Triangle Park

- 2021 Capital Budget funded \$80,000 for lighting improvements (WP73501). This project involved the replacement of existing 1970s lighting with new LED lighting that to improve safety for park users.
- In 2024 Parks completed of the lighting work with \$42,000 remaining in the budget.
- Parks submitted a fund transfer (24-761) that was approved by the Finance Committee and County Board in September 2024. These funds could be used to support general park improvements including the installation of two permanent picnic tables, replacement of the existing poured in place surfacing at the playground, and the installation of ADA accessible benches within the park.
- Parks is holding these funds at this time while the Parks Foundation is applying for \$100,000 in grant funding to supplement the budget for improvements at Atkinson Triangle. Parks is seeking to use the existing \$42,000 to support the construction of an open air shelter in this park.

Indigenous People’s Park

- Parks is using funding from 2024 Capital Project WP0550 to remove an existing asphalt pad and abandoned batting cages. This would create an additional 12,000 square feet of green space in the park that could also provide another park amenity, including a hard surface court. Parks will be

conducting community engagement to get residential feedback on potential park improvements.

Supervisor Rolland requested information regarding the established criteria for which structures, institutions, or organizations will be receiving trust funds, and the process for which those are designated, as well as information regarding a system-wide approach to trust funds throughout the parks system, and a fair process for application.

The comment at the 10/10 meeting suggested the need for a future policy-level discussion about what services benefit from having a trust fund for maintenance. The intent is to discuss how revenue-generating services can afford to be better maintained through the creation of maintenance reserve accounts while non-revenue generating services don't have the same benefit. If Milwaukee County is to support its mission of becoming the healthiest county by achieving racial and health equity then we should devise strategies for investing in services that support health outcomes regardless of the ability of that service to generate revenue.

Supervisor Bielinski requested information regarding cultural spending in Milwaukee County and its comparability to similar metropolitan areas.

Research from the Wisconsin Policy Forum clearly demonstrates that public funding for the arts in the State of Wisconsin lags behind all other states in the country. The focus of research has been funding at the State level rather than at the County or local level. It is significant to note that while Wisconsin's neighboring states like Minnesota fund the arts at a dramatically higher level than Wisconsin this funding is providing at the State level and not the local government level. The budgets for Hennepin (Minneapolis) and Ramsey (St. Paul) Counties shows no funding for the arts despite Minnesota ranking highly in this area of investment.

Relevant research includes –

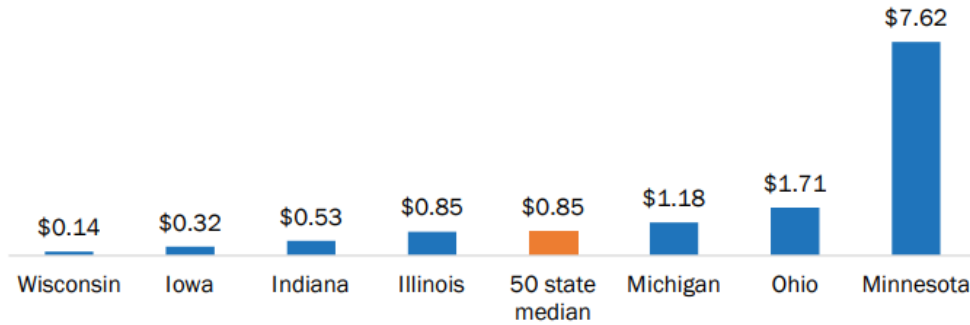
- Arts and Culture in a Pandemic: An Existential Threat (August, 2020)
 - <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/arts-and-culture-in-a-pandemic-an-existential-threat/>
- Curtain Time (May, 2024)
 - <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/curtain-time-assessing-and-responding-to-milwaukees-performing-arts-challenges/>

From the Wisconsin Policy Forum report Curtain Time (published May, 2024) –

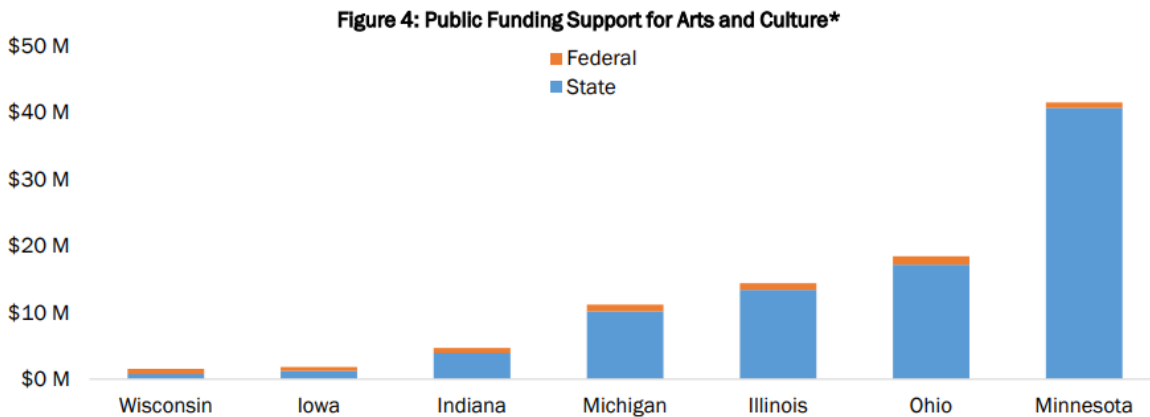
Public sector support still lacking

As we have pointed out in previous [research](#), performing arts organizations in Wisconsin and Milwaukee, and the arts as a whole, receive little public funding when compared to other states and peer cities. In fact, per the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, in 2023 Wisconsin ranked 50th of the 50 states in per capita state funding for arts agencies (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4: WI Ranked 50th in Annual State Support for Arts & Culture
Per capita state funding dedicated to state arts agencies, FY 2023



From the Wisconsin Policy Forum report Arts & Culture in a Pandemic (published August, 2020) –



Sources: State budget documents; state arts and culture agency websites
*Excludes appropriations for film promotions, which often support out-of-state film arts businesses.