

IMAGINE



URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER: Connecting people in cities to nature and each other

The Urban Ecology Center's mission is to connect people in cities to nature and each other. To fulfill this mission, the UEC has served the Milwaukee community for more than 25 years, providing vibrant urban parks for people to explore, learn and find respite. The Center has a vision for Milwaukee that will allow more people to experience the transformational properties of nature, ensure the Center's longevity to reach generations of people, and respond to interest in our model so we can spread our knowledge and deepen our impact.

At the Urban Ecology Center, we imagine a world where every urban child can explore the natural world with adults who guide and mentor them. We imagine a place where people can come together in a vibrant natural sanctuary, a neighborhood Urban Ecology Center, which educates and inspires people to understand and value nature as motivation for positive change.

To accomplish this vision, the Center has designed the Imagine Campaign, which has four vital components:

- **Washington Park Renovation:** The outdated and inefficient building in Washington Park is limiting the Center's ability to increase programming and does not provide the welcoming environment the Center is known for. The UEC plans to transform the existing facility into a new and vibrant Center while restoring the surrounding greenspace and infrastructure to reach more kids and adults in the neighborhood.
- **Riverland Development:** The Center aims to create a premiere event space in a historic warehouse and provide needed gathering and storage space in the Riverland property, adjacent to the current UEC Riverside Park branch. Additions and improvements to the Riverland location will allow this property to be a destination for neighbors near and far to connect to nature and each other. Additional details about this project are shared below.
- **Organizational Excellence:** The Urban Ecology Center is in a strong financial position with no long-term debt, an adequate operating reserve and a positive ratio of assets to liabilities. However, over time the Center has not been able to invest in certain growth initiatives due to rising operational costs. Capacity-building funds are needed to support UEC growth, solidifying a successful education and community renewal model into an equally successful long-term business model. Investments include technology and security upgrades, new financial management software, and staff development.
- **Endowment:** By strengthening the Endowment Fund, the Center aims to ensure a healthy organization that can respond to changing community needs well into the future, as well as provide a safety net during hard times.

Riverland Development

Located between the Riverwest and East Side communities, our Riverside Park branch was built in 2004. The UEC manages over 40 acres of wooded land and riparian habitat in Riverside Park and on the east bank of the Milwaukee River with access to the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum. However, the evolution of the property has posed challenges to how people are welcomed and activities are carried out. Additions and improvements to the Riverland location will allow this property to be a destination for neighbors near and far to connect to nature and each other.

Riverland projects include:

- New event hall: We will repurpose an existing historic Cream City brick building to create a premiere, 300 person, eco-friendly event destination. Located adjacent to beautiful park land and with an industrial feel, this unique space will generate revenue that allows the Center to sustain mission-based environmental education and outdoor recreation programs.
- Land Stewardship and Facilities team storage and workspace: This new space will create easily accessible, flexible, and expanded storage capacity for essential site work and land management equipment.
- Outdoor gathering space and play area: This gathering space for community members and school visits will provide a welcoming entrance to Riverside Park from the street and the Oak Leaf Trail.
- Additional modifications to the existing Riverside Park building will create more classroom space, centrally-located office space, and much-needed storage solutions. These modifications will also allow for the growth of the Center's nature-based early childhood education programming, a key element of our environmental education offerings.

