

# The Iconic Mitchell Park and Domes

Retained, Re-envisioned, Renewed  
Milwaukee's Urban Botanical Treasures



“Architecture is not simply the stage set in which we live our lives. It is also a reflection of how we live our lives and who we are.”









# History Retained and Refreshed.

Mitchell Park is Milwaukee's original horticultural and botanical park. In 1890 it was designed as one of Milwaukee's first five public parks, by the same architect who did the Pfister Hotel and Milwaukee City Hall. In the mid-1960's, the Domes, again designed by a Milwaukee architect, Donald Grieb, replaced prior conservatory buildings that had been on this site even before it became a public park. The Domes are considered on par with the world-famous St. Louis "Arch" as iconic mid-century American architecture, were the first conoidal buildings anywhere in the world, and remain the world's only conoidal glass structure spanning a conservatory. They are an architectural and engineering feat, awarded a US Patent. Visible for miles they symbolize Milwaukee: losing them would be like losing the heart of the City.

The Domes will be retained and reinterpreted. The "arid" and "tropic" Domes that in the 1960's brought Milwaukee residents their first taste of diverse climates will be rehabilitated following national historic preservation guidelines. Inside, the climates they feature will become integral to interpreting the global places and cultures they represent. Each year will bring different worlds of plants, people and culture. The deserts of Africa, the rainforests of Costa Rica, and the tree canopy of Wisconsin. Each will illuminate the changes in our global ecosystem, including here in Wisconsin. Each will include focused learning opportunities, curriculum, cultural exploration and celebration. Supporting them: a new Welcome and Education Center will be added, providing classrooms, research centers, exhibit and retail space.



Mission:

Connecting and  
inspiring people  
through the world of  
plants.

# A New Vision for Mitchell Park & Domes.

A place for wonder and fun, learning and  
exploration, involvement and community.

Programming the Domes and Park with changing/touring exhibits per a museum,  
multi-faceted education and community programs.

Activity hubs throughout the Park.

Children's gardens.

Youth and teen apprenticeship and stewardship programs.

Adult health and wellness, urban gardens programs.

The Clarke Square Neighborhood is an Opportunity Investment Zone.

**More young children  
under 10 than elsewhere in  
Milwaukee.**

**71% in the labor force as compared to 76% in Milwaukee.**

Statistical analysis courtesy Zilber Foundation





# 1. The Domes

They are historically important for their architecture and engineering. There is no other structure like them anywhere in the world.

They will be rehabilitated for the next 50 years, with important added elements to enhance the visitor experience.



## 2. Bringing back Mitchell Park

### **More trails, paths, places for family fun.**

Well lit, outdoor garden areas and surrounding picnic and food service areas. Spend an hour. Walk the dog. Stay for the day. Come back often for live music and events.

### **Bringing back lost features.**

Mitchell Park always had tennis courts. They will return. Kayak on a renewed, sparkling clean pond. Wander and enjoy sustainable garden beds.

### **Remember history.**

The first trading post in Milwaukee was located along the important Native American trail in the park in 1795. The white trader, Jacques Vieau married a Menomonee woman. Their daughter Josette became the wife of Milwaukee's first Mayor, Solomon Juneau. Visitors will be able to see the trail and site.

# 3. Enhancing The Park and Domes as an Urban Botanical Park



## Changing Climate

The Park will include a new Center for Wisconsin Urban Horticulture, devoted to sustaining Wisconsin native plant species and fostering our stewardship of Milwaukee's native assets.



## Water Stewardship

The Mitchell Park Pond was the first ever built in a Milwaukee park. Restored to sparkling water, it will now include a Park-wide re-circulation system, moving water throughout the Domes and Park. The goal: delighting visitors while being a demonstration site for smart water stewardship.



## Urban Agriculture and Health

With 60 acres, Mitchell Park offers ample opportunity for gardens. In partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin's Center for Healthy Communities and Research, the Park will house a Center for Urban Ag and Health, bringing together world-class research and back-yard gardens.



## Food and Cooking

From casual garden to table dining to food trucks that mirror the cultures featured in the Domes, the Park will become a Milwaukee foodie paradise, complete with farm-to-table culinary instruction and its own culinary arts training program.



## Economic Impact

The Domes and Mitchell Park will become a center for workforce training in horticulture, urban ag, and culinary arts. With teen-to-professional programs, it will train and employ hundreds each year and be a powerful economic hub for the Clarke Square neighborhood.



## 4. Adding New Park Features



### **Wedding Garden**

A wedding garden will be added, seating up to 300.



### **The Boathouse Pavilion**

The mid-century modern Boathouse Pavilion will become a state-of-the-art event and wedding center.



### **Children's Garden**

A new children's garden will offer hands-on activities and fun, with learning hubs for grades pre-K, K-4, and 5-6.



### **Amphitheater**

The amphitheater will be upgraded with terraced seating for 1500 and a stage for music, theater, and dance.

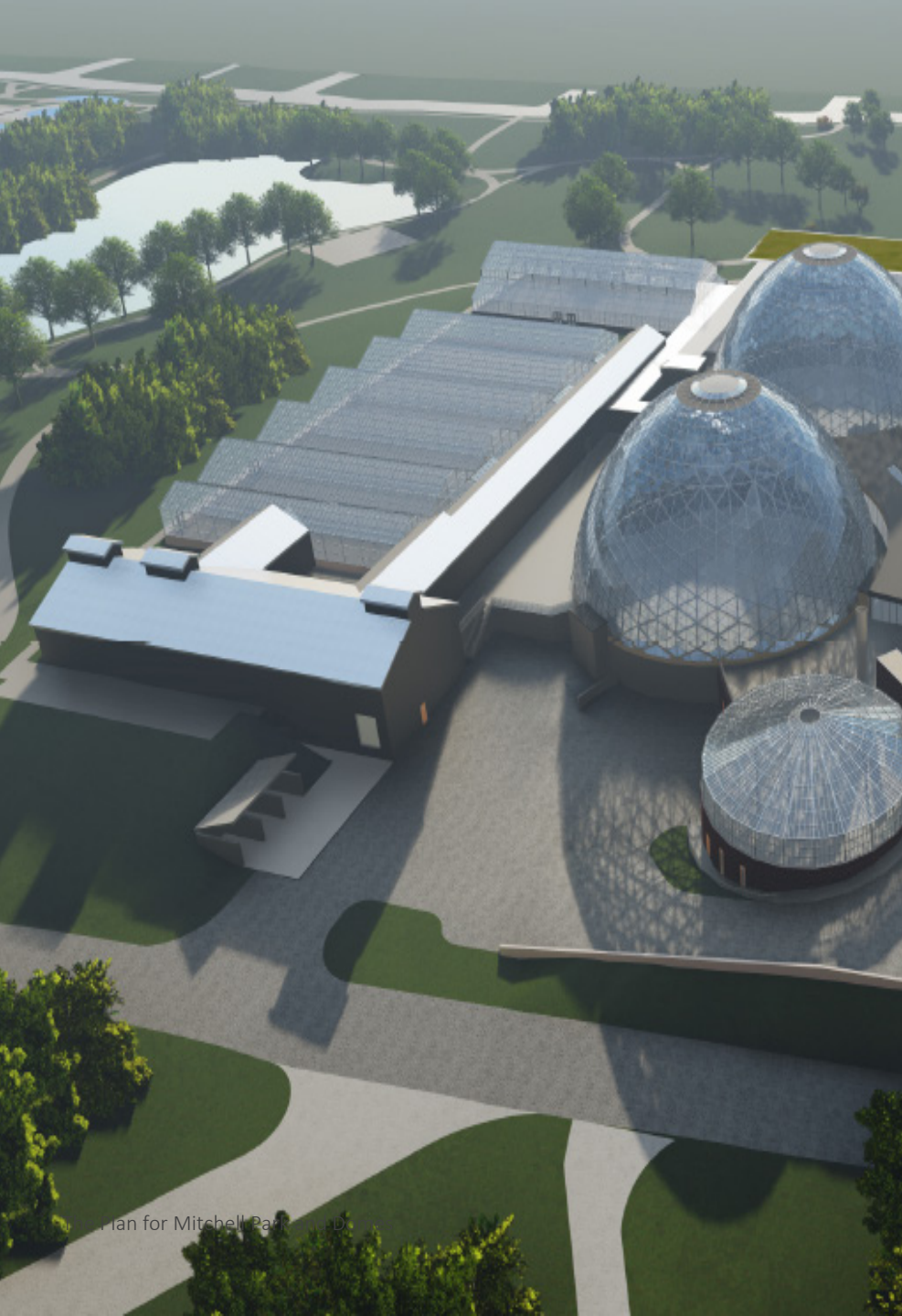
A tree canopy feature will offer visitors a tall green view of the Park and Milwaukee, with views that include the Menomonee River and all of Downtown.



# Learning and Fun

Instructional greenhouse, outdoor signage, tree canopy in children's garden





## 5. The Greenhouses

### Research



Medical research combined with applied horticultural research and student hands-on science.

### Learning



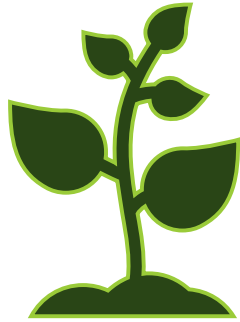
Youth summer camps. Teen apprenticeship programs. Master Gardener Program.



### Cooking

For the home cook and the aspiring pre-professional.





# A New Business Model

A public private partnership will operate Mitchell Park and the Domes and provide its programs and services.

# Business Model

The business model demonstrates capacity for success in capital redevelopment and sustainable operations



## **Milwaukee County Parks**

Ensuring access for all,  
operating the  
horticultural gardens.



## **Mitchell Park and Domes Conservancy**

A new expert nonprofit  
program and fund  
development governance  
non-profit with  
enterprise subsidiaries  
and Friends.



## **Partners**

Outstanding, proven  
Milwaukee partners  
providing learning,  
medical, research  
programs: teens, degree  
programs, life-long  
learning.



## **Subsidiaries**

Workforce development  
in horticulture, culinary  
arts, retail, health, events  
and construction. Up to  
300 jobs in full capacity.

# Tax Credits and Opportunity Zone Investment



## \$26 M

- Assumes \$7 million invested via Historic Tax Credits. This goes directly toward rehabilitation of the historic Domes.
- Assumes \$15 million in New Market Tax Credits. Twenty one percent (21%) of this remains as working capital; the balance of \$11.85 million is a loan repaid from enterprise subsidiary revenues at the end of seven years.
- Assumes \$5 million in PACE Energy Tax Credits.



## \$12 M

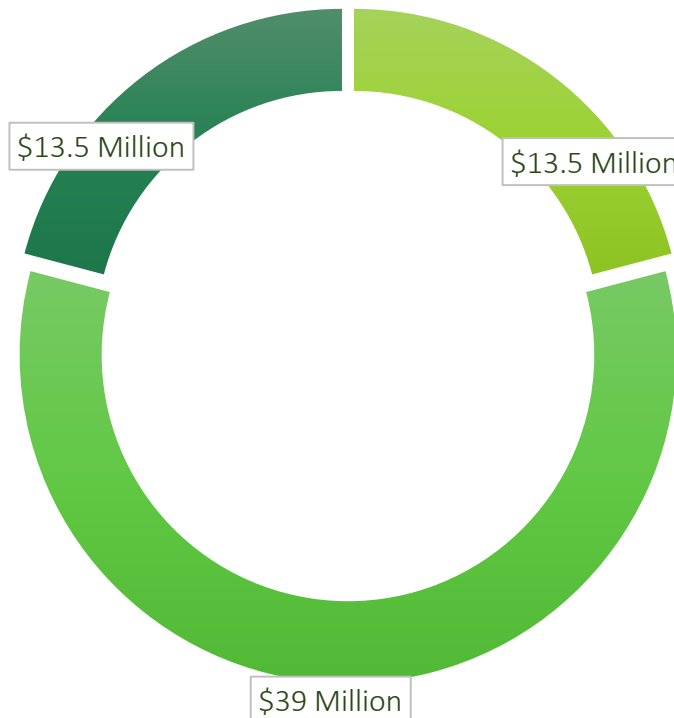
- The Mitchell Park and Domes Opportunity Zone Fund offers investor partners opportunity to build the Park's capacity as a major economic redevelopment hub for the Clarke Square neighborhood.



# Capital Funding Plan: \$66 million for the Next 50 Years

## Private Sector Campaign

\$13.5 million goal for major donor recognition and supporting gifts.



## Milwaukee County

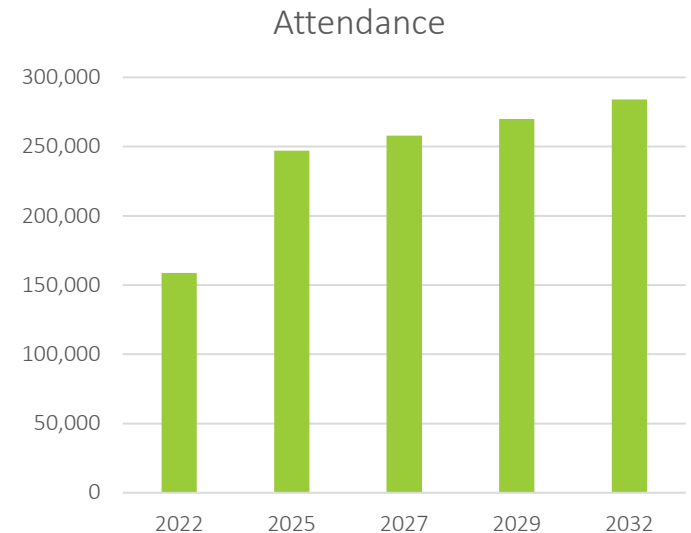
\$13.5 Million. A million less than tearing down the Domes. Only 21% of the total.

Tax Credits and  
Opportunity Zone  
Investment  
58% of the total project.

# Traction

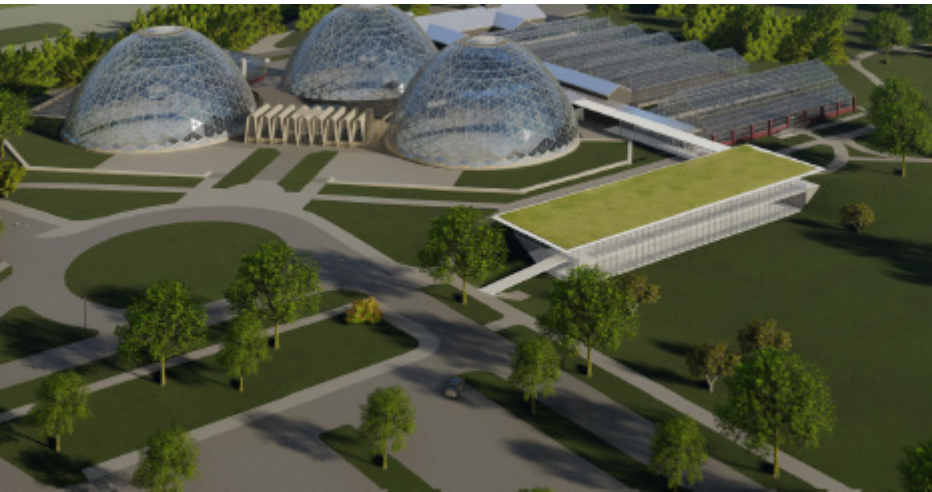
Forecasting for success

	Admissions and Related Direct Revenue	Subsidiary and Partnership Revenue	Conservancy Revenue**	Milwaukee County Parks Annual Line Item Support	Total Revenues*
2022	\$1.2 M	\$615 K	\$1.27 M	\$350 K	\$3.435 M
2025	\$2 M	\$1.01 M	\$1.825 M	\$250 K	\$5.08 M
2027	\$2.1 M	\$1.02 M	\$2.6 M	\$250 K	\$5.97 M
2029	\$2.2 M	\$1.13 M	\$2.38 M	\$250 K	\$5.96 M
2031	\$2.3 M	\$1.2 M	\$2.655 M	\$225 K	\$6.38 M



\*Revenue projections support payment of investment loans.

\*\*Conservancy revenue includes grants funds brought to it through its programs and partnerships, research and services as well as membership, admissions and annual campaigns.



# The Park that is the Heart of Milwaukee.

Mitchell Park and Domes Restored, Vibrant,  
Sustainable.

Milwaukee's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Urban Botanical Park, relevant, green, and vibrant, built for the next 50 years.

Freshly programmed and animated Domes, bringing the world of plants, their ecosystems and cultures to Milwaukee all featuring changing exhibits and programs.

New Welcome Center, retail, education and research hub.

Farm-to-table restaurant, new events Pavilion, food trucks, outdoor and indoor food service and family picnic spaces.

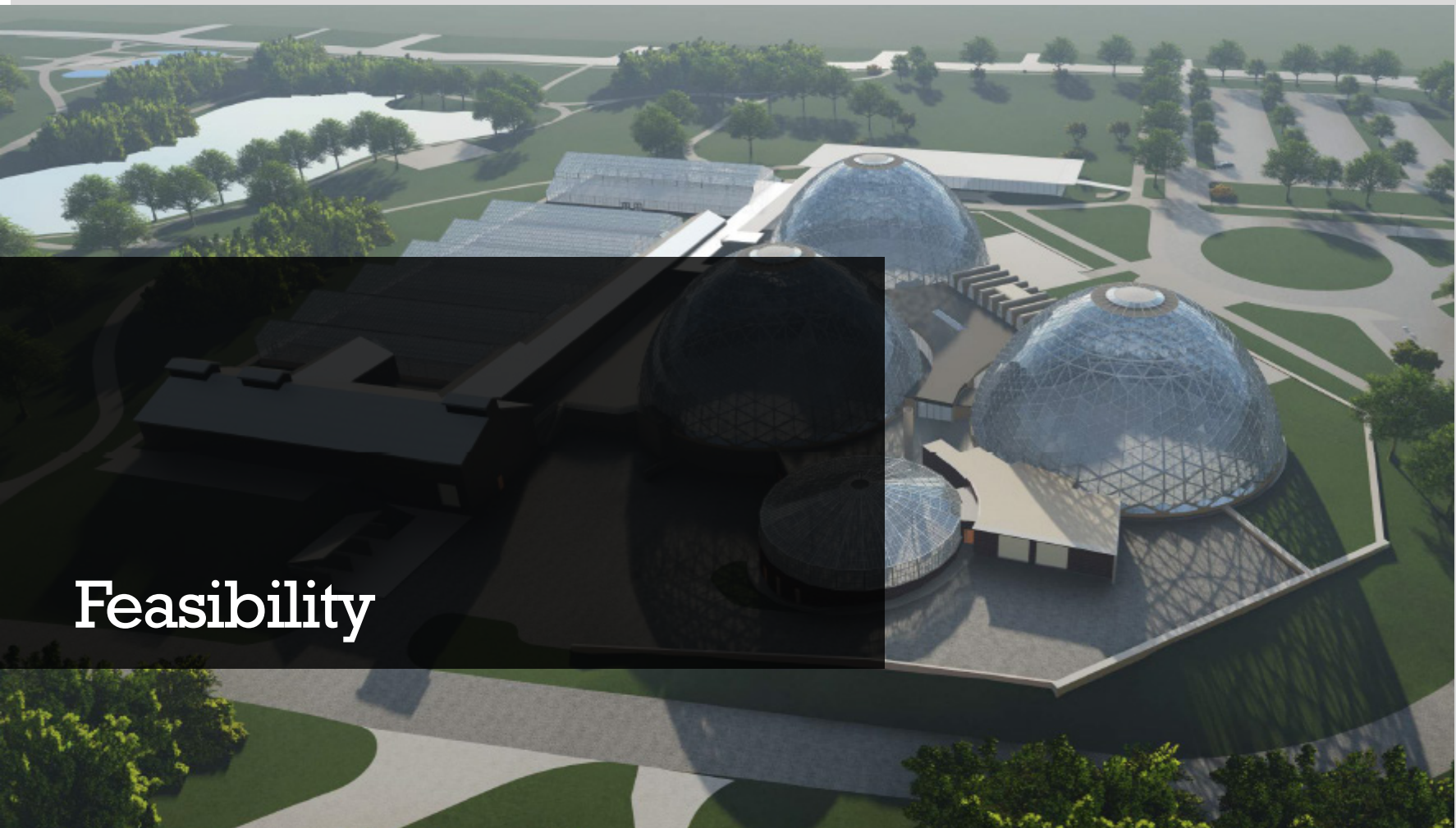
More pathways and access. Park-wide lighting. Improved amphitheater.

Clean and fresh pond, stream circulation, reflecting pool, water stewardship best practice.

Outdoor and indoor garden and learning: health, urban ag, hands-on and apprenticeship programs, certification, workforce development.

Economic engine for the Clarke Square neighborhood, sustainable economic model. Supporting 300 quality jobs and a hub for workforce development.





# Feasibility

The funding and financing strategy put forward in this plan is challenging. Given the current environment for bonding in Milwaukee County, the aggressive use of Historic Tax Credits, New Market Tax Credits, Opportunity Zone Investment and PACE, and the related aggressive timeline is a requirement, not an option, to restore the Domes and create a viable operating model for the Domes and Mitchell Park. If Milwaukee County could bond the full amount required, this approach would not be necessary: absent that there is no other financial capital model for feasibility. Our study of traditional prospective donors suggests that some will join in, but that there is skepticism of the County's will and capacity to complete this project and adopt this plan. The plan has addressed this by assuming a higher level of bridge loans to move the project toward completion, with major private sector contributions coming last. This model, while difficult, aligns with what other municipalities are doing to preserve and restore their public parks and assets – a public/private investment-based model reflective of 21<sup>st</sup> Century realities in asset preservation.

## Plan developed for Milwaukee County Parks Department.

With deep appreciation to the Domes Task Force that worked for three years to develop a vision and pathway forward for this iconic Milwaukee park, architecture, and plants collection.

William H. Lynch, Chair  
County Supervisor Jason Haas  
County Supervisor Sylvia Ortiz-Velez  
Ian Bautista  
Dr. Michele Bria  
John Gurda  
Roger Krawiecki  
Dawn McCarthy  
Rannell Washington  
Guy Smith, Director, Milwaukee County Parks  
Stu Carron, Director, Milwaukee County Facilities Management Division

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Julie Bastin  
Sarah Toomsen  
James Tarantino  
Gregory High

Plan developed by:

ArtsMarket, Inc., Bozeman, MT  
Engberg Anderson Architects, Milwaukee, WI  
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