

**Subject: RE: Milwaukee County Parks Contact Us**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

Thank you for contacting us.

Milwaukee County is moving forward on its plan to generate new, dedicated revenue for Milwaukee County Parks. Last November, as part of the 2018 County budget, the County Board of Supervisors voted 15-3 to approve a proposal from County Executive Chris Abele that would implement a Parks paid parking system and generate \$1.6 million in new, dedicated revenue for County Parks.

Milwaukee County Parks are visited millions of times every year, they're some of Milwaukee's most popular attractions for visiting tourists and help support hundreds of full-time and seasonal jobs. Every dollar that's spent at a park facility stays in the local community. It's true that Milwaukee acts as the economic engine for Wisconsin, but even though the County sends more and more dollars to the state every year, we get less and less back. The result is that in 2018, the dollars Parks will receive from property taxes are at their lowest in decades, and 36% less than in previous years. As well as finding creative ways to reduce spending, in recent years Parks has introduced innovative, new ways to bring in new revenue. The popular Traveling Beer Garden, the renovated South Shore Terrace Beer Garden and partnerships with events such as China Lights and the PHC Classic golf tournament have all helped parks generate more revenue, while also enhancing public park amenities. Our workforce has slimmed down too - Milwaukee County Parks now employs 60% fewer full-time employees than it did ten years ago. 217 full time Parks employees now manage the same footprint that more than 800 full staff did just years ago.

The lack of funding, together with rising costs of pension and healthcare obligations, means the County needs to find additional sources of revenue - or face up to \$1.6m in Parks service cuts this year. Cuts of that size could impact signature Parks facilities that our community needs and loves. Our goal, like yours, is to strengthen the park system and keep access open to the millions who enjoy the parks, trails, beaches, and facilities, which is why we support the implementation of a Parks paid parking system. We're inviting the community to help us support a thriving park system, by providing input as we create a plan for this dedicated funding source for Milwaukee County Parks.

A public input session will be held at the Mitchell Park Domes Annex on February 6 at 6pm to gain feedback on how the parking system should be implemented. Plans for the system have yet to be formalized but may include variable parking rates and free days. Additionally, parking will not be implemented in every Park, but rather be focused on regional and community Park facilities that have a regional draw.

Parks is grateful for community support and welcomes your feedback. Please reach out to your Milwaukee County Board Supervisor so that they too, are aware of your concerns. This link provides contact information for your specific County Supervisor: <http://county.milwaukee.gov/CountyBoard>.

We agree with the sentiment voiced by both the County Executive and Board that the only way to fix the County's challenges is to work together and collaborate on solutions. Together, we will work to find a way to deliver the best Parks programming possible within the constraints of the budget we are given.

It's a great day to be in the Parks!

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