

Milwaukee County Exec. Crowley: Announces 2022 recommended budget

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MILWAUKEE - Today, Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley presented his 2022 Recommended Budget to the County Board. The Recommended Budget continues the implementation of the first strategic plan in over 20 years for Milwaukee County, and takes even greater steps towards achieving the shared vision of achieving racial equity and by doing so becoming the healthiest county in the state.

“Given the persistent challenges over the last year, I’m proud to recommend a budget that continues to address dual, on-going pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism by moving resources upstream to address the root causes of racial health disparities,” said Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley. “The budget continues investments in families, public safety, mental health, housing, and the County workforce by addressing race and gender inequities in employee compensation. “

The 2022 Recommended Budget closes a budget gap of \$20 million with no major cuts to services our community depends on. The gap was closed by prioritizing fiscally responsible decisions, leveraging one-time pandemic relief funding, and asking departments to absorb the growing costs to continue delivering essential services.

However, looking ahead budget gaps will continue to persist because of a growing structural deficit as the cost of state-mandated services continues to rise. Right now, over 70 percent of our local tax dollars support state mandated services, and our options for increasing revenue are extremely limited and undesirable. These

state mandates are growing twice as fast as our ability to pay for them. Without change, by 2027, state mandates are projected to consume all of our local tax dollars, leaving no funding for local priorities.

Milwaukee County is continuing to build on the momentum generated by the Move Forward Milwaukee coalition, a partnership between the business community, state legislators, municipal governments, and community groups that advocates for allowing Milwaukee County to pursue a binding referendum for a 1 percent local option sales tax with property tax relief. The County needs a sustainable funding solution to support critical services for the long-term.

The budget builds on the investments made in the County's three strategic focus areas of Creating Intentional Inclusion, Bridging the Gap, and Investing in Equity, which were first introduced in the 2021 budget last year.

Intentional Inclusion

The 2022 Recommended Budget builds on previous efforts to increase representation, include more perspectives at the decision-making table, and equitably compensate individuals.

Milwaukee County is intentionally working to diversify its workforce at all levels of the organization so that County government reflects the full diversity of the community. Creating intentional inclusion also means building an inclusive workplace where the culture, values, and opinions of various groups are represented in the decision-making process. The 2022 Recommended Budget includes:

- The largest investment in employee compensation in over five years, with a proposed 2 percent across-the-board pay increase for County employees as of April 2022. In addition, an annualized investment of \$5 million is included to address disparities in pay by race and gender.
- Three new positions in the Department of Human Resources to support equity and inclusion across the entire organization. A new Training and Development Specialist will coordinate racial equity training countywide. A new Data Analytics Coordinator will establish and maintain workforce data, evaluate racial equity training effectiveness, and drive toward key performance indicators of equity. A new Diversity Recruiter will build relationships with outside organizations to develop diverse talent

pipelines and assist departments in developing recruitment plans. An additional \$60,000 is included to provide expand advertising efforts across the community.

- Three additional Park Maintenance Workers to leverage the successful Fresh Coast Fresh Start and Fresh Coast Ambassador programs, which connect underrepresented individuals to careers in green infrastructure maintenance.
- A new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility position at the Milwaukee County Zoo to ensure alignment with Association of Zoos & Aquariums standards and support intentional inclusion.

Bridging the Gap

The 2022 Recommended Budget prioritizes moving resources upstream to bridge the gap in health disparities that currently make Milwaukee one of the least healthy counties in Wisconsin. To advance this strategic focus area, Milwaukee County is designing an organization that puts our constituents first so that anyone can access County services in a way that meets their needs. The Recommended Budget includes:

- A new, cabinet-level department named Strategy, Budget & Performance to clearly connect strategy and budget functions. Staff of this department will also be responsible for developing key performance indicators to track progress toward closing racial disparities and becoming the healthiest county.
- An effort to expand the Office on African American Affairs into an Office of Equity. This change broadens the scope of the office in order to support County leaders and departments, increase accountability for achieving racial equity, and expand reach to communities impacted by health and racial inequities, including other communities of color, LGBTQ+ and people with varying abilities.
- A new Children, Youth, and Family Services Division which includes the former Division of Youth and Family Services as well as children's programs within the former Disabilities Services Division. Aligning these services reflects a shift away from outdated and ineffective corrections-based policies to preventative, rehabilitative, and community-based investments.
- Expanded investments in the Credible Messenger program, with an appropriation of \$1,250,000 for advocacy, mentoring, emotional first aid, community engagement and violence mediation for youth justice system-involved youth.
- Enhancing the Dine Out Pilot Program to reach more seniors who live in

underserved neighborhoods. The program is estimated to serve an additional 7,000 meals and offer cultural food items as well as cater to a broader range of dietary preferences.

- Two new positions to the Office of Emergency Management to track and analyze health data with a racial equity lens. Their work will provide information that will help identify needs among various populations and assist the County in developing a targeted strategy to address disparities.
- A partnership between the House of Correction and Department of Health and Human Services to provide housing navigation services for residents ahead of their transition back into the community. A new Community Intervention Specialist position will specifically support residents in securing housing and improving their chances of not recidivating once re-entering society. A new Human Services Worker position will help improve literacy, math, and life skills to help residents be successful once they are no longer in County care.
- An investment of \$225,000 for the Behavioral Health Division to continue Crisis Assessment Response Team expansion in collaboration with the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office and the Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management to respond to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.

Investing in Equity

The 2022 budget continues reimagining how Milwaukee County invests its resources to address the root causes of problems and eliminate barriers so residents can live successful, healthy, full lives. It includes:

- Major return on investment following the inaugural year of the Grants and Special Projects Division, established in 2021 with the goal of enhancing Milwaukee County's ability to compete in grant contests and implement projects. As of September 2021, the division's staff of three secured 11 awards totaling nearly \$18 million, with 20 projects pending notice of award. In 2022, the division aims secure at least \$15 million in competitive grant revenue to advance Milwaukee County's vision.
- A shift of Psychiatric Emergency Services to the new Mental Health Emergency Center. Inpatient services will transition to the new Granite Hills hospital operated by United Health Services in West Allis beginning this year with full transition anticipated by mid-2022.
- An investment of over \$30 million in federal funds by the Milwaukee County

Housing Division helped approximately 8,500 households facing housing insecurity due to the negative economic impacts of the pandemic. The 2022 budget continues to support the immediate economic stabilization for households to address the systemic economic challenges that have contributed to the inequal impact of the pandemic.

- Approximately \$2.7 million for Right to Counsel Milwaukee, a program which provides a right to free legal representation in evictions for eligible households beginning in September of 2021.
- More than \$15 million to replace the existing North Shop Highway Maintenance Facility. Originally built in 1928 without a women's restroom, this north side building will be reconstructed to include heated vehicle parking for trucks and other vehicles, administrative offices, locker rooms, a repair garage, and a truck wash facility.
- Continued investment in the East-West Bus Rapid Transit line and the delivery of 11 battery electric buses for the route. Additionally, 60 new clean diesel buses will be purchased to allow for maintaining continuity of service, good repair standards, and lowering future repair costs.
- A \$300,000 allocation to expand the use of body cameras in the Office of the Milwaukee County Sheriff.
- The reduction of phone call costs in the House of Corrections and Milwaukee County Jail by 25 percent, resulting in an estimated cumulative reduction of \$700,000 in revenue but helping to ensure residents can communicate with their support networks on the outside.
- A \$3.00 per hour premium pay increase for Correction Officer staff in the House of Correction, Milwaukee County Jail, and Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center. This item will be revisited in the future for 2023 and beyond. The premium pay increase aims to address pay competitiveness regionally and retention within Correction Officer positions to ensure adequate staffing levels to maintain the highest quality of service for those in County care.
- Salary adjustments to address pay equity issues for over 50 percent of the Human Service Workers within the Department of Health and Human Services.
- A \$100,000 investment in tree plantings to redevelop the tree canopy in Milwaukee County's urban parks, with support from the Weigel-Hearst Trust Fund.
- An allocation of \$40,000 to convene partners to address swim abilities and build a pipeline for trained lifeguards, with the goal of reducing drownings, supporting public water safety throughout the county.