



**Department of Administration
Budget and Management Division**

Tom Barrett
Mayor

Sharon Robinson
Administration Director

Dennis Yaccarino
Budget and Management Director

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MEMORANDUM

To: Aldermen Murphy
Chair, Finance and Personnel Committee

From: Dennis Yaccarino
Budget and Management Director

Subject: Social Equity

The City of Milwaukee budget priorities are important to its development. It is clear that the priority for 2021 budget is social equity.

Our office works directly with other departments that provide services either internally or to the public. We work with those departments to develop their budgets based on the priorities of the City and the department. Items addressing racial disparity are given priority. Fire Cadets and Police Aides are a high priority when it comes to funding. Those positions have been recognized for their diversification of the Fire and Police departments. This is just one example.

The 2021 budget will have a greater emphasis on social equity. The budget will include a new division in the Department of Administration that will focus on social equity issues. Among its responsibilities will be the development of social equity measures and working with departments to utilize the social equity measures to prioritize services.

Social equity measures will include a number of demographic measures in areas like income, education and economic opportunity. More specific measures will be developed where possible but the idea is City service will be analyzed on the basis of their impact on disparities reflected in the measures. Services will then be prioritized on their ability to reduce or eliminate social disparities. These priorities will be developed by the new division and become part of the budgeting process. The budget office will use these priorities as it relates to available funding.

Many social equity programs include a public engagement process that is linked to the budget. This not only includes resident participation in meetings, but also involvement through surveys and a budget simulation model. The public engagement program has begun with both the budget survey and budget simulation model being available to the public. Several virtual meetings have taken place that explain the input process and provide a short explanation of the budget. Time developing this program was short and limited by the impacts of COVID-19. The intent will be to restart the input process immediately after the 2021 budget is complete in November. This will be a continually evolving program that will see improvements as it moves forward.



Another priority will be addressing the disparity in mental health treatment. Currently, the Police are involved in response to mental illness related calls. Their training to deal with mental health issues is limited and they either leave the individual at the scene of the call or take them to a hospital. Other models are used in other communities that remove police as the responder. A non-police unit responds to non-criminal calls for service. The concept will allow individuals trained in the non-criminal types of calls to use their expertise to hopefully respond more effectively. Also, the intent is to link individuals needing services to those services immediately. It is the hope that this will reduce the number of persons revisiting the service and break the cycle of repeated pickups.

The Office of Violence Prevention will provide another alternative to the policing. Additional funding will expand the interrupter program to the Southside.

It is often difficult for mental health patients to navigate the mental health system, especially for those who are unable to afford medical insurance. The City Health Department's MKE Elevate strategic planning meetings with residents identified a need to focus more on mental health issues. The first goal of MKE Elevate is to improve access to mental health services.

Housing will be another key to addressing social equity issues. Resources will be provided to enhance the Housing Trust Fund and other agencies to further the creation of affordable housing, including new housing cooperatives, rehabilitation, and home ownership.

Funding will also be critical for services deemed essential; those ranging from garbage and recycling collection, street sweeping, snow and ice removal, street lighting to bulky waste collection. These are the services needed on a daily basis to prevent immediate deterioration in neighborhoods. The Department of Neighborhood Service and the Health Department are also key players in preserving the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

Prioritization of services is essential to the development of future budgets. A lack of growing revenues that do not keep pace with expenditure growth, and no additional assistance being provided from the Federal or State will force the City to look at service reductions. The City must continue its efforts to seek additional funding from the State and/or to seek legislation for residents to have the choice to create a local option tax. In the meantime, the City will need to prioritize the budget using social equity measures.

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