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MKEPLAYS

**Creating Play Environments:
Building Communities; Strengthening Neighborhoods**

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Executive Summary

MKE Plays

The MKE Plays initiative, conceived by Milwaukee Common Council President Michael Murphy, aims to transform 12 of the city's most deteriorated playgrounds into models for local collaboration and renovation.

The restoration of the City's playgrounds will bring much-needed improvement – both structural and intrinsic – to many of the city's poorest neighborhoods, and will create safe and attractive places for families to play. At a time when obesity is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and when close to 35% of Milwaukee high school students are either overweight or obese, the systematic and cooperative transformation of Milwaukee play areas cannot be underestimated.

Involving area residents in the restoration of community assets offers further benefits by providing opportunities for people to get to know one another and develop a sense of ownership in their community. The social capital needed to improve and maintain the MKE Plays neighborhoods is as much an asset as the required financial capital, and is more likely to overflow into additional community action.

Finally, in collaboration with Milwaukee Public Schools, MKE Plays will work to provide older youth with summer job opportunities as “play leaders,” trained to

help younger children engage in safe, organized, outdoor games and other play. The initiative – which in its initial stage will receive funding from the Zilber Foundation for the reconstruction of 2 playgrounds in the Layton Boulevard West Neighborhood and one in Lindsay Heights – will seek to accomplish this vision by:

- Matching private funds with public dollars.
- Offering various financing structure to inspire playground sponsorship.
- Involving community residents in the design and construction process.
- Encouraging the use of national demonstrated playground building models.
- Assess the impacts of program activities on the lives of beneficiary communities through transparent and methodical evaluations.

Having secured initial City funding through the Playground Challenge Fund, President Murphy has begun soliciting foundation and corporate support, and now seeks to develop the formal framework through which MKE Plays will work. This document is the manifestation of years of formal and informal efforts to improve city playgrounds, and it is intended to be the starting point for a new paradigm in their improvement, management and success.

Introduction

The MKE Plays Vision

We envision a city with play areas whose condition is not determined by the zip code or district they are in, but rather are equally equipped to inspire a child's imagination regardless of where they are located in the city of Milwaukee.

Children in non-white, low-income neighborhoods suffer from higher rates of asthma, are more likely to face risks of lead poisoning and are exposed to more violence and crime than most middle-class neighborhoods. In general, children in disadvantaged areas are not afforded the opportunities and infrastructure that many communities take for granted.

It is in these areas that MKE Plays may be most effective in helping children better overcome adversity and more fully realize their potential. The MKE Plays vision is based on the premise that equal access to resources leads to healthier communities and improved social outcomes. According to a 2014 press release on President Obama's Promise Zone initiative, for instance:

A child's zip code should never determine her destiny; but today, the neighborhood she grows up in impacts her odds of graduating high school, her health outcomes, and her lifetime economic opportunities...It will take a collaborative effort — between private business and federal, state, and local officials; faith-based and non-profit organizations; and striving kids and parents—to ensure that hard work leads to a decent living for every American in every community.





Theories of Change

Between February 2015 and October 2018, the MKE Plays initiatives will, through a community-based approach, seek to reconstruct 12 of the City's playgrounds. The initiative will not only seek to create opportunities for children to play, but will also provide spaces where neighbors can interact, have cultural exchanges and actively contribute to their community.

Grounded in the community and guided by the leadership of an ad hoc board, each playground reconstruction will exemplify the collaboration between public, private and non-profit partners, and will strive to realize the following "theories of change":

- By reconstructing play space to suit local needs, we will enhance the local play experience and increase the incentive for children to spend more time playing outdoors.
- By incorporating neighborhood input in local playground design, we will encourage community-building activities that will improve overall neighborhood collaboration and sustainability of park maintenance and use.
- By enhancing the physical/geographic space where children play and communities socialize, we will uplift how communities view themselves and their surroundings.

Play space is essential for children's physical, social, educational and emotional development, so much so that the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights has recognized play as a right to every child.

The design, development, maintenance and renovation of play space may also be an important component of even broader goals, such as:

- **Community building:**
Actions that increase the capacity of a neighborhood to identify needed changes, to be involved in those changes and to sustain positive revitalization.
- **Placemaking:**
The transformation of public places as a means of attracting people and revitalizing a previously underutilized community asset.
- **Environmental justice:**
Fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, income, and national origin—in the development of and access to quality outdoor recreation spaces.

The MKE Plays Framework

WHAT? Transforming Play Space in Milwaukee

Creating opportunities for children to play and providing space where neighbors can connect is a civic responsibility. Unfortunately, due to financial restraints, the City of Milwaukee is unable to meet the city's playground reconstruction demand, resulting in much of the city's playground infrastructure in the inner city deteriorating and in dire need of replacement.

Reconstructing playgrounds is a significant policy interest for the City of Milwaukee. For instance, according to a 2011 research brief by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), "[Along with neighborhood sidewalks and bike paths, safe routes to and from school, and physical education and recess in school, playgrounds play an important role in supporting physical activity for younger children. Playgrounds are one of the few places specifically intended for use by children...](#)"

Given the importance of playgrounds, we are reaching out to private and non-profit partners throughout the city to join us in accelerating the reconstruction of twelve parks geographically dispersed throughout the city [see Figure 2, page 19]. Without the financial support of our corporate and non-profit neighbors, reconstruction of these parks will not be complete for many years to come.

Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood.

-Fred Rogers, American children's television host

The MKE Plays Framework

WHY? The Importance of Play

Research shows that play space is essential for children’s physical, social, emotional and educational development.¹ As the Association for Childhood Education International notes:

Theorists, regardless of their orientation, concur that play occupies a central role in children's lives. They also suggest that the absence of play is an obstacle to the development of healthy and creative individuals. Psychoanalysts believe that play is necessary for mastering emotional traumas or disturbances; psychosocialists believe it is necessary for ego mastery and learning to live with everyday experiences; constructivists believe it is necessary for cognitive growth; maturationists believe it is necessary for competence building and for socializing functions in all cultures of the world; and neuroscientists believe it is necessary for emotional and physical health, motivation, and love of learning.²

Moreover, by providing public space where residents can interact and share experiences, we actively contribute to community building. As noted by KaBoom!, “children playing outside—in spaces dedicated for play or not—signify a vibrant, healthy community.” Indeed, the absence of play has been associated with various negative consequences, including an increase in child obesity, various mental conditions, as well as a decrease in necessary social skills.



¹ <http://kaboom.org/>

² <http://www.imaginationplayground.com/learning-library/learning-library-free-play.html>

The MKE Plays Framework

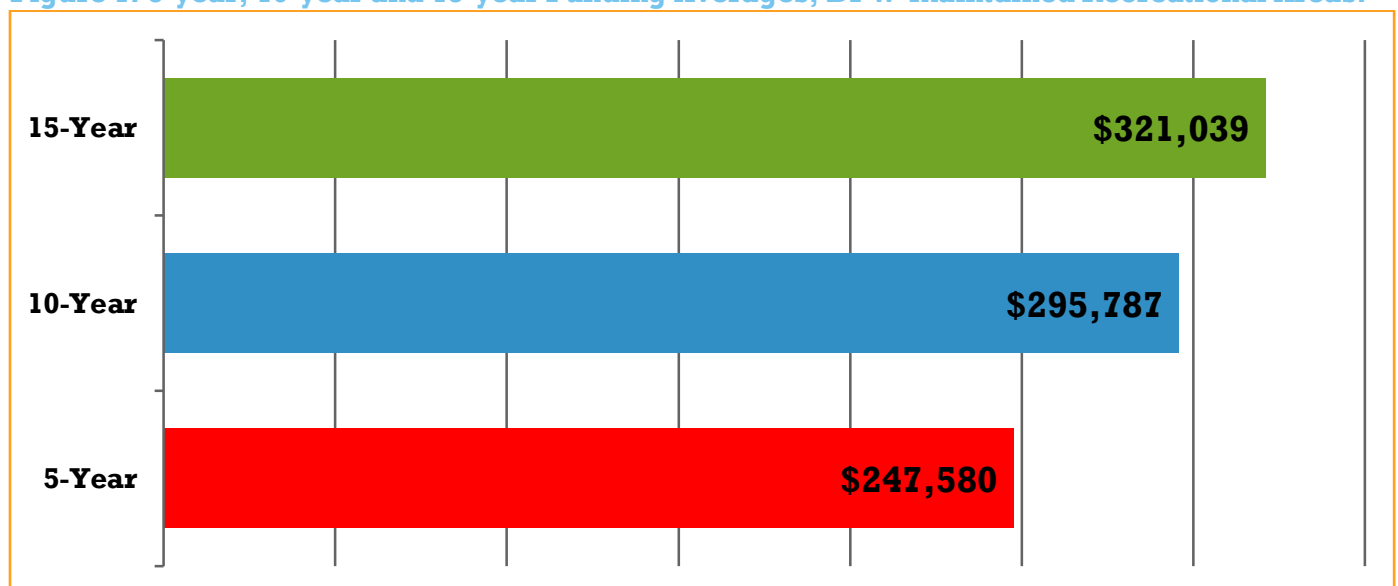
WHY? Decreasing Financial Resources

The Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains nearly 100 playgrounds, play areas, passive areas and playfields across the city. Historically, funding for Milwaukee's recreational facilities has come from various sources, including private donors, community development agencies and various state and federal programs, with nearly half these funds coming from City sources. Funding from all sources has been trending downward since at least 2000. For instance, 5-year, 10-year and 15-year funding averages \$257,228, \$305,759, and \$331,706, respectively [see figure 1, below]. Additional figures relating to historical funding are provided in the appendix.

These numbers have material implications—they equate to decreasing quality of playgrounds in our city, which impacts the amount of time children spend playing and socially interacting with their peers. Considering the socioeconomic disparities which already exist in Milwaukee's inner city, if the quality of playgrounds is indeed positively correlated with improved socioeconomic outcomes, the City and its partners have a compelling interest in assuring that adequate play conditions exist for at-risk children.

In fact, as the maps in the appendix illustrate, many of the parks most in need of rehabilitation are located in some of the city's most impoverished neighborhoods.

Figure 1. 5-year, 10-year and 15-year Funding Averages, DPW-maintained Recreational Areas.*



*15-year period from 2001-2015, 10-year period from 2006-2015 and 5-year period from 2011-2015



To put this challenge in perspective, according to a recent (2012) assessment of playground conditions, the replacement value of all playgrounds—some of which were constructed as far back as 1930 (DeBack Playground)—exceeds \$19 million [see Table 1, page 17]. The DPW’s current replacement and installation capacity is about 6 playgrounds per year.

Not all parks, however, require current reconstruction. The cost estimates in Table 1 are determined based on traditional playground infrastructure and take into consideration multiple factors including land, infrastructure, and play equipment. With maintenance needs and reconstruction costs exceeding available resources year after year, however, the deterioration of play equipment and space continues to accelerate.

Work consists of whatever a body is obligated to do...Play consists of whatever a body is not obligated to do.

-Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

The MIKE Plays Framework

HOW? Approaches to Play Innovation

Many approaches can be taken to reconstruct and revitalize deteriorated city play areas. Over the past decade cities across the country have taken creative approaches to play, from expanding opportunities to incorporate natural elements into play spaces, to incorporating musical instruments into play design. Below is a description of a few recent trends based on preliminary research of innovative playground designs.



Traditional

The traditional framework for city park reconstruction does not include community input. Rather, it depends on the DPW determining the need for a particular area, ordering traditional equipment (slides, swing sets, etc.) and completing the installation. This approach is not unlike the approach of other major U.S. cities. According to the RWJF, however, “taking steps to include the public in the planning, design, development and maintenance of playgrounds can help improve playground design and reduce long term maintenance needs. Local governments and providers should try to use open processes and encourage public participation whenever possible.”

KaBoom!

KaBoom! is a non-profit that takes a community approach to building playgrounds across the United States. While children are the main beneficiaries of playgrounds, KaBoom!’s philosophy is that creating the space for children to play involves an entire community. As such, community members and children are involved in the process from the onset—they help set the building priorities, map assets, vote on designs, fundraise, and ultimately help repair or replace some of the equipment.

The KaBoom! model is based on their belief that by convening people around a common cause and articulating achievable goals, a community will be enriched and grow by increasing collective courage and leadership.³ The community building aspect of this model and the incorporation of child engagement in the equipment design makes this model unique and sustainable. In addition, many KaBoom! playgrounds incorporate Imagination Playground designs [described on page 12].

In Milwaukee, a total of four KaBoom! playgrounds have been built, two on City of Milwaukee sites. All have been described as great successes and enhancements by the local communities, as well as by the DPW staff.



³ KaBoom!: Building Communities One Playground at a Time, Final Evaluation Report. http://media.kaboom.org/docs/documents/pdf/ABCD_Executive_Summary_2008.pdf

Imagination Playgrounds [New York]

As its name implies, Imagination Playgrounds (IP) are a recent trend to design innovative playgrounds that inspire the use of imagination in children. The first IP was designed by New York architect David Rockwell, who explains that an IP is meant to be “**interactive, transformable space that prompts children to manipulate their environment and create a play space of their own with sand, water, and loose parts. With giant foam blocks, mats wagons, fabric, and crates at their fingertips, children have the potential to build and explore endless possibilities.**”⁴ Essentially, IP create unstructured space where children are challenged to use both their sensory and motor skills as well as cognitive abilities by playing with loose materials.

Because IP come in a large storage box on wheels, they can be easily transported to different play areas across the city. In New York, IP have been taken to every borough and - in some parks - artists, architects and engineers have incorporated them into uniquely themed play areas that are often inspired and designed by the area’s history. While Rockwell’s Burling Slip is the best-known IP, other IP include themes of ships, Japanese inspired landscape, pyramids with secret passages, and tree house inspired playgrounds, among others.⁵



⁴ <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/imagination-playground>

⁵ <http://online.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324520904578549622466074216>

Natural Playscapes

According to 2012 research completed at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, “children who play on playgrounds that incorporate natural elements like logs and flowers tend to be more active than those who play on traditional playgrounds with metal and brightly colored equipment.”⁶ Considering the growing rates of obesity and other ailments related to decreasing physical activity, constructing playgrounds around a design that incorporate natural elements—if they increase overall child physical activity—is essential. The following are a few examples.

Nature Explore Classrooms

One approach to natural playgrounds is the Nature Explore classrooms (NE). Created through a partnership between the Arbor Day Foundation and the Dimensions Education Research Foundation, NE are created in consultation with a design team (trained as landscape architects) that work with a local team to design nature-based play spaces unique to the local environment. The collaborative process consists of preliminary dialogues followed by a two day visit by a consultation group, in which the team assesses the outdoor site, develops a design unique to the environment, presents a concept plan and helps coordinate successful implementation.⁷

An example of a certified NE can be found in Milwaukee at the Brown Street Academy, a project of the Center for Resilient Cities.



⁶ <http://tntoday.utk.edu/2012/10/11/study-natural-playgrounds-beneficial-children/>

⁷ <https://www.natureexplore.org/design/>

Green Playgrounds

Innovative approaches to natural playscapes are emerging that not only create enjoyable play areas for children, but that address environmental issues. In New York, several playgrounds have been designed with, “rainwater capturing tools, including barrels, raised gardens, porous pavement, and underground storage layers,” to address wastewater problems.⁸ Moreover, to reduce the need for equipment maintenance, some companies like the Natural Playgrounds Company assist in manipulating topography to create play areas that are environmentally sustainable.

Outside of the United States many designs have emerged which recycle or repurpose materials. In the Netherlands, the Upcycled Wind Turbine Playground was designed from discarded rotor blades. In Japan, the Nishi Rokugo Park was almost wholly created from unwanted tires.

Freenotes Harmony Park

Based on the idea that the enjoyment of music is universal, Freenotes creates outdoor musical instruments for public spaces. Unique to the Harmony Parks approach is not only the added sensory element missing from traditional playgrounds, but also the creation of an environment that can be used across a broad spectrum of ages. As described by the company, “Playing music transcends all boundaries of age, ethnicity, gender, and physicality. With Freenotes...everyone can play!”⁹

Freenotes musical instrument can be purchased in a variety of packages, from basic trios to larger premium packages. Examples of Harmony Parks are scattered throughout the



⁸ <http://www.inhabitots.com/6-of-the-worlds-coolest-green-playgrounds/nyc-rainwater-playgrounds-1/>

⁹ <http://freenotesharmony.com/>

United States. The first installation was in Moab, Utah in 1995 and remains today. Others can be found in Minnesota, Idaho, Arizona and Maryland. Noteworthy, the Executive Director of the Sensory Processing Disorder Foundation in Colorado stated that the instruments were a wonderful addition to a sensory playground. When used for therapy purposes, they found that the instruments “help the children implement rhythms, which can help calm them.”¹⁰

DESIGNING BEYOND TRADITIONAL

KaBoom!

Imagination Playgrounds

Naturescapes

Harmony Parks



¹⁰ <http://freenotesharmoniypark.com/>

The MIKE Plays Framework

WHEN? Operationalizing a Play Strategy

Having seen the impact of play in inner city neighborhoods, in 2013 Alderman Michael Murphy worked to create a Playground Challenge Fund to provide matching city funds for privately raised dollars for use in playground improvement projects. The account received \$100,000 and \$60,000 of funding in 2013 and 2014 respectively. While this account represents a success and a step in the right direction for the city's children, more work is required to meet current renovation demand, as is evident in Table 1 on page 17.

For instance, a recent Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article¹¹ detailed the conditions of the Marcus DeBack Playground 20 years after its naming. The article was contextualized around the theme of a child's forgotten legacy bounded by reprehensible violence in a space designated as safe for play. The article alludes to broader questions about public goods: during economic downturns, what public spaces and community members are most crowded out? In this case, children risk becoming even more disadvantaged as the spaces in their neighborhoods are unintentionally neglected.

This trend must be reversed. Milwaukee's kids deserve the right to play, and Milwaukee neighborhoods deserve community projects which uplift both geographic space and intrinsic self-perceptions.



¹¹ <http://www.jsonline.com/news/crime/a-child-slain-a-community-in-mourning--rewind-and-repeat-b99340069z1-273683891.html>

Table 1. Current Replacement Value (CRV) for Recreational Facilities, December 1, 2012.

Site	CRV 2013	Site	CRV 2013
1st & Hadley Passive Area	\$22,265	65th & Medford Passive Area	\$85,050
1st & Wright Play Area	\$170,219	65th & Stevenson Passive Area	\$60,011
4th & Mineral Play Area	\$77,499	66th & Port Play Area	\$790,404
5th & Randolph Play Area	\$89,302	67th & Spokane Play Area	\$1,360,476
12th & Wright Play Area	\$367,638	78th & Fiebrantz Play Area	\$514,879
13th & Lapham Play Area	\$89,379	84th & Burbank Play Area	\$409,747
16th & Edgerton Play Area	\$294,032	84th & Florist Play Area	\$185,272
16th & Hopkins Play Area	\$51,449	90th & Bender Play Area	\$248,464
17th & Vine Play Area	\$176,627	97th & Thurston Play Area	\$675,820
18th & Washington Play Area	\$73,301	Allis & Lincoln Play Area	\$294,513
20th & Olive Play Area	\$274,749	Arlington Heights Park	\$116,660
21st & Keefe Play Area	\$67,182	Arrow & Comstock Play Area	\$70,414
21st & Rogers Play Area	\$76,999	Bay & Lincoln Play Area	\$26,612
26th & Medford Play Area	\$141,407	Buffum & Center Play Area	\$97,385
29th & Meinecke Play Area	\$59,783	Butterfly Park	\$379,937
29th & Melvina Play Area	\$323,870	Darien & Kiley Play Area	\$695,655
30th & Cawker Play Area	\$170,171	DeBack Park	\$279,976
30th & Fardale Passive Area	\$1,437,073	Ellen Park	\$1,333,863
30th & Galena Play Area	\$109,207	Hartung Park	\$1,650,000
31st & Lloyd Play Area	\$60,788	Kaszube Park	\$26,268
34th & Mt. Vernon Play Area	\$76,102	Keefe & Palmer Play Area	\$104,384
35th & Lincoln Passive Area	\$61,637	Long Isl& & Custer Play Area	\$56,096
36th & Rogers Play Area	\$919,843	Paliafito Park	\$145,238
Foundation Park	\$100,684	Reiske Park	\$328,802
40th & Douglas Play Area	\$694,676	Reservoir Park	\$408,959
45th & Keefe Play Area	\$331,278	Riverbend Park	\$326,924
49th & Juneau Play Area	\$125,743	Snails Crossing Park	\$388,147
51st & Stack Play Area	\$400,136	Teutonia & Fairmount Passive Area	\$95,881
62nd & Kaul Play Area	\$319,734	Trowbridge Square	\$150,218
63rd & Cleveland Passive Area	\$85,224	Witkowiak Park	\$424,272
64th & Adler Play Area	\$40,636	Zillman Park	\$182,696
CRV of All of Play Areas:			\$19,201,656

Facility Conditions and Expected Reconstruction Year

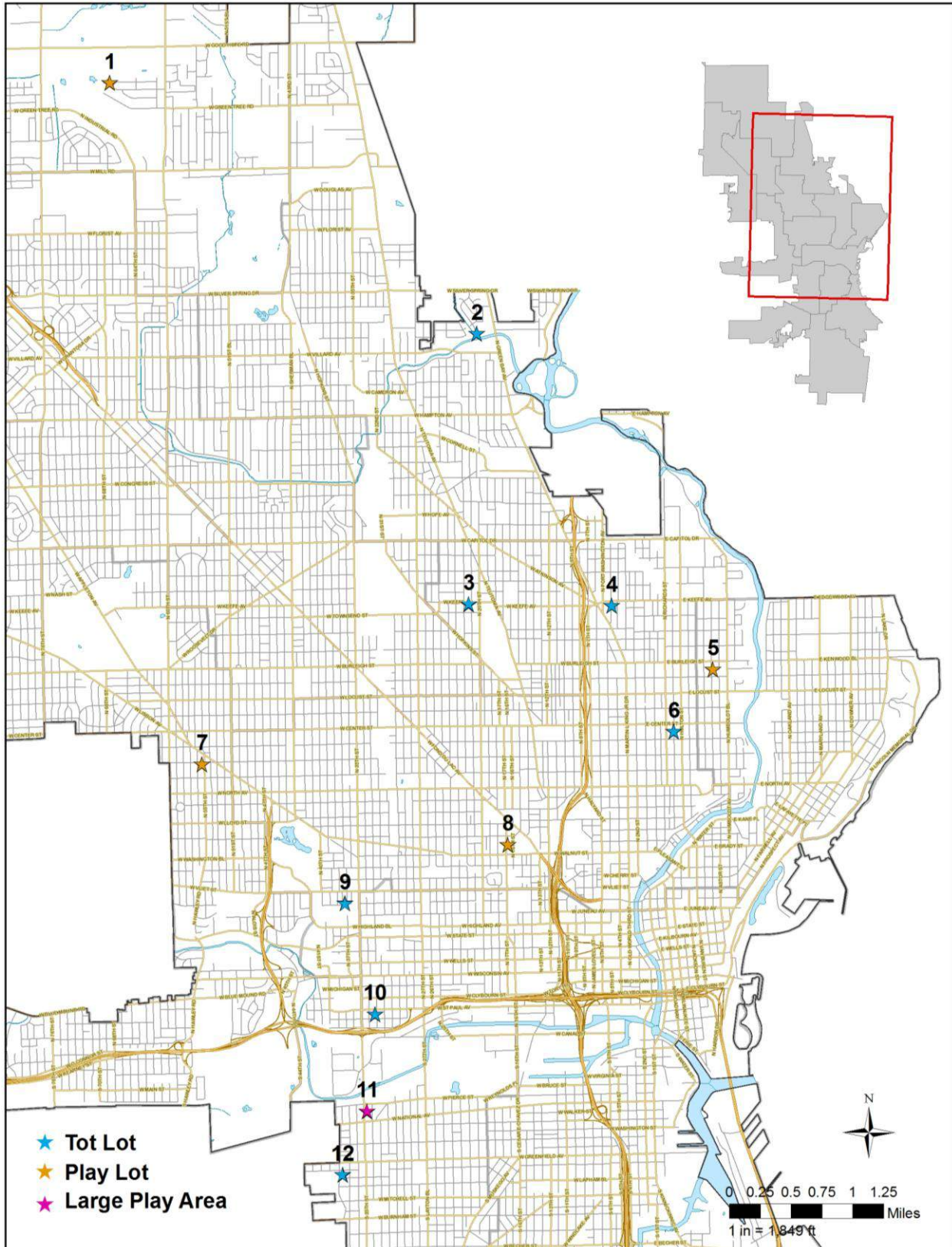
As with every project dependent on limited financial resources, evaluations must be completed to determine where to target resources. For city parks, the DPW performs a comprehensive process to evaluate and score facility conditions based on a number of factors, including: landscaping, surfaces, asphalt, infrastructure, play equipment and ADA compliances. The last citywide evaluation resulted in the following parks receiving the worst condition ratings:

Table 2. Reconstruction Cost Estimates, Targeted Parks and Play Areas.

Map #	Site	Years Since Rehab	Traditional Reconstruction Costs*					All Years
			2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
1	67th & Spokane	19	\$90,000	\$90,000				\$180,000
2	Long Island & Custer	19		\$75,000				\$75,000
3	21st & Keefe	19				\$95,000		\$95,000
4	5th & Randolph	19			\$78,000			\$78,000
5	Snails Crossing	11				\$95,000		\$95,000
6	Buffum & Center	19			\$95,000			\$95,000
7	DeBack Park	19		\$110,000				\$110,000
8	17th & Vine	20	\$75,000	\$75,000				\$150,000
9	Foundation Park	12	\$75,000	\$10,720	\$29,606			\$115,326
10	34th & Mt. Vernon	19					\$95,000	\$95,000
11	Arlington Heights	19				\$90,000		\$90,000
12	Trowbridge Square	19			\$90,000			\$90,000
	Average	17.8	\$80,000	\$72,144	\$73,152	\$93,333	\$95,000	\$105,694
	Total	--	\$240,000	\$360,720	\$292,606	\$280,000	\$95,000	\$1,268,326

*Cost estimates DO NOT include innovative equipment or design beyond traditional infrastructure. These figures reflect roughly a 1:1 replacement of what currently exists at the site. Given current budget constraints, these projects will not be completed until at least 2019, given current budget constraints.

Figure 2. Location of Targeted Parks and Play Areas (see Table 2 for park names).





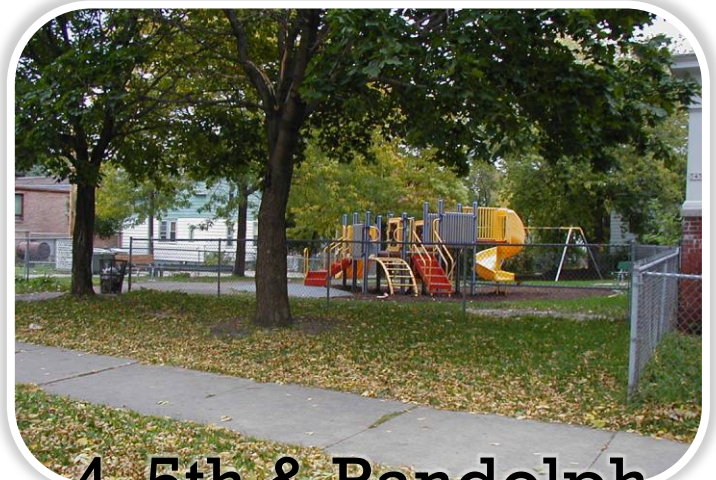
1. 67th & Spokane



2. Long Island & Custer



3. 21st & Keefe



4. 5th & Randolph



5. Snails Crossing



6. Buffum & Center



7. DeBack Park



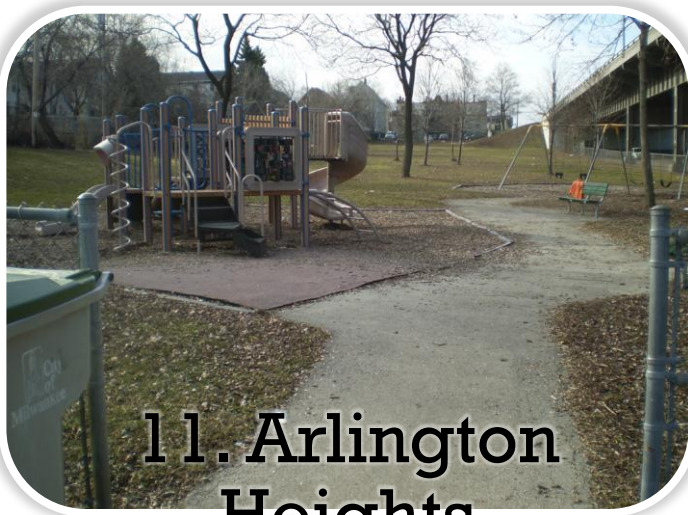
8. 17th & Vine



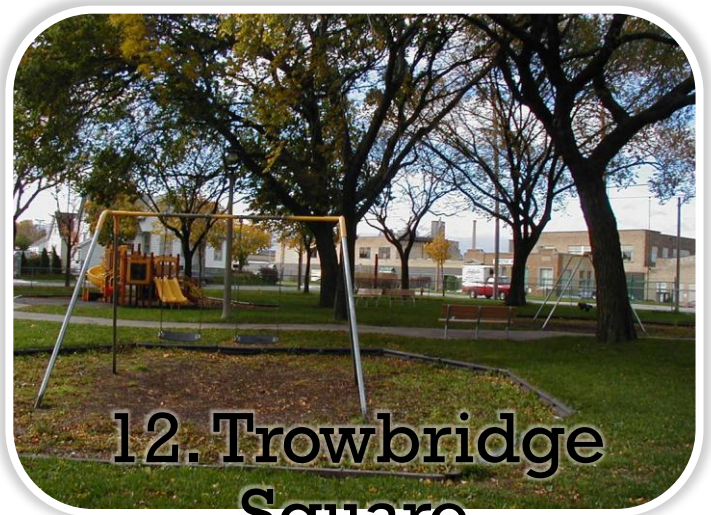
9. Foundation Park



10. 34th & Mt. Vernon



11. Arlington Heights



12. Trowbridge Square

Anticipated Reconstruction Costs

Although definitive amounts cannot be quantified prior to community involvement, by reviewing existing playground renderings by multiple vendors involved in innovative designs, we estimate incremental costs between 25-50% over traditional reconstruction estimates (25% minimum, 50% maximum increment, see Table 3, below, and Figure 2 on page 23).

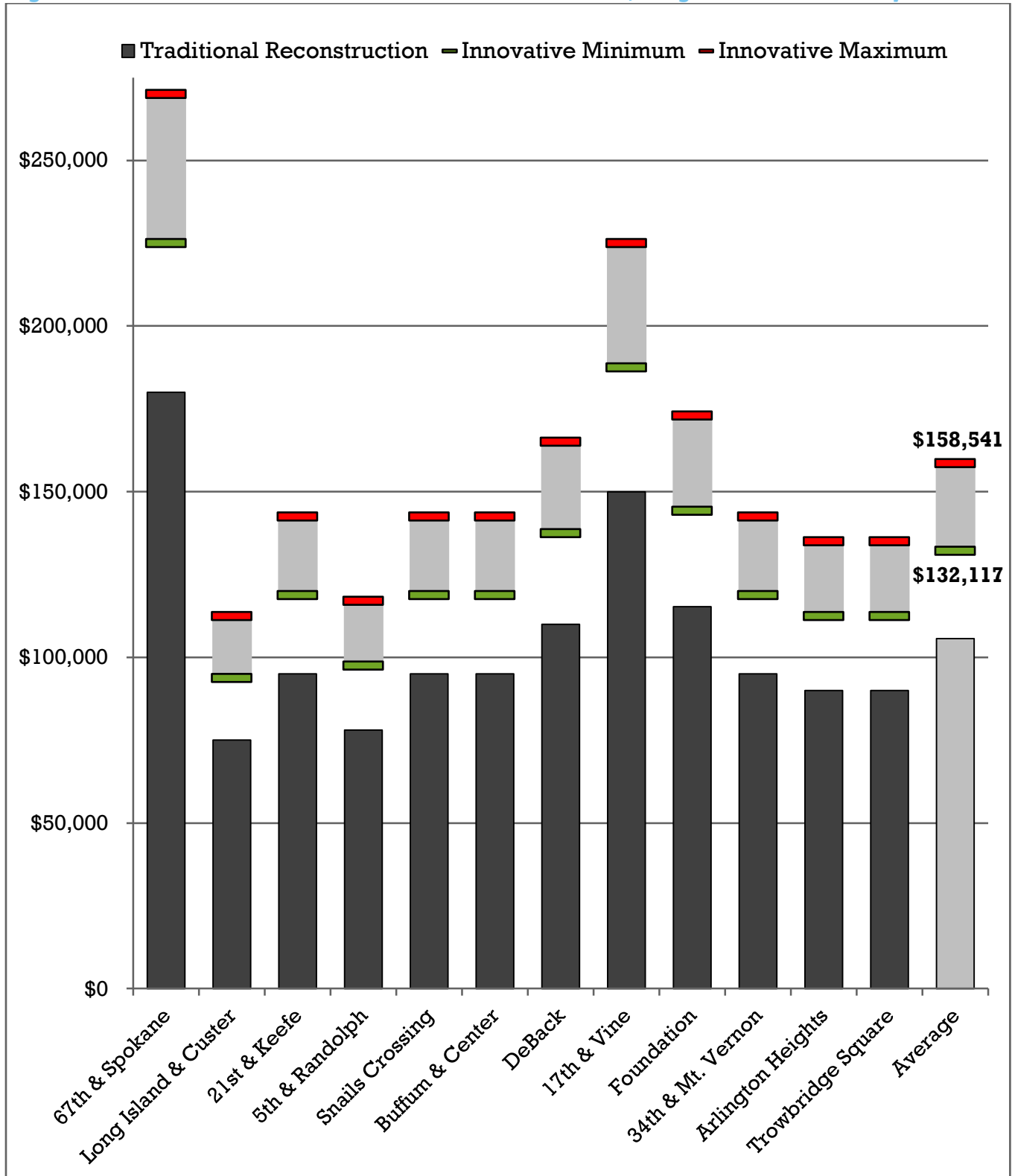
Table 3. Traditional and Innovative Reconstruction Costs, Targeted Parks and Play Areas.

Map #	Site	Traditional Reconstruction	Innovative Reconstruction - Minimum	Innovative Reconstruction - Maximum
1	67th & Spokane	\$180,000	\$225,000	\$270,000
2	Long Island & Custer	\$75,000	\$93,750	\$112,500
3	21st & Keefe	\$95,000	\$118,750	\$142,500
4	5th & Randolph	\$78,000	\$97,500	\$117,000
5	Snails Crossing	\$95,000	\$118,750	\$142,500
6	Buffum & Center	\$95,000	\$118,750	\$142,500
7	DeBack Park	\$110,000	\$137,500	\$165,000
8	17th & Vine	\$150,000	\$187,500	\$225,000
9	Foundation Park	\$115,326	\$144,158	\$172,989
10	34th & Mt. Vernon	\$95,000	\$118,750	\$142,500
11	Arlington Heights	\$90,000	\$112,500	\$135,000
12	Trowbridge Square	\$90,000	\$112,500	\$135,000
	Average	\$105,694	\$132,117	\$158,541
	Total	\$1,268,326	\$1,585,408	\$1,902,489

Play, while it cannot change the external realities of children's lives, can be a vehicle for children to explore and enjoy their differences and similarities and to create, even for a brief time, a more just world where everyone is an equal and valued participant.

- Patricia G. Ramsey, Contemporary American educational psychologist

Figure 2. Traditional and Innovative Reconstruction Costs, Targeted Parks and Play Areas.



Next Steps

Funding

Investing in public playgrounds is an investment in our city's children, our neighborhoods and the improved health of our city as a whole. To enhance the quality of life of our residents and the physical and mental health of our children, we aim to both accelerate the speed at which these projects are completed and incorporate innovative designs that spark children's imagination. However, although estimated reconstruction costs for 2015 projects alone (17th and Vine, Foundation Park, and 67th and Spokane) are approximately \$240,000, only \$165,000 worth of improvements will be provided for in the 2015 budget. If current trends are a predictor of future budgets, play space will likely see no increase, and perhaps a decrease, in budget allocation for 2016.

For this reason, we need help from our private and non-profit partners. Together we can create the financial capacity to make a positive social impact in many of Milwaukee's neighborhoods. This financial challenge can be approached from multiple angles.

Private Donations

One approach would be a traditional private donation to the City of Milwaukee specifically for playground enhancement and reconstruction. Private donations would require a Common Council resolution to accept funds and funnel dollars to the appropriate account. Additionally, a resolution would direct the DPW to undertake specific actions and order staff to report back to the council on its efforts.

Playground Improvement Challenge Fund

A second approach would be the existing Playground Challenge Fund, which was created in the 2013 Budget to “provide a dedicated funding source and demonstrate the City's commitment to providing recreational facilities for residents, neighbors and visitors” and to “provide a powerful incentive for community involvement and fund-raising activities.” Funds must be used solely for playground and recreational facility improvements.

MILWAUKEE CIVIC PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

The final and least traditional option would be the newly created Milwaukee Civic Partnership Initiative (MCPI), which aims to develop marketing partnerships to leverage the City's physical assets for additional revenue and improvement of public services. The MCPI's purpose is to generate non-tax revenue for City programs, departments and events to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships with private and non-profit sector partners for the generation of revenue, continuation of services and the general benefit of Milwaukee's

residents. The revitalization and enhancement of city playgrounds resulting in the strengthening of city neighborhoods easily fits into this model.

All MCPI agreements are subject to Common Council approval. Moreover, the MCPI will work to avoid any excess commercialization of public space and, if used for MKE Plays, will be especially sensitive to the over commercialization of public areas where children play. With this in mind, MCPI agreements may include the following:

- **Program partnership:** Sponsorship or partnership for a specific city event, program or asset.
- **Purchasing Partnership:** Any partnership that would include purchasing of commodities, materials, equipment or services for a substantial discount to the City.
- **Cost Share:** The ability for individuals, neighborhoods or companies to contribute to infrastructure improvements.
- **Naming Rights:** Partnerships that would grant naming rights to City assets or programs.

Ad Hoc Boards

Composition

Renovation of each park shall be led by an ad hoc board of 5 members consisting of:

- 4 members appointed by the Common Council President.
- The Commissioner of the Department of Public Works or the Commissioner's designee.

Stakeholders

As noted above, the traditional city parks playground model only requires city involvement through the Department of Public Works; outdoor recreational activities are typically operated by Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). While we realize there is a certain efficiency to limited outside involvement, the city aims to pursue a new, broadened community-based model parallel to that of KaBoom!. This collaborative framework is yet to be fully developed, as it is our intention to have various outside groups share in its formation. With the help of our partners and local community we hope to formulate an inclusive strategy which clearly defines actors, roles, and responsibilities. Rather than work from the top-down, a community-centered approach will allow the community to dictate the scope of work and individual capacities.

Evaluation

Assessments are critical to ensure that any plan is responsive to the needs of the target population and to measure the impacts of collective strategies and activities. Basic guidelines to assess plan goals and reinforce plan transparency must be developed in addition to further clarifying any metrics chosen.

In this endeavor, we believe it is important to incorporate an evaluation component to learn from one year's projects to the next if the goals set are being met. In particular, we want to hear from the community - in their own words - what the successes or weaknesses of our new approach have been. In this way, we hope to improve our approach as we move through reconstruction projects.

Methodology

Key informant interviews, both in the form of individual interviews and focus groups, are an excellent tool to assess the impacts of particular activities on the lives of beneficiary communities. The primary goal of MKE Plays is to increase play by enhancing play spaces and uplifting communities. To measure if that goal is achieved, qualitative data will be collected to measure the following objectives [More detailed objectives are provided in Table 4 in the appendix].

Improve Quantity/Quality of Play

- By reconstructing play space, we aim to increase the amount of time children spend playing and enhance their play experience.

Promote Neighborhood Collaboration

- By encouraging and supporting community-building activities that require neighborhood input and implementation, we aim to improve neighborhood collaboration and sustainability of park maintenance.

Enhance Public Space; Uplift Community Self-Perception

- By enhancing the physical/geographic space where children play and communities socialize, we aim to uplift how individuals and communities view themselves.

Design

The general design of the key informant interviews will require: identification of issues informants should address; creation of loosely structured survey questions that inform the City if objectives have been reached; identification of potential informants and mode of information gathering (interview or focus group); scheduling visits before and after projects; and analysis of data to inform of operational successes or weaknesses prior to preparations for the following year.

Analysis and Recommendations

After gathering responses, data will be recorded and analyzed to inform whether objectives were reached for the reconstruction year. Moreover, a summary of key findings with an explanation of challenges will be documented to identify areas for future improvement.

However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.

- Winston Churchill



Conclusion

The City of Milwaukee and its private and non-profit partners have a unique opportunity to transform play spaces in Milwaukee. For too many neighborhoods in the inner city, playgrounds have been neglected due to continuous budget constraints. This has resulted in the deterioration of play space, which consequently affects the quantity and quality of child play.

Despite the challenge, we aim to partner with our community to send a message to the children of Milwaukee that their play is important, that their space matters. To that end, we are reaching out to the community for collaboration and financial support. Let's go beyond traditional place making and create the opportunity where innovative play spaces can bloom.



Image Source: http://happymomhappyfamilybymoms.com/?attachment_id=143

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.

- George Bernard Shaw

Appendix

Table 4. MKE Plays Objectives, Indicators and Targets.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS	KEY RESULTS/TARGETS
<p>Objective 1: Improve Quantity/Quality of Play</p> <p><i>TOC 1: By reconstructing play space to suit local needs, we will enhance the local play experience and increase the incentive for children to spend more time playing outdoors.</i></p>	<p>1a. Physical Reconstruction of playgrounds complete by end of implementation period.</p> <p>1b. Neighborhood residents report an increase in frequency of time spent playing at the playground upon playground reconstruction completion.</p> <p>1c. Increase in the perceived quality of play at the playground.</p> <p>1d. Neighborhood residents report they are more likely to visit the park as a result of the playground reconstruction.</p>	<p>1a. Complete reconstruction of all 12 playgrounds within 3 years of program initiation.</p> <p>1b. Change in quantity of play. Our target is to increase time spent playing at the playground by 25%.</p> <p>1c. Change in quality of play. Our target is to increase the perceived quality of play for 100% of respondents.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Promote Neighborhood Collaboration</p> <p><i>TOC 2: By incorporating neighborhood input in local playground design, we will encourage community-building activities that will improve overall neighborhood collaboration and sustainability of park maintenance and use.</i></p>	<p>2a. Neighborhood representatives--both youth and adults--perceive a strengthened relationship among community members.</p> <p>2b. Neighborhood representatives and key stakeholders from neighborhood organizations participate in meetings dedicated to the playground design process</p> <p>2c. Neighborhood representatives and key stakeholders from neighborhood organizations participate in Build Day.</p> <p>2d. Neighborhood representatives and key stakeholders from neighborhood organizations participate in park clean-up day.</p> <p>2e. Neighborhood residents feel they have the communication and management tools to sustain park maintenance/usability.</p> <p>2f. Neighborhood residents report more frequent and diverse social interactions with neighbors as a result of activities related to the park reconstruction process.</p> <p>2g Neighborhood residents report benefits to increased social interaction with neighbors.</p>	<p>2a. Increase in % change in perceived strength of community relationships.</p> <p>2b-2d. Get participation from local residents--both youth and adults--throughout the park reconstruction process.</p> <p>2e. Increase in % change of local residents that feel they have increased capacity to affect positive change in their neighborhood.</p> <p>2f. Increase in % change of interactions among local residents.</p> <p>2g. Increase in % change of perceived benefits of social interactions</p>

Table 4. (Continued).

PRIMARY OBJECTIVES	<u>INDICATORS</u>	KEY RESULTS/TARGETS
<p>Objective 3: Enhance Public Space; Uplift Community Self-Perception</p> <p><i>TOC 3: By enhancing the physical/geographic space where children play and communities socialize, we will uplift how communities view themselves and their surroundings.</i></p>	<p>3a. Neighborhood residents report the playground appearance improved as a result of reconstruction.</p> <p>3b. Neighborhood residents report the neighborhood has been beautified as a result of the park reconstruction.</p> <p>3c. Neighborhood residents report that the park is a more inviting public space as a result of the park reconstruction.</p> <p>3d. Neighborhood residents report an increase in pride in their neighborhood.</p>	<p>3a. Increase perceived improvement in appearance of park by 100% of respondents.</p> <p>3b. % change increase (by 50%) in the number of residents that perceive the neighborhood as a whole has been beautified.</p> <p>3c. % change increase (by 50%) in the number of residents that perceive the park as more inviting public space.</p> <p>3d. % change increase (by 30%) of residents reporting increased pride in their neighborhood</p>

Figure 3. Budgeted Funding for Recreational Facilities, 2000-2015.

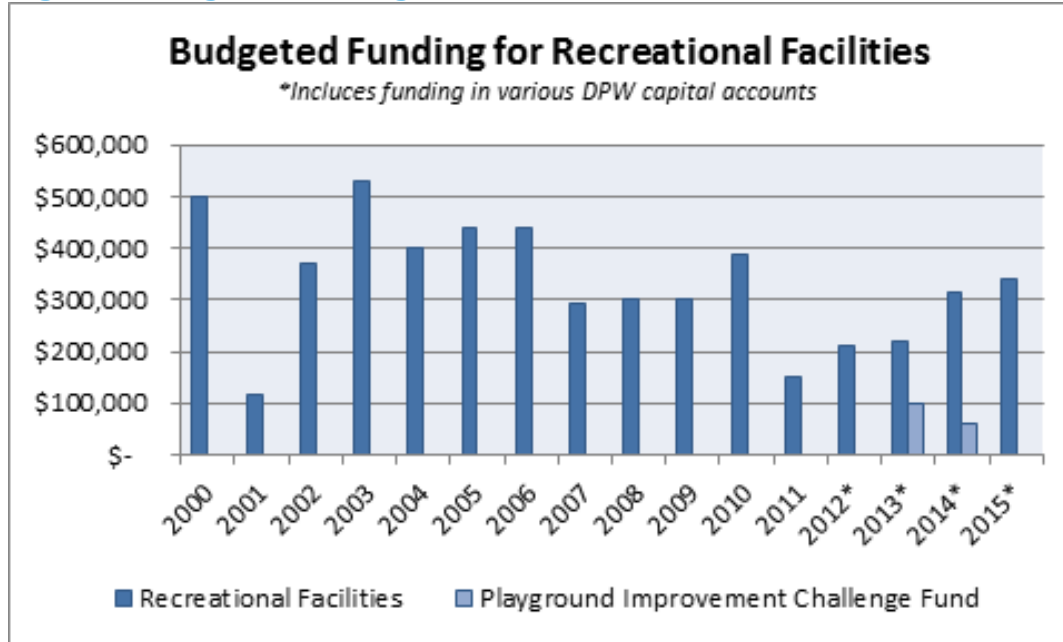
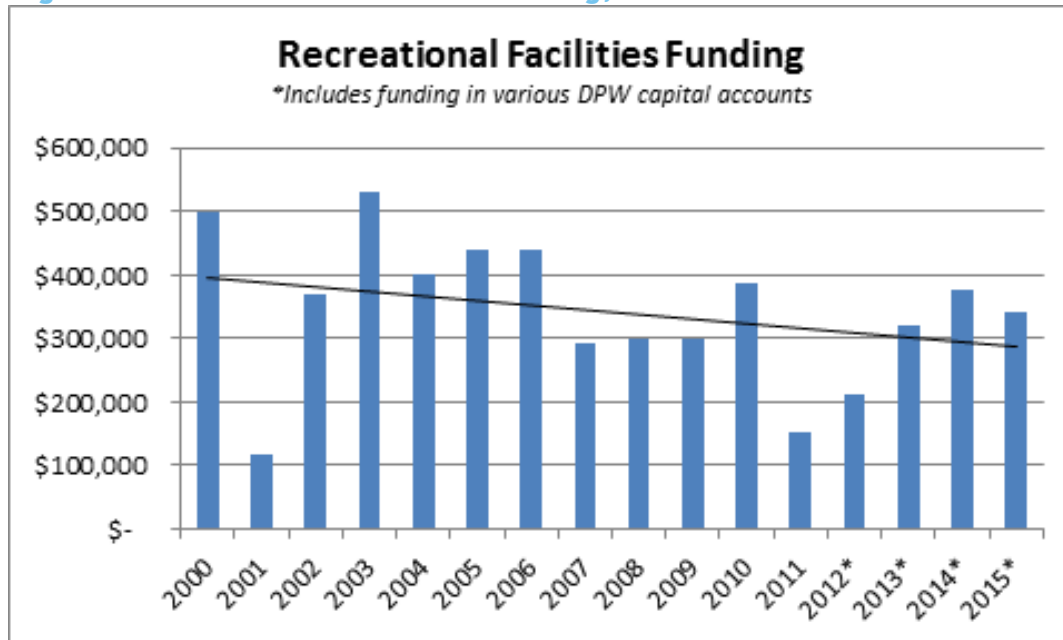
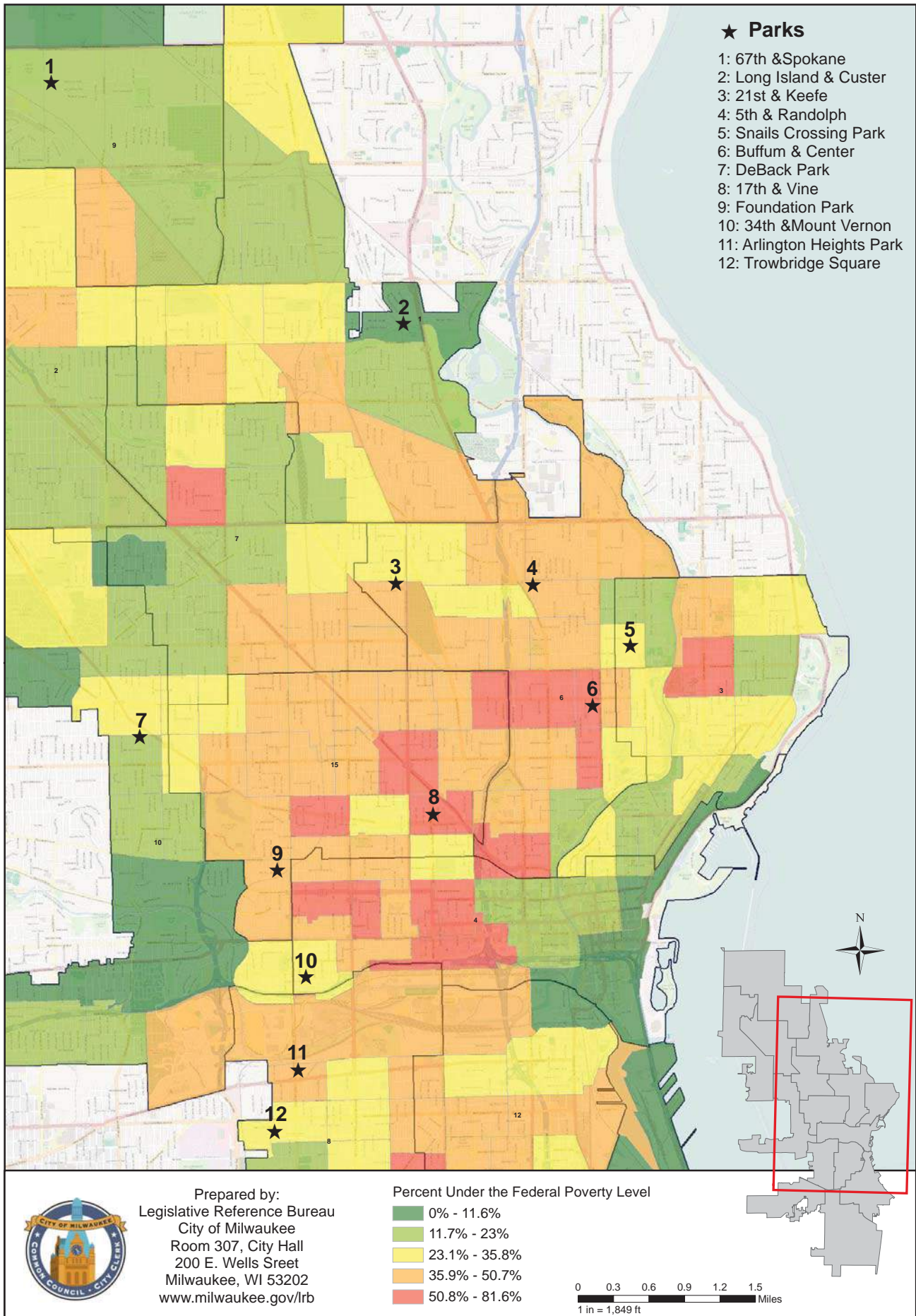


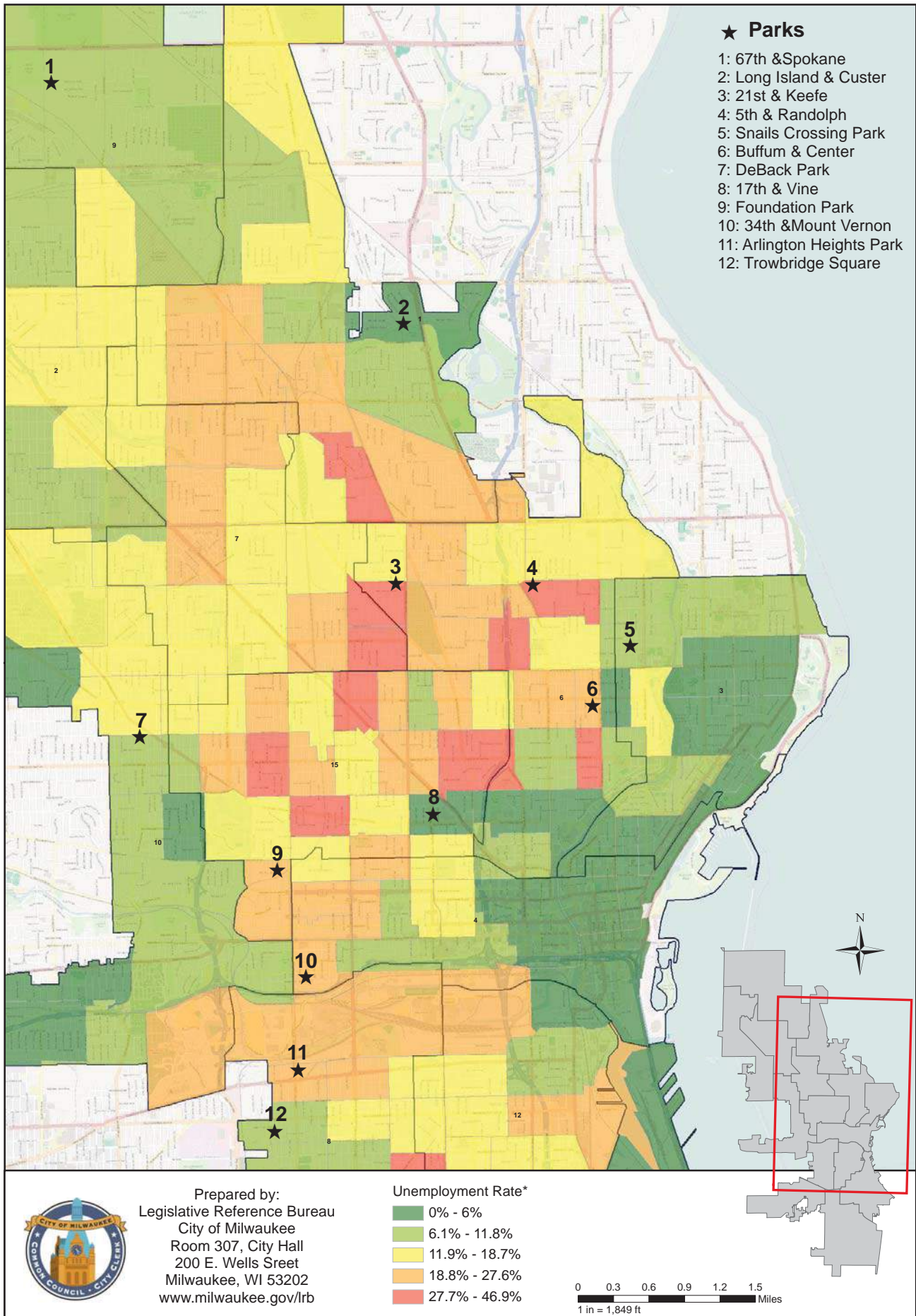
Figure 4. Recreational Facilities Funding, 2000-2015.



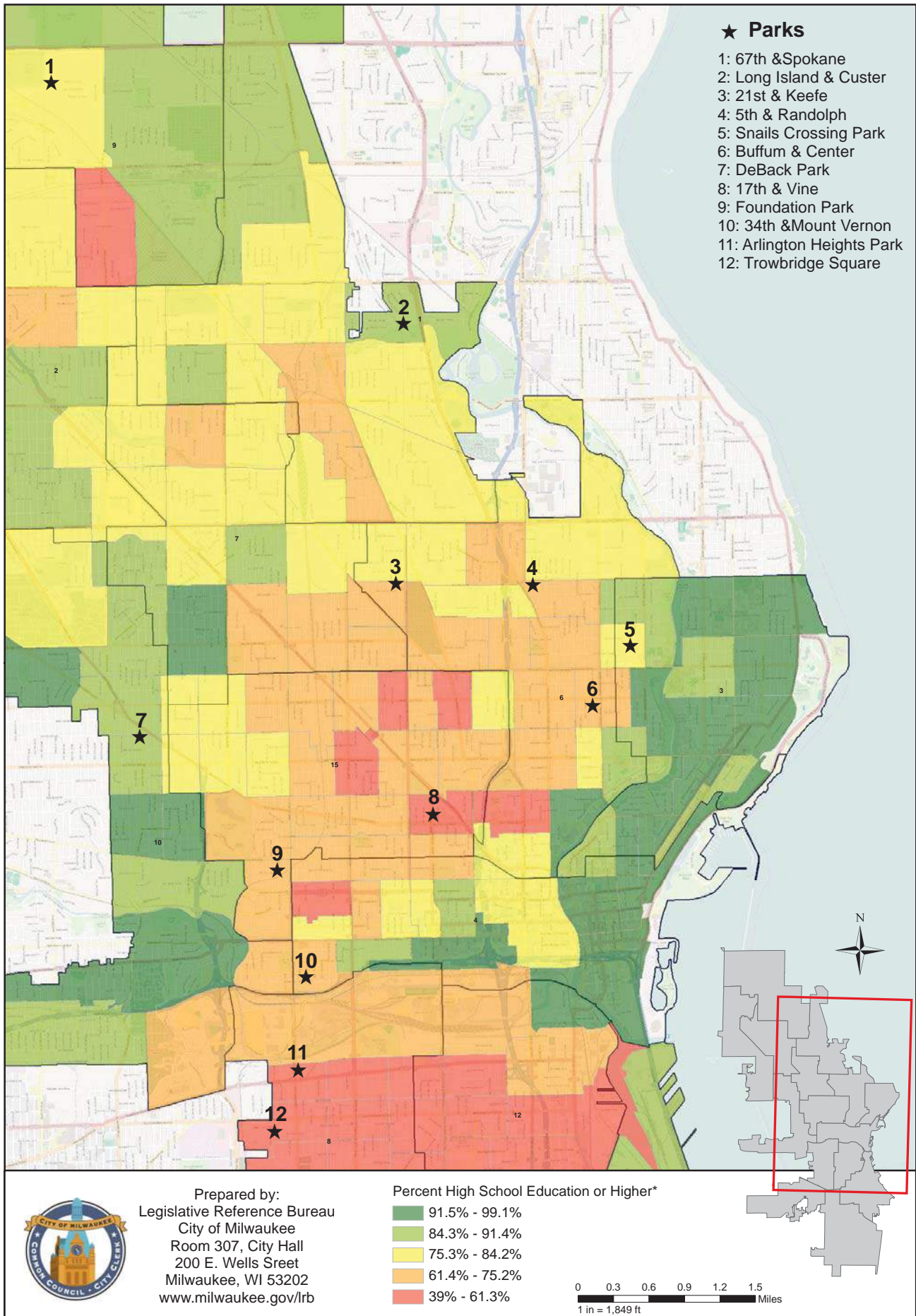
MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Federal Poverty Level



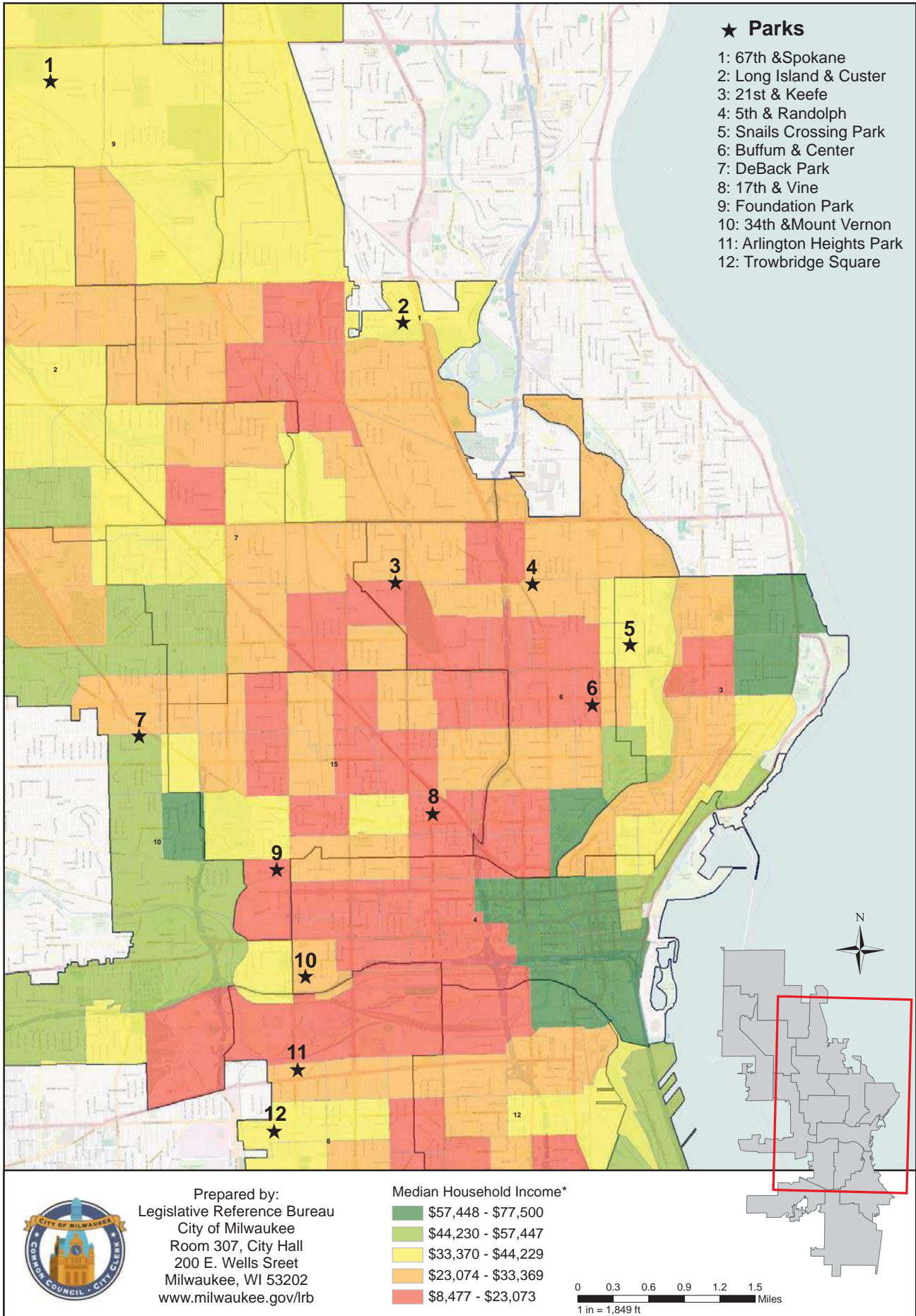
MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Unemployment



MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Educational Attainment

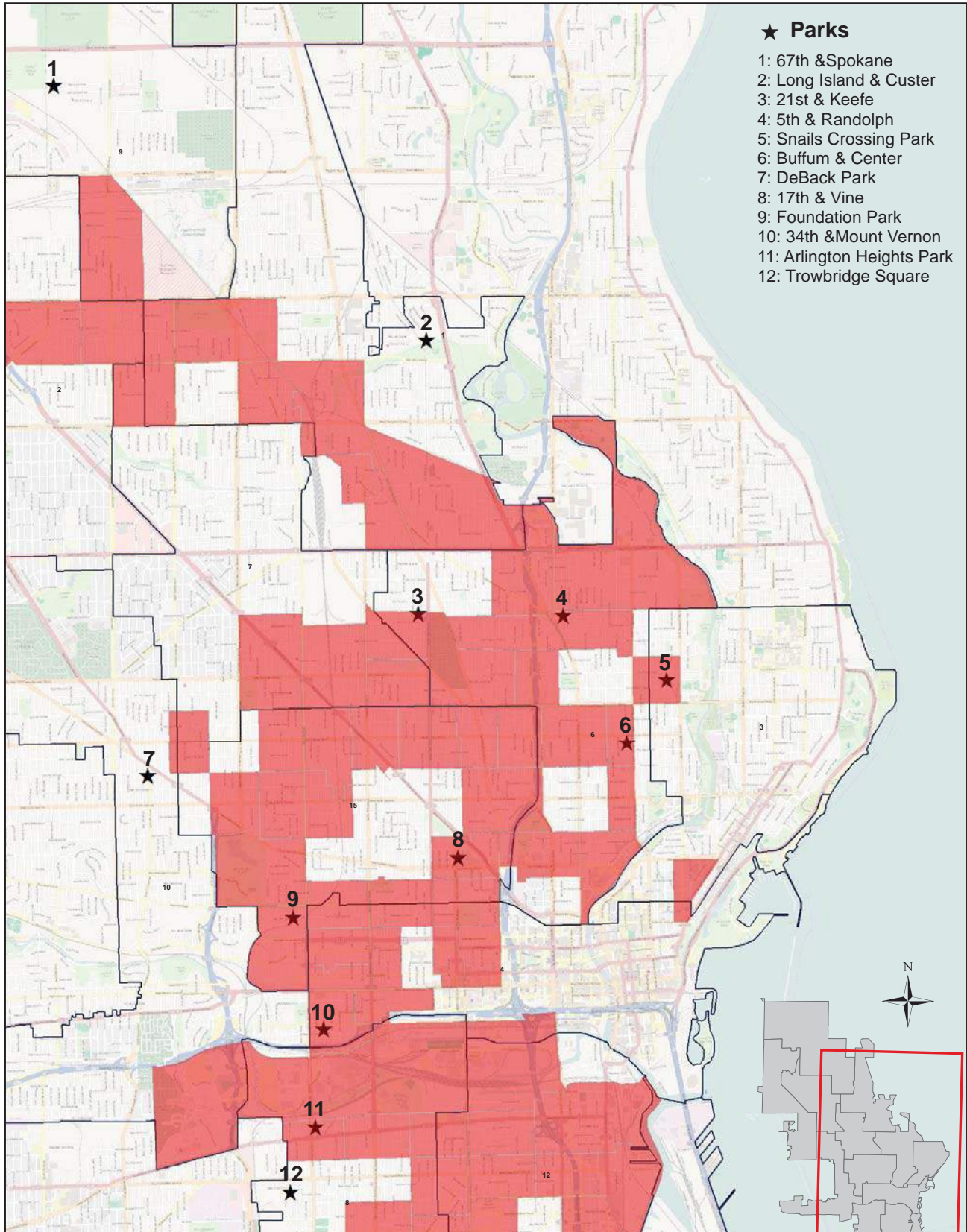


MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Median Household Income



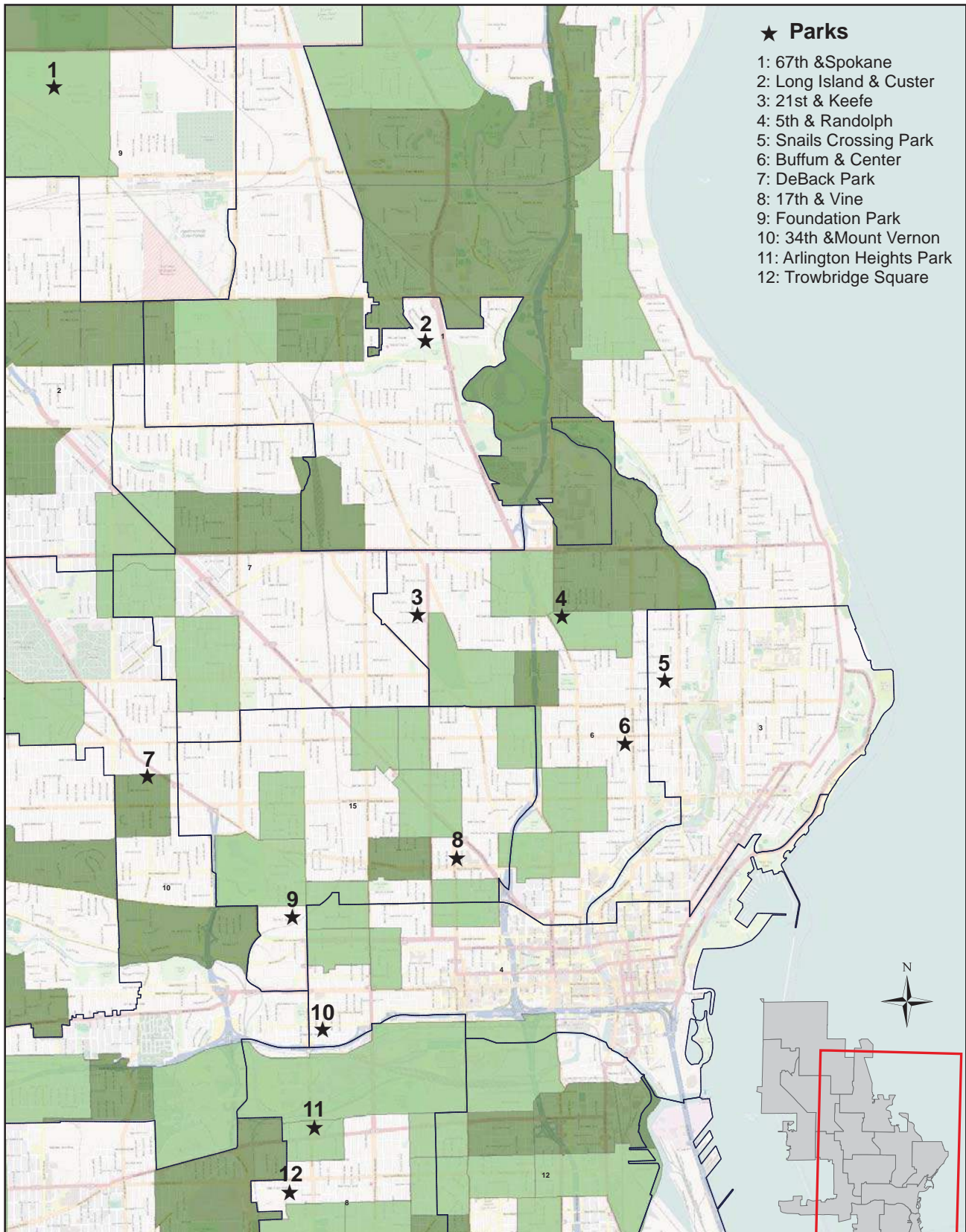
*Data Source: 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Childhood Poverty

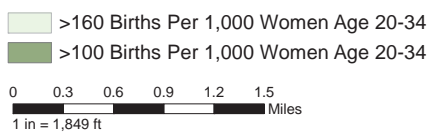


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MKE PLAYS INITIATIVE: Birthrate



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