

Afford to live and work in Milwaukee County

At a time when residents and employers are worried about foreclosures and bankruptcy issues, County Executive Scott Walker's 2010 county budget protects them by holding the line on the property tax levy and the sales tax and by not creating a new wheel tax.

Many of our residents are living paycheck to pay check. Bankruptcy numbers are up 32% through the end of August in the eastern district of Wisconsin. Unemployment in July was 10.2% (up from 5.7% in 2008). And foreclosures in Milwaukee County are up 29% from a year ago. County Executive Walker feels it is important to keep their tax bills as low as possible in 2010.

Retain and attract jobs in Milwaukee County

County Executive Walker's 2010 county budget includes an aggressive plan to retain and attract jobs in Milwaukee County. *Milwaukee County Works* (County Executive's Office of Business Development) will work with existing and new businesses on ways to retain and create more jobs.

The plan also accelerates the county building program to begin \$120 million worth of projects by the end of 2010. These projects will rebuild the county and include nearly \$50 million for highways, bridges and roads; nearly \$20 million for a new fleet initiative and over \$34 million in parks improvements.

Recovery Zone Facility bonds are another tool outlined in the jobs plan that will assist new developments within Milwaukee County.

To get people to and from work, the plan includes a new Bus Rapid Transit line, maintains all existing bus routes and includes the funding for 125 new, green and clean buses. The plan also includes major investments to increase growth and improvements at General Mitchell International Airport.

Create balance between public and private sector benefits

A major factor in the gap faced by the administration in putting together the 2010 county budget was the significant increases in the costs of retirement and health care benefits. In the 2010 budget, County Executive Walker seeks to offset those increases with proposed adjustments in public sector employee wage and benefit packages.

While nearly every other employer is considering wage and benefit concessions from employees, county government should not be immune. There is a fundamental imbalance between the retirement and health care benefits

received by public sector employees and the private sector workers who pay for the costs of government.

The annual survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Health Research and Education Trust shows that the cost of providing health benefits for families now averages \$13,375 per year, with employees paying \$3,515 and employers paying \$9,860.

In comparison, Milwaukee County family benefit plans cost \$XX,XXXX with county workers paying either \$XXX or \$XXX and the county paying \$XX,XXX or \$XX,XXX.

County Executive Walker's proposal will not only balance the budget for 2010, it will put into place long-term structural changes that will insure the fiscal stability of the county far into the future. Failure to adequately address legacy costs will lead to a significant structural deficit.

Maintain Quality of Life

Public safety agencies are protected under County Executive Walker's 2010 county budget. Areas like the Sheriff's Office and the District Attorney's Office also receive significant capital investments. And the countywide EMS system is maintained in 2010 with more revenues available to local governments.

Safety net services for people with disabilities, older adults and people suffering from mental illness; as well as support for veterans are all included in the 2010 budget. County Executive Walker's plan also includes a \$4.8 million investment in the expansion of FamilyCare to include people with developmental and physical disabilities.

The budget plan includes \$1 million for maintenance in the parks and more than \$20 million worth of capital investment in the parks. This includes new bathroom facilities, new playground equipment and improved parkways.

The budget also leverages a private donation to begin work on a third major aquatic center at Hoyt Park and to begin plans for another aquatic center in the southeast region of the county. Several deep well pools with declining numbers of swimmers are replaced with more popular splash pads (like the successful splash pad at Gordon Park that replaced a deep well pool).

The 2010 budget includes funding to begin the process of creating a non-profit organization to run the zoo that could blend the continued financial investment and expertise of the county with the membership and education/conservation strength of the Zoological Society. The budget specifically creates a panel to prepare the legal framework for such a transition by October of 2011.

Enact major budget reforms

County Executive Walker will include major reforms in the 2010 county budget that will improve the future fiscal stability of the county. In addition to pushing significant changes in public sector wage and benefit packages, the budget proposal allocating land sales for paying down debt and for a limited number of one-time projects.

Parks revenues are adjusted to a realistic level, the sales tax target is lowered because of economic trends and the funds from the pension lawsuit settlement are used to cover the long-term costs of the unfunded liability within the pension fund (and not front loaded to balance the current budget).

The budget expands several public/private partnerships and creates new ones that use public funds to leverage investments from the private sector. Major improvements in the parks, the zoo and the various cultural institutions are supported through these public/private partnerships that maximize the taxpayers' investment.