

Past #SaveOurDomes Updates

December 20, 2022 update - Domes at risk of demolition, next 6 months critically important



It has been a very eventful few weeks for the Domes. **The future of this treasure has never been more in question than it is today** following the passage of [Resolution 22-1184](#) at the December 15 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, but hope remains,

thanks largely to your incredible outpouring of support for the Domes. **Your continued support will be more important than ever over the next 6 months** as the fate of the Domes is explored and brought before the Board for a decision next summer. **Without your outreach, this treasure is at genuine risk of demolition!**

12/6 Parks Committee meeting

As reported earlier, the Parks Committee heard a resolution (22-1184) at their December 6 meeting that would "rescind" the County's existing policy, established in 2016 in [Resolution 16-200](#) to "pursue the repair and preservation of the existing Mitchell Park Conservatory Domes." MPA, along

with our partners at [Docomomo-US/Wisconsin](#) and the [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#), strongly urged members of the public to write to your elected officials encouraging them not to take this regressive step backwards. While we support forward motion and exploring options, we believed explicitly rescinding the established policy without the requirement of any involvement from the public or the expertise of individuals familiar with older buildings would fly in the face of public opinion and not provide Supervisors the critical facts needed to make informed decisions about the future of the Domes. You agreed, and **over 700 people sent letters to your elected officials!**

As a result of this flood of opposition to demolition, **the resolution was amended to "expand" the current policy rather than "rescind" it**, and an additional clause was added specifying that the new policy "does not advocate for, suggest, or show preference for one potential option over another." **The amended resolution passed the Parks Committee unanimously and was sent to the full board.**

At this same meeting, **the County's Office of Corporation Counsel (OCC, attorneys) issued a new legal opinion regarding the implications of listing the Domes on the National and State Register of Historic Places.** Informed by input from the City of Milwaukee's Historic Preservation staff and legal counsel from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, **the new opinion corroborated what MPA and other preservationists have been saying since Day 1: listing the Domes on the Register does not tie the County's hands in any way**, and they would retain final decision making authority regarding the future of the Domes. The National Trust provided testimony as well, thanks in part to MPA's outreach, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provided written explanation of the nomination process. Now that this issue has been cleared up, **we are hopeful that the nomination, vetoed by the County Executive and not overturned by the Board out of fear of it tying their hands, can be reintroduced** so the Domes can be recognized for their significance and Historic Tax Credits can be more quickly accessible should the County decide to move forward with this important preservation funding tool. The new opinion and SHPO report are available [here](#).

A number of news stories highlight the day's proceedings: [WUWM](#), [Journal Sentinel](#), [Urban Milwaukee](#), [Shepherd Express](#), [TMJ 4](#), [WPR](#) (and [another](#)), [WISN](#), [CBS 58](#), [FOX 6](#), [FOX 11](#), [Business Journal](#), and [WTMJ](#).

12/15 Board of Supervisors meeting

Resolution 22-1184 next made its way to the full Board with two potential resolutions. The first noted that inaction is tantamount to demolition by neglect and was not an option. This good amendment sets the stage for a decision to be made and does not allow for continued delay. It passed unanimously. Unfortunately, **a second amendment that would have significantly improved the resolution in a number of ways, especially by requiring the expertise of outside resources familiar with how older buildings work (to be paid for through funds already allocated toward Mitchell Park improvements) failed** 6-11. The final resolution then passed 16-1.

Additional news stories on the meeting are available from [Journal Sentinel](#), [Urban Milwaukee](#), [TMJ4](#), [WUWM](#), [FOX6](#), and [Business Journal](#).

Where does this leave us?

The resolution as passed is available [here](#). **The County - particularly the Parks Department, OCC, Budget Office, and Comptroller (accountant) - are charged with bringing details on 4 options to the Board in July: demolition, minor repairs, full renovation, and implementation of the Task Force Plan.** Each option must include costs, project scope, funding sources, potential governance structure changes, and long term options for the wider Mitchell Park. **The Parks Department has openly admitted it is not an expert on old buildings and preservation**, but we are hopeful that it will reach out for guidance to those who *are* in order to present the most accurate picture of what is possible at the Domes and present solutions driven not out of fear or scarcity but out of a sense of possibility and stewardship.

We do not believe this treasured Milwaukee landmark is simply an "unsolvable math problem" as it has been referred to. To relegate a place so important to the community to a series of number shuts down the conversation before it can begin. **The fact is that the Domes are incredibly important to the community, and restoring them would save environmental resources, honor our stewardship of an architectural icon, provide important year round access to the proven health benefits of green space, and could be a health, jobs, and equity driver for the entire neighborhood. Preservation can also be achieved economically through Historic Tax Credits and partnerships**, as opposed to spending taxpayer dollars on the senseless demolition and landfilling of this important place. **It simply takes vision and leadership.**

MPA has and will continue to serve as a resource to County decision makers on the possibilities of a preservation solution, including a conservancy model, which would allow a nonprofit partner to take over much of the management, fundraising, and financial burden from the County without sacrificing public oversight.

What can you do to help?

The next 6 months are more important than ever, and your continued outreach to your Supervisors can help ensure that when they are presented with options in July, they know a decision supporting demolition will be unacceptable to their constituents. Please take these steps today to ensure a future for the Domes and stay tuned for more ways you can Save Our Domes over the next months:

- Take 2 minutes to **send a pre-written letter to your elected officials** letting them know demolition is an unacceptable solution by entering your name [here](#) or below. Doing so will send a letter to the County Executive, Board Chairwoman, and your County Supervisor. Please feel free to edit the letter to be more personal and share why the Domes are important to YOU!
- **Email [your County supervisor](#), and [County Executive David Crowley](#)** and let them know you support preservation of the Domes. Encourage them to be the visionary leaders the Domes and community need!
- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decisionmakers know that the Domes can and must be preserved.

December 1 update - Major threat to Domes at 12/6 meeting, urgent action needed now

The Domes need you NOW! The 9:00am [December 6 meeting of the Milwaukee County Committee on Parks & Culture](#) will include **a new resolution that would rescind the [County Board's established policy of pursuing repair of the Domes](#)**. It will also direct the County to explore options with costs for the future of Mitchell Park and the Domes including demolition, addressing deferred maintenance, full restoration, and implementation of the [Domes Task Force Plan](#) and present a report by mid-2023. [See the proposed resolution here](#). While we support exploring paths

forward, **rescinding the County's established policy of preservation is a dangerous and unfounded step and is not necessary to explore all options.** Further, the resolution as written does not require the expertise of any engineers familiar with older buildings nor any participation from the County Board or public.

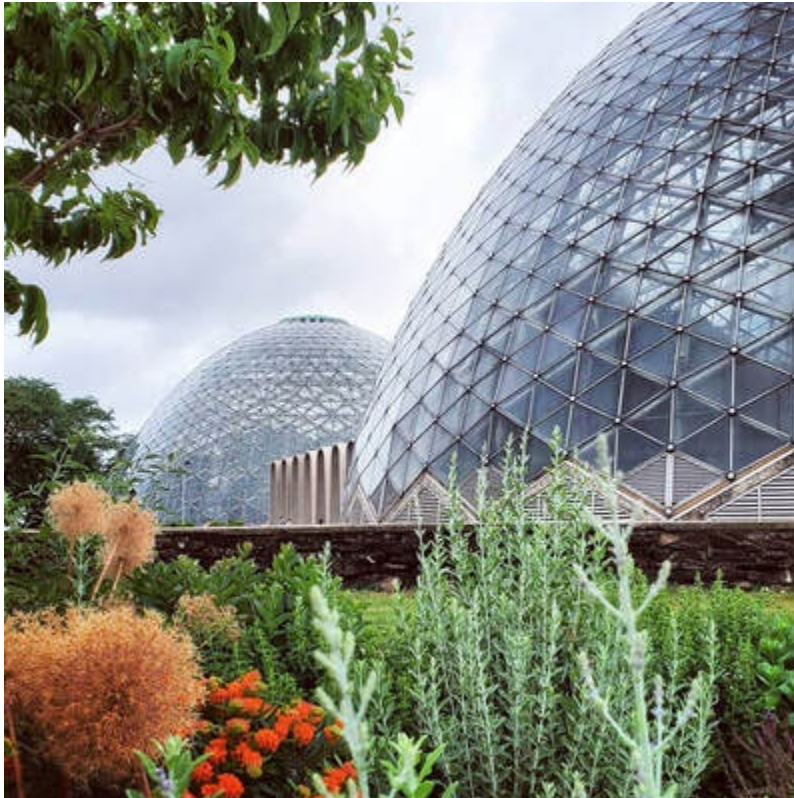
We believe the public's consistent support of preservation, numerous [studies](#) showing the long term viability of preservation, and cost-reducing opportunities like Historic Tax Credits and partnership-based conservancy models must be thoughtfully considered while developing options for a way forward. **A more thoughtful approach would be to hold this resolution until it can be crafted to include additional provisions that provide for the information the Board needs to make informed decisions without rescinding current policy unnecessarily.**

Here's what you can do NOW:

- Take 2 minutes to **send a pre-written letter to your elected officials** urging them not to rescind County preservation policy by entering your name [here](#) or below. Doing so will send a letter to the County Executive, Board Chairwoman, your County Supervisor, and members of the Parks Committee. Please feel free to edit the letter to be more personal and share why the Domes are important to YOU!
- **Speak at the meeting** on behalf of the Domes. You can speak in person by filling out a Public Comment Card in Room 203-R of the Milwaukee County Courthouse (901 N 9th St, Milwaukee, WI 53233) OR virtually by [registering here](#). This is the #1 most impactful action you can take, as it ensures your voice is heard and considered!
- **Leave a written eComment** in support of the Domes by [clicking here](#), selecting "Committee on Parks and Culture" from the dropdown, and clicking on eComment next to 12/6/22; you will need to create an account if you have not done so before.
- **Email [Parks Committee members, your County supervisor](#), and [County Executive David Crowley](#)** and let them know you support developing a preservation plan for the Domes. You can even send the same comment you submitted to eComment.
- **Watch the meeting in real time.** The meeting agenda and video link will be available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by clicking on the appropriate date for the Committee on Parks and Culture.

- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decisionmakers know that the Domes can and must be preserved.

November 23 update - The rollercoaster continues, important meeting 12/6



The past two months have seen their share of ups and downs in the effort to secure a long-term future for our beloved Domes. **MPA and Save Our Domes have succeeded in elevating the public's concern over the future of the Domes into a top level issue for County Supervisors and administration.** Despite some steps backwards, **we remain optimistic that we are moving toward clarity and a partnership-based preservation solution for the Domes** and

surrounding Mitchell Park. Read on for details and how you can make a difference at the December 6 Committee on Parks & Culture meeting.

2023 Budget

The adopted 2023 County budget includes an amendment allocating significant funds to various capital improvements in Parks, including **\$288,000 for Mitchell Park improvements**. While the amendment does not specifically tie this funding to the Domes, cosponsor Sup. Rolland notes in a [press release](#) that the amendment "funds a new strategic plan to reimagine Mitchell Park and its Horticultural Conservatory - a long-deferred planning process that can now move forward." Other cosponsors have indicated the same, and it is expected that future resolutions will seek to allocate a portion of this

funding to the development of a Mitchell Park/Domes plan. The final budget as adopted is not yet online, but the proposed amendment can be seen [here](#) on p.5.

National Register nomination

Despite a 16-2 [vote](#) by the County Board in favor of nominating the Domes to the National Register of Historic Places, **the County Executive issued an eleventh hour veto** citing an [unfounded fear](#) that listing in the Register would require the County to receive approval from the State and federal government before any action could be taken at the Domes. MPA has appeared at numerous public meetings to testify based on our daily interaction with preservation regulations that this is simply untrue. While designation would require conversations with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), **there is no regulatory authority for SHPO to prevent any action.** This important detail has been confirmed by SHPO, the entity in charge of enacting the statutes that have been cited by the County as tying their hands.

With 24 hours notice, the County board was presented with an opportunity to override the County Executive's veto on November 10. The issue was first heard by the Parks Committee, which voted unanimously to recommend overriding the veto despite strong opposition from the Office of Corporation Counsel, which again cited an erroneous fear that designation would tie the County's hands. MPA provided public testimony to the contrary. At the tail end of a 10-hour budget meeting, the full Board took up the veto override and ultimately [abstained from voting](#) on the issue. **This effectively sustains the veto while allowing the question to be raised again and allowing the County to gain clarity on the implications of National Register listing.** The issue is expected to arise again at the December 6 Parks Committee meeting, when representatives from SHPO will be present to provide clarity.

We continue to advocate for **National Register listing for the Domes as a very low risk way for the County to honor the Domes' significance to the community and pave the way for Historic Tax Credits** to be used to provide meaningful financial support for preservation efforts.

December 6 Parks Committee meeting

The 9:00am December 6 meeting of the Committee on Parks & Culture is expected to be another important moment for the Domes. At this meeting, **it**

is expected that a new resolution will be presented directing the County to produce a menu of options with costs for the future of Mitchell Park and

the Domes by mid-2023. We support moving toward a solution but the resolution unfortunately may include exploring demolition, potentially rescinding [official County policy](#) requiring pursuit of repair and preservation of the Domes. We believe the public's consistent support of preservation, numerous [studies](#) showing the long term viability of preservation, and cost-reducing opportunities like Historic Tax Credits and partnership-based conservancy models must be thoughtfully considered while developing plans for a way forward.

Unfortunately, the expected glazing mock-up and cost estimates providing proof of concept for the proposed [2019 glazing solution](#) appears to be further delayed. It also does not appear that the report on the mesh and concrete inspection completed this summer will be made public at this meeting as the Domes Project Team had previously indicated. Additionally, we have learned that **the Domes Project Team itself has been disbanded, with the Parks Department now taking the lead on future planning.** We will continue to provide updates on the implications of this change as well as news on when these important reports will be made public. In the meantime, **your support of the resolution to develop plans for Mitchell Park and the Domes on December 6 is important.**

There are many ways you can help!

- **Speak at the meeting** on behalf of the Domes. You can speak in person by filling out a Public Comment Card in Room 203-R of the Milwaukee County Courthouse (901 N 9th St, Milwaukee, WI 53233) OR virtually by [registering here](#). This is the #1 most impactful action you can take, as it ensures your voice is heard and considered!
- **Leave a written eComment** in support of the Domes by [clicking here](#) (this should be available a few days before the meeting and will be available by selecting "Committee on Parks and Culture" from the dropdown, and clicking on eComment next 12/6/22; you will need to create an account if you have not done so before).
- **Email [Parks Committee members, your County supervisor, and County Executive David Crowley](#)** and let them know you support developing a preservation plan for the Domes. You can even send the same comment you submitted to eComment.

- **Watch the meeting in real time.** The meeting agenda and video link will be available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by clicking on the appropriate date for the Committee on Parks and Culture.
- Take 2 minutes to **send a pre-written letter to your elected officials** urging their support for the Domes by entering your name [here](#) or below. Doing so will send a letter to the County Executive, Board Chairwoman, your County Supervisor, and members of the Parks Committee. Please feel free to edit the letter to be more personal and share why the Domes are important to YOU!
- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decision makers know that the Domes can and must be preserved.

September 27 update - We did it! ...but the future remains uncertain



We're pleased to report that **the full County Board endorsed a resolution to nominate the Domes to the National Register of Historic Places by a 15-3 vote** last week! This is great news for the Domes and marks the first major step forward toward a preservation solution in many years. While National Register listing will not provide protections for the Domes, it will honor their significance by adding them to this prestigious list and will **open the door to Historic Tax Credits** and other funding mechanisms only available to listed buildings. The majority of the nomination was already completed by a preservation consultant and paid for by the County as part of the Domes Task Force's work, and the next step will be to complete the nomination and submit it to the State Historic Preservation Office, which has already determined it to be preliminarily eligible. **The nomination process will take many months to complete, but it's on its way! MPA will continue to follow**

the process to ensure it moves forward and keep you updated on progress and opportunities for support. We couldn't have done it without you; thank you! You can watch the meeting recording [here](#) and read more about it in [Urban Milwaukee](#).

Much uncertainty remains, however. The resolution passed with amendments noting that the County is not obligated to pursue Historic Tax Credits and resolving "to as soon as practicable adopt a plan for addressing the future and capital needs of the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory, its home in the Mitchell Park Domes, and Mitchell Park."

Sup. Wasserman (Parks Committee chair), Sup. Martinez (District 12 for the Domes), and others are working on developing a resolution directing the County to create such a plan prior to July 2023. **Current discussions include leaving all options on the table, including demolition.** The County Board's [official policy](#), however, is to pursue the restoration of the Domes, and the Domes Task Force investigated demolition and new construction only to determine that it would be infeasible and unsupported by the public. Nonetheless, we're excited by these efforts to move toward action and decisions and develop a comprehensive solution for the Domes and surrounding park. **We will continue to work with the County as a resource on what is possible through preservation, encourage a solutions mindset, and advocate for public participation in the planning and decision making as well as inclusion of the Domes Task Force's work to develop a broad vision as the new plan is developed. The people have made their perspective very clear - preservation is the way forward - and we will work hard to make sure your voice is heard!**

WHAT'S NEXT?

The December 6 Parks Committee meeting is shaping up to be a very important one for the Domes. During this meeting, the ZS Engineering glazing (glass) study is expected to be released to the public. This builds on their [2019 report](#) and is expected to provide the results of a mock-up of a proposed solution for fixing the glass, cost updates to do so, and a brief update on the condition of the concrete structure. The glazing is the most critical fix needed at the Domes. The meeting will also likely include a vote on the resolution under development directing the County to create a comprehensive plan for the way forward. In the interim, **please continue to reach out to your Supervisor, the County Executive, and the Chairwoman with your support for a preservation solution by entering your**

name [here](#) or above. Every voice is important! *Check back here and on [Facebook](#) regularly for the latest news and more ways you can help.*

September 14 update - Setbacks and Big Wins!



The past week has been a big one for the Domes! Efforts to secure a long term future for this beloved treasure suffered an unfortunate setback but also achieved an important step forward and promise of more to come!

First, the difficult news. Despite multiple voices from the public who submitted written

comments and took time from their day to speak in support, including MPA, **the resolution to secure \$19 million in federal ARPA funding for the restoration of the Domes did not receive the support of the County's ARPA Task Force** last Thursday. There is still a small possibility of adoption through referral to committee or the full board. We're disappointed that this once-in-a-generation funding opportunity was not supported, and we fear that **the lack of investment and commitment now will only cause costs to rise** through inflation and deferred maintenance.

Committee members lamented the lack of a comprehensive plan for restoring the Domes. We know, however, that the Domes' glass and concrete need work, and this funding could have helped achieve that. We're afraid this is an example of **the perfect being the enemy of the good**. The longer a restoration plan is delayed, the more expensive it will become. **The alternative to doing nothing is the slow death of the Domes**, resulting in the mothballing of this important place, or worse, its demolition for a cost to taxpayers of \$15+ million. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by comments from Supervisors and Parks staff that **their opposition to this resolution is not an opposition to saving the Domes** and that the Domes should in fact be saved. You can watch the meeting [here](#) and learn more from: [Urban](#)

[Milwaukee](#), [WUWM](#), [KPVI](#), [Architect's Newspaper](#).

This week's Parks Committee meeting provided much better news and tangible forward-looking actions toward saving the Domes! Following a long

conversation and public testimony from MPA and others, **the committee supported a resolution to pursue listing the Domes on the National Register of Historic Places**. A nomination has already been largely completed and paid for by the County, and the Domes have already been preliminarily determined eligible for listing. This resolution will ensure that nomination is completed and submitted. Contrary to popular belief, **listing does not place restrictions on what the County can do with the property and is purely honorific**. What it does is honor the Domes for their importance to the community by adding them to the official list of special historic places nationwide. It is also a **prerequisite for the County to pursue Historic Tax Credits** for the restoration of the Domes, which could provide upwards of \$7 million in funding if the County works with partners to pursue them.

There was also a call for an additional resolution to be drafted for the next Parks Committee meeting (Dec. 6) directing the County to put together a plan for how to proceed with the Domes. While we're disappointed that conversation includes keeping all options on the table - including demolition, an idea that was deemed infeasible and unsupportable by the public during the Domes Task Force's work - we're excited by these efforts to move toward a solutions mindset. **MPA will work hard to provide expert knowledge on the mechanisms of historic preservation throughout the resolution development and planning process and do all we can to keep the public's desire for preservation front and center**. You can watch the meeting [here](#) and learn more from: [Urban Milwaukee](#), [WUWM](#), and [TMJ4](#) (note that we don't believe all the numbers quoted for restoration costs are entirely accurate).

The Parks Committee outcome represents a small but incredibly important step toward a preserved Domes, and we couldn't have done it without YOUR help! **Together we are changing the narrative from one of inaction and defeat to one of forward motion and possibility!**

WHAT'S NEXT?

You sent dozens of letters of support to elected officials in support of the Domes, and those letters made a difference. We need your help to keep the pressure on and make sure our representatives know the people of Milwaukee County support the Domes. **Please take 2 minutes to enter your**

name [here](#) or above to send an updated letter to your Supervisor and County Executive with your support for National Register listing, ARPA funding, and a plan for preservation. Every voice is important!

September 6 update - Important meetings this week and next!

This week and next are hugely important for the future of the Domes, and **we need your voice now more than ever**. There are **2 hugely important resolutions coming before the County in the next few days** that, if passed, will propel preservation of the Domes forward with actionable next steps to fund restoration work and recognize the value of this treasure. If you love the Domes and want to ensure it is protected for years to come, **now is the time to speak out!**

Critical needs this week:

- **ARPA Task Force meeting - Thursday, Sept. 8 - 9:00am.** The Task Force will be considering a resolution by Supervisors Martinez, Clancy, Zerpa, and Martin to appropriate \$19 million of federal ARPA funds (pandemic relief funds) for the rehabilitation of the Domes. This could be a huge game changer, and the first major allocation toward necessary physical preservation work at the Domes! [See details and agenda here](#) (the Domes is item #8).
 - **Speak at the meeting** on behalf of the Domes. You can speak in person by filing out a Public Comment Card in Room 203-R of the Milwaukee County Courthouse (901 N 9th St, Milwaukee, WI 53233) OR virtually by registering [here](#). This is the #1 most impactful action you can take, as it ensures your voice is heard and considered!
 - **Leave a written eComment** in support of ARPA funding for the Domes by [clicking here](#) and scrolling down to item 8 (you will need to create an account if you have not done so before).
 - **Email [ARPA Task Force Committee members](#), [your County supervisor](#), and [County Executive David Crowley](#)** and let them know you support ARPA funding for the Domes. You can even send the same comment you submitted to eComment.
 - **Watch the meeting in real time.** The meeting agenda and video link are available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by

clicking on the appropriate date for the American Rescue Plan Act Task Force.

- **KEY POINTS:**
 - **County Board policy is to pursue the repair of the Domes.** This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fund much of the necessary work to restore the Domes for decades of future service.
 - **This appropriation would cover a significant portion of the funding expected to be necessary** for the long term preservation of the Domes and would represent the initial County investment necessary to attract critical partnerships with public and private entities, grants, and private funds.
 - **ARPA funding for the Domes will save the County and the taxpayers money** by using federal dollars for this necessary work rather than stretching a tight County budget with the full cost of repair or demolition.
 - By promoting health and wellness and providing access to the proven physical and mental health benefits of green space to all County residents year round, the long term preservation of the Domes will help Milwaukee County **be prepared to respond to future public health emergencies.**
- **Committee on Parks & Culture meeting - Tuesday, Sept. 13 - 9:00am.** The committee will be considering a resolution by Supervisors Martinez, Zerpa, and Clancy directing the County to pursue listing the Domes on the National Register of Historic Places. The majority of the National Register nomination is already written. Completing and submitting it would recognize the importance of the Domes at the local, state, and potentially national level and begin the process necessary for the Domes to take advantage of Historic Tax Credits to fund restoration work. [See details and agenda here](#) (the Domes is Item 10). Check out the Urban Milwaukee story on the nomination resolution [here](#).
 - **Speak at the meeting** in support of submitting the National Register nomination. You can speak in person by filing out a Public Comment Card in Room 203-R of the Milwaukee County Courthouse (901 N 9th St, Milwaukee, WI 53233) OR virtually by registering [here](#) and scrolling down to the Parks & Culture Committee. This is the #1 most impactful action you can take, as it ensures your voice is heard and considered!

- **Leave a written eComment** in support by [clicking here](#) and scrolling down to item 10 (you will need to create an account if you have not done so before).
- **Email [Parks Committee members](#), [your County supervisor](#), and [County Executive David Crowley](#)** and let them know you support nominating the Domes to the National Register. You can even send the same comment you submitted to eComment.
- **Watch the meeting in real time.** The meeting agenda and video link will be available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by clicking on the appropriate date for the Committee on Parks and Culture.
- **KEY POINTS:**
 - The majority of the work is already done. Moving forward with the National Register nomination is **a continuation of the work the County already began and paid for** in commissioning the nomination years ago.
 - **Listing on the National Register is honorific and does not limit the County's options** at the Domes. It would simply recognize how significant the Domes are to the community, state, and even the nation.
 - Pursuing nomination poses little risk to the County, as **the Domes have already been determined preliminarily eligible** for listing by the State Historic Preservation Office.
 - Listing on the the National Register is **a necessary step for the County to take advantage of Historic Tax Credits** for the repair of the Domes, which could provide up to 40% of of qualified rehabilitation expenditures back. Despite being a government entity, the County CAN still benefit from tax credits by working with partners ([see details here](#)).

Additional ways you can help:

- Take 2 minutes to **send a letter to your elected officials** urging their support for the Domes by entering your name [here](#) or above. Doing so will send a letter to the County Executive, your County Supervisor, and members of the Parks Committee. Please feel free to edit the letter to be more personal and share why the Domes are important to YOU!
- **[Sign your support](#) for allowing Milwaukee County to raise its sales tax by 1%** in order to provide an additional \$180 million to support local priorities like the Domes.

- **Visit us at the [Silver City International Festival](#)** on September 10 from 12:00-5:00pm to pick up your free Save Our Domes buttons, stickers, and balloons!
- **Come see us downtown at the [Milwaukee Night Market](#)** on September 21 from 5:00-10:00pm to share your vision for the future of the Domes and take action to support their preservation.
- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decision makers know that the Domes can and must be preserved.

August 2022 Update - Take Action Today!



With budget season upon us, big picture thinking about the future of our parks underway, and rare opportunities for free federal funding on the horizon, **this is a critical time to speak out** and let our elected officials know we must move forward with a long term preservation solution for our beloved Domes.

How you can help:

- Take 2 minutes to **send a letter to your elected officials** urging their support of funding for preservation of the Domes by entering your name [here](#). Doing so will send a letter to

the County Executive, your County Supervisor, and members of key

County committees. Please feel free to edit the letter to be more personal and share why the Domes are important to YOU!

- **Complete the Parks Department survey** on ideas to secure a financially stable future for our parks, including the Domes, [here!](#) Following the publication of the 2021 Wisconsin Policy Forum [Sinking Treasures report](#), the Parks Department is now looking for public input on which strategies to pursue. This is an important opportunity for all of us who love the Domes to ensure decisions about the future of parks includes serious consideration of the future of the Domes. Learn more about the process from WUWM - Milwaukee's NPR [here](#).
- **Stay tuned for news of very important opportunities in the September legislative cycle to advocate for ARPA funding** and [advancing the existing National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Domes](#). Check out the Urban Milwaukee story on the nomination resolution [here](#). Opportunities will likely exist to submit eComments and speak at County committee meetings on September 13 and/or 15 at 9:00am.
- **Sign your support for allowing Milwaukee County to raise its sales tax by 1%** in order to provide an additional \$180 million to support local priorities like the Domes.
- **Visit us at the Silver City International Festival** on September 10 from 12:00-5:00pm to pick up your free Save Our Domes buttons, stickers, and balloons!
- **Come see us downtown at the Milwaukee Night Market** on September 21 from 5:00-10:00pm to share your vision for the future of the Domes and take action to support their preservation.
- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decision makers know that the Domes can and must be preserved.



June 16, 2022 update

Earlier this week, **the County's Domes Project Team presented an update to the County Parks Committee** on their work to explore

next steps for the Domes' future for the County Board to consider. This included [the completed report](#) from contractors Baker Tilly and Husch Blackwell analyzing the financial and legal aspects of the Domes Task Force

plan. Unfortunately, the contractors' scope of work was limited to an analysis of the Task Force plan, and did not explore possible additional funding sources such as ARPA.

This analysis, while finding flaws in some of the financing mechanisms in the Domes Task Force plan, also contains great information on how an updated plan can be devised. It's also **one more in a number of consultant reports that concludes that the Domes can have a successful future**. The [Domes Task Force plan](#) focused on a high level vision that was meant to be explored deeper. While the new report does not believe the entire funding stack is feasible as written, it notes that **many of the funding mechanisms, including Historic Tax Credits, ARE viable** and encourages further study toward a solution.

The Domes Project Team also issued [a report](#) discussing the possibility of **moving forward in a phased manner beginning with "repair/restoration and necessary code updates as an initial phase."** However, the report also repeats the outdated claim from the 2016 GRAEF report that the Domes must be rebuilt in order to obtain 50+ years of life and that a repair option cannot obtain these same results. These findings are not borne out by established preservation practice and have been superseded by the more recent [2017 WJE report](#) and [2019 concrete study](#) demonstrating that **a preservation solution is not only more affordable but can indeed provide decades of continued use**. Staff comments at the meeting also very unfortunately noted

that all options, including demolition, could still be on the table.

While committee members and other supervisors shared various perspectives at the meeting, including calling into question [the established policy of preservation](#), **a feeling of frustration at the slow pace of progress was nearly universal**, a perspective shared by MPA. MPA's comments, available [here](#), encouraged a solutions-focused approach to moving forward. **Now is not the time to despair but the time to band together and act**. The people of Milwaukee County have consistently supported preservation of the Domes, and the time is now to move forward toward this goal. Solutions may be complex, but complexity must not stop us from moving forward in accordance with the will of the community and established County policy. Other cities nationwide have found solutions for similarly complex projects, and so can Milwaukee, but **we must begin from a place of possibility, not negativity**.

The County report also noted that the mesh inspection and repairs have been completed and that a report, including an updated evaluation of the Domes' concrete frame, will be available next month. Staff reports indicate that the results continue to show that **the concrete is in good condition and only needs maintenance, not replacement.** The [updated timeline](#) provided includes little action until the completion of a mock-up of a proposed glazing solution in November followed by updated repair cost estimates, another update to the Parks Committee in December, and public engagement in early 2023, with **final decisions on a way forward to be made in July 2023.**

An excellent overview of the entire meeting was released by [WUWM](#), with additional stories by the [Journal Sentinel](#) and [Urban Milwaukee](#). To watch the proceedings or view reports and presentations, please [see here](#).

MPA will continue our work to engage with the County and other partners to encourage and enable forward motion toward a long-term preservation solution, but **your support and outreach is now more critical than ever! We must speak out and work together to move us forward and ensure this irreplaceable treasure is safe for years to come.**

How you can help (see talking points below):

- **Find your supervisor** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors> and write to them to let them know that you want the Domes to be preserved and that the time is now to move forward to invest in their future. *Right now this is the most important action you can take!*
- **Write to County Executive Crowley** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Executive> and let him know that you want the Domes to be preserved and that the time is now to move forward to invest in their future.
- **Tell everyone you know to do the same!** We need every voice to be heard so our decision makers know that the Domes can be and must be preserved.

Key Messages to Emphasize:

- Please **move forward with a solution for the Domes and Mitchell Park that preserves the Domes** and the horticultural conservatory for future generations to enjoy. The consultant report identified many feasible funding sources from the Task Force Plan. Complexity is not

impossibility, and we must be solutions focused. Now is the time to allocate resources to exploring additional funding solutions and allocating resources toward known needed repairs. Preservation of the Domes is in line with [official County Board policy](#). Demolition, which would cost a minimum of \$15 million, would be fiscally irresponsible, against the will of the public and established policy, and not advance County equity goals and cannot be an option.

- **Federal ARPA dollars should be considered for the Domes** before this once-in-a-generation FREE funding source disappears. In order to take advantage of this possibility, action must be taken now to plan for the future of the Domes and secure funding.
- **Investment in the Domes is a matter of equity and in line with the County's stated vision** of being the healthiest county in the state by achieving racial equity. Mitchell Park has been identified in the [Parks Equity Index](#) as being a high equity need park to be prioritized for investment. The neighborhood surrounding the Domes has limited green space and has been hit hard by the pandemic. Preserving and investing in the Domes and surrounding park would preserve and enhance year-round access to the proven physical and mental health benefits green space provides and help transform the Park into a learning, wellness, and horticultural campus that would increase health outcomes in the community.
- **Preservation is a long term solution.** Decades of preservation practice, along with the [2017 WJE peer review and 2019 concrete study](#) demonstrate that a preservation solution is not only more affordable than reconstruction but can provide decades of continued use. The assertion that rebuilding is the only way to get a long life for the Domes is simply inaccurate.
- **The County can submit the completed nomination for listing the Domes on the National Register of Historic Places.** Doing so poses no risk to the County and would allow it to work with partners to take advantage of valuable Historic Tax Credits that could return of to 40% of expenditures on qualified rehabilitation work.

Your voice makes a difference!

June 3, 2022 update



The County-commissioned Baker Tilly / Husch Blackwell analysis of the financial and legal aspects of the Domes Task Force plan along with options for funding strategies and legal frameworks for the future of the Domes will be made public at the Parks Committee's at their 9:00am June 14 [meeting](#). **The results of this report will be critical**, and will provide

considerable detail on proposed next steps for the Domes. The Project Team will also provide an updated timeline for the decision-making process, including opportunities for formal public input expected later this year. This meeting is **an important opportunity for you to share that you value the Domes** and want to see a long-term preservation solution!

Details of the reports to be presented to the Parks Committee are now available [here](#). The most recent reports from the Domes Project team's March update are available [here](#).

How to participate:

- **Find your supervisor** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors> and write to them to let them know to tune into the June 14 Parks Committee meeting and that the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Write to County Executive Crowley** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Executive> and let him know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Register to speak** at the meeting on behalf of the Domes by visiting <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors/Standing-Committees>. You will need to scroll down on the page until you see the section with registration for the Parks, Energy and Environment Committee.

- **Leave an eComment** in support of the Domes by visiting <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> and clicking on the appropriate date for the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee.
- **Email Parks Committee members** and let them know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Watch the meeting in real time** on Tuesday, June 14, beginning at 9:00am. The meeting agenda and video link are available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by clicking on the appropriate date for the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee.

Key Messages to Emphasize:

- Please **move forward with a solution for the Domes and Mitchell Park that preserves the Domes** and the horticultural conservatory for future generations to enjoy. Preservation of the Domes is in-line with [official County Board policy](#).
- Please **provide for robust public involvement and transparency** in the decision-making process regarding the future of this important place.
- **Investment in the Domes is a matter of equity and in line with the County's stated vision** of being the healthiest county in the state by achieving racial equity. Mitchell Park has been identified in the [Parks Equity Index](#) as being a high equity need park to be prioritized for investment. The neighborhood surrounding the Domes has limited green space and has been hit hard by the pandemic. Preserving and investing in the Domes and surrounding park would preserve and enhance year-round access to the proven physical and mental health benefits green space provides while transforming the Park into a learning, wellness, and horticultural campus that would increase health outcomes in the community.

Your voice makes a difference!

April/May 2022 update

The County-commissioned Baker Tilly / Husch Blackwell preliminary analysis of the financial and legal aspects of the Domes Task Force plan is now anticipated to be released concurrently with the final report presenting options for funding strategies and legal frameworks for the future of the



Domes. This report will be presented to the Parks Committee at their 9:00am June 14 [meeting](#). **The results of this report will be critical**, and will provide considerable detail on proposed next steps for the Domes.

In the meantime, you can continue taking these important steps in support of the Domes:

- **Find your supervisor**

at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors> and write to them to let them know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved. Keep in mind that new Supervisors

were elected on April 5, and your representative may have changed (see a list and find your Supervisor [here](#)). If your Supervisor is on the [Parks Committee](#), outreach is particularly important.

- **Write to County Executive Crowley** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Executive> and let him know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Visit the Domes!**

March 2022 update

On March 15, **the County's internal Domes Project Team (DPT) provided an update to the County Parks Committee on their ongoing work exploring possibilities for the future of the Domes**. This work includes contracting with Baker Tilly and Husch Blackwell to explore the revenue sources for a restoration and revitalization of the Domes and surrounding park proposed in the [2019 Domes Task Force Plan](#), along with a new capital stack that could fund the project, and the legal aspects of partnerships that would need to be in place for a capital project at the Domes. A combined preliminary report has been completed, with **the final report, including recommendations for the County, expected by the end of the month**. At this time, these reports have not yet been made public.

The DPT also contracted with ZS Engineering to inspect the mesh currently installed in the Domes and complete Phase 2 of the 2019 [Glazing Study](#),

including a mock-up and testing of the glazing system repair solution estimated to cost roughly \$20 for all three Domes. The mesh inspection is ongoing, and reports indicate that it is in good shape and is catching very little from the concrete structure, corroborating the results of the [2019 Concrete Study](#) indicating that **the concrete structure of the Domes is in good condition**. Minor repairs are also being conducted on the structure, and a report on the mesh inspection is expected soon. Unfortunately, it was also reported that **global supply chain issues have delayed materials needed for the mock-up, delaying completion of Phase 2 of the Glazing Study until October**.

The DPT is also currently developing a public engagement plan, which will be **a critical opportunity for the public to have a say in the future of the Domes before the County Board makes a final decision about next steps later this year**. This public engagement is currently scheduled for June-July, but the DPT indicated that it may not begin until after the Glazing Study mock-up is completed, which would push this important engagement back to the end of the year and push final Board decisions back as well.

While the next DPT update is not scheduled until July, there is a possibility that a May update would occur in order to share the results of reports that have been completed to that point. **Please stay tuned here and on Facebook for news as it becomes available!** The Report and Timeline presented to the Parks Committee is available [here](#) for review.

There are a number of ways you can continue to support the Domes in the meantime:

- **Find your supervisor** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors> and write to them to let them know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved. If your Supervisor is on the [Parks Committee](#), ask them to request a DPT update in May to review the reports completed and not wait until the scheduled July meeting to make these important documents public. Also request that public engagement begin as soon as possible after elections in order to provide the public as much time as possible to share their views.
- **Write to County Executive Crowley** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Executive> and let him know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Visit our County Supervisor candidate survey** to learn more about candidates' perspectives on historic preservation and the future of the Domes.

• **Visit the Domes!**

Key Messages to Emphasize with Supervisors and the County Executive:

- Please **move forward with a solution for the Domes and Mitchell Park that preserves the Domes** and the horticultural conservatory for future generations to enjoy. Preservation of the Domes is in-line with [official County Board policy](#).
- Please **provide for robust public involvement and transparency** in the decision-making process regarding the future of this important place. Information on what public engagement will look like as well as results from the legal and financial reports, glazing study, and cost estimates should be made available to the public as early as possible.
- **Investment in the Domes is a matter of equity and in line with the County's stated vision** of being the healthiest county in the state by achieving racial equity. Mitchell Park has been identified in the [Parks Equity Index](#) as being a high equity need park to be prioritized for investment. The neighborhood surrounding the Domes has limited green space and has been hit hard by the pandemic. Preserving and investing in the Domes and surrounding park would preserve and enhance year-round access to the proven physical and mental health benefits green space provides while transforming the Park into a learning, wellness, and horticultural campus that would increase health outcomes in the community.
- **The Domes are a public asset.** Economically sustainable preservation options are available for the Domes, but investment should be viewed primarily through a lens of equity rather than profit. Our parks provide incalculable benefits and are a public good that should be accessible to all.

Your voice makes a difference!

What would it cost to restore the Domes?

As conversations continue about the future of the Domes, there has been considerable talk about the costs associated with various options. Part of the work of the County's current [Domes Project Team](#) is to review and update some of these numbers, but we feel it's important clarify the existing estimates to truly understand the cost of restoration:



- approx. **\$20 million is the cost of restoring the Domes structure itself.** This number comes from the County-commissioned 2019 [Glazing Study](#), which determined **the glazing could be replaced for years of life** for a maximum of \$19.5 million, and the County-commissioned 2019 [Concrete Study](#) determining **the concrete frame can last several more decades** if a few maintenance interventions are included in future glazing replacement. Thus the total cost for restoring the Domes is approx. \$20 million. The 2017 [Peer Review](#) study comes to similar conclusions. A mock-up of the proposed glazing system is tentatively scheduled for early 2022.
- **\$12 million is the approximate amount Milwaukee County would contribute to a renewed Mitchell Park and Domes under the 2019 [Domes Task Force Plan's vision](#) (roughly the same cost as demolition).** This \$64 million vision would not just restore the Domes but invest further in the entire Mitchell Park, **providing a path to financial sustainability for the Domes, creating 300 quality jobs, and transforming the Park** into a center for urban agriculture, offering gardening and cooking classes, providing space for community gardens, and much more. The remainder of the funding would come from private capital, tax credits, and other outside sources.
- **\$64 million is a solution proposed in the 2016 [Costs & Options report](#), which would essentially reconstruct the Domes from the ground up.** The later [Glazing and Concrete Studies](#), along with the [Peer Review](#) of the Costs & Options report, indicate that **reconstruction would be unnecessarily costly and not return its energy savings for 200 years.** It is also **not consistent with County policy to preserve the Domes.**

The 2016 report is currently being updated as part of the Domes Project Team's work. Please spread the word about these important distinctions to your friends, [Supervisors](#), and [County Executive Crowley](#). There are financial challenges at the Domes, but they are surmountable!

December 2021 update

Thank you so much to everyone who spoke at the November 1 public budget meeting, submitted an eComment or wrote to their Supervisor in support of the Domes. **While the budget amendment did not pass, there was a strong public showing in support of the Domes** that let our County Supervisors know that their constituents are paying attention and desire a long term preservation solution.

We must keep it up! **We have another important opportunity to stand up in support of the Domes, preservation, health, and equity on Tuesday, December 7, at 9:00am.** At this time, the Domes Project Team will be providing an update to the County Parks Committee (consisting of members of the Board of Supervisors) at the virtual committee meeting related to the Project Team's progress in investigating various aspects of options for moving forward at the Domes (see September update below for some of MPA's concerns related to the group's understanding of the work of the Domes Task Force). The Project Team will also provide an updated timeline for the decision-making process, including opportunities for formal public input. You can review the Report and Timeline [here](#). This meeting and the time around it is **an important opportunity for you to share that you value the Domes** and want to see a long-term preservation solution!

How to participate:

- **Find your supervisor** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors> and write to them to let them know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Write to County Executive Crowley** at <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/County-Executive> and let him know the Domes are important to you and must be preserved.
- **Register to speak** at the meeting on behalf of the Domes by visiting <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Board-of-Supervisors/Standing-Committees>. You will need to scroll down on the page until you see the section with registration for the Parks, Energy and Environment Committee.

- **Leave an eComment** in support of the Domes (the ability to leave an eComment will likely not open until Fri., Dec. 3, but will be available at <https://milwaukeecounty.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> by clicking on the appropriate date for the Parks, Energy, and Environment Committee).

Key Messages to Emphasize:

- Please **move forward with a solution for the Domes and Mitchell Park that preserves the Domes** and the horticultural conservatory for future generations to enjoy.
- Please **provide for public involvement and transparency** in the decision-making process regarding the future of this important place.
- My fellow community members and **I support a long-term preservation solution for the Domes** that ensures this critical community asset continues to offer its many benefits for many years to come.
- **I support the positive work of the Domes Task Force**, which presented a vision for Mitchell Park that could create 300 quality jobs and transform the Park into a center for urban agriculture, offering gardening and cooking classes, providing space for community gardens, and much more to not only remediate food deserts and heat islands but create a culture of health and urban agriculture in the neighborhood and benefit the entire County.
- **Investment in the Domes is a matter of equity and in line with the County's stated vision** of being the healthiest county in the state by achieving racial equity. The neighborhood surrounding the Domes has limited green space and has been hit hard by the pandemic. Preserving the Domes and implementing the Domes Task Force vision would preserve and enhance year-round access to the proven physical and mental health benefits green space provides while transforming the Park into a learning, wellness, and horticultural campus that would increase health outcomes in the community.
- **The estimated cost of restoring the Domes is roughly \$20 million.** While more expensive options exist, County-commissioned studies (see below for links) have shown that the glazing could be repaired for long-term use for this amount and that the concrete is in good shape and can last for many years with proper maintenance. A further independent report by an internationally recognized firm specializing in historic buildings agreed that restoration is both possible

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and preferable to alternatives and can be accomplished for \$20 million when considering the possible use of Historic Tax Credits.

Please **review the complete County-commissioned [Domes Task Force Plan](#)**, completed in 2019 following 3 years of work by the Domes Task Force with public input, below. Also below are links to the 2019 **Pierce Engineering concrete study** and **ZS Engineering glazing study** indicating that the glazing could be repaired for long-term use for under \$20 million and that the concrete is in good shape and can last for many years with proper maintenance.

[Concrete Report](#)

[Glazing Report](#)

[Executive Summary](#)



October 2021 update

The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors are hosting the Annual Public Hearing on the County Budget this coming **Monday, November 1, at 6:00pm**. This is an important moment for us to share our collective voice in support of funding to move forward with a preservation solution for the Domes and remind the County how much we value this special place.

Sup. Ryan Clancy has introduced an amendment to the budget that would move funding from another department to provide for a start for the restoration of the Domes through an allocated contingency fund (meaning the funds would be available in perpetuity until spent). This funding would provide for a meaningful reinvestment in the future of the Domes and the many community benefits they provide. **By standing up to support putting money in the budget, you can make a difference for the future of our landmark Mitchell Park Domes!**

How to participate:

- The most impactful action you can take is to [register to speak at the meeting in support of funding for the Domes here](#). No need to be nervous! Your supervisors want to hear from residents, and your voice matters! All comments will be limited to 2 minutes, and even a brief statement that the Domes are important to you and you support funding their preservation has incredible impact.
- **Write to your County Supervisor** directly to share your support for the Domes. [Find your Supervisor here](#).
- **Write a eComment** [supporting funding for the Domes by visiting this site](#) and clicking on “Comment” next to Item 2 (File 21-920).
- **Share this information** with your friends and neighbors and encourage them to make a difference too!

Key messages to emphasize:

- **Investing in the Domes is an investment in equity** and in line with the County’s goals. The South Side neighborhood surrounding the Domes is a diverse, dense, working class community. It is 70% Latino and has more children under 10 than any other neighborhood in the City. 42% of residents live below the poverty level. The zip code bordering the Domes only has 1.8 acres of park per 1,000 residents while the City of Milwaukee as a whole has 8.8 acres of park per 1,000 residents according to 2017 Harbor District Water and Land Use Plan data. The Domes provide year round access to the proven physical and mental health benefits of green space that neighborhood and County residents deserve.
- **Investing in the future of the Domes will create jobs.** The Domes Task Force Plan, as it is envisioned, would create approximately 300 quality jobs for the neighborhood and region as Mitchell Park is transformed into a Learning, Wellness, and Horticultural campus, serving as a center

for urban agriculture, hosting research, offering gardening and cooking classes, providing space for community gardens, and much more.

- **Now is the time to act.** By investing in a long term preservation solution for the Mitchell Park Domes today, we can ensure that this treasure, one of the most iconic and beloved places in the County, continues to benefit the community for years to come.

Don't miss this opportunity to stand up and let our elected representatives know how important the Domes are to you!



September 2021 update

On September 14, 2021, the Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services (DAS) provided a substantial [update](#) on the Domes to the County Parks, Energy and Environment Committee and painted a discouraging picture for the future of the beloved icon. The update included a timeline of reports and other research that has transpired related to the structure and its financial viability as well as a game plan for **an “incremental decision-making process” that would have the County Board deciding on a path forward by next summer.**

The process is being led by a newly formed Domes Project Team consisting of the Parks Department, DAS, and the offices of the County Comptroller and Corporation Council, but not members of the County Board and with undefined opportunities for public engagement.

We applaud forward motion on the Domes, but **we are troubled to learn that the process appears to have limited transparency**, with the new Domes Project Team meeting without Board or public review or participation. Additionally, the picture being painted by the Project Team largely discounts the many years of hard work completed by the Domes Task Force. **The Task Force Plan was not meant to be a perfect roadmap, but rather presented a vision of possibility**, presenting a possible way forward that would support the will of the public and official County policy by preserving the Domes for decades to come, creating 300+ good jobs, and leveraging relatively limited County investment through tax credits and public-private partnerships.

We will continue to report on County plans and urge you to become involved.

Take Action

Milwaukee County residents can reach out NOW to [your County Supervisor](#), [County Executive David Crowley](#), and [County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson](#) to express your support for a long-term preservation solution for the Domes. It's important to include your address in your comment.

Your voice is critical to Save Our Domes!

[Review the County DAS Update](#)

[Read the WUWM Story](#)