

SUPERINTENDENT'S OCTOBER 2025 REPORT
COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary

September is always a month of transition, as we move from summer to preparing for winter – even when the weather still feels like summer. The community continues to make full use of the park system, though with shorter days the number of evening events is becoming limited. Fall also marked our annual Trucks and Treasures event, with over 630 people in attendance, and multiple City agencies showcasing the wide variety of equipment we use to serve the public. The Golf Program passed the \$5,000,000 in revenue by the end of September and is 6,000 rounds above last year's rounds numbers.

Our volunteer program has continued to flourish. This past month an event at the Olbrich Park nature play area, which focused on planting native plants, was a true community effort, with nearly 60 volunteers over three days (Sept. 17, 19, and 20). On the first day we partnered with Clean Lakes Alliance, and throughout the week volunteers from the UW, American Family Insurance, Johnson Financial, local neighbors, families, and the new Friends of Olbrich Park helped install more than 2,500 native plugs representing over 50 species around the children's natural play area. Kids pitched in alongside parents, and a neighborhood lemonade stand kept everyone hydrated while building a healthier, more welcoming park.

The lengthening of the shoulder seasons creates very real issues for us to adapt to in response to the changing climate. For example, with warm weather but limited lighting in our parks, should we install additional lighting so that our athletic fields and sport courts can be used for a longer period of time? What date is the right point in time to turn off our water fountains and close our bathrooms? We want these to be accessible, yet freezing weather is a very real possibility in October, despite high daytime temperatures. This last week, the Parks Leadership Team took a deep dive into the impacts of climate change in Wisconsin with guest speaker Steve Vavrus, from the UW Center for Climate Research. While the future weather can be described as "warmer and wetter" the Wisconsin climate will experience increased volatility, making it hard to predict which changes will have the greatest positive impact for our system. This is an issue that our team will continue to work on now and into the future.

As Commissioners will likely recall, in December 2023, the Community Development Authority requested to move forward with test boring to determine the feasibility of utilizing Brittingham Park for purposes of constructing a geothermal field to serve the CDA Triangle Redevelopment (Legislative File #81108). There has been some news coverage regarding the Triangle Redevelopment moving forward after significant planning and public engagement efforts. The Parks Division learned recently that following initial test boring that occurred in 2024, as well as evaluation of logistical, legal and financial reasons, CDA is moving forward with construction of a geothermal field that is self-contained within CDA's own properties. The Parks Division continues to remain committed to exploring innovative solutions around sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint, though not as was being explored in Brittingham Park.

Many of our capital projects have made great progress this summer. The Madison LakeWay project has finished its Design Development phase, and staff along with key stakeholders are assessing the project as we move into preparing documents for construction. The Madison LakeWay Partners have been strong participants in the development of the design and have begun the quiet phase of their capital fundraising campaign. The Madison Arts Commission will be initiating the process to find an artist for the public art that will be an integral part of the park design and is doing so with strong collaboration from the Madison LakeWay Partners.

Future Commission Items

- The following items will be brought to the Commission over the next year:
 - Alcohol in Parks Policy
 - Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
 - Olin Houses
 - Marshall Houses
 - Fall Work Plan Update

Personnel Updates

Promotions/Hires:

- Josephine Rinehart was promoted from a Special Event Attendant in Community Services to a Parks Worker position. Josephine is starting with Central Parks on September 29, 2025.

Section Updates

Parks Operations

Central Parks

- Performed shore repair along South and West Shore Roads caused by muskrat activity.
- Used the flail attachment on a tractor to complete annual prairie and non turf area mowing.
- Tree planting locations and feedback were completed, preparations for tree planting began.
- Pulled and treated perennial weeds including porcelain berry removal at Woodland Hills.
- Burned previously treated area of fescue at Elver Park.

Conservation

- Establishment mow prairie plantings at Cherokee Marsh and porcelain-berry control at Kettle Pond, Owen, and Stricker's Pond.
- Prescribed burns at Prairie Ridge and Turville Point.
- Trail maintenance performed including trimming vegetation and erosion repair.

Construction

- Completed the site work for the Door Creek ice rink.
- Repaired washout and added a rip rap spillway along the Olbrich nature play path.
- Playground maintenance staff continued with route maintenance, added mulch to various sites, power washed moss from structures and performed emergency repairs.

East Parks

- The new Door Creek Park shelter's grading project for a winter NiceRink concluded and Parks will begin regularly watering the area to establish grass before winter.
- Tiger mowing and turf mowing have begun at Starkweather Park to push back vegetation along the service drive and make the curbside appearance look more presentable.
- Parks supported volunteer mulching efforts by delivering mulch to Warner Park Beach for garden bed maintenance, and Sandburg Park for a new pollinator garden being installed.

Facilities

- Removed a manhole and relocated it at Door Creek for the ice-skating rink.
- Shelter winterization began at Goodman Pool, beach shelters and the splash pads.
- Installed Capitol Centre Signature sign for a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Mall Maintenance

- Finished up pedestrian light pole painting in service area.
- Aerated, overseeded, fertilized turf areas.
- Changed seasonal banners to autumn and started leaf collection

West Parks

- Pruned invasive and encroaching brush on park property lines and managed meadows.
- Equipment demonstrations to improve athletic field maintenance and increase our brush/rough mowing capabilities.
- Started leaf mulching and fall clean-up operations at Forest Hill.

Planning and Development

- The 2025-2030 Park and Open Space Plan was approved by the Board of Public Works and the Plan Commission.
- Parks staff is recommending to award Contract #9679, Olin Park Pedestrian Bridge Replacement, to Drax, Inc. The contract total is \$136,500. Award of the bid is pending approval by the Board of Public Works and Common Council.
- Parks staff is recommending to award Contract #9674, 346 E. Lakeside Demolition, to Speedway Sand & Gravel, Inc. The contract total is \$68,178.93. Award of the bid is pending approval by the Board of Public Works and Common Council.
- The Parks Sun Shelters contract is nearing completion, with the Kestrel Park sun shelter set to be completed by October 17. The shelters at North Star Park and Sycamore Park have been previously completed.
- Design is in-progress for the Warner Park Pickleball Courts. A Public Information Meeting is scheduled to be held on October 9 to receive input on the design.
- Parks received a tentative Land and Water Conservation Fund grant award from the Wisconsin DNR for \$369,691 towards the Warner Park Southeast Recreation Area project.
- Staff held the first public meeting for the Woods Farm Park and Canter Park Development Plans. Staff will hold a second public meeting on October 29 prior to preparing the final plan for review by the Board of Park Commissioners.
- Staff have been working to prepare a refined Master Plan for Midtown Commons Park and expects to hold a second public meeting in October prior to preparing the final plan for review by the Board of Park Commissioners.
- Staff is working to complete construction document for bidding playground replacements at Kennedy Park, Skyview Park, Sandburg Park, and Ontario Park. The contract is currently anticipated to be let for bidding in November.
- The Rennebohm Park east tennis court reconstruction project is nearing completion, with the contractor set to complete fencing and acrylic surfacing work in early October.
- The design of the Hoyt Park Parking lot has continued. Staff have engaged an Archeologist to assist with preparing necessary materials for approvals from the Wisconsin DNR related to the historic designation of the park.
- An RFP was release for consultants for the re-design of Cypress Splash Park. The project will include the full replacement of the existing splash pad and playground.

- With construction beginning to come to a close for the year, staff are working to complete yearly inspections ahead of winter. Inspections this year include 109 full-court and 38 half-court basketball courts. All basketball courts are inspected and rated in order to prioritize upcoming maintenance and replacement work.
- Development reviews: In the month of September staff completed 31 reviews of development projects.
- Impact Fees: In the month of September, staff coordinated and administered approximately \$430,000 of Park Impact Fee payments through 30 separate payments.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

- Comprehensive & Interpretive Plans – The contract with Reed Hildebrand is officially signed. We're officially kicking off the plans on October 6th with internal staff listening sessions. Public workshops are scheduled for November 13th. More details to come!
- Thai Festival – On Sunday, September 14th from 11am-4pm, Olbrich Botanical Gardens hosted a Thai Festival in collaboration with the Thai Cultural Fine Arts Institute. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway along with Dean Frances Vavrus from the University of Wisconsin – International Division participated in the ribbon cutting celebrating the restoration of the Royal Thai Pavilion. Thai performers from Thailand, Chicago, Tennessee, Houston, and California entertained audiences with musical and dance performances. The Frautschi Family Learning Center hosted a variety of Thai cultural workshops where the public participated in creating a variety of Thai crafts.

