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Equity and access audits planned for Dane County Parks, zoo

Jan 12, 2022



The Dane County Board of Supervisors recently launched a project to conduct an independent evaluation of equity and access at Dane County Parks and the Henry Vilas Zoo.



The contract with Keen Independent Research, a national equity consulting firm, is in the amount of \$99,990. Principals David Keen and Annette Humm Keen are leading the evaluation.

Keen has led more than 100 equity studies and has served as an expert witness on the subject of equity programs.

The process will include in-depth qualitative and quantitative research to form a better understanding, particularly in relation to issues of equity and access, of the demographics of who is and is not utilizing Dane County's public spaces. Keen Independent will ask local community members and stakeholders for input through interviews, surveys, onsite visits, focus groups, and other means.

Goals of the assessment include:

- Gaining a better understanding of the demographics of who is currently using Dane County Parks and Zoo and how they are using these places.
- Gaining a better understanding of who is *not* visiting Dane County Parks and Zoo and what the barriers are, or if there are other reasons why they are not visiting Dane County Parks and Zoo.
- Provide specific recommendations to the County Board Office that will remove identified barriers to racial and social equity and access, including access to people of all abilities, at Dane County Parks and Henry Vilas Zoo and strengthen racial and social equity and access to people of all abilities at Dane County Parks and Zoo facilities, lands, properties, and programming.

Keen has developed several opportunities for community members to provide input on equity and inclusion at Dane County Parks and Henry Vilas Zoo facilities and programming, including an advisory group, virtual and onsite surveys, focus groups,



and a dedicated project website, hotline, and email for people and organizations to access and offer feedback at their convenience. The project website, hotline, and email can be found here:

Website: <https://keenindependent.com/danecoparksandzooequity/>

Hotline: 608-205-8444

Email: danecoparksandzooequity@keenindependent.com

“We know that Dane County’s parks, trails, and recreational spaces and the Henry Vilas Zoo are treasured resources in the county and we are excited to explore additional ways to ensure the joys and benefits of these natural, cultural, and educational resources are accessible to all members of the Dane County community in ways that are positive and meaningful,” said Dane County Board Chair Analiese Eiche, who is from Sun Prairie.

The assessment and outreach will take place over the first half of 2022 with final recommendations anticipated in late summer of 2022.

The 37-member, nonpartisan Dane County Board of Supervisors represents the needs and welfare of all residents of Dane County, Wisconsin, and sets policy for Dane County operations in the areas of human needs, infrastructure, criminal justice, the environment and County finance. The board meets twice monthly at 7 p.m. Agendas are available at <https://dane.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

