

A youth member of one finalist community is also recognized with the AAC Youth Award. Nominations for this award will be requested after finalists are announced.

### Community Information

Community name and state: Brown Deer, Wisconsin

Your community is applying as a:

Neighborhood  Village  Town  Tribe  City  County  Region

If applying as a region, name participating communities: \_\_\_\_\_

If applying as a neighborhood, name city: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your community applied before? Yes  No  If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your community been a Finalist before? Yes  No  If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your community been an All-America City before? Yes  No  If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

### Contact Information

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout competition & follow-up):

Name: Nate Piotrowski Title (if any): Community Development Director

Organization/Government/Other: Village of Brown Deer

Address: 4800 W. Green Brook Drive City, State, Zip Brown Deer WI 53223

Phone (business/day): 414-371-3061 Mobile Phone 414-308-7450

E-mail Address(es): npiotrowski@browndeerwi.org

The applying community will receive a complimentary membership (or membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name Michael Hall

Address 4800 W. Green Brook Drive

City, State & Zip Code Brown Deer WI 53223

Phone Number 414-371-3050 Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email mhall@browndeerwi.org

We agree to follow NCL's rules regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League. We allow NCL and the All-America City Award to share this application and the information enclosed in it with the NCL and AAC networks to promote the work of our community. If we are named an All-America City, we agree to conduct a post-AAC conference call or regional forum for the AAC network that features our projects. In a pay-it-forward spirit, if named a finalist or All-America City, we agree to consider supporting AAC through an NCL membership for a minimum of the next three years.

Signature: Nate Piotrowski Date: 3/8/16

Name: Nate Piotrowski Title: Community Development Director

## Community Statistics and Map

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (source suggestions: U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics).

POPULATION (in year 2010 or most recent): 12,217 (2015 estimate)

Source/Date: Wisconsin Demographic Services Center

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 2000-2010 (indicate + or -): 1.8 % 2010-2015

Source/Date: Wisconsin Demographic Services Center

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN:

White	<u>62</u> %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	<u>4</u> %
Black or African American	<u>29</u> %
Asian	<u>5</u> %
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN)	<u>.4</u> %
Mixed Race	<u>3</u> %
Other	<u>1</u> %

Source/Date: US Census 2010

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 55,396

Source/Date: 2010-2014 ACS 5 year estimates

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 9.6 %

Source/Date: 2010-2014 ACS 5 year estimates

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: \_\_\_\_\_ %

Source/Date:

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP (percentages, if available):

19 years old and under	<u>21</u> %
20-24	<u>7</u> %
25-44	<u>25</u> %
45-64	<u>29</u> %
65 and over	<u>18</u> %

Source/Date: 2010-2014 ACS 5 year estimates

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 67 %

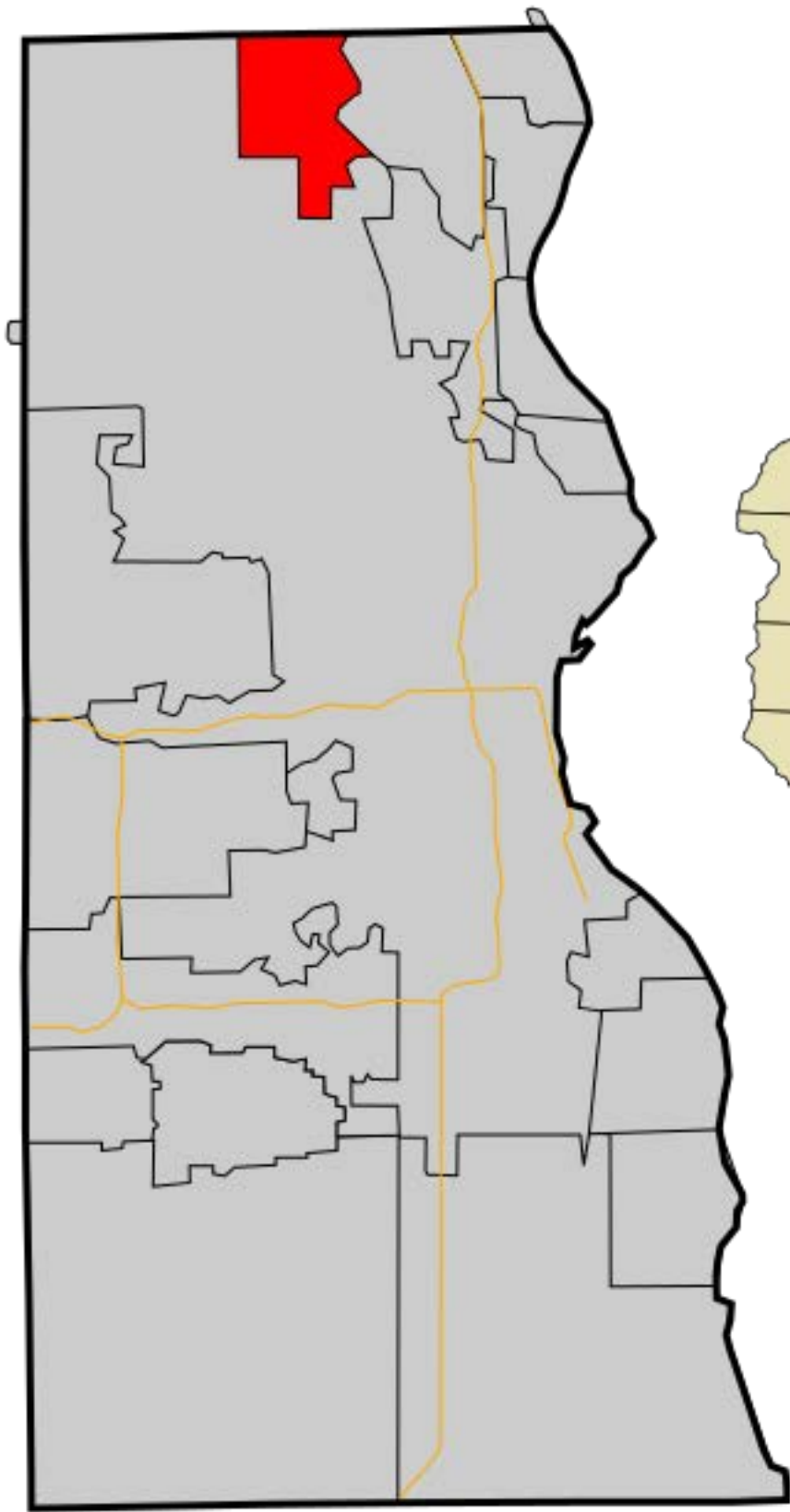
Source/Date:

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors (include military services and/or installations, if any) in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

<u>Education, health and social services</u>	<u>19</u> %
<u>Manufacturing</u>	<u>18</u> %
<u>Professional, scientific, mgmt., admin &amp; waste mgmt.</u>	<u>13</u> %

Source/Date: US Census 2000

MAP -- Please attach a state map (8.5" x 11") with your community clearly marked

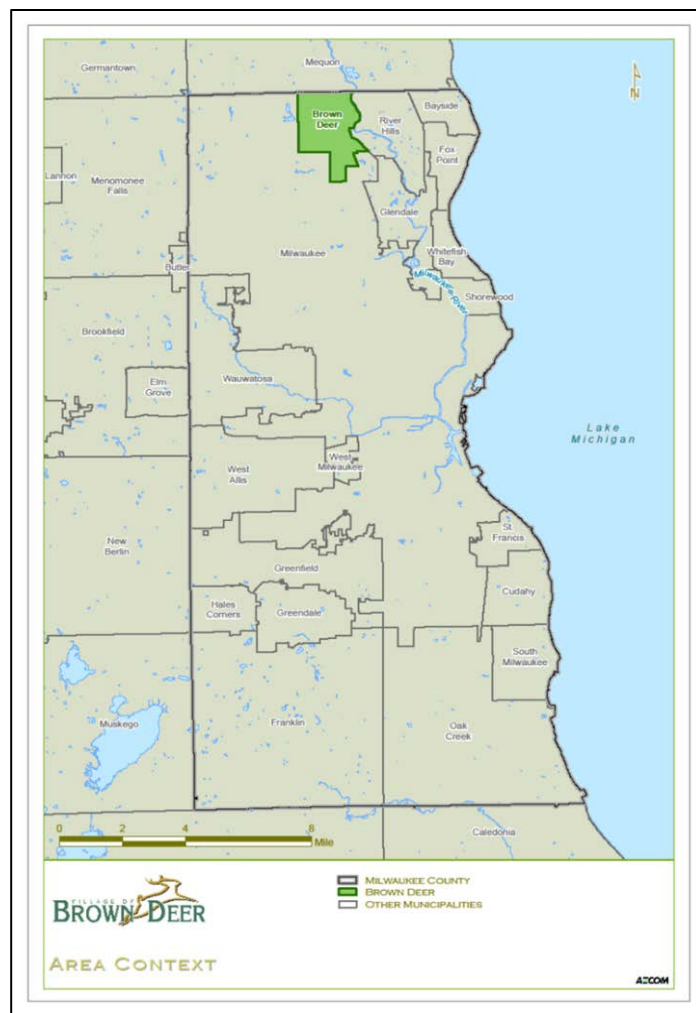


## PART I: An Introduction to Brown Deer, Wisconsin

### Introduction

There is only one community named Brown Deer. Look it up. It is literally the only place in America with the name. A unique name for a unique community that stands alone in many respects. Upon closer inspection, however, a hard-working, blue-collar microcosm of America appears in full view. Our Village has an outsized energy, determination, and record that many larger cities would love to swap with us. It is a record that merits recognition as that of an All-America City. Let us introduce you to Brown Deer, and to three exciting projects that are allowing us to improve the lives and futures of our children in ways that deserve national recognition. Before we showcase those efforts, though, let us share some background information with you.

Brown Deer is one of the seven original northern suburbs of Milwaukee, known locally as the “Northshore”. It is located at the north end of Milwaukee County, in between Milwaukee’s northwest side and the Northshore suburbs. The Village is fairly young, incorporated in 1955 after a bitter annexation battle with the City of Milwaukee wherein it lost 80% of its territory. For that reason Brown Deer is on the smaller side, at 4.4 square miles and 12,000 residents. That rough start, however, didn’t stop the young Village from developing a well-balanced mix of industrial, commercial, and professional employers that helped build a thriving suburban community.



To this day Brown Deer is home to several firms that are national leaders in their fields, such as Tapco (traffic safety systems and products), Badger Meter (flow measurement control technologies), and FIS (banking software). This balance of innovative employers reflects Brown Deer's identity as the most diverse community in Wisconsin, yet also describes the economic breadth that makes our Village a true snapshot of America. Add to that a great school system, an extensive and diverse menu of public programming, a well-built park and trail system, a solid set of community stakeholders, and you've got an All-America City whose story deserves recognition. Our story is one of transitions, and of the "middle ground" between the social and economic extremes of the inner city, and the gated communities of Milwaukee's suburbs. The mix of good employment, proximity to big-city amenities, affordable homes, strong schools, and cultural diversity sorely lacking in the rest of suburban Milwaukee all contribute to our success.

No community, however, is immune to difficulties or challenges. De-industrialization and the Great Recession dealt massive blows to the Milwaukee-area economy, which for several decades enjoyed a greater concentration of manufacturing employment than any other region. As a Rust Belt suburb, Brown Deer could not entirely escape the economic reality American urban areas have faced for decades. As thousands of manufacturing jobs disappeared or went overseas, and Americans fled the inner cities to the perceived safety of the suburbs, urban incomes and employment plummeted. Thousands of well-paid professionals in the nearby neighborhoods of northwestern Milwaukee fled, taking their capital with them.

With the economic costs came social ones as well. From the beginning of its existence, Brown Deer always stood out from both the city and surrounding suburbs, in the way it had avoided the exclusionary zoning practices that make Milwaukee and its suburbs the most racially segregated urban area in America. Brown Deer's inclusive culture and insistence on maintaining a diverse housing stock serving all income groups made it Wisconsin's most diverse suburban community. Yet ironically this also served to dilute the community's identity, as the Village came to be associated more with the sprawling, blighted Milwaukee neighborhoods to the south and west, than with its comfy, sheltered suburban neighbors to the north and east. Enormous demographic and political shifts occurred too, as older, whiter, middle-class populations in neighboring Milwaukee's northwestern neighborhoods were replaced with poorer, younger,

more racially diverse newcomers with little access to Milwaukee's political power structure. As the political "distance" from City Hall increased, northwestern Milwaukee was effectively isolated from public investment for several decades, making it almost impossible for Brown Deer and the City of Milwaukee to jointly address common problems with crime, unemployment, and urban blight. Eventually local government, small business leaders, and other community stakeholders realized that the Village would have to behave more pro-actively, and more independently, if it was to meet the challenges of the time and properly reinvent itself.

Much of the vibrancy and can-do spirit one encounters in Brown Deer can be traced back to this time, just over a decade ago, when the Village began to take a fresh look at itself. Forward-looking Village managers brought in younger planning staff, with fresh ideas and energy. A greater importance was attached to seeking out a vision for the Village, as opposed to simply reacting to external events. The Village worked with six neighboring suburbs to consolidate services like fire prevention, public health, and a consolidated dispatch center, while managing to get both of the new commissions headquartered in Brown Deer. The Public Policy Forum recognized the dispatch center as a success that set the standard for regional consolidation efforts. The North Shore Fire Department also recently gained accreditation for the high caliber of its training and service programming, a recognition that has only been awarded to 219 fire & rescue organizations nationwide. In 2010, local business leaders formed the Granville-Brown Deer Chamber of Commerce to jointly address regional economic issues with corporate neighbors in Milwaukee. This was also the period in which the school district began to take a serious look at the idea of revamping the District's entire educational system.

This new enthusiasm was encapsulated in the Village's 2009 Comprehensive Plan. This document was the culmination of thousands of hours of work by hundreds of people in the community. Key stakeholders, Village staff, and elected officials were identified and interviewed. Community workshops were organized and public comment was collected, before the plan was written and published. The new plan provided a clear distillation of the public's priorities and vision for the future. Three themes relating directly to the welfare of the Village's children stood out clearly: education, diversity, and environmental sustainability. Let's take a closer look at how the community addressed these stated priorities.

In 2011, Brown Deer voters truly set themselves apart by approving \$22 million in new bonds to remake the educational system. Brown Deer residents effectively voted themselves a tax increase, during the worst days of the Great Recession, to ensure that their children could receive an education consistent with the highest ideals and hopes of the community. With the new funds, Village residents and school district officials embarked on the second of the three projects we will describe in more detail in Part II: the creation of a School District Campus Master Plan. This bold revamping of the education system involved a new academic plan and ethos for the entire school district, a massive upgrading of all facilities, an aggressive focus on enhancing outdoor learning opportunities for the children, and the use of innovative financing techniques that resulted in zero interest payments, saving area taxpayers millions of dollars. The development of this new approach to education comprises the third project we will share with you in Part II.

This burst of community energy triggered an additional \$100,000 private donation towards the construction of the Fieldhouse from Brown Deer High School alumnus and NBA star, Mr. Steve Novak. It also catalyzed public efforts to extend sidewalks throughout the Village, and to use streetscaping to reduce average motor vehicle velocity on 60<sup>th</sup> Street, a busy and once-dangerous thoroughfare running alongside the school campus' western border. Since then the school district has noted an increase in children walking or biking to school and reductions in traffic incidents and average vehicular velocity on streets bordering the School Campus. The Brown Deer Falcons have also brought home two state basketball championships in the last three years and built the largest indoor rock-climbing wall in the state of Wisconsin.

Brown Deer residents can be proud of their record on diversity as well. Since its founding, Brown Deer has always been the most racially integrated suburb in Wisconsin, in stark contrast to Milwaukee's troubling legacy as America's most racially segregated large city. As mentioned earlier this was due in part to Brown Deer's refusal to enact exclusionary zoning practices used almost universally to bar racial minorities from the rest of Milwaukee's suburbs. In an effort to continue this positive legacy and enhance inclusivity, the Village has aggressively pursued a project to reduce the historic isolation of predominantly poorer, predominantly African-American children in Brown Deer's northeast quadrant from access to Village green spaces. This happens to be the first of the three projects we will describe in greater detail in the next section of this application.

The commitment to inclusion does not end with race, either. Diversity includes factors like income, age, and physical ability too. Village development policies have consistently encouraged the maintenance of a variety of housing stocks and residential developments that allow a broader spectrum of incomes and housing options than is the case virtually anywhere else in the Northshore. It is part of the reason that CNN/Money Magazine ranked Brown Deer 19<sup>th</sup> in the Nation for home affordability in December 2013. Neighboring suburbs using their zoning codes to prohibit affordable housing developments or small lots have, for example, made it difficult or impossible for senior citizens to find local housing that matches their needs or income. Since 2010, Brown Deer has facilitated the construction of four residential development projects that involve facilitated care, assisted living, memory care, or hospice care, welcoming an estimated 350 senior citizens into our community. Another example of inclusion is the new Badger Meter River Park Boat Launch that the Village finished in the autumn of 2015, the first ADA-accessible boat launch built on the Milwaukee River.

In addition to highlighting Brown Deer's remarkable diversity, the boat launch reflects the focus on environmental sustainability embodied in several recent Village projects. Three years ago the Village attained recognition as a Tree City USA municipality. Two years ago it succeeded in qualifying as a Bird City USA community. Last year the Village also completed its first five-year Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. This document allows Brown Deer to qualify for state and federal funding to promote outdoor programming and to enhance the viability and connectivity of green spaces throughout the Village. In 2011 the Village built the Brown Deer Recreational Trail along an old rail line, connecting Milwaukee County's nationally renowned, 96-mile Oak Leaf Trail to Ozaukee County's fantastic Interurban Trail for the first time. In 2007 the Village also rebuilt a 3,000 square-foot bathhouse facility to complement the region's only chlorinated Swim Pond within a Village park alongside the new Recreational Trail. The Village also spent millions of dollars depaving and re-naturalizing two historic creeks running through the Village. Although the process isn't complete, the Village, in partnership with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, has already reaped tremendous benefits from these investments in sustainability, significantly reducing water runoff by hundreds of thousands of gallons as well as beautifying the community. The Village's commitment to environmental sustainability also paid off handsomely in 2011 when the historic floods that ravaged the area barely touched Brown Deer, thanks to new stormwater drainage

systems that protected residents from the worst of flooding that left thousands of Milwaukee-area basements underwater.

Whether looking at our bold educational investments, our dedication to diversity, or the resilience we gained from investing in our natural environment, we are proud of the distances to which Brown Deer residents have gone and will go, to protect our children and their dreams. We trust that the three projects described below provide an accurate description of the innovation, optimism, and determination to serve our children that make Brown Deer a 2016 All-America City!

## **Part II: Three Brown Deer Projects**

### **Project #1 – Getting Children in the North River Corridor Access to Green Space**

Comprehensive plans for the Village dating back to the 1960's recognized a general failure to make green space accessible to the public throughout the community. Over time many projects have addressed this issue. One area, hemmed in by two major state highways and the Milwaukee River, is known as the "North River Corridor". (see Appendix - "North River Corridor") It remained isolated from green space access due to private ownership and a lack of safe and alternative transportation options. The North River Corridor also happens to contain the highest concentration of multifamily and affordable housing units in the Village. The area is frankly younger, more racially diverse, with lower median incomes than the rest of the Village. A map of the Village's green spaces (see Appendix - "Natural Resources") and an outline of the North River Corridor, shows that residents in this geographical pocket without an automobile (primarily children and the elderly) are effectively isolated from the Village's outdoor and natural amenities, due to a lack of sidewalks, trails and transportation options.

The Community Services Department staff took the view that since this situation did not emerge overnight, it would not be resolved overnight either. Improving transportation alternatives and public access to green spaces, parks, and outdoor programming would require a patient, concerted, and long-term approach to these challenges.

With this in mind, the Community Services Department completed an area land use plan in 2011 which sought to identify issues and opportunities in the "North River Corridor". The plan identified mass transit opportunities, bike trail possibilities and pedestrian enhancements. It also sought to identify "green" and "child-friendly" assets in the corridor. Land use analysis revealed an abundant amount of green space available along the Milwaukee River and nearby if only access could be provided. This green space included lands held by the Milwaukee Audubon Society and the local Rite Hite YMCA branch totaling more than 100 acres. This acreage was either fenced off as private property, made inaccessible behind a large shopping mall, or located on the opposite side of the river with no

pedestrian or transit connections. Most of the general Brown Deer public was unaware that any of this green space even existed. Interestingly, the plan identified one piece of property where public access to the River could be supported and perhaps provide the basis for a broader connection to the wealth of nearby green space. This area belonged to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as right of way for State Highway 100 (W. Brown Deer Road). Staff appealed to the department to consider a vacation of right of way and sale of the land for a public park instead of use as excess right of way. After a year of meetings, requests and lobbying, the state agreed to a sale in 2014 based on the Village's appeals. In 2015, the Village partnered with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, The Conservation Fund, and a local employer by the name of Badger Meter, to acquire the land, revitalize the space and create a new park with trails, natural landscaping, access paths and a handicap-accessible, non-motorized boat launch. The new Badger Meter River Park (see Appendix - "Conceptual Site Plan") now allows children and anyone with a kayak or canoe to enjoy direct access to the Milwaukee River. Village staff have begun communications with educators at in the Brown Deer School district and those districts downriver, to establish inter-district canoe rides allowing children the opportunity to use the new park and the Milwaukee River to further their understanding of local geography, history, biology, and geology. Plans are also underway to establish formal connections to the Milwaukee Audubon Society and YMCA properties thereby leveraging the new park as a trailhead for a regional interagency 100+ acre greenspace. These efforts will substantially increase direct access to green space for residents within the North River Corridor.

To improve accessibility to the rest of the Village, however, the Village has undertaken several other initiatives to improve multi modal connections. In 2015 the Village partnered with Milwaukee County Transit to add an east-west transit route (Route 276) which directly serves the North River Corridor and traverses the entire Village in an east-west fashion. This bus route allows residents throughout Brown Deer to access all of the community's parks and recreational trails.

Finally the area plan identified the intersection of Highways 57 and 100, at the southwestern corner of the North River Corridor, as an impediment to multi-modal transportation. The intersection is due for re-evaluation and possible reconstruction. The Village has taken this opportunity to negotiate aggressively with the state Department of Transportation to reduce the size of the intersection and make it friendlier to bicyclists and pedestrians. In fact the Department of

transportation is now proposing to eliminate a freeway style overpass at this intersection and replace it with an at-grade design featuring median U-turns. Such a design would allow for a substantial reduction in the construction footprint of the intersection safer pedestrian crossings, bike access and improved transit stops allowing while making the intersection safer and more aesthetically pleasing.

**Project #1 Contact:**

Fernando Moreno - Zoning & Planning Specialist  
Community Services Department  
Village of Brown Deer  
4800 West Green Brook Drive  
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## **Project #2: The Brown Deer School District Master Campus Plan**

The Brown Deer School District is one of the most diverse districts in the state. Seventy percent of the student body comprises children of color that, as a subset of the student population, suffer from a 43% poverty rate. As one of the largest employers in the Village, Brown Deer's School District employs 220 committed and dedicated teachers and ancillary staff. These men and women have made tremendous strides in narrowing the achievement and graduation gap. Our majority-minority district enjoys one of the best graduation rates across the state, if not the best one, at 98.6%. We have been able to narrow these gaps with leadership from our school board, students, families, teachers, staff, and the greater Village community, doing whatever it takes to improve achievement. It truly takes a Village.

For a decade, the Brown Deer school community has nurtured a vision for creating a campus that would better serve our children and meet growing community needs for services and activities that promote the whole child concept. This vision has become a reality as we opened our new field house, fitness center, art rooms, and commons in April of 2012. Having radically transformed the physical landscape, and utilizing all of our campus for learning both indoors and outdoors, the Brown Deer School District will be able to fulfill its mission to inspire students to become passionate learners, creative thinkers, and innovative leaders who enrich our world. The journey to create our schools as the centerpiece of the community is a collaborative effort of courage and bold decision making of our school and village boards, parents, school staff, community groups, the Granville Brown Deer Chamber, Milwaukee North Shore Rotary, business partners, and alumni. An old proverb states: "If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, GO TOGETHER," and we couldn't have gotten far without an unbelievable team of volunteers and staff who have been on this journey TOGETHER to see our dreams come true. This is a great example of how a village comes together - it's about transformation and bringing new life to forgotten spaces by acknowledging all of the potential and delivering with a purpose.

Our mission reflects our aspirations for student achievement - students improving and growing throughout their educational experiences in Brown Deer prepared

for college and career ready work. Through the strategic planning process over 70 school community members explored the development of a cohesive, holistic vision for our shared future. We formulated an academic plan that enabled our district to create a 21st century culture of achievement accelerating the academic success for all of our children. This was an ambitious plan, with a priority on learning and leading together to realize great opportunities for all members of our Brown Deer Village.

As a changing school community, we were faced with a significant challenge - how to provide a quality, 21<sup>st</sup> century education with 20<sup>th</sup> century facilities that urgently required upgrading and complete replacement. In November 2011, 65% of local voters approved the issuance of \$18 million in bonds, to remake the school system. A second \$4 million question was also approved with 53% approval for a grand total of \$22 million! The key to our success was a set of well-defined and clearly explained needs, a brilliant financing plan, and a price that seemed fair to taxpayers during the worst recession since the Great Depression. Our strategic planning goal did not simply consist of new buildings and equipment. It was approved because we were able to articulate a vision for a new way of approaching our children's education in general.

Creating a learning environment was more than "bricks and mortar". It was about the "places" designed for learning. The physical environment influences learning and contributes to the health, well-being, and quality of life for everyone - young and old, in our community. We have embraced efforts to bring more real-life learning experiences to our students, staff, and community. To best meet the needs of 21st century students, our schools now have dynamic and flexible learning spaces. The future is about the individual learner and the learning process - what, where, how and all of the tools are used for the learning process. Collaboration, teamwork, project-based learning, and the savvy use of technology are newer skill sets that our students will need simply to survive, let alone achieve success in a very connected, competitive international economy and society.

The School Board of Education approved a beautiful integrated master campus plan that not only modernizes and reconfigures efficient use of classroom space but connects our students to nature through the exposure to 60+ acres of habitat, wildlife, plantings, and trees on our campus. Learning happens outside of our classroom walls through the development of outdoor learning classrooms, spaces that encourage discovery and exploration, combination of hard and soft surfaces

for walking/running trails and play spaces integrated to meet a variety of needs throughout the campus. The very built environment itself is now seen as a learning tool, with the assumption that learning takes place anywhere and at anytime on our campus. The campus is designed to prioritize the outdoors ability to teach our children, as highly as we would previously prioritize the ability of a classroom to do so. The “whole” child is a reflection of a “whole” exposure to the environment.

More on Whole Child....

On April 10, 2103, a special celebration of transformation, inspiration, and generosity was the “Shining Moment” as the Brown Deer School District unveiled Phase 1 of their \$22 Million Dollar construction project. The journey to create the schools as the centerpiece of the community has been a collaborative effort of our entire community. The newly consolidated buildings created a two-school 21st century, technology-infused campus that will provide exceptional learning opportunities and revitalize the school campus for many years to come. “Our dreams are coming true as this vision has finally become a reality as we opened our new field house, fitness center, art classrooms, and newly renovated schools,” said Superintendent Dr. Deb Kerr, to the large crowd of over 2,000 gathered to celebrate this long overdue facilities improvement. Little did anyone know in the audience that a former student and current NBA player, Steve Novak would help put the finishing touches on the project by announcing that he and his wife, Christina donated \$100,000 to the transformation project in honor of his family. Steve Novak represents one of our most successful alumni whose commitment to education, hard work ethic, and service to community exemplifies the “Brown Deer Way.” Novak and his wife made this donation to recognize the vision, work ethic, and dedication of his father, Mike Novak, Brown Deer’s long-time Athletic Director, successful boy’s basketball coach, and former teacher. Steve Novak thanked the community and praised the work of the Board, “The people of Brown Deer had the vision and generosity to see that this project could set the community apart, it is truly a beautiful thing and honor to be a part of this.”

In education today, our challenge is to leverage high levels of learning, technology, and sustainability to create an engaging, relevant, and personalized learning experience for our students. Not only are we teaching our students to read, express themselves through writing, critically think and solve problems, we are teaching them to set goals, connect with nature, and aspire to lifelong

learning. Our district master campus plan is a design that inspires and shapes the aspirations for our future. We now have a Brown Deer Botanical Garden in our Village. This project has created meaningful opportunities for our school community to engage, invest in education, volunteer, benefit from updated facilities and build lasting coalitions and partnerships for our children.

One of the most creative aspects of the district master campus plan was to finance the project using zero interest via the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds program, (QZAB) a federal initiative that provides free bonds for school district construction projects for facilities renovation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, equipment, curriculum, and teacher training. In order to qualify for the bonds the school district applied to the state of Wisconsin for \$7.4 million and had secured required private matching for 10% of the project costs through Focus on Energy grants, private contributions from local businesses, community organizations, and volunteer services.

Dr. Gary Williams, School Board President, stated that “everyone in the community was able to get involved, from the youngest toddlers to the most senior, just like old fashioned barn raisings of the past, to help create a better Brown Deer and improve the quality of life for all of our residents.” The QZAB matching goal for Brown Deer is \$740,000 in five years. At the three-year mark, the community is well on its way to reaching the goal, currently standing at \$521,400 of matching funds. The fundraising project has catalyzed a great sense of community as it generated thousands of volunteer hours to plant flowers, habitats, oak savannahs, rain gardens, and the revitalization of a river that runs through the campus. Additionally, this has spurred students to build “Little Free Libraries” and Campus Map Boxes - six in total to support reading as a Village. The concept of the “free library” originated in Wisconsin, and the project has been adopted wholeheartedly by local children and parents. The Milwaukee North Shore Rotary sponsored our student group, “Interact” to help build the libraries, collect books, and keep the libraries stocked at all times with several books.

The journey to create our schools as the centerpiece of the community has been a collaborative effort of parents, staff, Board of Education, Village Board, community groups, Granville-Brown Deer chamber, Milwaukee North Shore Rotary, business partners, and Alumni. The master campus plan is a design that inspires and shapes the aspirations for our educational future. This project has created meaningful opportunities for our school community to engage, invest in

education, benefit from updated facilities and build lasting coalitions and partnerships for our children. We would not have been successful without an unbelievable team of volunteers, staff, and a courageous Board of Education that was willing to promote the educational needs of this project and to help the community to understand the value of investing in our schools. The Brown Deer school community and Village has come together to bring new life to buildings and forgotten spaces by supporting a successful referendum and award-winning district campus plan that has created a legacy of educational opportunity and value for a lifetime. Through this project, we have learned to work together to inspire, innovate, and lead with our school community to promote our campus as the centerpiece of the Village of Brown Deer.

**Project #2 Contact:**

Dr. Deborah Kerr - Superintendent

Brown Deer School District

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### **Project #3: “The Brown Deer Way” & Character Education**

In September of 2013, we opened up our reconfigured schools, renovated learning spaces, and breathtaking outdoor learning spaces to the excitement and joy of 1,600 students, their families, and staff. As one of the most diverse school districts in the state of Wisconsin, Brown Deer has made great strides to provide a rigorous, relevant and high quality education for every student through our strategic plan. More students are on grade level than ever before in reading and math, students are learning to read at an earlier age, and more students are being provided with opportunities to succeed at higher levels than ever. None of the successes achieved would be possible without the exceptional staff and the unwavering support that the citizens of our Village give to our schools. It is this partnership and spirit of teamwork that will allow us to continue to serve our students at the highest levels for generations to come.

But once upon a time, it wasn't like this. Over the last ten years the community has dramatically changed to a majority-minority neighborhood with African Americans the dominant ethnic group. Author and Futurist, Gary Marx in his book, [21 Trends for the 21st Century](#) identifies trends that will have a profound impact on our future. One of the top identified trends relates to diversity, he predicts,

*“In a series of tipping points, majorities will become minorities creating ongoing challenges for social cohesion. Worldwide growing numbers of people and nations will discover that if we manage our diversity well, it will enrich us. If we don't manage our diversity well, it will divide us.”*

## DIVERSITY

Diversity embodies inclusiveness, mutual respect, and multiple perspectives and serves as a catalyst for change resulting in health equity. In this context we are mindful of all aspect of human differences such as immigrants and first generation Americans, the first language spoken at home, first generation college graduates, race/ethnicity, sex, gender identity & sexual orientation, and age.

DIVERSITY &  
INCLUSION

In just nine years, Brown Deer would become one of the most diverse school communities in the state with over 70% students of color. The Great Recession pushed the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch from 22% to almost 50% of the population. While diversity has been prevalent all around us, we are not sure that the community or board of education could have predicted how this dramatic shift would bring unforeseen challenges as negative perceptions became front page news. Dark shadows were cast upon our school district as behavior issues became more prevalent causing some “white flight” to surrounding communities and school districts not as diverse.

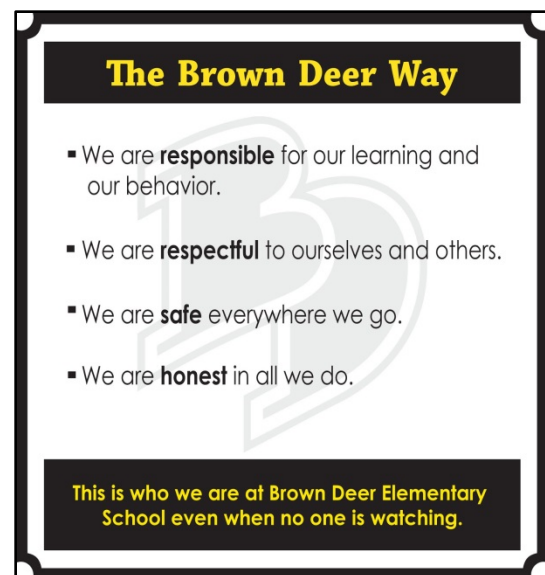
Five years ago, we received a letter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction indicating that we had an unusually high percentage of African American suspensions. After we reviewed the issue internally to better understand the root causes, we concluded that the numbers were indeed disproportionate, and unacceptably high. We applied for and received a state grant to study this phenomenon and improve our performance in regards to positive behavior modeling. This was our introduction, as a district, to character education and the Leadership to Advance Character Education (LACE) program. Thus ironically it was through adversity that we came to a better understanding of the moral code we call the Brown Deer Way.

The Brown Deer Way has become an innovative learning philosophy which focuses on students throughout the curriculum, teaching the values of acceptance, trust, honesty, respect and responsibility for themselves, their peers, their school and their community. By engaging students, parents and the entire community in the process, everyone has a voice in the positive outcome of our character education philosophy. The program starts at the top with teachers setting the pace by modeling examples of norms and expectations via personal behavior. As students have followed their lead, the results have been remarkable

as students replaced bad habits with positive behaviors and become more responsible individuals and model citizens. Positive behavior is acknowledged and celebrated at each school level. Monthly activities focus on specific character traits set forth in the Brown Deer Touchstone, and as needed in the school community. Daily quotes are created around the character trait of the month. Weekly lessons are planned by a group of students representing grades 8 through 11, based on the monthly theme. Likewise, charitable community service activities are an important part of the Brown Deer Way. Through volunteering in the monthly community service projects the students become more connected and vital members of our community. There is also an additional focus on preparing students for the “real world” with an emphasis on job readiness, developing soft skills, and college preparation. Businesses in the community have jumped on board to embrace and support our efforts. Additionally, staff members continue to be trained in a Character Education training through the program at Alverno College on a yearly basis. This year is the third group to go through the training.

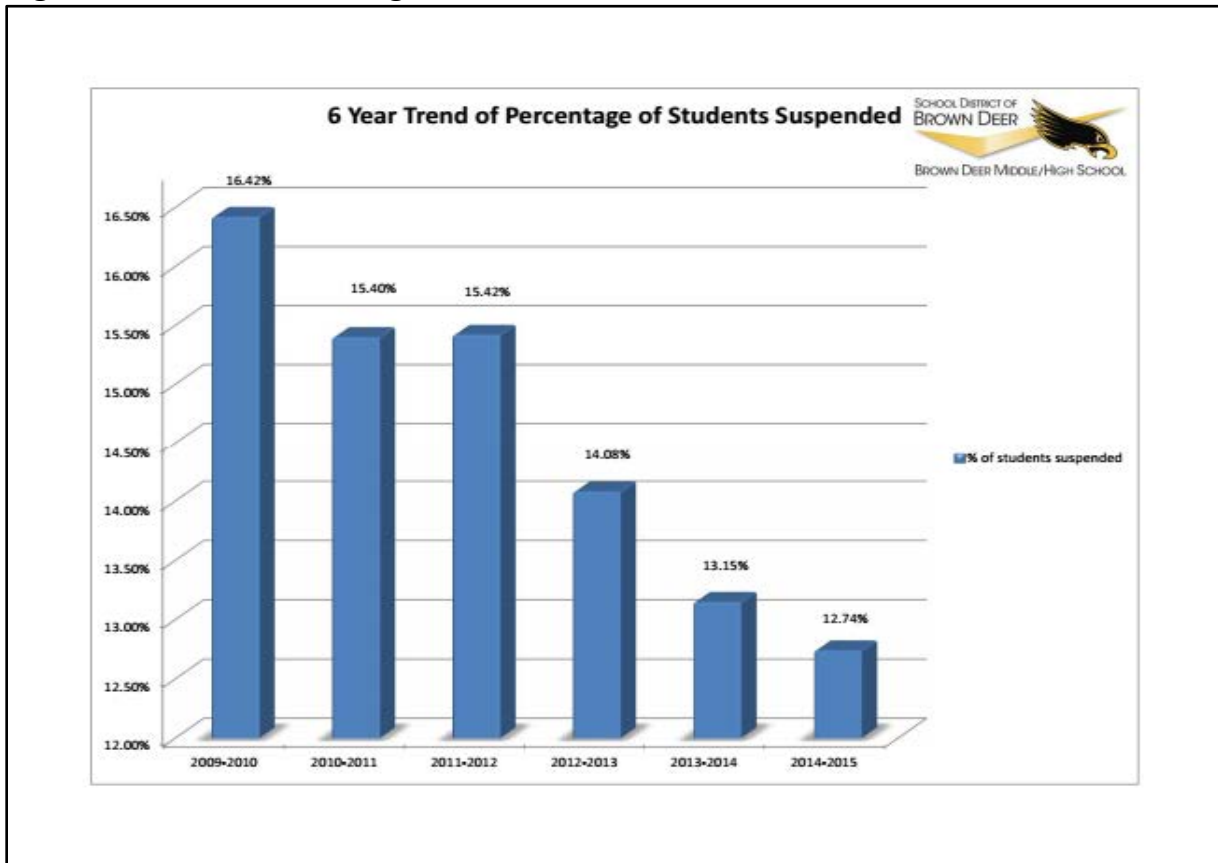
The staff helps students develop good character through modeling the expected behaviors and through weekly Brown Deer Way lessons which include videos, group discussions, self-reflections, commitments, and goal setting. Whenever possible the Brown Deer Way program is incorporated into all daily curriculums as a way to continually remind students of the positive character traits they should be demonstrating. Students are being acknowledged more frequently for their display of good character. This information is then shared with the student, the school community, and with their families.

One way students are recognized is through the CIA (Character In Action) recognition program whereby students are acknowledged for displaying exemplary integrity and depth of character. Our students are the pillar of the Brown Deer Way and they know we value their opinion. Students are randomly chosen from every homeroom on a monthly basis to provide feedback and



critique the weekly Character Ed lessons. The Brown Deer Way Student Team members who write the lessons are present and take into account the suggestions for all future lessons. Feedback is also encouraged from the staff through the Brown Deer Way Committee made up of twenty staff members, administrators, parents, community members and indirectly the Student Team. The committee meets once a month to share successes and discuss needs as seen by the staff and as indicated in monthly data. Changes have been made because of the student voice all throughout this process.

It is clear that the practice is positive impacting the student body. Not only has the number of referrals decreased virtually year-on-year since we began the program, but the levels and severity of misbehavior has clearly decreased. The success of the Brown Deer Way is also evident in comments from the community and parents about noticeable positive changes they have seen in their children, in addition to the reported use of the phrase “that’s not the Brown Deer Way” in the home. Outcomes of our character education program along with weekly lessons have resulted in reduced discipline referrals and more students of color finishing high school with a 99.2% graduation rate in 2014 and 98.6% in 2015.



We are very proud of the teacher/staff teams who attend the trainings and return inspired to implement the latest “best-practices” in the field of character education. This year we are training our fourth team and attending the summer conference. Staff members who attended the first year have asked when they might return for a second training. With our new construction project finished we now possess a state-of-the-art facility and a constant stream of visitors to our campus. What has impressed me the most about the tours, has been the body of comments about our students and staff. Visitors consistently mention the courtesy and politeness they encounter when interacting with our students. They remark on politeness, engagement, and general positivity. We consider this a victory. The Brown Deer Way thrives as the community earns its students a better reputation and hopefully moves them towards the quality of life we wish them to have. The Brown Deer Way is working because our community cares.

The Brown Deer Way is visible in every aspect of school and community life in Brown Deer. Over the past four years, it has become ingrained in our school culture and evidence of this can be seen throughout the schools and Brown Deer Village. The Brown Deer Way touchstone is published in student planners, posted in each classroom, and can be seen in the hallways and other areas of the building. The touchstone is written as statements that are easily understood by students, and have been adapted for elementary students. Teachers use the character traits as part of the standard language and procedures in their classroom. For example, several teachers include the touchstone as part of their syllabi. Teachers and building staff also use the core values when addressing behavioral concerns and often times write lessons that connect their content area material with the character traits.

The touchstone and information regarding Brown Deer character education programming is communicated regularly to parents through various sources. School and district newsletters contain sections with character education updates such as the “Character Corner (see Falcon Brief). A Brown Deer Way pamphlet was designed and distributed by district level administration highlighting the

### Here Are The 10 Best Places To Live In Wisconsin... And Why

Posted on 25 June, 2015 | In Wisconsin

Wisconsin is awesome, and it's a wonderful place to live. I think folks would be happy pretty much anywhere in our great state, but you definitely cannot go wrong with these ten great towns:

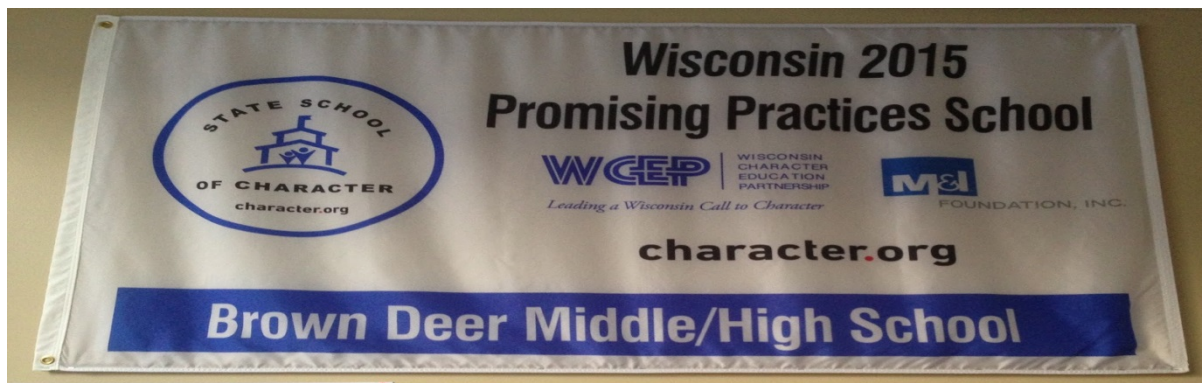
1. **Brown Deer.** The town is located just outside of Milwaukee, so access to the city's amenities is easy. Homes are affordable. And it's one of the safest places in Wisconsin.



district's work in relation to the core values. Parents and students alike also see reminders of the core values at various local businesses who posted our touchstone posters. The Brown Deer Way Website is located as a link on the main page of the Brown Deer Middle High School webpage and is accessible to anyone. It is a collection of activities, lessons, videos, accomplishments/celebrations, and theme related daily quotes.

<https://sites.google.com/a/browndeerschools.com/the-brown-deer-way/>

This past January, the dedicated commitment to instilling the values and virtues of the “Brown Deer Way” was recognized by Character.org, a national nonprofit agency based in Washington, D.C. Brown Deer Middle/High School is now a State School of Character and only one of 68 schools chosen this year from across the United States. Brown Deer has demonstrated a dedicated focus on character development that has a true positive impact on academic achievement, student behavior, school climate, and community involvement. More and more students are involved in service projects and are more willing to give back to each other and the community. The students want to help other students, this is displayed in classes and in the halls and is shown by the increase in the amount of students who want to be mentors to the 7th graders as they transition to the middle school, 9th graders as they enter high school life, and to any new student entering the district. In addition to our state recognition this year, last spring the school was awarded a “Promising Practice Award” by the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership. The Brown Deer Way Leadership Teams meet monthly to coordinate programs and plan school community activities. Both of our schools weave character education and positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS) into our daily practice. School of Merit awards were given to both schools this past summer.



Also, last month the Brown Deer Way teams of teachers and students were selected to present at the [95th State Education Conference in Milwaukee - Character Education - "The Brown Deer Way."](#) The theme of the conference was "Educating Hearts and Minds," and the students and staff received rave reviews for their presentation.

Finally, many community organizations have partnered with our school district to volunteer their time. Touchstones from our Middle/High School can be seen in the community at several businesses including restaurants and Walmart. We hope to give our students an advantage in life by providing them with character education. Since this journey has begun we have continued to encourage community and parental involvement with character development.

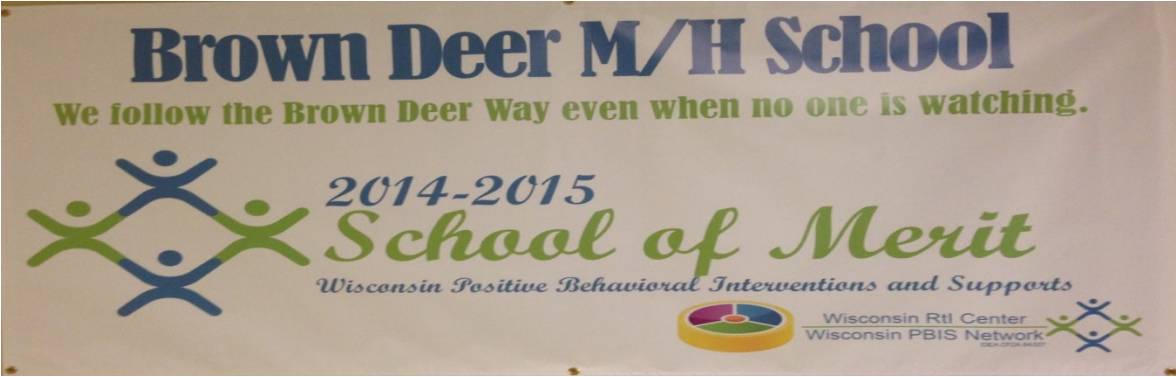
*"Regardless of the quality of education a school district can provide, it will never adequately prepare students for opportunities in a globally interconnected world if it can't offer the real-world experience of working alongside people of many different cultures, races, and even income levels"*

*Dennis Parker-Director of American Civil Liberties Racial Justice Program.*

The Brown Deer Way is thriving and is a vital part of our Brown Deer Village and school community, "even when no one is watching".

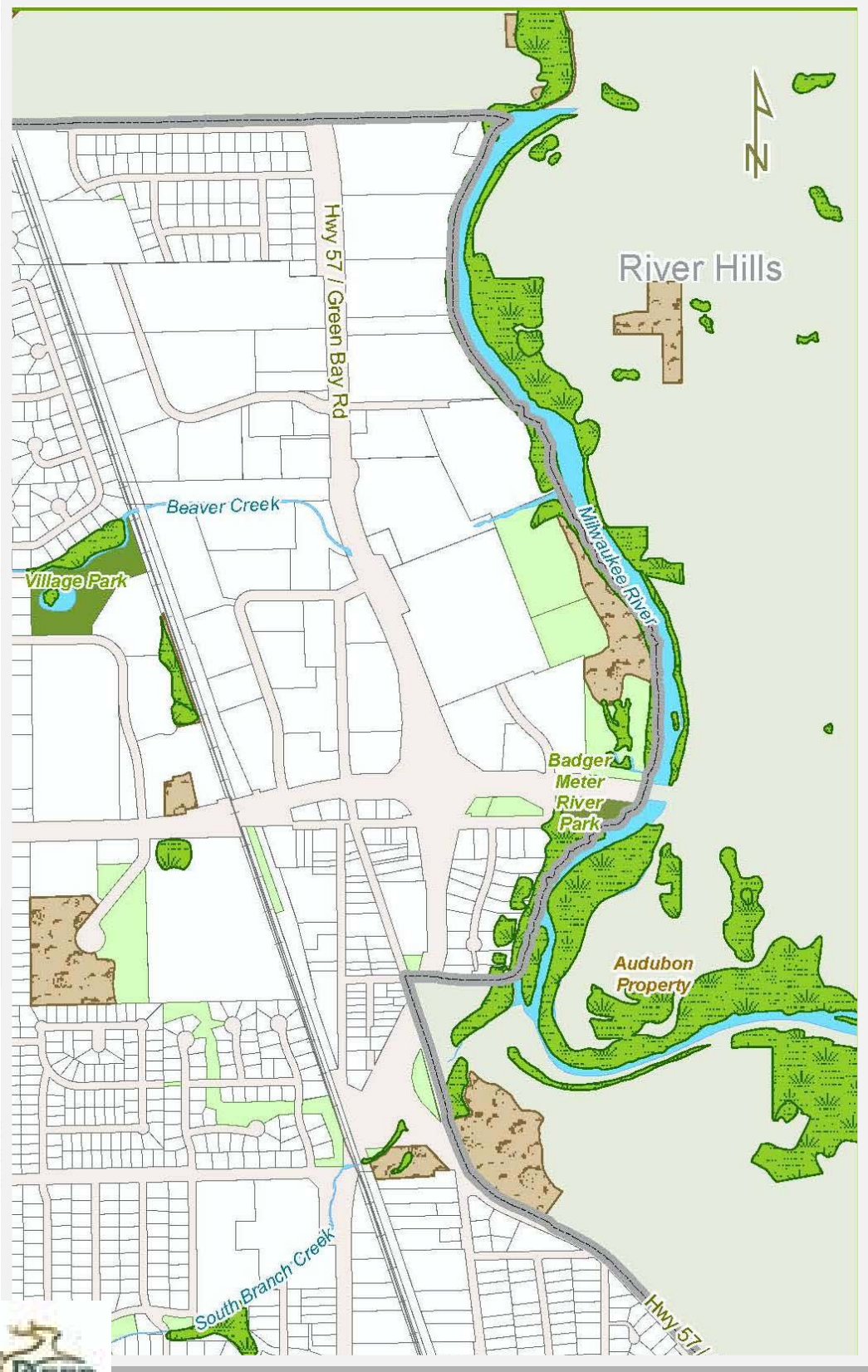
**Project #3 Contact:**

Dr. Deborah Kerr - Superintendent  
Brown Deer School District  
8200 North 60th Street  
Brown Deer, WI 53223  
(414) 372-6767  
[dkerr@browndeerschools.com](mailto:dkerr@browndeerschools.com)



## Highlighted Project #1

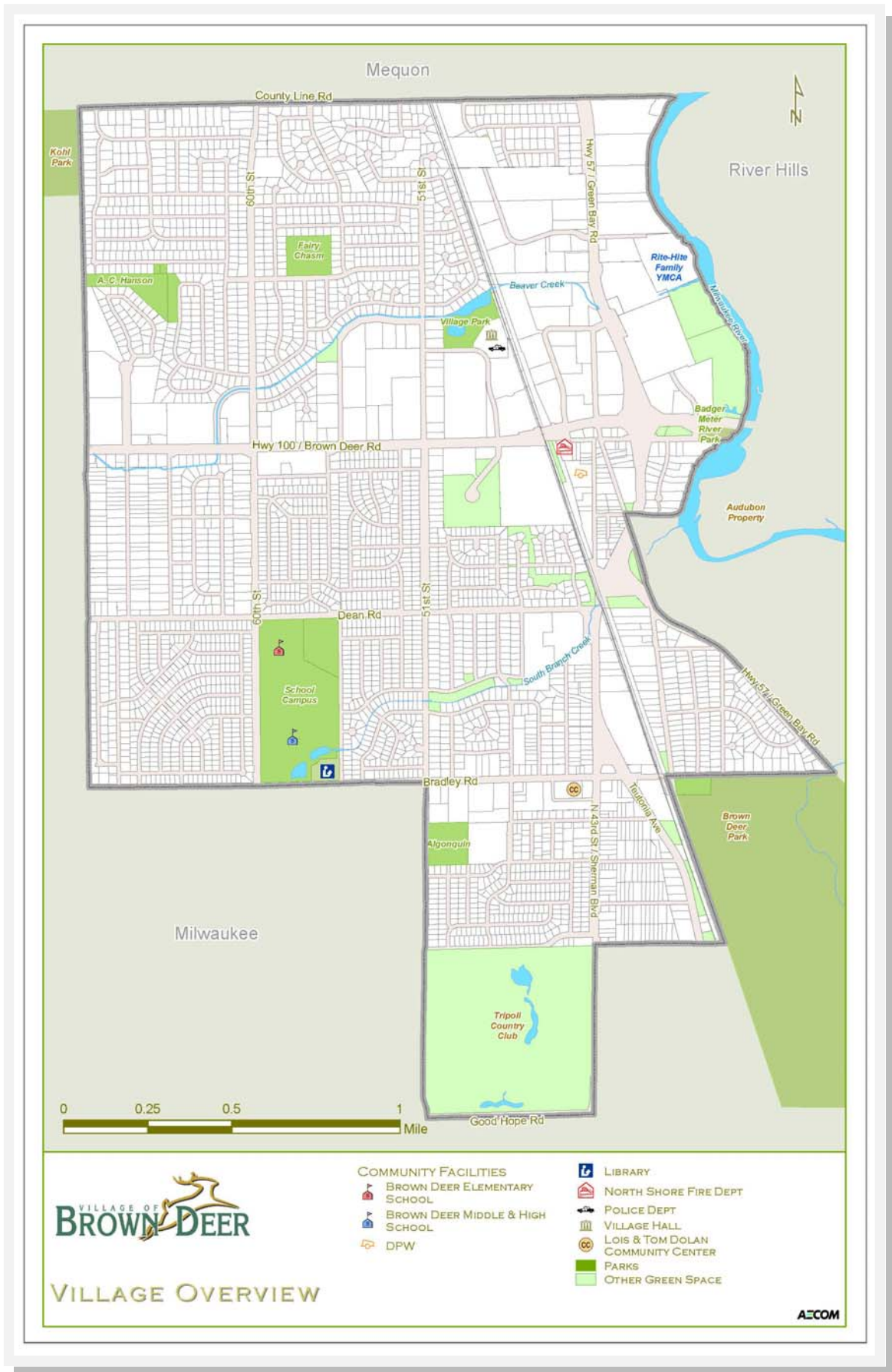
### Getting Children in the North River Corridor Direct Access to Green Space



North River Corridor

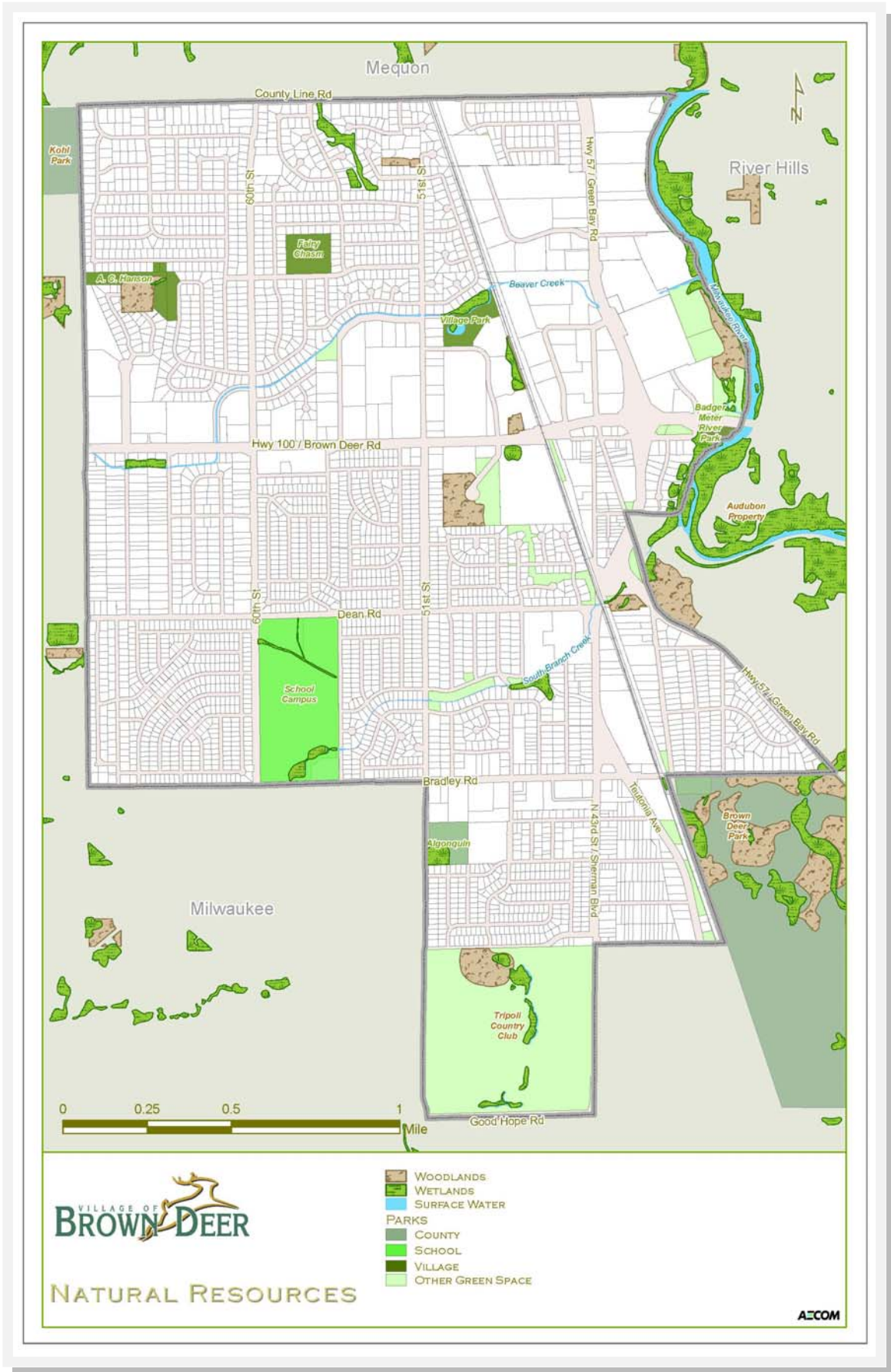
# Highlighted Project #1

## Getting Children in the North River Corridor Direct Access to Green Space



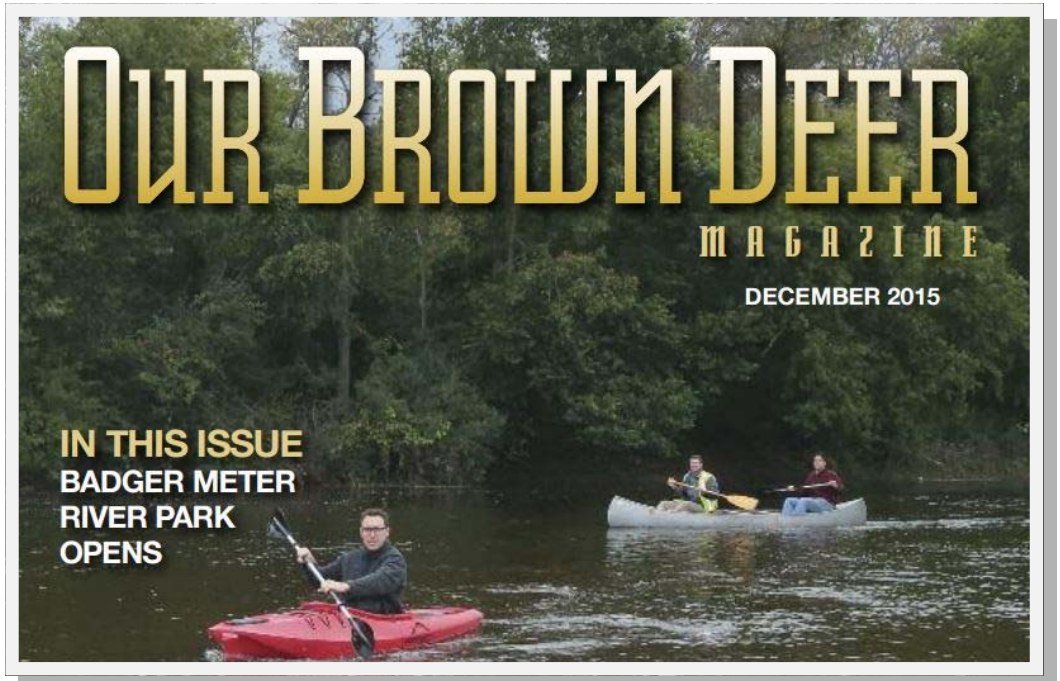
# Highlighted Project #1

## Getting Children in the North River Corridor Direct Access to Green Space



# Highlighted Project #1

## Getting Children in the North River Corridor Direct Access to Green Space



## Highlighted Project #1

### Getting Children in the North River Corridor Direct Access to Green Space



## Badger Meter River Park Celebrates Grand Opening

**T**he Brown Deer landscape has a beautiful, new addition. Badger Meter River Park, a handsome park and boat launch, will give residents public access to 270 feet of Milwaukee River shoreline. Located just south of Brown Deer Road on the east side of the Village, it features a handicapped-accessible boat launch onto the Milwaukee River with scenic views of the native prairie grass, wetlands and oak savannas along the riverfront. It is the only park of its kind in the northern stretch of Milwaukee County.

The Park was made possible in part through a \$40,000 donation from Badger Meter. Village representatives and other dignitaries gathered for the official ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 2. Attendees included Rich Meeusen, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Badger Meter; Badger Meter Chief Financial Officer Richard E. Johnson and Ronald H. Dix, chairman of the Badger Meter Foundation; Village President Carl Krueger, Village Manager Michael Hall and others.

"We are proud to celebrate the opening of this park in Brown Deer, our home," says Rich Meeusen, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Badger Meter. "As always, it has been a pleasure working with the Village to put together a community resource that will be enjoyed by many for years to come."

Village Manager Michael Hall adds that the new park will be a tremendous asset for the community. "It really contributes to the uniqueness and beauty of this great Village," says Hall. Work will continue on the project in 2016

adding a shelter, trail signage and a kiosk (as the budget permits) to contribute to the overall education and recreation for residents and guests.

*"It has been a pleasure working with the Village to put together a community resource that will be enjoyed by many for years to come."*

The Village is deeply grateful to all of its partners on this project: the River Revitalization Foundation (RRF), the Department of Transportation (DOT), Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), Schlitz Audubon Nature Center (SANC) and the Rite-Hite YMCA – and especially Badger Meter.

Since the early 1950s, Badger Meter has maintained its corporate headquarters in Brown Deer. This global business is an innovator in flow measurement and control products, serving water utilities, municipalities, and commercial and industrial customers worldwide. The company's products measure water, oil, chemicals, and other fluids, and are known for accuracy, long-lasting durability and for providing valuable and timely measurement data.

## Highlighted Project #2 - Brown Deer School District Master Campus Plan



*The transformation of the Brown Deer School District campus now with over 60 acres of habitat, wildlife, plants, and trees will provide rich opportunities for our school community as the new botanical garden creates learning opportunities outdoors for all age groups.*



## Highlighted Project #2 - Brown Deer School District Master Campus Plan

### Design Goals for the Improved Brown Deer Campus

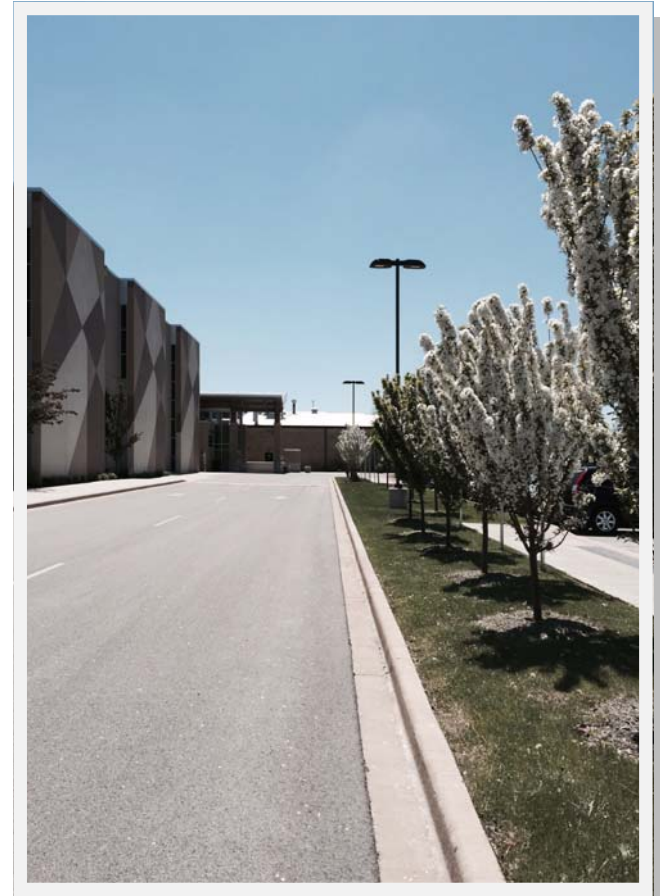
- Create a greener campus
- Manage storm water runoff
- Reduce lawn mowing
- Reduce parking and plowing
- Create strong pedestrian pathways
- Improve signage and lighting
- Increase athletic opportunities including summer recreation
- Enrich educational opportunities with an emphasis on outdoor sciences
- Increase the diversity of habitats and plants
- Enhance community use of the campus for recreation and social gatherings

### Plantings Included in the Campus Landscape Plan

- 377 trees: 164 botanicals, 65 evergreens, 148 ornamentals
- 522 shrubs including dogwoods, burning bushes and hydrangea
- 1,651 perennials
- 31 vines
- 97 grass of two kinds (feather reed and north wing switch)
- 2,448 pachysandra



## Highlighted Project #2 - Brown Deer School District Master Campus Plan



## Highlighted Project #2 - Brown Deer School District Master Campus Plan

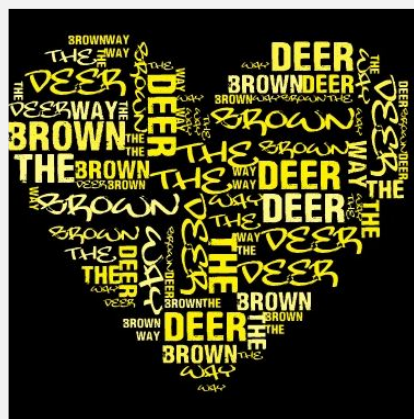
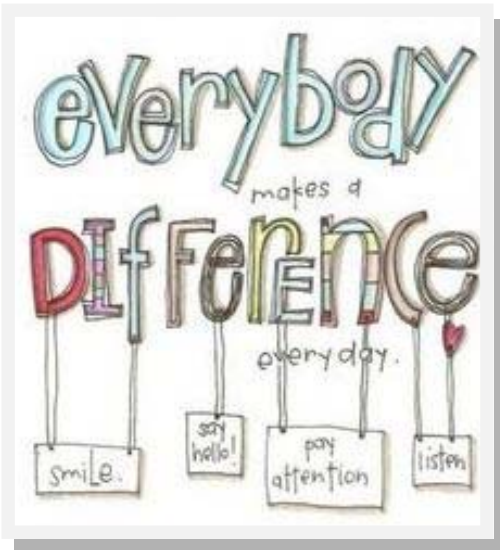
*The Elementary School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony was a joyous celebration of the project including students, families, teachers, staff, and our School Board. No better place to have this event than outside on the new playground.*



Highlighted Project #3 - "The Brown Deer Way" & Character Education



Wisconsin State Champs  
Character Education  
2016



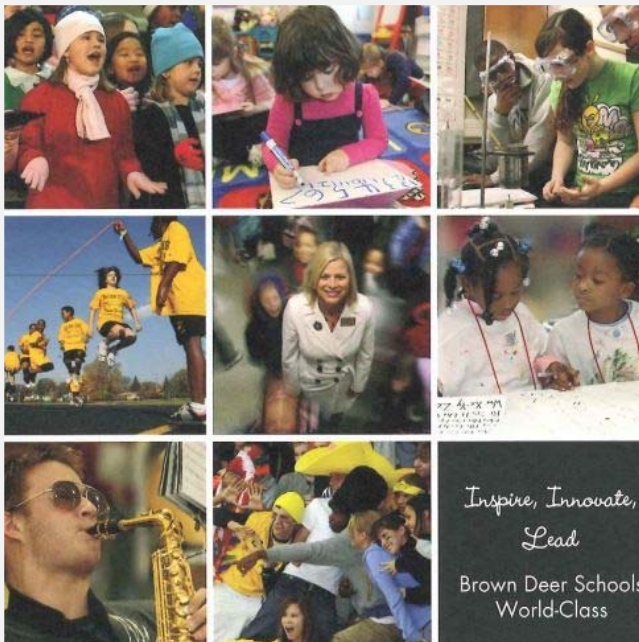
Educating  
the mind  
without  
educating the  
heart is no  
education  
at all.  
— Aristotle

# Highlighted Project #3 - "The Brown Deer Way" & Character Education

## The Brown Deer Way

- We take **responsibility** for our education and our actions.
- We show **respect** for our selves, peers, school, and community through our words and actions.
- We are a community that **accepts**, honors, and celebrates individual differences.
- We are **honest** in all we do.
- We establish **trust** and **confidence** in each other through positive relationship building.

This is who we are in Brown Deer even when no one is watching.



Inspire, Innovate,  
Lead  
Brown Deer Schools  
World-Class



Dkerr Supt added a new photo.

September 1 · iOS · 👤 · ▼

Great opening of our schools today in Brown Deer - This is our year to make all of our dreams come true! Go Falcons!



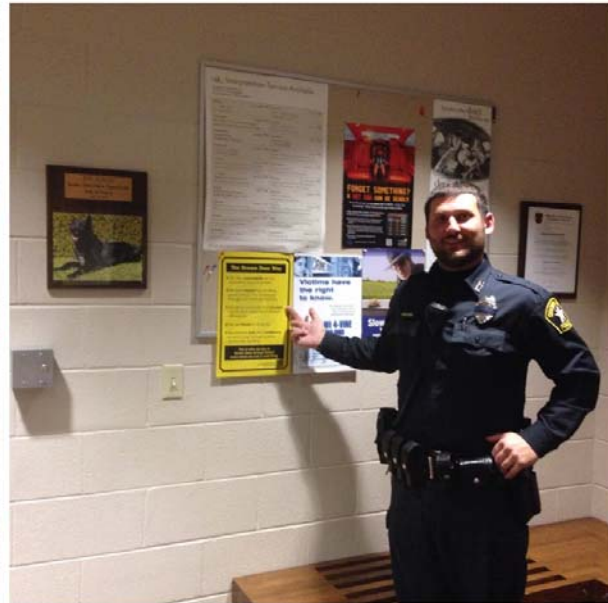
## The Brown Deer Way

- We are **responsible** for our learning and our behavior.
- We are **respectful** to ourselves and others.
- We are **safe** everywhere we go.
- We are **honest** in all we do.

This is who we are at Brown Deer Elementary School even when no one is watching.



## Highlighted Project #3 - "The Brown Deer Way" & Character Education



**The Brown Deer Way**

We take **responsibility** for our education and our actions.

We show **respect** for ourselves, peers, school and community through our words.

We are a community that **accepts**, honors and celebrates individual differences.

We are **honest** in all we do.

We establish **trust and confidence** in each other through positive relationship building.

*This is who we are in Brown Deer School  
...even when no one is watching.*

### Highlighted Project #3 - "The Brown Deer Way" & Character Education

