

LAND AND SPACE

Green space north of Milwaukee's Summerfest grounds opening for expanded public uses under a new plan approved by city officials



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Green space just north of Milwaukee's Summerfest grounds is opening for expanded public uses under a new policy approved Thursday by city officials.

The Board of Harbor Commissioners voted to revoke a 35-year-old agreement which gave Milwaukee World Festival Inc., Summerfest's operator, control of the site during festival season.

That Port Milwaukee-owned parcel, known as Urban Park, is between Maier Festival Park and East Clybourn Street.

Milwaukee World Festival has used the 2.9-acre lakefront parcel, which includes a service driveway, to support operations of Summerfest and other events at Maier Festival Park.

Under that agreement, which started in 1987, the nonprofit group controlled the parcel from June 1 through Sept. 15 in return for maintaining the site throughout the year.

With that agreement revoked, Port Milwaukee will negotiate a new agreement with Milwaukee World Festival to allow the group to continue to use the site, said Adam Tindall-Schlicht, port director.

Also, the port now has more control to make the site available to rent for other public uses, Tindall-Schlicht told board members.

Events that have used the site include the annual UPAF Ride for the Arts and races staged by USA Triathlon.

Requests for public uses have been increasing in recent years, Tindall-Schlicht said.

Under the new policy the port would assume responsibility for lawn care and other maintenance at the site, Tindall-Schlicht said.

"There was limited notice from Port Milwaukee surrounding this change prior to today's action, so we have few details," Milwaukee World Festival said, in a statement issued to the Journal Sentinel.

"We look forward to learning more about how rescission of the agreement will impact Henry Maier Festival Park, Summerfest, and Milwaukee's ethnic and cultural festivals," it said..

The new policy reflects an increased interest in public access to the lakefront, said Tindall-Schlicht and Tim Hoelter, board president.

"I don't think anyone really envisioned 30-plus years ago what the lakefront would look like today," Hoelter said.

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