

# GREETINGS

from MILWAUKEE WATER



# SALUDOS

del AGUA DE MILWAUKEE

**F**ounded in 2017, WaterMarks is a citywide network focused on how water supports our lives. It brings together artists, scientists, and diverse communities through public art and events that reflect Milwaukee’s water stories. By building a bridge to a better relationship with water, we hope to help create a more equitable, healthy, and resilient future for everyone.



In September 2021, we received expansion funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF). This document explains what we have done and learned since then and what we plan to do next.

**W**e have a big project team that includes people from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), City as Living Laboratory (CALL), and Reflo, but this document is coming to you from the WaterMarks evaluation team. We’re based at the Center of Science and Industry (COSI). Our role in the grant is to document what the project is doing and measure the project’s overall progress.



Dolly (she/her)



Justin (he/him)



Laura (she/her)

**O**ur evaluation team looks at WaterMarks in several ways. Right now, we are mostly measuring how well WaterMarks activities and programs support learning and interest related to Milwaukee’s water resources. We’re also studying how well the project supports the people involved and how well it meets its goals. The rest of this brief is about what we can say after the first year of NSF funding.

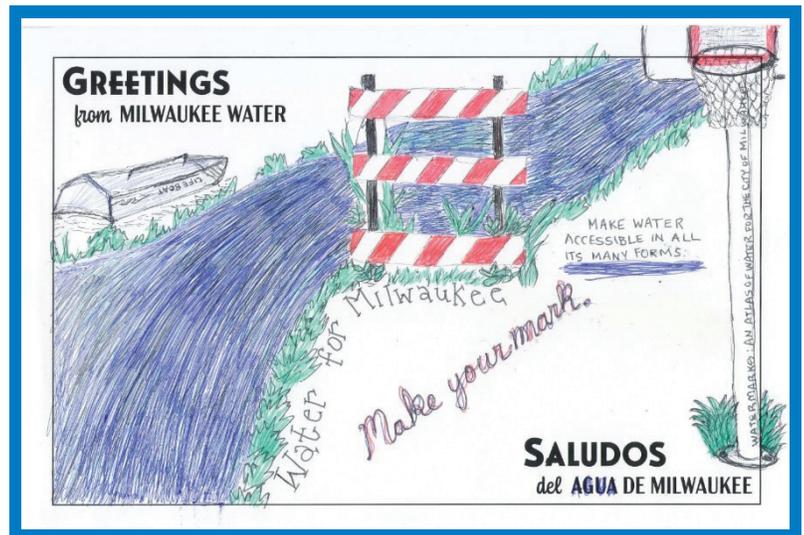
**D**uring the NSF grant, WaterMarks will support collaborations in six neighborhoods, beginning with relationship-building and Walks through community spaces. Walks explore water systems and environmental issues that matter to neighborhood residents. In May and July 2022, local artists and content experts hosted Walks in Lindsay Heights, as well as in Riverwest and Harambee along the Beerline Trail.



One way we gathered public feedback about the 2022 Walks was through postcards people could write and draw on during the experience. We collected 23 postcards in all. Three people who attended Walks also completed interviews with the UWM research team. Our evaluation team analyzed the available data to help us understand what people got out of the Walks. We found evidence that people who responded enjoyed the experience and were able to recall important ideas about water, art, and community. Our data also suggest that the Walks provided opportunities and context to notice more and different things about neighborhood environments.

Enlightening Beautiful Awesome  
Community Invigorating Artful  
Informative Welcoming Interesting

Examples of words participants used to describe the walks



Postcard drawing from Riverwest Walk in July 2022

*"I can't say it enough. I was really surprised at the bioswales and at what they do and provide.....and again, knowing that I walked [past] it all the time, or I have seen this and never given thought to even ask what it is... like you know this hole...you know...you see a little greenery and plants. But it's like it's there. And now I know what it is, and its purpose. It made it great to me."*

- Research interview participant

In December 2021, WaterMarks started a Community-University Working Group (CUWG). The CUWG is a group of Milwaukee community ambassadors who advise on big-picture strategy. Together, they help WaterMarks focus on equity as the project explores water through art and science. So far, the CUWG has begun to identify priorities and come up with norms for working together. In summer 2022, the WaterMarks Outreach Program Coordinator interviewed CUWG members to ask how their work has been going and how they would describe the value of WaterMarks.

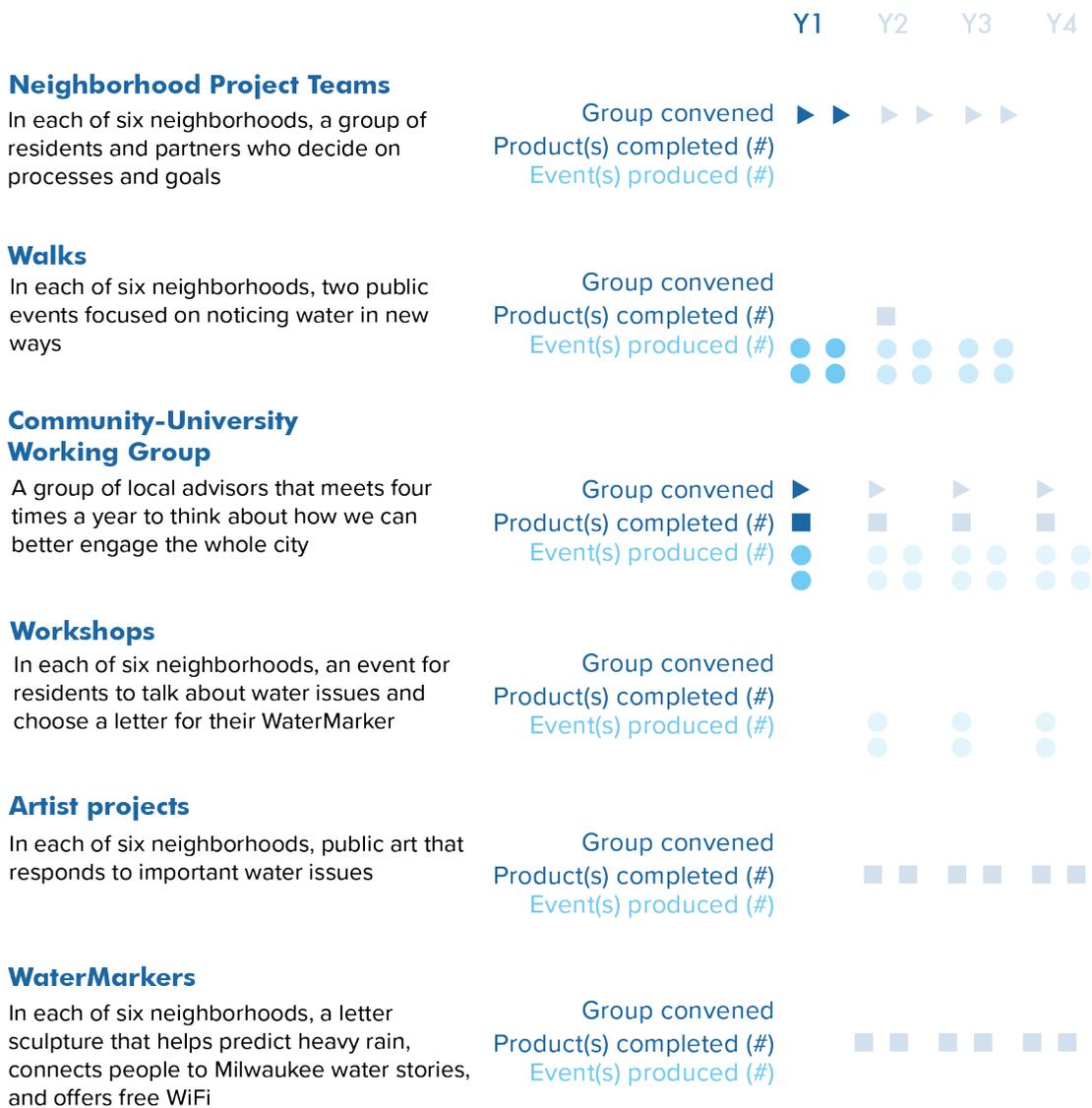
In these conversations, CUWG members explained the importance of building connections to water, appreciation of water, and understanding of water within Milwaukee. Some also identified opportunities to build stronger relationships across neighborhoods and to bring different types of knowledge together. As one CUWG member put it, the ethos of WaterMarks is that its work is "not just for the community, but from the community." Looking ahead, the CUWG will document the work of WaterMarks so that it is possible to improve and build on this project in Milwaukee and beyond.

Over the first year of NSF funding, WaterMarks has focused on building relationships and getting plans in place. During this time, we have observed the team and its work products to help show what has been accomplished so far. The image below explains some activities that are part of the NSF grant, as well as when we expect them to happen across six neighborhoods. (If you have worked with WaterMarks before, then you know that these are not the only neighborhoods that are part of the project, and not the only activities, either!)

Between now and August 2023, some of the things we expect to see are...

- Workshops in the neighborhoods where 2022 Walks were held
- New WaterMarkers and artist projects around the city
- Spring/summer Walks in two additional neighborhoods
- Quarterly meetings of the CUWG

We invite you to join us in these opportunities, and to help us identify new ways we can collaborate meaningfully and sustainably. Your voice is an important part of Milwaukee’s water story!



**NSF-funded project activities**

completed ▼ ■ ●  
planned ▼ ▒ ●