

Founded in 2014, 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 where we are in Fall 2024.

Many people contribute to WaterMarks, including grant personnel from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM), City as Living Laboratory (CALL), and Reflo, as well as many community leaders in Milwaukee who contribute through WaterMarks committees, neighborhood project teams, and the Community-University Working Group. 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 help document what the project is doing and measure the project's overall progress.

During the NSF grant, WaterMarks will support arts and science learning collaborations in specific neighborhoods across Milwaukee, focusing on water systems and environmental issues that matter to neighborhood residents. (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!) The core programs funded by the NSF grant are as follow:



Walks: In each of these neighborhoods, two public events focused on noticing water in new ways



Workshops: In each of these neighborhoods, an event for residents to talk about water issues and choose a letter for their WaterMarker



WaterMarkers: In each of these neighborhoods, an illuminated letter sculpture that connects people to Milwaukee water stories, helps alert residents when heavy rain is expected, and offers free WiFi



Artist projects: In each of these neighborhoods, public art that responds to important water issues

WaterMarks also maintains a presence at existing community events and hosts activation events in neighborhoods to support relationship-building and engagement around water issues in between formal programs. On our website, we share community water stories and ways to explore the WaterMarkers and artist projects more deeply.

The map on the next page summarizes the programmatic work WaterMarks accomplished in NSF project Year 3 (September 2023 - August 2024).

Year 3 NSF activities & new installations

1.

In collaboration with the Sherman Park Community Association, WaterMarks hosted a 3-hour bus tour of WaterMarker sites in February 2024. Participants included residents, community partners, and WaterMarks team members. 📷 Michael Timm

2.

The Connector Building near the Beerline Trail (274 E. Keefe Ave.) opened in September 2023. A mural on the building by artist David Najib Kasir titled *A Minus of Water* serves as the Artist Project for the Riverwest & Harambee WaterMarker. 📷 @davidnajibkasir

3.

A temporary exhibition featuring photographs and stories from Lindsay Heights residents titled *See What We See: Stories of Environmental Stewardship* opened at Milwaukee City Hall in April 2024. 📷 Michael Timm

4.

"H" WaterMarker installed at Greenfield and Harborview Plaza in September 2023. 📷 @watermarksmke

5 & 6.

Artist Yesi Pérez and health geographer Dr. Kirsten Beyer led Walks in November 2023 and April 2024. They focused on the restoration of the Kinnickinnic River, its impacts on the neighborhood, and how green spaces can improve mental health. Each Walk took a different route and highlighted unique parts of the river. 📷 Michael Timm

7.

Building on the Walks, the Workshop for Kinnickinnic River took place in May 2024. After a series of discussions conducted in English and Spanish, residents selected the letter "F" for their Marker, representing flowing, familia, and feliz. 📷 Michael Timm



Grey outlines indicate work not funded by NSF.

In the past year, the WaterMarks Community-University Working Group continued to gather community voices, make recommendations on ways to engage community residents, make community feedback actionable, and ensure that the NSF project reflects investment in and from Milwaukee. As we enter Year 4 of NSF grant funding, the Community-University Working Group will continue developing an Adaptable Model Guide that describes the key “ingredients” and approaches of WaterMarks, so that people in Milwaukee and beyond can sustain and build on this work.

The table below shows our progress and our plans for WaterMarkers throughout Milwaukee. Together, these public art installations will contribute to a city-scale “atlas of water” that reflects the importance of water in everyday life. In Year 4, we look forward to installing new WaterMarkers, co-hosting public programs in Sherman Park and West Basin, and continuing collaborations with neighborhoods whose work with WaterMarks began prior to the NSF grant. 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!

Installed	To be installed	
A UCC Acosta (5th & Washington)	S Greenfield Avenue (School of Freshwater Sciences)	C Melvina Park in the 30th Street Corridor
Ñ Kinnickinnic River (16th & Harrison)	M Greenfield Avenue (2nd & Greenfield)	L Lindsay Heights neighborhood*
G Green Tech Station (31st & Capitol)	V Greenfield Avenue (1st & Greenfield)	F Kinnickinnic River neighborhood*
H Greenfield Avenue (Harbor View Plaza)	W Milwaukee River / Wisconsin Avenue	3 additional NSF-funded letters to be selected by community residents
H Beerline Trail in Riverwest/Harambee neighborhoods*	*NSF-funded	

Find WaterMarks online:
<https://www.watermarksmke.org/>

Questions? Email us anytime at
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