

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



# Staff Bios



**ERIC DITMARS**  
*SUPERINTENDENT OF PARKS & RECREATION*

Eric has been the Auburn Parks Superintendent since 2015. He earned his B.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Management from Ball State University and has held several positions in the field, including 9 years with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and 12 years as the Park Superintendent for Steuben County. He has a great love for providing recreational and resource based opportunities to the community.



**KELLI WARD**  
*RECREATION MANAGER*

Kelli began working for Auburn in June of 2023. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Sports and Recreation Management from the University of Arizona Global Campus in October of 2022. She served in the U.S. Coast Guard and has since held multiple positions in programming, including the YMCA and the Waterloo Public Library. Kelli has been a fitness instructor for 14 years and loves to share her passion of fitness and affordable programs for the community. Kelli enjoys spending time with her family, hiking, taekwondo, and running.



**ANNA SALAS**  
*RECREATION COORDINATOR*

Anna has been working in program design and coordination since 2006 and joined the Auburn Parks in 2023. With her background working with camps, churches, elder care facilities, and community centers, Anna has honed her ability to identify and create successful programs for all ages. Anna holds a B.A. and a M.T.S. Anna has a passion for those who get overlooked and enjoys helping garner interest for the parks department and our programming. When not working, Anna loves creating, cooking, and traveling with her family.



**TABITHA CAGLE**  
*ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Tabitha began working for the Auburn Parks January 2025. She was the Administrative Assistant for DeKalb Central Schools (Country Meadow) for 3 years. Outside of work Tabitha enjoys spending time with her family, especially traveling to Florida every summer! She loves to spend time outdoors at home, by the pool, or somewhere playing a sport.

# Staff Bios



**TIM SMITH**  
*PARKS MAINTANENCE SUPERVISOR*

Tim has worked for the Parks Department for over 15 years. He studied Natural Resource Environmental Management at Ball State University, and has previous experience working as a USA Health, Safety, and Environmental Engineer and as the owner of a lawncare and landscaping company. He enjoys all aspects of nature, his family, and cruising!



**ABEL SALAS**  
*MAINTANENCE STAFF*

Abel has been a member of the Auburn Parks and Recreation Department since fall 2018. He previously worked with the United Methodist Camping Association for 4 years in Central Oregon and is also a trained chef with years in the food industry. He is native to Lima, Peru and enjoys outdoor activities, volunteering at local non-profits, archery, wood working, and soccer.



**BRIAN STEPHENS**  
*MAINTANENCE STAFF*

Brian began working for Auburn in August of 2022. He enjoys tattoos, concerts, and listening to music.



**JASON MCCLURE**  
*MAINTANENCE STAFF*

Jason is a graduate of Garrett High School and began working for the Auburn Parks and Recreation in 2020. Other endeavors outside of parks include Garrett Camper Sales, Ben Davis, Ingersoll Rand, and LSC Communications. Outside of work, Jason enjoys golfing, riding bike, and attending concerts.



# SUPERINTENDENT'S Report



The City of Auburn Parks and Recreation Department is very excited to meet the growing needs of our community and has embarked on several projects to enrich our facilities and programs for our residents. I believe we can offer a top tier quality of services in-line with the high expectations of our citizens.

We are proud of all the City of Auburn Parks which offer many different amenities and provide an exceptional level of recreational opportunities to all our residents. One great example is the ongoing Memorial Park Revitalization Project. This flag ship project will expand our reach while providing new and modern amenities to our patrons. We are expecting phase one to be completed in the fall of 2025.

The importance of connecting with our community members is a priority as we look to better serve you and your future needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eric Ditmars'.

**ERIC DITMARS**  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PARKS AND RECREATION

 [auburnin.recdesk.com](http://auburnin.recdesk.com)

 Auburn Parks and Recreation

 auburnin\_parks

# 2024 PARK BOARD MEMBERS

**Tad Boman** | President  
**Mike Makarewich** | Vice President  
**Ben Nordman** | Secretary  
**Alison Todd** | Member

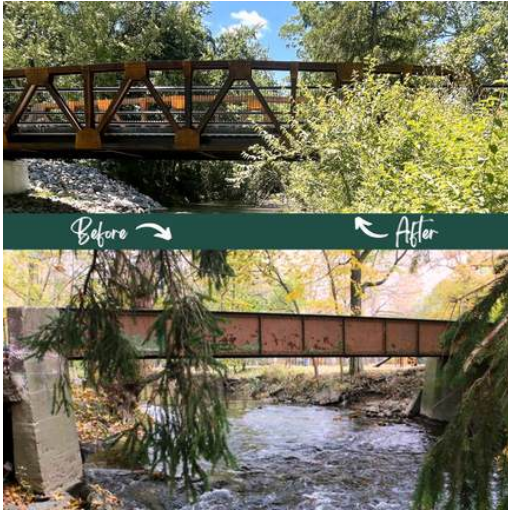


## Mission STATEMENT

The Auburn Parks & Recreation Department shall provide quality parks and facilities, open spaces, natural areas, educational opportunities and services which will enhance the well-being of the citizens of Auburn and surrounding areas.



# Special Projects



## Eckhart Park Bridge

The bridge was in substantial disrepair and needed to be completely removed and replaced. In this project, we also addressed ADA concerns to make it more accessible and safer bridge for all of the park patrons.

## Willennar Park

This unique playground was completed by our own staff from start to finish and was designed to meet the play needs of our community.

The playground features a unique hover net, a rope structure resembling a spiderweb, a climbing boulder, rock wall leading to a twisting slide along with other climbing features. New swings were also installed within the park including toddler swings, an inclusive glider and family swing.



## Cedar Creek Bank Stabilization

The Bank Stabilization Project is a joint project between the City of Auburn, DeKalb County Commissioners, Cedar Creek Drainage Board, Maumee River Basin Commission, DeKalb County Soil & Water Conservation District, and the DeKalb County Surveyor department.

This project is an excellent example of applying natural restoration techniques to address stream erosion and ecological decline. By focusing on stabilizing the creek the project aims to restore the natural form and function of the stream, which has been adversely affected by historical channelizing and erosion.



## Memorial Park, Phase 1

This is a project funded through Indiana Office of Rural Affairs, Auburn Hoosier Enduring Legacy Program, and help from the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council.

Phase I of the project includes nearly one mile of 10-foot pathways, ADA compliant restrooms with an attached shelter, fitness nodes with equipment along the trail, new drinking fountains and sanitization stations, a community meeting node with performance space, multiple shade structures, basketball court rehabilitation, a new pickle ball facility, and a new baseball diamond.



# Programs OVERVIEW

## Adult Programs

40 programs  
450 participants



## Youth Programs

15 programs  
540 participants



## Senior Programs

78 programs  
916 participants



## Intergenerational Programs

95 programs  
999 participants

## Community Programs

10 events  
10,831 participants



## Camps

3 summer camps  
49 participants



# Halloween Walk



2024

6,538 participants  
\$3,154.78 in donations  
\$3,150 in sponsorships  
\$4,975.49 in expenses



2023

4,626 participants  
\$2,013.50 in donations  
\$2,600.00 in sponsorships  
\$4,273.00 in expenses



2022

5,138 participants  
\$2,273.21 in donations  
\$1,600.00 in sponsorships  
\$3,873.21 in expenses



2021

2,511 participants  
\$1,548.52 in donations  
\$1,500 in sponsorships  
\$3,272.44 in expenses



# Christmas Walk

2024

3,575 participants  
\$2,110.58 in donations  
\$3,350 in sponsorships  
\$5,714.35 in expenses

2023

2,555 participants  
\$1,551.53 in donations  
\$2,000 in sponsorships  
\$ 3,159.72 in expenses

2022

3,459 participants  
\$1,136.45 in donations  
\$500 in sponsorships  
\$1,361.00 in expenses

2021

3,418 participants  
\$1,391.00 in donations  
\$1,250 in sponsorships  
\$1,930.86 in expenses



# Softball OVERVIEW

Total Softball Revenue

1  
1  
1  
1  
1



Total Softball Expenses

1  
1  
1  
1  
1





# Youth Sports OVERVIEW

## Auburn Little League

311 Participants  
36 teams  
161 Games Played

## Rocket Football

157 Participants  
34 Games at Carr Field  
275 Practices

## Auburn Girls Softball

196 Participants  
19 teams  
100 Games Played

# Auburn Trail COUNTS

## RIEKE PARK TRAIL

**Total Users: 45,209**

- January 2024: 1,161
- February 2024: 2,352
- March 2024: 3,217
- April 2024: 3,591
- May 2024: 5,251
- June 2024: 5,862
- July 2024: 5,703
- August 2024: 4,958
- September 2024: 4,360
- October 2024: 4,371
- November 2024: 2,707
- December 2024: 1,676

## AUBURN WATERLOO TRAIL

**Total Users: 6,627\***

- January 2024: 174
- February 2024: 376
- March 2024: 523
- April 2024: 692
- May 2024: 1,296
- June 2024: 1,390
- July 2024: 1,566
- August 2024: 610\*

**\*Auburn Waterloo Trail Under Construction 8/15 - 11/15/24**



# Program FINANCIALS

## Total Program Income for the Non-Reverting Fund

- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1

## Total Program Expenses for the Non-Reverting Fund

- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1
- 1



# Rental STATISTICS

## Total Rental Revenue

- 2024: \$26,385.00
- 2023: \$26,515.00
- 2022: \$29,485.00
- 2021: \$22,166.27
- 2020: \$11,744.00

## Total Rental Refunds

- \$661.75 from 6 total cancellations

## Total Rental Reservations

- Rieke Lodge: 151 Reservations
- Eckhart Pavilion: Unavailable in 2024
- Kiwanis North: 20 Reservations
- Kiwanis South: 36 Reservations





# 2024 PARTNERS

## May the Fourth Be with You 5K

- Steel Dynamics
- Steve Hostetter
- Choice Physical Therapy
- Best One Tires
- Auburn Essential Services

## Storywalks

- Eckhart Public Library

## Fishing Derby

- Hoham's Feed and Seed
- Beber's Shot and Sinker
- Walmart
- Well Now Urgent Care
- Classic City Cookies

## Paws Events

- Hoham's Feed and Seed
- Campbell and Fetter Bank
- Dekalb Humane Society

## Tree Sale

- Nucor Building Systems
- DeKalb County SWCD

## Spring Break Staycation

- Carter Koeppe Insurance
- Auburn Bowl
- NCG Cinemas
- McDonalds
- Culvers
- Pizza Hut
- Taco Bell
- Arby's
- Skatin' Station
- The GEM Center

## Pop In & Play

- Big C Lumber
- Taylor Rentals

## Cocoa with Moana

- Five Lakes Coffee
- Classic City Cookies

## Costume Contest

- Mike Varney- Ben Davis

## Back to School Bash

- Auburn Kiwanis Club

## Halloween Walk

- Auburn Dental Associates
- Steve Hostetter
- Downtown Auburn Business Assoc.
- Walmart Distribution Center
- Auburn Heating and Air Conditioning
- Worker's World
- Bassett Office Furniture
- ACE Hardware
- FXI
- Big C Lumber

## Christmas Walk

- Dekalb Community Foundation
- Tempus Technologies
- Steve Hostetter
- Vision Source
- FXI
- Campbell and Fetter Bank
- Indiana Farm Bureau
- Steel Dynamics, Inc

## Summer Kick Off

- Auburn's Best Kids
- Eckhart Public Library

## Hunt for the Great Pumpkin

- Auburn Essential services

## Canstruction

- The James Foundation
- Auburn Police Department

# Maintenance UPDATES

The Auburn Parks Department had another busy year and is proud to have work another year without a recordable accident. This makes the sixth year in a row!

This year we were able to bring in some outside work groups that were a big help in completing work that requires more people than we have available, such as, mulching playgrounds, trails, flowing beds, and trees, painting dugouts, picking up limbs after storms, edging sidewalks, and many other projects.

Thank you to the United Way Day of Caring, Girl Scouts, FFA (high school), and work groups from the First United Methodist Church, Auburn Church of Christ, Lake Wood Park, & Dekalb High School Athletics, All these groups provided much needed help and man hours to complete projects. A big thanks to all those individuals who performed over 1000 hours of community service hours with us this year.

The maintenance staff continues to mow all the Parks and Recreation grounds. This consists of 18 Parks and properties and totals over 112 acres of cuttable grass. We average around 70-man hours per week and over 2,000-man hours per year spent mowing.

Park rounds is another important job that the maintenance staff continues to complete. We check each park daily to clean restrooms, empty trash cans, check for ground trash, and a variety of other things. We prep and manage 2 adult softball fields at Rieke Park. We have 4 other ball fields that we perform maintenance on. We also have two rentable buildings that we manage. They require a cleaning after each use. All this totals over 3,200-man hours each year.

Throughout the winter months we perform a full service and preventive maintenance on all the parks equipment. The oil and other fluids are changed as needed, spark plugs, filters, bearings, everything is greased, and detailed cleaning performed. Damaged and worn parts are replaced.

The Eckhart Park driving bridge replacement project will be completed early in 2025.

The Willennar Park playground replacement project was started and was completed in early 2024. The playground at Don Lash Park was started in the fall of 2024 and hope to have it completed in early 2025. Parks staff removed the old equipment and prepared the subgrade for the new playground equipment to be installed. The staff removed over 250 tons of soil and added 100 tons of stone.

ADA transition items completed this year included, changing out the drinking fountains in Eckhart Park restroom, Carr Field, Smith Acres restroom, Thomas Park restroom, Rieke North and South Quads, Rieke playground restroom, and one drinking fountain addition to the Rieke trail located near the Rieke Lodge. An ADA sidewalk ramp was added at Don Lash Park. The Memorial Park Project includes a new restroom facility and will be ADA compliant.

The Parks Department has taken possession of the old Dekalb County Highway Department ground and buildings. We have started the cleanup process and will start using the quonset huts for storage. We will be moving the office from the Eckhart Park Location to the new location in late January or February of 2025.



# Projects

- Rieke Trail tree trimming/remove dead trees and branches
- Remove late falling, blowing leaves along fence lines as needed through(winter/spring)
- Put down new mulch around the trees in the downtown area.
- Removed weeds or suckers within the 3' square area prior to mulching
- Rolled athletic fields and parks as needed
- Aerated athletic fields park as needed
- Reseeded park areas as needed.
- Leaf removal and/or mulching in all parks as needed
- Hauled in mulch for Boy Scout Trail in Eckhart Park (5 Loads)
- Mole baits used in Eckhart Park
- Removed unwanted plants/weeds/leaves (General Cleanup) all parks
- Helped maintain flower beds at Eckhart Park using Community Service
- Assisted with programs as needed, Fishing Derby, 5-K's
- String trimmed all parks as needed
- All playgrounds mulched with Day of Caring (400 yards)
- Bush hogged Don Lash area in June and September
- Finished Installing of playground at Willennar Park
- Checked wooden benches in all parks for damaged/missing boards and replaced as needed
- Checked picnic tables for broken boards and missing nuts and bolts
- Hammered in rebar in parking bumpers all parks (March)
- Hammered in stakes at all playground edging
- Sprayed all fence lines as needed
- Sprayed all ball diamonds infields for weeds/grass as needed
- Checked Rieke ball field lights for any lights not working and replaced
- Opened all restrooms by April 15th
- Closed all restrooms by October 15th
- Opened/Closed Courtyard Park Fountain
- Set-up, tear down on Halloween and Christmas Walks
- Power washed open-air shelters (metal roofs, tables, concrete)
- De-cobweb/Power washed all dugouts at Rieke Park - North Quad (inside/outside)
- De-cobweb/Power washed all dugouts at Rieke Park - South Quad (inside/outside)
- De-cobweb/Powered wash the outside of the Rieke Park Lodge
- De-cobweb/Powered wash the outside of the Rieke Park North Quad Building
- De-cobweb/Power washed the outside of the Rieke Park South Quad Building
- De-cobweb/Power washed the outside of the Office Eckhart Park
- Performed playground inspections on playgrounds
- Snow removal on trails, sidewalks, parking areas and sanded as needed
- Park rounds performed weekends during winter months
- Deep cleaned Rieke Lodge winter months
- Service Parks Equipment
- Replaced all parking bumpers moved during snow plowing

# Projects continued

- Fixed Smith Acres vandalism issues
- Fixed Eckhart Park vandalism issues
- Checked trees for bugs, ants, worms
- Checked restroom and buildings for carpenter bees and treated
- Reinstalled a Born-To-Learn Trail sign
- Installed new drinking fountains in Eckhart Park, Smith Acres Park, Thomas Park, Skate Park, Carr Field, & Rieke Trail
- Added over 200 tons of ball diamond dirt to adult softball fields
- Set up & remove security fence for the Cedar Creek Bank Stabilization Project in Eckhart Park
- Fill in cracks on tennis courts at Smith Acres Park & Thomas Park
- Started cleanup on the previous site for Dekalb County Highway Buildings and Office
- Replaced damaged or broken playground equipment at Rieke Park.
- Reworked the land scaping blocks in Eckhart Park
- Rebuilt the pumps for the fountain at Courtyard Park
- Prepared the County Highway Offices for rehab
- Removed the flooring in the County Highway Offices
- Install proper blow offs at restrooms for winterization
- Halloween/Christmas set up and tear down
- Prepared Don Lash Park new Playground area
- Add drainage to Don Lash playground area
- Mulched Don Lash trail
- Finished Rieke Park Maintenance Building Addition
- Closed Memorial Park and provided signage for Memorial Park Improvement Project
- Removed usable items from the Memorial Park restroom before the demolition
- Cleared overhead trees and brush along Rieke Trail
- Painted the outside of the dugouts on the North Quad at Rieke Park
- Built new props for the Halloween and Christmas walk that included the large house and covered bridge and many smaller props and signs
- Rebuilt trailers which included new decks, wiring, lights, and paint
- Hazardous tree removal
- Storm water collection project in front of the Eckhart Park office area
- ACD site preparation and setup
- Move disc golf t-pads
- Installed Mike Walter Memorial Wetland Area sign
- Replaced the Rieke Ball Field Park Signs

