

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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 joined Auburn Parks and Recreation in 2023 and holds a degree in Sports and Recreation Management. She has held multiple roles in programming and wellness, including positions with the YMCA and Waterloo Public Library in Youth Services. Kelli has been a fitness instructor for over 15 years and enjoys sharing her passion for wellness and affordable, inclusive programming. Outside of work, Kelli enjoys spending time with her family, hiking, practicing taekwondo, and playing music.



ANNA ECKELBARGER 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 and programming. When not working, Anna loves creating, baking, and traveling with 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.

TIM SMITH
PARKS MAINTENANCE 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
MAINTENANCE 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.



JASON MCCLURE
MAINTENANCE 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.



BRIAN STEPHENS
MAINTENANCE STAFF

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



CLAYTON ADAMS
MAINTENANCE STAFF

Clayton has been working at Auburn Parks and Recreation since 2021 and moved to full time in 2025. Clayton enjoys motorcycles, cars, and outdoor activities. When he is not working, he can often be found hunting, fishing, and camping.



SUPERINTENDENT'S Report



Summer Camp



Glow Disc Golf



Summer Camp

The City of Auburn Parks and Recreation Department is very excited to meet the growing needs of our community and has embarked on an endeavor to enrich our facilities and programs for our residents.

This continued focus has broadened our departments reach over last year by providing exceptional facility services, community outreach, and patron driven programming. Our community is very supportive and encouraged by the progress we have made.

We have seen the completion of several projects inside of the parks. This includes the Eckhart Park Bridge, the Cedar Creek bank restoration, and the revitalization of Memorial Park. The future of the Parks Department is very bright and will be filled with added amenities, diverse park programs and park updates. The importance of connecting with our community members is a priority as we look to better serve you and your needs.

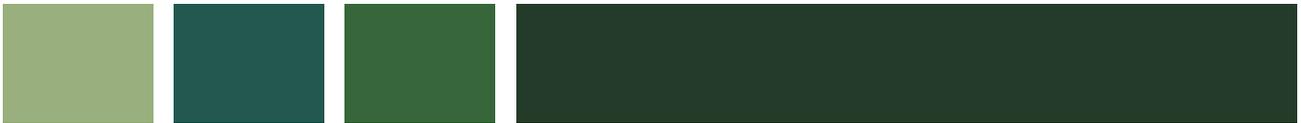


ERIC DITMARS
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PARKS AND RECREATION

 auburnin.recdesk.com
 Auburn Parks and Recreation
 auburnin_parks

2025 PARK BOARD MEMBERS

Mike Makarewich | President
Ben Nordmann | Vice President
Alison Todd | Secretary
Donald Winsley | Member



Beginner Makers: Paint by Number



Back to School Bash



Spring into Nature Tree Giveaway

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.

Programs OVERVIEW

Adult Programs

47 programs
1302 participants

- Sports Leagues
 - Disc Golf Rec League
 - Co-Ed Softball
- Art Programs
 - Watercolor
 - Painting
 - Makers Classes
- Fitness
 - Zumba
 - Yoga
 - Lifting
 - Date Night Dancing
- Games
 - Bingo
 - Murder Mystery
 - Escape Room



Watercolor Wonder



In Sync: Date Night Dancing



Happy Little Painting Class

Senior Programs

81 programs
1278 participants

- Fitness
- Art



Murder at Mad Anthony's

Programs OVERVIEW

Youth Programs

33 programs
977 participants

- Art
- Fishing
- Disc Golf
- Spring Break Staycation
- Fitness
- Themed Parties
- Game Days
- School Field Trips
- Volunteering
- Scavenger Hunts
- Ninja Course
- Park Pop Ups



Pop-In & Play: Tie Dye



Buddy's Pajama Party



School Partnership



Ninja Course

Camps

3 summer camps
51 participants

- Carnival
- Olympics
- Water Play

Programs OVERVIEW

Intergenerational Programs

118 programs
870 participants

- Bingo
- Art
- 5Ks
- Park Cleanups
- Pet Programs
- Game Days
- Movies

Community Programs

7 free events
7759 participants

- Halloween Walk
- Christmas Walk
- Back to School Bash
- Spring into Nature
- Zumba Fiesta
- Fishing Derby
- Bikes Around the Fountain



Park Cleanup



Donut Make Me Run 5K



Hunt for the Great Pup-kin



Glow Bingo

Program FINANCIALS

Total Program Income for the Non-Reverting Fund

- 2025: \$43,393.00
- 2024: \$41,619.47
- 2023: \$30,113.45
- 2022: \$23,605.14
- 2021: \$25,157.05

Total Program Expenses for the Non-Reverting Fund

- 2025: \$29,953.99
- 2024: \$37,684.89
- 2023: \$28,907.02
- 2022: \$23,853.83
- 2021: \$23,454.78

194 Free Programs Provided in 2025



Halloween Walk



2025

5,098 participants
\$3,043.29 in donations
\$3,200 in sponsorships
\$5,857 in expenses



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 in sponsorships
\$4,273 in expenses



2022

5,138 participants
\$2,273.21 in donations
\$1,600 in sponsorships
\$3,873.21 in expenses

Christmas Walk

2025

1,661 participants
\$1,112.32 in donations
\$3,200 in sponsorships
\$3,640 in expenses

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 in expenses



2025 PARTNERS



2025 PARTNERS



Don Winsley



Cheryl Carnahan



Steve Rowe

Softball OVERVIEW

Total Softball Revenue

2025: \$6,890.00
2024: \$7,800.00
2023: \$5,637.50
2022: \$4,762.50
2021: \$8,812.50



Total Softball Expenses

2025: \$6,225.00
2024: \$5,542.58
2023: \$5,124.00
2022: \$4,966.69
2021: \$6,485.89

Youth Sports OVERVIEW

Auburn Little League

336 Participants
36 teams
203 Games Played

Rocket Football

133 Participants
27 Games at Carr Field

Auburn Girls Softball

180 Participants
16 teams
83 Games Played

Maintenance UPDATES

The Auburn Parks Department experienced another productive year in 2025 and is proud to report its seventh consecutive year with zero recordable safety incidents, underscoring a continued commitment to safe and effective operations.

Maintenance efforts continued year-round across 18 parks and properties, encompassing approximately 112 acres of cuttable grass. Mowing operations require an average of 70 staff hours per week, totaling approximately 2,000 hours annually. In addition, maintenance staff conduct daily park rounds that include cleaning and maintaining restrooms and rental facilities, emptying trash receptacles, addressing ground debris, responding to vandalism and repairs, and maintaining trails. These daily rounds account for more than 1,300 staff hours each year.

Seasonal maintenance is also important. During the summer months, staff dedicated more than 40 hours to watering newly planted trees associated with the Eckhart Park Bridge project and an additional 20 hours supporting new tree plantings at the Acres Land Trust property in coordination with the Cedar Creek Bank Stabilization Project. From late spring through the end of summer, staff spent over 40 hours managing invasive vegetation throughout the parks system as well.

Several park improvement projects were completed or advanced during the year. At Thomas Park, the dog water fountain was relocated and upgraded, and a new picnic area with a concrete pad and picnic table was installed. The first phase of the Memorial Park project was completed, and the Don Lash Park playground project was finalized, including completion of the surrounding turf areas. Landscaping and beautification of the new "Welcome to Auburn" city signs were also completed.

Community partnerships continued to be an important component of park maintenance and enhancement. In 2025, more than 1,600 community service hours were contributed, including over 1,200 volunteer hours provided by organized groups. Boy Scouts assisted with mulching the Hague Nature Trail at Eckhart Park, United Way Day of Caring volunteers edged city sidewalk trails, and Lakewood Park Christian School students mulched trees and playground areas and assisted with debris cleanup. These efforts provided valuable support to the Parks team and our commitment to quality parks and programs.

Throughout the year, the Parks Maintenance staff worked diligently to maintain safe, accessible, and well-kept parks for the community. From routine cleaning and repairs to seasonal operations, infrastructure improvements, and park enhancements, staff demonstrated a strong commitment to safety, stewardship, and community pride as they look ahead to 2026.

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 a safer bridge for all park patrons. The Eckhart Park Bridge has seen a transformative renovation including a new bridge super structure, safety railing, approach, approach railing and lighting features with stone columns.

This project has been concluded with the addition of 157 trees replanted along Cedar Creek floodway within the city limits. This will allow inclusive access and adds to the historic value that Eckhart Park has for the City of Auburn.

Don Lash Park



The City of Auburn Parks Department has replaced the outdated playground structures at Don Lash Park. This new amenity addressed many site challenges including drainage and ADA concerns. The new equipment offers inclusive play for ages 2 to 12. The features of the playground include many slides, climbing features and a track slide which will accommodate many skill levels.

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 Surveyors 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



We are proud to announce the completion and grand opening of a completely revitalized park that includes many new and upgraded amenities. 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, pet drinking fountains, cornhole boards, table tennis and viewing bleachers and a new baseball diamond. This is a park you will want to place on your "have to visit" list!



Projects

- Cut back the Rieke Park trail tree line to improve safety and trail usability, covering approximately 14,800 linear feet (2.8 miles).
- Performed tree line maintenance at Smith Acres Park (approximately 700 feet), Don Lash Park (670 feet approximately), Thomas Park (600 feet approximately) and Eckhart Park (approximately 2,600 feet) for safety and vegetation management.
- Completed mulching and beautification efforts at City parks and building fronts, including the application of approximately 40 yards of brown mulch, weed removal, pruning, and routine landscaping maintenance.
- Conducted spring season preparation of athletic field turf at Rieke Park and Eckhart Park, including rolling and aerating approximately 333,500 square feet (7.6 acres).
- Repaired damaged turf areas throughout the park system through seeding, straw application, and watering as needed.
- Coordinated with a Boy Scout group to maintain the Hague Nature Trail at Eckhart Park, including facilitation and installation of approximately 30 yards of mulch.
- Maintained control of invasive vegetation throughout the park system through spraying, trimming, and removal of dead grass and shrubs.
- Assisted with Parks and Recreation programs and events, including the Fishing Derby, 5K Run, and other community events.
- Provided summer season maintenance for all parks and rental facilities, including routine cleaning, deep cleaning, repairs, upgrades, and general upkeep.
- Worked alongside volunteers during the United Way's Day of Caring event, completing sidewalk edging along the City Trail.
- Finalized the new playground installation at Don Lash Park, including defining mulch areas and grading, seeding, and strawing exterior grounds.
- Maintained picnic tables and benches throughout the park system through safety inspections, parts replacement, routine cleaning, and repairs.
- Ensured all playgrounds remained in safe and operational condition through regular inspections, repairs, and component replacements.
- Maintained ball fields and surrounding areas at Rieke Park daily from early spring through late-fall, including field grooming, power washing, weekly mowing, repairs, and upgrades.
- Completed winterization of 7 restroom buildings, 24 drinking fountains, 2 concession stands, 1 maintenance shop, 1 water fountain feature, and irrigation lines serving 8 athletic fields. On October 15 all systems are returned to service by April 15.
- Managed the design, preparation, setup, execution, and teardown of the Halloween Walk and Christmas Walk events.
- Performed routine maintenance of restroom buildings at the North and South Quads at Rieke Park.
- Conducted winter maintenance of park trails, bridges at Eckhart Park and City trail sidewalks, including snow removal and application of salt and sand as needed.
- Provided year-round upkeep of the park system and amenities, including daily restroom and building cleaning, trash removal, and litter pickup.

Projects

- Completed preventive maintenance and repairs on 57 landscaping assets, as well as 14 vehicles and 33 equipment attachments.
- Performed ongoing tree and vegetation maintenance across all parks, including pruning, removals, weed trimming, and edging.
- Installed a new dog drinking fountain at Thomas Park, including removal of the existing fountain, base relocation, concrete work, internal upgrades, and final installation.
- Constructed a new picnic area at Thomas Park, including installation of a concrete pad on the southeast side of the park.
- Finalized all four “Welcome to Auburn” City signage project, including subsoil preparation, topsoil grading, installation of gray slate decorative stone within steel edging, and seeding with straw applied to surrounding areas.
- Addressed vandalism throughout the park system by repairing or replacing toilets, windows, sinks, stall dividers, doors, and water lines, as well as removing graffiti and repainting as needed.
- Facilitated the soft launch and grand opening of Memorial Park through full site preparation, including turf mowing, trail cleaning, concrete sealing and caulking, final work on the outdoor amphitheater and pickleball courts, safety-related tree pruning, and deep cleaning of restrooms.
- Completed upgrades to the Rieke Park trail system and parking facilities, including crack filling, seal coating, localized repaving, restriping, and ADA compliance improvements, totaling approximately 2 miles (11,086 linear feet) of trails and 244,980 square feet of parking lot area.
- Finalized drainage and concrete improvements at Rieke Lodge, including concrete sealing and grouting, grading and landscaping of surrounding areas, seeding, straw application, and formation of mulch beds.
- Prepared Eckhart Park for the ACD event through site cleaning, improvements, and coordination of parking at Rieke Park, with approximately 240 labor hours dedicated to event readiness.
- Completed placement of infield material on athletic fields and graded to a 0.5% slope; replaced first, second, and third bases; reset the pitcher’s mound; and re-leveled batter’s boxes.
- Provided year-round routine cleaning and maintenance of rentable facilities, including Rieke Lodge, 10 outdoor pavilions, and 1 enclosed pavilion, with comprehensive deep cleaning performed quarterly.



Volunteer Group



Mosaics with Mom



Meal Kit Squad

Rental STATISTICS

Total Rental Revenue

- 2025: \$29,610.00
- 2024: \$26,385.00
- 2023: \$26,515.00
- 2022: \$29,485.00
- 2021: \$22,166.27

Total Rental Refunds

- \$2,057.08 from 13 total cancellations

Total Rental Reservations

- Rieke Lodge: 162 Reservations
- Eckhart Pavilion: 34 Reservations
- Kiwanis North: 23 Reservations
- Kiwanis South: 25 Reservations
- Total Users Served: 10,518



Auburn Trail

COUNTS

Rieke Park Trail

Total Users: 38,832

- January 2025: 1,164
- February 2025: 1,399
- March 2025: 3,505
- April 2025: 3,534
- May 2025: 4,452
- June 2025: 5,365
- July 2025: 4,580
- August 2025: 5,010
- September 2025: 4,318
- October 2025: 3,109
- November 2025: 1,631
- December 2025: 765

Auburn Waterloo Trail

Total Users: 12,809

- January 2025: 333
- February 2025: 257
- March 2025: 660
- April 2025: 893
- May 2025: 1,227
- June 2025: 1,593
- July 2025: 1,972
- August 2025: 2,226
- September 2025: 1,831
- October 2025: 1,032
- November 2025: 557
- December 2025: 228

