



2023 ANNUAL REPORT Summary



FORT WAYNE
PARKS AND
RECREATION



Mission

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life in Fort Wayne by providing positive opportunities for leisure time and by being stewards of our parklands, facilities, public trees and other resources entrusted to our care.

What We Do

The Parks and Recreation Department maintains over 2,840 acres of park land in 89 individual parks and currently manages 22 pavilions, 20 shelters, five recreation centers, four day camp facilities, three aquatic centers, 10 splash pads, three golf courses, two driving ranges, five disc golf courses, two dog parks, a botanical conservatory, an outdoor theatre, a zoo and a greenhouse.

Additional recreational sites include 58 playgrounds, 45 basketball courts, 50 tennis courts, 42 pickleball courts, 38 ball diamonds, 20 soccer fields, two futsal courts, eight multipurpose athletic fields, eight boat launch sites, 48 miles of trails which include River-greenway, park paths and mountain bikes trails, 14 ponds and lakes, a campground, a nature preserve, a BMX track, historic facilities and monuments and a 1930s era working farm.

Along with hundreds of activities and program opportunities, the Parks and Recreation Department provides free or low-cost special events for citizens of our community.

Guiding Principles

Balance

Community
and Family

Connectivity

Inclusion

Quality
Maintenance

Partnerships

Recreational
Opportunities

Sustainability

2023 Board of Park Commissioners

Justin P. Shurley, President

Cory D. Miller, Vice President

Richard (Rick) Briley, Commissioner

Jenna Jauch, Commissioner

Administrative Staff

Steve McDaniel, Director

Alec Johnson, Deputy Director of Planning & Development

Sandra Odisho, Manager of Finance

Kathy Pargmann, Manager Lead of Marketing

Chuck Reddinger, Deputy Director of Recreation

Steve Schuhmacher, Deputy Director of Park Maintenance

Rick Schuitemann, Director of Children's Zoo

Parks and Recreation are Essential Public Services

Economic Value

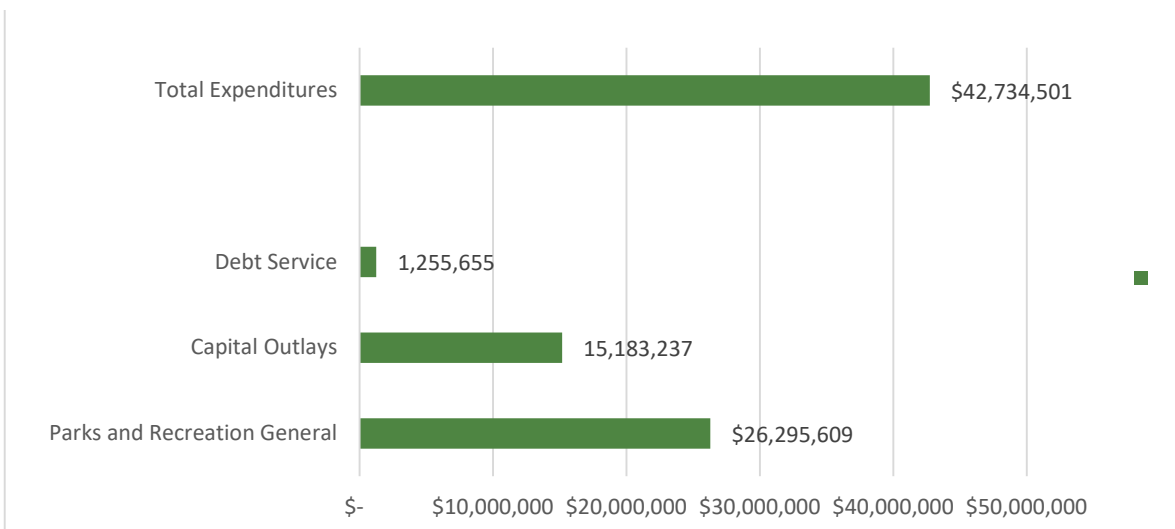
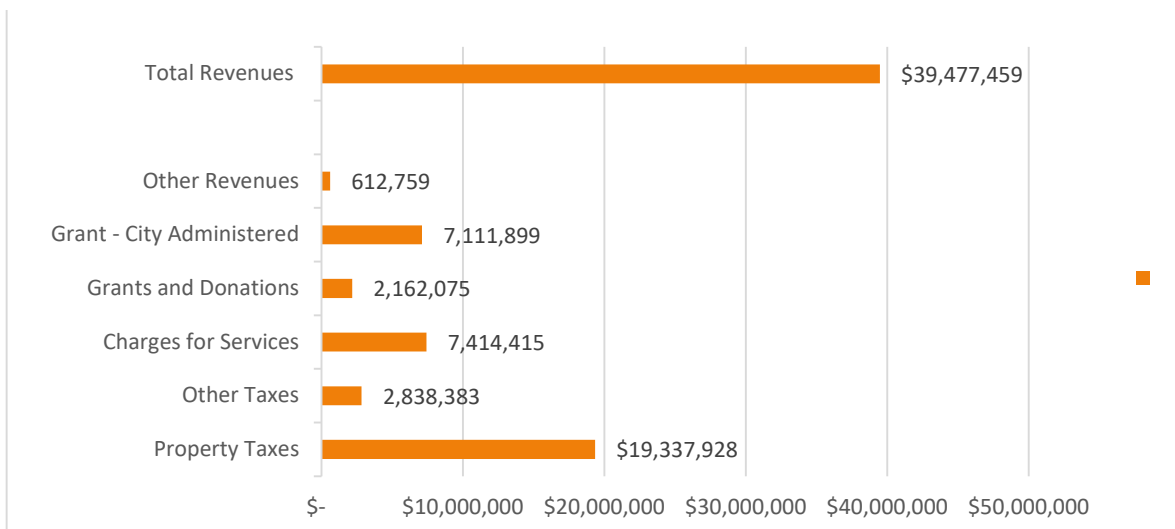
Health and Environmental Benefits

Social Importance

“Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and a region. There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation programs for public use and enjoyment.”

—National Recreation and Park Association, Advocacy Resources

Condensed Financial Report for 2023



Recreation



Headwaters Transitions to Parks

After 30 years of direction under The Headwaters Park Commission (in 1993) and the Headwaters Park Alliance (beginning in 2001), Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation assumed management and day-to-day operations of Headwaters Park prior to the 2023 festival season. The transition was smooth and led to a successful operation, including the seasonal Ice Rink.

New Park & Play Program Brings Fun to Youth

This mobile recreation unit called Park & Play brings a selection of sports, games, arts and crafts, fitness, nature and outdoor educational activities to youth ages five and above throughout the summer. This program supplements other summer activities for youth in neighborhood parks.



Dragon Boat Races at Promenade Park

The Fort Wayne Dragon Boat Races mixed culture and competition in a two-day family-friendly event at Riverfront Fort Wayne's Promenade Park. Since its debut in 2015, the races welcome people of all backgrounds to the river where the city of Fort Wayne was founded. The opening ceremonies featured colorful, live performances by the Chinese Friends & Family Association, live music, lighting of dramatic Floating Fire Pits and Fire Dancers. The following day, the dragon was awakened and the Dragon Boat Races commenced. In 2023, a focus on Chinese culture was expanded.



Department Acquires and Renews Parkland in Southeast Quadrant

- 75th Anniversary of the Jennings Recreational Center.
- Grand Opening of McKinnie Commons and holiday lighting.
- Acquisition of refreshed Powell Park.



Salomon Farm Expands Merchandising, Maintains Historic Sites

- Salomon Farm welcomed two Highland Miniature steers to the popular farm. An initial offering of eight interactive Meet and Greet sessions for the public to purchase sold- out within one hour. A total of 72 sessions were offered and completed in 2023 with all sessions selling out.
- The U-Pick Flower operation increased revenue for a total of \$14,660. This is a 70% increase over 2022.
- Two Dinner in the Flower Fields events drew 96 guests for romantic lighting, blooming sunflowers, a rustic table setting with a catered meal and live music.
- Renovations to the farm homestead and winterization of restrooms will allow for more accommodations at the park for year-round use and events.



Foellinger Theatre

2023 Season by Genre

Theatrical

Marian, or the True Tale of Robin Hood

Country

Willie Nelson
Gary Allan and Tracey Lawrence
The Mavericks

Classic Rock and Pop

Hotel California: A Salute to the Eagles
Herman's Hermits
America
The Return of Emerson Lake & Palmer
Stayin' Alive
Pat Benatar & Neil Giraldo
REO Speedwagon

90's Alternative Rock

Train
An Evening with Cake

Jazz & Big Band

New Millennium Jazz Orchestra
The 38th Infantry Division Band
Diana Krall
Fort Wayne Area Community Band

Classical, Choral and Orchestra

The Fort Wayne Children's Choir
The Fort Wayne Philharmonic

Increased Concerts by 29% in 2023

The Theatre season showcased a diverse range of shows to 23,000 plus music fans at ticketed events and offered free Community Concerts to enthusiastic friends.

Received Generous Award from The Foellinger Foundation

Funds in the amount of \$500,000 will go a long way to upgrade the Theatre lighting, electrical improvements and structural maintenance. A portion will also help to expand merchandise and beverage service areas to improve the customer experience.

At Foellinger Theatre . . .

 <p>Tuesday, August 22, 8:00 p.m.</p>	 <p>Tuesday, September 5, 7:30 p.m.</p>	 <p>Monday, September 11, 7:30 p.m.</p>
		 <p>Saturday, September 16, 7:30 p.m.</p>



Maintenance

Ground is Broken on Franke Park Renaissance Project

Phase One: Grounds Maintenance Heavy Equipment crews were located in a maintenance facility in Franke Park. Those buildings and site where they are working are being demolished as part of the project. Therefore, our heavy equipment crews had to be relocated to Lawton Park until we can find a new home for them.

2,410 Work orders completed

81 Capital Improvement projects undertaken

14,017 Hours of mowing, spin trimming, surface blowing

2,863 Volunteer hours logged in greenhouse, parks and rivers

61 Safety classes held for staff

29,000 Pounds of fertilizer applied to parks and athletic fields

719 Hours of flood cleanup in parks, along Rivergreenway

Parks Grew by Three in 2023

The Southeast Strategy initiatives by the City's Community Development Division and other leaders bloomed into two new parks in SE Fort Wayne:

- **Powell Park** at Pontiac and Weisser Park Avenue
- **McKinnie Commons** at McKinnie Ave. & S. Anthony Blvd.

The Maplewood Park Neighborhood Association and FWPR teamed up to develop green space into a park with a playground with slides, swings and spinning elements, plus benches and sidewalk.

- **Sheldon Park** at 7011 Sheldon Drive

Parks crews maintain these new parks as a part of 89 in our system.

Headwaters Park Management Shifts to Parks

Successfully transitioned Headwaters Park management from the Headwaters Park Alliance to the Parks Department. Hired a new maintenance supervisor who handles issues at Headwaters and Promenade Park. Collaborated with the Lawton Park crew and the new Riverfront maintenance crews to install the Ice Rink

Awarded Funds for New Playgrounds in Ten Parks

A larger than usual allocation from the State of Indiana from local income tax gifted Parks with \$2 million in funds specified by the City and City-Council for neighborhood park playgrounds in ten Fort Wayne Parks. Planning is complete and installation is proceeding.

Volunteer Hours Increased by 900% in 2023

By spreading mulch at park playgrounds and removing invasive plants to allow native species to thrive, volunteers contributed time and muscle to show their appreciation for Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation. Volunteer hours have grown as Covid-19 is further in the past. Volunteers donated a total of 6,863 hours in 2023.



Planning & Development

Completed 5-Year Master Plan

The 5-Year Master Plan takes a snapshot of community needs and desires, and allows FWPR to apply for various state funds through the Indiana DNR. The process inventory and analysis of the department was completed, and community input was gathered via in-person meetings and online surveys by project consultant Designing Local. The plan has been submitted and accepted by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

Lawton Greenhouse Beautified City

In 2023, the Lawton Park Greenhouse staff and volunteers grew a total of 110,503 plants, bulbs and seeds. Floral displays throughout Fort Wayne featured 29,320 plants of 284 different varieties and over 25,000 bulbs planted in the parks.

Botanical Conservatory Showcase Plant Production

- Winter Show: 1,260 pots and 3,285 pots of bulbs.
- Butterfly Show: 1,410 pots of annual flowers and vines.
- Summer Show: 1,951 including mums for the fall display.
- Holiday Show: 3,362 pots.

Approximately 1,900 plants were also produced for Conservatory events and programs.



The Great Tree Canopy Comeback Progressed

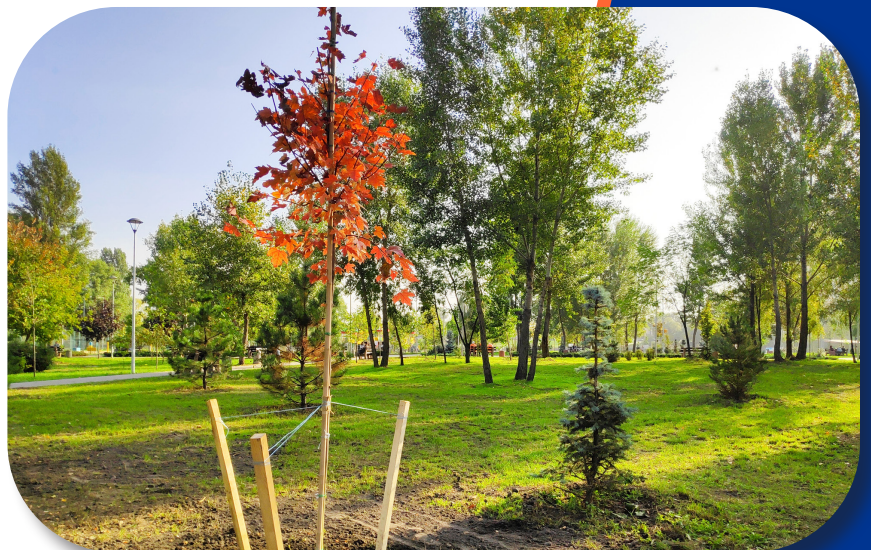
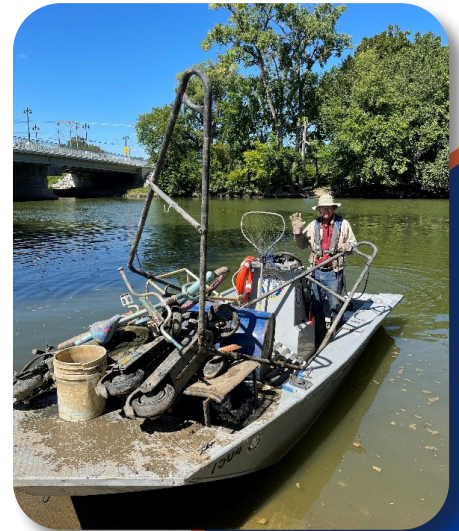
This annual volunteer effort through partnership with Friends of the Parks, was successful. It focused on the maintenance of young trees, the removal of invasive Honeysuckle in our parks and tree planting. Fifty shade trees were planted at Rockhill Park. Volunteers also removed Honeysuckle in Headwaters Park along the St. Marys River.

Work Barge Cleared Downtown Rivers

Riparian efforts removed over 162 tons of logs and navigational hazards from the downtown rivers. The cumulative effect is still apparent as the barge is now used for removing new log jams and navigational hazards caused from rain events. Bridges have been kept clear all year. More than 5,000 pounds of debris and litter was removed.

Additional \$500K Allocated for Tree Planting

An additional \$500,000 allocation from the Mayor's office in 2023 allowed for the planting of 1069 street trees and 195 park trees. Tree planting is one of the few infrastructure investments that grows with age. We look forward to watching these trees contribute to our community's well-being.



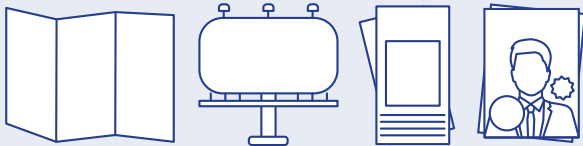
Marketing & Development

Print Media



Created in-house:

- 4 Fun Times activity guides, mailed to 120,000 households
- 511 additional promotional items



Gifts & Donations

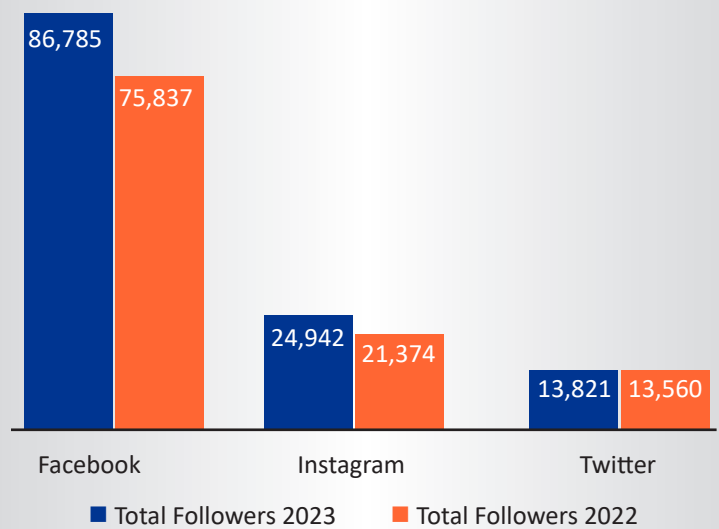
The Department received \$2,162,075 in monetary gifts and donations in 2023.



Digital Media

The Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department Marketing and Development Division produces marketing materials and advertising campaigns to inform and engage city residents about our programming and free and low-cost recreational activities.

125,000 Social Media Followers in 2023



Visits to website: 1,575,775

These numbers represent a 13% increase over 2022.

Unique Users: 559,385

Press Conferences

Foster Park Pavilion #3

- Arbor Day, Fort Wayne Daisies Memorial Unveiling, Fort Wayne Senior Games, Riverfront Phase IIa Ribbon Cutting, Franke Park Renaissance Ground Breaking, McKinnie Commons Grand Opening, Buckner Park Trail/Picnic Shelter Ribbon Cutting, Jennings Center 75th Anniversary, Bowser Park Centennial/Improvements, Riverfront Phase IIb Groundbreaking, Active Aging Week, Weisser Park Disc Golf Course

Botanical Conservatory

Career Center Program Benefits Conservatory

Volunteers with the Center for Academic Success (CAS) at Anthis Career Center committed to weekly hours at the Botanical Conservatory, to offer hands-on experience in the horticulture field to students & greatly benefitting the Botanical Conservatory.

Conservatory Upgrades Completed in 2023

Installation of new interior garden lighting, HVAC controls replacement and more effective Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies have resulted in a more comfortable environment and a healthier collection throughout the interior of the Conservatory.



Conservatory night life included JazzWorks!, the ROOTS Music Fest, Botanical Brew and the annual Rocky Horror Picture Show.

2023 Conservatory Attendance

California Dreamin' Jan 14-Apr 16	Color in Motion Apr 25-Jun 25	An Herban Garden Jul 1 -Nov 12	Timeless Tradition Nov 18-Jan 7, 2024	Other Attendance	TOTAL ATTENDANCE
29,453	27,113	27,905	13,293	7,823	105,587

Grants & Donations

Total of \$740,260
Including 40th anniversary gift from the Foellinger Foundation

Fort Wayne Children's Zoo

2023 Attendance and Membership

630,846 guests (4.89% increase)
17,500 members (2.94% increase)



Re-imagining the Indonesian Rain Forest-to-Asian Trek



Donations & Fundraising

7,651

gifts & pledges totalling

\$4.1 million

New Five-Year Strategic Plan Delivering Zoo Excellence

Purposeful • Collaborative • Enthusiastic
Welcoming • Adaptable

Capital Improvements in 2023

Red Panda Ridge

Bamboo Forest

Nature Play area in the African Village

New Chicken Feeding Experience in the Indiana Farm

Mother's Nursing/Family room

Sumatra Tiger retheming

Accessible ramp and decking for Endangered Species Carousel





FORT WAYNE
PARKS AND
RECREATION

fortwayneparks.org

