

History of the Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department

The Honorable Mayor Henry C. Berghoff appointed the first Board of Park Commissioners in 1905. The following members were confirmed by city council on June 6: Oscar W. Tresselt, David N. Foster, Joseph M Singmaster, and Ferdinand Meier. Ferdinand Meier was elected president and the board entered upon the discharge of its duties, taking over from the Board of Public Works. The following highlights track the history of the park system since 1863.

Year Event

- 1863 Old Fort Park, first city park, purchased by Mr. Henry Williams and given to city. (Site of Anthony Wayne's first fort.)
- 1866 Northside Park acquired to be home of the Indiana State Fair.
- 1869 Colonel Thomas W. Swinney leased his property to the City. It became known as Swinney Park.
- 1875 Colonel Swinney died and bequeathed his property to the City as a park with the condition that his family should have the home as long as they lived.
- 1876 Hayden Park acquired.
- 1880 Reservoir Park developed when the City reservoir was built.
- 1886 McCulloch Park given to the City by Mr. Hugh McCulloch.
- 1893 City leased more land for Swinney Park from Swinney heirs.
- 1894 Park Department formed under control of the Board of Public Works.
- 1895 Colonel Foster headed up a committee to investigate formation of a municipal park board. He believed that Fort Wayne should have a city park within a 10 minute walk of every home.
- 1900 Northside Park (Clinton & 4th St.) renamed Lawton Park to honor General Henry Lawton.
- 1905 Swinney Park developed into a 'pleasure park', not patterned after the European style park.
- 1905 Board of Park Commissioners formed due to passage of 'Cities and Towns Law' by the state legislature. The law created a Board of Park Commissioners independent of the Board of Public Works.
- 1908 Land donated by the Fort Wayne Land and Improvement Company for the development of Lakeside Park.
- 1908 First supervised playground operated at the corner of Clinton and Douglas Streets by Miss Carrie Snively.
- 1908 Weisser Park (15 acres of forest) purchased for \$10,500.
- 1910 The Robinson Plan developed by Charles Robinson.
- 1911 New taxing law gave Park Department the power to declare park districts and levy a tax on property within that district, but only for improvements to be carried out within the taxed area. The money could not be moved to a different district.
- 1912 110 acres of land for Foster Park donated by Samuel and Colonel David N. Foster.

- 1912 Lakeside Park development completed at cost of \$17,500 raised by special tax on the areas surrounding the park.
- 1914 Carl J. Getz became Fort Wayne's first city forester.
- 1914 Ten (10) tennis courts and wading pool constructed in Swinney Park.
- 1915 Parks and Recreation in Fort Wayne came to be viewed as one way to insure the quality of life.
- 1916 Johnny Appleseed monument erected in Swinney Park.
- 1916 Replica of Lincoln's log cabin erected in Foster Park by Lincoln National Life Insurance Company.
- 1917 Fort Wayne's first amusement park - Robinson Park -closed.
- 1917 The state legislature passed a park law that enabled cities to bond up to a percentage of their assessed value.
- 1917 Adolph Jaenicke became the first Superintendent of Parks and City Forester.
- 1918 Statue of General Anthony Wayne dedicated in Hayden Park at a cost of \$15,000.
- 1918 First public swimming pool opened in Lawton Park.
- 1918 Memorial Park established in honor of the military personnel that died during W.W.I.
- 1919 Park Board leased part of West Swinney to George Trier for Trier Amusement Park.
- 1920 Joseph and Sue Vesta Hanna donated Hanna's Ford (2 acres) to the Department.
- 1921 John Franke, president of the Perfection Biscuit Company, donated 80 acres to establish Franke Park.
- 1921 Statue of General Lawton dedicated in Lakeside Park.
- 1922 Statue of Colonel Foster dedicated "Father of the Park System."
- 1922 Swimming pool constructed in Swinney Park.
- 1923 Board of Park Commissioners assumed responsibility of all summer playgrounds from the school board as well as responsibility for community centers and other recreational activities.
- 1924 120 acres purchased as addition to Foster Park.
- 1926 Samuel and David Foster donated another 30 acres for Foster Park.
- 1926 Construction of Foster Golf Course began.
- 1927 First time that Fort Wayne issued bonds for park improvements.
- 1928 First public golf course opened in Foster Park.
- 1928 The gardens at Lakeside Park were named a National Rose Garden.
- 1928 A Japanese Garden was developed in West Swinney Park.
- 1928 National recognition given to Lakeside Park as the first municipal fish hatchery.
- 1930 Tea House Pavilion built in Swinney Park.

- 1937 The original 74 acres of land was donated by Mr. & Mrs. Dale W. McMillen and named McMillen Park.
- 1941 First full-time recreation director was hired by the Department.
- 1942 The name of the Japanese Gardens was changed to Jaenicke Gardens.
- 1945 Jefferson Recreation Center opened with programming for youth.
- 1946 Mr. Franklin B. Meade, Sr.'s world flower collection was presented to the city and planted in Foster Park.
- 1946 Franke Park Day Camp initiated in Franke Park.
- 1947 McCulloch Center constructed at a cost of \$61,500.
- 1947 Shoaff Lake formed in Franke by dredging swamp bottom.
- 1947 First center developed for senior citizens on the Bloomingdale School property.
- 1947 Chrysanthemum Garden at Lawton Park enlarged making it the most complete selection in the mid-west.
- 1948 Memorial and McMillen Pools opened.
- 1949 Foellinger Theatre constructed in Franke Park as a gift of the News-Sentinel in honor of Oscar Foellinger. Dedicated on August 10.
- 1949 Fort Wayne continued to be a pioneer city in the field of senior citizen programming.
- 1949 First city tot lot built in Weisser Park.
- 1949 Memorial Pool constructed at cost of \$95,000 tax funds.
- 1949 Emma J. Pond Trust Fund donated \$22,000 to construct Pond Pavilion as a boating/ice skating shelter.
- 1949 McMillen Foundation donated \$95,000 toward construction of ultra-modern pool in McMillen Park. Total cost was \$105,000. Dedicated August 13.
- 1951 Mr. and Mrs. A.W. Kettler donated 6.25 acres for Kettler Park.
- 1952 Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary opened to the public in Franke Park.
- 1952 Fred B. Shoaff donated 54.36 acres to become part of Franke Park.
- 1953 Psi Ote Park is first instance of school and park site planning in Fort Wayne.
- 1953 First woman to serve on the Board of Park Commissioners, Mrs. Helen W. Sweet.
- 1953 West Swinney Amusement Park discontinued, converted back to general park use.
- 1954 First annual Christmas Workshop.
- 1955 Board adopted First Class City Park Law and approved by the Common Council.
- 1955 New Tennis Center established in East Swinney Park.
- 1955 Park Board President, Frederick Shoaff, donated 169 acres to the City for Shoaff Park.

- 1955 Foster Golf Clubhouse constructed.
- 1956 The 50th anniversary of the Department was celebrated.
- 1956 McMillen Ice Arena first artificial ice rink in Indiana.
- 1956 Estate of Ella Conklin provided funds of \$118,529 for construction of Conklin Pavilion in Shoaff Park
- 1957 Park offices move from East Berry St. to Jefferson Center.
- 1958 First Fine Arts Festival held in Franke Park.
- 1958 Shoaff Park Golf Course opened in Shoaff Park.
- 1959 School Children's Flower and Garden Show sponsored by Park Department with help from Fort Wayne's Women's Garden Club.
- 1961 Beginning of close cooperation between Board of Park Commissioners, Board of Public Works, the Urban Redevelopment Commission, the City Plan Commission, and Fort Wayne Community Schools in reference to parks and playgrounds.
- 1962 Beginning of Children's Zoo - Advisory committee formed and architect hired.
- 1962 McMillen Golf Course dedicated.
- 1963 Department goals and objectives revised.
- 1963 Department entered fleet for the first time in the Chamber of Commerce Fleet Safety Program.
- 1964 Jack D. Diehm Museum of Natural History donated and constructed in Franke Park.
- 1965 Children's Zoological Gardens dedicated and opened.
- 1965 Diehm Museum of Natural History dedicated.
- 1965 60th anniversary of the Department celebrated with pageant at Foellinger Theatre.
- 1965 Senior citizen program and theater workshop program established at Jefferson Center.
- 1965 Buckner Farm ground obtained in trade for Southtown Mall site.
- 1966 Fort Wayne Zoological Society formed.
- 1967 Park acreage reaches 1640 acres.
- 1967 Department one of 100 U.S. departments which took part in the pilot Lifetime Sports Program sponsored by NRPA.
- 1968 First federal grant received to purchase Maumee (now Kreager) Park.
- 1968 First vest pocket park developed in Fort Wayne.
- 1968 McMillen Indoor Ice Arena opened.
- 1969 Department hosted 53rd annual conference of the Indiana Park and Recreation Association.
- 1969 Soap Box Derby Track donated and constructed by civic organizations at Franke Park.
- 1969 McMillen Ice Arena dedicated.

- 1970 Freimann Square park land dedicated to Park Board by the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission.
- 1970 Department participated in the federally funded Recreation Support Program for Inner-City Youth.
- 1971 First full-time Zoo Education Supervisor hired.
- 1971 Miner Community Center opened.
- 1971 Three buildings burned: Jefferson Center, McMillen Barn and the Nature Lodge in Franke Park.
- 1972 Fire at Foellinger Theatre.
- 1972 Park Foundation established to provide funding for capital improvements for the Department.
- 1972 Cooperative evening movie program offered with the Fort Wayne Police Department.
- 1972 Department offices move to the City-County Building.
- 1973 Rock concerts and organized activities provided on Sunday afternoons in Swinney and Foster Parks for teenagers.
- 1973 Reorganization of park maintenance methods and concepts.
- 1973 Took over the operation and maintenance of City Utilities and Reservoir Parks.
- 1973 Freimann Square completed.
- 1974 Organized and conducted Recreation Fair in conjunction with the Mayor's Recreation Coordinating Committee.
- 1974 Adoption of Affirmative Action Policy.
- 1974 Hosted state-wide conference for the Indiana Senior Citizens Association.
- 1974 Assisted with the Indiana State HPER Conference.
- 1974 Park Master Plan presented to City Council.
- 1975 Tillman Park developed at site of former Tillman Dump.
- 1975 Federal Revenue Sharing Funds used to construct new parks.
- 1975 Foellinger Theatre rebuilt.
- 1975 Street Outreach Program sponsored by the Department and funded by the Indiana Criminal Justice Planning Agency.
- 1975 First Johnny Appleseed Festival.
- 1975 Funmobile service increased with the development of a new concept in playground programming.
- 1975 Began operation of Cooper Community Center.
- 1976 African Veldt opened at the Children's Zoo.
- 1976 Park Study Team organized to evaluate all parks with respect to current social patterns and needs for physical changes to meet the new demands.

- 1976 A federal EEO review of the Department was conducted by a team from Washington D.C. resulting in a high compliance rating.
- 1976 Department adopted a change in policy which emphasized fees and charges to make services and programs financially self-supporting.
- 1976 Foellinger Theatre reopened following completion of the basic reconstruction.
- 1976 First full season of operation for Lindenwood Park Environmental Study Area, leased from the Lindenwood Cemetery.
- 1977 Stewart-McMillen Tennis Center completed.
- 1977 Completion and opening of new Senior Citizens Center.
- 1978 Lawton Park Greenhouse destroyed by fire.
- 1978 Therapeutic Recreation Program implemented. The Department was awarded the Pioneering Award by IPRA for being the first Parks and Recreation Department in Indiana to start such a program.
- 1978 Recreation services provided outside Fort Wayne city limits for the first time through a purchase of services agreement.
- 1979 75th anniversary of the department. Parks are featured theme of Three Rivers Festival.
- 1979 First Annual Winter Festival.
- 1979 First Three Rivers Festival Junior Golf Tournament sponsored by Bordens marked the beginning of the annual Junior Golf Program.
- 1979 The 1979-83 Park Master Plan completed and approved by the State Department of Natural Resources, Outdoor Recreation Division.
- 1979 Recognition of the Fort Wayne Park Department Employees Independent Union, Inc. As the bargaining agent for all non-supervisory employees.
- 1979 A multi-party agreement drawn up between the Redevelopment Commission, Park Board, Park Foundation, Foellinger Foundation, and the Freimann Charitable Trust. Agreement states what each party will be doing in its relationship to create the Botanical Conservatory.
- 1979 Grant through the Department of Natural Resources approved which will involve a study of wood utilization.
- 1979 Launching of the Historic River Cruise Program.
- 1979 Department hosted the First Joint State Conference for IPRA, IAHPER, ICEA.
- 1979 Great Zoo Halloween introduced.
- 1979 Policy manual compiled for the Department assembling for the first time all Park Board policies into one document.
- 1979 Swinney Pool renovated at cost of \$80,250.
- 1979 East Central Park dedicated.
- 1979 Ewing Park dedicated.

- 1980 Northside Park Tennis Courts constructed with funds from Fort Wayne Community Schools, \$64,900.
- 1980 With the help of Japanese citizens, Japanese Gardens developed on east side of Performing Arts Building downtown as a gift from our sister city, Takaoka, Japan.
- 1980 Central park office relocated from City-County Building to 705 E. State Blvd., former site of State Hospital and Training Center.
- 1980 Diehm Museum of Natural History reconstructed in Franke Park (after lost to fire) to take advantage of proximity to zoo.
- 1980 Land and Water Conservation Fund grant provided funds to implement several phases of Rivergreenway.
- 1980 Department received the coveted Gold Medal Award for Excellence in the Field of Park and Recreation Management presented by the Sports Foundation, Inc.
- 1981 After 50 years of continuous service, the Park Police operation was disbanded due to budget cuts.
- 1981 \$400,000 maintenance trust fund dedicated by Freimann Charitable Trust for maintenance of Freimann Square.
- 1981 Swinney Homestead admitted to National Register.
- 1981 West Central Park was renamed Moody Park and dedicated on August 1.
- 1981 Jehl Park dedicated. Developed with Land and Water Conservation Fund grant and a private donation.
- 1981 Ground breaking for Botanical Conservatory.
- 1981 \$100,000 secured from Land and Water Conservation Fund for Rivergreenway development and a \$25,000 appropriation approved by state for land acquisition.
- 1981 \$6.7 million bond issue initiated to finance park improvements.
- 1982 Department passed a \$6.95 million bond issue for park improvements
- 1982 Began construction of new education center and office complex at the zoo with funds from the 1982 bond.
- 1982 Ground breaking for the zoo gift shop.
- 1982 Improvements from bond funds included work at McMillen Ice Arena, Shoaff Golf Course and Foster Golf Course.
- 1982 Memorial Pool renovated as part of bond projects.
- 1982 Permanent closing of Lawton Park Pool, oldest pool in the state, perhaps in the mid-west. Opened in 1918, pool was in operation for 65 years.
- 1982 Construction began on Northside pool in newly developed Northside Park (site of old State School).
- 1982 Department developed first gift catalog.
- 1982 Department devoted countless hours combating ravages of the March flood.
- 1982 Department lost 10 structures to arson at an estimated cost of \$269,486.

- 1983 Completed Education Center and office complex at Children's Zoo.
- 1983 LWCF grant for \$150,000 was secured to continue Rivergreenway development.
- 1983 Dedication and grand opening of Northside Park and pool on June 4.
- 1983 Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory opened to the public.
- 1983 Zoopermarket opened at the Children's Zoo.
- 1983 City Council passed ordinance which allows alcohol in Botanical Conservatory.
- 1984 Fort Wayne/Allen County Senior Citizens Center Foundation, Inc. Was created.
- 1984 McMillen Pool renovated.
- 1984 Gren Park dedicated in June.
- 1984 Rivergreenway dedicated in June.
- 1984 UPARR grant secured to study usage and need for computers.
- 1985 BMX bike track built in Rockhill Park.
- 1985 Zoo celebrated 20th anniversary.
- 1985 Josephine Longfellow Diver Perennial Collection dedicated in Foster Garden.
- 1985 A comprehensive study of the park system was conducted by Dr. Louis Moncrief and associates from Michigan State University, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. Study emphasized budgets, data management, philosophy, goals, organization, revenue sources and philanthropy.
- 1985 Pi Chapter of Psi Iota Xi Sorority donated \$65,000 for renovation of the barn in Northside Park.
- 1985 Acquired abandoned Lincolndale Drive-in property adjacent to Franke Park.
- 1986 Traditional Sunday night rock concerts moved from Freimann Square to Lawton Park.
- 1986 Nuckols Memorial dedicated at the site of the old Hayden Park.
- 1986 Hurshtown Reservoir opened.
- 1986 Moncrief consultant team engaged to assist with implementation of Moncrief Management Study. A Marketing Manager was hired to work with the Moncrief Team.
- 1986 Banquet and meeting rooms at Conservatory completely remodeled to be more functional for group use.
- 1986 Terrace Garden at Botanical Conservatory dedicated. The Terrace Garden was developed with \$500,000 from Foellinger Foundation.
- 1987 Park Foundation funds used to purchase Lindenwood Environmental Study Area from Lindenwood Cemetery.
- 1987 10th anniversary of Senior Citizens Center.
- 1987 Design firm contracted to evaluate swimming pools and provide concepts for remodeling.
- 1987 Department received \$111,000 from Land and Water Conservation Fund and Indiana Waters grants for further Rivergreenway development.

- 1987 Department study by Dr. Louis Moncrief completed. Department characterized as “park driven.” Recommended Department take steps to become more “market driven.” Report include departmental reorganization.
- 1987 Department reorganization plans (recommended by Moncrief study) were completed and partially implemented.
- 1987 Staff formed marketing teams and received marketing education.
- 1987 Strategic Marketing plan for Department was completed with aid of UPARR grant.
- 1987 \$2.8 million Australian Adventure opened at Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo.
- 1988 Department reorganization completed.
- 1988 Department adopted marketing philosophy and mission statement. New Marketing Division established.
- 1988 Hosted the Annual Indiana Park and Recreation Association annual conference.
- 1988 Franke Day Camp was extended to include 4-5 year old children.
- 1988 Rivergreenway link between West Swinney and Foster Parks funded by LWCF grant.
- 1988 Master plans developed for Shoaff, Franke, Maumee and Buckner Parks as well as Johnny Appleseed Campground, Foster Gardens and the four city pools.
- 1989 Department adopted new logo.
- 1989 Traditional Sunday evening free rock concerts were discontinued due to volume and traffic problems.
- 1989 Park Foundation provided funds to purchase 16 acres north of Shoaff Park and two parcels on Goshen Road south of Franke Park.
- 1989 Miner Center closed after 20 years of operation and leased to newly established Boys and Girls Club for their use.
- 1989 Prehistoric Giants exhibit featuring life-like robotic dinosaurs visits the Children’s Zoo.
- 1989 Swinney Skateboard Center opened.
- 1990 Centralized, computerized registration system put in place.
- 1990 Conservatory designated a plant rescue center for the USDA as part of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).
- 1990 Bridal Glen dedicated in Foster Gardens.
- 1990 Received \$3 million bequest from Gail Kreager estate with stipulation that it be used within 5 years to develop at least 50-acre park to be named after him.
- 1990 Superintendent of Conservatory and Horticulture position created.
- 1990 The Fort Wayne Zoological Society began working with Dr. Richard Tenaza of the University of the Pacific and the Indonesian Government to set aside a reserve on the Mentawai Islands to help save five species of endangered primates.
- 1990 Fort Wayne Children’s Zoo hosted the Great Lakes Regional Conference of the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums.

- 1990 Zoo celebrates 25th anniversary.
- 1990 Forestry Division initiated comprehensive street tree maintenance program whereby trees are trimmed in a strategically planned order, one section of the city at a time.
- 1991 Developed SOAR Youth Scholarship Fund.
- 1991 Zoo employees transferred to Zoo Society payroll.
- 1991 4th of July fireworks moved to IPFW.
- 1991 Department hosted Indiana Parks and Recreation Association annual conference.
- 1991 Adopt-a-Greenway program created, whereby groups agree to clean a 2-mile section of the trail three times a year for two years. Six sections designated for adoption.
- 1992 McCulloch Center renamed Albert G. Jennings Recreation Center in honor of its long-time director who passed away in 1991.
- 1992 Last Soap Box Derby race in Fort Wayne.
- 1992 Senior Citizens center renamed Community Center and programming open to all ages.
- 1992 Department leased 12 acres at Johnny Appleseed Park (old Carrington Field location) to the County for the construction of Memorial Stadium in trade for 52 acres on North River Road contiguous with Maumee Park. In addition, the County provided \$100,000 to help fund construction of two new ball diamonds to replace the two lost to the stadium. IPFW provided campus space for the two new diamonds. The new Carrington Field was completed in 1993.
- 1992 New large area mowing operation implemented.
- 1993 McMillen Ice Arena renovated with funds from Park Foundation and McMillen Foundation.
- 1993 Carrington Field constructed on IPFW ground.
- 1993 Lakeside Pond improvements completed with \$155,000 from Indiana Waters grant.
- 1993 Foster #1 Pavilion renovated.
- 1993 Sand volleyball court constructed in Northside Park with financial help from Northside Neighborhood Association.
- 1993 Botanical Conservatory celebrates 10th anniversary.
- 1994 Decided to name Maumee Park after Gail Kreager and use his 1990 bequest to develop the park and establish a maintenance endowment.
- 1994 New tournament quality lights installed at Swinney Tennis Center with funds from Park Foundation and Tennis Commission.
- 1994 Strategic Master Plan developed for the Botanical Conservatory with funds provided by Foellinger Foundation.
- 1994 Foellinger Theatre renovations included new seating and new electrical system. Foellinger Foundation provided funding.
- 1994 Lindenwood Environmental Study Area designated a state nature preserve. Name changed to Lindenwood Nature Preserve.

- 1994 BMX track relocated from Rockhill Park to Franke Park.
- 1994 Indonesian Exhibit opened at Children's Zoo driving summer attendance to all time high of 465,268 visitors.
- 1994 Passed \$8.9 million general obligation bond for park improvements.
- 1994 Headwaters Park Phase I completed.
- 1994 Kids' Crossing Playground in Lawton Park constructed by community volunteers and funded by donations.
- 1994 Department participated in Bicentennial Crabapple Tree project.
- 1994 New irrigation system installed at Foster Park Golf Course.
- 1994 Hosted USA Hockey National Pee Wee Tournament at McMillen Ice Arena.
- 1994 Swinney Skateboard Center demolished and converted into in-line skating facility.
- 1995 Lawton Park Maintenance Office destroyed by fire.
- 1995 Ground breaking at Kreager Park.
- 1995 Pool renovations begun at Northside, Swinney and McMillen pools as part of bond work.
- 1995 Orangutan Valley exhibit opened at Children's Zoo as Phase II of Indonesian Exhibit.
- 1995 Received 186 acre Salomon Farm from Chris Salomon and his daughter, Lynn.
- 1996 The Department entered the information age with a new site on the world wide web.
- 1996 Conservatory renovations underway with funding from Foellinger Foundation and Lincoln Life.
- 1996 Began construction of Weisser Park Center, a \$1.3 million bond funded project.
- 1996 Headwaters Park Phase II completed.
- 1996 Driving range constructed at Shoaff Park.
- 1996 Franke Day Camp celebrates 50th anniversary.
- 1996 Completed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) survey of department facilities and developed a basic transition plan.
- 1996 Northside, Swinney and McMillen Pools renovated: Water slides, heaters, concessions . . .
- 1996 Department received federal Americorp grant for Kids Connection Corp program.
- 1997 Department hosts Indiana Park and Recreation Association annual conference.
- 1998 Weisser Center opened in Weisser Park.
- 1998 Kreager athletic fields and tennis courts open for public use.
- 1998 Fort Wayne Sports Corporation and Parks and Recreation Department host the first annual Lifetime Sports Academy offering free golf, tennis and swimming lessons for youth ages 8-18..
- 1998 Botanical Conservatory educational exhibits unveiled.

- 1998 Major renovations completed at Memorial Pool.
- 1998 Driving range developed at McMillen Park.
- 1998 New tennis courts constructed at McMillen Park (original courts removed).
- 1998 Franke Park parking lot expansion project began and was halted almost immediately when opposing citizens (led by former park board president, John Shoaff) filed a law suit. Controversy and litigation continued through through the year with no resolution.
- 1999 Greg Purcell appointed Director of Parks and Recreation by mayor Paul Helmke upon retirement of Robert C. Arnold.
- 1999 Northside Park renamed Bob Arnold Northside Park.
- 1999 Robert Arnold retired after 29 years as Director of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- 1999 Revenue-backed general obligation bond was approved to add a full sheet of ice at McMillen Ice Arena. Groundbreaking was held on November 4.
- 1999 The Community Center parking lot off Berry Street was expanded from 24 spaces to 60 spaces.
- 1999 Courthouse Green was conveyed to the Park Board from the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission.
- 1999 Headwaters Park and the Old Fort were officially conveyed to the Park Board from the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission and the Board of Works.
- 1999 Renovation of the old Wells Street Bridge completed.
- 1999 50th anniversary of the Foellinger Outdoor Theatre.
- 1999 Began taking program registrations on-line through the web site.
- 1999 Friends of the Parks of Allen County, Inc. formed under the leadership of Julie Donnell in response to the Franke Park parking expansion controversy.
- 1999 Freimann Square lower plaza reconstruction completed. Rededication held May 24, 2000.
- 1999 New playground equipment was purchased and installed in Lafayette Park by the Baker and Daniels Law Firm at a cost of \$17,593.
- 1999 25th anniversary of the Johnny Appleseed Festival.
- 1999 Exterior renovations and stabilization to Old Fort structures completed in November.
- 1999 New sound and lighting installed at Foellinger Theater with funding from the Foellinger Foundation.
- 1999 No supervised summer playground program was conducted for the first time in decades -- perhaps in as many as 70 years.
- 1999 The Fort Wayne Zoological Society raised \$3.8 million with their "Heart of the Zoo" campaign to rejuvenate the zoo's 7-acre core.
- 1999 Mayor Paul Helmke created the Franke Park Advisory Committee to examine the controversial Franke Park parking expansion issue and recommend possible solutions. The task force spent over 20 hours in meetings and public hearings. Their final recommendation, which was a significantly scaled-back lot, was accepted by the Park Board and the Zoological Society. Opponents of the original plan did not

accept the compromise recommended by the Advisory Committee and litigation continued through 1999.

- 2000 Board of Park Commissioners enter into an agreement with Headwaters Alliance, Inc. for the management of Headwaters Park.
- 2000 Joined efforts and funds with Allen County Parks to prepare a 5-year master plan.
- 2000 In June the City Council stepped into the Franke Park parking controversy and charged both sides in the dispute to develop a compromise or they would select a plan themselves. Mayor Graham Richard's office became involved as well and by November a new plan agreeable to all parties was developed and approved by City Council.
- 2000 Children's Zoo "Heart of the Zoo" improvements include the addition of Kids' Egg Walk, renovation of Little Poof, removal of the concrete amphitheater (in anticipation of the new sea lion exhibit), and the renovation of Monkey Island.
- 2000 Interested citizens introduced the concept of a dog park.
- 2000 Expansion and improvements of the McMillen Ice Arena completed at a cost of \$4.5 million making it the largest single project in the history of the Parks and Recreation Department.
- 2000 Adopt-a-Greenway program expanded to include ten sections.
- 2000 Hamilton park redesigned by City Utilities to act as a water retention basin. In exchange, the park received major improvements including new basketball courts, new ball diamonds, new playground equipment and a paved jogging trail around the perimeter of the park.
- 2000 A new fully accessible boardwalk, which meets the standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), was constructed in Lindenwood Nature Preserve.
- 2000 New animal hospital designed, constructed and brought into service for the Children's Zoo.
- 2000 Construction began on the Salomon Farm Learning Center.
- 2000 Indiana Senate Bill 74, which substantially increases the penalty for indecent exposure in public parks, was signed into law.
- 2000 Indiana Senate Bill 141, which limits liability for injuries sustained by participants in extreme sports activities, was introduced.
- 2000 Participated in a state-wide trail study conducted by the Eppley Institute at Indiana University.
- 2001 Greg Purcell resigned as director of Parks and Recreation in January. Phil Bennett acted as interim director until Dianne Hoover was appointed by Mayor Graham Richard in September.
- 2001 New donor plaza constructed just inside the front gates of the zoo to recognize donors to the "Heart of the Zoo" fund-raising campaign.
- 2001 After 10 years of hard work and patience, the zoo welcomed the first European black stork ever hatched in North America.
- 2001 Conservatory improvements funded by the Foellinger Foundation in 1996 were completed with the installation of "The Underground" hands-on exhibit and the development of Conservatory Park.
- 2001 New walking/jogging trail developed in Gren Park.

- 2001 City ordinance revised to allow unleashed dogs inside the confines of the dog park (when it is built.)
- 2001 A second flume slide installed at Northside Aquatic Center.
- 2001 After two years of controversy, litigation and alternative proposals, construction of the expanded Franke Park parking lot finally commenced in October.
- 2001 Kreager barn renovation completed
- 2001 Dennis Noak, Superintendent of Conservatory and Horticulture, retired after 33½ years with the Department.
- 2001 Rivergreenway additions constructed in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers diking project were completed. The trail is now open from Johnny Appleseed Park to Tillman Park and from State Blvd. (east side of St. Joseph River) to Pemberton Ave. (along the Maumee River.)
- 2001 Seldom used ball diamond in Foster Park West is removed and the area dedicated for a proposed dog park.
- 2001 New state law limits liability for extreme sports injuries.
- 2001 Salomon Farm Learning Center construction was completed.
- 2001 Mayor Graham Richard commits \$5 million of CEDIT funds for parks if the community can match it.
- 2001 New 9-hole golf course in McMillen Park was completed in late fall as part of the Lifetime Sports Academy. Construction of the \$175,000 course was funded by the Mad Anthonys. Weather and turf conditions delayed the opening until the spring of 2003.
- 2001 New basketball court complex constructed in McMillen Park with contributions from City Council CEDIT funds and local foundations.
- 2001 New wheelchair accessible playground installed in Lakeside Park through efforts and participation of the neighborhood association.
- 2001 Plans developed for a sprayground and memorial to local civil servants who die while in the line of duty. Efforts were initiated by City Council member, Dr. John Crawford, who raised over \$500,000 for the project. The sprayground was completed in November.
- 2001 Rea Magnet Wire offered to donate land along Pontiac Street contiguous with the southern end of McCormick Park and agreed to establish a maintenance endowment.
- 2001 The Indiana Family Farm exhibit opened at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo.
- 2002 The Olympic Torch for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics was relayed through Fort Wayne on January 3. A community celebration was held in Headwaters Park after the flame completed its route through the city.
- 2002 Franke Park parking lot expansion was completed, adding approximately 600 new spaces for park and zoo visitors.
- 2002 New sprayground opens in Memorial Park in June and quickly becomes very popular.
- 2002 Civil Servants memorial wall in Memorial Park is completed and dedicated along with the sprayground on August 30.
- 2002 The Community Center celebrated its 25th anniversary on October 5.

- 2002 A new playground was installed in Franke Park in conjunction with parking lot improvements. Ribbon cutting was held on July 17.
- 2002 Acquired 53 acres of property contiguous to Buckner Farm allowing for future access off Bass Rd. Funding for the purchase was provided through a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant.
- 2002 Salamon Farm Camp was introduced and sold out in its first year with 175 campers attending the six week-long sessions.
- 2002 The Rivergreenway Consortium (a group formed in the late 1970s to promote the Rivergreenway development) changes its name to the Greenway Consortium and expands its focus to trails beyond the rivers. The Consortium presented a Greenway extension plan to the Park Board.
- 2002 Department undertakes a comprehensive strategic planning process.
- 2002 A major renovation quadrupled the size of Sea Lion Beach at the Children's Zoo.
- 2002 A new parking lot was constructed behind the McMillen Ice Arena.
- 2002 An heirloom apple orchard was planted at Salomon Farm in recognition of Arbor Day
- 2002 Miner Center was transferred to the New World Church Outreach Program.
- 2003 A new office/learning center at Lindenwood Nature Preserve was constructed to replace the building destroyed by arsons in the spring of 2002.
- 2003 Mad Anthony's Threes 9-hole golf course learning center opened for play.
- 2003 Memorial Pool bathhouse exterior was renovated with federal UPARR funds.
- 2003 The Remenschneider property adjacent to Shoaff Park was purchased for future golf course expansion
- 2003 Pawster Park Pooch Playground construction completed. The facility was dedicated and opened for public use in May.
- 2003 Rea Park development completed. The new park was dedicated on July 22.
- 2003 Foster Park sustained major damage in flood of July 2003 requiring the closure of Foster Golf Course from July through the remainder of the year. . Lawton, Franke, Swinney and Kreager also sustained damage.
- 2003 Foster Park Golf Course celebrated it's 75th anniversary.
- 2003 New outdoor ice rink opened in Headwaters Park.
- 2003 New parking lot (behind the ice arena) and new roadways were constructed in McMillen Park.
- 2003 New playground equipment was installed at Psi Ote, Miner and McCormick Parks.
- 2003 In cooperation with the Downtown Improvement District, a "River of Flowers" consisting of 4,500 daylilies was planted in the Main Street medians.
- 2003 The Swinney Homestead renovation, which included new wood shutters, dormer siding, garage gable siding and painting of windows, doors and overhands, was completed with a \$19,875 matching grant from INDR.
- 2004 Achieved agency accreditation through the National Parks and Recreation Association's Commission for the Accreditation of Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).

- 2004 Lawton Skatepark opened on September 3. The facility was funded largely by private donations.
- 2004 Opened the new Sharks, Rays & Jellyfish exhibit at the Children's Zoo and recorded the second largest attendance in 39 years with 523,940 visitors.
- 2004 Constructed a new pole barn at Salamon Farm and began renovation of the historic barn.
- 2004 Celebrated the grand re-opening of Foster Golf Course after extensive flooding in July 2003 closed the course for the remainder of the season
- 2004 The comprehensive plan initiated in 2002 was completed.
- 2004 Buckner Farm Park opened to the public on October 1 after a path and parking area were constructed.
- 2004 Received the 2004 Outstanding Park Development Award from IPRA and the 2004 Outstanding Concrete Achievement Award from the Indiana Ready Mix Concrete Association for the Lawton Skatepark development.
- 2004 Received the 2004 Outstanding Special Award from IPRA for the Kaleidoscope blown glass showcase at the Botanical Conservatory.
- 2004 Created a Greenway/Community Trails Manager position to take responsibility for the Rivergreenway and coordinate with other area organizations in trail development.
- 2005 PBS Channel 39 produced and aired a 1-hour documentary of the Lifetime Sports Academy.
- 2005 Celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Parks and Recreation Department with special events and \$1 admissions scheduled throughout the year. The Three Rivers Festival honored the occasions with the parade theme "A Century of Fun."
- 2005 Director Dianne Hoover resigned in February. Dave Ridderheim(February-September) and Perry Ehresman (October)served as interim directors until Al Moll officially took the position in late October.
- 2005 Passed \$10 million general obligation bond for park improvements.
- 2005 Began reconstruction of the sunken gardens at Lakeside Park.
- 2005 Planted 5,240 trees in Kreager, McMillen, Foster West, Weisser and Tillman Parks as part of the 2005 Great Tree Canopy Comeback.
- 2005 Buckner Park Development Committee submitted recommendations for the future development of Buckner Park.
- 2005 Completed plaza and sidewalk renovations at Freimann Square.
- 2005 Foellinger Theatre improvements in 2005 included paving the parking lot, construction of a new restroom/concession building and plaza, and landscaping around the entrance.
- 2005 Renovation of the old barn at Salomon Farm was completed.
- 2005 McMillen Ice Arena hosted the 2005 International Silver Stick Regional Hockey Tournament, accommodating nearly 80 teams vying for international recognition.
- 2005 Fort Wayne Children's Zoo celebrated its 40th anniversary with special events throughout the summer, including naming the endangered species carousel in memory of Earl B. Wells, the zoo's founding director and leader for over 30 years.

- 2005 Entered into a management agreement with the Fort Wayne Zoological Society for operation of the Children's Zoo.
- 2005 The Conservateer volunteer program at the Botanical Conservatory was dissolved.
- 2006 Psi Ote Upper pavilion renovated.
- 2006 Completed reconstruction of Lakeside Park's sunken gardens.
- 2006 Celebrated the 60th anniversary of Franke Park Day Camp.
- 2006 Reprised youth programming at Cooper Center in Reservoir Park.
- 2006 Completed the Oak Savanna at Buckner Park and contracted the design of phase I development.
- 2006 The zoo's first baby orangutan, Dumadi, was born.
- 2006 The zoo gift shop was doubled in size, completed remodeled and re-opened with a new name: Wild Things.
- 2006 The zoo initiated a \$7 million capital campaign (the largest in zoo history) to renovate the African Veldt into African Journey.
- 2006 McMillen Ice Arena hosted the USA Hockey Pee Wee Tier 2 National Championship Tournament and the Silver Stick International Qualifier Tournament.
- 2006 Renovations at Salomon Farm Park included a new restroom building, a livestock shelter, parking lot improvements, a chicken coop, tool shed, and completion of the old barn.
- 2006 Broke ground on the new Lifetime Sports Academy Clubhouse/McMillen Golf Course Pro Shop
- 2007 Celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Lifetime Sports Academy
- 2007 McMillen Ice Arena hosted the American Collegiate Hockey Association's Division 3 Championship and the Silver Stick Youth Hockey Tournament.
- 2007 Renovated the Swinney Tennis Center and completed renovations of the pond in West Swinney Park.
- 2007 Purchased new Rec Trac registration/reservation computer system
- 2007 Installed splash pads in Waynedale and McCormick Parks
- 2007 Constructed 1.8 mile multi-use trail at Salomon Farm Park
- 2007 Constructed new Carrington Field off Coliseum Blvd, next to Lakeside Golf Course
- 2007 Began construction on the Zoo's new African Journey exhibit.
- 2008 Dedicated the Daryl B. Cobin Memorial Park, home of Carrington Field
- 2008 Began construction of Meyer Park at Parkview Field
- 2008 Children's Zoo receives accreditation by Association of Zoos & Aquariums
- 2008 Department entered agreement with Canlan Ice Sports Corp for private operation of McMillen Ice Arena beginning in 2009.
- 2008 Completed construction and dedicated new Japanese-style pavilion in Swinney Park

- 2008 Celebrated 50th anniversary of Shoaff Park Golf Course
- 2008 Initiated the Legacy Parks program to recognize parks that reach their 100th anniversary
- 2008 New maintenance building constructed at Shoaff Park Golf Course
- 2008 Restored bandstand at McCulloch Park
- 2008 Began phase I development in Buckner Park. Completed pavilion, playground, splash pad, parking lot
- 2008 Installed new playgrounds in McCormick and Lafayette Parks
- 2008 Received \$1 million gift from Foellinger Foundation in commemoration of its 50th anniversary
- 2009 African Journey exhibit opened at Children's Zoo
- 2009 Dedicated development at Buckner Park and opened splash pad
- 2009 Dedicated Robert E. Meyers Park at Parkview Field
- 2009 Installed new splash pad in Shoaff Park
- 2009 Celebrated 60th anniversary of Foellinger Theatre and 100th anniversary of Weisser Park
- 2009 Rivergreenway designated a National Recreation Trail
- 2009 Department turned management of McMillen Ice Arena over to Canlan Ice Sports Corp
- 2009 Department was re-accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Parks & Recreation Agencies
- 2009 Swinney Pool closed due to budget constraints and underuse
- 2010 Fort Wayne named "Playful City USA" by non-profit organization KaBOOM!
- 2010 Fort Wayne named "Tree City USA" for 20th consecutive year
- 2010 Department wins Merit Design Award for Meyers Park from the Indiana-American Society of Landscape Architects
- 2010 Lions Park tennis courts are converted to pickleball courts
- 2010 New cafe (Bagle Station) opens in Botanical Conservatory
- 2010 Ground broken on Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground in Kreager Park
- 2010 McMillen Ice Arena no longer operated as an ice arena.
- 2011 Fort Wayne's park and boulevard system is designated "Historic District" on the National Register of Historic Places and receives the Historic Preservation Award
- 2011 Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground opens in Kreager Park
- 2011 City of Fort Wayne recognized as the "2011 Outstanding Government Entity in Promoting Principles of Urban Forestry"
- 2011 Received state award for "Outstanding Municipality of the Year" for efforts in addressing the Emerald Ash Borer challenge

- 2011 Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground wins Synthetic Turf Council's "2011 Search for the Real Field of Dreams" contest
- 2011 Fort Wayne again named "Playful City USA" by non-profit organization KaBOOM!
- 2011 Fort Wayne named "Tree City USA" for 21st consecutive year
- 2011 A new zoo entrance was constructed to replace the 46-year old structure
- 2011 Splashpads installed at Waynedale and McCormick Parks
- 2011 40th anniversary of Freimann Square
- 2011 50th anniversary of the City Swim and Dive Meet
- 2011 65th anniversary of Franke Park Day Camp
- 2012 Celebrated the 100th anniversary of Foster Park
- 2012 Hosted first downtown Winter festival
- 2012 Legacy funding approved for McMillen Ice Arena to Community Center renovation
- 2012 Named 2012 Play City USA Community by KaBoom! organization
- 2012 Named Tree City USA for 22nd consecutive year
- 2012 Taylor's Dream awarded the "Daniel Flaherty Park Excellence Award" and "Excellence in Construction Award"
- 2012 25th anniversary of Lindenwood Nature Preserve
- 2012 15th anniversary of Lifetime Sports Academy
- 2013 Unveiled plans to repurpose the McMillen Ice Arena into the McMillen Park Community Center and began construction
- 2013 Mayor committed annual \$3 million allocation of funds for future Parks & Recreation maintenance and improvements
- 2013 Named a Playful City USA by the KaBoom! organization for the 4th consecutive year
- 2013 Named Tree City USA for 23rd consecutive year
- 2013 Expanded seating at Foellinger Theatre
- 2013 Celebrated 85th anniversary of Foster Park Golf Course, 55th anniversary of Shoaff Park Golf Course and 50th anniversary of McMillen Park Golf Course
- 2013 30th anniversary of Junior Golf Tour
- 2013 15th anniversary of Weisser Youth Center
- 2013 Indiana's First Lady Karen Pence visited Franke Park Day Camp
- 2013 The Disc Golf Club began construction on a new 18-hole disc golf course in Tillman Park.
- 2014 Fort Wayne designated Birdtown Indiana by Indiana Audubon Society

- 2014 Department re-accredited by CAPRA
 - 2014 McMillen Park Community Center opened on June 7 while the project received and IPRA Award of Excellence
 - 2014 Department received Downtown Improvement District award for outstanding commitment to downtown Fort Wayne
 - 2014 Department received Northeast Indiana Trail Riders Organization Corporate Supporter Award
 - 2014 Named “Playful City USA Community” by KaBOOM! for 5th consecutive year
 - 2014 Named “Tree City USA” for 24th consecutive year
 - 2014 New Bloom sculpture installed in Meyers Park
 - 2014 Cindy’s Diner relocated to the northeast corner of the Community Center parking lot
 - 2015 Celebrated 110th anniversary of Department with free community-wide party in Headwaters Park
 - 2015 Opened Camp Canine dog park in Johnny Appleseed Park on July 30
 - 2015 Taylor’s Dream voted 21st of the 50 best playgrounds in the country by Early Childhood Education Zone
 - 2015 Named “Playful City USA Community” by KaBOOM! for 6th consecutive year
 - 2015 Named “Tree City USA” for 25th consecutive year
 - 2015 LSA sponsors 1st Tee Golf Program in 34 FWCS elementary schools.
 - 2015 FootGolf Course opened at McMillen Park.
 - 2015 Began park development on the site of the former Franklin School
 - 2015 Purdue’s Cardinal Hoops Project provided funds for upgrading the basketball court at Jennings Center
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- 2016 Department’s Aquatic division honored with Gold International Aquatic Safety Award.
 - 2016 Riverfront Advisory Committee formed under direction of Parks and Recreation to guide planning and implementation of the Phase I Riverfront development project.
 - 2016 Parks & Recreation Department’s Riverfront Division established.
 - 2016 Hagerman Group named construction management firm for Promenade Park.
 - 2016 Riverfront renderings unveiled for Promenade Park by Riverworks Design Group.
 - 2016 Summer Rivercamp for youth begins new day camp program.
 - 2016 Zoo’s \$8 million Australian Adventure upgrade completed.
 - 2016 Former president Bill Clinton made stop at McMillen Park Community Center on campaign trail for wife Hillary Clinton.
 - 2017 Rotary Club of Fort Wayne pledge \$200,000 to sponsor the Water Jet at the Riverfront Phase I Park.

- 2017 Community Center celebrated 40th anniversary
- 2017 Unwind Your Mind program for persons with early stage dementia was launched.(2016?)
- 2017 Foster Park Golf Course celebrates 90 year anniversary; Shoaff Park Golf Course celebrates 60 years.
- 2017 Lifetime Sports Academy celebrated 20th anniversary.
- 2017 William J. & Bonnie L. Hefner Foundation donated \$300,000 toward a pavilion in Franklin School Park
- 2017 Warrior Breed Motorcycle Club raised \$40,000 to purchase and plant 71 trees to restore the Memorial Grove in memorial Park
- 2017 Northeast Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) approved \$5,170,480 for construction of Riverfront Phase I park.
- 2017 Park Foundation pledges \$1.5 million to sponsor the pavilion oat the Riverfront Phase I park.
- 2017 Old National Foundation pledges \$180,000 to sponsor the Old National Bank Plaza at the Riverfront Phase I Park.
- 2017 Zoo began fundraising for the \$6.5 million “Journey to Heart of the Zoo” renovation.
- 2017 Riverfront Program & Events Manager was hired and programs initiated to encourage interest during riverfront park development.
- 2017 March 10, Completed purchase/acquisition of all necessary properties for development of the riverfront park.
- 2017 Construction contracts for Phase I are approved by City Council 8-0. Contracts totaled \$17,154,558.
- 2017 June 8, Board of Park Commissioners approved Promenade Park as official name of Riverfront Phase I.
- 2017 June 29, Goundbreaking for Promenade Park.
- 2017 PNC Foundation pledges \$250,000 to sponsor the playground at Promenade Park.
- 2017 Ambassador Enterprises pledges \$500,000 to sponsor the South Dock Amphitheatre at Promenade Park.
- 2017 July 12, City Council approves Local Income Tax (LIT) , creating a revenue stream that will help pay for riverfront development and sidewalks/alley repairs.
- 2017 The Department purchases its own Dragon Boat.
- 2017 August 10, “Convergence” by Linda Howard was selected for the entryway sculpture for Promenade Park. Funded by Waterfield Foundation
- 2017 Dippin’ Dogs event started at the end of swimming season for Dog Park member dogs at Northside Pool
- 2017 David Hefner Pavilion opened at Franklin School Park.
- 2018 Futsol courts constructed in Packard Park with aid of Fort Wayne soccer star, DeMarcus Beasley.
- 2018 Salomon Farm Park’s Wolf Family Learning Center expanded by 5,000 square feet.
- 2018 New outdoor fitness facility installed in Kreager Park.
- 2018 Al Moll retired and Steve McDaniel hired as new Director of Parks and Recreation Department.

- 2018 Community Unity program recognized at 2018 Summit on Out-of-School learning as finalist in Out-of-School Champion Showcase.
- 2018 Aquatics staff received Ellis & Associates 2018 Platinum International Aquatics Safety Award.
- 2018 Foellinger Theatre performer area remodeled.
- 2018 Shoaff Park new restroom and shelter near splash pad and playground
- 2019 Grand Opening of Promenade Park was held August 9-11 with over 35,000 in attendance over the 3-day event.
- 2019 Partner Officer program received IPRA Innovative Program Award.
- 2019 Promenade Park named 2019 Project of the Year by Fort Wayne Magazine.
- 2019 Salomon Farm Homestead restoration completed.
- 2019 Botanical Conservatory linkway, which provides indoor connection between Embassy and Conservatory, completed.
- 2019 New Franke Park Master Plan adopted.
- 2019 New cart paths completed at Foster Park Golf Course.
- 2019 Spy Run Creek Stream Restoration completed in Franke Park
- 2019 New golf operation model adopted to bring all golf operations (including merchandise, carts, lessons and concessions) in-house.
- 2019 New ramp and floating dock installed at Guldlin Park
- 2019 Unique Little Library constructed in Lakeside Park using remains of a willow tree stump.
- 2019 \$6.5 million Journey to Heart of the Zoo renovation, including new Monkey Island and River Otter exhibits, was completed.