

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

2023 Budget Presentation

Victoria Drake Durbin, Director

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

- UC Parks Master Plan finalized.
- Applied and received funding for continued restoration in the Deserted Village of Feltville at the Watchung Reservation.
- Completed Tëmike Park, Plainfield

2023 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

OFFICE OF DIRECTOR

- Establish administrative policies and efficiencies across divisions; professional staff development for continuity of department; create and enact policies for recreational facilities and activities.
- Enter planning phase of new park developments in Scotch Plains and Berkeley Heights.
- Refurbish tennis courts and add pickle ball courts in Warninanco Park, Roselle and Cedar Brook Park, Plainfield.
- Development of a turf field in Lightening Brook Park, Union.
- Enter engineering phase to add multi-purpose turf fields at Mattano Park, Elizabeth.

Parks & Recreation - Director's Office				
Description	2022 Adopted Budget	2022 Modified Budget	2022 Expenditures	2023 Budget Request
Salaries & Wages	1,030,607	1,030,607	989,285.06	1,100,591
Overtime	23,000	23,000	28,495.31	25,000
Other Expenses	242,000	242,000	207,044.98	222,000
Total	1,295,607	1,295,607	1,224,825.35	1,347,591

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

SPECIAL EVENTS



2022 Programs	Attendance Totals
Touch-a-Truck	2613 attendees
Rhythm and Blues by the Brook	3000 attendees
Family Fun and Flix- 5 Movies- 2 Parks	1800 attendees
Summer Arts Festival- 9 Shows- 3 Parks	5,275 attendees
UC Car, Truck and Bike Show	900 attendees
Union County PRIDE	300 attendees
Rolling Thunder	Approximately 850 Bikes
Hayrides and Campfires	1480 tickets sold
The Great Pumpkin Sail	375 tickets sold
Celebrate the Season	750 tickets sold

2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

Touch-A-Truck:

- This year's Touch-A-Truck will not be held simultaneously with Wild Earth Fest; taking place at Rahway River Park.

Summer Arts Festival:

- In 2023 there will be seven concerts taking place during July and August in different parks throughout Union County.

Family Fun and Flix:

- We anticipate scheduling at least five children's movies for Summer 2023.

UC PRIDE:

- Spearheaded by the Office of LGBTQ Affairs, a celebration of community and inclusion will take place at Plainfield's Tëmike Park.

Hayrides and Campfires:

- In October, five hayrides will run on three Friday nights and two Sunday afternoons.

Haunted Hayrides:

- The highly-successful Haunted Hayrides at the Deserted Village will return in October.

The Great Pumpkin Sail:

- Taking place on November 1st and is anticipated to sell out.

Celebrate the Season:

- Union County's holiday event will be held at the Warinanco Sports Center on the first Sunday in December.



2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

RESERVATIONS



2022 Event Totals	Number of Permits Issued by Reservation Desk
Walk-a-thons/Runs	53
Boy Scout Bookings	157
School Trips	28
Photo Shoots-Video	18
Fishing Derbies	5
Day Camps	9
Picnics	3,183
Athletic Fields	13,580
Other Events including weddings, exercise classes, church, rallies, reunions, festivals	98
Fireworks	5
Sport Tournaments	25
Archery Group Lessons	358
Archery Small Group Lessons	33
Archery New/Renewed ID's	432
General Fitness Class	126



2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Trailside Nature & Science Center (Mountainside)

Trailside received the 2023 NJ Clean Communities Council Excellence in Education Award for their Recycled Art Exhibit

- Trailside welcomed approximately 30,696 casual visitors in 2022.
- Facility was featured on News 12 "Road Trip Close to Home" - with Syma Chowdhry & staff.
- Was awarded funds through the Conserve Wildlife Foundation for deer fencing and native plants.

Exhibit Improvements:

- Twelve museum-quality replica birds, reptiles, and mammals, created by the staff artist, were added to the exhibits.
- Re-opened the Children's Discovery Room – June 1
 - Fresh paint, floors waxed, rugs replaced, and new furniture were added to the room.
- Added interactive, nature-themed activity materials, and books.



2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Trailside Nature & Science Center (Mountainside)

New Solar System Walk - One step on this trail equals a million miles in space

- A spacewalk in the park that transforms a walkway into an outdoor recreational experience with QR codes for space-themed audio guides.
- Park Maintenance completed two paved trail connectors to create a ½ mile loop walk.

Union County Falcon Cam:

- Trailside took over the responsibilities of the webcam, the only falcon cam in NJ.
- The staff created resources for teachers to download in their classrooms.



Linden Public Schools Outreach:

- This fall, 458 fifth graders from the Linden Schools visited Trailside to participate in a two-hour Living Systems program.
- The staff wrote a new curriculum as per the request of the Supervisor of Science at the Linden Academy of Science and Technology.

2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Trailside Nature & Science Center (Mountainside)

Improvements to the Trailside facility:

- Purchase a new outdoor digital sign and install new outdoor pathway lighting.
- Repave the driveway.

Trailside Van Wrap:

- Install a new van wrap on the Trailside Outreach Sprinter Van.



Solar System Walk Video:

- Work with public information to create an informative video about the new interpretive signs and audio guides in the Watchung Reservation.

Union County Falcon Cam

- New Peregrine programs will be offered to seniors, families, and young children in May.
- Banding event for three chicks in May.
- Improvements will be made to the falcon website with free Livestream.

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Watchung Stable

- Held winter classes and birthday parties, previously unavailable due to COVID-19.
- The regular troop was at capacity, and we resumed our 3-day horse shows.
- Added two horse shows in June and November, with very high participation.
- Summer camp was back to full-day camp.
- In October, we had a pilot 6-week program for Veterans. One of our certified Handicapped riding Instructors put the content together based on teachings from his mentor.
- Vaccination, dental and de-worming program continues with a high success rate with boarder and school horses, making a safer and healthier environment for horses.
- We added six new school horses to the program to replace horses in our program that are aging out.



2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Watchung Stable

Facility Plans:

- The renovation of the employee bathroom.
- The exploration of hiring a grounds maintenance contractor.
- The planning for the renovation of the fourth riding ring, a therapeutic riding arena, and the addition of another turnout paddock.
- To increase the boarder end full by the summer of 2023.



Horses:

- Equine health and care plans include increasing the purchase of quality horses for our fully operational program.



Program Plans:

- Riding program for people with disabilities. The program has received a \$30,000.00 donation toward the purchase of horses and equipment, and two employees have been certified.
- To add more dates and times for trail rides for the public.
- Incorporating the Veterans program into our normal routine of classes in spring and fall.

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Galloping Hill Golf Course:

- Hit 68,000 rounds of golf and beat budgeted revenue by roughly \$16,000 for a total of \$2,840,000.
- Outings revenue increased year over year by 10% and accounted for an additional \$50,000 in revenue compared to prior year.
- The Hill Tavern has performed in it's first year of operations and hosted over 80,000 covers for the year.
- Galloping Hill Banquets returned to pre-pandemic form and hosted over 360 events.

The Learning Center at Galloping Hill:

- Surpassed a \$1,000,000.00 in total revenue for the second consecutive year.
- Hosted the wounded warrior golf education and special programming for special needs highlighted by the First Swing program in partnership with the County Commissioners.

Ash Brook Golf Course:

- Hit 44,591 rounds of golf and achieved \$1,600,000 in total revenue.
- The Tavern at Ashbrook hosted over 75 events and had over 65,000 guests.

Scotch Hills Golf Course:

- Surpassed budgeted rounds by 15% and budgeted revenue by 3%.

Warinanco Sports Center:

- In the fall of 2022 full sessions of open skate were once again available to the public.
- In the summer of 2022 the facility hosted 7 camp sessions hosting over 200 participants.



2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Galloping Hill Golf Course:

- In 2023 Galloping Hill golf course will once again host the IMG and Hurricane junior golf tournaments.
- The property is expecting to host 66,000 rounds of golf in 2023.

The Learning Center at Galloping Hill:

- Looking to add technology to the learning center facility which will increase participation for both the avid golfer and the recreational player.
- We will be adding technology to our programming which will allow for visitor to order food from the Hill Tavern with their mobile device.

Ashbrook Golf Course:

- An Engineering firm has been engaged to address the drainage issues.
- Ashbrook will execute necessary irrigation repairs and will relaunch the Tavern at Ashbrook once facility repairs are complete.



Shady Rest Golf Course:

- Looking to introduce mini-golf birthday packages to drive community traffic to that experience.
- Will continue to develop creative programs to drive resident traffic to include 3 internal golf tournaments.

Warinanco Sports Center:

- Will be focusing on turf rental programming and events.
- Creating internal programs that partner with local coaches and teams.



RECREATIONAL FACILITIES				
Description	2022 Adopted Budget	2022 Modified Budget	2022 Expenditures	2023 Budget Request
Salaries & Wages	1,816,856	1,816,856	1,663,944.01	1,723,368
Overtime	18,000	18,000	26,409.22	18,000
Seasonal	533,000	533,000	259,954.08	400,000
Per Diems	201,390	201,390	104,492.37	169,600
Other Expenses	8,358,049	8,358,049	8,307,743.28	8,285,020
Total	10,927,295	10,927,295	10,362,542.96	10,595,988

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PLANNING & ENVIROMENTAL SERVICES

Wildlife Management:

- Through a shared services program, USDA-Wild Services staff continued to assist the Township of Westfield, Linden Municipal Airport, Conoco Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery, City of Linden, and Suburban Golf Course with goose management activities on their properties.

Habitat Management:

- Staff facilitated two surveys of forest-associated species in the Watchung Reservation by the Rutgers University School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.
- The New Jersey Department of Agriculture awarded the County a grant to help fight the spread of the Spotted lanternfly.

Volunteer Programs:

- The Adopt-A-Park Program was twice as busy in 2022 as in the year before. At least 1,148 volunteers spent 2,634 hours on 53 Adopt-A-Park projects throughout the Union County Park System.



Trail Maintenance:

- Staff mapped the alignment of 100 miles of trails throughout the Watchung Reservation.
- Rebuilt heavily damaged trails and stream crossings damaged during Hurricane Ida Tropical Storm.

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PLANNING & ENVIROMENTAL SERVICES

Environmental Programming:

- Staff conducted a drive-through Plant Swap & Shop with 95 people registered.

Deserted Village of Feltville:

- In 2022, Maskers Barn was in use for 133 days, hosting 101 events attended by nearly 10,000 people. The facility collected \$32,000 in revenue.
- Over 1,700 visitors participated in the Four Centuries in a Weekend event at the Deserted Village in October.
- Haunted Hayrides returned to the Deserted Village of Feltville in October and sold out in less than two weeks.

Horticulture:

- Flower beds in the Henry S. Chatfield Memorial Garden in Warinanco Park were enhanced.
- An Eagle Scout candidate installed 1,700 feet of aluminum edging around the flower beds to define the interface between grass and mulch and keep the bed lines straight.



2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

PLANNING & ENVIROMENTAL SERVICES

Wildlife Management:

- To conduct an infrared drone survey of deer in our Parklands.

Habitat Management:

- Split-rail fencing will be installed around a new wildflower meadow in Elizabeth River Park in Hillside at the Rutgers Avenue section.

Volunteer Programs:

- At least 13 Eagle Scout or Gold Award Service Projects are planned for implementation or construction in 2023.
- The Volunteer Recognition Event will be brought back after a 2-year absence.

Trail Maintenance:

- Additional motorized equipment will be purchased to expand the capabilities of the maintenance crew.
- The reconstruction of the heavily-utilized Orange Trail in the Watchung Reservation.

Deserted Village of Feltville:

- Roof improvements of several Deserted Village cottages.

PLANNING & ENVIROMENTAL SERVICES				
Description	2022 Adopted Budget	2022 Modified Budget	2022 Expenditures	2023 Budget Request
Salaries & Wages	647,720	647,720	532,143.46	674,183
Overtime	-	-	3,658.43	6,000
Other Expenses	107,000	107,000	98,511.10	107,000
Total	754,720	754,720	634,312.99	787,183

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PARK MAINTENANCE

Park Safety:

- Groomed all our artificial turf fields every quarter as needed.
- Began the restoration of the Azealia Garden at Warinanco Park, Roselle.
- Provided a safety audit on all playgrounds and addressed deficiencies through our Playground Replacement Parts account.
- Continued our playground inspections by our Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI).

Playgrounds:

- Completed the Madison Avenue Challenge Course and Cedar Brook Extension playground.

Ponds:

- An engineer was hired for the hydro-raking of organic material from Bryant Park Pond and from Rahway River Pond.

Wheeler Spray Park (Linden):

- Welcomed 48,295 visitors this past summer.
- New water features, a new playground and synthetic turf were installed.

Ulrich Pool (Rahway):

- Welcomed 45,888 visitors coming in to cool off this summer, boasting 19 days of 98-plus-degree weather.

Routine Maintenance:

- All lakes, ponds, and waterways were treated for invasive species, overgrowth, and water quality.
- Walking paths requiring paving at Rahway River Park was completed under our Asphalt Overlay Program.
- Purchased and installed water bottle filling fountains in various park locations.



2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

PARK MAINTENANCE

Park Safety:

- G-Max testing for artificial-turf hardness compliance. De-compact and groom as recommended.
- Provide a safety audit on all playgrounds. Address deficiencies as noted.
- Continue our playground inspections by our Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI).
- To certify additional staff in playground safety.
- Contract for an annual Crane Operation and Inspection
- Implement a formal Park Inspection process through Cart-e-Graph.

Playground Improvements:

- Planning to upgrade two new playgrounds.



PARK MAINTENANCE				
Description	2022 Adopted Budget	2022 Modified Budget	2022 Expenditures	2023 Budget Request
Salaries & Wages	2,774,379	2,774,379	2,497,057.95	2,818,605
Overtime	250,000	250,000	299,216.52	300,000
Other Expenses	595,100	595,100	573,967.39	590,100
Total	3,619,479	3,619,479	3,370,241.86	3,708,705

2022 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CULTURAL & HERITAGE AFFAIRS

The office received a 2022 NACO Achievement Award for its Pop-Up Parks Exhibit: 100 Years of Union County Parks.

Events:

- Teen Arts Festival, Four Centuries in a Weekend, and the Senior Art Exhibit.
- Special Events featuring speakers recognizing Black History Month, Women's History Month, National Poetry Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month.

Funding:

- Received increased funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.
- Received increased funding support from the New Jersey Historical Commission; \$55,500 was provided to 16 organizations for general operating support and history projects.
- Renewed funding from the UC Division on Aging enabled the continuation of the Care for Caregiver Respite Art Program.
- The office applied for and was approved to receive \$191,000 from the New Jersey Historic Trust to continue work on House 4 at Deserted Village. All exterior work on House 7 is complete.

Grants Offered:

- HEART Grant, Local Arts Grant, and the History Grant

2023 GOALS & INITIATIVES

CULTURAL & HERITAGE AFFIARS



- The office plans to continue to expand the Four Centuries in a Weekend Program and will continue meeting with the Four Centuries in a Weekend sites to brainstorm on promotion, volunteers, and site plans.
- Recommendations from the Strategic Plan for Deserted Village will continue to be implemented.
- The office plans to apply again to the NJ Historic Trust for Capital Grants to continue the rehabilitation of Deserted Village.
- Cedar shake roofs will be replaced on several Deserted Village cottages to protect the historic buildings.
- With increased funding from the NJ State Council on the Arts for 2022, the office plans to re-grant additional funds to arts organizations.
- The office will continue to work with other County offices, agencies, and the business community to ensure that cultural resources fully contribute to sustainable economic growth.

CULTURAL & HERITAGE				
Description	2022 Adopted Budget	2022 Modified Budget	2022 Expenditures	2023 Budget Request
Salaries & Wages	174,799	174,799	172,429.84	190,675
Other Expenses	20,200	20,200	11,242.96	19,860
Total	194,999	194,999	183,672.80	210,535