

open line

a monthly newsletter for you, our residents.

AUGUST 2024



City of Auburn

GIS MEETS EMS *how a map could save your life*

Today, most of us could navigate practically anywhere by entering an address into our phone.

But what if you don't have an address? And what if you're looking for someone who isn't quite sure where they are? And what if they're in danger?

In fall 2022, the City of Auburn's Emergency Communications team — tasked with getting police, fire and ambulance services to Auburn residents in an emergency — had to answer these questions in real time.

All 696 acres of Chewacla State Park has one address: 124 Shell Toomer Parkway in Auburn. When Communications Supervisor Trent Mitchell received a medical rescue call from someone hiking the park's nearly 30 miles of trails, he had to be creative to get emergency responders more information than the location of the park entrance.

The caller reported they were "at the waterfall," and the park rangers station said the caller was at the overlook. The 911 caller plotting system showed the caller on a trail in a different area of the park.

While the plotting system will sometimes show a large area in which the caller might be, this time, Trent said they got lucky — a tight circle pinpointed the caller's location.

Instead of using traditional coordinates to let Auburn Fire know where the caller was, Trent used what3words, a system designed to identify any location within about 10 feet by putting a grid over the world and attaching three unique words to each box on the grid. Users can easily identify any location using the words in place of traditional latitude/longitude coordinates.

It took 17 minutes for emergency personnel to get to the caller, who was found near the overflow pipe that runs from the quarry into the state park (not at either of the park's two waterfalls). They then began the challenging task of getting the caller out of the park, and the caller was

life-flighted to a nearby hospital to receive the treatment they needed.

Auburn Fire and Emergency Communications met after the incident to review what went well and what could be improved. While communications received high praise for their work during the call, Trent saw gaps in the process. He regularly worked with the City's GIS team to get new homes and other missing locations plotted on the City's mapping system, and he wondered if they could do the same at Chewacla.

GIS had discussed a project to add sub addresses to golf courses throughout Auburn to provide more specific location points within the courses, but the project had been just an idea for some time. When Trent approached with a need at the state park, Deputy Chief Information Officer Christopher Graff saw "an opportunity to dig into the project."

Christopher brought key stakeholders together, including representatives from Auburn Public Safety, Chewacla State Park and Central Alabama Mountain Pedalers (CAMP) — a volunteer group that helped construct and frequently uses the trails at the park.

"This was an opportunity to work together so we didn't end up with something that left out pieces of the puzzle," Christopher said.

The group started by gathering around an aerial image of the park and identifying key points. They talked through cabin and campground numbers along with street and loop names to ensure they had consistent, agreed upon identifiers for each one. They took note of the locations from which most people call park rangers either for help or with an injury, such as jumps for mountain biking along the trails.

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(continued) After the meeting, GIS Technician Jennifer McKibben walked many of the trails to get a better understanding of the topography and to scope out potential map point placements. GIS then got to work adding those points to the City's existing mapping system and updating an old CAMP trail map to account for additions, trail name changes and trails that are no longer maintained.

Along with the mapping piece of the project, local Eagle Scout Nathan King from Troup 12 in Auburn was already working with the park and CAMP to update trail signage. Communications Administrator Charlsie Little collaborated with Nathan and the park to determine what should go on the signs and where they should be placed. They decided to include multiple identifiers on each sign, including its what3words designation and a three-character combination they developed to identify where the sign was located within a grid map of the park. Twenty-two new signs were placed along the trails.

Another critical component of the project was determining the quickest route to reach someone within the park. While the main park entrance may be the fastest way to reach someone at the lake, it may be better to use an emergency access entrance in adjacent neighborhoods to reach someone on an isolated trail.



In the end, the team's efforts resulted in more than 120 new sub-address points within Chewacla State Park. Now, rather than communications spending time trying to figure out the best way to describe a caller's location, there are over 120 points to which they can quickly direct emergency responders. Auburn Fire has also incorporated the new map points and the updated trail map into its pre fire planning.

"During that training, they're learning those points of interest, those addresses, those trails and how to access all of them," Christopher said. "All of this data allows them to stay ahead of the curve."

The project is already paying off. This April, a caller reporting a medical emergency used one of the new signs to convey their location. Auburn Fire was able to reach the caller in 10 minutes — seven minutes faster than a 2021 medical call in the same area.

The team has plans to help improve response times by expanding the project to other areas of town, including City parks, golf courses, the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center and Jordan-Hare Stadium. By doing so, first responders will not only be able to locate 911 callers faster, but Public Safety will also be able to use call data to identify problem areas within a park or facility that could be mitigated.

You can explore the newly added points at Chewacla State Park by viewing the COA Map at auburnalabama.org/maps. You can also find a location's what3words designation via the what3words app or by visiting what3words.com.

National Night Out set for Aug. 6

Auburn Public Safety invites the Auburn community to celebrate National Night Out on Aug. 6! This year's event will be held at the field behind Duck Samford Stadium (1623 E. Glenn Ave.) from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The evening will feature free food and family-friendly fun for all ages including representatives from local organizations with free community resources, a meet and greet with Auburn school resource officers, a Touch-a-Truck display, a K9 demo, photo ops with Sparky the Fire Dog and McGruff the Crime Dog, face painting and more!

Keep an eye out for more info by following Auburn Public Safety @COAPublicSafety on Facebook, Instagram and X.

End-of-Summer Pokémon Party



"Gotta catch us all" saying goodbye to Summer 2024 with a special Pokémon themed party at the Auburn Public Library! The event will be held on Saturday, Aug. 3, from 2-3:30 p.m. Build your team while we play games, make crafts, host activities and enjoy yummy snacks inspired by the wildly popular pocket monsters.

This event is free and open to the public. For more information, email libraryevents@auburnalabama.org or call (334) 501-3296.



It's hot out there. And when the temperatures rise, so does the demand on our water sources. The Water Works Board of the City of Auburn has a few pointers to help us all follow efficient practices for irrigation and outdoor watering. Try these tips to help conserve water:

- **Don't overwater your lawn.** Generally, lawns only need watering every five to seven days during the summer.
- **Don't water sidewalks, driveways or other paved areas.**
- **Avoid watering during the middle of the day** to avoid unnecessary water loss because of evaporation. Water before 8 a.m. As a general rule, the earlier, the better!
- **Check irrigation systems** on a regular basis to ensure the system's parts are not damaged or broken. Many irrigation systems use about 1,000 gallons of water an hour!
- **Install rain sensors** and/or moisture sensors on irrigation systems to eliminate unnecessary watering during rainy periods.
- **Don't leave sprinklers or hoses unattended.** Use a timer to remind you to turn the water off.
- **Use xeriscaping**, or practices that minimize water usage. Get more info about xeriscaping from the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service's website, aces.edu.
- **Consider rainwater harvesting.** Consider collecting rain using rain barrels, etc. that can be used for outdoor watering. Note that rain barrels can collect pollutants and bacteria from roofs, animals, etc. This should be considered when using rain barrels for edible plants. Water from rain barrels should never be used for human consumption.
- **Increase your lawn mower blade height.** A higher-cut lawn will encourage deeper-growing roots and will result in better soil moisture retention.
- **Mulch effectively** around all plants, trees and shrubs. Mulching helps soil retain moisture and controls weeds.

Hidden gems: Auburn's small parks & trails

July is Parks and Recreation Month, and the theme this year is "Where You Belong," celebrating the ways our Parks and Rec pros foster a sense of belonging in our community.

One of the ways we do that is by providing top-tier outdoor spaces where the community can gather to enjoy nature and time with each other. So, we're celebrating this year's theme by kicking off a series about our small parks and trails.

FIRST UP — SAM HARRIS PARK!

Located at 850 Foster Street, there's a lot to do at this seemingly small park. The park features a playground, two pavilions — which are available for rent or to just enjoy some time in the shade — and an outdoor basketball court. Three years ago, we added a new walking trail that is just over a mile, extending from the back of the park to the fields on Shug Jordan Parkway and CARE Humane Society. If you haven't been yet, we invite you to take a stroll!

Learn more about all Auburn Parks and Recreation has to offer by following @COAParksAndRec on Facebook and Instagram.

Itty Bitty Auburn Scavenger Hunt

It's time to break out the thinking caps and magnifying glasses for the Itty Bitty Auburn Scavenger Hunt!

Beginning Aug. 1, participants can pick up a worksheet for the scavenger hunt at any Parks and Recreation facility. It will also be available at auburnalabama.org/parks or on the Auburn Parks and Recreation Facebook page.

The worksheet will feature 20 itty-bitty sites in various locations around Auburn. Once you've figured out the location, head there to find a clue. Once you've visited each of the 20 sites and collected the clues, they will reveal a special phrase that you will need to log your win!

All participants must enter the secret phrase by registering for Itty Bitty Auburn at auburnal.myrec.com by Saturday, Aug. 31, at 11:59 p.m. Those who have the correct phrase will be entered into a grand prize drawing. Winners will be announced and contacted on Sept. 6.



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AUGUST 2024 **upcoming events**

Open Line is produced by the Office of the City Manager
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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	<p><i>Background Photo: A portion of the winding trail at Sam Harris Park</i></p>	<p>Programs & events are subject to change.</p> <p>Find up-to-date information at auburnlabama.org.</p>	<p>Auburn Public Library auburnlabama.org/library</p> <p>City Meetings auburnlabama.org/boards</p> <p>Parks & Recreation auburnlabama.org/parks</p> <p>Citywide Events auburnlabama.org</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Toddler Tales Thursdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Lullabies for Little Ones Thursdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>City Council Agenda Review Meeting 4 p.m.</p> <p>Itty Bitty Auburn Scavenger Hunt Begins</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Puppet Shows (in person/virtual) Fridays @ 9:30 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Tree Commission 11:30 a.m.</p>	<p>City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p> <p>Family Story Time Saturdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Untidy Tales Saturdays @ 10:30 a.m.</p> <p>Movers & Shakers Saturdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>End-of-Summer Pokémon Party @ 2 p.m.</p>
4	5	<p>Preschool Story Time Tuesdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Parks & Recreation Advisory Board 11:45 a.m.</p> <p>PreK in PJs Tuesdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>S.T.E.A.M. Lab (Grades K-3) Tuesdays @ 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Adults Create! @ 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Committee of the Whole TBD</p> <p>City Council 6 p.m.</p>	7	8	9	10
<p>Samford Pool Fall Hours Begin</p>	<p>Planning Commission Packet Meeting Noon</p> <p>Cemetery Advisory Board 4 p.m.</p> <p>Registration begins for fall adult softball & kickball</p>		<p>Baby's 1st Story Time Wednesdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Untidy Tales Wednesdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>Cultural Explorers (Grades 4-6) Wednesdays @ 4 p.m.</p> <p>Board of Zoning Adjustment 4:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Planning Commission 5 p.m.</p>		<p>City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p> <p>Adults Create! @ 2 p.m.</p>
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
		<p>Historic Preservation Commission 4 p.m.</p>		<p>City Council Agenda Review Meeting 4 p.m.</p>		<p>City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p>
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		<p>Library Board 10 a.m.</p> <p>Greenspace Advisory Board Noon</p> <p>Chapter Chats Book Club (for adults) 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Committee of the Whole TBD</p> <p>City Council 6 p.m.</p>		<p>Water Works Board 4 p.m.</p>		<p>City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p> <p>Author Talk: Ameila Wood @ 2 p.m.</p>
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
					<p>Registration ends for fall adult softball & kickball</p>	<p>Itty Bitty Auburn Scavenger Hunt Ends</p>

special to
open line



FLOOD PROTECTION & PREPARATION INFORMATION

In May 2014, the City of Auburn was accepted into the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS). Even though everyone doesn't own or live on property in a floodplain, this program benefits the community by protecting the environment, making people safer and saving everyone money. The City has received a Class 8 score for our CRS application, giving the citizens of Auburn a 10% discount on their flood insurance. The 10% discount is applied uniformly to all CRS eligible NFIP policies in the community regardless of flood zone. Below is some information you might find helpful about floodplains in the City of Auburn.

LOCAL FLOOD HAZARD

The City of Auburn has an annual precipitation of 52.6 inches and has a history of major rainstorm events. Over the last 10 years, our biggest rain events occurred in August 2013, December 2015, May 2017, June 2017, May 2018, December 2018, February 2020, April 2020, August 2021, December 2021, April 2022, July 2022, January 2023 and June 2023. During these major storm events, flooding can occur when drainage courses, such as stormwater systems and natural ditches, overflow. Local bodies of water and roadways subject to flooding include:

Local Water Bodies: Choctafaula Creek, Parkerson Mill Creek, Town Creek, Moore's Mill Creek, Chewacla Creek, Lake Chewacla, Lake Ogletree, Saugahatchee Creek and Little Loblockee Creek

Roadways: Watercrest Drive Bridge, East University Drive Bridge at Summertrees Drive, Moores Mill Road Bridge at Forestdale Drive, and Windway Road Bridge

KNOW YOUR FLOOD HAZARD

Our staff is available to provide more information on whether a property is in a Special Flood Hazard Area. Find out if your property is in the regulated floodplain by calling Engineering Services at (334) 501-7390.

For more general information, you can view your property in relation to the regulated floodplain online using the City's interactive map at auburnalabama.org/maps. Select the COA Map then turn on the "Natural Features" layer and the "Floodplain" sublayer.

The following Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) information can also be provided upon request: the community number, the map panel number and suffix, the date of the FIRM's index, the Base Flood Elevation shown on the FIRM, the elevation datum used on the FIRM and the availability of Elevation Certificates for review.

INSURE YOUR PROPERTY FOR YOUR FLOOD HAZARD

The City encourages all citizens to purchase flood insurance. Even if your property is not located in a high-risk flood area, it's a good idea to buy flood insurance because

almost 25% of all flood insurance claims come from areas with minimal flood risk. Here are some important facts you should know:

- Homeowner's insurance policies DO NOT cover flood damages or losses.
- Flood insurance policies have a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect.
- Renters are able to buy flood insurance for the contents of their homes.

Contact your insurance agent to see if your property is covered for flood damage. Additional information on flood insurance can be found at auburnalabama.org/engineering-services/flood-protection.



Water rushes through Moores Mill Creek after a heavy rainfall.

FLOOD SAFETY

Safety is a must when it comes to possible flooding in our area. The following tips can keep you and your family from harm during flooding:

- Do not walk through flowing waters.
- Do not drive through a flooded area.
- Stay away from power and electrical lines.
- Shut off all gas and water valves.
- Have a departure plan in case of emergency.

FLOOD WARNING

The City of Auburn works with the Lee County Emergency Management Agency to give citizens ample warning in cases of a flooding event. Emergency messages are broadcast through local radio and TV stations. In the event of heavy rains, it is essential to monitor TV and/or radio weather broadcasts for up-to-date forecasts on tornadoes, hurricanes or flash floods. Please call 911 for any emergencies and (334) 501-3100 for any non-emergencies.

PROPERTY PROTECTION MEASURES

Flooding remains the country's number one disaster and can potentially affect everyone and every property. If you own property, you can apply these permanent retrofitting techniques that can help to eliminate or reduce flood damage:

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- Elevating your house one foot above the base flood elevation.
- Flood proofing your house to make the walls and flooring watertight so water cannot enter.
- If you know you are in the flood prone area, flood vent the crawl space under your home so that water can flow through.

Employees from the City of Auburn are available for site visits to review flooding and drainage issues and provide one-on-one advice to property owners on appropriate flood protection measures. We are also available to help you with reviewing and critiquing retrofit plans for flood-prone residences and buildings.

Contact our Inspection Services Department at (334) 501-3170 or webcodes@auburnalabama.org about protecting your home or business from flooding.

FLOODPLAIN DEVELOPMENT PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the highest degree of safety and to protect your property from flood damage, the Inspection Services Department enforces the Building Code for the City of Auburn. Check with them before you build on, alter, grade or fill on your property. A permit is required for all construction in the City of Auburn to ensure that a project is compliant with all regulations.

Substantial Improvement Requirements

For the City of Auburn to participate in the NFIP, we adopted regulations and codes that apply to new developments in the floodplains. Local floodplain management regulations and codes contain minimum NFIP requirements that apply to new and existing structures that are “substantially improved” or “substantially damaged.”

“**Substantially damaged**” means damage of any origin sustained by a structure whereby the cost of restoring the structure to its before-damaged condition would equal or exceed 50% of the market value of the structure before damage occurred.

“**Substantially improved**” means any reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition or other improvements of a structure, the cost of which equals or exceeds 50% of the market value of the structure before the “start of construction” of the improvement. This term includes structures that have incurred “substantial damage” regardless of the actual

repair work performed.

The City of Auburn requires an elevation of one foot above the base flood elevation for new construction and for existing structures before they are repaired.

PROTECT NATURAL FLOODPLAIN FUNCTIONS

Floodplain areas and wetlands provide a wide range of benefits to both human and natural systems. Wetlands in and around the City of Auburn are a valuable asset — flood control and water quality being the two most important aspects of our local floodplain.

One of the ways you can help prevent flooding is to make sure you don't dump pollutants or debris into our storm drains. These debris drain into our natural drainage systems and wetlands. For the natural drainage system to operate efficiently, our ditches, streams and channels must remain clean. Debris, even leaves and grass clippings, can obstruct the flow of water and cause overflow onto streets and yards. Wetlands absorb water during heavy rainfall or flooding and slowly release the waters downstream, reducing flood damage. Wetlands and wetland plants help absorb and filter potentially harmful chemicals and pollutants before they get into our waterways. The City of Auburn is home to several identified undeveloped floodplain areas that are vital for several endangered or threatened species unique to this area. These areas also provide recreation, education and research opportunities important to our local economy.

Residents, businesses and property owners play a huge role in maintaining the ditches and streams on their property. They should notify the City when maintenance is needed on the right of way.

City Code, Section 7-1, prohibits taking any action that can impede the flow of water in ditches and waterways. If you know of any illegal dumping of debris or any action that could affect the drainage system, please contact the Public Works Department at (334) 501-3000 or webpw@auburnalabama.org.

For more information regarding the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System, please contact the Engineering Services Department at 161 N. Ross St., webengineering@auburnalabama.org or visit auburnalabama.org/engineering-services.

