

Winter Park Update

March through May 2023

vision Winter Park is the city of arts and culture, cherishing its traditional scale and charm while building a healthy and sustainable future for all generations.

Mayor's Message

Marching Into Spring: Winter Park's Bright Future

Spring has sprung in Winter Park, bringing with it fresh blooms, warmer days and a full calendar of exciting events! March kicks off with the Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on Park Avenue, taking place Saturday, March 1, at 9 a.m. Shortly after, Central Park will come alive during the 66th Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival, running from Friday through Sunday, March 21-23. These cherished traditions are just the beginning of what promises to be a season full of vibrancy and community spirit.

March is also a significant month for Winter Park voters. On Tuesday, March 11, the city will hold an election for City Commission Seat 3 where incumbent Kris Cruzada faces challenger Justin Vermouth. Warren Lindsey was unopposed for Seat 4. Additionally, the ballot includes the highly discussed leaf blower referendum, where voters will decide whether to ban gas-powered leaf blowers.

OFFICIAL BALLOT LANGUAGE The Winter Park City Commission adopted an ordinance banning the use of internal combustion (gas powered) leaf blowers effective June 1, 2025. If you are in favor of repealing the ordinance banning internal combustion leaf blowers vote "Yes." If you are in favor of leaving the ordinance banning internal combustion leaf blowers in place, vote "No."

This is your opportunity to shape the future of our city — be sure to make your voice heard! As the city awakens to spring, our focus is also turning toward the future. Believe it or not, we're already deep into planning next year's budget. Reflecting on the progress we've made and the milestones ahead, I'm excited to share some highlights that showcase why Winter Park remains one of central Florida's most exceptional cities.

Here are just a few reasons to be proud:

- **Stable Taxes, Strong Finances** Winter Park has not raised its millage rate in 17 years, maintaining the lowest rate among full-service cities in central Florida. Financial stability is strong, ensuring that resources are available to meet community needs, while growing city services and adding additional police and fire-rescue personnel.
- **Top-Tier Bond Ratings** Winter Park is among a very small percentage of municipalities to hold a AAA bond rating by Fitch and Aa3 electric revenue debt rating by Moody's which reflects our strong financial stability and reliability.
- **Emergency Reserves** With over \$22 million in reserves, we are prepared to recover quickly after storms and emergencies while maintaining essential services.
- **Infrastructure Excellence** We have 81% of our mainline electric distribution system undergrounded, with a goal of reaching 100% by 2030 to enhance storm resilience. Our water utility exceeds EPA standards, and our electric utility offers the region's lowest rates while remaining self-sustaining.
- **Community Safety** Winter Park's Police and Fire-Rescue departments lead central Florida with the fastest response times, ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors.

Beyond these achievements, our parks, public spaces and cultural amenities continue to shine. February brought the opening of Seven Oaks Park. At time of print, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park's Unity Corner dedication, which reflects our commitment to inclusivity and environmental stewardship, was in its planning stages. Meanwhile, our lakes, monitored regularly, remain in excellent condition, and our Winter Park Library — ranked #1 in Florida — is striving to become the state's first starred library.

As we continue into 2025, we're building on this strong foundation. From innovative infrastructure projects to fostering a vibrant arts and cultural scene, Winter Park is a place where residents can feel proud to live, work and thrive. Together, we'll keep shaping our city into a beacon of excellence and a welcoming home for all.

Warm regards,
Mayor Sheila DeCiccio

Commissioner's Column

A message from Vice Mayor Todd Weaver

At or near the top of the list of wise decisions made by city leadership and management in the past 20 years is the purchase of our electric utility.

In 2001, when the FPC/Progress Energy franchise expired, a clause in the agreement allowed the city to buy out the utility's assets within the city limits. City management and the citizen task force made the grand decision to bond (borrow) \$50 million to make the purchase.

Since 2004, when the deal finalized, Winter Park Electric Utility (WPEU) customers have enjoyed some of the lowest rates in the region. Margins have covered the debt service and enabled the city to begin undergrounding throughout the service area. City staff's astute management has kept rates low and provided equipment upgrades along with skilled manpower to ensure rapid recovery from outages when they occur.

Removal of power poles and overhead wiring has enhanced neighborhood aesthetics and reliability.

Because of annexations and other factors, however, there remain about 1,000 homes and businesses within city limits that are served by other electricity suppliers, namely Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC) and Duke Energy® Florida. Duke customers currently pay about 30% more for their electric power than those served by WPEU, and there is no possibility of undergrounding.

Duke customers in Winter Park have suffered over 50 major outages in the past 25 years. Four of these outages lasted a week or more and were exacerbated by flooded, non-functioning septic systems. Those without portable generators had no air conditioning, refrigeration, lighting or the ability to drain wastewater.

Staff has prepared a resident survey asking how these property owners feel about their electricity suppliers and if they'd be interested in having the city buy out Duke and OUC assets. The survey will be sent out soon.

It's time to think about providing all Winter Park residents the high level of service our city utility provides.

I wish you all a safe, healthy and happy Winter Park spring

Sincerely,
Todd Weaver

City Manager's Report

Congratulations to our Employees of the Year!

Each year we celebrate three city employees as our Employees of the Year. These three individuals represent the 500+ city family members that are committed to providing high quality city services to our residents and community.

Thank you all for living out our employee mission to "Make Every Day Exceptional" for all that we serve. Special thanks to Orlando Credit Union for sponsoring the Employee of the Year program.

Jeanni Ruddy Human Resources Generalist

Since Jeanni began working for the city, in charge of employee wellness and engagement, she has provided many health initiatives for city staff. She consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty, orchestrating a wide range of initiatives that have greatly benefited all employees. A few of the notable events Jeanni has coordinated, often single-handedly, include Lunch & Learns, the Benefits & Wellness Fair, holiday and seasonal engagements, employee fitness events and wellness initiatives. She also coordinates the Years of Service Employee Recognition luncheon and dinner, as well as helps with Employee Committee events.

Jeanni's caring, professional and playful demeanor serves as an inspiration to all. She radiates positivity, and her smile is a constant reminder of the energy and enthusiasm she brings to our team. Her contributions have had a profound impact on employee morale, connecting individuals and improving both their mental and physical wellbeing. This, in turn, has enabled city staff to be more effective and engaged in serving the residents and guests of Winter Park.

Jeanni Ruddy embodies the qualities of an exceptional employee and leader. Her unwavering commitment to our workplace values – building an extraordinary quality of life and promoting a sustainable future for all generations – made Jeanni the ideal candidate for Employee of the Year.

Thank you for helping us all make the most of each day!

Lieutenant Brandon Williams Firefighter/Paramedic

Lt. Brandon Williams provides excellent leadership in recreating the department's internal paramedic preceptor program. He has elevated the development of new paramedics, and his work with department leadership to introduce the Fire-Rescue Department's intranet has streamlined daily operations for all ranks.

Lt. Williams is always ready to help his fellow firefighters, devoting countless hours to mentoring and study sessions. He also consistently serves the Winter Park community with professionalism and compassion. We are proud to have Lt. Williams on staff and grateful for his dedication to the Fire-Rescue Department. **Thank you for your service to our community!**

Christopher Belcore Senior Police Officer

Senior Police Officer Christopher Belcore was selected because of his dedication in the safety and protection of the students and staff members at the Winter Park High School (WPHS). Officer Belcore

has been the School Resource Officer for two years. He is an exemplary mentor for students and has developed a rapport with many seeking guidance and direction for their future.

A prime example of his dedication to school safety occurred through an investigation of a troubled high school student in possession of a firearm. He worked with school administration, the Florida Department of Children and Families and the assigned detective to ensure cooperation and coordination. The student was charged with several felonies, trespassed and removed.

In addition to this case, Officer Belcore has demonstrated a willingness to go the extra mile when responding to tips regarding school violence. Whether it is overhearing a call for service or learning of troubling comments made by students, he ensures each unique situation is properly documented, monitored and followed through for safety of the entire campus. **Thank you for keeping our community safe!**

Sincerely, Randy B. Knight, City Manager

Now Open » Seven Oaks Park

On February 8, the city hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the grand opening of Seven Oaks Park, located at the corner of Denning Drive and Orange Avenue. After the ribbon cutting, the community enjoyed an array of activities in the park including local vendors, a free Pilates/yoga class, bounce slide, face painting, Family Fun Program craft and music by School of Rock Winter Park.

Seven Oaks Park is 2.4 acres of park space featuring passive and active amenities including lush garden zones, shade trellises, open spaces, public parking, and safe pathways and connections. Other elements include day and evening amenities, pop-up events, play areas, variety of seating and public restrooms.

For more information about this wonderful new green space, please access cityofwinterpark.org/SevenOaksPark.

Rules of the road for alternative modes of transportation bikes & electric bikes (e-bikes)

- **Regular bicycles and e-bikes** share the same rights and duties. E-bikes, which are bicycles with pedals, a seat, and a motor under 750 watts, are exempt from vehicle registration, driver's licenses and other vehicle regulations.
- **E-bikes** can be ridden on streets, highways, roadways, bicycle lanes, and multi-use paths. However, they are prohibited on sidewalks in certain areas, such as the Central Business District, Hannibal Square Neighborhood Commercial District, Orange Avenue District and sidewalks adjacent to sidewalk cafes.

E-bikes are classified into three categories:

» **Class 1:** Pedal-assist only, motor stops at 20 mph.

» **Class 2:** Motor can exclusively propel the bike, motor stops at 20 mph.

» **Class 3:** Pedal-assist only, motor stops at 28 mph.

motorized scooters

- **Motorized scooters** are allowed on roads and sidewalks, but not in the business district areas (such as the Central Business District and similar zones). These scooters have the same rights and responsibilities as bicycles and are limited to a maximum speed of 20 mph. While they are prohibited from sidewalks in certain commercial zones, they are generally allowed on sidewalks outside these restricted areas.

golf carts & low-speed vehicles

- **Golf Carts** are not permitted on public roadways in Winter Park. They are typically limited to golf courses, although they can be used on private property or specific areas designated for them. Golf cart operation is subject to restrictions, such as requiring drivers under 18 to have a learner's or regular driver's license, and those 18 and older must have a valid government-issued photo ID.
- **Low-Speed Vehicles (LSVs)** are allowed to operate on public streets, roads, and highways, provided they meet certain safety standards (such as seat belts, turn signals, and lights) and have a top speed of 20-25 mph. LSVs can be used where the speed limit does not exceed 35 mph, and they must comply with federal safety regulations. You must possess a driver's license to operate an LSV.

Quick Tip: It's time to spring forward

Sunday, March 9 Daylight Saving Time begins

- » Set **clocks** forward on hour Saturday night.
- » Change the **batteries** in smoke detectors.
- » Adjust **irrigation** to two days per week.

Park Avenue Refresh Project

Park Avenue is the epicenter of Winter Park's culture, charm and economic vitality. The last Park Avenue streetscape restoration occurred between 1996 and 1999. Now, almost 30 years later, the city's main street will be undergoing a refresh to provide for today and tomorrow's needs.

- Maintain charm & warm, inviting environment
- Enhance safety & aesthetics
- Strengthen infrastructure (electric, smart city & irrigation)
- Provide consistent look for hardscape, landscape & architectural elements along the Avenue

Construction is expected to start summer 2025. Access more information and updates at

cityofwinterpark.org/ParkAveRefresh.

Clerk of Courts has a new home

The Orange County Clerk of Courts Winter Park Branch location has moved from 450 N. Lakemont Ave. to the new Orange County Courthouse located at 4037 Metric Drive. The new location has expanded services to help better serve customers. Services include passports, passport photos, marriage licenses and ceremonies, traffic ticket payments and much more.

In addition, Self Help Services will be offered at this location along with an attorney consultation room. The Self Help Center was created to provide customers with limited legal guidance and low-cost attorney consultations. The Center is the first of its kind in the Orange County Community launched under the leadership of Clerk Tiffany Moore Russell in partnership with the Orange County Bar Association to help citizens who either don't have a lawyer or cannot afford one.

For more information, please access myorangeclerk.com.

Updates to Tree Preservation Ordinance

On October 17, following discussions and votes by the Tree Preservation Board and Planning & Zoning Board, the City Commission approved updates to the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance with an eye towards better protecting, preserving and growing Winter Park's storied urban canopy. Below are some of the most significant changes.

- The minimum size for a tree to qualify as a "protected tree" was reduced from nine inches DBH* to six inches DBH. All protected trees measuring six inches DBH and above are now subject to Winter Park's tree removal permitting process.
- The landmark tree category was established as a special category with extra protections. Mature live oaks and bald cypress assessed by a city arborist to be in fair to excellent condition and measuring 30" DBH, require triple the planting mitigation and/or financial compensation of other protected trees.
- Mitigation planting for tree removal permits on non-residential projects no longer counts toward minimum landscape requirements.
- Tree Risk Assessment Documentation for removal of trees without a permit on occupied single-use residential lots under Florida Statutes 163.045 must meet industry standards and must clearly demonstrate a tree meets the criteria for removal as stated in the statute. Documentation must be in the owner's possession at the time of removal and must be provided to city staff upon request.
- The appeals process for denied tree removal permits has changed. The City Commission's vote to uphold or overturn a denial is now final.
 - * DBH (diameter-at-breast-height) is measured with diameter tape at 4.5 feet from the base of the tree.

To read the complete ordinance, please access cityofwinterpark.org/government > [About](#) > [Code of Ordinances](#).

For more information or if you have questions related to the Tree Preservation Ordinance, please email urbanforestry@cityofwinterpark.org.

RESIDENTIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS [ad]

Fresh Access Bucks & SNAP

- Fresh Access Bucks [FAB] is a nutrition incentive program that increases the purchasing power of SNAP recipients to buy fresh fruits & vegetables
- Accepted @ farmers' markets + produce stands + mobile markets + community grocery outlets + Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
- FAB doubles a SNAP purchase [up to \$40 per day] & is accepted @ the city's Saturday Farmers' Market

access more info & locations that accept FAB at feedingflorida.org.

Managing Yard Waste

residential

- Yard waste is collected one time per week on Wednesday.
- Place yard waste in a container or bundle & stack.*
.Bundles should not
*exceed 4 ft. length or 4 in. radius
*weigh over 50 lbs. [any piece, segment, stump, etc.]
Stacked palm fronds are collected whole.
- Place yard waste curbside by 7 a.m

questions

- [407-599-3479](tel:407-599-3479)
- sustainability@cityofwinterpark.org

Winter Park Fire-Rescue

Serving our community

125 years | March 12, 2025

Happy Anniversary!

Quick Tip: City Hall will be closed

in observance of Memorial Day Monday 05.29.23

HHWD+ [ad]

Household hazardous waste dropoff

Saturday **March 8 | 8 a.m. to noon**

Cady Way Park @ 2525 Cady Way

Waste Pro® | Urban Recycling | American Textile Recycling Services

- » Bring proof of city residency.
- » Refer to lists of accepted items.
- » Keep in original containers & labeling.
- » Prescriptions go to Public Safety Facility.

RESIDENTIAL ONLY. NO CONTRACTORS PLEASE.

More info @ [407-599-3479](tel:407-599-3479) | cityofwinterpark.org/hhwd

Celebrate Earth Day [ad]

PREREGISTER TO PARTICIPATE

2025 run for the trees 7:30 a.m.

Saturday **April 26, 2025 | 8 to 11 a.m.**

Ward Park @ 250 Perth lane & across the street @ the Center for Health & Wellbeing

FAMILY FUN! Free for all ages

- » face painting
- » activities
- » Kona Ice ®
- » music
- » food

large item pickup

Thursday, May 1 or 8 & Friday, May 2 or 9

what spring cleanup

when after 5 p.m. the evening before your 2nd regularly scheduled trash pickup day

where north of Fairbanks/ Aloma avenues corridor {**may 1 or 2**}
south of Fairbanks/ Aloma avenues corridor {**may 8 or 9**}

info [407-774-0800](tel:407-774-0800)

please note yard waste and household hazardous waste* are NOT included in the Spring Cleanup.
[*please see HHWD event info above]

City Commission

Mayor Sheila DeCiccio, Commissioner Craig Russell, Commissioner Marty Sullivan, Commissioner Kris Cruzada and Commissioner Todd Weaver.

City Commission meetings are held monthly on the second and fourth Wednesdays.

Who to contact commission & administration

City Commission	407-599-3234
City Manager Randy Knight	407-599-3235
Assistant City Manager Michelle del Valle	407-599-3236
City Clerk Rene Cranis	407-599-3277
City Information	407-599-3399
Fire-Rescue Non-Emergency	407-644-1212
Police Non-Emergency	407-644-1313

department directors

Building & Permitting Services Gary Hiatt	407-599-3237
Communications Clarissa Howard	407-599-3343
Electric Utility Dan D'Alessandro	407-599-3294
Finance Wes Hamil	407-599-3292
Fire-Rescue Chief Dan Hagedorn	407-599-3297
Human Resources Pam Russell	407-599-3227
Information Technology Parsram Rajaram	407-599-3432
Management & Budget Peter Moore	407-599-3567
Natural Resources & Sustainability Gloria Eby	407-599-3471
Parks & Recreation Jason Seeley	407-599-3334
Planning & Zoning Allison McGillis	407-599-3665
Police Chief Tim Volkerson	407-599-3272
Public Works & Transportation Charles Ramdatt	407-599-3233
Water & Wastewater Utilities David Zusi	407-599-3219

Email addresses can be found at cityofwinterpark.org/contact

outages

Power & Street Light Outages

[1-877-811-8700](tel:1-877-811-8700)

helpful info

The Winter Park Update is published quarterly with a circulation of approximately 16,500, including both residents and businesses. To suggest article ideas, please contact [407-599-3343](tel:407-599-3343) or choward@cityofwinterpark.org.

City of Winter Park | [401 S. Park Ave. | Winter Park, FL 32789](#)