

Open Line

A Monthly Newsletter for City of Auburn Citizens

March 2014

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City of Auburn



'AA+' Standard & Poor's Rating Affirmed

In January 2014, Standard & Poor's (S&P) affirmed the City of Auburn's bond rating as 'AA+'. In their report, S&P cites strong management, as well as Auburn's "consistently strong financial profile, indicated by its very strong budgetary flexibility and liquidity" as factors that were considered in the rating. Another factor that led to the S&P AA+ rating was Auburn's status as the "key participant in the Auburn-Opelika metropolitan statistical area, indicating its presence as a regional economic center."

According to S&P, an 'AA+' rating indicates a "strong capacity to meet financial commitments." In addition to the strong S&P rating, the City of Auburn holds a rating of AA2 from Moody's Investors Service (Moody's). The Moody's report for Auburn reports "continued diversification and growth of the city's sizable tax base...the city's solid financial position" and a "strong management team" as factors helping Auburn earn an AA2.

Credit ratings are important indicators of a municipality's ability and willingness to meet its debt obligations. A strong credit rating directly correlates to the cost of borrowing. The better the rating, the lower the interest rate will be for City borrowings. This lower interest rate provides savings to the City and its citizens. An analysis of a few of the City's most recent borrowings show savings of up to 1% in interest costs as a result of a strong credit rating. For each \$5 million borrowing (20 year term), over 1/2 million dollars in interest could be saved over the life of the borrowing.

Auburn Recognized for Quality of Life

Auburn is once again getting media attention for its local quality of life. Forbes.com has ranked Auburn on its list of Top 25 Best Places to Retire in 2014. Forbes cited a cost of living that is 11% below the national average as a factor in the ranking. Other quality-of-life factors considered by Forbes include a strong economy, warm climate, housing prices and a low crime rate.

This Forbes ranking follows a number of previous recognitions from Forbes and other national media and commercial outlets hailing Auburn's quality of life, economic strength and other positive factors.

Other 2014 recognitions so far include Movoto.com, a real estate web site, which placed Auburn at number one on its list of Top Ten Best Places in Alabama. The firm pointed to Auburn's short commute time, low student-teacher ratio and high median household value as factors that launched Auburn to the top of the list.

Commercial website Lumosity.com ranked Au-

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**STANDARD
& POOR'S**



Auburn Recognized for Quality of Life

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burn/Opelika in the top 50 on its 2013 list of "Smartest Cities," based on data collected from users of their "cognitive training exercises."

In 2013 Auburn was named the "#10 Best Small City for Jobs in the U.S." and the #18 "Best Small Place for Business and Careers," both by Forbes.com. In 2012, recognitions included the Forbes #17 "Best Small Place for Business and Careers in the U.S." and the NewGeography.com 64th "Best Small City for Job Growth in the U.S."

Auburn has received other rankings and recognitions over the years including recognition by Southern Living as "One of the South's Best College Towns," a BusinessWeek ranking as the "Best Affordable Place in Alabama," and Forbes "#1 in Projected Job Growth in the U.S."

Auburn has also been named in U.S. News & World Report's "Top 10 Best Places to Live in the U.S." and as "A Great Place to Live" by the Today Show.

Each of these recognitions highlight a different aspect of the Auburn community, but the focus has clearly been on quality of life, strength of the local economy and job market. These national recognitions help in recruiting and retaining commercial and industrial companies and jobs in the Auburn market. They also report to a national audience what citizens say each year in the Annual Citizen Survey – the City of Auburn is a great place to live, work and raise children.

Daylight Saving Time Begins March 9

Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 9 at 2:00 a.m. Remember to move your clocks forward one hour Saturday night. This is also a good opportunity to take a few moments to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

Board Vacancies

One vacancy on the **Auburn Public Library Board** will be announced at the March 4, 2014 meeting and will be filled at the April 1, 2014 City Council meeting.



Three vacancies on the **Historic Preservation Commission** will be announced at the March 18, 2014 meeting and will be filled at the April 15, 2014 City Council meeting.

Citizens interested in serving are encouraged to contact their City Council member or notify the City Manager's Office.

ShopAuburn This Spring

Make your Spring shopping hassle-free with meter-free parking in downtown Auburn this year. Meter-free parking will be available Monday, March 10 through Friday, March 14 during Auburn University's Spring Break. In addition to free on-street parking available throughout downtown, free parking can be found on and surrounding the first floor of the Auburn Municipal Parking Deck, accessible from both Gay Street and Tichenor Avenue. Downtown shoppers may park in the newly constructed Gay Street parking lot, which has 93 conveniently-located parking spaces adjacent to the Auburn Municipal Parking Deck.

Keep your sales-tax dollars local and enjoy meter-free parking when you shop, dine or do business downtown during Spring Break. Auburn's sales tax revenue supports Auburn City Schools; funds the maintenance of roads and local infrastructure, and helps make possible community events such as Auburn CityFest.

ShopAuburn!
supporting our community markets centers.



Recycling Bins Available to Auburn Residents

The Environmental Services Department is providing new recycling bins on loan to garbage, trash and recycling customers in the City of Auburn. To get up to four stackable bins per household at no cost, customers can visit the Environmental Services Office located at 365-A North Donahue Drive. These new recycling bins were purchased through a grant from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. For more information, please call the Environmental Services Department at 501-3080.

Library Super Heroes Week March 23-29

Monday, March 24 - Super Heroes Academy for Kids for grades K - 5 at 2:00 p.m. Calling all super heroes! Wear your favorite super hero costume and discover your own super powers! (Registration Required - please call Youth Services, 501-3196)

Wednesday, March 26 - Dr. Magical Balloons, featuring story teller Dewayne Reynolds, will entertain grades K - 5 at 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 27 - Writing Fairy Tales for grades 6 - 8 at 4:30 p.m. Join the AU Student Writers as they share tips and help young authors develop their creative writing techniques.

Thursday, March 27 - Super Heroes Teen Café for grades 8 - 12 at 6:30 p.m. Prizes for best comic-con style super hero costumes (appropriate for a public gathering) will be awarded, games and refreshments will be provided.

City Responds to Winter Weather

January's winter weather event left motorists stranded and school children stuck at school across the southeast. In Auburn, conditions were not as severe as Birmingham or Atlanta, but local schools were closed and roads were dangerously icy throughout the city.

As it became apparent that the storm would bring more ice and less snow than had been predicted, City crews escalated their efforts to prepare roads and respond to icy conditions. City crews worked into the night as the freezing rain soaked the roads before a short snow began, setting up conditions for dangerously icy roads and sidewalks.

While icy conditions persisted, Auburn Police responded to 21 accidents, assisted more than 100 motorists including giving rides to stranded motorists, and dealt with approximately 30 additional road hazard complaints. Some stranded motorists were unable to retrieve their cars until icy conditions subsided. Storm conditions and related accidents did not result in any known deaths or serious injury in Auburn.

In addition to the response efforts of Auburn Public Safety, the City's Public Works, Environmental Services, Water Resource Management and Parks and Recreation Departments worked to make conditions safer by spreading sand on local roads and sidewalks, and at city facilities including parking lots, outdoor stairwells and cemetery walkways. Over 170 tons of sand and 3,300 pounds of de-icer were used to combat icy conditions.

Storm response by City crews took hundreds of person-hours to complete. The City did not suspend operations during icy conditions, but remained open to provide city services as needed by residents, with only a few services or programs delayed or canceled as dictated by weather conditions. The work done by City employees to respond to storm conditions and maintain city services is a testament to the dedicated men and women whose mission is public service.

Fit as a Fiddle, A 50+ Lifestyle and Health Fair Saturday, March 1

Join Auburn Parks and Recreation for Fit as a Fiddle, a 50+ lifestyle and health fair, on Saturday, March 1 from 9 a.m. - noon at the Harris Center, 425 Perry St. This FREE event features vendors, organizations, and instructors with offerings specifically for the 50+ population. Come discover a new hobby, pick up tips on maintaining an active lifestyle, and discover the new programs and events for adults 50+ offered weekly at the Harris Center.

For more information, or to participate as a vendor, visit www.auburnalabama.org/parks or contact Auburn Parks and Recreation at 501-2930.



MEETING SCHEDULE MARCH

- 3 Cemeteries Advisory Board**, 4:00 p.m., Harris Center, 425 Perry Street
- 4 Parks & Recreation Advisory Board**, 5:15 p.m., Harris Center, 425 Perry Street
- Committee of the Whole**, 6:55 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- City Council**, 7 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 5 Board of Zoning Adjustment**, 4:30 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 7 Tree Commission**, 11:30 a.m., Chamber of Commerce Conference Room, 714 East Glenn Avenue
- 11 Greenspace Advisory Board**, Noon, Harris Center, 425 Perry Street
- Historic Preservation Commission**, 4 p.m., Library Board Room, 749 East Thach Avenue
- Board of Education**, 6 p.m., AHS Multi-Media Room, 405 South Dean Road
- 13 Planning Commission**, 5 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 18 Committee of the Whole**, 6:55 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- City Council**, 7 p.m., Council Chamber, 141 North Ross Street
- 20 Water Works Board**, 4 p.m., Water Board Conference Room, 1501 West Samford Avenue
- 25 Library Board**, 2 p.m., Library Board Room, 749 East Thach Avenue

Meeting times and places are subject to change.

For more information, including a map of City meeting locations, please visit www.auburnalabama.org/boards.

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Open Line Feedback

Do you have any suggestions, feedback, or story ideas that you would like to share?

If so, please contact us at openline@auburnalabama.org or call 501-7255.

up COMING EVENTS

Due to space considerations, we are unable to publicize any events that are not directly affiliated with a City department.

Auburn Public Library For more information, contact Auburn Public Library's Youth Services at 501-3196.

Baby Time - Tuesdays at 10 a.m. for ages birth - 18 months and their caregivers.

Toddler Time - Wednesdays at 10 a.m. for ages 18 months - 3 years and their caregivers.

Preschool Time - Thursdays at 10 a.m. for preschoolers ages 3 - 5 years and their caregivers.

Legomania - Join us every Saturday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. for "free play" with Legos®.

Special Programs

Puppet Show - Monday, March 3 at 3:30 p.m. for children ages 3-7.

Fractured Fairy Tales - Tuesday, March 11 at 3:30 p.m. for students in grades K-2. Students will hear their favorite fairy tales and then the humorous 'fractured' versions and are invited to make a craft.

ConnectKids - Wednesday, March 19 at 3:30 p.m. This dynamic program allows kids grades 3-5 to explore diverse topics related to libraries, digital information, and the arts.

Poetry for Teens - Wednesday, March 26 at 4:30 p.m. for students in grades 8-12. Join AU Live Poets Society for a poetry writing workshop.

Parks and Recreation

For more information on any of the events listed, or to pre-register for a program, contact Auburn Parks and Recreation at 501-2930 or visit www.auburnalabama.org/parks.

Now Showing...Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center Exhibitions - Mark your calendar for the following Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center Exhibitions. The exhibits are free and open to the public Monday - Friday from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Spring Loan Exhibition, March 3 - 25. Molas from Panama and photographs of Ghana and the Cote d'Azur.

Spring Invitational 2014: Pastels, March 31 - May 2. New works by Eugenia Bates Yielding, Karen Lindved Chissom, and Robert Ekelund.

Beginning March 3...Register for Early Bird Swim Lessons and Purchase Splash Pass - Register for early swim lessons with the Auburn City Pools beginning Monday, March 3. Lessons begin in May. Registration is available weekdays from 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Harris Center. While you're there, purchase your 2014 Splash Pass, good for unlimited daily admission to the Auburn City Pools all summer. Passes are \$50 for individuals and \$125 for families.

Now Registering...Youth Track - Online registration for youth track will be held Feb. 18 - March 14. Log on to www.auburnalabama.org/athletics to register. A one-time, walk-in registration will be held on Tuesday, March 11 from 6 - 7 p.m. at the Dean Road Recreation Center. Youth track is for participants ages 9 - 14. The cost is \$50 and includes a t-shirt.

March 7...First Friday Night Tennis Mixer - Join the Auburn Community Tennis Association (ACTA) for the First Friday Night Tennis Mixer on March 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the City of Auburn/Auburn University Yarbrough Tennis Center. Citizens ages 19 and up are encouraged to play. All levels of play are welcome. No partner is necessary. The event will be held rain or shine. Yarbrough Tennis Center non-member court fees apply.



2014 Bullfrog Tennis Tournament Businesses Encouraged to Welcome Tennis Players

The City of Auburn welcomes the best and brightest of youth tennis during the 2014 Bullfrog Tennis Tournament at the City of Auburn/Auburn University Yarbrough Tennis Center March 21 - 24. Over 250 of the Southeast's best junior tennis players and their families will be in Auburn for the four-day tournament. Businesses are encouraged to display "Welcome Bullfrog Tennis Players" on their marquees during the tournament to encourage and welcome players. For more information on the tournament, or to volunteer, contact the Yarbrough Tennis Center at 501-2920.