

**Parks and Recreation Division Report
June 2023**

OPERATIONS

Wi-Fi in Community Centers

In exciting news, 11 parks and community centers will be equipped with publicly accessible Wi-Fi this summer. Installation of the hardware has begun and the internet access will be live later this summer. This project was initiated by the Library and is possible through the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) available to libraries and schools. The sites will include:

- Bayfront Park – Family Center
- Central Hillside Community Center
- Gary New Duluth Recreation Center
- Harrison Community Center
- Lafayette Community Center
- Morgan Park Community Center
- Piedmont Heights Community Center
- Portman Community Center
- Washington Community Center
- Wheeler Fieldhouse
- Woodland Community Center

PROGRAMMING

Youth Programs

We brought more than 40 kids from Gary New Duluth Rec Center out fishing at Chambers Grove Park on May 24. Despite a cold and rainy day, the kids had a blast! Adults participating in the program were allowed to fish with their kids or grandkids without a fishing license via an Educational License Waiver Permit through the Minnesota DNR.



Athletics

It was a busy spring at Wade Stadium, Wade softball fields, and Wheeler Athletic Complex once the snow melted. Parks and Recreation hosted reservations for 15 different baseball and softball teams, which totaled 55 games and 80 practices. Some highlights include hosting the Region 7A baseball playoffs, Region 7AAA baseball playoffs, and Region 7AAA softball playoffs. Also, we wrapped up our first season of an adult kickball league utilizing the turf field at Heritage Center. This league attracted eight teams and 85 participants.

55+ Programs

Highlights of recent programs include the Spring Fling event at Evergreen Community Center. Participants decorated planters with mini succulent plants and spring bonnets. Additionally, at the end of May we wrapped up spring with a boat cruise in the picturesque town of Stillwater, Minnesota along the St. Croix River. We are looking forward to new and returning programs this summer, such as an introduction to pickleball, step-by-step art classes, local day trips, the annual Senior Picnic, and more!



Connecting People to the Outdoors

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) Connecting People to the Outdoors (CPO) small grant program is intended to encourage innovation and nurture creative partnerships. Duluth Parks & Recreation has been awarded two CPO grants, one to acquire a track wheelchair to improve accessibility, and another to develop the Youth on Trails program. Bike equipment has arrived and bike instructors have completed certifications. On May 25, Parks & Recreation hosted an event with Valley Youth Centers of Duluth to launch Youth on Trails, a mobile mountain bike program designed to reduce barriers associated with trail-based activities and increase comfort and skills in the outdoors.



PERMITS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Park & Building Rentals	37	43	69	71	96
Commercial Operator Permits	3	1	3	7	8
Busker Permits	0	0	10	1	9
Alcohol Consumption Permits	2	8	3	9	6
TOTAL	42	52	85	88	119

PROJECT UPDATES

2023 Small Park Improvement Projects Supported by Revenue Replacement Funds

In 2022, City revenue replacement funds were dedicated to park improvement projects serving Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs), as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Several smaller park improvement projects will be supported with the revenue replacement funding. In May, the fall zone materials at the Blackmer Park, Morgan Park, and Portland Square playgrounds were converted from sand to engineered wood fiber and an accessible portable toilet enclosure was installed at Harrison Park.

Later this summer, a number of new picnic tables and benches, some with new concrete slabs, will be installed at Blackmer Park, Cascade Park, Endion Park, Morgan Park, Portland Square, and Washington Center. More substantial projects supported with revenue replacement funds include Midtown Park construction documents, additional support for the Lincoln Park improvement project, and future Hillside Sport Court Park improvements.



Enger Golf Course Renovation

On Monday, May 22, City Council chose to table the three resolutions related to awarding bids for the Enger Golf Course irrigation project. These three resolutions will return to Council on Monday, June 12. Two additional Council resolutions are on the Council agenda for June 12. One calls for Duluth Golf to operate at Lester Park Golf Course in 2024 and close but maintain Enger Park Golf Course during their irrigation project. The second calls for Duluth Golf to operate at least 18 holes at Enger Golf Course during the irrigation construction project in 2024, thus not reopening Lester. Council agendas can be found at: <https://duluthmn.gov/city-council/city-council-meetings-events/council-meeting-media/>

Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach)

Park improvement and coastal restoration work at Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach) has resumed. Improvements at the park will include new park landscaping and amenities, shoreline stabilization, improved access to the shore, and replacement of non-native plant species. Construction of park amenities and landscape restoration is anticipated to be completed by fall 2023.

During construction, the section of the newly extended Lakewalk through Brighton Beach will remain open. Users should anticipate the potential for intermittent, temporary closures for materials and equipment that may need to cross the trail. Upon completion of the park landscape restoration and improvements, the landscaped areas will be temporarily fenced to allow new turf to become established. Use of the Park will be limited to the improved pathways and the Lakewalk for several months, until the turf is well-established. Brighton Beach road construction is expected to start next summer in 2024. Due to ongoing long-term closures for construction, there will be no events, programming, or reservations allowed at Brighton Beach until fall 2024 at the earliest.

The memorial benches that had been placed at Brighton Beach will be removed and preserved during construction, then reinstalled towards project completion. Park designs have incorporated space for all existing memorial benches, and no new benches will be accepted at this time.

More information about the project can be found at: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/brighton-beach/>

Lincoln Park

Construction is well underway at Lincoln Park. The park improvement project includes: restoration of the historic stone pavilion with new ADA restroom facilities, playground relocation and replacement, new parking lots, a new nature playscape, new and refurbished picnic pavilions, a new multi-use sport court, accessible trails, and lighting.

Construction is anticipated to last through fall of 2023.



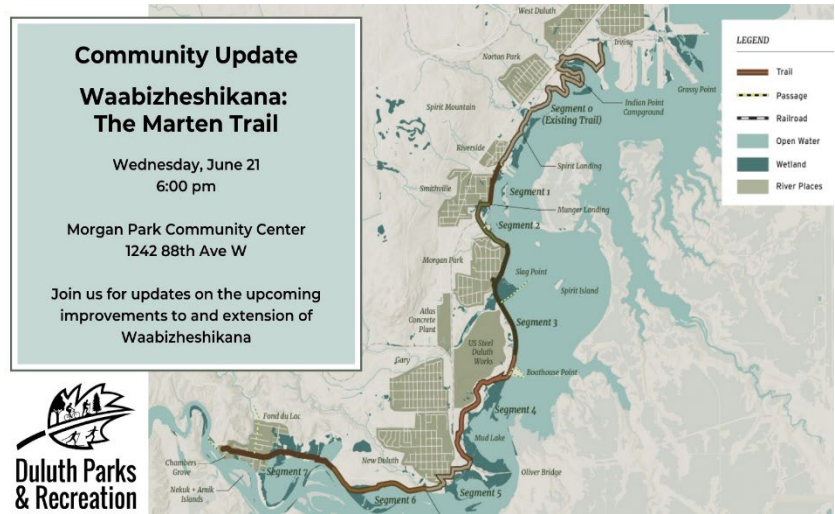
Minnesota Point Boardwalk at Lafayette

The City has been awarded funding from Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program to replace the boardwalk at Lafayette Community Center. As part of the boardwalk replacement project at Lafayette Community Center, the City conducted a Phase 1 Archeological Survey, inclusive of monitoring by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, to evaluate the project area for the potential of historic and cultural resources. The Phase 1 Archeological Survey, which is funded by the grant, was completed in May 2023. There were no significant findings identified during the study. The steel support structure will be ordered/manufactured in summer of 2023, and the boardwalk will be replaced in the fall of 2023.

Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail

A community update will be provided on Wednesday, June 21 at 6:00 pm at the Morgan Park Community Center. The update will include:

- Review of upcoming improvements, including presentation of the scope of work, concept designs, and tentative project timelines for
 - improvements on the existing segment of trail
 - extensions from Spring Street to Blackmer Park
 - and trailhead improvements at Munger Landing and Blackmer Park
- Area of Concern projects at Munger Landing and Spirit Lake by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- New Parks & Recreation programming initiatives
- St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail initiatives



Implementation of the upcoming improvements to and extension of Waabizheshikana is funded through an array of funding currently totaling roughly \$4,258,434 from State and Federal grants, Tribal and non-profit contributions, and \$400,000 from the Parks Fund. In May 2023, the Minnesota Legislature approved two grants for implementation of Waabizheshikana including a grant of \$1,493,434 from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) through the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, and a second grant of \$1,375,000 from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENTRF) as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources. Previously awarded grant funding includes a \$500,000 grant from the ENTRF, a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society of \$130,000 through the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, and \$215,000 from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Additional support comes from the Indigenous Women's Water Sisterhood, Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, and US Steel.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Public Lands Transfer

On June 12, a resolution will go before City Council to authorize acceptance of over 500 tax forfeit parcels for parkland and conservation. This resolution represents almost a decade of work with the County and the MN Land Trust to bring lands that have recreational or conservation value into City ownership. While this is an exciting step towards the eventual transfer of these parcels, a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in favor of a private landholder (Tyler vs. Hennepin County) has the potential to delay the process until this ruling can be further interpreted by the County. The City is working closely with the County to track the repercussions of this ruling and to keep the land transfer moving forward as quickly as possible, while still being sensitive to the impacts that this decision may have on the sale or transfer of tax forfeit property.

Invasive Species Management

In addition to contracted management, Parks and Recreation staff are coordinating with The Stewardship Network's Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) to host five Wild Parsnip eradication events in July. The events will be at Spirit Mountain, and near the DWP and Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail.

Duluth & Hartley Invaders

The Duluth Invaders is a dedicated volunteer group that generously gives their time to cut, treat and report invasive species on our City lands. About 30 individuals work across the City to eliminate garlic mustard, wild parsnip, knotweed and buckthorn. Staff changes and limited resources have led to what we hope is a temporary decrease in the City's ability to support this group. In light of this, staff at Hartley Nature Center have offered to provide support to volunteers who prefer to work in Hartley Park, by providing structure, tools and organizational support. Hartley has brought on additional stewardship staff, increasing their capacity to form their own "Hartley Invaders" volunteer group. Volunteers who work in other parts of the City will continue to be supported in a limited capacity by Park Maintenance, which can provide access to tools and garbage bags. The group also has a lead volunteer who previously worked at Park Maintenance and is willing to support the group in order to continue the battle against invasives.

PARK MAINTENANCE

In the past month, Park Maintenance has hired three full-time positions: Cassie Taylor, the new Administrative Clerical Specialist, and two seasonal employees were promoted to Park Maintenance Workers: Matt Bovee and Krys Manchette. Joe Miller continues to serve as Park Maintenance Interim Supervisor

Early summer has been filled with cleaning up from heavy, wet snow that left broken tree branches and limbs throughout the park system, as well as spring flood damage. Seasonal planting of landscaping and trees is underway. Thus far, 140 trees have been planted in boulevards throughout Duluth and the hope is to get another 200 in the ground before the weather heats up this summer. The restrooms at Enger Park were painted. Athletics field maintenance is in full swing for youth and adult sports. Drain tile was installed at a Wheeler Athletic Complex field to improve drainage.

