

Parks and Recreation Division Report May 2023

OPERATIONS

AED's

Over the last four years, we have worked hard to place AED's in community centers. At the start of this initiative, we only had a few in community centers. Over the years we've added a few more and swapped seasonal lower-use sites for higher-use sites. We are happy to report that with a donation from the DOT, as of this spring we have AED's in all community centers! No matter what the level of use is at a location, everyone has access to this life saving device in our facilities. Currently, 23 units are placed throughout our indoor park system facilities.

Beach Safety

The Duluth Y is again delivering lifeguarding services on Park Point at the Beach House. Guards are busy training this spring to start at the Beach House Memorial Day weekend. More information about lifeguard hours, weather conditions, and flag warnings can be found at parkpointbeach.org. Duluth Fire, Parks Maintenance, and Parks and Recreation have done their annual site tours of beach signs, throw ring locations, flags, and rip current safety signage. We are getting ready and are looking forward to summer!

PROGRAMMING

Youth Programs

April brought a variety of programs, including an Archery Tournament at Washington Center! We added more sessions of Intro to Archery, Open Archery, and Ninja Skills based on demand. We also visited Valley Youth Center and Family Freedom Center over the school spring break week to play Cosmic Dodgeball, which turned a rainy day into glow-in-the-dark dodgeball fun with black lights, glow sticks, glow-in-the-dark dodgeballs, neon clothing, and more!



Soccer Shots

On May 1, we wrapped up our five-week Soccer Shots program at Washington Center. This program was an introductory class for kids ages 5-8, learning about the skills, fundamentals, and rules of the game of soccer. Sixteen kids participated in the program.



Science Hikes

On March 30, Parks and Recreation and Duluth Foot Trails Alliance (DUFTA) led our monthly science hike in Lincoln Park. This hike was billed as a Snowshoe and Stream Ecology Science Hike. We started out low in the park and hiked upstream along the trail and off trail to get a little closer to the stream, flipping over rocks to teach about aquatic insects. Participants learned about Miller Creek as well as the new updates coming to beautiful Lincoln Park!



The April science hike had a Spring Phenology theme along the all-season Waabizheshikana Trail. Sixteen community members joined, with participants’ ages ranging from 8 to 66. We saw bufflehead ducks, geese, red wing black birds, two whitetail deer, a kingfisher, and beaked hazelnut (*corylus cornuta*) flowers. Halfway through the hike, we took a moment to silently sit or stand for a journaling exercise, giving participants a chance to write or sketch about their surroundings.



PERMITS

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

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:

Mobile Bike Fleet

In 2021, the GMRPTC awarded Parks & Recreation a grant of \$167,783 from the CPO program to develop a mobile bike fleet and establish programming to expand recreational access to the Duluth Traverse and mountain biking trails throughout Duluth. Equipment is starting to arrive and planning is in full force to implement the Youth on Trails initiative this summer. Activities to look forward to include youth programming with Valley Youth Center and Family Freedom Center, Learn to Ride events happening all across Duluth, and a few adaptive mountain biking lessons.



Track Wheelchair

Last fall, Parks & Recreation submitted a grant application to the GMRPTC for \$14,280 towards the purchase of a track wheelchair, and this past month the grant was awarded to Duluth! A track wheelchair is a mobility device that operates like a power wheelchair with tracks that allow the user to traverse sand and natural surfaces, which provides access to areas where a traditional wheelchair might not reach.

The chair will be housed out at Hartley Nature Center and users will be able to reserve the chair for use around Hartley Park. Duluth's recreation staff will also be able to bring the chair to various programs for a participant to use. After City Council approval on May 8, staff will proceed with ordering, and it will be available for use later this year.



PROJECT UPDATES

Barry Family Memorial Project at Chester Park Playground

In April 2022, the lives of the Barry family – Riana (44), Sean (47), Shiway (12), Sadie (9) – were tragically taken by gun violence. Chester Park was a beloved destination for the Barry family, especially for Shiway and Sadie. Loved ones of the Barry family, in cooperation with City staff, have come together to coordinate a memorial project at the Chester Park playground. Family, friends, and community members have pledged to raise \$22,000 to support adding a new spinner element and an accessible swing, converting the fall zone from sand to engineered wood fiber, incorporating an accessible pathway to the playground, and installing a memorial bench in remembrance of the Barry family. City staff are working closely with the fundraising organizers and anticipate implementation of the memorial project in July 2023.

Family and friends of the Barry family are hosting a fundraising benefit on Saturday, May 20, 2023 from 3pm – 6pm at The Other Place Bar and Grill, including a silent auction, pasta bar, and bake sale. Tickets are \$15 and will be available at the door. Additionally, a GoFundMe page has been set up at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/shiway-and-sadie-barry-memorial>.

Spring Golf Meeting

On Wednesday, April 26, the Spring Golf Meeting was held at Enger Park Golf Course. Approximately 25 attendees listened to updates and asked questions regarding 2023 operations, course maintenance, and status updates on the construction project. Attendees provided name and email addresses, and this list will be used for future written communications as well.

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 this summer, including:

- The fall zone materials at the Blackmer Park, Morgan Park, and Portland Square playgrounds are being converted from sand to engineered wood fiber. This work is expected to take place the week of May 22, and each playground location is expected to be closed for one-day while work takes place. A public notice will be issued once the final schedule has been determined, which will be at least one week in advance of any playground closure.
- An accessible portable toilet enclosure is planned to be installed at Harrison Park by the end of May.
- A number of new picnic tables and benches, some with new concrete slabs, will be installed this summer 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Prescribed Burn Pilot Project

The City contracted Prairie Restorations, Inc. to conduct controlled fires on May 4 at three pollinator meadows: two sites at Hartley Park and one site at the western end of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail near 94 Spring Street. The three burns went well as a result of strong planning and communication, knowledgeable contractors, and great weather.



Invasive Species Management

Ongoing management will continue in 2023. Management will include contracting the treatment and removal of invasive species along Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail, the bioswales along the Lakewalk, and multiple sites at Hartley Park. In addition, staff are coordinating with The Stewardship Network's Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) and Hartley Nature Center to complete additional management and potentially host volunteer events throughout the year.

Forestry

With the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) recently designated as endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, there have been ongoing conversations to determine how projects and tree removals could be impacted by the protections. There are currently no known roosting locations for the NLEB within Duluth. The necessary paperwork has been filed and tree removals for Emerald Ash Borer damage will continue on boulevards. In order to protect these endangered bats, staff will not remove trees that appear to be hollow or contain cavities that could harbor bats between June 1 and July 31, which is the rearing season for bat pups.

Tree planting season is here and the first order of trees has arrived. In total, there will be 500 boulevard trees planted this year. An additional 150 seedlings will be planted along Miller Creek in Lincoln Park upstream from 3rd Street. There has been extensive willow encroachment into the area. There is uncertainty whether tree-sized willow are native to the Duluth region. Regardless, the willow causes significant maintenance challenges when growing near maintained areas. These challenges will hopefully be mitigated by planting the more ecologically valuable and less troublesome seedlings.

PARK MAINTENANCE

The onboarding process for summer seasonal and temporary staff will be kicking off shortly. In exciting news, Todd Kobus was promoted to the position of Leadworker. Todd has been with Park Maintenance full time for 27 years. He has a keen eye for turf management and maintaining athletic fields.

The spring maintenance transition is in full swing. There has been a lot of cleaning up from the winter season, including removing sand, grit, and debris from park spaces. Enger Park and the Enger Tower are open for the season, and portables are currently in place until the bathrooms open in the coming weeks. The spring athletics activities across the park system include buttoning up the hockey rinks and preparing sport courts and fields. Athletic courts and fields preparation entails sweeping, installing nets, adding windscreens at the tennis and pickleball courts at Wheeler Athletic Complex, and getting ready for turf management.



Volunteer activities are increasing in frequency with the warmer weather and Park Maintenance continues to support volunteer work. One example of an upcoming volunteer event is the annual “Clean Yer Creek,” which will take place on May 6 and mobilize cleanup efforts for Keene Creek, Miller Creek, and Chester Creek. Park Maintenance staff will pick up and dispose of waste that is collected.

Spring Flooding Damage

This spring, there was significant flooding damage throughout the region, including at parks and trails across Duluth’s system. Seventeen sites had infrastructure damage identified, ranging from gullies and washouts on trails to footbridges that were swept away or pushed off alignment. Parks and trails impacted will include, but are not limited to, Hartley Park, Chambers Grove, and the Duluth Traverse.

The City is currently working with the Minnesota State Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division to determine eligibility for state and/or federal relief. Upon determination, announcements will be made and plans for repair and restoration will begin. Please be patient, as some of these facilities will remain closed during this time.

Examples of flooding damage across the system:



Hartley – accessible route to dam from Hartley Nature Center



Hartley – Marshall Street entrance



Clyde Connector in Magney-Snively Forest Preserve

Raising of the Roses

On Monday, April 24, Park Maintenance and the Lake Superior Rose Society hosted the annual Raising of the Roses. In the fall, the roses are tipped to protect the plants using the Minnesota Tip method. The rose plant is tied, bent over and laid in a trench, and then covered with soil and leaves to provide insulation against the harsh winter. During the Raising, this process is reversed to get ready for the growing season.

