Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan

Public Workshop #1
April 13 and 14, 2022

Prepared by DESIGN WORKSHOP
Meet the Team

Jessica Peterson – Parks and Recreation Manager
Cliff Knettel - Senior Parks Planner
Katie Bennett – Project Coordinator
Alicia Watts – Assistant Park Manager
Anna Laybourn - Design Workshop
Callie New - Design Workshop
Jeff King - Ballard King
Agenda

Presentation & Questions – 40 Minutes
  Project Overview
  System Evaluation
  Public Input
  Draft Plan Themes

Map Activity – 40 Minutes

Wrap Up – 5 Minutes
What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

It is a …

• Long-range planning tool to determine service gaps and identify opportunities for improvements.

• Visionary document that sets the values and goals for the department.

• An opportunity for staff and the public to weigh in on the future of parks and recreation.

It is not a …

• Operations model or financial budget.

• Method to approve capital expenditures (informs CIP).

• Detailed design proposal for a specific neighborhood, park, or facility.
What is a Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

Master Plan Process

Master Plan

Priorities

Projects

Policies

Implementation
Project Process

**Phase 1 - Taking Stock of Existing Conditions**
- July 2021 - Present
- Focus Groups
- Inventory and Analysis

**Phase 2 - Creating A Shared Vision**
- August 2021 - April 2022
- Community Survey
- Pop-Up Events
- Community Workshop #1
- Plan Framework

**Phase 3 - Evaluation of Concepts and Development of Recommendations**
- May - July 2022
- Community Workshop #2
- Recommendations & Prioritized Actions

**Phase 4 - Plan Documentation and Adoption**
- August 2022
- Draft Plan for Review
- Plan Adoption
What We Learned
Key Findings

✓ Previous Plans Review
✓ Community Profile
✓ Inventory of Parks and Park Classifications/Standards
✓ Walkshed Analysis and Gaps
✓ Equity Mapping
✓ Comparable Community Benchmarking
✓ Recreation Trends
Previous Plans

Imagine Duluth 2035
2010 Parks and Recreation Master Plan
2011 Trail and Bikeway Plan
Cross Country Ski Trails Master Plan
Climate Vulnerability and Climate Adaptation Strategy Report
Natural Resource Management Program Plan
Duluth Parks and Recreation System Inventory

- 129 Parks
- 6,834 acres of City parkland
- 11,000 acres of green space
- 10 miles of horseback trail
- 30 miles paved accessible trails
- 16 miles gravel accessible trails
- 38 miles of cross-county ski trails
- 95 miles of multi-use mountain bike trails
- 150+ miles of natural surface hiking trails
- 14 outdoor ice rinks
Parks Classifications

1. **Neighborhood Parks & Plazas**
   - 34 Properties

2. **Community Parks**
   - 13 Properties

3. **Destination Parks / Special Use**
   - 22 Properties
Parks Classifications

- **PARKWAYS**: 10 PROPERTIES
- **TRAILHEAD & WATER ACCESS**: 4 PROPERTIES
- **NATURAL/PASSIVE**: 28 PROPERTIES
69.6% of households in Duluth are within a 10-minute walking distance to a public park.
Sports Courts & Athletic Fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMENITY</th>
<th>QUANTITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Fields</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball/Softball Fields</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiuse Fields</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Courts</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis Courts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickleball Courts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Equity Mapping

LEGEND

Equity Zones
- High Equity Priority
- Medium Equity Priority
- Low Equity Priority
- Low Water Quality Zone

* factors informing these zones include low income, people of color, poor mental health, physical inactivity, pollution, populations with disability, people aged 65 and over and those aged 18 and under, population density and zero car household.

- Open Space
- Golf Courses
- Streams
- Duluth City Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundary
- Railroads
How many acres of park lands and natural areas are provided for every 1,000 people?
How many acres of park lands are provided for every 1,000 people?

**Neighborhood Parks**

- Bozeman, MT: 2.0 acres
- Fayetteville, AR: 1.5 acres
- Bend, OR: 0.5 acres
- Duluth, MN: 3.5 acres
- National Average: 1.0 acres

**Community Parks**

- Bozeman, MT: 2 acres
- Fayetteville, AR: 1.5 acres
- Bend, OR: 1.0 acres
- Duluth, MN: 2.0 acres
- National Average: 1.0 acres

**Regional/Destination Parks**

- Bozeman, MT: 25 acres
- Fayetteville, AR: 20 acres
- Bend, OR: 15 acres
- Duluth, MN: 30 acres
- National Average: 20 acres

**Special Use Parks**

- Bozeman, MT: 30 acres
- Fayetteville, AR: 25 acres
- Bend, OR: 20 acres
- Duluth, MN: 35 acres
- National Average: 25 acres
How many acres of natural lands are provided for every 1,000 people?
National Recreation Trends

Climate Change
• National Climate Assessment’s Midwest findings: Over 20 million people breathe air that fails to meet national ambient air quality standards, there is an increase of major heatwaves (3x as many from 1900-2010), and extreme rainfall and flooding events have increased during the last century.

Technology
• Micromobility and e_mobility devices are upending the ways that people access parks. Beacon counters, geofencing, and drones provide data that can help administrators understand usage patterns.

Pets
• Dog parks are one of the fastest growing types of parks in the country and can contribute significantly to agency revenues and tourism
State Recreation Trends

Outdoor recreation is increasingly important for Minnesotans.
• 70 percent of survey responders stated that outdoor activities are very important, a 16 percent increase from 2004.

Minnesotans enjoy sports that require less equipment and advanced skills.
• Favorite activities for adult recreation include mostly passive recreation - “relaxing in the outdoors,” “walking or hiking,” “relaxing by the water,” and “picnicking outdoors.” The top winter activities are sledding / snow tubing and ice fishing.

Seasonal outdoor activities add the most economic value to Minnesota’s GDP
• The activities that add the most economic value to Minnesota’s GDP is boating and fishing ($627,496), motorcycling/ATVing ($550,623) and hunting/shooting/trapping ($381,444)

Minnesota’s trail conditions are declining
• Minnesota’s paved state trail system is in good condition, but conditions are declining without any action. Minnesota State of the Trails 2018-2019 Report measured 75% of trails (447 miles as excellent or good, 20% (121 miles) fair, and 6% of trails (32 miles) were rated as poor or very poor. If current trends continue, only 50% of state trails are projected to be in good or excellent condition by 2030.
Local Recreation Trends

Most common ways residents use Duluth’s park system (Top 2021 survey results)

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Resource Capacity (Funding and Staffing)
What We Heard – Public Survey Results
Public Engagement Overview

- **60** Focus Group Participants
- **3** Plan Advisory Committee Meetings
- **8** Outreach at Community Events
- **1,962** Survey Respondents

Mailed to 3,200 households and separate open online survey
Representative Survey – Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Public Survey</th>
<th>Duluth Census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial or Multiethnic</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino, a, x</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau and City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Frequency of Usage

How often do you visit Duluth parks or natural areas?

57% of residents use Duluth’s parks and natural areas once a week or more.

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
## Importance of Parks

How important are each of these purposes of Duluth’s park system to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Essential or very important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Less important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhance tourism and attract visitors</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for social activities</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to appreciate and enjoy nature</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving mobility and non-motor transportation</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe public spaces to interact</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and programming</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve mobility and non-motor transportation</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for recreating and skill practice</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: these are the top 8 opportunities chosen as most important/essential out of the 13 provided*

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Issues Preventing Usage

Do any of the following issues prevent your use of Duluth’s recreation facilities, programs, parks, or natural lands, and therefore should be a priority to address? (Select up to 5)

- Lack of Information: Unfamiliar with programs...
- No change needed, nothing prevents my our...
- Access: Locations or facilities are over-crowded
- Safety: Security concerns, do not feel safe
- Lack of Information: Insufficient signage and...
- Parking: Lack of parking
- Quality: Insufficient maintenance or cleanliness
- Pets: Lack of pet-friendly areas

* Note: these are the top 8 issues out of the 16 provided

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
What We Have Been Learning: System Care

In the minds of residents, the most important purpose of Parks and Recreation facilities was maintaining open spaces and preserving the natural environment for resiliency and connection to nature.

Most residents prioritize maintaining the existing park system over adding new facilities.

Residents prefer a focus of maintenance on the parks and trails that are most popular and most in need, rather than spreading maintenance evenly or to underused parks and trails.

Source: Duluth City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021 Results
What We Have Been Learning: Amenities

Most residents feel there are enough playgrounds and unpaved trails.

Mixed feedback on whether there are enough sports courts and fields.

Duluth residents feel there are too few restrooms, dog parks, community gardens, public access points for water and paddling, and splash pads.

Source: Duluth City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021 Results
Satisfaction with Number of Amenities

Please indicate whether you think Parks & Recreation offers too much, too few, or the right amount of the following types of amenities:

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Satisfaction with Current Programs

Please indicate whether you think Parks & Recreation offers too much, too few, or the right amount of the following types of programs:

- Opportunities to volunteer to support...: 2% Too Many, 33% About Right, 65% Too Few
- Provide skills building for outdoor...: 1% Too Many, 33% About Right, 65% Too Few
- Programs for people with special...: 2% Too Many, 35% About Right, 64% Too Few
- Older adult (age 65 and over)...: 1% Too Many, 38% About Right, 61% Too Few
- Entry-level opportunity to experience...: 2% Too Many, 36% About Right, 61% Too Few
- Cultural, history, and wellness programs: 5% Too Many, 37% About Right, 59% Too Few
- Programs for people with low...: 7% Too Many, 34% About Right, 59% Too Few
- Environmental education and nature...: 3% Too Many, 46% About Right, 52% Too Few
- Adult recreation and sports programs: 2% Too Many, 48% About Right, 51% Too Few
- Community center programs: 2% Too Many, 48% About Right, 50% Too Few
- Teen (age 13 to 19) recreation and...: 2% Too Many, 50% About Right, 48% Too Few
- Children (age 12 and under) recreation...: 2% Too Many, 49% About Right, 48% Too Few
- Traditional recreation and sports...: 3% Too Many, 61% About Right, 35% Too Few

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Over the next few years, Parks & Recreation should prioritize

A) Maintaining: Taking better care of what we already have and improving the condition of the existing parks system, even if it means new parks, open spaces, trails, or facilities are not built or acquired.

B) Expanding: Acquiring and preserving additional open space and park land, building new parks and recreation facilities, and being visionaries for the future, even if it means maintaining our existing system at a lower level today.

Source: City of Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Plan Resident Survey 2021
Looking Forward
Draft Project Themes

- Invest in Duluth’s Future
- Nurture Connections to Northern Waters
- Strengthen Programs and Partnerships
- Park Spaces for Community Building
- Sustain Natural Areas
Goals

1. Increase park funding and acknowledge parks as essential city infrastructure.
2. Invest strategically.
3. Prioritize the provision of resources to where they are needed most.

Rationale: A majority of respondents (62% SV / 59% OP) prefer the Department to take better care of what we already have rather than expanding the system.
Nurture Connections to Northern Waters

Goals

1. Support water recreation through managed access.
2. Provide equitable, high-quality outdoor education and exploration programming.
3. Encourage connections with nature in park spaces.
4. Tailor improvements for community needs.
5. Honor the culture, storytelling, art and history of Indigenous Peoples.

Rationale: Too few water and paddling public access points (51% OP) (48% said about right), too few splash and spray water pads (71% OP), too few programs that provide skills building for outdoor recreation activities (65% SV), too few designated fishing areas (54% SV / xx OP), facilities that residents (with an opinion) felt there are not enough of included dog parks (54% SV / 64% OP), and there is a need/demand for an indoor facility, given the climate and excessively wet shoulder seasons.
Strengthen Programs and Partnerships

Goals
1. Bolster relationships with partners who provide sports and recreation programming.
2. Focus program offerings to fill gaps and reach critical populations.
3. Build awareness of and access to program offerings.
4. Provide programming that serves as a model of inclusion.

Rationale: The existing park system has adequate numbers of athletic fields, ice rinks and sports courts. Efforts should be put into maintaining these spaces to meet programming needs and ensuring equal access to them.
Goals

1. Ensure park spaces are inclusive and welcoming for all persons.
2. Activate park spaces to support social, cultural and economic advancement with events and community programming.

Rationale: Focus group feedback emphasized that homelessness encampments occur in hidden areas of parklands. There is a perception that the park is not safe. There is also a presence of trash. Homelessness is also an issue that faces many communities including Duluth, and often impacts park spaces.
**Goals**

1. Advance local culture of stewardship and trail user experiences.
2. Enhance our parks containing open spaces with projects to restore ecologies and build resilience to natural disasters.
3. Enhance climate-adaptation with resilient parks.

**Rationale:** Trails are the most heavily used aspect of the parks system, and the number/miles of trails is currently meeting resident needs. Expansion of the unpaved trail system is not needed, but maintenance is. In response to a question about the top 5 ways households use the park system, the most common responses touched on activities that utilized trails such as walking, hiking and running on trails (81% SV / 85% OP). Another question that respondents (with an opinion) answered spoke to having the right number of trails. Focus group feedback emphasized multi-use trail conflict and educating new users about trail stewardship.
Next Steps

• Draft plan – Summer 2022

• Final document and adoption - August