

DULUTH

Parks and Recreation master Plan



CHAPTER 2

trends

...HOW WE SEE THINGS CHANGING

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Recreation, like nature,
is constantly evolving.

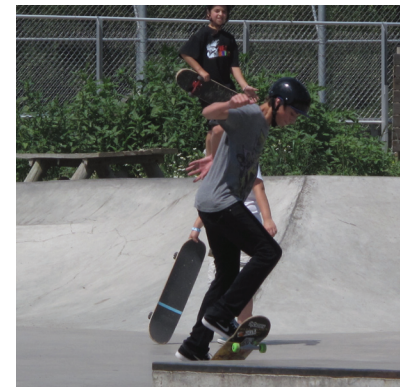
The City, recreation, and our environment are changing and dynamic. It is important to anticipate trends and plan for the future. The following chapter outlines key trends that we see influencing parks and recreation in Duluth.

Recreation is constantly evolving. New technologies, trends, cultures, and activities bring changing facility and program needs. Duluth Parks and Recreation must keep pace with these changing needs. By building flexibility into park and recreation facilities, the city will be able to adapt to new needs without expensive changes.

Recreation participation is influenced by changing demographics, the popularity of sports or activities on television, the emergence of new sports from other cultures, and recreation technology (like in-line skates, mountain bikes, GPS, etc.).

Visit Duluth describes the city as “a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts”

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*The Skate Park at Wheeler
Athletic Complex*



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Recreation Trends

Recreation trends change over time as a result of demographic, social, economic, environmental, and cultural changes. Changes in recreation affect park and recreation facility wants and needs. There are significant recreation trends that may affect change in the City of Duluth including:

MORE MOBILE

Trails are the number one desired recreation amenity. Trails can be used by people of all ages and abilities. Many people are interested in passive and natural resource based recreation such as hiking, nature study, bird watching and fishing that demand more recreational/leisure space and locations that will also cater to specific demographic factions.

- » According to the 2009 National Citizen Survey of Duluth, only 42% of citizens felt that the ease of bicycle travel was good or excellent; this is below the national benchmark.

NON-TRADITIONAL SPORTS

Non-traditional recreation and individual activities - such as skateboarding, in-line skating, off road biking, geocaching, and disc golf are increasing in popularity and are competing for recreation time and facilities.



HEALTH CONSCIOUS

All age groups are seeing an increase in obesity rates, along with associated health risks, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Analysis has found a connection between urban living and health – residents living in sprawling communities tend to weigh more than their urban equivalents. Promoting walkability, active recreation, and healthy food choices will be beneficial to all demographics. There will be a higher demand for more fitness and trail opportunities, increased active living opportunities, and a seamless integration of body and mind that are part of a quality lifestyle. City residents and visitors will also be seeking locally grown food and the opportunity to grow their own food within community gardens, perhaps on city land.

- » Community-wide brainstorming sessions that focused on creating a viable community in Duluth have led to a new program called Seeds for Success. Program interns claim that the demand in Duluth for locally produced food far outstrips the supply.



DOG-CENTRIC

A 2009 study (Lifestyle Market Profile) showed that there are more households with dogs (36%) than households with children (26%) in the Twin Cities Metro Area. A high level of dog ownership is likely in Duluth as well. Off-leash dog parks and dog walking are very popular activities now and into the future. This increase in dog ownership also brings a greater need to control off-leash dogs in unauthorized areas.

Demographic Trends

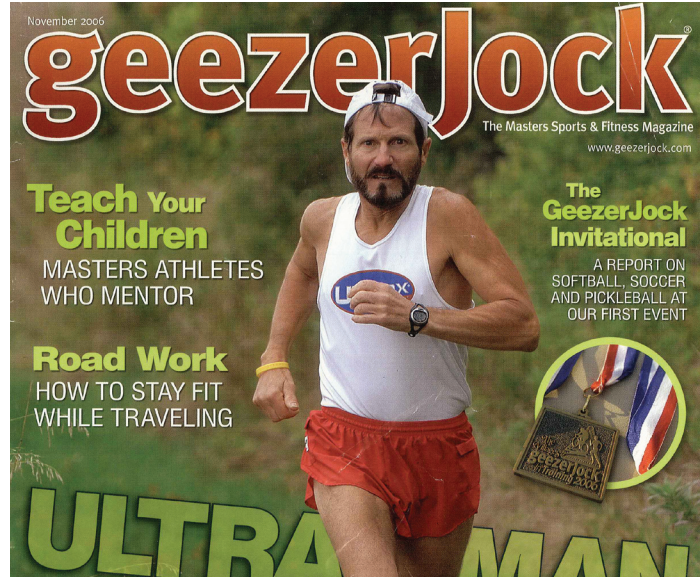
A review of Duluth's existing and projected population is important in determining future park and recreation needs. Comparing the past to the 2000 census provides some clues about future demographic trends, but probably under represents the degree of demographic change that has occurred in Duluth in the last 10 years and the likely change in the future. Significant demographic trends that have and will likely continue to affect change are:



INCREASINGLY DIVERSE

The U.S. is the only major industrial country with an expanding population fueled primarily by immigrants. Along with increased racial and ethnic diversity, trends are showing an increased desire for multi-age interactions and exchanges.

- » Duluth's minority population, while quite small relative to the total population, is increasing and is concentrated in a few areas within the City. The 2003 Demographic Analysis noted that the Central Hillside, East Hillside, Lincoln Park, Central Business Area, and Park Point neighborhoods have the highest concentration of minorities in the city with the East Hillside neighborhood being the highest at 18% of the total district population as a whole (2006 Comprehensive Plan).
- » The locations where minority populations appear to be concentrated are also the areas of the City with the oldest housing, including the only neighborhood in the City in which the under-18 population increased between 1990 and 2000. These locations are also those areas where college-aged population is concentrated (2006 Comprehensive Plan).



REDEFINING FAMILY

It is estimated that only twelve percent of new households over the next twenty years will have children. The traditional family, two parents with kids, occupies a minority of households.

- » Duluth's natural increase (births minus deaths) is near zero. This is a sign of an aging population and a small number of families in their child-bearing years present in Duluth (a decrease in residents between the ages of 25-40) (2006 Comprehensive Plan).
- » The 2003 Demographics report similarly showed that the under 18 population dropped in every neighborhood, except the neighborhoods of Central Hillside, Central Business Area and Park Point, between 1990 and 2000 (2006 Comprehensive Plan).
- » In 1990, married couple families (one type of 'family' household) comprised 47% of all Duluth households. In 2000 that number had dropped to 41%. Duluth is seeing an increasing number of 1-person households, and an increase in 'non family' multi-person households (2006 Comprehensive Plan).

AGING ACTIVELY

The 65-and-older population is expected to grow by 147% from 2000-2050. Many in our aging population group seek changes in lifestyle to reflect their lack of child-care responsibilities and often expanded recreation, educational and cultural interests. As baby boomers reach retirement age, they are aging more actively. The word "active" refers to continued participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labor force. Therefore, the City of Duluth will need to provide an environment that fosters participation in economic and civic affairs; cultivates spiritual, social, and cultural enrichment; and offers a broad range of outdoor and active recreation choices.

- » The most rapidly growing age group in Duluth consists of people in their "empty nester" and pre-retirement years (ages 40-60). These middle-age cohorts are not only the fastest growing segment of the population, but also the second most populated cohorts in the city (2006 Comprehensive Plan).



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environmental trends

Changes in our physical environment - climate, geography, geology, wildlife, plant life, etc. - affect our day-to-day and long term recreation habits and opportunities and are often distinctly tied to our social health and wellbeing. Environmental trends that have and will likely continue to affect change are:

CHANGING CLIMATE

While there is no agreement about the causes, there is an understanding that global warming and other climate changes are occurring. The warm winters and variable precipitation rates of the past decade have negatively affected winter sports like ice skating, hockey, and cross country skiing; causing a reconsideration of certain park uses. The early warm weather of Spring, 2010, caused a surge in use of Duluth's parks and recreation facilities before seasonal staff were available to help with maintenance and upkeep. Climate change has also increased people's interest in environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. Rising energy

costs will put a greater emphasis on local recreation options and will increase demand for trail and bikeway connections. Wise use of water, energy, and natural resources are at the forefront of decision making and support community sustainability.

Concerns of global warming and the pressure to make sustainable living decisions surround us everyday. NASA research suggests that CO2 emissions will need to be reduced dramatically if humanity wishes to preserve civilization on Earth. Society is becoming more environmentally conscious and is seeking urban areas that offer mass transit, denser living, green development and walkable neighborhoods where they can make a difference by living more sustainably. Wise planning would indicate a need to provide a bicycle and pedestrian network that is safe, easy to use and understandable for all types of users. Bike routes, trails, bike lanes, and complete streets will all be important tools for building a sustainable network for walking and biking within Duluth.



INTEREST IN NATURE

Increased sensitivity to ecological issues and the benefits of a healthy ecosystem have people demanding more natural experiences from parks and recreation. There is increased interest and opportunities to engage local citizens and groups in environmental stewardship activities such as stream and riparian zone restoration and the removal of invasive species. In addition, people desire more educational or interpretive programs, are seeking a better balance of environment and recreation, are looking for more passive open space, and have an amplified interest in aesthetics and gardens.

- » This is especially true in Duluth as many residents cite proximity to nature and the outdoors as a major reason for living in Duluth.
- » A large proportion of Duluth's Park System are nature and open space lands. Proper management of these natural areas is important for current and future generations.



FOUR-SEASON RECREATION

As a northern city, Duluth must offer recreation opportunities across a range of seasons. Four-season recreation requires a broader range of facilities and experiences and presents additional challenges for maintenance and operations - making ice-skating (and assisting community groups with skating sites), grooming trails for cross country skiing, plowing paved trails for winter use, holding events and providing indoor recreation space (gyms, ice arenas, etc.) are all part of a balanced winter recreation system.



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economic Trends

Economic conditions change over time and affect the City's ability to provide park and recreation services. Duluth Park and Recreation services are also influenced by the local and regional economic growth trends. Some of these economic trends that may affect change in the City of Duluth include:

FISCALLY CHALLENGED

Reduced revenue from the State of Minnesota to local governments and schools, rising health care costs, anti-tax sentiments, and increasing fuel and material costs, are reducing the resources available for park and recreation improvements and upkeep. There is an increased need for partnerships, volunteers, creative funding sources and a renewed focus on quality over quantity. There is also the need to seek new sources of funding.

EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Studies show that people receive more enduring pleasure and satisfaction from investing in quality experiences than material possessions; and recent trends show, even during a recession, people still seek quality experiences while cutting back on other necessities. This will put a focus on the importance of positive experiences in public spaces and parks as a driving force for the draw of tourists and for the satisfaction of residents alike. With it's wealth of parks, trails and recreation places, Duluth is well positioned to take advantage of this emphasis on experience if the parks and places are safe, well maintained, connected and pleasing.

» Research conducted by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), as well as surveys conducted by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, indicates that the Duluth area consistently ranks at the top of Minnesotans' spring/summer travel destinations. Similarly, Duluth ranks immediately after Minneapolis and St. Paul as a travel destination among non-residents (2006 Comprehensive Plan).



CRAVING CULTURE & THE OUTDOORS

Living in Minnesota, where 57,000 jobs are related to the outdoor recreation economy, it is hard for us to overlook the important role played by our interactions with nature and the environment. In addition, culture tourism is the fastest growing form of tourism and visitors tend to spend more and stay longer than other tourists. As the trend for outdoor recreation increases, Duluth should be prepared to offer recreation and interpretation opportunities that balance sensitivity to the ecological and cultural world while capitalizing on adventure sporting opportunities.

- » A study conducted by the University of Minnesota Extension Service/Minnesota Sea Grant Program in 1998 estimated that tourism and related activities had an economic impact on the Greater Duluth Area of \$395 million (2006 Comprehensive Plan).
- » Attendance reported by tourist and cultural (e.g., museum) attractions located in Duluth increased from 1.3 million in 1991 to over 2.6 million in 2000 – a 90 percent increase (2006 Duluth Comprehensive Plan)

HEALTH CARE COSTS & SEDENTARY LIVES

One of the biggest challenges facing our country and region is health care and rising health care costs. We can provide excellent care, but the lack of activity in most American's lives more than offsets our health care technology. The result is the most expensive health care in the world with only middle of the road results in term of personal health, longevity and infant mortality. We can do better. It is time that we acknowledge that parks, recreation, trails and active lives are a key to our personal and community health. Duluth can be a leader in active living and creating a healthy community, through expanded bicycle and walking connections, use of complete streets, promotion of active lifestyles and physical activity and commitment to creating a walkable community. Duluth has a strong base of existing parks and trails, a population committed to recreation and nature and motivated school, government and health care organizations that can band together to fully realize the benefits of a complete park and recreation system.

