

# DULUTH

## Parks and Recreation master Plan



### CHAPTER 5

## strategies and actions

...making the vision a reality



A gradual transition to take Duluth's parks, trails and recreation from good to great starts with distinct strategies and actions.

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This chapter of the Master Plan lays out strategies, actions and plans to revitalize the Duluth Parks and Recreation system, make it more economically sustainable and more relevant to residents and visitors. The strategies and actions are designed to implement the Guiding Principles of Chapter 4, but are arranged around functional categories - Parks, Recreation Center Buildings, Trails & Connectivity, Funding, Park Maintenance, Marketing & Communications, Partnerships & Volunteers, Stewardship and Recreation Programs. Realization of this Plan will take the on-going commitment and support of officials, staff, partners, volunteers and the public.

## Park and Recreation Benefits



The benefits of parks, trails, and open space stretch far beyond the users of the park and recreation system. Parks and trails improve our physical and mental health, strengthen our communities, make our cities and states more attractive places to live, work, and visit; and protect the environment.

Key benefits of parks and recreation, along with statistics highlighting the importance of parks and trails to residents, locally and nation wide, are permeated throughout this chapter and can be recognizable by the heading and the subheadings to the left.

## Imagine...what it COULD Be....

Many strategies and actions are outlined in the following chapter, some of which are explored further under the heading “imagine...what it could be”. These concept explorations address some of the current issues facing Duluth Parks - such as connectivity gaps, lack of revenue generating facilities, a need for multi-purpose park space, and the desire for more relevant recreation opportunities. These concepts explore one way, but by no means the only way, to re-design a park/recreation facility and are meant to spark ideas and foster action to improve the park and recreation system. These are ideas only. If these projects move forward a community process would occur to prepare an actual design plan.



## PARKS Strategies

**Improve Park Quality** - Duluth has an excellent supply and distribution of parks. Over 90% of Duluth's population is located within ½ mile of an existing park. However, park quality ranges from exceptional – (Lakewalk, Bayfront, Chester Bowl, etc.) to dismal - (Observation, Riverside Community Center, etc.). The premier high use parks are well maintained and high quality. Some neighborhood parks have not seen reinvestment, have had reduced maintenance, and are lower quality. Park maintenance and facility updates at neighborhood parks need to occur to bring quality up to an acceptable level. This will take increased funding for additional park maintenance staff and funds for capital replacements and renovation. Quality neighborhood parks will improve neighborhood quality, enhance quality of life and improve property values.

**Improve Access to Parks** - The large range in the quality and condition of parks across the system equates to inequitable access to premier facilities. In general, the higher quality signature parks (Chester Bowl, Hartley, Lester/Amity, Kitchi Gammi and Lakewalk, etc.) are located east of downtown. The western portion of Duluth has large areas of natural park land (Fond du Lac, Magney-Snively and parts of Spirit Mountain Recreation Area), but lacks convenient access to signature community parks. Chambers Grove and Lincoln Park are the two quality community parks in the west part of the City.

There is also a lack of access to quality parks and recreation facilities in the central part of the City. This is a particular concern due to the lower mobility of some residents in this area. Areas of lower mobility have higher concentrations of seniors, youth under 16, and households without cars. Not all people can drive to parks or recreation facilities located across town.

There is a need for more access to gymnasiums for indoor recreation. New and remodeled Duluth Schools can help fill the indoor recreation gap by providing additional public access to schools and school gyms. Middle schools and elementary schools offer the best opportunities for community use. Community use of schools is a fundamental element of the School District's

Long Range Facility Plan. The City and School District should continue to work together to assure the best community use of schools and parks.

There is a large need for handicapped accessibility (ADA) improvements within the parks and at recreation center buildings. Prioritize accessibility improvements. Seek MnDNR grants for accessibility improvements to outdoor recreation facilities such as docks, trails and play areas. Use Universal Design principles in renovations and new construction.

**Enhance Planning for Park Point** - Park Point is a unique area within Duluth, which attracts a wide variety of users. It has significant park, recreation and natural resources such as, but not limited to, Park Point Recreation Area, Park Point Beach House, Lafayette Recreation Center and a MnDNR Scientific and Natural Area. There has been interest in the use and management of the recreation buildings and park area as well as water oriented uses and other issues. There is also a need for year-round restroom access. The peninsula also has one point of access and one primary road so there can be circulation challenges. An area park planning process and management strategy is warranted.

**Lake Park Athletic Complex Building** - Lake Park is a significant City owned regional athletic park located just north of the City boundary in Rice Lake Township. It is well used by Duluth residents and residents from surrounding townships and cities. With partner funding support, future investment is recommended for Lake Park including a new shelter and storage building. The City should work with surrounding communities to obtain funding and operational support for this regional facility.

**Plan for Tax Forfeited and Undeveloped City Park Lands** - St. Louis County owns a large number of tax forfeited parcels in Duluth. Some of the properties such as land next to Amity Park and land in Piedmont Park contain existing trails, including portions of the Superior Hiking Trail, which are well used by the public. These lands should become part of the City park system.

There is also tax forfeited land next to Oneota Park, land in the Trinity Road area (south of Central Entrance) and lands just north



and south of W. Arrowhead Road (west of Arlington Ave. N.) that may be good sites to reserve for neighborhood parks, to serve future residential development.

There are other tax forfeited lands which contain high quality natural resources. The significant natural resources sites (as defined by the Mayor's Taskforce for Recommending the Re-use and Development of City Land and Protection Parcels of Public Significance) should be protected through conservation easements or other suitable protection methods by either the City or the County. While the County is looking to gain revenue from the sale of these tax forfeited lands it should recognize that Duluth is part of St. Louis County and by preserving public lands it is serving County residents in Duluth and the rest of the county who enjoy Duluth's parks, trails and open space. The City owns undeveloped park lands which range in size from small, 1 acre squares to large, + 200 acre tracts of natural land. Most of the undeveloped land has a logical use (such as preserving open space, steep slopes or stream corridors) and some undeveloped

park properties are likely candidates for neighborhood park use when future development occurs. The City should consider the recreation benefit and evaluate the potential to sell some undeveloped open space land such as Manchester Square, Russell Square, Scott Keenan Park, portions of Brewer-Bellvue open space.

**Playground Replacement Plan** - Playgrounds have a life of around 15-20 years and have strict safety requirements which are difficult to meet as play equipment reaches its life cycle. The City has 38 existing playgrounds. With a lifecycle of 20 years a prudent management and safety strategy should be to budget for and replace two playgrounds per year. This means budgeting approximately \$125,000 - \$175,000 per year (2010 dollars) for two play equipment installations with a new safety surfacing, edge containers and ADA access paths.

### Priority Playground Replacement Sites:

The following playgrounds with their installation date noted in parenthesis (19XX), are priority replacement sites:

- » Brighton Beach (removed in 2007)
- » Chambers Grove - removed in 2007
- » Grosvenor Square (1990)
- » Lester (1990)

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health



- ✓ Quality of Life
- ✓ Bonding with Family and Friends
- ✓ Physical Activity
- ✓ Mental Health
- ✓ Active Living

Nine out of ten state park users go to parks to spend time with family (Kelly, 2008).

90% of Americans mostly or strongly agree that outdoor recreation is the best way to be physically active (ARC, 2000).

Just one additional day of physical activity per week has been found to reduce medical charges by 4.7% (Pronk, Goodman, O'Connor & Martinson, 1999).

Park and Recreation Benefits



## Actions

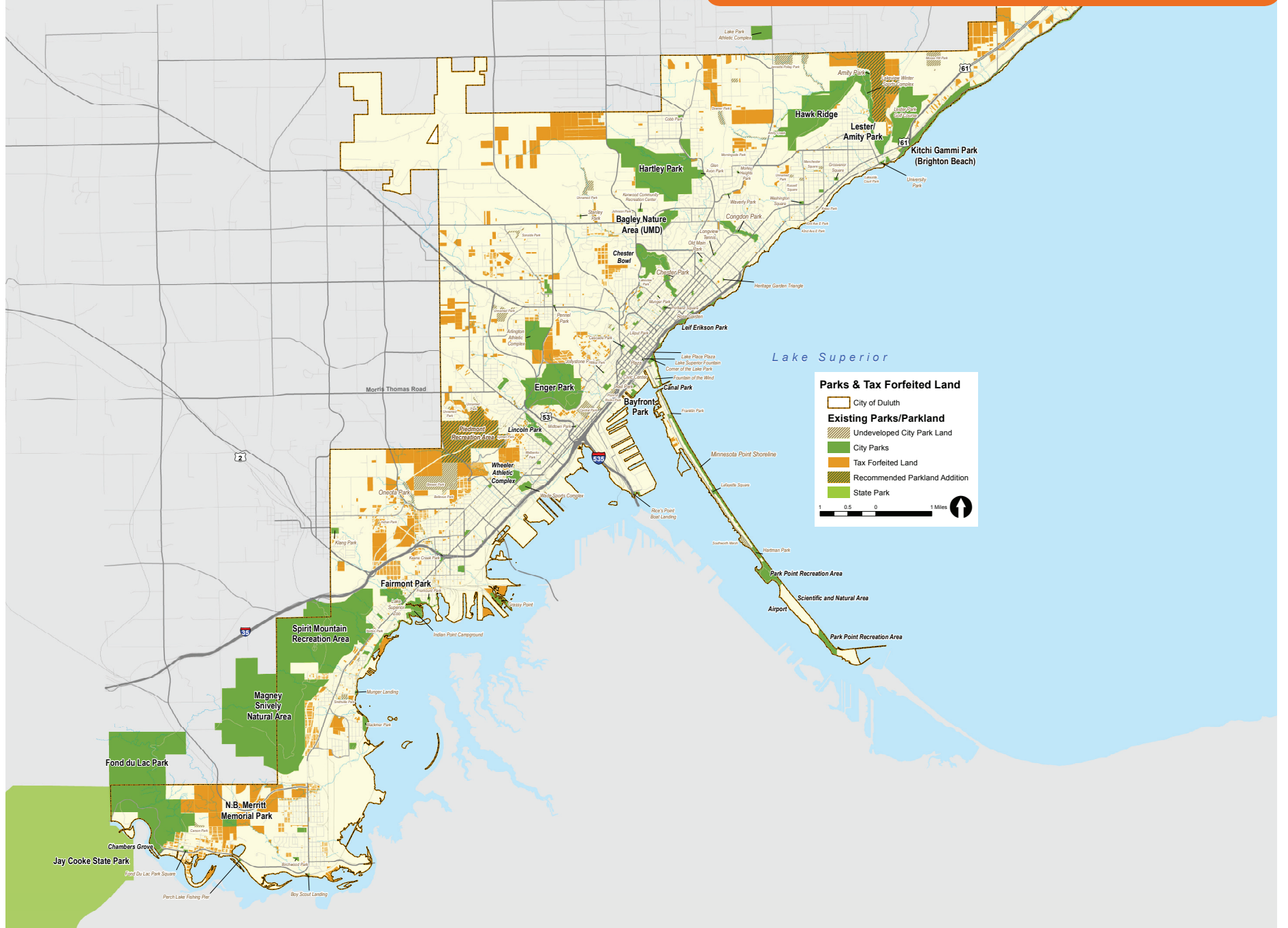
1. Insure equitable access to quality parks and recreation facilities by working to meet level of services standards in underserved areas such as:
  - A. West Duluth - Enhance existing parks such as Chamber's Grove and Blackmer Park and connect and enhance access to Magney-Snively and Fond du Lac to create premier signature parks in the west Duluth area. Continue to enhance park and recreation opportunities along and on the St. Louis River between Munger Landing and Boy Scout Landing, including a continuous waterfront trail.
  - B. Fill the gap in park service coverage in the northwest part of the City, through dedication of park land as new development occurs in the area and development of the new neighborhood park.
  - C. Improve safety, attractiveness and use of parks in the central part of the City. Prepare park master plans for Duluth Central Park (at Central Hillside/Washington Center), Chester Bowl, and Observation Park. Prepare a Park Plan for Park Point. See the attached concept plans for Central Hillside and Observation Parks for guidance.
2. Work with the Duluth School District to make sure that City parks near school sites also serve school recreation needs (Memorial, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Longview Tennis, etc.).
  - A. Adopt a master joint powers agreement between the School District and City to define the overall cooperative approach to community use and shared use and staffing of facilities.
  - B. Adopt detailed use agreements for each school site and associated parks that would document access, maintenance, staffing and programming details.
  - C. Designate staff representatives from both the City and School District to prepare the joint powers and use agreements.
3. Preserve and protect priority natural areas such as stream corridors, the lake front, the St. Louis Riverfront and significant woodlands and hillside areas. Secure land along the natural areas with restrictive covenants, and require developers to protect lands along these corridors. Have a higher level of protection for trout streams.
4. Work with St. Louis County to coordinate the preservation of the tax-forfeited lands currently used for recreation (Piedmont, Amity, etc.) and lands identified as high priorities for recreation or natural resource protection.
5. Consider the recreational benefit and evaluate the potential to sell some undeveloped open space land such as Manchester Square, Russell Square, Scott Keenan Park, and portions of Brewer-Bellvue open space.
6. Evaluate the need for additional City fields based on shared use of proposed new school fields. Plan for projected multi-use turf field needs (soccer, Lacrosse, football, rugby, etc.) by reserving flat land for future turf field development.
  - A. Improve the durability and use of existing high use turf fields through the addition of irrigation and lighting.
7. Prepare a court replacement plan and evaluate the distribution of courts based on need and use. For example, consider replacing the single tennis court at Park Point with a double court.
8. Study the viability and future use of Wade Stadium/fields and determine a strategic plan for use of the property. Include the potential to enhance the pedestrian connection between Heritage Center, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Wade Stadium fields and Western Middle School. See the attached concept plan for Wheeler area connections.
9. Add additional off leash dog parks to serve the east and central parts of the City.
10. In keeping with the regional use of Lake Park Athletic Complex, work with surrounding communities to obtain their funding support for operations and capital improvements.

*In general, Duluth does not need more parks\*. Duluth needs to increase the quality and condition of some parks and better connect people to parks via trails, signage, park maps, web information, etc.*

\* There is a gap in park coverage in northwest Duluth, some County tax forfeited lands currently used for parks and trails should become part of the City park system and additional park land will be needed as residential growth occurs, but the existing park lands can meet Duluth's current needs.



# PARKS & TAX FORFEITED LAND



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## CONNECT WADE STADIUM / WHEELER ATHLETIC COMPLEX / WESTERN MIDDLE SCHOOL

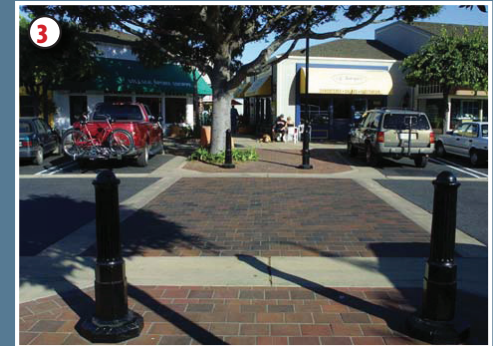
These three community facilities border each other and can benefit by shared use of parking, circulation and facilities. This illustration shows ideas of how Wade, Wheeler and the Middle School could potentially have direct and safe pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle connections.



Multi-use Trail and Park Drive



Landscaped Walkways



Pedestrian Crossing



Traffic Signal



"Green" Parking



Pedestrian Entry

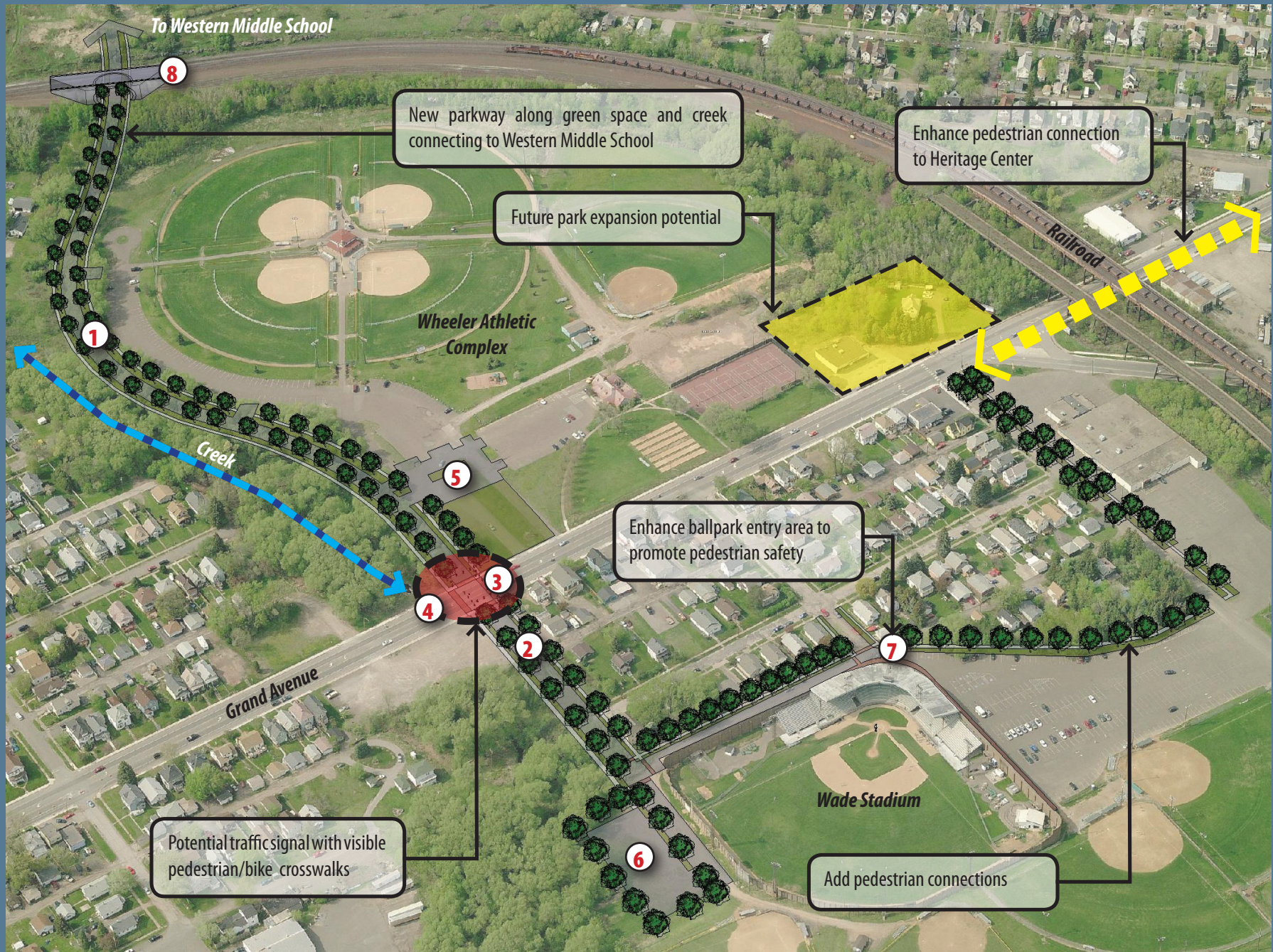


Driveway under Tracks



Pervious Parking







*The new recreation center approach will provide community recreation services across the city that act as hubs for delivery of recreation services and programs at other locations.*

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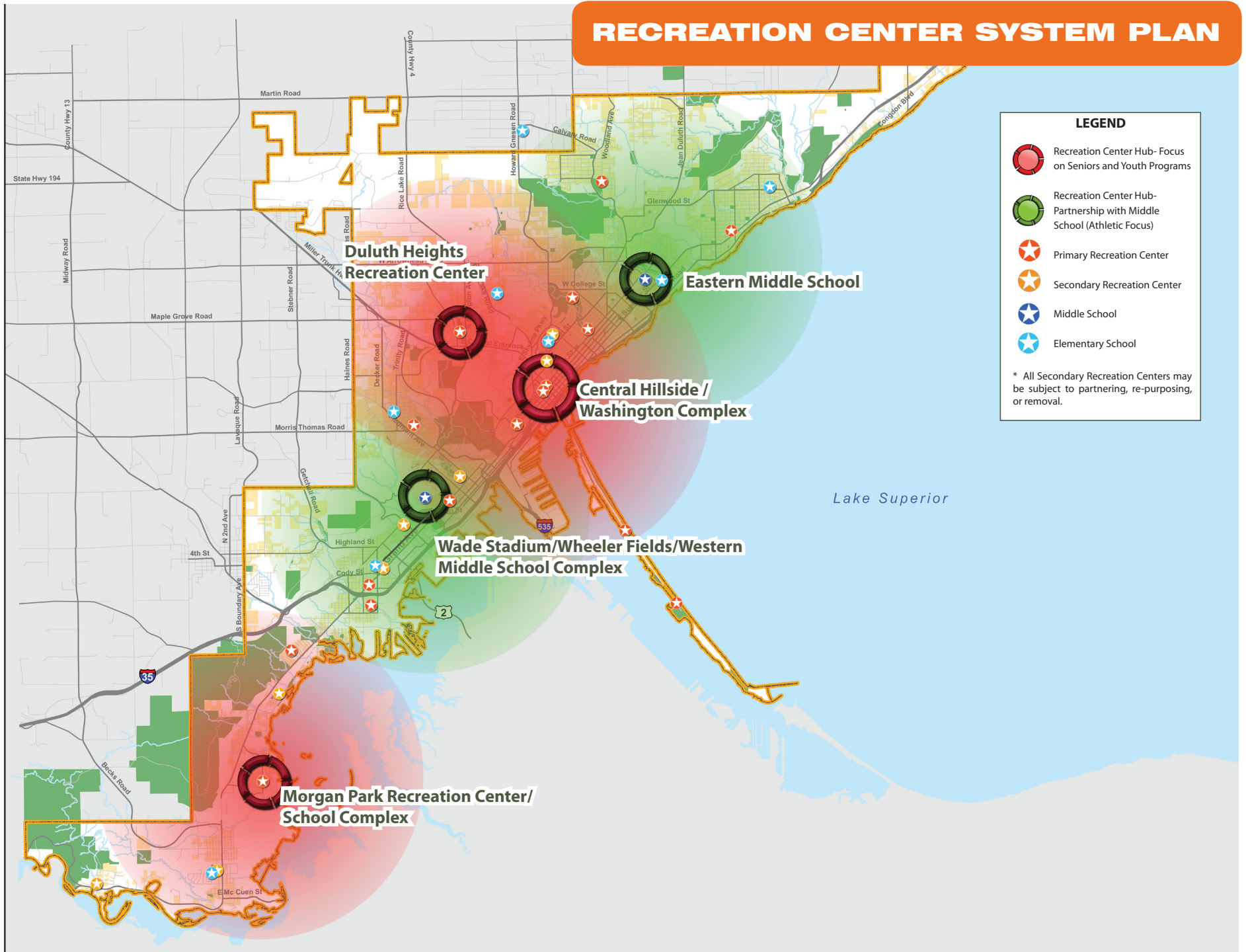
## RECREATION CENTER BUILDINGS

Duluth currently has 22 recreation center buildings that vary in quality and performance from closed, deteriorating structures to newer, well used buildings. Many buildings are not handicapped accessible and are not functional for today's community and recreation needs. Buildings are one of the most costly elements of the Duluth parks and recreation system as they require cleaning, utilities, security, general maintenance, and capital repairs. They also require staff to deliver recreation programs or to administer community delivery of recreation. The priority of the recreation buildings needs to be on quality not quantity. Some deteriorated buildings need to be removed, some buildings need to be upgraded and elementary and middle public school buildings need to function as community centers. The restructuring, consolidation, and improvement of District 709 school buildings offers an opportunity to use schools as community gathering and recreation places as promised in the Long Range Facilities Plan. The following recommendations are designed to create a cost effective system of high quality recreation centers to serve the community in an equitable manner. There will be fewer centers resulting in lower capital and operating costs. Those lower costs allow for reinvestment in the remaining centers. Increased community access to schools will be a huge benefit of the school restructuring and improvement.

### Strategies

The use of a recreation center hub network will allow a reduction in the number of City recreation center buildings and a reduction in both operating and capital costs. The recreation center building hubs will be high quality facilities offering access to meeting rooms, restrooms, and recreation program space. The hubs will be staffed by the City or by community groups. The hubs will provide community recreation services across the city and can act as hubs for delivery of recreation services and programs at other locations. Five primary recreation center hubs located evenly across the city are recommended.

# RECREATION CENTER SYSTEM PLAN



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## Recreation Center Categories

**Primary** – Key recreation buildings where, over time, the City will make the investments necessary (subject to funding availability) to assure a quality, functioning space accessible for public use. Primary buildings can be used by athletic and community groups with the expectation that those groups cover the operating costs of the building (utilities and cleaning).

**Hubs** - Locations where city-wide recreation programming by partner groups and the city will be focused (pending staff and resource availability). Hub locations include city buildings and Middle School buildings spread geographically across the City.

**Secondary** – Buildings that would eventually be removed from the City system or replaced with smaller buildings. These include city buildings on school property that will be returned to the District, city recreation buildings that are currently closed due to deteriorated conditions and lower quality buildings near higher quality school or city recreation buildings. Some sites which are used for ice skating warrant a temporary (seasonal portable building) or a permanent warming building.

Proposed recreation center hub sites are:

- » Morgan Park Recreation Center/School Complex
- » Wade Stadium/Wheeler Fields/Western Middle School Complex
- » Central Hillside/Washington Center Complex
- » Duluth Heights Recreation Center
- » East Middle School

Duluth Schools would complement the recreation hubs. Schools with the potential to be excellent community center and recreation places are:

- » East Middle School
- » West Middle School
- » Lester Park/Rockridge Elementary School
- » Congdon Park Elementary School
- » Grant/Nettleton Elementary School
- » Homecroft Elementary School
- » Lowell Elementary School
- » Laura MacArthur Elementary School
- » Stowe Elementary School
- » Historic Old Central High School

The City of Duluth relies on partner and volunteer organizations to run youth, senior and community recreation programs. Some youth athletic associations and community groups use City recreation center buildings to deliver recreation programs. Buildings are essential for some programs such as ice skating and senior recreation and many groups use City buildings for storage, bathrooms, concessions and meetings. While the current number of City recreation buildings is not economically sustainable, a core number of recreation buildings are needed to support recreation activities. This Plan recommends a three tiered approach to recreation center buildings. The categories are described in the side-bar to the left and shown on the map on the facing page.

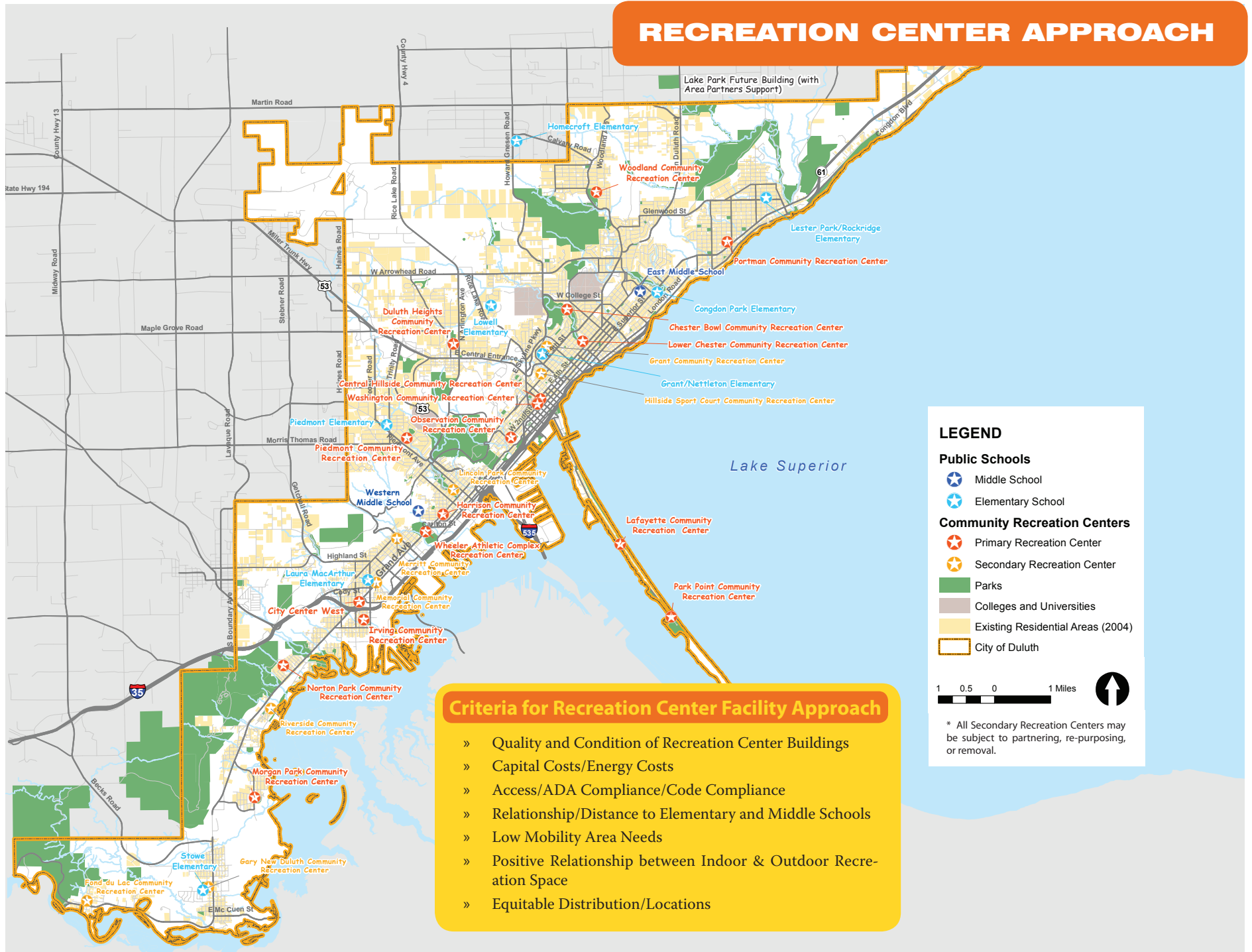
Some recreation buildings are in such deteriorated condition and have other buildings nearby that can serve the area (Fond du Lac, Riverside, Merritt, Observation, and Hillside Sport Court) that they should be removed and replaced with other appropriate park features, such as a picnic shelter, native landscaping,

turf play space, restrooms, etc (See Chapter 6 - Replacement Facilities). The Gary New Duluth building should be removed, a new warming building constructed, and the park land be turned over to the School District. The Grant building should be turned over to the School District. The Memorial building should be removed in conjunction with the Memorial Park - Laura MacArthur School project. Removing these buildings from the City recreation system will save \$2 million - \$3 million in renovation and replacement costs and will result in a reduction of over \$30,000 per year in utility costs.

## Actions

11. Use Memorial Park/Laura MacArthur Elementary School as a model for joint use of schools and park sites and for school-city collaboration on facilities and staffing. Enter into a Joint Powers Agreement between the City and School District for community use of schools and school use of parks. Use site specific agreements for use, access, maintenance, and staffing details.
12. Continue to seek opportunities for multi-use community recreation places, where feasible, by blending parks, schools, libraries and private enterprises.
13. Evaluate enhancing Washington Center to meet community indoor recreation needs. Options include: Adding a second gymnasium. Convert the existing old pool space to community meeting space. Closing Lake Avenue between 3rd Street and 4th Street to create park and green space connection to a renovated Central Hillside Park. See the attached concept plan for an illustration of the Central Hillside Washington Center possibilities.
14. Make energy and weatherization improvements and handicapped access improvements to the hub and primary recreation buildings.
15. Emphasize quality over quantity in recreation centers by having fewer, but better recreation center buildings. Remove non-viable buildings and replace them with lower maintenance recreation amenities such as picnic shelters, restrooms, natural plantings, open turf play space, etc. Make the remaining recreation centers viable and relevant places and assure that public schools function as public recreation centers. Recommended building actions are listed on the following pages.

# RECREATION CENTER APPROACH



*Emphasize quality over quantity in recreation centers by having fewer, but better recreation center buildings.*

### **Fond du Lac**

Fond du Lac Recreation Center is currently not open for Parks and Recreation programming. This plan recommends that the building be officially closed and removed. A community process should be held to define new replacement features. The park space will remain green space that can be utilized for outdoor recreation activity and will be flexible for future neighborhood needs. Improvements to Morgan Park Recreation Center are planned. Morgan Park Recreation Center, in conjunction with Stowe Elementary, can help meet the indoor recreation and programming needs of the Fond du Lac neighborhood.

### **Gary-New Duluth**

The Gary New Duluth Recreation Center, located next to Stowe Elementary School, is no longer open for Parks and Recreation purposes. This plan recommends that the City remove the existing deteriorated building, construct a new warming room building, and consider transferring the land to the School District. Improvements to Morgan Park Recreation Center, in conjunction with Stowe Elementary, will accommodate the indoor recreation and programming needs of the Gary-New Duluth neighborhood and the new warming building will allow continuation of ice skating.

### **Morgan Park**

This plan recommends that the Morgan Park recreation center building be remodeled and renovated in order to serve as a community center hub. Currently Morgan Park Recreation Center serves as a primary Senior Center, as well as Youth Center. The City should consider creating a community center complex between Morgan Park Recreation Center and the former Morgan Park Middle School. The former Morgan Park Middle School has a pool and gym that have re-use potential.

### **Riverside**

Riverside Recreation Center is currently not open to the public and is in poor condition. This Plan recommends that the building be removed. A community process should be held to define new replacement features. The playground, which is in good condition, should remain as a neighborhood amenity. The Cross City Trail is proposed to run through Riverside Park. Future trail planning should evaluate the potential need and location of a 3-season picnic shelter with bathrooms and storage and/or trail head within Riverside Park.

Assessments should consider the planning of the entire trail stretch and the appropriateness for such amenities within Riverside Park.

### **Norton Park**

Norton Recreation Center is currently run by community groups and neighborhood residents. The City does general maintenance but does not staff the building. The building needs to be evaluated for accessibility and code requirements. A community process should be held to define buildings renovation/replacement needs.

### **Irving**

Currently Irving Recreation Center has an active organization that uses the building and they are working towards taking over the payment of utilities. The building was recently renovated and updated and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is currently funding a master planning process that is addressing the recreation center, creek, and neighborhood.

### **City Center West**

While not technically a recreation center, City Center West serves an important community role and is an active site for senior recreation. City Center West is a multi-use building and facility containing Evergreen Senior Center, City Center West Library and a fire hall. The building is in good condition and the senior citizen center is well used. City Center West has the potential to be a site for expanded intergenerational programming and activities.

### **Memorial**

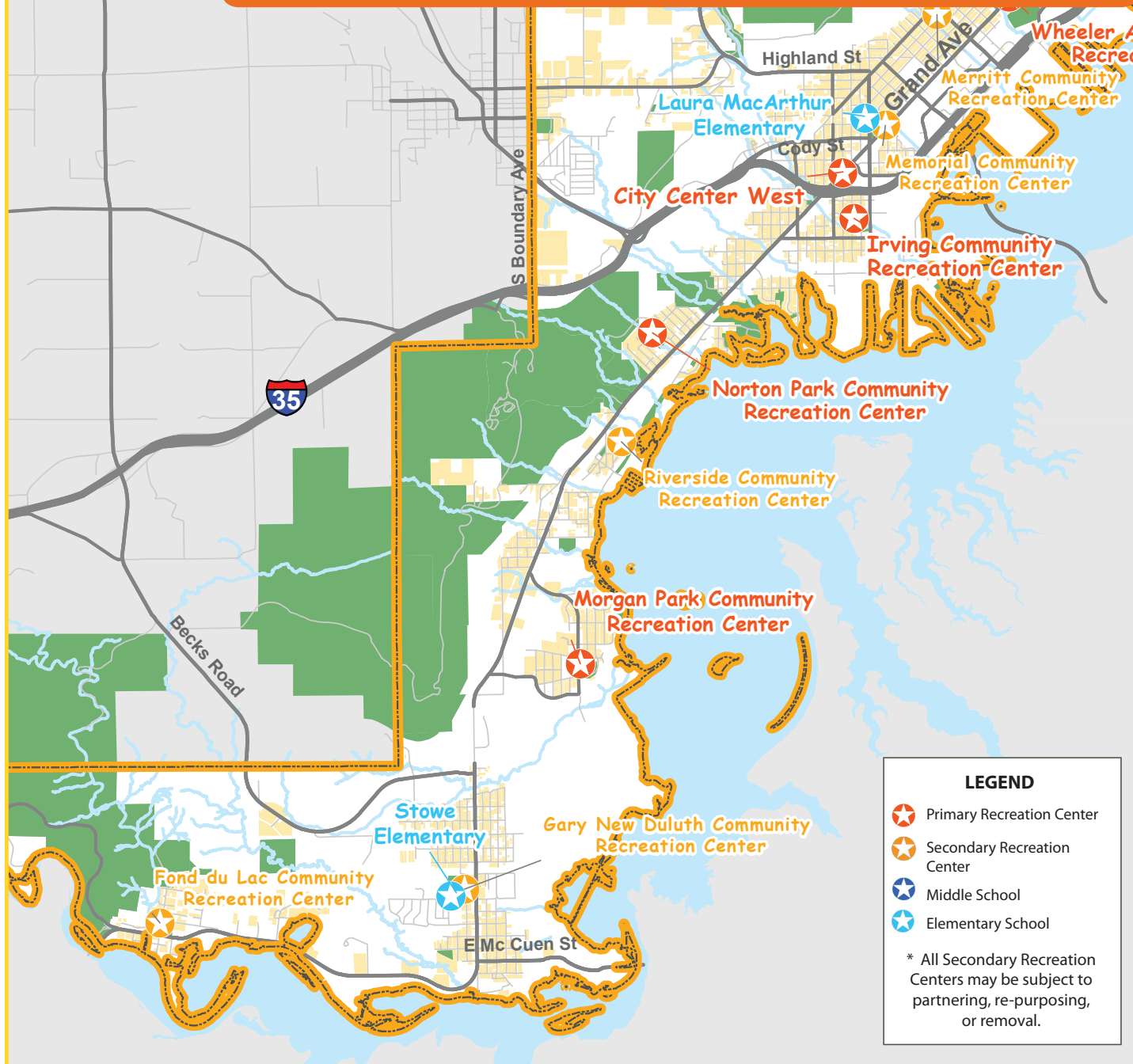
This plan recommends that the building at Memorial Park be demolished and replaced with a 3-season picnic shelter with bathrooms and storage. The green space will be shared by the community and the new Laura Mac Arthur School, which will also house the community center for the neighborhood.

### **Merritt**

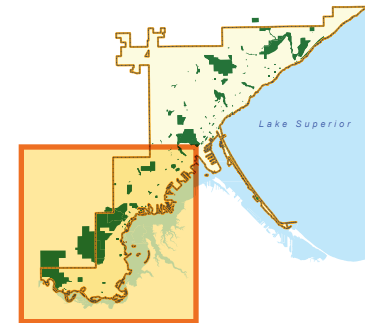
This plan recommends that the Merritt Recreation Center building be removed and replaced with a smaller multi-use building with bathrooms and storage. Consider including a new smaller multi-use building at Merritt as part of a potential 2011-2012 Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund package of improvements. The Western Middle School is a great opportunity for shared recreation programming with the City. The outdoor park space, which is currently used for horseshoes, softball, and pick-up hockey/broomball games, will remain.



## RECREATION CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS



**WEST**



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## Wheeler

Wheeler recreation center is an older well used building in a very active athletic park. A recreation center building here is vital, but the current building needs upgrading or replacement. This location is identified as a recreation center hub due its central location and high level of use. Future building replacement/renovation is recommended.

## Harrison

Recent renovations have been made to Harrison Recreation Center and it is currently in good condition. Harrison Recreation Center will remain and in the near future will also accommodate the addition of a Miracle Field (a handicap accessible softball field).

## Lincoln

A community process is recommended to be held in conjunction with planning for use of the adjacent Lincoln School building to determine building needs at Lincoln Park. Harrison recreation center building is five blocks away and the use of Harrison Recreation Center and Lincoln School may influence building needs at Lincoln Park. Community members and VCAP expressed a desire for retaining and renovating the existing building at Lincoln Park for skating and community use. If a new or remodeled building is warranted, consider including it as part of a potential 2011-2012 Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund. The Park will continue providing casual green space and the use of the band shell. The park also has potential to be a new trailhead location.

## Piedmont

Because of the condition of the building and its current inefficient nature, this Plan recommends that the existing building at Piedmont be removed. The building is used by community groups and athletic associations. A community process is recommended to be held to determine building needs at Piedmont Park. Consider including a new building as part of a potential 2011-2012 Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund.

## Duluth Heights

The Duluth Heights Recreation Center building is in poor condition and is not sustainable under current circumstances. Because of recreation need in the Duluth Heights neighborhood, this plan recommends the study and concept planning for a new Duluth Heights Recreation Center. A new Duluth Heights building will function as a community recreation hub. Consider including a new Duluth Heights building as a part of a Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund package of improvements.

## Observation

Observation Recreation Center is located on a park site with great views. The park and the recreation center building are in poor condition. This plan recommends that the building be demolished and a community process be held to prepare a park improvement plan. Because of the great view the site has the potential to be event space for weddings, meetings, and conferences. It could serve as a multi-purpose space that would be a community resource for the neighborhood and a revenue generating site for the City.

## Washington and Central Hillside

Washington Recreation Center and Central Hillside Recreation Center provide complimentary services for the neighborhood and the community. This plan recommends renovations to Washington Center, including the evaluation of the potential to make Washington and Central Hillside, along with the park, a campus like space by vacating Lake Avenue and making better pedestrian connections between the buildings. Other recommendations include a gym addition, remodeling of existing pool into a multi-purpose meeting space, and redesign of the parking area. Consider including the renovation as part of a Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund package of improvements. The existing indoor pool is in poor condition and has been closed for some time. The pool does not meet current safety or operational standards. Rebuilding the pool is not cost effective. New indoor pools in the East Middle School and Western Middle Schools will improve community access to swimming. Central Hillside/Washington Center will be a community recreation hub.

## Lafayette





Recent renovations have been made to the Lafayette Recreation Center building and it is currently in good condition. Lafayette Recreation Center will remain.

## Park Point

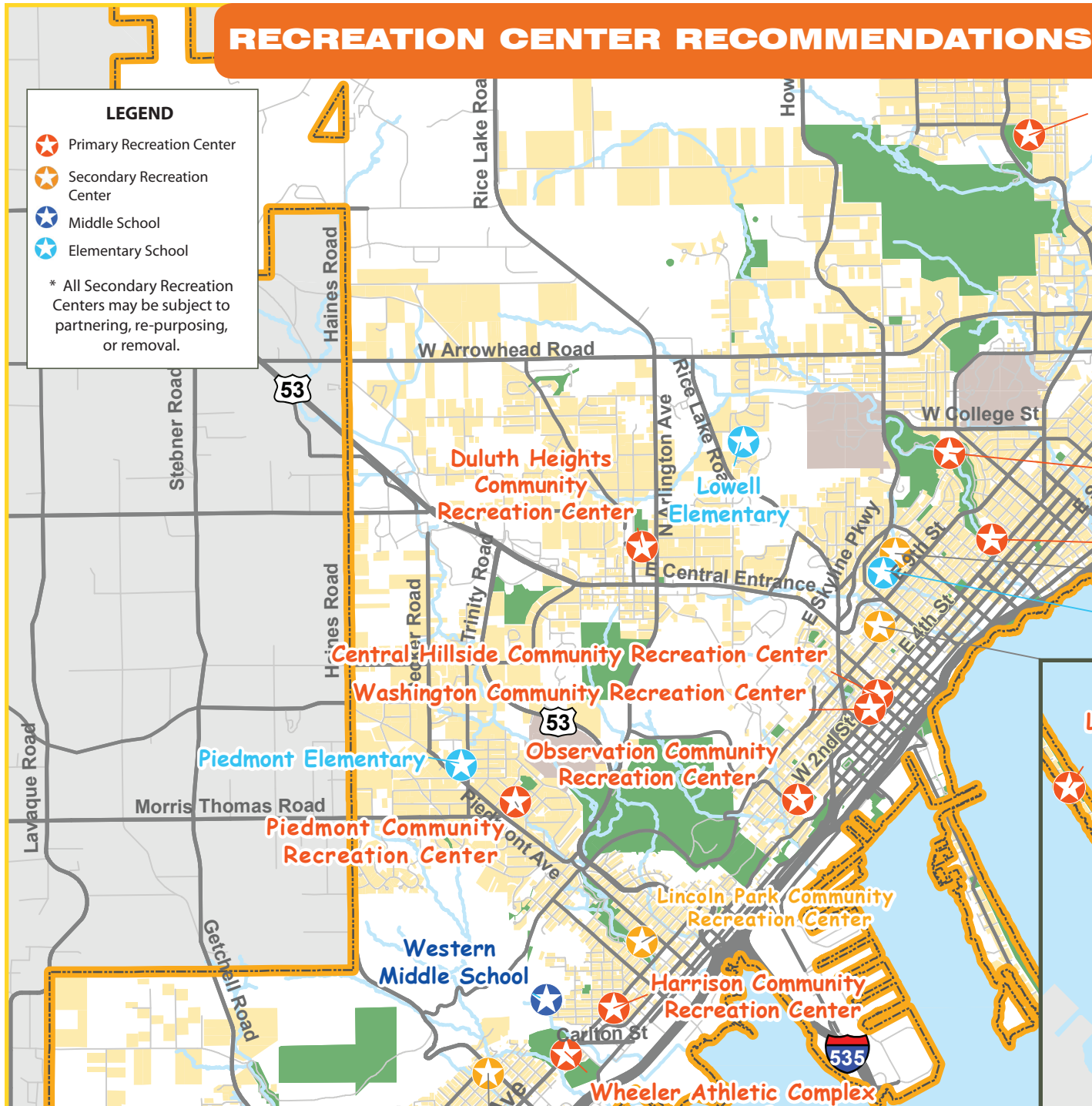
The Park Point Beach House itself is in relatively good condition, but it is not insulated so it functions only for summer uses. The deck, ramp and stairs leading to the building are in need of renovation or replacement. Park Point users expressed a desire for better and expanded access to the buildings restrooms. Given the high volume of park use, renovation of the deck, ramp and stairs is recommend along with weatherization of the building to allow three season use. Consider including renovation of the Park Point building as part of a Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund package of improvements.

# RECREATION CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS

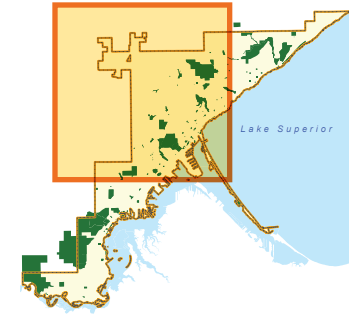
## LEGEND

-  Primary Recreation Center
-  Secondary Recreation Center
-  Middle School
-  Elementary School

\* All Secondary Recreation Centers may be subject to partnering, re-purposing, or removal.



## CENTRAL



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### **Hillside Sport Court**

Hillside Sport Court building has been closed for programming for over two years and is temporarily used only for basketball storage. This plan recommends that the building be demolished and replaced with a 3-season picnic shelter with portable toilet screens and storage. It is recommend that a community process be held to define new replacement features and remove the Hillside Sport Court building in 2011-2012.

### **Grant**

Currently the school owns the property on which the Grant Recreation Center building is located. The plan recommends that the City return the building ownership, programming, and responsibility to Grant/Nettleton Elementary School.

### **Lower Chester**

Currently Lower Chester Recreation Center building is managed by Friends of the Park as a city-wide garden club building, with a long term plan of providing community gardens for the neighborhood and City. An agreement with Friends of the Park for building use is designed to assure the Friends Group's liability, and transition building responsibility, programming, and maintenance obligations. The park also has a paved hockey rink which allows summer in-line skating. The City should also evaluate the potential opportunity for a trailhead into Chester Park.

### **Chester Bowl**

Chester Bowl, although not technically considered a Recreation Center, provides community recreation for the neighborhood and City. The building is in need of renovations to make it accessible and up-to-code. This plan recommends that the City pursue a concept plan for creating a larger seating area within the natural bowl, a hub for trails, a new or improved building, and an improved stage that would operate more as a pavilion. The City should pursue opportunities for partnering with UMD, St. Scholastica, and others for shared use of facilities, management and investment in the improvements. Seek partner funding for renovation of Chester Bowl, with a city contribution to potentially

come from a Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund package of improvements.

### **Woodland**

Woodland Recreation Center building is currently managed by the YMCA and includes three outdoor ball fields and active hockey use. This plan recommends that the City enter into an agreement with the YMCA for building use and that the agreement define the YMCA's responsibilities for building operations and costs. There is a desire to improve the ice skating rinks.

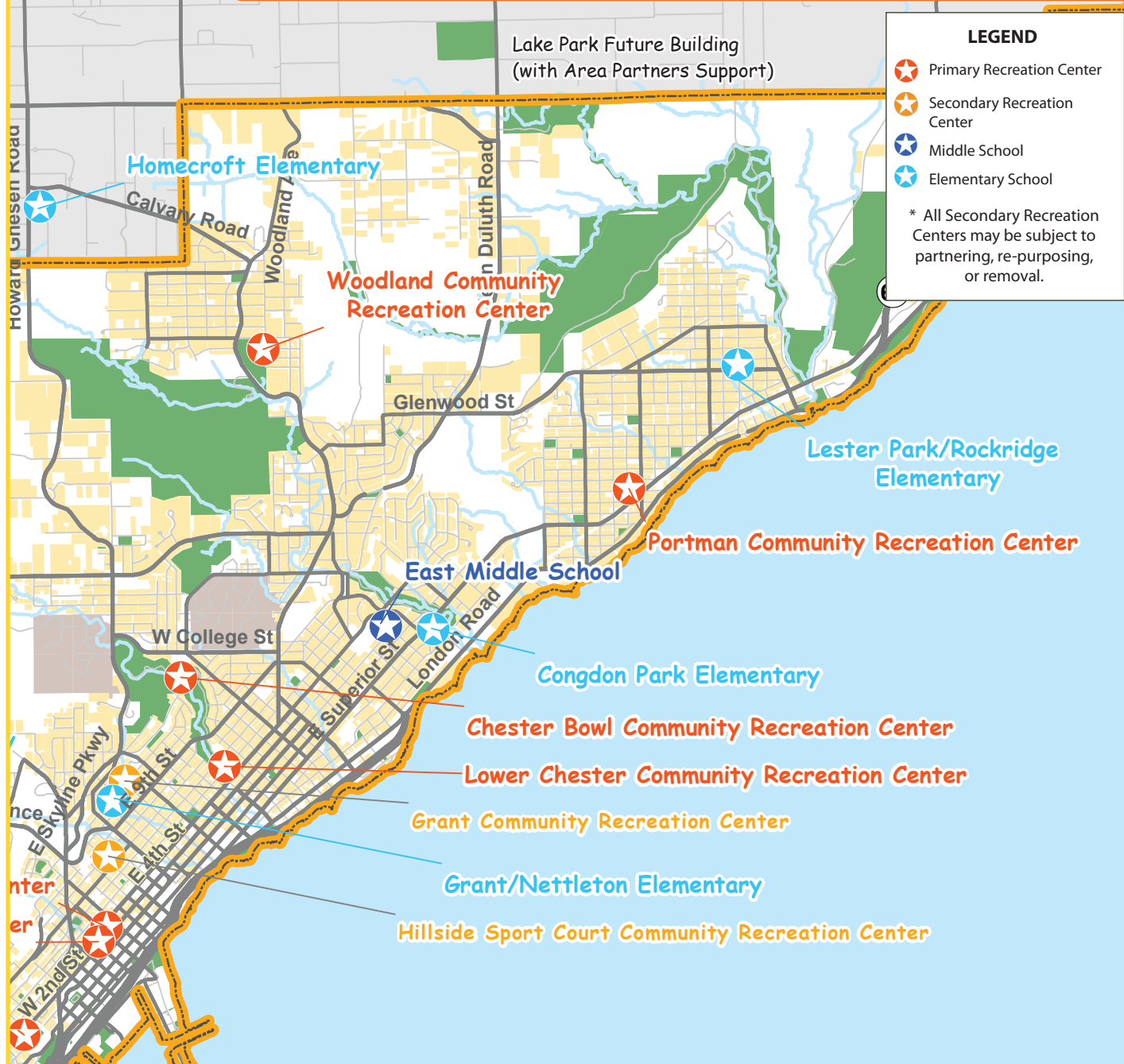
### **Portman**

The Portman Recreation Center building is actively used for senior recreation and youth athletics. While the building is generally in good condition, there is a need for improvements to accessibility and energy efficiency. Portman will remain as a Recreation Center and continue to function as a premier facility for seniors and the community on the East side.

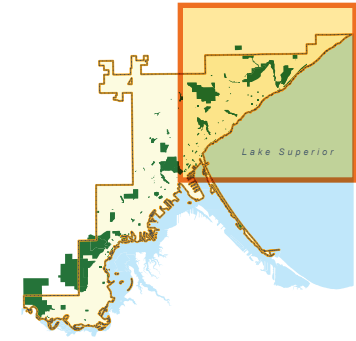
### **Lake Park**

Currently Lake Park (Jean Duluth Fields) is a Regional Athletic Field Complex. This plan recommends the future expansion of the Athletic Field Complex to include a recreation building. Because of the regional use of the park, this Plan recommends working with regional partners to fund a future shelter and storage building and to obtain their operations support at Lake Park.

# RECREATION CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS



EAST



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### Specialty Recreation Facilities

Duluth has a number of unique parks and places that offer specialized recreation. These facilities attract visitors from beyond Duluth's borders as well as Duluth residents. Many of these facilities are operated by separate entities on land owned by the City of Duluth and under a management agreement with the City. A few specialty recreation facilities are City owned and operated.

Examples of recreation sites owned by the City and operated by others are:

- » Spirit Mountain Recreation Area
- » Lake Superior Zoo
- » Enger and Lester Golf Courses
- » Hartley Nature Center
- » Hawk Ridge
- » Indian Point Campground
- » Longview Tennis Center
- » Fryberger Arena

City owned and operated specialty recreation facilities are:

- » Wade Stadium
- » Lakewalk
- » Bayfront Festival Park
- » Wheeler Athletic Complex
- » City Center West - Library and Evergreen Senior Center
- » Gary Senior Center

In addition, private and college recreation facilities, such as ice arenas, gymnasiums, nature centers, and health clubs, complement city facilities. Examples of these facilities include:

- » MARS Lakeview Arena
- » Heritage Sports Center
- » Bagley Nature Center (UMD)
- » DECC Amzoil Ice Arena
- » Snowflake Nordic Center

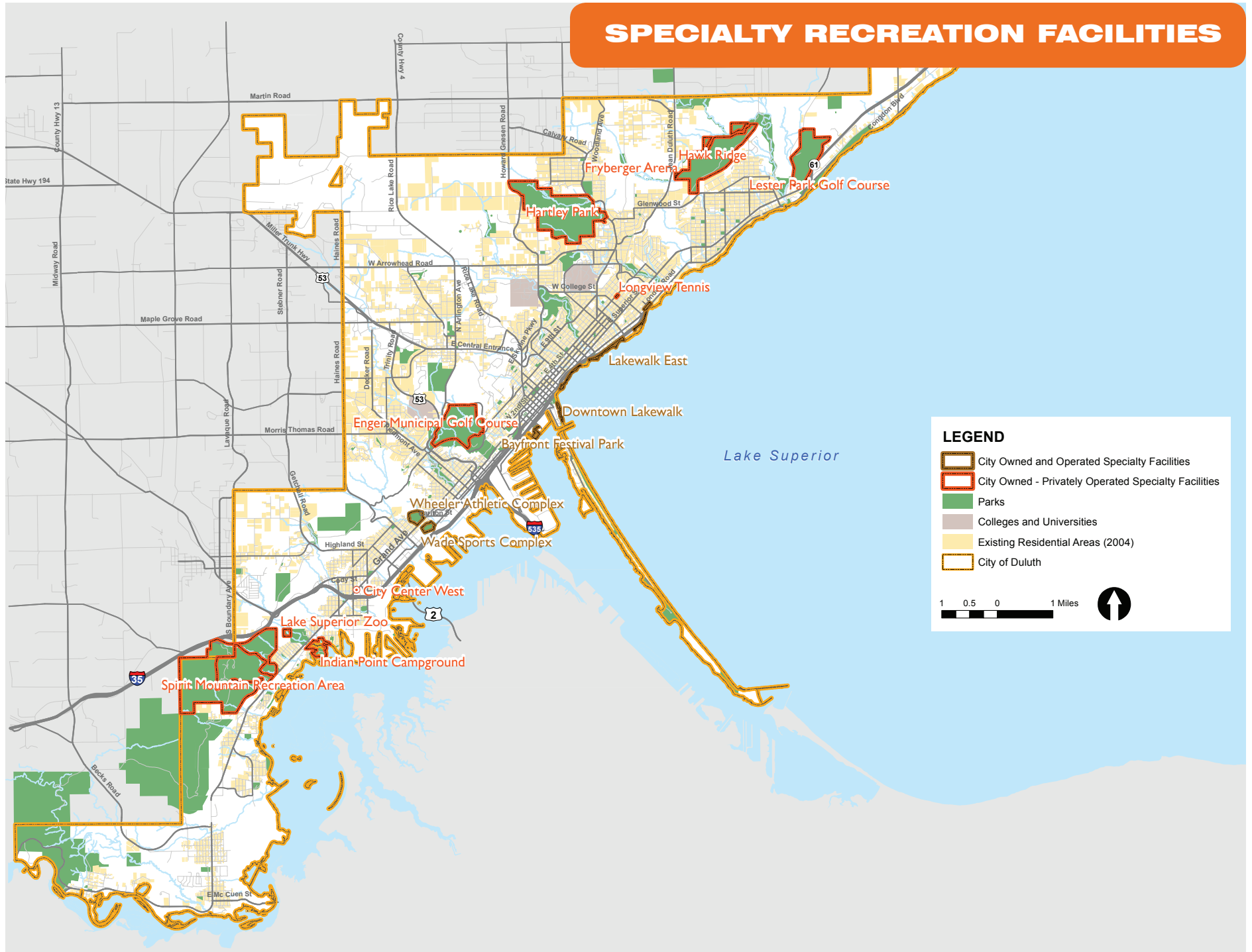
All of these facilities perform an important function for Duluth and the region attracting visitors while providing specialized recreation for residents. The facilities on City land operate under management and operational agreements with the City and several, including Lake Superior Zoo and Spirit Mountain, have their own master plans, which guide future development.

### Actions

16. Continue to monitor and support management partners. Review and update use agreements to assure appropriate return to the City and delivery of quality recreation services.



## SPECIALTY RECREATION FACILITIES



(67)

## CENTRAL HILLSIDE / WASHINGTON PARK & COMMUNITY CENTER

These plans and photos show potential ideas for creating a park campus in downtown by closing and greening a block of Lake Avenue and enhancing both Central Hillside Park and Washington Center to enhance community recreation, safety and social gathering.



1 Landscaped Water Feature



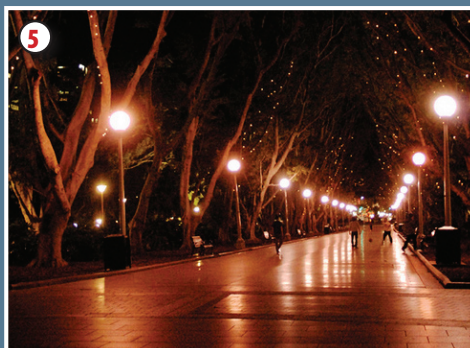
2 Climbing Wall



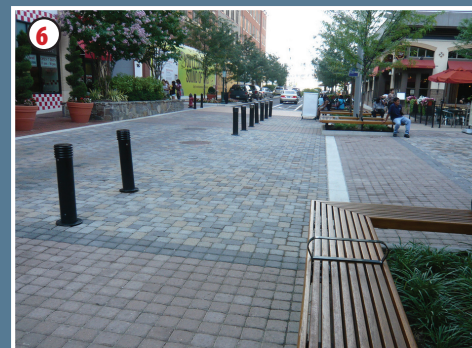
3 Walking Paths



4 Picnic Shelter



5 Park Lighting



6 Pedestrian Plaza



7 Outdoor Seating

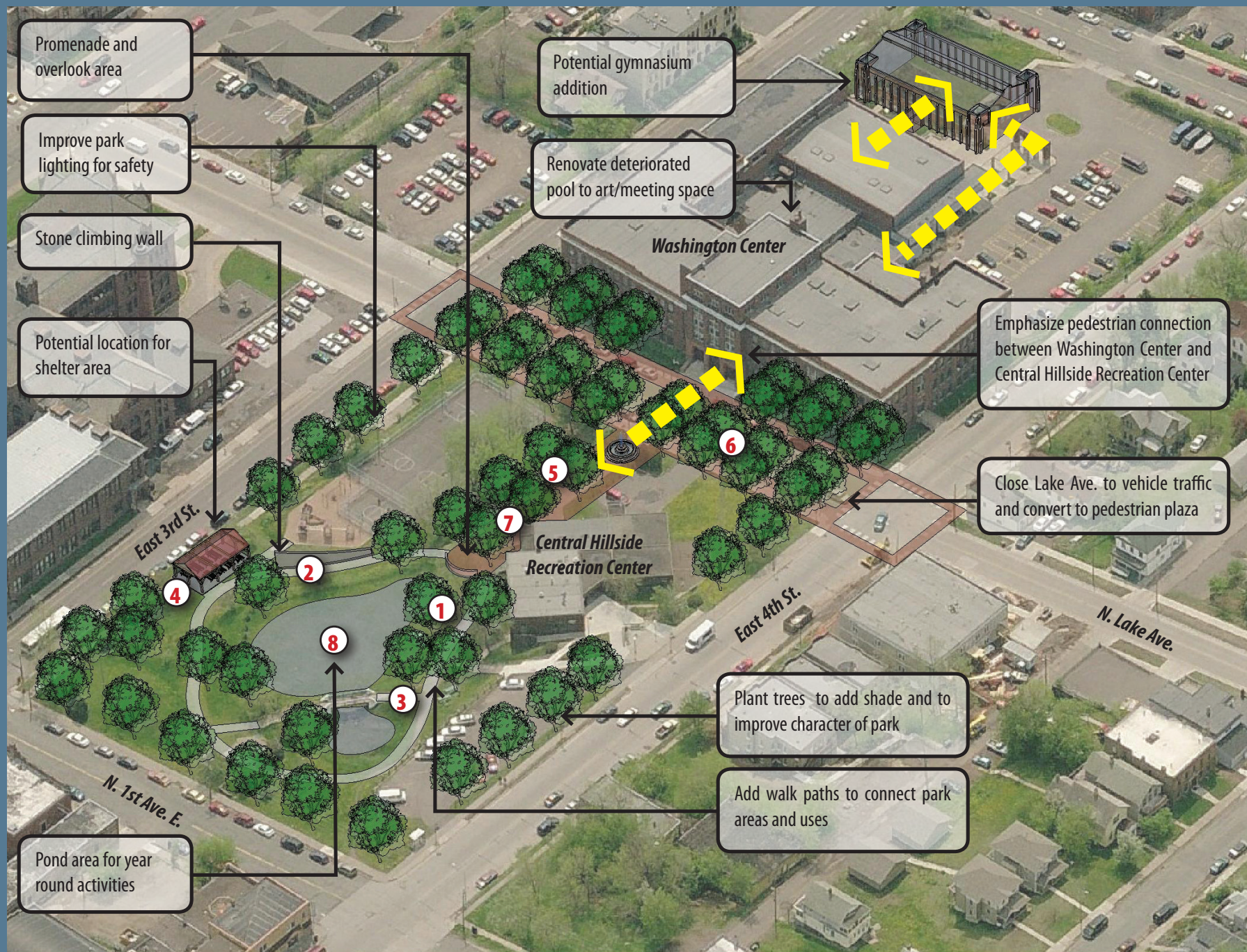


8 Summer - Pond



Winter - Ice Skating







## TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

### Strategies

**Improve Overall Trail and Bikeway Connectivity** - Trails, bikeways, and walkways are desirable recreation features that connect the community. They are also important to the economy and tourism. Trails were the number one desired recreation amenity in Duluth (based on the results from the 2009 Duluth Parks and Recreation Community Survey). Duluth has some excellent trails such as the Lakewalk, Superior Hiking Trail, Hartley Park and Amity Park; but lacks a connected network of trails. Also, Duluth's roads are not bicycle friendly. Winter conditions and topography are challenges and opportunities for the trail and bikeway system. The following actions are designed to connect the city and build a comprehensive network of trails, bikeways, and support facilities.

**Improve Connectivity for Users of All Abilities** -The comprehensive trail and bikeway network must account for universal design and connectivity between trails and between trails and parks. Universal design means designing the walk-bike network to be usable by all people, regardless of age or ability to the greatest extent possible. Good pedestrian and bicycle system design must account for the needs of all ages, including the young and old and those with physical or mental limitations. If the system is designed for the most vulnerable populations, it will better meet the needs of all users. The support of multi-cultural involvement in the planning and organization of park and trail activities is important.

**Complete Streets** - Duluth has recently adopted a Complete Streets Policy. Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access for all users and modes of travel. The policy encourages appropriate streets to be built or reconstructed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities to safely and comfortably move along and across a complete street. This policy supports bikeway and trail development and pedestrian and bicyclist connectivity.

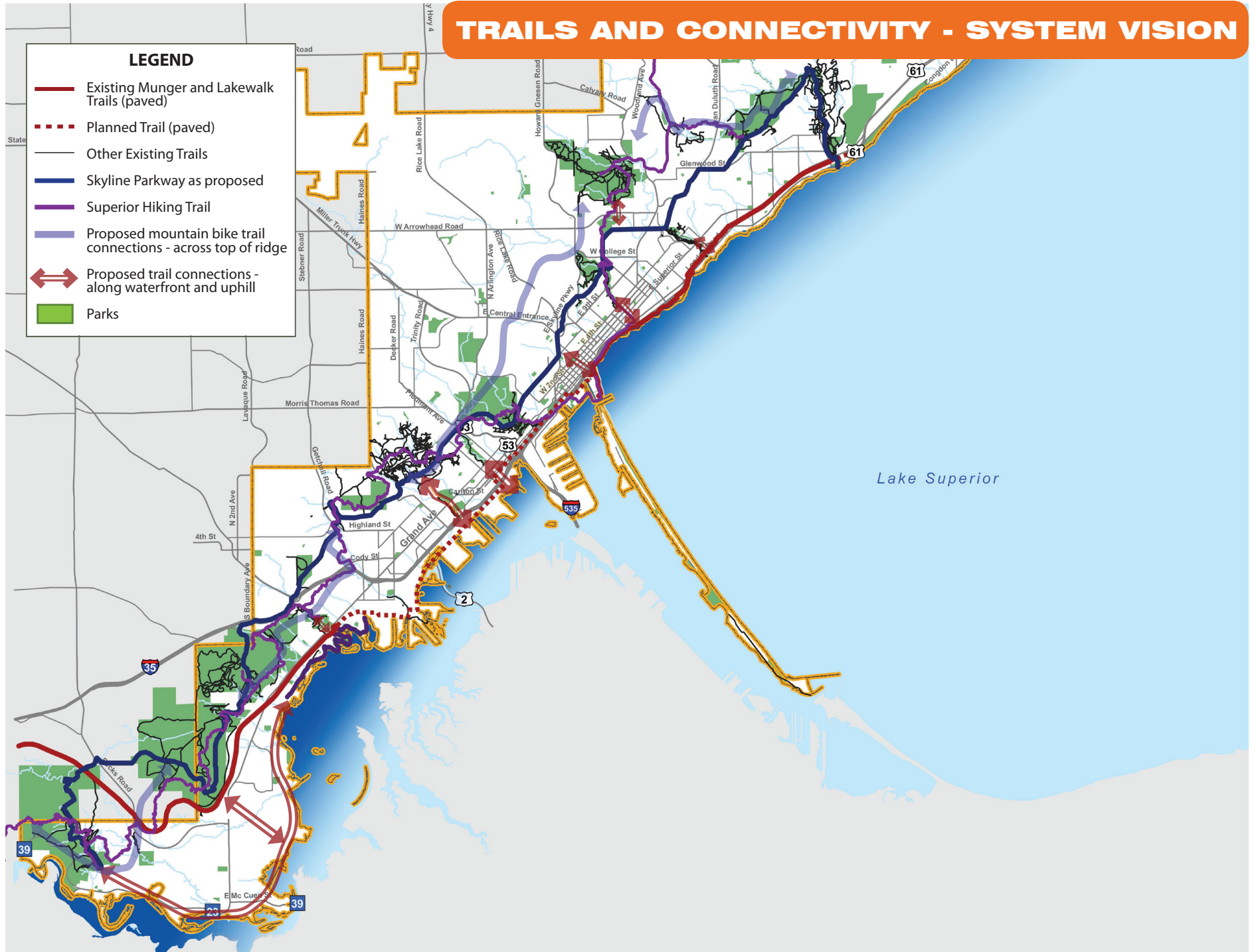
**Enhance Waterfront Connectivity** - As future waterfront development occurs, the City should require dedication of public land or trails along the waterfront with the goal of having a continuous linear trail and public space connection along the lake front. New parks and/or privately owned recreation facilities (such as children's play areas) may also be needed for larger residential developments.

**Skyline Parkway** - Implement the Skyline Parkway Management Plan and consider reducing the speed limit on Skyline Parkway to 25 MPH. This will provide immediate safety and usability improvements. Create/restore the continuity and historic character of the Parkway. Obtain National Scenic Byway status to assist with funding for Parkway improvements. Work within space limitations to enhance pedestrian and bicycle use and safety. Add the pedestrian and bicycle enhancements in a continuous section of the Parkway with adequate right of way and topography to demonstrate the non-motorized use potential. Implement the Vegetation Management recommendations of the Skyline Parkway Management Plan.

### Actions

17. Prepare a Duluth Trail and Bikeway Plan. – Work with the public and stakeholder groups to create a plan to realize the potential of existing trails, stream corridors, and Skyline Parkway with new trail and bikeway connections, trailheads and trail way-finding signage.
  - A. Create an interconnected multi-use trail system with off road paved trails, an on-street bikeway network, and an interconnected hiking/walking trail network. Utilize the trail and pedestrian policies and implementation items of the 2006 Duluth Comprehensive Plan. Have all trails be multi-use if the terrain supports it, except for Superior Hiking Trail, which was purposefully built for hiking. The addition of bikeways and sidewalks is supported by the Duluth Complete Streets policy. Have a goal of Duluth becoming certified by the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly

## TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY - SYSTEM VISION



(71)





### Superior Hiking Trail Association

The Superior Hiking Trail Association is a Minnesota non-profit corporation whose members are dedicated to the completion, preservation, and promotion of

the Superior Hiking Trail. The Superior Hiking Trail is a 277-mile footpath that largely follows the rocky ridgeline above Lake Superior on Minnesota's North Shore from Duluth to the Canadian border. Most of the Trail was built by crews hired from the local communities and from the Minnesota Conservation Corps (MCC). Trail maintenance is provided largely, in part, through a system of volunteers - either individually or in groups such as scout troops, outdoor clubs and other organizations.

The Superior Hiking Trail Association builds, maintains, and manages the trail with the help of hundreds of volunteers. Today membership has grown to over 3200 people, including members in 26 states and Canada.



Community (see [www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/](http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/)).

- B. Connect the Lakewalk to the Munger Trail (Cross City Trail planning is underway) and complete the Lakewalk connection east to Kitchi Gammi Park. Signs should be installed to delineate where wheels are allowed, versus foot traffic on the Lakewalk.
- C. Increase the City's paved trail system to allow for better connectivity between residents and parks, parks and school, and between parks.
- D. Consider merging Magney-Snively and Spirit Mountain cross country ski trails so that both are in the city trail system. Improve grooming of Spirit Mountain Trails.
- E. Evaluate adding lighted ski trail loops with snow making at Spirit Mountain Campground loop and around the Chester Bowl athletic fields. Consider adding warming shelters at popular cross-country ski trail locations.
- F. Work to formalize a multi-use trail connection between Fond du Lac Park and Magney Snively Park. Part of the connection would be outside of City boundary so a cooperative approach with Midway Township and area land owners would be needed.
- G. Connect the Pine City Trail to other City trails.
- H. Work to minimize trail conflicts and foster trail etiquette through media and signage.
- I. Utilize the DWP Railroad grade as multi-use gravel surface trail from West Duluth to the north side of I-35.
- J. Plan for and support a continuous waterfront trail in west Duluth.
- K. Improve biking and walking in the Mall area.



## 2010 Comprehensive Bicycle Assessment - Prepared by Fit City Duluth

Fit City Duluth is a public/private community initiative designed to change the social and physical environment of Duluth to encourage active, healthy lifestyles.

Through information and advocacy, they aim to prevent and reduce chronic health issues and to facilitate healthy built environments that reinforce human powered and public transportation.

This report has three main goals:

- » To recognize the current barriers to bicycling
- » To explore possible solutions to those barriers
- » To identify which routes are the most favorable for bicycle transportation

In addition to these three goals, this report also identifies ideal bike rack locations, destinations that should be included on future bike route signs and the most favorable bike routes for recreational purposes.

When polled about the question: "What specific destinations would a bicyclist who is riding through your neighborhood find interesting?" the top five answers were as following:

1. Skyline Parkway
2. Chester Park
3. Hartley Park
4. Lakewalk
5. UMD

When asked the statement: "Describe the main problems you have with bicycling, if any, and describe possible solutions to these problems," the participants top three responses were:

1. Motorists/Traffic
2. Road Condition
3. Roads Without Space for Bikes

## Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS)

Started in 1994 when the Superior Bikers and the North Star Bike Club combined, Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (501 C3 organization) is a cycling club dedicated to serving the needs of the bicycling community in Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin. COGGS is a non/profit incorporated club. They are involved in the Duluth Trail System and are instrumental in creating and maintaining the Twin Ports trail system, among others.

COGGS is also an important community service provider for the City of Duluth - participating in the yearly Superior Housing Authority Kids Bike Rodeo each June and partaking in Munger Trail Clean-up twice a year. To date they have given away almost 1,000 bike helmets to needy kids.





### The Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC):

DXC, a 501(c) 3 organization, was founded in 2004 “to promote health, fitness, and fun through cross-country skiing.” DXC works toward this mission by providing opportunities for skiers of all ages and abilities, maintaining and enhancing local ski trails, and serving as a hub for resources and information about cross-country skiing through their website. Their membership database includes more than 450 households, and they currently have over \$20,000 in assets.

The Duluth Parks system includes five cross-country ski trails of varying length and difficulty: Lester, Hartley, Chester, Piedmont, and Magney-Snively (40 kilometers/25 miles total, including a 4k lighted loop and a 3k skijoring trail, both at Lester). Skis can be rented from Hartley Nature Center and from local ski shops. A Great MN Ski Pass is required. In the “off-season” Duluth ski trails are used for hiking and/or mountain biking.

Spirit Mt. Nordic Center, operated by the Spirit Mt. Recreation Authority (SMRA), has 22k of trails that connect to the Magney-Snively trail. Spirit has a small warming building, rental skis, and a 1k lighted loop. High School and college teams and the Nordic Spirit Youth Ski League practice at Spirit. Interscholastic and citizen races are held there, including DXC’s Nordic Spirit Ski Race. A daily or annual Spirit Mt. Nordic pass is required. Duluth is also home to Snowflake Nordic Center, a private ski area with a warming building, rental skis, and 15k of trails, including a 4k lighted loop. High school and college teams and the DXC KidSki program practice at Snowflake, and both interscholastic and citizen races are held there. Snowflake allows members’ dogs on its ski trails and hosts skijoring races. A daily or annual Snowflake pass is required. Bagley Nature Center on the UMD campus also offers 3k of groomed ski trails free to the public.

Ski Club Input: What improvements would Duluth skiers like to see on their trails?

- » Establish a system for coordinating trail work to avoid duplication of efforts
- » Prioritize trail enhancement projects (portable toilets, solar lights, warming hut) according to feasibility and cost/benefit; identify funding sources; implement projects
- » Purchase a snowmobile groomer to use in conjunction with the Bombardier
- » Merge Spirit Mt. Nordic trails with the City of Duluth Ski Trail System
- » Conduct feasibility and cost/benefit studies regarding replacing MN Ski Pass with Duluth Ski Pass

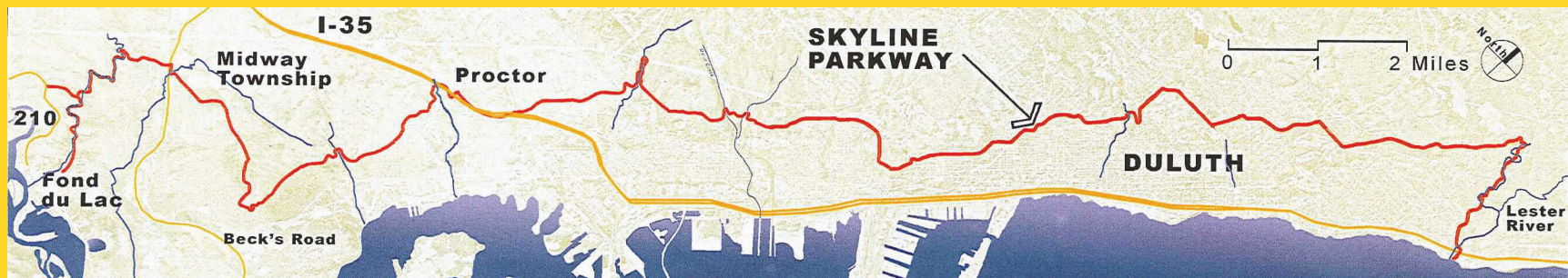
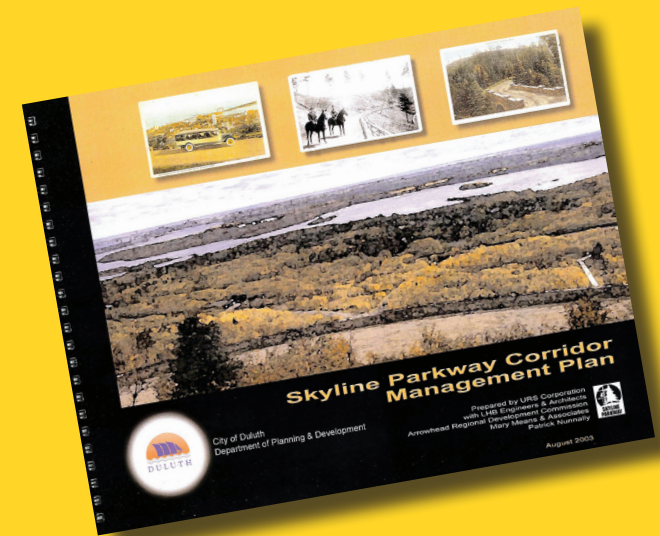


- L. Work with the County to strengthen the trail connections through tax forfeited land.
  - M. Work with COGGS on plans for the Grand Traverse Trail and a potential mountain bike park at Arlington Park.
18. Hire a Trail Coordinator/Trail Planner. Trails are the number one desired recreation feature in Duluth (2009 Duluth Parks and Recreation Survey). Trails are also a top visitor attraction and help connect the community. By being proactive on trail planning and construction, Duluth can become known as a national trail destination.
  19. There are many trail groups and volunteers that are passionate about trails in Duluth. Coordination is needed to fully realize the potential of the trail groups and to enhance and connect Duluth’s trails. Improve trail conditions by enhancing maintenance, making trails more durable, and improving management of trail use. Maximize the benefits of trail groups and volunteers.
    - A. Establish a system for coordinating cross-country ski trail upkeep that enables volunteers to expand the grooming of the trail system without duplicating efforts.
  21. Foster improvement of the Skyline Parkway in accordance with the Corridor Management Plan to make the Parkway less disjointed and to make it safe and enjoyable for pedestrians and bicyclists.
  22. Design a single wayfinding program for all city trails and install a coordinated and comprehensive set of trail wayfinding signs and maps at trail heads and at trail intersections. Create trailheads with parking and signage at key trail access locations. Add signage to direct people to trail heads. Expand awareness of existing park, trail, and recreation facilities through use of in park and at trailhead kiosks with park and trail system maps. Make trails easier to find, use and follow with new trailheads, way-finding signage and trail maps.

## Skyline Parkway Corridor Management Plan

The Skyline Parkway, developed first in the 1880's, is a designed historic landscape that is both a state scenic byway and a historic road. Today, Skyline Parkway intends to operate under its original purpose – that of a system that enhances connectivity and experiences when viewed as a system, not as pieces and parts. However, its very essence as a single system is also one of its greatest challenges. The length and diversity of the Parkway make it difficult to manage as a single resource.

The Skyline Parkway Corridor Management Plan, prepared by the City of Duluth in conjunction with URS, LHB Engineers and Architects, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission, Mary Means & Associates, and Patrick Nunnally, is an excellent resource for the City. The Corridor Management Plan should be used as a resource as the City moves forward to foster improvement of the Skyline Parkway to make it less disjointed and to make it safe and enjoyable for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Plan outlines vegetation management, land use management, an interpretive framework plan, and improvements to the road for all types of travel, among many other valuable issues.



(75)

### Parks Authority and Funding Options

(From information provided by Assistant City Attorney Steve Hanke)

There are no Minnesota Statutes expressly addressing a Parks Authority. However, Minnesota Statutes indicate that a City or City Parks Board has the power to create such an entity.

The City does not need to create a Parks Authority (or a Parks District) to either levy taxes or obtain funds specifically and expressly for Parks and Recreation purposes. The City already has that authority through a variety of options.

Most options are funded from a property tax levy, which is established on or around December 28 of the year preceding the year the levy will be paid by taxpayers. On or before five working days after December 20 of each year, the City Council must set the tax levy for the next year and send a certified copy to the county auditor.

Another option may be using a revenue bond financed by a special levy that would be used for maintenance and capital improvements to City parks.

Another option may be using a General Obligation (“GO”) bond, supported by voters, to fund City Park and Recreation programs. A GO bond is a municipal bond backed by the credit and “taxing power” of the City rather than the revenue from a given project.

## FUNDING Strategies

This Master Plan recommends a two-stage approach for funding, park operations, and improvements. The current tight budget situation requires continued actions to achieve cost efficiency. In the longer term, additional funding and more stable funding sources are needed to allow for adequate maintenance, phased replacement of aging infrastructure, and adequate staffing. Non-general funding earmarked exclusively for Parks and Recreation is needed to provide funding stability. The short and long term goal is a sustainable, flexible and relevant park and recreation system. The objective of cost and operational efficiency goes hand-in-hand with increased and stable funding. Several funding and operational strategies were considered. The preferred funding sources listed below represent a comprehensive, feasible and balanced set of tools to increase funding for parks, trails, recreation and programs. Some funding actions could be implemented immediately while others have a two to four year planning and organizational lead time. Make sure there is public buy-in before funding or grants are sought for capital improvement projects.

### Actions

23. Increase General Fund budget allocation to Parks and Recreation for increased park maintenance and recreation programming.
24. Hold a referendum (vote of the people) on formation and funding of a park and recreation enterprise fund in 2011. The park and recreation enterprise fund would be used for park and recreation improvements and maintenance and it would be funded by increased property taxes. While the amount and specific nature of a Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund will need to be determined, this Plan recommends use of the funds for:
  - » Capital Improvements to recreation center buildings and park renovation.
  - » Increased park maintenance (mowing, trash collection, natural resource management, etc.) and park infrastructure replacement and repair – (children’s play areas, handicapped accessibility improvements, etc.)
  - » Youth recreation programs in partnership with youth service organizations.



25. Identify a limited scope of excess undeveloped city lands and evaluate the feasibility and benefit of selling them with the profits going toward park improvement (See Action 5 for recommendations on undeveloped park land properties). Sale of land is limited by title constraints and requires a super-majority vote of the City Council.

26. Initiate and strengthen funding by:

- A. Holding fee-based special events (bike rides, 10K and 5K runs, concerts, etc.) with revenue dedicated to parks.
- B. Adding private concessions in parks (restaurants, vendor carts, etc.).
- C. Creating rental facilities (weddings, corporate events, family gatherings, etc.).
- D. Seeking donations and grants.
- E. Increasing business involvement, sponsorship, naming rights, etc. of parks, recreation facilities and events.

F. Designating signature parks and trails that serve a regional role as “regional parks and regional trails.” This will reflect their role in the community and region and enhance ability to obtain State Legacy funding for park and trail improvements.

G. Creating a parks foundation to focus on fund raising for park improvements.

27. Work with Duluth Friends of the Parks to raise funds, build advocacy, and carry out park and trail improvements.

28. Increase partnership and volunteer involvement when a City Volunteer/Agreement Coordinator position is established.

29. Prepare an asset management and replacement plan and fund the capital improvements identified in the plan. Consider renovation of whole parks with greater needs rather than a series of incremental improvements.

30. Evaluate on-going operational and life-cycle costs when making facility capital decisions.

(77)

**economic**



- ✓ **Economic Growth and Jobs**
- ✓ **Tourism Revenue**
- ✓ **Business acquisition and Retention**
- ✓ **Increased Property Values**

**In 2001, spending associated with visiting the Minnesota State Park System was \$218 million and supported nearly 3400 jobs (MN DNR, 2002)**

**2008 trail users in Minnesota spent \$3.3 billion, contributed \$2.8 billion in local taxes and accounted for 43,000 jobs (Venegas, 2009).**

**Park and Recreation Benefits**

## OBSERVATION PARK/ EVENT FACILITY

Today, Observation Park is a deteriorated park with a “million dollar view”. This illustration shows the potential to create a community center and event facility that would take advantage of the view, create a revenue source from building rental and enhance the park.



Event / Community Building



Event / Community Building



Scenic Views



Gardens



Gardens



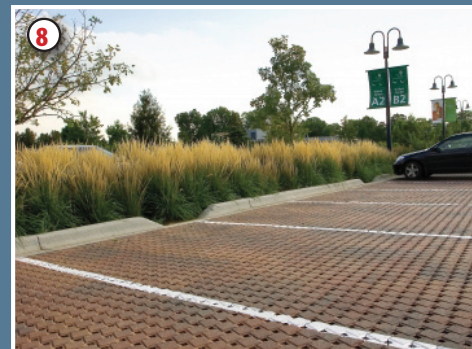
Water Feature



Children's Play Area



Rain Garden



"Green" Parking





(79)



## Maintenance Tiers

### Tier 1 - Premier Maintenance:

- » Amenities/materials/landscaping will reflect a priority on aesthetics and experience and higher on-going maintenance/life-cycle costs are acceptable.
- » City will perform most of the maintenance though volunteers may be used for special projects or select tasks.

### Tier 2 - Standard Maintenance:

- » Some higher maintenance amenities will still be present, though on-going maintenance needs will be considered a priority when adding/replacing amenities. Landscaping can require a moderate amount of upkeep and gardens/planters may be present in select locations.
- » City will perform maintenance in conjunction with an Adopt-A-Park program or other volunteer group.

### Tier 3 - Limited Maintenance:

- » Amenities are replaced/added with goal of minimal on-going maintenance needs and life-cycle costs (materials as well as types of amenities). Landscaping is low maintenance and mowed areas are limited.
- » Adopt-A-Park program or other volunteers are utilized for basic routine maintenance such as trash pick and landscape maintenance whenever feasible.

## PARK MAINTENANCE Strategies

A primary issue influencing the current quality of Duluth's parks is reduced operating and capital budgets. Improved maintenance of parks is a primary desire of the community. Budget and staff reductions resulted in reduced maintenance and deferred park improvements. In a 2008 comparison of six of the larger cities in Minnesota, Duluth had the lowest spending on park maintenance and forestry operations of any of the six cities, yet had one of the largest park systems.

In response to budget issues, Duluth implemented a tiered maintenance program where some parks are well maintained and other parks receive minimal maintenance. Generally, the high use parks such as Lakewalk, Bayfront, Canal Park, Wade/Wheeler, and others are priority facilities and are well maintained. Under the three tiered maintenance program, maintenance occurs less frequently in neighborhood parks and on trails which resulted in poor condition parks and resident's low satisfaction rating of neighborhood parks (as reflected in the 2009 Duluth Parks and Recreation Survey). In the short-term, the public should be made aware of the tiered maintenance program and the Adopt-A-Park program through signage and web information. In the long term, funding and staff resources should be increased to be sufficient to bring the maintenance level of parks up to an acceptable level of quality and to allow deteriorated facilities to be removed and/or replaced. Increased funding for park maintenance should come from the annual General Fund and from a proposed Park and Recreation Enterprise Fund.

Due to uncertainty with the 2010 city budgets and the Youth Employment Services (YES) program, staff are presenting three scenarios for the services that Buildings and Grounds may provide for the parks using a 3-tier system of maintenance. These three scenarios are varied based on YES program staff availability for 2010, Sentence to Serve availability for 2010, regular staffing levels in Buildings and Grounds, and ability to hire seasonal workers.

When funding and adequate staff resources are available, the tiered maintenance program should be revised to increase park maintenance and equipment replacement in neighborhood parks.

## Actions

31. As funding and staffing resources allow, increase the level of upkeep and improve the frequency of mowing and trash collection in parks. Improve access to bathrooms with portable toilets and over time add restrooms in high use parks.
32. Formalize and publicize the tiered maintenance policy in the parks and on the City web site to raise community awareness. Increase the level of upkeep and improve the frequency of mowing and trash collection in parks. Improve access to bathrooms. Formalize maintenance expectations and expand outreach to volunteer groups for maintenance.
33. Expand outreach to volunteer groups for maintenance and improvements. Work to expand the Adopt A Park/Adopt A Trail program. Continue Clean and Green Week. Note: this action is related to obtaining a new volunteer/agreement coordinator position and additional seasonal staff to guide volunteer efforts.
34. Prepare an asset management plan identifying priority renovation needs and funding for replacement and improvements. See initial recommendations for priority actions in Chapter 6.

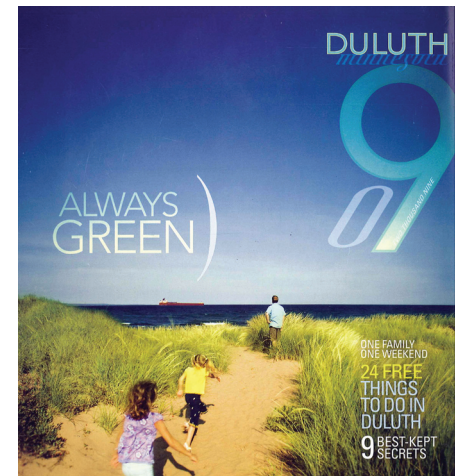
## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Duluth does a good job of informing residents and visitors of park and recreation resources using web, print and other media resources, but awareness and knowledge of existing opportunities can be even greater. Marketing and communications is a cost effective means of increasing use of existing facilities among residents and visitors.

### Actions

35. Be the recreation information clearinghouse for all recreation programs and activities in Duluth. The City should function as the “go to” source for recreation programs, special events and facility information. Even though the City has cut its actual delivery of recreation programs it still functions as a coordinator, provider of facilities, and liaison to public and private groups that still deliver recreation programs to children, families, adults and groups. The City should build on the program facilitator role by being the trusted contact and conduit for recreation program and activity information. This can take the form of a web page and paper program guides. This may require redirection of existing staff resources or new staff to perform this vital service. Having one source of information for dozens of providers eases resident’s access to programs and improves participation in recreation programs. Provide current and regularly updated information on the website regarding programs, maps, and events. Ensure that the website is user-friendly.
36. Create maps of existing trails and planned major trails and post and distribute these maps through partners, business, at public places, etc. Note: trail maps should be coordinated with partner groups.
37. Work/team with neighboring communities to be aware of their recreation programs and marketing efforts, both locally and nationally.
38. Identify and tap into existing national organizations that foster parks and recreation programs.
39. Expand awareness of the benefits of parks and trails – community, individual, health, economic, and environmental. Promote Duluth Parks and Recreation at special events and festivals.

(81)



*The Visit Duluth Guide is a great source for visitors and residents.*

### Friends of the Parks (FOTP)

Friends of the Parks (FOTP) was organized in 2009 and incorporated as a 501(c)3. The Master Plan's Guiding Principles will guide FOTP's direction and growth over the next twenty years. These principles (of providing safe, clean, fun and beautiful parks; of ensuring adequate funding; of building partnership; ensuring equitable access; of connecting the community; of connecting with the natural world; and to continue to meet evolving recreation needs) are in a very large part exactly why FOTP was created.

FOTP will become the go-to source for information about trails and parks. It will coordinate user groups and organizations across the city/region in a welcoming and well-structured stewardship program that sustains and improves trails and parks. FOTP will work side-by-side with the City of Duluth to coordinate volunteerism in the parks, to establish a foundation to raise money for parks and trails, and assist various park/trail user groups to coordinate capital improvement efforts.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERS

Partnerships and volunteers are key elements of the current park and recreation system and are crucial to Duluth's future. Volunteers and partner groups provide a great service to the City. As cutbacks in City staffing and services occurred, the number of community groups and volunteers providing recreation services has increased greatly. These services include offering recreation programs, park clean up, trail maintenance and improvement, operating city buildings and facilities. This is a positive step, but there is a lack of coordination, oversight and recognition of these efforts. There are so many agreements between the City and groups for facility use, that tracking and oversight of these agreements is not occurring in a comprehensive manner. A City volunteer coordinator position should be created to fully realize the huge potential of partnerships and volunteers and to adequately track use agreements.

The City should focus on the recruitment, scheduling, administration and recognition of volunteers to maximize the benefits of volunteers and partners groups and to make each volunteer's experience efficient and rewarding. The process for partner and community groups to make improvements to parks and trails and recreation buildings should be streamlined. An agreement/memo of understanding for maintenance and operations responsibilities should accompany new specialized uses in public spaces.

Maximizing community use school buildings (especially middle school and elementary schools) and school use of City parks is a key strategy. Partnership and joint use agreements between the City of Duluth and the Duluth School District are vital to enhance efficiency for both organizations and to allow the public to realize the benefits of schools, parks, and public places.

For recreation activities, the City should consider the activity needs first and evaluate all options for meeting that need. It may mean that the activity can occur at existing City facilities, or at partner facilities and that new facilities may not be needed.



## Actions

40. Hire a Volunteer/Agreement Coordinator. Duties to include:

- A. Focus on efficient and beneficial partnerships.
- B. Administer facility use agreements.
- C. Enhance customer service around partnerships.
- D. Improve recruitment, training, scheduling, and recognition of volunteers and volunteer groups.
- E. Implement School-City joint powers and site specific use agreements.

F. Work to minimize barriers, as reasonable, to non-profit organization facility use, such as insurance liability issues.

41. Improve and renovate existing hub recreation center buildings with the increased efficiency found in the school and community group partnering or closure of non-functional buildings.

42. Expand promotion of Duluth parks, trails, recreation attractions, and natural areas for tourism, quality of life and economic development. Potential partners include Visit Duluth, DEDA economic development, Explore Minnesota, Spirit Mountain, and Fit City Duluth.

A. Strengthen relationship with St. Louis County and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission.

# community



- ✓ Sense of Place
- ✓ Social Capital
- ✓ Community Trust and Pride
- ✓ Gathering Places
- ✓ Sense of Stewardship

Strong feelings about a park or trail help develop a sense of place and the building of social capital. Communities with high amounts of social capital tend to be more connected, more trusting of one another, and have a greater number of networks and groups that exist to enhance the quality of life for their community (Putman, 2000).

According to a Nationwide Study of the Perceptions of the American Public, 71% of non-users said they received some benefit from their communities' parks and recreational services.

A subset of Minnesotans value parks and trails because they provide a sense of security that the natural environment will not be lost (Anderson, et. al., 2008).

## Park and Recreation Benefits

## MORGAN PARK RECREATION CENTER COMPLEX

The closed Morgan Park Middle School contains a gymnasium and indoor pool that could potentially be accessible for public recreation. The illustration shows how the school and Morgan Park Recreation Center could function as a community recreation facility.

(84)



Picnic Shelter



Pedestrian Plaza



Speed Indicator



Pedestrian Crossing



Pedestrian Traffic Signal



"Green" Parking Lot





(85)



## STEWARDSHIP Strategies

Duluth's park system is founded on preservation and public enjoyment of natural areas. The majority of the park system is natural and open space lands. Stewardship of these lands and their natural resources is vital to their long term viability. Stewardship involves preserving, protecting, and restoring natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. Examples of stewardship actions are controlling invasive species, combating erosion, forest and water resource management. City park maintenance staff are assisted by volunteers, neighborhood and non-profit groups in park and site specific stewardship and natural resource management activities.

43. Prepare a tree replacement plan in order to minimize the impact of urban tree diseases and to increase the scale and quality of the urban forest.
44. Transition to more naturally functioning landscapes (native vegetation, rain gardens, community gardens, butterfly gardens, etc.) in all parks, regardless of their size, in order to improve water quality, increase habitat, and reduce maintenance.
45. Proactively manage natural resource areas and cooperate with others on aquatic resource management actions. Prioritize invasive species management actions. Stabilize steep slopes in park area and work to mitigate/correct storm water runoff issues as appropriate for the conditions and work to prevent erosion thorough education, enforcement, and management actions.
46. Promote the proper disposal of waste and the importance of recycling by providing adequate opportunities for recycling within parks - including properly signed and located recycling bins; and timely pick-up and removal.
47. Improve awareness and enforcement of park regulations including, but not limited to: dumping and littering, trail use (motorized use on no-motorized trails and in parks, bicycle use on pedestrian trails, and creation of unauthorized trails), off leash dogs on trails and in parks, and park land encroachments (private facilities built on public park land). Use park and trail signage, on-line, outreach, and the local press to inform people of regulations. Focus enforcement efforts on problems hot spots.
48. Improve existing trails with erosion or surface quality issues. Construct new soft surface trails to meet IMBA (International Mountain Bike Association) standards or other accepted sustainable trail standards. For paved trails, include a pavement management plan for regular seal coating, overlay and/or replacement.
49. Set the example for wise resource use by creating tangible demonstrations of rainwater gardens, pervious paving, native landscaping, recycling and re-use, erosion control, stream bank restoration, vegetative buffers, energy use and other appropriate practices.

environmental



- ✓ Ecosystem Services
- ✓ Environmental Protection
- ✓ Environmental Awareness
- ✓ Political/Community Involvement

**Trails and parks help improve air and water quality. For example, communities with trails provide enjoyable and safe options for transportation, which reduces air pollution.**

**Greenways protect important habitat and provide corridors for people and wildlife.**

## RECREATION PROGRAMS

### Strategies

Funding for City operated recreation programs was eliminated in 2008 and full time and seasonal recreation staff positions were also eliminated. Since that time, Duluth Parks and Recreation has focused its recreation efforts on assisting partners such as non-profit and neighborhood groups in delivering recreation programs to youth and seniors. Several groups such as the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club, community clubs, Valley Youth, NYS and others offer recreation programs. There are recreation program gaps especially in the Duluth Heights and the eastern area of the City. Based on community feedback there is a need for summer youth programs and seasonal staff for ice skating. Options to address the program and geographic program gaps are additional funding for City recreation staff and seasonal staff and/or additional partner and neighborhood groups coming forward to operate youth and senior programs. Gaps in access to youth recreation programs have an impact on youth development, enrichment and community quality and safety. Senior recreation programs needs are likely to increase as the number of seniors increases in Duluth. Senior programming can be largely self-directed, but City organizational, logistics, communications, and building support are needed to assist senior groups. As funding and staffing allows, Duluth Parks and Recreation's partner and volunteer coordination role should be expanded and recreation programs offered to fill gaps in youth and senior programming. The goal should be full and equitable access to programs across the City, not just in areas where partners or community groups have stepped forward to fill the gap.

Duluth's winter outdoor recreation opportunities are vital to the community and to tourism. Continue to support Spirit Mountain, the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club, the unique skiing and skating programs at Chester Bowl and other winter recreation opportunities.

### Actions

50. Fill gaps in youth and senior recreation programs through continued work with partner organizations for delivery of programs.
  - A. Work with cultural communities to define and address program needs.
  - B. Continue to work with and recruit community organizations to fill gaps in access to youth and senior recreation programs.
  - C. Create a mobile recreation program with youth service agencies to be able to flexibly and cost effectively deliver recreation programs and activities to youth in under-served areas of the City.
51. When additional City funding and staffing are available and/or through additional partner groups, offer youth and senior recreation programs at recreation hubs.
  - A. Restore summer youth program in areas with concentrations of youth. Offer and promote programs as collaborative effort between the City, schools and partners.
52. Formalize programs for assisting community groups and organizations at ice skating sites. Consider further enhancing ice skating at Bayfront Festival Park by adding a loop skating route. Enable more part time rink staffing.
53. Obtain more flexibility for use of part time staff through negotiation with the employee union.
54. Clarify field maintenance expectations for league and program use.

