



Parks & Recreation

Ground Floor
411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802



218-730-4300



parks@duluthmn.gov

Chester Bowl Shared Use XC-Ski Trail Executive Summary

The City of Duluth Chester Park Mini-Master Plan (2014) and Cross Country Ski Trail Master Plan (2015) both called for a shared use trial period to determine feasibility of pedestrian use on the existing cross-country ski trails at Chester Park. This trial period ran for three winter seasons from 2017-2019. Based on all available evidence, stakeholder and public input, user surveys, and trail observations, the City believes pedestrians and skiers are unable to coexist with a shared use cross-country ski trail. Issues with shared use of the existing trail are not rooted in direct user conflict rather degradation of the groomed ski surface due to pedestrian and canine traffic.

To communicate the potential outcome of available options, please consider the following:

1. **“Limiting Nordic skiing in all or major parts of Chester”**- Nordic skiing has already been limited at Chester Park by removing a classic ski track. In addition, the skate oval track within the soccer field has been removed. This option is meant to provide separate trails for pedestrians and xc-skiers. By further limiting or removing Nordic skiing from Chester Bowl, groomed trail surfaces for hikers would also be eliminated.
2. **“Building a separate parallel pedestrian trail”**- Comparable to all other Duluth parks with cross-country ski trails, this option provides recreational access for all user types.
3. **It is determined pedestrians and skiers can coexist, and shared use continues**- Based on the trial period results, pedestrian and canine traffic impacts the quality of the Nordic ski grooming; as such, the trail conditions are unable to meet the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Cross-Country Ski Trail Grants-In-Aid (GIA) program standards required to be considered adequately groomed. Therefore, it would be unethical to continue receiving support from this program. Without this support, the City will no longer provide a groomed trail surface.

**MnDNR definition of grooming: “Providing a good smooth trail, either tracked for classical skiing or smooth for skating, in order to provide a suitable trail for cross-country skiing.”*
Furthermore, it is stated *“The local unit of government shall: Provide adequate maintenance and grooming of the trail, which shall include keeping the trails reasonably safe for public use...If the local unit of government, or their agent, fails to provide adequate maintenance and grooming of the trails, the State may withhold current or future performance benchmark payments or grooming reimbursements to the local unit of government...”*

Parks and Recreation staff recommendation: **“Building a separate parallel pedestrian trail”**



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Signage Cost Estimates:

On 8/14/19, an informational presentation was given to the Parks and Recreation Commission and included a cost estimation of approximately \$46,250 for signage and wayfinding. This figure accounts for complete signage of Upper Chester Park, and is not exclusive to wayfinding for the proposed trail system. The following is a breakdown of those *estimated costs:

- Park signs include: Park ID, Park Entrance, Kiosk Directory, and Regulatory signs: \$40,195
- Trail signs include: Wayfinding Maps, and Trail Markers: \$6,055

*this is not an additional funding ask, associated costs will come from the established Signage & Wayfinding budget

Proposed Hiking Trail Alignment adjustments:

After review of public comment and communication with the Chester Bowl Improvement Club Board of Directors, the proposed hiking trail alignment requires adjustment to avoid an active alpine skiing area. To establish complete hiking loop routes, a new pedestrian bridge over Chester Creek is required. *The estimated costs of construction and installation is \$15,000. An updated map showing the conceptual trail design for proposed hiking routes is included.

*this is not an additional funding ask, associated costs will come from the established Bridge budget

Please refer to the attached appendix for a full list of public comments.

Matt Andrews

Trails Coordinator

City of Duluth

Parks & Recreation Division

218-730-4308 (Office)

mandrews@duluthmn.gov | www.duluthmn.gov/parks



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Chester Creek

Soccer

Chalet







Playground



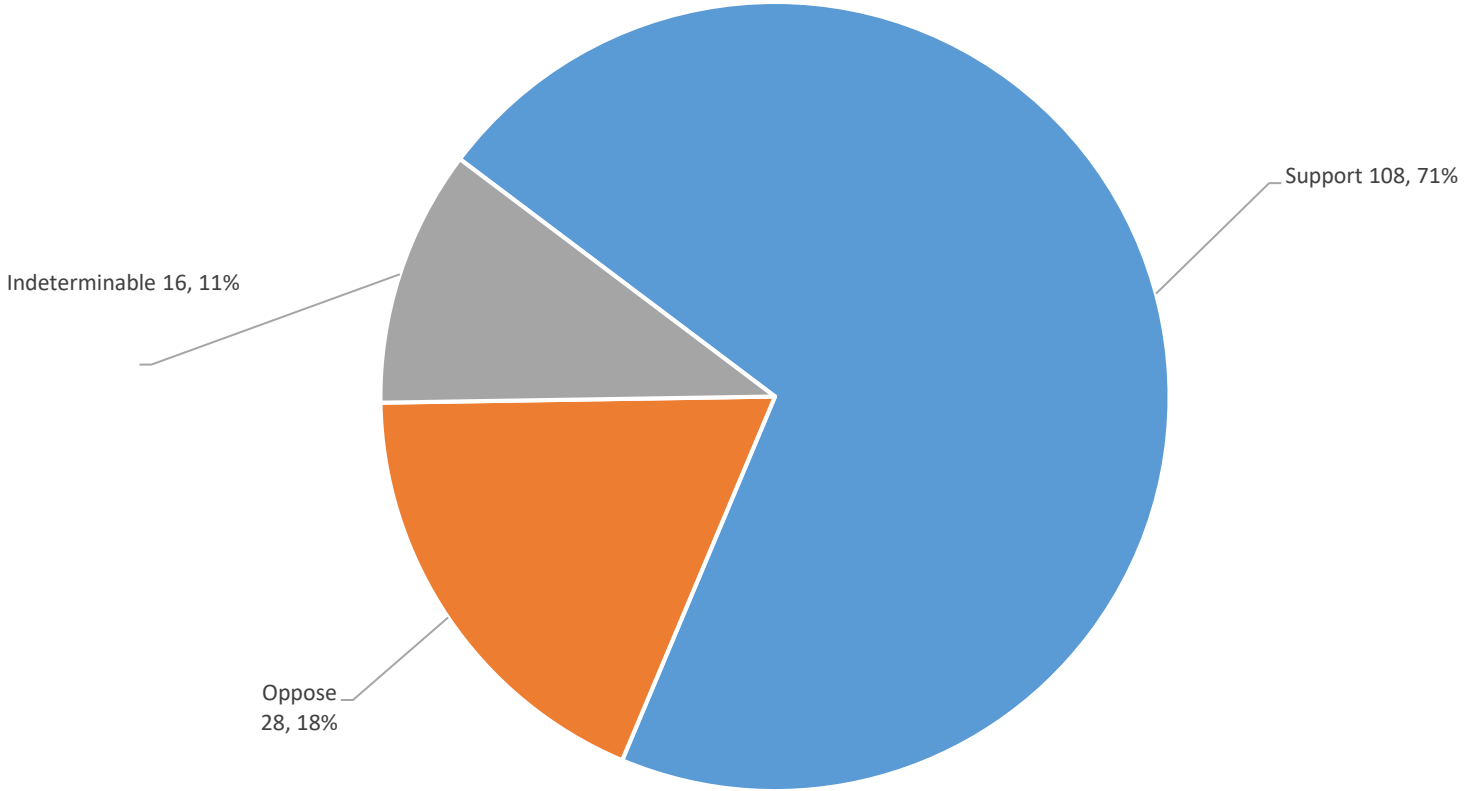
Ski Hill

Greys Creek

Legend

-  Proposed Bridge
-  Superior Hiking Trail
-  Mt. Biking/Hike Trail
-  X-Country Skiing Trail
-  Existing Hiking Trail
-  Proposed New Hiking Trail

Public Comment 08/15-08/29



| Date of Submission | Source | Comment | Theme: Support Separate Hiking Trail Oppose Separate Hiking Trail Indeterminable |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---|---|
| 8/15/2019 | Letter to Trails Coordinator | Enclosed are my comments in reference to the winter trail situation at Chester Creek Ski Trails (see notes on map 2). The alpine ski area is not a safe place to hike in the winter. The area I have indicated is slightly larger than the "official" area towards Skyline Blvd. As skiers use these trails...much to the cross country skiers surprise, the far left alpine ski run is affectionately called "suicide"....high speed thrills and spills with little lateral space to maneuver. The "see notes" segments is too steep for winter use. It is too close to the creek and is already unstable/eroding. During prior inspections, Jim Shoberg suggested abandonment of this segment. The north side of the creek identifies two segments too steep for winter hiking as well as having a barricade at the top of one. I do not envy the position you are in, trying to appease the skiers, especially the cross country skiers who have not even had the curiosity to actually visit the trail in the winter. Seeing the overwhelming number of walkers over skiers, I am beginning to beleive the cross country skiing at chester adsk too much and delivers too little. It may be time to go ski the four ski trails that are located three miles or less from Chester. | Indeterminable |
| 8/17/2019 | Web Comment Form | From 1975 to 2015, I was the manager at Chester Bowl Park. I groomed the ski trails for 25 years. I tried multiple ways to keep walkers off the trail, and everything I tried failed. THAT IS THE REALITY of the situation. The only peaceful solution is to keep the trail a joint use trail for both walkers and skiers. Based on 40 years of experience in managing Chester Bowl, If you choose to make it a skiers only trail, YOU WILL ABSOLUTELY FAIL, and it will create a lot of unnecessary conflict between skiers and walkers. I helped create the mini master plan for Chester Bowl, and it is a flawed document. It is based on ideal situations, and not reality. The reality is that walkers will continue to walk on the ski trails no matter what signs say, or the policy is. If you would like to talk to me about my experience with this situation, please contact me. Thank you for choosing the peaceful solution, and keeping the Chester Bowl Trail a shared trail. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/18/2019 | Web Comment Form | I'm writing in regards to the proposed plan that was shared at the August 14th park's commission meeting in regards to adding additional trails and doing away with the shared winter trail at Chester Park. I am a resident of XXX and hike on the trails year-round 2-3 times per day. This past winter with the addition of better signage communicating the expectations for everyone (hikers and skiers) sharing the groomed ski trails in the winter my impression was things were markedly improved for both user groups. This impression was based off daily observations and conversations on the trail with both skiers and hikers. Since the August 14th meeting, I've talked with numerous year-round trail users about the proposed new trails - each person stated they would continue to use the far side of the groomed ski trail for hiking in the winter instead of the new trail. The reason given was they have been sharing the trail for years with skiers, it worked last winter, and they won't use a new trail that isn't groomed. I too will continue to walk on the groomed ski trail in the winter. It would be a shame to destroy more precious forest and spend taxpayer money for a trail to be used by few if any for the intended purpose. In closing, please consider voting against adding new trails at Chester Park. Instead, encourage the continued shared use winter trail, which I know was successful last winter. Thank you for your time and consideration. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/18/2019 | Web Comment Form | I'm writing in regards to the proposed plan that was shared at the August 14th park's commission meeting in regards to adding additional trails and doing away with the shared winter trail at Chester Park. I am a resident of XXX and hike on the trails daily year-round. This past winter with the addition of better signage communicating the expectations for everyone (hikers and skiers) sharing the groomed ski trails in the winter my impression was things were markedly improved for both user groups. I will continue to walk on the groomed ski trail in the winter, rather than the new ungroomed trail. It would be a shame to destroy more precious forest and spend taxpayer money for a trail to be used by few if any for the intended purpose. In closing, please consider voting against adding new trails at Chester Park. Instead, encourage the continued shared use winter trail, which I know was successful last winter. Thank you for your time and consideration. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/18/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello! Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I love Chester Park, and I live near it. I urge the parks commission and the city council NOT to adopt the current proposed changes to the upper Chester Park trails. I think the city needs to be more inclusive when it comes to the users of the park and the city needs to protect the forest ecosystem. As a person who hikes the upper trail twice daily all year round, I believe that the SHARED USE of one trail for x-country skiers and hikers is the best solution. Shared use of the one trail has been successful. The new signage with directions for hikers and skiers was only installed last winter (2018), and these signs provide clear direction for all users. It is a waste of time and resources by making a change after one year. The trail is steep, and it is a short trail. The walkers are happy to share the space; the skiers who want to be professional and train for races can access trails at nearby Hartley or Spirit Mountain. Please keep in mind that Chester Park already has a lot of space dedicated to downhill skiers. It also contains the rim trail for bicycles. I think it is too much to also dedicate exclusive trail use for only skate-skiers. I caution the council and park board that while we all might like more trails, we can't really add more acreage. In this time of climate change, I urge the Parks & Recreation Board to preserve as much forest as possible. Today, when I walked I met three foxes and a deer. I've seen owls, woodpeckers, hawks and other birds here. This wildlife is essential to a healthy ecosystem. Cutting new trails means eliminating trees. A few years ago, many large and beautiful cedars were cut down for downhill skiing and snowboarding runs. Later, around the perimeter of the park, more trees were sacrificed for the Rim Trail, specifically for bicycles. We can witness the increased erosion since these events. The summer foot traffic from the two day camps for children have also created use patterns that impact the small park. Loss of trees means loss of wildlife habitat and more fragility of the forest (the fewer trees standing will not have as much wind break during storms) and more erosion. It takes a very long time for cedars and other trees to become large — it seems the increased deer population grazes on them and prevents their growth. The more trails that are built, the more this becomes a problem. The erosion is bad for Chester Creek because it makes it more muddy and adversely affects the fish. The erosion also damages the streets (Skyline Drive, Chester Parkway, and Chester Park Drive) and the surrounding neighborhoods. I'm sure the city has paid a lot for the patching of potholes and street damage. One way to limit the cost is to take better care of the forests. I see many, many neighbors using the trails in winter. This space provides a safe community meeting place and healthy exercise for elders, disabled, children, and dog-walkers. I also want to remind the commission and the council that the US population is aging. Baby boomers are becoming elders. The increased elder population will point to a need for more inclusive and shared public spaces that suit the needs of everybody. Thank you for all your time and attention to the parks and the many projects and initiatives that the parks have hosted. Your efforts are important and I ask that you approach this issue with a view of the long term needs of the ecosystem and population. Together, we make this city a great place to live. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/18/2019 | Web Comment Form | Fix the streets first. Also: Cut down the tree(s) blocking the stop sign at Kent & Chester Pk Dr. before someone gets injured or killed. Cut back the shrubbery growing in the gutter on the East Side of C. P. D., to the gutter before some one gets killed. Do something! I hope this notice to the city for liability reasons. Also, you voted on fixing the streets and the money goes to SMH and SLH. If there is any leftover \$\$ it will go to the streets. And now you want to have another trail in the Park, for which the DNR says the park is for "the fishies." No trail. (The creek is still barricaded to prevent access around the chalet.) Fix the streets first. The city has duped the voters, it would seem. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/18/2019 | Web Comment Form | Greetings, My family and I have lived in the Chester Park neighborhood since we moved to town 24 years ago. I am a dog walker and a skier. I am also a big fan of multi-use as a general concept. I biked the Duluth Traverse today and was again struck by how polite and accommodating 95% of the trail users are with each other. However, dual use on the Chester Ski trails does not work. I am a competent skier and have had my feet taken out from under me by a hard charging lab. I have skied a loop and quit, because the trail was so churned up and trashed by walkers that the trail couldn't be safely skied. The improved signage helped but the problems remained. Last season, I twice watched groups read a sign and then proceed to walk down the middle of the trail. I ski all over the city and other trails in northern WI and MN. Nowhere else are trails as quickly and thoroughly wrecked by walkers as they are at Chester, even with the signs. Nowhere else are pedestrians and dogs a constant hazard. Chester has a rich history as Duluth's historic ski center. I'd hate to see the Chester trails go the way of the jumps. As you know from your surveys and feedback, a high percentage of the Duluth ski community avoids Chester because of the walkers. To varying degrees, every other ski trail in town has pedestrian traffic. By and large, those pedestrians respect the groomed trails during the winter. It's not too much to expect the Chester walking community to do the same, especially with the proposed trail. I strongly support the Park's proposal. I love the idea of discontinuing ecologically harmful trails and replacing them with better planned and more sustainable trails. The walkers are an intransigent lot, but I hope that the Chester culture will change with time and that the Chester trails can be safe for everyone to use and enjoy. Thanks for listening, XXX | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/18/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>My name is XXX and I have lived in the Chester Park neighborhood for 18 years. My wife and I chose Duluth to put our roots down and raise our girls because it is a tremendously beautiful City with wonderful places like Chester, literally in our back yard. We have hiked, run, walked our dogs, biked, played with our kids, downhill skied, attend concerts and cross country skied in Chester for all of those 18 years and will do so for as long as we are able. I have attended all but one of the public and stakeholder meetings for the Chester ski trails and am former board member of the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club.</p> <p>I am writing so show my support for City Staff's recommendation or return the Chester Park cross country ski trail to a designated ski trail from a shared use trail. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue.</p> <p>Cross Country skiing is core to Chester Parks identity and has a rich legacy in the park. I was intimately involved in the stakeholder process of the shared use trail and firmly believe that walking on ski trails is not a compatible use, yet walkers need a place in Chester when the ski trails are groomed. Our understanding of the stakeholder process goal, was to reach a solution for all users to be able to continue to safely enjoy Chester. We felt that the process resulted in the that goal being achieved.</p> <p>Walking on the groomed trails is not a compatible because it adversely affects skiing, resulting is skiers not using the trail and shared use is a safety concern for all users. The risk of collisions between skiers, walkers and dogs is unacceptable. I believe that City Staff has proposed a safe solution that accommodates all users, while minimizing impact to the park. Please support the Staff's recommendation, by voting in favor of their plan.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and commitment to Chester!</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | So, if dogs make up over 1/4 of the usage of this park, cant we find a way to allow people to use this area for off leash dogs as well as other recreation? Couldn't this park be a designated off-leash area? | Indeterminable |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | As a non skier, I highly value the packed trails in Chester. I understand that skiers have kind of claimed their stake and I will follow the rules set forth. However, just as dogs roam off leash in Chester Park against the rules, I doubt pedestrians at large would stop using the ski trails. I think the best way is to find a way for skiers to coexist with hikers. I would appreciate that! The groomed surface is typically a perfect location to run in the winter. | Indeterminable |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | I lived near Chester for 10 years and skied the trails. I think it should NOT be groomed at all. There are very few who utilize it, most do it pre grooming due to footprints. Let it be a dog/hiking/snowshoe/backcountry trail and put more effort into grooming Magney which is often neglected or poorly groomed!! Dan Proctor does not have a computer and asked me to add that he wants to see it left ungroomed too. | Indeterminable |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | In the summer there are quite a few trails that are shared between bikers and hikers, and the two coexist rather well on even tighter trails. This suggests that the issues we're seeing in Chester Bowl's shared trails between skiers and hikers isn't because of the hikers. There are already plenty of places for cross country skiers. If they can't handle hikers in Chester Bowl then cross country skiing should be restricted in the park rather than cutting new trails. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | We have lived near Chester Bowl for 28 years, and used it often during the 32 years we have been in Duluth. The mixed-use designation has worked fine for our family, whether we are skiing, walking, or running. I am also concerned about the damage additional trail construction would cause. The park is only so big. As for pedestrians and skiers being unable to coexist on a shared trail, that has not been my experience. To the contrary, the winter trail users I have encountered at Chester Bowl have typically demonstrated the same spirit of cooperation I have come to expect on trails across the city. Thank you for your time. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | I am not for this plan and don't think that it is worth spending the money on this trail that is only going to be used for three months out of the year. Plus, unless the new trail for walkers that is built is going to be groomed, people aren't going to use it once it snows because the snow won't be packed. If you get a snow-mobile groomer in there to pack the walking trails then I think it can work, but if you don't groom it then why would anyone use that trail when they can walk on a groomed ski trail? It just doesn't make sense. The only way it will work is if the walkers trails are groomed too. Additionally, please take another look at what Dan Proctor said during the meeting about the numbers being off because of where the cameras were placed on the trails and how many times the skiers loop on the trails. The ratios of skiers to walkers just doesn't make sense. I am not in support of creating new trails for the walkers, and instead think that we should continue to keep the shared walker/skier trail. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | As a MN Master Naturalist and a volunteer for the city of Duluth to detect and remove invasive plant species I spend countless hours in Chester walking and examining the trails. The idea of creating additional parallel ski trails for at most 3 months out of the year is not beneficial to future sustainability of this small city park. If you examine the map and visit Chester you will note that the parallel trails are in extremely close proximity to the current very wide trails. The result will be further erosion of vegetation as parts of these two trails merge and cross, resulting in destruction of habitat in this small green oasis in the middle of the city. The argument that an equal amount of land reclamation will occur does not make sense when you examine the proposed reclamation areas. Much of this would be done to current deer paths, or short neighborhood access paths which are very narrow, of little significance, and thus in reality will not equal the destruction of other vegetation. In addition the plan does not clearly state who will do this reclamation, when it will happen, and where the financial resources will come from. The proposal does not include any consideration of the impact on vegetation lost that occurred when the Traverse trail was created through Chester, nor the lost vegetation resulting from the cutting of trees to create another downhill ski run. The frequently cited "Master Plan" was created before this and thus should be revised. In fact, the proposal includes no "environmental impact statement" regarding how this proposal will impact an already stressed green space. With all of this in mind why hasn't the city's Natural Resources Commission been consulted to evaluate the potential damage this proposal will create? The city's website states that: "The Natural Resources Commission will provide science-based guidance on the protection and enhancement of the ecological health of city owned and city managed lands and the regional ecosystems of which they are an integral part and will advise on the Duluth natural area program established to designate, protect, and manage lands of special environmental value. " Finally, before the city expends resources to create more trails it would be best to prioritize funding to address the erosion that exists currently throughout the park. It is disheartening to me that city officials mandated with protecting the ecology of Chester Park have proposed the destruction of same through needless additional trails. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 Web Comment Form | We own land backed up to Chester park at XXX. I have concerns that have not addressed several of my concerns including: 1) cutting additional park vegetation to accommodate the X-country skiers for the winter months only. During the remainder of the year these trails would be duplicate paths to the existing trails. 2) the additional cleared land will require the added cost to manage erosion issues that are already a problem in the noted problem areas. 3) the addition of the proposed new trails will do NOTHING to address the "none compliant" (eg dogs with no leash) guests. If anything the new trails will increase the cost of enforcement of the existing rules. At a time when resources are tight and the park service is facing the possibility of closing and selling portions of existing parks it seems unreasonable to use the limited resources for park attendees that will use the service for only 4-5 months.. We can see the trail clearly from our home and I can tell you from personal experience we see far more walkers on the trails and the occasional X-country skier and as I understand the proposal in addition to making new trails there is no plan to groom the walking trail. If that is the case I can guarantee the groomed ski trail will continued to be used for hiking. When you consider this proposal to create more trails please consider all of the ramifications and expenses associated with this plan | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | Pursuant to the 8-14-19 Chester Bowl Shared Use presentation, I wish to submit the following comments. I appreciate the Commissioners' time and attention and am aware that they need accurate and unbiased information within proposals to forward reasoned opinion. Neither was presented in the Shared Use Proposal. I am a retired UWS professor with extensive research/survey experience and I can state unequivocally, that the procedures and data presented were fabricated by design to support a biased conclusion (skiers and walkers are incompatible) and new trails are needed. Evidence of inaccuracy, bias and intent are shown in the proposal's process and the data presented. Process issue's include but are not restricted to secret meetings, secret maps, select participant meetings, scheduled meeting not held, decisions reached in a blind, and "fuzzy language" regarding particulars such as cost, how and who would do work, maintenance, compliance and safety. Similarly, data methods such as late signage, camera placement, definition of peak periods? data collection, anecdotal unsubstantiated reports and convoluted issues. I stand ready at any time to support my conclusions. The reality is that over the years the Chester Park Ski Trail has evolved to where the majority of users are walkers. The reasons as to why this change has taken place can be argued but the reality remains, the majority of users are walkers. As this change was occurring, there have been several interpersonal confrontations between skiers and walkers. To help avoid interpersonal confrontations a compromise was reached in 2018, that the trail would be a shared multi-use trail supported by new, improved signage. Now after one incomplete season (late signage), the Park Staff have decided, in a blind, that skiers and walkers are incompatible. In the face of common use and common sense, Park Staff with obvious bias, supported by fabricated conclusions, wish to turn the clock back to potential conflict in a public space. It took time and effort to come up with a compromise plan and to merely dismiss it without thorough review or exploration of how to make it better is an insult to all those involved. Those individuals who should be concerned with the health and safety of all in the park wish to return us to potential interpersonal conflict. The only suggestion to deal with potential conflict was new signage at \$46,250.00 that would replace last year's new signage that replaced the new signage of three years ago. No other suggestion of rule/trail oversight addressed the strong potential of conflict. As a a near daily trail user, it is a safe flat surface to walk. Last winter's experience was enjoyable and when I would meet a skier we both showed mutual respect. I would hate to see us digress but the proposal by the Chester Park Staff leaves me two alternatives; stop walking or become a "rule breaker" with possible interpersonal conflict. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | I think separate trails and LOTS of signage to underscore which use is exclusively ok on trail x is the only way to go at Chester. Some more extensive educational/informational signage at major access points that explained the rationale for separate trails might help to mitigate walking on ski trails, as I periodically encounter people walking on ski trails under the impression that it's ok as long as they aren't in the tracks. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | It is too dangerous on those big hills to have skiers screaming down the hills and hikers and dogs also on the trails. This should be skiers only and hikers can use the COGGS rim trail and the Chester Creek Trail. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am generally supportive creating a separate walking trail system. I don't us Chester as much for Nordic skiing as I would like, mostly because footprints on the snow are quite dangerous after there has been a freeze/thaw cycle refrozen. I've had a few bad falls at Chesterbowl, and they were the product of an icy footprint that got frozen in place on a downhill. The only concerns I have concern the routing of potential walking trails. First it appears that proposed walking trails are routed across the bottom of the alpine hill. This is obviously not feasible. I am also concerned that it appears from the maps posted online that the lowest portion of blueberry run would be used for the walking trail, presumably removing it from the alpine system. That run is a little trick, because it relies entirely on natural snow (the snow making equipment doesn't reach over there), it is closed much of the time. But it is also one of the most challenging runs on the hill, and therefore is particularly helpful for kids as the progress in their skiing skills. Even when this trail is closed, trying to provide foot traffic to it would require routing walker across the bottom of the bunny hill where the smallest children are learning to ski. This is a potential hazard to both walker and child. In this planning process it is important to remember that the alpine system probably see more use than either walkers or nordic skiers | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | As an avid Nordic skier and a winter hiker (with a dog and kid in tow) I realize that there is a need for both trail user groups to have access to winter trails. That being said, I am in full support of separate trails for winter hiking and cross country skiing. Due to the steep nature of Chester hills, twisty corners, and sometimes icy conditions that exist here in Duluth, it's crucial that the tracks remain in good condition (free of excessive bumps and divots) which is impossible with humans and dogs sharing the ski trails. Chester presents a unique opportunity for individuals to ski in the heart of Duluth without having to spend a significant amount of time in transit. It is a convenient location for folks to get in a quick workout, whether that be by foot or ski. I hope that there is a good solution for skiing, fat biking on the traverse trail, and hiking with dogs through a beautiful city park while keeping everyone safe on separate sections of trail. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | For the amount of hiker only trails in the chester Park area I don't see the need for them to also be allowed on the Nordic trails. Don't get me wrong, I walk down there all the time, but for how short the Nordic ski season is groomed and good for skiing why is it so much to ask for a section of trail to not be walked on. There is trail literally all over the city that is walking traffic only, where no other mode of transport is allowed, why is it that those exist but more and more hikers want access to other trail that is designed and built for other markets? I would love to see the chester ski trails turned back into Nordic Ski trails, it is one of the oldest and honestly most fun area to ski within the city of Duluth, but to have the groomed tread constantly ruined by people walking all over it it is hardly even skiable anymore. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | Besides potential problematic social interactions that can arise between slow-moving and fast-moving traffic, or pedestrians walking in and destroying ski track, it's just not safe for skiers and pedestrians (often with dogs) to use the same trail. I ski and walk (with dogs), and I support separate trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | Nordic ski trails take a big hit when people walk or bike on them. If you want to maintain skiable trails while offering pedestrians an option to use Chester in the winter, creating separate walking and ski trails would be necessary. Thank you for your time, Ashley Herman | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/19/2019 | Web Comment Form | Separate parallel trails, please. Please do not designate single use only trails in this very popular park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/20/2019 | Web Comment Form | Separate trail use for this beloved park would be excellent! Thank you for your research and follow through on this! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/20/2019 | Web Comment Form | Pedestrian and xc ski use are completely incompatible during the ski season. Footprints and holes in the ski deck are a huge safety issue for skiers, not to mention with the steep hills, skiers would be unable to navigate safely around pedestrians on the trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/20/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>My name is XXX , and I live at XXX, next to Chester Park with my wife Judith. We've lived here since 2002, and have used the Chester Park groomed ski trails and walking trails since moving to Duluth in 1979. Our two children learned to ski on Duluth's wonderful ski trails, including Chester. I ski the trails regularly during the winter months, living right across the street from the upper trails, and walk the trails the non winter months.</p> <p>I have been attending the Stakeholders meetings on the issue of the shared use trial period , where skiers and walkers have had joint access to the groomed ski trails the past 3 winters. I appreciate and support the City's Proposal to return the groomed ski trails to skiers only for the ski season, while supporting the development of winter walking trails through the use of existing walking/bike trails , plus creating short segments of new trail that would link the system for walkers. My wife is an avid walker / user of the trails in both summer and winter, including snowshoes. I walked the proposed system with Jim Shoberg, Matt Andrews and many shareholder walkers and skiers in early July. I like their proposal.</p> <p>Both my wife and I have seen the problems created by walkers, particularly with unleashed dogs for those of us who ski there.... and there are many with unleaded dogs. Even with leased dogs, I have had uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous encounters with walkers while skiing, particularly on downhills, where it can be very difficult to avoid them. Even with improved signage this past winter, some walkers chose to ignore the directions.</p> <p>Please support the City's plan to return the groomed Chester ski trails for skiers only in the winter months, and create a SEPARATE walking system (probably groomed with less expensive equipment that creates a good surface for walkers). I support the walkers and their desire to stay active during the winter in this beautiful park. This is a compromise that can work.</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/21/2019 Web Comment Form | As a lifelong Duluth resident, I am strongly opposed to the creation of parallel winter hiking trails. Chester Park does not have enough acreage to support any additional trails, even if other trails are taken out of use. Skiers and hikers should be encouraged to share the current trails which supports a strong sense of community. Creating separate trails will only facilitate anger and animosity in the Chester Park neighborhood | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Web Comment Form | I am opposed to the creation of any parallel hiking trails for three months out of the year. Cross country skiers have many options in Duluth and keeping the Chester Park trails as shared trails is another positive type of cross country ski option, not a negative experience. In addition, the proposal lacks financial rigor, as was pointed out during the public comment session on August 14th. Limited taxpayer dollars would best be spent restoring the current trails instead of creating additional trails. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>First of all, thank you for your work! I love Duluth and am grateful for all of the folks that make our city a great place to live. I am writing with regards to changes proposed to the upper Chester Park Trail system. I am strongly in favor of leaving the upper trail open to shared use between hikers and skiers (and people with snow shoes, baby strollers, canes, dogs etc.). Last year's signage brought some clear and useful direction that helped, in my experience, make the trail a friendly local place to share space and community with neighbors. I hike the trail at least twice daily year round. The overwhelming majority of trail use is by hikers and I have found the casual, relaxed space an excellent opportunity to meet neighbors, students, pedestrian commuters, youth program participants and other visitors of all ages and varied physical ability. This is the type of informal gathering space that creates the fabric of community in our city. It is also the type of green space that fosters a sense of relationship with the ecosystems that support us.</p> <p>There is a proposal on the table to create a new, separate trail for hikers. The existing, well-established, well-maintained trail would be reserved in the winter for racing / training type use by advanced, fast, elite skiers (the trail would be groomed awaiting those days that weather permits and these skiers decide to use the park). At the recent meeting at Chester Park to discuss the proposed new trails for walkers, it was made clear that maintenance of these new trails would be difficult to fund in terms of staffing time and equipment. It was suggested that hikers could just use snow shoes to break trail so the pristine quality of the expensively-groomed ski trail could remain undisturbed. I couldn't help but remember the days of my youth when cross-country skis were also meant to be used to break trail. It is clear though that we aren't talking slow, awkward skiers making their way through the woods. We only intend that trail for people that can go fast and stay out of the way of other advanced skiers or risk being mowed down ::: a rather small minority of the users of that trail system.</p> <p>At that last meeting, everything seemed to be expressed through the lens of that type of user. Dogs were "non-compliant," walkers took more than their quarter of the trail, trees were in the way, maintaining trail merely for hikers was a waste of city resources. I walk the trail daily and enjoy the opportunity to share space with "slow" people ::: I like the ritual of making room for each other. In an often mean-spirited world, I appreciate the kindness of skiers that show a courtesy to slow their pace and to walkers that move aside and remark on the day. Dogs have often been adopted from shelters and provide an easy conversational opening for their humans. The occasional errant dog poop pales in eyesore status and environmental impact when compared with taking down carbon-sequestering, erosion-reducing vegetation to create a new trail for those that can't share the existing space.</p> <p>I understand that this trail had historic use as a ski trail but there has been no historic time where we are so concerned with the vital need to plant trees to preserve our planet. Even symbolic action like preserving the trees that we can ::: to sacrifice a bit of recreation for this larger picture can have impact and meaning. We have limited resources that we can use as a community and the time is right to channel some of our recreation funds to create more forest cover ::: to do our part to sequester carbon and support wildlife. There are many other single-use ski trails at other parks. Chester is relatively small. It hosts a thriving summer youth presence, a very successful Alpine ski program, a leg of the Duluth Traverse trail system, a seasonal soccer field, concert stage, playground and festival space as well as the shared trail. All city parks don't need to serve all single-use needs.</p> <p>As a very frequent user of the trail, I felt the signage installed last year went a long way to create a safe, inclusive environment for shared use last winter. It is a win-win for the vast majority of users to continue this policy. We were told that the state provides funds to maintain ski-only trails but the share of this funding coming to Chester Park is very small. We could replace the expensive ski-grooming methods used now with an occasional, cheaper snowmobile pass-through to keep a snow pack that is conducive for hikers of varying physical abilities and for skiers. There is very limited accessible options for walkers in the winter. Adding a narrow, non-maintained, often steep, slick path for hikers significantly reduces the park's accessibility to a large number of recreational users and to pedestrians that use the trails to commute to work, school and other services.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and thanks again for your work. I also wanted to take a moment to thank the many neighbors who volunteer daily to maintain the trail. I have been so impressed with the community spirit that helps maintain the existing trail.</p> | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Web Comment Form | To whom it may concern: I'm a resident of the East Hillside neighborhood of Duluth and I live not far from, and frequently use, the Chester Park hiking and ski trails. I'm also executive director of the Superior Hiking Trail Association; the SHT passes through Chester Park. While the SHT is not affected by the management changes proposed by Duluth Parks, the Association takes great interest in how the City manages the parks the Trail passes through, We want to reduce conflict and improve harmony among trail users of all kinds. I have participated in 3 stakeholder processes in the last year and a half. I support Duluth Parks' plan for Chester Park trails. Keeping walkers off the ski trails and expanding the network of hiking trails gives something to everyone who's been engaged in the process. It was clear from the tour the stakeholder group took in June that Duluth Parks faces the daunting challenge of eliminating many "social trails" in Chester Park. I support the creation of a new hiking trail, but qualify that support with urging Duluth Parks to commit to getting people only on designated and managed trails to minimize the environmental damage from the many unofficial trails. Finally, I commend Duluth Parks staff for its effort to understand actual park use with the data collection efforts and holding firm to do the right thing in the end for the park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/21/2019 Letter to Parks Commissioners | <p>I was made aware of a new concerted effort to limit or even stop use of the Chester Bowl ski trails for skiing. I won't rehash the thorough points made by the Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC) board of directors in their recent correspondence on the matter, but let this paragraph's topic sentence sink in; stopping skiers using a ski trail.</p> <p>I tackled this very issue several years ago as a DXC board member. I fully understand and appreciate the delicate nature of, numerous perspectives on, passionate beliefs over, and desired use of the beloved outdoor space. It seems like a conundrum, but it really isn't. I do not see the logic nor a valid claim on any group's grab at a space that was designed for and intended to be used as a ski trail in winter, particularly one with the depth of history Chester Bowl has. Chester Bowl ski trail isn't just a ski trail, or even just a challenging ski trail. It is of historical significance to the city of Duluth, as a SKI trail. One would be hard pressed to argue that a trail of more historical and impactful nature exists in the area. That should be considered in this brew-hah at the very essence and outset of any assessment, but that isn't even why we should take pause on this notion. It is risk in precedent of rewarding misuse and ignoring the ordinances of the city to change the perspective and nature of a historically significant city entity. I fully understand WHY walkers want to walk on this great ski trail, but it's not a logical argument, because it is not a walking trail. It never has been, and it should not be in winter months.</p> <p>Imagine you are the mayor or a city counselor, but not today. It's 2069. Duluth has been known for its Lakewalk for upwards of 75 years now and it has been a gem, leading to walking trails at other locations in the city. But the Lakewalk is kind of the crown jewel because it was the first, and it really still is the best in people's hearts. But in the few decades prior to 2069, walking has taken a hit in American culture, because, well, it's HARD! Electric scooters have become not only culturally acceptable but the norm for moving about. They've begun to dominate the Lakewalk. Now electric scooters go 30 miles per hour but still don't feel as safe on roads next to automobiles in traffic. More and more people are using scooters on the Lakewalk as they feel there aren't enough safe spaces on the roadways for them. City ordinances prohibit them from being there, but the practice gets looked past by the city as it alleviates the burden of too few safe scooter lanes on streets. It seems silly to enforce because it is such an accepted practice. Plus the Lakewalk is BEAUTIFUL for scooting! It's the prettiest place in Duluth to scoot! Walkers feel less safe on the Lakewalk and avoid it more than they used to because of all the scooters (and their scooters poop all over the Lakewalk too!). Scooter-users take this as a sign walkers don't want to walk on the Lakewalk anymore and assert very loudly and publicly that you should remove the WALKers from the LakeWALK?</p> <p>Remove SKIers from the SKI trail? It's a poor precedent, and it would be arrived at in a very unfortunate and unfair manner. It's a ski trail; an historic, beloved ski trail that skiers want to ski on. And they should, whenever there's enough snow for the city to groom it. And it should be safe. Walkers should feel free to walk on it when there isn't any snow.</p> <p>Please consider this as you deliberate and consider what you face on this matter.</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door.</p> <p>I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Web Comment Form | <p>Thank you for the continued work on shared use trails in Chester Park. Having biked, skied, ran, and hiked in many trails through Chester, it remains in my mind a gem of outdoor recreation nestled in the urban hillside. Though I generally approve of the suggestions made herein, especially the precedent of stakeholder meetings and data-driven decision making, I believe there are 2 missed elements of the conversation. 1. Mitigation of user-conflicts seems to be a driving factor in the addition of a dedicated walking trail. However, a large portion of the designated walking route is still multi-use in nature, specifically being Duluth Traverse mountain bike trail. Though I know of no specific conflicts arising in this specific area, mitigation of user conflicts has been a continuing focus of the Cyclists of Gitchee Gumees Shores, and I stress that any routing changes should also serve as an opportunity for user education to try to mitigate conflict. Specifically, information regarding the etiquette of shared-use trails, right of way, dog leash laws, and a call for being an aware trail user. 2. The addition of hiking only trail also begs the question of if there is opportunity to revisit a multi-use MTB trail on that Southern portion where new trail is proposed. There is potential here to share resources in building said new trail. I did not see mention of this in the proposal, but here ask if there is expectation or intention of grooming the hiking trail, as "groomed/packed surface" was identified in survey as a reason individuals use the trail. The DT portion at least remains a difficult section to do so due to terrain. The comments here made are mine as an individual, not the official position of Cyclists of Gitchee Gumees Shores as an organization.</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/21/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>My name is XXX and I am the ski coach at the College of St. Scholastica. I work across the street from Chester Park and our ski team and club use the ski trail there almost daily. We are building a huge ski program on our campus that is known as the premier program for athlete-development at the college level. We have an NCAA team of around 45 people and a club with around 30 people. I expect this number to double over the next 4 years and I would love to share our growth proposal with you if you are interested.</p> <p>Smart, talented, hard-working, students come from all over the world to live next to Chester Bowl to continue pursuing skiing at all different levels from recreational to elite. We ski all over Duluth, but the value of being able to cross-country ski without having to drive in a car to college students is tremendous. The loss of skiing in Chester Park would be devastating to us.</p> <p>I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park.</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 Email to Trails Coordinator | <p>One area of conflict that is not addressed by the proposed new trail at Chester Bowl is the area that connects the Kenwood neighborhood to Chester Bowl Drive via the Bridge near the Soccer field.</p> <p>The bridge is used by bird watchers, dog walkers, children, hikers, and others.</p> <p>Currently, the bridge is only included as part of the ski trail. This will be an area of conflict as all other users will continue to use this crossing. It will need to be an area that skiers will need to be aware of as there will be other types of traffic over this bridge. A separate down hill hiking trail could be established but the funds that would be used to build a second bridge over the creek could be better spent elsewhere.</p> | Indeterminable |

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| <p>8/22/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners</p> | <p>Hello -</p> <p>My husband and I live in the Chester Park neighborhood, and are strongly in support of continuing the 'shared use' of the Chester Park trails. The current signage works well, and with courtesy 'shared use' will continue to benefit the great majority. We are sympathetic to elite Nordic skiers, since we have one in our family, but the greater Duluth area in general serves these skiers well. Walkers in the winter are far too often relegated to walking in the streets, as in our Chester Park neighborhood we have already been banned from walking in Bagley Nature Center due to skiers and are often unable to even use the public sidewalks due to delinquent shovelers. The Chester Park public area, with its well-signed trails, can work well for all of us, and should be kept at its 'shared use' status!</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to work on this issue -</p> | <p>Oppose Separate Hiking Trail</p> |
| <p>8/22/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners</p> | <p>Greetings Park Commissioners and City Councilors:</p> <p>I am writing about the proposed changes to the trails in Upper Chester Park, creating a separate trail for hikers in order to provide cross country skiers with their own private trail.</p> <p>For decades hikers and cross country skiers have shared the park, but this new proposal—put forth by the city administration—is not only unnecessary, but will harm the park and cost the city funds it needs to maintain its already stressed park system.</p> <p>Upper Chester is already criss-crossed with multiple trails, including an entire trail built with taxpayer funds for the exclusive use of elite bicyclists (who rarely use it). The park does not need another trail. New trails cost money and create more need for maintenance, and as you know Duluth already struggles to maintain its extensive park system. Further, cutting a new trail will remove more vegetation—trees and shrubs—and create more erosion and habitat problems.</p> <p>Why is this new trail needed? Only because the handful of cross-country skiers who occasionally use Upper Chester refuse to share the trail.</p> <p>The city will present you with trail-use data, but you should be aware of the flawed collection process used by the city to gauge winter usage in Upper Chester. The city used one camera facing the entry to a single trail loop rarely used by hikers, therefor not gaining an accurate picture of how many hikers use the trail. It also counted single skiers multiple times, as most skiers complete several loops through the park when they do ski, which is rare. So the data will show that skiers use the trails more often than hikers, which is simply not true. So once again the city has assembled skewed, inaccurate data to tilt the playing field in its favor in order to drive the issue toward its predetermined conclusion, ignoring public input and disenfranchising the people who use the park the most.</p> <p>Upper Chester does not need another trail. Instead, we should be asking our elite athletes to share the parks. The parks should be for all of us, not just the athletic friends of Mayor Larson and former Mayor Ness, for whom the unwritten policy since 2008 seems to be “whatever they want, they get—no matter what the rest of the public wants.”</p> <p>This elitism has to stop. Please support all Duluthians by refusing to allow unnecessary trail development in Upper Chester Park. And please demand honesty and transparency from the administration with this and all issues they present to you.</p> <p>Thanks for reading.</p> | <p>Oppose Separate Hiking Trail</p> |
| <p>8/22/2019 Letter to Parks Commisisoners</p> | <p>Dear Duluth Park Commission,</p> <p>Please accept my written comments in regard to continued sharing of Chester Creek Trails. I have no computer or email. To the comments to Matt Andrews enclosed, I would add my peresonal observations of 30 years of winter use of this trail system. I cross country ski, I walk, I run these trails. Skiing has been the minority use by a large margin over walking uses. I enjoy slowing down or stopping to talk to others when I ski. This communication builds community. The best skiing occurs before grooming. It is like old time skiing in the woods, breaking trail in slow snow conditions. When groomed, skiing becomes too fast and indimidating from the race training on this trail. We do not allow race training on our public roads. It makes no sense to allow ski race training on our public trails. The risks of race training are better addressed on private, more intensely maintained land. If winter trails for walkers is created, it must be groomed, or walkers will use the groomed ski trail. ninety percent of funding for duluths cross country ski trail grooming is from general tax reveue. The non skiing tax payers are entitled to a groomed witner walking trail at chester park for their taxes. Thank you.</p> | <p>Oppose Separate Hiking Trail</p> |
| <p>8/22/2019 Web Comment Form</p> | <p>I live near the Chester Creek Trails and walk on them often. I enjoy walking on these trails throughout the year. There have been a number of additions to the trails over the years which is a bit concerning because of their "thinning" effect on the amount of woods between the trails and nearby roads. When walking in the winter, I observe many other walkers using the trail and seldom come across a cross country skier. Whatever is decided, I am hoping to continue to walk on the trails throughout the year and am also hoping that the existing trails can can be expanded as little as possible. Thank you</p> | <p>Oppose Separate Hiking Trail</p> |
| <p>8/22/2019 Email to Parks Commissioners</p> | <p>My name is XXX, I live just a few minutes walk from Chester Park. I spend much of my winter cross-country skiing and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often throughout the winter. One of the reasons I live in Duluth is the accessibility to trails in the area, such as Chester Park.</p> <p>I am writing to you to add my support for the City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I believe this would be a great compromise to appeal to all users of the trails. I apologize that I was not in attendance last Wednesday, July 14th, to add my voice in person on this issue. I will plan on attending the September 11th meeting to advocate for the amazing ski trails we currently have in Chester Park.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p> | <p>Support Separate Hiking Trail</p> |

Dear Parks Commissioners,

The Duluth Cross-Country Ski Club (DXC) supports the City of Duluth's proposal regarding the cross-country ski trails at Chester Bowl because we believe the City's plan reflects a collaborative community solution that safely accommodates winter use of Chester Park for all user groups. The Chester ski trails have long been a special part of Duluth's legacy and identity as a City where people of all ages can have a quality experience cross-country skiing in their neighborhood park, without having to travel too far. It's one of the things that makes Duluth special and unique as a winter city that values health and outdoor recreation.

As you may be aware, the City's proposal seeks to address a longstanding conflict regarding appropriate winter use of Chester's cross-country ski trails. Although walking and dogs are historically not permitted on City ski trails during the three months when there is skiable snow, a number of people chose to walk on the groomed ski trails at Chester anyway. While we understand the desire to enjoy walking in Chester Park year-round, boot prints and foot and dog traffic on the groomed surface of the ski trail led to safety concerns and conflict between users.

Brief History. To address the desire for more winter walking-appropriate options within the park, the Chester Park mini master plan originally called for a parallel walking trail to be built. Given concerns about constructing additional trails in an already trail-dense park, this plan was put on hold in favor of a 3-year trial period of shared use on Chester ski trails. This was supposed to be followed by a public comment process and proposal to the Parks Commission by June 2017 on whether to continue or discontinue shared use. As you are aware, the trial period was extended for two additional seasons, due primarily to turnover in the City Parks and Recreation department and staffing issues. At the conclusion of the fourth year, the Parks Department facilitated two public comment sessions and several multi-disciplinary stakeholder sessions to collaboratively work toward a potential solution. The stakeholder group developed a collaborative proposal, which did not give any group exactly what they wanted, but offered a way to work together and get most of the way there for each group.

When the Chester Mini Master Plan and Cross-Country Ski Trails Master plan were drafted, the COGGS Chester Rim Trail did not exist. As a result, there is now an approved walking trail that covers a large swath of the park that was previously inaccessible to winter walkers. However, it still does not allow walkers to complete a "loop." The multi-disciplinary stakeholder group convened by the City worked together to propose that: 1) the ski trail be shared by walkers and skiers in short segments where there was not another environmentally appropriate option, 2) that short segments of trail be created to link the existing walking trails to form the loop that walkers have identified as an important need, and 3) to close/decommission enough unofficial trails within Chester that are currently not sustainably built and are causing erosion to result in a net-zero gain in the overall network of Chester trails.

Following two additional stakeholder sessions in the Spring and Summer of 2019, the City finalized its current proposal, which reflects many of the agreements reached by the multi-disciplinary stakeholder group that has worked together over the course of the past two years to identify a collaborative community solution to this concern.

Safety Concerns. Chester Park is beloved and well-used – it's everyone's park, and we believe strongly that all user groups should be able to use the park in every season. However, that has not been the case with shared winter use of cross-country ski trails, which does not allow for skiers to safely use the ski trails during the winter. There is a good reason why walking and dogs are not permitted on Duluth's other City ski trails – they are simply not compatible uses. City Parks staff do an amazing job of grooming ski trails so they stay safe and enjoyable for residents and visitors to enjoy. But, unfortunately, walkers' boot prints and dogs on the trail immediately undo that hard work, creating dents and divots across the surface of the trail, which in turn harden and freeze, creating a surface that is unsafe (and not much fun) to ski on. The City's surveillance of winter trail use during the trial period showed that 80+% of Dogs and 30+% of walkers did not stay to the side of the trail as required, and multiple collisions and falls have occurred due to tangles between skiers/dogs/walkers on the Chester ski trails, causing safety issues for all users. Many people have simply stopped skiing at Chester because they no longer feel they can do so safely.

For example, junior high and high school teams (e.g. Duluth East, Marshall, etc.) and the neighboring St. Scholastica ski team used to ski and train at Chester regularly, but now do not, in large part due to the significant safety and trail quality issues that walkers and dogs on the Chester trails now pose. Coaches cannot take the risk of bringing groups of kids to ski at a place where the quality of the trail surface is poor and where these safety issues are a constant issue. Skiers want to ski at Chester; but far fewer are able/willing to ski there when they have to put themselves and others at risk and contend with erratic trail surfaces to do it.

State Ski Trail Grooming Funds. Duluth's cross-country ski trails are groomed with funds earmarked for skiing, not walking. The City of Duluth receives funds to support ski trail grooming that are provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Cross-Country Ski Trail Grants-In-Aid (GIA) program. These funds, in turn, are drawn from revenues from the Great Minnesota Ski pass, which skiers are required to purchase in order to be eligible to ski on participating trails. Walkers using the ski trails in winter are utilizing a groomed ski trail that is being funded through cross-country ski trail funds received from the DNR, and ultimately by Minnesotans (and Duluthians) purchasing ski passes. If the Chester ski trails continue to be an unsafe place to cross-country ski, the City of Duluth will not be eligible to receive MN DNR GIA ski trail grooming funds for the Chester ski trail if it is no longer a viable place to cross-country ski. This would be a major loss for our entire community. The City's plan avoids this outcome and provides for safe ski conditions and improved winter access for walkers and dogs.

Cost. The one concern DXC had after reviewing the plan published by the City on its website and shared with you at the last meeting relates to the way its slides portrayed the estimated cost of signage and wayfinding. It is our understanding that the \$46,000 figures listed for signage and wayfinding is not a cost specific to the ski trail/walking trail proposal, but instead represents the overarching cost of rolling out the City's broader plan for Signage and Wayfinding that it intends to use in all City Parks, and which it will be rolling out regardless of this proposal. To provide some comparative context, DXC has been involved with the City's efforts to update signage at municipal cross-country ski trails located in Lester, Hartley, Piedmont and Magney undertaken since 2016. The entire cost to purchase 115 signs – enough to mark nearly every intersection between the ski trails, COGGS multi-use trails, snowmobile trails, and other trail access points at all of the above-listed parks – was \$2674. The number of signs needed to adequately sign the Chester ski trails and proposed walking route would almost certainly be fewer than 115, given that total kilometers of trail will not come close to that of the other four parks combined. As a result, we ask that you keep in context the costs specifically related to this project.

Conclusion. Appropriate use of the City's outdoor resources and facilities should be established based on what is practical, safe and reasonable given the use in question. The City has multiple defined-use outdoor resources. Chester Bowl offers downhill skiing within a City Park, which provides wonderful access for kids and adults alike to learn this lifelong winter sport in the heart of the City. Duluth's public golf courses offer Duluthians the opportunity to enjoy the activity of golf. If individuals started walking or cross-country skiing on the Chester Bowl ski hill while others were trying to downhill ski there, or engaging in non-golf activities on golf courses in a way that disrupted the ability to have a safe and quality golf experience, those uses would be incompatible with the primary purpose of the resource, and would be curtailed.

Some advocating for continued winter walking on the cross-country ski trails have stated that they feel the shared use of is working just fine, and that skiers who do not feel safe skiing at Chester should just "ski somewhere else." While this stance may solve the problem for those wanting an easy solution to meet their winter walking needs, it does so at the expense of the intended winter use of the ski trails: skiing. DXC remains committed to a solution that meets the needs, not just of skiers, but of all user groups.

To conclude, we urge you to adopt the City's proposal as a collaborative solution to this longstanding problem that meets the needs of all users of the park, year-round.

Sincerely,
The Duluth Cross Country Ski Club Board of Directors

8/22/2019 Email to Parks
Commissioners

Dear Park Commissioners,

Support Separate Hiking Trail

My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door.

I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park.

Thank you!

8/22/2019 Email to Parks
Commissioners

Dear Parks and Rec Commissioners ,

Support Separate Hiking Trail

My name is XXX and I live in the Chester neighborhood on XXX. I am so lucky to live in a neighborhood with close proximity to Chester bowl! Whether it is walking or biking in the summer and fall or skiing through the winter and early spring, Chester Bowl provides such a great escape from the city life.

I am an avid cross country skier and I am so grateful to have trails within walking distance. I grew up in Boise, ID and the situation was much different. While I had walking trails right out my back door, I had to drive an hour each direction to be able to ski! That means that while I spent hundreds of hours skiing as a kid I spent almost double that riding in a car! Luckily the situation is much different in Duluth. The Chester Bowl ski trails make Duluth an ideal place for skiers. There is no doubt that I feel spoiled now. Having ski trails so close is a major reason to live in Duluth.

I am writing to let you know that I am in full support of the separate walking and skiing trails at Chester Bowl. One of the things I love about skiing at Chester is meeting new people and dogs. But it is clear that things are getting crowded. Having both skiing and walking trails will help people recreate in multiple ways and not get in the way of other people. I apologize that I was not able to be at the meeting on August 14. I was home visiting family. I will do my best to be at the September meeting.

Thank you!

8/22/2019 Web Comment Form

I live adjacent to Chester Park. I really wish that the city would reconsider the shared use of the upper Chester Park ski trails. These are fun and challenging trails to ski on, but feel very unsafe. Last winter, I was always frustrated when I was skiing on the trails. Since it is my neighborhood park, I really want to take advantage of living close to ski trails. But most days, there were people walking in the middle of the trails and many had dogs that were unleashed. A friend of mine had sustained a dog bite while skiing on the Chester Park trails and I am worried about getting the same. The trails are in such terrible condition from walkers, that it is easy to get frustrated. The walkers frequently post holed the trails. Additionally, because some of the downhills are fast, it is difficult to make sure as a skier to control speed as to not startle a walker or dog. I think separate trails would be most appropriate and would be safer for everyone.

Support Separate Hiking Trail

8/22/2019 Web Comment Form

As an avid skier and dog owner who just bought a house next to Chester for both reasons, I am really glad to read this compromise which seems to preserve both options. The Chester ski trails are such a precious and unique resource in the heart of our city and it would be a real shame to lose them. The proposed compromise appears to make good use of existing trails for dogs and the additional trails to complete the loop should enhance the park for all users. One concern with the parallel trails - the chokepoint at the northernmost bridge by the soccer fields is probably the most dangerous spot for a skier-dog collision and I can't tell from this proposal if that is addressed. The visibility coming down the hill to that intersection and the bridge is not great, and I have had a couple near-collisions with unleashed dogs there. There is real potential for injury to dog or skier given the speed that hill generates. Not sure what the solution would be, but if there's trail work being done in the area perhaps sight-lines could be improved or something. Thank you for your work on this compromise - I regret I am working the night of the council meeting so won't be able to attend but my wife, dogs and I are extremely invested in this issue and hope it will work out.

Support Separate Hiking Trail

8/22/2019 Web Comment Form

I'm generally in favor of the proposal. I use the park for XC Ski, Mtn biking, Fat Biking, and my kids use the Downhill. Moving the winter hiking from the ski trail to the mountain bike trail is generally beneficial. Fat bikes and winter hikers are more compatible than skiers and hikers. As a skier my primary concern was that my speed downhill was too different from a hiker, which presents a safety issue, say if they were to hear me coming and step the wrong way, into my path. The main concern I have is the walking path crossing the bottom of the ski hill. The hill gets steeper at the bottom, so that's the highest potential for conflict. at a minimum, it should cross below the ski lift, by following the creek. One suggestion for improvement - the new trail along the south side of the park could be dual use, winter bike and winter hike. I really believe these uses can coexist beneficially, with Hartley Park as a prime example.

Support Separate Hiking Trail

8/22/2019 Web Comment Form

I support the City's recommendation to build a parallel trail for walkers and maintain the current cross country skiing trails. Also, as the data collected last year indicates, I really think the city needs to address the unleashed dogs that use the trails in Chester (and all city parks). Even with separate trails, unleashed dogs can wander onto cross country trails, leading to potential collisions between skiers coming downhill and dogs Thanks!

Support Separate Hiking Trail

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| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | I think this proposal (winter ski only, build walking trail connections) is a great compromise. I do remain concerned that people will still walk on the trail because frankly walking on a groomed surface is easier than walking on a hiking trail that hasn't been groomed. But I support spending some \$\$ to make this work. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support the proposed XC ski trail plan with separate pedestrian winter trails. Please support this as well. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | Please continue to allow cross country skiing in Chester. This is an important trail system for skiers in the heart of the city. Chester Bowl has always been a ski area for both downhill and cross country. Please keep it that way. Hiking can occur on the Duluth Traverse Trail that goes through the park. Perhaps a separate hiking trail can also be created. Thank you. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am writing to express my opinion that the Nordic Ski Trails at Chester Bowl should not continue with a shared use designation and should be restored to Nordic skiing only. For years, I would ski at Chester Bowl and enjoyed the challenging terrain as well as the beauty of the park and its Nordic trails. However, walkers, and especially those walking with dogs, began more and more frequently to use the trails. What I saw, at that time, was a complete disregard for posted signage which spelled out that the trails were for skiing only. Walkers were often incensed, in my experience, if I reminded them that the trails were for skiing only. In addition, boot marks and dog prints would leave the trail difficult to use and the dog excrement left on the trail was the icing on the cake in terms of irresponsible trail use and dog ownership. On one occasion while skiing, I fell very hard avoiding a dog who was defecating in the middle of the trail with no comment from the owner. The owner then proceeded to leave the excrement on the trail. The end result, for me, was that I completely stopped using these trails for skiing and when the city and the parks commission decided to conduct a trial of shared use trails, I remained uninterested in skiing there. I remain uninterested in this option going forward. I would, however, welcome the development of separate walking trails in Chester which would allow walkers and dogs to use the park in the winter as well as other seasons. However, I am not convinced that dog owners will remain respectful and responsible while using the current ski trails if the trails remain jointly designated. And for the record, I love the idea of using public green spaces responsibly with dogs and do so regularly. Thanks for listening and hosting an open comment period. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | Foot traffic and groomed (skate and track) ski trails are not compatible. I've skied the Duluth and Superior trails on an average of 3-4 days per week during the ski season since moving to Duluth 25 years ago. Walking on the groomed trails as continues to occur at all of the trail systems in Duluth and Superior significantly degrades them for skiing and under cuts the efforts of the groomers. Walkers, runners and bikers (including me) have the trails for these activities most of the year. Skiers deserve well groomed trails for the ever shortening period of time that our area has skiable snow. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | I hope cc skiing will always be available at Chester! It seems possible to have dedicated cc ski trails at Chester in the location they've been, while allowing walkers to strictly use the upper rim trail. This may take additional signage and monitoring in the short term, but worth it! Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | Returning the Chester Bowl Ski Trails to skier only traffic when snow is present is important to maintain the safety of these trails. The presence of walkers and dogs, especially dogs that are not compliant with leash laws creates an unsafe environment because of the vastly different speeds the groups travel at. The new Duluth Traverse Trail creates additional walking space that is groomed by snowmobile in the winter and available for walking with dogs in addition to the creek trail. All of these surfaces are not conducive to skiing and would create the separation of user groups that safety dictates. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/22/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello, I feel it is important to keep the Chester park ski trails for skiing only. They were designed for skiing and the walkers only use them since they are groomed... for skiing. There are plenty of other options for walking but only a limited number of trails to ski and it would be a bummer to see us lose a ski trail in a central location in Duluth. Skiers often avoid it because the walkers wreck it with foot prints. I also have a dog that I walk and I have plenty of options to go walk besides Chester ski trails. Thanks, | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/23/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | Dear Park Commissioners, My name is XXX, and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/23/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | Dear Park Commissioners, My name XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. As a member of the CSS ski team, it is so important for us young adults to have access to amazing public spaces such as Chester Park. Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/23/2019 | Web Comment Form | As a nordic skier I would like the city to recognize the fact that Chester Bowl has a long and storied history of being an important nordic skiing venue for both jumping and cross country (the state high school meet has been held there). Now that jumping has been eliminated, it would be a complete disservice to the nordic skiing community if the city were to eliminate cross country skiing too because of mostly non-compliant dog walkers (who based on the study appear to be the problem). Off leash dogs should not get there own groomed ski trail over nordic skiers who actually pay a trail user fee. I have been checked for my ski pass by DNR conservation officers when skiing at Chester . . but when I ask them about the people walking off leash dogs on the groomed trails needing a pass . . they say no. That seems like a problem when one compliant user has to pay and the other non-compliant user doesn't. When properly groomed, Chester offers an excellent venue for local advanced citizen, high school, and college skiers to train on, and also the bowl/soccer field when groomed offers a good place for beginning skate skiers to practice. It would be a shame if cross country skiing opportunities were to be eliminated because of conflicts with non-compliant dog walkers using a trail designed and maintained for cross country skiing. I am also a dog owner, and on most winter days I take my leashed dog for a walk on city sidewalks and/or un-groomed hiking trails . There is plenty of opportunity out there for people to walk dogs in the winter other than a groomed ski trails | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/23/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support the staff recommendation for Chester Park to build a separate parallel pedestrian trail as identified in the 2014 Chester Park Mini-Master Plan, and allow skiing only on the XC-Ski trails from January 01 - March 31. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/23/2019 | Web Comment Form | The ski trail at Chester needs to be groomed for Nordic skiing only. It is not safe for skiers, hikers, and dogs to share the trail at the same time. Hikers need to use the hiking, biking or traverse trail during the ski season, not the ski trail. I and others have had collisions with dogs/ hikers. The trail is not wide enough nor designed to accommodate both activities. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/23/2019 | Web Comment Form | Please keep cross country skiing at Chester. It is one of the best training trails in Duluth. If you need a hard ski and to sharpen your skills this is the best place. I was told once, "if you can ski Chester, you can ski anything". Please allow this to continue | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/24/2019 | Web Comment Form | We live XXX and use this trail every day mostly for hiking/walking however also for skiing occasionally. We are vehemently opposed to a second trail for many reasons. First we have never ever in walking every day had any issue with any skier regarding shared use. There is a small number of heavily vested individuals who do not even live on or near this trail system who would like to see this be skiers only and they have single handedly driven this progress towards "needing" a separate trail for walkers. We asked for numbers/data captured from this "study" of compliance with the camera and they are unable to provide them. Every "stakeholder meeting" has been nothing other than having a meeting for the sake of having said there was a meeting - no progress is made it is simply a reiteration of what has been said ally all the other meetings. Every attempt at signage has been after the fact, poorly done, and almost intentionally ineffective. There is no scientific method to any "study" that has been competed to demonstrate need - again this has all been "going through motions." The proposed walking trails are not intended to be maintained at all. So when there is heavy snowfall it would be their intention that walkers "go out there and pack it down with snowshoes." This is simply not feasible. There WILL be walkers on the maintained ski trail then - again shared use and all the money spent on new trails will be for a total waste. I am worried About further disruption of this land with additional trails. Particularly ones that will be ineffective. This damages this natural resource that we will never get back. Finally, the more small and non maintained trails we have the more it yields for inappropriate use of those trails - building structures, empty alcohol bottles from parties, and other paraphernalia from illegal activities is routinely found on these less traversed trails and I don't need or want that kind of activity where myself and my small children hike daily. This whole process has not made any sense - we coexist peacefully as it is currently. I think it is outrageous to spend money and destroy natural resource so a very small number of individuals who are not even in the community of the trail can have a ski trail they way they remember it being 20 years ago. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/24/2019 | Web Comment Form | Thank you for gathering input from residents about using the Chester Park trails. As both a walker/hiker and Nordic skier, I support having parallel or separate trails since I've seen too many walkers and dogs ruin the groomed trails for skiers. Also, when skiing downhill, it's hard to stop or safely go around walkers if we're on the same trail. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/24/2019 | Web Comment Form | Thank you for the opportunity to comment on trail use in Chester Park. I wish to express strong support for the groomed xc trails used for Nordic skiing only. Walkers, dogs, bikers, runners, etc. should now have the multi-purpose trail and lower Chester. I live and play on Hartley Park and know this works on these winter trails for safe and enjoyable outings for all. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/24/2019 | Web Comment Form | PLEASE keep XC Skiing trails for XC Skiing at Chester Bowl. Maintaining Chester Bowl for all kinds of skiing just makes sense. Walkers have many other options in the area for walking. Thank you for your consideration. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/24/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am sending my support for wishing to keep the cross-country ski trails in Chester Park. I am a user of the cross country ski trails and appreciate the fact that the trails are right in the center of town. I feel that keeping them, but having separate walking trails is something that is a great collaborative solution to meet the needs of all park users. Thanks for your consideration in keeping these trails! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/25/2019 | Web Comment Form | I have used the Chester xc ski trails multiple times and have very much enjoyed them. They are a great resource to use while kids are downhill skiing at Chester Bowl. They are also great for the ability to cross country ski for a short time in town. I have not had any concerns with walking or dog access use of the trail while skiing. The quality of the trails for skiing is not diminished by the walking on the trails and I believe they can both be used happily together. Please continue to offer cross country skiing trails at Chester Park. | Indeterminable |
| 8/25/2019 | Web Comment Form | When I moved here 28 years ago, walking in Chester meant not hearing cars. It really had the feeling of being deep in the woods. Now the woods have been so carved up it no longer feels that way. Any more carving up of Chester would make it feel like a park instead of the woods. I walk the trails 4 or 5 times a week in the summer. I have all but quit walking them in the winter because over the last several years skiers have gotten very aggressive and mean. They act as if they own these trails I have been walking for 3 decades. It is more important to preserve the forrest than to cater to a few entitled skiers. I would rather see no skiing or walking in Chester in the winter than more carving up of the woods. I am willing to share the trails, which is the adult thing to do. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/25/2019 | Web Comment Form | We need separate trails. It's dangerous. Collisions happen skiing downhill into hikers, and hiker's footprints sink down on the ski trail, creating crashes. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/25/2019 | Web Comment Form | I enjoy living near Chester Park to enjoy all seasons, but in particular to have access to groomed cross country ski trails in the winter. Unfortunately, since I moved to Duluth 3 years ago, I have found the heavy foot and dog traffic make skiing unattractive (and dangerous, in January 2018 I was bit by a dog while I was skiing). I encourage the city to prioritize cross country skiing at Chester Park | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/25/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support the plan for adding additional walking/hiking trails so that the ski trails can return to skier-only during the three primary winter months. Having the different user groups use separate facilities is safer for all and will especially improve the experience of the trails for skiers. Thank you for supporting the administration's recommendations. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I love XC skiing in the winter. I also love having challenging nordic trails out my back door. Chester Bowl is very unique. Please keep grooming the XC ski trails! Thanks | Indeterminable |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I have been a user of Duluth city x-c trails for almost 20 years. It's a no brainer that hiking cannot coexist on x-c trails. I'm glad this is coming to an end and I pray it isn't tried ever again in another park. As your survey data showed the problem in Chester is DOGS. Always has been (the place is infamous for it) although the problem is spreading to the other parks - esp unleashed dogs in all seasons. I also oppose any more trail construction in the parks. Every user can't have their own trail. The parks are already crisscrossed by a ridiculous amount of trails. They can walk on the traverse and other existing trails. | Indeterminable |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | My son who skied there in Chester for 4 years while in college says, "if the skiing stops, the grooming stops and most of the walking stops". Better public education and signage. | Indeterminable |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I think the shared use trails worked well last year. When I walked the trail in the snow, there were always several hiker tracks in the correct place on the trail. I noticed that all winter there were one or no skiers and never any confrontations between hikers and skiers. Be aware that the skiers that comment are all part of clubs and organize their clubs to comment. Hikers are not organized and just come to the trail to get exercise and enjoy the park. In reality there are many more hikers than skiers. I have skied and hiked for 45 years. In the years I skied there, I also saw many hikers. They knew it was skiers only but walked it anyway. It's in the middle of a neighborhood and people walk there as part of their routine. They should have every right to continue to use the park in the winter. I don't think promises to build a new trail will ever happen. We've seen about five master plans for Chester Park and as park boards and city governments change, the plans are never cared out. I think the new park director and trail manager are new at the job and made decisions about the ski trail too hastily. They were not part of any of the public discussions of the past three years. They just decided right away without really getting any input. They are themselves skiers and are not listening to the neighborhood park users. I think you should continue with the shared use trail. It works best for both skiers and hikers. | Indeterminable |

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| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am an avid user of Chester park and have been working to protect the trails there for decades. I use the trail almost daily when the conditions are appropriate. It saddens me that there is still so much turmoil over the trail and that people express concern about not being able to work together. After attending the last trails meeting, I did come away with further concerns about the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Commission recommendations. I actually came away with worries about the bias of the commission since the recommendations seem to lean so far toward the skiers view. For instance, it was pointed out the the city gets money from the state for grooming the trails and that money comes from sales of ski passes and that you should have a pass to use the trail. I think the assumption was that skiers have the pass and walkers don't but there was no data to support that. I rarely ski anymore but have continued to purchase a ski pass because I support grooming the trail. Do all the skier have a pass? I doubt it but there is no data. As was pointed out at the meeting, the trail counting system was definitely biased toward counting more skier on the trail. I'm there at all hours and can tell you there is at least 3 times, probably 10 times, more walkers than skiers on the trail. And the skiers often are the ones out there with the "accursed" dog who has been non-compliant with sticking to its side of the trail. At one time I was in favor of making a separate trail for walkers but spent some time talking to Dan Proctor, who is doing the lion's share of trail upkeep, and should not be ignored. He pointed suggested that there was not room for more trails and I started to pay closer attention. He really is right, the trails would start to be too close. The city plan also ignores the fact that the current ski trail actually crosses private land at one spot and the plan for a new walking trail is mapped to go further onto that private land. It was interesting to see the land owner's attempt to "encourage" respect of his land with flags and signs that were repeatedly destroyed. There are a lot of exclusive use options for ski racers to seek inside the city limits and fewer safe walking and running options for city residents that are groomed to allow winter use. A mixed use trail makes sense. If a ski racer is going fast to prepare for the Birkie (that's when they are out there) that they can't avoid a walker, he/she is also going to fast to avoid me while I ski on the trail, as I am pathetically slow. And I have been out on this trail because it is close to home. I might actually be skiing more since my knee won't allow me to run now. Should I be deterred by the stories of ski racers in Chester telling slow skiers to go other places that would be "more appropriate" for their skill. I hope not because this a public resource that should be shared. In the end, I would say that my experience has been that the hikers tend to do more to maintain the trails than the skiers really ever do. I see who walks there and who skis there and who helps on the trails. There are some loud voices expressing "personal" concerns who I have never seen on the trail, summer or winter. I have personally removed hundreds of trees and tens of thousands of sticks from the trail. I don't think there is enough space for more trails and no money to maintain the trails we currently have. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | A Chester Park shared use trail is the best option. Construction of a separate hiking trail is not required. We are a retired couple who have lived at XXX for almost 30 years. Our house borders the park and is adjacent to the gate/ service road to the cell tower. We have visual and physical access to the trail all year. We walk the trail 350+ days per year, often 2 times per day with two leashed dogs. During that 30 years we have walked the trail when it was open for half a day for walkers, when it was exclusively for skiers, and during the last three or more years when it was a shared trail. Of the three choices, the shared use option was characterized by cooperation and congeniality versus competition and conflict. Many skiers would stop and talk with us and tell us they like the shared trail option. In early December I underwent major surgery. Upon the advice of my doctors to remain active, I hit the trail 48 hours later; the groomed trail was a Godsend. I hiked two times a day for several months; I felt less isolated, stronger, empowered and alive. Not once did I worry about my physical health being compromised by a skier... I felt safe. It is implied in a shared-use trail that people will be more cautious and alert to others. While recovering from my surgery I would not have been able to negotiate a narrow un-groomed trail such as the one being proposed. Other people with fairly minor injuries or disabilities would be in a similar situation. The benefits of being outside and active in the dead of winter when isolation is the norm cannot be overstated. I believe that last winter this trail helped to heal me physically, mentally and spiritually. I believe it does the same for others. I want others to have open access to the trail and to benefit from its gifts, including during the winter. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | This is, and always has been, a ski trail first. The history and legacy of the trail is very important to the city and must stay a ski trail first | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I very strongly support the recommendation of having a skiing only trail with no dogs or walkers on it! A separate walking trail is wonderful. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I would like to see continued availability of skiing and pedestrian use in Chester Park. I strongly advocate for the creation of a parallel walking trail to avoid user conflict. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | Dear Park Commissioners, My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | Please build and provide a budget to maintain a separate pedestrian trail so I can resume nordic skiing in Chester. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | The Chester Park XC trails are an important cross-country trail system. Centrally located, close to low income users, within walking distance to hundreds if not thousands of users. I grew up on XXX and walked to these trails as a youth. Please do not close these trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I love to ski at Chester. Please keep the ski trails groomed and open to skiers. I like that there will be dedicated walking trails, because I like to walk at Chester, too. Your study states that the price of new signage is approximately 2-6x the cost of new trail work, which confuses me. I will volunteer to work on signs (locating, drafting, construction, posting, etc; whatever you need) if this becomes an impediment to continued nordic skiing at Chester. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello, My name is XXX and I am a 2015 graduate of The College of St. Scholastica (CSS) and current member of the US Biathlon Team. It was during my time at CSS that I was able to mature as a cross country skier due to the incredible access to great skiing, especially at Chester Bowl. Chester Bowl offers access to what could be world class Nordic skiing right in the heart of Duluth. I have not only spent countless hours on the Chester trails running and skiing, but also have volunteered there many times preparing and maintaining the trails because I believed the trails were worth it. You will be hard pressed to find a trail anywhere else in the state of Minnesota that has the combined access of a city and world class terrain that allow Chester be not only a regionally recognized trail, but one that has the potential to host National events. The trail at Chester Bowl is crucial for the development of skiers as it has tough uphill climbs that are necessary for the development of skiers who are looking to compete at the High School, NCAA and National level. To this day I am perplexed as to why Chester Bowl's trail improvements continue to be stalled by locals so that they can hike on the trails during the winter months. Hiking trails can be found throughout Duluth year-round, but a skiing trail such as Chester Bowl can not be. I think the proposed separate hiking trail in Chester Bowl can become a reality so that in doing so the ski trail can be preserved and conditions of the trail can be improved. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | Please please please continue grooming chester for skiing. They are hands down the best trails in duluth for skating when the grooming is good, and beyond special to have right in central hill side. I'd build the whole new walking trail myself if it meant keeping cheater groomed! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | It's great that the city wants to encourage skiing and walking in city parks. I support building a separate walking trail so that both activities can continue in Chester Park. It does look like non-compliant dog use (off leash?) is a major issue. Perhaps the city wants to consider clarifying the leash laws, so people know to keep their dogs on leashes (if that is the issue at hand). | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I helped design the current XC courses over 50 years ago. The terrain is unique especially for junior competitors. I lived within a 10 minute walk of the park. I strongly recommend that skiing be continued and that joint use be either eliminated or further limited. The area is large enough to accomodate both but walkers do not respect ski trains. Walkers have no need for groomed trails. Dogs ruin groomed tracks. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/26/2019 | Web Comment Form | I first skied the Chester Bowl ski trails at the State High School Ski Meet in 1967, then again at the State Meet in 1968, and 1969. When I moved to Duluth in 1979 to work at UMD, I skied the trails there frequently. Over the years I did so less and less because of the pedestrians and dogs, so I am very, very happy to see your conclusion, "Building a separate parallel pedestrian trail" as identified in the 2014 Chester Park Mini-Master Plan, and allow skiing only on the XC-Ski trails from January 01 - March 31. My only comment would be, could you begin the "skiing only" time period slightly earlier to include Christmas and the Holiday vacation period for students? Perhaps starting December 15 or at least December 20? Thanks for the opportunity to comment. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/26/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | Dear Park Commissioners, My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/27/2019 | Web Comment Form | I feel the Chester Park shared use trail is a viable option and enjoys support from a large majority of the current users, including "recreational" skiers. A shared use trail only seems to be a problem for the "performance" oriented skiers who wish to maximize their speed and endurance and train for competitive events such as the Berkebeiner. I have lived adjacent to the park for 29 years, have skied the trails and currently hike in the park daily, including during the winter. My comments, listed below, are based on my trail experience, interaction with other trail users, and attendance at numerous meetings. Comments include reasons why a trail is needed for non-skiers but why it should not need to be separate. 1- Many hikers are from the nearby Chester Park neighborhood where there are few sidewalks, especially along Skyline Parkway. The existing shared use trail is used by hikers, runners, commuters to school and work, and dog walkers. 2- Most of the performance skiers are not from the Chester Park neighborhood and arrive at the park by vehicle. 3- Many hikers on the trail are daily users. Skiers are much more likely to stay away for too much/little snow, too high/low temperature, too windy or un-groomed conditions. 4- The city has said that there will be no grooming or maintenance of the proposed new trail, thereby making it unusable by many individuals during the ski season. An unusable trail is no longer a trail. Traffic will revert to the ski trail. 5- Chester Park is already getting to be "trail dense" and cutting down more trees and vegetation is neither prudent nor desirable due to climate change concerns and loss of animal habitat. 6- The proposed hiking trail route still has conflicts, including overlap and crossing of the Alpine ski hill. 7- The shared use trail trial went very well for most users; proper signage was a big improvement. 8- The only serious complaints that I know of came from those desiring high speed and competitive event (Berkie) training. Other venues are available for these activities. 9- The city has spent a very large amount of money providing other venues for the performance (high speed) skiers. 10- Several recreational and family skiers have expressed approval of the shared use trail to me. 11- The DNR funding of the Chester Park ski trail is only about \$500/year, due in part to its short length. 12- The Chester trail is one of the shortest ski trails (2.3K), requiring performance skiers to make several laps around the trail. I've seen some make 10 laps in less than 2 hours. Each circuit was counted as an individual skier in the usage survey, over representing the number of skiers. 13- Many days during the ski season there were no fresh ski tracks on the trail, other days only a few; higher usage shortly before the Berkie. Should the vast majority of trail users be relocated to a wasteful and clearly inferior new trail to allow a select group of performance oriented skiers to use the trail on an occasional basis? The correct choice is clear to me. Respectfully, | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/27/2019 | Web Comment Form | My experience using the shared trail system last season was positive and I am in favor of keeping it a shared trail. The tracks in the "ski" section were minimal and the majority of hikers stayed in the "hiker" section of the trail. Adding additional trails through Chester bowl would leave little natural habitat and add extra expense. Also, if there isn't a plan to groom the proposed "hiker" trail in the winter hikers/commuters are going to use the groomed ski trails regardless of signage. We can all share the trail... | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I like the shared trail system. I live in the Chester neighborhood and enjoy skiing the trails and walking the trails! I also enjoy being able to walk with my dog, ski with my dog, and walk with my family around the trail system. Honestly if I am going to go for a more intense or longer ski I go to Lester, or longer trail systems. I am usually on the trails everyday and the ski traffic is minimal and I am convinced more people walk the trails in the winter than ski. There are multiple ski areas in town, but not many walking areas like Chester that can accommodate a safe, family friendly, wide path. It's really the only place I feel safe in the winter loading up my kid in the ski trailer and walking around. | Indeterminable |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | One more thought as a skier and dog walker. It seems fair to cede the soccer field to the dogs, since that is the least interesting park to ski on and it has become a de facto dog park anyway. That would be a small price to pay for preserving the rest of the trails. | Indeterminable |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I walk the trails almost every day year round. I don't understand why there can't be one shared set of trails in the city. If skiers don't like it they have several other options but walkers do not. An ungroomed parallel trail will be just as treacherous and difficult to walk on as the mostly unshoveled sidewalks | Indeterminable |

8/28/2019 Web Comment Form PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN TRAILS FOR CHESTER PARK The ski facilities at Chester Park are a valuable asset to the citizens of Duluth. However, the natural beauty of the park is even more valuable and is irreplaceable. Further development of the park must be curbed to preserve this natural resource. Recently, the Park Department has somehow determined that skiers and pedestrians are unable to coexist and has proposed to build additional pedestrian trails in the park so that existing trails can be dedicated to Nordic skiers. These proposed trails should NOT be constructed for the following reasons: 1. Designated-use trails are not enforceable. 2. The proposed pedestrian trails have been poorly planned. 3. Chester Park is too small for more development. 4. Survey data are seriously flawed. 5. Recent developments in the park have deteriorated the natural beauty of the park. The following paragraphs provide more detail. 1. DESIGNATED-USE TRAILS ARE NOT ENFORCEABLE Thom Storm, former Chester Park caretaker, managed and groomed the ski trails in the park for 45 years, and has more experience in this matter than any current Parks staff member. Storm stated at the August 14 presentation that it was his experience that it is not possible to enforce separate trails for skiers and pedestrians. He found that coexisting use of the trails works well and is the only answer. If the proposed trails cannot be enforced, then why go the bother and expense of building trails that will only degrade our park? 2. THE PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN TRAILS HAVE BEEN POORLY PLANNED a. By examining Maps 1 through 5 of the August 14 presentation, it can be seen that one proposed pedestrian trail segment crosses the bottom of the alpine ski run, a very busy place. This obviously won't work! Two other segments would use existing trails that have been marked for closure or remediation (the dark gray regions of Map 5) because of erosion and silt runoff into Chester Creek. A fourth segment would be sandwiched tightly between private property and two existing ski trails because the presence of a rocky hill limits available space. Actually, this flawed proposal may be the best that the Parks Department could come up with because Chester Park has limited space and some very steep terrain. b. At an earlier meeting, neighborhood residents pointed out that if the proposed trails are not kept clear of snow in the winter, then the walkers will use the groomed ski trails. Jim Shoberg of the Parks Department suggested that the residents of the neighborhood get together and purchase equipment for maintaining the pedestrian trails. I would like to point out to Mr. Shoberg that this is not likely to happen, and walkers will use the ski trails. 3. CHESTER PARK IS TOO SMALL FOR MORE DEVELOPMENT Jessica Peterson, Parks Director, stated at the August 14 presentation that Chester Park is no different from the other parks and should be treated in the same manner as the others. Actually, Chester Park is different: It is much smaller than other parks, and it has some very steep terrain that limits room for development. Hartley Park may have room for designated-use trails, but Chester Park is MUCH smaller and has no room for more trails without degrading the natural beauty of the park. 4. SURVEY DATA IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED The Parks Department has conducted Public User Surveys and has made observations from Trail Counter & Camera Data. These surveys are seriously flawed and do not represent reality. The skiers are organized and many of them responded to these surveys, while the walkers are not organized and most did not respond. The data are therefore unrealistically weighted towards the skiers. Dan Proctor, volunteer trail maintainer, presented a map at the August 14 presentation and explained that the trail camera was placed on a trail that is not widely used by walkers in the winter. Hence, data from the camera are not representative of the real situation. Furthermore, Parks' decision that "pedestrians and skiers are unable to coexist" is somewhat mystifying; it is not clear what this decision is based on. Anyone who walks regularly in the park in winter sees that walkers greatly outnumber the skiers on the trails. Parks' surveys failed to capture this

. 5. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE DETERIORATED THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE PARK a. Two years ago, a mountain bike trail was constructed through the park. It is a popular trail, but it was poorly planned. One segment, behind the Aftenro and Northwoods homes, was carved into the steepest part of the hillside, near the top, while an abandoned roadway exists a mere 15 to 20 feet away, on the hilltop. These hillsides that surround the park are very fragile, and there have been catastrophic slumps from top to bottom in recent history, usually at a location where someone has disturbed the hillside. Several of these large-scale slumps occurred in 1972 and 2012 after huge rainfall events. Many of these slumps were located where City Engineering had dropped storm sewers from top to bottom, disturbing the steep slope. If the bike trail had been better planned, this weakening of the hillside could have been prevented. Another segment of the bike trail, parallel to the Kenwood Avenue, has undermined utility poles along the avenue, and the poles are now leaning towards the trail. The utility company will no doubt be contacting Parks about this sometime in the future. Not only that, but this trail is parallel to two previously existing trails. b. Last year, a swath of timber on the alpine hillside was cleared to give more room for the ski area. c. A few years ago, a cell phone tower was erected in the area of the former ski slides. How much more "development" are we going to do in this park? CONCLUSION Shared-use trails are the best alternative to serving the majority of Chester Park users and preserving the natural beauty of the park.

Oppose Separate Hiking Trail

8/28/2019 Web Comment Form I hike the Chester Park hiking/ski trails just about every day. My experience as a hiker on the shared use trail this past skiing season was completely positive. The few skiers I encountered were all pleasant and friendly. Not once were there any conflicts nor did I feel there was any sense of danger to either myself or a skier. Human nature being what it is, I foresee that, even with new trails designated for hikers only, there will be those few hikers who will cross over into the ski trails, thus destroying even more vegetation. I am concerned that, once again, conflicts will erupt. The idea of monitoring compliance for new rules and standards via "park police," cameras, and possibly ticketing makes me cringe. I need to point out here that it is not only hikers who bring their dogs to the trails. Skiers, too, bring their dogs who leave prints in the groomed trail. I would like to reiterate a couple of points expressed by Thom Storm at the Aug. 14th meeting because I think, from his personal previous experience working with the Chester Park trail system, that his perspective and approach carry much weight and validity. And I agree with him one hundred per cent. Despite Thom's attempts to maintain a trail for skiers only, and as hikers continued to use the groomed trail, Thom learned that "the peaceful thing to do was to go WITH the energy of the reality," and to allow for a cooperatively shared hiking/skiing use of the trail. I think it important to keep in mind another point Thom made: that "ideal conditions on pages are not realistic, and that before designated shared usage, major conflicts often erupted." And who speaks for the trees, the birds and other wildlife who live in our parks? They need these nature niches for their own survival. I think it imperative to keep in mind, while considering a proposal to create new hiking trails, that trees, other vegetation, and animal habitat will be destroyed in an already compromised ecosystem. I ask you, as park commissioners, to give the proposal for a new hiking trail in Chester Park careful thought and to consider the following: 1) Is this proposal a wise use of city park monies when there is already a solution that is working for most skiers and hikers? 2) Is this a wise decision for an already compromised ecosystem? I, for one, would feel deeply saddened and disappointed if more trees have to be cut down because we, as hikers and skiers, were unable to work cooperatively together in a peaceful way for a shared-use trail. Thom worked hard to create a peaceful park and I stand with him in supporting a peaceful way to coexist on the winter trails. Thank you.

Oppose Separate Hiking Trail

8/28/2019 Web Comment Form I am opposed to the proposal to add another hiking trail to Chester Park's crowded system. "Skiers and hikers cannot coexist" is a slanted and weaselly statement. Hikers and skiers have coexisted for many months on the shared-used trail. I live at the access point to the park on Chester Parkway, and every day, rain or shine, summer and winter, I see local residents hiking into the park. It alarms me that the City is considering granting exclusive access to this public trail to a relative few so-called "elite" skiers, most of whom don't even live nearby. I've been talking to walkers who use the park, and many of them really resent the idea of making the trail just for the privileged "elite." Taxpayers should not have to foot the bill for this small group to have this public trail turned into their private training track three months out of the year. Nor should the City spend thousands to tear another path through through this small and very well-used park. As I walk around in the park, I see paths (official and unofficial) crisscrossing through the woods. We surely don't need another one when there's a perfectly good one in use for all already. As the New Agers say, *Coexist* through mutual tolerance, patience, and understanding. Keep the shared trail shared by all.

Oppose Separate Hiking Trail

8/28/2019 Web Comment Form I am writing to ask your commission to recommend the shared use of the ski and walking trails throughout our Duluth winter. I have lived near and walked in Chester Park for over 40 years. In the last three years, I have become a member of the Duluth Invaders, Red Team, whose mission is to remove invasive species from Chester Park. Up until this point, I was unaware that this was such a huge problem in our park. We have worked very hard to remove plants such as buck thorn, invasive honeysuckle and tansy, but there is so much more work to be done! Our small group of volunteers cannot begin to eradicate these invasive trees and plants. As we remove the invasives, we must replace them with native trees, shrubs and plants, giving them a chance at repopulating the park. I implore you to listen to Thom Storm, Dan Proctor and the others who spoke at the last meeting of your board. Do not prohibit walkers on the ski trails. Do not create parallel walking trails in the park. Ungroomed walking trails will not be used in the winter! The reason walkers walk on the edge of the ski trails is because they are packed down. If ski trails are exclusive to skiers and parallel walking trails are created, this could only be done at great monetary expense as well as manpower. If there are resources available to our park, please use them to remove invasives, plant natives and maintain the shared ski and hiking trail. Thank you

Oppose Separate Hiking Trail

8/28/2019 Web Comment Form Dear Duluth Parks and Rec, Pedestrian use is incompatible with the cross-country ski trail. Respectfully request that the Chester Park Ski Trails be just that: ski trails. Pedestrians have 9 months out of the year to walk wherever they please. For a few months of the year, they should be able to stomach letting skiers use the trails for skiing only. Thank you.

Support Separate Hiking Trail

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| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I strongly support the City's plan regarding winter use of Chester Park ski trails, and the addition of a small segment of new trail to connect a continuous walking loop for winter walking. I also love to walk on trails in the winter, and understand why those who want to continue walking on the groomed ski trails enjoy doing so in the winter. However, pedestrians, dogs, and a constant cover of foot and bootprints on Chester's ski trails have made them unsafe and unenjoyable for their intended winter purpose of xc skiing. The City's plan does not ask walkers to give up walking in the park during the winter – that would be unacceptable. Instead, the City's plan appropriately recognizes that, if the need currently being filled for folks by walking on the ski trails is not met some other way, there will be no end to this frustrating conflict. Likewise, for the City to maintain a policy of shared winter use of the ski trails would be to endorse an unsafe situation on the ski trails, and would effectively end XC skiing at Chester Park. The state dollars (which come from skiers' purchase of the Great MN Ski Pass) currently used to support the City's grooming operations are not approved for use to groom walking trails (and frankly could well be in jeopardy if the DNR knew the City had permitted walking on groomed ski trails for the past 5 years). Those grant-in-aid ski trail dollars will go away if the Chester trails are no longer a viable place to ski, meaning that no one would have winter use of the ski trails. This would be a loss for everyone. There is a reasonable solution to this issue that meets the needs of all winter users of Chester Park. Please approve the City's proposal so that we can move forward with a plan that supports the safe enjoyment of multiple winter uses of Chester trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am in support of the proposal to separate trail uses in Chester Park. Given the more intermediate/advanced degree of difficulty that the Chester Park ski trails offer, I feel that user safety on the ski trails is very compromised with the shared use between skiing and hiking, and for this reason I typically opt to ski elsewhere. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support a plan that separates walking and skiing during periods of snow. While I recognize the value of having a place to walk in the winter, walking on groomed ski trails degrades the surface for the purpose of skiing, and walkers and animals on the trails are dangerous for both skiers and walkers, especially in a place with terrain, like Chester. A separate path for walkers and skiers seems like the best solution to me. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I strongly believe that Chester Park ski trails should remain as ski trails and that walking should be moved to the additional trails within the park, namely the DT Chester Rim trail that runs along the park. Ski trails are an integral part of the Chester Park winter experience and historically Chester holds amazing significance within the ski community as an inner-city groomed ski trail, a treasure. Walking can take place in a variety of other locations all within the park, where as skiing can only safely be done on a groomed trail. In order to provide equitable experiences within our city, having a park with groomed trails in walk-able distance to our two largest college campuses and a large portion of Duluth's Chester Park neighborhood is what the sport is all about- being accessible to all, not only having skiing at locations where cars are needed to transport you, and enjoying our winter months skiing. The Duluth Traverse is a great option within the park for walking on trails and this would not pose safety risks to either user group. Again, I urge the city of Duluth to keep the ski trails at Chester viable and support walking on other nearby existing trails so all users can be safe and enjoy winter. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | Thank you for your continued work on the trails in Chester Park. As an avid runner/hiker, skier, and biker, I am aware of the trail conflicts, and I support having a separate hiking and skiing trail. I do worry about part of the hiking trail being designated to the Duluth Traverse as I know that terrain has some blind spots and hikers with off leash dogs could cause the same conflicts as the ski trails (additional signage and education could help fix this). I see the reason hikers liked the ski trail is due to it being packed/groomed and so I would wonder or hope that the bike trail could also be groomed or packed for biking and hiking. The addition of hiking only trail also brings up my curiosity if there is opportunity to revisit a multi-use MTB trail on that Southern portion where new trail is proposed. There is potential here to share resources in building said new trail. Again, thanks for all your hard work. I love enjoying the outdoors in Chester Park and look forward to a trail solely designated for skiing. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am in full support of the building of an additional multi-use or walking trail as proposed. This gives both walkers and skier the opportunity to use the park. There is plenty of space and not very much additional trail will need to be made. This will allow the ski trail to remain as ski trails and skiers will be able to enjoy it for the short 3 months out of the year that it is good for skiing. While recognizing the number of skier participants has declined compared to dog walkers, what message is the city sending if they decide on giving up on skiing because they cannot control unleashed dogs in the park. Just look at the graphs of non-compliance, specifically dog walkers. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | Thank you for taking steps to save the Chester Bowl Ski Trail while also accommodating those who wish to walk in the park through the winter months. The Chester Ski Trail is a historic neighborhood loop that was once home to the Minnesota High School State Championships, has helped prepare several Olympic skiers, and remains a huge piece of our present outdoor culture. Chester Bowl is a big part of what defines Duluth—an amazing little ski trail winding around a ski hill in the heart of Duluth’s most diverse neighborhood. What could be better for economic, cultural, and lifestyle development than that? It would be a mistake to destroy such an amazing asset when it is possible to accommodate all user groups. The Chester Ski Trail allows access for kids of all socio-economic backgrounds to become involved in the sport of cross country skiing, an incredibly healthy lifetime sport. The Chester Ski Trail lies within walking distance of UMD and St. Scholastica, high-income residents, and low-income families. The Chester Bowl Ski Trail is a unique and precious asset that should be nurtured, not destroyed. The Chester Bowl Ski Trail is the reason that I purchased my home on Skyline Parkway close enough to walk to the loop. The Chester Bowl Ski Trail is an economic and cultural driver. I respect and value the winter walkers at Chester. We are kindred spirits, people that want to get outside to appreciate nature, clear our minds, and get some exercise. However, these activities are simply not compatible on a ski trail, especially one that offers fast downhill like Chester Bowl. The cross country trails utilize the same vertical drop as the alpine hill. Year-round walkers agree that the alpine ski hill is not appropriate for walking, but they don’t seem to understand that cross country skiers also glide on these downhill and they are similarly not appropriate for walking. I have collided with dogs on two occasions and have had many more near misses, some this past winter. Normally dogs are not on leashes. Sometimes leashed dogs create just as much danger as they can be pulled across the trail, owner on one side and dog on the other. I support the idea of combining and developing existing trails to create a pathway for walkers to use during the ski season. Obviously, a suitable path in Chester Park would need to be thought through, but I'm convinced there is a way to provide a safe trail that would keep walkers off the ski trail during the ski season and be sustainable for the park's ecology. This pathway could be easily groomed with a snowmobile at a low cost. If that approach is not taken, should skiers expect that all cross country ski trails at all City of Duluth parks will be converted to year-round walking-only loops? Thank you for your attention and thought on this important culture and lifestyle issue for Duluth. Duluth is a massively unique and special place that has become known for incredible access to the outdoors—even named America's Best Outdoor City by Outside Magazine. The Chester Bowl Ski Trails are clearly a big part of the pulse that is driving our growth, our reputation, our culture, and our health. Please do not take an action to throttle back or reverse that momentum. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello: I support the proposal to maintain different trails for XC skiing and winter hiking. No amount of signage will correct the behavior of all hikers and dog walkers. Hartley Park is close to my home. There are still hikers and dogs on the ski trails despite clearly marked signs and different trail systems. I imagine it would be worse if skiers and hikers shared the same groomed trails. Separate trail systems are working at Hartley; it makes sense to do that at Chester Park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I am a skier and walker who lives in Congdon but enjoys the Chester Trails. I urge you to vote in favor of the proposed separate walking trail. It is unfortunate that it does not work to have walkers use the groomed ski trail in the winter. I don't like cutting more trails in the park - therefore I am encouraged to see that the City is working to close other inadequate trails with a resulting no net gain in trail surface in the park. Thanks | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello, Our ski trail system in Duluth is magical. We are so lucky to have ski trails scattered throughout the city. Chester is the only cross country ski trail we have in the Central hillside (I live just 6 blocks from Chester) and I want my children to grow up with a neighborhood cross country ski trail. The ski trails at Chester are so damaged by walking that I honestly avoid them unless it's right after a fresh snow (adventure ski!) or right after they've been freshly groomed. Please keep the ski trails and walking trails at Chester separate. It is no fun at all to ski on trails with huge footprints and divots and it isn't safe to ski on trails with holes or to risk coming upon a person or dog while traveling rapidly downhill. I thought that the signs would help with the walkers, but it didn't. It seems like people these days are too busy and/or distracted to read signs. They need a black and white rule or they just don't understand the grey areas--like keeping to a certain side of the trail or staying off trails when they are soft. And, the walkers are often mean! I don't want to be in the position of telling them what is and isn't allowed on a trail, but there isn't anyone else to enforce the rule. Please save the Chester ski trails for generations of Central Hillside kids and residents to be connected with our amazing park and the wonderful sport of cross country skiing. Skiing belongs at Chester with the history of skiing and the current ski hill. Walkers have other alternatives, skiers don't. Thank you, | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | As an XXX at CSS, UMD alumnus and avid skier, I am quite aware of the continual use of Chester Bowl nordic ski trails. The arena is a great place to teach kids how to skate ski and the remainder of the trails still used by skiers of all abilities. Obviously, it is in a centralized location attracting many; especially those who do not have individual transportation. Personally, I do ski there, but have been weary as I have nearly experienced a couple of collisions with a few walkers along with their dogs. Please consider a separate walking trail for the safety of all who recreate at Chester Bowl. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | I'm an avid Nordic skier (former serious competitor etc.) and I still like to train. I love the Chester Park area for its scenery and varied trails. Personally I was never very motivated to ski there because it was so short (the only reason I would is if I'd want to get my dog out for some exercise). I think it's a difficult area for newer skiers and seasoned skiers would prefer to go to longer trails. Although I understand the argument and the appeal of having inner city groomed trails I think there are enough other places investing in great trails that it's nice to leave the Chester trails open for maximum access and usage for hikers and folks who don't really care about the quality of the groomed ski trails. It didn't bother me to ski on the trails if they were trashed by hikers because I wasn't there to go for a long "flow" ski anyways. It's such a popular park for dog owners and folks just wanting to get out for a nice nature hike after work. I think making the wide trails skier access only would just reduce its access to the majority of users. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | Chester is a unique and historic ski trail, and the only skate skiing option near downtown. I believe the skiing conditions have been marginal at best with all the walkers, and not safe for walkers and skiers alike. I think 2 separate trails makes the most sense. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/28/2019 | Web Comment Form | As a member of DXC board and a Duluth resident, who lives within a mile of Chester Bowl. I write in favor of the option of having separate trails for walkers and skiers. My family utilizes Chester in all four seasons, and upon moving back to Duluth in the winter of 2018, we were intent on buying a home which would be within a mile of ski trails. Sadly, due to the walkers utilizing the ski trails at chester, it has not been a safe place for my husband, daughter and I to ski. With the breadth and depth of options to enjoy the great outdoors in Duluth, it seems like a ski trail, centrally located in DULuth, that has capacity for separate trails, should have separate trails for walkers/dogs and skiers for the limited months, where skiing is possible. Thank you for your consideration of this feedback and the feedback of other skiers. Sincerely, | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | <p>To the Duluth Parks Commission, This is the official position statement from the Chester Bowl Improvement Club (CBIC) on the Chester Park Shared Use Ski Trail, submitted by Executive Director Dave Schaeffer on behalf of the CBIC Board of Directors. In summary, we are not making an official recommendation for or against the overall concept of separating winter walking from the skiing trail to a new loop. We recommend that the Parks Commission make a deliberate determination if mixed use is working. If a plan with separate trails is approved, we strongly encourage that plan to be re-routed away from the Alpine Hill, to include significant restoration and the addition of a pedestrian bridge in the portion of the walking trail coming from the gravel pit down to Chester Creek, and that a formal interim plan be established governing use between the passing of the plan and the creation of the required infrastructure. The CBIC is a non-profit organization providing programs within Chester Bowl Park and based out of the Chalet. Key programs include the downhill ski and snowboard program, summer and fall day camps, Fall Fest, and the Chester Creek Concert Series (with the City as lead agency for the concerts). The CBIC has been involved in every step of park planning since the Mini-Master Planning process that culminated in 2014. Staff and/or board members have been at every public and stakeholder meeting relating to the shared use ski trail, plus additional meetings and conversations with Parks Department staff. The Nordic ski trail is not used directly by CBIC for programming, so we have seen our role to date as helping facilitate the conversation and listening to all sides. This is a complicated issue with decades of history. If there were a simple solution, it would have been found years ago. Here are some key points that influence our recommendations. 1. The CBIC is not making an official recommendation for or against the separate trails outlined in the staff planning document. We have talked extensively with both skiers and walkers and both groups are united in their love for the park and being outside in all seasons. We are very concerned about the further segmentation of the park by creating additional trails for winter walking use. For a small park (about 190 acres) with 5 miles of trail already established, there are very few areas where there is no development for more than 30 yards in any direction. We are concerned that, if the plan is passed and the trail is built, walkers may persist in walking on the ski trail illegally, resulting in an additional but unused trail. On the other hand, we know that the multi-use trails have not been safe for skiers. Most of the discussion has been about walkers and dogs on the trail, but we see that the bigger issue isn't the bodies- it is the footprints that those bodies leave behind. Human and canine feet sink in the soft snow and the holes freeze, causing safety issues for skiers. From our conversations, most walkers think getting out of the way of skiers when they approach is enough; they don't realize that the footprints are an issue too. Chester is already a difficult trail to ski; footprints can make the downhills nearly impossible. We are frustrated that this mixed use trial period could have worked with a combination of early and adequate signage, and if all users had respected the trail restrictions. But mixed use isn't resulting in a safe ski surface, and we understand why many skiers have stopped coming to Chester. 2. There is an assumption in the project overview planning documents:</p> <p>"Through this process it is determined that pedestrians and skiers are unable to coexist, and therefore a recommendation, as called for within the Chester Park Mini-Master Plan, will be brought to Parks and Recreation Commission." From this assumption the Mini-Master plan allows for two options. But please note that this assumption that shared use is not working should be questioned, and as the Parks Commission, you make that final determination. The walkers you are hearing from generally think that mixed use is working. The skiers you are hearing from generally think that mixed use is not working. We hope that your deliberations including deciding if you think the original assumption is correct, because any solutions are built on that assumption. 3. In the draft plan presented at the August Parks meeting, the walking loop was shown crossing the bottom of the Alpine hill. This will not work. The risk of alpine skier and snowboarder crashes with walkers is too high, with the potential for catastrophic injuries. After meeting with Jim Shoberg and Matt Andrews on August 21st, they have agreed and will be presenting a modification to the plan that will re-route the trail so that it does not use this area while still allowing for a walking loop. Without this re-route, we would strongly oppose the plan on the basis of the safety of both user groups. 4. The draft plan shows a pedestrian path coming down to Chester Creek from the 7-way intersection near the gravel pit. With the modification to the route discussed above, the trail will be re-routed to cross the creek about 50 meters upstream from the Chalet. We support this re-route part of the plan as long as significant work is done to ensure that the trail is sustainable (it is very steep with significant erosion), and a pedestrian bridge is established across the stream at this point. Although this is a big investment in trail and infrastructure, it is a popular area of the park year-round that would benefit from this type of crossing and improved trail. 5. In our meeting with Jim Shoberg and Matt Andrews, CBIC staff talked extensively about the need for a clear interim plan, which staff reported that they would be presenting as part of your September meeting. If the plan is approved with a separate walking trail and no walking on the Nordic trail, we hope that you will ensure that it is very clearly defined as to what will happen between when the plan is approved and when the necessary changes are made in the park. This could be as short as one winter, but with no dedicated funding for this project, it could be considerably longer. We strongly support continuing mixed use until the infrastructure is complete, and we would like the interim plan to be a written component of the final plan. We feel allowing for mixed use until trail work is complete allows for the best chance of long term success and also enables all users groups to use the park in the meantime. Please be sure the interim plan is part of any final plan passed! 6. In the planning documents, one circled "area of study" is the Alpine hill. An area about four to six feet wide down the middle of the main alpine run has a dirt path going down it with erosion issues. Chester staff talked with Jim Shoberg and Matt Andrews about its causes and management. Each spring when the snow melts off of the hill, the runoff will naturally funnel and stream together. The path will shift slightly each year, and if you look carefully at the hill, you can see past years' runoff troughs in various stages of re-growth. Hikers and hill runners gravitate to the newest trough (which looks like a dirt trail) for the rest of the year. While this use as a path may increase erosion slightly, most of the damage is done by spring melt. We talked about management options that include short fencing sections to keep walkers on the better vegetated sections and attempting to re-vegetate where the erosion occurs. Thank you for your time.</p> | Indeterminable |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. I have been using these ski trails every winter for years now and have always found a good balance between the walking/ hiking community and the ski community. It is my belief that these two communities can come together and share these trails in a cohesive way. | Indeterminable |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | The breadth of CC skiing in Duluth is absolutely incredible. With the multitude of trail options throughout the city, I truly feel that Duluth is a 'destination' cross-country skiing city. As such, it is imperative that we continue to support and encourage as much access is possible. The Chester Bowl trails are an invaluable piece of the Duluth trail system; and it would be a travesty to lose that amenity. It offers challenging terrain, incredible views, and is literally a gem in the middle of a neighborhood; perhaps the most unique trail in town. Thank you for making every effort to keep this system operational and open to cross country skiing! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support retaining Nordic skiing at Chester Parl. Shared use is suitable as long as clear signage is posted and grooming is maintained for each use. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Dear Park Commissioners, My name is Maria Stuber and I am the ski coach at the College of St. Scholastica. I work across the street from Chester Park and our ski team and club use the ski trail there almost daily. We are building a huge ski program on our campus that is known as the premier program for athlete-development at the college level. We have an NCAA team of around 45 people and a club with around 30 people. I expect this number to double over the next 4 years and I would love to share our growth proposal with you if you are interested. Smart, talented, hard-working, students come from all over the world to live next to Chester Bowl to continue pursuing skiing at all different levels from recreational to elite. We ski all over Duluth, but the value of being able to cross-country ski without having to drive in a car to college students is tremendous. The loss of skiing in Chester Park would be devastating to us. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. Thank you! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live in the Chester Park neighborhood and it is crucial that there is access to skiing and walking in the winter. I am in strong support of the City of Duluth's plan to have separate skiing and walking trails. This allows multiple types of recreation while also continuing with the rich history of Chester Bowl. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support separate Nordic and pedestrian trails. Shared trails are dangerous, and put both groups at risk. They also ruin grooming, wasting the effort and resources | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | My name is XXX I am a Chester neighborhood resident, and a life-long cross-country skier, hiker, mountain biker and trail runner in the park. I am also on the board of the Superior Hiking Trail Association. I have been engaged in the Chester Park Ski Trail public stakeholder process for two years, and have participated in more than five public comment, information, and stakeholder sessions (including on 2/20/2018, 3/21/2018, 5/3/2018, 10/25/2018, and 5/29/2019). I am writing to support the City of Duluth's proposal to preserve safe and accessible cross-country skiing at Chester Bowl through the creation of an alternative winter route for walkers As I am sure you are aware, the safety and grooming quality of the Chester Park Ski Trails has decreased so significantly over the past decade that most skiers I know - skiers who love Chester Park and the Chester Park Ski Trails, and who would like to ski there - no longer feel safe. I do ski there as often as possible, but only immediately after it has been groomed. Otherwise, the trail is destroyed within hours by footprints of walkers, dogs and hikers. For those of you who aren't skiers, footprints are almost more dangerous than collisions. They firm up and/or freeze when the temperatures drop, and make skiing incredibly unstable. Despite being a strong skier, I have crashed more than once on trails because of frozen prints in the snow. Very unfortunately (as has been documented by the trail camera), some neighbors are deliberately walking in the middle of the trail, despite their familiarity with the rules and despite the new signage. While I have not personally had a collision with people or dogs (though I've been close!), I have heard many stories from people who have. I also personally witnessed two children skiing the loop at the soccer field get tackled by a pack of friendly-but-completely-uncontrolled dogs at the 4:00 PM "dog party" this winter. It was terrifying to watch, and I'm sure that that parent will not bring their children back to ski there. Unfortunately walkers and off-leash dogs are simply not compatible with skiing. Through the public process, stakeholders collectively developed a plan that, while imperfect, was a compromise that both preserved the safety and accessibility of skiing in the park, while also providing a quality walking experience off of the ski trails. That solution was to create an alternate walking-only (i.e. no bikes) winter route that would include (1) building new trail in places where that was needed, and (2) sharing the ski trail only in pinch points when necessary. Throughout the planning process we were reminded of the City's "no new net trail" approach, which would require closure of some of the degraded informal trails in use in the park (which I see as a very positive ecological improvement for the park). As someone who walks in the park every single day, I was excited about this plan! However, neighbors on Hovland Lane and other surrounding property owners have suddenly taken a "not in my backyard" stance, threatening to derail the entire public process to date. Chester Bowl is a special park, and I believe that we are all there with the same goals: to enjoy it and to steward it with care. But these specific trails were built by skiers for skiing, and reflect a rich history of both cross-country skiing, and the Chester neighborhood. George Hovland and other notable skiers got their starts as hardscrabble hillside kids who were lucky enough to have access to this urban park (and mentors who helped them build their own skis and learn ski techniques). I have peers who grew up in the Hillside; they didn't have cars or cash to ski at Snowflake or Spirit Mountain, but they could throw skis over their shoulder and hike up the hill to Chester to train. Chester is an incredibly unique urban cross-country skiing resource. I believe that there is a tenable solution at hand, and it is time to pursue it for the benefit of all trail users: an alternate walking-only (i.e. no bikes) winter route that is used by walkers during the three short months the City of Duluth grooms its ski trails. It will require very little trail-building or resources, will result in no net gain of trail, and will address the very serious safety and accessibility issues at hand. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hello Park Commissioners, My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present on Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I, XXX support the use of Chester Bowl as a ski only trail during the winter months. I also support the addition of separate walking sections of trail to the park. The opposition to the ski trail is by a small number of walkers who live on or near land surrounding Chester Bowl and therefore feel they have more of a right to the park than other Duluth citizens. During open forums they have prefaced their comments with their address and how long they have lived near the park, which makes no difference in our right to use city owned space. They have dominated this discussion with loud voices, but make up a small percentage of overall users. Thank you, | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I support shared trail use. I have several concerns and comments about the information shared at the August 14 meeting and on line. Adding a trail for walkers has the potential to environmentally impact Chester Park. Has an environmental impact study been suggested? The new trail would be steep, narrow and non maintained. The trail would not be a viable walking option for many neighbors with various physical abilities. Chester Bowl is a neighborhood park! Data was given showing concern about unleashed dogs and safety concerns. I have walked Chester ski trail many times. It is an elite ski trail with many hills and curves. Skiers will be moving quickly. I am a very experienced dog walker and walk trails daily. For my safety and my dog's safety, when sharing the trail with the elite skiers, common sense behavior will be to leash. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | Dear Park Commissioner, My name is XXX and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door. I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

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| 8/29/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>Dear Park Commissioners,</p> <p>My name is XXX e and I live right next to Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door.</p> <p>I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park.</p> <p>Thank you! (seperate comment; not same user as line above)</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live on XXX near Chester Park and I am strongly in favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Thank you for doing this study of winter ski trail use at Chester Park. I live in the neighborhood and use the trails year round as a walker, runner and skier and appreciate the city's efforts to make the trails better and more accessible for all users. I support the construction of an alternate walking loop at Chester and designation and maintenance of the ski trails as 'skiing only' in winter. I believe this is the safest option for both walkers and skiers in the winter and that more skiers will use the trails if they are not shared with walkers. As a skier, I value having this challenging trail to train on so close to where I live. Additionally, I think that it's proximity to the downhill area and existing snowmaking infrastructure provides a unique opportunity for the future of nordic skiing in Duluth. As winters continue to warm, there is likely to be more need for snowmaking on nordic trails. Perhaps one day Chester Park Trails will be the East Side version of the Grand Ave Nordic Center. Together the two trails could provide nordic skiing opportunities in low snow years for Duluthians living in different parts of the city. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Dear Parks Commissioners, I am writing regarding the Chester Park ski trails to voice my support for the City Staff's proposal to return the cross-country ski trails to designated ski trails and create separate winter trails for walkers. This situation is difficult, I believe the walkers and skiers are kindred spirits, we all enjoy time outdoors and value the trails in Chester. Since I was a child, I've hiked the trails in Chester and I also enjoy cross-country skiing. In Chester, it is important that safe options exist for both user groups and the proposal brought by the City's staff accomplishes this, it's a win-win solution for both parties. As a skier, I currently avoid the Chester trails for concerns of running into walkers and/or dogs, and also for poor grooming conditions from trails damaged from walking. I don't believe that shared use of the existing ski trails is compatible. As well, if skiing was no longer allowed and the ski trails converted to walking trails, I fear the walkers would remain frustrated, as grooming would likely end without the state grant funding. Please support the City Staff's proposal and vote in favor of their recommendation. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Email to Parks Commissioners | <p>Dear Park Commissioners,</p> <p>My name is XXX. I live right below Chester Park. I am an avid cross-country skier and I use the Chester Park Ski Trails often. I am a part of the CSS Saints Cross country and Nordic ski teams. Chester Park and the recreational opportunities there is an integral part of why I love my location in Duluth. I can walk to the trail from my door, enjoy the outdoors with friends, and ski at Chester when class interferes with team practice.</p> <p>I am writing to show my support for City Staff's recommendation to have separate skiing and walking trails in Chester Park. I apologize that I was not able to be present last Wednesday, 8/14, to speak in person on this issue. I will do my best to attend the September 11th Meeting to advocate for skiing in Chester Park.</p> <p>Thank you!</p> | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | The Chester park ski trails are a necessary part of St. Scholastica's Nordic ski team training as well as a great place for local skiers to recreate. My grievance with the Chester trail "walking community" is that they can walk anywhere in the entire area because all the land is walkable but not everywhere can be skied on because skiers need grooming and wide enough trails to ski on. on top of this, the trails get ruined for skiers by the walkers since they but large divots into the ground. Hopefully, my fellow skiers and I are enough to sway the decision in this matter but now this is in your hands. Thank you for your time and consideration | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. (separate comment; not same user as line above) | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester park and use the trails regularly and am in strong favor of the city of Duluth's proposal for winter use of the park. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hey Chester Bowl Planners. I live just across the way on XXX walking distance from Chester Bowl. I'm a Nordic skier who lives in Duluth specifically for the Nordic Skiing. Loosing a ski trail to a bunch of people who want a groomed walking trail is hard for me to understand with all the history behind Chester Bowl being a hub for skiing. Also to add that grooming a trail ski trail and designating it specially meant for walkers seems like a poor use of Nordic Skiers MN Ski pass funding. It sounds almost a slap in the face to the skiing community. I originally grew up in the twin cities, where thousands of Nordic Skiers flock to 3 locations in all of the twin cities to ski at due to the lack of snow there. Duluth is a Skiers paradise that so many flock to in order to enjoy! I want to continue to be able to grab my skis, walk over to the park and get my skiing in, without needing access to busses, cars, or any other forms of transportation. If Chester was no longer a Nordic Ski Trail I wouldn't be able to go causally skiing any day that I choose. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. (separate comment; not same user as line above) | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. (separate comment; not same user as line above) | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Hi. Having worked on this project for a number of years, I understand the passion people bring to the issue. Given the number of hiking/biking trails now in the park, it seems like a simple idea to add a few more feet of trail to keep users separated in the winter. With folks walking their unleashed dogs a perennial problem (throughout Duluth) it makes the ski trails unsafe for all users. I was so happy to read this detailed report and to note that trails were monitored to the degree that they were. hard data is hard to fight. Nice work to all involved! | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | Chester Bowl has a long and rich history of Nordic Skiing in Duluth. This inner city, centrally located course is close to colleges, is technically challenging and protected from winds. The terrain has long provided a unique experience for our ski community. If not for Chester Bowl ski trails, I would not have been as prepared to win the MN State HS Meet, win US Nationals / Junior Olympics and make the US Ski Team World Juniors in the 1980s. I know, first hand the benefits this trail brings to our locals skiers including my daughter, also a local high school state team champion. Due to the challenging terrain and speeds on course, mixing walkers and skiers on the same trail is dangerous for two reasons: 1. Skier and walker collision 2. Foot prints transform groomed trails into rough surface changing a relaxing experience into a potentially dangerous one. Duluth has a deep history of Nordic skiing and Chester Bowl ski trails are part of that history. Please give us our cross country ski trail back. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/29/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |

8/29/2019 Web Comment Form

It is very important to me that Chester Ski Trails remain cross country ski trails in the winter months. There are only a small handful of groomed ski trails throughout the city but many walking trails

Support Separate Hiking Trail

8/30/2019 Email to Parks
Commissioners

Hello Park Commissioners!

Indeterminable

Thank you for your attention and hard work on planning. I appreciate your time and energy spent on this project. I am a hiker and visit the upper trail in Chester Park twice daily year round. I wanted to share a poem that celebrates Chester Park. I wrote it just yesterday. I'm sure many of you have the same feeling.

Trees
by S.P

When I walk beneath the trees,
I hear their leaves whisper to the wind
in the dappled light.
Even when the leaves turn crisp
and fall in the north wind
I feel the ease of letting go
reaching for the cold, those open branches in the sun.
Even when I can't sleep,
the leaves rustle in my mind
along the paths that wind over roots and fallen limbs.
I need the trees' heights.
I need them to receive and lift
flights of birds, a song of wind, the weight
of balancing snow.
When I walk beneath the trees
the limbs shelter me. Their roots
take my weight.

The living tangle with the dead.
There is no place they have not fallen
and feed a deep silence, create space, offer
an afterlife of new architecture,
remembering. The new are dreams
the old ones dreamt.
Inside the wood, each year is given
a circle. Each fire or drought or scar
is a mark left in the grain.
When I walk through day and night
the trees to hold me inside,
protect me with their bark,
lend their movement and their shade.
And on those nights when I must
sway with storms and bend beneath the sky,
they plant new seeds on every ledge.

*

I have attended previous meetings regarding the plans for the park. I have sent a letter to the park board through the website comments box. Due to a schedule conflict, I can't attend the September 11 meeting, but I want to support the elders who are bringing their wisdom there.
I support continued shared use of upper trail for hikers and x-country skiers. Shared use makes the most sense for this small public park that already hosts a popular downhill ski program and a bike trail. A great many neighbors also want to see the shared use continue "as is." After all, the signage for shared use was added only last winter. Let's not waste money on making changes so fast.
Shared use increases the accessibility to all citizens in this public setting. I see many elderly folks, kids, and people with disabilities on the trail in the winter. It's safe and the trail offers a place to create community here in the neighborhood. Ungroomed small trails are more treacherous for differently abled people. Park staff report they do not have the staff or financial resources to groom the proposed new trail.

Making another trail exclusive in the small acreage here is "overdevelopment" of the forest. I've been a hiker here in Chester Park for thirty years and have witnessed the changes that have occurred due to the flood in 2012, the extra ski runs created for the downhill program and the bicycle trail. I am concerned about the detrimental effect of cutting another trail. Many large cedar trees, pines, and hardwoods were lost due to the flood and removed because of the recent development for downhill skiers and bicyclists.

More trails in the forest will cause erosion to increase (and it is already a big problem that has not been addressed). Erosion negatively impacts the creek and the fish. It also impacts the surrounding streets, causes more washouts and holes around the pavement, and increases flooded basements. The ecosystem (vegetation, small animals, birds, deer, fox, bear) will be affected by the loss of trees and brush. In this time of increasing loss of the Amazon rain forest and water resources across the world, it's time to act to preserve our trees, forest, and water quality. "No development" is a viable strategy. It allows the forest to regenerate itself and heal from the tree loss that has already occurred. No development will enhance the quality of life for animals and people. In that way, our children and grandchildren will have the same enjoyment of the park and perhaps get around to writing some poems of their own.

Thanks for your time!

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| 8/30/2019 | Web Comment Form | I live near Chester Park, and I am in strong favor of the City of Duluth's proposal for winter use of Chester Park ski trails. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/30/2019 | Web Comment Form | I fully support the City's recommendation of "Building a separate parallel pedestrian trail" as identified in the 2014 Chester Park Mini-Master Plan, and allow skiing only on the XC-Ski trails from January 01 - March 31. I look forward to enjoying the Chester ski trails once again without fear of injuring myself due to footprints causing an uneven and unsafe trail surface, off-leash dogs, and hikers not paying attention. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/30/2019 | Web Comment Form | The question to how best serve the needs of hikers and skiers at Chester Park is a thorny one. As a park neighbor who regularly uses these trails year-round, I appreciate the time and effort the city has invested toward finding a solution. Nevertheless, I fear the proposed plan to separate skiers and foot travel will not result in a satisfactory outcome, and will only serve to fan the flames of discontent and frustration on both sides. As justification, I offer the following observations: 1. Winter hikers and dog-walkers are a significant user group. The proposed plan asks hikers to stop using popular trails in winter. Non-compliance is inevitable. Creating new options that will separate foot travel from the ski trails seems like a great idea, but hackles will go up when walkers are told they are unwelcome on some of the park's most traditional, scenic trails. Especially when the advanced nature of these trails means the primary users will be a relatively exclusive group of more highly skilled skiers and teams from the adjacent college and other schools who use Chester as a training venue. Cross-country skiing at Chester is not a broadly inclusive, family-friendly activity. Walking is. This is not to say that skiing has no place in Chester Park. But planning for skiing must be weighed alongside the fact that foot travel is now a well established and very popular form of recreation in this park for a user group with a much more diverse demographic (at this location) and enjoyed daily by a significant number of people who live in the adjacent neighborhoods. 2. Attempting to move walkers to the multi-use trails around the perimeter of the park will shift trail conflicts with skiers to trail conflicts with winter bikers. If COGGS or some other entity grooms the trail, it will encourage walkers, but as we've seen with other groomed multi-use trail locations around town, thoughtless or ignorant hikers who plod down the middle and ruin freshly groomed bike trails engender animosity between both groups. 3. In the same way, groomed ski trails encourage non-compliance by foot travelers. Unfortunately, walkers and dogs will too often opt for the path of least resistance. Groomed ski trails invite walkers to hike the hard-packed surfaces. 4. The problem with non-compliant dogs is a huge contributor to these conflicts, and will not be solved without enforcement. I hate to see tickets issued to the owners of unleashed, friendly dogs who pad along close to their owners, causing no harm. But the fact is, these folks are breaking the law. As someone who has been bitten twice by non-compliant dogs in Chester and looked on helplessly as others have charged children and run wildlife to ground, I'm vexed that the city has made no effort to periodically issue tickets on these heavily used trails. It's the only way headway will ever be made regarding the problem, and until that happens, unleashed dogs will be an ongoing frustration for skiers, walkers, and other park users. As I've said, there is no easy answer, but I believe the current plan is doomed to failure for the reasons I've stated. Although many people will comply, it only takes a few to ruin the ski trails, and the outcome then is nothing but frustration and hard feelings on both sides. Nothing positive is achieved. So what is the answer? I believe the best possible outcomes will be achieved by not separating the two user groups. Instead: 1. Widen the existing trails to more clearly create paths for walkers on one side and skiers on the other. This way no one will be excluded from trails that are traditional and favorite routes for both groups. 2. Groom the hiking side for hikers. Groom it with a snowmobile, so it is clearly a hiking path, distinctly different and separate from the groomed ski surface. I understand that the City's position is that winter hiking trails aren't groomed in other parks, but that's not exactly the case (COGGS grooms large portions of the multi-use trails) and Chester Park is arguably a unique situation where such proactive attention could go a long way toward solving a perennial conflict. In fact, DXC or other ski advocates could generate a tremendous amount of goodwill among walkers and better serve skiers by volunteering to groom a separate walking path alongside the ski trails. 3. Periodically enforce leash laws. I believe it would only take a short time to train non-compliant dog owners to leash their dogs or go elsewhere. To ease the frustration of folks who will be angered by such action, I suggest seriously considering the possibility of making the soccer fields at Chester a dog park in winter. Whatever solution is ultimately implemented at Chester Park, it should be one that encourages cooperation and discourages enmity between user groups, but is realistic enough to recognize and plan for the realities of non-compliance. | Oppose Separate Hiking Trail |
| 8/30/2019 | Web Comment Form | I agree with the study results that skiing and walking cannot coexist without conflict on the same trail. I like the plan to provide both walking and ski only trails. In my opinion the ski only dates should include the month of December. | Support Separate Hiking Trail |