

2022 Annual Report

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Our Mission

To promote the health and well-being of our community, environment and economy by facilitating recreational opportunities and coordinating the enhancement of our parks, facilities and natural resources now and in the future.



Our Vision

Continue to be the central driving force in strengthening the heritage of a healthy, active community for future generations by continuing on the path of improving and enhancing our parks and facilities; protecting our natural resources; and developing partnerships to deliver recreation programs and services.

MESSAGES

From Parks and Recreation Commission President

Greetings!

This was a big year for the Parks and Recreation Commission. We always have important work before us, and this past year was one for the books! If I had to sum up the year in just a few words, I would highlight equity, inclusion, and community.

The Parks and Recreation division completed the Essential Spaces: Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan. This deeply thought-out and inclusive plan was unanimously supported by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Two of our Commissioners had the opportunity to work with the Parks and Recreation division alongside our community to complete a vision of parks and recreation in Duluth for the next ten years. I am always in awe of the work of the dedicated individuals working within the division, but I was especially impressed with the integrity of the Essential Spaces planning process. The incorporation of existing plans and community consideration was a beautiful example of the public process at work. On behalf of the Commission, we are proud to have been a part of this process.

The Parks and Recreation Commission worked together with VOTE YES! for Duluth Parks campaign to rally behind the proposed tax levy we saw on last November's ballot. The levy did not pass this year but allowed the opportunity for our Commission to talk about the importance of parks and recreation and how imperative our essential spaces, places and opportunities within our parks system are to the health and wellness of our community. It brought attention to the importance of parks and recreation as a public service just like other public services such as libraries, police, and fire. Parks and recreation serves as an inclusive space for individuals of all ages, abilities, cultural backgrounds, and income levels. It is no secret that Duluth is lucky to be home to so many equitable opportunities within our park system. Despite funding challenges, the important work of the division continues. Imagine what we could accomplish with adequate funding in place!

I also want to highlight the work of the community partners, groups and stakeholders who work with the Parks and Recreation division and thank you for your dedicated civic service. Collaboration and engagement are key to successful outcomes for our community. I had the opportunity to sit as a Commissioner on the Public Golf Committee this past year and am humbled by the dedicated Committee members who volunteered their time to work on solutions to increase the value of Duluth Public Golf. Community stakeholders and dedicated partners are vital in the success of our parks system as a whole. After all, parks and recreation belong to the communities they serve.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow Commissioners for your service; our work together has made meaningful changes. We said "goodbye" to several dedicated Commissioners this past year and welcomed a new District 4 representative. Thank you to past, present, and future Commissioners for being a liaison for the community and the Parks and Recreation division. I am excited to welcome new Commissioners in 2023 and can't wait to see what comes before us as we embark on a new year.

"The fundamental idea behind parks is native. It is, in brief, that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us. The parks stand as the outward symbol of the great human principle." Franklin D. Roosevelt

With Respect,



Amanda Crosby, Parks and Recreation Commission President

MESSAGES

From Parks and Recreation Manager

Greetings from Parks and Recreation,

I'd like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to our dedicated community members, volunteers, staff and Commissioners who collectively steward and program our parks and trails. The past year was full of exciting and important progress, projects, and programs throughout our parks and recreation system.

Together, with your support, we completed the Essential Spaces: Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan. The Essential Spaces Plan is an equity-driven, community-informed plan that charts our course forward for the next decade. Taking on a system-wide planning effort is no small task, and our staff, consultants, Project Advisory Committee, and Commission rose to the occasion, completing an award-winning long-range system plan that we can all be proud of. Thank you for the contributions large and small that led to the completion of the Essential Spaces Plan.

Programming resumed in full force in every neighborhood this year. With a combination of our favorite recurring programs and a heavy dose of creative new ideas, programs ranged from weekly ice skating at Heritage Center to pop-up splash pads and everything in between. We were reminded that kickball isn't just for kids, Bingo isn't just for Seniors, and social connections are as important as the recreational experiences in our park system. Summer camp adventures, archery programs, and collaborations with our local youth agencies are just a few of our many program highlights this year.

Our community centers were back in action too, hosting celebrations, activity clubs, meetings, and social gatherings. We are reaching organizational capacity on reservations and permitting thanks to all of your creative uses of our parks and trails! We continue to be honored to host the many sports teams and leagues who call our rinks, courts, and fields home, and we're so glad to see you all back in full swing. These are all important indicators of the value of our park system to our community, that it is where you choose to gather, celebrate, play, relax, and learn.

With a good deal of progress to celebrate, I have also been reflecting on where we are headed next. Our park and trail facilities are in need of attention—deferred maintenance is adding up, and costs to repair and/or replace our assets are increasing. In the absence of additional funding, the progress we've made will become stagnant, and may even regress. As a community, we will be faced with difficult decisions of all shapes and sizes. Even so, I am confident that the value this community has placed on our park system—deeming it *Essential*—will prevail, and we will continue to make forward progress.

From all of us, thank you for supporting the mission and vision of Duluth Parks and Recreation.



Jessica Peterson
Parks and Recreation Manager

ABOUT US

Parks and Recreation Staff

Jessica Peterson—Manager
Alicia Watts—Assistant Manager
Matt Andrews—Trails Coordinator
Todd Armbruster—Parks Project Coordinator
Katie Bennett—Parks Project Coordinator
Allison Brooks—Project Technician
Diane Desotelle—Natural Resources Coordinator
Bridget Erickson—Admin Clerical Specialist
Adam Fornear—Recreation Specialist
Jessica Haig—Admin Clerical Specialist
Cliff Knettel—Senior Planner
Kate Kubiak—Natural Resources Coordinator
Megan Lidd—Recreation Specialist
Jarod Meyer—Recreation Specialist
Melody Morris—GIS Technician
Brett Odegard—Recreation Specialist
Abby Proulx—Recreation Specialist
Chris Severson—Permits Coordinator
Sam Werle—Recreation Specialist

Parks and Recreation Commission

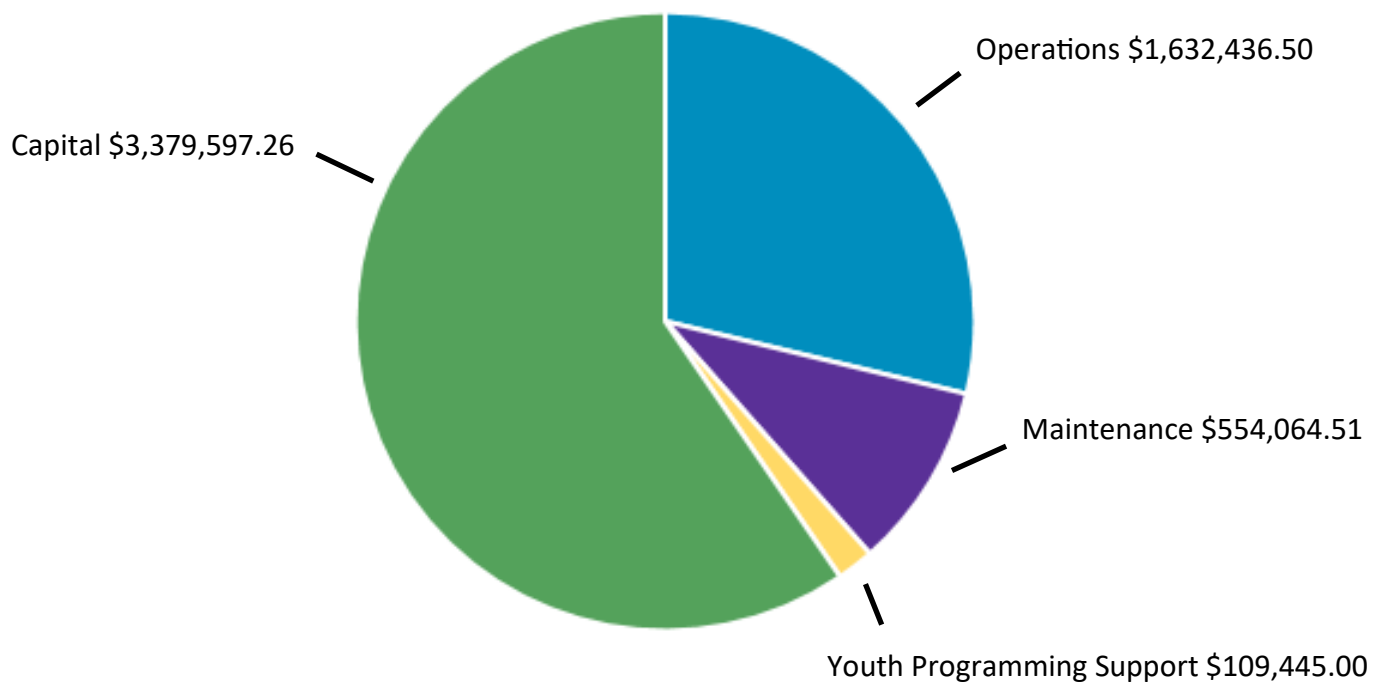
Amanda Crosby—President
David Demmer—Vice President, Land Management
Natalie Chin—Secretary, At-Large
Tjaard Breeuwer—District 1
Kala Pederson—District 2
Britt Rohrbaugh—District 3
Sarah Beehler—District 4
Barb Darland—District 5
Jennifer Peterson—At-Large
Noah Kramer—Recreation Professional
Shauna Maurer—Recreation Professional

Park Maintenance Staff

Cheryl Skafte—Parks and Grounds Supervisor
Todd Armbruster—Operations Coordinator
Robert Dunsmore—Lead Worker (Parks)
Billy Davis—Lead Worker (Trails)
Clark Christenson—City Forester
Park Maintenance Workers:
John Capra
Trevor Christensen
Darin Franckowiak
Greg Hanson
Todd Halbakken
Abbie Hopper
Kevin Jentoft
Todd Kobus
Jenny Monroe
Anna Neu
Taylor Persson
Paul Sunday
Ben Sosniecki
Cory Wagner
Chris Walz
Wendy Wohlwend
Chris Zwick
Leah Mullin—Community Forestry Corps (AmeriCorps)



BUDGET



Operations

- Wages and benefits
- Equipment and supplies
- Marketing and printing
- Vehicles and mileage
- Membership and dues
- Special events and concerts
- Training and education

Maintenance

- Maintenance staff
- Cleaning, repairs and maintenance at parks, fields and community centers
- Invasive species removal team
- Training, certifications and licenses
- Forestry operations

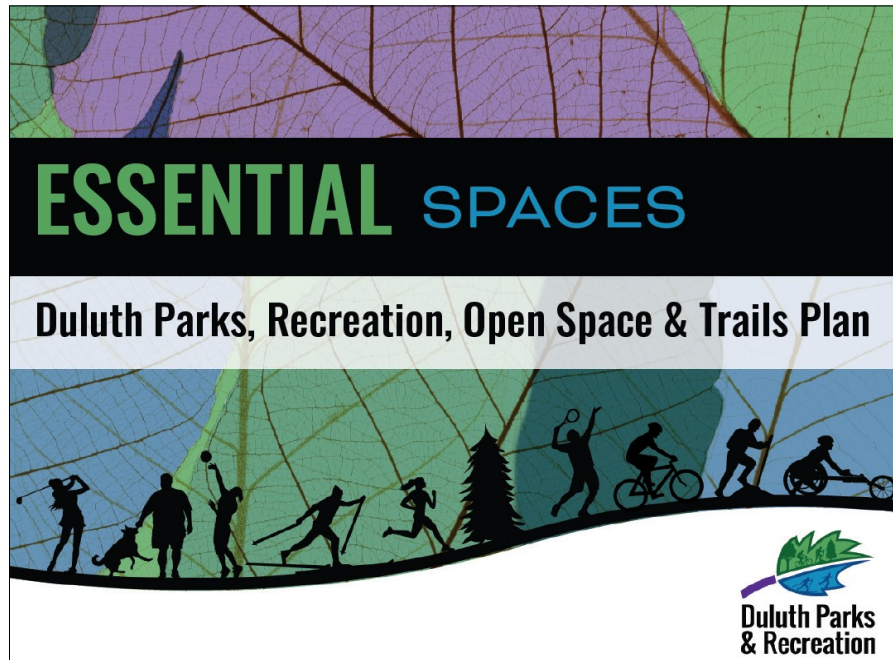
Youth Programming Support

- Boys and Girls Clubs of the Northland—Lincoln Park
- Chester Bowl Improvement Club
- Duluth Area Family YMCA—Gary New Duluth
- Duluth Community School Collaborative—East Hillside
- Family Freedom Center—Central Hillside
- Valley Youth Center—West Duluth

Capital

- Park improvements
- Trail repair and improvements
- Community Center upgrades

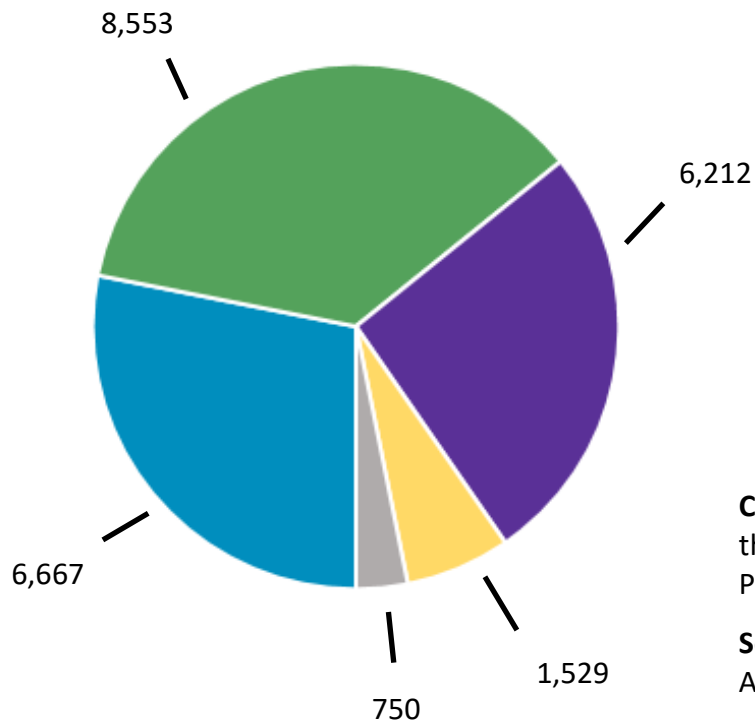
ESSENTIAL SPACES



On October 10, 2022, the Duluth City Council approved the adoption and implementation of the Essential Spaces: Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan. Essential Spaces establishes the long-range vision for the park system and provides recommendations on how the City can continue to support a healthy and vibrant community, enhance inclusion and equity, and advance environmental protection within a sustainable budget framework. A robust community engagement process informed the development of Essential Spaces through a series of focus group meetings, a community survey, interactive community workshops, presentations to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and guidance from a 21-member Project Advisory Committee comprised of City staff, Parks and Recreation Commissioners, and citizen representatives. The Essential Spaces plan can be found here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/14188/10-10-22-essential-spaces-plan-for-council.pdf>



PROGRAMMING



Participants Per Category

- Senior Programs
- Community Events
- Youth Programs & Sports
- Adult & Family Programs
- Adult Sport Leagues

Community Events: Free drop-in events offered to the community year-round (ex. Cold Front, Story and Play, Chester Concerts, Solstice Luminary Hike)

Senior Programs: Programs geared to those 55+ (ex. Activity Clubs i.e. Cards, Fitness; Hikes; Parties; Trips)

Youth: Programs designed for youth only (ex. Day Camps, Archery, Flag Football)

Adult Leagues: Athletic programs for adults (ex. Kickball, Softball, Ultimate Frisbee)

Adult & Family: Programs designed for all ages and families (ex. Full Moon Hike, Open Skate, Bayfront Skating Rink)



Who We Are

The Parks and Recreation programming team, seeks to provide a variety of programs throughout the year, across the park system, for people of all ages and abilities. Programs mostly take place outdoors in park spaces using a mobile recreation model, bringing the adventures to where community members are! Programs are designed to give participants an affordable introduction to a variety of activities. While 150+ program topics were offered in 2022, the following pages showcase notable programming highlights from the year.

PROGRAMMING

Summer Day Camps

Day Camps continued to grow this year, offering unique themes and activities including Archery Camp, Fishing Camp, Wizards & Warlocks Camp, Nature Detectives Camp, and more! Full weeks of Day Camp to start and end the summer provide options when some other local programs are not in session. These weeks of camp are especially appreciated to meet the needs of childcare. Demand was high in 2022, with more than 100 campers left on waitlists above maximum capacities.



Youth Open Gym

Youth Open Gym for homeschool families provided a variety of gym and sports equipment for families to stay active indoors during the winter months. This weekly program hosted a small group of consistent participants, with the largest attendance being 14 kids.

Family BINGO

Family BINGO sessions in the spring and fall saw more than 100 people participate! The BINGO night in November included a partnership with the Duluth Public Library, offering a combination of regular BINGO and Book BINGO led by Library staff – more than 50 people attended this activity!



PROGRAMMING

Outdoor Education Day

Outdoor Education Day is a partnership between Parks and Recreation and UMD's undergraduate Environmental & Outdoor Education program. The goal of this event is two-fold: 1) local youth serving agencies and programs get to participate in outdoor activities such as canoeing, birds & binoculars, tree identification, map & compass skills, aquatic macroinvertebrates, and more; and 2) UMD students gain experience in leading these lessons and activities as outdoor educators, as well as connecting with local youth and youth programs.

2022 was the third year for this event, and this year saw almost 50 youth from local youth programs attend, including the Little Y at Harbor Highlands, Family Freedom Center/Neighborhood Youth Services, and the Myers-Wilkins Duluth Community Schools Collaborative.

Free Programming for Youth Serving Agencies

Each year, five local youth serving agencies (Boys and Girls Club of the Northland, Duluth Community Schools Collaborative, Family Freedom Center, Valley Youth Center, and the Duluth Y) receive free recreation program opportunities through Parks and Recreation. Activities in 2022 included cross-country skiing, archery, pickleball, nature activities like animal tracks & signs, ice skating, canoeing, team building activities, and providing bus transportation to Outdoor Education Day. 291 youth participated in these free programs in 2022.



Fee Assistance Program

The Fee Assistance program helps families across Duluth participate in recreation programs regardless of any financial barriers they may be facing. In 2022, \$3,818.50 was provided in Fee Assistance. The program type that received the most requests for fee assistance in 2022 was Summer Day Camps for youth.

PROGRAMMING

55+ Activity Clubs

Activity Clubs are free, community-run groups that meet in park spaces and community centers throughout the City. Anyone ages 55+ is welcome to join or create an Activity Club. The following list includes all Activity Clubs that met in 2022:

- 500 Cards: twice weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- BINGO: weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- BINGO: weekly at Morgan Park Community Center
- Bone Builders: twice weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- Bridge: weekly at Portman Community Center
- Cribbage: weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- Cribbage: weekly at Morgan Park Community Center
- Dominoes: weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- Evergreen Crafters: weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- Hand and Foot: weekly at Evergreen Community Center
- Men's Coffee and Chat: weekly at Portman Community Center
- Play/Learn to Play Mahjong: weekly at Evergreen Community Center



55+ Spring Fling

A brand new Spring Fling event in May included a DJ playing classic music, tomato plants provided by Duluth Community Gardens, and a craft activity to decorate tomato planters. More than 30 participants attended to celebrate the incoming warmer weather.

55+ Snowshoe Social

The winter 2022-2023 season marked the second year for the ages 55+ Snowshoe Social. This program featured a new trail each week for residents to meet up, explore, and make new friends! Despite a cold start to winter in 2023, the programs filled with a range of experienced and novice snowshoers. Snowshoes were available from Parks and Recreation if needed.



PROGRAMMING

Develop Skills to Skate

Partnership with Duluth Figure Skating Club
Bayfront Park & Duluth Heritage Center
6 sessions | 60 participants

Adult Kickball League

Second year
Wheeler Athletic Complex
14 teams | 200 participants | 7-week season

Youth Flag Football

Partnership with the NFL
Grades K-8
195 participants (72 more than last year!)
30 volunteer coaches | 6-week season

Ultimate Frisbee League

Partnership with Duluth Ultimate Community
Spring, Summer, Fall leagues
Heritage Center, Irving Park, Chester Park
138 participants | 6-week seasons

Adult Softball League

Three nights per week
Wheeler Athletic Complex
Men's and Open divisions
25 teams | 300 participants | 12-week season

Open Skate

Weekly at Duluth Heritage Center
6,000 participants
Average of 125 participants at 4 free events:
Skate for the Heart, Boo Bash,
Gobbler Glide, Skate with Santa



PROGRAMMING

Cold Front

The annual Cold Front event took place on Saturday, February 5 on a beautiful snowy day at Bayfront Festival Park. Families came out to enjoy a day of winter activities provided by Parks and Recreation and other local outdoor enthusiasts and partners. Park Maintenance built snow sculptures, luges, obstacle courses, and ran the tractor ride. Other events included crafts, science experiments, a snow play area, ice skating, kick sledding, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, dog sledding, “sno-ga” yoga, and local fire spinners at sunset.



Chester Creek Concerts

It was a wet season for the 39th annual Chester Creek Concert series where shows four weeks in a row were rained out! A total of 7 shows brought out around 2,500 attendees for the season with a variety of music ranging from big band styles to classic rock, funk, and Americana.

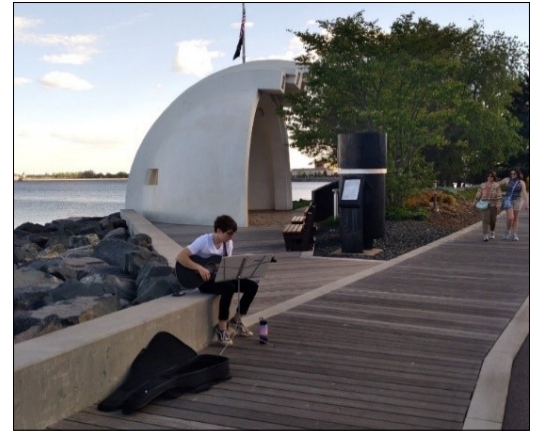
2022 Bands:

Born Too Late
Bill Bergeson Band
Preston Gunderson
Boss Mama and the Jebberhooch
Windjammers
Box Car
Laura Velvet

PROGRAMMING

Busker Stroll

Once a month during the summer, a new Busker Stroll mini-series highlighted permitted buskers on the Lakewalk. These free, accessible events provided an enjoyable night of music for folks spending time along the Lakewalk. Buskers also appreciated the opportunity to make their performances more of an event that invited people to stop and listen.



Pop-Up Splash Pads

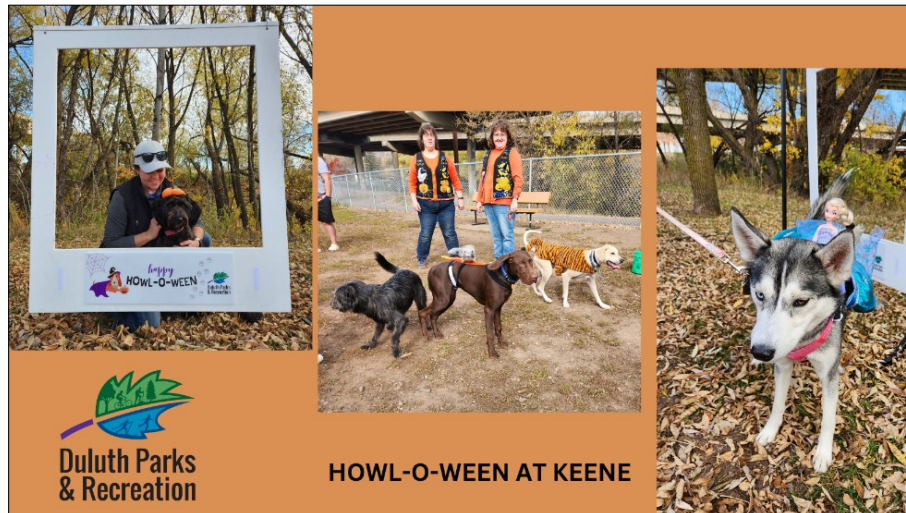
Parks and Recreation hosted three Pop-Up Splash Pads in partnership with the Duluth Fire Department at Keene Creek Park, Harrison Park, and Riverside Park over the summer. This new offering drew a crowd of people to play with various sprinklers, water features, and water games. In total, more than 700 people attended these three events.



PROGRAMMING

Howl-O-Ween

Howl-O-Ween at Keene Creek Dog Park was our first dog park-centric event, taking place on a gorgeous Sunday afternoon in October. Many dogs and their owners showed up in costume, and treat bags were available for purchase. We enjoyed connecting with all the happy dogs and dog owners through this event.



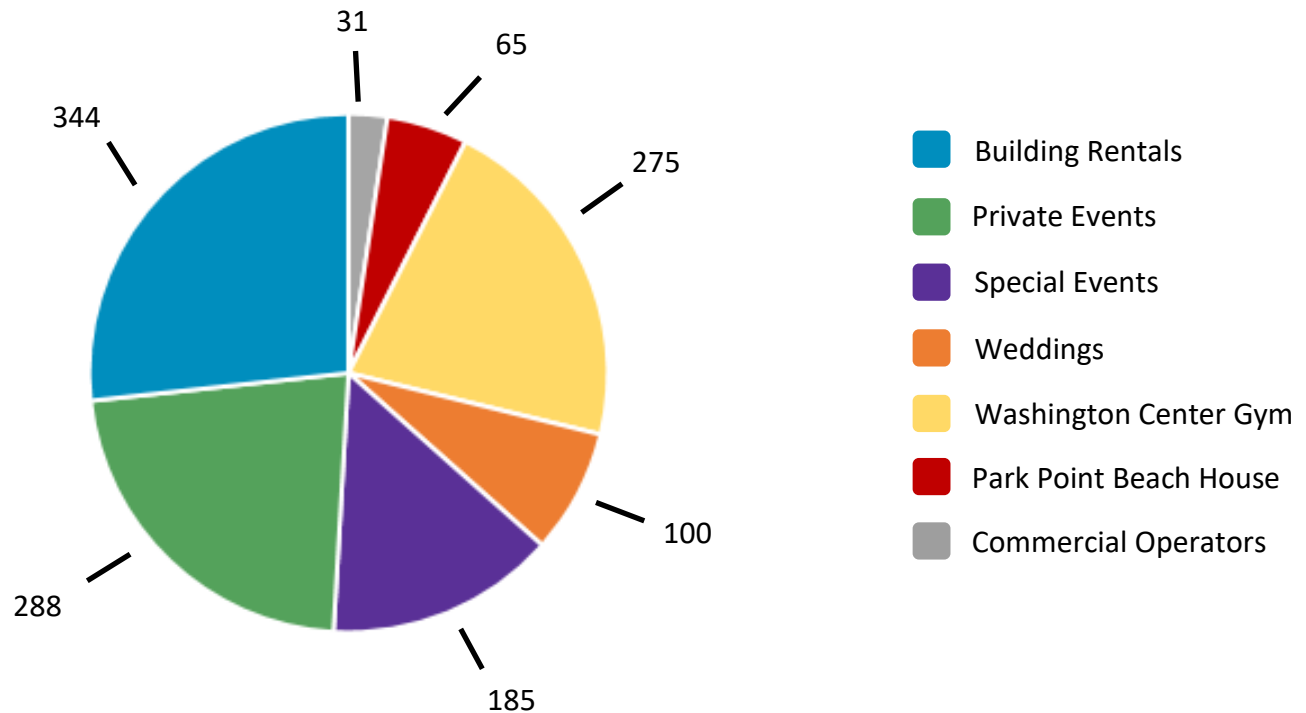
Glow Hike

The first ever Glow Hike took place on Friday, October 28 at Indian Point Campground, which proved to be a great way of activating the park space in the off-season of the campground. Campsites along the river were utilized for a fire with s'mores and access to Waabizheshikana Trail, and the half-mile loop around the campground was lined with glow sticks. Some folks joined in the fun of Halloween early by bringing their own glow apparel. The event had nearly perfect weather, a clear night, and more than 400 people join!



Indian Point Campground

PERMITS & RESERVATIONS



Special Events in Parks

While many of the Special Events hosted in parks by community organizations offer fun and entertainment, there are others that provide support and services to the Duluth community. A few of those events from 2022 include:

- AICHO Indigenous Food and Art Market is a bi-weekly event hosted at Central Hillside Park providing fresh and locally grown food to the neighborhood while stimulating the BIPOC food and art economy.
- Community Action Duluth's Seeds of Success program runs a weekly Farmer's Market at Harrison Park selling fresh produce, baked goods and meat. The market provides food options for a neighborhood with limited access to food resources.
- Harm Reduction Sisters utilizes Memorial Park and Central Hillside Park for their Community Mobile Health Pop-Up Events, which provide a wide array of low-barrier health and harm reduction services.



PERMITS & RESERVATIONS



Morgan Park Community Center

Community Center Rentals

Rentals of indoor spaces made a noticeable return in 2022 with a total of 409 private rentals at Portman Community Center, Lafayette Community Center, Park Point Beach House, Harrison Community Center, Evergreen Community Center, and Morgan Park Community Center. A majority of the events hosted were birthday parties, graduation parties, and family gatherings and weddings.

Community Centers previously hosted revolving reservations on a weekly or monthly basis for various user groups, but ceased with the pandemic. In 2022, revolving reservations returned with a weekly facility use by Champion Force Cheerleading, Northern Exposure Arts Collaborative, Music Together and a local martial arts class.

Building Improvements

Improvements to Lafayette:

- Paint
- Whiteboard
- Updated Closet Curtain
- Refinished Hardwood Floors

Improvements to Portman:

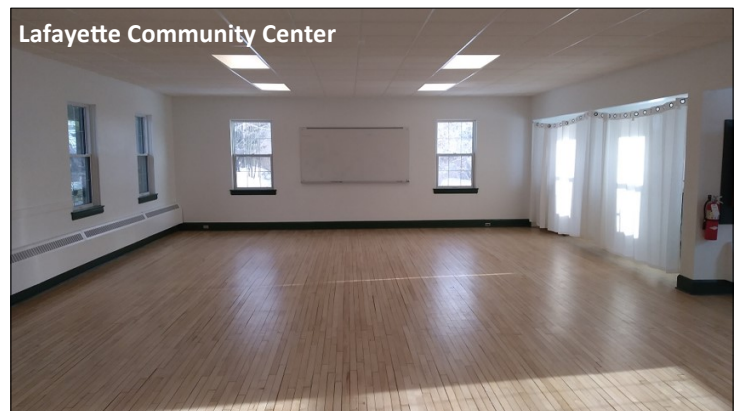
- Paint
- Projection Screen
- Window Treatments
- Lighting

Improvements to Evergreen:

- Kitchen Floor Resurfacing
- Window Treatments

System Wide Community Center Updates:

- Key Card Access
- Energy Efficient Lighting
- Microwaves



Lafayette Community Center



Portman Community Center

PARKS STEWARDSHIP

Kingsbury Pier

In June, the fishing pier at Kingsbury Bay was replaced with a new, 104-foot long pier. The fishing pier is located near Indian Point Campground and can be accessed from Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources identified the location as a high priority under the State's public water access program and subsequently funded the new fishing pier. Installation of the pier was a cooperative effort between the MDNR and City staff.



Kingsbury Pier

A ribbon cutting was held for the Kingsbury Bay and Grassy Point habitat restoration projects on September 12 at the new Kingsbury Bay fishing pier. The speakers for the event included representatives from the Minnesota DNR, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Lakes National Program Office, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and the City of Duluth.

Wheeler Athletic Complex

A ribbon cutting was held on June 30 to celebrate the significant improvements made at the Wheeler Athletic Complex, including a sport court replacement, baseball field and dugout improvements, restroom renovations, accessible walkway improvements, and the addition of new horseshoe pits and sand volleyball courts. Combined, this work has transformed Wheeler into a more functional and accessible recreation destination.

In 2019, the City of Duluth was awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Outdoor Recreation Program to support the implementation of the West Duluth Sports Corridor Mini-Master Plan. Additional project support came from the half and half tax, the Park Fund, and donations from St. Louis County, the Duluth Softball Players Association, and the Duluth Area Pickleball Association.



Wheeler Athletic Complex

PARKS STEWARDSHIP

Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan

On June 27, the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan was adopted by City Council. The Plan was developed in collaboration with the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, which provides educational programming at Hawk Ridge. The plan will guide future improvements of the educational facilities that expand opportunities and improve safety and accessibility.



Lincoln Park

A groundbreaking event was held on August 26 to celebrate the start of construction. The scope of the improvements at Lincoln Park will include replacement of the playground, a refurbished historic stone pavilion with accessible restrooms, refurbished picnic shelter, two new parking lots, one on the upper terrace and one in place of the old playground on the lower area, and upper terrace improvements including a new sports field, multi-use sport court, nature playscape, and small picnic shelter. Throughout the entire project site, we will add new accessible trails, improved signage and wayfinding, and green infrastructure such as biofiltration basins, pollinator gardens and drainage swales. Lincoln Park Drive will be reclaimed.

In 2016, the City of Duluth was awarded \$750,000 from the MDNR Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program to support the implementation of the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan. In 2019, the City was awarded \$299,525 from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Program. Additional project support includes grants from the City's Community Development Block Grant Program, U.S. Bank Foundation, Essentia Health, Maurices, St. Luke's, and Minnesota Power. Other funding sources include the Park Fund, ARPA revenue replacement, Street Improvement Sales Tax, and the Sustainability Fund.



PARKS STEWARDSHIP

Shoreline Restoration

Storms in October 2017, April 2018, and October 2018 severely damaged the shoreline along portions of the Lakewalk and Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail near Spirit Cove, and at Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) contributed funding for the completion of the projects through the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant programs.

- The Lakewalk shoreline, roughly between 14th Ave E and 16th Ave E, was repaired over the summer with engineered stone revetment to improve resiliency. The repairs were funded through tourism tax and FEMA.
- A portion of the shoreline adjacent to Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail near Spirit Cove was repaired this fall. The project was designed to restore a living shoreline featuring engineered stone armoring and native vegetation. The repairs were funded through the half and half tax and FEMA.
- The first phase, of two planned phases, of coastal restoration at Brighton Beach was completed this fall. The restoration is designed to mimic natural conditions with stone stabilization and rewilding to restore ecologic function in the area and improve visitor usability. The second phase will be implemented during the planned park improvements that will take place in 2023. The restoration was funded through the Parks Fund and FEMA.



Enger Golf Renovation

Concluding a competitive bid process, City Council approved a management agreement with Indigo Sports, LLC for ongoing management of the City golf courses.

Following the Parks & Recreation Commission and City Council approval of the Enger Park Golf Course Renovation Plan in September 2021, the City embarked on the design of the renovation project. During 2022, the final design and construction documents were completed, and the project was put out for bid. Construction is expected to start in the fall of 2023 and be completed in 2024. The first phase of the project will include construction of a new irrigation system and irrigation pond, and improvements to fairways.

PARKS STEWARDSHIP



Hartley Nature Center

A ribbon cutting was held on October 17 to celebrate the improvements at Hartley Park and the addition to the Hartley Nature Center. The 5,200 square foot facility expansion (to the existing 7,500 square foot building) provides additional classroom spaces, a second restroom facility, an expanded office area, an updated exhibit hall and gathering space, and a public meeting room. The enhanced facility supports our community's increasing demands for environmental education, recreational programming, and opportunities to connect with nature and with one another.

In 2019, the City of Duluth was awarded \$1.29 million from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) Legacy Grant Program to support the implementation of the Hartley Park Mini-Master Plan, including a building expansion, improved sidewalk connectivity, additional parking, and comprehensive signage and wayfinding. Additional project support came from the Parks Fund and Hartley Nature Center.



St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail

A ribbon cutting was held in collaboration with the St. Louis River Alliance on September 28 to celebrate the designation of the St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail. Approximately, 130 people attended the event, which featured tables for twelve organizations including the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, Superior Hiking Trail Alliance, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation, St. Louis River Alliance, and more.

The St. Louis River Estuary National Water Trail officially gained designation in 2020 by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and is now included in the National Parks Water Trail System. This incredible accomplishment celebrates the revitalization of the St. Louis River, the largest tributary to Lake Superior and once one of the most polluted waterways in the nation. The Water Trail has 11 looped routes for paddlers and boaters of all skill levels and abilities.



SIGNAGE

Signage replacements and additions are installed according to the specifications described in the Gate, Wayfinding, and Signage Final Design Plan that was adopted in 2017.

In total for 2022, 156 new park signs were installed:

- 82 at Chester Park (upper) – entrance identification, directories, maps, rules and regulations, and trail markers. Funded by the Parks Fund.
- 67 at Hartley Park – entrance identification, directories, maps, rules and regulations, and trail markers. Funded by the Parks Fund and a grant from the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission. The wayfinding improvements were identified as a recommendation in the 2014 Hartley Park Mini-Master Plan.
- 4 signs at the Piedmont trailheads – entrance identification and directories. Funded by the Half and Half Tax.
- A new entrance sign for the Lafayette Community Recreation Area. Funded by the Parks Fund.



Waabizheshikana Legacy Designation

In June, Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail was designated as a regionally significant trail by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC). Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail Mini Master Plan and Interpretive Plans were completed in 2019 and 2021, respectively, and laid the groundwork for raising funds and phasing their implementation. One significant funding source for park and trail projects in Minnesota is through the GMRPTC, which provides recommendations to the State legislature for grants funded by the Legacy parks and trails fund. In order to be eligible to apply for and receive these Legacy funds, a local park or trail asset has to be designated by the GMRPTC as “Regionally Significant”. With the addition of Waabizheshikana, Duluth now is home to four designated park and trail assets, including Hartley Park, Spirit Mountain, and the Duluth Traverse.

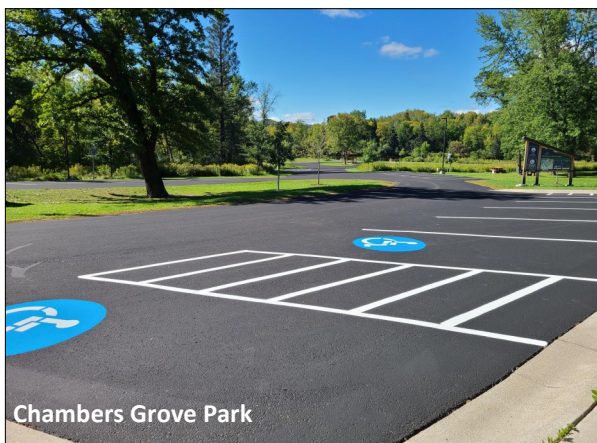
Trails and Trailhead Improvements

In 2022, Park Maintenance completed parking lot repairs at seven trailheads and parks, including the Haines Road trailhead for Brewer Park and Piedmont Trails, Pulaski Street trailhead for Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail and the Willard Munger State Trail, 12th Street Beach parking lot, Bayfront Park, Chambers Grove Park, Hartley Park, and Memorial Park. Repairs included crack filling, seal coating, and restriping of the lots.

Hartley Park – The Duluth Foot Trails Alliance coordinated three volunteer days in October to improve and reroute an existing social trail from the Hunters Park neighborhood. The previous informal social trail was presenting erosion issues, which was negatively affecting the nearby Tischer Creek. It was replaced with a new neighborhood connection that is more sustainable and in alignment with the recommendations identified in the Hartley Park Mini-Master Plan that was adopted in 2014.

Superior Hiking Trail – Three realignments were completed to reduce erosion and improve trail sustainability as described in the St. Louis River Corridor Trails Plan that was adopted in 2017. These realignments were funded by the Superior Hiking Trail Association and included:

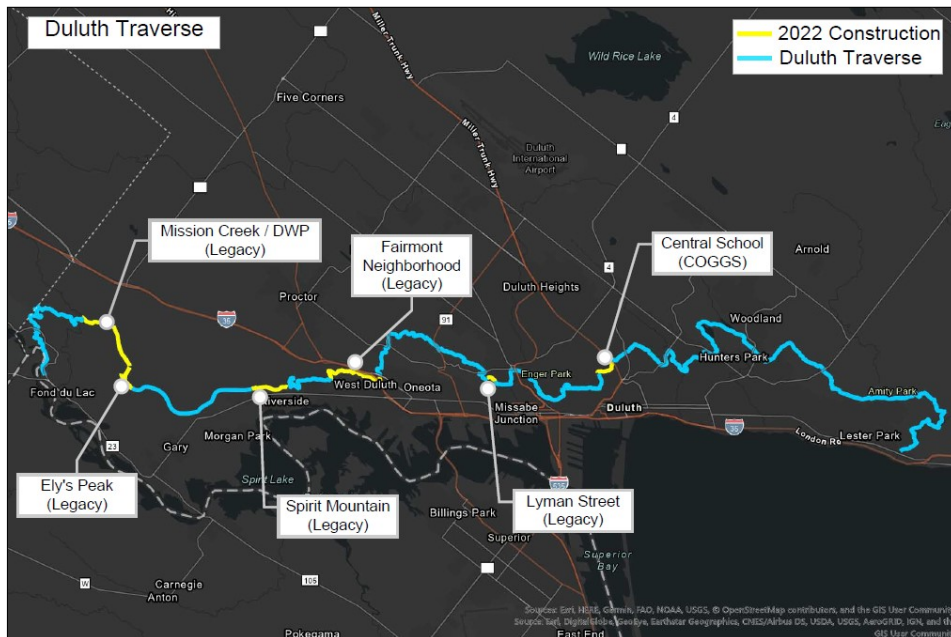
- removal of stairs at Knowlton Creek and a reroute,
- a reroute near a Keene Creek tributary,
- elimination of a 0.5 mile walk on the roadside of West Skyline Parkway to a path through the woods utilizing the Stewart Creek bridge on the DWP trail.



TRAILS

Duluth Traverse

In 2018, the City of Duluth was awarded an \$889,198 grant from the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) Legacy Grant Program to support trail improvements to the DWP Trail and the Duluth Traverse. The grant funding supported restoration of the scenic Stewart Creek and Sargent Creek Bridges, completion of rock fall mitigation at the Ely's Peak tunnel, installation of crushed stone on the trail to meet the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) accessibility standards, and construction of multiple segments of the Duluth Traverse.



On October 19, a ribbon cutting was held with the GMRPTC and Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS) to celebrate the significant additions and improvements to the Duluth Traverse completed in 2022. Five segments completed in 2022 accounted for nearly four total miles of new trail:

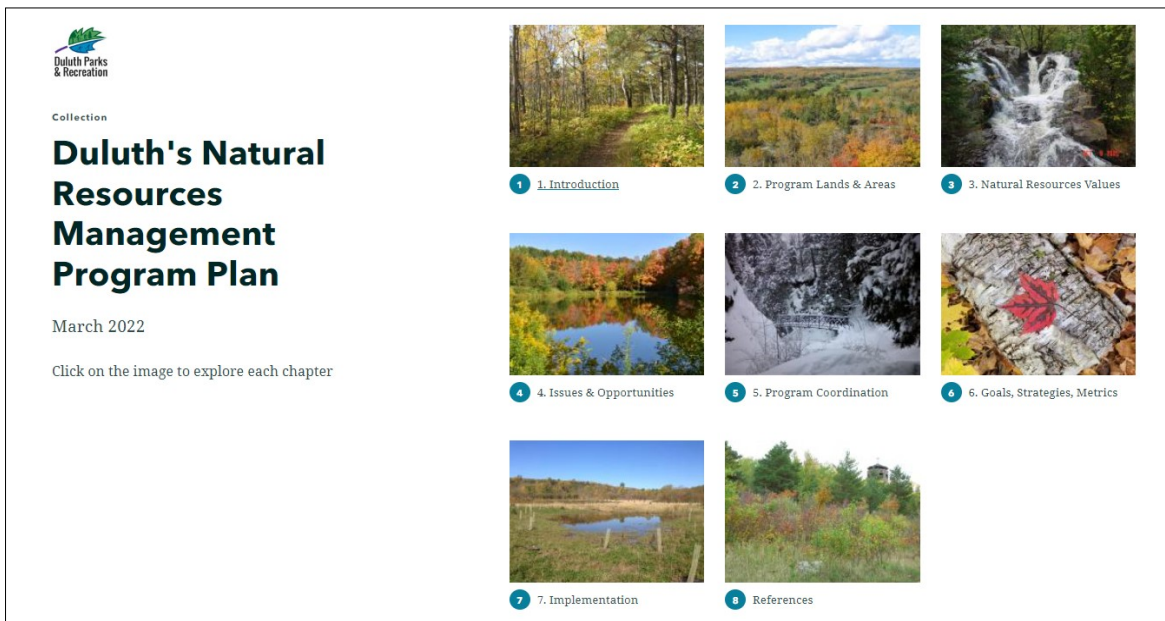
- Shortline Park to Ely's Peak Tunnel: Leading from Shortline Park on Beck's Road to Ely's Peak Tunnel, this segment replaces the eroded path that led to the railroad tie stairway. Segment funded through the GMRPTC Legacy grant.
- Mission Creek: This segment restores connectivity for the DWP between Spirit Mountain and Mission Creek. Segment funded through the GMRPTC Legacy grant.
- Gogebic Street to Grand Avenue Chalet: There is now a Traverse trail adjacent to the DWP trail. Segment funded through the GMRPTC Legacy grant.
- Fairmont Neighborhood Trail: This trail segment parallels the DWP and filled the gap between Kingsbury Creek (above the Lake Superior Zoo) and Hwy 35 (at Keene Creek Park). Segment funded through the GMRPTC Legacy grant.
- Lyman Street Bypass: This trail segment created a bypass for the one block, on-street section in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, which now allows users to continue on a natural surface trail. Segment funded through the GMRPTC Legacy grant.
- Central School Trail: A new segment through the Central School property filled the largest remaining gap in the Traverse; it connects the Observation Hill Neighborhood to the Marshall School area, which leads to Chester Park. Segment funded and constructed by COGGS.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources Management Program Plan

On March 28, 2022, the Natural Resources Management Program Plan was adopted. The Plan was developed in collaboration with the US EPA Great Lakes Toxicology and Ecology Division Laboratory, the Minnesota Land Trust, and numerous federal, state, tribal, local, and nonprofit natural resource management agencies that are actively working to restore and protect Duluth's natural resources. The Plan describes long-term goals, strategies, and decision-making processes to preserve, repair, nurture, and assess the public open space lands in Duluth.

The first annual partner meeting was held on October 7 to bring organizations together to discuss natural resources projects that are happening throughout the city. In total, 28 people attended representing 18 outside organizations and agencies. A survey collected information about the array of projects, and the total cost for projects being completed within the city, including completed and multi-year ongoing projects, is \$25.3 million. Additionally, the total estimated costs of the St. Louis River Area of Concern remediation projects coordinated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is approximately \$466 million, which includes a mix of private, state, federal, and grant funding from a multitude of sources.



Strategic Public Lands Realignment Project

In support of the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Duluth and St. Louis County have jointly finalized a list of tax forfeit open space parcels with significant natural resource, recreation, and stormwater management value for the City to acquire and permanently protect. Throughout 2022, the acquisition process continued moving forward. The acquisition will include roughly 2,400 acres of land within five project areas: Lester Amity, Hartley, Piedmont, Mission, and St. Louis River. Once the transfer is complete, the Natural Resources and Parks and Recreation Commissions will be involved in formally designating approximately 1,900 acres of the parcels as parkland.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Invasive Species Management

One aspect of the Natural Resources Program in Duluth is the management of invasive plants to maintain and preserve open space ecology. Invasive plants are not native to Duluth and spread rapidly, which can negatively affect the function of our ecosystem. There are invasive plant populations throughout Duluth. To be most efficient, the City aims to treat or manage the plant populations that are near high quality or vulnerable habitats to limit their spread. In 2022:

- Continuing a multi-year effort, 40 sites across Duluth were treated for Knotweed.
- Pollinator gardens and meadows across Duluth were monitored for invasive species and managed as needed.
- In Hartley Natural Area, sites were treated for Reed Canary Grass, Cattails, and Buckthorn.
- Sites in Lincoln Park and along Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail and the DWP were treated for state noxious weeds including Buckthorn and Reed Canary Grass.

Duluth Invaders—Over the summer, volunteers with the City of Duluth’s service initiative, Duluth Invaders, logged over 1,380 hours. These volunteers remove and properly dispose of invasive plants in our parks, which is a critical component to preserving and restoring Duluth’s natural areas. Priority plants included buckthorn, wild parsnip, purple loosestrife, knotweed, and garlic mustard.

CISMA—The Duluth Collaborative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) is a Member Community of The Stewardship Network. The Collaborative promotes relationship building, fosters information exchange, and leverages resources to address shared challenges and embrace opportunities to benefit the protection of natural resources from invasive species in South St. Louis County. Identifying, monitoring, and management activities including educating both public and private landowners have been part of the Collaborative’s efforts. Catalyzing volunteer efforts in 2022, CISMA held seven volunteer work days to manage wild parsnip, garlic mustard, and buckthorn on City of Duluth lands. The yearly, well-attended invasive knotweed workshops continue to support numerous landowners to responsibly manage knotweeds on private lands. These and other outreach efforts align with the City’s ongoing investment to control knotweed stands found in parks and greenspaces. Invasive plant management on publicly owned open space helps achieve goals listed in the Natural Resources Management Program Plan to “preserve their ecological functions and values, and enhance the ecosystem services they provide.”



NATURAL RESOURCES

Goose Management Plan

On September 26, 2022, City Council approved the adoption and implementation of the Canada Goose Management Plan for the City of Duluth. In Minnesota, an approved Management Plan is required in order for a municipality to obtain a permit to implement wildlife management practices related to Canada Geese. There has been significant inter-agency funding and staff time dedicated to re-establishing 275 acres of naturally regenerating wild rice plantations within the St. Louis River Area of Concern (AOC) by 2025. These efforts prompted discussions about mitigating the negative impacts of geese on the wild rice. The City developed the plan and the MN Department of Natural Resources will fund the plan's implementation in the AOC. While the initial focus of goose management will be protecting wild rice plantings in the AOC, the plan applies City-wide, which will make it easier to obtain permits to control geese in other areas of the City in the future as needed.



Forestry

The Park Maintenance Forestry Program has been actively managing ash trees since 2016 to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive beetle that attacks ash trees. EAB bore into ash trees and damage their ability to take up water and nutrients. The process will kill the tree in 2-7 years depending on the tree's age, size, and initial vigor. Dying ash trees need to be removed because they become brittle and are at much greater risk of storm damage, which could result in falling branches and limbs. The extensive population of EAB in Duluth is expected to continue to grow.

Since 2016, the City has secured a total of \$810,562 in state grants. With this state assistance, the City has, thus far, removed and replaced 1,800 dead and dying ash trees out of an initial population of 3,200. Going forward, the City aims to remove and replace 400-600 more trees per year in hopes of completing removal and replanting in 2026. Replanting efforts prioritize establishment of a more sustainable urban forest that will be less vulnerable to new invasive species that may arrive in Duluth in the future. The City has also been collaborating with the Minnesota Land Trust to plant replacement trees in ash woodlands within the estuary landscape.

In 2022, the Forestry Program:

- Pruned 2,289 trees
- Planted 227 boulevard trees
- Removed 442 ash trees that were dying from EAB damage

GRANT AWARDS

2022 Grants Awarded

The following grants were awarded in 2022. Each grant award varies in terms of timeline, documentation needs, contracting requirements, implementation, and reporting.

U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Adjustment Assistance

\$4,938,067– to support the construction of the Baywalk and Harbor Plaza.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

\$1,493,434– to support the extension of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail.

Legislative-Citizen Commission on MN Resources

\$500,000– to support the construction of Segment 2 of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail.

MN Department of Natural Resources Conservation Partners Legacy

\$400,000– to support land acquisition for permanent protection.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

\$201,430– Grant through the Sustain Our Great Lakes program to support treatment of invasive plants and habitat restoration in the Tischer Creek and Kingsbury Creek watersheds.

MN Department of Natural Resources Preparing for Emerald Ash Borer

\$150,000– to support the removal and replacement of ash trees on public land.

Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program

\$100,000– to support replacement of the boardwalk at Lafayette using salvaged ipe boards from the Lakewalk and restoration of native dune grasses.

National Park Service

\$35,000– Grant providing technical and financial assistance in support of the design of Munger Landing recreational improvements.



Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail

PARKS LEVY REFERENDUM

Parks Levy Referendum

In 2022, as the Essential Spaces Master Plan was nearing completion and adoption by the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council, City Administration identified the importance of funding for the park system as a high priority. Thus, Administration proceeded expeditiously with *System-Wide Action Item #1: Ask City Council to authorize a referendum that would, if approved by voters, increase funds generated by the existing Park Fund levy and allow them to grow over time by changing the levy from a fixed dollar amount to a fixed percentage of taxable property value. Prioritize the additional funds for parks capital maintenance.*

With authorization from Council, the City posed the question to voters on the November 8, 2022 ballot:

The city has an existing parks fund levy set as a fixed annual dollar amount of \$2,600,000 on the referendum market value of all taxable property within the city, which is 0.0290052 percent on the referendum market value of all taxable property within the city for the year 2023. The current parks fund levy is applicable indefinitely unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law.

Should the city increase its parks fund levy to a new fixed annual percentage amount of 0.0472654 percent on the referendum market value of all taxable property within the city, which is \$4,236,821 on the referendum market value of all taxable property within the city in 2023, and end the entire parks fund levy referendum revenue authorization in twenty-five (25) years at the end of the year 2047, unless otherwise revoked or reduced as provided by law? The sole purpose of the parks fund levy is funding parks and recreation facilities and activities.

The referendum failed by 202 votes, leaving the existing fixed dollar amount Park Fund levy at \$2,600,000. Alternative efforts to support park funding in the future will be explored, using the Essential Spaces master plan as a guide.

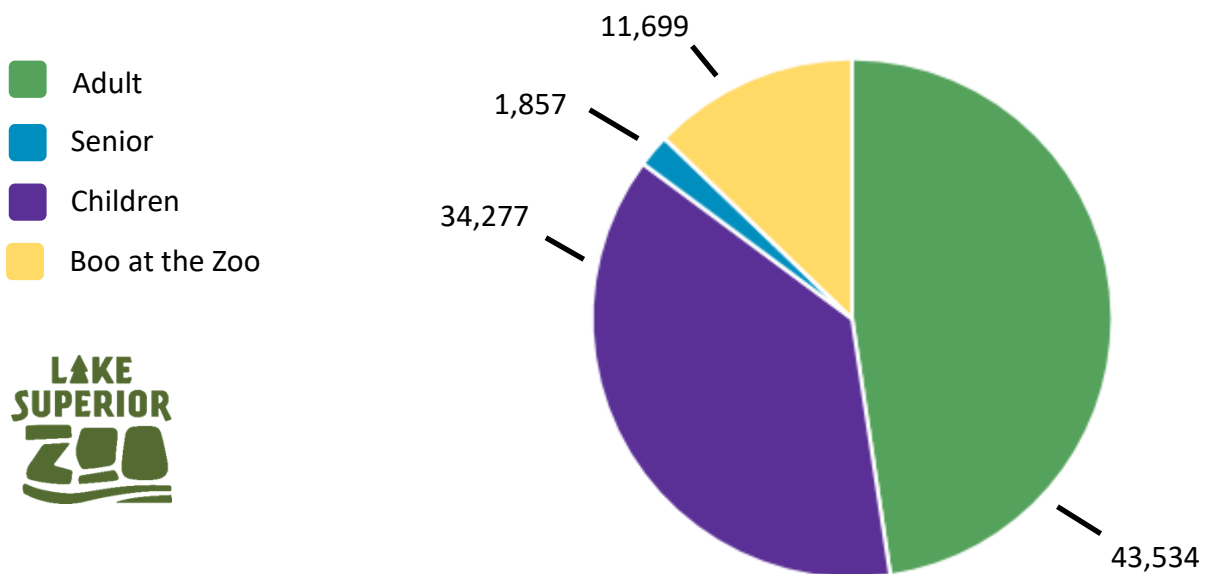


COMMUNITY

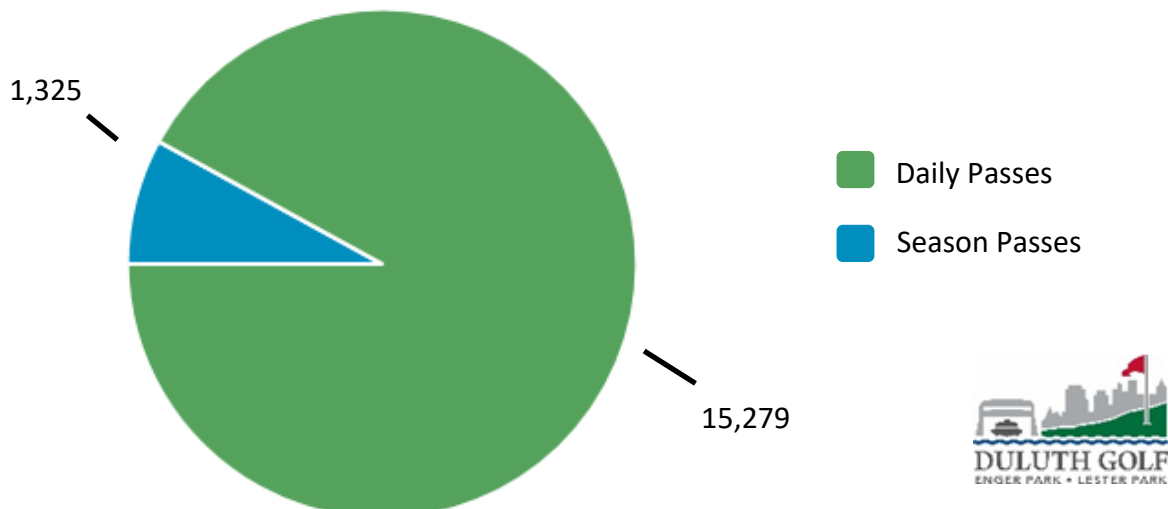
Clean and Green Volunteer Program

Clean and Green—A total of 2,303 hours were reported by more than 916 volunteers with the Clean and Green service initiative. Through Clean and Green, volunteers are equipped with bags, gloves, buckets, and other supplies to assist in removing garbage from our parks and trails.

Lake Superior Zoo Admissions



Duluth Golf: Season & Daily Pass Sales



COMMUNITY

Stewarding and programming the Duluth Park and Recreation system is a team effort. Dedicated City staff work closely with volunteer and community groups, the business community, non-profits, other government entities, and many additional residents and stakeholders who care deeply and give generously to support this amazing park system. The following page lists many of the organizations we are proud to collaborate with in various ways throughout our parks and open spaces. Thanks to each of you for your commitment and service to our public park spaces. If we missed your organization, please let us know so we can add you to this important list of thanks next year!

1854 Treaty Authority	Duluth Cross-Country Ski Club (DXC)	Hermantown Night Riders Snowmobile Club	Northern Expressions Arts Collective
Age Well Arrowhead	Duluth Dog Parks	Hike Duluth	Northern Minnesota Track Club
Alliance for the Great Lakes	Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA)	Indian Point Campground	Northland Paddlers Alliance
Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance	Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC)	Indigo Golf Partners	Norton Park Community Club
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency	Duluth Foot Trails Alliance (DuFTA)	Irving Community Club	Park Point Community Club
Arrowhead Fast Pitch League	Duluth Garden Flower Society	ISD 709 Duluth Public Schools	Piedmont Heights Community Club
Arrowhead Regional Development Commissions	Duluth Girls Fast Pitch Softball	Izaak Walton League	Portman Recreation Association
Arrowhead Transit	Duluth Huskies	Jungle Boy Boxing	Rainbow Community/Senior Center
Arrowhead Youth Soccer Association (AYSA)	Duluth Invaders	Lake Park Baseball	Riverside Community Club
Bellmont Partners	Duluth Little League	Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad (LSMR)	Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT)
Bentleyville Tour of Lights	Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation	Lake Superior College	RSVP Senior Corps
Boys and Girls Club of the Northland	Duluth Monarch Buddies	Lake Superior Disc Golf Community	Senior Center Clubs
Central Hillside Community Club	Duluth Preservation Alliance	Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve (LSNERR)	Sierra Club
Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Duluth Softball Players Association	Lake Superior Rose Society	South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District
Cities of Service	Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation	Lake Superior Zoo	Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority
Clean Yer Creek (Loll Designs and Involta)	Duluth Ultimate Community	Lakeside-Lester Park Community Club	St. Louis County
College of St. Scholastica	Duluth Urban Watershed Advisory Committee	Lawrence & Schiller	St. Croix Hospice
Community Action Duluth	Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC)	Lee Franciso - Skyline	St. Louis River Alliance
Corporation for National and Community Service	Duluth Y	Life House	Stella Maris Academy
Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute	East Hillside Community Club	Lincoln Park Business Group	Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA)
Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS)	Ecolibrium 3	Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative	Temple Israel
Dan Proctor - Chester Park Trails	Essentia Duluth Heritage Sports Center	Longview Tennis Club/Friends of Tennis	The Stewardship Network
Destination Duluth	Essentia Health	Merritt Community Club	True North Americorps
Downtown Duluth	Family Freedom Center	Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Twin Ports Coastal Clean-Up
Drift Toppers Snowmobile Club	Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Minnesota Department of Health	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Duluth Amateur Hockey Association (DAHA)	Fond du Lac Community Club	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	University of Minnesota Duluth
Duluth Amateur Youth Basketball Association (DAYBA)	Friends of Duluth Public Golf	Minnesota Geocachers Association	University of Minnesota Extension
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce	Friends of the Lakewalk	Minnesota GreenCorps	U.S. Steel
Duluth Area Horse Trail Alliances (DAHTA)	Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trails	Minnesota Land Trust	Valley Youth Center
Duluth Area Pickleball Association (DAPA)	Gary New Duluth Community Club	Minnesota Point Preservation Society	Visit Duluth
Duluth Area Youth Softball Association (DAYSA)	GND Development Alliance	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	West Duluth Business Club
Duluth Audubon Society	Grandma's Marathon	Minnesota Power	Western Lake Superior Sanitary District
Duluth Bikes	Great Lakes Alliance	Minnesota Sea Grant	Western Little League
Duluth Children's Museum	Harbor City International School	Morgan Park-Smithville Community Club	Wheels on Trails
Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (Duluth CISMA)	Harrison Community Club	Nah-Gah-Chi-Wa-Nong Reservation	Woodland YMCA
Duluth Climbers Coalition (DCC)	Hartley Nature Center	National Bank of Commerce	Youth in Action - St. Louis County
Duluth Community Garden Program	Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory	National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	Youthworks
Duluth Community School Collaborative	Head of the Lakes United Way	North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District	Zeitgeist Center for Arts and Community