

2023 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.



Duluth Winnipeg, and Pacific (DWP) Trail

Messages



DAVID DEMMER

PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION PRESIDENT

Greetings,

From the shores of Lake Superior to the summit of Ely's Peak, Duluth parks forge the intersection of green space and the neighborhoods of our beautiful, historic City. Over 20% of the land within Duluth city limits is parks or open natural space and 70% of Duluth residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park or trail. Every day, thousands of Duluthians access our parks - these essential spaces are critical to the physical and mental well-being of the community. Maintaining our parks is not just about outdoor recreation but preserving our natural and cultural resources for future generations. We are stewards of these special places - a responsibility we hold in trust for those to come.

During my tenure on the Commission, one thing I've learned is the health of our parks reflects the strength of community partnerships. There are more than 150 partners ranging from community groups, non-profits, businesses, government entities, private individuals, and other stakeholders who support Duluth Parks. These partners are essential to the robust programming we enjoy in our parks. In 2023, more than 1,500 people volunteered more than 6,000 hours in the Parks. Their dedication is an invaluable asset to our community and park system.

Duluth Parks is moving into an exciting phase of implementation. With a number of large projects on the near horizon, the City has the recently adopted Essential Spaces Plan to guide the way. There is a lot to look forward to: newly rehabilitated Lincoln Park, more resilient Brighton Beach, new vision for the Hillside Sport Court Park, interpretive plans along the Lakewalk and Marten Trail, construction of new segments along the Cross City Trail, Enger Park Golf Course renovations, re-envisioning of Lester Park, collaborative approach to a new Spirit Valley Community Center, reinvestment and strategic approach to rethinking our athletic venues, continual improvements at community centers across the city, and of course robust programming for all ages city-wide.

Investments in our Parks have been made over the generations, since the first Board of Park Commissioners was formed in 1888. It's our obligation to continue to maintain the Parks for future generations. Duluth Parks are not just essential spaces for residents, they are also an economic driver. Duluth is officially a mountain bike destination, we host national ski races, a preeminent long distance hiking trail traverses our woods, and the Lakewalk and Cross City Trail transport visitors through the city districts.

Messages



DAVID DEMMER

PARKS AND RECREATION
COMMISSION PRESIDENT

When a major funding mechanism for the Parks was passed in 2011—the Parks Levy—it was passed as a fixed amount. Unfortunately, the buying power of that amount decreases with time due to inflation. This means that, due to simple accounting, the Parks have seen a steady decrease in funding since the community voted to invest in our Parks. Now, during a time of relatively high inflation, this funding decrease is accelerating as we are actively planning to reinvest in our Parks. I've seen this fiscal reality play out time and again. It ties the hands of the City and forces decisions to the detriment of our Parks and the community.

Success relies on our ability to work together to solve big systemic problems. Our goal should be to maintain the Parks of yesterday and build a park system for tomorrow. We have incredible parks, dedicated partners, and community driven plans. Now is the time for another generation to invest in the future of our Parks.

With optimism,

David Demmer
President, Duluth Parks and Recreation Commission

Messages



JESSICA PETERSON

PARKS AND RECREATION
MANAGER

Greetings from Parks and Recreation!

This past year was certainly one for the history books! After many years of planning, design, historic preservation, and construction, together we celebrated the renewal and reopening of Lincoln Park, one of the oldest parks in Duluth. And, with that, we honored a beloved friend, colleague, and City Councilor, Renee Van Nett, with the naming of Lincoln Park's historic stone pavilion in her memory and honor.

It is an honor to work alongside our community, to hear your ideas and visions for these beloved park spaces, and then chart a course to realizing these big ideas, solving problems together, and enhancing programs to better serve you. Our team is dedicated to supporting the many organizations, programs, and services that use and enjoy Duluth's park system.

And use it, you are! A record number of reservations and permits passed through our office in 2023. Your events large and small are important to the wellness and vitality of our citizens and economy, and we have our amazing City staff to thank for their continuous efforts across our park system to ensure spaces are ready for your use and enjoyment.

This year Parks and Recreation rolled out the Youth on Trails mountain bike initiative. A fleet of mountain bikes, trikes, and balance bikes coupled with mobile elements and certified instructors made its way around Duluth last Summer. While Youth on Trails staff were ready to level kids up to new mountain biking skills, they often found themselves teaching kids the basics of how to ride a bike. In just one summer, staff guided kids from never riding a bike to happily pedaling their way along beginner (green) trails, learning about wayfinding and trail etiquette along the way. Again, we were honored to be a part of teaching lifelong skills and helping to grow the next generation of trail users and stewards.

As you review the 2023 annual report, we hope you feel a sense of honor and inspiration, too! We recognize this is but a small snapshot of the incredible programs and services taking place in our parks and on our trails. Thanks to our extraordinary City staff for your work in stewarding and programming our parks, thank you to our Parks and Recreation Commissioners for your guidance and perspective, and thank you to the vast community of volunteers who go above and beyond to bring positive recreation and social connections to our community all year long. See you in the parks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jessica Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Jessica Peterson
Parks and Recreation Manager

About Us

Parks and Recreation Staff

Jessica Peterson - Manager
 Alicia Watts - Assistant Manager
 Cliff Knettel - Assistant Manager
 Emily Alworth - Social Media Strategist
 Matt Andrews - Trails Coordinator
 Katie Bennett - Senior Planner

Allison Brooks - Project Technician
 Bridget Erickson - Admin Clerical Specialist
 Adam Fornear - Recreation Specialist
 Claire Hoffman - Recreation Specialist
 Kate Kubiak - Natural Resources Coordinator
 Megan Lidd - Recreation Specialist

Jarod Meyer - Recreation Specialist
 Chris Severson - Permits Coordinator
 Sam Werle - Recreation Specialist

Parks and Recreation Commission

Amanda Crosby – President, Commission on Disabilities Representative
 David Demmer – Vice President, Land Management
 Kala Pedersen – Secretary, District 2
 Sarah Beehler – District 4
 Tjaard Breeuwer – District 1
 Natalie Chin – At-Large *
 Dave Cizmas – Recreation Professional

Barb Darland – District 5 *
 Josie LaPorte – District 3
 Terrance Lovejoy – At-Large
 Jennifer Peterson – At-Large *
 Britt Rohrbaugh – District 3 *
 Hailey Sigafus – Community Education

*Terms concluded in 2023

Park Maintenance Staff

Joe Miller - Acting Supervisor
 Cassie Dudley - Admin Clerical Specialist
 Robert Dunsmore - Lead Worker (Parks)
 Billy Davis - Lead Worker (Trails)
 Clark Christenson - Lead Worker (Forestry)
 Todd Kobus - Lead Worker (Athletics)

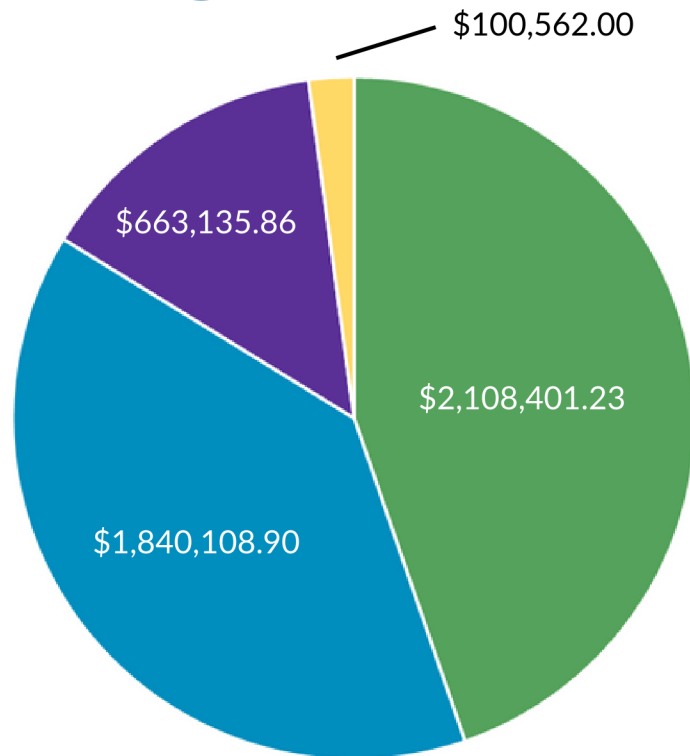
Parks Maintenance Workers:

Matt Bovee
 John Capra
 Trevor Christensen
 Krys Davis-Manchette
 Darin Franckowiak

Todd Halbakken
 Greg Hanson
 Abbie Hopper
 Kevin Jentoft
 Jenny Monroe
 Anna Neu

Ben Sosniecki
 Cory Wagner
 Chris Walz
 Chris Zwick
 Taylor Persson
 Paul Sunday

Budget



Operations: \$1,840,108.90

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

Maintenance: \$663,135.86

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

Capital: \$2,108,401.23

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

Youth Programming Services: \$100,562.00

- 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

Grants

In 2023, the City of Duluth was awarded an astounding \$12,739,491 for Parks & Recreation-related projects! Awarded grants support implementation over multiple budget years.

U.S. Department of Transportation: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity

\$8,196,234 – to support Lakewalk rehabilitation between the corner of the Lake and 26th Avenue East.

MN Department of Transportation Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Technical Assistance Grant

\$2,049,752 – to support Lakewalk rehabilitation between the corner of the Lake and 26th Avenue East.

Legislative-Citizen Commission on MN Resources

\$1,375,000 – to develop facilities and programs to reconnect communities to the St. Louis River Estuary.

National Park Service: Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

\$280,500 – technical and financial assistance for implementation of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail and recreational improvements at Munger Landing.

Federal Highway Administration: Federal Recreational Trail Program

\$300,000 – to support continued development of the Cross-City Trail.

MN Historical Society

\$165,725 – to support implementation of the Lakewalk Interpretive Plan.

MN Department of Natural Resources: Regional Trail Program

\$150,000 – to support continued development of the Cross-City Trail.

Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program

\$108,000 – to support replacement of a boardwalk at Park Point Recreation Area using salvaged ipe boards from the Lakewalk and restoration of native dune grasses.

Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program

\$100,000 – to support land acquisition and permanent protection of open space in Duluth.

Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

\$14,280 – a Connecting People to the Outdoors grant to fund the purchase of a track wheelchair.

Award: MRPA Award of Excellence

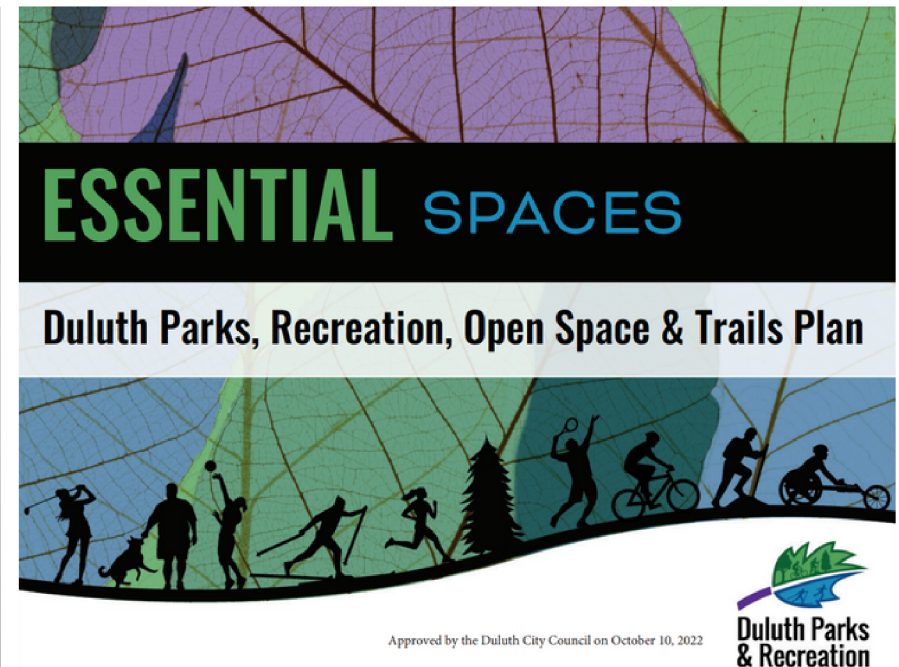
Each year, the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association (MRPA) recognizes park and recreation agencies and organizations in Minnesota for outstanding achievements and accomplishments. On June 26, Michelle Snider, Executive Director of MRPA, presented an Award of Excellence to the City of Duluth for the city's comprehensive park system plan, Essential Spaces: Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Plan.

The Essential Spaces Plan is a community-informed plan to guide the future of Duluth's parks, recreation, open space, and trails system to support a healthy and vibrant community, enhance inclusion and equity, and advance environmental protection under a sustainable budget framework. The plan recognizes the important function that parks and recreation serve in Duluth, and honors the robust legacy of resident involvement and partnerships that make the system what it is today.

Duluth Parks and Recreation staff were honored to accept this MRPA Award of Excellence on behalf of the City of Duluth.



City Hall



Approved by the Duluth City Council on October 10, 2022

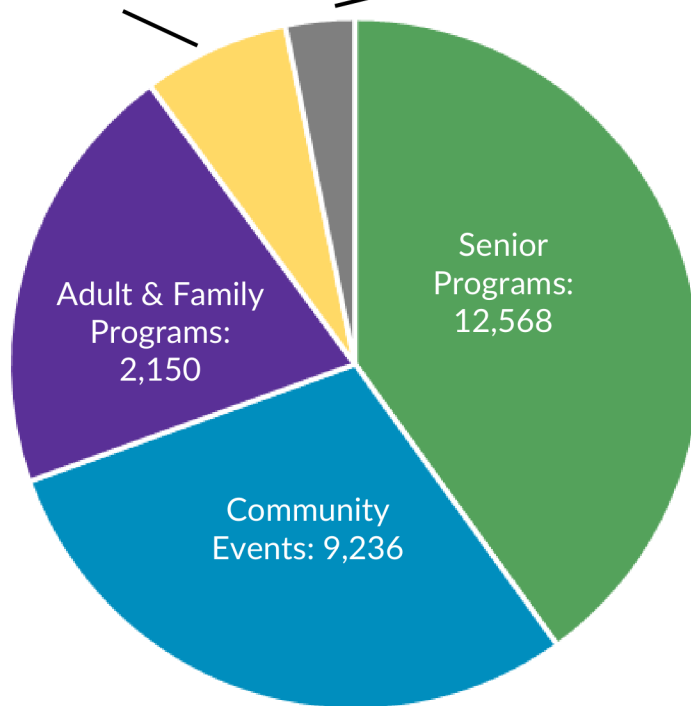
Programming

Our Parks and Recreation programming team provides a variety of programs year round, across our park system, aimed for people of all ages and abilities to connect with their parks and neighbors. Programs take place mostly outdoors in park spaces using our 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.

We had more than 140 program topics offered in 2023, totaling up to 3,770 program hours, or an average of 10 hours of activities, every day, all year long!

Participants Per Category

Youth Programs: 2,150 Adult Leagues: 1,016



- Senior Programs:** Programs geared to those 55+ (ex. Activity Clubs i.e. Cards, Fitness; Hikes; Parties; Trips)
- Community Events:** Free drop-in events offered to the community year-round (ex. Cold Front, Story and Play, Chester Concerts, Solstice Luminary Hike)
- Adult & Family Programs:** Programs designed for all ages and families (ex. Full Moon Hike, Open Skate, Glow-in-the-Dark Game Night)
- Youth Programs:** Programs designed for youth only (ex. Day Camps, Archery, Flag Football)
- Adult Leagues:** Athletic programs for adults (ex. Kickball, Softball, Ultimate Frisbee)

These figures may include duplicate participants.

Programming: Community Events

Cold Front

On Saturday, February 4, nearly 3,000 people came out to the 6th annual Cold Front to celebrate the best of winter fun. Folks enjoyed the regular offerings of a sledding luge, snow play area, obstacle course, and other activities provided by local partners. Some new activities this year included a fat bike demo course, Damage's Snowboard Pro Team showing their tricks and skills, an adult snowshoe kickball tournament, and Palm Swings closest to the pin golf contest. Community partners were fantastic in supporting the event by leading activities with Parks and Recreation staff. Park Maintenance did an incredible job of getting the space ready and making it inviting for the day while the Recreation Specialists provided a creative range of activities to serve all ages and abilities. Special thanks to Cold Front 2023 sponsors: Pier B, Essentia Health, St. Luke's, and WDIO.



S'more Ski Grooming

New in 2023, this event highlighted what it takes to groom Duluth's cross-country ski trails and gave people a chance to see the PistenBully, one of the City's trail grooming pieces of equipment, up close. Park Maintenance brought the PistenBully to Lester-Amity Chalet, while Parks and Recreation provided s'mores, and Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC) led a group ski. Around 40 people spent a chilly evening learning more about grooming!



Programming: Community Events

Yeti Hunt

The third annual Yeti Hunt took place on Saturday, February 18. More than 50 community members participated by following clues posted to social media to find the Yeti hiding at Fairmont Park! This passive recreation activity is a great way for families to get outside for a weekend adventure on their own schedule. Those who submitted a picture with the Yeti were entered into a drawing to win a yeti-themed prize!



Story & Play

Story & Play was once again a summer staple for many families with young children. Weekly, this program saw around 100 people or more coming out to enjoy this partnership with Parks and Recreation and the Duluth Public Library.



Programming: Community Events

Beach Party and Water Safety Awareness

Parks and Recreation hosted three afternoons at the Park Point Beach House for folks to play beach games, as well as learn about rip currents and water safety. Special thanks to the Minnesota Department of Health, which also joined to talk about water-borne illnesses.



Chester Creek Concert Series

Chester Park hosted eight bands in this popular concert series in 2023, with approximate attendance of 3,500 people. Concert attendees enjoyed the variety of music from week to week.

Bands in 2023:

- Rich Mattson
- Aly Aleigha
- Ronnie Allen
- North Shore Big Band
- Lindsay Marie Johnson
- Kim Curtis-Monson
- The Listening Party
- Ross Thorn



Programming: Community Events

Pop-Up Splash Pads

This was the second summer of Pop-Up Splash Pads hosted by Parks and Recreation and the Duluth Fire Department.

This program took place at four locations throughout the summer: Morgan Park, Grant Park, Keene Creek Park, and Portman Park.

More than 600 people showed up to these events to cool off, run in the sprinkler set up, and enjoy spending time in the park.



Public Orchard Night

In partnership with our City Arborist, and in celebration of being a member of the Tree USA Community, we hosted a Fall Arbor Day event at Merritt Park to promote our public orchards and city-wide tree planting.

Programming: Community Events

Pumpkin Palooza

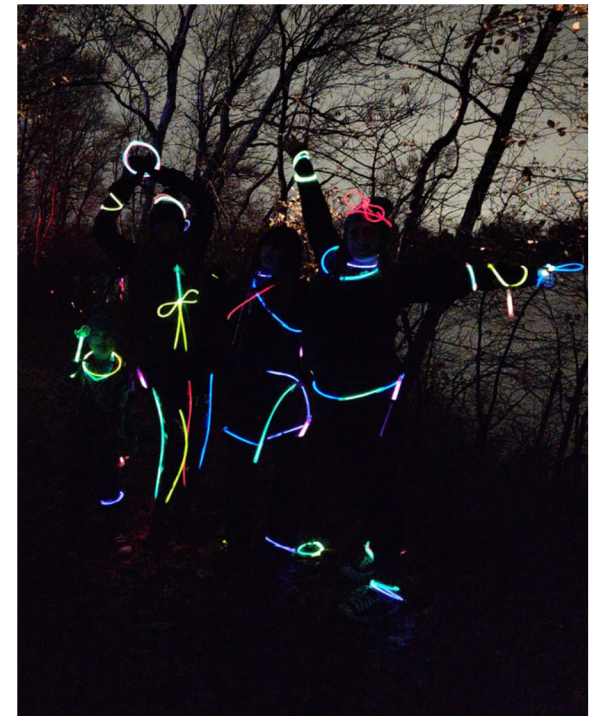
This partner program took place on Saturday, October 7 at Harrison Park. The Duluth Public Library hosted a pumpkin-themed storytime, and pumpkins were donated by the Duluth Whole Foods Co-op for carving and painting. This annual event saw 125 community members enjoying the park on a brisk fall day.



Glow Hike

The second annual Glow Hike took place once again at Indian Point Campground on Friday, October 27. More than 300 people came out to hike a half-mile loop around Waabizheshikana, lit up by glow sticks.

Many showed up with their own glow sticks, lightsabers, light-up shoes, and other glow-in-the-dark decorations.



Programming: Community Events

Howl-o-Ween at Keene

Howl-o-ween at Keene was another successful dog park event. Dogs and even some owners showed up in costume to take a photo in the photo booth, play at the park, pick up a treat bag, and three lucky dogs went home with a new toy from a prize raffle. More than 30 people and dogs enjoyed the park together during this event on Monday, October 30.



Solstice Luminary Hike

More than 1,500 people celebrated the arrival of winter with the Solstice Luminary Hike at Enger Park Golf Course on December 21. Beginning at the Clubhouse, participants followed the luminaries on a self-guided hike, along with enjoying hot chocolate and warming up by a fire.



Programming: Youth

Summer Camps

Parks and Recreation Summer Day Camps provide youth with unique experiences, exciting activities, and the opportunity to build relationships with both other youth as well as Parks staff members, who spend their summers as positive adult role models in these programs. The Day Camps offered in 2023 serviced 253 participants and included the following topics:

- Archery Camp
- Fishing Camp
- Wizards & Warlocks Camp
- Disc Golf Camp
- Park Play Camp
- Make a Mess Camp
- Friday Fun days



Morgan Park Community Center



St. Louis River near Perch Lake

Cosmic Dodgeball

A new program in 2023 was Cosmic Dodgeball for adults. Black lights, glow sticks, glow-in-the-dark dodgeballs, and more were set up at the Washington Center Gym, for an hour of friendly competition featuring a few different formats of dodgeball.



Programming: Youth

Pop-Up Play

This free summer program, featuring yard games and activities, was hosted for 13 weeks at a different park throughout the City: Leif Erikson Park, Morgan Park, Washington Square, Memorial Park, Portland Square, Merritt Park, Observation Park, Riverside Park, Portman Park, Harrison Park, Duluth Heights Park, Norton Park, Morley Park. Participants were welcome to drop-in and stay as little or long as they wished to enjoy some fun neighborhood park activities.



Music Together

Music Together engages families with young children in the joy of music, singing, and spending time together! They have hosted classes at Portman Community Center and Harrison Community Center.

Portman has emerged as the main site, with growth throughout the year to the point of offering three weekly classes year round.



Programming: General

Open Skate

Open Skate was held weekly on Wednesday nights and Sunday afternoons throughout 2023 at the Essentia Duluth Heritage Center. In total, there were 3,120 attendees. Skaters can bring their own skates or borrow skates provided by Parks and Recreation. This is a great way for those learning to skate to try out different types of skates and learn in a comfortable environment.



Adventure Book Club

The Adventure Book Club met monthly for five months throughout the summer and fall for a book discussion led by the Duluth Public Library and a hike led by Parks and Recreation.

Each book club met at a different park, with 5-10 people at each session.



Chambers Grove



Chambers Grove

Programming: General

Yoga at Enger Park

Every Saturday morning in the months of June-August, Parks and Recreation and Full Circle Yoga offered yoga classes at the scenic Enger Park overlook.

More than 300 people attended throughout the summer.



Painting in the Park

In 2023, Parks and Recreation brought in a painting instructor to lead three painting classes in scenic parks throughout the City.

Locations included the Enger Park overlook, the Park Point Beach house, and Lakewalk Plaza near the Aerial Lift Bridge.



Programming: Hiking

Women Hike Duluth

Women Hike Duluth is a partnership with Hike Duluth that gives women an opportunity to spend time outdoors together in the community.

This monthly program welcomed more than 400 participants over the course of 12 different hikes at various locations across the City.



Hike and Science with Duluth Foot Trail Alliance

In 2023, Parks and Recreation partnered with Duluth Foot Trails Alliance (DUFTA) for six hikes, with a different scientific topic at each one: Snowshoe Science, Snowshoes & Streams, Miller Creek Stream Ecology, Spring Phenology, Summer Science, and Kingsbury Creek Science.



Programming: Hiking

Full Moon Hikes

These monthly hikes took place on the evening of the full moon, at a different park each month. In total, 143 participants got to experience a park at night with beautiful views of the night sky.

Hike locations included Hartley Park, Park Point Nature Trail, Twin Ponds, Hawk Ridge, and more.



Trail Trekkers

Trail Trekkers is an ages 55+ hiking program that takes place at different trails throughout the year. In 2023, 70 hikers participated in the summer and fall series.

Superior Hiking Trail: Duluth Series

Every other week throughout the months of May-October, Parks and Recreation led a 10-hike series following the entire Duluth portion of the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT), beginning in the Fond du Lac neighborhood and ending on Martin Road.

Each hike met the maximum of 13 participants, and eight hikers were able to complete the entire series over the course of the summer and fall.



Programming: Ages 55+

Day Trips

St. Croix River Cruise

On May 30, 33 participants enjoyed a scenic cruise and lunch along the St. Croix River. Participants rode a coach bus to and from the cruise, adding to the ease of the group travel experience.



Great Northern Railroad

On July 26, 21 participants traveled by historic train car from Trego, Wisconsin, enjoying lunch and views of the Namekagon River.

Swedish Christmas

On December 5, 30 participants visited the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, along with a stop at the Bokhandel Gift Shop, a traditional Swedish lunch, and a guided tour of the Turnblad Mansion.



Programming: Ages 55+

Lunch, Learn, and Share

This popular new program for ages 55+ featured a new topic for discussion each month along with lunch at Harrison Community Center. Some of the 2023 topics included: Wellness in the Winter, Talking Taxes, Growing Older at Home, Social Connections, Beware of Scams, Finding Joy Through Gardening, Navigating Healthcare Systems, Aging with Meaning and Purpose, Fall Prevention and Safety, and Legal Topics.



Harrison Community Center

Annual Holiday Party

The Senior Holiday Party brought local seniors, Parks and Recreation staff, Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency (AEOA) staff, and Police and Community Safety Officers together to celebrate the season on December 8 at Morgan Park Community Center. The group enjoyed a meal together and listened to live music. This annual event is a fun opportunity to get together with old friends and meet new people.



Programming: Youth Athletics

Develop Skills to Skate

- Partnership with Duluth Figure Skating Club
- Bayfront Park Ice Rink and Essentia Duluth Heritage Center
- 6 sessions | 36 participants

Intro to Golf

- Partnership with College of St. Scholastica golf team
- Enger Park Golf Course
- 8 sessions | 38 participants

Intro to Pickleball

- Partnership with Duluth Area Pickleball Association
- Wheeler Athletic Complex
- 8 sessions | 8 participants

Soccer Shots

- Washington Center Gym
- 5 sessions | 12 participants

Youth Flag Football

- Partnership with the NFL
- Wheeler Athletic Complex
- 312 participants (117 more than last year!)
- 48 volunteer coaches | 9 referees



Programming: Adult Leagues

Kickball

- Spring league at Essentia Duluth Heritage Center
- Fall League at Washington Center Gym
- 16 teams

Pickleball

- Wheeler Athletic Complex
- 51 participants

Softball

- Wheeler Athletic Complex
- 24 teams

Volleyball

- Winter and Fall leagues
- Washington Center Gym
- 12 teams

Ultimate Frisbee

- Partnership with Duluth Ultimate Community
- Spring league at Essentia Duluth Heritage Center
- Summer league at Irving Park
- Fall league at Chester Park
- 170 participants



Washington Center Gym



Essentia Duluth Heritage Center



Washington Center Gym

Connecting People to the Outdoors

The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC) Connecting People to the Outdoors (CPO) small grant program is intended to encourage innovation and nurture creative partnerships. Duluth Parks & Recreation has been awarded two CPO grants: Mobile Bike Fleet and Track Wheelchair.

Mobile Bike Fleet

In 2021, the GMRPTC awarded Parks & Recreation a grant of \$167,783 from the CPO program to develop a mobile bike fleet and establish programming to expand recreational access to the Duluth Traverse and mountain biking trails throughout Duluth. After equipment arrived, staff implemented the Youth on Trails initiative last summer. Activities included youth programming with Valley Youth Center and Family Freedom Center, Learn to Ride events all across Duluth, and a few adaptive mountain biking lessons.

On May 25, Parks & Recreation hosted an event with Valley Youth Centers of Duluth to launch Youth on Trails, a mobile mountain bike program designed to reduce barriers associated with trail-based activities and increase comfort and skills in the outdoors.



Connecting People to the Outdoors

Track Wheelchair

Parks & Recreation was awarded a grant from GMRPTC for \$14,280 towards the purchase of a track wheelchair.

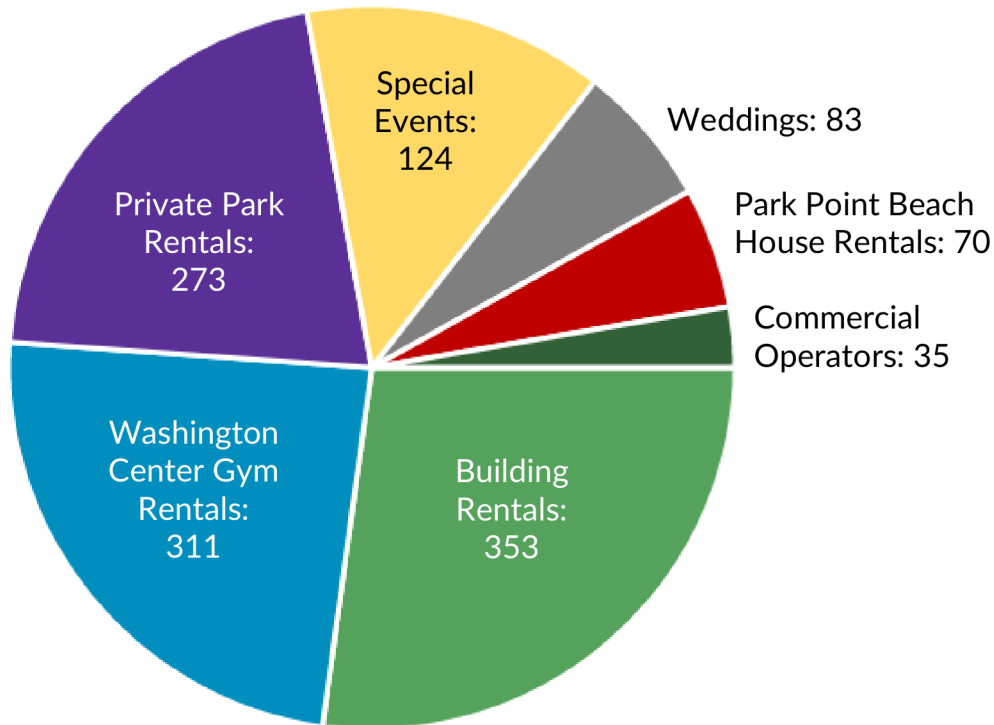
A track wheelchair is a mobility device that operates like a power wheelchair with tracks that allow the user to traverse sand and natural surfaces, which provides access to areas where a traditional wheelchair might not reach.

The chair was purchased and will be housed at Hartley Nature Center. Users will be able to reserve the chair for use around Hartley Park. Duluth's recreation staff will also be able to bring the chair to various programs for a participant to use.



Permits

A variety of parks and buildings are available for rentals. This year, we issued 1,147 permits to rent indoor and outdoor spaces for private parties, special events, weddings, birthday parties, and more. Popular buildings to rent include the Park Point Beach House, Harrison Community Center, and Morgan Park Community Center.



Commercial Operator Permits

Well-coordinated and permitted commercial operators contribute positively to the overall experience of parks and trails. Permitted commercial operators gain communication lines with Parks and Recreation staff to stay informed about current park and trail projects that help them understand when and where to avoid operating to ensure space is available for them to use with their customers. In 2023, Parks and Recreation issued 35 permits to commercial operators to conduct business in park spaces and trails.

Operations

AEDs in Community Centers

Over the last four years, Parks and Recreation has worked hard to place AEDs in community centers. With a donation from the Department of Transportation, all community centers now have AEDs.

Regardless of the level of use at a location, each facility now has one of these life-saving devices. Currently, 23 units are placed throughout indoor park system facilities.



Lafayette Community Center

Wi-Fi in Community Centers

Thanks to a grant and a partnership with the Duluth Public Library and City of Duluth Departments of IT, Property & Facilities Management, and Planning & Economic Development, a number of parks and community centers now have free Wi-Fi, which can be accessed by using your Duluth Public Library card!

- Bayfront Park – Family Center
- Central Hillside Community Center
- GND Recreation Center
- Harrison Community Center
- Lafayette Community Center
- Morgan Park Community Center
- Piedmont Community Center
- Portman Community Center
- Washington Community Center
- Wheeler Athletic Complex (near skate park and sport court)
- Woodland Community Center

Parks Stewardship

Athletics Venues Reinvestment Initiative

The future of athletic venues in Duluth is looking bright! On October 16, Duluth City Council approved ordinance 23-035-O, which renewed the 0.5% food and beverage tax and 0.5% lodging tax (half-and-half tourism tax) to fund improvements to parks-based athletic venues that drive regional sports tourism. This Council approval was the next important step after the State Legislature approved the renewed tax during its session earlier in the year. The renewed half-and-half tourism tax, titled the Athletic Venue Reinvestment Initiative (AVRI), will provide up to \$36 million of investment in tourism-focused athletic venue improvements over the next decade.

Lakewalk Shoreline Repairs

The Lakewalk connects users to beautiful views of Lake Superior. The same waves that people love to watch can become destructive during storms, and in November of 2022, storms caused extensive damage to portions of the shoreline and the Lakewalk below Gichi-Ode' Akiing. Through internal collaboration, and advocacy to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, the City was awarded State Disaster funding to support needed repair work. During the restoration process, an engineered concrete wall was built and large rock was added to the shoreline. This combination is intended to protect the shore from future damage from Lake Superior waves to help ensure the Lakewalk continues to be an attractive and enjoyable public waterfront trail for all to enjoy.



Parks Stewardship

Adopted Park & Trail Plans

Lakewalk Interpretive Plan

On June 26, City Council adopted the Lakewalk Interpretive Plan, which spans the riverfront segments of the Baywalk along Bayfront Festival Park, the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, the south side of Canal Park, and then continues along the Lakewalk from the ship canal to 21st Avenue East.

Altogether, the Plan spans nearly 3.5 miles of designated trail. The Plan defines specific elements and common themes for interpretation along the existing trail and soon to be reconstructed segments during the Lakewalk resiliency and Harbor Plaza improvements. Themes invite visitors to gain a richer understanding of the area and create meaningful spaces for visitors to engage. Interpretive elements will include historical, cultural, and artistic representations of people and place.

Hillside Sport Court Park Plan

A renewed vision for the future of Hillside Sport Court Park received the support of community members, neighborhood organizations, and City Council. On August 21, City Council adopted the Hillside Sport Court Park Plan, which details prioritized park improvements such as enhanced site connectivity and accessibility, a renewed sport court, a new playground, improved open green space, and a community garden, among other improvements intended to rejuvenate this important neighborhood park.



Community Input Session at Central Hillside Community Center

Parks Stewardship

Lincoln Park

Construction was finished on the most anticipated park improvement project in recent Parks and Recreation history – Lincoln Park! A reopening celebration was held on October 17 with wonderful turnout recognizing the significant investment and improvements that transformed the park into a more functional and accessible recreation space. The event also included a dedication ceremony for the commemorative naming of the stone pavilion in honor of the late Duluth City Councilor Renee Van Nett. Park improvements included:

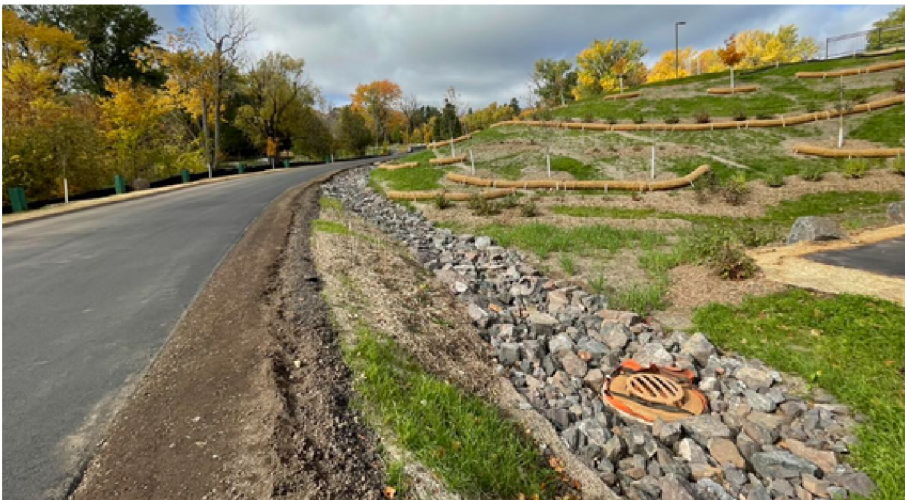
- Restoration of the historic stone pavilion to include new ADA-compliant restroom facilities
- Relocation and replacement of the playground
- Stabilization and repaving of Lincoln Park Drive
- Creation of two new parking lots
- A new nature playscape and multi-use sport court
- New and refurbished picnic pavilions
- New accessible trails
- Improved signage and wayfinding
- Green infrastructure such as biofiltration basins, pollinator gardens, and drainage swales



Parks Stewardship

Lincoln Park, cont.

This project was made possible by grant funding from the National Park Service Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program administered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants Program, the City of Duluth's Community Development Block Grant Program, and the U.S. Bank Foundation. Additional funding support came from half-and-half tourism tax proceeds, City of Duluth parks capital, Super Bowl Legacy program, and donations from Essentia Health, maurices, St. Luke's, and Minnesota Power.



Parks Stewardship

Revenue Replacement Park Improvements

City revenue replacement funds were dedicated to park improvement projects serving Qualified Census Tracts (QCTs), as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. These additional funds supported some needed park improvements over the summer, including:

- The fall zone materials at the Blackmer Park, Morgan Park, and Portland Square playgrounds were converted from sand to engineered wood fiber.
- An accessible portable toilet enclosure was installed at Harrison Park.
- A number of new picnic tables and benches, some with new concrete slabs, were installed at Blackmer Park, Cascade Park, Endion Park, Morgan Park, Portland Square, and Washington Center.

Other projects supported with revenue replacement funds include Midtown Park construction documents, additional support for the Lincoln Park improvement project, and future Hillside Sport Court Park improvements.



Parks Stewardship

Barry Family Memorial Project at Chester Park Playground

In April 2022, the lives of the Barry family – Riana (44), Sean (47), Shiway (12), Sadie (9) – were tragically taken by gun violence. Chester Park was a beloved destination for the Barry family, especially for Shiway and Sadie. Loved ones of the Barry family, in cooperation with City staff, came together to coordinate a memorial project at the Chester Park playground. Family, friends, and community members raised \$22,000 to support adding a new spinner element and an accessible swing, converting the fall zone from sand to engineered wood fiber, incorporating an accessible pathway to the playground, and installing a bench in remembrance of the Barry family. A heartfelt memorial dedication event for the playground improvements was held on Friday, September 29 at Chester Park.



Parks Stewardship

Chester Bowl Bridge

A ribbon cutting was held in partnership with the Chester Bowl Improvement Club (CBIC) on July 10 to celebrate the installation of the new permanent bridge over Chester Creek! The bridge restores year-round access across the creek and improves trail connectivity around Chester Bowl. The project was funded through a Community Development Public Facilities grant, economic development funding from St. Louis County, donations to CBIC, and in-kind support from LHB. This new bridge kicked off the first phase of CBIC's capital improvements to Chester Park, ensuring that future generations continue to have recreation opportunities in the park. CBIC is in the midst of a fundraising campaign, Growing Up Chester, to expand and renovate the Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center.



Trails

Hartley Park Pines Loop

The Pines Trail is a 0.5-mile loop trail in the heart of Hartley Park's mountain biking and hiking trail network and serves as a hub connecting to multiple other trails. Late last year, the Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS) proposed updating the Pines Trail to renew the trail with universal design standards to accommodate access for adaptive cycling equipment, and provide a space for youth and beginner riders to build confidence and bike handling skills. In consultation with Hartley Nature Center, the City approved this project proposal and in August COGGS contracted with a local trail builder to make this project a reality.



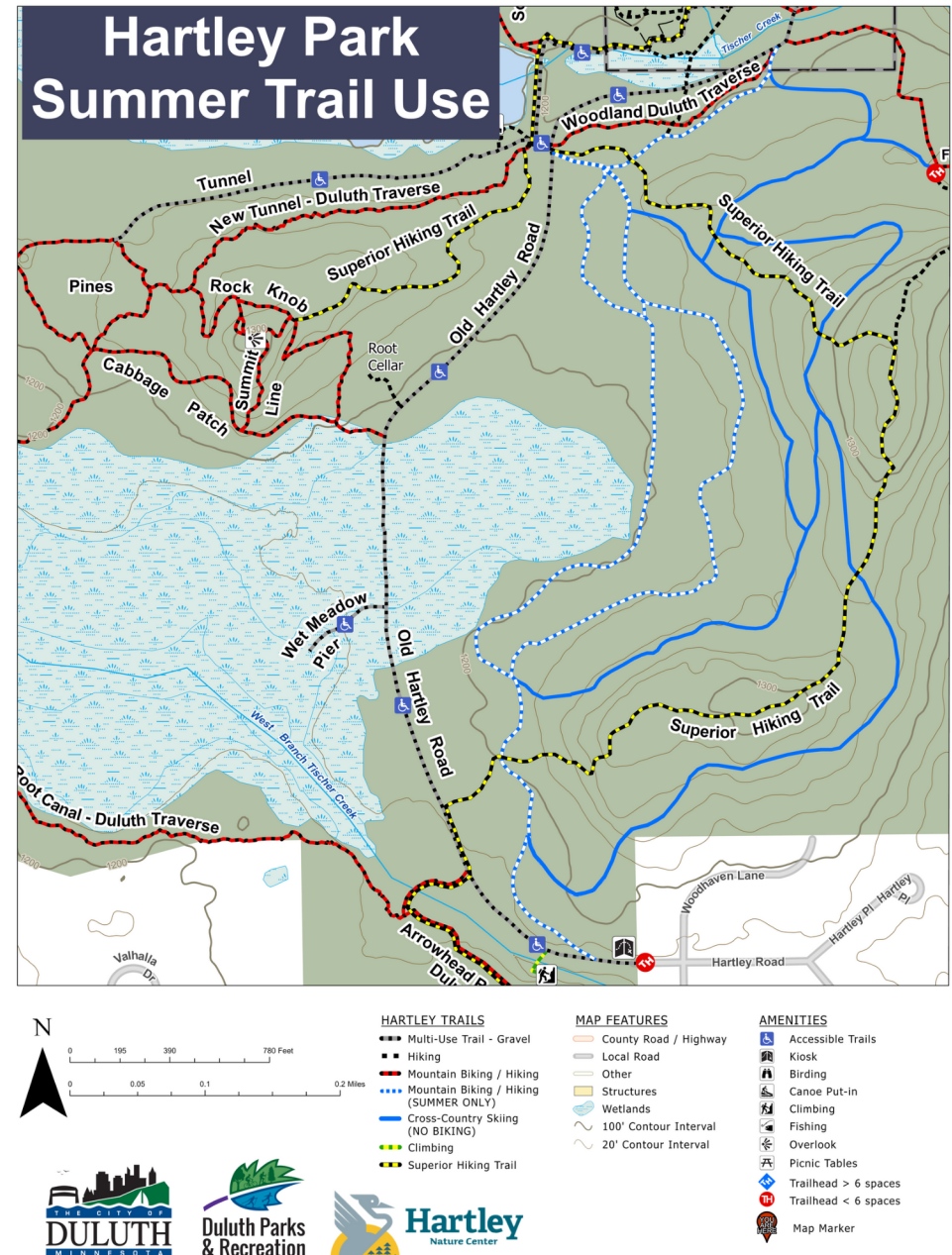
Trails

Hartley Park Adaptive Trail Access

On a pilot basis, a portion of a cross-country ski trail was designated for summer use by adaptive and beginner cyclists. Signs were installed along a short portion of a cross-country ski trail in Hartley to trial the trail as being open to bicycles to create a loop with Old Hartley Road. Northland Adaptive Recreation (formerly Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute) proposed this as an option for use with their adaptive bike programming equipment, and it also expands programming options for Parks and Recreation's Legacy-funded Youth on Trails mountain biking program and future use with a track chair awarded in 2023 and planned to be available for use starting in 2024 based at Hartley Nature Center.

For many participants, these programs may be the first time they've experienced cycling. Finding a low-traffic, low-pressure trail with appropriate width, slope, and cross-slope to facilitate introductory trail experiences was the primary rationale for this pilot change. The loop is approximately 1-mile in length, connecting to the gravel surface Old Hartley Road at the north and south ends of the loop.

The map shows the newly designated trail in white and blue dashes.



Trails

Trail Reroutes and Rehabilitation

COGGS completed a trail rehabilitation project on the Marshall Street connector into Hartley Park. Turf stone pavers were installed on the trail to reduce erosion and stabilize the trail. Duluth Foot Trail Alliance (DuFTA) completed a trail reroute project leading to/from Gazebo Point and the Hunters Park neighborhood in Hartley Park. The old trail alignment was once an access road for farm equipment and went straight up the hill, making for an unsustainable climb. The new, quarter-mile long trail now meanders through the woods, creating a much more enjoyable hiking experience, while addressing erosion concerns.

The Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA) continues to improve upon trail quality with a number of improvement projects throughout Duluth. In July, SHTA partnered with the non-profit group Surly Gives a Damn (SGAD) to perform a reroute in Brewer Park to eliminate and rehabilitate a short but steep, fall-line segment of trail. SHTA has also coordinated volunteers for projects, including trail hardening and replacing old boardwalk (puncheon) along various segments within Duluth. Throughout the summer, the SHTA also provides weed-whipping along the entire corridor.



Trails

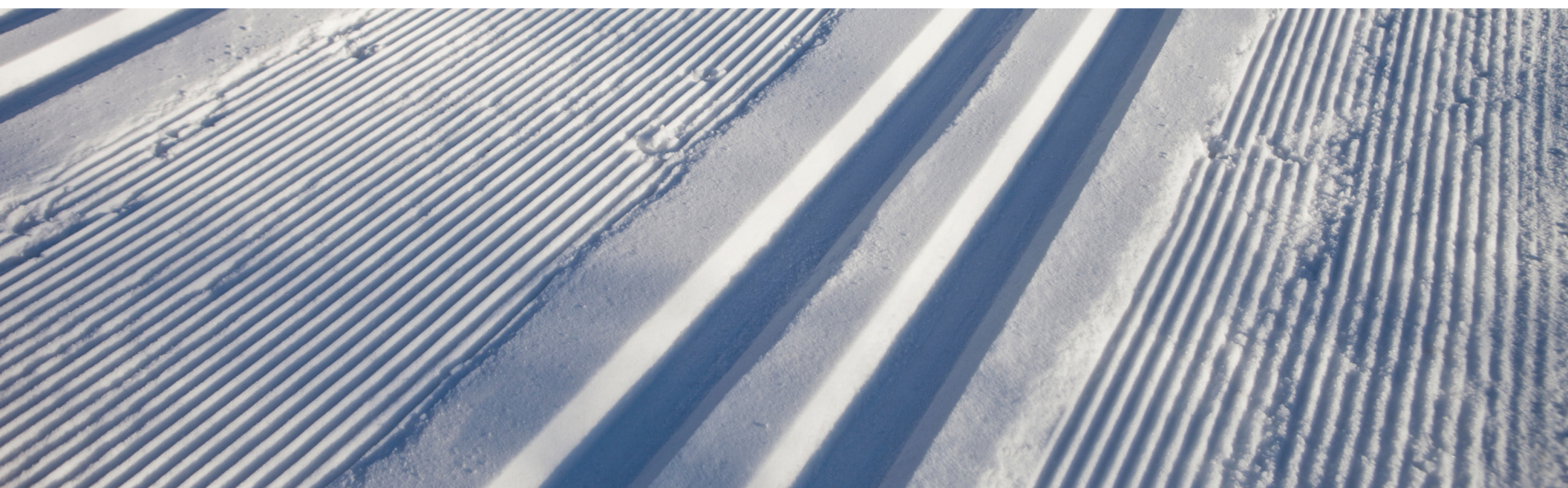
Ski Trail Grooming

This winter was a great year for skiing with an early and deep snow base. Grooming of ski trails began November 17, 2022 and the final grooming occurred on April 7, 2023. The final grooming dates from previous seasons was March 31 in 2022, March 24 in 2021, and April 6 in 2020. The timing of grooming and the determination for when final grooming will occur depends on the base of snow, as well as air and surface temperatures, which dictate if staff are able to get the equipment onto the trails without damaging them. In the spring, this often means staff start bright and early, when air temperatures are the coldest and surface temperatures have had time to cool. In total, staff groomed 51 days this season, which is 53% of the business days of the season!

Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC) gathered volunteers to receive training from Park Maintenance staff on cross-country ski trail corridor clearing, brushing, and other preparation. With 38 miles (61km) of ski trails to maintain, coordination with and support from DXC volunteers is vital to inspect and prepare all the trails for the ski season. Park Maintenance staff also updated and replaced ski trail signage this season.

How many times was each ski trail system groomed?

- Lester Trails: 27
- Hartley Park: 25
- Magney-Snively Forest Preserve: 24
- Piedmont Trails: 22
- Chester Park: 20
- Lester Park Golf Course: 14



Natural Resources

Prescribed Burns

The City contracted Prairie Restorations, Inc. to conduct controlled fires on May 4 at three pollinator meadows: two sites at Hartley Park and one site at the western end of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail near 94 Spring Street.

Prescribed burning, also known as prescribed fire, is a land management strategy that uses the controlled application of fire to the landscape to restore ecosystem health. The burns are conducted by fire experts under specific weather conditions with site preparation to ensure the fire stays within the designated area.

Prescribed burning at these three sites was intended to stimulate native plant growth while controlling invasive and non-native plants. The three burns went well as a result of strong planning and communication, knowledgeable contractors, and great weather.



Hartley Park



Natural Resources

Public Lands Transfer

Through extensive collaboration with St. Louis County, the first phase of the public lands transfer was completed in December 2023. This first phase included property in five project areas across Duluth: Mission, St. Louis Riverfront, Piedmont, Hartley, and Lester-Amity. In total, 2,200 acres of tax-forfeit open space was transferred from the County to the City of Duluth for permanent protection. Some of the parcels were transferred to the City for only the cost of application and administrative fees, the remainder of the parcels were purchased from the County through a grant awarded to the City from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Now that these lands have been acquired, the City can move forward with incorporating the properties into adjacent park spaces, restricting the parcels for long-term stormwater protection, and, in some cases, creating new parkland for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Invasive Species

Invasive plant management continued in 2023, including treatment for buckthorn and roughly 40 sites with knotweed. Continued management of these sites is critical for progress towards restoring the native habitats.

In addition to contracted management, Parks and Recreation staff coordinated with The Stewardship Network's Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) to host three Garlic Mustard workdays in June and five Wild Parsnip removal workdays in July. In July, CISMA and Hartley Nature Center hosted a Knotweed workshop at the Nature Center to share information about the damage that Knotweed can cause and methods for controlling the plant. In 2023, CISMA secured funding to establish a volunteer toolshed at Hartley Nature Center to support invasive species volunteers in eastern Duluth. Park Maintenance hosts a toolshed in west Duluth.



Buckthorn sapling

Natural Resources

Forestry

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to damage the ash tree population in Duluth. Removal of dead and dying ash trees has, and will continue to be, a high priority for Park Maintenance staff. Once infested, ash trees become very brittle and can be hazardous if not removed in a timely manner. We are in the process of providing educational information to people, particularly for residences where ash are growing in the road right-of-way that could be perceived to be a home's yard. Door hangers and green tree ribbons are currently being distributed to various neighborhoods.

The EAB Management Plan, which was initially approved by City Council in 2016, was revised in 2023. The revised EAB Management Plan was adopted by City Council on February 13, 2023. The revisions better reflect the progression of the pest in Duluth and clarify management strategies given the EAB's infestation citywide.

In total for 2023:

- 270 tree stumps chipped
- 349 trees removed, with 266 of those being green ash
- 2,147 trees were pruned in the Lakeside and Morley Heights neighborhoods
- 387 trees of 39 different species were planted



Park Maintenance

Throughout August, staff completed parking lot patching at parks throughout the City, including Morgan Park, Evergreen Senior Center, Woodland Community Recreation Center, Chester Park, Enger Park Golf Course, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Park Point Recreation Area, and Keene Creek Park.

Over time, the bricks in the circles at the Rose Garden had become dislodged and uneven from frost heave and ground movement. Staff have been resetting the bricks in the circles and, over the summer in 2023, staff completed the final circle.



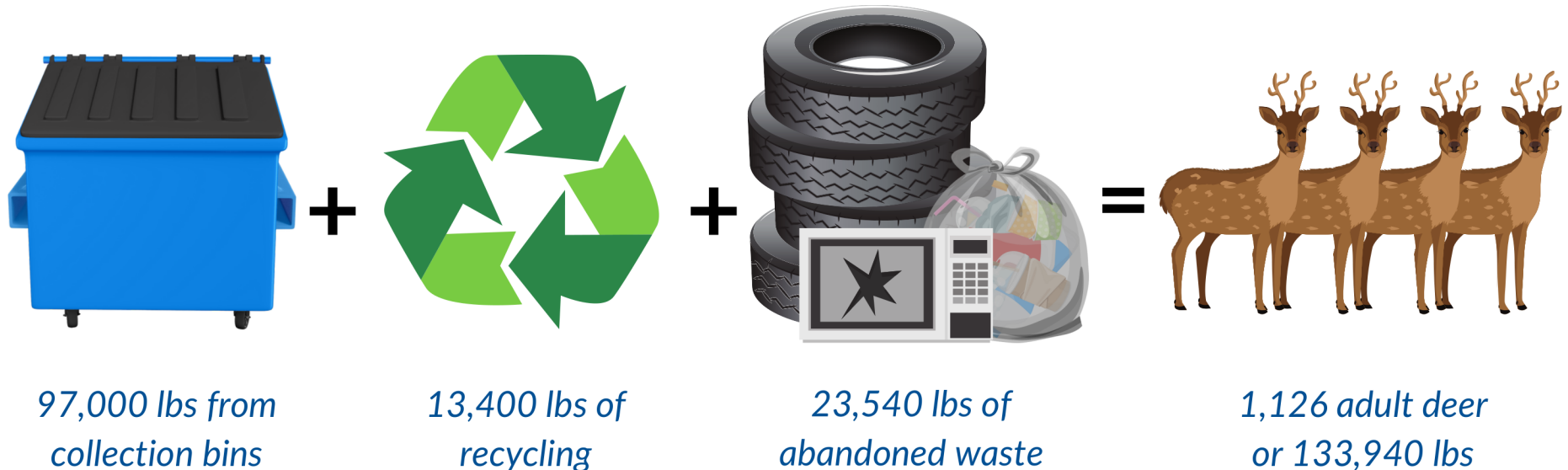
Park Maintenance

Keeping Parks Safe and Clean

A significant component of Park Maintenance's work includes restroom, garbage, and recycling service to keep park spaces clean and safe for parkgoers. In 2023, Park Maintenance changed the process for collecting garbage and recycling by obtaining a waste haulers license from the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) and Hartel's Disposal, and then outfitting a truck to be used for hauling waste from parks. Distribution of Mutt Mitts for dog waste collection is also a large part of service. In 2023, staff placed a total of 320,000 Mutt Mitts bags at various waste collection points in the city.

In total, staff hauled 97,000 pounds of garbage from collection bins at parks and trails and another 13,400 pounds of recycling! Park Maintenance also routinely responds for abandoned waste collection across Duluth. In total for abandoned waste, staff handled 223 car tires, 14 appliances, 28 televisions, 5 microwaves, and 19,540 pounds of mixed waste.

To put this amount into perspective, Park Maintenance removed material equal to the weight of 1,126 adult deer!



Park Maintenance

Keeping Parks Safe and Clean, cont.

Oftentimes, waste is in difficult to reach locations, like down in ravines or over the steep cliffs along Skyline Drive. Collecting and removing difficult to access waste requires specialized pulley systems, which is how staff were able to remove the below pictured abandoned couch.



In addition to waste removal, Park Maintenance staff service six restrooms across the park system at the Rose Garden, Endion Station, Bayfront Family Center, Enger Park, Fairmont Park, and Chambers Grove. The level of service varies with frequency of use, with an average of 900-1,000 cleanings each season, requiring approximately 950 hours of staff time for cleanings, or one full time seasonal position. Staff also coordinate placement of portable restrooms (portas) across the park system. In 2023, there were 15 portas placed year-round, 15 placed for the winter season only, 54 placed for the summer season, and 19 placed temporarily for special events and activities. Porta placement is determined based on the park or trailhead's level of use, seasonal programming, event needs, community requests, and budget limitations. Total cost for portas placement in 2023 was \$67,098.

Community

Clean and Green Volunteer Program

There have been a series of updates to the process of organizing a litter clean up or other volunteer event in a park or community space. Groups or individuals can now register through our website: duluthmn.gov/parks/volunteer/volunteer-information/. This form allows residents the opportunity to borrow supplies from the Park Maintenance Tool Shed and request a Park Maintenance staff pick-up of the collected garbage after the event.

In 2023, there were 52 volunteer events scheduled through this process! These events ranged from park and neighborhood clean ups to trail work and invasive species removal. In total, there were 6,137 hours recorded through events registered in our system. Whether volunteers join a mass clean up or independently pick up litter along the paths they walk in their daily lives, these efforts are essential to keeping our parks and green spaces clean, safe, and beautiful.

Volunteer Recognition: Mary Tennis

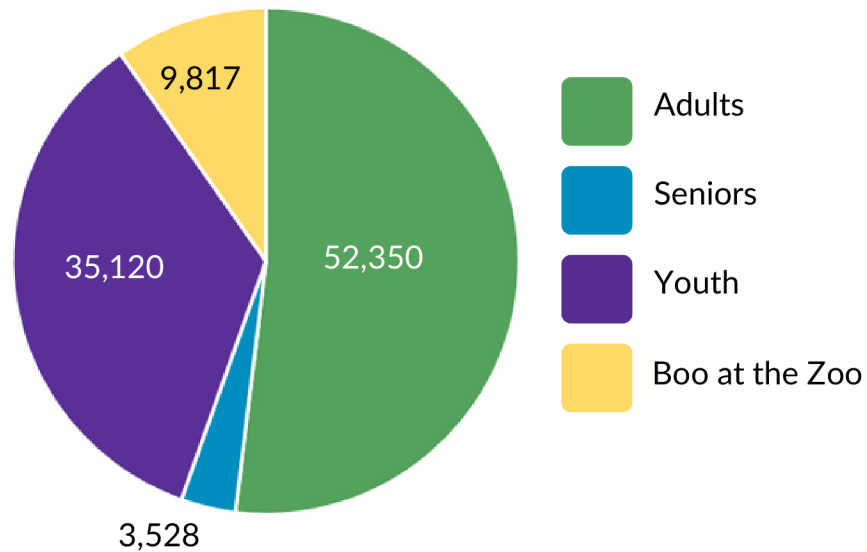
A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Mary Tennis at the April 19, 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. Mary Tennis was a long-time Park Maintenance employee and volunteer. As a Park Maintenance worker, she oversaw the care and maintenance of the Rose Garden, and during her tenure the Rose Garden was recognized nationally as a public display garden due to rose quality and overall standard of excellence.

After her retirement, Mary continued her leadership within the Lake Superior Rose Society, hosting events and managing records, labeling, and signage. She also mentored two Park Maintenance workers in the care and maintenance of the Rose Garden. Sincere thanks to Mary Tennis for her service and dedication to Duluth parks and the Rose Garden.

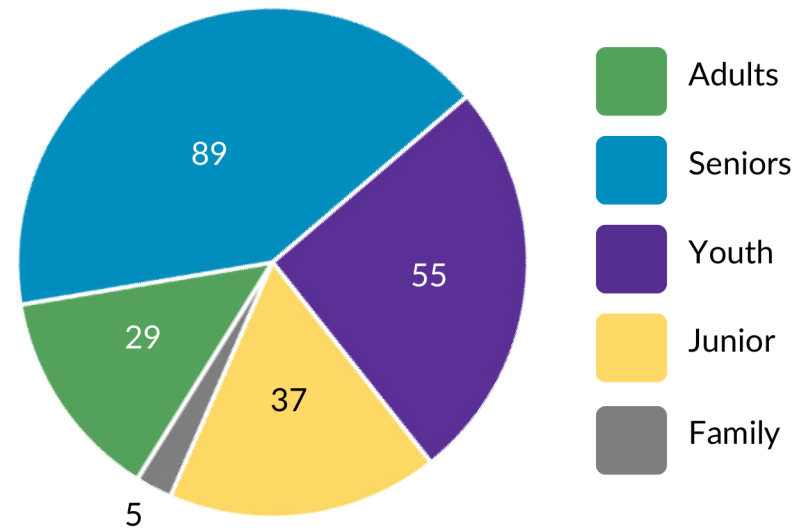


Community

Lake Superior Zoo Admissions



Duluth Golf: Season 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	Downtown Duluth
Age Well Arrowhead	Drift Toppers Snowmobile Club
Alliance for the Great Lakes	Duluth Amateur Hockey Association (DAHA)
Arrowhead Bowhunters Alliance	Duluth Amateur Youth Basketball Association (DAYBA)
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency	Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce
Arrowhead Fast Pitch League	Duluth Area Horse Trail Alliances (DAHTA)
Arrowhead Regional Development Commissions	Duluth Area Pickleball Association (DAPA)
Arrowhead Transit	Duluth Area Youth Softball Association (DAYSA)
Arrowhead Youth Soccer Association (AYSA)	Duluth Audubon Society
Bellmont Partners	Duluth Bikes
Bentleyville Tour of Lights	Duluth Children's Museum
Boys and Girls Club of the Northland	Duluth Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (Duluth CISMA)
Central Hillside Community Club	Duluth Climbers Coalition (DCC)
Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Duluth Community Garden Program
Clean Yer Creek (Loll Designs and Involta)	Duluth Community School Collaborative
College of St. Scholastica	Duluth Cross-Country Ski Club (DXC)
Community Action Duluth	Duluth Dog Parks
Corporation for National and Community Service	Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA)
Cyclists of Gitchee Gumee Shores (COGGS)	Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC)
Dan Proctor – Chester Park Trails	Duluth Foot Trails Alliance (DuFTA)
Destination Duluth	Duluth Garden Flower Society

Community

Duluth Girls Fast Pitch Softball
Duluth Huskies
Duluth Invaders
Duluth Little League
Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Duluth Monarch Buddies
Duluth Preservation Alliance
Duluth Softball Players Association
Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation
Duluth Ultimate Community
Duluth Urban Watershed Advisory Committee
Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC)
Duluth Y
East Hillside Community Club
Ecolibrium 3
Essentia Duluth Heritage Sports Center
Essentia Health
Family Freedom Center
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Fond du Lac Community Club
Friends of Duluth Public Golf
Friends of the Lakewalk
Friends of West Duluth Parks and Trails
Gary New Duluth Community Club
GND Development Alliance
Grandma's Marathon
Great Lakes Alliance
Harbor City International School

Harrison Community Club
Hartley Nature Center
Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory
Head of the Lakes United Way
Hermantown Night Riders Snowmobile Club
Hike Duluth
Indian Point Campground
Indigo Golf Partners
Irving Community Club
ISD 709 Duluth Public Schools
Izaak Walton League
Jungle Boy Boxing
Lake Park Baseball
Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad (LSMR)
Lake Superior College
Lake Superior Disc Golf Community
Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve (LSNERR)
Lake Superior Rose Society
Lake Superior Zoo
Lakeside-Lester Park Community Club
Lawrence & Schiller
Lee Franciso – Skyline
Lincoln Park Business Group
Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative
Longview Tennis Club/Friends of Tennis
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Community

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Minnesota Geocachers Association
Minnesota GreenCorps
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota Point Preservation Society
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Power
Minnesota Sea Grant
Morgan Park-Smithville Community Club
Nah-Gah-Chi-Wa-Nong Reservation
National Bank of Commerce
National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District
Northern Expressions Arts Collective
Northern Minnesota Track Club
Northland Adaptive Recreation
Northland Paddlers Alliance
Norton Park Community Club
Park Point Community Club
Piedmont Heights Community Club
Portman Recreation Association
Rainbow Community/Senior Center
Riverside Community Club
Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT)
RSVP Senior Corps
Senior Center Clubs

Sierra Club
South St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District
Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority
St. Louis County
St. Croix Hospice
St. Louis River Alliance
Stella Maris Academy
Superior Hiking Trail Association (SHTA)
Temple Israel
The Stewardship Network
True North Americorps
Twin Ports Coastal Clean-Up
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
University of Minnesota Duluth
University of Minnesota Extension
U.S. Steel
Valley Youth Center
Visit Duluth
West Duluth Business Club
Western Lake Superior Sanitary District
Western Little League
Wheels on Trails
Woodland YMCA
Youth in Action – St. Louis County
Youthworks
Zeitgeist Center for Arts and Community

Essential Spaces Update

On October 10, 2022, the Essential Spaces: Duluth Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Trails Plan was approved by the Duluth City Council. 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.

To explore the completed Essential Spaces Plan, please visit the Parks Planning Library at duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/parks-planning-library/

The Essential Spaces Plan set out five themes based on community feedback:



*Invest in
Duluth's
Future*



*Advance
Uniquely Duluth
Experiences*



*Park Spaces
for Building
Community*



*Strengthen Programs,
Partnerships, and
Volunteerism*
















*Sustain Trails
and Natural
Areas*

These themes guided the creation of 19 goals, 104 strategies, and 89 action items to inform next steps and realize our community's vision for Duluth's extensive park system.

2023 was the first full year that Essential Spaces was available for implementation! The table on the following pages provides status updates for 29 of the action items where there was significant progress. Successful progress is a reflection of an engaged community providing input to guide the City's work, cultivating drive for improvement, and volunteering their time to create the changes they want to see. We look forward to providing annual updates moving forward to share our collective progress!

Essential Spaces Update

Status Legend: Complete  Progress Made  Annual and/or Ongoing 


#	System Wide Action Items	Status	Notes
3	Ask City Council to renew the existing half-and-half tourism tax to support sports tourism citywide by investing in capital improvements to publicly owned community athletic facilities.		Approved \$36M in bonding over 10-15 year project period.
7	Preserve, restore, and maintain natural lands in accordance with the Natural Resources Management Program Plan (NRMPP) recommendations.		
14	Advance plans in the Duluth Traverse Mini-Master Plan to ensure continued development of mountain bike infrastructure for riders of all skill levels, and with an emphasis on less skilled riders.		COGGS reconstructed the Hartley Pines Loop in collaboration with City Staff. Began developing a process to complete Universal Trail Assessments.
26	Identify staff and resource needs to develop a multi-year and annual marketing plan for Parks and Recreation offerings.		Hired a Social Media and Marketing Strategist at 13.5 hours per week.
27	Create a social media campaign to advertise program registration, describe offerings, celebrate park improvements, and recognize park partners.		
28	Provide all-ages programming in densely populated neighborhoods in centrally located spaces.		
30	Identify staff and resource needs to develop a multi-year and annual marketing plan for Parks and Recreation offerings.		Tracking metrics are more standardized allowing improved comparisons.
32	Expand program offerings for older active adults, environmental education and nature exploration, entry-level and skill-building experiences with outdoor recreation activities, and multi-generational activities.		Through a partnership with the Duluth Foot Trails Alliance, a new Science Hikes program was added.
38	Implement and uphold permitting policies and practices. Review and update use agreements to assure appropriate return to the City and delivery of quality recreation services.		
49	Develop policies and procedures for the naming of parks, trails, and assets within the park system.		Created procedure that also provides guidance for Indigenous naming process.

Essential Spaces Update

Status Legend:






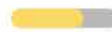
Progress Made 

Annual and/or Ongoing 

Western Action Items

Status

Notes


1	Implement the interrelated plans for Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail Mini-Master Plan, Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail Interpretive Trail Plan, and the St. Louis River Estuary Water Trail.		Secured grant funding to support future implementation.
2	Acquire essential green space in the Brewer, St. Louis River, Mission Creek, and Spirit Mountain areas and designate those properties as protected parkland, in accordance with the Imagine Duluth 2035 plan and the Natural Resource Management Program Plan.		Essential green space acquired in the St. Louis River and Mission Creek areas from St. Louis County managed tax-forfeit lands.
3	Support Spirit Mountain Recreation Authority's implementation of Spirit Mountain Master Plan and pursue opportunities to connect Spirit Mountain to the citywide parks and trails system.		Secured grant funding to support trail connections and facility improvements.
5	Fulfill potential of National Water Trail by improving water access infrastructure and working with St. Louis River Alliance and the City's tourism promoters to promote the National Water Trail as a paddling destination.		Secured grant funding to support SLRA work and infrastructure for future installation.
9	Expand program offerings for older active adults, environmental education and nature exploration, entry-level and skill-building experiences with outdoor recreation activities, and multi-generational activities.		Activities and events have increased.
10	Support Lake Superior Zoological Society's implementation of Lake Superior Zoo master plan and pursue opportunities to connect the zoo experience to the larger citywide parks and trails system.		Secured funding for the pre-design study of the main Lake Superior Zoo building.

Essential Spaces Update

Status Legend:












Progress Made 

Annual and/or Ongoing 

Central Action Items

Status

Notes

1	Implement the Lincoln Park Mini-Master Plan including restored historic pavilion, rehabilitated picnic shelter and new playground, parking lots, nature playscape, accessible walking trails, sports field and sport court.		The Lincoln Park improvement project was completed.
3	Enhance spaces for active recreation activities in Chester Park including improving the multi-use sports field and playground area.		The playground area was improved with a new spinner element and the fall zone was replaced through the Barry Family Memorial project. A new bridge was installed over Chester Creek.
5	Continue to implement “low mow” efforts at Park Point Recreation Area. Enhance green spaces with natural plants and pollinator gardens to support climate resiliency efforts.		
7	Develop mini-master plans for Central Hillside Park, Hillside Sport Court, Observation Park, Gichi-Ode’ Akiing, and Leif Erikson Park. Seek funding to support the implementation of plan outcomes.		Hillside Sport Court Park Plan adopted August 2023.
8	Relocate and redevelop Midtown Park to mitigate impacts of the Twin Ports Interchange Reconstruction project.		Completed construction documents for the relocation of Midtown Park in collaboration with the MN Department of Transportation.
9	Implement the Duluth Lakewalk Renewal plan to ensure safe public access to Lake Superior, coastal resiliency, and preservation of natural resources and characteristics near the shoreline.		Secured \$10.2 million to support future implementation of the Lakewalk renewal.
11	Acquire essential green space in the Page Street Pond, Piedmont, and St. Scholastica areas and designate those properties as protected parkland, in accordance with the Imagine Duluth 2035 plan and the Natural Resource Management Program Plan.		Essential green space acquired in the Piedmont areas from St. Louis County managed tax-forfeit lands.
14	In partnership with other agencies and other City departments, continue to work towards beach preservation, natural resource management, and safe access points along the Minnesota Point Shoreline.		Secured grant funding to support replacement of boardwalks at two sites. Continued support of the Army Corps of Engineers Section 111 Study.
18	Implement the Enger Golf Course Renovation Plan.		Secured funding to complete full replacement of Enger irrigation system and excavated new pond.

Essential Spaces Update

Status Legend:



Progress Made 





Annual and/or Ongoing



Eastern Action Items

Status

Notes

3	Protect, formalize, and improve existing unofficial neighborhood trail connections to parks by acquiring select tax forfeit and cemetery property then designating, maintaining, and, in some cases, improving the trails.		Acquired 56 acres of undeveloped green space adjacent to Downer Park.
6	Complete resilient restoration of Brighton Beach Park.		Shoreline restoration and implementation of park improvements were substantially complete in 2023 with remaining work and road construction to be complete in 2024.
7	Acquire essential green space in the Lester Park and Downer Park areas and designate those properties as protected parkland, in accordance with the Imagine Duluth 2035 plan and the Natural Resource Management Program Plan.		Essential green space acquired in the Lester Amity and Hartley areas, and 56 acres of land adjacent to Downer Park acquired in the Woodland neighborhood.
8	Conduct a feasibility study to retain, remove, or modify the pond in Hartley Park to best balance recreation, aesthetics, history and ecology.		Initiated the Hartley Pond and Tischer Creek Feasibility Study in collaboration with the MN Department of Natural Resources.