



**Cultural Resources Report for
Section 106 Review of Thom Storm Chalet Upgrade
1801 Skyline Parkway East, Duluth, MN
SHPO Number: 2025-1193**

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**Prepared for
City of Duluth-Parks and Recreation
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Introduction

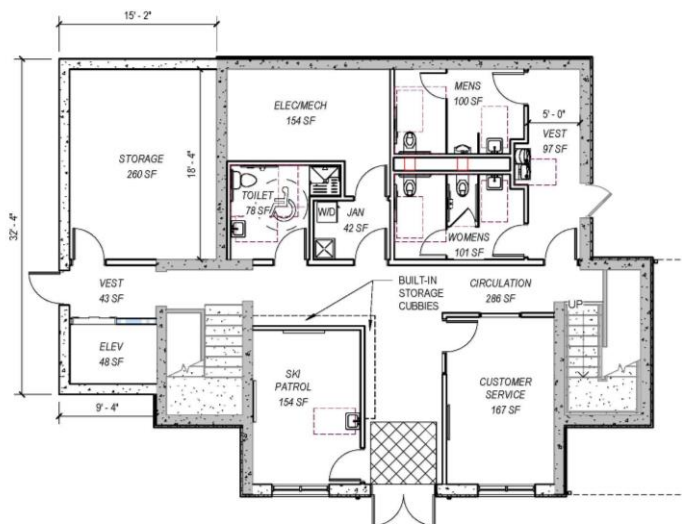
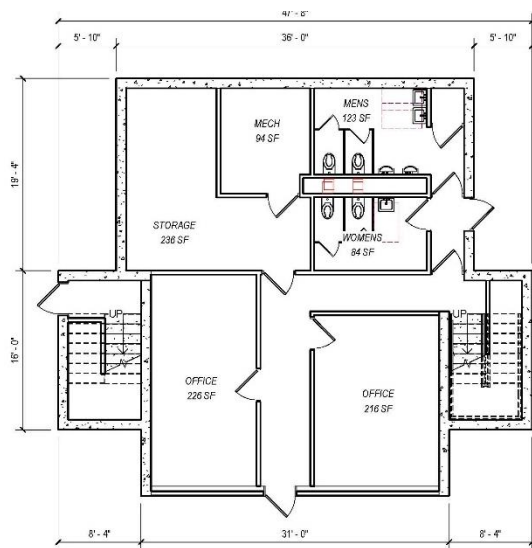
Chester Creek flooded in 2012, breaching two dams installed in the 1920s and draining a lake impounded by one of the structures. This began a series of changes to Chester Bowl, the section of Duluth's Chester Park upstream from Skyline Parkway. The dams were removed rather than repaired and the creek returned to a more natural state with stone riffles tempering the flow (SHPO #2015-2986). Wildflowers planted on the banks have grown into a linear thicket in the area once occupied by the lake. The valley edging the creek is surrounded by steep hills, densely wooded except for a cleared swath to the south with a chairlift and alpine ski runs. At the base of this section, on the opposite (north) side of the creek, is the Thom Storm Chalet, built in 1973-1974 and operated by the nonprofit Chester Bowl Improvement Club. The club was founded in 1980 and has been responsible for programming at the park since 2008, when the city faced a serious funding deficit. In close collaboration with the city, the club is leading the campaign to raise funds to overhaul the chalet, which has inadequate mechanical systems, is not accessible, and does not accommodate the group's programmatic needs.

In 2020-2021, the city consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) about plans to construct a permanent bridge over the creek to replace the temporary bridge that had been installed seasonally to connect the chalet and alpine hill for skiers and snowboarders (SHPO #2020-2570). The project also proposed to install a gravel path along the north edge of the creek. Phase I archaeology survey did not identify any potential historic or prehistoric sites. For the Section 106 review, the SHPO assumed that Chester Bowl was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The SHPO determined that the Thom Storm Chalet was not eligible because it was less than fifty years old, the typical benchmark for National Register consideration. The SHPO concluded that the design of the bridge and path met the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and they were subsequently built.

In 2025, the chalet project was awarded grant funding from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) and Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. The city, as the authorized representative of HUD, initiated Section 106 consultation with SHPO in spring 2025. The following report has been prepared in response to SHPO's request for an intensive-level survey for the Thom Storm Chalet, which is now more than fifty years old. The SHPO also recommended an intensive-level survey of Chester Bowl (SL-DUL-03635). While the substantial amount of fieldwork and analysis required to complete such a survey is beyond the capacity of the chalet project, this report and an updated inventory form provide an overview of the park's history and significance and identify significant dates and periods.

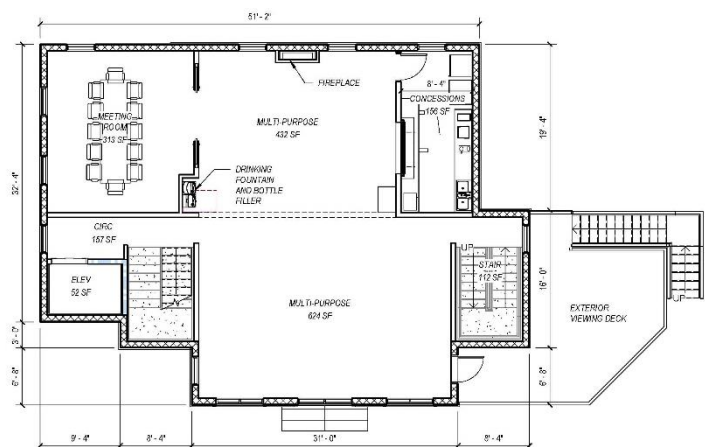
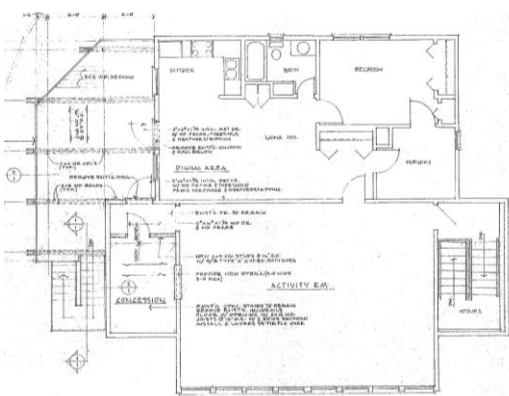
Proposed Project

Plans call for retaining the foundation walls and reconstructing the rest of the building with modern mechanical systems (see existing and proposed floor plans on the following pages). The footprint will be extended to the west to allow for the addition of an accessible elevator and an enclosed space where there is now a deck. On the ground floor, the configuration of the rooms will stay essentially the same. A stairway, blocked by remodeling in the 1980s, will be reopened next to the elevator, and the hallway serving that stair and the elevator will go to an exterior door on the west facade. Restrooms will be updated and an accessible restroom will be added.



Left: The existing ground level. Right: The proposed plan. The existing perimeter wall is shaded gray; new construction (elevator, vestibule, and storage) is on the building's left (west) side. (Drawings here and below are by the project architect, LHB)

Currently, the south half of the second level holds a large, open room, the building's main activity space. A door and window for a small concessions area were originally at the east end of the room's north wall. A caretaker's apartment occupied the remaining space north of the activity room. In 1984, a floor was inserted in the west stairway and the concessions moved there and the original concessions area was incorporated into the caretaker's apartment. A deck was added to the building's northwest corner to serve as a second means of egress and an amenity for the caretaker. There is no accessible means of egress to this level. The proposed plan will dedicate the entire floor to activity and meeting space, reestablish the west stair, remove the 1984 deck, and extend the building's interior to that space to provide an accessible elevator.

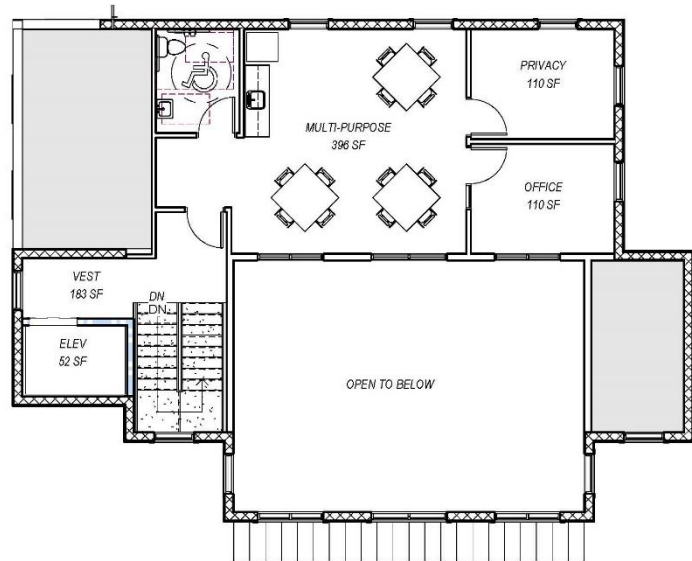


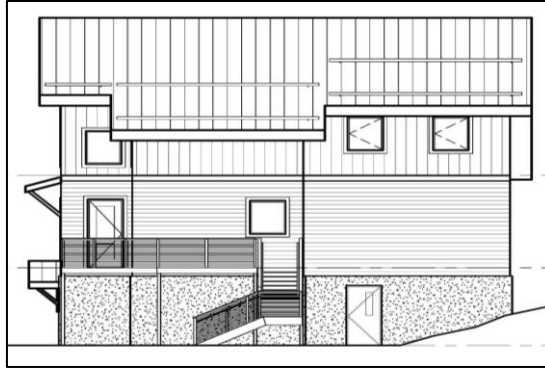
Left: A 1984 drawing for the second-level remodeling. Right: The proposed second-level plan. A third level will be added above the north half (see next page). The ceiling to the south will rise two stories. A deck, similar in size and shape to the one removed from the northwest corner, will be added to the southeast corner overlooking the alpine slope.

The new third floor (right) will hold staff offices, a break room, and a small meeting area.

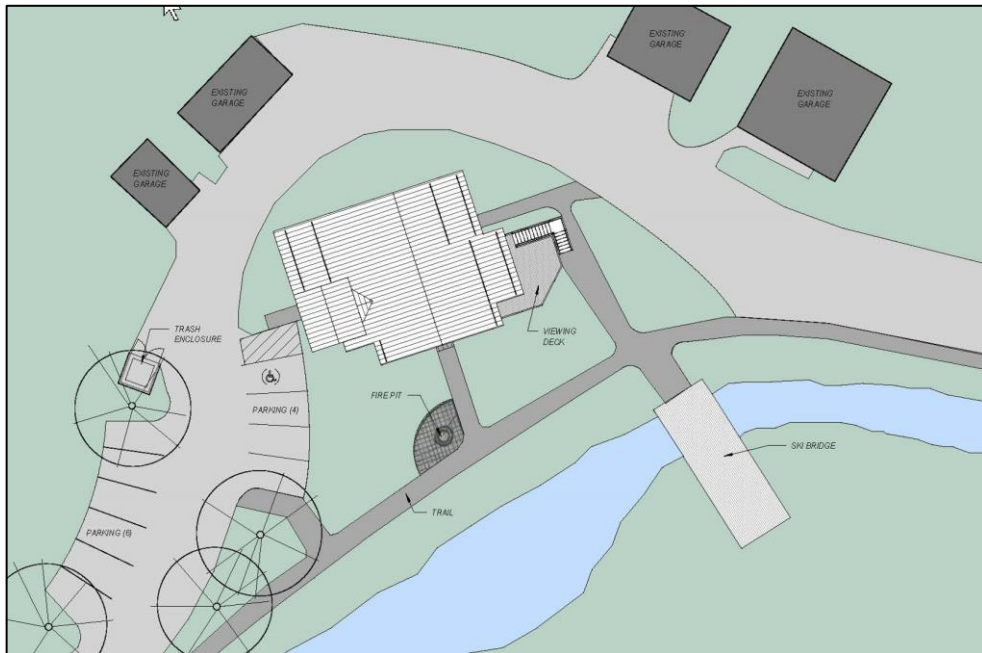
The exterior design of the rebuilt chalet is modeled after the 1970s structure. New basement walls will be exposed concrete. Upper floors will be clad in vertical and horizontal fiber-cement siding painted brown and the roof will be standing-seam metal. The new deck will be framed with treated wood posts and joists and have composite decking.

The new elevator tower is set back from the front facade and takes its design from both the original chalet and the Swiss chalet aesthetic that inspired that design. The tower screens the visibility of the expansion at the northwest corner. The addition of a story will increase the building's volume, but the general massing conforms to the original. Because the location is unchanged, the setting is the same: open to the alpine slope in the front, with a hillside of deciduous and evergreen trees dwarfing the building to the east, north, and west. Apple trees around the building that must be removed will be replaced in kind. The new building will facilitate the continuation of the programs that overcrowd the chalet today, maintaining the property's feeling and association.





Comparison of existing and proposed facades. Top to bottom: east, north, and west. All of the proposed drawings are the same scale. The photos provide an approximation of scale but the surrounding vegetation makes it difficult to get a perspective comparable to the drawings.



Aerial photo of the site today and the proposed site plan. A small turnaround in the parking area will be eliminated and the parking area will be modified to allow accessible parking near the new building's entry on the west side, by the elevator. The reconfiguration provides a total of ten parking stalls (one accessible) on both sides of the road. Dumpsters currently west of the building will be relocated to a trash enclosure. Four small, existing outbuildings north of the chalet are not included in the project scope.

Public participation has been emphasized throughout the planning process starting with development of a mini-master plan for Chester Bowl, completed in November 2014. Feedback on the project was solicited in 2015 at the park's annual Fall Fest, which always draws a crowd, and through numerous mailings, press releases, website updates, and Facebook posts since then. The city and the Chester Bowl Improvement Club have also held a series of public meetings for input as the project's design was refined from three initial concepts to the final alternative.

The project has been reviewed by the Duluth Heritage Preservation Commission at meetings on August 11 and September 8, 2025. The commission raised no objections to the project. In a unanimous vote at the September 8 meeting, the commissioners found the chalet did not qualify for designation as a local landmark.

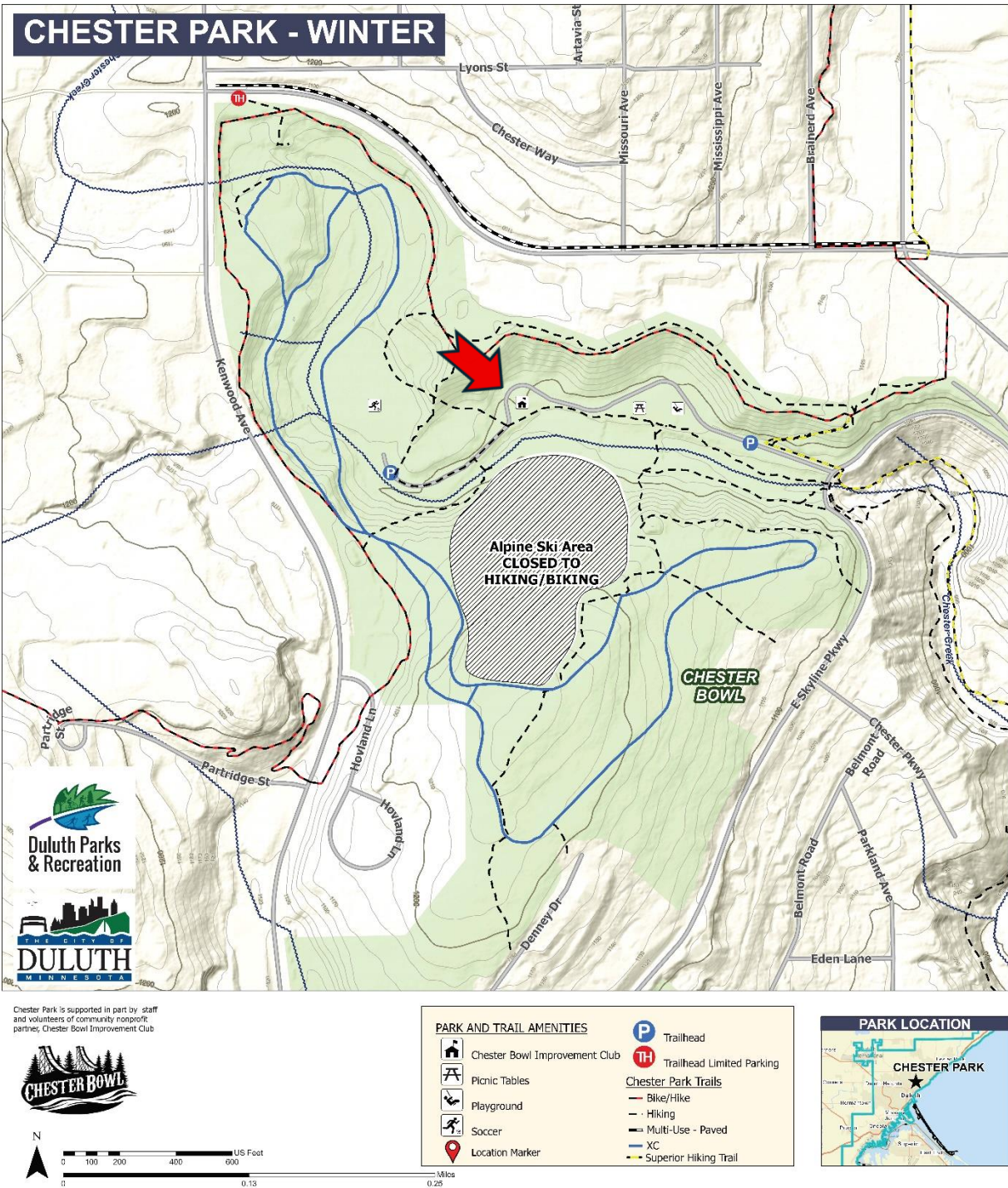
The Project's Area of Potential Effects

Federal regulations outlining the Section 106 process (36 CFR Part 800) define the Area of Potential Effects (APE) as "the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The area of potential effects is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking."¹

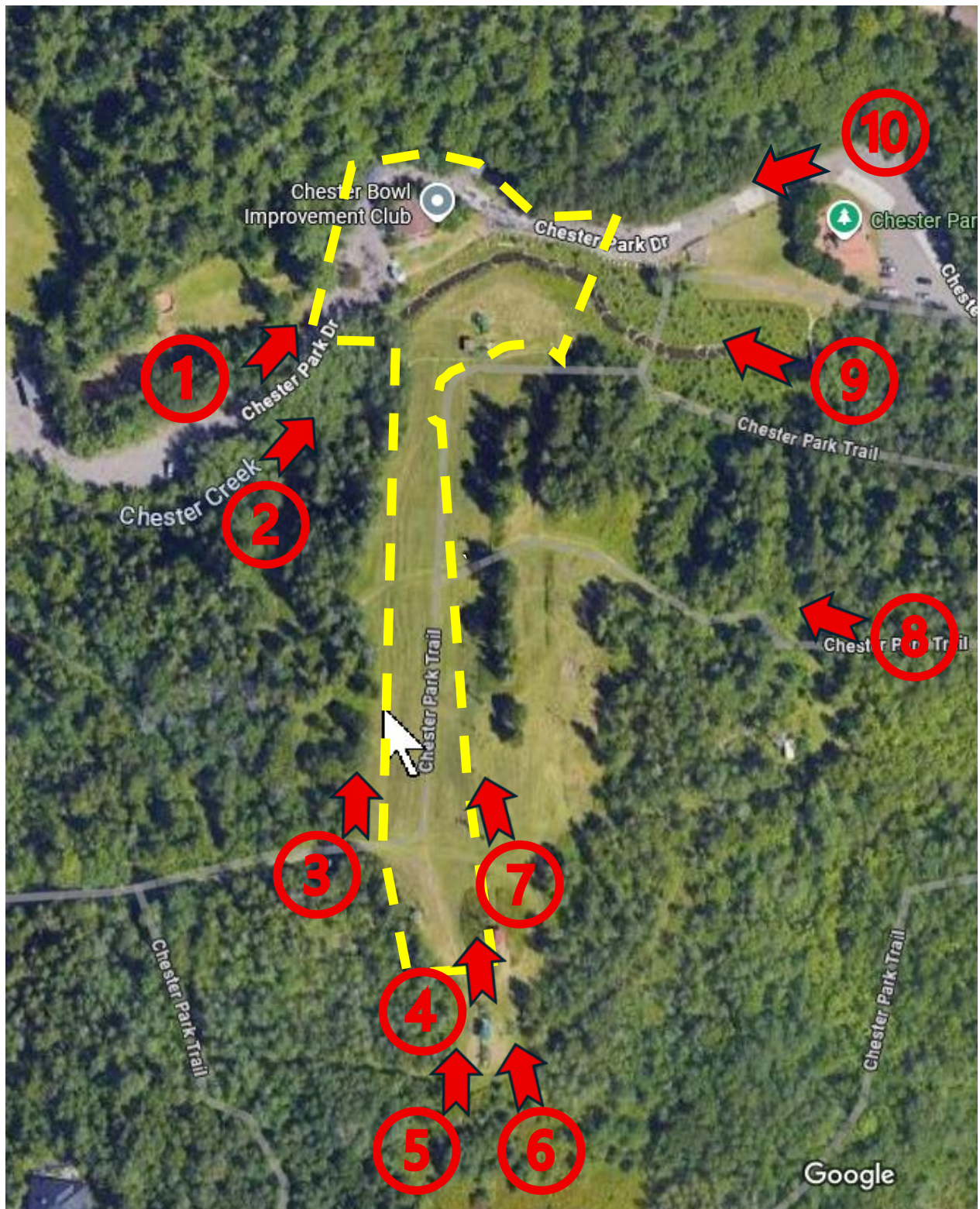
The APE for archaeological resources was established and analyzed previously. This report considers the project's effects on above-ground resources. While there will be noise, truck traffic, and other inconveniences during construction, these are inherent with any construction project, minor, and temporary. The primary effects will be:

1. A major physical alteration to the chalet. As noted above, the building's concrete foundation and walls will remain but the project will remove the rest of the chalet's original materials.
2. The visual impact of that alteration to Chester Bowl. The park's varied topography and dense vegetation block long views from most locations, including Chester Park Drive and Skyline Parkway. The notable exception is the alpine ski area, where trees have been removed to create five runs. Even there, the chalet is visible only from the main run, which also holds the chairlift, until the runs reach the open area at the bottom of the hill near the creek. The APE delineated on the following page is based on a field assessment of sightlines completed in August 2025. While the sightlines will change somewhat in the winter when leaves are off deciduous trees, the number of evergreens and the general density of trees and vegetation in the area provide considerable screening in all seasons.

¹ The definition of the APE is in 36 CFR Part 800.16(d).



*The red arrow points to the symbol marking the chalet's location.
The APE extends south of the chalet into the area labeled "Alpine Ski Area."
(Chester Bowl Improvement Club, <https://www.chesterbowl.org/trail-maps/>)*



The chalet ("Chester Bowl Improvement Club") is clearly visible from points 1, 4, and 7. It is largely obscured or not visible from the other locations. The APE is the yellow line, which approximately encompasses the area where the chalet can be seen.

Photos taken August 2025



1 (above): Looking northwest on Chester Park Drive. Chalet's facade is visible.

2 (below): Looking northwest along Chester Creek towards chalet, which is not visible.





3 (above): Looking north from west edge of alpine hill. Outbuildings next to the chalet are visible but the chalet is not.

4 (below): Chalet can be seen from the chairlift drop-off. View north.





5 (above) and 6 (below): The mound for the chairlift drop-off blocks these views to the north.





7 (above): Chalet can be seen looking north from the east side of the main ski run.

8 (below): Dense woods block views from the former ski jump area. Looking northwest.





9 (above): Looking northwest on Chester Creek just upstream from where a dam once blocked the flow, creating a lake. The creek was reestablished after the 2012 flood and its banks are filled with vegetation.

10 (below): Going west on Chester Park Drive, the chalet is hidden until the road reaches a curve.



Evaluation of Historic and Potentially Historic Properties in the APE

Chester Bowl

The Original: Lower Chester

Chester Bowl's history must be considered in the context of Chester Park, which it became a part of in 1920. The park's original section, Lower Chester, follows Chester Creek downhill from Skyline Parkway to 4th Street. Upper Chester, commonly known as Chester Bowl, is west of Skyline Parkway, stretching to Kenwood Avenue on the west and College Street on the north.

Chester Park was one of the first parks created after the Duluth Board of Park Commissioners was established in 1889. Small public squares were sometimes included in early plats for Duluth and town sites now within its boundaries, but none were intended to preserve the area's rugged beauty. As the hillside and lakefront sprouted development in the 1870s and 1880s, there was growing concern that natural resources could be obliterated. By 1884, the *Duluth Tribune* was lobbying for "at least one good city park" for the benefit of both Duluth residents and the "great numbers of people in the Eastern, Middle, and Southern states who will make the head of the lakes the Mecca of their summer pilgrimages." As for the park's location: "All our citizens agree that Chester Creek ought to be preserved for that purpose."²

Garfield Park—later renamed Chester Park—was established in the same year the board of park commissioners was created. It was the eastern bookend for a park system extending west to Lincoln Park, connected by a ridgeline boulevard. The board controlled most of the land for what is now Lower Chester within two years.³

In 1902, the park officially took the name of an early settler, Charles Chester. By July of that year, the park board completed a winding path along the creek "starting near 5th Street and 14th Avenue and following the stream northward" to 11th Street. "Rustic benches" and two bridges were provided along the way. "The board has long been anxious to improve this piece of ground . . . but not until this season has the development work been started." From the city's center, it was a twelve-minute trolley trip up 4th Street to the park's lower end at 14th Avenue. Because the board could not come to terms with the owner of land between 4th and 5th Streets, "one enters what at first seems to be a lane leading to a small house beyond." The board finally obtain that parcel in 1908 and created a more welcoming access.⁴

The city organized some winter sports at Lower Chester, including a skating rink at 15th Avenue and 5th Street, but there were few areas in the park flat enough to host ballgames or larger events.⁵

² "A Park for Duluth," *Duluth Tribune*, April 25, 1884.

³ "City Park System," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 7, 1895.

⁴ "Thirty Years Ago—From the Duluth News-Tribune, October 10, 1902," *Duluth News Tribune*, October 10, 1932; "Development of Garfield Park," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 2, 1902; "Trolley Rides in Duluth and Superior, Picnic and Outing Places for Stay-at-Homes, Beautiful Parks but Little Visited," *Duluth Sunday News Tribune*, August 10, 1902; Nancy Nelson and Tony Dierckins, *Duluth's Historic Parks: Their First 160 Years* (Duluth: Zenith City Press, 2017), 61-63.

⁵ "Duluth School Kids to Compete in Sport Meet," *Duluth News Tribune*, January 15, 1920.

Flying Down the Slopes

The area above Skyline Parkway that became Chester Bowl was first developed by the Duluth Ski Club. Founded in 1905, the ski club's first ski jump was a hill in Hunters Park augmented with "an artificial takeoff or 'bump' as it was known in those days," according to club historian and long-time member Ben Rasmussen. The ski club hosted a small tournament that winter, an annual event for a number of years. In 1906, though, it was held at a new location. The ski club "celebrate[d] the formal opening of the new jump at Chester Creek" on Christmas Day, a newspaper reported. "The work of clearing the ground of all stumps and brush and putting up the large scaffold was completed yesterday evening." In addition to "the big jump a number of smaller ones have been built for the amateurs so that everyone can enjoy the sport. A toboggan slide has also been constructed for the women and children." The tournament in January 1907 drew fifty contestants from around the Midwest and over two thousand spectators. More improvements were completed by the next winter including "new warming houses" and a "new scaffold," thirty feet taller than the previous one, "on the grounds purchased last fall by the club."⁶

Ski club members gained experience and confidence, hosting national championships in 1908 and 1915. "The ski slides of the 'old club' . . . gradually grew bigger and bigger," Rasmussen recalled, "but, unfortunately, . . . the slides blew down almost as fast as they were built." Finally, "in 1917, the triple starting point hundred foot slide blew down again, and this time the sponsors threw up their hands and allowed the people of the neighborhood [to] haul away the wreckage for kindling wood." While dedicated skiers continued to pursue their sport, the public's attention was claimed by events locally and beyond, including World War I and the influenza epidemic and forest fires in 1918. The ski club would come back to life in the early 1920s, but by that time the city had incorporated the ski hill into Chester Park.⁷

Chester Bowl Joins the Park System

The upstream end of Chester Park was initially bounded by Rogers Boulevard, now known as Skyline Parkway. Conceived in the 1880s by the park board's first president, William Rogers, the ridgeline parkway connected Miller Creek and Chester Creek. A steep grade along the east side of Chester Creek brought the parkway to Lake Superior's shore, where it continued east. The sharp slope, though, was challenging for horsedrawn carriages. To avoid that and respond to the popularity of the elevated drive, the board and other advocates were soon planning extensions going to Lester River on the east and Thompson Hill on the west. Progress on the eastern section faltered after the park board was abolished in 1913 as part of an overhaul of the city's administrative structure and a city department took over management of the park system.⁸

⁶ Ben Rasmussen, "A Brief History of the Duluth Ski Club, Inc.," 1, copy of typescript at Chester Bowl Chalet Archives (hereafter CBCA); "Ski Jumpers to Get Busy," *Duluth News Tribune*, December 25, 1906; "Duluth Skiing Enthusiasts Look Forward to Successful Tournament," *Duluth News Tribune*, January 20, 1907; "Ski Riders Are Getting Ready," *Duluth News Tribune*, December 29, 1907. While the club was founded in 1905, its articles of incorporation were adopted December 30, 1907, and the group was officially incorporated on February 7, 1908, at CBCA.

⁷ Rasmussen, "A Brief History"; Ben Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History of Our Duluth Ski Club* (n.p., [1955]; published for club's "Golden Anniversary, 1905-1955"), n.p., at CBCA.

⁸ Nelson and Dierckins, *Duluth's Historic Parks*, 27-43.

By the late 1910s, residential construction was pushing eastward. In January 1920, the city's public works department completed a new concrete-arch bridge to carry 9th Street over Chester Creek. Rising 125 feet above the creek bed, the span was built to hold an anticipated extension of the streetcar line. Realizing that the window to expand Chester Park was narrowing with increased development in the area, the city began condemnation proceedings for land upstream from the original park.⁹

In an attempt to minimize acquisition costs, city councilors asserted the land's rugged topography made it useless for purposes other than a park. The Aftenro Society disagreed. It had purchased 9 acres on the bluff by the creek in 1916 for an elder care facility. The city wanted a corner of the land, compromising the society's plans. When the condemnation appraisers completed their work in April 1920, the 2 acres taken from Aftenro received the highest price, \$800 an acre. All in all, the condemnation appraisers certified a value of \$37,575 for parcels totaling 51.59 acres, or an average of \$736 an acre—less than the \$800 to \$2,000 an acre the property owners had demanded. The city sold bonds to raise \$150,000 for parks in August and closed on the Chester property in early September. The council appropriated \$20,000 for park improvements around that time, half dedicated to road grading and other work in Upper Chester. Additional land for the park, about 4.5 acres, was acquired later that year. Small parcels ranging from 0.09 to 3 acres were added in 1927, 1929, and 1935, plus 7 acres in 1979.¹⁰

Reporting on the city's 1920 bond sale, the *Duluth News Tribune* said Mayor Magney believed the Upper Chester property would be "an excellent site for a tourist camp, such as many cities now have." In May 1921, the paper reported on plans for the park: "The old ski club building, which has been lying idle since the organization dissolved, will be converted into a shelter for tourists who use the site. . . . The present boarded sides of the building will be torn away and replaced by screen. Piazzas will be built around the structure." The city, in collaboration with the Duluth Automobile Club, also developed camps at Indian Point along the Saint Louis River on Duluth's west side and, on the east side, at Brighton Beach where the Lester River emptied into Lake Superior.¹¹

All of the camps catered to tourism fostered by the recent surge in car ownership, offering tenting sites and spring water for the next three summers. Chester Bowl was second in size to the 85-acre Brighton Beach camp, but its facilities remained primitive. In August 1924, the mayor acknowledged that it lacked "adequate toilet facilities" and "conditions could be a lot better."

⁹ "Here's the Link between the Hilltops," *Duluth News Tribune*, January 11, 1920.

¹⁰ "Would Condemn Land for Park," *Duluth News Tribune*, March 2, 1920; "Aftenro Will Build Home for Aged in 1920," *Duluth News Tribune*, November 3, 1919; "City to Have Tourist 'Camp'; Parkway Bond Issue Signed," *Duluth News Tribune*, August 28, 1920; "Will Wait for Snow to Melt," *Duluth News Tribune*, May 10, 1920; "Appraisers Set Value on Land," *Duluth News Tribune*, April 4, 1920; "Plan Bond Issue to Improve City Parks, Streets," *Duluth News Tribune*, April 18, 1920; Duluth Park Department, "Permanent Properties Record," ledger at Duluth Parks and Recreation Department (hereafter DPRD), Duluth City Hall; Nelson and Dierckins, *Duluth's Historic Parks*, 74-75. Aftenro proceeded with construction of the residential facility on the remaining 7 acres, completing the building in spring 1921. ("New Aftenro Home for Aged Will Be Ready in Spring," *Duluth News Tribune*, March 1, 1921; "Aftenro Society Arranges to Dedicate \$75,000 Home," *Duluth News Tribune*, May 13, 1921.)

¹¹ "City to Have Tourist 'Camp'; "Indian Point, Chester Park Camp Awaits Auto Tourists," *Duluth News Tribune*, May 22, 1921.

With a limited budget for improving any of the sites, it is not surprising that the Chester Park camp closed for good at the end of the season.¹²

Return of the Jumpers

Skiing would prove a better match for the park. In March 1922, the *Duluth News Tribune* reported that sixty skiers had signed up for a tournament “at the old Chester Creek hill . . . sponsored by the Chester Park Ski Club.” The resuscitated Duluth Ski Club initially used the West End Ski Club’s jump at Miller Creek by Lincoln Park but returned to Chester Park in the 1923-1924 season. On November 6, 1923, a headline in the *Duluth Herald* proclaimed: “Chester Park Ski Scaffold Will Be Rebuilt.” The 60-foot structure was made of wood and almost completed in less than a month. The ski club intended to use it only for the 1923-1924 season. “Next year the club members plan on erecting a steel scaffold which will be among the biggest in North America.”¹³

That plan was optimistic—the ski club relied on the wood jump for winter 1924-1925. The next year, though, construction of the massive steel ski slide was catalyzed by the ski club’s successful bid to host the 1926 National Ski Jumping Championships in February 1926. The tournament stimulated a larger festival, the Winter Frolic, that reportedly drew “more than 50,000 persons” to the opening parade, with “the attendance at all of the various events during the celebration [running] into the hundreds of thousands.” The tournament and first-place wins by Duluth skiers at other competitions secured the city’s reputation as one of the country’s foremost centers for ski jumping during that sport’s golden age.¹⁴

To improve the ski jump landing area, the park board curved the park’s road north along the edge of the valley and, by December 1926, had plans to install two stone dams across Chester Creek. The dams were finally finished in fall 1928. “The lower one . . . fill[ed] up the valley of the creek so that the skiers could go across the ice instead of over the ugly wooden apron which was previously necessary. The lower dam also increased considerably the amount of space that could be utilized on the ski hill.” The other dam created a pond, a popular skating rink in the winter.¹⁵

To support the park’s activities, a new fieldhouse was completed in November 1927, replacing a modified pavilion from the tourist-camp era. The wood-frame fieldhouse was separated from the lake by a parking area. The long axis of the T-plan building paralleled the creek, a one-story section topped by a steeply sloped, hipped roof. The building’s entry was recessed into the south facade. The interior, anchored by a large, stone fireplace, was a public space with a concessions area, changing rooms, and a meeting room. The section to the west, at a 90-degree angle, rose 1-1/2 stories and held a caretaker’s apartment. It was occupied for forty years by Walter and Millie

¹² “Duluth Offers Three Camp Sites to Automobile Tourists for Summer Months,” *Duluth Sunday News Tribune*, May 7, 1922; “Larger Budget Asked to Equip Tourist Camps,” *Duluth News Tribune*, August 31, 1924.

¹³ “Chester Creek Club Plans Ski Tourney,” *Duluth News Tribune*, March 1, 1922; Rasmussen, “A Brief History”; Sandy MacDonald, “Chester Park Ski Scaffold Will Be Rebuilt,” *Duluth Herald*, November 6, 1923; “Ski Scaffold Nearly Completed,” *Duluth Tribune*, November 23, 1923.

¹⁴ Rasmussen, “A Brief History”; “High Winds Halt National Ski Tourney,” *Duluth News Tribune*, February 14, 1926.

¹⁵ Charles T. Hathaway, “Newly Organized Duluth Outdoor Club Plans Major Development of Recreational Facilities in Beautiful Chester Park Surroundings,” *Duluth News Tribune*, January 2, 1927; Duluth Park Department, *Annual Report*, 1929, n.p.

Mattson, who moved there in 1929 and were energetic boosters of ski jumping and other park programs.¹⁶

Other attractions were also added in the late 1920s. In September 1927, Mayor Snively introduced an ordinance to use \$3,000 of funds recently raised from a bond issue “for preliminary grading for [an] athletic field and tennis court at Chester Park.” The park department installed goal posts and baseball backstops in the athlete field and beautified the fences around the three clay tennis courts with plantings of bittersweet and woodbine in time for summer 1929, when these facilities were finished.¹⁷

In addition to jumping and skating, Chester Bowl offered other winter sports. In 1928-1929, the park had four toboggan slides. The park department rented toboggans and charged a small fee for using the slides in the evenings and on weekends, selling over 10,000 tickets that winter. It estimated the slide was used at least 5,000 times at other times when there was no charge.¹⁸

Cross-country skiing was another draw. In the 1930s, locals Eric Judeen and Pete Fosseide, both Norwegian immigrants and legendary cross-country champions, created a 6-kilometer trail half in Chester Bowl and half on the adjacent campus of the College of Saint Scholastica, connected by a culvert under Kenwood Road. High-school students were recruited for school teams, introducing new generations to skiing. The Arrowhead High School Ski Meet was held at Chester Bowl in 1932, the country’s first high school ski tournament. The first competition was only for jumping, but cross-country was added a year or two later and slalom was introduced in 1939. The tournament was officially adopted by the Minnesota State High School League in 1934. Chester Bowl continued to be a leader in youth sports after the war, playing host to the National Ski Association’s first junior championship in February 1948.¹⁹

By this time, though, the focus of adult jumpers had shifted to a new location. As interest in winter sports grew, the Duluth Ski Club became increasingly frustrated by the limitations of Chester Bowl’s ski jumps. Strong winds often interfered with jumping at Chester Bowl including during the 1926 tournament, when some rounds had to be canceled. During the same period, rapidly expanding car ownership led to traffic jams in Chester Bowl’s constrained valley. The ski club searched for a larger, more protected site and, by 1938, was working with the city on a new winter sports center at Fond du Lac, a community at Duluth’s far west end. Skiers from around the country came for the opening celebration in February 1941. The 60-meter jump was built by the city park department with crews paid by Works Projects Administration funds. The development also had an alpine ski area, the Ojibway Ski Bowl. The Duluth Ski Club “moved its

¹⁶ “Chester Park Fieldhouse nears Completion” (photo), *Duluth News Tribune*, November 13, 1927; “Mille N. Mattson” (obituary), *Duluth News Tribune*, April 21, 1990; “Duluth Ski Club’s New Toboggan Slide Opens This Afternoon,” *Duluth News Tribune*, December 20, 1925; Nelson and Dierckins, *Duluth’s Historic Parks*, 71-72; “Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council, December 11, 1929,” *Duluth News Tribune*, December 12, 1929.

¹⁷ *Duluth News Tribune*, September 15, 1927, 15; Duluth Park Department, *Annual Report, 1929*, n.p.

¹⁸ Duluth Park Department, *Annual Report, 1929*, n.p.

¹⁹ Ryan Rodgers, *Winter’s Children: A Celebration of Nordic Skiing* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2021), 144-145; Doug Edmonson, *Norm Oakvik: The Inconspicuous Coach* (n.p.: published by author, 2024), 15, 27-28, 30, 238, 264; “Boy Skiers Vie for National Title Sunday,” *Duluth News Tribune*, February 21, 1948; Thomas Storm, interview by author, August 14, 2025. The cross-country link under Kenwood Avenue was closed in 1966 but a challenging 3-kilometer trail in Chester Bowl remains.

main activities out to the new ski area at Fond du Lac,” historian Rasmussen reported, beginning a new phase in the ski club’s history.²⁰

After the Fond du Lac facility was in place, the ski club converted Big Chester to an intermediate, 45-meter jump by eliminating the highest tower. With its multiple jumps, cross-country trail, and skating pond, Chester Bowl remained a bustling venue for winter sports, particularly important for training youth. This helped perpetuate the city’s ski-jumping legacy for decades after World War II. A 1992 article described a sequence of prominent jumpers including the Denney family dynasty: “Jim, a member of the U.S. Olympic team in 1976 and ’80; Jon, on the ’84 Olympic team; and Jeff, who was not on an Olympic team but was a member of the U.S. Ski Team in the late ’70s and early ’80s.” The article observed that “the Denneys are part of the rich tradition of local ski jumpers who’ve gone on to national fame as Olympians, a tradition that’s included Gene Kotlarek (’60 and ’64 Olympics), Adrian Watt (’68), Greg Swor (1972), and Terry Kern (’76).” It cautioned, though, that the “tradition is in danger of drying up unless more kids start and stick with the sport.”²¹

Jumping’s Demise

The Duluth Ski Club maintained the jumps at Fond du Lac and at Chester Bowl, where volunteers recontoured the landings of 35-meter Little Chester and 15-meter Rabbit Ears in 1969-1970. Rabbit Ears was rebuilt as a 20-meter jump in 1974 and 10-meter Bunny Ears was added. Children as young as three started on the 5-meter Copper Peekaboo, described as little more than “a railroad tie.” Big Chester was redecked and the landing recontoured four years later and Little Chester received the same update a year after that. The city and ski club continued to invest in the jumps at Chester Bowl through the 1990s and first years of the twenty-first century. The city allocated about \$56,000 in 1990 to repair the jumps, including rebuilding the wood deck on Big Chester. Ski-jumping tournaments were held there through 2005.²²

In fall 1974, though, the Fond du Lac ski jump was abandoned after the ski club and city “spent many dollars and countless hours trying to maintain” it. The following year, the ski club’s president requested that the “steel stairway be saved . . . for installation on Little Chester.” He also asked the city’s support for building a replacement for the big jump at Chester Park or Spirit Mountain. A new jump was not built and ski-jumping competitions returned to the existing jumps at Chester Bowl. The ski club asserted this was “not a step backwards,” but the sport never regained its earlier popularity despite the energetic efforts of jumping enthusiasts.²³

²⁰ Rasmussen, “A Brief History”; Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History*; “Duluth Dedicates Ski Slide Sunday,” *Duluth Herald*, February 1, 1941.

²¹ Rasmussen, “A Brief History”; Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History*; Irv Mossberger, “Ski Jumpers Can Earn Wings Early,” *Duluth News Tribune*, December 29, 1992.

²² Ronald Wiener, president, Duluth Ski Club, to Duluth Park and Recreation Advisory Board, memo requesting change of Little Chester and Rabbit Ears landing contours, August 21, 1970, at DPRD; Duluth Ski Club, “Public Hearing Report to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board from the Duluth Ski Club on Chester Bowl Park,” November 29, 1979, at DPRD; Mossberger, “Ski Jumpers Can Earn Wings Early”; “Duluth City Council Summary,” *Duluth News Tribune*, July 24, 1990, and September 25, 1990; Krech and Ojard, “Evaluation Report for Big Chester Ski Jump,” December 19, 1990, prepared for the Duluth Nordic Ski Club, Inc., at CBCA; advertisement for junior ski jumping championships, *Duluth News Tribune*, January 13, 1991; “Ski Jumping is . . . Excitement!” *Duluth News Tribune*, November 11, 1991; “Bulletin Board: Ski Race,” *Duluth News Tribune*, March 14, 1991.

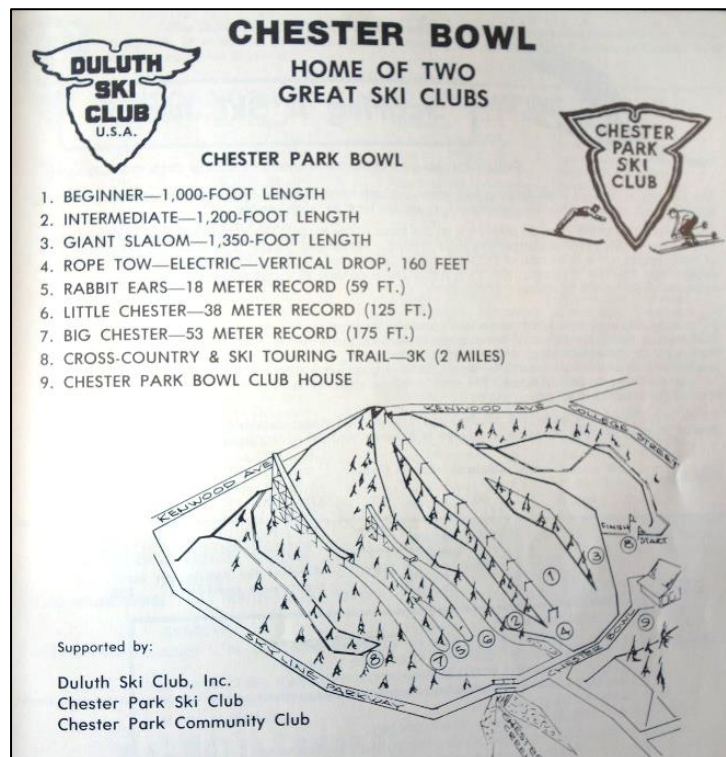
²³ James Denney, president, Duluth Ski Club, to Harry Nash, director, Duluth Parks and Recreation, letter, November 5, 1975, at DPRD; Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History*, n.p.

By the 1960s and 1970s, other winter sports were gaining ground on ski jumping. Historian Doug Edmonson pointed to “two revolutionary changes in Nordic skiing that dramatically transformed the sport”: improvements in trail grooming and the switch from wood to fiberglass skis. In addition to broadening interest in classic cross-country skiing, the new ski technology led to a boom in skate skiing. Skating requires a wider track, so the Duluth Ski Club upgraded and widened the park’s cross-country ski trail in the late 1970s. Non-skiing sports like junior hockey also drew attention away from jumping.²⁴

The most direct competition to jumping, however, came from alpine skiing. It gained visibility in 1936 when it became an Olympic sport. When the Ojibway Ski Bowl opened at Fond du Lac in 1941, it offered a rope tow as an alternative to scrambling up hills with skis in hand. Before that time, Rasmussen wrote, club members tried to “interest the general public in recreation skiing, . . . but nothing much . . . came of these attempts until the invention of the ski-tow.” He noted that “the jumpers, on the other hand, welcome the strenuous climb up the hill as good exercise to strengthen the legs”—a challenge that was attracting fewer and fewer people.²⁵

The Duluth Ski Club obtained a ski tow motor for Chester Bowl in 1968 and a power building for the ski tow was completed the next fall. As chairlifts became more common, an even broader segment of the population was attracted to alpine skiing. Chester Bowl’s attendance jumped in 1987 when its rope tow was replaced by a two-person chairlift from Spirit Mountain, displaced by a new four-person lift there.²⁶

Skiers and historians point to many factors leading to the demise of ski jumping in the late twentieth century. Alpine skiing and other winter sports were less physically demanding and more of a social activity. While the Duluth Ski Club encouraged girls and women to jump, few took them up on it. The television network ABC did no favor to the sport by including the spectacular crash of Yugoslavian ski jumper Vinko Bogataj at the 1970 World Ski Flying Championships in its opening sequence for



*Duluth Ski Club Souvenir Booklet, 1984
(Ron Wiener drawing; CBCA)*

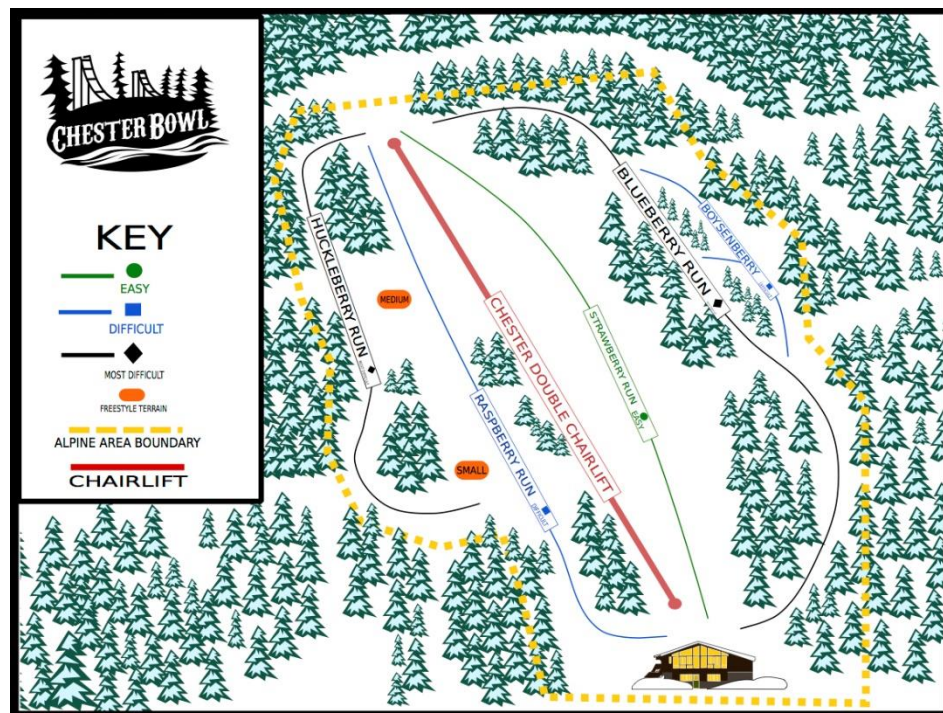
²⁴ Edmonson, *Norm Oakvik*, 116.

²⁵ Duluth Sky Club, *Souvenir Booklet, 1980* (n.p., [1980]), 14, at CBCA; Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History*, n.p.

²⁶ Rasmussen, *Fifty-year History*, n.p.; “City Ski Club Plans Full Winter for Chester Bowl,” *Duluth News Tribune*, November 24, 1974; “Chester Bowl Skiers Jump with Delight,” *Duluth News Tribune*, November 15, 1987.

Wide World of Sports. Illustrating “the agony of defeat,” the clip “became an iconic image in America,” ABC observed, thanks to its repeated appearance at the start of the long-running program. In a 1993 interview, a Duluth coach commented, “We struggled with that Wide World of Sports thing for a long time. Mothers see that and it’s the last thing they want their kids to do.” This might have been a final blow to ski jumping as a high school sport; it was no longer included in state ski meets after 1978.²⁷

Historian Ryan Rodgers reported that the city’s jumps “came down one by one,” leaving Big and Little Chester the last standing. Although some community members attempted to preserve the deteriorating structures, the city demolished them in August 2014.²⁸



The alpine ski area today.
(Chester Bowl Improvement Club, <https://www.chesterbowl.org/trail-maps/>)

²⁷ Thomas Neumann, “Whatever Happened to ‘Agony of Defeat’ Ski Jumper?” *ABC News*, accessed August 26, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Sports/happened-agony-defeat-ski-jumper/story?id=41406621>; Edmonson, *Norm Oakvik*, 238.

²⁸ Rodgers, *Winter’s Children*, 308-309. The city had signed a contract allowing a cell phone company to locate equipment on Big Chester. Facing the loss of the ski jump, the company proposed building a monopole tower on top of the hill to relocate the equipment, an idea that met with much local opposition. In November 2014, though, the city council approved the plan, which produced a 75-foot monopole “disguised to look like a pine tree.” (“Duluth, Proctor Differ on Pot,” *Duluth News Tribune*, October 11, 2014; Peter Passi, “Council OKs Cell Tower Disguised as Pine Tree in Chester Park,” *Duluth News Tribune*, November 11, 2014.)

Thom Storm Chalet

Modeled after a Swiss chalet, the two-story building has a low-slope, front-gable roof, with rafter tails exposed beneath the broad eaves. Brown-colored wood siding sheathes the upper level and, on the front (south) facade, part of the ground-level walls. On the front facade, clapboards are aligned horizontally and diagonally in vertical panels. The other walls have flush horizontal siding. The ground level's concrete walls are partially dug into the sloping site on the east, north, and south sides. The building is essentially rectangular in plan. Bump-outs on the east and west sides, which hold interior stairways, are set back from the front facade. The upper level of the front facade is filled with fixed and operable windows in various sizes. Bands of windows flank an off-center door on the ground level. Other doors are on the east and west sides. Windows are irregularly spaced on the east, north, and west sides of the upper level, all north of the bump-out. A wood deck extends from the north end of the building's west facade at the upper level.

On the interior, the door on the south facade enters a hall separating activity rooms to the left and right. In 1981, artist Jim Young painted a winter sports mural on the west wall of the west room that remains today, although it is split by a partition dividing the room in two. Near the building's midpoint, the hall makes a 90-degree turn to the east and a door opens into a work area/mechanical room occupying the building's northwest corner. The hall accesses a stairway to the upper level at the building's east wall and makes a 90-degree turn to the north to reach men's and women's toilet rooms and the exterior door on the building's east side. The door on the west side provides access to the base of another stairway but not the rest of the ground level. The stairway has been filled in at the upper level and is no longer functional.²⁹

On the upper level, a large activity room occupies about half of the building. A wall of windows on the south side overlooks the ski hill. Most of the area north of the activity room was originally a caretaker's apartment with a single bedroom in the northeast corner. Tucked between the bedroom and the activity room was a vending area with a wide window enabling service directly to the activity room. The vending area was incorporated into the apartment in 1984 to create another bedroom and the vending area moved to the west stairway, where a floor was inserted at the upper level. The resident caretaker vacated the apartment in 2022 and it now services as office and meeting space for the Chester Bowl Improvement Club.³⁰



*Training for ski season in front of new chalet, 1974.
("City Ski Club Plans Full Winter for Chester Bowl")*

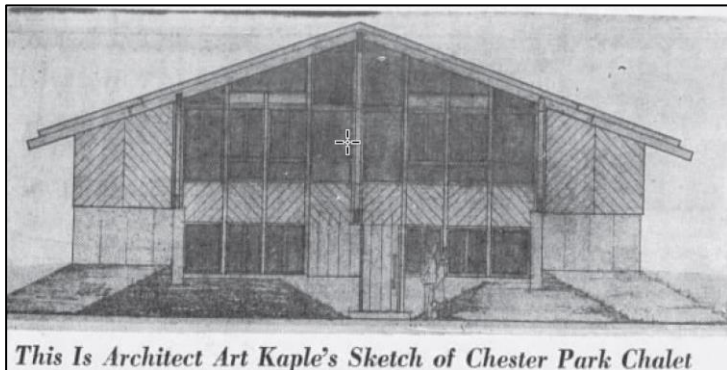
The building generally maintains good historic integrity as is evident by comparing a 1974 photo of the front facade with its appearance today.

²⁹ Art Kaple, "Chester Bowl Recreation Area Activity Building," plans, May 30, 1973, at CBCA; photo of Jim Young with mural, March 1981, at CBCA.

³⁰ Art Kaple, "Chester Bowl Recreation Area Activity Building," plans, May 30, 1973, at CBCA.

The chalet was built a few years after Chester Bowl's alpine ski hill was outfitted with a rope tow, beginning a new era in the park's history. In February 1973, the city council voted to hire local architect Art Kaple "for services relating to the construction of an Activities Building at the Chester Bowl Ski Area." His fee of \$8,565 was based on a percentage of the assumed construction costs. The fee was increased to \$10,550 in April of the following year because "changes in the scope of the project . . . resulted in increases in total project costs."³¹

Kaple's drawings for the chalet are dated May 1973. On June 11, following the council's dedication of \$72,000 in federal revenue-sharing funds to the project, the *Duluth News Tribune* published a sketch of the chalet. The paper noted, "The new building will be closer to the pond than the structure it replaces, with the roadway running behind it, and will provide a better view of the ski hills." Bids were due by the end of the month with construction expected to "conclude by Thanksgiving, in time for next year's skiing season."³²



Duluth News Tribune, June 11, 1973

In early July, the city had received bids from six contractors. Donald Holm Construction Company not only came in with the lowest bid, \$100,651, but also anticipated completing the work in 90 days in contrast to the 150 days proposed by the others.³³

Work kicked off with demolition of the old fieldhouse in late summer. A brief article in the *Duluth News*

Tribune on February 1, 1974, stated that "construction is nearing completion on a new \$77,000 activity building in Chester Park." It explained that "the two-story, 3,300-square-foot wood building will have facilities for skiers upstairs and two rooms for meetings or activities downstairs," plus "a serving pantry and vending machine area, restroom facilities, and an apartment for the resident manager."³⁴

The cost of \$77,000 reported in the February 1974 article was close to the approximately \$80,000 expense anticipated in the city's 1973 capital improvements program a year earlier. The actual cost, however, was more. Holm's low bid had been "substantially higher than the amount that had been budgeted," according to the Duluth Ski Club. "Not wanting to skimp on space and quality originally planned for, the Duluth Ski Club and the Duluth Alpine Club offered to take on the responsibility of the interior to keep the price as originally planned." The two clubs, with

³¹ "Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council, February 26, 1973," *Duluth News Tribune*, March 2, 1973; "Official Proceedings," Duluth City Council, April 26, 1974," *Duluth Herald*, April 26, 1974.

³² Kaple drawings; "Chester Park Chalet Planned," *Duluth News Tribune*, June 11, 1973.

³³ "Chester Bowl Bid Received," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 4, 1973.

³⁴ "Chester Park Building Rises," *Duluth News Tribune*, February 1, 1974.

additional help from “members of the Air National Guard, former ski club members, and friends,” finished their work around the beginning of March 1974.³⁵

The vending area was relocated in 1984. At unknown dates, a wall subdivided the west room on the ground level and storm windows were installed on the exterior. Otherwise, the chalet is essentially unchanged since 1974, hosting a variety of activities in every season.

Art Kaple

Born in Tampa, Florida, in 1933, Kaple served in the military before receiving a bachelor’s degree in architecture from the University of Florida in 1958 and a master’s degree in architecture from the University of Minnesota in 1967. He worked for the federal government from 1962 to 1964, then joined the Duluth architecture firm Ruble Miller Associates, founded in 1954. By 1970, Kaple had become a partner with Earl H. Ruble, a professional engineer, in the firm Ruble and Kaple. Their office was at 217 South Lake Avenue. Kaple and his family lived at 2722 East Superior Street.³⁶

Kaple was licensed to practice in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Florida as well as Minnesota and was elected to the board of the Northeastern Minnesota Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1970. He was involved in designing a school building and county jail in Florida and an elderly housing project in Wakefield, Michigan, before moving to Duluth. With Ruble, he worked on a municipal liquor store in Hinckley, a maintenance facility in Hoyt Lakes, and a pavilion at Chamber’s Grove.³⁷

Ruble and Kaple are credited as the architects of Faith Haven Apartments, a senior high-rise at 4901 Grand Avenue in Duluth. It opened in 1972 but plans were apparently prepared before October 1970 when the principals split and established their own practices: Earl Ruble and Associates and Art Kaple, Architects. Kaple leased space for his office in the Alworth Building.³⁸

In addition to the chalet, Kaple’s firm prepared plans for other city projects including roof and masonry repairs to a public works tool house, a police department headquarters renovation (again with Donald Holm Construction Company), an emergency operating center in city hall, indoor rinks for Duluth’s youth hockey program, and a parking garage for Duluth’s Housing and Redevelopment Authority. He also did private-sector work including a “major remodeling and construction project” at 2650 Miller Trunk Highway for a car sales and repair facility for Emerson-Olds.³⁹

³⁵ “\$836,000 Program Geared to Upgrade Parks, Play Areas,” *Duluth Herald*, March 20, 1973; “Chester Park Gets New Clubhouse,” *Duluth Ski Club Souvenir Booklet*, 1974, in possession of Karla Southworth.

³⁶ “Kapte, Art” (page 473) and “Ruble & Kaple, Inc.” (page 786), entries in John F. Gane, ed., *American Architects Directory*, 3d ed. (New York and London: R. R. Bowker Company, 1970); “Janie Freeman, Art H. Kaple to Be Married,” *Tampa Bay Times*, June 19, 1952; “Architect Forms Firm,” *Duluth News Tribune*, October 8, 1970.

³⁷ Gane, ed., *American Architects Directory*, 473, 786; “Architect Forms Firm”; “Architect Groups Name Virginia Man,” *Duluth News Tribune*, January 21, 1970; “Shefchik Elected,” *Duluth News Tribune*, January 26, 1972.

³⁸ Faith Haven Apartments is featured in an advertisement for Molin Concrete Products Company in *Northwest Architect* 35, no. 6 (September-October 1971): 242; “Architect Forms Firm”; “Area Notes,” *Northwest Architect* 34, no. 7 (November-December 1970): 366.

³⁹ “Indoor Hockey Rink Contract,” *Duluth News Tribune*, October 20, 1970; “Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council, December 3, 1973,” *Duluth Herald*, December 7, 1973; “Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council,

In 1974, Kaple moved to Baton Rouge to join the architecture faculty at Louisiana State University. He continued his private practice in the new location, joining a team led by San Francisco architects Turnbull and Associates to design a \$1.6 million civic complex in Biloxi, Mississippi.⁴⁰

Conclusions

Chester Bowl

Chester Park was one of Duluth's first parks, an important part of the armature that shaped the city's development. Established in 1889, the park was improved with trails and bridges in the early twentieth century. The addition of the parcel on 4th Street and 14th Avenue in 1908 completed Lower Chester, the park's initial chapter. It was substantially enlarged in 1920 when the city acquired Chester Bowl, also known as Upper Chester. While not previously a public park, Chester Bowl was used by the Duluth Ski Club from 1906 to 1917 as a venue for ski jumping, a sport introduced by the community's many Scandinavian immigrants. This activity was abandoned for several years but revitalized after Chester Bowl was incorporated into Chester Park.

Big Chester and Little Chester, the park's largest jumps, were prominent symbols of Chester Bowl from the time they were erected in the 1920s until their demolition in 2014. By the last decades of the twentieth century, the park's alpine ski hill was attracting more activity than the jumps, maintaining the winter sports legacy. In other seasons, the park's trails, picnic areas, other amenities, and programs draw a steady stream of visitors.

As a significant park in a city with a noteworthy system of parks, Chester Park qualifies for the National Register under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Entertainment/Recreation with the period of significance beginning with the park's founding in 1889. While the park continues to be significant in these areas today, the period ends in 1975, conforming to the National Register's fifty-year cutoff.

Thom Storm Chalet

The individual significance of the chalet was evaluated under the four National Register criteria:

- A. Event: The chalet dates from a turning point in Chester Bowl's history but its significance is intertwined with other elements representing that era. The chalet is not individually significant under Criterion A.
- B. Person: The chalet was named in honor of Thom Storm upon his retirement as Chester Bowl's program manager in 2015. Storm worked at the park for forty years and lived in the chalet for seventeen years, raising his family there. During his long and productive

February 25, 1974," *Duluth Herald*, March 1, 1974; "Proposals Wanted," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 25, 1974; "Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council, September 9, 1974," *Duluth News Tribune*, September 13, 1974; Duluth Housing and Redevelopment Authority, "Invitation for Bids," *Duluth News Tribune*, December 8, 1972; "Emerson-Olds Will Move to Miller Trunk Location," *Duluth News Tribune*, October 31, 1972.

⁴⁰ "Official Proceedings, Duluth City Council, July 15, 1974," *Duluth News Tribune*, July 19, 1974; "Former Duluth Architect on Winning Team," *Duluth News Tribune*, January 20, 1975; Marie Langlois, "Groundbreaking Scheduled for Library-Cultural Center," *Biloxi Herald*, October 24, 1975.

tenure, he built on the programs of his predecessor, Walter Mattson, whose career at Chester Bowl also spanned forty years. Storm continues to live near Chester Bowl and be an active supporter of its programs. According to National Register guidelines for Criterion B, “Properties associated with living persons are usually not eligible for inclusion in the National Register. Sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both the person’s field of endeavor and his/her contribution to that field.” Storm is still alive, essentially eliminating the possibility of the chalet’s eligibility under Criterion B for its association with him. Even with the passage of time, it appears unlikely that this association would be significant enough to merit National Register designation under this criterion.⁴¹

- C. Design/Construction: The chalet’s architect, Art Kaple, does not appear to have made a significant contribution to the advancement of design. The building cannot claim to be the work of a master or to possess high artistic value. The Swiss chalet style is a traditional favorite for ski facilities and Kaple’s design does not represent distinctive characteristics of that type or the 1970s era. The method of construction is standard. The building does not qualify for designation under Criterion C.
- D. Informational Potential: It does not appear that the chalet could make important contributions to the understanding of human history and, hence, does not merit designation under Criterion D.

While the chalet does not appear to be individually eligible under any National Register criteria, it was built during the Chester Park historic district’s period of significance. This period begins in 1889, well before construction of the chalet. A fieldhouse opened at Chester Bowl in 1927, when ski jumping was the king of winter sports there. The chalet replaced the fieldhouse in 1973-1974 as alpine skiing was usurping jumping’s decades-long primacy. As such, the chalet, like improvements to the alpine hill, was part of a new chapter in Chester Bowl’s history, making it a contributing feature in the Chester Park historic district.

⁴¹ Storm interview; *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* ([Washington, D.C.]: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1990, rev. 1997), 16.

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