

## Parks and Recreation Division Report

September 2024

### PROGRAMMING

#### Fall 2024 Program Brochure

The Parks and Recreation Program Brochure for Fall 2024 has been released and can be found on our website: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/qhbba5wc/parks-brochure-fall-2024-for-web.pdf>. We are excited to bring a wide variety of programs across the park system for our community. This fall brochure contains program offerings for September-December.



#### Annual Senior Picnic

There was a great turnout for the Senior Picnic at Morgan Park Community Center on August 22. Eighty participants enjoyed a lunch together, raffle prizes, and games. Local Duluth band, Polkarobics, played a great concert for the group! Everyone also shared a special moment to celebrate Norrine, who will be turning 100 in October!



#### Superior Hiking Trail: The Duluth Edition

This hiking series traverses the entire Superior Hiking Trail that runs through Duluth in ten segments. The group meets at the end point of the hike, takes a shuttle to the start, and hikes back to their cars. This series has consistently had ten participants per hike so far, and everyone has had a great time. Two Recreation Instructors hike along with the group each segment, and they provide teachable moments along the hike.

## Fishing

The Gone Fishin' program has been successful in getting people between the ages of 2-72 out fishing in City parks that have fishable water. Groups have fished at Chambers Grove, Twin Ponds, and Munger Landing. Gone Fishin' has been offered twice a month since June. One group fished for over an hour in the rain!



We have also started a Tenkara fishing program. Tenkara is a specialized cane pole that uses fly line from a fly rod fishing set up. It is an effective, graceful, and simple way to fish our waterways, especially any of our 16 designated trout streams in the City of Duluth. This program was made possible through the Minnesota Recreation and Parks Foundation's New Initiative Grant.

## Adventure Book Club

Adventure Book Club is a partnership program with the Duluth Public Library. The first hour is a discussion on the book picked for the group to read for that month. Then for the second hour, Parks and Recreation leads a casual hike in the park where the book club is taking place. Folks that have been participating love getting together every month and meeting new people. August's book club was held at the Park Point Beach House. The group had sunny skies and an ore boat anchored off the beach, as well as Fox 21 News joining for the first part of the program!





## Athletics

It was a busy summer at Wade Stadium, Wade softball fields, and the Wheeler Athletic Complex from our baseball, softball, pickleball, horseshoes, and bocce ball users. Our 18 Parks and Recreation adult softball teams are wrapping up playoffs, while our open pickleball league recently ended with over 50 participants playing in one or both of our sessions. We also just completed our partnership with the Duluth Figure Skating Club for a nine-week Develop Skills to Skate program at Heritage Center for kids ages 5-10.



## Youth Programs

August concludes a busy summer for Parks and Recreation! Youth activities included Youth on Trails mountain biking sessions with Gary New Duluth Rec Center (Boys & Girls Club), Lincoln Park Boys & Girls Club, and Denfeld High School. Students from Denfeld also got to go canoeing in a Voyageur-style canoe, try archery, and go hiking with Parks and Recreation. Other activities included continued weeks of Day Camp, Friday Fun, partnerships with the Duluth Public Library on another Escape Enger Tower activity for teens, and more!



## Introducing Peter Ray – New Recreation Specialist

We are excited to introduce Peter Ray, who will be joining the Parks and Recreation team as a Recreation Specialist, focusing on the St. Louis River Estuary area. Peter spent the past four years at Hartley Nature Center as a nature preschool teacher and program coordinator, helping to run their summer camps and field trip programming. In his free time, Peter likes to be on a bike, look for birds, and spend time at his family’s cabin up north. If you see him, feel free to say hi and tell him about the coolest bird you recently saw!



## PERMITS AND OPERATIONS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.
Park & Building Rentals	65	65	73	80	111	221	191	226
Commercial Operator Permits	1	1	2	6	6	3	2	0
Busker Permits	0	0	9	3	5	3	3	1
Alcohol Consumption Permits	2	5	5	15	14	18	17	7
<b>Total</b>	68	71	89	104	136	245	213	234

## PROJECT UPDATES

### **Athletic Venues Reinvestment Initiative (AVRI) Action Plan**

The first set of community engagement opportunities were held Tuesday, August 27 – Thursday, August 29 for the AVRI Action Plan. There were three public open houses held with roughly 30-35 people attending each event. The open houses provided attendees with an opportunity to hear more about the planning process, ask questions, and share their input and priorities for reinvestment. There were also six different focus group meetings with various stakeholders to discuss opportunities for improvement, needs, and priorities.

### **Duluth Traverse Trailheads and Bike Playground**

In August, the bike playground/skills area survey was published in coordination with COGGS to gather information about preferred locations and features for a potential new bike playground. The survey yielded 704 responses. A summary of the responses will be provided in the near future on the Progress in the Parks webpage for the project: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-parks/duluth-traverse-trailheads-and-bike-playground-skills-area/>.

This fall, there will be a focus group with trail-related groups to discuss needs and priorities for a future grant application to support trailhead improvements. After the focus group, there will be a public open house to share information and gather feedback on proposed trailhead improvements. These community engagement opportunities will help to ensure that trailheads can better meet community and user needs. While our Parks team doesn’t host a public process for every grant application, the collaborative opportunities this application presents, coupled with efforts to honor past approved plans such as the Duluth Traverse Plan and Essential Spaces long-range plan, and recognize that more recent community preferences may vary slightly from past plans, have combined to create the opportunity and need to reengage with trail groups and users.



### **Hillside Sport Court Park Plan Implementation**

The first phase of the Hillside Sport Court Park Plan implementation, which includes capping utilities and removing the dilapidated building has been completed. Next steps include bringing the Outdoor Recreation Grant Program contract before City Council for approval to accept the funds, completing final design and construction documents this fall, bidding and awarding the project to a contractor over winter, with the goal of starting construction in Spring 2025.

### **Lakewalk Transportation and Resiliency Improvements**

Design of the Lakewalk improvements between the corner of the Lake and 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue East is continuing well. In August, staff held stakeholder meetings with the Friends of the Lakewalk to provide an overview of the project and discuss signage needs along the trail, and a meeting with Fitger’s to discuss the improvements near the business complex.

In early September, there were closures of the Lakewalk with detours posted to allow contractors to complete soil borings. These borings provide information on the soil structure and depth to bedrock, which is used in the design process to ensure retaining walls and other infrastructure will be supported properly.

### **Waabizheshikana Improvements and Extension**

Design is well underway for the improvements to the existing section of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail and the extension from the current terminus at Spring Street to Blackmer Park. The cultural, historical, and environmental reviews are in progress. Because of the historic significance of the St. Louis River and the riverfront area, eight sites along the project area were determined to be areas of potential interest. In August, staff contracted an archaeological survey with shovel testing and Tribal monitoring for the new disturbance areas. The archaeological survey consisted of a series of shovel tests at these eight areas where the surveyors dug soil from the site and screened the soil to search for any cultural artifacts or indicators. The results of the survey, as well as the previously completed reports of the cultural and historical literature reviews, are used in the state and federal project review process.

