

Parks and Recreation Division Report

March 2025

PROGRAMMING

Cold Front

Parks and Recreation was excited to host the 8th annual Cold Front event for our community on Saturday, February 1. With minimal snow leading up to the event, we were thrilled when it started snowing halfway through the day! Around 1,000 people joined us to celebrate the best of winter fun through ice skating, hay rides, snow play, and so much more. Park Maintenance once again brought the magic by building the sledding luge, snow play area, and maintaining the ice rink. Partner organizations helped elevate this experience by bringing hot chocolate, fat bikes, cross country skis, and other activities. Save the date for next year's Cold Front on Saturday, February 7, 2026!



Snow Volleyball

A new activity at Cold Front this year was Snow Volleyball. Two volleyball courts were set up in the middle of Bayfront Festival Park, and six teams competed in a round-robin tournament while the snow was falling!

Yeti Hunt

The Yeti Hunt was back again in 2025! Clues were shared hourly on Parks and Recreation's social media on February 8, giving hints to the location of the Yeti hidden somewhere in our park system. Around 50 people followed the clues to Lincoln Park to find the Yeti!



Bayfront Rink and Warming House

It was a short but beautiful season at Bayfront Warming House and Skating Rink. The Warming House was open daily for about two months this year, offering free skate rental, a fire for roasting marshmallows, and board games inside. Park Maintenance did an incredible job making the ice, and more importantly, maintaining the ice through the season. They also installed small patio lights around the rink, giving it a Northwoods vacation ambience all winter. Overall, 1,400 skaters used Bayfront Rink during Warming House open hours.



Develop Skills to Skate

It was a great year for Parks and Recreation's skating program at the Bayfront rink. The five-week program was held on Tuesday nights in January and February, and it was instructed by skaters from the Duluth Figure Skating Club. Two sessions were offered, and participants ranged from 5-14 years old.

Preschool Fun at Bayfront

Parks and Recreation hosted an event for Duluth Preschool families to socialize and have fun at Bayfront Family Center. Though the ice rink had already melted, kids and families roasted marshmallows, did art projects, rode riding toys, built with giant legos, enjoyed hot chocolate and snacks, and more! More than 120 people spent a sunny afternoon with us.



S'more Ski Grooming

We celebrated skiing and trail grooming during the February school break week with this annual partner event with the Duluth Cross-Country Ski Club at the Lester-Amity Chalet. This event welcomes the public to see the grooming equipment up close and ask questions of our Park Maintenance grooming staff. DXC led a social ski outing, and Parks and Recreation's team hosted s'mores, along with demos of our backcountry skis and snowshoes.



55+ Health and Wellness Programs

Parks and Recreation hosted two health and wellness partner programs this winter. "Fall Prevention" was a partnership with Fox Rehabilitation Services, and "Advance Care Planning" was a partnership with local Aspirus St. Lukes Hospice employees. Both programs were free and offered enrichment targeted for older adults.

Hawk Ridge Winter Walkers is a weekly hiking meetup hosted by Parks and Recreation. The program has been ongoing throughout January, February, and into March and promotes staying active in the depths of winter.

Backcountry Skiing

On February 13, Parks and Recreation hosted a backcountry ski at Lester Park Golf Course. Four participants registered, but only one braved the bitter cold that day for a two-hour ski. This is a new program offering this year, and it has great potential to get community members out exploring the amazing parks and trails throughout the city.

OPERATIONS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb
Park & Building Rentals	58	67
Commercial Operator Permits	1	1
Alcohol Consumption Permits	8	5
Total	67	73

Park Point Beach House Management and Operations

Over the past four years, use of the Park Point Beach House has grown with a significant increase in the number of rentals at the site. Due to the significant increase in management needs, we have determined that the most effective strategy for managing this space is to seek a third-party operator to manage events and event facilities at the Beach House. A Request for Proposals was issued in mid-January, seeking qualified organizations with experience in facilities operation and event management. The City is currently in the selection process. The selected operator will enter into an agreement with the City of Duluth, and will work closely with Parks and Recreation on managing events and reservations at the Beach House for the summer season, as well as provide year-round facility marketing, customer service, and coordination necessary to support and plan for the summer season.

Evergreen Senior Center Improvements

There have been recent new improvements completed at Evergreen Senior Center. The Center was painted, new floor trim was installed, and wobbly card tables were replaced with new aluminum tables. The sturdy new tables are very appreciated by the seniors and staff. All of the changes contribute to making Evergreen Senior Center a welcoming and comfortable space. Thank you to Property & Facilities Management and Janitorial Services for their help with these projects.



2025 ST. LOUIS RIVER SUMMIT

A number of staff across our department attended the 15th Annual St. Louis River Summit hosted by the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. The event is a great local conference that brings together more than 300 attendees from local, state, and national agencies and organizations to share the work that is happening along the St. Louis River.



This year, Duluth Parks and Recreation staff gave a presentation on new and ongoing efforts to increase access opportunities along the River, including continued trail development planned for Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail, and programming for community events, neighborhood gathering, guided and educational hikes, and more! It was a great opportunity to share how the City is actively working to address barriers to recreation on and along the St. Louis River.

Perch Lake Habitat Restoration & Landing Site Visit

Through the Summit, staff also partnered with representatives from the MN DNR and Minnesota Land Trust to provide a site visit at Perch Lake. Approximately 20 attendees heard about the habitat restoration efforts and the new opportunities for recreating at the restored and enhanced Perch Lake! The City completed designs for future Landing improvements in 2024, and staff are currently working to secure implementation funding. The DNR project work added a large box culvert and pedestrian bridge that will drastically increase water flow between the St. Louis River and Perch Lake to improve water quality and habitat connectivity and enable paddle craft safe passage in and out of Perch Lake. The dredged Perch Lake features new hemi-marsh that has more variety and will be a great location for paddling to observe a more diverse plant community and the birds that will call it home!



PROJECT UPDATES

Park Point Recreation Area Plan

A request for proposals was issued on January 22 to select a consultant for the Park, Recreation, and Coastal Preservation Plan for Park Point Recreation Area. The proposals will be reviewed by a team of city staff and the selected consultant will be contracted once approved through City Council. The planning process will include a variety of community engagements, identification of potential site plans and features that will be vetted through additional public and stakeholder reviews, and then development of a final recommended site plan and implementation plan. There will be presentations to appropriate City Commissions this year to share updates on the planning process and present final plan recommendations for approval by November 2025.

Norton Park Improvement Planning

A community meeting was held on Thursday, January 16 with more than 25 neighbors coming out to discuss Norton Park!



At the meeting, staff shared a recap of the building assessments that had been completed and discussed the key goals for the 2026 improvement project based on the previous 2016 planning process and feedback at the last community meeting. As a result of facility assessment studies, the building will be removed in 2025 to make way for park improvements.

The key goals of the improvement project will be to address deferred maintenance and reduce long-term maintenance needs, create a high-quality neighborhood park that folks want to visit, and ensure the park is inclusive, accessible, and family-friendly. The community's identified priorities were to replace the playground, replace the building with a new pavilion for gathering, and improve drainage to make the multi-use field more useable. The park layout will stay roughly the same, and improvements will include new pathways and supporting amenities.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Irving Park – Stormwater Basin

The City of Duluth's Department of Public Works & Utilities will be constructing a new stormwater bio-infiltration basin along the west side of Irving Park this year. The basin will collect and filter stormwater runoff through plants, rock, and soil to reduce pollution entering the adjacent Keene Creek. The project is funded with support from the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program administered by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

During construction this summer, the park will remain open, but users should expect heavy equipment, and there will be intermittent disruptions to the adjacent section of the Cross City Trail. The project will also include updates to the stormwater infrastructure below S 57th Ave W. Public Works will repave the road after these infrastructure improvements are completed.