

Parks and Recreation Division Report

December 2025

MINNESOTA RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Parks & Recreation staff attended the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association (MRPA) annual conference in October. The conference offered valuable opportunities to connect with colleagues and leaders from across the state, and to engage in sessions highlighting the latest innovative programs and projects.



PROGRAMMING

November Full Moon Hike

On November 5, 21 participants plus one dog met at the Pulaski Street parking lot for the Full “Beaver” Moon Hike along the Waabizheshikana in West Duluth. There was a mix of new and returning faces on this hike. Clear skies and friendly temperatures made for a great night to see the supermoon rise over the St. Louis River. Everyone had a great evening, and there are already folks signed up for next month’s Full Moon Hike along Hawk Ridge!

55+ Halloween Bingo

Halloween Bingo was held on October 30 at Evergreen Community Center. This is a popular party each year, and many attendees dressed up in costumes and enjoyed winning prizes.



55+ Craft Time

Craft Time is returning to Evergreen Community Center! In the past, there was a craft group meeting every Wednesday, but that group did not return after COVID. This fall, Parks & Recreation has offered two new crafting opportunities: “Paint a Pumpkin” and “Make a Snowman Ornament”. These crafts are hosted during Open Game Time, which is a weekly drop-in style program for folks ages 55+.

Youth Programs

November was a busy month at Washington Center Gym for youth programs, including a growing number of families attending Toddler Playtime, Homeschool Gym featuring hockey, soccer, and pickleball activities, and archery classes taking place weekly for both youth and adults to try and learn a new activity together.

Pickleball

This October, Parks & Recreation hosted our first Learn to Play Pickleball class, which consisted of four sessions and ten participants at the Washington Center gym. Drop-in pickleball sessions started in the middle of October as well, and these continue through the end of December. Pickleball is hosted four mornings each week with two playstyles offered.



Free Skating Holiday Parties

Boo Bash (Halloween-themed) and Gobbler Glide (Thanksgiving-themed) free skating parties at the Duluth Heritage Center were both well attended with more than 100 skaters at each event. Participants were able to skate for free, listen to festive music, and have a chance to win raffle prizes. Our final skating party of the year, Frosty’s Frozen Skate Party, will be held on December 17 from 6:30-8pm.



Family Movie Nights at Morgan Park

The start of November kicked off our Friday Night Movie Nights at Morgan Park Community Center. Each week we transform the space into our very own neighborhood movie theater – complete with a new family-friendly feature on the big screen and plenty of popcorn to make it feel like the real deal. Many families have been coming out each week to see what is showing. Look for the final showing on December 12!



OPERATIONS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Park & Building Rentals	58	67	93	73	102	198	150	218	126	103	50
Commercial Operator Permits	1	1	5	2	6	8	3	0	1	2	1
Alcohol Consumption Permits	8	5	0	8	12	16	21	16	6	3	3
Total	67	73	98	83	120	222	174	234	133	108	54

PROJECT UPDATES

Chester Bowl – Thom Storm Chalet Reconstruction

The Thom Storm Chalet reconstruction project is continuing through the design and project review process. Due to the federal funding involved in the reconstruction, a National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 Section 106 review of the project is required. A historical evaluation of the Chalet and its role in Chester Park found that while the Chalet is not individually eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), it is a contributing feature in the history of Chester Park, and Chester Park is potentially eligible for listing on the NRHP. The demolition and replacement of the Chalet is considered an adverse effect on Chester Park. This will require mitigation to resolve the adverse effect, which will be described in a Memorandum of Agreement that the City will need to enter with the MN State Historic Preservation Office and other consulting parties. The City and Chester Bowl Improvement Club look forward to identifying appropriate mitigation and continuing towards the proposed Chalet reconstruction.

Norton Park

In March 2025, the City of Duluth applied to the Outdoor Recreation grant program to support park improvements, and the project was selected for funding! The project is moving through the review process and staff anticipate entering into a grant agreement for Norton Park improvements in early 2026. Concurrently, staff are working with the consultants at SAS+ Associates to begin developing the designs for the park. Improvements will include replacement of the playground, an accessible sidewalk, regrading the multi-use field, a new picnic pavilion, an accessible portable restroom enclosure, stormwater improvements, and new site amenities. The project is on schedule for construction in 2026.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Knotweed Treatment

Japanese knotweed is a highly invasive plant that grows rapidly, often taking over disturbed areas and streambanks. It tolerates a wide range of conditions and has an extensive root system, which makes it hard to remove and control. It often takes several years of repeated treatment to address an infestation. In September, the City hired contractors to treat 41 knotweed sites. This is our fourth year in a row treating these sites and it is working well. Each year, a few new infestations are identified and added to the treatment list.

Magney-Snively Designated Natural Area – Management Plan Update

An advisory committee is working towards updating the management plan to reflect current opportunities and challenges at Magney-Snively. Information collection is mostly complete, and the advisory committee has reviewed the 50% draft. The final version of the plan is expected to be completed in early spring 2026.

Tischer Creek Tributary Hartley Park Grant Application

Several partners including the City, Hartley Nature Center, the MN Department of Natural Resources and the South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District developed and submitted a grant application to Conservation Partners Legacy to remove invasive crack willow from along Tischer Creek in Hartley and remove woody debris from the stream channel to improve flow, stream stability and habitat. The funding decision from CPL is expected by the end of the year.

PARK MAINTENANCE DIVISION UPDATES

The second row of sand dune fencing was installed in October to help re-establish the diminishing dune between the Aerial Lift Bridge and the 12th Street Beach.



Resurfacing and striping project at the Wheeler Athletic Complex was completed in October! The new coating preserves the long-term life of tennis, pickleball, and basketball courts. The Lincoln Park sport court will be completely resurfaced this spring. Cooler temperatures limited the completion this fall.



A picnic table, bench, and grill were installed at Birchwood Park this fall to complement the existing swing set and public orchard.

