

Parks and Recreation Division Report

March 2026

PROGRAMMING

55+ Programs

On January 21, Evergreen Senior Center hosted a craft time during the weekly Open Game Time. Participants could drop in to make their own custom buttons (see photo to the right).

Gentle Yoga began winter sessions at Portman Community Center on Tuesday evenings and Lafayette Community Center on Wednesday evenings. Twenty-four people are enrolled in this program across the two locations. Most are routine participants who attend every week year-round!

Four people attended the Seniors Get Savvy program at Evergreen Senior Center in January. This is a drop-in program that provides free basic technology help to seniors. In January, staff helped attendees with questions such as, "How do I change my background photo?" and "How do I join a Zoom meeting?"

Evergreen Senior Center had a fun Valentine's week. There was a Valentine suncatcher craft, which six people dropped in to create. Seniors also made valentine gifts for the City Center West Police and Fire Departments. Staff and senior delivered a card and goodies and got to visit with police officers. Several Fire Department staff visited the senior center and even brought Jack the K9 arson detection dog.



Youth Programs

2026 has started off cold, and that means indoor activities are busy! Programs like Archery and Music Together continue to be popular, and Toddler Playtime at Washington Center seems to be hitting its stride; we've averaged around 40 people per day in January and February. That means 15-30 families are enjoying play time, socializing, and kids getting energy out in the gym during cold Wednesday mornings!

The Yeti Hunt was back again this year, with more than 20 families sending in pictures of their search!

Cold Front

Cold Front 2026 took place on Saturday, February 7 at Bayfront Park. With more snow than the past two years combined, we were excited to share more winter outdoor recreation opportunities with the community. Attendees enjoyed the return of youth dog sled rides, cross country skiing, and giant ski races among our regular offerings of a large snow play area, sledding luge, and more! Our creative and skilled Park Maintenance team help us every year to prepare the event space, build the ice skating rink, sledding luge, and snow play mounds. This year they helped us bring to life a new, popular activity: Ice Hockey Mini Golf! They built three mini golf holes that were ice instead of turf, and we used hockey pucks and sticks instead of golf balls and putters. More than 1,500 people joined us at Cold Front this year throughout the day, and we look forward to next year: Saturday, February 6, 2027!



Sled Dogs



Snow Volleyball



Sledding Luge



Giant Ski



Glow Front Skating



Ice Hockey Mini Golf

Backcountry Skiing

During the months of January and February, we offered a weekly backcountry skiing session up and around Enger Park Golf Course. Backcountry skiing is done on shorter and wider skis compared to traditional cross-country skis. These skis also have a universal boot binding that fits any style and size of winter boot. The beauty of backcountry skiing is that it allows you to ski in any direction you want without the need for groomed ski trails. Participation varied for this weekly program, but those that joined all had a good experience exploring the terrain of Enger Park Golf Course.

Snowbound Sundays

Starting in January, we kicked off three Snowbound Sundays at Morgan Park. We packed up our recreation gear and headed out into the snow so everyone could jump right into the action. Families had the chance to try snowshoes, kick sleds, and even backcountry cross country skis. Whether it was their first time, or they were seasoned snow adventurers, there was fun for everyone! Each session brought something new, featuring a different cozy indoor craft to warm up between outdoor adventures. Outside, the snow play toys were in full swing, along with a fire for s'mores. With nearly 40 people stopping by on the first session, Morgan Park was buzzing with snowy exploration and winter fun!



Bayfront Warming House and Ice Skating Rink

While the skating season at Bayfront Family Center was shorter than we would have liked due to heavy snowfall and warm temperatures, it was still a great season overall. Many community members took advantage of the ice rink and open warming house, enjoying free skate rentals, great music, and the chance to warm up by the fire. In total, we had 21 open days of skating, with more than 800 people passing through during warming house open hours.

A huge thank you to our Park Maintenance team for keeping the rink in great shape with regular flooding, as well as to our Facilities team for updating the overhead lighting that helped ensure safe nighttime skating this winter!



OPERATIONS

| PERMIT TYPE | January | February |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Park & Building Rentals | 54 | 67 |
| Commercial Operator Permits | 1 | 1 |
| Alcohol Consumption Permits | 6 | 1 |
| Total | 61 | 69 |

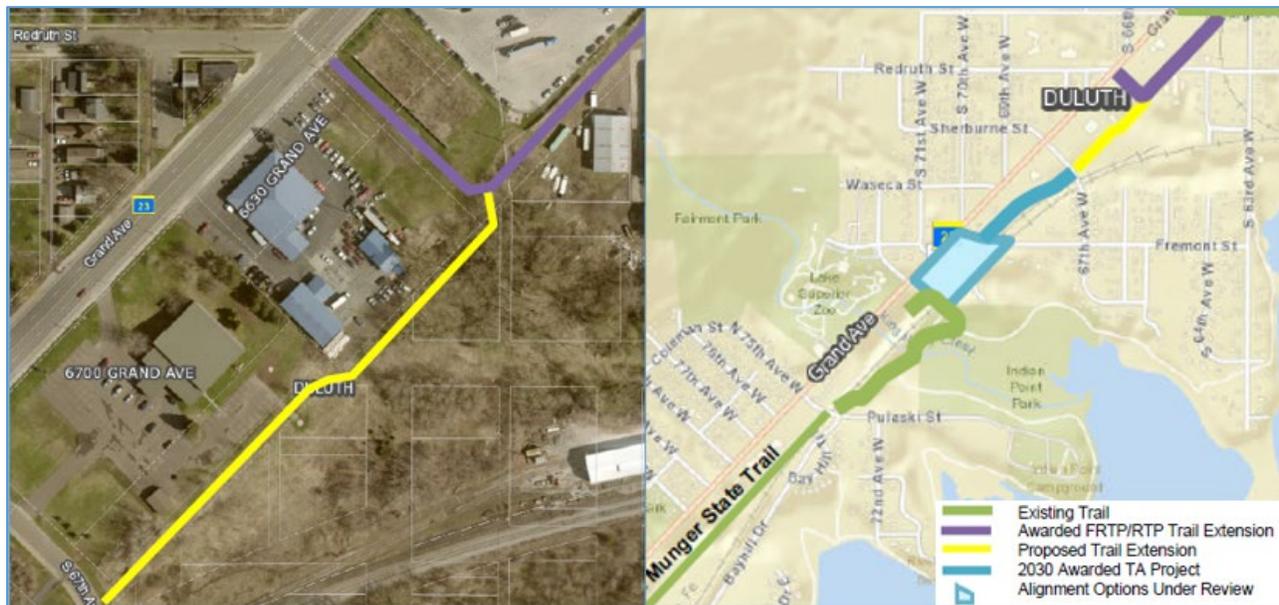
PROJECT UPDATES

Chester Bowl – Thom Storm Chalet Reconstruction

The Thom Storm Chalet reconstruction project is out for bid! A pre-bid meeting was held at the Chalet on Wednesday, March 4, with a great turnout and much excitement for the project. Bids are due on March 23, after which a contractor will be selected, and a construction contract will be brought before City Council for approval. The anticipated project start date is April 15, and the anticipated completion date is December 1, 2026. Many thanks are due to staff at LHB Inc., Chester Bowl Improvement Club, and across multiple City divisions for their close collaboration, responsiveness, and commitment to getting this project out in time for the 2026 construction season.

Cross City Trail – Continued Development

The vision for continued development of the Cross City Trail is to construct extensions that will connect to the Willard Munger State Trail. This will create a connected multi-use trail system between western Duluth and the Lakewalk! The City of Duluth is submitting applications for funding through the Federal Recreational Trail Program and the Regional Trail Program this spring to support the next phase of trail construction between approximately Redruth Street and South 67th Avenue West. The project would include construction of a culvert extension for the 67th Avenue Creek and construction of around 0.2 mile of paved trail. Awards will be announced this summer and, if awarded, construction could take place between 2027-2028. The City of Duluth has also been awarded 2030 funding from the Federal Highway Administration through the Transportation Alternatives Program to support continued development of the Cross City Trail. It is exciting to see tangible progress towards completing the vision for the Cross City Trail!



Park Point Recreation Area Plan

The draft Park Point Recreation Area Plan is ready for public review! LHB will present the draft plan at this month's Parks & Recreation Commission meeting. A public comment period will then be open from Thursday, March 11 through Friday, March 27. The draft plan and public comment form will be posted on the project webpage, and a hard copy will be available for viewing at the Parks & Recreation office during regular office hours. After the public comment period closes, staff will review the comments received, incorporate changes where appropriate, and prepare the final Park Point Recreation Area Plan for consideration at a future Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, before bringing it to City Council for final approval.

Hillside Sport Court Park Plan Implementation

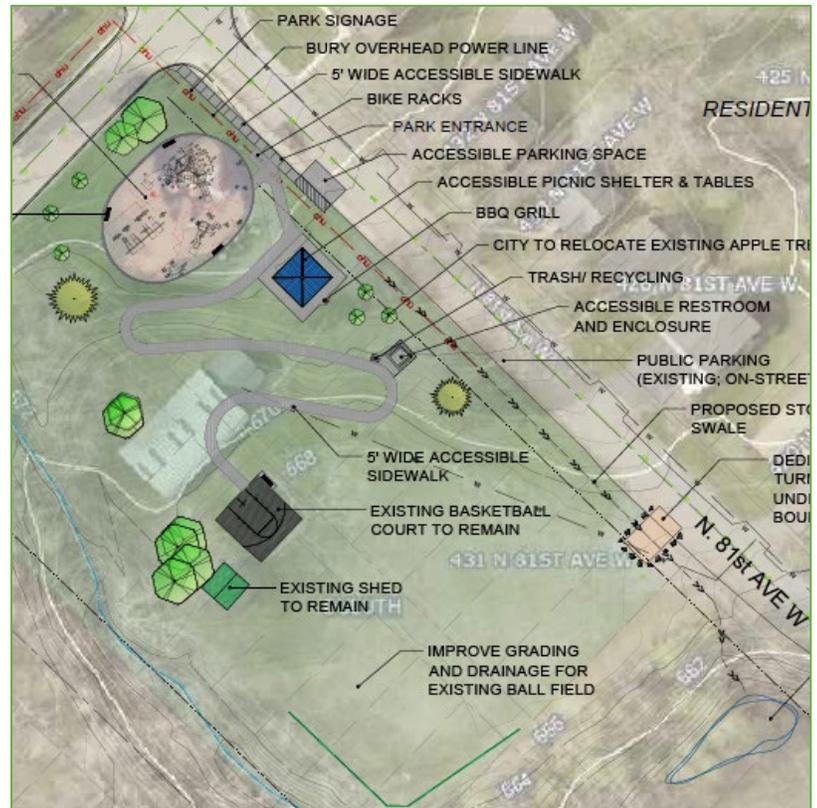
The Hillside Sport Court Park project is out for bid! A virtual pre-bid meeting was held on February 26. Bids are due on March 12, after which a contractor will be selected, and a construction contract will be brought before City Council for approval. The anticipated project start date is June 1, and the anticipated completion date is October 1, 2026.

Park improvements include enhancing site connectivity and accessibility, replacing the former community building with a pavilion and picnic area, renewing the sport court, replacing the playground, maintaining open green space, allotting space for a community garden, and repairing or replacing other park assets such as fencing, bike racks, signage, gates, trees, and vegetation. This project will transform the park into a modern, community-oriented space that will better serve the Central Hillside neighborhood and beyond.

Norton Park

A community meeting was held on January 28 to review how previous community feedback has shaped the planned park improvements for Norton Park. Around 20 neighbors joined the conversation and shared their thoughts on the project. The priorities for this project are to create a high-quality neighborhood park that is inclusive and family friendly. Top concerns discussed at previous meetings were to replace the playground that is at the end of its useful, address stormwater and drainage problems in the multi-use field to improve useability, and install a pavilion to create a space for community gathering in replacement of removed community building.

Next steps for the project will include entering the agreement with the MN Department of Natural Resources for the \$350,000 Outdoor Recreation grant supporting the project, continue developing construction documents, vacating the alley right-of-way through the park, and bidding the project. The project is on track for construction in 2026.



PARK MAINTENANCE DIVISION UPDATES

Park Maintenance crews have been busy with a variety of winter maintenance tasks, including grooming cross-country ski trails and Chester Bowl to support winter recreation. Crews have also been pruning boulevard trees, working on snow removal, and clearing many downed trees and branches after recent winter storms.

SPRING GOLF MEETING

The Spring Golf Meeting at Enger Park Golf Course is tentatively planned for Wednesday, April 22 at 4:00pm in the Enger Clubhouse. Notices will be sent to the existing golfer contact list and golf leagues with final details.