



Legislation Text

File #: 23-0799R, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING APPLICATION TO THE CONSERVATION PARTNERS LEGACY METRO PROGRAM TO SUPPORT ACQUISITION OF 72.5 ACRES FROM THE FOREST HILL CEMETERY FOR RECREATION AND PRESERVATION.

CITY PROPOSAL:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the proper City officials are hereby authorized to apply for up to \$500,000 from the Conservation Partners Legacy Metro grant program to support acquisition of 72.5 acres from the Forest Hill Cemetery for recreation and preservation.

FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Duluth has the legal authority to accept these funds and the financial, technical, and managerial capacity to ensure proper planning and maintenance of the project. The City will meet the required 10% match with funding from a previously awarded grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lake Superior Coastal Program Grant.

FURTHER RESOLVED, the Duluth City Council names the fiscal agent for this project as Jen Carlson, City of Duluth Finance Director, 411 West 1st Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This resolution authorizes application to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for up to \$500,000 from the Conservation Partners Legacy Metro (CPL Metro) grant program to support acquisition of 72.5 acres of undeveloped open space north of the Forest Hill Cemetery in the Woodland neighborhood to be managed for outdoor recreation and long-term preservation consistent with the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use map for this area, and Comprehensive Plan Guiding Principle #2: Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places. The Comprehensive Plan designates these lands as "OS - Open Space" to provide for parks, recreation, or natural resource preservation.

The City intends to meet the 10%, \$50,000, match requirement with federal funds from a previously awarded grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Lake Superior Coastal Program Grant. If that grant is not funded, the City will fund the match through the Parks Fund.

The Duluth Cemetery Association Board of Directors responsible for the Forest Hill Cemetery property is a willing seller, though final property boundaries and a final sale price have yet to be agreed upon.

The property is home to ecological resources of exceptional value and sensitivity. The acreage includes mature northern hardwood forest, few invasive plants, steep slopes, extensive wetlands, and a tributary of an important trout stream, Tischer Creek. The property is part of a contiguous 450-acre area of undeveloped open space that provides critical habitat for a variety of species.

Acquisition of the property will permit completion of the Duluth Traverse multi-use trail system and support the Superior Hiking Trail Association's desire to relocate their existing trail through this area from a roadway to the forest. The property is currently crisscrossed by numerous popular social trails some of which are eroding sediment into the adjoining creek and wetlands. Following acquisition, the City will work with residents to determine how to consolidate and/or reconstruct social trails in a manner that will support continued access to green space and reduce erosion.

The boundaries of the 72.5-acre Duluth Cemetery Association property that the City seeks to acquire were

drawn to intentionally omit two undeveloped portions of Duluth Cemetery Association land (see attached Exhibit A):

1. 16 acres to the south that the Cemetery Association wishes to retain for cemetery purposes.
2. 7 acres to the west that the Future Land Use Map designates as Traditional Neighborhood that may be suitable for future development.

The 72.5-acre cemetery property adjoins 292 acres of tax forfeit open space that the City is in the process of acquiring from St. Louis County as well as a 54-acre property owned by the Park Hill Cemetery Association. Once the two transactions are complete, the City intends to ask Council to designate all of the newly acquired property as permanently protected parkland.