

## Parks and Recreation Division Report

April 2026

### PROGRAMMING

#### Adult Volleyball League

The winter session of Parks & Recreation's Adult Volleyball League finished on March 15. Twelve teams competed in the seven week regular season, held on Sunday nights at the Washington Center Gym, followed by a one-week playoff. The winning teams in each divisional bracket were Recovery Crew (below, left) and The Hail Marys (below, right)!



#### Full Moon Hike

On March 3, 23 adventurous community members joined Parks & Recreation at Quarry Park for a beautiful evening hike. With 18 inches of snow on the ground, the group donned snowshoes and trekking poles and set off on an hour-long loop around the entire park. Hike leaders Sam and Zach shared the history of Quarry Park, showed off the active ice farming done by Duluth Climbers Coalition, and discussed how the composition of the basalt found in the quarry is very similar to rocks found on the moon! The group was also able to watch the moon rise over Lake Superior.



## Bird Feeder Build

March kicked off our Bird Feeder Build program at Morgan Park, where participants used their creativity and craftsmanship to assemble wooden bird feeders from kits. After building, they painted their bird feeders to make each one unique. The experience continued with a guided bird walk along Waabizheshikana, where the group searched for local feathered friends and practiced bird identification skills. Everyone left with their handcrafted feeder, a supply of bird seed, and the knowledge to welcome and recognize new visitors to their very own bird feeder.



## 55+ St. Patrick's Day Bingo

The Evergreen Senior Center hosted a festive St. Patrick's Day Bingo celebration in March. Attendees enjoyed themed refreshments and socialized over several rounds of bingo.



## Day Trip: Chanhassen Dinner Theater

A full coach bus of seniors traveled to the Chanhassen Dinner Theater for a matinee performance of *Guys & Dolls*. The bus trip included the famous stop at Tobies in Hinckley for fresh cinnamon rolls. The trip was a welcomed excursion to enjoy the performing arts and camaraderie.

## Youth Programs in March

- Toddler Playtime at Washington Center Gym continues to be popular as a free way for families with young children to play indoors during the winter months.
- Youth Archery Club at Washington Center Gym allowed youth to learn and practice their archery skills over the course of four weeks.
- Jazz/Ballet Dance partnership program with 218 Dance Project concluded sessions at Morgan Park and Portman Community Centers.
- Music Together's winter session ended, and the spring session began with five classes running again each Monday at Portman Community Center.
- Homeschool Gym at Washington Center Gym continues to provide an indoor play option during the week for homeschooling families.

## Sunrise Equinox Hike

Our annual Sunrise Equinox Hike took place along the Lakewalk on March 20. Many attendees brought warm beverages to sip while enjoying a beautiful sunrise over Lake Superior. The group walked from Canal Park to Leif Erikson Park and back, conversing, soaking in the sun, and celebrating the first official day of Spring.



## OPERATIONS

PERMIT TYPE	January	February	March
Park, Building, & Gym Rentals	54	67	86
Commercial Operator Permits	1	1	2
Alcohol Consumption Permits	6	1	2
<b>Total</b>	61	69	90

## **PROJECT UPDATES**

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

In March, Parks & Recreation staff provided an Athletic Venues Reinvestment Initiative (AVRI) update to Duluth City Council's Committee of the Whole. The presentation included an overview of the "half-and-half" funding source, projects completed to date, community engagement efforts and key takeaways, findings from a conditions analysis and market study, and a recommended approach for moving the initiative forward. Currently, the recommended approach includes a focus on fixing existing infrastructure at key athletic facilities to address deferred maintenance, public safety, and accessibility. Sites identified in the presentation included Wade Stadium, Wheeler Athletic Complex, Lake Park Athletic Complex (Jean Duluth), Arlington Athletic Complex, Enger Golf Course, and a hockey facility to be determined. Additionally, a call for support from community groups, non-profit organizations, and the business community was made to help expand the scope of projects beyond available AVRI funds. Staff will reconnect with key user groups and community partners to review the recommended approach and identify opportunities and preferences for potential community contributions.

### **Chester Bowl – Thom Storm Chalet Reconstruction**

The construction contract for the Thom Storm Chalet reconstruction project is heading to City Council for approval on March 13! There were five responsive bids. Project mobilization is expected to begin in late April, with project completion anticipated by December 2026. During the project, City and Chester Bowl Improvement Club staff will also work on developing an interpretive display to be installed inside the chalet that will share the history of Chester Bowl. The interpretive display is a mitigation measure for replacement of the chalet within Chester Park, which is eligible for listing as a historic property on the National Register of Historic Places.



### **Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve – Accessible Trail Improvements**

In 2022, the Hawk Ridge Nature Reserve Mini-Master Plan was adopted by the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory and Duluth City Council. The plan provides a long-term vision for addressing three primary challenges at Hawk Ridge: 1) Limited accessible facilities and trails for education programs and outdoor recreation; 2) Visitor safety and conflicts with vehicle traffic; and 3) Limited space and resources for high-quality conservation-based education programming.

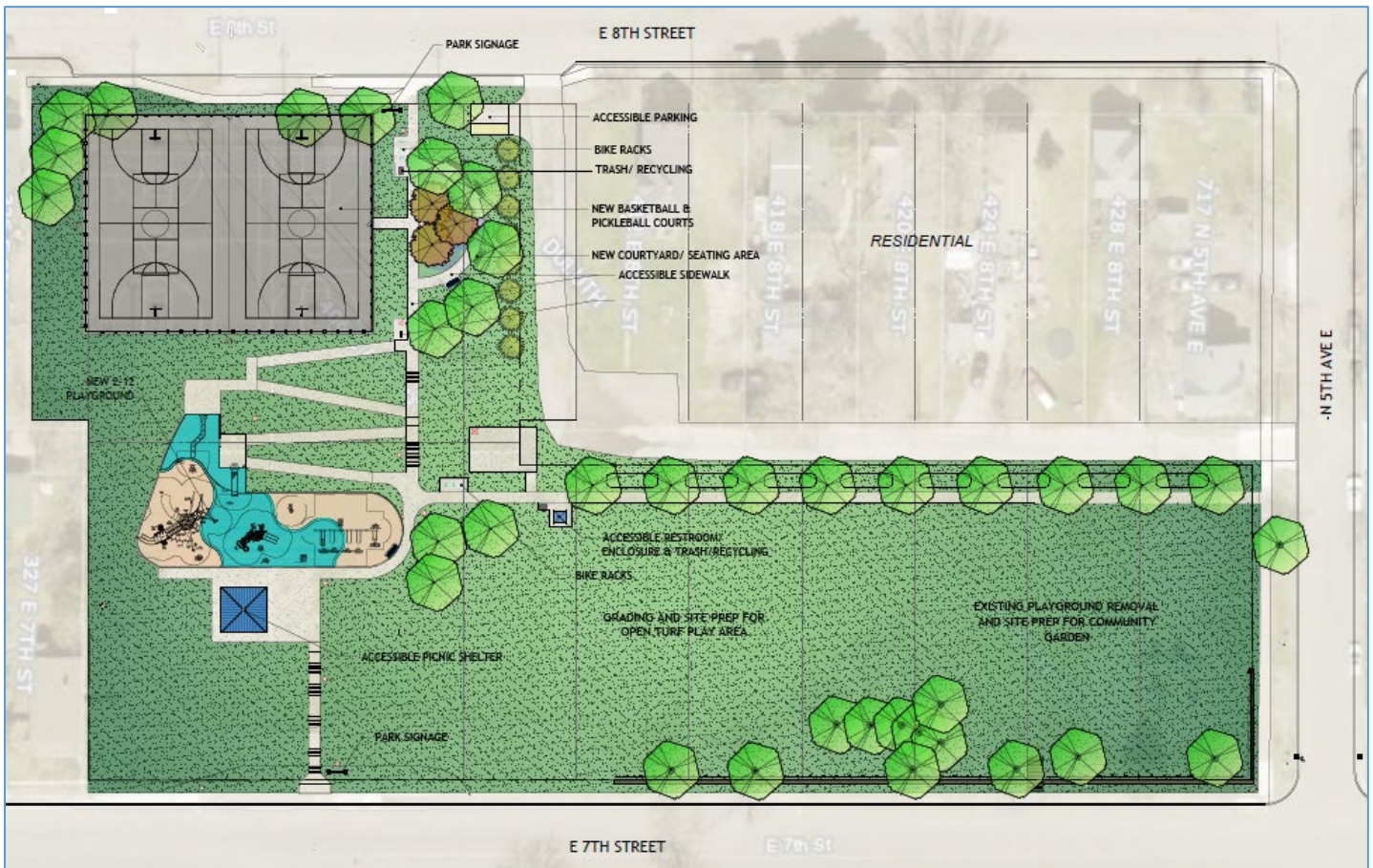
New accessible connections are an important aspect of the proposed plan, and in 2025 the City of Duluth was awarded a grant of \$155,000 from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources to support the first phase of accessible trail construction at Hawk Ridge.

This project focuses on improving equitable access to outdoor recreation and conservation-based education for individuals of all abilities through the construction of a universally accessible trail loop and improved access to the bird migration viewing platform. The loop will be established through a combination of newly constructed trail, segments of new boardwalk to protect and preserve wetlands, and upgrades to existing trail to meet the firm and stable surface requirements for an accessible trail. Additionally, approximately 1.25 acres of invasive species removal will be completed along the accessible trail corridor to promote native habitat and protect ecological integrity.

The trail project is out for bid! Bids are due on April 14, after which a contractor will be selected, and a construction contract will be brought before City Council for approval. The project is anticipated to take six weeks to complete.

## Hillside Sport Court Park Plan Implementation

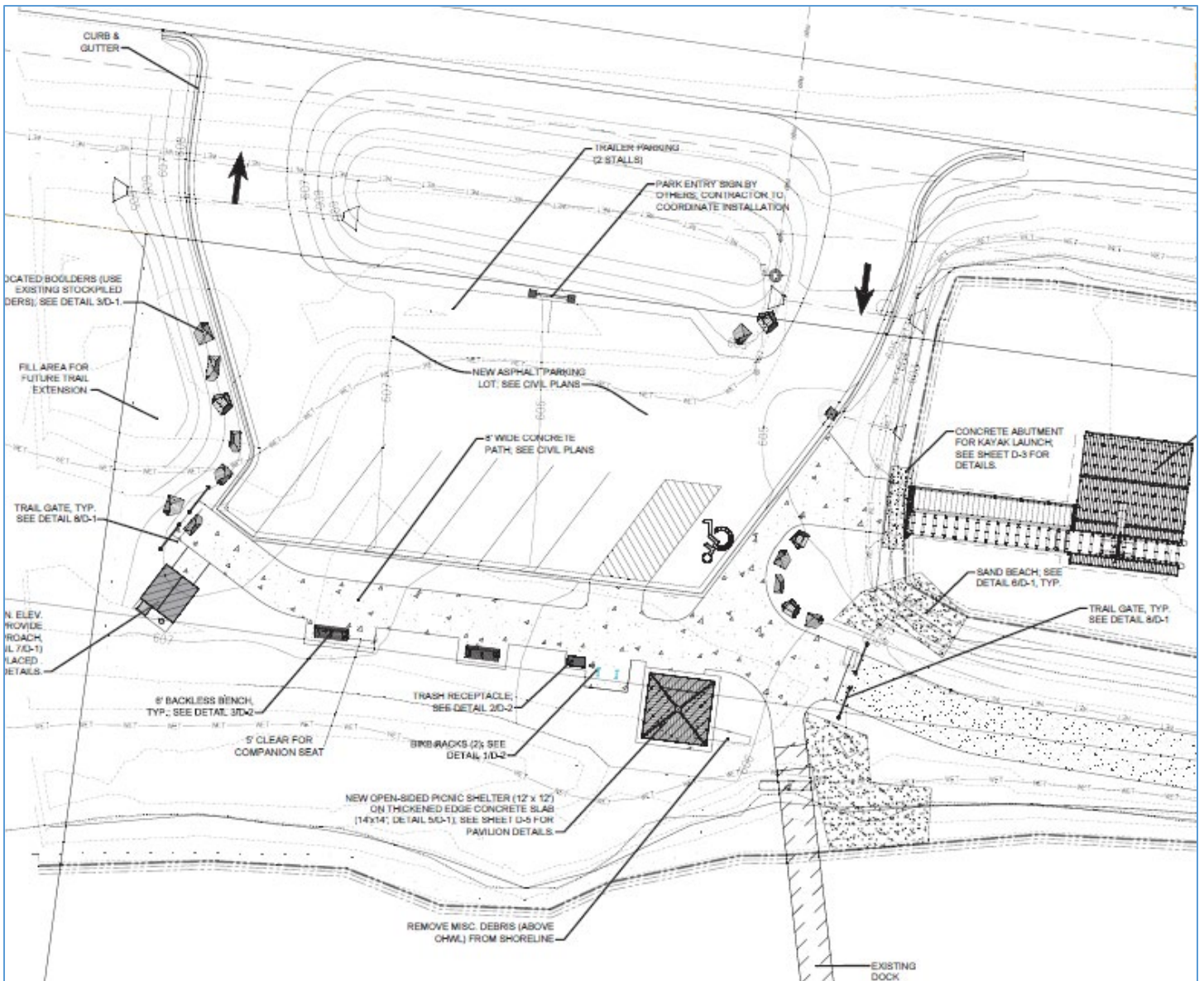
The construction contract for the Hillside Sport Court Park project is heading to City Council for approval! There were six responsive bids. In advance of the larger park improvement project, the City's Public Works and Utilities team will be repairing and replacing sanitary lines within the park. This will include significant earthwork and is expected to take place during the months of April and May, with the park improvement project to follow in June. All of the work in the park is anticipated to be completed in October 2026. This project will transform Hillside Sport Court Park into a modern, community-oriented space for all to enjoy!



## Perch Lake Landing

Perch Lake Landing is located at 12100 Highway 23 near the Fond du Lac neighborhood. Site improvements will be starting in late April and are anticipated to be completed this summer! Tree removals have been completed in preparation for construction. Site improvements are intended to create a more accessible trailhead and paddle launch so that the community and visitors are better able to enjoy the restored area.

The project is funded through a \$150,000 cooperative agreement award from the MN DNR and St. Louis River Corridor half and half tax funds. The scope of the project is illustrated in the image below and includes reconstruction of the parking lot to create a one-way traffic pattern with a dedicated entrance and exit driveway, new signage and site amenities, new accessible sidewalk connections between the parking lot and existing fishing dock, a new picnic shelter, and installation of a new accessible paddle launch and dock in the protected waterbody between the embankment that contains Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail and Highway 23. These improvements will complement previous work completed by the MN DNR and Minnesota Land Trust to enhance habitat in the area. (See site plan on next page.)



**SPRING GOLF MEETING**

The Spring Golf Meeting at Enger Park Golf Course is tentatively planned for April at the Enger Clubhouse. Notices will be sent to the existing golfer contact list and golf leagues with final details.