Planning & Economic Development Division
218-730-5580 | planning@duluthmn.gov
Room 160 | 411 West First Street | Duluth, Minnesota 55802
www.duluthmn.gov

Memo

To: Duluth Economic Development Authority, Natural Resources Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Planning Commission
From: Jenn Moses, Manager of Planning and Community Development
Date: March 2, 2026

Subject: Lester Park Golf Course Land Use Study – March 2026 Update

February was a busy month with the Lester Park Golf Course Land Use Study. City staff, working with the consultant team at Bolton & Menk, launched a survey as a way for people to provide input on the future vision for the site; so far, the survey has received over 1,100 responses.

Among the identified existing conditions of the site are:

- With the fertilizer and pesticide use of the former golf course, contamination is likely, including mercury contamination.
- Looking at historic hydrology and soils, it is likely that a large east-west swath of wetlands existed through the middle of the site prior to the golf course use.
- The "Lake 9" includes more forested areas than the remainder of the site.
- While high-value ecosystems exist nearby at Moose Mountain and along Lake Superior, the golf course site does not contain ecosystems of significant value. The site is part of broad designations for habitat for certain species such as Canada Lynx and Blanding's Turtles; however, these designations extend across Northeast Minnesota and do not indicate actual presence of these species within the site.
- Currently, the area shows signs of invasive species. Any areas to be preserved will need restoration to remove and prevent invasives, remove contamination, restore hydrology, and create habitat.
- Duluth lies within an important migratory flyway; as with other areas in Duluth, any development will need to be designed to ensure no impacts on bird species, and could include mitigation such as bird safe glass and dark sky lighting.
- Current recreation on the site includes cross-country skiing, hiking, and dog exercise.

Existing conditions will continue to be researched and documented. On March 2, City staff and the consultant team held a public open house and multiple focus groups with various stakeholders, such as large employers, outdoor recreation groups, and natural resource perspectives. The open house had approximately 200 attendees.

During the remainder of March, we anticipate:

- The survey will close on March 8, after which all responses will be summarized and shared on the web site.
- Information and materials from the March 2 open house will be available on the web site at lpgcstudy.com.
- The project team will use information gathered to date to work towards a vision for the site that balances development, outdoor recreation, and natural resources.

Note that the next public meeting is planned for early May.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 218-730-5328 or jmoses@duluthmn.gov.