



Staff Report for PLUMA-2605-0002

Application Information:

Application Type: UDC Map Amendment- Rezone

Piedmont Trail System Parcels from RR-1 to P-1

Location of Subject: Numerous, see attached map

Legal Description: N/A

Applicant: City of Duluth

Applicant Contact: Jenn Moses

Agent: N/A

Agent Contact: N/A

Staff Contact: Reina Owecke, rowecke@duluthmn.gov

Deadline for Action:

Application Date: N/A

Date Extension Letter Mailed: N/A

60 Days: N/A

120 Days: N/A

Site Visit Date: June 30, 2026

Sign Notice Date: June 30, 2026

Neighbor Letter Date: June 24, 2026

Number of Letters Sent: 99 letters

Proposal:

The City proposes rezoning the Piedmont Trail System Parcels to Parks and Open Space District.

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the rezoning amendment to City Council.

Zoning and Land Use:

	Current Zoning	Existing Land Use	Future Land Use Map Designation
Subject	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space
North	R-1	Residential	Traditional & Low-Density Neighborhood
South	RR-1	Open Space	Open Space
East	R-1	Residential	Traditional Neighborhood
West	N/A	N/A	N/A

Summary of Code Requirements:

UDC Sec. 50-37.3.C: The Planning Commission shall review the application, and Council shall approve the application or approve it with modifications, if it determines that the application: 1. Is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan; 2. Is reasonably related to the overall needs of the community, to existing land use, or to a plan for future land use; 3. Is required by public necessity, convenience, or general welfare, or good zoning practice; 4. Will not create material adverse impacts on nearby properties, or if material adverse impacts may be created they will be mitigated to the extent reasonably possible.

Comprehensive Plan Governing Principle and/or Policies and Current History (if applicable):

Governing Principle #2 – Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped spaces – the proposed rezoning protects these undeveloped parcels from future residential development and ensures their continued use for public recreation.

Governing Principle #6 – Reinforce the place-specific – the proposed rezoning to P-1 reinforces the existing recreational use of the parcels by aligning zoning with the character and identity of the area.

Future Land Use:

- Open Space – High natural resource of scenic value, with substantial restrictions and development limitations. Primarily public lands but limited private use is anticipated subject to use and design controls. Examples include: city parks and recreation areas, primary viewsheds, shorelands of the lake and streams, wetlands and floodplains, and high-value habitat.

History: In 2023, the City acquired over 2,000 acres of tax-forfeit lands from St. Louis County. Many of these newly acquired parcels were already being used for recreation purposes, such as many tracts within the Piedmont area. Now under City ownership, this acreage will be preserved for recreation, as park land. Furthermore, an Ordinance was passed on December 8, 2025, advancing the City's long-term commitment – established through the Strategic Public Lands Realignment Project – to secure protective designations on at least 1,500 acres of newly acquired public lands, including the parcels in Piedmont. As noted in the Ordinance, "a minimum of 1,500 acres of the City's real property...be dedicated as park property, re-zoned as P-1, or included in the Duluth Natural Areas Program".

Review and Discussion Items:

Staff finds:

1. The subject parcels incorporate a total of 516.9 acres. The area is currently zoned RR-1 (Residential Rural) with a Future Land Use designation of Open Space.
2. The City proposes rezoning the subject parcels to P-1 (Park and Open Space District). This is consistent with the Future Land Use designation of Open Space.
3. Permitted uses in the in the P-1 district include both passive (walking and biking paths. etc.) and active (playgrounds, tennis courts, etc.) recreational uses.
4. By direction of the Ordinance passed by City Council on December 8, 2025 (25-032-O), the proposed rezoning of the Piedmont trail system parcels from RR-1 to P-1 directly connects to the ongoing effort of the Strategic Lands Realignment Project to secure protective designations on at least 1,500 acres of public land. The Piedmont rezoning represents one of the earlier implementation steps toward fulfilling these protective-status obligations, demonstrating how individual rezonings contribute to the broader strategy to further secure undeveloped public spaces across Duluth.
5. Even though the Piedmont trail system parcels have been managed for recreational purposes for many years, a UDC Map Amendment (rezoning) is required to fulfill the intent of the Strategic Lands Realignment Project, and to align the established use with its future land use designation.
6. This proposal is consistent with the comprehensive plan (Imagine Duluth 2035) and implements several governing principles including declaring the necessity and securing the future of undeveloped spaces and reinforcing the place-specific. The parcels are identified in this long-range planning document as part of Duluth's connected trail and open-space network, reinforcing the appropriateness of the P-1 designation.

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7. Adjacent land uses consist of additional public open space and low-density residential neighborhoods. The Piedmont trail network is already well integrated into this landscape, and the P-1 district supports land uses that are inherently compatible with nearby residential areas while reinforcing the area's established recreation-focused character.
 8. Adverse material impacts are not anticipated. This rezoning confirms the existing recreational use and preserves its function and intent.
 9. No public, City or agency comments have been received.

Staff Recommendation:

Based on the above findings, Staff recommends that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the rezoning amendment to City Council for the following reasons:

1. This proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
2. This proposal is related to existing land uses.
3. The proposal is good zoning practice.
4. Material adverse impacts on nearby properties are not anticipated.