

# Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission

## Designation Application

### General Section

Designation Application #: 16-037D      Date Submitted: 04/29/2016

Park or Trail Name: Hartley Park

District #: 1      Map Coordinates (Latitude and Longitude): Latitude: 46.8414 Longitude: -92.0833

#### Location Description:

Hartley Park, 3001 Woodland Avenue, Duluth, MN 55803, is a 640 acre urban park located in the Woodland/Kenwood neighborhoods of Duluth. The Park is 4 miles north of downtown Duluth.

Lead Applicant Organization: City of Duluth

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Joint Applicant #1 Organization:

Joint Applicant #2 Organization:

Joint Applicant #3 Organization:

Joint Applicant #4 Organization:

#### Describe other project supporters:

Hartley Nature Center Cyclists of the Gitchee Gumees Shores Duluth Cross Country Ski Club Izaak Walton League Minnesota Land Trust

### Description Section

Regional Significance Statement: Hartley Park boasts diverse terrain, including sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, a northern hardwood forest of sugar maple and red oak, a large wet meadow and willow swamp complex, three types of lowland forest, a pine forest, and the remains of a working farm of historical significance. The Park offers comprehensive recreational activities for the novice to the expert: all in combination with state-of-the-art interpretive opportunities unavailable elsewhere and just four miles from Lake Superior.

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Total proposed acreage: 640

#### Overview/Description of Park or Trail:

Hartley Park's terrain includes sweeping vistas of Lake Superior, a northern hardwood forest of sugar maple and red oak, a large wet meadow and willow swamp complex, three types of lowland forest, and a pine forest. Amenities include: \* Hartley Nature Center provides quality educational enrichment to 15,000 children and over 5,500 visitors annually through field trips, summer camps and nature-based preschool programs. The Center has interpretive exhibits, equipment rental, and a natural play area; conducts ecological data collection and habitat restoration; and is available for rental and serves over 600 visitors annually; \* An extensive 11-mile trail system used by avid hikers, mountain bikers and skiers. The regionally significant Superior Hiking Trail and Duluth Traverse mountain biking trail wind through Hartley; \* Expansive undeveloped areas are utilized for programming for all ages, and by bow-hunters, birders and those seeking solitude. Tourism research indicates that many people are unable to experience a wilderness experience because these areas are often in remote locations. Hartley provides this experience within an urban setting as well as within three hours of the Twin Cities metropolitan area; \* A pond and designated trout stream provides educational programming about aquatic life, as well as by water access for paddlers and anglers; \* The Park is a laboratory, classroom and regional showcase that engages volunteers, citizen scientists, college students and recreational users to learn about, create and advocate for ecological restoration and preservation. \* The remains of Allandale Farm are found in the Park: remnants of the farm's root cellar, stairs and well, as well as bluestone curbs, gutters, culverts and road surface on Old Hartley Road. The Farm dates to the late 1800's and includes many items of historical interest; \* Other remains include Bluestone Quarry, which provided local building material, and a Soap Box Derby Track from the 1960's. Support services: \* Nearby restaurants, hotels, and attractions like Canal Park and Downtown Duluth provide a range of family friendly services. \* Trailheads and parking provide access, ADA accessible trails and restroom facilities, running water and way-finding. \* Duluth has a number of top tier websites that connect visitors with attractions, lodging, dining, activities, sporting events, and maps. \* The Superior Hiking Trail connects Hartley to the Bagley Nature Center, part of the University of Minnesota Duluth campus. \* Hartley is in close proximity the two colleges and one university.

#### What is the Acquisition and Development Status?

- New Park or Trail (no land acquired or developed)
- Existing Park or Trail
  - Land Acquisition
    - Status: 19 acres remain to be acquired
    - Percentage of Land Acquired: 98%
  - Development Status
    - No Development
    - Some Development, but more Proposed
      - New Facilities Proposed

- Existing Facilities to be Upgraded
- Fully Development

Facility Listing Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park	
Existing Facility List	Proposed Facility List
Picnicking and picnic shelters, Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking Trails (paved), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Canoeing Facilities, Fishing Piers, Visitor Center, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play areas, Outdoor Amphitheater, Climbing (natural/man-made), Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas, The Nature Playscape is an emerging concept in outdoor play.	Picnicking and picnic shelters, Walking Trails (paved), Hiking Trails (natural), Biking trails (paved), Mountain Biking Trails (natural), Cross-country Skiing Trails, Canoeing Facilities, Fishing Piers, Visitor Center, Nature Center/Interpretation Trails, Play Areas, with an outdoor theme, Climbing (natural/man-made), Restrooms/sanitation building, Roads and Parking Areas

Master Plan Status Section

Master Plan Status: Master Plan meeting requirements of strategic plan is available

Describe Other Supportive Information:

Hartley Park is beloved by residents of Duluth and visitors alike. Additions and upgrades are underway to existing facilities/trails that will complement the outdoor recreation experience as well as steward valuable natural resources. Hartley's Master Plan establishes a framework for implementing improvements and managing resources within Hartley Park over the next 5-10 years. The goals are to:

- \* Expand programming opportunities to inspire lifelong connections with nature through education, play, and exploration. The Playscape concept connects families to the natural world through unstructured free play in a beautiful, creative, outdoor environment;
- \* Preserve and enhance the distinctive character of Hartley Park as a regionally and locally unique place;
- \* Enhance recreational activities and amenities that are nature-based;
- \* Restore natural ecological processes within the Park's diverse landscapes;
- \* Expand access to, and enjoyment of, the Park for diversified users.

\* Access: Improvements to Hartley Park trails and parking is underway to improve accessibility for those in wheelchairs, families with strollers, or others needing wide, firm-surface trails. Upgrades will address ADA requirements and sensitivity to material selection for surfaces and trail design will mitigate impacts on the Park's wild, natural aesthetics to create an accessible experience that can promote a broader spectrum of use for residents, Nature Center program participants and visitors. Hartley's location on the top of the hill makes it the most likely park for additional ADA accessible trails because it does not have the steep grades common in other hillside parks. An accessible trail is planned to encircle the beloved Rock Knob. Standardized wayfinding throughout the park will facilitate access and navigation as well as direct users to connecting amenities.

- \* Vegetation Management: The farming operation fundamentally changed both the vegetation and soils through compaction and disturbance and exotic species have a firm foothold in the Park. Restoration of native species, management of forests, and removal of exotics is underway and is essential to the extensive environmental education programming and integral to

place-appropriate recreational use. Legacy funding in 2014 began the control of the buckthorn infestation, but much still needs to be done, including follow up on treated/replanted areas. \* Water Resource Management: A mile of Tischer Creek coldwater trout habitat above and below the old farm dam that forms Hartley Pond will be restored in a manner that preserves and increases the historical, recreational, ecological, educational and aesthetic value of Hartley Pond and the Creek. Nineteen acres adjoining the Park will be acquired from Duluth Public Schools and restored to protect a coldwater tributary that cools Tischer Creek as it exits the park. The Tributary needs to be restored to its original course before the parking lot can be restored. The existing diverted channel runs along the entry road and parking area saturating the base and weakening the pavement.

### Classification Details Section

Classification: Natural Resource Based Regional Park

Criteria #1 Provides a High-Quality Outdoor Recreation Experience: \* Relevant facilities/amenities: Hartley Nature Center is a green building with solar electrical generation, public restrooms, library, classrooms, picnic tables, year-round equipment rentals for all ages, and an exhibit hall. The campus includes a yurt, amphitheater, a Natural Playscape and a timber-frame pavilion. Interpretive signs explain features or projects including invasive species removal, wildlife habitat, ecological processes, and cultural and natural history. \* Expands outdoor recreation to new or extended populations: Family programming, the Nature Playscape, and accessible upgrades meet the needs of an emerging market: families traveling with children who seek outdoor experiences. Several now degraded trails will soon meet universal design, increasing trail use, and offering new opportunities to access additional areas such as the Wet Meadow. \* Regional and national tourism destination: Duluth serves 3.5 million visitors annually. Hartley Nature Center is utilized by regional schools including: Cloquet, Hermantown, Esko, Duluth, Superior, Proctor and Carlton. Programs served over 11,000 Pre-K through 6th graders and over 5,500 other visitors last year. Hartley's skiing, biking and running trails are used extensively for local and regional races that are part of the tourism economy. \* Provides a quality of experience: Amenities meet the diverse outdoor recreation needs of all abilities. Universally designed, multiple use trails for hiking, biking, and running offer immersion. Visitors can choose solitude while others take part in group programming or watch a forest management action in progress. Whatever an individual's outdoor experience need, the opportunity is there. \* Emphasizes innovation, uniqueness and new ways of engaging residents and tourists in outdoor activities: Duluth and the Nature Center monitor emerging trends and respond. The Playscape and the addition of mountain bike trails connecting to the Duluth Traverse are examples. Bouldering is growing in popularity as are weddings for locals and visitors.

Criteria #2 Preserves a Regionally-Significant and Diverse Natural or Historic Landscape: \* Provides a compelling sense of place and uniqueness: Hartley's woodlands, creeks, ponds, meadows and rocky overlooks providing stunning views of Lake Superior are unique within the City. The MNDNR Natural & Cultural Heritage Information System identifies Hartley as a site of biodiversity with a significance ranking. The Park's plant communities are among the best remnants of natural vegetation and the diversity of community types are significant. The hardwood forest of sugar maple and red oak is one of the largest remaining in Duluth. The wet meadow and willow swamp complex is the largest in Duluth. Five vernal pools provide the critical breeding area for eight species of amphibians. These breeding

pools have disappeared from much of Duluth. \* Water access and historically/culturally-significant features: Some remains of Allandale Farm are found in the Park: remnants of the farm's root cellar, stairs and well, as well as bluestone curbs, gutters, culverts and road surface on Old Hartley Road, built in 1913. The Farm dates to the late 1800's and was a significant resource for the Duluth by providing produce and employment. The site provides many opportunities for education the life of Guilford Hartley, one of the leading industrialists of his day. The Pond has an earthen berm and is the third iteration of a dam dating back to the farm. Access to the pond is via canoe and a pier. Canoes are available for rent by the Nature Center. \* Impacts to the land resource: Upgrades and new development takes care of what we have. Duluth is committed to protecting its natural resource base to promote quality of life and economic development. Duluth is restoring as much of Hartley to pre-settlement conditions as possible: removing exotic species, replanting with natives restoring inadequate trails, and protecting water resources.

Criteria #3 Well-located and Connected to Serve Regional Population and/or Tourist Destination: \* Located by a well-established tourist destination: There are nearby facilities for every interest including museums and historical sites, arts and nightlife, shopping, parks and trails, sporting events, as well as the outfitters to connect visitors with their ideal amenity. Duluth provides a comprehensive range of facilities for visitors to access Lake Superior and the St. Louis River and its estuary. Additional family focused visitor destinations include the Great Lakes Aquarium, the North Shore Scenic and Lake Superior Mississippi Railroads, Lake Superior Zoo and special seasonal events like Bentleyville Tour of Lights. Of all these family-based activities, Hartley is the only destination that allows opportunities for either private or group immersion into a nature-based setting, a unique opportunity so close to an urban setting. \* Connected via local, regional, or state-level trails: Hartley trails connect to the Duluth Traverse and Superior Hiking Trail, part of the national long-distance North Country Trail. These trails connect other trail systems to Hartley from Lester-Amity Park, Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, Enger Park, Piedmont Recreation Area, Brewer Park, Spirit Mountain Recreation Area and the F.R. Paine Forest Preserve and Jay Cooke State Park. The paved multiuse trail accessible at Lester Park is part of the planned National Bicycle Route 41 that will travel from Texas to Canada. It extends across the city, connecting to the Munger State Trail.

Criteria #4 Fills a Gap in Recreational Opportunity within the Region: \* Need for regional recreational opportunities not otherwise available: Travelers with children show different preferences in selecting recreational activities within a nature context. Activities that offer educational value seem more attractive to those families traveling with children. Hartley Nature Center provides enrichment programming for Early Childhood through grade 6, interpretive displays, and live animal exhibits. The Nature Playscape, unique to Duluth, caters to kids and families and introduces them to the natural world through unstructured free play in outdoor environments. Immersion into a nature-based setting is critical for the young to develop empathy for, and interest in, the natural world. \* Fills a critical gap in an area with a recreation opportunity shortage: Hartley provides a comprehensive mix of recreational nature-based activities for all ages and abilities as well as programs that educate and entertain, all within four miles of Canal Park attractions and within three miles of the Twin Cities. These assets draw families looking for activities they can do and enjoy together. Constraints to outdoor recreation, like lack of time, may have a stronger impact on visitors because of the travel commitments necessary to reach

undeveloped natural areas. Travel distance was found to be a significant predictor of family recreation motivation. Family recreation is a form of purposive leisure: traveling a shorter distance for the purpose of recreating with the family is preferable to traveling a long distance.

Attachment List Section (only lists up to 10 documents)

<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
regional_map	Figure 1
acquisition_plan_overview_uploads	Figure 27
acquisition_plan_overview_uploads	Figure 28
feature_uploader_231	Figure 29
feature_uploader_269	Figure 34
feature_uploader_270	Figures 35 & 36
feature_uploader_271	Figure 37
feature_uploader_272	Figure 38
feature_uploader_273	Figure 39
site_characteristic_images	Figure 2