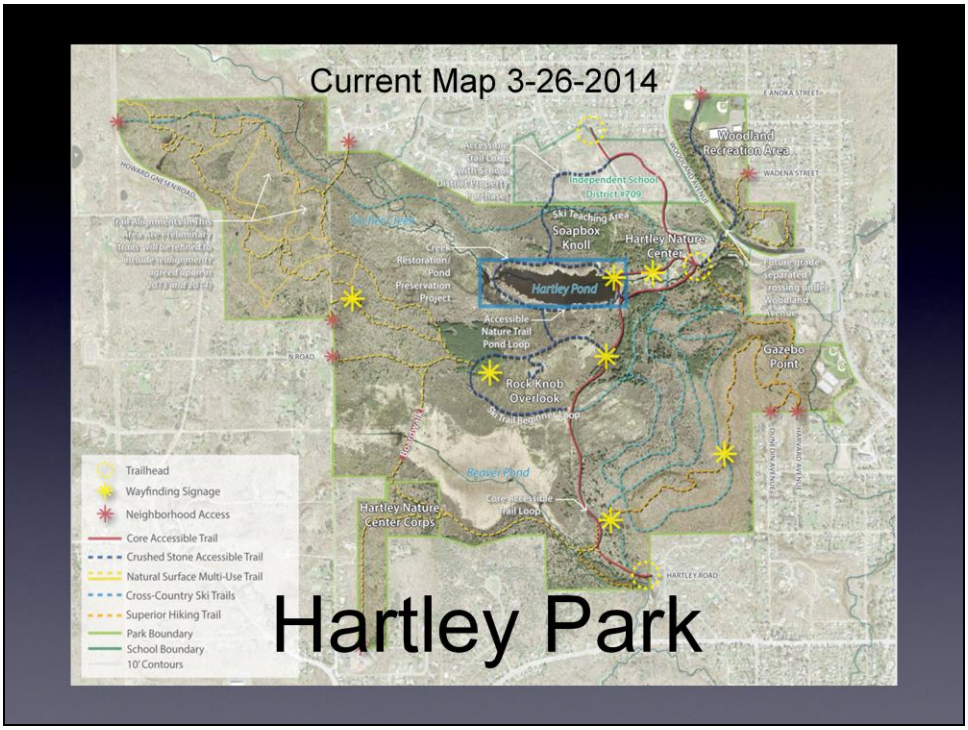
Hartley Park

Mini Master Plan 2013-2014



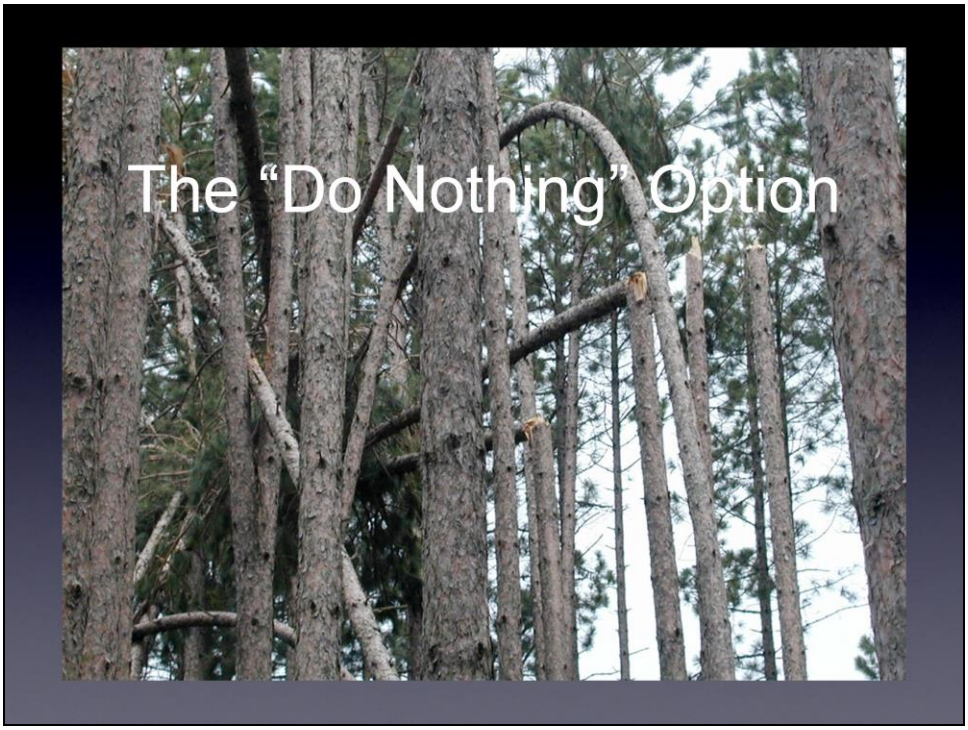
Since last fall, the City of Duluth Parks Division has been working closely with the public on future improvements for Hartley Park. After much consideration of the input received from residents and user groups, the City modified its process to accommodate additional time for public comment on several key points which are presented below.

The Duluth Parks Commission met on May 14. During the meeting, staff presented information related to a handful of key components of the Plan and asked for Commission input. Residents and members of the public still have an opportunity to comment online until May 28 regarding these areas:

- management of the Pine Plantation
- parking accommodations and options for entry points into the park
- route for the Duluth Traverse Trail
- surface material options for the Old Hartley Rd
- Hartley Pond
- changes and improvements to cross country ski trails

Pine Plantation: 11-acre wooded stand (group or growth of tall trees) near the center of the park

Situation: The pines in this area were planted about 7 feet from each other and had never been thinned. The result is small crowns, dying and dead standing trees, and, the potential for disease or insect damage to come into the stand. There is no regeneration of young pine, and it is really NOT ecologically desirable from a wildlife or plant diversity angle. The Hartley stand is also severely invaded by glossy buckthorn, which takes advantage of the lack of competition from native trees and shrubs which do not do well in such intense shade. Park users have an affinity for the 'cathedral-like' appearance of the Hartley stand, so efforts to ensure its sustainability for generations to come should be of paramount importance.

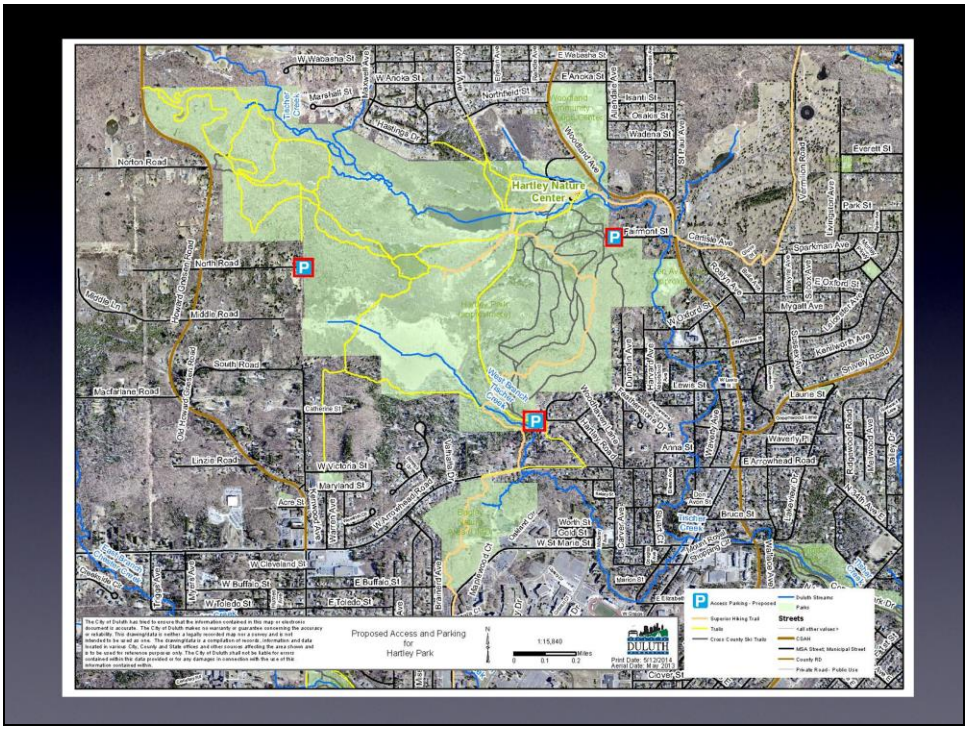


<u>Option 1:</u> The ‘Do Nothing’ Option

Although doing nothing is an option, change will continue as trees weaken, fall over, break off or die. Trees will become weaker and the ‘cathedral’ will be replaced with a mix of dead trees and overgrown brush. Doing nothing is probably not the best option.

Option 2: 'Thinning'

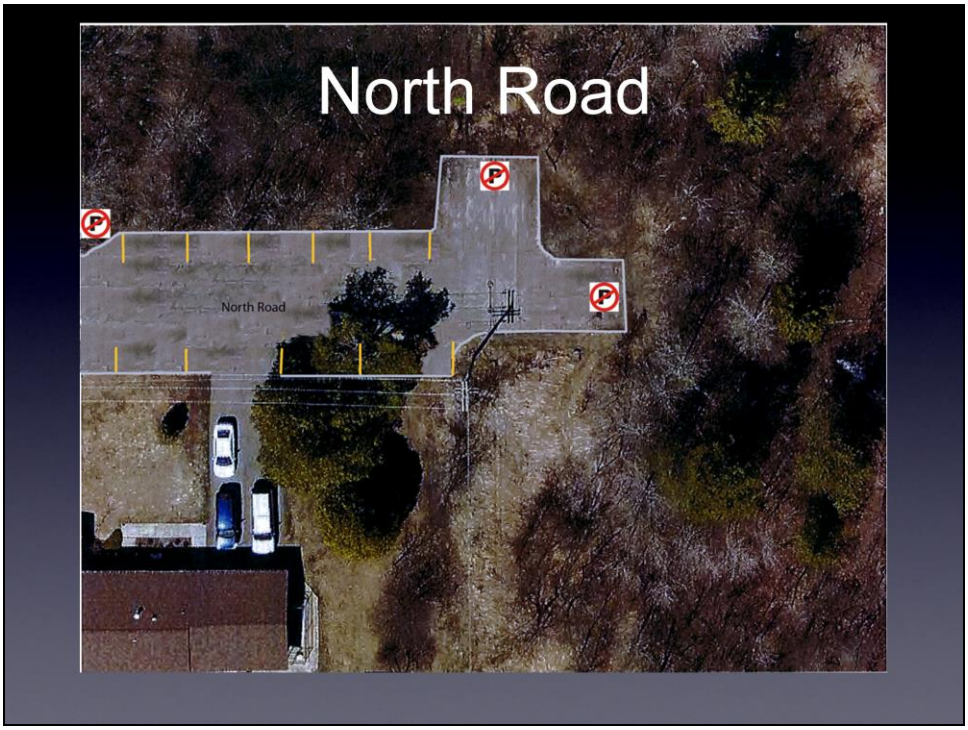
Thinning is a form of ecological restoration that results in a healthier stand. Light is able to penetrate the canopy and there is regeneration of young pine underneath. Many classes of trees benefit from thinning of a tree stand.



Parking: Feedback indicated problems at parking locations around the park. Three parking areas have been proposed at these access points to the park: Hartley Road/Woodhaven Lane, North Road, and Fairmont Road.

Hartley Road/Woodhaven Lane

In this area, the road is not wide enough for legal parking on the street and there is inadequate space to ensure the safety of individuals exiting or entering their vehicles. The initial plan proposed a parking lot, but this was met with concern from neighbors about safety, illegal dumping and so forth. The new proposal (pictured above) widens the road to allow for legal parallel parking, pavement with curb and gutter to protect neighboring property and diverts run-off away from Tischer Creek. Additionally, the turn-around at the end of the street would increase maneuverability for both park visitors and emergency/service vehicles. Care would be taken to ensure the trees on the south side of the road would remain.

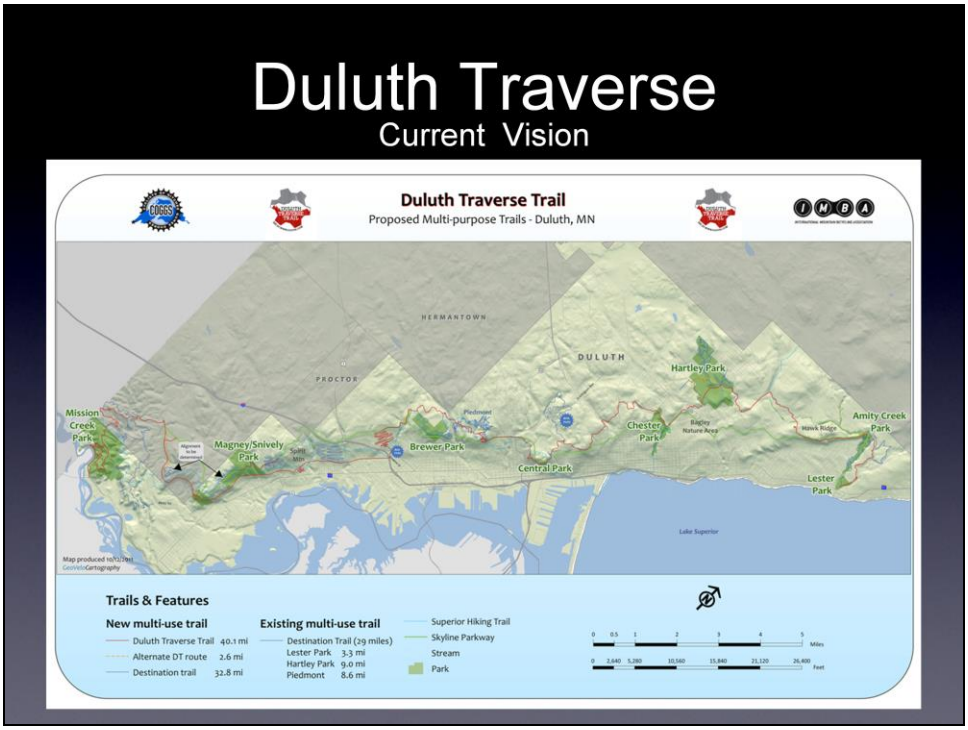


North Road access to Hartley Park

The western side of Hartley Park is where most of the shared use trails are located and cars with bikes often head to this entrance of the park. North Road is not wide enough for legal parking on the street and emergency/service vehicles cannot get to the homeowner who lives on the end of the road. These vehicles are also not able to turn around if cars are parked at the end of the street. The new proposal (pictured above) would widen the road into the right-of-way and allow for parallel parking for 8-10 vehicles. Curb and gutter would mitigate run-off into the nearby wetland and keep cars from parking on private property. Parking would only be allowed in the marked spaces. Care would be taken to ensure the trees are retained.

Fairmont Road entrance to Hartley Park

Previously a key entry point to the ski trail system at Hartley, this entrance has been ignored and fallen into disrepair over time. There is sizable wetland at the top of the street and during heavy rain events, water runs down the street causing severe erosion. The proposal (pictured above) would make improvements to this area by adding pavement and installing curb and gutter. This would make the area able to withstand vehicle traffic and also provide a space that accommodates overflow parking during events at the Nature Center. Landscaping and the creation of bioswales and other catchment systems would restore the landscape in this sensitive wetland. Additionally, emergency/service vehicles would have a sustainable turnaround. Increased use of this entrance would also enhance safety and promote stewardship of the area. Care would be taken to ensure the trees are retained.



Duluth Traverse: The City of Duluth has been supportive of the vision of the Duluth Traverse.

The Traverse is to be a 100-mile trail system spanning the length of the city from Chambers Grove to Lester Park. It will connect neighborhoods and trail systems with a purpose-build, shared use, 18-inch natural surface trail that can be used by hikers, runners, dog walkers, back-country skiers and mountain bikers.

Various options for the Duluth Traverse (DT) as it travels from east to west in Duluth and connects into the trail system at Hartley Park have been examined.

Duluth Traverse

Using Old Hartley Road AND New Route West

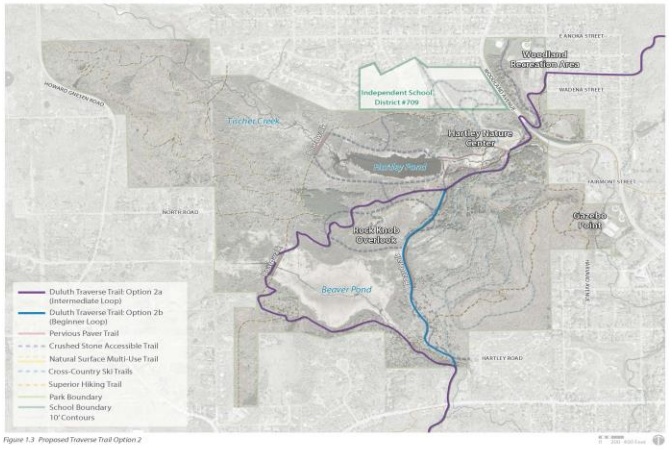
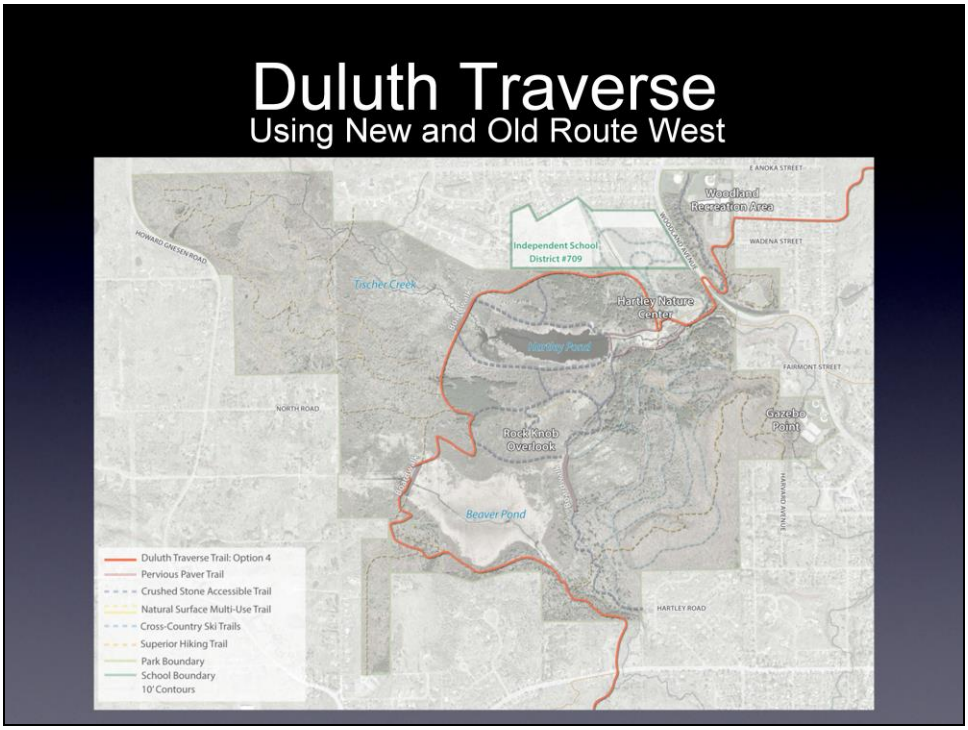


Figure 1.3 Proposed Traverse Trail Option 2

Hartley Park and Woodland Recreation Area Mini Master Plan DRAFT 05/14/2014 SRF Consulting Group Inc.

<u>Duluth Traverse – Using Old Hartley Road and a new western route – deemed "best option"</u>

In this proposal, Old Hartley Road would serve as what is known as a "white" or extremely easy option for absolute beginners. Trails within the park – PURPLE line on map – would be "intermediate-ranked" and more interesting for all users. This trail would enter in the same location in the park to the northwest and utilize a new, sustainably built trail to the Pines. This trail would replace the unsustainable trail currently running from the Pond to the Pines with a shared-use trail to be used by all. From the Pines, the Traverse would continue on current trails around the Beaver Pond to the exit on Arrowhead Road. This option provides a two-part solution and is the option agreed to by all partners including Hartley Nature Center, the McCabe Chapter of the Izaak Walton League and COGGS.

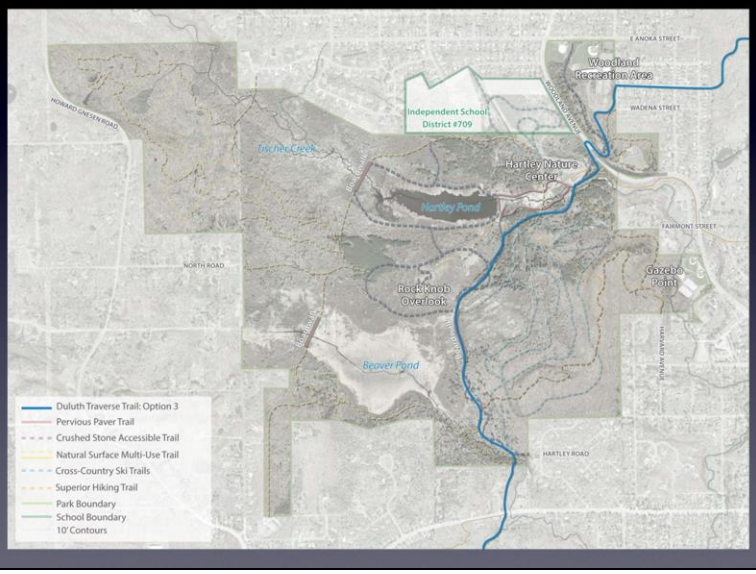


<u>Duluth Traverse – North and West Option</u>

In this option, the Traverse enters the park on the NW corner of the park. A new trail would be constructed from the northwest, around the pond to join the new proposed route around the pond. The Traverse would cross Tischer Creek and associated wetlands on the same proposed boardwalk. At the junction of the Pine Plantation, the Traverse would continue along existing shared-use trail to the exit near Arrowhead Road.
A trail around Hartley Pond would need to be done in conjunction with the DNR and others.

Duluth Traverse

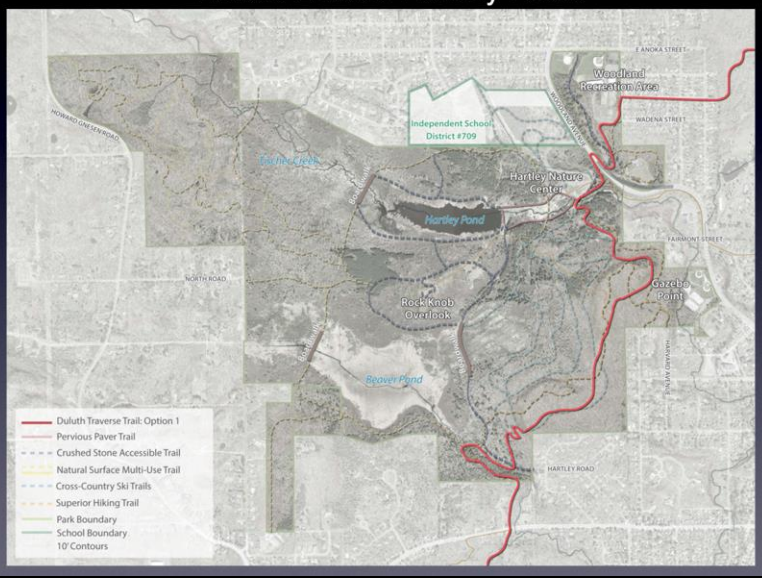
Using Old Hartley Road



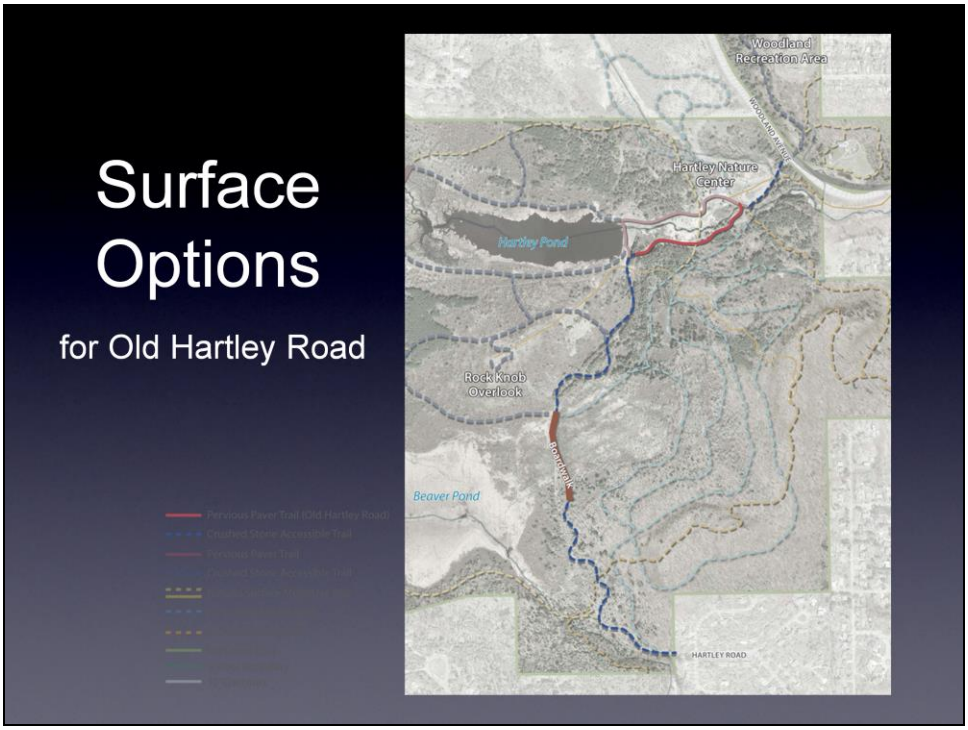
This route using Old Hartley Road has been removed from consideration based on input from the public.

Duluth Traverse

Route East of Hartley Road

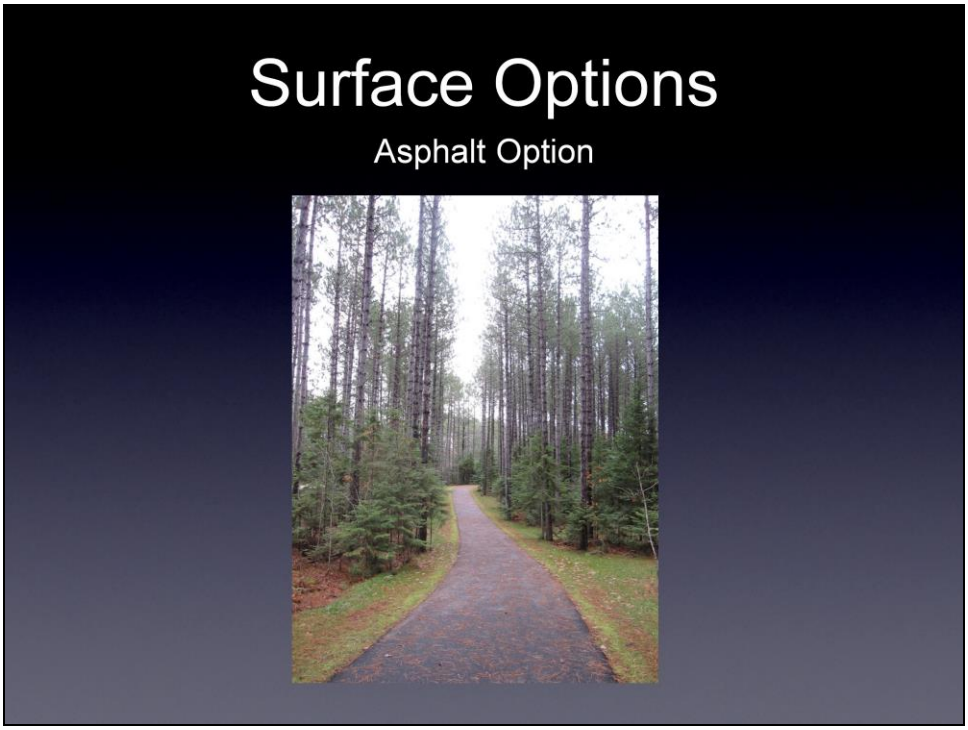


This eastern route has also been removed from consideration based on input from the public.



Surface Options for Old Hartley Road
The first iteration of the plan included nearly four miles of paved trail with the goal of creating an accessible trail system. While citizens and park users embrace the idea of increasing accessibility, many felt that integrating four miles of asphalt would be excessive and contrary to the primary purpose of the park. Alternative surface options have been incorporated into the proposal in an effort to minimize the amount of asphalt used. Surface options include asphalt, crushed stone, permeable pavers, and/or boardwalk.

NOTE: The Old Hartley Road is 101 years old, was built by hand, and has many unusual features including curbs and gutters built of bluestone and storm sewer runoff structures all put in place to drain the wetland for farming. Prior to implementing any option for the Old Road, an evaluation must be undertaken.

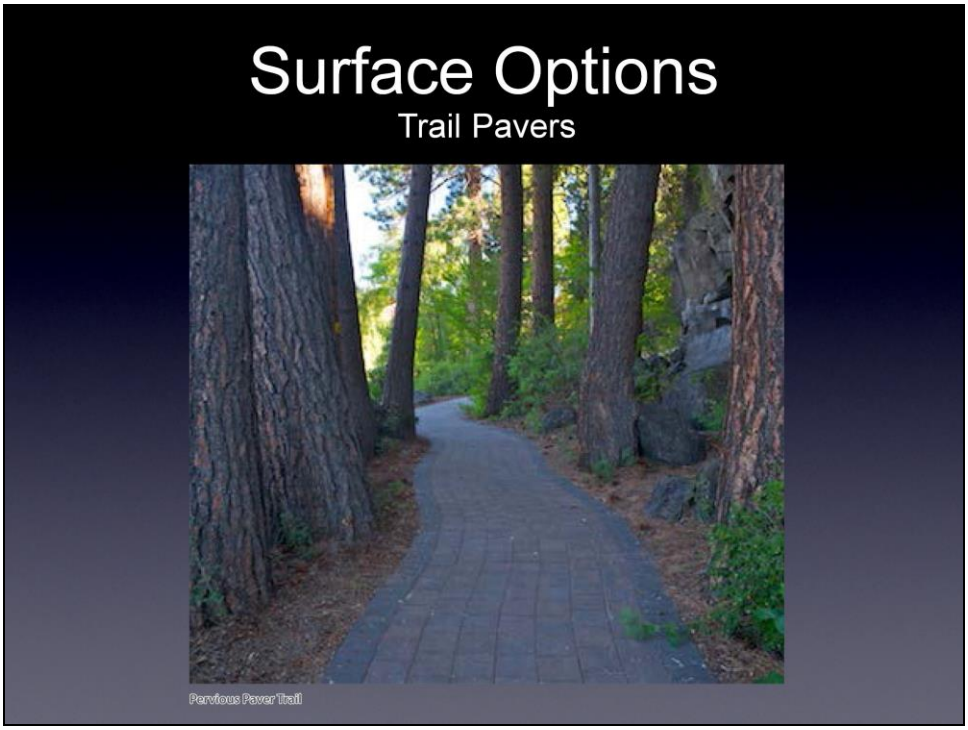


Asphalt Option for portions of Old Hartley Road

This option is the most universally accessible because it is so smooth. State standards for such a paved pathway are ten-feet wide with a two-foot 'clear zone' that contains no trees or hard objects. This allows for two-way travel with strollers, wheelchairs, bikes or people walking. This is the same standard applied to the Lakewalk and Cross City Trail.

Crushed Stone Option for Core Accessible Trails

This option makes it easier for families to get into the park to make those important connections with the natural world, especially those with young children. This type of surface would also make it easier for our older generation to continue to be able to enjoy the park. While the surface can sometimes be jarring to those in wheelchairs, a trail that is wide enough for side-by-side walking that is level with crushed stone is a good option for accessibility.



Permeable Paver Option for Core Accessible Trails

This option is proposed for a portion of Old Hartley Road to the Dam and back on the north side of Tischer Creek to the Nature Center. Although an initial expense, pavers tend to endure cold winters and traffic use and provide an accessible surface. They are a good option for building long-term sustainable trails.

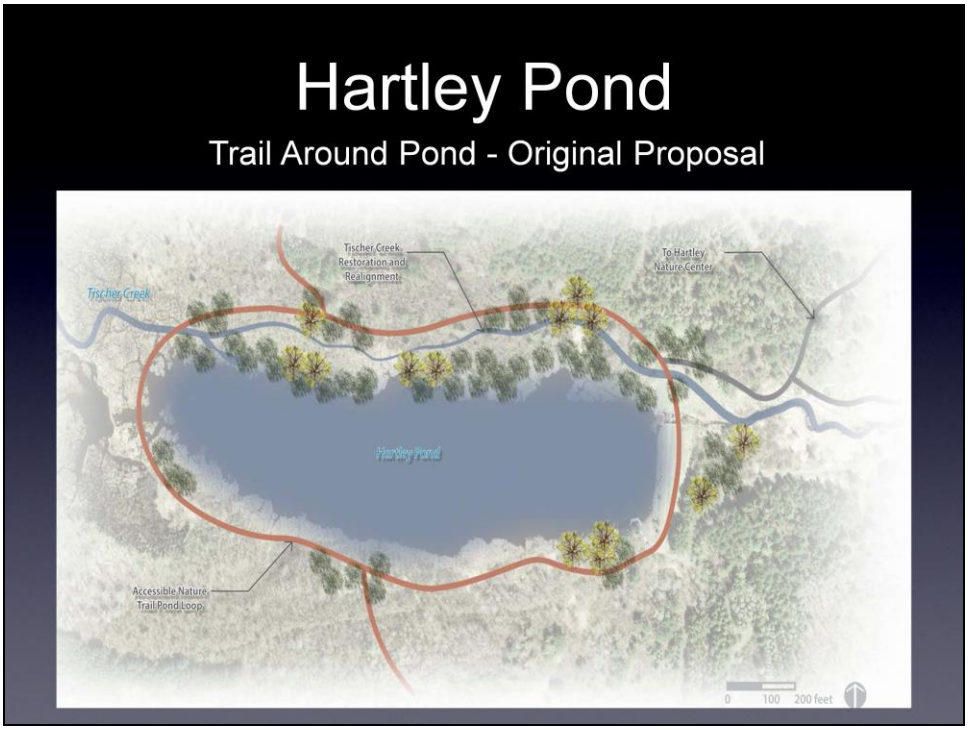
Restoration of Hartley Pond, Dam and Tischer Creek

To address this portion of the park, the plan proposes that a study by the DNR and MPCA be commissioned to gain a clear understanding of what needs to be done in this area. Without this study, it would be impossible to determine the best course of action to follow.

Some of the current tensions in this area are reflected in the following and should be considered as part of the proposed study:

Although the pond is not natural and does not uphold the values of restoration and preservation as part of a nature center, park users use it in a myriad of ways and it has an emotional connection for many.

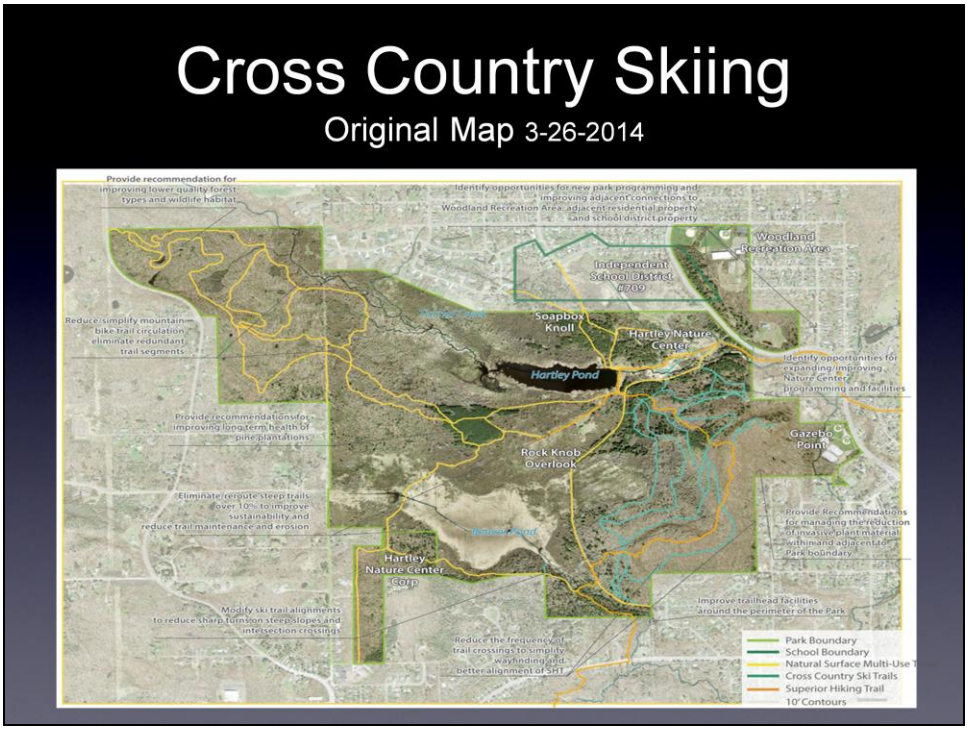
The trout stream below the dam is affected by high temperature and few trout survive in the area approximately one mile below the dam.
The dam is an important to flood control in the area as was evidenced by its effectiveness in holding back raging waters in 2012.



Trail around the Pond

For years, there have been proposals to build a trail around the pond and the concept initially proposed is shown above. However, many of our partners have indicated that a trail so close to the edge of the pond would be detrimental to the pond itself, and subsequently, to the biota of the region. For this reason, we propose a trail that is much further set back from the pond, with a boardwalk crossing the upper Tischer Creek area. (There could also be one or two raised boardwalks that go to the pond from the trail for wildlife observation.) A trail such as this would need to be done in conjunction with work directed by the DNR and others.

Current proposal with trail situated farther away from the pond but with boardwalk access points to the pond.

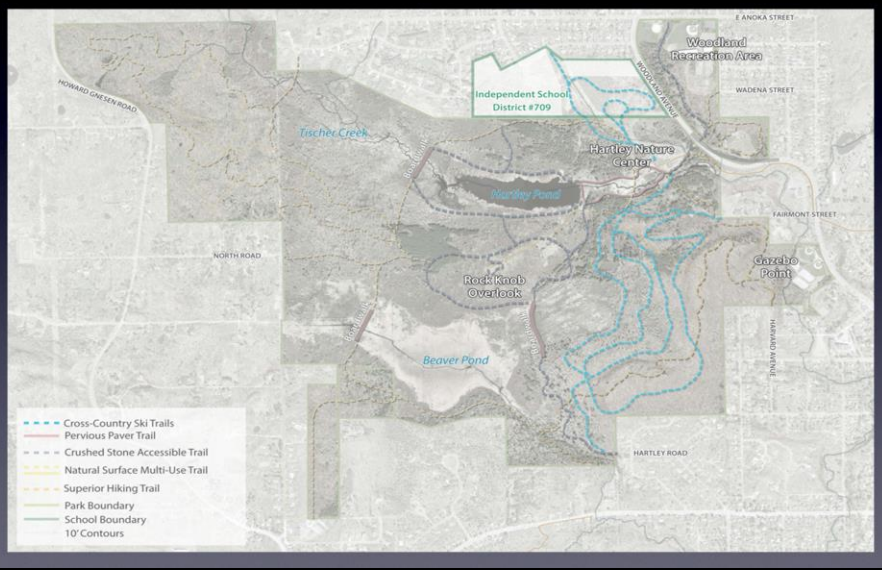


Cross Country Ski Trails

The initial proposal added a significant amount of ski trail to the plan, including a trail that would connect to current and future ski trails to the west of the park. Concerns about cutting such a wide corridor (4 meters) were raised along with a need to have a beginner set of trails and ski learning area somewhere near the main nature center.

Cross Country Skiing

Current Proposal



The current proposal includes a beginner loop (indicated near the nature center) and the elimination of the connector trail to the west. In addition, the current system has removed some redundant trails and changed directionality to maximize use of the current system.

If you would like to comment on the preceding proposals, please click on the web link below to access the online comment form

http://www.duluthmn.gov/parks/mini-master-plans-2013/hartley-public-comment-form/

The City thanks the public for their careful consideration, dedicated participation, and generous input.