



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-236

Proposal Title: Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center

Project Manager Information

Name: Katie Bennett

Organization: City of Duluth

Office Telephone: (218) 730-4317

Email: kbennett@duluthmn.gov

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Reconstruct the Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center to expand high-quality outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities to preserve and protect the unique natural resources of Chester Park.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$2,850,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Land Acquisition, Habitat, and Recreation (G)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NE

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

Chester Bowl Improvement Club (Club) has provided quality programs at Chester Park since 2008. The Club promotes natural resource protection through outdoor recreation and environmental education activities for children and families. Outdoor and nature-based activities include ski/snowboard programs, summer and fall day camps with an environmental education focus, and community-based festivals and concerts. The Club fosters leadership development by hiring/training high school students to assist with programming and education.

The Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center (Center) has been the heart of Chester Park – a 135-acre park with a restored urban trout stream - for over 50 years. Unfortunately, an Asset Report by the City of Duluth (City) shows the existing building is past its useful lifespan and cannot meet the needs of a modern nature-based recreation and education facility; of 46 assessed systems, 32 were beyond useful life and 14 were potentially critical, and 13 accessibility limitations were identified as requiring corrective action.

The existing building limits the Club's ability to serve the community. Each year the Club must turn away dozens of families from their outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities, which are critical for developing the next generation of stewards of our natural spaces.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

The proposed solution is to reconstruct the Center to improve accessibility, achieve modern sustainability standards, and better meet the community's nature-based recreation, education, and preservation needs. The Center will be new construction on the existing foundation, plus 415 square feet of new foundation to allow for an accessible elevator. Other accessibility improvements include parking, building egress, individual and multi-stall restrooms, and hallway widths. The building will be constructed to B3 standards to improve energy efficiency. Improvements to the surrounding site will allow for ten parking stalls, including accessible parking.

By primarily building upward, the Center will expand from a 3,330 square foot, 2-story building, to a 5,220 square foot, 3-story building; increasing capacity by 56%, while preserving the adjacent trout stream and surrounding natural resources. The Center will have educational and multi-purpose rooms, a viewing deck, accessible restrooms available for use by the general public, and support space to better implement environmental education. The reconstructed Center will allow the Club to expand nature-based programming and education opportunities, reach more children and families, be more inclusive and sustainable, and serve as a critical hub to nurture generations of Minnesotans that understand the importance of preserving and protecting natural resources.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

Reconstruction of the Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center will:

- Create a high-quality nature and recreation center to expand outdoor recreational and environmental education opportunities that enhance youth and family understanding of the importance of natural resource protection, conservation, and preservation.
- Preserve and protect an urban trout stream, Chester Creek, through sustainable reconstruction of the adjacent Center.
- Improve accessible environmental education and outdoor recreation opportunities for all people.
- Reduce energy waste and advance sustainability goals by designing to B3 Guidelines.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Pre-Design / Design

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

The objective of the Pre-Design/Design activity is to establish an effective, efficient, and sustainable building and site design for the Center. Tasks include evaluating project requirements and objectives, establishing project metrics and budgets, completing necessary consultations and approval process, and securing funding. These tasks will be accomplished collaboratively between the Club and the City. This activity will result in the approval of final plans to be implemented in the construction phase. This activity will be paid for with non-ENRTF funds.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Enrollment in Minnesota B3 Guidelines Tracking Tool	March 31, 2024
Dept. of Administration Pre-Design Review*	June 30, 2024
Consultation with SHPO*	July 31, 2025
All Construction Funds Legally Secured*	July 31, 2025
Approval of Plans	December 31, 2025
Other Permitting / Agency Review	January 31, 2026

Activity 2: Pre-Construction

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

The objectives and tasks of the Pre-Construction activity are to prepare construction documents that can be competitively bid, to award the construction contract to a qualified contractor, and to hold pre-construction meetings with the contractor. These tasks will be accomplished collaboratively between the Club and the City, and the City will be responsible for ensuring proper procurement processes are followed. This activity will help prepare all parties for the following Construction activity. This activity will be paid for with non-ENRTF funds.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Advertisement for Bid	February 28, 2026
Construction Contractor Selected	February 28, 2026
Pre-construction Meetings	March 31, 2026

Activity 3: Construction

Activity Budget: \$2,849,997

Activity Description:

The objective of the Construction activity is to physically construct the Center. Tasks include demolition of the existing building and reconstruction of the new building – from site preparation tasks through building completion – by the selected contractor, and construction oversight and administration by the City. This activity accounts for that most substantial portion of project work and will set the stage for all of the project benefits to follow.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Begins	April 30, 2026
Mobilization/Site Preparation/Staking	April 30, 2026
Substantial Completion	October 31, 2026
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Ends	October 31, 2026

Activity 4: Closeout

Activity Budget: \$1

Activity Description:

The objectives of Closeout activities is to fully complete the project and re-open the Center to the public. Tasks include addressing punch list items, as built-approvals, addressing all permitting and grant requirements, re-opening the facility to the public, and completing final payments and reports. This activity will be paid for with non-ENRTF funds.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Stabilization/Punch List Items/As-builts Approved	November 30, 2026
Certificate of Occupancy or Equivalent Obtained*	November 30, 2026
Signage Installed with ENRTF Language or Logo*	November 30, 2026
Open for Intended Use* / Grand Opening	November 30, 2026
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded*	March 31, 2027
Ongoing Reporting / Final Report	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Dave Schaeffer, Executive Director	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Manage the Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center in Chester Park; Provide programming and nature-based education to promote conservation and stewardship of natural resources for generations to come; Manage Growing Up Chester capital campaign to support project implementation.	No

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

Reconstructing the Center is a collaborative effort between the Club and the City. The Club and LHB Inc’s architectural team is leading the design in consultation with the City. The Club is also leading a successful fundraising campaign, which will fund any additional costs. The City will be the project’s fiscal agent, procure a qualified contractor, and oversee construction.

During construction, large tents will be erected to minimize disruptions to the Club’s camps, programming, and outdoor recreation and education opportunities. Post-construction, the Club will maintain their exclusive use agreement with the City to operate programming out of the Center.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
St. Louis River Re-Connect	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09d	\$500,000
St. Louis River Re-Connect - Phase II	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$1,375,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Katie Bennett

Job Title: Senior Parks Planner

Provide description of the project manager’s qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Katie will be responsible for grant and project management, including coordinating efforts between the City’s construction management team, LCCMR, and the Chester Bowl Improvement Club to ensure all project elements are completed properly and in a timely manner.

Katie holds a B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning from Michigan State University, and dual Master of Urban Planning and Master of Public Administration degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Katie’s previous experience includes managing Community Development Block Grant funds, educating staff and contractors on federal regulations and labor standards, monitoring timeliness, conducting wage interviews, ensuring proper procurement processes, preparing annual action plans and performance reports, and record-keeping for federal monitoring. Katie served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Moldova with a focus on community development, as well as a City Planner in the Milwaukee area with a focus on urban revitalization. In her current role as a Senior Parks Planner for the City of Duluth, Katie manages park planning and improvement projects of all sizes, including community engagement, budgeting, grant management, and coordinating project implementation with the City’s construction management team.

Mike LeBeau, the Construction Project Supervisor for the City of Duluth, will manage all aspects of construction. Mike

has been providing construction project management for thirty years, focusing on value, durability and environmental responsibility. Areas of expertise include building durability, energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy, high performance buildings, indoor air quality, moisture management, resource efficiency, and mechanical integration. Successful projects for the City of Duluth include shoreline storm damage reconstruction after Lake Superior storm surge events; FEMA funded stream bank reconstruction after a 2012 flood event; infrastructure repair, renovation and new construction; energy efficiency, conservation and renewable energy; and trail and bridge renovation projects.

Organization: City of Duluth

Organization Description:

The City of Duluth manages over 11,368 acres of green space, including 162 parks and a diverse trail network of 10 miles of equestrian trail, 30 miles of paved accessible trail, 16 miles of gravel trail, 38 miles of cross-country ski trail, 85 miles of bike-optimized single-track trail, and over 150 miles of natural surface hiking trail nestled alongside Lake Superior and the St. Louis River. Parks vary from small neighborhood playgrounds to extensive natural areas. Parks and Recreation's mission is to promote the health and well-being of the Duluth community, environment, and economy by facilitating recreational opportunities and coordinating the enhancement of parks, facilities, and natural areas now and into the future.

Chester Bowl Improvement Club (Club) was established in 1980 to support programming for the thousands of users enjoying Chester Park. Today, the Club manages and operates the Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center, providing year-round programming, recreation, and environmental education opportunities for people of all ages. The Club promotes natural resource protection and healthy living, serves families from all backgrounds, offers a safe learning environment, helps teenagers gain leadership skills, and upholds their promise to parents to “return your child tired, happy, and dirty.”

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Construction contractor (demolition of existing building; reconstruction of new building)				9		\$2,850,000
							Sub Total	\$2,850,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$2,850,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Project Coordination	Secured	\$9,324
In-Kind	LHB, Inc. / Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Design Services	Secured	\$20,000
Cash	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Design Services	Secured	\$232,500
Cash	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Construction Contractor	Secured	\$595,797
Cash	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Signage and Wayfinding	Secured	\$7,500
Cash	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	FF&E	Secured	\$75,000
Cash	Chester Bowl Improvement Club	Envelope & MEP Commissioning	Secured	\$25,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$965,121
			Funds Total	\$965,121

Total Project Cost: \$3,815,121

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [f150bdbbe-b6a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Grayscale architectural drawing of the proposed building shows three stories, ample windows, two entryways, clock-tower, and viewing-deck. Below, a site plan illustrates the proposed building and surrounding facilities, including the existing Chester Creek, bridge-crossing, and trail south/southeast of the building, and proposed parking to the southwest of the building....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
City of Duluth Management and Compliance Report	37bdf06c-810.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution 24-0229R	e7774513-8db.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Photos of Thom Storm Chalet and Outdoor Recreation Center	ecb16716-2dd.pdf
Media Links - Capital Campaign & Center Video Tour	ceb0c335-ad4.pdf
Capital Construction Project - Budget Addendum	dd706978-767.xlsx
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	45d14579-da1.pdf
Letters of Support	cf28a849-0c5.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

Yes

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

Yes

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF? If so, describe here (1) the source and estimated amounts of any revenue and (2) how you propose to use those revenues:

Yes, (1) Chester Bowl Improvement Club (Club) is a 501c3 non-profit. The Club's two primary revenue generating programs are the winter alpine program and summer day camps. As part of their mission to serve all users regardless of income, the Club also awards scholarships to low income families that could not otherwise afford to participate. Summer Camp program fees generated \$158,500 in revenue in 2023, with \$32,520 of that amount (20%) covered by scholarships. Winter program fees generated \$196,000 in program fees over winter 2023/2024, with \$25,000 (13%)

covered by scholarships. Other sources of significant revenue include special events, donations, and grant support.

(2) As a 501c3, the Club proposes to use all revenue generated over operating expenses to be reinvested into the recreation and environmental education programming operated by the Club out of the Center. This is the model that has been used to date with all program revenue. The expanded Center will allow for increased programming, and therefore increased revenue, and continual reinvestment to support additional scholarships and long-term growth. The revenue will support general programming expenses, including program supplies and staffing salaries, as outlined by the Club's organizational budget. The Club's overall operating budget is \$590,000.

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

Yes

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Christine Penney - City of Duluth Grant Coordinator

Allison Brooks – City of Duluth Project Technician

Mike LeBeau - City of Duluth Construction Project Supervisor

Dave Schaeffer - Chester Bowl Improvement Club Executive Director