

Orange Places Project

CAMPUS RECREATION ACTION PLAN
MOOSE LAKE COMMUNITY SCHOOL
2025

An initiative of



Essentia Health

Orange Places Project

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Special Note:

Moose Lake Community School and Essentia Health wish to extend a special thank you to members of the project advisory committee, who guided this project and its process. The individuals who advised this project were:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| • Abigail Anderson | • Christopher Novy |
| • Lisa Anderson-Reed | • Vicki Radzak |
| • Greta Barrett | • Lisa Riihiluoma |
| • Raenee Bennett | • Paul Riihiluoma |
| • Paul Christensen | • Melissa Rossini |
| • Greg Eliason | • Michael Rossini |
| • John Engstrom | • Billie Jo Steen |
| • Garret Hultgren | • Adelyn Szczymbak |

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Introduction

The Moose Lake Community School campus is a property designed to serve the educational purposes of the Moose Lake community. The campus is located on County Road 10 in Moose Lake, Minnesota, and is owned and managed by the Moose Lake Public School District (ISD 97).

In 2024, Moose Lake Community School applied for and was selected by Essentia Health's Community Health Department to participate in a community development technical assistance program called the Orange Places Project. The Orange Places Project is an initiative of Essentia Health¹ to support the development of functional, well-loved community spaces, with a desire to respond to mental and social well-being needs in the region.

The goal of this project is to assess and identify potential improvements to outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus. This scope was developed in response to identified community health needs for physical activity and mental/social well-being in Essentia Health-Moose Lake's service area. The project began in June 2024 and ended in December 2024.

This report documents the public process to envision and plan the future of outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus. The report is outlined using the Orange Places Project's 3-"E" framework for developing and managing public places: Evaluation, Engagement, and Execution.

¹ Essentia Health is a non-profit, integrated health system caring for patients in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Dakota. At Essentia Health, we are called to make a healthy difference in people's lives.

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Evaluation

Evaluation of a public space is crucial for understanding who uses the space and how. But while it is important to understand current use, this understanding should not dictate future development of the space, especially if evaluation finds that the space is underutilized.

This chapter gives context to the Moose Lake Community School campus by documenting its infrastructure and programming, development history, neighborhood demographics, recreation network, and documented use.

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Infrastructure/Programming

Opened in 2017, the Moose Lake Community School campus is adjacent to County Road 10 on its west side, Konieska Road on its south side, and a mix of public- and private-owned land on its north and east sides. The campus includes five parcels that cover 149.93 acres and is most notably home to facilities that host education programming for grades K-12, early childhood, and community education. The campus also includes outdoor facilities to support a learning environment for enrolled students and the community. These outdoor facilities are the focus of this project.

From north to south, the outdoor recreation facilities include a community garden with 25 raised garden beds and an apple orchard, an early childhood playground, an elementary age playground with an adjacent basketball court, a resting area with a pergola, 1.3 miles of school forest trails surfaced with class five gravel, two outdoor learning pavilions, a solar garden, a track with a multi-purpose field, a multi-use practice field, and a baseball field.

The school building, situated on the east side of the campus, provides 224 stalls in a paved parking lot in front of the K-12 wing, 49 stalls in a paved parking lot in front of the early childhood wing, and an informal gravel parking lot near a bus garage on the north side of the building.

A paved trail travels designated for non-motorized use travels north along County Road 10. A crosswalk and sidewalk infrastructure on-campus delivers people walking or biking to the front door of the K-12 entrance, where bike parking is available.

The school campus hosts regular programming of its outdoor recreation facilities. Notably, the early childhood playground and elementary age playground are used daily for recess during the school year. The track with a multi-purpose field and the baseball field are also used as a formal part of Moose Lake School District's extracurricular athletic program. It is important to note that the school campus, including its outdoor recreation facilities, only allows community visitors outside of education hours.



Figure 1. K-12 entrance to Moose Lake Community School.

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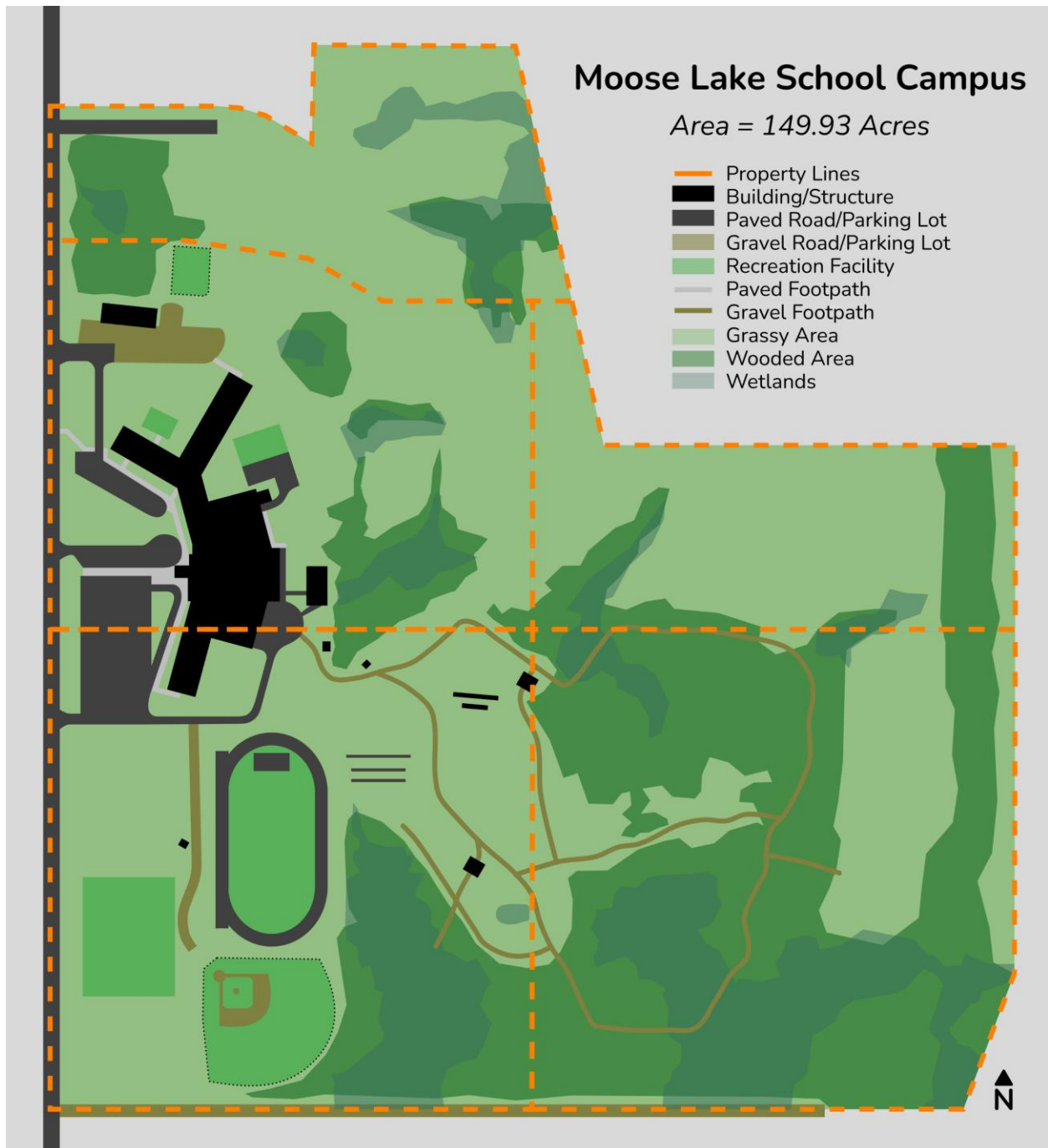


Figure 2. Map of the Moose Lake Community School campus.

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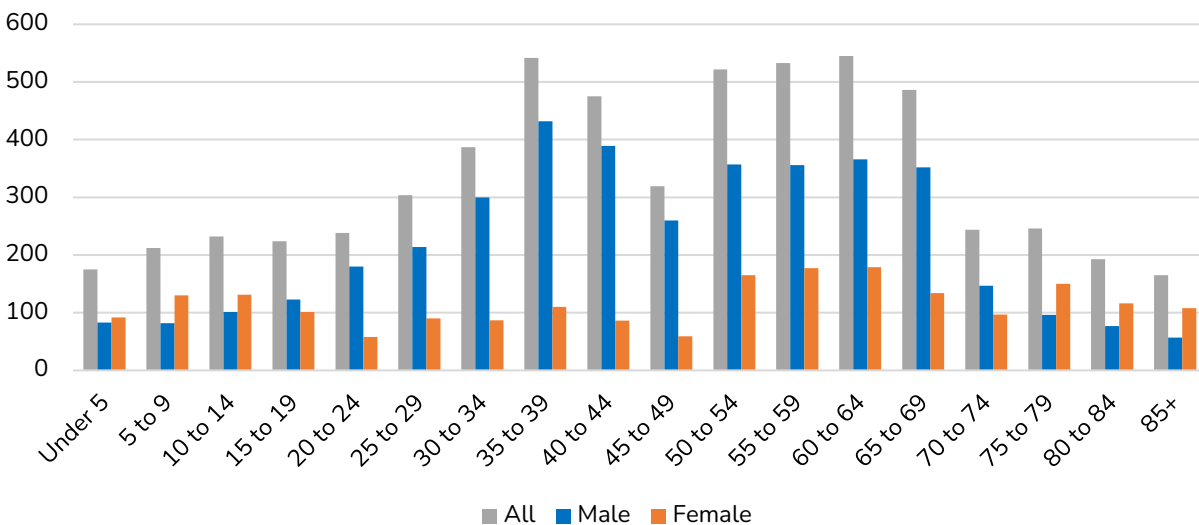
Neighborhood Demographics

For purposes of this project, the “neighborhood” of Moose Lake Community School is defined as the Moose Lake School District (ISD 97).

Demographics² of this neighborhood, excluding the Minnesota Correctional Facility and Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake, are presented below.

- Total Population: 5,123
- Housing Units: 2,576
- Race:
 - 86.8% (4,447) White
 - 5.1% (263) Black/African American
 - 4.9% (252) Two or More Races
 - 2.0% (104) American Indian/Alaska Native
 - 0.8% (39) Some Other Race Alone
 - 0.4% (18) Asian
 - (2.0% [105] Hispanic or Latino)
- Sex Distribution:
 - Male: 65.7%
 - Female: 34.3%
- Age Distribution: See chart below.

Age Distribution in Moose Lake School District, Minnesota

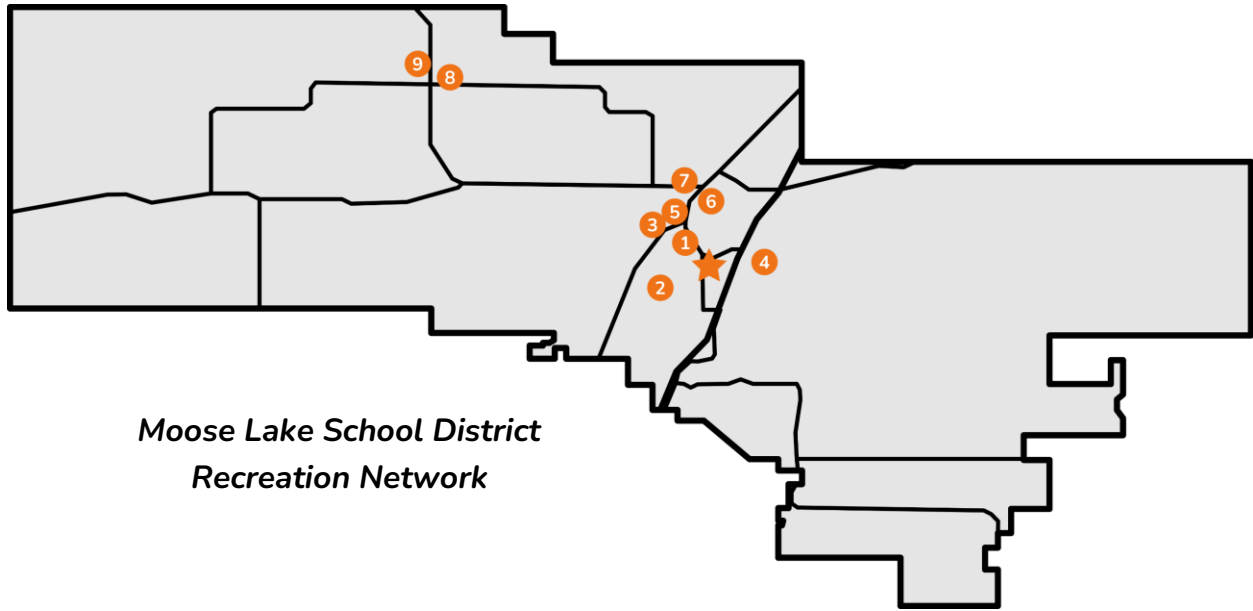


² 2020 U.S. Census, United States Census Bureau

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Recreation Network

The Moose Lake Community School campus is part of a network of other recreation facilities available in the Moose Lake School District. The map below identifies other facilities in this network, listed in order of distance from the school campus.



*Moose Lake School District
Recreation Network*

1. Twilight Field (Youth Baseball Field) (1 mile)
2. Art Ohlgren Recreational Area (Youth Baseball Field, Tennis Courts, Pickleball Courts) (1.2 miles)
3. Willard Munger State Trail (Paved Walking/Bicycling Trail) (1.2 miles)
4. Moose Lake State Park (Campsites, Picnic Area, Hiking Trails, Swimming Beach, Fishing Pier) (1.3 miles)
5. Woodland Trails (Hiking Trails) (1.35 miles)
6. Moose Lake City Park (Campsites, Playground, Picnic Area, Swimming Beach, Youth Baseball Field) (1.7 miles)
7. Roy Peterson Memorial Park (Playground, Basketball Hoop) (1.75 miles)
8. Rick Peterson Memorial Ball Field (Youth Baseball Field) (6.7 miles)
9. City of Kettle River Park (Playground, Basketball Court, Picnic Area) (6.9 miles)

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Documented Use

When it comes to a park, one measure of success is the number of people who visit the space. Private parks measure the number of visitors very well; they count the number of guests through gate entries and/or ticket sales, and these numbers inform whether new attractions are needed to boost visitor numbers. Unfortunately, it is more difficult for a public agency, with staff capacity limitations, to measure success of a public park. However, it is a process important to help a park best serve the community.

To track use of the Moose Lake Community School campus, the Moose Lake School District is using a technique coined as the “Snapshot Method”. The Snapshot Method consists of taking a “snapshot” of park use on an “average” day of the year. During the evaluative visit, a headcount of visitors, each visitor’s perceived demographics (i.e., gender, age), and activities of each person is documented on an hourly basis.

Considerations must be made for the Snapshot Method to collect useful data. First, the weather on the selected evaluation day must be fair. Second, holidays or abnormal days must be avoided. And third, observation must be conducted throughout the entire day – or during standard “daylight hours”.

For purposes of evaluating the Moose Lake Community School campus, evaluation took place under the following conditions:

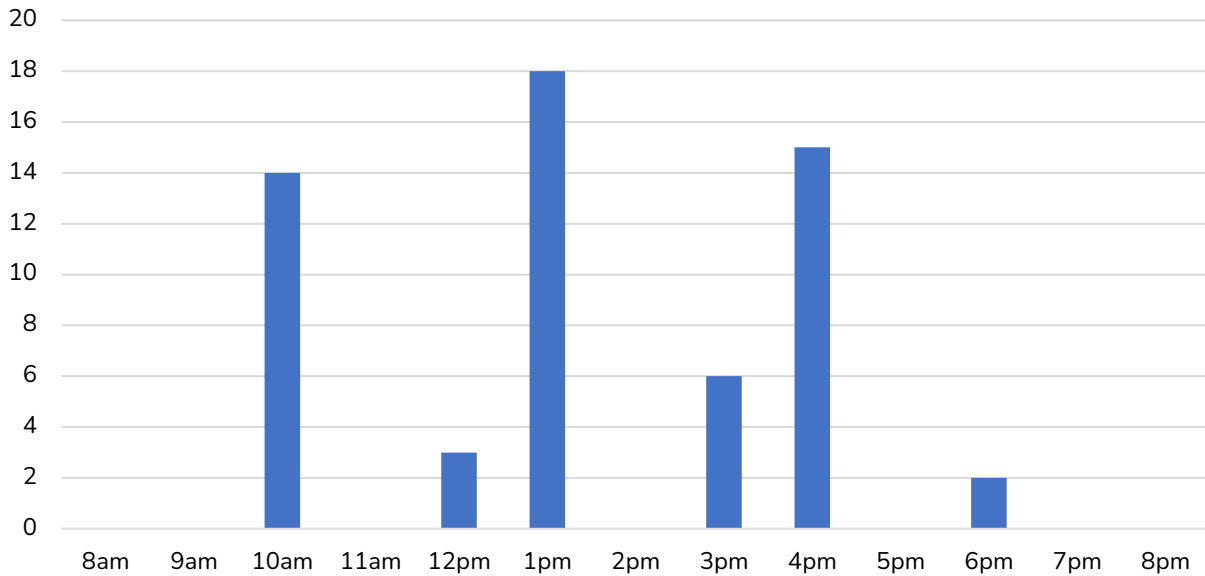
- On a day when there was no precipitation, high wind, or fog;
- On a Tuesday or Thursday (avoiding all dates impacted by holidays); and
- Every hour on the hour starting at 8am and concluding at 8pm.

Thursday, August 8, 2024, was selected as the evaluation date for this project. On this day, the weather was partly cloudy with a temperature in the mid-60s. Graphs documenting the data collected during this date are presented below.

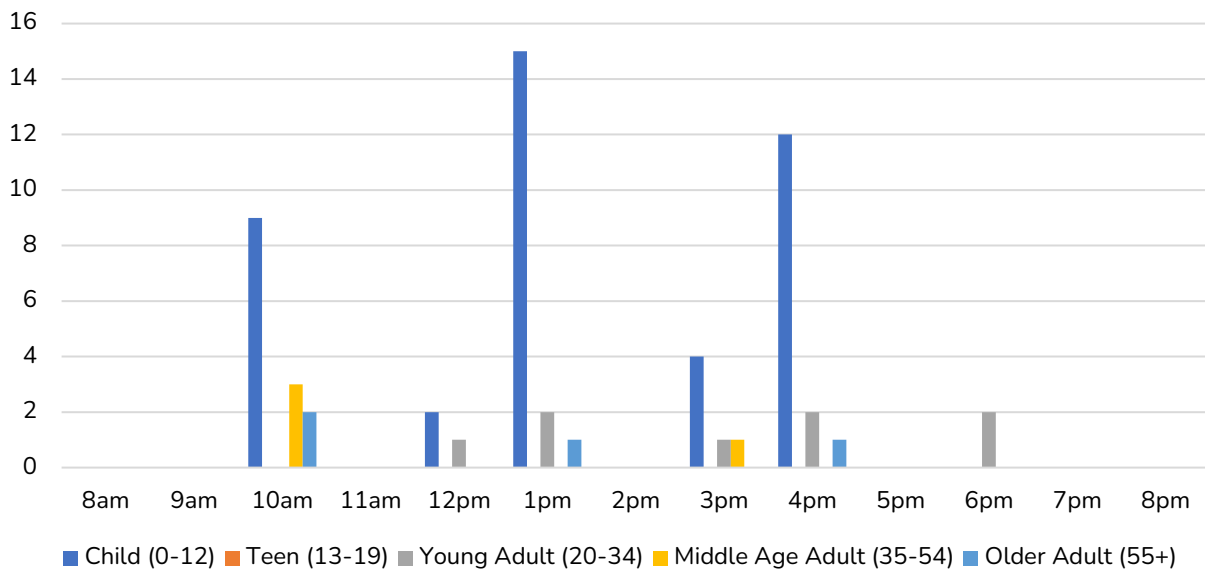
Note: A flaw of this data collection method is that groups using the park outside of the evaluation times are not counted; in turn, a large group that uses the campus for less than an hour and is not there at the top of an hour would not be counted. A data collection method with continuous presence would be more accurate but was not selected due to concerns about privacy of parks guests.

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Number of Park Users by Hour



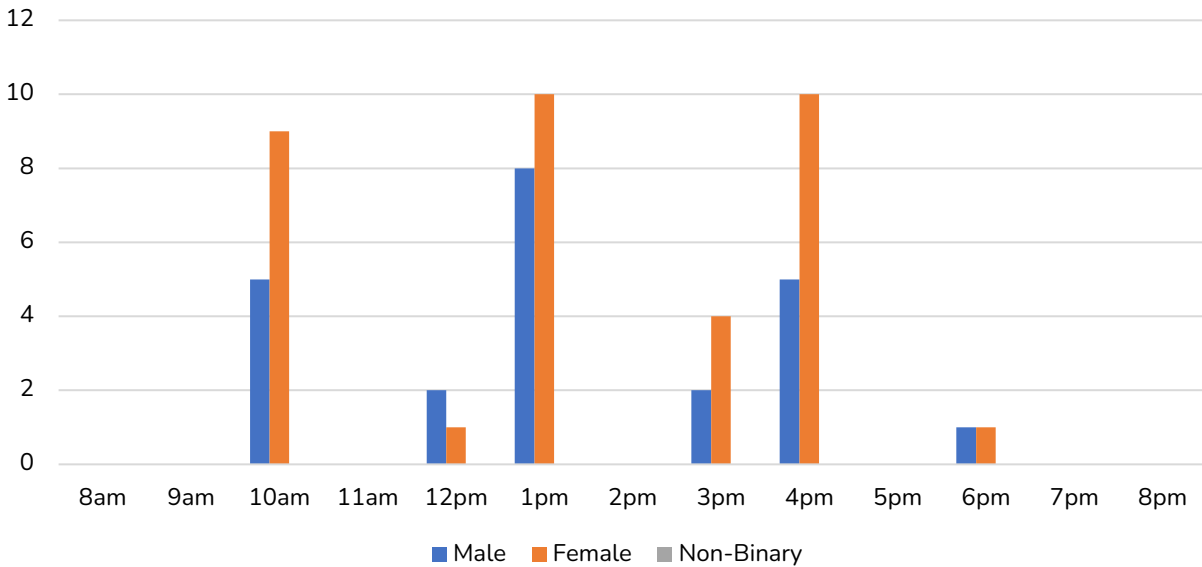
Perceived Age of Park Users by Hour



Note: The high number of children on campus was skewed by the presence of children enrolled in the Mini Moose program, which utilizes the early childhood playground on the school campus.

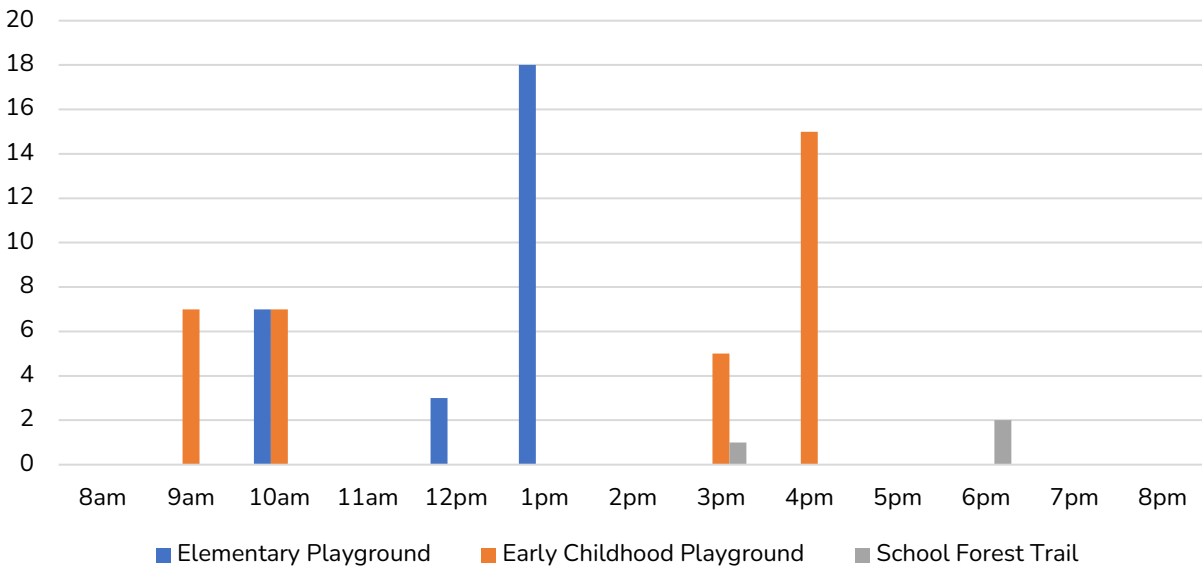
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Perceived Gender of Park Users by Hour



Note: Most female campus users were adults; the male campus users were almost exclusively children enrolled in the Mini Moose program.

Activities of Park Users by Hour

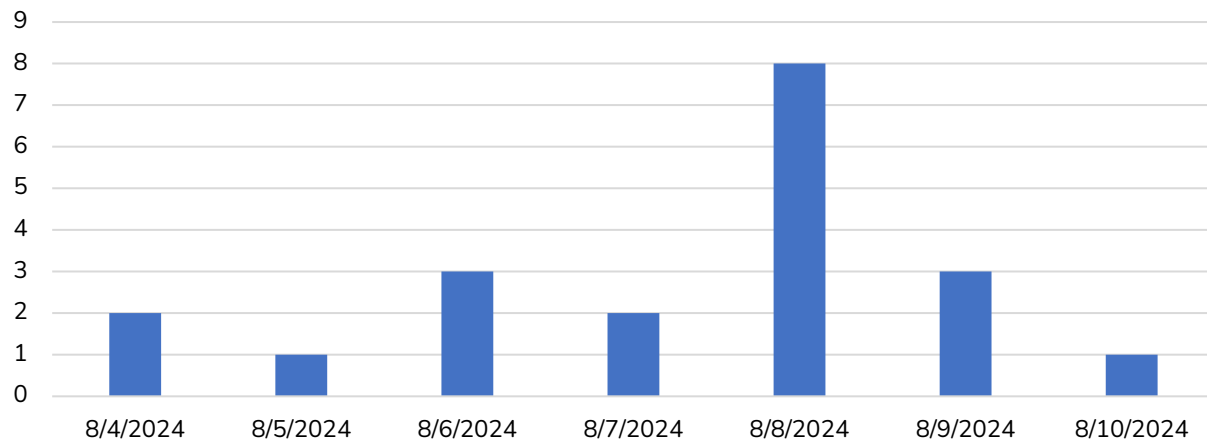


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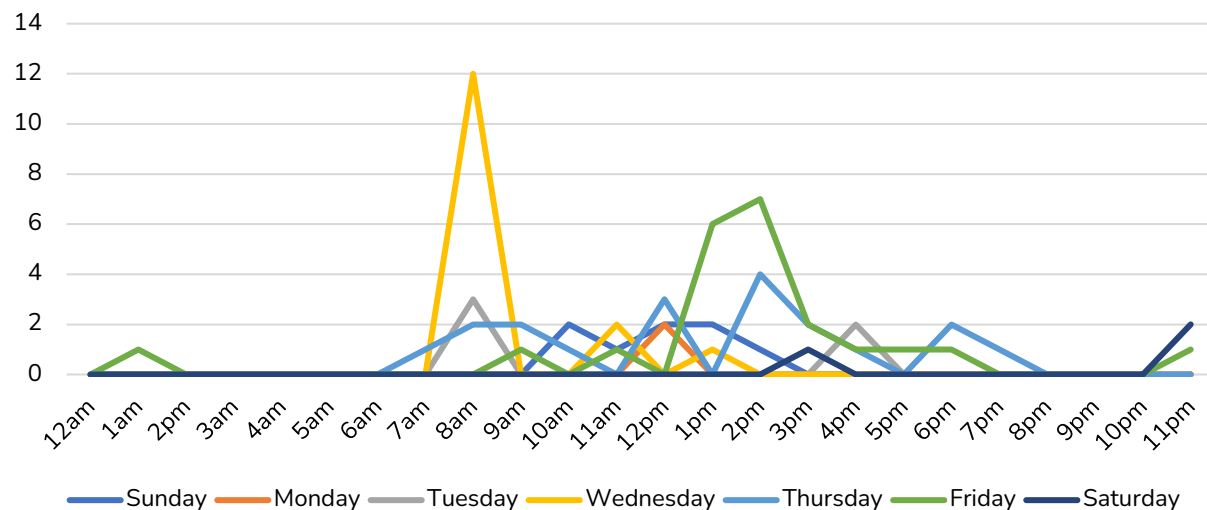
In addition, the Moose Lake School District employed an automated trail counter to study the use of the school forest trails on the Moose Lake Community School campus. An automated trail counter is a device that is affixed to a vertical pole along a trail, with a sensor aimed toward the trail. When a trail user crosses in front of the sensor, the device registers trail use.

Through a partnership with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation District 1 (MnDOT D1), the Moose Lake School District and Essentia Health installed the trail counter at the entrance to the school forest trail system for a full week, from Sunday, 8/4, through Saturday, 8/10. The data collected during this period are presented below.

School Forest Trail Users, 8/4/24-8/10/24



Average Trail Users by Day of Week and Hour of Day



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Engagement

Success of a public space relies on quality Engagement. If you want to attract people to use a space, it is unwise to make assumptions about what they want to see or do there. You need to identify the population you wish to see use the space and seek out their input about what would attract them to use the space daily.

This chapter outlines the methodology and results of engagement efforts employed to inform future development of outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus.

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Methodology

When it comes to engagement, it's important to start with one question: "Who do you want to engage?" For the purposes of developing outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus, it was noted that we should prioritize the input of people residing in the Moose Lake, Willow River, and Barnum school districts, as these are the people most likely to use a destination recreation property in the area. However, it was noted that input from all members of the public, including seasonal residents and area visitors, is welcome during the process.

The project advisory committee directed Essentia Health staff to collect input via a public survey. To capture these perspectives, Essentia Health administered an online survey, which the school district distributed through its Facebook page. Additional outreach took place through posts on community Facebook groups, business outreach in the Moose Lake Area Chamber of Commerce newsletter, fliers posted at back-to-school events and school athletic events, and 500 postcards mailed to households in the tri-district area. In addition to the online survey, a paper survey option was made available at the Moose Lake Public Library. The survey was officially opened on August 27, 2024, and closed on September 30, 2024.

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Input Results

Engagement efforts yielded 56 survey responses. A summary of these responses is below. Full survey results are available in Appendix C.

- The “average” survey respondent is in the 31-45 age range, lives in the 55767 (Moose Lake) ZIP code, lives in the area year-round, and is relative to an enrolled student at the school. Most respondents noted that they rarely visit the school campus (“never” or “once a year”).
- Half of respondents were uncertain if or when the school campus can be used by members of the public.
- Survey respondents most frequently identified a desire for playground upgrades (e.g., nearby shade/picnic shelters, public washrooms) and community events/programming. A handful of respondents also expressed interest in infrastructure for frisbee/disc golf and pickleball.

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Execution

Making plans means nothing without Execution. And two vital factors in executing public space upgrades are community support and funding. While these two things often go together, they individually require a high level of intention and determination, especially for the organization that owns and manages a public space.

This chapter presents proposed actions of the Moose Lake School District as it pursues further development of the Moose Lake Community School campus.

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Action Plan

The following actions are desired within the next five years, and the anticipated timeline for completing each action is listed within the action steps below. Some improvements are simple actions with a target completion date of July 2025. Other improvements require more resources and coordination and, therefore, are assigned a target completion of July 2030. The intention of these actions is to attract heightened use of the Moose Lake Community School campus.

1. **Informational Signage:** By July 2025, develop a visitor signage plan that communicates information about parking and campus visitor policies. By July 2030, implement the plan.
2. **Social Space:** By July 2025, purchase and install seating, shade structures, and yard games to develop a temporary social space behind the high school (near the school forest entrance trail). If the temporary space demonstrates regular use, formalize the social space with more permanent seating and shade structures by July 2030.
3. **Half-Court Basketball:** By July 2030, activate the parking lot behind the high school as a hub for campus recreation. Allocate pavement space for half-court basketball and install a basketball hoop. If the court demonstrates regular use, consider striping other areas of the back parking lot to accommodate additional hard-surface sports.
4. **Playground Rest Areas:** By July 2030, install shaded benches near both the elementary and early childhood playgrounds.
5. **Frisbee Golf Course:** When funding is secured, design and construct a frisbee golf course in the undeveloped parcels behind the school building.

Please view the next page for a visual representation of these improvements.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Aerial Photographs

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Appendix C: Survey Results

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Appendix A: Aerial Photographs



Figure 3. Aerial image of Moose Lake Community School campus, 2021.

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Figure 4. Aerial image of Moose Lake Community School campus, 2024.

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Moose Lake Community School Campus Survey

Moose Lake Community School is seeking public input about the future of outdoor recreation facilities on its school campus. Your participation in this survey will inform development efforts that aim to attract community members to use outdoor campus recreation facilities during non-education hours. The survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. The survey will close on September 30, 2024.

1. What is your age?
 - ☐ 0-15 years
 - ☐ 16-30 years
 - ☐ 31-45 years
 - ☐ 46-60 years
 - ☐ 61-75 years
 - ☐ 76+ years
2. What is the ZIP code of your main residence?
3. Which of the following categories best describes you? (Select one.)
 - ☐ I live in the Moose Lake area year-round.
 - ☐ I live in the Moose Lake area seasonally or part of the year.
 - ☐ I work or go to school in Moose Lake area but don't live there.
 - ☐ I visit the Moose Lake area.
4. Are you or a member of your household currently enrolled as a student at Moose Lake Community School?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
5. The Moose Lake Community School campus has two playgrounds, a community garden, hiking trails, a walking track, and sports fields. How often do you use these outdoor recreation facilities on the school campus?
 - ☐ At least once a day
 - ☐ At least once a week
 - ☐ At least once a month
 - ☐ At least once a year
 - ☐ Never

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6. Which of the following barriers keeps you from using outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus more often? (Select all that apply.)
- ☐ I'm not interested in current outdoor recreation options on the school campus.
 - ☐ I don't know if I'm allowed to use recreation facilities on the school campus.
 - ☐ I don't know when I'm allowed to use recreation facilities on the school campus.
 - ☐ I would want to use recreation facilities during the school day, but that's not allowed.
 - ☐ I don't have transportation to get to the school campus.
 - ☐ The school campus is too far away, or it takes too much time to get there.
 - ☐ There isn't convenient parking available, or I don't know where to park.
 - ☐ Other: _____
7. What “attractions” would get you and/or your family to visit outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus on a regular basis?
8. Are you interested in volunteering or being involved in projects to improve outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
9. If you are interested in receiving email updates about this project, please provide your email address below. (Optional)

Appendix C: Survey Results

N=56

1. What is your age?
 - 0-15 years: 3 Responses, 5.4%
 - 16-30 years: 5 Responses, 8.9%
 - 31-45 years: 25 Responses, 44.6%
 - 46-60 years: 16 Responses, 28.6%
 - 61-75 years: 6 Responses, 10.7%
 - 76+ years: 1 Response, 1.8%
2. What is the ZIP code of your main residence?
 - 55767: 26 Responses, 46.4%
 - 55783: 17 Responses, 30.4%
 - 55707: 5 Responses, 8.9%
 - 55756: 2 Responses, 3.6%
 - 55757: 2 Responses, 3.6%
 - 55795: 2 Responses, 3.6%
 - 55072: 1 Response, 1.8%
 - 55331: 1 Response, 1.8%
3. Which of the following categories best describes you?
 - I live in the Moose Lake area year-round: 47 Responses, 83.9%
 - I live in the Moose Lake area seasonally or part of the year: 1 Response, 1.8%
 - I work or go to school in Moose Lake area but don't live there: 7 Responses, 12.5%
 - I visit the Moose Lake area: 1 Response, 1.8%
4. Are you or a member of your household currently enrolled as a student at Moose Lake Community School?
 - Yes: 30 Responses, 53.6%
 - No: 26 Responses, 46.4%
5. The Moose Lake Community School campus has two playgrounds, a community garden, hiking trails, a walking track, and sports fields. How often do you use these outdoor recreation facilities on the school campus?
 - At least once a day: 10 Responses, 17.9%

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- At least once a week: 6 Responses, 10.7%
 - At least once a month: 9 Responses, 16.1%
 - At least once a year: 12 Responses, 21.4%
 - Never: 18 Responses, 32.1%
 - No Response: 18 Responses, 32.1%
6. Which of the following barriers keeps you from using outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus more often? (Select all that apply.)
- I don't know if I'm allowed to use recreation facilities on the school campus: 28 Responses, 50.0%
 - I don't know when I'm allowed to use recreation facilities on the school campus: 28 Responses, 50.0%
 - There isn't convenient parking available, or I don't know where to park: 10 Responses, 17.8%
 - I would want to use recreation facilities during the school day, but that's not allowed: 8 Responses, 14.3%
 - I'm not interested in current outdoor recreation options on the school campus: 5 Responses, 8.9%
 - The school campus is too far away, or it takes too much time to get there: 1 Response, 1.8%
 - I don't have transportation to get to the school campus: 0 Responses
 - Other: 4 Responses (Wasn't Aware, No Time, Only Use with Grandkids)
7. What "attractions" would get you and/or your family to visit outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus on a regular basis?
- Playground Upgrades (12)
 - Nearby Shade/Picnic Shelter (2)
 - Nearby Outdoor Bathrooms with Changing Station (2)
 - Rubberized Surface (1)
 - Toddler Swings/Ramps (1)
 - Use during School Hours (1)
 - Nearby Baseball/Kickball Field (1)
 - Sensory Play Equipment (1)
 - More Toddler-friendly Options (1)
 - Additional Equipment (1)
 - Within View from the Street (1)

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- Programming (8)
 - Seasonal community cookout (1)
 - Astronomy Nights with Minnesota Astronomical Society (1)
 - Ice/Snow Sculpturing (1)
 - Family Fun Days (1)
 - Master Gardener Classes (1)
 - Hobby Swaps/Meet-ups/Learning (1)
 - Community Garage Sale (1)
 - Movie Nights (1)
 - Community Volunteer Events (e.g., Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Packing) (1)
- Frisbee/Disc Golf (5)
- Pickleball Court (5)
- Hiking/Biking Trails (4)
 - Accessible, paved trail surface (1)
- Ski Trails (4)
- Running Track (4)
 - Maintenance Needed within Next Two Years (1)
 - Bleachers for Spectators (1)
 - Announcing Stand/Speakers (1)
 - Event Parking in Field (1)
- Tennis Court (4)
- Outdoor Swimming pool (4)
- Basketball Court (4)
- Better Advertising (3)
- Signage about Allowed Use/Parking (2)
- Walking Loop Sidewalk/Trail around School (2)
- Barbeque Grills (2)
- Climbing Wall (2)
- Outdoor Gym/Calisthenics Equipment (2)
- American Ninja Warrior Obstacle Course (2)
- Volleyball (1)
- Splash Pad (1)
- Paved Sidewalks to Football/Track/Baseball Fields (1)
- Baseball Field (1)
- Fenced-in Dog Park (1)

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- Geocaching (1)
 - Indoor Pool (1)
 - Mini Golf (1)
 - Water Park (e.g., Lupient Water Park in Minneapolis) (1)
 - Zip Line (1)
 - Tetherball (1)
 - Indoor Exercise Center (e.g., Wild River Fitness at Osceola Medical Center) (1)
 - Gaga Ball Pit (1)
 - Apple Orchard (1)
 - Multi-Sport Stadium (1)
8. Are you interested in volunteering or being involved in projects to improve outdoor recreation facilities on the Moose Lake Community School campus?
- Maybe: 27 Responses, 48.2%
 - No: 15 Responses, 26.8%
 - Yes: 12 Responses, 21.4%
 - No Response: 2 Responses, 3.6%