



In September 2017, the City of Duluth invited residents and visitors to think creatively about the future look, feel, and function of Canal Park for a new project titled Imagine Canal Park. In the first phase of the project, more than 1,200 residents, visitors, business owners, and other stakeholders shared their thoughts and concerns about Canal Park through online surveys, at public events, and at community workshops.

A Collective Vision

With this initial feedback, the Imagine Canal Park team developed a collective vision statement for the future of the area:

Vision Statement

In 2035, Canal Park will be a unique and accessible year-round hub that is designed for residents and visitors of all ages, and is seamlessly connected to the rest of the city.

This vision statement highlights two priority areas:

Mobility and Access

Public Space and Programming

Based on these two priority areas, the team consolidated the community's input into actionable ideas and recommendations.

Throughout 2018, the City collaborated with local partners to test six ideas in real time and launched meaningful experiments, or pilot projects, to better understand the benefits and trade-offs of new designs, traffic patterns, and events. These pilot projects included a month-long winter festival, a pedestrian-scale wayfinding system, two temporary public spaces, new traffic configurations on South Lake Ave., and extended free trolley service.

Experiments and Evaluation

The City, in collaboration with consultants 80 Cities and Zeitgeist, used a variety of data collection tools to document outcomes and impacts from each pilot project implemented in Canal Park. Stakeholders from across the city provided input through online surveys and emails, and by attending pop-up engagement booths and meetings.

Qualitative feedback and opinions were supported through observational studies which captured how each project performed on-the-ground. The results of this data provide insight into what types of changes could be made permanent or brought to scale, and which experiments need more thought or improvement.

These pilot projects revealed new insights about the strengths and weaknesses of certain ideas, in addition to providing opportunities to learn more about community preferences. These outcomes helped us define recommendations for next steps and potential investments in the area.



The following is a summary of the collected data and stakeholder feedback for each pilot project:

1 Cold Front February

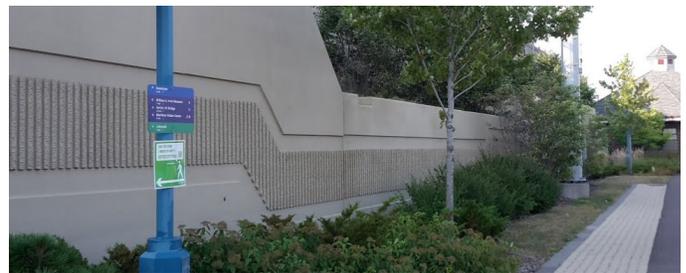
A month-long celebration of winter in Canal Park, with programming and activities.



- Respondents were most enthused about making the ice trail a permanent winter fixture in Canal Park
- Attendees would like more hot food and beverage vendors
- On average, 211 individuals skated the ice trail each day
- Overall, 96 percent of respondents rated their experience at Cold Front favorably

2 Canal Park Wayfinding Pilot

Testing out the impact of three new types of pedestrian-scale wayfinding signage.



- Overall, respondents felt that the wayfinding signage was well-designed
- The round sidewalk stickers were most noticeable but also the least helpful
- The small directional signs and 8-foot informational maps are most helpful for visitors as local residents already had familiarity with listed destinations
- There's support for expanding the scope of the wayfinding project and making it permanent

3 Buchanan Street Plaza

Transforming a portion of Buchanan Street into a pedestrian plaza.



- Buchanan Street is a valued shortcut for drivers going to/from Park Point which caused some frustration for residents when it was closed off to vehicles
- Community members like the concept of a plaza and additional seating, but would prefer to see it done elsewhere
- The plaza improved the pedestrian experience in Canal Park
- More needed to be done to improve the ambiance at the plaza
- Overall, 62 percent of respondents rated the Buchanan Street Plaza unfavorably

4 Lighthouse Park

Converting the Lighthouse Lot into a recreation and play-focused park.



- 85 percent of online survey respondents did not spend time in the park
- The play elements were the most popular
- Three contrasting themes emerged from residents' feedback: 1) retain it as a parking lot, 2) make it permanent but increase the number of activations in the space, or 3) incorporate the same elements elsewhere
- Overall, 50 percent rated it unfavorably and 43 percent rated it favorably

5 South Lake Avenue Re-Routing

Reconfiguring the lanes on South Lake Avenue to test out impacts on traffic flow.



- The loss of parking overshadowed the improvements in vehicular traffic flow
- The new configuration worsened the walking and biking experience
- Desire to keep Morse Street and Buchanan Street accessible to motorists
- Better signage may have prevented driver confusion
- Overall, 77 percent of respondents rated the South Lake Avenue Re-Routing pilot unfavorably

6 Free Trolley Service

Free trolley service from June through September.



- 2018 saw the highest ridership numbers in history with 28,332 rides
- Free trolley admission and extended service led to a spike in ridership in summer 2018, an increase of 53 percent compared to summer 2017

Recommendations

The recommendations presented in the full report are:

1 Continue to experiment

- 1.1 Institute pilot projects as a standard engagement strategy in future projects
- 1.2 Engage more citizens and stakeholders in building and evaluating the pilots

2 Invest in active transportation infrastructure to, from, and throughout Canal Park

- 2.1 Continue and improve free trolley service
- 2.2 Improve walking experience between downtown Duluth and Canal Park

3 Improve communication and coordination around vehicular access to Canal Park

- 3.1 Invest in parking guidance systems
- 3.2 Actively promote parking located outside of Canal Park to targeted audiences
- 3.3 Partner with Canal Park hotels to efficiently make use of underutilized parking spaces

4 Expand the wayfinding system to downtown Duluth

- 4.1 Use sidewalk decals more strategically
- 4.2 Increase the dimensions and font size of the small directional signs
- 4.3 Increase number of 8-foot informational maps
- 4.4 Include information to attractions outside of Canal Park

5 Transform Buchanan into a flexible, shared street

- 5.1 Go curbless
- 5.2 Test out regular, timed closures
- 5.3 Promote Buchanan as a programmable space

6 Consider a more balanced approach to reconfiguring South Lake Avenue

- 6.1 Provide higher visibility crosswalks
- 6.2 Provide traffic calming interventions
- 6.3 Designate Canal Park a 20 mph zone
- 6.4 Retain on-street parking possibilities
- 6.5 Develop a more thorough understanding of vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns on South Lake Avenue before making a permanent reconfiguration

7 Increase opportunities for play near the water

- 7.1 Transform a portion of the Lighthouse Lot into a year-round kids' play area
- 7.2 Provide wind protection at the Lighthouse Lot
- 7.3 Increase recreational opportunities along the Lakewalk

8 Grow and expand Cold Front February events

- 8.1 More vendors and programming
- 8.2 Provide more comfortable restrooms
- 8.3 Maintain the skating trail throughout the winter
- 8.4 Recruit volunteers

As the City of Duluth moves forward with temporary and permanent improvements in Canal Park, it is crucial to continue involving and seeking input from diverse stakeholders. The City should report back the results of this process to community members and gather additional feedback; and together with the community, develop priorities, explore other pilot project ideas, and plan for implementation.



About Imagine Canal Park

Imagine Canal Park is led locally by the City of Duluth. The Community Planning Division is leading this work through their ongoing efforts with the Imagine Duluth 2035 process. The City of Duluth has enlisted consultants 880 Cities and Zeitgeist to conduct the community engagement and pilot project processes. The pilot projects

were documented in video and photography by Wherehouse Productions. Imagine Canal Park is a recipient of a 2017 Knight Cities Challenge grant, generously provided by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. This project is also generously supported by the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation.

