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**SUBJECT: MAYOR HIGHLIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT AS PRIORITY**

**BY: Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator**

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## **MAYOR HIGHLIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT AS PRIORITY**

[DULUTH, MN] – Blight and nuisance properties diminish quality of life and community pride. Today, Mayor Don Ness and the Bryan Bushey from the Duluth Fire Department highlighted the significance of reducing blight to maintain quality neighborhoods while standing in front of a dilapidated vacant property at 820 N Lake Ave, which has been an eye sore for many neighbors over the years. The building is scheduled for demolition later this year once it receives approval from the City Council.

“Blight is a serious issue that goes well beyond the property line of the offender. From property values to neighborhood crime, unkempt property is a community issue that requires a community response. The City and residents can help hold property owners accountable for the blight they bring to a neighborhood. I want to thank Chief John Strongitharm, Deputy Chief Bryan Bushey and the Fire Department for their efforts to address this concern city-wide with the Neighborhood Blight Reduction Program,” said Mayor Don Ness.

The program was started last summer involving the Duluth Fire Department and the Solid Waste Compliance team in a concerted “Neighborhood Blight Reduction Program” effort to reduce neighborhood blight and improve quality of life for city residents and visitors. The Neighborhood Blight Reduction Program is an intensive, city-wide effort to address blight issues in Duluth neighborhoods. The program will restart again this summer. Last summer’s pilot program resulted in numerous contacts with property owners with good responses and overall general compliance. Obviously some problem properties persist which can lead to demolition if violations and requests for compliance result in non-action by the property owner.

“It’s important for property owners to do their part as taxpayers and stewards. Demolition is left as the very last resort. We want residents to have access to clean and safe housing and property owners are a critical partner to ensure that,” said Bryan Bushey, Deputy Fire Chief.

The City Attorney’s office and the Police Department have also been working on blight and nuisance property prosecution under a federal grant. The components of success for this project encompassed developing a community prosecution model, building a community

collaborative to reduce blight, making positive impacts through the use of community intervention, and a close working relationship between Police and a Community Prosecutor seeing victims and problems firsthand. The program pinpoints and connects people with resources but also prevents duplicative services among providers and partners by promoting consistent open communication. The program was recognized by Duluth Local Initiatives Support Corporation at their annual luncheon.

City officials encourage all property owners to ensure their property is in compliance with city code. Keep yards and neighborhoods looking clean, safe, and livable by:

- Licensing all vehicles on your property
- Removing all abandoned vehicles from your property
- Appropriately disposing of all abandoned property
- Make sure your house number is clearly posted on your home
- Repairing or removing dilapidated buildings
- Having a garbage can large enough to handle your household waste
- Cleaning up any solid waste in your yard
- Maintaining your yard and cutting back shrubs or vegetation

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