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**City of Duluth - Communications Office**

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**SUBJECT: City of Duluth Issues Findings for Imagine Canal Park Initiative**

**BY: Pakou Ly, Communications Office**

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### **City of Duluth Issues Findings for Imagine Canal Park Initiative**

[Duluth, MN] - The City of Duluth along with former City Councilor Elissa Hansen, the Canal Park Business Association, Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, 8 80 Cities, Zeitgeist Community & Arts Center, the Greater Downtown Council, Duluth Transit Authority and Visit Duluth activated and engaged over 2000 people over the past year with its Imagine Canal Park initiative offering fun interactive temporary pilot projects in several locations. The projects stimulated ideas and encouraged people to think broadly about access and mobility. Imagine Canal Park was funded with a \$200,000 grant from the Knight Foundation's Knight Cities Challenge and was led by Councilor Hansen and the City's Community Planning division as part of the Imagine Duluth 2035 comprehensive plan update. With assistance from 8 80 Cities consultants, the City of Duluth collected data throughout the past year and has received a final report including findings and recommendations. The City is sharing the final report with the public this week and will use the document to supplement the land use and parking studies currently being conducted to help re-vision Canal Park.

Canal Park is a geographically defined business district that draws in millions of visitors each year but also acts as the nexus to Park Point. As Canal Park's popularity and volume of visitors increase, the area is faced with a capacity dilemma. "Imagine Canal Park offered us a great opportunity to evaluate potential solutions to age old issues or problems. Our goal from the beginning was to be bold and innovative. We acknowledge that not every concept was well received, but we also don't learn unless we try something. Through these pilot projects, we heard from residents, business partners, stakeholder groups and visitors about what matters most to them and the potential they envision for Canal Park's future. Based on this input so far, we have a lot to look forward to," said Keith Hamre, Director of Planning and Economic Development.

"We tried a series of new ideas in ways that were creative, cost-efficient, innovative and experimental. I'm proud to be Mayor of a city that actually tries new things. Did all the ideas work the way we thought? No. Are all the ideas worth repeating? No, but many of them are, and that's part of what's so great about this. We tried some things people have talked about for years, and we did so in ways that were flexible, fun and included collecting people's feedback," stated Mayor Emily Larson.

Critical in the findings are accessibility – including pedestrians, motorists, cyclists, and transit users – into and out of Canal Park, regardless of level of mobility, and the potential usage of public and private spaces to accommodate programs and activities. Connections between Canal Park and downtown, particularly for pedestrians, continue to be a priority. The report highlights the challenges for motorists and expresses a need for parking configurations and traffic modeling that best maximize the current footprint as personal vehicles are the primary mode of transit into Canal Park. Imagine Canal Park survey respondents showed interest in extending the free Duluth Port Town trolley service, adding seating around Canal Park, increasing opportunities for play, and recreational activities or events like those provided during the Cold Front Celebration or the Lighthouse (parking) Lot temporary park.

The full list of recommendations includes:

1. Continue to pilot and evaluate projects as a standard practice
2. Invest in active transportation infrastructure to, from, and throughout Canal Park
3. Improve communication and coordination around parking
4. Expand the wayfinding system to downtown
5. Transform Buchanan Street into a flexible, shared street
6. Consider a more balanced approach to reconfiguring South Lake Ave
7. Increase opportunities for play near the water
8. Grow and expand Cold Front February

Hamre adds, "We are grateful to the Knight Foundation and 8 80 Cities for their contributions as well as our business partners. We

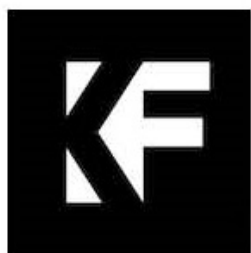
have some additional pilots projects planned and are excited to bring back Cold Front again in 2019 on February 1-3. Stay tuned for more details.”

The City is sharing the executive summary and complete report with the public on the <http://imagineduluth.com/canalpark2/> website.

*About*

*Imagine Canal Park is funded through the Knight Cities Challenge. The Knight Cities Challenge, an initiative of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, seeks ideas that help make cities more vibrant places to live and work, focusing on three drivers of city success: keeping and attracting talent, expanding opportunity, and creating a culture of civic engagement.*

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