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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: Mayor Larson launches broadband community needs survey

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Mayor Larson launches broadband community needs survey

[Duluth, MN] At a press conference today, Mayor Emily Larson announced that the City of Duluth will launch a broadband community needs survey. The survey will collect essential data from residents about how and why they use the internet and if it is affordable. The survey can be found by visiting www.connectingduluth.com and will take approximately three minutes to complete.

"We are asking Duluth residents to take the survey to help us understand barriers for access, lack of service, poor quality, and affordability," Mayor Larson said. "It will also help us to understand the gaps in service and help us to determine our next steps."

The goal of the survey is to have as many people take it as possible.

"It's crucial to have as many people as possible take the survey," City of Duluth Economic Developer Emily Nygren said. "Whether you take the survey on your phone, at the library, a computer lab, at work or at home, we are looking to collect as much information as possible to help us understand how the public uses the internet, how this service could be better, and how it could be spread more equitably throughout Duluth."

In the Mayor's State of the City speech earlier this year, she drew attention to the critical broadband needs facing Duluth and the stark disparities that currently exist around equitable access for all residents to fast, reliable, and affordable internet. She called for the need for competition in the market and committed to allocating \$1 million in American Rescue Plan funds to incentivize new service providers.

Since the speech, the City created an internal working group that meets weekly to research broadband opportunities. The group has looked at how 20 other municipalities across the region have developed or expanded broadband within their communities. The group also reviewed four presentations from service providers. EntryPoint, one of the service providers, has since become a consultant to create a feasibility study and develop a City of Duluth Master Broadband Plan.

The survey will be open from October 8 until November 12. Once the survey closes, city staff and EntryPoint will review the data and create the master broadband plan based on the outcomes. The plan will include a marketing and risk analysis that identifies current services, prices, and speeds from carriers in Duluth; infrastructure options for fiber, optic, coaxial cable, and wireless; potential sources for construction financing and long-term financing; and recommendations and considerations for next steps. The plan is expected to be presented to the City Council by the end of the year.

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