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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: City to Use Focus Groups in Effort to Improve Services

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City to Use Focus Groups in Effort to Improve Services

Grant funded research to address performance issues

[Duluth, MN] - In a continuing effort to improve city services, resident focus groups will be asked to voice their opinions about city priorities, the quality of services to residents, and performance standards to measure success. The effort will be paid for by a grant from The National Center for Civic Innovation.

The focus groups are the next phase of the City of Duluth's emphasis on performance management. In the past two years, the City has implemented several important reforms including departmental business plans, customer service training, systematic employee reviews, and citizen perception surveys. Over the past two years, hundreds of Duluth residents have taken part in the National Citizen Survey which has helped to establish a baseline performance measurement for city services.

"The best way to determine if our reform efforts have been effective is to hear directly from our customer, the residents of Duluth," said Mayor Don Ness. "I hope that we hear positive comments to reinforce the positive changes and inspire our work going forward. I also hope we hear clearly where we are falling short, to challenge ourselves to do better."

The city continually seeks ways to improve customer service and how we provide services to the public. The findings from these focus groups will help us better understand citizen perspectives about city government and our priorities," said Duluth Mayor Don Ness in announcing the focus group research. "Citizen input helps our decision making process and improves performance standards," added Ness.

Zenith Research Group of Duluth will conduct three focus group sessions early next year. The three 90-minute long focus group sessions will allow participants to more thoroughly discuss a variety of city services including public safety, housing, education, parks, libraries, sustainability and neighborhood vitality.

Duluth residents who are interested in participating in the focus group research will be asked to complete a short online application survey. Surveys will be available for completion on the City of Duluth website www.duluthmn.gov or the Zenith Research Group website www.zenithgroup.com beginning **Monday, December 20, 2010**. The application process will close on **Friday January 7, 2011**.