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**City of Duluth Communications Office**

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**DATE: 4/24/2023**

**SUBJECT: Mayor Emily Larson and Downtown Task Force co-chairs provide update on progress**

**BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer**

**Mayor Emily Larson and Downtown Task Force co-chairs provide update on progress**

[Duluth, MN] Mayor Emily Larson and Downtown Task Force co-chairs Shaun Floerke and Kristi Stokes, along with City of Duluth staff and community members, gathered at a news conference Monday, April 24 in the atrium at the Zeitgeist Center for the Arts and Community to provide an update on progress to task force recommendations.

Task force recommendations revolved around four key areas: Safety, Activation, Vision, and Investment.

“We know there’s a lot more work to be done on our downtown, but we’re proud to say the work is happening,” said Mayor Emily Larson. “We’re increasing investment in public safety resources downtown. We’re enhancing mental health response. While we know the crime rate is down by 22% across the city, what’s equally as important is improving the public’s perception of safety in our downtown neighborhood, and that is why we keep convening the community often to communicate, to share resources, to train, and to listen.”

“Our goal is to have a downtown that is alive and vibrant 18 hours a day,” said task force co-chair Kristi Stokes. “We’re looking now toward workshopping with Urban Strategist Michelle Reeves and our downtown businesses to find out how to revitalize through tenant mixes and property values to get all the businesses rowing in the same direction, to correct course and encourage growth.”

Task force co-chair Shaun Floerke provided updates on Vision and Investment, providing information about the housing study that is underway. “We happen to think downtown Duluth is a super exciting place to invite people to live,” said Floerke. “The last housing study was done in 2020, and the world is a lot different now than it was in 2020 in terms of downtowns across the country, so we’re looking to have some recommendations coming out in the summer, and we’re excited about that.”

Updates to the Downtown Task Force recommendations can be found in full at:  
<https://duluthmn.gov/mayor/downtown-task-force/>.

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