

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**City of Duluth Communications Office**

Mayor Emily Larson  
411 West First Street • Duluth, Minnesota 55802 • [www.duluthmn.gov](http://www.duluthmn.gov)

*For more information, please call 218-730-5309*

**DATE: 12/27/2022**

**SUBJECT: Mayor Emily Larson provides 2022 year-end progress report in news conference**

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

**Mayor Emily Larson provides 2022 year-end progress report in news conference**

[DULUTH, MN] In a news conference held today at Duluth City Hall, Mayor Emily Larson laid out progress made by City administration and staff in 2022 on initiatives in four focus areas.

Priorities for 2022 fell into four key areas: Economic Development, Public Safety, Connectivity, and Sustainability.

“Earlier this year, in my State of the City Address, I laid out an ambitious, holistic approach to economic development—our path to building a healthy, prosperous, sustainable, fair, and inclusive community,” said Mayor Larson in the news conference, previewing a list of initiatives with benchmarks passed and markers for ongoing progress for each initiative.

Under the first header of Economic Development, Mayor Larson listed progress made with her Housing Task Force and the Housing Trust Fund, highlighting \$35 million in dedicated funds that were invested into this core priority, resulting in 850 new housing units created or planned in the city limits and helping the City make significant strides toward clearing an ongoing barrier to economic growth.

Additionally, Mayor Larson and the City’s Planning and Economic Development team streamlined the permitting process to make it more responsive and intuitive for residents and developers. This includes a new online communication tool for frequently asked questions, a new service delivery system to allow staff more one-on-one service, better and faster response time to all permit inquiries, and the implementation of a new digital process to review electronic plans. Beyond that, the City is convening an internal audit to take a closer look at our economic development strategies and ensure that no opportunity is left unexplored.

Signs that these efforts to improve and streamline the permitting process are working include large-scale developments and investments at the Cirrus Innovation Center, ST Paper’s purchase of the former Verso paper plant, and historic private investments into housing.

Mayor Larson also reviewed the successes of the Builders + Backers Idea Accelerator, which invested in a first cohort of new entrepreneurs’ ideas and start-up businesses, infusing new energy into the local economy.

She highlighted the work conducted by her Downtown Task Force—an initiative that brought together community leaders and City staff to re-envision and strengthen the heart of Duluth. The Mayor’s Downtown Task Force recently released their 27 recommendations, and City staff have already put several of those recommendations into action, bridging Public Safety and Economic Development.

Larson went on to highlight Connectivity through description of the progress made by the Planning and

Economic Development team on their Duluth Broadband Pilot Project, which seeks to close the digital disparity gap for 1,900 Lincoln Park residents, and eventually any resident who wishes to participate in this affordable, reliable, high-quality fiber broadband opportunity.

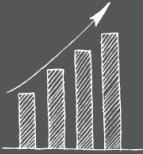
Additionally, Larson continued to underscore the successes of Public Works and Utilities staff in their road repair efforts, accelerating the pace of repair to nearly 17 miles of streets repaired in 2022, adding notably that when she began her first term, the City averaged only 2 miles of repair per year.

In highlighting the continuing efforts to build a sustainable, clean energy economy, Mayor Larson said, “Our Sustainability Office continue to make huge strides toward cross-departmental, cross-agency work that not only strengthens our climate action efforts, but also creates a resiliency for our city and its residents that will allow future generations the same resources we have while also allowing for some significant savings for taxpayers in this generation. Every win in this category has either current or future positive economic impacts that residents will reap the benefits of for generations to come. I’m so proud that we’re on the leading edge of sustainability and resiliency efforts in the City of Duluth.”

The Mayor will set forth a new priority plan in her 2023 State of the City speech on a date to be named later.

###

# 2022 YEAR END REPORT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Convene an internal audit to take our economic development strategy to the next level
- Streamline permitting process
- BIPOC Business Directory
- Builders + Backers Idea Accelerator
- New tourism strategy
- Cirrus
- ST Paper



## HOUSING

- Established a \$16M Housing Trust Fund in partnership with Duluth LISC
- \$19 million dollars from ARP to build and preserve nearly 400 affordable units
- Expand warming center hours



## PUBLIC SAFETY

- Convened Mayor's Downtown Task Force
- Added new prosecutor
- Conduct a full-scale racial bias audit of the department
- Revive "community courts"
- Activating downtown storefronts
- Love Your Block program
- Community-coordinated response



## CONNECTIVITY

- Commitment to affordable, reliable, high quality fiber optic internet within six years
- Initiate Pilot Project to enroll 1,900 homes in the Lincoln Park neighborhood to evaluate resident interest, installation costs, etc.



## SUSTAINABILITY

- Galvanize a city-wide effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the city to meet net-zero by 2050
- Established City's Climate Action Work Plan
- Duluth Energy Systems has also created a 5-year plan to eliminate coal
- RACER Award
- Citywide lead remediation strategy