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**City of Duluth Communications Office**

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**SUBJECT: City of Duluth Receives State Funding for Legislative Priorities**

**BY: Daniel Fanning, Communications & Policy Director - Mayor's Office**

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## **City of Duluth Receives Funding for Legislative Priorities**

**Mayor Calls it a “Historic Moment”: Funding Secured for Wade, Spirit Mountain & Nor Shor**

[Duluth, MN] – With the passage of the 2014 State Bonding Bill earlier today, the City of Duluth will receive funding for all three established legislative priorities: Wade Stadium Renovation, Spirit Mountain Water Project, and NorShor Theater & Arts Center Restoration.

“This is a very good bill for the City of Duluth,” said Mayor Don Ness. “All three of these projects are important for our city. These funds will help create hundreds of new construction and permanent jobs and serve as a major boost to our local economy. Restoring Wade Stadium will ensure the iconic ball field will continue to be enjoyed by players and fans for decades to come. The Spirit Mountain Water Project will allow the ski hill to get off of the City’s treated water, saving money and opening up other potential development in western part of town. NorShor Theater & Arts Center will serve as a catalyst for new development in old downtown. We are very grateful for the leadership and support of our local delegation, legislative leaders, Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Prettner Solon, and everyone who had a hand in making this historic moment possible.”

Minnesota legislators approved the \$1B statewide public works bill earlier today and Governor Dayton has agreed to sign it into law. The bill includes \$846 million in GO bonds with an additional bill which includes \$200 million in surplus cash. All three of Duluth’s projects will be funded through surplus cash.

Wade Stadium, which has been one of the City’s legislative priorities for the past six years, received \$2.3 million dollars for needed repairs including field repairs and reconstruction of the stadium’s crumbling brick walls. While the amount is short of the original request of \$5.7 million, this first phase will allow the improvements necessary in the short term, with the option to request additional funding for second phase improvements in the future to further enhance fan experience.

“These funds will allow much needed field turf to be installed, along with upgraded lights and long overdue brickwork,” said Kathy Bergen, City of Duluth Parks and Recreation Manager. “These upgrades will enhance the player and spectator experience and ensure the Duluth Huskies, St. Scholastica Saints, Denfeld Hunters and all other user groups will be able to continue playing in historic Wade Stadium for years to come. The artificial turf will actually

expand our options, opening up the possibility of having other user groups enjoy the Wade as well.”

“We’re very grateful for the support from Mayor Ness and the City of Duluth, as well as our legislative delegation,” said Craig Smith, General Manager of the Duluth Huskies, one of the user groups at Wade Stadium. “The new turf in particular will mean less rain delays and cancellations for our team this summer, and the new lights will allow us to schedule more evening games. This will all result in a better and safer environment for our fans and players.”

Spirit Mountain received \$3.4 million dollars to be used to acquire land rights, design, and construction of a water system which will deliver water to the ski facilities directly from the St. Louis River for snow making purposes.

“The \$3.4 million in bonding for the Spirit Mountain Water Infrastructure project is really a game changer for the resort,” said Renee Mattson, Executive Director of Spirit Mountain. “The ability to open three weeks earlier in the season will further enhance Spirit Mountain’s already sizeable \$37 million economic impact on the community. Additionally, the environmental benefits by reducing the spring runoff into the St. Louis River are vitally important to the watershed. We’re grateful for the work and support of City Administration on this project and thank our legislative delegation for their tireless pursuit of funding for this project.”

The bonding bill also included \$6.95 million dollars for restoration of the historic NorShor Theatre & Arts Center in downtown Duluth, under a partnership between Sherman & Associates and the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) with productions to be managed by the Duluth Playhouse. The project will result in an estimated 366 new jobs and will result in a 750+ seat theatre along with a new arts center, music and theater classrooms, workshops and guest services center.

“We are grateful to the Minnesota legislature for their support of the NorShor Theater & Arts Center,” said Nancy Norr, President of DEDA. “The renovation of this historic theatre will have a regional and statewide impact as we work to grow and enrich our communities, help retain and attract a talented workforce, and provide diverse arts and cultural experiences. We look forward to bringing this iconic asset back to life as part of the continuing efforts to revitalize downtown Duluth.”

“I want to thank all those who worked tirelessly throughout this legislative process,” said George Sherman, President of Sherman Associates. “We could not have achieved this success without their commitment and determination. The NorShor restoration is a remarkable project in its scope and purpose, and we are so gratified by this show of support. We look forward to our continued partnership with the City of Duluth, DEDA, and the Duluth Playhouse as we bring the NorShor back to its rightful place as a center of artistic and economic vitality for the city and the region.”

“We are extremely grateful for the tremendous support the NorShor Theatre & Arts Center restoration project received from the Legislature,” said Christine Gradl Seitz, Executive and Artistic Director of the Duluth Playhouse – who will manage the property. “This project will enhance our community, our region, and our state in countless ways; bringing new jobs and new life to much beloved Duluth landmark. We appreciate the dedication and commitment of Mayor Don Ness and the perseverance of our legislative leaders in support of our vision of all the NorShor will be.”

Mayor Ness will hold a press conference with community and legislative leaders on Monday, May 19, at noon in the Mayor’s Reception Room, Duluth City Hall, to discuss these projects in

more detail.