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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: After four years of construction, Superior Street will reopen today September 3

BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer

After four years of construction, Superior Street will reopen today September 3

[Duluth, MN] The Superior Street Reconstruction Project will be complete later today. The final portion of the project that has been under construction since June 21st will reopen to vehicular traffic by the end of the day.

The \$31.5 million projects began in 2018, which was to replace one of Duluth's oldest streets. The project, which replaced the iconic bricks on the street's surface, also replaced utilities that dated back to the 1880s. The project also converted its 1932 steam heating system to a more efficient hot water distribution system.

"In the first phase of the project, it was amazing the things we found during the construction," said Duncan Schwensohn, City of Duluth Senior Engineer and lead on the project. "We found everything from trolley tracks to vaults that were never documented – our team learned a lot from this project."

The project stretched from the 600 block of West Superior Street to the 400 block of East Superior Street. The project was originally planned to take three phases over three years but was stretched to a fourth and final year to finish a one-block portion of Phase II and another portion of Phase III. Rainy and cold weather played a part in the delays, in addition to unexpected findings and conditions below the surface.

"We are ready and reset. This once in a generation project took all we had – the patience of our downtown community, the financial investment of partners, and vision for a sustainable future," Mayor Emily Larson said. "It's all a part of our new downtown. I'm thrilled today for our entire community. We're a city on the rise, and we're poised for a generation of success."

Kristi Stokes, president of the Greater Downtown Council, agreed.

"We're excited to cross the finish line on this project," she said. "While it's never easy for our businesses to have construction out their front door, they now have a transformed main street with new infrastructure and amenities. It will be such a milestone to see the last of the barricades removed and watch traffic freely flow to all of our businesses along Superior Street. We're grateful to Northland Constructors and the City of Duluth for working closely with the stakeholders throughout the entire job."

A diverse work group played a large role in completing the project.

"The City is proud that a large percentage of the workers on the project were people who are considered socially disadvantaged individuals," Mayor Larson said. "Thanks to Workforce Development, Northland Constructors, and subcontractors, people of color, low-income workers, people who have and are experiencing homelessness, at-risk youth, among others found not only employment through this project, but are trained and can have careers in the construction trades. Their futures are bright, and they can be proud to see what they have helped to create and the impact that their work will have for generations to come."

“Northland has been an outstanding partner in our efforts to recruit diversity in the construction industry,” said Director of Workforce Development Elena Foshay. “They’ve been actively involved in the Construction Working Group for a while, and are engaged with our various construction training programs. They have and continue to hire program graduates who are then able to work on the Superior Street project and others modernizing downtown infrastructure.”

“After nearly 130,000 Northland crew hours plus subcontractor’s time in the heat, cold, a pandemic, rain, and drought Northland is proud to fully open Superior Street today,” Annie Harala, Northland Business Development and Communications Manager for Northland Constructors, said. “Northland is grateful for the strong partnership with businesses, neighbors, The City of Duluth, Evergreen Energy, and our partnering sub-contractors.”

The City of Duluth would like to thank internal staff, especially Duncan Schwensohn, for his leadership on this project. In addition, the City would like to thank Chauncey Bangs, Shane Anderson, Nate Lavine, Bruce Carlson, Brian Scott (retired), and Marty Thiry for the roles that they specifically played in this project.

Thanks to the Planning and Economic Development and Public Works, and Workforce Development for playing lead roles in helping to create and execute the plans for this project and creating opportunities for Duluth’s underserved populations to be employed in this project.

Additional thanks to Kristi Stokes and the Greater Downtown Council for their partnership on this project. To Northland Constructors, and especially Annie Harala, thank you for your leadership, your perseverance, and your enthusiasm to complete this project; we are grateful.

To the business owners and businesses along Superior Street, thank you. Thank you for believing in this project and for hanging in there. It wasn’t easy, but look what we have accomplished.

Finally, to the Duluth residents and visitors, thank you for shopping, eating, and visiting the storefronts along Superior Street. Our main street is an amazing asset- thank you for supporting local and getting businesses through to the finish line!

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