



**City of Duluth Communications Office**

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

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

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**SUBJECT:** Mayor Roger J. Reinert delivers his first State of the City address Thursday evening

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

## **Mayor Roger J. Reinert delivers his first State of the City address Thursday evening**

[DULUTH, MN] Mayor Roger Reinert gave his first State of the City address since taking office on January 2nd as Duluth's 40th Mayor. The location was Denfeld High School in the western part of Duluth.

"I chose Denfeld because I'm a fan of Duluth history," said Reinert. "There are so many connections to our most amazing chapters that all tie back to this place." Reinert also noted that he lived on the west side of town.

Mayor Reinert spent most of his time discussing the Five Big Issues he campaigned on in 2023. He highlighted the action steps that had already been taken in each area, and discussed the work yet to be done.

Key take-aways included:

- Asking the City Council to send unused ARPA dollars to the Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA) so those funds could be applied to gap financing on housing projects, as well as site prep and utility infrastructure costs.
- Reinert pledged to hold Duluth's 2025 local property tax levy flat for the first time since 2014. "After nearly 50% growth in just the last eight years, Duluth taxpayers need a breather."

Reinert also shared that according to the City's Finance team, a third party actuarial, and the State Board of Investment, the City has successfully funded its retiree healthcare obligation. That frees up \$4.5M in the city budget beginning in 2025. The Mayor advocated using these funds to finance a new combined maintenance facility for the City.

“I asked the staff smart enough to find these dollars how we could best use them to support our core city service priorities. Without hesitation they said a combined maintenance facility.”

The city currently owns four separate facilities, and all are in need of significant investment. A combined facility would save operational costs, and also create more drivers and maintenance staff by freeing up overlapping positions.

We have to be better systems thinkers and we have to do a better job of actually moving the needle. This project may seem a little boring, but it's a great example of doing both those things well.”

Reinert concluded by calling on Duluth to have a “growth mentality”. “By the 2030 Census Duluth should be over 90,000 people.” Duluth’s population was once nearly 107,000, but has hovered at just under 87,000 for over three decades.

He noted that growing the population would indicate moving the needle on all the big issues: creating more housing, growing the economy and tax base, better investment in core City infrastructure, revitalizing downtown, and spreading out the existing tax burden.

Video of the mayor’s 2024 State of the City Address can be viewed in its entirety at [https://fb.watch/rGL\\_-Pvspq/](https://fb.watch/rGL_-Pvspq/).

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