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SUBJECT: Community Leaders Provide Update on Prosperity Initiative

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Community Leaders Provide Update on Prosperity Initiative

Mayor Don Ness and community leaders unveiled the Duluth Prosperity Agenda earlier this year with the goal of harnessing existing talent and resources, building collaborations, and exploring long-term community investments, all aimed at increasing community prosperity. Prosperity is gauged in following five areas: housing, education, income and poverty, workforce, and business climate. The Prosperity Agenda Leadership Team is committed to measuring its results and sharing updates with the community.

As the one year mark approaches, the Prosperity Agenda Leadership Team has gained further insight on the community and its needs using results from the recently conducted American Community Survey. Poor economic conditions have had an obvious impact on residents and their economic status. The survey shows an increase in the number of Duluthians living at 200% of poverty from 40.3% to 47%, many of whom are students; the median household income is down by \$2,000 to \$35,341 but Duluth also has far fewer families with two adults compared to the state average; and the number of people in the workforce has decreased slightly Duluth's diverse job market helped minimize the impact compared to state job numbers.

"We have a better understanding of the diverse faces of our workforce and those residents living in poverty. This data demonstrates an even greater need for awareness and a united front to move our community one step closer to achieving prosperity. The dividends and public benefits are numerous if we are willing to make strategic long term investments," said Mayor Don Ness.

A key element of the effort is the "Prosperity Index" used to measure Duluth's progress in creating and sustaining prosperity. The Index, was created in partnership with the state Department of Employment and Economic Development. An increase in the key indicators moves the index in a positive direction. The Index base year is 2009 (using 2008 data) and in studying the 2010 data, there is a significant decline of 14 points in the index due to the spike in poverty numbers.

“This decline should not discourage the community but rather move us to action with greater commitment to help friends and neighbors climb out of poverty,” said Angie Miller, Director of Community Action Duluth which serves low income and working families and individuals.

As the Prosperity Agenda work advances and community initiatives such as the Duluth Academy, the Blueprint to End Poverty and At Home in Duluth Collaborative make progress, the community could begin to realize dividends in the form of increased revenue, economic independence for individuals and families, lower crime and blighted homes, increased number of high school graduates, a highly educated workforce, and more healthy and stable neighborhoods.

The Prosperity agenda Leadership Team invites volunteers to join one of its five work groups. For Additional information visit the City of Duluth website at

http://www.duluthmn.gov/duluth_prosperity_agenda/index.cfm

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