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City of Duluth - Communications Office

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SUBJECT: Making Canal Park Pop is a 2017 Knight Cities Challenge Winner

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Making Canal Park Pop is a 2017 Knight Cities Challenge Winner

[Duluth, MN, June 12] – Making Canal Park Pop has been selected as a 2017 Knight Cities Challenge winner! The Knight Cities Challenge, an initiative of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, seeks ideas that help make cities more vibrant places to live and work, focusing on three drivers of city success: keeping and attracting talent, expanding opportunity, and creating a culture of civic engagement. Duluth's proposal was one of 33 winners selected from 144 finalists nationwide.

As a winner of the Knight Cities Challenge, this project aligns with the Knight community and national initiatives strategy to invest in projects that advance talent, opportunity, and engagement. Creating a central gathering hub for residents in Duluth will strengthen their connection to both the city and to each other. Making Canal Park Pop will act as a catalyst in the creation of Duluth's new waterfront experience where culture comes together and the community engages with each other, creating a sense of place and increasing economic opportunity to all socioeconomic levels.

“By activating a central public space for diverse residents to meet and connect, the project is helping to make Duluth a more vibrant place to live and work, while involving residents in shaping their city,” said Lilly Weinberg, Knight Foundation director for community foundations.

“We are thrilled and grateful for the Knight Cities Challenge grant which will enable all residents to experience more of what Canal Park has to offer and share their own ideas about the future of the district. We are excited to introduce elements that align economic development with creative use of open space. This project is grounded in our work towards achieving prosperity that is inclusive of everyone,” said Mayor Emily Larson.

The project objective is to enhance local community members' activity in Canal Park year round. The pop-ups will capitalize on and make effective use of existing open spaces, roadways, and create common public plazas to encourage people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and neighborhoods to gather and interact. Activities will entail:

- Hosting extensive community engagement processes that canvas residents and neighbors about what they want to see in Canal Park.
- Launching a series of pop-up installments in Canal Park. Different programming will be tested in different seasons. Results and data will be gathered.
- Collecting quantitative measures and qualitative feedback to inform Imagine Duluth's Canal Park 2.0 comprehensive plan.

“Our purpose is to increase vibrancy in Duluth by repurposing space in Canal Park with pop-up installations that attract and connect diverse residents from different backgrounds. Duluth is a city with innovative thinkers and problem solvers. Alternative modes of transit and common open spaces help engage and create a sense of community connectedness.” said City Councilor and project coordinator, Elissa Hansen, “We want to consider how we purposefully build infrastructure to grow a culture supporting socioeconomic mobility and we know that disparities and lack of access to open spaces hinders healthy neighborhoods. This proposal confronts these issues. Canal Park was chosen to host the “pop-up” concepts given its central location, access to the Lakewalk trail, and year-round available amenities to our residents.”

The project period will commence in July 2017 and run through December 2018 with a final public report to be issued. The project team will be collaborating with Zeitgeist Center for Arts & Community, the Duluth Transit Authority, the Canal Park Business Association, Visit Duluth, and 8 80 Cities.

About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Knight Foundation is a national foundation with strong local roots. We invest in journalism, in the arts, and in the success of cities where brothers John S. and James L. Knight once published newspapers. Our goal is to foster informed and engaged communities, which we believe are essential for a healthy democracy.

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