



City of Duluth Communications Office

411 West First Street • Room 403 • Duluth, Minnesota • 55802  
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*Mayor's 100-day assessment report - April 25, 2008*  
**Results**

**Goal:** Hire a new Chief Administrative Officer.

**Action Taken:** Lisa Potswald assumed her responsibilities as the City's CAO as of April 14. A 16-member committee, led by Pat Mullen, consisting of elected officials, business executives, and citizen leaders committed three months of effort in evaluating over forty candidates to narrow the field. We thank them for their excellent work and dedication to the process which has resulted in the selection of an outstanding choice.

**Goal:** Implement plans to move existing retirees to a single health care plan.

**Action Taken:** The city took a significant step towards this goal by mandating that all eligible retirees enroll in Medicare. 37 individuals were sent notices requiring compliance. City staff has worked diligently on creating a legal history of the retiree health care benefit which will be necessary for any successful implementation of achieving significant retiree benefit cost savings.

**Goal:** Kick off public process to create a new form-based zoning code.

**Action Taken:** This process has been delayed due to the retirement of Planning Director Bob Bruce. A new Planning Director will be hired in May. The creation of a new code will be an 18-month process guided by city staff, a citizen advisory committee, and a technical advisory committee. As a first step, consultant RFQs will be reviewed in May and a RFP will be sent to qualified applicants in June.

**Goal:** Work with City Council to create a plan for policy process reform.

**Action Taken:** The Mayor participated in the City Council's two day retreat at Hartley Nature Center. From that gathering, a refined process for policy development was agreed upon. The result is a more intensive and collaborative process in which city staff work with Councilors in the development of policy prior to a proposal being placed on the agenda.

**Goal:** Restructure planning district model and reinvigorate process for citizen participation.

**Action Taken:** The Mayor's plan replaces the planning district model with one that reestablishes the importance of neighborhood-based community clubs and creates five citizen organizations based upon Duluth's five council districts. The Council District Board, comprised of neighborhood representatives, would meet monthly to discuss issues facing their area with elected officials and city staff.

**Goal:** Advocate for passage of 2008 Legislative priorities.

**Action Taken:** After three years of frustration, the DECC project received \$38 million from the State and construction will begin this fall, putting 300 people to work. Passenger rail funding was also included in the bonding bill, but was line-item vetoed by the Governor. While we did not achieve funding this session, we were successful in raising awareness of our sanitary sewer needs and capital funding needs at the zoo, the airport, and passenger rail. We are well positioned to achieve funding for these important projects during the next legislative session. We are proud of the work done by our legislative delegation during this session and applaud their efforts.



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Assessment

**Goal:** Assess each department's operations conducted by respective directors.

**Action Taken:** Each department director conducted an internal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis with staff assistance and input. This assessment will serve as the foundation for reform and improvement efforts in the coming months. A partial summary of their findings is presented by each director following the mayor's comments.

**Goal:** Analyze cumulative tax/fee/rate involving taxing authorities.

**Action Taken:** A meeting to discuss the cumulative cost of public services was held Monday, April 14, with representatives of authorities including the Duluth Public Schools, St. Louis County, Seaway Port Authority and others present.

**Goal:** Identify measurable community indicators comparable to similarly-sized communities in the region.

**Action Taken:** The City is supporting the efforts of an organization called Minnesota Compass which is developing a system to provide unbiased, credible community indicators that will be measured state-wide and will provide consistent data to compare Duluth to similar communities.

**Goal:** Establish citizen-led study groups for statistical and operational assessment of Duluth's efforts in budget, economic development, permit process, workforce development, environmental sustainability, homestead foreclosure, snow removal and long-term infrastructure investment.

**Action Taken:** The Mayor's Foreclosure Study Group has met several times already since inception in February and is working to craft a set of findings. An internal review of the Building Safety Office has resulted in an internal reorganization of the department with a consultant on board to provide additional assistance in this task. Two groups were formed regarding the snow removal process – an internal group which was charged with updating the city's snow removal and snow emergency ordinance, and an external group charged with providing a public communication plan in the event snow emergencies are declared. The Duluth Workforce Council and the Environmental Advisory Commission have taken on additional responsibilities per the Mayor's request.



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Communication

**Goal:** Establish monthly 'open office' meetings to allow citizens to meet one-on-one with mayor and department directors.

**Action Taken:** The first "Mayor's Night" was held in March with 22 citizens attending. This event will be held on the last Tuesday of each month – citizens are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to visit with the Mayor outside of regular business hours.

**Goal:** Develop a regular City Hall PACT-TV program.

**Action Taken:** Two episodes of "Duluth: This Is Your City" have been shot and air regularly on the channel. The monthly program, hosted by the Mayor, is designed to give citizens greater insight into City operations and positive community initiatives.

**Goal:** Visit each city department and meet with employees.

**Action Taken:** Mayor Ness has visited each department and met with employees at City Hall and remote sites around the city. He has taken suggestions from employees concerned about various aspects of city operations and gained a greater understanding of how employees operate, especially those outside City Hall. This has been a valuable opportunity for both Mayor Ness and staff alike.

**Goal:** Establish direct contact with area elected officials.

**Action Taken:** Mayor Ness has met with many elected officials around the area, including area mayors, council members, county commissioners, school board members, local legislators, and Congressman Oberstar. The Mayor plans to attend council meetings and meet with local officials from the broader Arrowhead Region throughout the year.

**Goal:** Conduct monthly "Believe in Duluth" forums highlighting community-led initiatives.

**Action Taken:** The highlighting of these initiatives is now part of the monthly PACT-TV show. The first two shows have highlighted the United Way's fundraising campaign and PAVSA's new SANE program to assist in gathering evidence in cases of sexual assault. We are pleased and proud to recognize our citizens, non-profit organizations and most especially our volunteers for all the good work they do to help our community grow.

**Goal:** Host eight community assessment dialogues in aviation, health care, higher education, tourism, technology, shipping, development/construction and manufacturing.

**Action Taken:** These meetings were all held in April. Mayor Ness presided over a series of informal discussions in all these fields to learn about areas of concern in each as well as to gain a greater understanding of key issues these important areas of our community face. Local leaders in all these areas assisted in bringing together their colleagues. Special thanks should be given to John Eagleton of Northstar Aerospace, Terry Mattson of Visit Duluth, Lisa Heyesen of APEX and Adolph Ojard of the Seaway Port Authority of Duluth for their efforts in bringing together industry leaders.

**Goal:** Present 100-day assessment report on April 25, 2008.

**Action Taken:** This report accomplishes this goal.