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SUBJECT: City Announces Health Impact Assessment on Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan

BY: Amy Norris, Public Information Coordinator

CITY ANNOUNCES

HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON GARY/NEW DULUTH SMALL AREA PLAN

The project is a partnership between City of Duluth Long Range Planning and Business and Economic Development staff and the Minnesota Department of Health.

DULUTH— City of Duluth announced today that its departments of Planning and Construction Services and Business and Economic Development will be conducting a health impact assessment (HIA) in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health to explore the potential health impacts of the Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan. The Small Area Plan and HIA will begin in May 2013 and wrap up at the end of the year.

HIA is a tool used to identify and address the potential health benefits and health risks of a decision made in a field outside the health sector; in this case, the adoption of a new long-range plan for the neighborhood of Gary/New Duluth. The Gary/New Duluth neighborhood is situated adjacent to a landfill and the US Steel Plant Duluth Works site, a federal Superfund site. Conducting an HIA on the small area plan provides an opportunity for City staff and the community to identify existing strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood and to provide recommendations to the City Council to improve the health of residents through community-based planning.

The City will provide multiple opportunities for community input on the elements of the Small Area Plan and the health impacts to be addressed in the HIA. The City will convene a Steering Committee of community stakeholders as well as several Technical Advisory Committees to address specific topic areas addressed by the HIA. An HIA Technical Advisory Committee will oversee the scope and recommendations of the HIA. In addition to the formal committees, the City will host public meetings and engage community members in discussions to generate more input and feedback on the Plan and HIA.

“Because the Gary/New Duluth Neighborhood is located between US Steel superfund site and a major land fill, our significant health concerns are based on past pollution as well as the redevelopment of other adjacent industrial property. This HIA Grant will facilitate our ability to incorporate and mitigate the impacts of the recommendations from the Small Area Plan on the health of the neighborhood residents” said Keith Hamre, Director of Duluth’s Department of Planning and Construction Services.

The first and only other HIA done in Duluth was the Sixth Avenue East Schematic Redesign Study HIA, completed in 2011 and led by St. Louis County Public Health. That HIA developed a series of recommendations for future planning and engineering initiatives associated with the redesign and reconstruction of Sixth Avenue East. The recommendations focused on accessibility, safety, physical activity and livability needs identified by the community through the HIA process.

The Gary/New Duluth Small Area Plan HIA was made possible by a grant from the Health Impact Project, a collaboration of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts dedicated to promoting the use of health impact assessments in the United States. More information, including a searchable map of HIA activity in the United States, is available at www.healthimpactproject.org.

For additional information, contact John Kelley, Planner II at 218-730-5326.

The Minnesota Department of Health has been working on HIA in Minnesota since 2009. More information about HIA at MDH is available at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hia/.

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