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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: Results of Downtown Housing Study presented to public in downtown meeting this morning

BY: Kelli Latuska, Public Information Officer

Results of Downtown Housing Study presented to public in downtown meeting this morning

[DULUTH, MN] In March of 2023, Mayor Emily Larson’s Downtown Task Force recommended a study be conducted around the market potential for development of downtown housing. For this task, Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. was contracted to conduct a comprehensive study evaluating the market potential and optimum market position for affordable/workforce and market-rate rental and for-sale downtown housing units that could be developed over the next five years through a combination of new construction and adaptive re-use of existing commercial buildings within the greater downtown study area. The study area encompasses both the downtown core area as well as a portion of the central Hillside neighborhood.

“This study substantiates what we thought might be true: people want to live downtown. And even better: that both the people already living here and potential new residents see downtown as a great choice. Our job now is to catalyze on this study to bring housing units on line. The next ten years are going to be incredible for downtown Duluth,” said Mayor Emily Larson.

Presented by Laurie Volk of Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. at a meeting in the Lyric Convention Center on Tuesday morning, the study reveals that a yearly average of around 8,000 households of all incomes and demographics comprise the market potential for new and existing primary housing units in the City as a whole, and that an annual average of 2,175 of those households represent the market for new and existing dwelling units inside the greater downtown study area. The greater downtown study area has the potential for 1,920 to 2,505 new market-rate, affordable/workforce and subsidized units.

“The outcomes of this study really complement the other recommendations of the Mayor’s Downtown Task Force,” said President of Downtown Duluth and Downtown

Task Force co-chair Kristi Stokes. “We need to look at different ways to activate a post-pandemic downtown. And we have definitely seen that having more residents means a more active and more vibrant downtown.”

“We know that a thriving downtown is absolutely essential to the health of our city and that increasing housing is critical to that thriving. This study outlines the tools we can use to make it happen. People are coming together to solve this complex problem and move Duluth forward, said Downtown Task Force co-chair and President of Duluth Superior Community Foundation.

City of Duluth Director of Planning and Economic Development Chad Ronchetti said of the study, “The Zimmerman/Volk Associates study provides our department a roadmap to reinvigorate our downtown and revitalize the heart of our community. The City looks forward to enhancing the critical partnership between the City and the development community.”

Zimmerman/Volk Associates’ executive summary and full greater downtown study can both be found on the City of Duluth’s Planning and Economic Development web page at <https://duluthmn.gov/media/15841/duluth-exec-summary-2023.pdf> and https://duluthmn.gov/media/15840/greater-downtown-study-area_duluthmn-2023.pdf.

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