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SUBJECT: City of Duluth one of 11 US communities chosen by US Department of Energy to design geothermal heating district
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City of Duluth one of 11 US communities chosen by US Department of Energy to design geothermal heating district

[DULUTH, MN] In a press conference held in Lincoln Park today, May 9, 2023, Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, City of Duluth Sustainability Officer Mindy Granley, and community partners from Ever-Green Energy, Ecolibrium 3, and WLSSD gathered to detail a US Department of Energy's Geothermal Technologies Office (GTO) award received to design a geothermal district heating system using waste heat from WLSSD in Duluth.

"This extremely exciting opportunity to analyze and design a district geothermal and heat recovery possibility—one that hasn't been designed in the US before—comes to us with a ton of potential to further reduce operating emissions and introduce more strategies to decarbonize many of the buildings in the district," said Mayor Emily Larson of the award. "This community collaboration, led by City staff, really shows the community momentum behind finding new clean energy solutions."

This $700,000 award for Community Geothermal Heating Design and Deployment initiative will support community coalitions like this one to design and deploy geothermal district heating and cooling systems, create related workforce training, and identify and address environmental justice concerns. Widespread adoption of geothermal heating systems will help decarbonize the building and electricity sectors, reduce energy costs for families, and boost resilience.

In the first phase of this effort, coalitions will design their systems, finalize project sites and use, assess the energy resource, analyze environmental and permitting needs, conduct feasibility analysis and local engagement, and identify workforce and training needs. Based on first-phase outcomes, the Department of Energy's GTO will select a subset of projects to advance to a second phase for deployment of these systems. In addition to helping communities implement community geothermal heating and cooling systems, the initiative will provide data and case studies that will help other

communities nationwide consider such systems to support local energy needs.

Duluth is one of 11 communities in the United States to receive this award. The proposed geothermal system will use waste heat from the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) effluent to cover 100% of heating loads for a new district energy system in the Lincoln Park neighborhood.

“Project collaboration partners include a wide range of key community organizations and technical experts working across sectors, including the City’s Sustainability Office, Public Works and Utilities, Workforce Development, Ecolibrium3, Ever-Green Energy, WLSSD, and the Center for Occupational Research and Design,” said Sustainability Officer Mindy Granley.” The City will be the grant holder and will help with the contracting needed to consult on the design and cost analysis. The award will fund the next year of work, and the West Superior Street reconstruction project funded by the RAISE grant allows us to maximize our efforts in designing this system in the Lincoln Park neighborhood.”

Ever-Green Energy Systems will be partnering with the City to provide technical analysis and design work throughout the project. Ken Smith, CEO of Ever-Green Energy, said of the project, “For 10 years Ever-Green Energy has partnered with the City and the Duluth community to advance their energy systems. We are thrilled to be doing so once again. The innovative geothermal project envisioned for Lincoln Park has the potential to be truly transformative for residents and businesses, while also serving as a model for other communities. Utilizing heat pumps to recover wasted thermal energy for use in buildings has enormous potential to jump start community decarbonization efforts.”

The project is co-led by Ecolibrium 3. “Ensuring that this type of project meets the needs of neighborhood residents and businesses is key to its success, said Ecolibrium 3 Founder and CEO Jodi Slick. “If this project is successful, it would not only provide economic and environmental benefits for Lincoln Park, but has the potential to support the district water loops in Downtown and Canal Park.

“We look forward to learning about job opportunities and skill development needs created by geothermal energy investments, and working with partners to build career pathways into this green energy field,” said Director of Duluth Workforce Development Elena Foshay about the opportunity to develop a workforce that can deliver on geothermal heating.

For more information about the project, please visit https://www.energy.gov/eere/geothermal/community-geothermal-heating-and-cooling-design-and-deployment.

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