



# Office of the Mayor

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## STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Jim Paine

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I think each of the citizens of Douglas County owe you a debt of gratitude for your service but none more than me. Your leadership and partnership have been instrumental to our shared successes in each of our offices. But I do not want to let moments like this pass without thanking you for being a mentor, and more importantly, being a friend. Without you, I would not be here at all. It is an honor to stand by your side in the service of the community we both care so much about.

Members of the Common Council, People of Superior, it is my honor and pleasure to come before you for the second time to account for the State of our City. This is an important tradition. It recognizes the responsibility leaders bear for the commitments we have made. It is a celebration of achievements and promises kept. It is reflection and a renewal of our shared purpose. And it is the setting forth on a new journey towards a new and more prosperous future. Tonight is a chance for new promises, for renewed hopes, and for bold vision.

Last year I told you that Superior was a City on the Rise. I meant it. Together, we have proven it. Across this community people feel a renewed sense of energy, optimism and hope. We have expanded our view of the purpose of government beyond the basic necessities of safety, infrastructure and economy. We have come to see our duty, not as the simple overseers of bureaucracy, but as the sentinels of a growing community.

Growth is something we all celebrate when we see it. But we have to recognize that the leadership and progress our fellow citizens expect of us goes beyond numbers or data or dollars. To the people of Superior, this place is not a business,

or an economy, or a job opportunity, or a shopping center. This place is home. The work we do on your behalf is personal. We inherited this place with a sacred duty to care for it, improve it and pass it along to our children. This City houses more than just our lives and livelihoods. It hosts our memories and colors our identity. The City of Superior is the people of Superior, nothing less. To improve our City is to improve ourselves.

Small victories, then, are not enough. The status quo is unacceptable. We owe it to ourselves and to each other to reach for greatness. The work we do for our community, for our families, our friends, neighbors and fellow citizens is the most important work we will do in our lives. But if we would rise above the lesser expectations of the past, we have to understand and accept that we will only find greatness if we pursue it together.

This does not preclude discussion, debate or even division. These are the tools we use to perfect ideas and build consensus. But progress is not possible if we cannot distinguish between criticism and obstructionism. It is the duty of all of us that would lead to look to each other and find the merit, the best intentions, and the best incarnation of the ideas of our fellow leaders and citizens. Fortunately for the people of Superior and contrary to the unfounded accusations of some, this City is led by people that believe in collaboration, not opposition. We discuss, debate, plan, prepare and persuade, but the vast majority of our decisions end in consensus. This is not only inspiring but, it is the very essence of opportunity. To bring our very different minds, experiences, and talents together to a common purpose is the foundation of greatness. I know this not out of blind faith, but by the proven successes we have achieved together.

So I am pleased to join you tonight to celebrate some of those successes.

Each of the Mayoral campaigns I have witnessed over the last 20 years has criticized our neighborhoods and over the 10 years that I have served in public office, I have heard the same criticism countless times. Superior has the oldest housing stock in the State. Superior has the oldest housing stock in the Country. It is not true. We do not really know how we compare to other communities, but politicians love hyperbole and so if something is bad, why miss the chance to say it's the worst?

But we ought to know where we actually stand. Old homes are historic homes. We should recognize that and celebrate it. If in fact we are home to some of the

most iconic and beautiful structures in the State or even the Country, we should tell that story. That is why we have resurrected the City of Superior Historic Preservation Committee to identify significant and historic structures and places in our City and help protect them. At their very first meeting, the Committee partnered with the State Historical Society to conduct a historic homes survey of Superior, the first step to telling the long history of our neighborhoods and our neighbors. We will use this survey to connect homeowners to resources that can help them preserve their homes for their families and their community.

But old housing stock is not just a challenge or an opportunity. Even I have used both of those terms and I was wrong. Housing is the foremost identity of our community. Houses are the face of our community and the structure of our neighborhoods. They are the greatest investment most families will ever make. They are the place our children grow up. They provide beauty and character to our neighborhoods and they hold the stories of generations of our people. It is not a problem that they are old any more than it is a problem our City is old. Age is not our problem, condition is our problem, but destruction is not the solution. Destroying homes, regardless of their condition is the destruction of our past and our future. It is harmful to our City budget, our economy, and our environment. So we changed direction and decided to accept our past and make it our future. Last year, we created a Housing Task Force to turn this vision into policy. This year, we created the City's first Housing Coordinator position and hired Jeff Skrenes, a housing advocate that took on the City of Minneapolis in the depths of their housing crisis through vision, research, and policy. He was at the front of countless home and neighborhood rehabs and now he works for us. Jeff worked with our Planning Department, my office, the City Council, and our Housing Task Force to create the City of Superior's first vacant house recycling program, which takes houses that have lost nearly all of their value and incentivizes the market to restore the home and therefore the neighborhood to new life. We have already seen three houses enter this program with more on the way. Instead of creating financial and safety liabilities for their owners, neighbors and the City, these homes are now on their way to injecting tens of thousands of dollars in new value into the community and bringing new families into restored neighborhoods.

Beyond preservation of our existing homes, one of our greatest challenges has been supply of affordable housing for a growing population. As our economy continues to thrive we have struggled to provide safe places for working families to live in our City and we have lost not only neighbors, but customers and taxpayers to other communities. Only new housing can prevent this and put us

on a path to real economic prosperity. That is why the City of Superior partnered with P&R Plumbing to follow their successful Onyx building with even more market rate housing in their 320 North project.

Our economy drives our quality of life. Safe housing, recreation, stability and prosperity all grow from economic opportunity. But for decades we have pursued economic growth under the false theory that jobs alone improve our economy and quality of life. But we now know that a low unemployment rate does not decrease poverty nor increase prosperity. Only living wages and good benefits can provide the stability necessary for a community to grow. That is why our development efforts have focused on those jobs and projects that truly benefit the people that work them and not just the investors that fund them. Due to these efforts by our Economic Development Team, Redevelopment Authority, Plan Commission and City Council, we can celebrate successes like the expansion of Ravin Crossbows into the previously vacant Target building, a new home for Lakehead Construction, the rezoning of the Mariner Mall to a Planned Development District to allow new and diversified growth in the space, the advancement of the Nemadji Trail Energy Center and maybe most important, Thirsty Pagan Brewing's expansion to the historic Winter Street Depot. All of these projects promise good living wages to their builders and employees and offer more opportunities for the people of Superior to find a good job that supports their families and their futures.

But the greatest impact we can have on our economy, or our environment, or our health, or our quality of life is the way we move around the City. When I first ran for this office and in the years since, I have promised to make transportation slower, safer, and more efficient for all citizens. While design and construction of infrastructure is the work of years, not months, I am pleased to report that moving around Superior is getting easier and safer. In the last year we completed the Belknap project with significant safety improvements for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. We have finished the first year of our newly expanded sidewalk program, improving access for neighborhoods that have not seen sidewalk improvements in decades. We have increased and enhanced enforcement of our snow removal ordinance to ensure that pedestrians can move safely through the City all year long and we launched the Twin Ports first bike share program, which despite starting late last year, saw scores of citizens sign up for a new form of transportation in Superior. Their return this spring has proven these bikes to be as popular as ever with dozens of new rides in April alone. We also have to recognize that for many citizens, cars are still their primary form of transportation

and this has been a rough winter for cars. Record setting snow, ice and cold have made unique and complex challenges for our Street Department. This obviously generates frustration for the public as well and I want to take a moment to recognize the very hard work of this small group of dedicated employees that put in long hours, late nights and early mornings with very few days off over some long, dark and cold months. There were complaints, but there were a lot of compliments too. The public recognized the hard work and professionalism our Street Department put into this winter. I recognize it too and we all appreciate it.

Our efforts are not just about where we live or where we work, where we play matters too. Quality of life really exists in those moments outside our day to day routines. Superior has to be a place that visitors remember and that citizens appreciate. 2019 is bringing us more to do than ever before. Last year we began major restorations and improvements to Wisconsin Point and Barker's Island. We added a new rustic landing in Billings Park and continued to add and expand several City Festivals, including Independence Day and the Ice Festival and moved the S.S. Meteor closer to national landmark status.

Last year, in partnership with UW-Superior, I spent months hearing the needs, ideas and concerns of the people of Superior across all demographics in a series of listening sessions. Among the literally hundreds of comments, one clear value and identity rose above all others: Lake Superior! This is a water city and it surrounds us and defines us. The waters of our Lake and rivers are the source of our history, economy, and culture. Our responsibility to preserve and protect our greatest resource is a sacred duty. And in the last year I am proud to say we have kept faith with this cause. We have begun moving forward the first changes that will remove barriers to green infrastructure from our building codes. We have continued to advance the cleanup of the St. Louis River Estuary by entering an agreement with the DNR and Fraser Shipyards to clean up the highly polluted Howard's Pocket. I am very excited to announce tonight that we have reached an agreement with the Husky Oil Refinery to end their discharge of water into Newton Creek and begin to discharge into our Municipal Wastewater Treatment System, which will help us protect Lake Superior and bring over a million dollars in new revenue to the City of Superior.

As I speak to the people of Superior they are very optimistic about our City, but this does not mean they do not have complaints. Taxes and fees, road conditions, retail options, and our drug crisis have been consistent concerns over the past

year. These are my concerns too and working with the City Council and administration, we have made real progress on each front.

Taxes and fees are a simple problem, they are too high, but the solution is complex. Reducing these burdens without decreasing vital services or jeopardizing the growth of our City is very difficult. I am proud to say that after limiting our growth in spending last year and managing to reduce your bill by reaping the benefits from a growing economy, we went even further this year. For the first time in decades we reduced the amount of property tax we collected from citizens and we reduced fees for the first time ever.

One of the more acute challenges that local elected officials face in Northern Wisconsin is the fact that we must run for office and re-election in the spring, or as spring is more commonly known up here, winter. So after collecting nomination signatures just as tax bills are hitting mailboxes, we have to face voters while road conditions are at their absolute worst. First we all endure, and then clean up severe winter storms that do not respect the day to day transportation needs of our community, and when the snow finally begins to melt, usually just a week or so before Election Day, potholes overtake our roads and compound the frustration of residents and visitors alike. There is no doubt that winter is hard here and this past winter was among the worst we have ever seen. That does not remit our responsibility to improve, as we are already preparing for next winter with new equipment purchases to clear and treat our roads faster and more effectively with less harm to our environment. New sanding equipment will allow us to sand entire roads with a single pass, making our streets safer and faster. I am most excited about the introduction of potassium acetate to our Street Department, which can remove ice from streets at much lower temperatures and with far less impact on surrounding plant-life than traditional salt. Clearing streets faster allows us to remove snow faster and less snow and more efficient removal will get our crews filling potholes faster when spring finally arrives. So I can confidently report that next winter will be better than last winter.

We do not have anywhere to shop in this town! It is one of the most common concerns my office hears. The loss of large retailers like Target, KMart and Youngers has had a real impact on many of our citizens for whom shopping was not only a necessity, but a fun and engaging part of their lives. People build relationships with the places they shop and when those places leave, it hurts. The solutions, though, do not come easy. Unfortunately, we cannot simply call and

request the restaurants and retailers we want to see come to Superior. In the current national retail environment, even incentives will not allow large, failing chains to expand to a small community like Superior. In fact, the United States continues to see the fall of large corporate retail nationwide as consumers have become more selective and moved much of their shopping online and this is not all bad. Online retailers like Amazon provide real opportunities for local manufacturers like Epicurean, Ravin and Feradyne, to sell their products to a global market, while also raising money for local non-profits. Even when our citizens shop online their sales taxes stay local and the delivery of their purchases helps fund the growth of living wage jobs at Fedex, UPS, and the US Postal Service. We still need places to shop and we deserve local options. In fact, the best places to shop for our economy and our shopping experience are locally owned retailers where our money stays local and proprietors know their customers' needs and wants. We grow a local retail economy by building spaces where they can thrive and the best place to grow retail is the place it thrived for decades, downtown. In the past year, as watched both retail and professional services expand in our downtown following the Tower Avenue and Belknap Street projects. We are excited to finally announce the upcoming construction of Cobblestone Hotel, which will flood our largest Business District with new customers as early as next spring, and fill in a space that has sat vacant for far too long. Incentives can help bring in new business but we need to also make sure that we are creating an environment conducive to growth and that means removing regulations that impede new development. I was proud to join a unanimous City Council in repealing our commercial parking minimums ordinance, which for decades had literally banned new development in dense commercial districts by requiring businesses to overbuild their parking lots and fill potentially lucrative building sites with unnecessary empty space.

Taxes are tough, roads can be a problem and we all want more shopping, but these are the pervasive problems that many small cities face. Superior's most critical and unique challenge is the addiction crisis that has scourged this community for far too long. This is not just a crime problem or a public safety issue, this is a health and moral crisis that afflicts us more acutely than most other Wisconsin Cities. We have to honestly reckon with the nature and the scale of this problem. This is a human crisis. It was created by people that knowingly and deliberately afflicted our families and friends. The opioid addiction crisis that has decimated our community across all demographics, incomes and backgrounds was preventable. It was inflicted on us nonetheless by greedy manufacturers, billionaires that put their own profits ahead of the lives of vulnerable people. So

we joined the City of Duluth and communities around the country to help bring them to justice. We are suing the manufacturers of this crisis to demand they stop killing our people and to pay for the damage and the heartbreak they have caused. We cannot afford to wait for justice or relief, we need the State of Wisconsin to take action right now to provide funding for adequate treatment for the victims of all forms of drug and alcohol abuse by matching the resources our neighboring States provide. This year we made this demand our top legislative priority at Superior Days and will remain our first and principle priority for our State Representatives until we have the resources we need to help our people to find their way out of this darkness. We cannot wait for the State either as our citizens demand action now. I have been pleased that our Police Chief recognizes that this problem goes beyond law enforcement and I have been especially proud of his recognition that drug addiction is not a choice and that addicts are not bad people or necessarily criminals simply by virtue of their disease. In a place and a time where it seems like there is no help or hope for people suffering addiction and all paths lead to either jail or the grave, our Police Department has begun to offer another way. The Pathways to Hope Program allows victims of addiction to choose treatment over prosecution. This program is already ending the downward spiral for several of our citizens and offering them real hope for recovery.

Drugs are not the only threat to public safety. We continue to find new and innovative ways to improve our Police Officers' abilities to respond to crises in the community. We launched Superior's first take home squad program for officers living in Superior to both prolong the life of this very expensive and vital equipment and to also incentivize officers to live in the community they protect. Also the Crisis Intervention training that we introduced to the Superior Police Department last year has already saved the lives of people experiencing mental health crises.

The most obvious and infamous threat to public safety occurred just over a year ago when an explosion ignited one of the largest oil refinery fires in the history of the United States and triggered an evacuation of most of the City. Despite the very real danger this event posed to refinery workers, first responders and citizens, we escaped the disaster without a single loss of life. With no exception and no comparison, this has been the single largest and most frequent topic in my conversations with citizens. The Husky Refinery Fire affected this whole community and made national news. The reaction from citizens to this fire and the performance of the team that met the crisis has been overwhelmingly



positive and rightfully so. My role that day was very small, but I have received a disproportionate amount of the attention. So I want to say again publicly what I have had to say privately across hundreds of conversations in the last year. The quick, decisive, and professional response to the Husky Fire was the work of dozens of professionals, many of them true heroes, who executed a well prepared plan. If citizens are grateful to the response team, and they should be, Superior should know that I am grateful for the response of our citizens, who, in a time of extreme crisis came together in calm dedication and service to one another. That fire was a disaster, among the worst we have ever seen, but it brought out the very best in all of us and I could not be more proud of all of you.

Tonight is not just a chance to celebrate what we have done. It is our chance to dedicate ourselves to even greater accomplishments in the future and as I said in the beginning, we can only move this City forward together. So over the last few weeks I have met with Department Heads and City Councilors to learn their goals for the coming year.

In the coming year I will be partnering with Councilor Dan Olson to improve our responsible bidders ordinance to protect taxpayers and workers from predatory, criminal and unqualified contractors on public projects. Councilor Craig Sutherland and I will be working to protect both City finances and our employees from the crippling and still rising costs of health care. Councilor Tylor Elm and I will continue our work to bring Superior into the 21st century by pursuing municipal broadband infrastructure and “Smart City” designation. I look forward to helping Councilors Keith Kern and Ruth Ludwig, as we develop an environmentally responsible management plan for our Municipal Forest. I will also look to them to make our parks more accessible by funding construction of bathrooms and other amenities in each of our neighborhood parks. Councilor Esther Dalbec pointed out to me that tree killing insects and diseases do not only afflict trees on public property, but many of our citizens lack the resources to mitigate and defend against these blights or remove afflicted trees. My administration will be working with her to develop a plan that helps homeowners and our urban forest. Councilor Van Sickle has been an uncompromising advocate for pedestrian and neighborhood safety and she and I will work closely to bring new safety improvements to every neighborhood and especially to the neighborhoods endangered by highway 2 and 53. She and I will look to partner with Councilors Jack Sweeney and Brent Fennessey to bring life back into the East End Business District through improved design and place making.

I will also be asking the whole City Council to join me in supporting policies, projects and plans that move our City forward.

We need to fund resources for emerging entrepreneurs, particularly women and people of color to assist in build outs and first year operating expenses, so that we can expand our local retail and business community.

Retail survives when it has steady access to customers and the best proven way to connect business to customers is for people to live near where they shop. We are going to double down on our efforts to create and improve housing in our downtown by surveying existing housing, especially mixed use buildings on our main streets, and incentivizing and de-regulating affordable housing in and near our commercial districts.

We are going to improve public safety by conducting a full review of all policing policies and adopting a more modern, community oriented standard. We will also begin sending our Police Officers to fair and impartial policing training to better equip them to understand their own biases and to fairly protect people of all cultures and backgrounds.

We will begin work on the City's first active transportation plan to ensure that every citizen can move safely through the City and to offer new, healthier, economically and environmentally friendly ways to move through our City.

We will construct Superior's first Complete Street on East 18th street to facilitate all forms of transportation equally and safely.

We will continue to work with and support the Husky Refinery as they rebuild and reopen, but we will also hold them accountable for meaningful safety improvements and seek the support of outside agencies and authorities like the Chemical Safety Board, EPA, and Congress in requiring the company to use the safest production methods possible, including alternatives to Hydrogen Fluoride.

Superior is growing, changing and improving. We have a right to make ambitious plans because working together, we have achieved more than most of us thought possible. This has been an exciting year for our hometown, but the year to come will be even better. I have been waiting for tonight to make some key announcements and now I am thrilled to share with all of you several major advancements in the coming months.

Grandma's Marathon is the largest event in the Twin Ports and organizes several professional races throughout the year in the City of Duluth. Last year, the City of Superior partnered with the organization to support the Marathon and bring half-marathon shuttle busses to Superior. This year, I am pleased to announce that we will be expanding our partnership and hosting the first ever Grandma's Marathon sponsored race in Superior. The North End Nightmare 5K will race through our downtown late this October and headline the growing North End Days Spooktakular neighborhood celebration.

For several weeks I have been working with the Directors and Boards of the Superior Public Museums and the Bong Veteran's Museum on a simple principle. No citizen of Superior should ever be denied access to their local museums because of cost. So along with Megan Meyer, Hayes Scriven, the Superior Public Library and their Boards of Directors, I am thrilled to announce that starting this summer library card holders will be able to reserve and check out admissions to the Bong Veteran's Museum, Fairlawn Mansion, and the S.S. Meteor free of charge, making education and recreation accessible to our entire community.

History is important. It is our story and our identity and we have an obligation to learn it, protect it and pass it along to each generation. My own love of history inspired much of my journey into politics, but not in a positive way. I watched with sadness and regret as we lost the Palace Theater and Central High School over a decade ago. We can never replace those iconic buildings and we should regularly recommit ourselves to the protection of historic buildings and places. But an ancillary problem to losing these iconic structures were the vacant, useless lots that have done nothing for our City's development. The announcement that Cobblestone Hotel would fill the Palace lot was an exciting first step to putting these losses behind us. Now I can formally announce that we will soon be completing the next step and filling the Central lot as well. We have begun work and negotiations with P&R Properties to develop the former site of Central High School with a mixed use development featuring a blend of market rate and student housing with retail space, bringing in even more downtown housing and the new shops and restaurants that so many citizens have demanded. With the City Council's help, we will look to break ground this summer and open a new multi-million dollar development by the summer of 2020 whose design will evoke the memory of this iconic building and kick off a bright new future for our downtown.

In the coming years Superior will be unrecognizable to someone who last visited us even a few years ago. We have over 20 million dollars in street and sidewalk improvements and over 50 million dollars in new construction. Cleaner waterways, improved shorelines, enhanced parks and forest, rotting houses restored to rehabilitated homes, lower unemployment, higher wages, new businesses and in every corner of our lives, new opportunities. Ladies and gentlemen, the State of your City is strong and we are getting stronger. My message to you tonight is that despite all of our triumphs and achievements, our greatest days still lay before us. We did not get here by accident nor good fortune and the lesson that runs through our entire history is that the people of Superior built their own good fortune, usually out of extreme adversity. The success of Superior is due to the hard work, faith, optimism and passion of so many of the people of Superior. I want to close tonight by celebrating one of those people.

Last year we began a tradition of naming a Citizen of the Year. This is not necessarily the most successful, well known or most influential citizen of our community. Last year, and now this year, I have chosen to name someone that best exemplifies the values that define and inspire our community. We are a people that understand hardship and we do not fear it nor shrink from it. We embrace it and build our future out of the challenges set against us. Our Citizen of the Year is a man that has experienced hardship, adversity and barriers his whole life. He has broken many of his own barriers and used his enduring challenges as pillars of his identity and character. That could be true of many citizens of Superior. But this man not only overcame his own barriers, he dedicated his life to breaking down barriers for everyone else. Ladies and Gentlemen, our Citizen of the Year is Mr. John Nousaine.

Mr. Nousaine retires this year as Executive Director of North Country Independent Living and leaves behind him decades of professional advocacy for people living with disabilities. He fought not only for accessibility and adaptability for individuals, but for true independence. He also insisted that people living with disabilities not be the only ones adapting. John demands that the rest of us adapt as well. He has fought for a society in which all people can live, move, work and play equally and together. It is my hope and expectation that this recognition remind him that we do not expect that work to end with his professional retirement. It is the belief that his work will continue that makes me honored to present the Key to the City of Superior to our Citizen of the Year: Mr. John Nousaine.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attendance this evening. To join me on a Monday night for this event is a testament to your passion for our community. The achievements and goals I have laid out tonight are not mine alone. These achievements are all of ours, born out the faith, passion and most importantly, the work of hundreds or thousands of citizens. The goals I have laid out tonight are not our only agenda. With your help we will continue to find new opportunities for Superior and expand our ambitions. We should be excited for our future and we should also accept responsibility for it. We have a great deal of work to do, but I have little doubt that by working together, we will be able to gather here next year with even more to celebrate.

Thank you and good night!