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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Equity in the Built Environment; Establishing Career Pathways for Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC) Women

August 18, 2021 – ROCHESTER, MINN. – In March of 2021 the City of Rochester submitted its application in the first round of [Bloomberg Philanthropies' Global Mayors Challenge](#). Focusing on economic recovery and growth, the City hopes to address health, income, and labor disparities deepened by COVID-19, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) women in Rochester. With well over 2,000 annual construction jobs generated by the Destination Medical Center (DMC) development initiative, intervention will be essential to ensure Rochester's economic recovery over the next 20 years benefits the people of our community equitably.

Rochester was announced as a 2021 Global Mayors Challenge Champion City in June, one of 50 cities selected out of over 600 applicants across the world. Phase 2 of the application process gives Rochester a chance to test our idea over the next few months, bringing in community co-designers to assist in the development of solutions.

The co-design concept has quickly become a new and innovative type of community engagement that the City of Rochester is committed to. Community co-design aims to engage and elevate the voices that have historically been underrepresented in our typical government processes. With 40% of Black residents living in poverty and the level of unemployment among BIPOC women far higher than any other demographic group, BIPOC women have key perspectives in designing pathways for their increased participation in Rochester's growing construction industry. [View the City of Rochester's "90 Second Pitch" discussing the importance of co-design within this process.](#)

In addition to a mix of BIPOC women from the community, who are and are not within the construction industry, community co-designers also include local representatives in employment and education. Co-designer participants include Benike Construction, CRW Architecture + Design Group, Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester Public Schools, and union representatives from Construction Partnership, Inc. The Diversity Council, Workforce Development, Inc., Destination Medical Center and Cradle 2 Career are also working in partnership with the City of Rochester on this project.

Over the next 6 weeks community co-designers will engage in three, two hour sessions to share their lived experiences, perspectives, and knowledge as Rochester residents and from their identified community. In between sessions, each co-designer will spend time capturing and sharing the experiences of the broader communities they are a part of.

Key themes identified earlier in the process included culture clash, overall knowledge and awareness of the industry and available jobs, and education opportunities. Insights from their conversations will be used to identify and inform the development of sustainable solutions in the built environment that will increase access and opportunities for BIPOC women in Rochester.

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