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**First-ever public art installation in downtown Saint Paul skyways
will illuminate immigrant experiences**

*Nancy Ann Coyne's **Speaking of Home** to be unveiled September 5, 2017
at the intersection of East 6th and Minnesota Streets*

(Saint Paul, Minn.) –*Speaking of Home* will transform four of Saint Paul's public skyways into a monumental public artwork, exploring the meaning of home among first-generation Minnesota immigrants. Located in the downtown commercial epicenter, the six-month installation comprised of 58 larger-than-life translucent photographs will resemble an architectural lightbox.

The multi-year project was initiated by international public artist, designer and social innovator Nancy Ann Coyne in partnership with the City of St. Paul and four private properties including Alliance Bank Center, US Bank Center, Town Square, and the Securian Building. The project has been funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Minnesota State Arts Board as well as local family and corporate foundations.

"Planning for this project began long before the more recent immigration policies became a national discussion, and long before downtown Saint Paul residents and businesses raised concerns over the security in the skyways," said Nancy Ann Coyne, *Speaking of Home* principal. "However, it is more important than ever – to make immigrants feel welcome here -- while the nation debates immigration policies, travel bans and sanctuary cities, two of which are Saint Paul and Minneapolis."

Coyne names two goals: first, the project's materials and overall design endeavor to create a place for new Americans' voices and histories, which are often

overlooked and marginalized in greater society; second, the public installation's intention is to expand the skyway's use for public enrichment and city revitalization. How can it attract more people to enjoy downtown Saint Paul?

Coyne collaborated with immigrants from more than 50 different countries, inviting each to share a family photograph from their country of origin and engage in interviews about their journeys to Minnesota. Each photograph is printed on semi-transparent fabric installed seamlessly into the skyway's windows, accompanied by texts illuminating each individual's story—and their reason for leaving their country of origin. This includes Iraqi immigrant, Adnan Shati, who sought political asylum after he took a stand against the Iraq-Iran war. "This was the last photograph I took with my friend, Jabbar Ma'Touq. He then joined the ruling Ba'ath Party led by Saddam Hussein, which severed our ties. However, after the collapse of Saddam's regime, we rekindled our friendship during my first return visit in 2003," said Shati. (Adnan Shati photo attached)

Overhead panels display the word "home" in corresponding native languages.

Speaking of Home, the first public artwork installed in the largest publicly-owned skyway system in the world, repurposes a portion of the 47 skyway bridges of Saint Paul's elevated urban walkways which serve thousands of pedestrians daily. Coyne pioneered the creation of a new city ordinance for permitting artwork in the skyway bridges.

Working with Steve Carpenter, CEO of Archetype and Carol Lansing of Faegre Baker Daniels LLP, the policy was adopted on July 6, 2016 by St. Paul City Council. "The goals of empowering new Americans, supporting diversity and teaching tolerance are all critical to the long-term health of our city," said Chris Coleman, Mayor of Saint Paul. "To accomplish all of this while advancing design and innovation in the public domain makes the [Speaking of Home] project a special one."

Speaking of Home can be experienced inside and outside four adjoining skyways. Street-level pedestrians and motorists will experience 58 faces gazing onto the city, while some 30,000 skyway walkers, per day, engage with the artwork in each 77-foot bridge. Created in association with industry leaders Michael Haug Design, Archetype and Designtex, *Speaking of Home* is designed to invert "the relationship between the city's native-born and immigrants, situating them as stationary onlookers as the locals pass by and move through the city," according to Coyne.

“*Speaking of Home* transforms public space into public artwork and it does what art always does best, helping us understand the world from the point of view of others and in the process, a better understanding of ourselves,” said Tom Fisher, architectural critic, and University of Minnesota’s Director of the Minnesota Design Center and dean emeritus of the College of Design. “While St. Paul has had some challenges policing and maintaining the world’s largest publicly owned skyway system, *Speaking of Home* demonstrates the value of having so much indoor public space, open for all to see.”

Speaking of Home will feature a broad range of educational and public programming created in cooperation with the University of Minnesota’s Office of Public Engagement, non-profits serving immigrants, civic entities and design and arts community. In addition to a website (www.speakingofhome.org), the project will have enhanced interpretative content on site. This includes video vignettes featuring a selection of the new Minnesotans accessed through QR scan codes, and a catalogue. Classroom lesson plans will be available through the project website. The exhibit closes March 8, 2018 following which an impact study will be posted.

The Saint Paul installation builds on Coyne’s groundbreaking 2008 pilot project presented in the IDS-Macy’s skyway in downtown Minneapolis during a four-month period. That 23-image pilot project received numerous international and national awards, including Americans for the Arts’ 2009 Public Art Year in Review selection, the Society for Environmental Designer’s 2009 International Merit Award, and the Industrial Fabrics Association International’s 2009 Award of Excellence.

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Supplemental materials available upon request:

- FAQ with the artist Nancy Ann Coyne
- *Speaking of Home* Fact Sheet
- Digital photos of the featured participants
- History of Minnesota immigration
- History of skyway systems

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