



For Immediate Release

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City of Grand Haven Hosts Virtual Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for Riverwatch Project

The Riverwatch Project brings pedestrian-friendly green space to the waterfront

Grand Haven, Michigan, October 29, 2020 – To celebrate the construction of the Riverwatch Project, the City of Grand Haven hosted a virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The Riverwatch Project enhances an underutilized public space in the heart of downtown Grand Haven by removing unkempt spruce trees and narrow sidewalks that caused pedestrian congestion along Harbor Drive. The new safe, reliable, and engaging green space includes wider sidewalks, a public overlook deck, and ADA accessible pathways to the waterfront.

Before the completion of the Riverwatch Project, the closest barrier free access point to the boardwalk was over half a mile downriver.

Ashley Latsch, Assistant to the City Manager, submitted a grant application to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) requesting \$1,474,983 for the Riverwatch Project and received funding in December of 2019. The CDBG funding request totaled \$1.6 million, including a 10% local match.

“Project Riverwatch was the result of a great collaborative effort that led to a \$1.6 million investment along our waterfront,” Latsch said. “The most exciting part of this place making effort is the significant accessibility improvements. These improvements are great for residents and visitors!”

Under ordinary circumstance, the City of Grand Haven marks the completion of major building projects with an in-person ribbon-cutting ceremony. Due to COVID-19, it was no longer possible to safely host a large gathering.

“Ribbon-cutting is a traditional marker of civic pride,” said Pat McGinnis, City Manager. “We needed to find a creative alternative to fit the occasion.”

Instead, Latsch recorded a video expressing gratitude to the MEDC for its investment in Grand Haven. The video features Mayor Bob Monetza cutting a ribbon at the overlook deck along with

messages from Congressman Bill Huizenga, Senator Roger Victory, Representative Jim Lilly, Chamber President Joy Gaasch, and Grand Haven Area Community Foundation President Hadley Streng.

“With a project of this magnitude, we knew we had to find a proper way to say thank you to all of those involved,” Latsch said. “Without the support we received, this project would simply not have been possible. After putting our heads together, we determined that the most effective, and personal, way to pay tribute to the incredible transformation would be through video.”

The virtual ribbon-cutting ceremony is now available for viewing on the City of Grand Haven website and on Facebook.