FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Community projects in the EUP receive grant dollars

Eight worthwhile projects will receive a boost in funding thanks to Community Development Mini-Grant awards announced this week from the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission (EUPRPDC).

The first time mini-grants, funded by Michigan’s Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI), will distribute $24,000 to projects that will improve community placemaking efforts. Placemaking is defined by the Land Policy Institute as the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in.

“The implementation of placemaking initiatives was a strategic priority identified in our five year economic plan for the region,” explained Jeff Hagan, EUPRPDC Chief Executive Officer. “We were fortunate to receive funding for these placemaking grants through the 2016 RPI,” he added.

In total, 14 projects competed for this first round of funding. After a panel comprised of representatives from each county and EUPRPDC staff reviewed the applications using pre-determined criteria, eight were chosen for awards. Applications from the chosen recipients covered three types of work: cultural projects, park improvements, and downtown enhancements.

Recipients with projects that were cultural in nature were the Hessel Schoolhouse project, which will receive $2,000 for its signage and driveway work, and the Museum of Ojibwa Culture in St. Ignace, which was awarded $3,000 to help with longhouse construction.

“This grant, along with the financial support of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians, enables us to hire a contractor to finish the outside of our longhouse and make the lodge useable for our summer programs, workshops and Anishinaabe ceremonies,” said Museum Director Shirley Sorrels.

Several EUP parks will also benefit from grant funding. Newtown Township will work on improvements to its park bathroom and sidewalk with its $4,000 award. Three Lakes Academy, located in Curtis, will utilize $4,000 for playground improvements. Newberry Elementary School will invest its $3,000 mini-grant in playground equipment.

Recognizing the importance of downtown districts in placemaking efforts, three projects were given grant support. The Village of Newberry received $2,500 to help with the effort of making Main Street more pedestrian friendly. Trout Lake’s Pride Organization will invest $2,500 in the downtown park gazebo and the St. Ignace DDA will spend $3,000 on a pocket park at St. Anthony’s Rock.

Organizers say they hope to offer the mini-grants again, but the decision will depend upon the availability of RPI funding. The benefit to the region for this first round will be felt in the coming months, as organizations put the dollars to work.

“The commitment and passion demonstrated in all of the applications submitted makes me proud of our U.P. communities,” said Rebecca Bolen, Planner for EUPRPDC. “The projects that are getting underway this summer create or enhance welcoming public spaces and highlight the unique qualities of their communities.”

To learn more about EUPRPDC and the Regional Prosperity Initiative, visit eup-planning.org.

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