

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### City of Alpena Secures Funding from the 2023 Public Gathering Spaces Initiative for Culligan Plaza Renovation

Alpena, Michigan — September 26, 2023— The City of Alpena in partnership with the Downtown Development Authority and Target Alpena is thrilled to announce that it has successfully secured grant funding from the 2023 Public Gatherings Spaces Initiative (PGSI) to embark on the transformation of the beloved Culligan Plaza. This remarkable achievement paves the way for the City to revitalize Culligan Plaza into a more accessible, dynamic, and seasonally adaptable gathering place for its residents and visitors.

Culligan Plaza, located at the intersection of US-23 (Chisholm Street) and M-32 (2nd Avenue), has long been recognized as the heart of Alpena's Historic Downtown District. However, the plaza is in need of comprehensive revitalization, as its current design is outdated, lacks full accessibility, and has fallen into disrepair. Thanks to the recently awarded grant funds, totaling \$991,995 from the 2023 PGSI, in addition to the City's committed 10 percent cash match of \$118,555, \$20,000 from and Alpena County Youth and Recreation Commission grant, and a generous donation of \$100,000 from the First Federal of Northern Michigan Legacy Foundation (FFNMLF) its largest award to date, the City is now fully equipped to bring the ambitious \$1,185,550 renovation project to fruition.

With the design led by Drost Landscaping from Petoskey, MI., the reimagined Culligan Plaza will incorporate a comprehensive set of improvements, such as

- Removal of existing structures: This will entail the removal of the current fountain, steps, lighting, trees, brick pavers, and all existing concrete elements.
- Installation of a new water feature: Providing a refreshing and interactive addition, especially appealing to children.
- Public events stage with ADA accessibility: Elevating the plaza's versatility as a venue for diverse gatherings, live entertainment, and performances.
- New concrete ADA surfaces: Ensuring accessibility for residents of all abilities.
- Tree filter boxes and swale rain gardens: Incorporating green spaces and environmentally sustainable features.
- Installation of new trees: Enhancing the plaza's visual appeal and providing essential shade.
- Construction of a new ADA family restroom facility: Addressing a long-standing community need.
- Upgraded lighting and electrical systems: Ensuring safety and functionality.
- Integrated sound system: Enhancing the audio experience for events.

A primary objective of this project is to create an inclusive and accessible space that accommodates people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The redesigned plaza will

significantly expand its capacity to host various community events, from holiday celebrations to live music performances, establishing it as a central hub for Alpena's cultural and social life.

The City of Alpena firmly believes that the rejuvenated Culligan Plaza will not only benefit its residents but also contribute to the economic development of the downtown area. By drawing more people to the heart of the city, the project aims to invigorate downtown businesses that have faced challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of online shopping. The increased foot traffic and vibrancy of the plaza are expected to have a positive impact on local businesses.

The successful grant application for the 2023 PGSI has been meticulously prepared, taking into account extensive community feedback and the City's master plan, which underscores the enhancement of quality of life, preservation of cultural resources, and support for economic development in Alpena's downtown. The City is immensely grateful to the FFNMLF for their generous financial contribution, Alpena County Youth and Recreation Commission, and to Target Alpena Development Corporation for their invaluable assistance in securing this grant.

With the grant funds now secured, the project planning will commence, marking the beginning of the transformation of Culligan Plaza into a modern, accessible, and vibrant community space. There will be no disruption to holiday and winter activities for this season, but we anticipate that renovation activities will begin in Spring 2024. The City of Alpena is steadfast in its commitment to creating a gathering place that truly belongs to everyone and looks forward to realizing the vision of a revitalized Culligan Plaza.

For more information about the Culligan Plaza renovation project and the 2023 Public Gathering Spaces Initiative, please contact:

Rachel Smolinski, MPA  
Alpena City Manager  
208 North First Avenue  
Alpena, MI 49707  
Ph: 989.354.1711  
Fx: 989.354.1709  
Cell: 989.464.6023