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Embracing Wisconsin's outdoor spirit in Cable *WEDC Secretary's visit spotlights Vibrant Spaces site, future community gathering venue*

CABLE, WI. MAY 28, 2025 – From the center of town to the ends of its many ski and hiking trails, the Town of Cable is breathing new life into its outdoor spaces.

In the heart of downtown Cable, a once-vacant lot is being transformed into a lively community park and a fresh space for visitors and residents to gather, play and unwind. Just outside of town, the historic Telemark Lodge found new life as Mt. Telemark Village, a year-round outdoor hub reconnecting residents and visitors with the trails, woods, and Nordic spirit that have long defined the area.

"Outdoor recreation is the backbone of the economy in Northern Wisconsin – and the Birkie, with an economic impact of over \$20 million annually, leads the way," said Ben Popp, executive director of the American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation (ABSF). "Events in our region introduce people to our amazing area and can create lifelong visitors."

Secretary and CEO Missy Hughes and other leaders of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) are visiting communities across Wisconsin this year to celebrate their successes in building an Economy for All, by creating communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. In Cable, town officials and nonprofits like the ABSF are teaming up to turn the outdoors into a catalyst for growth by transforming underused spaces into vibrant public assets that support local businesses and attract visitors year-round.

"Leaders in communities like Cable are showing that investing in outdoor and underused spaces is about more than just recreation, it's about contributing to communities where people and families can work, live, and thrive," Hughes said. "By joining together to make their shared visions a reality, Cable is helping to make Wisconsin not just a destination, but a great place to build a life."

The Town of Cable received a \$50,000 Vibrant Spaces Grant from WEDC this year to support the revitalization of a vacant downtown lot into a green gathering place for public use. In addition to a \$150,000 Brownfield Site Assessment Grant from WEDC in 2023, which was used to demolish a blighted building on the site, the town plans to use the lot to connect visitors to nearby downtown businesses.

The new park will feature a 375-foot pedestrian walkway connecting the space to the town's municipal parking lot, making it easier for visitors to park and walk directly into the heart of downtown. The addition of a central pavilion will not only offer a shaded space for everyday use, but also has the capacity to host community staples like the weekly farmers market and Cable's annual Make Music Day and Fall Fest activities.

LOOK FORWARD ➤

"We won't have an eyesore in the middle of town anymore," said Bobbi McCauley, clerk and treasurer for the Town of Cable. "This project is going to help bring new life to the downtown."

Just outside of Cable, another revitalized outdoor space is strengthening Cable's commitment to the connection between recreation and economic development. With support from a \$250,000 Idle Sites Redevelopment Grant in 2021, the Town of Cable partnered with the ABSF to transform the site of the former Telemark Lodge and Resort into Mt. Telemark Village. The project involved acquiring the property, removing outdated hotel wings and creating new outdoor infrastructure to support visitor activities.

Today, Mt. Telemark Village serves as a hub for Nordic skiing, mountain biking, hiking, and biathlon, with a stadium trail, trailheads, and an ice-skating area. The village also serves as the home base for the annual American Birkebeiner, North America's largest cross-country ski race, which draws thousands of skiers and spectators from around the world to Cable each winter.

"I think we need to invest more in the things that attract people here – outdoor recreation," Popp said. Designed to welcome everyone from seasoned athletes to curious beginners, the site offers an inclusive space for outdoor adventure at any skill level.

The race brings nearly \$25 million of economic impact annually to the region. Additional data shows that over 80% of visitors will revisit the area, creating long-term economic growth, according to Popp.

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