



**For Immediate Release**

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**Ribbon Cutting for Oak Hill Park**

**October 23, 2023--Olean**—William J. Aiello, Mayor of the City of Olean, was pleased to be joined by Common Council President John Crawford; Jennifer Dunning, Department of State Deputy Director of Government Relations; Benjamin Bidell, Department of State Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure; Lee James, Representing Congressman Nick Langworthy; Kara Stimson, Representing Senator George Borrello; Joe Sempolinski, Representing Assemblyman Joe Giglio; Community Development Program Coordinator Keri Kerper; Nick and Leslie of the Theater Workshop; and Dennis Cornell of Benson Construction to the cut the ribbon for the Oak Hill Park enhancements.

The event took place on Friday, October 20, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the stage in the park near the corner of Laurens and North Sixth Streets.

Dating back to 1905 and shaded with a canopy of large oak trees, the historic park had become underutilized and in need of a renewal. The improvements which cost approximately \$745,000 will guarantee increased foot traffic as well as a significant increase in outdoor programming.

The project included a number of enhancements:

- A dog park with fencing and play furniture;
- Restroom with a small storage area to support programming in the park;
- An outdoor stage built in partnership with Olean Theater Workshop to support outdoor performances;
- Recreational court improvements including replacement of fencing, mill and paved blacktop areas, and new fixtures and striping for basketball and tennis courts;
- A new picnic area with ADA-accessible tables and grills.

The project was funded in part by the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (\$500,000) and administered by the New York State Department of State. "The Downtown Revitalization Initiative continues to lead the way for the renaissance of communities across the State of New York," said Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez. "Through the DRI's investment of \$500,000, the historic Oak Hill Park community in Olean will continue to be a treasured place to live and visit with innovative upgrades and enhancements for the arts and outdoor recreational opportunities."

The City of Olean also contributed to the project.

“A few years back, the park was at risk, it had become underutilized and the Laurens Street staircase was crumbling. The City was fortunate that Marianne and Erick Laine started the whole renewal process by restoring the staircase to its majestic grandeur, said Mayor Aiello. “As the plans for the new stairs were in process, the City’s Community Development Office was striding forward with New York State’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative. Their hard work paid off, and Olean was awarded \$10 million dollars, some of which was targeted for this beautiful park.”

Mayor Aiello thanked the volunteers who tend to the parks gardens and grounds, the Class of 1965 who have donated benches to the park and the Olean Theater Workshop who partnered with the City on the new stage.

“This is another great day for the Olean Park System. We set out to make Olean a great place to live for the next generation and the updates to the park are a testament of our commitment to that pledge,” Mayor Aiello said.

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