



Mayor Lovely A. Warren Joins with Elected Officials, Community Leaders and Neighborhood Residents at a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to Celebrate New International Plaza

(Thursday, Oct. 8, 2020) – At a ribbon cutting ceremony this morning, Mayor Lovely A. Warren joined with City Council President Loretta Scott, County Executive Adam Bello, and a host of other elected officials, community leaders and neighborhood residents to celebrate the completion of the long-awaited International Plaza in Northeast Rochester.

The International Plaza, located at 828 N. Clinton Avenue, is an exciting, new Latin-themed event space and marketplace that will provide a community gathering space to celebrate and build on the tremendous arts and cultural assets of the surrounding neighborhood. The Plaza will also serve as an area where local entrepreneurs and/or existing businesses can acquire space to sell their products and services in a low risk, low cost, flexible environment that is envisioned to become an incubator for neighborhood economic development.

“This project has been a long time in the making - - a very long time,” said Mayor Warren. “But today, we stand here on North Clinton Avenue, in a beautiful new space that will serve as a community gathering spot. This will be a place for people to come together to shop, enjoy music and dance, celebrate holidays and enjoy the many flavors of the neighborhood.”

“What makes today even more special is the fact that this Plaza is being dedicated during Hispanic Heritage Month, a time when we honor the culture and contributions of all those whose heritage is rooted in Latin American countries,” Mayor Warren continued. “This wonderful space will allow the entire Rochester region to enjoy various aspects of Latino culture, along with an array of cultural and ethnic traditions that are observed by all of the residents that live in this diverse neighborhood.”

Conversations regarding a Latin-themed marketplace in Northeast Rochester began almost 30 years ago during the Ryan administration and continued through the years of the Johnson administration. Community leaders from Ibero American-Action League, Ibero-American Development Corporation and the former Spanish Action Coalition, along with a large number of involved citizens, advocated tirelessly for the project.

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Under the leadership of Mayor Warren and her administration, and in conjunction with organizations such as Ibero, a host of community leaders, numerous neighborhood residents and approval from the City Council, the project has finally come to fruition. The International Plaza serves as an excellent example of what can be accomplished when citizens and government work together for the greater good of the community.

Following today's ceremony, the Plaza will officially open for public shopping from 1 – 4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 11, and will operate during these same hours on three additional Sundays: Oct. 18, 25 and Nov. 1. The Plaza will then close for the winter months, with plans to reopen on Thursdays and Sundays in spring 2021.

Recently, two anchor tenants were announced for the Plaza. Borinquen Bakery, a Spanish-style bakery owned and operated by the Binet family, and New Generation Meats, owned by Wafik Altawel and specializing in sausages and smoked meats, will both provide quality products to the community on a daily, year-round basis. Three additional vendors - - Hipocampo Children's Books, LLC; Ice Dreams; and Wilson Produce - - are scheduled to operate on a seasonal basis.

The International Plaza project was made possible thanks to a \$3.6 million total investment by the City of Rochester and several other funders, including Empire State Development, RG&E, REDCO and Rochester Urban Renewal Funding Agency, along with funds from the 2017 Community Development Block Grant.

Civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineering design services were provided by LaBella Associates, D.P.C.; Architectura PC; Passero Associates; Ravi Engineering; Cummings Construction, LLC; North Coast Electrical Solutions, LLC; Emcor Services Betlem; and Ikoniq.

During today's celebration, three individuals with a long history of involvement with the concept and development of the International Plaza were honored with plaques that will be permanently displayed at the site. Gladys Santiago, a former City Council President and executive at Ibero; the late Father Laurence Tracy, a priest who served at St. Michael's Church and dedicated his life to the Northeast community; and Eugenio Marlin, Executive Vice President of Ibero-American Development Corporation, were recognized for their unwavering faith and commitment to the project.

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Other highlights from today's ceremony included a performance by Borinquen Dance Theatre and the blessing of the International Plaza by Father Bob Werth. Immediately prior to the start of the program, Peter Jemison, Historic Site Manager of the Ganondagan State Historic Site and a member of the Heron Clan of the Seneca Nation, performed a traditional Native American ceremony to bless the land and give thanks for the gifts that the natural world has provided us.

An opportunity for the community to purchase engraved bricks in honor of family members or friends was also announced. The bricks, which can be purchased for \$25, will be set in a beautiful piece of original artwork that will be prominently attached to the wall of the Plaza's multi-use building. The brick sale is a collaborative effort between Ibero and the City of Rochester. Proceeds will benefit St. Michael's Church and Parish. Details on the brick sale can be found at <https://pages.donately.com/iberoamericanactionleague/campaign/international-plaza-brick-purchase>.

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News Media: For more information, contact Bridgette Burch White at (585) 428-6064 or Bridgette.Burchwhite@cityofrochester.gov.