



PRESS RELEASE

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LUDINGTON NOMINATED “BEST HISTORIC SMALL TOWN” BY USA TODAY 10BEST READERS’ CHOICE AWARDS FOR THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR; VOTING OPENS MARCH 2

Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau Awarded \$88.2K USDA Grant to Leverage Historic Town Designation and Promote Area Historical and Cultural Attractions

LUDINGTON, Mich. – *March 2, 2026* – Ludington was again recognized for its rich history as a 2026 nominee for [Best Historic Small Town](#) by USA TODAY’s 10BEST Readers' Choice Awards after taking the #1 spot in 2024 and #4 in 2025, with voting starting March 2. Inspired by these recognitions, the [Ludington Area Visitors Bureau](#) applied for and was awarded its first United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development grant, totaling \$88,200, to fund a **Ludington Landmarks initiative** to market the county’s historical assets.

“Ludington has always been a visitor draw for our natural resources like our Lake Michigan shoreline, beaches and parks, but we are now also becoming known for our historical attractions, as these award designations show,” said Brandy Miller, executive director of the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (LACVB). “This grant allows us to more proactively promote these rich cultural assets to a wider audience and make the experiences easier to navigate, while also giving visitors more reasons to visit the region.”

Ludington Nominated Again for Best Historic Small Town by USA TODAY 10BEST

Ludington was nominated as one of 20 towns by the USA TODAY 10BEST Readers’ Choice Awards for **Best Historic Small Town** in 2026. Ludington took the #1 spot in the contest in 2024 and #4 in 2025. Individuals 18 and older can [vote for Ludington](#) daily starting March 2 throughout the month until the contest ends Monday, March 30 at 11:59 a.m. EDT at 10best.usatoday.com/awards/ludington-michigan. The top 10 winners, as ranked by USA TODAY 10BEST readers, will be announced April 8 at noon EDT.

“Ludington proved in 2024 that it could go toe-to-toe with popular destinations such as Breckenridge, Carmel-by-the-Sea and Moab – we hope to reclaim the #1 title again this year,” said Miller. “Our historical assets like our two lighthouses, Port of Ludington Maritime Museum in a 1934 U.S. Coast Guard Station, Historic White Pine Village celebrating its 50th anniversary, SS Badger, and Victorian lumber baron homes-turned B&Bs are key draws and enhance our reputation as a top historic destination. We ask everyone to vote for Ludington daily.”

Ludington’s description in the award entry reads: “Ludington, Michigan, built its economy on the lumber industry and has continued to thrive as a shipping port, both by water and by train. Today, visitors come to explore Ludington's small-town charm, enjoy its waterfront location, and shop at its many specialty shops and art galleries. Explore the town's past at Historic White Pine Village and the Port of Ludington Maritime Museum.”

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The [USA TODAY 10BEST Readers' Choice Awards](#) highlight top-notch attractions and businesses, providing readers with trusted recommendations. Nominees are chosen by a panel of relevant experts, including a combination of editors from *USA TODAY*; editors from 10Best.com; relevant expert contributors; and sources for these media and other Gannett properties. Voting rules are at 10best.usatoday.com/legal/awards/rules.

USDA Grant to Fund Ludington Landmarks Project

Encouraged by award recognitions for “Best Historic Small Town,” the LACVB bid on and was awarded an \$88,200 grant from the USDA Office of Rural Development. Combined with \$91,800 in matching funds from the LACVB, the USDA grant will help support a Ludington Landmarks initiative to market and showcase Mason County’s historical assets. The goal is to improve awareness of and access to Mason County’s historical assets for locals and visitors alike to prompt visits to the region.

Mason County has numerous historic and cultural assets that tell the story of the region’s history and growth due to the lumber and shipping industries in the late 1800s and how it has influenced Ludington today – and local historical and cultural entities have done extensive work cataloging these assets. Through this grant, LACVB can complement and expand upon the work done by local historical attractions and cultural groups to further market and cross-promote these sites to increase awareness of these landmarks, inspire exploration, reach more audiences and enhance the onsite visitor experience.

"This grant is an important investment in the stories that define Mason County," said Rebecca Berringer, executive director of the Mason County Historical Society. "The Ludington Landmarks initiative will help us showcase our historical assets in a more connected and visible way, reaching a broader audience and strengthening cultural tourism in our community. The Mason County Historical Society is proud to be a key partner, working to ensure our history not only is preserved, but continues to inspire residents and visitors alike."

The project consists of the following elements:

- **Developing/distributing Ludington Landmarks literature** – The LACVB will create numerous self-guided tour routes throughout Mason County, along with companion materials inviting visitors to explore the most significant chapters of Ludington’s past. These will serve as storytelling and navigational guides, directing users to interpretive markers throughout the community for an engaging, interactive onsite experience. Materials will also be developed for young audiences for multi-generational appeal.
- **Creating new and enhancing existing cultural interpretive markers** – The LACVB will create and place as well as enhance existing interpretive signage at key pedestrian areas highlighting Ludington landmarks and routes. These designed markers will serve as engaging touchpoints along the route, offering visitors of all ages insights into the region's history and significance and creating a more immersive and connected experience through the community.
- **Providing an engaging online experience** – Attracting approximately 750,000 users annually, PureLudington.com offers a powerful opportunity to deepen visitor engagement by integrating the region’s historic assets into the website. Visitors will be able to access interactive historic content, curated routes and storytelling to help plan trips in advance and enrich their onsite experience. This digital integration will create new ways for visitors to explore, connect with, and appreciate the area’s historic landmarks before, during and after their visit.
- **Marketing the Ludington Landmarks initiative** – The LACVB will launch a comprehensive, multi-channel marketing campaign about the Ludington Landmarks program that will include digital advertising, print placements, social media outreach and strategic public relations.

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The Ludington Landmarks initiative is a collaboration with numerous local and regional community stakeholders, including the LACVB, Chamber Alliance of Mason County, Mason County Historical Society, Mason County Cultural Economic Development Task Force, Ludington Downtown Development Authority, City of Ludington, SS Badger and Lakeshore Keepers.

Planning for the project began in January and is estimated to take 12 to 16 months, with completion estimated in the spring of 2027.

To kick off the process, the LACVB launched an initial project in May 2025 ahead of the summer travel season to gain feedback and engage potential audiences. In partnership with local cultural institutions, the LACVB created a [Historic Landmarks of Ludington brochure](#) highlighting two self-guided walking tours – one of historic landmarks, and one of historic homes in the East Ludington Avenue Historic District. The brochure also lists coastline landmarks plus other places to explore history and culture in the Ludington area. It is available in print at the Pure Ludington Visitors Center and Rose Hawley Archives or downloadable at pureludington.com/listings/historic-self-guided-walking-tours.

About the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The [Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau \(LACVB\)](#) is the official destination marketing organization for Mason County, promoting the region to business and leisure visitors to maximize economic impact. An independent nonprofit organization, the LACVB collaborates with its partners to champion the continuous improvement of the region as a unique and memorable tourism destination. For more information, visit pureludington.com, Facebook.com/PureLudington and Instagram.com/pureludington.

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