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Lakefront steps to Port Washington's north beach completed on schedule with $50,000 savings

The staircase from Port Washington's Upper Lake Park to the north beach was completed and opened Tuesday, on time and well under budget.

In fact, the 116-step staircase was built for about $50,000, roughly half the $100,000 estimate, Street Commissioner Dave Ewig said.

"It's nice to come in at half the amount expected," Public Works Director Rob Vanden Noven said.

The steps were a joint city-Ozaukee County project. Port engineering technician Ross Kroeger did the topographic work, and County Highway Commissioner Bob Dreblow designed the staircase. It was built by city street department and Ozaukee County highway department employees.

The budget estimate was developed by Dreblow and based on the county's previous experience building a beach staircase at Lion's Den Gorge in the Town of Grafton, Vanden Noven said.

That estimate inadvertently included work done at Lion's Den but not needed for the Upper Lake Park steps, he said.

"This project ultimately was a lot less involved as a whole than Lion's Den was," Vanden Noven said, and supplies were less than expected as well.

"I thought lumber was going to cost twice as much as it did," he said.

"This project was almost the opposite of Murphy's Law, everything that could have gone right did. The only exception was the cold, rainy weather we had during construction."

Despite the fact they had some rain days and the county workers were furloughed for a day or two, the steps were done on time.

"I think the stairs may be used more heavily than we expected," Vanden Noven said. "If you're able to walk the 116 steps, it's really inviting to check them out. It does add a new view of the shoreline that you don't get anywhere else.

"It's worth the climb."

What of the money that was saved on the project?

"We're waiting for it to snow," Vanden Noven said. About $15,000 of the unexpended money was set aside to supplement the city's snow and ice removal budget, something City

Administrator Mark Grams said may be needed if the city experiences a snowy November and December.

The remaining $35,000 was used to fill cracks on the city streets, a project that was completed last week.