

A Guide to Starting Your Business in Downtown Fond du Lac

Downtown Fond du Lac is in the midst of an economic resurgence. Our beautiful, historic downtown area has attracted significant new investment in the form of old buildings being purchased and repurposed. The market for new business continues to improve every day.

For an individual or entrepreneur, starting a new business can present a major challenge. You need to locate a space to lease. Or possibly buy a building. You need to obtain city permits and approvals. You need access to funding and technical assistance. The process can seem overwhelming. We want to help.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership has created this guide in an effort to make the process of starting your business as simple as possible.

Please contact the Downtown Partnership staff for assistance through this process:

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DFP Mission Statement: To establish a diverse, prosperous and healthy district that is social, commercial and the cultural heart of the community.

Developing Your Business Plan

Fond du Lac County Economic Development Corporation 920.929.2928 For guidance in developing a business plan or conducting market research: 116 N. Main Street, Fond du Lac
Website: <http://www.fcedc.com>

Advocap 920.922.7760 The Business Development Program allows low income persons gain self-sufficiency through self-employment. The program administers a Business Development Loan Fund which provides loans to start-up and existing eligible businesses.
Website: <http://www.advocap.org>

Entrepreneurs Toolkit is designed to give innovators a guide to resources available in Wisconsin and beyond.
Website: <http://witoolkit.com/>

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation is Wisconsin's lead economic development organization. WEDC offers information on Business Planning, Permits & Licensing and resources from incubators to business mentors.
Website: <http://inwisconsin.com/inside-wedc/>

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center provides expert assistance to Wisconsin businesses and entrepreneurs by SBDC consultants who know business and understand the issues facing them.
Website: <http://www.wisconsin sbdc.org/>

Finding the Right Location

Where does it make sense for your business to be? Is it a retail or service business? Does your business rely on high visibility? Or do you need an office setting? What about parking? For businesses wanting to locate in Downtown Fond du Lac, the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership is here to help. Downtown Fond du Lac is home to a variety of property types: storefronts, office space, residential buildings, historic buildings. The DFP maintains a database of spaces available for sale or lease in downtown Fond du Lac. The database includes lease or sale prices, square footage, a brief description, and contact information. DFP list of available sale or lease properties:
http://www.downtownfonddulac.com/dfp/available_properties.php

Property Renovations

Downtown Property Design Renderings: To show renovation possibilities, this free service can be used before a building is purchased or leased.

Downtown Façade Design Assistance Grant: This grant funds the services of an architect to design the exterior of your property. Maximum grant amount is \$4,000. Seventy-five percent of design costs are reimbursed when the design is complete and approved by the DFP Design Review Board. Twenty-five percent of the balance is reimbursed upon completion of the project.

Building Improvement Grant: Provides a matching grant to fund the expense of exterior or interior renovations. The minimum grant is \$2500 and there is no maximum.

Downtown Fond du Lac Design Guidelines: The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership's Design Review Board has authored, "Design Guidelines, A Guide to Building Rehabilitation, Renovation and New Construction". The guidelines are used in evaluating DFP facade grant applications and for proposals for changes to downtown properties. The Downtown Fond du Lac Design Guidelines are available online at:
<http://www.downtownfdl.com/dfp/sft422/designguidelinesseptember2012.pdf>

Finding the Cash

A variety of assistance programs help to expand, relocate or start a business in Downtown Fond du Lac.

Building Improvement (BIG) Grant: Designed to incentivize property owners to undertake interior and/or exterior property improvements.

National Exchange Bank & Trust Downtown FDL Loan Program: Provides Downtown FDL property & business owners the opportunity to secure financing at below-market interest rates.

Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund: Loan amounts from \$10,000 to \$200,000 are available. There must be at least one private dollar spent for each public dollar in the project. Eligible uses of funds include property acquisition, architectural fees, site preparation, and working capital. Job creation is a requirement of the loan.

Downtown Microenterprise Loan Program: This loan program assists businesses of 5 or fewer employees, one of which must be the owner of the business and of low or moderate income.

Downtown Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program: Loan program for exterior renovations of commercial buildings. Minimum loan amount is \$20,000; maximum is \$100,000. There must be one private dollar for each public dollar spent. Requires compliance with the Davis-Bacon Act.

Rental Rehabilitation Loan Program: Applies to the residential units within a mixed use building. Residential units must be rented to low or moderate income tenants.

America Saves! Program: With the help of community volunteers, businesses can apply for incentives from their electric and natural gas utilities to implement identified upgrades.

For details and contact information on these programs go to:

http://www.downtownfdl.com/dfp/financial_incentives.html

Getting the Permits

Starting a business may require permits, licenses and other approvals from the City of Fond du Lac.

Architectural Review: 920.322.3440

Most changes to downtown properties require review and approval of the Downtown Architectural Review Board. Signs, painting, awnings, roofing, restoration, repairs, additions - are subject to design criteria of the Zoning Code and the *Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines*.

Historic Preservation: 920.322.3440

Any building that is locally designated as historic requires review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission for any exterior building alterations or renovations.

Building Permits: 920.322.3577

Inspection staff provides code information and assistance for new construction, remodeling or expanding an existing structure or changing the use of an existing structure. A permit is required for all new buildings, additions, interior and exterior alterations, signs and improvement or repairs.

Signs: 920.322.3440

Wall signs and sandwich board signs are allowed in the downtown. The design and placement of a new sign is subject to Downtown Design standards. A sign permit is required.

City Licenses: 920.322.3430

The office of the City Clerk is responsible for issuing certain licenses, including liquor licenses.

Getting Connected

Water Utility: 920.322.3680

The City of Fond du Lac Water Utility provides water service to residents and businesses.
160 S. Macy Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.fdl.wi.gov/>

Alliant Energy Business Resource Center: 800.255.4268

Dedicated to assisting business customers, the team of consultants at the Business Resource Center can explain utility practices and offer answers to improve your energy efficiency and bottom line.
883 W. Scott Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.alliantenergy.com/business>

Waste Management: 888.960.0008

Low-cost high-quality waste management services for businesses of all sizes.
301 Thomas Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <https://www.wm.com/>

Charter Business Internet: 855.251.9121

High-speed Internet connection that can support bandwidth-intensive tasks like web-conferencing, cloud-computing, video-streaming, and large file transfers.
Website: <http://www.charterbusiness.com/>

Getting Listed

Fond du Lac Police Department: call 920.906.5555 to register emergency contact information.

Fond du Lac Fire Department: call 920.322.3800 to register emergency contact information.

US Post Office: 920.921.2911

99 W. 2nd Street, Fond du Lac, Website: <https://www.usps.com/>

Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership: 920.322.2006

30 S. Portland Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.downtownfdl.com>

Getting the Word Out

Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership: 920.322.2006

The DFP will help get the word out with press releases, newsletters, Facebook and website listings.
30 S. Portland Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.downtownfdl.com>

Fond du Lac Reporter: 920.922.4600 Daily subscription based newspaper.

N6637 Rolling Meadows Drive, Fond du Lac; Website: www.fdlreporter.com

Action Advertiser: 920.907.7819 Bi-weekly home delivery free newspaper.

N6637 Rolling Meadows Drive, Fond du Lac; Website: www.fdlreporter.com/section/fon12

Sunny97-7 / 96-1TCX / AM1170 / 98.7FM: 920.924.9697

210 S. Main Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.radioplusinfo.com/>

K107.1 / KFIZ: 920.921.1071

254 Winnebago Drive, Fond du Lac; Websites: <http://www.k107.com/> <http://www.kfiz.com/>

B104.7: 920.230.1047

3911 S. Washburn Street, Oshkosh; Website: <http://www.b104online.com/>

Fond du Lac Area Association of Commerce: 920.921.9500 Membership based organization for the purpose of promoting the civic, commercial and industrial progress of our community.

207 N. Main Street, Fond du Lac; Website: <http://www.fdlac.com/>

Parking & Maintenance

Free Parking: Visitors to downtown can park for free every day on Main Street, with a two-hour limit. Parking is free throughout the district on evenings and weekends.

Parking Enforcement: Parking limits are enforced Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for metered parking and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for Main Street.

Employee Parking: Downtown employees and frequent visitors find parking permits to be cost-effective and convenient. Downtown employees are encouraged to keep Main Street spaces open for customers. Website: <http://www.downtownfonddulac.com/parking.html>

Winter Parking Reminder

On-street parking from November 15th through March 15th is restricted between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. On EVEN numbered days starting at 8:00 p.m. parking is restricted to the even side of the street only. The same applies for ODD numbered days. NO PERMITS will be required. Any METERED AREA is restricted to 60 minutes between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. This policy overrides all other on-street parking restrictions in place on any street where parking is allowed.

Website: <http://www.fdl.wi.gov/index.iml>

Cleaning Sidewalks

City regulations require that the owner or occupant of a lot, part of a lot or a building that fronts on any street must keep the sidewalk in front of such property clean and free from all dirt, rubbish, encumbrances or obstructions.

Website: https://www.secured-site7.com/city_of_fdl/www/cofuploads/Chapter_8.pdf

Bulky Waste Pick Up Service

Pick up service is available for bulky waste items. Please telephone 322-3544 to schedule pick up of bulky waste items. The charge is \$40 per cubic yard with a \$40 minimum.

Website: <http://www.fdl.wi.gov/departments.iml?DeptID=8&DeptPage=53>

Get Involved!

The success of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership (DFP) is driven by the active involvement of its members. One of the best ways to get involved is to volunteer to serve on a committee. The committees offer opportunities for members to use their diverse skills to further the mission of the DFP. The DFP is looking for additional members to serve on the following committees:

Fondue Fest Committee

Plans and organizes the annual event, while continually looking for new additions and enhancements. Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month at noon.

Marketing Committee

Develops and refines a unified, quality image of downtown by marketing the business district as a compelling place to shop, live, work, invest and visit that is consistent with the "Come Together" marketing campaign. Meets the fourth Thursday of the month at noon.

Design Committee

Explores solutions to concerns brought by the committee by downtown stakeholders that may include safety, parking, zoning, cleanliness, etc. Maintains and improves the visual appearance and functional aspects of downtown while maintaining historical integrity. Enhances the attractiveness of the business district with banners, signage, landscaping and lighting. Meets the fourth Wednesday of the month at noon.

"It is the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership's intention to assist potential business owners and entrepreneurs in starting their businesses here in Fond du Lac. We want to make the process as easy as possible"

~ Amy Hansen, Executive Director

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