

2017 CHILI CRAWL



The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership held its 8th annual Chili Crawl event on Saturday, February 11th, 2017. Participants paid a \$10 entry fee to taste 10 unique chili recipes prepared by downtown businesses, submit their votes for the winner, and receive a commemorative T-shirt.

In 2016, 107 visitors participated in the tasting, with 91 percent visiting each participating stop. Total attendance was on par with last year, which had 108 participants, and represented a 62 percent increase over previous historic attendance averages. The event was successful in attracting new customers into businesses, with 75 percent of participants visiting at least one new business, with an average of 4 new businesses visited during the event. For businesses, this resulted in an average of 43 new faces walking through the door during the 4.5-hour event.

The event continues to attract new attendees who learned about the event primarily from social media but also radio advertising and word of mouth. Attendees reported spending several hours downtown as part of the event, and roughly half reported making at least one purchase from a downtown business as part of the visit.

A follow up survey of business participants found that virtually all businesses felt that the event was well-promoted and positive for downtown. Additionally, three-quarters of businesses experienced a noticeable increase in foot traffic, and half also saw an increase in sales. While half of businesses chose to incorporate additional in-store activities or specials to encourage additional visitor spending, few, if any, chose to add hours or staff as a result of the increased traffic. There was also not a direct correlation between the introduction of special promotions and an increase in sales.

*Economic Analysis completed by Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation using data collected by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership.

CHILI CRAWL EVALUATION NOTES:

Next year tasting votes will be split into two categories: Best Restaurant and Best Home-Cook. This will probably help us recruit more restaurants and will ensure that Downtown's Best Chili is always available for purchase in downtown. Based on participant feedback (and stomach size) overall business participation will still be capped at 13 locations.

At this time, attendance will still be capped at 100. Businesses are investing approximately \$150 to serve more than 6 quarts of chili. If there is a strong need for us to increase the attendance cap based on Sturgeon Spectacular marketing needs, we will review it with the potential participating businesses in December.

Ballots will have a place for businesses to indicate that attendees tasted their chili, so that votes will only be counted if attendees visited all locations.

Winners announcement and title belt transfer at Saturday evening Guys on Ice on Ice performance?

PAINT THE TOWN EVALUATION

A great pilot year. Do it again. Add a judging panel. Folks did not take the time to wander to all window locations, so the people's choice voting was probably not very accurate.

DO YOU WANT TO BUILD A SNOWMAN? EVALUATION

Poorly received. One tiny snowman built on the plaza. All the rest left untouched.

Consider offering a workshop on a weekday immediately prior to the weekend. Perhaps request that the Fond du Lac Snow Sculpting team offer a class on snow sculpting on the plaza. This would allow it to work as a marketing tool and a community building tool.