

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Downtown Fond du Lac earns statewide recognition at 31<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Main Street Awards ceremony**

**Fond du Lac, WI** – The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership was recognized for its outstanding downtown revitalization efforts at the 31st Wisconsin Main Street Awards ceremony held in downtown Fond du Lac on April 22, 2022 at Hotel Retlaw.

The awards ceremony recognized the efforts by Wisconsin Main Street volunteers and staff for their historic preservation and downtown economic development efforts of communities in Wisconsin in 2021.

Downtown Fond du Lac took top honors in the Best New Business, Best Cooperative Business Marketing Campaign, Best Special Event, Best Façade Rehabilitation Under \$20,000, and Best Public Improvement Project at the event, which was hosted by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

Best New Business was awarded to The Cellar District at 40 E. Division Street. Founded in 2021 by Brandee Alexander and Sarah Palas, The Cellar District has become known for revolutionizing the way people experience dining out. They take pride in their ability to discover unique ways to combine local, fresh ingredients and the dining experience as a whole. The Cellar District was also the winner of the 2021 Downtown Fond du Lac Best New Business award.

Best Cooperative Business Marketing Campaign was given to the Fond du Lac Farmers Market 'Market Bucks' Program. In 2020, the Farmers Market launched the Market Bucks program. Shoppers stop at the information tent at the Farmers Market to swipe their EBT or debit/credit card to receive Market Bucks

only able to be used the Downtown Fond du Lac Farmers Market. All vendors at the Farmers Market may accept the Market Bucks as payment for their goods. Vendors then return the Market Bucks to the information tent to redeem their cash. The Market Bucks program has no transactional fees for shoppers or vendors.

Best Special Event was awarded to Fondue Fest. The annual festival brings 25,000 people right into the heart of downtown Fond du Lac and is Fond du Lac's largest one-day festival. Fondue Fest includes a variety of merchandise and food vendors, a car show, a variety of music locations/stages, a Kid's Zone, and THELMA's Fondue Fest Finale. Community-wide economic impact of this event is estimated to be \$2.2 million.

Best Façade Rehabilitation Under \$20,000 was awarded to Jesse and Sarah Houle. At a property that had seen a high level of neglect for many years, Jesse and Sarah Houle set out to purchase and remodel 20 N. Main Street. Façade improvements include new paint, business entry door, residential entry door, awning and carpentry repair. The façade improvements made to 20 N. Main have enhanced the buildings natural architecture, design and compliment the recently renovated neighbors to the North and South. The building has once again become a vibrant, active property in downtown Fond du Lac. The project is also the recipient of the 2021 Downtown Fond du Lac Exterior Design of the Year award.

Best Public Improvement Project was awarded to Downtown Fond du Lac Mural Project. The artistic landscape of Downtown Fond du Lac was significantly changed in 2021. In 2021, six pieces of art were selected after a call to local artists. While the original artworks are small enough to use in any home décor, the art was scanned and reproduced to be up to three stores high. In addition, a painted mural entitled "Mandala Flowers" was completed with a finished size of 162' x 30' at 82 N. Main Street.

Volunteer of the Year for Fond du Lac was awarded to Kirsten Quam. Kirsten most recently completed a three-year term as President of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Board of Directors. She continues to serve on the Board of Director, Executive Committee, Marketing Committee. Kirsten's service goes beyond meetings and committees, volunteering her time to serve on interviewing panels, as a liaison between downtown businesses, volunteering at events and being an overall voice of reason. She was most recently recognized as the 2021 'Friend of Downtown Fond du Lac'. The Friend of Downtown award is given to a person or organization that has made a deep impact and sustained commitment to Downtown Fond du Lac.

Amy Hansen, Executive Director of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, was recognized for fifteen years of service to Fond du Lac's downtown, during which the organization has received more than 30 state and national awards.

"WEDC congratulates the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership for their outstanding efforts to revitalize and improve downtown," said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of WEDC. "A vibrant downtown is critical to a community's overall economic development as well as the quality of life for its residents, and we commend the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership for being among the best in the state when it comes to strengthening its downtown."

Fond du Lac City Manager Joe Moore said, "Wisconsin's Main Street Awards program recognizes excellence, so I was particularly happy to see so many Fond du Lac projects recognized at this year's event. Our downtown property owners and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership have created a

wonderfully reinvigorated downtown with inspired façade renovations, fun events and a multitude of thriving new businesses. My heartfelt appreciation goes out to all of them.”

Wisconsin Main Street is a community development program administered by WEDC that targets Wisconsin's historic commercial districts. WEDC provides technical support and training to the 34 Main Street communities and 83 Connect Communities to help them revitalize their business districts based on guidelines developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Since the program's inception in 1987, Wisconsin Main Street community projects have resulted in the creation of more than 3,000 new businesses and more than 16,000 net new jobs. In addition, more than \$2.5 billion in public and private investment has occurred in Wisconsin Main Street communities.

During fiscal year 2021, despite suffering one of the most dramatic economic declines in recent history, Wisconsin Main Street communities were responsible for the creation of an estimated 357 net new jobs and 134 net new businesses in the state. Nearly 25,000 volunteer hours were dedicated to improving the quality of life in communities around the state.

The complete list of 2021 Award winners includes:

**Best Upper Floor Development**

Winner: Newburg Flats on Pearl, La Crosse

**Best New Business**

Co-Winner: The Cellar District, Fond du Lac

Co-Winner: Hooked & Tagged, Eagle River

**Best Interior Renovation Over \$50,000**

Winner: The Staple & The Stone Room, Osceola

**Best COVID Response – Community**

Winner: Wishing Tree, Omro

**Best COVID Response - Business**

Winner: Gather, On Broadway, Green Bay

**Best Image Item/Campaign/Event**

Winner: Downtown Decks, La Crosse

**Best Retail Event**

Winner: Main Street Morning Mixer, Watertown

**Best Retail Event**

Winner: Art Walk, De Pere

**Best Cooperative Business Marketing Campaign**

Winner: Market Bucks, Fond du Lac

**Diversity & Inclusion Award - Business**

Winner: String Theory Studio, Chippewa Falls

**Diversity & Inclusion Award – Community**

Winner: McIntosh Memorial Library, Viroqua

**Best Creative Fundraising Effort**

Winner: Tomahawk Main Street Lawn Dice Project, Tomahawk

**Best Creative Fundraising Effort**

Winner: Valentine’s Day Gift Packages, La Crosse

**Best Public-Private Partnership in Downtown Revitalization**

Winner: Heart of the Harbor, Port Washington

**Best Volunteer Engagement**

Winner: Knapp Stout Park Public Improvement, Rice Lake

**Best Special Event**

Co-Winner: Fondue Fest, Fond du Lac

Co-Winner: Mural & Busker Festival, On Broadway, Green Bay

**Connect Communities Award - Best Revitalization Initiative-Under 5,000 Population**

Winner: Black River Falls Business Video Series

**Connect Communities Award - Best Revitalization Initiative-Over 5,000 Population**

Winner: Waupaca Streetscape & Public Art Installation

**Best New Building Project**

Winner: ABC Supply Stadium, Beloit

**Best Business Success Story**

Winner: Zodica Perfumery, Monroe

**Best Storefront Display**

Winner: Endless Designs, Marshfield

**Best Public Improvement Project**

Winner: Michael J. Walsh Plaza, De Pere

Honorable Mention: Mural Project, Fond du Lac

**Best Business Transition Success Story**

Winner: The Milk Merchant, Wausau

**Best Façade Rehabilitation Over \$20,000**

Winner: Leithold Music, La Crosse

Honorable Mention: Sunrise Donut Café, Monroe

**Best Interior Renovation Project Under \$50,000**

Winner: Lux Cuts, Beloit

Honorable Mention: Bridal Boutique, Platteville

**Historic Preservation Education Initiative**

Winner: The Warehouse Community Arts Center, Eagle River

**Best Façade Rehabilitation Under \$20,000**

Winner: Bespoke FDL, Fond du Lac

**Best Historic Restoration Project**

Winner: Fortney Building, Viroqua

**Corporate Supporter Award**

Winner: Evan Koshak, Tomahawk

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing people, activity, business and a thriving civic life back to the heart of Fond du Lac. The DFP serves 214 properties with 284 businesses, 76% of which are small, locally-owned and operated. The DFP has been part of the Wisconsin Main Street Program since 2004.

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