

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023



DOWNTOWN  
FOND DU LAC

*Partnership*

# 2024 Board of Directors

**President:**

JJ Raflik, *Fond du Lac Family YMCA*

**Vice President**

Sam Meyer, *State Farm Insurance & 18 Hands Ale Haus*

**Secretary**

Tyler Gross, *Ahern Gross Plumbing Contractors*

**Treasurer**

Andy Kittelson, *Fox Valley Savings Bank*

**Past President**

Dave Hopper, *Hopper's Screen Printing & Embroidery*

*The DFP extends a heartfelt thank you to Kirsten Quam, Maeghan Michels and Rob Bartz for their many years of service on the Board of Directors.*

**Members:**

Julie Balson, *Gallery and Frame Shop*

Dave Buechel, *Property Owner*

Ashley Deiler, *National Exchange Bank & Trust*

Tracy Mathweg, *Lillians of Fond du Lac*

Bekki Fishelson-Kuber, *Blue Marble Botanicals*

Monica Lara, *Argentum et. Aurum*

**Ex-Officio Members**

Dyann Benson, *City of Fond du Lac*

Bernadette Ericksen, *Envision Greater Fond du Lac*

**Police Liaison**

Captain Scott Krause, *City of Fond du Lac Police Dept.*

## Letter from the President

Dear Members and Supporters,

As we reflect on another remarkable year for the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership (DFP), I am honored to present our Annual Report for 2023. It is with great pride that we share the numerous achievements and successes that have shaped our downtown community over the past year.

Throughout the year, the DFP has remained steadfast in its strategic focus across four key areas: Economic Vitality, Promotions, Design, and Organization. Under the visionary leadership of our Executive Director, Amy Krupp, and her exceptional team, we have made significant strides in each of these areas.

Our downtown landscape has been thriving through a diverse offering of events and initiatives, which have not only attracted visitors but have also fostered a sense of community spirit. From the Chili Crawl and Wine Walk to the vibrant Night Market, the busy Summer Farmer's Market, and beloved Fondue Fest, our events calendar has been filled with excitement and energy.

Beyond our signature events, the DFP has continued to spearhead projects and initiatives aimed at enhancing the aesthetic appeal and functionality of our downtown district. From creative sign updates, to facade renovations, we remain committed to creating an inviting environment for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

As we celebrate our successes, we also recognize that there are challenges ahead. However, with the unwavering support of our members, volunteers, and community partners, I am confident that we will continue to overcome obstacles and propel downtown Fond du Lac to even greater heights.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you who has contributed to the success of the DFP. Whether through your time, resources, or advocacy, your dedication is truly appreciated and invaluable to our collective efforts.

Here's to another year of growth, collaboration, and prosperity for downtown Fond du Lac.

Warm regards,

**JJ Raflik**

*Fond du Lac Family YMCA*

President of the Board,

Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership



# History of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership

In 1999, the organization known as the Central Business Council – an ad-hoc group comprised primarily of downtown retailers and business owners – worked with the Fond du Lac Area Association of Commerce in an effort to create a downtown Business Improvement District (BID).

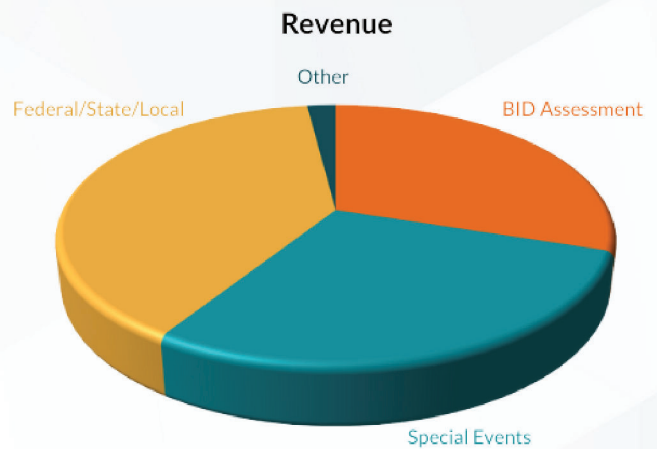
Following Wisconsin legislature governing BIDs, the two entities worked together in a petition drive to gather enough signatures from downtown property owners to prove majority consensus in creating the BID. Their efforts were successful, resulting in Fond du Lac City Council approval of the downtown BID on September 22, 1999.

Shortly thereafter, a BID Board of Directors was formed with representation from property values large and small (as outlined in the new organization's bylaws). At that time, the stated mission of the BID was to develop downtown Fond du Lac into a place that is supportive of professional and business services, institutional services, specialty and retail stores, the arts, and government. For promotional purposes, the BID board chose to rename the organization, and on January 1, 2000, the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership (DFP) launched operations.

The DFP Board created an organization chart modeled after the National Main Street Program's Four Point Approach, and was accepted into the Wisconsin Main Street Program in July 2004.

In 2014, the DFP became a non-profit 501c3 organization and is currently governed by an eleven-member volunteer Board of Directors. The organization is funded by BID assessment, contributions from the City of Fond du Lac and community donations and sponsorships.

Currently, the DFP employs three FTE staff members and is organized into volunteer committees that break down the tasks of the organization. Approximate district boundaries are Main Street from Follett Street on the north to Ninth Street on the south, and encompassing several side streets east and west of Main.



## Mission Statement

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

## Vision Statement

Downtown Fond du Lac will be the local and regional designation that will serve as the cultural and economic hub of the city and surrounding areas. Our financially successful downtown will present a clean, safe, and friendly environment that has broad appeal.

Downtown Fond du Lac will have an atmosphere that is welcoming, comfortable, and enjoyable through its attention to history preservation, restoration, and unique mix of businesses, including retail, professional services, dining, and entertainment. The downtown's streetscape will be modern and well cared for, while at the same time paying homage to its heritage.

The public will have great awareness of all that downtown Fond du Lac has to offer, and the community will support effort to maintain a high quality of life for residents, businesses, and other stakeholders.

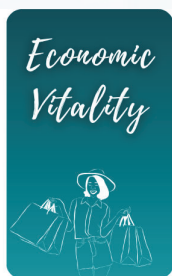
# A Wisconsin Main Street Community

The Wisconsin Main Street Program is a comprehensive revitalization program designed to provide technical support and training to organizations dedicated to downtown or commercial corridor revitalization activities.

Currently, there are 35 Wisconsin Main Street communities. These communities receive tailored support and intensive technical assistance from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) for goals relating to façade improvements and building rehabilitation projects, community engagement and promotional activities, and business retention. The Wisconsin Main Street Program has helped their respective communities achieve increased storefront occupancy and property values, improved overall environment and aesthetics, and an expanded customer base.

## The Four-Point Approach

In 1980, the National Trust for Historic Preservation established the National Main Street Center, now known as Main Street America, to assist downtown revitalization efforts. The Wisconsin Main Street Program is based on the Main Street America philosophy, which advocates for restoration of the historic character of a downtown while pursuing traditional development strategies such as marketing, business recruitment and retention, real estate development, market analysis, and public improvements. Four elements combine to form the Main Street Approach to downtown development:



**Economic Vitality** involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Recruiting new businesses, creatively converting unused space for new uses, and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional merchants are examples of economic restructuring activities.



**Promotion** creates excitement downtown. Street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns are some of the ways Main Street encourages consumer traffic in the downtown. Promotion involves marketing an enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors.



**Design** enhances the attractiveness of the business district. Historic building rehabilitations, street and alley clean-ups, colorful banners, landscaping, and lighting all improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to live, work, shop, visit and invest, and result in the reinvestment of private and public dollars into downtown.



**Organization** involves building a Main Street framework that is well represented by civic groups, merchants, bankers, citizens, public officials, and chambers of commerce. Everyone must work together to renew downtown. A strong organization provides the stability to build and maintain a long-term effort.

## Member Organizations



# 2023 Economic Review

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership was created in 2000 and joined the Wisconsin Main Street Program in 2004. Since entering the Wisconsin Main Street program, downtown Fond du Lac has seen an overall private investment of more than \$148 million.

Since 2013, the vacancy rate of downtown properties has declined from 10.2% to 6.7%. Since 2004, of the 214 properties in the district, 210 grants have been awarded to property owners to assist with interior and exterior property renovations. In total, \$1.132 million has been awarded, leveraging more than \$7.4 million in private investment.

The DFP has made many capital investments totaling over \$240,000. Investments include trash receptacles, flower planters, banners, public art, and holiday décor and lights. Another year of festive holiday decorations were made possible with the help of the City of Fond du Lac Electrical Department (Main Street pine garlands and lights) and Fond du Lac County Parks Department (holiday lights in Veteran's Park).

Each year the DFP organizes numerous annual events including the Farmers Market and Fondue Fest. These events have an estimated total attendance of over 90,000 and a local economic impact of \$4.217 million.\*

The DFP has over 50 active volunteer committee members and over 100 active event volunteers - all working in a volunteer capacity to improve our community.

The DFP leverages partnerships with other organizations in Fond du Lac, as well as other downtowns in the state, region, and nation, to evaluate and implement best practices, leverage the strengths of other organizations, and bring health and activity to our downtown.

\* Source - Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

## Year In Review 2023



Volunteer Committee Members



NEW GRANT PROGRAMS



Events

Local Economic Impact

\$4.217  
MILLION

Economic Vitality

# New Businesses

- Aurora's Apothecary, 171 S. Main
- Beautox Bar, 69 E. First
- Bird's Eye View Optical, 19 S. Main
- Bryanna's Bakery, 72 S. Main
- Copper Cock Tavern, 30 N. Main
- Home Helpers, 21 N. Portland
- Indigo Blu Boutique, 1 N. Main
- Indigo Gallery & Gifts, 104 S. Main
- Knitty Gritty Yarn Shop, 63 N. Main
- Knockout Women's Kickboxing, 15 E. Second
- Legacy Training Lab, 15 E. First
- Mirrorball Home Décor, 44 N. Main
- Rural Mutual Insurance, 103 S. Main
- Sumerce Artisans, 52 E. Division
- Summit Credit Union, 116 N. Main
- The Diner, 175 S. Main
- The Gallery 74 S. Main
- This Is Permanent, 25 N. Main
- Throwback Pockets, 119 S. Main



# Grants & Programs

## Business & Property Owner Assistance

The DFP staff regularly assists new and existing business/property owners on a variety of topics including:

- business marketing assistance
- participation in downtown special events
- new business expansion/relocation/startup
- remodeling projects, permit information
- design standards, design review, design plans, and financial incentives
- miscellaneous issues including legislative issues, business closings, weather alerts, and community collaboration

In 2023, \$220,000 was granted to downtown property owners. In 2024, there is another \$220,000 available in the grant pool.

## Building Improvement Grant

The DFP offers the Building Improvement Grant (BIG) to downtown property owners. The BIG is designed to incentivize property owners to undertake exterior property improvements. The grant review committee considers a variety of factors in determining grant awards including, but not limited to: an increase in property value, a signed lease from a viable tenant, blight elimination, business track record, readiness to proceed, and neighborhood impact.

### 2023 Building Improvement Grant Recipients

- Sam Meyer, 127 N. Main\*
- Samantha Cutler, 191-193 S. Main
- Fat Joe's, 15 E. Division
- Radio Plus, 210 S. Main
- Fond du Lac Cyclery, 209 S. Main
- Karl Huth, 25 Third Street

\*Project still in development

## New Business Grant - [New in 2023](#)

Designed to incentivize and assist entrepreneurs with expenses associated with starting a new or expanding business, this program provides a \$2,500 grant to eligible businesses to be used towards startup expenses.

### 2023 New Business Grant Recipients

- Bird's Eye View Optical, 19 S. Main
- Home Helpers, 21 Portland
- Indigo Blu Boutique, 1 N. Main
- This Is Permanent..., 25 N. Main

## Experience Generator Grant - [New in 2023](#)

Designed to attract businesses who contribute to the overall downtown experience by increasing the vibrancy and vitality of the downtown district, the Experience Generator Grant Program provides new downtown businesses with funding associated with business startup costs. Eligible business types include restaurants, retail shops, or experience-based businesses such as indoor archery, museums, ceramic art studios, golf simulators, etc. This program provides a \$5,000 grant to assist with business startup expenses.

### 2023 Experience Generator Grant Recipients

- Aurora's apothecary, 171 S. Main
- Bryanna's Bakery, 72 S. Main
- Wonder Play Café, 15 N. Main

## Creative Sign Grant - [New in 2023](#)

Designed to incentivize property owners to add to the uniqueness and character of Downtown Fond du Lac by undertaking creative projecting sign projects. This program grants up to 75% reimbursement of the cost to design, manufacture, and install a unique, handcrafted projecting sign.

### 2023 Creative Sign Grant Recipients

- Cujak's Wine & Spirits, 47 N. Main
- Fond du Lac Cyclery, 209 S. Main
- Knitty Gritty Yarn Shop, 63 N. Main
- Mirrorball Home Décor, 44 N. Main

## Building Security Grant

The Building Security Grant Program assists property and business owners with purchasing an exterior surveillance camera system (in partnership with the Fond du Lac Police Department) and/or a rapid entry system lock box (in partnership with the Fond du Lac Fire Department). The program reimburses up to \$250 per exterior camera, and 50% of the cost of each lockbox.

Many thanks to the Fond du Lac Area Foundation for helping to fund this program. The program has now assisted a total of 12 properties in the downtown.

### 2023 Building Security Grant Recipients

- H&H Hobby 79 S. Main
- Aurora's Apothecary, 171 S. Main
- Argentum et Aurum Jewelry, 111 S. Main
- Sesso Bella Salon, 69 E. First

*Economic Vitality*

# Special Events

Special events help to position the downtown as the central hub of the community, both socially and economically. Complete economic impact reports compiled by Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation are available through the DFP office. The DFP is proud to host over 50 event days in downtown. These events are designed to bring people to the downtown district, resulting in sales to our downtown businesses.

DFP Special Events are categorized into three groups:

## Market Events

Market Events are outdoor events involving street closures with merchandise vendors, live music and children's activities lining the streets. The purpose is to bring people into the downtown district to expose them to the environment.

## Walk Events

Walk Events involve sampling food or drinks at various businesses. These events are designed to get ticket holders physically into businesses. Data has typically shown that 50% of businesses are a new experience for ticket holders.

## Promotional Events

Promotional Events are events that mostly involve collective advertising of sales, specials and activities at individual businesses.



# Market Events

## Farmers Market

Going strong since 1971, the Downtown Fond du Lac Farmers Market, sponsored by SSM Health and Dean Health Plan, was held on 25 occasions in 2023. Wisconsin-grown produce, plants, flowers, baked goods, meats, cheeses, arts, crafts, and pottery were available from 172 vendors – an almost 100% vendor increase over 2022. Average weekly attendance of vendors was 90 external vendors and 27 downtown businesses per week.

The Saturday market attracted an average of 2,000 weekly visitors to downtown, for an approximate total of 50,000 visitors over the 2023 season. Of the 2,000 visitors each week, on average 44% attended the market weekly, 34% attended bi-weekly, and 22% attended monthly. 75% shopped at downtown businesses during their trip to the market.

\$25,020 in Market Bucks were sold in 2023. Market Bucks are a form of Downtown Farmer's Market currency that is purchased with a credit, debit, or EBT card and handled the same as cash. The first Saturday of each Market month is known as EBT Match Day. Shoppers with EBT cards were able to receive up to \$10 bonus Market Bucks thanks to a partnership with National Exchange Bank and Trust.

In conjunction with the Farmers Market, 13 businesses outside of the market footprint collaborated to run promotional specials on Saturday mornings, encouraging shoppers to visit the entire downtown district. Major Sponsor, Grande Cheese, also offered the opportunity to sign in weekly to win "One Year's Worth of Cheese!"

Average Market visitor spending was \$14/person. Total spending as part of the event included \$1,956,860 in direct spending downtown and \$2,191,683 in total regional impact.





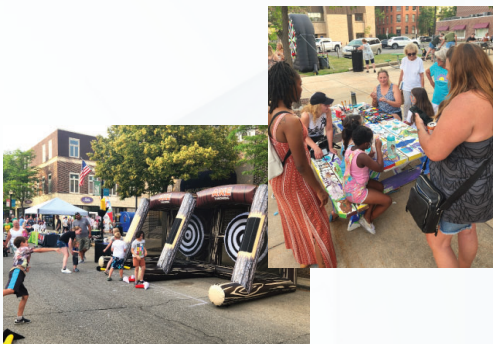


### Night Market

The Downtown Fond du Lac Night Market had its 3rd season in 2023 over five Thursdays in June, July, and August on Main and Sheboygan Streets. The Night Market is an open-air street market featuring live music, food, beverages, artists and kid’s activities sponsored by TDS Fiber.

In total, 47 vendors participated over the course of the season. These included a mix of live artists, prepared food, and maker-made art vendors.

The Night Market was held in conjunction with THELMA’s Thursday night concert series. 78% of Night Market visitors stated they attended the concert series after the Night Market. 78% of visitors said they dined and/or shopped while attending the Night Market, with an average of \$28 spent. Total spending as part of the event series includes \$282,600 in direct spending downtown.



### Fondue Fest

The 16th Annual Downtown Fond du Lac Fondue Fest, presented by Fox Valley Savings Bank, attracted an estimated 20,000 visitors. Fondue Fest continues to be Fond du Lac’s largest one-day festival with over 60 volunteers needed to manage event operations.

Moraine Park Technical College Culinary Arts Program was back in 2023 with chocolate and dessert fondue. New this year, The Melting Pot of Appleton joined as a second fondue location. In addition to fondue tastings, the festival featured five music locations, signature “Fondue Brew” beers from Lakefront Brewery and Fox River Brewing Co., a car show, 211 art, craft, food, produce and retail vendors, and a huge Kid’s Zone, sponsored by SSM Health. The Kidz Zone featured a petting zoo and Fleet Races for kids of all ages operated by Fond du Lac Cyclery, with 3D oriented awards created by the FDL Library. The day served as a fundraiser for numerous non-profits and for the second year, Fond du Lac Festivals held ‘Fondue Feast’, a progressive eating competition. Fat Joe’s Burgers and Brews once again hosted the Fondue Fest Finale, with bands playing into the evening.

The average amount spent downtown per visitor during Fondue Fest was \$43. Given the nature of the event, prepared food vendors reported the highest earnings, with an average gross sale of \$1,756 per vendor, though actual sales ranged from \$250 to \$5,500. Artisan and produce vendors earned significantly less, averaging \$863 with a range of \$140 to \$2,600 in event sales. 18% of vendors were businesses and nonprofits not offering direct sales of goods. When combining the reported customer spending information and vendor sales data, total estimated spending as part of the event is estimated to be \$1,500,579.



### Winter Market

The DFP, in partnership with the City of Fond du Lac, hosted a Winter Market in 2022 which continued into 2023. The Winter Market, located at 16 E. Second Street, was held on Saturdays and featured a total of 30 vendors over the course of the season. Vendors sold the freshest Wisconsin-grown produce, plants, flowers, and baked goods, as well as crafts, arts, pottery, and other hand-made items. A goal of the Winter Market is to support local producers and to offer healthy, local food options in the winter months. Another goal is to serve as an incubator for local vendors who are interested in growing into a brick-and-mortar business. The Winter Market typically saw a weekly attendance of 100-200 visitors.

Promotion

# Walk Events

## Soup Walk

New in 2023! Held on January 21, the Soup Walk featured homemade soup samples at 11 participating businesses. 200 tickets were sold.



The soup walk introduced many customers to new businesses. Based on survey data, of the participants who visited new businesses during the Soup Walk, participants visited an average of 4 new businesses. Total impact as parting of the event resulted in \$6,880 in direct spending downtown.

## 14TH ANNUAL CHILI CRAWL WINNERS!

**RESTAURANT**  
Brick House  
2nd year in a row!

**HOME COOKED**  
Korneli's Bar  
4th year in a row!



## Chili Crawl

On Saturday, February 11th, as part of the Sturgeon Spectacular Weekend festivities, the 14th Annual Chili Crawl featured 12 unique chili recipes prepared by downtown businesses (including Restaurant and

Home-Cooked categories). 300 tickets were sold. Best Restaurant Chili was awarded to Brick House for the 2nd year in a row and Best Home-Cooked Chili went to Korneli's Bar for the 4th year in a row.

The Chili Crawl introduced many customers to new businesses. Based on survey data, of the participants who visited new businesses during the Chili Crawl, participants visited an average of 4 new businesses. In addition, businesses saw an increase in sales during the event, with an average increase of 63%. The estimated economic impact as a result of the Chili Crawl is \$10,522 in direct spending downtown.

## Sweet Stroll

New in 2023! The DFP held its first Sweet Stroll on Saturday, February 11th. 200 tickets were sold to taste 14 different delectable sweets made



by downtown businesses. Based on survey data, of the participants who visited new businesses during the Sweet Stroll, participants visited an average of 8 new businesses. 70% of participants spent money downtown in addition to the price of admission to the event. The overall average participant spent \$26 downtown during the Sweet Stroll. There was a slightly higher percentage of 53% of attendees said they shopped during the event, and 43% reported dining at a downtown restaurant before or after the event. Total spending as part of the event was \$6,645 in direct spending downtown.

## Easter Egg Walk

The 3rd Annual Easter Egg Walk was held on Saturday, April 1. 200 tickets were sold and 26 businesses participated. Ticket holders received

an Easter Egg Basket and map with participating locations. Ticket holders received an Easter Egg at each location. Eggs included candy and special prizes. Additional activities included hosting an easter bunny for photos, special egg prizes, free snacks, discounts and specials. Total spending as part of the event includes \$6,660 in direct spending downtown. The egg hunt introduced many customers to new businesses. Based on survey data, participants visited an average of 11 new businesses.



### Spring Beer & Seltzer Crawl

New in 2023! The DFP held its first Beer & Seltzer Crawl event on Saturday, April 15th. Participants paid a \$30 entry fee to sample beer, seltzer or mocktails at participating business locations. 102 tickets were sold. 13 businesses participated in the event as sampling locations. 7 businesses offered entertainment or specials.



86% of attendees reported dining in the district before or after the event and 38% made retail purchases. Total spending as part of the event included \$11,907 in direct spending downtown.



### Summer Wine Walk

The DFP hosted its 7th Annual Summer Wine Walk event on June 16, sponsored by National Exchange Bank & Trust. 600 individuals purchased admission to sample wines at 23 participating business locations. Ticket holders chose from three ticket options: Sweet Wine, Dry Wine, or Mocktail tickets. Each ticket allowed attendees to choose 12 samples (2 oz) out of the 23 tasting options available at the individual participating



business locations. In addition, for the 3rd year in a row, the DFP teamed up with Envision Greater Fond du Lac Agri-Business to provide donated cheese samples from local dairies to all of the retail locations

in support of June Dairy Month. Two new sponsors, Lillian's and Cujak's Wine & Spirits, provided tote bags to all the ticket holders.

Based on survey data collected from businesses and participants, attendees visited an average of 7 new businesses. 92% of participants stated they made additional purchases with the average attendee spending \$50. The Wine Walk resulted in more than \$44,992 in direct spending downtown.

### Summer Beer & Seltzer Crawl

New in 2023! The Summer Beer & Seltzer Crawl was held on August 18. 11 businesses participated as sampling locations, and 2 businesses also offered entertainment.

Out of the 214 people who attended the event, 93% are likely or certain to participate in the future. 93% reported dining for lunch or dinner in the district. Total spending as part of the event included \$17,221 in direct spending downtown.



### Holiday Wine Walk

The DFP hosted its 4th Annual Holiday Wine Walk event on November 11th, sponsored by Fox Valley Savings Bank. 600 individuals purchased admission to the event choosing from three ticket options: sweet wine, dry wine, or mocktail tickets. 25 businesses participated in the event.

97% of participants spent money downtown in addition to the price of admission to the event. This included the 87% dining downtown before, during, or after the event as well as other purchases made during the walk the average participant spent \$84.

The wine walk introduced many customers to new businesses. Based on survey data, of the participants who visited new businesses during the wine walk, participants visited an average of 6 new businesses each. 100% said they are likely or certain to participate in the future. Total spending as part of the event included \$66,888 in direct spending downtown.



*\*Estimated direct spending for all events calculated by the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation*

Promotion

# Promotional Events

## St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl

The 3rd Annual St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl was held on March 11 following the St. Patrick's Day Parade. The DFP collectively promoted specials from downtown restaurants and taverns. 19 downtown businesses participated. Total spending as part of the event includes \$24,000 in direct spending downtown.



## Holiday Kickoff Weekend

The 2nd Annual Holiday Kickoff Weekend was held on November 3-4 to encourage shoppers to put downtown Fond du Lac at the top of their holiday shopping lists. 22 businesses participated (up from 9 in 2022) in the weekend event. Businesses offered free giveaways, product packages, and discounts just in time for the holiday shopping season. Total spending as part of the event includes \$12,000 in direct spending downtown.

## Deer Camp Weekend

While the hunters are away, the shoppers will play! Deer Camp Weekend was held on November 17-18 to encourage shoppers to visit downtown. 24 businesses participated (up from 18 in 2022) in the promotion providing classes, sales, art exhibitions, and pop-up vendors in their businesses. Total spending as part of the event includes \$19,200 in direct spending downtown.

## Small Business Saturday

2023 was a celebration of 14 years of Small Business Saturday. Held annually on the day following Black Friday, 22 businesses ran various promotions all to encourage shoppers to 'Think Big - Shop Small'. Promotions included sales, classes, giveaways and complementary goodie-bags.



## Witches Day Out

The 2nd Annual Witches Day Out was held on Saturday, October 21st. 26 businesses offered spooky in-store specials, tarot card readings, themed art classes, a spooky selfie station, a costume contest, and more. In addition, participants were eligible to participate in "Spin the Wheel" where they received various prizes including gift certificates from our event sponsors Lillians and Cujak Wine & Spirits.



A costume contest was held at Fat Joe's Burgers and Brew with a winning prize of \$200 in gift certificates from Fat Joe's Lillians and the DFP. Approximately 50 witches and various spooky creatures participated.

73% of visitors said they dined while attending the event and 91% said they shopped at downtown businesses while attending the event. The average amount spent on shopping downtown during the event was \$51. 75% of businesses reported an increase in visitors during the event, with an average of 75% increase in traffic. 50% of businesses reported an increase in sales during the event compared to a typical Saturday, with an average of 48% increase in sales. Total spending as part of the entire event included \$13,896 in direct spending downtown.



# Marketing & Other Promotions

The DFP works with numerous business and community entities to create awareness for downtown businesses through marketing and shopping promotions.

## Downtown Gift Certificates

The Downtown Gift Certificate program continues to provide gift givers access to more than 70 downtown businesses. Sold in denominations of \$10, \$25 or \$50, they make the perfect gift for all occasions. \$8,765 in gift certificates were sold in 2023.

## Open Flags



Downtown Fond du Lac is open for business! A simple idea, with great visual impact. The DFP provides downtown businesses with OPEN signs at no cost. The goal was to create a unified look through downtown and to highlight businesses that are open to passersby. 42 businesses are participating.

## Shop Small Sweepstakes

For the 10th year, the DFP held the 'Shop Small and Win' sweepstakes. Participants submitted receipts from their downtown purchases dated between November 1 and December 31.



Every \$10 shoppers spent at a downtown business during the sweepstakes time period qualified them for one entry into a drawing for \$500 in Downtown Fond du Lac Gift Certificates.

Destination Lake Winnebago Region assisting in marketing the downtown district during the holiday season with social media marketing and radio advertising.

## Monster March

Monsters, princesses, action heroes and other costumed characters were in action on Main Street the last Saturday of October. 700 children and families in costume trick-or-treated at 28 participating downtown businesses and farmers market vendors on Main Street. 18 Fond du Lac High School students volunteered as crossing guards.



## Radio Commercials

For the third year, the DFP sponsored radio commercials for downtown business owners. 12 businesses had their ads aired locally on Sunny 97.7 over the holiday season.

## Dining Cards

Did you know that there are more than 25 places to grab a bite to eat downtown? The Downtown Fond du Lac Dining Cards have become one of the most popular brochures distributed to local hotels in partnership with Destination Lake Winnebago Region.

## Social Media

The DFP Facebook page continues to reach new members of the Fond du Lac community. The DFP Facebook page has 7,900 followers representing an 7% growth in followers. The Farmers Market page has 6,700 followers representing a 12% growth in followers. There are also 204 members in the 'Downtown Business and Property Owners' Facebook group. The DFP also created a Downtown Events Collaboration Team group which has 102 members. The DFP followers on Instagram increased, now surpassing 1,700 followers.

## Fond du Lac Homecoming Window Décor

13 businesses partnered with Fond du Lac High School clubs to have their windows painted with Homecoming décor. The partnership was a success and well received.

Promotion

# Renovation of the Year

## Copper Cock Tavern

As a boy riding his bike around Downtown Fond du Lac, Vince Kuber was fascinated by the many historical buildings that lined Main Street. In 2023, he made his childhood dream reality by bringing together a team of talented renovators to transform 30 N. Main Street into a spectacular, modern venue that still honors its roots. The building needed a lot of love, and Vince's passion has more than met the challenge.

Vince Kuber and Bekki Fishelson-Kuber purchased 30 N. Main in early 2022. The Kubers began renovating the building, gutting it completely and virtually starting from scratch. The process took about a year.

The exterior renovation included a new façade which remains as close to the original building as possible.

The fine-dining restaurant features upscale food and cocktails in an environment described as “a fusion of the 1870's and modern”.

Originally built in 1873, this modern-day elegant renovation was completed just in time for its 150-year anniversary.

The DFP congratulates Vince Kuber and Bekki Fishelson-Kuber on a very impressive restoration project, which has made a substantial visual impact on the surrounding area.



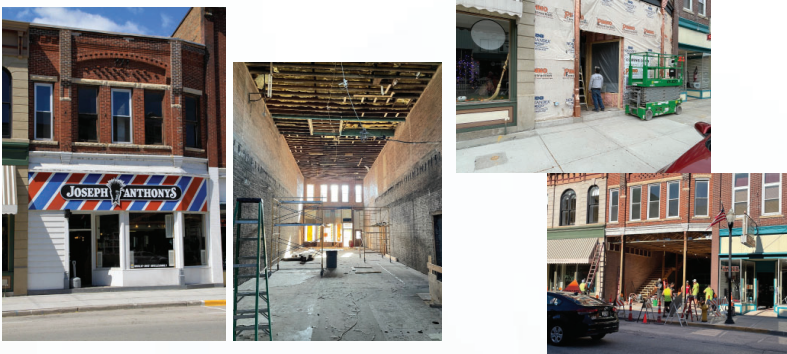
The Renovation of the Year is chosen by the overall aesthetic improvement, quality of workmanship, and community impact a building project has made in downtown Fond du Lac.

### Past Exterior Design of the Year Award Recipients

- 2022 Vince Kuber & Bekki Fishelson-Kuber - Copper Cock Tavern
- 2021 Sara and Jesse Houle - Bespoke Salon
- 2020 Ahern-Gross Residential Plumbing
- 2019 18 Hands Ale Haus
- 2018 Dan & Laurie Baumhardt - Brick House
- 2017 Doug & Judie Duitman - Studio 40 Salon
- 2016 Sam Meyer - Art District Lofts
- 2015 Ted Buetow & Randy Cunzenheim - Theo's 24
- 2014 The Commonwealth Companies - Riverside Senior Apartments
- 2013 Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts
- 2012 The Commonwealth Companies - Trinity Restaurant & Hall
- 2010 Fond du Lac Family YMCA
- 2009 The Commonwealth Companies - St. Peter's Place
- 2008 Sam Meyer - The Knitting Room
- 2007 Chuck Boyd - Pockets Bar & Grill
- 2006 Hometown Bank & Sam Meyer - State Farm Insurance/Red Brick Inn

### Past Interior Design of the Year Award Recipients

- 2022 LEB Properties - 21 E. Second Street
- 2021 The Cellar District
- 2020 Blue Marble Botanicals
- 2019 Hotel Retlaw - Legendary Hotels LLC
- 2018 Brick House
- 2017 The Coliseum
- 2016 National Exchange Bank & Trust
- 2015 Tracy Mathweg - Lillians



Design

# Best New Business

## Mirrorball Home Decor

Casey Fiebig opened Mirrorball Home Décor at 44 N. Main Street in January 2023. Casey took a big leap of faith and left his corporate job to fulfill his longtime dream.

When the right building at 44 N. Main Street became available, it was destiny.

Mirrorball sells home decor in a mix of vintage and modern styles, from wall prints and trinkets to pillows and furniture. The store aims to appeal to a range of customers, from those who like simplicity to others who are looking for a pop of color. Another goal of Mirrorball is to offer cool pieces at an affordable price.

Casey got the idea for the store after visiting similar stores in nearby cities like Ripon and Cedarburg. So the store's vibe is to take a vintage style and turn it into something that's fun and not necessarily trendy.



*"Mirrorball is breath of fresh air in the vintage/ antique retail store arena. Their stylized approach to merchandising their everchanging and unique pieces is welcoming and inviting. The owner, Casey has proven that he is more than willing to not only collaborate with others in the community but also be an advocate and cheerleader for other downtown businesses to generate foot traffic and energy to our downtown. Their marketing and social media strategy should be used as a template or guideline on how to gain positive attention and create posts that create a newsworthy frenzy!"*

– Nomination Entry

*"Casey has contributed to the community on multiple fronts, but my personal experience is his willingness to promote other businesses and non-profits. He has a heavy social media presence and uses that to help other businesses in spreading the word about them. Mirrorball's performance has been outstanding. The ever-changing decor, set up and inventory keeps people coming back for more. Casey has used innovative ways to keep business going in slow times and thinks of new ideas that keep people coming! (I thought his 'adopt a ghost' in October was genius). Mirrorball gets involved in many DFP events and has a big community presence. Finally, Mirrorball is unique in our downtown area and brings an excellent vibe and contribution to the downtown experience. I couldn't recommend Casey and Mirrorball more for this award."*

– Nomination Entry

*"MirrorBall is such an amazing shop with an awesome owner who loves to help others! Casey helped with many downtown collaborations and other community events like Pride Picnic, Hope on the Block and WeEmpowerHer."*

– Nomination Entry

The DFP congratulates Casey Fiebig on the success of his new business.

The Best New Business Award is presented to a business that has opened in downtown in the past year. The recipient(s) is chosen based on contribution to community and industry, business performance, innovative practice, and challenges overcome.

Every year, the public is invited to nominate their favorite new downtown business.

Past Recipients of the Best New Business Award

- 2022 Fondy Axe Company & Hang 10 Poke
- 2021 The Cellar District
- 2020 Lunar & Lake Book Market
- 2019 Hair Lounge & HempWorks Wisconsin
- 2018 Brick House
- 2017 Atlas Gaming
- 2016 Annie's Fountain City Cafe
- 2015 Mix It Up Bakery

Organization

# Downtown Legacy Award

## National Exchange Bank and Trust

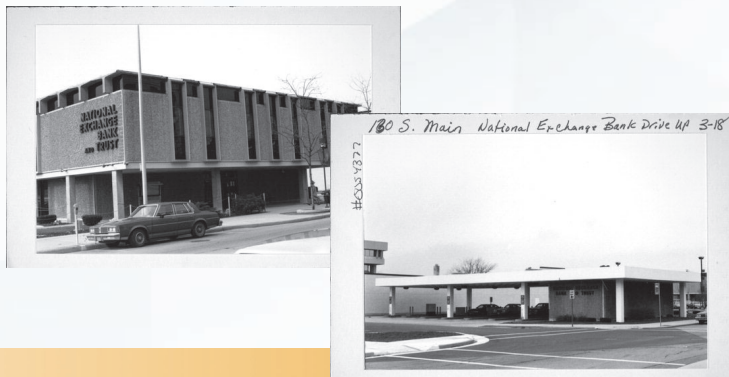
National Exchange Bank and Trust has been a pillar of stability in the Fond du Lac community since it first opened its doors on Dec. 20, 1933, at 104 S. Main Street.

Due to expansion and development, the corporate offices of National Exchange Bank are now centered around 130 S. Main Street and known as National Exchange Bank and Trust. The Trust Department opened in 1975 to better serve the expanded financial needs of the area.

Today, National Exchange Bank and Trust has built an extensive office network, beginning with the addition of their Mount Calvary office in 1989. Other offices were soon added making National Exchange Bank and Trust a large presence in Southeastern Wisconsin.

Part of NEBAT's Mission Statement includes, 'Give back to the communities we serve with financial support and through the talents of our employees.' This has been shown in continuously yin the downtown. In addition to their ever-increasing property investments, they regularly sponsor our events, and their employees have longtime served on DFP committees and boards. For approximately the past 10 years, the "NEBAT Downtown Fond du Lac Loan Program" has been available to assist with small business loans in downtown.

Since its inception in 1933, National Exchange Bank and Trust has been at the side of consumers to help them prosper and has assisted small and large businesses to reach their goals to help mold a solid community. Always a friend of education and the numerous organizations throughout the community, the bank has been most generous in its support.



# National Exchange

## Bank & Trust

*"National Exchange Bank continues to be an industry leader not only in the FDL community, but also among privately held financial institutions in the State of Wisconsin. In a market where acquisitions and mergers are the norm, NEBAT continues to be expand their footprint and acquire other financials. Challenges have been plenty in the past few years with adjustments through COVID and increasing rates, but NEBAT continues to provide top notch customer service to all retail and commercial customers while supporting them through difficult economic times. Their commitment to the downtown and community was evident this year with their investment in a new drive-up facility and large sponsorship of the new Fond du Lac High School football field." - Nomination Entry*



The Downtown Fond du Lac Legacy Award is presented to a business located in downtown for more than fifty years. The recipient is chosen based on contribution to the community and industry, business performance, innovative practice, and challenges overcome.

### Past Recipients of the Downtown Legacy Award

- 2022 Hotel Retlaw
- 2021 Joe's Fox Hut
- 2020 Wood's Floral & Gifts
- 2019 Fond du Lac Public Library
- 2018 Fond du Lac Family YMCA
- 2017 U.S. Bank
- 2016 Edith's Bridal & Tuxedos
- 2015 Kitz & Pfeil True Value



# Friend of Downtown

## Dave Hopper

Dave is the President of Hopper's Screen Printing and Embroidery, which celebrated it's 45th Anniversary this year and the addition of the Mercury Dock Store. The name "Hopper" has become synonymous with Fond du Lac. He also serves on the Board of Directors for Fond du Lac Festivals.



Dave most recently completed a two-year term as president of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

It is widely known that Dave is a generous person and will take time to help however possible.

The DFP extends its sincere thanks to Dave for his commitment to downtown and the Fond du Lac community.

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.

### Past Recipients of the Friend of Downtown Award

- 2022 Mike Leb
- 2021 Kirsten Quam
- 2020 Steve Awve
- 2019 Nicole Wiese
- 2018 Alan Hathaway
- 2017 Sara Cujak
- 2016 Wood's Floral & Gifts
- 2015 Lisa Pauly
- 2014 Louie Lange III and The Commonwealth Companies
- 2013 Julie Balson
- 2012 Steve Schoofs and Sam Meyer
- 2011 Wayne Rollin
- 2010 Joe Tasch
- 2009 Dave Schneider
- 2008 Tom Meiklejohn III
- 2007 Jim Gaffney
- 2006 Debra Heller
- 2005 Randy Mittelstaedt
- 2004 Esther Pietrowski
- 2003 John Papenheim and Marian College

# Volunteer of the Year

## Maeghan Michels

Maeghan actively assists the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership by volunteering at events including the Night Market and Fondue Fest.



Maeghan always shows up to help with an energetic and helpful spirit, and she's not afraid to bring along additional friends or family members to help out as well.

Maeghan most recently served on the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Board of Directors and Executive Committee. She continues to serve on the Night Market Committee. In addition, she also serves on the Board of Fond du Lac Festivals. Not only is she a dedicated advocate for downtown Fond du Lac, she is also a respected member of the community and enthusiastic volunteer for many causes.

We are honored to present Maeghan with the 2023 Volunteer of the Year award to show our appreciation for her commitment to the DFP and the example she sets in his volunteer spirit for our community.

The Volunteer of the Year Award is presented to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the organization over the previous year.

### Past Recipients of the Volunteer of the Year Award

- 2022 Pete Wilke
- 2021 Rachel Peichl McGee
- 2020 Aubriana Donahue
- 2018 Pete and Deb Doll
- 2017 Donna King
- 2016 Katie Kahlhamer
- 2015 Leo Metivier

# Thank You!

Many thanks to the individuals, organizations, corporations, and public agencies that continue to support the efforts of the DFP. We couldn't succeed without the support of our community.

## Marketing Committee

Sara Cujak, *Cujak's Wine and Spirits*  
Ruby Guell, *Fond du Lac Festivals*  
Alyssa Hallgren, *Fond du Lac Cyclery*  
Jennifer Holzman, *Radio Plus*  
Tristin Holzmann, *Wonder Play Cafe*  
Monica Lara, *Argentum et Aurum*  
Tracy Mathweg, *Lillians*  
Kirsten Quam, *Fox Valley Savings Bank*  
Taylin St. Mary, *Wonder Play Cafe*  
Pete Wilke, *Fond du Lac Festivals*  
Tad Wallender, *Fat Joe's Burgers & Brew*

## Grant Review Committee

Rob Bartz, *Main Street LLC*  
Dyann Benson, *City of Fond du Lac*  
Brian Carter, *United Service Appraisals*  
Kathy Doyle, *ADVOCAP*  
Lisa Mader, *National Exchange Bank & Trust*

## Fondue Fest Committee

Hannah Kane, *Fond du Lac Public Library*  
Alyssa Hallgren, *Fond du Lac Cyclery*  
Vicky Melius, *Fives and Salute the Troops*  
Leo Metivier, *MEC*  
Adam Schmitt, *City of Fond du Lac*  
Bethany Warner, *Pit Stop Portables & Lillians*  
Pete Wilke, *Fond du Lac Festivals*  
Sarah Davis, *Fond du Lac Public Library*

## Fondue Fest Committee

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Alyssa Hallgren, *Fond du Lac Cyclery*  
Vicky Melius, *Fives and Salute the Troops*  
Leo Metivier, *MEC*  
Adam Schmitt, *City of Fond du Lac*  
Bethany Warner, *Pit Stop Portables & Lillians*  
Pete Wilke, *Fond du Lac Festivals*

## Farmers Market Steering Committee

Colleen Lubbert, *Lubbert's Farm*  
Amanda Miller, *UW-Extension*  
Lisa Lefeber, *Destination Lake Winnebago Region*  
Byron Pegram, *Jack's Team Sports*  
Shoua Vang, *Fond du Lac County*  
Bill Zeleske, *Fondy Fruits & More*  
Lynda Zeleske, *Fondy Fruits & More*

## Night Market Committee

Bernadette Ericksen, *Envision Greater Fond du Lac*  
Maeghan Michels, *M3 Insurance*  
Tristin Holzmann, *Wonder Play Cafe*  
Megan Schueller, *National Exchange Bank & Trust*



# Supporters & Partners

## Special Event Sponsors & Supporters

18 Hands Ale Haus  
5G Benefits  
Ahern Gross Plumbing  
Blueprint Solutions  
Cujak's Wine & Spirits  
Dean Health Plan  
Everdry Waterproofing  
Festival Foods  
Fleet Farm  
Fond du Lac Reporter  
Fox River Brewing Company  
Fox Valley Savings Bank  
Gallery & Frame Shop  
Grande Cheese  
Hopper's Screen Printing & Embroidery  
KFIZ/107.1The Bull/Mountain Dog Media  
Lakefront Brewery  
LEB Properties  
Lillians of Fond du Lac  
Marian University Men's Hockey Team  
National Exchange Bank & Trust  
Network Health  
NBC 26 Green Bay  
Pit Stop Portables  
Radio Plus/Sunny 97.7/WFDL  
SSM Health  
State Farm Insurance – Sam Meyer  
TDS Fiber  
Waste Management

## Community Partnerships (In-Kind Donations)

ADVOCAP  
City of Fond du Lac Community Development  
Department  
City of Fond du Lac Electrical Department  
City of Fond du Lac Fire Department  
City of Fond du Lac Parks Department  
City of Fond du Lac Police Department  
City of Fond du Lac Public Works Department  
Destination Lake Winnebago Region  
Envision Greater Fond du Lac, Inc.  
Fond du Lac Area Foundation  
Fond du Lac County  
Fond du Lac County Parks Department  
Fond du Lac Festivals  
Fond du Lac High School Silver Cord Program  
Fond du Lac Public Library  
IGNITE! of Fond du Lac County  
Living Well Coalition  
Moraine Park Technical College Culinary Arts Program  
Salute the Troops  
Thelma Sadoff Center for the Arts

## The Downtown Fond du Lac Fund

In 2012, The Downtown Fond du Lac Fund was established through the generous donations of DFP Board Members Mitch Kahl, Louie Lange and Sam Meyer.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Fund of the Fond du Lac Area Foundation is designed to aid in the improvement and beautification of downtown Fond du Lac.

The Non-Endowed Fund is set up to put funds to work immediately. The Endowment Fund becomes part of the DFP's permanent fund where only the interest generated will be distributed. Monies from all donors will be pooled to fund projects on a larger scale, or donors may choose to specifically designate their investment for a particular purpose.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Fund is designed to be a long-term solution in funding public improvements. The Fond du Lac Area Foundation manages and invests these funds.

*Organization*

# Downtown Fond du Lac SPECIAL EVENTS 2024

## Winter

### Soup Walk

January 20

### Chili Crawl

February 10

### Sweet Stroll

February 10

## Spring

### St. Patrick's Day Pub Crawl

March 16

### Easter Egg Walk

March 23

### Downtown Derby Day

May 4

### Farmers Market

May 18 - October 26



DOWNTOWN  
FOND DU LAC

Partnership

## Summer

### Summer Wine Walk

June 14

### Night Market

June 27, July 11, July 25,  
Aug. 8, Aug. 22

## Fall

### Fondue Fest

September 7

### Witches Day Out

October 19

### Monster March

October 26

### Holiday Kickoff Week

November 5-9

### Holiday Wine Walk

November 16

### Deer Camp Weekend

November 22-23

### Small Business Saturday

November 30

### Christmas Cookie Walk

December 7

## Contact Us:

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### Executive Director

Amy Krupp  
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### Bookkeeper

Cindy Laubenstein  
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### Director of Communications & Special Events

Megan Sigrist  
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