



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 long-standing buildings being purchased and repurposed. The market for new business continues to improve every day, making Downtown Fond du Lac a great place to start your new business.

For any individual or entrepreneur, starting a new business can present major challenges. From locating space to lease or purchase to obtaining city permits and approvals, to accessing funding and technical assistance - the process can seem overwhelming. We are here to help.

In an effort to make the process of starting your business as simple as possible, the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership has created this guide meant to help you navigate your journey of opening your new downtown Fond du Lac business.

We encourage you to contact Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership staff for assistance through this process.

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Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Mission Statement:

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

DEVELOPING YOUR BUSINESS PLAN

Envision Greater Fond du Lac

Provides guidance in developing a business plan or conducting market research.

23 S. Main Street, Fond du Lac, WI

(920) 929-2928

www.envisiongreaterfdl.com

ADVOCAP

ADVOCAP's Business Development Program can assist with writing business plans and creating financial forecasts. The program administers a Business Development Loan Fund which provides loans to eligible start-up and existing businesses.

19 W 1st St, Fond du Lac, WI

(920) 922-7760

<https://www.advocap.org/services/business-development/>

Wisconsin Technology Council Entrepreneurs Toolkit

Designed to give innovators a guide to resources available in Wisconsin and beyond.

www.witoolkit.com

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

Wisconsin's lead economic development organization. WEDC offers information on business planning, permits & licensing, and a variety of resources from incubators to business mentors.

2352 S. Park Street., Suite 303, Madison, WI

(608) 210-6700

www.wedc.org

Wisconsin Small Business Development Center

Provides assistance to Wisconsin businesses and entrepreneurs via SBDC consultants who are business experts who understand the issues involved in starting and running a Wisconsin business.

780 Regent St., Madison, WI

(800) 940-7232

SBDC@lists.wisconsin.edu

<https://www.wisconsinsbdc.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? Do you need an office setting? What about parking?

If you are looking to open your business in Downtown Fond du Lac, the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership (DFP) is here to help.

Downtown Fond du Lac is home to a variety of property types, including storefronts, office space, residential buildings, and historic buildings. The DFP maintains a database of spaces available for sale or lease within downtown Fond du Lac, which includes information on pricing, square footage, a brief description, and contact information.

View the DFP database of current downtown properties available for sale or lease at:

www.downtownfdl.com/doing-business/available-properties/

PROPERTY RENOVATIONS

Downtown Property Design Renderings

This free service from the Wisconsin Main Street (WMS) Program can be used to show the renovation possibilities of a downtown property before a building is purchased or leased. A WMS architect will seek owner/tenant input to design a renovation rendering based on historic photos and current property conditions. Downtown property design renderings are available to building owners or tenants located within the Downtown Business Improvement District, only. Please contact Amy at the DFP to apply.

Downtown Fond du Lac Design Guidelines

The Downtown Architectural Review Board has authored "[Design Guidelines, A Guide to Building Rehabilitation, Renovation and New Construction](#)". These guidelines are used in evaluating DFP façade grant applications and for proposals for changes to downtown properties.

FINDING THE CASH

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership offers a variety of assistance programs are available to help start or expand businesses in Downtown Fond du Lac.

Downtown Fond du Lac Building Improvement Grant (BIG)

The Building Improvement Grant (BIG) is designed to incentivize property owners to undertake exterior property improvements, leading to increased property values within Downtown Fond du Lac. The intent is to support building projects that will help move the needle forward to a more aesthetically vibrant downtown.

BIG is a matching grant to fund the expense of exterior renovations, only. Exterior Renovations must be approved by the Downtown Architectural Review Board (DARB). Property owners may apply for up to 50% of total exterior renovation project costs. There is no maximum.

Downtown Fond du Lac Creative Sign Grant

The Creative Sign Grant is designed to incentivize property owners to undertake creative projecting sign projects that add to the unique character of Downtown Fond du Lac. The goal of this grant program is to make downtown business signage as unique as the businesses they represent. This grant reimburses up to 75% of the cost of unique, handcrafted projecting signs, including expenses related to the sign design, manufacturing and installation. Maximum grant award is \$3,000.

Downtown Fond du Lac Experience Generator Grant

The Experience Generator Grant Program is designed to attract businesses who contribute to the overall downtown experience. These business types include restaurants, retail shops, or experience-based businesses such as indoor archery, museums, ceramic art studios, golf simulators, cooking schools, etc. These business categories contribute significantly to visitor and tourism spending and the overall vibrancy and vitality of downtown Fond du Lac. This \$5,000 grant may be used for a variety of business startup expenses.

Downtown Fond du Lac New Business Grant

The Downtown Fond du Lac New Business Grant is an incentive to assist entrepreneurs with expenses associated with starting a new or expanding business in downtown Fond du Lac. New businesses are eligible for a \$2,500 grant to be used towards business startup expenses.

Downtown Fond du Lac Building Security Grant Program

The Building Security Grant assists property/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).

Downtown Fond du Lac Façade Design Assistance Grant

This reimbursement grant funds the services of an architect to design the exterior of a downtown property. Maximum grant amount is \$4,000. 25% of design costs are reimbursed when the design is approved by the Downtown Architectural Review Board. The remaining 75% is reimbursed upon completion of the project.

National Exchange Bank & Trust Downtown Fond du Lac Loan Program

Provides Downtown FDL property and business owners the opportunity to secure financing at below-market interest rates to improve business space or rehabilitate residential space for market-rate housing.

For full details and contact information on the DFP grant programs listed above, visit:

www.downtownfdl.com/doing-business/financial-incentives/

Additional Financial Assistance Programs:

In addition to the DFP grant programs listed above, there are various other sources of financial assistance for those looking to start, maintain, and improve their small business.

ADVOCAP

Administers SBA loans for businesses <https://www.advocap.org/services/business-development/>

Focus on Energy

A State of Wisconsin program where businesses can apply for incentives from their electric and natural gas utilities to implement identified upgrades. <https://focusonenergy.com/>

KIVA

A crowdfunded small business loan program up to \$15,000 at 0% interest. <https://www.kiva.org/borrow>

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

Exterior renovation and sign changes to downtown properties require review and approval of the Downtown Architectural Review Board prior to the start of any project. Signs, painting, awnings, roofing, restoration, repairs, and additions are subject to design criteria of the Zoning Code and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines. [“Design Guidelines, A Guide to Building Rehabilitation, Renovation and New Construction”](#).

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 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

City of Fond du Lac Water Utility

(920) 322-3680

160 S Macy Street, Fond du Lac, WI

www.fdl.wi.gov

Alliant Energy

(800) 255-4268

883 W. Scott Street, Fond du Lac, WI

www.alliantenergy.com/business

Waste Management

(888) 960-0008

301 Thomas Street, Fond du Lac, WI

www.wm.com

Spectrum Business Internet

(920) 907-7756 or (920) 948-4427

www.spectrum.com/business

GETTING LISTED

Fond du Lac Police Department

(920) 906-5555

Call to register emergency contact information.

Fond du Lac Fire Department

(920) 322-3800

Call to register emergency contact information.

Fond du Lac Sherriff's Department

keyholder@fdl.co.wi.gov

Email to register emergency contact information.

US Post Office

(920) 921-2911

99 W. 2nd Street, Fond du Lac

www.usps.com

Contact to register your business address

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Fond du Lac Reporter

(920) 922-4600

N6637 Rolling Meadows Drive, Fond du Lac, WI

www.fdlreporter.com

Radio Plus (Sunny 97-7 / The Great 98 / The Source / 95-1 & 96-1 The Rock

(920) 924-9697

210 S. Main Street, Fond du Lac, WI

www.radioplusinfo.com/

107.1 The Bull / KFIZ - AM1450 / FM 100.7

(920) 921-1071

307 N. Main St, Fond du Lac, WI

www.107thebull.com

www.kfiz.com

Envision Greater Fond du Lac

(920) 921-9500

23 S. Main Street, Fond du Lac, WI

www.envisiongreaterfdl.com

Membership based organization for the purpose of promoting the civic, commercial and industrial progress of our community.

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.

www.downtownfdl.com/doing-business/downtown-parking

Winter Parking Restrictions

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.

www.fdl.wi.gov/parking/winter-parking

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.

ecode360.com/15560451

Bulky Waste Pick Up Service

Pick up service is available for bulky waste items. Please telephone (920) 322-3544 to schedule a pickup of bulky waste items. The charge is \$40 per cubic yard with a \$40 minimum.

www.fdl.wi.gov/public-works/bulky-waste-disposal

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.

We are continuously looking for community minded individuals to assist with special event set up and tear down, downtown maintenance, data entry and deliveries to businesses.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership.

“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 Krupp, Executive Director