

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3/5/2026

For more information contact:

Brittany Machleit

Special Events Director
Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Inc.
131 Main Street Suite 101
Fond du Lac, WI 54935
(920) 322-2006
hello@downtownfdl.com
www.downtownfdl.com



DFP's Annual Meeting Showcases Award Winners & 2025 Highlights

Fond du Lac, WI - The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Inc. (DFP) highlighted its accomplishments from 2025 and recognized several community award winners during its Annual Meeting on March 5, 2026.

Downtown Fond du Lac continued to see strong momentum in 2025, with 20 new businesses opening during the year. The DFP also awarded 17 grants to support building improvements such as security upgrades, creative signage, and experience grants designed to help businesses attract customers.

Since Fond du Lac became a Wisconsin Main Street Community in 2004, downtown has seen more than \$180 million in private investment. During that time, the Building Improvement Grant program has been awarded 250 times, providing \$1.5 million in assistance toward exterior property renovations and leveraging \$9.4 million in private investment.

The DFP also celebrated state and national recognition through the Main Street America program, receiving Gold Tier accreditation as a Wisconsin Main Street Community in recognition of excellence in revitalization strategy, organization, and measurable impact.

Special events remain a major driver of downtown activity. The DFP organizes numerous promotions and signature events including the Downtown Fond du Lac Farmers Market and Fondue Fest, along with community events such as Galentine's Day, Witches Day Out, Small Business Saturday, and Bags & Bucks. In total, the organization hosts more than 50 event days annually, drawing an estimated 80,000 attendees and generating more than \$7.4 million in local economic impact.

In 2025, the DFP also commissioned "The Art Lot," an outdoor gallery featuring 11 murals inspired by Fond du Lac themes, adding a new public art destination to downtown.

During the meeting, several annual awards were presented to recognize businesses and individuals who have made significant contributions to the downtown district.

The Best New Business Award was presented to La Belle FDL, owned by Claudia Hawkins-Moise, for creating a welcoming boutique featuring unique merchandise from small and women-owned businesses. La Belle has quickly become a standout destination for shoppers seeking distinctive goods while supporting independent makers.

The Design of the Year Award was presented to Fond du Lac Beer Company, owned by Mike Leb, for the transformation of a long-underutilized downtown property into a vibrant brewery and community gathering space. The extensive renovation restored historic elements of the building while introducing modern features, including an event space and outdoor patio that has already hosted large community events.

The Downtown Legacy Award was presented to ADVOCAP, recognizing nearly 60 years of service supporting individuals and families through programs focused on housing, education, workforce development, and economic opportunity.

The Friend of Downtown Award was presented to Dyann Benson, who served for 15 years as the City of Fond du Lac's Community Development Director and a member of the DFP Board of Directors. During her tenure, more than \$1.5 million in grants were awarded to downtown businesses and property owners, helping drive significant reinvestment in the district.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Dave Buechel, whose consistent support of downtown events and projects has made a meaningful impact on the organization and the community.

The complete 2025 Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Annual Report is available at www.downtownfdl.com.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Inc. is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing people, activity, business, and a thriving civic life back to the heart of Fond du Lac. The organization serves 214 properties and 280 businesses within the downtown district.

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