

BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT

2026 GRANT APPLICATION

The Building Improvement Grant (BIG) is designed to incentivize property owners to undertake exterior property improvements which will lead 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.

The BIG is a competitive grant program. Applications will be scored and awarded based on identified metrics. The DFP Board of Directors has an obligation to the 214 property owners to invest in good, stable and financially feasible projects with an end goal of raising the property values of the entire district.

AWARD CRITERIA

Grants will be awarded to projects based on the impact the project will have on the overall downtown district. A variety of factors are considered in determining grant awards including, but not limited to: projected increase in property value, blight elimination, street front visibility, business track record, impact on surrounding neighborhood, a signed lease from a viable tenant, job creation, readiness to proceed, local economic impact, and new use of a high-profile property.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Property owners may apply for up to 50% of total project cost (exterior renovations only). For example, if your total project cost is \$20,000, you may apply for a grant of \$10,000.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications will be accepted until all funding is exhausted for the year. Ideally, all funds would be granted in spring/summer to allow adequate time to complete projects before the end of the fiscal year.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, there have been cases where a property owner determines their project will not be completed or timelines have not been met. In these cases, funds will be reallocated back into the grant pool to be awarded to another property owner.

ELIGIBILITY

Property must be located within the Downtown Fond du Lac Business Improvement District.

The applicant must own or have plans to purchase the real estate. If the applicant is a business owner leasing a property, the property owner must provide written support of the project.

The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership has authored the ["Design Guidelines, A Guide to Building Rehabilitation, Renovation and New Construction"](#). These guidelines are used in evaluating grant applications and for proposals for changes to downtown properties.

All exterior property improvements must have prior approval from the City of Fond du Lac. **All** projects applying for BIG funding require Downtown Architectural Review Board (DARB) approval. DARB meets the first Tuesday of each month and applications are due 10 days prior to the meeting date. Properties that are locally designated as historical properties may require approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. Questions regarding DARB, application submittals or historic status may contact the City of Fond du Lac Community Development Department at 920-322-3440.

No application will be reviewed or presented to the committee for consideration on behalf of an individual or entity that is delinquent in permit approvals, property taxes or any payments to the City of Fond du Lac or the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership.

USE OF FUNDS

Funds are to be used for labor or materials associated with streetside exterior renovations. Examples include: carpentry, masonry, windows, doors, lighting, paint, signs, awnings, roofing (if visible from street level). Parking lots, out buildings, patios, roofing and business rebrands are not eligible. All work must be completed by professional licensed contractors.

MATCHING INVESTMENT

The property owner's matching investment must be equal to or greater than the amount being requested on the grant application.

PROJECT START UP

Ideally, projects should be completed within a six-month window. However, project completion dates will be determined on a case-by-case basis on larger scale projects.

Any alterations or changes to the design approval by the Downtown Architectural Review Board may require re-submittal to DARB. Applicants should contact the City of Fond du Lac Community Development Department at 920-322-3440 to determine the level of review required for any proposed changes. If design alterations or changes are made without prior notification and approval, a stop work order may be issued until the issue is resolved.

PROJECT PROGRESS

For large scale projects, applicants may be required to provide periodic updates to DARB on their projects.

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

The grantee will be reimbursed for eligible pre-approved grant related expenses. Grant funds cannot be disbursed until all conditions have been met. These conditions include:

- All conditions of the grant contract have been fulfilled.
- The entire project has obtained the necessary permits from the City and all required inspections have been approved.
- The entire project complies with all conditions of approval by the Downtown Architectural Review Board.
- All contractors have been paid in full.
- Failure to comply with any of these conditions shall result in non-payment of grant funds to the applicant and project.

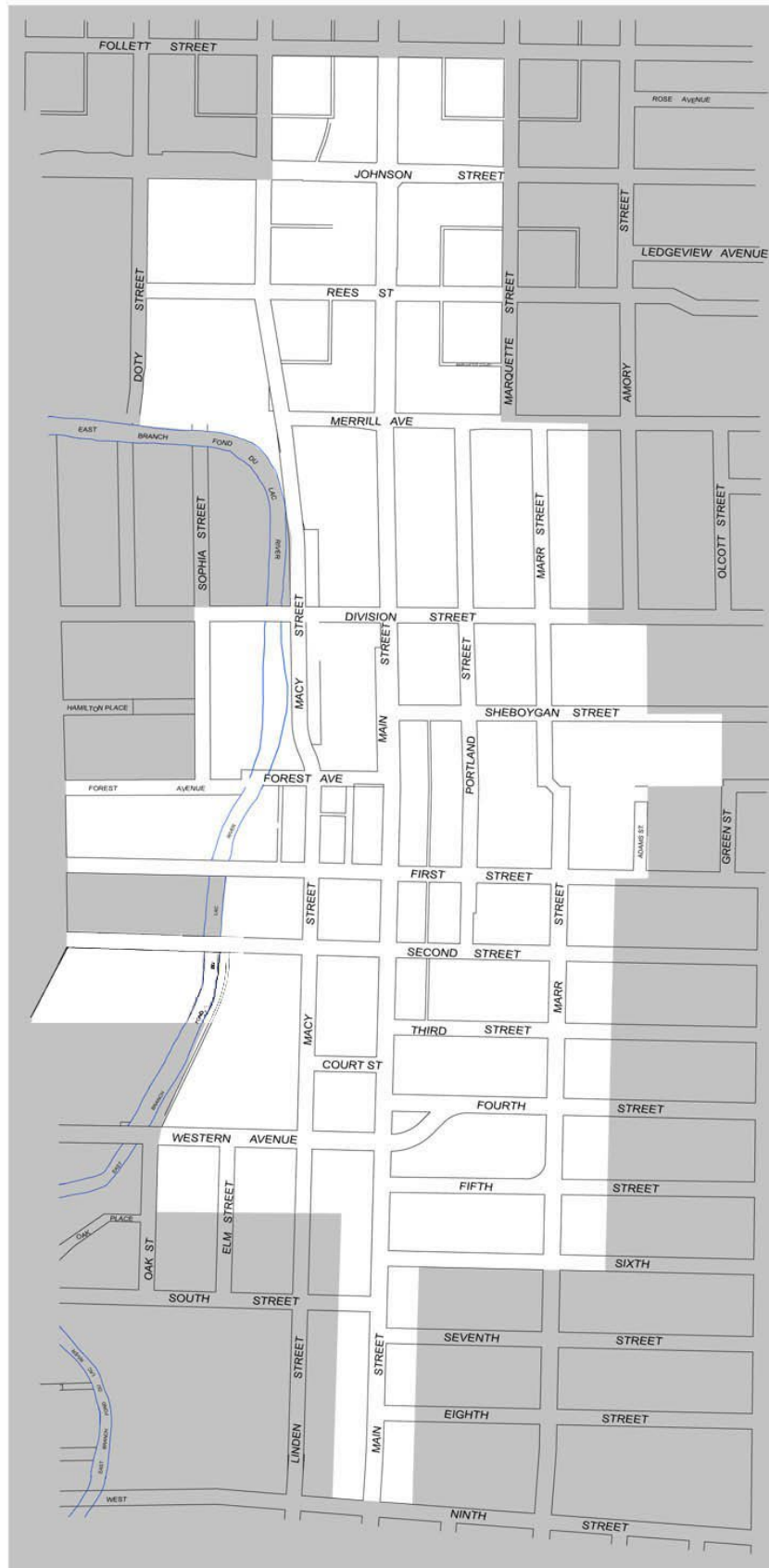
CONTINGENCY

All projects will be required to post a sign in a visible location stating "This project was funded in part by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership." Upon payment, the DFP will write a press release and submit a picture to local media. Project success stories must be available to the DFP to further promote the various grant programs.

APPROVAL PROCESS

1. DFP Staff Review: Applications are reviewed by staff for completeness and accuracy. Applicants will be notified whether their application is complete or if additional information or corrections are necessary.
2. Grant Review Committee: The committee reviews applications on the third Monday of each month until funds are exhausted for the year. Applicants must be present at the meeting to answer questions. The Grant Review Committee is comprised of professionals in applicable fields including: economic development, real estate, finance, and property appraisals. Recommendations made by this committee serve as the basis for funding approvals.
3. DFP Board Approval: Upon recommendation by the Grant Review Committee, the DFP Board of Directors will review and approve each individual grant.
4. Notification: All applicants will be notified in writing of the DFP's decision. An agreement form must be signed and submitted to DFP staff before the start of the project.

Projects cannot be started prior to grant approval.



The white area represents the **Downtown Business Improvement District**. Properties within this area are eligible for the Building Improvement Grant.

2026 BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

Applicant Name: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Property Owner/Owners: _____

Property Address: _____

Total Exterior Project Cost: _____ Grant Amount Requested (cannot exceed 50%): _____

Desired timeline for the start and completion of your project: _____

Date of design approval from the City of Fond du Lac: _____

Written description of project:

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Attachments – Please email or US Mail all documents together in one envelope or email.

1. Photos of existing conditions
2. Architectural drawings or rendering of proposed project
3. Copies of estimates, bids, contracts, or quotations to be done in connection with the project
4. Written letter of support from property owner (if not the applicant)

Additionally - Large Scale Projects Only (greater than \$5,000 in grant funding being requested):

5. A list of real estate owned by the principals
6. A Sources and Uses of Funds Statement, including proof of matching funds.
7. Business Plan if the project is a new business or entity.

An application without the requested attachments is considered incomplete and will not be processed until all information is on file.

Signature

Date

For questions or to apply for the 2026 Downtown Fond du Lac Building Improvement Grant, please contact:

Downtown Fond Lac Partnership
131 S. Main Street, Suite 101, Fond du Lac, WI 54935
920-322-2006 or info@downtownfdl.com