

NEWS BULLETIN

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BUSINESS & PROPERTY UPDATES

[VendiCards](#) has officially opened, May 4 at their new location at 49 N. Main Street. Previously located at 74 S. Main Street. Owner Logan Rihn founded VendiCards with a passion for the Pokémon Trading Card Game and a commitment to serving the collector community. What started as a love for the hobby has grown into a comprehensive destination for collectors. Offering everything from sealed products and raw cards to graded gems, custom merchandise, and professional card services.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Road construction on Western Ave will be taking place until late July. Macy St. will be closing intermittently during that same time period. To stay up to date on road closings/water shut off check out [City of Fond du Lac – Municipal Government](#).

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

CELEBRATIONS

We would love to stay more up to date on your projects, business announcements, special events, milestones, and more so we can help spread awareness and celebrate your successes on our social media pages!



To make that easier, we created a Google Form that you can return to anytime throughout the year. Whether you're celebrating:

- 🎉 A business anniversary
- 👋 A new employee
- 📦 A new product launch
- 🎊 A special event or more!

...simply choose the topic that fits and answer a few quick questions!

Check out the [form here](#). If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Brooke at marketing@downtownfdl.com.

MAIN STREET SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

We're excited to share a free opportunity for you all in partnership with Main Street America!

Join in for a 3-part webinar series this summer designed to help you access capital, strengthen your business, and plan for growth. Bonus: Attendees can apply for an exclusive Accelerator Program with expert coaching + pitch competition opportunities!

How to Choose the Right Funding for Your Business

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 | 3 - 4 p.m. ET

Register here: https://savingplaces-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_WS38gxUdSjqlFb2MWF6BJA#/registration

What Are Lenders Looking For When You Apply for a Business Loan?

Wednesday, July 15, 2026 | 3 - 4 p.m. ET

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Register here: https://savingplaces-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BQ1RY9VNQAuweXdHRb3Eow#/registration

Business Plan Basics

Wednesday, August 19, 2026 | 3 – 4 p.m. ET

Register here: https://savingplaces-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Kq3aVYfGQIGNtAAvQT72Qg#/registration

You can register through those links, or if you'd like more information do not hesitate to reach out to me at hello@downtownfdl.com

SPECIAL EVENT NEWS

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

The 2026 **Farmers Market**, presented by SSM Health, will run from May 16-October 31: 2026 from 8am-12pm. The [Farmers Market Vendor Application](#) is now available online. All downtown businesses are eligible for one free 10x10 space. We are close to reaching capacity so please apply if you'd like to secure your space! **We are in need of drink vendors and want to make sure our downtown businesses get first pick of the booth spaces available.** If you are interested, contact [Kristin](#) for more information.



We are seeking volunteers to serve on the [Friends of the Farmers Market](#) team as either a Welcome Booth Ambassador or in Operations Support. Please contact [Kristin](#) for more information.

- **Savant Stroll** in partnership with the SSM Health Treffert will be held on Thursday, July 9th from 4:00pm–5:30pm! We are currently looking for Downtown businesses interested in hosting a savant in your space to showcase their incredible talents and/or donating gift cards or prizes for our community raffle. Guests who visit each savant stop and complete their passport will be entered to win raffle prizes! 🌞

This event is part of the larger [Archipelago 2026: A Global Savant Gathering](#) that celebrates connection, creativity, and the unique gifts and people that make our world so special. If you have more questions, please email [Brittany](#).

- **Fondue Fest**, presented by Fox Valley Savings Bank, is being planned for Saturday, September 12, 2026, 9am-5pm. The [Fondue Fest Vendor Application](#) is now available online. All downtown businesses are eligible for one free 10x10 space.

SPECIAL EVENT RECAPS

- **Downtown Derby Day** – Saturday, May 2, an all-day Kentucky Derby themed promotional event, featuring specials at 15 downtown businesses.
- **Beer & Bourbon Crawl** – Saturday, May 2, from 1-5:00pm. 217/250 tickets were sold. Doubling sales from last year which was great!
- **Farmers Market**– Saturday, May 16, was a beautiful first Farmers Market. We had over 80 vendors and those numbers will continue to grow as the season progresses and more produce is available. Many

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people were excited and said it was the best Farmers Market yet. We are excited to continue this trend and would love to invite businesses to add additional programming in the plaza near the music. If interested, please email [Kristin](#) for more information.

ANNUAL SPECIAL EVENT REVIEW

The DFP Marketing Committee conducted a comprehensive evaluation of all annual special events to assess how well they align with organizational goals and support a broad range of downtown businesses. The objective is to create a strategic event calendar that delivers the greatest overall impact for the downtown district.

As part of this process, a survey was distributed to downtown businesses that have participated in events. The feedback received has been extremely valuable in guiding planning and decision-making.

Final decisions regarding the 2026 Special Events Calendar will be made in early July. In the meantime, the following potential changes are under consideration:

1. **Christmas Cookie Walk & Sweet Stroll** – These events are being reevaluated, as participation tends to be more “grab-and-go,” which may not significantly support retail sales compared to events like Wine Walks or the Chili Crawl, where attendees linger and shop.
2. **Downtown Derby Day** – This event may be combined with the Beer & Bourbon Crawl to streamline offerings and maximize participation.
3. **Beer & Bourbon Crawl** – Ticket sales doubled this year. We noticed a different demographic at this event and would like to keep it in the future. We will see how interest is in 2027.
4. **Bags & Bucks** – This event has not gained strong traction and falls during a particularly busy time for businesses, making execution more challenging.
5. **Shop Small and Win \$500 Raffle** – With participation declining in recent years, the committee is assessing whether this promotion has run its course.
6. **New Events** – Moving forward, all proposed new special events will require approval from the DFP Board of Directors to ensure alignment with organizational priorities.

The DFP remains committed to creating events that are vibrant, well-supported, and beneficial to the entire downtown business community.

STAFFING UPDATE

Executive Director Amy Krupp officially retired effective April 30, 2026 after 18 years of service. Brittany Machleit is serving as Interim Executive Director until a replacement is named. Amy will continue assisting the DFP with grant programs.

Individuals interested in applying for the Executive Director position are encouraged to [apply here](#).

DORA RECOMMENATION – (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area)

The City of Fond du Lac is looking into options to introduce a DORA after survey results were in favor of it. This will take longer than we originally thought and might not be in effect this summer. More information to come on this as we learn more.

BUSINESS RESOURCES

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2026 GRANT PROGRAMS

- **Building Improvement Grant (BIG)** – Designed to incentivize property owners to undertake exterior property improvements, 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 with no maximum.
- **Creative Sign Grant** – Designed to incentivize property owners to add to the unique character of Downtown Fond du Lac through creative projecting sign projects, this grant reimburses up to 75% of the cost (up to \$3,000) of unique, handcrafted projecting signs, including expenses related to design, manufacturing and installation.
- **Experience Generator Grant** – Designed to attract experience-based businesses that 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.
- **New Business Grant** – 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.
- **Building Security Grant Program** – Assists property/business owners with purchasing an exterior surveillance camera system (in partnership with the FDL PD), exterior security lighting and/or a rapid entry system lock box (in partnership with the FDL FD)

For full details and contact information on the DFP grant programs listed above, visit: [Grant Programs](#)
Please email info@downtownfdl.com for more information.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDITS

As members of a Wisconsin Main Street Community, Downtown Fond du Lac businesses are eligible to receive free website and social media audits. This assistance focuses on reviewing, evaluating, and assessing the business' website and/or social media pages. Potential reasons for a website or social media audit include a desire to revamp and/or gain an outside perspective on your website or social media accounts, to obtain assistance with social media content ideas and frequency, and/or assistance with taking over and improving a pre-existing website/social media account.

If you would like to request a website and/or social media audit, please reach out to info@downtownfdl.com.

DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC MAPS

The DFP has a downtown map showing downtown retail, bar and restaurant businesses. Pads of 25 are available at the DFP office, or email info@downtownfdl.com if you would like one dropped off.

DOWNTOWN FOND DU LAC GIFT CHECKS

A great way to support our downtown district is to encourage your customers to purchase Downtown Fond du Lac Gift Checks to share the love with over 70 downtown businesses!

Downtown Fond du Lac Gift Checks are sold at the DFP office or online in any requested denomination and can be mailed directly to the recipient's address.

If your business would like to be included in the Downtown Fond du Lac Gift Check program, please email info@downtownfdl.com.

OPEN FLAGS

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The DFP has “OPEN” flags available for downtown businesses at no cost. The goal is to create a unified look throughout downtown and to highlight businesses that are open. If your business would like a flag, please email info@downtownfdl.com

FOND DU LAC POLICE DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

City of Fond du Lac Chief of Police, Aaron Goldstein offers the following insight and resources to the downtown business community:

- Fond du Lac Community Resource Guide, FDL PD - [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
A comprehensive guide on available Fond du Lac emergency services, mental health, abuse and juvenile and family services, and transportation resources.
- Pathways to Care - [English](#) and [Spanish](#) - A guide for navigating Fond du Lac County's mental health services in crisis and non-crisis situations.

STAY CONNECTED

- DFP Business and Property Owners Facebook Group – This private group welcomes downtown business and property owners to discuss general downtown issues, public notices and services. [Business and Property Owners Group](#)
- Downtown Events Collaboration Team Facebook Group – This private group is a place for downtown business owners to discuss ideas to make the most out of capturing the audience of attendees at downtown special events [Downtown Events Collaboration Team](#).
- DFP Facebook Page – [DFP Facebook](#)
- DFP Instagram Page [DFP Instagram](#)
- DFP Farmers Market Facebook Page [Farmers Market Facebook](#)

BOARD MEETINGS

The DFP Board of Directors typically meets the second Wednesday of the month at 8:30 a.m. at Fox Valley Savings Bank. This meeting is open to the public. If you would like to be added to our meeting notification list, please email info@downtownfdl.com.

CONTACT US

General inquiries or responses to items from this news bulletin can be sent to info@downtownfdl.com or via phone at (920) 322-2006.

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Cindy Laubenstein, Bookkeeper and Research Assistant, bookkeeper@downtownfdl.com

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