



Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21
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Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 among 15 new communities accepted into WEDC Downtown Revitalization Program

Program to help communities revitalize downtown and urban commercial districts

(MILWAUKEE, Wis. – July 5, 2016) – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has accepted 15 new municipalities into its Connect Communities Program, an initiative that works with communities to advance downtown and urban corridor revitalization efforts.

With the latest additions, there are now 67 participants in the Connect Communities Program, which provides access to resources and training to help downtown organizations pursue revitalization and redevelopment efforts. Since the program was launched in January 2013, participating communities have reported adding 175 net new businesses and more than 550 jobs, as well as \$30 million in private investment.

The new Connect Communities participants are:

- Barron Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Beaver Dam, Inc.
- Town of Boulder Junction
- City of Brillion
- Chetek Chamber of Commerce
- Cross Plains Chamber of Commerce
- Cumberland Chamber of Commerce
- Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce
- Florence County Chamber of Commerce
- Jefferson Chamber of Commerce
- Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21
- Mount Horeb Area EDC
- Village of New Glarus
- Reedsburg Revitalization Organization
- City of Waupun

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 intends to leverage the resources of the Connect Communities Program to advance revitalization efforts along downtown's commercial corridors, such as West Wisconsin Avenue. To date, the organization and its partners have launched a West Wisconsin Avenue website (www.WisconsinAve.com) and are currently seeking proposals for a new creative lighting installment along the avenue. A West Wisconsin Avenue opportunities brochure will debut in July.

“With WEDC’s main street and commercial corridor expertise, our participation in the Connect Communities Program will assist us in enhancing downtown’s vibrancy, particularly along the West Wisconsin Avenue corridor, as well as in exploring opportunities to strengthen the connection of downtown to the Historic Third Ward and adjacent neighborhoods,” said Matt Dorner, economic development director of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. “These efforts will complement the work being done by the various downtown organizations to leverage the momentum felt throughout downtown.”

Prior to being accepted to the Connect Communities Program, applicants had to explain the type of activities or assistance that they hope to undertake as part of the program, and identify a local team that will be responsible for carrying out activities and participating in program events and training.

MORE

ADD ONE / Connect Communities Program

“The Connect Communities program has made an impact on dozens of downtown districts in every region of the state,” said Mark Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC. “Downtowns and urban commercial districts play an important role in their communities and in Wisconsin’s overall economy. This program is just one way in which WEDC works closely with local downtown leaders to help them develop strategies for success.”

The program, launched in early 2013, is designed to support and complement the Wisconsin Main Street Program, which has supported projects statewide resulting in the creation of more than 3,100 net new businesses and 7,200 net new jobs since the program’s inception in 1987.

Connect Communities participants benefit from a variety of assistance and resources simply by being part of a broad-based network of communities with similar objectives, but specific program services include:

- A ListServ/network group to get new ideas from staff and other participating Connect Communities
- Participation in Main Street workshops focused on a downtown revitalization topic
- An on-site visit from a member of WEDC’s community development staff to assist in identifying needs and offering assistance
- Training for each community’s downtown director or board president
- Roundtable discussion groups on pertinent topics
- Access to WEDC’s downtown development online library
- Access to resources and training materials developed for Wisconsin Main Street communities
- Invitation to the annual Main Street Awards program, plus eligibility to nominate a project for a Connect Communities award
- Quarterly webinars/regional training

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About Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21 is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown is a management district organization that oversees 150 square blocks representing approximately 500 property owners in the center of downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe and friendly downtown. More info is available at www.milwaukeedowntown.com.

About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive economy. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit www.inwisconsin.com or follow WEDC on Twitter @_InWisconsin to learn more.