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## Creating a community that thrives in Dodgeville

### *WEDC Deputy Secretary's visit includes Vibrant Spaces, dental clinic projects*

**DODGEVILLE, WI. MAY 15, 2025** – Dodgeville is taking steps to make sure its downtown continues to thrive through projects that create places to gather, support small businesses that strengthen the community, and meet the community's needs.

"Rural downtowns serve as the heart of their communities, offering spaces for commerce, social interaction, and cultural events," said Dodgeville Mayor Barry Hottmann. "They are essential for preserving local heritage, supporting small businesses, and providing residents with a sense of identity and belonging."

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Deputy Secretary and COO Sam Ridders was in Dodgeville Thursday see how the city is taking steps to ensure the community continues to flourish.

"In our communities, downtowns serve as a central place where people can go to live, work, and play," Ridders said. "It's great to see Dodgeville is tackling projects that address all aspects of our lives, from creating a social space to gather, meeting community needs, and supporting the small businesses that serve residents."

To ensure its residents have a space to gather, Ridders learned how the city plans to transform a vacant lot into a community gathering space in the heart of downtown.

Dodgeville is one of 27 Wisconsin communities that received a Vibrant Spaces Grant from WEDC. More than \$1.1 million in grant funds were awarded last month.

Dodgeville will use its \$50,000 in grants funds to add seating, an amphitheater, green space, and murals to the site. The space, which will host library programs, farmers markets, and other community events, will enhance the downtown corridor and is expected to increase foot traffic, stimulate the local economy, and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

"The hope is that this space will be universal in nature to allow for a variety of community uses and be a catalyst for community gathering and inclusiveness," Hottman said.

Ridders heard about how Iowa County—where Dodgeville is located—will support small businesses through the Iowa County Business Boost Initiative, a grant program funded in part with a \$125,000 Small Business Development Grant from WEDC. The initiative offers grants for business needs such as expansion, relocation, capital improvements, marketing, program development, and other foundational activities.

"Iowa County intends to support local entrepreneurs through grants that promote entrepreneurship, provide mentoring or training, and encourage local business

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improvements,” Hottmann said. “These initiatives aim to strengthen the county’s economic development network and assist small businesses in overcoming challenges to growth.”

While in Dodgeville, Ridders also visited the Access Dodgeville Dental Clinic, which provides dental care for the underserved and uninsured residents in of Dodgeville and the surrounding communities.

WEDC assisted with a Community Development Investment Grant for the expansion of the clinic in 2021, which allowed the clinic to increase its square footage and serve an additional 1,500 to 2,000 patients per year, meeting a critical need in the community.

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#### **ABOUT THE WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

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