

# Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.: Three Wisconsin communities receive state grants to support downtown improvement projects

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*WEDC awards a total of \$625,000 to Tomah, Soldiers Grove, Rice Lake*

**MADISON** - The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has awarded grants totaling \$625,000 to three communities for redevelopment projects that will strengthen the business districts of each community.

WEDC awarded two Community Development Investment Grants of \$250,000 each to the City of Tomah and the City of Rice Lake, and a \$125,000 grant to the Village of Soldiers Grove.

"A thriving downtown is key to a community's overall economic strength, and each of these projects will help bring more visitors downtown, which will provide a boost to nearby businesses," said Lt. Governor Kleefisch, who joined state and local officials in each community Tuesday to make the grant announcements. "The state's investments in these community development projects are designed to establish a firm foundation for future economic growth."

"These grants are prime examples of how WEDC works to support communities throughout the state as they invest in enhancing their downtowns," added Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, the state's lead economic development organization. "These projects will improve the downtown areas of these three communities while at the same time create jobs and increase property values."

Lt. Governor Kleefisch was joined by several state legislators in making the announcements Tuesday, including Sen. Jennifer Shilling and Rep. Lee Nerison in Soldiers Grove; Sen. Patrick Testin and Rep. Nancy VanderMeer in Tomah; and Sen. Janet Bewley and Rep. Romaine Quinn in Rice Lake.

Here are the details on the grants announced Tuesday:

### **City of Tomah (Monroe County)**

Tomah is receiving a \$250,000 grant to assist in the construction of a mixed-use commercial building on the site of the former Tee Pee Supper Club, a local landmark that was razed in 2016.

Tomah-based developer 3<sup>rd</sup> Gen LLC plans to build a three-story, 70,000-square-foot mixed use building with commercial and office uses on the first two floors and 11 residential units on the top floor. The \$11 million development will include a new full-service restaurant on the ground floor and a banquet facility on the second floor with a walkout patio overlooking downtown.

The new building is expected to create over 35 jobs and is expected to house four other businesses in addition to the restaurant. Construction is now underway and should be completed by February.

### **City of Rice Lake (Barron County)**

Rice Lake is receiving a \$250,000 grant to support the renovation of a historic building at 12 W. Marshall Street, known as the Marshall 12 building, which will become the new home of the Northern Star Theatre Company, an all-volunteer, nonprofit community theater organization.

Northern Star had occupied a building on Main Street, but is relocating because of the reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge in downtown Rice Lake. The theater plans to occupy part of the Marshall 12 building and make the rest of it (about 12,700 square feet) available for lease. As many as nine small businesses could potentially lease space in the building.

The project will preserve and redevelop the century-old Marshall 12 building and transform it into a fine arts center that is expected to provide a boost to area businesses and restaurants by drawing visitors to downtown. Northern Star, which produces six to nine shows per year, draws between 5,000 and 6,000 people

annually to its performances.

Construction is expected to start soon and be completed by the end of the year.

### **Village of Soldiers Grove (Crawford County)**

Soldiers Grove is receiving a \$125,000 to support the expansion of the Driftless Brewing Company (DBC), which is currently a one-barrel brewery. The brewery will expand its existing facility at 102 W. Sunbeam Drive and will build out a former grocery store.

With the \$1.1 million expansion project, DBC will become a 15-barrel production brewery and will also have a 70-seat taproom. The renovation/expansion includes the brewing and fermentation operation area, packaging, product storage, office space and ingredient storage.

In addition to improving the aesthetics of downtown Soldiers Grove, the expansion will also create new jobs, as plans call for adding six jobs initially and up to 12 full-time and part-time positions within five years.

Construction will begin in four to six weeks, and the project is expected to be completed in late fall of 2018.

### **About the grants**

WEDC's Community Development Investment Grant Program supports community development and redevelopment efforts, primarily in downtown areas. The matching grants are awarded based on the ability of applicants to demonstrate the economic impact of the proposed project, including public and private partnership development, financial need, and use of sustainable downtown development practices.

Since the program's inception in 2013, WEDC has awarded more than \$17 million in grants for projects expected to generate more than \$233 million in capital investments statewide.