

WEDC: Wausau River District named 2019 Great American Main Street

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MADISON, WI. March 27, 2019 – Wausau River District has been named a recipient of the 2019 Great American Main Street Award, which recognizes communities for their excellence in comprehensive, preservation-based commercial district revitalization.

“Wausau River District has set an example for communities across the country that are looking to cultivate sustainable, long-term revitalization in their downtown,” said National Main Street Center CEO and President Patrice Frey. “They have shown what’s possible if you invest in public spaces, expand partnerships and collaborations, diversify funding sources, and launch programs that respond to the needs of your community.”

Selected by a national jury of community development professionals and leaders in the fields of economic development and historic preservation, Wausau River District is being recognized for becoming an amenity-rich arts and culture destination with engaging public spaces and a booming local economy.

“Wausau River District has consistently been a leader in district revitalization,” said Errin Welty, downtown development account manager for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. “The strong focus on public-private partnership engagement has fostered an atmosphere of innovation and creativity. While the River District has always been an employment hub and shopping destination, it is increasingly attracting visitors and residents that appreciate the district’s ample dining, nightlife, and recreation amenities.”

Founded in 2002, Wausau River District has played an important role in advocating for new developments as well as redesigning wider and more walkable streets.

These efforts, combined with more than \$93 million in public investment and \$26 million in private investment, has allowed the city to focus on developing unique public spaces and special events that showcase the character and natural beauty of the downtown area.

Wausau River District hosts 100 special downtown events each year, ranging from concerts to art fairs, drawing over 72,000 visitors annually.

“I’m beyond proud of our community’s focus on improving the quality of life for our residents, through the creation of public spaces, community events, expansion of walking/biking trails and the vast amount of cultural and historical offerings that make our downtown so vibrant any time of the year,” said Blake Opal-Wahoske, executive director of Wausau River District.

The selection criteria for the winning communities includes their overall strength of their Main Street Program, commitment to historic preservation, active involvement of the public and private sector and engagement of community members and local stakeholders in the downtown revitalization process.

Alberta Main Street in Portland, OR and Wheeling Heritage in Wheeling, WV were also recipients of the 2019 Great American Main Street Award.

Previous Wisconsin main street communities who have also received the Great American Main Street Award include Sheboygan Falls (1995), Chippewa Falls (1996), La Crosse (2002), Green Bay (2009) and Beloit (2011).