

WEDC: Bayfield County receives \$250,000 state grant to support expansion of a retreat center

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MADISON, WI. OCT. 28, 2020 –Bayfield County is receiving a \$250,000 state grant to help support the development of a multi-phased expansion project for the Wild Rice Retreat located in the Town of Bayfield, two miles south of the City of Bayfield on State Highway 13.

The Community Development Investment Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will support the first phase of an expansion project for the Wild Rice Retreat, a center for guided retreats and a venue space for local events.

“A vibrant blend of businesses is key to a community’s overall economic success, which is why it is one of WEDC’s top priorities to support communities across the state and invest in quality infrastructure and services,” said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of WEDC. “The expansion of the Wild Rice Retreat Center will serve as a foundation for future economic growth and for the collective good of the Bayfield community”.

“This new development will bring jobs and investment to our region on an ongoing basis,” said Bayfield County Board Chair Dennis Pocerlich. “The County supports and applauds WEDC and Wild Rice Retreat’s efforts and encourages other businesses to consider Bayfield County as a place to live and work”.

Superior Living Arts LLC, the developer for the project, is planning a multi-phased expansion of the retreat center totaling close to \$30 million. The first phase will consist of building additional lodging, a multi-purpose classroom, a sauna and

expansion of the local trail system. This development will allow the center to host and accommodate 50 guests at a time with year-round operation.

“The CDI Grant is essential funding that allowed the project to proceed with construction in 2020,” said Heidi Zimmer, president of Superior Living Arts and visionary for the project. “Over 50 local construction jobs were created, and the project is built almost entirely with local materials from northern Wisconsin suppliers and vendors. I am honored to partner with WEDC to create this impactful project for the region.”

Wild Rice Retreat covers a total of 114 acres and is owned by Wild Rice Land LLC. The center offers a destination for guided personal and group retreats that focus on integrative artistic and holistic life experiences. The center also functions as a primary venue space for Bayfield fundraisers and special events for local businesses and organizations.

The first phase of the project will result in the creation of seven permanent, year-round jobs. Up to 12 part-time and seasonal positions will also be created, along with opportunities for local artists, educators, farmers and business owners to teach workshops and engage with the Wild Rice Retreat.

“The Wild Rice Retreat is both a local resource and a global destination,” said state Sen. Janet Bewley. “By expanding the trail system along Lake Superior, creating multi-functional classrooms, and providing additional lodging for visitors to northern Wisconsin, this investment is good for the community as a whole. I’m happy to see Bayfield County and the state are helping to support this economically stimulating enterprise”.

“Small businesses across northern Wisconsin are hurting due to the global pandemic. This is especially true in our tourism industry, which has been the lifeblood of many communities throughout the Lake Superior shoreline,” said state Rep. Beth Myers. “That’s why I’m thrilled that the state is investing in this local project, which is going to provide jobs and opportunities for folks who need it. Wild Rice Retreat honors the beauty and splendor of our natural landscape while supporting our local artistic community. I wish them nothing but good things as they develop this project and grow their business”.

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 \$26.4 million in CDI Grants to over 100 communities for projects expected to generate more than \$440 million in capital investment statewide. Through fiscal year 2020, WEDC has awarded 124 CDI Grants to 86 communities throughout the state.