

AARP: 'Walk Your Wheels' proposal to make downtown Fond du Lac safer wins AARP Wisconsin Small Dollar, Big Impact grant

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FOND DU LAC, WI – A proposal submitted by the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership to purchase and install decals asking riders of bicycles, skateboards and scooters to “Walk Your Wheels” has been selected to receive an AARP Wisconsin “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant.

Grants are being awarded each month throughout 2021 to projects across Wisconsin that are designed to improve communities and make them better places for everyone to live, work and play as they age. Judges selected this project for a \$1,000 grant after reviewing dozens of proposals submitted from all over the state.

“This project fits perfectly with the spirit and intent of the Small Dollar, Big Impact grant program,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Sam Wilson. “Our goal is to support communities as they make positive changes that inspire long-term progress on livable issues. This proposal hits that nail right on the head.”

Amy Hansen, Executive Director of the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, was thrilled to learn the group will receive the grant. “We are thankful to the AARP for seeing merit in our “Walk Your Wheels” campaign. We believe it will positively

impact pedestrian safety in downtown Fond du Lac.”

For years, Hansen explained, “we have had the challenge of people riding bicycles, scooters and skateboards on downtown sidewalks. We have signs posted at intersections, but they are not capturing people’s attention. We believe that sidewalk decals will be more noticeable by being colorful and directly over their path of travel.”

The \$1,000 will be used to purchase 20 of the 48 decals they plan to buy and install on Main Street in the downtown area. Each decal will have a picture showing a person next to a bike, skateboard or scooter.

The Partnership plans to raise funds to pay for the remaining 28 decals and install them when weather allows in early 2022. Hansen said the decals will be part of a community education program explaining that downtown sidewalks are intended to be pedestrian zones.

“Bicycles, scooters and skateboards are a great way to get around town, however we want to make sure that they do not interfere with pedestrian safety, especially in the downtown district, where doors open directly onto the sidewalk,” she said.

Hansen added that people over age 50 sometimes have slower response time to react to bikes, skateboards and scooters that might come directly at them while walking. They are also more likely to be visually or hearing impaired. That’s why she hopes the decals, with illustrations on them, will be easily identifiable and understandable by everyone, which will make the sidewalks safer.

AARP Wisconsin’s launched its “Small Dollar, Big Impact” grant program in 2020 and is now in its second year of helping proposed projects move forward in rural and urban parts of the state.

“These grants are exactly what the name describes – short-term, low-cost solutions that could have remarkable impacts on the shaping of neighborhoods and cities,” said Darrin Wasniewski, Associate State Director of Community Outreach for AARP Wisconsin.

“There are so many great ideas and proposals for making life better in communities across Wisconsin. We know how impactful \$1,000 can be. This is our way of extending some seed money to get these projects off the ground.”

The grant program is open to some nonprofits and government entities. For more information on the program, visit www.aarp.org/WIsdbi