

AARP Wisconsin: Proposal for Pop-up Holiday Alley Activation wins AARP Wisconsin grant

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MILWAUKEE, WI – A proposal by Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 to host a holiday-themed activation event aimed at supporting area businesses and increasing foot traffic along a historic cobblestone alley called Turners' Alley has been selected to receive an AARP Wisconsin "Small Dollar, Big Impact" grant.

The two-day event, set for Dec. 17 and 18, will be an extension of a pilot alley activation event held in October called Pop's Pop-Up Pumpkin Patch. The winter version will be held in the same alley at 1029 N. Old World 3rd Street/Dr. Martin Luther King Drive and will feature an ice bar by Camp Bar, hot apple cider, hot cocoa and popcorn from Pop's Kettle Corn and MarketPlace, and festive photo-ops for the holidays.

AARP Wisconsin is awarding grants 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."

Beth Weirick, CEO of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21, was thrilled to hear they had won the grant. “We are enormously grateful and honored to be a recipient of AARP Wisconsin’s ‘Small Dollar, Big Impact’ grant. We’re proud to partner with AARP Wisconsin as we pilot a new placemaking initiative to activate downtown alleys into vibrant urban experiences with our community.”

“With AARP Wisconsin’s support, we look forward to transforming Turners’ Alley with our first-ever ‘Santa Camp’ pop-up event this December as part of the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival,” she said.

Gabriel Yeager, Downtown Environment Specialist with the Business Improvement District, said the group brought together several neighborhood partners for the organization’s second alley activation after the success of Pop’s Pop-Up Pumpkin Patch in downtown Milwaukee on Oct. 16.

“From tables on loan to in-kind decorating and cleaning services, we were able to rally our community partners to transform the alley in just a matter of two weeks,” Yeager said in the grant application. “Given the success and popularity of the event, we are excited to plan for a winter extension of our pilot program.”

The \$1,000 grant will enable the group to purchase event supplies and equipment such as blankets/throws for beer garden tables and benches that can be reused during future events.

“We will also leverage funding for temporary lighting to illuminate the alley for the event,” Yeager said, “as we explore long-term lighting improvements for Turners’ Alley and others in downtown Milwaukee.”

Temporary seasonal greenery, such as pine trees, will also be purchased with the grant.

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