

# Gov. Evers: Announces more than \$20 million in tourism capital investment grants for projects across the state

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GREEN BAY — Gov. Tony Evers today announced \$21.9 million in grants will be awarded to 27 local governments and organizations through the Tourism Capital Investment Grant Program for major tourism-related capital improvement projects across the state that help promote, maintain, or bolster Wisconsin's tourism industry. The announcement today is a continuation of the governor's efforts to support Wisconsin's tourism industry. Since 2020, Gov. Evers has prioritized more than \$200 million in support for travel, tourism, lodging, and entertainment industries.

"We've prioritized major investments in Wisconsin's tourism industry, because it's at the core of our local economies, helping to promote local festivals and events, support small businesses, restaurants, and hotels, showcase our outdoor recreation opportunities, and so much more," said Gov. Evers. "From Green Bay to Hayward to Wisconsin Dells, these capital infrastructure projects will help ensure Wisconsin's tourism industry—and all the industries that depend on it—continue to be a strong part of our economy."

Created and announced by Gov. Evers in [August of 2021](#), the Tourism Capital Investment Grant Program is funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act, and grants can be used to build, expand, or maintain buildings, travel-related infrastructure, or public attractions. The grants awarded range from \$29,000 to the maximum of \$3.5 million, and due to significant interest in the program, additional funding was allocated to support more projects across the state.

“We are proud to support our critical tourism and entertainment industries with capital improvements and investments that would be hard to come by without additional support from the state,” said Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld. “I know this investment will make a big difference for communities that rely on tourism dollars to thrive.”

A list of grant awardees and additional information can be found below and on the [program website](#) (see award announcement).

**The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation | \$762,750**

The American Birkebeiner Ski Foundation will receive a grant of \$762,750 to help with the development of the Mt. Telemark Village, a destination year-round recreation area on the historic Telemark Lodge property, which was purchased by the foundation in February 2021. The development will include a paved fitness trail, an outdoor gym and fitness area, a biathlon range, beginner and intermediate mountain bike trails that will also accommodate youth racing, and a lookout tower.

**American Players Theatre of Wisconsin, Inc. | \$971,360**

American Players Theatre will receive a \$971,360 grant to expand and revitalize the theatre parking lot by replacing insufficient lighting with new LED lighting, expanding the parking lot to accommodate an additional 75 cars, installing a swale to manage storm water runoff, and paving the portion of the lot that accommodates accessible parking.

**Barron County Pro Rodeo, Inc. | \$36,500**

The Barron County Pro Rodeo, one of Wisconsin’s premier rodeo events, will receive a \$36,500 grant to make needed on-site improvements and update technology to better serve their national audience.

**Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce | \$30,000**

The Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce will receive a \$30,000 grant to create a Championship Disc Golf Course to attract new visitors, as well as tournaments and other events. Additionally, in the winter seasons, the course has been specifically designed to be used for snowshoeing and ski trails, with the ability to host regional and national meets.

**City of Marshfield | \$140,000**

The city of Marshfield will receive a \$140,000 grant to assist with barn repair needs at the World’s Largest Round Barn, which was built in 1919 on the Marshfield

Fairgrounds and is a staple of the Central Wisconsin State Fair. The funds will be used to replace the barn's 79 windows. Currently, the wood around the windows is rotten, allowing rain and snow to penetrate the barn.

**City of Merrill Parks and Recreation Department | \$140,000**

The city of Merrill Parks and Recreation Department will receive a \$140,000 grant to purchase 70 acres of land that is immediately adjacent to their 950-acre Memorial Forest. In recent years, the city of Merrill has invested in multi-use pedestrian and bike trails which has increased visitors to the park. The additional 70 acres of land will allow them to extend and expand their pedestrian and bike trails to accommodate more visitors.

**Dane County | \$3.2 million**

The Alliant Energy Center of Dane County will receive a \$3.2 million grant to support significant upgrades to provide heating, cooling, and electrical, serving the year-round needs of cattle, horse, and other animal shows. The Alliant Energy Center is home to several resident organizations, including World Dairy Expo, Midwest Horse Fair, and other annual agriculture and animal shows. These shows have distinct requirements for care, grooming, assessment, showing, and housing. Specifically, these funds will help add more than 600 in-install electrical receptacles, radiant and forced air heating equipment, physical plant power distribution improvements, fan/cooling/air movement equipment, a dry-chemical fire suppression system to protect storage areas for bedding, food, tack, and equipment, and upgraded air filtration equipment.

**Door County Maritime Museum and Lighthouse Preservation Society, Inc. | \$1.75 million**

The Door County Maritime Museum will receive a \$1.75 million grant to help expand their Sturgeon Bay location with the Jim Kress Maritime Lighthouse Tower. This expansion will provide an additional 20,000 square-feet, doubling the museum's exhibit space and offering 10 floors of educational exhibits to highlight Wisconsin's rich maritime history.

**Driftless Development, Inc. | \$119,182**

Driftless Development Inc./Prairie du Chien Main Street will receive a \$119,182 grant to help host the 350th Historic Celebration, commemorating the 350th anniversary of the expedition of Father Marquette and Joliet down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi River. Prairie du Chien will create a series of celebratory events, including several reenactments, historical tours, canoe races,

parades, a medallion hunt, kids' historical games, square dancing, carriage rides, vintage photography opportunities, an axe throwing contest, a beard contest, and a pie judging, among many others. The 250th anniversary attracted more than 12,000 people and Prairie du Chien hopes to quadruple that number with both national and international visitors.

### **Experience Greater Green Bay Corporation | \$2.5 million**

The Experience Greater Green Bay Corporation will receive a \$2.5 million grant to help construct the new Experience Greater Green Bay Visitor Center. This new visitor center has been long-anticipated and the governor first proposed funding for the center in his 2019-21 Capital Budget. Unfortunately, that provision was rejected by legislative Republicans. And last year, when the state had the unique opportunity to expand Medicaid and receive an extra \$1 billion, the governor again proposed funding for this project in his [special session call](#) to expand BadgerCare. Again, Republicans in the Legislature rejected that proposal. The new visitor center will bolster tourism marketing in the greater Green Bay area and provide visitor services to the six million annual guests to the area.

### **Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail, Inc. | \$65,000**

The Great Sauk State Trail is a multi-use recreational trail system that will connect the Dane County Recreational trail systems to the 400 State Trail when completed, making it possible to one day cross the entire state by bicycle. Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail, Inc. will receive a \$65,000 grant to make needed improvements to the first half mile of trail north of the bridge that crosses the Wisconsin River at Sauk City, which recently received funding to be reconstructed. With the reconstruction of the bridge, this portion of trail could become one of the busiest portions of the regional trail system. These improvements will transform the area with vegetation management, a community mural, and a gathering space with benches for trail users.

### **Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau | \$112,050**

VISIT Milwaukee will receive a \$112,050 grant for their new custom-designed mobile welcome center. The mobile welcome center will be immersive and interactive, and will help visitors find events, accommodations, and experiences to enjoy while in the Milwaukee area. Additionally, it will be used as a marketing tool to promote major meetings, conventions, and sporting events.

### **Jefferson County | \$242,000**

Jefferson County will receive a \$242,000 grant to make on-site improvements and

upgrades to Fair Park which holds more than 200 days of events in Jefferson County throughout the year.

**Milwaukee County | \$3.5 million**

The Milwaukee County Zoo will receive a \$3.5 million grant to revitalize and upgrade the entrance experience at the zoo, which includes the Humboldt Penguin exhibit. This exhibit is a year-round exhibit and is one of the zoo's most popular. Zoo habitat expansions and renovations are an operational necessity for maintaining, expanding, and revitalizing zoo visitation and engagement, and the penguin exhibit expansion will allow the Milwaukee County Zoo to add interactive features while providing a state-of-the-art habitat for the penguins.

**Mosinee Community Athletic Association | \$109,100**

The Mosinee Community Athletic Association will receive a \$109,100 grant to upgrade the lighting at the main soccer field at Edgewood Park. Upgrading the lighting at the field will allow Edgewood Park to host more games and visitors by extending the hours of operations and lengthening the season into the early spring and late fall.

**National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, Inc. | \$42,174.29**

The Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward welcomes approximately 50,000 visitors annually and will receive a \$42,174.29 grant to make updates to museum facilities, including carpet replacement.

**Olbrich Botanical Society, Inc. | \$145,650**

Olbrich Botanical Gardens consistently ranks among the top tourist attractions in Madison and welcomes more than 335,000 visitors in a typical year. Olbrich Botanical Gardens will receive a \$145,650 grant to support an accessibility capital project to make the infrastructure more accessible for visitors of all abilities.

**Ozaukee County Agricultural Society | \$29,640**

The Ozaukee County Agricultural Society will receive a \$29,640 grant to install a permanent chain link fence around the grandstand area of the Ozaukee County Fairgrounds to improve the safety and well-being of fairgoers.

**Paine Art Center and Gardens, Inc. | \$250,000**

The Paine Art Center and Gardens will receive a \$250,000 grant to help fund the construction of a new parking lot for events, creating 30 new spaces and refurbishing the 40 existing spaces.

### **Port Milwaukee | \$3.5 million**

Port Milwaukee, a city of Milwaukee department, will receive a \$3.5 million grant to help expand maritime infrastructure to accommodate larger cruise ships. Port Milwaukee has been working on this expansion since 2020 when Viking Cruises announced Milwaukee as its selection for turnaround service. Currently, the Port does not have the infrastructure to accommodate larger cruise ships. Port Milwaukee estimates they will see between 9,000 and 15,000 cruise ship passengers in 2022.

### **Port Washington Historical Society | \$38,820**

The Port Washington Historical Society will receive a \$38,820 grant to help construct a picnic-like shelter to display a lifeboat from the shipwreck of the car ferry the SS Milwaukee, which sank in 1929 and was located in 1972. The lifeboat was recently refurbished after it had been sitting outside for many years. The shelter will allow the Port Washington Historical Society to display the lifeboat while protecting it from the elements.

### **Pump House Regional Arts Center, Inc. | \$288,140**

The Public House Regional Arts Center in La Crosse welcomes more than 50,000 visitors in a typical year and will receive a \$288,140 grant to improve and update the restroom facilities to expand capacity and increase public health and safety, as well as replace chairs in the theater.

### **Sun Prairie Chamber of Commerce | \$187,465**

The Sun Prairie Chamber of Commerce will receive a \$187,465 grant to help in the renovation of their office building. The building was built in 1956 and the remodeling will include renovations to improve energy efficiency and ADA accessibility, and create a board room so the Chamber can host meetings and volunteer training sessions.

### **Village of Johnson Creek | \$225,200**

The village of Johnson Creek will receive a \$225,200 grant to create a park near the Rock River. The area already has a paved trail and the goal is to enhance the area to promote more outdoor recreation by updating the trail for bikers and pedestrians and adding a boat launch, as well as building park infrastructure such as picnic tables, restrooms, and bike racks.

### **Village of Oregon | \$100,000**

The village of Oregon will receive a \$100,000 grant to install new year-round public

art throughout the village that symbolizes the uniqueness of the region and the state of Wisconsin using local artists.

**Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau, Inc. | \$3.5 million**

The Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau will receive a \$3.5 million grant for their project to develop a \$5.5 million public entertainment plaza, also known as the Elm Street Plaza, with the city of Wisconsin Dells. The Elm Street Plaza aims to bring visitors and increased business to the downtown area, and bolster the overall economic impact from tourism expenditures in the Wisconsin Dells area.

The DOA administered the application process for the grant, which opened on Oct. 7, 2021, and closed on Nov. 19, 2021.

For more information on pandemic related assistance, visit [BadgerBounceback.wi.gov](https://www.BadgerBounceback.wi.gov). For updates on other recovery-related grant opportunities, sign up for the [Badger Bounceback update list](#).