



For immediate release
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Six new communities selected for downtown revitalization program

*WEDC's Connect Communities Program helps revitalize
downtown and urban commercial districts*

MADISON, WI. July 9, 2018 – The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) has accepted six new organizations into its Connect Communities Program, an initiative that works with communities to advance downtown and urban corridor revitalization efforts.

With the latest additions, there are now 71 participants in the Connect Communities Program, which provides access to resources and training to help downtown organizations pursue revitalization and redevelopment efforts. Since the Connect Communities Program was launched in 2013, participating communities have reported adding 274 net new businesses and more than 1,600 jobs, as well as \$115 million in private investment.



The new Connect Communities participants are:

- Land O'Lakes
- Montello
- Sparta
- Tennyson
- Wausaukee
- Waukesha

“The Connect Communities Program has supported downtown improvement initiatives in dozens of communities throughout the state, and has made a real difference in helping to launch new businesses and creating jobs,” said Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC. “This program is one of the many ways in which WEDC partners with local communities to develop strategies for success.”

The program is designed to support and complement the Wisconsin Main Street Program, which has supported downtown community development since 1987. The program has results in the creation of more than 2,600 net new businesses and 13,000 net new jobs across the state since its inception.

The announcement came as state officials prepare to join local Main Street and Connect Communities participants in celebrating the second annual Wisconsin Main Street Day on Tuesday, July 10. As part of the day, state officials are joining local leaders in eight communities around Wisconsin to highlight the important role downtown business districts play in economic development.

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Secretary Hogan, Lt. Governor Kleefisch, WEDC Deputy Secretary and COO Tricia Braun and WEDC Vice President of Business and Community Development Barb LaMue are touring the state to celebrate the accomplishments of Wisconsin's downtowns, and highlight the success of the Wisconsin Main Street and Connect Communities Programs, which provide technical support and guidance to downtown groups.

Prior to being accepted to the Connect Communities Program, applicants had to explain the type of activities or assistance that they hope to undertake as part of the program, and identify a local team that will be responsible for carrying out activities and participating in program events and training.

Connect Communities participants benefit from a variety of assistance and resources simply by being part of a broad-based network of communities with similar objectives, but specific program services include:

- A ListServ/network group to get new ideas from staff and other participating Connect Communities
- Participation in workshops focused on downtown revitalization topics
- An on-site visit from a member of WEDC's community development staff to help identify needs and offer assistance
- Training for each community's downtown director or board president
- Roundtable discussion groups on pertinent topics
- Access to WEDC's downtown development online library
- Access to resources and training materials developed for Wisconsin Main Street communities
- Invitation to the annual Main Street Awards program, plus eligibility to nominate a project for a Connect Communities award
- Quarterly webinars/regional training

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About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit wedc.org or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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