



# WISCONSIN DOWNTOWN NEWS

April 2014

## Pop up into Beloit!



Downtown Beloit, a Great American Main Street Award recipient, will be host to the WDAC 2014 Community Visit on Friday, June 6. The Wisconsin Downtown Action Council is teaming up with the Downtown Beloit Association, Visit Beloit and Friends of RiverFront for a community visit packed with interesting stories, creative people, and innovative programs and projects.

Each year, the National Trust Main Street Center recognizes exceptional Main Street communities whose successes serve as a model for comprehensive commercial district revitalization. These award-winning communities have demonstrated proven success in using the Main Street Four Point Approach to create economic vitality, a unique sense of place, and a strong commitment to the community by all stakeholders.

“Downtown Beloit Association has an impressive track record of taking underutilized areas envisioning their best use and leveraging partnerships to achieve exemplary results,” said Doug Loescher, director of the National Trust Main Street Center. “Beloit’s rich arts offerings, revitalized riverfront, creative adaptive use projects and award-winning farmer’s market are shining examples of DBA’s outstanding work.”

The Downtown Beloit Association is a collaboration of property owners, business people and community volunteers who have jointly committed to the mission of revitalizing and managing Beloit’s Central Business District. A small town with an urban flair, Beloit celebrates the arts in all its forms and gives a warm nod to an industrial past. The district boasts over 120 hanging baskets and urns on tree-lined streets, bike paths and a public canoe/kayak launch to encourage walking, biking and skating, as well as quiet, no-wake water sports. *Continued page 3*

**If your Community has a story to tell and would like to sponsor a Community Visit contact the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council.**

## Meet the WDAC Board: Jennifer Stephany



For over 10 years Jennifer has served as the Executive Director of Appleton Downtown Inc. as well as the Downtown Appleton Business Improvement District.

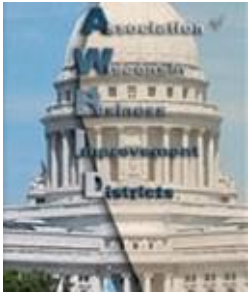
Her previous position as Director with the New London Chamber of Commerce began her 15 year career in community development leadership. Jennifer oversees all operations of the organization including coordination of business supporting programs and district development projects, management of community events and image marketing, fostering strong community partnerships and focusing on the growth and development of the downtown Business Improvement District.

Jennifer currently serves as Treasurer of the Downtown Appleton Rotary Club, is on the Board of Directors with the Fox Cities Exhibition Center, and is a Fox Cities Chamber of Commerce Pulse Future 15 award winner in 2011. She is a graduate of UW Oshkosh, holds a masters degree in management and organizational behavior from Silver Lake College and is a certified Chamber Executive through the US Chamber of Commerce Institute for Organizational Management. Currently she is working to reestablish the Wisconsin Business Improvement District Organization. Jennifer served as the WDAC Conference chair in 2012.

Jennifer and her husband Jay live in Appleton with their daughter Isabella.

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## Get To Know WDAC Strategic Partner: Association of Wisconsin Business Improvement Districts



The state of Wisconsin is one of the country's leaders in BID establishment. The association of BIDs strive to improve communication, networking and

learning between BIDs. The association offers a consolidated voice on issues challenging BID operation. The association's goal is to inform, educate, and advocate on behalf of all BIDs by:

- disseminating information
- sharing resources and expertise among its member districts
- assisting member districts in their development
- supporting BIDs in their physical, social, and economic environments
- being a collective voice to propose and advocate for initiative/legislation that support the viability of all BIDs
- Enhance the awareness for BIDs including the economic impact they have throughout the state

The association is currently in the process of developing a resource website for BIDs and exploring opportunities for developing a BID Resource Team to be available on contract to communities throughout the state to assist with BID development and growth.

To view the Wisconsin  
Historic Preservation Tax  
Credit Webinar PDF go to:  
[www.wisconsinowntown.org](http://www.wisconsinowntown.org)

## WDAC 2014 Community Visit:

### *Pop up into Beloit!*

Friday, June 6, 2014, 9 am – 3 pm

Ironworks Hotel, 500 Pleasant Street, Beloit

Presented by the **Wisconsin Downtown Action Council** in partnership with **Downtown Beloit Association, Visit Beloit** and **Friends of RiverFront**.

Visit downtown Beloit for a rockin' good time for networking and learning! The Wisconsin Downtown Action Council is teaming up with the Downtown Beloit Association, Visit Beloit and Friends of Riverfront for a community visit packed with interesting stories, creative people, and innovative programs and projects. Beloit promises an extra-special experience! Come to Beloit on Friday, June 6 to learn how this small community has transformed itself as a hub for creativity, cultural tourism, education, and 21st century economic growth. The day will be jam-packed with activities and stories, and, there will be lots to tempt you to stay over for a great weekend!

Activities will include:

- Presentations on downtown Beloit programs and projects, including arts and foodie festivals and events
- Walking tours of downtown Beloit
- Breakout sessions on Beloit stories of opportunities and successes
- Wine and cheese reception after the community visit
- If you are interested/able . . . stay overnight to experience the Farmers Market and other activities. *Special hotel rates are available thru May 6.*



**Friends Of RiverFront**  
*Beloit, Wisconsin* Where Friends and River Meet

Registration is \$20 for WDAC members, \$25 for all others,  
includes materials and lunch.

For Schedule & to Register go to: [www.wisconsinowntown.org](http://www.wisconsinowntown.org)

# WISCONSIN DOWNTOWN NEWS

## Pop up into Beloit!

Continued from page 1

Downtown Beloit hosts more than 50 days of events a year from a summer lunchtime concert series to an ArtWalk featuring more than 100 artists. June through October, the Saturday morning Farmers Market draws more than 90 vendors and was named the best event in Wisconsin Main Street history in 2008. Beloit's commitment to local food is evident in a new grocery store, Bushel & Peck's Local Market, housed in the restored Woolworth Building. The market anchors a downtown filled with more than a dozen home-grown restaurants and cafes, boutiques and bookstores, live theater, museums and art galleries, as well as riverfront sculpture and murals. From Blues to Jazz, live music can be found almost every night of the week.

The City of Beloit's beginnings are rooted in its downtown, originally settled by French fur trader Joseph Thibeau in 1824. It grew as a hub of industry along the Rock River and was the center of activity for Beloit. After an all too familiar story of decline and neglect, Downtown Beloit harnessed the passion of its citizens. With innovative, successful partnerships they generated great success in transforming areas of neglect into exemplary examples that a passionate, common vision can achieve. Beloit is regarded as one of the strongest and most sophisticated Main Street programs in Wisconsin. In Beloit you can see this success in their restored riverfront, riverwalk bike paths along with restored buildings and creative new development projects.

The City of Beloit covers approximately 17 square miles. It is home to 37,110 residents as well as more than 88 industrial firms, 850 retail establishments, several corporate headquarters, a minor league baseball team, several museums and an internationally acclaimed college that bears the community's name.

Beloit is rich with breathtaking scenery, exciting attractions, convenient recreational facilities, and year-round events. Whether you're interested in fishing and boating on the Rock River, watching the Snappers play exciting Class-A minor league baseball at Telfer Park, ice skating at Edwards Ice Arena, or partaking in the world horseshoe championship, Beloit has a facility to fit the needs of any sports enthusiast. The Beloit Snappers minor league baseball team is a Class A affiliate of the Oakland A's. They play at Pohlman field which holds about 3,500 people.

Friends of RiverFront is a non-profit organization comprised of a broad-based group of volunteers who share a common passion for enhancing and celebrating community living along Beloit's award-winning riverfront. They are committed to animating and sustaining our spaces along the Rock River.

For more on the Downtown Beloit Association, Visit Beloit and Friends of RiverFront and its partnerships visit:

Downtown Beloit Association: <http://downtownbeloit.com/us/>

Visit Beloit: <http://www.visitbeloit.com/>

Friends of RiverFront: <https://www.facebook.com/BeloitRiverfront>

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Rural Summit 2014 - Generations: Responding to Our Future**

May 2, 2014 - Stevens Point

**WDAC 2014 Community Visit - Pop up into Beloit!**

June 6, 2014 - Beloit

For information and registration links for these events go to the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council home page: [www.wisconsin-downtown.org](http://www.wisconsin-downtown.org)



## Rural Summit 2014 – Generations: Responding to Our Future

The 2014 Rural Summit is coming up on May 2, 2014 at the Holiday Inn in Stevens Point. Join Wisconsin Rural Partners for a full day of activities celebrating rural Wisconsin and discussing a bright future.

Rural communities are facing critical issues today. What tools and resources can be used to recruit & retain our future generation? How do we help rural areas become vibrant & economically sustainable? Breakout sessions allow facilitated discussion between attendees & panel members.

### Who Should Attend?

All those who live, work, serve, or have a *vested interest* in Rural Wisconsin and want to make a difference- *helping communities* become more economically viable for a *sustainable future*, and preserving the quality of life for rural residents into *future generations*.

For Information and to Register go to: <http://wirural.org/summit2014>

### About Wisconsin Rural Partners:

**Networks** Wisconsin Rural Partners serves as a network hub for organizations, government agencies and people working to make rural Wisconsin a better place.

**Leadership** We strive through our work to build leadership for the communities of rural Wisconsin.

**Voice** Wisconsin Rural Partners works to provide a voice for rural Wisconsin. Through our annual Rural Summit, our monthly Rural Update and other events, we communicate the needs and successes of rural Wisconsin to policy-makers at the local, state and federal levels.

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## About the WDAC

In 1982, a small group of business, professional and community leaders formed the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council to address the serious problems plaguing the state's downtowns. Once the hub and heart of their communities, by the early 1980's Wisconsin downtowns were deteriorating. Commercial districts, no longer the center of commerce, were becoming wastelands of vacant stores and shabby buildings. Something had to be done.

Dedicated individuals organized workshops and seminars, where state and national experts would advise communities on how to market, manage and revitalize their downtowns. WDAC was instrumental in spearheading legislation to create Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), one important factor in Wisconsin's success stories: today there are over eighty BIDs in Wisconsin, managing and rebuilding downtowns.

Along with state legislators, WDAC was also a key player in the development of the Wisconsin Main Street Program, an initiative providing technical assistance to downtowns. This is one of the most successful state programs in the country, currently assisting more than thirty communities.

WDAC avidly supports effective and sensible community planning that leads to revitalized downtown areas. WDAC champions downtown as a key component of smart growth; educates on the benefits of downtown; works to identify and remove barriers to downtown development; and coordinates with other organizations to promote smart growth for downtowns.

WDAC continues to evolve, aided recently by strategic planning assistance from UW-Extension. We have re-evaluated who we are, who we serve and our capacity for providing assistance. We are confident in our mission and we look forward to putting our plans into action. We invite you to join us!

## Join WDAC Today

Vibrant downtowns are critical to the economic sustainability and overall attractiveness of communities as places to live, work, visit and connect. Help keep your downtown vital by joining WDAC.

We look forward collaborating with you in fostering downtown revitalization throughout Wisconsin.

To join online, visit :  
[www.wisconsinowntown.org](http://www.wisconsinowntown.org).

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions:

*Jeff Mirkes, Membership Chair*  
920.437.3423

*Amy Hansen, President*  
920.322.2007

## Our Mission

The Wisconsin Downtown Action Council is a statewide organization established to facilitate the revitalization of Wisconsin downtowns as vibrant social and economic centers. We will pursue our mission through a mix of strategies including developing partnerships with other organizations, information sharing, and facilitating networking and peer learning. It is our vision that all Wisconsin communities will recognize and support their downtowns as special places and work together for the betterment of all Wisconsin downtowns.

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