

CASE STUDY: FOND DU LAC, WI



The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership was selected to receive a \$5,000 grant from *America Saves* to support local energy efficiency implementation and outreach to the downtown business community. The grant allowed the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership's staff to carry out the regular communication and data-gathering needed to meet the goals of *America Saves*. The addition of more detailed building data and energy benchmarking information to lease listings also helped market vacant spaces in the downtown.



downtown Fond du Lac

About Fond du Lac: Fond du Lac is a mid-sized city (pop. 43,021), located in central Wisconsin, 60 miles northwest of Milwaukee. Named for the French phrase, "Bottom of the Lake," Fond du Lac appreciates and celebrates its close proximity and relationship to Lake Winnebago, Wisconsin's largest lake. Fond du Lac's downtown provides a supportive environment for small and local businesses as well as events and celebrations, such as the weekly summer farmers market. The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership was created in 1999 to lead continued improvement of downtown for retailers, business owners, residents, local government, and other stakeholders. The Partnership markets downtown Fond du Lac to business owners and real estate developers and promotes and consults on property renovations and improvements.

DISTRICT-BASED ENERGY CHALLENGES + GOALS:

The *America Saves* pilot project in Fond du Lac began in 2014. The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership saw designation as one of the first *America Saves* pilot projects as a way to increase outreach and add programming for local downtown businesses. The project leveraged the contributions of 10 community volunteers and a total of more than 300 volunteer hours. *America Saves* outreach to business owners also facilitated long-term relationship building that went beyond energy efficiency. Overall, the Fond du Lac project achieved the greatest number of implemented energy efficiency retrofit projects among the five *America Saves* pilot communities. A key project partner, Focus on Energy helped facilitate these retrofits through their strong trade ally network and existing energy efficiency incentives for small businesses in Wisconsin. The Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership integrated the *America Saves* energy efficiency information into their Business Guide handbook, which ensures the long-term availability of local energy efficiency program information to new Fond du Lac businesses.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- Pilot Kick-Off [August 2014]: A kick-off meeting including the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership, Alliant Energy, and Focus on Energy established a collaborative and inclusive partnership to support increasing energy efficiency opportunities for downtown Fond du Lac businesses. In Fond du Lac, Alliant Energy provides both electricity and gas to small business customers. Alliant's strong partnership with Focus on Energy, a statewide energy efficiency nonprofit, allowed the *America Saves* team to quickly understand mutual benefits and coordinate roles
- Small Business Audit Blitz [November 2014]: One result from the August 2014 meeting was an agreement to organize a coordinated, downtown-wide energy audit blitz day. Working closely with Focus on Energy and their trusted trade ally network, *America Saves* organized and supported a coordinated audit campaign aimed at downtown Fond du Lac businesses. Each participating business received a custom report detailing their energy efficiency savings opportunities and documented return on investment.
- Business Owner Outreach [June 2016]: After a period of data collection and refinement of the energy analysis process, the *America Saves* team returned to Fond du Lac to deliver custom energy savings reports to participating businesses. Both Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership and Focus on Energy staff participated in business owner meetings, adding local and statewide information for each business owner. Additionally, Focus on Energy offered another round of in-person, no-cost energy audits and assessments to connect interested business owners with energy savings opportunities. In total, more than 40 downtown Fond du Lac businesses were directly engaged, in their place of business, during *America Saves* outreach and business consultations.

OUTCOMES:

- **47** customized *America Saves* reports for local businesses
- **24** FREE energy assessments, offered through Focus on Energy
- **13%** average energy savings potential for local businesses
- **\$907** average annual potential savings for local businesses
- **10** implemented energy efficiency retrofit projects



talking with business owner

LOOKING AHEAD:

- Moving forward, the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership will continue to share information about small business energy efficiency in their Business Guide and leverage their increased energy efficiency capacity, gained through participation in *America Saves*, to help downtown Fond du Lac businesses identify energy and cost savings opportunities.
- The opened doors and stronger local partnerships fostered through *America Saves* will continue to inform Focus on Energy's work in Fond du Lac and provide increased opportunities to local businesses to save energy and money.

COMMUNITY COMMENT:

"Working with America Saves has opened doors to many different small business types in a way that has assisted business owners in opening a discussion of possible energy efficient advancements. Some businesses had already started the process of thought; however, did not know where to go to with those inquiries. Working with Downtown Fond du lac and America Saves, gave the customers a feeling of comfort and provided them with real time facts. All businesses I spoke to, that opted to go forward with energy efficient upgrades, were very pleased and the offset money from the Focus on Energy Small Business Program helped them to move forward with plans and to start saving money on their monthly utility bill soon rather than later."

Dena Weihart | Focus on Energy Small Business Program, GDS Associates, Inc.



www.SavingPlaces.org/AmericaSaves



National Trust for Historic Preservation

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