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Kaukauna, WI's Forward-Thinking Vision Spurs Growth, Investment

Kaukauna, WI, is focused on the future with a newly revitalized downtown, commercial opportunities and plenty of activities on the Fox River.

By Livability on August 21, 2024

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Located on the Fox River, Kaukauna, WI, offers all kinds of outdoor activities and the best of small town living.

Sure, you're captivated by the serenity and sparkle of the river, the occasional eagle cruising overhead, the quaint downtown and people who can always spare a smile. But don't be fooled by this seemingly sleepy city: there's a lot of excitement afoot in Kaukauna, [Wisconsin < https://livability.com/wi/>](https://livability.com/wi/), located in the [Fox Cities Region < https://livability.com/fox-cities/>](https://livability.com/fox-cities/).

"Kaukauna's 17,187 residents are looking ahead," says Kaukauna Mayor Tony Penterman. "We're a city with a rich history and tradition – and a progressive vision. We've got a lot to offer."

Among the city's exciting plans is a 140-acre expansion of the Commerce Crossing business park, focused on light industrial and commercial use. A new hotel will further enhance the site. Through a public-private partnership, the old Eagle Mill has been rehabbed, repurposed and now houses the North American headquarters of Ahlstrom, a Finnish company, and the Kaukauna Public Library.

The revitalization of downtown was amped up with a grant from the federal government that helped bring businesses — a candy and ice cream shop, a salon, an antique shop and a wedding cake bakery among them — to the district.

"We have several programs to help, like low-cost loans for façade renovation or downtown apartments," Penterman says. "If you want to open a restaurant, we have loans available for equipment. You can even get a loan to paint a mural on the side of your building."



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Fox River: A Center of Activity

For up-close encounters with Mother Earth, little compares with the 1000 Islands Environmental Center, a 350-acre nature haven in Kaukauna WI.

The Fox River offers an unbeatable opportunity for all kinds of water activities, and for on-land water fun, the Aquatic Center just received a \$6 million spruce-up and expansion that includes a splash pad, additional water slide and an aqua climbing wall.

The Kaukauna Farmers Market is a weekly Wednesday highlight in summer, as is the Live From Hydro Park concert series.

Also in downtown Kaukauna WI, the city's Alley Activation Project will turn two adjacent alleys and vacant lots into a community gathering spot, with landscaping, seating, and space for food trucks and live music.

"There are so many great things going on," says Andrea Fencl, marketing and communications manager. "But the most important thing about Kaukauna, I think, is our people. This is a place where people care about each other, help each other and enjoy each other. It's the kind of place that people want to live."

Learn more about Kaukauna WI at kaukauna.gov < <https://kaukauna.gov/> > .