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FEATURED TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

Dodge County communities can benefit from new development fund

Terri Pederson

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Morgan Muche, Dodge County community development marketing and communications manager, and Nate Olson, community development administrator, look over the application process for the county development fund grant. The funds will assist communities in Dodge County to complete nee
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Dodge County has a new program to assist communities in the county with a community development fund grant that will allow the county to invest \$2 million of sales tax revenue to go to cities, towns and villages for needed infrastructure improvements.

“What we have going on in different communities is there are some really good initiatives underway,” said Nate Olson, Dodge County community development administrator. “Some of the local leaders are trying to make things happen whether it is industrial developments, commercial or other needs such as housing or childcare. All these different activities are going on in different communities. The roadblock is the resources to help get them across the finish line.”

In the economic financing world, it is called a gap in financing, Olson said. The county created the Dodge County Developmental Fund to bridge that gap, “to work with our communities to try to get some of these projects across the finish line,” Olson said.

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The fund is a grant program specifically for cities, towns and villages, Olson said.

One example of how the funds could be used is in industrial park where the money could be used for infrastructure such roads, water and sewers.

“That is typically the responsibility of the community,” Olson said. “This is something that could help them with that infrastructure. To be honest, I first see this program mostly financing infrastructure because it is so expensive. It is a Dodge County grant program just for our communities.”

The Dodge County Board approved the program during its budget meeting on Nov. 12 and will use \$2 million of sales tax revenue to fund the program, Olson said.

“To my knowledge, I don’t know of another program like this in Wisconsin,” Olson said. “There might be some variations of it.”

Dodge County had a revolving loan fund a few years ago that funded businesses, Olson said. That program went away, but started Olson thinking about what Dodge County might really need.

“I saw a need,” Olson said. “Maybe we don’t need a loan program for businesses, but more so the need was for our communities and helping the communities with those projects.”

Olson said the idea was to become more of a resource to the communities to make things happen, and he talked to different people in his field as well as county staff to help shape a program that would work.

“Dodge County Board of Supervisors are very supportive,” Olson said. “They hear from their communities that they need help and assistance to make some things happen, and we hope this new initiative program will do just that and get things going.”

Olson said there will be an application process and an advisory committee of economic development people from other areas of the state will be assessing the projects for approval.

“We are pulling in people who work in this field but not in Dodge County,” Olson said. “They will be the ones to actually review the projects.”

The Dodge County Executive Committee will approve the projects, Olson said.

There will be a formal kick off this winter at the Dodge County Administration Building for community leaders to find out more about the program, Olson said. The first round of applications will most likely come in during the spring.

“Many communities are already aware of it and they are looking forward to it,” Olson said. “This is also something they have been asking for. They are already going after grants, donations, and utilizing the tools they have, but they are maxed out. They need help. This isn’t just Dodge County’s idea. This has come from our communities as well. They have said they need help for quite a while now.”

Olson said he is looking forward to seeing what communities can do now that they have the program.

“It is nice now that Dodge County can be more of a proactive partner with them,” Olson said.

GALLERY: Dodge County Rodeo fills the stands