School of Journalism and Mass Communication
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

# DeForest Strategic Memo

## Situation

DeForest is looking for a way to bring the community together and promote its strengths to both its current and prospective residents. Not only will this build morale, but it will bring together the residents who like the small town feel and those who want DeForest to expand.

## Problem/ Opportunity

DeForest is a rapidly growing village, with a projected growth rate of 2.5% this year. If this trend persists, the projected population of DeForest in 2034 is expected to exceed 15,000. With many new residents moving into the area, there is a growing desire to expand the town and its amenities, reducing the need to travel to Madison. However, the long-time residents prefer to maintain the small-town charm they've always enjoyed. It's important to meet the needs of both groups to keep residents satisfied, while also finding ways to bring them together and create solutions that work for everyone.

## Recommendation

We are recommending that the Village of DeForest focus their branding and messaging efforts on presenting the community as a neighborly living, with an emphasis on the nature that the area has to offer. Based on original feedback, it was conveyed to our team that DeForest's park and trails systems set it apart from surrounding communities, and we believe it does too. We believe that DeForest must take efforts to target the community as a whole, while also making sure that subcommunities feel seen and their presence appreciated through town events and growth plans.
The following will provide an analysis and further details of our recommendation:

Mission Statement: "DeForest is dedicated to fostering a vibrant and connected village through the celebration of nature and community uniting. We embrace our abundant natural resources, school systems, and thriving parks, creating an enriching atmosphere for people embarking on any stage of life."

Campaign Slogan: "DeForest: Where Nature Meets Neighborly Living"

## Branding

- Font(s):
    - Agrandir
    - Amoresa

    - Fonts Specific to Trail(blazer) Challenge: Horizon
        - We believe that using a different font for the headings on the DeForest Trail(blazer) Challenge will set the contest apart from other town events, marketing, and messaging. This will also place an emphasis on DeForest's connection with nature, by allowing these posts to stand out and captivate the audience. We will expand more on the challenge below.
- Main Color Palette
    - White: #ffffff
    - Lighter Green: #a6ca6a
    - Forest Green: #2d5432

## Strategic Suggestions

### Downtown Growth

Businesses to Target & Deals to Attract:

- Local Artisans and Craft Shops
    - Business Target: Encourage stores that sell locally made goods, such as handmade crafts, artisanal foods, and unique souvenirs. These shops foster community pride and provide unique items that appeal to residents and tourists alike.
    - Attraction Deal: *Trail Challenge Discounts.* Partner with local artisans to offer discounts or free items to participants who complete a set mileage in a community trail challenge, connecting physical activity with shopping rewards.
- Casual Dining and Cafés
    - Business Target: Attract family-friendly, casual dining spots and cafés ideal for relaxed meals, coffee meetups, or weekend brunches. These options create a welcoming atmosphere for families, friends, and solo visitors.
    - Attraction Deal: *Weekend Brunch Specials.* Offer discounted or bundled brunch specials on weekends to draw groups and families downtown on Saturday and Sunday mornings, encouraging leisurely gatherings.
- Entertainment Venues
    - Business Target: Bring in small bars, lounges, or performance venues for live music, comedy nights, or open mic events. These venues provide evening entertainment options that appeal to a variety of age groups.
    - Attraction Deal: *Friday Happy Hour Specials.* Partner with local bars and restaurants to offer discounted drinks and appetizers during happy hour on Fridays, kicking off the weekend and making downtown a go-to spot for unwinding.

### DeForest After Dark Night Market

- DeForest After Dark is a Night Market Event that, if successful, could become a once a month, recurring event. Running from May to October, DeForest After Dark will feature food, drinks, shopping, and live entertainment.
    - Target Audience:
        - Although this market is targeted at a more young adult to adult audience, the entertainment will be family friendly, and children are welcome.
    - DeForest After Dark will aim to feature a larger range of vendors than DeForest's Farmers Market, aiming to include more local businesses and local artists/ artisans. This way the Night Market will also act as free advertising for these businesses.
- Businesses that are included, but are not limited to:
    - Calvino's Pizza Co.
        - Provide pizza and burgers & soda
    - Norske Nook
        - Provide food & non-alcoholic beverages
    - El Alegre Mexican Restaurant
        - Provide tacos & margaritas
    - Young Blood Beer Company
        - Provide canned beverages (beer, cocktails, seltzer) & wine
    - Windsor Breads Bakery & Coffeehouse, LLC
        - Sell seasonal baked goods
    - Fields of Flavor Artisan Bread Studio
        - Sell bread
    - Mousehouse Cheesehaus, Inc
        - Sell gourmet cheese and charcuterie items
    - Branch + Daughter Quality Meats and Market
        - Sell specialty items and meat
    - Local Artists and Artisans
        - Can get an idea of who to include from DeForest's Dragon Art Fair.
    - Local Entertainment
        - I.e. local band or singer, could include multiple acts

**DeForest Winter Events**

- In an effort to strengthen the sense of community during the winter months in DeForest, we've developed three exciting options for potential winter events that the town could showcase:
    - Snowman Building Contest:
        - Let's decorate the community through a Snowman Building Contest, open to all ages. DeForest's Snowman Building Contest will allow the town to

participate in something together from the comfort of their own home, making it ideal for Wisconsin's variable winter weather.
        - This competition is one that is more for fun than anything else. DeForest will be able to demonstrate community in each and every front yard that chooses to participate, so prospective residents will see the warmth and friendliness that DeForest's community is built off of.
        - This event is beneficial because the event will not cost the town anything and will boost morale and community.
    - Winter Trivia Night:
        - Wisconsin Winter Trivia Night would be hosted by Young Blood Beer Company, open to everyone ages 21+ that live in or near the DeForest Community.
            - This is important because DeForest's community needs to make sure they are also targeting their young adult residents, making them feel included and seen by the community. Moreover, this may help young adults who have moved out to DeForest for work, to build a community, creating both positive living and working experiences for these new members of the community.
                - This could also target potential residents who may be thinking of working in DeForest, but are nervous about what the town has to offer their age group.
        - There would be a special deal on drinks and food during the duration of the trivia contest, and the winner and first runner-up, would win prizes. Prizes would include:
            - 1st Place: $50 gift card to Young Blood Beer Company + the ability to create a limited time beverage served at Young Blood Beer Company
            - 2nd Place: $50 gift card to Young Blood Beer Company
            - 3rd Place: $25 gift card to Young Blood Beer Company

**DeForest (Trail)blazer Challenge**

- Challenge Outline:
    - There are 3 trails that must be completed
        - The trails take you around the heart of DeForest, showcasing the town's true beauty and a full immersion experience
        - Upper Yahara,
        - The 3 trails can be completed in any order but a picture of completion is required, whether that's an image of the individual partaking in a hike/walk/biking session or of the completed stats with mileage.

        - The hashtags #TrailblazeDeForest and #BlazeTheTrailDF are encouraged to be used by citizens, so DeForest can repost and utilize the UGC content to boost the challenge. This interaction boosts the community image of DeForest while also showcasing the beautiful attributes from nature all around.
        - Challenge begins May 1st, 2025 through July 1st, 2025.
        - Winners of the challenge get their choice of the selected DeForest merchandise.
        - Excess merchandise will be available for sale through the Village of DeForest Website throughout the remainder of the year. This will make it a limited edition, and will make citizens want to buy this gear.
- Merchandise Designs:

- Social Media Element:
    - Those who compete in the DeForest Trailblazer Challenge will have the ability to be featured across the town's social media accounts.

## Social Media & Website Growth

- Create a Village of DeForest Instagram
    - DeForest has a well followed Facebook account that works well with outreach, however, it came to our attention that there was no "Town of DeForest" Instagram account. Although some businesses or attractions in DeForest do have Instagrams, the town as a whole, does not. Social media is important in terms of community engagement, and as a younger population moves into DeForest, the village is missing out on catering to a new age group.
    - Reasons for Use:
        - Different Demographics
            - While Instagram attracts users of all ages, it is particularly popular among younger generations, including new parents. An Instagram

account would create a larger social media presence for DeForest, and increase engagement across multiple age groups, instead of just focusing on a few.
        - It is crucial for children, teenagers, and young adults to take pride in their community and actively engage with it, and this presents the perfect opportunity to foster and cultivate that connection.
    - Visual Storytelling
        - Instagram provides a whole new realm of visual storytelling, which happens to drive engagement. The ability to create reels on Instagram is more developed than on Facebook, and has the ability to reach users through the algorithm. Finally, Instagram Reels tend to gather more views than reels on Facebook do.
        - Interactive quizzes, polls, and question stickers are available that will allow town members to provide more feedback and interact with the Village of DeForest.
        - Instagram's "Highlights" feature allows users to organize and group Instagram Story Posts. This way users can refer back to them on DeForest's account, without all of them showing up on DeForest's feed. The Instagram Story feature offers an excellent way to showcase events and maintain a consistent presence year after year.
    - Broader Reach to Audience
        - Instagram's algorithm favors visual content and engagement, making it easier for posts to go viral or reach new audiences through hashtags and location tags. This would be helpful to the village of DeForest because of the location share setting. So many users have already tagged DeForest, Wisconsin on their posts which would create a stronger connection and algorithm in the surrounding and outside areas, making the Village of DeForest recognizable.
        - Additionally, Instagram's users are typically more engaged, so content has the ability to travel wider and faster. There is a lot more organic discovery through Instagram's explore page, which is filled with posts and reels through Instagram's algorithm.
- <u>Specific Information on Each Trail on DeForest's Website</u>
    - Our team noticed how there isn't a lot of information describing the differences of each trail and why each one is unique. Additionally, we found it challenging to navigate the trail map, since many overlapped and were the same color. We couldn't distinguish where one ended and the next began.

        - We feel this may be confusing to community members who may be first time, or even return, hikers. By organizing the information surrounding each trail, it allows each individual one to shine and get more visitors. Since we were told the paths are a huge part of DeForest's appeal, we believe that more could be done to really showcase everything the trail system has to offer.
    - <u>Suggestions:</u>
        - Create a description for each trail beyond just the length and location.
        - Rather than featuring all trails on a single map, consider creating a map that highlights a specific trail for a more focused and streamlined presentation.
            - This approach will provide visitors with the opportunity to learn more about each individual trail. Additionally, it will clarify the starting and ending points, enabling them to plan a customized hiking experience across the trails of their choice.
- Create a Linktree for Instagram Bio
    - Maximizes Space
        - Instagram allows only one clickable link in the bio. Linktree lets you use that single link to host multiple links, giving followers access to all of your important content without cluttering your bio with multiple URLs.
    - Improved User Experience:
        - Instead of directing followers to just one destination, Linktree provides a menu of options (e.g., DeForest's Facebook, Website, YouTube videos, etc.) in one easy-to-navigate page. This enhances the overall user experience because it makes all of DeForest's social presence easier to access.
    - Centralized Content:
        - Linktree can centralize all of your platforms, products, or content in one place. You can update the links as your priorities change without having to constantly edit your Instagram bio.
    - Customization and Branding:
        - Linktree offers customization options that allow you to add colors, logos, and other elements to match your personal brand. This can make the link more visually appealing and help maintain brand consistency.
    - Analytics:
        - Although DeForest's Comms team doesn't use analytics, Linktree provides insights into how many people click on your links and which ones are the most popular. This data helps you understand your audience's interests and improve your marketing strategy.
    - Easy to Update:

        - If you want to promote something new (like a sale, a new post, or a project), you can quickly update your Linktree without needing to change the bio text itself, which might make your profile look cluttered.
- Create Facebook Events for attendees to RSVP
    - To increase attendance at town events, consider creating Facebook Events and promoting them on both your Facebook and Instagram accounts.
    - By sharing the event link on social media and on your Linktree, you'll be generating more visibility and provide a better estimate of attendee numbers ahead of time.
    - By tracking attendance at each event, you can gather valuable data to identify which events are most popular and assess those with lower attendance, helping to refine future event planning.

## Promotional Content

Deliverables

- Social Media Templates
    - Farmer's Market
        - Post:

        - Caption Idea:
            - Everyone's favorite event is back! 🥒🌽🍅
            - Come visit the Village of DeForest's Farmers Market this (insert weekday), June 4th, to grab your pick your share of our local fruits, veggies, baked goods, and more!
            - Don't forget to post what you take home with the #FarmersMarketDeForest. 📲
    - Night Market
        - Post:

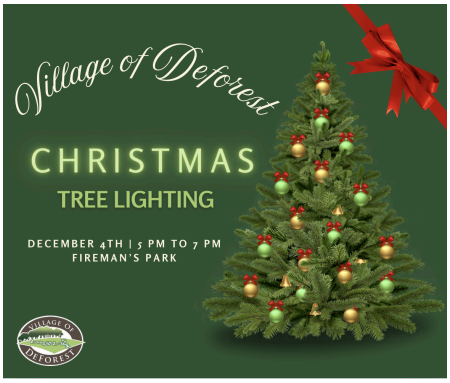
- Caption Idea:
  - ✨Introducing…DeForest After Dark! The village's NEW Night Market event.✨
  - Featuring local food trucks, live music, local art, and fun for the whole family!
  - You won't want to miss this, because it's going to be BIG. Join us June 7th after 8 p.m. at Fire Ends Park Plaza.
  - We can't wait to see you there! 🌃 #DFAfterDark 🔦

- Trail System
  - Post:

  - Caption Idea:
    - Introducing the DeForest Trail(blazer) Challenge! 🥾🌲🔥
    - From May 1st through July 1st, community members can accept the challenge and hike the 3 feature trails: The Upper Yahara, Western Green Park Prairie, and Sedge Meadow.
    - Oops 👀, don't forget to include a picture of your mileage! Post it with the ##TrailblazeDeForest and #BlazeTheTrailDF, and you're all set!
    - Happy hiking DeForest!

- Christmas Tree Lighting

- Post:




- Caption Idea:
  - Did someone say Christmas? 🔔Well don't worry, we've already put up our tree!
  - Join the Village of DeForest community at our annual Christmas Tree Lighting.🎄
  - We can't wait to see you there, and spread some Christmas cheer! 🤗✨

- Candle Walk
  - Post:

  - Caption Idea:
    - Join us for DeForest's annual Candlelight Hike. 🕯️
    - Let's make the holiday season a little brighter and warmer this year! Join us December 6th at Western Green Park…and don't forget to dress appropriately! 🧣🥾🧤

- Snowman Making Contest
  - Post:

- Caption Idea:
  - Do you want to build a Snowman? ☃️
  - Join us for DeForest's first annual Snowman Making Contest! All you need to do is visit https://www.deforestwi.gov/ to enter!
  - Just make sure your snowman is ready by Sunday, December 10th by 8 a.m., before our judges drive through the streets of DeForest. 🧣
  - Don't forget to post what you create at home dor #DFSnowmanContest. 📲

- Trivia Night
  - Post:

  - Caption Idea:
    - Anybody up for some trivia ❓
    - Grab some friends and you're thinking caps because you won't want to miss this brand NEW event.
    - Prizes include a $50 gift card to Young Blood Beer Company, and even the chance to create a limited time beverage served at Young Blood Beer Company! 🍺
    - Think you have what it takes to win?
    - Then join us December 12th at 8:30 p.m. at the Young Blood Beer Company to test your skills. 🤔

- Flyers

    - Farmer’s Market
    - Night Market
    - DeForest Trail(blazer) Challenge
    - Specific Trails
    - Snowman Making Contest
    - Trivia Night
    - Christmas Tree Lighting
    - Candle Walk
    - Fourth of July Celebration
    - Trail
- Email Templates
    - Night Market Email Blast to Community:

Subject: Join Us for a Free Community Event: DeForest After Dark!

Dear [Recipient's Name],

We’re excited to invite you to **DeForest After Dark**, our first Night Market! This free community event is filled with delicious food, local artists and endless entertainment! Gather your friends and family and join us for a cozy evening under the stars as we celebrate the local flavors and talents of our community.

**Date:** [Event Date]
**Time:** [Event Time]
**Location:** [Event Location]

## What’s in Store for the Evening

**Food & Drink**

We have a fantastic lineup of local vendors to satisfy every craving:

- **Windsor Breads Bakery & Coffeehouse, LLC** – Enjoy a variety of freshly baked goods.
- **Mousehouse Cheesehaus, Inc** – Taste gourmet cheese and charcuterie board items.
- **Calvino’s Pizza Co.** – Savor their mouthwatering pizza.
- **Norske Nook** – Treat yourself to classic favorites.
- **Fields of Flavor Artisan Bread Studio** – Discover a selection of artisanal breads.
- **El Alegre Mexican Restaurant** – Dive into tasty tacos and refreshing margaritas.
- **Branch + Daughter Quality Meats and Market** – Explore specialty food items from this local favorite.
- **New Brewery** – Quench your thirst with a range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic refreshments.

**Unique Shopping Opportunities**

Discover and support local artisans and artists as they showcase their handcrafted goods and artwork. It's the perfect chance to pick up one-of-a-kind art and support your community!

**Live Entertainment**

We're excited to feature local talent with [band/singer to be announced]. Stay tuned for more details!

Mark your calendar and don't miss this opportunity to enjoy a fantastic night out with great food, drinks, and entertainment. We look forward to seeing you at DeForest After Dark!

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title/Organization]
[Contact Information]

Follow us on [Social Media Handle/Link] for updates on the event and more details on our local vendors and entertainment lineup!