



# **The Loading Dock in Grafton to stay open all winter for ice skating and eagle watching**

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager  
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**GRAFTON** – Grafton, Illinois, offers those seeking a beautiful summer visit to a unique river town, a popular spot for summer fun of live music, bike riding, wine tasting, great food, shopping and much more.

Come fall, the Grafton traffic starts to die down and the business hours of the many unique shops and restaurants lessen and many even close completely for the winter.

The Loading Dock Bar and Grill, located at 401 Front St., was one of those businesses. However this year that is all about to change.

Established in 1992, the Loading Dock is a well-known spot positioned right along the riverbank. Many visitors frequent the Loading Dock for their array of live music, monthly Flea Markets, SWAP Meets, wedding festivities and much more. This year, the fun doesn't end when the temperature drops.

The Loading Dock staff is proud to announce that they will not be closing their doors this year. Plans are in the works to build an ice skating rink inside The Historic Boatworks Warehouse.

The staff has been working diligently to prepare for the winter season, planning and organizing.

"We just realized we had to buy a snow shovel," said Peter Allen, owner and operator of the Loading Dock. "I never had to have one."

The warehouse is a venue located on the premises which once housed a factory that manufactured boats to send down the river in support of the U.S military. The Loading Dock hosts many events in the warehouse from concerts to weddings.

This winter, the warehouse will be converted into an ice skating rink.

"We are all excited," said Allen. "This is a huge turn in direction going from getting ready to close in November to really getting it to ramp up in November."

The rink will be officially open for business Nov. 14. The Grand Opening event and ribbon cutting ceremony is on Nov. 21.

The Loading Dock winter season will be from November 14 – March 15, weekends only. The regular hours of winter business are from noon – 10 p.m. on Friday & Saturday, noon – 8 p.m. on Sundays.

Many special events are in the works for the winter season to include "broom ball," where participants take off the skates and play street hockey on ice with brooms instead of hockey sticks.

"As always, this is a family friendly environment," said Allen. "We will focus a lot on the children and hope to make this a family tradition for people."

The menu and atmosphere will be changed entirely, getting rid of the palm trees and bright yellows, and bringing out the campfires and winter eats.

Among many others, new items on the menu will include shrimp and grits and specialty soups of the day.

For years, the staff has tried to think of ways to keep the year going and stay open throughout the winter and now, it is all about getting the word out and working to maintain the flow of business.

Many people visit Grafton for the wintering eagles nested within the bluffs and trees. Now those visitors will have a place to kick back, get some grub and have fun.

“It will affect the whole town as far as bringing people in, not just for the eagle watchers,” said Allen. “I don’t know if people even realize how beautiful it is out here in the winter with all the ice going by on the river and the eagles soaring.”

Riverfront Times recently named The Loading Dock Bar and Grill one of the Top 10 Best St. Louis Restaurants with a View. Many people frequent the Loading Dock for the beautiful summer-time tropical type of atmosphere. Now, with this change of direction, the Loading Dock will only begin to gather even more attraction.

\$8 is the admission price for an entire day of skating and only \$5 to rent skates.

The ice skating rink will also be available for private events. For birthday parties, \$250 will include four hours of skating with skates for 20 guests. The rental also includes decorations: balloons, printable invitations, four pizzas, soda and cake.

Other private parties, \$300 will provide four hours of skating with skate rental for unlimited guests. However, Private Rink Rental is not available on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, or during Holiday hours.

Holiday Hours:

November 23 – 29, December 14 – January 10, January 18

Sunday – Thursday: Noon – 8pm

Friday & Saturday: Noon – 10pm

*Open Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, & New Year’s Day – Hours TBD*

For more information on the Loading Dock Bar and Grill, visit [www.graftonloadingdock.com](http://www.graftonloadingdock.com) or like them on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/The-Loading-Dock-Bar-Grill](https://www.facebook.com/The-Loading-Dock-Bar-Grill).

Contact Event Coordinator Afton Hughes at (618) 786-3494 or [loadingdock@gtec.com](mailto:loadingdock@gtec.com) to book events.