

Phelps NY Forward

Open Call for Projects Informational Session

United Church of Phelps
June 25, 2025 at 5:45 PM

Attendees

- 15+ community members
- Several LPC members

Project Team:

- Melissa Keller, Department of State (DOS) Project Manager
- Kimberly Baptiste, Colliers Engineering & Design Project Manager
- Jeanette Petti, Colliers Engineering & Design
- Greg Parker, Empire State Development (ESD)

Welcome and Introductions

Kimberly Baptiste, project manager with Colliers Engineering & Design (Colliers), welcomed participants to the informational session and thanked them for their interest in the NY Forward program. She explained that Colliers is the lead consultant helping the Village of Phelps facilitate the NY Forward program, with support from other subject matter experts and representatives from multiple New York State (NYS) agencies.

What is the NY Forward Program?

Kimberly began the informational session by providing some background on the NY Forward program. She explained that NY Forward is a New York State program designed to invigorate and enliven downtowns in New York's small towns and hamlets. This round, the program is infusing a total of \$200 million in communities across New York State between the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) and NY Forward programs. The Village of Phelps has been awarded \$4.5 million as part of the NY Forward program to plan and implement transformative projects downtown.

The NY Forward program has multiple goals, including:

1. Enhancing downtown living and quality of life
2. Creating an active downtown with a mix of uses
3. Providing diverse employment opportunities for a variety of skillsets and salary levels
4. Creating diverse housing options for all incomes
5. Providing public spaces that serve all ages and abilities
6. Encouraging the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
7. Growing the local property tax base



Projects to receive NY Forward funding will be identified through a 6-month planning process. The planning process began in May and will conclude in November with the completion of the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which is the report that documents the planning process and recommends to New York State which projects the community believes have the most potential to positively impact downtown Phelps. The State will review the SIP and determine which projects will receive funding from the \$4.5 million allocation. NY Forward grant awards will be announced tentatively in Spring 2026, with project implementation to follow.

Kimberly explained that Phelps' NY Forward planning process will be led by the Local Planning Committee (LPC), with assistance from a Project Team of industry experts and representatives from multiple New York State agencies. The LPC is a group of community members selected by NYS and local leaders to lead Phelps' NY Forward planning process and to determine which projects have the most potential to bring transformative change to downtown Phelps. LPC members represent a diverse segment of the Phelps community, from business owners, to residents, to local officials. They are required to act in the public interest and to adhere to a Code of Conduct. LPC members who have a conflict of interest with a proposed project must recuse themselves from discussing or voting on that project. LPC members volunteer their time.

The LPC will evaluate all proposed projects based on a set of established criteria and determine which projects to include in the SIP. Projects can be proposed by the Village of Phelps as well as by community members. Kimberly emphasized that not all proposed projects will be included in Phelps' Strategic Investment Plan. Similarly, not all projects included in the SIP will receive NY Forward funding. Ultimately, New York State will make the final decision on which projects are funded.

Open Call for Projects

Kimberly explained that community members can submit project proposals through the Open Call for Project Applications. Any private, non-profit, and public entity can submit. Applicants must complete the Project Application Form and answer basic questions about their proposed project. Applications are available to download at villageofphelpsnny.gov/phelps-forward or for pick-up at the Village Offices (8 Banta Street, Phelps, NY 14532). **All Project Applications are due by Friday, July 25, 2025 at 4:30 PM.** The LPC will evaluate all received applications and decide which projects to recommend to New York State for potential funding. New York State will make the final decision on which projects receive NY Forward funding. *It is important to note that not all applications will receive funding.*



Project Application Form

Kimberly walked through each page of the Project Application Form, as described on the following pages.

Instructions (Page 1)

To fill out the Project Application Form, applicants should:

- **Step 1:** Review the Eligibility Criteria (Page 2) to make sure your project is eligible to be considered for NY Forward funding.
- **Step 2:** Review the Project Requirements (Page 3) to understand the basic requirements your project must meet to be considered for NY Forward funding.
- **Step 3:** Review the Evaluation Criteria (Page 4) to see how your project will be evaluated by the Local Planning Committee and New York State.
- **Step 4:** Fill out the Project Application Form (Pages 5-14) or the Small Project Letter of Interest (Pages 15-17), as applicable.
 - For projects greater than or equal to \$75,000 in total cost, complete the Project Application Form. These types of projects generally include new development or new construction, medium to large-scale construction, rehabilitation, or renovation projects, public improvement projects, and downtown marketing or branding initiatives.
 - For projects less than \$75,000 in total cost, complete the Small Project Letter of Interest Form. These types of projects generally include minor renovation projects, business assistance such as the acquisition of commercial machinery or equipment, and public art projects.
- **Step 5:** Submit your completed application and any attachments.

It is important to be as detailed as possible because the information provided in the Project Application will be the basis for how the LPC evaluates proposed projects.



Eligibility Criteria (Page 2)

NY Forward funds will only be awarded to capital projects that transform downtown Phelps in ways that will benefit current residents and future generations. In order to be eligible for funding through the NY Forward program, projects must be one of the following eligible project types:

- **New development.** New construction for mixed-use, commercial, residential, not-for-profit, or public uses.
- **Redevelopment or rehabilitation of an existing downtown building.** Redevelopment or rehabilitation of an existing downtown building for mixed-use, commercial, residential, not-for-profit, or public uses.
- **Public improvement projects.** Projects that improve the public realm such as park, public space, or streetscape improvements.
- **Downtown branding and marketing projects.** Projects that promote downtown to residents, visitors, investors, and/or developers such as signage or promotional materials.
- **Small projects.*** Projects less than \$75,000 in total cost. Eligible activities include minor renovations, business assistance, soft costs, and public art. For applicants proposing small projects, the LPC is seeking Letters of Interest to demonstrate support for establishing a Small Project Fund in the future. If a Small Project Fund is established, small project applicants will need to complete another round of applications to be considered for funding.

**Small project applicants only need to fill out the Small Project Letter of Interest form at the end of the Project Application document (Pages 15-17).*

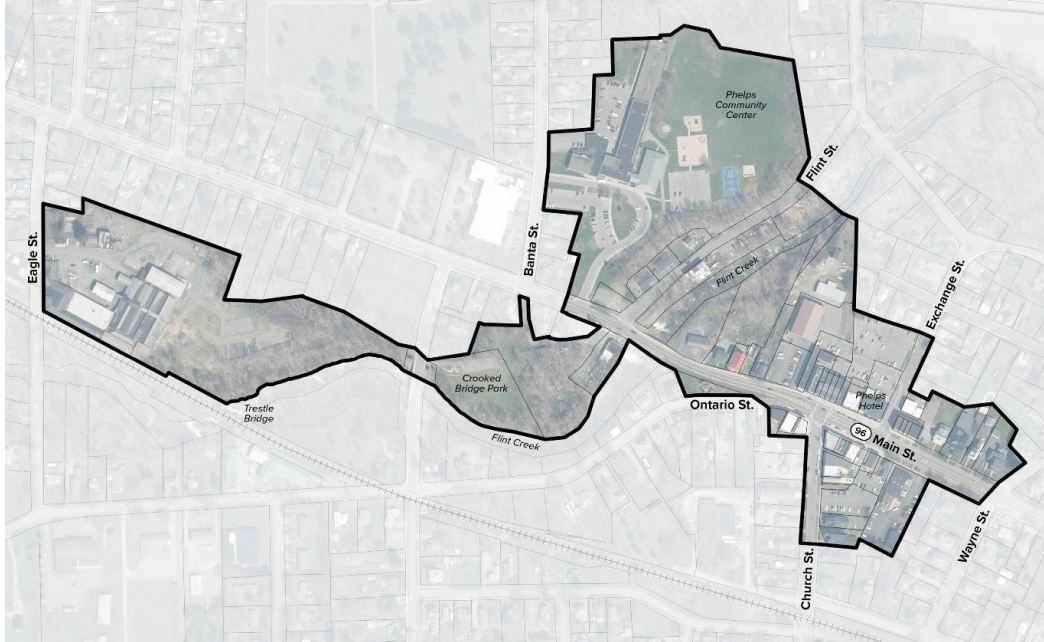
The following project types are ineligible for NY Forward funding:

- **Planning activities.** NY Forward funds cannot be used for planning or feasibility studies.
- **Operations and maintenance.** NY Forward funds cannot be used for on-going or routine expenses, such as salaries and wages, rent, utilities, or property up-keep.
- **Pre-award costs.** NY Forward funds cannot be used to reimburse costs that were already incurred prior to the announcement of NY Forward funding awards.
- **Property acquisition.** NY Forward funds cannot be used for property acquisition. The cost of property acquisition can be included in the overall project budget, but the acquisition must be funded by a source other than NY Forward.
- **Training costs.** NY Forward funds cannot be used to cover continuous costs, such as training costs.
- **Expenses related to existing programs.** NY Forward funds cannot be used to supplement existing programs or replace existing resources.



Project Requirements (Page 3):

In order to be considered for funding through the NY Forward program, projects must meet the requirements stated below:



- **Location.** Projects must be located in the NY Forward area, as shown on the map above. *Projects located outside the NY Forward area can be proposed but applicants must include a justification. The LPC will decide on a project-by-project basis if projects outside the boundary will be considered for funding.*
- **Timing.** Projects must be able to break ground within two years or sooner of receiving NY Forward funding.
- **Impact.** Projects must have a transformative impact on downtown.
- **Sponsor.** Project sponsors must have the capacity and legal authority to undertake the proposed projects. Sponsors must be legal entities (LLCs), not individuals. Sponsors can be public, not-for-profit, or private entities.
- **Decarbonization.** New construction, building addition, and renovation projects greater than 5,000 square feet must meet building decarbonization requirements for energy efficiency. There are several options for compliance including: (1) meeting the New York State Stretch Energy Code, (2) obtaining an Energy Star score of 90 or better using EPA's Target Finder Calculator, or (3) obtaining a certification from a third-party, such as Energy Star or LEED. The Project Team will assist project sponsors in meeting decarbonization requirements, as applicable.
- **Funding and Required Match.** Projects must have financing commitments largely secured or be able to demonstrate a clear path to securing financing. Private project sponsors should target a match of at least 35%. Non-profit project sponsors should target a match of at least 5%. **Applications with higher match percentages than the minimum will be more competitive during the evaluation process.** Projects submitted by public entities are not required to provide a match, but some level of match is preferred and will strengthen the application.



Evaluation Criteria (Page 4):

Projects will be evaluated by the Local Planning Committee and New York State based on the criteria below:

- **Eligibility.** Projects must be one of the eligible project types outlined on Page 2 and must meet all the project requirements outlined on Page 3.
- **Readiness.** Projects should be well-developed and ready to proceed immediately or soon after the award of NY Forward funding.
- **Alignment with Phelps' Vision.** Projects must advance Phelps' vision for downtown, as explained below:

"Phelps is where community comes together. With a lively downtown, vibrant events, and inviting community spaces all set against a scenic natural backdrop, Phelps has something for everyone. Our welcoming and inclusive community embraces residents, new and old, visitors, and businesses alike.

Our unique blend of history, natural beauty, and central location makes Phelps the ideal gateway to the Finger Lakes. Main Street is active, businesses thrive, and quality of life is exceptional. Our buildings are revitalized, parks upgraded, and streetscapes safe and walkable.

Here, the perfect balance of small-town charm and big-time appeal comes together to make Phelps more than a destination. Phelps is the place where people want to be – where residents are proud to call home and where visitors keep coming back."

- **Alignment with Phelps' Goals.** Projects must support at least one or more of Phelps' goals for downtown revitalization. These goals are to:
 - Celebrate and strengthen Phelps' downtown character and small-town charm.
 - Grow downtown Phelps as a tourist destination.
 - Enhance community spaces, parks, and the public realm.
- **Alignment with New York State's Goals.** Projects must support at least one or more of New York State's goals for the NY Forward program. These goals are to:
 - Create an active downtown with a strong sense of place.
 - Attract new businesses that create a robust mix of shopping, entertainment, and service options for residents and visitors, and that provide job opportunities for a variety of skills and salaries.
 - Enhance public spaces for arts and cultural events that serve existing members of the community but also draw in visitors from around the region.
 - Build a diverse population, with residents and workers supported by complementary diverse housing and employment opportunities.
 - Grow the local property tax base.
 - Provide amenities that support and enhance downtown living and quality of life.
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support investments that are more resilient to future climate change impacts.
- **Catalytic Effect.** Projects must have a significant positive impact on the revitalization of downtown Phelps and must be likely to catalyze additional investment downtown.
- **Co-Benefits.** Projects must result in benefits to the community, beyond just the project sponsor, such as economic activity or improved quality of life.
- **Cost-Effectiveness.** Projects must have a realistic budget and must represent an effective use of public resources.



Project Application Form (Pages 5-14):

Applicants submitting projects greater than or equal to \$75,000 in total cost must complete the Project Application Form. The information provided in this application will be used by the LPC to evaluate the project. A brief overview of each page of the Project Application Form can be found below:

- **Contact Information (Page 5):** Project sponsor contact information. The project “sponsor” is the person or organization proposing the project, who has the legal authority to implement it. *For contracting purposes, project sponsors must be legal entities (such as LLCs), not individuals.*
- **Basic Project Information (Page 6):** Location of project. Existing conditions at the project site. Type of project (e.g., new development, redevelopment, public improvement, etc.)
- **Project Description (Page 7):** Title of project. Project description, including proposed scope of work and expected outcomes.
- **Additional Project Information (Page 8):** Description of how the project aligns with Phelps’ and New York State’s goals for the NY Forward program. Explanation of property ownership.
- **Project Sponsor Capacity (Page 9):** Explanation of project sponsor’s previous experience with similar projects. Description of any partner entities expected to be involved in the project and their roles. Explanation of how the project sponsor will maintain and operate the completed project into the future.
- **Preliminary Budget (Page 10):** All applicants should fill out the budget table. Each line of the budget table should have an action necessary to complete the project, the estimated cost of that action, the expected funding source of that action, and whether that funding source is secured, anticipated, requested, or undetermined. It is strongly encouraged that project sponsors obtain third-party quotes/cost estimates to prepare their budgets. If exact costs have not yet been determined, please provide an estimate. Private project sponsors should target a match of at least 35%. Non-profit project sponsors should target a match of at least 5%. Applications with higher match percentages than the minimum will be more competitive during the evaluation process. Projects submitted by public entities are not required to provide a match, but some level of match is preferred and will strengthen the application. Final match requirements may be modified by the LPC at a later time. *It is important to note that NY Forward funds are structured as reimbursable grants. This means that grant funds will not be released to the project sponsor until the full scope of the project is completed. Project sponsors may need to finance the total project cost using a bridge loan, owner equity, or other financing mechanism.*
- **Project Readiness (Page 11):** Explanation of any work completed to date related to the project, such as feasibility studies or preparation of plans/construction documents. Timeline for implementation, including key milestones. *It is important to note that you cannot begin work on the project you are proposing for NY Forward funding until after funding awards have been announced. Any work completed before funding awards are announced is not eligible for reimbursement.*



- **Additional Readiness Information (Page 12):** Description of any permits, approvals, or environmental work necessary to complete the project. Identification of any challenges to implementation of the project, and how they will be resolved in a timely manner. List of any attachments to be submitted with the application. This could include: images of the existing site, renderings of the proposed project once completed, feasibility studies, preliminary site design, permits obtained, pro formas, business plans, etc.
- **Decarbonization (Page 13):** This page is used to determine if the project will need to comply with New York State's decarbonization requirements for energy efficiency. These requirements are only applicable to new construction projects greater than 5,000 square feet, building additions greater than 5,000 square feet, and renovation projects impacting more than 5,000 square feet. Applicants who will need to comply with decarbonization requirements will work with a member of the Project Team to help identify a pathway to compliance.
- **Certifications (Page 14):** Applicants must sign to attest that they understand the requirements of the NY Forward program and that all the information provided in their application is accurate to the best of their knowledge.

Small Project Letter of Interest (Pages 15-17):

The Small Project Letter of Interest form is for projects less than \$75,000 in total cost. The purpose of the Letter of Interest form is to demonstrate interest in the establishment of a Small Project Fund in the future. If there is sufficient interest, the LPC will consider requesting funding from New York State to establish a Small Project Fund. *It is important to note that there is no guarantee that a Small Project Fund will be established.*

If a Small Project Fund is established, small project applicants will need to complete another round of applications to be considered for funding. *Submitting a Letter of Interest does not guarantee funding from the Small Project Fund.*

Project activities that are eligible for the Small Project Fund, if established, include:

- **Interior and exterior building renovations for commercial and mixed-use buildings** including façade/storefront renovations, permanently affixed signage and awnings, commercial interior fit-out, HVAC, mechanical, or plumbing, and other permanent building improvements.
- **Residential improvements to the upper stories of mixed-use buildings.** Residential-only buildings are not eligible.
- **Business assistance** such as the acquisition of permanent commercial machinery or other equipment.
- **Soft costs** to facilitate the above improvements such as architecture, engineering, and environmental review services.
- **Public art** such as murals, statues, and other art pieces in the public realm.



Certain projects will be given preference during the evaluation process. These preferred projects include:

- **Awnings** for downtown buildings
- **Signage** for downtown buildings
- **Accessibility** improvements for downtown buildings

Ineligible activities include:

- Property acquisition
- Deferred maintenance or general repairs
- Working capital
- Landscaping
- Improvements to municipally-owned or operated buildings
- Labor performed by the applicant, their family, or their staff

Important conditions of the Small Project Fund include:

- All projects must be located in the NY Forward area.
- The maximum grant request cannot exceed 75% of the total eligible project costs. Applicants must provide **at least a 25% match** for the total eligible costs.
- This is a reimbursement program, meaning that applicants must complete the approved scope of work, pay all contractors in full, and submit proof of payment before receiving any reimbursement.

Applicants interested in the Small Project Fund should complete the Small Project Letter of Interest, which can be found at the end of the Project Application Form (Pages 15-17). To complete the Letter of Interest, applicants must provide the:

- Location of the proposed project
- Brief description of the project scope of work
- Preliminary budget
- Total amount requested from the Small Project Fund

How to Submit

Completed applications and any attachments can be submitted either:

- **By email to:** PhelpsNYForward@gmail.com
- **By mail or drop-off to:** Village Offices (8 Banta Street, Phelps, NY 14532). The Village Offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Mailed applications must be *received by* July 25, 2025 at 4:30 PM.

All Project Applications and Small Project Letters of Interest are due by Friday, July 25, 2025 at 4:30 PM. *Please note that in the coming weeks, all project applicants will be contacted by a member of the Project Team, so it is important to monitor your email and phone and respond promptly.*



How to Get Help

Applicants who have questions or need assistance completing their Project Application Form or Small Project Letter of Interest can send an email to: PhelpsNYForward@gmail.com.

Next Steps

- **July 25, 4:30 PM:** Project application period closes
- **August 19, 6:00 PM at the Village Offices Meeting Room:** LPC Meeting 3
- **September 9, 6:00 PM at the PCC Cafeteria:** Public Workshop 2

Questions & Answers

Time was reserved at the end of the informational session for questions.

- How do you differentiate between small project sponsors and private project sponsors?
 - **Answer:** Small projects have a total project cost less than \$75,000. Only private entities and non-profits can submit small projects. The required match for small projects is 25%, regardless of the type of project sponsor. Projects greater than or equal to \$75,000 in total cost can be submitted by private, public, or non-profit sponsors. For these projects, the match requirements are 35% for private sponsors and 5% for non-profit sponsors. No match is required for public sponsors, though some level of match is encouraged.
- Do small projects need to comply with MWBE requirements?
 - **Answer:** Should a Small Project Grant Fund be awarded, the fund will need to comply with MWBE requirements overall. The manager of the fund will ultimately determine how this trickles down to individual small projects.
- Applicants are getting estimates from contractors now for work that will not happen for at least two years. How is that built into the budget?
 - **Answer:** When preparing budgets for the Project Application Form, applicants should incorporate the estimates they receive from contractors as is, with no changes. After applications are submitted, the Project Team will review budgets for accuracy and will modify budgets as appropriate to account for escalation over a set period of time. In most cases, contingencies are built into budgets to account for unforeseen expenses or changes in materials/labor costs.
- Let's say a business owner wants to do both interior and exterior renovations on their building. Should those improvements be proposed together in one application?
 - **Answer:** If the interior and exterior renovations, when combined, are less than \$75,000 in total project cost, they should be submitted together as part of one Small Project Letter of Interest. If the interior and exterior renovations are greater than or equal to \$75,000 in cost either when combined or individually, the project sponsor could decide to submit them as one large Project Application Form or as two Project Application Forms. Ultimately, the LPC will decide whether to consider them as one project or two.

