

Phelps NY Forward

Local Planning Committee Meeting 2

Phelps Village Offices
June 19, 2025 at 5:00 PM

Attendees

LPC:

- Jim Cheney (Co-Chair), Village of Phelps Mayor
- Ryan Davis (Co-Chair), Finger Lakes REDC, Ontario County Economic Development
- Terri Brown, Village of Phelps Planning Board
- Keith Childs, Phelps-Clifton Springs Community Theatre
- Nick Ganster, Phelps-Clifton Springs Central School District
- Fred Gaylord, American Legion
- Nicole Keebler, Village of Phelps Historic Commission and Beautification Committee
- Sarah Landschoot, Phelps Community Historical Society
- Amy McNicholas, Town of Phelps Planning Board
- Loryn Payne, Phelps Library
- Hannah Williams, Phelps Business Development & Tourism Council (BDTC)
- Chris Wright, Village Resident

LPC Members Not in Attendance:

- Mary DePorter, Rotary Club
- Diane Sheckler, Mary Hicks Preston Foundation

Project Team:

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

Other Attendees:

- Several community members



Welcome and Preamble

Kimberly Baptiste, Project Manager with Colliers Engineering & Design (Colliers), welcomed LPC members to the meeting. Ryan Davis (LPC Co-Chair) read the required Preamble. No conflicts of interest were noted at this meeting.

Project Status

Kimberly updated LPC members on the status of the NY Forward planning process. Several tasks were in progress in the month of June including: (1) finalizing the vision, goals, and strategies for downtown revitalization, (2) completing a baseline analysis of downtown Phelps' existing conditions, and (3) initiating the Open Call for Project Applications process.

Vision, Goals, and Strategies

Kimberly shared an updated version of the vision statement with the committee, which was refined based on feedback from the previous meeting.

The updated vision statement is as follows. New language (in bold) was included to emphasize Phelps' inclusiveness and reputation as a place where people want to be.

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

Our unique blend of history, nature, and 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."*

LPC Feedback on Vision

- Emphasize natural resources/greenery more clearly.



A series of goals and actionable strategies were developed to support this vision. The goals and strategies are as follows:

- **GOAL: Celebrate and strengthen Phelps' downtown character and small-town charm.**
 - Encourage facade improvements and building restoration that enhances downtown's historic character, such as awnings, signage, and adaptive reuse.
 - Activate the upper stories of downtown buildings with new uses, including residential and lodging spaces.
 - Support existing businesses and encourage new business development to diversify downtown shopping, dining, and entertainment options.
 - Expand and diversify downtown housing with options that are attractive and accessible to everyone, including young people and seniors.
 - Enhance downtown streetscapes for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists.

- **GOAL: Grow downtown Phelps as a tourist destination.**
 - Leverage tourism assets to attract visitors, such as Phelps' unique events, historic character, and natural beauty.
 - Support tourism-related businesses, including lodging, dining, and entertainment venues.
 - Continue to provide a variety of downtown programming and event options for all ages.
 - Refine and strengthen downtown Phelps' branding and marketing.
 - Create spaces to support community events, including performing arts venues and festival streets.

- **GOAL: Enhance community spaces, parks, and the public realm.**
 - Enhance important community gathering spaces, such as the Phelps Community Center, the Library, and the Phelps Arts Center.
 - Upgrade parks and green spaces with additional amenities to expand recreation options and promote community health.
 - Improve connectivity and accessibility to downtown destinations through enhancements to community spaces such as sidewalks, trails, and public parking lots.
 - Strengthen Phelps' community identity and sense of place with public realm improvements including public art, placemaking features, and wayfinding signage.



Project Application Updates

Kimberly provided an update on the Open Call for Project Applications process. The Open Call gives community members the opportunity to submit Project Applications for consideration for potential NY Forward funding. The application submission period will open Monday, June 23, 2025 and close Friday, July 25, 2025 at 4:30 PM. Applications will be available at the Village Offices (8 Banta Street, Phelps, NY 14532) and online at: villageofphelpsny.gov/phelps-forward.

Match Requirements

The LPC confirmed the match requirements as follows:

- **Private sponsors:** 35%
- **Public entities:** 0%
- **Non-profits:** 5%
- **Small projects (under \$75,000):** 25%

The following language will be included in the Project Application Form to encourage project sponsors to provide higher match percentages, if possible:

*“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.”*

Small Project Fund Preferred Projects

The LPC identified several small project types that will receive preference during the evaluation process. Preferred small project types are as follows:

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

Downtown Profile and Market Analysis

Kimberly outlined key findings from the ongoing analysis of downtown Phelps’ physical, demographic, and market conditions. These findings are intended to inform LPC decision-making when considering which projects to recommend for potential NY Forward funding.



Demographic Characteristics

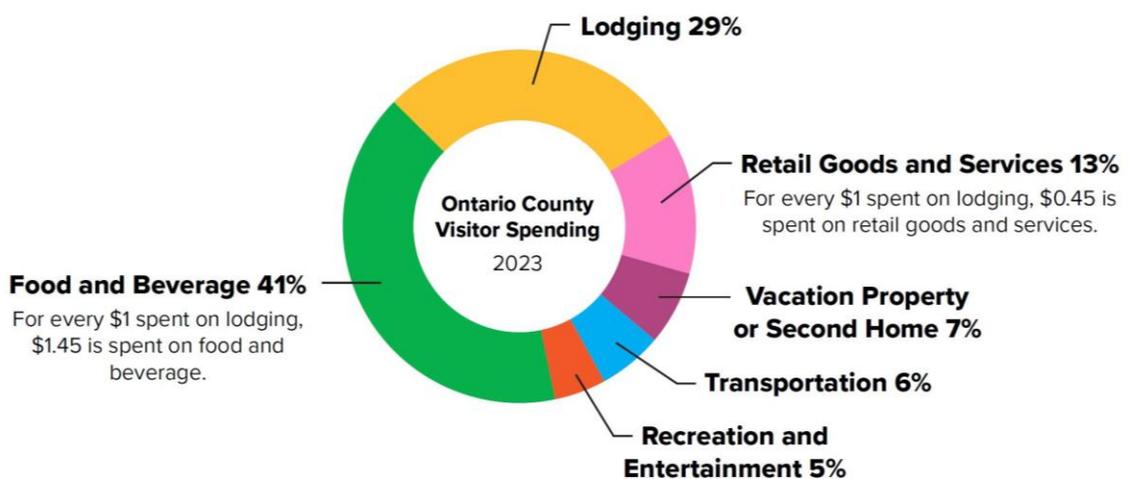
- **Population Decline:** From 2010-2020, the Village of Phelps saw population decline around 4% (-80 people), one of the highest rates of decline in Ontario County.
- **Younger Population:** The Village has a slightly younger population and a lower concentration of seniors than other areas of Ontario County.
- **Low Household Incomes:** Household incomes in the Village are lower than the three-county region and New York State, indicating reduced local spending power.

Housing

- **Active Housing Market:** The Village of Phelps has an active housing market where homes sell quickly (most in under 30 days) and prices are rising, up more than 16% since 2023. But this also means that the cost of homeownership is becoming beyond reach for many households in the NY Forward area.
- **Older Housing Stock:** More than half of all housing units in the Village of Phelps were built prior to 1940, and the median age of housing units is 87 years old.
- **Tight Rental Market:** Low vacancies and a limited supply of rental units in the Village of Phelps contribute to a relatively tight rental market in the area. Because of this, in the NY Forward Area, new rentals are projected to make up one-third of anticipated demand.

Market Trends

- **Sales Leakage:** Village residents spend more on certain services located outside the Village, like restaurants and convenience stores, suggesting gaps in the local market.
- **Growing Visitor Spending:** Visitor spending in Ontario County has increased year-over-year since 2020. In 2023, the county saw \$341 million in visitor spending. For every \$1 spent by visitors on lodging, there is an additional \$2.45 spent locally in other sectors, including \$1.45 spent on food and beverage and \$0.45 spent on retail goods and services.



Key Opportunities

Several key opportunities specific to downtown Phelps were identified based on the findings from the Downtown Profile and Market Analysis. These opportunities are shown below:



Renovation

Opportunities to renovate and reuse the historic building stock



Upper-Floor Housing

Opportunities for conversion of upper-stories of downtown buildings into housing



Rental Units

Opportunities to capitalize on expected demand for rental units



Restaurants

Opportunities for limited- and full-service restaurants



Convenience Store

Opportunities for some additional retail, particularly convenience-type retail



Lodging

Opportunities for lodging to support growing tourism industry



Tourism-Based Businesses

Opportunities for new tourism offerings and complementary businesses, like dining and lodging



Events

Opportunities to support and grow events and programming offerings



Recreation / Nature

Opportunities to leverage natural resources for recreation and tourism

Potential Unique Tourism Opportunities

- **Family-friendly outdoor recreation zone:** Nature play area or adventure playground, water feature / splash pad, nature obstacle course, rental bikes, ropes course, etc.
- **Multi-use recreation hub:** Flexible space with indoor and outdoor facilities that can host seasonal events, tasting, programming, weddings, etc.



Review of Public Projects

Kimberly provided a brief overview of the public projects that the Village of Phelps is considering proposing for NY Forward funding at this time. A preliminary, high-level “order of magnitude” cost estimate was provided for each project. Once the Village decides which projects it is interested in pursuing, it will prepare Project Applications for each project to submit through the Open Call for Projects. All projects submitted through the Open Call will be evaluated on a level playing field, regardless of whether they are public, private, or non-profit projects.

The potential public projects are as follows:

Streetscape Projects

- Exchange Street Parking Lot Improvements: \$1.2 million (estimated)
- Main Street Improvements: \$500,000 (estimated)
- Exchange Street Improvements: \$500,000 (estimated)
- Church Street Improvements: \$900,000 (estimated)

Public Space Projects

- Crooked Bridge Park Improvements: \$2.1 million (estimated)
- Memorial Park Improvements: \$200,000 (estimated)
- Town Hall Greenspace: \$200,000 (estimated)
- “Scary Alley” Improvements: \$100,000 (estimated)

Community Center Projects

- PCC Multi-Purpose Space Improvements: \$1.5 million (estimated)
- PCC “Main Street” Hallway: \$300,000 (estimated)
- Library Storywalk: \$900,000 (estimated)

**Note: The PCC front entry upgrades project which was included in the Village’s original application for NY Forward funding is now being considered for alternative sources of funding that better match the goals of that project.*

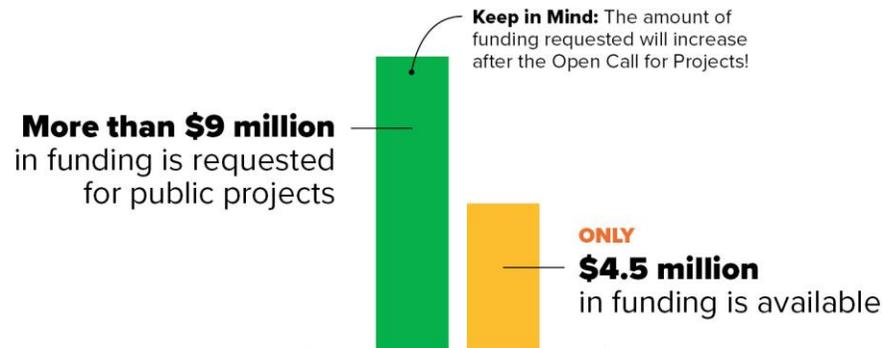
Additional Projects

- Small Project Grant Fund: \$300,000 (estimated)
- Wayfinding: \$200,000 (estimated)
- Downtown Branding: \$100,000 (estimated)



Summary

As currently estimated, the public projects total approximately \$9 million in funds requested from the NY Forward program. As additional projects are submitted through the Open Call, the amount of funds requested from the NY Forward program will increase. Kimberly reminded LPC members that only \$4.5 million in grant funding is available for all projects (public, private, and non-profit), and the committee members will need to keep this in mind when deciding which projects to keep under consideration for potential funding at future meetings.



Next Steps

- **June 19, 7:00 PM at the Village Offices Meeting Room:** Public Workshop 1
- **June 23:** Project application period opens
- **June 25, 5:45 PM at the United Church of Phelps:** Open Call for Projects Informational Session
- **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

LPC Questions

- How is the Open Call for Projects being advertised?
 - **Answer:** It is being advertised through several outlets including: (1) the Village and Town websites, (2) the Phelps Happenings Facebook page, and (3) flyers at several downtown locations. In addition, the BDTC went door-to-door to contact every property owner in the NY Forward Area. The Village also intends to mail the Project Application Form to all eligible applicants and is working to get several local newspapers to run stories about the NY Forward program.
- If some of the public projects seem too high in cost, is it possible to scale the projects back?
 - **Answer:** Yes, the scope of projects can be modified to reduce the total project cost. As the public projects are developed, the Project Team can create low, medium, and high-cost options for the LPC to consider.



- Is it possible to phase projects, and only submit one phase for potential NY Forward funding?
 - **Answer:** Yes, a specific phase of a project can be submitted for NY Forward funding. This might be a good option for large-scale public projects, such as Crooked Bridge Park. In this case, the first phase of the project could be submitted for NY Forward funds, and future phases could be funded through other sources, such as the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA).
- What happens if a potential NY Forward project is awarded CFA funding?
 - **Answer:** State reviewers are made aware of CFA awards prior to making decisions on NY Forward projects. If a project is awarded CFA funds, NY Forward funding may be reduced for that project.
- Will LPC members be able to review the Downtown Profile and Market Analysis?
 - **Answer:** Yes, the Downtown Profile and Market Analysis will be shared with LPC members in late July, following review by DOS. These documents will provide important context for the LPC to consider when making decisions about projects.
- Is it okay for LPC members to talk with each other outside LPC meetings?
 - **Answer:** It is okay for informal conversations to happen. However, if a quorum of committee members gets together, a public notice must be issued in advance. A working session can be called if the LPC feels that a particular topic needs more targeted discussion. Working sessions can be closed to the public as long as no decisions are made.
- This is a reimbursement program. How does that affect project sponsors' ability to get financing?
 - **Answer:** Banks are generally familiar with reimbursement grant programs and will provide letters of intent for financing contingent on the award of NY Forward funding.

Public Comments

All LPC meetings are open to the public. Time is reserved at the end of each meeting for a public comment period. All comments are recorded. The Project Team and the LPC do not respond directly to comments unless clarification is needed. No public comments were received at this meeting.

