

CORE OF THE COMMUNITY FUND PROGRAM GUIDELINES



1. INTRODUCTION

The Village of Massena was awarded \$600,000 through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) to create the Core of the Community Fund (COTC), which provides matching grant funds for commercial building façade improvements and other revitalization efforts within the Massena DRI target area. Property owners, business owners, entrepreneurs and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for funds for interior and exterior building improvements, site upgrades and permanent commercial machinery and equipment. Projects should meet the goals outlined below. COTC is administered by LaBella Associates on behalf of the Village of Massena. The application can be found at [insert website]. **The application is due October 17, 2023 at 5PM.** Applications must be submitted via email to jkonkoski@labellapc.com. A second round of funding may be announced if not all funds are expended in the first round.

The goals for the COTC Fund are:

Support Business Diversity and Innovation:

- Encourage diverse businesses and innovative projects to set up in Downtown, enhancing its character and offerings.

Accelerate Aesthetic Improvements:

- Fund small-scale beautification and public art projects that contribute to the "Living Downtown" goals.

Enhance Community Infrastructure:

- Support improvements in green infrastructure, park upgrades, and biking lanes that promote a sustainable and functional Downtown.

Facilitate Mixed-Income Housing:

- Provide funds for projects that create a diversity of housing options, contributing to the "Living Downtown" initiative.

Promote Wellness and Recreation:

- Invest in upgrades to public spaces, parks, and walking routes, supporting the "Serving Downtown" objectives.

Improve Connectivity and Mobility:

- Fund projects that focus on improving walkability, accessibility, and multi-modal transportation, as outlined in the "Connecting Downtown" strategy.

Leverage Regional Tourism:

- Use the fund to enhance tourist-friendly aspects of Downtown, whether through streetscape improvements or new recreational activities.

Support Sustainable Practices:

- Encourage projects that utilize sustainable materials or technologies, contributing to the eco-friendly objectives of the Massena DRI.

By focusing on these specific goals, the Small Project Fund Program will work synergistically with the broader DRI objectives, acting as a catalyst to accelerate the revitalization and sustainable development of Downtown Massena. Please refer to the complete set of Downtown Revitalization goals and strategies in **Attachment A**.

Funding through COTC is available for projects in the following categories:

1. Building Renovation Improvements
2. Small Business Assistance

2. ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include owners (individuals, for-profit and not-for-profit entities) of properties and businesses within the DRI target area or owners of prospective businesses that will be located within the DRI target area (see attached Target Area Map on page 7). Only properties current with all property taxes, utility payments, mortgage payments and fees are eligible to apply.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Ineligible applicants include corporate chains, municipalities and franchise-owned properties.
- Religious organizations applying for renovations to a property used for any religious purpose.
- Private membership-based organizations applying for renovations to properties used solely for private membership-based events.
- Applicants that are not current with their mortgage, utility or tax payments.
- The final determination of applicant eligibility is at the discretion of the Village of Massena.

3. AVAILABLE FUNDING

There are two (3) project categories. Applicants can apply for more than 1 category.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	Minimum Award	Maximum Award ¹	MINIMUM MATCH
BUILDING RENOVATIONS	Funds may be used to renovate facades, storefronts and commercial interiors. Funds may be used to create new residential units or rehabilitate existing units.	\$10,000 \$100,000 max per building	\$50,000 Additional \$25,000 per residential unit created	50% (25% for non-profit entity)
SMALL PROJECTS	Small Project funds may be used for permanently affixed signage and awnings.	\$5,000 - \$10,000		50%
SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE	Small Business Assistance funds may be used for permanent machinery and equipment.	\$10,000 - \$20,000		25%

¹ The grant award will not exceed 50% of the total eligible project cost (75% for non-profits) for Building Renovations and Small Projects or 75% for Small Business Assistance, up to the maximum award under each category.

4. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

In general, eligible expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Façade improvements
- Interior and exterior building renovations for commercial and mixed-use spaces, e.g. storefront renovations, interior fit-out, HVAC, MEP, and other permanent building improvements
- Upper-story residential improvements
- Energy system upgrades
- Permanently affixed signage and awnings
- ADA accessibility improvements

- Project soft costs – architectural, engineering, environmental (see page 4 for details)
- Public Art, e.g., murals, sculptures, or other significant permanent installations
- Interior and exterior improvements to support adjusted business practices, e.g., pick-up windows, outdoor seating areas
- Permanent commercial machinery and equipment

**Renovations must meet local design guidelines and standards, the NYS Building code, and the NYS historic preservation standards.*

5. INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to, the following:

BUILDING RENOVATIONS & SMALL PROJECTS

- Property acquisition
- Improvements to structures owned by religious or private membership-based organizations
- Improvements to municipally owned or municipally operated buildings
- Certain construction materials, including vinyl siding or windows
- Roof and window replacement unless part of a comprehensive renovation
- Furnishings, appliances, vehicles, electronics, tools, disposable supplies, business equipment and non-permanent fixtures, temporary artwork, hardware, computers, etc.
- Site work or ancillary activities on a property including but not limited to: septic systems/laterals, grading, parking lots, sidewalks, patios, decks, garages, sheds, landscaping, fences, free standing signs, general maintenance or repairs
- Projects that eliminate existing occupied housing units
- Business activity, including inventory, rent or lease expenses, working capital, repayment of debt, salaries, wages, benefits, loan, finance interest and/or tax fees
- Funds cannot be used for participant, participant’s family or participant’s staff labor
- In-kind labor and the reimbursement for materials only
- Reallocation of funds to other organizations (other than approved subcontractors for the project)
- Expenses reimbursed from any other source or agency
- Work that in the opinion of the review committee is inconsistent with or detracts from the character of Downtown Massena, or that is otherwise reasonably objectionable.
- Projects that do not further the priorities of the Strategic Investment Plan (refer to page 1)

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

- Used or secondhand materials or appliances
- Salaries, wages and benefits
- Repayment of debt
- Loan, finance, interest and/or tax fees
- Inventory
- Rent or lease expenses
- Working capital or other undefined expenses
- General or disposable supplies
- Other expenses that do not sustain business operations

6. BUDGET & FINANCING

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

The match requirement is based on the total project cost. Match requirement must be met on a building-by-building basis. In-kind match or labor is not eligible. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant agreement are not eligible for reimbursement and not eligible as a match.

SOFT COSTS

Eligible soft costs include architecture, engineering and design services, and environmental testing expenses. Soft costs require matching funds, and in-kind match is not eligible. Soft costs must be included within per building activity funding limits identified above and may not exceed 18% of the awarded funds.

Soft costs are to be paid by the property or business owner and can be partially reimbursed upon project completion. Soft costs incurred for work on buildings that eventually prove infeasible and do not receive other investments will not be covered by grant funds.

FINANCING

The property owner must contribute cash to cover at least 50% of all project costs (or 25% for non-profit applicants). The property owner is required to cover the total cost of the project after the maximum grant amount has been applied, which may be greater than 50% of the project costs. The property owner will also be required to contribute cash to cover any excess cost, including:

- The cost of ineligible improvements;
- The extra cost incurred when the property owner does not select the contractor who submitted the lowest bid or quote.

REIMBURSEMENT

The program operates fully as a reimbursement grant program and the owner is responsible for paying for all agreed upon improvements. Payment of grant funds will be made only upon satisfactory completion of items in the approved scope of work.

- No reimbursement shall be requested until inspections of the work has been completed by the Rehabilitation Coordinator or their designee.
- To substantiate costs, owners must provide the following:
 - Written contracts
 - Copies of invoices
 - Cancelled checks
 - Any other documents deemed reasonably necessary by the Village of Massena or required by the Housing Trust Fund Corporation to maintain effective internal controls
- Cash payments/cash receipts are not permitted and will not be reimbursed
- Soft costs for canceled projects are not eligible for reimbursement.

7. PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Project Review Committee will use the following criteria to review, score and recommend projects for funding:

A. ALIGNMENT WITH PROGRAM GOALS

- Projects that are visually prominent in Downtown;
- Projects that include renovation of upper story residential units;
- Projects with historic value or historic properties in danger of being lost in part or in total to disrepair or damage;
- Projects that with the assistance of grant funds, will reduce blight, contribute to the economic recovery of the downtown, or realize a stabilization or expansion of a Downtown business;
- Projects where assistance will create jobs;
- Projects where assistance will allow business to expand service offerings.

B. PROJECT SCORING & SELECTION

The project review committee will assign a score to each project using the following scoring system:

Criteria	Max Points
Readiness- projects that provide proof of overall feasibility and readiness such as proof of ownership, documentation that 100% of the financing for the project is in place, reasonable, construction timeline	20
Physical Impact- projects that are visually prominent downtown, have historic value, are in danger of being lost, bring existing properties into compliance with design guidelines, that are transformative beyond normal maintenance	20
Economic Impact- projects leveraging grant funds with private investment that with the assistance of grant funds, will reduce blight and vacancies, contribute to the economic recovery of the target area, or realize a stabilization or expansion of downtown tax base, businesses and/or jobs	20
Quality of Life- projects include renovation of upper floor residential units, include energy efficiency or accessibility improvements,	20
DRI Priorities- projects that advance the goals and priorities of the DRI Investment Strategy	20
Total	100

8. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & REIMBURSEMENT

All projects receiving public funds must follow State procurement and reimbursement procedures. Property owners are required to pay contractors directly and then submit documentation for reimbursement. Please note that if construction begins before all steps under program development are completed, reimbursement cannot be issued. Upon notice of funding award, the applicant must work with LaBella to advance the project. Failure to meet milestones will result in loss of grant funds. All projects must proceed through the steps outlined below:

Step	Description	Responsible Party
1. Award Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return signed award letter to LaBella Pay \$1,000 refundable commitment fee (fee is only refundable for completed projects) 	Property Owner
2. Develop Project Scope of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with rehab coordinator & project design professional to develop project workscope Ensure design meets local code and design standards For larger projects: Complete floor plans, drawings, renderings, written workscope or any other needed construction documents For smaller projects: Complete written workscope Finalize project budget Secure planning board approval if required Receive clearance from LaBella on final design 	Property Owner
3. Environmental Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALL projects require an environmental review Design professional will secure State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) approval and share with LaBella LaBella will obtain floodplain determination letter, zoning letter, site contamination report and any other needed documentation LaBella will complete environmental checklist Environmental testing (asbestos & lead paint) as needed 	Property Owner & LaBella
4. Project Setup	LaBella will submit project setup to State for approval	LaBella

5. Bidding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LaBella will advertise project and do direct solicitation ● Owner will communicate with contractors to solicit bids ● Obtain a minimum of two bids or 2 quotes for each phase of work and select contractor ● Bids must be submitted directly to LaBella 	Property Owner & LaBella
6. Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LaBella will provide all agreement templates ● Owner will execute agreement with contractor ● Owner will execute agreement with LaBella ● Owner will sign Property Release Form ● Owner will sign Bid Selection Form 	Property Owner & LaBella
7. Construction <i>*Please note that if construction begins before all previous steps are completed, reimbursement cannot be issued.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contractor will secure building permit and provide LaBella with a copy ● Receive Notice to Proceed from LaBella ● Owner will take before photos ● LaBella will provide project sign to be installed ● Owner will take after photos ● Rehab coordinator t will do inspection and issue Certificate of Compliance or Certificate of Occupancy ● LaBella will complete environmental clearances (only required if there was hazardous material abatement) 	Property Owner, Contractor & LaBella
8. Reimbursement <i>*Property owners are required to pay contractors directly and then submit documentation for reimbursement.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Owner will send LaBella all invoices and proof of payment (only canceled checks or bank/credit statements are acceptable proof of payment) ● Invoices must be typed and acceptable to NYS, which must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Date ■ Name & address of contractor ■ Name & address of person being billed ■ Detailed description of what is being invoiced ■ Information about what has previously been paid (if applicable) and the balance for current invoice ■ The invoice amount must match the proof of payment amount ■ Proof of payment date must be after invoice date ■ Deposits for materials must be invoiced ● Owner will sign and notarize Property Maintenance Declaration ● LaBella will prepare and submit disbursement request to State ● Receive reimbursement 	Property Owner & LaBella

9. PROGRAM CONDITIONS

- Grant awards will be merit based. Applicants that can communicate a compelling need that directly fulfills COTC program goals with quantifiable results will be given higher consideration.
- Projects selected by the Project Review Committee will be submitted to Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) for review and approval prior to notifying property or business owner of formal funding approval.
- Awarded funds may be subject to conditions. The award letter and agreement will clearly outline all conditions.
- Village of Massena reserves the right to award a project less funding than requested.
- All assistance is in the form of a reimbursable grant with a five (5)-year compliance period. Property owners will be required to execute a Declaration document committing to this compliance period. Should the property owner sell the property within the five (5)-year timeframe, they will be responsible for repaying a portion of the grant funding received. A Declaration Form will be filed with the County Clerk to secure this obligation and the following repayment schedule will apply:

- Months 0-12: 100% repayment due
- Months 13-24: 80% repayment due
- Months 25-36: 60% repayment due
- Months 37-48: 40% repayment due
- Months 49-60: 20% repayment due
- Months 60 and beyond: 0% repayment due

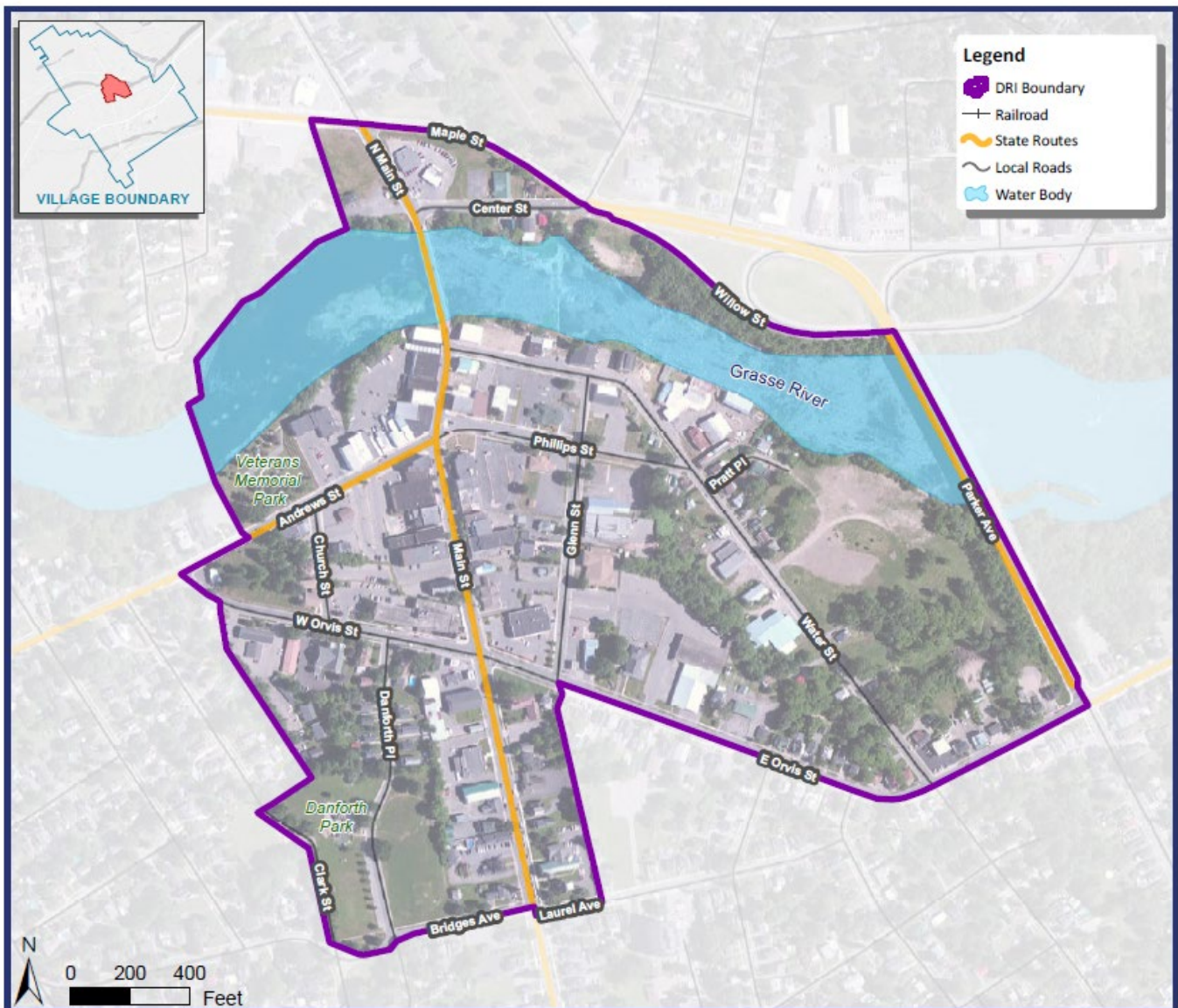
10. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

The application must be submitted electronically and in typed form to jkonkoski@labellapc.com. No handwritten applications will be accepted. All attachments must be sent as digital files. Village of Massena reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant.

11. PROGRAM INFORMATION

Additional information about this program, the program application form and program guidelines, is available at massena.us. Questions should be directed to Jamie Konkoski at jkonkoski@labellapc.com or 518-491-9884.

12. MASSENA DRI BOUNDARY



ATTACHMENT A

LAUNCH CORE OF THE COMMUNITY FUND



The project aligns with the following Massena DRI Strategies:

BOOSTING DOWNTOWN

- Bolster economic growth and inspire a range of entrepreneurial opportunities within a welcoming and galvanized Downtown.
 - Encourage diversity of desirable full-service businesses and experiences Downtown that are accessible to residents and visitors.
 - Continue the momentum of Downtown to support innovation and entrepreneurship to generate new business and employment opportunities.
 - Cultivate a sustainable economic environment that retains existing businesses and skilled professionals.

SERVING DOWNTOWN

- Complement health, wellness, and recreational needs and encourage fresh air adventure for “always in season” Massena.
- Upgrade parks and public spaces to include a variety of outdoor activities and public amenities for all ages and abilities.
- Integrate formalized walking/cycling routes within the Downtown and along the riverfront.
- Leverage and embrace the compact Downtown to achieve more opportunities for recreation and draw more visitors and residents Downtown.

CONNECTING DOWNTOWN

- Strengthen and formalize connections, walkability, and functionality of Downtown to provide a desirable experience for all.
- Creates an attractive, safe, walkable, accessible downtown through streetscape enhancements that reinforce a sense of community pride.
- Support local and regional tourism through creative placemaking in a more connected Downtown community.
- Develop intentional waterfront connections and recreational experiences.
- Highlight progressive Complete Streets approaches that support the development of a transportation network for all modes of travel that promotes access, mobility, and safety for all users.

LIVING DOWNTOWN

- Enhance placemaking and sustainability all while maintaining the neighborly hometown feel the Village is known for.
 - Celebrate the creativity, culture, and spirit of Downtown through public art projects and beautification efforts.
 - Support placemaking by investing in amenities to promote a functional dynamic Downtown.
 - Utilize green infrastructure to create a contemporary Downtown that is environmentally sustainable.
 - Foster local food access through farmers’ markets and food truck experiences Downtown.
 - Generate mixed-income housing to address lacking quality affordable housing stock and encourage growth Downtown.
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