



## Schuyler County Façade Improvement Program *Program Guidelines & Overview*

### **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:**

During previous program efforts, Schuyler County representatives identified a need for a fund to support existing business owners in enhancing their business presence. This program provides financial assistance for façade improvements that strengthen the visual appeal of commercial buildings, improve the pedestrian environment, and encourage continued private investment throughout Schuyler County.

Program funds are intended to leverage private investment in existing buildings, with priority given to projects that contribute to the improvement of the streetscape and character of main corridors across the county. While highly visible, street-facing improvements are prioritized, the program also supports enhancements to buildings that may not be immediately visible from public roads but will still positively impact the business's operations, customer experience, or long-term viability. These improvements should contribute to the overall economic vitality of the county, even if they are located on secondary façades, side entrances, or areas not directly facing main thoroughfares.

We welcome applications for façade improvement projects that result in meaningful, high-quality transformations to a building's exterior and enhance the broader business environment within Schuyler County.

### **PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY:**

1. A commercial or mixed-use property located in Schuyler County. Higher scores will be given for proximity to a business or commercial area.
2. The property must be an existing commercial or mixed-use building. Single, Two-Family, and Multi-Family Homes are not eligible.
3. Property must be covered by liability and hazard insurance. Hazard insurance must be sufficient to cover any outstanding loans on the property and the total amount of grant funds provided.

### **PROPERTY OWNER ELIGIBILITY**

1. Program Awardee[s] must be the owner of the property or the tenant of the building with the property owner's written approval.
2. The property owner must be current with all Village, County, and school taxes for all properties owned by the Awardee in the respective municipality.
3. Awardees must agree to provide a minimum 50% match for their project cost. The minimum grant award will be \$5,000, with the maximum award being \$25,000.
4. The property owner must have the ability/financial capacity to secure matching funds for the project and must provide proof that such funds are available for the specific project. The property owner must verify approval of a loan or availability of cash equal to the project cost. All program funds are provided only through reimbursement at the completion of the project. Therefore, Awardees must also have the ability to provide financing for the entire project until reimbursement is provided, typically within 60 days of project completion.
5. The property must have a current business operating within the building or a signed contract for a future business when payment reimbursement is requested.
6. Buildings that have previously been awarded or granted funds through the Watkins Glen DRI, the Montour Falls NY Forward and/or past rounds of the Downtown Façade program are not eligible to apply.
7. The project must be completed within one year from award notification.

### **ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS:**

1. General façade improvements and exterior structural repairs.  
Such work may include, but not necessarily be limited to, painting, signage, awnings, handicapped accessibility to storefront entrances, carpentry repairs, masonry repairs and repointing, storefront and building cornice repair and/or restoration, window repairs, roof repairs [flat roofs are ineligible], sidewalk improvements and other visual improvements. All façade work should be clearly visible from a public right of way. Repairs to the rear façade of buildings are only eligible if such facades face a public parking lot, public sidewalk, or other public areas.
2. Site work that improves property appearance.  
Improvements to the general appearance of the property on its public facing side, such as site clearing, improved parking, and landscaping that includes permanent installations such as shrubbery or trees.
3. Design and engineering services.  
Costs associated with design and engineering are reimbursable up to \$2,500 or 50% of such costs, whichever is less.

### **INELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS:**

1. The refinancing of existing debt and payment of interest generated from interim financing.
2. Payment or reimbursement for participant's in-kind labor.
3. Payment of any sales tax.
4. Funds may not be used for ancillary activities on the property, such as septic systems or laterals, utility improvements, parking lot pavement or extensions, or general maintenance.
5. Any work that, in the Committee's opinion, is inconsistent with the character of the community or is otherwise reasonably objectionable to the local municipality.

### **PROCUREMENT**

1. All awardees will be required to seek two competitive bids for each separate construction project or professional service to establish the credibility of project costs. If you are unable to procure two quotes the committee may accept one with an explanation. Preference will be given to applicants with all requirements met.
  - a. There must be a clear, written scope of work for the project for which bids or quotes are sought. All bidders must have equal access to relevant information, including information on the property itself.
  - b. The process should be free of collusion or intimidation, and FLX Gateway will exercise appropriate oversight over the entire process to ensure that it is fair and efficient and avoids actual and perceived conflicts of interest. If the awardee chooses a contractor other than the lowest bidder, reimbursement will be based on the amount of the lowest bid.
2. Any selected contractor may be required to provide proof of proper insurance, including but not limited to general liability and workers comp.
3. Property owners may perform eligible rehabilitation work on their own properties as an alternative to hiring a contractor. However:
  - a. In-kind labor (the owner's own labor) is not eligible for reimbursement.
  - b. The committee reserves the right to request proof of capability, such as previous experience, qualifications, or a detailed work plan, to ensure the project can be completed safely and to an acceptable standard.
  - c. All work performed by the property owner must comply with applicable local, state, and federal building codes and permitting requirements.
  - d. Neither FLX Gateway nor Schuyler County shall be held responsible for any damage, injuries, or liabilities incurred as a result of owner-performed work.

## **CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT/QUALITY CONTROL**

### **Construction Monitoring**

The County and the local municipality retain the right to inspect or audit work in progress and, at any point, monitor general project progress and adherence with Fund rules. In addition, the local Code Enforcement Officer may be required to conduct periodic inspections of renovation/construction activities in accordance with NYS Building Codes.

### **Final Inspection**

Before a final payment can be made, a final inspection will be required. The local Code Enforcement Officer (as applicable) and the property owner will all verify that the work was completed properly and is consistent with the contracted scope of work. FLX Gateway reserves the right to conduct a final inspection if necessary.

### **PROJECT REIMBURSEMENT:**

1. The Awardee is responsible for the total cost of the project upfront. Grants will reimburse Awardees at the conclusion of the project after all costs of the project are paid, and proper documentation is provided. Awardees should allow approximately sixty [60] days for reimbursement processing.
2. The Awardee will submit project invoices that reflect the name of the contractor, the work completed, and the amount invoiced. Corresponding canceled checks, money orders, or credit card receipts for these invoices will also be required. Payments made in cash will not be accepted for reimbursement without proper receipts and related invoices. It will be the Awardee's responsibility to maintain and provide all of the required documentation.
3. Reimbursement is subject to the execution of a final Building Inspection and Certificate of Occupancy, if applicable.
4. See "Reimbursement Checklist" for full list of requirements.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:**

Businesses and/or properties owned by a county officer or employee, or his or her spouse, minor child, and/or domestic partner are ineligible for this program in order to ensure there is no conflict of interest in the administration of this program. For purposes of this section, ownership of a business or property shall be deemed to include any owner, joint tenant, tenant in common, tenant by the entirety, partner, member, director, officer, management employment, and/or ownership or control of more than 5% of the business's outstanding stock. Applicants will be required to complete a Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form to determine if a conflict of interest exists. If there is a question or ambiguity as to whether a conflict of interest does exist, the Schuyler County Attorney will make a final recommendation to the program administration.

### **INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS:**

Each awardee will be required to submit, as a condition of the award, satisfactory comprehensive insurance that names the County of Schuyler and its officers, employees, and agents [collectively, the County] and Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development and its officers, employees, and agents [collectively, FLX Gateway] as Additional Insured in connection with the work being performed pursuant to the program guidelines and requirements of the Fund. Notwithstanding the limits of any policy of insurance provided or maintained by the awardee, the awardee shall defend, indemnify and hold harmless the County and FLX Gateway from all claims, actions, suits, liabilities, damages, awards, costs, and expenses (including, without limitation, attorneys' fees) of every nature and description arising out of or related to the work being performed pursuant to the program guidelines and requirements of the Fund, or arising out of or caused by any act, omission, or negligence of myself officers, employees, volunteers, or agents during the construction period.

### **PROPERTY OWNERS' RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. The is a reimbursable grant, meaning all payments must be made by the grant recipient and submitted to FLX Gateway for reimbursement. As such, the grant recipient must secure the funds for the entire project. The recipient is responsible for all financial transactions and payments.

2. Owners must keep records of all invoices and payment receipts and submit them to FLX Gateway at the end of the project. Failure to do so will result in a delay or rejection of reimbursement request. Payment receipts can be in the format of cancelled checks or redacted credit card bank statement.
3. Reimbursement, when applicable, will be disbursed following completion of the final inspection by the Code Enforcement Officer and the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy, if required.
4. Owners must perform their own due diligence regarding the contractor's capability of performing the approved scope of work. FLX Gateway and Schuyler County cannot be held accountable for work performance and quality of the owner-selected contractors. If owner-contractor disputes arise, FLX Gateway and Schuyler County will not serve as mediators of any kind.
5. Owners act as the project manager of their approved project. FLX Gateway and Schuyler County do not perform day-to-day management and oversight during the project construction period.
6. The approved scope of work is final. Any modifications to the scope of work can result in a delay or rejection of reimbursement.

#### **MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA RECOGNITION:**

Program participants are encouraged to recognize the Schuyler County Façade Improvement Program (SCFIP) and FLX Gateway when sharing information about their funded project on social media or other digital platforms. When possible, participants should tag FLX Gateway using the official social media accounts provided at the time of award.

- Recommended text:
  - This project was supported by the Schuyler County Façade Improvement program administered by FLX Gateway.
  - Thanks to the support of FLX Gateway and the Schuyler County Façade Improvement program, we're excited to share progress on this project.
- Recommended hashtags: #SCFIP #SchuylerCounty #FLXGateway
- Social media accounts:
  - Facebook: @FingerLakesGateway
  - Instagram: @FLXGateway
  - X (formerly Twitter): @FLXGateway
  - LinkedIn: Finger Lakes Gateway
  - TikTok: @FLXGateway

#### **PROJECT SIGNAGE REQUIREMENT:**

All funded projects will be provided with an official program sign indicating that the project was supported by the Schuyler County Façade Improvement Program. Recipients are required to display this sign at the project site in a visible location for a minimum of one (1) year following project completion. The sign must be maintained in good condition for the duration of the posting period.

#### **PROJECT EVALUATION/ RANKING:**

Each project will be reviewed by the Schuyler Façade Improvement Plan Review Committee made up of representatives from the Schuyler County Community Development and Natural Resources Committee, County Administrator's Department, Planning Department, and the Schuyler County Partnership for Economic Development. Projects will be selected based on the impact their project will have on the Schuyler County economy, the business districts and local tourism.

Projects may be downgraded or rejected in their entirety if the work requested, even if otherwise eligible for funding, is required due to the deferral of regular and necessary maintenance on the property. This decision is at the sole discretion of the Review Committee, and is not subject to appeal.

The following criteria will be used to score each project:

- Physical Impact [25 points]
  - Higher points will be awarded to projects that are (1) in a prominent location, (2) collocated with other program applicants, (3) located near recently renovated properties, (4) key to renovation in the surrounding area, (5) mixed use sites.
- Viewshed [10 points]
  - Higher points will be awarded to projects that are viewable from state roads. If Property is not viewable from any state, village, county or town roads you may receive no points under this category.
- Project Readiness [22 points]
  - The committee will give points based on (1) proof of ownership, (2) proof of financing, (3) submitted design, (4) the number of quotes included in the application.
- Economic Impact [35 points]
  - Higher point values will be assigned to projects that can show a higher level of private investment as it correlates to the grant award being requested. Additional points may be granted for projects with demonstrated community impact, such as reactivating vacant properties, improving neighborhood vitality, or supporting local workforce opportunities.
- Property Location [25 points]
  - Higher points will be given to projects that are in a recognized location as identified on the Official Schuyler County map, per the Schuyler County Planning Department.