

New York State Downtown Revitalization Initiative: CHINATOWN BUILDING UPGRADE FUND

Overview

The Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) Building Upgrade Fund provides grants to support property improvements that strengthen and revitalize Chinatown. Eligible projects include building exterior improvements, ADA accessibility, and small projects such as signage improvements. If you own or lease a property in Chinatown, you can apply for funding from \$10,000 to \$100,000, depending on your project type. Learn more about eligibility and apply today!

Learn more about the fund at one of our upcoming information sessions, where staff will provide detailed guidance on eligibility, the application process, and available support services. You may also visit our [website](#) for additional information and resources. Follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [X](#) for updates.

Which projects are eligible to receive a grant?

All projects must be located within the Chinatown Downtown Revitalization Initiative [Catchment Area](#). Associated architectural, engineering, and environmental costs must constitute less than 18% of the award.

Eligible Activities	Funding Limits
Building Exterior Improvements: Storefront/facade improvements	\$50,000 – \$100,000
ADA Accessibility: Access ramps, lifts, compliant doorways, emergency exits	\$10,000 – \$25,000
Small Projects: Permanently affixed awnings and signage (including address numbers), lighting, security cameras, plaques	\$10,000 – \$15,000

Who can apply?

- Property owners (individuals, for-profit entities, non-profit entities)*
- Lessees with written property owner permission and at least three years remaining on the lease after estimated project completion
- All applicants must fulfill a match requirement
 - Minimum 20% match of the total project cost is required
 - The match must be comprised of eligible project costs only
 - The match is calculated on a building-by-building basis
 - In-kind contributions are not eligible

** Municipally owned or operated buildings as well as structures owned by religious or private membership-based organizations with no public access or benefits, are not eligible for the BUF program. For properties owned by membership-based organizations that are partially leased to an eligible business or tenant (e.g., a ground-floor storefront), that lessee may still apply for funding, provided all other eligibility requirements are met. Properties used solely by the membership-based organization without public access or benefit remain ineligible.*

How do I apply?

1. Fill out the [application form](#), which is organized into three sections.

- a. Applicant Information: General information about you and the proposed project
 - b. Project Description: Project description, including scope, narrative, and budget
 - c. Program Compliance Certification
2. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applicants who meet eligibility based on location and scope will be asked to submit documentation via email. Documents include:
 - a. Budget Projection and Cost Breakdown
 - b. Proof of Ownership or Lease
 - c. Project Plans, Renderings, or Specifications
 - d. Contractor Bids or Quotes
 - e. Photographs of Existing Property

What are the scoring criteria?

Projects will be scored based on five criteria listed below, for a total possible score of 100.

DRI Priorities	Projects will be evaluated based on how well they advance the DRI Investment Strategy's goals. The Committee will assess each project's impact on its immediate surrounding area, including effects on the street or corridor and benefits to neighboring properties. Priority will be given to projects that catalyze improvements along key streetscapes or encourage nearby investment. High priority will also go to projects on strategic, high-visibility corridors that enhance neighborhood character, improve pedestrian experience, and strengthen Chinatown's identity as a vibrant community destination.	20
Project Readiness	Project readiness, financial readiness, and implementation timeline. Priority is given to projects that demonstrate a reasonable construction timeline and a clear path to construction with minimal risk of delay, with evidence of the applicant's previous experience completing similar projects and their overall capacity to deliver.	20
Physical Impact	Priority is given to projects that are transformative beyond normal maintenance by evaluating physical impact, such as projects that are visually prominent, have historic value, address properties that are in danger of being lost, and bring existing properties into compliance with design guidelines.	20
Economic Impact	Projects will be evaluated based on their size, scope, and total investment amount, which demonstrate their potential for transformative change. Priority is given to projects that leverage grant funds with private investment, result in economic impacts such as reducing blight or vacancies, contribute to the target area's economic recovery, and support the stabilization and expansion of the area's tax base, businesses, and jobs.	20
Quality of Life	Projects will be evaluated based on how well they advance the quality of life within the target area. This includes accessibility and safety improvements as well as broader quality of life considerations that support a more attractive, livable, accessible, and inclusive community.	20

For questions, please email chinatownDRI@chinatownpartnership.org