

# Downtown St. Catharines Animation Matched Funding Program Guidelines

Updated: May 2026

## OVERVIEW

The City of St. Catharines Downtown Animation Matched Funding Program aims to increase foot traffic and overall visits via events, popups, and placemaking. This program offers financial support to eligible stakeholders for initiatives focused on one of the three key priorities:

### Key Priorities:

- Public Events (e.g., Festivals, concerts, retail and food markets)
- Vacant/underutilized space activation (e.g., events, installations, space beautification)
- Streetscape enhancements (e.g., greenspace, lighting, public/window art)

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The Downtown St. Catharines Animation Matched Funding Program is open to business and not-for-profit stakeholders in good standing who contribute to the vitality of the Downtown core. Eligible applicants must demonstrate how their initiative supports the Key Priorities. Applicants may be required to provide supporting documentation to verify their status and project alignment with program objectives.

## ELIGIBLE INITIATIVES

To be considered for matched funding, projects must:

- Take place in **Downtown St. Catharines (See Schedule B for boundaries)**
- Align with City of St. Catharines Strategic Objectives, namely:
  - Economic Prosperity - Enrich the urban growth centre vitality through creative placemaking initiatives
  - Social Well-Being – Enhance neighbourhoods through regeneration, particularly in the downtown core
  - Environmental Stewardship - Protect, preserve and enhance the City's tree canopy

As well as any further objectives as determined by staff

- Demonstrate **measurable economic impact**, through initiatives that are **strategically aligned** with attracting sustained economic activity benefitting local business and residents, enhanced placemaking, regeneration of underutilized space, as well as overall social and environmental impact.
- Adhere to any applicable City requirements and regulations, including compliance with zoning, planning, and building requirements

## INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Grants, contributions, or flow-through funding to other organizations.
- Charitable fundraising activities, donations, or contributions to political parties, advocacy organizations, or lobby groups.
- Capital expenses or infrastructure costs.
- Prize money.
- Alcohol-related expenses.
- Expenses that do not directly relate to or benefit downtown.

## **MATCHED FUNDING CRITERIA**

- **The City of St. Catharines will match dollar for dollar** any funds that an applicant contributes to an approved project, up to the maximum funding amount.
- **Minimum funding request:** \$5,000 (matched by \$5,000 from the City resulting in a minimum project value of \$10,000).
  - Notwithstanding the above, City Staff have the authority to recommend that the Evaluating Panel consider funding requests under \$5,000.
- **Maximum funding request:** \$10,000 (matched by \$10,000 from the City resulting in a minimum project value of \$20,000)
- Funding shall not be used as matching funds for any other municipal, **provincial or federal government program.**
- Funding shall not be used to offset existing operational, administrative, or marketing costs.
- The City may deny, reduce, cancel, or require repayment of funding where the applicant receives, or becomes eligible to receive, funding through another City of St. Catharines grant, incentive, rebate, sponsorship, or funding program that may be applied to the project.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **Step 1 – Application Submission**

- All applicants must submit a completed application form to the City of St. Catharines in the form and manner prescribed by the City. The City shall have sole discretion to determine whether an application is complete or acceptable for consideration.
- The deadline for submitting applications shall be determined by City Staff.
  - Late applications shall not be accepted.
  - Late applicants are eligible to apply for future intake sessions.
- Applications must include:
  - A clear description of the project/event, including goals, deliverables, and anticipated impact.
  - A budget outlining **all sources of funding** and eligible expenses.
  - Marketing and promotional strategies.
  - Performance measures and success metrics.
- Applicants are responsible for reviewing the City's current applicant requirements, forms, deadlines and program criteria, which may be amended from time to time.
- City Staff may, in their sole discretion, disqualify any applications they deem to be incomplete.
  - Disqualified applications shall not be provided to the Evaluation Panel for review.
  - Disqualified applications are eligible to apply for future intake sessions

### **Step 2 – Review & Approval**

- City Staff will oversee the coordination of the review and approval process.
- Meetings of the Evaluation Panel shall be closed to the public but City Staff or designates shall have discretion to invite individuals they deem appropriate to attend.

- If a member of the Evaluation Panel declares a conflict for an application, they shall not provide a score or recommendation for the application and shall not take part in any discussion involving the applicant
  - Should the number of conflicts on an application limit the number of eligible members on the Evaluation Panel to less than two, City Staff or designates shall have discretion to select an employee of the City of St. Catharines to review the application(s).
  - Should all members of the Evaluation Panel have a conflict for an application, the City Staff or designates shall select two employees of the City of St. Catharines to review the application(s).
- Applications shall be evaluated based on the Funding Evaluation Criteria noted in Schedule A.
- The Evaluation Panel shall be responsible for making a recommendation on how funding should be allocated.
- The approval of funding shall be a decision of the Evaluation Panel

### **Step 3 – Funding Disbursement**

- Prior to the disbursement of funds, approved projects will be required to sign a Funding Agreement which outlines responsibilities, deliverables, and funding conditions.
- City Staff shall have the authority to establish an intake on a rolling basis, with the objective of disbursing funds as early as possible to the successful applicants.
- Payments are made **only to applicants** with **10% held back** until the final report is received and approved by City Staff

### **Step 4 - Pre-Project**

- If an applicant fails to fulfill the requirements outlined in the funding agreement, the City of St. Catharines reserves the right to withhold funds or recover disbursed funds, all or in part, and the applicant may be deemed ineligible for future funding opportunities.
- Recovered funds will be added back to the budget for the Matched Funding Program.

### **Step 5 – Post-Project Reporting**

- After completion of the event or project, organizations must submit a final report, in the form and manner prescribed by the City, including:
  - Number of visitors and economic impact analysis- ticket sales, food & beverage sales
  - Proof of **City of St. Catharines recognition** (logo placement, media mentions, etc.).
  - Financial reconciliation.
  - Performance measurement outcomes.
  - Copies of marketing materials and documentation.
- Reports must be submitted by the date outlined in the funding agreement.
- Failure to submit a final report may, at Staff discretion, **disqualify** the applicant from future funding.

## **Administration**

- The City of St. Catharines **reserves the right to review and amend** these Guidelines as needed.
- The City of St. Catharines may **audit or verify** applications and reports to ensure compliance.
- Failure to adhere to funding conditions **may result in ineligibility** for future funding.

# Schedule A

## FUNDING EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

### Downtown Economic Impact

- How will this initiative attract visitors to downtown?
- What are the projected **economic impacts**?
- How will results be measured? See chart below for examples.

| Key Priority          | Metric Examples (including but not limited to)  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Marketing             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media reach and engagement (likes, shares, comments, followers)</li> <li>• Website traffic and conversions (bookings, sign-ups)</li> <li>• Number of media mentions or influencer collaborations</li> <li>• Email marketing open and click-through rates</li> </ul> |
| Investment Attraction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projected increase in visitor numbers (%)</li> <li>• Number of tickets/experiences sold</li> <li>• Average length of stay per visitor</li> <li>• Repeat visitation rate (%)</li> </ul>   |
| Product Development   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assets produced (photography, video)</li> <li>• Estimated revenue generated (\$)</li> <li>• Increase in local business sales (%)</li> <li>• Number of participating businesses/partners</li> </ul>   |

### Marketing & Outreach

- What is the **regional, national, or international reach** of the initiative?
- How does the marketing strategy ensure a broad audience engagement?

### Brand Alignment & Community Enhancement

- How does the project align with **loveSTC tourism brand**?
- Does it promote local culture, businesses, or attractions?

### Partnerships & Collaborations

- What **business and tourism stakeholders** will be engaged in this initiative?
- How will partnerships strengthen the downtown's appeal?

### Media Exposure & Social Media Impact

- What media coverage and social media engagement will be generated?

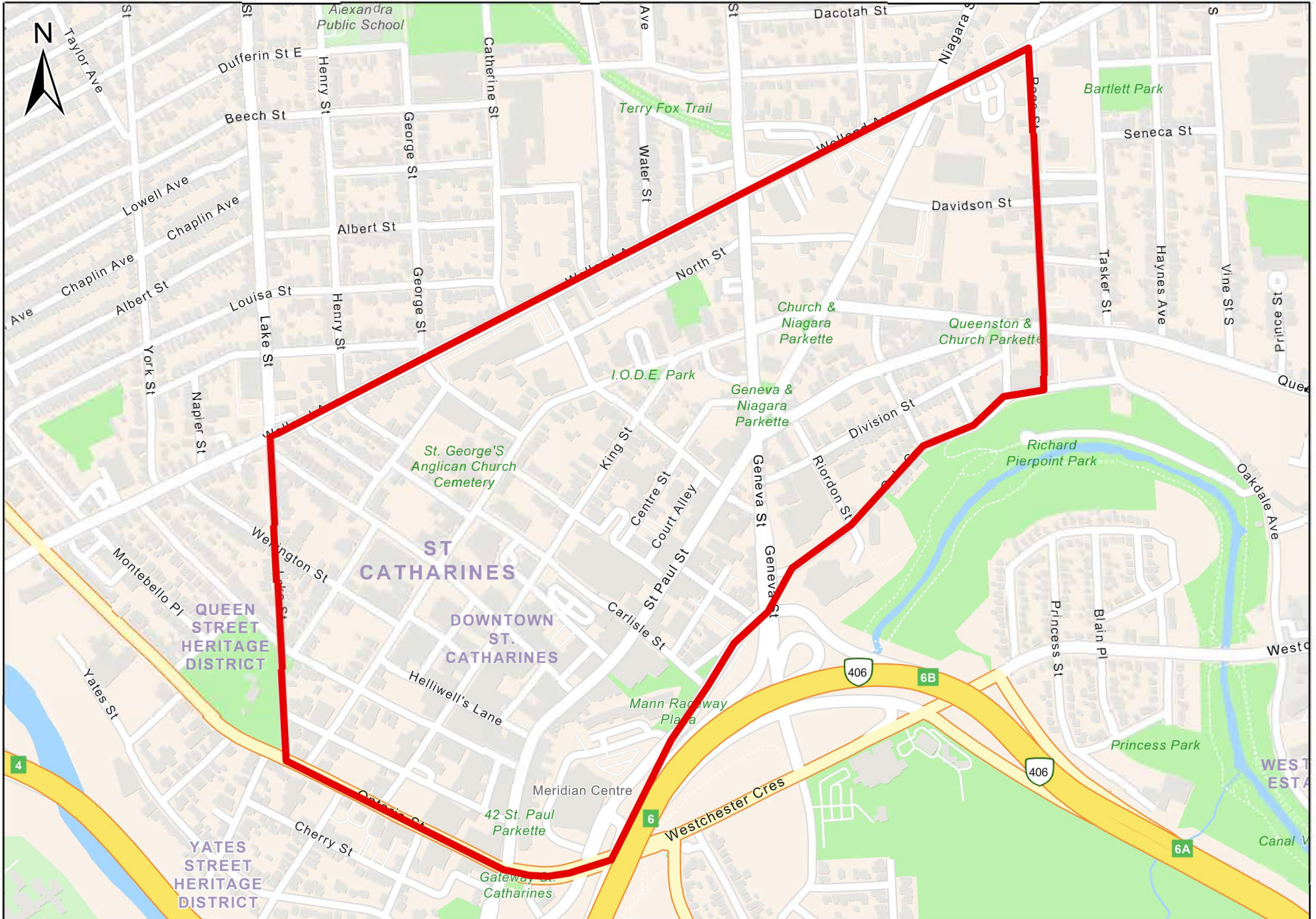
### Scalability & Sustainability

- Does this project have the potential to **grow and be repeated** in the future?
- What **sustainable** practices will be implemented?

### Accessibility & Inclusion

- How does this initiative ensure inclusivity for **diverse and underrepresented groups**?
- Are there efforts to engage **BIPOC, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+** audiences?

# Downtown St. Catharines Animation Matched Funding Program Boundary



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Date: 05/20/2026



## Schedule B