

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Consulting Services for City of Bethlehem Enterprise Zone Renewal



Due Date and Time:

Friday, July 24, 2026 by 5:00 pm ET

Deadline to Submit Questions:

Wednesday, July 15, 2026 by 5:00 pm ET

Contact Person:

Sean Ziller, Deputy Director of Economic Development
City of Bethlehem
10 E. Church Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018
610-849-2142
sziller@bethlehem-pa.gov

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (population approximately 79,000), is seeking a qualified consulting firm to assist in the preparation and submission of an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) for renewal of the City's Enterprise Zone (EZ) designation for an additional five (5) year term.

The City's application will evaluate the outcomes achieved during the expiring EZ designation period and propose modifications for the subsequent term to better align with Bethlehem's evolving conditions, needs, and emerging challenges. The application will identify new targeted investment and development needs as well as implementation strategies to address those needs.

The City's renewal application must adhere to the EZ Program Designation guidelines as included here: <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/enterprise-zone-designation/> and further detail as provided here: <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/neighborhood-assistance-enterprise-zone-tax-credit-napezp/>

2.0 BACKGROUND

PA DCED offers communities the opportunity to designate areas of a municipality or region for targeted investment and development for a period of five years through the EZ Program. Designation includes the identification of specific needs for investment and/or development and the design and/or implementation strategy to address those needs. An EZ focuses on the deteriorated, distressed, and blighted industrial and manufacturing areas of a community.

The City of Bethlehem previously received Enterprise Zone designation for certain industrial and manufacturing areas of the city. The City requested and was granted its most recent five-year EZ designation renewal in 2019 for areas shown on maps further below.

The City is now applying to PA DCED for a renewal of the EZ Designation. Bethlehem's current EZ renewal expired on 9/30/24 and Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP) EZ Tax Credit eligibility is set to expire on 9/30/26. Other EZ benefits under the current designation are set to expire on 09/30/2029.

The City of Bethlehem is submitting a renewal application to continue to help address the deteriorated, distressed, and blighted commercial and industrial areas of the city, while also evaluating opportunity for potential zone adjustment or expansion. For the benefit of Tax Credit eligibility, specifically, the City is looking to mitigate any potential gap between the old designation and new designation.

As noted in the City's 2019 renewal request, after the loss of Bethlehem Steel, which was the city's largest employer, landowner, and taxpayer, the City worked diligently to diversify and strengthen Bethlehem's economy for the future. This ongoing effort has been

supported by project investments by entrepreneurs that have addressed blighted and vacant parcels with assistance through the EZ program. Today, manufacturing remains strong and sectors like Education, Health Care, and Real Estate are prominent and growing. While Bethlehem has largely succeeded in reinventing itself in the wake of Bethlehem Steel's closure, the City continues to face challenges to maintain the health and vibrancy of its neighborhoods.

The City of Bethlehem has been able to effectively market and utilize the Enterprise Zone to current businesses, property owners, and prospective businesses while leveraging other economic development programs that have helped to facilitate development of vacant brownfield land and underutilized properties in our urban core and surrounding neighborhoods. As of May 2026, there have been a total of 23 Enterprise Zone Tax Credit applications approved and \$5.9 million in Enterprise Zone Tax Credits awarded. These tax credit awards have been crucial in the City's ability to stay competitive and attract further investment in our blighted properties and downtowns.

Additionally, previously awarded Enterprise Zone Grant-to-Loans were used to construct Bethlehem Technology Center I and II. These incubators were constructed by the Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) and eventually purchased by growing companies within the respective space. The Enterprise Zone Grant-to-Loans have since been repaid with interest back to the City of Bethlehem and reinvested into a technology center called Pi: Partnership for Innovation, an 8,000 sq. ft. space for startup companies that are eligible for the Southside Bethlehem Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ).

The boundaries of the current Enterprise Zone designation include all commercial and industrial areas within the City of Bethlehem. A high-resolution map of the City is available by using the interactive [GIS Zoning Map](#). The City of Bethlehem's [Zoning Ordinance](#) provides greater detail on uses allowed in these zones.

The following zones are included as part of the existing Bethlehem Enterprise Zone:

- CB Central Business District
- CG General Commercial District
- CL Limited Commercial District
- CS Shopping Center District
- CM Office Research Center District
- OMU Office Mixed Use District
- CMU Mixed Use Commercial District
- PI Planned Industrial District
- LI Light Industrial District
- IN Industrial District
- IN-O Industrial Overlay District
- IR Industrial Redevelopment District
- IR-R Industrial Redevelopment - Residential District

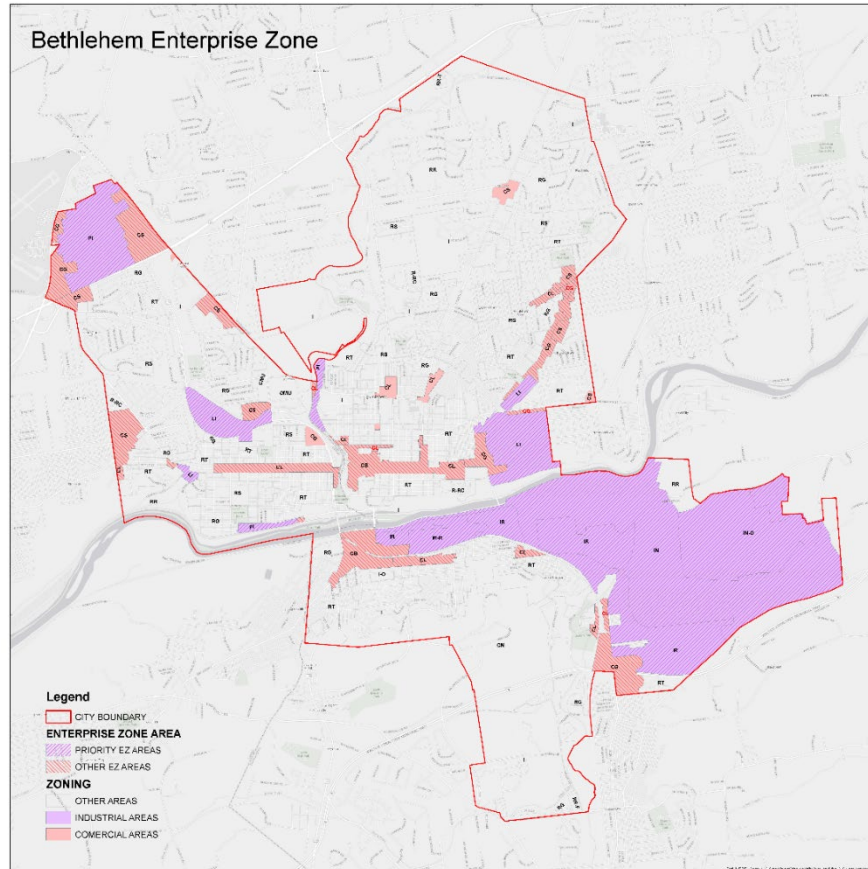
3.0 PROJECT GOALS

As noted, the City has leveraged components of the EZ program, namely EZIP Tax Credits, over the course of its prior designations to great effect and to the benefit of public-private revitalization efforts. The City looks toward a potential new five-year designation for continued redevelopment of available industrial and commercial properties as well as strategic coordination with other long-term community and neighborhood planning efforts that tackle our city's current and emerging needs.

For instance, the City, in partnership with the Bethlehem Housing Authority (BHA), was awarded a HUD Choice Neighborhoods (CN) Planning Grant for the Pembroke neighborhood in the Northside. Bethlehem was one of 14 communities nationwide to receive the CN grant in 2023. This initiative involves the revitalization of distressed public housing while promoting and leveraging investments that improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents, including improved access to jobs. As the City evaluates the final plan presented in September 2025 and seeks to expand workforce training opportunities within the neighborhood, it has considered whether a boundary adjustment - aimed at promoting revitalization through properties in the surrounding industrial, manufacturing, and commercial areas - would complement the workforce development and neighborhood revitalization goals of the CN Plan. *More information about the Choice Planning process can be found here: <https://www.bethlehemchoice.com/>*

Of the 23 Enterprise Zone Tax Credit awards, 19 have been awarded to businesses on the City's Southside, of which 11 have been in the Lehigh Valley Industrial Park (LVIP). From cold storage and large-scale screen printing to plastics and broader manufacturing, the EZ program in Bethlehem has been able to support the generation and retention of jobs. As facilities within LVIP continue to develop, the City is exploring opportunities in alternative priority EZ areas and other EZ areas, as highlighted in the map below.

The City is amenable to exploring boundary adjustments that would most effectively facilitate expanded business development in areas that remain available for investment.



The City is also cognizant of other benefits that derive from an Enterprise Zone designation, including the following:

- Eligible businesses located within the zone receive priority consideration when bidding on state government contracts. This benefit continues for five years after the zone exits the program.
- Eligible businesses located within the zone receive priority consideration when applying for financial assistance to clean up contaminated sites under Act II. This benefit is active up to five years after the zone has exited the program.
- Eligible businesses receive priority consideration for any resource administered by the commonwealth that would assist in leveraging imminent business investment and job creation in an Enterprise Zone.
- Priority consideration for a State Liquor License.
If an EZ Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is in place, the boundaries of the Enterprise Zone remain intact as government contracts. This benefit continues for five years after the zone exits the program.

In anticipation of a potential renewal, the City seeks to establish a plan to more effectively connect businesses with these benefits and maximize their utilization.

4.0 SCOPE OF WORK

Services needed, in collaboration with City staff, include:

- Data Collection and Collation
- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- EZ Designation Eligibility Analysis
- Key Strategy Identification
- Updated Implementation Plan / Recommended Actions
- Exhibit Preparation
- Final Application Packaging

The selected consultant, firm, or team will assist the City of Bethlehem with preparing the submittal to the Commonwealth for the City's EZ renewal as outlined in this proposal.

Project Oversight

- Review the City of Bethlehem's prior designations and investments.
- In conjunction with the City, conduct data collection (demographic, land use, etc.), interview stakeholders, study the City's key planning efforts and priority initiatives, and utilize community input to analyze the City's eligibility for EZ renewal and formulate the best strategies to strengthen a renewal application.
- Provide project guidance, implementation, and/or any technical oversight.

Community Engagement

- Provide coordination for public meetings with business / property owners, City and County government, institutions, the private sector, prior EZ Tax Credit awardees, and/or City residents.
- Draft media releases, FAQ sheets, and presentations for any outreach activities.

Project Delivery

- Work with the City's Department of Community & Economic Development, specifically the Economic Development Bureau, to ensure all necessary documentation is prepared for an eventual submittal to PA DCED.
- Generate final application, inclusive of tables, exhibits, and other necessary documentation, for submittal by the City.
- Address follow-up inquiries that may be required by PA DCED.

The City anticipates submitting a renewal application to the Commonwealth in Q3 2026, to reduce the gap between the expiring designation and potential new five (5) year renewal.

5.0 BUDGET

As part of its response to this RFP, each prospective firm must clearly present a proposed budget on a time-and-materials basis, organized by role and corresponding established hourly rates.

Not-to-Exceed Amount:

Total budget should not exceed \$20,000.

6.0 RESOURCES

Guidance will be available through the City of Bethlehem's Department Community and Economic Development (DCED). Additional GIS information, copies of the City's various community and strategic plans, associated economic data (ex., existing market analyses), and a copy of the 2019 renewal application will be made available to the selected team.

7.0 DELIVERABLES

Qualified consultants, firms, or teams are invited to submit a single submission as described in this RFP. Submissions should be thorough and concise and are recommended to be not more than 15 pages.

All submissions must include:

1. *Cover Letter and Availability:* Provide a brief cover letter from the lead consultant or firm, including basic background information on the organization or team, a statement of interest in the project, and a review of understanding of the Scope of Work. Include contact information for the consultant's Project Lead and a commitment to participate in a potential Phase 2 interview.
2. *Outline of Qualifications and Experience:* Provide an overview of the lead consultant or firm's background, relevant experience, credentials, and qualifications as they pertain to this project and the deliverables. Include specific information on the background and related experience, such as resumes, of the project lead and any other lead staff who will be involved in the project.
3. *Examples of Similar Projects:* Provide not more than three (3) examples of previous similar projects completed by the project team with an emphasis on the key staff and team members who will be included in this project.
4. *Methodology:* Outline your proposed approach to the project and describe the method for working with the City of Bethlehem to complete the potential services outlined in the scope of work.
5. *Timeline:* Include a statement confirming the respondent can complete the project in the timeline outlined in the section below.
6. *Project Budget:* Include a cost estimate to complete the proposed services in conjunction with the City of Bethlehem staff.
7. *Professional References:* Provide contact information and/or professional references for not more than three recent clients on similar projects.

8. *Conflict of Interest*: The respondent shall disclose any financial, business, or other relationship that may impact by this work.
9. *Signature*: Provide names, titles, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of individuals with the authority to negotiate and contractually bind the respondent

8.0 INQUIRIES AND SUBMITTAL

Respondents shall be responsible for reviewing this RFP and any addenda issued by the City of Bethlehem prior to the due date, and for requesting written clarification or interpretation of any perceived discrepancy, deficiency, ambiguity, error, or omission contained therein.

Inquiries and questions concerning this RFP should be directed in writing via email to the City of Bethlehem's Deputy Director of Economic Development, Sean Ziller, at sziller@bethlehem-pa.gov. No phone calls will be accepted.

The City of Bethlehem will respond to written requests for clarification received by July 15, 2026 by 5:00 pm ET. A summary of all questions and responses will be added to the posted RFP by July 22, 2026 by 5:00 pm ET.

All inquiries and final proposals to the RFP shall be submitted electronically to:

Sean Ziller, Deputy Director of Economic Development
City of Bethlehem
10 E. Church Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018
610-849-2142
sziller@bethlehem-pa.gov

Proposals shall be emailed as attachments in Portable Document Format (PDF) or via a downloadable link. Please contact the City ahead of the final submittal to test any links or file share options. The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals not submitted appropriately by the specified deadline.

9.0 SELECTION AND CRITERIA

The Economic Development Bureau will review all submissions to determine whether they meet all the requirements of the RFP. Submissions meeting those requirements will be reviewed and ranked by a selection committee, consisting of City of Bethlehem staff.

Top-ranked respondents may be interviewed as needed and at the City's discretion.

The selection committee will use the following criteria in evaluating submissions:

Written Proposal Criteria	Max Points
Demonstrated experience of key personnel to be assigned to the project	20 points
Proposed approach to achieving the goals of this RFP in an effort to ensure timely and robust submission of a renewal application to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	25 points
Respondent's methodology to successfully support the City in addressing the scope of work	10 points
Reasonableness of costs/price proposals	10 points
Specific experiences, references, or other considerations that make the Respondent uniquely qualified	20 points

Selection

Any contract awarded shall be made to the best-qualified submission based on the selection process. The City of Bethlehem will notify respondents of the submission selected by distributing a notice of intent to award. The final Scope of Work will be negotiated to meet the City of Bethlehem's needs, comply with all appropriate guidelines, and could include a scope of work modified from the identified one in this RFP. Prior to contract execution, the selected consulting firm must be approved by the Bethlehem City Council.

10.0 CONCLUSION

The City of Bethlehem is not responsible for any costs incurred by prospective bidders in responding to this RFP. The City reserves the right to award the project in the best interests of the project and is not obligated to select the lowest priced proposal.