

## **RFP: Establishment of a Business in the Historic Gilbert Block Building, 7 Commercial St, Gilbertsville NY**

### **Project Overview**

The Village Improvement Society Gilbertsville, a registered nonprofit, owns and manages the Gilbert Block building in the heart of downtown Gilbertsville, NY. We are seeking proposals to operate a business from the middle storefront space within this building. The space, most recently a grocery store, has been vacant since July 2020. The Village Improvement Society (VIS) is a community organization with a strong desire to see something that generates foot traffic downtown, but does not directly compete with the existing businesses in the building (a bakery/coffee shop and a book store). This business will be expected to open to the community no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

We are requesting business proposals for this space. The requirements for the proposal are listed below. Please submit by December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Submit in PDF format to [kpstrain1@gmail.com](mailto:kpstrain1@gmail.com).

### **Our Organization**

Founded in 1886, the VIS is a 501c3 organization with a seven-person executive board and approximately 100 members. We own and maintain the Gilbert Block building and the Gilbertsville post office building, as well as the adjacent park area on Commercial Street. We also own the Overlook Park, across State Highway 51 from this area. Our mission, as written, is: *...to benefit the general social and public welfare and to combat community deterioration through charitable, educational, and historical projects that are promoted through existing organizations rather than by help to individuals*. In the course of our 135-year history, we've taken on varied projects benefiting the local economy and culture. These include:

- Organized tree-planting after fires tore through downtown in the late 1800s
- Mobilized against and successfully blocked an Army Corps of Engineers project to flood the valley (1979)
- Registered the entire Village of Gilbertsville on the National Register of Historic Places (1983)
- Initiated a popular program offering Gilbert Block studios to active local visual artists at affordable rates (1990s)
- Pursued funding opportunities in order to facilitate recovery from the catastrophic 2006 flood (2006-07)
- Completely renovated the west end of the Gilbert Block, including a new septic, electric, furnace and fuel tank, flooring, drywall and paint. (2020-21)

### **Project Goals**

The key goals of this project are as follows: to provide goods or services that will benefit the community, to generate foot traffic downtown (and ideally, traffic from out-of-town as well), to provide a consistent and reliable presence that will help anchor the local economy while also preserving the historic character of the space and the building as a whole.

### **The Community**

Gilbertsville, NY is comprised of a mix of young families, mid-career professionals, and retirees. There is a steady influx of seasonal visitors as well, with events such as weddings (at the Major's Inn, Centennial Farms, and the Gilbertsville Farmhouse), horse shows by Gilbertsville Horse Shows, and holiday weekends bringing people to town. As of the 2010 census, Gilbertsville's population was 399, while the population of the Town of Butternuts (which surrounds the village) was 1786. The demographics of our area are shifting with new

families moving from the Hudson valley and New York City area, bringing a new perspective on what type of businesses can thrive here.

Most recently, the space was occupied by the Gilbertsville Valueway, a “general store”-style business that also offered a consistent array of hot and cold sandwiches, soups, and hot dishes “to go.” The Valueway existed in some iteration for over 50 years. While there is considerable desire among residents for a place to purchase provisions (milk, eggs, bread, snacks, beer) in the village, the prospect of a straight grocery store in Gilbertsville is less sustainable than it once was. Since 2015, three Dollar Generals, plus Weaver’s Farm Market, have opened within ten miles of town.

## **The Space**

The storefront space boasts original shelving and counter space, and lots of historic charm. It is roughly 24’x60’ – 1200 square feet with windows and an awning across the front façade facing Commercial Street, and window across the same space in the rear of the building. The rear windows overlook Dunderburg Creek. Features include a 10 foot original tin ceiling, 8 foot stained wood and painted wainscoting, built in drawers and shelving, and a 17’ original wood counter. There are upgrades planned to include a small office and bathroom with fresh paint and light fixtures. Four additional windows may be uncovered at the rear of the building as well. A rear egress with stairs down to the creek wall and back yard could also be considered. Basement access for shared storage space is available.

Please indicate in your proposal how much capital you would be able to contribute to these interior upgrades. We encourage viable proposals to earmark **\$5-\$10k** for interior upgrades. Tours of the space will be made available to those submitting proposals.

## **Expenses**

In the interest of supporting our local businesses, and to defray startup expenses, the VIS offers the following lease structure:

Rent, years 1-5 - \$350/mo increasing slowly to \$500/mo over the five-year term. We require a five year lease term. Tenants are responsible for utilities, including electric, heat (oil burning furnace), water, and insurance.

For budgeting purposes, you may use the following numbers to estimate operating expenses:

Electric: \$100-\$200/month, depending on usage and equipment

Heat: \$2000-\$3000/year

Water: \$200-\$400/year

Insurance: \$800-\$1,500/year for the required million dollar business insurance policy. This cost may be markedly higher for certain types of businesses (a daycare, for example).

## **Requirements**

- An EIN, aka Employer Identification Number, or a Taxpayer ID number
- An intention to conduct business face-to-face, with live human beings. (Ecommerce cannot be the primary sales channel for your business.)

- An intention to leave the historic character of the space intact, including the original shelving and drawers, counter, and windows front and back.
- A business plan covering the first five years in operation, and including:
  - An executive summary, including the mission statement, leadership, employees, operations, and location.
  - Products and services, outlining pricing, product lifespan, benefits to the customer, productions/manufacturing process, note any patents, proprietary technology, and R&D. Also note intended hours of operation and how many employees you expect to have.
  - Marketing strategy and analysis, including competition/peer organizations (include strengths and weaknesses), consumer demand, and expected ease of acquiring market shares. As for market strategy, this section will describe how the organization will acquire and keep its client base. This description should include an outline of the distribution channel, advertising plans, marketing campaign plans, and target media channels.
  - Financial planning, including financial projections, a financial plan including targets and estimates. For established businesses revising their business plan, statements, balance sheets, and other financial documents should be included.
  - Budget, including estimations of revenues and expenses related to the operation of the business for a set period of time.

### **Application Structure**

- Your application should contain:
  - A letter of intent (LOI) outlining your interest in Gilbertsville, the storefront space, serving the community and working with the Village Improvement Society
  - A business plan, as outlined above, and covering your operation's first five years in business

### **Timeline**

- Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis. They are due December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and can be submitted in PDF format to kpstrain1@gmail.com. Our selection will be notified no later than February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and the space will be made available at that time. The business will be expected to open to the community no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.