

## RRA Quarterly Report, April 2020

The following report will serve as the quarterly status update as stipulated in the Agreement for Services between the City of Rutland and the Rutland Redevelopment Authority. In accordance with the Agreement these status updates will be made to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen following the conclusion of each quarter of the year and will provide an update on the RRA's progress in regards to: A) Grant Administration, B) Grand List and Job Development, C) Housing Initiatives and Blighted Properties.

- A) Grant Administration – Please see the attached spreadsheet for details on completed, current, and future grant administration projects.
  
- B) Grand List and Job Development – The RRA is participating in several current projects which could lead to improvement to the Grand List and increased jobs within the City.
  - 1. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic the RRA has been working in collaboration with all other stakeholders to facilitate information and provide resources for the Rutland City small businesses being negatively affected by this unprecedented situation. RRA has developed a plan to re-deploy BIAP funding to an Emergency Loan Provision which may assist small businesses with emergency loans to help sustain them through the event.
  - 2. RRA continues efforts to promote Rutland City as a business destination and to market the BIAP program with a BIAP award made in March to Blush Salon to assist in business expansion at a new location.
  - 3. The RRA continues working in collaboration with RRCC, REDC, DRP and other regional stakeholders on managing the ongoing Regional Marketing initiative. RRA ED continues to serve on a steering committee providing guidance for the overall initiative. Currently the marketing initiative has been put on hold in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - 4. RRA members continue to serve on a committee assisting the RPC and Zoning Administrator on an update to the City's zoning bylaws. The revised by-laws initiative has remained in the draft stage for many months. A successful grant application to complete this initiative was submitted and awarded in December and a potential consultant has been selected.
  - 5. RRA continues working to facilitate the disposition and redevelopment of several underutilized industrial or commercial sites. Redevelopment of the site has been completed. Starbucks opened in late March before closing again due to COVID-19 and Chipotle Mexican Grill was announced as a second tenant but has not yet opened.
  - 6. RRA continues to work towards a productive re-use of the Berwick site and is currently trying to facilitate progress with DEW Construction Corp. on a downtown hotel development. The NMTC allocation process and the property acquisition has been delayed with expectations that a 2020 NMTC allocation round will be announced in the second quarter of 2020 which will determine if the required project funding is available through this program.
  - 7. RRA is working collaboratively with REDC, RRCC, DRP, and other regional and City ED stakeholders towards the planning and facilitation of several regionally focused economic

development initiatives supporting entrepreneurship, marketing, and recruitment. The RRA and City were “core-stakeholders” in an initiative to find funding for the Rutland Region via the Federal Bank of Boston’s Working Communities Challenge. In February it was announced that a planning grant application submitted by REDC and the RRPC was not awarded for this initiative.

8. RRA continues working to promote and support the federal economic development program Opportunity Zones created as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Three of Rutland’s four census tracts have been approved by the Treasury Department. State and local EDO’s are working on developing strategies for leveraging this new program. Currently a Rutland City Opportunity Zone prospectus has been created in collaboration with VT Innovation Commons and REDC with a focus on seeking investors for potential City projects.
9. Utilizing a Downtown Transportation Fund grant improvements to the West Street gateway at Main Street Park and the MVMTC have been completed.
10. RRA and DRP have been facilitating an updated Downtown Strategic Plan initiative which is currently underway. Vendor, Camoin Associates, has held two public stakeholder events and is currently working on data analysis. The updated study is expected to be completed in April or May, 2020.
11. RRA and City stakeholders have submitted a letter of intent to apply for a Northern Borders Regional Commission grant for acquisition fund which may allow the City to pursue purchase of the athletic facilities at CSJ campus for permanent use as a Community Center.
12. RRA and DRP have formed a joint steering committee to focus on downtown investment and redevelopment. Currently the committee will be overseeing the upcoming Downtown Strategic Plan process as its key focus.
13. With the announcement that the Diamond Run Mall would be closing in October RRA and DRP staff visited the mall to speak with merchants about assistance in re-location. To date several merchants have relocated to downtown locations.
14. With the loss of accreditation at College of St. Joseph RRA and other stakeholders are working with CSJ leadership to facilitate a future plan for the college and campus. The RRA has committed funding to help support a feasibility study conducted by CSJ and Vermont Innovation Commons. The feasibility study has been completed with a favorable conclusion and the current status of the CSJ property is being determined. In this past quarter a prospective senior housing developer has also expressed interest in a portion of the 118 acre campus and RRA has worked to facilitate that potential investment.
15. The annual maintenance of existing gateway bump-outs has been determined with RRA working to facilitate an agreement between the Rec and Parks Dept. and a local landscaping company to maintain these areas for the 2020 season.

C) Housing Initiatives and Blighted Properties – The following progress has been made towards the remediation of Rutland City’s vacant and blighted properties and focus on improving City housing.

1. RRA continues to work with the Rutland County Parent Child Center as they strive to overcome issues before beginning their planned implementation rehab work at 16 Chaplin Ave. Project is currently seeking funding through USDA Rural Development with a feasibility study being required before a loan will be offered.
2. Phase 3 of the Hickory Street Project is complete with an additional and stand-alone initiative to develop two single family homes on that site underway by Housing VT/Rutland Housing Authority. Phase 3 close-out is complete.
3. RRA continues working with RRPC on brownfield remediation initiatives with the RRA director serving on the brownfield steering committee.
4. RRA continues to facilitate the city owned property disposition process with ongoing review and recommendations and the RRA ED and Board President serving on the steering committee reviewing and recommending applications for the purchase of city owned properties.
5. RRA continues to oversee the City's Vacant/Blighted Residential Property Tax Stabilization program with one applicant being awarded tax stabilization for a property at 20 E. Center Street in February.
6. RRA is working with the RPC to update the 2015 Rutland City Master Plan. An updated version was compiled by RRA and approved by RPC in November with additional updates and edits being proposed by the RPC in January. RRA will continue facilitating the re-adoption process with expected completion by June 2020.