

RRA Quarterly Report, April 2021

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 response to the COVID-19 pandemic the RRA continues working in collaboration with all other stakeholders to facilitate information and provide resources for Rutland City small businesses being negatively affected by this crisis.
 - 2. The RRA continues working in collaboration with CEDRR, RRPC, 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 re-initiated, despite some concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, with LIFT Marketing developing new lead generation and follow-up procedures to more effectively connect with the existing leads that have been collected. Once current travel protocols are lifted additional outreach is planned for 2021.
 - 3. RRA staff and Board Chairman continue to serve on a Zoning By-law Advisory Committee assisting the RPC and Zoning Administrator to develop additional Bylaw language and process for a comprehensive rewrite expected to be completed by October 2021.
 - 4. RRA continues working to facilitate the disposition and redevelopment of several underutilized industrial or commercial sites.
 - 5. RRA continues to facilitate redevelopment at the Berwick Site (27 Wales Street). The City of Rutland has received approximately \$110,000 in delinquent taxes and fees as part of the recent Chapter 7 Bankruptcy sale. With new ownership in place renovations of that site are underway to house future tenants. The new owner has filed a BRELLA application with the State and RRA has been in contact in an effort to assist with future redevelopment planning.
 - 6. RRA continues working to promote and support the federal economic development program around Opportunity Zones. State and local EDO's had been working on developing strategies for leveraging the program, but, due to the COVID-19 crisis there has been little progress on a statewide marketing initiative.
 - 7. The Downtown Steering Committee group, consisting of RRA and DRP board members, is currently reviewing initiatives and recommendations around the Downtown Strategic Plan.
 - 8. With the transfer of ownership from the College of St. Joseph to HFCU the RRA and other stakeholders have worked to facilitate a future redevelopment plan for the campus. The

RRA has been working with other City stakeholders on an acquisition plan for the City to purchase the former Athletic Center and surrounding lands from current owner HFCU. In 2020 the City/RRA applied for, and was awarded, a \$350,000 grant from the Northern Borders Regional Commission to help fund acquisition of the CSJ Community Center and is currently administering that grant. RRA ED assisted with pre-purchase planning, including due-diligence work related to ACT 64 General Permit 3-9050 (three acre rule) and filing an accepted BRELLA application with the State. The City closed on the purchase of the Lot A CSJ property on March 30.

9. The RRA and other regional ED partners have been involved in ongoing discussions with a prospective senior housing developer, Heartland Development, who have been engaged for the past 16 months in the planning process for redevelopment of the remaining portion of the CSJ campus. Project is currently seeking funding and a timeline for implementation is still undetermined.
10. The RRA, in collaboration with DRP, RRPC and other City stakeholders is planning a 2021 enhanced Center Street modification project to again allow expanded outdoor seating for restaurants and bars and enhance pedestrian activity and commerce downtown. Changes to the street included limiting lane width and parking modifications, creating multiple “parklet” dining areas, and enhancing streetscape aesthetics with new plants, trees, and street painting. Funding through a new State grant program, Better Places, was sought and \$19,275 was awarded to help fund the City’s 2021 initiative. Planning for the implementation of the dining Parkletts, including an Invitation to Bid for construction, is being developed. Several City entities will be involved in the project and co-ordination with the Rec and Parks Dept. and DPW for a roll-out in late May is underway.
11. In an effort to pursue a permanent implementation plan for the Center Street enhancement the City/RRA was awarded a \$28,800 scoping study grant through VTrans in November, 2020. An RFP for vendor services was published and responses are currently being evaluated with a selection and kick-off planned for April 2021.
12. The RRA and DRP are working together on the Downtown Pedestrian Wayfinding Sign initiative. In the past quarter a vendor, Wood & Wood Sign Design was selected and planning and design work is underway. Signs are expected to be installed and project completed during Summer 2021.
13. City/RRA was successfully awarded CARES Act funding of \$25,000 for BROCC Community Action food refrigeration capacity expansion and continues to help facilitate that project and administer the grant.
14. RRA reviewed and recommended two BIAP grant awards. One, to Healthy Design, Ltd. Co., to assist with fit-up of a new manufacturing facility at 27 Wales Street. The second, to McNeil and Reedy, to assist with renovations of their store at 81 Merchants Row. The BOA approved both grants at their February meetings.
15. BIAP ELP loan re-payment planning was initiated with a recommendation from the RRA and City Treasurer to allow more flexible options for repayment.

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. The Rutland County Parent Child Center has finally been approved for a USDA Rural Development loan and is set to begin rehab work at 16 Chaplin Ave. This project, which was awarded VCDP funding of \$300,000 in 2016, has now met the matching fund requirements for the grant to be awarded and this is imminent.
2. RRA continues working with RRPC on brownfield remediation initiatives with the RRA director serving on the brownfield steering committee.
3. RRA continues to help facilitate the city owned property disposition process with ongoing review and recommendations and the RRA ED and Board Chairman serving on the steering committee. During the last quarter properties at 77 S. Main Street, 119 Park Ave, and 30 Lincoln Ave, were marketed on the RRA web site, and bids for each reviewed with future owners recommended to the BOF.
4. RRA continues to oversee the City’s Vacant/Blighted Residential Property Tax Stabilization program. There were no applicants in the past quarter.
5. City/RRA were awarded \$498,000 grant from VCDP to pass through to the Housing Trust of Rutland County for their acquisition and redevelopment of Lincoln Place (IHM Property). Grant is currently in the process of being awarded.
6. RRA ED has been involved in a regional Ad-hoc housing committee discussing strategies for improving housing stock. Discussion about improving market rate rental housing in the region has been a primary topic.