

RRA Quarterly Report, October 2019

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. RRA continues efforts to promote Rutland City as a business destination and to market the BIAP program with a BIAP award made to Downtown Gentlemens Salon and Rekaroo's Childcare:Rekaroo's Mini's in September.
 - 2. 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 new vendor, LIFT, has established new strategies and material and a tag line "The life you were meant for" Fundraising to sustain the marketing initiative remains a concern.
 - 3. 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 with the RRA and Zoning Administrator submitting a second VCDP planning grant application seeking additional funds to complete this process.
 - 4. RRA continues working to facilitate the disposition and redevelopment of several underutilized industrial or commercial sites. The former Hearthside Restaurant at 37 N. Main Street has been demolished and redevelopment of that site is well underway. Starbucks has signed a lease as the anchor tenant for this location and Chipotle Mexican Grill was announced as a second tenant at this site in September.
 - 5. 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 due to missed timing. Currently DEW is working to re-establish site control and will need to wait until the 2020 NMTC allocation round to determine if project funding is available through this program.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. RRA is working to promote and support a newly enacted federal economic development program called 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. During the past quarter a draft Rutland City Opportunity Zone prospectus was created in collaboration with VT Innovation Commons and REDC a component of which was a prospective project related to the CSJ campus.

8. The City has been awarded a Downtown Transportation Fund grant to help fund improvements to the West Street gateway into downtown. Contractor Parker Excavation has been hired for the construction which was substantially completed in September.
9. RRA has been facilitating a Downtown Strategic Plan initiative in collaboration with the DRP. A contractor has been selected by the Downtown Steering Committee and a contract has been completed for review. Initial work is expected to begin in October and be completed by April, 2020.
10. RRA and other stakeholders continue to pursue an initiative focused on enhancing multi-use trail connections between Killington and downtown Rutland. A request to the Northern Borders Regional Commission program for grant funding was unsuccessful and plans for another application for funding of this initiative are underway.
11. 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.
12. 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. At least one merchant has confirmed moving to a new downtown location with several other location decisions outstanding.
13. 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 study results are expected to be released by the end of September.

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. NW Neighborhood revitalization progress continues. Final presentation has occurred and grant closeout is underway.
2. RRA continues to work with the Rutland County Parent Child Center as they strive to overcome environmental contamination issues determined on site before beginning their planned implementation rehab work at 16 Chaplin Ave. Currently awaiting notification from RCPCS on their ability to provide the required matching funds for the VCDP implementation grant so that the grant agreement can be executed. RCPC is working with USDA Rural Development on a loan that would provide them funding to proceed. A loan decision which was expected in August has been delayed. Property has transferred from REDC back to RCPC in September following successful environmental remediation at the property.

3. 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 imminent.
4. RRA continues working with RRPC on brownfield remediation initiatives with the RRA director serving on the brownfield steering committee.
5. 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.
6. RRA has re-engaged I Squared Community Development Consulting to conduct an updated Housing Needs Assessment for the City. The updated study was completed and presented to stakeholders in August.