

RRA Quarterly Report, October 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. 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. The overall marketing initiative has now been re-initiated with LIFT Marketing developing new lead generation and the Real Rutland Concierge program providing follow-up facilitation and support. The obstacle of finding potential transplants quality rental housing within the City/region has been a key concern over the last quarter.
 - 2. RRA staff and Board Chairman have continued 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. The past quarter included meetings led by the City's hired consultant working towards a working draft of revised by-laws. The consultant's contract expired 9/30/21 and the RPC and ZBAG group will continue discussion going forward. No defined timeline is in place for adoption at this time.
 - 3. RRA continues working to facilitate the disposition and redevelopment of several underutilized industrial or commercial sites.
 - 4. RRA has continued to administer the Northern Borders Regional Commission grant award for the Recreation Center acquisition at the former CSJ campus.
 - 5. The RRA and other regional ED partners have continued ongoing facilitation with Heartland Development, who have been engaged for the past two years in the planning process for redevelopment of the remaining portion of the CSJ campus. This past quarter saw an interest from Heartland in applying for CDBG funding to assist with their financing and several meetings with VCDP were held to determine eligibility of the project.
 - 6. The RRA and other regional ED partners have been involved in ongoing discussions with the VFFC leadership on ways to redevelop and enhance their current campus. This past quarter VFFC requested planning funding from RRA and the City for a potential planning study of their campus and abutting properties.

7. The past quarter saw successful use of the 2021 Center Street initiative with several restaurants taking advantage of the deployed “parklet” decks for outdoor seating. Plans for the decommissioning and storage of the 2021 materials is underway.
8. 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 and has hired Dubois & King as the consulting engineer. This study is now well underway with several community stakeholder meeting and public surveys being completed leading next to conceptual design work and traffic study. It is anticipated that conceptual designs will be completed and released for discussion by end of the December.
9. The RRA and DRP are working together on the Downtown Pedestrian Wayfinding Sign initiative. In the past quarter the vendor, Wood & Wood Sign Design, has been working with RRA and DRP staff on planning and finalizing design work. The project has now received the required approval from the VT Dept of Historical Preservation and VT Transportation Council and materials have been ordered. Due to the delay in approval the signs are now expected to be installed and project completed during Spring of 2022
10. In the past quarter RRA reviewed and recommended, and BOA approved, a BIAP grant to Diamonds and More at 7 Center Street and a BIAP forgivable loan to Early Horizons Learning Center at 92 Allen Street.
11. As part of the ARPA funding provided to the City the RRA has proposed a “Business Plan Competition” for City residents or businesses affected by the COVID pandemic who are looking to start or expand new businesses in the City. Future implementation of this initiative will be based on ARPA funding decisions.

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 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. There were no new properties considered in the past quarter.
2. RRA continues to oversee the City’s Vacant/Blighted Residential Property Tax Stabilization program. There were no applicants in the past quarter.
3. City/RRA was 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 funding is being requisitioned and construction is underway at the site.
4. RRA assisted in facilitating a request for a past loan/grant to be forgiven to the HTRC Tuttle Block project. Existing loan of \$600,000 has been forgiven by the City and VCDP so that a next phase of required funding/investment for rehabilitation at that site can occur.
5. Discussion about improving market rate rental housing inventory in the City/region has been a hot topic with this subject coming to the BOA C&ED Committee for discussion this past quarter. A “pilot” housing initiative is currently being planned for the City and sources of funding for a sustainable market rate housing initiative are being explored.

6. RRA continues working with other interested stakeholders to facilitate discussion with Brixmor Property Group around possible improvement to the Rutland Plaza site. In the past quarter several discussions with Brixmor leadership have occurred and a plan to improve the City owned property around the Amtrak station is being considered. Ideas to improve both vitality and traffic/pedestrian flow within the northern section of the Plaza have seen progress and a VTrans grant is being considered which could allow City investment to occur.
7. RRA involved in discussion of a proposed solar generating plant/electric car charging station located at 34 N. Main Street (Beverage Mart Property) by Same Sun Solar.
8. RRA continues to facilitate City discussion about creating a future TIF District for the City. Progress in the past quarter includes the issuance of an RFP for a consultant to assist the City in this endeavor. A hiring decision is expected in October.