

# Rutland Redevelopment Authority: Strategic Plan 2024-2029



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Community Roots

RRA STRATEGIC PLAN – 2024-2029

## Introduction

The Rutland Redevelopment Authority (RRA) is at a crossroads, seeking to understand how best to evolve to better meet the future needs of the City of Rutland.

Formed by Charter in 1989, the Rutland Redevelopment Authority (RRA) has historically served as Rutland City's economic development entity. Under the Charter, the RRA was established to reduce the property tax burden on residential homeowners, redevelop dilapidated and blighted structures, revitalize the commercial and industrial sectors of the economy, and promote economic opportunity for all citizens. More specifically, the Charter lays out the following purposes for the RRA to foster and carry out:

1. To enhance and promote economic opportunity within the City of Rutland.
2. To plan for public and private improvements and development within the City of Rutland, dedicated to the promotions of industrial and commercial benefit.
3. To create employment opportunities.
4. To enhance the acquisition, development and improvement of taxable real and personal property within the City of Rutland.
5. To promote the development, improvement, acquisition and rehabilitation of industrial and commercial property within the City of Rutland.
6. To foster commercial and industrial growth within the City of Rutland.
7. To promote and support investments and improvements which will result in the elimination of slum and blight.
8. To support and promote the development of those recreational, social and public facilities which directly, or indirectly, create or enhance commercial or industrial activity within the city.

RRA's powers, as enumerated in the Charter, include:

- To adopt, administer and enforce ordinances relating to the power of eminent domain with the approval of the board of aldermen.
- To enter into agreements, contracts, ventures and associations of every kind, style and nature with public and private persons and entities and governmental agencies in order to effect and achieve the purposes set forth in this charter.
- To assess, in the name of the City of Rutland, impact fees and special benefit assessments within those parts of the City of Rutland designated by the board of aldermen.

- To create tax increment financing districts, and to issue instruments of tax increment financing debt upon the concurrence of the board of aldermen, for any purpose permitted by the general law of the State of Vermont.
- To undertake and be responsible for the development of municipal plans and economic benefit goals within those parts of the City of Rutland designated by its board of aldermen.
- To apply and accept on behalf of the City of Rutland, state, federal and private economic development grants-in-aid, and to manage, administer and disburse the same.
- To establish development standards consistent with .... Eradicating blighted conditions or threats to public health, safety and welfare; Conforming with capital plans and capital budgets; Benefiting low and moderate income residents; Providing permanent employment opportunities; etc.
- To adopt and enforce regulations and ordinances under the general laws of the State of Vermont, in the furtherance of the purposes and powers of the authority.
- To adopt rules of procedures, and to engage such staff, consultants, attorneys, and contractors as deemed necessary.
- To provide technical and advisory services, as requested by the board of aldermen.
- To issue, with the concurrence of the board of aldermen, instruments of debt.

The primary responsibilities of the RRA are to:

1. Administer grants
2. Grow the grand list
3. Job development
4. Focus on residential development, marketing and promotion of the business district
5. Implement blighted property strategies
6. Coordinate housing strategies and city planning.

Currently RRA administers the following programs:

1. **Business Incentive and Assistance Program (BIAP).** This program includes: a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) with secured loans of up to \$50,000, unsecured loans of up to \$10,000 which may be forgiven if predetermined investment commitments are met by the end of the loan term, and \$5,000 grants to supplement equipment and machinery purchases or real property improvements. In an effort to encourage growth by limiting a new or expanding business' up-front expenses, the BIAP also offers several inventive assistance opportunities. These include funding to

cover or offset initial costs of infrastructure upgrades or improvements required by a particular project. Examples of these types of improvements could be site accessibility, water/wastewater connections, and accessing telecommunication services. A qualifying business may also utilize BIAP funds to offset their workforce training costs for approved employee training programs. Rutland City is also able to offer free or discounted workspace for a start-up business in one of its privately established downtown incubator spaces or to provide short-term assistance of up to 50% of rental costs for appropriate commercial space within the City. The BIAP program can even offer relocation cost reimbursement for a business expanding or relocating into the City.

2. **Community Development Programs:** The City has established a policy through the Maples Revolving Loan Fund to provide funding, in the form of a loan, for community development activities benefiting the City of Rutland.
3. **Tax Stabilization:** Working with the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen, the RRA has crafted two new tax stabilization policies, one for industrial and commercial property and one for vacant/blighted industrial and commercial property. The highlights of the policy require that a business be looking at making a tangible new financial investment in real property and/or machinery and equipment which will create new jobs within the City. An interested business would complete an application in which the scope of the project, level of financial investment, and projected job creation numbers and associated payroll are defined. If, based on their application, the business is deemed qualifying for stabilization, the RRA will make a recommendation to the Board of Aldermen in regards to the level of stabilization and its length of time. The Board of Aldermen will have ultimate discretion as to the structure of the Tax Stabilization Agreement (TSA) that is entered into with the qualifying business.
4. **Water and wastewater rate reduction incentives.** A policy allows a qualifying business to reduce their initial costs of entering into the Rutland City system as well as lowering their water and wastewater usage rate for a predetermined period of time. It is believed that this policy can be employed to incentivize new use, job creation, and investment without incurring significant new costs to the City. The business incentive will be available to non-residential users located within the City of Rutland who are making tangible financial investment in a facility, creating new jobs within the City, and whose business operations will require utilizing a minimum of 1,000 Gallons per Day (GPD) in new or expanded water usage. It will also be available to businesses located outside the City of Rutland who are utilizing water and/or wastewater services through the City's infrastructure. In the case of a business located outside the City, eligibility will be limited to non-residential users working in industrial activity or in commercial activity determined to produce long-term economic benefit and new good paying jobs in the region.

## Methodology

Community Roots assisted the Rutland Redevelopment Authority (RRA) with a strategic planning process, including the following steps:

1. A review of previous RRA plans and documents.
2. A review of other regional economic development plans and documents.
3. Numerous key informants were interviewed about their experiences with the RRA.
4. Community Roots facilitated a number of meetings with the RRA Board of Commissioners, including
  - a. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis.
  - b. Reviews of various findings along the way.
5. Drafting goals for RRA for the next five years.
6. Working with the Board to determine how best to operationalize the RRA goals.
7. Developing metrics for RRA's new goals.

RRA's Board of Commissioners has been involved all along the way, as has RRA's Director of Grants and Outreach Barbara Spaulding. RRA's new Executive Director Ed Bove was hired in the summer of 2023 and engaged in the final draft of the strategic plan.

## **SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)**

The process began with a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis in the spring of 2023, discussing where RRA was at that point in time. Community Roots introduced the wealth creation approach which is focused on eight forms of community capital, as it relates to each piece of the SWOT, and then facilitated the SWOT discussion. A SWOT analysis is a tool that can help analyze what the organization does best now and to devise a successful strategy for the future. It can also uncover areas of the organization that are holding it back. A SWOT examines both internal and external factors - what's going on inside and outside the organization.

## Strengths

**Excellent grantwriter and administrator with a ton of institutional knowledge and great customer service/engagement skills, commitment, grant facilitation, experience**

Taxing authority structure

City/RRA communication

DRP

Relationships with small businesses

City contract gives RRA stable funding set-up – not dependent on massive grants.

Grant success

Independent board

Separate municipality

Collaboration with partner organizations

Strong relationships

Positive opinions

## Weaknesses

### Staffing challenges

City contract too broad and ambiguous. Tasked with too much by contract.

Lack of public/private knowledge of RRA in general.

Marketing – what we do.

Board - Independence/Board enthusiasm/difficult to retain members

Partners. Leadership role in partnerships. RRA has not been seen as a partner in the recent past.

Not being more “visible” in community

Need to be more nimble

Relationship with developers/movers and shakers

How to tell story

Single (primary) income source (city contract). Much smaller secondary sources.

More work needs to be done on:

Marketing and awareness.

Process of applying – clarity

Updating eligibility criteria

Needs to be more accessible.

Perceptions - loss of operational turf, need to overcome. Past damage to relationships/overcoming perceptions

Website

Organization overlapping on the type of work we should be doing.

## Opportunities

ED and future trajectory under next ED  
Opportunity to refine city contract  
Paramount/WKM/HUB – downtown development TIF  
Re-invent – new brand, new build, new image.  
Hybrid approach – additional funding sources for mission, vision, values  
Work more closely with DRP Board  
Use existing tools.  
Housing needs – demand for growth all levels  
Housing lead workshops re: Funding available.  
Transformative moment. Starting with fresh slate.  
Current inflection point/opportunity to restructure or rebrand  
Partnering to create new economic development programs  
Ability to hire staff (whatever the job title) to aid in new vision/structure  
Grant, tax incentive tools, etc. that already exist.  
There is demand for business incentives and guidance on how to navigate what's out there.  
More vocal and visible emphasis on RRA's activities and achievement.  
Not a lot of predevelopment process money. Hard to come by. RRA could become a predevelopment source. Grants for predevelopment. Could be predevelopment agency for the area.  
Taxing ability.

## Threats

City contract deadline – 6 months – time crunch  
Lack of marketing  
Marketing – what does the RRA do? Is there overlap within the city?  
Loss of operational turf to others. How to regain it?  
Unsung accomplishments  
Other orgs operating in same areas/spaces  
Desire to dissolve  
Irrelevancy without leadership  
Board of Aldermen  
Not having an ED  
Outdated employee handbook  
Negative opinions  
Need for business owners to be represented  
Charter  
Residency requirement



## Key Themes

After reviewing and discussing with the Board of Commissioners the SWOT analysis, Community Roots identified the following key themes, which were the grist for the RRA Draft Goals.

- **Additional staff are needed.** When RRA lacked an Executive Director, the organization placed a great deal of pressure on the Grant Administrator (now the Director of Grants and Outreach ) to keep the organization moving. This was unsustainable, preventing RRA from operating to its full capacity and fulfilling its vision and goals. Now RRA has a new Executive Director, who will be more of a connector and partner to city agencies and departments, as well as to organizations within and outside of the City of Rutland. Despite this, there is still a need for a staff person to assist with grant writing and administrative duties.
- **New city contract with a more focused workplan.** The city contract has been too broad, focusing RRA's efforts in too many directions. RRA and the Mayor recognize this and are interested in focusing the contract and the resulting workplan in ways that build on RRA's strengths. There has been a decision to develop an annual workplan, which will allow for regular review and revision.
- **Reinvention to be more accessible and understood.** There is a need for more and better marketing and awareness, more clarity around the process for applying, etc. From interviews with key informants, it was clear that many people and businesses do not understand what RRA's purpose is and how to engage with RRA. The new Executive Director should make it his priority to elucidate RRA's vision, goals, services and how to access them to those within and outside of the City of Rutland.
- **Partnerships need to be developed to have greater impact** on economic development, and to collaborate more effectively on RRA focus areas and on those areas that will be taken out of the contract with the city. RRA is part of a larger economic development ecosystem. As part of that ecosystem, RRA will want to be partnering with the other parts of that system to work more collaboratively toward economic development for the City of Rutland and beyond.

## Redevelopment Authorities

Redevelopment authorities have been in existence for decades in different places. In general, based on a review of others around the country, they seem to have been created to operate “in situations where the private sector and/or local governments cannot effectively perform.”<sup>1</sup> They are and have been instrumental in the rehabilitation and reuse of vacant or underutilized industrial, commercial and residential properties. Redevelopment authorities, as quasi-public agencies with the power of eminent domain, are typically designed to assist municipal, nonprofit and private entities in the fields of redevelopment and economic development. Most have significant experience in applying for and obtaining federal, state and local grants, low-interest financing and tax credits - which can then provide the financial resources necessary to carry out community and economic development projects. These authorities can be an integral component in assisting municipal, nonprofit and private entities to revitalize former industrial and commercial sites, improve housing conditions, upgrade deteriorated areas and assist in environmental remediation of contaminated properties.

Some redevelopment authorities are more recent. The Holyoke Redevelopment Authority in Holyoke, Massachusetts, created in 2008, has prepared an urban renewal plan titled “Connect. Construct. Create. – A plan to revitalize Center City Holyoke.” The action steps laid out in the plan will maximize opportunities for private development within the Center City over the next several years. Its primary purpose is to promote economic development and growth in Holyoke by capitalizing on the City’s unique characteristics, ‘connecting’ people and places; ‘constructing’ public infrastructure and a diverse stock of commercial, residential and industrial buildings; and ‘creating’ a more vibrant and prosperous Center City.<sup>2</sup>

The Brockton Redevelopment Authority (BRA),<sup>3</sup> also in Massachusetts, is a quasi-public agency contracted by the City of Brockton, whose main mission is community development and economic revitalization, specifically for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households and areas of Brockton. The BRA works with the Mayor, the Planning Department, and other city departments to develop and achieve a strategic development vision. The BRA also works in partnership with other organizations like the Metro South Chamber of Commerce,

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<sup>1</sup> History of the Redevelopment Authority. Bucks County, Pennsylvania. <https://www.bcrda.com/history-of-the-bucks-county-redevelopment-authority/>

<sup>2</sup> Holyoke Redevelopment Authority. <https://www.holyoke.org/departments/holyoke-redevelopment/>

<sup>3</sup> Brockton Redevelopment Authority. <https://brocktonredevelopmentauthority.com/about-us/>

NeighborWorks Housing Solutions, Brockton Housing Authority, public services, private businesses, and developers to further the strategic development vision. As part of the BRA's contract with the City of Brockton, it manages the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The principal purpose of the funding is to improve the lives of low- and moderate-income Brockton residents through economic development, affordable housing, and social programs.

BRA's objectives include:

- **Downtown revitalization:** The BRA is working with the City, private developers, and businesses to revive the heart of downtown Brockton. The BRA in conjunction with City and other partners have created a Development Strategy for the downtown area.
  - Downtown Action Strategy
  - Downtown Brockton Urban Revitalization Plan (URP)
  - Map Amendments to Urban Revitalization Plan
  - Soliciting Public Comments on the URP Amendment
  - 2016 URP Amendment Public Meeting Minutes
- **Community Development:** Assist in the reduction of crime; enhance the quality of life through the provision of better public facilities including parks and playgrounds; stabilize neighborhoods through the reconstruction/improvement of streets and sidewalks, through code enforcement, and infrastructure improvements aimed at supporting economic development. Many programs help to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for low and moderate-income people by expanding economic opportunities and through support for vital social/public service providers and facilities that help create and/or retain jobs.
- **Housing:** Maintain, support and preserve the existing housing stock; prevent housing deterioration and vacancies; and prevent neighborhood deterioration due to foreclosures and vacancies. Its programs increase the overall availability of affordable permanent housing through the creation of new units and the return to habitable status of vacant and deteriorated units. The BRA's housing programs strive to preserve the quality of life in existing neighborhoods while accommodating smart growth, and support a well-conceived balance between housing development, transportation, open space and recreational facilities, and appropriate commercial development opportunities.

- **Planning and Development Projects:** In addition to being the Director of Community Development, the BRA's Director also works with the Mayor's office, Planning Department, Planning Board, Building Department, Department of Public Works, and other city departments as necessary to coordinate planning and development projects in the city.
- **Sustainability & Energy:** Explore grant opportunities, like the Massachusetts Green Communities designation, that will help the city reduce its operating costs, energy use, and impact on the planet.

Overall, it seems relatively clear that Redevelopment Authorities have been instrumental in the rehabilitation and reuse of vacant or underutilized industrial, commercial and residential properties. Redevelopment Authorities can operate in situations where the private sector and/or local governments cannot effectively perform. However, the Authority is designed to assist municipal, nonprofit and private entities in the fields of redevelopment and economic development. With experience in applying for and obtaining grants and other financial resources, Redevelopment Authorities can provide the financial resources necessary to carry out community and economic development projects. Redevelopment Authorities can plan, administer and implement redevelopment and community improvement projects and provide assistance in identifying and obtaining funding for industrial, commercial or residential improvement or expansion projects. In Rutland, the RRA has been a tool for supporting and leading economic development efforts for a city, while having powers of eminent domain, taxing authority and the ability to apply for grants.

## On the Right Track - the Beginnings of the Rutland Redevelopment Authority

Excerpts from the 1989 “On the Right Track” report show that the Rutland Redevelopment Authority (new at that time) had potential strengths in areas calling for public action at that time. Those same areas require attention in this time period.

- Being the creative public partner that through its actions can stimulate and finance many of the improvements called for in this strategy.
- The Redevelopment Authority is seen as savvy, creative, public-spirited and action oriented, making prudent and sound investments of its resources, but with a mind for producing leverage well beyond the immediate application or project.
- Again, at every opportunity the concern should be for linkages to the overall goals and strategy rather than to the individual free-standing project.
- Under its legal authorization RRA enjoys broad legal and financial powers. It can and should be more active than serving merely as a passive bank.
- Rather, RRA should actively shape implementation of the downtown program. Windows of opportunity only occur once in a generation and Rutland can't afford to lose the momentum that is being generated downtown.

Staffing of RRA was also mentioned in this report. “The Redevelopment Authority needs an experienced executive director, preferably someone who has served in a similar position or at a similar point in a city's downtown revitalization process. Strengths should include real estate finance and packaging, community development, communication skills, mature judgment and an orientation towards action.” An “orientation toward action” is what has been missing in the management of the RRA.

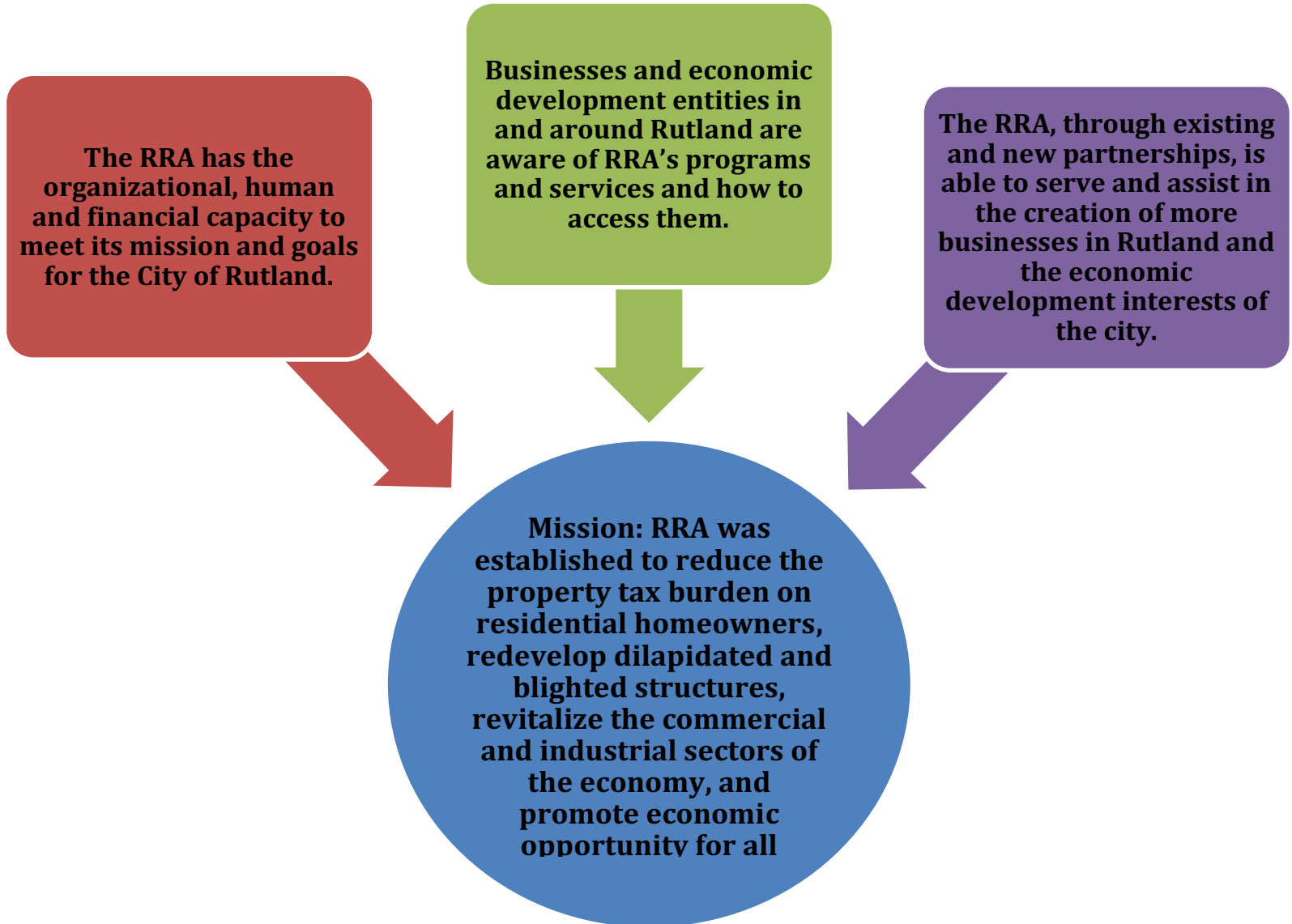
Focus areas for the RRA were also mentioned:

1. **Actively negotiate with developers of major downtown parcels and provide assistance when appropriate.**
2. **Establish a tax increment financing program** as soon as possible. This proven method of financing needed downtown improvements is ideal to Rutland's situation. TIF enables a city or public authority to use some of the increases in tax revenue, projected to be generated by significant redevelopment in a defined area, to issue bonds with which to finance necessary improvements in that same area. These can include infrastructure, parking facilities and other public improvements.

3. **Create a tax assessment district as a means of involving private landowners and merchants in the financial support of downtown.** Funds collected would be controlled by the RRA but made available on a contracted basis for the long-term organizational support of Rutland Partnership, Inc.
4. **Provide initial financial support to RPI.** This will enable that organization to quickly become the needed partner in the downtown arena by providing the important organizational, management and marketing services downtown needs.
5. **Support an important flagship project.** Such a project should have broad popular appeal, serve to galvanize momentum, and create opportunities for spinoff developments or enterprises. Implementation could occur in partnership with other entities (including additional funding from a new regional agency, matched by contributions from individuals, corporations and civic participants).

Many of these have been accomplished, but there is more to do.

## RRA Goals



## **Goal 1: The RRA has the organizational, human and financial capacity to meet its mission and goals for the City of Rutland.**

Given the recent history of the RRA, it is time to rebuild. The new Executive Director is key to this rebuilding; the new Executive Director will be a connector, collaborative and outgoing - someone who will be making connections with other economic development players in the City of Rutland and outside, businesses, nonprofits and developers, while also maintaining relationships with relevant state agencies. Despite the new Executive Director, there is still a need for a staff person to assist with grant writing and administrative duties. As for other personnel, this will depend on the city contract and what it holds.

For all personnel, staffing compensation needs to be studied to determine if employees are being paid in a manner commensurate with the roles they're playing in the organization.

The Board of Commissioners is another piece of the organizational and human capacity of RRA. There is a need for succession planning of board members, as some board members have been with RRA for a long time. At the same time, it will be important to develop board role descriptions, so that potential board members understand the responsibilities of the positions they're seeking. It will be important to cultivate relationships in an effort to identify potential replacements. In addition, it's critical to consider the types of skills that would benefit RRA and to find candidates with those skills. For example, the Board would benefit from members who have experience in real estate, banking, housing, property development, economic development, etc. Part of the succession and recruitment phase is building board capacity, by helping new members join the Board and understand what's happening, what their roles are, and how to best support the RRA in its future plans.

There is interest in casting a wider net for candidates for the Board, by modifying the charter to allow RRA to recruit board members who may not necessarily live in the City, but either own property or a business in the City, as they too have a role to play in redeveloping the City. This would increase the number of people who would be eligible to serve on the RRA Board. There was discussion of having two of the Board's nine members be eligible to not be residents but have property or a business in the City. This would mirror the Board of the Downtown Rutland Partnership.

At this point in time, there is no regular committee structure or standing meetings. As RRA works through its strategic plan and considers a new city contract, there may be new ideas for relevant board committees.



Financial capacity is another piece of this goal. The contract with the City dictates RRA's financial capacity. The new contract may include more work, with more money to accommodate that work. However, RRA can charge a higher percentage on grant administration and/or grow its grant servicing revenues. For example, CEDRR and other similar organizations would likely pay a percentage of their grants for administration. This additional grant administration load would lead RRA staff away from their own workplans though. More discussion is needed.

### **Metrics:**

1. New Executive Director is fully integrated into the organization.
2. Staff compensation study and next steps.
3. Board succession planning, including job descriptions, inventory of new skills the Board is seeking, and need for committees.
4. Board modification to allow for up to two Board members who live outside the City but own a business or property in the City is drafted and passed.
5. Study ways of building financial capacity.

## **Goal 2: Businesses and economic development entities in and around Rutland are aware of RRA’s programs and services and how to access them.**

Part of this plan is about building increased community awareness of RRA and its programs and services and how to access them. It’s important for existing businesses, but also those starting up businesses in the City, to understand the resources at their disposal. Ways of accomplishing this include:

1. Improving the website, with easy access to the resources most useful to businesses.
2. Short presentations either online or through local access channels that talk about the RRA, its programs/services, and how to access them. These could include the Mayor talking about particular programs or businesses talking about programs/services they’ve actually accessed and what the impact has been on their businesses.
3. The new Executive Director is key to this goal. The new Executive Director, as discussed previously, should be the type of leader who is connecting regularly with businesses, getting out into the community, and networking on behalf of the RRA. This person should be outspoken but collaborative, approachable and articulate.
4. Board members are also conduits for this type of information and should be promoting the work of the RRA to all businesses with whom they are in contact.
5. Economic development entities are key partners in outreach and education. These include:
  - a. Downtown Rutland Partnership
  - b. Rutland Departments of Planning, Public Works, Recreation
  - c. Rutland Planning Commission
  - d. Development Review Board
  - e. CEDRR.
  - f. Rutland Regional Planning Commission
  - g. Rutland Housing Authority
  - h. Housing Trust of Rutland County
  - i. Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
  - j. State Treasurer.

## **Metrics:**

1. New website is developed. # of visitors increases.
2. # businesses taking advantage of RRA programs/services.
3. Presentations are developed and shared. # of views of presentations.
4. % of Executive Director hours that are spent in conversation with businesses/economic development partner organizations.

**Goal 3: The RRA, through existing and new partnerships, is able to serve and assist in the creation of more businesses in Rutland and the economic development interests of the city.**

This goal is more about building partnerships to be able to do more to serve businesses in Rutland. This involves making connections with community organizations and government organizations. The new Executive Director is key to making that happen. RRA can be a convener of disparate parties to create change. These disparate parties might include hotel developers and other property developers in areas where RRA wants to have an impact. Part of this is being aware of what is happening in and around the City of Rutland and not being hyper-focused on just what is within the City boundaries, but being willing to pivot to support economic development that will benefit the City of Rutland, regardless of its origins.

**Metrics:**

1. # of businesses created, expanded or retained.
2. # of high impact/high profile projects (Development of physical space, increase in jobs, impact urban culture of Rutland).
3. Increased grand list.

## The New RRA

RRA has work to do to “dig itself out of a hole created over the long term.” It will take time and intention to counteract the current culture and feelings around the RRA. One way is to be focused on goals and outcomes. RRA will want to engage in work based on their capacity to do the work. In the past, there was a sense that RRA felt like they needed to “own” projects, despite their lack of capacity.

The New RRA has some clear next steps:

1. **Building Capacity.** RRA has needed additional capacity to fulfill its mission and goals. Now that RRA has a new Executive Director, who will be a connector and collaborator, there is still a need for a staff person to assist with grant writing and administrative duties. Additional roles for this new staff person and any others deemed necessary will depend on what the New RRA’s key goals and responsibilities are. There may also be a consideration of program managers for different work areas. If RRA only has two staff people (as it does now), RRA will need to partner more with others to help make things happen. “RRA should be the collaborator to bring everyone together to get things done.”
2. **Rebranding, Education and Outreach.** Some suggested a rebranding, with a new start, new purpose, new website, and a clear statement of “this is what we’re focusing on.” RRA can also modernize its processes/services. All its application forms should be able to be filled out online. And the website should be optimized to be easy to find and navigate. Businesses are currently coming to CEDRR looking for funding or support economically, who then send them to RRA for the buyout program or tax stabilization. It’s clear that once it has new staff, RRA needs to better market what it does to the community. “Not everyone recognizes the RRA exists, and what the process is to engage with them and what services they provide.”
3. **Defining the annual workplan,** with defined contracts and measurable outcomes, will be key to RRA’s success. This will allow RRA’s progress to be tracked over time. Defining the annual workplan is a useful method to maintain focus, but also to represent the outcomes of its work. “This is what we set out to do, this is what we did.” The annual workplan can evolve based on outcomes and successes.
4. **Being a connector and building partnerships.** Many felt that RRA needed to be a connector, charged with coordinating meetings with people from different sectors to bring them together under one vision, project or focus. CEDRR is seen as being this connector

at the county level. There is a vacuum at the city level in this role that RRA could fill. In the housing space, RRA could lead the variety of players in the housing area, bringing experts to the table and helping the larger group work toward a common goal; this would involve facilitating the group to do the work. Some felt that businesses should be engaged in RRA work also; “it’s not just quasi-public organizations and the city. It has to involve the community.” Customer service should be job one. “Businesses don’t know what they don’t know and need someone to listen to them and help them get to yes. Not every business idea is a good one.” RRA can serve businesses in Rutland by sending them to agencies designed to help them, such as the Small Business Development Center or elsewhere.

RRA is about creating an atmosphere in the City of Rutland in which businesses can survive and thrive. “Economic development sets the table... so someone comes in and wants to be there.” The underlying goal of RRA is to make underperforming assets perform and removing barriers to development. RRA can be the facilitator of economic development in Rutland City, connecting people and businesses to the information they need to be successful.