



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

January 8, 2020

Members Present

Ms. Donna Alqassar
Dr. Marisa Angell Brown
Dr. Timothy Ives
Ms. Tanya Kelley
Mr. J. Paul Loether
Ms. Elizabeth Rochefort
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Lucie Searle
Ms. Sarah Zurier

Members Absent

RIHPHC Staff Present

Ms. Virginia Hesse
Ms. Katherine Pomplun

1. Call to Order.

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 am by RIHPHC Executive Director J. Paul Loether.

2. Approval of Minutes of November 13, 2019 Committee meeting.

Upon a motion by Ms. Tanya Kelley seconded by Dr. Timothy Ives, the minutes of the meeting were approved.

3. Review and discussion/analysis (SWOT)

Ms. Katherine Pomplun (Grants Coordinator) and Ms. Virginia Hesse (Historical Architect) of the RIHPHC staff were present to provide information about their respective program areas to the committee. Before discussion began, Mr. Loether explained the SWOT (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats) framework and summarized the committee's previous discussions on RIHPHC program areas.

Ms. Hesse then spoke on the state and federal historic tax credit programs and their impacts. Ms. Hesse stated that successful historic rehabilitation projects using state and/or federal historic tax credits include: 88 industrial buildings (primarily historic mills) with a total project investment of approximately \$1.5 billion dollars; 50 commercial blocks in downtowns; and 12 vacant school buildings. Ms. Hesse emphasized the program's importance to revitalizing communities across the state. However, incoming projects are beginning to slow down because the state program has been gradually phased out. Ms. Hesse also remarked on a nationwide trend of developers struggling with the National Park Service's long wait times for review, which has led to some foregoing tax credits all together and others making changes to historic fabric so as not to delay their project schedules. Ms. Hesse stated that she knew of at least one local developer who withdrew from consideration for a federal historic tax credit due to the perceived timeliness of National Park Service review and the potential for added costs.

Ms. Zurier asked whether it is possible to track how many projects have used the fairly new Rebuild RI tax credits for preservation work. Ms. Hesse replied that the Rebuild RI program does not share its data, but she may be able to gather that information internally. Mr. Loether clarified that RIHPHC would not review those projects unless a building was listed on the State Register.

Following the discussion of state and federal tax credit programs, Ms. Pomplun summarized the RIHPHC's grant programs. Ms. Pomplun stated that the State Preservation Grant Program (SPG) is the agency's biggest grant-making program. Ms. Pomplun is in the process of creating a working document of SPG successes and a wish list for future rounds that she will provide to the committee. Ms. Pomplun also discussed the federal Certified Local Government program, from which there are eighteen designated cities or towns in Rhode Island eligible to receive planning grants from RIHPHC.

Discussion of the state and federal tax credit programs, state and federal grants, and federal Certified Local Government grants followed the aforementioned SWOT framework and is summarized below:

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
State and Federal Tax Credit Programs	<p>Strong track record of investment in historic buildings</p> <p>Revitalization of RI communities</p> <p>Strong staff at RIHPHC</p>	<p>Recent unpredictability of the National Park Service (NPS)</p> <p>NPS holdups dramatically affecting project schedules</p> <p>Developers pulling out of tax credit projects</p> <p>Taxation office has not provided any information about projects in the queue</p>	<p>Rebuild RI tax credits could develop stronger/more consistent standards in face of NPS changes</p> <p>Tracking Rebuild RI projects to determine preservation impact</p> <p>Increased collaboration with Rebuilding RI; relationship building with Jesse Saglio and/or a delegate who holds an RIHPHC seat.</p> <p>Possibility to funnel \$15 million from Rebuild RI to preservation projects</p>	<p>Recent unpredictability of NPS</p> <p>Dwindling projects because of phased out state historic tax credit program</p> <p>National trend of developers not consulting RIHPHC before changes are made</p> <p>Developers pulling out of historic tax credit projects</p> <p>Entire federal historic tax credit program being eliminated</p>
State and Federal Grant Programs (SPG)	<p>State Preservation Grant (SPG) program is a well-established program with a strong network</p> <p>Communication between partners, constituency, advocates</p> <p>Strong bench of qualified contractors, architects, etc.</p>	<p>Administrative and financial capacities of applicants/grantees, especially for smaller organizations</p> <p>Administrative burden on some smaller, all volunteer organizations</p> <p>Bond-based funding model does not provide annual (or</p>	<p>Ability to complete a deep-dive analysis into the three most recent grant rounds (2015, 2016, 2017) to determine successes and future challenges</p> <p>RIHPHC can reevaluate rules, regulations, and internal procedures if program is refunded</p> <p>Attorney General understands mission of program in the</p>	<p>Our program is not currently funded; all bond money awarded out</p> <p>Not yet complete projects from the 2015, 2016, or 2017 rounds might be a threat to a new bond issue (large amount of money appears on the books even though it is</p>

	<p>Partnership with RI State Council on the Arts (RISCA), esp. the reciprocal seats on SPG review panel and RISCA's State Cultural Facilities Grant review panel</p> <p>Ability to harness RISCA's advocacy power</p> <p>RIHPHC has also received federal grants and built a strong relationship with NPS grant office.</p>	<p>regular) funding</p> <p>Repeat audiences and lack of organizational diversity among applications</p> <p>Staff capacity issues for RIHPHC to pursue applying for its own federal grants</p>	<p>context of legal decisions</p> <p>Pursuing a new funding model that is not dependent on the state budget; ex. other states fund this program with a fee on real estate transactions</p> <p>Expand or rethink regulations about project eligibility to draw in new constituents</p> <p>Increasing the number of applicants also increases the number of advocates for the program</p> <p>RIHPHC could apply for its own federal grants like the recent Save America's Treasures application or a National Maritime Heritage Grant</p> <p>Changing strategies to counteract low staffing capacity at RIHPHC; offer to be a partner on a federal grant but delegate administrative responsibilities to a non-profit partner</p>	<p>allocated for reimbursements)</p> <p>Requirement that grantees be open to the public 12 days per year may deter new applicants</p>
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Federal CLG program	<p>Many strong and active Certified Local Government (CLG) communities in RI (ex. Gloucester)</p> <p>Active listserv for HDC collaboration</p> <p>Continuity of being required to pass through 10% of our historic preservation fund budget to CLGs annually</p>	<p>Strengths vary from CLG to CLG</p> <p>Turnover in municipal planning departments</p> <p>Infrequent on the ground monitoring of CLGs</p> <p>Small grant award amounts</p>	<p>CLG audit to learn more about each city/town, encourage fewer active members</p> <p>Appetite for new CLG communities; inquiries from at least 2 cities/towns</p> <p>Training for active Historic District Commissions (HDC)</p> <p>Convening all CLGs w/RIHPHC for networking and collaboration</p> <p>CLG grant for a community HDC training (or as part of annual RIHPHC conference), esp. for HDC staff members</p> <p>Ability to mold funding priorities to specific goals (i.e. climate change, Preservation is Local)</p>	<p>Inactive HDCs</p> <p>Lack of training for active HDCs</p> <p>Lack of quality applications and requirement to give out all money</p>
GIS program	Tabled until next meeting			
Cultural landscapes	Tabled until next meeting			

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:03 pm.