



City of Hartford * County of Van Buren * State of Michigan

TO: Mayor Hall and the Hartford City Commissioners

FROM: Nicol Brown, City Manager

DATE: March 24, 2025

RE: Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) facilitated by VBC

ITEM BEFORE THE COMMISSION:

The item before the Commission is to approve the City's participation in the Redevelopment Ready Communities certification process facilitated by Van Buren County's Community Service Office.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Hartford started the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) certification process under Yemi Akinwale's administration. Because the process began several years ago, MEDC considers the city RRC engaged. The RRC program, administered by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), is demanding. It involves multiple stages that can be quite demanding for participating communities. These stages include:

1. **Initial Setup and Orientation Meetings:** Organizing initial discussions to understand the requirements and commitments needed for RRC certification.
2. **Review of Best Practices:** Thoroughly reviewing and adhering to established best practices across various aspects of planning and development, including zoning, planning public outreach, and internal processes.
3. **Establishment of Standardized Forms and Processes:** Developing and instituting standardized forms and processes that align with RRC standards can be a time-intensive process requiring meticulous attention to detail.
4. **Continuous Engagement and Feedback:** Consistently engage with MEDC to ensure all practices and submissions meet their criteria, including revisiting and revising documents and strategies as feedback is received.

The county was awarded funding for an AmeriCorps worker to assist communities in becoming RRC certified. The county is asking communities that lack staff capacity to engage in the RRC process. The county is asking each local governmental unit to commit \$2,500 to help the County meet its match of \$17,000.

The AmeriCorps Community Redevelopment Liaison will be stationed in Van Buren County full-time for 11 months, equitably dividing their time among all participating units. This support aims to enhance interactions, assist in the thorough preparation of necessary documentation, and ensure that community meetings and stakeholder engagements are conducted efficiently.

The City will begin the master plan process next month, which is good timing because the master plan is part of the RRC Best Practice step.

RECOMMENDATION:

The City of Hartford City Commission approves a \$2,500 contribution to the Redevelopment Ready Communities certification process facilitated by Van Buren County's Community Service Office AmeriCorps Community Redevelopment Liaison. The commission authorizes the City Manager to execute the agreement.