



8. Strategic Planning Update

Kathryn Madden said that staff has been doing research and evaluation of the last seven years. Her presentation outlined the goals and timeline of the Strategic Planning process. The discovery phase is wrapping up. CRA is transforming from a startup enterprise into a more mature organization taking on more complex and many more projects. Systems are needed to better manage the increase in work. The [current mission statement](#) speaks to aspirations, constituency, operation, and identity of the CRA. The mission has [been advanced with-through the CRA's work on](#) open space and infrastructure projects as well as projects that focus on community support and economic development issues. Many CRA projects have been clustered in Kendall Square but there are several projects that focus on areas with minority, low income and/or English isolation populations. About half of the projects taken on in the past seven years have been completed, while others have long-term obligations. The CRA is good at being nimble and responsive, as demonstrated with its Covid relief support.

Ms. Madden spoke about some preliminary findings with regards to project management, partnerships, DEI integration, advisory committees, strategy, and regulatory framework. Staff have been talking about a formal Go-No Go process for evaluating future projects. She summarized the analysis of the CRA's internal operations and policies. Some of the [recommendations for improving](#) internal operations are already in process. Financially, the CRA's assets and its liabilities have grown. A more robust financial system is needed to replace Quickbooks. From the analysis of the various partnerships and transactional relationships, incorporating DEI goals and improved outreach are a primary focus.

Ms. Madden spoke about the next steps in the process. Staff will continue to improve on some aspects of internal operations, including project decision making, research into financial systems, and internal processes for collaboration and learning. Before the outreach phase begins, it is important to build a strong sense of the CRA story and determine how best to communicate that. Ms. Madden will come back to the Board for a more in-depth discussion of how best to leverage the CRA's capital structure to make an impact.

Mr. Bator said that given the current amount of work and the likelihood of more, a focus on internal operations and systems is key. It is important to recognize the need for more expertise sooner than later. He expects that the Executive Director will need to relinquish day-to-day detailed control over every aspect. He added that a board size of five, [which is a state mandated governance structure, which](#) forces a limit of two members on subcommittees, [is and is](#) something that needs to be addressed.