

THE ROTCH-JONES-DUFF HOUSE & GARDEN MUSEUM

April 12, 2023

President Linda Morad and Honorable Members of the New Bedford City Council
City Hall
133 William Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

Dear President Morad and Members of the City Council:

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is vital to the preservation of New Bedford's history and architectural heritage, let alone the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum (RJD). A national Historic Landmark and the only whaling-era mansion left intact and open to the public in the city, the RJD is just one example of the CPA's investment in the city and its residents.

With the type of funding CPA provides, we have made our site safer and more accessible to residents across all wards of the city. As you may know, the RJD's main function is as a non-profit, educational museum, telling stories about Abolition efforts in the city, the Whaling industry's impact on New Bedford residents, and life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The property is part of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. As a museum, we host public exhibitions and programs, public visitation, social gatherings, virtual programs, school field trips and private use by groups and individuals. This property sees over 6,000 visitors annually. We are open year-round. The gardens are free to visit, and open sunrise to sunset 7 days a week. Over 75% of our programming is provided free of charge. As a space that today is used much like any public park in the city, the RJD garden meets the community need for accessible outdoor green space. CPA grants have helped us preserve the significant history of this site and create a space for area residents to explore and enjoy their shared history.

CPA is also an economic driver. It creates local construction jobs by spurring development, eliminates blight, promotes sustainability, supports affordable housing options, and increases the values of neighborhoods and commercial districts throughout the City. For example, whenever possible, RJD has hired New Bedford-based masons, painters, carpenters and general contractors to do CPA projects.

CPA is a wise and sound investment as it directly leverages an automatic state match, and many of the individual CPA projects attract additional public and private dollars to match their CPA awards, leveraging funds far beyond the community's investment and which often would not be available without the CPA incentive. This was certainly the case for the RJD where between 90% and 100% of CPA dollars were matched by the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, private donors, and most recently, ARPA.

New Bedford's adoption of CPA was notable, as it was one of the first cities within the Commonwealth to adopt CPA, and as a Gateway city, **attracted national attention**, including the Land Trust Alliance featuring New Bedford's CPA adoption in their national magazine *Saving Land*. Furthermore, the City was asked to provide representation to the Steering

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Committee of the State Community Preservation Coalition, an organization that advances the CPA tenets of smart growth and sustainable development in communities throughout Massachusetts.

CPA was signed into state law in 2000 and to date, 194 communities have adopted CPA, which thus far, has not diminished the state match from the DOR managed Community Preservation Trust Fund. The 194 communities represent 70% of Massachusetts residents and statewide over \$3.15 billion has been raised for community led projects. Since its inception there have only been three attempts (the last in 2012) by communities to revoke the CPA program through a ballot initiative, and all three failed by a large margin. It is clear that both locally and statewide, CPA's benefits are widely recognized.

As representatives of the leadership of the RJD Museum, we respectfully ask that you recognize the widespread benefits of CPA and not override the Mayor's veto on the non-binding referenda to repeal the Community Preservation Act.



G. Stewart Young, President, Board of Trustees



Dawn E. Salerno, Executive Director