



Aquidneck Center  
401. 846. 4600

**James L. Maher Center**  
P.O. Box 4390, Middletown, RI 02842  
Fax: 401. 849. 4267  
[www.mahercenter.org](http://www.mahercenter.org)



Transportation  
401. 848. 5710

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December 4, 2018

**To:** All Interested Parties

**Re:** Request for Information (*see attached*)

The James L Maher Center is inviting Requests for Information from businesses and alliances to “re-imagine” and vision possibilities to utilize its former Garden Center, an extraordinary facility, which includes retail space, greenhouses, and adjacent property. From the late 1970s to its closing in the spring of 2018, the Garden Center was a vibrant hub of activity for the community on Aquidneck Island.

We are seeking ideas and proposals from businesses and organizations for a new use of this community asset that would return the space into a thriving center occupied by a business, partnership or other creative venture. Respondents and collaborators should consider that they may be able to utilize all or part of the space and are not limited to use as a “garden center” – all types of businesses/organizations are welcome to respond to this Request for Information.

An information session, during which interested parties may view the space and ask questions regarding potential use of the space, will be held Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2019 at 7 p.m. at the James L Maher Center, 906 Aquidneck Avenue, Middletown, RI 02842. To attend this meeting, please RSVP to [rmorton@mahercenter.org](mailto:rmorton@mahercenter.org) no later than 1/2/2019.

**RFI responses are due on or before Monday, Jan. 21 2019 at 4 p.m.** Responses should be emailed or delivered to:

James L Maher Center  
Attn: Rose Morton  
906 Aquidneck Avenue  
Middletown, Rhode Island 02842  
[rmorton@mahercenter.org](mailto:rmorton@mahercenter.org)

Sincerely,

Rose Morton  
Executive Director

# Request for Information

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## Concept Statement

From the late 1970s to its closing in the spring of 2018, The James L. Maher Garden Center located on Aquidneck Avenue in Middletown, RI, was a vibrant hub of activity for people with developmental disabilities as well as the broader community on Aquidneck Island.

In visioning for the future of the center, a partnership of diverse groups has joined together to “re-image” the use of this community asset into a thriving center occupied by a business, partnership or other creative venture with the potential to be a ‘green economy’ jobs workforce development incubator.

The partnership is committed to inviting creative businesses and alliances to “re-imagine” the possibilities to utilize this extraordinary facility and space.

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## Background

The James L Maher Garden Center located on Aquidneck Avenue in Middletown RI was created in the late 1970s as a place where individuals with varying degrees of abilities could experience a chance to learn a trade/skill, acquire the satisfaction of employment, gain a sense of responsibility, interact with customers and develop friendships with their co-workers in an environment that was safe, enriching and nurturing. The business began as a small greenhouse and along the years expanded to five operating greenhouses, a retail garden center as well as large work and storage areas. The program afforded individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) an opportunity to gain experience caring for and maintaining plants at a community supported facility. This facility supported 15-20 individuals with I/DD, as well as employing four full-time non-disabled employees and operated a valued community business.

While well intended, the business was unable to support the objectives of the therapeutic program and began to incur operating losses, ultimately leading to the closing of the facility in the spring of 2018. This was a great loss to the community, the full-time employees and more importantly the individuals who participated in the therapeutic program.

The current footprint of the facility includes approximately 3100 square feet of space encompassing retail, workshop and garage space. Additionally, there are five greenhouses located on the property ranging in size from 500 square feet to 2200 square feet. (Measurements are approximate) Please see attached document with photos and descriptions.

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## Opportunity

**Business or Training Opportunities:** The partners are seeking to recruit innovative businesses such as, but not limited to: co-op partnerships, propagators, retail/wholesale producers, innovative hubs, plant researchers and/or other interesting opportunities to create a successful self-sustaining operation utilizing the Maher facilities.

# Request for Information

Additionally, interested parties could have the opportunity to collaborate through a partnership with the State of Rhode Island Dept. of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH); State of Rhode Island Dept. of Labor and Training (DLT); Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI); Rhode Island Nursery & Landscape Association (RINLA); and the Maher Center to create an integrated multi-faceted training vehicle.

## Interested Parties

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Please include the following in your response to the Request for Information (maximum 4 pages total):

**Business Concept:** Narrative summary of the business proposal to include business philosophy and practices. Please include production potential, market opportunities and/or current clients, product demand (type, quantity, time frame), space requirements and proposed duration of occupancy.

**Company Profile:** For an existing business/organization, please provide an overview of current business and/or employment that would demonstrate professional capacity to successfully implement business concept. For proposed businesses/organization(s) please provide an overview of your business concept.

**Fiscal Profile:** Please include financial viability to support the proposal.

**Professional and Educational Experience:** Please include professional certificates, educational achievements, industry specific awards and/or activities, professional networks or memberships.

### FAQ's:

Q: Would I need to pay rent to run my business at the facility?

**A: Yes; a new business utilizing the area would rent space from the Maher Center.**

Q: Would I need to sign a contract or lease with the Maher Center?

**A: Yes; terms would be agreed upon amongst all parties.**

Q: What role does RINLA play in this project?

**A: RINLA views this as an opportunity to support and collaborate with allied businesses and organizations to further green industry interests. As the professional umbrella organization for the \$2.5 billion agriculture and plant-based industry in Rhode Island and a Real Jobs Rhode Island partner, RINLA advocates for supportive workforce policies and building cross-sector relationships that strengthen appreciation for our industry and building pipelines of new people into it. We also seek to strengthen relationships with community organizations that provide training and services, including career and technical high schools, urban green infrastructure training for at-risk youth, ESL providers, and organizations providing targeted job training for adults with disabilities, prisoner re-entry, veterans, foster youth, and refugees. RINLA seeks to build on these relationships to strengthen pipelines into green industry jobs and apprenticeships.**

## Request for Information

Q: Can I lease some of the space but not all the space?

**A: Yes**

Q: Can two or more individuals/business (existing/prosposed) submit collaborative responses?

**A: Yes, collaborative applications are welcomed and encouraged!**

Q: When will the space be available for use?

**A: Spring, 2019**

Q: Will I be allowed to modify the space to fit my business model?

**A: Yes**

Q: What limitations on the space exist?

**A: At this point, there are no limitations on the use of the space.**

Q: What utilities are on site and who pays for utilities?

**A: Buildings and greenhouses use gas heat; electric service is 100 amp. Tenant will be responsible for utilities.**

Q: What is the water source for the facility?

**A: The facility utilizes well water for agricultural and commercial use.**

Q: Does the owner provide insurance?

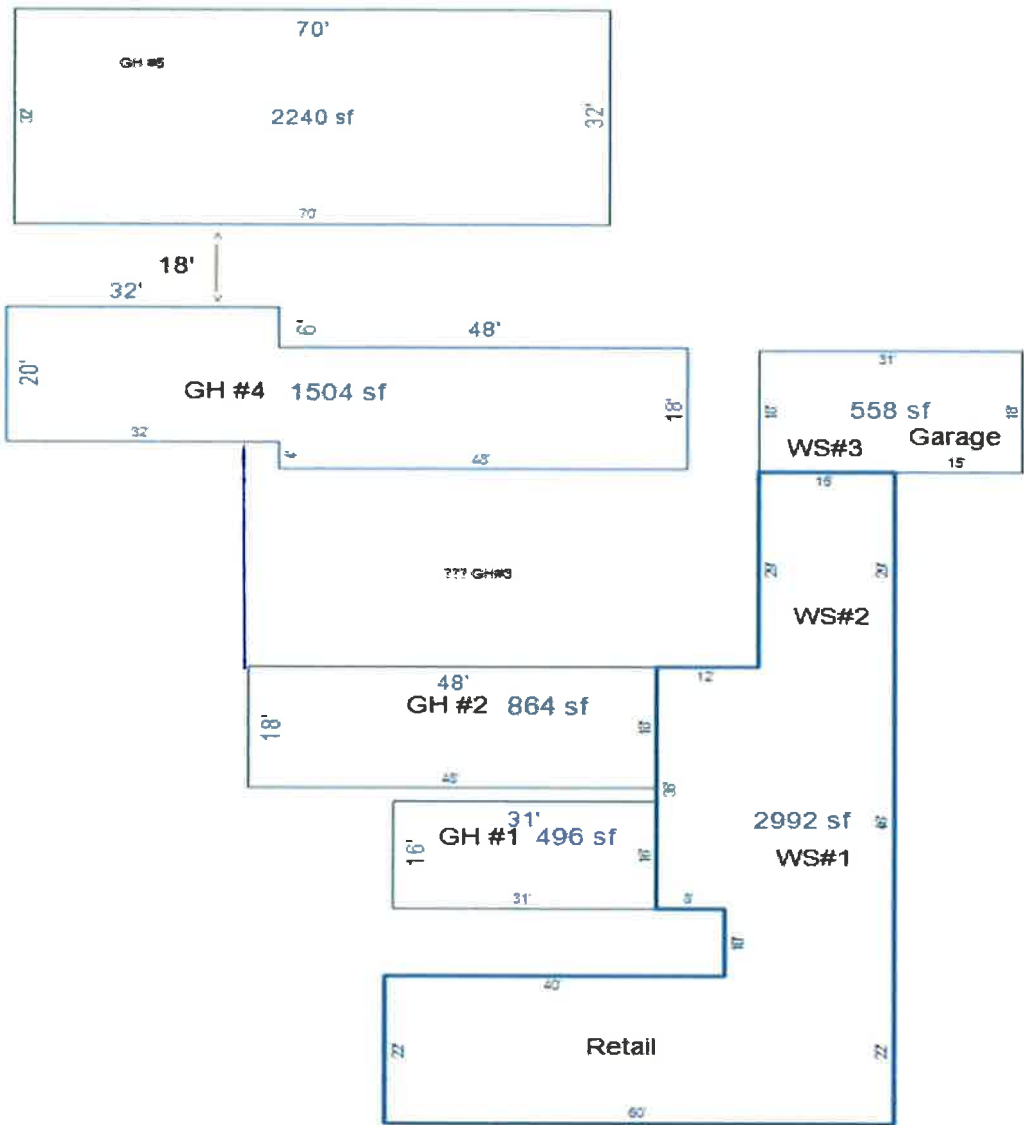
**A: Occupant will need to provide insurance on contents of the building and greenhouses.**

Q: What kind of timeline has been established for this RFI?

**A: Information Session: Tuesday, January 8, 2019 @ 7:00 pm at the Maher Center;  
RFI Responses due 21 January, 2019 per cover letter guidelines.**

Q: When will I know if my proposal has been accepted?

**A: All responders will be contacted by January 28, 2019.**



Front Side



## Garden Center

11/30/2018 11:27:50 AM

Scale: 1"=62'

Scale is approximate

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.





Exterior Photos:



Front side / left end



Front side / right end



Front side & right side



Right side – Front & Center sections



Right side – Rear section



Rear side – GH#3 main portion



Rear side & Left/rear portion – GH#3 extension



Covered picnic area – Located @ rear near driveway

Exterior – Green Houses



GH #3, 2 & 1



GH #2 & 1 and Left end of main bld.



GH #3 & 2



Left side GH#3, 2, 1  
Also-(4) Large in-ground planters in foreground



GH #5 – Free standing/detached GH located 18' beyond end of main building



Left side/rear portion GH#4 extension



Garden Center – Interior Photos:

Workshop Area #1: Located directly behind the front retail area/right end



WS#1– Behind retail area



WS#1 – Viewed from back facing front

WS#1 - View from workshop entrance



Front Retail Area #1 – Far right



Retail area – viewed from front entrance



Front Retail Area #3 – Far left



GH#2 - View from WS#2 doorway



GH#2 – View from far end – Facing WS#2 door

**Green House #3 – Access off WS#3**



GH#3 – Viewed from WS#3 entrance



GH#3 – View from far end – Facing WS#3 door

**Green House #1 Interior – Access off WS#1**



GH#1 - View from retail shop door



GH#1 – Viewed from door to outside



# POSSIBILITIES



# POSSIBILITIES

