

Jamie A. Bentley, MPH
Community Impact Coordinator
Rutland Regional Medical Center

June 16th, 2022

Town of Castleton
263 Rt. 30 North
Bomoseen, VT 05732

Dear Castleton Select Board,

As a resident of Castleton and the Co-chair of the Rutland Youth Coalition and Project Vision Health Committee, I am writing to support the Community Village Square proposal for the Castleton Village School. In addition to Co-chairing these countywide coalitions I also researched, coordinated, and authored the most recent Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for the Rutland Region. The CHNA identified 4 priority areas within our county. Those priority areas are listed as mental health, childcare and parenting, supporting the aging community, and housing as health care. Creating a third space for the Castleton community would address multiple priority areas identified in the CHNA and support many agencies and groups working to improve the health of the Rutland Region.

Third space is identified as a physical place that is outside the “home” and “school/work”. Third spaces are absolutely necessary for the development of strong communities and resilient populations. Specifically, for our youth. There is direct correlation between third spaces and positive outcomes for our youngest and most vulnerable population. In the follow up report to the CHNA, providing more third spaces for youth is a suggested strategy to support youth and families. In a 2020 survey of Slate Valley School District 7th and 8th graders, only 42% stated they had sports, art, drama, or music activities afterschool. Research through [Planet Youth](#) illustrates with years of data that investing in third spaces for afterschool programming drastically reduce substance use and other risky behaviors in youth. In addition, before the pandemic the mental health field was already experiencing and increase in need for youth mental health services. The pandemic exacerbated this need exponentially. Providing third spaces increases connection and resiliency which benefits mental health.

Additionally, Supporting or Aging Community is another priority area for our region. Again, third spaces are important in the overall health of this specific population. A community center like the one proposed has the potential to decrease social isolation and increase opportunities for intergenerational connection. Our aging community is also our fastest growing population. Creating additional community space that would provide support and programming for youth, families, and our aging community would be an amazing step in the right direction. The Castleton Senior Center does amazing work and the collaboration between these two spaces would benefit seniors, youth, and families.

Providing this service for our community seems like an easy choice. If we want our community to grow and thrive, for our kids to come back and live here, for people to move here, we need to provide the services and spaces that will nurture and care for all residents. Please consider the immense impact a community center could have on countless lives in the Castleton and Hubbardton area and our region as a whole.

Sincerely,



Jamie A. Bentley, MPH
51 Seminary St.
Castleton, VT 05735

Dear Castleton Select Board Members:

As a member of the Rutland Youth Coalition, I am writing in support of developing the Castleton Village School into shared community space. The Rutland Youth Coalition is a group of agencies, youth, and community members who work to ensure all youth know they belong. This group uses local timely local data to amplify our youth's voice to fight for a future they want.

The Vermont Youth Project, a collaboration between Vermont Afterschool, Planet Youth, and local school districts, has been surveying all middle and high school students in the Rutland City School District and the Slate Valley School District since 2019. These Rutland County schools may be in different locations, but the students have told us a similar story. They crave connection to each other and their community.

- Survey results for Vermont Youth Project Middle and High school students have significant unorganized free time and limited participation in structured activities outside of school <https://vermontafterschool.org/vyp/>
- Research shows that investing in our youth by providing third space and activities outside the home and school can drastically reduce substance use <https://planetyouth.org/the-method/>
- 27% of high school students in the Rutland Region reported trying alcohol by the age of 13 (Vermont Youth Project Data)
 - Youth who start drinking before the age of 14 are more likely to experience alcohol dependence <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/205204>

Providing third spaces for youth that are accessible and safe will only make our community stronger. Please consider investing in our youth and their future.
Sincerely,

Adam Sancic

Agency of Human Services

Rutland and Bennington County Field Director

Cell-798-2075

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Dear Castleton Select Board Members,

I am a member of the Rutland Youth Coalition and I write support of using the Castleton Village School as a shared community space.

Results of a survey of all middle and high school students in the Rutland City and Slate Valley School Districts by the Vermont Youth Project show that students strongly desire a connection to each other and their community. They report significant unorganized free time and limited participation in structured activities outside of school. See, <https://vermontafterschool.org/vyp/>

Research confirms that a space and activities outside both their home and school can drastically reduce substance use now and in the future. See, <https://planetyouth.org/the-method/> and <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/205204>

I ask you to please consider making this important investment to strengthen our youth and the community as a whole.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Patricia Lancaster

Rutland Youth Coalition Member

I am writing this letter to support the conversion of the Castleton Village School to the Community Village Square-a Castleton-Hubbardton Recreation Center. I support town ownership of this building. I support the submitted two organization proposal with the Boys and Girls Club and the Castleton Recreation Department as the anchors of this proposal.

In the Hubbardton "Community Engagement" section of their town plan (2016, page 4), citizens mentioned things such as "farmer's market, community potlucks, community center, summer activities for kids, community garden, family game nights, organized sports clubs and activities, and a cribbage club".

The Castleton Town Plan (2018, page 43) highlights recreation with a goal to "maintain and enhance recreation resources and opportunities". This goal would be achieved by "retaining and improve existing recreational activities for all ages". The plan would also "expand recreational opportunities within the town" by "pursuing opportunities for funding the development of new recreational opportunities, facilities and activities", "developing a more robust recreation program including after school and summer activities" and "promoting the creation of a recreational complex or center".

Realistically, the towns will never again have this opportunity to provide such a needed service to the citizens. Both towns have received feedback from their citizens regarding this endeavor. The towns of Castleton and Hubbardton should retain ownership of this building and repurpose the space for the benefit of all residents, all ages, all abilities and all interests. Let this be a legacy for our present and future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Schroeder

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Castleton