

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Better Places

Empowering Vermonters to Create Vibrant Public Places





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About Better Places

Better Places supports community-led projects that create, revitalize, or activate public spaces, bringing people together together to build welcoming and thriving communities across Vermont.

Better Places is a community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public

places serving Vermont's designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, and neighborhood development areas. The program is led by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation and Patronicity.

How It Works

Better Places crowdfunding campaigns are eligible for a 2:1 matching grant ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 to advance community-led placemaking efforts that create, revitalize, or activate public spaces. Municipalities, local community groups, and nonprofit entities with municipal support may apply.

Better Places uses a method of grantmaking called "crowdgranting." Crowdgranting combines crowdfunding – the practice of funding a project with small donations from a large number of people – with a matching grant from the State. Crowdgranting builds local awareness, excitement, and shared investment in community-led placemaking projects.

The Better Places program provides one-on-one project coaching and local fundraising support to community leaders to help them develop and run successful crowdfunding campaigns that the State matches with a 2:1 grant.

Do you have an idea to improve a public space in your community?

Learn more at patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT

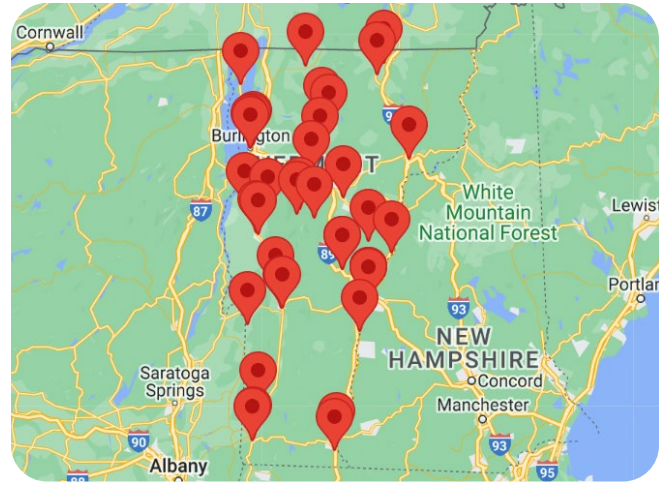


Funding

The Better Places program is funded through state dollars allocated by the Vermont Legislature during the passage of Act 74 in 2021, with the intent to support community-led projects that create, revitalize, or activate public spaces, bringing people together to build welcoming and thriving communities across Vermont. This includes \$1,275,000 in total grant funds.

Better Places is a place-based economic development program that:

- Activates and revitalizes public spaces to build vibrant communities
- Empowers residents to play an active role in shaping their community
- Advances “quick build” projects which boost community confidence and local pride
- Builds inclusive and welcoming spaces for social connection, health, and recreation
- Increases integrity of and equitable access to green spaces
- Stimulates the creative economy and provides equitable access to the arts
- Spurs entrepreneurship, partnerships, and public and private investment
- Connects viable projects to individual contributors and matching funds



Since the spring of 2022, the Better Places program has supported 38 community-led projects, including:

- 18 parks and green spaces (playgrounds, pavilions, village parks, recreation)
- 8 community driven public art/mural projects in parks, streets, and along rail trails
- 5 programming/events (downtown events, music, movies, food, youth engagement)
- 5 community building improvements (libraries, community centers, maritime center, etc.)
- 2 downtown beautification projects (streetscape improvements)



Small Towns, Healthy Places Podcast

Healthy and vibrant communities require safe streets and sidewalks, inclusive gathering places and green spaces for everyone to enjoy, and easy access to services, fresh food, and local amenities. Join Suzanne Kelley from the Vermont Department of Health and Richard Amore from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development in *Small Towns, Healthy Places*, the podcast that explores the intersection between health equity and community design in the State of Vermont. They interview state partners, local leaders, and community members about creating vibrant places that support health and wellness. If you're passionate about public health, improving the built environment, and placemaking, this podcast is for you.

[Listen now!](#)



Better Places Impact by the Numbers

This is a snapshot of Better Places projects from February 1, 2022 – January 3, 2024.

Total Matched



\$850,100

LIFETIME

Total Crowdfunded



\$473,290

LIFETIME

Total Projects



38

LIFETIME

Total Patrons



3,207

LIFETIME

100% Success Rate

CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

111% Funded

AVERAGE OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS

\$5,506,943

LEVERAGED FUNDING

\$5,980,233
Total Private Investment

CROWDFUNDING AND LEVERAGED FUNDING

7.03:1 Total Private Investment Ratio

For every \$1 invested by Better Places,
\$7.03 was invested privately.



\$22,371

AVERAGE PROJECT GOAL

\$12,455

AVERAGE RAISE

84

AVERAGE PATRONS

HIGHEST RAISE

The Hartford WW1 and WW2 Monument had the highest crowdfunding campaign raise of \$28,605.

SMALLEST CAMPAIGN GOAL

Poultney Downtown Mural Initiative had the smallest crowdfunding campaign goal of \$3,250.

LARGEST NUMBER OF PATRONS

Bring a Community Playground to Enosburgh had the largest number of patrons with 605 contributing to the campaign's success.

VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

600+

SQUARE FEET OF PUBLIC SPACE CREATED OR REDEVELOPED

134,304

TEMPORARY JOBS CREATED

51

NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, MUNICIPALITIES, OR OTHER ENTITY TYPES

**Community Groups: 5 (13%)
Nonprofits: 26 (68%) | Municipality: 7 (19%)**

38 Projects in Thirteen Counties

FROM SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES (VERSHIRE, ROXBURY, COVENTRY, AND NORTH HERO) TO LARGER COMMUNITIES (BARRE, BRATTLEBORO, BENNINGTON, RUTLAND, AND NEWPORT)

Over 180+ preflight consultations from communities across the state





Patrons in the City: Reimagine Roxbury, Vermont

In spring 2023, the community of Roxbury, Vermont came together to envision a better place for their community to gather, exercise, and entertain. The Roxbury Park Development Committee, a passionate group of individuals, had a vision to strengthen their community. The committee—including Ed Carney, Elizabeth Carney, Craig Sullivan, Jim Rogler, and Dotti Guiffre—launched the crowdfunding campaign Roxbury Village Park Needs Your Support! The grassroots crowdfunding campaign raised \$8,615 from 51 patrons. The campaign exceeded its goal of \$7,500, showcasing the deep desire for the community to invest in its future by developing the new park.

Dotti: “The enthusiasm and support we received, as the plan took shape, from the residents of Roxbury, supporters from Patronicity and the State of Vermont Better Places Grant has encouraged the members of our Park Development Committee to keep going and give it our best. This project holds a key location in revitalizing the entire community.”

Ed: “The Better Places Grant accelerated the Roxbury Village Park Project, motivating us to reconnect with friends, neighbors and families that recently moved to Roxbury. It demonstrated with leadership and volunteers how a community can improve its appearance and provide a space for all its members to enjoy and be proud of the effort they put into making Roxbury Village Park a reality. It demonstrated that with conviction and cooperation, we can effect positive change for the betterment of our town and community.”

We spoke in-depth with Dotti & Ed about how they reimaged Roxbury.

Read more at resources.patronicity.com



Patron in the City: Gillian Sewake

Gillian Sewake, the Director of [Discover St. Johnsbury](#), has a love for her community that has been the driving force behind many initiatives in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. In May 2022, Gillian launched a successful crowdfunding campaign for a free outdoor music event series. One of the first Better Places projects to launch a crowdfunding campaign through Patronicity, [#GetDowntown St. J](#) raised over \$4,000 to fill the downtown with art, community, and fun. By reaching their crowdfunding goal, the project unlocked a 2:1 matching grant from the Better Places program.

Patronicity: What could other towns learn from your community or project?

Gillian: “Make sure you remove as many barriers as possible to ensure that all community members can participate. Look at whether some activities at your free event cost money, and try to cover those costs. Look at what transportation barriers exist, and try to make sure your event lines up with a time that everyone can get there, whether or not they have a car. Look at cultural barriers that keep people from different racial, ethnic, or political backgrounds from feeling safe and welcomed at your event, and try to remove as many of them as possible.”

“In a time with increasing polarization and inequality, it's imperative that everyone who works in community and economic development work as hard as we can to create reasons for people of different backgrounds and experiences to share space and share joy.”

We spoke with Gillian to learn more about her passion for community.

Read more at resources.patronicity.com

Groundbreaking Public Spaces

Explore a few of Vermont's community-led Better Places projects.

Coventry Playground Renovation

COVENTRY, VERMONT | ORLEANS COUNTY

CROWDFUNDED: \$23,746 CROWDGRANTING MATCH: \$40,000

POPULATION: 1,100 PATRONS: 39

In September 2023, Coventry School Partnership Inspiring Community Engagement (SPICE), Coventry Village School's Parent Teacher Organization, launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds to help rebuild the school's playground. A year earlier, the playground was inspected and the majority of the equipment was deemed unsafe and required repair or replacement. With the support of the community, Coventry SPICE was able to build a safe, entertaining, quality playground for children to enjoy for years to come. Funding from the campaign was used to purchase new playground equipment, including a giant sit-and-spin, monkey bars, and a standing seesaw, just to name a few!

[Learn More](#)



Guilford Community Park

GUILFORD, VERMONT | WINDHAM COUNTY

CROWDFUNDED: \$20,250 CROWDGRANTING MATCH: \$40,000

POPULATION: 2,120 PATRONS: 120

The Community Collaborative for Guilford was formed to develop a comprehensive plan for a vacant lot. The group created the plan for a park with public amenities, including a 24' by 48' timber frame pavilion. The pavilion was built in spring 2022 by Vermont Natural Homes in West Townsend with wood harvested from Vermont and Massachusetts.

Guilford Community Park is now open to residents. The pavilion is welcome for public use and has hosted many community events. The park features a stone fire pit, a children's play area, and a classic seven-circuit Labyrinth. More is in the works for the park, including a half-court basketball court, disc golf course, soccer nets, corn hole boards, swings, and a two-person swing glider.

[Learn More](#)



Groundbreaking Public Spaces

Hyde Park Views

HYDE PARK, VERMONT | LAMOILLE COUNTY

CROWDFUNDED: \$22,070 CROWDGRANTING MATCH: \$40,000

POPULATION: 3,020 PATRONS: 93

Hyde Park has a new piece of public art welcoming residents and visitors alike to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail. *Hyde Park Views* by Vermont artist Dan Gottsegen includes a series of colorful glass panels in the playful shape of a bending railroad. The glass panels feature depictions of the community's history and landscape, gathered through community research. The sculpture acts as an anchor for the Village and a community gateway, creating connections through shared history and giving rise to community pride. The piece totaled \$70,000 to fabricate and install. In addition to funding from the Better Places program, the project received a \$10,000 grant from the Vermont Arts Council.

[Learn More](#)



Vershire Town Center Pavilion

VERSHIRE, VERMONT | ORANGE COUNTY

CROWDFUNDED: \$20,036 CROWDGRANTING MATCH: \$40,000

POPULATION: 672 PATRONS: 108

The community of Vershire desired a covered outdoor gathering space to accommodate events in inclement weather. The Town of Vershire created a plan to build a pavilion thoughtfully incorporated into the Town Center's public facilities and grounds. The 30' by 42' timber frame pavilion is located behind the Town Center Building and next to the playground. The pavilion is an invaluable asset to the community, providing a public space where residents can gather, host cultural events, and more.

The project offered community members many opportunities to get involved, from a kick-off at the skating rink to a spaghetti dinner, a Snowshoe-a-thon, and the pavilion raising. The town celebrated the new pavilion with a dedication event in September featuring music and oven-baked pizza.

[Learn More](#)



Better Places

patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT



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To: Richard Amore, Manager of Placemaking and Community Partnerships, Department of Housing and Community Development, ACCD
From: Karen Scott, Grants Coordinator for Strategic Partnerships, VT Community Foundation
Title: Better Places Program Report
Date: December 2023

Introduction

This report captures data, stories, and quotes from the BPVT final reports submitted by seventeen 2022 and 2023 grantees collected as of December 8, 2023. This second edition builds on learnings identified in the April 2023 edition of this report.

A total of 18 Better Places projects from 10 counties have been completed and have had their final reports approved. These programs received a total of \$196,504 in donations from 1347 members of the community, resulting in a total of \$372,000 in matching Better Places Program awards. They engaged 598 volunteers in their efforts, and created or redeveloped an estimated 134,304 square feet of space in their community. They created approximately 51 temporary positions and one permanent position.

As of the preparation of this report there are 20* projects in 13 counties being supported by Better Places. These projects raised \$275,846 from 1805 members of the community, resulting in matching Better Places grants totaling \$478,100.

(Note: includes one project actively crowdfunding at time of report preparation. Information in this report has been edited for length and clarity. Original survey information is available upon request.)

Summary:

- Crowdfunding has been a new activity for all grantees. While some found it difficult, several grantees felt that crowdfunding added value by necessitating the development of new partnerships and engaging the community in new and more meaningful ways. They appreciate that crowdfunding tends to level the fundraising field for small towns as they can set goals that work for their projects and communities.
- Grantees continue to experience a high degree of satisfaction after successfully meeting (and in many cases exceeding) their community fundraising goals.
- Receiving grant payments quickly was appreciated.
- Engaging their communities in new ways has created value, excitement, and satisfaction among the grantees.
- Community members placed high value on events that drew them together and reinvigorated spaces within their towns.

Activities, Quotes, and Stories

Better Places grantees planned and implemented a variety of activities. Over the course of two years, activities have included construction of accessible pavilions and parks, live performances, celebrations of downtowns and villages, and public murals celebrating diversity and collectively painted by community members. Murals and art installations remain popular, however structures that increased the usability and vitality of public spaces in the center of towns gained considerable community support in Vershire, Guilford, Middlebury, and Pittsford.

Junction Arts & Media (JAM) (Windsor County)

*Residents of the community have been impacted in diverse and numerous ways. We witnessed hundreds of people engage JAM's offerings by virtue of our repurposed street-level storefront space. Engagement has varied from curious passers-by to repeat participants in media-making workshops, film screenings, author talks, improv comedy, and scriptwriting, among other activities. Local residents tell us JAM is contributing to the "positive creative vibe" of White River Junction and the Upper Valley, and even that "JAM is making the Upper Valley a livable place". The focus of our Better Places creative placemaking has been in-person events, exhibits and workshops with a top priority on bringing people together in person after pandemic isolation and to strengthen the social fabric through the arts. By intentional design, our programming has **aimed for inclusivity of marginalized members of our community and to nurture relationships among local people of different walks of life.** We have witnessed a flourishing of individual and collective creativity and storytelling in the space this year with more than 4,500 community members participating in JAM events over the year.*

– Samantha Davidson Green, CATV Executive Director

Middlebury Bike Pump Track Project (Addison County)

*The new pump track has proven to be very popular with the community. While performing follow up work and maintenance to the track, we have observed a steady stream of cyclists have used and enjoyed the track. **Epecially notable are very young kids on either regular or strider (no pedal) bikes who come to the track. Both boys and girls are using the track in similar numbers. In addition to kids, adults are also enjoying the pump track. Both experts and adult novices can benefit from using the track.***

–Erik Remsen, Addison County Bike Club

Town of Vershire Pavilion (Orange County)

*As one person said when seeing it, "**This changes everything!**" We have already had two events with the pavilion. As organizers, it is such a relief not to have to worry about the weather, especially with musical events. It encourages more use of the pizza oven. The Pavilion Dedication brought out more folks than we have seen together in town since before COVID. We have had evening meetings outside. The skating rink will be set up soon so that folks can hang out under the pavilion. I have seen mothers sitting in the pavilion on their laptops or reading while their children play on the playground quite a few times already. There has already been one local event in the pavilion. **There is much more pride in our Town Center and a sense that we can make changes and create the town that we want to have.***

–Reva Seybolt, Vershire Town Center Committee

#Getdowntown in St. J (Caledonia County)

Better Places grant funds supported artist fees, event supplies, event infrastructure, and some marketing expenses to launch the St. J Final Fridays event series in partnership with Catamount Arts and the Town of St. J with three events in 2022. These events included a Street Fair & Gallery Stroll and a St. Johnsbury Live Music Series concert, which turned the downtown into a pop-up concert venue for the evening. Final Fridays gathered people together from different socio-economic, political, racial, and other identity groups to create a shared sense of community on three beautiful summer evenings. These events were wildly successful and have helped change the narrative about what kind of experiences you can have in downtown St. J and who is welcome here. In a time with increasing polarization and inequality, it's imperative that everyone who works in community and

economic development work as hard as we can to create reasons for people of different backgrounds and experiences to share space and experiences.

- Gillian Sewake, Discover St. Johnsbury

Activities led to positive community impact. Better Places events and activities drew a wide range of community members by age, socio-economic status, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and families, fostering new connections and conversations. Community building projects increased accessibility to important resources. Art installations encouraged conversation and storytelling, creating positive spaces that encouraged community members to see their town in new ways. Rehabilitated space continues to provoke discussion of what could be done next.

Windsor Public Library (Windsor County)

*Residents of our community are impacted by this project because our historical records room, children's room, and meeting room are now much more accessible for library patrons. Folks who cannot manage stairs are able to use the lift to access our lower levels. Meetings in our meeting room are now accessible to folks who cannot navigate stairs. Our children's room and bathroom are **now much more accessible to everyone.***

-Barbara Ball, Windsor Public Library

Jenna's House (Lamoille County)

*Since Covid, our town has had few opportunities to come together as a community. This grant allowed us to provide several opportunities free of charge. This funding allowed us to take another large step in **breaking down the barriers to people accessing substance use disorder treatment (SUD), and that was breaking down the stigma.** We have had a significant increase in awareness for Jenna's House and Jenna's Promise as a whole. This grant has created a space in our community that people are excited to visit and host events at.*

-Olivia McGovern, Jenna's House

SoRo Underpass Art (Windsor County)

*As all good art does, this art too is causing a stir! The rehabilitation of the space has started several conversations about the relationship between the railroad and the town as well as interest in what other areas could be improved upon. Overall, this project has **brought awareness to the need to create a sense of place, ownership, and pride in our community.***

-Rosella Gwin, South Royalton

High Street Mural (Windham County)

*This has been one of the most daunting projects that we have led to date, and we were so proud to watch it come to life! In addition to exceeding our fundraising goal, we were amazed by how far our campaign reached. **We had 94 donors, hailing from 36 towns, 12 states, and 3 different countries.** Among our supporters, we heard from many enthusiastic local community members. Many of our patrons live right on High Street or Main Street (adjacent to High Street) and shared their excitement at being able to look out their window and see the mural.*

- Jamie Mohr, Epsilon Spires

Grantees established new and enhanced collaborations. Each project was comprised of a central project leader who pulled together a wide range of partners. At times that effort was demanding, and they regularly reached out to new groups and organizations to share the work. Every project leader felt the Better Places project brought together new partners that will benefit future collaborative efforts.

Jenna's House (Lamoille County)

*We have been able to **collaborate with many local and statewide organizations** at Jenna's House. At our annual open house, we encourage other local human service organizations to table to build awareness for the services. A few organizations include The North Central Vermont Recovery Center, Clarina Howards Nichols Center,*

Hireability, & Johnson Health Center. Also, we provide free health and wellness offers like meditation, reiki, and yoga classes to the community weekly at Jenna's House. These practitioners offer demonstrations during the open house to increase awareness as well.
- Olivia McGovern, Jenna's House

Better Bennington Thursday Night Live! (Bennington County)

The Town of Bennington and the downtown merchants were very supportive of Thursday Night Live. Several Selectboard members were regular attendees. The relationship with our police officers was also strengthened by the project. One of the evenings highlighted Bennington College with the Middle Eastern Ensemble and it **was fabulous to see members of the college come downtown.**
- Jenny Dewar, Better Bennington Corporation

SoRo Underpass Art (Windsor County)

Many local businesses supported this project with financial backing. The local library- directly across from the site-- not only contributed financially but provided workspace for the artists during the installation. The Vermont Law School was another very supportive community partner. Many students have already expressed their excitement about the project and relief that the space will be lit at night. The collaboration of local organizations and businesses in **the fundraising effort brought us into contact with individuals within the community who may not otherwise be involved** with the initiating organizations. Building these relationships will help all of us to better support each other in the future.
-Rosella Gwin, South Royalton

Events and projects were inclusive and accessible. Each Better Places project focused on ways to assure inclusivity and accessibility for their community. Some of the strategies they used were designing accessible structures, centrally located activities, and offering free entertainment and food. Murals were created in safe, freely accessible areas with paved walkways and ample free parking.

Community Collaboration of Guilford (Windham County)

A keystone policy states that the park is open to the public at large. This includes everyone. We have made our Declaration of Inclusion which has been a recent feature of many institutions of the State of Vermont as an indicator of **commitment towards equity and inclusion.**
- Dunham Rowley, CCG

Beginner's Mind: a Mural Project for Rutland City (Rutland County)

The mural project reflects the world of reading and the adventures you can go on by reading books. It also **represents hopefulness, and the power of the arts to transform** - for this project the side of Rutland City Hall – as well as the feeling of vibrancy of that area of Rutland City. *- Sherri Birkheimer Rooker, Chaffee Art Center*

Jenna's House (Lamoille County)

This funding allowed us to create a walkway from handicapped parking to the lift entrance, all the way down to the back of the building. This allows for **easier access to the entire property for someone in a wheelchair or someone with limited mobility.**
- Olivia McGovern, Jenna's House

#Getdowntown in St. J (Caledonia County)

In contrast to traditional market-style fairs, street fair participants were either artists who received Better Places funds to provide free activities (live music, custom poems, live portraits, henna tattoos, a chalk mural) or they were local businesses/orgs who provided free experiences in exchange for hosting a table. We were able to provide free gelato, popcorn, lemonade, and other goodies at each event. In our programming, **we intentionally included representation from folks of diverse political, racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation identities, creating an event designed for people of different beliefs and experiences to feel safe and welcomed, share space, and share joy.**
- Gillian Sewake, Discover St. Johnsbury

The experience sparked new learnings. Several lessons were identified, including the need to set aside the time to develop new programming and organize events that brought together organizations that had not worked together previously. They appreciated the value of established partnerships while engaging with new partners. Key to success was understanding the need to engage the entire community, including town leaders.

[Community Collaborative for Guilford \(Windham County\)](#)

*As a result of the implementation of our project, we learned the complexity of conducting a capital campaign. We learned that the key to success for projects like this is **being able to communicate the vision of the project to the community in a way that is essentially positive and confident**. Sharing the vision over and over, and in the various ways through social media and invitations for the community to interact with the team, these are very important. Overcoming the anxiety of the team members and getting them to work in ways that sometimes goes outside the comfort zones is important.* - Denham Rowley, Community Collaborative for Guilford

[Waterbury Vermont Anti-Racism Coalition \(Washington County\)](#)

*A 3rd grade teacher took her class on a walking field trip the day after the mural was installed. Here are her comments: "Wow! It looks so good in person!! **I just love it as the new focal point in our sweet little town! The kids loved it too!!** They focused on loving the rainbow colors, the mother figure protecting all the kids and all the colors of skin, and the water/mountains being VT! Also now they want to try and paint on metal."*

- MK Monley, WAARC Director

[Park Street Community Project \(Addison County\)](#)

***Communication about the project to the community was very important, particularly for crowdfunding.** We created several ways to get the word out--marketing signs, cards, emails, Vergennes Partnership newsletters, Front Porch Forum, websites, social media, etc. Challenges were learning how best to run the crowdfunding campaign and how not to get discouraged early on. When we saw the support, it became a way to further our communication efforts. Working with and getting support from Patronicity was extremely helpful.*

- Bo Price, Park Street Committee

[Lamoille Art & Justice Project Community Mural \(Lamoille County\)](#)

***Effective marketing, education, and broad community outreach were necessary to help increase support for the project among allies and stakeholders.** This groundwork is essential with a public art project, and especially one that is centered around a challenging topic like racial justice. Our efforts were bolstered by the town of Stowe's acceptance of a new Declaration of Inclusion, and official recognition of the project under the Declaration. This action helped the public understand the significance of the project and showed that the community was invested in the mission of the Lamoille Art & Justice Project.* - Rachel Moore, The Current

[Merry Barre Holidays Light Up The City \(Washington County\)](#)

*The lessons I have learned through this project. 1. **That there are a lot of people that will put time into volunteering for a project such as this.** We had community members reach out to us that wanted to volunteer putting up garland. 2. Keeping things simple and not overdoing it or stressing when something goes wrong.*

- Tracie Lewis, Barre Partnership

Grantees stories. Numerous stories were shared in the final report. Here are a few that rise to the top as they speak of the impact on their own community:

[Windsor Public Library \(Windsor County\)](#)

Our 82-year-old front desk volunteer who has some trouble walking has been eagerly tracking the progress of our lift installation. "How's the lift coming?" we'd hear each week. He would never use the bathroom during his 2-hour regular volunteer shift due to the difficulty of using stairs. He was very excited to be the first unofficial lift rider, once it was installed, taking a ride to try it out during his shift, and then riding it an hour later to use the

facilities. He gladly rode the lift during our celebration, accompanying the 96-year-old official first rider, and showing her the ropes of lift ridership.

– Barbara Ball, Windsor Public Library

[Community Collaborative for Guilford \(Windham County\)](#)

People were pounding pegs into the timber frame structures with their names on them. Symbolic importance of "a piece of me in the building."

– Dunham Rowley, CCG

[#Getdowntown in St. J \(Caledonia County\)](#)

*A community member lives with her family in low-income housing that is right on Railroad Street where the **Final Fridays** series takes place. I asked her if she was planning to come to the event and she shared that she couldn't because she always felt bad that her son would ask to participate in things she couldn't pay for. I started to list off all the free things (like free gelato, face painting, popcorn, giveaways, cookies, live portrait drawing) that she and her son could take part in, and her face lit up. **That Friday, I saw her with her entire family on the street until the very end of the night (likely way past her son's bedtime!), enjoying every drop of what the event had to offer.***

- Gillian Sewake, Discover St. Johnsbury

[Lamoille Art & Justice Project Community Mural \(Lamoille County\)](#)

*Activity leaders from Juniper Creative Arts shared their experience leading youth and volunteers in the mural project: "During the installation of the rec path mural, we were approached by all types of individuals. Most were caught off guard because the entrance to the path was closed and from there, we engaged in conversations around the mural concept and design. All kinds of questions about the mural were asked. From 'How long will it last?' to 'What inspired the images within the mural?' The one thing that was consistent throughout our time in Stowe was the compliments we received on our work. So many wonderful, expressive compliments. **We really enjoyed our time creating something that the community could be proud of. It was a wonderful experience.**"*

– Rachel Moore, The Current

[Merry Barre Holidays Light Up The City \(Washington County\)](#)

***Seeing this project come to life, having so many people come to the event and seeing everything come together was absolutely magical.** From the donations to all the hours and hard work put into by so many people in the community, I feel like the whole community felt they were all a part of it. After videoing the light up and portions of the event, my photographer and I both stepped aside to take it all in. It was then that we both got emotional and teared up. We've done so much work to promote the City of Barre, however, this event was truly magical. Watching all the people so excited about this event and to see how beautiful our downtown looks is all we hoped it would be with this project, and more.*

–Tracie Lewis, Barre Partnership

In their own words: what participants had to say about their local project:

[Park Street Community Project \(Addison County\)](#)

*Wow, **the new green space is so beautiful!** I love how it all so integrated. I would love to spend some time here, just sitting, and relaxing.*

- Ron Redmond, City Manager

[Pittsford Village Pavilion \(Rutland County\)](#)

*The pavilion **enhances outdoor activities at the farm** as there is limited shade in the playscape and the community garden. It also provides a place for a picnic when the weather is inclement. Erin Eugair of Florence feels, "It (the pavilion) is in a great location for one stop shopping." She likes the fact that you can, "visit the library, get lunch at Kamuda's and have a picnic in the shade with the family or enjoy playdates at the farm."*

[Windsor Public Library \(Windsor County\)](#)

*"**This doesn't just help people in wheelchairs. It helps a lot of us.** My daughter will no longer need to take her sleeping baby out of the stroller when my grandson comes downstairs for story time. My uncle with his bum knee*

will now be able to join Spanish class when it happens in the meeting room."

– Windsor Public Library Patron

[Jenna's House \(Lamoille County\)](#)

*"It was so exciting to hold all these events and give back to the community that has supported us...thrilled with the changes to Jenna's House and **the opportunity it brings to hold more community events, it has turned into a gathering place for the Johnson community.**"*

- Amy Tatro, Co-founder of Jenna's Promise

[Lamoille Art & Justice Project Community Mural \(Lamoille County\)](#)

JCA artist Jennifer Herrera Condry explained that *"Public art created with **intention and that celebrates historically marginalized people has the potential of enriching the lives of everyone who comes in contact and engages with it.** It can also improve the sociocultural dynamics of a community."*

[Better Bennington Thursday Night Live! \(Bennington County\)](#)

*"Thursday Night Live provided a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together and enjoy a huge variety of high-quality musical and spoken word performances. Many people in Bennington would not have access to performances like this which makes them even more important. **Everyone deserves to experience the power of listening to live music.**"*

-Jeanne Conner, SelectWoman

[SoRo Underpass Art \(Windsor County\)](#)

From Alex Hanson, Royalton resident and reporter for the Valley News *"What Passage makes me think about is not my own response to it, but to **how it might influence the neighborhood kids, including my own, who walk by it and see a piece of their world reshaped by creativity and hard work.**"*

["Beginner's Mind": A mural project for Rutland City \(Rutland County\)](#)

Rutland Mayor David Allaire said at the unveiling that, although he was unsure about the prominent location when first asked for permission, he was very glad he'd agreed. *"Since the community has had a chance to look at it, I've heard nothing but positive reactions,"* Allaire said. *"**It's wonderful for us to be able to be a part of projects like this that are bringing art to the public,**"* Chaffee executive director Sherri Birkheimer Rooker said. *"It's accessible to everyone, all the time."*

[Merry Barre Holidays Light Up The City \(Washington County\)](#)

*"What an incredible event. **It could be a scene from a Norman Rockwell painting.** The lights, the people, the backdrop, the hot chocolate, the music ... WOW!"*

-David Rubalcaba, Barre City Fire Department

Better Places grantees shared their experience with the process. The crowdfunding process was new to all grantees and presented a challenge as they learned to create the webpages for their project. All grantees remarked that they received strong and welcome support from the Better Places team, especially from Richard (DHCD) and Camryn (Patronicity). They were pleased when they successfully reached their goal and were able to put their plans into action.

[Better Bennington Thursday Night Live! \(Bennington County\)](#)

*I am new to this position. I came in with the idea and plan to do Thursday Night Live. I was looking for the right grant fit and then Better Places became the obvious choice. I asked other organizations to let me go for this one and I pounced. **I found the whole process very user friendly.** Camryn from Patronicity and Richard Amore were invaluable resources and cheerleaders. **It was a very positive experience overall.***

- Jenny Dewar, Better Bennington Corporation

[#Getdowntown in St. J \(Caledonia County\)](#)

*I have never experienced a non-competitive funding program like this before. This approach **reduced the pressure of focusing on the application and funder priorities, and more towards telling the community the story about the event we were planning.** The quick turnaround from initial application to award was also very much appreciated!*
- Gillian Sewake, Discover St. Johnsbury

Grantees provided program feedback and suggestions. Below are a few responses directly from grantee reports.

Pittsford Village Pavilion (Rutland County)

*The program was well advertised and **accessible to the public.** I found the directions easy to understand. I also printed Patronicity materials in a notebook to follow the phases during the campaign. The most important strategy was to create a strong team. My treasurer and social media were topnotch and I could not have had a successful campaign without them. As previously stated, Richard Amore and Karen were always available and were quick to respond to any issues.*
- Donna Wilson, Pittsford Village Farm, Inc.

SoRo Underpass Art (Windsor County)

*We received adequate support and information from the Better Places team and project partners. **Questions were answered quickly, and support was readily available.** It would be great if there was an option for individuals who exceed their fundraising goal to obtain additional matching dollars. It was difficult for us to decide where to set the funding goal due to concerns about being able to successfully raise the match. This was the most daunting part of the grant program.*
-Rosella Gwin, South Royalton

"Beginner's Mind": A mural project for Rutland City (Rutland County)

*Camryn from Patronicity was the **most helpful support** that I needed. After reading all the materials, there were still many questions that I had in completing the application. Richard Amore was also a wonderful resource in this process. Maybe a review of the written materials by someone that has gone through the grant process to offer ways to make it easier to understand and follow.*
- Sherri Berkheimer Rooker, Chaffee Art Center

Merry Barre Holidays Light Up The City (Washington County)

*This project wouldn't have happened if it were not for Richard Amore of ACCD and Camryn from Patronicity. **Both were absolutely amazing to work with.** They understood my time crunch and helped push this project through really quickly. No matter what questions or issues I had, they were able to answer them quickly.*
- Tracie Lewis, Barre Partnership

Complete /Active (C/A)	County	Organization	Project	Community Patrons	Community Crowdfunding	Matching Better Places Grant	Total Better Places Award	Total Project Investment	Final Project Cost	# of Volunteers	Public Space created or redeveloped (sq.ft)	Jobs Created (temporary)
A	Addison	Bristol CORE	Bristol Farmers Market Music Series	57	\$ 5,070	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,070	\$ -				
A	Addison	Town Hall Theater	Performance & Public Plaza*	5	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,000	\$ -				
C	Addison	Vergennes Partnership	Park Street Community Project	109	\$ 21,950	\$ 40,000	\$ 61,950	\$ 86,346	\$ 64,492	5	5,500	3
C	Addison	Addison County Bike Club	Middlebury Bike Pump Track Project	37	\$ 6,703	\$ 12,000	\$ 18,703	\$ 5,000	\$ 23,700	12	10,920	4
A	Bennington	Better Bennington Corporation	Student Art Banners in Bennington	41	\$ 4,710	\$ 9,000	\$ 13,710	\$ -				
C	Bennington	Better Bennington Corporation	Better Bennington Thursday Night Live!	60	\$ 5,345	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,345	\$ 8,650	\$ 18,439	0	0	16
C	Bennington	Arlington Arts Enrichment Program	Creation of Arlington Common Ground	100	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 65,450	30	2200	1
C	Caledonia	St. Johnsbury WORKS	#Getdowntown in St. J	32	\$ 4,155	\$ 8,000	\$ 12,155	\$ 26,140	\$ 54,714	25	15,000	0
C	Chittenden	Fight for Kids Foundation	FKF Presents – Sweat, Flix & Chill	103	\$ 5,121	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,121	\$ 15,121	\$ 16,063	10	2,000	2
A	Chittenden	Friends of the FRAME	Activate the FRAME!	109	\$ 22,599	\$ 40,000	\$ 62,599	\$ 49,500				
A	Chittenden	Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center*	Lake Access for All	16	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 4,162,732				
A	Chittenden	Vermont Racial Justice Alliance	Richard Kemp Center Revitalization	92	\$ 11,012	\$ 20,600	\$ 31,612	\$ -				
C	Lamoille	The Current	Lamoille Art & Justice Project Community Mural	36	\$ 5,400	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,400	\$ 122,140	\$ 45,729	30	522	4
C	Lamoille	Jenna's Promise	Jenna's House Community Center	25	\$ 8,065	\$ 16,000	\$ 24,065	\$ 5,500	\$ 24,092	30	40,000	0
A	Lamoille	Town of Hyde Park	Hyde Park Views	93	\$ 22,070	\$ 40,000	\$ 62,070	\$ 10,000				
A	Lamoille	Town of Enosburgh	Enosburgh Community Playground	605	\$ 10,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 20,000				
A	Grand Isle	Town of North Hero	Bring a Projection System to the North Hero Community Hall	22	\$ 13,340	\$ 20,000	\$ 33,340	\$ -				
C	Orange	Town of Vershire	Vershire Town Center Pavilion	108	\$ 20,036	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,036	\$ 12,500	\$ 73,535	150	1,260	0
A	Orange	Fairlee Community Arts	Reconnect Fairlee's Main Street and Lake Morey	42	\$ 5,500	\$ 11,000	\$ 16,500	\$ 18,500				
A	Orleans	Memphremagog Community Maritime	Memphremagog Education and Science Center	69	\$ 20,430	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,430	\$ -				
A	Orleans	Coventry SPICE	Coventry Playground Renovation	38	\$ 20,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 21,000				
C	Rutland	Chaffee Art Center	Beginner's Mind Mural Project	35	\$ 6,103	\$ 12,000	\$ 18,103	\$ 1,758	\$ 18,042	13	504	0
A	Rutland	Come Alive Outside	Reimagine Depot Park	32	\$ 10,730	\$ 20,000	\$ 30,730	\$ 6,785				
A	Rutland	Pittsford Village Farm, Inc.	Pittsford Village Farm Pavilion	71	\$ 11,358	\$ 22,000	\$ 33,358	\$ 16,215	\$ 33,000	80	900	1
A	Rutland	Poultney Downtown Revitalization Committee	Poultney Downtown Mural Initiative	36	\$ 3,360	\$ 6,500	\$ 9,860	\$ -				
C	Washington	Barre Partnership	Merry Barre Holidays Light Up the City	32	\$ 5,025	\$ 10,000	\$ 15,025	\$ 1,747	\$ 16,844	25	18,000	0
A	Washington	Mad River Valley Dog Park Committee	Building of the Mad River Valley Dog Park	101	\$ 12,505	\$ 24,000	\$ 36,505	\$ -				
C	Washington	Waterbury Anti-racism Coalition	Waterbury VT Community Mural Project	133	\$ 10,405	\$ 20,000	\$ 30,405	\$ 4,000	\$ 38,009	50	0	4
A	Washington	Town of Roxbury	Roxbury Village Park Project	51	\$ 8,615	\$ 15,000	\$ 23,615	\$ 45,000				
A	Washington	Town of Warren	Warren Town Green Pavilion	98	\$ 20,863	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,863	\$ 56,990				
C	Windham	Epsilon Spires	High Street Mural	94	\$ 8,411	\$ 16,000	\$ 24,411	\$ 1,500	\$ 25,911	9	2,208	7
C	Windham	Community Collaborative of Guilford	Guilford Community Park Project	120	\$ 20,250	\$ 40,000	\$ 60,250	\$ 94,918	\$ 68,357	50	32,670	0
A	Windsor	Hartford Historical Society	Installation of a World War I and World War II Monument	120	\$ 28,605	\$ 28,000	\$ 56,605	\$ 31,000				
A	Windsor	Building a Local Economy, Inc.	Moon and Stars Summer Series	57	\$ 3,560	\$ 7,000	\$ 10,560	\$ -				
A	Windsor	COVER Home Repair	A Community Mural for Downtown White River Junction	121	\$ 4,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 11,000	\$ 10,000				
C	Windsor	Windsor Public Library	Windsor Public Library Lift	59	\$ 13,017	\$ 20,000	\$ 33,017	\$ 102,017	\$ 146,860	19	0	0
C	Windsor	Community Access Television, Inc. **	Come JAM with us at Junction Arts & Media!	100	\$ 17,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 47,000	\$ 102,000	\$ 102,072	30	820	5
C	Windsor	Town of Royalton	SoRo Underpass Art Project	93	\$ 8,160	\$ 16,000	\$ 24,160	\$ 41,500	\$ 65,660	30	1,800	4
TOTAL				3152	\$ 463,473	\$ 850,100	\$ 1,313,573	\$ 5,088,559	\$ 900,969	598	134,304	51

*project actively crowdfunding - amounts estimated

**one full time position created in addition to temporary positions