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State grant to fund Killington arts center study

By [Cristina Kumka](#) Herald Staff

For more than a decade, Killington residents have mulled what the town would be like if a performing arts center were built there.

By next year town officials are hoping they'll finally find out.

Courtesy of a \$25,000 Vermont Community Development Planning Grant awarded to the town, a bid will go out to contractors in February to do a preliminary feasibility study of a center, to determine if there's a demand for one in the town and if the town can financially sustain it, according to Killington Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development will mail the town a check in January, Ramsay said.

The study will be the precursor to a formal feasibility study, according to Ramsay, and will include "all on the economics."

The number of visitors coming to Vermont, the price of gas, the economy, trends in performing arts, and increase in desirability will all be investigated courtesy of the \$25,000 study, Ramsay said.

The grant money is the result of two meetings held this year between the Vermont Council on Rural Development and Killington officials, aimed at solidifying recommendations for moving forward in light of the council's development report on the town, Ramsay said.

One way to do that was through this grant so Ramsay applied for it in August and won, she said.

Killington Economic Development Director Carl Spangler said the idea for a performing arts center has been on the radar for years but this will be the first formal look at the project.

The study would show "if creating this would make economic sense and be sustainable and viable in the community," Spangler said.

"So far it has only been ideas," he said. "This is the first positive move forward to take a serious economic look at it."

A performing arts center could be one facet in the town's overall mission to "brand" and promote the town as a four-season resort community, according to a press release from the town of Killington.

"These tourism-related businesses tend to hire low- to moderate-income individuals; such jobs are critical to Killington area, with an August 2008 unemployment rate of 12.5 percent and an annual average wage that is 34 percent less than the statewide average," according to the release.

Killington's award, presented by Gov. James Douglas Dec. 16 at a ceremony in Lyndonville, was one of five community development grants totaling more than \$1.6 million issued through the Vermont Community Development Program for reducing energy costs, rehabilitating housing and laying the groundwork for future job creation.

West Rutland will receive \$750,000 in funding to be passed onto NeighborWorks of Western Vermont to use a loan fund to rehabilitate housing in Rutland, Bennington and Addison counties and provide counseling services for pre- and post-purchase delinquency and foreclosure prevention.

Thirty-thousand dollars of grant funding will be sent to Bennington to develop plans for the design and construction of a new community center and up to three additional units of housing at Applegate Housing.

And the city of Rutland will receive \$18,000 for the implementation of a regional food facility to process, store, and package locally grown and produced food.

For information on the Vermont Community Development Program, please see the Agency of Commerce and Community Development Web site at www.dhca.state.vt.us.

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