

Good Morning! Thank you for coming to celebrate the start of what is to become our new community space. During COVID, the Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocated one million dollars to our town. Last summer, the ARPA Committee asked Shaftsbury citizens for ideas and suggestions about how to spend the money. The results overwhelming spoke to a desire for a common space for the community. Today we are here to celebrate the beginning of fulfilling that wish.

This 2.2 acres was purchased using a portion of the ARPA funds and we have been working to create a green space. Our vision to see a community center and town green will take several years and many phases. Our next phase will be adding benches, a pavilion and landscaping around Cole Hall and the town green. The Economic Development Committee (EDC) is helping to manage the planning, funding and ongoing phases of this project in collaboration with The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC), Goldstone Architects, the Recreation Department and other state and local partners.

Later phases will include building our community center. We will have a visual concept for the green and community center in the coming months. Our community space will provide areas for gathering and connection for many groups in our community from youth to seniors.

The community center will require many sources of funding including ARPA funds, grants, private donations and you! The EDC is brainstorming funding opportunities including a buy a brick campaign and other fundraising ideas. It will take a village to make this vision a reality. We invite you to come to our meetings at Cole Hall in the coming year to participate and share your ideas.

We'd like to thank everyone at the BCRC, the staff at Cole Hall, the Department of Public Works, the EDC, the ARPA Committee and Shaftsbury residents for all your energy and excitement.

Our hope is that this project is a catalyst for revitalizing our downtown and adding new businesses to the area.