

Beyond School & Home

A Study of Third Spaces for Teens in New England's Rural Counties



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Created by Heather Brouillard



New England (HHS Region 1)

PTTC

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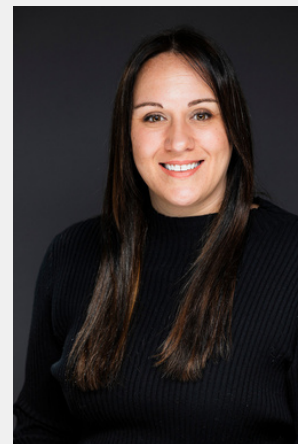
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About the Author

Heather Brouillard is a dedicated community advocate with deep roots in her hometown. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Castleton University and later pursued a legal education at Suffolk University Law School in Boston. Heather has built a career centered around youth-supportive services and has over a decade of experience working in both direct and indirect prevention efforts. Her work reflects a passion for creating safer, more supportive environments for young people to thrive.



The use of affirming language inspires hope.
LANGUAGE MATTERS.
Words have power.
PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.

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What is a Third Space

A third space is defined as environments outside the school that promote social engagement, learning, creativity, wellness, and recreation. These spaces play a critical role in adolescent development and substance use prevention. Especially in rural New England, where teens face higher rates of isolation, binge drinking, and early cannabis use, accessible third spaces are critical to fostering resilience and preventing long-term harm.

Third Space Categories

For the purposes of this study, third spaces were organized into eight distinct categories to reflect the diversity of youth interests and needs



Community & Cultural Spaces
recreation centers, public libraries, teen centers, cultural organizations



Creative & Performing Arts Spaces
dance studios, drama clubs, art studios, music lesson



Outdoor & Nature Based Spaces
public parks, skate parks, hiking trails, bike paths



Athletic & Wellness Oriented Spaces
sports fields & courts, aquatic centers, ice rinks, ski areas



Casual & Hangout Spaces
cafes, arcades, bowling alleys, and gaming lounges



Technology & Learning Hubs
tech centers, STEM clubs, robotics programs, computer labs



Civic & Faith Based Programs
church youth groups, local YMCAs, mentoring programs, 4-H, Scouts



Support & Wellness Oriented Spaces
peer support groups, LGBTQIA+ clubs, substance use prevention centers



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Resource Charting

This tool charts third spaces in rural New England counties, identifying each as public, private, or nonprofit and noting whether they provide free, paid, or mixed-cost services. This approach highlights which spaces are both geographically and economically accessible to teens, helping reveal gaps and guide equitable resource expansion. Access this information by state using the links below.

Why Asset Mapping?

Asset mapping is a powerful tool used to identify and visualize the resources, programs, and services available within a community. It helps stakeholders understand strengths, spot gaps, and make informed decisions to ensure equitable access and strategic investment.

Connecticut



Maine



Massachusetts



New Hampshire



Rhode Island



Vermont



**Find the Full Tool
Here:**



Limitations & Next Steps for Communities

These asset maps and resource charts are intended as a starting point for communities, organizations, and local leaders to better understand the landscape of third spaces for teens in rural New England. While they provide a broad view based on publicly available online information, they are not exhaustive. Local stakeholders; those with direct knowledge, lived experience, and on-the-ground connections; are essential to deepening this work. Communities are encouraged to use these tools as a springboard for conducting more in-depth, county- or town-level assessments that capture additional programs, informal gathering spaces, and evolving resources that may not be visible through online research alone.



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