



Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development is marketing a commercial kitchen to lease. PROVIDED PHOTO

## Winston Prouty seeks to 'bring kitchen to life'

By Chris Mays, Brattleboro Reformer

BRATTLEBORO — Officials at Winston Prouty Center for Child and Family Development hope an affordable price tag and a built-in community will attract the right person or group to rent a commercial kitchen.

"We're really looking for someone who will be thoughtful and creative and join us as a partner on campus to bring that kitchen to life in different ways," said Chloe Learey, executive director at the center.

Her group purchased the former Austine School for the Deaf campus in Brattleboro about four years ago and recently completed a campus planning process with community members who are specialists in different areas. One of the takeaways from the planning process was to maximize use of the more than 1,500-square-foot kitchen which has a walk-in freezer and refrigeration space, preparation area, a steamer, large mixer, cooking surfaces, multiple ovens, significant storage, and cleaning and sanitizing equipment.

Before the coronavirus pandemic hit, many meetings were held on the 184-acre campus which houses more than 30 businesses

and 160 tenants. Learey said there was "some success" last summer with having food trucks on site. And there is hope of hosting weddings and more events on the property when larger gatherings are allowed in the state — that too was a takeaway from the planning process.

The thought is that the kitchen could be used as a cafe, catering operation or production business.

"It's an underutilized asset," Learey

said, "so we really want to have it be a launching pad for someone."

Lisa Whitney, director of campus operations at the center, said the space has been used by frozen food company VT Dinners for freezer storage but minimally for cooking.

Staff at the center are open to helping a tenant tap into grants and loans to make kitchen upgrades. Rent would be \$1,000 a month.

"We think there are a million opportunities," Whitney said.

The center is looking for letters of interest by June 15. More information, photos and a floor plan are available at [winstonprouty.org/kitchen](http://winstonprouty.org/kitchen).

Learey said her group is looking for a tenant who will create a community on campus and support the broader community.

"We want a partner who is interested in being something that is bigger than themselves," she said. "I think we would consider a lot of things."

Through the campus planning process, officials at the center have watched their list of contacts grow. Whitney said they hope to get help from their new connections with finding a tenant for the kitchen.

"I do think word of mouth is going to be our best bet," Learey said, anticipating letters of interest might come from the local community and further out.

She said New York City residents might be interested in changing their lifestyle and moving after the pandemic.

The goal is to have someone in the space by September.

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