

# Community Investment Plan Hilltown Community Development Corporation

2017 – 2019

Hilltown CDC's Community Investment Plan is based on collaboration and reciprocity to maximize impact across intersecting segments of the rural communities we serve. These segments include the public sector (Town Select Boards and other governmental bodies), the private sector, non-profit partners and, most important, hilltown residents, many of whom are active in several overlapping sectors. This plan is based on "demand-side community development"; it is driven by the needs and desires of the rural communities we serve, as identified by local residents.

The following plan is an updated narrative based on our initial plan submitted in 2014. The plan writes to the required sections and discusses Hilltown CDC's plans and strategies to implement this CIP vision. We have added some new initiatives to the plan under New Activities which are a direct result of our CIP engagement activities set forth in the initial plan. Since we drafted our initial CIP, many of the issues we focus on in the hilltowns have not changed dramatically but it is clear to us that concerns regarding population loss, infrastructure, economic security and safety net services pose unique challenges related to a large rural geography. In some ways, our towns are remnants of the past struggling to compete in a technocratic world where younger people seek technology, urban living and all the conveniences of our county's service based economy. It is important to the residents in the hilltowns that there is a realistic relationship between state government and our towns. This means taking an informed look at what it takes to successfully operate and manage towns that have to support 500 to 1,500 residents. Our CIP plan attempts to offer strategies and services that provide meaningful solutions to our rural problem, but also promote a vision for rural Massachusetts that expresses our collective actions in setting forth a vision for the future. We hope DHCD will recognize the unique challenges we face in the hilltowns and how impactful the CITC program has been, and will continue to be, in supporting our activities.

We will comment on and describe our successes and challenges in the accompanying Community Partner Statement as a statement of our progress. We will also describe our utilization of tax credits in this statement and how we have engaged donors.

## Section 1 Community or Constituency(ies) to be served by the organization

Hilltown CDC has a "core" service area of ten hilltowns (primary service area) with some services offered to an additional hilltowns (secondary service area) in the western Massachusetts region (see attached map). All of Hilltown CDC's services are targeted to assist low to moderate income people in the hilltowns. These primary and secondary target areas make up the Hilltown CDC's "region of the Commonwealth." The primary service area includes the Towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg and Worthington, whose populations range from 400 to 2,631. The secondary service area includes the Towns of Ashfield, Becket, Blandford, Chester, Dalton, Hinsdale, Montgomery, Otis, Peru, Russell, Washington and Windsor, whose populations range from 517 to 6,750. None have populations over 7,500. All the towns we serve have populations under 7,500. Therefore, we qualify as a **rural region**. Town by town population information from the American Community Survey follows:

**Communities Served by Hilltown CDC**

**Primary Service Area**

Chester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,337</li> <li>• 48.1% LMI</li> <li>• 7.1% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36.7 square miles</li> <li>• 36 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Chesterfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,112</li> <li>• 41.5% LMI</li> <li>• 4.3% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31.26 square miles</li> <li>• 36 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Cummington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 997</li> <li>• 43.1% LMI</li> <li>• 13.5% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23.07 square miles</li> <li>• 43 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Goshen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,121</li> <li>• 34.2% LMI</li> <li>• 0.6% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.7 square miles</li> <li>• 63 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Huntington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 2,167</li> <li>• 40.5% LMI</li> <li>• 10.7% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26.78 square miles</li> <li>• 81 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Middlefield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 403</li> <li>• 42.6% LMI</li> <li>• 0.7% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24.13 square miles</li> <li>• 17 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Plainfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 536</li> <li>• 51% LMI</li> <li>• 5.2% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21.32 square miles</li> <li>• 25 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Westhampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,592</li> <li>• 28.3% LMI</li> <li>• 5.2% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 27.36 square miles</li> <li>• 58 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Williamsburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 2,631</li> <li>• 35.9% LMI</li> <li>• 6.7% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25.67 square miles</li> <li>• 102 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Worthington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,200</li> <li>• 37.8% LMI</li> <li>• 7.6% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 32.1 square miles</li> <li>• 37 people per square mile</li> </ul>

**Secondary Service Area**

Ashfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,737</li> <li>• 33.1% LMI</li> <li>• 9.2% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 40.4 square miles</li> <li>• 43 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Becket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,882</li> <li>• 41.8% LMI</li> <li>• 13.7% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47.8 square miles</li> <li>• 39 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Blandford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,129</li> <li>• 30.5% LMI</li> <li>• 5.5% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53.6 square miles</li> <li>• 21 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Dalton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 6,750</li> <li>• 36.4% LMI</li> <li>• 4.5% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21.9 square miles</li> <li>• 308 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Hinsdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 2,149</li> <li>• 46.6% LMI</li> <li>• 4.3% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21.7 square miles</li> <li>• 99 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Montgomery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 861</li> <li>• 26.4% LMI</li> <li>• 3.3% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15.2 square miles</li> <li>• 57 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Otis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,309</li> <li>• 35.6% LMI</li> <li>• 11.7% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 square miles</li> <li>• 34 people per square mile</li> </ul>

Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 914</li> <li>• 46.7% LMI</li> <li>• 7.9% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 square miles</li> <li>• 35 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Russell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 1,743</li> <li>• 48.2% LMI</li> <li>• 6.3% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17.9 square miles</li> <li>• 97 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Washington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 517</li> <li>• 39.2% LMI</li> <li>• 3.2% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38.7 square miles</li> <li>• 13 people per square mile</li> </ul>
Windsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total population: 884</li> <li>• 40.2% LMI</li> <li>• 2.4% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35.1 square miles</li> <li>• 25 people per square mile</li> </ul>

## **Section 2 Involvement of community residents and stakeholders**

Hilltown CDC was formed 36 years ago by local residents in response to local needs. It has always been governed by a citizen Board of Directors. All of its programs and activities have been in response to local needs as identified by local residents. Resident and stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of our programs is part of the definition of who we are and what we do. The activities to be implemented in our Community Investment Plan have been identified and chosen in the same way.

Since the implementation of our CIP in 2014 we have increased the involvement of community residents and stake holders in our work. The following is a list of some of the engagement activities in which the Hilltown CDC has played a lead role in gathering community opinions about needs and solutions for the region:

- Formation of a Continuum of Care (CoC) Community Board of Directors
- Execution of CoC Governance Charter and Written Standards
- Formation of Regional Coordinating Council Transportation advisory board
- Facilitation of a Sustainable Design Architectural Team initiative
- Leadership and collaboration in the development of The Western MA Health Equity Network
- Fiscal Sponsorship for a grassroots Arts and Culture initiative “Hilltown Chautauqua”
- Town of Goshen Senior Housing committee

## **Section 3 Plan goals**

The primary goal of Hilltown CDC’s Community Investment Plan is to fulfill Hilltown CDC’s mission of “improving the quality of life of Hilltown residents by addressing economic, housing, educational, social and community needs while preserving the rural character of the area. To advance our mission:

- “We identify community needs through public participation, and we support appropriate solutions.
- “We seek and sponsor programs that promote economic and social equality.
- “We actively develop programs to help create opportunities for hilltown residents.
- “We advocate for services for hilltown residents in particular and for rural communities in general.
- “We serve all who live and/or work in the hilltowns, emphasizing support for low and moderate income residents and businesses.”

- We participate directly in advocacy that promotes legislation, programs and resources to support the sustainability of rural towns in MA.

Community Investment Plan activities will have an impact on low to moderate income constituents as well as on the entire community of hilltown residents. This is a regional effort with an interdisciplinary approach to problem solving designed to bring together the public, private and non-profit sectors. It will build and strengthen a network of support across a large rural and sparsely populated region.

Low and moderate income households, and the entire community, will benefit from:

- Increasing the scope and effectiveness of senior services in the region
- Building additional senior housing
- Developing a regional agricultural plan in cooperation with the farmers and woodsmen of the region
- The amelioration of homelessness by the agencies supported by the three-county Continuum of Care
- The creation of new hilltown businesses, and the strengthening of those which already exist, leading to additional local jobs
- The creation and improvement of affordable housing in the region
- The renovation of substandard housing stock for low and moderate income households
- The expansion of Arts and Culture programming, events and tourism in the region
- In increased awareness of public health concerns related to the built environment, economic security, healthy living and infrastructure
- An effective rural transportation system
- increased awareness and intersection of public health and community development

The entire community benefits when local residents can stay in their communities rather than seeking opportunities elsewhere. This increases the tax base, supports local volunteer organizations such as Fire Departments and churches, and keeps the community from “hollowing out.” Current trends in our country related to out migration from rural areas will impact the hilltown region. It will be important to continue to pay close attention to this phenomenon and develop ways to “manage the transition”. Population, resources and economic activity will all continue to remain dynamic and create new challenges for the hilltowns and how we envision a strong identity into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **Section 4 Activities to be undertaken**

**Continue A Regional Approach:** Based on the economic geography of the hilltown region, a regional approach to community development and investment must be part of our plan. Hilltown CDC has consistently approached its work as a regional effort and continues to do so in this Community Investment Plan. Hilltown CDC will continue to play a leadership role in the state regarding rural programs and policies. Our approach will continue to respond to the expressed needs of residents in the region. Other regional approaches are described below. Expected impacts: Collaboration across sectors and the implementation of systems that create common assessment practices for determining levels of assistance and intervention across the region. Constituencies served: residents of the western Massachusetts hilltowns, community based organizations and local government.

**Senior Services:** Hilltown CDC will continue to support the growing local senior population. Community Investment Tax Credits will make it possible to expand the existing Hilltown Elder Network (HEN), which currently provides in-home chore services to local elders to help them stay in their homes. We will continue to keep this a priority in our region and work with our local residents to ensure a safety net is in place for our oldest and most vulnerable neighbors. Expected impacts: seniors in need of home health care will be able to stay in their homes. Constituencies served: seniors in need of services; their families; the entire community, who learn about themselves from the history represented by the oldest members of the community.

We will also use CITC funding to support the development of senior housing in Goshen, as guided by the Goshen Senior Housing Committee. CITC will help support the overall capacity to complete this project which is slated to start construction in 2017. Expected impacts: 10 additional units of affordable housing for seniors. Constituencies served: seniors (over 60 years of age) living in the hilltown region, and their families.

**Agriculture/Farming:** Important attributes of our rural region are its open land and widespread forests, with the potential for agricultural business expansion. Hilltown CDC facilitated a “Keep Farming” initiative in 2014/2015. Hilltown CDC produced a regional agricultural plan. In 2017 we received MA DAR funds to implement one component of the Keep Farming plan. Additional CITC funds will help us move toward full implementation of the plan over the next few years. Expected impacts: more communication among farmers and woodsmen across town and county borders, leading to locally-designed initiatives; increased farming productivity and profitability; increased retention of open space. Constituencies served: farmers and woodsmen; all local residents who benefit from the retention of open space. Expected impacts: increased local availability of fresh produce and local farm products. Constituencies served: participating farmers; all residents who seek to purchase fresh produce without a long drive.

**Rural Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance:** Hilltown CDC is currently the Collaborative Applicant and lead administrator for the Three County Rural Continuum of Care (CoC) which provides federal HUD funding to 16 grant funded programs run by 6 agencies across Berkshire, Hampshire and Franklin counties to address and prevent homelessness. Hilltown CDC’s role is to engage the community in developing and maintaining a housing and homeless service plan to eliminate chronic homelessness and prevent homelessness from occurring when possible. Hilltown CDC administers roughly \$1.6 million dollars in HUD Continuum of Care funding for the three counties. Hilltown CDC will help increase the participation of community leaders, businesses and governments in the Continuum of Care process. CITC funding will be used to support this effort.

Expected impacts: the reduction of homelessness across the three rural counties of western Massachusetts. Constituencies served: residents who are already homeless, the chronically homeless, residents who are at risk of homelessness. This population includes many sub-populations for whom specific targeted activities are designed to address specific problems that contribute to homelessness.

Hilltown CDC, as the Collaborative Applicant for the HUD 3 County Rural Continuum of Care, has implemented an intensive planning process that is aligning the Three County CoC with the Federal Plan to End Homelessness: Opening Doors. There is a sharp focus on targeting homeless veterans and unaccompanied youth as important sub-populations that add to the complexity of how homelessness impacts all the segments of our society.

Hilltown CDC conducts annual point-in-time counts of homeless populations across all three counties. In addition, Hilltown CDC has collaborated with DHCD in conducting statewide Point in Time counts for unaccompanied youth across all 3 western Massachusetts counties.

Hilltown CDC coordinates a number of sub-committees designed to address homelessness among various sub-populations.

At a systems level, Hilltown CDC has taken a lead role with housing and service providers in promoting the best practice of a Housing First approach to addressing homelessness, which includes the expansion of permanent supportive housing options for the chronically homeless and rapid re-housing models for homeless families.

This program also ties into our housing rehabilitation and affordable housing programs. Low cost rehabilitation of the substandard homes of low and moderate income households can help prevent homelessness by ensuring homeowners are able to maintain their homes free of code violations, with reduced maintenance expenses and increased energy efficiencies. Our agency-owned affordable housing now includes units set aside for homeless families and veterans. Access to affordable housing is one of the primary barriers to ending homelessness, particularly in Massachusetts. Hilltown CDC recognizes that to address homelessness there must be a comprehensive approach to its reduction and ultimate eradication. This includes a balance between access to current housing stock, rehabilitation of sub-standard housing and the production of new housing. Hilltown CDC believes that every community across the Commonwealth must play its part in addressing homelessness. There must be a continuum of housing and services available in every community in order to provide a safety net for people who are experiencing housing instability. Prevention is the best antidote for homelessness. Through its affordable housing program, Hilltown CDC has made housing available in the most rural area of the state. This approach can limit the need for people to relocate or end up in a region of the state where they do not have natural supports should they experience an episode of homelessness .

**Small Business Assistance/Economic Development:** Hilltown CDC will continue to offer small business assistance to hilltown businesses, as it has for 25 years. Over 2,000 local businesses have been assisted. These services include individual consulting, specialized technical assistance, and training for existing and prospective businesses. Also, the annual publication of a Hilltown Business Directory serves to promote over 300 locally-owned businesses in the hilltowns. The Business Directory is distributed once a year to 16,500 households in 22 towns, and is also available on-line. CITC funding will be used to support this effort. Expected impacts: more local jobs; more private investment in local businesses. Constituencies served: local employers; local employees and those looking for work closer to home; local consumers.

**Affordable Housing:** As part of Hilltown CDC's regional and sub-regional approach to community development, our affordable housing program focuses on developing scattered site, low density rental properties and specialized housing for seniors, veterans and homeless families. As the local population ages, there is a high demand in the hilltowns for senior housing; this ties into Hilltown CDC's commitment to increasing in-home services to seniors and supporting the Councils on Aging in an effort to explore multiple ways to meet the needs of seniors. In addition, Hilltown CDC will continue to seek funding to provide Housing Rehabilitation and First Time Homebuyer services to hilltown residents. These services have been consistently prioritized in each town's Community Development Strategy; they are also consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainability Principles.

CITC funding will support this effort. Expected impacts: the creation of more senior housing units where the need is identified by residents; improvement of existing affordable housing units owned by Hilltown CDC; rehabilitation of substandard homes for low and moderate income residents, resulting in sustainable mixed income populations. Constituencies served: low and moderate income residents of substandard housing; seniors who need appropriate housing in their communities; the families and neighbors of these residents. Also served: The entire community is served when substandard homes are rehabilitated; the town receives more tax revenue and local property values increase.

### New Activities

**Arts and Culture:** Over the past few years Hilltown CDC has made a commitment to explore and develop a plan to promote Arts and Culture in the region. We are providing fiscal sponsorship service to a local grassroots initiative, the "Hilltown Chautauqua". We are featuring local artists in our office art gallery. Currently we are showing art made by homeless veterans.

We will continue to grow this new approach to community development based on national models of successful creative placemaking. There is ample support for this activity as evidenced by local support including considerable fundraising dedicated to this activity. Many new donors gave through CITC to support this initiative. Expected Impact: Increase in economic activity, tourism and work for local artists, musician, writers and speakers. Constituencies served: The regional hilltown communities.

**Community Public Health:** Over the past few years Hilltown CDC has made Community Public Health part of our CIP. This new focus was inspired by a local initiative that created a Western MA Health Equity Network (WMHEN) in western MA led by UMASS's department of public health. Hilltown CDC's Executive Director is a founder and steering committee member of the WMHEN. As part of this work, Hilltown CDC received some funding from MA DPH to engage in rural public health work with the community. We partnered with *Healthy Hampshire*, a program run by the Collaborative for Educational Services and facilitated a regional Sustainable Design Architectural Team (SDAT) process. This resulted in a number of engagement activities and a regional plan. Expected Impact: Increased awareness of public health issues, ways for residents to get involved in regional activities regarding public health. Constituencies served: The regional hilltown communities.

**Transportation:** As part of our CIP we have identified transportation as an unmet need in the hilltowns. The community has worked with Hilltown CDC over the past year to form a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) focused on better understanding the transportation needs of hilltown residents. More detail on our past year of work is outlined in our statement of progress. Hilltown CDC has developed a positive working relationship with the Franklin County Regional Transit Authority and MA DOT to help the hilltown region reimagine a rural transportation system. Our RCC meets monthly and is made up of residents from various hilltowns, seniors, Highland Valley Elder Services, the local Hilltown Community Health Center, Cooley Dickenson Hospital, FRTA, Mass Mobility, Veteran Services Officer and the local Council's On Aging. It is the RCC's vision to expand transportation for seniors, veterans, those living with disabilities and those needing assistance to get to work. Hilltown CDC is developing a business plan to provide transportation services with an FRTA van. We hope to pilot this service in the summer of 2017.

## Section 5 How success will be measured and/or evaluated

Success will be measured in multiple ways and the tools and methodologies will be appropriately adapted to address specific initiatives and desired outcomes. The general evaluation of our CIP will be discussed in our bi-monthly staff meetings and monthly board meeting to keep Board members and staff engaged in our efforts as an organization.

Some outcomes will be easier to measure than others. The creation of new senior affordable housing units or newly renovated homes is a relatively easy quantitative outcome to measure. Overall community improvement and sustainability are much more difficult to measure in short periods of time. Comprehensive community development requires a longitudinal aspect of measuring outcomes across a large community representing a diversity of interests. This necessitates the use of benchmarks as indicators of progress when promoting systems change on a community level. Informed evaluation also requires direct feedback from community residents as to their perception and “feeling” of change in their community. Ultimately, it is human behavior that must change in order to accomplish the goals of this CIP. The tools, resources, strategies and plans are all part of how we interact as people, neighbors, family members and co-workers.

Hilltown CDC has identified broad comprehensive community development goals in Section 3 of this plan based on 35 years of community development work in the hilltown region and an increased focus on community engagement in the past four years. We will continue to build on our community engagement successes and incorporate the results into our ongoing strategic planning for the region.

We have very specific evaluative measures for the following initiatives:

### Affordable Housing:

- Construct 10 units of senior housing in Goshen by April 2018
- Complete the rehabilitation of 50 homes across the hilltowns by July 2019
- Conduct a market study to determine affordable housing needs in the region 2017/2018

### Small Business Assistance/Economic Development:

- Provide specialized counseling services to local start-up and existing businesses
- Implement a Keep Farming initiative between 2017-2019

### Reduce/End Regional Homelessness:

- Assess and prioritize homeless individuals and families and identify appropriate housing resources to end homelessness
- Implement a Regional Coordinated Assessment and Entry program
- Strengthen the Continuum Community Board and leadership opportunities

### Senior Services:

- Continue the Hilltown Elder Network model
- Support the local Council's on Aging

### Community Engagement:

- Continue ongoing community meetings to gather feedback
- Facilitate community dialogue around identified needs
- Assist with the completion of annual Community Development Strategies in multiple hilltowns; the number is different each year



#### Sustainability:

- Encourage towns to seek Green Communities designation
- Continue to work with community members to promote regional collaboration, resource sharing and leadership development

#### Transportation:

- Implement a pilot transportation van service across 7 hilltowns in collaboration with FRTA/DOT in 2017

#### Arts and Culture:

- Continue to promote the Hilltown Chautauqua series (2 primary events annually)
- Continue to feature local artists in office gallery (rotating artists throughout year)

#### Community Public Health:

- Support the Western MA Health Equity Network – participate in planning and presentation of annual Summit at UMASS.
- Seek additional funds to implement public health initiatives identified in community planning process

### **Section 6 Collaborative efforts to support implementation**

Hilltown CDC currently collaborates with a host of non-profits, businesses, stakeholders and municipal governments, including but not limited to:

- Hilltown Consortium of Councils on Aging
- Highland Valley Elder Services
- Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- Franklin County Council of Governments
- Hampshire County Council of Governments
- Berkshire Regional Housing Authority
- HAP Housing
- Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Hilltown Community Health Center
- Collaborative for Educational Services
- Cooley Dickenson Hospital
- Service Net
- Soldier On
- Community Action of the Franklin, Hampshire and North Quabbin Regions
- Berkshire Community Action Council
- Franklin County Community Development Corporation
- Valley Community Development Corporation
- Massachusetts Broadband Institute
- Town Select Boards in our primary and secondary target areas

Hilltown CDC has been working directly with municipal governments in the hilltowns for 35 years on a number of initiatives. The most robust initiatives have been the administration of regional CDBG

programs dating back to 1987 and the development of scattered site affordable housing. Hilltown CDC has worked with local hilltowns to secure over \$27 million dollars in CDBG funding. Hilltown CDC has been selected by local hilltowns to prepare CDBG grant submissions and, when awarded, administer programs funded by this resource. Town Select Boards and committees are supportive of Hilltown CDC's efforts and regularly contact the agency for assistance.

In addition to incorporating regional planning initiatives into our CIP, Hilltown CDC works directly with the two entitlement communities in our region (Northampton and Pittsfield) to contribute language to their Consolidated Plans to address affordable housing and homeless housing and services. By leveraging the input and expertise of partner organizations, Hilltown CDC advocates for the hilltown region to be included in regional planning and reminds the larger region of the importance of maintaining a vibrant rural region where open space, recreation, agriculture, tourism and cottage industry can flourish. Connecting the hilltown economy and geography to the Pioneer Valley and Western Massachusetts urban centers creates linkages across communities and bridges talent and expertise across the rural/urban divide.

Hilltown CDC's Business Assistance Program is a partner with Franklin County CDC and Valley CDC in a region-wide program called Western Mass Means Business, which offers the collective resources of all three agencies to existing and future businesses in all of Franklin County, the western half of Hampshire County, parts of northern and central Berkshire County, the North Quabbin region in Worcester County, and parts of western Hampden County.

### **Section 7 Integration of activities/consistency with community strategy and vision**

Hilltown CDC has always worked regionally across a large group of hilltowns. Activities and services are designed to provide support to low to moderate income households through a continuum of services focused on the needs of a rural population. The Community Investment Plan uses input from residents to identify local needs and to create a larger vision and strategy for the entire community.

All our activities are focused on strengthening local communities while preserving their rural character. This includes:

- **Housing**: rehabilitation of substandard housing; refurbishing of existing affordable housing to preserve its viability; creation of new affordable housing
- **Seniors**: creation of additional housing appropriate for seniors, to help them remain in their communities; in-home chore services for seniors, to help them remain in their homes; development of locally-based certified home health care services; promoting the collaboration of single town Councils on Aging to enhance services for seniors
- **Agriculture**: collaborating with local farmers and woodsmen to establish appropriate programs to strengthen agriculture and preserve open space; business development services for farmers and woodsmen.
- **Homelessness**: coordinating many local agencies, through the Continuum of Care, to provide improved services to prevent and ameliorate homelessness; designating affordable apartments for the homeless.
- **Business Assistance**: helping new and existing businesses grow and survive

- Many hilltown communities have Community Development Strategies, listing current needs and priorities and recent accomplishments. These Community Development Strategies are prepared with the assistance of Hilltown CDC. They have been useful in working across towns on comprehensive planning and resource development. They provide, on an annual basis, a way to coordinate our activities with specific single-town plans and priorities. This ongoing practice has allowed for the hilltowns to be engaged for many years in community development planning and implementation.
- Multi-agency collaborations: Many of our activities are undertaken in coordination with other regional non-profits in the hilltowns such as the Hilltown Community Health Centers and the Hilltown Food Pantry. Hilltown Community Development planning incorporates needs assessments from Community Action, the local CAP agency, and from the Regional Planning Commissions as well as from single-town Community Development Strategies.
- Transportation: Currently an underutilized van operated by the Town of Goshen is serving the region. Hilltown CDC has been brought in to help increase ridership and put in place a sustainable business plan for the use of the regional van service.
- Arts and Culture: A significant population of artists, musicians and artisans can help support economic activity in the hilltowns as well as a sense of community. Hilltown CDC is working with local residents to increase the profile of arts and culture in the region.
- Public Health: Hilltown CDC is promoting the intersection of public health and community development particularly related to the built environment. We are utilizing PDH funds to engage residents, town select boards and committees to envision ways to improve public health, recreational opportunities, access to fresh food and other ways to promote healthy communities.

## **Section 8 Financing strategy**

Hilltown CDC continues to enjoy a long history of receiving and managing funding from federal and state sources including various Department of Housing and Community Development Block Grants, HUD Continuum of Care funding, HDSP, AHTF, EDF, MHP, USDA Rural Housing Preservation Grants, Federal Home Loan Bank Board, the state Attorney General's Office, the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation and private foundations.

Local resources have always presented a greater challenge to the CDC due to the nature of the region served. This area has few residents of wealth, and very little industry with no large employers. Despite these structural challenges, Hilltown CDC has been able to engage local banks, our United Way and a local hospital to contribute to our mission. We also have an ongoing relationship with a private foundation that contributes to our annual operating budget.

We will use the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits to reach out to current donors to solicit their continued support. We will also use the CITC program to reach out to new donors and expand our reach across the western MA region.

Hilltown CDC is considering hiring an experienced fund-raising consultant similar to the one we hired to launch our CITC program but with more of a focus on engaging new donors. We have identified a number of new potential donors and our Board of Directors has established a CITC fundraising committee. A fund development plan was created that focuses on three areas of outreach: our committed local banks, to increase their participation through tax credit incentives; local businesses,

especially those with ties to the CDC (contractors who have built our affordable and senior housing projects, for instance) and individuals who have donated in the past or who have been identified as donors, and who have the potential to contribute \$1,000 or more. The board committee works with the ED, CFO and fundraising consultant to implement this multi-year plan to increase our overall fund-raising capacity.

We anticipate that the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits in 2017 will result in an increase in our annual donations from banks, businesses and individuals. The extra donations will strengthen our ability to carry out our current and future programs and activities, many of which are listed in Section 4 above. The additional funds will also be used to:

- Further strengthen our future fund-raising capability
- Increase our ability to creatively engage with our community to discover additional needs and develop creative solutions
- Continue to invest in our new program areas of Transportation, Arts and Culture and Community Public Health

### **We are requesting \$150,000 in Community Investment Tax Credits in 2017.**

Implementation of Community Investment Plan activities will be financed by increases in contributions that are encouraged by the CITC program. This additional fundraising will be used as leverage to match a growing diversity of funds that the CDC secures from foundations, government grants, donations and fee-for-service contracts. The tax credit donations will help the CDC demonstrate to other potential funders that there is significant local investment in the CDC's mission. Matching grants and donations will achieve a multiplier effect on investment.

### **Section 9 History, Track Record and Sustainable Development**

As stated earlier, Hilltown CDC has been providing comprehensive community development services to the hilltown region since 1982. We have developed an expertise in the area of administering complex government grants. We have secured permanent financing and soft debt to develop the only state supported affordable housing developments in the hilltown region. We have also supported a regional social service delivery system that provides food pantry services, elder support services, child care support and income supports for low to moderate households. In addition, we have developed a unique hilltown small business assistance program, including the publication of a Hilltown Business Directory that promotes over 300 local businesses annually with a printed and online directory that reaches 16,500 local homes.

Hilltown CDC has built strong fiscal policies and procedures and has always produced clean financial audits. We are on time with our reporting and maintain a solid track record of compliance with regulatory requirements. The following list is a sample of our history successfully managing the financial activities related to our service delivery model:

- 28 years of administering regional CDBG grant awards (over \$25 million) and conducting monitoring of sub-recipients
- 18 years of securing, developing and rehabilitating affordable housing stock in the hilltown region using multiple sources of financing
- Currently managing/administering \$1.6 million in HUD Continuum of Care funds and conducting the monitoring of 7 sub-recipients and 16 grant agreements

- Fiscal sponsorship services to Hilltown Chautauqua Arts and Culture programming
- Technical Assistance to towns, select boards and committees to access resources and develop community wide plans
- Helped forge a collaboration between Hilltown CDC, Franklin County CDC and Valley CDC to create the Western Mass Means Business program providing small business assistance across the region utilizing grants from the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation.

Through Hilltown CDC's many years of community development accomplishments in the hilltowns and the comprehensiveness of our scope, we have consistently aligned ourselves with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles. This is evidenced by:

- Our small scale affordable housing developments
- Our small business and local economic development programs
- Our assistance to local municipalities to comply with handicap accessibility requirements by the renovation of community centers, Town Halls and senior centers.
- Our development of energy efficient housing for low and moderate income families. For first-time home buyers, we built and sold 11 homes that each have a full array of solar panels resulting in little to no energy costs for homeowners and no pollution as a byproduct of energy generation.
- We have successfully promoted green energy initiatives, helping towns obtain Green Communities designation,
- We have maintained consistency with the rural character of the region when developing small-scale senior housing and family housing,
- We are currently using \$80,000 in CPA funds from the Town of Goshen to secure land to build senior housing.
- Hilltown CDC has also promoted the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles when assisting local towns in developing their annual Community Development Strategies.

Almost everything we do is approached from a regional perspective promoting collaboration and sharing of resources.

The most challenging Sustainable Development Principle for the hilltowns to address has been that of providing transportation choice.

List of Attachments (samples of work products):

- **Hilltown CDC regional service area map**
- **CoC Governance Charter**
- **Transportation Survey results**
- **Sustainable Design Architectural Team power point presentation**