

Hilltown Community Development On The Ground

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Vital Community Development Programs Fully Funded

On behalf of the Town of Chesterfield, Hilltown CDC will administer a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to continue our most popular community development programs. This competitive funding is made available each year through a federal program known as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). Passed by Congress under President Ford in 1975, the program's purpose is to redistribute influence from the federal bureaucracies to local governments. Communities across the nation have used the funding to improve public infrastructure, build and rehabilitate housing stock, support economic development initiatives, and fund public services.

Since 1987 Hilltown CDC has administered CDBG funds on behalf

of several local towns for projects to improve the accessibility of public facilities, plan and build affordable housing units, construct a town public safety complex, run a small business loan program, support our local Hilltown food pantry, and provide in-home medical and chore services to seniors. This year's funding will support the Housing Rehab Program, Hilltown Elder Network (HEN), Health Outreach Program for Elders (HOPE), the Goshen Food Pantry, and Childcare Subsidies for residents in seven towns: Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg, and Worthington.

Paula Bilodeau has led our Housing Rehab program for the past six years, administering 98 zero-interest, deferred, forgivable loans to local homeowners to make necessary repairs to

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their houses in that time. "Increasing the number of code-compliant homes in our region is a key component to ensure resident safety, improve energy efficiency, and contribute positively to local economic development," says Paula. "From leaky roofs, failed septic systems, no water, no heat, and toxic exposure to lead or asbestos, this one program can make all the difference in

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From the Executive Director



Greetings Hilltown Neighbors!

As summer turns to fall, we are feeling grateful for all the people in our communities who work so hard to enhance our quality of life here in the Hilltowns. We are committed to supporting this work and developing creative partnerships that benefit our rural families, businesses and towns.

Recently, on behalf of the Town of Chesterfield, we were awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), a federal grant that will fund our housing rehabilitation program and provide vital social services to Hilltown residents in seven towns: Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Peru, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington.

My view of this work includes a strategy to get our money back to our community from the government. We have all paid our taxes and our hard-earned income should come back to us in the form of government investments. That is what the CDC does when we apply for funding for the region. We have applied for CDBG funds for the Hilltown region for over 25 years. As a result, we have secured over \$25 million in federal funds for our community. This has resulted in over 700 homes being rehabilitated, including repaired wells, septic systems and lead removal. It also has allowed us to develop a social service safety net for underserved Hilltown residents.

Rural America has suffered from years of disinvestment and we are not immune to this in the Hilltowns. Our sparse populations do not offer much of a profit motive to the business community and our government doesn't pressure public utilities enough to invest in rural technology or infrastructure. Our goal is to continue to compete for resources on behalf of Hilltown residents and to help government better understand our rural economic conditions. We will continue to advocate for ways to return money to our region and to invest in the preservation of our rural communities and lifestyle.

I also want to recognize the staff at the CDC without whom we could not leverage these vital funds. Our CDBG administrator is Bea von Hagke. Bea coordinates the annual submission of CDBG proposals on behalf of the region. She may be the best in the state at what she does.

Our Housing staff includes rehab manager Paula Bilo-deau, housing specialist Doug Desmarais, social services manager Charlie Hayes, and all our caregivers who provide services to Hilltown seniors. These employees are all the best at what they do.

We are so lucky to have a strong team and honored to have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the Hilltowns at the local, state, and federal level. As always, we welcome your ideas and look to you to guide our advocacy work and direct our staff and financial resources. Our Hilltowns wouldn't be so vibrant without each and every one of you.

Dave

CDBG Funding Award

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the world to homeowners who can't afford to make these repairs." To learn more about the Housing Rehab Program and see if you may be eligible, contact Paula at 413-296-4536 x123 or paulab@hilltowncdc.org.

Also funded in this year's CDBG grant are our social services programs, administered for the last 24 years by Charlie Hayes. One of these is the Hilltown Elder Network, better known as HEN, which provides a variety of in-home chore services to nearly 100 elder households, allowing eligible seniors continued independent living and safety in their own homes for longer than might otherwise be possible. "Keeping our elders here in the communities where many have lived for decades enriches the whole fabric of the Hilltowns," says Charlie. "By tapping into the strong network of neighbors working to help neighbors, we create more connected and caring communities".

Hilltown Community Development is committed to supporting progressive programs that respond to the changing needs of our communities and seek creative solutions. We help ensure that federal funding is directed towards those who need it most in ways that uplift all who live here in our rural community.

**Meet
Your
State
Rep!**

MA State Representative Natalie Blais of the First Franklin District holds regular office hours at the CDC in Chesterfield. You can find her schedule on our website. Call 413-362-9453 or email lily.wallace@mahouse.gov to book an appointment or voice your opinion on legislative matters.

Free Fall Business and Skill-Building Classes

Hilltown CDC and the Southern Hilltown Adult Education Center (SHAEC) have again teamed up to offer a full catalog of free classes to Hilltown residents this fall! The classes are designed to enhance your small business skills or simply keep you up to date with great

tools and technology, from building a Wordpress website to uploading videos on YouTube, using Google docs, mastering Excel, and taking better photographs. For information or to register for any class, call or email Michele at 413-354-1055 or michelek@hilltowncdc.org



Grant Writing Class with Dave Christopolis. Photo Credit: Michele Kenney

Rural Policy in the Spotlight

Commission releases first MA Rural Policy Plan

The Massachusetts Rural Policy Advisory Commission has released its first comprehensive Rural Policy Plan to guide legislators in developing robust policies that champion the state's most rural communities in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, Worcester, and Barnstable Counties. The Plan is intended to guide legislation and statewide policy to help enhance the economic, social and environmental vitality of rural Massachusetts. It was developed over the course of the past year through statewide meetings with hundreds of rural

stakeholders, including many here in the Hilltowns. Executive Director Dave Christopolis has helped guide the process as a founding member of the Commission and will co-deliver the Plan to the State House on October 2. See more details about the event and read the full Policy Plan online at hilltowncdc.org



MA Rural Policy Plan

Hilltown Mobile Market a success!

This summer, Hilltown CDC launched a new mobile farmers' market in collaboration with Healthy Hampshire and the Hilltown Community Health Center. The market has provided low-cost farm shares to 34 local Hilltown families, including 12 HIP-reimbursable shares for those eligible for SNAP (food stamps). Hilltown grown vegetables were also available for all to purchase each week in Worthington and Huntington from 6 local farms. The market will end the last week of September so be sure to stop by for fresh, delicious local vegetables this fall!



Photo credit: Caitlin Marquis

Open Studio Tour 2019 in Review

The second annual Hilltown Open Studio Tour took place in June with 23 artists opening their private studios to visitors to share their creative spaces and processes. Another five artists showed their work at the William Cullen Bryant Homestead and the Project Art Studio, both in Cummington. The two-day event saw hundreds of visitors. A post-event survey showed strong artist sales for a second year in a row. This event is co-organized by the Hilltown Arts Alliance and Hilltown CDC. For more details or to find out about next year's Tour, visit hilltownartsalliance.org!



Fundraiser to Grow Local Creative Economy

Hilltown Arts Alliance and Hilltown Community Development will host a "Fall for the Arts" Fundraiser on Saturday, October 12 at 6:30PM at the Velvet Restaurant, located at the Worthington Golf Course, 13 Ridge Road, Worthington. The event will feature a silent art auction, live music entertainment, art trivia, a seasonal buffet dinner and a cash bar. Tickets cost \$30 each and may be purchased online at hilltowncdc.org until October 5. The silent auction will feature works by talented local Hilltown artists. Since 2018, members of the Hilltown Arts Alliance have benefited from business classes, new exhibit opportunities, and greater exposure through their partnership with Hilltown CDC. Additional funding will help the two organizations expand and enhance the annual Hilltown Open Studio Tour in 2020, develop the local creative economy, create additional place-making opportunities and promote local cultural district formation work. We hope to see you there!



Annual Meeting to Celebrate Local Farms

Hilltown CDC will host our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, October 15 at the Rabbit Hole Restaurant located at the Fiddlehead Inn, 144 Huntington Road, Worthington. The event will celebrate exciting new partnerships with local Hilltown farmers and producers to promote local agriculture and improve food access in the Hilltowns through the Hilltown Mobile Market, as well as highlight many other recent and ongoing community development projects. Dinner and evening entertainment will be provided. All are welcome; seating is limited and attendees should RSVP online at hilltowncdc.org.






A poster for the "Annual Meeting 2019". It features a background image of fresh vegetables like cucumbers and squash in a wooden crate. The text includes "ANNUAL MEETING 2019" in large letters, "PLEASE JOIN US" with a double arrow icon, and the event details: "The Rabbit Hole, 144 Huntington Rd, Worthington, MA, 5:30-9 PM". It also says "TUES OCT 15" and "CELEBRATING OUR LOCAL HILLTOWN HEROES". On the left, there is a vertical logo for "HILLTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" and a small logo for "HILLTOWN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT" with the tagline "Enriching lives in a rural economy".

Hilltown Easy Ride

By the Numbers

Have you seen the FRTA Bus driving around the Hilltowns? That bus could be your next ride to a grocery store or medical appointment! The Hilltown Easy Ride is a rural transportation program offered in partnership with the Franklin Regional Transportation Authority Demand Response service. Seniors 60+ and veterans in Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield and Worthington who pre-register can book rides on the bus by calling Ed, our dispatcher, at least 48 hours in advance at 413-296-4232.

So far this year, the Easy Ride has completed:

-  **81 medical trips**
-  **69 shopping trips**
-  **13 COA adventures**
with:
-  **8,421 miles driven**
-  **79 unique riders**
-  **12 seats**
-  **2 friendly drivers**
- 1 handicap accessible bus**

