

Hilltown Community Development On The Ground

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Worthington Plans for Senior Center

The Town of Chesterfield's Community Development Block Grant includes funding to explore the feasibility of creating a Senior/Community Center in the Town of Worthington. In February, Hilltown CDC collaborated to distribute a survey to all town residents about their views and ideas. We received 250 responses and many thoughtful comments expressing residents' thoughts, questions, and concerns about the project. The

appointed town committee is now reviewing the data and feedback from the survey and will soon hold a series of focus groups to hear additional commentary. Their goal is to ensure that the Center meets the physical, programmatic, and financial capacity of the town. Kathy Ford, Worthington resident, lead architect and project manager, says, "The work of planning for a new center in Worthington is exciting! Our committee has been visiting area senior center facilities and I am now looking forward to the next step of evaluating appropriate town sites for the project." The committee plans to share the results of the survey and focus group information in an open a community forum in June.



Save the Date! Come to a public presentation on the ADA Transition Plans for the towns of Chesterfield, Cummington and Goshen. Each town received a grant from the Mass Office on Disability to review the accessibility of their buildings and programs. Join us at the Goshen Town Hall on **Tuesday, May 28th at 1pm to learn more about the recommendations for removing all barriers to access.** All are welcome!

From the Executive Director

Photo credit: Susan Slattery



Greetings Hilltown Neighbors!

We have been keeping busy throughout the winter months on a number of projects and plans to benefit our region's towns and residents. I recently attended a quarterly gathering of the Massachusetts Rural Policy Council to support legislation on behalf of rural communities throughout the state. We have also developed a good relationship with our new State Representative Natalie Blais who has been holding district office hours here in Chesterfield every Thursday from 1-6pm since February.

Our 2019 Hilltown Business Directory is hot off the presses; we are proud to feature so many local business and urge you not to look far for the products and services you seek.

Our Board of Directors thanks former president Elliot Ring for his three years of service and is pleased to welcome Susan Bronstein as our new President. In addition, we welcomed two new Board members, Sylvia Snape of Westhampton and Nick Cockoros

of Goshen. I am continually grateful for their leadership and dedication to the ongoing work of this organization.

As we look ahead we continue to face challenges in rural transportation, housing and food access, and yet we are bolstered by the promise of new local businesses opening, a thriving arts and culture scene, and several new economic development opportunities. We look forward to spring returning to our beautiful hills!

Dave



Photo credit: WGBY

Continuum of Care: Homelessness services in transition

Hilltown CDC has acted as the Collaborative Applicant for the

Three County Continuum of Care (CoC) HUD funded program for the past six years. The program provides close to \$2 million in rental assistance and case management services to reduce homelessness. After determining that this program was not well-aligned with our mission we began the process of finding another agency interested in administering this important federal program.

Through a public bidding process this winter, **Community Action of Pioneer Valley** was selected to administer the program going forward. With a presence in all three counties and a number of programs and services that address poverty and its symptoms, Community Action of Pioneer Valley is well suited to operate this program. We congratulate and thank them for their strong regional partnership and commitment to end homelessness.

Housing Rehabilitation



Before



After

Spring is in the air! Is this the year that you finally get those drafty windows replaced? Or perhaps it's time for a new roof? The Hilltown CDC Housing Rehabilitation Program is here to help! If you meet the income eligibility guidelines you may be eligible to receive a

no-interest, no-payment loan of \$25,000 or more to make needed repairs to your home. We are currently seeking applications from homeowners in the towns of Cummington and Peru and accepting applicants in the towns of Chesterfield, Goshen, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington for our wait list. For more information about the program Contact Paula Bilodeau, Program Manager, at (413) 296-4536, ext. 123, email paulab@hilltowncdc.org or visit hilltowncdc.org/housingrehab.

Funding is provided by the US Dept. of HUD/DHCD and MA CDBG Programs.

Winter in the Hilltowns this year was not an easy one. From heavy rains to severe wind storms, power outages and even hazard-

Climate Resilience Plan: MA Vulnerability Grant offers support to small rural towns

ous mud conditions, we understand that new patterns are emerging in our local climate. Luckily, there are things we can do in the Hilltowns right now. Our state government has made climate change funds available to our towns through the MA Vulnerability Program (MVP) Planning Grant. This grant will allow us to develop a regional emergency response plan and then apply for additional funding to help us mitigate climate-related disasters. Hilltown CDC is working with Goshen, Cummington, Worthington and Chesterfield in preparing a joint submission. These disasters almost always affect multiple towns simultaneously, so developing shared emergency response systems and contingency plans is a vital way that our towns can work together to leverage state funding and deliver better services to our communities. We are grateful for our emergency first responders for keeping us safe during difficult storms and our highway departments for clearing and maintaining our roads. We can work together to ensure that future weather-related events do

not incur more damages to our towns and be proactive about preparing for the worst.

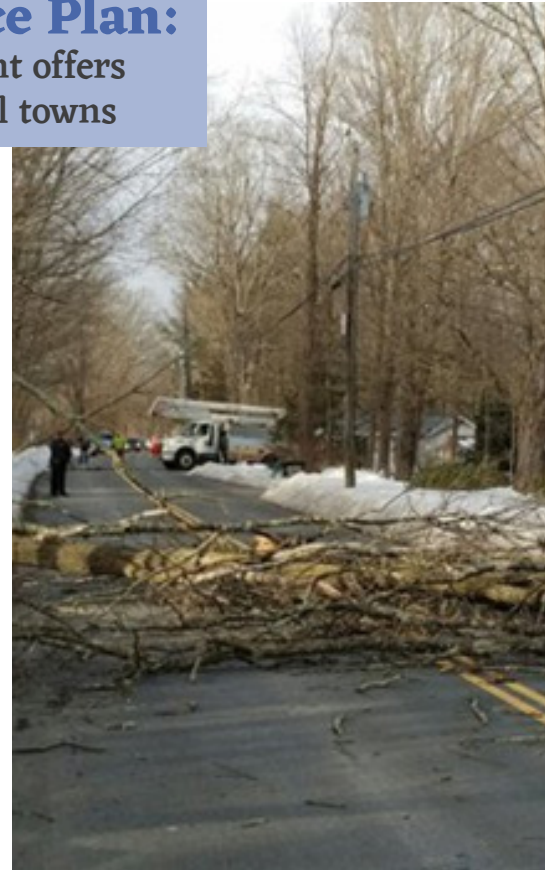


Photo credit: WWLP.com



Photo credit: MACDC.org

Rural Policy Advisory Commission

Two years ago, Hilltown CDC advocated for the establishment of a Rural Policy Advisory Commission under the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. Through tireless advocacy work, we were successful in getting legislation passed that established the first Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) in Massachusetts. There

are currently fifteen Rural Commissioners who meet quarterly and look out for our rural towns. Dave Christopolis, Hilltown CDC Executive Director, is currently an at-large member and clerk of the Commission. To contact the Commission or learn more about their purpose and legislative priorities visit them at mass.gov/service-details/rural-policy-advisory-commission-rpac

Goshen goes for a Walk

With assistance from Hilltown CDC, the Town of Goshen has received funding to prepare a plan and implement a vision for a safer, more walkable and vibrant community. This spring, the Town will work with the [Conway School of Landscape Design](#) to conduct two community meetings and develop a plan that incorporates complete street principles and is designed through an ecological lens for climate resiliency. Walking has been shown to have positive environmental, economic, and health benefits, reducing the risk of chronic disease and improving the quality of life of all people.



Photo credit: Healthy Hampshire

Free Small Business Classes!

Are you a small business owner? Would you like to learn a new skill? The Hilltown CDC, in partnership with the Southern Hilltown Adult Education Center (SHAEC) offers free classes to all residents of the hilltowns, whether you are seeking small business assistance or just want to explore a new hobby. From cloud-based software to positive thinking strategies, see what classes are being offered this spring at the Hilltown CDC in Chesterfield and the Village Enterprise Center in Chester. Visit www.shaec.org or www.hilltowncdc.org/events to view the upcoming calendar. What do you want to learn?



Here's just a sampling of upcoming spring classes! Pre-register by emailing southernhilltownsaec@gmail.com



Social Media for Business
Wednesday April 17
6-8:00 PM
Village Enterprise Center,
Chester



Selling on eBay
Thursday April 18
6-8:00 PM
Village Enterprise Center,
Chester



Starting an AirBnB
Wednesday April 24
6-8:00 PM
Village Enterprise Center,
Chester



GRANT WRITING
Grantwriting 101
Wednesday May 1
6-8:00 PM
Hilltown CDC,
Chesterfield



Intro to Branding
Tuesday May 14
6-8:00 PM
Hilltown CDC,
Chesterfield



Hilltown Open Studio Tour Returns

Save the date! The 2019 Hilltown Open Studio Tour will be held June 22 & 23rd! Get a glimpse into the creative process and inspiring spaces of 29 talented Hilltown artists working in 24 Studios in over 11 diverse mediums. The tour is set amongst mountain views, streams and Western Mass rural splendor. There is no cost for the tour, but many artists will have work for sale. You may start at any location and chose the route which works for you. This year we are also excited to partner with the William Cullen Bryant Homestead to host several of our artists and a very special Farm-to-Table Dinner on Sunday night to conclude this wonderful weekend.

To stay updated on all the latest from the artists, visit them online at hilltownartsalliance.org/open-studio-tour

Thanks to the great work of our talented staff, leadership from our Board and the financial support provided by our generous donors, the Hilltown CDC is pleased to report that we have been awarded \$150,000 through the [Massachusetts Community Investment Tax Credit](#) program. These credits provide a 50% state tax refund to donors who gift us \$1,000 or more. It is open to corporations, businesses and individuals. This program is only available to Community Development Corporations and provides us with a significant amount of unrestricted funding with which to do our work. With these funds, we are able to respond quickly to community needs without the need to apply for highly restricted government funding. Your input on our programs and services is always valueable and we are grateful for the support we have recieved from our community to continue serving the needs of the Hilltowns.

**Hilltown
Community
Development
awarded
\$150K in
Community
Investment
Tax Credits**

Thank you!