

Organizational Overview

Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire

1 August 2016

The mission of the Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire (CDCSB) is building healthy, sustainable community in rural western Massachusetts, by creating affordable housing and economic opportunity for low and moderate income households. Based in Great Barrington, MA, CDCSB's primary service area includes the fifteen Berkshire County towns south of Pittsfield, MA., where population range from 130 in Mt. Washington, to 7,000 in Great Barrington. The region is characterized by (a) a housing market driven by high demand for vacation and second homes and (b) an increasingly service-based economy. The combination of high housing costs and low wage-paying jobs is forcing working class individuals and families away from the area.

Poverty is less visible in rural areas than in urban environments, but ever present nevertheless. In the larger towns, poverty is above 12% and regionally, 26% of public school children qualify for free or reduced fees for lunch. Over the last seven years, CDCSB has leveraged over \$13 million in public and private investments in the southern Berkshire County community, creating fifty affordable housing units.

Included in CDCSB's pipeline of projects are 142 housing units and 40,000 square feet of commercial space for new and expanding locally-owned businesses. A primary current focus is cleaning up an 8-acre brownfield site in the center of downtown Great Barrington, and transforming the land from unusable and contaminated into safe and usable property for a mixed-use residential and commercial with a two-acre public park along the banks of the Housatonic River.

CDCSB's smart growth practices have been recognized by the State of Massachusetts as a model for rural development by concentrating housing and commercial activity in town centers while permanently preserving farmland and open space. CDCSB works closely and collaboratively with town governments, open space and conservation organizations, and other regional nonprofits in identifying community needs and building long-term solutions to address the needs of the community.

The CDCSB has been especially active in supporting growth and job creation in the agricultural sector helping to bring new farmland into production and increase the number of young farmers in the service region. It is helping pioneer a new economic model for job growth called, Community Supported Industry, modeled after the successful Community Supported Agriculture movement where community members create, support and share the financial investments in new and expanding businesses