

# Community Investment Plan

## Hilltown Community Development Corporation

2014 – 2016

Hilltown CDC’s Community Investment Plan is based on a theory of change designed to maximize partnership and collaboration 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.

### 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 eleven 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 Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg and Worthington, whose populations range from 403 to 2,631. The secondary service area includes the Towns of Ashfield, Becket, Blandford, 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></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 17.7 square miles</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0.6% poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
<b>Secondary Service Area</b>		
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 31 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.

The following is a list of recent engagement activities in which Hilltown CDC has played a lead role in engaging the community to elicit opinions about needs and solutions for the region:

- Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Engagement Session (3/28/2012 – 15 participants)
- Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Engagement Session (4/20/2013 – 18 participants)
- Community Development Strategies (annual planning sessions for 3-8 towns, including Select Boards and other town officials and residents)
- Resiliency Summit (3/23/13, Cummington Community House – 60 participants)
- Continuum of Care regional planning to address homelessness – (three county service area with a citizen board of 12)
- Consortium of Councils on Aging (regionalization effort including 12 participants from 7 towns)
- Williamsburg Farmers' Market (inception to implementation – fiscal sponsorship with a local steering committee of 8)
- Goshen Senior Housing feasibility study and implementation (6 member Goshen senior housing committee )
- Meeting with 11 local farmers (10/16/13) to explore the implementation of a Keep Farming Initiative designed to promote local agricultural economic development

Many targeted activities have been identified by these and other community engagement activities, including: expansion of senior services and senior housing; renovation and expansion of affordable family housing; small business assistance; agriculture and open space preservation; homelessness prevention; and housing rehabilitation/renovation for low and moderate income families. A common denominator among hilltown residents is the recognition of the limited resources available through each town government and the need to work together to develop other resources.

The Resiliency Summit in March of 2013 helped form the Hilltown Engagement Council (HEC) through which a number of hilltown residents became more involved in our community engagement efforts. We are introducing a community calendar on our website to promote events in the hilltowns as a result of the HEC. The Resiliency Summit, along with the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Initiative, helped us connect with farmers; as a result we have a pending grant application submitted to fund a Keep Farming program.

The Continuum of Care (CoC) is the most comprehensive community activity of the CDC. Over the past year, since the CDC took on this responsibility, we have conducted a number of community stakeholder meetings across all three western Massachusetts counties. These meetings include quarterly sub-regional meetings in Berkshire County and the Pioneer Valley designed to address specific sub-regional issues that affect the Berkshire, hilltown and valley communities. Participants in these sub-regional meetings are from the CoC general membership made up of over one hundred members from over 40 organizations. The CoC Community Board includes formerly homeless individuals as well as homeless advocates, public officials and service providers.

Evaluation of Community Investment Plan activities will occur at monthly meetings of the Hilltown CDC citizen Board of Directors, and at quarterly meetings of our Hilltown Engagement Council (HEC), which includes a cross-section of residents who live in the hilltown region and which is open to all. The HEC will meet with the Hilltown CDC Board of Directors at least once a year to discuss community needs and agency planning. At quarterly HEC meetings, CIP activities, plans and accomplishments will be reviewed and discussed. These discussions will guide our implementation of the Community Investment Plan

### **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."

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 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.”

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

**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 has been successful in the past by supporting the creation of member-governed organizations such as the Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative, the Hilltown Artisans’ Guild, the Hampshire Hills Bed and Breakfast Association, and the Williamsburg Farmers’ Market, among many others. All of these initiatives responded to the expressed needs of residents of 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 explore the addition of a program that provides state-certified home healthcare workers; currently, these services are not available to most residents of the hilltowns because of distance. This program will provide additional services to elders to help them remain in their communities rather than having to transition to an institutional setting. Expected impacts: seniors in need of certified 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. A location has been identified for a 10 unit project near the center of town. CITC funding will support staff and consultant resources in the pre-development phase of the project.

Hilltown CDC is currently supporting the creation of a regional Consortium of Councils on Aging, as requested by local Councils on Aging. Councils on Aging play a vital role in supporting seniors in the hilltowns. Hilltown CDC will continue to support COA consortium meetings and offer advocacy and planning assistance to ensure adequate resources are available for this growing constituency in our region. Expected impacts: centralized collaboration of senior services across the hilltown region resulting in cost efficiencies through standardized service delivery and assessments. Constituencies served: seniors (over 60 years of age) living in the hilltown region, and the system of local COAs which will benefit from the sharing of resources.

**Agriculture/Farming:** Important attributes of our rural region are its open land and widespread forests, with the potential for agricultural business expansion. Hilltown CDC is exploring a “Keep Farming” initiative in collaboration with Glynwood, a non-profit whose mission is to support agriculture by strengthening farm communities and regional food systems. Glynwood has already begun a similar initiative in southern Berkshire County. Hilltown CDC is discussing this initiative in our community engagement sessions with local farmers and woodsmen. We will use CITC funding, if awarded, to support collaboration with Glynwood to implement a Keep Farming regional plan. We will begin with a study of the regional economic impact of hilltown farming, then increase networking among farmers to promote locally-directed economic development and to increase farming productivity and profitability. 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.

Hilltown CDC is also the fiscal sponsor of the Williamsburg Farmers’ Market and has assisted in its development from its inception. This Farmers’ Market is governed by hilltown farmers who are collectively operating the market on Thursdays from April through October. This project is popular in the community and is growing. Hilltown CDC will use CITC funds to continue to provide technical assistance to the Market as it grows. 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 20 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 \$1.5 million dollars in HUD Continuum of Care funding for the three counties. Hilltown CDC is a member of the Western Massachusetts Regional Network to End Homelessness and Dave Christopolis, the Executive Director of Hilltown CDC, sits on its steering committee. Hilltown CDC will continue to provide direct support to this state effort and will increase the participation of community leaders, businesses and governments in the Continuum of Care process. CITC funding will be used to support this effort.

Part of our engagement strategy is to reach out across the three counties to have geographic and cross sector representation on our Continuum of Care board. Hilltown CDC is in the process of reconstituting the CoC to merge programs in Berkshire County with Franklin and Hampshire Counties to create a new geographic CoC. This important program is an example of Hilltown CDC's commitment to providing planning and financial management expertise to our region to address an issue that affects the most vulnerable residents of our communities. 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 3 County CoC with the Federal Plan to End Homelessness: Opening Doors. This plan commits to ending chronic homelessness by 2015 and family homelessness by 2020. 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. As the lead agency in this effort, Hilltown CDC has entered into many strategic partnerships. In 2013, Hilltown CDC was asked by the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) to play a lead role in identifying best practices that will reduce and ultimately end homelessness for veterans and unaccompanied youth. Hilltown CDC has been working directly with ICHH, participating in two regional working committees that are engaging community experts, service providers, policy makers, homeless advocates, homeless individuals and state officials to design a plan that will direct appropriate resources and services to both homeless veterans and unaccompanied youth.

The ICHH has given a grant to Hilltown CDC to conduct an enhanced point-in-time count of unaccompanied youth across all 3 western Massachusetts counties at the end of January 2014. This count will also include a follow up week of focus groups and surveys conducted with youth across the region. This information will be used to better understand this population, what factors are contributing to homelessness, and what the barriers are to obtaining appropriate safe and affordable housing for this population. This is the primary focus of prevention as youth are the feeder to the homeless system. Interventions must be put in place to break the cycle of generational homelessness and poverty.

In collaboration with the ICHH and the Veteran's Administration, Hilltown CDC has formed a veteran's sub-committee. The first task assigned to the committee is to complete a base line inventory of all the services and housing currently available to homeless veterans. This work is underway. In addition, Hilltown CDC is working directly with Soldier On!, a local non-profit, to expand permanent supportive housing opportunities for homeless veterans.

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. Hilltown CDC has implemented an extensive evaluation of current CoC funding and has worked directly with its CoC community Board of Directors to submit a reallocation plan to HUD that proposes to increase permanent supportive housing units in the region by 50 units in 2014 with an additional 33 units in 2015. Hilltown CDC has also successfully implemented a regional policy across all three counties that adopts a “Housing First” approach to all supportive housing programs, providing a low threshold of eligibility for the chronically homeless to be placed directly in supportive housing as a way to decrease utilization of expensive emergency shelter beds.

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 areas 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 now 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.

**Emergency Preparedness:** At the request of hilltown residents and first responders, Hilltown CDC is working with local agencies to determine the needs of the hilltowns in relation to emergency preparedness. This includes dealing with power outages, natural disasters, food shortages, medical care, fire and EMT response and basic services. Many of these issues are addressed currently by single-town volunteer fire departments and other groups who are struggling with limited financial resources and limited volunteers.

This is an example of another regional effort designed to address the limited ability of each small town to achieve its goals. It is also a recent example of an initiative that grew directly out of meetings of the Hilltown Engagement Council, at which this need was brought forward.

As current trends in the hilltown region show a decrease in population and an increase in the number of aging residents, the preservation of rural life in Massachusetts is at risk. Our ability to respond to emergencies and provide basic services to residents has a direct correlation to the region's ability to attract new residents and businesses. Expected impacts: more regional discussion about cooperation among emergency preparedness professionals; more regional ability to access available funds to enhance emergency preparedness. Constituencies to be served: all residents, local governments.

Our Community Investment Plan is based on Human Ecological principles that view the community as an ecosystem of interrelated systems dependent upon human interaction, and an informed population that understands its relationship to the natural and material world. At the center of these activities to be undertaken is the need to engage the community on a regular basis in formal and informal settings in which diverse voices can be heard and residents can take ownership of their community's future.

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

Success will be measured in many ways and the tools and methodologies will be appropriately adapted to address specific initiatives and desired outcomes. The general evaluation of our CIP will occur at quarterly meetings of our Hilltown Engagement Council (HEC), which includes a cross-section of residents who live in the hilltown region and which is open to all. The HEC will meet with the Hilltown CDC Board of Directors at least once a year to engage in a dialogue about community needs and agency planning. At quarterly HEC meetings, the CIP will be

reviewed and concrete plans and accomplishments will be presented for discussion. In addition, surveys will be sent to participants and beneficiaries in every initiative to gauge the results.

Some outcomes will be easier to measure than others. The creation of new 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. Any theory of change recognizes the 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 30 years of community development work in the hilltown region and an increased focus on community engagement in the past two years. We will continue to build on recent 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:**

- Complete renovation of 24 units of scattered site affordable housing rental units in the towns of Chesterfield, Williamsburg and Haydenville by March 2015
- Secure permanent financing to construct 10 units of senior housing in Goshen by September 2015
- Complete the rehabilitation of 22 homes across 5 hilltowns by July 2015

**Small Business Assistance/Economic Development:**

- Provide specialized counseling services in 2014 to 36 local start-up and existing businesses
- Implement a Keep Farming initiative in 2014

**Reduce/End Regional Homelessness:**

- Increase Permanent Supportive Housing units across all three counties by 83 units by June 2015
- Implement a Rapid Rehousing Program for homeless families across all three counties by July 2015

**Senior Services:**

- Expand the Hilltown Elder Network model to include state certified home health care workers by January 2016

**Community Engagement:**

- Continue quarterly meetings of the Hilltown Engagement Council

- Assist with the completion of annual Community Development Strategies in multiple hilltowns; the number is different each year

Sustainability:

- Assist the Town of Goshen in achieving Green Communities designation by January 2015, and encourage other towns to achieve this designation
- Continue to work with community members to build capacity around emergency preparedness

**Section 6 Collaborative efforts to support implementation**

Hilltown CDC currently collaborates with a host of non-profits, businesses, stakeholders and municipal governments, including:

- 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
- 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 26 years on a number of initiatives. The most robust initiative has been the administration of regional CDBG programs dating back to 1987. Hilltown CDC has worked with local hilltowns to secure over \$25 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 a recent example of this, the Town of Chesterfield contracted with Hilltown CDC to administer their Green Communities Grant, which distributes small grants to town residents who are making energy improvements to their homes. Hilltown CDC is currently working with the Town of Goshen to obtain Green Communities designation with an application to be submitted to the state by October 2014.

In the past year, Hilltown CDC has collaborated with both the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission on affordable housing initiatives and regional planning activities. Hilltown CDC completed two comprehensive housing market studies, one for each planning commission, which reported on the towns of Becket, Granville, Southampton, Blandford and Montgomery. Hilltown CDC continues to participate in regional planning initiatives with both planning commissions, including the Sustainable Knowledge Corridor planning project in the Pioneer Valley and the Sustainable Berkshire Regional Plan in Berkshire County. Through these and other collaborative efforts the implementation of the CIP will be enhanced.

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.

In addition, 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.

Hilltown CDC also solicited and received a grant from the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative to support the advocacy and development activities of Wired West, a municipal cooperative governed by representatives of 47 Western Massachusetts towns.

### **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 guide appropriate services 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.

## **Section 8 Financing strategy**

Hilltown CDC has 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. Nonetheless, our most recent annual report lists substantial donations from: 7 regional banks, whose combined annual donations are between \$30,000 and \$40,000; the local United Way; three local foundations; and contributions from local residents and businesses. Annual donations from individuals and businesses are around \$10,000.

We will use the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits to help persuade current donors to increase their support. Clearly, our current bank, business and individual donors have the capacity to take advantage of almost \$50,000 in tax credits by themselves. And we

know that the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits will lead to the addition of new donors.

Hilltown CDC has just engaged an experienced fund-raising consultant for assistance in working with local banks, businesses and individuals to promote the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits. A fund development plan will be 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 work of the fund-raising consultant will also include development of a multi-year plan to increase our overall fund-raising capacity.

We anticipate that the availability of Community Investment Tax Credits in 2014, along with a projected increase in our overall fund-raising capacity, will result in more than doubling 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
- Invest initial effort in the development of major new projects (new housing development for seniors, for instance). Future financing is dependent on early community engagement and comprehensive planning which takes time.

We believe that we can effectively use \$75,000 in Community Investment Tax Credits in 2014.

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:

- 26 years of administering regional CDBG grant awards (over \$25 million) and conducting monitoring of sub-recipients
- 15 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 20 grant agreements
- Fiscal sponsorship services to Wired West (a broadband advocacy initiative) and Williamsburg Farmers Market
- Grant writing services to the Dalton Community Recreation Association and Berkshires Jazz, non-profits promoting cultural, economic and community development in the region
- Fee-for-service contracts awarded by both the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to complete studies targeting rural housing development in the region
- 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. This may be beginning to change. Recently, Hilltown CDC was asked to attend a planning meeting called by the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority. In collaboration with Soldier On!, a regional transportation system is planned to be piloted in the coming year. This will include a regional call center from which transportation "on-demand" will be provided to people in need of transportation to medical and work related destinations. Hilltown CDC advocated for a route that connects Pittsfield to Northampton along Route 9, the only primary road through the hilltowns.

List of Attachments:

- **Hilltown CDC regional service area map**
- **Agenda/Notes Engagement Session with Farmers (2 pages)**
- **Sustainable Knowledge Corridor Summary**
- **Resiliency Summit Poster**
- **Staff Qualifications**
- **Continuum of Care Governance Charter Sample (3 pages)**
- **Community Development Forum Invitation**