

Berkshire Taconic Announces Regional Grants for Community Engagement and Affordable Housing Workshops

Sheffield, Mass. — Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation's [HousingUs](#) initiative today announced over \$30,000 in grants to five lead organizations to plan and convene outreach activities that bring residents together to explore the interrelated issues of affordable housing, economic development and town center vitality. The awards follow a request for proposals announced in mid-July that has resulted in at least one funded project in each of the four counties Berkshire Taconic serves.

"Affordable housing and economic development are mutually reinforcing elements of a healthy community and pressing issues for our region," said David B. Rich, chair of the HousingUs advisory board and a Berkshire Taconic board member. "With these grants, HousingUs aims to inspire innovative thinking and cross-sector collaboration that can lead to sustainable solutions for our towns."

Grants were awarded to the following organizations:

- [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission \(Pittsfield, Mass.\)](#) - \$8,000 to host a daylong housing institute for municipal leaders, advocates and developers. Modeled on a successful annual event run by the statewide agency [Massachusetts Housing Partnership](#), the program will feature planning, financing and development consultants and technical training break-out sessions. Project partners in addition to MHP are the Community Development Corporation of South Berkshire, Construct, Age Friendly Berkshires and the towns of Great Barrington and Lenox, Mass.
- [Housing Committee of Hillsdale, NY](#) - \$3,600 to partner with countywide nonprofit [Columbia Opportunities](#) in hosting a public forum on affordable housing and economic development. After an update of a 2010 housing needs study and additional survey work, the event will engage the Hillsdale community in discussions about creating a continuum of housing options, including workforce and senior housing, and their potential impact on neighborhood revitalization and economic development in Hillsdale.
- [Hudson River Housing \(Poughkeepsie, NY\)](#) - \$6,400 for a three-part project in the towns of Amenia, Pine Plains and Millerton: a seven-week community leadership training program; a series of interactive housing and community development workshops; and a gathering of regional leadership teams for a problem-solving and knowledge-sharing session known as collaborative learning. The project represents the second phase of the organization's Northeastern Dutchess Initiative, which has to date engaged nearly 200 residents in discussions on income inequality, the current state of local economies after several decades of uneven development and the dangers of disinvestment in rural communities.
- [Philmont Beautification, Inc. \(Philmont, NY\)](#) - \$5,000 to engage residents, businesses, municipal leaders and nonprofits in workshops to boost results from the organization's community renewal project focused on the Philmont waterfront. That grassroots project has examined how affordable housing options are connected to parks, public amenities and neighborhood revitalization strategies. Its goals include creating sustainable land use tools, investments in neighborhood infrastructure to promote social interaction and healthy living, and preservation of the village's stock of historic housing.

- [Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission \(Salisbury, Conn\)](#) - \$8,000 to host a series of community workshops designed to produce resident-driven scenarios for expanded housing options and economic vitality in Salisbury's town centers. The project will provide a forum for experts and residents to continue exploring housing needs, possible sites and economic impacts of increasing housing options. Project partners are the Salisbury Housing Committee, the Salisbury Housing Trust, the Salisbury Economic Development Committee, the Northwest Hills Council of Governments and Salisbury School.

Established in 2000, HousingUs is a collaborative effort of nonprofit organizations and community leaders to promote broad-based affordable housing options in towns throughout the northwest corner of Conn., northeast Dutchess and Columbia counties in New York, and Berkshire County, Mass. Governed by an advisory board of local community representatives, HousingUs is one of several leadership initiatives that receive annual investments from Berkshire Taconic beyond its regular grantmaking.

"The future of our towns depends on the availability of affordable housing, good jobs and a range of opportunities to meaningfully engage in community life," said Peter Taylor, president of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation. "We believe the solutions are at hand, so we are eager to gather experts, leaders and residents in every county we serve to find and achieve them together."

About Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

For nearly 30 years, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation has built stronger communities and helped donors make a difference through charitable giving in northwest Litchfield County, CT; Berkshire County, MA; and Columbia County and northeast Dutchess County, NY. Each year, the foundation distributes over \$8 million through grants and scholarships to nonprofits and individuals in the arts and education, health and human services and environmental protection. Berkshire Taconic is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public charity. You can make a difference. We can help.

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