

Southern Berkshire Chamber

In the Spotlight...



Our Mission – The Community Land Trust holds community owned land for homes, farms and businesses to ensure permanent access, control, affordability and stewardship.

Our Background – Growing from the overseas roots of the community land trust movement the first community land trust in the United States was founded in Albany, Georgia in 1969. There are now over 250 CLTs across the nation. These pioneering organizations sought to organize everyday people to solve the issue of access to land for homes, farms and businesses.

Since its founding in 1980, the Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires (CLTSB) has:

- Acquired an eleven-acre parcel on Jug End Road in South Egremont with four homes, the office/library of the Schumacher Center for a New Economics, and an orchard.
- Developed the Forest Row neighborhood in Great Barrington with 18 units for year-round residents in a combination of single family homes, duplexes, and two quadruplex buildings.
- Partnered with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and farmers Elizabeth Keen and Al Thorp to purchase Indian Line Farm, the first CSA farm in the country. TNC holds the conservation easement, the CLTSB holds title to the land, and the farmers own the buildings and lease the land on a long-term lease basis.

The founding documents created in 1980 have withstood the test of time, legal challenges and community evolution. The bylaws established an open, democratic organization of community members with a shared vision for the future. A tripartite board of trustees was structured to include community members, leaseholders and local professionals with relevant expertise. The lease agreements were devised to enable occupants to build wealth with equity in their improvements on community-owned land. The land use plan makes clear the balance between ecological care of the land and access for productive use.

In 2015 the CLTSB incorporated the Berkshire Community Land Trust as a sister tax exempt organization designed to conduct educational programs to further an understanding of holding land in common.

Our Blueprint for Success – As an open, democratic organization, a community land trust enables long-term land use planning and allocation of resources to support goals for sustainability. Looking to the future, the goals of the Berkshire Community Land Trust are to expand our local agricultural footprint, create new business opportunities and encourage the construction of workforce housing.

History teaches us whoever controls our land will control our future. People committed to a life in a shared community use a land trust to share ownership of the land for the common good.

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