



## Learning from Philmont:

### Observe, collect & invent the future of village housing

A free two-part community discussion and workshop to brainstorm innovative community design and affordable housing strategies for Philmont that enhance the existing potentials of the village in ways that are relevant, desirable and inclusive to all members of the community.

#### Part 1 Saturday, June 10 10am-1pm

- \* Self-guided walking tour of Philmont
- \* Discussion of Philmont zoning possibilities and potentials
- \* Mapping & storytelling exercises

#### Part 2 Saturday, June 24 10am-1pm

- \* Discuss connections to *The Making of Philmont Waterfront* plan
- \* Architectural mask-making exercise to invent housing prototypes

**LOCATION:** Philmont Public Library (Cultural Center)

**REGISTER TO PARTICIPATE:** [info@pbinc.org](mailto:info@pbinc.org)



HousingUs  
project  
report

PBI



## Learning from Philmont:

### Observe, collect & invent the future of village housing

A free community conversation workshop on how Community Land Trusts can preserve the affordability of housing, enhance diverse communities, and assist grass-roots community planning by encouraging local living economies.

#### **Community Land Trusts**

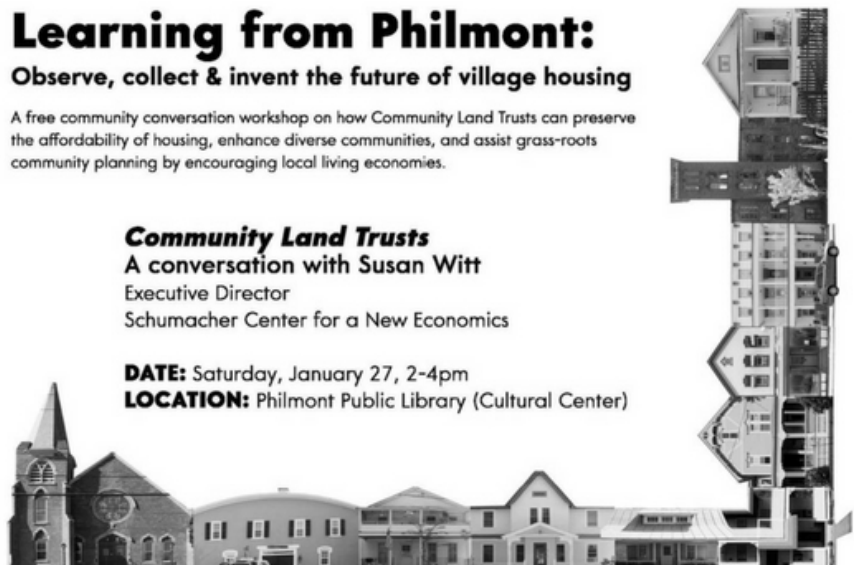
A conversation with Susan Witt

Executive Director

Schumacher Center for a New Economics

**DATE:** Saturday, January 27, 2-4pm

**LOCATION:** Philmont Public Library (Cultural Center)



## Executive Summary:

This report describes some of the key activities and outcomes of the **Learning from Philmont** project supported in part by funds from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation during the fall of 2016- to the end of December 2018, and matched with funds from the NYS Department of State Office of Planning and Development Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program, and the Village of Philmont.

The Learning from Philmont project offered an opportunity to take the first steps towards creating a community-driven housing plan that will address the significantly high number of sub-standard rental housing units in the Village of Philmont, and the lack of neighborhood parks, services, and amenities. It also provided the opportunity for over 60 community members who participated in three **Learning from Philmont** workshops, eight community meetings, and ongoing conversations to familiarize themselves with existing housing conditions. Workshops led by Cosmo Design Factory incorporated walking tours of the village, observational drawing of distinct architectural detail and housing styles in the eight zoning districts in Philmont, and an overview of Philmont zoning. Out-of-the-box interactive activities raised awareness and stimulated engagement. They included model-making of prototype housing as large wearable housing masks worn and displayed by children and adults on Community Day.

The review by one of the workshop participants below shows how the workshops engaged participants, while at the same time it speaks to an energy often hard to generate when a community decides to take on the usually dry and abstract challenges of addressing affordable housing concerns.

“From Le Corbusier’s multi-story housing - Unite d’Habitation-to Denise Scott Brown’s contextual analysis - [Learning from Las Vegas](#)- much ground was covered by Julia Sedlock and Mark Rowtree’s June 10 presentation and workshop on Philmont’s built environment. Despite the wide geographical coverage, the salient references to what makes affordable housing successful and the diversity of architectural messages resulting in a richly textured community of buildings certainly hit home when considering the huge potential presented by a revitalization of the Philmont community.

The three hours went quickly and in addition to the presentation included (1) a comprehensive tour of Philmont’s zoning districts (by separate teams), (2) sketching of both unique and ubiquitous architectural elements seen from the street, and (3) a concluding discussion analyzing what we saw (do you know the difference between “Hamlet I” and “Hamlet III”?) The 15 or so participants were knowledgeable, animated and simpatico, making for a lively experience and that rarely felt optimism for Philmont’s future. For me personally, the direct exposure to the zoning districts was a real eye-opener. With deep respect for the effort it takes to get a zoning resolution adopted in the first place, it is time to start modifying this one. It is perhaps too complex, widely inconsistent and outdated. (We do not need a district that allows the building of churches, but rather allowing the repurposing of vacant ones.) Hopefully this event will lead to more discussion and maybe even action.”

*6/22/17 Tom Paino, Steering Committee Member, Summit Lake and Its Watercourse study*

As we move forward with the scope of producing a housing plan for Philmont, we will create a street-by-street photo map of rental housing to analyze existing conditions, and will continue to adhere to best practices and the funding opportunity provided by the HousingUS Initiative to develop “a locally-based future vision and/or strategy planning process that explore concurrently the residential, cultural, civic and economic factors contributing to sustainable town centers.”

## Comparison of Goals and Outcomes:

### PROPOSED GOALS

1. Engage community members in “next step” visioning and planning for improved affordable housing in the Village of Philmont to reflect the Housing & Neighborhood Development section of the *Summit Lake and Its Watercourse Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)* planning study
2. Provide three interactive workshops that will increase community skills, knowledge, and capacity to develop innovative affordable housing strategies that incorporate public spaces, parks, increased services and economic development for Philmont

### PROPOSED OUTCOMES

- a) Zoning map of Philmont showing places of interest, annotated with drawings, stories, pathways to describe relationships and potentials
- b) Participant drawings, maps, stories specifically related to zoning districts
- c) Catalog of community-produced programmatic prototypes that relate to housing
- d) Build mask-model of prototypes (a wearable house)
- e) Sign-ups to participate as a member of the Housing and Neighborhood Development Implementation Task Team of the *Summit Lake and its Watercourse* study

### ACHIEVED GOALS

1. 30 community members reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> draft document of the *Summit Lake and Its Watercourse BOA* planning study
2. 50 members participated in “next step” visioning and will return for more workshops
3. Review notes were shared with Steering Committee members assembling the BOA plan
4. 7 members attended two workshops in the City of Hudson addressing the housing crisis
5. 50 community members attended three interactive Learning from Philmont workshops
6. 4 members attended five additional meetings to discuss housing in Philmont and increased skills relating to housing strategies supporting working families’ home-ownership

### ACHIEVED OUTCOMES

- a) 20 people participated in Workshop #1 and produced drawings of housing details observed on walking tours of the eight zoning districts in the village
- b) Cosmo Design Factory produced presentations for workshops and for HousingUs convening. Presentations can be reused as housing plan is assembled and more community members attend more workshops going forward.
- c) 10 attendees in Workshop #2 made mask-models later displayed at July 2017 Community Day held on the Village Green sparking more community conversations about housing and revitalization economic development
- d) 4 community members submitted their names volunteering to be a committee member for the Summit Lake and its Watercourse Implementation Task Force for Housing & Neighborhood Development

## Barriers to the Project and How They Were Overcome:

The HousingUS – Learning from Philmont project was initially proposed to be implemented from October 2016 to finish April 2017. Unfortunately, a large renovation building construction project for the Kitchen/Co-op experienced a delayed start date by six months resulting in a scheduling conflict with the start date of the HousingUS project.

Due to the need to re-structure schedules, the fall weather window had passed preventing the walking tours of the village as an integral component of the 1<sup>st</sup> Learning from Philmont workshop, and the mask making displays for the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop.

What could have been perceived initially as a potential barrier to this project turned out, in the end, to present other opportunities. The time delay provided PBI the opportunity to meet several times over the winter and into early spring with a new community action group, Philmont Community Action Neighbors (P-CAN), in the Village. It resulted in a strong commitment from this group to be involved with PBI's programming and the organization's

housing initiatives, including this project. This increased community participation is reflected in the Achieved Outcomes chart on page 2 of this report exceeding the initial proposed goals for the project.

Equally, the time constraints experienced by Elan Planning, (previously scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop), presented the opportunity to re-allocate the budget line item to include additional time required by PBI to converse and meet with an expanded project base of community members, and the financial resources to re-schedule the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop to better address the outcomes from those community meetings. This resulted in re-allocating the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop funds to support a community presentation by Susan Witt, Executive Director of the Schumacher Center for a New Economics, to discuss how Community Land Trusts can assist to ensure long-term equitable and affordable housing.

The additional meetings and re-allocation of funds are listed on page 6 of this report under the financials.

## Lessons Learned from Project Implementation:

PBI has an established reputation as a small and nimble organization, quick to respond to the evolving conditions of maintaining high levels of community participation in revitalization projects. This project benefited from the re-scheduling of workshops which in turn allowed for extensive prep time over the winter of 2017, building a strong and committed base of community members interested and willing to learn about housing in the village.

By the end of the project, over 30 community members have committed to continue meeting and participating to create a housing plan that will address some of the findings of the HousingUS - Learning from Philmont project. These findings include the challenges of ensuring equitable long-term affordable housing in

communities, a willingness to think out-of-the box to produce a housing plan that will address the significant number of sub-standard housing rentals in the village, the lack of public parks, and the lack of neighborhood amenities.

During the course of the project, members had the opportunity to read the 1st draft of the *Summit Lake and Its Watercourse Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)* planning study so they were prepared to fully engage in the interactive workshops, participate in the workshop walking tours to familiarize themselves with buildings, homes, and zoning districts, and then to apply the knowledge and skills gained to highly interactive workshop conversations. The preparation time spent in the winter months helped to equip community members with an



understanding of the housing conditions and demographics contained in the BOA planning document.

We collectively learned that Philmont has approximately 654 housing units. More than

half (51.1%) of Philmont's housing is rental properties, roughly twice the rate of Claverack (24.9%) and of the county (28.4%), also reflecting the lower income levels of the community.

**Table 3-4: Housing Occupancy (2010)**

Housing Occupancy	Philmont		Claverack	Columbia County
	No.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Vacant Housing Units	88	13.5%	16.3%	21.0%
Occupied Housing Units	566	86.5%	83.7%	79.0%
Owner Occupied	277	48.9%	75.1%	71.6%
Renter Occupied	289	51.1%	24.9%	28.4%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

## Housing

The median home value in Philmont is \$151,600. Home appreciation is 0.70% over the last year.

The median age of Philmont real estate is 73 years.

Preliminary market research completed in 2011 indicates the community is experiencing a slight growth in 2nd home owners and first-time home buyers, likely due to the lower than average Columbia County property values.

## Households

Preliminary market research completed in 2015 is indicating the village is experiencing a slight growth in employment in young professionals, trade artisans, and alternative health care providers.

Nearly half (46.9%) of family households in Philmont have children under 18 years old, vs. 38.9% for the county. Additionally, Philmont has a very high number of single parent households. Single women head of household in Philmont is 25.9%, vs. 16.7% in the county.

Similarly, single men head of household is 12.5% in Philmont, vs. 8.0% in the county. Philmont continues to have a significantly lower per capita income than the county or state. Philmont's per capita income was \$23,009 in 2010, about one-third lower (~\$10,000) than that in Claverack or Columbia County.

Philmont ranks #859 among NY's 1052 localities. However, per capita income in Philmont has risen by an estimated \$6,000 since 2000. Table 3-2 summarizes the 2010 income differences between Philmont, Claverack, and Columbia County.

**Table 3-2: Income Characteristics**

Income Measure	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
Median Household Income	\$39,821	\$50,023	\$56,445
Mean Household Income	\$56,660	\$80,114	\$79,555
Per Capita Income	\$23,009	\$33,807	\$32,934

Columbia County and the region is generally experiencing a condition occurring in many upstate communities: younger populations are decreasing and older populations are increasing. However, Philmont’s 39.7 median age is considerably lower than both the town of Claverack and the County. Table 3-3 details the age distribution in Philmont compared to Claverack and Columbia County.

Table 3-3: Age Characteristics (2010)

Age Group	Philmont	Claverack	Columbia County
Pre-school (Under 5)	6.3%	4.8%	4.8%
School Age (5-14)	12.9%	10.8%	11.2%
High School (15-19)	8.5%	7.4%	6.6%
College (20-24)	5.7%	4.9%	5.1%
Young Employee (25-39)	17.3%	13.4%	14.8%
Mid-level Employee (40-49)	17.7%	15.5%	15.3%
Senior Employee (50-74)	24.9%	32.9%	33.8%
Retired (75+)	6.6%	10.%	8.3%
Median Age	39.7	46.2	45.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Outcomes of what we learned:

The HousingUS project provided the opportunity for PBI and community members to take the first steps towards evaluating existing conditions of housing in the village, ask vital questions, converse with the local government, and start to build consensus moving towards producing an effective and innovative housing plan to ensure long-term equitable access to affordable housing. The team established during the course of this project will now spend the 2018 winter months volunteering to produce a street-by- street photo-documentation, mapping of all rental housing, vacant lots, and condemned buildings, as a corner stone of a housing plan that will support the vision and goals of the *Summit Lake and Its Watercourse* Housing and Neighborhood Development section of the study.

