



HOUSING FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

# connections

FALL 2022

CONSTRUCTBERKSHIRES.ORG

## GENEROSITY!

Nearly every article in this newsletter reflects the spirit of generosity that keeps neighbors safe, sustainable at home, and engaged in our South County communities.

Generosity helps build a much-needed culture of caring. Even if we could snap our fingers and provide all the homes needed at affordable costs, without generous caring, we'd still be missing the mark. Having a roof overhead goes a long way, but as we have learned through the communal losses of COVID-19, it is not enough to thrive.

Construct's mission is to change and save lives by providing homes and support. Most of our tenants and those who come to us for assistance are essential workers in our community. We all thrive when these neighbors and our south Berkshire small businesses thrive.

### THIS YEAR, THANKS TO YOUR GENEROSITY, CONSTRUCT HAS:

- Distributed over \$80,000 in financial assistance to 300 households.
- Provided homes for 92 households across eight properties.
- Upgraded our website for improved access and functionality.
- Administered lotteries resulting in three new homeownership opportunities.
- Completed major capital repairs at all of our transitional and permanent properties.
- Entered into a contract to purchase a 20-unit property in Great Barrington (more on this inside!)

## THE BRICK CAMPAIGN: BRICK BY BRICK, BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY.



Stable housing is the foundation of a successful life. And for Anne Schnesel, this is the message of the Brick Campaign. With bricks representing structure, strength, and security, Anne launched the Brick Campaign in honor of her late husband Ernie, whose strength of spirit had enriched many lives.

**Starting at \$25 per brick**, donors can impact areas of housing insecurity often overlooked, such as transportation and childcare costs and essential hygiene items—necessities that, when depleted or scarce, can cause anxiety and compound housing insecurity.

"The Bricks represent a foundation...the foundation of a person as important as the foundation of a building ... the support needed for someone to start over, regain their footing, and thrive."

Construct board member, Elaine Silberstein, is a regular donor to the Brick Campaign, giving bricks as gifts in memory of loved ones. "This has been a meaningful way for me to express my love to others throughout the year while taking steps to create a stronger community."

*Brick Campaign donations can be made online, by phone, or by mail. Please note "BRICK CAMPAIGN" in correspondence and include the number of bricks purchased and the name(s) of those you wish to honor.*

## CONSTRUCT HELPS FAMILY BUY THEIR FIRST HOME

Through the Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Initiative Receivership Fund (AHIR), which incentivizes the conversion of blighted properties into affordable housing units, Construct was designated a court-appointed receiver. With this appointment, Construct created the first affordable housing unit in Becket by rehabilitating a long-abandoned 3-bedroom property in town. Situated on 2.9 acres, the property has easy access to many ideal amenities for a first-time home buyer. With help from a \$100,000 loan from the AHIR, Construct rehabilitated the blighted property and then offered it for sale by lottery to individuals whose income is 80% or less of the area's median. A deed restriction ensures the home will always remain affordable.

Shasta Bona, a Great Barrington social worker, was the lucky lottery winner. "This has saved my family from homelessness. Our future looked very grim when we were evicted from our apartment. All apartment opportunities were uninhabitable, too expensive, or out of our daughter's school district. We had begun looking into long-term stays at local motels when I learned about this opportunity. I still cannot believe we made it to the finish line, but we did! Thank you, Construct!"



Construct continues to identify other abandoned properties throughout the southern Berkshires, with two more projects already underway.

### FAST FACTS

#### What is a lottery?

In a lottery, income-eligible applicants submit applications. The lottery administrator then assigns a lottery code to each package, and the code is selected blindly at a public location.

#### Why do a lottery?

In order to receive federal funding, standards must be followed to avoid discriminatory effects that may violate applicable fair housing laws.

## BUILD CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Thanks to our generous donors, we are happy to report that we have met our fundraising goal for Phase One of the BUILD Capital Campaign! With \$287,870 raised and construction underway, we anticipate moving staff into the new offices by year's end. Work on Phase Two and Phase Three of the BUILD Campaign will begin during the winter and spring months with energy-saving upgrades to huddle spaces and parking, drainage, and landscaping improvements.

The **Construct Center for Affordable Housing** comes at a critical time when demand for services has increased dramatically, hastening the need for Construct to offer improved meeting space to better serve, educate, and advocate for our clients. We are grateful to those who have helped move the BUILD campaign along—especially



Neil Chrisman for his invaluable support and guidance. Donations to the BUILD Campaign can be mailed to Construct at 316 A State Road, Great Barrington, MA 01230. Please note BUILD in your correspondence. For general questions about the campaign or stock and wire transfer account information, please call Leigh at 413.429.4855 or email [ldavis@constructberkshires.com](mailto:ldavis@constructberkshires.com). We look forward to welcoming you into the new Center during our late spring 2023 groundbreaking!

## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT PHILIP DU GUAY

*Philip was homeless for 5 months before being introduced to Construct.*

With his marriage falling apart, Philip Du Guay and his family separated. When Philip's wife and children moved in with a relative, Philip tried in vain to find an affordable apartment so he could remain near his children. As a self-employed contractor, he sometimes slept in a warehouse or a motel when he could afford it.

As Philip's savings dwindled, a chance encounter led him to Construct. Within a few weeks, Philip moved into a two-bedroom apartment at Construct's Pine Woods apartments in Stockbridge. He shares custody of the children, who enjoy a nearby playground and easy access to the school bus stop. They love their new home! Philip is thankful for Construct's help and gives



back by shoveling snow for the apartment complex. The Construct team regularly checks in with Philip and his family to ensure they have the support they need.

## ARPA FUNDS TO HELP BERKSHIRE COUNTY FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS



Thanks to Massachusetts State Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli, low- to moderate-income Berkshire residents will get a hand up to home ownership. Rep. Pignatelli successfully introduced an amendment to

the Massachusetts American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), appropriating \$100,000 for a first-time home buyers' program. Construct will administer the funds, working with area mortgage brokers, to provide eligible candidates "final mile grants" for closing expenses.

"I'm a firm believer that creating a path to homeownership is the most effective way for people to build equity," said Pignatelli. "We want people to be able to live in the Berkshires, establish roots here, work, and raise their families. I hope these ARPA funds will help Construct continue and grow their great work in our community."

Thanks to additional funds provided by Lee Bank Foundation, Construct has begun providing final mile grants to first-time homebuyers. Now the process is open to all who are income eligible. Construct is working with mortgage officers at Lee Bank, Greylock Federal Credit Union, Adams Community Bank, Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, and Berkshire Bank, who have applications for those who are income eligible. *For more information, email Kate at, [kcoulehan@constructberkshires.org](mailto:kcoulehan@constructberkshires.org).*



# SEEDING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO PURCHASE THE HISTORIC WINDFLOWER INN

The shortage of workforce housing is crippling businesses in the Southern Berkshires — from workers leaving the area due to the lack of housing to restaurants shutting down due to the lack of staff. The fabric and quality of life as we know it is unraveling. To address this critical issue, Construct has contracted to buy The Windflower Inn, a 20-bedroom, 17-bath multi-building property minutes from downtown Great Barrington. The Inn on 10.5 acres presents the unique opportunity to help local businesses struggling to house essential staff while quickly adding moderate-income rental units that generate immediate revenue. Sources of funding include Greylock Federal Credit Union and Great Barrington ARPA funds.



## Quick Facts

**ADDRESS:** 684 So. Egremont Rd., Great Barrington

**YEAR BUILT:** 1850

**PRICE:** \$1.425 million

**ACREAGE:** 10.5 acres

**RENTAL UNITS:** Inn: 13 Bedrooms, each w/ private bath • 4-bedroom, 2-bath cottage • 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath cottage

**FEATURES:** Septic • Private well • Gardens, Pond

**CLOSING:** Nov 2022

**EXPECTED TENANCY MOVE-IN:** Feb 2023

## Preliminary Plans Include

- 1** Pre-leasing blocks of rooms to local businesses for key staff while keeping space available to rent directly to essential workers.
- 2** Offering the property's two cottages to families needing affordable homes to rent close to jobs and schools.
- 3** Repurposing the property's commercial kitchen into a culinary classroom, business development incubator, and commissary kitchen for restaurants and small producers.
- 4** Utilizing the expansive outdoor space for fundraising and community events.
- 5** Exploring possible hospitality management training partnerships with fellow nonprofits.

## Will You Seed The Windflower?

### GIVING LEVELS:

TREE	\$150,000+
TRUNK	\$75,000+
BRANCH	\$40,000+
LEAF	\$20,000+
ROOT	\$10,000+

All Seed Donors will be recognized during a special ribbon-cutting event held on the premises.

For information about giving options and naming opportunities, contact Leigh Davis, Development Director, 413-429-6868 or [ldavis@constructberkshires.org](mailto:ldavis@constructberkshires.org). A *pro forma* is available on request.

# FISCAL YEAR 2022: FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

**JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2022**

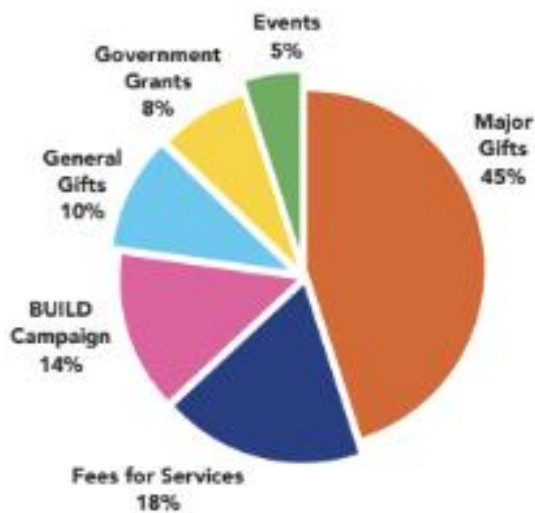
Income surplus includes restricted funds for the BUILD Campaign raised this year and not yet spent.

## INCOME

### WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Major Gifts	45%	\$522,921
Fees for Services	18%	\$204,726
BUILD Campaign	14%	\$166,195
General Gifts	10%	\$112,402
Government Grants	8%	\$ 87,157
Events	5%	\$ 57,924

**TOTAL INCOME** **\$1,151,325**



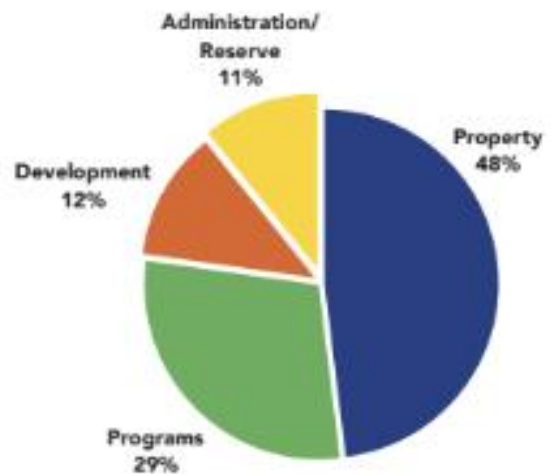
To every Construct supporter and partner—thank you! You're bringing hope and stability to hundreds of people struggling with housing insecurity.

## EXPENSES

### HOW WAS THE MONEY INVESTED?

Property	48%	\$522,834
Programs	29%	\$309,987
Development	12%	\$125,855
Administration/Reserve	11%	\$120,486

**TOTAL EXPENSES** **\$1,079,162**  
**NET** **\$72,163**



## THE POWER OF DONATIONS

**\$200**

A meal and emergency motel stay for a family out in the cold for one night.



**\$1000**

The average rental assist to keep a family who has lost income safely housed for another month.



**\$75**

The average monthly utility bill for a two-bedroom unit.



**\$500**

100 gallons for fuel—the minimum fuel companies will accept to refill a tank.



**\$2000**

The minimum for most families to get into a new apartment over-and-above the cost of the rent.





## CONSTRUCT

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### BREAKING NEWS!

Construct is the winning auction bidder to purchase Cassilis Farm Estate in New Marlborough! This 14-bedroom compound on 20+ acres will provide much-needed affordable and workforce housing to local residents. More details to come!

### BOARD

Elizabeth Rosenberg <i>Board President</i>	Michael Alper Stacey Billups	Wanda L. Houston Barbara Manning
Laura Jordahl <i>Vice-President</i>	Hinda Bodinger Robert Bogomolny	Christa Montano Mark Rosengren
Keith Seidman <i>Treasurer</i>	Peter Cherneff Tony Chojnowski	Deborah Ryan Anne Schnesel
Elaine Silberstein <i>Secretary</i>	Betty Farbman Jane Glaser	Richard Slutzky Barney Stein
	Rabbi Neil Hirsch	

### STAFF

Jane Ralph – *Executive Director*  
 June Wolfe – *Housing Director*  
 Leigh Davis – *Development Director*  
 Courtney Kimball – *Program Manager*  
 Kathy Wiggins – *Property Manager*  
 Sammye Keeling – *Property Management Assistant*  
 Mike Howard – *Maintenance Manager*  
 Rusty Coe – *Maintenance*  
 Kate Coulehan – *Housing Associate*  
 Hillary Howard – *Office Administrator*  
 Jeanne Keesler – *Bookkeeper*

*Special thanks to volunteer Lisa Beede for her assistance with this newsletter.*

### President's Advisory Council

David Bruno, Suzanne Czeraz, Bryan House, Josh Irwin, Sara Koffman, Lisa Messinger, Marcie L. Setlow, Lisa Sloan, Susie Weckes, Janet Zimmerman

### FOUNDED IN 1969

Construct is the leading nonprofit provider of affordable housing and supportive services to residents in fifteen towns across the southern Berkshires. Construct is committed to providing affordable housing to strengthen and diversify communities, stabilize lives, and empower individuals to build a better future.



Construct's tax identification number (EIN) is 23-7099108