

HV SPOTLIGHT

COMMUNITY DRIVEN REVITALIZATION

Philmont Beautification Inc.



Philmont Beautification Inc. (PBI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the revitalization of Philmont, a small village of about 1,300 people in Columbia County. Since its inception in the early 2000s, PBI has made a substantial positive impact in the village through programming, community engagement, and the rehabilitation of 23 properties.

From the start, a key component of PBI's success has been direct community involvement and a bottom-up approach to planning and decision making. Instead of soliciting community feedback in the middle or end of a project, PBI puts community members in the driver seat at the beginning of the process. This is achieved through strong communication efforts and the creation of working groups comprised of local resident volunteers. These working groups have direct input on things like project goals, site design, and the development of requests for proposals. This genuine community engagement improves community buy-in, fosters additional civic engagement, and leads to better results that reflect the desires of the community.

Vacant building rehabilitation is one of the most noticeable and impactful outcomes of PBI's work. The community engagement strategies described above – along with funding from the New York Main Street program and matching public-private dollars – has resulted in the revitalization of several vacant and underutilized buildings in downtown Philmont. Vacant building rehabilitation is just one component of PBI's wholistic approach to revitalization, which includes addressing affordable housing, food accessibility, small business support, and other special projects.

Below are three examples that highlight PBI's downtown revitalization efforts in Philmont.

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LOCAL 111

With assistance from PBI, a vacant service garage on Main Street was transformed as a farm to table restaurant called Local 111. The origins of this successful adaptive reuse project can be traced back to an early community meeting about main street revitalization put on by what would later become the founding members of PBI. After attending this meeting, Philmont residents Linda Gatter and Max Dannis were inspired to purchase the vacant garage in 2004. Linda, a trained architect, redesigned the building and worked with PBI to secure funding through the New York Main Street Program. Local 111 opened in 2007 and remains a valuable community asset today.

Before



After



119 MAIN STREET

Just down the street from Local 111 is 119 Main Street. In the early 2000s this building sat vacant with an empty commercial storefront. Again making use of New York Main Street funding, PBI successfully worked to rehab the building while preserving elements of the historical architecture. Today, the building is occupied and maintained with a real estate office occupying the ground floor commercial space.



Before



After

116 MAIN STREET

In 2011, a former Stewart's gas station/convenience store that was donated to PBI. This readaptation project brought together three interrelated PBI programs involving local food, small business, and the Main Street program. An extensive gut rehab turned the property into a green energy space to house the Philmont Cooperative, a commercial kitchen and café, creating a local food system with the participation of area farmers and producers. It includes a "Victory Garden," 18 raised beds for teaching kids to grow vegetables. PBI raised the considerable \$860,000 cost of the rehab through a blend of state grants, foundations, and local donor contributions. It took five years to complete the project, culminating in the final "gap" award to complete the rehab received from the New York State Office of Community Renewal and the Housing Trust Fund Community Investment Fund. The project opened in the spring of 2018, serving the community with fresh healthy foods from farms within 3 miles of the site, mixed with local value-added producers who rent space in the commercial kitchen at well below market rents.



Before



After

MORE ABOUT THE NEW YORK MAIN STREET PROGRAM

The New York State Main Street Program (NYMS) is a state-level program that offers technical and financial assistance for main street projects. Eligible activities include facade renovation, building rehabilitation, streetscape improvements, and technical assistance. Municipalities and nonprofits are the only eligible applicants for NYMS funds. When NYMS funds are awarded, the municipality or nonprofit is responsible for fund distribution and administration in compliance with program rules. The NYMS program is part of the annual consolidated funding application (CFA) process. For more information on the NYMS program, [click here](#).

