



**Northern Berkshire
Habitat
for Humanity®**

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NOVEMBER 2025 Newsletter

Our Next Housing Project

Williamstown is getting four new affordable single family houses and a new 289 foot road off Summer Street named Austin Lane. The volunteers had a busy fall clearing brush along the southern and eastern edges as well as in the northwest corner of the lot. Each of the four homes will have a 10 foot by 12 foot shed. The first two sheds were built with the assistance of the Rotary Club.

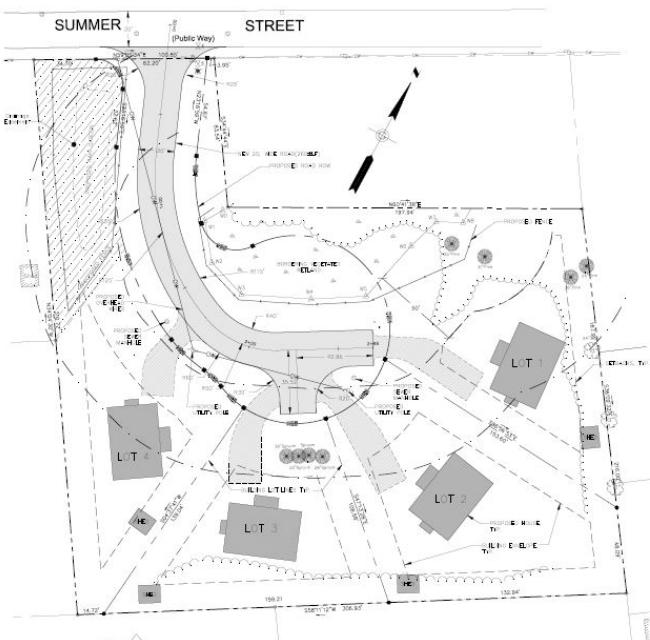
Each single story ranch style home will be approximately 1200 square feet with three bedrooms and one full bath and one half bath. Homes will be situated on approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of property keeping in character with the neighborhood. These homes will be highly energy efficient all electric homes.

While going through the permitting process the Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity Board met several times with the neighbors, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. We were able to retain the grove of large spruce trees on the sight cleaning up some of the understory to make a beautiful picnic area.

Modern Excavation was awarded the contract for the site development. The Summer Street neighborhood will benefit as a new fire hydrant has been installed at the intersection of Austin Lane and Summer Street. Currently the nearest fire hydrant is across the road on North Hoosac Road and while there is a fire hydrant on May Street, it most likely would be used as a secondary source of water in the event of a fire on Summer Street according to the fire chief.

Currently the water line is installed and is being tested for pressure leakage and bacteria. The sewer line is about 2/3's complete with all connections made and Summer Street repaired. The roadbed and detention basin and structures are next.

The volunteers expect to begin construction on the first house beginning early spring. Come join us for the build.



Our Thanks for Support of our Summer Street Project Development, Veteran's Building Projects and Brush with Kindness Projects

Contractors and Suppliers

Summer Street Project Development

BEK Land Surveyors
Guntlow & Associates
Burr and McCallum Architects
KMS Signs

Veteran's Building and Brush with Kindness Projects

rk Miles
Aubuchon Hardware
Carr Hardware
Home Depot
Duke's Lumber Hardware & Contracting Supplies
Benchmark Kitchens
McLain Electric
Ouellette's Plumbing
The Tree Guy

Grant/Foundation Support and Fundraisers

Williamstown Affordable Housing Trust
Community Preservation Committee, Williamstown
St. John's Episcopal Church, Williamstown
First Congregational Church, Williamstown
Mary and Henry Flynt Endowment
Williamstown Community Chest
Rotary Club, Williamstown
Turner House Fund
Shirley Brownrigg Charitable Trust
Aubuchon Hardware Round Up for Charity Program
North County Chorale
American Legion Post 152, Williamstown

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors

Keith Davis, President and Project Manager
Greta Snyder, Secretary
Mary Morrison, Treasurer
Laura Gura
Thomas Kirby
Vince Pesce
Brad Schueckler
Cindy Vadnais
Mark Vadnais

What It Is Like To Be A Volunteer

by Chuck O'Neill

My journey with Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity began with travel to Biloxi, Mississippi in the summer of 2005 with former director, Paul Austin, and a volunteer group of eager high school students. We did the complete framing of a home built for a local Habitat family. We were quite excited to see that it was still standing in satellite images that were taken after Hurricane Katrina that fall!

Fast-forward 20 years and five years post retirement I was happy to rekindle a sense of enjoyment and accomplishment of those earlier years by volunteering with the local group here in Northern Berkshire. It is an eclectic group, including people from academic, professional and construction trades. The more experienced workers are more than happy to assist with those of us who have less knowledge of specific construction techniques, but are willing to learn. We grouse about the pay and benefits and along the way have a lot of fun!

This summer, we have been working on small projects of kindness to help with veterans and other homeowners of special needs. We are also looking forward to the larger project of building four homes on the newly constructed Austin Lane off of Summer Street. It looks like there will be plenty of work to be done over the next few years and volunteering is a great way to join in the fellowship and fun and learn some new skills.



Our Continuing Mission Over 30 Years

Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1990 and since that time has been working to meet the housing needs of Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, New Ashford, North Adams, Savoy, Williamstown and Stamford, VT. Our projects include building new homes and renovating existing houses. As of November 2025, Northern Berkshire Habitat has completed 14 home buildings or renovations, serving 14 families and an estimated 73 people including parents, children and foster children. We have also performed 27 Brush with Kindness and Veterans critical repair or ramp projects impacting 51 people. With the support of Habitat contributors, homeowners achieve the strength, stability and self reliance needed to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Jim Joins Habitat

8 AM on a bright November morning. A keen-edged 24 degrees. The kind of weather that's a joy to watch from the warmth of the couch while cradling a hot cup of coffee, cereal bowl perched on one knee and the cat curled up in my lap.

But today I'm hustling out the door. Because it's Wednesday: Habitat day.

I signed up with Habitat this fall for at least 47 and 1/2 different reasons. And the experience has exceeded every one of them. To cite just a few:

1. To meet humans, beyond the few I work with at Williams College. This is a tough thing to do in a small community. Especially if, like me, you didn't grow up here and aren't much of a joiner (that's an understatement).
2. To learn basic building skills, after growing up in a family where successfully changing a light bulb was considered "showing off."
3. To actually help people. Because folks need a lot of help right now. A *lot*. And building, repairing or weatherizing homes will help them much more than my endlessly rage-reading the news... no matter what my phone's attention-hogging news apps want me to believe.
4. To finally answer my wife's and my time-old question, of what in the world our neighbor, Keith Davis, the president of Northern Berkshires Habitat, was doing running back and forth with all those tools and materials all the time.

So when I got a little more time in my week due to a job change, I signed up. The experience has ticked all those boxes, and a few more besides. Meeting humans? Yep, these folks sure seem human enough: everyone from retired electricians and engineers to teachers, doctors and lawyers. They're welcoming, knowledgeable and happy to be doing this work. If you could bottle their can-do spirit, you could change the world.

Learn a few building skills? So far, so good. A lot of the crew members have professional or advanced DIY experience, and they don't mind sharing it with a semi-retired speechwriter who always has to ask which one's the speed square, or how to change the blade on the circular saw.

Helping people? This is the greatest reward of all. The kindness and appreciation of the homeowners and residents is awesome. But even when they're not around, just the knowledge that our work is making a practical, immediate and positive difference in their lives is... well, it's nothing short of joyous.

As for that last question, about what Keith's up to? Well, you'll just have to come see for yourself! Join our merry crew and have a great time, in the words of Northern Berkshire Habitat, "empowering our homeowners to become contributing members of the community and providing security for their children to grow and prosper."

Now that's something worth leaving the couch for.



How Can You Help?

Volunteer

We welcome individuals interested in volunteering their time and energy to support our mission. There are volunteer opportunities in non-construction efforts as well as in on-site construction work.

Board of Directors/Committees - Our board and committee members are all volunteers working collaboratively on the administrative tasks necessary to support our construction projects. We would especially welcome experience and skills in the following areas.

- Fundraising
 - Grant Writing
 - Event Management
 - Donor Cultivation
- Communications/Public Relations
 - Newsletters
 - Social Media
 - Publicity - in support of Events, Family Selection, Construction Projects

Construction - All are welcome, skilled and less skilled. We provide tools, oversight and instruction and a wonderfully friendly working environment.

- Summer Street projects starting in Spring 2026
- Veterans/Brush with Kindness projects ongoing (paused during winter months)

For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact our office at office@northberkshirehabitat.org or (413)664-4440.

Donate

- Make a tax deductible donation to NBHfH online at our website <https://northberkshirehabitat.org/donate> or mail a check to our office. Direct donations to our local affiliate go 100% toward building a local, affordable home.
- Donate your vehicle (cars, trucks, boats, RVs and motorcycles welcome) to Habitat's Cars for Homes program. Your donated vehicle will help build the next affordable home. To donate, call 877-277-4344 or link to <https://www.habitat.org/support/donate-your-car>.



A Busy Year for the Habitat Volunteers

While permitting and performing site work for our four-house subdivision off Summer Street, the volunteers have kept very busy with various Veterans and Brush with Kindness projects.

This year the volunteers completed several veterans' projects. The first project involved replacing rotted portions of a home's sill, stripping old siding then installing exterior insulation and new vinyl siding, and replacing the roof including new sheathing. We also rebuilt several windows, replaced two doors and build two walls. This project exceeded our available funds for a veteran project and the American Legion Post 152 provided a grant to cover the additional costs. While this was our most extensive project, it was only the beginning.

Other veterans' projects included cutting down trees and roofing a shed, removing a bathtub and installing a custom walk in shower with the help of Benchmark Kitchens, and finally building a handicapped ramp with a new wider exterior door.

Our Brush with Kindness projects included siding and roofing a garage, replacing a small roof, replacing stairs and repairing a 3 season porch, installing several energy efficient windows, and helping one of our volunteers building a shed.

Our Critical Repair/Brush with Kindness projects focus on repairs that will make a home safer, more energy efficient and more accessible. This year's project improved the lives of 13 people in 9 homes.

Veterans' projects are funded by a special grant that originated from the sale of the Turner House. This fund allows us to purchase materials and hire contractors when necessary for certain trades.

For Brush with Kindness projects the applicant needs to cover the cost of materials but we can provide free labor.



Applicants for Brush with Kindness Program or Veterans Program must:

- Have lived in Northern Berkshire or Stamford, VT for at least one full year prior to application date.
- Own their own home. Earn no more than 80% of the Median Income for Northern Berkshire.
- (Non-veterans) Be able to fund the cost of materials.
- (Veterans) Be Honorably Discharged.

To learn more about the Brush with Kindness Program or Veterans Program and to request an application, contact Northern Berkshire Habitat for Humanity, (413) 664-4440, office@northberkshirehabitat.org, P.O. Box 391, North Adams, MA 01247

We Are Looking for our Next Habitat Family

As we look forward to starting construction on our first Summer Street house, we are also looking for our next Habitat Family to work with us on the project and to purchase the completed house with an affordable mortgage. We are looking for a family:

- in need of adequate, affordable housing;
- willing to work with Habitat on construction of their own and future homes;
- having a stable, adequate income within 30-80% of the area median income;
- having manageable debt and a positive credit history;
- currently living or working in the Northern Berkshire area.

For information on specific criteria for homeownership, families can contact our office by phone or email, 413-664-4440 or office@northberkshirehabitat.org

Habitat makes homeownership possible to families who could not obtain a conventional mortgage by:

- Constructing the house primarily with volunteer labor.
- Calculating a mortgage to ensure the homeowners housing costs do not exceed 30% of their total income (housing costs include mortgage principal and interest, property taxes and insurance). Habitat does not require a down payment and will work with the selected family to secure an affordable mortgage.
- Raising funds through donations, grants and events to cover the difference between our building costs and the calculated affordable mortgage.

You can help by spreading the word to any families you know who may benefit from the Habitat program. And you can help with a generous donation to offset our building costs and make our homes affordable.



1 ENTRY PORCH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"



2 SIDE PORCH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

