



## **Ulster County (NY) REALTORS® Help Transform Old Network of Railways into New Hiking/Biking Trails – January 2015**

The original capital of New York State, the City of Kingston is the only urban community of Ulster County, just within the northernmost reaches of New York City's metropolitan area. In its day, it was a major railway hub connecting multiple corridors; today, with the help of a Smart Growth Action Grant from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, the just-shy-of-600-member Ulster County Board of REALTORS® (UCBR) is transforming Kingston into a hub of rail-trails that connects the city's neighborhoods and business districts with each other and with the rural areas beyond.

For more than a decade, various disparate groups have been working to create multi-modal rail-trails along strategic segments of the vast system of unused rail lines that exists in the region. In order to develop a coherent hub connecting these trails in the City of Kingston, UCBR has partnered with the Kingston Land Trust, branding the trail hub as the Kingston Greenline. UCBR's president, Andi Turco-Levin, also chairs the Kingston Land Trust, and is thrilled to see the project coming together. "The Kingston Greenline will be great for the quality of life in the community," she notes, adding that the project falls right in line with an important initiative of the mayor. "Because Kingston is the county seat, lots of city services are concentrated here, and the trails significantly lessen the need for cars. Part of the corridor we're working on runs by an old lace curtain factory that is being redeveloped into artist lofts; it also connects to the SUNY Ulster campus, slated for completion next fall. Another portion drops down by the Trolley Museum of New York, an important tourist attraction, and goes on to provide river access. The Greenline is not just about recreation: there's an impact on personal health and the environment, and the economy, as well." Part of her goal has been to educate her fellow REALTOR® members about the impact of trails on home value. "We are all hearing about the appeal of walkable neighborhoods, and here we are with the opportunity to create them."

The Greenline itself has been a working concept for about six years, says Turco-Levin, and now that the coalition behind it has finally succeeded in securing property rights, there is a greater sense of urgency to complete it. The \$15,000 Smart Growth Action Grant that UCBR received from NAR is being used for outreach, education, and generating public support for the project. In June, it sponsored a visit from a rail-trails advocate who spoke at a UCBR member breakfast. It has funded the re-design of the project's website, and has created an internship program. On the third Sunday of each month, 60-70 members of the public have been participating in trail walks along different segments of the proposed Greenline. The coalition commissioned a local advertising agency to produce compelling print ads and outdoor signage to promote the Greenline. In early October, UCBR sponsored a groundbreaking event that featured the removal of railroad ties and rails along the first segment to get underway, with numerous REALTORS® involved, and the mayor and most city council members in attendance.

"This project reinforces so well what REALTORS® do," says Turco-Levin, "and that they're more than just about selling houses, they're real stakeholders in the community." She continues, "Getting to this point has taken a lot of dedication, vision, and hard work,



by a lot of people who are not in it for the money. They're invested in their community, and that's becoming part of the REALTOR® brand."

*To learn more about how the REALTORS® of Ulster County, New York are improving the quality of life in their region, contact Andi Turco-Levin, President of the Ulster County Board of REALTORS®, at [andi.levin@coldwellbanker.com](mailto:andi.levin@coldwellbanker.com) or 845.679.2255 x110.*



In its day, Kingston was a major railway hub connecting multiple corridors. Today, with the help of a Smart Growth Action Grant from NAR, the Ulster County Board of REALTORS® (UCBR) is transforming Kingston into a hub of rail-trails that connects the city's neighborhoods and business districts with each other and with the rural areas beyond.