

# Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan



May 2014

BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN OFFICIALS  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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**RESOLUTION NO. 2014-7**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BURGESS AND TOWN COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN ADOPTING AND APPROVING THE POTTSTOWN BOROUGH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATED MAY 12, 2014.**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 301 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act 247, municipalities are required, from time to time, to prepare, adopt and update Comprehensive Plans; and

**WHEREAS**, after careful consideration, the Borough of Pottstown, with the help of its Planning Commission and the Montgomery County Planning Commission, have reviewed and updated its existing Comprehensive Plan that would serve as a guide for future growth and development; and

**WHEREAS**, an implementation goal is to establish general consistency between local land use ordinances and the Plan per guidelines set forth in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act 247; and

**WHEREAS**, after review and monitoring ordinances within the Borough of Pottstown, the Borough Council has prepared a Comprehensive Plan dated May 12, 2014 (hereinafter referred to as "Comprehensive Plan") in order to further general consistency between the Plan and the local land use ordinances; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed Comprehensive Plan has been submitted for review and comment in accordance with the requirements of the Municipalities Planning Code and has been found acceptable for guiding the Borough's growth and development by various reviewing bodies and organizations; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed Plan has been reviewed and endorsed by the Pottstown Borough Planning Commission at its public meeting held March 19, 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, the Comprehensive Plan has been the subject of a public hearing held by Pottstown Borough Council on May 12, 2014.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED** by the Burgess and Town Council of the Borough of Pottstown that Borough Council does hereby adopt and approve the Borough's Comprehensive Plan dated May 12, 2014, including all exhibits and attachments which shall become part of the Plan. A complete copy of the Plan is attached hereto, incorporated herein, and marked as Exhibit "A".

**ENACTED and RESOLVED** this 12<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2014.

**THE BURGESS AND TOWN COUNCIL  
OF THE BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN**

BY: Stephen M. Toroney  
Stephen M. Toroney, President

ATTEST: Virginia L. Takach  
Virginia L. Takach, Secretary

Approved this 12<sup>th</sup> day of  
May, A.D., 2014.

Sharon Thomas  
Sharon Thomas, Mayor

BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE  
May 2014



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CHAPTER 1  
introduction

## **POTTSTOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Borough of Pottstown Planning Commission was first established in order to carry out the planning functions authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The borough adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1960, and updated the Plan again in 1986. In 2005, the Borough joined seven other municipalities in its adoption of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan, which continues to guide the growth of the Region. This 2014 Borough Comprehensive Plan is generally consistent with the Regional Plan and establishes a more detailed set of recommendations for the Borough of Pottstown.

### **What is a Comprehensive Plan?**

A comprehensive plan provides an overall vision for a community along with tools to implement that vision. It begins by assessing the current state of a municipality, establishes goals and objectives for how it should look and function in the future, and then proposes actions to implement the goals and objectives. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide for the community's leaders as they make land use policy such as zoning ordinances, subdivision and land development ordinances, capital improvement plans, redevelopment or revitalization programs, parkland development, housing renovation programs, and parking regulations. It also provides a framework for reviewing individual development proposals.

### **State Mandate**

Although a Comprehensive Plan is tailored to each individual municipality, certain elements are required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to be included in a Comprehensive Plan. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) is that state Act that allows and regulates municipal planning, including zoning. As such, the MPC outlines the following required elements for a Comprehensive Plan:

- Statement of Objectives
- Land Use Plan
- Housing Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Community Facilities and Utilities Plan
- Statement of interrelations of plan components
- Short and long-term range implementation strategies
- Compatibilities with or buffering for neighboring municipalities
- Natural and historic resources protection plan
- Identification of land uses relative to natural resources and use of existing minerals
- Identification of regionally important land uses

- Farmland plan
- Historic preservation plan
- Water supply plan
- Planning surveys (characteristics and trends)

Other elements may be included and the organization of the plan and the thoroughness of an element is left to the discretion of the municipality.

## Planning in Pottstown

Today, in addition to its five member Planning Commission, the borough also has a Pottstown Downtown Improvement District Authority (PDIDA) which has developed a strategic plan to aid in the revitalization of the borough's downtown business district as well as a Blighted Property Review Committee which works in conjunction with the Planning Commission to discuss and identify properties that may qualify as blighted pursuant to the provisions of the state law. The borough is also a member of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee (PMRPC), a multi-municipal planning effort that includes eight municipal members, six from Montgomery County and two from Chester County. The intent of the Regional Committee and its Regional Comprehensive Plan is to ensure smarter growth in the region, better management of future development, and protection of the area's unique historical, cultural, and natural amenities.

Since the adoption of the borough's first Comprehensive Plan in 1960, many studies have been completed for the borough, the most influential of which include:

- Pottstown Pennsylvania: An Evaluation of the Economic and Industrial Development Potentials of the Pottstown Area (1976)
- Pottstown, Pennsylvania: An Evaluation of Development Strategies for Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Incorporated (1989)
- Downtown Pottstown Comprehensive Plan (1994)
- Western Riverfront District Redevelopment (2002)
- Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan (2003)
- Reconnections: Reconnecting the People of North Coventry Township and Pottstown Borough with Each Other and Their Schuylkill River Heritage (2004)
- Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan (2005)
- Pottstown Borough Open Space Plan (2006)
- Pottstown Economic Development Strategic Plan (2008)
- Pottstown, Pennsylvania: Transformation Strategies (2009)

- Heritage Action Plan (2011)
- Marketing the Pottstown Region: Strategies for Economic Development and Their Fiscal Impacts (2012)
- Industrial Zone Transportation Access Study (2012)

Summaries of the previous plans listed above, as well as others that have been created for the borough are detailed in the Appendix. The 2014 Comprehensive Plan draws heavily from these documents as they contain many goals and objectives still relevant for the borough today.

## **PAST TRENDS, EMERGING PROBLEMS, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

For more than 100 years, industry in Pottstown provided the means of livelihood. Industry was the basis for most all local economic activity, formed the patterns of neighborhoods, social structure, and cultural values. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century though, Pottstown's role as a hub of economic and industrial activity diminished as major employers in the borough closed or relocated.

Decades of a declining industrial base and population in the borough helped to create and shape the challenges now facing Pottstown. As identified in the borough's most recent Economic Development Strategy Plan, Pottstown currently faces problems related to its available industrial space, competition from surrounding communities, low income levels among its population, and distressed core residential neighborhoods, among other issues.

### **Emerging Challenges**

Available Industrial Space: While the borough was once a hub for industrial activity, it currently lacks available space with the modern amenities necessary to attract new industrial users to Pottstown.

Competition from Surrounding Communities: The municipalities surrounding Pottstown have experienced significant growth in recent years. With lots of vacant and agricultural lands ripe for development, developers and residents alike have been attracted to the greenfield sites and newer housing units available outside of the borough.

Low Borough Income Levels: Income levels in the borough are well below that of both Montgomery County as a whole and the surrounding municipalities. In 2010 the borough had a median household income of roughly \$43,000, significantly less than the County's median of \$76,000.

Distressed Core Residential Neighborhoods: Residential areas in the vicinity of the downtown district have generally experienced higher incidence of poverty, crime, rental tenure, and substandard housing than other neighborhoods in the borough. The deterioration of downtown neighborhoods not only affects the quality of life for the residents who live there, but also undermines the efforts being made to revitalize the main street and downtown commercial corridor.

### **Opportunities**

While population and employment figures have experienced a steady decline since the 1980's, Pottstown has recently begun

to see population figures level off and both population and employment numbers are projected to grow in the upcoming years. Despite its history and current challenges, the borough also possesses unique opportunities to help grow and revitalize Pottstown.

Business/Industrial Infrastructure: While Pottstown is unlikely to ever to recreate the heavy industrial sector it once had, the region is experiencing growth among light industrial operations, the technology sector, and financial services. With existing capacity in its infrastructure, including water and sewer systems, a rail line, airport, and direct access to both Routes 422 and 100, the borough has the potential to attract smaller companies in these growing sectors.

Recreational Amenities: Pottstown boasts some of the region's most noteworthy recreational facilities, including Memorial Park, Riverfront Park, the Schuylkill River Trail, Pottsgrove Manor, and the Carousel at Pottstown. Additionally, the borough's parks and recreation department works to provide numerous recreational events, attracting people from across the region. Events such as the Pottstown Volleyball Rumble and BMX bike races have helped to bring thousands of people from around the country to the borough.

Cultural, Educational, and Institutional Amenities: Pottstown has a rich cultural heritage, including the Steel River Playhouse, the Public Library, ArtFusion 19464, Pottstown Dance Theater, and the performing arts facilities at the Hill School. The borough is also home to one of Montgomery County Community College's two campuses as well as the Pottstown Memorial Medical Center, the only general hospital in the Metropolitan Region.

Main Street District and Distinctive Character: The attributes of High Street, including continuous store fronts, ample sidewalks, historic architecture, street trees, and street lamps help to create a unique setting that is distinguishable from the more rural and suburban character of surrounding municipalities. Pottstown's urban-style setting and unique character create an attractive destination for a growing population of young adults and empty nesters, whose preference for dense, walkable communities is increasing.



CHAPTER 2  
goals & objectives

## VISION

Keep Pottstown a desirable place in which to live, work, shop and play by maintaining high standards for new construction and redevelopment, and by providing quality community facilities and services to residents and visitors alike.

## OVERALL GOALS

Pottstown's Comprehensive Plan Update is based upon goals and objectives which the borough could use in developing its planning policies and development objectives in the future. The overall goals embodied in the plan include the following:

Continue efforts to preserve the borough's natural features, open space, viewsheds, gateways, historic areas, and residential neighborhoods.

Broaden the borough's tax base so as to stabilize and keep residential property taxes at a reasonable level without affecting community services by encouraging the expansion and addition of revenue producing land uses.

Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment. Ensure the permitting and approvals process supports and encourages the growth of new and expanding businesses in the borough.

Improve and enhance the downtown to support a strong and diverse business district that serves as an attractive hub for residents and a viable destination for the surrounding region.

Continue to develop Pottstown as a destination for arts, culture, recreation and heritage tourism.

Provide a diversity of housing types to meet the needs of Pottstown's young adults, middle aged families, and aging citizens, including market-rate and owner-occupied housing.

Open the community to the Schuylkill River so that residents and shoppers can gain easy access and enjoyment of the riverfront and its amenities.

Preserve the existing high quality homes and structures that define Pottstown and preserve the street grid that provides the borough with its walkable nature. Look for ways to modernize outdated structures while keeping and enhancing the historic elements that should remain.

Provide quality neighborhood recreation areas and park facilities.

Support the borough's educational facilities, ranging from the public and private schools in the borough to the higher education opportunities that the community college provides.

Support the borough's arts organizations in order to continue to establish Pottstown's identity as an center for arts and culture in the region.

Continue to strengthen property maintenance standards and code enforcement across the borough.

Create new opportunities for redevelopment in underutilized areas of Pottstown.

Improve the visual environment and image of Pottstown with the beautification of key locations, public art, and the continued upgrading of the street and neighborhood environments.

Maintain and improve community facilities and services in accordance with the changing needs of the population and businesses. Consider technological advances when planning for community upgrades. Look to promote ideas of sustainability and conservation within this context.

Provide for the movement of all forms of transportation within and through the borough in a safe, efficient, and

convenient manner, including serving pedestrians and bicyclists.

Continue the borough's role and participation in the regional planning commission. Work to coordinate with other regional agencies to find the best outcome for regional transportation, commerce, recreation, and other issues.

## LAND USE GOALS

Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment.

Identify appropriate uses for vacant land, whether it be development or other uses, such as pocket parks in neighborhoods, community gardens, stormwater management systems, parking, or other open space.

Eliminate vacant and blighted buildings.

Protect valuable environmental resources, including groundwater resources, trees, and sensitive areas such as woodlands, stream systems, wetlands, steep slopes, and wildlife, especially along the Schuylkill River and Manatwny Creek.

Work with adjacent municipalities to improve the function and appearance of the borough's gateway areas, as recommended in the *Reconnections Plan* and the *Western Riverfront District Redevelopment Plan*.

Develop and implement strategic plans for opportunity sites.

Continue to update and streamline the zoning ordinance and other permitting and planning procedures within the borough.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment.

- Promote the development and redevelopment of suitable sites for businesses in the borough.
- Establish a range of business assistance programs.
- Develop more business/customer-friendly permitting and planning processes and ordinances.
- Expand employment opportunities for residents.
- Undertake further research to develop a detailed understanding of business and economic conditions in Pottstown and the region.
- Expand and enhance the Pottstown Borough Municipal Airport.

Enhance Pottstown's identity as the urban hub of the Region.

Develop a riverfront plan for reuse of key parcels.

Encourage and accommodate a vibrant downtown.

Encourage high-value employment.

Build on existing arts and culture activities as an economic development tool to bring more visitors into town.

Expand Pottstown's heritage tourism infrastructure and attractions.

Include Pottstown's urban advantages and assets in marketing for economic development.

Increase economic activity related to heritage, arts and culture, and recreational tourism in Pottstown for the benefit of taxpayers, partners, and the general public.

## **HOUSING GOALS**

Expand market choice for new housing and revitalize existing housing.  
Improve the quality of life in Pottstown and its neighborhoods.  
Encourage the development of properly located multifamily apartment complexes, attached townhouses, and the adaptive reuse of quality older structures for dwellings.  
Support the transition of existing rental housing units into owner-occupied housing, where appropriate.  
Promote the creation of new market-rate housing in neighborhoods which can support this type of construction.  
Provide incentives to encourage infill housing construction that is appropriate for Pottstown's existing character.  
Look to promote downtown housing by encouraging the renovation of the second- and third-stories above downtown retail spaces.

## **MOBILITY & CIRCULATION GOALS**

Make improvements to the transportation network to promote the safe and efficient movement of people, vehicles and goods within and through the borough.  
Expand and enhance the Pottstown Borough Municipal Airport.  
Continue to support, expand, and upgrade public transit access and facilities in the borough.  
Capitalize on the borough's existing rail infrastructure.  
Increase access and safety by improving the design of intersections and prioritizing projects that increase connections in the borough.  
Ensure safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle access in the borough.  
Improve access to and awareness of parking facilities.

## **CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES GOALS**

Preserve the historical as well as architectural qualities of Pottstown's built environment through the creation of a comprehensive preservation program.  
Maintain an inventory of potential site landmarks and districts for identification of additional desired sites for preservation.  
Work with owners of historic properties to educate them as to the value of their properties. Ensure that private owners of historic properties receive appropriate technical assistance and financial incentive information from government sources.  
Provide incentives for private-sector reinvestment and restoration of historic properties.  
Establish a management structure and oversight for Pottstown's Heritage Action Program.  
Build effective partnerships for heritage initiatives in Pottstown to ensure long-term management and economic sustainability.  
Raise public awareness of Pottstown's historical, artistic, cultural, recreational and environmental resources and their locations. Educate Pottstown's residents on the borough's rich architectural and historic heritage.  
Develop marketing and outreach for coordinated promotion of Pottstown's heritage, arts and culture, and recre-

ational resources and offerings.

Take advantage of local, regional, and national marketing organizations to promote Pottstown's heritage offerings. Remain informed concerning current trends and best practices through associations at local, state, and national government and organization levels on an ongoing basis.

## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS**

Support regional park coordination and cooperation.

Open up the Riverfront.

Continue to develop recreational facilities and programs that benefit borough residents and attract people regionally.

Promote the borough's parks and recreation facilities and events to residents and the surrounding communities.

Implement the goals and recommendations of the borough's Open Space Plan.

Encourage the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail through the borough.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS**

Continue to enhance public safety in the borough.

Maintain and enhance services at existing community facilities.

Provide high quality emergency services, healthcare, and education.

Promote municipal community facilities as regional assets to help draw people to the borough.

Strive to save costs and improve sustainability in the borough by reducing energy and water consumption in municipal buildings.

Improve the borough's underground arch system.



CHAPTER 3  
community profile

## **HISTORY AND REGIONAL INFO**

### **The Region**

Pottstown is centrally located in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region's planning area and is the Region's only borough, thus containing the highest density development of all the municipalities. The Pottstown Metropolitan Region is located approximately 40 miles west of the City of Philadelphia in Montgomery and Chester Counties and abuts the southeastern border of Berks County. The Pottstown Metropolitan Region is comprised of Douglass, New Hanover, Lower Pottsgrove, Upper Pottsgrove and West Pottsgrove Townships and Pottstown Borough in Montgomery County and East Coventry and North Coventry Townships in Chester County.

The Schuylkill River runs through the center of the Region and separates Montgomery and Chester Counties. The Region is also at the crossroads of Route 422, a major east-west U.S. route, and Route 100, a major north-south state route.

### **The Borough**

The convergence of the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River was an attractive location for members of the Delaware Indian tribe and foreign explorers. William Penn deeded the land, which is now Pottstown Borough and the surrounding area to his son John in 1701. Among the early settlers were Germans, Swedes, and English.

By the mid 1700's, Thomas Potts, who was an ironmaster, had multiple iron interests in the Pottstown area. John Potts, the oldest son of Thomas Potts, purchased nine hundred ninety-five acres in the area and in 1752 Pottstown was founded. Before 1800, the village was called Pottsgrove in reference to the family; however, as the population increased, this slowly evolved into Pottstown.

The Potts home was a showplace on a small hill just west of town. When the town was first laid out, its boundaries stretched from York Street to Charlotte Street and from the Schuylkill River to Beech Street.

### **Government**

On February 6, 1815, the area was incorporated as a borough, the second in Montgomery County with Norristown being the first. The first election of town officers was held in April of 1815.

In 1847 the town was divided into two wards. By 1850 the population of the borough reached a total of 1,850. As the town grew, new wards were added and old ones were divided. By 1893 the borough had ten wards represented by twenty councilmen, two from each ward. Borough Council continued to function as one of the largest municipal representative bodies in Pennsylvania. In 1964 the number of wards was reduced to seven, with only one councilman representing each ward.

In 1944, the Council-Manager form of government was adopted and administrative responsibility for the operation of the borough was given to a professional Manager. The borough has had twelve Managers since the position was created.

## **Economy**

Pottstown was a metal manufacturing town, first as an iron producer and later as a steel producer. As early as 1714 the first iron forge was built. By the 1720's, the first blast furnace was in operation for the production of cast iron and wrought iron. In 1732, the first steel furnace was in production in the Pottstown area. This industry was prevalent in Pottstown until the early 1900's, picked up during both World Wars, and all but ended after WWII when increased competition started to slow production demand.

By 1839, steam locomotives were running between Reading and Philadelphia, with a stop in Pottstown. Citizens who opted for motorized transit also had two trolley lines running from Sanatoga to Stowe and High Street to Ringing Rocks Park. Raw materials and coal were moved easily, and markets were more readily accessible. At this time, the population of the borough was 600. Since the first forge, Pottstown has received much recognition in the metal industries. The most significant projects include the locks for the Panama Canal and the Golden Gate Bridge.

The Schuylkill River played a significant role in the development of Pottstown. The Schuylkill Canal opened in 1824 and provided the first mode of transportation besides horse, bike or walking. Bicycling was a very popular means of transportation in and around Pottstown.

Pottstown was the traditional hub of activity. The borough was a large employment center and had many cultural activities, shops and banks that lined the streets. Today the borough has been hit by the dwindling presence of the steel industry and by the closing of other major employers within the borough. Positive steps to turn the tide have been made and more work is being done to revitalize the borough.

## **Education**

The school system dates back to before 1800 when two log cabin school houses existed. In 1838, Pottstown established a public school system. Multiple school buildings were built around this time and in 1890, a large school building with multiple rooms was constructed. Private schools were always a prominent part of the history of Pottstown. The Hill School was opened in 1851 and run as a family operated school until 1920 when it became a not-for profit operation.

## **Infrastructure**

In the 1860's, a water company was formed and water was pumped to a reservoir on Washington Hill. A municipal sewer system was not installed in the current day borough until development pressures in 1915 brought about a need for it. Today, there is public water and sewer and an adequate road network throughout the borough that is an asset to future redevelopment of the area.

The Pottstown Municipal Airport was constructed in 1952 and is owned by the Borough of Pottstown. As a general aviation airport it provides limited corporate and charter service as well as services for recreational pilots. The Airport's runway is more than 2,700 feet long and 75 feet wide.

## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

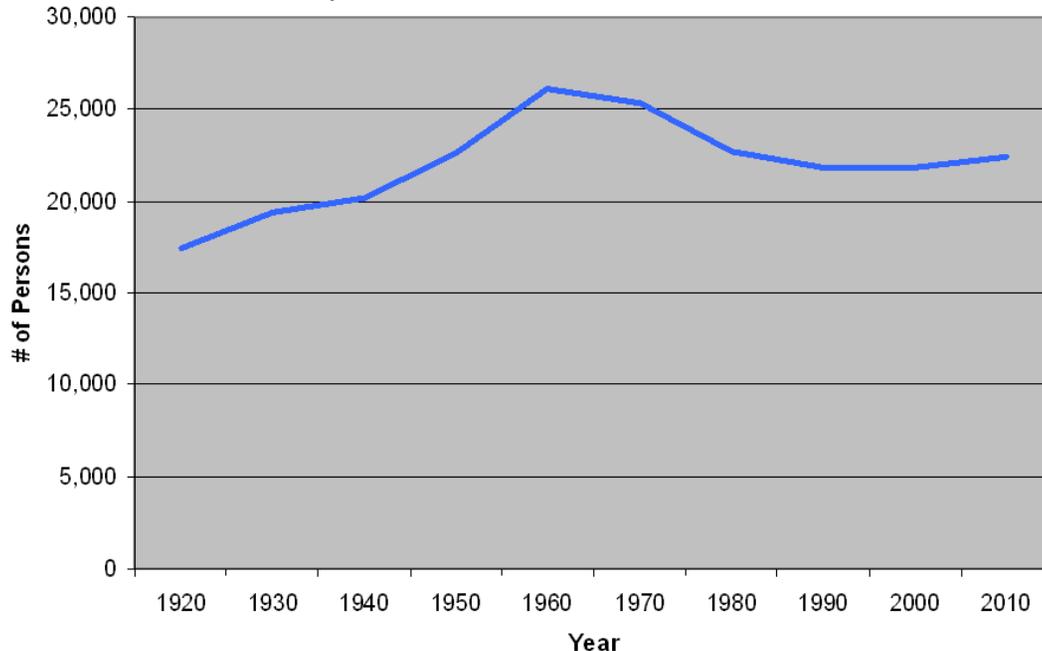
This section provides a detailed analysis of the population, housing, social, and economic characteristics in Pottstown Borough. The primary source of data is the decennial U.S. Census, supplemented by other Census reports and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC).

### Population and Change

The tri-county area surrounding Pottstown continues to grow in population. As of the 2010 Census, Montgomery County had grown to 797,990 residents, a 6.4 percent increase from 2000 and a 24 percent increase from 1980. Nearby Chester County grew to 438,500 residents (1.2% increase from 2000) and Berks County grew to 412,053 residents (10.3% increase from 2000). Both Chester and Berks Counties increased their populations by more than 30% since 1980. The Route 422 Corridor is still experiencing growth despite the economic downturn. This growth may indicate that the character of the region is changing.

Since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan, the borough's population decreased 12 percent. Pottstown's population peaked in 1960 at 26,144, followed by a steady decline through 1990 at which point the population leveled off for the next two decades. A modest increase has occurred lately. The population grew by 2.4% between 2000 and 2010, to 22,377; however this number is an 11.7% decrease from the 1980 population.

**FIGURE 3-1: Population over Time**



Sources: 1960, 1990, 2000, and 2010 US Census; 1988 Pottstown Comprehensive Plan (1970, 1980)

While experiencing a very modest population increase in the recent decade, Pottstown has not seen the same overall population gains as other surrounding municipalities. Adjacent municipalities, namely Upper Pottsgrove (85%) and Lower Pottsgrove (65%), as well as the more rural townships, have seen significant population gains since 1980.

Pottstown is the 11th largest municipality in Montgomery County, but ranks 39th in growth. In previous decades, Pottstown's declines matched those of nearby urbanized areas such as Norristown and Reading. In 2010, those communities experienced more growth, 9.4 and 8.5 percent respectively. Pottstown's very modest growth in the past decade is more comparable to urban areas like Lansdale (1.2%), Boyertown (2.9%), and West Chester (3.4%).

Upon the release of the 2000 U.S. Census, DVRPC projected that Pottstown would gradually increase in population after 2010. This projection is based on an analysis of various local factors that include birth rates, past and recently proposed level of development, zoning, availability of land and public utilities (particularly

**Figure 3-2: Population Characteristics**

	1980	2000	2010	Change from 1980-2000		Change from 2000-2010		Change from 1980-2010	
				Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Pottstown</b>	<b>25,355</b>	<b>21,859</b>	<b>22,377</b>	<b>(3,496)</b>	<b>-13.8%</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>(2,978)</b>	<b>-11.7%</b>
Region, Counties and State									
Berks	312,509	373,638	412,053	61,129	19.6%	38,415	10.3%	99,544	31.9%
Chester	316,660	433,501	438,500	116,841	36.9%	4,999	1.2%	121,840	38.5%
Montgomery	643,621	750,097	799,874	106,476	16.5%	47,893	6.4%	154,369	24.0%
Pottstown Metropolitan Region	61,440	69,409	79,261	7,969	13.0%	9,852	14.2%	17,821	29.0%
Commonwealth of PA	11,863,895	12,281,054	12,540,718	417,159	3.5%	259,664	2.1%	676,823	5.7%
Urban Centers									
Boyertown	3,979	3,940	4,055	(39)	-1.0%	115	2.9%	76	1.9%
Norristown	34,684	31,282	34,234	(3,402)	-9.8%	2,952	9.4%	(450)	-1.3%
Phoenixville	14,823	14,788	16,440	(35)	-0.2%	1,652	11.2%	1,617	10.9%
Reading	87,643	81,207	88,082	(6,436)	-7.3%	6,875	8.5%	439	0.5%
West Chester	19,301	17,861	18,461	(1,440)	-7.5%	600	3.4%	(840)	-4.4%
Neighborhoods									
East End - South	3,217	2,989	3,225	(228)	-7.1%	236	7.9%	8	0.2%
West End	1,777	1,585	1,632	(192)	-10.8%	47	3.0%	(145)	-8.2%
Washington/Rosedale	3,197	2,872	2,991	(325)	-10.2%	119	4.1%	(206)	-6.4%
Beech/Wilson	3,940	4,015	3,931	75	1.9%	(84)	-2.1%	(9)	-0.2%
Manatawny/Farmington	3,416	3,448	3,537	32	0.9%	89	2.6%	121	3.5%
North End	3,047	2,800	2,586	(247)	-8.1%	(214)	-7.6%	(461)	-15.1%
Downtown - North	3,116	3,020	3,297	(96)	-3.1%	277	9.2%	181	5.8%
Downtown - South	1,019	1,130	1,178	111	10.9%	48	4.2%	159	15.6%
Surrounding Municipalities									
Lower Pottsgrove	7,299	11,213	12,059	3,914	53.6%	846	7.5%	4,760	65.2%
North Coventry	7,164	7,381	7,866	217	3.0%	485	6.6%	702	9.8%
Upper Pottsgrove	2,873	4,102	5,315	1,229	42.8%	1,213	29.6%	2,442	85.0%
West Pottsgrove	4,208	3,815	3,874	(393)	-9.3%	59	1.5%	(334)	-7.9%
East Coventry	4,085	4,566	6,636	481	11.8%	2,070	45.3%	2,551	62.4%
New Hanover	4,623	7,369	10,939	2,746	59.4%	3,570	48.4%	6,316	136.6%
Douglass	5,833	9,104	10,195	3,271	56.1%	1,091	12.0%	4,362	74.8%

Sources: 2000 and 2010 US Census; 1988 Pottstown Comprehensive Plan (1980)

**FIGURE 3-3: Population Forecasts**

	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Montgomery County	799,874*	808,531	823,564	848,463	873,361	887,364	894,486
Pottstown – 2007 est.	21,934	22,173	22,400	22,613	22,814	23,000	n/a
Pottstown – 2012 est.	22,377*	22,595	22,865	23,210	23,555	23,750	23,818

Source: DVRPC 2040 Population Forecasts (January 2012) and 2035 Population Forecasts (2007)

\* 2010 U.S. Census (actual, not a projection)

**FIGURE 3-4: Change in Age of Population**

Age Group	1980		2010		1980-2010 Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
< 5	1,522	6.7%	1,716	7.7%	14.5%
5-9	1,485	6.5%	1,491	6.7%	2.0%
10-14	1,593	7.0%	1,294	5.8%	-17.5%
15-19	1,826	8.0%	1,385	6.2%	-23.0%
20-24	2,055	9.0%	1,521	6.8%	-24.8%
25-34	3,297	14.5%	3,479	15.5%	7.2%
35-44	2,061	9.1%	2,861	12.8%	41.0%
45-54	2,497	11.0%	3,253	14.5%	32.3%
55-64	2,818	12.4%	2,370	10.6%	-14.6%
65-74	2,111	9.3%	1,481	6.6%	-28.7%
75+	1,464	6.4%	1,526	6.8%	5.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,729</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>22,377</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-1.5%</b>

Sources: 2010 US Census; 1988 Pottstown Comprehensive Plan

sewers), proximity to employment centers, development patterns, and local zoning. This expected increase in population will place a greater stress on Pottstown’s existing community services and facilities; it demands measures and efforts, like this comprehensive plan update, that better prepares the borough for the potential growth in population.

Pottstown’s actual 2010 population disproves previous population forecasts prepared by DVRPC in 2007, which suggested the borough’s population would continue to decrease by another 3.2 percent between 2000 and 2010. Instead, the current population is two percent higher than that 2010 forecast and even approximately equivalent to

that 2020 forecast. DVRPC revised its population forecasts with the release of the 2010 US Census to reflect the new data and the current state of the economy. The expected percentage of change in Pottstown’s population remains largely the same, at approximately one percent every five years. However, there is a slight increase in growth rate in 2025 and 2030 to 1.5 percent and a drop-off in growth to 0.3 percent in 2040.

### Age

Pottstown’s population continues to experience an aging trend, similar to Montgomery County overall. The median age for Pottstown’s population was 30.8 years in 1970 and increased to 36.1 years in 2010 (same as in 2000). Montgomery County’s median age is even higher, at 38.2 years. Pottstown’s median age is similar to other urban centers and surrounding municipalities. The only markedly different community is West Chester, with a median age of 24.4 years, which is likely because of West Chester University and the younger population it draws. Coatesville and Reading have retained a younger population as well, with a median age around 31 years.

A closer look at Pottstown’s age distribution reveals more changes taking place in the borough.

**School-aged Children:** This 5-17 years age bracket consists of the school aged population in Pottstown. At 16.2 percent of Pottstown’s population, it still makes up a large part of the borough. This number has been fairly consistent since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. The school aged population made up 18.6 percent of the borough’s population in 1980. Looking further back, the school aged population has declined since 1970, when nearly 25 percent of the population was in the 5-17 year age bracket.

**Working Population:** Certainly a large slice of Pottstown’s population, the 25-64 years age bracket, consists of a wide variety of people. This age group ranges from young families and homebuyers to well-established income earners who are edging toward retirement. At 53.4 percent of the borough’s population, this age group has increased from 1980 when it made up 47 percent of the population. There’s been a noticeable increase in the population aged 35-54 years, which now makes up 27.3 percent of the population (up from 20.1 percent in 1980). This may mean that more young families chose to make their home in Pottstown in the last 20 years. However, there has also been a slight decrease in the 55-64 years age bracket, which stands at 10.6 percent of the population (down from 12.4 percent in 1980). This decline may be due to the rise in popularity of age restricted housing in Montgomery County, which is usually restricted to homeowners who are over the age of 55 years. This trend has certainly attracted older residents to purchase what are typically smaller homes. Much of the growth in this type of housing has been outside of Pottstown.

**Retirement Age and Older:** The life expectancy of America’s population is getting older. As the number of people within this aging population increases, there will be a need for specialized facilities like age-restricted housing, continuing care facilities, and recreation centers that cater to the elderly. Since 1980, there has been a slight decrease of this age group within Pottstown, from 15.8 percent in 1980 to 13.4 percent in 2010 (although it did rise to 16.2% in 2000). A significant decrease was seen in the population aged 65 to 74 (-28.7%), whereas the 75 years and older population increased by 6 percent. These decreases could be influenced by a lack of options for specialized elder care in Pottstown. Approximately 3.5 percent of Pottstown’s housing stock is age-restricted; there are no continuing care facilities.

## Ethnic and Racial Composition

Between 1980 and 2010, Pottstown’s white population dropped 17 percent. During this same period, Pottstown’s black population increased by nearly 80 percent. Pottstown is significantly more racially diverse than the County overall.

For the twenty year period, the population identifying themselves as of Hispanic origin increased from two percent of the population to eight percent. If this

**FIGURE 3-5: Race and Origin Characteristics in Pottstown (2000, 2010)**

	Black or African American	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Other Pacific Islander	White or Caucasian	Other	Two or More Races	Hispanic Origin
Pottstown Count (2000)	3,291	50	161	17,343	413	601	990
Pottstown Count (2010)	4,366	71	212	16,143	600	985	1,785
Percent Change 2000 - 2010	<b>32.7%</b>	<b>42.0%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>-6.9%</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>	<b>80.3%</b>

Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census

**FIGURE 3-6: Household Types (2010)**

	2010	
	Number	Percent
Family Households		
Married Couples with Children	1,274	13.7%
Married Couples with No Children	2,128	22.8%
Single Parent	1,228	13.2%
Other Family	872	9.4%
Non-Family Households		
1 Person Non-Family Household	3,047	32.7%
2+ Person Non-Family Household	772	8.3%
Total No. of Households	9,321	100.0%
Average People per Household	2.36	

Source: 2010 US Census

**FIGURE 3-7: Marital Status (2005-2009)**

	Percent of Persons Over 15 Years of Age	
	Montgomery County	Pottstown
Never Married	28.7%	36.6%
Married	55.1%	39.5%
Separated	1.6%	2.5%
Widowed	6.8%	7.7%
Divorced	7.7%	13.7%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

Note: Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. The degree of uncertainty for an estimate arising from sampling variability is represented through the use of a margin of error. Margin of error for this data can be found on the U.S. Census Bureau website ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

trend in Hispanic population growth continues, more multilingual services may be needed in Pottstown. Since 1980 “Other Races” in Pottstown, including those identifying as two races, also increased from two percent of the population to over eight percent of the population.

### Household and Family Structure

The size and structure of Pottstown’s households continues to be shaped by social forces, as was noted in the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. What was once predominant—the traditional nuclear family structure—is no longer the norm. Young people may choose to marry later so as to focus on their education and careers. Divorces and subsequent remarriages are more common. People are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. All of these factors affect housing needs, employment patterns, and income distribution. This is somewhat evident when one looks at average household size, which has been dropping steadily (albeit slowly) since the 1950s. In 1970, Pottstown’s average household size was 2.9 and in 2010 it was 2.36 (unchanged from the year 2000). The average household size for Montgomery County is 2.53. Smaller households, theoretically, require less living space and different types of homes to meet their needs. Smaller footprint homes are more likely to already exist in older, urban communities like Pottstown and new housing construction is trending towards smaller homes such as townhomes, condominiums and other multi-family units.

More changes can be seen by looking at shifts in the marital status of Pottstown’s population. The percent of people over age 15 that were divorced as of the 2000 Census jumped to 11.8 percent of the population—nearly doubling since 1980.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, the percent of the population who were married at that time decreased as well, from 54.4 percent in 1980 to 47.8 percent in 2000. The 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that approximately 37 percent of residents (age 15 and over) are never married, 40 percent are married, 16 percent are divorced or separated, and 8 percent are widowed. Pottstown’s married population lags behind that of Montgomery County as a whole (55% in the 2005-2009 ACS). As the 1988 Comprehensive Plan notes, this is because Pottstown is an urban area and draws larger amounts of single people, young and old alike; but it does also have a higher divorce rate than the County.

<sup>1</sup>Marital status is not available in the 2010 US Census. Household Type, which is available in 2010 data, provides marital status but not divorced, widowed or separated. Marital status is available as part of the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, which represents the average over a five-year period and therefore cannot be directly compared to the Decennial Census.

## Education

Pottstown’s population has continuously lagged behind Montgomery County in academic achievement, as shown below in Figure 3-10. However, the amount of high school graduates in Pottstown has increased by 10 percent since 1980, with nearly 84 percent receiving a high school diploma or the equivalent according to the 2005-2009 ACS. Also, a little over 40 percent of Pottstown’s population has pursued a higher level of education, although nearly half (16%) have not received a degree.

Since higher levels of education attainment are linked to higher income status, it is important for Pottstown to attract new, and maintain existing residents, who have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. At the same time, Pottstown’s younger generations should be encouraged to continue their education beyond high school.

## Income

Pottstown’s median household income as reported in the 2005-2009 ACS is \$40,467 and Montgomery County’s is \$75,728.<sup>2</sup> Consistent with the 2005-2009 ACS data above, figure 3-9 shows that Pottstown’s median income per household is substantially lower than Montgomery County in 1999 data. Adjusted for inflation to 2009 dollars, median household incomes for Pottstown and Montgomery County are \$46,066 and \$78,305 respectively. With the exception of West Pottsgrove, the surrounding municipalities also have a higher median income per household than Pottstown.

At 11 percent, Pottstown’s population living below the poverty level is 7 percent higher than that of the County’s and 4 percent higher than both Lower Pottsgrove and West Pottsgrove, the two surrounding municipalities in Montgomery County with the next highest incomes.

Additionally, while median household income and per capita incomes decreased in real dollars from 2000 to 2010 across Montgomery County, Pottstown experienced a much larger decline than many other municipalities. Figure 3-10 shows Pottstown’s decrease in median household income of 7.5% as well as a 9.3% drop in the borough’s per capita income.

## Income Distribution

Pottstown’s income distribution gravitates slightly more to the lower to middle end of the distribution spectrum than to the middle to higher end. 12 percent of households make \$100,000 or more, whereas 16 percent make under \$15,000. When comparing Pottstown’s income distribution with the County’s, Pottstown’s middle income level is slightly higher in the \$35,000-\$49,999 and \$50,000-\$74,999 ranges.

<sup>2</sup>Data reported for the 2005-2009 ACS are in 2009 inflation adjusted dollars.

**FIGURE 3-8: Educational Attainment (2005-2009)**

Years of school completed	Percent of total 25+ adult population	
	Pottstown	Montgomery County
Less than 9th grade	5.0%	2.3%
Some high school, without a diploma	11.2%	5.5%
High school diploma or equivalent	44.8%	26.7%
Some college, no degree	16.0%	15.7%
Associates degree	6.2%	6.2%
Bachelor’s degree	12.8%	25.3%
Graduate or professional degree	4.0%	18.4%
Percent high school graduate or higher	83.7%	92.2%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher	16.8%	43.7%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

**FIGURE 3-9: Area Annual Income (2009)**

	Median Income Per Household (1999\$)	Median Income Per Household (2009\$ adj.)	Per Capita Income	Percent of Population Below Poverty Level
Pottstown	\$35,785	\$46,066	\$19,078	11.3%
Tri-County				
Berks	\$44,714	\$57,560	\$21,232	9.4%
Chester	\$65,295	\$84,054	\$31,627	5.2%
Montgomery	\$60,829	\$78,305	\$30,898	4.4%
Urban Centers				
Boyertown	\$39,232	\$50,503	\$21,194	6.0%
Norristown	\$35,714	\$45,974	\$17,977	17.2%
Phoenixville	\$42,500	\$54,710	\$22,911	6.2%
Reading	\$26,698	\$34,368	\$13,086	26.1%
West Chester	\$37,803	\$48,663	\$19,073	21.4%
Neighborhoods				
East End - South	\$38,802	\$49,949	\$19,431	8.1%
West End	\$29,421	\$37,873	\$15,901	25.4%
Washington/Rosedale	\$40,469	\$52,095	\$24,458	10.3%
Beech/Wilson	\$39,286	\$50,572	\$17,086	5.8%
Manatawny/Farmington	\$37,716	\$48,551	\$19,373	5.3%
North End	\$43,689	\$56,240	\$21,519	4.5%
Downtown - North	\$26,705	\$34,377	\$15,251	9.7%
Downtown - South	\$27,903	\$35,919	\$17,925	8.5%
Surrounding Municipalities				
Lower Pottsgrove	\$52,100	\$67,068	\$23,958	7.7%
North Coventry	\$51,954	\$66,880	\$25,418	4.5%
Upper Pottsgrove	\$70,500	\$90,754	\$25,607	2.6%
West Pottsgrove	\$42,759	\$55,043	\$18,413	7.7%

Source: 2000 US Census. Note: The Census Bureau recommends using CPI-U-RS adjustment factors published annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to adjust 1999 median, mean, and per capita income dollar amounts shown in Summary File 3 to 2009 dollars by multiplying the 1999 dollar amounts by the CPI-U-RS factor of 1.28729056.

## Population Mobility

Social instability can result from a rapid or large turnover in the population of an area; however, a stagnant population over a long period of time can result in a sudden and major change that has negative consequences on a community. Therefore, there is always the need for gradual and orderly change in a community.

Recent mobility data published in the 2007-2011 ACS contrasts significantly with findings from the 2000 US Census. The 2000 data showed a considerable amount of stability, with nearly 30 percent of Pottstown home-owners moving into their homes before the 1970s. However, now that number has decreased to 14.7 percent. The percent of homeowners who moved into their homes in the 1970s or 1980s has also decreased. These findings suggest that Pottstown experienced a high degree of home-owner turnover in the latest decade, which can be expected due to the changes in the housing market nationwide. This is confirmed by the percent of home owners who moved into their homes in the 2000s; approximately 50% percent. Montgomery County experienced similar fluctuation in population mobility.

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

### Residential Development

This section focuses on residential development that occurred in Pottstown between 1990 and 2010 and takes a closer look at how Pottstown has grown in comparison to other nearby municipalities and other similarly urbanized boroughs.

### Total Housing Units

Between 1990 and 2010, Pottstown saw a 6.4 percent increase in housing units totaling 620 new units. More than half of those new units (374) were built in the most recent decade. The Washington/Rosedale section had the most substantial increase in the first decade; the neighborhood nearly doubled the amount of units between 1990 and 2000. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the West End neighborhood lost units in the same 10 year span.

**FIGURE 3-10: Adjusted Income Trends (2010)**

	Median Household Income			Per Capita Income		
	1999	2010	Percent Change	1999	2010	Percent Change
Pottstown	\$46,826	\$43,311	-7.5%	\$24,964	\$22,648	-9.3%
Montgomery County	\$79,597	\$76,380	-4.0%	\$40,431	\$40,076	-0.9%

Source: 2000 and 2010 US Census. Note: Dollars are expressed in 2010 Census

**FIGURE 3-11: Household Income Distribution (2007-2011)**

	Pottstown		Montgomery County	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
\$0 - \$14,999	1,510	16%	20,251	6.6%
\$15,000 - \$34,999	2,487	26.4%	42,717	13.9%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	1,409	14.9%	32,850	10.7%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	1,834	19.5%	51,370	16.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,057	11.2%	44,477	14.5%
\$100,000+	1,132	12%	115,937	37.7%

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011

**FIGURE 3-12: Year Householder Moved Into Unit (2007-20011)**

	Percent Owner Occupied Housing Units					
	2008 or later	2000-2007	1990-1999	1980-1989	1970-1979	1969 or earlier
Pottstown	11.5%	39.4%	14.2%	12.25	9%	13.7%
Montgomery County	13%	33.5%	23.4%	13.8%	8%	8.4%

Source: 2007-2011 American Community Survey

When comparing Pottstown’s growth to the tri-county area, new housing construction within the borough occurred at a much slower rate than the growth in all three counties. Montgomery County’s housing units increased by nearly 23 percent over the same two-decades; Berks and Chester Counties were the same or more. When compared to nearby urban centers, Pottstown ranked second in new units (up from third in 2000), just surpassing Coatesville. Housing units built in both these boroughs were only half of those built in Phoenixville, which has seen resurgence in recent years.

Pottstown’s surrounding municipalities all had significant increases in new housing units between 1990 and 2010; especially Lower Pottsgrove and Upper Pottsgrove at 46.5 percent and 63 percent, respectively. Like other older urban centers in the area, it is likely that the demand for newer and bigger single-family detached homes sparked an increase in residential development in outlying, less developed suburban areas.

### Population Density

An area’s population density is typically measured by analyzing how many people and housing units are located within a defined area. Pottstown’s approximately 4.83 square miles contains 4,633 people and 2,137 housing units per square mile. For Pottstown’s neighborhoods, Downtown-North, the neighborhood with the smallest area, has both the highest number of people and highest number of housing units per square mile (as of 2010). As its name implies, the Downtown-North neighborhood is located in Pottstown’s downtown, an area of the borough with the greatest amount of high density residential uses such as single-family attached homes, twins and duplexes, and multi-family developments. Interestingly enough, the Downtown-North neighborhood also has the smallest household size (persons per housing unit). The Downtown-South neighborhood has a similarly small household size.

Theoretically, these smaller household sizes make sense because smaller housing units should equate to smaller numbers of residents inhabiting them. However, the Beech/Wilson neighborhood conflicts with this theory. Among Pottstown’s neighborhoods, it has the second highest population per square mile and housing units per square mile, as well as the highest number of persons per housing units. The West End neighborhood is largest in area, but also the smallest in both population and housing density. As already noted in this chapter, the West End neighborhood saw the largest loss in housing units between 1990 and 2000.

Comparisons with the surrounding municipalities show that Pottstown is higher in population and housing density but lower in household size. This may be a factor of families with children moving out of Pottstown to surrounding suburban communities. That being said, the number of persons per housing unit in each of the surrounding counties is slightly higher than Pottstown’s. The borough is the second largest urban center detailed on the table to the left, but hovers on the lower end in both density and household size when compared to the other urban centers listed.

**FIGURE 3-13: Housing Units Trends**

	1990	2000	2010	Change From 1990-2000		Change From 2000-2010		Change From 1990-2010	
				Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Pottstown	9,700	9,973	10,320	2.8%	273	3.5%	347	6.4%	620
Tri-County									
Berks	134,482	150,222	164,827	11.7%	15,740	9.7%	14,605	22.6%	30,345
Chester	139,597	163,773	193,462	17.3%	24,176	18.1%	29,689	38.6%	53,865
Montgomery	265,856	297,434	325,735	11.9%	31,578	9.5%	28,301	22.5%	59,879
Urban Centers									
Boyertown	1,713	1,885	2,026	10.0%	172	7.5%	141	18.3%	313
Norristown	13,081	13,531	13,420	3.4%	450	-0.8%	-111	2.6%	339
Phoenixville	6,623	6,793	7,699	2.6%	170	13.3%	906	16.2%	1,076
Reading	34,276	34,314	34,208	0.1%	38	-0.3%	-106	-0.2%	-68
West Chester	6,457	6,541	6,762	1.3%	84	3.4%	221	4.7%	305
Neighborhoods									
East End - South	1,380	1,389	1,441	0.7%	9	3.7%	52	4.4%	61
West End	754	670	679	-11.1%	-84	1.3%	9	-9.9%	-75
Washington/Rosedale	865	1,268	1,299	46.6%	403	2.4%	31	50.2%	434
Beech/Wilson	1,641	1,629	1,696	-0.7%	-12	4.1%	67	3.4%	55
Manatawny/Farmington	1,435	1,554	1,697	8.3%	119	9.2%	143	18.3%	262
North End	1,253	1,280	1,273	2.2%	27	-0.5%	-7	1.6%	20
Downtown - North	1,426	1,608	1,633	12.8%	182	1.6%	25	14.5%	207
Downtown - South	574	575	602	0.2%	1	4.7%	27	4.9%	28
Surrounding Municipalities									
Lower Pottsgrove	3,175	4,127	4,651	30.0%	952	12.7%	524	46.5%	1,476
North Coventry	2,896	3,114	3,329	7.5%	218	6.9%	215	15.0%	433
Upper Pottsgrove	1,196	1,459	1,950	22.0%	263	33.7%	491	63.0%	754
West Pottsgrove	1,500	1,606	1,613	7.1%	106	0.4%	7	7.5%	113

Source: 1990, 2000, 2010 US Census of Housing

**FIGURE 3-14: Population Density in 2010**

	Square Miles	Population per Square Mile	Housing Units per Square Mile	Persons per Housing Units
Pottstown	4.83	4,633	2,137	2.19
Tri-County				
Berks	858.9	480	175	2.49
Chester	756	580	217	2.65
Montgomery	483.1	1,652	616	2.52
Urban Centers				
Boyertown	0.8	5,069	2,356	2.09
Norristown	3.53	9,698	3,833	2.31
Phoenixville	3.8	4,326	1,788	2.18
Reading	9.82	8,970	3,494	2.37
West Chester	1.8	10,256	3,634	2.73
Neighborhoods				
East End - South	0.8	4,031	1,734	2.15
West End	1.17	1,395	556	2.37
Washington/Rosedale	0.83	3,604	1,539	2.26
Beech/Wilson	0.47	8,364	3,466	2.46
Manatawny/Farmington	0.67	5,279	2,319	2.22
North End	0.46	5,622	2,826	2.19
Downtown - North	0.2	16,485	7,990	1.88
Downtown - South	0.24	4,908	2,500	1.97
Surrounding Municipalities				
Lower Pottsgrove	7.9	1,526	523	2.72
North Coventry	13.6	578	231	2.37
Upper Pottsgrove	5.05	1,052	289	2.81
West Pottsgrove	2.35	1,649	683	2.38

Source: 2010 US Census of Housing

The measure of persons per housing unit has dropped since Pottstown’s previous comprehensive plan in 1988. In 1980, there was an average of 2.41 people per housing unit (and 2.90 people in 1970). Montgomery County had even higher numbers reported in the previous plan (3.22 people per unit in 1970; 2.79 people per unit in 1980). Despite population growth and new housing units being built, household size has steadily decreased over the years - likely due to shifts in family structure. Divorces ultimately mean that families that once occupied one home now occupy two - or more - homes. Longer life expectancies may mean that elderly people stay in their homes longer, with household sizes of only one or two people. For these and other demographic changes, housing needs continue to change.

### Housing Types

Pottstown Borough has a diverse mix of housing unit types. This is reflected in Tables 3-15 and 3-16, which take a closer look at the types of housing available in the borough. The most frequently found type of housing unit in Pottstown is single-family detached, comprising 38 percent of all residential units. At 27 percent, single-family attached homes are the next most common type of housing unit. Single-family attached homes include twins and townhomes.

Single-family detached housing units make up a large part of the housing units located in both the North End and Washington/Rosedale neighborhoods. Higher density housing units, such as multifamily homes and single-family attached units, make up a large percentage of the housing units found in the downtown neighborhoods, as well as the Beech/Wilson and East-End South neighborhoods. While the American Community Survey estimates that there are 61 mobile homes in the borough, these are located on individual private lots and are therefore characterized by Montgomery County as single-family detached units.

### Substandard Housing

The U.S. Census Bureau determines a house to be of substandard condition when the unit lacks complete plumbing facilities and/or has overcrowded living conditions (when the number of persons in that unit exceeds the number of rooms, not including kitchens, bathrooms, storage space, etc.). 2.9 percent of Pottstown’s housing units were classified as substandard in the 2000 Census which is more than two times higher a percentage than found within Montgomery County. While Pottstown’s number of substandard units decreased by nearly 100 units between 1980 and 2000, the number of substandard units rose again from 2000 to 2010.

Pottstown Borough has taken great efforts to reduce the number of substandard units found in the community. Also, citizen participation like the borough’s well organized Blighted Property Committee has been very vigilant in overseeing that properties with poor conditions are improved.

**FIGURE 3-15: Housing Types**

Housing Type	Pottstown	
	Number	Percent
Total Housing Units	10,233	100.0%
Single-Family Detached	3712	36.3
Single-Family Attached	2,821	27.6%
2-4 Units per Structure	2,036	19.9%
5 or more Units per Structure	1,677	15.4%
Mobile Homes	61	0.6%
Other	26	0.25%

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011

**FIGURE 3-16: Housing Types by Neighborhood**

Neighborhood	Total Housing Units	Single Family Detached	
		Number	Percent
West End	687	303	44.1%
Downtown-South	590	117	19.8%
Downtown-North	1,602	207	12.9%
Manatawny/Farmington	1,712	758	44.3%
Beech/Wilson	1,684	483	28.7%
North End	1,288	784	60.9%
Washington/Rosedale	1,301	740	56.9%
East End – South	1,369	320	23.4%

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011

**FIGURE 3-17: Substandard Housing Conditions as of 2010**

	Total Housing Units	Substandard Units		Change 2000-2010	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Montgomery County	306,661	3,766	1.2%	-1,284	-25.4%
Pottstown	9,575	288	3%	10	3.6%

Source: 2010 US Census of Housing

areas across the region have become more developed, the demand for large single-family detached homes has remained relatively steady. Since larger and newer homes tend to cost considerably more than the older homes found in Pottstown, the borough's median dollar value of housing units is roughly half that of Montgomery County and almost \$200,000 less than Chester County's. It is important to point out that both Montgomery County and Chester County contain some of the most affluent areas in the state.

For some time now, Pottstown Borough has worked toward increasing the values at which the borough's properties are assessed. Housing assessed at higher values can yield more funds from property taxes and thereby hopefully allow for a higher level of governmental services.

### Tenure of Housing

Pottstown has a high percentage of renter occupied units in relation to the surrounding area. This is not surprising given the borough's rental prices. Among its neighbors (and besides Boyertown and Reading), according to the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, Pottstown had the lowest median gross rent. The Downtown-North and Downtown-South neighborhoods have the highest number of rental units. The West End and the two downtown neighborhoods have the lowest median gross rent.

**FIGURE 3-18: Age of Housing**

	Total Housing Units	2000 or Later		1999-1990		1989-1980		1979-1970		1969-1960		1959-1950		1949 or before	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Montgomery County	326,045	30,442	9.3%	36,058	11.1%	37,604	11.5%	41,979	12.9%	40,471	12.4%	54,787	16.8%	84,708	26%
Pottstown	10,611	128	1.2%	223	2.1%	596	5.6%	864	8.1%	853	8%	1,729	16.3%	6,218	58.6%

Source: American Community Survey 2007-2011

### Age of Housing

Nearly 60 percent of Pottstown's housing was built in 1949 or before. Therefore, many of the housing units in the borough can be classified as historic. Housing construction pre-WWII contained materials and craftsmanship far superior to the quality of construction that is done today. If the right amount of preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation is deservedly given to Pottstown's older housing stock, then both their structural and architectural integrity will last for a long time.

### Value of Housing

Much of Montgomery County and Chester County's housing stock has been built over the last 40 years. During this time period, as suburban

**FIGURE 3-19: Occupancy Value and Financial Characteristics of Housing as of 2010**

	Owner Occupied Housing					Renter Occupied Housing			
	Owner Occupied Units	Percent of Total Occupied Units	Median	Median	Median Selected Owner Costs/Month (with Mortgage)	Renter	Percent of Total	Median	Median Gross Rent
			Number of People per Unit	Housing Value		Occupied Units	Occupied Units	Number of People per Unit	
Tri-County									
Berks	104,693	74.0%	2.67	\$163,700	\$1,413	36,877	26.0%	2.22	\$718
Chester	139,328	76.2%	2.77	\$328,900	\$2,120	43,572	23.8%	2.28	\$1,042
Montgomery	225,001	73.1%	2.7	\$294,000	\$1,955	82,749	26.9%	2.08	\$996
Urban Centers									
Boyertown	938	48.7%	2.48	\$153,700	\$1,272	989	51.3%	1.75	\$724
Norristown	4,969	41.5%	2.69	\$148,600	\$1,413	6,994	58.5%	2.86	\$902
Phoenixville	4,041	55.9%	2.40	\$200,800	\$1,547	3,191	44.1%	2.06	\$937
Reading	12,703	42.4%	2.94	\$61,800	\$919	17,276	57.6%	2.79	\$644
West Chester	2,198	34.7%	2.41	\$304,700	\$1,929	4,137	65.3%	2.26	\$983
<b>Pottstown</b>	<b>5,152</b>	<b>55.3%</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>\$136,700</b>	<b>\$1,427</b>	<b>4,169</b>	<b>44.7%</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>\$726</b>
Neighborhoods									
East End - South	807	59.9%	2.47	\$129,900	\$1,450	541	40.1%	2.26	\$860
West End	339	52.2%	2.40	\$138,600	\$1,534	310	47.8%	2.59	\$298
Washington/Rosedale	765	64.2%	2.49	\$138,000	\$1,336	426	35.8%	2.55	\$838
Beech/Wilson	925	60.7%	2.52	\$122,100	\$1,314	598	39.3%	2.41	\$716
Manatawny/Farmington	959	62.2%	2.34	\$141,500	\$1,498	582	37.8%	2.18	\$737
North End	897	76.7%	2.25	\$165,000	\$1,585	273	23.3%	2.06	\$879
Downtown - North	308	22.3%	2.41	\$111,400	\$1,443	1,071	77.7%	2.24	\$679
Downtown - South	152	29.2%	2.56	\$77,900	\$975	368	70.8%	2.11	\$635
Surrounding Municipalities									
Lower Pottsgrove	3,633	56.4%	2.66	\$211,100	\$1,748	2,806	43.6%	1.76	\$806
North Coventry	2,168	72.0%	2.71	\$246,900	\$1,797	844	28.0%	2.00	\$868
Upper Pottsgrove	1,279	90.3%	2.91	\$231,600	\$1,966	138	9.7%	2.73	\$1,104
West Pottsgrove	1,024	67.2%	2.63	\$149,500	\$1,330	500	32.8%	2.16	\$1,032

Source: 2010 US Census of Housing, 2005-2009 American Community Survey

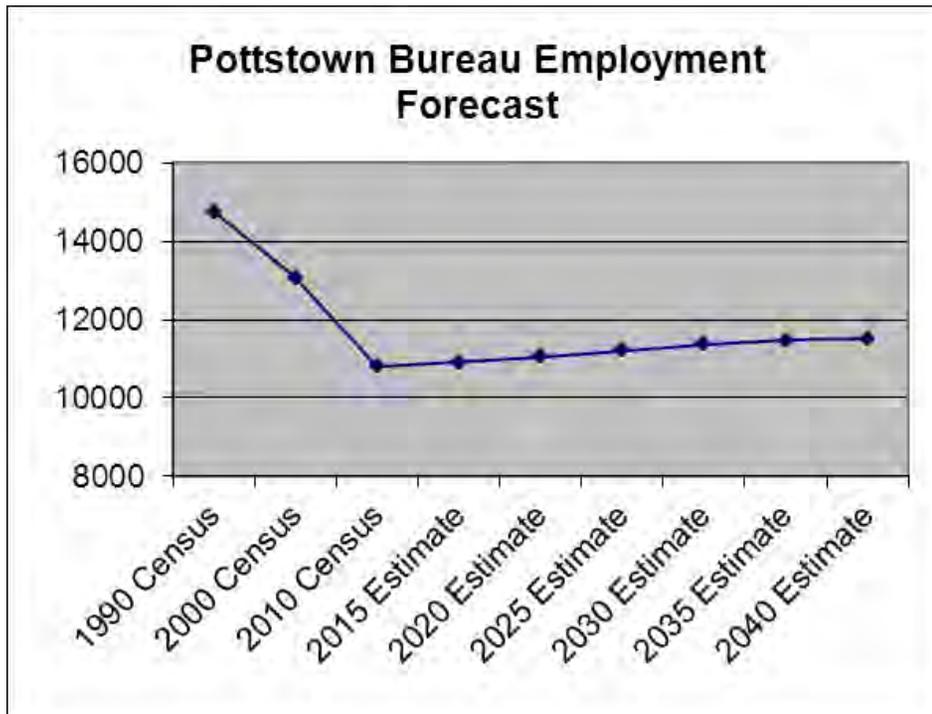
Many of the plans that the borough has pursued in the past, specifically those related to community revitalization, have included goals and strategies on how to create financial incentives that would increase the owner occupancy within the borough. This Plan incorporates these same goals and strategies.

### Housing Summary

Housing in Pottstown is mainly built out and there have been few significant residential developments in the borough during the past 20 years, particularly compared to the County and surrounding municipalities. While the borough’s number of substandard housing units is not particularly high, it is, nevertheless, more than two times the percentage of substandard units located in the county. Moving forward, the borough will need to continue to address housing maintenance and affordability to help improve housing conditions in Pottstown. With such a high percentage of renters, 44.7%, the borough should continue to pursue goals and strategies that can help to increase owner occupancy.

## ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

**FIGURE 3-20: Employment Forecast**



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

This section focuses on the economic characteristics of Pottstown Borough, including labor force characteristics and forecasts, and an analysis of the borough’s industries. Because local economies do not operate in isolation, this economic analysis makes comparisons to the Pottstown Metropolitan Region and Montgomery County.

### Employment and Employment Forecast

According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), there were an estimated 10,812 jobs located in Pottstown Borough in 2010. DVRPC forecasted that this figure would rise to 11,215 by 2025 and 11,508 by 2040. This increase, shown in Figure 3-21, represents an increase in jobs from 2010 to 2040 (696 jobs) for a total of six percent job growth over the period. Although Pottstown Borough is forecasted to gain jobs in the coming years, projections indicate that surrounding areas will experience greater job growth. The DVRPC forecasted that jobs will increase nearly 12 percent in Montgomery County between 2010 and 2040.

### Occupations

With an estimated average of 10,440 workers between the years 2005 and 2009, Pottstown Borough has more jobs within its boundaries than total workers over age 16. Only 27 percent of the borough’s workforce work within Pottstown’s jurisdiction. That means over 70 percent of Pottstown’s workforce travels elsewhere in Montgomery County, or to Chester, Berks or Philadelphia County for employment. In support of this finding, approxi-

mately 30 percent of Pottstown’s workforce commutes less than fifteen minutes (one-way) to their job; most of these jobs are likely within Pottstown. Another approximately 30 percent commute between fifteen and thirty minutes (one-way); 20 percent commute between thirty and forty-five minutes (one-way); and nearly 18 percent have commutes of forty-five minutes or longer (one-way).<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau classifies occupations into three broad categories that consist of more descriptive job types. Figure 3-22 reveals that blue collar workers account for 25 percent of the Pottstown Borough workforce compared to 22 percent in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region and 15 percent in Montgomery County. White collar workers account for 55 percent of the workforce in Pottstown Borough and 64 percent and 73 percent in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region and Montgomery County respectively. The remaining 20 percent of the Pottstown Borough workforce is employed in service occupations. In the Pottstown Metropolitan Region, 14 percent of the workforce is in service occupations compared to 12 percent in Montgomery County. The largest occupation sectors for Pottstown Borough residents are service (20%), followed by clerical/office (18%) and production/transportation (18%).

The U.S. Census Bureau also categorizes the workforce into classes. The majority of Pottstown Borough, 78 percent, works for a private for-profit employer. Approximately 11 percent of the borough’s workforce consists of private not-for-profit workers and eight percent consists of government workers. The remaining portion of the workforce is classified as either self-employed or unpaid family workers. This breakdown is fairly consistent across both the Pottstown Metropolitan Region and Montgomery County and is shown below in Figure 3-23.

## Industries

Figure 3-23 shows employment estimates for industries located in Pottstown Borough between 2005 and 2009 as well as the location quotients associated with each industry. A location quotient is the ratio of a specific industry’s share of local employment compared to the industry’s share of national employment. Location quotients are commonly used to determine the basic (or export) and non-basic (or local-serving) industries of a local economy. A location quotient greater than one indicates that the industry is basic and has a greater share of local employment

**FIGURE 3-21: Occupations**

	Pottstown Borough	Pottstown Region	Montgomery County
Occupation	% Total	% Total	% Total
Management	9.1%	13.8%	18.8%
Professional	16.0%	20.9%	28.2%
Sales	11.1%	12.2%	11.9%
Clerical/Office	18.3%	16.8%	14.3%
Construction	6.9%	8.9%	6.7%
Production/Transportation	18.2%	12.9%	8.3%
Farming	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Service	20.4%	14.3%	11.7%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

**FIGURE 3-22: Class of Worker**

Class of Worker	Pottstown Borough	Pottstown Region	Montgomery County
Private for-profit	78.1%	77.3%	73.6%
Private not-for-profit	10.6%	9.0%	11.3%
Government Workers	8.0%	9.1%	8.9%
Self-employed	3.2%	4.5%	6.0%
Unpaid family workers	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

<sup>3</sup> Travel time to work data is derived from the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, which represents the average of a five-year time period and does not represent the data from any one of those five years. Please note there is a significant margin of error for the data presented in this category.

compared to national employment, while a location quotient less than one indicates the opposite.

The industries with location quotients much greater than one are:

- **Administrative** **1.52**
- **Management** **1.45**
- **Health Care/Social Assistance** **1.34**
- **Sales** **1.26**
- **Production/Transportation/Utilities** **1.19**

The location quotients above signify that a portion of Pottstown Borough's workforce in these industries work to fill demand for the industry in other areas in the United States where location quotient is lower. For example, Pottstown Borough's administrative industry is one and a half times larger of that than the average U.S. locality. Although the above industries export their goods and services to other economies, a portion of them remain local serving. Figure 3-24 shows the percent of these industries that are considered basic as well as the number of employees that can be considered basic.

Many of the borough's other industries are close to or on par with the United States shares, with the exception of the below industries:

- **Agriculture** **.03**
- **Arts/Entertainment/Recreation** **.55**

The relatively low location quotients for the above industries signal that Pottstown Borough relies on other localities for the goods and services produced through these industries. It is easy to comprehend why Pottstown might have a very low location quotient in agriculture, as the borough is almost entirely built-out and does not have much land dedicated to traditional agriculture. However, there are ways that the borough can build off the agricultural resources in the Region and be open to new opportunities in the industrial agriculture industry. Opportunities for this have been discussed in the Market Assessment prepared for the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee in October 2011. While the location quotient for arts and recreation was below the level found on average in other U.S. localities, these industries have seen significant growth over the past several years and are continuing to grow with the many new arts and culture organizations locating in Pottstown and increasingly popular recreational events taking place.

The recently completed *Economic Strategy Report*, which was part of the *Marketing the Pottstown Region* study, identified strategies, including increased marketing, for the borough to continue to build off existing cultural and recreational resources to further grow its identity as an arts and cultural destination.

## Economic Summary

Despite the decline in employment in Pottstown Borough between 1990 and 2000, job forecasts for Pottstown suggest that the borough will begin to rebound in the coming years. These increases are smaller in comparison to the anticipated growth for both Pottstown Metropolitan Region and Montgomery County between 2010 and 2035. Pottstown, however, remains an important employment center with more jobs in its boundaries than workers over 16. A majority of Pottstown residents are employed in service, clerical/administration, and production/transportation, with a large portion working in the private sector. The largest employment sectors located in the Borough include administration, management, health care, sales, and production/transportation. Conversely, Pottstown Borough relies on other economies for agricultural services and products.

**FIGURE 3-23: Employment and Location Quotients by Industry**

Industry	Employment	% Total	Location Quotient
Agriculture	5	0.05%	0.03
Construction	595	5.7%	0.77
Sales	1,940	18.6%	1.26
Production/Transportation/Utilities	2,035	19.5%	1.19
Professional/Technology/Information	590	5.7%	0.65
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	802	7.7%	1.08
Management	15	0.1%	1.45
Administrative	632	6.1%	1.52
Public Administration	256	2.5%	0.52
Services:	3,570	34.2%	0.97
Educational	704	6.7%	0.75
Health Care/Social Assistance	1,750	16.8%	1.34
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	117	1.1%	0.55
Accommodation/Food	622	6.0%	0.88
Other Services	377	3.6%	0.75
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,440</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>1.00</b>

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

**FIGURE 3-24: Basic Industry Employment**

Industry	Basic Employees	% Basic
Administrative	218	34%
Management	5	31%
Health Care/Social Assistance	444	25%
Sales	404	21%
Production/Transportation/Utilities	331	16%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey



# CHAPTER 4

## land use

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## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Topography

Pottstown's topography is typical of alluvial plain formations that form river valleys. Adjacent to the Schuylkill River is a broad plain consisting of silts and alluvial sands and gravels. Beyond this plain, the land rises about 125 feet to a sloping plateau, which is pockmarked by hollows and valleys.

Various high points dot Pottstown's landscape: in the North End at Hanover and Mervine Streets, Washington Hill, the Hill School, and Jackson Street near Sheridan Street, among others. Low points are typically found along the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek, as well as the various streams that flow into them.

There are very few extremely steep slopes in Pottstown that would be an impediment toward future growth and redevelopment. Slopes of over 25 percent are considered too steep for development. Pottstown, however, has no significant areas of slope that exceed 15 percent and only a few small areas where the slope exceeds 10 percent.

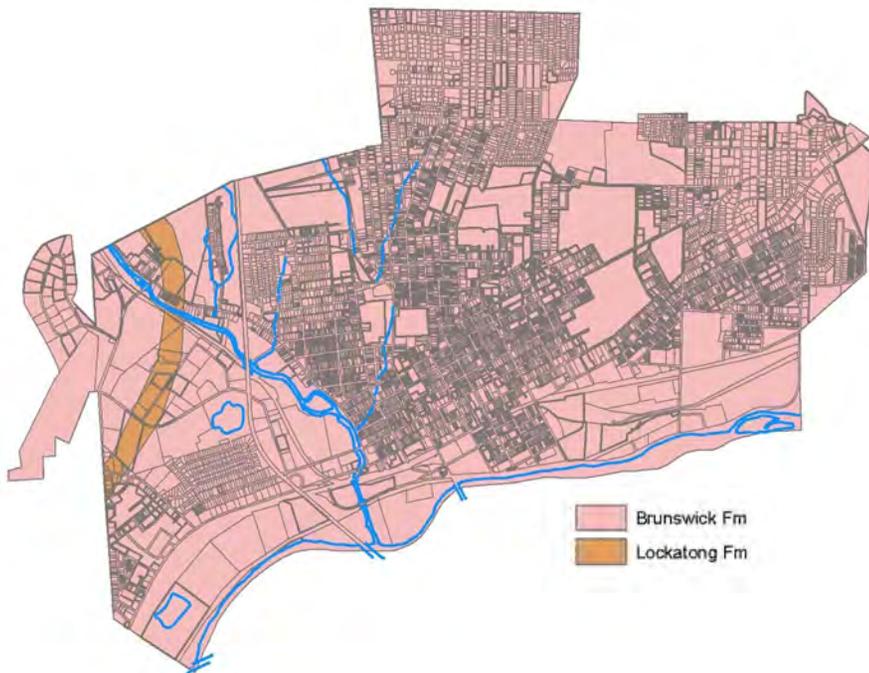
### Soils

Soils are a result of the hydrology and the weathering capacity of the underlying geology in a given area. Yet they are also influenced by the orientation of the land and the types of vegetation it supports. Thus, the type of soil influences the vegetative cover of the land, which affects both the quality and quantity of surface water bodies, groundwater areas, wildlife diversity, rates of erosion and the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

Though soils are very diverse, soil scientists have classified the soils found in Montgomery County into several groups called soil series. Soils listed within the same series will display similar subsurface characteristics. The subsurface characteristics of soils within a particular series can vary in slope, degree of erosion, size of stones, and other easily recognizable features. Although a variety of soil types exist in all parts of the borough, more than 90 percent of Pottstown is comprised of soils classified as "made land." This refers to land which has been excavated, disturbed, filled, paved, or built upon. While made land usually consists of the original natural soils of that location, the soils are often mixed with substrata soils or other types. The quality of made land varies from one extreme to another, and evaluation of these soils should be done on a site-by-site basis.

The less than 10 percent of Pottstown that has undisturbed soils shows considerable variety. In many instances, these soils have not been disturbed

**Figure 4-1: Geology**



because they present some sort of obstacle to development. Soils along the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek are generally poorly drained, soft and unstable, and frequently have a high water table and periodic flooding. Other undisturbed soils are found along steeper slopes of stream valleys and ravines.

In addition to the soil mapping units, soils can also be divided more broadly into hydric and alluvial soils, as shown on Figure 4-2: Soils. Hydric soils are periodically wet soils, that when in an undrained condition often support wetland vegetation. However, soils in urban locales like Pottstown are less likely to be undrained and would not have the otherwise characteristic wetlands. Pottstown's largest area of hydric soils is in the western section of the borough in the industrial district. Alluvial soils are often located within the floodplain (to be further discussed below). They have been deposited by flowing water and are not stable as a result of their texture and composition. Pottstown's concentrations of alluvial soils exist along the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River corridors, with the majority of these soils in both Memorial and Riverfront Parks. Most of the land in Pottstown that includes alluvial soils is already protected from development.

## Surface Waters and Hydrology

Water is an essential resource, and is consumed by people and industry, enjoyed at recreational facilities and in nearby rivers and creeks, and used in the assimilation of treated sewage. It's certainly part of the everyday lives of all of Pottstown's residents and workers.

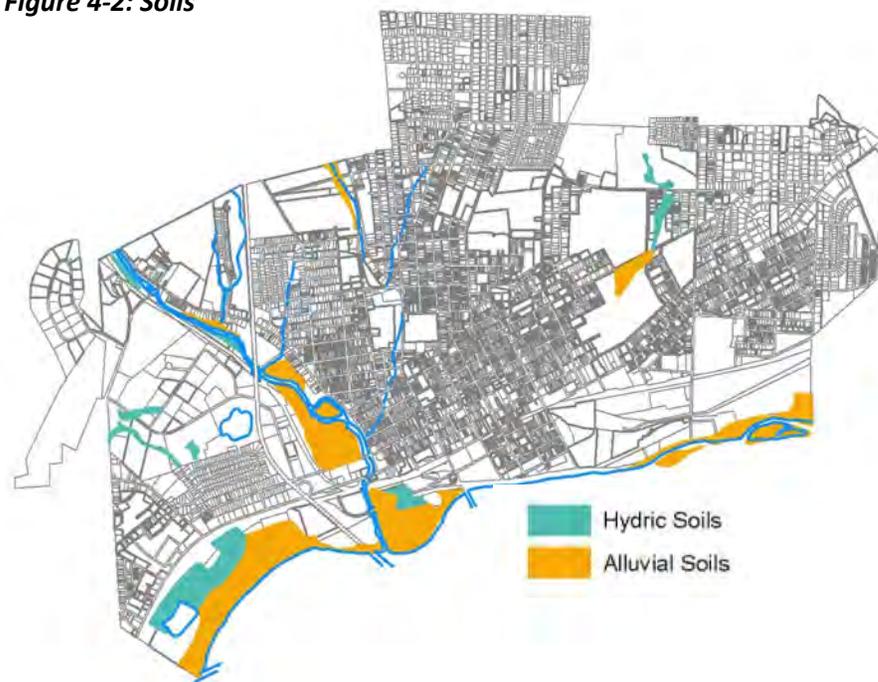
### Watersheds and Stream Corridors

In terms of drainage, Pottstown's land area is part of the Delaware River watershed, as is the entirety of Montgomery County. However, sitting at the top of three watersheds, runoff from the borough gets to the Delaware in three very different ways, as shown in Figure 5-3: Watersheds.

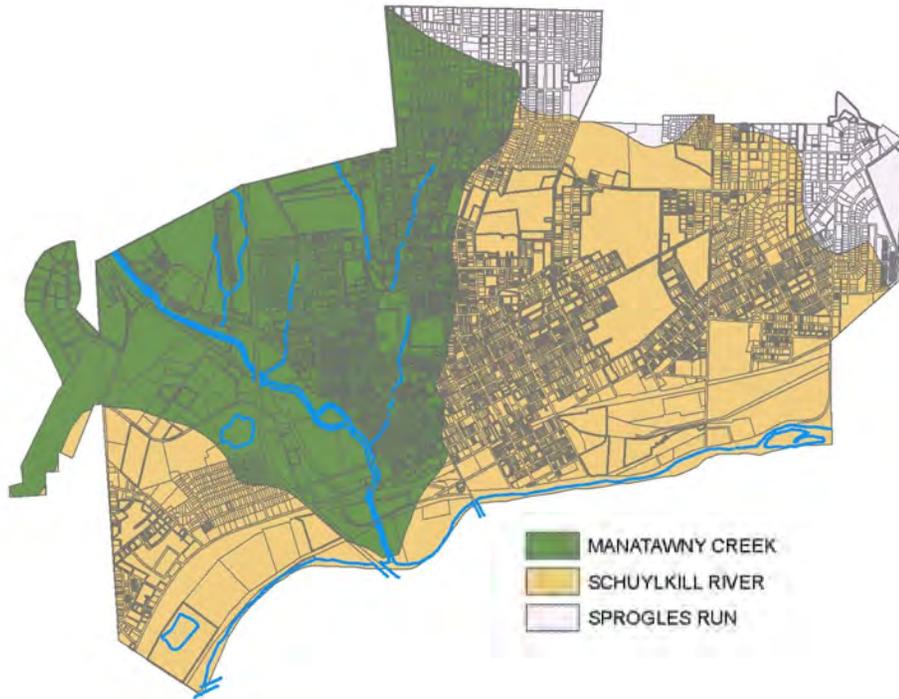
Pottstown lies within the Schuylkill River Basin, which is a part of the Delaware River Basin. The Schuylkill River is both the main drainage channel and the source of water to the borough. Water is brought to Pottstown via the upstream drainage area of the river that covers more than 960 square miles. Manatawny Creek is also a major source of water. The Manatawny watershed reaches nearly to Kutztown in Berks County and drains an area of about 94 square miles. Both the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek can be considered reliable sources of water.

Other water flows to Pottstown from upstream communities via several small tributary streams. These include Stowe Creek at the western boundary, an unnamed stream located west of Route 100, and another that parallels the west side of Farmington Road. This latter stream gathers surface water from a 570-acre area of Upper Pottsgrove Township.

**Figure 4-2: Soils**



**Figure 4-3: Watersheds**



Locally, Pottstown receives surface drainage from a small area of West Pottsgrove Township near the airport and from the hill north of Glasgow. Surface drainage from Upper Pottsgrove flows into Pottstown from the area north of Wilson Street near State Street and from the area west of Hanover Street.

Most of the precipitation that falls within the borough is carried away by channels located within Pottstown. Only a minor portion of Pottstown's surface drainage flows into another municipality - runoff from about 230 acres in Pottstown flows into Upper Pottsgrove along the borough's northeastern boundary. Water runoff is carried to the Schuylkill River via a number of small drainage ways. Four stream channels flow into the Manatawny Creek and then to the river. Another four channels flow directly to the Schuylkill. Many of these channels are now piped underground and are no longer visible. The majority of precipitation that falls on Pottstown drains to the Schuylkill River. About 57% of the borough's area is shed to the river; nearly 35% flows to the Manatawny Creek and then to the Schuylkill River; and about 7% drains to Sprogles Run in Upper Pottsgrove Township.

### **Floodplains**

The 100-year floodplain is a feature that affects the health, safety, and welfare of Pottstown's residents. Much of the time it is dry. During storms, however, the floodplain stores and conveys floodwater. Development within the floodplain reduces the carrying capacity and increases the height and destructive ability of floods.

In addition to carrying flood waters, the floodplain and stream corridor serve other important functions. The condition of the stream corridor itself is important in minimizing erosion and water pollution, protecting water quality, and providing animal habitat and recreation opportunities. Well vegetated corridors will reduce pollutant loads to streams, shade the stream, and provide habitat for wildlife. If vegetation is preserved along the banks of smaller tributaries as well as the main stem, pollutant loads are greatly reduced. Unconsolidated gravel and stone deposits are also found along stream corridors, and these areas allow for groundwater re-charge.

The 100-year floodplain of the Manatawny Creek and the Schuylkill River are within Pottstown's borders. All of Memorial Park and Riverfront Park fall within the floodplain. The floodplain, as shown in Figure 4-4, is important to identify as development within and close to its boundaries is not permitted nor is it wise in terms of the safety and welfare of local residents. A mature



*The Schuylkill Riverfront*

forest environment is encouraged within the floodplain to maintain water quality and soil stability.

In fall 2010, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps for municipalities throughout the state, which include changes to floodplains last established in 1978. The draft maps are available for review. However, the process of approving those new maps has been delayed due to objections; therefore, as of the completion of this plan, the maps have not yet become official. Some residents may find that their property lies within the new floodplain and others may no longer be located in a floodplain at all. Changes to the floodplain are primarily due to improvements in mapping technology and differences in topography.

### **Wetlands**

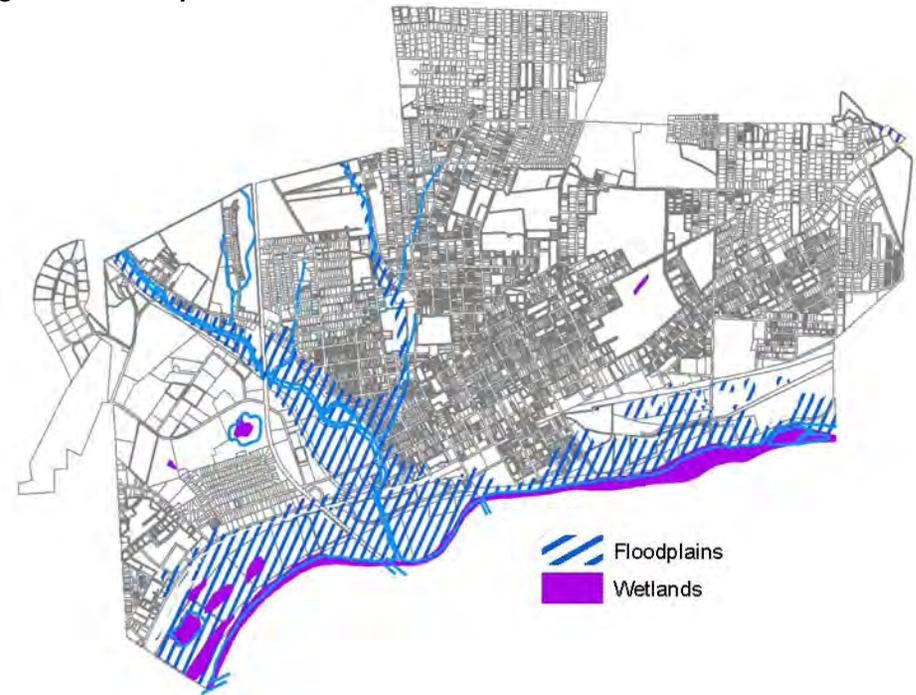
Pottstown has very few wetlands, based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. The largest areas are found along the Schuylkill River, east of Manatawny Creek as shown in Figure 5-4. The NWI offers a broad-based, generalized overview of wetlands; other wetlands may exist in the municipality. Hydric soils, primarily Bowmansville, Croton, Doylestown, Hatboro and Watchung soils may also indicate the presence of wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers or a qualified consultant should be enlisted for a final determination where wetlands are suspected to be present.

### **Scenic Areas**

Scenic resources are elements of both natural and built environments that stand out among the attributes of a community. They tend to be the most pleasant and interesting places, such as historic sites, natural features, recreation areas, and town centers.

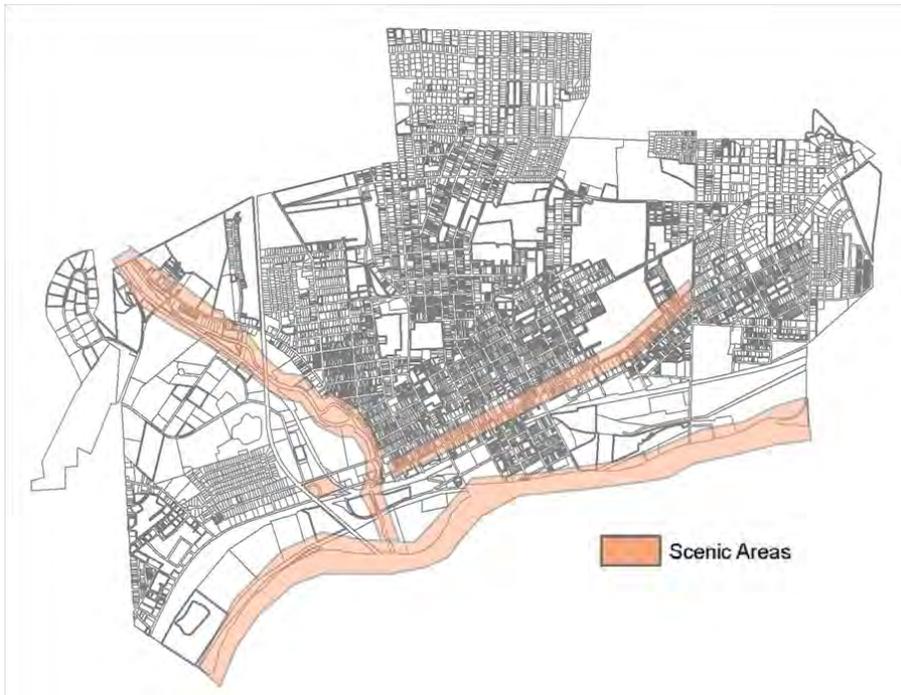
Although the process of identifying a scenic resource is largely dependent on the observer's own opinions and preferences, information collected from the community provides a relatively broad inventory. Wherever possible, these areas should be preserved and linked to the community open space and recreation system. Pottstown's scenic areas are displayed in Figure 4-5 and can be categorized in one of two ways: the architectural environment or the natural environment.

**Figure 4-4: Floodplains and Wetlands**



*Manatawny Street (as seen from Beech Street) and many other locations in the borough were flooded by the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River in June 2006.*

**Figure 4-5: Scenic Areas**



### **Architectural Environment and High Street**

Many of the borough's structures are characterized by historic architectural styles, as evidenced by the fact that much of the borough has been declared a Conservation District; however, this historic architectural character is particularly apparent along High Street. The visual environment created by the variety of buildings and architectural styles helps to define the borough. There is a specific relationship between the buildings, sidewalks, and street network along High Street, which creates a rigid visual organization.

Pottstown's High Street offers a unique shopping and office district that shapes the character of the borough in a unique way that no large shopping mall can. High Street epitomizes the classic American town. Here, small scale, commercial establishments run the length of the pedestrian-scale main street, lined with decorative street lights and trees. If this part of Pottstown were changed or lost, the character of Pottstown as a whole would be overwhelmingly affected.

### **Natural Environment**

Although many of the scenic resources of Pottstown are provided by developed areas, Pottstown's open spaces also define the community and provide scenic views that should not be ignored. Areas along the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River not only offer natural vistas of these waterways, but also a unique portrait of Pottstown's local ecosystem. The Schuylkill River is a significant asset for the borough. As noted in the 2010 Urban Land Institute (ULI) Report, the River provides opportunities to enhance existing open space, provide recreational options and unhindered access and views, and market the borough as a waterfront town. The ULI Report recommended cutting the undergrowth to physically and visually open the river to the borough; removing/moving the railroad tracks; creating a "place of magic" along the River; and completing the long distance trail.

The Glasgow Railroad Woods located in Pottstown and West Pottsgrove Township is identified in the Regional Plan as a Unique Natural Feature for the locally significant flora located at two separate sites along the Manatawny Creek and an adjacent railroad. The woodland buffer should be retained to discourage further encroachment of exotics and other weedy species.



*View of West High Street, just some of the architecturally interesting buildings in downtown Pottstown.*

## Views

The various high points around the borough provide several pleasurable vantage points of Pottstown. Some of the most notable viewpoints are from Washington Hill, from where one can look down into the borough's junior and senior high school campus, peruse the downtown area, and catch a glimpse of the Hill School. Other longer vistas from Washington Hill show off the Schuylkill River and neighboring Chester County.

## **Points of Entry**

A community's gateways serve to establish first impressions, and can certainly be a mixture of good, bad, and in between. Gateways that make a good impression on both visitors and residents include:

High Street to the east, where the hospital and medical office buildings provide a sense of permanence and arrival.

Charlotte Street, with trees flanking it, is a distinct change from Upper Pottsgrove's commercial strip.

Farmington Avenue, with its scenic views.

Manatawny Street, with its views of the creek and its shade-filled shores.

The borough contains a few entryways that need some improvement. The Keim Street Bridge, built in 1935, crosses the Schuylkill River but runs through an industrial area that has seen better days. Closed for safety reasons in late 2010, Keim Street Bridge needs to either be repaired or reconstructed. Having this entry point closed creates a hardship for the borough and neighboring North Coventry. Another entryway that recently underwent improvement is the entry from the west along High Street. This approach from the west is a continuation of West Pottsgrove's commercial strip, as well as the railroad corridor.. Work to remove the 103-year-old bridge over the Manatawny began in March 2011 and was complete by December 2011.

In 2004, Pottstown Borough partnered with North Coventry Township to create the "Reconnections Master Plan". The purpose of this Plan is to implement methods geared towards physically, economically, socially, and aesthetically reconnecting Pottstown and North Coventry Township using the Schuylkill River heritage as a focus. Improvements to both the Hanover Street Bridge and the Keim Street Bridge were identified as recommendations within the Reconnections Master Plan. The 2002 Western Riverfront District Redevelopment Plan also supported safety and aesthetic improvements at the borough's gateways, specifically by recommending zoning changes to the riverfront.

The processes to improve the Keim Street Bridge had been underway before it was closed;



*Manatawny Creek provides many scenic spots where it runs through Memorial Park.*



*Keim Street Bridge, a significant entry point to the borough, is in need of repair. (Photo Credit: Raymond Klein at [www.bridgehunter.com](http://www.bridgehunter.com))*



*The former First Fidelity Bank building at the corner of High Street and Hanover Street.*

the timeline for its repair or replacement is currently unknown. Pedestrian access improvements to the Hanover Street Bridge have been underway as well. PennDOT, Montgomery County, Chester County, and Pottstown Borough have been working on the design phase of the Hanover Street Bridge project. Ultimately, when the Hanover Street Bridge project is completed, Pottstown Borough will have a large scale gateway that is welcoming to pedestrians and promotes the use of the Schuylkill River Trail.

## **Landmarks**

Pottstown’s landmarks—the natural or man-made objects which help people remember where they have been or where they are going—remain mostly unchanged since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. Natural landmarks include the waterways and water features that are part of the borough, like the Schuylkill River, Manatawny Creek, and the waterfall near the north end of Manatawny Street.

Much of Pottstown’s architecture provides the man-made landmarks on which residents and visitors have come to count. These include the campus and buildings of the Hill School as well as Pottstown’s own junior and senior high schools, Pottsgrove Manor, the borough’s many churches, and Pottstown Medical Center. Many of the borough’s parks and other open spaces provide visual references as well.

The existing land use analysis focuses on the current land uses within the municipality, enabling a more in-depth focus on patterns of use. In addition to the Existing Land Use Map (Figure 5-6) the TABLE 5-1 details the acreage of each category. The properties within Pottstown are generalized into fourteen land use classifications that group their characteristics into like categories. By classifying land in this manner, the borough can have a better understanding of how to effectively craft and revise its land use and development regulations. The assigned land use categories are derived from Montgomery County Board of Assessment parcel data. These numbers are also useful in understanding changes in land use patterns.

## **Development Patterns**

Pottstown Borough covers an area of over five square miles, primarily land area with the exception of the waterways that run through the borough. This profile of land uses classifies the approximate number of properties and land area within Pottstown by land use type. The area that the borough’s streets cover is not included in this analysis. Various development patterns are initially apparent:

- Since High Street is the main commercial corridor within the borough, it is of no coincidence that many of the borough’s commercial uses (retail, office, and mixed use) are located along this corridor.
- When Pottstown’s manufacturing industry was more prominent, automotive transportation was not nearly as dominant as it is today. At that time, the primary means of transporting materials to and from these industries was by railroad. When looking at where the Norfolk Southern railway runs through Pottstown on the map, it is not surprising that many of the borough’s industrial uses are located along this railway corridor.

- The land located along Pottstown’s two major water bodies, the Schuylkill River and the Manatawny Creek, is where much of the borough’s public parks and open spaces can be found. This is an indication that the community of Pottstown recognizes the importance of buffering the impacts of development around these water bodies by permanently protecting the land closely surrounding them.

These types of observations allow for the Land Use Map to be an effective tool for developing land use policies that will promote the best types of development within the borough.

## Land Use Profile

As an addition to the land use map, the land use profile contributes to detailing Pottstown’s development pattern. This profile classifies the approximate number of properties and land area within Pottstown by land use type. Again, as with the Land Use Map, the data that compile this profile is based on the Montgomery County’s Board of Assessment Appeals tax records. The area that the borough’s streets cover is not included in this analysis.

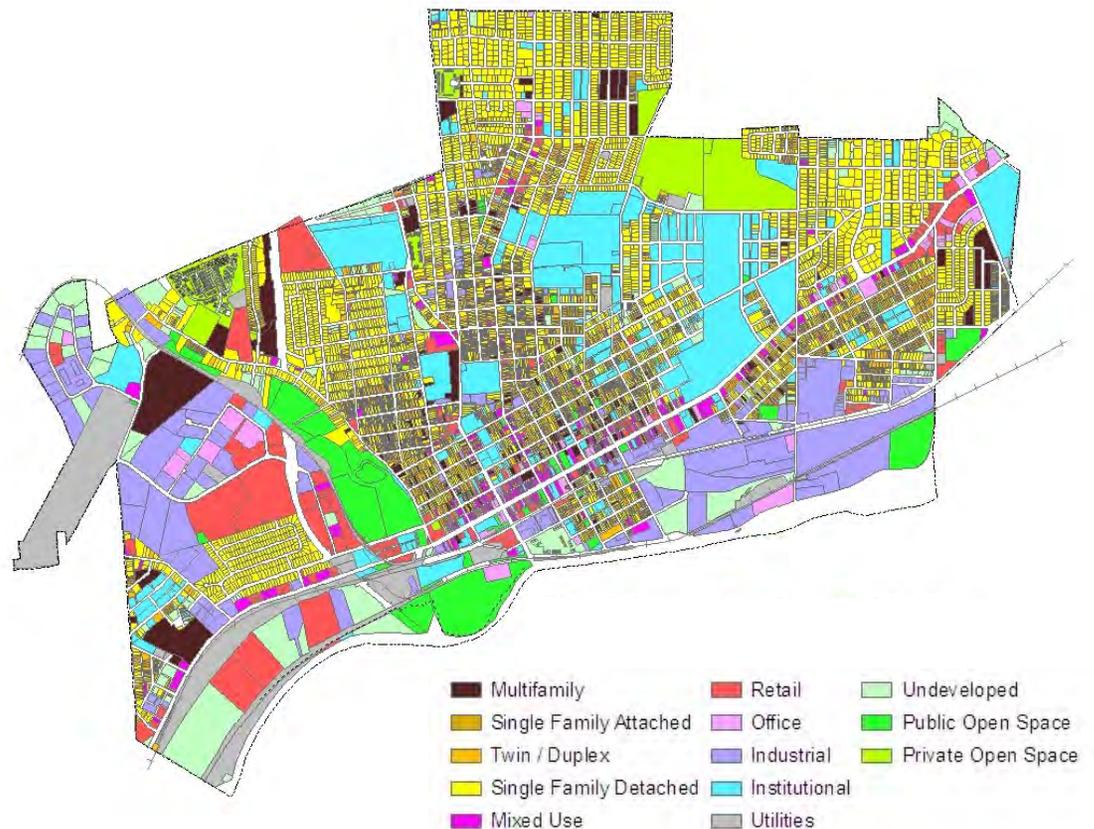
### Residential

The greatest amount of Pottstown’s land area is devoted to residential uses, which increased 11 percent since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. Pottstown’s residential uses are further classified into four different types: single-family detached, twin/duplex, single-family attached, and multifamily. Of these four types, the single-family detached use contains the most properties and covers the most land area. This is illustrated on the Land Use Map by the yellow-colored category that takes up a great deal of the borough’s land area. The higher density properties—twin/duplex, single-family attached, and multifamily—tend to be located towards the center of the borough, which is where Pottstown’s downtown commercial core is located.

### Commercial

The three commercial uses consisting of retail, office, and mixed use have the next highest number of properties within the borough (though not the second highest amount of acreage to match). Two-hundred seventy four (274) acres or 11 percent of the borough contain

**Figure 4-6: Land Use**



**Figure 4-7: Land Use Profile (2010)**

Land Use	Approximate Number of Properties	Area	
		Acres	% of Land
Single Family Detached	3,599	607	24.4%
Twin / Duplex	2,327	183	7.3%
Single Family Attached	779	47	1.9%
Multi Family	541	112	4.5%
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>7,246</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>38.1%</b>
Retail	243	187	7.5%
Office	64	39	1.6%
Mixed Use	347	51	2.0%
<b>Total Commercial</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>11.1%</b>
Public Open Space	89	141	5.7%
Private Open Space	15	77	3.1%
Agriculture	5	1	0.0%
<b>Total Open Space</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>8.8%</b>
Industrial	184	305	12.2%
Institutional	249	401	16.1%
Utilities	47	121	4.8%
Undeveloped	464	220	8.8%
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>8,953</b>	<b>2,491†</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals Property Records

† - Corrections were made to the Board of Assessment data based on observed inaccuracies and specifically parcels that had no land use data. Therefore, the overall acreage provided here may not be consistent with previous total land area for the borough. The Total Area here does not include roads and therefore does not represent the 5.5 square miles (3,250 acres) reported as the borough's true land area.

commercial uses, an increase from 261 acres or 8 percent of total land since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan. Mixed use properties comprise the greatest number of properties among all commercial land use types. Typically, a property is defined as mixed use when it contains two or more uses, usually a combination of retail, office, and/or residential uses. Although the mixed use category contains the highest amount of properties, it does not cover as much area as Pottstown's retail uses. The relatively high amount of acreage devoted to retail can be found among the large red properties along the Route 100 corridor identified on the Land Use Map.

### Institutional

Institutional uses have the second highest amount of acreage in the borough, with 401 acres, largely driven by properties like the Hill School, various public school facilities, Pottstown Memorial Medical Center, Montgomery County Community College, as well as the large cemeteries interspersed throughout the borough.

### Industrial

A total of 184 properties and 305 acres make up the industrial properties in the borough. As previously noted, many of the current (and former) industrial uses within Pottstown are located near the Norfolk Southern railway. The northwest area of the borough also contains a large amount of sizeable industrial properties. As is the case across the country, Pottstown's manufacturing industry has suffered a steep decline. Many of the borough's industrially zoned properties are vacant or underutilized. Considerable focus should be directed towards developing strategies on how to redevelop these older industrial sites. Many good strategies are already outlined in Pottstown's 2008 Strategic Plan.

### Utilities

There are 121 acres of utility uses within the borough. The types of properties that fall within this land use classification are typically those devoted to telephone companies, electrical transformer stations, water reservoirs, or gas maintenance facilities. In Pottstown's case, a great deal of acreage in the utility category is the Pottstown Airport property. Pottstown's 2008 Strategic Plan includes recommendations for redeveloping the airport property.

### Open Space / Recreation

Nearly ten percent of the borough's land area is considered to be open space. This includes larger park areas along the Schuylkill River, the Brookside Country Club,

historical sites like Pottsgrove Manor, and smaller pocket parks and playground areas. Recently, the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation did a full inventory of available park and open space land within the Pottstown Region which found that Pottstown has enough public parks and open spaces to meet the needs of the borough's population. However, when the inventory broke down the borough's population by age, it showed that some of the borough's age groups are not adequately served.

**Agricultural**

As shown in Figure 4-7, there are approximately five parcels totaling only one acre dedicated to agricultural uses in the borough. However, being that Pottstown Borough has an urban character; these parcels may be classified as such, but are most likely not involved in agricultural activities

**Undeveloped Land**

There are a considerable amount of properties classified as undeveloped on the Land Use Map. Many of Pottstown's undeveloped properties are small tracts of land originally intended for row or twin houses. Larger undeveloped properties can be found surrounding existing industrial, utility, and railroad sites. Because underutilized and vacant properties are a significant concern in Pottstown, the following section is devoted to analyzing the location and size of Pottstown's undeveloped properties and recommending how to best utilize them.

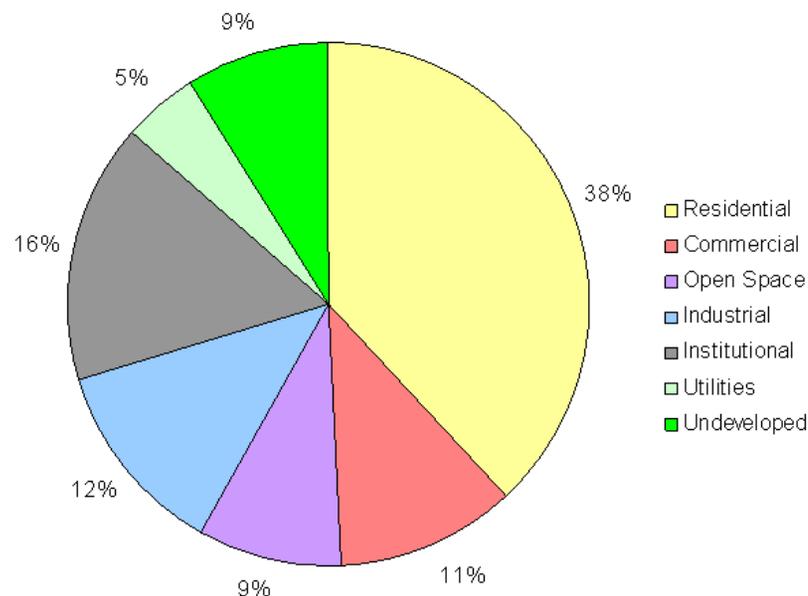
**ZONING**

Pottstown Borough's zoning ordinance was last significantly updated in 2004. Amendments were made in late 2011. The borough's Zoning Map is organized by title and color for each zoning district and shown in Figure 4-9. These zoning districts generally are consistent with the existing and proposed future land uses for Pottstown.

Pottstown has a rather unique zoning ordinance. It is one of the first communities in Montgomery County to include design standards within its zoning ordinance; this is a planning concept now being adapted and adopted in other communities. While the borough's code can be seen as a model, other communities can use the lessons learned in Pottstown as an example in how to make the review process more efficient.

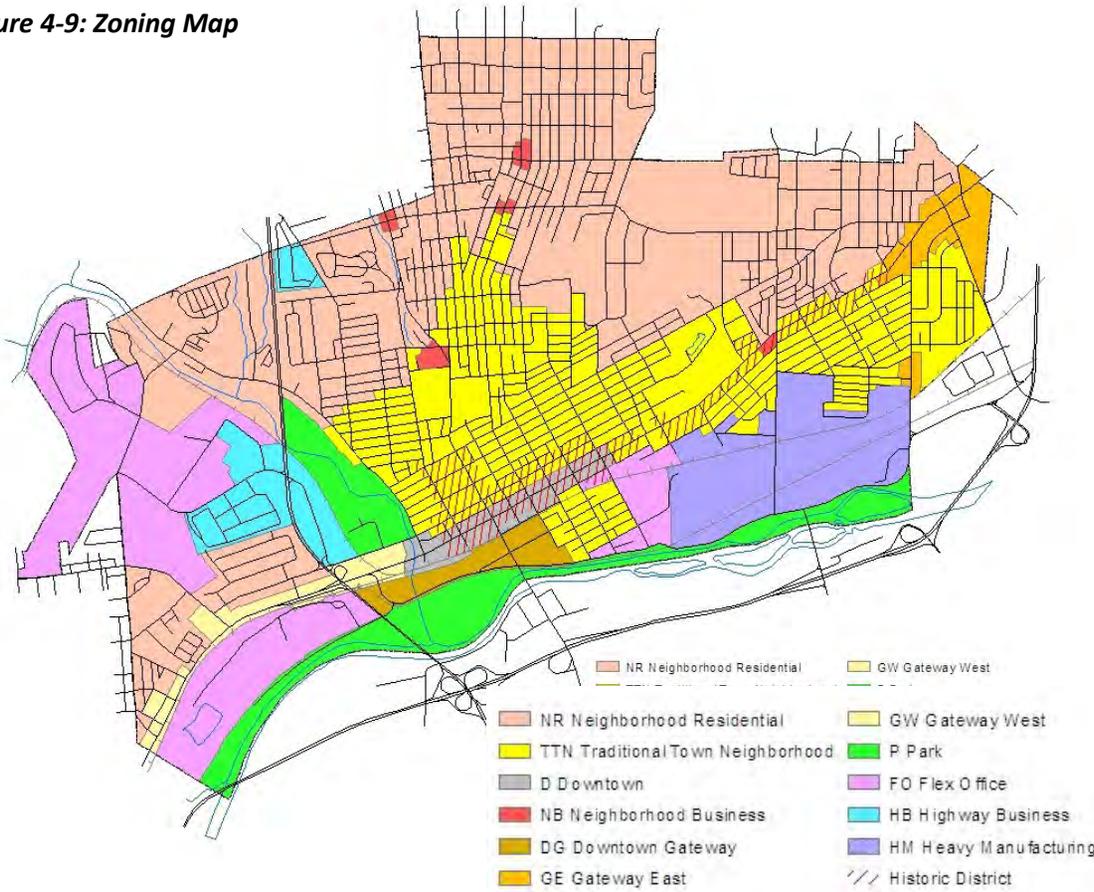
A key concern with Pottstown's zoning, as described in the borough's Economic Development Strategic Plan, is a perceived lack of clarity and specificity in the zoning code's provisions and requirements. This concern is shared by private citizens, business owners, and the borough's own code enforcement personnel. This situation can result in delays in the development permitting and approval process as requirements that should be clearly defined are negotiated. The resulting increased costs

**Figure 4-8: Land Use Chart (2010)**



Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals Property Records

**Figure 4-9: Zoning Map**



Source: Prepared by Montgomery County Planning Commission using Montgomery County Board of Assessment data last updated in 2010.

## UNDERUTILIZED LAND

The 2006 Open Space Plan compared existing (at the time) vacant sites with those recorded and mapped in the 1985 Comprehensive Plan for Pottstown. At this time, it was shown that vacant land area and number of vacant sites had decreased considerably since 1985. Between 1985 and 2005, vacant or undeveloped land in Pottstown decreased by 58 percent. Much of the utilization of vacant land is attributed to the borough's land and economic development policies. Significant land was developed into commercial/office/industrial parks west of Route 100. Smaller parcels have been developed in residential neighborhoods.

in time and money may discourage potential developers from considering projects in Pottstown, particularly when more accommodating communities and "greenfield" sites may be found nearby.

In 2010, the borough designated an Ad-Hoc Zoning Review Committee made up of municipal staff, officials, and consultants, to study closer some of the perceived concerns raised about the borough's zoning. As a result of this committee, the borough has proposed a number of changes in late 2011 aimed to make the zoning, as well as the development process itself, more clear and efficient. This was a specific goal of the borough's Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Also in 2010 and a recommendation of the Strategic Plan, the Borough Manager established a development review committee designed to streamline development review and inform key staff about important projects early on in the project's lifetime, rather than finding out about them after substantial discussion has occurred. This Committee should help business owners and developers to be aware of borough rules and regulations and hopefully save everyone time and money.

Additional recommendations regarding the borough's zoning ordinance can be found in the Goals and Objectives section at the end of this Chapter.

## VACANT, UNDEVELOPED AND

The decrease in vacant sites was found particularly in the urban core. Approximately 264 acres of formerly vacant parcels were developed between 1985 and 2006 and only 3 additional acres were abandoned or cleared. Twenty-three (23) acres were converted to recreational use. At the time of the Open Space Plan, there were 186 acres of vacant or undeveloped land in the borough, representing 5.7 percent of the total land area.

In 2010, vacant land in Pottstown has decreased an additional 15 percent from the Open Space Plan in 2006. The absolute decrease in total vacant land between 1985 and 2010 was 291 acres or a 65 percent decrease (as shown in Figure 4-10); which represents very significant progress in transforming vacant or undeveloped land into tax-producing uses or protected open space.

Of the remaining vacant or undeveloped land, it is important to note that not all of this land is developable. For example, some of these properties may be within the floodplain or have other environmental constraints and should remain undeveloped. If no reuse is feasible, these properties may be converted to protected open space in the future. In fact, many of the larger industrial vacant or undeveloped properties are located within the floodplain (68 acres of industrial land alone is located in the floodplain).

Many vacant parcels are small residentially or commercially zoned lots having limited development capacity. There may be opportunities for some of these parcels that will help enliven the borough, such as pocket parks or community gardens, or even parking. Finally, undeveloped land may be held by private or public interests for future. Of the 156.7 acres of vacant or undeveloped land, approximately 56 percent may be available for future development.

## Vacant and Blighted Property

While the previous section discusses vacant or undeveloped land, which refers primarily to land parcels that contain no buildings, vacant properties is an entirely separate issue. This section will discuss recent efforts in the borough to quantify and remedy a growing problem of vacant buildings, specifically residential, throughout the borough. Pottstown has seen tremendous growth in its vacant housing, increasing by 87 percent between 1990 and 2000. Comparatively, Montgomery County experienced only a 4 percent increase during the same time period.

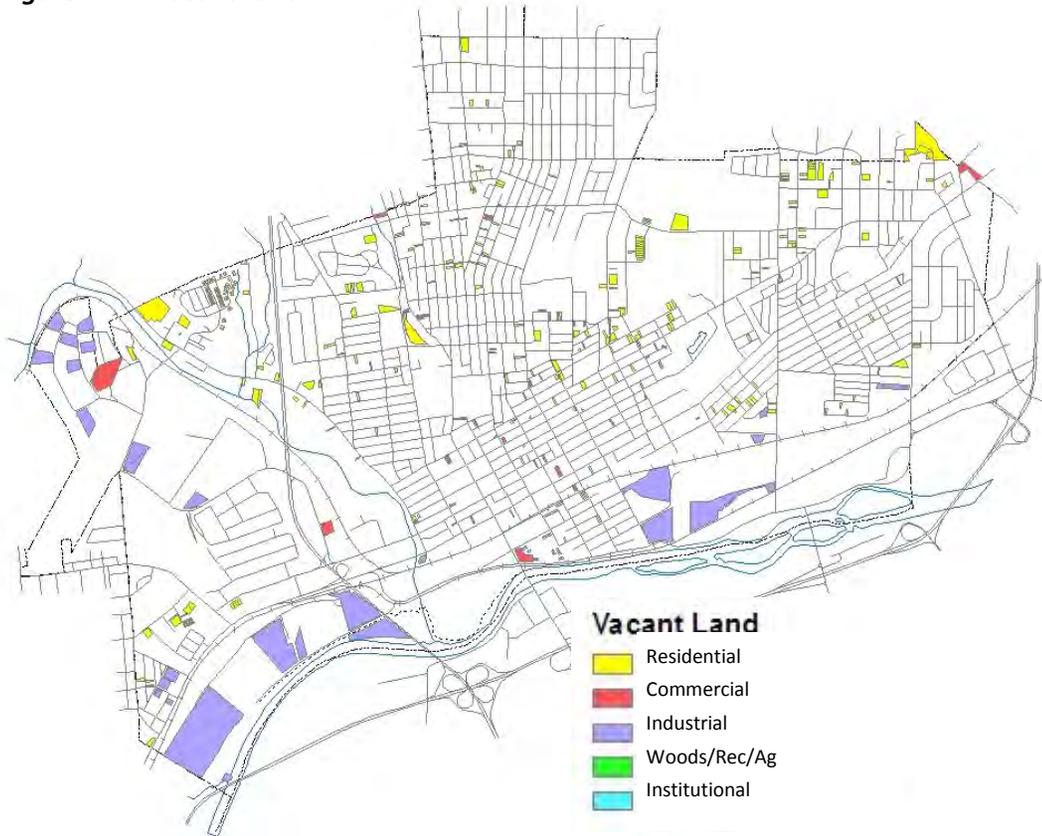
Vacant properties tend to be accompanied by minor and major building code violations. When significant, these violations can be considered “blight,” which generally refers to deteriorating or significantly less than ideal property conditions that have deleterious effects on the community in which it is situated.<sup>4</sup> Vacant and blighted properties have significant impacts

**Figure 4-10: Vacant Land by Zoned District (1985-2010)**

1985			2010			Change 1985-2010 (Developed Land)
Land Type	Acres	% Total	Land Type	Acres	% Total	
Residential	186.4	7.5%	Residential	48.7	2.0%	- 137.66
Commercial	18.10	0.7%	Commercial	10.8	0.4%	- 7.28
Industrial & Office	195.5	7.9%	Industrial	97.0	3.9%	- 98.53
Floodway & Other	48.0	1.9%	Woods / Rec/ Agriculture	0.07	0.0%	- 47.93
Institutional	n/a	n/a	Institutional	0.1	0.0%	n/a
<b>Total Vacant</b>	<b>448.0</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>Total Vacant</b>	<b>156.7</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>- 291.30</b>

Source: 1985 – Pottstown Comprehensive Plan (original source unknown); 2010 – Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals Property Records. See note on Figure 5-7 regarding Total Land Area.

**Figure 4-11: Vacant Land**



Source: Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals Property Records, last updated October 2010.

on the community, including decreased property values both in the neighborhood and in the municipality overall, added municipal maintenance costs, and uncollected property taxes.

In 2007, the borough established a Vacant Property Review Committee under the powers granted by the Pennsylvania Urban Redevelopment Law, Act of May 24, P.L. 91. In 2007, the Act was amended and necessitated a change in the committee name to the Blighted Property Review Committee. The five-person committee, appointed by council, consists of staff and elected officials as well as a representative of the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority. The Committee evaluates properties identified by the Code Enforcement Officer to be vacant and in violation of local codes.

This committee designates, certifies, and recommends action be taken on blighted property as defined in the Act and in cooperation with the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority. The Redevelopment Authority assists in bringing about the acquisition, by the exercise of eminent domain or otherwise, as authorized by the Act and elimination of blighted property within the borough.

Recent legislation is continuing to assist the borough in this process. One, HB 712, which passed the House of Representatives June 29, 2010 by an overwhelming vote of 190 to 8, allows towns, boroughs and cities of 10,000 people or more

to establish "land banks" as a way of more quickly obtaining blighted properties and getting them redeveloped.<sup>5</sup>

On October 27, 2010, Governor Rendell signed the Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act, a bill which provides municipalities with new tools to get a handle on derelict properties. As told to the Pottstown Mercury, the Borough Manager sees three benefits of the bill:

- "It allows the borough to take action against an owner for continuing violations by imposing liens against the personal assets of the owner, not just the property with the violation.

<sup>4</sup> *The Housing Alliance of Philadelphia, "Quick Guide: New Tools to Address Blight and Abandonment." October 2010: page 7.*

<sup>5</sup> *Evan Brandt, "Fight against blight: Local towns may get a new tool." The Pottstown Mercury, August 15, 2010.*

- It allows the borough deny permits to applicants who owe taxes, water, sewer fees or have serious code violations for which fines and penalties have been levied. That applies to the landlord, not the individual properties.
- It provides training for judges on changes in laws related to blight and abandoned properties so they can be brought up to speed to what we're legally allowed to do.”
- “Other aspects of the bill allow municipalities to pursue the physical extradition of out-of-state owners of deteriorated property for prosecution, and allow for the establishment of a "housing court" in the county Court of Common Pleas to hear and decide matters related to real property.”<sup>6</sup>

## Opportunity Sites

Significant development or redevelopment opportunities exist in Pottstown, including vacant or underutilized properties in and around the Pottstown Industrial Center; the Keystone Opportunity Zone site on west of College Drive; the Circle of Progress Business Park and other properties around the airport; and various parcels along High Street and in the borough’s core neighborhoods. The Economic Development Strategic Plan (2008) defines an “Opportunity Site” as a property where significant redevelopment may be possible, due to the property’s size, location, access to infrastructure, vacancy, ownership, and/or other factors. Vacant or underutilized parcels suitable for large-scale redevelopment are discussed below.

A valuable redevelopment opportunity exists in the Riverfront Industrial Area along Industrial Highway, where there exist a number of vacant or underutilized properties. The Economic Development Strategic Plan recommended that the borough establish a business/employment district with an enhanced identity through coordinated planning and development activities involving property owners, developers, Montgomery County and the borough. Further up the river, another opportunity exists for industrial land development at the Keystone Opportunity Zone, which contains perhaps the three largest vacant sites in the borough. Finally, commercial and light industrial opportunities exist in the Circle of Progress Business Park, where there are approximately nine vacant commercially or industrially-zoned vacant sites.

High Street—the borough’s “Main Street”—is also subject to vacancy in the form of vacant storefronts and buildings in need renovation and rehabilitation. However, there is not significant amounts of vacant land on High Street or in downtown Pottstown itself. The issue of vacant storefronts and abandoned commercial uses is better addressed through the programs discussed in Chapter 5 of this plan - Economic Development.

## Airport Area

- Circle of Progress Business Park – Attract commercial and industrial uses to the existing vacant land at the site. Further development of the airport facilities, including providing additional hangers and other services such as restaurants, will contribute to growth of Pottstown’s commercial and industrial sectors.

<sup>6</sup> Evan Brandt, “New law signed to help towns fight blight.” *The Pottstown Mercury*, November 16, 2010.

## **Riverfront**

As discussed above, Pottstown's underutilized industrial land is ripe for redevelopment if the right opportunity arises.

- Keystone Boulevard: Extend Keystone Boulevard to connect with South Grossman Road and pursue commercial and industrial development to the area. Other development options could include research and development opportunities, office space, or hotel facilities.
- Attract additional heavy industrial and manufacturing businesses to the Bethlehem Steel Site / Pottstown Industrial Center.
- Use the recently developed Pottstown Carousel site as a way to improve access between Riverfront Park , Memorial Park, and the Pottsgrove Manor.

## **Downtown**

Both residential and non-residential developments are appropriate for Pottstown's downtown. The Strategic Plan calls for continued efforts to revitalize the Main Street commercial district along High Street, focusing on:

- 300 , 400, and 500 blocks of High Street

Beginning in 2014, the Borough of Pottstown will undertake a "Downtown Focus Study", in conjunction with the Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Inc. and the Montgomery County Planning Commission. The study area is proposed to include the blocks on High Street between King Street to the north and the railroad tracks to the south, and from the Carousel in the west to Madison Street/The Hill School in the east.

The focus study will collect and analyze data, including information about the Borough's industries, vacant and available properties, parking inventory, and traffic patterns, to create both a policy and design document that can be used as a tool to attract new, sustainable businesses to the downtown.

Included in the focus study will be various inventories, plans, and implementation techniques for the purpose of enhancing economic development in the downtown, encouraging infill development, improving the aesthetic environment of the area, and preserving the borough's existing character. Once completed, the study will be incorporated into the Borough's Comprehensive Plan.

## **FUTURE LAND USE**

Pottstown is already a largely developed municipality and does not expect a vast amount of new development. However, there is underutilized and vacant land suitable for redevelopment and land uses will continue to shift over time. In certain areas, Pottstown wishes to maintain existing land uses, whereas it plans to change existing land uses in other areas. The future land use pattern of Pottstown largely reflects the zoning map. Key opportunity sites are described below and illustrated on the Future Land Use Map (Figure 4-12).

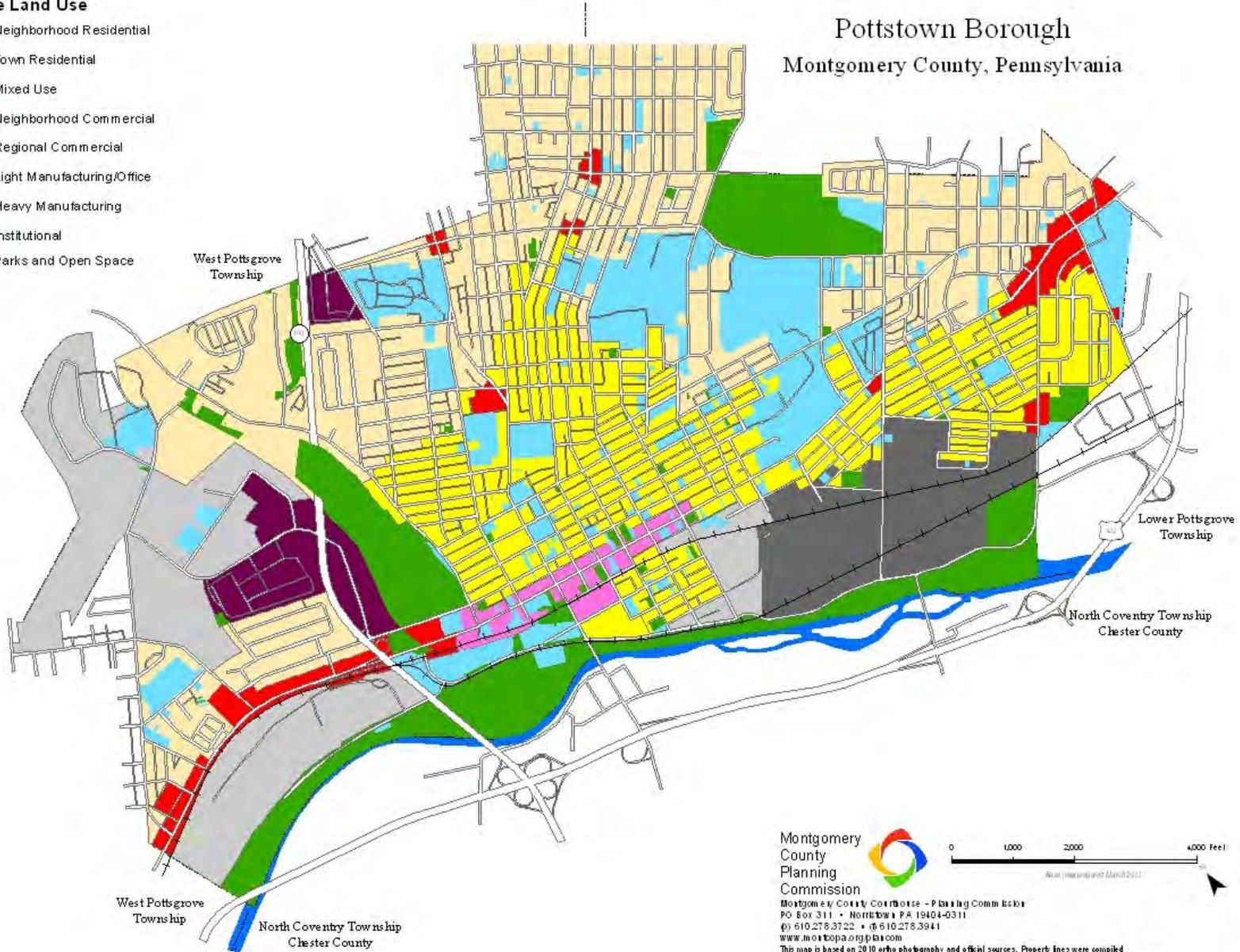
The Pottstown Metropolitan Region Comprehensive Plan (2005) calls for new residential and nonresidential development to be directed into designated growth areas and encourages the redevelopment and infill of underutilized and vacant parcels, specifically those in and around Pottstown borough. In a 2002 resident survey for this plan, respondents identified Pottstown and existing villages as the number one type of area where new development should be encouraged. The plan identifies Pottstown in its Future Land Use Map as a "Metropolitan Center." This designation is intended to encourage the revitalization of the Borough of Pottstown as the historic, urban, mixed use core of the region.

Suggested use options for Pottstown include a mixture of uses: residential, commercial, office, industrial, institutional, shopping centers, recreational, utilities, airport related, and other similar uses. Redevelopment of existing underutilized properties is a priority. Urban-style housing is to be encouraged in the downtown. More flexible development regulations and development incentives should be established. Furthermore, any mix of densities and uses shall be permitted that are compatible with and enhance the Borough of Pottstown's historic, urban environment.

**Figure 4-12: Future Land Use Plan**

**Future Land Use**

- Neighborhood Residential
- Town Residential
- Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Regional Commercial
- Light Manufacturing/Office
- Heavy Manufacturing
- Institutional
- Parks and Open Space



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 PO Box 311 • Norristown, PA 19380-0311  
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 www.mcpa.org/pa.com  
 This map is based on 2010 ortho photography and official sources. Property lines were compiled from individual block maps from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, with no verification from the deed. This map is not meant to be used as a legal definition of properties or for engineering purposes.

Source: Created by the MCPC and Pottstown Planning Commission for this document.

## Future Land Use Categories

<b>Neighborhood Residential:</b>	The borough intends to maintain and enhance these areas as primarily single-family or semi-detached housing with few non-residential uses mixed in. The borough intends to encourage infill development in these areas and emphasize compatible housing types on smaller lot sizes.
<b>Town Residential:</b>	This area will be preserved as predominantly residential with a small number of stores and offices mixed in. All types of housing, including multifamily, should be encouraged in these areas.
<b>Mixed Use:</b>	A mix of uses, including a wide range of retail, business, professional, governmental, and higher-density residential uses should be encouraged in this area. An emphasis should be placed on development that maintains and enhances this area's existing historic architecture and character.
<b>Neighborhood Commercial</b>	A mix of neighborhood-serving commercial and office uses should be encouraged in these areas, including small (less than 3,000 square feet) retail and office establishments, sit-down restaurants, and other direct service providers. Importance should be placed on development that improves the appearance of these areas through appropriate design, building orientation, and materials that are consistent with the character of the area.
<b>Regional Commercial</b>	A variety of large (minimum 30,000 SF lots) and auto-oriented businesses should be encouraged in these areas to serve the commercial needs of the greater Pottstown region.
<b>Light Manufacturing/Office</b>	These areas will be primarily used for office and light manufacturing industries that provide a wide variety of employment opportunities in the borough.
<b>Heavy Manufacturing</b>	This area will be preserved for necessary heavy industrial activity and related uses of such a nature that they require isolation from many other kinds of land uses. Some commercial uses that can be appropriately located near industrial activity may also be found in this area of the borough.
<b>Institutional</b>	This area, which includes the land occupied by the Hill School and Montgomery County Community College, among other uses, is intended to be reserved for the borough's institutional uses, including schools, medical facilities, government offices, religious institutions, and other similar land uses.
<b>Parks and Open Space</b>	All existing parks and open space are intended to be maintained as lands for recreational and open space use.

## LAND USE GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment.

- Initiate redevelopment of key opportunity sites in the borough.
- Identify key potential business development / employment sites throughout the borough and prevent rezoning for other uses.
- Assess existing borough owned properties and determine whether they should be sold or used for a borough purpose.

### 2. Identify other uses for vacant land that are not development.

- Convert appropriate small vacant lots within residential neighborhoods to pocket parks, community gardens, stormwater management systems, or other public open space (preferably green).
- As appropriate, convert small vacant lots within commercial or residential neighborhoods for well-designed and landscaped parking.

### 3. Eliminate vacant and blighted buildings.

- Establish a land bank pursuant for the purpose of managing undesirable properties and facilitating their revitalization or reuse.
- Continue to identify vacant properties that are hazardous to human health and safety.
- Continue to Support Blight Property Review Committee

### 4. Protect valuable environmental resources.

- Protect existing groundwater resources and encourage groundwater recharge in the designs of new development.
- Preserve sensitive natural resource areas, including woodlands, stream systems, wetlands, steep slopes, and wildlife, especially along the Schuylkill River and The Manatawny Creek.
- Promote and protect street trees and other vegetation in developed areas.
- Protect all municipalities within the same watershed from impacts of improper development.
- Implement the natural resource preservation goals of the Pottstown Open Space Plan.
- Revisit the borough's floodplain ordinance in light of FEMA's updates to the floodplain boundaries.

### 5. Continue to implement the *Reconnections* plan.

- Continue to work with North Coventry Township to implement the recommendations of the *Reconnections* plan. In particular, the recommended improvements to Keim Street Bridge and Hanover Street Bridge should be made.
- Work with adjacent municipalities to improve the functionality and appearance of the borough's gateway areas, as recommended in *Reconnections* and the *Western Riverfront District Redevelopment Plan*.

## **6. Develop and implement strategic plans for opportunity sites.**

- Implement the ULI Report recommendations for the Riverfront.
- Implement the recommendations from the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee's Market Assessment and Fiscal Impact Study (spring 2012) and the Transportation Community Development Initiative (TCDI) findings regarding Keystone Boulevard.
- Implement the recommendations from the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee's Market Assessment and Fiscal Impact Study (spring 2012) for High Street.

## **7. Update and streamline the zoning ordinance.**

The borough may want to consider rewriting the zoning code to address these problems. It may also want to consider including the following options in the revised code.

- Develop a Riverfront Recreational Zoning Overlay with economic incentives.
- Develop a Downtown Enhancement Overlay Zoning District with aesthetic and economic incentives.
- Provide greater flexibility to mix uses within districts and structures as long as design principles are followed (a form of performance zoning).
- Provide greater incentives to eliminate non-conforming buildings/uses.
- Expedite Planning and Zoning Review:
  - Process some plan amendments with zoning applications concurrently.
  - Expedite zoning application acceptance and processing to provide incentives for revitalization efforts.
  - Offer pre-submission conferences, review, and recommendations.
- Provide additional Flexible & Incentive Zoning Provisions:
  - Offer reductions in the commercial-parking requirement.
  - Increase the allowable building heights in certain districts as an incentive.
  - Improve the landscaping, signage, and screening requirements.



CHAPTER 5  
economic development

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### Data Analysis

According to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), there were approximately 10,812 jobs located in Pottstown in 2010. The largest employers in the borough include the Pottstown Memorial Medical Center (1,089 employees), the Pottstown School District (550), the Wal-Mart on Shoemaker Road (250), and the Hill School (236). The Pottstown Borough government, Montgomery County Community College, and the county's social service delivery offices also provide a high number of jobs in the borough. Once an industrial giant, the sites of former manufacturers are now vacant or underutilized, with only a small fraction of the borough's employment remaining in heavy industry.

While the decline of Pottstown's manufacturing base has contributed to its decreasing employment over the past several decades, DVRPC has projected that employment will rebound and grow 6% between 2010 and 2040. Although this reverse of recent trends is positive, the projected 6% growth is only half of the employment growth forecasted for Montgomery County as a whole. Economic development, including the revitalization of its downtown and existing industrial properties, will continue to be an important challenge in the upcoming years.

### Previous Plans and Studies

*POTTSTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN (2008)* - Gannett Fleming produced the Pottstown Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2008, which provided a balanced program of projects and initiatives to guide community revitalization efforts in the borough. It builds on the Pottstown Community and Economic Development Action and Implementation Strategy (2000) and continues many of its priorities.

*MARKETING THE POTTSTOWN REGION (2012)* - In 2012, the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee (PMRPC), with assistance from a private consulting firm, the Montgomery County Planning Commission (County), and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), completed a regional market assessment and fiscal impact study for the Pottstown Metropolitan Region. The fiscal impact analysis evaluated the fiscal sustainability of likely growth in the Region and make recommendations for ensuring a fiscally sustainable development pattern in the future.

Additional information regarding the goals and objectives of these plans and other completed studies can be found in the *Appendix – Existing Studies and Plans*.

### Organizations and Activities<sup>7</sup>

#### Economic Development Organizations

The *Pottstown Downtown Improvement District Authority* (PDIDA) serves as an advocate to improve and strengthen both non-business and business aspects of Downtown Pottstown. To accomplish this goal, PDIDA focuses on enhancing a five-block

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.tricountyareachamber.com/businessResources/economicDevelop/> accessed on June 21, 2011.

area, Downtown Pottstown's image to businesses, consumers, and investors while supporting the rehabilitation of Downtown Pottstown's unique historic district and main shopping venues.

The *Pottstown Downtown Foundation* (PDF) was organized to provide resources and coordinate leadership for PDIDA. The PDF focus is geographically larger than PDIDA, enabling a broader base of support and involvement for business development. More information is available at [www.downtownpottstown.org](http://www.downtownpottstown.org).

*Pottstown Area Industrial Development, Inc.* (PAID, Inc.) is a 501c(3) non-profit corporation originally formed in 1965 whose mission is to promote commercial and industrial development in the Borough of Pottstown. PAID, Inc. developed and sold a 32 lot industrial complex known as the Pottstown Airport Business Campus. Along High Street, they secured commercial retail properties and resold with financing to attract new businesses to the downtown of Pottstown. PAID, Inc. is working with the Borough of Pottstown, Montgomery County, private economic development organizations and the business community to create a long range vision that will lead to new business and employment opportunities for the region.

### **Recent Economic Development Activities**

The following is a summary of some of the recent activities that impact economic development in the Borough of Pottstown:

The borough worked in cooperation with Montgomery County Community College and the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area to complete the conversion plans of the former PECO building at 140 College Drive. Originally built in 1911 and abandoned for much of the 1990's, this building was purchased by the borough in 1997 and converted to offices in 2000 with assistance from Montgomery County Open Space funding. According to Open Space requirements, the ownership of the building had to remain with the borough for five years. After extensive renovations, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area organization moved their headquarters from Wyomissing into the new facility in 2002. The next phase involved Montgomery County Community College acquiring the building from the borough for available space to renovate into classrooms, faculty offices, and focus on new environmental science courses, using as much green building technology as possible.

At the former Mrs. Smith's site, Cornell Homes has constructed townhomes as part of the Hanover Square site plan along Industrial Highway and across from the Schuylkill River.

The Borough of Pottstown also hosts the Historic Homebuyer's Cultural Show at Montgomery County Community College. The show focuses on the cultural resources of Pottstown. The event is sponsored by local banks, Montgomery County Community College, and numerous other groups and individuals.



*Pottstown Memorial Medical Center*



*Schuylkill River Center at 140 College Drive*



*Charles W. Dickinson Transportation Center in downtown Pottstown*

Pottstown Borough has applied for Montgomery County Revitalization Program funding for the Homeownership Initiative Program, the Steel River Playhouse, and Hanover Street Gateway. Pottstown hopes to reopen its Homeownership Initiative Program to first time homebuyers for grants to make improvements to their home in the Core Redevelopment District, support the Steel River Playhouse in its operations and continued capital success, and through the Hanover Street Gateway, improve the Hanover Bridge corridor with streetscape improvements.

Pottstown Borough received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding dedicated to the design and construction of the Intermodal Transit Facility, now named the Charles W. Dickinson Transportation Center, at the former train station canopy adjacent to First Niagara Bank and in close proximity to Smith Family Plaza Transit Park and Borough Hall. Improvements included the rehabilitation of the existing train station canopy through structural and electrical upgrades to serve as a transit hub for buses in the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit system (PART). The facility rerouted buses from High Street and Hanover Street to the refurbished station and provides weather protection for passengers, eases congestion in downtown Pottstown, and coordinates with existing transportation improvements in the area.

Additionally, Pottstown Borough will be involved in some transportation improvements through Pennsylvania's Community Transportation Initiative Grant (PCTI), which was awarded to both Montgomery and Chester counties in the amount of \$1,775,000 for the restriping, installation of bike lanes, parking, and a multi-use trail on Hanover Street between River Road and High Street.

Meanwhile, borough staff continues to work with several existing and potential new businesses for growth opportunities in Pottstown.

## **REVITALIZATION OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Business & Industrial Infrastructure**

With its existing capacity in water and sewer infrastructure, a rail line, and access to both airports and major roadways (Routes 422 and 100), Pottstown has the potential to become an attractive business location. Although it is unlikely that the borough will see a return to its former heavy industrial past, there has been some growth in the light industry sector, including businesses in biotechnology, life sciences, technology-oriented assembly productions, software development, and financial service companies.

The borough also contains several vacant or underutilized properties where significant redevelopment may be possible. Some of these sites include the Circle of Progress Business Park, the Bethlehem Steel Complex and surrounding parcels, properties around the airport, and several parcels along High Street. With encouraged development of these properties, Pottstown can continue to improve its position as a place to do business.

## Riverfront & Recreational Tourism

With more than 300 acres of public, private, and institutional open space as well as direct access to the Schuylkill River Trail, Pottstown possesses the amenities to become a recreational destination. Events such as the Pottstown Volleyball Rumble, which attracted an estimated 2,000 athletes and many more spectators to the 4-day event in 2013, are helping to transform the borough into hub for recreational activity. Pottstown Borough should continue to implement the recommendations made in the Pottstown Borough Open Space Plan (2005) and the Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan (2003). Among these goals, completion of the Schuylkill River Trail from Pottstown to Phoenixville and improved linkages between the riverfront, borough parks, and the downtown will help to further attract trail users to Pottstown.

## Downtown

Downtown Pottstown is a traditional, main street community with historic and attractive storefronts, tree-lined streets, sidewalks, and a growing number of cultural and recreational amenities. Despite Pottstown's unique identity, challenges such as vacant storefronts, blighted properties, and incompatible uses continue to persist. The Pottstown Downtown Improvement District Authority (PDIDA) works to maintain clean and safe streets, attract new businesses and organizations to the borough, and create and promote special events. The PDIDA should continue to work with the borough to attract both new residents and businesses to the downtown. A vibrant commercial core will help to further strengthen the role of the borough as a regional hub.

## Arts & Culture

In addition to its abundant historic resources, Pottstown is now host to numerous arts and culture organizations. With several art galleries, musical attractions such as the Schuylkill Valley Regional Dance Company, the Pottstown Public Library, the Center for the Performing Arts at the Hill School, Art Fusion 19464, and the Steel River Playhouse, Pottstown can develop its role as the region's cultural and institutional center.

Organizations, including the Pottstown Arts & Cultural Alliance and the Pottstown Downtown Improvement District Authority (PDIDA) should continue to market the borough's institutions and events and promote the borough as a center for arts and culture.

## Education

As previously mentioned, the Montgomery County Community College, the Hill School, and the Pottstown School District are already three of the largest employers in the borough. In addition to the employment opportunities provided by the institutions, these schools can also aid in Pottstown's economic development by attracting new students and their families from



*Former Bethlehem Steel Complex*



*Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown*



*Hill School Center for Performing Arts*



*MCCC's University Center*

outside of the borough. Additionally, partnerships between the Pottstown School District and the Montgomery County Community College as well as with local arts education organizations can help to provide educational and career pathways that increase the post-secondary degree attainment levels of residents and expand opportunities for the borough's youth.

## **Marketing**

Effective marketing of the borough could help to not only draw visitors from surrounding communities but could also help to attract more permanent businesses and residents to Pottstown. A marketing goal was initially established in the 2000 Economic Development Strategic Plan, and reiterated again in the 2008 update. Several steps have been made towards enhancing Pottstown's identity as the urban hub of the region, including the introduction of a new borough logo and the hiring of a community relations staff by the Pottstown School District.

To further grow Pottstown's image, the borough should create a position to help coordinate and market the borough's many cultural and recreational programs and events. Both the Pottstown School District and Montgomery County Community College could be included as a partner in this effort. The borough should also pursue more active recruitment of developers and businesses. Without active recruitment, developers and business owners will remain unaware of the opportunities available in the borough.

## **Transportation**

Transportation networks can help shape a community. With convenient access to both U.S. routes 100 and 422, proximity to two airports and commercial rail running through the borough, Pottstown has a transportation system that, along with future improvements, can support its economic development. Further expansion of the nearby airports, improvements to Route 422 to lessen congestion, as well as continued support for the development of commuter rail service between Pottstown and Philadelphia could all help to stimulate growth by bringing more people and businesses to the borough.

## **Gateways and Signage**

Improvements to the borough's gateways could help to create a more memorable entry and clearer route to the downtown area. As recommended in the recent *Reconnections* Plan, the borough should provide improvements to the Hanover Street Bridge, the Keim Street Bridge, and develop the existing Railroad Trestle as a new pedestrian bridge to link Riverfront Park with North Coventry Township's River Park. Improvements to the borough's western gateway on High Street would also help to tie together Memorial Park, Riverfront Park, and the historic Pottsgrove Manor site. As recommended in the Tischler Bise Regional Strategy Report, creation of a consistent "wayfinding" signage system in key areas of the borough, such as the downtown area and airports, will help make these areas more accessible. Attracting non-regional populations can yield significant economic benefit.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment.**

- Promote the development of suitable sites for businesses in the borough.
- Establish a range of business assistance programs.
- Develop more business/customer-friendly permitting and planning processes and ordinances.
- Expand employment opportunities for residents.
- Undertake further research to develop a detailed understanding of business and economic conditions in Pottstown and the region.

### **Enhance Pottstown's identity as the urban hub of the Region.**

- Strengthen and publicize amenities and resources that draw people to the borough.
- Improve the borough's gateways and implement a consistent "wayfinding" signage system to make Pottstown more accessible.
- Continue efforts to revitalize the Main Street commercial district along High Street as well as adjacent areas.

### **Utilize the riverfront plan established in the ULI's Transformation Strategies plan for reuse of key parcels.**

### **Encourage and accommodate a vibrant downtown.**

### **Encourage high-value employment.**

### **Build on existing arts and culture activities as an economic development tool to bring more visitors into town.**

### **Expand Pottstown's heritage and recreational tourism infrastructure and attractions.**

### **Include Pottstown's urban advantages and assets in marketing for economic development.**

### **Increase economic activity related to heritage, arts and culture, and recreational tourism in Pottstown for the benefit of taxpayers, partners, and the general public.**



*Pottstown Municipal Airport*



CHAPTER 6  
mobility & circulation

Pottstown’s transportation system is made up of various elements, including highways and local roads, parking facilities, rail lines and rail yards, the Pottstown Municipal Airport, public transportation, bicycle lanes, and the sidewalks and pathways that make up the local pedestrian network. Transportation is a critical element for the people of Pottstown—it affects mobility, safety, economic development, job accessibility, and quality of life.

## MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

The majority of Pottstown’s residents (as of the year 2011) utilized private vehicles to travel to work. The percent of people doing such has increased slightly over the years, but is similar to Montgomery County’s percentages. Although a greater percentage of people in Pottstown carpool to work, this is likely because historically, fewer people have owned their own cars in the borough. Chart 6-1 depicts the differing methods used by Pottstown residents used to commute to and from work locations.

Public transit usage as a means to travel to work has also decreased over the years. Montgomery County’s higher transit usage percentage for rail use is likely because those options are more easily accessible in the eastern end of the county. However, Pottstown’s residents could take bus service to various employment centers in the Pottstown area. More Pottstown residents walk to work than take public transportation, less so than in the past, but a greater percentage than in the County overall; this is likely due to Pottstown’s density and employment opportunities.

## REGIONAL VEHICLE CIRCULATION

The primary challenges facing the regional highway network are traffic congestion and deteriorating roads and bridges. A regional survey from 2005 identified the top three transportation issues as road maintenance, traffic congestion, and parking. Some corridors that serve the borough, such as US Route 422 (US 422) and PA Route 100 (PA 100) north of High Street have become particularly congested. Increased traffic in these areas has led to recommendations for additional turn- and through-lanes as well as shoulders. These highway corridors serve a regional market, and provide access to major shopping and employment centers, and carry significant volumes of traffic.

There are four major, inter-county highway corridors that serve Pottstown.

- PA 100
- PA 724
- PA 663
- US 422

**Chart 6-1: Mode of Transportation (2009-2011)**

	Montgomery County		Pottstown	
Total Population	403,374		10,549	
Means of Travel	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Private Vehicle	349,964	86.7%	8,705	82.5%
Drive Alone	321,604	91.9%	7,776	89.3%
Carpool	28,360	8.1%	929	10.6%
Public Transportation	20,814	5.2%	277	2.6%
Walked	12,031	3.0%	1,035	9.8%
Taxicab, Bicycle, Motorcycle, or Other means	3,348	0.8%	309	2.9%
Worked from home	17,217	4.3%	223	2.1%
<b>Mean travel time to work</b>	<b>27.5 minutes</b>		<b>24.9 minutes</b>	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2009-2011 American Community Survey

Since Pottstown serves as an area hub within the northwestern tip of the county and connects many adjacent communities, it is important to consider coordination with the road systems of neighboring municipalities as well. Inter-municipal street cooperation and coordination is an important function in this regard, performed with the assistance of county and state government agencies. Recent studies and plans of regional and inter-municipal roadways are described below:

### **Pottstown/West Pottsgrove TCDI Study (2012)**

In 2010, Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township were awarded a \$65,000 Transportation grant from DVRPC. The grant is part of DVRPC's Transportation and Community Development Initiative program which supports selected areas to undertake planning, analysis, or design initiatives for projects or programs which enhance development or redevelopment and enhance or improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system. The funding awarded to Pottstown and West Pottsgrove will be used to develop a High Street Corridor Plan that will establish an implementation strategy for revitalizing the entire High Street corridor.

### **Tri-County Transportation Study: A Vision for PA Route 100 (2010)**

In summer 2010, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) completed a study of the PA 100 corridor. Findings of the *Tri-County Transportation Study: A Vision for PA Route 100* study showed the major issues to be traffic congestion, safety, inconsistent interchanges, transition zones at each end of the corridor, and increasing development pressures. Recommendations for Pottstown include: widen PA 100 to three through lanes per direction between Shoemaker Road and the southern State Street intersection; modify traffic flow patterns in the vicinity of King Street; improve the intersections at Shoemaker Road and southern State Street as well as northern State Street and Moyer Road; and, plan for the potential widening of Farmington Avenue and its overpass of PA 100.

### **R6 Norristown Service Line Extension Study (2009)**

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) released the results of the *R6 Norristown Line Service Extension Study* in 2009. The study analyzed various rail options utilizing the present Norfolk Southern line between Norristown and Wyomissing, and the existing R6 Norristown Line to access Center City Philadelphia. The study explored innovative financing techniques, such as public-private partnerships, that could support the implementation of rail service. Preliminary analysis suggested that tolling existing highway capacity on US 422 was a feasible strategy for generating the funds necessary to advance the rail project, as well as providing the funding sources needed for the River Crossing Project and additional improvements along US 422, particularly in the Pottstown area. Combined with the US 422 Master Plan, this study recommended the need to further study the feasibility of these strategies (see the 422Plus Project discussed below).

### **US 422 Master Plan (2009)**

The opening of the US Route 422 corridor to development has taken a region that used to be insulated, and tied it into the Greater Philadelphia Metropolitan area with all of the attendant advantages and problems. However, it has not been a significant advantage to Pottstown as it has made it easier for people to travel outside the borough for jobs and shopping (such as to King of Prussia). As a result, the road has significant congestion issues. The *US 422 Corridor Master Plan*, led by DVRPC

with coordination from the County Planning Commissions in Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties, provides a vision and guidance to link land use and transportation decisions, and makes recommendations to sustain the quality of life and economic vitality in the 422 Corridor. The recommended “Sustainable Alternative” encourages growth of compact, mixed-use centers that link residences and jobs in close proximity, and identified more transportation options to serve them. With the *R6 Norristown Service Line Extension Study*, this study recommended the need to further study the feasibility of these strategies (see the 422Plus Project discussed below).

### **US 422 Pottstown Bypass Project**

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) plans to improve US 422 between the Berks County line and the Sanatoga Interchange in Chester and Montgomery counties under separate projects over the next several years. This seven-mile section of Route 422 consists of two travel lanes in each direction, six interchanges, and numerous bridges. PennDOT plans to replace six critical structurally deficient bridges located within the project limits, including two large structures over the Schuylkill River; address deficient geometry to improve safety; reconstruct deteriorating pavement; improve interchanges; and lengthen acceleration and deceleration lanes to meet current design standards.

According to the Region’s 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”), US 422 is scheduled to undergo the following major improvements; 2012: PA 363 Interchange and Old Betewood Pedestrian Bridge; 2016: PA 23 Interchange; 2017-2020: New Schuylkill River Bridge. In and around Pottstown, the Armand Hammer Interchange and the nearby South River Bridge will be in construction between 2011 and 2014. All other recommendations of the US 422 Master Plan are not funded and will likely not occur until closer to 2020.

### **US 422Plus Project (2011)**

Pennsylvania, like many states, is struggling to find adequate ways to fund transportation needs. The recently completed 422Plus Project, also led by DVRPC with coordination from the three counties and the state and regional transportation agencies, considers whether tolling approximately 25 miles of US 422 between US 202 and just east of PA 662 could fund road improvements to relieve congestion, address infrastructure needs, and potentially support re-establishing 44 miles of passenger rail on an active freight line between Norristown and Wyomissing, with a stop in Pottstown. The plan was introduced in spring/summer 2011 and largely rejected by local legislators and a large majority of the public. As a result, DVRPC and the Counties consider the idea dead.

### **Industrial Zone Transportation Access Study (2012)**

A concept master plan was recently completed for the area of land bounded by the Schuylkill River to the south, the Norfolk Southern rail line to the north, Grosser Road to the west and College Drive to the east. The study, completed in conjunction with West Pottsgrove Township, looks at the possible extension of Keystone Boulevard in Pottstown to Old Reading Pike in West Pottsgrove and possibly to the Stowe Interchange of US 422. With proximity to rail, available utilities, and potential connections to both Route 100 and US Route 42, the site’s 366 acres possess strong economic development potential. Currently, Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township are working in cooperation to create a new vibrant employment center that can maximize the area’s redevelopment potential.



**Figure 6-3: Annual Average Daily Traffic Count (2010)**

Road	Average Daily Traffic Count
Route 100 (southern end)	36,000
East High Street (east end)	17,000
Armand Hammer Boulevard	16,000
West High Street (near Route 100)	11,000
King Street (Route 663 portion)	8,500
Manatawny Street (under Route 663)	6,100
Charlotte Street—Route 663 (northern end)	6,200
Farmington Avenue at Hanover Street	7,200
State Road	4,000

Source: PennDOT, DVRPC

Route 100, is eclipsing King Street’s vehicle count, while Manatawny Road (between PA 663/ King Street and High Street) and Charlotte Street/PA 663 (at the northern boundary), maintain their relative positions with respect to average quantity of vehicles per day.

Industrial Highway intersects several significant waterfront properties east of Washington Street; this impedes access to the Schuylkill River, trail system, and waterfront park. Plans have suggested that Industrial Highway be re-routed to run along the lower Norfolk Southern rail line to allow more flexible redevelopment opportunities north of the riverfront.

Manatawny Street is a high-speed throughway that discourages residents of the neighborhood to the east from accessing Memorial Park. The borough could pursue a warrant analysis to determine whether a traffic signal would improve access.

**SAFETY**

Unsafe driving and human error is attributed as the cause of many traffic accidents. It is the duty of motor vehicle operators, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike to act responsibly at all times and follow appropriate laws when travelling on highways, streets, and paths. Other factors also affect the safety of all persons travelling on roadways, such as road conditions like street widths, sight distances, lighting, signage, capacities, traffic, maintenance, etc.

**Local Roadway Improvements**

A new local road, Wilson Street, opened in 1991 between Farmington Avenue and State Street. Wilson Street became a critical link from High Street to Beech and Jackson Streets. This became an important northern tier road in the borough, providing access to PA Route 100.

College Drive is a relatively new street from S. Hanover Street west toward and intersecting with High Street that was constructed in the late 1980s, in concert with water service infrastructure. The road was the extension of Industrial Highway (and originally named as such), which was constructed in 1960s and crosses the borough east to west. Designed when there was a lot of commercial traffic from Mrs. Smith’s Pies, College Drive essentially serves to finish a downtown bypass by connecting to Industrial Highway and is beneficial in removing truck traffic from High Street and reducing congestion. It was designed to accommodate a lot of industrial traffic. Like Industrial Drive, College Drive opened up more property for development. In fact, the Montgomery County Community College ended up building adjacent to the new roadway, which only then became known as College Drive.

Keystone Boulevard is an improved roadway that begins at College Drive and provides access and utilities to properties in the Keystone Opportunity Zone, west of PA Route 100. A trail segment, part of the Schuylkill River Trail, was constructed with the road. This portion of the trail, roadway, and associated utilities was constructed in 2003. The properties opened up are all located south of railroad and without access to High Street. Designed to bring in commercial opportunities; the Opportunity

Zone has thus far failed. As discussed above, the Keystone Boulevard Extension would extend the roadway into West Pottsgrove, providing access to Old Reading Pike and possibly the Stowe Interchange of US 422. The potential connection of the area to Route 422 could help to attract new businesses and employment opportunities to the borough.

Shoemaker Road between PA Route 100 and Glasgow Street was relocated in the mid- to late-1980s. The new configuration opened up the development area to allow the Pottstown Center Shopping area, a small industrial park, and another shopping center.

Around 2003, High Street was redesigned to change from a 4-lane to a 2-lane roadway with the introduction of back-in, angle parking and bicycle lanes. As part of this project, the borough also moved traffic lights around. While the project increased the availability of parking downtown, the back-in parking receives mixed reviews from borough residents. After 7 years people are getting used to the unusual parking arrangement. Two goals of the project were to slow traffic and improve the pedestrian environment; however, the roadway remains wide and still presents a barrier to pedestrian flow in downtown Pottstown. Improving the pedestrian crossings can continue to draw shoppers, diners, and other pedestrians in downtown.

Streetlights and pedestrian-oriented lights should be installed along the primary through streets and at all street intersections. The Pottstown Area Signal System project, which involves the upgrade of signals at 39 intersections to a closed loop system, is scheduled to be completed.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The need for convenient public transportation service in Pottstown is driven by a variety of factors: age of population, vehicle ownership rates, and housing density. As the borough's population ages, there is, and will continue to be, an increased need for transit service for those who are unable to drive. Pottstown also tends to have lower rates of vehicle ownership, making public transit access a necessity for some, regardless of age. Housing densities equal to or exceeding five units per acre increase the need for transit options and Pottstown is nearing this density with four housing units per acre. Additionally, public transit usage for commuting to work has increased in Pottstown, as shown earlier. As recommended in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region Comprehensive Plan, the development of greater transportation choice will best meet the transit needs of Pottstown.

A local transportation agency, Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART), provides bus service from downtown Pottstown to Coventry Mall and four other routes. PART is the largest municipally-owned transit system in the county; it is different than a typical municipally-owned transit provider in that it is an actual transit agency. It provides hourly service six days a week (Monday through Saturday), with limited service at night, through the borough, Lower Pottsgrove Township, West



*High Street with angled parking and bike lanes*



*Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) bus stopped at the Charles W. Dickinson Transportation Center*

Pottsgrove Township, Limerick Township, and North Coventry Township, including the Coventry Mall and the Premium Outlets. While PART is currently municipally-owned, the creation of a separate authority to oversee the bus system is being considered following a recommendation by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA's) Route 93 bus serves Pottstown, connecting the borough with the Norristown Transportation Center (and the greater SEPTA transit network) via Collegeville along the Ridge Pike/High Street corridor. The bus runs seven days a week, at approximately one-hour intervals. The Route 93 bus line stops along High Street in downtown Pottstown and at Montgomery County Community College. SEPTA does not pick up or drop off between Sanatoga and downtown Pottstown, except for certain runs each day when PART isn't operating. This formal agreement helps to preserve PART's ridership.

As the two transit agencies serving the region, both PART and SEPTA receive funding from the same federal and state sources. Both SEPTA and PART are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act to provide services to people with disabilities who live within three-quarters of a mile from a fixed bus route. SEPTA's Customized Community Transport (CCT) provides the required paratransit services for eligible disabled individuals. This service covers all of Pottstown. PART's paratransit service also provides curb-to-curb service to disabled people in Pottstown. The Suburban Transit Network, Inc. (TransNet) provides shared rides for senior citizens throughout Pottstown via a contract with Tri-County Transit.

Additionally, private intercity bus service is available for Greyhound and Bieber Tourways in Pottstown, with service to King of Prussia, Philadelphia, Reading, and Harrisburg. The station is located at the Citgo Smart Mart on High Street.

## RAIL AND FREIGHT SERVICE

Although there is currently no passenger rail service in Pottstown, this is an amenity which would surely be a welcome transportation improvement in that it would reduce congestion on US 422 and provide an alternative means for Pottstown residents to commute along that corridor. A current regional proposal calls for a 44-mile extension of the SEPTA Manayunk/Norristown (formerly named the R6) train line which would eventually terminate in Wyomissing. This extension would serve Pottstown via the US 422 corridor, and would hopefully serve as a catalyst for future new development in the borough, as well as provide access to jobs along this corridor. This issue has been discussed since the mid-1990s. The federal government declined to fund it in 2003 and the state declined funding in 2007. A recent/current feasibility study, released in 2009, found this rail extension is feasible. However, since the tolling of US Route 422 has been largely rejected, there remains a lack of funding for the proposed rail extension and the project is unlikely to move forward in the near future.

There are several freight lines that do run through the borough. The rail infrastructure consists of the former Reading main line and a small segment of the former Pennsylvania West Shore Line which are both currently owned by Norfolk Southern Railway Company.



*Norfolk Southern Freight Train in Pottstown*

Norfolk Southern operates freight rail service within and through Pottstown, along the former Conrail track near the borough's southern border. The other line, a rail spur to the Oxychem site in Lower Pottstgrove, is minimally utilized and its future is uncertain; in recent years the line was being used only once per week. Previous plans have recommended that the line be removed to facilitate redevelopment.

A third line, the Colebrookdale Branch Railroad, was purchased by Berks County in 2009, after its former owner (East Penn Railroad) sought federal approval to abandon the line. While Berks County originally hoped to resume its operations as an active freight line, plans are currently being proposed for the creation of a Tourist Railroad. In January 2012, a conceptual plan was completed for transforming the line into a Tourist Railroad, named the "Secret Valley Line". The proposed rail line would link Pottstown to Boyertown and would help to expand heritage and recreational tourism in the borough as well as potentially provide a catalyst for further development of Pottstown.

## AIR SERVICE AND AIRPORTS

Pottstown Municipal Airport is a full-service airport which is owned and operated by the borough, along Glasgow Street in the borough's West End. Pottstown Municipal Airport was built in 1952 and is the only municipally-owned airport in Montgomery County. There are no scheduled airlines that operate out of the Pottstown Municipal Airport. The nearest major scheduled air service is located at the airports in Philadelphia or Allentown. Scheduled short service flight service is also available at the Reading Regional Airport.

The Municipal Airport is managed by a Fixed Base Operator (FBO) TNT Air, Inc. The airport also has an associated private operation, Witmer Aviation Services that provides repair services for specific types of aircraft, including routine maintenance, custom repairs, and rebuilding of vintage aircraft.

Pottstown Municipal Airport provides limited corporate and charter service, and emphasizes personal service to recreational pilots. Its paved runway is 2,704 feet long and 75 feet wide. The airport had 22,275 annual flight operations in 2012 which shows significant growth over the previous 7,250 flight operations counted during 2003. Forty-four aircraft were based at Pottstown Municipal as of 2012. The airport site measures approximately 63 acres surrounded by dense residential development to the west, and a business/industrial park to the east.

The limited space and existing adjacent land use may restrict the extent of future expansions at Pottstown Municipal. Pottstown Borough and Upper Pottsgrove have adopted airport related height restriction zoning to protect the approach and other operating airspace surfaces. According to DVRPC, future development plans at Pottstown Municipal should be coordinated with those of Pottstown-Limerick in order to avoid redundant services or capital investment. In the 2025 Regional Airport System Plan (2001) for the Delaware Valley Region, DVRPC recommends apron extension and hangar construction for the airport. The *Marketing the Pottstown Region: Strategies for Economic Development and their Fiscal Impact* report, completed in 2012, identifies the Municipal Airport as a regional opportunity site that could help expand and support additional industrial development and recreational activities in the borough.



*Pottstown Municipal Airport*

## **SIDEWALKS, TRAILS AND BICYCLE LINKAGES**

Pedestrian and other non-motorized methods of circulation are vital to the regional transportation network and can reduce congestion levels when used instead of the automobile for short-trips. Bicycle routes and the Schuylkill River Trail serve longer trips, such as commuting and recreation. Furthermore, well designed pedestrian networks can improve the perceived attractiveness of an area.

Once completed, the Schuylkill River Trail will be a particularly valuable asset in the Borough. The Schuylkill River Trail in Montgomery County is an 18-mile multi-use trail that runs from Philadelphia to Mont Clare. It was built on the Pennsylvania Railroad right-of-way and parallels the scenic Schuylkill River as it passes through various townships and boroughs. The trail is a popular destination for biking, rollerblading, jogging, and walking. It is recognized as a National Recreation Trail by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Trails System. Once the remaining Pottstown portion of the trail is completed, 22.5 miles of the trail will pass through the county. A portion of the trail has been recently completed in Pottstown's Keystone Opportunity Zone. Upon leaving Pottstown Borough, the Schuylkill River Trail is planned to cross to the Route 422 Bridge into North Coventry Township and continue eastward on the Chester County side of the Schuylkill River. Chester County is moving forward with its portion of the project, which will eventually result in the completion of a 60-mile continuous portion from Philadelphia to Reading. The long-range goal is a 115-mile trail from Pottsville (Schuylkill County) to Philadelphia. Completion of the trail in Pottstown Borough will help to further develop tourism and recreation opportunities in the borough, as well as create a new connection between Pottstown and surrounding communities.

As a developed borough, Pottstown already has an established sidewalk network. While the majority of the Borough's roadways do contain sidewalks, the effects of age have already begun to impact the network. To ensure pedestrian safety, the condition of sidewalks and the location and condition of crosswalks should continue to be maintained at high standards. Although the proportion of commuters biking to work is still low in the region (0.3%), it is still higher than the proportion for Montgomery County (0.2%). Pottstown has the highest number of residents in the region reporting they bike to work. Montgomery County has designated a variety of roads within Pottstown as primary and secondary on-road bike routes, including High Street and Charlotte Street. No state bike routes exist within the project study area.

Given the need for improved pedestrian and bicycle connections in the Pottstown, the Borough and Pottstown School District have begun working together on a plan to repair sidewalks and install bike lanes along several roadways in the Borough in an effort to establish "Safe Routes to School". The proposed \$3 million dollar "Safe Routes to School" plan would install bike lanes and repair sidewalks throughout the Borough in order to create a network of safe walking and biking routes for students traveling to and from school. A Feasibility Study has been conducted, with the Borough and Pottstown School District now seeking state funding for the program. Efforts should continue to be made to improve sidewalks and bike lanes in Pottstown, not only along the designated "Safe Routes to School" but throughout the Borough as well. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure not only promotes healthy lifestyles through increased walking and biking, but can also provide economic benefits including increased property values and customer traffic for retail businesses in the Borough.

## **TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Make improvements to the transportation network to promote the safe and efficient movement of people, vehicles, and goods within and through the borough.**

### **Expand and enhance the Pottstown Borough Municipal Airport**

Maintain and expand the runway (on both ends) and facilities at the Pottstown Municipal Airport as the demand for air services increases.

Continue to explore the expansion of hangar and storage space at the airport as well as an upgrade to the passenger terminal.

Coordinate with Heritage Field airport

### **Continue to support, expand, and upgrade public transit access and facilities in the borough**

Improve service, including frequency, of SEPTA's Route 93 bus.

Monitor the need to re-establish SEPTA's Route 99 bus between King of Prussia/ Norristown and Pottstown.

Consider expanding PART's service area as recommended in the PMRCP.

Encourage and support technological improvements to public transit, including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) for Transit to make riding transit more user-friendly.

### **Capitalize on the borough's existing rail infrastructure**

Maintain short line rail access and rail access to the Keystone Boulevard area.

Support the development of the Colebrookdale rail line into a Tourist Railroad.

Continue to support the extension of passenger rail service from Philadelphia to Pottstown Borough.

### **Increase access and safety by improving the design of intersections and prioritizing projects that increase connections in the borough.**

- Maximize the use of the regional highway network by improving access.
- Maximize the efficiency of existing streets by separating through traffic and local traffic routes, providing several access points to local and regional highways, and requiring adequate off-street parking in all new developments
- Work to improve traffic safety at several of the borough's intersections by improving street design, signalization, and directional signs.
- Develop a system for the control of traffic signals that allows synchronization between traffic signals and the variations in daily traffic flow. Consider a signal override system for emergency situations.
- Continue implementation of a closed loop system for traffic signals and LED traffic lights
- Cooperate with county and state agencies to improve inter-municipal streets, provide safer access to the high-

way network, and improve local circulation.

- Extend Keystone Boulevard to Old Reading Pike.
- Promote pedestrian-friendly design and amenities along High Street in downtown core. Encourage through traffic to use Industrial Highway or King Streets.
- Improve traffic flow on Mantawny Street from High to King Street by adding turning lanes (widening) and/or improving curve radii to accommodate truck traffic.
- Jog traffic from Adams Street on to Warren Street at Washington Hill then improve Warren Street.
- Complete the replacement of the Keim Street Bridge and align it with the existing Keim Street where it intersects Industrial Highway. Ensure that pedestrian and bicycle access is incorporated into the bridge.
- Pursue improvements to the High Street interchange of PA 100, including removing the northbound ramp from PA 100.
- Where practical, improve alleys and streets that parallel High Street in the downtown area to serve as commercial service streets to businesses.

**Ensure safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle access in the borough.**

Develop a system of pedestrian and bike trails (or visible striping) separate from motor vehicle routes to be used for safe, convenient travel and recreation.

Ensure that street crossings are well-located, safe and visible.

Continue to explore improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to North Coventry, specifically between High Street and Riverfront Park, as recommended in the Reconnections Plan.

Support the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail between Hanover Street and US Route 422.

**Improve access to and awareness of parking facilities**

Integrate the system of off-street parking facilities with the network of convenient access streets, and the network of pedestrian ways in the downtown area.



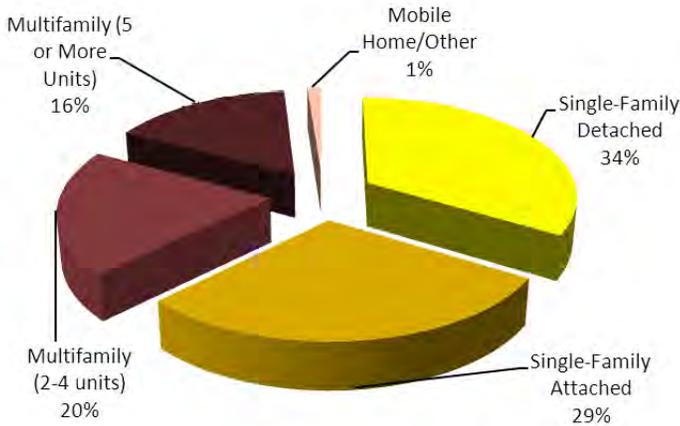


# CHAPTER 7

## housing

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**Figure 7-1: Housing Types in Pottstown Borough**

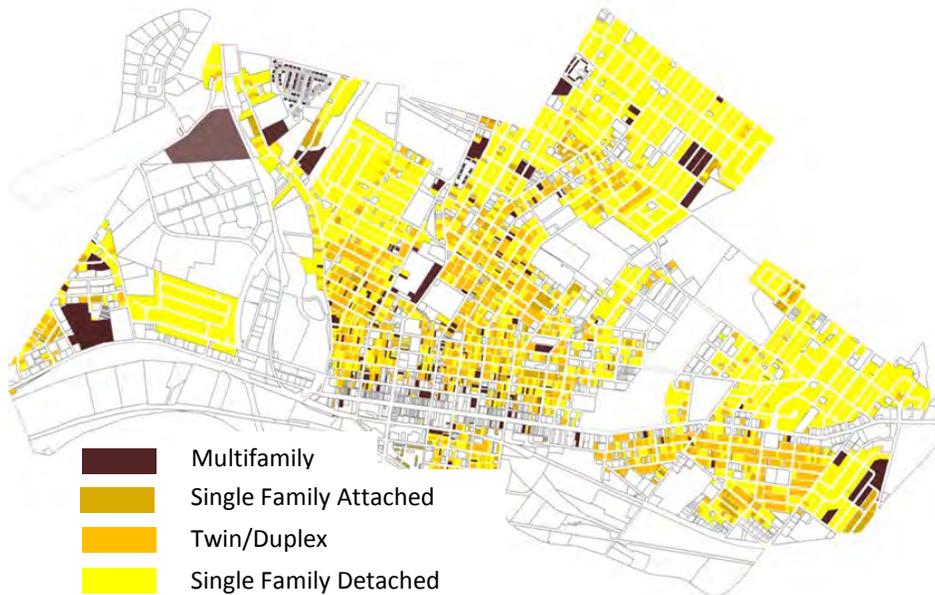


## HOUSING TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

Pottstown contains a large number of historic and architecturally-distinctive housing units. The borough offers an array of attractive features for its residents, including walkable neighborhoods, convenient access to downtown Pottstown, a growing number of cultural amenities, as well as proximity to Route 100 and US Route 422. Despite these features, the borough’s older housing stock and more limited housing choices have, as outlined in the 2008 Economic Development Strategic Plan, been an ongoing challenge to the redevelopment of Pottstown. A lack of upscale and more modern housing units has contributed to the decline of the borough’s residential communities, while the surrounding and historically rural municipalities have seen unprecedented growth. As summarized in *Chapter 2 – Demographics*, Pottstown Borough has experienced some of the following housing trends over the past several decades:

**Housing Inventory** - There were 10,579 housing units in Pottstown Borough in 2010, an increase of nearly 6% from 2000. However, this increase lagged significantly behind the County’s housing growth which increased more than 10% over the same time period. While the borough experienced higher growth among single-family attached and multi-family housing, there was a 7.5% decrease in the number of single-family detached homes.

**Figure 7-2: Location of Housing Types in Pottstown Borough**



**Housing Value** - While the value of Pottstown’s housing stock is reflective of its age and size, Pottstown’s median housing value was only \$117,000 in 2011, less than half the median value for the County as a whole. The median rents for the borough were also significantly lower than the County value.

**Age of Housing** - Nearly 60% of Pottstown’s housing was built prior to 1950. The borough’s housing stock, although attractive for many with its historic architecture and urban-style design, is comparatively much older than housing stock in surrounding communities.

## HOUSING TYPES

The Borough of Pottstown includes a true mix of housing types with single-family detached, single-family attached and multi-family housing units each comprising roughly equal proportions of the borough’s housing stock. Figure 7-1 shows the breakdown of the various housing types in the borough and Figure 7-2 shows the locations of residential land uses throughout Pottstown.

### **Single –Family Detached**

Single Family Detached (SFD) housing means a building designed for and occupied exclusively as a residence for one family only and not attached to any other building or dwelling units. In 2010, Pottstown had 3,554 single-family detached housing units, which comprised 33.6% of the total number of housing units in the borough. According to American Community Survey data from 2000 and 2010, this figure is actually a decrease of 7.2% from the year 2000 when there were more than 3,800 SFD units in the borough. As shown in Figure 7-2, single-family detached housing is the predominant type of residence throughout most of the borough’s neighborhoods, with the exception of the downtown area. The decline in the number of SFD units in the borough is likely due in part to conversions of existing single-family detached homes into multi-family housing units, a trend supported by the data showing that multi-family housing units containing 2-4 units increased 11.9% over the same time period.

### **Single-Family Attached and Townhomes**

A single-family attached (SFA) unit is defined as a dwelling unit with independent outside access that is attached to another SFA by a common party wall. Examples of SFA housing include twins, townhomes, row homes, triplexes and quadruplexes. American Community Survey data indicates that in 2010 there were 3,084 Single-Family Attached units in Pottstown, comprising 29% of total units. The number of single-family attached housing grew 13.5% between 2000 and 2010. Single-family attached housing units and twins/duplexes are concentrated in the borough’s downtown, East End South, Beech/Wilson neighborhood and southern portions of the Manatawny area.

### **Multi-Family**

Multi-family dwelling units are located in a detached residential building containing two or more dwelling units, typically referred to as apartments. They are usually multiple units in one building on one lot and the units are stacked on multiple floors having shared indoor or outdoor access and some common facilities. A multi-family development is often run under one owner or operating unit, as a rental or condominium property. Examples of multi-family include garden apartments, flats and multifamily conversions from single family homes. There were a total of 3,814 multi-family units in 2010, up more than 20% from 2000. Multi-family housing units in are located throughout the borough, with a greater number located in the downtown neighborhoods.

### **Mobile Homes**

Mobile Homes are located on a parcel of land that contains lots rented under one owner/operator, used for the placement of mobile homes. When mobile homes are placed on lots owned by the mobile home owners, they are considered single-family detached dwellings. While American Community Survey data estimates that there were roughly 61 mobile homes in



*Victorian Single-Family Detached House on High Street*



*Attached Housing along High Street*

the borough in 2010, these are likely located on privately owned lots and are categorized as single-family detached units by Montgomery County.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

### Housing Value

Compared to many of its surrounding communities and the County as a whole, Pottstown’s housing stock has significantly lower values. According to Montgomery County Board of Assessment data the median sales price for housing Pottstown was \$112,250 in 2012, less than half the median sale price for housing the County overall (\$255,000).

One likely factor contributing to the lower cost of housing is the age of the borough’s housing stock. The majority of Pottstown’s housing units, 58.9%, were built before 1950. Comparatively, just 26% of the County’s housing stock is the same age. Figure 7-3 compares the age of housing between the borough and the County. Montgomery County as a whole experienced significantly more housing growth in the most recent decade (2000-2010) than Pottstown Borough, as is evident by the 9% of housing that was built during this time period in the County, compared with only 3.5% (347 housing units) in the borough.

The type of housing stock located in the borough is another possible explanation for the lower cost of housing in Pottstown. Compared to the County as a whole, Pottstown Borough contains a higher proportion of single-family attached and multi-family dwellings. These types of residential units tend to have lower values than single-family detached units which dominate the housing supply in many of the county’s other municipalities.

Data from the 2007-2011 American Community Survey provides information on the monthly costs of housing for homeowners with a mortgage in both Pottstown Borough and Montgomery County as a whole. While 53% of County residents with a mortgage pay \$2,000 or more in monthly housing costs, only 11% of Pottstown residents do. The median monthly cost of housing for homeowners with a mortgage is more than \$600 less in Pottstown Borough than in the county as whole (\$2,074/month vs. \$1,410/month). Pottstown Borough provides a great opportunity for future homeowners seeking attractive housing options at more affordable prices.

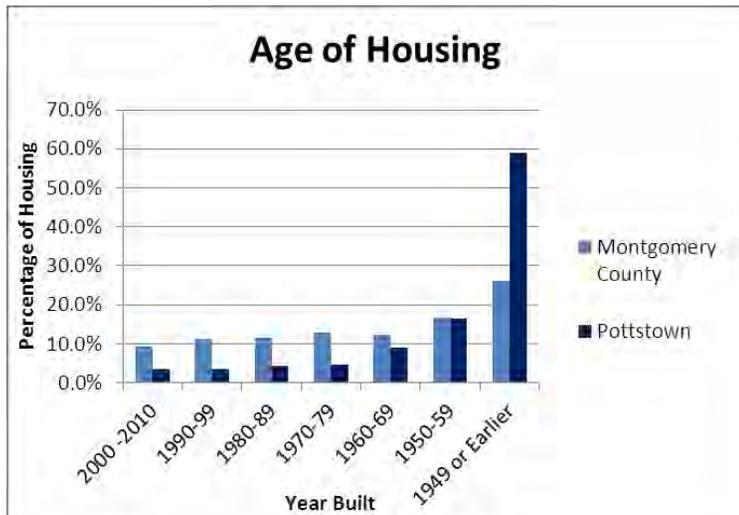
### Age –Restricted Housing

Shown in Figure 7-4, there are four age-restricted housing developments in Pottstown containing a total of 365 age-restricted housing units. Age restricted housing include units in developments where a legal restriction requires that either all residents are 62 years of age



*Apartments in former Roller Mill Building*

**Figure 7-3: Age of Housing in Pottstown**



or older or that at least one person (per household) age 55 or older lives in at least 80% of the development's occupied units.

Of the borough's four age-restricted developments, three also have income-restrictions in place. The Jefferson School Apartments are located in the 1920's era Jefferson School building, which was fully renovated into 46 affordable age-restricted units. The Robert P. Smith Towers is an age-restricted housing development owned and operated by the Montgomery County Housing Authority (MCHA), and is restricted for elderly and disabled residents. Located on East High Street, the 9 story high-rise includes 80 efficiency and 1-bedroom apartments. The Sidney Pollock House, a 9-story high-rise containing 100 efficiency and 1-bedroom apartments, is also restricted for elderly and disabled residents.

The Manatawny Village is the only age-restricted community in the borough that is not also income-restricted. The Village includes 138 single-family attached units for residents aged 55 and over. While age-restricted housing constituted 3.5% of Pottstown's total housing units in 2010, the population aged 55 and over made up nearly 25% of Pottstown's total population the same year. The senior population is expected to grow dramatically over the next 20 years as the baby boomer generation continues to age. As these demographics shift, it will be important for Pottstown to maintain a supply of housing that can meet the needs of an aging population.

### **Income-Restricted Housing**

Three organizations in particular aim to provide affordable housing opportunities in the borough, including the Montgomery County Housing Authority (MCHA), Genesis Housing Corporation, and Mosaic Community Land Trust. The MCHA and the Genesis Housing Corporation administer housing programs for the borough's low and moderate-income residents.

In addition to administering the federally-funded Housing Choice Voucher program, MCHA owns and manages affordable family communities for residents located throughout Montgomery County. One of these, the Bright Hope Community, is located on West King Street in Pottstown and includes affordable townhomes ranging from 1 to 4 bedrooms.

The Genesis Housing Corporation, a non-profit Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), serves the entire County through rehabilitation and new construction of affordable homes. The organization also provides housing counseling and money management services to low and moderate-income home buyers. In Pottstown Borough, the Genesis Housing Corporation has led the construction of several new housing developments including the Walnut Homes Development, the Warren Street Homes Development, and the May Street Crossing Development discussed below. Rehabilitation projects include the



*Jefferson School Apartments, age-restricted housing in Pottstown*



*Manatawny Village*

**Figure 7-4: Age-Restricted Housing Inventory**

Development	Location	Acres	# of Units	Unit Type	Year Built
Jefferson School Apartments	Beech St and Warren St	3	46	MF	2004
Manatawny Estates	Manatawny St, west of Upland St	33	139	SFA – 138; SFD – 1	2007
Robert P. Smith Towers	507 High Street	1	80	MF	1968
Sidney Pollack House	456 High Street	1	100	MF	1980
	<b>Total Age-Restricted Units</b>		<b>365</b>		
	<b>% of Housing Units</b>		<b>3.5%</b>		

Source: Age-Restricted Housing Inventory prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Commission, 2010.

Washington Street Neighborhood Project, which purchases, rehabilitates and resells homes at affordable prices, the Jefferson School Senior Apartment Project, and the Pottstown Homeowner Property Rehab Program, which provides grants and technical assistance to qualified homeowners to improve their homes and eliminate housing code violations.

Mosaic Community Land Trust, an organization relatively new to Pottstown, seeks to provide permanently affordable housing and healthy living choices to people through education and participation, create a vital community with a focus on arts and culture, and stabilize neighborhoods and improve the quality of life in Pottstown. In 2013, Mosaic Community Land Trust received awards from the Montgomery County Planning Commission and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for its development of a community garden at 423 Chestnut Street.

### RECENT HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

In addition to the Jefferson Apartments and Manatawny Village housing developments previously mentioned, there have been two additional large housing developments built in the borough since 2000.

Genesis Housing May Street Crossing – The May Street Crossing Development provided 28 new single-family units for sale to first-time home buyers. The development, located near Washington and May Streets, was completed in 2006.

Mrs. Smith’s Redevelopment — The site of the former Mrs. Smith’s pie manufacturing facility is now the location for a 118-unit proposed townhome community. Renamed Hanover Square, the development is located east of South Hanover Street between the Schuylkill River and South Street. After several delays the project was near completion by the end of 2013.

### THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN POTTSTOWN

While Pottstown’s neighborhoods have experienced disinvestment in the past, there are a growing number of reasons to be optimistic about their future. The urban-style type of housing found in Pottstown has shown increased popularity across the U.S. in recent years. Due to a number of factors, including smaller family sizes, an aging population, increasing costs of transportation, and shifting preferences among younger generations, the demand for housing in more walkable, urban-style communities is growing.

To further capitalize on these changing trends, the borough should prioritize new, market-rate residential construction that

fits the existing character of the borough. In an effort to breathe life back into its downtown and established neighborhoods, the borough should prioritize infill development on vacant and underutilized lots as well as the redevelopment of existing buildings. The borough should also encourage the creation of second and third story residential units above commercial uses in the downtown neighborhoods. The establishment of more upscale housing in the downtown could help to attract more young professionals, families, and empty nesters who are seeking a more urban and walkable community. Rehabilitation and restoration of the borough's older homes and reconversion of these buildings from multi-family back to single-family units will also be important for attracting new residents to the borough and ensuring the preservation of these historic buildings for future generations.

To support the revitalization of Pottstown's neighborhoods, the borough will need to prioritize the rehabilitation or creation of new market-rate housing opportunities to attract new residents to the community. Nevertheless, the borough must also ensure it is continuing to meet the housing needs of its existing population, including its older and lower-income residents. It will be important, therefore, for any future development of affordable housing to meet certain best-practices standards. The borough should ensure that any future affordable housing in the borough is attractive and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, mixed-income developments should be prioritized over developments that concentrate affordable units in one location or neighborhood.



*May Street Crossing development*



*Hanover Square Townhomes*

## **HOUSING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Expand market choice for new housing and revitalize existing housing.**

**Improve the quality of life in Pottstown and its neighborhoods.**

- Encourage the revitalization of neighborhoods.
- Provide a broad range of housing choices, including additional market-rate, owner-occupied housing, to help stabilize neighborhoods and meet the needs of current and future Pottstown residents.

**Encourage the development of properly located multifamily apartment complexes, attached townhouses, and the adaptive reuse of quality older structures for dwellings.**

**Promote the creation of new market-rate housing in neighborhoods which can support this type of construction and that is compatible with Pottstown's existing character.**

**Promote the transition of multi-family housing in single-family residences back to its intended use, where appropriate.**

**Support the transition of existing rental housing units into owner-occupied housing, where appropriate.**

**Provide incentives to encourage infill housing construction that is appropriate for Pottstown's existing character.**

**Look to promote downtown housing by encouraging the renovation of the second- and third-stories above downtown retail spaces.**





CHAPTER 8  
historic & cultural resources

## INTRODUCTION

Historic resources may consist of historic districts, buildings, sites, structures, or other physical evidence that may exemplify a period of history. Knowledge of these resources increases our understanding and appreciation of the local heritage. Preservation of such resources can strengthen local economies, stabilize property values, and foster civic beauty, community pride, and the appreciation of local and national history, resulting in an improved quality of life.

Cultural resources refer to events, places, buildings, institutions, neighborhoods, structures, infrastructure, natural features, and other objects having a special social, cultural, community, or aesthetic value. Pottstown benefits from having historic architecture, a walkable town, as well as a small town atmosphere. Such resources help shape the community as a whole and give Pottstown the character we see today.

A wealth of historic and cultural resources can be found in the Borough of Pottstown and local awareness of such resources has significantly increased over the past few years. This chapter will provide an inventory of the historic and cultural resources located within Pottstown and will give particular attention to local historic preservation efforts.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Borough of Pottstown is one of the earliest industrial centers on the Schuylkill River and is intertwined with America's iron and steel production industry. As the historic and geographic center of the greater Pottstown region, the borough has a unique concentration of historic districts and sites, which represent the area's diverse history. The borough is currently home to two historic districts listed on the national register, as well as several districts that are eligible for the National Register. It has been said that of the approximately 7,200 building sites in the borough, more than half would be eligible for inclusion in an historic district or would qualify as a landmark site on its own merits.



Significant historical resource surveys have been undertaken in Pottstown, but none recently. In 1984, with assistance from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Historic Preservation and the Old Pottstown Preservation Society, the borough received a modest grant to hire a consultant to examine the oldest portions of the borough. The Pottstown School District assisted by creating a computerized database for the survey. Out of this survey, the Old Pottstown National Historic District came to be.

As part of the previous 1985 Pottstown Comprehensive Plan process, a windshield survey of the rest of the borough was undertaken. This survey revealed significant landmarks and historical sites that lie outside of the Old Pottstown National Historic District and identified the potential for up to eight more historic districts in Pottstown. In 1986, Montgomery County hired a preservation consulting firm (the Clio Group) to conduct a survey of historic resources in the County, including the Borough of Pottstown. This survey, however, was not comprehensive. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission maintains an inventory of historic resources both listed on and eligible for the National Register.

## NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Being listed on the National Register is honorary. There are no restrictions on individual property owners for being listed on the National Register and demolitions and alterations are generally allowed. Greater consideration is given when planning projects of federal undertakings (that is federally-funded, federally-assisted, or federally-licensed projects) when National Register listings are involved. Sites within a National Register district are eligible to apply for federal tax incentives and can receive historic preservation grants. For historic districts listed on the National Register, 75 percent or more of the resources within that district must be “contributing.” The following two districts in Pottstown are listed on the National Register (Figure 8-1).

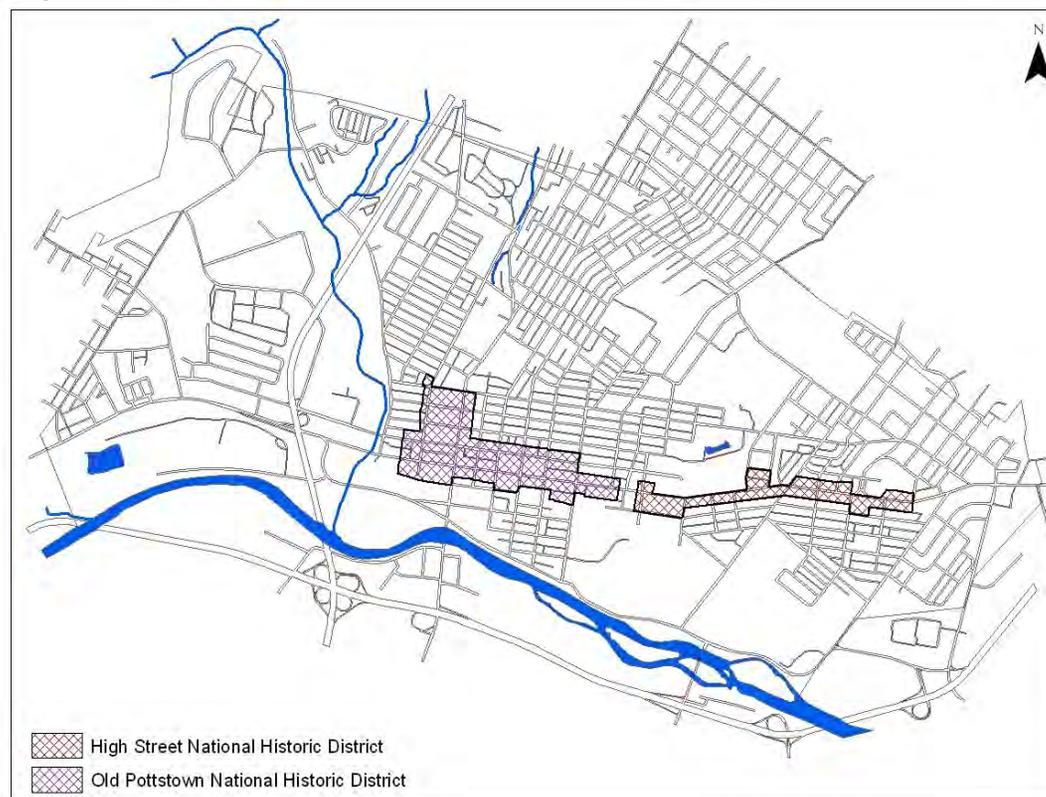
### Old Pottstown National Historic District

This National Historic District includes the borough’s downtown and contains small and large commercial buildings, the early churches of Pottstown, the buildings that housed the borough’s early wealthy residents and community leaders, buildings of fraternal organizations, some industrial and warehouse properties, as well as government buildings. This area is representative of the days of great growth and prosperity in both the borough and the western portion of Montgomery County. The district’s wide variety of architecture spans an era from 1850 to 1930, and includes late Federal, Victorian, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Richardsonian, and late Victorian. The geographic area extends from Beech Street to High Street, with portions extending to the Schuylkill River, and from Manatawny Street to about Adams Street. The District amended prior to the 2006 Pottstown Open Space Plan. The District was listed in the National Register in 1985.

### High Street National Historic District

This National Historic District runs along High Street and represents Pottstown’s first suburban neighborhood. The establishment of a trolley line eastward along High Street helped residential growth to spill beyond the borough’s original boundaries. The large homes of industrialists, business owners, and civic leaders can be found along the wide, tree-lined street. There are many 2 1/2-story single homes interspersed with large, semi-detached homes and a few smaller single homes. The landmark Grubb Mansion anchors the east end of the district. The architecture generally spans from 1875 to 1935 and includes Victorian, Late Victorian, Gothic Revival, Four-Square and Classic Revival styles. The District was listed in the National Register in 1992.

**Figure 8-1: Historic Districts**



## ELIGIBLE NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Certain other areas in Pottstown have historic qualities but are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places. If 50 percent or more of contributing property owners object to being listed in the National Register, the district cannot be listed but can be formally determined as “eligible” by the National Park Service. The following districts in Pottstown are eligible to be listed on the National Register, but they either failed to become listed or never applied.

### Glasgow Village

Glasgow Village is located on the edge of the borough near West Pottsgrove Township. The area is representative of a mid-19th century working community, centered on the former Glasgow Iron Works. Still standing are the homes of the ironmaster, workers, and managers. A stone water tower also remains. The architecture generally spans from 1830 to 1870 and includes Federal, Queen Anne, and Victorian Period styles.

### Fourth Street

This area represents one of the earliest expansions of the borough outside of its original urban core. This residential area features two-story, modest semi-detached brick homes. The grid street pattern reinforces the consistent quality of these homes. The architecture generally spans from 1865 to 1910 and includes Federal, Late Federal, Gothic Revival, and Four Square styles.

### Charlotte Street

The borough’s second suburban area remains primarily residential in nature. The establishment of a trolley line facilitated the development of several fine country homes, as well as Pottstown Hospital, then north of the borough. Development was in the form of 2-story and 2 1/2-story semi-detached and single homes. A few corner stores, as well as the Jefferson Hotel, were also established in this neighborhood. Several landmark-quality homes soon appeared on Charlotte Street, and the former 4-story factory of the Merkle Light Motorcycle Company located on Hanover Street. The architecture generally spans from 1865 to 1925, and includes Late Federal, Late Queen Anne, Mansard, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Four Square, Victorian Period, and Commercial styles.



*Upper School Dormitory, the Hill School*

### Lincoln Avenue

This district is a hillside community with a mix of 2-story and 2 1/2-story homes, nestled around the former Jefferson Elementary School (now home to the Jefferson Apartments) a National Register landmark since 1991, and several churches. Both frame and brick masonry is found here. The overall level of architectural integrity is good. The architecture generally spans from 1870 to 1910, and styles include Late Federal and Late Queen Anne.

## South Side

This residential neighborhood has an interesting mix of architecture. Early industries along the Schuylkill River (as well as later development along the railroad) provided the basis for these homes. The semi-detached and row homes housed mill and railroad workers. An early ethnic neighborhood of German craftsmen, this area later evolved into homes for Eastern Europeans. A variety of industrial buildings, churches, and modest homes provide much visual interest, and local landmarks include mill buildings. The architecture generally spans a period from 1870 to 1900, and styles include Late Federal, Victorian, and an Eastern European church.

## The Hill School Campus

The Hill School's campus is home to a number of outstanding edifices that represent the ongoing development of this private educational institution. Buildings range from 1-story cottages to 4-story dormitories. Buildings are typically constructed of brick, stone, and stucco. The majority of buildings are eligible for landmark status. The architecture generally ranges from 1850 to 1940, and styles include Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Collegiate Gothic, and Medieval Revival. There are also several modern-style structures of note.

## Iron Works

This neighborhood, primarily a residential area, contains a foundry and several small industries. The neighborhood developed along with the foundry and the nearby iron works. The semi-detached and row homes provided shelter for both the foundry's workers and workers at the nearby steel mill. The architecture generally spans from 1875 to 1920 and includes Victorian and Late Victorian styles.

## East End

This area of the borough is primarily residential and represents a 1920s suburb. Nearly all of the homes are semi-detached, uniform in style, size, and color, and laid out in a regular pattern. The regularity of the architecture is reinforced by the rhythmic spacing of the local streets and street trees. The architecture generally spans from 1910 to the late 1920s, and its styles include Bungalow and Four Square.

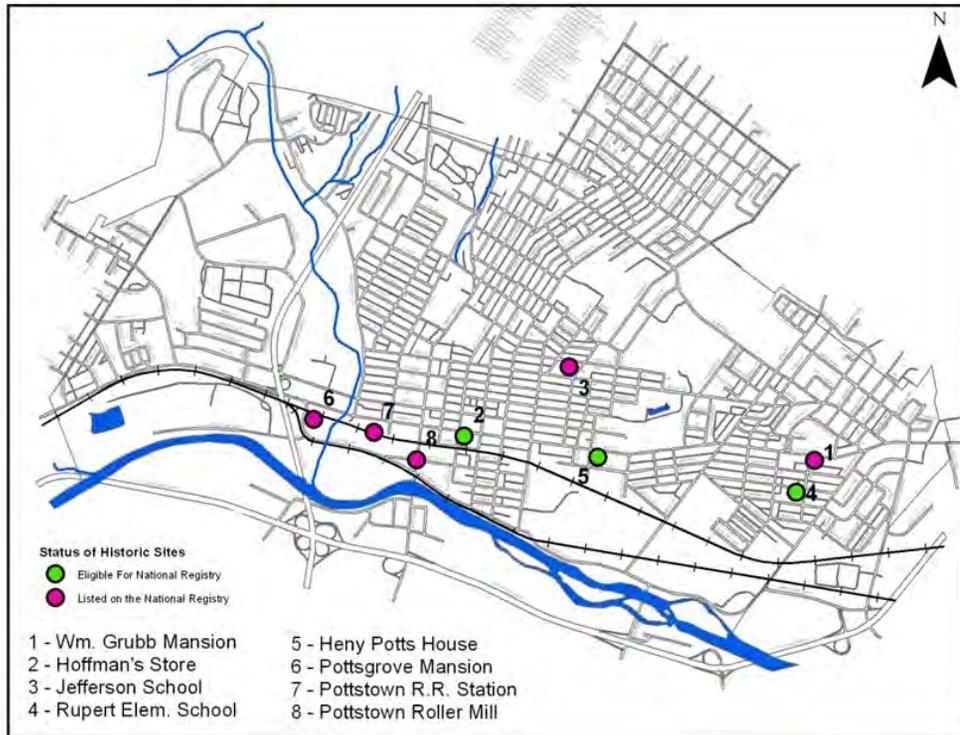
## HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Pottstown has a wealth of outstanding man-made landmarks, including many of the large and historic buildings in and around downtown; fine churches and spires, such as those along Hanover Street north of High Street; the campus and buildings of the Hill School; the Pottstown Middle School; the Pottsgrove Manor; firehouses; and the hospital. Man-made open space, such as Wilson Street at High Street, Park Road at High Street, and Memorial Park—an area which contained some of Pottstown's first mills—are also noteworthy community landmarks. There are also more recently erected landmarks, such as the Lenni-Lenape Native American Memorial located at Franklin Street and Industrial Highway. The memorial was dedicated



*Lenni-Lenape Native American Memorial  
Inscription reads: "In this vicinity in the year 1859,  
Borough workers unearthed a Native American burial ground.  
In their memory we dedicate this site. May 6, 2000."*

**Figure 8-2: Historic Resources Map**



in 2000 to commemorate the site where a Native American burial ground had been discovered in 1859. There are too many eligible historic landmarks to discuss in detail; some locations can be seen along with the listed historic resources in Figure 8-2. Five built resources have been listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks; they are discussed in greater detail below.

Some of the landmarks in Pottstown may not be typically perceived as attractive or noteworthy architecture, but they have helped shape Pottstown and remain an integral part of the community's history. Landmarks of this type include large industrial buildings, bridges, underpasses, large office buildings, the rail yards along High Street, and the water tower on Jackson Street.

### **Pottsgrove Manor**

Pottsgrove Manor is a lavish mid-eighteenth century Georgian resident located west of Pottstown's downtown. The 2 ½-story building was built in 1752 by John Potts, an ironmaster, merchant, judge, and member of the General Assembly, who laid out the town named after him. The house was by far the largest and most elaborate in the region when it was built, but the site is equally important for its historical significance in Pottstown's early history and in the American Revolution. In 1777, the house served as General George Washington's headquarters for several days during the battle of Brandywine. In the 1870's and 80's property operated as the Mill Park Hotel. Restored in the 1940's by G. Edwin Brumbaugh, the house is now a museum and architecturally and historically it is one of the most outstanding and important residences in Montgomery County and the most significant museum in the Pottstown Metropolitan Region. Pottsgrove Manor was listed on the National Register in 1974.

In the past, Pottsgrove Manor has physically and visually isolated from the downtown by the Colebrookdale railroad spur embankment and the major roads that surround it and has been difficult to access by walking or biking. With the repurposing of the Colebrookdale railroad spur into a tourist railroad connecting Pottstown and Boyertown in Berks County, the site will have improved access and visibility in the community.

### **Reading Railroad Pottstown Station**

The former train station building currently serves as a The Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) Transportation Center. Norfolk Southern is the current owner of the old Reading Line that started operation in the mid-1800s. At its peak, the station supported both passenger and freight rail. The train station was built in 1928 and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in January 1984.

## Roller Mill

Built in 1725, John Penn, Samuel McCall, and John Potts, the founder of Pottstown, were influential in getting the enterprise started. The building was sold in 1855 to Henry & Jacob H. Gabel, who rebuilt it and equipped it with state-of-the-art machinery. The Roller Mill was in continuous operation until 1972, when the 1972 flooding put an end to the milling. In danger of being torn down in the early 1980s, the mill became Pottstown's first restoration and was converted into offices and apartments. The building now enhances Pottstown's southern entryway. The Pottstown Roller Mill was listed on the National Register in 1974. In 1986 it was purchased by a group of local investors, and renovated into 12 loft apartments.

## Grubb Mansion

The Grubb Mansion, at 1304 High Street, was built in 1904 by William I. Grubb, a Pottstown businessman. Mr. Grubb manufactured bicycles, motorcycles and automobiles and was an acquaintance of Henry Ford, who reportedly stayed at the house at times. The building is representative of the larger Queen Anne style homes of the upper class residents in an otherwise working class area of the borough. The building was restored by George and Joan Wausnock in 1989 and is now home to a commercial office. Notable features include the broad wrap-around porch, stone façade and hipped and gabled form with porches, gables and bays. A large meeting hall was added to the rear in the 1960s. The Grubb Mansion was listed on the National Register in 1991.



*Grubb Mansion*

## Jefferson Elementary School

The borough's most recent addition to the National Register of Historic Places, the Jefferson Elementary School, was added in 2003. Built in 1923, the building was decommissioned as a school in 1980. Today, the building is an example of a successful historic adaptive reuse project as an apartment complex for low-income senior citizens.



*Pottsgrove Manor Historic Site*

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCES

### HARB District

Upon establishing the Old Pottstown Historic District in 1986, Pottstown appointed a Historical Architectural Review Board, also known as a HARB, under Act 167. An HARB consists of a registered architect, a licensed real estate broker, a building inspector, and two or more persons with interest and experience in historic preservation from the community.

Originally Pottstown's HARB was located primarily along High Street and was divided into two parts with the western section including High Street and King Street from approximately Manatawny Street to Washington Street, and extending to Beech Street between Hanover and Charlotte Streets, while the eastern portion of the HARB contained only High Street parcels from approximately Bailey/Adams Street to Rosedale Drive.

In 2011 the HARB District was amended by the Borough Council to eliminate certain portions of the Downtown Commercial District from its boundaries. The HARB District now contains the following areas:

<b>East to West</b>	642 - 1314 High Street (South Side)
	631 - 1239 High Street and 1319 - 1333 High Street (North Side)
	17– 455 King Street
	148– 307 Chestnut Street
	150– 312 Walnut Street
	216 – 272 Beech Street
<b>South to North</b>	15 – 63 N. York Street
	17 – 176 N. Hanover Street
	20 – 180 N. Charlotte Street
	16 N. Evans Street
	25 – 62 N. Franklin Street
	19 – 64 N. Washington Street
	15 -112 Penn Street
	524 Union Street

The HARB acts as an advisor to the Borough Council, recommending approval or disapproval of certificates of appropriateness for new construction, demolition, and work within the historic district which would alter the exterior appearance (visible from a public right of way). Final authority to approve or disapprove the issuance of permits rests with the Borough Council. A HARB requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to be issued by the governing body for the construction, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, or demolition of any building, old or new, in the historic district. Demolitions are rarely allowed.

### **Conservation District**

Pottstown also has a Conservation District, which contains land zoned as Neighborhood Residential, Traditional Town Neighborhood, and Downtown. This area encompasses most of the borough, excluding major industrial areas and commercial areas.

A Conservation District is used to retain the general character-defining features of an area as a whole, such as scale, setbacks, massing, and important architectural features. It can also be used to retain important area buildings such as religious, social, and public buildings, parks, or schools. Though a Conservation District does not emphasize historic preservation; often one is located in an area with historical structures and new construction is required to respect the existing buildings. A Conservation

District may add a neighborhood committee or municipal review for alterations to the exterior of existing buildings. This should be a separate municipal ordinance, not a zoning ordinance; however a zoning ordinance should refer to an existing Conservation District.

## HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism is a growing form of leisure travel that draws upon an area's historic and natural resources. According to Pennsylvania's 1997 Domestic Travel Report, 21.9 million travelers included some level of heritage tourism activity in Pennsylvania and 10.3 million travelers sole purpose of the trip in Pennsylvania was heritage tourism. In a 1999 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) study, historic towns and districts were identified third (behind Philadelphia and Gettysburg/battlefields) when asked "what comes to mind when you think of Heritage Tourism in Pennsylvania?"

Heritage Tourism can include walking tours of historic areas and heritage/community events. Tourists interested in heritage tourism like to spend time in an area and will also look for accommodations, restaurants, and shopping opportunities in the borough. Pottstown recently completed a Heritage Action Plan and the borough's valuable historic resources are part of this plan.

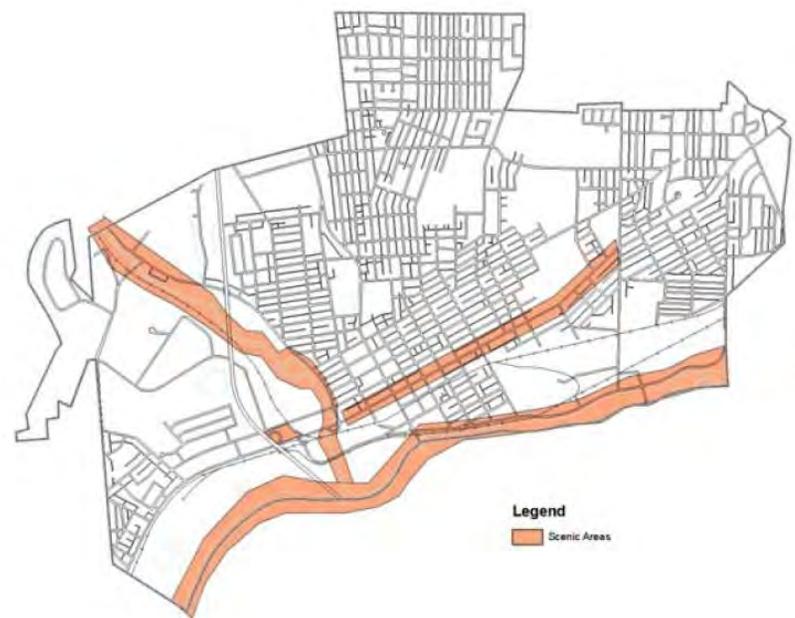
Heritage tourism allows a community to tell the story of its unique role in Pennsylvania's rich history and in the development of our nation, while in the process stimulating economic activity. The Borough is part of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area, a national and state heritage area that also has its headquarters in the Borough. The Borough of Pottstown has the opportunity to utilize its historic, cultural, and recreational assets to promote economic development and revitalization, as well as enhance the quality of life for residents and to improve the sense of place for residents and visitors alike.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

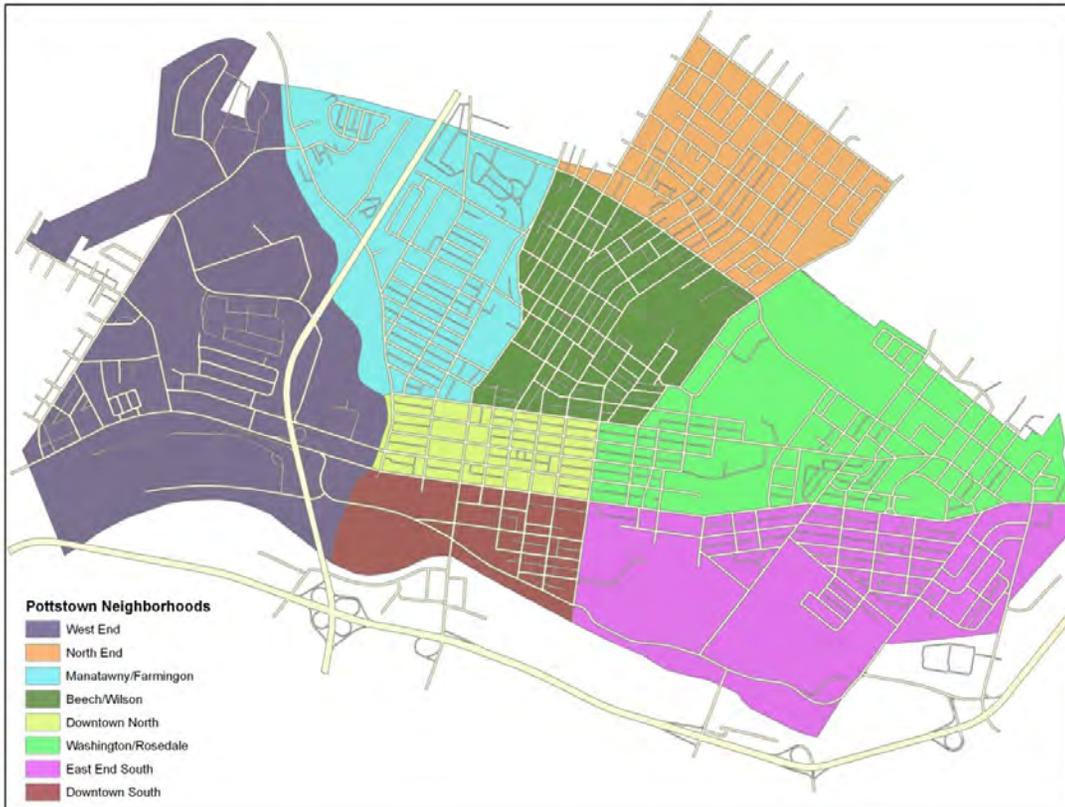
### Scenic Areas and Streetscapes

Scenic resources are elements of both natural and built environments that stand out among the attributes of a community. They tend to be the most pleasant and interesting places, such as historic sites, natural features, recreation areas, and town centers. Although the process of identifying a scenic resource is largely dependent on the observer's own opinions and preferences, information collected from the community provides a relatively broad inventory. Wherever possible, these areas should be preserved and linked to the community's open space and recreation system. Pottstown's scenic areas are displayed in Figure 8-3 and can be categorized in one of two ways: the architectural environment or the natural environment.

**Figure 8-3: Scenic Areas**



**Figure 8-4: Pottstown Neighborhoods**



## Neighborhoods

Pottstown is a community defined by its varied and historical neighborhoods (Figure 8-4). They are unique places whose architecture provides a point of interest surpassing the conventional suburban development that has appeared throughout the neighboring region in recent years. The borough itself has eight neighborhoods, which correspond with the borough's eight census tracts: the West End (census tract 2090), Downtown-South (tract 2088.01), Downtown-North, Manatawny / Farmington (tract 2089.01), Beech / Wilson (tract 2089.06), the North End (tract 2089.05), Washington / Rosedale (tract 2089.03), and finally East End-South (tract 2088.02). Each of these neighborhoods is unique in some manner and helps create the charm of Pottstown Borough.

### Main Street and Downtown

Pottstown's downtown is highlighted by its' main street, High Street, a street that epitomizes the classic American town. This recently renovated street offers residents and visitors a unique shopping and office district that gives the borough a sense of character that no large commercial shopping mall can. Along the length of the main street run small commercial establishments in conjunction with decorative streetlights and street trees. While walking along the street one gets the sense of a human scale that is often lost somewhere among highways and

shopping malls. The visual environment created by the variety of buildings and architectural styles helps to define the borough. There is a specific relationship between the buildings, sidewalks, and street network along High Street, which creates a rigid visual organization. If this part of Pottstown were changed or lost, the character of Pottstown as a whole would change significantly.

### **Natural Features and Parks**

The Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River may be the most predominant feature of the borough; however Pottstown has many other natural features not to be outdone by these two water ways. As depicted in Figure 8-5, residents and visitors alike can choose from 13 different parks to visit, with Riverfront and Pollock Park being the most popular.



*BMX Bike Race in Memorial Park*

## Annual Festivals/Regional Events in Pottstown

Pottstown Borough also holds many community events from May through January including the Polar Bear Plunge, a BMX national event, several classic car shows, the Schuylkill River Sojourn, a soap box derby; Volleyball Rumble, an extravagant July 4th celebration, the Carousel of Flavor celebration, the Schuylkill River Festival, a Halloween Parade, Shiver on the River, Candlelight House Tour, a Historic Homes Tour, and the Hometown Holiday Celebration. These events not only involve residents in a vibrant community atmosphere, but also draw in many visitors and spotlight Pottstown in positive manner.

## Institutionally-Owned Open Space

As mentioned in earlier chapters, many institutions that lie within Pottstown have historically contributed greatly to Pottstown residents' quality of life. The benefits of these institutions include open space, recreation space, and attractive architecture to local neighborhoods and the greater community. Spaces such as the Hill School and many of the borough's churches help give Pottstown the varied historical and architectural charm it has today.

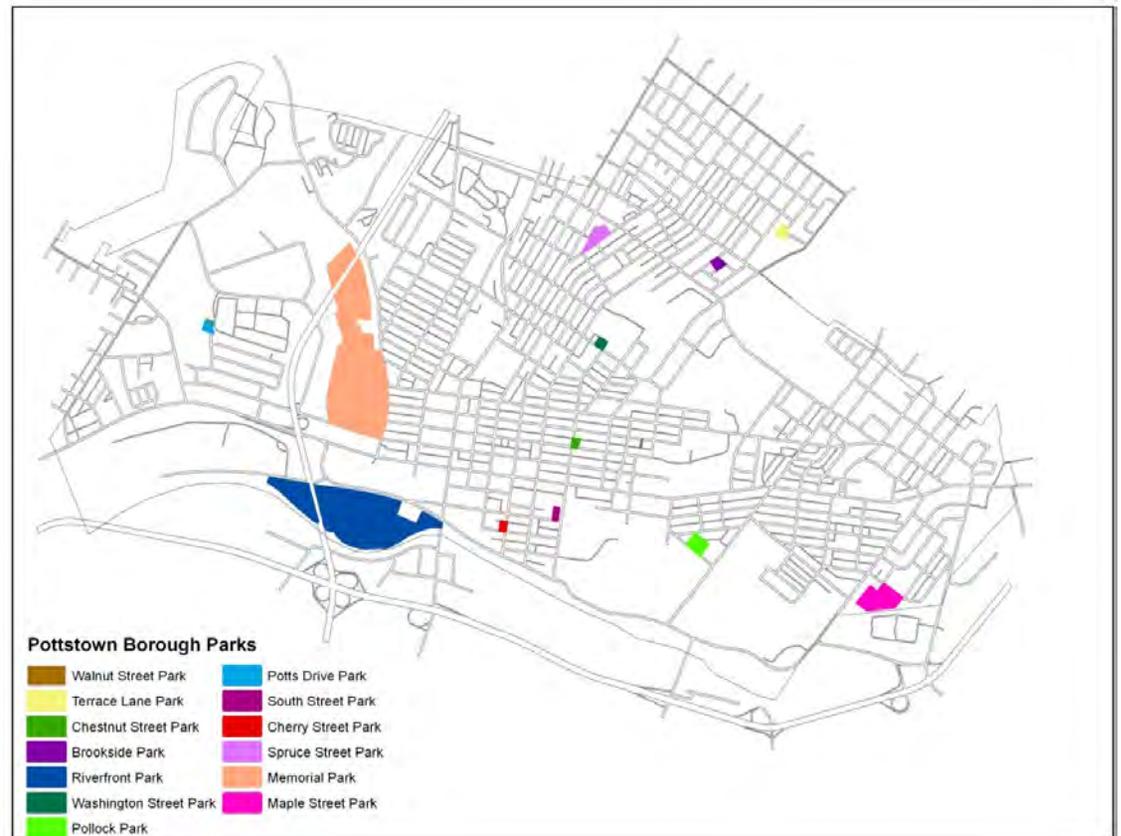
## Brownfields and Vacant Land

The shape of the current economy has left many useful lands within Pottstown Borough underutilized. However, due to recent public and private partnerships, as well as other factors, redevelopment is beginning to occur. Projects such as the former Mrs. Smith's site, Nittany Warehouse, and ongoing efforts along Keystone Boulevard are examples of a revitalization and redevelopment process. These and similar projects are a major factor in helping to transform Pottstown into a destination town.

## Arts and Entertainment

The community of Pottstown is highly involved in the arts. A few of the more prominent arts resources in Pottstown include ArtFusion 19464 which is located in a fully restored Victorian building in the center of Pottstown's historical district. The ArtFusion offers contrasting styles of media for the casual as well as the most discriminating collector. The gallery represents local and national artists with established reputations as well as new and upcoming artists. The Steel River Playhouse, a

Figure 8-5: Pottstown Borough Parks



MCCC North Building prior to renovations  
(Former Nittany Warehouse)



*Steel River Playhouse on High Street*

dynamic, performing arts organization founded in 2001 by a dedicated team of performing artists, arts educators, and area residents who dreamed of creating new and highly accessible performing arts opportunities for the community, is also located on High Street. Other resources include the Center for the Arts at Hill School, High Street Music, North Hall at MCCC, and the Boyer Gallery at Hill School.

## **Heritage Tourism Business and Amenities**

Located on the Schuylkill River Trail, Pottstown also has many tourism based amenities already in place, including coordinated programs and activities promoting physical activity and health, public restrooms, and for those who drive to Pottstown, plenty of parking. Once in Pottstown tourists will be able to enjoy a bite to eat at places such as Henry's Cafe, Very Best, Juan Carlos, or Brunish Grocery on Lincoln. Several outdoor-oriented shops are also located in the borough, including Tri-County Bicycles and Hidden River Outfitters. One may even care to partake in Pottstown's Bike Share program which allows participants to freely rent bikes for use throughout the borough. One of the latest additions to the borough, the Sly Fox Brewery and Tasting Room located on Circle of Progress Boulevard, has also proven to be an attraction for many living outside of Pottstown. The brewery not only draws visitors to its brewery tours and tastings, but its events such as the Annual Can Jam Festival help to attract even larger crowds to the borough.

## **Schuylkill River Trail**

The Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) is a multi-use trail under construction for expansion along the banks of the Schuylkill River in southeastern Pennsylvania which will eventually extend about 120 miles between Philadelphia and Pottsville. It is well-documented that trails of this length become travel destinations for bikers and hikers interested in multi-day trips. Pottstown must capitalize on this and let these tourists know how to get into the downtown through improved connections between the Schuylkill River Trail and downtown Pottstown and what resources and amenities are available to them. The marketing of Pottstown as a heritage destination is meant to reach a wider audience of visitors, not just Trail users. Through well placed and well-designed signs, kiosks and marketing brochures, anyone coming to the downtown should be able to easily locate and enjoy local history, architecture, parks, restaurants, shops and the arts.



*Schuylkill River Trail at Pottstown Riverfront Park*

## **CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS**

**Preserve the historical as well as architectural qualities of Pottstown's built environment through the creation of a comprehensive preservation program.**

**Maintain an inventory of potential site landmarks and districts for identification of additional desired sites for preservation.**

**Work with owners of historic properties to educate them as to the value of their properties. Ensure that private owners of historic properties receive appropriate technical assistance and financial incentive information from government sources.**

**Remain informed concerning current trends and best practices through associations at local, state, and national government and organization levels on an ongoing basis.**

**Provide incentives for private-sector reinvestment and restoration of historic properties.**

**Establish a management structure and oversight for Pottstown's Heritage Action Program.**

**Build effective partnerships for heritage initiatives in Pottstown to ensure long-term management and economic sustainability.**

**Develop marketing and outreach for coordinated promotion of Pottstown's heritage, arts and culture, and recreational resources and offerings.**

**Take advantage of local, regional, and national marketing organizations to promote Pottstown's heritage offerings. Remain informed concerning current trends and best practices through associations at local, state, and national government and organization levels on an ongoing basis.**

**Increase opportunities for Heritage Tourism in the borough by connecting the Schuylkill River Trail to High Street.**



CHAPTER 9  
parks, recreation,  
& open space



*Water Spray Park in Pottstown's Memorial Park*



*Pottstown Carousel at former metal welding property*

## **PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES**

Since the 1988 Comprehensive Plan was written, five plans in particular have taken a closer look at Pottstown's various park and recreation facilities. Additional information about the specific goals and objectives of these plans can be found in the Appendix chapter.

### **John Potts Park Plan (1998)**

The John Potts Park Plan was a community-led initiative to establish a county park in the greater Pottstown area, extending from the Berks County Line south through West Pottsgrove, Pottstown, and Lower Pottsgrove along the Schuylkill River. The County Park was conceived as a linear park, with major recreation and open space areas along the way. The Plan was centered on the borough's Memorial Park (77 acres), Riverfront Park (44 acres) and Pottstown Manor. Although never implemented in full, the plan is still very relevant to today's park and open space planning efforts. More information about the goals and objectives of this plan can be found in the appendix.

### **Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan (2003)**

The Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan, adopted in 2003, established a recreational vision for these two parks. The plan focused on both active and passive recreational opportunities, and establishes a clear set of steps for providing future activities, many of which have since been accomplished. More information on the goals and objectives of this plan can be found in the appendix.

### **Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan (2005)**

The Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted near the end of 2005, and identifies Pottstown as the region's commercial and recreational center. The borough's location along the Schuylkill River, as well as Memorial and Riverfront Parks, provide excellent opportunities for the region's population.

### **Pottstown Borough Open Space Plan (2006)**

The Pottstown Borough Open Space Plan was completed in 2006. To some extent, this is an update to the borough's 1996 Open Space and Environmental Resource Plan, as the borough's new goals and objectives build upon this previous work. It is a comprehensive look at Pottstown's existing open space as well as its future preservation priorities. The goals and objectives of this plan including implementing the borough's park and recreation master plan, enhancing the borough's existing recreational amenities and exploring new possibilities for the addition of recreation space, establishing a

green town image, providing open space in all districts, preserving valuable natural features, developing linkages within the open space network, and protecting Pottstown's historic and scenic resources.

## Transformation Strategies - ULI Report (2009)

This plan advocated completing the long-distance trail plan, allowing the borough to connect with other locations along the Schuylkill River and designating the borough as a stopping point, and participating in larger marketing efforts being considered for the trail system.

## **EXISTING PROTECTED LAND**

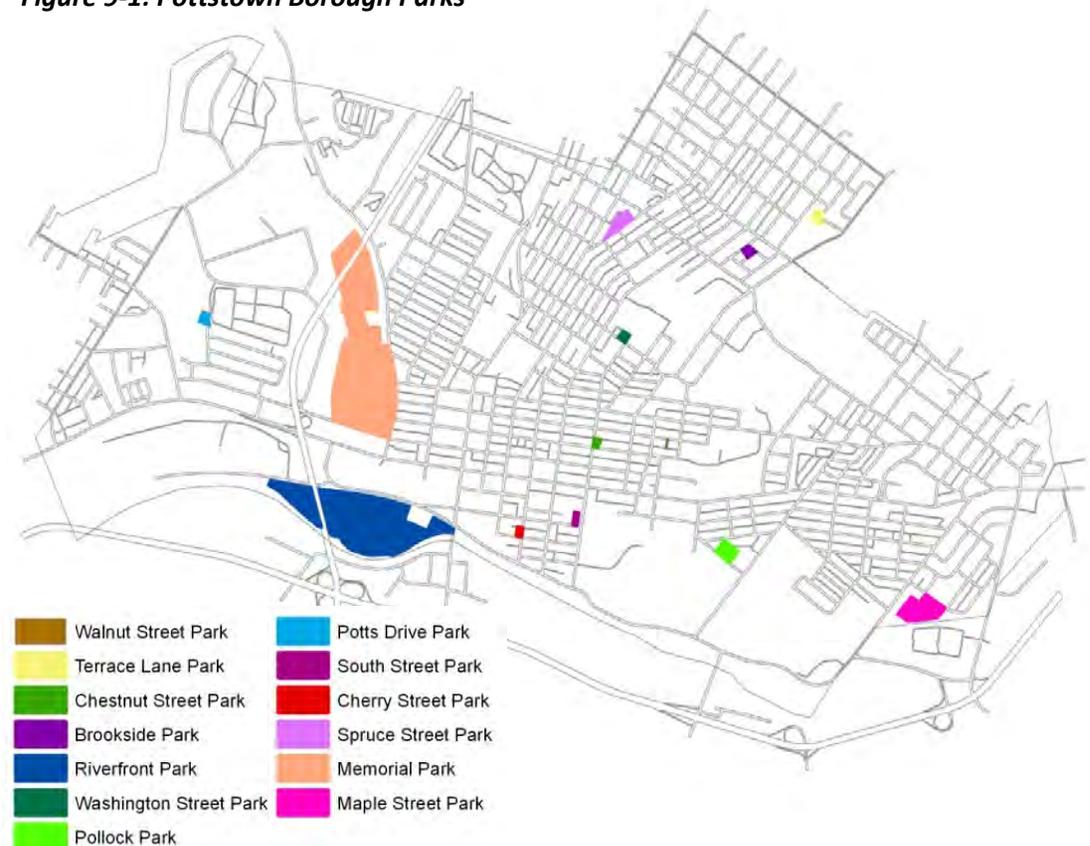
Despite Pottstown's urban environment, there is a great deal of protected land within the borough's boundaries. This section differentiates between permanently and temporarily protected land - since temporarily protected land like golf courses or swim clubs can easily be sold and redeveloped.

Pottstown's existing park and open space system is rather extensive (Figure 9-1). These borough-owned parks and open space areas comprise just over 140 acres of land, 90 of which are used for active recreation. The majority of the borough's open space is along either the Manatawny Creek or the Schuylkill River. These open space amenities include ball fields, tennis courts, hockey rinks, and playgrounds. Recent additions to Pottstown's recreational offerings include the community's carousel and a parks department office at the site of the former Pottstown Metal Welding Property, as well as the recently opened water spray park.

### Pottstown Parks

Temporarily protected land comprises several types of properties - ranging from private open space to institutional uses. Pottstown's temporarily protected land totals about 152 acres. Some of this is privately owned property, such as the lands which belong to the Brookside Country Club and the North End Swimming Club. Institutional properties, such as various school district-owned properties, offer much appreciated recreational areas. While they function much like borough-owned properties do, school district-owned properties may not stay open forever, as enrollment patterns shift and schools are closed and re-purposed as other land uses. This has proven to be the case for Edgewood Elementary School and its associated recreational facilities, which is expected to close at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

**Figure 9-1: Pottstown Borough Parks**



Park	Acres	Features	
<b>Memorial Park</b> (King and Manatawny St.)	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Baseball Field (illuminated)</li> <li>● Softball Field</li> <li>● Basketball Court</li> <li>● Walking Trail</li> <li>● Parking</li> <li>● Picnic Pavilion (electric available)</li> <li>● Restroom</li> <li>● Soccer Fields</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bandstand</li> <li>● Football Field</li> <li>● Playground</li> <li>● Open Space</li> <li>● Spray Park</li> <li>● Members-only dog park (Bark Park)</li> <li>● BMX Track (Trilogy BMX Park)</li> <li>● Skate Park (Trilogy Skate Park)</li> </ul>
<b>Riverfront Park</b> (College Dr.)	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Walking Trail</li> <li>● Parking</li> <li>● Picnic Pavilion (electric available)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Restroom</li> <li>● Amphitheater</li> <li>● Open Space</li> </ul>
<b>Brookside Park</b> (Brookside & Virginia St.)	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>	
<b>Cherry Street Park</b> (Cherry and Evans St)	.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>	
<b>Chestnut Street Park</b> (Chestnut & N. Washington St.)	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Amphitheater</li> <li>● Pavilion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> <li>● Restrooms</li> </ul>
<b>Maple Street Park</b> (Maple St. & Moser Rd)	6.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Baseball Field</li> <li>● Basketball Court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> <li>● Tennis Courts</li> </ul>
<b>Pollack Park</b> (South & Cross St.)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basketball Court</li> <li>● Tennis Court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>
<b>Potts Drive Park</b> (Potts Dr. & West Beech St.)	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basketball Court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>
<b>South Street Park</b> (South & S. Washington St.)	0.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basketball Court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>
<b>Spruce Street Park</b> (Spruce & Gay St.)	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basketball Court</li> <li>● Volleyball</li> <li>● Hockey Court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> <li>● Open Space</li> </ul>
<b>Terrace Lane Park</b> (Terrace Lane & Mineral St.)	0.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Basketball Court</li> <li>● Picnic Pavilion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>
<b>Walnut Street Park</b> (600 block of Walnut St)	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>	
<b>Washington Street Park</b> (West & Washington St.)	0.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Playground</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gazebo</li> </ul>

## RECENT AND PLANNED OPEN SPACE PROJECTS

Pottstown is in the process of completing several new open space projects that have been funded through the County's Open Space funding program, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation (PAHWF), and other sources.

- 2003: Built with funding from the National Bicycle League, the Trilogy BMX track in Memorial Park now sits at the site of the former Gruber Community Pool. For the past several years the Park has been the host for the Pottstown Classic, a national BMX tournament that brings 7,000 people to Pottstown from as far away as China, Australia, and Canada.
- 2008: Improvements to six borough parks, including Rickett's Community Center, Cherry Street Park, South Street Park, West Street Park, Terrace Lane Park, and Maple Street Park.
- 2008: Improvements to Memorial Park, to help mitigate flooding that occurs at the park and to re-orient the position of the existing ball fields.
- 2008: Improvements to Walnut Street Park, which replaced the playground equipment with new equipment that complies with national safety and accessibility standards.
- 2009: Creation of the Fountain of Youth Spray Park, within Memorial Park, which provides new summertime relief in place of the recently shuttered Gruber Community Pool.
- 2009: Manatawny Gateway Park - creation of community Carousel and Park's Department office at a former metal welding site.
- 2009: Bark Park, located in Memorial Park, provides a fenced in area for dogs to play leash free. The park is a members-only facility.
- 2012: Trilogy Skate Park – With a grant from DCNR and the PAHWF, Pottstown constructed a new Skate Park behind the existing Trilogy BMX track located in Memorial Park.

Using funds from the County's Open Space Program and from the PAHWF, the borough is also planning a miniature golf course and associated restrooms and concession stand to be located adjacent to the recently completed Carousel building. The facility is expected to be completed in late 2013.

The borough should also see the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail through its borders in the upcoming years. The trail is planned to be extended from its current terminus in Chester County to Pottstown and eventually all the way to Reading. Currently a 2.5 mile gap exists in the Pottstown section of the trail. While design work and funding for construction of a 1.2



*Chestnut Street Park at Chestnut and Washington Streets*



*Pottstown School District Athletic Fields and Facilities*



Bark Park Dog Park located in Pottstown's Memorial Park



2013 Pottstown Volleyball Rumble

mile section of this gap have been obtained, the borough should continue to work with Montgomery County to prioritize completion of the trail through Pottstown. Once the Pottstown portion of the trail is completed, 22.5 miles of the trail will pass through Montgomery County. Completion of the trail in Pottstown Borough will help to further develop tourism and recreation opportunities in the borough, promote the health and wellness of community members, as well as create a new connection between Pottstown and surrounding communities.

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the borough's open space land and park infrastructure and amenities, the Borough of Pottstown's Parks and Recreation Department also organizes numerous recreational events and activities throughout the year. One of its largest events, the Pottstown Volleyball Rumble, is a four-day volleyball tournament that attracted more than 2,000 athletes and countless spectators to the borough in 2013. In addition to the Volleyball Rumble, the following recreational events are held throughout the year.

- Carousel of Flavor – Festival featuring food from local restaurants and caterers, live bands, crafters, and other entertainment.
- PPOA Fishing Derby—Event for kids 12 and under.
- Nostalgia Nights—Held the first Saturday of the month, May through September, this event showcases vintage and classic cars along High Street
- Summer in the Park—This event provides free concerts and family entertainment at the Bandstand in Memorial Park.
- Annual Pottstown Pet Fair—An opportunity for residents to showcase their pets. Located in Memorial Park.

Additionally, events such as the Schuylkill River Festival, Airport Day, Schuylkill River Sojourn, Polar Bear Plunge, and the Pottstown Community Garden all provide a variety of recreational opportunities to Borough residents and surrounding communities. These events, which help to attract visitors from the entire Region, increase tourism and provide economic benefits for the borough.

Pottstown should continue to prioritize expansion of both its park facilities and recreational events as a means of improving the health of its residents, increasing its sense of community, and growing the borough's role as a destination in the region.

## VULNERABLE RESOURCES

Pottstown's Open Space Plan outlines the vulnerable resources that are important to current and future planning efforts. These resources - including natural, historic, and cultural features - are what make Pottstown a unique and distinct place in Montgomery County.

Since Pottstown is a developed community, there are few remaining natural resources that remain for protection or preservation. Similarly, cultural and scenic resources may become more vulnerable as redevelopment occurs within the borough. That doesn't mean that there aren't things the borough can do to increase open spaces and preserve its existing resources. New development, both within the downtown core and throughout the borough, should emphasize the existing character and architectural heritage of the community. Continued community greening efforts and tree plantings should also be encouraged. And the borough should continue its work to preserve both the historic structures along the High and Hanover Street corridors as well as the quality of the watersheds, streams, and wooded areas within the borough.

The Open Space Plan lists the highest priority resources as follows:

- Large Open Space Areas - A few large open space areas do remain in the borough. Areas that should be targeted include lands that would extend an existing park or open space area, lands that create linkages between open space areas, and riparian corridors.
- Stream Corridors - Pottstown's stream corridors, so dominant throughout the borough, are its highest priority for natural resource protection. The Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River provide peaceful scenery in what is otherwise an urbanized borough, and are assets that must be protected. Following the completion of the 2003 Master Plan, the borough began to manage Riverfront Park as a riparian buffer, despite the challenges of removing invasive and exotic plant species and the implementation of best management practices. Additionally, after the removal of the Manatawny Creek Dam in 2000, low water levels have exposed large areas of creek bed. A riparian buffer would help protect these areas.
- Historic Resources - In addition to the structures that are protected within the borough's two historic districts, many historic buildings are outside of these districts and are not afforded any extra protection. Future priorities of the borough may include a detailed inventory of the borough's historic structures, as well as implementing a program to preserve the facades of historically significant buildings.
- Urban Woodlands - There are stands and groupings of trees along the banks of the Schuylkill and Manatawny that have been maintained over the years. Implementing tougher regulations to prevent the removal of mature trees would help preserve these areas.



*2011 Polar Bear Plunge*



*Schuylkill River Festival in Pottstown*

An additional area of vulnerability for the borough is the future of many of its recreational programs. While many of Pottstown's recreational events and activities have continued to grow in recent years, others, such as the annual Fourth of July celebration, have struggled due to limited funding. Given the economic turndown of the past several years, it will be important in the future for the borough to partner with other organizations and surrounding municipalities in order to continue to grow its recreational programs. Coordination and cooperation with the other communities in the greater Pottstown Region may help reduce the financial burden of organizing and hosting regional events.

## **PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE GOALS**

The following goals have been established in order to further improve parks, recreation, and open space amenities in the borough:

**Support regional park coordination and cooperation**

**Open up the Riverfront**

**Continue to develop recreational facilities and programs that benefit borough residents and attract people regionally.**

- **Explore opportunities to develop a community pool in the Borough.**

**Promote the borough's parks and recreation facilities and events and to residents and the surrounding communities.**

**Implement the goals and recommendations of the borough's Open Space Plan.**

**Encourage the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail through the borough.**





CHAPTER 10  
community facilities  
& services

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are numerous public services and facilities which must be provided by local government to meet the health and safety needs of the community. Community facilities are those public, quasi-public, and private services and structures which are provided on a neighborhood, municipal, or regional basis. Such facilities include emergency services, schools, solid waste disposal, sewer and water services, government offices, and libraries. Publicly chartered services such as electric, gas, and telephone/internet are also considered community facilities. The responsibility for the provision of community facilities rests largely on local government, supplemented by federal, state, and county government, other public and quasi-public agencies (such as SEPTA) and private institutions.

The quality of community facilities and services can have a significant impact on the perception of the quality and overall health of a community. For example, the perception of the schools and their facilities often play a large role in attracting—or discouraging—new families to locate in a community just as taxes and eldercare opportunities can influence the location choices of older constituents. Adequate and reliable utilities, emergency protection, and other basic services, and the perception of fair processes at Borough Hall will be attractive to business and industry.

The Comprehensive Plan Update is focused primarily on those community facilities and services provided by Pottstown Borough. Physical facilities, rather than services, will receive more attention in this chapter because those are the aspects on which local planning can have a greater impact and which have the greatest impact on local land use and long-range development. Although parks and recreation are facilities supported by the borough, for the purpose of this plan they are discussed in the Open Space chapter.

## **EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

Educational facilities are an important part of everyone's life and draw the most attention and controversy of all community facilities and services. Schools are the largest community investment in terms of both capital outlay and yearly operating expenditures. Schools function not only as educational centers, but as recreation and community gathering places as well. But this is not limited to primary and secondary education. Educational facilities in Pottstown include the public school district, several private schools, and the west campus of the Montgomery County Community College (MCCC). Post-secondary or "adult" education facilities are also an important community resource.

### **Enrollment Trends**

To plan for schools requires periodically updated forecasts of enrollment, as the kind and extent of educational facilities and programs depends upon the number of children in different age brackets. According to the 2010 US Census, there are approximately 4,500 school age children in the borough. An analysis of family structure indicates that 50% of children are from married couple households and 49% of children are from single parent households.<sup>8</sup> Many of these families are headed by working parents.

<sup>8</sup> *Includes all children, not just school-age children; from 2010 US Census. Own children under 18 years by family type and age.*

Although enrollment numbers in Pottstown’s public schools have seen a slight downward trend over the last 10 years, enrollment numbers have not seen many changes since the last comprehensive plan was authored, which reported an enrollment of 3,050 in the 1984-85 school year. However, enrollment numbers remain significantly lower than benchmark used prior to the 1988 Plan, when enrollment was at 4,345 students in the 1974-1975 school year.

**Figure 10-1: Pottstown School District - Enrollment Trends by Grade (Regular Education)**

Grade	'01-'02	'02-'03	'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08	'08-'09	'09-'10	'10-'11	'11-'12
Pre-K	152	126	139	130	137	145	124	100	120	98	94
Kindergarten	250	232	234	261	274	260	236	225	286	274	270
1st	296	262	252	250	253	253	230	243	235	269	251
2nd	258	275	258	223	221	219	200	224	247	219	242
3rd	242	265	249	232	207	210	183	211	212	232	208
4th	226	247	247	222	207	193	170	173	202	208	225
5th	238	190	226	216	207	207	180	163	169	194	191
6th	237	226	205	224	204	199	175	177	161	164	188
7th	191	199	222	213	205	203	189	171	168	149	166
8th	196	180	172	185	202	202	180	184	158	162	142
9th	221	237	241	242	230	230	244	216	231	181	169
10th	163	164	175	175	203	184	163	199	166	191	158
11th	156	137	127	131	141	161	140	133	141	140	166
12th	140	157	157	147	111	136	151	129	131	144	131
<b>Total Special Ed.</b>	404	415	413	132	394	415	576	572	457	472	461
<b>Total Elementary</b>	1,777	1,688	1,710	1,640	1,626	1,617	1,596	1,616	1,657	1,668	1,629
<b>Total Secondary</b>	1,593	1,624	1,607	1,585	1,570	1,600	1,545	1,504	1,427	1,429	1,433
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,370</b>	<b>3,312</b>	<b>3,317</b>	<b>3,225</b>	<b>3,196</b>	<b>3,217</b>	<b>3,141</b>	<b>3,120</b>	<b>3,084</b>	<b>3,097</b>	<b>3,062</b>

Sources: Pottstown School District School Report, from [www.pottstownschoools.org](http://www.pottstownschoools.org) last accessed on August 5, 2013 and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Data Services.



*Pottstown Middle School*

Most notable over the last 10 years of school enrollment data is the increasing number of special education students, despite the decrease in overall enrollment. While this could likely be due to an increased sophistication in diagnosing and treating various disabilities, this places an additional burden on both the school district’s existing facilities as well as its budget.

Pottstown’s residents attend a variety of schools, including many outside of the Pottstown school district as shown in Figure 10-2. However, more than 91 percent of Pottstown’s residents enrolled in school attend the Pottstown public schools (2011-2012 school year). St. Aloysius School, West-Mont Christian Academy, and the Wyndcroft School have the highest numbers of non-public school enrollment. The Hill School, a boarding and day school, is one of the most prestigious private schools in the nation. Pottstown Senior High School provides the vocational technical programs for the Pottstown Metropolitan Region.

More than 150 Pottstown children attend Charter Schools in the region or through the internet; the most popular are the Renaissance Academy and the Agora Cyber Charter School. An additional 34 students were home-schooled during the 2011-2012 school year (Figure 10-3).

### **Quality of Education**

In the 2011-12 school year, 83% of Pottstown’s graduating seniors (private and public schools) pursued additional education. This includes 36% attending a 4-year college, 31% attending a 2-year college, and 15% pursuing another type of postsecondary education. Four percent of Pottstown’s graduates entered the military and 1% entered the work force in the service industry. The high school drop-out rate is 2.8%.

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, also known as PSSA, measures how well students have achieved in reading, mathematics, science and writing. According to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, students must be 100% proficient in reading and math by 2014. The NCLB Act requires states to determine annually whether schools and districts in Pennsylvania make Adequate Yearly Progress, also known as AYP. Student performance has gradually improved in the Pottstown School District as measured by PSSA and NCLB Act. In the 2003-04 school year, the School District was under a Warning. Since the 2010-2011 school year, the School District has met AYP.

### **Facilities**

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan reported a 30% decrease in student enrollment which allowed for smaller classroom sizes and the conversion of the Jefferson Elementary School into a pre-school and special education facility. In 1980, the Jefferson School was closed; it is now a senior housing facility. The moderate increase in enrollment since the late 1980s has eliminated any un-



*Montgomery County Community College – West Campus*

der-capacity of the school facilities and space is again at a premium. Capacity limits from the 1988 Plan show that Barth and Edgewood enrollments exceed the building capacity, Lincoln and Rupert are close to capacity, and the other buildings remain under capacity. Note that the capacity of these facilities may have changed since 1988 due to new technology, facility upgrades, the provision of temporary space solutions, or other reasons (Figure 10-4).

In 2013, due to increasing costs and decreasing available school funding, the Pottstown School District School Board voted to close Edgewood Elementary School. As part of the closure the attendance areas will be re-districted, the four remaining elementary schools will undergo renovations, and all of the District’s fifth graders will be moved into to the middle school. While Edgewood Elementary is the Borough’s newest school building, other factors, such as location and walkability for students were considered in determining which elementary school would be closed.

### Higher Education

Montgomery County Community College’s (MCCC) West Campus opened its location in Pottstown in 1996 and is an important regional resource. The West Campus is a valuable addition to Pottstown’s downtown landscape, with two campus buildings that are connected by a pedestrian underpass. According to the Regional Plan, MCCC has committed to shaping its curriculum at the West Campus to match the job training needs of the Region’s employers, thus facilitating economic development.

### WATER SUPPLY FACILITIES

Public water facilities are an important part of the borough’s local infrastructure system. The Schuylkill River is a reliable source of water, although there is a moderate risk of water contamination due to stormwater runoff, road deicing chemicals, and leaks from underground storage tanks.

Owned and operated by the Pottstown Borough Water Authority, Pottstown's water treatment plant is located in West Pottsgrove Township and serves 11,500 customers throughout the borough as well as West Pottsgrove, Lower Pottsgrove, and Upper Pottsgrove Townships. Between 1990 and 2000, the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan reports that the Pottstown area’s water service connections grew by 14 percent, with the vast majority of connections are to residential users.

The borough’s water supply system consists of a supply source, treatment facilities, storage, and a distribution network of trunk lines, pumping stations, feeder lines, and laterals. The system supplies water to residences, commercial establishments and industries and is also used for fire fighting as needed. The Pottstown Borough Water Au-

**Figure 10-2: Pottstown - Resident School Enrollment Numbers**

School	Pottstown Resident Enrollment for K-12 (2011-2012)
Berks Christian School of Exeter Bible Church	1
Coventry Christian School	27
Highpoint Baptist Academy	1
The Hill School	12
Kimberton Waldorf School	3
Perkiomen Valley Academy Day Treatment Program	5
St. Aloysius School (K-8 <sup>th</sup> Grades)	68
St. Peter’s School (now known as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta School)	16
Pope John Paul II High School	28
West-Mont Christian Academy	35
Wyndcroft School	33
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>229</i>
Pottstown School District	
<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>3,062</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,291</b>

Source: Pottstown School District School Report, from [www.pottstownschoools.org](http://www.pottstownschoools.org) last accessed on August 5, 2013

**Figure 10-3: Pottstown Charter School Enrollment**

School	Pottstown Resident Enrollment for K-12 (2011-2012)
Achievement House Charter School	6
Agora Cyber Charter School	33
Collegium Charter School	2
Commonwealth Connections Academy	28
PA Distance/Electronic Learning Center	1
PA Cyber Charter School	16
PA Virtual Charter School	14
PA Leadership Charter School	14
Renaissance Academy	37
Dr. Robert Ketterer Charter School	1
SusQ-Cyber Charter School	1
21 <sup>st</sup> Century Cyber Charter School	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>
Source: Pottstown School District School Report, from <a href="http://www.pottstownschoools.org">www.pottstownschoools.org</a> last accessed on August 5, 2013	

thority withdraws all of its water from the Schuylkill River, and treats an average of 4.5 million gallons of water per day.

The permitted capacity of the system is 8 million gallons of water, but it is designed for approximately 12 million gallons of water. Therefore, the Authority has sufficient supply to meet its future daily water needs. In fact, the Authority and the borough are interested in bringing new users, specifically large-scale users, into the system to help offset operational, maintenance, and upgrading costs.

In recent years, the Authority built a new water tower in Lower Pottsgrove to solve water system issues in that area. In 2011 the plant became fully computerized and a new generator ensures that the system continues to operate in the event of a power failure. An outstanding concern is that the lagoons are located in the floodplain; the Authority is looking for funding for the approximately \$5-\$7 million project to remedy this issue.

**SEWAGE FACILITIES**

Sewage facilities are one of the most important and most expensive public services that a community can provide for the health of its residents as well as the safety of the local environment. These facilities ensure that all waste is properly collected, treated and disposed. However, if not operated and maintained properly, negative health and water quality impacts can result.

The borough owns and operates the sewage treatment plant which discharges to the Schuylkill River. The treatment plant treats sewage from Pottstown as well as West Pottsgrove, Upper Pottsgrove, and Lower Pottsgrove Townships. The treatment plant was upgraded in 1992 to a capacity of 15.6 million gallons per day and treats waste from 15,000 area homes, businesses, and industrial sites. Typical daily treatment levels average about 6-7 million gallons per day. There is sufficient capacity in the sewer system; the borough owns this capacity and could either sell it to another municipality or use for the borough as the need arises. Another contributing factor to the treatment plant excess is abandonment or underutilization of major industrial sites in Pottstown.

The Authority upgraded the utility pumping station in the fall of 2010. Concurrent with this project, Lower Pottsgrove will be running a new force main to address pumping issues within the Township.

**STORM SEWER SYSTEM**

The storm sewer system (storm water) is an entirely separate collection system and does not connect to the sanitary sewer system (waste water). A network of gutters, catch basins, drainage channels, and pipes, including 1,300 storm inlets and 60 miles of pipes, collect the vast majority of runoff during and after local storms. The Public Works Department maintains the

storm water collection system through regular inspection and street sweeping to keep the lines clear of unwanted debris. Storm water discharge eventually flows to the Manatawny Creek and the Schuylkill River.

Pottstown participates in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program administered by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The borough is a member of the Pennsylvania Storm Water Coalition, a group of municipalities organized to question proposed new PA DEP storm water regulations. The borough has used their newsletter to educate the public about storm water issues, including the proposed PA DEP regulations.

### SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING

Solid waste is an increasingly important issue to this region as space for new landfills (as well as space within existing landfills) is at a premium and products that were once durable are increasingly disposable and cheaply replaced.

Although the borough once provided its own trash collection services, collecting trash twice a week, it now contracts with an outside vendor to provide once a week pick-up for trash, bulk items, and recycling. The borough’s recent conversion to single stream recycling has helped to create a dramatic decrease in trash disposal, influencing the decision to move from a bi-weekly to once a week trash collection. Under the new schedule is aimed to reduce collection costs for residents as well as further encourage recycling among resident.

The Pottstown Landfill was closed in October of 2005, after operating for more than 70 years. The landfill was located on approximately 520 acres of land in West Pottsgrove Township, though additional land owned in Upper Pottsgrove Township did not receive any landfill activity. It is unclear what the future holds for this property. A modified closure plan for the site was approved in September 2009 by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, which allows for more frequent testing of methane gas stacks, periodic review of leachate flow from the landfill, and enhanced security of the site.

### EMERGENCY SERVICES & FIRE PROTECTION

Pottstown has four volunteer fire companies: Goodwill Fire and Rescue Company #1; Philadelphia Steam Fire Company (known as the Phillies); Empire Hook and Ladder Company; and, North End Fire Company. Each station is responsible for its

**Figure 10-4: Pottstown School District - Enrollment Trends by Building**

Building	Maximum Capacity†	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Pre-K	-	106	120	145	94	94
Barth	331	314	376	381	405	403
Edgewood	257	262	272	260	273	279
Franklin	324	290	270	279	277	273
Lincoln	358	327	343	349	327	340
Rupert	280	271	249	268	262	240
Middle School	725	679	665	618	603	641
High School	1,324	865	839	809	826	779
District	4,028	3,140	3,120	3,084	3,097	3,061
† As reported in the 1988 Comprehensive Plan.						
Sources: Pottstown School District Demographics 2012, from <a href="http://www.pottstownschoools.org">www.pottstownschoools.org</a> last accessed on August 5, 2013 and 1988 Pottstown Comprehensive Plan.						

own operation and maintenance. The Borough gives each station a yearly contribution for operational expenses. The four companies are under the operational command of a full-time Fire Chief/Fire Marshall employed by the borough. The Fire Marshall also performs inspections for certain work or the use of fuels.

Each fire company has three full-time paid career personnel (for a total of 12); having career firefighters provides faster response to emergencies. There are approximately 40 volunteer firefighters overall. Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development has urged consolidation of fire companies throughout the state. While no decisions have yet been reached, the four companies have begun discussions regarding possibilities for a merger.

The recommendation in Pottstown's 1988 Comprehensive Plan that the borough's firefighting facilities need to be modernized to keep up with changes in firefighting technology still holds true. As much as these buildings may be historically significant to the borough, a centrally-organized department will better serve the borough's emergency services needs.

The borough's fire services were evaluated in a Fire Services Assessment prepared by Emergency Services Education and Consulting Group (ESECG) dated August 2009. As the borough's fire companies look toward the future, this report will be useful to organizing the fire companies' needs in one place. The Pottstown Borough Fire Department's 5-Year Strategic Plan was incorporated into the Assessment. Many of the Borough's recommendations are expanded upon by ESECG's Assessment.

Most recently, Empire Hook and Ladder Company moved into space at the Goodwill Fire Company on High Street and put the Empire firehouse it has occupied for 92 years up for sale. The move reduces costs for Empire whose building was in need of repairs. Despite the ongoing discussions on consolidation of the four fire companies, Empire pays to rent the space it occupies and for now its two trucks and full-time drivers will remain separate from Goodwill Company.

In addition to the four volunteer companies, Pottstown has an active Fire Police unit to assist on the scene of fires, accidents, and other incidents. This is a specialized unit, unique to a few states including Pennsylvania.

Pottstown participates in the region's Ches-Mont Emergency Response Team (CMERT). This team specializes in special weapons and tactics, and was developed to handle high-risk situations that normal patrol officers may not be equipped to handle. The team also includes civilian tactical medical personnel.

## **POLICE & PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Police Chief supports the Community Oriented Policing style of providing police services. Community Oriented Policing combines both the traditional Response to Incidents policing strategy and the Problem Oriented Policing (crime prevention through problem solving) strategy. While other communities may choose one or the other method, the Department's stance is that in order to provide for a safe and peaceful community, the policing strategy must be both proactive (problem-solving) and reactive (swift responding).

The Police Department has many divisions. The Patrol Division has 21 uniformed officers, four corporals and four sergeants,

divided into four squads that work in twelve hours shifts. Patrol services are provided 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Detective Division is responsible for handling the follow up investigation of the majority of crimes reported and major crime scene processing. Within the Detective Division there are investigator's additionally assigned to specialized investigations such as Arson, Major Crimes, and Juvenile. A Juvenile Investigator is assigned to work in the Pottstown High School as a School Resource Officer (SRO). The SRO handles incidents which may occur there, as well as the Peer Mediation Program, which allows specially trained students to resolve conflicts with other students.

A Community Response Unit (CRU) has been introduced to address quality of life issues. Staffed with plain clothed and uniformed officers and supervisors, the CRU handles problems as they arise, problem solving (identifying and dealing with the underlying causes of the problems), and narcotics related issues. The CRU also handles issues such as abandoned vehicles, problem dwelling units, and locations having multiple calls for service. Unit members work closely with the District Attorney's Quality of Life Initiative personnel, Codes Enforcement personnel, and social service agencies. Additionally, CRU members conduct community relations activities such as; facilities tours, participation in community wide events (Kid Fest, Family Fest, Community Days, etc.), public speaking engagements, etc.



*Pottstown Borough Public Library*

## LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Pottstown Public Library was founded in 1921 by the Century Club of Pottstown. It moved to its current location, originally built as a post office at the southeast corner of High and Washington Streets, in 1961. The Library serves the Pottstown Metropolitan Region, including Pottstown Borough, residents of Chester County with a Pottstown mailing address, and the Pottsgroves. It is a private, non-profit institution which receives part of its support from state, county, and municipal governments.

The library is a member of the Montgomery County Library Information Network (MCLINC). This consortium allows users to easily search the holdings of participating libraries in Montgomery County via the internet. Books can be borrowed from these participating libraries via inter-library loan, and library members can also arrange to borrow books or other resources from libraries across the country. The Pottstown Public Library offers internet access to the public at several computers.

Although the current location is a good one—it has adequate park-

**Figure 10-5: Pottstown Library Statistics (2011)**

	Pottstown	All Montgomery County Libraries	All Pennsylvania Libraries
<b>Population Served</b>	43,625	802,088	12,411,468
<b>Collection (No. of Cataloged Items)</b>	81,744	2,471,148	32,643,712
<b>Items per Capita</b>	1.87	3.08	2.63
<b>Circulation</b>	130,642	5,597,428	68,674,018
<b>Circulation per Capita</b>	2.99	6.98	5.53
<b>Turnover Rate</b>	1.60	2.27	2.10
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>	\$599,833	24,529,316	\$313,752,490
<b>Expenditures per Capita</b>	\$13.750	\$30.583	25.279

Source: 2011 Pennsylvania Public Library Statistics  
[http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/Library\\_Statistics/8696/](http://www.education.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/Library_Statistics/8696/)

ing, is served by public transit, and is easily reached by pedestrians—the library is housed in an aging building that could likely use renovations. The second floor, which would expand the library’s usable space, is not accessible.

## COMMUNITY CENTERS

The Pottstown Area Seniors’ Center (PASC) was founded in 1976, incorporated in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The mission of the Pottstown Area Seniors' Center is to enhance the well-being of its members by providing services and activities that promote an independent and healthy life style. PASC has more than 3,400 members residing in the Tri-County Area. Members must be 55+ years of age or 50+ years of age if they are a member of AARP. Membership is \$10 per year.

With growing needs for more space, the PASC purchased the site for its new home at the former Pottstown Health Club on Moser Road. The new space offers several advantages, including a larger space than YMCA offered and ample parking. Since the purchase of the building in 2012 the PASC has been engaged in a capital campaign to help raise the funds necessary for renovating the new space. Once completed that 18,000 square foot center will include an exercise room with a walking track, a dining room with a full kitchen and seating for 150 people, a Fine Arts room, two card and game rooms, a café, a TV room, and several meeting rooms.

A Strategic Plan for PASC was prepared in April 2010. The Plan identified the PASC’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and created a set of goals and strategies. Strengths include the staff, programs, community image, and Board of Directors. Weaknesses include the inadequate physical space, shortage of volunteers, reliance on county funding, and depth of key staff members. Opportunities include a surging senior population. Threats include competition for limited funds in the non-profit sector.

PASC identified three overall corporate goals to be achieved throughout the term of the Strategic Plan. There are also other “program related” goals. The first two corporate goals, to meet the need for additional space to accommodate future services and growth and to negotiate an extension of current lease to accommodate immediate requirements have been met through the purchase of its new building. The third goal, to increase membership and volunteer base by enhancing the PASC brand, remains ongoing.

## GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

Pottstown Borough Hall is located at 100 E. High Street in front of the old train station. Constructed in 2000, this new building replaced the earlier Borough Hall at King and Penn Streets. The construction of a new Borough Hall was driven by the 1989 Urban



*Borough Hall*

Land Institute (ULI) study. The 1989 study recommended the construction of a Town Center under the premise that Pottstown needed an urban focal point both to serve the borough and to fill its role as the urban center of the region. The Smith Family Plaza, a new town square, opened in 2002 adjacent to Borough Hall; in 2006 both were named a Bronze Award Winner by the 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania. Together, these two facilities serve as the governmental and social center of Pottstown. Numerous public events occur at the Smith Family Plaza, including First Saturdays, parades, festivals and passive recreation.

Borough Hall is a 28,000 square foot structure in three stories. It houses most local government offices, Council chambers and other meeting rooms, and the Police Department (via a separate entrance). Construction of the Borough Hall on a long-vacant site is credited with sparking the renovation of the Security Trust Building—vacant for 20 years—at the corner of High and Hanover Streets into an office building (home of the Tri-County Chamber of Commerce) and restaurant.

The borough owns and operates nine municipal parking lots as well as a municipal garage located at Beech and Grant Street, home to the borough's Public Works division. In 2011, a 30 foot section of the municipal garage wall collapsed on the Beech Street side of the building, prompting the Borough to consider relocating to another building. As of 2013, the borough had acquired the property at 10 Rice Street for the new garage and was beginning the design phase of the project.

## **LOCAL MEDIA**

Pottstown Borough is home to both Pottstown Mercury Newspaper and the PCTV Network, consisting of three cable channels featured on the Comcast network. The Pottstown Mercury is a daily newspaper with its headquarters located on Hanover Street in downtown Pottstown. In addition to Pottstown Borough, the newspaper serves other nearby communities in the counties of Berks, Chester and Montgomery including the municipalities of Amity, Birdsboro, Boyertown, Colebrookdale, Collegeville, Douglass, Douglassville, Limerick, New Hanover, North Coventry, Phoenixville, Pottstown, Royersford, South Coventry, Spring City, Trappe, Union, and others. The Pottstown Mercury has had two staff members win a Pulitzer Prize.

The PCTV network has provided Pottstown residents with local access and high school sports programming for more than 32 years. The network aims to provide affordable, accessible, and quality programming to the Borough of Pottstown as well as the entire region.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES GOALS**

### **Education**

Continue to meet or exceed adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Continue to maintain all active public schools and administrative office facilities to meet enrollment needs.

Enhance and improve school facility sites with landscaping and redesigned play areas.

Where practical, provide additional land for passive recreation at elementary school sites.

Improve the visual appearance and safety of parking areas by providing visual separation from other functions and public sidewalks, and by providing well-designed, easy-to-maintain landscaping.

Reorient some facilities and programs to better serve the adult population.

Support the MCCC and specifically the College's efforts to provide a curriculum that suits the job training needs of the Region.

### **Water and Sewer**

Continue good maintenance of all systems, especially catch basins, storm water lines and the sanitary sewer system.

Participate in inter-municipal planning efforts to control surface water runoff and to protect natural and man-made water channels.

With Upper Pottsgrove and regional agencies, examine and analyze the potential water run-off and the storm sewer capacity of the drainage way that parallels Farmington Avenue.

Continue to educate residents regarding storm water.

Repair and improve the Borough's underground arch system

### **Solid Waste**

Participate in inter-municipal and regional efforts to provide safe and acceptable means to dispose of solid waste.

### **Emergency Services**

Consider consolidation and/or merger of some or all of the fire stations if significant public cost increases arise for capital improvements or operations.

Modernize the borough's firefighting facilities to keep up with technological improvements.

### **Library**

Expand and upgrade existing library facilities as well as current library services – consider relocation to a site nearer to the center of Downtown.

The library should make an effort to meet the needs of an aging and changing population.

Work with the Montgomery County District Library Center to determine the extent of responsibilities and financial support for providing library services to the Tri-County area.

### **Governmental Facilities**

Landscape and screen any garage or parking area and provide well-defined, controlled access.

### **Senior Center**

Implement the goals of the 2010-2012 Strategic Plan, which includes increasing its membership and volunteer base.



APPENDIX  
previous plans & studies

In the years since the last borough-wide comprehensive plan was authored, much of the borough has been studied for various other planning purposes—be it for the borough’s revitalization, economic development, open space preservation initiatives, or assessment of the health and wellness of the borough’s residents.

Summaries of these previous plans, ordered chronologically, are provided in this Appendix. While some of the goals and objectives contained in these documents are still relevant for Pottstown today, many others have already been achieved or have changed in the years since these plans were created.

### **POTTSTOWN PENNSYLVANIA: AN EVALUATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIALS OF THE POTTSTOWN AREA (1976)**

This 1976 report is the first of three reports that the Urban Land Institute completed for Pottstown. Spurred by the closing of the Bethlehem Steel plant, the report contained the following recommendations for the borough:

- Bethlehem Steel should consider subdividing its Pottstown facility to seek multiple tenants. Spatial and functional requirements of individual tenants should indicate the manner in which space should be divided.
- The reopening of Keim Street through the Pottstown Works would provide additional access to the area and facilitate subdividing the property.
- Locate and develop industrial sites properly serviced with water, sewerage, highway and rail facilities outside the floodplain.
- Improve the labor force by establishing vocational training programs in order to meet the changing needs of present and future employers.
- Complete the Schuylkill Expressway, which will improve access to Philadelphia and other major metropolitan areas.
- Wilson Street should be extended from Hanover Street to meet Route 100, thus providing a third access point onto Route 100.
- Provide an extension of the industrial highway which would bypass the CBD, assist industrial traffic in the area, and relieve congestion on High Street, the present route for industrial as well as retail traffic.
- The old Penn Central tracks should probably be removed and the Reading tracks retained.
- Pottstown Municipal Airport is a potential commuter stop for commercial feeder lines. In addition, the airport could be used by corporate personnel. The approach to the airport through the Airport Industrial Park improves desirability of industrial sites to consumer-oriented industries. Consideration must be given to lengthening the runway in order to implement airport transportation improvements.
- Municipal services, i.e., water, sewer, and power, are adequate to support new and expanded development within the Pottstown area.
- Flood protection measures should be adopted, and coordination with the Corps of Engineers’ flood control projects is necessary.

- Develop recreational areas along the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek. Hiker/biker trails, picnic grounds, boating facilities, etc.
- Parcels of land should be secured for high density, multi-family housing, particularly for the elderly. These parcels should be acquired in close proximity to shopping and service centers.
- The CBD could maintain and improve its retail market potential by procuring additional parking and improving store facades. In addition, the entire CBD should be revitalized by completion of the renewal project.
- The railroad station should be retained as a transportation center.
- Historic buildings should be restored and preserved. This could stimulate the tourist industry.
- The PAID (Pottstown Area Industrial Development Corporation) should be strengthened in order to implement recommendations suggested by the Panel.

## **POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA: AN EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR POTTSTOWN AREA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCORPORATED (1989)**

The Urban Land Institute returned in 1989 to complete this report, noting in the foreword that Pottstown's "economy is in the midst of a dramatic recovery." The report noted that despite the loss of manufacturing jobs from the borough, many employers had filled the places of Bethlehem Steel and Firestone Tire and Rubber Company. The report also noted that residential development in the surrounding area was flourishing and that the downtown was showing signs of recovery. This report proposed a number of primary and secondary recommendations, listed below:

### **Primary Recommendations**

- Create a new town center on the vacant land parcels in front of the old Reading Railroad terminal on High Street.
- Develop a riverfront open space and pedestrian system linking the downtown with the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek.
- Revitalize the central business district by restoring the facades of historic buildings and extending the downtown improvements along High Street to York and Evans Streets.
- Phase out the Pottstown Municipal Airport and use the land to expand the airport business campus and provide larger sites for development. Relocate air services to the Pottstown-Limerick Airport.
- Encourage the establishment of a satellite campus for the Montgomery County Community College in a central location in Pottstown.

### **Secondary Recommendations (*for the Borough of Pottstown*)**

- Design uniform and attractive entryways to the borough.
- Develop a marketing plan to promote Pottstown.
- Develop a formal program to welcome new businesses to the borough and to retain those that are already present.
- Promote and market special events downtown.
- Continue to enhance the vocational/technical intern programs.

- Support economic development groups like PAID, emphasizing downtown and riverfront development.
- Preserve the existing housing stock.
- Promote historic preservation.
- Maintain a database of information often requested by businesses.
- Conduct a study of alternate forms of local government that may allow the borough to remove the millage levy cap.
- Develop an inter-agency task force to take the lead in planning, designing, and marketing economic development activities in Pottstown.
- Encourage the county to bring property assessments up to date.
- Determine whether sufficient demand exists to support commuter rail service from Pottstown to the Philadelphia metropolitan area.
- Work with other cities to encourage the state legislature to enact legislation to make tax increment financing legal in Pennsylvania.
- Investigate state and federal economic development funding sources.

### **Secondary Recommendations *(for the PAID)***

- Continue to market the Pottstown Airport Business Campus and other industrial parks in the greater Pottstown area.
- Use the proceeds from the Pottstown Airport Business Campus to stimulate economic development in Pottstown, for example by providing seed money for the town center or subsidizing interest on business loans.
- Continue to maintain a computer inventory of available and industrial sites.
- Continue industrial diversification by attracting “clean” industries.
- Focus more on the economic development of Pottstown.
- Encourage other industrial park owners to adopt covenants and restrictions similar to those used by the airport business campus.
- Give organized labor an active role in PAID.
- Hire a full-time staff person to manage the day-to-day affairs of PAID.
- Work with the borough to improve the image of Pottstown.

### **DOWNTOWN POTTSTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (1994)**

The Downtown Pottstown Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the Urban Partners in 1994, and was collaborated on by various organizations such as the Pottstown Downtown Improvement Authority, the Tri-County Area Chamber of Commerce, Pottstown Area Industrial Development Inc., the Old Pottstown Preservation Society and Progress Pottstown. The plan addresses land use issues such as retail, office, residential, cultural space and infrastructural investments.

The Downtown Pottstown Comprehensive Plan has five primary goals that were addressed in the Development Strategy portion of the document followed by descriptive Implementations Section. The plan’s goals are to:

- Establish Downtown Pottstown as the premier office location in the Greater Pottstown Area for all but medical-related

users,

- Strengthen Downtown Pottstown as a specialty district,
- Enhance Downtown Pottstown's image to businesses, consumers, and investors,
- Establish Downtown Pottstown as the cultural center of the Tri-County Area, and
- Encouraging residential development in the Downtown Area.

## **JOHN POTTS PARK PLAN (1998)**

The John Potts Park Plan was a community-led initiative to establish a county park in the greater Pottstown area, extending from the Berks County Line south through West Pottsgrove, Pottstown, and Lower Pottsgrove along the Schuylkill River. The County Park was conceived as a linear park, with major park and open space areas along the way. The Plan was centered on the borough's Memorial Park (77 acres), Riverfront Park (44 acres) and Pottstown Manor. Although never implemented in full, the plan is still very relevant to today's park and open space planning efforts.

Specific recommendations in this plan included:

- Memorial Park
  - Renovation of the swimming pool
  - A new entry and parking area opposite the College Drive extension
  - Re-establish the creek's riparian buffers
  - Playground improvements
  - Planting improvements
- Riverfront Park
  - Improve vehicular access
  - Improve trail access
  - Develop a boat ramp, fishing access
  - Introduce restrooms
  - Acquire 7 acres of land between High and King Streets for use by Pottstgrove Manor to expand its interpretation of the area and create new greenspace at this gateway
- Complete the Schuylkill River Trail through the borough to connect with Chester and Berks Counties.
- Develop the Colebrookdale Railroad Spur Trail
- Build the York Street pedestrian and vehicle underpass to help connect the borough to the Schuylkill River and Trail
- College Drive extension and a link between High and King Streets
- Linkage across the railroad between the community college and the Nittany Warehouse/High Street site
- Acquisition and adaptive reuse of lands between High and King Streets and Manatawny
- Expansion of the Pottsgrove Manor historic site and its surrounding property
- Re-establish the Manatawny Creek riparian buffers
- Improve access to Riverfront Park; and

- Build Keystone Boulevard to access the Keystone Opportunity Zone and link to West Pottsgrove. The Schuylkill River Trail will be built adjacent to the roadway.

### **COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (2000)**

The Community and Economic Development Action and Implementation Strategy was prepared by the Urban Partners in 2000. The strategy's objectives are:

- Preserving and increasing Pottstown's employment base and tax base;
- Upgrading visibly-deteriorated industrial, commercial, and residential areas of Pottstown; and
- Preserving and increasing the environmental, cultural, and educational resources that establish a quality of life in Pottstown attractive to businesses and to residents of all income levels.

The strategy lists the top eleven priorities for the borough to address to effectively market the borough's strengths. These priority initiatives include:

- Market the borough
- Support the Schuylkill Valley Metro
- Revitalize High Street
- Improve borough-business sector communication
- Implement the Washington Street Action Plan
- Upgrade/market the Keystone Opportunity Zone
- Reuse Mrs. Smith's complex
- Initiate an area commission on government functions
- Reduce rental unit density and stabilize neighborhoods
- Improve Pottstown schools' image
- Implement John Potts Park Plan

### **WASHINGTON STREET ACTION PLAN (2000)**

The Genesis Housing Corporation published the Washington Street Action Plan in 2000 to provide a vision for the overall improvement of the Washington Street corridor. The plan notes that some of the qualities that make this neighborhood distinctive, such as its older housing stock, also make it difficult to promote redevelopment. The plan made specific recommendations for five initiatives along this corridor:

- Public improvements to upgrade the physical appearance and functionality of the sidewalks, signage, lighting and paved areas;
- Site landscaping of private properties to demonstrate that Washington Street is a place where people care about their environment;

- Exterior upgrades of existing buildings to improve the appearance of the street;
- Extensive interior and exterior renovations of buildings, to improve living conditions and external appearances, to reduce the housing density of certain properties, or to provide renovated commercial space for new institutions or businesses on the street; and
- Construction of new housing on underutilized blocks.

### **WESTERN RIVERFRONT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (2002)**

The Western Riverfront District Redevelopment Plan was written in 2002. The redevelopment plan is to analyze the existing determined blight certified properties and area's economic, physical and institutional conditions. The plan also proposes changes to vehicular and pedestrian movement and overall land uses.

The plan addresses five goals or objectives:

- Expand the employment and tax base of Pottstown by making more effective use of economically underutilized properties,
- Strengthen Downtown Pottstown physically and economically and improve gateways to the Downtown,
- Create more effective circulation patterns for vehicles, mass transportation, and pedestrians,
- Upgrade properties with unsafe physical conditions and ones that are regarded as public nuisances, and
- Enhance Pottstown's distinctive character by preserving and strengthening the community's recreation and riverfront amenities.

The plan summarizes the zoning changes needed and proposes redistricting of the waterfront. The proposed districts are Downtown Gateway, Flex-Office Industrial and Riverfront Recreational. Finally, the plan outlines the properties in need of being acquisitioned.

### **POTTSTOWN AREA HEALTH & WELLNESS FOUNDATION HEALTH STATUS ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNITY PLAN (2003)**

In 2003, the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation conducted its first needs assessment of the greater Pottstown community. Although this study is not about the physical characteristics of the borough, the public health of the community has a deep connection to the overall health of the borough, and vice versa. The assessment gathered empirical data to base priorities and goals for health needs of the Pottstown Area.

The results were:

- The future health of the Pottstown Area is tied to the contradictory forces shaping its economic development;
- Differences in education, income, poverty and crime between the townships and boroughs in the Pottstown Area shape differences in the health of their residents;

- Family and neighborhood support and services help buffer individuals from health risks;
- Access to care poses an additional barrier for many low and moderate income persons but they are generally more likely to report having received basic preventative and screening services;
- The behavior of individuals results in many preventable risks. The long-term goals of the plan are to reduce behavioral risks, improve access to medical services, enhance formal and informal supports, and to improve the physical and social environment.

### **CORE DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (2003)**

The Core District Redevelopment Plan dates back to 2003 and was prepared by Urban Partners. The area included in this plan, which includes the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods, was also studied for the Pottstown Community and Economic Development Action and Implementation Strategy (September 2000). This plan proposed reuse ideas for seven key properties within the core district, as well as infrastructure and zoning changes needed to support these ideas. The site plan analysis includes proposals to:

- Reuse the Hotel James as two single-family detached houses;
- Reuse the auto repair service center at 58 N. Franklin Street as two sets of twin homes facing King Street;
- Redevelop the parking lot at the northwest corner of High and Evans Streets as an elementary school;
- Redevelop the surface parking lot north of the railroad tracks to Charlotte Street OR the properties on the north side of High Street (a surface parking lot and an abandoned structure) for a structured parking garage for the (now abandoned) Schuylkill Valley Metro proposal;
- Redevelop a portion of the north side of the 400 block of High Street as 12 twin homes;
- Redevelop the south side of the 300 block of High and Apple Street between Evans and Franklin Street as 36 twin homes;
- Reuse the mostly vacant residential properties on the 400 block of Apple Street as flex office buildings;
- Reuse the Nipple Factory site at 412 Laurel Street as flex office space.

### **RIVERFRONT AND MEMORIAL PARKS MASTER PLAN (2003)**

The Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan, adopted in 2003, established a recreational vision for these two parks. The plan focused on both active and passive recreational opportunities, and establishes a clear set of steps for providing future activities.

- Recommendations in this plan for Riverfront Park included:
  - Renovate the Schuylkill River Center building for additional uses and tenants;
  - Expand parking at the Schuylkill River Center to accommodate Riverfront Park visitors;
  - Further develop/enhance existing amphitheater;
  - Enhance existing River Walk leading to the Hanover Street Bridge; and

- Coordinate improvements with the Schuylkill River Trail and the Schuylkill River Water Trail/Landing.
- Recommendations for Memorial Park included:
  - Enhance the King Street entrance;
  - Implement drainage improvements at the ball fields;
  - Expand the playground and develop a water play area; and
  - Create a BMX track and skate park at the former pool location.

## **RECONNECTIONS: RECONNECTING THE PEOPLE OF NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP AND POTTS-TOWN BOROUGH WITH EACH OTHER AND THEIR SCHUYLKILL RIVER HERITAGE (2004)**

The 2004 Reconnections project examined the potential physical, economic, social, heritage and aesthetic connections between Pottstown Borough and North Coventry Township. The plan focused on the Schuylkill River as the “heart” of each community’s shared history. The two municipalities formed a joint committee, obtained state and local funding, and retained a consultant team to assist them to identify obstacles in reconnecting the communities and to find solutions toward achieving the study’s goals. The planning process and resultant plan and recommendations indicate many shared concerns that point to the advantages of continuing the dialogue and cooperation fostered by this effort.

Major physical improvement recommendations include:

- Enhancements to the Hanover Street Bridge to create a functional and symbolic link and gateway for both communities;
- Establishment of the River Road Trail from the Hanover Street Bridge to River Park in North Coventry;
- Other improvements along Hanover Street, Laurelwood Road and Rt. 724 to create more attractive and walkable links between the borough and the Coventry Mall; and
- Conversion of the existing unused railroad trestle into a pedestrian bridge across the river to connect River Park and Riverfront Park.

## **POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2005)**

Pottstown is part of a regional planning effort that has the borough as its center and focus. Adopted in December 2005, this is the official comprehensive plan for the greater Pottstown region. The regional planning effort includes Pottstown Borough, as well as Douglass, Lower Pottsgrove, Upper Pottsgrove, West Pottsgrove, and New Hanover Townships (in Montgomery County) as well as East Coventry and North Coventry Townships (in Chester County). This plan outlines the region’s history and socio-economic conditions, while inventorying the region’s natural and historic resources, land use, transportation facilities, housing stock, economic development, community facilities, and open spaces. It also provides a vision and goals for the future growth of the region.

General goals for the region include:

- Protect the unique historical, cultural, and natural resources of the Region;

- Promote the economic vitality and quality of life of the Region's existing communities;
- Implement growth management techniques to provide for orderly and well-planned new development;
- Preserve open space and agriculture;
- Develop transportation choices for better mobility in and through the Region;
- Encourage walkable communities with a mix of uses and a range of housing options where appropriate;
- Promote new economic opportunities and jobs;
- Maintain and improve recreation options;
- Address the specific needs and unique conditions of each municipality.

### **POTTSTOWN BOROUGH OPEN SPACE PLAN (2006)**

The Pottstown Borough Open Space Plan was completed in 2006. To some extent, this is an update to the borough's 1996 Open Space and Environmental Resource Plan, as the borough's new goals and objectives build upon this previous work. It is a comprehensive look at Pottstown's existing open space as well as its future preservation priorities. The goals and objectives of this plan are as follows:

- Continue to implement the borough's park and recreation master plan.
  - Acquire lands designated in the Master Plan for acquisition;
  - Explore funding opportunities to help develop the recreational opportunities proposed in the plan;
  - Address stormwater management issues on these lands;
  - Explore private-public partnerships that may help achieve the goals of the plan.
- Enhance the borough's existing recreational amenities and explore new possibilities for the addition of recreational space.
  - Make needed repairs to recreational equipment and facilities;
  - Ensure that all recreational facilities are accessible by achieving ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance;
  - Explore possibilities for acquiring a swimming pool for public use.
- Establish a green town image.
  - Fill gaps in the street tree network, especially in the Downtown;
  - Create green gateways at strategic borough entrances, specifically areas identified in the borough's Reconnections Plan;
  - Direct landowners on how to create and maintain greener public spaces, streetscapes, and parking lots; and
  - Develop a façade and streetscape improvement plan.
- Provide open space opportunities in all districts.
  - Adopt methods to require useful and sustainable green space in redeveloped areas; and
  - Maintain and enhance existing park, open space, and community facilities.
- Preserve the valuable natural features of the borough.

- Adopt methods, such as stream bank restoration and the establishment of riparian buffers, to address the water quality issues, especially for the Manatawny Creek; and
- Maintain and enhance existing park, open space, and community facilities.
- Develop internal and external linkages to the open space network.
  - Participate in regional trail planning;
  - Develop a local trail plan to complement the regional system;
  - Manage the sidewalk system to increase pedestrian access throughout the borough;
  - Develop clear signage to enhance usage of services and businesses; and
  - Support development of the Schuylkill River Trail.
- Protect the borough’s historic and scenic resources.
  - Implement a program to preserve the facades of historic structures; and
  - Develop a detailed inventory of the borough’s historic structures.

### **POTTSTOWN AREA HEALTH & WELLNESS FOUNDATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT (2008)**

This report is an update to the 2003 study, and one of its purposes is to compare more recent data to the baseline created during the initial study. Like the 2003 study, this report covers an area within a ten-mile radius of the borough, and breaks down the results by school district because much health and wellness work is being done at the school district level.

Although this study covers a greater geographic area than just Pottstown, the report notes that Pottstown has the largest concentration of low income residents when compared to the entire study area, and thus “stands alone on many fronts of disadvantage.” Some results of the study that include the borough’s respondents show that the borough has:

- The lowest average income (average \$51,660, median \$39,480)
- The highest proportion of people who earn less than \$50,000 (59%)
- The second highest proportion of people who report fair or poor health (21%)
- The lowest reporting of having none of the medical conditions inquired about (28%)
- The highest percentage reporting depression (18%)
- The largest proportion who are overweight or obese (74%)
- The highest percentage of smokers (24%)
- The highest rate of domestic violence (4.2%)
- The most government assisted health care (43%)
- The highest percentage of people who do not exercise (36%)
- The most interest in organized adult sports (33%)
- The highest percentages of people reporting recent major life changes and stressors
- The highest percentage of residents who have recently moved (21%)
- The highest percentage of residents with a high school education or less (45%) and the lowest percentage of residents

with a college (15%) or graduate degree (7%)

## **POTTSTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN (2008)**

Gannett Fleming produced the Pottstown Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2008, which provided a balanced program of projects and initiatives to guide community revitalization efforts in the borough. It builds on the Pottstown Community and Economic Development Action and Implementation Strategy (2000) and continues many of its priorities. Strategies of this plan included:

- Promote the development of suitable sites for businesses in the borough.
  - Initiate redevelopment of key opportunity sites in the borough.
  - Identify key potential business development/employment sites throughout the borough and prevent their rezoning for other uses.
  - Assess existing borough-owned properties and determine whether they should be sold or used for a borough purpose.
- Establish a range of business assistance programs in the borough.
  - Institute a business retention and expansion program in the borough.
  - Institute a business attraction and recruitment program in the borough.
- Develop more business/customer-friendly permitting and planning processes and ordinances.
  - Develop a clear, concise, streamlined planning and permitting process for businesses seeking to locate to or expand in the borough.
  - Provide ongoing customer service training for borough employees who work directly with the public.
  - Undertake a regular Customer Satisfaction Survey to track public perceptions about the quality of public services and the responsiveness of borough employees.
  - Review the borough zoning ordinance to identify opportunities to make provisions and requirements more clear and predictable.
- Expand employment opportunities for Pottstown residents.
  - Continue to develop the partnership between the Pottstown School District, other area school districts, and Montgomery County Community College to provide educational and career pathways that increase postsecondary degree attainment levels of residents, including high school students, adults, and area businesses and organizations.
  - Continue to support and expand early education and after-school tutoring programs in the borough.
  - Hold regular meetings between the School Board and leaders of local business organizations to develop a partnership to improve the borough's schools.

- Undertake further research to develop a detailed understanding of business and economic conditions in Pottstown and the region.
  - Undertake a market sector/industry cluster analysis for Pottstown and the region.
- Strengthen and publicize amenities and resources that draw people to the borough.
  - Create a position to help coordinate and market the borough and region’s educational, cultural and recreational institutions, facilities, programs and events.
  - Strengthen the partnership between cultural institutions in the Pottstown Borough and region.
  - Continue and expand the existing borough marketing effort.
- Continue efforts to revitalize the Main Street commercial district along High Street as well as adjacent areas.
  - Focus revitalization efforts on the 300 and 400 blocks of High Street;
  - To support the proposed development at High and Evans, look for opportunities to encourage redevelopment of nearby properties;
  - Institute a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) program for the borough to help defray building renovation costs and encourage redevelopment;
  - Build on existing efforts such as the Performing Arts Center to recruit arts and cultural organizations with a regional draw to the High Street area; and
  - Undertake consistently-applied code enforcement efforts on High Street and throughout the borough.
- Make improvements to the transportation network to promote the safe and efficient movement of people, vehicles and goods within and through the borough.
  - Continue to work with North Coventry Township to implement the recommendations of the Reconnections Plan. In particular, the recommended improvements to the Hanover Street Bridge and the Keim Street Bridge should be made;
  - Undertake a multi-modal transportation study in partnership with adjacent municipalities;
  - Work with adjacent municipalities to improve the functionality and appearance of the borough’s gateway areas;
  - Develop a wayfinding system to provide clearer directions into and within the borough;
  - Improve pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections between High Street and Riverfront Park;
  - Undertake a parking study to determine parking supply and demand and assess the need for additional parking facilities; and
  - Conduct an assessment of key organizations in the borough and identify strategies to improve collaboration.
- Encourage the revitalization of Pottstown’s neighborhoods.
  - Undertake planning activities that focus on the specific needs of Pottstown’s neighborhoods.

- Provide a broad range of housing choices, including additional market rate, owner-occupied housing, to help stabilize neighborhoods and meet the needs of current and future Pottstown residents.
  - Form a non-profit borough housing corporation to take the lead in housing development initiatives in Pottstown;
  - Provide financial incentives and other support to encourage rehabilitation and homeownership of residences in the borough;
  - Encourage the development of market-rate urban-style housing (e.g., condominiums, townhouses) in the urban core;
  - Rewrite zoning requirements in the urban core to encourage good-quality urban-style housing; and
  - Work with the local real estate industry to increase interest in promoting home sales in the borough, especially single-family homes.
  
- Develop recreational facilities and programs that benefit borough residents and attract people from the surrounding region.
  - Support and enhance recreational programming at the Ricketts Center;
  - Continue to implement the recommendations of the Riverfront and Memorial Parks Master Plan and the Open Space Plan;
  - Develop safe pedestrian and bicycle linkages from Pottstown’s neighborhoods to Riverfront and Memorial Parks;
  - Continue to develop seasonal activities and programs that draw residents and visitors to the borough’s recreational amenities; and
  - Work with area municipalities to develop a regional network of recreational amenities.
  
- Enhance public safety in the borough.
  - Obtain new/refurbished equipment for the Fire Department (new/refurbished fire trucks; improved fire hydrant connections);
  - Provide enhanced street lighting throughout the borough;
  - Obtain advanced safety monitoring systems for the Police Department (video cameras; Shot Spotter system);
  - Establish a Volunteers in Policing Program (VIPS) to enlist senior citizens to provide civilian support services to in the borough; and
  - Update rental property licensing requirements to include public safety requirements.

## **R6 NORRISTOWN SERVICE LINE EXTENSION STUDY (2009)**

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) released the results of the *R6 Norristown Line Service Extension Study* in 2009. The study analyzed various rail options utilizing the present Norfolk Southern line between Norristown and Wyomissing, and the existing R6 Norristown Line to access Center City Philadelphia. The study explored innovative financing techniques, such as public-private partnerships, that could support the implementation of rail service. Preliminary analysis suggested that tolling existing highway capacity on US 422 was a feasible strategy for generating the funds necessary to ad-

vance the rail project, as well as providing the funding sources needed for the River Crossing Project and additional improvements along US 422, particularly in the Pottstown area. Combined with the US 422 Master Plan, this study recommended the need to further study the feasibility of these strategies (see the 422Plus Project discussed below).

## **US 422 MASTER PLAN (2009)**

The opening of the US Route 422 corridor to development has taken a region that used to be insulated, and tied it into the Greater Philadelphia Metropolitan area with all of the attendant advantages and problems. However, it has not been a significant advantage to Pottstown as it has made it easier for people to travel outside the borough for jobs and shopping (such as to King of Prussia). As a result, the road has significant congestion issues. The *US 422 Corridor Master Plan*, led by DVRPC with coordination from the County Planning Commissions in Montgomery, Chester and Berks Counties, provides a vision and guidance to link land use and transportation decisions, and makes recommendations to sustain the quality of life and economic vitality in the 422 Corridor. The recommended “Sustainable Alternative” encourages growth of compact, mixed-use centers that link residences and jobs in close proximity, and identified more transportation options to serve them. With the *R6 Norristown Service Line Extension Study*, this study recommended the need to further study the feasibility of these strategies (see the 422Plus Project discussed below).

## **POTTSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA: TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES (2009)**

The Urban Land Institute’s most recent Advisory Services Panel report was completed in the fall of 2009. The panel looked to answer the following questions: *Where is the borough going? How does the borough get there? Who in the borough is going to do it?*

To that end, the panel offered solutions that are listed below:

- Open up the riverfront.
  - Cut the undergrowth...to provide useful, punctuated views of the river;
  - Remove the tracks...to eliminate the perception of the river being disconnected from the rest of the borough;
  - Create a “place of magic” on five blocks of riverfront in downtown...to invite residents and visitors to indulge in the riverside amenities; and
  - Complete the long-distance trail plan...to allow the borough to connect with numerous other locations along the Schuylkill River.
  
- Encourage high-value employment.
  - Build on existing economic strengths, including the hospital the community college, The Hill School, the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation, and existing industrial employers;
  - The borough should consider a more business-friendly approach to permitting, inspections, and planning approvals;
  - Sell the borough more effectively.

- Expand market choices for new housing and revitalize existing housing.
  - Encourage the construction of new housing in a variety of locations near downtown;
  - Designate the Keystone Opportunity Area for residential development;
  - Immediately establish an aggressive neighborhood stabilization partnership among Montgomery County, the code enforcement department, the housing authority, and the police department;
  - Create new incentives for renovating and occupying the upper floors of existing commercial buildings in downtown with market-rate residential uses.
  
- Encourage and accommodate a vibrant downtown.
  - Build a threshold of culture, arts, entertainment and nightlife activity;
  - Begin a program to cluster economic activity involving doctors, seniors, students, and non-social service public offices in the block immediately adjacent to the intersections of High and Hanover Streets;
  - Create new incentives for renovating and occupying the upper floors of existing commercial buildings;
  - Establish a robust program of public and private activities in the downtown;
  - Establish a robust incentive package to get a few key retailers to consider locating in downtown; and
  - An active commuter rail that goes to Philadelphia could be a real game changing event in the history of Pottstown.

## **PLANNING AND DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY LIVING, PARKS AND RECREATION IN THE POTTSTOWN AREA (2010)**

Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation commissioned the Hamer Center for Community Design at The Pennsylvania State University to study the Pottstown area's parks and recreation system in regards to encouraging healthy living. This report, "Planning and Design Strategies for Healthy Living, Parks, and Recreation in the Pottstown Area" identifies recommendations and implementation strategies corresponding to the issues raised by the four question topics: awareness, barriers, access, and opportunities. Four planning objectives directly address the issues raised:

- Build awareness of nearby parks or park which provide desired amenities;
- Address common barriers to park visitation such as cleanliness and safety;
- Emphasize active transportation choices for access to local parks to increase overall rates of physical activity; and
- Provide a well-rounded range of opportunities at parks through a breadth of facilities and programming.

While study focused on the entire Pottstown Region, some of the recommendations more relevant for Pottstown Borough include the following:

- Alleviate environmental concerns for future parks and recreation strategies as industrialization has left some areas and many waterfront sites contaminated;

- Promote cooperation between various municipalities and encourage partnerships with other agencies for a more effective parks and recreation system;
- Provide residents with information about activities, facilities, and programs available at the park being visited;
- Upgrade maintenance, including daily cleaning and preventative maintenance;
- Encourage community volunteers to assist with improvements or maintenance;
- Incorporate safety-conscious features in park design;
- Provide well-rounded parks with a variety of opportunities available, including passive as well as active recreation; and
- Promote safe routes to parks

### **TRI-COUNTY TRANSPORTATION STUDY: A VISION FOR PA ROUTE 100 (2010)**

In summer 2010, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) completed a study of the PA 100 corridor. Findings of the *Tri-County Transportation Study: A Vision for PA Route 100* study showed the major issues to be traffic congestion, safety, inconsistent interchanges, transition zones at each end of the corridor, and increasing development pressures. Recommendations for Pottstown include: widen PA 100 to three through lanes per direction between Shoemaker Road and the southern State Street intersection; modify traffic flow patterns in the vicinity of King Street; improve the intersections at Shoemaker Road and southern State Street as well as northern State Street and Moyer Road; and, plan for the potential widening of Farmington Avenue and its overpass of PA 100.

### **HERITAGE ACTION PLAN (2011)**

The 2011 Heritage Action Plan (HAP) was created as a result of the request for letters of interest for a Trail Towns and Tour Grant Program proposed in November 2010 by Schuylkill River Greenway with funding from the William Penn Foundation. After applying in January 2011 Pottstown was named one of five grantees and received \$2,000 to create a HAP, as well as an opportunity to apply for implementation funds up to \$25,000. Consultants were contracted to guide the process, publicize it, bring together stakeholders, solicit input, and create the final plan.

The Pottstown HAP was a community based planning process created by the Pottstown Heritage Action Plan Group to be used as a blueprint of strategies and actions to increase the community's attraction as a destination for visitors interested in heritage resources. Two major intents behind creating a HAP for Pottstown were (1) to identify and leverage existing arts, cultural, historical, and recreational resources to attract visitors and (2) spur sustained economic activity and improve the connections between the Schuylkill River Trail and downtown Pottstown.

The main purpose of Pottstown's Heritage Action Plan is to recognize and promote Pottstown's history and resources as they relate to the river and the River Trail, the plan's projects and strategic actions are necessarily centered on Riverfront Park and the adjacent downtown; therefore, upon completion of the HAP the four projects chosen for implementation were:

- Creating Schuylkill River Trail connections between Riverfront Park and High Street;
- Creating and installing three 3-sided informational Kiosks in both Riverfront and Pollock Park as well as a downtown loca-

tion;

- Creating a comprehensive Pottstown Brochure for distribution; and
- Creating a trail-friendly decal for use by participating local businesses and organizations.

### **US 422PLUS PROJECT (2011)**

Pennsylvania, like many states, is struggling to find adequate ways to fund transportation needs. The recently completed 422Plus Project, also led by DVRPC with coordination from the three counties and the state and regional transportation agencies, considers whether tolling approximately 25 miles of US 422 between US 202 and just east of PA 662 could fund road improvements to relieve congestion, address infrastructure needs, and potentially support re-establishing 44 miles of passenger rail on an active freight line between Norristown and Wyomissing, with a stop in Pottstown. The plan was introduced in spring/summer 2011 and largely rejected by local legislators and a large majority of the public. As a result, DVRPC and the Counties consider the idea dead.

### **MARKETING THE POTTSTOWN REGION: STRATEGIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR FISCAL IMPACTS (2012)**

In 2012, the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee (PMRPC), with assistance from a private consulting firm, the Montgomery County Planning Commission (County), and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), completed a regional market assessment and fiscal impact study for the Pottstown Metropolitan Region. The fiscal impact analysis evaluated the fiscal sustainability of likely growth in the Region and make recommendations for ensuring a fiscally sustainable development pattern in the future. Specific recommendations for Pottstown Borough included the following:

- Infrastructure Improvements
  - Air - Support runway enhancement and expansion for the Pottstown Municipal Airport;
  - Rail – Maintain the short line rail access and access to the Keystone Boulevard area, with continuance of rail to appropriate industrial areas;
  - New Rail – Support the development of the proposed commuter rail service and the three stops within the Region;
  - Major Highway Enhancement – Support the proposed improvements to US 422;
  - Parking Improvements Downtown – Non-capital intensive parking improvements should be evaluated and implemented to improve any negative perceptions of parking in the Downtown area; and
  - Signage – Create a consistent way-finding system in borough.
- Strategic Site Opportunities
  - Airport – The sites surrounding the Pottstown Municipal Airport represent opportunities for expanded industrial development activity. Consideration should be given to the light aircraft industry, product assemblage, and kayak or canoe production to capitalize on the Region’s recreation sector;

- Keystone Boulevard/Trail Area – Develop the Keystone Boulevard area west of Route 100 primarily in the context of a planned development and utilizing existing buildings, areas, and site. Consideration in development should be given to expanding pervious soil conditions and through structural development that minimizes damage from possible flooding. Potential uses include expansion of higher education facilities, incubator space for R&D entities, any consumer product oriented assemblage, medical oriented service of-fice space and facilities;
- Downtown Pottstown and High Street – Through a Regional Market Analysis, the study found substantial identified potential for Downtown Pottstown and High Street, including: 5-7 non-national food service establishments, 5,000 square feet of specialty food space, 15,000-25,000 square feet of miscellaneous or other retail space, 150,000 square feet of multi-tenant office space for community based professional services, outpatient medical service, and potential R&D activity, and ann additional 150 to 250 housing units.

### **INDUSTRIAL ZONE TRANSPORTATION ACCESS STUDY (2012)**

A concept master plan was recently completed for the area of land bounded by the Schuylkill River to the south, the Norfolk Southern rail line to the north, Grosser Road to the west and College Drive to the east. The study, completed in conjunction with West Pottsgrove Township, looks at the possible extension of Keystone Boulevard in Pottstown to Old Reading Pike in West Pottsgrove and possibly to the Stowe Interchange of US 422. With proximity to rail, available utilities, and potential connections to both Route 100 and US Route 42, the site’s 366 acres possess strong economic development potential.

The study outlines a preferred alternative for redevelopment of the area which involves a combination of new uses coming to the study area mixing with certain existing land uses. Those uses include heavy and light manufacturing and processing, offices, water related commercial, and a hotel. These land uses capitalize on improved highway access via contemplated realignment of US Route 422 and its improved interchange with South Grosstown Road, and they are supported by roadway, rail, and infrastructure improvements. Pedestrian access along the riverfront and to new recreational fields utilizing an existing and proposed trails complement the redevelopment activities.

Currently, Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township are working in cooperation to create a new a vibrant employment center that can maximize the area’s redevelopment potential.

### **POTTSTOWN/WEST POTTS GROVE TCDI STUDY (2012)**

In 2010, Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township were awarded a \$65,000 Transportation grant from DVRPC. The grant is part of DVRPC’s Transportation and Community Development Initiative program which supports selected areas to undertake planning, analysis, or design initiatives for projects or programs which enhance development or redevelopment and enhance or improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system. The funding awarded to Pottstown and West Pottsgrove will be used to develop a High Street Corridor Plan that will establish an implementation strategy for revitalizing.





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