

BEGINNING OF PART 6 OF 6 PARTS

State, federal and county grants have been the lifeblood of virtually every improvement project in Pottstown.
Federal and state grants paid most or all the cost of:

- Airport Business Campus
- Wilson Street extension
- Construction of College Drive
- Construction of Keystone Boulevard
- Restoration of a score of commercial buildings (federal tax credits).
- Acquisition of land downtown that eventually was used for Borough Hall
- Smith Family Plaza, the town park in front of Borough Hall (federal transportation grant)
- Riverfront Park and the Schuylkill River Greenway
- Pedestrian Underpass connecting Montgomery Community College's main building (South Hall) with the former Vaughn Knitting Mill building (North Hall).
- Reconfiguration of traffic lights to narrow High Street
- Hiring of Main Street Manager
- Major improvements to Memorial Park

History compiled by Thomas Hylton

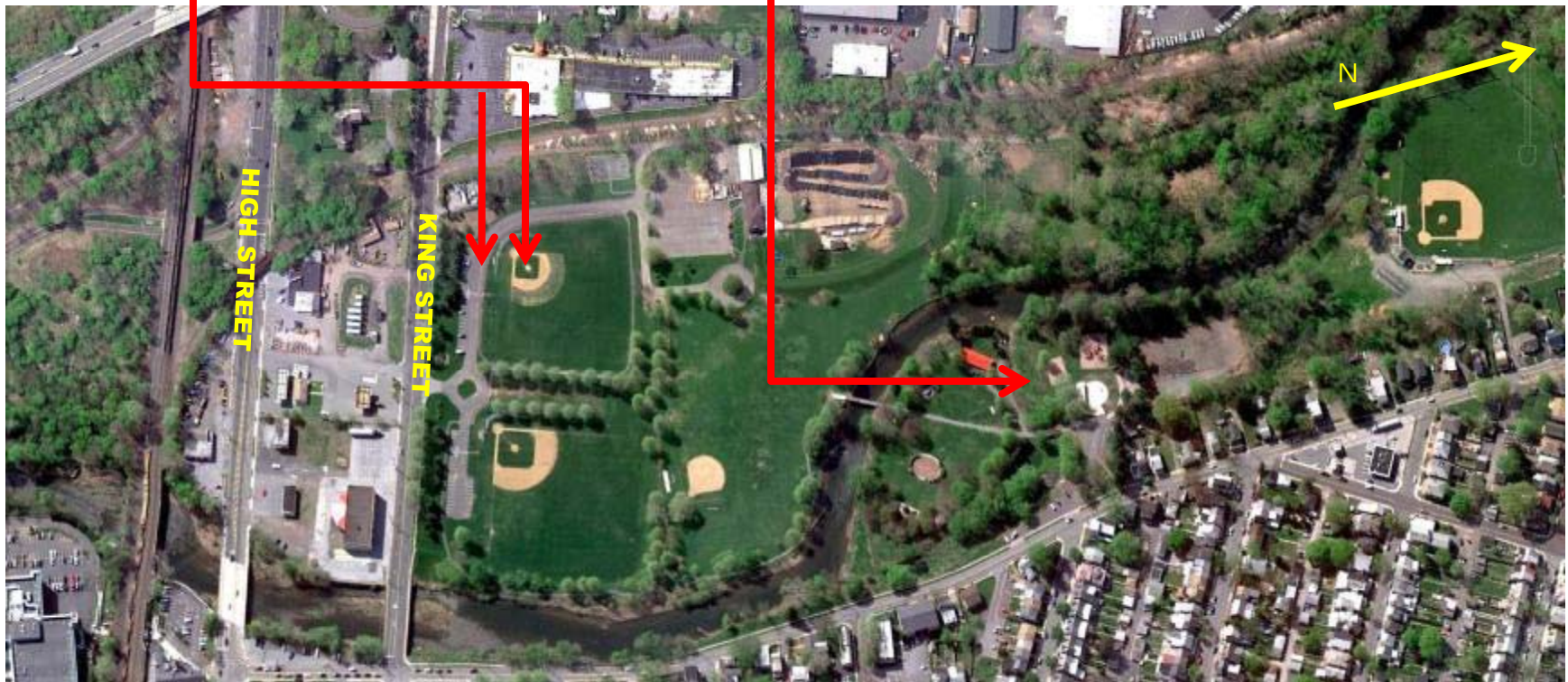
Grants from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources helped pay for numerous improvements to Memorial Park, including the construction and realignment of ball fields, the Fountain of Youth Spray Park, and walking trails along the Manatawny Creek. Another major contributor was the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation.



Memorial Park walking trail along the Manatawny Creek

Reconstructed ball fields and new parking

Fountain of Youth Spray Park



Major grants from the Montgomery County Open Space program helped develop Memorial Park and also paid to acquire the former Pottstown Metal Welding Co. tract between High and King streets for the Pottstown Carousel and a new headquarters for the Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department.



Carousel building

Former Pottstown Metal Welding site acquired with county funding



No institution has done more for Pottstown than Montgomery County. Pottstown has received millions of dollars in a long series of county initiatives going back more than 20 years.



In 1987, the county rescued Pottsgrove Manor historic site from years of neglect from the state Historical and Museum Commission by signing a 99-year lease to operate the museum. The county then invested \$750,000 to restore the site. Pottsgrove would not be open today if it was still run by the state.



In 1987, the county awarded Pottstown nearly \$1 million to install new sidewalks, benches, paving, trees and streetlamps on High Street to beautify the downtown.



In 1998, the county acquired a four-acre site near High and Hanover Streets which it donated to the borough for a new borough hall and park. The county's share of the cost was about \$750,000.



Montgomery County built a \$15 million campus for an initial enrollment of 1,000 students in the fall 1996 on what is now called College Drive, just south of the downtown.



The two college buildings are connected by a pedestrian and bicycle arch under the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks built in 2006. The county paid \$360,000 toward the cost of the underpass. State grants paid \$325,000.



Ten years later, the college expanded into the former Vaughn Knitting Mills building on High Street. Because it leases the building from a private developer, the building is still on the tax rolls.



Meanwhile, in 2001, the county provided Pottstown with \$650,000 in grant funds to buy the former PECO maintenance building and 30 acres of woods for Riverfront Park. In 2009, the community college bought the building, now the Schuylkill River Heritage Center, from the borough.

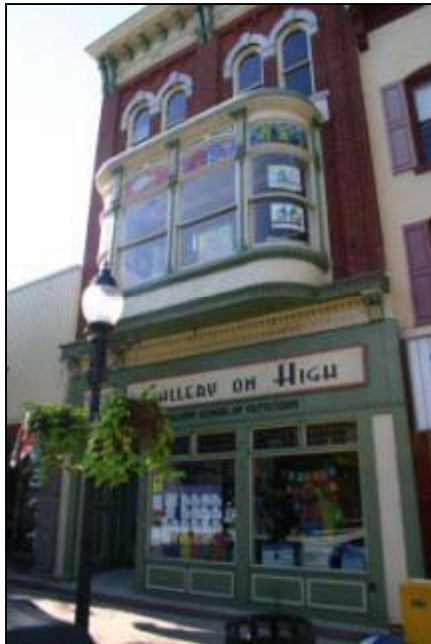


The county provided \$631,000 in grant money to renovate a former 5&10 store as the Tri-County Performing Arts Center, and to provide stage equipment.



Montgomery County provided \$312,000 in grant money toward the restoration of the Security Trust Building in 2002.

This year, the borough is requesting \$500,000 from the county to rehabilitate the Gallery on High building for art education.



The county provided \$163,000 to help pay for the installation of back-in angle parking and bike lanes on High Street. More than 90 parking spaces were added downtown at no cost to local taxpayers.

Pottstown Economic Development Strategic Plan



March 2008

prepared by:
 **Gannett Fleming**

In March 2008, Pottstown Borough Council adopted an updated Economic Development Strategic Plan with three major goals:

1. Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment.
2. Enhance Pottstown's identity as the urban hub of the region.
3. Improve the quality of life in Pottstown and its neighborhoods.

In the spring of 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by four parties:

Pottstown Council
Pottstown School District
Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority
PAID (Pottstown Area Industrial Development Authority)

The agreement calls for a uniform economic development strategy to carry out the goals of the Economic Development Strategic Plan to be managed by PAID.

In October 2009, a third Urban Land Institute (ULI) panel of three experts visited Pottstown and met with about 45 civic leaders in three group sessions conducted in one day. Tom Murphy, the chairman of the ULI panel, was mayor of Pittsburgh for 12 years, from January 1994 through 2005.

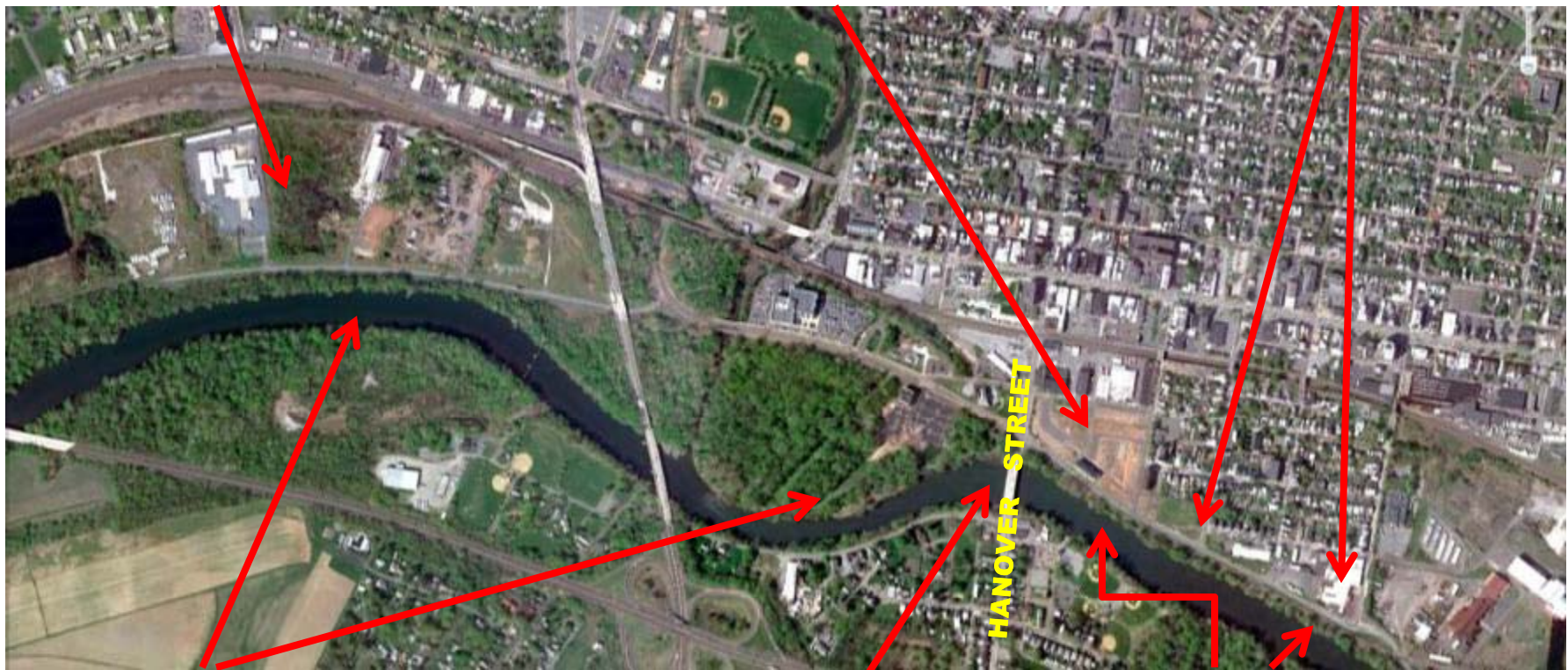
Although not nearly as in-depth as the first two ULI reports, the panel's recommendations emphasized several good ideas, including initiatives the borough is already doing.

Major Recommendation: Open up the waterfront, build housing along the Schuylkill River. As mayor of Pittsburgh, Tom Murphy made his name by creating new pedestrian and bicycle trails along the Allegheny, Monongehela, and Ohio Rivers in Pittsburgh and encouraging residential development along the waterfront. Murphy recommended Pottstown should do the same along the Schuylkill River.

Keystone Opportunity Zone

Former Mrs. Smith's site, housing now under construction

Build new housing here



Schuylkill River Greenway

Greenway currently ends at Hanover Street

Remove railroad tracks, continue Greenway

One prime area for residential and mixed-use development would be the land north of the Industrial Highway from Charlotte Street going east to Washington Street.

Among the properties that could be redeveloped for housing and some mixed use are the former shirt factory, a historic building; the vacant site of the now-demolished Lincoln Underwear factory, owned by the borough; the Humphry's Flag Company building; the vacant Pottstown Nipple Works; and Pottstown Plating Co.



The former shirt factory at Charlotte and Cherry Streets, once part of the Mrs. Smith's factory complex, would be perfect for high-end residential lofts. Renovations would qualify for federal tax credits as a historic preservation project.



Former Lincoln Underwear site

Humphry's Flag Co.

Pottstown Nipple Works

Pottstown Plating Works

*Pottstown
Plating
Works, right*



*Humphry's Flag Co.
building, left*



Former Lincoln Underwear site

Humphry's Flag Co.

Pottstown Nipple Works

Pottstown Plating Works



The ULI recommended thinning out the tree cover along the Schuylkill River east of Hanover Street, shown above, to open up water views from the Industrial Highway.

It also recommended removing the railroad tracks so the Schuylkill River Greenway could be extended east of Hanover Street.

Railroad tracks



The ULI panel recommended changing the zoning for the Keystone Opportunity Zone, below, from Flex-Office to housing, to take advantage of the river and the greenway.



84 Lumber Co. truss plant

Schuylkill River Greenway

Just as the 1976 ULI report urged Pottstown civic leaders to champion the completion of the Route 422 expressway from King of Prussia to Pottstown, the 2009 ULI report urged Pottstown to seek a return of rail service to Pottstown.

Pottstown lost its train service in 1982 when SEPTA discontinued its heavy rail passenger service beyond Norristown. Previously, it had served Spring City, Pottstown, and Reading.





ULI also recommended making a concerted effort to create new housing on the vacant upper floors of downtown commercial buildings.



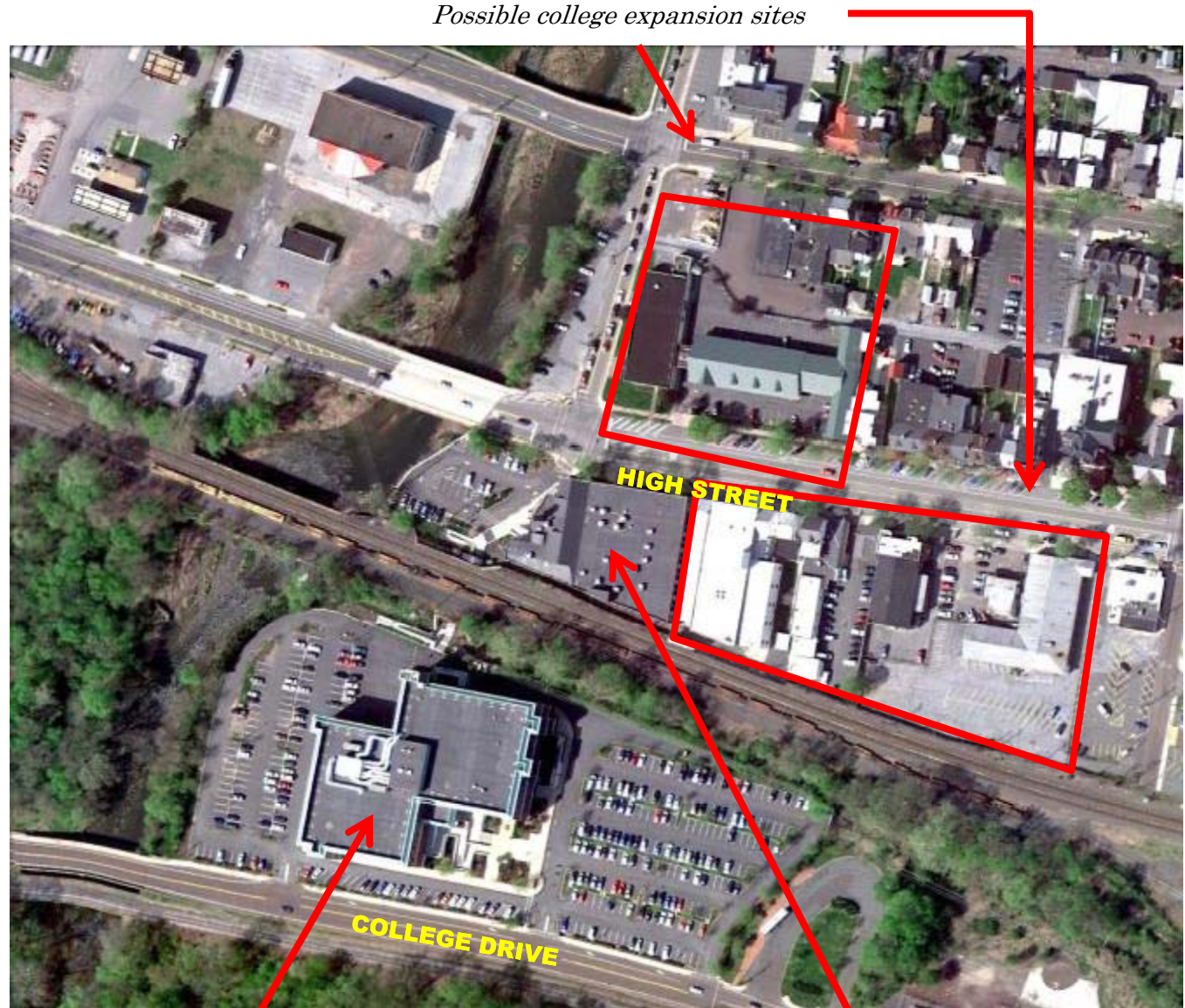
Since its opening in 1996, the Montgomery County Community College West Campus has grown from 1,000 students to more than 2,500 students.

The college expanded from its original 90,000 square foot building on College Drive into the former Vaughn Knitting Mills, with 52,000 square feet, in 2006.

It recently bought the Schuylkill Heritage Center, which it shares with the Greenway Association.

In three or four years, the college will probably need to expand again.

It could possibly expand its High Street site east toward borough hall, or across High Street to the Days Inn site.



Possible college expansion sites

Montgomery Community College original building

Community College High Street building



END OF PART 6 OF 6 PARTS

As this brief history demonstrates, Pottstown has made some tremendous strides in the last three decades.

Those who are negative about our town too easily forget the hard work that has been expended in recent decades to bring about the many improvements we take for granted.

True, we have lost nearly all the heavy industries that defined Pottstown for more than a century. Our downtown is no longer the retail and commercial hub of the region. Overall, we are less affluent and less educated than residents of the surrounding townships.

But in other ways, the borough is vastly improved:

Four business campuses totaling more than 200 acres have been created since 1973.

Our town boasts lovely tree-lined streets which were formerly stark and bare.

Many of our historic buildings have been handsomely restored.

Our downtown has been beautified with street trees, historic lamps with flower baskets, benches, and attractive paving.

A Downtown Improvement District Authority has been created to coordinate promotional events and maintenance in the downtown .

The Schuylkill riverfront has been rediscovered with the creation of a greenway, a park and amphitheater, and an environmental education center.

Pottstown has gained the West Campus of the Montgomery County Community College, with more than 2,500 students and growing.

An economic development strategy, managed by PAID, is now underway.