

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR  
**Responsible**  
 GOVERNMENT

## High Street a natural for live-work units

For more than 50 years, a huge sign and three-story metal covering erected by Milton's Youth Center concealed one of the loveliest facades in downtown Pottstown.

When the sign came down, revealing six tall Italianate windows embellished with intricate brickwork, Pottstown had reclaimed one of its architectural gems.

The building, at 221 High St., is now a live-work unit for Lori and Brian Patrick, owners of Affinity Property Management. Their office is on the first floor and they live on the upper two floors.

A live-work unit is not the same as having a home office, where a self-employed person works alone and has no visiting clients or customers.

A live-work unit has the business on the first floor, which is open to the public and which often employs people outside of the household. Living quarters are upstairs.

Live-work units go back centuries in Europe and America. Here in Pottstown, live-work units were common as recently as the 1960s, when doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers, tailors and other artisans routinely lived above their offices or stores.

With the rise of the suburbs and the decline of traditional towns, live-work units became increasingly rare. Suburban zoning typically outlaws them, but they are legal in downtown Pottstown and other older areas of town as conditional uses.

Nationally, live-work units are now making a comeback as an element of the "smart growth" movement to place housing, stores, and workplaces in close proximity, so people can walk, bicycle, or take public transportation to some of their destinations.

Fashionable "neo-traditional" developments such as Eagleview in Exton boast live-work units as part of their mix of houses, stores and offices.

The Patricks, who moved to downtown Pottstown from a five-bedroom house in

North Coventry, love interacting with other people as they walk to nearby stores and restaurants. It's an appealing lifestyle.

We have a treasure trove of buildings downtown like 221 High St. which could be converted to live-work units.

Although the borough has employed numerous Main Street Managers over the last 25 years, no one has yet done a systematic inventory of available properties.

Such an inventory would be invaluable. We should promote our downtown as an ideal place to live and work in the same building.



Commentary by  
 Thomas Hylton



**TO BE ON HOUSE TOUR—The 221 High St. live-work unit owned by Lori and Brian Patrick of Affinity Property Management, right, will be on this Sunday's Historic Pottstown by Candlelight House Tour from 1 to 6 p.m.**