

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

No. 1 issue: Climate change

It's grade school science. We are living on a tiny patch of planet earth, an enormous globe hurtling through space a hundred times faster than the fastest jets.

But it doesn't feel that way. In fact, Pottstown seems quite stationary — and horizontal, except for hills and valleys.

We know dinosaurs once roamed the Schuylkill Valley, but that was a much different world, millions of years ago.

Today humans predominate. We live in permanent structures that are warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Electricity powers our appliances 24/7. We enjoy indoor plumbing. Smart phones and the Internet. Driving anywhere we want, anytime we want, with groceries and every other kind of commodity available in abundant stores or delivered to our door.

That's why it's so difficult to grasp climate change. We are so used to life as it is, we can't imagine anything else.

According to American Association for the Advancement of Science, 97 percent of climate scientists worldwide agree the earth is warming with disastrous, almost inconceivable changes to come. Coastal cities like New York underwater. Frequent, violent storms. Droughts. Species extinction.

And much of this will begin by the time today's kindergartners are entering their prime of life.

Climate change is by far the greatest conundrum civilization has ever faced.

It took 200,000 years for the world's human population to reach 1 billion people, in about 1800. Then, in a little more than a hun-



Commentary by
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dred years, the population doubled, to 2 billion. Now, in just ninety years, it has more than tripled, to 7 billion. All these people are burning ever more fossil fuels, emitting ever more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

The human race has experienced weather extremes before, but that was back in our hunter-gatherer era. Our civilization depends on buildings, roads, underground pipes and electric lines. We can't just pick up and move them.

Last month, in Paris, 195 nations pledged to lower their greenhouse gas emissions. But this enormous task will require major changes in the way we live.

Using land more efficiently and limiting suburban sprawl are two of the most important ways to limit greenhouse gas emissions, according to a recent report by the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

Reviving Pottstown is our small part of that effort. Thanks to our multi-story buildings and compact form, we are far more energy efficient — and sustainable — than the car-dependent suburbs. Pottstown represents the future of green.

