Restoration fund needed

Last month, Borough Council passed a $52.6 million budget. Nearly all this money is aimed at maintaining existing borough services — police, fire, trash collection, water and sewer service — for another year.

There’s very little money for improving the appearance of our town, which would add to our quality of life and help attract new residents and businesses.

In the past, there have been some major projects to beautify our town, such as a $1 million streetscape project on High Street between Hanover and Evans streets in 1987 with new sidewalks, lamp posts, and trees; or the $4 million new borough hall in 2000, followed by the creation of Smith Family Plaza in front of borough hall.

And there have been some major restorations, such as the $4 million renovation of the Security Trust Building at High and Hanover streets in 2006, now home to the Brick House Restaurant and numerous offices.

But there’s been no systematic effort to restore Pottstown’s historic but declining housing stock.

A 1989 study of Pottstown by the Urban Land Institute stated: “For its size, the borough contains some of the oldest, most architecturally significant, charming housing stock in the Northeast. . . .

“Preserving it is not only vital to Pottstown’s long-term future, but could very well serve as a major tool for marketing the community.”

Thirty years ago, a non-profit organization called Preservation Pottstown (still around, but now called the Mosaic Community Land Trust) established a $100,000 fund to buy homes and restore their facades before reselling them.

This improved the appearance of the buildings from the street and gave potential buyers an idea of how attractive these houses could be.

Over a five-year period, fifteen homes and one commercial building were restored before the fund was depleted. We need to revive that idea today.