

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Pottstown Y saved, restored

He did what he said he would do.

Pottstown area entrepreneur Charles Gulati has completed the purchase of the former Pottstown YMCA building on North Adams Street and finished more than \$1 million in renovations to the portion of the building he is leasing back to the YMCA.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

The competition pool, with a new water filtration system, is now open to YMCA members, in addition to fitness centers with exercise equipment, a group exercise room, a multi-purpose room, and a child watch facility.

Y members can also use the elevated track surrounding what is now an 8,000 square foot indoor turf field leased to a private sports firm.

The basketball gym is also open to Y members in the early evening Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Gulati estimated about 40 percent of the facility is being leased to the YMCA for five years, with an option to extend the lease another five years.

Except for the elevated track, the YMCA facilities are clustered on the first floor, with a new HVAC system, newly finished walls, and new rubber flooring in most rooms and new wood floors in the others.

Meanwhile, because the 1970 building is now privately owned, it is on the tax rolls for the first time ever, assessed at more than \$1.5 million.

Gulati's purchase of the YMCA building, for \$400,000, together with

a commitment to invest millions of dollars in renovations, and a plan to bring in new users, is Pottstown's most auspicious development of 2018.

A year ago, without any prior warning, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA — the parent organization of nearly 20 local YMCAs in southeastern Pennsylvania — announced it was closing the Pottstown Y in June 2018.

Administrators said the Pottstown Y was operating at a loss and needed \$11 million in repairs. Philadelphia Freedom Valley selected a group of Pottstown civic leaders who were tasked with finding alternatives to the services provided at the Pottstown YMCA building.

But after several months, the task force reported "We conclude that the YMCA in Pottstown is rooted in a physical location and that a decision to close the facility ... is unacceptable."

Both the Pottstown School Board and Pottstown Council passed resolutions to keep the facility open, and an ad hoc group, spearheaded by the Pottstown chapter of the NAACP, began a campaign to keep the YMCA open and made plans to picket the YMCA headquarters in West Norriton.

The standoff ended when Gulati, president and CEO of SunnyBrook Ballroom in Lower Pottsgrove, agreed to purchase the building.

*Thursday: Gulati's vision*



**Charles Gulati**



**CONSTRUCTION VEHICLES line the parking lot of the Pottstown YMCA building, which businessman Chuck Gulati is renovating for continued use as the Pottstown YMCA and as a private fitness center.**