

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Y building: fitness mecca?

Lots of people talk about Pottstown's potential for revitalization.

Pottstown area entrepreneur Charles Gulati is actually making it happen.

For years, the Pottstown YMCA was losing money and membership, according to its parent organization, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

The Y building needed millions of dollars in repairs, and there was not enough community support to keep it going. It had to close, they said.

But Gulati purchased the building in October and has already pumped more than \$1 million into renovations, with much more to come.

Gulati aims not only to breathe new life into the YMCA, but turn the building into a regional sports, health, and fitness center.

Gulati is leasing about 40 percent of the 75,000 square foot building to the YMCA for five years with an option to renew for five years.

YMCA members can still use the swimming pool and most of its previous facilities.

The rest of the building will be leased out to private athletic training and coaching providers and for fitness and wellness — including aqua therapy and physical therapy.

For example, the YMCA's "south" gym, its largest, is being turned into an indoor playing field for soccer, lacrosse, and other field sports.

The original floor has been re-

placed with a cushioned floor topped with artificial turf. The elevated running track surrounding the gym is protected from flying balls by netting. A private firm has already leased the 8,000 square foot space.

A karate class is leasing a space in the basement.

Other facilities can be used for baseball coaching, with batting cages and space for infield training.

Gulati also envisions a space for indoor cycle classes like SoulCycle.

The building's warm water pool, closed in 2017 to save money, will be rehabilitated and leased to private providers for aqua-therapy.

The Gulati family has a record of rescuing struggling businesses. The family bought Stokesay Castle outside Reading in 2009 and made it a regional showplace for fine dining, banquets, and events.



Charles Gulati

Early in 2015, the family took over operations and management of the 1931 SunnyBrook Ballroom in Lower Pottsgrove. Charles Gulati is now president and CEO of both enterprises.

Gulati is very high on Pottstown. He points out it has easy access to three major highways — Routes 422, 100, and 663. It has one of the widest main streets in Pennsylvania, with lots of parking, and some of the finest architecture in the region.

"As the lead character says in the movie, *The Big Short*, 'I may be early, but I'm not wrong.' Pottstown has a great future."



THE ELEVATED TRACK at the Pottstown YMCA will be shared by YMCA members and clients of private sports providers leasing space at the YMCA building. The track surrounds an 8,000 square foot private practice field with artificial turf covering a rubberized floor.