

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## ULI makes another visit to Pottstown

This week, a panel of nationwide experts from ULI — the Urban Land Institute — is visiting Pottstown to evaluate the community's strengths and weaknesses and suggest ways we can promote economic development and enhance our quality of life.



Commentary by  
Thomas Hylton

After touring the town and interviewing civic and business leaders, the panel will report its findings and make recommendations from 8 to 11 a.m. Friday at the Steel River Playhouse on High Street.

Their visit is sponsored by the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation.

The ULI, based in Washington, D.C., has made several trips to Pottstown in recent decades. Founded in 1936, ULI is the nation's premier research institution for urban planning and development.

ULI was first brought to Pottstown in 1976, just after Bethlehem Steel closed its fabricating plant, eliminating 1,000 high-paying jobs. The steel company paid for the ULI study as a farewell gesture to help Pottstown establish a strategy to attract new industry.

The recommendations contained in ULI's report formed a blueprint which the borough followed diligently for years. Many successful initiatives were based on ULI recommendations made in 1976, including:

- Extend Industrial Highway east from Hanover Street to join High Street west of the Central Business District. (Completed in 1987, the highway extension, now called College Drive, was built on the old Penn Central Railroad right-of-way.)
- Develop recreational areas along the Schuylkill River and the Manatawny Creek. (Riverfront Park was developed in 1992, and

the Schuylkill River Greenway extension to West Pottsgrove and Berks County was completed in 2005.)

- Preserve and restore historic buildings (Pottstown's National Register Historic Districts were created in 1985 and 1991, and two local ordinance historic districts were created in 1986 and 1990).
- Subdivide the Bethlehem Steel property for new uses. (This was completed in 1984 and is now the Pottstown Industrial Complex, housing a variety of industries.)
- Reopen Keim Street from the Industrial Highway to High Street (completed in 1992).
- Extend Wilson Street from Farmington Avenue to State Street, connecting central Pottstown to Route 100 (completed in 1990).
- Target vacant land along the Schuylkill River between Route 100 and West Pottsgrove Township for a new industrial park. Keystone Boulevard was constructed in 2003, opening up 58 acres for development).
- Retain the former Reading Railroad station as a transportation center. (The station was rehabilitated for the local district court, but the adjacent area is Pottstown's bus transportation hub.)

We take for granted such things as our historic districts, Riverfront Park, College Drive and Keystone Boulevard. They were all conceived by ULI more than 30 years ago.

**Thursday: ULI's 1989 report provided more good ideas.**



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