

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

ULI 2019 plan: smorgasbord of ideas

Seven community development experts from all over the country have now returned home after spending six days in Pottstown last week crafting a plan to invigorate our borough in the years to come.

This is the fourth Pottstown plan conceived by panelists from the Urban Land Institute, the nation's premier research institution for urban planning. The first was in 1976.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

Although a rough sketch of the 2019 plan was presented last Friday to about 70 Pottstown stakeholders, the finished document won't be ready until January, when it will be published on the website of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, which sponsored the study.

Unlike the ULI plans of 1976 and 1989, the latest plan proposes no catalytic projects of the same scope as developing Pottstown's riverfront or bringing a new borough hall downtown.

Rather, it offers a smorgasbord of ideas, including the following:

- Create a formal process to gather local borough data and receive stakeholder input.
- Task PAID (Pottstown's economic development non-profit) with analyzing Pottstown's market potential.
- Implement an annual business survey.
- Establish an ombudsman to assist navigating the Borough's approval and permitting processes.
- Set up networking events for real estate investors and developers.
- Make the executive director of PAID the point of contact for all business retention, expansion and recruitment efforts.
- Host annual town

hall meetings.

- Task the TriCounty Community Network to carry out a workforce initiative.
- Create a housing inventory directory.
- Streamline the code and inspections process for housing.
- Use the already-established land bank to decrease the number of blighted properties.
- Create a housing resource center with a full-time staff person.
- Identify lending partners and identify funding tools.
- Develop signage for the gateway to Pottstown via Hanover Street and via King Street from Route 100.
- Develop the former Hess gas station site at Hanover Street and College Drive.
- Focus development in the area of the Colebrookdale Railroad, the Carousel, and Memorial Park.
- Create a sports complex in the area along Keystone Boulevard just east of West Pottsgrove Township.
- Focus on the 400 block of High Street and east to the hospital.
- Eliminate inefficiencies and inconsistencies from the borough planning and permitting process.
- Contract with Villanova, Penn, or other universities to facilitate initiatives.

The panel estimated the total cost of physical improvements at \$61 million; one-time expenses of \$740,000; and annual expenses of \$520,000 to carry out its plan.



Urban Land
Institute