Take a walk! Ride your bike!

Government officials are instructing us to shelter in place to protect ourselves and others from the coronavirus.

Are we ever!

As I walk around Pottstown these last few days, I see very few moving cars and very few people, moving or otherwise. I am surprised that, after a week stuck indoors, more people aren’t escaping to the outside.

Folks, it’s perfectly okay to take a walk or ride your bike if you keep your distance from others. You’ll be much better off physically and spiritually, and you might get to see parts of Pottstown you never saw before.

Valerie Arkoosh, M.D., the chair of the Montgomery County Commissioners, who also has a master’s degree in public health, encourages us to escape confinement from time to time and enjoy the great outdoors.

You can walk side-by-side with people sharing your house, like your spouse or children. Just keep a 6-foot buffer from everybody else. The streets are so empty you can veer off the sidewalk if necessary (be vigilant) to avoid other people.

The fresh air will be invigorating.

Walking and biking have always been important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. But now that we’re cooped up all day, it’s more vital than ever just for our sanity.

As one New Yorker recently told a reporter, “As someone who struggled for years with depression, anxiety, and addiction, I am well acquainted with the feeling of needing to escape, wanting to jump out of my skin. When I feel that way, going for a long walk alleviates the pressure.

“They help significantly, by getting me out of my head and boosting the release of much-needed neurotransmitters.”

Many suburbanites associate Pottstown with its downtown and its low income neighborhoods in the center of town.

But the North End, Rosedale, and the East End contain a cornucopia of distinctive housing styles built solidly in stone, brick and wood.

And there’s plenty of room to spread out.

Can’t take that trip because of the pandemic? Get to know your home town up close and personal. Enjoy the scenery. You might find it more attractive than you think.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

RIDE YOUR BIKE! — Pottstown has about 10 miles of bike lanes.

WALK YOUR DOG! — Our dog, Maggie, patiently waits to start her daily walk with my wife, Frances. It’s easy to keep 6 feet of clearance from others.