

# FOCUS ON POTTSTOWN REVITALIZATION

## Progress Being Made in the Revitalization and Reimagining of Pottstown



**By Peggy Lee-Clark,  
Executive Director  
Pottstown Area  
Economic Development,  
Inc. (PAED)**

Recently, Pottstown Area Economic Development's (PAED) Executive Committee hosted a tour for Montgomery County Leadership and Staff. These opportunities not only serve to highlight all that is right with Pottstown but, also serve as great reminders of the progress that is being made in the revitalization and reimagining of Pottstown.

For many decades, Pottstown's industrial and manufacturing businesses brought much success to the Borough. Over time, those same industries shifted, or closed, leaving behind land and buildings that became abandoned sites, and ultimately environmental concerns. Today's investors are managing everything from air quality testing and soil sampling, to securing professional plans, exploring funding through grant programs, clean up, construction and utility upgrades... the list is long, and the timelines require patience and perseverance. As I have often shared,

*"This is a marathon, not a sprint, and some days it's a slog."*

On the tour we made multiple stops and met with developers and employers. The first stop on the tour took us to meet Jay Lankford on the site of the future **ReStream Energy Plant**. There the group had a recap of where the development is in the process. It will be the first major project under the 2018 Keystone Employment & Economic Plan (KEEP) administered and developed by PAED. The Plant will use a green gasification process that produces virtually no emissions or other environmental consequences to produce pipeline-ready renewable diesel, while keeping 200,000 tons of waste out of landfills. At this point, the group is on target to begin moving dirt this summer. The project will not only bring numerous construction jobs during the development phase but, once operational, will require approximately 110 full-time employees.

After leaving Keystone Boulevard, we headed East to Industrial Boulevard. There we made a stop at **215 South Washington Street** — the site of the former Pottstown Plating Works. It is almost unrecognizable. After the former owner left the environmen-

tally contaminated site to decay and his bills unpaid, including years of taxes, there seemed to be no future except for the property to continue to remain a liability and a symbol of a long-forgotten industry. The public entities and creditors were never going to see that money — They had become only numbers on pieces of paper. Through the vision of a local investor and the collaborative work of Pottstown Borough, Pottstown School District, Pottstown Sewer Authority, Montgomery County, Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority and PAED, the property is now environmentally remediated and has been producing tax revenues since 2021. The current owners are working on obtaining a tenant which would have the ability to produce 50 jobs by its second year after relocating to Pottstown. They continue to improve the property both structurally and aesthetically.

The last formal stop on the tour was the **Pottstown Industrial Complex** aka, the partial footprint of the former Bethlehem Steel Facility. The uniformity of the Complex from the outside disguises the diversity of the innovative industries that are currently operating or are under construction to operate in the near future in

the massive interior spaces. Tenants who occupy the more than 800,000 square feet are drawn to the site because of what it can provide. The Industrial Complex has the benefit of high ceilings, heavy power capability, cranes and rail. When so many places like this have been leveled throughout the region for office parks and housing developments, Pottstown is lucky to have this competitive advantage. The group heard about and visited three of the newest tenants. **Toggle** makes products out of rebar which then are delivered to variety of construction projects including cell tower locations. They do this through a combination of using robotics and employees skilled in tying rebar. **APW Turf Management** uses Italian technology to remove, recycle, and maintain sports turf fields. This ecologically friendly technology keeps sports turf from simply ending up in landfills at the end of their lifecycle. **Dowa Holdings Company** from Japan is also using green technology like many of the companies highlighted on the tour. At their location in Pottstown, they will recycle metal in the production of catalytic converters.

The afternoon wrapped up with a stop at The Alley on High Street. We took a

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peek at what will be The Alley's Kiki indoor expansion. It will allow the successful venue to operate year-round and during inclement weather. As we all started departing, all agreed that things are going in the right direction, and we need to keep the positive front and center.

PAED is committed to working alongside responsible investors to re-imagine, convert, and redevelop these same location sites for tomorrow's economy. These projects and properties all have a variety of complexities. One such challenge is bringing older historic buildings into today's code compliance. PAED developed a proposal with input from developers, design professionals, and builders to suggest a DCED grant program for similar boroughs throughout Montgomery County. The funds would be for assisting owners with improvements to the buildings. That proposal has now been expanded to include the entire State and we look forward to its introduction in an upcoming legislative session. Environmental clean-up is a comprehensive process, requiring guidance from county, state, and federal departments. PAED is grateful to all who are contributing to economic development of Pottstown.

*Peggy Lee-Clark can be reached at 610.326.2900;  
email:pleeclark@paedinc.org*

The pending commercial development and investment in Pottstown is exciting and O'Donnell Weiss & Mattei, P.C. is proud to be a part of that growth and revitalization.

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# FOCUS ON POTTSTOWN REVITALIZATION

## Vlahos Dunn Insurance and Iron Gate Biergarten — Invested in Pottstown

By James Vlahos

In 2007 after having a great year in our insurance business, my partner (Tom Dunn) and I decided to look into making another investment in Pottstown. Our insurance agency Vlahos Dunn Insurance has been a staple in the community for more than twenty years, living and breathing the changes that the Pottstown community has experienced over the past two plus decades. As our agency was growing nicely, we found a nice open lot right in the middle of town for sale with an approved plan for a building with commercial space on the first floor and condos on the upper two floors. We purchased the property and started to put our plan together to move forward — Then the Great Recession came in like a lion and put a halt to those plans!

A couple of other opportunities came under consideration over the next several years until a friend of ours



Vlahos Dunn Insurance Headquarters at 1954 E. High Street, Pottstown.

suggested that the lot at 230 E. High Street would make a perfect Beer Garden. We did our research and again formed a partnership, went to the Borough for approval and permitting and built our beautiful beer garden that is now open for all to enjoy. The name “Iron Gate Biergarten” is derived from the strong history of the iron business which built our town. The Iron Gate Biergarten is more than a bar. It’s a place to sit for a spell with old friends and meet new friends while trying Pennsylvania crafted spirits, beers, and




Iron Gate Biergarten located at 230 E. High Street, Pottstown.

ciders while enjoying a piece of history. We will continue to find ways to improve and expand our beer garden in the future. The mission of Iron Gate Biergarten is “Honoring Those Who Served” and for the past 13 years our insurance agency has been raising money for our veterans in the area with a popular annual Vlahos Dunn Insurance Veterans Golf Outing. This year’s outing will be held on September 20.

Go to our Instagram page and follow us and visit [www.irongatebiergarten.com](http://www.irongatebiergarten.com) or call 610.203.4579. Thinking of a place for your event, bridal shower, birthday, or just the right place to gather with friends? Come join us as we grow together, and don’t forget to bring your furry friends! For additional information, please contact Jim Vlahos or Nicholas Vlahos at 610.326.1010; email: [jvlahos@vlahosdunn.com](mailto:jvlahos@vlahosdunn.com); [nvlahos@vlahosdunninsurance.com](mailto:nvlahos@vlahosdunninsurance.com).





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## Hobart's Run is Open for Your Business

Hobart's Run, a neighborhood improvement initiative and 501(c)3 created with support of The Hill School, now offers a Business Incentive Grant!

Qualified new businesses must open in the 500 to 900 blocks of East High Street. Our BIG of up to \$1,500 will help entrepreneurs with their first month's mortgage payment or rent. More information can be found at: [hobartsrunpottstown.org/business](http://hobartsrunpottstown.org/business).

To learn more about Hobart's Run and how we welcome local business development, please email **Twila Fisher**, Executive Director, at [twila@hobartsrunpottstown.org](mailto:twila@hobartsrunpottstown.org), or call

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## Pottstown GoFourth! 2022 Returns to Successful Street Fest Venue

**Downtown streets, Memorial Park to be filled with family-friendly July 4 activities**

This year's Pottstown GoFourth! Festival Independence Day celebration will pay homage to the '70s, with a special nod to one of the originators of the Pottstown 4th of July celebrations of years ago. The day will begin with the Rotary Club of Pottstown July 4 parade on High Street from Adams to York, beginning at 10:15 a.m.

Pottstown GoFourth! Street Fest will get underway at 11:15 a.m. and continue until 4 p.m. Stroll High Street from Penn to York to enjoy live music, local restaurant fare and popular food trucks, Pottstown's brew pubs and beer gardens, artisans and other vendors, nonprofit information exhibits, and children's activities.

Kids Zone will be focused in the area between Penn and Hanover. Organizers are still seeking a sponsorship for the Kids Zone activities. They have added additional face painters this year to accommodate demand. There will be games and entertainment including the ever-popular Judy Tudy the Clown, and living history presented by the Shire of Hartshorn-dale, including reenactments, medieval history, dance, costumes, and combat. New this year is



Scotty Cavanaugh, an "action-comedy juggler" who performs on unicycle.

Live musical entertainment, sponsored by VideoRay, LLC, will be featured at Smith Family Plaza in the 100 Block of High Street. JoAnn Bathurst will open the show with the singing of the National Anthem. Following are country music favorite Stephanie Grace, sponsored by Pottstown Parks and Recreation, Ms. Grace was the opening act for the Taylor Swift concert in Philadelphia on May 14. Hector Rosado y Orchestra Hache are up next, returning for their 6th performance at the festival, and Modern Luxe, back by popular demand, will close out the afternoon. Live sound is provided by Montgomery County Community College's Sound Recording & Technology Department.

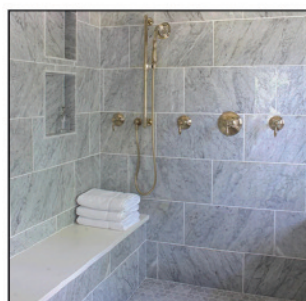
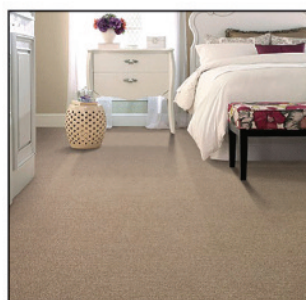
*(Continued on page 14)*

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## POTTSTOWN GoFOURTH!

(Continued from page 13)

Festivalgoers can enjoy the music with a beverage from Sly Fox Beer Garden and food from one of the many food trucks. A number of High Street restaurants also will be open to customers.

The Rotary Duck Race Drawing will take place at 3 p.m. at High and Hanover streets. This event raises money for vital area nonprofit organizations.

The fireworks pre-show party will kick off at 5 p.m. in Memorial Park, 75 W. King St., featuring food trucks, a Sly Fox Beer Garden, Inflatable “rides” for kids, and DJ Q Ball. This year will also see the return of Grandpop Bubbles, a favorite of kids and adults alike, with his giant bubbles to be enjoyed by all. The pyrotechnics, presented by International Fireworks and sponsored again this year by Precision Polymer Products, Inc., will begin at 9:30 p.m.

Parking will be available on the streets where appropriate (please be considerate of our Borough neighbors) and in the Borough of Pottstown lots at South Hanover Street near the train tracks, the lots at High and Evans Street, and the lot on King Street



between Hanover and Penn streets. In addition, free parking will be available on the parking lot at Montgomery County College's South Hall, 101 College Drive. Premium fireworks parking passes will be available, but parking tickets are required; they will go on sale in mid-May at [www.pottstowngofourth.com](http://www.pottstowngofourth.com).

Sponsorships are still available as planners work to meet significant costs and make this genuine Pottstown community celebration extraordinary. Visit [www.pottstowngofourth.com/sponsorships](http://www.pottstowngofourth.com/sponsorships). Volunteers also are needed: [www.pottstowngofourth.com/volunteer](http://www.pottstowngofourth.com/volunteer).

Vendors and nonprofits who would like to set up a stand or table should contact Darlene Bainbridge at [PG4Vendors@gmail.com](mailto:PG4Vendors@gmail.com).



Vendor registration deadline is June 10, 2023.

Pottstown GoFourth! recognizes these valued top-level sponsors to date: Precision Polymer Products, Inc.; VideoRay, LLC. (Entertainment Sponsor).

Donations toward this community event and the Rotary Club of Pottstown Parade are welcomed (and donors will be recog-

nized in the Pottstown Mercury). Please visit [www.pottstowngofourth.com](http://www.pottstowngofourth.com) or by check made out to Tri-County Community Network (TCN), and send to Pottstown GoFourth!, P.O. Box 1362, Pottstown, PA 19464.

Website visitors also can purchase Pottstown GoFourth! shirts and other merchandise, see photo albums, and find other information about this event.

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