

# Borough of Pottstown, Pennsylvania Ordinances Governing Subdivision, Land Development and Zoning

## Preface

This document can be read at two levels:

\* It is Pottstown's official law regarding zoning and the subdivision and development of land within the borough, in accordance with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

\* It is a guide to help citizens understand how we want our town to be developed and the procedures we have established to reach that goal.

To make this law easier to read and understand, this document consists of a concise narrative that explains the basic rules, followed by an appendix containing detailed legal requirements.

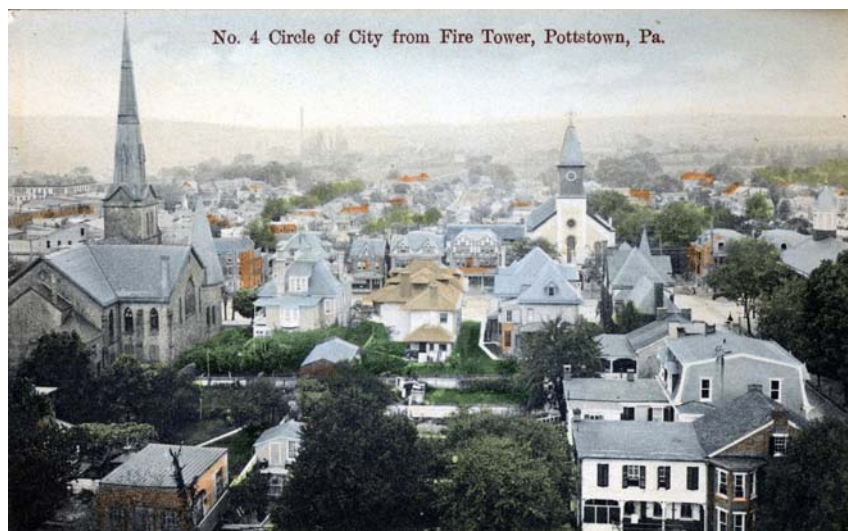
## Community Development Objectives

### Pottstown: historic, traditional, walkable

Over a period of 250 years, Pottstown has evolved into one of the loveliest, most historic, and most livable small towns in Pennsylvania. It has an excellent balance of homes and workplaces. It has beautiful, historic architecture. The compact size of the Borough, about five square miles, places most houses, schools, stores and offices within walking and bicycling distance of each other, at most a 10-minute drive by automobile.

The purpose of these Ordinances is to preserve our small-town charm and enhance it as we build on vacant tracts of land, recycle older buildings, and re-use previously developed parcels of land.

Pottstown has a distinguished heritage. An important iron making center during the colonial era, Pottstown became an industrial giant during the second industrial revolution of the late 19th century and the massive public works era of the early 20th century. Pottstown produced cannon for Washington and Grant, bridges from coast to coast, railroad tracks and cars that helped industrialize America, and steel to build some of the country's first skyscrapers.



*Pottstown circa 1910*

# Community Development Objectives

## Pottstown develops revitalization strategy

Pottstown reached its zenith in the mid-20th century, when its heavy industries were booming, its downtown was the regional center of commerce, and new neighborhoods were still being built. At that time, Pottstown housed people of all ages, races, and incomes, in proportions similar to the Commonwealth as a whole.

With postwar suburbanization, however, Pottstown gradually lost its appeal to many middle class and affluent households. Today, Pottstown has a disproportionate number of low and moderate income families.



*High Street business district in the 1940s*

After reaching its economic and psychological nadir with the loss of industries such as Bethlehem Steel and Firestone in the late 1970s, Pottstown launched several revitalization initiatives.

Pottstown adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1986 which emphasized retaining and building on the traditional character of Pottstown. Since adopting the Comprehensive Plan, Pottstown Borough has participated in five other plans:

- \* Development Strategies Plan, 1989, Urban Land Institute
- \* Downtown Comprehensive Plan, 1994, Urban Partners, consultant
- \* Pottstown Open Space Plan, 1996, Robert Bartmann, AICP, consultant
- \* College Park District Plan, 1998, Urban Research & Develop. Corp., consultant
- \* Community & Economic Development Plan, 2000, Urban Partners, consultant

Two new business campuses have more than replaced the jobs lost with the closing of such industries as Bethlehem Steel. The Borough established two historic districts to preserve Pottstown's unusually fine housing stock, and more than half the town has recently been declared eligible to the National Register of Historic Places by the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office.

Millions of dollars in community development funds have been spent for downtown improvements, and a downtown improvement district authority has been established. Other millions of private dollars have been spent in the restoration of residential and commercial properties since the mid 1980s, especially in the downtown area.



*New Pottstown Borough Hall, 2000*

The Borough opened a new \$4 million Borough Hall in 2000 in the downtown, compatible in appearance to the historic character of High Street, adjacent to a new public park to be completed in 2002.

The Borough is buying parcels of property for the new John Potts Park, which will link existing Borough parks to a greenway the length of the Schuylkill River.

# Community Development Objectives

## Zoning designed to build on Pottstown's heritage

Pottstown residents respect their heritage and celebrate the unique livability of their town. Located in a densely populated region with millions of people, Pottstown provides a niche market among potential residents and businesses who value traditional towns. Recognizing that Pottstown is almost fully built out, and that we wish to enhance the traditional character of our town, the Borough will use its Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances to implement the following goals:

1. Increase the diversity of our population to include people of all ages, races, and incomes in rough proportion to the Commonwealth. At present, Pottstown needs to attract more middle class families to achieve that diversity. To do so, we must market our assets and encourage high quality development compatible with a traditional town.
2. Build on Pottstown's assets and improve our environment by encouraging the restoration and maintenance of our historic building stock; increasing the landscaping of our streets and private properties; and increasing the size and quality of our public parks.
3. Protect our historic and traditional neighborhoods, dating from the mid-1800s to the 1950s, by ensuring that new construction conforms with existing structures in setbacks, bulk, and appearance, and ensuring that parking lots are as unobtrusive as possible.
4. Promote the health and sociability of Pottstown residents, and the vibrancy of our streets, by encouraging people to walk or bicycle for some of their activities. Walking and bicycling is best encouraged by permitting a mixture of small stores and offices in close proximity to residential areas; by promoting well-landscaped sidewalks and bike lanes; by designing streets to slow down auto traffic; and by ensuring that parking lots are well landscaped and no larger than necessary.
5. Mitigate some of the planning mistakes of the past by retrofitting auto-oriented areas with landscaped sidewalks and parking lots; by providing maximum as well as minimum parking spaces for various uses; and by allowing the construction of new buildings closer together, to create the kind of urban fabric that we enjoy in Pottstown's traditional neighborhoods.
6. Improve the appearance of Pottstown's gateways such as East High Street, South Hanover Street, and West High Street by setting minimum architectural standards to make new buildings compatible in appearance and quality to our traditional neighborhoods. This is especially important for franchise businesses whose "signature" buildings may detract from our visual environment.



*High Street shopping district*



*Pottstown Historic District*