

POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



2022 MEMBERSHIP

DOUGLASS TOWNSHIP

Don Bergstresser
Pete Hiryak
Joshua Stouch

EAST COVENTRY TOWNSHIP

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Larry Tietjen
N. Lance Parson (Alternate)

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Thomas Troutman (Chair)
Ray Lopez

NEW HANOVER TOWNSHIP

Keith Youse
Kurt Zebrowski

NORTH COVENTRY TOWNSHIP

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Bill Soumis

POTTSTOWN BOROUGH

Daniel D. Weand
Ryan Procsal (Treasurer)

UPPER POTTSGROVE TOWNSHIP

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William Hewitt

WEST POTTSGROVE TOWNSHIP

Howard E. Shawell

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Bonnie Frisco (Non-Voting Member)

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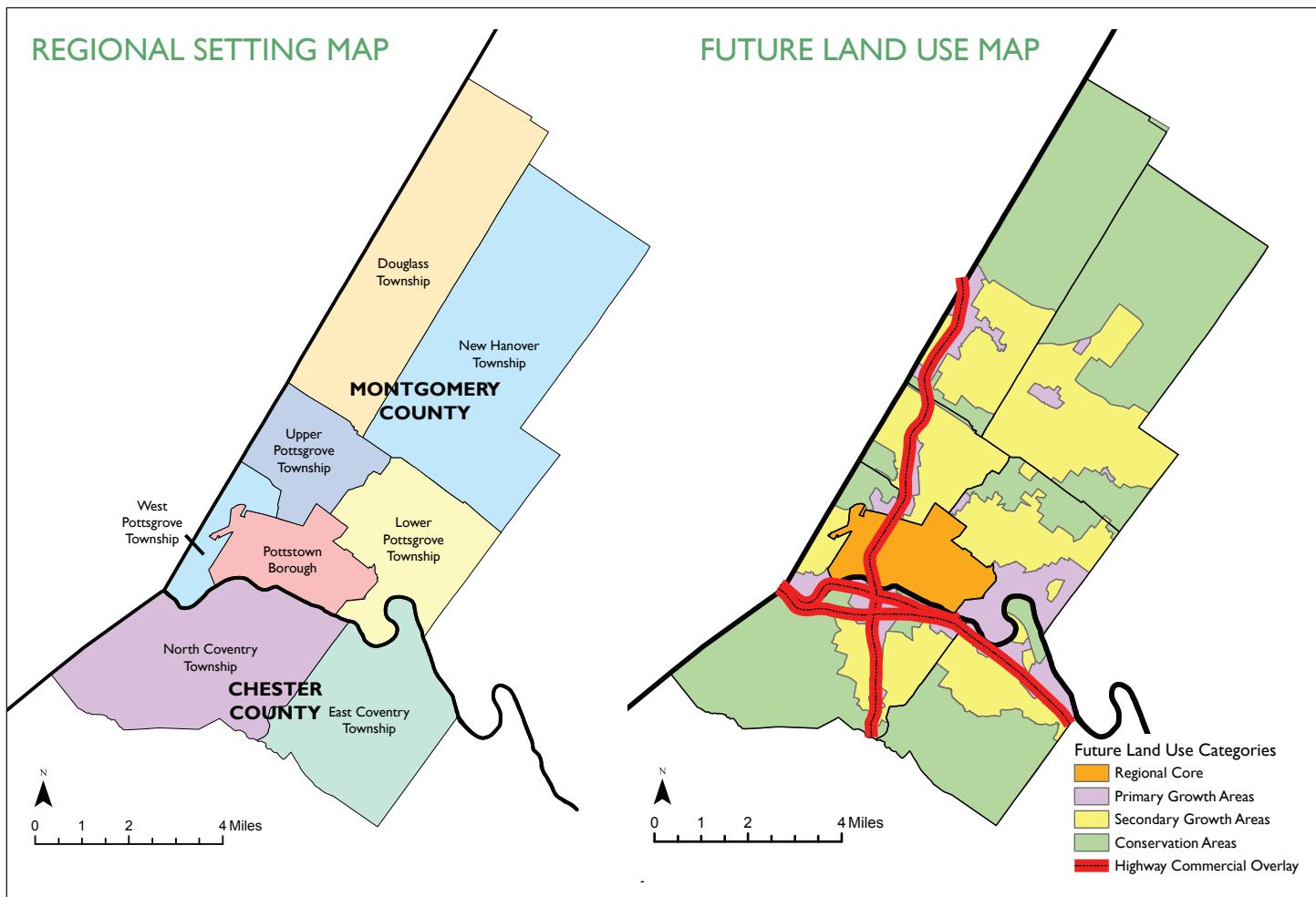
PMRPC PURPOSE

“The Pottstown Metropolitan Region is positioned directly in the path of growth as it continues to expand outward from Philadelphia and its suburbs. It is a well-balanced region with a richly diverse landscape of historic communities, attractive suburban neighborhoods, industry, commercial centers, rolling farmlands and abundant natural resources. The intersection of US Route 422 and PA Route 100 in the middle of the region provides a gateway for new growth. The region’s communities recognize that they are at a crossroads for directing growth and this is the catalyst for the region’s eight municipalities working together to plan their future. Especially important for the region is directing growth into the region’s older communities and designated growth areas, particularly the Borough of Pottstown, in order to revitalize these older places, maximize the costly public infrastructure of the region, and preserve the region’s rural areas.

Through regional cooperation and planning the Pottstown Metropolitan Region intends to:

- Protect the unique historical, cultural, and natural resources of the region.
- Promote the economic vitality and quality of life of the region’s existing communities.
- Implement growth management techniques to provide for orderly and well-planned new development.
- Preserve open space and agriculture in the region.
- Develop transportation choices for better mobility in and through the region.
- Encourage walkable communities with a mix of uses and a range of housing options where appropriate.
- Promote new economic opportunities and jobs.
- Maintain and improve recreation options.
- Address the specific needs and unique conditions of each municipality.”

Source: Pottstown Metropolitan Region Intergovernmental Cooperative Implementation Agreement for Regional Planning (April 12, 2010)



FEATURED PROJECT: SCHUYLKILL RIVER PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY

In early 2022, the County Commissioners of Montgomery, Berks, and Chester counties authorized the creation of the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA). The SRPRA was established in order for the counties to jointly oversee the further planning for and implementation of the restoration of passenger rail service between Philadelphia and Reading. Recent planning studies have demonstrated that restoring passenger rail service along this line, including a station in Pottstown Borough, could have a significant positive impact on mobility options, economic development, and equitable transportation access.

In June 2022, Amtrak launched a new Thruway Bus Service that offers two round-trips daily between Reading, Pottstown, and Philadelphia, where riders can access the greater Amtrak network.

The Amtrak Connects US Program and PennDOT's State Rail Plan both support the restoration of passenger rail service along the Schuylkill River corridor, including Pottstown. Under the guidance of an executive director and a 9-member board with equal representation from all three counties, SRPRA is actively working to restore this service by coordinating with Amtrak, SEPTA, local governments, and state and federal agencies. Specifically, SRPRA intends to enter the federal Corridor ID Program in order to fund the rail restoration.

For more information: <https://www.gosrpra.com/>



Pottstown's historic train station is currently utilized as the Charles W. Dickinson Transportation Center for the local Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) bus service.



Inset map of proposed route (in light blue) between Philadelphia and Reading
(Source: <https://media.amtrak.com/amtrak-connects-us/>).

POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015 as an update to the first regional comprehensive plan adopted in 2005. The 2015 Regional Comprehensive Plan lays out goals and objectives for the region related to economic development, housing, parks and recreation, open space, natural resource protection, agriculture, transportation, and community facilities.

No amendments to the regional comprehensive plan were reviewed or adopted by the Committee during 2022.

ZONING ORDINANCE AND MAP CONSISTENCY REVIEWS

All proposed zoning text or zoning map amendments that change the standards regulating use, residential density, or non-residential intensity within a member municipality are sent to the Committee for review and comment. The Committee reviews the proposed amendment to determine whether it is generally consistent with the stated goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Ordinance Repealing the Age Qualified Overlay District—Upper Pottsgrove Township – At the March meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed zoning amendment to repeal the Age Qualified Overlay District. The committee determined the zoning amendment to be generally consistent with the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Gateway Interchange District Amendments—Lower Pottsgrove Township – At the March meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed zoning text amendment to modify the permitted uses, dimensional standards, and special development regulations in the G-IN Gateway Interchange District. The committee determined the zoning text amendment to be generally consistent with the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Various Zoning Map Amendments—New Hanover Township – At the April meeting, PMRPC reviewed a set of proposed zoning map amendments to expand the R-2 Residential Modified District south of Swamp Picnic Road; and to eliminate the CB-2 Commercial Business District, the TN Traditional Neighborhood District, and the HI Heavy Industrial District. The committee determined the zoning map amendments to be generally consistent with the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Junkyard Ordinance—New Hanover Township – At the April meeting, PMRPC reviewed a zoning text amendment to add junkyard as a permitted use in the LI Light Industrial District. The committee determined the zoning text amendment to be generally consistent with the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan for the Pottstown Metropolitan Region as outlined in the 2015 Regional Comprehensive Plan includes policies and maps intended to guide future growth in the Region for the next 20 years (see the Future Land Use Map on page 1).

SUBDIVISIONS AND LAND DEVELOPMENTS OF REGIONAL IMPACT

Any subdivision or land development proposal within the Region which meets the definition of a “subdivision or land development of regional impact” is reviewed by the Committee. The Committee reviews and provides advisory comments to the individual municipality where the proposal is located as it relates to the stated goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted Regional Comprehensive Plan.

New Hanover Town Center—New Hanover Township – At the January meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed development of a mixed-use town center with a total of 638 dwelling units (187 village houses, 96 twins, 78 atrium houses, 263 townhouses, 13 multifamily, and 1 existing single-family detached home to remain), 159,400 square feet of retail space, 30,300 square feet of office space, 90 hotel rooms, and 63.6 acres of open space. PMRPC provided comments on proposed residential density calculations relative to the future land use plan, vehicular access and traffic impacts, phasing of the development, the potential impact of the area of the site shown for future development, the need for updated traffic counts for the transportation impact study, potential impacts on the school district, and trail locations within the floodplain of Minister Creek.

Greens at Gilbertsville—New Hanover Township – At the May meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed redevelopment of the Gilbertsville Golf Course with 297 single-family detached homes. PMRPC provided comments on vehicular access and traffic impacts, pedestrian circulation, and relationship to regional trails.

Royal Farms (updated) —Lower Pottsgrove Township — At the May meeting, PMRPC reviewed a revised development proposal for a Royal Farms gas station with 16 pumps, a convenience store, a drive-through car wash, a drive-through retail building, and a storage facility. PMRPC noted concerns regarding storm drainage, as previously communicated in a letter dated August 27, 2021.

Rt. 100 Medical Facility—Douglass Township — At the June meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed development of two medical buildings: a 3-story medical office building with 60,000 square feet and a 1-story hospital with 22,194 square feet. PMRPC provided comments on stormwater management and relationship to “Future Market Street”.

Valley Forge Properties/Sanatoga Marketplace—Lower Pottsgrove Township — At the June meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed development of two warehouse/distribution buildings totaling 133,432 square feet. PMRPC provided comments on potential truck traffic impacts on Rupert Road.

Madison Walk—Douglass Township — At the September meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed development of 136 residential units (47 townhomes, 73 single-family detached homes, 16 twins) as part of a larger development with 68 additional residential units in Colebrookdale Township, Berks County. PMRPC provided comments on potential off-site traffic impacts, stormwater management, street trees, and regional trail connections.

Wawa—Lower Pottsgrove Township — At the December meeting, PMRPC reviewed a proposed development of a 6,049 square foot Wawa Food Market and associated gas pumps. PMRPC provided comments on future sidewalk connections in the vicinity.

2022 GUEST SPEAKERS

- **February** – Jon Lesher, LEED GA, Environmental Planning Assistant Manager & Ellis Foley, AICP, LEED GA, Environmental Planner II, Montgomery County Planning Commission (Montgomery County Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis)
- **March** – Scott France, AICP, Executive Director & Matthew Edmond, AICP, Assistant Director of Transportation and Long-Range Planning, Montgomery County Planning Commission (Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority)
- **June** – Tricia McCloskey, AICP, Pottstown Area Regional Parks Planner (Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee Update)

REGIONAL GRANT PROGRAMS

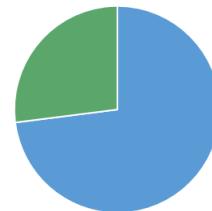
PREVIOUS MINI-GRANTS ROUNDS #1-4: 2013-2022



37
Projects



8
Municipalities



73% park development projects
27% park planning projects

\$725,521
Total grant funds awarded

MINI-GRANTS PROGRAM

The Pottstown Parks and Recreation Improvement Mini-Grant Program is a local grant program jointly-administered by PMRPC and the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation (PAHWF) with grant funding from DCNR which is matched 50:50 locally by PAHWF. Mini-grants are available to all eight of the municipalities within the Region. The program is designed to fund park improvements to increase park usage and improve the health of area residents.

MINI-GRANTS ROUND #4: 2021-2024

Throughout 2022, PMRPC worked with its member municipalities, PAHWF, and PARRC to manage the fourth round of mini-grants.



Pottstown Borough was awarded \$25,000 in mini-grant funding for the rehabilitation of two basketball courts at Spruce Street Park. The court on the north side of the park required full removal and replacement, whereas the court on the south side received a major renovation. An accessible pathway was also constructed, connecting the sidewalk along Spruce Street to the courts.

MINI-GRANTS ROUND #5: 2023-2026

In 2022, PMRPC received a \$100,000 grant from DCNR, which will again be matched locally by PAHWF, to fund Round 5 of the mini-grant program..

This next round will expand the scope of the program to allow for funding the establishment of shared-use agreements between municipalities and local school districts, plus it will encourage planning and development projects to enhance recreational amenities under such agreements. PMRPC is anticipating new and exciting partnerships to emerge from this and subsequent rounds of funding! The application period is planned for fall of 2023.



East Coventry Township was awarded \$25,000 to complete the design of a pedestrian bridge over the Pigeon Creek in Ellis Woods Park. The proposed bridge was identified as a missing link between the park and the nearby Creekview neighborhood. It is anticipated that creating this new connection will eliminate the need for many residents to drive to the park.