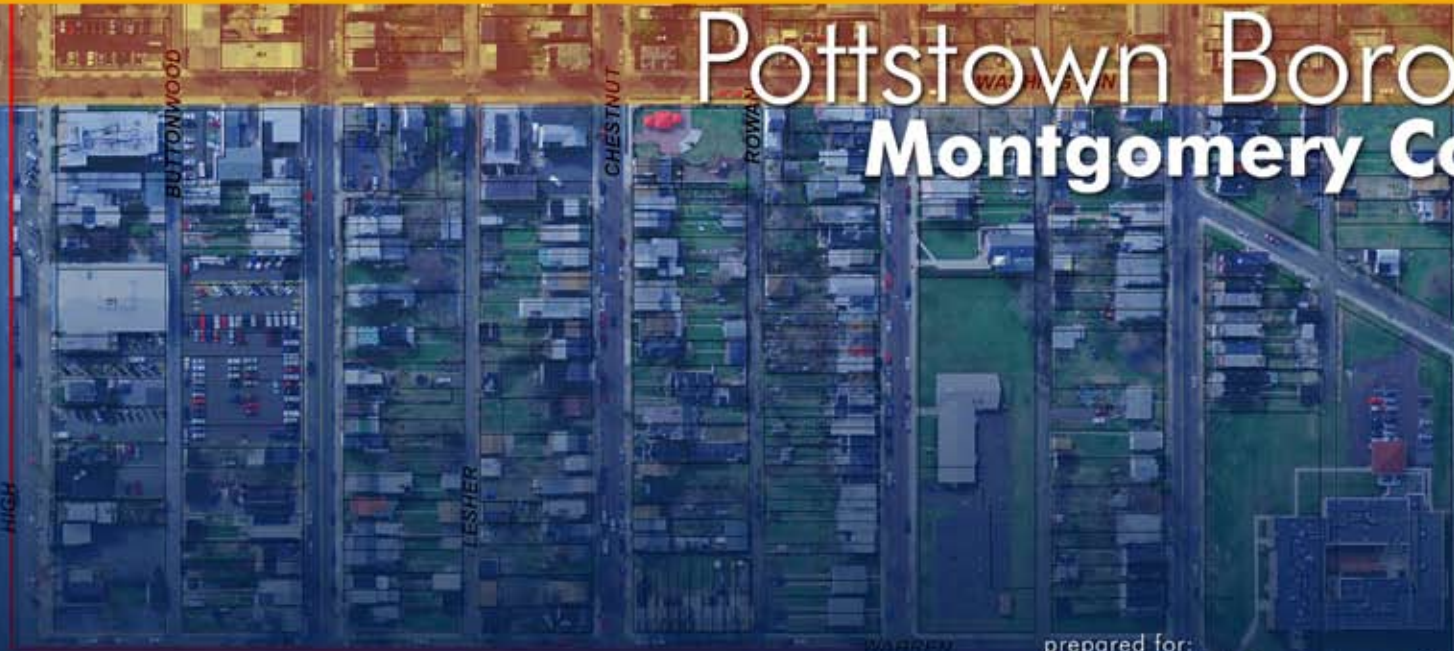


February 2010

# Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan Update



## Pottstown Borough Montgomery County



prepared for:  
Genesis Housing Corporation

prepared by:  
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## Steering Committee

- Dave Garner, Pottstown Borough Council
- Ellen Crain, Susquehanna Bank
- Alison Hunter, Lighthouse Bookstore/Resident
- Michelle Borzick, Borough of Pottstown
- Bill Sharon, Borough of Pottstown
- Katrina Belcher, Susquehanna Bank
- Thomas Hylton, Pottstown Planning Commission
- Newstell Marable, Pottstown Branch NAACP



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## Executive Summary

### About Genesis Housing Corporation

Since 1994, Genesis Housing Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has served Montgomery County as a community housing development organization (CHDO) and is dedicated to the development of affordable housing and to the education of consumers on housing and financial issues.

### 2010 Washington Street Action Plan

The 2010 Washington Street Action Plan, which is an update to the 2000 plan, is a community-based revitalization plan for the Washington Street neighborhood in Pottstown, PA. The preparation of the plan was made possible by a grant from Susquehanna Bank.

A comprehensive neighborhood plan was developed and is being implemented to improve the housing stock, reduce crime and revitalize this deteriorated section of Pottstown. To date, more than sixty properties have benefited from the Genesis Housing Corporation program in Pottstown.

A Steering Committee of Borough leaders helped guide the preparation of the plan update. While the previous plan focused on problem corner properties, the 2010 plan has adopted a mid-block property improvements strategy for the next decade. A community meeting was also held and the plan presented to Pottstown Borough Council. Emphasis is also placed on improving the neighborhood

streetscape.

### Implementation and Funding

The responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of this update study will be the responsibility of many organizations and individuals. Genesis Housing Corporation is committed to continue its past practices of acquiring, renovating and selling affordable homes to eligible home buyers. In Pottstown, Genesis Housing Corporation's projects are funded by Montgomery County's Housing Trust Fund, HOME Investment Partnership and Community Development Block Grant programs. Additional funds are provided by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

### Demonstration Projects

In order to help stimulate additional redevelopment in the Washington Street neighborhood, five demonstration projects were selected to illustrate possible adaptive reuse for each of these locations. Only one of the sites – the Chestnut Street Park – is in public ownership. The other four are all privately owned. These recommendations are aimed at increasing interest in redevelopment of these privately held sites. These adaptive reuse ideas can also be applied to other properties in the Washington Street Neighborhood and Borough toward neighborhood revitalization and community building.



# I. Introduction

## Genesis Housing Corporation

Since 1994, Genesis Housing Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has served Montgomery County as a community housing development organization (CHDO) and is dedicated to the development of affordable housing and to the education of consumers on housing and financial issues. Genesis Housing's activities include the rehabilitation and new construction of homes to improve and stabilize neighborhoods and to provide opportunities for lower income homebuyers to purchase homes at affordable prices. Genesis Housing Corporation also provides monthly classes and individual counseling to help overcome barriers to home ownership, financial education and foreclosure prevention.

The programs implemented by Genesis Housing Corporation include:

1) The Housing Counseling Program provides free classes and individual counseling helping over 3,500 potential first-time homebuyers. Monthly classes focus on topics not taught in regular school including understanding credit, credit repair, money management, saving plans, grant programs and understanding the home buying process including selecting a realtor and finding the best mortgage. Genesis Housing Corporation has been certified as a FannieMae Counseling Agency and is approved by PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD). Providing certified counseling programs allows qualified buyers to participate in special bank and government programs for lower interest rates and/or fees for their mortgages. Genesis Housing Corporation is also an approved agency for Montgomery County's and Norristown's First-Time Home Buyers Programs.

- 2) The Norristown Neighborhood Project acquires and renovates homes to resell at affordable prices to help lower income families to purchase their first homes in the Norristown, PA. Phases 1 and 2 of the Norristown Neighborhood Project have been completed and nineteen vacant homes were rehabbed and sold to first-time homebuyers. The federally funded program helped return vacant properties to the tax rolls and keeps owner-occupied homes from becoming rental units.
- 3) The Montgomery County Homeowner Rehab Program provides grants and technical assistance to qualified lower income owners to improve their homes and eliminate housing code violations. Genesis Housing Corporation coordinates the program for the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Development. Genesis Housing Corporation also coordinates the Handicapped Access Program for Montgomery County.
- 4) The Spring Avenue Condo Development is a 10-unit development of semi-attached homes in Ardmore, PA. The first phase of six affordable homes was completed and sold to lower income first-time homebuyers in 2003 and the second phase was completed in 2004. President George

Bush honored this project with a visit in March, 2004. Genesis Housing Corporation continues to work as the staff for the Lower Merion Affordable Housing Corporation.

- 5) The Cooperative Project was a multi-agency effort to provide a two-year program of supportive transitional housing for women and children who have experienced domestic violence. Genesis Housing Corporation renovated three apartments and three single-family homes for the program.
- 6) The Washington Street Action Plan which is the focus of this plan update is a community-based revitalization plan for the Washington Street neighborhood in Pottstown, PA. A comprehensive neighborhood plan was developed and is being implemented to improve the housing stock, reduce crime and revitalize this deteriorated section of Pottstown.
  - A. The Targeted Owner-Occupied Property Rehab Program provides grants and technical assistance to qualified lower income homeowners to improve their Washington Street neighborhood homes and eliminate housing code violations. To date, over 45 homes have been rehabilitated or are in the process of undergoing renovations for the program. Targeted Homeowner Rehab brings homes up to local codes, including lead paint testing and abatement, new roofing, new heating systems, and new electrical systems.
  - B. The Washington Street Neighborhood Project acquires and renovates vacant Washington

Street properties to resell at affordable prices to improve the housing stock and revitalize the neighborhood. Seventeen vacant properties have had extensive rehab or are currently under rehab for resale to lower income homebuyers. Genesis Housing Corporation is working with the Borough of Pottstown to condemn long-term vacant properties to continue the acquisition and rehabilitation of vacant deteriorated properties.

- C. Walnut Street Homes Development - Little's Bar was a long-term severely deteriorated vacant bar and rooming house that was a blighting influence on the neighborhood and a corner hangout for drug dealers. The building was demolished to create the building lot for the construction of four new semi-attached homes. Construction is completed and the four new affordable homes have been sold to new homebuyers.
  
- D. Warren Street Homes Development - Four new homes were constructed on a vacant lot one block east of the Little's Bar site in cooperation with ACLAMO, the local Hispanic social service agency. Construction is completed and the four homes have been sold to new homebuyers.
  
- E. Jefferson School Apartment Project is a low income tax credit project that converted an old school in the Washington Street neighborhood to forty-six affordable apartments for senior citizens. In partnership with Pennrose

Properties, Genesis Housing Corporation has received historic and low income tax credits for this project that completed construction in August, 2003.

- F. The May Street Crossing Development built twenty-eight new homes for sale to first-time homebuyers in the neighborhood near the Jefferson School Apartments. In partnership with Pennrose Properties, Genesis Housing Corporation has received PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) Home Ownership Choice funds and Montgomery County Housing Trust funds. Construction of the new homes is completed and all of the homes have been sold.

Through this program, Genesis Housing purchases, rehabs, and resells homes at affordable sale prices with an interest free soft second mortgage for the difference between the sale price and the appraised value of the home. To date, Genesis has been involved with improvements to 100 homes and 46 affordable senior apartments. These various programs are as follows:

Program	Units
Revitalization and resale	24
Pottstown Targeted Homeowner Rehab	42
Pottstown Homeowner Façade Program	6
May Street Crossing in Partnership w/ Pennrose Prop.	28
Jefferson Street Apartments	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>

# Year 2000 Washington Street Action Plan

Many of the projects that Genesis completed were made possible in part by the work that was done in the 2000 Washington Street Neighborhood Plan. The 2000 plan documented neighborhood conditions, identified strengths and challenges within the neighborhood's physical and social framework, and made recommendations for improvements to the district. Recommendations included improvements to the streetscape on Washington Street, the police substation, renovations to the Dairy on Chestnut and Washington Streets, and improvements to specific buildings and lots. Six renovations projects were used for before and after sketches. Relative costs and phasing plans were also included in the plan.



## Genesis Housing Corporation Washington Street Action Plan



January 12, 2000

Genesis Housing Corporation  
P.O. Box 1475  
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19101

Becker Winston Architects  
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Philadelphia, PA 19104

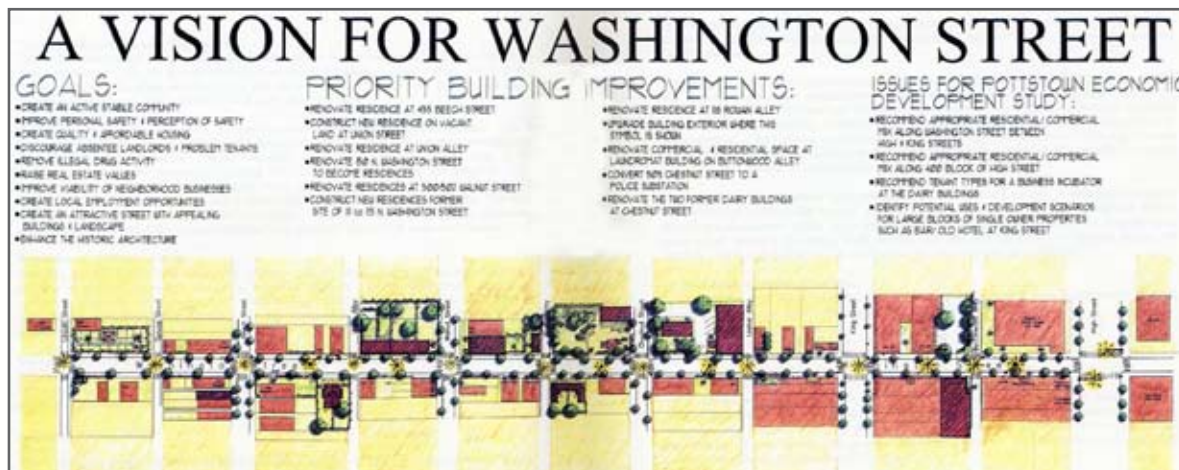
Carter Van Dyke Associates  
40 Garden Alley  
Doylestown, PA 18901

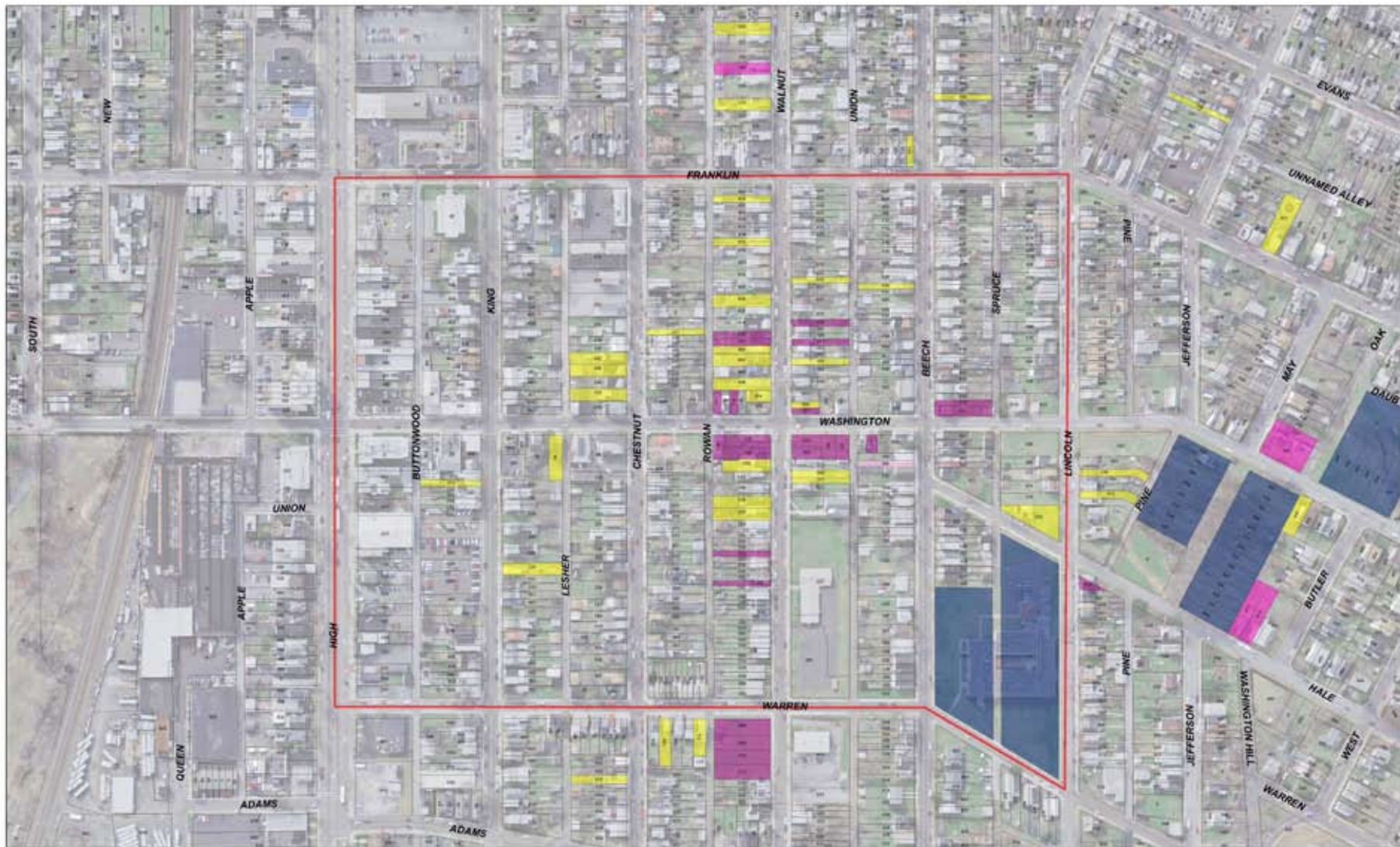
This 2010 Washington Street Neighborhood Update is intended to document the progress since 2000 and to plan for the next phases of neighbor reinvestment and redevelopment.

The progress that Genesis Housing Corporation has made in the Washington Avenue Area neighborhood since 2000 can be seen on a map of the neighborhood that indicates projects by lot. This map shows more than sixty properties have benefited from Genesis Housing Corporation projects.

The 2000 plan focused on street corners, where there was more drug and crime activity. Over the past decade, Genesis Housing has worked closely with the community and the results are beginning to show a shift in the neighborhood character. New residents are coming to the neighborhood and there is an expanding sense of community, as evidenced by those attending meetings.

For the 2010 Plan Update, a mid-block strategy has been adopted for the next 10 years. Also, emphasis





Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan Update  
Pottstown Borough, Montgomery County  
Genesis Housing Corporation

■ Targeted     
 ■ Revitalization Project     
 ■ Partnership Project  
■ Genesis Other     
 ■ Facade Program

Neighborhood Focus Area



Sixty properties have been improved by Genesis Housing Corporation

should be placed on improving the neighborhood streetscape, especially if federal stimulus and Transportation Enhancement funds become available.

Rehabilitation has always been the preferred course of action in addressing blighted properties. This approach was echoed at the meetings with the Steering Committee and community. The demonstration projects proposed by this plan follow that approach.

## Committee oversight and public input

Public outreach for the update to the Washington Street Plan was provided through working with a steering committee and public meetings.

There were three committee meetings and two public meeting. Notes from these meetings are in the appendix of this report.

The committee included representatives from the neighborhood, Pottstown Borough Government, elected officials, and others interested in the neighborhood. The group met three times during the planning process to guide recommendations and provide needed information. A list of committee members and notes from the meetings are provided in the appendix of this report.

The first public meeting was a community meeting held at the Ricketts Center (Olivet Boys and Girls Club). More than a dozen residents came out and provided their comments and concerns for the



neighborhood and suggested ideas about projects that would help improve conditions. The second public meeting was a presentation to Borough Council in March 2010.

## Susquehanna Bank

A grant from Susquehanna Bank funded this Update of the Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan. Susquehanna Bank is committed to supporting the communities in which it serves and through the Neighborhood Partnership Program, a program of the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, Susquehanna Bank has donated funds to Genesis Housing Corporation. In addition to its monetary donation, the bank has pledged continued proactive involvement including providing mortgages to low-income homebuyers and administrative support to assist Genesis Housing Corporation.

Susquehanna Bank DV, headquartered in Camden, N.J., is a subsidiary of Susquehanna Bancshares, Inc. Susquehanna Bank operates retail branches throughout Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland and Gloucester counties in New Jersey; and Berks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery and Northampton counties in Pennsylvania. For more information, visit [www.susquehanna.net](http://www.susquehanna.net).



## II. Background Information

### Location, size, & character

The Washington Street neighborhood is located adjacent to downtown Pottstown to the east (Wards 1 & 2). The study area is bound by High Street to the south, Franklin Street to the west, Lincoln Avenue to the north, and Warren Street to the east. Cross streets include the 300 and 400 blocks of High, King, Chestnut, Walnut, and Beech Streets and Lincoln Avenue. Five alleys also intersect Washington Street as follows: Buttonwood, Leshner, Rowan, Union, and Spruce. The area includes ten blocks, 442 parcels, 54 acres, and 984 residential units.



Pottstown is located in western Montgomery County approximately 40 miles to the west of Philadelphia and 20 miles to the east of the City of Reading. The Borough has a population of just under 22,000 residents. Pottstown was once a booming steel industry town, but declined in recent decades as

its infrastructure has aged and its businesses and residents have moved to the surrounding suburban and exurban areas.

### Demographics

The Washington Street neighborhood is located at the intersection of three US Census tract areas. There is no totally accurate method for determining the population of the neighborhood. However, based on 2009 data on household size (average 2.5 persons per household) provided by Policy Map (Policy Map is produced by The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) a national leader in the financing of neighborhood revitalization) and based on there being approximately 980 residential units in the study area, the neighborhood population is approximately 2,450 persons.

Estimated average household size in the neighborhood varies slightly. West of Washington Street, average household size is 2.39 persons or less. East of Washington, it is on average 2.4 to 2.73 persons. North of Beech, it is 2.74 persons or more.

The estimated percentage of persons with a Bachelor's degree is between 7.93% to 16.74 percent in the area west of Washington. North or Beech Street, that number is 7.92% or less. There is insufficient data for the areas east of Washington Street.

In terms of race, approximately 30.6% or more of the neighborhoods population were of a race other than white.

Again, based on data from Policy Map, median per

capita income is approximately \$19,100. Median household income is estimated at \$37,400 or less for most of the area, but for the area north of Beech Street, higher median household incomes, between \$37,400 and \$57,000 are indicated. Generally, these figures correlate to the type, size and quality of the residential structures between these two areas of the neighborhood.

According to Policy Map, 2009 median home values for owner-occupied homes in the neighborhood ranged from \$120,000 to \$178,000. The estimated percent of all households that own their own home was 61% or less.

As of year 2000, the percentage of households who moved into their homes before 1980 (20 year residents) was 21% or less for most of the neighborhood. North of Beech Street, however, that percentage was 21% or more. This data agrees with greater values for owner-occupied homes in that same area.

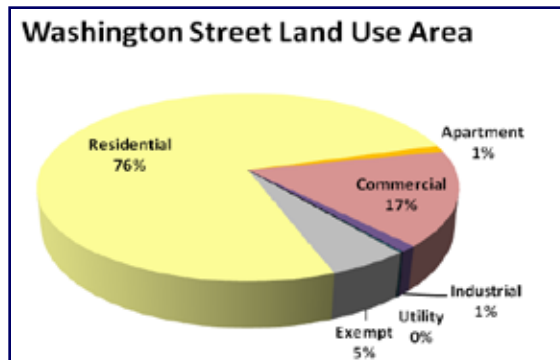
Vacancy rates of all residential units in 2009 in the neighborhood vary. West of Washington, vacancy is greater than 6%. East of Washington, vacancy is estimated at between 3.2% and 6%. North of Beech, vacancy falls to between 1.6% and 3.2%.

This information also correlates with the preponderance of multi-unit buildings, since the percent of households that live in buildings with between 3 and 19 units is 24.3% west of Washington. This falls to between 10.4% and 24.3% east of Washington and north of Beech, the number is between 3.5% and 10.4%.



## Land use

The neighborhood is predominantly residential with commercial uses along High Street, which is

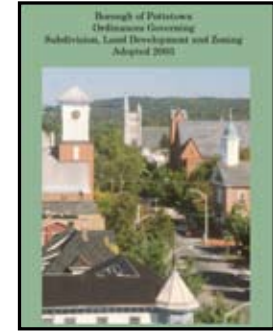


Pottstown's traditional "main street." A few large apartment projects are located in the study area, including Jefferson Street Apartments and the Robert E. Smith Senior Homes. There are also a few scattered industrial uses, notably the vacant Dairy, and a number of "exempt" uses which include public lands and non-profit institutions such as churches.

## Pottstown Borough Land Use Regulations and Plans

The majority of the study area is in the TTN – Traditional Town Neighborhood District. It is a residential district and does not allow commercial, retail or office uses as a permitted use. Office and restaurants are permitted within existing structures

as a conditional use. Conversion of single family homes into multifamily units is discouraged by required a ground floor of at least 2,400 square feet, which does not typically exist in the neighborhood. The ordinance's standards are provided in greater detail (page 9)



### Residential Rental Permit Requirements

Pottstown requires that rental units be inspected prior to being rented to ensure that they meet the Borough's code, which is designed to ensure the safety and welfare of renters.

## TTN – Traditional Town Neighborhood Conservation District

**Conversion of single family homes is discouraged.**

### Permitted Uses:

- Apartment/Condo. With a **minimum ground floor of 2,400 SF**
- Single Family Detached Residence
- Single Family Semi-Detached Residence

## TTN

### Permitted Uses:

- Apartment/Condo. With a minimum ground floor of 2,400 SF
- Single Family Detached Residence
- Single Family Semi-Detached Residence

### Accessory Uses:

- Private Garage
- Greenhouse
- Home Occupation
- Parking Lot
- Storage Shed (max. 100 square feet)
- Swimming Pool

### Special Exceptions:

- Boarding Home
- Convalescent Home
- Group Home
- Bed and Breakfast

### Conditional Use:

- Church
- Child Care Facility
- Single Family Attached Dwelling
- School
- Social Club
- Utility Company
- Uses of the Same General Character

### Existing Building Conditional Uses

- Office
- Office on First Floor and Dwelling(s) on Second Floor
- Direct Retail (min. 1,500 s.f. ground floor)
- Direct Service (min. 1,500 s.f. ground floor)
- Restaurant – non alcoholic (min. 1,500 s.f. ground floor)
- Apartment

### Minimum Lot Size:

Only required for subdivisions comprising 3 or more acres

### Bulk and Area Standards:

Front, Side and Rear Setbacks: Use the average setback of existing buildings on the same block facing the same street within a 250' radius; or, the same distance as at least 30 percent of the buildings on the same block facing the same street within a 250' radius. Adjustments of 30% to 50% of the average is permitted depending on setback location.

Building Size: Average size of buildings on the same block facing the same street within a 250' radius; or, average size of at least 30% of the buildings on the same block facing the same street within a radius of 250'. The above may be adjusted by up to 30%. A new building or building addition may be 30% to 100% larger than existing buildings facing the same block if they can meet requirements of a conditional use.

### SECTION 803. Repairs and Maintenance.

1. Normal maintenance repairs and incidental alterations of a structure containing a non-conforming use are permitted provided they do not extend the area or volume of space occupied by the nonconforming use.
2. Residential non-conforming uses may be altered to improve interior livability, provided that no structural alterations shall be made which would increase the number of dwelling units or the bulk of the building.

### ZONING SECTION 804. Restoration of Damaged Non-conforming Uses.

1. Non-conforming structures damaged or destroyed by fire, explosion, accident or other calamity (as contrasted to deterioration because of time or neglect) may be constructed and used as before; provided, that:
  - A. The reconstruction building shall not exceed the dimensions of the damaged or destroyed building, including height, width, depth and volume.
  - B. Building construction shall be started within six months from the date the building was damaged or destroyed, and shall be carried out without interruption, and shall be completed within one year of the date the building was damaged or destroyed.
2. Non-conforming structures which have been condemned by the Pottstown Zoning Officer shall not be rebuilt or used except in conformance with this Chapter.



# ZONING MAP

## BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

- CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
  - NR NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL
  - TTN TRADITIONAL TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD
  - D DOWNTOWN
- GATEWAY DISTRICTS
  - NB NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS
  - DG DOWNTOWN GATEWAY
  - GE GATEWAY EAST
  - GW GATEWAY WEST
  - P PARK
- OTHER DISTRICTS
  - FO FLEX OFFICE
  - HB HIGHWAY BUSINESS
  - HM HEAVY MANUFACTURING



### Pottstown Historic District

The Pottstown Historic District includes all the properties along High Street and on either side of the 400 Block of King Street within the study area.

### Old Pottstown Historic District

The Old Pottstown Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. The area encompasses the entire study area, but does not restrict use of buildings or require any permitting. The designation does provide the opportunity to use historic tax credits for improvements to commercial historic buildings that meet the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation.

### ULI Advisory Panel

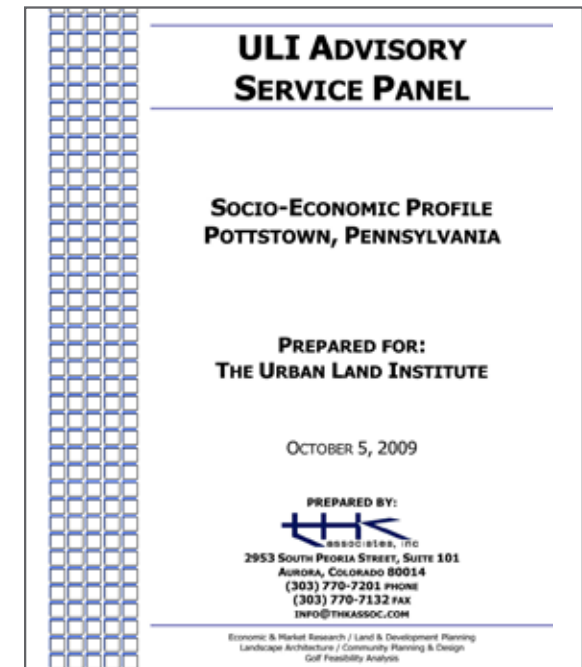
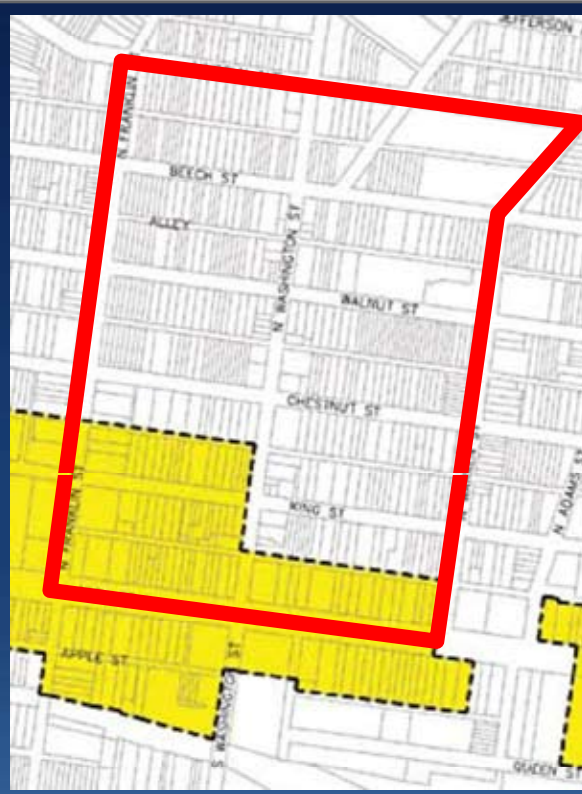
The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is an internationally renowned real estate and development research and education organization with a mission to, "To promote leadership in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities worldwide." They have performed three Advisory Panels for Pottstown in 1976, 1989, and in 2009. The most recent panel examines the existing and future socio-economic conditions for Pottstown using the tri-county market area of Montgomery, Chester, and Berks Counties. The companion report "Transformation Strategies" was also completed by ULI

A number of observations that are relevant to the Washington Street neighborhood were made including:

- The Borough of Pottstown has grown at a meager rate for households, most likely due to the fact the Borough is almost completely built out as opposed to its surrounding more rural land areas which have been growing quite well.
- Within the primary trade area most of the future residential growth and almost all single family dwelling construction will occur outside of the Borough of Pottstown.
- Over the next decade it is projected that the Borough of Pottstown will grow at a rate of approximately 40 households annually or .4% a year.

## Historic District Ordinance

Except for interior alterations, **no persons shall** erect, construct, reconstruct, alter, restore, demolish, raze or change in appearance, in any manner, any building or structure, in whole or in part, which is visible from a public street or way, **within any Certified Local Government Historic District, without first obtaining permits**



In strategizing what Pottstown should focus on for future growth, the Panel recommends:

- Housing stock is one the greatest assets.
- Office/flex space demand in Pottstown will rise at a rate of 9,600 S.F. per year through 2020.
- Retail space demand is expected to grow at a rate of 69,500 S.F. per year within the Borough through 2020.
- Opportunities are in expanding arts and recreation

### **2008 Strategic Plan**

The 2008 Pottstown Economic Development Strategic Plan provides a program of projects and initiatives to guide community revitalization efforts in the Borough for ten years. The plan contains a number of goals and specific action items. The goals and actions that are relevant to Washington Street are summarized below.

### **Goal 1: Strengthen Pottstown as a center for business and employment .**

1.1. Initiate redevelopment of key opportunity sites in the Borough.

### **Goal 2: Enhance Pottstown's identity as the urban hub of the region.**

Continue efforts to revitalize the Main Street commercial district along High Street as well as adjacent areas.

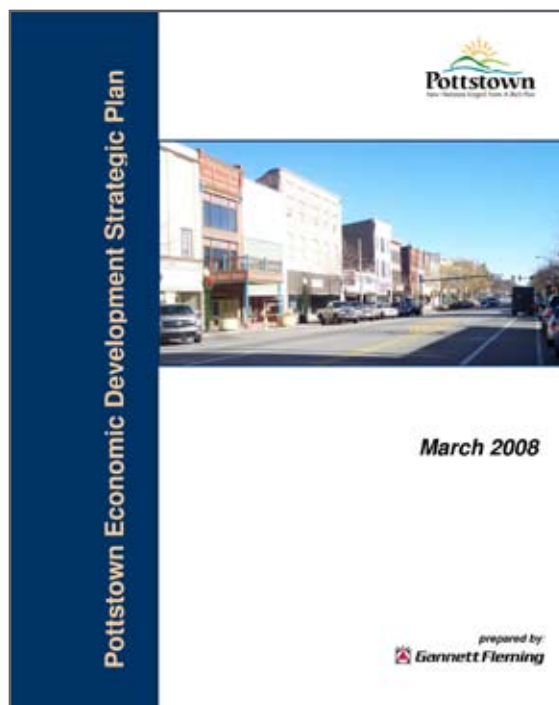
**Focus revitalization efforts on the 300 and 400 blocks of High Street.**

The Borough and other organizations should undertake the following steps:

- Identify key properties for possible acquisition.
- Identify potential physical improvements to support revitalization.

### **Goal 3: Improve the quality of life in Pottstown and its neighborhoods. Encourage the revitalization of Pottstown's neighborhoods.**

3.1. Undertake planning activities that focus on the specific needs of Pottstown's neighborhoods. These plans should identify key needs and opportunities and develop strategies and possible physical improvements to improve the quality of life for residents. The plans should also consider



ways to achieve a balance between market-rate and affordable housing in order to help stabilize communities. The Washington Street neighborhood should be the focus of the initial neighborhood plan.

3.3. Provide financial incentives and other support to encourage rehabilitation and homeownership of residences in the Borough.

3.4. Encourage the development of market-rate urban-style housing (e.g., condominiums, townhouses) in the urban core.

Enhance public safety in the Borough.

3.13. Provide enhanced street lighting throughout the Borough.

3.14. Obtain advanced safety monitoring systems for the Police Department.

- Video cameras
- The Shot Spotter system... monitor an area within a one-half mile radius of the intersection of Washington and Walnut Streets.

3.15. Establish a Volunteers in Policing Program (VIPS) to enlist senior citizens to provide civilian support services in the Borough.

3.16. Update code requirements for rental properties to include public safety requirements such as deadbolts, locking windows and sensor lighting.

### III. Neighborhood Analysis

The Washington Street Neighborhood has many of the characteristics that are currently being incorporated in new residential neighborhoods across the country and are referred to as “new urbanist” or “traditional neighborhood” developments. These characteristics include human scale, interesting architecture, street trees, relatively narrow street, porches on residential structures and some limited number of mixed uses, i.e. neighborhood grocers, restaurants, and personal services shops.

The neighborhood contains a dense mix of housing types on tree-lined streets and in a variety of historic styles. The community is well served by retail convenience and service stores, including two banks. The Pottstown Public Library is located on High Street and the Ricketts Center (Olivet Boys and Girls Club) provides numerous programs and activities for the neighborhoods children. There are also two parks.

Pottstown is served by two bus services, Route 93 operated by SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) and the Pottstown Area Rapid Transit, Inc. (PART).

The SEPTA Route 93 service operates both daily and weekend service between Norristown and Pottstown.

For operation times see <http://www.septa.org/schedules/bus/index.html>.

PART is owned, funded and administered by the Borough of Pottstown. The day-to-day operations are the responsibility of Pottstown Area Rapid Transit, Inc. (PART). Please see the links below showing day and night route maps for Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART).

Day Line:

<http://www.pottstownarearapidtransit.com/daylines.html>

Night Line:

<http://www.pottstownarearapidtransit.com/nightlines.html>





Despite its positive characteristics, the neighborhood suffers from an aging housing stock with aging physical and community infrastructure. These physical defects are exacerbated by absentee landlords, trash, unkept properties, crime, poverty, and a reputation or perception of being a down and out area.

The remainder of this section considers the strengths and challenges of conditions in the neighborhood and identifies opportunities for improvements.

## Housing

The majority of the housing was built pre - 1940 and includes a mixture of row homes, twins, and a few single family units. Buildings range between two and three stories and are a mix of Italianate, Second Empire, Federal, and Queen Anne architectural styles. There are also a handful of homes that were built in the 1960s and 1970s, which lack interesting architectural detail; and some newly constructed homes that were designed with front porches and other details that reflect the neighborhood's architecture.

Sections of the neighborhood are cohesive and attractive with well kept buildings, however, most blocks have either individual or groups of homes that are vacant, derelict, or just not kept up. Rental units tend to be less well kept as owners typically do not live in the structures and renters do not maintain the buildings or grounds. They also convert porches, front rooms, and other parts of a building that help define the street into private and closed uses.



Specific elements of the neighborhood housing that detract from the neighborhood include:

- Vacant buildings
- Boarded windows
- Trash in yards
- Signage
- Unmaintained buildings

## Streetscapes

With the exception of High Street, the streets in the neighborhood are quiet residential roadways. Most homes and buildings face the cross streets, which run east to west, while the north-south streets have few buildings facing on them. The effect is that north-south streets are generally less well maintained and the east-west streets are more inviting with more “eyes on the street.”

Conditions can vary greatly from block to block and even by house to house. Typically, the perception is most influenced by the abutting buildings. Streetscape elements in the public right of way, while not in excellent condition are serviceable but have suffered from benign neglect and wear and tear.

## Alleys

Residents voiced concerns about parking in the alleys, trash cans being put out in the alleys on trash collection days, a lack of lighting, and the general appearance of the alleys. The evolution of alley front residences is seen to problematic as it has increased the number of multi-family dwellings, eroded the move toward owner-occupied housing and generally added to the decline of the alley





“streetscape”. Additionally, the ownership of alleys is not clear. Old deeds show various limits, with little consistency from block to block. While most residences would prefer that the Borough “take” ownership of the maintenance of alleys, it is thought that the Borough has other more pressing issues. Over the years, the Borough has completed some repaving and repairs in alleys when manpower and resources have allowed. It was reported also that there have been instances where residents paid for repaving by private contractors. Despite these issues, the alleys do provide an alternate circulation route through the neighborhoods and for trash pick-up.

While these problems exist and will continue to be an enforcement issue for the Borough, there is no immediate solution that is apparent.

## Social

### Crime

Crime rates in Pottstown are above the rates for Montgomery County as a whole, which would be expected for an urban area. The Washington Street Neighborhood is perceived to be more crime-prone than other sections of the Borough. However, the Washington Street Neighborhood has seen an influx of new, more stable residents, due in at least part to the work of Genesis Housing Corporation. We believe this negative perception is beginning to change. New residents have been attracted to the neighborhood by the housing stock, affordable prices and redevelopment progress. Many of those attending the public meeting for this plan voiced confidence that the district was improving and becoming safer and more stable.

## IV. Proposed Improvements

### Streetscape Improvements

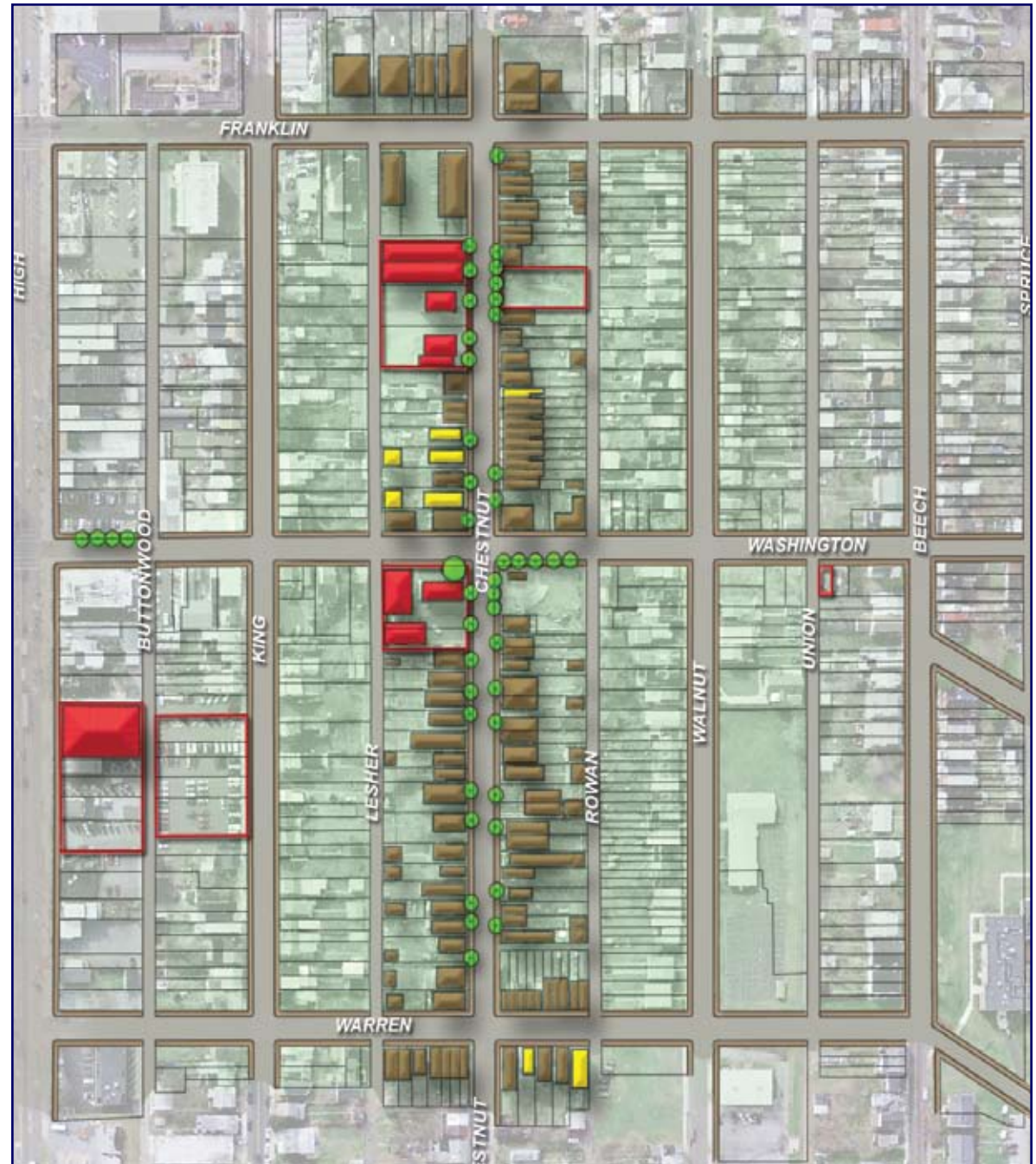
Chestnut Street is typical of most streets in the neighborhood. For the purpose of this study, the 500 block of Chestnut Street was used as a “model” for standard streetscape improvements that are desirable throughout the district. Generally, these improvements consist of:

- Repair of cracked or broken sidewalks
- Pedestrian scale lighting
- Street trees (smaller stature street trees only should be considered) \*
- ADA accessible handicapped ramps
- Crosswalk markings

Using this block of Chestnut Street as the model, the block was surveyed and quantities of needed improvements were determined. Cost estimates were then completed for these improvements and then extrapolated to all of the district’s streets except for High Street. In this manner, an order of magnitude cost was determined for the project area.

Based on this methodology, streetscape improvements costs are estimated at approximately \$1.4 million.

One interesting pavement alternative that is worth further examination is the concept of utilizing asphalt in lieu of concrete for sidewalks. Borough resident and urban planning advocate recently replaced



### Streetscape Cost Narrative:

The average costs per linear foot of streetscape improvements is based on the more detailed cost estimate prepared for the 500 block of Chestnut St. It is estimated that streetscape improvements will cost approximately \$77 per linear foot (\$50,000/650 linear feet).

Within the project area, there are two predominate block sizes – 650' long blocks to the east, and 570' long blocks to the west. The costs generated below are based on both block lengths and include the side streets Warren, Washington, and Franklin Streets.

Total cost for a 650' long block including side streets: \$73,150 (300LF+650LF = 950LF x \$77)

Total number of 650' long blocks: 10

Total cost for streetscape improvements on ten 650' long blocks including side streets: \$731,500.00

Total cost for a 570' long block including side streets: \$66,990 (570+300=870 x \$77)

Total number of 570' blocks: 10

Total cost for streetscape improvements on ten 570' long blocks: \$669,900.00

Grand total cost for streetscape improvements: \$1,401,400.00

cracked and heaved sections of concrete sidewalk with asphalt that was color coated to a light beige to look similar to concrete. The concept is that asphalt is a more fluid and malleable materials than concrete and will “adjust” better to expanding street tree roots over time. Cracked sidewalks due to trees roots is a concern of neighborhood residents. This installation was installed in October 2009 on Chestnut Street and should be monitored for possible future applications in the Washington Street neighborhood and other locations in the Borough.

## Alley Improvements

While there was significant discussion about the condition and ownership of alleys in the district, improvements suggested by this study for alleys were limited to milling and repaving, since the pavement condition in the alleys was the major concern of residents.

DEVELOPMENT					
Estimate of Probable Costs					
Item Number	Work Item	No. of Units	Unit Cost	Total	Cost
1.	<b>PRE-CONSTRUCTION</b>				<b>\$13,761.25</b>
	Design and Engineering (10% of Construction)	1	LS	\$8,507.50	\$8,507.50
	Contingency (5% of Construction)	1	LS	\$4,253.75	\$4,253.75
2.	<b>CONSTRUCTION - 500 BLOCK OF CHESTNUT S - 643 L.F. (BOTH SIDES)</b>				<b>\$85,075.00</b>
	Traffic Control	1	LS	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
	Demolition - Cracked Concrete Sidewalk	1,750	SF	\$1.50	\$2,625.00
	Concrete Sidewalk - 5' Width	1,750	SF	\$10.00	\$17,500.00
	ADA Accessible Curb Cut	2	EA	\$700.00	\$1,400.00
	Shade Tree Plantings @ 30' O.C.	23	EA	\$450.00	\$10,350.00
	Crosswalk/ Stop Bar Line Striping	200	LF	\$3.50	\$700.00
	Ornamental Lighting - Pole Mounting @ 75' O.C. - Alternating Sides	8	EA	\$4,000.00	\$32,000.00
	Conduit Service	1,300	LF	\$15.00	\$19,500.00
<b>NOTE: Costs Are Projected in 2010 Dollars</b>				<b>TOTAL OF ABOVE</b>	<b>\$98,836.25</b>





## Demonstration Projects

In order to help stimulate additional redevelopment in the Washington Street neighborhood, five demonstration projects were selected to illustrate possible adaptive reuse for each of these locations. Only one of the sites – the Chestnut Street Park – is in public ownership. The other four are all privately owned. The recommendations are aimed at increasing interest in redevelopment of the privately held sites. These adaptive reuse ideas can also be applied to other properties in the Washington Street Neighborhood and Borough toward neighborhood revitalization and community building.



## Chestnut Street Park, 423 Chestnut Street

The existing small park located at 423 Chestnut Street is, as reported by residents, little used by children or adults. The play equipment located there is outdated, and while the site is maintained, it is generally unattractive.

Suggestions from several residents have been to transform the park into a community garden, where plots could be assigned (or “rented” for a minimal fee) to neighborhood residents where they could grow

vegetables and flowers (also a recommendation of the 1990 Plan).

The conversion of this small Pottstown School District park at 423 Chestnut Street, into a community garden - will rely on the School District, Borough and community. These recommendations are also aimed at increasing interest in redevelopment of these privately held sites. These types of community gardens are popular in many urban neighborhoods and often can become social gathering places. Community gardeners tend to tend to their crops at all hours of the day, maintaining activity and eyes at these sites from sun-up to sun-down.

With the permission of the School District, the costs for retrofitting the site can be relatively minimal and there are grants available for these types of activities. One notable funding source is the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society that has a huge community gardening program in Philadelphia. This program has been growing in recent years to towns outside of Philadelphia.

Once the playground equipment is removed, and trees removed or trimmed to eliminate shade, the costs for this conversion are minimal. Water service will need to be provided to the site for irrigation.



## Dairy Building

Located at the corner of Chestnut and Washington Streets is a unique red brick industrial structure that, given the correct adaptive reuse project and development incentives, could be a wonderful renovation. This structure was also featured in the year 2000 Washington Street Action Plan and suggested for office incubator use.

Residents generally would prefer that an adaptive reuse be found for this structure rather than demolition. This study concurs and as food for thought, shows an adaptive reuse as a restaurant with café on the ground floor with possible offices or apartment above - a suggestion voiced by several residents at the project's community meeting.

While the interior conditions, structural conditions and any contamination issues were not examined by this study, we suggest the Borough work with Genesis Housing to try and spur the adaptive reuse of this building. We recommend that the following actions be undertaken:

- Contact the owner and confirm the owner's interest to sell the building
- Issue a Request for Proposal for developers / entrepreneurs to suggest purchase and adaptive reuse of the building.
- Enlist a local architect to provide conceptual design services on a pro-bono or nominal basis to assist with the RFP. This could lead to a commission for the architect.
- Explore a building auction

- Contact the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority to inspect the building and suggest financing and redevelopment options
- Contact the office of the Montgomery County Commissioners to explore the possibility of availing this project of the new Economic Development Program being conducted by the County.





## Former Auto Dealer, 523 High Street

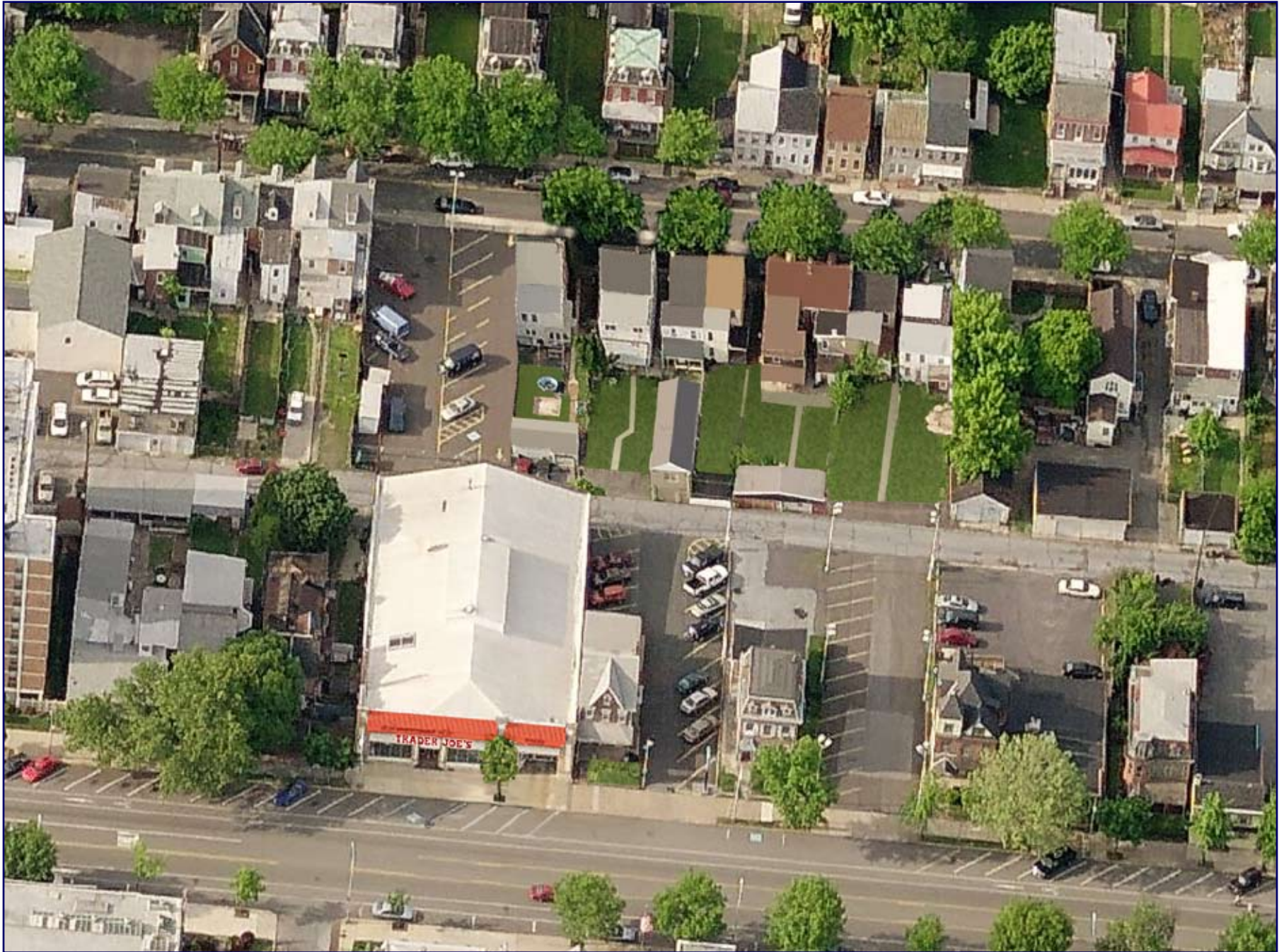
The recent closing of the auto dealership at 523 High Street presents an adaptive reuse opportunity for a number of potential uses. The site consists of an approximate 10,000 square foot structure (one floor, open layout) on High Street, a converted residence on High Street (that served as an office for the auto dealer), parking off of High Street and a large parking lot between Buttonwood Alley and King Street.

Residents expressed a desire for an in-town grocery store. Both the Trader's Joe "model" and the Weavers Way Co-op "model" (Mt. Airy, Philadelphia) of a relatively small grocery operation could be adaptively fit into this structure with adequate parking on the site.

The large parking lot could lend itself well to the construction of new single family homes that front on King Street. The Photo-simulation shows this adaptive reuse scenario as one possible option.

Similar to the process suggested above for the Dairy, Genesis Housing and the Borough could collaborate on a series of administrative actions that might stimulate interest in the adaptive reuse of this structure and remaining lot. It should be noted that a new Auto Zone store recently opened further to the east on High Street. This type of use could also make use of this type of building.





## Building Supply Business, 420 and 424 Chestnut Street

The two former school house building are simple but elegant buildings. While these two structure contain an on-going and viable business – Surplus Supply Building Materials – the owners of the business are currently in negotiation to purchase both buildings. If successful, they are interested in improving both buildings for an adaptive reuse. The use they have suggested is six apartments. In order to possibly permit this use, they have suggested connecting the two structures with a connecting first floor, as shown in the Photo-simulation.

While there are other possible adaptive reuses for these buildings, it is recommended that Genesis Housing and the Borough work with these or other entrepreneurs to assist them in the adaptive reuse of these structures. Enlisting the assistance of County resources is also recommended.





## 174 N. Washington Street

The residential building located at 174 North Washington Street contains two single family homes. The Photo-simulation is intended to illustrate the utility that paint, shutters, some color and other modest improvements can have on the building appearance and streetscape character. This also illustrates that great effect that a façade improvement program can have, whether run by local government or by the non-profit sector.







## V. Implementation and Funding

### Montgomery County Economic Development Program

The responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of this update study will be the responsibility of many organizations and individuals.

Genesis Housing Corporation is committed to continue its past practices of acquiring, renovating and selling affordable homes to eligible home buyers. In Pottstown, Genesis Housing Corporation's projects are funded by Montgomery County's Housing Trust Fund, HOME Investment Partnership and Community Development Block Grant programs. Additional funds are provided by the Neighborhood Stabilization Program

One of the target demonstration projects, one half of the duplex at 174 North Washington Street was recently acquired by Genesis Housing Corporation and renovations at that location will happen in the near future. The acquisition and rehabilitation of this property will be funded by Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds. The NSP funds are part of a PA Department of Community & Economic Development grant from federal stimulus funds.

Three of the other demonstration projects – The former dairy, 420 & 424 Chestnut Street, and the former auto dealership at 523 High Street, will rely on private sector owners – or new owners to effectuate

the adaptive reuse of these sites. There are funds that can assist these property owners, and details are below. In addition to funds, promoting these properties will fall to the Borough and the proposed “development entity” that is currently proposed and is being discussed by Borough leaders. The proposed development entity was recommended by the recently completed study completed by ULI entitled “Transformation Strategies”. Making outside investors interested in these and other Borough sites is key to moving them forward.

The fifth demonstration project – converting the small park at 423 Chestnut Street, is probably the least expensive project to move forward. Agreement by the Pottstown School District and minimal funding (estimated at \$25,000) is all that would be required to turn this unused park into what is envisioned as a social hub in the neighborhood where neighbors meet neighbors as they grow food and flowers. A community garden, albeit not in this specific location, was also a recommendation of the 2000 Washington Street Action Plan.

Recommendations for streetscape improvements can come from a variety of sources. Since the Washington Street neighborhood is but one community in the Borough of Pottstown, Washington Street area residents will need to lobby Borough leaders to seek and spend outside funds on this neighborhood. One of the best tools will be this plan, as it sets a course of action and includes preliminary costs for these various public domain projects.

Possible funding sources for Streetscape and projects in the public domain include the following:

**PA DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) Tree-Vitalize program.** Provides funds for tree planting in urban communities across Pennsylvania. <http://www.treevitalize.net/>

**Enhancements Funding** – Prior authorizations of this federal program have been called ISTEAs, TEAs, LU among other names. These funds are applied for on a competitive basis and include funding for streetscape improvements such as sidewalks, lighting and trees. There are discussions in Washington D.C. that this program may be authorized before the end of 2010. Residents should keep abreast of these developments and work with Borough council to aggressively apply for these funds should they become available.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/guidance.htm>

**Stimulus Funding** – There may be additional federal stimulus funds available for streetscape projects. <http://www.recovery.gov/Pages/home.aspx>

**PA DCED (Department of Community and Economic Development)** – These grants are dependent on support by Pottstown's state legislators. These funds can be used for almost any project that has a public benefit. <http://www.dced.state.pa.us/>

**PA Horticultural Society** - Provides funds for urban greening and gardening through their Philadelphia Green program and urban gardening program. While PHS's focus is within the City of Philadelphia, there are resources for information and possible alternate funding sources.

Go to: <http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/index.html>

**PECO** - Has programs for tree planting and greening called the PECO Green Regions Program. <http://www.natlands.org/categories/article.asp?fldArticleId=113>

Possible funding sources for Private Sector projects and projects in the public domain include:

**Montgomery County Economic Development Program.** Announced in July of 2009, the program provides grants and loans for a variety of economic development activities. Pottstown and Norristown are key targets for these funds. Municipalities can apply for funds for a wide variety of projects including streetscapes, parking, and housing as well as planning funds. Private sector businesses can also apply for low interest loans through the Business Location Fund. Some of the demonstration projects may be good applicants for this funding. Go to <http://www2.montcopa.org/montco/site/default.asp> and enter 'Economic Development Program' into search.

## VI. Appendix

Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated population in 2009.  
Estimated population in 2009.  
Estimated count of population in 2009.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated Average size of a household in 2009.  
Estimated Average size of a household in 2009.  
Estimated average household size in 2009. A household includes all the people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. The average household size is calculated by dividing the total population by the total number of households.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated percent of people with a Bachelor's degree in 2009.  
Estimated percent of people with a Bachelor's degree in 2009.  
Estimated percent of population 25 years and older with a Bachelor's degree in 2009. Percentage calculations were suppressed in areas where the percentage of the population was less than 10 of the total.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated percent of all people who were of a race other than White in 2009.  
Estimated percent of all people who were of a race other than White in 2009.  
Estimated percent of the population that is non-White in 2009. Percentage calculations were suppressed in areas where the percentage of the population was less than 10 of the total.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated per capita income in 2009.

Estimated per capita income in 2009.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated typical (median) income of a household in 2009.

Estimated typical (median) income of a household in 2009.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated typical (median) value of an owner-occupied home in 2009.

Estimated typical (median) value of an owner-occupied home in 2009.



Map of Custom Region (Washington Neighborhood) with Estimated percent of all households that own a home in 2009.

Estimated percent of all households that own a home in 2009.



Percent of all households who moved into their home before 1980, as of 2000.

Artifact of household without household number listed on the last column (1880, or 1890). The 1850 Census Bureau identifies the household as the parents to whose family the child is added, being bought, or raised. If there is no sufficient ground, any household number 25 years and older can take as the household for the purposes of the Census. Percentage of children and teenagers in each state. The



The percent of all units that are vacant, July through September 2009.

Pottstown



Estimated percent of households that live in a building with 3-19 units in 2009.



Fair Market Rent for a Four Bedroom Unit in 2010.





October 27, 2009

#### Meeting Notes

#### Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan Update

Committee Meeting # 1

Date: October 23, 2009

SC #:09097.10

**Attendance:** David Garner, Borough Council; Kay Dougherty and Cathy Slatko, The Hill School; Ellen Crain and Katrina Belcher, Susquehanna Bank; Alison Hunter, neighborhood resident and Lighthouse Bookstore; Michelle Borzick and Bill Sharon, Borough of Pottstown; Thomas Hylton, Pottstown Planning Commission; Judy Memberg, Genesis Housing; and Peter Simone and Oliver Carley, Simone Collins (SC).

#### NOTES

Committee members introduced themselves. It was understood that those present will serve as the steering committee for this project.

Judy Memberg opened with a brief history of Genesis's work in the Washington Street area and the development of the 2000 Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan. She indicated that the plan was critical to funding.

Oliver Carley reviewed the objectives of the study, which are to update the neighborhood conditions plan, develop typical streetscape improvement concepts, develop illustrative building improvement sketches, and create an updated plan. He also explained the purpose of meeting was to hear the committee's ideas for what areas or properties should be focused on in the study and what other improvements are needed. The following summarizes major discussion points.

1. The Dairy at Washington and Chestnut Streets was suggested as being appropriate for redevelopment. Bill Sharon suggested that the building was in poor enough condition where demolition was the best option. The owner is willing to sell, but is looking for a price above the market assessment. There is an artesian well underneath the property, which may present opportunities but more likely challenges due to the presence of a culvert. Reuse options discussed included commercial and residential options.  
**Action: SC to determine the location and depth of culvert. SC to determine reuse options.**
2. Michelle Borzick indicated that the Borough maintains a list of blighted properties in the neighborhood.  
**Action: Michelle to provide SC with copy of list.**

3. Michelle indicated that the Borough has information on whether a residence is owner occupied or rental.  
**Action: Michelle to provide SC with list of homeownership/rentals.**
4. Dave Garner stated that there is concern about reversing the direction of housing that is moving toward the blighted list, but is not there yet. Bill S. stated that inspection violation reports are available. This information might be used as an indicator for decline.  
**Action: Bill S. to provide SC with code citations for the area, if available.**
5. Peter Simone stated that he heard a concern for addressing midblock areas. The desire to address this concern was confirmed by the committee.
6. Judy M. stated that approximately 75% of Genesis's home sales are to people that already live in the Pottstown area.
7. Judy M. stated that Genesis generally cannot purchase homes from Sherriff Sales as the titles are not clear and therefore do not satisfy funding requirements.
8. Judy M. indicated that Genesis has received \$1.5 million of stimulus funds for acquisitions. The Washington Street Neighborhood is eligible for roughly half of these funds, which would equate to roughly six or seven properties. Neighborhood stabilization funds can be used for demolition.
9. Judy M. stated the need for concepts for specific projects in order to attract and allocate funding.  
**Action: SC to provide concept plans in plan update.**
10. It was stated that the car dealership between King and High and Washington and Warren Streets is out of business. This is one of the largest tracts in the neighborhood and has redevelopment potential as either a public amenity or commercial enterprise. A committee member suggested that a local church might be interested in moving to the site.
11. Rear-alley housing was discussed. There are a handful of these units in the neighborhood that *may be* illegal and should be discouraged.  
**Action: SC to look at Borough Zoning to determine if rear units are allowed.**
12. The committee indicated that all elements of the streetscape need to be improved: lighting, trees, sidewalks, crosswalks, etc. No specific item was called out. Peter S. suggested that funding might be available from the state and county for streetscape improvements.  
**Action: SC to identify funding opportunities in the plan update.**

pg 2

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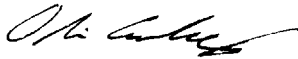
13. A vacant "pocket park" between King and Lecher Alley and Washington and Franklin Streets was discussed. The site was reported to be owned by the school district and might present an opportunity for redevelopment.
14. The committee suggested that a community serving grocery store is needed.
15. The committee suggested that there are plenty of recreation facilities but better programming is needed.
16. Alleys are in poor condition, are not well lit, and are perceived as unsafe. Oliver C. suggested that alleys can provide a good place for recreation and play. There was concern that improving alleys may not be high priority given other neighborhood concerns.
17. Judy asked if there is anyone else that should be invited to be on the committee. A committee member stated that a neighborhood committee was being formed for the 400 blocks of King and Chestnut Streets.  
**Action: Genesis to reach out to group.**
18. The Committee reviewed the schedule. Dave G suggested the final meeting should be moved to February 3 as the full Council will be present at that meeting.

**The next Committee Meeting is scheduled for Friday, November 13 at 3:00 P.M.**

*Please notify SC within 10 days if these minutes differ from your understanding or important items were omitted. SC will make appropriate revisions; otherwise these minutes will become part of the park master plan record.*

Respectfully Submitted,

SIMONE COLLINS, INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Oliver Carley

Encl Sign in sheet



November 23, 2009

**Meeting Notes**  
**Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan Update**  
Committee Meeting # 1  
Date: November 13, 2009  
SC #:09097.10

**Attendance:** David Garner, Borough Council; Katrina Belcher, Susquehanna Bank; James Smith, Olivet Boys and Girls Club; **NEUSTELL MAROBLE**, Cheryl Chiarello, neighborhood resident; Michelle Borzick and Bill Sharon, Borough of Pottstown; Thomas Hylton, Pottstown Planning Commission; Judy Memberg, Genesis Housing; and Oliver Carley, Simone Collins (SC).

#### NOTES

Committee members introduced themselves. Judy Memberg provided a brief history of Genesis's work in the Washington Street area. Oliver Carley gave a PowerPoint presentation reviewing relevant land use regulations, planning documents, and existing conditions. The following summarizes major discussion topics.

1. Oliver C. reviewed relevant components of Pottstown's zoning ordinance and planning documents. It was noted that the Borough's ordinance discourages conversion of single family homes into apartments. A discussion of how existing multi-family units can be reconverted to single family homes followed. The Borough offered some assistance for deconversion via the Homeowner Initiative Program, but that program is no longer offered.
2. Targeted projects for the Plan Update sketches were discussed. Projects included:
  - Dairy building on Washington Street,
  - Auto dealership between King and High Streets,
  - Old school buildings off of Chestnut Street,
  - School district playground / pocket park on Chestnut Street, and
  - 174 N. Washington St., which is a residential twin.
 The committee was asked for suggestions for other project properties and none were put forward.
3. The condition of alleyways was discussed. The committee is interested in finding simple ways of making alleys more attractive and safe. Oliver C. suggested that guidelines could be created to make alleys more uniform and neater in appearance. Guidelines could include trash enclosures, fencing, plantings, parking, garage treatments, and road surface treatment.

pg 3

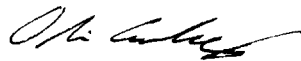
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4. Judy M. suggested moving the Community Meeting from December 3 to December 8, 2009. No objections were stated.
5. Judy M. suggested moving the next committee meeting from December 18 to January 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Please notify SC within 10 days if these minutes differ from your understanding or important items were omitted. SC will make appropriate revisions; otherwise these minutes will become part of the park master plan record.*

Respectfully Submitted,

SIMONE COLLINS, INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Oliver Carley

Encl Sign in sheet



December 23, 2009

#### Meeting Notes

#### Washington Street Neighborhood Action Plan Update

Community Meeting - Ricketts Center (Olivet Boys and Girls Club)

Date: December 8, 2009, 7PM

SC #:09097.10

Attendees: Judith Memberg, Executive Director, Genesis  
Peter Simone, Simone Collins Inc.  
Oliver Carley, Simone Collins Inc.  
Members of the community (See attached sign in sheet – note that not all attendees signed-in )

Judy Memberg gave a brief introduction of Genesis Housing Corporation and its history in the Washington Street Neighborhood. Meeting attendees introduced themselves. A PowerPoint presentation (attached) was given by Oliver Carley after which Judy M. asked the community for input and questions. Reuse options were discussed for five properties, underlined below. The following items summarize the major discussion points.

1. Dairy. Judy M. stated that the Dairy property on Washington and Chestnut Streets was a focus of the 2000 Washington Street plan, but that no improvements had been made to the building. The neighboring resident stated that part of the building was leaning into her property and looked unstable. Dave Garner suggested that she call the Borough. Most attendees supported keeping the existing building, but a few suggested tearing it down. It was also mentioned that an artesian well is located beneath the building. The owner is interested in selling the building.

Judy M. asked attendees for ideas on the reuse of the dairy site. Ideas include:

- Brewery
- Restaurant

pg 2

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- Professional office
- Business incubator
- Grocery
- Artist space
- Community space was suggested, but Judy proposed that the second floor of the existing police substation might be a better location.

Some concerns about any increased traffic associated with a new use were cited.

2. Chestnut Street pocket park (owned by Pottstown School District). Children do not currently use the park. It was noted that the adaptive reuse of the Dairy could influence the use of the park. The reuse of the park as a community garden was supported by those in attendance. Controlled access was suggested for the park.
3. Old school buildings (used for storage). Judy M. suggested that architectural designs be developed that would help the buildings compliment the neighborhood better. She suggested that the designs could be provided to the owner for them to implement. Some reuse ideas were discussed, but the property is not for sale. Developing design for façade and site improvements was supported by those in attendance. The buildings were stated to be owned by the Butz family and used for storage and sale of surplus doors and windows. (An attendee later reported that the Butz family has an option to purchase these buildings, but does not own them).
4. Auto dealership. This is a large site on the 500 block between King and High Streets. Reuse options were not discussed during the meeting. After the meeting an attendee suggested a grocery store.
5. 174 N. Washington Street. This is a residential building (one-half of a twin) that Genesis is looking for to acquire for renovation and resale.
6. Reducing crime was a cited as a key element to improving the neighborhood.
7. Judy M. stated suggested that the condition of the neighborhood's alleyways might be a concern. Attendees agreed that alleys are run down but were uncertain as to whether they are owned by the Borough or the property owner.

Judy M. explained that the ownership is not consistent as parcel boundaries changed over the years. Dave G. explained that alleys are referred to as "open but not ordained." Peter Simone suggested that the plan recommend the Borough take over ownership of the alleys. David Garner suggested that the Borough has numerous other concerns and that controlling alleys may not be a priority.

8. Collection of garbage was discussed in relation to the alleys. Attendees stated that on some streets garbage is collected in the alleys (especially for alley streets) and others on the streets themselves. Any guidelines that exist for where garbage is picked up are not being followed by collectors or residents. It was recommended that additional clarifications, guidelines or designated pickup areas would be useful.
9. Parking in rear alleys was also discussed. Meeting attendees generally supported the development of parking guidelines for alleys and rear properties. It was also suggested that on-lot parking be permitted at the rear of the long lots, with access from the alleys. Pull-off, parallel spaces were also suggested.
10. Providing lighting in the alleyways was suggested. It was also suggested that lighting was needed along streets.
11. Other comments from the meeting included:
  - An attendee expressed interest in Genesis combining two smaller residences to create one larger one. Judy M. stated that combining residences is difficult as Genesis generally does not usually own adjacent lots.
  - Trees along the 400 block of King were described as being too dense. A suggestion was made that the "right" kinds of trees need to be planted. There was also a suggestion that root barriers be used to discourage pavement cracks in the sidewalks. Peter S. explained that these constrain tree growth but can be used.
  - Litter was stated to be a problem in the neighborhood. Community street cleaning and beautification were discussed. A community clean up is organized once a year. Genesis has helped fund clean ups through Susquehanna Bank.
  - The creation of a museum in either the old school or in the Dairy building was discussed.

***The next Committee Meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 8 at 3:00 P.M.***

*Please notify SC within 10 days if these minutes differ from your understanding or important items were omitted. SC will make appropriate revisions; otherwise these minutes will become part of the park master plan record.*

Respectfully Submitted,

SIMONE COLLINS, INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Simone', is written over the company name.

Peter M. Simone, RLA, FASLA  
President