

# **Downtown Pottsville**

## **Strategic Revitalization Plan**

**April 2018**

**Bergmann Associates  
&  
Eastwick Solutions**

Cover photo source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau

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in partnership with:

**PBA - Pottsville Business Association**

**PADCO - Pottsville Area Development Corporation**

**City of Pottsville**



**BERGMANN**



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Schuylkill County Courthouse (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Pottsville, Pennsylvania is a small city located in the heart of Schuylkill County. It is the county seat and is the historic central city of the region. With a population of 13,995 (2016), it remains the largest city in the county.

As with many cities across Pennsylvania and the United States, Pottsville has experienced boom and decline over its lifespan. It saw a peak population in 1940 of 24,350, with hundreds of retail and service businesses that lined Centre Street and adjoining downtown streets. But interstate highway development, suburban housing and the construction of suburban malls nearby resulted in a loss of residents and businesses. Nevertheless, Pottsville retains several key assets and has some recent momentum that provide a foundation for optimism for the revitalization of its downtown. D. G. Yuengling & Son, America's oldest family owned brewery and the largest craft brewery in the US, has a brewery as well as a recently opened gift shop and tasting room located very close to downtown. The company has recently received a significant state grant to further enhance their location and draw more visitors. In the last month there has been an announcement of a multi-screen movie theater being developed as part of a downtown parking deck redevelopment. Pottsville is still the dominant urban place in the region, with a downtown that has seen new retail stores and restaurants open recently and remains a regional draw for retailing and restaurants. Moreover, due in part to the efforts of the local Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB), downtown still possess some magnificent examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building stock. Lastly, residents and those who live nearby still care deeply about Pottsville.

This strategic downtown revitalization plan recognizes the challenges that face Pottsville, but also recognizes the opportunities that are present. It is a pragmatic and realistic plan. Downtown Pottsville's revitalization will not be based on nostalgia or a replication of what downtown was in the 1950s or 1960s. The people who will come to Pottsville to shop, eat, play and live will likely not remember when downtown was the economic hub and center of civic life. People will come to downtown in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century due to what is has today: its assets, its social capital, its authenticity. The retail mix will differ from the past, as shopping habits have changed; its restaurants will differ, as dining habits have changed; its residential mix will differ as new populations will be attracted to living downtown. Pottsville has a distinctiveness to its downtown and distinctive downtowns will continue to attract people.

Downtown Pottsville matters to the city, to the County and to the region. Downtown contains a sizable portion of the city's property value and work force. As the central city for this area, it remains a key economic force; as the county seat it represents the county to visitors; as the largest downtown in the region, it still attracts a large share of customers and visitors; as the location for a hugely popular visitor destination (Yuengling Brewery), it sees a significant share of all county visitors.

Research has demonstrated that the economic health of a region is integrally tied to the economic health of its central city. As goes the central city's vitality, so goes the region's vitality. Nearly 25% of all jobs in Schuylkill County are located within the City of Pottsville. About 1 in 10 people who live in Schuylkill County live in Pottsville. It is the largest city in the county, with the next largest town being half its size. The research performed for this plan revealed that downtown Pottsville remains an economic attractor. Downtown restaurants capture over 30% of all restaurant sales within a 5-mile radius, and the total amount of retail sales downtown exceeds the demand for those living downtown, thus demonstrating that downtown attracts retail customers from beyond its boundaries.

This plan is titled as a **strategic** revitalization plan for a reason. It will lay out strategies that need to be followed for downtown to be revitalized. It is not a master plan, nor an urban design plan. While it contains strategies that address urban design, as well as strategies that can be incorporated into a master plan, this plan takes a broader, longer term focus on how downtown can be revitalized. Future detailed and specific plans are likely to be needed as well.

In early 2016, the Pottsville Business Association (PBA), determined that a strategic revitalization plan was needed for downtown. With challenges looming, but also opportunities emerging, it saw the need to craft a plan with a framework and a playbook to work from. Such a plan would create shared vision of a revitalized downtown and an agreed-upon set of recommendations. It would be a community-driven plan, with input from a wide variety of organizations, individuals and governments. In concert with the Pottsville Area Development Corporation (PADCO), and the City, PBA crafted a request for proposals to solicit consultants to prepare a strategic revitalization plan.

Members of PBA then went out to the community to raise funds. This "crowd sourced" funding was successful, and the consultant team of Bergmann Associates and Eastwick Solutions was hired in August of 2016. A list of individuals, businesses and organizations that contributed to this plan are listed in Appendix A.

The project location includes the historic Central Business District, as well as several blocks beyond it. Overall the Study Area encompasses approximately 117 acres.



## Location Map of Pottsville and Study Area



**GRAPHIC 1-1:** Location Map of Pottsville and Study Area (Source: Bergmann)

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal for the plan is to revitalize downtown, however more specific goals have been identified to articulate what revitalization means. Each of the goals listed below provide detail to what a revitalized downtown means, and each includes more specific objectives to meet the goals.

### Increase economic activity & the economic health of downtown

- a. Recruit new businesses
- b. Support existing businesses & assist in their expansion

### Improve the “look” & feel of downtown

- a. Change perception of downtown
- b. Reduce the number of vacant storefronts & buildings

### Make downtown more vibrant & vital

- a. Provide more activities for people
- b. Make downtown a place for people to live, work, shop & play
- c. Use local assets & authenticity as basis for revitalization

### Enhance downtown Pottsville’s attractiveness for tourists and visitors

- a. Offer compelling reasons to visit Pottsville & deliver a rewarding visitor experience
- b. Increase length of stay & spend of tourists & other visitors
- c. Provide more activities for visitors

### Create a strategy that is sustainable

- a. Involve residents, businesses, government, non-profits, workers & visitors in creating & implementing the strategy
- b. Create a framework to ensure implementation of plan
- c. Increase communication & collaboration
- d. Create & use metrics to measure successes
- e. Encourage accountability & responsibility

## Chapter 2: Public Outreach & Engagement

A key to developing and effectively implementing this strategic revitalization plan is soliciting and incorporating public outreach and to positively engage the public in the development of the plan. Fortunately, there has been very strong public engagement on revitalization in Pottsville, engagement that preceded the creation of this plan. Before the consultant team was brought on, several public meetings were held with 75-100 attendees at each. Residents, businesses and other stakeholders have a great interest in seeing downtown revitalized.

This plan was developed as a bottom-up, community-driven plan and several methods have been employed to accomplish that end.

### STEERING COMMITTEE

A steering committee was created, representing a wide range of stakeholders. Representatives from the City, PBA, PADCO, the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau, the Schuylkill County Economic Development Corporation (SEDCO), the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, D.G. Yuengling and Son were all members, as well as state Representative Michael Tobash and a representative from state Senator David Argall's office.

The steering committee was charged with general oversight of the planning process, providing feedback and comments to the consultant's work, reviewing and commenting on the presentations made to the public, and reviewing and commenting on the draft plan. Its final task was to endorse the plan and then take it back to the respective organizations that each member represented and request that those organizations also endorse the plan. The steering committee met monthly from September 2017 until March 2018, and its members attended and participated in the 2 public workshops that were held during this period.

Name	Affiliation
Mark Atkinson	Councilman, City of Pottsville
Robert Carl	Schuylkill County Chamber of Commerce
Matt DiRenzo	Pottsville Business Association
Brian Hansbury	SEDCO
Chris Hohman	Pottsville Business Association
Gina Gargano	Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau
Savas Logothetides	Pottsville Business Association/PADCO
Naomi Ost	PADCO
Tom Palamar	City Administrator, City of Pottsville
Michael Peckman	Lehigh Valley Health Network
Patricia Setlock	Pottsville Business Association
Craig Shields	PADCO
Mike Tobash	State Representative
Christine Verdier	State Senator David Argall
Wendy Yuengling	D.G. Yuengling & Son

### PUBLIC INPUT

To understand the general public's perspective on revitalization, three approaches were used:

- a review of comments received from PADCO-sponsored public meetings on revitalizations held in 2006 and 2011
- a community-wide Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats survey was undertaken
- two public workshops were held, as well as a public meeting to present the final plan.

## PREVIOUS PUBLIC MEETINGS ON REVITALIZATION (2006, 2011)

The previous public meetings on revitalization organized comments into 2 broad respondent groups: businesses/executives/public officials and residents. Both groups were asked to identify Pottsville's greatest strengths and greatest weaknesses, from a pre-selected list. A summary of these comments is provided in the following tables, listed in order of percentage of responses:

### GREATEST STRENGTHS

#### Residents

2005 Community Assessment	2011 Economic Summit
Public safety/crime/quality of police (26%)	City heritage (19%)
"quality of people" (25%)	Community activism (14%)
City heritage/history (13%)	Yuengling as attraction (13%)
Community activism (10%)	Quality of people (10%)
School district (10%)	Public safety (7%)
Progressive political/business leadership (6%)	Increased recreation opportunities (5%)
Yuengling as major attraction (6%)	Location (4%)

#### Businesses/Executives/Public Officials

2005 Community Assessment	2011 Economic Summit
Political/business leadership, business involvement in community (21%)	Quality of people (33%)
"quality" of people (family values, work ethic, friendliness) (19%)	Community activism (17%)
City heritage/history/sense of tradition (13%)	City heritage (15%)
Public safety/crime/quality of police (11%)	Public safety (9%)
Community activism/involvement (10%)	Location (9%)
Location (county seat, proximity to major metro) (10%)	
Quality of government services (8%)	
Yuengling Brewery as major attraction (6%)	

GRAPHIC 2-1: Greatest Strengths (Source: PADCO)



Centre Street-Downtown Pottsville (Source: Bergmann)



## GREATEST WEAKNESS

### Residents

2005 Community Assessment	2011 Economic Summit
Lack of jobs, recreation facilities, entertainment for youth (15%)	Traffic flow (19%)
Retail merch/services (13%)	Lack of jobs, recreation facilities (16%)
Traffic flow & street repair (11%)	Physical image (13%)
“entitlement mentality” (11%)	Retail merchants (12%)
Physical image (10%)	Entitlement mentality (10%)
Tourist attractions, recreation facilities (9%)	Better quality & higher paying jobs (9%)
Parking (8%)	Crime (9%)
Better quality & higher paying jobs (7%)	Parking (7%)

### Businesses/Executives/Public Officials

2005 Community Assessment	2011 Economic Summit
Need more tourist attractions, recreation facilities, entertainment, more stimulating cultural climate (11%)	“entitlement mentality” (17%)
Lack of jobs, recreation facilities, entertainment for youth (10%)	Retail merchants/services (15%)
Retail merch/services/business recruitment (10%)	Taxes & need for strong political leadership (11%)
Parking (cost & availability) (10%)	Crime (11%)
Taxes (9%)	Physical image, cleanliness (11%)
Lack of sustainable economic growth, financial constraints, infrastructure (9%)	Street maintenance (9%)
“entitlement mentality”(too much emphasis on public/social programs) & growing # of undesirables (9%)	Education (9%)
Traffic flow & street repair (8%)	Poor self-image (7%)
Physical image and cleanliness (8%)	

**GRAPHIC 2-2:** Greatest Weaknesses (Source: PADCO)



Centre Street-Downtown Pottsville (Source: Bergmann)

## STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES/OPPORTUNITIES/THREATS (SWOT) SURVEY & RESULTS

As part of this current planning effort, a SWOT survey was conducted in September and October 2017. Initially using paper surveys, steering committee members expressed concern over the low response rate. Consequently, an on-line version was created, and resulted in substantially more responses. In all, nearly 300 responses were received. Because this survey was voluntary, respondents were self-selected, and it was not performed using a true sample of the population, it cannot be analyzed as a statistically valid survey. However, these results are helpful as they reflect the attitudes and opinions of those who took the time and have the most interest in downtown Pottsville. Moreover, this continues the use of SWOT surveys that have been used since at least 2006; using consistent methodology enables comparisons of current results to previous surveys. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix .

The survey itself asked people to identify what were the strengths of downtown, why a business would choose downtown, what were downtown's weakness and if any of those weaknesses were significant enough to be a threat to downtown's economic well-being, and what opportunities might be available for downtown revitalization.

There was a total of 286 surveys returned and analyzed: 210 on line and 76 paper copies. Of the total responses, nearly 60% were residents of Pottsville, while approximately 40% were not residents. A summary of this survey is given below.

- **Strengths** – Respondents viewed the historic heritage of downtown as its greatest strength, and this included the building stock. The presence of the Yuengling Brewery was also seen as a significant strength. The next most popular opinions were the affordability of building space, and the walkability of downtown.
- **Weaknesses** – Convenient parking was perceived as downtown's single most significant weakness, however respondents noted that other weaknesses included vacant buildings, general blight and lack of cleanliness. When combined, these three physical appearance issues resulted in a higher response than did parking. Respondents also felt that loitering and the belief that there was on-going drug use downtown were weaknesses.
- **Opportunities** – Similar to downtown's strengths, the building stock and presence of Yuengling Brewery were viewed as strong opportunities. Respondents also mentioned existing small businesses and restaurants as providing revitalization opportunities; tourism and the possibility of a movie theater rated highly as strong opportunities among respondents.
- **Threats** – Threats are defined as weaknesses that, left unchecked, can threaten the success of downtown revitalization. Interestingly, there was not an overwhelming focus on any one specific weakness that could turn into a threat, the greatest potential weaknesses to become threats were drugs and crime. As noted in a later section, based upon recent crime rate analysis, these issues appear to be more a perception than a reality. Other weaknesses that could become threats were: the presence of low income housing downtown, parking, blighted buildings/landlords not maintaining properties. Of note were comments about negative mindsets existing that could hinder revitalization.



Centre Street-Downtown Pottsville (Source: Bergmann)

## PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

To further engage the public, two workshops were held. The first, on November 14, was held at the Humane Fire Company and was attended by over 80 people. The public was presented with the results of the research and background analysis that had been performed, examining previous planning work, downtown's land use, the condition of the downtown market, current trends and best practices of small city revitalization, and the existing tourism market. The result of this work suggested several strategies, or "paths", that would be appropriate for downtown Pottsville to follow. Each of five different paths were presented at this meeting, with a brief description. These five potential paths to downtown revitalization shared the goals identified in Chapter 1, and all would result in a revitalized downtown, but differed in how that revitalization mechanism might occur, which partners would be involved and some other details.

After this presentation, the attendees were asked to prioritize which of the five they preferred. Three paths clearly emerged:

- Tourism-based
- arts and entertainment-based
- increasing the number of residents who lived downtown.

More details on these paths are given in Chapter 6.

The second public workshop, held on January 18, 2018 at the Lodge at Sharp Mountain attracted over 125 people. At this workshop, each of these paths were discussed in more detail using a table-top discussion format with facilitators at each table. Attendees provided their own ideas as to how these various revitalization strategies might be accomplished, who should be involved in the implementation of the strategies and what they, as residents, could play a role. In addition, attendees were asked to volunteer to help accomplish revitalization. There was an overwhelming positive response to this request.



GRAPHIC 2-3: Workshop Poster (Source: Bergmann)



## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND INVESTED STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Recognizing that more in-depth discussion with certain organizations and entities would provide valuable insight and perspective, interviews were held with about 25 individuals representing private businesses, governmental entities, non-profit organizations, downtown developers, and real estate brokers. Interviews were also held with commercial real estate brokers, downtown businesses, PADCO, SEDCO, D.G Yuengling & Son staff, Chamber of Commerce, City staff, County staff, and developers to better understand the market and identify issues and concerns.

Because the crowd-funded nature of this effort resulted in about 45 stakeholders who invested in hiring consultants to create this plan, these stakeholder – termed “invested stakeholders” – were given an opportunity to provide input early in the planning process.

The interviewees and invested stakeholders provided valuable insights and perspectives summarized below:

- Communication and leadership is needed – as in any community, there are a multiplicity of organizations and entities that are involved in revitalization and downtown. Several interviewees noted robust engagement is often lacking among these organizations and entities, and that at times strong and clear leadership in both public and private sectors was absent.
- Optimism – While the challenges to revitalizing downtown Pottsville are clear, interviewees were optimistic about downtown’s future, and cited new restaurants and retail, as well as increased collaboration evidenced through this current revitalization plan.
- Buildings with on-site parking are fully rented and those without parking are not. As was noted in the SWOT analysis, parking is a key determinant for occupancy of retail and office space, and for any future residential occupancy.
- Some of larger buildings will need a lot of rehabilitation. The Thompson building, one of the 2 “marquee” buildings at Centre and Market Streets, will require significant capital investment to renovate it regardless of future use(s). The Wells Fargo building, the other marquee building, may also require investment to return it to class A space.
- Possible need for full service hotel – The lack of a full-service hotel and the inability of the existing hotel to capture many of the available room-nights are significant factors that will inhibit or deter future visitors. By not capturing those room-nights, there are fewer downtown visitors and a reduced demand for restaurants and retail. Increasing the number of overnight visitors is more fully addressed in the recommendations chapter.
- Business Privilege Tax may be obstacle – The City and School District currently levy a 1% tax (shared equally between them) on business gross receipts and revenue. This is seen by some interviewees as a disincentive for businesses to locate anywhere in the City.
- LERTA needs to be promoted but may not be enough of an incentive – The City, County and School District do participate in a Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) district within the city. This allows a reduction in property taxes over a 10-year period, with gradually increasing tax payments over that time. However, LERTA is underutilized, perhaps due to insufficient advertising of the program and technical assistance for applicants. Another possibility is the amount of financial benefit that LERTA provides to a property owner is not significant enough to apply for it.
- Return on investment (ROI) for real estate investment inadequate - Current residential rents cannot support rehabilitation costs necessary to renovate upper floors in the CBD. There is a significant amount of available space on the upper floors of many of the downtown buildings, however, the overall renovation costs to bring that space up to code for residential use are substantial and these costs cannot be supported by current rents. Building owners and developers may require external subsidies to make the projects feasible.

# Chapter 3: Assessment & Inventory of Downtown

To establish a clear picture of what current Downtown Pottsville looks like, an inventory and assessment was performed for the study area. Methods to create this picture included the use of a GIS, aerial photography, Schuylkill County property data, and on-site information gathering. This information was compiled and mapped, providing a snapshot of downtown Pottsville. This inventory was the basis for the assessment and findings, which helped to inform the goals and strategies outlined in other chapters.

## LAND USES

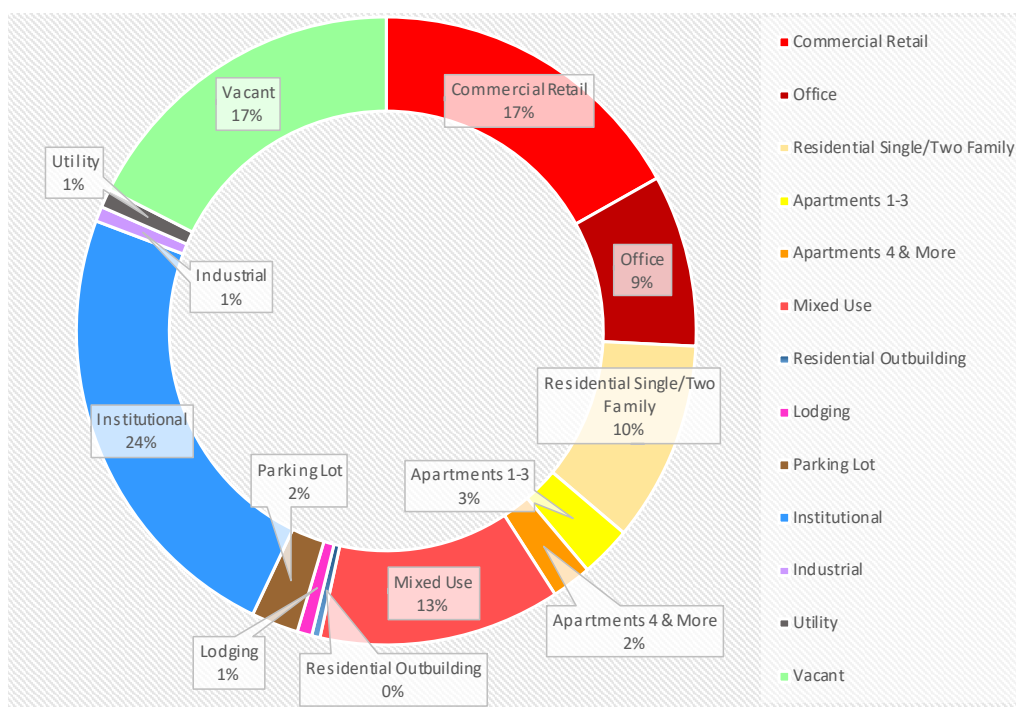
### Mix of Uses

Land use information was obtained from Schuylkill County in a GIS format. Within the study area, there were over 20 different categories that reflected the land use as well as the county taxing structure. These were simplified for purposes of this revitalization study based generally on accepted land use categories, with similar uses being combined under one category. The 13 categories are shown below and on the Existing Land Use Map.

Mix of land uses in downtown are well distributed, with 4 notable exceptions:

- **Institutional.** Approximately 27% of the land in the study area is classified as Institutional. This includes religious institutions and many of the state and county offices. As Pottsville is the county seat for Schuylkill County, it is logical that county offices be located here. Additionally, it is not unusual for a city of Pottsville's age and size to have several churches to be located downtown
- **Vacant Land.** About 20% of the land in the study area has a land use classification of Vacant. Some of the smaller properties are actually vacant, are side yards for an adjacent property or are unusable. However, the majority, of parcels marked vacant are used as parking lots; they have been developed in the past.
- **Lodging.** Only 3 properties are classified as Lodging in downtown: the Ramada Inn, the Partridge House Bed and Breakfast, and the Maid's Quarters Bed, Breakfast & Tearoom. All are located along South Centre Street. Both bed and breakfasts face onto S. Centre Street, while the Ramada's front faces Progress Avenue with parking across the street. Its now-vacant restaurant faces South Centre St.
- **Industrial.** Only one property is classified as Industrial in the study area. This is unusual for a city such as Pottsville with a history based on the coal industry. The original brewery building for D. G. Yuengling & Son, located on Mahantongo Street falls under this classification.

## LAND USE BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STUDY AREA



GRAPHIC 3-1: Land Use (Source: Bergmann)

## Tax Exempt Uses

One remaining category that is important to identify is shown on the Tax Exempt Land Use map. This category shows the properties that are tax-exempt in the study area, many of which coincide with the Institutional classification.

## HISTORIC BUILDING STOCK

- **General Type & Condition.** As was indicated in the SWOT, the residents of Pottsville consider the historic architecture of downtown to be one of its greatest strengths. Many of the buildings date back to the late 1800's and early 1900's, and for the most part, are in good condition.
- **Vacancy.** Many of the storefronts in downtown are currently vacant. This information was not readily available from the county data; therefore, several site visits were conducted to gather this information. The details and ramifications are discussed in the next chapter, but long-term vacancy has an effect on building condition as well.

## PARKING

Convenient parking was listed as the number one weakness in the SWOT. However, on-street parking is available on most downtown streets; there are surface lots and 1 public parking garage. The Mahantongo Street Parking Garage is currently closed because of structural issues, but plans are in place to rebuild it. D. G. Yuengling & Son has given the city \$2.8 Million for the reconstruction. An informal parking survey was conducted using aerial photography and at first glance, it appears that there is adequate parking for downtown. However, the steep terrain and the distances from one end of town to the other, the available parking may not be considered "convenient." In addition, several of the parking lots are privately owned and are not available to the public.

The on-street parking conditions and parking policy are inconsistent. Several blocks of Centre Street, the primary commercial street, have no meters on them and only have one-hour parking regulations. Other blocks off of Centre, such as West Market Street and 2nd Street have meters, with some meters charging \$0.25 per hour and others charging \$0.50 per hour. On-street parking is a precious commodity and needs to be managed as such. Best practices state that metering prime commercial streets provides the necessary turnover to free up parking for the retail customers; meter rates can vary across different parts of downtown but should be consistent on any one block. The results of the informal survey is shown on the Preliminary Parking Inventory Map.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Institutional Properties

The sizable percentage of county-based offices have a definite impact on the downtown. The social service offices attract a population of people that are either unemployed or underemployed and who may loiter throughout the daytime and evening. This impacts the perception of safety, the desirability of shopping, and negatively impacts other foot traffic in downtown.

### 2. Tax-Exempt Properties

The high percentage of Institutional and other tax-exempt properties has had an impact on downtown, especially given the Business Privilege Tax that is levied on the businesses.

### 3. Historic Building Stock

The historic building stock is generally in good condition and is an asset to the downtown character. The Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB) has had a positive effect on the preservation of the historic buildings. The recent grant that PADCO received for façade restoration is also a step in the right direction for revitalization.

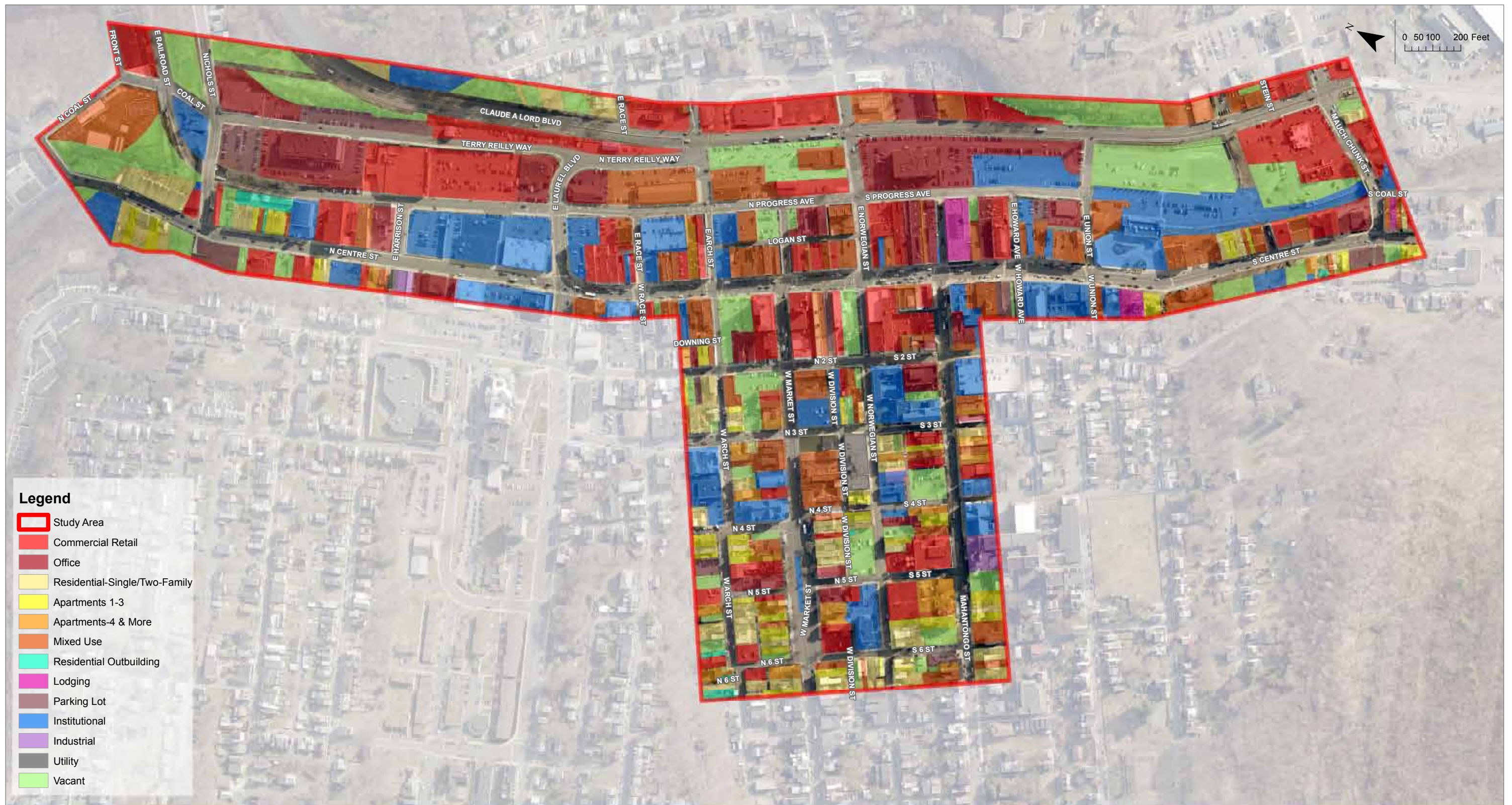
### 4. Parking

The reconstruction of the Mahantongo Parking Garage, combined with existing surface lots may provide adequate parking downtown, although it may not all be conveniently located. On-street parking regulations and meter rates need to be rationalized. A formal parking study would help to identify the issues and workable solutions.

### 5. Streetscape

Although the streetscape character wasn't analyzed as a separate item, it was noted that recent improvements were made to the streetscape by the business community and the city. These included plantings, a few directional signs and hardscape furniture. These are positive steps towards revitalization.





# Existing Land Use

CITY OF POTTSVILLE







# Tax Exempt Land Use



CITY OF POTTSVILLE







#### Legend

-  Study Area
-  Parking Lots



# Preliminary Parking Inventory

CITY OF POTTSVILLE





# Chapter 4: Analysis of Tourism Market

With the existence of the Yuengling Brewery and the brewery tours, tourism was identified as a leading factor to consider for downtown revitalization, requiring more detailed analysis. This analysis of the tourism market has been informed by a broad range of input from stakeholder interviews, data collected by Yuengling, public workshops and site visits. This analysis reveals a Pottsville with the assets and opportunities to become a viable tourism destination and a basis for downtown revitalization. It also identifies the challenges that may slow or impede its growth. The results of this analysis are incorporated into the strategies and specific actions contained in Chapters 7 and 8.

Pottsville's revitalization potential, based in part on a theme of tourism, can offer unique, authentic and inspiring visitor experiences, but these visitor experiences need to be cultivated to increase number of visitors and visitor spending. Throughout the stakeholder discussions and community meetings, it became clear that there is support for the tourism pathway, building on existing assets to tell the story of the city and its culture. Tourism is an opportunity for local business to leverage those visitors into customers and to increase foot traffic to generate more downtown economic activity. Businesses need to cooperate and collaborate and learn how to accommodate better visitor needs in order to be successful.

This chapter is also intended to provide a consensus among the stakeholders who participated in decision-making on tourism-related development for the City and advising investors and businesses on where they should be investing their energies as Pottsville tourism industry takes shape.

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

Tourism in Pottsville has the potential to be a transformative industry for the local economy and improve quality of place for residents. With Pottsville's rich history, and the presence of Yuengling Brewery, the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad excursion train, a trolley, and various attractions and events, tourism is a realistic initiative to explore and develop.

There are existing assets that form a framework to build a tourism industry around, but there are also challenges facing the initiative. Resources, including financing, industry knowledge and attitudes in Pottsville, need to be improved to facilitate changes, to develop the market, and to generate room nights. Overcoming these require continued and strengthened cooperation among key stakeholders such the City of Pottsville, PBA, PADCO, D.G Yuengling and Son, the Schuylkill County Visitor Bureau and private investors.

The focus of this tourism analysis is within the footprint of the study area, but the tourism footprint also encompasses experiences outside the city. The cluster of assets in downtown Pottsville is core to the recommendations, with the understanding that visitors to Pottsville may also travel to nearby attractions as part of their experience.



Yuengling Brewery (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)

## TOURISM ECONOMY IN SCHUYLKILL COUNTY – A \$200 MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Below is a snapshot of the tourism economy in Schuylkill County for the most recent time periods, 2014-2015, including total spending, spending by selected categories, total economic impact, employment and labor income, and taxes paid. Pottsville-specific data is not available for this data set, but the data below illustrates the potential for jobs, tax revenue and spending through tourism. Information specific to Yuengling Brewery visitors is given in the section following.

The numbers indicate that the spending and its associated impacts are rising in the county, better than the surrounding region and the state, with overall spending increasing 3.7%. By comparison, the region that Schuylkill County is grouped in by the state experienced a decline in spending of -0.8% over this same time, while the state grew by only 2.9%. Traveler spending in all categories has increased meaning that visitors are spending more in tourism-related outlets.

Year	Lodging	Food & Bev.	Retail	Recreation	Transportation	TOTAL
2014	\$ 17.4	\$ 47.9	\$ 34.2	\$ 31.3	\$ 68.2	\$ 198.9
2015	\$ 18.4	\$ 50.1	\$ 35.2	\$ 32.7	\$ 69.8	\$ 206.2

**GRAPHIC 4-1:** Visitor Spending (Source: Tourism Economics, for PA DEPT OF TOURISM)(*dollar amounts in millions*)

Looking at the broader economic impacts in the county, tourism impact trends are also positive - increasing in all categories representing more jobs and generating more in local, state, and federal taxes. It should also be noted that the tourism industry generates over \$10 million in private investment and non-travel related personal consumption spending, and nearly \$102 million in income for residents employed in jobs related to tourism.

Year	Total Travel Demand	Employment	Labor Income	State & Local Taxes	Federal Taxes
2014	\$ 209.5	2,402	\$ 98.9	\$ 18.8	\$ 18.9
2015	\$ 217.4	2,446	\$ 101.8	\$ 19.3	\$ 19.7
% change	3.6%	1.8%	2.8%	2.6%	4.1%

**GRAPHIC 4-2:** Tourism Industry Impacts (Source: Tourism Economics, for PA DEPT OF TOURISM)(*dollar amounts in millions*)



Downtown Attractions (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)

## VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN POTTSVILLE

Based on data supplied by the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau, there are four primary attractions/types of attractions within the city.

### Yuengling Brewery

Located on Mahantongo Street, this is by far the largest visitor attraction. Of the 74,000 reported visitors, approximately half came to take the brewery tour (and sample different brews in the tasting room), and half came just for the gift shop to purchase merchandise and beer. The Brewery offers an exceptional visitor experience with experienced, professional staff to tour the hand-dug caves under the brewery, bottling rooms and other parts of the brewery.

### Culture & Heritage-themed Tourism

This is a niche to develop. Pottsville has a rich history and played a significant role in the industrial revolution that shaped America; many notables were born or lived in Pottsville, fortunes were made and of course the fate of the Molly McGuire's left their mark on the city too. There are two existing attractions that are in this category, Schuylkill County Historical Society (3,500 visitors per year) and Jerry's Custom Cars and Collectibles Museum (5,000 visitors per year)

### Arts & Entertainment

These attractions are downtown Pottsville-centric, where many of the largest arts & entertainment attractions are located. This is a broad category that can encompass music, live performance, film and traditional crafts and mediums. Existing outlets in the City include the Majestic Theater (8,000 visitors per year), the Anthracite Philharmonic (5,000 visitors per year) and the Schuylkill County Center for the Arts (4,500 visitors per year).

### Events

Existing events, which are also a vital component to the tourism fabric include:

- The Yuengling Light Lager Jogger 5K held in April, attracts 3,500 runners and another 2,500 spectators, The Light Lager Jogger 5K is extraordinarily popular and sells out within days of the registration opening. The event also sells out the one downtown hotel. Day-of events include a beer garden and live music
- Cruisin' Pottsville (formerly the Great Pottsville Cruise) is a car cruise in August that attracted several thousand people in 2017. It is currently a single day event that occurs on Centre Street. However, it has recently had some struggles. It had been managed for over 20 years by the Pottsville Lions Club until 2017, when illness forced a key member to step away and it was initially cancelled. However, local car enthusiasts took over, renaming it Cruisin' Pottsville and ran it. There are plans for a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary cruise in 2018.
- The annual Block of Art in April draws 1,000 visitors annually. The community feedback has been generally positive, but the event seems to be fractured; the lack of cohesion can be addressed by a task force.
- City Cycle 17 – a seventeen-mile bicycle race on city streets, it was last run in 2016, however it has the potential to be a bigger event and should be considered for the 2018 calendar.

Outdoor recreation is currently not a draw for downtown Pottsville, but it is an important reason for visitation to the county and could be a reason for people to stay or visit Pottsville. Recreation-related attractions and destinations include state and county parks, and an innovative re-use of industrial land as an off-road vehicle sports destination. Another outdoor recreation site is Hawk Mountain Visitor Center and its trails. It straddles both Schuylkill and Berks County and reports a visitation of 75,000 people per year.

With regard to river-related activities, there is a put-in spot for kayaks on the Schuylkill River at the very western edge of the City limits, but the river is shallow at that point and the put-in spot is in an undesirable location next to the sewage treatment facility. It is not an attractive spot for visitors and does not provide for a positive visitor experience.

Within the city, there is a short multi-use trail that runs from John F. Kennedy Memorial Recreation Complex to Railway Park along an abandoned rail right-of-way; it is about 1 mile in length. There are nearby trails, including the Bartram Trail, that are part of the planned 130-mile long Schuylkill River Trail from Philadelphia to Pottsville. Recently, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area has improved and opened a section of the trail from Tumbling Run Road south to Seven Stars Road. Eventually, this regional trail will connect with downtown, but there is no timetable for that to occur. There is also a trail that is being planned at the western edge of the City – the Blackwood Trail – that would run from Gordon Nagle Trail to near Blackwood Road. This trail is only in the feasibility stage and has no construction timetable.



## OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS

The list below provides information on the largest attractions, location and number of visitors estimated for 2016. It should be noted that these visitation numbers are self-reported to the Visitors Bureau and should be viewed within that framework.

### NUMBER OF VISITORS BY ATTRACTION IN 2016

Name	# of Visitors/year	Location
Tuscarora State Park	220,000	Barnesville
Locust Lake State Park	200,000	Barnesville
Swatara State Park	100,000	Pine Grove
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary	75,000	Kempton (Schuylkill & Berks County)
Rausch Creek Motorsports Park	40,000	Pine Grove
Pioneer Tunnel Coal Mine	40,000	Ashland
Sweet Arrow Lake County Park	36,000	Pine Grove
Tamaqua Railroad Station	30,000	Tamaqua
Schuylkill County Fair	22,000	Summit Station
Camp-A-While	15,000	Hegins
Rosemount Camping Resort	9,000	Tamaqua
Hegins Craft Fair/Festival	8,000	Hegins
Tamaqua Heritage Day with Train Rides	8,000	Tamaqua
Girardville St. Patty's Day Parade	8,000	Girardville
Appalachian Trail	8,000	various
Bartram Trail (part of Schuylkill River Trail)	8,000	various
Lehigh Valley & NE Rail Trail	8,000	various
Schuylkill Valley Heritage Trail	8,000	various
Schuylkill County Wine Festival	7,000	Hegins
Lighting of the Vineyard/Benigna's Creek	6,000	Klingerstown
Tamaqua Community Arts Center	5,000	Tamaqua

**GRAPHIC 4-3:** Largest Non-Pottsville Visitor Attractions in Schuylkill County (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)

## THE VISITOR: REGIONAL AND POTTSVILLE

Visitors to Pottsville and the surrounding region fall into 4 categories:

- Business
- Business/leisure
- Leisure visitors who are visiting family and friends
- Marketable – leisure visitors who are not visiting family and friends.

Each visitors of the above categories include both overnight visitors and visitors just coming for the day (“day-trippers”). The state provides limited data for the region, but none for Pottsville alone. However, a recent survey that was performed of visitors to the Yuengling Brewer provide valuable insight into leisure visitors to Pottsville, due to the substantial proportion of visitors who come to Pottsville to visit the brewery. In addition, recent tourism studies indicate that business trips with 3+ days are more likely to add a leisure component, “bleisure travelers”, a hybrid of business and leisure travel.

### Leisure

According to state data, most leisure visitors who spend the night in the region came to visit family and friends (63%), with 37% of overnight visitors coming for other reasons. The primary origin for these visitors was Pennsylvania, with New York, New Jersey and Maryland contributing the next largest number of overnight visitors. For day-trippers, the numbers are almost reversed, with only 39% coming to visit family and friends, and 60% visiting for other reasons. The origin markets for day-trippers was very similar to overnight visitors, except for Delaware supplanting Maryland as a major origin state.

A recent meeting with Leeann Imschweiler, regional manager that oversees Ramada Pottsville, indicated that visiting-family-and-friends leisure travelers, people attending events and business travelers make up most of the Ramada’s clientele

D.G. Yuengling & Son undertook a visitor survey during the summer of 2016 and found that its visitors’ origins reflected the state data. The largest age group that visited the brewery were aged 21-37 years of age. Significant portions of visitors were interested in dining options nearby, taking a trolley tour of the city, learning about local history and seeing other attractions in the city.

### Business traveler

Of all overnight visitors, those who came for businesses reasons totaled 12%; while of day trippers, the percentage of business travelers was only 9%. The place of origin of business travelers is not provided by the state data. There is very little current data for the business traveler to Pottsville but through stakeholder interviews, it is estimated that business travelers from across the country came to Pottsville for business-related trips to D.G. Yuengling & Son, Empire Beauty School headquarters and Hydro (formerly Sapa).



Locust Lake State Park & Mountain Valley Golf Course (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)

## KEY ASSETS

### Yuengling Brewery

Pottsville is synonymous with Yuengling. The Yuengling visitor experience is excellent, attracting 74,000 people visitors annually to take the tour, sample product, purchase merchandise and run in the Light Lager Jogger 5K. Yuengling builds brand awareness through broader distribution and as a by-product, Pottsville gains additional opportunities to attract visitors. In addition, the state has recently awarded the company with a \$1 million grant, to be matched on at least a one-to-one basis with private funding, to enhance the visitor experience. Plans have not been finalized yet, but there has been discussion of construction of a museum focusing on D.G. Yuengling's history, a community event space and an enhanced tour route. In addition, the Visitors Bureau intends on installing an interactive kiosk in the Gift Shop that will provide information on nearby attractions, restaurants and other visitor-focused points of interest.

### History

Pottsville has a story worth telling. Pottsville embodies the history of industrialization and urbanization of America with its positive and negative attributes, these themes remain relevant today. The presence of the Schuylkill County Historical Society, with its significant genealogical holdings, volunteer and paid staff, and museum collection, is an anchor and resource.

### Location

Pottsville is located on Rt. 61, between Interstates 81 and 78 making it an accessible destination by car or chartered bus. Its central location within the county is well suited for base trips to other tourism attractions (a "Hub and Spoke" approach). The Schuylkill County Airport, located outside of the city limits, can accommodate small jets and passenger planes.

### Building Stock

Pottsville's emergence as a regional center during the late 1800s and early 1900s resulted in the construction of elaborate and architecturally striking commercial buildings. The economic decline of the city and lack of new investment in construction had the unintended consequence of saving many of these buildings and providing one of its greatest treasures, the building stock. In addition, the existence of a HARB has also helped preserve these cultural gems. Pottsville downtown is lined with magnificent buildings, testimonials to the wealth and craftsmanship of bygone eras.

### Railroad

Pottsville had a significant railroad presence and while much of it no longer exists, a set of railroad tracks were reconstructed to the Union Station building as part of a previous downtown project. Currently, the Reading, Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad uses this track for its excursion trains, although there was a hiatus in these excursions in 2017. The excursion train rides are an underutilized opportunity to introduce people to Pottsville for a day of shopping, touring and history. The railroad ownership has recognized this opportunity and has committed to weekend excursions on a once per month basis from May until October.

### Trolley

The City of Pottsville has recently acquired a 26-seat trolley that is available for private functions, tours and other visitor experiences. It was used by the Majestic Theater in December 2017 for a very successful inaugural run of their Holly Trail holiday house tour.

### Events

The events held in Pottsville (Yuengling Light Lager Jogger 5K and the car cruise) listed previously draw thousands of people and in some cases, generate significant room nights (which in-turn generate room tax that are reinvested in marketing the county by the VB); they eat in local restaurants and shop in downtown stores. These short-term visitors form the basis of future longer-term visitors.

## SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES

### Lodging

Pottsville lacks a hotel that can serve all the potential markets, including business and leisure traveler. Currently there is one downtown hotel – a Ramada Inn. However, it does not have a restaurant or bar and lacks service and amenities found in full-service hotels. The entrance is not ADA compliant, requiring visitors to climb steps to the lobby. Meetings with stakeholder affirm that the absence of a full-service hotel is the biggest obstacle to developing business or leisure tourism; there are complaints about its quality of rooms and cleanliness. The Ramada is located at key location and gateway into the city, a critical site for creating first-impressions of Pottsville.

As a result, Pottsville is missing the opportunity to generate additional room-nights and, revenues across all categories of tourism spending. Wendy Yuengling and Dave Casinelli, of D. G. Yuengling & Son, have indicated that its business traveler requires a full-service hotel and estimates that more than 400 room-nights are needed to accommodate Yuengling's needs. Without a full-service hotel, the company has found alternative sites to house its visiting team members and hold meetings. In addition, the Yuengling Light Logger Jogger generates an unmet local demand of over 600 room nights, and other businesses in the area generate more room-night demand. These missing room-nights translate into fewer visitors to downtown Pottsville, less downtown vitality and lost revenue for downtown restaurants and bars.

Moreover, the closing of a restaurant in the hotel in 2010 resulted in two additional impacts on downtown's vitality. It reduced the number of potential eating places, and since the former restaurant space fronts onto Centre Street at Mahantongo, it has created an uninviting presence at a key intersection due to the dead retail space.

### Resources

The City of Pottsville and the Schuylkill County Visitor Bureau have limited resources to market Pottsville or staff specific initiatives. There is a locally-focused Pottsville Tourism Commission, however its membership has dwindled and now only has a single member.

### Product Development

Pottsville does not offer a broad "Pottsville experience" that educates or entertains. The visitor experience that exists today is generally limited to the Yuengling Brewery tour and gift shop.

### Identity & Image

A tourist's image of Pottsville is negatively impacted by the existing hotel and the appearance of downtown. While tourism will generate revenue and bolster local economies, the vacant buildings and tired commercial buildings communicate a negative image to out of towners. This, combined with Pottsville's self-identity does not present a welcoming environment.



Downtown Marquee Buildings: Thompson and Wells Fargo (Source: Bergmann)



## PARTNERS

Pottsville tourism will benefit by developing partnerships among all local attractions and major employers to establish a promotional framework and working relationships. Partnerships should be well-thought out and articulated to include:

- Sharing resources – staff, volunteers, mailings, etc.
- Using social media platforms to cross promote and build awareness
- Creating itineraries
- Event support
- Marketing strategies that focus on shared demographic, geographic and psychographic markets

## TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

Pottsville lacks a comprehensive tourism infrastructure. Downtown does not have the amenities that visitors expect, including high quality signage (wayfinding), readily-available visitor information (e.g. the Visitors Bureau is currently closed on weekends), restrooms, “tourism ambassadors”, guided tours schedules or dynamic self-guided walking tours. This infrastructure can be created, however, and Pottsville has the existing resources and technology.

By opening the Visitors Bureau on the busier weekends and increasing and publicizing the location of places where visitors can get local information on what to do and where to eat and shop (e.g. local shops and restaurants, AAA office, Cabela’s, local Sheetz stores, etc.), visitors and potential visitors can easily find information on downtown. By conducting training of front line staff at these same places, attracting volunteers to be “tourism ambassadors” to tourists, answering their questions on downtown streets, and providing public rest rooms, visitors will feel welcomed and comfortable and will want to return.

Moreover, while the Pottsville topography is daunting to people on foot and the (perceived) lack of parking can frustrate visitors in cars, technology like a walking tour app or a parking app, and an operating trolley system would be significant improvements.

The capacity to undertake these initiatives and actions can be developed by working with volunteers, organizing or coordinating with them, and “re-stocking” and re-energizing the Tourism Commission with new members.



Steep Climb along Mahantongo Street to the Yuengling Brewery (Source: Bergmann)



Pop-up Art on Centre Street (Source: Bergmann)



Wayfinding signage at Centre Street & Claude A. Lord Blvd (Source: Bergmann)

# Chapter 5: Trends & Best Future Research

## BEST FUTURES RESEARCH

Small cities across Pennsylvania and the country are experiencing a renaissance of their downtowns. There are several trends identified as supporting this revitalization of smaller downtowns. Pottsville has many of the assets and resources related to these trends and is therefore able to benefit from them.

### Urbanization & Downtown Residential Use

Overall, there has been an urbanization of the population where people are moving back to cities to live. There have been many media stories recently about millennials (people born ca. 1982-2002) moving back to cities, and this urbanization is also a trend among empty-nester and retired Baby Boomers. Retirees and empty-nesters no longer want or need a suburban house with a yard but are active and want a setting that allows them to enjoy restaurants, cultural events, and lifestyle amenities. Millennials and Boomers want to live and/or work in a walkable, mixed-use, live-work-play environment.

In addition to a general trend back to cities, the downtown areas of cities are seeing increased residential use downtown. This trend is an amplification of the overall urbanization trend, focused on the downtown areas. Downtown areas tend to have architecturally interesting and/or historic characteristics; the upper floors of retail buildings are appealing as renovated residential living space.

### Higher Education Facilities

The existence of these facilities (with student, faculty and staff) in cities is also being used to leverage revitalization efforts. This higher education community provides potential shoppers and eaters, as well as providing cultural and educational resources for the entire city.

### Craft Brewing

This is a lifestyle trend that has caught on across the country. Brew pubs, cideries and distilleries provide a social space for people to interact in and can be springboards for attracting additional private investment.

### Festivals

Similarly, there has been an increase in the “festivalization” of cities, with arts festivals, music events, car shows, etc. occurring on downtown streets. Festivals attract visitors who will spend money in retail outlets, restaurants, and cultural venues and will return again and tell their friends.

### Tech Sector

The changing business trends in workplace and workforce have also been catalysts for revitalization. The Tech Sector is attracted to physically open space available in older building stock, an independent workforce seeking the flexibility of being able to live anywhere and work anywhere, and coworking offerings that support services and facilities for that independent workforce.

### Historic Preservation

This is another trend, and many of the trends identified above are directly related to the historic character of cities and their downtowns. Historic preservation supports some of the trends identified above, but also attracts visitors who are interested in heritage tourism. Authenticity sells visitors.

### Pop- up Stores & Activities

This trend is to activate empty storefronts for seasonal or event-related windows of opportunity. Pop-up stores or activities that are related to an uses like a beer garden, dance studio or one that is seasonally-themed can attract shoppers and visitors who may not be typically inclined to visit downtown.

## BEST PRACTICES

These trends have resulted from successful strategies and best practices such as the ones listed below:

### Leadership

Visible leadership from both the public and private sector is needed. Successful city revitalization is supported by public sector leadership that is proactive, future-oriented, embracing change, and assuming risk. Private sector leadership includes private investment, partnerships with private, public and non-profit partners, and innovative governance of such private/private partnerships. This leadership is often collaborative in its activities and structure.

### Social Capital

The various social connections within/between community members is important. This makes the partnerships mentioned above easier and more successful.

### Regional Economic Strategy

Cities do not exist in an economic vacuum, so a regional strategy will provide needed support to reengage disconnected workers with jobs via education, job readiness training, and access to employment.

### Leveraging Existing Assets

Successful city revitalization utilizes available, existing assets and builds on them. Historic events, historical character, unique local products, natural resources, inexpensive real estate, and any assets that cannot be experienced via the internet can be leveraged.

### Broadly Held Local Vision

Agreement among community members, government officials, merchants, private industry and other stakeholders is needed to move forward on revitalization. This shared vision can then be implemented through coordinated and collaborative actions.

### Identify, Measure, & Celebrate Short-term Success

Revitalization is not a quick process - there are few quick fixes that will turn a city around. The economic disinvestment that impacted cities in decline didn't happen overnight and neither will revitalization. However, it is critical to generate and maintain momentum in the early stages and sustain public support through the process. By identifying what short-term success "looks like" (e.g. more visitors to downtown, new shops, more events, improved storefronts, new signage, etc.), measuring those characteristics and then celebrating accomplishments, there can be a shared sense of achievement and community pride.



Crimson House: newly opened restaurant (Source: Bergmann)



# Chapter 6: Analysis of Downtown Market

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the work to develop a revitalization strategy for downtown, an understanding of its demographic and economic context, and findings from previous studies and plans are useful. They provide a baseline of information and a realistic foundation upon which to build potential paths towards revitalization and the recommended actions needed to follow any of them.

This chapter will present an analysis of trends and current economic conditions of downtown Pottsville, based on quantitative data sources, qualitative research and user-generated data from field visits.

Much of this data will be focused on Pottsville's historic downtown – the area surrounding Centre and Market Streets. This area is considered by the consultant team as the “core” of downtown Pottsville. It is walkable, has a density of retail and office uses, and is bisected by the major east/west artery – US Route 209.

This analysis, combined with the tourism analysis (contained in Chapter 4), stakeholder interviews, the SWOT survey analysis, best practices, current trends, and other background research provide a basis for recommended strategies for downtown revitalization.

## DOWNTOWN ANALYSIS OF MARKET

### BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

To provide some context and comparability, data for population, population by age, and household income is offered for the Census Tract that includes downtown Pottsville (Census Tract 19), the entire City of Pottsville, Schuylkill County and the State of Pennsylvania.

### POPULATION

Downtown Pottsville is younger than the region, has experienced a slight increase in older millennials and has had a faster income growth rate than the region, all of which are positive trends for revitalization. Conversely it has lost population at a faster rate than the region and remains poorer than the region which are troubling trends.

Downtown's overall population saw a loss of approximately 800 people from 2000 to 2015 and experienced a faster rate of decrease than the City or Schuylkill County. By comparison, the state experienced a small gain in population over this same time. When examining population by age, downtown stayed younger than the City or County, and in the last 5 years, older millennials (i.e. those aged 25-34) made a modest comeback in population. The City, County and State all got older during this time.

Household income data shows that downtown is still poorer than the City or County (or state), but it gained more than the City or state over the last 10 years.

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

	Total Population			Median Age			Household Income		
	2000	2015	% Change	2000	2015	% Change	2000	2015	% Change
Downtown (Census Tract 19)	5,894	5,107	-13.4%	36.7	36.6	-0.3%	\$ 21,806	\$ 30,343	39.1%
Pottsville	15,549	14,025	-9.8%	40.9	43.3	5.9%	\$ 30,137	\$ 37,581	24.7%
Schuylkill County	150,336	146,360	-2.6%	40.5	43.8	8.1%	\$32,699	\$ 45,535	39.3%
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	12,779,559	4.1%	38	40.5	6.6%	\$ 40,106	\$ 53,559	33.5%

**GRAPHIC 6-2:** Demographic Data- Downtown Pottsville, Schuylkill County and Pennsylvania (Source: US Census Bureau)



**GRAPHIC 6- 1:** Census Tract 19 (Source-Google Maps)



Vacant Storefront-Wells Fargo Bidg (Source: Bergmann)

## STREET LEVEL STOREFRONT ANALYSIS:

There is limited data available at the storefront level of detail necessitating field visits to conduct a storefront-by-storefront inventory and analysis of the walkable downtown “core”. This area, dubbed in this report as the Central Business District (CBD), includes Centre Street from Laurel Boulevard to Mauch Chunk St, and West Market from Centre to 6<sup>th</sup> Street. This “T-shaped” area, stretching approximately ½ of a mile in length, is the essential core of downtown Pottsville. This is Pottsville’s historic downtown, which is adjacent to most of the government offices of the City and County; bisected by the major east/west route in the region - US Route 209. While the southernmost blocks in this area are residential, most of buildings have non-residential uses occupying the ground floor.

It should be noted that this inventory was focused on storefronts, not on the building in which the vacant storefronts were located. This granular level of detail identifies trends and issues at the pedestrian scale and informs strategies that can have a significant impact on the look and feel of downtown to those pedestrians.

## STOREFRONT VACANCIES IN CBD

TOTAL STOREFRONTS: 171;	
OCCUPIED RETAIL/OFFICE/ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT/LODGING = 96 (57%)	
VACANT RETAIL/OFFICE = 31 (18%)	
RETAIL USE	71: 47 occupied, 24 vacant
OFFICE	51: 44 occupied (10 social service offices), 7 vacant
LODGING	2: all occupied
ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT	3: all occupied
INSTITUTIONAL	9: all occupied
RESIDENTIAL	35: 28 occupied, 7 vacant

**GRAPHIC 6-3:** Street Level Storefront Analysis (Source: Eastwick Solutions)

There are 171 storefronts within the CBD area, of this total, only 96 are occupied as retail, office or other non-residential use (57% of all storefronts). Additionally, there are 28 occupied storefronts that are residences within the CBD. It is desirable to have retail or services at the ground floor of a downtown building, as this is what generates foot traffic.

A second issue of concern for Pottsville is the number of vacant commercial storefronts, The inventory acquired during the field visits revealed that there were 63 vacant commercial storefronts (not including vacant residential), nearly 37% of all storefronts.

It was difficult to tell from an exterior field view whether the upper floors of many of these storefronts were occupied and by what use. Based upon observations and anecdotal evidence, many of these upper floors are vacant.





# Focus Area with Vacancies

CITY OF POTTSVILLE





## RETAIL DEMAND AND SUPPLY ANALYSIS

Using a proprietary software package developed by ESRI, a report was generated to identify the size and geographic draw of downtown retail sales. The methodology of this retail demand and supply analysis is based upon Census data and estimates based upon that data. Because the report does use estimation methodology, its results should be viewed with some caution. Nevertheless, there are some salient findings in it.

Most importantly, the estimated amount of retail sales and restaurant sales that occur downtown in the CBD exceeds the estimated buying power of the residents who live in or near downtown. Within a 1-mile radius of downtown, retail sales exceed estimated demand for all retail by over \$10 million and restaurant sales exceed estimated demand by over \$5 million. Within a 5-mile radius, sales exceed demand for total retail sales and for restaurant sales. The conclusion: downtown still draws retail and restaurant customers from outside of downtown; it is still seen as an overall economic magnet. In fact, it is estimated that downtown Pottsville accounts for over 31% of all restaurant sales within a 5-mile radius.

The table below provides the estimates for both a 1-mile radius of downtown and a 5-mile radius of downtown

### RETAIL DEMAND & SUPPLY

<b>1 Mile Radius:</b>	<b>Demand (Retail Potential)</b>	<b>Supply (Retail Sales)</b>	<b>Sales vs. Demand</b>
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$114,396,869	\$124,625,701	\$10,228,832
Total Retail Trade	\$104,226,989	\$109,305,083	\$5,078,094
Total Food & Drink	\$10,169,880	\$15,320,618	\$5,150,738
<b>5 Mile Radius:</b>	<b>Demand (Retail Potential)</b>	<b>Supply (Retail Sales)</b>	<b>Sales Vs Demand</b>
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$301,694,104	\$436,574,672	\$134,880,568
Total Retail Trade	\$274,917,427	\$401,508,693	\$126,591,266
Total Food & Drink	\$26,776,678	\$35,065,979	\$8,289,301

**GRAPHIC 6-4:** Retail Demand and Supply (Source: ESRI MarketPlace Retail Profile)

While this is a positive sign for downtown, it should be noted that retail and restaurant sales downtown are much less than retail and restaurant sales just beyond the City limits.

## MARKET VALUES & RECENT SALES

Based upon Schuylkill County property sales records, the total market value of the entire City over last 9 years has increased 15%, which is faster than inflation and a positive sign. Similar comparisons for downtown real estate values are not available, however the Study Area, an area larger than the CBD, has a market value of \$84 million, and the CBD has a market value of nearly \$34 million.

Unfortunately, in both these areas, there is a sizable portion of properties that are tax-exempt and pay no property taxes. Thirty-four percent of total value of all properties in the Study Area is tax-exempt, while tax-exempt properties in the CBD total 38% of the total value.

Within the Study Area, over the last 5 years, there has been an average of 11 arms-length transactions of non-single-family homes. As of July 2017, there were 11 such sales in 2017.

## EMPLOYMENT/DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT

There is limited employment data available. For tax revenue budgeting purposes, the City estimates that there are approximately 7,700 people working within the City limits as of 2017. However, less current Census data (from 2012) shows that there were over 9,600 workers working in the City, including 4,288 in health care & social assistance, the largest single sector. By comparison, the same Census data shows that employment has risen 5.4% from 2007-2012.

Census data on employment is not available specifically for downtown, however the County estimates that there are approximately 500 county workers who work downtown. In addition, there are hundreds of non-County employees who work downtown, including those employed in law firms, non-profits, retail establishments, and restaurant.

Employers with a larger, downtown workforce includes Pathways (formerly REDCO) with approximately 150 employees and Cleo (formerly Extol) with about 65 employees. While not downtown, the nearby Lehigh Valley Health Network - South Jackson Street facility has approximately 70 employees working in it on any given day. Although there have been some suggestions that there are 40,000 people downtown on a weekday, we have found no evidence to support that high of a figure.

Unemployment data is only available at a City level, and as of September 2017 it stood at 5.8% (not seasonally adjusted), higher than the County or the State. Based upon seasonal adjustments at those geographies, it is likely higher.

## CRIME

Data on crime is only available at a city-wide geography through the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). When comparing the incidence of violent crimes (homicide, aggravated assaults, rape, robbery) in Pottsville to other cities of its size across the state, the crime rate in Pottsville is lower than most of the cities, ranking 7<sup>th</sup> safest out of the 18 cities of similar size. An interview with Police Chief Richard Wojchiechowsky revealed that crime downtown is likely to be lower than elsewhere in the city due to targeted patrols and enhanced foot patrols there.

## OTHER ISSUES – MARKET RATE RESIDENTIAL

Due to downtown Pottsville's low rental rates for residential units, its relatively large number of units, the amount of retail services available and its general convenience, and the location of many social service agencies, it has seen a relatively large number of lower income residents locate there. In addition, there are several subsidized housing developments in close proximity to downtown. These subsidized developments include Laurel Terrace (118 units), Laurel Court (82 units), John O'Hara Homes (50 units), Michael Close (50 units), and Necho Allen (65 units). In addition, there are an estimated 84 units downtown that have Section 8 vouchers used for them. While there is a definite need for housing for low income people and households in the area, it appears that there are adequate numbers available currently in downtown Pottsville. Moreover, in order for existing retail to thrive and for new businesses to move in, there must be adequate numbers of consumers with sufficient income to purchase goods and support these merchants. Consequently, the number of downtown residential units that are market rate need to be increased. Increasing the number of market rate units developed and available downtown will increase the target audience for shops, services and restaurants. The one exception to this may be related to recruiting artists to move downtown, which is discussed more in Chapter 7.

## FINDINGS

Based upon the research performed, several findings have been developed for downtown revitalization that provide a basis for the potential revitalization strategies for Pottsville.

### 1. Downtown has significant value and great potential

Although downtown Pottsville has suffered from disinvestment and there are vacancies along Centre Street, the historic downtown still contains nearly \$34 million worth of real estate, visitors from outside the immediate area eat and shop downtown, and it is a walkable area; the building stock is exceptional. Moreover, it is very close to a major visitor destination (Yuengling Brewery), it is the county seat, has an excellent location within the region and is affordable. Market rate residential uses should be encouraged on upper floors.

### 2. Focus efforts within Study Area

The Study Area identified at the beginning of this process contains approximately 117 acres. Given limited resources that are available for any revitalization effort, this is a very large area. There is a significant risk that attempting to undertake a revitalization for this entire area will result in inadequate resources being deployed for any action resulting in a lower chance of success. Therefore, a smaller focus area should be identified within the Study Area to concentrate revitalization actions. It is recommended that this focus area should be the historic downtown and the blocks immediately adjacent to it including Centre Street from Mauch Chunk to Laurel Boulevard, West Market Street from Centre to 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Mahantongo Street from Centre to 5<sup>th</sup> Street referred to as the CBD (encompassing D.G. Yuengling & Sons campus) and Progress Street from Union Station to Laurel Boulevard. Keep in mind, that even this adjusted area may turn out to be too large of a focus area and adjustments may be necessary.

### 3. Perception is not reality

The SWOT analysis and interviews revealed a perception of unsafety downtown. However, an analysis of crime data refutes this perception. Recent FBI UCR crime data (2104) shows that Pottsville is not an unsafe city. Thus, it is more of an appearance issue than a crime and personal safety issue.



#### 4. Need lead entity

While revitalization activities and efforts must include many players and organizations, there needs to be better coordination to ensure effective action. Establishing a lead entity will facilitate improved coordination and accountability. There are several existing entities that may be appropriate, but PADCO is an obvious choice since its mission is focused on economic development within the City. The lead organization needs to have appropriate and adequate resources and staff skills to support revitalization activities. It must also be focused on downtown revitalization, including real estate development and business retention and recruitment. The priority should be on revitalization and anything additional will be a distraction and detriment to the process.

#### 5. Citizen and Business engagement is tremendous asset

Over the course of the last year, there have been several public meetings that have generated hundreds of attendees from the public and businesses. In addition, the Pottsville Business Association, (PBA) which is leading this effort, has a membership of approximately 160 businesses. This high-level of engagement is crucial to revitalization success. As noted in the “Best Futures Research” section, this enthusiasm and momentum needs to be sustained in variety of ways.

#### 6. A “mega-project” is not likely to be the answer

Downtown revitalization is accomplished by many smaller pieces being fit together in an integrated strategy - it is rare that a single large project accomplishes it. This revitalization strategy recognizes this fact and will provide a series of actions for revitalization.

#### 7. Marquee buildings are significant capital cost issues

The Thompson Building and former Wells Fargo Building, located at S. Centre Street and Market Street, are currently vacant; not only are they the most prominent buildings downtown, but they are also located at a key intersection. While actual rehabilitation costs have not been estimated as part of this planning project, it is likely that these costs are in the millions of dollars. Best practices indicate that revitalization efforts that start with large buildings, rather than smaller projects, have a higher likelihood of failure. Consequently, it is not recommended to start downtown revitalization with either of these two buildings.

#### 8. Communication among players could be improved

There are numerous entities that are currently and historically involved in downtown economic activity, including public and private sector players: the City, PADCO, SEDCO, the Chamber, the Parking Authority, D.G. Yuengling & Sons, Barefield Development Corporation, private developers, the Visitors Bureau, PBA, individual merchants, building owners, the County Historical Society, etc. As can be expected when a multitude of organizations are interacting, and as revealed by some of the interviews with stakeholders, at times communication is inadequate. A lack of communication can result in missed opportunities. As a corollary to the establishment of lead entity, improved methods of communications among all the key players will assist in revitalization efforts.

#### 9. Build Mahantongo Deck but look more closely at parking

There is a widely-held opinion that there is not adequate parking downtown, both for retail/restaurant patrons and for future residential use. The recent closing of the Mahantongo Deck has magnified this opinion and has reduced the amount of parking available for Yuengling Brewery and gift shop customers. The City has received funding from D.G. Yuengling & Son that would be sufficient to rebuild the deck. For these reasons, the deck should be rebuilt (note that a movie theater is part of this project), however the issue of on- and off-street parking should be examined more closely. From our Downtown Inventory work, there is a substantial number of off-street parking spaces, although it may not all be available to the public or not seen as convenient enough. In addition, several blocks of downtown do not have parking meters, which reduces parking turnover and makes finding parking more difficult. A review of off-street parking locations and their usage patterns, as well as on-street parking supply, demand, regulations and metering would provide an objective and comprehensive analysis to determine adequacy and availability of parking.

## POTENTIAL PATHS TO A REVITALIZED DOWNTOWN

The preceding research and analysis points to several possible strategies, or “paths”, that could be followed to further revitalization of downtown. Each of these potential paths will be summarized below. As previously mentioned, these five paths share some similarities as to specific strategies and tactics needed to implement them, and the final, recommended path may incorporate parts of several of these paths.

## Tourism

The presence of the Yuengling Brewery and gift shop (and site of a future museum) only a few blocks from downtown provides significant opportunities for tourism-based revitalization. By their estimate, 35,000 people took a brewery tour and another 35,000 visited the new gift shop last year. In addition, Jerry's Classic Cars and Collectibles Museum, the Schuylkill County Historical Society, the Majestic Theater, and sports events at Martz Hall and Barefield Recreation Complex, and the Yuengling Light Lager Jogger 5K attract thousands of additional visitors. Encouraging Yuengling brewery visitors to spend more time downtown, to eat and shop, to have a drink, or to take a walking tour will result in more sales and encourage new businesses to open. Having more people downtown will also enliven the streets and act to dispel the perception of a deserted downtown.

In addition, recent changes to state gaming laws present an opportunity for a "mini-casino" to be located downtown. The new law requires an existing casino operator to participate in an auction to be held to award new casino licenses. At this time, there are numerous unknown factors, but a mini-casino would align with the Tourism path.

## Leveraging Health Care Sector

The most recent Census estimates of health care related jobs, the presence of both Lehigh Valley Health Network hospitals and related medical facilities, and Geisinger's medical facilities all suggest that health care can be a viable path to revitalization.

## Living Downtown

Recent trends in small city revitalization provide two potential paths: encouraging more people to live downtown and using arts and entertainment. The living downtown path would require the renovation of upper floor space into residential uses. Also included in this path would be encouraging live/work space and co-working space to be created in these upper floors.

## Using Arts/Entertainment

There are several arts and entertainment venues downtown – the Majestic Theater, Jerry's Classic Cars and Collectibles Museum, Mud & Maker, and the Schuylkill County Historical Society - and the annual Block of Art and Pottsville Cruise bring people downtown. In addition, the Schuylkill County Council for the Arts is located near downtown. All these assets provide a foundation upon which to base revitalization. In addition, the recent announcement of a proposed movie theater to be built within the Mahantongo Parking Deck provides an enhancement to downtown arts and entertainment.

## Leveraging Existing Workers/Visitors

The last potential path is based on the fact that Pottsville is the county seat, has two hospitals, an existing workforce that works downtown, and participants and visitors using the Barefield Recreation Complex and Marts Hall. Consequently, a revitalization path based on leveraging these existing workers and visitors is another potential path.



Painting of Workers at Yuengling Brewery (Source: Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau)



# Chapter 7: Revitalization Vision and Strategy

A strategy for revitalization needs to start with a vision - a vision of what that revitalization will look like when it happens. A vision statement is aspirational, it encapsulates what might be, what should be, what downtown should become.

The vision statement, while aspirational, also sets the stage for the strategies that are needed to turn that vision into reality. It provides a broad measuring stick against which to measure progress. This strategic revitalization plan also includes more detailed measures and metrics that might be used as revitalization efforts are accomplished.

**The vision for downtown Pottsville: A vibrant and vital downtown that is the “town center” for Schuylkill County and a great place to live, work, shop, play and visit.**

As previously mentioned in this plan, there were 5 potential paths or strategies developed to revitalize downtown Pottsville, based upon the background work and research performed. While all would lead to a revitalized downtown, and would meet the goals established with more vibrancy, more people, and more shops and restaurants, each has a somewhat different approach. These five potential paths are:

- Tourism-based
- Arts & Entertainment-based
- Living Downtown-based
- Health Care-based
- Leveraging Locals-based

## DESIGN FRAMEWORK (RECOMMENDED PATH/STRATEGY)

These five potential strategies and what downtown might look like under each of them were presented at a public workshop in November 2017. Attendees were asked to vote on their preferred strategies and this resulted in 3 preferred strategies for downtown revitalization: tourism-based, arts & entertainment-based and living downtown-based. Additional input from the public on these three strategies was solicited at a second public workshop in January 2018. All this input was reviewed and vetted and then combined with the findings from the research previously performed to produce an overall design framework with recommended strategies and actions.

This framework integrates these three preferred strategies into a single unified strategic revitalization plan. Specific recommendations are provided to effectuate the strategy that are addressed to various audiences: public sector entities such as the City and the County; non-profit organizations such as PADCO, PBA, Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau, SEDCO, and the Majestic Theater; private businesses that are located downtown and those located near downtown; workers who work in or near downtown; and residents.

One of the critical sets of recommendations relate to maintaining the enthusiasm and momentum already created and sustaining revitalization. This involves identifying the responsibility of various partners and stakeholders and a system of accountability. To support this, an Action Matrix summarizing the recommendations, and details who should do what and when, is provided in the following chapter. This Action Matrix will provide an easy-to-use summary that can also be used as a “scorecard” to track progress on individual recommendations and on the overall revitalization of downtown. By using this Action Matrix, responsibilities are clarified, and accountability is enhanced. The recommendations provided are grouped into the five revitalization goals from Chapter 1.

## INCREASE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY & THE ECONOMIC HEALTH OF DOWNTOWN

Two key strategies to increasing economic activity are: (1) to provide support for existing downtown businesses, and (2) to actively recruit new ones. There is an abundance of commercial space available to support new and expanded businesses, and the retail leakage analysis provides evidence that downtown can and does attract patrons from beyond its borders. Existing downtown businesses must be nurtured and also combined with an assessment of the types of new businesses that should be recruited to insure a strong retail and service mix.

Research on small city revitalization found that small businesses typically need 5 types of support: (1) the need for marketing to get the word out about their existence and the services they provide; (2) finding space for expansion in the downtown; (3) obtaining support with financing; (4) keeping up with technology; and (5) finding good, reliable workers.

Therefore, support for existing downtown businesses should include joint marketing and promotion, technical assistance in operations, assistance to spruce up exteriors and interiors, and on-going communication with the City to address concerns and ideas. The recently announced grant funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development for facades is a positive step forward, but more funding and technical assistance is needed. PADCO's Revolving Loan Program provides some financial assistance for businesses but should be bolstered. Technical and financial resources such as those available from SCORE and Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA Alliance) should be called upon and used. NEPA Alliance has several loan products available to small businesses, as well as staff that can assist businesspersons. In addition, MetroAction in Scranton, a Community Development Financing Institution (CDFI), can make modest business loans available.

New businesses should initially be focused on those that visitors might frequent - coffee shops, restaurants, a distillery, or gift shops. The retail supply and demand study that was performed also identified some potential new retail businesses, where there was significantly more demand than supply within a 5-mile radius of downtown. These included: furniture and home furnishing stores, recreational vehicle/motorcycle/ATV/boat dealers, electronics and appliance stores, clothing and clothing accessory stores, non-department store general merchandise stores, and certain miscellaneous retail stores. However, this supply/demand data should be treated with some caution, as they are based upon estimates and online purchases will show up as demand when there may not actually be demand for a brick-and-mortar location. Cultivating a dialogue with existing businesses outside of downtown but in the region who may desire to expand is another source for new businesses development downtown.

Storefront space should be occupied by retail or restaurant use, or service uses that generate significant foot traffic (such as a gym). These are the types of uses that should be recruited for street level space. Office uses or other uses that do not generate significant foot traffic should be encouraged to locate on the upper floors. Potential business owner should be encouraged to have a business plan in place prior to acquiring space and should receive assistance in finding suitable and appropriate space. Here again, SCORE and NEPA Alliance have resources that would be useful.

New and expanded businesses might be hampered by parking, an issue that has been raised repeatedly in meetings. A comprehensive downtown parking analysis should be undertaken. The study area would encompass an area roughly from Claude Lord Boulevard to 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Mauch Chunk Street to Nichols Street, and would look at existing private and public lots and garages (and include the Mahatongo Deck), and on-street parking. Issues such as turnover, vacancy patterns, duration, shared parking potential, rates, on-street regulations (i.e. length of time), and meter rates need to be thoroughly examined to determine if additional parking needs to be developed, or if there are other alternatives such as increased shared parking or allowing public parking in some private lots or revising on-street regulations to free up spaces. In addition, technologies such as parking apps, should be examined to determine their feasibility for downtown.

The City's Business Privilege Tax, assessed on gross receipts with tax revenue shared between City and Pottsville Area School District, may be an obstacle to recruiting and retaining businesses. This revenue source, which accounts for approximately \$990,000 per year in revenue to the City, is used for general operations such as police and fire services, as well as public works operations. The City should consider improving its communication with the business community on how these funds are used, to let businesses know the taxes collected benefit the business community and general welfare of downtown. Another consideration is for the City to commit a certain portion of this revenue for downtown-related actions or activities. As a goal, the City should seek to reduce or eliminate this tax over the next decade.

In any rehabilitation of existing or future commercial space, local contractors should be encouraged to be involved. A "matchmaker" service that pairs local contractors with existing or future tenants would be helpful.

The City (in conjunction with PBA and PADCO) should consider a program to work with landlords to improve the appearance of their buildings and be ready to enforce ordinances for properties that do not meet code.

Real estate property acquisition and re-sale by a public or non-profit entity may be necessary to accomplish some of the actions recommended in this plan. There may be properties that need to be acquired ahead of any specific redevelopment



ment/rehabilitation project, or it may be strategically advantageous to acquire certain properties in advance. In these instances, having a designated entity to acquire these properties will facilitate the process. PADCO is an obvious choice to be that entity, as it is able to acquire and sell land, and is a non-profit. There may need to be close coordination between PADCO and the Redevelopment Authority, as the Authority may be a better agency to actually acquire the property, and then transfer it to PADCO.

Land banking, another tool to consider, is where underdeveloped, tax-delinquent or vacant buildings are acquired by a public entity, and then re-sold (at a discount) to a developer who commits to rehabilitating the building. Land banks are becoming more popular in Pennsylvania after recent legislation was passed to encourage their use. Land banks can acquire property, clear title and extinguish liens. A land bank, set up by the City, can receive property from the city and can also acquire property at a judicial sale without competitive bidding, in a negotiated agreement with the tax claim bureau. It should be noted that state law allows the sale price to be non-monetary, and the form, substance and timing may be negotiated on terms different from those usually done for judicial sales. For example, a sales agreement can be developed wherein the sales price is the land bank agreeing to acquire the property, maintain it and then transfer it for redevelopment. Used in conjunction with strict and strategic code enforcement and delinquent property tax enforcement, a land bank can prevent properties from falling into the hands of speculators who are not interested in redevelopment. A land bank can acquire and hold property until the time is right for redevelopment of it. Locally, eight taxing bodies have created a Schuylkill County Land Bank to operate in Delano Township, Mahanoy, Minersville and Shenandoah. This local example may be instructive for Pottsville. PADCO could also be the entity to manage the land bank.

The proposed movie theater within the Mahantongo Parking Deck will increase foot traffic and provide more potential customers for existing and new businesses. This project will require on-going support until finalized and constructed.

Additional recommendations that are specific to improving the economic health of downtown by attracting visitors from Yuengling Brewery are included under the goal to increase visitors to Pottsville.

## IMPROVE THE “LOOK” & FEEL OF DOWNTOWN

Downtown Pottsville, despite its impressive collection of architecturally appealing and significant commercial buildings, receiving new streetscape elements like streetlights and sidewalks, and burgeoning businesses community, suffers from an image problem. Vacant storefronts and buildings, old and tired-looking commercial frontages and signage, loitering, and trash all contribute to a perception of a distressed and unsafe downtown. Perception is not reality as, downtown is not an unsafe environment and there is a growing number of shops and restaurants to frequent. To combat the perception of decrepitude, some buildings require physical improvements. The City has a leadership role in communicating expectations to property owners regarding property appearance and the need to present an inviting “face” for downtown buildings.



**GRAPHIC 7-1:** Living Downtown (Source: Bergmann)

A marketing campaign that highlights downtown and promotes shopping, living, eating and enjoying downtown should be undertaken to rehabilitate downtown's image. Its convenience to restaurants, bars, shops, a grocery store, and health care, its walkability, and its historic character are all strong assets that need to be showcased. County workers can be targeted to stay downtown after work to have a drink, eat dinner or take in a show at the Majestic. Workers from the many Lehigh Valley Health Network facilities that are near downtown are another target audience, as are the other larger employers in and near downtown.

The façade funding that has recently been received by PADCO is a valuable resource, but it is limited and won't provide funding for all distressed buildings. This funding needs to be used strategically, focused on a small geographic area to provide the most visual impact. When additional funds are secured, this area could expand.

A program to expand businesses and recruit new ones, as articulated above, is also part of this strategy.

Additional streetscape elements, like decorative garbage containers, bicycle racks and informational kiosks will also add to a rejuvenated-looking downtown. Funding for public projects like these may be available via NEPA Alliance and their access to Appalachian Regional Commission and US Economic Development Administration funding.

To counter the perception of an unsafe downtown, a friendly presence through uniformed personnel or volunteers will make a positive impact. Depending on resources, increased police presence (on foot or on bicycle) to demonstrate a presence downtown could be undertaken. A less-expensive alternative is to establish a downtown "ambassadors" program that include volunteers wearing matching shirts, and who could answer questions from visitors about local dining, ATM locations or upcoming events.

Creating physical gateways at key entrances to downtown will also reshape the perception and the look to downtown. These locations would include Mauch Chunk and Centre Street or Claude Lord Boulevard, Claude Lord Boulevard and Norwegian, and Claude Lord Boulevard and Arch. Gateways can be transformed using sculptural or totemic elements and could be installed in conjunction with PA Department of Transportation's Route 61 improvements, slated for construction in 2019.

Downtown currently has a public plaza next to the Schuylkill Municipal Authority building, but there was strong public interest in creating more outdoor space, including outdoor green space. Residents are interested in having places to socialize outside, to have informal sitting areas for eating lunch or having coffee. This outdoor space can also be locations for live music, theater or al fresco dining.



**GRAPHIC 7-2:** Arts & Entertainment (Source: Bergmann)



## MAKE DOWNTOWN MORE VIBRANT & VITAL

The strategies discussed previously will result in a more vibrant downtown, but there are additional strategies that provide more activities for people, make downtown a place for people to live, work, shop and play; and use local assets and authenticity as a basis for revitalization.

One key strategy to do this is to encourage the upper floors of buildings to be converted or updated into market-rate residential space that will attract younger workers or retirees. These residents would be the customers for downtown businesses, patrons of downtown venues and events, and enliven downtown streets.

There are several significant obstacles to converting or rehabbing existing residential space into new residential units. Perhaps the most significant obstacle, a zoning ordinance that essentially prohibits upper floor residential, was removed by City Council in mid-February. This is an essential pre-condition to any future conversions.

Renovation costs, including meeting building code regulations that require a 3-hour fire-resistance construction standard between commercially-occupied space and residentially-occupied space, which cannot be recouped due to low rental rates are a second major obstacle. Without an adequate return on investment (ROI), landlords and investors are unwilling to invest in upper floor residential. Working with architects and contractors who specialize in renovating historic buildings may provide innovative and lower cost methods to meet these code requirements.

In addition, there are several types of tax credits that might be used to reduce the equity needed. Historic tax credits are available for buildings over 50 years old that follow certain rehabilitation guidelines. Low income housing tax credits might also be suitable as a way to attract artists to occupy the low-income units. Since artists, particularly younger and emerging ones, are often low income, they meet the income requirement but add a certain vitality and energy. There have been several such artist housing developments created in Pennsylvania, including the Coral Arts Building and the Artists Building in Philadelphia and the Brew House in Pittsburgh.

Promoting LERTA would provide post-construction financial incentives. An information campaign to educate landlords, realtors and potential investors on these tax credits and LERTA would encourage the use of these tools.

Having a dedicated pool of funding to subsidize renovation costs would also work to allow an ROI high enough to attract private equity. One possible source of this would be via Santander Bank. Santander Bank recently announced a new program called Inclusive Communities that promises to provide \$11 billion over a five period in its 8-state footprint (including Pennsylvania) for community development and small business loans in underserved communities. This funding source may be useful for several of the recommendations contained in this plan. Schuylkill Community Action received some funding through this new program at the end of 2017.

The types of residential units available should be market rate and varied in size, with studio and 1-bedroom units as well as larger units. All units would need to be modern and up-to-date in amenities and finishes.

A marketing campaign that is directed towards younger workers, empty-nesters and retirees would promote new living spaces. Pottsville's proximity to I-81 and I-78 makes it an attractive location for workers in Schuylkill County, the Lehigh Valley and the greater Reading area, and workers from businesses located in these areas should be targeted.

In addition, the health care employers nearby, such as Lehigh Valley Health Network, are also obvious targets. They have a steady supply of new employees that require housing; the existence of modern units in historical buildings will support LVHN with recruitment efforts as well.

Initially, there may need to be some incentives offered for these new tenants, such as free parking or YMCA/gym membership.

Another strategy is to increase the number of activities that occur downtown. Using existing events, such as the Yuenling Light Logger Jogger 5K, the Block of Art, and the car cruise as a foundation events should be done; niche activities and events should be added. This might include an enhanced farmers market with additional farmers, a flea market, First Friday/Second Saturday-type events with stores open later and coupons from restaurants and bars, food trucks, ethnic festivals, free theater (at the Majestic or outdoors), guide-led walking tours, genealogy related events at the historical society, regular music or game nights at restaurants and bars. These and similar events would attract people downtown and help change the perception. With a new Executive Director at the Majestic Theater, there is now more capacity for them to have events, but they will require funding. These types of activities should include activities for all ages and be marketed as family-friendly.

Utilize vacant storefronts for pop-up activities, such as temporary retail outlets or art galleries, using existing space with minor modifications (a coat of paint, signage,). Pop-up shops enliven a block - they create excitement and a sense of urgency to visit.



To generate buzz about revitalization and to be a “proof of concept” for some of these recommendations, a one-day event that includes an excursion train, free trolley rides around downtown, outdoor dining, merchandise on the sidewalk, musicians on the street, a movie screening at the Majestic, an event at the Historical Society, temporary signage and other activities could be scheduled on a warm weekend. It should be heavily promoted and supported by downtown businesses and residents. The Reading, Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad has committed to providing monthly excursion rides to Pottsville from May to October, and also offered to pay for trolley operations for those days. This 1-day event should be coordinated with one of those rail excursion days.

The arts play a vital role in making downtown vibrant. Collaboration among existing artists, and enhancing existing art initiatives already started by artists in the community is one strategy. Pottsville can make art more accessible to a broader audience. Mud & Maker, SCCA and the nearby Walk In Art Center in Schuylkill Haven can provide additional or different types of classes to attract a more diverse audience

Public art is an important component for revitalization and it spans a broad spectrum of media. Pottsville recently saw a new mural created at the far northern end of downtown. Murals, when created by professionals and that include community involvement, are a proven success. While the success of The Mural Arts Project in Philadelphia is world renowned, smaller communities like Manayunk and Phoenixville have used murals as public art in a revitalization strategy. Towns of all sizes have embraced public art – fiberglass animals, art in vacant storefronts, public sculptures - to enliven a downtown. Artist live/work space is also an increasingly popular tool for downtown revitalization.

Finally, the agreement between the City and the former Pearl Stadium Theater that will result in the construction of a multi-plex movie theater as part of the Mahantongo Deck rebuild will provide a boost for downtown. Upon completion, a marketing effort targeting movie-goers should be initiated to entice movie-goers to have dinner or a drink pre/post movie.

## ENHANCE DOWNTOWN POTTSVILLE'S ATTRACTIVENESS FOR TOURISTS AND VISITORS

Strategies to enhance downtown Pottsville's visitor attractiveness encompass a variety of recommendations, including lodging choices, visitor services, the visitor experience, tourism product development and promotion.

### Lodging

The existing lodging choices are limited to an economy hotel with 60 sleeping rooms and 2 bed and breakfasts with a total of 9 rooms. Pottsville does not have a full-service hotel and there are concerns that the existing hotel, Ramada, doesn't meet the needs of the current business traveler necessitating major employers to house their guests in other locations. The consequences of this impacts city businesses as companies are forced to use alternative restaurants, sleeping rooms and meeting rooms, it impacts local retail outlets as it eliminates any possibility of walk-in business resulting in a loss of revenue, and it impacts the image of Pottsville as a destination, downgrading it to a less-than desirable one. Ramada owners and management company are committed to a business model for a particular visitor and they are successful within this market. The Ramada visitor needs do not align with the needs of a professional business or higher-end visitor, so a hotel feasibility study has been recommended to conduct an analysis of Pottsville visitor market. Upon its completion, next steps will be conducted to determine the level of interest for local investment and financing.

A more immediate strategy to meet demands of the business and leisure traveler is to encourage residents to develop Airbnb or VRBO units. These units can be developed in a brief period of time and can provide additional lodging units. If this is initiated, a tracking system needs to be developed and implemented to capture room tax; and they must operate within City ordinances.

### Visitor Services & Experiences

In addition to an improved lodging experience, quality visitor services are also necessary to enhance downtown's attractiveness. These services include public bathroom accessibility, increased accessibility to visitor information, adequate signage to attractions and destination, smart-phone apps for walking tours and parking.

Access to visitor information is crucial to the visitor experience. The Visitors Bureau has brochure racks in town, but their placement is not well advertised. Installing signs (using the easily recognizable “i” symbol) denoting that visitor information is available within a building will alert visitors to information location.

Currently, the Visitors Bureau is not open on weekends or holidays, during what is typically a busy visitor time, making it difficult for visitors to get information on activities or lodging or other visitor information. Being open on weekends and/or making visitor information readily available through other outlets is needed. Trained volunteers can supplement the VB staff as greeters and ambassadors to incoming rail excursion groups. They can greet the group and provide a brief orientation about the history and noteworthy sites in the city before the visitors board the trolley.

Access to bathrooms needs to be provided on train excursion weekends, and other weekends when large scale events are occurring downtown.

Wayfinding signs in Pottsville need to be a cohesive and visually dynamic system throughout the city. Such a sign system would direct people to city hall, Yuengling Brewery, Jerry's Classic Cars & Collectibles Museum, the Historical Society, the Schuylkill County Council of the Arts, the County Courthouse, and other visitor destinations. Although there are a few wayfinding signs downtown, some installed as part of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area Rivertown program and others that denote the location of the visitor's bureau offices, they do not serve visitors on a large scale.

The city-owned trolley needs to be utilized more, to shuttle people to and from various points of interest including the brewery, Union Station, downtown, Martz Hall, and other venues where activities or events are taking place. People should be able to step on and step off the trolley with ease.

The experience for the visitor extends beyond just services; it includes how they are treated while visiting. Implementing an "ambassadors" program of volunteers who are visible and can answer basic questions such as where nearby public restrooms, restaurants and ATMs are located can be very helpful. These ambassadors could be recruited from interested residents.

The attitude and behavior of staff at retail shops, restaurants, and the hotel needs to be welcoming and accommodating to visitors. Employees need to be ready and trained to answer basic questions like those above, and broad ones like "what is there to do around here". These front-line staff are often the first people that visitors interact with and are therefore the first impression of Pottsville.

Front line training could also include hosting familiarization tours to volunteers and front-line staff. These "fam" tours would present all of the attractions and tourism product that Pottsville has to offer. These tours could use the trolley to add more excitement and interest.

#### Product Development

The tourism "product" that Pottsville can offer visitors is the basis for any visit. Not having enough product can significantly deter visitors. Prior to creating product, there needs to be an identification of themes around which to build a product experience. These themes need to be authentic to Pottsville. Some potential themes: the history of industrialization and urbanization, the history of D.G. Yuengling and Son, coal mining, how beer is brewed, etc., all tell a story about Pottsville.

In addition, specific niches (student travel, manufacturing tours, craft beer interest groups, heritage tourism) should be identified prior to product development around which to build new product.



**GRAPHIC 7-3:** Tourism (Source: Bergmann)

Existing product like the Yuengling Brewery tour can be enhanced with other products like telling the story of coal mining or railroading. Part of telling the story may include a screening of *Centralia – The Lost Town*, or *The Molly Maguires* at the Majestic Theater. These additions can attract specific niches or be added to the visitor experience.

The life of John O'Hara is another opportunity to attract new visitors with regular screenings of movies with relevance to Pottsville, such as those based on John O'Hara books (*"Butterfield 8"*, *"Ten North Frederick Street"*, *"A Rage To Live"*, *"From the Terrace"*, *"Pal Joey"*); the library could consider an O'Hara essay contest to further promote the author and Pottsville, his muse.

Visitors of all ages rely on their smartphones when travelling, creating apps for more dynamic walking tours are other products to consider for development. A Pennsylvania-based company, Tutouria, has created history-themed walking tour apps for several downtowns and may be able to create one for Pottsville.

Suggested itineraries for visitors are also a valuable and useful way to promote the tourism product. One and two-day itineraries can be based on history, culture, art, brewing, but need to be authentic to Pottsville.

### Promotion & Sales

Promotion is essential to build visitation to downtown. While the Visitors Bureau provides county-wide marketing support, a more localized and focused approach is needed. A local group will provide local perspective. The Pottsville Tourism Commission already exists although severely undermanned; it needs to recruit volunteers with a passion for Pottsville who will focus exclusively on tourism marketing for Pottsville. Tourism promotion will need to be coordinated and integrated with the broader program of promoting downtown.

Social media should be used to promote downtown as a visitor attraction. Linking existing Facebook and Instagram pages of attractions, restaurants, the Visitors Bureau, the Chamber, PADCO, and PBA should be done to broaden the reach of the promotion.

Sales & Promotion would also include developing group leader and tour operator packages by the Visitors Bureau to use in sales calls and at tradeshows.

Partnerships with regional businesses like Starbucks, Cabela's and regional employers using in-store bulletin boards, brochure racks and employee newsletters will also generate interest and awareness.

The existing attractions downtown and nearby have ongoing events and programming and will be best served to develop partnerships with one another and neighboring attractions to cross promote events and programs. Linkage is key.

Promotion of existing events, like the Light Logger Jogger 5K, Block of Art and Pottsville Cruise necessitate posters to be displayed in storefronts, city hall, the library and other prominent places; in addition, participant-specific promotions should be created for attendees to add a sense of exclusivity and hospitality.

Relationships with the Pottsville Republican Herald, as well as WNEP-TV and Lehigh Valley Business Journal need to be nurtured as local press outlets and communicated with for story placement about the tourism and revitalization.

Another visible promotional activity is to create table tents placed in local bars & restaurants about what to do in Pottsville.



Majestic Theatre-Centre Street(Source: Bergmann)



## CREATE A STRATEGY THAT IS SUSTAINABLE

The best laid plans will not become reality without careful and thoughtful implementation strategies that sustain revitalization. To date there has been enthusiastic involvement and engagement of residents, businesses, government, and non-profits in the creation of this revitalization plan. It is critical for this engagement to continue and grow strategically.

Moreover, revitalization takes time. The elements that caused a downward spiral in downtown Pottsville and caused disinvestment did not happen overnight and downtown's revitalization will not happen overnight. It is also unlikely that there will be a single mega-project that will turn downtown into a thriving place, it is more likely that revitalization will require many smaller projects.

Revitalization is a series of steps, some large and some small; it is incremental and builds upon itself. Revitalization is additive and cumulative. Sustaining that effort over time is no small task and needs to be clearly part of this plan. Communicating the on-going effort is also important and can help to manage expectations of all involved.

Strong and visible leadership from the public sector is crucial to sustaining revitalization efforts. City leaders need to provide that public leadership, by showing up at new business openings, participating in events and taking actions to support revitalization. Leadership from the private sector is also needed, and this can include financial support for revitalization efforts, encouraging participation in revitalization activities by their employees and other actions.

Sustaining revitalization includes creating a framework to ensure implementation of the plan, encouraging accountability and responsibility, promoting constant communication and collaboration among partners and stakeholders and the public, and identifying and using metrics to measure success. It is recommended that a coordinating committee be formed that is charged with overseeing the implementation of the plan. While responsibility for implementing specific recommendations will fall to specific entities and not the coordinating committee, there is clearly a need for coordination, communication and for keeping the various partners accountable. Regular meetings of the coordinating committee, that include establishing metrics and reviewing the Action Matrix, will provide that accountability. The coordinating committee can also attend City Council meetings to provide updates to members of Council and the public. Membership should include representatives from the City, PADCO, PBA, the Visitors Bureau and other key stakeholders. The chair of this committee should be the Executive Director of PADCO.

Accountability also can be encouraged through active public participation at City Council meetings, membership participation at PBA and Visitors Bureau meetings, as well as regular postings and updates on revitalization activities via social media and partner websites.

There are many actions that are recommended in this plan, a number of which will require staffing. Fortunately, a large numbers of those who attended the last public workshop expressed a willingness to volunteer some time to assist with revitalization. There was an inconsistent attempt to gather specific names for volunteering, but the sign-in sheets that were gathered that night will be able to be used to request volunteers for specific actions. These volunteers will need to be organized into working groups, which could be accomplished by the coordinating committee. These groups can then be paired with individual organizations that are implementing the relevant actions.

On-going communication with the public is an essential strategy to sustain momentum. This plan, the Action Matrix that is annotated with status updates, and on-going activities should be able to be easily found on a web site that would also contain a comments section and a way to volunteer. The PADCO website is the recommended website. A more aggressive strategy is to start a blog, podcast or regular on-line newsletter. There has recently been a podcast developed that features some revitalization stories (Coal Region Campfire, on Soundcloud), but it also features other human-interest stories from the region. One candidate group to shepherd this on-line communication strategy is the newly created Schuylkill Young Professionals Organization. A strategic approach among all partners and entities is crucial to the success of Pottsville revitalization to maximize audience engagement and promote consistent messaging. Communications is typically a "push / pull" exercise: organizations can push information out using mailing lists, news outlets and public postings or pull people in that already have an interest in a topic or activity.

With multiple websites and FB pages, it is important that the message and information are consistent. To insure this process is effective, independent working committees (and subcommittees) should report on progress or challenges to members of the coordinating committee (per the committee structure) at which time the coordinating committee should develop key message statements and discuss what information should be posted on participating websites and social media outlets.

Collaboration is essential so independent organizations like the Schuylkill Historical Society, Majestic Theater, Yuengling and the retail community are informed of activities and how they may impact foot-traffic. This process will be organic meaning some committees will be driven by city or funding activities, others by events or programs offered targeting tourist and still others by opportunities or challenges that may occur throughout the year.

In addition to creating a cohesive communication network among Pottsville entities, working together to communicate among multiple entities will also engage residents to stay involved and engaged. Part of the communication with the public strategy is to publicly celebrate every victory, small and large – every new store that opens, every new event, every existing event, etc. Such celebrations might include officials from the City, PADCO or PBA making a short speech, issuing a press release, having photographs taken and posting them on line

Metrics that will assess the success of revitalization need to be developed. They should include both quantitative measures (e.g. # of people living downtown, # of Yuengling visitors eating downtown, # of new retail stores, % of storefronts that are vacant, downtown property values, etc) and qualitative measures (e.g. positive media reports, bike friendliness, attitude of elected officials, attitude of residents). The coordinating committee and others can develop these metrics, but continual monitoring of them is required to track progress towards the plan's goals. These metrics should also be made public when they are developed and as they are monitored. The following is a list of possible metrics, organized by type of measure.

- Image of the downtown - positive media reports on downtown, mentions on visitor-related social media like Trip Advisor;
- Demographics -proportion of city's population residing downtown, demographic diversity, population density, volunteerism;
- Housing, property values, and vacancy rates -number and proportion of housing units downtown, change in assessed values of downtown property, vacancy rates;
- Economy - business starts, numbers of downtown businesses and employees, sales volumes, business turnover rates, business longevity, hours of operation, tax base growth, income growth, regulation of on-street parking, redevelopment grant activity;
- Civic and cultural amenities - proportion of civic and cultural amenities downtown, public gathering spaces, events; and
- Design and land use - land-use mix, pedestrian and bike friendliness, transit options, art in public spaces, art in storefronts

Funding for the actions identified in this plan must be identified and secured. Here is an area that state elected officials can provide leadership and assistance. They can provide help in working with state agencies to identify and secure project and program funding. While the total funding required for this plan has not been estimated, it is clearly in the millions of dollars. State elected officials can help to find a portion of this funding, it is recommended that they commit to working with federal and local officials to secure \$10 million in funding over the next decade.

Finally, this plan calls for numerous partnerships - partnerships between public and private sector, between businesses, between non-profits and for-profits. While this plan provides the playbook and a framework for these partnerships, on-going collaboration is necessary to sustain the partnerships. The coordinating committee is one example of the type of partnership that is needed, but there are additional ones. There needs to be on-going communication among all partners as well as collaboration and coordination.

In the following chapter, the recommendations given above will be presented in an Action Matrix with recommended action, recommended lead partner, time frame, priority, and funding and resource notes. This matrix is intended to be an "living" document, used regularly by the coordinating committee, and updated as progress occurs in the recommended actions; parts of it will need to be further detailed, with discrete timelines and perhaps new partners. The "Lead Partner/Potential Partner" is intended to identify the lead entity(ies), as well as other key partners. Some of the recommended actions (such as hotel feasibility study, parking study, front line training) will likely require bringing in outside expertise.

# Chapter 8: Implementation Plan

## OVERVIEW

The recommended actions offered in Chapter 7 are just one part of the overall strategy; recommended actions require implementation to complete them and turn them into reality. These actions need to be “owned” by (i.e. be the responsibility of) someone or some group; adequate resources like funding and volunteers need to be identified and secured. The following implementation table provides details on how the plan gets done: which organization/entity should be the lead organization on each recommendation, potential partners, funding sources, and suggested time frame. Further recommendations on which actions should be high priority and the expected level of effort are also given to assist with taking the next steps.

This is where the “rubber meets the road”, where actions need to be started. There is a role for everyone in the implementation of this downtown revitalization strategy – civic organizations, private businesses, workers, residents, local government, non-profits. In fact, everyone needs to be involved in this last part of the strategy. While much of the “heavy lifting” for the implementation of this plan will be dependent on just a few groups – the City, PBA, PADCO, D.G. Yuengling & Son, the Parking Authority and the movie theater operator, selected property owners and residents, workers, shop owners and staff all have vital roles. If downtown is to come back, people need to go there more often, and the shops, and services and eating places need to offer something that these people want. This plan relies on volunteers from the community to accomplish some of the activities, and residents and workers need to be involved in that way. Moreover, residents are essential in showing City Council that there is on-going interest in revitalization. Attending meetings and requesting updates on revitalization activities will help to maintain momentum.

## FUNDING

The Funding Resources Strategy column contains potential financial and technical assistances sources for each recommended action. This includes grants, loans, tax credits, tax incentives, as well as funding from private sources. Some of this funding can be secured through local agencies, most notably the NEPA-Alliance, other sources are state and federal programs.

There is also funding available for some of these projects from foundations. Foundation funding is typically not available to governments but can be used creatively in partnership with a local 501 (C) 3 non-profit. There are local/regional foundations (such as the Schuylkill County Community Foundation) and state/national foundations. Further research needs to be done to identify specific foundations, based on a recommendation/project. Unless the lead organization has had successful experiences with foundations, it should probably start modestly with a small grant request and look locally to a foundation that knows the community or this region. Much like taking on building rehabilitation, starting small and being successful, and then increasing scope and scale is a successful way to fundraise. Private sources include private financing for some projects, and corporate sponsorships.

## IMPLEMENTATION TABLE – THE ACTION MATRIX

The Action Matrix is laid out with separate columns for the recommended action, which goal the action will achieve, who the lead organization or entity should be, who else should be actively involved, where funding might be acquired and also a Notes column that contains additional considerations.

This matrix is really the heart of this strategy; it is the “playbook” that the various partners and stakeholders should refer to help initiate and continue revitalization activities. This matrix was developed in March 2018, it represents the best information available at that time. Nevertheless, it is recognized that it will become obsolete and useless unless it is used and updated. Some actions will need further detailed action steps, some actions will not be feasible after further vetting, partners will change as new ones are identified, etc. A final part of this strategy is to regularly and continually update the matrix. It is recommended that the coordinating committee be the one to keep it up to date, and in fact to use it as the report card for revitalization, noting what has been accomplished and what remains to be accomplished.



## NEXT STEPS

The matrix identifies who does what and how soon, but what are the immediate next steps?

1. Get everyone on board. The Steering Committee that oversaw the development of this plan has endorsed this plan as the plan for downtown revitalization. A small but significant next step is to get similar endorsements from a few key partners: the City, PADCO, PBA and the Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau. These four entities all have key roles and must provide some of the leadership needed to successfully undertake this strategy. By publicly discussing the plan and taking action on it, a clear public statement of support will be made. In addition, it would be helpful for several other entities to also endorse the plan – the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, the County and SEDCO. These county-wide organizations can publicly support this plan as the recommended plan for downtown Pottsville without taking anything away from the other non-Pottsville members that belong.
2. Get organized. There are a lot of recommendations, both in breadth and depth, and there needs to be a rigorous and organized approach to accomplishing them. The overarching organizational recommendation is to have a coordinating committee set up to succeed the Steering Committee. This coordinating committee would have membership from the key partners, key businesses, and other key stakeholders who have the ability and authority to take action. There also needs to be an organizing of volunteers to capture and nurture the strong public support that has been demonstrated.
3. Start talking. Communication between partners and stakeholders, communications among residents, communication to outside interests like investors and the media need to be started. The public communication strategy recommended in the plan can provide the framework and details of undertaking this important action.
4. Start doing. The endorsements need to be done soon and organizational meetings need to be set up. Task assignments (including securing funding and other resources) and deadlines need to be set.
5. Keep talking. Continual communication supports continual collaboration and cooperation. This should be done through a variety of outlets and platforms. Traditional print media, social media, blogs, and podcasts are some of those outlets that need to be continually fed.
6. Keep doing. Revitalization will take time and participants need to keep participating. At times progress will be slow, but there will be progress.



Downtown Pottsville Trolley Tour(Source: Eastwick)

## ACTION MATRIX

#	Goal	Action	Time Frame	High Priority	Lead Partner/Potential Partner(s)	Funding Resources Strategy	Notes
1	Increase economic activity	Provide technical assistance for operations for existing businesses	Short Term	X	PADCO	SCORE, NEPA Alliance, USDA (Rural Business Development)	Includes business plan refinement, marketing, employee recruitment, mentoring
2	Increase economic activity	Provide funding for façade improvements	Short term	X	PADCO	PA DCED Keystone Communities; Santander Inclusive Communities, ARC, EDA, SBA (via NEPA Alliance), USDA (Rural Business Development)	Consider very targeted area to maximize visual impact. Guidelines need to be written
3	Increase economic activity	Create joint marketing & promotion for businesses	Short term		PBA	DCED (Marketing for Tourists)	
4	Increase economic activity	Recruit new businesses	Medium term		PADCO/PBA, property owners, realtors		Consider creating a "how to open a business" brochure
5	Increase economic activity	Provide technical assistance for new businesses	Short term		PADCO/PBA	NEPA Alliance, SCORE, SEDCO, USDA (Rural Business Development)	Including business plan development
6	Increase economic activity	Undertake comprehensive parking study	Medium term		Parking Authority		Include on and off-street
7	Increase economic activity	Create "matchmaker" program between local contractors and businesses looking to relocate/rehab/expand	Medium term		PBA		
8	Increase economic activity	Work with property owners to improve appearance & interior of buildings, including strategic & strict code enforcement	ongoing	X	PADCO/City, PBA	Santander Inclusive Communities, Tax Increment Financing, CFA Building PA, CFA Building in Our Sites; Keystone Communities Program, Pennsylvania First, Neighborhood Assistance Program, Neighborhood Assistance Program, Small Diverse Business Capital Access Program, National Trust Preservation planning grant	
9	Increase economic activity	Consider establishing a land bank	Medium Term		City, PADCO	Santander Inclusive Communities,	
10	Increase economic activity	Recruit investors	On Going		PADCO		
11	Increase economic activity	Construct movie theater as part of Mahantongo Deck project	Short Term	X	Parking Authority, movie theater operator	USDA, ARC, EDA, SBA (via NEPA Alliance)	Acquire all public funding necessary ASAP
12	Increase economic activity	Work to eliminate or reduce Business Privilege Tax over 10-years	Long Term		City/Pottsville Area School District		In short term, provide information to businesses on how tax revenue is currently used to benefit them
13	Improve look & feel of downtown	Create & execute marketing campaign for downtown as a place to eat, shop & visit	Short term		PBA, PADCO	VB, DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	
14	Improve look & feel of downtown	Install additional streetscape elements	Medium Term		City	City, DCED, ARC, EDA, SBA (via NEPA Alliance)	
15	Improve look & feel of downtown	Establish downtown "ambassadors"	Medium Term		City, PADCO	DCED Neighborhood Assistance Program	Consider using volunteers

#	Goal	Action	Time Frame	High Priority	Lead Partner/Potential Partner(s)	Funding Resources Strategy	Notes
16	Improve look & feel of downtown	Create gateways at key locations	Medium Term		City/PADOT	City,	
17	Improve look & feel of downtown	Create more outdoor space and more outdoor green space	Long Term		City, property owners	DCNR, ARC, EDA (via NEPA Alliance)	
18	Improve look & feel of downtown	Improve cleanliness of streets	Short Term		City, PBA	Use volunteers?	
19	Improve look & feel of downtown	Improve street lighting	Medium Term		City	City	Change light fixture type?
20	Make downtown more vibrant	Amend zoning ordinance to allow upper floor residential	Short Term	X	City	N/A	Amendment adopted in February 2018
21	Make downtown more vibrant	Establish working group of code enforcement officials, HARB, property owners and architects to reduce costs of rehabilitation	Medium Term		City/ PBA, HARB, property owners	N/A	Consider creating a brochure on process & incentives for rehabbing downtown buildings
22	Make downtown more vibrant	Hold informational sessions on tax credits, Tax Increment Financing, other funding sources, and LERTA for property owners, developers and realtors	Short Term		PADCO	N/A	
23	Make downtown more vibrant	Contact Santander Bank to access their Inclusive Communities program	Short Term	x	PADCO/ City, Chamber	N/A	
24	Make downtown more vibrant	Encourage creation of a variety of residential units	On going		PADCO/property owners, City	Historic Tax Credits, Low Income Housing Tax Credits (as part of artists housing), private financing, CFA Building PA, CFA Building in Our Sites; DCED Keystone Communities Program, Pennsylvania First, Neighborhood Assistance Program, Small Diverse Business Capital Access Program	Focus should be on constructing market rate units
25	Make downtown more vibrant	Create & execute marketing campaign to attract younger workers, empty-nesters and retirees to live downtown	Medium Term		PADCO/ PBA	Santander Bank Inclusive Communities	Target employees at local employers like LVHN, Hydro, D.G.Yuengling, Empire Beauty School, and Lehigh Valley and Reading companies as well
26	Make downtown more vibrant	Work with landlords to create incentives for residential tenants	Medium Term		PBA	Landlords	
27	Make downtown more vibrant	Increase activities downtown such as an enhanced farmers market, First Fridays, food trucks, ethnic festivals, free theater, flea market	Medium Term		PBA/ City	Santander Bank Inclusive Communities; DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists), foundations	
28	Make downtown more vibrant	Create pop-up activities in vacant storefronts	Short Term		PADCO/ PBA, City		Could be retail, cultural, historical activity.
29	Make downtown more vibrant	Create a 1 Day event downtown	Short Term	X	City, PADCO, VB/PBA	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists), VB	
30	Make downtown more vibrant	Encourage more art-related workshops & classes downtown	Medium Term		PBA/ Arts working committee	Foundations	Include visual arts, theater arts, music arts



#	Goal	Action	Time Frame	High Priority	Lead Partner/Potential Partner(s)	Funding Resources Strategy	Notes
31	Make downtown more vibrant	Create additional murals downtown,	Long Term		City/ PBA, Arts working committee	CDBG, Foundations	with input from residents and businesses
32	Make downtown more vibrant	Create other public art, including fiberglass art, sculptures and art in empty storefronts	Medium Term		City/ PBA, Arts working committee	Foundations	
33	Make downtown more vibrant	Recruit artists to live & work downtown	Medium Term		PBA/ Arts working committee		Consider low income housing tax credit program, collaborate with SCCA, Walk In Art Center
34	Make downtown more vibrant	Provide better connections to bike paths by using bike lanes and signage	Medium Term		City/ PADOT	DCNR, People for Bikes, PADOT TA Set Aside, CFA Multi-Modal Transportation Fund	Integrate with Schuylkill River Trail & other trail developments
35	Make downtown more vibrant	Encourage outdoor dining at restaurants	Medium Term		City/ PBA		Need to determine if permissible under current zoning
36	Make downtown more vibrant	Extend hours of businesses	Short Term		PBA		Any extended hours need to be coordinated
37	Make downtown more vibrant	Create indoor space for events	Medium Term		PBA/ PADCO, private property owners, Arts working committee	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	A "black box" type of space would provide the most flexibility.
38	Make downtown more vibrant	Involve partners like library and YMCA in events	Short Term		Library, YMCA, PBA	Foundations	Provide new programming within or outside of their facilities
39	Make downtown more vibrant	Recruit more diverse restaurants	Medium Term		PBA/ property owners with vacant space		
40	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Undertake hotel feasibility study	Short term	X	VB	VB, potential investors, SEDCO	
41	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Create group and tour operator packages for tradeshow and sales calls	Short / medium term		VB/ local & regional attractions		These may exist but are not available on the website.
42	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Encourage Airbnb or VRBO units	Short term		VB/ PBA, Local residents, County Treasurer	N/A	Outreach needs to include education re: tax liabilities
43	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Have VB open on weekends and/or make visitor information readily available through other outlets	Short term	X	VB /PBA	VB	Consider using volunteers
44	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Have bathrooms open in Union Station for rail excursions	Short term	X	Schuylkill Transportation System/ VB	N/A	Most likely ones to be open would be those adjacent to STS waiting room on top floor
45	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Info sign for anyone with a signage rack (using international "I")	Short term		VB/ relevant businesses, City	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	
46	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Increase # of rail excursions	Short term	X	VB/Reading, Blue Mtn & Northern RR	Reading, Blue Mtn & Northern	At least 1 per month May-Oct
47	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Install an enhanced way-finding system throughout the city	Medium Term	X	City/PADOT VB	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists); CFA Multi-Modal Transportation Fund/ DCNR	to direct people to city hall, D.B. Yuengling Brewery, Historical Society and Schuylkill County Council of the Arts and SCVB. Will need design and PADOT approval for certain locations

#	Goal	Action	Time Frame	High Priority	Lead Partner/Potential Partner(s)	Funding Resources Strategy	Notes
48	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Conduct front line training to provide information to visitors	Short Term		VB		Includes lodging, restaurants, retail workers, city and county staff, ambassadors
49	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Use volunteers to act as ambassadors	Short term		VB, Tourism working committee/ Tourism Commission / Local residents / YPO		Considering using ambassadors to staff VB office on weekends
50	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Utilize trolley to make a designated loop with step on/off service	Short term		VB/ City	VB, private sponsorship	Include in 1-Day Event, consider a Historical Society guide for onboard tour
51	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Use trolley to shuttle people from train station to brewery & downtown	Short term	X	VB/City	Reading, Blue Mtn & Northern RR	At least once per month May-Oct; Use trolley and run on First Fridays or Second Saturdays to create an event and draw locals into town
52	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Enhance Pottsville Tourism Commission to focus on tourism marketing, to build itineraries, and align partners	Short term		Tourism Commission/ VB		Tourism Commission includes volunteers from email solicitation
53	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Tell story of Molly McGuire's, D. G. Yuengling and Son, John O'Hare and/or life of a coal miner	Medium Term		Schuylkill County Historical Society, Majestic Theater/Actors Guild/Schuylkill Theater Association (for talent)/ D.G. Yuengling & Son, VB	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists), foundations	Train story tellers and position them outside during warm weather, present in Majestic Theater or on excursion train or trolley
54	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Collaborative programming between Yuengling museum and Historical Society	Medium term		D.G. Yuengling/ Schuylkill County Historical Society	Foundations	Have historical society staff the Yuengling Museum, host historical discussions in community event space, or encourage to walk to Historical Society for a presentation telling the story of miners and how/ why Yuengling and other local breweries were part of a lifestyle
55	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Identify niches (student travel, manufacturing tours, craft beer interest groups, heritage tourism) & undertake marketing campaign	Medium / long term		VB/ PBA, PADCO, D.G. Yuengling & Son, Jerry's Custom Cars and Collectibles Museum, Schuylkill County Historical Society	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	
56	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Purchase a copy of Pottsville-related films (e.g. "Centralia", "Butterfield 8", "Ten North Frederick", "Molly Maguires", etc) for Majestic Theater screening	Short term		VB/ Majestic Theater, Schuylkill County Historical Society	Private sponsorship	Include in 1 Day Event, show on excursion train weekends
57	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Develop a history-themed app	Medium term		VB/ Schuylkill County Historical Society	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists), private sponsorship	Tutouria is a low-cost app that incorporates now/then photography with information in a walking tour.
58	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Identify tourism themes and build a product experience	Medium Term		VB/ Schuylkill County Historical Society, SCCA, Pottsville Tourism Commission, attractions	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	Themes might include Yuengling and brewing, Molly McGuire's, Life of a coal miner, impacts of coal, John O'Hara
59	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Conduct familiarization tours for locals to convert them into Pottsville advocates	Short Term		VB/ Historical Society Pottsville Tourism Commission		Consider using trolley

#	Goal	Action	Time Frame	High Priority	Lead Partner/Potential Partner(s)	Funding Resources Strategy	Notes
60	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Create 1 & 2 day itineraries focused on Pottsville and post on VB website	Medium Term		VB/ Pottsville Tourism Commission	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	These may include regional attractions that align with a theme but visitors begin and end in Pottsville. Also promote on other social media
61	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Develop partnerships with attractions to cross promote events and programs	On going		VB/Pottsville Tourism Commission, YPO , Schuylkill County Historical Society, Majestic Theater , D.G. Yuengling & Son, attractions	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	
62	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Create posters for storefronts around events...i.e. Welcome Yuengling Light Lager Joggers and create promotions for attendees	Short term	x	VB/D. G. Yuengling, businesses, Young Professional Organization, PBA	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	Encourage businesses to create product or promotions for event participants
63	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Initiate marketing effort and link to FB, Instagram, and other social media with websites	On going	X	VB/Tourism Commission	N/A	Consider using volunteers to keep up-to-date
64	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Communicate with local press outlets for story placement	On going		PBA/PADCO VB	N/A	
65	Enhance downtown's attractiveness to visitors	Create table tents and place in local bars & restaurants about what to do in Pottsville	On going		VB/ PBA	DCED (Marketing to Attract Tourists)	
66	Create a sustainable strategy	Establish a coordinating committee to oversee implementation	Short Term	X	City, PADCO, PBA, VB, DG Yuengling	N/A	Consider including SEDCO, Chamber, major employers and business leaders
67	Create a sustainable strategy	Provide strong public leadership	Ongoing	X	City	N/A	Need cheerleading, on-going promotion, active involvement in actions
68	Create a sustainable strategy	Participate at Council meetings	On going	X	Residents, PBA	N/A	
69	Create a sustainable strategy	Volunteer for events, downtown ambassadors, other activities	On going	X	Residents/workers	N/A	
70	Create a sustainable strategy	Organize volunteers	Short Term	X	Coordinating Committee	N/A	Organize into working committees, might include Arts, Tourism, Events, coordinate with PBA committees & Tourism Commission
71	Create a sustainable strategy	Create & execute a public communications strategy, using on line and other methods	Short Term	X	PADCO/City, Coordinating Committee		Include roll out strategy for this plan. Engage multiple partners, Schuylkill Young Professionals
72	Create a sustainable strategy	Create public events around revitalization activities	On going		PBA/City, PADCO		Includes ribbon-cuttings, store openings, etc
73	Create a sustainable strategy	Establish and use metrics to measure success	Short Term	X	Coordinating Committee	N/A	Publicize metrics and progress.
74	Create a sustainable strategy	Recruit youth to volunteer	On Going		Coordinating Committee/ Pottsville Area School District	N/A	



# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## List of Individuals, Businesses and Organizations Who Contributed to Plan

AIS Consulting	Anthracite Abstract Company
Anytime Fitness	Bosack, Joe
Bowers Donuts, Inc. / Duncan Donuts	Boyer's Food Markets
CACL	Charlie's Pizza and Subs
City of Pottsville	D.G.Yuengling and Son
DiRenzo, Matt	Eastern Press
EJ Trophy	Green's Communications
Greystone	Iverson, Joshua
Kenderdine, Karen	Lipton, Ian
M&T Bank	Marshall, Bohorad, Thormburg, Price & Campion, PC
Meyer, Nick	Mid Penn Bank
Mud and Maker	Murphy Jewelers
Newton, Matthew	Ost, Naomi
Pottsville Area Development Corporation	Pottsville Business Association
Pottsville Housing Authority	Pottsville Provision
Progress Cleaners	Quandel
Rep. Michael Tobash	Salon KL
Schuylkill Community Action	Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau
Sen. David G.Argall	Shane Hobbs, Esq.
Something Sweet Candies	State Farm Jeremy Buchinsky
The Lodge at Sharp Mountain	Towne Drugs/Yorkville Drugs
Trio Salon	Waddell & Reed, Inc.
Weiss, Michael	Wells Fargo
Wheel Restaurant	Williamson, Friedberg & Jones, LLC

# APPENDIX B



## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Survey for Downtown Pottsville

We want to know what you think of downtown Pottsville!

As part of Pottsville Business Association's Downtown Revitalization effort, we are surveying residents, visitors, employees and businesses on their views of Pottsville, through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) survey.

A SWOT can help understand perceptions of downtown Pottsville, reveal what sets downtown apart (both the positive and negative), identify ways to improve the business district, and highlight emerging opportunities for it.

**Please fill out your responses in the space provided below for each of the 4 categories, the results will be used to help create the downtown plan. Drop off locations are listed at end of survey.**

**Please submit by Tuesday Oct 3.**

**Strengths** - *Strengths are those available and valuable assets that should be preserved or improved on.*

1. What advantages does downtown Pottsville have?
2. What unique or lowest-cost resources are here?
3. Why would businesses want to locate here?

1.

2.

3.

**Weaknesses** - *Weaknesses are drawbacks or short-term challenges that need to be addressed so that they do not cause long-term problems to the vitality of either the quality of life or the economy of downtown.*

1. What are residents and visitors likely to see as shortcomings?
2. What could Pottsville improve?
3. What types of businesses are we lacking?

1.

2.



3.

**Opportunities** - *Opportunities are the long-range positive trends affecting downtown as well as the positive paths that we might follow. A useful approach when looking at opportunities is to look at downtown's strengths and ask yourself whether these create any opportunities. Alternatively, look at weaknesses and ask yourself whether we could be creating opportunities by eliminating or modifying them.*

1. What opportunities can you spot in downtown that we can expand on?
2. What interesting trends are you aware of?

1.

2.

**Threats** - *Threats are long-term weaknesses that can undermine revitalization efforts. Consider what factors might pose a threat to downtown such as: changing shopping habits, changes in technology, social or economic conditions*

1. What obstacles does Pottsville face?
2. Could any of our weaknesses seriously threaten downtown's businesses?

1.

2.

**Check all that apply:**

- ☐ Live in Pottsville
- ☐ Work in Pottsville
- ☐ Visiting Pottsville

Please provide your zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**DROP OFF LOCATIONS:**

- ✓ City Hall, 401 N. Centre St, City Administrator's Office
- ✓ Something Sweet Candies, 300 North Centre Street
- ✓ Dreamcatchers Art Emporium, 370 South Centre Street
- ✓ Murphy Jewelers, 115 West Market Street
- ✓ Rebekah's Creations, 203 West Market Street

**Please submit by Oct. 3**

**Thanks for your participation, results will be presented at a public meeting in November, stay tuned!** Find the Pottsville Business Association on Facebook



**BERGMANN**

