

## POTTSTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

### Fall 2023: Outreach | Information Sessions

- Mailed 268 information and invitation letters to Parcel Owners of the 437 parcels
- Held 6 Information Sessions over 3 Dates
- Approx. 30 individuals attended and provided feedback (*representing 11% of total invited*)
- Edited Draft plan based upon feedback from Parcel Owners & further research

### Parcels:

- 437 parcels including 363 assessed, 74 exempt

### June 10, 2024 Public Hearing

- 63 attendees
- 23 spoke (*representing less than 9% of the total parcel owners; 5.3% of the total parcel count*)
- 11-13 additional signed up, but passed to speak
- Speakers from:

0-100 E. High – 3

100-200 E. High – 2

200-300 E. High – 3

300-400 E. High - 1

400-500 E. High – 1

500-600 E. High – 2

Circle of Progress – 3

West High - 4

King Street – 4

### Topics | Mentions :

Trash: 3

Drugs: 7

Parking: 4

Safety/Crime: 4

Homeless: 11

Clean their own Space – 3

PAED – 1

## POTTSTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

### FAQs

*(\*Notes in blue are taken directly from the BID Plan and The NID Act)*

#### **Why a BID? Where/when did this BID idea come from?**

There has been a desire expressed for attention to and enhancements, etc. throughout the Downtown and Borough. The Business Improvement District (BID) has proven successful in 1000+ cities throughout the U.S. The BID has been discussed by PAED for several years since visiting Lancaster City, and witnessing the improvements experienced there.

Efforts such as the sidewalk cleaning in the Downtown, canopy of lighting, banners, etc. have been possible due to grants received through PAED's efforts, specifically the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which ends December 31, 2024. Beautification and economic development efforts including the proposed establishment of a BID were all recommendations based on the issued ARPA grant dollars.

*"Pottstown's businesses have seen an influx of several new businesses to the Borough in recent years. To continue that momentum, there is a need to establish a Business Improvement District that can provide services considered vital to those businesses while promoting the district to attract new businesses, consumers and residents to Pottstown's commercial / industrial districts."*

*"The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has granted municipalities the authority to create a Neighborhood Improvement District under the Neighborhood Improvement District Act, P.L. 949, No 130 and further states that, "municipalities should be encouraged to create, where feasible and desired, assessment-based neighborhood improvement districts (NID)"."*

#### **Why is a Board necessary for the BID?**

The Board sets the project priorities.

Until the Board is formed, the budget is based on estimated project costs.

*"In accordance with the Pennsylvania Neighborhood Improvement District Act of 2000, the board shall consist of nine (9) members to include property owners, representatives of Pottstown Borough, PAED and institutions that exist within the boundaries of the District.*

*"...The Board shall be appointed pursuant to the Municipalities Authorities Act of 1945..."*

*The Pottstown Business Improvement District Management Associations (PBIDMA) Board shall be comprised of:*

*One (1) Permanent Member – Pottstown Borough*

*One (1) Permanent Member – PAED Board*

*One (1) At-large or Exempt Parcel Owner Member*

*One (1) property owner from Circle of Progress*

*One (1) property owner from West High Street*

*One (1) property owner from 0-199 East High Street, North York between High & King and South Hanover Street between High & Industrial Highway.*

*One (1) property owner from 200-299 East High Street, North Penn Street between High & King, North Hanover Street between High & King, Charlotte Street between Chestnut & Queen.*

*One (1) property owner from 0-299 East King Street.*

*One (1) property owner from 300-599 East High Street."*

### **What is the Salaries and Administration category for?**

There is labor involved in identifying grants, reporting of compliance with the grants. There is labor involved in contracts for work, scheduling, and coordination of activities.

*“The Pottstown BID expenses will include salaries and related costs, office rent, utilities, office equipment, software, liability and workers compensation insurance, legal, other professional fees along with the costs associated with the programs and services described in the Programs and Activities section. In addition, further funding for additional projects/programs proposed will be sought through grants and other sources.”*

### **What does the BID Plan mean regarding “Grants”?**

Prior to the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant award, PAED began researching establishment of a BID in the Borough of Pottstown. This proactive approach allowed services and projects to be implemented sooner.

The assessments alone would have amounted to slightly more than \$170,000 and would not cover a variety of activities. For example, the sidewalk cleaning in the present areas cost approximately \$50,000 annually. The additional cost of *salaries and related payroll costs, office rent, utilities, office equipment, software, liability and workers compensation insurance, legal, other professional fees* would have expended the majority of the remainder of the assessment funds, therefore grants, contributions, sponsorships and other sources of funding would have been necessary to further any programs or initiatives undertaken by the Board of Property Owners managing the BID.

*“The source of funding will be from a combination of Property Assessment Fees, Government Grants, Private Grants, Contributions, and Sponsorships.”*

*“Efforts such as the sidewalk cleaning in the Downtown, canopy of lighting, banners, etc. have been possible due to grants received through PAED’s efforts, specifically the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which ends December 31, 2024. Beautification and economic development efforts including the proposed establishment of a BID were all recommendations based on the issued ARPA grant dollars.”*

### **What metrics/evaluations will be used to monitor success?**

Once the BID Board is established, based on the Board’s recommendations, the scope of project work begins and evaluations will be on-going.

Goal initiatives will include items such as increased property values, increased foot traffic in the Downtown, improved employee/owner satisfaction in relation to quality of life, increased business inquiries, less vacancies and decreased commercial tenant turnover.

*“1. In accordance with Section 5. (c) (3)(iv) of Act 130 of 2000, P.L. 949, requires that the Borough must maintain the same level of municipal programs and services provided within the BID before the BID designation as after the BID designation.*

*2. The BID shall fulfill all duties and responsibilities of a Neighborhood Improvement District Management Association (NIDMA) as set forth in the Act (53 P.S. § 18101 et. seq.). In its capacity as the NIDMA, the Pottstown BID shall submit an annual audit of all income and expenditures to Pottstown Borough within 120 days after the end of each fiscal year, and submit a report, including financial and programmatic information and a summary of audit findings, to Pottstown Borough and to all assessed property owners located in the District, as required by the Act at 53 P.S. § 18109.”*

### **What about important problems such as Homelessness, Safety, Drug Use?**

The BID will have a direct and indirect effect on economic improvements.

As part of preparation of the plan, research was done on BIDs throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). Consultations were conducted with several entities managing BIDs in PA boroughs with similar aspects to the Borough of Pottstown. Collectively, these entities exhibited a decrease in crime, and an increase in foot traffic, as well as property values. In a few instances, an entity shared that after seeing the success of the BID, many other property owners/neighborhoods/areas/parts of the borough/municipality were actually requesting to be included in/added to the BID area.

Homelessness is a national crisis. The BID is not responsible for solving homelessness, but rather helping to solve economic development issues that it CAN help solve.

*“...for the purpose of promoting the economic and general welfare of the district and the municipality...”*

### **What about other topics such as Parking and Trash?**

As the goal of the BID is to impact beautification, increased visitor activity, and improved quality of life, these are topics that will be included in areas of improvement by the Board and Staff of the BID.

*“...for the purpose of promoting the economic and general welfare of the district and the municipality...”*

### **Why isn't the entire Borough being assessed?**

There is no objection to including the entire Borough of Pottstown. However, the Act does not provide a mechanism for the entire Borough. Rather, it requires a designated area.

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Beginning with *“a limited geographic area within a municipality”* allows for a manageable, attainable, feasible geographic area.

### **Why aren't ALL properties assessed within the BID – including the tax-exempt ones?**

By law, the non-taxed properties cannot be assessed.

However, the Act allows the BID to *“solicit in-kind services or financial contributions from tax-exempt property owners within the BID in lieu of properties assessment fees.”*

### **Who ultimately is the BID helping?**

“One size does not fit all.” Each area within the proposed BID boundaries within the Borough has its own unique characteristics. Therefore, the services and improvements in each of the areas will vary. With representation from each specific block/area within the BID, prioritizing projects of those areas is guided by the Board. Ideas, feedback, collaboration, budgets, timelines all are taken into careful consideration in order to create an effective plan.

The purpose of a BID is not about the individual, but rather about the collective.

### **Aren't there already programs in place to cover these activities/improvements?**

BIDs, NIDs (Neighborhood Improvement District), DIDs (Downtown Improvement District), Mainstreet Programs, etc. were created to bridge the gaps between government and businesses/community. The desire for consistent, measurable, impactful improvements requires reliable, consistent funding to accomplish such goals. Activities and improvements maintained by a BID are outside the scope of any particular department within a government staff.

### **What is PAED's role vs. a BID?**

For several years, PAED has been managing projects that would normally be managed by an entity such as a BID. Projects such as the Clean Team, Light Up High Street, Street Banners, Holidays, Downtown Planters, etc. are outside the scope of PAED's primary mission. In order to continue these types of improvements, sustainable funding must be identified.

- PAED is a 501c3 private non-profit corporation. PAED is not a government entity. PAED is funded by donations from businesses and organizations. PAED has been improving Pottstown's economic development through large projects since 1965, and since 2017 has assisted with over \$7 million in grants.
- PAED's services include to assist with site selection within the Borough's 5.5 sq. miles, educating businesses through the submission of applications, including the inspection process, starting a business, and zoning variances.
- PAED engages with county, state, and federal offices for the purpose of exploring funding opportunities for economic development projects and providing business solutions.
- PAED works with incoming and existing employers to identify their workforce needs and connect them with appropriate employment resources.
- PAED connects investors, businesses, and real estate professionals with commercial and industrial opportunities and properties within the Borough.
- PAED serves as the Land Bank Administrator for Pottstown – which purchases blighted, vacation, and tax-delinquent properties to ensure the homes are rehabilitated and then sold to individuals within specific income guidelines.