



Pottstown Play Streets

Evaluation Report
Fall 2023



Report prepared by Laura Lessard, PhD, MPH

Overview

Play Streets is a summer outdoor program which temporarily closes a neighborhood block to traffic and provides play equipment to create safe, fun, and healthy spaces for children, families and neighborhoods to connect and play right outside their doors. Pottstown Play Streets aims to increase physical activity opportunities and promote community cohesion for children and families.



The Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department provides equipment for activities including connect four, jump rope, sidewalk chalk, cornhole, life-size jenga, bean bag toss, hula hoops, footballs, kickballs, basketballs, and soccer balls. Community organizations provide outreach and offer individual programs and activities.

Goals of Play Streets



Goals for Children & Families

Play Streets creates a **safe, healthy and fun place for recreational activity within the Borough of Pottstown**. By doing so, recreation access gaps are reduced and there is increased access to social safety net resources like benefit navigation, food, housing, healthcare and employment opportunities. Play Streets events also provide an **opportunity to engage with others and increase community and youth engagement**. Over time, Play Streets can contribute to an increase in overall community cohesion and improved interactions between the community and community agencies. Ultimately, Play Streets aims to continue to **improve community health and wellness**.



Goals for Community Organizations

Beyond the impact on children and families, Pottstown Play Streets is an opportunity to **build connections and relationships between organizations in the community**. The Borough of Pottstown Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the delivery of the Play Streets program. It is a member of and works alongside its partners at the Pottstown Play Streets Coalition to plan, implement, and evaluate the program annually. The Coalition was convened by PAHWF in 2022 as a common solution to capacity gaps associated with the delivery of Play Streets and the impacts of COVID-19 on local non-profits as identified in PAHWF and Tri-County Community Networks' COVID Organizational Capacity & Service Implementation Survey for Executive Directors. Coalition members include local businesses, organizations, and funders.

Evaluation Approach



To continue to learn about how to improve Play Streets in the future, the Coalition is committed to conducting evaluation of the events. The evaluation approach is designed to capture both **stories of impact and also opportunities to learn and improve**. For example, at each event, volunteers counted participants and recorded their thoughts about successes and challenges.

Additional information was gathered from program stakeholders during informal discussions and a debrief meeting in September 2023. This evaluation report summarizes what was learned through those processes.

“

“The music and games were great for getting the kids involved.”

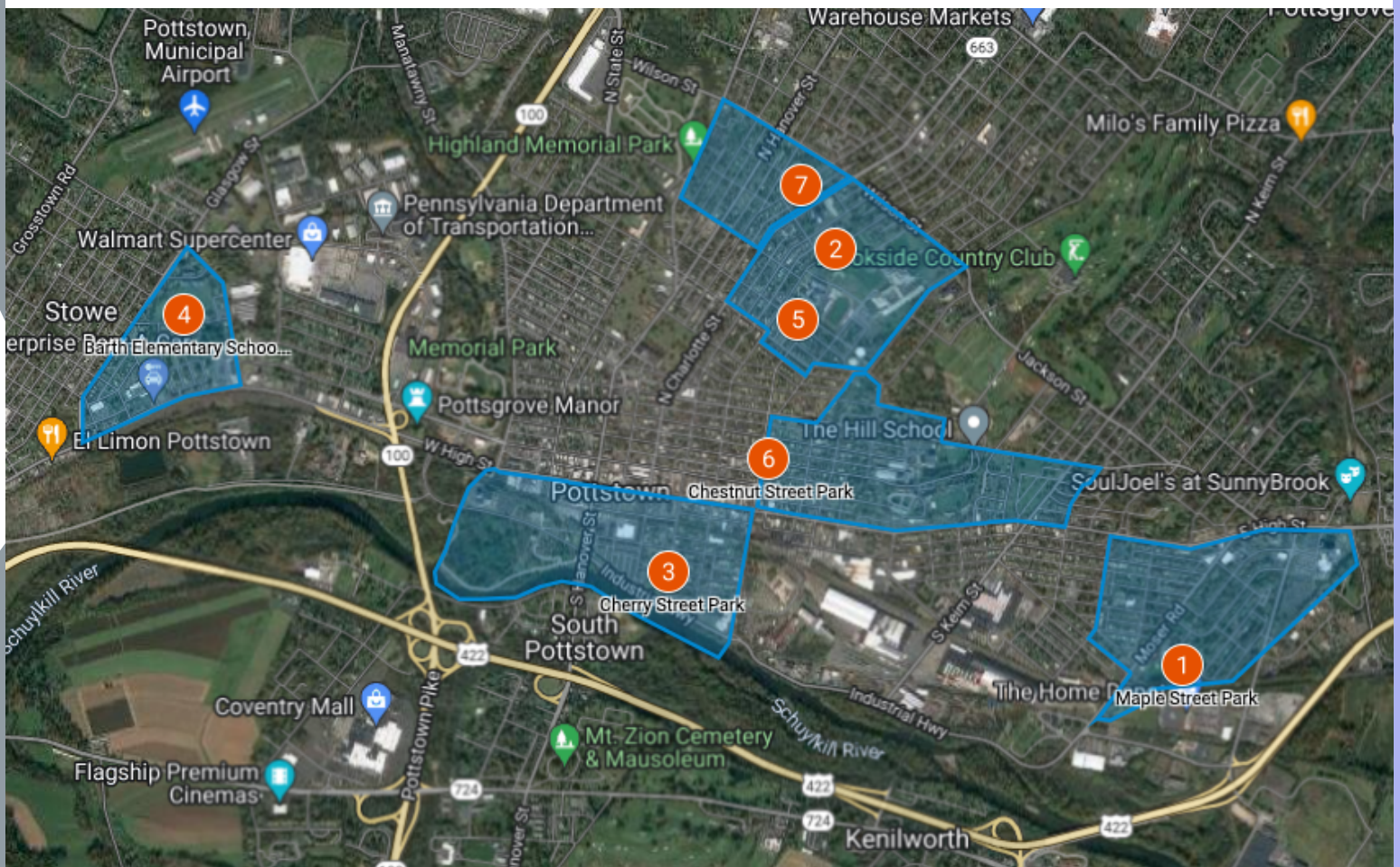
Coalition Member



Locations

Seven Play Streets events were planned across Pottstown. Due to weather, two events were cancelled and one was rescheduled. Locations and Census tract information is provided in the map below.

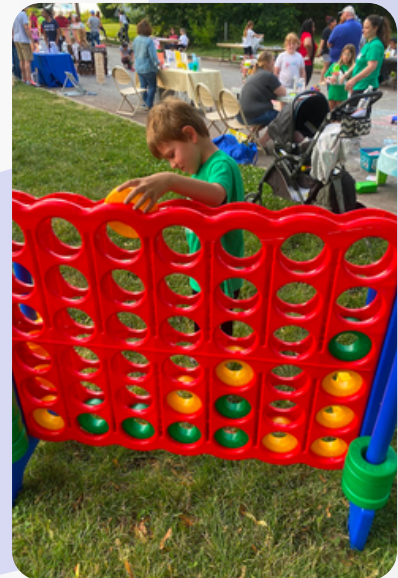
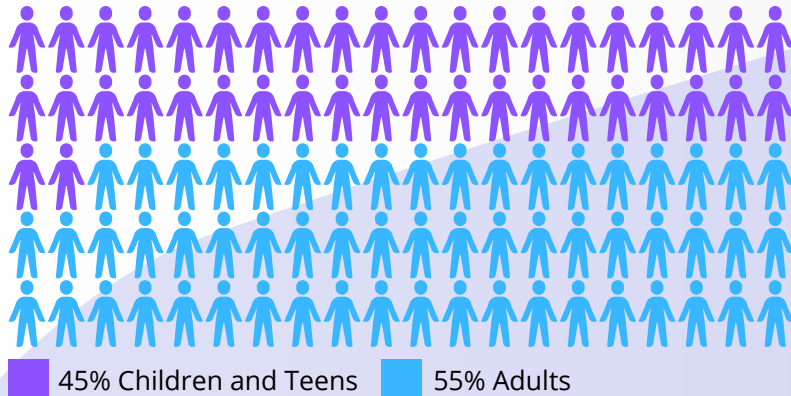
- 1 Maple Street Park, June 15 (2088.02)
- 2 Middle School Field / Franklin Street, June 22 (2089.06)
- 3 Cherry Street Park, August 3 (2088.01)
- 4 Barth Elementary School field, July 13 (2090.00)
- 5 Washington West Street Park, July 20 (2089.06)
- 6 Chestnut Street Park, weather cancellation (2089.03)
- 7 Spruce Street Park, weather cancellation (2089.06)



Map available [here](#).

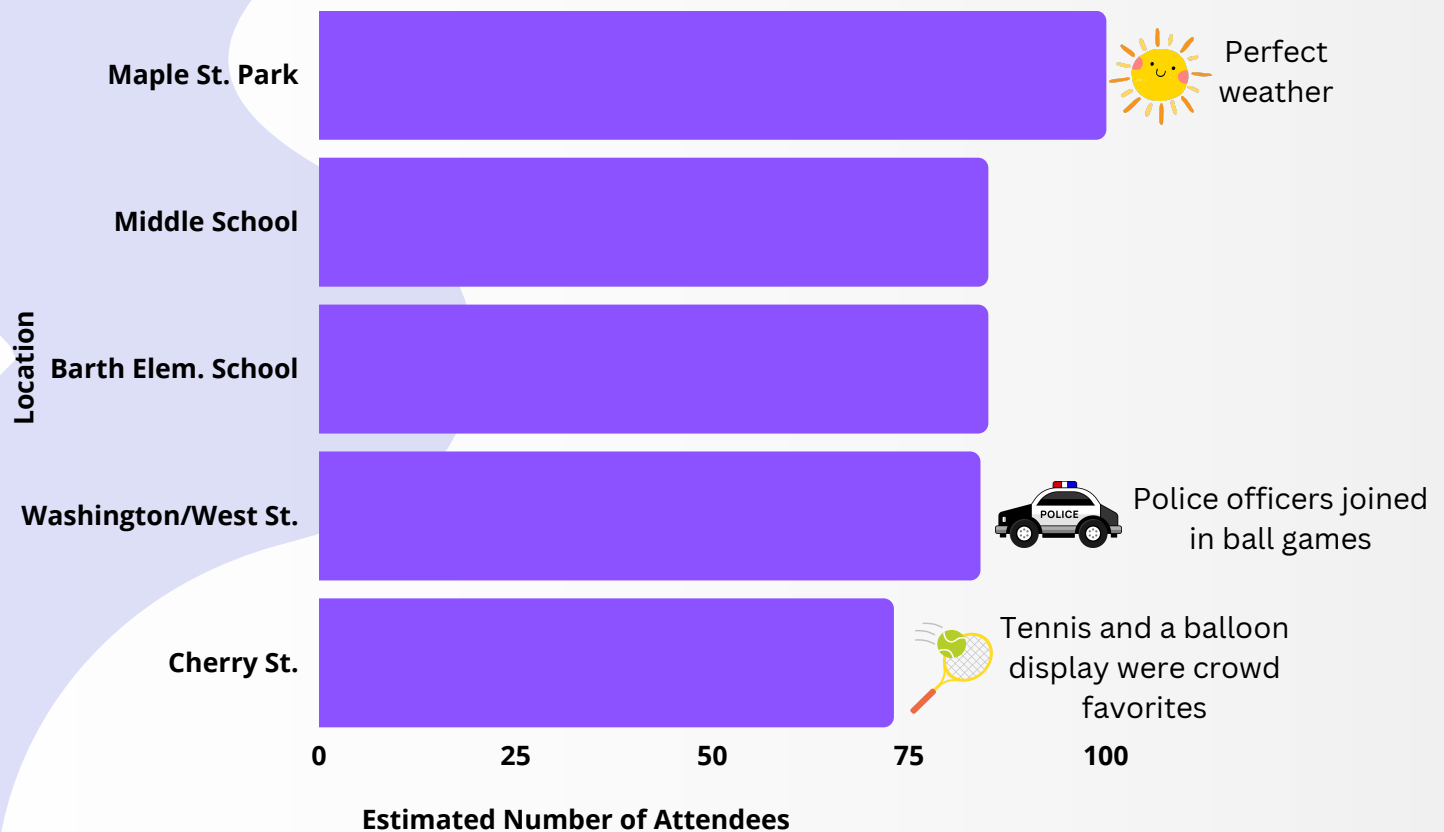
Reach

During the summer of 2023, Pottstown Play Streets drew over 427 neighbors across five events. About half of the attendees were children and teens.



In total, 427 people attended Pottstown Play Streets 2023

Many locations featured unique attractions, activities, food, and even a few friendly animals for children and families to interact with.



Programs & Activities

Pottstown Play Streets Coalition members include non-profits, healthcare providers, youth-serving organizations, social services, schools, and religious organizations coordinated to provide outreach, programs, and activities at one or more Play Street events. Planned activities included:

- **Pottstown Parks and Recreation** supplied the free play equipment for each event as well as free t-shirts and water.
- **Montgomery County Community College** MCCC's youth engagement department created an interactive activity related to STEM.
- **Pottstown Children's Discovery Center** provided mystery STEM boxes and books for children.
- **Mother Goose Read to Me** provided free books for children.
- **Pottstown Community Arts** provided art activities and sidewalk chalk.
- **Trellis for Tomorrow** provided games and activities.
- **Pottstown Community Action** delivered outreach for Love your Block Pottstown.
- **Genesis Housing** offered program information as well as snacks.
- **Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation** engaged with attendees about their community survey.
- **Greater Pottstown Tennis & Learning** offered an introduction to tennis with fun games.
- **Tower Health** provided educational materials for children focused on health.



- **ACLAMO** provided outreach information about immunizations and COVID-19.
- **Be ReZilient, Healing Through The Arts** offered activities focused on emotional wellness and community.
- **Community Health & Dental Care** shared health information and giveaways for children and families.

Programs & Activities

- **Pottstown Trauma Informed Community Connection** offered interactive and engaging activities that promoted collaboration and engagement for youth and parents.
- **The JT Dorsey Foundation** lead attendees in fun soccer games and activities.
- **Rahab's Hope** shared information about their rental assistance program.
- **Health Partner Plans** provided on site presentations and screenings and family fun activities.



- **YWCA** supplied additional free play equipment, including double dutch, giant jenga, human ring toss, a family obstacle course, and four square.
- **Traces of Love Association** provided materials on grief and loss.
- **Foundation Church** supplied music and outdoor games like large jenga, corn hole and connect four.
- **The STRIVE Initiative** contributed their Created for Greatness Middle School student DJ program.
- **Family Services of Montgomery County** supplied outdoor games and activities for families as well as outreach for their programs.
- **Pottstown School District PreK Counts** offered free activities for young children and families as well as information about kindergarten.

“It gets us out as a community engaging with each other with getting information”

Resident



Future Directions

Following Pottstown Play Streets 2023, members of the Pottstown Play Streets Coalition came together for a debrief meeting to share their thoughts on [what went well](#), [areas for improvement](#), and [suggestions for Pottstown Play Streets 2024](#). Feedback was also collected from coalition members during individual Play Streets events and via email. A summary of this feedback is provided below.

What Went Well

Coalition members praised the **logistics** of the events, including delivery and setup of tables and chairs, setup of activities and breakdown at the end of the event. They were also pleased with the **communication within the group**, especially regarding weather and other last minute challenges during the summer. Coalition members consistently spoke highly of one another and the **opportunity to meet and network** with others who work in the same space. There was also mention of the **diversity of activities and partners** across the events, which offered lots of options for attendees including the chance to learn about community resources. One Coalition member explained:

"People don't like to go to central locations for services, Play Streets is about bringing those services to the people."



Opportunities for Growth

Coalition members identified several opportunities to expand the reach and impact of Play Streets in 2024 and beyond. Firstly, there was mention of **inviting additional partners** to attend the events (e.g. fire truck and firefighters; younger volunteers) to continue to broaden the reach of Play Streets. There were several suggestions for how the events could be **shared with the community**, including flyers sent home at the end of the school year, flyering local businesses (e.g. child care programs) and working with faith communities to expand outreach. The suggestion was made to work with the YWCA to create videos showcasing Play Streets to advertise upcoming events.

Appendix A.

Coalition Members



Mission statement: Pottstown Parks and Recreation strives to create, support, and promote diverse recreation opportunities in the Borough, to enhance existing park facilities and promote tourism with new attractions and amenities for residents and visitors of all ages, ethnicities and backgrounds. We seek to provide park improvements and recreation programming that promotes healthy lifestyles, benefits the community, connects residents and helps build a better Pottstown.

www.pottstown.org/135/Parks-Recreation



Mission statement: Transform the lives of those we serve through educational, workforce, and cultural experiences and programs that drive success both at the College and beyond.

www.mc3.edu | 215-641-6551 | admissions@mc3.edu



Mission statement: Be ReZilient Healing Through The Arts is an inNvative, creative wellness organization that strives to help eradicate the stigma of mental wellness. Through the use of fine art and other mediums, as well as aromatherapy-infused educational programming. We strive to bring self-awareness, help to identify emotional triggers, and provide lifelong strategies to foster a resilient mindset.

https://berezilient.org_



Mission statement: We are committed to providing life enriching community-based services and resources that will inspire and strengthen individuals and families in areas of health, life skills, education, social development and engagement, and economic empowerment. Our vision is leading people to opportunities essential to achieving full potential.

<https://c1dc-pa.com/>



Mission statement: Our mission is to foster compassion and resilience in people and inspire them to build more sustainable communities.

trellis4tomorrow.org/en | (610) 886-4900



Mission statement: Our ultimate goal is to become a beacon, a ray of hope, that we can be seen as those who show the way.

www.pottstowncommunityaction.org | PottstownCommunityAction@gmail.com



Mission statement: Genesis Housing Corporation is dedicated to the development of affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization and the education of consumers on housing and financial issues.

genesishousing.org | 610-275-4357 | info@genesishousing.org



Mission statement: The Foundation enhances the health and wellness of area residents, providing education, funding, and programs that provide equitable access and opportunities for all residents to adopt healthy lifestyles.

pottstownfoundation.org | 610-323-2006



Mission statement: ACLAMO is a nonprofit community service organization that provides educational programs, social services, and access to health and wellness programs to Latinos and other community members to empower them to fully achieve their life potential.

aclamo.org | 610- 277-2570



Mission statement: Recognize, respond to and reduce the struggles that children and adults face every day in Pottstown.

www.pottstownpeak.org/home



Mission statement: The Pottstown Cluster of Religious Communities transforms lives by offering basic needs assistance, spiritual guidance, and self-sufficiency programs to improve people's socio-economic stability in the Greater Pottstown Area through cooperation with our faith and community partners.

www.pottstowncluster.org | 610-970-5995



Mission statement: Family Services is committed to improving the lives of individuals, children, seniors, and families in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania by providing a comprehensive array of human services. We envision a strong, caring community of individuals and families meeting the challenges and opportunities of life.

fsmontco.org | 610-326-1610



Mission statement: We bring the community together through art and beauty. Collaborating with professional artists, art students and individuals in and around town, we help beautify public spaces in Pottstown.

pottstowncommunityarts.org | 610-574-8016 | topottstownarts@gmail.com



Mission statement: YWCA Tri-County Area is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

www.ywcatricountyarea.org | 610-323-1888 | info@ywcatricountyarea.org



Mission statement: to provide compassionate, accessible, high-quality, cost-effective healthcare to the community; to promote health; to educate healthcare professionals; and to participate in appropriate clinical research.

towerhealth.org/locations/pottstown-hospital | 610-327-7000



Health Partners Plans

Mission statement: We connect with the hearts and minds of those we serve, improving the health outcomes for our members, operating with respect and dignity, while cultivating inclusivity and belonging.

<https://www.healthpartnersplans.com/>



Mother Goose Read to Me

Mission statement: We are a non-profit with the goal of reaching as many parents as possible to explain the importance of reading to young children as a way to boost their literacy in preparation for school.

<https://www.mothergoosereadtome.org/>



Mission statement: It is the mission of Community Health and Dental Care to identify gaps in health services and to ensure access to appropriate levels of care for all people in the service area regardless of their ability to pay.

<https://ch-dc.org/>



Mission statement: Building the local church in Pottstown and beyond. Our vision is to Build Lives + Build Culture + Build Kingdom in our region and beyond with the hope of Jesus.

<https://fndtn.church/>



Mission statement: To mentor life skills, healthy behaviors and learning through tennis.

<https://greaterpottstowntennis.org/>



<https://www.hedwighouse.org/>



Mission statement: to provide an educational, hands-on, interactive atmosphere promoting healthy living for children, families and schools by stimulating curiosity and motivating learning. All children learn through hands on interactive experiences. These experiences enhance social/emotional growth by exposing children to interactions such as collaboration, exploration and self-control which lead to critical and creative thinking, self-confidence and healthy communication skills.

www.pottstowndiscoverykids.org/home



Mission statement: PEAK increases the school readiness and success of children in Pottstown by cultivating a network of organizations that support young children and partner with families.

www.pottstownpeak.org/home



Mission statement: Rahab's Hope extends financial assistance and community resources to support individuals and families that are experiencing financial hardships and are at risk of homelessness. Our services aid in obtaining and maintaining housing stability throughout Montgomery County.

<https://rahabshope.org/>



Mission statement: The JT Dorsey Foundation's mission is to provide wellness education, physical activity, mentoring, leadership, employment training, and a safe space for at-risk children to grow up.

<https://jtdorsey.org/>



Mission statement: STRIVE's mission is to cultivate positive perceptions and provide relatable and diverse mentorship to Pottstown youth to realize their academic and individual aspirations.

<https://striveinitiative.org/>



Mission statement: TOLA offers grief support and education to children, parents, families, and educators in our community.

<https://www.tracesoflove.org/>

Appendix B. Logic Model

Logic Model

Pottstown Play Street	Goal: Develop and Implement a Borough-Wide program that encourages physical activity among youth Objective 1: Create safe, healthy, fun places for recreational activity Objective 2: Re-build community cohesion in challenged areas across the Borough (Community Improvement & Community Building)			
INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES		
What we invest	Objective Steps and Activities	Short-term Outputs	Intermediate	Long-term
Staff Time Assessment Hours Materials Recreation Equipment Timeline Partner Resources Volunteers Funding Marketing Health Partners Communities Strategic Partners Public Works Police Fire	Identify common agenda Identify Neighborhoods and Locations Establish schedule of events Identify Strategic, Community and Funding Partners Secure Funding Coordinate logistics with Borough and Community Partners Align Health Partners Develop Evaluation needs and mechanism with strategic partners Secure equipment and storage Secure buy-in from supporting departments of the City Pre-Event Community Outreach	Create safe spaces for children to play; Treat recreation access gaps Opportunities for physical activity Remove the "last mile," to social safety net resources like benefit navigation, food, housing, healthcare, and employment; Exposure to healthy food options; Opportunity to socially engage with others; Workforce development opportunities for youth; Increase in community and youth engagement; Increase in partners ability to engage in collective impact while treating capacity gaps	Community cohesion; Improved interactions between community and with public departments; Improved community health and wellness	Community driven playstreets; Improved physical health of youth; Decrease in childhood obesity; Decrease in pediatric diabetes; Safer communities; Increased perception of safer communities; Improved mental health of youth; Decreased chance of children engaging in illicit and risky behaviors
Assumptions: - Borough youth don't get enough physical activity nor have access to safe open spaces for play - Borough Youth desire safe spaces for play - There is will among partners to engage in a collective impact approach - Funding can be secured through strategic partners to support cost of program		External Factors: - Funding - Volunteers - Buy-in from community and partners		