



Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia  
FY2011 Status Report



**C**haracter, culture, and convenience are the characteristics that define a Classic Town. Ranging from colonial settlements to college towns, streetcar suburbs to waterfront communities, Classic Towns are sprinkled throughout the Greater Philadelphia region, providing a quality of life that is often not found in this age of suburban sprawl.

Officially launched in 2008, the Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia initiative of the Delaware Valley Planning Commission (DVRPC) is designed to foster the economic growth of the region's timeless communities by promoting what makes each community a wonderful place to live, work, and play! DVRPC has identified the following guiding principles as the framework for the Classic Towns program:

**Identify niche markets.** Classic Towns target markets that are appealing to homebuyers and business owners. Highlighted amenities include access to transit, pedestrian friendliness, housing options, and well-established neighborhoods.

**Invest in and build on quality of place.** The DVRPC region is rich with communities that are unique, attractive, exciting, and welcoming to residents and visitors. Building upon these amenities makes individual communities and the region a more attractive place to live, work and play.

**Create new partnerships.** New partnerships unite residents, businesses, and local governments to provide momentum necessary to bring new ideas to fruition.

**Think regionally, act locally.** The Greater Philadelphia region is more economically competitive when communities work together. It is difficult for any single community to realize the enormous opportunities and amenities that a region can provide. Regional cooperation strengthens local initiatives.

Many communities in the Greater Philadelphia area realize the benefits of marketing and currently have ongoing local initiatives. "Classic Towns designation" complements ongoing local efforts. The Classic Towns regional campaign promotes the inherent benefits of choosing to locate in mature communities. Marketing activities are sustained over long time periods. For communities that have not yet created a brand for themselves, Classic Towns provides the tools and training needed to launch individualized local marketing campaigns. The regional Classic Towns of Greater Philadelphia campaign seeks to strengthen existing local marketing campaigns and encourages the creation of new initiatives.



This status report details some of the highlights of the Classic Towns program, as well as evaluating analytical measures of success, since the program's launch in July 2008. For the last three years, DVRPC staff has sent out a Classic Towns survey to better gauge participants' opinions and technical assistance needs, and has asked for suggestions to improve the program. While the sample size is very small, DVRPC received a 55% response rate for the 2011 survey. Aggregated responses are included throughout this report.

## Workshops

**A**s part of the Classic Towns designation, communities are invited to participate in workshops and engage fellow Classic Towns representatives. Workshop topics are chosen from the Classic Towns annual survey and other sources.

Held in January 2011, this fiscal year's workshop, done in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and co-hosted by the Germantown Community Connection, focused on historic preservation. The workshop started with a panel discussion on incentives for homeowners to buy and restore historic homes and was moderated by Donna Ann Harris of the Heritage Consulting. The panel featured Ron Emrich, the Executive Director of Preservation New Jersey, and Amy McCollum and Patrick Hauck from Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. The group also heard from Andrea MacDonald of PHMC on a survey of Pennsylvanians' community values. An afternoon tour featured the neighborhood of Germantown, a 2009 Classic Town inductee, led by David Young, Executive Director of Cliveden of the National Trust. Founded in 1681, Germantown is one of the most historical neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

Over 45 people attend the morning workshop, and approximately 30 people attended the afternoon tour. DVRPC decided to open registration to this past workshop to a larger group of community development professionals as a way to further promote the Classic Towns program. As with all workshops, presentations and handouts are available on the password-protected area of the Classic Towns website.

2011 Survey respondents ranked the following workshops as most interesting (in order of preference):

- ▶ “Marketing and Branding to the Experience Economy”
- ▶ “Zoning and Planning To Sustain a Vibrant Downtown”
- ▶ “Importance of Open Space in a Built Out Community”
- ▶ “Culinary Tourism”
- ▶ “Nuts and Bolts of Downtown Circulation”



Additional write-in responses had a general theme of acquiring more skills to undertake or utilize market analysis for business recruitment and/or attracting developers.

## **Outreach to the Real Estate Community**

**D**VRPC project staff members attend various events geared toward the real estate community throughout Greater Philadelphia to promote the Classic Towns program and the designated communities. For the third year, DVRPC staff attended the Bucks County Realtors Association’s TEXPO in Langhorne, PA to meet and talk to local realtors about the benefits of using Classic Towns’ marketing materials. Feedback from realtors has been positive and new partnerships are underway. While DVRPC has reached out to other realtor associations, staff welcomes suggestions for additional opportunities to promote Classic Towns.

In April 2011, DVRPC highlighted the Classic Towns program at the US Environmental Protection Agency’s National Brownfields Conference, held in Philadelphia, PA. In June 2011, DVRPC participated in ULI Philadelphia’s Urban Marketplace. Both events’ audiences included developers who are interested in downtown reinvestment, as well as professional planners and community volunteers.

## **Media Coverage**

**A**s the publication relations field says, “earned media” (news coverage) is the best form of advertising. DVRPC program staff, as well as the Commission’s Public Affairs staff, spends significant time developing earned media. DVRPC’s Executive Director, Barry Seymour, has appeared on the Fox 29 News Morning Show, CBS3, and Comcast Newsmakers, specifically promoting the Classic Towns program. The program has also been featured on NBC 10 and KYW news radio.

Over 45 articles referencing Classic Towns have appeared between July 2008 and June 2011. An additional 17 articles appeared in print in regionally significant dailies, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Courier-Post*, the *Daily Local News*, and *Gloucester County Times*. In the time period between July 2010 and June 2011 alone, over 14 articles touting Classic Towns appeared.



## Style Guide

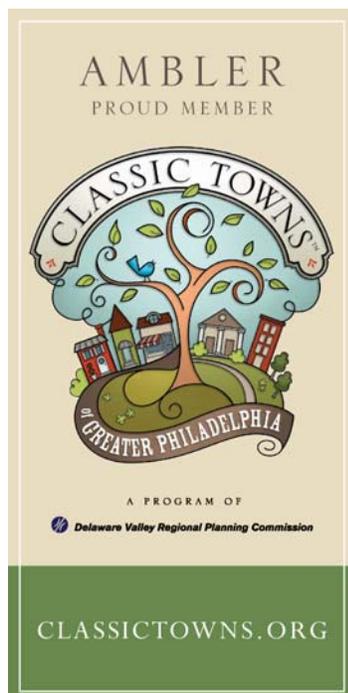
The Classic Towns Style Guide and other campaign elements can be utilized by individual member towns in various forms of communication. Consistent messaging at the local level builds the Classic Towns brand. Approximately 75% of the Classic Towns have downloaded the Style Guide and logos. A majority (55%) of the Classic Towns are utilizing the Classic Towns logos for banners on their homepages and in newsletter stories. Approximately 39% use the logo for street banners.

Individual brochures were also created and distributed to each Classic Town; in addition, individual street post banners, posters, stickers, and web banners were provided. Since 2008, DVRPC has distributed at least 15,000 member town brochures, 7,000 program overview brochures, 2,000 Classic Towns pins, and 1,500 store decals. Member towns can provide these marketing materials to visitors, residents, and businesses to help promote the program.

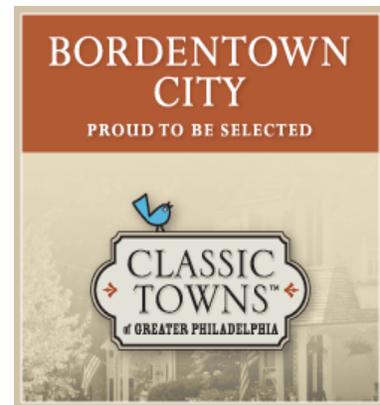
In 2011, DVRPC contracted with a media company to distribute brochures at various tourist destinations throughout Greater Philadelphia. Classic Towns brochures can be found at Amtrak 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Philadelphia, Greater Wilmington hotels and the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Since September 2010, DVRPC has distributed over 4,000 brochures in these three locations.



POSTER



OUTDOOR BANNER



WEB BANNER



WEB ADVERTISEMENT

## Marketing and Advertising

**M**arketing and advertising activities for Classic Towns include local, regional, and national ad buys. The program was designed to target an online audience. Classic Towns ran an online advertising campaign from September 2011 to June 2011. These online ads accounted for 16% of the total traffic to the Classic Towns website – 2,754 people visited the website by clicking on one of these ads. We ran ads on the following websites:

- Frontdoor.com
- HGTV.com
- KYW.com
- NYTimes.com
- Philly.com
- Realtor.com
- Trulia.com

The ad shown to the left is an example of advertisements placed on [www.FlyingKiteMedia.com](http://www.FlyingKiteMedia.com). Paid advertisements placed on our various websites are all animated and connect directly back to the Classic Towns site. Screenshots of the banner ads running on a few of the campaign websites are below.

DVRPC has also purchased print advertisements in county-based and regional real estate magazines. The marketing campaign is constantly revised throughout the year in response to online traffic, advertising opportunities, and other analytical and qualitative feedback. All of the Classic Towns survey respondents are satisfied with the advertising designs and placement of ads.

Marketing the Classic Towns program is intended to leverage the individual activities that member towns are undertaking.

Approximately twelve percent (12%) of Classic Towns communities have advertised their participation in the Classic Towns program in print ads for local newspapers and magazines.



### BANNER AD CAMPAIGN

### Facebook and Flickr

In 2011, DVRPC added two social media platforms to the Classic Towns promotion. The Facebook page has been active since January 2011 and has several hundred followers. Built as a fan page, the Classic Towns Facebook page allows us to engage our Classic Towns' partners and members of each Classic Community. Our website analytics indicate that approximately 20% of the visitors to the website click through the Facebook page. Added in June 2011, is a photo gallery of the Classic Towns. Housed on Flickr.com, this enables potential homebuyers to see additional photos of each Classic Town.

### Classic Towns Times

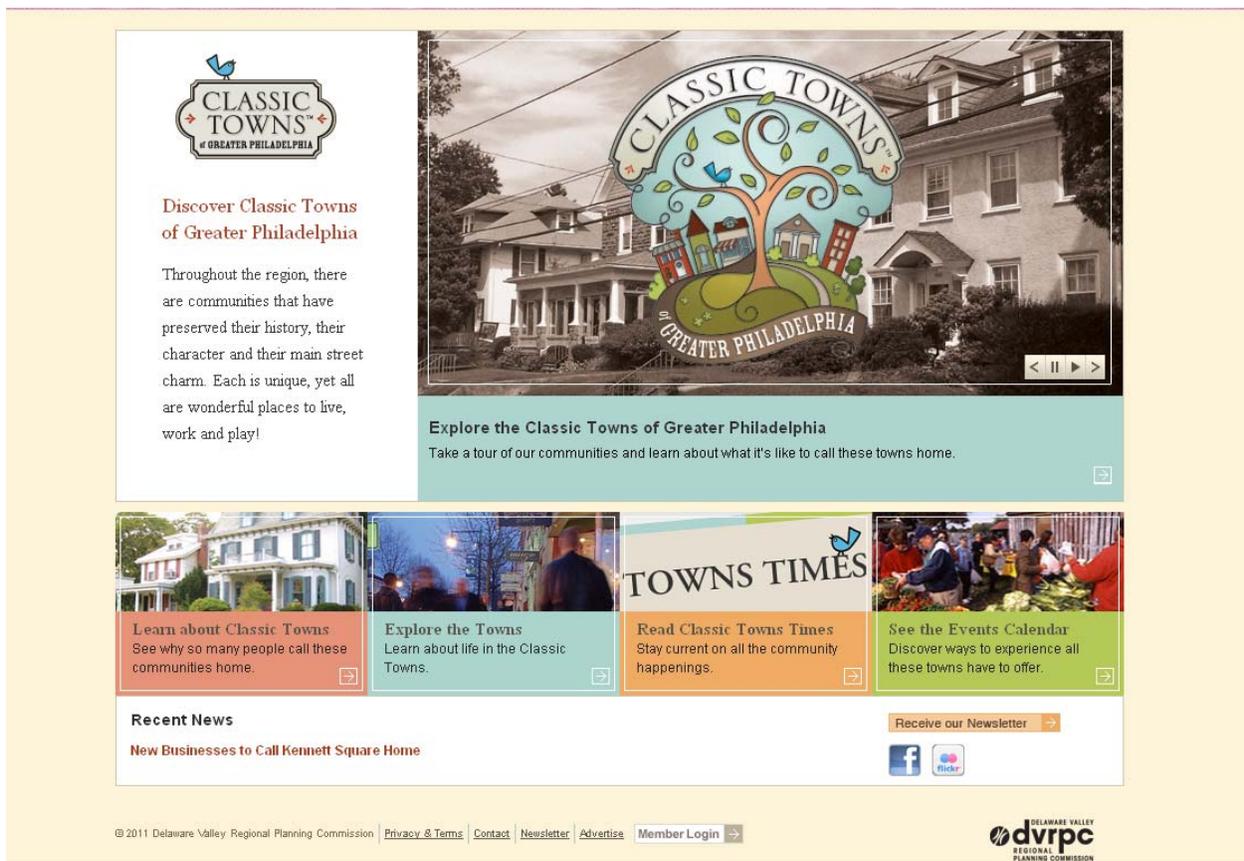
Started in September 2010, the *Classic Towns Times* is a new quarterly e-newsletter and section on the website. The *Times* newsletter, with original content, drives more traffic to the website as well as improves the website's "natural search" returns – meaning more users will find it as a top or higher option when searching related terms. The *Times* distribution list is composed of over 2,500 unique email addresses for real estate developers, real estate agents, community development professionals, and other colleagues. Articles are intended to draw more interest in investing in the Classic Towns and build overall brand recognition.



## Website

All advertisements and marketing efforts bring potential homebuyers and other interested people to the Classic Towns website. It has been created to introduce these wonderful communities and to ask web visitors to “take action” by learning more about individual member towns, by visiting a member town, by supporting a downtown business, or by choosing to relocate to a member town.

To help promote community events and make it easier for web visitors to visit a member town, an event calendar was added to the website in early 2010. DVRPC staff has received mixed feedback about the calendar. However, an encouraging 77% of the survey respondents utilize the calendar feature on the website.



### CLASSIC TOWNS HOMEPAGE

DVRPC analyzes website activity on a monthly basis. The Classic Towns program targets all demographic groups, from first-time homebuyers to empty nesters. However, market research has revealed that nearly all demographic groups, regardless of age, race, and socio-economic status, conduct online research before contacting a realtor. Therefore, Classic Towns advertisements are



strategically placed, and geographically targeted to the New York Metro area, central Pennsylvania, and an expanded Greater Philadelphia metro area. Since the launch of the program in July 2008, the Classic Towns website traffic continues to grow.

Averaging just over 20,000 visitors per year, about 44% of the traffic to the website is clicking through a referral site. As mentioned before, 16% of all traffic is generated by “clicking through” online ads. Another 23% access the site by typing the address directly into the browser. This signifies that the website is developing brand recognition. Even more exciting is that 75% of classictowns.org visitors are unique (new visitors)! To put this in perspective, only 32% of visitors to DVRPC’s website are unique.

### **Top Traffic Sources**

1. Direct Traffic
2. phoenixville.org
3. Google
4. dvrpc.org
5. city-data.com

### **Top Visited Pages**

1. Homepage
2. Explore
3. About
4. Calendar
5. Phoenixville

### **Top Search Terms**

1. classic towns
2. classic towns of greater philadelphia
3. overbrook farms
4. towns in philadelphia
5. classictowns.org

### **Top Traffic Locations**

1. Pennsylvania
2. New Jersey
3. New York
4. California
5. Virginia

## **Analytics**

Visitors to classictowns.org are exploring at least five to six pages on the website, while average visitors on many sites view only two pages. In addition, visitors to classictowns.org spend almost four minutes searching the website, compared to fewer than two minutes on dvrpc.org. Since the launch of the Classic Towns website in July 2008, the time visitors spend on the website varies dramatically depending on recent media coverage. In addition, our website analytics reveal that the newsletter is bringing in additional viewers! When the newsletter is released, we see a 45% increase in website traffic with visitors spending over five minute on the site.



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