

# Hollidaysburg 2035

## Issues and Opportunities Report

November 1, 2021



### October 14-16, 2021 Outreach

Approximately 60 citizens shared their perspectives on living, working, and visiting Hollidaysburg with the Planning Team during two drop-in public workshops at the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library – one Thursday evening and one Friday afternoon – and at the Hollidaysburg Pumpkinfest 2021 on Saturday.

Another 11 community and regional stakeholders were interviewed about various aspects of the community and economy: development potential, local culture, public safety, and local services. Additional stakeholder interviews are scheduled.

Stakeholders engaged to date:

- Historic Hollidaysburg
- Hollidaysburg Arts Council
- Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog
- Hollidaysburg Police Department
- Hollidaysburg Community Partnership
- Hollidaysburg Area School district
- Blair Regional YMCA (re-scheduling)
- Altoona-Blair Community Development Corporation
- Local developers and design consultants
- Everett Railroad
- AMTRAN
- Explore Altoona

Comments from citizens and stakeholders are already helping to shape the plan, as you can see below. The Planning Team will host a second round of workshops in mid-November, presenting preliminary goals and recommendations. Visit [www.hollidaysburgpa2035.com](http://www.hollidaysburgpa2035.com) to see the schedule of events.

### Common Themes from the October Outreach

Common themes among public and stakeholder conversations are summarized below.

#### Land Use & Zoning

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- The downtown's urban form and visual character is strong, but its economic vibrancy is limited by outdated zoning (limited uses) and a perceived shortage of free, on-street parking options. Professional offices and other uses have taken over many groundfloor storefronts. Many remaining active uses (retail, personal services, restaurants, entertainment, etc.) have limited or irregular hours, creating an unreliable downtown experience for visitors.
- New zoning is needed for the US 22 / Blair Street corridor south to Juniata Street.
  - Commercial zoning along US 22 is inconsistent.
  - This is the highest-visibility east-west corridor. It should be a commercial corridor, different yet complementary to the historic downtown.

- The Holiday Hills development is more than 50 percent complete. The master plan includes apartments and townhomes that have not yet been constructed. Topography makes public sewer service challenging and costly.
- The Stowell Farm is the largest undeveloped tract in town – about 52 acres on the south side of Gaysport. Traditional neighborhood development will provide a mix of modern housing unit types and neighborhood commercial services.
- Smaller open parcels are opportunities for infill development or continued open space.
- The zoning ordinance is too restrictive, such as setbacks for residential properties.
- The zoning map needs to be reviewed for spot zoning and designations without real development potential.
- Standards for properties in the historical district should be reviewed.
- Private industry, primarily located outside of Hollidaysburg, takes advantage the rail system.

## Housing & Neighborhoods

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- The housing market is narrow.
  - Single family homes are affordable to purchase but costly to update.
  - Other market-rate housing types, such as townhouses, apartments, and condos, are limited. Pet-friendly rentals are rare.
- There are very few downtown high-end, long-term rentals suitable for people in their early 20s/young professionals and empty nesters. Some say there isn't a market for high-end rentals.
- Local homes are already being rented for short-term use on AirBnB. Reasonable controls are needed to manage neighborhood impacts of these short-term rentals.

## Economy & Tourism

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- The Diamond is a landmark space in the downtown. It should be *the premier business location* and venue for downtown events!
- Downtown Hollidaysburg, its unique retail offerings, and downtown events aren't easily found on the internet.
- A lack of consistent business hours hurts all business. Summer hours are even less consistent.
- Experience and perceptions of convenient parking are a barrier to recruiting new businesses to downtown.
- The downtown would benefit from shared parking across lot lines along the alleys.
- There is a lack of incubator space for start-ups/pop-ups to market their products and services.
- As the county seat, government and related private services are a strong influence on land use and daytime activity.
- The Everett Railroad serves regional industry and creates tourism; it's relatively isolated on the south side of town.
- Several on-road and off-road trails pass through or near Hollidaysburg and could become the foundation for a trail-based, tourism economy.
  - The recently designated 9-11 National Memorial Trail offers potential for new visitors.

- The countywide trail town initiative – Blair County and Explore Altoona – is about to get underway.
- Locals and visitors both need trail designation signage.
- Wayfinding signage to/from hospitality and other services would be needed.
- Walking tours are assets for local culture and tourism, for citizens and visitors.
- The community needs more year-round, kid-friendly indoor and outdoor activities.

## Travel & Circulation

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- Hollidaysburg is walkable and bikeable in block pattern and land use, but safety is a concern.
  - Crossing US 22 from Newry St. to Allegheny St.
  - Some major streets lack sidewalks or road shoulders, e.g., Newry Street at edge of town south of Holliday Hills.
  - Visibility of and by pedestrians, e.g., students using the Penn Street/Garber Street intersection, is limited.
  - Some sidewalks are in poor to very poor condition.
  - Trees need to be trimmed to maintain a walkable clearance, e.g., along the sidewalks around the cemetery.
- There are opportunities for additional or enhanced bike and pedestrian connections:
  - A second N-S corridor (parallel to Penn Street); maybe Union or Montgomery Streets.
  - Juniata Street
  - Blair Street east side of downtown lacks sidewalks and has excessively wide curb cuts along
  - A safe connection (or two) to Gaysport.
  - North area of town around the library and high school
  - Between borough parks and open spaces as a connected system.
  - Between the Stowell farm and Cedar Crest Drive neighborhood in Blair Township.
  - (a walking bridge) From American Legion Park to Glimcher Drive (connecting to Martin's Food store and other retail) in Blair Township.
- There is no bike rental or bike share service in the Hollidaysburg area or Altoona.
- The bridge along Edgar Street at the golf course has no shoulders for bicyclists or runners.
- Traffic calming is needed in residential neighborhoods, such as:
  - Allegheny Street at Bella Street, given the speed of vehicles leaving US 22.
- The Loop Road corridor on the south side may need improvement, esp. if/when the Stowell farm is developed.
- AMTRAN has a one-way daily route through Hollidaysburg; service in Gaysport is on-demand. The courthouse and nearby medical facilities are the busiest stops. AMTRAN offers "transit travel training" to familiarize new riders with transit service.
- There are Uber and Lyft drivers in the Hollidaysburg area. AMTRAN is willing to work with TNC's for first and last mile service.

## Water

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- Stormwater pools along Allegheny Street between Bella and Spring Streets because the curbs have deteriorated or sunk; it's a safety hazard.
- Lower Gaysport is floodprone; stormwater flows down the hillside, the creek/river floods over its banks, and groundwater seeps up from below. The combined sewer and storm sewer system is a problem.

## Culture

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- The way the town looks – the visual character of its building patterns, scale, and styles – is directly tied to its history of the canal and the railroad.
- The school district campus is an asset for the whole community. Its outdoor facilities, e.g., fields and disc golf, and walking paths are available for all to use. Youth gather there to play sports informally and to socialize.
- There isn't much else for youth to do in town.
- Music and sports are a big part of community life.
  - Concerts at the Canal Basin Bandshell are one example.
  - A "runner's loop" follows Brush Mountain Road, Pond Street, Godfrey Lane, Scotch Valley Road, Allegheny Street, Penn Street and Edgar Street.
  - The school's cross-country team runs through the woods surrounding the Fox Hollow development north of the school.
- Hollidaysburg is still a faith-based community with varied and well-attended denominational churches.
- We love our dogs! Where could we have a dog park?

## What Else?

E-mail the planning team at [ideas@hollidaysburgpa2035.com](mailto:ideas@hollidaysburgpa2035.com). What issues and opportunities do you see to fix, improve, or enhance Hollidaysburg? Who else should the Planning Team interview?

## What's Next: November Outreach on Directions for 2035

The Planning Team will host a second round of workshops in mid-November. They will present preliminary directions for the plan – goals and recommendations – for feedback and refinement. Visit [www.hollidaysburgpa2035.com](http://www.hollidaysburgpa2035.com) to see the schedule of events and pick a time convenient for you to help shape the plan for 2035.