

Comprehensive Plan

Draft October 31, 2022

Contents (Part 1 – 10.31.22)

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(Funding acknowledgement)

Purpose and Preparation of Hollidaysburg 2035

Plan Purpose

Hollidaysburg 2035 is the Borough's 10-year plan for community and economic development. It is the official, adopted policy plan, outlining how ordinances, programs and services, and capital projects should manage conditions such as land use, housing, utilities and services, infrastructure, and natural and historic resources to sustain and enhance the community and its economy.

A Comprehensive Plan is a policy for guiding community and economic development in a municipality or multi-municipal region. A comprehensive plan demonstrates that elected officials, in consultation with the public, have considered the current and future needs of its community and agreed upon the direction and scale of development and resource conservation for the foreseeable 10 years.

The Plan provides a blueprint for municipal decision-making. It establishes a desirable land use pattern and recommends the use of various tools to accomplish and serve this pattern. These tools include zoning and subdivision and land development regulations, capital improvements to transportation and infrastructure systems, and adjustments to municipal programs and services. The plan's purpose in considering these topics simultaneously is to ensure that decisions are coordinated and complementary.

The Comprehensive Plan does not change municipal regulations, practices, or budget allocations. The Plan may recommend changes in these areas, but such change is put into effect through a separate process.

Authorization for Municipal Land Use Planning

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968, as reenacted and amended, authorizes municipalities, individually or jointly, to plan for the future. It authorizes the use of several planning tools including the municipal planning commission, the comprehensive plan, the official map for planned municipal facilities and infrastructure, the subdivision and land development ordinance, the capital improvement program, the zoning ordinance and map, and the zoning hearing board.

Additionally, Act 148 of 1973, as amended, authorizes the establishment of Environmental Advisory Councils.

Finally, Pennsylvania's Historic District Act of 1961 authorizes local governments to regulate changes to buildings and structures in a certified historic district and mandates the appointment of an advisory Historical Architectural Review Board to review proposed changes that can be seen from the public right-of-way.

Municipal Use of Planning Tools

Hollidaysburg has managed community and economic development by using various authorized planning tools, as listed in Figure 1, since the 1980s.

Figure 1. Authorized Municipal Planning Tools in Use by Date of Enactment and Most Recent Amendment

Planning Tools	Hollidaysburg Borough
Planning Commission	Yes
Comprehensive Plan	1980
Official Map	-
Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance	1982; 2006
Capital Improvement Plan	-
Zoning Ordinance & Map	1989; 2021
Zoning Hearing Board	Yes
Historical Architectural Review Board	1989

Source: Hollidaysburg Borough (to be verified).

Plan Preparation

Borough Council appointed a local planning committee work with a consultant planning team to review public input and existing conditions, establish planning priorities, and develop goals, objectives, and recommendations.

Planning Committee

- Sean M. Burke, Ward 4
- Walter Kalista, Ward 6
- Jane Sheffield, Planning Commission and HARB Vice Chair
- Andrew Haines, HARB Chairman
- James E. Gehret, Borough Manager
- Gerald Harbison Borough Code Official

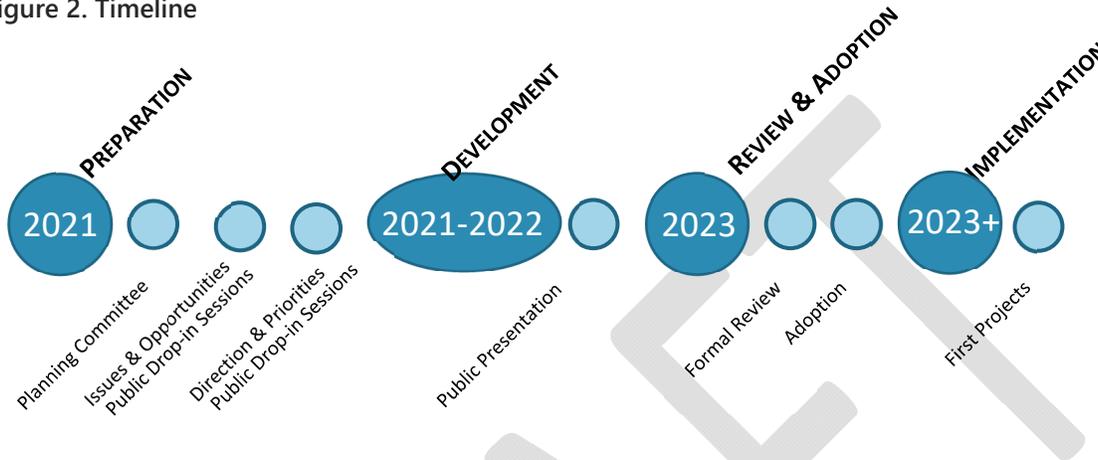
- At its initial meeting with the consultant, the Planning Committee gave direction to :
 - Leverage the analysis and policy directions in Alleghenies Ahead (2018), the multi-county comprehensive plan for Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset counties, as applicable to Hollidaysburg.
 - Ask the community what is needed.
 - Discuss the potential for Hollidaysburg to become a trail town.
 - Enhance recreation.

Technical Preparation

The planning team reviewed available data from U.S. Census Bureau, municipal and county records, and other plans and studies to analyze trends and issues in Hollidaysburg. Maps from recent plans and studies were cross-referenced and new maps were prepared using geographic information systems (GIS) technology.

The planning team shared its findings with the Planning Committee and facilitated discussion of community needs and priorities, development direction, and potential recommendations.

Figure 2. Timeline



Community Engagement

Invited Stakeholder Discussions

Fourteen (14) community and regional stakeholders were interviewed about various aspects of the community and economy: development potential, local culture, public safety, and local services.

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

Public Engagement

- **Issues and Opportunities Drop-ins, October 2021.** 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. Common topics among the public and stakeholder discussions included the following; summary comments are reported in the respective sections of this plan:
 - Land Use & Zoning
 - Housing & Neighborhoods
 - Economy & Tourism
 - Travel & Circulation
 - Water
 - Culture

- **Direction and Priorities Drop-ins, November 2022.** The Planning Team literally stepped into citizens' everyday routes around town with a map of potential priorities for the community:
 - Strong Character; Modern Uses.
 - Fully Connected; Safely Walkable.
 - Housing Choices.
 - Modern Operations & Infrastructure.
 - Lively Public Spaces.
- All were positively received.
- From Thursday evening to Saturday morning, they politely intercepted citizens at a variety of locations to hear from all walks of life—youth and seniors, downtowners, and nearby neighbors:
 - Hollidaysburg Area Public Library in the Community Room
 - Boro Coffee, 411 South Juniata Street
 - Blair Regional YMCA, 1111 Hewit Street
 - In front of the old “Green Church,” at 400 Allegheny Street
- Many citizens who had participated in the October drop-in sessions restated their needs and perspectives.

- **Draft Plan Presentation.**

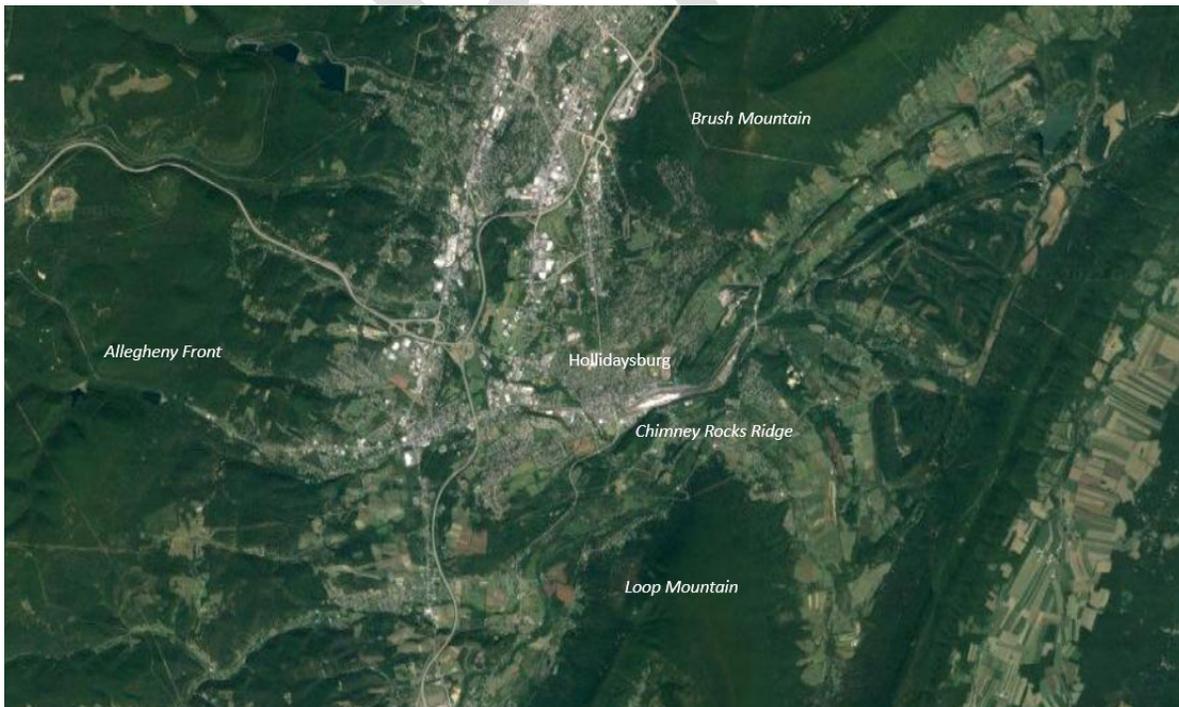
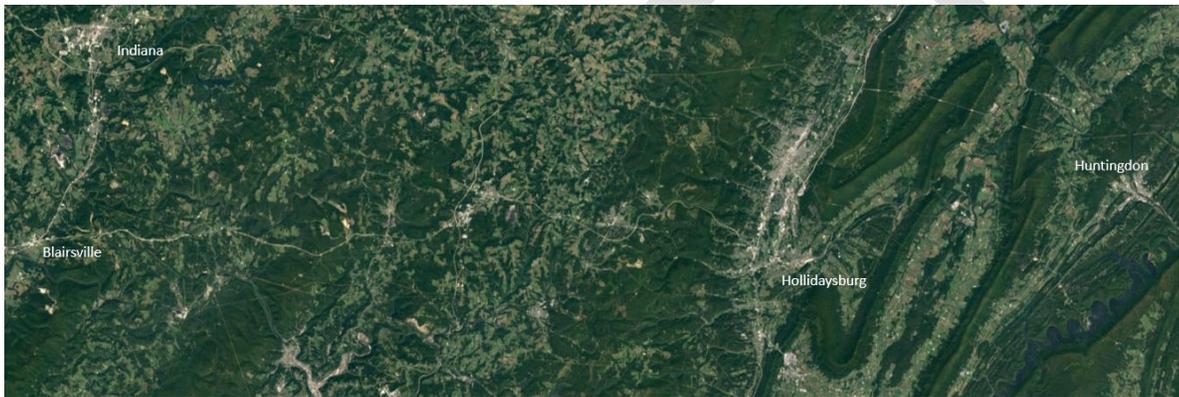
- **Planning Commission Public Meeting.**

- **Borough Council Public Hearing.**

Hollidaysburg's Development History, and Future

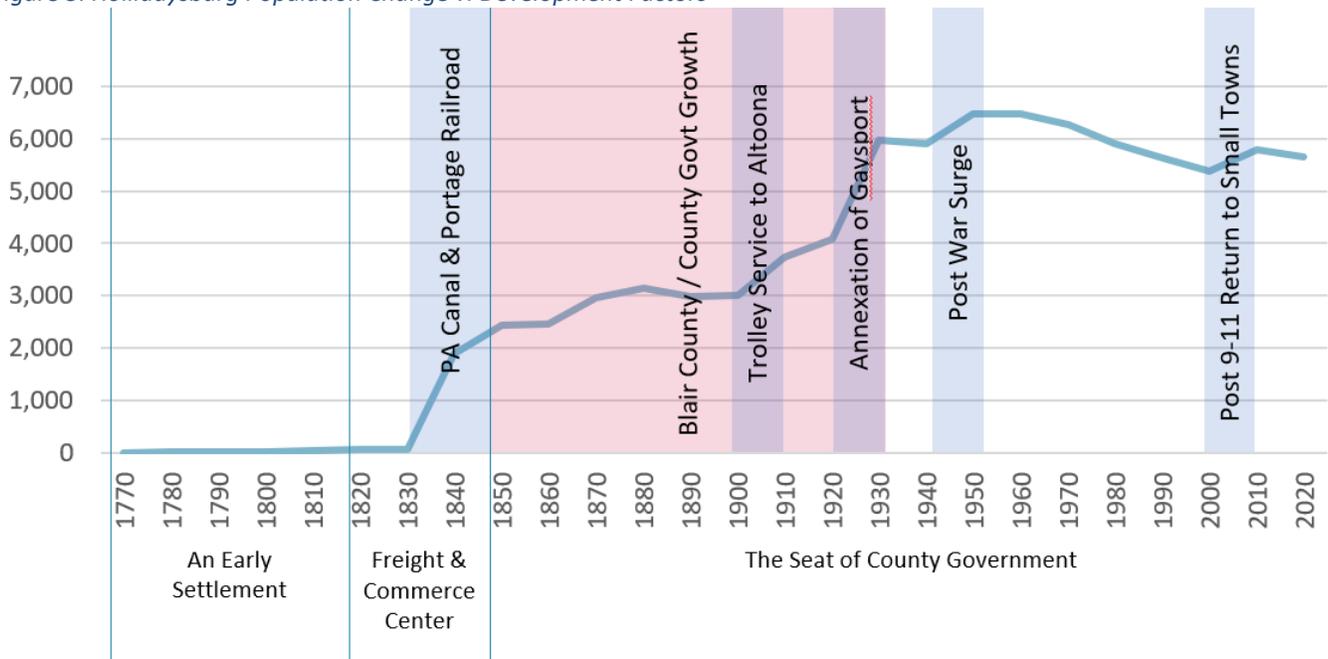
Geographic Context for Settlement and Development

- Along the travel route from central to western Pennsylvania and beyond
- Along the Beaverdam Branch to the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River; a water supply
- At the foothills of the Allegheny Front; a resting place for west-bound travelers



Historical Development Eras

Figure 3. Hollidaysburg Population Change v. Development Factors



Settlement, Late 1760s to 1820

- Settlement by Brothers Adam and William Holliday, respectively on the north and south sides of the Beaverdam Branch; lay out of a few streets and blocks on the north side.

Industrial, Freight, & Commercial Center, 1820s to 1840s

- Opening of the Huntingdon, Cambria and Indiana turnpike, a narrow road for wagon travel¹ an overnight stop along the wagon route between Huntingdon and Indiana, PA².
- Opening of a foundry and location of major trading for Juniata iron manufactured across the valley.
- Completion of the Main Line of the PA Canal, opening trade with Philadelphia and the east, and the Allegheny Portage Railroad, extending the trade route west to Johnstown and beyond
- Incorporation of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company and route selection following the Little Juniata, creating “a new transportation metropolis, Altoona, on farmland a few miles to the north”; dismantling of the Portage Railroad.³

Seat of Blair County Government and Commercial Center, 1846 to (2022) present

- Designation of Hollidaysburg as the seat of Blair County government
- Growth of Altoona and Blair County and its government
- Completion of a trolley line to Altoona along Penn Street and northern neighborhood development.
- Designation of U.S. Route 22 through the Borough.

¹ A Brief History of Blair County, Sylva Emerson.

https://www.blairhistory.org/uploads/5/0/2/8/50284405/a_brief_history_of_blair_county.docx, accessed 10/29/2022

² HOLLIDAYSBURG WALKING TOURS, <https://sites.psu.edu/hollidaysburghistory/>, accessed 10/29/2022

³ (Description for National Register Designation; verify)

Recent History: From the 1960s to 2010

- Overall trend of population loss in Hollidaysburg; also across Blair County
 - Decline in building maintenance and stewardship; loss of individual buildings to fire, demolition, etc.
 - Degradation of historic urban form and introduction of other forms
 - Along Blair Street, Penn Street
- 1985 Evaluation of buildings in the historic community core and designation of this core as a national historic district
 - Inventoried buildings in the community core, roughly bounded by Juniata Street, Blair Street, Strawberry Alley, Bella Street, Church Alley, and Spruce Street.
 - Evaluated each building for its individual significance (historic ownership, historic and modern use, and architectural style), noting patterns by block and neighborhood
 - At the time of designation, Hollidaysburg Historic district encompassed 457 buildings in the downtown and surrounding residential areas. 33 buildings were deemed individually significant, 395 were noted as contributing to overall form and character of the district, and 29 were cited as intrusive.⁴
 - The buildings are primarily frame and brick, dating from the 1830s to the 1920s and including structures built as churches, government and civic buildings, and banks and financial services.
- 1989 designation of a local historic district to protect the remaining historic urban form and character of the district as a whole, by managing demolition and modifications
- Population increased from 2000 to 2010, resulting in part from a post-9-11 return to small town living (*ask committee for input*)
- Student enrollment at the Hollidaysburg Area School District increased through the 2016-2017 school year, peaking at 3,449 as a result of population growth in other municipalities, then declining.

Snapshot of Recent Conditions

Population

- Residents of Hollidaysburg were counted as about 5,600 residents in about 2,800 households in 2020, averaging about 2 persons per household.
- Student enrollment declined to 3,205 in the 2021-2022 school year.

Jobs

- In 2019, there were 3,896 local jobs, predominantly in public administration (county and borough government), Health Care and Social Assistance, and Educational Services. Jobs declined from 4,067 in 2009, by 171 jobs or 4.2 percent.

Land Use & Housing

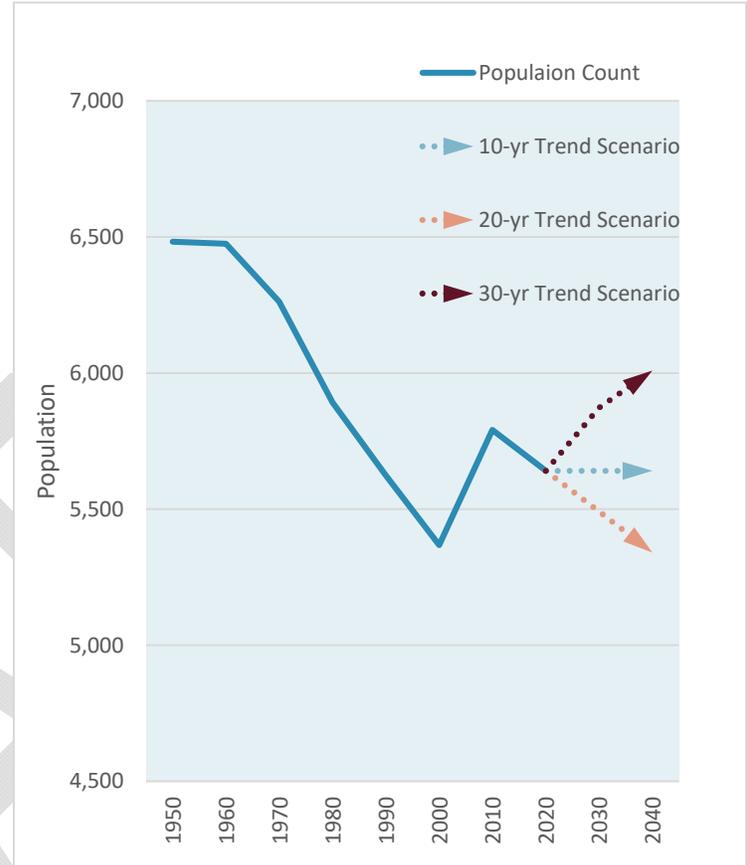
- There were 3,030 housing units; 6.5 percent vacant.
- High business turnover and persistent vacancy in the downtown.
- 15.9 percent land vacancy; some steep sloped lands, some developable. The largest developable tract was the Stowell Farm at the south end of Bedford Street.

⁴ (Description for National Register Designation; complete this citation)

Development Direction for 2035 and Beyond

- Hollidaysburg’s historic development and prosperity from the 1770s to 1950 resulted from a combination of local action and investment and external forces and decisions.
- Which of three directions would represent prosperity for the Hollidaysburg community?
 - **Managed decline** of population, jobs, and building stock (a 20-yr trend scenario)
 - **Stabilization** of population and jobs counts; continued vacancy (a 10-year trend scenario)
 - **Recovery and Modest Growth** of population and jobs; increased occupancy of existing buildings and development of vacant land (a 30-year trend scenario)
- What community and economic indicators most critical to address/improve?
- What local actions and investments would be necessary or beneficial?

Figure 4. Hollidaysburg Population, 1950-2020, and Trend Scenarios



A Vision for Prosperity in 2035

Direction

- **Recovery and Modest Growth** of population and jobs; increased occupancy of existing buildings and development of vacant land

Development Focus

- **Tourism** as an additional economic engine—
 - Destinations and attractions that feature Hollidaysburg’s role in Pennsylvania’s transportation history, and in turn, fueled the community’s physical development and rich architectural history
 - Huntingdon, Cambria, and Indiana Turnpike
 - PA Main Line Canal
 - Portage Railroad
 - Tourism is a multi-faceted industry that can
 - leverage older building stock, historic sites, outdoor public spaces, and other assets for heritage tourism
 - increasing demand for effective historic preservation and maintenance and the trades that provide maintenance and restoration services, as well as other construction that is compatible
 - expand interpretive tours, activities and events that offer things-to-do for citizens and visitors
 - offering both free and for-fee experiences
 - provide a hub of services to land- and water-oriented recreation enthusiasts visiting the Hollidaysburg area, Blair County, and Southern Alleghenies region.
 - leading to new business and jobs in food and beverage, and lodging, as well as locally crafted merchandise
 - possibly supported by a centralized parking lot with safe pedestrian routes and a bike share program to move about the community
 - offer a reason to visit, an experience to remember, a desire to return, and the potential for long-term investment.
 - supporting the need for in-town lodging options, ranging from a small hotel to managed short-term rentals
 - potentially leading to housing and business investment

Supporting Inputs and Infrastructure

- **Workforce of Employees and Entrepreneurs**
 - Young adults, young workers
 - Remote workers who can work from any location with reliable internet service
 - Retirees
- All of whom would require...
- **Housing**, preferably modernly equipped and appointed units; located in or near downtown; both mid- to long-term rentals and smaller unit options to enter the market
- **Leisure and Entertainment places/activities**, which might be found in the local tourism industry or other local business, or in public or non-profit sectors and spaces (education, faith, recreation/sports, etc.)
 - Downtown, including on the Diamond
 - Parks and gardens
- **Travel options**, including safe streets and intersections for walking and bicycling, as well as bus and drive/ride options.

2035 Targets:

- **No net population loss:** small increase in population, especially among young adults, young workers, children and youth
- **No net jobs loss:** small increase in local jobs
- **Increased Commercial Occupancy:** reduced frequency and duration of vacancy, especially in downtown

Priorities for Community and Economic Development

1. Promote and participate in cooperative economic development & tourism.
2. Uphold strong built character and allow modern uses.
3. Expand housing choices.
4. Maintain, extend, and promote the pedestrian/bicycle network.
5. Modernize roadway and stormwater infrastructure.
6. Enhance public space with arts, history, and culture.