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### Relaxing in and Visiting Bloomsburg

Bloomsburg is a great place to visit *and* a great place to live. The Town's central location and numerous events and activities make it the cultural center of the Columbia and Montour County region. The Bloomsburg Fair, the largest annual event in the region, draws thousands of visitors from across the region and the state to the Town each September. Fly-ins draw visitors to the Town Airport and events like Artwalk direct residents and visitors alike to the



downtown. Programs offered in the Town Park and throughout the community provide an array of recreational and leisure opportunities for residents of all ages. This plan aims to leverage the value of these existing amenities for community and economic benefits.

#### Goal

Bloomsburg is a community where citizens and visitors find a fun, welcoming, and navigable destination with a rich variety of recreational and leisure attractions and special events.

We will achieve our goal if we...

1. (Continue to) Implement the Town Park Master Plan.
2. Promote and develop the airport as an integral transportation and recreation facility of Bloomsburg.
3. Improve the fairgrounds facility and operations, balancing investment, economic return, and community needs for entertainment.
4. Develop and install a signage system to aid residents and visitors in navigating their way to community destinations and support facilities, e.g. restaurants and parking.
5. Work cooperatively to schedule and market special events.
6. Interconnect neighborhood destinations with trails within and beyond the Town.

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### Summary of Public Input on Current Conditions

#### *Positives*

- Arts and cultural communities in Town provide a lively backdrop to the day-to-day activities.
- The Bloomsburg Town Park is a focal point in the community.
- The Bloomsburg Municipal Airport offers a facility for recreational flying and flight lessons.

#### *Opportunities*

- There are many “things to do” in the community. Sometimes conflicting events are scheduled for similar locations. Better event coordination should be promoted among organizations planning events.
  - The Fairgrounds helps to retain the single largest open space in the Town. The Fair Board should consider attracting additional events.
  - Select areas of Town, particularly the western gateway, are cluttered with signage or conversely, lack appropriate signage to help people reach their destinations.
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### Bloomsburg Town Park



The 43-acre Bloomsburg Town Park is located on the southern edge of town. The park offers baseball and soccer fields, tennis, basketball and hockey courts, a fitness trail, a skate park, swimming pool and play area, and a large community-built playground known as Kidsburg. The Town’s bicentennial band shell as well as smaller picnic pavilions and charcoal grills are available for public use. An annual fishing derby is held at the park’s stocked pond each June.

The Park is well connected to the adjacent school and neighborhoods by sidewalks and well used by citizens. The baseball and soccer fields are heavily used by youth leagues. The tennis courts are used by adult and high school tennis teams as well as recreational instruction for children and adults. Swimming lessons are also offered at the Norris E. Rock Memorial Swimming Pool. There are

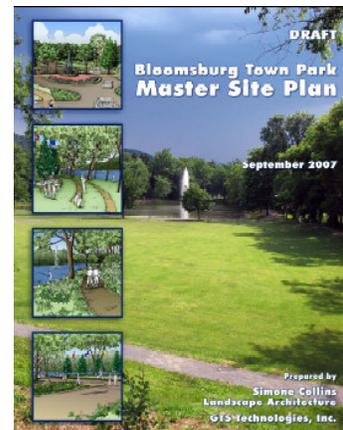
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numerous special events held at the park throughout the year, including summer concerts and sporting events. In addition to these structured activities, many people use the park for various unstructured outdoor activities, including private weddings. The park is well maintained by volunteers of the Town Park Improvement Association with the assistance of public works staff.

With so much to offer, it is easy to see why the park is an asset to the Town. It provides opportunities for active and passive recreation, provides the town with green space, and is a venue for community entertainment, activities and social life. Its facilities and programs attract users from the surrounding area, which reinforces the Town's identity as a regional hub. Even local businesses benefit from it, because the park helps to make the community a desirable place to live.

In 2007, the Town adopted a Master Site Plan for the park. This comprehensive document outlines needs for parking, facility upgrades, and other improvements, and presents goals for ongoing development of the Park. Recommendations for improving the park include improving pedestrian and vehicular access to the park, creating more parking, building a memorial to veterans, upgrading the loop trail and adding another trail, constructing a play area at the swimming pool, designating a dog park, and rerouting Kinney Run into a manmade wetland to improve water quality, among others.



The PA Fish and Boat Commission owns and maintains a non-motorized watercraft river access at the airport. Residents have suggested having an additional water access point. The Master Site Plan offers two design alternatives for the terminus of Market Street at the river: a structured, formal design and an informal design.

The Master Plan outlines a phased approach to park development but gives no target completion dates. Scheduling of development projects is presumed to occur once the Town identifies priorities and funding sources.

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### *Recommendation*

- R.1. (Continue to) Implement the 2007 Park Master Plan.** In light of the fact that investment was already made in the Master Site Plan, following the recommendations and its phased development approach would best enable the Town Park to flourish into the future.
- R.2. Master plan the Streater property.** This will begin to establish the riverfront as a park and open space system. The property's long, uninterrupted history of agricultural use, enabled by its floodplain location, may be a focal point of site interpretation. Its continued use for agricultural purposes, e.g. a portion leased to an area farmer, would preserve prime farmland for some level of self-sustaining food production within the Town's corporate limits. This idea should be explored through the development of a master plan. The Town Park Master Plan has already provided much of the foundation for the additional recreation facilities planning.
- R.3. Add walking/biking paths along Fort McClure Blvd from the Airport to the Rupert Bridge and ideally up around to the Fairgrounds.**
- R.4. Identify public green spaces throughout the Town where maintenance or enhancements would provide attractive places to relax and gather as neighbors and community members.** The Daughters of the American Revolution monument on West Main Street is one example of such sites.

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Lead Partners: Town Park Improvement Association

Support Partners: Town Council

Funding Sources: General Fund, Town Park Improvement Association/Local fundraising, PA Fish and Boat Commission

PA DCNR: Community Conservation Partnership Program

- Community Recreation or Park Rehabilitation and Development programs
- Rivers Conservation program
- Land and Water Conservation program

Other: as specified in the Master Site Plan

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### Bloomsburg Municipal Airport

The Bloomsburg Municipal Airport is located along the north bank of the Susquehanna River. It is owned by the Town and is the only airport in Columbia County. A nine-member Airport Advisory Committee provides support to Town Council when it considers airport-related matters. The Town leases operations and maintenance to a private for-profit company, Columbia Aircraft.



The airport averages 32 aircraft operations a day, most of which involve general aviation and recreational flying. Business, air taxi activities and a small number of military flights also make use of the airport. Twenty aircraft, mostly single engine planes, are based there. The airport has one paved 2800 foot runway, a runway lighting system, hangar and tie down parking, and a fuel supply facility. The runway and facilities are in good condition. In addition, the airport employs one part-time airport manager.

Because the airport is the only airport in the County, it provides a unique facility and opportunity for air service. The airport enables visitors to fly to the town, an alternative to highway travel, and supports recreational flying in the region. Golden Aviation, a flight school, is based at the Bloomsburg Airport. The Parlor City Flying Club, also based at the airport, rents its three planes to certified pilots for recreational use. Local business executives use the airport to maintain contact with customers and suppliers outside of the region, while others use the airport to access Bloomsburg businesses. This unique advantage indirectly benefits the local economy.

A hangar expansion was recently completed, expanding the hangar capacity to 25 aircraft. The older hangar is anecdotally an important historic structure.

A runway extension project is also underway. This extension will increase the total runway length to 3200 feet within the Town limits and will enable flights of larger aircraft. Some residents support extension of the runway to 4200 feet in

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order to accommodate small corporate jets. Due to the location of the airport between existing development and the Town limits, this suggested improvement would require land in Scott Township. Scott Township has not supported the extension to date due to noise concerns with larger planes. In addition, local flyers have expressed a desire for a 24-hour fueling station, restrooms and telephone for planes coming in after hours.

Due to its riverside location, the airport is periodically flooded during heavy rains. This flood hazard threatens the condition of private aircraft stored at the site and restricts alternative emergency access to the Town. A runway realignment and extension project will extend the runway to 3200 feet and raise it above the height of the 1972 Agnes flood.

The safe operation of the Bloomsburg Municipal Airport justifies the zoning provisions that the Town adopted in 1986. These provisions are based in the understanding that access to the Town by highway, rail or air facilities is “vital to the economic and social development of the community as well as to the convenience of residents.” These provisions specifically regulate the height of structures, vegetation, and other objects that could intrude into the airspace above and around the airport that is required for safe take-off and landing. While the proposed flood mitigation project, i.e. the levee, encroaches on this airspace, the Federal Aviation Administration has approved this condition.

Some citizens of Bloomsburg value the airport as a recreational and historic asset to the community, but with a high turnover among residents, especially the student population, others barely know that the airport exists, take advantage of its use, or question its value. Improving public awareness of the facility and its planned improvements would enable the community to see its value and foster support for continued investment in the facility.

### ***Recommendations***

- R.5. **Modify the composition of the Airport Advisory Committee to include a citizen representative who is not a pilot.** The Airport Advisory Committee currently comprises flying enthusiasts, who are knowledgeable in the technical operations and needs for maintaining the

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airport. Changes to the facility or operations, however, could have an impact on adjacent neighborhoods or the Town at large. Therefore such changes should be evaluated with input from non-flyers, as well.

- R.6. Host an annual open house.** Airport open houses are a wonderful way to make the public aware of the airport and introduce them to the facility in a friendly setting. An open house can encompass a variety of activities such as airport tours, fly-ins, hangar dances, aircraft displays, and hands-on youth activities.
- R.7. Host more frequent special events** to improve public awareness. Hosting community fundraisers at the airport would introduce a wider variety people to the facility and raise awareness and support for its continued use and improvement.
- R.8. Work with local taxi companies or other transit providers to improve transportation access between downtown and the airport, particularly during special events.** Taxi service would enable people who have difficulty getting to the airport that have no other means of getting there i.e. the elderly and those without access to a vehicle. .

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Lead Partners: Airport Advisory Committee, Town Council

Support Partners: Golden Aviation, Parlor City Flying Club, Columbia Aircraft

Funding Sources: Town of Bloomsburg, Local fundraising

PennDOT: Aviation Development Program

Real Estate Tax Reimbursement Program

Aviation Education Grants

PA DCED: Community Revitalization Program

First Industries Fund - Tourism

## Bloomsburg Fairgrounds

The Bloomsburg Fairgrounds comprise 227 acres on the western edge of town. Facilities include a covered grandstand with seating for 5,400, a half-mile dirt track, parking for 20,000-22,000 vehicles, three 20,000 square foot exhibition buildings, a 17,000 square foot arena, a small animal barn, and an open cattle barn.

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The Bloomsburg Fair Association, a non-profit corporation, owns the fairgrounds and is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and marketing of the facility.



The Bloomsburg Fair is the main event held at the Fairgrounds during the last week of each September. Fair activities and events include a fair midway, livestock shows, entertainment, and horse racing. Other events, including 4H shows, dog and other animal shows, a sportsman's show, builders show, antique show and a Monster Truck rally, fill most weekends throughout the year.

Bloomsburg is known for the Fair and this makes the Fairgrounds an important part of the community. The Fairgrounds can accommodate events both large and small, as well as multiple events at the same time. Events draw visitors from the wider region, which reinforces the town's identity as a regional hub and benefits local businesses. In addition, when not in use the Fairgrounds provide the Town with open space which can be used for recreation.

There is no master plan for the fairgrounds. The Board prepares an annual assessment of needs and improvements for the fairgrounds to identify and prioritize projects. Recent improvements include a VIP center on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Industrial Building, an air conditioning and heating system for the Industrial Building, and computerized ticket sales. Proposed or planned improvements include a new stage and improved backstage amenities for performers (dressing rooms, rest rooms), a 3,600 sq. ft. modular home for viewing during the Bloomsburg Fair, and improvements to the free stage areas.

Residents have raised concern for the lack of transit service to special events at the fairgrounds on the weekends. Taxi service is available on weekdays but not on the weekends when most events are scheduled. This is a problem, particularly for older people and those without cars who want to attend.

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### **Recommendations:**

- R.9. Prepare a Fairgrounds Master Plan** to guide future physical improvements at the facility.
- a. Survey past and potential organizations to better understand their event facility needs and their opinions about the suitability of the fairgrounds.
  - b. Determine and prioritize the need for repairs to and upgrading of existing facilities.
  - c. Evaluate the appearance and functionality of the fairgrounds entrance and the main access routes, e.g., entrance and directional signs, landscaping, parking/internal circulation, streetscaping, pedestrian access, etc. Determine and prioritize necessary improvements.
  - d. Determine if new facilities should be added.
- R.10. Expand the Fair Association website to provide additional information about events other than the Bloomsburg Fair.** A calendar of events is listed, but the information provided by the calendar about any particular event is only the name of the event and the time. A further description would help potential attendees decide to attend an event that they may not know much about.
- R.11. Increase efforts to market the Fairground facilities to area organizations as a site for events.**
- R.12. Work with local taxi companies or other transit providers to improve transportation access between downtown and the fairgrounds, particularly during special events.**

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Lead Partners: Bloomsburg Fair Association

Supporting Partners: Public and private transit providers, 4H, Indian Head Campgrounds, Columbia Montour Visitors Bureau

Funding Sources:

PA DCED: Community Revitalization Program

First Industries Fund - Tourism

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### Welcome and Wayfinding Signage

Signage is an important but often overlooked component of a community. For communities like Bloomsburg that have a regular turnover of residents (e.g. first year University students) and masses of visitors (e.g. for the Bloomsburg Fair and University Alumni events), signage is particularly important. It helps define a community's identity and create welcoming atmosphere for visitors.



Signage has secondary benefits to the community, as well. By guiding visitors to their destinations, it eases traffic congestion. Signage also promotes other attractions that visitors may wish to visit, encouraging them to extend their stay or plan a return trip in the future. This, in turn, creates demand for visitor services, such as dining and lodging.

A good signage system for Bloomsburg would include a series of consistently placed directional information signs for drivers and pedestrians in a defined artistic style. This system could be designed or expanded to direct visitors to county or regional destinations, as well. This concept should be explored during the development of the signage system.

Residents have suggested a need for better signage both for general way-finding to destinations and attractions in and around the Town and for local trails. The City of Harrisburg and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor have effective and attractive signage systems that could be viewed as model signage systems.

#### ***Recommendations:***

**R.13. Develop a welcome and way-finding signage system throughout the Town.**

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Lead Partners: Town Council

Supporting Partners: Bloomsburg University, Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc, Fair Association, Town Park Improvement Association, Shade Tree Commission

Funding Sources: PHMC - Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program

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### Community Events Coordination

Community calendars are a great way to keep the public informed and involved in local events. Because Bloomsburg is the cultural center of the region, there are many events that occur in the Town. This emphasizes the need for a coordinated means to schedule and advertise them. Community events calendars not only inform the public but also help organizations avoid conflicts between events and identify gaps in community activities.

Community events calendars are a cost effective marketing and promotion tool. Local businesses benefit from increased visitor spending that events bring in. Using the community calendar to coordinate event schedules can result in a wide selection of events for Town residents and visitors to enjoy. This advance planning can lead to better management of increased traffic, parking demand and other logistical concerns.

There are two online community events calendars that post events in Bloomsburg: one hosted by the Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau and the other by the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce. The Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau calendar appears to have a more current and comprehensive list of events hosted by a wide variety of local community groups, including Bloomsburg University. The calendar sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce includes fewer events and is therefore not as effective. In addition, the Fairgrounds, the Park, and Bloomsburg University all have separate events calendars on each of their websites. Each calendar is useful to its own target audience, but posting or linking to a common calendar would help to centralize awareness of public events.



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### *Recommendations:*

- R.14. **Discontinue use of the Chamber of Commerce calendar for community events; post Chamber events, as appropriate, on its own website and link to the Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau’s online calendar.** For the most part, the only events listed on the Chamber calendar pertain to the Mall, and those events are already listed on the Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau calendar.
- R.15. **Promote use of the Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau’s online calendar of events.** Community organizations and/or their event managers post or provide a link to the Visitors Bureau calendar from their own websites. The University and its public events, in particular, should be included in this effort.
- R.16. **Encourage community organizations to coordinate related or compatible events on the same day or weekend in order to create a larger overall event.** Groups should also look for opportunities to develop new events throughout the year in order to create a full calendar of activities and attractions.
- R.17. **Encourage community organizations to jointly market events.** Sponsoring groups should develop and disseminate marketing materials and messages with a consistent theme to increase the visibility of events. Joint marketing efforts could result in a more efficient and effective use of resources.



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Lead Partners: Columbia-Montour Visitors Bureau

Supporting Partners: Bloomsburg Chamber of Commerce, Community organizations sponsoring special events

Funding Sources: First Industries Fund (PADCED)