

LIGONIER VALLEY JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Focus Group Summary – Heritage/Tourism
January 18, 2017 – 7:45 PM

A total of eight (8) persons attended the session facilitated by Rick Truscello (EADS). Suggested topics as per input received from field work, the prior workshop and the community survey included the following, but these were noted for guidance only:

- Building on historic and cultural tourism heritage
- Nature tourism
- Agri-tourism
- Winter sports expansion
- Marketing and promotions

After a brief introduction on the process and the purpose of this session, input on issues and recommendations were welcomed.

Winter Sports

Reopening of Laurel Mountain Ski Resort is seen as a positive step overall but may need a greater local presence;

- Building on past positive perceptions by skiers and now part of a larger skiing experience under Seven Springs;
- Perception that there are few advertisements for Laurel Mountain but some social media communication;
- Seven Springs owns property in Laurel Mountain Village in neighboring Somerset County;
- Seven Springs promotes Seven Springs resources, noted due to agreement with PADCNr; and
- Cross-Country Trails are being groomed.

Connectivity

Perceived need for great connectivity and visibility of area tourism resources

- Laurel Highlands Visitor's Bureau connectivity initiative is noted as "in process" and numerous attractions noted on website under "Ligonier"
- Perceived need for better directional signage along Route 30 to capture regional traffic:
 - Also need for eastern and western gateway signage
 - Consideration of a tourism signage district
 - Design and placement coordination with Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor to reinforce the experience and visual quality:
- Additional lodging choices seen as important to reinforce and grow tourism and associated retail, dining, weddings and entertainment in Ligonier Valley;
- Coordinated local promotional/marketing campaign focused on the Ligonier Valley with Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau;

- Consider a Smart Phone app keyed to local resources, stories and experiences; and
- Photo sharing of actual visitor experiences should be encouraged in promotional/marketing efforts.

Assets and Resources

Plan should specifically feature defining characteristics and identity of the Valley

- Natural beauty and visual quality;
- Conservation and preservation;
- Other unique characteristics and showcasing “best kept secrets” (i.e. Blue Stone Quarry, Ligonier Beach, Diamond Theatre, Ice Pond, Antiochian Village and Conference Center, etc.);
- Be cognizant of differing perceptions by different age groupings; and
- Encourage agricultural and culinary tourism.

260+ year Heritage is well-documented with archives available at the Library, Compass Inn and Fort Ligonier

- Transportation - Forbes Road and Turnpike – Laughlintown noted as the original “Breezewood” – later railroad;
- Western expansion and the French and Indian War;
- Economic – mining and ice pond; and
- Recreation and seasonal living.

There is an informal but massive “Ligonier Nation” presence of the extended “Ligonier Family” on social media

The “Ligonier Experience” varies with age group and interest:

- Small town charm and natural beauty
- Specialty retail and dining
- Entertainment and recreation
- Wedding destination
- Conferences (i.e. Antiochian Village and Fort Ligonier)

Issues

- Parking - Better signage to longer-term off-street lots is needed;
- Truck traffic negatively impacts tourism – work with PennDOT to consider rerouting regional truck traffic;
- Revisit regulations that may deter area as tourism and recreation (i.e. outdoor cafes, etc.);
- Timberlink property reuse should reinforce the area as a tourism and recreation destination and in keeping with the character of the Valley; and
- Valley is seen as being “pet-friendly” but lacks a dog park and pet-friendly lodging.