

Revitalizing Duss Avenue:
A Corridor Study for Harmony Township

Sustainable & Resilient Communities, Spring 2026

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Introduction

Harmony Township, located in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, is known primarily for its industrial heritage which is concentrated along its main corridor, Duss Avenue (“Duss”). Members of the Harmony Township Planning Commission are working to develop a more “welcoming” corridor for current residents, workers, and visitors.

As it stands, Duss offers an assortment of commercial businesses and heavy industry. There is a mix of active industrial facilities (including a recycling plant), vacant industrial sites, and brownfields. Their main goals are to address issues with walkability, high truck volume, and a general lack of business engagement. They established a partnership with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Municipal Project Hub (“SWPA Hub” or “the Hub”), an organization dedicated to providing “no-cost technical and funding assistance, partnerships, and best practices to help develop high-impact, sustainable projects,” with the aim of closing capacity gaps for regional public agencies and local governments¹.



Harmony Township Planning Commission Office²

To initiate the project, the Hub connected the Township Planning Commission with Dr. Matthew Mehalik, Executive Director of the Breathe Project and Adjunct Professor at Heinz College, Carnegie Mellon University. The collaboration took place from February to May 2026, upon completion and submission of this report.

As mentioned previously, the project was originally conceived to be a review of pre-existing traffic data and walkability audits along Duss; however, it soon became apparent that a deeper understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the corridor was necessary to best serve community interests in the long-term. This resulted in a focus on more direct engagement in Harmony Township, achieved through in-person interviews with prominent stakeholders

¹ SWPA Municipal Project Hub. “Our Services.” Accessed April 20, 2026. <https://www.swpahub.org/services>.

² Ambridge Connection. “Government.” Accessed April 20, 2026. <http://www.ambridgeconnection.com/government.html>.

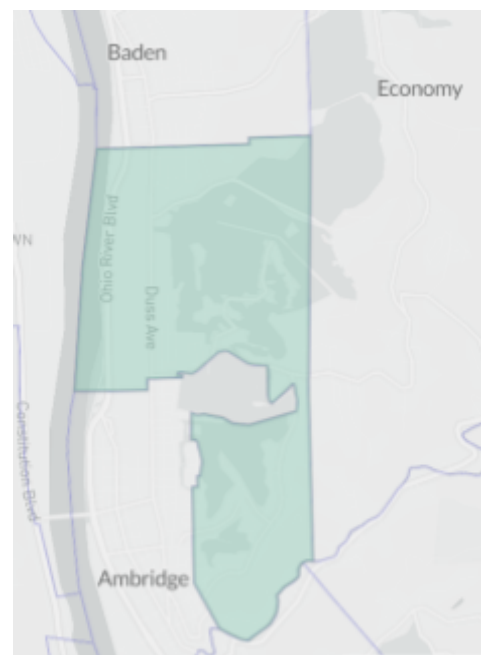
including business owners, Planning Commission officials, and a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (“PennDOT”) representative. The data provided in this report chiefly comes from the qualitative analysis of those interviews.

This document is meant to serve as support for future Harmony Township projects revolving around Duss Avenue. It contains detailed assessment of the stakeholder interviews as well as recommendations based on qualitative analysis, comparable case studies, and other background research. Furthermore, actionable next steps for the Planning Commission are also included as a component. We anticipate that our in-depth stakeholder assessment will function as a foundational “Phase 1” of an extended study of Duss Avenue and the broader area of Harmony Township. This initial phase provided critical qualitative data and established key relationships for subsequent research and planning efforts.

A Brief Overview of Harmony Township

Harmony Township is located in south Beaver County, approximately 20 miles north of Pittsburgh, PA. It shares a border with the Boroughs of Ambridge, Economy, and Baden as well as the City of Aliquippa. The Township was settled in 1751 by the Harmonists as a result of lack of available land in Ambridge, but it was not officially incorporated as a legal entity under state law until a century later in 1851. As such, Harmony and Ambridge are deeply interconnected, not merely in proximity, but through their economic, cultural, and historical ties.

Economically, the vitality of one often directly impacts the other, with residents frequently commuting across the border for employment and both communities sharing a common labor pool and consumer base that supports local businesses. This proximity has also fostered shared institutions, school districts, and community events, creating a common social fabric. Historically, their development has run parallel courses, often tied to the industrial heritage of the region. A



Harmony Township (highlighted in green) in relationship to surrounding boroughs⁴

prime example of this is Duss Avenue itself which is well known for this industrial legacy with approximately 64% of industrial land located on a 2.5 mile stretch between Ohio River Boulevard and Duss³.

Duss Avenue extends from Ambridge into Harmony Township from 24th Street, which is near Ambridge, toward Logan Lane, situated closer to Baden. Within Harmony, Duss acts as the arterial road within the municipality and is currently home to a variety of industrial and commercial ventures such as O’Neal Manufacturing Services, Skyline Metals LLC, and BEEMAC. Typical to the region, Harmony—and by extension, Duss—first emerged as an industrial center during the era of Big Steel in the early twentieth century. However, with the collapse of steel manufacturing in the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a significant economic downturn leading to demographic shifts.

Location & Demographics

Harmony Township spans a total area of 2.9 square miles. A defining feature of the Township is its direct adjacency to the Ohio River. This prime riverfront location, coupled with convenient access to a railway line, was instrumental in shaping Harmony’s economic trajectory. The confluence of river and rail transport capabilities made Harmony Township an exceptionally desirable and logical location for a variety of industrial and manufacturing activities.

Currently, Harmony Township's land use is mixed, featuring low- and medium-density single-family homes, commercial properties, and a substantial industrial zone dominating the western section of Duss. Additionally, smaller areas of forest and open space are located in eastern Harmony, near Economy.

The 2024 U.S. Census recorded a total population of 3,149, which reflects a minor decline from the 3,373 inhabitants counted in 2000⁵. Of their population, approximately 83% are White, 10%

3 SHALE Steering Committee, Pashek Associates, and Herbert, Rowland, and Grubic, Inc. *SHALE Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan: A Strategic Vision for Our Future*. 2004.

<https://irp.cdn-website.com/90ed003f/files/uploaded/4200722264mmcp.pdf>.

4 Census Reporter. “Census Profile: Harmony Township, Beaver County, PA.” Accessed April 15, 2026.

<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/06000US4200732680-harmony-township-beaver-county-pa/>.

5 Ibid.

Hispanic, 4% Black, and the remaining 3% are from other races or ethnicities (Asian, Pacific Islander, two or more races)⁶. Harmony Township has an aging population, with a median age of 47, which is somewhat older than the Beaver County average. This trend is consistent with the 2000 Census data, which indicated that more than 26% of the population was at least 65 years old⁷. Finally, median income has been relatively consistent over the past two decades with a slight decrease from \$37,056 in 2000⁸ to \$36,317 in 2024⁹. However, there is still room for economic growth in the area with great potential for commercial and retail sector expansion.

Assessment of Community Needs

The project's initial community needs assessment was based on the SHALE Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan which was originally conceived of in the 1980s but most recently updated in 2004. The purpose of the plan was to provide a framework for guiding land use, economic development, and infrastructure improvements where necessary. Residents of South Heights, Ambridge, Economy, Leetsdale, and finally Harmony came together to outline their concerns and future priorities. In Harmony and Ambridge, in particular, the majority of the public's focus was on cleaning up Duss Avenue and identifying opportunity sites to reuse or redevelop vacant facilities and brownfields (Figure 1).

Key planning issues that face the region	
A community meeting was held in each municipality at the start of the planning process to help identify key planning issues. Below are common themes stated by citizens.	
• Redevelop brownfields, blighted areas, and vacant sites, and link redevelopment efforts with economic redevelopment	
• Catalyze more economic development that creates job opportunities	
• Improve coordination of community services - police, mail delivery, water, sewer, and stormwater management	
• Improve communications between citizens, elected officials, and neighboring communities	
• Clean-up and promote a more vital community image to those who live within the community and outsiders	
• Enhance the existing mainstreets and business districts - cores of communities	
• Provide more housing diversity - types, styles, and affordability	
• Identify, preserve, and promote the community assets of the region: historic, cultural, rural/agricultural, and those assets that are attractive to youth and young professionals	
• Create more and make improvements to recreational facilities and programs for all ages	
• Transportation issues: Make improvements to the Ambridge/Allegheny Bridge which will provide greater access to Route 51, limit speeding on Route 51, and sustain smooth traffic flow on local roadways throughout the region	

Plan:

Figure 1: A summary of key issues within the SHALE region according to 2004 findings

Beyond brownfield cleanup and redevelopment, the findings indicated several other community priorities, as indicated above. A significant focus was placed on fostering regional economic development, recognizing that each of the municipality's long-term vitality is inextricably linked to the prosperity of the surrounding area. Another key issue was improving the lines of communication between citizens and elected officials. This demonstrated widespread interest in accessible avenues for dialogue to ensure that the concerns, suggestions, and feedback of the citizenry are actively factored into the decision-making processes of the Township's leadership. The public also noted the importance of the preservation and revitalization of existing community assets in order to maintain a "sense of place" while attracting greater personal and financial investment in the region.

The SHALE Plan informed our approach for the project by providing a general framework to take into account for the duration of assignment with Harmony Township. The following points were selected as the focus to assist Harmony in achieving its objectives:

1. *Rethink current land use*

- a. Maintain current industrial uses while encouraging new commercial development along Duss Avenue which aligns with community desire for economic growth and job creation within the corridor
- b. Greater inclusion of neighborhood amenities including, but not limited to, coffee shops, banks, laundry facilities, restaurants, green spaces, etc.

2. *Infrastructure and placemaking*

- a. Improve pedestrian and public safety measures through long-term collaboration with PennDOT representatives
- b. Enhance design and aesthetics of the corridor by incorporating green spaces, shrubbery, and public art projects

3. *Community engagement:*

- a. Provide more avenues to residents and businesses to connect with Harmony Township officials in order to provide updates on projects and feedback from locals on issues as they arise

These considerations informed our strategy when developing the interview questions and conducting the case study research, which is elaborated upon in subsequent sections of this report.

Stakeholders Overview

To understand the real conditions on Duss Avenue, we conducted interviews with different businesses who rely on the corridor daily to learn about the challenges that they face, what works well for them and what does not work for them, and also what they would like to see improved.

With the support of the planning commission, we identified 8 critical businesses along Duss Ave. Then we conducted interviews with them and grouped them into three categories: Commercial Businesses, Industrial Businesses and Specialty Businesses based on their operation so we could compare the similar use types as well as understand how different business models interact with the corridor.

Commercial Businesses

Commercial businesses include Shop'n Save, Write collision, and BEEMAC. These businesses are more service oriented and interact with corridors in different ways.

- Shop'n Save: This is a grocery shop which serves grocery shoppers who rely on convenient parking and safe pedestrian access.
- Write Collision: It provides vehicle services and depends on the steady customer flow and vehicle movement.
- BEEMAC: It is a trucking and transportation company that moves goods for the businesses by using the trucks, logistics service.

Industrial Businesses

Industrial businesses are the businesses which rely heavily on truck access, material movement, and consistent infrastructure to support production and the distribution. This category includes Ambridge Lumber, PittMoss, and Microsonic.

- Ambridge Lumber: This is a family-owned lumber and hardware business supplier that delivers building materials across the region.
- PittMoss: This business makes potting soil from the recycled paper and loads products onto trucks directly from their facility.
- Microsonic: It produces plastic parts, such as earbud tips and hearing-related components, and ships them to the manufacturing, safety equipment, and healthcare sectors.

Specialty Businesses

Specialty businesses include service-oriented operations that draw the customers for specific activities.

This group includes Leopardi Service Station and Perfect 10 Gymnastics.

- Leopardi Service Station: It provides fuel and auto services.
- Perfect 10 Gymanastics: It offers children's gymnastics classes.

Together, all these 8 interviews from the businesses combined with 2 interviews from planning commission and 1 interview with PennDOT representatives, provided an overview of how different types of businesses experience Duss Avenue. Their perspective shows some shared concerns such as speeding, pedestrian safety, and limited amenities.

Interview Methodology & Analysis

As mentioned above, we completed 11 interviews in total across three stakeholder groups. These included 8 business owners and managers, 1 representative from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and 2 members of the Harmony Township Planning Commission.

The business interviews were conducted on-site at each establishment along the corridor and lasted approximately 30 minutes per session. This format was intentional, as visiting each business in person allowed the team to observe the physical conditions of each property and its immediate surroundings. Factors such as public transit access, visibility from Duss Avenue, proximity to other businesses, and exposure to traffic patterns, added a layer of contextual understanding that would not have been possible through a phone or email approach.

We designed interview questions to be largely open-ended, encouraging respondents to raise the issues most relevant to their own experience rather than being constrained to a fixed set of topics.

Broadly, the questions covered six areas:

1. The **history of the business' location** decision and its connection to Duss Avenue
2. Operational **advantages and challenges** associated with being on the corridor
3. **Workforce dynamics** including hiring, training, and retaining employees
4. **Future outlook** and growth plans
5. **Vision** for the corridor and desired changes
6. Areas where **Township support** would be most impactful

This open-ended approach proved effective in surfacing a range of concerns and priorities that a more structured survey may not have captured.

The PennDOT interview provided critical context on the regulatory and jurisdictional landscape governing Duss Avenue, including the processes and requirements involved in pursuing roadway improvements. The two Planning Commission interviews, conducted later in the project, allowed the team to ground its initial findings and recommendations in the Township's own institutional perspective.

Following the completion of the interviews, we analyzed transcripts and detailed notes using a color-based qualitative coding system. Each relevant passage was tagged according to one of six

thematic categories. The complete coded interview transcripts are included with the Final Report for the Planning Commission's reference and future use.

For the color-coding, we used red for the general safety concerns, orange for driver and vehicle safety, yellow for pedestrian safety, green for beautification and corridor appearance, blue for business development and desired changes, and purple for general corridor perspectives. After coding, we grouped similar statements together. From this process, four major themes emerged across multiple businesses which are: road safety, appearance and maintenance of the corridor, amenities and worker experience, and business and operational needs.

Road and Safety

This theme includes all the comments about the physical road, traffic behavior, and how safe the corridor feels to use. Many businesses described speeding, difficult turning movements, and roadway conditions that affect daily operations. Several interviewees described unsafe driving and speeding:

“I do feel like sometimes people are going too fast. Yes, especially motorcycles.”

“People clip on this road.”

“Lots of speeding.”

Some described witnessing crashes:

“Since we’ve been here, we’ve had...I’ve heard and witnessed two motorcycle accidents, and there was another accident. A guy got hit on his electric wheelchair.”

Others mentioned challenges with trucks entering and exiting:

“Sometimes you have to because people are going a little too fast if you know, if you’re driving or whatever.”

“Some drivers have difficulty, but like our neighbors over here, if their vehicles are in the way, they’re willing to work with us to move so that way the trucks don’t have an issue.”

“Our production team will stop traffic so the truck doesn’t have to worry about, like, you know, traffic trying to come in and out while they’re trying to back in.”

Drainage and pavement issues also came up:

“The entryway dips when you pull in leading to issues with drainage... putting a drain in would be ‘brutally expensive’ to avoid damaging existing infrastructure.”

And some noted that the road layout itself creates challenges:

“The merge (4>>2) occurs in front of the parking lot... there’s no real way to avoid that.”

Despite these issues, some noted that the corridor’s geometry helps:

“This is a pretty straight shot. There’s not like blind corners.”

Appearance and Maintenance

This theme included how the corridor looks, how well it is maintained, and how businesses perceive the overall atmosphere. Trash and litter were mentioned repeatedly:

“I pick up trash three times a week in my parking lot.”

“A lot of stuff (trash).”

Several interviewees pointed to deteriorated or vacant buildings:

“There’s one location that used to be Thrills on Wheels. It’s an eyesore.”

“The old roller rink is an eyesore.”

Some expressed frustration with slow improvements:

“Improvements were slow going (internet access).”

Even with these concerns, businesses emphasized that the corridor’s industrial identity is important:

“This is an industrial drive... I mean, I think sidewalks and a couple of benches and maybe some trees would help beautify it, but other than that, I don’t know.”

“Historic manufacturing zone >> generational!”

Amenities and Worker Experience

This theme focuses on what workers need and what affects their daily experience including food options, bus stops, sidewalks, and general comfort. Many interviewees described frequent pedestrian activity:

“You’ll see moms dragging a wagon to go get their groceries... people walking on the side of the road, they’re pretty close to the road.”

“It’s not infrequently you see people walking up and down this road, yeah? And that does make me nervous.”

Some described employees walking to work:

“We had people that would walk to work, yeah? That does worry me.”

Sidewalks and safer walking routes were a common request:

“I do wish that there were some sort of even on one side of the road, some sort of path of some kind.”

“A sidewalk would be nice for employees who commute.”

Interviewees also mentioned the lack of places to sit or wait:

“Maybe some benches at the bus stops? I don’t know, just a thought.”

Food options were also limited:

“There’s only so many times you can eat at Ba’Runi’s... something else would be nice.”

Some noted that amenities affect hiring and retention:

“It’s hard to come by, and it is nice to be able to have more people... but it’s dirty work... it’s just hard.”

Business and Operational Needs

This theme includes what businesses need to operate successfully and what they worry about when changes are proposed. Many interviewees emphasized that improvements should not create new burdens:

“Trees are an issue for manufacturing and trucking and like, they’re a hazard more than anything.”

“I don’t think anything is absolutely necessary, but it would always be a bonus.”

Some expressed concerns about PennDOT requirements:

“Complaints about PennDOT... ‘Needs to be redone.’”

Others emphasized that the industrial identity must remain:

“This is an industrial drive.”

“We’re kind of in a sweet spot here, which is nice, yeah. And I think that goes back to what I was saying earlier. Like, location wise, this is a nice location.”

Some noted that improvements should not interfere with truck access:

“We have to have the loading dock. We have to have the functionality of all of these different spaces that is, you know, for manufacturing like that’s really important to us.”

“We’re trying to ship to lots of different places... being in a place where we can get semis in and out is really important to us.”

And some expressed concerns about who would maintain improvements:

“Who maintains them?”

External Case Studies

To strengthen the analysis of this report and identify strategies that have proved effective in comparable context, we examined three corridor case studies from other municipalities. Each was selected for its relevance to the challenges facing Duss Avenue. Specifically, tension between industrial land use and pedestrian safety, high truck volume, and the need for corridor revitalization without disrupting existing economic activity. Together, these three cases offer a practical reference point for the recommendations outlined in the following section.

Ecorse Road Corridor - Romulus, Michigan

Of the three cases mentioned, Ecorse Road bears the closest resemblance to the current conditions along Duss Avenue. Located in Romulus, Michigan, the corridor is characterized by heavy truck traffic generated by nearby warehouses and airport-related industrial activity, a near-total absence of sidewalks, poor lighting, unsafe bus stops, and conflict between industrial land use and adjacent neighborhoods¹⁰.

Residents of the area reported difficulties with trucks blocking driveways and causing dangerous school routes, as well as a general lack of basic pedestrian amenities.

¹⁰ City of Romulus, Michigan. “Ecorse Road Corridor Vision Master Plan.” <https://www.romulusgov.com/DocumentCenter/View/3856/Ecorse-Road-Vision-Master-Plan>

In response, the City of Romulus developed a corridor vision plan with four central goals:

1. Promoting economic development and growth
2. Determining the feasibility of diverse land uses
3. Improving safety and multimodal connectivity
4. Enhancing overall quality of life

The plan called for widening Ecorse Road to three lanes alongside constructing sidewalks and improving lighting. Additional updates included making bus stops more visible and safe for commuters. The planning process incorporated substantial community engagement, through which residents consistently identified the need for a grocery store, parks, safer school routes, and expanded housing options. Importantly, the City recognized that achieving these improvements needed coordination across multiple jurisdictions, including Wayne County which owns the road, and the local airport authority.

The Ecorse Road case demonstrates that even modest, targeted infrastructure investments can meaningfully upgrade safety and quality of life along a corridor of this type. It also underscores the importance of coordination across jurisdictions, a note directly applicable to Harmony Township given PennDOT's authority over Duss Avenue.

East Street Redesign - Frederick, Maryland

The East Street Redesign in Frederick, Maryland offers a model for how a municipality can improve pedestrian safety and corridor aesthetics without compromising the industrial and freight functions that businesses depend on¹¹.

The City of Frederick approached the redesign using a "Complete Streets" framework, which seeks to balance the needs of all road users: pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles, including freight, rather than prioritizing any single mode. **Key improvements included the addition of sidewalks, streetlights, and landscaped buffer strips between the road and pedestrian areas to create physical separation from moving vehicles.** The plan also preserved existing curb cuts

¹¹ City of Frederick, Maryland. "East Street Redesign." [https://www.mwcog.org/assets/1/6/Frederick - TLC FY22 East Street Redesign Final Report.pdf](https://www.mwcog.org/assets/1/6/Frederick_-_TLC_FY22_East_Street_Redesign_Final_Report.pdf).

and truck access points, recognizing that disrupting freight movement would be harmful for corridor businesses. Underutilized parcels were identified as opportunities for compatible mixed-use development. Corridor branding and signage were incorporated to strengthen the street's identity and visual cohesion.

A particularly relevant aspect of the East Street case is how it treated the relationship between pedestrian infrastructure and economic activity. Rather than framing these as competing priorities, the redesign treated improved walkability and accessibility as a means of increasing customer traffic and supporting business viability. This framing is equally applicable to Duss Avenue, where improving the pedestrian experience could benefit not only residents and workers but also the businesses that depend on them.

Armitage Industrial Corridor - Chicago, Illinois

The Armitage Industrial Corridor Framework Plan, developed by the City of Chicago, represents a more long-term vision for corridor revitalization, and a useful model for how Harmony Township might think about the future of Duss Avenue. The Armitage corridor is an established industrial area that faced pressure to modernize while maintaining its core identity as a significant employment center.

The framework was organized around interconnected priorities¹²:

1. Strengthening the corridor as a job center
2. Enhancing infrastructure and mobility
3. Preserving the corridor's industrial character
4. Improving communication between employers and the surrounding community.

On the land use side, the plan recommended expanding permitted uses to allow for compatible new development including parks, food and beverage retail, healthcare services, and artist workspaces. The plan identified specific "opportunity sites," meaning vacant or underutilized

¹² City of Chicago. "Armitage Industrial Corridor Framework Plan."

https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/sites/armitage-industrial-corridor-planning/pdfs/AIC_Plan_FINAL.pdf.

parcels, and matched each with a set of compatible potential uses. This approach avoided a wholesale rezoning of the corridor while creating openings for reinvestment.

The plan also placed significant emphasis on greening the corridor. It recommended tree planting, landscaped buffers between industrial and pedestrian areas, and on-site sustainability measures such as stormwater retention as both an aesthetic strategy and an environmental one. Community engagement was treated as an ongoing and essential component of the process, with digital tools proposed to keep residents and businesses informed and to solicit ongoing feedback.

For Harmony Township, the Armitage case suggests that leaning into a corridor's industrial identity need not come at the expense of making it a more attractive and livable place. Second, identifying specific opportunity sites along Duss Avenue such as vacant lots, underutilized parcels, or properties with redevelopment potential could serve as a practical starting point for longer-term economic development efforts.

Altogether, successful corridors of this type share several common characteristics:

1. Balance between industry and safety rather than treating them as mutually exclusive
2. Investment in green space and streetscape improvements as both aesthetic and functional tools
3. Engagement with stakeholders meaningfully and consistently throughout the planning process
4. Approaching revitalization gradually, building momentum through targeted early wins before pursuing more transformative change

These principles directly inform the recommendations presented in the following section.

Short-Term Recommendations (0-2 Years)

Leverage the America 250 Site as a Corridor Gateway

Later this summer, Harmony Township will debut its America250 site, a commemoration for the nation's 250th anniversary and a celebration of Beaver County. The site is intended to serve as an entranceway into the community, drawing new visitors who may otherwise have limited familiarity with the area. Therefore, it represents a time-sensitive opportunity to make a strong first impression on an entirely new audience.

The team recommends that the Township prioritize beautification of the corridor entrance nearest to the America250 site in parallel with the site's development. This could include the installation of planters, greenery, and branded wayfinding signage orienting visitors toward Duss Avenue and its businesses. These improvements are relatively low-cost in a short timeline, and would establish a visual baseline that future corridor improvements can build upon.

Restart Dialogue with PennDOT

As established in earlier sections of this report, any physical improvement to the road requires PennDOT review, approval, and in many cases independent study to confirm community need. The Township has engaged PennDOT on corridor improvements previously, though past requests including bus shelter installations, were denied due to insufficient demonstrated demand at the time. The team recommends that the Township re-engage PennDOT with a single package of coordinate submissions for all near-term roadway improvement requests.

Based on the findings of this report, priority requests should include:

1. Marked crosswalk
2. Speed awareness signage
3. Improved lighting near bus stops and high-pedestrian areas
4. Safety review of intersections most frequently cited for truck-pedestrian conflicts

In many cases, the interview data and corridor assessments contained in this report can serve as supporting evidence of community need. Following initial submission, regular check-ins with PennDOT should be established to monitor the status of each request, recognizing that improvements are likely to move through the review process at different speeds.

Host the Inaugural Duss Avenue Business Forum

Throughout the interview process, a recurring theme emerged across business types. Stakeholders expressed a desire to feel more connected to the Township, to the Planning Commission, and to one another. At the same time, the Planning Commission noted difficulty reaching certain business and parcel owners, particularly those affiliated with national or international organizations. A structured business forum directly addresses both of these gaps.

The team recommends that the Township organize an inaugural gathering of Duss Avenue business owners, managers, and parcel owners. This would be an open and accessible forum where the Planning Commission can share updates on corridor plans and listen to real-time feedback. As such, the Commission would communicate clearly that the purpose is not to impose new burdens on businesses, but to understand their needs and build a stronger sense of shared community. Beyond building relationships, the forum would serve as an early opportunity to gauge interest in beautification initiatives and begin establishing communication channels that feed into the longer-term engagement plan. The Township can also determine an appropriate cadence for future forums based on turnout and stakeholder response.

Long-term Recommendations (5+ Years)

Develop a Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan

The short-term recommendations above are meaningful first steps toward revitalizing Duss Avenue. However, lasting corridor change requires a sustained approach to engagement that extends beyond a single initiative. We recommend that Harmony Township develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan that expands upon the communication channels and relationships established through its near-term work.

The plan should address three core stakeholder groups: corridor businesses and parcel owners, Township residents, and regional institutional partners such as PennDOT, the Beaver County Planning Commission, and SWPA. For each group, the plan should define how the Township communicates outward versus how stakeholders can communicate back, and how frequently that exchange occurs.

We also recommend the creation of a dedicated digital hub where all stakeholder groups can access project updates and track corridor initiatives, with the ability to submit questions or concerns directly to the Township. Pittsburgh's S. 18th Street Corridor Safety Improvement Project offers a useful model in practice. It features project documentation, meeting records, a milestone timeline, and an open field for community input updated regularly as the project progresses¹³.

In terms of implementation, we see two realistic pathways forward. The first is a continued partnership with SWPA, which facilitated the Township's engagement with this project and has existing regional relationships that could support a more formalized effort. The second is to scope this plan as a defined project for a future Heinz College team or summer intern, building directly on the foundation established by this report. The goal is for every stakeholder connected to Duss Avenue to understand what is being planned and feels their voice has a place with the Township in shaping the corridor's future¹⁴.

Limitations

Our assessment has several important limitations which shapes how the findings should be interpreted. First, the results are based on interviews with a small number of corridor businesses and partners, with the minimal direct input from residents or workers who use Duss Avenue daily. While these themes that emerged are consistent across the interviews we conducted, they do not represent the full range of experiences of all businesses, employees, or residents along the corridor.

Second, the assessment relies on the qualitative, self-reported experiences from the businesses. So, the insights reflect how stakeholders perceive and navigate the corridor, but they were not verified through transportation engineering studies or the quantitative data. We did not use the traffic speeds, crash history, drainage performance, or maintenance conditions of the corridor. As

¹³ City of Pittsburgh. "S 18th St Corridor Safety Improvement Project." <https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/s-18th-st-corridor-safety-improvement-project>.

¹⁴ University of California, Berkeley. "Example of Outreach Efforts, Connected Corridors Program." <https://connected-corridors.berkeley.edu/planning-system/selecting-corridor/engaging-stakeholders/example-outreach-efforts>.

a result, the findings describe lived experience of the stakeholders, not measured roadway performance.

Third, many of the issues raised especially those related to road conditions, speeding, and safety improvements of the corridor actually fall under PennDOT's authority, not the Township's. Since the Duss Avenue is a state-owned roadway, the Township has limited ability to make the changes without external coordination which means that even widely supported improvements may require longer time, approvals from PennDOT, and also outside funding.

Finally, this work represents an early-stage qualitative assessment which focused on identifying themes, concerns, and opportunities along the corridor. To move from themes to implementation and make the necessary changes, the Township will require additional data, including traffic studies, cost estimates, feasibility analysis, and the engineering review. These next steps are essential for determining which improvements are actually possible, how they should be prioritized, and what other resources will be required.

Next Steps for Harmony Township

This report represents the initial phase in a multi-step process toward establishing a more "human-oriented" corridor that simultaneously fosters economic development and preserves Harmony Township's industrial legacy. To maintain the project's momentum, we have outlined several feasible action items for immediate implementation. These all can be done in collaboration with the SWPA Hub and further partnership with Carnegie Mellon University for assistance with strategy development and facilitating engagement.

<i>Target the creation of strategic communication channels with relevant stakeholders</i>	By utilizing a mix of traditional and digital approaches to stakeholder communication, the Planning Commission increases the probability of effectively informing and engaging residents and businesses within Harmony.
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	● Digital assets ○ Email lists to distribute newsletter, project updates, upcoming event details, etc. ○ Social media channels for real-time updates (use will most likely be dependent on local interest) ○ Update website to include a “citizen interest and/or concern” form outside of public works problems or code violations; incorporate an easily accessible public bulletin and events calendar to encourage more widespread use by residents and businesses ● In-person events ○ Neighborhood meetings and community workshops are a practical approach to getting feedback en masse ○ Targeted business outreach through industrial corridor resource fairs and informal gatherings to allow for a more robust partnership between the Township and businesses concentrated along Duss Avenue ■ An informal network building event would be prudent to host as soon as possible to follow up on interviews (where applicable) and cultivate better relationships with disengaged stakeholders; use feedback to improve
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	future events
<i>Continue conducting interviews with residents of Harmony Township over the course of the summer</i>	During the course of this project, the team engaged with businesses along Duss Avenue to better understand their needs and concerns related to the corridor. However, it is important to acknowledge that many interviewees are not residents of Harmony Township and, consequently, may exhibit less interest in the corridor's broader improvement beyond the potential for business growth. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that the Planning Commission consult with Harmony Township residents to generate a more current list of general community priorities to guide future projects. ● Engagement strategy can be modelled after the business interview series with an emphasis on in-person meetings to elicit greater participation and showcase Harmony's dedication to its denizens ○ Interviewers should aim for 20-30 interviews with individuals of varied backgrounds and relationships to the Township ■ Target "influencers" within the community, potential skeptics of revitalization, service providers, families, and underrepresented groups ○ Supplementary interviews can be conducted virtually via Zoom or surveys ○ Can also utilize neighborhood meetings and community workshops to encourage public participation and gather information in a

	larger group ■ Caution overreliance on this approach due to potential for conformity bias
<i>Review short-list of viable sources of funding</i>	Given the available resources available to Harmony Township, the Commission is advised to establish a clear hierarchy of proposed plans. This ranking process must be directly correlated with the potential for attracting maximum external financial support. Specifically, plans should be prioritized based on their capacity to secure the most substantial funding, thereby leveraging limited Township funds for the highest community impact. Below are potential funding avenues to explore in addition to those provided by the Hub. ● PennDOT Local Transportation Funding: This document offers an overview of available discretionary program funding for road improvements, traffic calming measures, streetscapes, and safety measures for alternative forms of transportation ○ See: PennDot Connects for more details on best practices for research and planning phases (includes examples of past successful municipal proposals) ● Industrial Sites Reuse Program: Grant and low-interest loan financing to perform environmental site assessment and remediation work at former industrial sites

	○ See guidelines here ● Business in Our Sites (BOS): Empowers communities to attract growing and expanding businesses by helping them build an inventory of ready sites ○ See guidelines here ● Creative Communities Initiative: CCI provides multi-year funding to community-driven, arts-based projects that serve as catalysts for social cohesion, livability, and community and economic development ○ Long-term option for beautification in lieu of green spaces
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This juncture represents a pivotal moment for Harmony Township. As evidenced within this report, Harmony possesses considerable potential for sustained growth, achievable through continuous stakeholder engagement, increased capital investment in Duss Avenue, and collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the SWPA Hub, PennDOT, and Carnegie Mellon. It is important to reiterate that this constitutes the initial phase of a multi-step process aimed at establishing a "human-oriented" corridor that will facilitate long-term revitalization.