



TIDIOUTE, PA

Heart & Soul

Action Plan 2024

Revitalizing Our Community Through Shared Values and Collective Action



Welcome to Tidioute, PA!

Tidioute, Pennsylvania, founded in 1800 by European settlers, and nestled in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains, is a community steeped in rich history and natural beauty.

Known for its iconic bridge spanning the Allegheny River, Tidioute has long been cherished by residents and visitors alike for its tranquil environment and close-knit community spirit. The town's legacy is intertwined with its surroundings—the Allegheny River, the forests, and the historic architecture that reflects a bygone era of oil and timber prosperity.



Today, Tidioute faces new challenges and opportunities as it seeks to preserve its heritage while fostering economic growth and community connection. The Heart & Soul initiative, launched in 2021, was pursued to ensure that Tidioute remains a vibrant, welcoming place for all who call it home. This initiative reflects the community's commitment to preserving what makes Tidioute unique while planning for a prosperous future.

QUICK FACTS

- Tidioute is home to **626 residents**. Residents are a mixture of full-time and part-time seasonal “campers.”
- 'Tidioute' is an Iroquois word for 'Protrusion of Land,' which refers to the sharp bend of the Allegheny River which flows alongside the town.
- Median resident age is 52 years old
- **28%** of the population is **65 years or older**.
- Median income is **\$40,385**
- Tidioute is home to the Tidioute Community Charter School, a K-12 learning institution that **serves 300 youth and their families**.
- The Allegheny River, 2024 Pennsylvania River of the Year, runs alongside Tidioute and is a star of the **PA State Fishing Championship every year that draws folks from all over the state and beyond!**

POP.
626

MEDIAN
AGE
52

MEDIAN
INCOME
40K

LOCAL ASSET: PA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP FISHING TOURNAMENT

Since 1959, Tidioute has been home to the PA State Championship Tournament. Set along the beautiful Allegheny River, the Tournament welcomes residents, visitors and part-time residents (“campers”) every fall for a ‘catch and release’ fishing contest. Prizes are given to both adult and “junior” fishers for catches of a variety of fish: trout, northern pike, muskellunge, walleye and smallmouth bass.



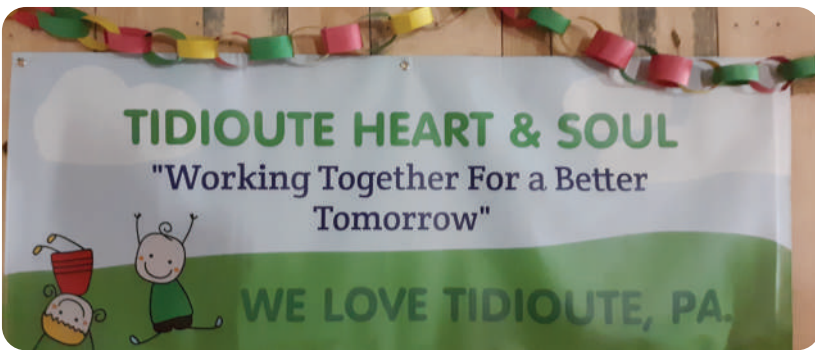
This event has been a prized tradition in Tidioute for 64 years and counting. In addition to fishing, the Tournament boasts family-friendly activities, live entertainment and local food vendors.

The Tournament has attracted hundreds of participants over the years - and it is a large part of Tidioute's identity as an outdoors paradise. Because of this, Tidioute Heart & Soul made the Tournament a key outreach activity in their community engagement plan. They attended multiple Tournaments throughout the years of Heart & Soul, collecting stories and feedback from attendees that shaped this action plan.



Overview of Community Heart & Soul

Community Heart & Soul is a four-phase community-driven process designed to engage all residents in shaping a town's future. Built on three key principles - **involve everyone**, **focus on what matters** and **play the long game** - the process aims to build a more connected town that honors its past while looking forward to a prosperous future by focusing on what matters most to the community.



Through storytelling, interviews, and unique community engagement methods, Community Heart & Soul captures the voices of residents, revealing shared values and crowd-sourcing priorities for action. Each Heart & Soul project results in a community Action Plan, a unique representation of what a community holds dear. The action plan is a blueprint for how residents will cultivate what they value most through events, activities and projects that benefit everyone.

Tidioute is one of **16 PA Heart & Soul** communities. PA Heart & Soul is a special partnership between PA Humanities and Community Heart & Soul designed to strengthen and grow potential in Pennsylvania's rural communities.

Community Heart & Soul begins with a four-phase, step-by-step process that brings residents together to identify and honor the unique character of their town and the emotional connection of the people who live there.

PHASE 1: IMAGINE
Heart & Soul teams are formed to build awareness, interest, and commitment in all segments of the community.

PHASE 4: ACT
Heart & Soul Statements are officially adopted by town and city councils, incorporated into comprehensive and other plans, and are used to guide future policies and decisions.



PHASE 2: CONNECT
Stories are gathered from residents, leading to the development of Heart & Soul Statements that identify what matters most and reflect what they love about their towns.

PHASE 3: PLAN
Residents develop action plans to guide future town planning based on their Heart & Soul Statements.

STRENGTHENING SKILLS, BUILDING CAPACITY

A big part of the Community Heart & Soul program is providing skill building workshops to the group of residents making up the core team. Each community is assigned a certified Heart & Soul coach, and that coach visits the community throughout the process to provide these training sessions and meets with the team usually on a monthly basis to support their work.



Tidioute Heart & Soul team members received training in:

- Researching and understanding community demographics
- Strategizing community engagement methods
- Community interviewing techniques
- Organizing and coding community data/feedback
- Analyzing community feedback for shared themes
- Planning and coordinating community events
- Collaborating and communicating with local government to share resident feedback
- Identifying community trends, needs and concerns

Taking part in Community Heart & Soul also provides residents with a deeper understanding of local government processes and community decision-making.

Tidioute Heart & Soul TIMELINE

2021

Spring - Summer '21

Tidioute Heart & Soul launches community outreach

2022

Fall '21 - Spring '22

Team attends major events around town to gather initial feedback from residents and visitors about Tidioute assets.

2023

Summer '22 - Early Winter '23

Team conducts resident interviews and story circles with residents, including seniors, youth, campers and visitors to learn what makes Tidioute special and how to leverage assets for future planning.

2024

Spring - Summer '23

Team develops Tidioute Heart & Soul statements and works with the community to validate and adopt them for future planning.

Fall '23 - Spring '24

Team coordinates Community Conversations to gather ideas for action from the community. Ideas are prioritized by community members.

Summer - Winter '24

Community plan is written and released.

Community Engagement the Heart & Soul Way

Community Heart & Soul is unique because it prioritizes relationships and resident-to-resident connection over impersonal surveys or large community meetings where only a few people get their ideas heard.

Starting in **Phase 1: Imagine**, the community comes together to review the current demographics of their town. This process allows the community to create a leadership team that is representative of the town. It also helps the team strategize ways to connect with different segments of the population, especially groups that may be harder to reach or who don't typically participate in community planning.

In Phase 1, Tidioute formed a leadership team made up of residents, borough representatives and established and emerging leaders. Together, they identified some goals for the project, including:

- Strengthening community connectedness
- Celebrating and/or reviving traditions unique to Tidioute
- Identifying opportunities for downtown business district

The team also learned how to conduct a **Community Network Analysis** as a way to better understand who lives, works, plays and learns in Tidioute. Through this activity, residents get to know their community even better and discuss trends they are seeing in the population that may not show up in the demographic data.

The Tidioute Heart & Soul team immediately identified three key missing voices in most planning processes: **youth, seniors** and **seasonal residents**. To reach these groups, the team brainstormed existing community events like the Fishing Tournament and Fall Festival, that would help them meet residents "where they naturally were" instead of asking them to come to a community meeting. The Fishing Tournament, a unique event in Tidioute that attracts hundreds of individuals from in and out of Tidioute, proved vital during Phase 2 engagement and again, in Phase 3 when the team needed help gathering and prioritizing community projects.

A round up of early community engagement activities included:

-  **BONFIRE AT TIDIOUTE BALLFIELD** | June 4th, 2021
-  **HEART & SOUL AT THE FISHING TOURNAMENT** | September 24-26, 2021
-  **FALL FESTIVAL AT TIDIOUTE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL** | October 23, 2021
-  **"HEART & SOUL WISHES UPON A STAR"** | December 3, 2021
DURING HOMETOWN HOLIDAYS CELEBRATION
-  **HEART & SOUL BAR COASTER INITIATIVE** | February - April 2022

Using creative, engaging strategies like idea walls, bar coasters and write-on displays, team members introduced residents to Community Heart & Soul and asked for responses to questions like, "What do you like most about Tidioute?" and "What do you wish for Tidioute?"

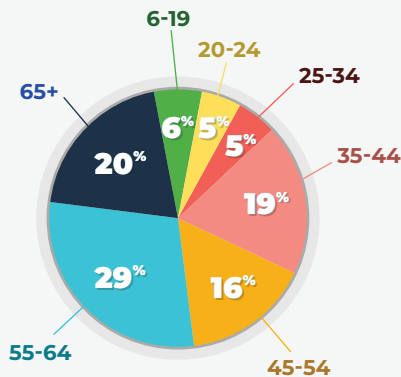
WHO PARTICIPATED OVER TIME

Heart & Soul teams are encouraged to collect basic demographic information from participating individuals in order to understand who - and who is not - participating in the process. Collecting demographic data can be tricky in a community; individuals don't often feel comfortable sharing certain aspects of their identity and some of the events and activities planned can make it difficult to collect data.

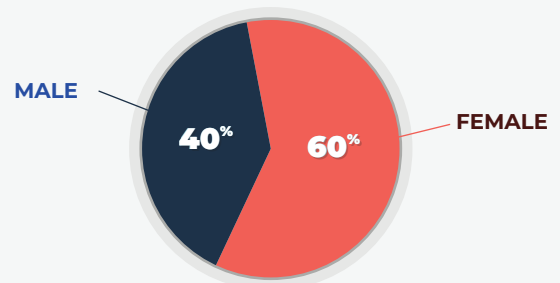
Most of the demographic data Tidioute Heart & Soul collected was through surveying that marked the end of Phase 2 when Value Statements were validated by the community and in Phase 3, when the community was asked to prioritize ideas for action. Of note below:

- More women than men participated over time.
- The team had difficulty reaching individuals ages 20 - 34 - a common challenge in Heart & Soul processes, mainly because many of the individuals in this age range are either attending college or are young families with many responsibilities that may prevent them from participating.
- Participation was greater for individuals 55 - 65+ and a healthy amount of folks 35 - 54 participated as well.
- According to the most recent census data, Tidioute Borough is home to approximately 96% of individuals who identify as White and about 2.6% of individuals who identify as "two or more races." Of the data collected, Tidioute Heart & Soul did a good job reaching a representative portion of the population.
- In terms of household income, Tidioute Heart & Soul reached individuals from all over the income map.

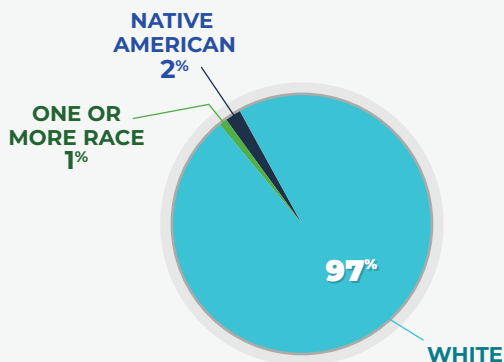
AGE - PARTICIPANTS



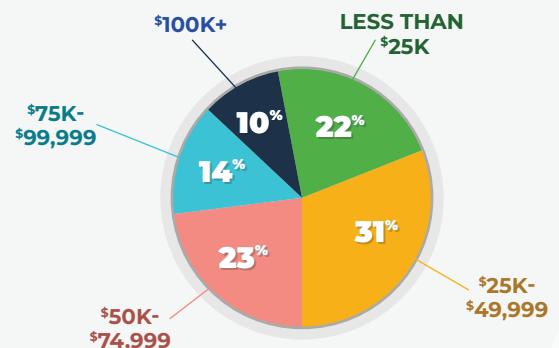
GENDER IDENTITY - PARTICIPANTS



RACE/ETHNICITY - PARTICIPANTS



HOUSEHOLD INCOME - PARTICIPANTS



DIGGING DEEPER TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ASSETS

In **Phase 2: Connect**, residents dig deeper into what matters to the community using a technique called “storygathering.” Tidioute Heart & Soul team members were trained in how to plan for, coordinate and facilitate community story circles and conduct informational interviews. Interviews and story circles were held at the **Tidioute Community Charter School, Buccardo’s Restaurant, the Tidioute Senior Center, and at the 2022 Fishing Tournament.**



Story and interview prompts focused on sourcing assets and identifying what matters most. The team asked residents and visitors:

What are your hopes for the future?

What do you love most about Tidioute?

What are your concerns and how can we work together as a community to address them?

Residents from many backgrounds were invited to tell their story of their experience in Tidioute. The team took notes, and later, analyzed this feedback to develop Heart & Soul statements.

These community outreach efforts revealed themes and assets that were important to community life: **small town connectedness** (knowing your neighbors), **safety, beautiful natural surroundings, events and traditions** and **the importance of the school**. This input laid the foundation for developing the Heart & Soul Value Statements, reflecting the community's shared priorities and aspirations.

Event: Tea Time with the 80s Ladies

Community connections are a big part of life in Tidioute Borough and no one group exemplifies this more than the 80s Ladies - a group of women who have lived in Tidioute their entire lives. Former schoolmates from Tidioute High School, these ladies have been getting together regularly for years to share stories, stay connected and talk about their experiences in the community.



When these ladies heard about PA Heart & Soul launching in town, they decided to create an illustration of what Tidioute looked like in the 1930-40s when businesses were thriving on Main Street. The ladies shared this drawing with the Tidioute Heart & Soul team and offered to tell stories of what was, what is and what could be in the community. Tidioute Heart & Soul jumped at the opportunity to gather stories from these ladies - many of them in their 80s - to learn more about their experiences.



Tidioute Heart & Soul rented out the old Hunter Mansion, now owned by the Sabella Family, and held a high tea for the ladies. Over tea and sweets, the 80s ladies took turns answering questions like, "What do you love about Tidioute?" "Why did you stay?" and "What keeps you here?" The ladies also talked about what made Tidioute thriving in those old days and why raising their families in Tidioute was important to them. They also talked about the illustration they made and talked about what they hoped for the future.

This special opportunity built a stronger sense of community for the 80s ladies, and allowed Tidioute Heart & Soul to listen to feedback from a crucial audience - long-time residents and leaders.



TIDIOUTE HEART & SOUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

Captured over
300
COMMENTS
& **FEEDBACK**
from community
members

Interviewed over
50
INDIVIDUALS
from youth to seniors

Attended
7 MAJOR EVENTS IN
THE COMMUNITY,
including the PA State Fishing
Tournament, Hometown Holidays
and Fall Fest

Identified
4 COMMUNITY
VALUES

Gathered over
400 DATA POINTS
related to ideas for action

Heart & Soul Statements: Listening to What Matter Most

The Tidioute Heart & Soul team successfully gathered many insights from residents and visitors through community engagement activities in Phase 2. Guided by their Heart & Soul coaches, the team reviewed the feedback given through stories, feedback forms, interviews and short surveys - and learned how to extract four key pieces of information: what matters most or what people love about Tidioute, what they hope for the future, their concerns for the town and even what ideas they have for actions, projects or initiatives that could improve community life (more on that later!).

Shared themes began to emerge from this input:

- Many longtime residents, seasonal residents and frequent visitors cited the beauty of Tidioute and the surrounding area as a reason they stay or return. The Allegheny River and the surrounding mountains were mentioned often, treasured for their recreational opportunities, including camping, fishing, boating, and hiking. Residents expressed a strong desire to protect and enhance these natural resources.
- Revitalizing the local economy and reviving the downtown was strongly connected to an initial goal of the initiative - and residents agreed! Residents expressed a strong desire to continue to support existing businesses while attracting new ones. Residents mentioned some gaps in retail, dining, and essential services.
- Tidioute residents expressed pride in the 'sense of community' that characterizes the area. Feedback and stories highlighted the close-knit nature of the community. People felt like they knew their neighbors and could count on them. Many expressed the importance of increasing social activities, volunteerism, and support networks to strengthen community bonds for longtime residents, seasonal residents, visitors and new-comers.



The team worked together over the summer of 2024 to write Heart & Soul statements to capture the themes they heard from residents. Once they completed writing the statements, they shared them widely via social media and invited residents to 'validate them.' Close to 10% of the population responded to these surveys and confirmed the importance of these themes.

TIDIOUTE HEART & SOUL VALUE STATEMENTS

These Heart & Soul Value Statements serve as the guiding principles for brainstorming community ideas, actions and projects.



NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We cherish our Natural Environment, including the Allegheny River and the Allegheny Mountains, which provide recreation opportunities that build pride and community in our residents and town.



DOWNTOWN & LOCAL BUSINESS

We cherish a thriving Downtown Community of Local Businesses that will help to sustain and improve our town's economy.



SENSE OF COMMUNITY

We value a sense of community where people know each other, take care of one another, and feel connected.

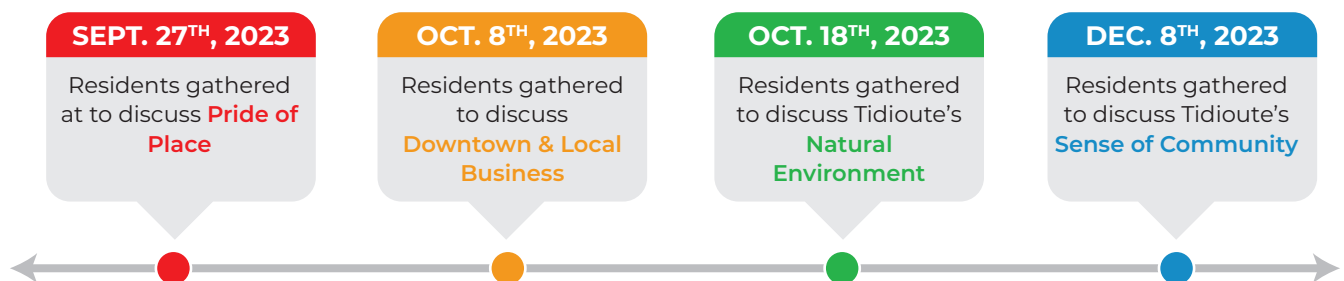


PRIDE OF PLACE

We cherish a safe, well-maintained, beautiful community that instills pride in our residents.

CROWD-SOURCING IDEAS FOR ACTION

In **Phase 3: Plan**, Tidioute Heart & Soul went back to the feedback they collected in Phase 2 through interviews, story circles and surveys and pulled out any ideas for action they received from residents. Ideas for action can be community wide projects, initiatives and small grassroots efforts that help the community live out the values they expressed in Phase 2 and strengthen community life. At the end of Phase 2, Tidioute gathered hundreds of data points related to ideas for action. They thought it was important to conduct one last push for ideas so they coordinated four **community conversations** - one for each Heart & Soul Statement:



At each of these community conversations, residents were led by a community facilitator in an activity called Change Over Time. **Change Over Time** asks residents to look at each value and discuss what it felt like in the community 10 years ago, what it feels or looks like now and what they would want it to feel like 10 years in the future.

Tidioute Borough - Community Ideas for Action

After speaking with residents at four community conversations and sourcing ideas for action, Tidioute Heart & Soul released a survey to prioritize these ideas. Residents were asked to consider not necessarily their favorite action idea, but to think strategically about what would have the most impact on Tidioute and how many resources (people, funding, partners) were needed to make action happen. Below are the ideas that rose to the top. It's important to note that the Heart & Soul process does not happen in a vacuum. Many of the ideas below reflect what's been bubbling up in the community for some time - and may also connect with ideas already in progress. Finally, action ideas will also cut across what matters most, sometimes addressing more than one value at a time.



Natural Environment

We cherish our Natural Environment, including the Allegheny River and the Allegheny Mountains, which provide recreation opportunities that build pride and community in our residents and town.



KEY ACTION STEPS:

Objective	Action Steps	Potential Partners	Timeline
Enhance River Access & Trail Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a survey to identify priority areas for trail improvements. Secure funding through state grants and local fundraising efforts. Implement trail enhancements and improve signage for better accessibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidioute Borough Council Local environmental groups Allegheny National Forest 	1-3 Years
Promote Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize community clean-up events along the riverbanks and trails. Develop educational programs in schools about the importance of conservation. Create a "Leave No Trace" campaign to promote responsible recreation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County Environmental Organizations Tidioute Community Charter School Youth Organizations 	Ongoing

Downtown & Local Business

We cherish a thriving Downtown Community of Local Businesses that will help to sustain and improve our town's economy.



KEY ACTION STEPS:

Objective	Action Steps	Potential Partners	Timeline
Support and Revitalize Local Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and resources for small business owners to enhance their online presence. Create a local business directory to promote shopping locally. Organize seasonal events downtown to attract visitors and boost sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidioute Borough Council – Revitalization Committee Warren County Visitor's Bureau Local Entrepreneurs 	3-5 years
Incentivize New Business Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer tax incentives for new businesses that open in the downtown area. Develop a grant program to support start-ups and innovative business ideas. Work with property owners to make vacant storefronts available for new businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidioute Borough Council Economic Development Office Local Investors 	3-5 Years

Sense of Community

We value a sense of community where people know each other, take care of one another, and feel connected.



KEY ACTION STEPS:

Objective	Action Steps	Potential Partners	Timeline
Enhance Community Events and Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand existing events like the Fall Festival and Hometown Holidays to include more community involvement. Introduce new events that cater to different age groups, such as youth sports leagues and senior socials. Develop a community calendar to ensure events are well-publicized and accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidioute Borough Council / Tidioute Community Charter School Tidioute Churches Fun Days Group 	Ongoing
Foster a Culture of Volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch a "Volunteer of the Month" program to recognize and encourage community service. Create a centralized volunteer sign-up platform where residents can find opportunities to get involved. Partner with local schools to offer service-learning opportunities for students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tidioute Borough Council Economic Development Office Local Investors 	Ongoing

Pride of Place

We cherish a safe, well-maintained, beautiful community that instills pride in our residents.



KEY ACTION STEPS:

Objective	Action Steps	Potential Partners	Timeline
Improve Public Spaces and Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize sidewalk repairs and maintenance to ensure safety and accessibility. • Initiate a community-wide effort to clean up and beautify public spaces, including parks and streetscapes. • Explore funding opportunities for public art installations that reflect Tidioute's heritage and natural beauty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidioute Borough Council • State and County Agencies 	1-3 Years
Enhance Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase police presence during peak community events and high-traffic periods. • Establish a community watch program to engage residents in neighborhood safety efforts. • Improve lighting in critical areas, such as the boat launch and downtown, to deter crime and enhance security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidioute Borough • Neighborhood Watch Programs • Local Businesses 	Ongoing

EARLY TIDIOUTE "WINS"

1 Tidioute Boat Launch & Playground:

A point of pride for Tidioute is the boat launch area along the Allegheny River that allows individuals to utilize the natural resources right in their backyards! Residents have expressed desire for an update to the launch and a need to repair the playground that was damaged by a fallen tree. Tidioute Heart & Soul heard this desire reflected in the feedback they gathered. In recent years, the playground has been repaired, cleaned and upgraded with new signage and facilities, making it more accessible for residents and visitors. This project is a visible example of how the value of celebrating Tidioute's Natural Environment shows up in the community.

2 Expansion of the Fall Festival:

The Fall Festival in Tidioute was launched approximately four years ago in collaboration with Tidioute Heart & Soul and the Tidioute Community Charter School (TCCS). Since its launch, participation has grown with each year being even bigger than the last. TCCS has fully taken over this event, increasing resident participation and vendor booths. A desire for more community gatherings and events emerged from Tidioute Heart & Soul storytelling - and the Fall Festival is a great example of how Sense of Community shows up in the town.

3 Community Clean-Up Initiative:

Multiple community clean-up days focused on the Allegheny Riverbanks and local parks, improving the natural beauty of Tidioute and fostering a sense of pride among residents.

4 Revitalizing New Spaces:

The Landmark Hotel and the former Hummingbird Restaurant buildings have sold and are being revitalized to open new businesses.

Stewarding Tidioute Heart & Soul for Future Growth

In **Phase 4: Act**, members of Tidioute Heart & Soul will continue to work with local government, volunteers and community partners to develop a detailed implementation plan for each action idea the community prioritized. Some next steps include:

- **Get official buy-in from the borough.** Many Heart & Soul communities present their final action plan to the local government and get a resolution passed to recognize the work. Once the action plan is completed, Tidioute Heart & Soul will share with the borough for further discussion and adoption.
- **Build a stewardship team.** The role of the stewardship team is to communicate and celebrate the implementation of actions and continue to find people or organizations to lead new efforts. The current Tidioute Heart & Soul leadership team will work to engage new residents to help steward Heart & Soul.
- **Map out details for each action idea.** Objectives and tasks need to be thought through and identified for each of the prioritized action ideas. The community will have to work together to further refine each action idea and lay out clear steps and processes for accomplishing the work.
- **Connect with potential partners.** Getting action ideas complete, means cultivating collaboration and communication between implementation partners. Tidioute Heart & Soul will work to share the action plan with key stakeholders and partners and identify points of connection so that action ideas can be accomplished.
- **Identify funding to complete projects.** Seek out funding opportunities at the local, state and national level to support implementation of action ideas. Together, with the borough and other partners, resources may be identified to support the completion of action ideas.

FUTURE VISION & WORK

The Tidioute Heart & Soul Action Plan represents a shared vision for Tidioute's community's future. Through extensive community engagement, the team identified the values and priorities that matter most to the town's residents. This plan lays the foundation for a more connected, prosperous, and vibrant Tidioute, where everyone has a voice and a role in shaping a collective future.

As the team wraps up this process, the success of this plan will depend on the continued involvement of the entire community. By working in partnership, Tidioute can ensure this special town by the river remains a place where nature and community thrive, businesses grow, and residents feel proud and connected.

Stay connected! Tidioute Heart & Soul wants to hear from you. It's never too late to get involved. Visit the Tidioute Heart & Soul section on the Borough website and leave us a message:

www.tidioute.org/tidioute-heart-soul.

Acknowledgments & Gratitude

The Tidioute Heart & Soul Action Plan results from the hard work, dedication, and collaboration of many individuals, organizations, and community members. We are deeply grateful to the following:

HEART & SOUL TEAM

To the dedicated team of volunteers who devoted countless hours to gathering data, organizing events, and working with the community. Your tireless efforts have made this plan possible. Special thanks to Cindy Lindemuth, Cindy Paulmier, Heather Cass, Karrah Reddick and Crystal Heenan.

RESIDENTS

Thank you to all of the residents of Tidioute and the surrounding areas who shared their stories, participated in surveys, attended meetings, and provided valuable input. Your voices are at the heart of this plan.

TIDIOUTE COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

For your involvement in the engagement process, especially in hosting events and facilitating student participation.

TIDIOUTE BOROUGH COUNCIL

For your support and partnership throughout this process.

PA HUMANITIES, WARREN COUNTY, PA ROUTE 6 AND COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL

For supporting Tidioute Heart & Soul with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and Act 13 monies in addition to providing coaching and technical assistance throughout the project.

A special shout out to Dan Glotz, Warren County Commissioner, and Warren County Planning & Zoning for support throughout the process.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

We also thank the local businesses, civic groups, and other organizations who collaborated with us to ensure the success of this initiative. Your continued support will help bring the action steps in this plan to life.

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Lucinda Leonard, for your leadership, coordination, and commitment to seeing this project through to completion.

FUNDING & PARTNERS



WARREN COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA

