



Photo credit: Jim Harris/PBT

# 2023 REDEVELOPMENT STUDY of Cranberry Township's Commercial Core

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Prepared by czbLLC  
with MJB Consulting



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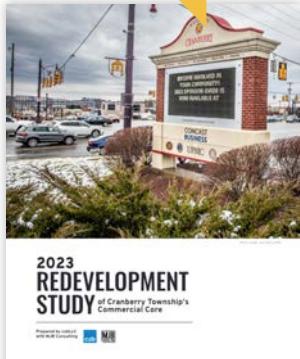
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cranberry Township's commercial core is a high-performing business district in one of Greater Pittsburgh's fastest-growing suburbs. An important part of the community's success, and that of its core, is a matter of Cranberry's location at the nexus of busy transportation corridors. But the Township's commitment to setting high standards and nurturing a desirable quality of life have also played a key role.

This commitment to thinking ahead and creating long-term value is now being expressed by attention to the future of the commercial core as Township leaders ask:

**How can Cranberry's commercial core adapt and remain strong well into the future? And how can the Township guide that process from its current position of fiscal and market strength?**

The **Redevelopment Study of Cranberry Township's Commercial Core** explores these questions and their implications for long-range strategic planning. It finds that Cranberry is in a unique position of strength—and a position to shape its own future that most communities would envy.



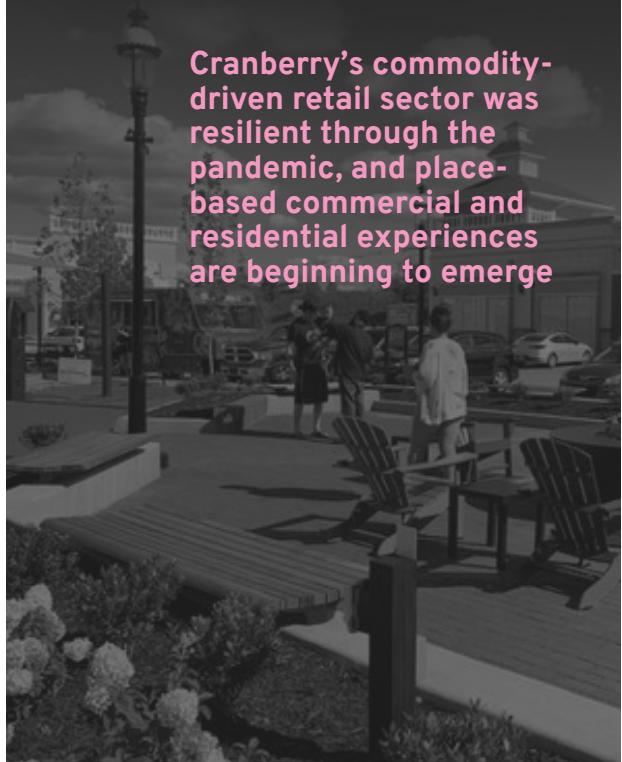
Positive trends that provide critical context for thinking about the future of the commercial core include:

Cranberry has been the fastest-growing of Pittsburgh's large suburbs since 2000

**Well-above average population growth has occurred alongside Cranberry's growth as an employment center**

Cranberry is among the region's highest-income and youngest communities, and its housing supply is becoming more diverse

**Cranberry's commodity-driven retail sector was resilient through the pandemic, and place-based commercial and residential experiences are beginning to emerge**



## Current and Future Challenges

Alongside Cranberry's strengths and superlatives are a series of challenges that require attention and consideration as the township plans for its future and the commercial core, including:

- Cranberry's future will occur within one of America's slowest growing and most rapidly aging metropolitan areas, so any growth must be drawn from a stagnant pool of regional demand.
- The commercial core's infrastructure—a reflection of 20th century suburban form—will be very expensive to retrofit, and different forms are likely to be a key part of staying competitive in the coming decades.
- The current success of the commercial core, including the profitability of its real estate, creates a level of comfort with the status quo that is rational but risks complacency.

## Opportunities and Vision

### CRANBERRY'S VISION



The age of commercial real estate west of I-79, the presence of some older and smaller properties, and the community's previous commitments to high standards and quality of life all present near-term opportunities to reimagine parts of the commercial core and advance an emerging community vision that reflects existing momentum on several fronts.

Within the commercial core, this vision would take shape as an evolving mixture of land uses, including housing, connected by high-quality and pedestrian-friendly public spaces.

## IN 2030 AND BEYOND, CRANBERRY IS...

### A CHOICE COMMUNITY



Cranberry is a suburb of choice in Greater Pittsburgh and is included among the ranks of dynamic and innovative suburbs in similar-sized regions.

The township's history of setting high standards for quality continues to make it attractive to residents and businesses who seek and expect a community with high standards.



### A BALANCED COMMUNITY

Cranberry has diverse and high-quality housing options and amenities that enable a broad and resilient demographic base to live in the community at different life stages.

The township's strong residential and commercial opportunities reinforce each other and support sustained, forward-looking investments in the community.



### A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Cranberry's residential, commercial, and recreational opportunities are increasingly well-connected to each other in a manner that supports active lifestyles, public safety, and enjoyment of the township's natural and community assets.

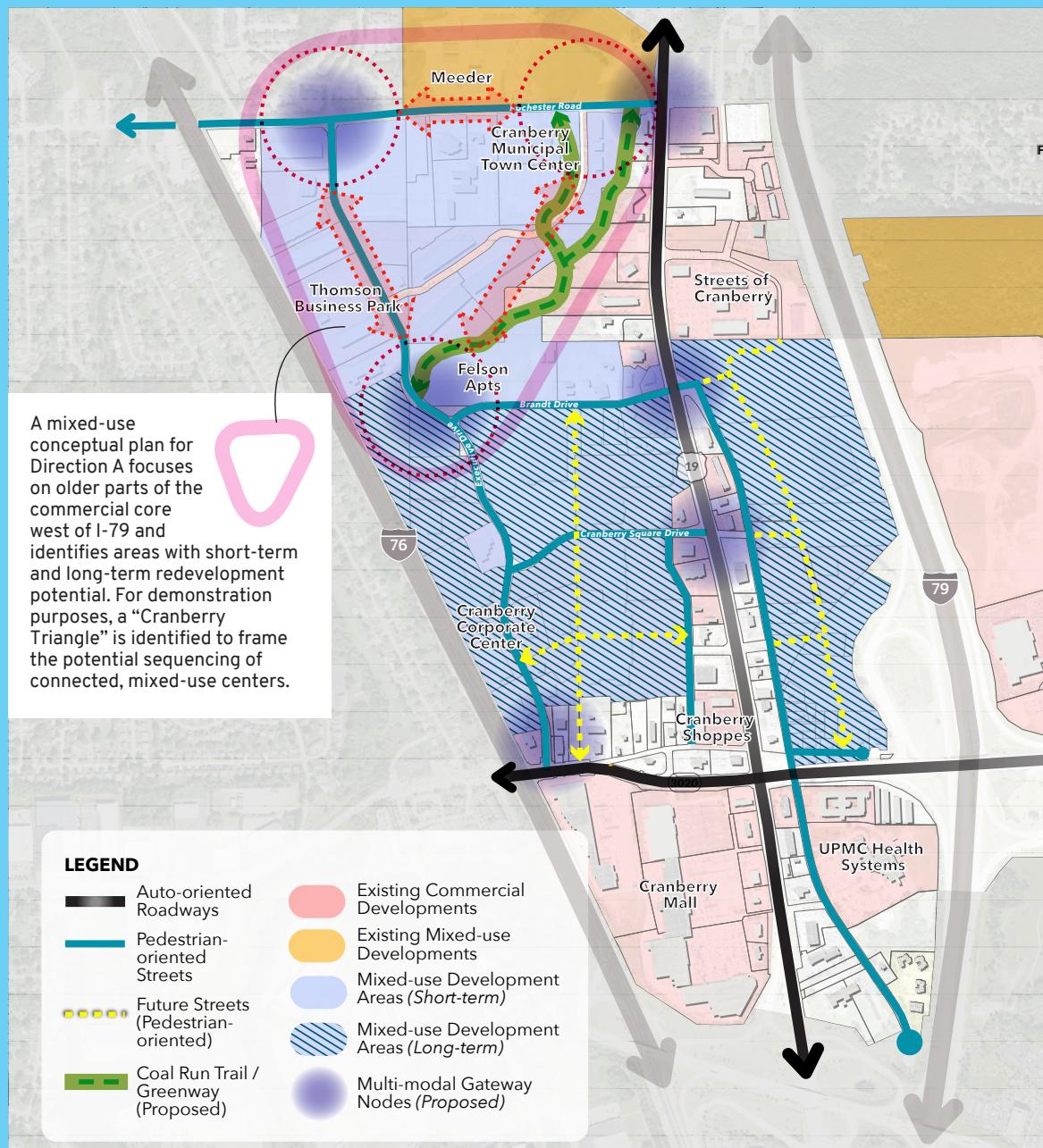
The Redevelopment Study uses the current challenges and opportunities in the commercial core to **explore two directions**:



## DIRECTION A STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

Direction A would require that Cranberry Township embrace an active role in leading the market so that redevelopment takes shape in a manner that reflects public goals and occurs sooner rather than later. Based on existing conditions and opportunities in Cranberry's commercial core, as well as the community's vision, implementation of Direction A would call for the following types of interventions:

- 1** Cultivate connected, mixed-use centers
- 2** Provide proactive support for place-based investments
- 3** Update regulatory framework for more predictable development outcomes



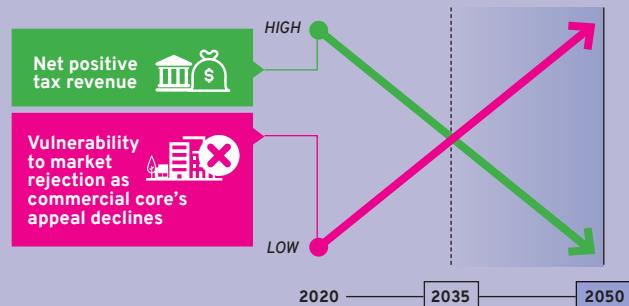


## DIRECTION B STATUS QUO PLUS

Direction B would involve Cranberry Township taking a less active role in leading the market than Direction A. But it would involve greater levels of preparation for the future and anticipation of redevelopment needs than currently exist. Direction B would call for the following types of interventions:

- 1 Assemble resources and tools to actively guide redevelopment when the time comes**
- 2 Provide proactive support for place-based investments**
- 3 Update regulatory framework for more predictable development outcomes**

Though Direction B makes preparations for future redevelopment opportunities, it plays a waiting game that carries risks—namely, that the Township's capacity to successfully intervene in commercial core redevelopment will be diminishing at the same time that a public sector role will be most needed.



## Next Steps

This Redevelopment Study is intended to inform and prime a conversation in Cranberry Township about how to think and act strategically when it comes to one of the community's biggest assets. The two directions presented are departures from business as usual—not just in Cranberry but in the vast majority of communities in similar positions.

Pursuing either direction will not be a decision made lightly or quickly, nor should a decision to maintain the status quo, given the commercial core's key role in any long-range planning effort for Cranberry.

2023-2024

Education and Discussion



A period of education and discussion will be an important start to a process of identifying what the community wants from its commercial core and its willingness to pursue alternative directions or maintain the status quo.

2024-2026

Comprehensive Planning Preparation



A period of dialogue would set the stage for a series of efforts that would prepare Cranberry for well-deliberated updates to its long-range plans. Confirmation of the community's vision, a strategy for housing, and a detailed commercial core master plan could be phases of this preparatory process and help to initiate near-term implementation of new policies and strategies.

2027-2028

Comprehensive Plan and Regulatory Framework Update



Steps to confirm Cranberry's vision and identify detailed strategies around community priorities would produce components of a new comprehensive plan and inform building and development code updates. Such updates would ensure that Township policies and strategies are fully aligned with a chosen path for the commercial core.

# INTRODUCTION

**Cranberry Township finds itself in a position of strength in 2023—a stronger position, perhaps, than any other suburban community in Greater Pittsburgh.**

Its population, now nearly 35,000, is higher than it has ever been. The township's large retail and services sector, after successfully weathering the COVID-19 pandemic and the growth of online shopping, appears primed to benefit from the rise of remote work. And the promotion of high standards and investments in quality of life—a conscious effort by Township leaders that began in the 1990s—is paying dividends in the form of strong demand despite Cranberry's location within a very slow-growth region.

All of this positive news could be viewed as a signal for Cranberry Township to maintain its current course. Or to follow the age-old dictum that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." And the evidence clearly shows that much of what Cranberry has been doing is working and worth continuing.

A position of strength, however, is precisely the time for a community to be thinking ahead—to position itself to be adaptive and resilient as the world changes in order to remain strong well into the future. There are few good examples of this in the Greater Pittsburgh region, which is filled with cautionary tales of complacency; of communities that scrambled to adjust after they peaked and were less able to shape their futures for the better.



This Redevelopment Study is representative of Cranberry Township's commitment to think ahead and to adjust, when needed, to stay ahead. Developed during the first half of 2023, it focuses on the commercial core that gave rise to the Cranberry Township we see today—the area where I-79 and the Pennsylvania Turnpike meet, bisected by Route 19.

The results of this effort are presented in three parts that reflect how the study can be used to inform long-term planning and decision-making by Cranberry Township and its partners.



## PART 1

### Existing Conditions and Trends

Part 1 summarizes an up-to-date understanding of where Cranberry Township is today, what has happened in recent years, and how Cranberry's commercial core fits within the wider context of the township's demographic and economic portrait. It identifies challenges and opportunities within the core, as well as baseline conditions that are critical for long-range goal-setting and planning.

## PART 2

### Part 2: Community Vision and Outcomes

The future of Cranberry's commercial core cannot and should not be treated as somehow separate from the wider community's goals. Part 2 defines Cranberry's long-range vision, specific outcomes within the commercial core that would align with the vision, and key opportunities to seize in the core that would advance the community's aspirations for future strength and resilience. Altogether, it proposes a flexible framework for sound and consistent decision-making.

## PART 3

### Part 3: Potential Directions for the Commercial Core

Part 3 translates the key findings from Part 1 and the decision-making framework from Part 2 into high-level guidance for strategy development within Cranberry's commercial core. It presents two potential directions for the commercial core, and the implications of those directions, as a basis for informed dialogue as the community plans for the future. And it concludes with a set of recommended 'Next Steps' that would integrate decisions about the core's future with wider efforts to define long-range plans and policies for all of Cranberry.



This Redevelopment Study of Cranberry Township's Commercial Core is a focused effort to analyze and provide direction for future investments and development within the area outlined on this map. The boundaries should not, however, be treated as "hard" lines as many of the findings may be pertinent to adjacent areas.



Focus area in Cranberry Township





# EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

PART 1



**Many of Cranberry Township's trend lines are strong, especially when compared to its peers in Greater Pittsburgh. Household growth and job growth have been exceptional in recent decades, and the commercial core has expanded and diversified.**

Cranberry is not without vulnerabilities, though. It has posted strong levels of growth but within the context of a stagnant region. The retail sector is strong but dominated by commodity-driven retail that does not reflect the township's upmarket demographics. And the well-performing real estate in the core is a blessing in terms of revenue but carries the risk of instilling complacency.

Part 1 provides a broad snapshot of current conditions in the commercial core and pinpoints key challenges and opportunities to shape conversations about future directions.

# Cranberry's size and growth rates make it an outlier in Greater Pittsburgh

## Cranberry has been the fastest-growing of Pittsburgh's large suburbs since 2000

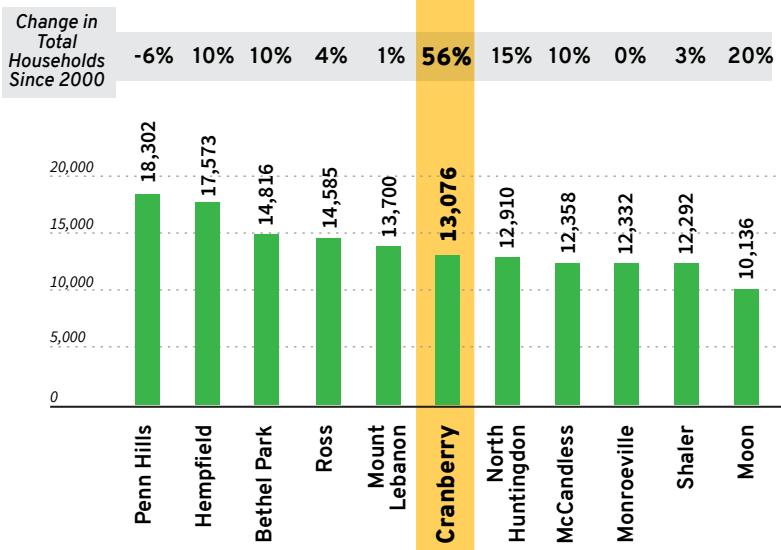
In a seven-county region with over 450 local jurisdictions, Cranberry Township stands out for several reasons. Size is one of them, given Cranberry's status as the seventh largest community in the region by total households and population. Among the region's suburban communities, Cranberry is now the sixth largest.

Cranberry's ranking is likely to rise to the fourth largest jurisdiction in the region (and third largest suburb) by 2030 due to another notable quality: the township's growth rate. Since 2000, the number of households in Cranberry has risen by 56%, a period when the only other large suburban community to approach a similar rate (Moon Township) grew by just 20%.

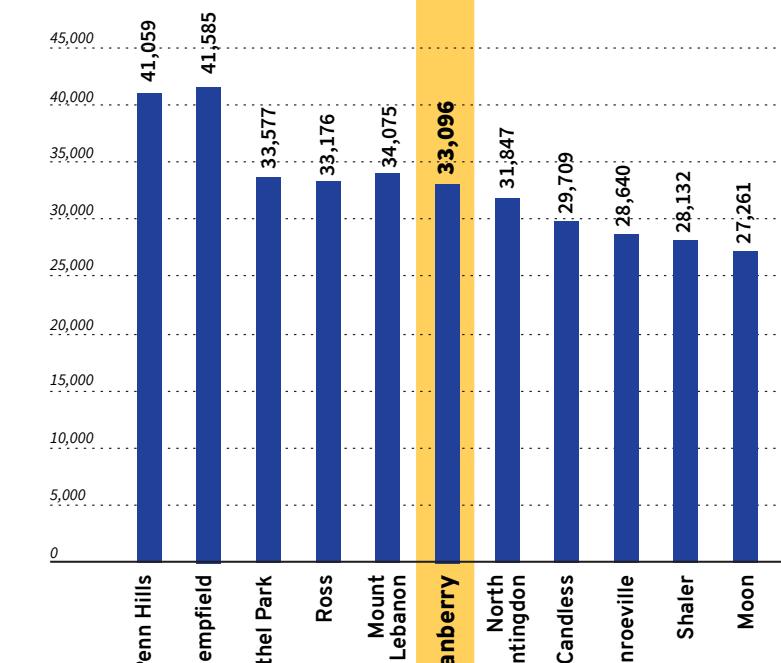
Rapid growth, in fact, has lifted Cranberry to the distinction of being Greater Pittsburgh's largest "young" suburb. While the region's biggest suburbs all recorded their peak populations in 1970 or 1980, Cranberry's population in 2020 represented its historical high. Cranberry's peers in that regard, including North Huntingdon, McCandless, and Moon, have all been growing at slower rates.

## Suburban Jurisdictions in Greater Pittsburgh with 10,000+ Households

### Households, 2021



### 2020 Census Population



Year of Peak Population



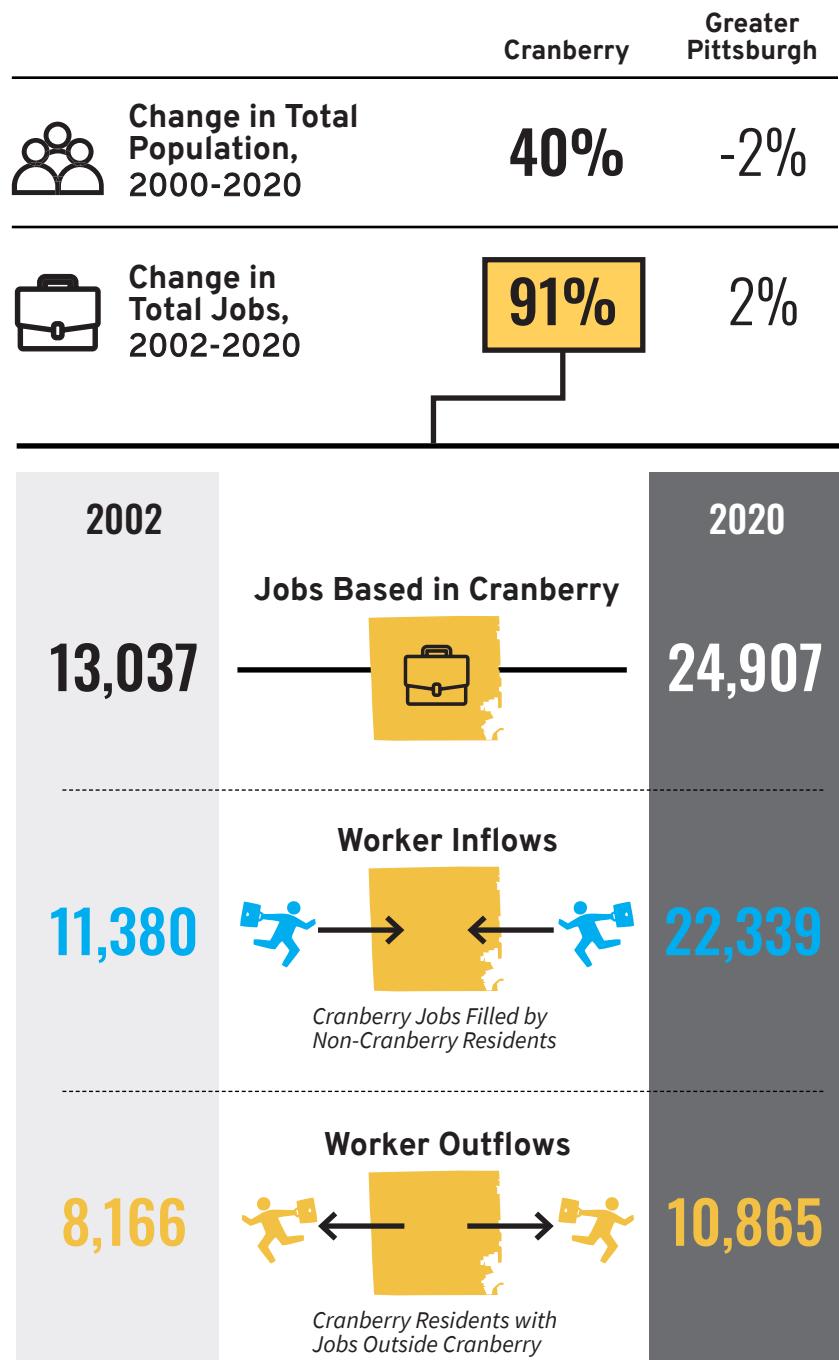
Source: 2020 Census and 2021 American Community Survey (5-year estimates)

## Well-above average population growth has occurred alongside Cranberry's growth as an employment center

All told, Cranberry Township's population growth since 2000 (40%) far exceeded its peers in the region and the region's overall rate of growth, which was slightly negative (-2%). An even more significant over-performance occurred when it came to jobs, with the number of jobs based in Cranberry Township (including all public, private, full-time, and part-time jobs) growing by 91% between 2002 and 2020 compared to a regional growth rate of just 2%.

The township's emergence as a jobs hub during this time—with most of those jobs located in the commercial core—coincided with a change in the balance of worker flows within the community. On the one hand, the number of residents treating Cranberry as a bedroom community (live there, work elsewhere) grew by 33%, or well under the overall rate of household and population growth. On the other hand, the number of workers living outside of Cranberry and treating the township as a worksite grew by 96%.

Thanks largely to the economic dynamism of the commercial core and adjacent areas, rapid population growth was complemented by economic growth and all that comes with it, including a larger tax base and more complex traffic flows.



Sources and Notes: 2000 and 2020 Decennial Census; Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) from U.S. Census Bureau; job figures reflect full- and part-time positions in both the public and private sectors

# Cranberry is also a regional outlier when it comes to its demographic and socioeconomic profile

## Cranberry is among the region's highest-income and youngest communities

Many characteristics of Cranberry's population are a reflection of its recent growth. A median home value of \$328,200, placing it in the top 5% among Greater Pittsburgh communities, can be pegged to the relative newness of the township's housing stock and the simple fact that newer homes are more expensive. This also shapes household income levels by attracting households able to afford newer properties.

Higher household income levels, in turn, are correlated with high levels of education and large concentrations of dual-income households with considerable purchasing power (for housing and for goods and services in the commercial core). Those high rates of well-educated family households, however, are also influenced by good schools, which Cranberry is known for. Consequently, Cranberry has made a particularly compelling case for young families and is now among the younger communities in the region.

## The township's housing supply is becoming more diverse

While home development in Cranberry has long skewed toward traditional single family detached homes, that has been changing somewhat since the Great Recession and is likely (along with wider demographic trends regionally and nationally) to diversify its population and household profile in coming years.

Since 2013, the number of permitted units in multi-family properties has been nearly equal to the number of permitted units in single family homes, reflecting a national shift away from single family home construction after 2008. Within the single family home market, there has been a recent uptick in attached homes (townhomes or rowhouses) due in part to a conscious effort by developers and the Township to offer more compact and traditional neighborhoods.

### Cranberry township

Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes	 \$328,200	Top 5%
Median Household Income	 \$113,157	Top 5%
% of Adults with Bachelor's Degree or More	 63.1%	Top 5%
% of Households Married-Couple Families	 62.7%	Top 15%
% of Population Aged 25-44	 27.9%	Top 20%
% of Population Aged 65+	 15.1%	Bottom 20%

Source: 2021 American Community Survey (5-year estimates)

### New Residential Units Permitted by Type, 2013-22

	2013-17	2018-22	TOTAL
 Single Family Detached	431	441	872
 Single Family Attached	201	426	627
 MultiStory, Multiple Family	896	488	1,384

Source: Cranberry Township Building Permits Database

# Retail, services, and office uses are major contributors to economic activity in Cranberry and its commercial core

## Cranberry's major employment sectors are well-represented in the commercial core

As one might expect from the look and character of Cranberry's commercial core, the retail sector is the single largest source of jobs in the township—and one that relies heavily on lower wage workers who may struggle to find housing there. That sector grew during the 2010s, as did the closely related food services and hospitality sector, though both grew at a relatively slow rate.

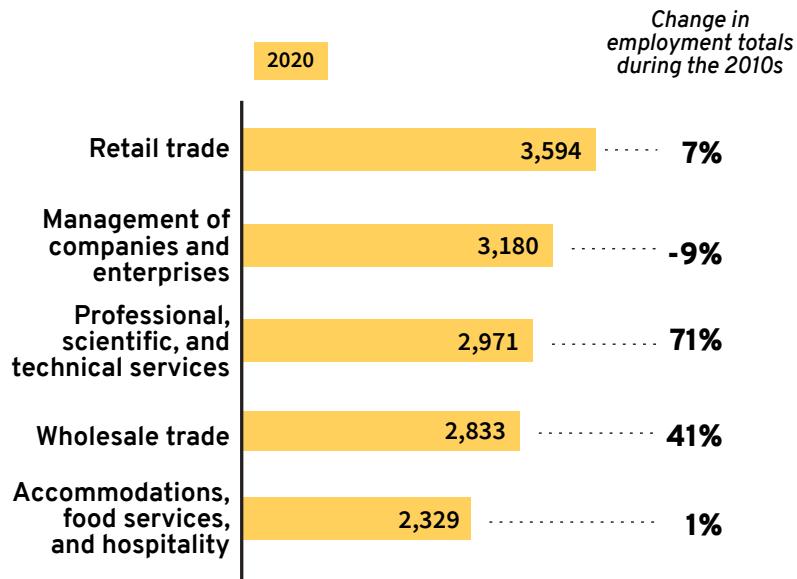
Much faster rates of growth were recorded by the professional services sector and wholesale trade, which are also heavily represented in or adjacent to the commercial core. Corporate services, located largely in the township's office parks, actually declined during the 2010s and may be a questionable source of in-person employment going forward due to the rise of remote working.

## Demand for space in the commercial core is driven by accessibility

Out of the 750 acres that cover Cranberry's commercial core, uses related to goods (retail) and services consume around 50% of that land. Office activities consume another 100 acres, and infrastructure consumes a significant share of what remains.

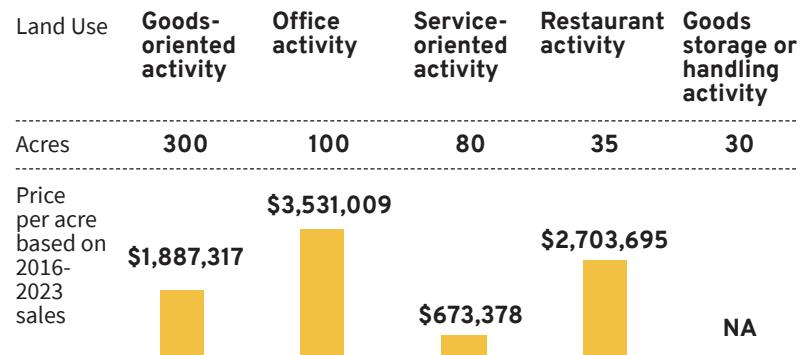
While land values are difficult to gauge in the township due to outdated property assessments, recent sales and per-acre pricing suggest healthy levels of demand in recent years, especially for retail, restaurant, and office uses. A good portion of that demand can be tied to the accessibility of the commercial core, including high traffic volumes and sophisticated methods of managing those volumes successfully.

## Cranberry's Largest Employment Sectors



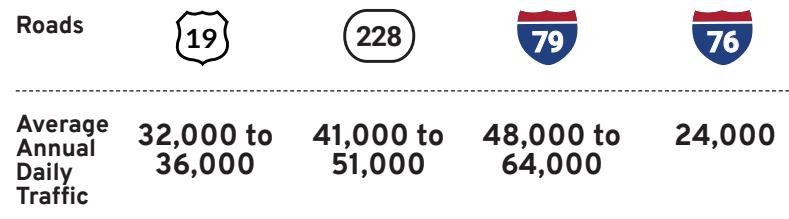
Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), U.S. Census Bureau

## Largest Land Uses in Cranberry's Commercial Core



Source: Analysis of Cranberry's Township's current parcel database

## Traffic Volumes on Major Roads in Cranberry's Commercial Core, 2021



Source: PennDOT

# Cranberry's retail sector is the township's largest source of jobs and has vulnerabilities as well as distinct opportunities



## Cranberry is a community-scaled shopping destination, existing between the neighborhood and regional scales

While Cranberry has one of the largest concentrations of retail space in the region, it does not yet fit the definition of a regional shopping destination. The types of retailers in Cranberry are those that tend to exist in and around most of the region's larger commercial centers and serve a market area within a 20-minute travel radius, placing Cranberry in the "community-scaled" category of shopping destinations.

The nearest regional center, Ross Township, has retailers that have just one outlet in the region (such as Nordstrom and L.L. Bean) and draws shoppers from a wider radius, though the Ross Park Mall has an uncertain future.

In the near-term, Cranberry's status as a strong community-scaled shopping destination appears secure. There is limited competition in Pittsburgh's far northern suburbs, and the gravitational pull of Cranberry's existing cluster of retailers is strong.

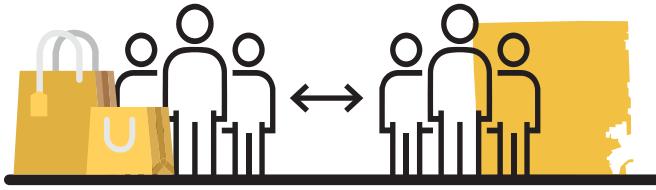


## Commodity retail currently dominates in Cranberry, though experience- or place-based activities are making some inroads

A vulnerability of Cranberry's current community-scaled shopping profile is the dominance of commodity retailers. These include Wal-Mart, Target, Kohl's, Costco, TJ Maxx, and others that serve typical household needs at competitive price points. While having a large concentration of these retailers in Cranberry is convenient for households nearby, this is the type of retail where in-person visits are most easily replaced by online shopping.

This is also a type of retail that does not tend to rely on "quality of place" to attract shoppers and could decamp to new greenfield opportunities in Jackson or Adams townships under the right set of conditions.

Commercial activities that rely on a consumer's experience of place, and that contribute to a community's sense of place, are few in number in Cranberry but beginning to grow. The Streets of Cranberry is one example along these lines, as are the brewery and cafe at the center of the new Meeder development.



### **There is a noticeable gap between the market served by Cranberry's retail and the township's own demographics**

The commodity-driven retail that dominates Cranberry's commercial core today is not a true reflection of the township's demographic makeup and household incomes. While the township's retailers are certainly used by Cranberry's higher income households, in-town demand for upscale goods and services generally leaks to other parts of the region that offer more curated consumer experiences.

This means that there is a strong upmarket potential for Cranberry's commercial core. If the right collection of spaces, businesses, and experiences can be cultivated, Cranberry may be in a position to capture upscale demand from its own households and attract similar demand from other parts of the northern suburbs.



### **Cranberry has diversity in its inventory of retail space**

Amid the sizable footprint of big-box commodity retail in Cranberry are numerous smaller properties and strip-style retail properties that add important diversity to the township's commercial scene. While these tend to be older and sometimes outdated properties, they offer relatively affordable lease rates for the types of small, locally-owned businesses that are critical to cultivating a place-based experience and brand.

Smaller properties on irregular parcels may sometimes be viewed as obstacles to redevelopment and new investment. As Cranberry evolves from commodity retail to a balance that includes significant place-based commercial experiences, many of these could be viewed as assets to leverage.

# Key Observations

The analysis performed for this Redevelopment Study points to the following set of overarching challenges and opportunities as critical context for identifying and understanding potential directions for Cranberry's commercial core.

## CHALLENGES

### **The region's demographics represent headwinds for any community in Greater Pittsburgh, including Cranberry**

Pittsburgh has been one of the nation's slowest-growing metropolitan areas for decades. Slowing birth rates and a rapidly aging population mean that slow growth will continue, though Greater Pittsburgh's growth dynamics will look increasingly "normal" as more regions run into similar demographic walls.

That Cranberry has managed to grow so rapidly has been a testament to its ability to appeal to households within the region that had options and chose Cranberry, but also to its supply of build-able land in a region with a tendency to sprawl. The diminishing supply of land in Cranberry means that redevelopment, which is more difficult, will be a key to any future growth and dynamism, and that it will have to occur within the context of a region with stagnant demand.

### **In terms of the commercial core's built form and infrastructure, the die is largely cast**

The built form of the commercial core is a reflection of late 20th century suburban development practices, with single-use buildings surrounded by parking and connected to each other by auto-oriented roads.

Efforts have been made to soften this development pattern with landscaping, more interesting building design, and community-themed fixtures. But altering the underlying pattern of how the commercial core operates, even in small sections, is a much costlier proposition, especially when much of the public and private infrastructure in the core has decades remaining on its usable life. Just as a traditional downtown, for better or worse, must operate within the constraints of a 19th century operating framework, a commercial district such as Cranberry's has particular DNA that cannot be easily or inexpensively changed.

### **Real estate in the commercial core is performing well and will continue to perform—until it doesn't**

Cranberry's commercial core is a successful and profitable 750 acres of real estate at an important transportation nexus in Greater Pittsburgh. This redounds to the benefit of the Township in the form of tax revenues, and to those who own property or operate businesses there. This is good, but not an unalloyed good.

Every successful commercial district breeds comfort with the status quo, especially when it is clear that good times are likely to persist for at least a while longer. This makes change and innovation more difficult than it would be if vacancies were rising and values were falling because properties are more valuable and the politics of upsetting the apple cart are more complicated.

In short, the current health of Cranberry's commercial core is a challenge for near-term change. If it is recognized as such, however, it is also an opportunity to prepare for the future.

# OPPORTUNITIES

## **Areas west of I-79 represent potential near-term opportunities to accelerate Cranberry's shift towards place-based retail and services**

While no part of Cranberry's commercial core is rife with the vacancy or disinvestment that typically initiates redevelopment or some other fundamental shift, there are notable differences east and west of I-79. To the east are relatively young and high-performing developments with new infrastructure. Altering patterns currently in place in that portion of the core will make little to no sense to the owners, investors, banks, and businesses that have long-term capital there.

Properties west of I-79 tend to be older and smaller. This does not make them overdue for redevelopment. But it does mean that they are more likely to fit the logic of redevelopment: for the potential of their location, under current market conditions, to exceed the value of what currently sits there. And as potential fits for redevelopment, they represent openings for a healthier balance between commodity retail and place-based experiences.

## **Older, smaller properties in the commercial core are potential assets in cultivating local businesses and restaurants**

Properties west of I-79 that are not occupied by big-box retailers—generally the older, smaller properties—represent some of the biggest near-term opportunities for transitions in the commercial core. Some of these properties, if assembled together, could form sufficient acreages for new commercial and residential developments that follow a place-based model.

Many of them, however, represent opportunities in their current form: as spaces for local businesses and restaurants that have the potential to build Cranberry's brand as a place to find compelling experiences. Finding the balance between conserving and fully utilizing some smaller properties while assembling and redeveloping others will be an important part of future economic development in the commercial core.

A notable challenge to the cultivation of a more vibrant restaurant scene within these older and smaller properties is the difficulty with which new operators are able to obtain liquor licenses in Butler County due to its small population and the static number of available licenses.

## **Cranberry's work to elevate standards and invest in quality of life have attracted residents and businesses with higher expectations than most suburbs**

While the longstanding success of Cranberry's commercial core poses a challenge to any effort to change or re-imagine it, the Township's track record of boosting standards and quality of life may create pressure in the other direction.

Households that have chosen Cranberry, simply put, could have chosen any number of other suburbs in Greater Pittsburgh that have lower development standards, spend less per capita on parks and public works, or were less deliberate about civic creativity and thinking ahead. But they chose Cranberry and likely have high built-in expectations for their community. These expectations may be difficult to live up to, but setting a high bar and striving to meet it is a key part of successful community development.

# COMMUNITY VISION AND OUTCOMES

PART 2



**Cranberry Township is a place with high standards and high expectations. Its vision for the future does not consist of muddling through and staying above water.**

There are three central components to Cranberry's community-wide vision for the future which together describe a place that maintains its status among the most vibrant and innovative suburbs in Greater Pittsburgh.

Part 2 defines those vision components, translates them into potential planning principles to guide decision-making, and identifies outcomes that will signal progress.

# CRANBERRY'S VISION

A Vision with Three Interconnected Components

Stakeholder conversations during this Redevelopment Study, as well as a review of existing planning documents, revealed a community-wide vision for the future comprised of **three interconnected components**. All three have aspirational qualities but are also rooted to long-term or more recent commitments that are visible in the community.

## A CONNECTED COMMUNITY



## A CHOICE COMMUNITY



## A BALANCED COMMUNITY



## IN 2030 AND BEYOND, CRANBERRY IS...

### A CHOICE COMMUNITY

Cranberry is a suburb of choice in Greater Pittsburgh and is included among the ranks of dynamic and innovative suburbs in similar-sized regions.

The township's history of setting high standards for quality continues to make it attractive to residents and businesses who seek and expect a community with high standards.

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Cranberry has diverse and high-quality housing options and amenities that enable a broad and resilient demographic base to live in the community at different life stages.

The township's strong residential and commercial opportunities reinforce each other and support sustained, forward-looking investments in the community.

### A CONNECTED COMMUNITY

Cranberry's residential, commercial, and recreational opportunities are increasingly well-connected to each other in a manner that supports active lifestyles, public safety, and enjoyment of the township's natural and community assets.

### PLANNING PRINCIPLES



Cranberry's vision components can serve as filters for decision-making. As the expected or unexpected happen, how do the choices in front of community leaders reflect this vision?

A set of planning principles that echo this vision can serve as additional filters. The following are examples of principles that align with Cranberry's vision.



#### We will set and uphold high standards

Our community sets itself apart and succeeds when we communicate to each other and outsiders that we have high standards and take the work of building community seriously. If we wish to cultivate long-term value and remain competitive, we cannot compromise on doing things well and getting things right.



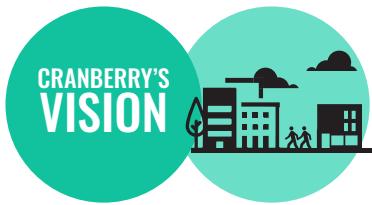
#### We will foster an exceptional quality of life

We choose Cranberry because it is a great place to live and offers a quality of life that is hard to match in this region. We must continue to make the choices, investments, and connections that advance Cranberry's status as a great place to live.



#### We will be a community for all stages of life

We are, and wish to remain, a place that families seek out. We are also a place with a growing range of housing and neighborhood types that provide high-quality options as people transition between life stages, and for younger and older households with diverse needs.



## VISION-ALIGNED OUTCOMES FOR THE COMMERCIAL CORE

If Cranberry is advancing its vision in the coming years, it will be expressed by outcomes that reflect progress across each of the three vision components. The exact outcomes may differ from one part of the township to the next, or from one issue to another. Within the commercial core, though, there are certain basic outcomes that will signify movement in the right direction.

### Evidence that Cranberry's vision is advancing in the commercial core would include...



#### Land values are rising

Cranberry's vision is being advanced if land in the commercial core is increasingly sought after by buyers who have confidence in the township's future and the direction that the core is taking—especially relative to opportunities in other commercial districts in Greater Pittsburgh.

As developers and businesses compete to be at the table, values will rise. Values will rise more, and bolster the potential for redevelopment, if the build-out potential for existing sites exceeds what is currently there.



#### Land uses are intensifying

Intensification of land uses with higher densities of leasable space will be a natural outgrowth of rising values. And higher densities of leasable space, especially of residential and office uses, will bring higher densities of people and customers to activate new public spaces and patronize commercial core retail and services, all of which would expand Cranberry's potential to sustain strong place-based commercial environments.

Greater land use intensity comes, of course, with the potential for more traffic and congestion in an already high-traffic area. Investments in high-quality connective infrastructure within the core for pedestrians, along with continued careful management of auto traffic, would be needed for such an intensification to occur without resulting in negative impacts to access and quality of life within or adjacent to the core.



#### Land uses are becoming more mixed

Manageable levels of land use intensification will require greater levels of land use mixing (both vertical and horizontal) within the core and continued movement away from the strict separation of land uses that was long part of Cranberry's (or any suburb's) development DNA.

Mixed uses will deliver users to multi-modal public infrastructure in the core and make shared parking arrangements more practical. The right mixture of uses combined with the right connective infrastructure will make visits to the commercial core a stronger and more desirable experience that, in turn, will feed further growth in value.

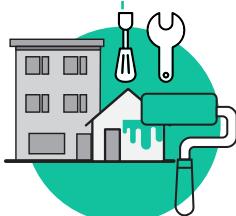
**CRANBERRY'S VISION**

## HOW DO CRANBERRY'S VISION AND CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMERCIAL CORE OVERLAP?



**Areas with redevelopment potential represent opportunities to test connected, mixed-use projects on a small scale**

Parts of the commercial core with near-term redevelopment potential are primarily concentrated west of I-79 and in areas with smaller and older properties. These areas could be the focus for experimental mixed-use projects that test out policies, tools, and infrastructure at a small scale for possible adoption and refinement at a wider scale over time.



**Updates and improvements to small properties could provide commercial “balance” while enhancing Cranberry’s image as a place that people and businesses seek out**

The need to create and maintain “balance” within the commercial core is an important part of Cranberry’s vision, and one that small properties in the core are primed to provide in the near-term with relatively small-scale interventions. Like older commercial plazas in suburbs across the country, those in Cranberry could be important incubators for home-grown retail and eateries that become part of Cranberry’s brand.



**The Township’s regulatory framework for development could be bolstered to more formally codify expectations for a more walkable and visually appealing built environment**

Cranberry Township has done an admirable job since the 1990s in setting higher standards for development and requiring more than the typical suburb. With this reputation now established, an opportunity exists to make baseline expectations for the entire commercial core more formal and fully aligned with the community’s vision.

A blue-toned photograph of a commercial building with a parking lot in the foreground. The building has a large sign that is mostly obscured by the text of the title. The sky is bright and overexposed.

# POTENTIAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE COMMERCIAL CORE

PART 3



**Maintenance of the status quo in a high-performing commercial district is the direction that most places in Cranberry's situation choose. And the status quo has, indeed, treated Cranberry well.**

The status quo in the commercial core is not likely, however, to move Cranberry strongly in the direction of the community's vision. There are realistic directions it could take to move towards that vision, including an active acceleration of redevelopment in targeted areas, and long-term preparations to guide future redevelopment.

Part 3 describes two potential and realistic directions that each come with their own costs and benefits to be discussed and debated as the Township develops its path forward.

# THE UNDENIABLE MOMENTUM OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

**In its current state, Cranberry's commercial core has much going for it and for the various interests that depend on it.**

- It is convenient for Cranberry residents who patronize its businesses on a weekly if not more frequent basis.**
- It is profitable for current owners of leasable property, especially those with little or no debt to service.**
- It is profitable for businesses that benefit from cluster economics, high traffic volumes at their doorsteps, and high household incomes nearby.**
- It is profitable for the Township, generating a substantial share of Cranberry's tax revenues each year from its gross receipts tax and property taxes.**

Moreover, the convenience and profitability that the commercial core represents is highly predictable. Whatever headaches may be encountered from time to time due to traffic volumes and construction, people know how to navigate and use it, even if they are visiting it for the first time.

None of this means that people cherish the commercial core as a place, or that it evokes warm feelings or excitement when people arrive there. Places like this have a utility that does not require that it look good or feel special.

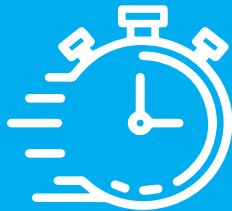
All of these factors contribute a great deal of momentum to the status quo. It makes significant financial and practical sense, especially in the near-term, to keep things as they are.

But it may not make long-term strategic sense to maintain the status quo. Nor is the status quo a natural fit for Cranberry's vision of the future.

This tension—between the momentum of existing conditions that work well for most interests and the imperative to think about and manage long-term risks and opportunities—will require deliberation in Cranberry Township about the costs and benefits of engineering shorter-term changes to the status quo that align with the community's vision versus the costs and benefits of waiting for opportunities to become riper over time when real estate is no longer delivering acceptable returns.

# Timing of Redevelopment in a Healthy or Stable Market

## Factors to Consider When Shaping Public Policy



### ACCELERATE TURNOVER OF PROPERTY FOR NEAR-TERM REDEVELOPMENT

#### Public Role

More active; lead the market in a direction that fits the community's vision before the market would move on its own

#### Costs and Risks

Market gaps must be covered to induce development that will not otherwise occur due to excessive private risk  
Redevelopment may be too far ahead of its time to be sustainable or to achieve the goals being sought; may require unpredictable levels of subsidy

#### Benefits

Exercise greater control over the future of important sites  
Position the market for future demand and value creation by staying ahead of risk-averse competitor communities



### WAIT FOR TURNOVER TO HAPPEN AND REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO EMERGE

#### Public Role

More passive; let the market respond to redevelopment opportunities organically as properties age and demand evolves

#### Costs and Risks

The market moves on to another location or community by the time a property is seen as "ready" for redevelopment, leaving it empty or underutilized  
The community has to live with less than optimal outcomes until conditions become favorable for redevelopment, posing potential threats to image and ability to attract or retain target markets

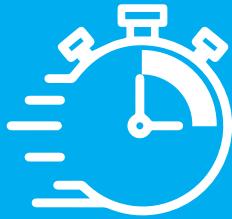
#### Benefits

Continue to collect tax revenues for as long as real estate is performing well; use revenues to invest in other ways that build a community's competitive advantages  
Near-term costs and risks are fewer and more manageable than accelerated redevelopment

# ALTERNATIVE DIRECTIONS THAT ALIGN WITH CRANBERRY'S VISION



CRANBERRY'S  
VISION



**DIRECTION A**

# **STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT**

Move in a direction that accelerates redevelopment so that parts of the commercial core align with Cranberry's vision sooner rather than later. Or move in a direction that plays the waiting game while preparing to shape the future when the time comes.

These are two directions with important distinctions and similarities that would both serve to advance the community's vision. On the following pages, each direction and the strategies they would require are summarized.



**DIRECTION B**

# **STATUS QUO PLUS**



DIRECTION A

# STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

Direction A would require that Cranberry Township embrace an active role in leading the market so that redevelopment takes shape in a manner that reflects public goals and occurs sooner rather than later. Based on existing conditions and opportunities in Cranberry's commercial core, as well as the community's vision, implementation of Direction A would call for the following types of interventions:

1

**Cultivate connected,  
mixed-use centers**

2

**Provide proactive  
support for place-based  
investments**

3

**Update regulatory framework  
for more predictable  
development outcomes**



## DIRECTION A | STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

### 1

## Cultivate connected, mixed-use centers

Using land in the commercial core more intensively will be a key part of advancing Cranberry's vision for a more connected and balanced community that remains competitive well into the future. This will mean development at a greater density and with a greater mix of uses than typically found today in the commercial core—an altogether different pattern from what has been successfully practiced there for decades.

Given the age and current profitability of development in much of the commercial core, a large-scale redevelopment that aims to create a small "downtown" for Cranberry—assembling and clearing dozens of acres to create a traditional town center from scratch—would be prohibitively expensive. A more realistic approach—though not inexpensive—would be one that creates and connects small, mixed-use centers at locations that represent plausible near-term redevelopment opportunities. The emergence of a network of small centers could, over time, expand the township's collection of high-quality spaces and amenities while establishing a credible model for future redevelopment to follow.

### Which parts of Cranberry's commercial core are suitable for mixed-use redevelopment?

There are several factors to consider when evaluating the suitability of locations for mixed-use redevelopment. Obvious factors like land and

construction costs play important roles. So, too, must existing land uses, public infrastructure, public amenities, and local community assets.

The Mixed-Use Conceptual Plan on the following pages, and its components, articulate a framework for mixed-use redevelopment in the commercial core. An important assumption of the conceptual plan is that the areas east of I-79—including Cranberry Springs, Cranberry Crossroads and Cranberry Commons—are all relatively new and unlikely to undergo redevelopment anytime soon. Therefore, the focus of the evaluation and the redevelopment framework is on older developments west of I-79 adjacent to Route 19.

### Why create centers?

Importantly, this direction would require that explicit locations be identified as focal points for mixed-use redevelopment. Only with the creation of "centers" that look and feel distinguishable from other parts of the commercial core can a heightened sense of place be achieved. The alternative—scattered mixed-use redevelopment—would not achieve the critical mass or consistently high quality of public amenities for Cranberry's vision to be realized.

### WHAT WOULD A "MIXED-USE CENTER" INCLUDE?

Under this model of redevelopment, a single mixed-use center could be comprised of a small collection of buildings (perhaps as few as three or four) that together include a mixture of residential uses, commercial uses, and public amenities.

A key element would be their design and form. The buildings would have to address each other and the public realm in a manner that creates a walkable, place-based experience



## MIXED-USE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

With a mixed-use redevelopment framework narrowed to areas west of I-79, this **Mixed-Use Conceptual Plan** displays that broad target area and the components that would have to be integrated for a network of connected, mixed-use centers to take shape. Even within this narrowed area, some areas are much more viable for mixed-use redevelopment, especially in the near-term.

### Auto-oriented Roadways

Routes 19 and 228 are roadways primarily designed to move cars and trucks. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes are well over 30,000, which requires multiple travel lanes in each direction. Traffic volumes and speeds are too high to make walking and biking comfortable, so these corridors will likely never be truly walkable and bikeable. While pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be included, their focus will remain on the automobile, and mixed-use developments will avoid fronting these roads directly.

### Pedestrian-oriented Streets

These streets and roadways are located behind the auto-oriented corridors and include lower traffic volumes with one travel lane in each direction. Characteristics like these, along with proximity to land conducive to mixed-use redevelopment, make these streets opportunities to become pedestrian oriented. When possible, these streets should include on street parking along with sidewalks, street trees and crosswalks with pedestrian signals. Amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and bike racks should be included in key locations.

### Future Streets (Pedestrian-oriented)

Long-term, as mixed-use development takes hold, new streets can help break down large redevelopments into smaller walkable blocks with frontage. When possible, these streets should also include on street parking along with sidewalks, street trees and crosswalks with pedestrian signals. Amenities should be included in key locations.

### Coal Run Trail / Greenway (Proposed)

Public amenities like parks, trails and greenways contribute to the quality of life in a community and add value to nearby development. Coal Run provides the opportunity to develop an adjacent trail or greenway that would connect pedestrians and bicyclists from Rochester Road to Executive Drive. A spur could also provide an important connection to the Cranberry Township Municipal Center and its new civic space fronting Rochester Road.

### Multi-modal Gateway Nodes (Proposed)

These key intersections are generally located at the periphery of the proposed mixed-use development areas and aim to leverage the visibility and access provided by the high traffic volumes corridors. These nodes are envisioned to be pedestrian friendly gateways to the mixed-use areas with sidewalks, street trees, high visibility crosswalks, wayfinding signage, and other features that enhance the intersections as important decision points. Development at these intersections should engage the public realm with parking tucked to the side or to the rear of buildings and never on the corner.

### Mixed-use Redevelopment Areas

#### Short-term

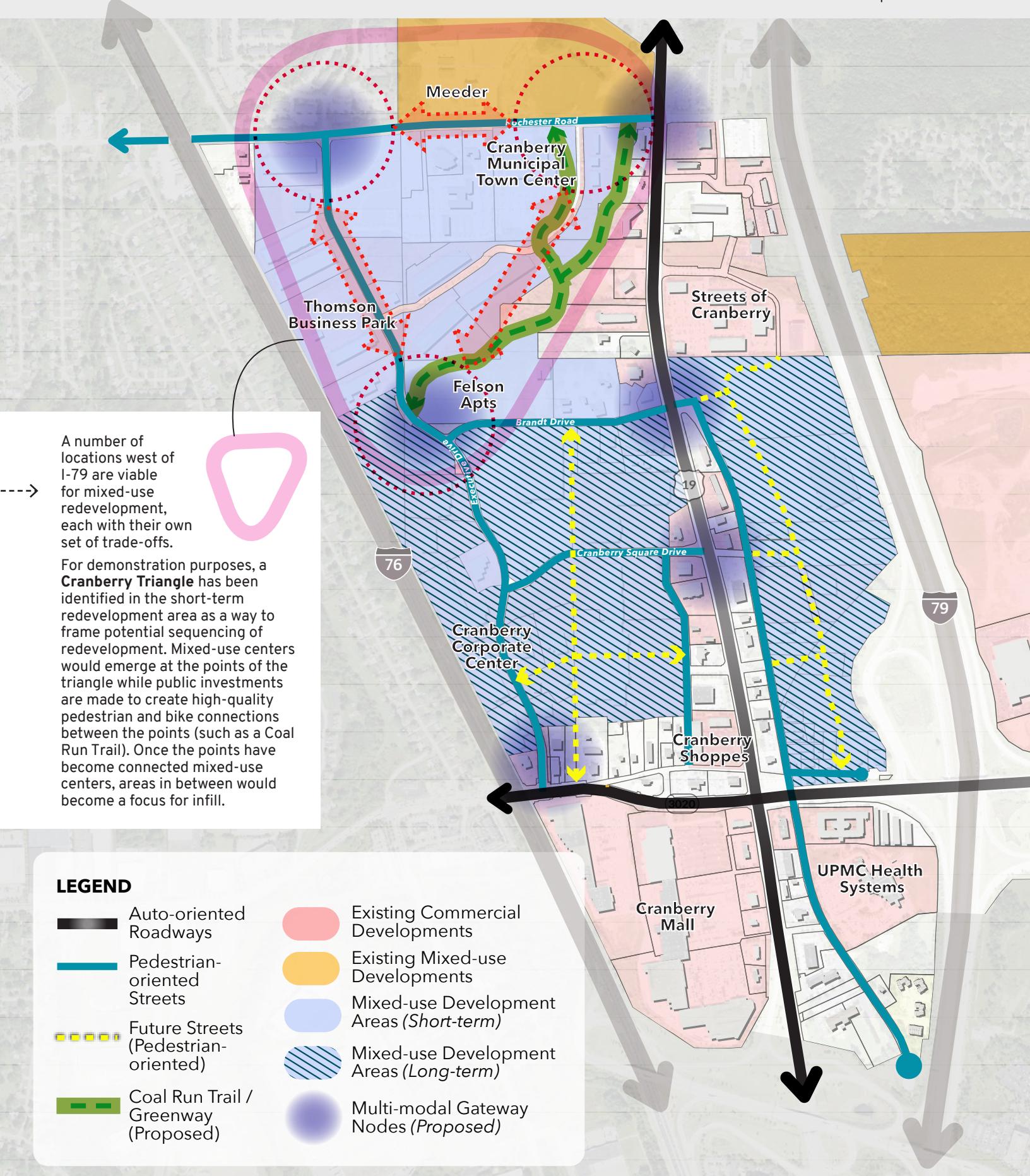
A “Redevelopment Premium” that accounts for the acquisition of real estate that is performing well financially is an important consideration in Cranberry’s commercial core. Areas north of Brandt Drive, west of Route 19, are estimated to have a **redevelopment premium of around \$1 million per acre** owing to a mixture of underutilized and vacant land. This is the lowest premium among the areas analyzed and a rationale for this area to be a shorter-term prospect for redevelopment than other areas.

Another factor driving this area’s potential in the short term is the momentum of the recently completed Meeder development and forthcoming enhancements at the Cranberry Township Municipal Center.

#### Long-term

Land south of Brandt Drive between I-79 and I-76 is likely to take longer to redevelop due to higher acquisition costs and less favorable proximity to existing assets.

While redevelopment premiums north of Brandt Drive are estimated to be around \$1 million per acre, premiums south of Brand Drive are estimated to be closer to \$3 or \$4 million per acre.



## HYPOTHETICAL REDEVELOPMENT EXAMPLE IN THE CRANBERRY TRIANGLE

Redevelopment in areas that are more favorable than others in Cranberry's commercial core, including the Cranberry Triangle identified in the Mixed-Use Conceptual Plan, is unlikely to happen without help. This is especially true for redevelopment that would create a more urbanized development pattern not dominated by surface parking lots.

The financial challenges, and potential solutions, are clarified by examining a hypothetical project in the Cranberry Triangle, how it would pencil-out if no public assistance were provided, and what it would take to make project risks more manageable for the developer, their investors, and traditional lenders.



### CONCEPT

A developer has identified a 5.5-acre site within the Cranberry Triangle, adjacent to Coal Run, as a mixed-use development opportunity. Analysis of the site has resulted in a rough concept for:



220 units of rental housing spread across five buildings of three-to-four stories (a density of 40 units/acre)



181 structured parking spaces, to limit consumption of land by surface parking



10,000-12,000 square feet of ground floor neighborhood-scale commercial space



An amenity-rich setting with high-quality community spaces for an upper middle income target market



### ESTIMATED DEVELOPMENT COST

The site's location in the Cranberry Triangle means that, for starters, there is a \$1 million/acre redevelopment premium (or \$25,000 per new unit) to cover acquisition of real estate and businesses, with all other costs added from there.



Acquisition cost or redevelopment premium:

**\$5,500,000**



Construction costs @ \$250/square foot:

**\$49,500,000**



Parking premium @ \$35,000/unit:

**\$7,700,000**



Amenities and financing costs @ \$40,000/unit:

**\$8,800,000**

Total Residential Development Cost:

**\$71,500,000**

### RENT

### REQUIRED RENTS WITHOUT PUBLIC SUBSIDY

The estimated development costs for this project would require **average monthly rents of \$3,250**. To afford this rent, a household would have to make at least \$130,000 per year.

**\$3,250**



Lowering the level of amenities to something more basic would cut average rent to \$3,000, requiring income of \$120,000.

**\$3,000**

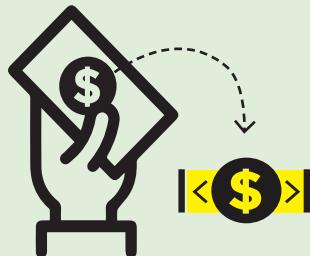


While these required incomes are close to the township's median income, the rent levels are well above market rents in Cranberry's newer apartment complexes—pushed upward primarily by the redevelopment and parking premiums. As conceived, there may be too much of a market gap (and too much risk) for this project to be financed.

**< \$ >**

## POTENTIAL ASSISTANCE AND ADJUSTMENTS

### MARKET RENT SUBSIDIES TO CLOSE MARKET GAPS



To bring proposed rents on this project more into line with prevailing market rents for newer units in Cranberry (\$2,500), the total residential development costs borne and financed by the developer would have to be lowered to \$55,000,000. That represents a \$16,500,000 (or \$75,000 per unit) gap to close for an amenity-rich product that upper middle income households would demand, and an \$11,000,000 (or \$50,000 per unit) gap to close for a more basic product.

Cranberry Township could help to close these gaps in a combination of the following ways:



#### Site acquisition

Performing the up-front site acquisition and clearance work to bear the redevelopment premium itself, followed by issuance of an RFP for a developer to build a project such as this hypothetical example.



#### Parking assistance

Covering all or part of the parking premium in order to obtain a higher-density mixed-use project that does not require acres of surface parking.



#### Site Improvements

Cover some portion of site preparation and infrastructure costs.



#### Direct per-unit subsidy

Provide a per-unit subsidy in return for a project that aligns with Township goals and offers lowered rents over a specified period.



#### Indirect operating subsidy

Reduce tax obligations to lower the owner's operating costs over a specified period.

### SUBSIDIES TO SUPPORT BELOW MARKET RENTS FOR TARGETED HOUSEHOLDS



Achieving lower rent levels for workforce housing or seniors with restricted incomes may be of interest to Cranberry due to the retail and service sector workforce in the commercial core, as well as the graying demographics of Greater Pittsburgh.

Doing so for all or a portion of the 220 units in this hypothetical example would simply mean larger gaps to close. Bringing average rents down to the levels below, for example, would each be accompanied by a specific per-unit gap to close:

AVERAGE RENT	PER-UNIT GAP TO CLOSE	<(\$)>
\$2,000	\$100,000	
\$1,750	\$125,000	
\$1,500	\$150,000	

*Note: This hypothetical example has been modeled by czb based on prevailing construction and financing costs in Greater Pittsburgh in spring 2023, as well as site acquisition costs in the area specified.*



## DIRECTION A | STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

### 2

## Provide proactive support for place-based investments

Alongside the cultivation of connected, mixed-use centers, Direction A would be advanced by supplemental efforts in areas beyond those that experience mixed-use redevelopment. Chief among these efforts would be the stimulation of private investment in older and smaller properties that represent opportunities to nurture place-based retail and services.

In keeping with Direction A's emphasis on accelerated change, tools that would help to initiate these place-based investments include:

### Support for Exterior and Site Improvements

Aging plazas, strip malls, or standalone buildings are likely to have a few or multiple features that are out of step with modern best practices. While some features may be charming and worth maintaining, others may contribute to safety, aesthetic, or other issues that the community is looking to move past. Active partnerships with property owners to amend problematic property features is one way to turn older and smaller properties into assets that contribute to the community's vision.

Improvements to assist through matching grants or low-interest loans include:

**Facade improvements**

**Signage upgrades**

**Parking lot reconfigurations**

**Upgrades to pedestrian and bike circulation**

### Support for Interior Improvements

Partnerships on interior improvements are a way to accelerate the production of spaces that are well-suited for modern businesses, with updated fixtures, mechanical systems, and infrastructure. This is especially helpful with regard to preparing a space for use by restaurants and other food services. Township support for these improvements may be tied to the maintenance of specific lease rates that are conducive to entry by local startups.



## DIRECTION A | STRATEGIC REDEVELOPMENT

### 3

## Update development framework for more predictable development outcomes

Design will play an important role in achieving the community's vision within the commercial core. As Cranberry moves toward a place-based retail approach, higher quality design of the built environment and the integration of the public and private realms will be a requirement for success. Up to this point the focus has been on the public realm with less attention paid to custom and/or innovative private sector development.

As a component of the zoning code, the Township has the General Manual of Written and Graphic Design Guidelines. This includes a series of overlay districts. Depending on the overlay, regulations address architecture, street network and streetscape, crosswalks, signage, landscaping, land use, and several other public and private realm design components. The goal of these overlays is to produce a better built environment and, based on a review of the regulations, they include many best practices. However, the overlays are optional and are not often selected by applicants along the commercial corridors.

As a result, site and building design has been typical suburban strip development with little to no design relevance to Cranberry. The Streetscape Enhancement Overlay District is the only mandatory overlay, and it is applicable to many streets within the study area including the two major commercial corridors. The Streetscape Enhancement Overlay is producing results, and this is evident by the required brick piers and fences along the corridors. This unique design feature is becoming a signature design element for the Cranberry Corridors. However, beyond the fences lies an abundance of front yard parking, little landscaping, and typical box buildings. For this to consistently change, zoning modifications will be needed.

### Establish baseline expectations within the zoning code for all development

The Township should create required standards for all development within the study area. These baseline standards should be principle-based

and focus on best practices for site, building, landscape, and streetscape design along with up-to-date parking requirements. A unified circulation and access system should be standard practice and integrate with adjacent developments. The pedestrian circulation system should safely connect the public realm with the private realm. Consideration should be given to standards that address:

#### Building placement and general composition

- Minimum and maximum setbacks
- Minimum and maximum building height and length
- Building base, mid-section, and crown
- Entrance location and transparency along street frontages
- Multibuilding developments

#### Parking lot placement, landscaping, and right-sized parking requirements (including maximum)

#### Consolidated curb cuts, cross-access, etc.

#### Pedestrian circulation and facilities

#### Signage

#### Landscaping, fences, and walls

### Include a mixed-use option within the existing CCD overlay

Consider modifying the existing mixed-use district or creating a new overlay within the CCD that accommodates mixed-use development. The district should address both vertical and horizontal mixed-use development along with required design standards with a focus on walkability and integrating the public and private realms. Many of the design components listed above should be addressed. Buildings should be located and designed with frontages that engage the public realm with streets that include sidewalks, street trees, and on-street parking, when possible. Parking should be located to the side or rear of buildings and never on street corners. Shared parking should be encouraged.



## DIRECTION B STATUS QUO PLUS

Direction B would involve Cranberry Township taking a less active role in leading the market than Direction A. But it would involve greater levels of preparation for the future and anticipation of redevelopment needs than currently exist. Based on existing conditions and opportunities in Cranberry's commercial core, as well as the community's vision, implementation of Direction B would call for the following types of interventions:

1

**Assemble resources and tools to actively guide redevelopment when the time comes**

2

**Provide proactive support for place-based investments**

3

**Update regulatory framework for more predictable development outcomes**

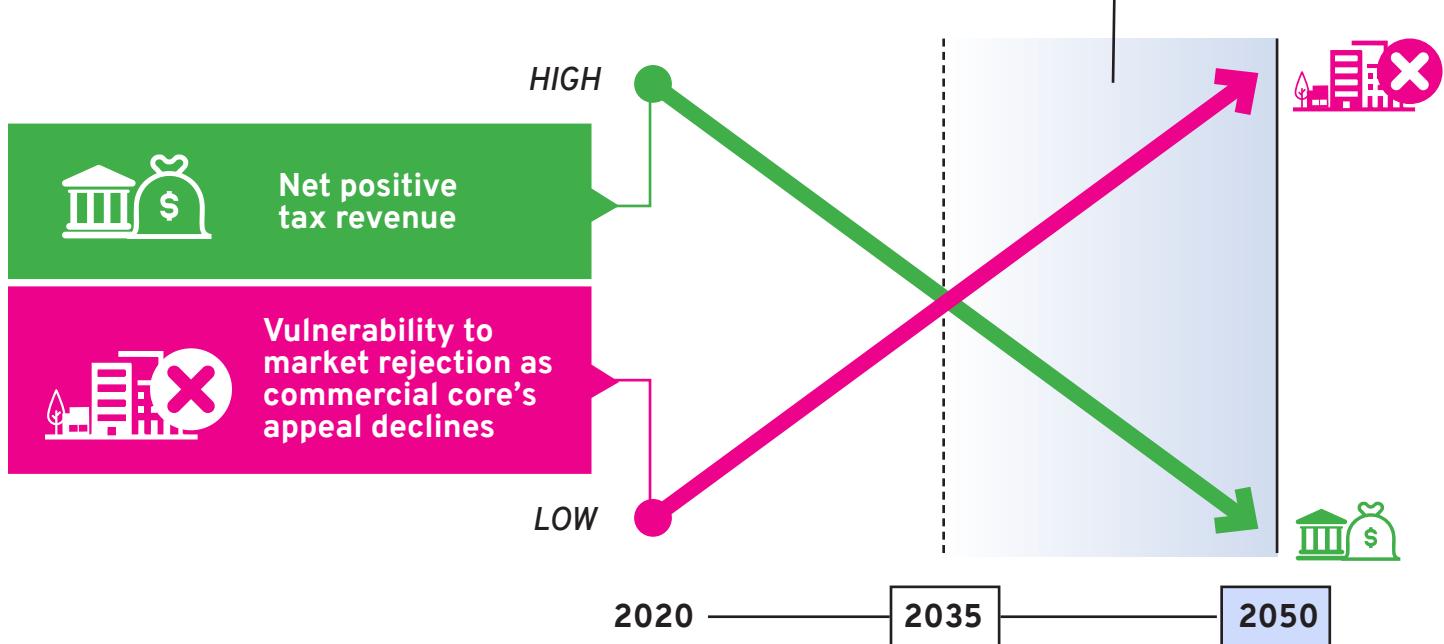
## Direction B's inherent risk: waiting too long to act

Direction B is more proactive than the status quo. As outlined on the following pages, it would involve the Township setting aside resources to eventually guide redevelopment, ensuring that Cranberry's regulatory framework is aligned with its vision, and actively supporting place-based investments in the near-term.

But this direction still carries the risk of intervening in the market at a point in the future when real estate in the commercial core is less competitive and more poorly positioned to attract the levels of reinvestment needed to achieve Cranberry's vision. As the simple diagram below suggests, Cranberry today enjoys strong net positive tax revenues from its commercial core. As infrastructure and buildings age, net

tax revenues can be expected to diminish as expenses rise. At the same time, the aging of commercial properties increases their collective vulnerability to changes in the market that favor other locations in Greater Pittsburgh or other commercial formats.

**Over time, as net tax revenues decline amid growing vulnerabilities in the commercial core, Cranberry's position to strongly intervene in the market will weaken.** Though it is difficult to anticipate the timing of these two trajectories, czb estimates that a threshold could be reached around 2035 beyond which the costs to recover from market vulnerabilities may overtake Cranberry's capacity to engineer a turnaround.





## DIRECTION B | STATUS QUO PLUS

1

### Assemble resources and tools to actively guide redevelopment when the time comes

Direction B would steer clear of actively trying to cultivate a network of mixed-use centers in the near term, but it would not steer clear of preparing for a future that involves that type of vision-aligned development. To put Cranberry Township in a position to potentially guide redevelopment in the longer-term, Direction B requires a level of preparation and intervention akin to the following:

#### **Create and capitalize a robust Cranberry Redevelopment Fund**

A Cranberry Redevelopment Fund would be a rainy day fund, of sorts, specifically intended to allow the Township to participate in the acquisition and repositioning of strategically located properties in the future. Built up over time through annual allocations from the general fund, a CRF would be used to shape outcomes that are positive for the commercial core and contribute to the community's vision.

#### **Designate a redevelopment entity**

Along with creating and capitalizing a CRF, Direction B would involve the designation of an entity or authority that would manage the CRF within parameters set by the Board of Supervisors. Such an entity or authority would also have a leadership role in developing plans, acquiring and holding property, disposition of property, designating master developers for properties acquired with CRF resources, and other duties or roles typically held by redevelopment authorities.



## DIRECTION B | STATUS QUO PLUS

---

2

**Provide proactive support for place-based investments**

3

**Update development framework for more predictable development outcomes**

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Similar to Direction A, Direction B would position Cranberry Township well for long-term redevelopment by instituting regulatory updates and helping to nurture place-based investments.

For details on these two strategy components, see details provided under Direction A.

# Next Steps

This redevelopment study is intended to inform and prime a conversation in Cranberry Township about how to think and act strategically when it comes to one of the community's biggest assets. Both directions for the commercial core presented in Part 3 are departures from business as usual—not just in Cranberry but in the vast majority of communities in similar positions. Pursuing either one will not be a decision made lightly or quickly, nor should a decision to maintain the status quo.

The process of choosing a direction as a community is work that should begin with the completion of this study. And because the direction chosen for the commercial core is inseparable from Cranberry's vision for the future and any long-range planning exercise the township undertakes, these decisions should be made in a manner that simultaneously gives shape to an updated comprehensive plan. Consequently, the following outline of recommended next steps takes the form of a timeline that would conclude with an updated comprehensive plan and regulatory framework.

2023-2024

## Education and Discussion

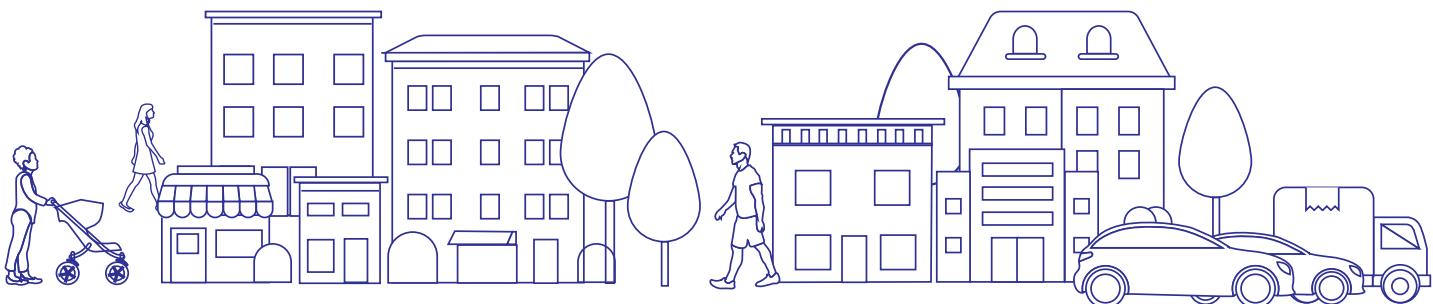


A concerted effort to present the findings and discuss the implications of this Redevelopment Study is a critical first step toward deciding what the community wants and what it is willing to do to get what it wants.

These efforts, from completion of the study through the end of 2024, can help set a tone for informed dialogue about Cranberry's future that would persist through other topics and public processes for the following five years.



2023  
REDEVELOPMENT  
STUDY of Cranberry Township's  
Commercial Core



2024-2026

2027-2028

## Comprehensive Planning Preparation

Community discussions of this study would be expanded to a series of topics and planning efforts that set the table for long-range plan and policy updates.

### Community Visioning



The vision identified in this redevelopment study should be the starting point for a wider visioning process to confirm or revise components of the community's vision. Identification of core values and how they translate to planning principles will be key in producing an ambitious but realistic vision.

### Housing Strategy



Housing is the single largest land use in the Township and is already playing an expanded role in the future of the commercial core. A thorough understanding of housing trends and needs will be important for strategies within and beyond the core.

### Commercial Core Master Plan



Confirmation of the community's vision and informed discussions about the findings of this Redevelopment Study can form the basis of a full-fledged master planning process for all or chosen parts of the commercial core. A master plan would provide specific guidance on physical planning and policies to shape redevelopment in the core in a manner that reflects the community's confirmed vision. Amendments to the regulatory framework should then be made, as necessary, to implement the master plan.

### Study of Other Priorities

Additional Cranberry priorities that require detailed study and attention could be pursued at this time, as could updates to plans for critical township infrastructure.

*Elements of Direction A or B as presented in this study could begin during this period as community visioning confirms an overall direction for Cranberry, and as that formalized vision gives shape to a housing strategy and detailed commercial core master plan.*

## Comprehensive Plan and Regulatory Framework Update

The last update to the Cranberry Plan—the Township's comprehensive plan—was adopted in 2016. The plan will be due for another update later this decade, as would the building and development codes that are legally tethered to the plan. The timing of these updates could serve a critical role in ratifying and advancing an emerging collection of plans and strategies.

### Comprehensive Plan



Steps taken during the Comprehensive Planning Preparation Period would produce ready-to-use components that could be consolidated into an updated comprehensive plan, especially one that follows DCED's guidance for implementable plans.

Adoption of an updated plan would formalize Cranberry's vision, priorities, and long-term policies associated with the commercial core.

### Updated Codes



Adoption of an updated comprehensive plan would pave the way for updated zoning and building codes to reflect the plan.

While targeted amendments or patches to codes can be made sooner to address inconsistencies with existing plans, a full update of Cranberry's regulatory framework would be a critical step to aid with the implementation of the commercial core master plan and other pieces of the comprehensive plan.

2023—

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# REDEVELOPMENT

## STUDY of Cranberry Township's Commercial Core

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with MJB Consulting

