

SUMMARY

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Crafton - Ingram

THRIVE



**A Small-Town Feel for a New Generation:
Working Together for a Community Plan**

A plan to thrive

Crafton and Ingram want to enhance the boroughs’ small-town feel while propelling the communities forward. Working together, the boroughs can build on strengths and make improvements. Crafton and Ingram will each retain their friendly, small-town identities and character, and begin growing in new ways.

Crafton and Ingram collaborated to produce an implementable comprehensive plan and early intervention programs. The two policy initiatives together create an effective review and plan for creating changes that residents and officials desire while maximizing use of resources.

The boroughs chose four working areas as the primary focus of the implementable plan. Work to make positive changes is already under way.



Chapter 1: Deteriorating Properties



Chapter 2: Commercial Development



Chapter 3: Walkability + Connectivity



Chapter 3: Communications

Why you should care

- ▶ Citizens expressed a need for change in the four key areas and are expecting follow-through.
- ▶ The communities can best ensure their future viability by adapting their small-town identities for the next generation of home- and business owners, as detailed in this plan.
- ▶ There are costs to making changes (time, money, effort), but also costs to doing nothing (resentment, declining property values and less tax revenue).

Now who does what?

This report can serve as a guide in the following ways:

- ▶ **ELECTED OFFICIALS** - This report documents the development of the comprehensive plan. It identifies the directions in which the boroughs will change, and lays out the practical next steps that will produce the desired changes. Next steps, in most cases, rest in the hands of elected and appointed officials who have the role and responsibility of initiating new policies or procedures; providing funding via grants or city revenue streams; providing human and material resources; and lending oversight. Residents expect leadership from their elected officials, including anticipating future challenges before they become today's problems.
- ▶ **CITIZENS** - Individuals may advocate for the plan and track progress by comparing the steps listed in this report to physical changes in the community and actions taken by the two boroughs. Citizens must attend public meetings where decisions are made. Citizens must take an active role by pressing for the actions and policies listed in this plan, which are designed to create change in the two communities. Citizens also may support and propel change by volunteering for committees or for special initiatives.
- ▶ **BOROUGH STAFF MEMBERS** - Crafton and Ingram employees have the responsibility of identifying successive next steps and tracking progress. They will work on a day-to-day basis to develop policies and procedures; muster resources; and assist elected and appointed officials in pushing the outcomes of the plan. Staff members are in the best position to spot obstacles to progress and propose solutions.
- ▶ **APPOINTED OFFICIALS** - People serving on a new joint Planning Commission should become deeply familiar with the contents of this report. These members, along with other board and commission members, hold the responsibility of keeping they boroughs' "foot on the gas" for implementing the steps in this plan, anticipating what should happen next, and proposing action, and solving problems that will clear the way for progress.

Deteriorating Properties

Crafton and Ingram will be an attractive location where property values remain steady or grow, and where well-maintained homes and businesses create a healthy and inviting place to live, work and participate fully in community life. The main steps:

- Create a Blight/Enforcement Action Team to lead an overall process for addressing existing and emerging property maintenance problems and preventing new ones.



The presence of poorly maintained properties harms the value of other homes or buildings in the area.

- Adopt policies and practices that prevent and remediate property deterioration, including creating a consistent approach between the two communities, implementing new ordinances and programs, and employing a full-time code enforcement officer.
- Make it easier to improve and redevelop properties, including providing easy access to information about investment opportunities.
- Build awareness of and engagement in these efforts to show residents and business owners the two boroughs are energetically pursuing solutions to a problem identified by residents as one of the most critical in the communities.

Commercial Development

Crafton and Ingram will present business owners and investors, workers and residents with viable, diverse, convenient and attractive commercial environments. The main steps:

- Create a shared planning and zoning initiative to support the two boroughs' vision, goals and strategy steps, beginning with a new joint planning commission. This commission will lead efforts to revising zoning ordinances, and will be the champions of implementing this comprehensive plan.
- Create a new impression of Crafton and Ingram's available properties and investment opportunities. This includes adopting policies and program that support redevelopment, and adding to the boroughs' capacity. One important step is to partner with Economic Development South to secure expertise and assistance to get the work done.
- Reinvigorate the Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center. This includes close communication with owners to ensure changes follow progressive design standards, and for the boroughs to implement streetscape and connectivity improvements within rights-of-way.

Connectivity + Walkability

Crafton and Ingram will attract and retain residents and businesses by maintaining and improving the boroughs' status as highly walkable communities. The main steps:

- Identify existing and potential routes within, between and beyond the boroughs, and make improvements, such as repairs, new sidewalks, more visible crosswalks and other amenities that enhance walkability and connectivity.
- Build public awareness of the boroughs' strength and viability as walkable and bikeable communities. Publicize the walking/biking routes and create activities that engage citizens in more outdoor exercise for health and community-building.

Communications

Crafton and Ingram will engage the public through timely, accurate and effective two-way communications. The main steps:

- Learn the means by which residents, institutions and businesses want to receive information, ask questions or share ideas with the boroughs. Develop a communications plan and toolkit that meets these needs, and revise staff roles and responsibilities for consistent and effective two-way communications.
- Add information, functionality and usefulness to borough websites. Reasonable achievement goals may be set by viewing award-winning websites from other Pennsylvania communities of the same size.
- Create and implement a protocol for welcoming citizen participation and attendance at council and other official meetings.
- Develop a volunteer recognition program.



Both boroughs are already very "walkable." Improvements along key walking routes will enhance the boroughs' status as livable and desirable communities.

What set this plan in motion

Implementable comprehensive plans should be as deeply rooted as possible in community opinion. This was true for the Crafton-Ingram Thrive plan, which also placed a high priority on building awareness in the boroughs about the planning process.

Initial public meetings



On a walking tour of the boroughs, members of the steering committee pass a popular local restaurant.

- Our process began with public meetings in each borough, at which residents listed and prioritized the issues they felt are most important to the community, and also explained which problems are most feasible to address.
- The meetings were well attended, considering the boroughs' size. Long- and newer-term residents attended.
- Comments at the public meeting in Ingram reflected heightened sensitivities about a charged issue that was under discussion at the time: the future of the Volunteer Fire Department. Ingram Borough Council resolved the VFD issue while work proceeded with this plan. However,

some residents who were displeased with the VFD decision stated a mistrust of the planning process as well, saying they had lost confidence in any initiative led by the council.

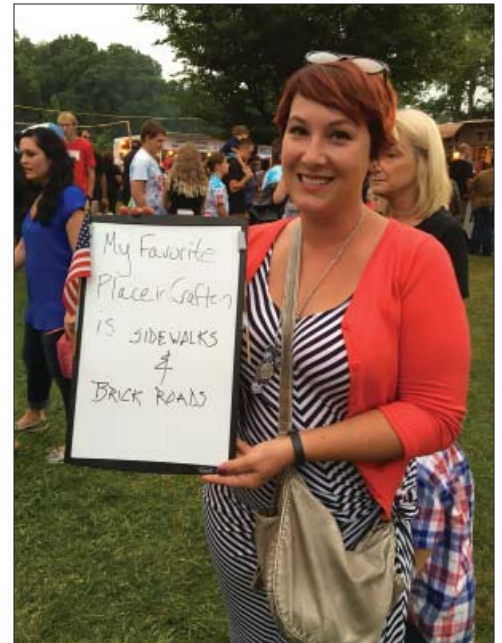
Steering committee

- Membership in the steering committee included long- and newer-term residents from both communities, members of the borough councils and planning commissions, the Crafton Borough manager, and the shared code enforcement officer. Meeting locations alternated between the two boroughs.
- The committee finalized the list of four key working areas.
- Members of the steering committee subsequently chose one or two of the working area topics as ones they would particularly help to pursue during the planning process. It is hoped that they will continue to help lead change as part of an ongoing process that is the heart of implementable comprehensive planning.
- As part of our information-gathering for the four working areas, the consultant and steering committee went on walking tours of the boroughs. This propelled common understanding of baseline conditions for Connectivity + Walkability, Commercial Development, and Deteriorating Properties.

Community awareness-building

A distinctive element of the implementable planning process in Crafton and Ingram was a well-developed and energetic effort to spread the word in the community about the planning process; collect opinions; and acquire contact information for people who might be willing to participate more actively in civic life in the future.

- Pashek Associates, serving as planning practice consultant, created a comprehensive plan website, providing information to the community about the four key working areas and how to get involved. The site is: CIThrive.wordpress.com
- The steering committee and borough councils created a flyer that was sent to all residents. This explained the comprehensive planning process, the reasons behind choosing the four key working areas, and community goals for each of the four.
- Committee members and consultant held two pop-up events outside the Giant-Eagle store in Crafton-Ingram Shopping Plaza at which they handed out flyers, explained the plan and asked for input.
- Crafton Celebrates! and Ingram Days are the most well-attended annual events in each community. Held in the summer, they are great opportunities to meet large numbers of residents. Steering committee members and the consultant created a presence at each event to build awareness of the plan and generate community spirit. Residents were asked to pose for social media photos showing their favorite things about their boroughs.
- Community awareness efforts naturally align with the implementation strategies presented in the Communications working area within this comprehensive plan.



At Crafton Celebrates! and Ingram Days, residents told us their favorite thing in the boroughs. This resident wrote: "Sidewalks and brick roads."

Crafton's top tasks in next 6 months

Of the implementation steps outlined in this plan, this list suggests what to do right away.

- ▶ Consider joining with Ingram to hire new code enforcement officer.
- ▶ Apply for a grant to update zoning ordinances to be consistent with this comprehensive plan and to assist in achieving the goals of this plan.



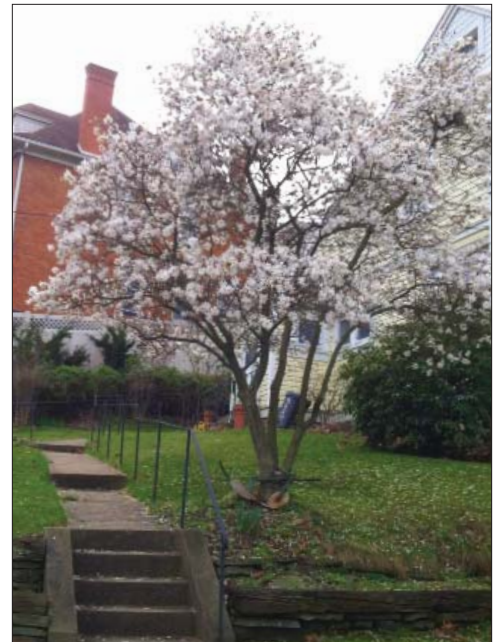
Focusing on four working areas encourages progress on matters that the boroughs feel are most important.

- ▶ Work with Ingram to form a Blight/Enforcement Action Team, and begin working on a comprehensive strategy to focus on deteriorated properties.
- ▶ Explore Allegheny County Land Bank program and join.
- ▶ Create a joint planning commission with Ingram to champion the contents of this plan.
- ▶ Negotiate in concert with Ingram a contract with Economic Development South to provide professional capacity regarding economic development.
- ▶ Meet one or two times a year with owners of Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center properties to coordinate efforts to improve the appearance of the center. Identify grants that the borough can obtain to support the private developer(s) in improving the space.
- ▶ Create a joint connectivity working group to identify and implement improvements in borough walking and biking routes as detailed in comprehensive plan.
- ▶ Street Tree Commission should continue its work, including applying for TreeVitalize grant to add trees along identified walking routes.
- ▶ The current joint communications working group should develop a communications toolkit for both boroughs to employ, and should pursue the other communications strategies in this plan.

Ingram's top tasks in next 6 months

Of the implementation steps outlined in this plan, this list suggests what to do right away.

- ▶ Consider joining with Crafton to hire new code enforcement officer.
- ▶ Apply for a grant to update zoning ordinances to be consistent with this comprehensive plan and to assist in achieving the goals of this plan.
- ▶ In the meantime, revise current regulations to adopt the current International Property Maintenance Code.
- ▶ Enact rental registration program.
- ▶ Explore Allegheny County Land Bank program and join.
- ▶ Create a joint planning commission with Crafton to champion the contents of this plan.
- ▶ Work with Crafton to form a joint Blight/Enforcement Action Team, and begin working on a comprehensive strategy to focus on deteriorated properties.
- ▶ Negotiate in concert with Crafton a contract with Economic Development South to provide professional capacity regarding economic development.
- ▶ Meet one or two times a year with owners of Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center properties to coordinate efforts to improve the appearance of the center. Identify grants that the borough can obtain to support the private developer(s) in improving the space.
- ▶ Create a joint connectivity working group to identify and implement improvements in borough walking and biking routes as detailed in comprehensive plan.
- ▶ The borough should collaborate with Crafton to apply for a TreeVitalize grant to add trees along identified walking routes.
- ▶ The current joint communications working group should develop a communications toolkit for both boroughs to employ, and should pursue the other communications strategies in this plan.



An Ingram yard in springtime.

Acknowledgements

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Ingram Borough Council

- Richard "Sam" Nucci, President of Council
- Greg Butler, Vice President of Council
- Karen Dixon
- Joe Chesno
- Jerry Ellis
- Samantha Wilfert
- Don Bennett

Steering Committee

Crafton

- Robert Herring
- Lydia Herring
- Phillip Levasseur
- Dave Morgan
- David O'Brien
- Dennis Piper
- Megan Schriver
- Ann Scott

Ingram

- Don Bennett
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