

Crafton Comprehensive Plan



2019 Progress Report

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How to Use This Report

Each section’s point-by-point breakdown is assessed using the following color and symbol guide.

- ✓ **Crafton has achieved/completed this strategic goal.**
- **Crafton is still working on this strategic goal.**
- ❖ **This goal is not appropriate or realistic for implementation at this time given Crafton’s community context, immediate needs or resources. Further consideration is needed.**

Introduction



Crafton's latest comprehensive plan, Crafton-Ingram Thrive, was adopted in 2017 in partnership with Ingram Borough. Billed as an "implementable comprehensive plan," the purpose of the document was to identify both low-hanging fruit as well as long-range goals the boroughs could work towards over the next several years. The plan's four priority areas were identified via surveys, pop-up event booths, and community feedback sessions, or "charrettes," where respondents helped the planning team determine community consensus on the most pressing policy issues.

Comprehensive plans can be designed to have a useful life of a variety of time spans, depending on the size and scope of the community – ten years is fairly standard for smaller communities, whereas many larger cities are establishing "2040" plans at the current time. In some cases, "2050" vision documents are being drafted for regional planning agencies tasked with creating transit plans that require major infrastructure work.

Feedback from members of the steering committee indicates that Crafton-Ingram Thrive was designed to function on a condensed scale of around five years. This was likely done in concert with the Early Intervention Plan, a document funded by the DCED's Strategic Management Planning Program that addressed the borough's financial concerns on a five-year timeframe. The recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Plan were thus meant to be the first steps towards a larger paradigm shift in how the boroughs prepare for a sustainable future.

This "progress report" has been created to update the community on where we are in September 2019 as we approach the midpoint in this five-year timeframe. Although the passage of time can bring changes in elected and appointed officials, volunteer composition, and staffing and administrative capacity, a comprehensive plan is meant to ensure a level of continuity for shared community values and goals. We're excited to share with the community how much progress has been made, as well as present opportunities for passionate residents to get involved as we continue the work of executing the plan's goals.

The following sections of this document provide a point-by-point breakdown of progress on overall strategies as well as individual groundwork steps and activities. For items that are still a work-in-progress, the detailed report outlines next steps or a call for volunteer support where it's most needed. Each section also concludes with a summary inventory of the remaining items of each priority area in a simple checklist format. We hope you'll join us in checking the remaining boxes off in these summary inventories, whether you're reading this from the comfort of your Crafton home or joining us at a public meeting sometime soon.

Respectfully presented,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rachel J. Susko". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Rachel J. Susko
Borough Manager

Deteriorating Properties

Goals and Objectives

1. Preserve and enhance property values.
2. Create opportunities for commercial/economic growth.
3. Improve or create opportunities for safe and healthy residential, social, recreational and cultural life.
4. Create and sustain visually attractive locations and views.

I. Strategies and Implementation Steps

Strategy 1: Create a comprehensive process for addressing deteriorating properties.

- Gain consensus for developing a strategy for addressing blight and deteriorating properties.
 - ✓ **Engage political leadership.**
 - ✓ **Commit staff resources, including fully supporting the work of the shared code enforcement officer. Add or strengthen codes and resources.**

Although the Comp Plan originally recommended a shared code officer due to the joint nature of the plan, this is not the best solution for Crafton's needs. The current code enforcement officer, brought on board in July 2018, already has plenty to do with Crafton alone and the nature of an enforcement approach that includes context and consideration for borough residents requires the administrative team to work closely and with the weight of management discretion. This is hard to do when you're dividing services that you are in fact capable of administering in-house. This goal is being checked off because Crafton *has* indeed committed significant staff resources for enforcing Crafton's codes.

- ✓ **Engage key stakeholders through BEAT, including the code enforcement officer, representatives of the planning commission, police and fire officials, human services workers, the local magistrate and the district attorney.**

Although the BEAT committee has not regularly met recently, the borough has realistically fulfilled this objective. Between the code enforcement officer, borough staff and elected officials, and the local magistrate, we're able to move forward with this policy priority. Coordination with the PD and VFD occurs on an as-needed basis. The BEAT team could be revived for support of current activities.

- Assess the nature and extent of the communities' problem with deteriorating properties.

- ✓ **Develop definitions of blight and distress.**

This item required some retooling from the work done by the interns of summer 2018, which labeled almost any property with back taxes as blighted. The result was a picture that was much more negative/dire than the reality. New map-based blight assessments are calculated by taking 80% of the median annual property tax burden, multiplied by 3 (this should capture most realistic property valuations and it's more likely there's a permanent problem after 3rd year of unpaid taxes). The delinquent/blighted property map is now much more similar to the Comp Plan's qualitative assessment of deteriorated properties; in fact, several have already been addressed via demos.

- ✓ **Provide ongoing training for the code enforcement officer.**

A dedicated training/continuing ed budget was added in 2019.

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- ✓ **Link code enforcement activities with GIS data.**

- Create the capacity to lead the fight against blight.

- ✓ **Create a vision for desired outcomes.**

- ✓ **Select strategies to address prevention, remediation, and redevelopment.**

Between code enforcement (prevention) and demolition budgets (remediation), the borough seems to prefer taking blighted houses down and allowing the empty lots to be taken by the Side Yard Program. That strategy doesn't leave much room for redevelopment. The borough could consider revisiting the demo (remediation) strategy, but currently is technically satisfying this requirement.

- ❖ **Create quantifiable goals.**

Given the low number of existing blighted structures, this is a difficult thing to actually quantify in a statistically useful fashion. A year-by-year approach as it fits into the budget is preferable.

- Engage local officials.

- **BEAT collaborates and communicates with borough officials.**

- **Some elected and some appointed officials participate on the BEAT committee.**

Both of these items will presumably be addressed if/when the BEAT committee is revived. When BEAT is active, these objectives are checked off.

- Identify priorities and begin implementation.

- **Engage with the resources provided by the county planning division, county redevelopment authority, and TRI-COG Land Bank.**

The borough should engage more actively with the blight fight tools provided by the Land Bank and GRB law firm. This has mostly been a capacity issue in the last year as other priorities were focused on by Council. Crafton will also need a better understanding of what truly constitutes blight in the community, vs. tax-delinquent vacant land that is not the most urgent concern.

The borough should pursue a more hands-on explanation from these organizations on how they could support our community's efforts (via staff, revived BEAT, or both). General presentations on blight fight tools are good, but sometimes hard to visualize without direct examples.

- ✓ **Create a blight/enforcement policies and procedures manual.**

Strategy 2: Strengthen the ordinances and policies that seek to prevent or address blight.

- ❖ **Create a consistent approach between the two communities.**

This section includes five recommendations related to creating a "consistent approach," with the primary issue being Ingram was operating under an older standardized property maintenance code at the time the Comp Plan was written. Ingram functions under a different Borough Council and code enforcement database, so we cannot guarantee streamlining processes between the two communities.

In practice, Crafton code enforcement receives minimal-to-zero calls regarding confusion between our code enforcement practices and Ingram's. Our shared border is mostly occupied by commercial space (i.e.

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not residential, which would hold a greater variety of property owners), so there isn't a high risk of a harsh "transitional" enforcement line in our core residential neighborhoods.

It's understandable that the Comp Plan recommended collaboration with Ingram on many services because it took the perspective of a joint comprehensive plan. However, Crafton and Ingram have mismatched administrative capacities and financial resources. Crafton's map-based code violation tracking, notice timeline and remediation system as established over the last year are working as intended. Crafton code enforcement is happy to work with and support Ingram on the case-by-case challenges that occasionally arise under current capacity. As Crafton's code enforcement system becomes a matter of routine there may be opportunities for closer collaboration.

➤ Embrace opportunities to create a proactive approach.

❖ **Enact a Quality of Life / Maintenance of Property ordinance (example on page A-3).**

Redundant. The borough's use of the IPMC (International Property Maintenance Code), Uniform Building and Construction Code (UCC and related mechanical and electrical codes), and functioning permitting process already cover the issues described in the sample ordinance. Urgent health hazards can be dealt with via the Health Hazard/Nuisance portion of Crafton's code. This should not be a priority for use of staff time/budget.

❖ **Require long grass to be cut within five days of notice, or the borough will do it at the owner's expense. The charges for this work could be recouped in real time or accrued as a lien (example on page A-15).**

Redundant and inappropriately aggressive. Current borough ordinances provide for the option to complete work to be billed and, if necessary, liened to the property. These liens are hard to collect and may even increase the risk of a blighted property failing to transfer ownership due to accrued fines. There is also a capacity mismatch with the public works department to complete grass work uniformly. The sample ordinance community, Greentree, has a general fund budget that is twice the size of Crafton's.

✓ **Place a lien against property for maintenance costs accrued by the borough, with settlement occurring as part of closing costs when a property is sold.**

✓ **State a willingness to be a location for policy experimentation.**

➤ Bolster enforcement efforts.

✓ **Budget additional hours for a code enforcement officer.**

✓ **Support the use of mobile technology in code enforcement.**

□ **Mobile technology should link to the borough's financial software and to enforcement-related paperwork.**

The borough office recently finished demoing more comprehensive software for permitting, enforcement, and asset management that is supported by GIS-based UIs and plans to adopt TRAIRS as a result. TRAIRS offers mobile technology that builds off of the existing GIS-based code enforcement.

✓ **Code enforcement data should be compatible with GIS mapping.**

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- Improve early intervention to help prevent the spread or worsening of distressed conditions.
 - ✓ **Provide initial courtesy notices of a likely violation via door-hanger.**
 - ✓ **Implement an escalating approach to achieve compliance, including door-hangers, letters, calls, issuance of quality of life tickets* (notices), citations, and declaration of nuisance property.**

The Comp Plan references BEAT as the one who delivers these notices, but this is the actual job of the paid code enforcement officer. In practice, the code enforcement officer issues escalating notices of violation rather than quality of life tickets and tracks the timelines for follow-up closely as part of daily job responsibilities. A volunteer should not issue enforceable notices and documentation that will be scrutinized during court processes.

- ✓ **Make property owners aware of resources that provide aid to low- and moderate-income households for home improvement loans, foreclosure assistance, etc.**

The code enforcement offer proactively provides these types of resources to property owners who are repeat offenders or seem to be struggling.

- **BEAT should create new programs or build on existing volunteer efforts to provide assistance in cases where property owners are in temporary distress.**

The code enforcement officer has expressed a desire for a program that supports property owners struggling with maintenance and upkeep costs, especially elderly homeowners, dubbed “Crafton Cares.” However, volunteers/other support systems are needed to get it off the ground.

Strategy 3: Make it much easier to improve and redevelop properties in the borough.

- **Provide easy access to complete information about properties available for investment.**

This is a longer-term goal as the administration builds out Crafton’s online presence and resources available for community development purposes.

- **Assemble and provide information, forms and applications online.**

Work-in-progress at the office (partially complete). Permit forms and applications are currently available on the website in PDF form. Borough staff are working on building out permit/application checklists and possibly an online payment system. These issues are discussed in more detail in the Communications section.

- Actively publicize and utilize available programs to redevelop vacant property.
 - ✓ **Participate in the Vacant Property Recovery Program (VPRP) offered by the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County (RAAC).**
 - **Create a vacant land registry, promote opportunities and post applications online.**

The vacant land registry ordinance was passed and the VPRP application is posted online each year during the eligibility period.

However, the vacant land registry ordinance was passed without an established plan for launching and administering it and thus far has not been utilized. Borough staff could use help from a revived BEAT committee to develop notification materials, determine existing qualifying properties, and conduct owner outreach to get it up and running.

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- ✓ **Directly contact individuals whose property lies next to a vacant lot and encourage them to pursue the property via the Residential Side Yard option.**

The borough has generally been proactive in supporting adjacent property owners in utilizing the side yard program. In the past year multiple blighted properties were demolished and acquired via the VPRP (i.e. 19 N Emily St, 1656 Crafton Blvd).

- ✓ **Speak with community groups to identify opportunities to improve borough areas via the Community Parcel option.**

The borough administration is well-engaged with the Planning Commission on this topic.

- ❖ **Watch for opportunities to acquire distressed property to rehab for affordable housing.**

The intent of this recommendation is unclear. The borough is not a real estate developer or flipper and that wouldn't be an appropriate role for a small municipal operation.

The administration is supportive of local flippers, rehab buyers or other responsible individuals seeking to rehab a blighted property and actively works with BIU to enable straightforward and effective rehab sales and inspections.

- **Employ land banking.**

The borough should determine whether land banking is the right strategy to pursue depending on conversations with TRI-COG Land Bank staff and a realistic assessment of the number and extent of persistently blighted properties. If Crafton joins, we must remit 5% of our collected delinquent taxes to the land bank and 50% of current taxes of a rehabbed property for the first five years after it returns to the tax rolls.

Strategy 4: Build public engagement in and awareness of community efforts to remediate or prevent blight and deteriorating properties.

- **Create a joint Crafton-Ingram blight enforcement action team (BEAT).**

The BEAT committee needs to be revived.

- **Explain and promote to citizens all new efforts to strengthen codes, ordinances, policies and enforcement efforts.**

Borough staff actively communicate information about code enforcement policies and requirements to the community and individual residents where opportunity arises (quarterly newsletter, website, calls/emails, etc).

However, better coordination with the administration is necessary when Council begins to consider new ordinances and/or programs regarding permitting, inspections, and other administrative and regulatory activities. In the past year, the Vacant Property Registry and Fire Code Inspection ordinances were passed without first establishing a plan of action for implementation. As a result, enforcing these ordinances is still a work-in-progress.

It is extremely important that actionable implementation strategies are developed for new policies before they are enacted. The borough must have the capacity to take on the new administrative duties required for consistent enforcement. Understanding this requires a thorough evaluation and planning process.

Borough staff are currently researching registration and inspection fees and strategies for successful enforcement in boroughs with similar ordinances in order to make recommendations to Council. Following

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this, public outreach campaigns will need to be designed and rolled out in order to inform the community of their responsibilities under these ordinances/programs. A revived BEAT committee could provide important assistance to borough staff in public outreach and the creation of informational materials when these policies are ready for implementation.

□ **Publicize the list of blighted, distressed or long-vacant properties available for redevelopment.**

This issue has been discussed above under Strategy 3, vacant land registry. When proceeding with this goal the borough should take care to clearly define what conditions warrant this kind of publication and avoid “advertising” private properties with current residents or actively involved owners regardless of their condition.

✓ **Build a relationship with the local magistrate.**

The code enforcement officer and borough manager are in regular contact with the current magistrate.

Deteriorating Properties

II. Remaining Goals and Objectives

Strategy 1: Create a comprehensive process for addressing deteriorating properties.

- Engage local officials. (*Note: Addressed if BEAT is revived.)
 - ❑ BEAT collaborates and communicates with borough officials.
 - ❑ Some elected and some appointed officials participate on the BEAT committee.
- Identify priorities and begin implementation.
 - ❑ Engage with the resources provided by the county planning division, county redevelopment authority, and TRI-COG Land Bank.

Strategy 2: Strengthen the ordinances and policies that seek to prevent or address blight.

- Bolster enforcement efforts.
 - ❑ Mobile technology should link to the borough's financial software and to enforcement-related paperwork.
- Improve early intervention.
 - ❑ BEAT should create new programs or build on existing volunteer efforts to provide assistance in cases where property owners are in temporary distress.

Strategy 3: Make it much easier to improve and redevelop properties in the borough.

- ❑ Provide easy access to complete information about properties available for investment.
- ❑ Assemble and provide information, forms and applications online.
- Actively publicize and utilize available programs to redevelop vacant property.
 - ❑ Create a vacant land registry, promote opportunities and post applications online.
- ❑ Employ land banking.

Strategy 4: Build public engagement in and awareness of community efforts to remediate or prevent blight and deteriorating properties.

- ❑ Create a joint Crafton-Ingram blight enforcement action team (BEAT).
- ❑ Explain and promote to citizens all new efforts to strengthen codes, ordinances, policies and enforcement efforts.
- ❑ Publicize the list of blighted, distressed or long-vacant properties available for redevelopment.

Economic Development

Goals and Objectives

1. Make business investment and development opportunities simpler and more inviting, while increasing tax rolls.
2. Enhance the appearance and convenience of commercial areas, including the Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center.
3. Provide a lively cultural, social, economic and residential atmosphere.

This section also included the creation of a vision statement:

Present business owners and investors, workers and residents with viable, diverse, convenient and attractive commercial environments.

I. Strategies and Implementation Steps

Strategy 1: Create a planning and zoning initiative to support the borough's vision, goals and strategy steps for commercial development. Encourage reinvestment and new business development via contemporary ordinances and zoning map.

Note: This strategy section appears in the Comp Plan as targeted towards a joint zoning initiative. The discussion here only speaks to Crafton's progress, administrative capacity and future strategy. Crafton's Planning Commission continues to meet with Ingram's Planning Commission quarterly and will be supportive of any forward progress. However, at this time Crafton needs to focus economic revitalization efforts on its own schedule and retain independent decision-making capacity.

❖ **Develop impetus for multi-municipal planning and zoning.**

As discussed above, Crafton should be open to multi-municipal planning efforts in the future, but at this time Crafton needs to be able to focus on its own economic revitalization concerns through an independent zoning ordinance re-write. The borough is in a critical period for local business development and needs to fast-track the zoning re-write as well as support for the downtown business district that does not have a direct connection to Ingram.

Future consideration could be given for a shared overlay district near the Shopping Center. In general, Crafton should retain independent decision-making capacity over issues that affect its revenue growth and financial situation.

✓ **Consider establishing a joint Planning Commission.**

Crafton and Ingram have retained their own independent Planning Commissions, but do currently hold a joint meeting quarterly to discuss any potential shared opportunities or bring new information regarding transit-oriented development, etc. to the group. The two bodies have regular and open communication and have jointly solicited a representative of the Port Authority to attend the next quarterly meeting.

➤ **The Planning Commission leads the effort to create new zoning ordinances that support the borough's vision, goals and strategy steps for commercial development.**

- ✓ **Issue an RFP to revise zoning to incorporate a progressive position that is most likely to serve existing and new residents, reflect changing housing and workplace needs, and attract new businesses.**

Economic Development

- ✓ **Provide training for new members of the Planning Commission(s) via the Local Government Academy or by inviting guest speakers.**
- The Comp Plan also recommends we seek grant funding to revise zoning maps and ordinances. This is a solid recommendation, so I didn't flag it as not appropriate/realistic. However, an individual zoning ordinance re-write will be much less expensive than a joint project. The borough is capable of absorbing the full project cost in the interest of expediency. Applying for a grant would add several months to the start date.

Strategy 2: Implement policies and practices that encourage business investment.

- ✓ **Pursue the “Main Street” approach to improving the borough’s traditional commercial areas. Embark on strategies that will bring change.**

The following steps described in the Comp Plan are directly reproduced from Main Street America’s “Four Points Approach”: Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Vitality. The current borough manager is a Main Street specialist and has been trained as a Main Street Manager in the Four Points Approach. The following items will outline how the borough has begun to employ the Four Points Approach in supporting the business district.

- **Design**

Comp Plan description: “Make commercial areas look their best.”

Main Street America: “Create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere. Celebrate historic character. Foster accessible, people-centered public spaces.”

Code enforcement has been working in both the downtown business district and the Shopping Center as focus areas and is reporting significant positive results from property owners improving maintenance efforts, as well as a reduction of bulk waste accumulation. Building inspection also works with property owners to help them understand outdoor signage regulations and still achieve attractive signage while waiting for the zoning ordinance to be updated.

The borough continues to apply for funding to assist in replacing and upgrading ADA curb ramps. Four Green Light-Go grants were awarded in 2018 to improve key intersections within the business district; these improvements include clearer signalization of intersections such as the “five points” crossing of Noble Ave, E Crafton Ave, and Dinsmore Ave, which will make them safer for pedestrians as well.

- **Organization**

Comp Plan description: “Engage citizens, groups, businesses, workers and borough officials in the pursuit of common goals.”

Main Street America: “Build leadership and strong organizational capacity. Ensure broad community engagement. Forge partnerships across sectors.”

The Planning Commission now functions as the economic development support team among the borough’s pool of volunteer appointed officials. Business owners, community groups, and other interested citizens have also been engaged via the Block Party working group, which has been a great starting point in building meaningful collaborative relationships.

Economic Development

➤ Promotion

Comp Plan description: “Articulate and effectively communicate the value of these commercial areas.”

Main Street America: “Market the district’s defining assets. Communicate unique features through storytelling. Support the buy-local experience.”

Branding for Crafton’s business community is being launched at the Downtown Crafton Block Party on October 6. This is discussed in detail later in this section. In addition to local promotion, the borough manager is working with regional organizations and agencies such as CONNECT and the Port Authority to raise Crafton’s profile as a community working towards transit-oriented development (TOD) and to market the convenience of the West Busway near Crafton’s businesses.

➤ Economic Vitality

Comp Plan description: “Identify and pursue new or better purposes for business in these areas.”

Main Street America: “Build a diverse economic base. Catalyze smart new investment. Cultivate a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem.”

Main Street America’s wording of this strategy should be noted. The borough should take care to promote future interactive uses in empty business spaces, but remember to respect, value and promote our existing businesses as well. On the other hand, MSA’s principle of cultivating an “entrepreneurship ecosystem” is likely beyond the scope of operations of a municipality of Crafton’s size. However, the borough can certainly seek to support connections between local entrepreneurs and Allegheny County, where these services are more typically available.

The borough has enacted a handful of strategic amendments to the existing zoning ordinance to allow for modern uses of walkable commercial areas – most notably the addition of microbrewing as a permitted use in C-1 and C-2 districts as the Pittsburgh region continues to draw national attention for the success and popularity of its craft beer industry.

✓ Devise specific next steps for each element.

➤ Design

Early next steps will include identifying appropriate and useful spots for simple pedestrian-friendly features such as benches and trashcans [overlap with the Connectivity section]. Existing branding will be utilized to build out wayfinding features such as banners and updated street lighting. Ultimately, the borough should work towards establishing a concrete development plan that includes a full streetscape. This is a multi-year process and will require significant funding partnerships with county and state agencies, such as the Port Authority, or DCED’s Keystone Communities program and PennDOT’s Multimodal Transit Fund. Other creative funding opportunities should be pursued as they arise.

➤ Organization

Another longer-term goal should be to recruit interested community members and business owners to stay involved as the business district develops with the eventual goal of founding a community development corporation (CDC). CDCs are common in areas with more established business/Main Street districts and in larger cities where neighborhoods have greater variation in character and function.

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CDCs typically employ a Main Street Manager as well as fund business development activities. Crafton will need significant investment from the borough in the coming years in order to pave the way for a thriving business community that can support a CDC.

➤ **Promotion**

The borough should continue to build out community branding and advocate for community recognition and “buzz-building” on the regional level. Pop-up events and other activities in the support of the business community should become more regular.

The Planning Commission has offered to review the borough’s list of businesses registered in our Turnkey Tax database, in order to determine what business listings have an interactive storefront or office – i.e. not a home office – and eventually provide refined data that the borough can convert into a business map for the website. This online content will include the map, and the name, function, and general contact information for the business. The goal here is to show what patrons of Crafton businesses can do nearby as they visit the area.

➤ **Economic Vitality**

The borough’s primary ability to influence economic vitality comes from constructing a modern, progressive zoning ordinance. Otherwise, this strategy overlaps with the other three.

✓ **Add expertise and capacity for economic development.**

The Comp Plan originally worded this as a recommendation to partner with Ingram to jointly contract a consultant with Economic Development South to provide greater expertise on the subject. The current borough manager fulfills this goal for Crafton as a Main Street specialist. Should borough staffing change, the recommendation to engage an economic development consultant (EDS or otherwise) would become appropriate again. It is also important to note that Ingram and Crafton do not have connected Main Street business districts, so sharing a consultant to specifically promote Crafton’s downtown business district is not the most urgent strategic move at this time.

➤ **Develop a brand for the borough’s commercial areas, and market these as charming, up-and-coming yet affordable places to do business.**

✓ **Work with local businesspeople, graphic designers and marketers to create a logo, slogan and other branding materials for the business community.**

The “I ♥ Crafton” branding/tagline is being launched at the Downtown Crafton Block Party on October 6. The graphics including the logo heart were designed by local business Custom Ink & Image. Members of the Planning Commission and Rec Board have supported the borough in establishing the branding idea and planning the event via a joint working group.

✓ **Develop and implement a branding campaign that may be used by local businesses, real estate agents and others who are marketing properties.**

Following the I ♥ Crafton launch, the branding/tagline will be available for any local businesses that wish to use it (window signs, future events, etc). The borough also plans to distribute small items such as stickers for businesses to keep on hand for interested customers. The intention is to ultimately expand the branding to the point where the borough can sell a few larger items (i.e. keychains, shirts, hats) at the borough office, create a “local business news” section of the website, and incorporate the branding into future downtown design elements.

Economic Development

- ❑ **Develop marketing packages available to businesses considering moving to the area. Highlight demographics, positive area trends, results of any economic development survey, borough contacts, and other useful information.**

A marketing package for new businesses will be helpful. Some of the items mentioned in this goal should be reconsidered. For example, demographics would be taken directly from the census and American Community Surveys; these are already readily available via Google and Wikipedia. Developers already conduct their own market studies. Individuals interested in doing business in Crafton have primarily cited financial constraints on acquiring real estate, or questions about challenges posed by outdated zoning regulations, not concerns about demographics or economic development surveys.

It would be more beneficial for new businesses to receive a welcome package with borough contacts, as mentioned, as well as information about how to register their business with the borough to make sure they are current on zoning and occupancy compliance inspections, business taxes, and also receive the benefits of any promotional activities the borough undertakes.

Strategy 3: Reinvigorate the Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center.

- Collaborate with property owners to build awareness of community goals.
 - ✓ **Meet with the property manager of 1204 Corp., which owns the main parking lot and many of the buildings in the plaza.**

Elected officials met with 1204 Corp. around the time the Comp Plan was completed in hopes of fostering an open line of communication and collaboration.

- Update ordinances regarding parking lot requirements.
 - ❑ **Propose revisions in ordinances to require fewer parking spaces.**

The zoning ordinance re-write will accomplish this goal.
 - ❖ **Seek agreement from 1204 Corp. and other property owners to update lease agreements in the future that would decrease parking 10% from current levels as leases are renewed.**

Further investigation and review of previous conversations with 1204 Corp. will be necessary to understand the dynamic here. Typically parking spaces are allotted based on municipal zoning requirements. We should also have concrete reasons and/or benefits to present to private property owners when we are asking them to alter their business model. Would lowering the parking levels in lease agreements allow the Shopping Center to offer spaces to more tenants? Could portions of the parking lot be repurposed for additional tenant space with attractive pedestrian and green features?

- Improve appearance of the Shopping Center and surrounding businesses.
 - ❑ **Develop design guidelines for façade improvements, landscaping and signage.**

The zoning ordinance re-write will accomplish this goal.
 - ❑ **Add streetscape improvements. Consider applying for grants.**

This is a good long-term goal, but streetscaping activities should focus on the downtown business district first. Streetscapes are significant investments and they will absolutely require a financial

Economic Development

partnership (grant, foundation, private-public partnership or a combination thereof) in a community of Crafton's size. These improvements would be much less noticeable in the middle of a large parking lot, compared to a walkable downtown district.

- ❖ **Develop, adopt and enforce ordinances governing feeding of wild animals. The feeding of pigeons at the Shopping Center creates health and safety issues.**

This issue is not pressing enough to divert resources from any other objective and is functionally unenforceable. Code enforcement primarily encounters bulk waste accumulation and graffiti in this area.



Economic Development

II. Remaining Goals and Objectives

Strategy 2: Implement policies and practices that encourage business investment.

- Develop marketing packages available to businesses considering moving to the area. Highlight demographics, positive area trends, results of any economic development survey, borough contacts, and other useful information.
- While the goal inventory checked off the fact that the borough *is* currently employing the Main Street Four Points Approach, this goal speaks more to a continuous strategy and is not necessarily a one-time mark-off. It takes many years to foster a successful, self-sustaining Main Street business district.

Strategy 3: Reinvigorate the Crafton-Ingram Shopping Center.

- Update ordinances. (*Note: The zoning ordinance re-write will accomplish these goals.)
 - Propose revisions in ordinances to require fewer parking spaces.
 - Develop design guidelines for façade improvements, landscaping and signage.
- Improve appearance of the Shopping Center and surrounding businesses.
 - Add streetscape improvements. Consider applying for grants.

Connectivity + Walkability

Goals and Objectives

1. Provide safe, convenient walking routes to connect community assets.
2. Provide exercise and recreation opportunities.
3. Provide safe walking routes for individuals commuting to work.

I. Strategies and Implementation Steps

Strategy 1: Identify existing and potential routes within Crafton, as well as between Crafton and Ingram, and external links to trails, routes or assets in neighboring communities.

- Form a connectivity group to continually identify next-step improvements and find solutions to issues as they arise.**
- Research and identify pedestrian routes and important connections.**
- Identify gaps in connectivity to show the location of potential future sidewalk and trail development.**
- Note locations where new trails are needed or desirable to provide greenway or parkland connections. Opportunities exist in linking Crafton Park with the green space above Chartiers Creek, as well as along the Creek itself.**

The borough manager has recently contacted Carnegie's borough manager regarding potential "rails to trails" connections near Crafton's southern border. More information will be provided as it becomes available. Crafton may be able to link into a larger rails-to-trails project that Carnegie and Collier Township are considering.

Strategy 2: Identify locations for safety or quality improvements through a comprehensive inventory of existing conditions.

Note: This is a high-priority need for volunteer support. The borough administration has attempted to begin work on the following recommendations via internship programs as well as general technical assistance programs and has received very limited aid/funding, which is not often available for these types of activities in the first place. Volunteers could easily be set up to collect field data using the asset management software the borough is expecting to roll out soon.

- Identify locations for sidewalk improvements through a comprehensive inventory.
 - Note locations where deterioration makes sidewalks unsafe, difficult or impossible.**

The code enforcement officer would typically note these issues in regular code enforcement activities and take the appropriate action with property owners.
 - Note locations where sidewalks do not comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).**

The shade tree inventory (currently in progress) will also note areas of concern on sidewalks that have been affected by shade tree roots.
 - Note locations of deteriorated right-of-way stairs ("public stairs," "Pittsburgh stairs").**

Connectivity + Walkability

- Identify locations for cleanup and new pedestrian amenities.
 - ✓ **Note locations where litter or weeds have accumulated.**

This is part of regular code enforcement duties.

- **Note locations where trash cans or benches could be added.**
- ✓ **Inventory the location of future street trees.**

The shade tree inventory as performed by Penn State Extension interns began the week of 9/2. Their report may suggest locations for future street trees; at the very least, we will finally have a full asset inventory of existing shade trees. We do have recommendations from Duquesne Light as to what trees may be appropriate to plant under electric lines.

Strategy 3: Improve the safety and quality of walking routes.

- Improve or replace substandard sidewalks and stairs.
 - ✓ **Budget annual funds to improve pedestrian facilities on public land.**

The borough has applied for funds to improve ADA curb ramps via the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the last three funding cycles, committing 20-25% of matching funds to each project. As pedestrian facilities are further inventoried the borough can continue to explore funding opportunities and/or make repairs as finances allow.

- **Maintain a list of residents looking to complete upgrades on their sidewalks in order to enable residents to negotiate work jointly with contractors.**

The exact mechanism of this recommendation is unclear; the borough should not negotiate private contracts for residents, but could refer residents to contact each other with permission for economies of scale.

This concept is somewhat related to the cost-sharing approach used by Brentwood Borough in both their sewer backflow preventer device program (which Crafton subsequently adopted this year) and a limited sidewalk repair cost-sharing program. Brentwood budgets a small amount of funds – approx. \$10,000 or less based on a brief budget review – for each year that residents may apply for in repairing their sidewalks. If this functions the same as the backflow preventer device program, when funds are expended, the program is closed for the year. Crafton could consider employing this as another mini-grant program.

- Add pedestrian safety features.
 - **Members of the walkability team should meet with borough police and public works departments to determine priority locations for additional pedestrian safety features.**
 - **Borough works to add specialty paving surfaces and markings at crossings along important walking routes.**

The borough does paint crosswalks, but could expand the pedestrian safety features at certain intersections. This has been very generally discussed as a streetscaping activity in relation to the business district.

- ✓ **Borough works to add ADA compliance such as curb cuts to areas that are lacking.**

Connectivity + Walkability

- Add amenities such as trash cans, benches and street trees.
 - ❑ **Create a prioritized list of locations for benches, trash cans and bike racks to enhance the convenience of walking and biking.**
 - ❑ **Discuss locations for future trees, stressing value of new trees when they are along major walking routes.**

The borough should take care to balance the value of street trees along major walking routes with the challenge of narrow tree lines and low power wires alongside many streets. Street trees are damaged when the power company cuts branches back from power lines. The borough should also determine what trees will not have adjacent sidewalks before planting in narrow tree lines.

- ❑ **Pursue grant applications for multi-modal transportation, trail planning and construction, and street trees.**

This is a good recommendation, but more planning and forethought is needed to what exactly a grant application would entail given the limited nature of resources to provide grant matches. In 2019 the borough applied for approximately \$500,000 in recreation and park facilities grants and \$4,000,000 in sewer grants. The borough's total annual budget is approximately \$8,000,000.

Opportunities may exist to reach out to Carnegie for collaboration on trail planning and construction in the coming years.

Strategy 4: Build public awareness of the borough's strength and viability as a walkable and bikeable community.

- Participate in the Live Well Allegheny program. [Crafton is a designated Live Well community.]
 - ❑ **Develop indoor and outdoor wellness trails accessible to residents of all abilities.**

The Comp Plan did identify some basic proposed walking routes outdoors. It is not clear if these are being used.
 - ❑ **Develop walking maps, measure the distances mapped and encourage residents to meet goals.**
 - ❑ **Encourage multi-modal transportation of residents by providing facilities or policies that encourage walking and bike riding.**

The mechanisms or types of policies being recommended here are unclear. Bike racks could be considered for certain public spaces, if this is the intended recommendation. Crafton streets are narrow and Pittsburgh topography is not particularly conducive to biking, so opportunities here may be limited.

- ✓ **Encourage involvement with community volunteer activities.**
- ✓ **Utilize web sites and social media to provide information on physical activity, nutrition, stress management, tobacco cessation, and other health and wellness related initiatives.**

Detailed information like this is primarily provided by community organizations or Allegheny County, but borough staff do post general community resources and information on a dedicated resources page of the borough website.

Connectivity + Walkability

- ❖ **Offer incentives for employees who walk or bike to work.**

Assuming this recommendation is specifically for borough employees, this will likely go unused even if developed. Most borough employees need to be able to access a car for their jobs even if they live in walking distance, and the borough does not maintain an employee vehicle fleet outside of police and public works vehicles. Borough health insurance is already robust with several health opportunity benefits.

- ✓ **Enlist volunteers to assist with walking, biking and other connectivity improvements such as building trails, planting street trees, and cleaning up litter.**

The borough does not currently have trail plans to build out, but volunteers do assist with planting street trees and cleaning up litter.

- ✓ **Link language of grant applications with the Live Well Allegheny initiatives supported in this comprehensive plan.**

- Publicize the community's designated walking/biking/hiking routes.

- ❑ **Place downloadable route maps on the community's website.**

The borough could post the basic walking routes map created for the Comp Plan. Otherwise, we do not have formal maps built out yet, although this is a task the borough has sought funding and technical support for via the WalkWorks program. This is a very limited resource.

- ❑ **Add walking route signage in the community to provide information about directions and distances.**

This is another task that the borough has sought funding and technical support for via the WalkWorks program. Official walking routes could also be identified and subsequently signed with volunteer assistance.

- ❖ **Develop and provide mobile app maps.**

This is excessive. Online PDFs are sufficient.

- Create other outreach mechanisms and opportunities.

- ❑ **Meet with existing walking/hiking/biking/running groups as well as special events organizations and local civic groups to make them aware of connectivity and walkability.**

The newsletter could help get the word out at the ground level if walking resources are further developed.

- ❑ **Designate four dates a year as Take A Walk Days, encouraging residents to go outside to take a walk, and potentially meet new people, visit a new location and enjoy the borough in new ways.**

Connectivity + Walkability

II. Remaining Goals and Objectives

Strategy 1: Identify existing and potential routes within Crafton, as well as between Crafton and Ingram, and external links to trails, routes or assets in neighboring communities.

- Form a connectivity group to continually identify next-step improvements and find solutions to issues as they arise.
- Research and identify pedestrian routes and important connections.
- Identify gaps in connectivity to show the location of potential future sidewalk and trail development.

Strategy 2: Identify locations for safety or quality improvements through a comprehensive inventory of existing conditions.

- Identify locations for sidewalk improvements through a comprehensive inventory.
 - Note locations where sidewalks do not comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - Note locations of deteriorated right-of-way stairs (“public stairs,” “Pittsburgh stairs”).
- Identify locations for cleanup and new pedestrian amenities.
 - Note locations where trash cans or benches could be added. (*Note: Redundant in Strategy 3?)

Strategy 3: Improve the safety and quality of walking routes.

- Maintain a list of residents looking to complete upgrades on their sidewalks in order to enable residents to negotiate work jointly with contractors.
- Add pedestrian safety features.
 - Members of the walkability team should meet with borough police and public works departments to determine priority locations for additional pedestrian safety features.
 - Borough works to add specialty paving surfaces and markings at crossings along important walking routes.
- Add amenities such as trash cans, benches and street trees.
 - Create a prioritized list of locations for benches, trash cans and bike racks to enhance the convenience of walking and biking.
 - Discuss locations for future trees, stressing value of new trees when they are along major walking routes.
 - Pursue grant applications for multi-modal transportation, trail planning and construction, and street trees.

Strategy 4: Build public awareness of the borough’s strength and viability as a walkable and bikeable community.

- Participate in the Live Well Allegheny program. [Crafton is a designated Live Well community.]
 - Develop indoor and outdoor wellness trails accessible to residents of all abilities.
 - Develop walking maps, measure distances mapped and encourage residents to meet goals.

Connectivity + Walkability

- Encourage multi-modal transportation of residents by providing facilities or policies that encourage walking and bike riding.
- Publicize the community's designated walking/biking/hiking routes.
 - Place downloadable route maps on the community's website.
 - Add walking route signage in the community to provide information about directions and distances.
- Create other outreach mechanisms and opportunities.
 - Meet with existing walking/hiking/biking/running groups as well as special events organizations and local civic groups to make them aware of connectivity and walkability.
 - Designate four dates a year as Take A Walk Days, encouraging residents to go outside to take a walk, and potentially meet new people, visit a new location and enjoy the borough in new ways.

Communications

Goals and Objectives

1. Encourage citizen engagement by providing transparency in local government operations and a welcoming atmosphere at borough meetings.
2. Communicate in a timely and accurate way with citizens, the business community, visitors and the media.
3. Provide access to information about community resources for old and new residents to the greatest extent resources allow.

Note: The Comp Plan authors acknowledged that feedback for the plan was being taken during a “time of tension within Ingram Borough over the future of its Volunteer Fire Department. This comprehensive plan was in no way involved with that issue; however, it is possible that some desire on the part of citizens for increased communication arose partly out of concern over the VFD.”

This is a separate issue from Crafton, but the joint nature of the comp plan process means some of this section’s recommendations focused more on things Ingram needed to do, and which Crafton was/is already doing.

I. Strategies and Implementation Steps

Strategy 1: Provide citizens with information they need, want and can use, and provide mechanisms for citizens to ask questions or present ideas or concerns.

- Identify citizens’ preferences for methods of receiving information from the borough.

If formal surveys were taken during the Comp Plan process, borough staff are not sure where to access them but would welcome the data.

In general, the return of the quarterly bulk-mailed newsletter received the strongest response out of any form of resident communication. Residents went out of their way to express that they enjoyed the return of the newsletter and that they find it to be a good way to stay in touch with the borough’s activities.

- Develop the use of a variety of communication channels to meet the needs of a diverse citizenry.

The Comp Plan originally described this as a “communications toolkit.” I have restated the objective because a “toolkit” creates complexity out of a simple, common-sense issue for a primary administrative staff of three. The following points refer to this goal as restated.

- ✓ **Tailor the communications strategy to meet the needs of the largest citizen preferences, with care taken not to omit groups such as lower-income or elderly.**

This recommendation is unclear and/or circular. It appears to state that the borough should focus its communication strategy towards the most common demographic group, but then take care to not exclude vulnerable groups who may not be able to access that strategy. Presumably, the borough has met this goal by providing information via the internet, telephone/in person office visits, and paper mailed newsletters.

- ✓ **Account for a range of information types, i.e. FAQs, routine questions to time-sensitive, important or urgent news.**

Borough staff select the website for important, non-time-sensitive news or long-term information; SavvyCitizen for time-sensitive/urgent news (important or “not”); and the physical newsletter for more general updates and to call attention to information that is widely applicable.

Communications

- ❑ **Distribution channels should include newsletters, email blasts, borough website, and social media.**

The email list has fallen out of use with the advent of SavvyCitizen, but could be brought back. The borough office hopes to implement a social media presence in 2020. In the meantime, volunteers for certain activities and working groups (such as Crafton Celebrates or the Downtown Block Party) share information and promotional materials on prominent community social media pages.

- ❑ **Include an emergency communications plan for communications channels.**

We previously contracted with Nixle reverse emergency notification system, although this contract was terminated in 2018. During that time we did not need to activate Nixle. The borough should discuss with the Police Chief what channels may exist through the County or other communications systems already available to us before seeking another reverse-call system.

Reverse-call systems frequently go by zip code – this is not ideal for Crafton, which shares 15205 with Robinson and the City of Pittsburgh.

- ✓ **Develop a digital media policy.** [what information is shared, how, and why]

The Comp Plan suggests establishing one single Facebook page for all borough business. In general, this is a solid recommendation – in that all notices from the borough office or pertaining to general borough proceedings and activities should originate from one source.

However, certain organizations or activities may benefit from their own Facebook pages – for example, the Crafton Pool which already maintains a Facebook presence. The same could be said for the eventual expansion of promotion of the business district. This should be an ongoing discussion as we build out this channel.

Regarding the existing digital information channels, there is an established protocol for what events and notices are added to SavvyCitizen (established at a council meeting during the 2018 summer) and the website largely adheres to similar rules for time-limited announcements and promotion of events and services.

Strategy 2: Add more information, functionality and usefulness to the borough website, to the degree allowed by limited staff resources.

- ✓ **Prepare to revamp websites, including the possibility of adopting a new content management system.**

- ❖ **Seek grant or other funding for website development, based on how new website will facilitate commercial development.**

Seeking grant funding for a cost this small is not necessary – websites just aren't that expensive. Crafton does not need an extremely sophisticated content management system, and even the price tags on those services don't warrant the time and labor spent on a one-off grant application for a recurring expense. CMS such as Squarespace or Wordpress are appropriate and affordable for Crafton.

- ✓ **Revise responsibility for communications.**

- ✓ **Allow “trusted providers” to add information such as dates on the events calendar.**

SavvyCitizen allows for this; Crafton Library and Crafton Pool regularly do so for event notices and scheduling alerts (pool closures, etc).

Communications

- ❖ **Assign responsibilities for applying different communication channels.**

Due to the very small staff size all admin staff members are cross-trained on communication channels such as SavvyCitizen and updating the website content. The Borough Secretary is the go-to person for SavvyCitizen notices, but admin staff work closely and regularly communicate on how and when to provide information. There is no need to silo these responsibilities.

- ❖ **Consider sharing the services of a public information officer.**

This recommendation is not appropriate for Crafton. A public information officer needs to be able to respond quickly and with the most accurate information and context to any situation. Sharing this service would create a redundancy (borough staff would have to inform a PIO on how to respond, creating hazards of delay and miscommunication). Crafton typically appoints the borough manager as the Right-to-Know Officer, which could overlap with a PIO and already holds the responsibility of being the “official” provider of public documents and information.

Crafton should not share critical staff roles with other jurisdictions. Successful and competent borough staff will respond to information needs in a timely and professional manner.

- ✓ **Add searchable content.**

- **Add interactive functionality.**

- ✓ **Provide downloadable and online-based forms for permit applications, park shelter or room reservation forms, commission-volunteer applications and other civic responsibilities.**

Most forms and applications are currently available for download on the borough website. Borough staff will continue to expand online form offerings and build out online submission functionality for certain activities that do not require up-front payments or security deposits.

The borough website currently offers a service request submission form.

- **Enable online payment of borough fees, such as facility rental and permit applications.**

This is a work-in-progress. Most of the payments processed by the borough office are associated with services and activities that require staff review and interaction prior to approval (shelter/community room rentals with security deposits; building and zoning permits).

The borough office should plan out protocols for accepting online payments for a limited number of services, then offer a trial run to identify any potential points of confusion for users. It needs to be clear to users and applicants that an online payment does not guarantee an approval for items requiring staff review. Additionally, certain building and zoning permits are calculated by variable factors such as square footage, number of outlets, etc. Custom invoicing would need to be developed for those services. This is certainly not impossible, but it does require some time and detail-oriented thinking.

Borough staff are exploring online pre-payments for season pool passes during 2020.

- **Enable sign-up for email blasts.**

SavvyCitizen’s implementation has more-or-less replaced the email blast list. However, the borough could revive this feature if there is significant interest and/or lack of overlap.

- ✓ **Enhance events calendar functionality.**

SavvyCitizen provides a live calendar widget for the website in addition to the titular mobile app.

Communications

- ❑ **Create a welcome package for new residents.**

Borough staff would welcome volunteer aid in accomplishing this goal.

Strategy 3: Create and implement a protocol for welcoming citizen participation and attendance at council and other official meetings.

- ✓ **Develop and implement a public meeting protocol for welcoming citizens.**

The Council President opens public meetings by welcoming attendees and reads a statement prior to the Citizens Comments section explaining to citizens when attendees may comment on agenda items vs. other public comments.

Strategy 4: Develop a volunteer recognition program.

- ❑ **Plan an annual event to recognize and thank people who have volunteered on commissions, boards or other borough-sponsored groups or initiatives.**

Council has agreed to revive the Edward L. Stewart Community Service Awards, which previously were given to volunteers nominated by local groups at a ceremony during the fall season. The timeline will be delayed for 2019 as organizations are contacted, but this is an easy objective to meet given that the program has already been developed.

Communications

II. Remaining Goals and Objectives

Strategy 1: Provide citizens with information they need, want and can use, and provide mechanisms for citizens to ask questions or present ideas or concerns.

- Develop the use of a variety of communication channels to meet the needs of a diverse citizenry.
 - ❑ Add email blasts and social media distribution channels.
 - ❑ Include an emergency communications plan for communications channels.

Strategy 2: Add more information, functionality and usefulness to the borough website, to the degree allowed by limited staff resources.

- Add interactive functionality.
 - ❑ Enable online payment of borough fees, such as facility rental and permit applications.
- ❑ Enable sign-up for email blasts.
- ❑ Create a welcome package for new residents.

Strategy 4: Develop a volunteer recognition program.

- ❑ Plan an annual event to recognize and thank people who have volunteered on commissions, boards or other borough-sponsored groups or initiatives.

Discussion & Analysis

General Discussion

The drafting process of this Progress Report revealed important aspects of Crafton's capacity to respond to policy recommendations and calls for expanded services. One of the greatest challenges facing the local government field today is the need to balance the compounding demand for capital projects, facility upgrades, and community social support with the reality that many smaller municipalities are constrained by the revenue sources that are available to them. Facing this reality head-on ultimately forces the discussion: does the closely held identity of a small town produce enough momentum for the necessary community involvement?

In Crafton's case, the answer is an enthusiastic "yes" – albeit with the need to cultivate the next generation of volunteers and civic-minded residents that are willing to step up where there is need as well as where there is personal interest.

In 2018 the borough significantly increased its staff capacity and expertise with the addition of a dedicated code enforcement officer at approximately 30 hours a week, as well as a borough manager who specializes in economic development. The administrative team works well together, improving efficiency and leading to proactive adoption of new policies, procedures and technologies that allow the small staff to better leverage their workdays.

However, certain aspects of this Progress Report illustrate the challenges associated with setting goals in abstract without a guaranteed capacity to accomplish them. This is particularly clear in the Connectivity + Walkability focus area. Most of this focus area requires on-the-ground work to map out Crafton's pedestrian facilities – that is, volunteers, interns, and other individuals who aren't desk-bound. Local government interns are often in short supply; volunteerism certainly exists in Crafton, but one recurring group of community members can only take on so much. By the same token, some activities with heavy impacts on office workload, such as new ordinances that require time and paperwork to enforce, or new ways of tracking data, can become inconsistent if they are not implemented through a clear management structure. Issues that require confidentiality, timeliness of response, or custodianship of public funds need to be centrally handled by the borough office.

Readers will notice that other focus areas such as Economic Development and Communications have made profound progress. The reason for this is twofold: because the Comprehensive Plan sought to make first-step recommendations, goals that were phrased as "consider using the XYZ approach..." or "establish a relationship with..." have been easy for borough staff to achieve. The Comprehensive Plan was drafted at a time that the borough staff did not include economic development expertise or a dedicated code enforcement officer. Further, the Communications section acknowledged that many of the recommendations were heavily influenced by issues that were unique to Ingram at that time.

The short version of the above analysis is "there's still work to be done, but look how far we've come already." It's important to remember that comprehensive plans are considered long-term strategy documents for a reason. If a comprehensive plan recommended easy goals that presented minimal complications, it would be underwhelming and unhelpful. Likewise, a purely aspirational comprehensive plan is overtly discouraging. Crafton's community leaders should take pride in the results of this report – midway through at a midway point sounds just about right.

The next steps of specific goals were discussed in detail in the previous sections, but for a 10,000-foot-view takeaway of our future needs, read on:

Deteriorating Properties

Crafton has made significant progress on addressing the most severely blighted structures in the last few years – not all, but many. The combination of increased code enforcement, a dedicated residential building inspector from BIU, and more effective use of technology has moved many of these properties either to demolition or, if possible, flipping and remediation. Building inspectors and planning professionals have noted their surprise that deteriorating

properties were identified as a focus area based upon their observations in 2019. This speaks more to the progress that has been made, rather than questions the appropriateness of its inclusion. Borough staff will continue to work on designing enforceable processes for programs such as the vacant property registry in the coming months.

The Comprehensive Plan also imagined a significant role for the BEAT committee in soliciting resources, gathering data on the ground, and championing the recovery of Crafton's aging properties. A revived BEAT committee could supplement the borough's existing code and inspection activities with the help of volunteers willing to conduct field data collection and build relationships with regional blight recovery organizations.

Economic Development

Crafton is moving along at a good pace on this focus area. Many activities recommended in the Comprehensive Plan are at the groundwork-level; with continued energy the borough will soon move beyond these and start to implement branding and design more seriously. The remaining goals will either be addressed by the upcoming comprehensive zoning ordinance update, or are much further in the future, such as a major streetscape project.

The Planning Commission has become the hub and the catalyst for raising the public profile of Crafton's business community and forging relationships with regional stakeholders such as CONNECT and the Port Authority. The Commission and borough manager will continue to leverage these relationships to advocate for Crafton in attracting the small-town renaissance that so many neighboring communities are currently enjoying.

Connectivity + Walkability

This focus area has the most significant volunteer need. Data collection in the field will be much easier with the borough's planned expansion of its GIS-based asset management system. The remaining goals of this section are data-driven and hinge upon whether an inventory of Crafton's pedestrian facilities can be completed.

Community members that are interested in getting involved with the borough and are open to data collection in the field are encouraged to contact the borough office. The office can coordinate the startup of a "walkability team" as recommended in the Comprehensive Plan – but potential volunteers must be identified in the first place.

Communications

For the most part this section has been completed. The remaining goals are simple, non-urgent, and build upon existing successful systems.

Volunteers interested in this focus area would be the most helpful working on the recommended welcome package to new residents. The idea of a "welcome wagon"-type group has been mentioned at Council meetings in the past. This is an excellent idea, but in the scope of more urgent issues borough staff handle day-to-day, it has been difficult to find the time to execute.