CHALLENGES

The following pages outline some of the challenges that Hermitage is facing in creating a pedestrian-oriented town center.

no sense of place

The center of Hermitage currently consists of unlandscaped parking lots, single story retail that is set back long distances from the street and overly wide streets. These predominant elements combine to create an atmosphere that is anonymous, drab and unattractive. These photos of the intersection of State Street with Hermitage Road, below, could have been taken anywhere in the United States.

no connection to natural features

There are several stream corridors in the heart of town that could provide a great amenity to the community. Erosion control projects have already been undertaken where the stream runs behind the elementary school complex. However, they are currently not treated as amenities; the projects would have to be extended both north and south in order to create trails.
CHALLENGES

no pedestrian amenities

The current zoning code requires new development to provide a sidewalk, street trees and to not be separated from the street by parking, but development has been patchy since the regulations went into effect. There are a few unlinked pieces of sidewalk and some curb cuts without adjoining sidewalks.

high traffic volumes on Hermitage Boulevard and State Street

State Street (State Route 3008) carries 18,000 cars per day while Hermitage Road (State Route 0018) carries 15,000 cars per day. The traffic volumes themselves, are not squelching pedestrian activities. Many pedestrian friendly retail centers around the world have similar, or even higher, traffic counts. The problem lies in the combination of the high traffic volumes, high vehicular speeds, excessively wide streets and a lack of pedestrian amenities, creating a very intimidating and uninviting pedestrian environment. There are many tactics for calming traffic, reducing traffic volume and encouraging pedestrian activity that could help mitigate this problem.
CHALLENGES

disconnected uses

Like many towns that developed during the post-war era, land uses in Hermitage are segregated by type. Each use is confined within its own area of land, with no intermingling of uses occurring, making it very difficult to establish a pedestrian culture without additional development. Mixed use development promotes walkability by placing residents (ie, customers) within walking distance of the business that they frequent. The diagram below illustrates how the commercial district that is centered around Hermitage Road and State Street creates a barrier between residential neighborhoods. Wide, fast and heavily trafficked, the roads themselves also create a barrier, discouraging any pedestrian activity.
large blocks

Due to the lack of a finer grained street grid that would allow local residents to move about on side streets, almost all of the area’s traffic is funneled onto Hermitage Road and State Street, causing congestion. These large blocks also make any potential pedestrian trips longer. For example, if someone living on Dutch Lane wanted to walk to the mall, they would have to either walk to State Street and then over to the mall, or walk to Highland Road and then south on Hermitage Road to the Mall. The construction of additional streets would create shorter routes for both pedestrians and vehicles. These additional streets would also open up more property for further development.

The two images below show the center of Hermitage at the same scale as downtown Pittsburgh. The scale of the blocks are completely different.
CHALLENGES

market assessment

As the chart below illustrates, Hermitage has a competitive demographic disadvantage when compared with other surrounding areas, in particular, high growth areas like Cranberry Township or the East End of Pittsburgh. Particularly in terms of potential retail development, the lower disposable income levels suggest that a large scale retail development or redevelopment is unlikely.

Early on in the planning process, the steering committee identified examples such as Crocker Park near Cleveland, Ohio as a positive model of what the ultimate goal for the Hermitage Town Center should be. This "town center" development is a mixed-use community that includes extensive high-end retail, apartments and offices to support an intensively developed public realm of streetscapes, public parks and parking garages. However, this project was undertaken as a coherent project under the control of a single developer with site control of the entire land parcel. Hermitage's relatively small population, slowly declining population and moderate income levels make it unlikely that this type of a developer intervention will take place, at least at the present time.

This means that change will most likely happen incrementally and the town center planning process needs to be based on that reality. It is clear, however, from the current level of developer and landowner interest, that is is a market for new retail establishments, the new Super Wal-Mart and Home Depot projects testify to that fact. We believe that there is also a potential long-term market for residential development based on an aging population seeking new housing products such as condominiums and apartments.

comparative demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Hermitage - 10 mile radius</th>
<th>Waterfront - 20 minute drive</th>
<th>Cranberry - custom trade area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population 1990</td>
<td>99,932</td>
<td>1,084,428</td>
<td>174,452</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population 2000</td>
<td>97,701</td>
<td>1,012,198</td>
<td>191,479</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population 2005</td>
<td>96,021</td>
<td>981,382</td>
<td>195,811</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005 Age &lt;18</td>
<td>20,791</td>
<td>199,323</td>
<td>46,022</td>
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<td>2005 Age 18-34</td>
<td>18,817</td>
<td>212,484</td>
<td>36,154</td>
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<td>2005 Age 35-54</td>
<td>27,276</td>
<td>283,499</td>
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<td>2005 Age &gt;55</td>
<td>29,137</td>
<td>285,878</td>
<td>51,557</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average HH Income 1990</td>
<td>$29,737</td>
<td>$34,782</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average HH Income 2000</td>
<td>$45,239</td>
<td>$48,643</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average HH Income 2005</td>
<td>$49,358</td>
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<td>Median Disposable Income 2005</td>
<td>$33,823</td>
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<td>2005 Income Distribution $0k - $35k</td>
<td>18,532</td>
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<td>2005 Income Distribution $75k - $100k</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Education &gt;High School Degree</td>
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<td>2005 Households</td>
<td>40,071</td>
<td>415,359</td>
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<td>2005 Retail Expenditures/Household</td>
<td>$18,855</td>
<td>$18,547</td>
<td>$21,187</td>
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</table>

Note: Cranberry 2005 data based on 2004 study.
OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities in Hermitage that will aid in achieving a memorable, active town center. Some of these opportunities were also listed as challenges, but if appropriately addressed, they could actually become an asset to the community.

small area allows for greater walkability

The area being targeted as the center of town is quite compact. If pedestrian conditions were improved to make the area pleasurable to walk in and if more retail, residential and businesses were developed, the area would be very walkable.

HALF MILE RADIUS
10 minute walk from edge of circle to the center of town

QUARTER MILE RADIUS
5 minute walk from edge of circle to center of town
OPPORTUNITIES

connection opportunities

BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN PATHS
Key streets that connect many of the separated uses should receive bike paths and sidewalks. Highland Road is currently being renovated to allow for safe bike and pedestrian passage.

INTERSECTIONS
Pedestrianizing intersections in and around the town center will help create connectivity between uses.

NATURAL CORRIDORS
Creating pathways along natural corridors will provide recreation as well as additional pedestrian connections to the town center from previously disconnected residential areas.

development opportunities

OLDER RETAIL
Older sections of retail, such as the retail along State Street, offer an opportunity for incremental redevelopment. Many of these properties may be up for redevelopment in the next ten years and could be imagined to align with the vision of the town center.

LARGE PARCELS
Having two large parcels at the heart of the town could be a huge opportunity. This allows a whole quadrant of the town center to be redeveloped without having to buy up many smaller properties.

MIDDLE SCHOOL
If the middle school is decommissioned by the school board, it provides an excellent opportunity for redevelopment right at the heart of town. This would be a perfect site for a community oriented use such as a library or community center.

PARKING LOTS
Infill development along new streets running through under-utilized parking lots would increase density and walkability.
The diagram below illustrates the overall design concept. This concept organizes retail along Hermitage Boulevard and State Street and encourages mixed-use development to occur within a half mile radius of the intersection of the two streets. The following pages outline components of the design concept, each of which could be utilized in a variety of locations to create a walkable, memorable town center that would be the physical and social center of the community. These components are intended to be tools to shape future development into the vision of Hermitage that was established in the goal setting process. The final plan for Hermitage will most likely be quite different from any versions you will see on the next few pages, but the elements will be present in some form or another.

**OVERLAY DISTRICTS**
Create Overlay Districts in key corridors to create pedestrian connectivity, density and mixed-use

**NATURAL CORRIDORS**
Create pedestrian and bike connections along natural corridors and greenways

**CONNECT THE PIECES**
Create connections from existing residential neighborhoods. This includes pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle connections

**PHYSICAL TOWN CENTER**
Green space, signage and formal landscaping at intersection of State Street and Hermitage Boulevard provide a visual focus at the physical center of town

**EXPAND STREET GRID**
Establish a street grid on large parcels and develop with mixed use development using the existing right of ways, paper streets and an "Official Map"

**STATE STREET RETAIL**
State Street will be gradually reconfigured into a main street style retail district as existing properties redevelop. Traits of this area will include continuous sidewalks, established build to lines and parking located behind the buildings

**HERMITAGE BOULEVARD**
A planted median and a consistent, landscaped buffer transform a faceless, ugly street into a community asset.

**INCREMENTAL REDEVELOPMENT**
Change isn't going to happen overnight. Instead, if the proper zoning requirements are in place, change will happen naturally, as older properties are redeveloped