

# CORAOPOLIS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  
2021-2026

Prepared collaboratively by the  
Board of Directors,  
Business & Economic  
Development Team, and Staff.



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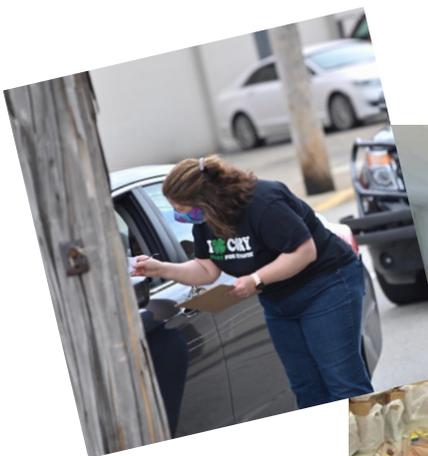
*Coraopolis Community Development gratefully acknowledges The PNC Foundation for underwriting the development, printing, and distribution of this document.*

# Organizational Background

Coraopolis Community Development Corporation (CCDC) is a small organization with big dreams. Starting as a grassroots effort in 2006 under the name of “Coraopolis Community Development Foundation,” the registered 501c3 nonprofit organization has steadily built its donor and volunteer base over the years to more than 800 individuals and businesses. The CCDC is currently made up of a staff of 2.5 - a full-time executive director, a full-time director of economic development, and a part-time program manager.

Although primarily focusing its efforts on the Borough of Coraopolis, the CCDC’s service area includes Neville Island, Moon Township, Crescent Township, and Groveton. At the heart of the organization’s mission is the well-being and prosperity of the people it serves. The CCDC focuses on providing much needed resources to individuals and families through a number of programs including:

The **Coraopolis Food Pantry** which opens its doors on the first and third Sunday of each month. During the COVID-19 health pandemic, the number of people served through the food pantry spiked from 260 to a staggering 847 in one month. Though numbers tripled in the midst of the pandemic, the CCDC’s small size allows it to be nimble and adaptable in the midst of crisis. The CCDC aspires to serve its community at this heightened level of service for as long as needed.



The **Weekend Snack Pack program** is an extension of the Food Pantry that was developed in 2019 in partnership with the local school district. In community eligible school districts, students are eligible to receive subsidized breakfast, lunch and dinner during the school week. The Snack Pack program was born with the mission to feed school children during the weekend and provides a much needed supplemental food source for local families. Currently, the Snack Pack program feeds 112 students across two school districts during the school year with a goal of increasing to serve 200 students in subsequent years.



The CCDC **Community Garden** is a member of Grow Pittsburgh, an urban agricultural program catering to Allegheny County. Not only does the Community Garden bring together members of the Coraopolis community to develop gardening skills, but the produce grown in the garden supplements the Coraopolis Food Pantry with fresh produce for families in need.



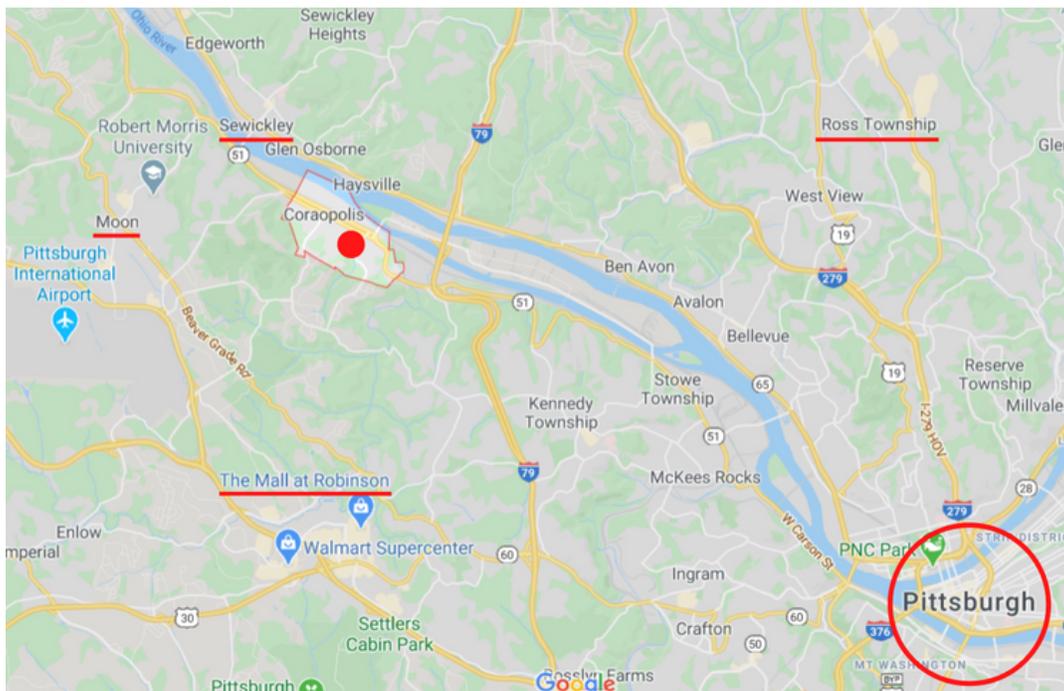
The **Coraopolis Train Station** is the CCDC's first restoration project. The long-neglected Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad passenger station at Mill Street and Neville Way was built by the firm of Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge, successors of Henry Hobson Richardson, and completed in 1896. The station, a valuable example of Richardsonian Romanesque Revival architecture, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places (79002156) in 1978, but sadly has been exposed to the elements for years due to a deteriorating roof. The CCDC purchased the station to restore the building for use as a community gathering space in the heart of downtown Coraopolis. As a bicycle gateway, the station is situated near the junction of three trail networks: The Montour Trail, The Ohio River Trail and the Three Rivers Heritage Trail System. The station will be a central stop for cyclists and a link to emerging bicycle culture in Coraopolis. Construction is ongoing as fundraising continues, with the exterior improvements estimated to be complete by the end of 2021.



# Community Profile

The Borough of Coraopolis is situated in Allegheny County, 14 miles northwest of Pittsburgh and 10 miles from Pittsburgh International Airport. The town itself is not large but it lies in the center of several growing townships. Located directly adjacent is Moon Township, which has 26,000 residents, hundreds of small businesses, and is home to Robert Morris University. Located south are Neville Island and Robinson Township; east is Kennedy Township; west are Findlay and Crescent Townships; and north is Sewickley.

- According to the United States Census Bureau, the borough has a total area of 1.4 square miles, of which 1.3 square miles is land and 0.1 square miles, or 9.46%, is water.
- Population of 5,677
- Median income of Coraopolis residents is \$44,583
- 13% of the population listed an income under the poverty level in 2018



# Demographics

## POPULATION BY RACE



| <b>Race Category</b>            | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| White Alone                     | 4,257         | 75.1%             |
| Black or African American Alone | 1,067         | 18.8%             |
| Hispanic or Latino              | 232           | 4.1%              |
| Asian Alone                     | 22            | 0.4%              |
| Two or More Races               | 312           | 5.5%              |

## DEMOGRAPHICS BY AGE



| <b>Age Category</b>       | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Under 5                   | 278           | 4.9%              |
| Persons 5-17 Years        | 635.8         | 11.2%             |
| Persons 18-24 Years       | 374.7         | 6.6%              |
| Persons 25-34 Years       | 828.8         | 14.6%             |
| Persons 35-54 Years       | 1328.4        | 23.4%             |
| Persons 55-64 Years       | 1073          | 18.9%             |
| Persons 65 Years and Over | 1163.8        | 20.5%             |

## HEALTH DATA (2014-2018)



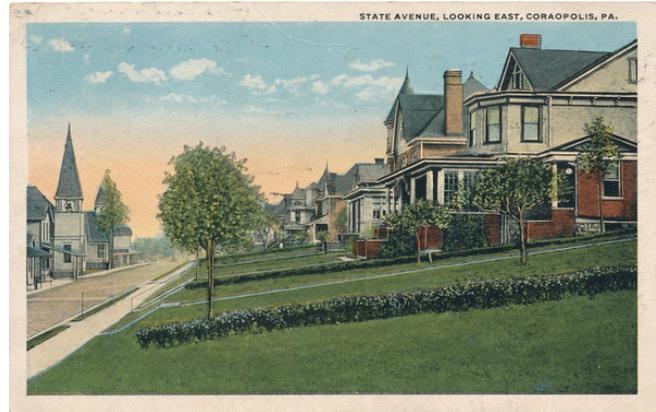
| <b>Category</b>                                      | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------------|
| With a disability, under 65 years old                | 590           | 10.4%             |
| Persons without health insurance, under 65 years old | 602           | 10.6%             |

# History

Coraopolis is seated alongside the Ohio River, and was a former major stop on the "Little Giant" Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad. This is what brought industry, people and promise to the former "Middletown" village, which was renamed as the maiden city "Coraopolis" in 1886.

Over the years, Cory (as it is affectionately called) has overcome numerous obstacles.

The Great Floods brought despair in 1907, 1936, and 1972, but rather than sink into that despair, the townspeople rose above the headwaters that threatened to destroy them and rebuilt damaged homes and businesses. From industry decline with the closing of the Consolidated Lamp & Glass Company in 1963 to the last passenger ride through the Coraopolis Train Station in 1985, that spirit of resilience has never wavered. As the saying goes, "come hell or high water," Coraopolis will survive.



Coraopolis is still the home and world headquarters of the American Bridge Company, which has several notable projects all over the world including the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in New York, the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge, the Willis Tower, the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the US Steel Tower, and the Vehicle Assembly Building at Kennedy Space Center, among many others.

Cory's central business district is lined with flat sidewalks, locally-owned shops and has a hometown feel. Within the last few years, small business owners have started to fall in love with Cory again, spurring transformation of its 1960's facades, little by little. As you walk the (sometimes cobblestone) streets, you can easily be transported to a more romantic era, where Victorian-age homes with wrap-around porches and turrets stand tall. These are homes that have been held onto by generational families and which have recently been changing hands to younger families looking to start their own memories. The town is flanked by historic stone churches that serve as examples of some of the best architecture of their time and a more prosperous time in Cory's history.

In contrast, are the forgotten, blighted homes and commercial spaces that long for some love and attention. With 13% of residents listing an income below the poverty level, the financial ability to revitalize these properties is not typically a financial reality.

Once a thriving industrial center - peaking in 1940 with a population of 11,086 - Coraopolis has struggled to find its footing in the modern economy. As of 2018, the median income in Coraopolis was \$44,583, which is significantly lower than Pennsylvania's median of \$59,445 and the national median of \$61,937. As previously stated, 13% of Coraopolis residents live below the poverty line, which is higher than the Pennsylvania average of 12.2%. Seventy-two percent of families in the predominant school district are on government assistance or under the poverty line.



# Guiding Statements

## MISSION STATEMENT

Since its founding in 2006, the organization's mission statement as the "Coraopolis Community Development Foundation" has been: "To serve the community of Coraopolis PA, encouraging and assisting in renewal through community service and development projects, providing relief, resources and redevelopment."

As the organization has transitioned to the Coraopolis Community Development Corporation, its work moving forward will be more "community development" focused. The CCDC wishes to embrace a new mission statement that places the economic well-being of Coraopolis and its residents front and center:

*The Coraopolis Community Development Corporation's mission is to work toward the equitable growth and revitalization of Coraopolis by providing residents with tools to lead to self-sufficiency; continuing to grow the town's business district; and improving the overall quality of life in our community.*



## POSITIONING STATEMENT

We believe in Coraopolis: its people, its businesses, and its tremendous assets. Situated near educational institutions, a major Interstate, highways, neighboring local destinations, recreational trails and greenspace, the power of our town to attract significant consumer traffic is great. We seek to stabilize food security and increase support for those in need, while enhancing and revitalizing the sidewalk business district to uplift and provide opportunity to residents and business owners.

## PROGRAM PARAMETERS

The following criteria were used in evaluating the strategies listed later in this document and should be used when considering new program opportunities. CCDC's programs and services will:

- Advance our mission
- Address community needs
- Align with our commitment to equity and inclusion
- Build upon the CCDC's expertise and be within our capacity
- Be sustainable through philanthropy
- Continue to position the CCDC as a trusted leader in the communities we serve
- Leverage the capabilities and resources of partner organizations

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## CORE VALUES

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| ✓ Transparent            | ✓ Community-focused  |
| ✓ Collaborative          | ✓ Historically proud |
| ✓ Proactive              | ✓ Forward thinking   |
| ✓ Culturally interesting |                      |



# Goals, Strategies, & Outcomes

## **GOAL ONE: AVENUES FOR GROWTH**

*Support, promote, and grow the downtown business district mainly comprised of Mill Street, 4th and 5th Avenues.*



### **Strategies:**

1. Create an economic ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial ideas and activity through the establishment of a business accelerator and work sharing space in downtown Coraopolis.
2. Promote existing businesses and available commercial space through events and marketing.
3. Through strategic networking and leveraging existing and new businesses, attract more small business owners to invest in the town with retail that aligns and complements the existing landscape.
4. Working with borough and business leaders, develop a streetscape and beautification plan and updated signage guidelines for the business district.
5. Partner with local artists, galleries and student art organizations to implement an arts and culture initiative in downtown Coraopolis.

### **Outcomes:**

1. Increased storefront occupancy rates
2. Higher revenue and foot traffic at existing businesses
3. More visible and desirable business district that attracts customers within and beyond the 15108 zip code
4. An established set of annual events that draw people to the downtown corridor.
5. Coraopolis's sense of identity continues to strengthen as the community embraces its rich heritage and collective memory to inform future dialogue.

## GOAL TWO: ALL ABOARD! MILL STREET

*Leverage the redevelopment of the Coraopolis Train Station to spur catalytic growth in the area surrounding the station on Mill Street and 4th Avenue.*



### Strategies:

1. Renovate the Coraopolis Train Station. Completion date: end of year 2021.
2. Secure a tenant for a revenue generating restaurant, cafe or catering business inside and launch a facility rental program.
3. Secure adjacent properties for additional parking, outdoor seating and green space.
4. Leverage train station redevelopment to attract new retail, food and beverage establishments to Mill Street and 4th Avenue.
5. Establish a commerce and cultural corridor that will extend from 5th Avenue down Mill Street, across 4th Avenue to the Train Station, and down to the forthcoming Coraopolis Borough Riverfront Park project.
6. Develop a streetscape and beautification plan for 4th & Mill crossing.

### Outcomes:

1. The Train Station will be a gathering space for positive community activity.
2. Mill Street will be restored as a bustling business and retail hub, contributing to the overall growth of the Coraopolis Business District.
3. The overall appearance of Mill Street and the Business District will be improved.
4. Improved aesthetic and positive street activity will enhance the overall quality of life for surrounding neighbors and businesses.
5. Further connectivity and expansion of the Coraopolis commercial corridor.
6. CCDC's brand as an innovative, high performing community development corporation will be well-established in the minds of community residents and businesses, the public sector, foundations, and peers.



## TRAIN STATION

CORAOPOLIS, PENNSYLVANIA

Artistic renderings show the vision for a completed Coraopolis Train Station (above) and a revitalized 4th & Mill Street Crossing (below).



## MILL STREET

CORAOPOLIS, PENNSYLVANIA

## **GOAL THREE: CORAOPOLIS COLLABORATIVE**

*Organize a platform to convene Coraopolis business owners, residents, government and community leaders to work together to improve their neighborhood.*



### **Strategies:**

1. Strengthen the CCDC's focus on convening residents and business owners, equipping them with the tools, information, and connections needed to have a proactive, effective voice in community improvement plans.
2. Merge the Coraopolis Business Association with the CCDC and begin offering regular programming to members.
3. Create a steering committee to oversee the CCDC's Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) application and subsequent execution once funding is received.
4. Include members of the community in the planning of community-wide events.

### **Outcomes:**

1. CCDC is positioned as a trusted resource and the keystone in a thriving, connected community that is working together with one, unified voice.
2. Community leaders and business owners will feel a sense of comradery, have an open line of communication, and a comfortable platform through which to connect with each other.
3. NPP partners and borough leaders will have a seat at the table when critical decisions are made that affect the economic development of Coraopolis.
4. Community members will have the opportunity to celebrate together in a way that instills local pride.

## GOAL FOUR: PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUCCESS

*Connect vulnerable individuals with resources and information they need to improve their lives, become self-sufficient, and remain safely in their homes.*

### Strategies:

1. Operate a food pantry that is run so efficiently that it can easily fluctuate with rise and fall of demand for its services.
2. Expand the Snack Pack program to serve 200 students across two school districts.
3. Expand and enhance the Community Garden to include a sensory garden for people with disabilities.
4. Through a partnership with local financial institutions, offer school students and adults regular learning sessions around financial literacy, basic savings plans, and budgeting to help improve their financial situations.
5. As part of the NPP application, establish a pilot project with Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh to improve housing conditions for long term homeowners in Coraopolis.
6. Work with developers to generate interest in purchasing and renovating property in Coraopolis for new homeowners and renters.



### Outcomes:

1. As economic challenges come and go, the Coraopolis Food Pantry is ready, prepared, and able to easily increase or decrease its services to meet the needs of community members.
2. Increased awareness of the Snack Pack program, connecting as many children who need the program to its resources.
3. Further solidifying the Community Garden as a community-wide treasure and affirming the CCDC's commitment to inclusive opportunities. This will also expand the garden's volunteer draw and initiate unconventional partnerships with new organizations.
4. CCDC clients will have an enhanced understanding of and access to the resources they need to manage their financial lives.
5. As the business district and housing stock grow due to renovations and promotion, long term residents will not feel excluded from the success of the community. People will live in safer, more affordable homes, and the stock of quality, affordable housing will be preserved.
6. Coraopolis enters its next chapter as a revitalized, relevant and desirable place where all can thrive.

## GOAL FIVE: SERVING WITH STRENGTH

*Ensure the CCDC has the resources needed to serve its community in an efficient, effective and innovative way.*



### Strategies:

1. Renovate the existing and unencumbered Garden House at 411 Broadway Street and pull all CCDC operations under one roof, including the Food Pantry, Snack Pack program, Community Garden, and administrative offices. Completion date: beginning of 2023.
2. Cease rent payments at the food pantry.
3. Run an endowment campaign in honor of the organization's 15 year anniversary.
4. Submit and be awarded a six year Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP).
5. Implement an annual comprehensive fundraising plan that includes foundation and corporate giving; individual giving through the 1886 Society; and planned giving.
6. Establish and/or strengthen strategic local and regional partnerships to enhance the CCDC's offerings and expand its reach. Including but not limited to:
  - Borough of Coraopolis
  - Cornell School District
  - Moon Area School District
  - Robert Morris University
  - Carnegie Mellon University
  - Pittsburgh Airport Area Chamber of Commerce
  - Montour Heights Country Club
  - Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
  - Allegheny County Economic Development
  - Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh
  - Grow Pittsburgh
  - Salvation Army of Western Pennsylvania

### Outcomes:

1. The CCDC is able to serve its community in the most efficient and effective way possible, through one central "hub" for community services.
2. The CCDC is in a significantly better financial position.
3. Having an endowment will help the CCDC weather any future economic downturns by establishing a "rainy-day fund." It also provides flexibility should the board/staff want to explore a new program and/or initiative and need seed funding to do this.
4. Setting up an NPP in Coraopolis would spur economic growth, shine a light on the town, and foster critical corporate partnerships to invest in the long term success and revitalization of the community.
5. The CCDC is fiscally strong, with the capacity to meet needs and drive community development while showing its donors the measurable impact of their philanthropy.
6. The CCDC is positioned as a "go-to" community resource and supplements its offerings to the community with the knowledge and expertise of its partners. The CCDC becomes a convener for idea sharing and problem solving and a link between Coraopolis businesses, government, and community.

# Approach

In summer 2019, a subgroup of the CCDC's Board of Directors called the "Business and Economic Development Team" was formed out of the desire from business owners and property developers to see further advancement in the economic development of Coraopolis. This group has personally invested in the partial funding of a full-time Director of Economic Development - the first in the CCDC's history - and will embark upon a community development initiative to jump-start neighborhood revitalization for the benefit of local residents and business owners.

Throughout this process, many productive conversations took place in order to develop a better understanding of expectations and a clear vision of intended accomplishments. Demographic and historical data was researched through the United States Census Bureau, Allegheny County, Coraopolis Historical Society, Citi-Data.com, NeighborhoodScout.com, and "*Coraopolis*" by Gia Tatone. The plan outlined in this document is the culmination of a year-long process. During the process, the CCDC:

- Convened it's board, the "Business & Economic Development Team," and staff to develop plans for economic development and how the initiative fit into the overall work of the CCDC.
- Compiled and reviewed internal CCDC documents in order to gain a better understanding of the CCDC's history, structure, past and current plans, programming/services, and service area.
- Conducted more than 40 meetings to gain insight into perspectives on key strategic issues with the following:
  1. Members of the Board of Directors and Business & Economic Development Team
  2. Coraopolis Borough Manager and Council Members
  3. Coraopolis business owners
  4. Local, state, and federal officials
  5. Real estate professionals and investors
  6. Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development and its Main Street program
  7. Economic development professionals from other municipalities, both locally and across the state of Pennsylvania

# SWOT Analysis



# Closing Statement

In adopting this strategic plan, the CCDC affirms its commitment to equitable community development, engaging its community members in an inclusive way, and offering services to its clients that will directly improve their lives. Further development of the town and its resources will provide residents with tools and opportunities leading to self-sufficiency; create a vibrant and bustling business district; and raise the quality of life for all who live, work, and play in Coraopolis.

The CCDC also pledges to uphold the organization's core values in all dealings inside the organization and when working with external partners. The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide guidance for the next five years - from 2021 to 2026. This plan includes new guiding statements for the organization and a refined set of goals, strategies, and outcomes. It is not all-encompassing, but rather highlights the priorities for the years ahead.

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*Thanks for being on  
this journey with us!*

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