

In Cranberry Business Park, There's No End To The Speculation

Some commercial buildings – supermarkets, big box stores and hotels, as well as a few major corporate buildings like the Westinghouse Cranberry Woods headquarters – are built to order. Others are built on speculation – in the hope that prospects will find the space to their liking and decide to move in.

Cranberry Business Park, a 180-acre office complex serving nearly 3,000 employees in the geographic heart of Cranberry, is among the latter. None of the seven buildings put up by Chaska Property Advisers, the Park's development arm, had tenants before they were begun. So its design is deliberately flexible – allowing tenants to carve out just the right amount of space for their own immediate needs.

The park is built on land defined as SP-1 – Special Growth zoning – Cranberry's designation for land that permits certain types of business uses, like office space, while barring others, such as food processing or manufacturing. But it's a bit off the beaten path, along Unionville Road, and it can't be seen from any of the Township's major thoroughfares.

Traco, whose original family owners assembled most of the land decades ago, is a neighbor on the Park's southernmost end. Its eastern boundary lies immediately behind the screen of woods that includes Community Park Nature Trail. And its list of tenants contains an impressive roster of technology, equipment, software, pharmacy, engineering, energy, financial and logistics companies, including some which are the American outposts of larger overseas parent corporations.

It also has a distinctly low-rise suburban character. Point Breeze resident Richard Donley is a leading partner in the Business Park and, for the past ten years or so, has

developed it around a clearly-defined vision of what companies want in the 21st century. He approaches that task with a remarkably high level of confidence, using his own money along with his partners' funds to finance buildings entirely on speculation that his vision is correct. "I don't want to build multi-story offices," he asserts.

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"We're not a bunch of tall buildings; that's why people leave the city. And besides, I don't like them, they're harder to manage, and they don't promote the campus-type environment we've tried to create here," he said.

"The flex space in this park is over 80 percent office; only 20 percent is for storage or R&D. We're different than other business parks. If you look at what most people call 'flex space,' it's the opposite: they're 80 percent storage and 20 percent office. Here, every tenant has their own entrance. They control their own security. The utilities are individually metered. They control their own restrooms.

"We built a much more expensive shell than our competitors for flex space. It's brick and glass and we built lots of parking – five spots per thousand square feet instead of three, like most flex buildings do. That parking ratio has allowed the Park to attract companies like Sage Software, Fidelity Information Services,

Overview. Richard Donley, along with several co-investors, built Cranberry Business Park and contemplates adding two more flex-space buildings on its remaining undeveloped sites.

Coventry Health Care, Tollgrade, Pittsburgh Logistics, and Fidelity Information Services – companies which are 100 percent office – into Cranberry Township and the Park."

That arrangement also gives Donley the ability to relocate growing companies within the Business Park, and to do so with minimal disruption. "Real estate should be the least important part of any tenant's day," he reflected. "The tenant shouldn't have to worry about changing light bulbs or mowing the grass or anything else. The tenant should focus on their business. The important thing is to make sure they're comfortable, that the environment's right for them, and that they know that if their business grows, somebody's here who can take care of them. That's why, so far, we've never lost a tenant."

In the end, though, what makes any business park succeed has less to do with its architecture than its location, and Cranberry has been a great location, according to Donley. "The infrastructure and the community life Cranberry has to offer is really a great package," he reflected. "Good, solid planning, forward thinking, traffic management; Cranberry Township

really stands out. We don't always agree on everything, but they've done a great job in managing this growth. It's been incredible."

