

City of Kent Bicentennial Plan

*In Honor of Ohio's Bicentennial in 2003,
the City of Kent's Bicentennial in 2005
and Kent State University's Centennial in 2010*

**A Comprehensive Plan Based
on the Principles of Sustainability**

**Approved by Kent City Council
November 3, 2004**

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Charley Bowman

INSERT CITY MANAGER'S LETTER HERE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, City Council directed the city administration to proceed with a community-wide comprehensive planning process. The City of Kent Community Development Department was given the responsibility to administer the planning process based on the framework of sustainability principles, consistent with the City of Kent's adopted *Goals for Sustainable Development*. Through application of the City's sustainability principles, and an extensive community meeting process, a community vision and definition of sustainability have been reached. Professional assistance was sought from the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service Sustainable Communities Program. In addition, technical assistance was provided by numerous Kent State University faculty and staff and the Kent State University Urban Design Center.

The concept of sustainability is defined as finding the long-term balance between environmental, social and economic issues. Within this context, sustainability seeks to maintain a balance among three key sectors that impact the viability of a community: economic, sociocultural and ecological. Sustainability means giving all three factors careful consideration as community planning, development and redevelopment projects move forward.

Over the course of thirteen months beginning in October 2002, the Community Development Department hosted a series of planning meetings in eight planning districts. A volunteer Steering Committee assisted with the location and facilitation of the district meetings. Four rounds of meetings and a total of forty-five community meetings were held during the study period.

The results of the meetings defined the tasks needed to achieve a state of sustainability on a community-wide basis in addition to an individual district basis. Together, these tasks comprise the city's Bicentennial Plan. The study process also identified community implementers who, along with the City of Kent, must be involved in their respective roles to guide, provide leadership and implement the Bicentennial Plan.

Kent residents arrived at a list of aspirational goals that reflect the values of the Kent community. Implementing these goals over a long-term period will lead to a sustainable future. The goals are oriented herein within the three elements of sustainability. The list of goals is as follows:

Natural Environment

1. Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
2. Preserve natural resources.
3. Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

1. Promote traffic management.
2. Improve pedestrian orientation.
3. Use existing buildings for redevelopment.

Social

1. Protect neighborhoods.
2. Retain a strong public-education system.
3. Preserve Kent's small-town atmosphere.

Economic

1. Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
2. Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental conscience.
3. Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

The goals are paired with an implementation plan and are presented in a matrix with progress indicators and the parties responsible for implementing the plan (implementation teams). The indicators function as benchmarks to identify progress being made toward reaching the community vision expressed through the aspirational goals. In some cases, the indicators are presented with time frames.

Readers will notice that components of goals can be found in more than one aspect of sustainability. This reinforces the idea that social, economic and environmental issues are inextricably woven and that community issues are far less black and white than they may first appear.

In addition to community-wide aspirational goals, specific planning consideration was provided for three Special Planning Areas:

1. West Main Street
2. Campus Link
3. Southwest Corner of State Routes 261 and 43

These three areas were analyzed through a lens of sustainability. Conceptual development site plans were created based upon a community consensus facilitated during the many Bicentennial Plan meetings. The conceptual site plans will guide decision-makers in reviewing redevelopment and development plans for these areas. Architectural and development guidelines are key components for each of the Special Planning Areas. This work can also serve as a template for other areas that are identified for redevelopment in the future.

Special reports have been provided by Kent State University staff and community members on a variety of topics, including: economic development, parks and recreation planning, waterways, architecture, Kent State University-City of Kent joint planning, and transportation. The special reports highlight specific issues related to sustainability.

It is intended that this plan be a living document in which the City of Kent and the identified implementation teams report annually to the community. These annual reports will communicate the status of respective projects and programs within the community. In keeping with the spirit of this idea, the plan needs to be adaptable based upon changing

trends and conditions within the Kent community. To this end, it is appropriate that the document be reviewed every three to five years and any modifications be adopted.

The Bicentennial Plan is both a long- and short-term plan for the Kent community. The search for a balance with economic, social and environmental aspects of our community will be neither easy nor simple. The challenge is in finding balance, achieving compromises, accepting trade-offs and having the wisdom needed to make and keep Kent a sustainable community.

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Kent is a sustainable place that has intertwined the delicate balance of economic, environmental and social vitality that form a community. Together we have created a plan based on our appreciation of a small-town lifestyle placed within the urban context of northern Ohio. Our focus on locally owned and independent businesses within the downtown area and diverse neighborhoods throughout the city provides a viable choice that preserves natural resources and the historic nature of our built environment.

We are a university community where Kent State University serves as a resource to create and support enterprises with a strong social and environmental consciousness while providing cultural opportunities for our residents. Kent is a diverse community where the integrity of neighborhoods has been protected by a balance between family homes and student housing.

The size of our community allows us to create a walkable community within a built environment where traffic management is possible because of the strong use of alternative forms of transportation and well-planned traffic patterns. We also are a place where the park system and community celebrations enhance our physical and mental well-being while raising our individual awareness and commitment to enhancement of the natural resources that bless this place. The strong academic tradition of our public school system prepares our youth to develop their abilities and participate in creating the future of this community.

Finally, we are assured that we will remain a sustainable community because of committed Kent residents, approachable city officials and cooperation between local government and university officials who truly have incorporated sustainable practices into the core of decision-making.

SUSTAINABILITY DEFINITION

Sustainability is defined as the balance of environmental, social and economic issues; these are the essential elements of sustainability. In this context, it means maintaining a balance among three key sectors that impact the viability of a community: economic, sociocultural and ecological. Sustainability means giving all three factors careful consideration as community planning and development go forward.

INTRODUCTION

In 2001, the City of Kent conducted a community-visioning process called Destination 2006. The purpose of this process was to identify concrete programs or plans that City Council and the City Administration should pursue. A series of public forums was held over a period of approximately six months. Of the many ideas generated, the topic that received the greatest interest was that the City of Kent should complete a comprehensive-planning process. The City of Kent currently has a Comprehensive Plan that was written in 1985. It was indeed time to revisit and update that document.

In 2002, City Council directed the City Administration to proceed with a community-wide comprehensive planning process. With the leadership and guidance of Kent State University Professor Emeritus Eugene Wenninger, the Community Development Department outlined a program for the Bicentennial Plan based upon principles of Sustainability and building upon the City of Kent's *Goals for Sustainable Development* document (see Appendix D). To implement this process, assistance from the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service was sought. Ohio State University is the only public university in Ohio that has a sustainable-communities planning program (see Appendix A). The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service responded positively to the inquiry, agreeing to participate in a pilot program that may be utilized as a model for other communities within the State of Ohio.

Kent State University responded in an equally generous manner. Kent State University President Carol Cartwright provided the assistance of a number of academic and staff personnel to serve as the Design Team and assist the City of Kent in preparing and writing of this document. The Design Team provided valuable insights in developing a plan that helps to balance the three elements of sustainability: Environmental, Social and Economic.

The Kent State University Urban Design Center provided valuable contributions in the development of conceptual scenarios for the three special planning areas. The Special Planning Areas are West Main Street; Campus Link; and the Southwest Corner of State Routes 261 and 43. These three areas were deemed to merit special consideration as key areas for potential development and redevelopment and will be discussed in greater detail in this report.

The workhorse of the Bicentennial Plan is the citizens' Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was comprised of forty-seven Kent residents who assisted in the organization and formatting of the planning process. Steering Committee members provided the crucial task of facilitating the district meetings.

It is the intent that the Bicentennial Plan will guide the City of Kent's land use, neighborhood development and redevelopment decision-making process for years to come. To achieve this end, it is recommended that the plan be revisited every three to five years and that progress on the goals identified in the Bicentennial Plan be measured. An annual report card needs to be presented to the Kent community, illustrating progress on the goals and plans presented in this document.

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DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

By Gary Locke, Plans Administrator
City of Kent, Department of Community Development

A demographic profile of a community provides a depiction of the characteristics of the population within that community. Such profiles, to their fullest extent, can provide a great deal of information and insight into a community and can constitute a full study unto itself. For the purposes of this document, however, this special report is intended only to provide information to assist the reader in understanding some basic characteristics of the population in the City of Kent. More specifically, it will describe Kent's population in certain facets, look at how some of Kent's characteristics compare to other places and identify some of the trends that may be developing based on a review of data over the past several decades.

The most reliable and constant source of data related to demographics is the data obtained through the nation's decennial census conducted at the beginning of each decade. The most recent data collected are based on the 2000 census conducted in the Spring of 2000. While the census data are considered to be the most reliable data available, there are limitations that prevent it from being the "perfect" count, leaving room for errors and omissions. It is possible that some of these problems taint, or raise questions about, the accuracy of the data collected for the city. Nevertheless, data reported for Kent by the census is considered official and is the basis on which the apportionment of local, state and federal political districts is based. Federal and state formula grants allocations also are based on the census figures.

The demographic profile portion of this special report is divided into three sections. It should be noted that both sections will provide facts and descriptions of the population in the city as it existed in the Spring of 2000. The first section will review certain characteristics of the population in 2000 and compare this information to selected places, including these statistics as they are reported for the State of Ohio and the United States. This comparison should provide some perspective on how Kent compares with other places. While this comparison is certainly limited and is by no means complete, it does provide some interesting insight into the community. The second section will provide a comparison of Kent to several other college towns in the State of Ohio. The third section will review trends related to selected characteristics of the population over the past several decades. In addition to providing more insight into the community, this information also is useful in planning for the future and determining what some of the needs for the city may be in the coming years, based on these trends.

Comparison of Kent to Selected Places – 2000

Population. This section compares Kent to several selected places, including Portage County, the State of Ohio and the United States. In addition to those places just named, statistics from Franklin Township (the unincorporated portion) and from the City of Barberton in Summit County also are included. Barberton was included in the comparison because it is similar in population size to Kent, is part of the Akron

metropolitan area, and does not serve as the home of a major university. It also is an older community with similar community characteristics and economic development issues as those that Kent faces. For total population figures, see the table below:

Comparison of Kent, Ohio, Population with Selected Locations, 2000	
Location	Population
Kent, Ohio	27,906
Franklin Township, Ohio	5,276
Portage County, Ohio	152,061
Barberton, Ohio	27,899
State of Ohio	11,353,140
United States	281,421,906

The following characteristics will be discussed in the remainder of this section:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Families and households below poverty status
- Household income
- Educational attainment

Most of the figures used for comparison in this section are comprised of percentages rather than actual population figures given the wide disparity of numbers in the actual counts. In several cases, the statistical median figure is provided. For those not familiar with the term “median,” it represents the midpoint of all cases counted. In other words, if the ages of 100 people are counted and ranked in order from lowest age to highest age, the median age is the age that falls in the middle of the ranking. It does not represent the mean, or average, age of the population. The actual data charts from which the information in this section is taken are provided in Appendix E.

One final note on census data: The data are compiled on the basis of how people complete their census questionnaires. Thus the data are representative of how people classify themselves, not on how others classify them.

Gender. As shown in the table below, the distribution of the number of males and females is relatively equally proportioned nationally, with the percentage of females (50.9%) holding a slight edge over the percentage of males (49.1%).

Distribution of Males and Females, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Population Group	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Male	45.8	51.0	48.8	46.7	48.6	49.1
Female	54.2	49.0	51.2	53.3	51.4	50.9

The national trend of a female-to-male edge in the population holds true in each of the places reviewed in varying proportions, with the exception of Franklin Township, where males held a 2% edge over females. Interestingly, Kent had the largest gap between the genders, with 54.2% of the population being female. A further review of the gender breakdown by age for Kent shows that the age group where the gender difference is most disparate is the 18-24 year age group, where females comprise 57.4% of the population in that age grouping compared to 42.6% being male. In contrast, males hold a slight edge in the population below the age of 18, where they comprise 51.3% of the population in that age group compared to 48.7% female. The large increase in the percentage of female residents at the age-18 threshold may be attributed to the attraction of Kent State University, but it also could be related to other factors such as housing, jobs or other supportive services. Kent's male and female population percentage in the 18-24 year age group is not comparable to the national percentages, where males in that age group outnumber females 51.1% to 48.9%.

Age. Kent's age distribution is obviously impacted by Kent State University and the number of young people that the university attracts. As can be seen from the table below, the impact is substantial.

Age Distribution, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Age Group	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Median Age	22.9	37.4	34.4	37.2	36.2	35.3
Under 18	16.4	21.6	23.7	24.8	25.4	25.7
18 to 24	40.0	14.1	14.4	8.4	9.3	9.6
25 to 64	36.1	53.3	50.9	49.5	52.0	52.3
Over 64	7.5	11.0	11.0	17.3	13.3	12.4

The median age of the U.S. population is 35.3, compared to Kent's population, which is more than 12 years younger at 22.9. This statistic is supported by the fact that more than half of the City's population (56.4%) is under the age of 25. In the other places studied, the percentage of the population below the age of 25 runs from about 33% to 38%, with

the rate nationally just over 35%. Without the university, Kent's age distribution likely would reflect the findings in the other places studied.

Kent's age distribution also helps to explain several other characteristics of a population that differ from other communities studied. The first and perhaps most significant impact is on earned income. As will be discussed later in this section, Kent's median household income is well below that of the other places studied. This can be attributed to the fact that the earning capacity of persons below the age of 25 is generally limited because they either work a part-time job while going to school, or they hold a full-time job that does not pay a high hourly rate. This factor also is consistent with the fact that the city's percentage of persons living below poverty level is higher than it is for the other places studied.

It also is important to point out that the portion of the population that generally earns the most wages, those people between the ages of 25 and 64, account for just over one-third of Kent's population (36.1%), whereas typically in the other places studied, that portion of the population typically accounts for about half of the entire population. These figures, when coupled with the city's income data, would support a scenario where the public services demanded by the community are not proportionately supported by the tax revenues generated by its citizens. These data also would suggest that the spending power within the community is limited, based on the lower income levels and the number of people who earn at those lower levels.

Racial Composition. Anyone familiar with Kent knows that Kent State University attracts a very diverse population to the community. While national origin is reported separately from race in the census data, some of this diversity is shown in the breakdown of race. The 2000 Census also made provisions for counting persons of more than one race (multiple-race people), which indicates that persons of multiple races are becoming more numerous and thus do not allow as clear of comparisons to census data from previous counts, which tended to favor single-race reporting (see other section of this special report dealing with race).

As shown in the table below, the racial composition (diversity) of Kent's population is more pronounced than that of some of the surrounding communities that were studied.

Racial Composition (Diversity), Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Race	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Black/African-American	10.2	2.5	3.6	5.9	12.1	12.9
White	87.9	95.2	95.5	93.7	86.1	77.1
Native American	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.5
Asian	2.5	2.4	1.0	0.5	1.4	4.2
Other	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.4	1.2	6.9

Note: Numbers include persons reporting multiple races and do not add to 100%.

Kent’s population is generally reflective of that of the State of Ohio’s in regard to white and non-white population. Kent’s non-white population has a somewhat higher percentage of people of the Asian race and a slightly lower percentage of persons who are black/African-American. Kent’s non-white population also is significantly higher than for the other places studied. In the case of Franklin Township, the percentage of black/African-American residents and Asian residents is almost the same.

The population of Kent and the other places studied is somewhat different than the overall racial distribution in the United States. In all of the nonwhite categories, the percentage of nonwhite persons in the United States is higher than what is found in Kent and the other local communities studied. This would suggest that Kent, while more racially diverse than some of its environs, is not as racially diverse as the country as a whole. Interestingly, the population of Portage County is the least diverse of any of the places studied, followed closely by Franklin Township.

Families and Households below Poverty Status. The U.S. Census Bureau defines “poverty” based on income and not on the condition of housing, employment status or other variables. Certainly people who live below the poverty level may live in substandard housing, be unemployed or underemployed, or have other difficulties that contribute to their situation. The Census Bureau establishes income thresholds based on family size, with families falling below such level considered to be below poverty level. Family and non-family counts do not include persons living in group quarters, such as those persons living in college dormitories, nursing homes or jails. These counts do, however, include persons living off-campus in various types of housing units.

As shown in the table on the next page, Kent leads all of the places studied with the highest percentage of families and households living below the poverty level.

Households Living below Poverty Level, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Family Type	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
All Families	15.4	2.8	5.9	11.5	7.8	9.2
Married-Couple Families	4.9	1.4	2.3	4.5	3.4	4.9
Female Head-of-Household	40.9	24.4	25.0	32.2	26.3	26.5
Non-family Households	35.9	24.5	19.2	15.8	16.6	17.4
Note: Percentages are not inclusive of other categories.						

It should be noted that Kent has a substantially higher percentage of female-headed households living below the poverty level than the national average and that of the places studied, only Barberton has a percentage in this same category that approaches Kent's. This figure in Kent's case may be supported to a certain extent by the university population, where it has been noted earlier that the city has a larger college-age, female population whose income opportunities are limited. Even more interesting is the fact that the percentage of married-couple families living below the poverty level is not that high and matches the national average of 4.9%. This again would tend to point to the university-age population as one of the prime contributors to the higher percentages regarding poverty level and would suggest that the City, with the college-age population factored out, would not be significantly dissimilar to the other places studied.

Household Income. Conclusions from a review of the data related to household income (see table on the next page) are consistent with those for poverty-level status. The median household income level shown for Kent is the lowest of all the places studied, with only Barberton approaching Kent's figure. Franklin Township and Portage County exceed both the state and national median household income figures. The fact that both Kent's and Barberton's median household-income figures are significantly below the state and national averages may suggest that such a trend is not uncommon in older suburban cities, although such a statement is not supported with statistical proof because of the limited nature of this analysis.

Household Income, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Income	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than \$10,000	18.1	1.03	7.8	11.7	9.2	9.5
\$10,000 to \$29,999	32.3	21.0	23.8	34.1	26.5	25.6
\$30,000 to \$74,999	35.1	40.2	47.3	43.5	44.5	42.4
\$75,000 to \$149,999	13.3	21.6	18.2	9.1	16.5	17.9
More than \$150,000	1.2	6.9	2.9	1.6	3.3	4.6
Median (Dollars)	\$29,582	\$47,750	\$44,347	\$32,178	\$40,956	\$41,994

Kent had the highest percentage of households earning less than \$10,000, the lowest percentage of households earning \$30,000 to \$74,999 and the lowest percentage of households earning more than \$150,000. Franklin Township had the highest median household income of all the places studied and also had the largest percentage of households earning more than \$150,000. Barberton had the lowest percentage of households earning more than \$75,000 a year (10.7%). This compares to Kent's 14.5%. Nationally, about 22.5% of all households earn more than \$75,000 in annual income.

Educational Attainment. In reviewing the 2000 census data for the educational attainment of persons 25 years of age and older, Kent would be expected to show well compared to the other places studied because of the presence of Kent State University. As shown in the table below, Kent and Franklin Township score the highest in the categories related to college education, with Franklin Township rating slightly higher in the percentage of persons with master's degrees or post-master's degrees.

Educational Attainment, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Educational Attainment	Kent, Ohio	Franklin Township, Ohio	Portage County, Ohio	Barberton, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than High School	8.3	8.8	14.0	20.9	17.1	19.6
High School Graduate	28.6	26.8	39.9	46.1	36.1	28.6
Bachelor's Degree	21.0	21.6	14.0	7.3	13.7	15.5
Master's Degree	10.9	12.2	4.7	2.2	5.0	5.9
Above Master's Degree	5.2	9.1	2.3	1.1	2.5	3.0
Note: Data are for persons 25 years of age and older.						

The percentage of persons with bachelor's degrees or higher in the City of Kent is just under 40% (37.1%), while the same figure in Franklin Township is just over 40% (42.9%). These combined categories score significantly better than the State of Ohio (21.2%) and the United States (24.4%). Kent and Franklin Township also had the lowest percentages of persons with less than a high school education, while Barberton led that category.

Conclusions. As noted earlier, this brief comparison can in no way paint a complete picture of how Kent compares to other places. It does, however, provide some interesting comparisons and tends to support some general conclusions that can be generated from the data. These conclusions follow:

- Kent has a higher proportion of females to males than what is found in some of the other places studied. Based on a review of the actual data breakdown of gender by age, this ratio appears to be attributed to a proportionately higher number of college-age females than college-age males.
- Kent has a significantly younger population than the other places studied. Just over 56% of all people living in the city are under the age of 25. Given that this population has limited earning potential, this age factor is likely one of the primary inhibitors to income levels.
- Kent is more racially diverse than the other local places studied, is comparable to the racial diversity figures for the State of Ohio but somewhat less diverse than the U.S. population as a whole.
- Household income in Kent is lower than the other places studied, with more than half of Kent's households earning less than \$29,582 a year. The average household in the United States earned just under \$42,000.
- Just over 37% of all persons living in Kent who are age 25 and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Nationally, this figure is about 24%.

Comparison of Kent to Selected University Cities in Ohio – 2000

This section will compare Kent to three college communities in Ohio: Oxford, Ohio (Miami University), Bowling Green, Ohio (Bowling Green State University) and Athens, Ohio (Ohio University). These three towns are comparable in size to Kent as indicated below:

Comparison of Kent, Ohio Population with Selected Locations, 2000	
Location	Population
Kent, Ohio	27,906
Oxford, Ohio	21,943
Bowling Green, Ohio	29,636
Athens, Ohio	21,342

The same characteristics that were discussed in the first section of this chapter will also be discussed in this section:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Families and households below poverty status
- Household income
- Educational attainment

All four cities are smaller cities compared to the larger urban university cities throughout the state, thus they are somewhat easier to analyze, more easily revealing the impacts that their universities may have on their populations. Two of the communities, Kent and Oxford, are located in relatively urban areas, whereas Bowling Green and Athens are located in more rural areas. Athens is even somewhat more unique in that it is located in “Appalachian” southeast Ohio, an area where incomes and economic opportunities are limited, as will be reflected in some of the data being analyzed.

Gender. The comparison of population of each community by gender reveals no significant differences, with each community having a larger percentage of females than males. Of the four communities, Kent has a slightly larger disparity between the male / female population than the other communities and all four fall slightly below the State and National percentages.

Distribution of Males and Females, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Population Group	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Male	45.8	46.8	46.8	46.9	48.6	49.1
Female	54.2	53.2	53.2	53.1	51.4	50.9

Age. While the median age of each of the four communities is relatively equal and substantially below the levels for the State of Ohio and the United States, there are some

significant differences in the age breakdowns. Kent and Bowling Green appear to be more closely aligned in the age breakdowns, while Oxford and Athens share a number of similarities.

Age Distribution, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Age Group	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Median Age	22.9	21.3	22.4	21.5	36.2	35.3
Under 18	16.4	8.3	13.1	6.7	25.4	25.7
18 to 24	40.0	66.8	46.6	66.7	9.3	9.6
25 to 64	36.1	20.1	32.7	21.8	52.0	52.3
Over 64	7.5	4.8	7.6	4.8	13.3	12.4

As noted in the first section of this Chapter, Kent, when compared to the selected places studied, had the largest percentage of population between the age of 18 and 24. However, in this comparison with other Ohio university cities, Kent had the lowest percentage of persons between 18 and 24 years of age. Remarkably, two-thirds of both Oxford’s and Athen’s population was comprised of persons between the age of 18 and 24. In both cases only about 25% of the population of Oxford and Athens was above the age of 24. Similarly, the elderly population in both Oxford and Athens was smaller (percentage-wise) than either Kent or Bowling Green. Thus, it can be said that Athens and Oxford are somewhat “younger” communities, with fewer families and school-age children, than Bowling Green and Kent. The same can be said for all four college communities when compared to state and national levels.

Racial Composition. Compared to the other university communities analyzed, Kent is by far the most racially diverse, with almost 15% of the population indicating that it was non-white. Athens reported a non-white population of about 11% and also reported the highest percentage of Asian residents (5.0%).

Racial Composition (Diversity), Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Race	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Black/African-American	10.2	4.9	3.2	4.3	12.1	12.9
White	87.9	92.4	93.1	90.6	86.1	77.1
Native American	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.5
Asian	2.5	2.9	2.2	5.0	1.4	4.2
Other	1.0	0.8	2.4	1.3	1.2	6.9

Note: Numbers include persons reporting multiple races and do not add to 100%.

Oxford reported a non-white population of about 9% and Bowling Green was the least diverse with a non-white population of just over 8%. All of the communities analyzed fell below the national figures for diversity, and only Kent closely resembled the diversity characteristics for the State of Ohio overall.

Families and Households Below Poverty Status. Each of the college communities studied reflected higher levels of families and households living in poverty than the State and National averages. The variations were most noticeable in the percentage of Non-Family Households living below poverty status. These figures are not surprising given that the student population (those not living at home) would typically fall into this classification.

Households Living below Poverty Level, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Family Type	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
All Families	15.4	13.4	8.0	14.8	7.8	9.2
Married-Couple Families	4.9	7.8	2.0	7.5	3.4	4.9
Female Head-of-Household	40.9	32.9	25.5	41.5	26.3	26.5
Non-family Households	35.9	53.5	36.8	63.9	16.6	17.4
Note: Percentages are not inclusive of other categories.						

Generally, Bowling Green had the lowest levels of families and households living below poverty level and for the most part, Athens had the highest figures. Kent reported the highest percentage of families living below poverty level but Athens clearly reported the highest percentage of non-family households living below poverty level. Kent also had the lowest percentage of non-family households living below poverty status of the four communities. While by no means conclusive, the numbers from these four communities would suggest that college towns are typically more impacted by families and households living at or below poverty level than non-college towns in similar urban and rural settings. The next section on Household Income also supports this assertion.

Household Income. A comparison of median household income in the college communities studied reveals that all four of the communities have median household incomes that fall way below the State and National median household incomes. Bowling Green was the community with the highest median household income, just slightly higher than Kent's. Athens had by far the lowest median household income, which was less than half of the State and National figures.

Household Income, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Income	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than \$10,000	18.1	21.5	15.4	33.3	9.2	9.5
\$10,000 to \$29,999	32.3	33.7	33.5	33.9	26.5	25.6
\$30,000 to \$74,999	35.1	29.1	37.5	20.9	44.5	42.4
\$75,000 to \$149,999	13.3	13.5	11.9	9.4	16.5	17.9
More than \$150,000	1.2	2.2	1.7	2.3	3.3	4.6
Median (Dollars)	\$29,582	\$25,164	\$30,599	\$17,122	\$40,956	\$41,994

In Athens, two-thirds of the households make less than \$30,000 per year, whereas about half of the households in the other communities make less than \$30,000 per year. Athens situation is probably exacerbated by its somewhat remote location and presence in Appalachian southeast Ohio. These figures on household incomes appear to correlate with poverty level data to suggest that income levels in college communities are more depressed than what may usually be found in most areas.

Educational Attainment. The data for the four communities analyzed regarding educational attainment is somewhat mixed and does not reveal results that one might assume, that being that income earning ability is directly associated with educational attainment. As was noted in the previous section on income, Athens, Ohio had the lowest household median income figure of the four college communities. As far as educational attainment, however, it had the highest combined percentage (63.8%) of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational Attainment, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Educational Attainment	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than High School	8.3	10.7	8.8	6.5	17.1	19.6
High School Graduate	28.6	14.7	22.7	11.2	36.1	28.6
Bachelor's Degree	21.0	24.0	21.9	25.6	13.7	15.5
Master's Degree	10.9	17.9	14.6	22.5	5.0	5.9
Above Master's Degree	5.2	11.6	7.6	15.7	2.5	3.0
Note: Data are for persons 25 years of age and older.						

Conversely, Kent had the lowest combined percentage of persons having attained a bachelor's degree or higher, mainly due to the fact that it had the lowest percentage of

persons who had attained either a Master's degree or above. As would be expected, the four communities had a much higher level of educational attainment than the Statewide or National level.

Conclusions. While the above review of selected data was very limited, there are some conclusions that can be suggested from this data.

- That Kent and the other college communities analyzed typically have a higher female to male ratio than either the State of Ohio or the United States.
- That Kent and the other college communities have significantly younger populations than the State and National medians.
- That Kent is somewhat more racially diverse than Athens, Oxford or Bowling Green.
- That all four communities have significantly lower median household incomes than the State and National median incomes and have typically higher levels of poverty than what is seen across the State and the country as a whole.
- That all four communities have a collectively higher educational attainment level than Ohio or the United States as a whole. Kent, however, had the lowest percentage of persons having a college degree of the four communities studied.

Historical Review of City of Kent Data

The population of Kent over a thirty-year period has fluctuated, showing a slight decrease of about 1% between 1970 and 2000. Between 1980 and 1990, however, the population increased by more than 2,000 people. At best, these figures, as unstable as they are, indicate no specific trends and point to the inconsistency with which the data are collected.

In reviewing the general development of the City of Kent since the 1970 census, it can be said that between 1970 and 1980, the City saw some expansion of its physical land area through annexation and the acquisition or construction of a substantial number of housing units. The 1980s was a decade of some physical expansion of the City's boundaries, mainly into Brimfield Township. These areas were sparsely populated and would not have contributed greatly to the population increase seen between 1980 and 1990. Few new single-family homes were built in the 1980s, but there was significant construction of multifamily units toward the end of the decade that would help to account for the population increase.

The decade from 1990 to 2000 saw the City's single family home production increase significantly, with the development of several hundred new homes in northern Kent and northwestern Kent. The population increase that one would have expected with this growth did not materialize, and according to the 2000 census, the City's population

actually decreased by about 900 people. The continued development of new single family housing in the City has continued into the 2000s and, as of the writing of this plan, still has some way to go before being completed. It is likely that by the end of the decade, the city should be close to the build-out point, or the point at which most of the developable residential land will have been developed.

The factors that have contributed to the rather unpredictable and not easily explained ups and downs of the population counts for the city are described in the following paragraphs.

Fluctuations in On-Campus Housing. The on-campus housing population at Kent State University has fluctuated over the past thirty years. The figures for on-campus housing are counted under the Group Quarters heading but are easily identified. These counts have fluctuated because of increases and decreases in the number of persons living on campus and are affected in enrollment fluctuations and some units being taken out of service by renovation or reconstruction projects.

Fluctuation in On-Campus Housing, 1970-2000				
Year	Dormitory Population	Percentage Change	Overall Population	Percentage Change
1970	8,330		28,183	
1980	4,801	-42.4	26,164	-7.2
1990	6,950	44.8	28,835	10.2
2000	5,653	-18.7	27,906	-3.2

The chart above shows the levels of on-campus housing as reported by Kent State University for the time period from 1970 to 2000. The ups and downs of the on-campus housing are consistent with the general increases / decreases in the overall City population.

Inaccurate Counts. As already noted, counting the transient population of the City is at best a hit-and-miss effort despite the procedures that the Census Bureau uses to try to ensure complete counts. Census Day is the first of April in each new decade, and the overall effort runs well through the summer of that year as field enumerators attempt to locate those households and persons who may not have returned a survey through the mail. This includes persons in group quarters. Summer also is the time when the university has its smallest enrollment and when the on- and off-campus student housing is at its lowest occupancy. This leads to a suspicion that some of the student population does not get counted and that the fluctuation in the counts over the last 30 years may actually give some measure of the accuracy of the counts.

Decreases in Persons per Housing Unit. One of the statistics that is often overlooked is the trend toward smaller household sizes over the past thirty years. In comparing the total population with the total number of occupied housing units over the past thirty years, the number of persons per housing unit has decreased from 4.08 persons per unit in

1970 to 2.85 persons per unit in 2000. While any of the census data collected can be argued based on the possible inaccuracies of the counts, these numbers do indicate a significant trend—namely, that household sizes are decreasing. This may be the best explanation as to why the population counts have not increased proportionately with the construction of new housing units seen over the past thirty years. It is quite notable that the increase of housing in the city by just more than 3,500 units since 1970 should have produced substantial population growth in the city during that time. This has not been the case and can be explained only by decreases in population density and the other factors just noted. A more detailed study may show other reasons but the three just noted are the most obvious explanations.

Age of Population. As noted in the first part of this special report, the college-age population constitutes a significant portion of Kent’s total population when compared to some of the other places studied. While the 1970 census data available are limited, it appears that this age group has accounted for 36% to 42% of the city’s total population and thus has been relatively stable. Given the other trends that have been noted and the expectation that Kent State University will remain stable if not grow in enrollment, this ratio is not likely to change significantly. The senior citizen population also has been relatively stable over this period, ranging from about 6% to 7.5% of the overall population. The trend here indicates that the senior citizen population is increasing slightly. The percentage of children ranging in age from birth through high-school age also appears to be relatively stable.

A somewhat differently structured comparison of changes in age groups in the city between 1980 and 2000 is provided in the table below. This breakdown is more detailed by age group and covers only the past twenty years rather than the previous discussion, which covers the past thirty years. This table shows trends within the age groupings, rather than a comparison of age groupings to the total population as discussed in the previous paragraph.

Age Distribution, Historical Data				
Age Group	1980	1990	2000	Percentage Change
Under 5	1,481	1,425	1,397	-5.7
5-9	1,285	1,430	1,274	-0.9
10-14	1,116	1,235	1,129	1.2
15-19	3,934	5,070	4,569	16.1
20-24	7,542	7,824	7,351	-2.5
25-34	4,754	4,177	3,639	-23.5
35-44	1,678	2,957	2,792	66.4
45-64	2,814	2,695	3,650	29.7
65 +	1,560	2,022	2,105	34.9

The table above shows that there have been some significant changes in the 15-19 year age group (up 16.14%), the 25-34 year age group (down 23.45%), the 35-44 year age group (up 66.39%), the 45-64 year age group (up 29.71%) and the 65-and-over age group (up 34.94%). Looking at this data further, in some cases the data do not present a firm trend up or down, but there are several exceptions. The 25-34 year age group has decreased steadily since 1980, suggesting that the persons who would just be exiting college are less inclined to stay in Kent. Considering that most of the students who attend Kent State University did not live in Kent before coming to school, the steady decrease is not surprising, but it does show a trend that fewer graduates are staying than had been the case twenty years ago. The 65-and-over population has been steadily growing since 1980, increasing by about one-third. This supports the fact that the population of Kent is growing older with the aging of the baby boomers and their parents.

This trend toward increasing numbers of older citizens and decreasing numbers of younger, post-college citizens has significant implications as far as city services are concerned. Such a trend suggests that income tax revenues will see a decline, putting some pressure on city government in its attempts to maintain services in the face of declining revenues that help to pay for those services.

Race. As noted in the previous section on this topic (see p. 000), Kent has a significantly higher minority population than the other places to which it was compared locally. Since 1970, the percentage of minority population in the city has increased from about 4% to about 14%. Thus, Kent is becoming an increasingly diverse community. Many comments were received in the comprehensive planning district meetings said that Kent residents value the diversity of race, culture and religion in the community. This trend is expected to continue (see also, Appendix E).

Household Income and Poverty Status. In comparison to the other local places studied in the previous section on this topic, Kent's percentages of persons living below the poverty level is significantly higher, with the exception of the percentage of "married-couple families" living below the poverty level. This finding is generally comparable to local, state and national figures. It was also noted earlier that Kent's median household income is much lower than what was found in the other places studied (see also, Appendix E).

Income in the city has risen steadily since 1970, with the largest increase between 1970 and 1980. The number of families and individuals living below the poverty level has decreased slightly by several percentage points between 1990 and 2000. Thus, despite increasing incomes, a significant number of households and individuals still are living below the poverty level. This situation points to a potentially growing income gap between people of moderate and higher incomes versus those who are poor. Of special note is the increase in the number of individuals 65 years of age and older that are living below the poverty level. The elderly and the poor are the major benefactors of the social-service funding that the city has provided for more than 20 years. Should tax revenues decrease in the future, however, the city may be challenged in its ability to maintain funding levels for social services. Many of the agencies providing these services have already experienced significant cuts in funding from other funding sources that they have historically relied upon.

Employment. The employment status of Kent residents has remained fairly stable. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of people in the labor force, and the unemployment rate (as measured at the time of the 2000 census) dropped from 4.21% in 1990 to 3.94% in 2000. However, these numbers are three years old, and with the number of job cutbacks and the general economic downturns of the past three years, unemployment has likely increased (there are no numbers available for the city which are published on a regular basis). Several comments received at the neighborhood meetings stated a need for the City of Kent to create more jobs for local residents. Such comments, along with potential declines in tax revenues and increasing public service needs make economic development a crucial priority for the City of Kent.

Taking a closer look at the employment profile of the city, there are some noticeable trends that impact the focus of economic development and need to be understood. The U.S. Census examines employment categories, one of which is Industry Employment (see Appendix E). This title is somewhat deceiving, as the data reflect all sectors or industries in which people are employed. Over the past four census counts, the Census Bureau has changed its employment catalog titles. In the 1990 and 2000 Census, employment groupings previously used were broken down into various subgroups. In spite of this, it is possible to attempt to reconfigure the 1990 and 2000 data to be similar to the 1970 and 1980 data. In so doing, it is possible to note significant shifts in employment patterns in Kent between 1970 and 2000.

Employment in Kent by Sector, 1970-2000								
Employment Sector	1970	Percent of Total	1980	Percent of Total	1990	Percent of Total	2000	Percent of Total
Total Employment	11,210	100.0	12,543	100.0	13,891	100.0	15,586	100.0
Professional and Related	4,670	41.7	4,979	39.7	5,301	38.2	6,074	39.0
Manufacturing	2,342	20.9	2,295	18.3	1,902	13.7	1,894	12.2
Retail	2,099	18.7	2,260	18.0	3,324	23.9	2,171	13.9
Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation and Food Service	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,526	16.2
All other Employment Sectors	2,099	18.7	3,009	24.0	3,304	23.8	2,291	14.7

A study of the data finds that the Professional and Related job category has shown a slight decline in terms of its share of the entire labor force. However, in terms of actual jobs, the number of jobs has increased by 30% since 1970.

In the Manufacturing category, employment in the City of Kent has decreased since 1970, both in terms of its overall share of the job force and in terms of actual numbers. In 2000, manufacturing jobs comprised only about 12% of the city's labor force, as compared to almost 21% in 1970. During that same period, the number of manufacturing jobs in the city decreased by about 20%.

In the Retail category, the proportion of jobs in the labor force also decreased, by 4.8%, during the past thirty years, with the actual number of retail jobs having increased by 3%.

It is difficult to rank the Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation, Recreation and Food Services sector category in the 1970, 1980 and 1990 Census data. In its own right, as reflected by the 2000 data, the category has become a significant employment sector in the city, comprising almost 14% of the city's total employment.

In terms of economic development strategies for the city, it will be important for the city to encourage the continued growth of the professional-and-related labor force. Traditionally, communities have looked to the manufacturing sector as a solid base.

With a worldwide economy, however, that may no longer be possible. The challenge that faces Kent is twofold:

- Work to maintain the existing industrial base and encourage expansions
- Partner with Kent State University to facilitate technology transfers from the academic world to the working world and be able to accommodate that transfer within the city by providing places for companies working in these areas to flourish

Employment Status and Occupation. It is interesting to note that while Kent's population decreased between 1970 and 2000, the number of employed residents increased. As in earlier census counts, the data collected for the Employment Status and Occupation category in the years 1970 and 1980 differ from the categories used to report the data collected in the census in 1990 and 2000 (see also, Appendix E).

The first set of statistics looks at the population of persons 16 years of age and older who are in the labor force.

Kent Residents 16 years of age and older in the Labor Force, 1970-2000				
Population	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total Employment	11,210	12,543	14,950	16,575

As noted earlier, in 1990, Kent residents experienced an unemployment rate of 4.21%. That figure dropped to 3.94% in 2000. (Data for 2003 are not available for the city.)

As with other employment data, it is difficult to completely track all of the information over time. In some cases, assumptions can be made and analysis applied to the data; in other cases, the changes in census categories makes this task rather difficult and requires additional assumptions. With this in mind, data for the Employment Status and Occupation category may be considered in the manner shown in the following table.

Employment Status of Kent Residents by Sector, 1970-2000								
Employment Sector	1970	Percent of Total	1980	Percent of Total	1990	Percent of Total	2000	Percent of Total
Managerial, Technical, Sales and Admin. Support	6,583	58.7	7,502	59.8	8,379	56.0	9,528	57.5
Service	1,794	16.0	2,258	18.0	2,690	18.0	3,256	19.7
Operators and Laborers, Craftsmen and Repairmen	2,781	24.8	2,614	20.8	2,678	17.9	2,783	16.8
Farming and Agriculture	52	0.5	169	1.3	174	1.2	19	0.1

Employment patterns of Kent residents are somewhat different from the data for trends in the Industrial Employment category. The number of Kent residents employed in areas described as managerial, technical, sales and administrative support have increased by 45% between 1970 and 2000. The majority of Kent residents are employed in this job sector.

The number of Kent residents employed in the service sector has increased 81% and, as of 2000, constituted 21% of Kent's work force.

Unfortunately, Kent residents in the sector that includes operators, laborers, craftsmen and repairmen have not shared similar growth trends. In terms of the number of jobs, this sector has remained stable; however as a percentage of the total number of Kent residents, this sector has decreased by 9%. Likewise, both the number and the percentage of Kent residents involved in farming and agriculture has decreased in both number and as a percentage of the Kent work force.

Commuting to Work and Vehicles Available. Kent residents who commute to work are traveling an average of 21 minutes. In addition, the number of Kent residents who carpool (16.07% in 1980; down to 8.85% in 2000) and those residents who use public transportation (4% in 1990; down to 2.18% in 2000) have both decreased. Just over 50% of all the households in Kent own two or more vehicles, and just over 14% of the households own more than three vehicles. These statistics show a trend contrary to what some of the residents attending the district meetings indicated in their statements that they would like to see Kent be a pedestrian-friendly community that offers alternative forms of transportation and relies less on the automobile. To accomplish these preferences, residents will need to make lifestyle changes or adaptations to their daily routines. City government can indeed work with the appropriate groups and entities to provide Kent residents with increased transit service from PARTA and construct intermodal facilities in the community. It should be noted that since the 2000 Census, PARTA has already taken on a larger role in Kent and Portage County, thanks to increases in its operating revenue (see also, Appendix E).

Residents at the district meetings also stated a desire to see more hike-and-bike trails in the community, thus stressing a preference for health and recreation. It should be noted that the development of such facilities in other areas of Ohio has fostered some growth in local tourism that helps to support local restaurants and retail shops.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure. The number of renter-occupied housing units in the city has increased dramatically over the last 30 years, with 53% in 1970 compared to 62.2% of all housing units being renter-occupied in 2000. Because Kent is a university town, the slightly higher percentage of renter-occupied housing is not unusual. With the 2000 Census indicating that almost two-thirds of the housing in Kent is rental housing, this situation does have implications for the city. Property maintenance will continue to be an important component of city-provided services in order to ensure decent living conditions for rental residents and as a way of helping to preserve property values in neighborhoods. Many comments received at the district meetings indicated that Kent residents have a strong desire to see their owner-occupied neighborhoods protected from an influx of student housing. To help accomplish this, the city has and will continue to provide incentives for home ownership and the conversion of some rental units back to owner-occupied units. Likewise, the city should continue to consider ways in which it can encourage residential properties to be maintained and upgraded through incentives (e.g., low-interest loan programs) and active enforcement of housing and exterior maintenance codes (see also, Appendix E).

Housing Values and Rental Costs. The values of owner-occupied homes in the city have increased steadily, with a 40% gain in value between 1990 and 2000. Gross rent has increased 25% during the same period. The owner-occupied market has been bolstered since the early 1990s by the construction of new single-family homes as reported earlier in this special report. That trend essentially expanded into western Portage County and, to a lesser extent, into eastern Portage County from the residential expansion that was taking place in eastern Summit County in such places such as Tallmadge, Stow and Hudson. While the increase in gross rents has been somewhat subdued in comparison, it does not show that Kent already has some of the highest gross-rent rates in the area, if not the entire State of Ohio.

Typically many rental properties rent at rates higher than the fair market rates established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of its administration of federally assisted housing programs. These higher rental rates are a function of the concept of supply and demand and can be attributed to the fact that the student population competes with the local, non-student population for rental housing. With a constant demand being placed on the rental housing market, landlords can maintain rents at premium levels.

School Enrollment and Educational Attainment. As noted in the first section of this special report, Kent residents have attained a higher level of education than most of the places studied, including such levels for the State of Ohio and the country overall. The percentage of high school graduates within the City of Kent has increased from 85.89% in 1990 to 91.67% in 2000. Residents with a bachelor's degree also increased, from 33.63% in 1990 to 36.68% in 2000.

The number of students enrolled in elementary school has remained fairly steady over the years, but the number of students enrolled in high school has changed dramatically since 1970. Since that time, the number of high school students has dropped from 2,123 in 1970 to 929 in 2000. This trend can be attributed to the aging of the baby boomers, most of whom attended high school in the late 1960s and 1970s. Family sizes have decreased as shown in statistics discussed earlier in this special report related to the number of persons per housing unit (see also, Appendix E).

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The Bicentennial Plan

Unlike traditional comprehensive-planning processes, residents were asked to think and project beyond the usual time frames of five to ten years and consider the future of Kent even 50 years from now. One of the keys to sustainability is to think and project into the future, taking into account the here and now while considering what can be, respecting the idea that change can take a long time.

The Bicentennial Plan is organized around eight defined districts. Four rounds of public district meetings were held. Each round consisted of at least one meeting per district. The meetings were led and facilitated by a dedicated cadre of City resident volunteers from the Bicentennial Plan Steering Committee and staff from the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service.

Additionally, three special planning areas were identified by the Community Development Department for more intense study. The special planning areas are sites that appear to be either problematic in their design and function or are locations that have special development or redevelopment potential and thus require special attention.

Partners in Sustainability

The City of Kent has a long history of interest in the concept of sustainability. In 1995, City Council approved the creation of an Environmental Commission consisting of five resident volunteers who would be tasked with studying sustainability in other cities and creating a mission statement and sustainability goals for the city. The Environmental Commission spent the next three years researching sustainability and writing a document titled *Goals for Sustainable Development* (see Appendix D). In April 1999, City Council adopted the Sustainability Goals as a guide for future development. As sustainability was becoming a community value without a clear definition, it became apparent to and incumbent upon the city to write a comprehensive plan that included sustainability principles.

Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service Sustainable Communities Team

With the assistance of Dr. Eugene Wenninger, professor emeritus at Kent State University, the city's Community Development Department staff contacted the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service Sustainable Communities Program to discuss the process for creating a Comprehensive Plan based on sustainability principles. The Sustainable Communities Team that was created has been involved in many different strategic planning processes throughout the State of Ohio. The team's coordinator, Bill Grunkemeyer, was very interested in the possibility of utilizing sustainability issues in the process of producing a comprehensive plan. According to Mr. Grunkemeyer, this type of project would be the first of its kind in the State of Ohio. The Ohio State team decided that they wanted to be involved in the project and offered to have their team

included in what they saw as a pilot project that could be used as a model in other communities throughout Ohio.

Design Team

In addition to the City's partnership with Ohio State University, there was a desire to involve Kent State University in the planning process. Kent State University President Dr. Carol Cartwright was very enthusiastic about the process and offered to commit her staff to assist with the technical parts of the plan. A Design Team was then created that included faculty and staff from Kent State University with specific areas of specialization related to the process. The Design Team was given the task of defining the characteristics of sustainability for the City of Kent and having those terms reviewed and approved by the community Steering Committee. The Design Team also was tasked with interpreting the district comments within the framework of the sustainability characteristics. These comments were used in the writing the Bicentennial Plan and are included in the Special Reports section of this document.

Steering Committee

In designing the process, it was recommended that a community-based Steering Committee be created to facilitate the district-meeting process, encouraging residents to attend the district meetings and determining themes gleaned from feedback received at the numerous Round One district meetings. Steering Committee volunteers were sought from all areas of the community, (i.e., neighborhood associations, community groups, churches, Chamber of Commerce, City of Kent Board and Commission members, and Kent State University administration, staff and students). The 46-member volunteer Steering Committee participated in facilitation training provided by the Sustainable Communities Team from Ohio State. The district meetings were facilitated by Steering Committee members, Ohio State University Sustainable Communities Team members, Kent State University Urban Design Center staff and City of Kent Community Development Department staff.

Kent State University Urban Design Center

The Kent State University Urban Design Center was contracted to provide master planning guidance for the three special planning areas. Residents provided feedback and direction to the Urban Design Center. In each round of district meetings, the Urban Design Center provided an evolving site plan for each site, including both text and graphic renderings. Staff from the Urban Design Center also facilitated each of the neighborhood and community meetings for the special planning areas.

The Process

The City of Kent is unique because it consciously chose to find a way to prosper using sustainable practices as their model. What makes the city's sustainable, comprehensive

land-use plan unique is that it was constructed with a focus on the following four elements:

- Inclusive Process. Sustainable planning goes beyond traditional public-participation processes by actively seeking to reduce barriers to resident involvement. Diversity in participation is built into both the plan governance and the process for seeking plan input. First, the Steering Committee is made up of residents from all sectors of the community to build in broad-based ownership and direction. Second, by going to where people gather—in contrast to inviting them in to public meetings—community residents feel more comfortable in familiar surroundings and are more likely to share their input for the planning process. The resident input was organized around eight districts. Four rounds of public district meetings were held in neutral locations where residents regularly gather. The first and second rounds gathered resident’s hopes and aspirations for the potential of their community. The third and fourth rounds sought reactions and suggestions for changes regarding the actual draft sections of the Bicentennial Plan. Each round consisted of at least one meeting per neighborhood. In addition, a few communities of interest also asked to comment on the plan, and sessions were held for their input. The meetings were led and facilitated by a dedicated cadre of city resident volunteers from the Steering Committee and staff from the Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service that comprised the Sustainable Communities Team.
- Interconnected Process. Sustainable planning seeks to find a balance among the social, environmental and economic sectors of the community. Residents make choices that lead to an intentional interconnectedness among the three sectors that balances and enhances each of the sectors as they act in relationship with each other. The final concepts for the three special planning areas stand as examples of the potential when we seek to find a balance among the social, environmental and economic dimensions of an issue. These three special planning areas were identified by the Community Development Department for more intense study. The special planning areas are sites that appear to be either problematic in their design and function or are locations that have special development or redevelopment potential and thus require special attention. The Urban Design Center prepared various concepts based on suggestions generated by residents. Each of the special planning areas contains concepts that allow for enhancing the local economy in a manner that respects the natural environment and stimulates social equity.
- Long-Range Perspective. Sustainable planning pushes planners and residents to consider future generations. While traditional planning often uses a window of 10 or even 20 years, sustainable planning pushes the process out 50 years or more. Such a time frame leads to a consideration of the impact that the decisions we make today have on our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sustainable planning considers what we value about our community that we want to preserve for future generations and what we dream our community to be for our

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When we stop focusing first upon our immediate concerns and instead think about our legacy, we can see more fairly what we need to do today.

- **Multidimensional Indicators.** Sustainable planning incorporates the development of clearly stated indicators. These shared, multidimensional measurements help a community to track its progress and determine how well it is progressing toward common goals and vision. Paying attention to indicators increases the probability that the Bicentennial Plan will be a living document modified as new insights and possibilities arise. The sustainable indicators intentionally link the three sectors (i.e., environmental, social and economic) so that what is to be achieved in one area has an intentionally positive impact on and benefit to another area.

The following pages provide the final results of this conscious effort to build a plan that provides a guide for difficult decisions as we strive to achieve a sustainable community. Most valuable about the approach used to create this plan are the involvement, guidance and decision-making by residents of the City of Kent. In the final evaluation, it will be the daily choices that the residents, business owners and community groups make that will determine the sustainability of our community. Therefore, it is appropriate that the Bicentennial Plan was created by the residents and then placed before their elected officials for acceptance and adoption. Now residents, the business community, local organizations and public officials have a clearly articulated destiny that overcomes any perceived limitations. This plan now serves as our template for where we wish to be in our collective future.

District Meetings

Four rounds of district meetings were held and involved eight to fourteen meetings per round. Each round distilled information and comments from the previous meetings. A key aspect of each round was the identification of sustainable-development principles as they related to residents' comments. These principles also were identified in the articulation of short- and long-term plans and goals for the City of Kent (see Appendix B for results of the district meetings and Appendix C for the meeting schedules).

The components of sustainability also were key drivers in the development of the site plans for the special planning areas.

Round One - Fall 2002. The goal of the Round One meetings was to define the values and aspirations for the Kent community and can be characterized as asset-based fact-finding meetings. Residents were asked two questions at these meetings:

- What do you value most about the Kent community?
- What do you hope the Kent community will become for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren? (See Appendix B.)

The question format is important as the goals of the questions are to determine what Kent residents consider to be important assets and values and how these assets and values can be projected into defining the future for the City of Kent.

Residents also were asked to consider the three special planning areas within this same context, though with narrower parameters. One of those areas, West Main Street, is an unattractive entrance into the City of Kent from the City of Stow. Kent residents were asked to consider this area in terms of its aesthetics and possible redevelopment scenarios; in the instance of what could/should happen if any of the very large and community-significant automobile corporate dealerships closed and/or moved from Kent. The dealerships' community contributions are integral to the tax base, employment and support of local not-for-profit organizations. Equally significant is the amount of potential commercial traffic that these businesses bring into the City of Kent.

The Campus Link Neighborhood has its own potential and community characteristics. This neighborhood is located between Kent State University and Downtown Kent. The concept for this review was an examination of the potential benefit to the overall community to "connect" the Kent State University campus with the downtown area.

The vacant parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection of State Routes 261 and 43 is a 55-acre site that has been the subject of controversial development proposals for many years. It was the intent of the public-input process to garner a community consensus as to what type of development would be acceptable to the overall community, while respecting the private ownership of the property.

Round Two - Winter 2003. Round Two provided the opportunity for residents to prioritize the general ideas, assets and values presented in Round One. All of the Round One responses were divided into three columns, each representing an element of sustainability: environmental, social and economic.

Meeting attendees were asked to identify their three top individual priorities in each of these three columns, using nominal-group technique. This exercise helped to show the tradeoffs involved in the social, environmental, and economic development aspects in creating a sustainable community.

Residents were then asked to create linkages between the three columns and the selections that they had made. Could they find a link between an item in the Environmental column with items in the Social or Economic columns? What items in each of the three columns could be linked to make Kent a sustainable community? These linkages were then recorded.

Linkages also were created by analyzing the input provided by residents in the nominal-group-technique facilitation process. Responses were ranked, and the top three sets of linkages along with the linkages created in the district meetings were used in developing the respective district plans. The results are discussed in Appendix B and the respective district sections of the Bicentennial Plan.

In Round Two, residents reviewed and responded to the concept plans presented by the Urban Design Center for the three special planning areas. The West Main Street Special Planning Area featured a concept that identified three distinct commercial-use zones: Gateway, Mixed-Use Retail and Automobile-Oriented.

The southwest corner of State Routes 261 and 43 was represented with a concept that respected the topography and sensitive areas found at the site while incorporating the possibility for a mixed-use development that could include retail, office, research and residential uses.

The Campus Link Neighborhood focused on potential redevelopment of the neighborhood and possible locations for a proposed Executive Training Center, Hotel, and Multi-Modal Transportation Facility.

Round Three – Summer 2003. Round Three focused on the three special planning areas. Architectural renderings were prepared based on the conceptual drawings shown and the comments received at the Round Two meetings. Those comments are summarized below:

- West Main Street Special Planning Area. The West Main Street Special Planning Area straddles the Fairchild District and the Middlebury District. Three land-use zones on West Main Street were identified: Gateway, Mixed-Use Retail and Automobile Oriented. The Gateway Zone concept presented land uses featuring a residential-character architectural style. The Gateway concept also incorporates increased building setbacks. The increased setbacks establish a wider and greener entrance into the city of Kent. Buildings may be stand-alone structures or clustered. Parking for these buildings are in the rear of the properties. Joint parking areas could be established across parking lots to keep curb cuts to a minimum.

The Mixed-Use Retail Zone is a compact, more urban style of development. The setbacks in this zone are less than in the Gateway Zone. Buildings are oriented to the edge of the right-of-way and sidewalks. This creates a more walkable retail area. The parking in the rear yards allows for a transition from commercial uses and includes buffering for the adjacent residential properties. Rear entrances and pedestrian connections to the adjacent residential neighborhoods will be encouraged. In addition, a small green space is planned for this area and is intended to be used as a neighborhood-gathering place.

The Automobile-Oriented Zone will highlight the automobile-related businesses (the second-highest income producer for the city) in the area by creating a uniform frontage with setbacks and sidewalks to encourage comparison-shopping. No trees are planned for this area. This is to address the automobile dealers' concerns that trees bring birds and bird droppings that deface the cars. In addition to uniform frontage, raised car-display areas will be included at interval locations throughout the zone, and the number of curb cuts will be reduced.

- State Routes 261 and 43 Special Planning Area. The State Routes 261 and 43 Special Planning Area is in the Plum Creek District. This area has a long history of controversy between developers (progress) and residents (preservation). The land is privately owned and likely will be developed in the near future. These site plan renderings propose a compromise in which the land is developed but in a manner that “touches the land lightly.” Two proposals have been suggested for this site: a mixed-use village and an office/research park. Both options include preservation of natural areas based on topography. This allows for green space that surrounds the development area. The conceptual designs also provide buffering of an apartment complex to the west and the undeveloped land (including the Kent Bog), situated on the south side of Meloy Road. Although a portion of the site will be preserved, the development is dense and concentrated in the center to create enough development to make the site profitable.

The mixed-use village concept includes an entrance directly across from Devon Place. The proposal also illustrates an intersection joining this development to S.R. 261 and the retail development to the north. At the center of the development is a retail area surrounded by townhouses and encircling a central green space. In addition, the second floor of the retail area could be used as apartments or combination living/working space. At the far northeast corner of the development close to this intersection, additional office space is proposed. The southwest corner of the development is used for development of 57 single-family homes. The concept also calls for 175 apartments and 59 townhomes. The entire development has the capacity for 68,500 square feet of retail, 134,500 square feet of office space and 395,000 square feet of residential development. Parking spaces could be shared between the residents (who would use them at night) and the office/retail employees (who would use them during the day). In addition, the potential exists for some employees to live and work in this area, thereby decreasing the number of parking needed.

The significance of this proposal is the mix of residential housing. The mix of single-family residential, townhouses and apartments could provide a new and unique housing market for the City of Kent.

The office/research park concept calls for 325,800 square feet of office space with some mix of specialty retail. The main entrance again would be directly across from Devon Place but with the potential for a right-in, right-out entrance to and exit from S.R. 261. Office uses are clustered around each of these two entrances. The location of retail at the northeast corner of the development is a possibility. The office/research park concept includes common areas within and around office buildings. The idea behind the research park is the ability to market this area as a high-tech office research and development hub and encourage spin-offs from the Kent State University business incubator to locate in this area.

- Campus Link Special Planning Area. The Campus Link Special Planning Area is located in the central business district. By far the most commented on and unique special planning area, the Campus Link Special Planning Area also generated the greatest number of conceptual plans. The five proposed plans offer some similarities, but each concept has its own unique qualities.

Two of the offerings illustrate Haymaker Parkway in its present location. Two other concepts show Haymaker Parkway ending at Depeyster Street. The stretch of the parkway between Depeyster and Main Streets would be vacated and become part of the Campus Link redevelopment program.

A fifth concept depicts Haymaker Parkway turning to the north and accessing East Main Street between Depeyster and Willow Streets. Also significant in this rendering is the addition of treed boulevards on Haymaker Parkway.

All of the concepts attempt with various degrees of success to tie visual connections to the Kent State University campus (in particular the Kent State University Fashion Museum) and include The Portage Hike-and-Bike trail as a major amenity through the campus area to downtown. Overall pedestrian friendly travel is a value in each of the proposed concepts.

Each of the concepts envisions additional retail development in the central business district along Depeyster, Erie and College Streets. Expanded retail also is recommended for the present DuBois Bookstore site.

New and upgraded housing is called for in each of the five renderings. Kent State University students, faculty and staff and young families could occupy the multistory townhouses and row houses proposed for this special planning area.

A major consideration for the Campus Link Special Planning Area is the location of a proposed Executive Training Center, hotel and multimodal transportation facility. Three of the five proposals locate these facilities along Haymaker Parkway. The proposed Executive Training Center, hotel and multimodal facility represent a unique partnership between Kent State University and the City of Kent.

- Commissions and Boards Reviews. At the conclusion of Round Three, a joint meeting of the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, the Environmental Commission and the Architectural Advisory Review Board reviewed the conceptual drawings for each special planning area. A PowerPoint presentation further illustrated the concepts being discussed and provided visual examples of the potential redevelopment of these sites. The Round Three comments, suggestions and concerns were shared with the group.

The majority of this feedback echoed residents' input at the district meetings. Overall, the meeting attendees were very positive about the vision emerging for the City of Kent. To quote Planning Commission Chairman Ralph Sinistro, "I was impressed by all three of the focus areas at the meeting the other night. I like the dream of making Kent look world class."

Round Four - Fall 2003. Round Four was the final round of the Bicentennial Plan district meetings. The purpose of the fourth round was to receive feedback on the draft plan and view the final renderings for the special planning areas. A focus-group approach was used in the meetings to answer three questions:

1. How well do the citywide tables (see Citywide Plan, pages 21-41) capture your image of the Kent of tomorrow?
2. What implications do you see present in various choices in the citywide tables?
3. How well do the recommendations for the local district match your perceptions of local residents' goals for this district?

For the most part, residents confirmed and validated the information presented; however, many comments raised the concern that students' interests appeared to have been addressed inadequately. Many residents commented that they perceived students as being attracted by chain stores and felt that chain stores interspersed with locally owned business could coexist and economic development efforts should be focused in that direction. These comments also noted that this approach could be a mechanism for attracting students to shop in Kent rather than leave Kent to shop. It was also felt that this might be a way in which to "keep" students in Kent on weekends. These items have been added to the Community-wide Plan tables. As a result of these suggestions, there is a recommendation was made in the Community-wide Plan to resurrect and reformat the Town-Gown Committee. The purpose of the Town-Gown Committee will be to improve communication and understanding between students and permanent residents. The reformatting could include a group that is more grassroots and neighborhood based rather one that is guided, coordinated or led by the City and University administrations.

Requests also were made to add time frames to the Implementation Plan to follow. Time frames also have been added to the tables. It must be noted that time frames are tentative and may need to change based on available resources for each of the respective Implementation Teams.

In Round 4, presentations were made at all of the district meetings of the final renderings of the three special planning areas. Each of the representations was well received. A recommended conceptual plan was presented for two areas: West Main Street and Campus Link. Two recommended alternatives were prepared for the Southwest Corner of State Routes 261 and 43. One alternative combines mixed-use residential and office and retail space. The second alternative is an office and research park. Design guidelines

have been developed for each of the special planning areas. Details of these design guidelines can be found in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

INSERT

Planning District Map

DISTRICT PLANS

Introduction

The analysis of each district (neighborhood) is discussed separately. This discussion includes the following elements:

- Description. The description of the district is based on a survey conducted while driving each street within that area. The description includes comments on land use, infrastructure and building conditions.
- District Sustainability Goals. Responses from the district meetings are grouped according to the elements of sustainability each represents.
- Implementation Plan. The list of policy statements is then extended to create a list of implementation recommendations.
- Implications. Next is a discussion of the implications of the plan outlined for the district. Like the physics lesson about equal and opposite reactions, there are trade-offs and implications for each district's sustainability plan. One priority offered may negate another voiced concern. For instance, the creation of arts nodes may invite regional traffic, which in turn may create problems and prompt requests for traffic management and traffic calming. The question then becomes: How do we acknowledge the potential conflict to a workable, sustainable solution? These answers can only be resolved over time. The purpose is to raise awareness.

INSERT STANDING ROCK MAP HERE

Standing Rock District

Description

The Standing Rock District is a unique mix of land uses: commercial, public space (cemetery, arboretum, school buildings and grounds), and a mix of residential housing types, including historical homes and buildings. The area is hallmarked by many large and stately trees on tree lawns and in yards. The district is bisected by State Route 43 (North Mantua Street) and is bounded on the east by the Cuyahoga River.

Approximately twenty percent of the land area is in public usage: Roosevelt Senior High School, Stanton Middle School, Franklin Elementary School, Davey Elementary School, the former Central Elementary School, Standing Rock Cemetery, and the Parks and Recreation Board Arboretum. The River Bend subdivision is the most recent residential development in this district.

It appears that approximately fifteen percent of the housing units in this district are rental units. Housing styles are mixed, and a number of houses are in various stages of renovation. Most properties are very well maintained and reflect a wonderful historic and architectural value and investment. Other areas could and should be targeted for property maintenance enforcement and housing rehabilitation fund programs.

Many of the roads are in need of repair ranging from repaving to reconstruction. Storm drainage infrastructure in many parts of this district appears to be problematic and in need of redesign and/or repair. Sidewalks are also in need of repair and/or replacement. In a few isolated areas, sidewalks do not exist and should be constructed.

North Mantua Street, between Crain Avenue to Carthage Avenue, functions as a small commercial node with a mix of commercial activities. Many of the commercial properties are in need of facade and signage improvements. As the northern gateway into Kent, this area needs improvements in aesthetics. The area also includes a small commercial area along West Main Street in the southwest corner of the district; a small, adjoining industrial area; and two isolated, nonconforming industrial uses.

District Sustainability Goals

The Standing Rock District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Preserve Kent's unique history.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Support diversity.
- Encourage City of Kent officials and offices to be approachable and facilitate citizen involvement.

Economic

- Support appropriate economic development.
- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Standing Rock District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor protection ordinance for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Promote traffic management with street maintenance and traffic calming.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage the replacement of sidewalks and construction of new where they are missing; facilitate and encourage pedestrian access and travel; improve district walk-ability.
- Encourage capital investment in drainage systems and road improvements. This district could serve as a pilot for the implementation of green-oriented drainage systems (including lot-based rain gardens).
- Accept socially, culturally and economically diverse populations.
- Develop artistic oriented businesses/cultural areas, coffeehouses and restaurants.
- Re-develop and re-use underutilized buildings and properties.
- Encourage a diverse economic base including industrial uses, and technology spin-offs from Kent State University.
- Assist the retention and expansion of existing commercial and industrial businesses.
- Evaluate the use of tax incentives.
- Encourage the location of businesses that pay a living wage.

- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially along the Route 43 corridor; utilizing CDBG housing funds or the housing rehabilitation program where appropriate.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting homeownership loan programs. Investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements program.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available).
- Rezone the R-C (High Density Multifamily-Commercial Urban Residential) District on West Main Street to R-3 High Density Residential.

Implications

The Standing Rock District links the ideas of preserving Kent’s natural history and natural resources, the community’s diversity and a desire to support appropriate economic development. The vast majority of Kent is developed. Only a few remaining large parcels suitable for development remain. All of these parcels, however, are outside of the Standing Rock District (with the exception of uncompleted areas of the River Bend subdivision). Appropriate economic development is difficult to define and is a term that, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.

Traffic management and preservation of trees were linked with the approachability of municipal officials and having a local economy that is based on the arts and art-related businesses that is diverse and sensitive to environmental and social issues. The relationship between the arts and supportive corollary businesses ties into the concept of preserving Kent’s natural resources, as these businesses may, more than likely, be located in existing buildings either in the downtown area or in strip centers elsewhere. It may not be necessary to construct new buildings. Arts businesses are directly related to tourism and invite regional traffic into the community. Traffic management and parking may become challenges, but they would be seen as good problems to have. A community working openly with approachable public officials to resolve these challenges will make a better and stronger community for all concerned.

The diversity of the district’s economy as it applies to the retail and service trades refers to the products and services that will be purchased by the Kent population without their having to leave the community. Such stores would be ones that appeal to both full-time residents and Kent State University students. Retailers need to be aware of this dichotomy—as do residents in communicating to retailers what their goods and service needs may be—rather than simply shopping in other communities.

The district’s economic diversity also implies the need for industrial and knowledge-based companies locating in Kent and, once established, expanding in Kent. The city has serious challenges in this regard. Fewer than 300 acres of land are available for this type of development. The acreage is divided among prime parcels that feature rolling topographies and is adjacent to Plum Creek, the Cuyahoga River and wetlands. Kent is now landlocked; Joint Economic District Development (JEDD) agreements have virtually negated any present or future discussion of annexation, initiating a new era of

cooperation with both Franklin and Brimfield Townships. All of the goals cited for the Standing Rock District also imply an inward view of development and redevelopment of existing buildings and an acceptance of the development of all remaining available parcels. The City must enact development codes that provide a balance between environmental issues and the ability of businesses to build and provide employment opportunities.

The goals for the Standing Rock District are important in terms of finite resources and the use of these resources to provide a framework for Kent as a sustainable community.

INSERT CRAIN TO MAIN DISTRICT MAP HERE

Crain-to-Main District

Description

The Crain-to-Main District is a mix of industrial, single-family, multifamily houses and apartments, student rooming houses, and institutional and religious uses bounded by commercial uses on the north side of East Main Street. This district is heavily influenced by the proximity of Kent State University on the area's southern border and industrially zoned property to the north.

In 2000, the Smithers-Oasis Corporation completed construction of a 63,954-square-foot manufacturing and warehousing operation. As part of that project, the City of Kent and the State of Ohio reconstructed and lengthened Marvin Avenue, thereby opening up numerous acres for additional new industrial businesses and expansions.

Several medium and small apartment complexes can be found along Lake and East Main Streets. The University Woods single-family subdivision is in its last phase of construction. New houses and duplexes have been constructed along East Main Street within the last few years. A small development on Anna Drive for Coleman Professional Services was completed in Summer 2003. The Parks and Recreation Board recently acquired a three-acre parcel of land adjacent to Walls Elementary School on Doramor Street. It is likely that this area will remain in its natural state with some trails and picnic areas. This is the only public park in the Crain-to-Main District.

The majority of the single-family housing is well maintained, with some reinvestment noted; however, maintenance of the multifamily houses and apartments is mixed. A few are well maintained, while others are not. The condition of the multifamily housing ranges from needing minor repair to needing significant renovation and re-investment.

This district also is home to an increasing number of student rental houses, rooming houses and fraternity houses, which are easily identifiable. This is a source of constant tension in the district, especially in the neighborhood located between Crain Avenue and East Main Street. An increase in the number of student housing units is causing increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic, increased noise, litter and parking problems, and expressions of concern that student housing is having a negative impact on property values.

Many of the roads in this district need repairs that range from repaving to reconstruction. Some streets (e.g., Highland and Marvin Avenues) were reconstructed recently. The storm drainage infrastructure in some older parts of this district appears to be problematic and in need of redesign and/or repair. Sidewalks in this area are in need of repair or replacement. There are a few isolated areas where sidewalks do not exist and should be constructed.

A small commercial plaza at the far eastern end of Lake Street can be found in this district. The plaza is full, and it appears to be functioning adequately.

Most East Main Street businesses appear to be functioning at a high level. Over the past two years, a proposal has been made to expand the Taco Bell restaurant into the adjacent residential neighborhood. This proposal was met with significant neighborhood opposition, and the developer withdrew the application. These pressures will likely continue, and developers should be encouraged to find ways to work within their existing sites and communicate openly with adjacent neighborhoods. In some cases, architectural standards will be important to visually enhance this entrance into Kent and to tie the architecture of the Crain-to-Main District and the University into building facades and site designs.

Some reinvestment has occurred in this commercial area that has not had a negative impact on the residential neighborhoods. Included among these are Chipotle's, Papa John's Pizza, Burger King, East Main Coney's and Discount Drug Mart.

District Sustainability Goals

The Crain-to-Main District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.
- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.
- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Crain-to-Main District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets and registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting homeownership loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stops sites.
- Connect the district to “The Portage” bike/hike trail system.
- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially on blocks that are predominantly student housing, as well as multifamily units that need maintenance and upgrading.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses (including the small commercial node at Lake Street and city border) with available City of Kent Small Business Development Center and Chamber of Commerce programs.
- Develop a diverse local economy.
- Encourage healthy retail downtown center.
- Retain a strong public educational system.
- Encourage the replacement of sidewalks, and construction of new where they are missing; facilitate and encourage pedestrian access and travel; improve district walk-ability.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available).
- Develop a neighborhood watch program with the Police Department.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development.
- Perform environmental studies and if necessary work to remediate and develop the industrially zoned properties on the north side of Lake Street, owned by the Lake Erie & Western Railroad Company.

Implications

The consensus of Crain-to-Main District residents is that quality of life is important. Critical to this quality of life are recreational opportunities and facilities in Kent and the retention of family housing in the district as opposed to increased student housing. At the same time, there is a recognition that Kent State University (and, by extension, Kent State University students) contributes to the local economy. Student housing has become a NIMBY (not in my back yard) issue for many Kent residents, but it must be recognized that students will live in Kent neighborhoods. Communication between Kent State

University officials and students, the City of Kent and Kent residents needs to continue to improve.

The Crain-to-Main District noted that the city's park system and the area's urban forest are assets. Other valuable assets noted include a small-town atmosphere, preservation of Kent's unique history, and an economy that is diverse and has a social and environmental consciousness. Support of the arts community and managing traffic are equally important to residents in the Crain-to-Main District.

The park system is an asset because of the existing system of neighborhood parks and larger community parks. The addition of new parkland in this district is important to its residents. Connection of these assets with a system of on- and off-street bike trails increases accessibility for Crain-to-Main District residents to the city's park system. The connection also is seen as contributing to the small-town atmosphere where the community is fairly compact and resources (such as stores and houses of worship) are nearby and a feeling of overall safety is evident. District residents also say that they, like residents of older small towns, want to highlight their historic buildings and create historic districts where century homes have been rehabilitated and renovated.

The preservation of Kent's unique history opens the discussion of architectural standards for use in the creation of historic districts. These two items—the city's history and architectural standards—will assist in the preservation that is being sought. Older preserved buildings tend to be places that draw artists and/or become galleries. Preserved buildings also tend to appreciate in value. The increased property values in turn can create a ripple effect that benefits other areas of the district.

For a viable arts community in Kent, arts-related businesses must rely on regional interest and traffic from outside the area. The city's residents are not likely to be the sole supporters and patrons of the arts in Kent. . Also necessary for success is a greater presence of the local arts community and a willingness among such persons to rent buildings in the downtown for work and/or gallery space. Collectives may be needed to generate operating capital. Given the proximity of the Crain-to-Main District to downtown, increased tourist traffic into Kent to participate in arts events may well spill over into this district.

The interest in a diverse economy recognizes the need to balance the economic development of downtown, which tends toward retail businesses, with other types of businesses for the Crain-to-Main District. Options here include industrial and knowledge-based business development. Knowledge-based industries can be of two types: software-based companies and manufacturing companies with a biomedical and product-oriented operation. In some cases, existing buildings may be suitable sites; others may require new construction with sterile facilities inside the building. The existing rail yard adjacent to Lake Street is a long-term site for the construction of manufacturing-oriented businesses. The use of this land will require an environmental review of the property and possible remediation of the site. In any event, its eventual use will increase traffic on Lake Street and potentially on other nearby streets.

INSERT FRANLIN DISTRICT MAP HERE

Franklin District

Description

The Franklin District is a mix of single-family housing, senior apartments, student apartments, rental houses, duplexes, commercial establishments, a public school, local and federal government buildings, and industrial uses. This district is bisected by South Water Street (State Route 43). The district is flanked by Kent State University to the east and industrial uses to the west. These land uses create two very distinct neighborhoods as well as a diverse mixed-use planning district.

In 2002, the Heritage Development Corporation constructed a 70,287-square-foot shopping center that replaced an 110,000-square-foot Ames department store. The redevelopment of this under-functioning site with a Tops grocery store and a series of other stores is a significant development for this district and the City of Kent.

The area east of South Water Street and between Summit Street and State Route 261 is predominantly single-family residential where the houses and yards are well maintained. The closer one gets to the Kent State University campus the more one can see large areas of student apartments and student rental housing. Upon closer inspection and a review of anecdotal information from full-time residents, it appears that student rental units are beginning to intrude further into this district. Within the older sections of this district, residents expressed concerns about drainage and sidewalk maintenance.

On the west side of South Water Street, a mix of housing and retail continue to predominate in an area where a significant amount of the land use is zoned industrial. One example is the Davey Industrial Park. Approximately one-third of this section of the Franklin District area is a combination of retail, offices or industrial uses. For most of the residential streets, significant property maintenance and nuisance code enforcement is needed. The maintenance of alleys, street maintenance and drainage issues also need to be addressed.

The Lincoln Commons residential development was proposed to and approved by the Planning Commission in 2003. The development is an infill project of 31 single-family homes. It was designed to be what is known as a Traditional Neighborhood Development. Yards are smaller and building setbacks shorter than one might normally expect. Streets are narrower and include an area of common green space along South Lincoln Street.

District Sustainability Goals

The Franklin District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Value properties that link us to the past.
- Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation.
- Improve pedestrian orientation.

Social

- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.
- Create a quiet, clean community maintained with effective code enforcement.
- Protect neighborhoods.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Franklin District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting first time homebuyer loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatement program.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Develop a diverse local economy.
- Identify areas where sidewalks need to be constructed or repaired.
- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially on blocks that are predominantly student housing, as well as multifamily units that need maintenance and upgrading.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available).

- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs.
- Retain the residential character of businesses located on State Route 43 between Summit Street and Cherry Street/Bowman Drive, via zoning and architectural overlay regulations.
- Encourage businesses in this area to use existing residential designs.
- Encourage the use of rear parking and joint parking agreements with appropriate buffering.
- Encourage the development of adjacent industrial properties, including the extension of utilities where needed.
- Encourage and facilitate expansion of existing industrial companies.
- Rezone the C-R (High Density Multifamily-Commercial Urban Residential) District on the west side of Water Street; from Summit Street to School Street to the rear of properties fronting on South Water Street to R-3 (High Density Residential).

Implications

Residents in the Franklin District identified a number of district priorities. As with the Crain-to-Main and Standing Rock Districts, a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness, less invasiveness of student housing in the district, and preservation of natural resources and historic properties are important. The preservation of natural resources links to the creation of a riparian protection program that will include the Franklin District's Plum Creek.

Alternative transportation was identified as a need for this district. The need for such transportation not only suggests a linkage of the district to commercial and retail centers with bicycle routes and public transportation, but it also seems to reflect the trend of converting single-family rentals and owner-occupied homes to student housing units and the need for transportation to the Kent State University campus. Any redevelopment in this district needs to include both of these transportation modes.

Other priorities identified during the Franklin District meetings include waterways and trees; the area's pedestrian orientation; maintaining the quiet, clean community with effective code enforcement; and being a place where economic opportunities exist for all of Kent's diverse residents. Residents want to be able to walk in their neighborhoods and have sidewalks that are canopied with a healthy system of street trees. They also want to have green areas that link the district to places of retail, commerce, employment and recreation. The need for jobs also was raised during the district meetings. Employment opportunities that pay a living wage provide benefits and hold opportunities for advancement were deemed important.

With the increase in student housing in the district, residents voiced concern about the maintenance and upkeep of residential properties. Both landlords and tenants must be kept to a standard of maintenance, and their actions should not create a negative experience for full-time residents of the district. When problems do occur in a district, the

residents expect an appropriate and adequate level of response from City departments. They also believe it is important that efforts to increase and improve the level of communication between Kent State University officials and students and residents continue.

INSERT PLUM CREEK DISTRICT

Plum Creek District

Description

The Plum Creek District is the least developed and the least populated district in the City of Kent and is adjacent to Brimfield Township on the south. The district is primarily defined as being south of State Route 261, though it also includes adjacent parcels of land north of State Route 261 and west of Mogadore Road. The land uses in this area are diverse: rural single-family, multifamily, industrial, agricultural, open space and park areas, medical, and commercial. Most of the residential areas are large lots with no utilities and no sidewalks. Three older homes, one of which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are located in this district. The majority of land in the Plum Creek District is undeveloped and has the greatest development potential of any area in the City of Kent.

Within the Plum Creek District is one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning Areas. This planning area is located at the southwest corner of State Routes 261 and 43. It is zoned for commercial uses, as are the parcels located at the southwest corner of Sunnybrook Road and State Route 261 and the adjacent acreage located between Sunnybrook and Mogadore roads. Development potential also exists in nonconforming residential properties located within industrially zoned areas on the west side of Mogadore Road.

Still other areas with development potential are located adjacent to Campus Center Drive, between State Route 261 and Meloy Road, and the former Spring Water Park swimming area on Howe Road east of Sunnybrook Road in which residential development is possible.

Plum Creek runs through this district. The Kent Bog, a natural preserve owned and operated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, can be found in this district as well. The bog is an environmentally sensitive and historically significant site known for its tamarack trees and other endangered plant species.

District Sustainability Goals

The Plum Creek District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Preserve natural resources.

Built Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Social

- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Plum Creek District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting first time homebuyer loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatement program.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Focus on property maintenance code and rooming house zoning and health code enforcement.
- Develop a diverse local economy.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage the development of adjacent industrial properties, including the extension of utilities where needed.
- Encourage expansion of existing industrial companies.
- Encourage the development of the parcel at the Southwest corner of S.R. 261 & S.R. 43 per the Special Planning Area recommendations.

Implications

Residents of the Plum Creek District identified priorities that are applicable to this district and to the city at-large. The establishment of riparian corridors and the protection of waterways are positive measures for the area. The idea of preservation of trees in the areas may be problematic as this area has numerous tracts of land that can be available for development. Development can be done in a way that preserves some stands of trees and specimen trees; however, it must be noted that available properties will need to be developed for maximum utility and financial return to the community. This restriction is reflected in the district policy statement that calls for a cooperative relationship in the community where strong employment and a strong tax base provide for community amenities and employment opportunities.

Providing available public and alternate forms of transportation may be difficult. Only one place in this District has the population density needed to make the provision of public transportation viable. The construction of bike paths and designation of bike routes may provide the alternate forms of transportation that are being proposed.

While there is not a great deal of student housing in this neighborhood, residents are concerned that student housing could become an issue in the district. Again, there is the dichotomy of being a university city; however, student housing is not seen as desirable, at least not if it is next door.

INSERT UNIVERSITY DISTRICT MAP

University District

Description

The University District is dominated by Kent State University. The non-university housing in this district, is predominately multi-family, catering primarily to student apartment housing.

The Allerton Family Housing area was originally designated for students with families and international students. Over the years, the quality of the housing has deteriorated. Kent State University is planning to demolish these units and possibly reconstruct upgraded housing units on this site.

The area known as the Loop Neighborhood (i.e., Athena, Artemis and Olympus Drives) is a combination of single-family homes, condominiums, public housing and market-rate apartment complexes, and duplexes. Some of the apartments have upkeep and property-maintenance problems.

A portion of the University District was developed with Community Development Block Grants to facilitate affordable housing alternatives in the neighborhood. The Portage Area Development Corporation and the City of Kent have undertaken several projects aimed at investing in the creation of affordable single-family housing within the city of Kent. The Portage County Metropolitan Housing Authority facilitated the construction and management of some of the public housing apartments in this area.

University Townhomes on Summit Street is becoming a significant supplier of student housing and has become a significant source of disruptive student behavior in May of each year. The original intent of University Townhomes was that parents and other persons would purchase the units and then rent them to their college-aged children. Over time, however, this concept has gone by the wayside. Investigation into this development may be required to bring the area into compliance with the conditional-use permits that have been issued for the development.

Several apartment complexes in this district—Holly Park, Celeron Square, Whitehall, College Towers and Summit Gardens—all need exterior maintenance attention.

The Sunrise and Silver Oaks apartment complexes are well maintained. In 2003, the Four Seasons housing complex for the elderly was constructed and provides a needed housing option for senior citizen living in Kent.

That same year, Kent State University created a wetland on University-owned property in the area north of Summit Street between Route 261 and the campus. It also constructed an additional student parking lot at the corner of State Route 261 and Summit Street.

The only other single-family area in the district is the recently annexed Glad Boulevard area. The road, which needs some repair, is scheduled to have municipal water and

sanitary sewer lines installed in 2004. In 2003, the City of Kent also annexed Kent State University property along Summit Street, a tract of land that includes Dix Stadium.

District Sustainability Goals

Public meetings for the University District consisted of sessions for residents, faculty, staff and students. In creating the plan for this district, responses from the three groups were taken into consideration and included in one table.

The three groups in the University District communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Kent State University Faculty/Staff

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Create a quiet, clean community maintained with effective code enforcement.
- Communicate Kent State University's opportunities for lifelong learning within the community.
- Support diversity.
- Preserve Kent's small-town atmosphere.
- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

Kent State University Students

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain trees as an asset.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.
- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.

Built Environment

- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Continue recycling programs.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.
- Celebrate Kent's convenient geographic location.

Economy

- Support appropriate economic development.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

District Meeting

Natural Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Built Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Social

- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Support diversity.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the University District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Encourage Kent State University to continue to redevelop adequate student housing on campus.
- Ensure Kent State University and the City of Kent continue to work on joint traffic management and parking programs, including bike path development with Portage County and Portage County communities.
- Encourage Kent State University to develop public-private partnerships for additional student housing on or adjacent to the campus.
- Facilitate expansion of existing wetlands, creating conservation areas and easements with private property owners and not-for-profit groups; work with Kent

State University to continue its efforts with PLACE (Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education) and like groups to develop and maintain wetlands.

- Connect this district to “The Portage.” Construct sidewalks along Whitehall Boulevard.
- Focus property maintenance inspections in the off-campus student housing area.
- Continue the collaborative working relationship between the City of Kent, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and Kent State University.

Implications

The input from Kent State University staff and students and full-time residents of this district indicate that there are points on which all agree. This can be a starting point for a meaningful community-wide dialogue.

It is interesting to note that permanent residents did not comment on Kent State University’s being a contributor to the local economy, while both faculty and students mentioned it as an important economic component to Kent’s sustainability. Kent residents believe that the city’s downtown is an economic focal point; Downtown was not cited as being important to either staff or students. Anecdotal evidence exists that Kent State University may not be the community-wide economic engine that it is believed to be. Many faculty and staff do not live in Kent, and many students do not know where downtown is, nor do they shop there. Surely other businesses immediately adjacent to the university have seen a positive economic benefit from the university and are doing very well as a result. Targeting students and faculty as a key market for both commercial and housing growth is a wise and sustainable economic development activity. The real emphasis is upon capturing local dollars that are currently escaping our community. Capturing these dollars is a wise sustainable strategy since local wealth increases without adding additional development demands on public services or increasing population since the targeted market is already part of the existing Kent demographics. To this end, student groups and the community, via the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Kent, need to communicate more regarding the retail and commercial needs of the student population and work together to attract those establishments.

Participants at each group meeting pointed out Kent’s small- town atmosphere. That may be why more than twenty-five percent of the adult, non-student population in Kent are Kent State University graduates. Diversity also was a common point among the participants.

Traffic management was cited as an important component to Kent’s sustainability. As more students enroll at Kent State University and more students live off-campus and bring cars with them, traffic is only going to become more congested. The establishment of bicycle trails connecting the community with the campus will then become more important, as will new PARTA bus routes to service this area. Students living in Kent’s residential areas immediately adjacent to the campus will need to become more aware of available alternate transportation modes.

Student housing will always be an issue with students and the community. The challenge is to bring people together to resolve neighbor and neighborhood issues that are unique to a university community. Students must realize that while they are in Kent for four to five years, their actions while in Kent, establish a template, good or bad, for students who follow them. Incidents such as the end-of-the-year problems experienced at the University Townhomes only jade the vision of the full-time community that lives near these developments and have a negative impact on the remainder of the community.

INSERT MIDDLEBURY DISTRICT MAP

Middlebury District

Description

The Middlebury District is primarily residential in character. Single-family homes dominate, though there are small pockets of duplexes. Industrial uses border the eastern edge of the district, while commercial uses border the district on West Main Street. Most of the commercial uses along the south side of West Main Street are new and used automobile dealerships. West Main Street is also one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning areas. The Cuyahoga River, which buffers the district from a stretch of railroad tracks, State Route 261 and an existing asphalt plant, borders the district to the south.

Overall, the houses and yards are well maintained and have an attractive suburban character. This district is enhanced by wonderful stands of trees. The areas with duplex housing need exterior maintenance to bring them up to the standard of the rest of the district.

The majority of streets are in good condition; however, the Middlebury District is known for having drainage problems, specifically in the northwest corner of this area. The City of Kent is planning a major capital improvement to the drainage system aimed at solving the drainage problems. Several of the streets in the district do not have sidewalks.

The Middlebury District is home to Fred Fuller Park, the City of Kent Water Reclamation Plant and Longcoy Elementary School. This district provides access to the Summit County Hike and Bike Trail System on Munroe Falls Road. This access point will be a major connection to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.

The used car lots on the south side of West Main Street in this district have a blighting effect on the overall landscape of that street and will be discussed in more detail in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

District Sustainability Goals

The Middlebury District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Preserve natural resources.
- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Preserve Kent's unique history.
- Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation.

Social

- Encourage City of Kent officials and offices to be approachable and facilitate citizen involvement.
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Provide quality fire and police services.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Middlebury District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a neighborhood watch program with the Police Department.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage Kent State University to continue to redevelop adequate student housing on campus.

Implications

Residents in the Middlebury District identify waterways as being an asset and are interested in preserving natural resources. They also value the city's park system and the quality of recreational opportunities and facilities. The impact of the Cuyahoga River and Fred Fuller Park on this district is apparent. Preservation and improvements to the Cuyahoga River and its tributaries can be accomplished through riparian corridor protections. Flood plains in this district would benefit from such protections as well. Other environmental aspirations include Kent having a pedestrian orientation, preservation of Kent's unique history and the use of alternative forms of transportation.

Within the next few years, The Portage bike/hike trail system is slated for construction along the Cuyahoga River. It will connect to the Summit County bike/hike trail on Munroe Falls Road. The path also will connect to Downtown Kent, the Kent State University Campus and Downtown Ravenna.

Middlebury residents said that Kent officials are approachable and encourage involvement. The residents also said they want their district to be protected and that they have a positive feeling about the services provided by the Fire and Police Departments. One of the issues related to the protection of neighborhoods is the beginning of an influx of student housing in the district. Like other districts in Kent, student housing is an issue.

Economically, Middlebury residents want to see a community where companies have a social and environmental consciousness and businesses are locally owned and independent. They also want to see economic opportunities available for all residents and see the value of Kent State University contributing to the local economy.

The Middlebury District is not an area that is going to be promoted for industrial development opportunities, with the exception of the renovation of industrial sites adjacent to the Haymaker Parkway Bridge. These industrial buildings and sites, unless demolished and given clean environmental bills of health, will not be sites for new technologies as they emerge from Kent State University. Such sites will continue to be associated with older manufacturing technologies and warehousing. Existing industrial parks and sites need to be nurtured and new industrial lands developed with sensitivity to the preservation of wetlands and green space.

The commercial areas along West Main Street can be areas for commercial redevelopment. The market will determine whether retail and commercial developments and redevelopments are locally owned and operated or whether they are corporate operations. The West Main Street Special Planning Area will be explored in more detail in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

INSERT FAIRCHILD DISTRICT MAP

Fairchild District

Description

The Fairchild District is primarily residential, with a mix of single-family homes, duplexes and multifamily apartments. Commercial uses border the District on West Main Street, while a small industrial park is located in the District's northwest corner. Three parks also can be found in this district: Al Lease, Forest Lakes and Majors Lane.

The majority of commercial uses along West Main Street are a mix of automobile dealerships, restaurants and other business. Recent investments have occurred with Dalton Furniture and Weiss Motors. West Main Street is also one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning Areas. That area will be discussed separately in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

Bicycle lanes on both sides of Fairchild Avenue connect to the Summit County Hike and Bike Trail System on Silver Meadows Boulevard and to the trailhead at Stow-Munroe Falls High School. These trails also will be connected The Portage hike/bike trail system.

The Fairchild Avenue area has been the site of new residential developments over the past seven to ten years. The new developments include Forest Lakes, Cottage Gate Condominiums, White Oak Hills, Fieldstone and the Lakes at Franklin Mills. In 2003, the Lakes at Franklin Mills was awarded the Environmentally Sensitive Building Award by the Portage County Environmental Roundtable for its preservation of land and sensitive development design. Despite the number of recent developments, though, some parcels on Fairchild Avenue remain available for limited residential development. The limitation stems from the wetlands and Fish Creek that surround many of the parcels.

The apartment complexes are located along Silver Meadows Boulevard and Spaulding Drive. As a whole, the complexes are well maintained and sparsely landscaped. The duplex units located on Silver Meadows Boulevard need exterior maintenance.

Three intersections—Silver Meadows Boulevard/Sunset Way and Fairchild Avenue; Stone Water Drive/Adrian Drive and Fairchild Avenue; and Majors Lane and Fairchild Avenue—should be studied and monitored regularly to determine at what point traffic signals should be installed.

The streets and drainage systems in the northeast section of the Fairchild District do not appear to be functioning adequately and may require additional infrastructure study and improvements in the near future. During the writing of this report, sanitary sewers were being installed and the storm sewer system repaired on McKinney Boulevard.

Healthy street trees and yard trees are a highlight of this district.

District Sustainability Goals

The Fairchild District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.

Built Environment

- Promote traffic management.
- Use existing buildings for redevelopment.

Social

- Sustain Kent as a good place to raise a family.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Facilitate vibrant retail and service sectors.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Fairchild District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development.
- Provide transportation to recreation programs for children and/or recreation programming at local parks.

Implications

Like many other districts in Kent, the Fairchild District considers quality of life to be important. Fairchild residents are interested in having quality recreational opportunities and facilities and believe that the city's park system is an asset. These residents also

believe that traffic management is important and that existing buildings should be used rather than demolished.

Residents at the district meetings said that Kent is good place to raise a family and that street and sidewalk maintenance is important. Economically, residents believe that Kent needs locally owned and independent businesses with Downtown Kent as a focal point. They would like to see Kent's retail and service sectors more vibrant.

The Fairchild District's two parks, Al Lease and Forest Lakes, make it second to only the Middlebury District in acreage dedicated to parks and open space. An expansion of Al Lease Park is being considered. If it is enlarged, that portion would be part of the Lakes at Franklin Mills development. The two parks also will connect to each other via bike and hike trails and to The Portage bike/hike trail system. The parks provide a quality of life and a family-oriented amenity that Fairchild residents say that they want.

An active downtown is as much a quality of life issue as it is an economic issue; downtowns are not what they used to be in terms of retail goods and services. There are many successful downtowns that feature boutiques and specialty shops. This can happen in Kent with the right amount of research and attention to products and services and marketing directed to both students and full-time residents. Of course, additional traffic to commercial centers, including Downtown Kent, raises the issue of traffic management. Too much traffic in vibrant retail centers and Downtown will be a good problem to have.

An active downtown and vibrant retail and service sectors would meet Fairchild residents' desire that Kent be home to many locally owned and independent businesses. There needs to be a greater spirit of entrepreneurship in Kent for this ideal to carry forward. There are many resources in Kent to assist start-up businesses, and these will be discussed in the Special Reports section of this document.

INSERT CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT MAP

Central Business District

Description

Kent's Central Business District is predominately a traditional downtown commercial business district and includes two residential areas. The northern residential neighborhood includes Brady, Portage and Columbus Streets and small areas of Crain Avenue and Depeyster Street. The other neighborhood lies to the south and east, within the Campus Link Special Planning Area. This neighborhood includes South Depeyster, East Main Street (to Lincoln Street), South Willow Street, Tonkin Court, Erie Street, East College Street, College Court and a small area of Summit Street (between Depeyster and Summit Streets). The majority of properties in both residential areas need exterior maintenance attention. Many of the streets and sidewalks, with the exception of South Willow Street, need to be repaired.

In the Central Business District proper, many of the buildings need facade enhancements. Kent touts its downtown as historic; however, many facades are covered with treatments not reflective of the buildings' original architecture, resulting in a historic nature that is questionable at best. It is recommended that architectural standards for the downtown be adopted (see the Economic Development section of this document for a discussion of this recommendation).

The parking lots behind the buildings in the southeast quadrant of downtown need to be consolidated and redesigned because the flow of traffic is uneven and difficult. A redesign and regrading of the area would also provide additional parking spaces. Property owners and business owners in this quadrant of downtown and in the northeast quadrant should improve their buildings by creating rear entrances for customer access.

The West River Neighborhood revitalization area is in the Central Business District. The City of Kent has purchased property in what is known as the triangle area as part of an economic redevelopment strategy. The renovation of the West River Medical Arts Building (previously the Kemp Building) and the West River Place Building (previously the Bissler Building) are part of that strategy. Parking will continue to be an issue for the sustainability of development in this area. The City of Kent has been able to procure parking leases with local property owners (i.e., First Christian Church, Kent Masonic Lodge, Kent Public Schools) to provide additional spaces; however, a permanent solution is needed. Issues of redevelopment of the Central Business District are addressed in the Economic Development section of this report.

The Central Business District also includes the Campus Link Special Planning Area, which will be addressed in the Special Planning Areas section of the report.

District Sustainability Goals

The Central Business District participants communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Maintain trees as an asset.
- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Protect neighborhoods.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Stop sprawl.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Central Business District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Connect the district to “The Portage” bike/hike trail system.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Encourage café seating where allowable.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs.
- Adopt an exterior maintenance ordinance for commercial uses.

Implications

Implications of the plan for the Central Business District are many. At the same time, however, the implications of not implementing this plan are risky for all concerned. It is

entirely possible that Downtown Kent will become the vibrant, pedestrian-friendly area of boutique shopping that attracts Kent residents, students and their parents. The cost of this transformation, however, is not inexpensive. The restoration of downtown buildings to their original architecture and the creation of easily accessible parking are keys to any downtown restoration. The restoration of buildings and the conversion of private parking lots into public ones is costly. Short of a conversion of this type, private parking lot owners must be open to the idea of jointly redesigning and reconstructing their lots and removing any physical barriers that may exist.

Building restorations can be financed in part with Community Development Block Grant funds, state tax credits and local tax-abatement programs. Restorations should however reflect a building's period architecture, with review by and approval from an Architectural Review Board.

Building owners will then be able to market their buildings to larger retail concerns, especially those that are relevant to Kent State University students. The city's Community Development Department and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce can take leadership roles in this effort to attract customers to downtown businesses. Funds will need to be made available for promotional materials for both agencies, whether produced separately or jointly.

Special Meetings: Business Community and Kent Area Chamber of Commerce

Description

In addition to the district meetings, special meetings were held for the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the business community. The results of these meetings have been combined, as many of the groups' responses were similar.

Responses from the business community and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce indicate that a sustainable community consists of a place where the downtown is an economic center with many locally owned, small businesses, a strong school system and a small town atmosphere. Quality recreational opportunities and parks enhance the quality of life, according to this group. The participants also noted that development that enhances Kent's unique history and uses existing buildings in redevelopment efforts is needed.

Sustainability Goals

The participants in the business community and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce meetings communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Use existing buildings for redevelopment.
- Preserve Kent's unique history.

Social

- Retain a strong public educational system.
- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to unite the downtown businesses for special planning for the downtown.
- Encourage the Small Business Development Center to continue and expand its work to assist small locally-owned businesses.
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to establish a program encouraging industrial, commercial and retail businesses in Kent to do business with other Kent locally-owned businesses.
- Encourage local businesses to continue to sponsor and become involved in parks and recreation leagues and programs.
- Consider expanding Adopt-A-Spot program to the parks.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development with a focus on maintaining the small town atmosphere.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent Small Business Development Center and Chamber of Commerce programs.
- Encourage business community support for the schools.

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CITYWIDE COMMUNITY PLAN

After reviewing the results from the district meetings, a citywide cumulative list of the input received was established with the top-priority features listed for each of the three aspects of sustainability:

Natural Environment

1. Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
2. Preserve natural resources.
3. Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

1. Promote traffic management.
2. Improve pedestrian orientation.
3. Use existing buildings for redevelopment.

Social

1. Protect neighborhoods.
2. Retain a strong public educational system.
3. Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economic

1. Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
2. Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental conscience.
3. Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

These priorities become the basis for the citywide plan and are referred to herein as "Community-Wide Goals." Steps to implementation of the "Community-Wide Goals" must then be established and adopted for implementation by each of the individual community stakeholder organizations, agencies and governmental departments. Stakeholders include, but are not be limited to, the following:

- City of Kent
- Kent City Schools
- Kent State University
- Portage County government and affiliated departments and agencies
- Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
- Kent Environmental Council
- Community religious organizations
- Community service organizations
- Neighborhood associations

As residents identify their goals and hopes for Kent’s future, they set the vision that will define Kent’s unique choices to create a balance for achieving sustainability. None of the ideas offered can be accomplished in isolation; rather, they must function in unison. Decision-makers must be cognizant of the interplay and interdependency of these goals upon one another.

The twelve top-priority community-wide goals stated above will be explored further in the Community Plan Implementation section immediately below. Many of the implementation steps will appear in multiple plans. Further, many of the programs and plans to be implemented are directed or delegated to community-implementation teams. Building a sustainable city requires a shared responsibility between the City of Kent and the community at large. As these entities shares an equal role in ensuring the future of Kent and participating in the implementation of this community plan, a sustainable Kent will be realized. This is the interconnectedness needed to build a sustainable community.

COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A brief narrative accompanies each goal statement. The narrative includes some commentary provided by residents at the district meetings. Following each goal statement is a table combining the goal, the implementation plan, indicators of progress toward implementation and implementation teams. The point of this process is to illustrate the connection and multidimensional nature of a sustainability goal.

These goals and implementation plans, however, are not enough to ensure success for the City of Kent’s Bicentennial Plan. A measurement tool is needed to evaluate the success of the plan. This is where multidimensional indicators will play a critical role.

Indicators are the backbone of a sustainable plan. An indicator, in simple terms, is just a measurement tool. It is a means by which we measure our progress; however, a sustainability indicator is not just a measurement tool. It also shows linkages between environmental, economic and social goals. These multidimensional indicators help to define sustainability and focus our actions.

Environment: Natural Environment

Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities. The community acknowledges the great asset that neighborhoods play in building diversity in the City of Kent. Residents' vision was of maximizing local recreational programs while challenging us to improve and expand programming and facilities in neighborhoods rather than at one central location. Comments included using the Cuyahoga River for kayaking, creating more neighborhood-based programming, providing greater accessibility to all of the city's parks, construction of a swimming pool and skate park, and development of more programs for youth and teens.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
The Parks and Recreation Board should elicit feedback on the community's vision for improving the existing parks and recreation facilities and updating its Master Plan. The Parks and Recreation Board should expand its programming for the community's youths and teens.	Survey completed Master Plan update completed Net increase in program offerings for youths and teens Net increase in program attendance for youth and teen programs	Parks and Recreation Board Residents
Expand offerings of recreation and leisure services via the community network of neighborhood parks in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Board's Master Plan.	Number of neighborhood-park based programs Attendance over time	Parks and Recreation Board Residents
Expand the use of pervious pavement materials in all city parks and city facilities where parking lots are to be constructed or expanded by 2023.	Number of parking lots in city parks and facilities reconstructed or replaced with pervious materials	Parks and Recreation Board
Use the Cuyahoga River as a recreation facility for canoeing and/or kayaking, operated either by the Parks and Recreation Board or a private entity.	Construction and/or lease of rental facility completed	City Council Parks and Recreation Board Kent Historical Society Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	City Council Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.		

Environment: Natural Environment

Preserve natural resources. In addition to recreation programming and facilities, Kent residents feel very strongly about the preservation of natural resources. These preservation efforts include riparian protection of creeks and the Cuyahoga River; protection of wetlands, including the Kent Bog; preserving green space in the community; and managing the growth pattern of Kent State University.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Expand the use of pervious pavement materials in all city parks and city facilities where parking lots are to be constructed or expanded by 2023.	Number of parking lots in city parks and facilities reconstructed or replaced with pervious materials	Parks and Recreation Board
The City of Kent to enact riparian-corridor-protection ordinances that applies to creeks and tributaries of the Cuyahoga River by 2005.	Ordinance passed	City Council Community Development Department Environmental Commission Planning Commission Kent Environmental Council Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Keep Kent Beautiful and Public Service Department to develop a water-conservation program by 2007.	Program adopted and funded by City Council	Keep Kent Beautiful Board Public Service Department
Keep Kent Beautiful to sponsor semi-annual river and creek cleans-ups, beginning in 2005.	Program adopted and funded by City Council Number of events held per year	Keep Kent Beautiful Board Public Service Department Kent Environmental Council
Inventory wetlands and sensitive environmental areas, creating base maps and updating this information every three to five years, beginning in 2007.	Inventory completed Frequency of Inventory update	City Council Public Service Department Community Development Department
Preserve and expand existing wetlands and create conservation areas and easements with private property owners and not-for-profit groups.	Number of acres expanded or added Number of conservation easements created	Parks and Recreation Board Environmental groups
<i>(continued)</i>		

Preserve natural resources (continued)		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Encourage the use of rain gardens and other similar water-quality facilities in new construction projects (residential, commercial and industrial) and redevelopment projects.	Number of projects completed with alternative water-quality facilities	Community Development Department Planning Commission Environmental Commission
Implement the Davey Arboretum Plan.	Plan implemented Number of trees planted Number of walking paths constructed	Parks and Recreation Board
Expand the Keep Kent Beautiful Adopt-A-Spot program to include the entrances to the city of Kent, park entrances and neighborhoods, beginning in 2007.	Net increase in number of spots Net increase in number of volunteers	Community Development Department. Public Service Department Keep Kent Beautiful Board
Create a five-to-10-year Master Plan for the improvement of storm-water facilities in the city	Number of projects completed Net decrease in number of complaints	City Council Public Service Department
Investigate and implement Green Building codes where appropriate.	Number of projects completed with Green Building procedures	Community Development Department

Environment: Natural Environment

Maintain the park system as an asset to the community. The City of Kent park system is highly regarded. Residents spoke fondly about many of Kent’s larger parks (i.e., Plum Creek, Fred Fuller, River Edge, Al Lease) as “treasures,” while noting park amenities such as soccer fields, baseball fields, playground areas, and walking paths.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Expand the Keep Kent Beautiful Adopt-A-Spot program to include the entrances to the city of Kent, park entrances and neighborhoods, beginning in 2007.	Net increase in number of spots Net increase in number of volunteers	Keep Kent Beautiful Board Public Service Department Community Development Department
Implement the Davey Arboretum Plan	Plan implemented Number of trees planted Number of walking paths constructed	Parks and Recreation Board
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.		

Environment: Built Environment

Promote traffic management. Traffic management was seen as a key component for building a sustainable future. Recommendations include improving traffic flow on state routes to the Kent State University campus, implementation of traffic-calming techniques, construction of street boulevards (i.e., on East Main Street), increased intersection safety, traffic signalization on Fairchild Avenue, street maintenance and improved entrances to Kent.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Stakeholders
PARTA develops a plan to increase ridership by Kent residents and Kent State University students, including car-pooling programs, by 2006.	Net increase in ridership Net increase in car-pooling program	PARTA Kent residents
Kent City Schools should encourage more high school students to ride the bus, decrease student parking areas and decreasing the amount of paved parking surfaces at Roosevelt High School.	Net increase in student ridership Net decrease in parking areas	Kent City Schools
Develop a plan for traffic calming in existing and new neighborhoods	Plan approved by City Council	City Council Safety Department Community Development Department Public Service Department
Add signs to major routes, directing Kent State University traffic along major thoroughfares and state routes.	Project completed	Kent State University Safety Department
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
Create new intersection crosswalk specifications, including the use of alternate paving, surface materials, and coloring systems, by 2007.	Specifications completed	Public Service Department Community Development Department Safety Department
<i>(continued)</i>		

Promote traffic management <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Stakeholders
Install traffic signals at Fairchild Avenue and Silver Meadows Boulevard; Stonewater Drive and Majors Lane; North Mantua Street and River Bend Boulevard; West Main Street and Admore Drive (soon to be Stonewater Drive); and Campus Center Drive and State Route 261, as funding allows.	Study completed Funded and installed	City Council Public Service Department Safety Department
Improve street maintenance by adopting a pavement-management system, and dedicate additional funding toward street maintenance as the economy improves	Adoption and funding of plan	City Council Public Service Department
* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.		

Environment: Built Environment

Improve pedestrian orientation. This comment is related to the issue of traffic management. Kent residents desire their community to be walkable. Residents want intersections to be safe for pedestrians, and they want to be able to walk to activity centers within their respective neighborhoods (e.g., parks, stores, churches, restaurants). The concept of being a walkable community also is tied to the idea of linking neighborhoods with bike paths, which function for all types of pedestrian and non-motorized traffic (e.g., skaters, skateboards, bicyclists).

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
Construct street boulevards on Haymaker Parkway and at entrances to Kent on North Mantua and South Water streets as part of road widening and redevelopment projects and as funding allows.	Construction completed	Public Service Department Community Development Department
Create new intersection-crosswalk specifications, including the use of alternate paving, surface materials and coloring systems by 2007.	Specifications completed	Public Service Department Community Development Department Safety Department
Install traffic signals at Fairchild Road and Silver Meadows Boulevard; Stonewater Drive and Majors Lane; North Mantua and River Bend Boulevard; West Main Street and Admore Drive (soon to be Stonewater Drive); and Campus Center Drive and State Route 261, as funding allows.	Study completed Funded and installed	City Council Public Service Department Safety Department
Identify locations for installation of sidewalks; develop a five-to-10-year plan for installation and repair of sidewalks throughout Kent, including a first-come, first-served equal-cost-sharing sidewalk-repair program.	Locations defined Plan completed Plan funded Number of feet of sidewalk replaced or installed.	City Council Public Service Department
* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.		

Environment: Built Environment

Use existing buildings for redevelopment. Kent residents like the older buildings in the community and would rather see existing buildings used than to have them demolished and replaced with new ones. This feeling is tied especially to older, historic buildings that have served as community landmarks. Recent building renovations in the West River Neighborhood highlight some of this activity.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Create historic residential and commercial districts as identified in the district plans by 2010.	Number of districts created	City Council Community Development Department Planning Commission Kent Historical Society
Encourage the renovation of historic homes, including a recognition program and available tax programs.	Number of homes renovated Recognition program established	City Council Community Development Department Kent Historical Society
Identify and register historic buildings with the Historic Society and the National Register of Historic Places, beginning in 2005.	Number of historic buildings identified and registered per year Percentage of qualified buildings registered	Community Development Department Kent Historical Society
Tighten regulations, and increase enforcement for the licensing and occupancy of rooming houses, beginning in 2005.	Adoption of ordinance Number of enforcement actions per year	City Council Health Board Community Development Department
Increased enforcement of property maintenance code.	Number of enforcement actions per year	Community Development Department Law Department
Continue housing-rehabilitation programs, and encourage new construction on vacant residential lots.	Number of houses rehabilitated Dollars spent Number of houses constructed	Community Development Department
<i>(continued)</i>		

Existing Buildings <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Create architectural standards for downtown buildings and other commercial zones in Kent by 2007.	Ordinance passed	City Council Planning Commission Architectural Review Board Community Development Department
The City of Kent proposes a grant program, a revolving- loan program and a tax- abatement program for facade improvements for retail centers throughout the City of Kent, including downtown. Report to City Council by July 2005.	Program drafted and presented to City Council	City Council Community Development Department

Social

Protect neighborhoods. The social fabric of Kent is found within the residential neighborhoods. Residents identify heavily with and value the neighborhoods in which they live and which provide them with a sense of place. The diversity of the population, the housing types and the affordability of Kent’s residential neighborhoods are highly valued. Residents want their neighborhoods protected, not simply from crime, but also from increased vehicle traffic and the influx of student housing into the neighborhoods that have been primarily single-family in nature. Residents also have a desire for the renovation of the housing stock in older neighborhoods.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Identify and register historic buildings with the Historic Society and the National Register of Historic Places, beginning in 2005.	Number of historic buildings identified and registered per year Percentage of qualified buildings registered	Community Development Department Kent Historical Society
Promote the conversion of rental housing units by promoting homeownership loan programs. Investigate a possible one-to-two-year property tax abatement program, and report to City Council by 2005.	Number of loans per year Number of conversions per year Tax abatement program proposed to City Council	City Council Community Development Department
Investigate and implement Green Building codes where appropriate.	Number of projects completed with Green Building procedures	Community Development Department
Tighten regulations, and increase enforcement for the licensing and occupancy of rooming houses, beginning in 2005.	Adoption of ordinance Number of enforcement actions per year	City Council Health Board Community Development Department
Increase enforcement of property maintenance code	Number of enforcement actions per year	Community Development Department Law Department
Increase the amount of student housing on the Kent State University campus.	Number of housing units constructed per year	Kent State University
Continue housing rehabilitation programs, and encourage new construction on vacant residential lots.	Number of houses rehabilitated Number of houses constructed	Community Development Department

Social

Retain a strong public educational system. The Kent community has a reputation for supporting school levies and educational initiatives. Proficiency scores are competitive with surrounding school districts. Overall, residents are very pleased with the performance of the school system and look forward to continued positive outcomes in the local educational system.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Continue community support of the Kent City Schools	Levy support Increases in test scores State of Ohio rating increases	Kent City Schools Kent State University Kent residents
Kent State University should encourage and invite the community to participate in activities on campus.	Number of activities per year Number of participants Number of sponsoring groups	Kent State University Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community service groups Kent residents

Social

Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere. Kent residents value the characteristics of small towns that are traditionally found in rural, non-urban areas or in the suburban edge of development. Kent residents like the compact size of the city and see Kent as a small town where they can enjoy the small town-activities such as the Kent Heritage Festival. The presence of Kent State University adds an urban dynamic and provides additional cultural and intellectual amenities. Similarly, Kent's geographic location provides proximity to the urban centers of Akron and Cleveland.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
The Parks and Recreation Board elicits feedback on the community's vision for improving existing parks and recreation facilities, updates its Master Plan and expands its programming for the community's youths and teens.	Survey completed Master Plan update completed Net increase in program offerings for youths and teens Net increase in program attendance for youths and teens	Parks and Recreation Board Residents
Create historic residential and commercial districts as identified in the district plans by 2010.	Number of districts created	City Council Planning Commission Community Development Department Kent Historical Society
Develop a plan for traffic calming in existing and new neighborhoods	Plan approved by City Council	City Council Safety Departments Community Development Department Public Service Department
Encourage more downtown community activities to supplement the Heritage Festival, the Festival of Lights and the Home Savings Concert Series, beginning in 2005.	Number of downtown activities per year	City Council Downtown merchants Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
<i>(continued)</i>		

Preserve Kent's Small Town Atmosphere <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Team
Encourage Kent State University to have at least one activity per year in the downtown area.	Number of activities per year sponsored by Kent State University in downtown Kent	Kent State University Downtown merchants Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Encourage Kent State University organizations to adopt neighborhoods, sponsor neighborhood clean-ups and Adopt-A-Spot locations throughout the community, beginning in 2006.	Number of neighborhoods adopted Number of neighborhood clean-ups Number of Adopt-A-Spots Number of volunteers	Kent State University Kent State University Student Organizations Community Development Department Public Service Department
Kent State University should encourage and invite the community to participate in activities on campus.	Number of activities per year Number of participants Number of sponsoring groups	Kent State University Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community service groups Kent residents
Expand the Keep Kent Beautiful Adopt-A-Spot program to include the entrances to the city of Kent, park entrances and neighborhoods, beginning in 2007.	Net increase in number of spots Net increase in volunteers	Community Development Department Keep Kent Beautiful Board Public Service Department
Encourage Kent residents to shop in Kent.	Number of Kent residents shopping in Kent as determined by merchants' customer surveys Increase in yearly sales	Kent residents Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Kent merchants
Resurrect and reformat the Town-Gown Committee	Decrease in neighborhood problems	Church groups Community service groups Neighborhood associations Student groups Fraternities and sororities
Continue to financially assist needed health and social service programs that meet established criteria.	Number of Kent residents served Annual amount of CDBG and Social Service General Fund dollars expended.	City Council Community Development Department Community not-for-profit social service and health agencies.
* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.		

Economy

Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses. For example, Kent residents want to attract restaurants that are not franchises. There is a vision that each small business will attract other small businesses. Kent residents also value the existence of a daily hometown newspaper and the local Chamber of Commerce.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Encourage Kent residents to shop in Kent.	Number of Kent residents shopping in Kent as determined by merchants' customer surveys Increase in yearly sales	Kent residents Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Kent merchants
The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce adopts a "Buy Kent" program by 2005.	Program adopted Annual program-review completed	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
The City of Kent adopt a "Buy Kent" program for municipal supplies and services by 2005	Number of Kent businesses serving the City of Kent as goods and service providers	City Council City Departments
The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce sponsors an annual community business fair with a goal of encouraging local businesses to buy from and supply each other with goods and services beginning in 2005.	Event established Number of participants per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Local businesses
Downtown merchants organize to continue efforts to improve the commercial activity in downtown, including sidewalk-sale events throughout the year starting in 2004.	Creation of downtown organization Number of events per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Downtown merchants
Strip-center merchants organize to continue efforts to improve the commercial activity in their respective centers, including sidewalk-sale events throughout the year, starting in 2004.	Creation of strip-center organization Number of events per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Shopping center owners and merchants
Arts groups raise their profile by increasing cultural arts opportunities and venues in downtown, including an annual program downtown, starting in 2005.	Number of arts-based programs in downtown per year Number of attendees	The Artist Network of Kent Standing Rock Cultural Arts Center Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
<i>(continued)</i>		

Locally Owned Small Businesses <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Continue to promote Kent through the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Central Portage County Visitors and Convention Bureau.	Number of inquiries and information requests received Number of Web site hits Dollar amount of hotel taxes received per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community Development Department
The city of Kent proposes a grant program, a revolving-loan program and a tax-abatement program for facade improvements for retail centers throughout the city, including downtown. Report to City Council by July 2005.	Program proposed Program adopted and funded by City Council Number of facades improved each year	City Council Community Development Department
The Cuyahoga River is used as a recreational facility for canoeing and/or kayaking and is operated either by the Parks and Recreation Board or a private entity.	Construction and/or lease of facility completed	City Council Parks and Recreation Board Kent Historical Society Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Develop and create business programs for new entrepreneurs using volunteers to provide business planning assistance, understanding local regulations, financing programs and managing your business.	Number of annual inquiries Number of start-up businesses Number of volunteer counselors	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community Development Department Kent Regional Business Alliance Small Business Development Center

Economy

Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness. The residents of Kent recognize the city’s need for a tax base that is supported by commerce and maintained by high-technology jobs. Tax incentives should be awarded judiciously. Industrial jobs created or located in Kent should pay a living wage. Local government regulations and fees should not be a hindrance to businesses locating or operating in Kent. Vacant or underutilized land and buildings should be sites for development. Development should not have a negative impact on Kent’s quality of life. Residents see the value in a regional economy and encourage the collaborative creation of economic districts between local governments. Tourism also is seen as a viable economic development sector.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Encourage the use of rain gardens and other similar water-quality facilities in new construction projects (residential, commercial and industrial) and redevelopment projects.	Number of projects completed with alternative water-quality facilities	Planning Commission Community Development Department
When and where appropriate, place utility wires underground in development and redevelopment project areas.	Number of miles of road where utility wires have been buried	City Council Community Development Department Public Service Department
Create historical residential and commercial districts as identified in the district plans by 2010.	Number of districts created	City Council Planning Commission Community Development Department Kent Historical Society
Investigate and implement Green Building codes where appropriate.	Number of projects completed with Green Building procedures	Community Development Department
Kent residents encouraged to shop in Kent.	Number of Kent residents shopping in Kent as determined by merchants’ customer surveys Increase in yearly sales	Kent residents Kent merchants
The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce sponsors an annual community business fair with a goal of encouraging local businesses to buy from and supply each other with goods and services, beginning in 2005.	Event established Number of participants per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Local businesses
<i>(continued)</i>		

Diverse Economy <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Create architectural standards for downtown buildings and other commercial zones in Kent by 2007.	Ordinance adopted	City Council Community Development Department Kent Historical Society Architectural Review Board
Encourage greater communication between Kent State University and the City of Kent regarding emerging technologies and opportunities for employment growth in the City of Kent.	Number of new jobs created from “spin-off” businesses	Kent State University Community Development Department
Base tax incentives on jobs that pay living wages and increase incentives for those businesses that pay living wages.	Number of new jobs paying a living wage	City Council Community Development Department
Continue to promote Kent through the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Central Portage County Visitors and Convention Bureau.	Number of inquiries and information requests received Number of Web site hits Dollar amount of hotel taxes received per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Survey Kent State University students regarding shopping patterns and preferences.	Survey of students	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community Development Department Kent State University Office of Student Life Kent State students
Pursue chain stores that will be attractive to Kent State University students.	Number of inquiries and contacts Number of chain stores located in Kent	Community Development Department Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Kent State University student groups
<i>(continued)</i>		

Diverse Economy (continued)		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Continue Ambassador Program.	Number of industrial visits	Community Development Department Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Seek the clean-up and development of the Wheeling and Lake Erie Rail yard.	Phase One Environmental reviews Development of parcels	Community Development Department Ohio Department of Development Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad

Economy

Develop Kent’s downtown as an economic focal point. The downtown business district should be accessible to students and should market products and services to students. Downtown should remain walkable and be more retail-oriented. Cultural arts should support the development of downtown shopping, activities and festivals. There is great interest in more restaurants that are unique, diverse and of high quality. Older buildings need to be redeveloped and commercial opportunities developed along the Cuyahoga River. Residents commented on the need to preserve the small-town atmosphere and the continued the beautification of downtown. This redevelopment and beautification needs to include the preservation of historic architecture in downtown Kent.

Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Interconnect all community parks with The Portage by 2015.*	Number of parks connected each year Number of lane miles added (by routing or construction)	Parks and Recreation Board Kent State University
Identify locations for installation of sidewalks; develop a five-to-10-year plan for installation and repair of sidewalks throughout Kent, including a first-come, first-served equal-cost-sharing sidewalk-repair program.	Locations defined Plan completed Plan funded Number of feet of sidewalk replaced or installed	City Council Public Service Department
Encourage more downtown community activities to supplement the Heritage Festival, Festival of Lights and Home Savings Concert Series beginning in 2005.	Number of downtown activities per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Musical and Visual Arts groups
Encourage Kent State University to have at least one activity per year in the downtown area.	Number of activities per year sponsored by Kent State University in downtown Kent	Kent State University Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Increase the number of Kent residents shopping in Kent and the retail shopping opportunities available in the city.	Number of Kent residents shopping in Kent as determined by merchants’ customer surveys Number of new retail stores downtown Increase in yearly sales	Kent residents Community Development Department Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Kent merchants
The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce adopts a “Buy Kent” program by 2005.	Program adopted Annual program-preview completed	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
<i>(continued)</i>		

Downtown as Economic Focal Point <i>(continued)</i>		
Implementation Plan	Indicators of Progress	Implementation Teams
Downtown merchants need to organize to continue efforts to improve the commercial activity in downtown including sidewalk sale events through the year starting in 2004.	Creation of downtown organization Number of events per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Downtown Merchants
Conduct a market study of all downtown businesses to determine downtown Kent's overall market area.	Completion of market study with 100-percent participation of downtown businesses	Downtown merchants Kent Area Chamber of Commerce Community Development Department
The City of Kent proposes a grant program, revolving-loan program and tax-abatement program for facade improvements for retail centers throughout the city, including downtown. Report to City Council by July 2005.	Program proposed Program adopted and funded by City Council Number of facades improved each year	City Council Community Development Department
Create architectural standards for downtown buildings and other commercial zones in Kent by 2007.	Ordinance passed	City Council Community Development Department Kent Historical Society Architectural Review Board
Expand the Keep Kent Beautiful Adopt-A-Spot program to include the entrances to the City of Kent, park entrances and neighborhoods, beginning in 2007.	Net increase in number of spots Net increase in number of volunteers	Community Development Department Keep Kent Beautiful Board
Arts groups raise their profile by increasing cultural arts opportunities and venues in downtown Kent, including an annual program downtown, starting in 2005.	Number of arts-based programs in downtown per year Number of attendees	The Artist Network of Kent Standing Rock Cultural Arts Center Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
Continue to promote Kent through the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Central Portage County Visitors and Convention Bureau.	Number of inquiries and information requests received Number of Web site hits Dollar amount of hotel taxes received per year	Kent Area Chamber of Commerce
<i>(continued)</i>		

Downtown as Economic Focal Point *(continued)*

<p>Create a comprehensive parking strategy, including redesigned and properly signed parking lots.</p>	<p>Number of identifiable customer and employee parking locations. Parking Action Plan implemented (see Appendix F)</p>	<p>City Council Parking Action Committee Community Development Department Public Service Department Safety Department Downtown Merchants Kent Area Chamber of Commerce</p>
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* For more information on The Portage, see Appendices G & H.

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INSERT SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS HERE -
Page 1 - Overview

INSERT SPECIAL PLANNING AREAS HERE -
Page 2 – Campus Link

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Page 4– West Main Street

SPECIAL REPORTS

Introduction

The City of Kent has been rather fortunate to have the resources and expertise of Kent State University faculty and staff and City of Kent staff members to assist in the interpretation of sustainability principles and citizen's goals into specific action plans. These special reports reach beyond the Community-Wide Plan matrix to introduce finer points and strategies to implement sustainable principles and practices and help to illuminate the complexities of sustainable planning.

Special Report: **Economic Development**

By

Michael Weddle, Economic Development Coordinator
Charles V. Bowman, Community Development Director
City of Kent, Department of Community Development

Kent residents have identified a number of characteristics of and for economic development. The characteristics overlap with themes of historic preservation, use of existing buildings, a need for a diverse economic base, and the contribution that Kent State University can, and should, offer. Residents also commented on the important economic contribution of the automobile dealerships located on West Main Street and further noted the symbiosis of arts and small, independently owned, local businesses.

Downtown is very important to Kent residents, as is taking advantage of the unique presence of the Cuyahoga River adjacent to that part of the city. Numerous comments reflected the desire for higher paying jobs in Kent, bringing high-tech jobs to the city and developing a business incubator in Kent.

The desire for a consistent economic development plan for Kent's future is clear. The plan must be multifaceted and cannot concentrate in any one area of the city. In developing and, more important, sustaining an economic development plan, there are a number of stakeholders who must cooperate and actively participate in the implementation of this plan. Traditionally, local economic development has been the responsibility of the local government; however, for Kent's future, the line of responsibility in this process will become more complicated and involved as the number of stakeholders and their respective roles in the process continue to evolve.

Partnerships with the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, the Central Portage County Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Kent Downtown Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, Kent State University, Kent City Schools, the Small Business Development Center, Brimfield and Franklin Townships joint economic development district agreements, and residents of the community enrich the effectiveness of the City's economic development efforts by bringing depth and perspective to the economic planning process.

Community Partnerships

Kent Area Chamber of Commerce

The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce for decades has played a vital leadership role in the community. This important of promoting the Kent community and participating in the interaction between the City and Kent State University must continue.

The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce assists with the City's Ambassador Program Visits, which aims to retain current businesses located in Kent and help with any expansion plans these businesses may be considering. Through its presence on the Web and its numerous promotional materials, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce promotes the City of Kent far beyond its borders. While hosting Downtown festivals such as the Kent Heritage Festival in the summer and the Festival of Lights around Christmastime, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce must provide additional focus on, and the leadership for, the downtown area. Organizing downtown businesses is traditionally a challenging venture in any community, and Kent is not unique in this regard. A hallmark of a strong central business district is a well-organized downtown association, either as a stand-alone organization or a subcommittee of the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce. In either case, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce needs to redevelop its marketing plan for the City of Kent city of Kent and the Kent region, focusing on Kent as a regional hub in its own right and including specialized program targeted to the customer group being sought.

Central Portage County Visitors & Convention Bureau

Created in 2000, the Central Portage County Visitors & Convention Bureau has been creatively promoting the communities of Kent and Brimfield Township. Funded with a hotel bed tax, Kent and Brimfield Township joined to form the Bureau. Administered from within the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, the Bureau devotes its time and resources to synergistically promote the tourism assets of both communities equally. Bureau board members include local hoteliers and representatives of Brimfield Township, the City of Kent and Kent State University.

Downtown Kent Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation

The Downtown Kent Corporation is a business support organization and an urban redevelopment corporation. The Downtown Kent Corporation has been instrumental in assisting the City of Kent in the redevelopment of the West River Neighborhood. Through its leadership and vision, the Downtown Kent Corporation helped to identify the under-utilized and under-developed neighborhood and recognized the potential in a revitalized West River Neighborhood. This vision was supplemented and refined through an extensive public outreach effort seeking the participation of the neighborhood's residents.

The revitalization program began in 1992 with the acquisition of properties between Gougler Avenue and the Cuyahoga River and North Mantua Street and Gougler Avenue. By 2000, a critical mass of properties had been acquired, and buildings were demolished. The properties are now under consideration for potential development scenarios that are consistent with the *West River Neighborhood Generalized Land Use Plan*.

The year 2002 saw the plan begin to bear fruit as the Kemp Building was redeveloped into medical offices known as the West River Medical Center. Also in 2002, West River

Place (formerly known as the Bissler Building) initiated its long awaited rehabilitation into office space.

The cooperation among the Downtown Kent Corporation, the City of Kent and residents of the West River Neighborhood illustrates the impact that partnerships can have on the redevelopment and revitalization of under-performing areas of Kent. While questions were raised regarding the advisability of the City of Kent participation in real estate transactions, the current and long-term benefits that will accrue to the community are now becoming evident.

Kent State University

Kent State University is the largest employer in Portage County and the largest single contributor to the Kent economy. A number of businesses in Kent are operating solely because of the presence of Kent State University. Kent State University also provides an opportunity for some unique partnerships.

Kent State University and the City of Kent must fully capture the synergistic opportunities presented by working together for the betterment of the community. The two entities have the ability to create and sustain more symbiotic energy: Kent State University through the creation of intellectual property and commercialization (research driven start-up companies) of its research potential and marketing clout and the City of Kent through public sector incentives for the growth of these university-generated commercial and industrial applications. The City of Kent also provides and draws from Kent State University's diversity in offering a very attractive quality of life marked by an enriched environment for residents, students and faculty.

The City of Kent and Kent State University must work together to promote the location of new university-related commercialization projects in Kent. To date, very few university-inspired business ventures have located in Kent. Instead they have located in neighboring communities. The loss to Kent is the typically low-impact, high technology, well-paying employers by whom the Kent community would be well served.

The City of Kent and Kent State University need to work with property owners to refurbish and rehabilitate buildings to accommodate spin-off businesses that are being courted by other communities. By remaining tied to the Kent community, these businesses would further diversify the economy, strengthen Kent State University's technology- research image, broaden the city's economic base and elevate its economic status in the region. Incubator facilities and other technology development enhancements also should be located within the city to facilitate establishment of these new enterprises.

Concurrently, property and building owners must be realistic in their expectations about the cost of redevelopment and in providing the necessary types of amenities and services desired by these nascent businesses. Kent State University-related start-ups should be encouraged and/or required to contact the City of Kent when seeking space for their operations. Regular round-table discussions should be held among these businesses, the

City of Kent, potential property owners and local Realtors so that the community can be better prepared to serve and provide facilities for these start-ups.

The City of Kent offers a wide range of incentives, including local income tax and property tax abatements. Business partnerships and start-up funding partnerships with the university are possible. These partnerships would be similar to venture capital funding, ensuring these businesses would be located in Kent or in joint economic development districts.

A second type of synergy for Kent State University and the Kent community is in the future redevelopment of the Campus Link Neighborhood. This area has the potential for the location of a hotel/conference center/executive training center. Investment by both entities in the Campus Link neighborhood area can bring significant redevelopment that caters to and provides support services for the broader community. This area also should be a site for the location of future University facilities, be it office space or research or institute use as the University expands to the west rather than current East Campus expansion on currently open space land.

Many college communities enjoy a dynamic economic health with a physically adjacent campus and downtown. The impact of the Campus Link neighborhood redevelopment on the central business district, as outlined in the Special Planning Areas section of this document, will be quite significant. The concept of bringing the campus to downtown and downtown to campus will be a redirection of campus growth as well as a new and unique partnership between Kent State University and the City of Kent. In that past, University expansions have been southeast of the main campus.

Small Business Development Center

The Small Business Development Center provides small and developing businesses with services ranging from business-plan development to Small Business Administration financing.

The City of Kent supports this program with Community Development Block Grant funding; however, increased communication and coordination is needed between these two entities. The City of Kent provides Community Development Block Grant funding to subsidize services provided to businesses located within the City of Kent. Information about the numbers of City of Kent jobs created and/or retained by local businesses as a result of having received Small Business Development Center services should be shared along with the locations of these businesses. Doing so would enable the city to provide development and permit assistance at the front end of business formation. While the Small Business Development Center can provide financing for small business projects, opportunities may exist where the city's revolving-loan programs may be used to fill a financing gap.

Joint Economic Development Districts

Kent City Council's recent approval of joint economic development district agreements with Brimfield and Franklin Townships creates a cooperative environment for these governments to provide economic development opportunities and benefits for each community. The joint economic development district agreements remove from the picture time-consuming and animosity-creating annexation battles seeking similar economic development goals.

These agreements add to the potential development area for the City of Kent, which is significant in that the city has only approximately 230 acres available for industrial, commercial and/or office development. This is truly a sustainable practice as the city builds collaborative regional relationships leading to wise use of existing lands encouraging infill (see the Industrial Development section of this document).

Kent Residents

From the community meetings, it became clear that the Kent community wants small, independently owned businesses rather than "big box" stores; however, while Kent has several locally owned and independent businesses and many are doing quite well; others are struggling. Historically and in virtually all communities, a cycle of small-business births and deaths can be observed. Some closings are based on the product; but others result from the owner being forced out because of market conditions, corporate franchise operations or Internet shopping opportunities. Still other businesses close because they lack community support.

Kent residents therefore play a vital role in the life of small businesses in that they must frequent the small businesses. It is easy to bypass the small local store in favor of a regional strip center or shopping mall. Kent is home to many quality small businesses that provide a wide range of products and services, many of which are also found in nearby malls or shopping centers. However, shopping in the town where one lives improves the entire community by creating employment and wealth, reducing commercial vacancy rates and increasing local taxes that fund local services and education.

Small business owners need to understand their market, provide the services and goods that locals will want to purchase, and market their products either individually or collectively with other local businesses. Recently the new automobile dealerships in Kent began to market themselves together in local and regional newspapers. Through this joint marketing effort, money is saved and more people are attracted to all of the car dealerships. Other businesses must use this strategy. Downtown merchants and shopping center merchants must learn to market themselves together to draw people to their location.

Small businesses do an extraordinary job in their efforts to keep costs low. Some costs, however, continue to plague them (e.g., workers' compensation insurance). Joining a chamber of commerce is one of the best things that a small business can do. The economies of scale and cost-saving programs that these organizations typically offer can

be invaluable to small businesses owners. Locally, that organization is the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce.

Development Areas

Downtown

Kent residents expressed repeatedly their affection for and support of Downtown Kent. Many of the buildings still have their original architecture, and downtown remains home to numerous retail and service businesses. While parking in the downtown area can be problematic at times and competition from nearby strip centers within and outside of Kent certainly exists, Downtown Kent continues to thrive.

Downtown Kent is a pedestrian-friendly area with parking spaces located closer to retail destinations than those at a shopping mall. The future of downtown Kent rests depends on the following strategies:

- Storefront revitalization
- Development of a coherent parking system
- Creation of a joint marketing organization
- Renovation of the Ellis Hotel

While these strategies appear to be separate actions, they must occur in tandem to be effective. Such actions represent the interdependencies of downtown businesses, local government and the community.

Storefront Revitalization. Revitalization of storefronts to their original architecture is a cornerstone of an effective small-town downtown economic development plan. A number of buildings in downtown Kent have already undergone this transformation; however, many others still have their beauty, grandeur and history obscured by false fronts. This type of reinvestment begets additional investment in the downtown area. The Main Street, Ohio, program has proven this to be true in communities throughout the state. Downtown, Inc., is another such organization that has been able to document the impact of such a program. Particular priority should be given to help current buildings and future construction along the Cuyahoga River to find creative ways to create orientation that opens access to the building toward the river.

Many communities in Ohio looking to revitalize their downtown have benefited from a grant made available through the State of Ohio. As an “entitlement city,” however, Kent is the direct recipient of Community Development Block Grant funds through the federal government’s Department of Housing and Urban Development and therefore is ineligible for such state grant funding. To encourage redevelopment, the City of Kent should investigate the possibility of earmarking a portion of its annual Community Development Block Grant funding for facade renovation of downtown buildings for a period of ten years. These grant funds could be made available for the following purposes:

- Providing architectural technical assistance
- Bringing deficient wiring, plumbing etc. up to code
- Restoring building exteriors and signage
- Creating rear entrances to buildings

If such funds are made available, then business owners should be required to match any funding with a 1.5 to 1 dollar match (i.e., \$1.50 business-owner money to \$1 of Community Development Block Grant money). Community Reinvestment Area tax abatements also be used for downtown-building revitalization projects.

Development of a Coherent Parking System. The vast majority of the available parking spaces in downtown Kent are in private hands. As a result, much of the parking in downtown Kent disorganized and poorly designed and assembled. Customers coming into downtown could enjoy a greater utility if the parking areas were redesigned, and parking lot owners offered creative parking options that benefit all of downtown. If needed, City of Kent could provide assistance. Greater cooperation among the city, property owners and business owners to designate and differentiate parking for customers and employees also is needed.

To encourage greater availability of spaces for customer parking, downtown businesses should reconsider the idea of having employees park in remote areas where spaces may be available during the day (e.g., parking areas at the fringe of downtown, parking lots at large retail centers). They also should work with PARTA to provide bus transportation to and from downtown these “out lots.”

The 2003 report from the Kent Downtown Parking Management Planning Committee is attached as Appendix F and can be used as a guide for resolving downtown parking issues.

Creation of a Joint Marketing Organization. The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce needs to provide a leadership role in organizing and directing marketing efforts with and for downtown businesses. Employment of a professional marketing team is not required, though it would be a positive move; rather, downtown businesses need to conduct a simple marketing study of their customers over a short period. This information can be collected by the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Community Development Department. Together they would determine the overall market area of downtown Kent. The results of this review should then be shared with the entire downtown community. Downtown businesses then create an advertising program that targets specific media outlets within this newly determined downtown Kent market area.

All downtown merchants participating in a facade renovation program should be required to participate in the marketing study and its implementation. This type of simple market study should be repeated every three to four years. Doing so is vital to the survival of downtown Kent and the ability of downtown businesses to market themselves as a group.

A number of activities already exist that help bring people into downtown Kent,

including the Kent Heritage Festival, the Festival of Lights, the Home Savings Bank Concert Series and the Kent State Folk Festival 'Round Town program. Additional special-event programming through the Western Reserve Folk Arts Association, the Artist's Network of Kent, the Standing Rock Cultural Arts Center, the Mountain Rose and FolkNet have the ability to create other outdoor public events that bring people into downtown Kent throughout the spring and summer months.

Renovation of the Ellis Hotel. Long a sore spot and point of controversy in the city, the Ellis Hotel, if found to be financially feasible, should be renovated. If the building cannot be renovated, then it should be demolished. If demolition is required, then this parcel should be land-banked and made available only for the purpose of constructing a building that will add to and blend with the fabric and structure of downtown. At all costs, this parcel should not be turned into a parking lot. Any new building needs to reflect the architecture and scale of the downtown.

Industrial Development

A total of only 230 acres are available in Kent for possible industrial, light industrial, and research and office development. This land is in the form of four non-contiguous parcels. One of these parcels, the property at State Routes 261 and 43, will be discussed in a separate section of this document. A 40-acre parcel sits at the intersection of State Route 261 and Sunnybrook Road. This parcel was rezoned from residential to light industrial in 2000; however, it may be prudent for the Kent community to keep its options open. This area could be a productive site for an office development, an assisted-living facility or combination of the two.

Another 100 acres is located on Mogadore Road. Challenges come with this parcel, as it has a rolling terrain. This does not rule out the parcel, but it does provide a caveat, in that it may be a difficult site for industrial development.

The remaining 40 acres is the former railroad roundhouse property between Lake Street and the Cuyahoga River. This site also has challenges. As a former rail site, there may be environmental contamination that will have to be examined. Any clean up of the site will depend on the outcome of environmental assessment studies and the type of uses that may want to locate on this site.

Industrial development for these four remaining parcels is consistent with the city's Sustainability Plan as it pertains to the need for high-tech and high-paying jobs in Kent.

It is the goal of the City of Kent to develop this land over the next five to twenty years in cooperation with the landowners. Economic development policies espoused in a traditional comprehensive plan would not necessarily be found to be consistent with the desired outcomes stated in a Sustainability Plan. The City of Kent, however, has systematically encouraged the evolution of its industrial development strategy in a direction that embraces the concepts of sustainability and continues to seek the interconnectivity among social, spatial and economic environments of local and national economies as something that evolves from a manufacturing orientation to an information-

based orientation. Therefore, a high priority has been placed on encouraging infill development capturing available current facilities and space that does not create expansion into open areas.

Assuming this balanced, yet forward-looking approach to economic organization is adopted, the local community's reliance on technology-oriented companies becomes a natural extension of the principles of sustainability. Not only are unnecessary environmental and social stresses on the community alleviated, but also the quality of life is enriched through the creation of more high-paying jobs.

By definition, economics is the efficient allocation of scarce resources. The task facing the City of Kent therefore, is to net the greatest sustainable-oriented return on its most fixed of assets—namely, developable land. To realize this return, cooperation among the various and often-competing segments of the community must work together.

Special Report: **Transportation**

By: Dr. David H. Kaplan, David Kotting and Thomas Clapper

The City of Kent comprehensive-planning process initiated in the fall of 2002 and referred to as the Bicentennial Plan features the theme of “building a sustainable community.” While the term *sustainable* carries various “green” environmental connotations, it reflects a basic strategic goal of any community planning—that physical development and redevelopment maintain and enhance the community’s long-term social, environmental and economic fitness. The dictionary definition of *sustain*: “to keep in existence, maintain, and, to supply with necessities or nourishment; provide for.”

A community’s transportation system in all of its modes is a fundamental determinant of a community’s character, its present fitness, the range of futures that it can create and their sustainability. As compared to other types of development, transportation investments—whether Columbus’ voyage or a new highway—may be the most powerful agent of social, economic and environmental change known. When locations outside the community are more attractive than those within, there is “leakage.” When a community supplies housing, retail, employment, educational and recreational opportunities that are desirable, there is less leakage and the community becomes sustainable, retaining and attracting social and commercial investment.

Transportation issues have determined much of the City of Kent’s historic development and opportunities. Beginning in the earliest days of the 19th century, from the Big Beaver Trail, the Pennsylvania and Ohio canal, Marvin Kent’s railroad and the Northern Ohio Traction and Light interurban system, Kent has been a part of every major transportation mode as each arose. Since that time, Kent has been served by the state and national highway networks; however, the interstate system indirectly connects Kent. Although the interstate system does not directly connect Kent, the impact is significant as vehicles traverse Kent on a north/south axis via State Route 43 while moving from one interstate to another as well as on an east/west axis along State Route 59. For a city of its size, Kent has relatively high traffic volumes, according to data from the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) and as shown in the table below.

AMATS Traffic Volume Average Daily Traffic Count	
Kent	
State Route 43 at Roosevelt	17,500
Fairchild at Silver Meadows	11,810
West Main at Longmere	21,020
Haymaker at Water Street	25,860
South Water at Summit Street	18,480
South Water at State Route 261	17,040
East Main at Lincoln Street	25,790
East Main at Midway	25,770
Cuyahoga Falls	
State Road at Graham Road	18,540
State Road at High Level Bridge	16,000
Portage Trail at Second Street	21,310
Stow	
Kent Road at Fishcreek Road	21,020
Kent Road at Darrow Road	24,950
Akron	
Main Street at Market Street	20,430
Exchange Street at Broadway	26,710
Broadway at Mill Street	12,450
AMATS = Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.	

In the case of Kent, less than immediate access to interstates has allowed much of the city core to remain comparatively untouched by intense commercial development as is, for example, present in Montrose. Kent retains a built environment (i.e., a central downtown, relatively quiet, tree-lined streets and historic architecture) that may not have survived the developmental pressure of immediate interstate access. It is unnecessary to argue whether highways create intensive commercial development or the other way around. In planning our community, we must acknowledge that the community is a partner and that the consideration of one requires the consideration of the other.

The growth of Kent State University has also been a defining factor in the city's development. The university's growth and the movements of students, faculty, staff and visitors have driven a significant portion of the city's transportation investments and have profoundly determined what Kent is and can be. One transportation-related example of

this is Haymaker Parkway and the development of East Main Street as a four-lane roadway.

Haymaker Parkway was envisioned as a means to overcome traffic delays arising from the rail crossing in downtown Kent and traffic demand associated with the university. While rail service and its attendant delays declined almost as soon as the road was dedicated, the parkway remains an effective means of moving automobile traffic on the east/ west axis. An unforeseen but perhaps predictable negative effect of the Parkway, however, is a physical barrier between downtown Kent and much of the community, including the university campus.

Even with Haymaker Parkway, Kent has a community roadway network that is essentially unchanged since it was a quiet village. University-related traffic is understood to generate problems for the entire community. While the university has recognized these impacts and actively directs traffic to high-capacity roads, some of the university-related traffic distributes itself throughout the city. It is worth noting that daily work-trip patterns have changed significantly in the last decade. The 2000 census reports an overall increase of 20.4% percent in daily work trips for Portage County from 1990 to 2000, according to data from AMATS.

2000 Census 1990 and 2000 Daily County Work-Trip Data, Portage County				
1990	# of Trips	2000	# of Trips	% Change
To Portage	14,224	To Portage	19,953	40.3
From Portage	31,606	From Portage	37,856	19.8
	45,830		57,809	26.1
Internal, Portage	38,848	Internal, Portage	39,351	12.9
Total Portage	80,678		97,160	20.4
Note: Data from Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study.				

As in most communities over last few decades, Kent’s transportation developments and other community development efforts do not appear to be consistent with sustainability concepts. Due in part to state and federal funding protocol, the focus has been on roadway capacity improvements without sufficient regard to community impacts. At the same time, community development has not been conducted with full knowledge of the transportation impacts of that development. This is especially true in the example of high-density student housing.

It is worth noting that Congress is currently considering a reauthorization of a transportation bill that sets the framework for federal transportation investment over the next six-year period. The bill currently under consideration places more emphasis on “community” decision-making than did previous legislation.

The transportation considerations above relate directly to the following highly rated citywide desired outcomes of the Bicentennial Plan:

- Promote traffic management.
- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Town/gown interaction.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Kent's retail and service sectors are vibrant.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.
- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.
- Street and sidewalk maintenance.
- Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation.

The City of Kent's existing transportation resources provide both opportunities and some barriers to these outcomes. It should be remembered that each of these is a qualitative goal and therefore are inherently difficult to measure.

Transportation Goals

Promote traffic management

Virtually any alteration in traffic pattern, from increasing the width and posted speed of residential roads to creation of an automobile-free city, may be considered traffic management. We must assume that Kent's desired traffic management lies somewhere between these two extremes. The only means of determining what traffic management means to the participants in the city's comprehensive-planning process is to examine other desired outcomes, which provide some context for traffic management. Highly rated goals such as "Protect neighborhoods," "Improve pedestrian orientation" and "Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation" suggest that traffic-management efforts should result in less intrusion by automobile traffic than is present; emphasis should be placed to direct traffic to destinations while minimizing negative effects on residential areas.

The city has established additional capability in traffic management through a partnership with Kent State University's Department of Geography. The joint study team possesses the capability to measure current traffic, project future traffic and model a variety of scenarios using industry standard tools and techniques. It is significant that traffic monitoring is maintained on an ongoing basis and that the study area is expanding to ultimately include the entire city. This effort would not have been supported without a clear understanding that additional capability for traffic management in the city was indicated.

The tools of traffic management allow any aspect of transportation design, pricing and policy to be modified at virtually any scale (from citywide to a single block) with predictable results upon traffic. A few techniques that have been considered by the joint traffic study include the following:

- Traffic Restrictions. These include no left turn, no through traffic, emergency vehicles only, among others. Such restrictions can be implemented through signage or physical barriers. Traffic restrictions can discourage automobile traffic where it is not desired and thereby direct that traffic to roads better able to deal with the additional volume and/or speed of traffic.
- Parking Policy Approaches. These include pricing of parking through meters or permits, eligibility restrictions, limitation of parking supply, among others. Parking policy can be effective in adjusting traffic when high-quality alternatives to personal cars are present. Those alternatives can include walking, bicycling and public transit.
- Traffic-Light Modifications. These modifications can include the addition or removal of turn arrows and synchronization. Such changes can allow traffic to move more smoothly with fewer back-ups. They also encourage more desirable traffic-flow patterns. This low-cost approach can be remarkably effective in encouraging desired traffic movement.
- Traffic Calming. This includes a variety of types of physical changes to the road surface and/or surroundings that slow traffic but do not bar it. Traffic-calming techniques include traffic circles, streetscapes, woonerven, and the altering of existing streets with plantings and visual barriers. Many of the traffic-calming techniques permit easier and safer pedestrian crossing. A traffic-calming technique that has been somewhat tarnished is the speed bump (or hump). While relatively low in cost, speed bumps may be as much of an irritant as an enhancement, due to noise and safety concerns.
- Access Management. Congregation of driveways by grouping driveways to businesses, traffic can be directed to the individual site with internal circulation.

This is far from an exhaustive listing of traffic-management techniques that might be applied in Kent. Traffic management can also include the addition of road capacity (e.g., wider or more lanes) where appropriate. The important concept within traffic management is that the tools be matched to the situation. Traffic management supplies a much larger “tool box” than what has been employed by the city to this point.

As seen in the Crain Avenue bridge discussions, transportation planning in Kent is not solely the search for an automobile-accommodating engineering solution. Citizens want design objectives to be founded upon social, environmental and economic goals. The revision of the *Crain Avenue Bridge Statement of Purpose and Need* to include those

goals is a perfect example of this community's priority of its goals over engineered solutions to move cars.

Improve pedestrian orientation

The City of Kent does not lack nearby destinations for walking trips, whether for work, education, shopping or recreation. The scale of the city permits walking to downtown in a half-hour or less from most residential areas. Fine trees shade many streets, and Kent is a well-policed and inherently safe town in which to walk. Federal Department of Transportation policy supports pedestrian and bicycle amenities in all projects receiving Department of Transportation funds. This policy suggests that up to 20% of the project cost for the primary improvement is a reasonable expenditure for accompanying pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

Discussion at a transportation forum in April 2003 (the transcript of which is in Appendix J) placed emphasis on the quality of the walk. It is one thing to provide sidewalks but quite another process to plan and construct a walking network that considers such things as best walking routes, pedestrian amenities and roadway crossing points. In a nutshell, there was clear expression to create a "great walking" environment in Kent.

The Portage, a proposed regional bike and hike trail has been designed to connect existing trails with Kent parks, downtown and the university. Critical elements of the Portage have been built, more funded and others programmed. The use of existing parks and other public lands allows the Portage to be a framework for pedestrian improvements extending into districts.

New residential developments in the city are required to include sidewalks in their plans. A proposed plan without sidewalks would require approval of both the Planning Commission and City Council. Often not considered, however, is how the sidewalks of the development are connected to the overall walking system. A more comprehensive review of how new developments connect to the entire walking system and primary destination centers during the planning-review process could be considered.

The city has many opportunities, however, to improve pedestrian access in established districts. In particular, regular walkers note the following:

- Areas with no sidewalk. Oddly, many of the city's parks have no sidewalks leading to them. In other areas, sidewalks constructed as part of multifamily developments do not connect to other sidewalks (e.g., Longcoy Avenue).
- Uneven sidewalks. These can be tripping hazards.
- Sidewalks immediately adjacent to traffic.
- Roads as pedestrian barriers.
- Inconsistent snow removal from sidewalks.
- Few pedestrian amenities such as benches and mini parks.

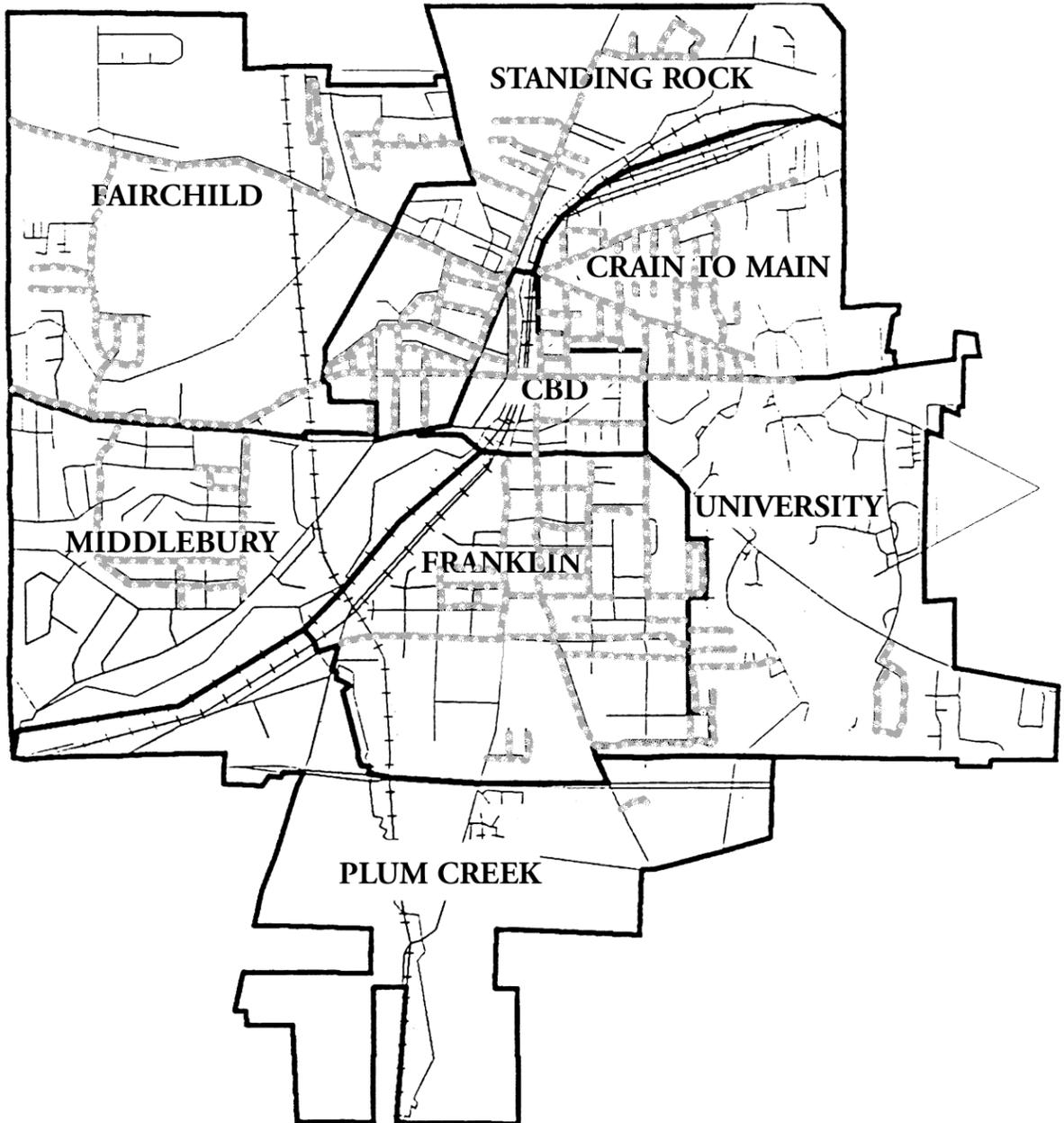
- Sidewalks are often too narrow to allow people to walk beside each other or pass in opposite directions.
- Lack of direct walking pathways to key destination (e.g., Holly Park and a walking system that forces pedestrian to take the “long way” around to primary destination).

Improvements in pedestrian facilities compete with other desired improvements and maintenance tasks in the city budget. These improvements are thus reliant upon the will and consensus of City Council. A complete review of the city’s existing walking network, lack of sidewalks, routes, quality of the walk, width of sidewalks, amenities and other issues could be considered as an outcome of the Bicentennial Plan comprehensive-planning process.

Special emphasis may be placed on pedestrian access and movement to and in the downtown area. To enhance the presence of a strong downtown, the pedestrian experience offers a competitive edge. Additional linkage to the university with an emphasis on pedestrian movement offers sustainable benefit.

On the following page is a map showing the approximate extent of sidewalks in the City of Kent. Shading indicates sidewalks. While this is not an authoritative inventory of walkways, it does suggest that some areas of the city are without pedestrian facilities.

Extent of Sidewalks in Kent



Protect neighborhoods

Several neighborhoods in Kent have roadways and other developmental conditions suitable for limited through-traffic and low posted speed limits. Arguably, the most direct means of protecting these neighborhoods is to limit the amount of traffic directed to them by the rest of the roadway system. Traffic management supplies the tools to control access to these neighborhoods and to direct traffic to roads better able to accommodate it.

Neighborhoods are also protected with a pedestrian orientation. Where individuals are able to walk in their neighborhoods, they enhance security and the sense of belonging to that community. Kent's downtown is another neighborhood—partially commercial but to a growing degree also residential in character. This neighborhood can also benefit from pedestrian activity as retail vitality relies upon people getting out of their cars. Even Chapel Hill Mall is not a drive-through facility.

Pedestrian activity does not create, in and of itself, safe neighborhoods and vibrant commercial activity. As has been shown around the world, however, it is an absolutely necessary component of both. Well crafted pedestrian facilities, whether sidewalks or trails, also have been shown to increase property values.

Town/Gown Interaction

It has been viewed that town/gown interaction is not greatly dependent upon the conditions of the transportation system; however, transportation issues between the city and the university certainly have affected the quality of interaction to date. Historically, the traffic demand associated with the university has been a major force directing roadway transportation investment. The results of projects initiated on this basis have had mixed results. An especially notable example is Haymaker Parkway.

In recent years, the level of discussion and cooperation between the city and the university has grown substantially. One expression of this is the Joint City/University Transportation study. Regular discussions between the city and the university regarding transportation issues are likely to provide more effective solutions through cooperation.

Haymaker Parkway is considered a barrier between town and gown. This is something more than a metaphor, especially for pedestrians and perhaps especially to new university freshmen. To the extent that town/gown interaction is dependent upon students identifying the city as their new hometown and regarding city residents as neighbors, Haymaker Parkway adversely affects town/gown interaction. Suggestions for this problem will be reviewed within the Campus Link Neighborhood in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point; Kent's Retail and Service Sectors Are Vibrant

Kent's downtown retains some businesses but overall retail density is low. In some cases, offices occupy the most desirable retail spaces on the first floors of buildings. Probably

the most vibrant sector of Kent's downtown business is the entertainment and tavern industry, which is most active after the retail shops close the doors for the night. While some view parking as insufficient, various surveys suggest that parking access is not a barrier to economic growth in the downtown. The majority of automobile traffic is directed around downtown via Haymaker Parkway. The transportation perspective on Kent's downtown, however, is that the mere presence of automobile traffic or additional parking capacity is not a panacea for downtown economic growth.

The Kent State University/City of Kent traffic study shows a significant traffic volume decline from the "in-semester" period to when classes are not in session (i.e., the base period). At Lincoln and Summit Streets, for example, the 24-hour traffic volume changes from a high during fall semester of 19,747 cars to 8,526 cars during the base period immediately following the end of spring semester, a 56% decline in traffic volume.

This contrasts with downtown traffic where the change in volume is not as drastic. At Main and Depeyster Streets, the high traffic volume in Spring of 2003 was 10,592 and drops to 8,340 during the base period, a 21% decline in traffic volume. At Water and Erie streets, the high was 7,429 in the spring semester and declined to 6,764 during base period, a 9% decline in traffic volume. Clearly, the traffic volume generated by the university is not impacting the downtown area to the degree measured elsewhere.

For persons whose exposure to downtown Kent is part of a regional trip, larger and more concentrated commercial developments are also along the way. For Kent residents, there are few downtown stores that provide daily necessities, such as groceries. Those stores that are present in the downtown are often specialty or niche stores, and there is not a sufficient concentration of any type of store to create a regional identity for the downtown's retail sector or to attract university student, their families and visitors.

A greater density of stores with an identifiable theme might attract discretionary spending. As we see in the west Kent automobile strip or in Ravenna's many antique stores, making an area a destination for shopping of a certain type can be good business.

Kent's historic development and the retention of many historic buildings in the downtown suggests several business themes that could stimulate retail activity and remain consistent with Kent's regional identity as a center for youthful entertainment and recreation. Examples include the canal, the river and the railroads. Businesses that might benefit and support such an orientation include bicycle rental and repair shops, a canoe livery, antique shops, bed and breakfasts, handmade crafts stores, restaurants and, of course, taverns.

From a transportation perspective, Kent possesses the facilities and resources to have a thriving downtown. That same perspective suggests that to thrive, the downtown must possess a distinct identity as a destination. Lacking are the "great walks" that invite not only residents but university students, faculty, staff and visitors to explore the community and, in particular, to find their way to the downtown area. The environment should include excellent walkways, pedestrian crossing points, underground utilities, inviting signage, bicycle amenities and accommodating transit services.

Kent State University Contributes to the Local Economy

Beyond any potential or real benefits from university incubators or research spin-offs, the university is an economic engine for the city. The city collects income taxes from university employees. If those employees live in Kent or a community without an income tax, then Kent collects it all. Employees who live in communities with whom Kent has an income tax reciprocity agreement contribute less. The university is the city's and the county's largest employer. Kent State University faculty and staff living in the City of Kent number more than 1,500. In addition, 3,781 students are employed, the great majority of whom live in the city, either on campus or nearby.

More than 23,000 students chose Kent for their college years. This transient population should be a major factor in the local economy. It is clear, however, that an increasing portion of university employees and students do not choose to live in Kent or spend their dollars with Kent businesses. This may be the largest or most easily determined example of "leakage." To some degree, that leakage bears upon transportation. As the university has often stated, Kent State University is near enough but not too near to much of northeast Ohio's population. Most of Kent State University's students can be home in less than an hour. Many go home on weekends. On-campus residents have a larger choice within their meal plans than previously. They stay on campus for most of their meals. These factors may have resulted in diminished expenditures by students in Kent.

Applied to Kent State University's 23,000 students, the former rule of thumb was that one-third live in resident halls, one-third live in Kent and one-third live outside of Kent and commute. Evidence suggests, however, that this rule of thumb is now out of date. While the residence hall population has grown, the number of students living in the city is diminishing. More students are choosing either on campus or out-of-town accommodations. Informal discussions with area landlords suggest a growing vacancy rate in nearby student rental areas.

Today's students are more mobile than ever before, and their expectations are different than in preceding generations. College choices are based upon perceived quality of life at least as much as the prestige of the degree, and the City of Kent seems to have become a less desirable place of residence for many students.

Census data from 2000 confirms an exodus of the 18-to-29-year-old cohort as compared to the data from 1990, even as Kent State University enrollment has grown. More and more students are looking elsewhere to live and shop. Kent has become less appealing to students. In addition the transportation system does not lend itself to at least capture some of this market before the students' daily departure.

Census data from 1980 shows a city of Kent population in the 18 to 29 age group at 17,635, or 67.4% of the entire City of Kent population. In 1990, the 18-29 age group grew to 19,137 in gross numbers but fell to 66.4% of the total City of Kent population. The 2000 census shows the 18-29 age group, total population at 17,505 (less than 1980) and representing now 62.7% of the entire City of Kent population. This is leakage on a

large scale; however, there is no conclusion of causality. Further study may indicate the reasons for this leakage.

One more fact from the 2000 census: The City of Kent's population declined from 1990 to 2000 by 3.2%, an overall population loss of 929 people. The 18 to 29 age group over the same period fell by 8.5% or 1,634 people. No new off-campus housing has been built in the last ten years, leaving a market gap between what is available and what students want. Meeting the market demand of today's students is exactly why Kent State University is constructing new resident halls.

University students living near campus have a larger variety of high-density residential developments from which to choose than was the case a few decades ago. These developments are uniformly designed solely for automobile access. Pedestrian amenities are very limited, and they are almost impossible to serve effectively with public transit. The Holly Park apartment complex is one example. It offers one driveway onto four-lane East Main Street and no other means of access. As a practical matter, after we have chosen to use a car for a trip, a trip of five miles is as convenient as a half-mile trip. In order to encourage local spending, developers in the future might be encouraged or required to offer through- access and wider roadways for transit access as well as convenient pedestrian walkways. In this way, the residents might be encouraged to shop locally rather than drive to a mall; however, economic growth, especially retail growth, cannot be simply generated by pedestrian access.

Small-Town Atmosphere

The character of Kent's road system is largely that of a small town. In the downtown, architectural landmarks and Kent's history abound. Most residential areas are of a small-town scale, and the roads (width, intersection spacing, building setback, etc.) support that feel. Where that is not the case (e.g., South Water Street south of School Street, East Main Street east of campus and West Main Street west of Longmere Drive), this city might be any city. There are no landmarks other than the stores themselves. In the longer term, these areas could be induced to develop with an orientation to something other than the road. A local example of this might be the Kinko's/ News and Photo Plaza on East Main Street. Here, several stores are served with one entrance on Main Street and two smaller entrances on Willow Street. While not an ideal example, perhaps, this plaza contrasts with sites along South Water Street, West Main Street and East Main Street that have two driveways per store. Where driveways can be congregated and shared by a cluster of stores, rather than a strip, internal circulation can be provided and pedestrians may also be accommodated. This access-management technique may provide significant benefits in reducing congestion and achieving traffic management.

Street and Sidewalk Maintenance

There can be no discussion of the merits of street and sidewalk maintenance that does not include local political and administrative capacity. Kent has an accomplished Public Service Department. If City Council provides policy direction and funding, then street and sidewalk maintenance may be improved. While everyone wants smooth byways that

last forever, those goals can run into rational financial constraints. So, while better street and sidewalk maintenance is a desirable outcome, existing financial constraints probably place them outside of the comprehensive-planning realm.

It should be noted, however, that bumpy streets could control speed and thus provide other benefits including safer pedestrian access. An example is the brick paving on Franklin Avenue between Main and Summit Streets. Here, speeds are low and slow vehicular traffic supports the ambiance of taverns, restaurants and the Haymaker Farm Market. The development of outdoor dining areas in downtown allow casual people-watching that would not be possible if traffic were speeding by, and pedestrians were discouraged.

Alternative Forms of Transportation Are Used

Kent has a considerable history with what is now called alternative modes of transportation, including the manufacture of transit vehicles at the Fageol and Twin Coach facilities, canals, interurban trolleys and one of the first student-operated transit systems. The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA) serves Kent and all of Portage County. The Pufferbelly Restaurant expresses Kent's former status of being on the "main line" of transportation developments. Kent has had relatively minor impact from automobile-related facilities and retains a large portion of the feel of prior times, when what we now call alternative transportation modes were the height of modernity. In planning, however, integration of transit and roadway systems has not been accomplished.

In many of the most highly rated living places in the country (e.g., Madison, Wisconsin; Davis, California; and Portland, Oregon) "alternative" transportation modes are essential components of community mobility. In each of these cities, there are effective public transit services, bicycle amenities, comprehensive traffic management and pedestrian orientation in addition to the roadway network. The automobile is not displaced, although when other modes are made safe, convenient, reliable and comfortable, automobiles provide sane choices for many trips. By comparison, cities that are less desirable virtually require a car for every trip. The automobile remains a rational choice in Kent; however, this should not be the only rational choice for every trip.

While the use of alternative modes of transportation can bring incremental improvements in air quality, community health and traffic relief, a profound benefit comes from the human interaction that is unlikely when we are alone in our cars.

Currently, there are some remarkable initiatives taking place in the Kent community that suggest these alternative modes are nearly at hand.

- The Portage. The Portage is a regional bike/hike trail system that will link the Summit County Metroparks bike trails to downtown Kent, the Kent State University campus, some high-quality recreational and environmental sites, Towner's Woods, Ravenna, and on to Warren. This trail system will provide the first east-west link between the state's two major north-south trails. The Portage is

designed to provide recreational, commuting and commercial-retail benefits and will operate almost entirely on public right of way but separated from automobile traffic. Interconnection with Kent's bike lanes and sidewalk system will be a major step toward complete bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the city.

- PARTA. The Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority is just completing the first phase of new services with the expansion of door-to-door transit throughout the county. At the same time, it is engaged in a new transportation-planning program for the next five years. While it is too early to discuss specifics, PARTA planners expect to place strong emphasis on access between neighborhoods and downtown and employment and educational sites.

Site-Specific Transportation Issues

The Bicentennial Plan has established three areas of special emphasis known as special planning areas:

- West Main Street
- Campus Link
- Southwest Corner of State Routes 261 and 43

West Main Street

This is a gateway area. Transportation improvements can announce clearly the presence of a unique community. The West Main Street neighborhood is bounded on the west by commercial strip development at the Stow-Kent border and Longmere Drive on the east. The intersection of Longmere Drive and Main Street also is the western origin of Haymaker Parkway. Traffic is relatively congested due, in part to narrow lane-widths and irregular paving. Traffic volume in this area of West Main Street has an average daily traffic count of 21,050, as documented by AMATS. The posted speed is 25 mph, although it is rare to observe speeds under 35 mph. To the south of the commercial development is a moderate-income neighborhood of mainly single-family homes. North of Main Street is an area of homes, multifamily apartment buildings and a former farming area that is rapidly being developed in housing subdivisions. Streets that intersect Main Street in this area primarily serve the residential neighborhoods, although there are a few streets that provide through connection to the north and south, such as the following:

- Spaulding Drive and Silver Meadows Boulevard provide direct connection to Fairchild Avenue to the north.
- Longmere Drive provides direct connection to Middlebury Road and Munroe Falls Road to the south.
- Deidrick Road provides direct connection to Munroe Falls Road to the south.
- Combinations of streets to the south of Main Street connect to Munroe Falls and Middlebury Roads.

Neighborhoods on either side of Main Street often feel the proximity of the intense business activity on Main Street, whether via light pollution or persons test driving new cars. In general, these neighborhoods maintain some separation from the activity on Main Street, despite its proximity. In short, very few in these neighborhoods chose to walk to these businesses. Every site in the target area is oriented exclusively to the car. There are sidewalks on both sides of the street, although they are within a few feet of traffic and do not provide for any type of “quality” walk.

It should be recognized that the businesses in this area may be willing to support a more aesthetically pleasing roadway, underground utilities, green areas, mini parks, a walking system and other changes. These improvements are good for business. City officials and the Kent State University Urban Design Center team reported that these concepts were favorably viewed during the presentation of draft design sketches to area retailers.

The following is a discussion of how the citywide desired outcomes of the Bicentennial Plan relate to the West Main Street Special Planning Area:

- Promote traffic management. This area shows little evidence of traffic-management approaches, except for the posted speed limit. Within the 0.8-mile of this roadway, there are 41 active driveways on the north side and 26 on the south side. If traffic-management techniques were to be applied here, then a first step might be to congregate driveways where possible. Passage between the car dealers could be accommodated with an off-street circulation pattern. As a major arterial without nearby alternatives, traffic volumes will continue to grow and should not be discouraged by means that could increase congestion, such as road narrowing.
- Improve pedestrian orientation. This is one of Kent’s least pedestrian-oriented areas. While there are sidewalks, they are narrow and so close to traffic as to be perceived as hazardous. Pedestrian crossings exist at Longmere Drive, Francis Street and Spaulding Drive, although the widths of the roads and other disincentives to walking make them less than optimal. Pedestrian activity is thoroughly secondary to automobile access. As the entire study section is devoted to automobile sales and repair, convenience store, and drive-through facilities, no one should be surprised that walking is not a preferred mode of transportation. There also are few sidewalks in the neighborhoods adjoining Main Street, especially to the south. The City of Akron water right-of-way passes through the southern neighborhood along Akron Boulevard and might provide a good bike/hike trail alignment in a southwest to northeast orientation.
- Protect neighborhoods. Neighborhoods on both sides of Main Street are somewhat threatened by the proximity and intensity of commercial activity, especially traffic. The principal transportation-related means of protecting the adjoining neighborhoods might be to establish traffic restrictions (e.g., no through traffic) and/or traffic-calming techniques. Longmere and Spaulding drives and Silver Meadows Boulevard, in particular, are wide, relatively straight and encourage inappropriately high speeds. When alternatives were presented for the

reconstruction of the Middlebury Road Bridge, many residents said that the two-lane proposal would accommodate additional automobile traffic at the expense of the Middlebury neighborhood.

- Kent's Retail and Service Sectors Are vibrant. This is perhaps the most active commercial retail sector in the city. Transportation-related changes in this area should benefit both residents and businesses. Parking areas should be linked internally where possible.
- Street and Sidewalk Maintenance. Sidewalks are generally in good repair, although narrow. Walking is, however, virtually an irrelevant mode of transportation here. The mere presence of sidewalks without walkable destinations will not create pedestrian activity. West Main Street is patched constantly and appears to be of substandard width for four lanes. (The Ohio Department of Transportation is slated to resurface West Main Street in its 2004-2005 Resurfacing Program.) On the other hand, these road conditions serve to control traffic speeds better than does the posted speed limit.
- Alternative Forms of Transportation Are Used. This section of Main Street does not lend itself to alternative transportation modes other than public transit. Even transit service is compromised by passenger stops in the main roadway. Bus pull-offs, where there is available room, would diminish conflicts between transit vehicles and other traffic.

Campus Link Neighborhood

As suggested by its name, the Campus Link Neighborhood is a link between Kent State University and the downtown Kent. The Campus Link Neighborhood is an area of older homes with a predominance of rental property and some owner-occupied housing. This area has many rooming houses—some of which are in poor repair and/or appearance—catering to university students. These rooming houses represent the past student-housing market and contrast sharply with current market demand for housing. At the same time, some homes are well maintained by owner-occupants. The proximity of both the downtown and the university supports sustainable comprehensive redevelopment concepts as well as the investments of individual owners. The area is bounded on three sides by roadways whose traffic volumes are among the most affected by the university calendar: East Main Street, Lincoln Street and Summit Street. Internal traffic in the Campus Link Neighborhood is comparatively minor. The factor that complicates and perhaps defines the neighborhood is, however, its bisection by Haymaker Parkway.

Haymaker Parkway separates the university from the city center. In addition to the physical barrier, the parkway is a symbol of town-gown separation. Despite the unintended consequences of the parkway, any development plan for the Campus Link Neighborhood must consider Haymaker Parkway and its utility as an effective mover of traffic.

The Campus Link Neighborhood has been discussed as the site of a conference center and hotel as well as a multimodal facility. Taken in its entirety, this complex is proposed to address shared university and city needs. A multimodal facility is typically recognized as a parking deck but has additional functions, including retail stimulus, interception and capture of automobile traffic and transportation mode changes (e.g., from automobile to public transit, walking and cycling). Redevelopment of this area should give careful consideration to possible roadway, pedestrian, bicycle and public-transit systems and opportunities to achieve community goals.

The drawings presented during discussions of the Campus Link Neighborhood have featured more comprehensive redevelopment and more extensive roadway changes than what has been proposed at the other targeted sites. Without commenting on any specific design, four points arise:

- A multimodal facility in the Campus Link Neighborhood should have direct access to Haymaker Parkway in order to intercept traffic and encourage travel via roads best able to accommodate it. This location provides an opportunity to reduce traffic on Summit and East Main Streets and direct destination traffic to primary roadway systems. This location also allows real advantages for public transit vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.
- Haymaker Parkway's ability to move traffic efficiently should not be degraded.
- The development of a conference/hotel and a multimodal facility will require a comprehensive assessment of transportation impacts, including those outside the immediate area of development.
- The "Link" between the city and university should become well established and user friendly. This area also represents an opportunity to construct off-campus housing concentrated in close proximity to the university and downtown area.

The following is a discussion of how the citywide desired outcomes of the Bicentennial Plan relate to the Campus Link Special Planning Area:

- Promote traffic management. At present, the Campus Link Neighborhood does not suggest the application of any traffic-management techniques. Traffic controls are minimal, and with the exception of the truncation of College Street at Haymaker Parkway, traffic is unimpeded throughout the grid-street layout. As the Campus Link Neighborhood is developed, consideration of traffic-management techniques such as automobile-free zones, pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, and street furniture seem certain. This area contrasts significantly with, for example, the Crain-to-Main District, where the reduction of automobile traffic seems to be the goal. In the Campus Link Neighborhood, a great deal of automobile traffic can be expected to remain, although it is expected that traffic needs to be highly segregated from pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

- Improve pedestrian orientation. Perhaps the greatest barrier to pedestrian access in Kent is Haymaker Parkway. While the Campus Link Neighborhood has ample sidewalks, it is bounded by high-traffic roads and bisected by Haymaker Parkway. Internal pedestrian circulation is well supported, although access between the Campus Link Neighborhood and other parts of the city is difficult.
- Protect neighborhoods. Despite the mixture of rental and owner-occupied housing the Campus Link Neighborhood has a distinct identity as a neighborhood. Buildings are of a consistent scale, and the proximity of the university and the downtown and the neighborhood's encapsulization by high-volume roads give it a unique "feel." The attractiveness of the area for redevelopment does, however, suggest that its character may well change. Even with change, the neighborhood can retain and enhance its distinct character if traffic associated with Haymaker Parkway is segregated from currently residential areas and if those areas can be more self-sustaining. A mix of residential and small commercial shops, especially food stores, might support pedestrian activity that would enhance the vitality of the neighborhood for its residents while not taking business away from the downtown or creating new traffic problems within the neighborhood. Simple protection of this neighborhood may not be the appropriate goal; rather, the neighborhood should be enhanced.
- Town/Gown Interaction. The possibility of cooperative development of the Campus Link Neighborhood by the city and the university could establish town/gown interaction on several levels:
 - The cooperation itself
 - Creation of a high-quality mixed-use district oriented to both the university and the downtown
 - Development of attractive housing of value to the university for recruitment of faculty, staff and students
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point. Redevelopment of the Link Neighborhood should be consistent with the downtown as the economic center of the city. While there is risk of competition with downtown retail, access between the two areas, especially by pedestrians should be provided for.
- Kent's Retail and Service Sectors Are Vibrant. Redevelopment of the Campus Link Neighborhood could be a stimulus to commerce, especially if the neighborhood's primary pedestrian orientation is in an east-west direction. This could be accomplished with broad walkways and street furniture placed on College Street.
- Kent State University Contributes to the Local Economy. The creation of attractive housing within walking distance of the university and downtown will help the university attract faculty, staff and students.

- Small-Town Atmosphere. Existing homes and streets in the Campus Link Neighborhood convey a small-town feel. Possible redevelopment should retain the physical scale of streets as well as maintain trees for shade.
- Street and Sidewalk Maintenance. This is an ideal location for the application of enhanced pedestrian amenities. Streets should be well maintained but not so smooth or unimpeded as to attract through traffic.
- Alternative Forms of Transportation Are Used. The proximity of this neighborhood to both the university and downtown make walking, bicycling and public transit rational choices for many trips.

Southwest Corner of State Routes 261 and 43

The largely undeveloped area at the southwest corner of State Routes 261 and 43 comprises a parcel with evident commercial development possibilities, design limitations resulting from adjacent environmentally sensitive lands and a long history of contention. The land has been proposed as the site for intensive retail, a research park and other uses. None of these proposals have been pursued, due in part to environmental action, concern that such development would draw people from the beleaguered Kent downtown and limited access to the site from the north. State Route 261 is a significant barrier between the site and most of the city. At nearly the southern boundary of the city, the site is often proposed as a gateway to Kent from I-76 and the south.

This area is a gateway to the city and, to a great many, their first impression of the city. Any development in this area should strive to bury utility lines, soften the edges and invite people to Kent. With the soon to commence widening of State Route 43 from I-76 to State Route 261, an opportunity exists to extend this gateway further south along State Route 43. Planners should consider congregated access-management, underground utilities, a boulevard-style roadway and pedestrian movement as a component of the State Route 43 widening project.

The following is a discussion of how the citywide desired outcomes of the Bicentennial Plan relate to the special planning area at the southwest corner of State Routes 261 and 43:

- Promote traffic management. This site allows little traffic management in the sense provided by context with the other highly rated community goals. Traffic management techniques here would seem to be limited to maximization of automobile access and safety.
- Improve pedestrian orientation. The distance of this site from any other area with realistic pedestrian opportunities (except the Indian Valley apartments) suggests that pedestrian orientation is not an overwhelmingly practical option.
- Protect neighborhoods. The site is largely separated from residential concentrations with the exceptions of the Indian Valley apartments and portions

of Meloy Road. Additional automobile traffic generated by development of the site—especially retail development—could be expected to be on State Routes 261 and 43.

- Town/Gown Interaction. This site does not have outstanding opportunities for improved town/gown interaction. If developed by the university, however, there would always be someone in town who would complain about land taken off the property tax rolls.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point. Development of this site as concentrated retail could damage downtown Kent's economic vitality. If it were developed as an office park, then it might free up ground-floor locations in downtown for additional retail.
- Kent's Retail and Service Sectors Are Vibrant. While the development of this parcel for retail might damage the downtown, it could also be argued that the combination of existing and proposed retail developments outside the city and an automobile-based mobility already make the downtown untenable as a retail destination for most goods. Mall type developments have already almost completely replaced downtowns as sites for routine shopping. This is another argument for commerce in the Kent downtown to have a distinct feel or flavor not available at malls.
- Kent State University Contributes to the Local Economy. Except in the case of university-related research spin-offs and a possible research park at this site, there is little at this site that relates to Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.
- Small-Town Atmosphere. Development of this site will have no effect on the city's small-town atmosphere. An automobile-focused design in this part of town would make it look like any other town in America.
- Street and Sidewalk Maintenance. General comments regarding street and sidewalk maintenance apply here, except to note that there are few pedestrian opportunities at this site.
- Alternative Forms of Transportation Are Used. Alternative forms of transportation at this site are possible, although they are not likely to be highly effective. State Route 261 impedes transit access. Bicycle access and pedestrian access are even more problematic.

Special Report: **Waterways**

Written by: Bob Heath, Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of the
Water Resources Research Institute, Kent State University

The following remarks are based on my personal and professional acquaintance with the city of Kent. First, I have lived in Kent longer than I have in any other town—25 years. I can resonate with the citizens' expression of hopes for the future as expressed in the surveys that have been taken as part of the Bicentennial Plan comprehensive-planning process. I value the environmental qualities of Kent because those qualities will keep me interested in returning to Kent, even after I retire from Kent State University several years in the future. Professionally, I recognize the high quality environmental resources found in this city. I believe that those resources need to be seen for their economic value as well as for their aesthetic value. Retaining those environmental assets will require vigilance on the part of city decision-makers, as their retention will require *active input* and likely will be the source of future discussions and debates. By “active input,” I include the commitment of both financial and personnel resources.

Here I will first interpret what I have read in the results of the interviews conducted during the comprehensive-planning process and heard during the town meetings I have attended. Second, I will make some specific recommendations, and finally I will provide a brief list of caveats that threaten to damage the current high quality of the environmental resources in Kent.

Interpretation of Citywide Results

The citizens of Kent value their community as it is at the moment and want to keep it that way for the foreseeable future. They value the pedestrian orientation of the town and the neighborhoods. Of possible improvements, I heard that many residents would like to see more activities in the town and a greater reason to come to the town center and walk around. Kent citizens value the park system as an asset and seem willing to at least maintain it and perhaps expand it somewhat with a green belt on the outskirts of the town. The citizens as a whole value the diverse economy that is based on small businesses with a social and environmental consciousness. They do not favor sacrificing the character of the city for an enlarged tax base that could be found in large industry or massive strip malls (e.g., Streetsboro). Kent citizens envision their city having a unique, homey feeling and being a desirable residential location and a destination for diners and those looking for small shops.

Trees Are a Major Environmental Asset

Kent is a tree city by nature, choice and designation. Many of the neighborhoods have preserved a fair number of trees so that Kent has a relatively good-sized urban forest, including private trees on residential lots and public trees lining streets and growing in parks. Kent citizens value their urban forest for the aesthetic value it brings them. The aesthetic value of trees can be a major asset in making Kent a desirable place to reside

and to work. The problem with aesthetic value, however, is that it is difficult and imprecise to place a dollar value on aesthetics. When doing so during times of financial constraint, aesthetics can be set aside in favor of more tangible needs.

Trees have other values that are more tangible and should not be overlooked in city planning. Trees—especially old, well-established trees—measurably increase the resale value of property. Also, trees appropriately planted and maintained around buildings can measurably diminish household energy costs. By shading buildings and providing transpirational cooling in the summer trees can curtail the need for electric air conditioning. In the winter trees can curtail air currents around buildings, potentially minimizing a wind-chill effect, thereby minimizing the rate of heat dissipation from buildings and potentially lowering heating costs in the winter. Trees provide a true value that can be measured in dollars or energy-saving units (e.g., BTUs saved per year). Trees also mitigate air pollution (e.g., acid rain, ozone and particulates), diminish the rate and extent of storm water run-off, and abate noise pollution. These functions of trees have been reported in the scientific literature to be measurable and significant in urban forests. All other things being equal, without trees, property values likely would be lower, energy costs would be higher, and the need for greater storm-water handling capacity greater. Recent reports in the scientific literature show the social and psychological value of trees: Crime is lower, people have fewer illnesses and heal faster from serious illness in the presence of trees, all other things being equal. ***Both the City of Kent and its individual citizens need to be aware of the tangible values of trees and the urban forest that has been established here.***

Waterways as a Benefit to the Kent Community

Kent has two major water assets: the Cuyahoga River and its ground-water aquifer that is used as a source of drinking water.

Cuyahoga River. Although the interviews reveal that the citizens of Kent view the Cuyahoga River as a benefit, it is unclear what they value or why. Relatively few residents visit the river on a regular basis, and there are few activities that center around or use the river. There is an earthen pathway along the river that accommodates two people to pass (i.e., it has minimum width for public use), and the pathway has occasional decks and overlook points that accommodate relatively few people at a time (i.e., five to ten). The river runs alongside a Kent city park but is not well integrated into it. Recent discussions regarding the possible reconstruction of the Crain Avenue Bridge viewed the river as a hurdle to be crossed as quickly as possible rather than a destination to be reached and enjoyed. Although many citizens valued the Kent Dam and the waterfall as a major attraction, it was an attraction based on an artificial structure that prevented the river from operating correctly as a riverine ecosystem (i.e., one that is situated on the banks of a river). The dam slowed the river and allowed stagnation to occur and an anoxic pool of water to develop with attendant odor problems. Many businesses are situated along the river, but not one of them faces the river; they all have their backs to the river, fronting instead on Mantua Street or Water Street. The Cuyahoga River is

generally ignored and treated as an impediment instead of being used as a unique natural resource and an asset.

I can only speculate on the reasons for this attitude: It is a 19th century attitude toward rivers. Towns grew up around rivers because of their usefulness as commercial conduits and sewers. The noise of commercial boat traffic and the smells of sewage were to be avoided as much as possible, so rivers became the back alleys of growing towns rather than centers of attraction. Today, commerce depends on roads for business and tertiary sewage-treatment plants to handle sewage. These days, rivers across the nation are being revalued. As long as rivers are able to run swiftly, water does not stagnate and odor problems associated with stagnant water and loss of oxygen should not occur. Increasingly, urban planners view major rivers as a commercial and environmental asset. A contemporary use of rivers can be found in the rebuilding of San Antonio, Texas, where the San Antonio Riverwalk is a major attraction for visitors.

Ground-Water Source. The other major aquatic asset of the City of Kent is the excellent ground-water aquifer that it uses for drinking water. I believe I must comment on this because it was **not** included in the survey questionnaires. People take for granted those aspects of daily life that present them with no problems without realizing that these may be major assets **because** they present no problems. Assets unappreciated are assets vulnerable to inadvertent damage and loss. Ground-water aquifers are renewable and sustainable resources, but attention needs to be given to them to ensure that they are sufficiently renewed and continue to provide high-quality drinking water sufficient to sustain current activities and those planned in the foreseeable future. Ground-water aquifers are not limited to city boundaries; they need to be managed **regionally** to ensure that the conduits through which they are recharged are not damaged either by introduction of toxic materials or by loss of water return. Aquifers also need to be managed to ensure that they are not overdrawn. Ground-water resources need to be continually reassessed to ensure that planned use does not or will not exceed the reasonably expected recharge rate, a rate that can be determined and monitored by appropriate technical procedures.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Beyond the aesthetic enjoyment that well-established trees provide, the urban forest provides measurable dollar- and energy-savings value as well as measurable environmental benefits (e.g., mitigation of air pollution and storm-water runoff). Maintaining this valuable asset needs to be part of any plan the city may consider now or in the future. Routine maintenance expenses are the most frugal procedures in the long term, as they prevent premature loss of assets and forestall major replacement costs. Modest costs involved with maintaining the health and extending the longevity of the urban forest should be considered as prudent and necessary. ***It is recommended that the City of Kent consider the costs of tree-maintenance programs (e.g., planting, maintenance and removal) to be a normal part of the functions of governance to protect the city's urban forestry assets.***

Recommendation 2. If major changes are considered in the urban landscape that may include major changes to the urban forest, then those changes should be evaluated by experts well acquainted with assessing the value of urban forests to determine loss of environmental and economic benefits. Often individuals and municipalities are unaware of the possibility that changes in the urban landscape can result in the loss of value greater than the benefits that may be accrued by proposed changes. ***It is recommended that the City of Kent consider the tangible value of its urban forest consider any actions related to the Bicentennial Plan or other future changes to its urban landscape.***

Recommendation 3. Kent has taken a major step to increase the value of the Cuyahoga River for its citizens by reconstructing the Kent Dam so that the river runs freely. By finishing the planned project with a park and reconstructed walkways, more Kent citizens will be able to use this valuable resource. That, however, is only the immediate effect this project will provide. In the long-term, this project brings Kent into the vanguard of cities and towns across the nation that are re-envisioning rivers and waterways that pass through them. From the 19th century view that the Cuyahoga River is a nuisance to traffic and an impediment to recreation and aesthetic enjoyment, the river restored to its functional state will become a more valuable asset to the City, its citizens and visitors. At the moment, land use along the river largely ignores the river. Instead, businesses such as restaurants, gift shops and art galleries, as well as water activities and other attractions could be established that front on the river and use its proximity. Also, the Kent city park could be reconfigured to include and use the river to greater advantage. ***It is recommended that the City of Kent consider uses of the river that include businesses and activities that front on the Cuyahoga River. It is further recommended that the Bicentennial Plan envision the Cuyahoga River as a focal point and destination. Parking decks near the river should be planned so that visitors can park and stroll, dine or enjoy river-based recreation.***

Recommendation 4. At the moment, Kent draws high-quality water from its ground-water resources. More than any other natural resource, this abundant, high-quality drinking-water source makes possible a high quality life style in this city. Accordingly, more than any other natural resource, this resource needs to be protected with appropriate long-term regional planning to ensure that it is not damaged by toxic materials or overdrawn. ***It is recommend that the City of Kent include consideration of the effects of any actions related to the Bicentennial Plan on ground-water resources. Planning should include regional demographic projections to ensure that population increases envisioned in the future shall not exceed the capacity of the aquifer or its projected recharge rate. Planning should include consideration of the proximity and effects of toxic-waste storage sites and their potential effects on ground-water quality. The City of Kent should not accept at face value unsubstantiated assurances of waste-site managers but should seek independent consultation and advice regarding the long-term security of the quality of its drinking- water resources.***

Caveats

Recorded comments of those participating the interview process and comments from those attending the Bicentennial Plan comprehensive-planning meetings reveal a strong preservationist behavior among those citizens. Preservationists value things and conditions just the way they are and seek no change. Preservationism is not the best management practice for environmental resources because resources may be slowly in decline in quantity or quality or may depend on natural processes that necessarily bring change. An excellent example of the liabilities of preservationism was the U.S. Forest Service's management practice of preventing forest fires at all costs in forest ecosystems that had evolved to recover from inevitable small fires but were unable to survive the massive blazes that years of unburned underbrush allowed. The Forest Service now manages in a way that will **sustain** the forest ecosystem as a healthy ecosystem, hopefully indefinitely, by permitting small fires to occur. Preservationism often eschews any active management, whereas sustainable management requires active management to achieve the goal of retaining a healthy ecosystem indefinitely. *Sustainable management is the art and science of using natural resources without using them up. Kent should do more than preserve its natural resources. It should plan to actively sustain those resources in a continuously useful condition.*

People value what they see and use frequently; they neglect or take for granted what is unseen. The ground-water aquifer is Kent's most important natural resource. It provides high-quality water in abundance and makes possible the expansion and development of this community. As with any natural resource, however, Kent's ground-water aquifer limits the expansion that may be possible. Kent's future possibilities and prospects depend on maintenance of its ground-water aquifer. There are three possible threats to sustained, abundant, high-quality water from this aquifer.

- When populations expand rapidly, they can exceed their resource base, and that excessive draw on resources may go unnoticed until it may be too late to reverse the conditions that caused them. This is frequently seen in arid regions that depend on deep aquifers for their water, but it also can occur in regions such as Kent.
- Water recharge rates can be adversely affected when cities overpave their land area. Population increases frequently lead to development of the land from pervious surfaces (e.g., open fields and woods) to impervious surfaces (e.g., houses, streets and parking lots). Rainfall that once could settle into the land through pervious surfaces and recharge the aquifer is lost when it runs off into storm drains.
- Underground toxic-waste dumps can threaten ground-water quality when leaks occur.

Population increases are accompanied by these threats to ground-water resources in each of these ways. Increased population leads to increased draw on the aquifer and

frequently to decreased rates of aquifer recharge. Population increases also may require increased use of toxic materials for residential and industrial purposes, thereby increasing the likelihood that toxic-waste sites are filled. The greater the use of burial sites as a means of disposing of toxic materials, the greater the likelihood of inadvertent leaks and consequent damage to ground-water quality. ***The Bicentennial Plan should consider that projected population increases for the City of Kent will affect the draw on the ground-water aquifer, its water recharge rate and the likelihood of toxic inputs. Plans should include vigilance that the rate of population growth be managed at a sustainable rate.***

Special Report: **Building and Site Design Standards**

Written by: James Dalton, Professor of Architecture, Kent State University

In 2002, the City of Kent asked Ohio State University and Kent State University to aid in developing a long-range plan for the city. Citizens from each of the city's neighborhoods, Kent State University and the community's merchants participated in a series of meetings to identify local values. Community-wide values were then derived from and confirmed by citizen comments. From these shared values, the following general building- and site- design standards for commercial and retail structures emerged. The intent of the standards is to preserve and reinforce the community characteristics Kent citizens value most. The City of Kent's interest in the regulation of design of individual buildings and sites is to enhance the public realm and maintain and continually improve the quality of the character of Kent. A high-caliber public realm and character for the community of Kent enhances citizen's lives and, as a result, increases the economic value of all property.

As Douglas Kelbaugh has stated, "Like civilization or language, cities cannot be invented in one generation. They must be designed and built incrementally, evolving slowly and laboriously—the sum of many acts, some large, some small. And, like any self regulating system, they must correct and re-correct themselves continuously."

The intent of the following standards is to protect and enhance the environment throughout Kent and promote good site and building design. It is recommended that the city use these standards as a framework in its review process for new construction, building renovations and any projects affecting the exterior of commercial, office and retail buildings in the city. The standards should act as a base for objective decision-making by the city's Architectural Review Board. It should be understood that these standards are best used with other tools, such as zoning ordinances, to aid in implementing a plan. For the city's three special planning areas, additional standards beyond the general community standards should be developed with the intent of facilitating the design objectives of these areas.

These guidelines will not regulate growth, control non-exterior changes or guarantee good design. The guidelines are intended to assist developers, property owners, and/or business owners in developing their projects in a manner that allows the structures to be harmonious with the surrounding community. The Architectural Review Board should be composed of design professionals from the community and should be an integral part of the building-review process. Citizens should use the Design Review Committee for advice in the early stage of project design, before proposals have been submitted for plan review.

General Site-Design Standards: Building within the Ecology

The value of both individual properties and community livability are influenced by site design. The development of both the site and the buildings must respect the surrounding environment in which they are placed and which they influence. Natural settings and natural features—such as existing plants, mature trees and topology—help create an attractive city, stabilize runoff and provide the underpinnings of a sustainable community. Development of sites should maximize the use of the existing ecology of both the site and the surrounding community, as well as preserve the natural features of the site, thereby protecting and preserving natural resources whenever possible. The use of existing land contours and plants reduces both development costs and long-term environmental costs. When adding vegetation to a site, a principle of good landscape design is to use plants that are native to the region. Doing so minimizes the potential for the disruption of the natural ecology and helps ensure the ability of the plants to endure local conditions and climate.

Trees are of value for both community aesthetic and sustainability purposes. Trees reduce cooling costs, shade pavement and add a cohesive visual impression to a community. Trees are a symbol of Kent, the slogan for which has become “The Tree City.”

Common landscape-design systems also can add greatly to a unified context, especially in commercial “strip developments” such as those along State Routes 43 and 59. The addition of trees and shrubs to shade, cool, and soften the appearance of large paved areas and parking lots adds visual amenity and reduces energy consumption.

General Building-Design Standards

The history of Kent is valued by its citizens. The community’s physical character is a constant reminder of the community’s past. The design of new developments, building projects, and additions and alterations to existing buildings should respect the context and character of the neighborhood (or downtown) framework in which construction or alteration occurs. The merit of a design for a building shall not be judged as an independent object but in the context and character of its existing surroundings. The intent is to prevent incompatible new construction. The building design and site design must be in character with the context in which they are being proposed.

This is not to preclude contemporary architecture; rather, it is to ensure that prevalent building massing, materials, textures, colors and architectural details are reflected in the design of new structures or additions. The intent is not to copy but to be sympathetic to the surrounding context. A variety of architectural styles can add interest to the public realm, but cohesiveness of the larger context is the goal. This is often accomplished through similarities and commonality of building and design elements. Examples include the following:

- Materials
- Scale of massing (i.e., height and width)

- Setback patterns
- Detailing
- Shapes and spacing of windows and door openings
- Horizontal elements
- Color schemes
- Roof lines and shapes
- Overhang designs.

In the case of downtown and commercial districts, a common sign-system design also should be developed in order to add continuity to the commercial districts. Kent State University is an example in this regard, with its unified sign-system design for both main-campus entry points and individual buildings.

Owners of downtown buildings with renovations that do not reflect the original building style should be encouraged to rehabilitate the buildings in order to recapture the original character of the architecture.

The city needs to encourage the rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings whenever possible and practical. Such efforts help to preserve the history of the community and can help to conserve local resources. This is a prime aspect of an economically and ecologically sustainable community.

Variety of Design

Kent has been developed over a long period and therefore has a rich variety of architectural styles, both in its downtown and in many of its neighborhoods. This variety of design adds richness to the public realm when the variety is within a framework and general uniformity of building scale. Unique architectural features should be carefully located. They may be used to designate entries into a neighborhood, indicate major corners within the traffic flow, or signify special building uses or places such as community theaters, churches and public facilities.

Architectural Quality

Proposed commercial, office and retail buildings, as well as additions and/or developments must be required to exhibit a high level of architectural quality. Architectural quality is complex and includes elements such as the quality of building materials, proportions, scale, massing, color, texture and site layout. Although architectural quality may be argued as subjective by some, the intent is to maintain and improve the public realm through a constant improvement of individual buildings during the review stage of building renovations and additions or the construction of new buildings and/or developments.

Special Report:
Kent Parks & Recreation

By John Idone,
Director, Parks & Recreation Board

Cities throughout the nation commonly lack adequate public open space. As growth continues, increasing demands will be placed on administrators to provide more parks, more facilities, and more recreation programs. This inherent challenge requires a coordinated development program for acquisition and improvement of parklands based on a community-wide parks and recreation master plan.

The purpose of this plan is to provide the framework for systematic acquisition of parklands and development of recreation facilities to serve the needs of the community over the next ten years. It should be utilized to support and illustrate the general intent of the Kent Parks and Recreation Department to improve and expand services and to insure that when opportunities for recreation development are presented they can be properly evaluated and pursued.

City administrators have a responsibility to preserve or enhance quality of life for its residents. To this end, parklands should be available in terms of quantity, quality, and location to provide residents adequate opportunities to access open space and fresh air. Recreational facilities for active competition and recreation, exercise, and passive contemplation provide opportunities for conditioning of body and mind, venting frustrations, and escaping the burdens of everyday life. Thus, recreation areas support public health and welfare and enhance the qualities of urban living.

Cities must not only acquire adequate recreational and open space area, but they must also maintain and operate those facilities. Budget constraints often make this a burdensome and problematic task. Likewise, funding for new acquisitions and recreation developments is usually difficult to obtain. City administrators will typically favor capital improvements such as roadways and sewers over the "leisure" services when budgets are made.

However, it is often the existence of quality of life elements such as recreational opportunities that contribute significantly to community vitality. When companies are deciding where to establish or expand their businesses they are greatly influenced by a community's quality of life. If facilities and programs are neglected for too long, they will present a negative image and the community will be perceived as a less than desirable place in which to live. Opportunities for growth, new development and even revitalization will be discouraged and community pride will diminish.

It is the goal of the Kent Parks and Recreation Department, through this Master Plan, to contribute to the positive elements of quality of life by providing adequate open space and diversified recreational facilities and programs for all residents. Objectives that support this goal can be the basis for establishing policy regarding size, location, and type of recreational facilities that should be provided.

Master Plan Objectives

The primary recreational objectives identified for this Master Plan are as follows:

- Provide and enhance existing parklands.
- Provide a system of parks that serve the needs of the community.
- Provide greenway linkage and bike/hike trails to parklands and to neighboring communities.
- Implement a plan to systematically improve and expand the park system over the next decade.
- Provide a diversified series of facilities and programs designed to serve changing community needs and preferences.

General Improvements

- Provide more information to the public about programs and facilities.
- Establish a closer working relationship with Kent State University and coordinate efforts with them to better inform the general public as to when KSU facilities are available for public use.
- Provide safe pedestrian linkages between neighborhood districts to maximize park service areas. For example, by improving sidewalks and providing pedestrian activated traffic lights with cross walk signals at key points along major roadways, the effective service area of a park can be expanded across access barriers.
- Continue to preserve and/or enhance historically significant features such as Main Street Bridge and Dam, Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal, Pioneer Cemetery, Standing Rock in Cuyahoga River, Brady's Leap, and Franklin Mills for public interpretation.
- All new facilities or renovations should be developed to meet handicapped accessibility requirements as established by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).
- All new playground facilities or renovations should be done in accordance with safety standards published in the "Public Playground Handbook for Safety" by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- Be active in the development of the county-wide hike and bicycle network, called The Portage to insure that the city becomes part of the national hike and bicycle trail

network to linking Kent to the rest of the country. The Kent hike and bicycle system has been referenced in the following Parks and Recreation Board documents:

The Portage Hike & Bike Plan Bike Plan (2003)

Fairchild Open Space Plan (2001)

Kent Parks & Recreation Master Plan (1995)

Riveredge Extension Master Plan (1993)

What is a Greenway?

Greenways are Kent's natural connection - connections between one place and another place - between conservation and economic development - between people and the land. Greenways typically follow linear landscape features such as watercourses, ridgelines, abandoned rail lines, or utility corridors. They can be as wide as a watershed or as narrow as a trail. They can be publicly owned or limited to a conservation or trail easement.

Greenways do not look at one parcel or even one use. The goal is nothing less than a network of green, linking people and parks, historic sites, and natural areas. They provide a multitude of benefits for people, wildlife, and the economy.

Benefits of Greenways

- ❖ Recreation - Greenways can provide a community trails system for the linear forms of recreation such as hiking and biking or just plain strolling.
- ❖ Environmental Protection - It provides a lifeline for wildlife, preserves biodiversity, and protects water quality by providing a buffer against runoff and non-point source pollution.
- ❖ Economic Development - Development of the West River Neighborhood is enhanced by the proximity of Riveredge Park. Forest Lakes Development has successfully marketed the park facilities with houses backing onto the park commanding premium prices. White Oak Hills and Cottage Gates Condominiums are the latest developments which have recognized the benefits of providing a bike and hike trail between these two projects.
- ❖ Quality of Life - Greenways provide a close to home outdoor classroom where children can learn about nature.

Fairchild Area Parks and Open Space Plan

The Parks & Recreation Board recently completed a conceptual plan to provide linkages between your parks in the Fairchild area of Kent. Similar plans to be developed in the future will include the Plum Creek and Breakneck Creek areas. The concept of greenways is not new to Kent, as the Board has developed Riveredge Park, which includes over one and a half miles of protected areas. In addition, Board staff has been working closely with the Portage County Park District on the acquisition and development of the Towner's Woods Rail Trail.

Special Report: **Kent State University and City of Kent Cooperative Planning**

By Lowell Croskey
Associate Vice-President, Facilities Planning
Kent State University

In the early 1900's, the Kent Normal School and the "Village of Kent" began a relationship that now is almost 100 years in the making. The vision and courage of our early civic leaders has given rise to the City of Kent, a city known for supporting a family-friendly quality of life, and Kent State University, a university recognized around the world for the quality of its academic programs and research.

The growth experienced by both the City of Kent and Kent State University has resulted in many changes. Today, the City and the University have blended in ways that present both opportunities and challenges for our community. Kent State University long ago outgrew the original William Kent site as a result of the significant campus expansion that occurred during the decades of the 1960's and 1970's. Likewise, the City has grown to the point where it now engulfs the university. While a shared vision has always been critical, it is even more important today.

Even though the city and university have engaged in master planning initiatives in the past, the current 1996 Kent State University Master Plan coupled with the City of Kent's 2004 master planning initiative offers a new opportunity to work even more closely in creating a shared vision for our community that can begin to be realized over the next few years.

The rebirth of the historic university buildings along Hilltop Drive has created a renewed opportunity to link a vibrant part of Kent State University with the historically significant downtown Kent. The City has responded with a willingness to examine opportunities for redeveloping this neighborhood that currently divides the university from the core of downtown. A partnership between the city and university involving a possible hotel, executive education and training center, and multi-modal facility is one possible option for building a vibrant link between the University and the City.

As the planning for the redevelopment of the area between the City and University takes place, the long-standing commitment by both to improving the quality of the natural environment will not be forgotten. One partnership of this nature is the plan to construct a pedestrian pathway linking the university and downtown and other trail and park systems to both the east and west. The "Portage" as the project has been named will begin construction on the Kent Campus in the Summer of 2004.

In recent years, the University and the City of Kent have also worked closely on storm water issues developing solutions that not only protect the community from unnecessary storm water runoff, and create vibrant wetland habitats. The wetland features located near the Student Recreation and Wellness Center and eastward along Summit Street are

examples of how friendly environmental features can be attractive focal points for the community.

Kent State is committed to working in partnership with the City of Kent to first establish a vision and then begin working with the City of Kent to accomplish the development of a more vibrant community. This important partnership can mean a future where downtown Kent is economically more attractive to businesses and patrons and the entire Kent area can enjoy the benefits of a community where the natural environment is preserved and recreation opportunities are cultivated.