

February 22, 2008



February 27th will start with a short Special Council Meeting to vote on those items that were passed on first reading only, rather than full adoption, due to the number of Councilmember absences at the start of last Wednesday's Council meeting. After that, I'd like to break into a workshop for presentation and discussion on the prospects of a whitewater park in downtown Kent and findings of the Buxton retail analysis.

Whitewater Park Workshop

1. Mike Harvey, Presentation

Mike Harvey of Recreation, Engineering and Planning (REP) consulting has completed his report on the river recreational opportunities in downtown Kent so we've invited him back to present his findings. As you may recall, Main Street paid for the white water consultant to come back to Kent back in December 2007 to do more on-site investigation of the opportunities available to expand public access and usage of the river across a range of activities -- from walking along the banks to canoeing and even kayaking. The consultant gathered maps, existing plans, photos, data, etc., and he met with stakeholders in both private and public meetings to better understand what would fit in the Kent community.



Based on the data collected and the input received from the stakeholders, the consultant performed analytical and conceptual work to further develop some river concept design options that we could use to go after State grant funds that are available for these sorts of river improvements. Main Street and Parks and Recreation have already been coordinating with State agencies to give them a sense of how we hope to use this project to continue all the work we started with the Dam project and the initial feedback has been favorable from these agencies.

With the Dam project we made a significant impact on improving the water quality, and the idea of this project is to open up access to the new and improved river so that residents, students and visitors can enjoy it all year long. From the City's perspective I continue to see this eco-friendly outdoor-activity as a unique business opportunity for us to capitalize on in our region that is both a quality of life enhancement and is also a part of the economic revival of the downtown. I can't think of a better way to celebrate our river heritage than by having a plan for expanding river use in a way that connects the public investment we made to revitalize the West River Neighborhood to the redevelopment work we are now pursuing in downtown.

The concept design work will give us a list of improvements that we can consider, including ranges of costs, regulatory issues, etc. One of the tasks included in the scope of work was to begin to outline the possible economic impacts of a white water park with a range of examples of new business activity and local spending spawned by these types of parks. The purpose of this data is to give us a better sense of the costs/benefits and the rate of return of the improvements should we eventually choose to pursue any or all of them.

Buxton Retail Workshop

2. Joe Fackel, Buxton Company Presentation

The Buxton company has completed their Retail Site Assessment for Kent so we've invited Joe Fackel to come present the findings to Council. As you may recall Buxton is a leading retail site selection company whom we hired to use their proprietary retail site selection methodology to evaluate the Kent trade area in order to provide us with an assessment of our retail readiness and identify those retailers that would be a good fit in the Kent market.



Our interest in gathering this retail data was to better understand where the best retail opportunities exist in our market based on real economic data, not just what we all would like to be here. We all have our wish lists for the types of stores we'd like to see in Kent but retail is driven by business decisions, not wishes, so we hired Buxton to cipher through Kent's data in order to speak to the business side of retail in Kent.

Given our limited resources we have to optimize our resources, focusing them where they will have the greatest impact. That same logic applies in retail attraction, retention and expansion – it probably doesn't make a lot of sense for us to spin our wheels trying to land a Bass Pro shop when in reality Kent doesn't fit the Bass Pro market requirements. The point of the retail study was to identify the retailers that succeed in markets that look just like Kent and if those retailers are not already here to be able to go after them armed with the kind of business data they would need to be convinced to come here.



If you're interested, Joe was a featured speaker on a webinar sponsored by Governing Magazine titled "Competing for Retail and Winning" that you can listen to at: <http://www.governing.com/webinars.htm>

Information Items

1. Traffic, Engineering and Safety (TES) Report

Bill Lillich has provided the minutes from the February 14th TES committee meeting. Items discussed included traffic calming in Forest Lakes, Fairchild @ Adrian intersection safety, Horning Road safety, Elmwood @ Crain Avenue stop sign, and an update of State/County road projects. (attached)

2. Cuyahoga River Movie Debut

Bob Brown sent me a copy of a press release from WVIZ/PBS announcing the showing of the new documentary film *The Return of the Cuyahoga*. Following a showing at the Playhouse Theater in April the documentary will be distributed to PBS stations all over the country. In addition to years of environmental stewardship, the Kent Dam project is one of the reasons the Cuyahoga is enjoying such a successful comeback. I'm not sure if any Kent clips made it into the movie but we should take great pride in Kent's contribution to the health of the river. (attached)

3. Police Department Awards

Chief Peach has announced this year's Kent Police Department Awards and I have included the award recipients and the Chief's congratulatory memorandums for your review. As you will see, the Chief is honoring Susan Graves in memorium with the Officer of the Year award, Lt. Ray Stein with the Supervisor of the Year award, and Cheryl Burg as Employee of the Year. We are fortunate to have such exemplary police employees and I hope you will find the time to congratulate this year's recipients. (attachment)