

**City of Kent Comprehensive Bicentennial Plan – Campus Link Neighborhood
City Administration’s Recommended Modifications
September 2004**

1. *Should there be a “no net loss” policy regarding the number of housing units for students?*

Yes, it is important for the City to maintain the current number of student rental units in the Campus Link Neighborhood that presently exist, to avoid a migration of student housing into other residential neighborhoods. One of the objectives of the Campus Link Neighborhood component of the Bicentennial Plan is actually to increase the density of housing, both student and non-student occupied units. In fact, given projected higher density levels, it is quite possible and even likely that the Campus Link Neighborhood can actually house more students than current levels.

Recommendation: Adopt a policy statement that the City will maintain at least as many student housing units as what currently exists in the Campus Link Neighborhood, and will support maintaining a positive balance in that housing number so that no housing units are removed without having already created an equal number of units so as to avoid displacement of students in other neighborhoods.

2. *Should there be a “no net loss” policy as it pertains to generation of property tax revenues from the Campus Link Neighborhood to the Kent School District?*

Yes, such a public policy statement is not only appropriate, but is quite reasonably feasible and achievable given existing property values and the beneficial effect redevelopment has on local economic markets.

Recommendation: Adopt a public policy that the City of Kent will protect the present value of property tax revenues generated from the aggregate property values of properties in the Campus Link Neighborhood to the Kent School District.

3. *Should alternative locations be considered within the Campus Link Neighborhood for the hotel, conference center and multi-modal facility?*

The whole notion of a conceptual plan inherently implies that it is a vision of what and how things could be in order to stimulate thinking and conversation about the community’s future. The illustrations were not necessarily meant to be taken literally, but rather to present an idea in a schematic format so that the public could better envision the concept of redeveloping an area of town that might be better used to create greater wealth and improve the quality of life. Nothing on this conceptual plan was intended to be cast in concrete, so to speak.

Recommendation: The Council should adopt a policy statement that it intends to further study the concept of a hotel, conference center, and multi-modal facility for the Campus Link Neighborhood, to evaluate alternative locations for such improvements, to study the economic feasibility and financial structuring of such an undertaking, to analyze current and future traffic congestion and flow in and around the Campus Link neighborhood and throughout the eastern half of the community, and investigate other issues related to such a potential project.

4. *Should the hotel, conference center (executive training center) and multi-modal facility (parking deck with bus, bicycle, and pedestrian connections) be relocated onto the University campus?*

This is the University's stated fall-back option if the City of Kent decides not to support the development within the community itself. Locating such a major attraction near the central business district has the potential of generating a considerable economic ripple in terms of creating new business opportunities by drawing both student and conventional market demand into the downtown. History has demonstrated that the City has had difficulty attracting retailers and restaurateurs into downtown Kent without evidence that market demand exists. The hotel and conference center is critically important in the overall strategy of bringing people closer into the central business district in order to attract retailers and restaurateurs to meet that market demand. Successful communities have learned that attracting people into the downtown is the ingredient in attracting commercial interest.

Recommendation: Leave the hotel, conference center and parking facility in the Plan. Removing it will literally purge the Plan of its potential to attract new commercial revitalization of the downtown area. It is the most important element that enables the other components possible. Do not remove it from the Plan.

5. *Should the multi-modal facility be considered for location on the north side of Haymaker Parkway as an alternative site?*

Yes, as with the previous issue, more study is required to better develop the concept into an actionable plan after analyzing the advantages and disadvantages associated with various locations.

Recommendation: The Council should adopt a policy statement agreeing to participate in a study with Kent State University and PARTA to evaluate possible sites for the location of a multi-modal facility in the Campus Link neighborhood, including the north side of Haymaker Parkway.

6. *Should one of the criterion for the locating of the multi-modal facility be the reduction of vehicular traffic on Crain, North Willow and Summit (between Water and Lincoln) Streets?*

Yes, one of the objectives of the Campus Link Neighborhood is to direct the majority of traffic onto Haymaker Parkway and reduce traffic through residential neighborhoods.

Recommendation: Establish a traffic model with program standards that forecast a "no net" increase in traffic volumes on Crain, North Willow and Summit (between Water and Lincoln) Streets as a direct result of the placement of a multi-modal facility in the Campus Link Neighborhood (i.e. the multi-modal needs to be placed in a location that either reduces or has no direct impact on traffic volume on these streets).

7. *Should the policy of the City Council be to encourage the development of additional retail and commercial businesses in downtown Kent as part of the Campus Link proposal?*

Yes. A component of the hotel and conference center plan is to generate additional traffic into downtown Kent. Attracting additional retailers and restaurants into downtown Kent is part of an overall economic development strategy for the downtown. Increasing the mass of and diversity of retail activity in the downtown will help stabilize downtown as a retail center not only for residents, but for Kent State students, faculty and staff as well as for the immediate region. Depending on the retail mix, downtown Kent has the opportunity to also become a tourist destination for people visiting northeast Ohio.

Recommendation: Undertake a market analysis and direct the Administration to embark on a recruitment campaign to attract retail and restaurant businesses that appeal to the Kent community.

8. *Should Summit Street be widened to four lanes or widened to accommodate a median (boulevard)?*

No, Summit Street should be left in its present condition in terms of width and number of lanes.

Recommendation: Include a policy statement in the Plan to the effect that the City of Kent intends to maintain Summit Street in its present configuration and does not intend to widen it into a 4-lane street nor install a median for a boulevard.

9. *Should the City repair and/or reconstruct Lincoln Street?*

Lincoln Street is in need of repair and like other streets in town that are in similar condition, it does receive periodic attention as needed to fill potholes. The reconstruction of South Lincoln Street between East Main and Summit Streets has been in the City's 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan since 2000. It was originally scheduled for reconstruction in 2003, but rescheduled for 2004 a year later to accommodate other capital needs. In the 2003 update of the Capital Plan, this project was indefinitely delayed for two reasons: the need for funds for the Crain Avenue Bridge Project and planning of the Campus Link Neighborhood which could affect the design for the reconstruction of the roadway. It is presently planned for design in 2005. Although reconstruction has been delayed until 2007, the City will continue to maintain and repair the road surface as needed.

Recommendation: None required (informational only).

10. *Should zoning regulations be amended to permit higher density and to allow for the construction of additional larger housing units?*

Yes, the Campus Link Neighborhood Plan already recommends higher density levels in that area. There is space available and it is the intent of this conceptual plan to have more people, both students and non-students, living between campus and downtown.

Recommendation: Adopt a policy statement as part of the plan to amend the zoning regulation and rezone the Campus Link area to accommodate all proposed land uses. This will permit higher density development and allow for the construction of additional larger housing units.

11. *Should the City consider a policy of performing a financial analysis on redevelopment projects in the Campus Link Neighborhood before investing public funds in such projects?*

It is important to first note that the City Administration has no intention of recommending the purchase of property in the foreseeable future to implement the Campus Link plan. However, it is possible the City may deem it an appropriate role to participate financially in a redevelopment project, or it may be possible that the City may be asked to acquire an isolated parcel to ensure that a project move forward. If or when the City considers the use of municipal funds for a redevelopment project or to provide infrastructure improvements, it would be prudent to perform a financial analysis to determine the pay-back period for such public investments. The City has already begun to calculate such financial analyses on other economic development projects requiring the injection of City funds. The Administration has generally offered favorable recommendations on the use of municipal funds for economic development/redevelopment projects that demonstrate a return on investment in ten or fewer years.

Recommendation: Adopt a policy statement that the City will perform a financial analysis on the investment of City funds in the Campus Link Neighborhood and will generally support investments that demonstrate a 10-year payback.

12. *Should the City use eminent domain in acquiring property to implement the Campus Link Neighborhood?*

The City of Kent has demonstrated its reluctance to use its eminent domain authority for economic development purposes in the past. It is unlikely the Council is willing to exercise this authority broadly.

Recommendation: Establish a limited policy statement that would allow the City Council to consider the use of eminent domain to acquire isolated parcels of land under only extreme situations that will enable a project to move forward.

13. *Should the City undertake financial forecasting to develop two alternative scenarios of future municipal revenues and expenditures, one option reflecting implement of the Plan and the other a “do nothing” status quo alternative?*

Although it would be difficult to predict the probability of some development and revenue assumptions beyond five years given the Plan’s long term (20 plus years) perspective, it would be beneficial to discuss the economic and financial advantages of the comprehensive plan compared to a “do nothing” scenario. It might be a wise use of a good internal resource to have the Finance Director and City Manager work with a small group of citizens to form an Administrative Think Tank or a sounding board to develop an annual financial forecast for the next five years based on reasonable assumptions given what information is available at the time of each update.

Recommendation: Direct the Administration to form a small administrative ad hoc committee of community leaders to develop assumptions pertaining to the implementation of the comprehensive plan, and develop a five-year financial forecast of expected revenues, comparing it against the financial projections developed for the General Fund in the Five-Year Capital Improvement Program every August.

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14. *Should the policy of the City Council be to study and preserve, relocate and/or reuse any historically or architecturally significant buildings in the Campus Link Neighborhood?*

Yes. Historic preservation is a value expressed in the Bicentennial Plan. One of the goals stated in the Built Environment is to use existing buildings for redevelopment.

Recommendation: Adopt a policy statement that the City will conduct a review of any building slated for acquisition by the City of Kent for historical or architectural significance. The City Administration, in conjunction with an approved development plan, will endeavor to preserve, relocate and/or reuse these buildings, based upon a study, and incorporate them into the design framework of the Campus Link, to the extent feasible.