

**Brief Description of Kent City Council Priorities  
November 2000**

Redevelopment of the West River Neighborhood: Beginning around 1993, the City of Kent has taken an active involvement in directing commercial redevelopment of the area bordered by Mantua Street to the west, West Main Street to the south, the Cuyahoga River on the east, and the Crain Avenue Bridge/Fairchild Avenue/Mantua Street intersection on the north. The plan is to attract new private investment by establishing retail shops, restaurants, and possibly some limited townhouse styled residential development.

Kent Dam Pool Water Quality Issue: The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, under the authority of the federal Clean Water Act, has identified various water quality problems associated with the pool of water behind the Kent Dam. The State would prefer to have the City re-establish a free flowing river ecosystem and has imposed more restrictive discharge limits on the City's municipal water reclamation facility (requiring \$2 to \$5 million of improvements) if nothing is done to address the dam pool issue. The Kent Dam is a historically significant structure in Kent and the waterfall feature is a community icon, both of which may be adversely affected by these water resource management regulations.

Downtown Hotel Project: The City has been working in cooperation with Kent State University in undertaking a feasibility study to locate a hotel and conference center in the downtown area. The study has generally concluded that such a development is feasible with help from the City in securing an adequately sized site in the central business district and a certain minimum level of business from University sponsored activities. The project is hopeful of being started sometime next year with completion a couple three years from now.

JEDD Agreements and/or Annexations: The City is currently having discussions with both Franklin and Brimfield Townships regarding the possibility of entering into Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) agreements whereby the two parties agree to share certain revenues and provide certain services to a defined geographic area (usually in the township) in an effort of working together to foster commercial and industrial development opportunities.

Industrial – Business Park Development: The City has identified four strategic sites inside the existing corporate limits to work with the property owner and/or developer to invest in public improvements (roads, water, sewer, storm drainage) through a joint partnership in order to make construction-ready industrial sites available for business development. The sites include both greenfields and brownfields. The focus here is to create jobs which provide the City's primary source of tax revenues to support police, fire and other important municipal services.

Increase Municipal Revenues: The slow growth of revenues into the municipal treasury has positioned the City to not only reduce expenditures and eliminate several employment positions upon retirements and/or resignations, but it has also focused attention on various means of increasing revenues. The three primary sources to accomplish this, is to increase the tax (or millage) rate by voter approved property and income tax levies, to increase the economic base of the community by encouraging new commercial and industrial development which create new jobs, thus providing enhanced income tax revenues, or to increase various fees for services such

as water and sewer rates, solid waste fee, the storm water utility fee, and various other means such as building permits, parking fines, etc. The purpose for these efforts is intended to keep pace with the increased personnel and operational costs of providing municipal services at their present levels. The City has gradually reduced certain services in recent years.

Strategic Long Term Plan: The City Council has commissioned the development of a 5-year strategic plan to identify the community's overall direction for the next five years. The Administration has been given the responsibility of formulating such a plan. Destination 2006 has been created for this purpose and a citizens Steering Committee organized to assist in the process of identifying the top 12-15 issues and/or projects into which Kent City government should invest limited financial resources over the next five years in an effort to make a meaningful improvement in the quality of life being experienced in the Kent community.

### **Second Tier Priorities**

Commuter Rail Development: The Kent community is located along one of several possible routes currently under study to develop new commuter rail transportation infrastructure in northeast Ohio. All of the various alternatives would route passengers to and from downtown Cleveland. Both Portage County and Kent State University have been actively involved in this study with support from local communities, including the City of Kent, to secure a favorable decision for commuter rail service into western Portage County.

Middle Cuyahoga River Water Quality Concerns (other than Kent Dam): This watershed approach involves the participations of all stakeholders in the upper/middle Cuyahoga River system that will result in the implementation of best management practices to reduce or eliminate non-point sources of pollution into the river. These might include the evaluation of various agricultural and silvicultural practices and the establishment of certain riparian control and streambank buffering techniques.

Getting Projects off the Ground (Make Progress): The City Council has repeatedly expressed its desire to actually see progress being made with respect to the various economic development projects. The Administration has often viewed this priority in conjunction with the West River Neighborhood Redevelopment, Downtown Hotel, and Industrial/Business Parks Development projects. The City is anxious to see new private investment and construction in the community.

Rail to Trail Development (connecting bike paths): This issue entails the connection of the various regional trails as they pass through Kent. In particular, there is a desire to make the Towner's Woods connection and getting across the Cuyahoga River as part of the Crain Avenue Bridge Realignment Project. These efforts would help make connections to bike trails already established to the west in Stow and to the southwest in Munroe Falls.

High Tech Incubator Project: This has become known as the Business Technology and Entrepreneurship Center under the direction of the Kent Regional Business Alliance (KRBA)

with the participation and support of Kent State University, the City of Kent and NEOUCOM. The facility is proposed to be located on property owned by Kent State University in the vicinity of State Route 261 and Campus Center Drive. Its purpose is to assist new business start-up companies in the Kent community with the expectation of graduating to their own facility and creating new employment opportunities. Although special attention will be given to technology based companies, this facility will be available to any type of new business requiring incubation.

Breakneck Creek Preservation Area: Under the leadership of Portage County, a plan has been devised to create a preserve along Breakneck Creek in Franklin and Ravenna Townships to protect both water quality and the natural environment. As part of this effort, the old A & B Landfill has been evaluated and strategies developed to minimize or eliminate continued contamination from leaving this site through future groundwater transmission.

Communication with Civic Groups: Perhaps one of the most affective ways for City government to earn the trust of its citizenry, is to provide timely information on various community issues and projects. Several elected officials and administrative staff members have made themselves available to address local civic organizations and other groups in an attempt to disseminate important information to citizens regarding these community issues. This effort has been predominantly spearheaded by the Mayor with some limited assistance from the City Manager.