

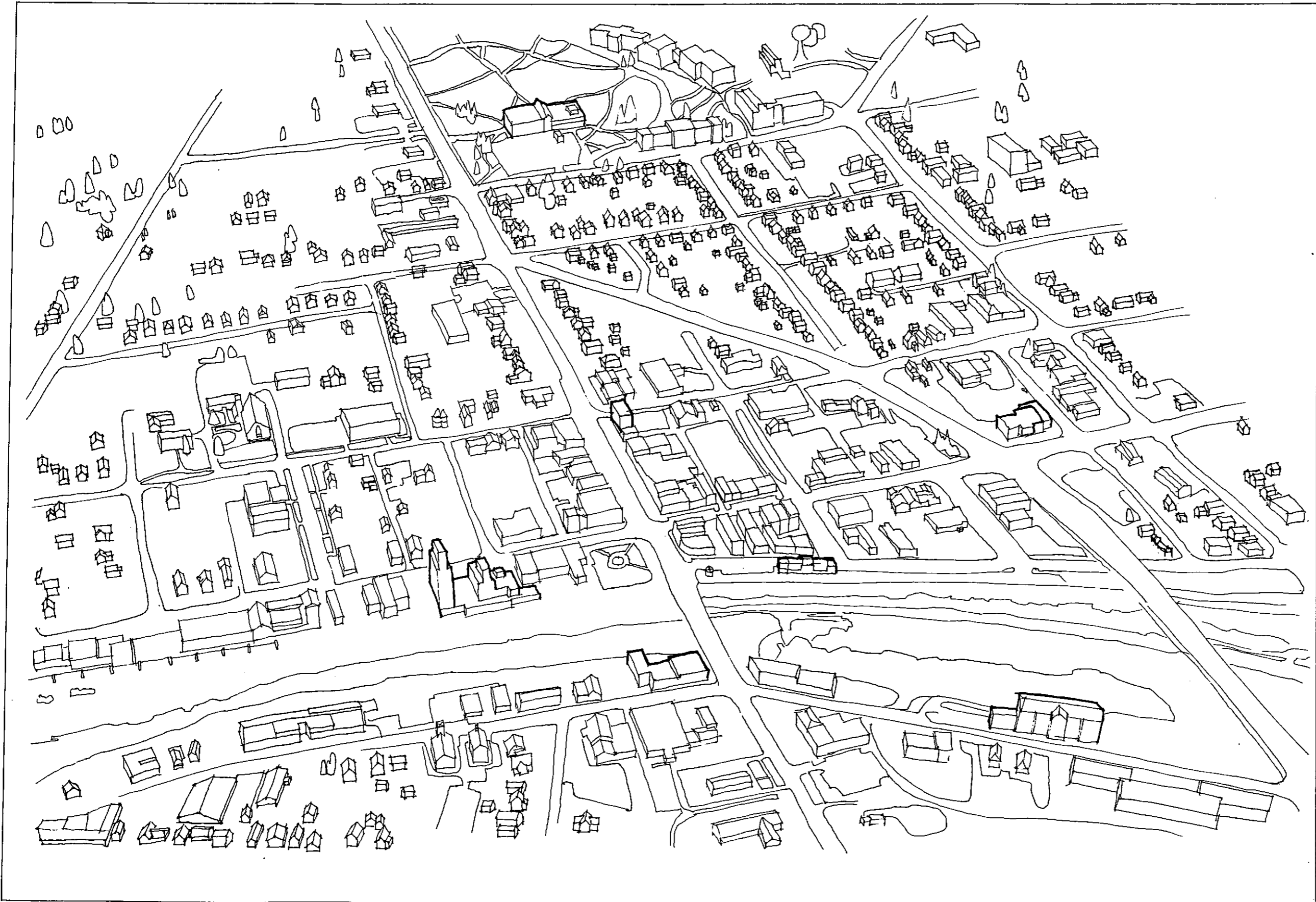
# **Kent, Ohio**

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*Urban Design Proposal*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Existing Aerial Perspective              | 3  |
| Introduction                             | 4  |
| The Macro Level                          | 8  |
| The Meso Level                           | 13 |
| The Micro Level                          | 24 |
| Conclusion: Goal, Objectives, Strategies | 38 |



EXISTING AERIAL PERSPECTIVE

## INTRODUCTION

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This concept plan was assembled in response to concerns expressed during several meetings and critiques by members of the business, academic and professional communities of the city of Kent. It focuses on a study area defined by Main Street to the north, Water Street to the west, Summit Street to the south and Lincoln Street to the east. Primary among the concerns regarding this area and the districts contained within it was the hope for continued growth and development: commercial, institutional and financial. Hoping that architecture alone can ever hope to solve the problems of an entire society, let alone the area under consideration, is dubious at best and naive at worst. But we nonetheless can place faith in the notion that a meaningful built environment (a *complete* one that is lacking in Kent), one that expresses the existence of its users, can act as a catalyst for other kinds of change.

Three questions of utmost priority must be asked before any drawing is made or any foundation stone is laid:

*What is the problem?*

*Who are we solving it for?*

*How do we solve it for them?*

Seems obvious. But unless a comprehensive understanding of these questions is grasped, some real mistakes might be made. This doesn't mean that this concept plan is altogether practical on every level. What it does mean is that when several members of a community voice a desire for more green open space, we as planners and architects ought to find a way to give it to them.

So what exactly are the problems within the study area? A quick glance at the existing map of Kent (shown on the opposite page with the buildings darkened in, a technique known as figure/ground to architects) reveals that a rigorous commitment to an organized planning strategy hasn't been a priority at any level: government, business or resident. The haphazard intrusion of buildings into the urban fabric -- typically described by architects as 'fragmented development patterns' -- without any concern for meaningful space (one need not look any further than the Smart Food Store on Main Street and the Firestone Dealership on Depeytsers to see what we mean by this) only contributes to a lack of appreciation by ourselves and visitors of what Kent does have to offer. And it offers a lot. Two new restaurants, the Zephyr at the corner of Franklin and Main Street and Susan's Coffee and Tea across from the University are the kinds of places that people remind each other of previously having visited a month or so ago, and then say to one another "Hey, let's go there again, that was fun!" By the time they realize that Kent has something they want, maybe some new boutique or specialty shop will



EXISTING CONTEXT: *Figure ground map showing fragmented development patterns at Lincoln and Main; along Depeyster; at Lincoln and Summit.*

open its doors providing yet another opportunity for tourist dollars to be spent here.

Who are we concentrating our efforts on? What are they like? What are their hopes, dreams and activities?...

At this stage, it's important to keep asking "what" kinds of questions, we'll get to the "hows" later. The "whats", or goals, of this study area can be summarized as follows:

What will it take...

to improve the economic vitality of the area?

to improve the image and identity of the area?

to facilitate safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles?

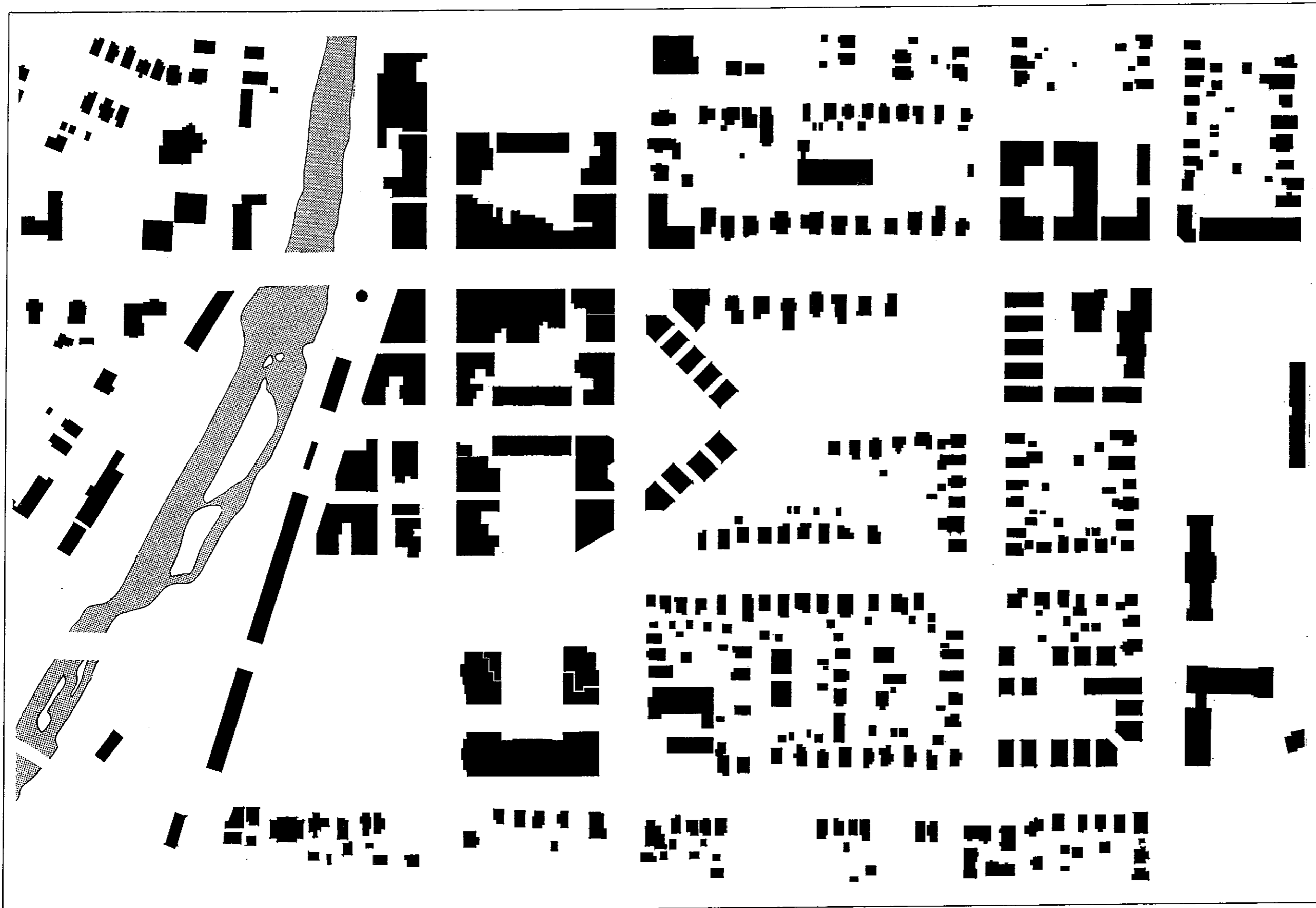
to improve linkages between downtown and the university?

to utilize open spaces more effectively?

to utilize existing structures more efficiently?

to preserve and enhance Kent's history?

Understand that no one particular district aims to satisfy one particular goal -- some overlap will occur. For instance, our so-called Gateway Park development just south of the Haymaker Overpass simultaneously answer the need for improvement in Kent's identity while also utilizing open spaces more effectively. What better way to arrive in Kent from Stow, Hudson of Cuyahoga Falls than through a well-maintained and landscaped public park, where passers-by can get the impression that the people of Kent place their leisure time activities in high regard, and really know how to have fun.

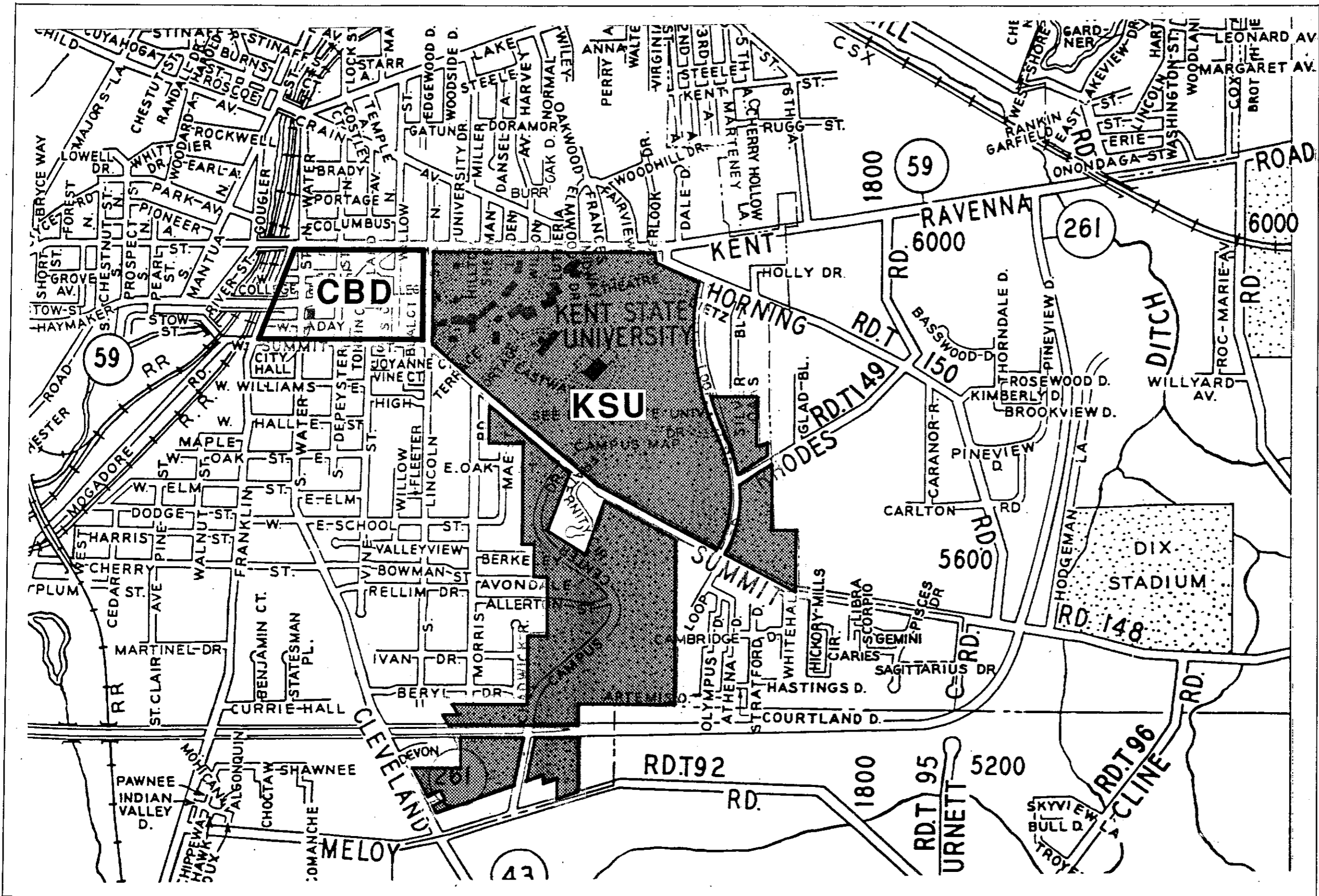


PROPOSAL: *New Figure ground reinforces district boundaries, especially the residential district bounded by Main, Lincoln, Depeyster and Summit.*

# The Macro Level

The following two maps indicate, respectively, the spatial relationship of the campus of Kent State University to downtown Kent; and, the path relationships which connect Kent to surrounding communities.

The purpose of these illustrations is to provide the notion that Kent must direct its development strategy toward attracting a largely tourist population if any success is to be realized.

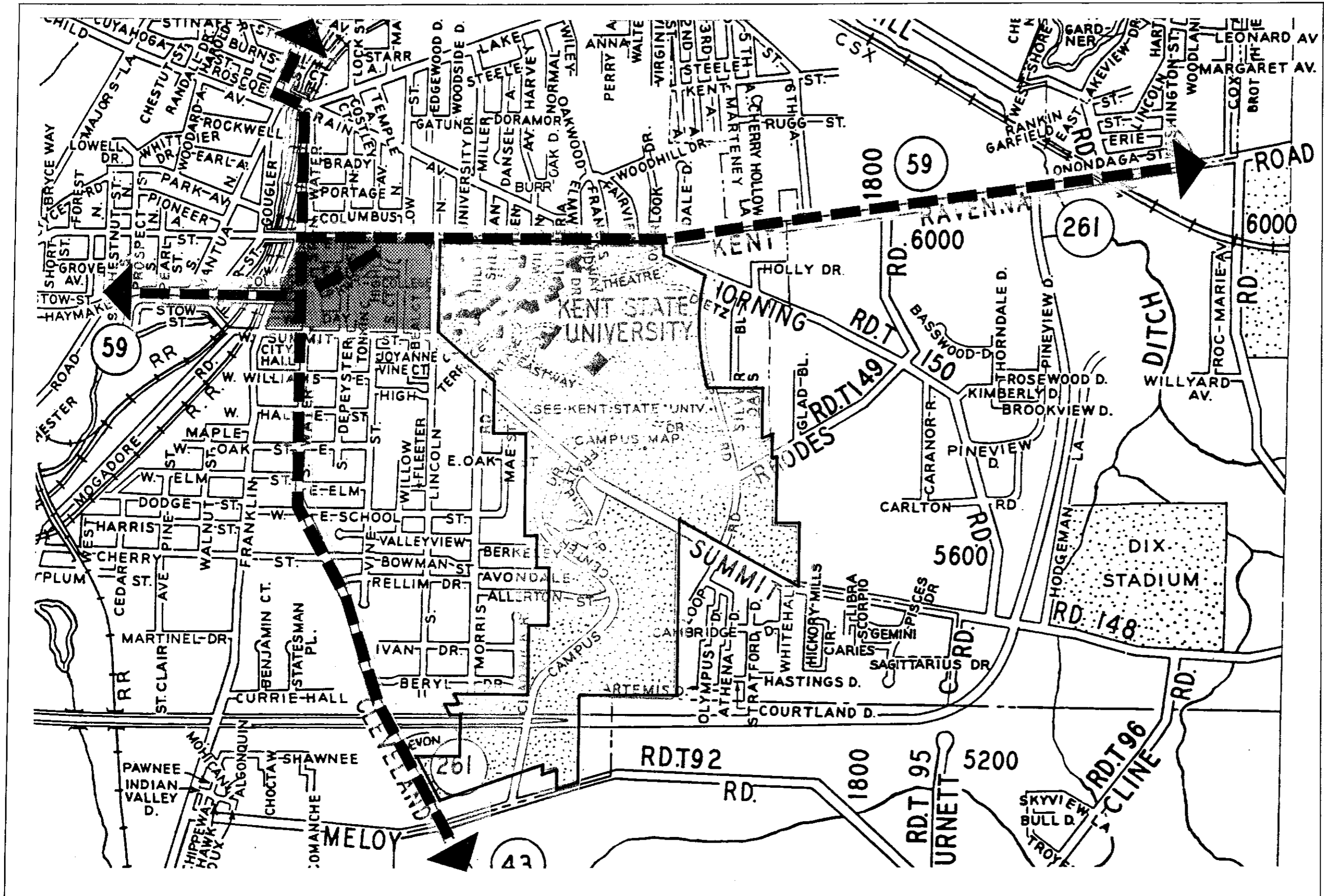


## PATH RELATIONSHIPS

The dotted lines on this map indicated vehicular travel which connects Kent to surrounding communities. Being a college town, Kent lies at a sort of crossroads between communities which, if aware of the things Kent has to offer in the way of dining, galleries and shops, might just stop by for a visit.

State Route 43 takes traffic north to Cleveland and its eastern suburbs, including Aurora. Traveling the opposite direction for a few more miles will hook you up with Interstate 76. One point of interest along the way is Ristorante di Giovanni, an excellent Italian restaurant.

Traveling east on State Route 59 takes one to Stow, Cuyahoga Falls and Hudson, an upscale community of predominantly educated professionals who would be attracted to the kinds of development we propose.





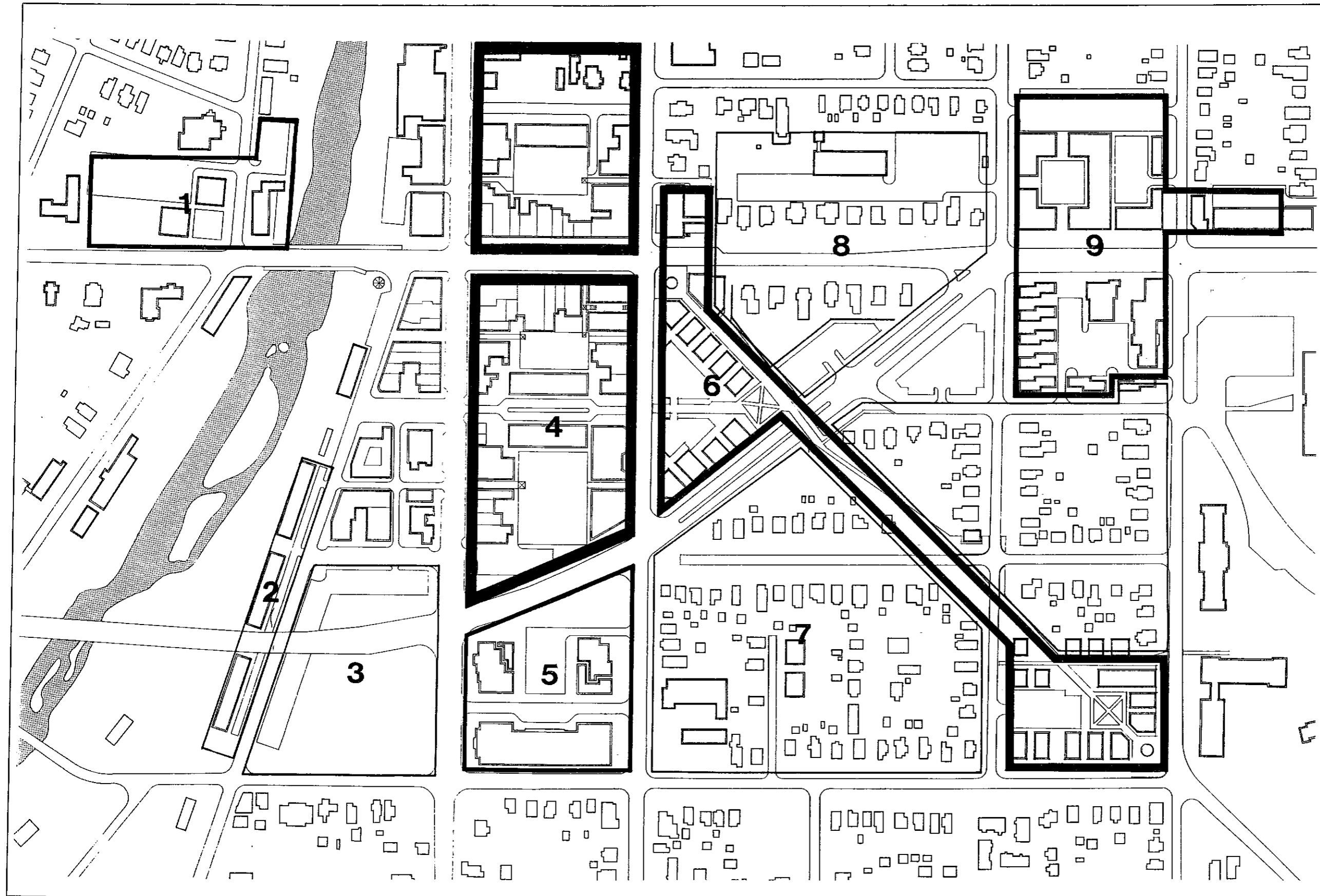
# The Meso Level

## DISTRICTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Nine districts emerged from our investigation most of which existed prior to this undertaking, a few others were created out of necessity. To become more familiar with these districts we've named them in order to lend them a more human quality rather than being called "subdistrict a" or "area 1". Below is a listing of these areas and a brief description of their respective uses:

- |    |                       |                                |
|----|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) | The Bissler's Block   | Mixed use, recreation          |
| 2) | Riverside Housing     | Student housing                |
| 3) | Gateway Park          | Outdoor recreation             |
| 4) | The Public Plazas     | Housing, parking, recreation   |
| 5) | The Government Center | Government functions           |
| 6) | The Campus Link       | Pedestrian footpath, housing   |
| 7) | College Park          | Housing                        |
| 8) | Fraternity Row        | Greek housing                  |
| 9) | Student Services      | Retail, housing, entertainment |

The map on the facing page outlines the extent of these districts. The section of this brochure titled "The Micro Level" provides three-dimensional perspective drawings, a drawing technique whose information more easily apprehensible by laymen.



### THE MESO LEVEL: an analysis of key features of our proposed development

The four drawings in this section indicate the extent to which the existing context is being altered to accommodate our concept plan:

- 1) Vehicular and Pedestrian Path Alterations and Improvements
- 2) Proposed Demolition Plan
- 3) Proposed Addition to Existing Buildings and New Structures
- 4) Proposed Parking Plan

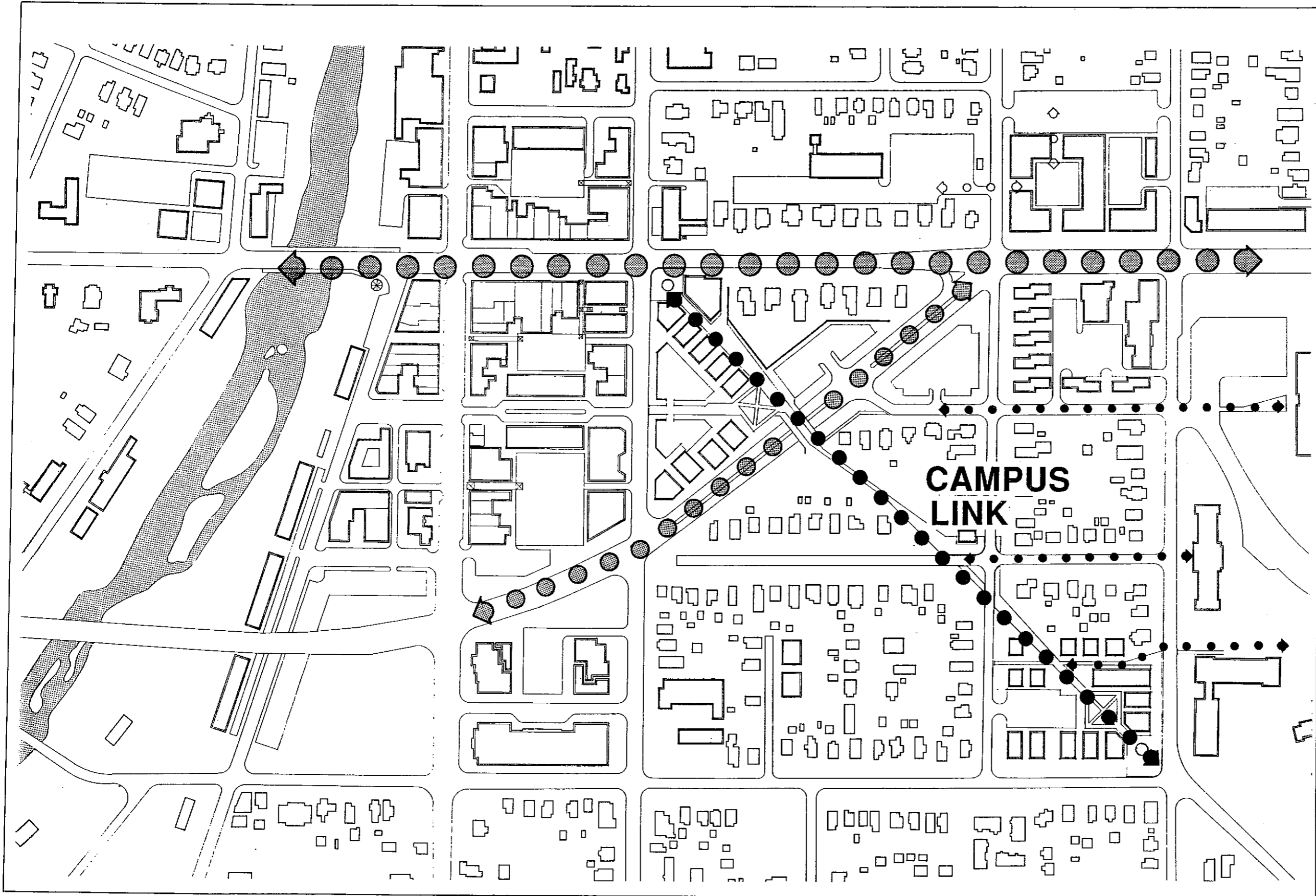
### VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ALTERATIONS

We successfully met the goal of facilitating safe and effective movement of vehicles and pedestrian by placing the elimination of curb-cuts as our primary objective. Where this is most evident is the along Fraternity Row (West Main Street) and at the corner of Lincoln and Main near Student Services. With the added concentration of pedestrians at these locations, it seemed obvious that their safety is a factor. Having accomplished that, the reduction in curb cuts allows for an extensive investment in a landscaping program to beautify and enhance Main Street from Lincoln to Water Streets, thus satisfying another goal of improving the image of the area.

Haymaker Parkway is developed as a four-lane bypass with a landscaped median strip along its length. The impression we intend to give motorists is that a new and vital residential district is now being entered, thus they ought to slow down and enjoy the scenery. We are eliminating the concept of this path as a wasteland to be ignored. On the contrary, the subtle repetition of plantings reinforces the ecological mindset of most of Kent's inhabitants.

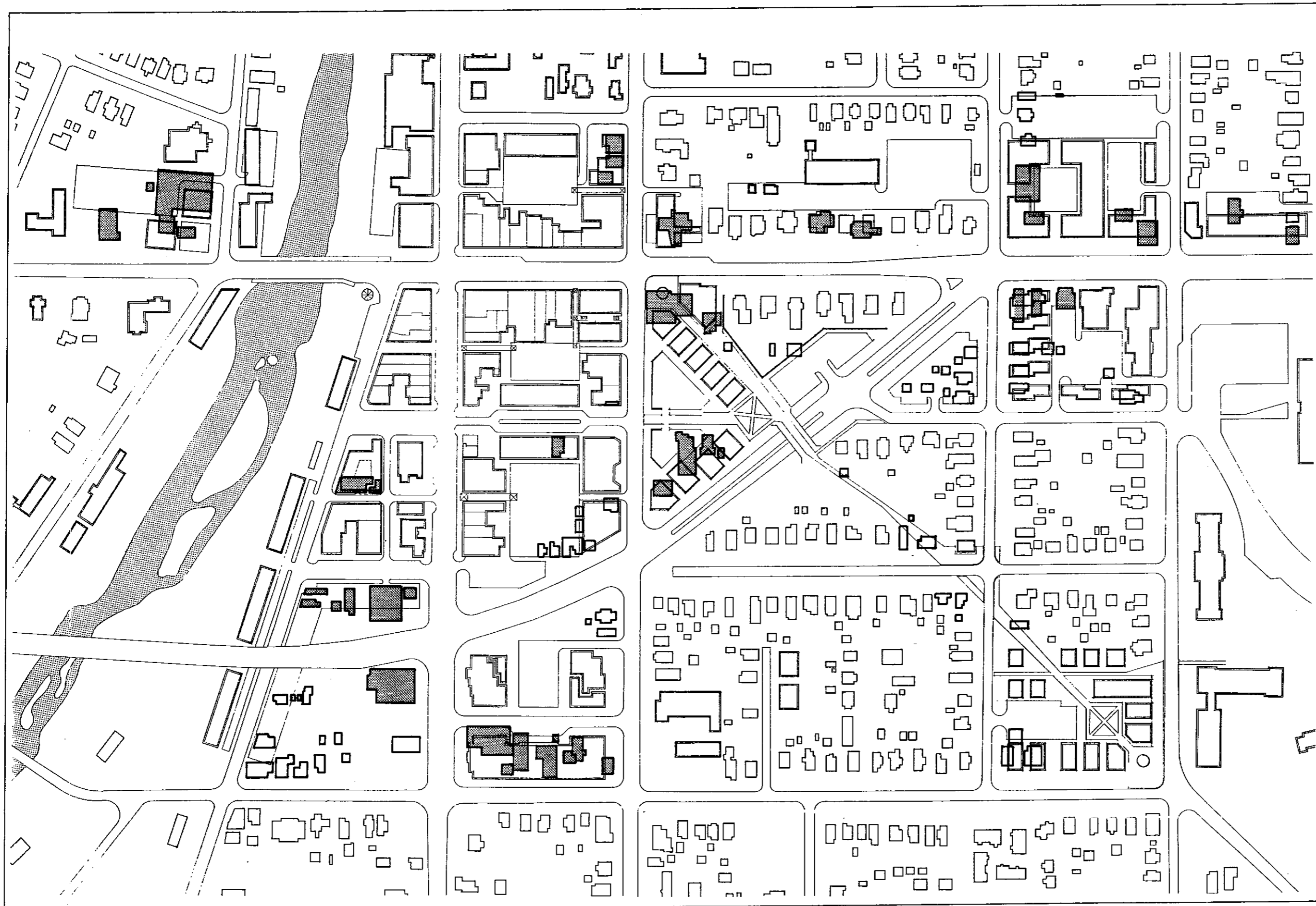
The Campus Link facilitates day and nighttime travel through a residential district whose residents currently complain that noise and litter are key problems because of weekend student traffic. This development solves this problem by providing an insulated park-like setting for district residents and students alike, the care of which is maintained by volunteer neighborhood groups.

Three tertiary links (traveling east/west) provide easy access to the Campus Link from three strategic points on campus: the Fashion Museum, Franklin Hall and McGilvrey Hall.



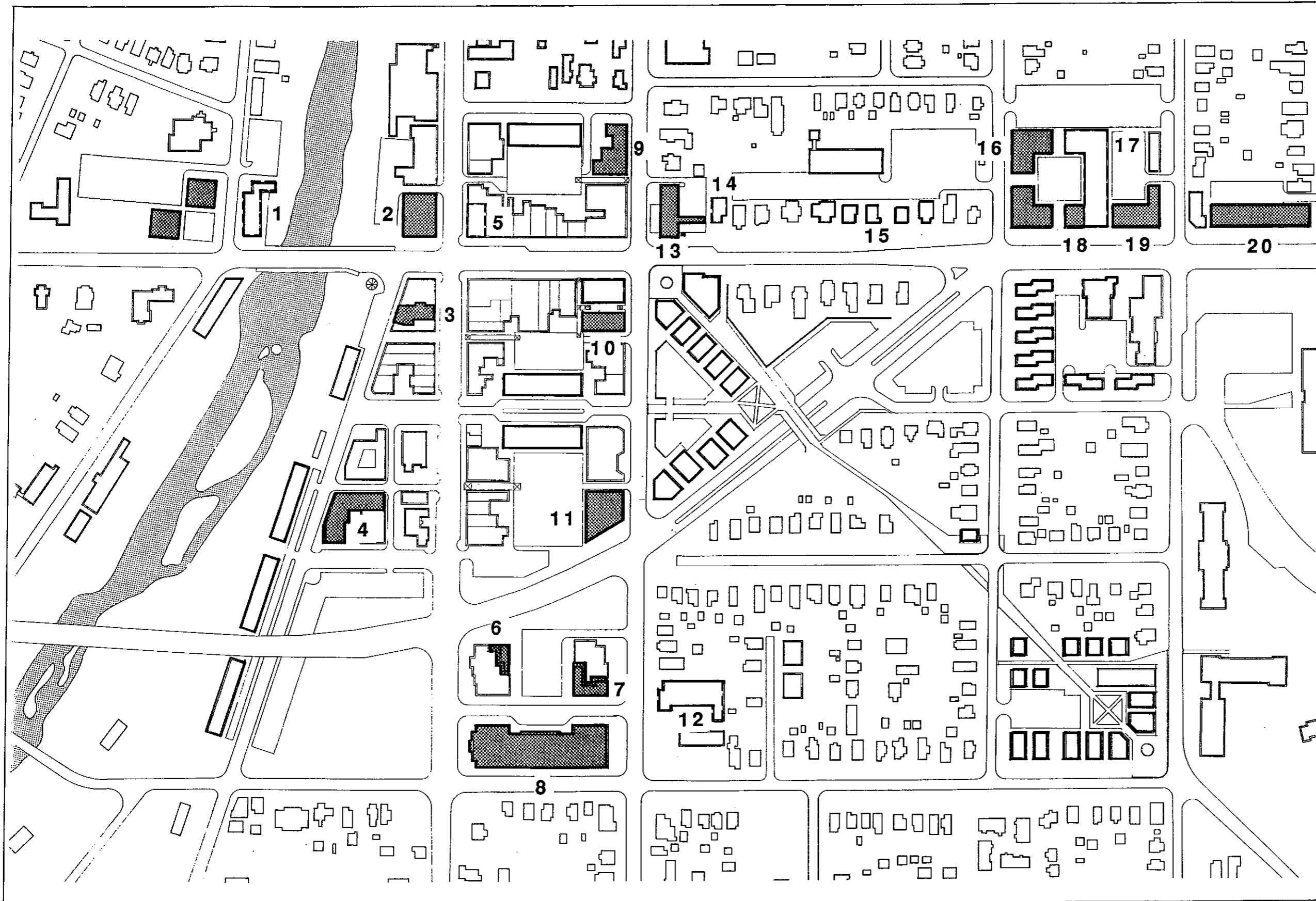
## PROPOSED DEMOLITION PLAN

We have no doubt that the extent of demolition proposed for the study area may seem extensive, but when one compares this map to the one on the following page, it is realized that the fragmented development patterns mentioned earlier have now been modified through the insertion of needed uses at strategic locations, which go far toward getting Kent 'back on track' urbanistically speaking. The shaded buildings represent non-residential uses while the unshaded buildings represent residential uses.



#### PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO EXISTING CONTEXT

This drawing should calm those racing hearts as a result of the previous page. Keyed similarly to the preceding map, one will notice that much more housing has been created than lost, more opportunities exist for business and tourist activity to develop (see the Kent-Ellis Hotel, now a new hotel and conference center and the former location of the Unocal 76 station, the new location of Cafe 303 -- with outdoor seating) and a better sense of identity and place is established.



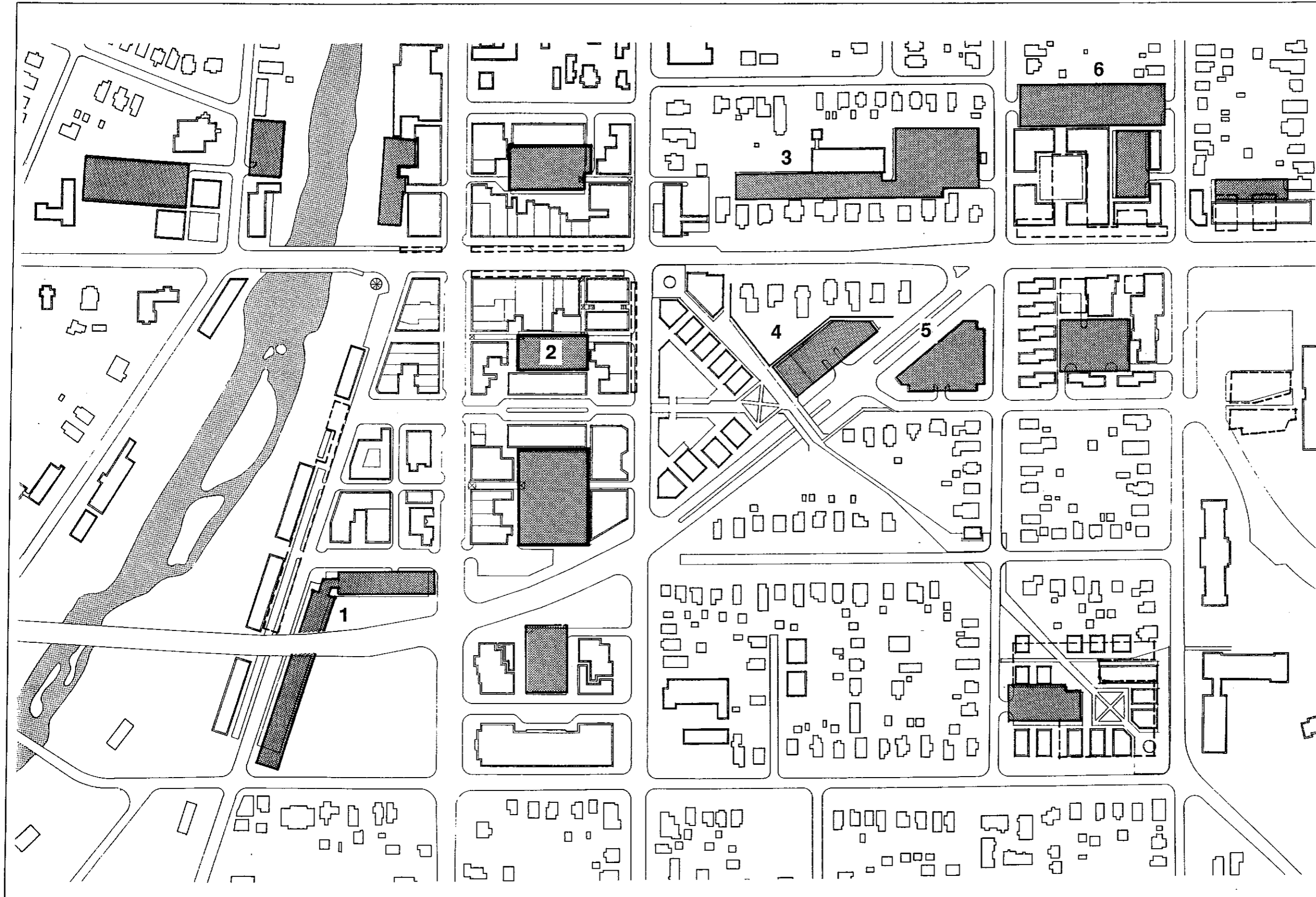
**Key to Development:**

1. *Bissler's Rec Center*
2. *Office Building*
3. *Infill Office*
4. *Nightclub*
5. *Rehabed Exterior*
6. *Police Station Addition*
7. *Fire Station Addition*
8. *New City Hall*
9. *Offices*
10. *Conference Center*
11. *Nightclub*
12. *Reopened Market*
13. *New location Cafe 303*
14. *Reopened SAE House*
15. *New Fraternities*
16. *News and Photo Shop*
17. *All Media and Kinko's*
18. *Stahl's Bakery*
19. *Blockbuster Video*
20. *Student Gallery/  
Walkup Studios*

## PROPOSED PARKING PLAN

During the course of this investigation, the emphasis placed on parking grew to to such an extent that no proposal was made without first having asked "Where is everyone going to park?" This dose of reality quickly brought our most conceptual of plans down to earth. So not only did we acknowledge its importance, we provided so much parking that probably all of Northeast Ohio could spend the night here..

But seriously, take note of the fact that any parking alterations and additions are discreetly maneuvered away from public view (see the lots on the north side of Main behind Fraternity Row and the sectional drawing of the lots on either side of Haymaker Parkway). And although we eliminated curb-side parking on Main Street between Depeyster and Water Street, the development of subplaza parking behind the CBD more than makes of for it. Besides, with the development of rear entries to these buildings and the development of similarly styled Pedestrian Connectors located in existing alleyways (see the Micro View), this stretch of Main Street now has the opportunity to become even more humanly scaled, thus preserving and enhancing Kent's image as a small town.



**Parking Plan:**

1. Gateway /  
New Student Housing Parking
2. Sub Public Plaza Parking
3. Fraternity Row/  
Kent Motor Inn Parking
4. Fraternity Row Parking
5. New Student Housing  
Overflow Parking
6. Student Services Parking