

IMPLEMENTATION: ACTION PROGRAMS

KENT STRATEGY AND TACTICS

This section includes the strategies for Kent as well as the actual tactics that will be used to implement these strategies. Based on the situation analysis, several key areas of Kent were viewed as needing improvement. Our project group has compiled the following strategies and tactics as possible ways to strengthen Kent.

STRATEGY: To help new or expanding businesses thrive in the Kent community so that employment and a tax base are provided.

TACTIC: One more incubator needs to be set up in the Kent area besides the already present Kevin Coleman Center incubator. Incubators are a way to help businesses thrive when without the incubator the business may not be able to get past the overwhelming start-up costs. Incubators help by subsidizing rent, providing clerical and consultant services, and by providing low interest loans funded by taxes and existing businesses. Once the business matures and reaches financial stability, they leave the incubator and a new business moves in. Sometimes incubators are created around themes. For this reason, Kent should pursue another incubator by utilizing one of the following themes. This list constitutes possible sites and their themes as well as a description of the already present Kevin Coleman Center incubator.

*Moulton Hall, Kent State University: This location would make use of the university staff and students easy and accessible.

*The Bissler Building, 126 West Main Street: The location in Downtown Kent has 23,000 square feet available and could possibly house a theme mini-mall of Aurora Farms stores.

*The old Silk Mill across the Cuyohoga River

*The Kevin Coleman Center business incubator, Martinel Drive: This is already an incubator site that is funded by the government, the city, and private investors. It has 2500 square feet available for service and assembly businesses that are new or expanding.

STRATEGY: To improve the linkage between Downtown, Kent State University, and the new proposed mall (University Town Center). Also to provide better public transportation to combat the lack of parking space available.

TACTIC: Three ideas have been generated to implement this strategy and they are:

*Create a new Campus Bus Route that will go from the KSU Student Center to Main Street to South Water Street to the University Town Center and back. This will pull the students through downtown Kent on their way to the new mall. By capitalizing on the certain popularity of the new mall, downtown will receive exposure as a result.

*Develop a Trolley service from the University Town Center

to downtown Kent to get the people at the mall to the restaurants and services available. This would be more targeted at the older/non-student crowd that would be hesitant to ride a campus bus.

*Start a new cab service for downtown. This would create less demand for parking space downtown.

STRATEGY: To organize the land in downtown and the surrounding area in larger, more marketable plots.

TACTICS: The creation of a Downtown Development Corporation, which purchases land for the city and gets tracks of land together for businesses, would help solve this problem. The Downtown Development Corporation would be funded by Federal and State Grants as well as private interest (ie. landlords, etc...).

STRATEGY: To enhance Kent's recreational facilities.

TACTICS: Create a Greenbelt around Kent by making a "Rails to Trails" bike and hike path that will follow the miles of railroad tracks already in place. Also, make a system of trails to connect the various parks in the Kent area. Finally, regain control of the Cuyohoga River from Akron which has had jurisdiction since 1911 and possibly set up a canoe livery.

STRATEGY: To draw a diverse/unique retail mix to the downtown area of Kent.

TACTICS: Fill market niches with stores such as furniture stores,

antiques, comic books, "catch all" stores, etc... Three types of retail businesses that would also enhance downtown are apparel stores, markets (Dairy Marts), restaurants, and entertainment. Mini-malls with unique stores are also possible. The Bissler Building and the old Silk Mill are two possible locations.

STRATEGY: Bolster Kent's tourism industry .

TACTICS: The following are several tactics to improve Kent's tourism industry:

- *Restore the old Hotel downtown in order to keep people in the city over night throughout the year but especially during the summer. This will also enable Kent to hold more conferences. There has been a study that has shown that this Hotel can be rehabilitated for \$3.5 million or, for another million, it can be torn down and have its capacity doubled.

- *Continue to pursue the proposed Science Fiction Museum for Kent.

- *Support the proposed Portage County Travel Bureau financially and create new Kent brochures for the bureau to distribute.

- *Create tour "packages" so that the tourists from the Fashion Museum (30,000 per year) stay in Kent longer. Similar "packages" can be created to capture the tourists visiting Geauga Lake and Sea World as well.

STRATEGY: Get more people downtown and stimulate life after 5PM.

TACTIC: Promote the idea of mixed-use buildings with the downstairs being a business and the upstairs being an apartment in the downtown sector.

STRATEGY: Utilize Kent State University as a valuable resource within the business community.

TACTICS: There are several ways to take advantage of this vast resource that sets Kent apart from most cities. They are as follows:

- *Work with the Marketing Department of the University to market the city.

- *Set up more classes like "Seminar: Urban and Economic Development" in conjunction with Ohio Edison to get inexpensive, fresh ideas and solutions to area business problems. These classes could be in all of the respective colleges of KSU (ie. Business College, Fashion College, etc...).

- *Use the professors on campus as incubator and business consultants.

- *Use the professors and students to run the proposed Moulton Hall Incubator. Also, use the Alumni to help finance this venture.

STRATEGY: To attract light manufacturing and "clean" or high technology industry to Kent because of its potential for employment

and a tax base.

TACTICS: The vacant land by the Land-o-Lakes company is the best location for any new industry because of the land available. However, in order to be competitive, Kent must be able to quickly move the company in. In order for this to happen, the land must be zoned appropriately, made into an Enterprise Zone, and the necessary utilities (water and sewer) must be run to the edge of the property. These measures will ensure that the companies needs are met quickly. Other possible sites for industry are the Bissler Building and the old Silk Mill.

STRATEGY: To utilize Dix Stadium (KSU) for more than football purposes.

TACTICS: Possible uses for the stadium during the summer months include:

- *Antique shows
- *Craft shows
- *Concerts

STRATEGY: To control the growth and spillover that will accompany the University Town Center.

TACTICS: This can be accomplished by viewing "Kent" as the area defined in the City Definition earlier. This will allow Kent to use its surrounding areas to its own benefit.

STRATEGY: To create a small town image downtown.

TACTICS: Allocate money specifically for the purpose of giving downtown a "facelift". Storefronts and uniform store signs should be of primary concern.

ADVERTISING, SALES PROMOTION, & PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY & TACTICS

This section encompasses suggestions that may help create a greater sense of awareness for the city of Kent. They range from specific to conceptual in nature.

STRATEGY: To make it clear to those who do not know just what the city of Kent has to offer.

TACTICS: New maps should be created to replace the unclear maps that exist now (ie. zoning map). Also, a new city resume should be created for each market segment such as tourists, businessmen, etc... The Kent Historical Society has an excellent example of a city resume from Germany.

STRATEGY: To instill pride and a sense of awareness in the county.

TACTICS: Create a new magazine much like the magazine Stark County publishes. It details the things going on in the county and has advertisements from businesses within the county. This would also allow Kent to take pride in its county which would help the area to overcome its territorial behavior. This is an excellent idea to promote regional marketing.

STRATEGY: To improve the distribution network of resources within

the Kent area.

TACTICS: Make sure such excellent resources as the colorful map promoting Kent businesses and the Kent Today magazine that already exist get to the population. One way to do this would be to go through the University and have them placed in the Residence Halls before the start of school. That way the new students as well as the returning students can familiarize themselves with the area. Also, the parents can look at these materials to get a grasp of what Kent has to offer.

PERSONAL SELLING STRATEGY AND TACTICS

This section includes the ideas that will improve the effectiveness of the sales force for the city of Kent. Improvements could range from refinement of an existing group or position to creation of a new one.

STRATEGY: To coordinate the efforts of the respective sales force entities of the city of Kent.

TACTICS: In order to coordinate the efforts of the Mayor, Chamber of Commerce, City Hall, Akron Regional Development Board, and others, a new sales force position should be created. This Liaison should be an experienced professional and paid accordingly (Salary= \$40,000-\$50,000/year). Some of the functions of this position would include:

- *Aggressively pursue business and industry opportunities for Kent.

- *Become a member of or a consultant to all of the sales force positions or groups.
- *Work with the Portage County Travel Bureau to improve the tourism industry of Kent.
- *Work with the group Kent Vision 2000.
- *Help local businesses see and utilize the benefits of the University Town Center (ie. spillover).
- *Work with proposed future Northeast Ohio University School of International Business staff and Students to further expand Kent's city definition. This school will be a collaboration of the business schools of Cleveland State University, Kent State University, Youngstown State University, and Akron University.
- *Create business "handbook" outlining opportunities and financing options and distribute to businesses.
- *Implement most of the tactics given in the Action Plan segment of this paper.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVE STRATEGY AND TACTICS

This section describes how economic development incentive programs can be coordinated more effectively. These programs will help to develop existing businesses or will be an incentive to businesses considering locating to Kent.

STRATEGY: To develop a brochure which will include all financing, loan and tax abatement programs. This brochure will make

it easier for businesses to see what types of financing are available to them.

TACTICS: The liaison should coordinate efforts to get all the financing programs available into one brochure. The following is a listing of some of these programs:

- *Downtown Loan Program
- *Tax Abatement Programs
- *Small Business Administration 504 Loan
- *166 Demo
- *Direct Loan (166 Loan)
- *Capital Access Plus Program (CAPP)
- *7
- *Ohio Mini Loan
- *Ohio Enterprise Bond Fund
- *Ohio Minority Loan
- *IDRB
- *Linked Deposit
- *Community Development Block Grants(CDBG)
- *Pooled Bond Program/Industrial Revenue Bonds
- *Minority Business Development Financing
- *Withdraw Linked Deposit Program
- *Urban Development Action Grant(UDAG)
- *Revolving Loan Funds(RLF)

These are only some of the programs available to businesses in Kent.(See Appendix B for more details on these programs.)

There are also special programs for certain areas of the City such

as the Layover District, the Enterprise Zone and the Central Business District.

Another tactic that should be used is to include financing programs and loan opportunities in advertising and marketing brochures such as was done in the Kent Today, published by the Record Courier. This targets people who may be interested in Kent but not have access to the information they may need to locate in Kent.

Another way of reaching prospective businesses is to include the financing programs in mailings. These mailings can be kept for future reference, which will in turn draw more businesses to Kent.

In order to help out start-up businesses, the Kevin Coleman Center, an incubator in Kent, should be utilized. These types of businesses may have a more difficult time in getting loans.

MARKETING BUDGET

The marketing budget for Kent should be raised to \$80,000 which would include a salary of about \$45,000 for the liaison salary. The current budget is between \$10,000-\$30,000. It should be utilized more efficiently for marketing programs, which would include a brochure such as the Kent Today and a brochure for economic development incentive programs, such as financing programs.