

CITY OF KENT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

An Overview
February 1993

Introduction

The purpose of this overview is to identify specific strategies to be used by the City in its overall economic development efforts and to define interrelationships between these strategies and the methods used to implement them.

This overview is the precursor to an economic development plan for the City of Kent. Said plan should provide specific descriptions to the way in which the following strategies are implemented as well as to the way in which specific economic development projects can be stimulated and completed.

Many cities in the United States, both large and small, enjoy successful economic development efforts as a result of a strong public sector/private sector relationship. Such relationships involve local governments working with private developers, local financial institutions, neighborhood groups, Chambers of Commerce, as well as colleges and universities. A spirit of cooperation between similar groups is beginning to be promoted here in Kent and should be fostered to its fullest extent.

The following pages will briefly identify and discuss the strategies, their objectives and relationships so that the reader can gain a better understanding of how Kent can implement a multi-faceted, community-wide effort aimed at protecting and expanding its economic base, its jobs and its quality of life.

The Strategies

For the purpose of this report, a strategy may be a project or program defined on a more generalized basis. Such generalization would permit the strategy to be executed on a neighborhood or city-wide basis. Some strategies will be more "bricks and mortar" oriented while others will be more programmatic.

The following strategies are proposed:

- Central City Redevelopment
- Community Reinvestment Access
- Business Retention/Expansion Program

Strategies (cont.)

- Research & Development Park
- Technology Transfer Program
- Small Business Development Center/
Business Incubator
- Marketing and Promotion

Each strategy will be described in more detail below. We have already begun the implementation of some of the strategies. Under each general strategy, a number of specific projects or tasks can be defined. For example, the present efforts being conducted on the Kent Hotel and the Bissler Building are specific projects that can be categorized under the Central City Redevelopment strategy. Before those two projects are brought to completion, however, time will also be spent on marketing/promotion, accessing local financing in conjunction with the Community Reinvestment Act and possibly retaining one or more local businesses by making newly generated tenant spaces in these buildings available to those businesses. Through the example just given, one can get an idea of the interrelationships between the strategies.

We should also point out that the above strategies are not just for City government to pursue. These strategies are community strategies and should be supported by all those who play a role in promoting the economic viability of the community. These are the strategies to be pursued by the public/private partnership.

(Each strategy is discussed on a separate page)

CENTRAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT

Objectives

1. To stimulate the use or re-use of vacant lots and buildings in the central city area so that they may become productive and attractive properties.
2. To generate uses and activities that attract people to the central city area in order to help support local businesses.
3. To preserve and enhance the historic quality of buildings in the central city area through the careful rehabilitation of existing buildings wherever possible.
4. To encourage new structures that maintain the architectural and historical integrity of the original area.

Tasks

1. To stimulate investment in the central city area by assisting in the acquisition of development sites, the conceptualization and promotion of "deals", helping the prospective developer obtain attractive financing, and providing adequate public facilities and services to support the proposed development.
2. To promote and market the central city area and its existing businesses.
3. To attract businesses which are complementary to the central city area as well as to other existing businesses through thematic clustering and/or efforts to retain/create/attract businesses that are different but complimentary to each other.
4. To promote and encourage the use of the central city as a viable and attractive residential area.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. MARKETING & PROMOTION
2. COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACCESS
3. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACCESS

Objectives

1. To maximize the participation of local financial institutions in community economic development efforts in conjunction with the Community Reinvestment Act.
2. To foster and enhance a positive working relationship with said financial institutions.
3. To explore the potential of establishing creative financing methods which can provide attractive programs for fixed asset financing, permanent working capital financing and venture capital financing.

Tasks

1. To become acquainted with the commercial loan officers and CRA officers of all local lending institutions.
2. To jointly develop a community reinvestment plan that can be implemented with one or more of the local lending institutions (preferably all of the local institutions would agree to participate).
3. To bring strong and doable proposals to the lending institutions for financing consideration.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. CENTRAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT
2. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM
3. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PARK
4. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM
5. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER/BUSINESS INCUBATOR
6. MARKETING & PROMOTION

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

Objectives

1. To retain existing companies within the community through an outreach program aimed at dealing with the specific, individual needs of those companies.
2. To assist growing companies with their need to expand so that said expansion can take place within Kent rather than having to leave the City for another location.
3. To bring potential technology transfer (in conjunction with the university) to existing companies so as to enhance their ability to grow and operate in a profitable manner.

Tasks

1. To establish teams of community ambassadors who take part in a visitation program to area businesses and industries. Such visits can help determine any needs or problems the companies may have and will establish a regular and on-going linkage between business and government.
2. To develop a database of available sites and buildings for commercial and industrial enterprises in need of new sites or additional space.
3. To develop a technology transfer program in conjunction with Kent State University in order to determine ways in which local companies can help transfer research into products that can be marketed and sold in the open market.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. CENTRAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT
2. COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACCESS
3. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM
4. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER/BUSINESS INCUBATOR
5. MARKETING & PROMOTION

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Objectives

1. To create a large scale office and high tech development area for businesses that would be attracted to the research and technology being generated at Kent State University and other area colleges and universities.
2. To create development opportunities for high tech industries.
3. To bring quality, high paying employment to the City of Kent.

Tasks

1. To identify a large area of land (40 to 80 acres) and to secure the ability to develop the land for the implementation of technology transfer.
2. To identify and combine resources to develop a pilot program for high tech manufacturing operations.
3. To aggressively pursue targeted companies.
4. To develop a technology transfer program in conjunction with Kent State University in order to determine ways in which local companies can help transfer research into products that can be marketed and sold in the open market.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACCESS
2. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM
3. MARKETING & PROMOTION

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM

Objectives

1. To enhance the beneficial relationship between Kent State University and the City of Kent through the transfer of ideas and efforts generated by way of research and academic programs into local businesses and industries.
2. To develop new businesses by drawing from the academic and research efforts of the university.
3. To create a job training component which would provide access and training to new technology, new manufacturing processes and related procedures so as to insure the transfer of information from the university to the private sector.

Tasks

1. To establish a working program between the City and Kent State University which promotes technology transfer.
2. To analyze the characteristics of existing businesses in order to determine the type of assistance from the university that might be beneficial to the business.
3. To develop a job training component to transfer induced production lines and/or jobs or job functions so that the transfer can be successful and so that existing employees are not displaced by not being able to cope with the new technology.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM
2. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PARK
3. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER/BUSINESS INCUBATOR
4. MARKETING & PROMOTION

SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER/BUSINESS INCUBATOR

Objectives

1. To encourage and promote the formation and development of local small businesses by providing pre-startup and post-startup assistance.
2. To establish attractive and creative financing sources including access to venture capital programs for prospective or developing small businesses.
3. To provide professional advice and counseling to prospective or developing small businesses so that proper operational financial planning is available to the entrepreneur.

Tasks

1. To establish a Small Business Development Center with a trained staff available for assistance or counseling.
2. To establish an incubator type facility where new businesses can work cooperatively and reduce operational overhead.
3. To establish specific programs geared toward specific population groups - women, minorities and the handicapped.
4. To create a mechanism for small businesses to inexpensively access necessary local technical assistance.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. CENTRAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT
2. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM
3. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PARK
4. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM

MARKETING & PROMOTION

Objectives

1. To establish marketing approach which promotes the qualities of the City and all of the components which make up the community.
2. To advertise the availability of programs available through the programs established in conjunction with this strategy.
3. To make extra efforts to promote said programs within the community so that the availability of these programs be known to residents and businesses.

Tasks

1. To develop multi-media presentations which generally market and promote the City and its amenities.
2. To establish targeted marketing programs which make an extra effort to reach out to desired businesses and industries.
3. To create a business hot-line through which information about economic development related programs can be derived and callers can be directed to the appropriate contacts.

Interrelationships (Primary)

1. CENTRAL CITY REDEVELOPMENT
2. COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT ACCESS
3. TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM
4. SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER/BUSINESS INCUBATOR
5. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT PARK
6. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

Creation of an Economic Development Plan

Each of the strategies outlined above will rely on the creation and success of individual programs geared toward achieving the objectives of those strategies. In addition, specific "brick and mortar" projects will be pursued under these strategies, thus creating the economic and employment benefits desired.

In order to set a well defined and thought out game plan for the implementation of these projects and strategies, a three to five year Economic Development Plan (EDP) should be adopted and maintained. Similar in purpose to a capital improvements plan, the EDP can identify and prioritize specific projects to be undertaken. Additionally, the EDP can define the specific tasks and actions needed for each project, the time frame for completion and various funding sources available to each project.

By establishing such a plan, City Council as well as other involved parties can work funding for projects into their annual budgetary process. Various requests for funding can be evaluated for their consistency to the goals and objectives outlined for the various strategies. By having such a plan, the allocation of various public dollars can be decided so that the benefit of these dollars can be maximized.

Finally, the creation of a formal EDP makes the future goals and objectives clear both within and outside the community. Residents, businessmen and community leaders alike will have a better understanding of the efforts being made within the community to preserve and create jobs and to enhance the City's economic base.