

## **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

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A demographic profile of a community provides a depiction of the characteristics of the population within that community. Such profiles, to their fullest extent, can provide a great deal of information and insight into a community and can constitute a full study unto itself. For the purposes of this document, however, this special report is intended only to provide information to assist the reader in understanding some basic characteristics of the population in the City of Kent. More specifically, it will describe Kent's population in certain facets, look at how some of Kent's characteristics compare to other places and identify some of the trends that may be developing based on a review of data over the past several decades.

The most reliable and constant source of data related to demographics is the data obtained through the nation's decennial census conducted at the beginning of each decade. The most recent data collected are based on the 2000 census conducted in the Spring of 2000. While the census data are considered to be the most reliable data available, there are limitations that prevent it from being the "perfect" count, leaving room for errors and omissions. It is possible that some of these problems taint, or raise questions about, the accuracy of the data collected for the city. Nevertheless, data reported for Kent by the census is considered official and is the basis on which the apportionment of local, state and federal political districts is based. Federal and state formula grants allocations also are based on the census figures.

The demographic profile portion of this special report is provided into three sections. It should be noted that both sections will provide facts and descriptions of the population in the city as it existed in the Spring of 2000. The first section will review certain characteristics of the population in 2000 and compare this information to selected places, including these statistics as they are reported for the State of Ohio and the United States. This comparison should provide some perspective on how Kent compares with other places. While this comparison is certainly limited and is by no means complete, it does provide some interesting insight into the community. The second section will provide a comparison of Kent to several other college towns in the State of Ohio. The third section will review trends related to selected characteristics of the population over the past several decades. In addition to providing more insight into the community, this information also is useful in planning for the future and determining what some of the needs for the city may be in the coming years, based on these trends.

### **Comparison of Kent to Selected Places – 2000**

**Population.** This section compares Kent to several selected places, including Portage County, the State of Ohio and the United States. In addition to those places just named, statistics from Franklin Township (the unincorporated portion) and from the City of Barberton in Summit County also are included. Barberton was included in the comparison because it is similar in population size to Kent, is part of the Akron

metropolitan area, and does not serve as the home of a major university. It also is an older community with similar community characteristics and economic development issues as those that Kent faces. For total population figures, see the table below:

<b>Comparison of Kent, Ohio, Population with Selected Locations, 2000</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<b>Population</b>
Kent, Ohio	27,906
Franklin Township, Ohio	5,276
Portage County, Ohio	152,061
Barberton, Ohio	27,899
State of Ohio	11,353,140
United States	281,421,906

The following characteristics will be discussed in the remainder of this section:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Families and households below poverty status
- Household income
- Educational attainment

Most of the figures used for comparison in this section are comprised of percentages rather than actual population figures given the wide disparity of numbers in the actual counts. In several cases, the statistical median figure is provided. For those not familiar with the term “median,” it represents the midpoint of all cases counted. In other words, if the ages of 100 people are counted and ranked in order from lowest age to highest age, the median age is the age that falls in the middle of the ranking. It does not represent the mean, or average, age of the population. The actual data charts from which the information in this section is taken are provided in Appendix E.

One final note on census data: The data are compiled on the basis of how people complete their census questionnaires. Thus the data are representative of how people classify themselves, not on how others classify them.

Gender. As shown in the table below, the distribution of the number of males and females is relatively equally proportioned nationally, with the percentage of females (50.9%) holding a slight edge over the percentage of males (49.1%).

<b>Distribution of Males and Females, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Population Group</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Male	45.8	51.0	48.8	46.7	48.6	49.1
Female	54.2	49.0	51.2	53.3	51.4	50.9

The national trend of a female-to-male edge in the population holds true in each of the places reviewed in varying proportions, with the exception of Franklin Township, where males held a 2% edge over females. Interestingly, Kent had the largest gap between the genders, with 54.2% of the population being female. A further review of the gender breakdown by age for Kent shows that the age group where the gender difference is most disparate is the 18-24 year age group, where females comprise 57.4% of the population in that age grouping compared to 42.6% being male. In contrast, males hold a slight edge in the population below the age of 18, where they comprise 51.3% of the population in that age group compared to 48.7% female. The large increase in the percentage of female residents at the age-18 threshold may be attributed to the attraction of Kent State University, but it also could be related to other factors such as housing, jobs or other supportive services. Kent's male and female population percentage in the 18-24 year age group is not comparable to the national percentages, where males in that age group outnumber females 51.1% to 48.9%.

Age. Kent's age distribution is obviously impacted by Kent State University and the number of young people that the university attracts. As can be seen from the table below, the impact is substantial.

<b>Age Distribution, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Median Age	22.9	37.4	34.4	37.2	36.2	35.3
Under 18	16.4	21.6	23.7	24.8	25.4	25.7
18 to 24	40.0	14.1	14.4	8.4	9.3	9.6
25 to 64	36.1	53.3	50.9	49.5	52.0	52.3
Over 64	7.5	11.0	11.0	17.3	13.3	12.4

The median age of the U.S. population is 35.3, compared to Kent's population, which is more than 12 years younger at 22.9. This statistic is supported by the fact that more than half of the City's population (56.4%) is under the age of 25. In the other places studied, the percentage of the population below the age of 25 runs from about 33% to 38%, with

the rate nationally just over 35%. Without the university, Kent's age distribution likely would reflect the findings in the other places studied.

Kent's age distribution also helps to explain several other characteristics of a population that differ from other communities studied. The first and perhaps most significant impact is on earned income. As will be discussed later in this section, Kent's median household income is well below that of the other places studied. This can be attributed to the fact that the earning capacity of persons below the age of 25 is generally limited because they either work a part-time job while going to school, or they hold a full-time job that does not pay a high hourly rate. This factor also is consistent with the fact that the city's percentage of persons living below poverty level is higher than it is for the other places studied.

It also is important to point out that the portion of the population that generally earns the most wages, those people between the ages of 25 and 64, account for just over one-third of Kent's population (36.1%), whereas typically in the other places studied, that portion of the population typically accounts for about half of the entire population. These figures, when coupled with the city's income data, would support a scenario where the public services demanded by the community are not proportionately supported by the tax revenues generated by its citizens. These data also would suggest that the spending power within the community is limited, based on the lower income levels and the number of people who earn at those lower levels.

Racial Composition. Anyone familiar with Kent knows that Kent State University attracts a very diverse population to the community. While national origin is reported separately from race in the census data, some of this diversity is shown in the breakdown of race. The 2000 Census also made provisions for counting persons of more than one race (multiple-race people), which indicates that persons of multiple races are becoming more numerous and thus do not allow as clear of comparisons to census data from previous counts, which tended to favor single-race reporting (see other section of this special report dealing with race).

As shown in the table below, the racial composition (diversity) of Kent's population is more pronounced than that of some of the surrounding communities that were studied.

<b>Racial Composition (Diversity), Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Race</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Black/African-American	10.2	2.5	3.6	5.9	12.1	12.9
White	87.9	95.2	95.5	93.7	86.1	77.1
Native American	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.5
Asian	2.5	2.4	1.0	0.5	1.4	4.2
Other	1.0	0.8	0.4	0.4	1.2	6.9
Note: Numbers include persons reporting multiple races and do not add to 100%.						

Kent’s population is generally reflective of that of the State of Ohio’s in regard to white and non-white population. Kent’s non-white population has a somewhat higher percentage of people of the Asian race and a slightly lower percentage of persons who are black/ African-American. Kent’s non-white population also is significantly higher than for the other places studied. In the case of Franklin Township, the percentage of black/African- American residents and Asian residents is almost the same.

The population of Kent and the other places studied is somewhat different than the overall racial distribution in the United States. In all of the nonwhite categories, the percentage of nonwhite persons in the United States is higher than what is found in Kent and the other local communities studied. This would suggest that Kent, while more racially diverse than some of its environs, is not as racially diverse as the country as a whole. Interestingly, the population of Portage County is the least diverse of any of the places studied, followed closely by Franklin Township.

Families and Households below Poverty Status. The U.S. Census Bureau defines “poverty” based on income and not on the condition of housing, employment status or other variables. Certainly people who live below the poverty level may live in substandard housing, be unemployed or underemployed, or have other difficulties that contribute to their situation. The Census Bureau establishes income thresholds based on family size, with families falling below such level considered to be below poverty level. Family and non-family counts do not include persons living in group quarters, such as those persons living in college dormitories, nursing homes or jails. These counts do, however, include persons living off-campus in various types of housing units.

As shown in the table below, Kent leads all of the places studied with the highest percentage of families and households living below the poverty level.

<b>Households Living below Poverty Level, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Family Type</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
All Families	15.4	2.8	5.9	11.5	7.8	9.2
Married-Couple Families	4.9	1.4	2.3	4.5	3.4	4.9
Female Head-of-Household	40.9	24.4	25.0	32.2	26.3	26.5
Non-family Households	35.9	24.5	19.2	15.8	16.6	17.4
Note: Percentages are not inclusive of other categories.						

It should be noted that Kent has a substantially higher percentage of female-headed households living below the poverty level than the national average and that of the places studied, only Barberton has a percentage in this same category that approaches Kent's. This figure in Kent's case may be supported to a certain extent by the university population, where it has been noted earlier that the city has a larger college-age, female population whose income opportunities are limited. Even more interesting is the fact that the percentage of married-couple families living below the poverty level is not that high and matches the national average of 4.9%. This again would tend to point to the university-age population as one of the prime contributors to the higher percentages regarding poverty level and would suggest that the City, with the college-age population factored out, would not be significantly dissimilar to the other places studied.

Household Income. Conclusions from a review of the data related to household income (see table below) are consistent with those for poverty-level status. The median household-income level shown for Kent is the lowest of all the places studied, with only Barberton approaching Kent's figure. Franklin Township and Portage County exceed both the state and national median household-income figures. The fact that both Kent's and Barberton's median household-income figures are significantly below the state and national averages may suggest that such a trend is not uncommon in older suburban cities, although such a statement is not supported with statistical proof because of the limited nature of this analysis.

<b>Household Income, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Income</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Less than \$10,000	18.1	1.03	7.8	11.7	9.2	9.5
\$10,000 to \$29,999	32.3	21.0	23.8	34.1	26.5	25.6
\$30,000 to \$74,999	35.1	40.2	47.3	43.5	44.5	42.4
\$75,000 to \$149,999	13.3	21.6	18.2	9.1	16.5	17.9
More than \$150,000	1.2	6.9	2.9	1.6	3.3	4.6
Median (Dollars)	\$29,582	\$47,750	\$44,347	\$32,178	\$40,956	\$41,994

Kent had the highest percentage of households earning less than \$10,000, the lowest percentage of households earning \$30,000 to \$74,999 and the lowest percentage of households earning more than \$150,000. Franklin Township had the highest median household income of all the places studied and also had the largest percentage of households earning more than \$150,000. Barberton had the lowest percentage of households earning more than \$75,000 a year (10.7%). This compares to Kent's 14.5%. Nationally, about 22.5% of all households earn more than \$75,000 in annual income.

Educational Attainment. In reviewing the 2000 census data for the educational attainment of persons 25 years of age and older, Kent would be expected to show well compared to the other places studied because of the presence of Kent State University. As shown in the table below, Kent and Franklin Township score the highest in the categories related to college education, with Franklin Township rating slightly higher in the percentage of persons with masters' degrees or post-masters' degrees.

<b>Educational Attainment, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Income</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Franklin Township, Ohio</b>	<b>Portage County, Ohio</b>	<b>Barberton, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Less than High School	8.3	8.8	14.0	20.9	17.1	19.6
High School Graduate	28.6	26.8	39.9	46.1	36.1	28.6
Bachelor's Degree	21.0	21.6	14.0	7.3	13.7	15.5
Master's Degree	10.9	12.2	4.7	2.2	5.0	5.9
Above Master's Degree	5.2	9.1	2.3	1.1	2.5	3.0
Note: Data are for persons 25 years of age and older.						

The percentage of persons with bachelor's degrees or higher in the City of Kent is just under 40% (37.1%), while the same figure in Franklin Township is just over 40% (42.9%). These combined categories score significantly better than the State of Ohio (21.2%) and the United States (24.4%). Kent and Franklin Township also had the lowest percentages of persons with less than a high school education, while Barberton led that category.

Conclusions. As noted earlier, this brief comparison can in no way paint a complete picture of how Kent compares to other places. It does, however, provide some interesting comparisons and tends to support some general conclusions that can be generated from the data. These conclusions follow:

- Kent has a higher proportion of females to males than what is found in some of the other places studied. Based on a review of the actual data breakdown of gender by age, this ratio appears to be attributed to a proportionately higher number of college-age females than college-age males.
- Kent has a significantly younger population than the other places studied. Just over 56% of all people living in the city are under the age of 25. Given that this population has limited earning potential, this age factor is likely one of the primary inhibitors to income levels.
- Kent is more racially diverse than the other local places studied, is comparable to the racial diversity figures for the State of Ohio but somewhat less diverse than the U.S. population as a whole.
- Household income in Kent is lower than the other places studied, with more than half of Kent's households earning less than \$29,582 a year. The average household in the United States earned just under \$42,000.
- Just over 37% of all persons living in Kent who are age 25 and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. Nationally, this figure is about 24%.

### **Comparison of Kent to Selected University Cities in Ohio – 2000**

This section will compare Kent to three college communities in Ohio: Oxford, Ohio (Miami University), Bowling Green, Ohio (Bowling Green State University) and Athens, Ohio (Ohio University). These three towns are comparable in size to Kent as indicated below:



<b>Comparison of Kent, Ohio, Population with Selected Locations, 2000</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<b>Population</b>
Kent, Ohio	27,906
Oxford, Ohio	21,943
Bowling Green, Ohio	29,636
Athens, Ohio	21,342

The same characteristics that were discussed in the first section of this chapter will also be discussed in this section:

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Families and households below poverty status
- Household income
- Educational attainment

All four cities are smaller cities compared to the larger urban university cities throughout the state, thus they are somewhat easier to analyze, more easily revealing the impacts that their universities may have on their populations. Two of the communities, Kent and Oxford, are located in relatively urban areas, whereas Bowling Green and Athens are located in more rural areas. Athens is even somewhat more unique in that it is located in “Appalachian” southeast Ohio, an area where incomes and economic opportunities are limited, as will be reflected in some of the data being analyzed.

Gender. The comparison of population of each community by gender reveals no significant differences, with each community having a larger percentage of females than males. Of the four communities, Kent has a slightly larger disparity between the male / female population than the other communities and all four fall slightly below the State and National percentages.

<b>Distribution of Males and Females, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Population Group</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Oxford, Ohio</b>	<b>Bowling Green, Ohio</b>	<b>Athens, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Male	45.8	46.8	46.8	46.9	48.6	49.1
Female	54.2	53.2	53.2	53.1	51.4	50.9

Age. While the median age of each of the four communities is relatively equal and substantially below the levels for the State of Ohio and the United States, there are some

significant differences in the age breakdowns. Kent and Bowling Green appear to be more closely aligned in the age breakdowns, while Oxford and Athens share a number of similarities.

<b>Age Distribution, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Oxford, Ohio</b>	<b>Bowling Green, Ohio</b>	<b>Athens, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Median Age	22.9	21.3	22.4	21.5	36.2	35.3
Under 18	16.4	8.3	13.1	6.7	25.4	25.7
18 to 24	40.0	66.8	46.6	66.7	9.3	9.6
25 to 64	36.1	20.1	32.7	21.8	52.0	52.3
Over 64	7.5	4.8	7.6	4.8	13.3	12.4

As noted in the first section of this Chapter, Kent, when compared to the selected places studied, had the largest percentage of population between the age of 18 and 24. However, in this comparison with other Ohio university cities, Kent had the lowest percentage of persons between 18 and 24 years of age. Remarkably, two-thirds of both Oxfords' and Athens' population was comprised of persons between the age of 18 and 24. In both cases only about 25% of the population on Oxford and Athens was above the age of 24. Similarly, the elderly population in both Oxford and Athens was smaller (percentage-wise) than either Kent or Bowling Green. Thus, it can be said that Athens and Oxford are somewhat “younger” communities, with fewer families and school-age children, than Bowling Green and Kent. The same can be said for all four college communities when compared to state and national levels.

Racial Composition. Compared to the other university communities analyzed, Kent is by far the most racially diverse, with almost 15% of the population indicating that it was non-white. Athens reported a non-white population of about 11% and also reported the highest percentage of Asian residents (5.0%).

<b>Racial Composition (Diversity), Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Race</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Oxford, Ohio</b>	<b>Bowling Green, Ohio</b>	<b>Athens, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
Black/African-American	10.2	4.9	3.2	4.3	12.1	12.9
White	87.9	92.4	93.1	90.6	86.1	77.1
Native American	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.5
Asian	2.5	2.9	2.2	5.0	1.4	4.2
Other	1.0	0.8	2.4	1.3	1.2	6.9

Note: Numbers include persons reporting multiple races and do not add to 100%.

Oxford reported a non-white population of about 9% and Bowling Green was the least diverse with a non-white population of just over 8%. All of the communities analyzed fell below the national figures for diversity, and only Kent closely resembled the diversity characteristics for the State of Ohio overall.

Families and Households Below Poverty Status. Each of the college communities studied reflected higher levels of families and households living in poverty than the State and National averages. The variations were most noticeable in the percentage of Non-Family Households living below poverty status. These figures are not surprising given that the student population (those not living at home) would typically fall into this classification.

<b>Households Living below Poverty Level, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage</b>						
<b>Family Type</b>	<b>Kent, Ohio</b>	<b>Oxford, Ohio</b>	<b>Bowling Green, Ohio</b>	<b>Athens, Ohio</b>	<b>State of Ohio</b>	<b>United States</b>
All Families	15.4	13.4	8.0	14.8	7.8	9.2
Married-Couple Families	4.9	7.8	2.0	7.5	3.4	4.9
Female Head-of-Household	40.9	32.9	25.5	41.5	26.3	26.5
Non-family Households	35.9	53.5	36.8	63.9	16.6	17.4
Note: Percentages are not inclusive of other categories.						

Generally, Bowling Green had the lowest levels of families and households living below poverty level and for the most part, Athens had the highest figures. Kent reported the highest percentage of families living below poverty level but Athens clearly reported the highest percentage of non-family households living below poverty level. Kent also had the lowest percentage of non-family households living below poverty status of the four communities. While by no means conclusive, the numbers from these four communities would suggest that college towns are typically more impacted by families and households living at or below poverty level than non-college towns in similar urban and rural settings. The next section on Household Income also supports this assertion.

Household Income. A comparison of median household income in the college communities studied reveals that all four of the communities have median household incomes that fall way below the State and National median household incomes. Bowling Green was the community with the highest median household income, just slightly higher than Kent's. Athens had by far the lowest median household income, which was less than half of the State and National figures.

Household Income, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Income	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than \$10,000	18.1	21.5	15.4	33.3	9.2	9.5
\$10,000 to \$29,999	32.3	33.7	33.5	33.9	26.5	25.6
\$30,000 to \$74,999	35.1	29.1	37.5	20.9	44.5	42.4
\$75,000 to \$149,999	13.3	13.5	11.9	9.4	16.5	17.9
More than \$150,000	1.2	2.2	1.7	2.3	3.3	4.6
Median (Dollars)	\$29,582	\$25,164	\$30,599	\$17,122	\$40,956	\$41,994

In Athens, two-thirds of the households make less than \$30,000 per year, whereas about half of the households in the other communities make less than \$30,000 per year. Athens situation is probably exacerbated by its somewhat remote location and presence in Appalachian southeast Ohio. These figures on household incomes appear to correlate with poverty level data to suggest that income levels in college communities are more depressed than what may usually be found in most areas.

Educational Attainment. The data for the four communities analyzed regarding educational attainment is somewhat mixed and does not reveal results that one might assume, that being that income earning ability is directly associated with educational attainment. As was noted in the previous section on income, Athens, Ohio had the lowest household median income figure of the four college communities. As far as educational attainment, however, it had the highest combined percentage (63.8%) of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Educational Attainment, Selected Ohio Locations, by Percentage						
Income	Kent, Ohio	Oxford, Ohio	Bowling Green, Ohio	Athens, Ohio	State of Ohio	United States
Less than High School	8.3	10.7	8.8	6.5	17.1	19.6
High School Graduate	28.6	14.7	22.7	11.2	36.1	28.6
Bachelor's Degree	21.0	24.0	21.9	25.6	13.7	15.5
Master's Degree	10.9	17.9	14.6	22.5	5.0	5.9
Above Master's Degree	5.2	11.6	7.6	15.7	2.5	3.0
Note: Data are for persons 25 years of age and older.						

Conversely, Kent had the lowest combined percentage of persons having attained a bachelor's degree or higher, mainly due to the fact that it had the lowest percentage of

persons who had attained either a Master's degree or above. As would be expected, the four communities had a much higher level of educational attainment than the Statewide or National level.

Conclusions. While the above review of selected data was very limited, there are some conclusions that can be suggested from this data.

- That Kent and the other college communities analyzed typically have a higher female to male ratio than either the State of Ohio or the United States.
- That Kent and the other college communities have significantly younger populations than the State and National medians.
- That Kent is somewhat more racially diverse than Athens, Oxford or Bowling Green.
- That all four communities have significantly lower median household incomes than the State and National median incomes and have typically higher levels of poverty than what is seen across the State and the country as a whole.
- That all four communities have a collectively higher educational attainment level than Ohio or the United States as a whole. Kent, however, had the lowest percentage of persons having a college degree of the four communities studied.

### **Historical Review of City of Kent Data**

The population of Kent over a thirty-year period has fluctuated, showing a slight decrease of about 1% between 1970 and 2000. Between 1980 and 1990, however, the population increased by more than 2,000 people. At best, these figures, as unstable as they are, indicate no specific trends and point to the inconsistency with which the data are collected.

In reviewing the general development of the City of Kent since the 1970 census, it can be said that between 1970 and 1980, the City saw some expansion of its physical land area through annexation and the acquisition or construction of a substantial number of housing units. The 1980s was a decade of some physical expansion of the City's boundaries, mainly into Brimfield Township. These areas were sparsely populated and would not have contributed greatly to the population increase seen between 1980 and 1990. Few new single-family homes were built in the 1980s, but there was significant construction of multifamily units toward the end of the decade that would help to account for the population increase.

The decade from 1990 to 2000 saw the City's single family home production increase significantly, with the development of several hundred new homes in northern Kent and northwestern Kent. The population increase that one would have expected with this growth did not materialize, and according to the 2000 census, the City's population

actually decreased by about 900 people. The continued development of new single family housing in the City has continued into the 2000s and, as of the writing of this plan, still has some way to go before being completed. It is likely that by the end of the decade, the city should be close to the build-out point, or the point at which most of the developable residential land will have been developed.

The factors that have contributed to the rather unpredictable and not easily explained ups and downs of the population counts for the city are described in the following paragraphs.

Fluctuations in On-Campus Housing. The on-campus housing population at Kent State University has fluctuated over the past thirty years. The figures for on-campus housing are counted under the Group Quarters heading but are easily identified. These counts have fluctuated because of increases and decreases in the number of persons living on campus and are affected in enrollment fluctuations and some units being taken out of service by renovation or reconstruction projects.

<b>Fluctuation in On-Campus Housing, 1970-2000</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Dormitory Population</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>	<b>Overall Population</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
1970	8,330		28,183	
1980	4,801	-42.4	26,164	-7.2
1990	6,950	44.8	28,835	10.2
2000	5,653	-18.7	27,906	3.2

The chart above shows the levels of on-campus housing as reported by Kent State University for the time period from 1970 to 2000. The ups and downs of the on-campus housing are consistent with the general increases / decreases in the overall City population.

Inaccurate Counts. As already noted, counting the transient population of the City is at best a hit-and-miss effort despite the procedures that the Census Bureau uses to try to ensure complete counts. Census Day is the first of April in each new decade, and the overall effort runs well through the summer of that year as field enumerators attempt to locate those households and persons who may not have returned a survey through the mail. This includes persons in group quarters. Summer also is the time when the university has its smallest enrollment and when the on- and off-campus student housing is at its lowest occupancy. This leads to a suspicion that some of the student population does not get counted and that the fluctuation in the counts over the last 30 years may actually give some measure of the accuracy of the counts.

Decreases in Persons per Housing Unit. One of the statistics that is often overlooked is the trend toward smaller household sizes over the past thirty years. In comparing the total population with the total number of occupied housing units over the past thirty years, the number of persons per housing unit has decreased from 4.08 persons per unit in

1970 to 2.85 persons per unit in 2000. While any of the census data collected can be argued based on the possible inaccuracies of the counts, these numbers do indicate a significant trend—namely, that household sizes are decreasing. This may be the best explanation as to why the population counts have not increased proportionately with the construction of new housing units seen over the past thirty years. It is quite notable that the increase of housing in the city by just more than 3,500 units since 1970 should have produced substantial population growth in the city during that time. This has not been the case and can be explained only by decreases in population density and the other factors just noted. A more detailed study may show other reasons but the three just noted are the most obvious explanations.

Age of Population. As noted in the first part of this special report, the college-age population constitutes a significant portion of Kent’s total population when compared to some of the other places studied. While the 1970 census data available are limited, it appears that this age group has accounted for 36% to 42% of the city’s total population and thus has been relatively stable. Given the other trends that have been noted and the expectation that Kent State University will remain stable if not grow in enrollment, this ratio is not likely to change significantly. The senior citizen population also has been relatively stable over this period, ranging from about 6% to 7.5% of the overall population. The trend here indicates that the senior citizen population is increasing slightly. The percentage of children ranging in age from birth through high-school age also appears to be relatively stable.

A somewhat differently structured comparison of changes in age groups in the city between 1980 and 2000 is provided in the table below. This breakdown is more detailed by age group and covers only the past twenty years rather than the previous discussion, which covers the past thirty years. This table shows trends within the age groupings, rather than a comparison of age groupings to the total population as discussed in the previous paragraph.

<b>Age Distribution, Historical Data</b>				
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
Under 5	1,481	1,425	1,397	-5.7
5-9	1,285	1,430	1,274	-0.9
10-14	1,116	1,235	1,129	1.2
15-19	3,934	5,070	4,569	16.1
20-24	7,542	7,824	7,351	-2.5
25-34	4,754	4,177	3,639	-23.5
35-44	1,678	2,957	2,792	66.4
45-64	2,814	2,695	3,650	29.7
65 +	1,560	2,022	2,105	34.9

The table above shows that there have been some significant changes in the 15-19 year age group (up 16.14%), the 25-34 year age group (down 23.45%), the 35-44 year age group (up 66.39%), the 45-64 year age group (up 29.71%) and the 65-and-over age group (up 34.94%). Looking at this data further, in some cases the data do not present a firm trend up or down, but there are several exceptions. The 25-34 year age group has decreased steadily since 1980, suggesting that the persons who would just be exiting college is less inclined to stay in Kent. Considering that most of the students who attend Kent State University did not live in Kent before coming to school, the steady decrease is not surprising, but it does show a trend that fewer graduates are staying than had been the case twenty years ago. The 65-and-over population has been steadily growing since 1980, increasing by about one-third. This supports the fact that the population of Kent is growing older with the aging of the baby boomers and their parents.

This trend toward increasing numbers of older citizens and decreasing numbers of younger, post-college citizens has significant implications as far as city services are concerned. Such a trend suggests that income tax revenues will see a decline, putting some pressure on city government in its attempts to maintain services in the face of declining revenues that help to pay for those services.

Race. As noted in the previous section on this topic, Kent has a significantly higher minority population than the other places to which it was compared locally. Since 1970, the percentage of minority population in the city has increased from about 4% to about 14%. Thus, Kent is becoming an increasingly diverse community. Many comments were received in the comprehensive planning district meetings said that Kent residents value the diversity of race, culture and religion in the community. This trend is expected to continue (see also, Appendix E).

Household Income and Poverty Status. In comparison to the other local places studied in the previous section on this topic, Kent's percentages of persons living below the poverty level is significantly higher, with the exception of the percentage of "married-couple families" living below the poverty level. This finding is generally comparable to local, state and national figures. It was also noted earlier that Kent's median household income is much lower than what was found in the other places studied (see also, Appendix E).

Income in the city has risen steadily since 1970, with the largest increase between 1970 and 1980. The number of families and individuals living below the poverty level has decreased slightly by several percentage points between 1990 and 2000. Thus, despite increasing incomes, a significant number of households and individuals still are living below the poverty level. This situation points to a potentially growing income gap between people of moderate and higher incomes versus those who are poor. Of special note is the increase in the number of individuals 65 years of age and older that are living below the poverty level. The elderly and the poor are the major benefactors of the social-service funding that the city has provided for more than 20 years. Should tax revenues decrease in the future, however, the city may be challenged in its ability to maintain funding levels for social services. Many of the agencies providing these services have already experienced significant cuts in funding from other funding sources that they have historically relied on.



Employment. The employment status of Kent residents has remained fairly stable. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of people in the labor force, and the unemployment rate (as measured at the time of the 2000 census) had dropped from 4.21% in 1990 to 3.94% in 2000. However, these numbers are three years old, and with the number of job cutbacks and the general economic downturns of the past three years, unemployment has likely increased (there are no numbers available for the city which are published on a regular basis). Several comments received at the neighborhood meetings stated a need for the City of Kent to create more jobs for local residents. Such comments, along with potential declines in tax revenues and increasing public service needs make economic development a crucial priority for the City of Kent.

Taking a closer look at the employment profile of the city, there are some noticeable trends that impact the focus of economic development and need to be understood. The U.S. Census examines employment categories, one of which is Industry Employment (see Appendix E). This title is somewhat deceiving, as the data reflect all sectors or industries in which people are employed. Over the past four census counts, the Census Bureau has changed its employment catalog titles. In the 1990 and 2000 Census, employment groupings previously used were broken down into various subgroups. In spite of this, it is possible to attempt to reconfigure the 1990 and 2000 data to be similar to the 1970 and 1980 data. In so doing, it is possible to note significant shifts in employment patterns in Kent between 1970 and 2000.

<b>Employment in Kent by Sector, 1970-2000</b>								
<b>Employment Sector</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Total Employment	11,210	100.0	12,543	100.0	13,891	100.0	15,586	100.0
Professional and Related	4,670	41.7	4,979	39.7	5,301	38.2	6,074	39.0
Manufacturing	2,342	20.9	2,295	18.3	1,902	13.7	1,894	12.2
Retail	2,099	18.7	2,260	18.0	3,324	23.9	2,171	13.9
Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation and Food Service	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,526	16.2
All other Employment Sectors	2,099	18.7	3,009	24.0	3,304	23.8	2,291	14.7

A study of the data finds that the Professional and Related job category has shown a slight decline in terms of its share of the entire labor force. However, in terms of actual jobs, the number of jobs has increased by 30% since 1970.

In the Manufacturing category, employment in the City of Kent has decreased since 1970, both in terms of its overall share of the job force and in terms of actual numbers. In 2000, manufacturing jobs comprised only about 12% of the city's labor force, as compared to almost 21% in 1970. During that same period, the number of manufacturing jobs in the city decreased by about 20%.

In the Retail category, the proportion of jobs in the labor force also decreased, by 4.8%, during the past thirty years, with the actual number of retail jobs having increased by 3%.

It is difficult to rank the Arts, Entertainment, Accommodation, Recreation and Food Services sector category in the 1970, 1980 and 1990 Census data. In its own right, as reflected by the 2000 data, the category has become a significant employment sector in the city, comprising almost 14% of the city's total employment.

In terms of economic development strategies for the city, it will be important for the city to encourage the continued growth of the professional-and-related labor force. Traditionally, communities have looked to the manufacturing sector as a solid base.

With a worldwide economy, however, that may no longer be possible. The challenge that faces Kent is twofold:

- Work to maintain the existing industrial base and encourage expansions
- Partner with Kent State University to facilitate technology transfers from the academic world to the working world and be able to accommodate that transfer within the city by providing places for companies working in these areas to flourish

Employment Status and Occupation. It is interesting to note that while Kent's population decreased between 1970 and 2000, the number of employed residents increased. As in earlier census counts, the data collected for the Employment Status and Occupation category in the years 1970 and 1980 differ from the categories used to report the data collected in the census in 1990 and 2000 (see also, Appendix E).

The first set of statistics looks at the population of persons 16 years of age and older who are in the labor force.

<b>Kent Residents 16 years of age and older in the Labor Force, 1970-2000</b>				
<b>Population</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
Total Employment	11,210	12,543	14,950	16,575

As noted earlier, in 1990, Kent residents experienced an unemployment rate of 4.21%. That figure dropped to 3.94% in 2000. (Data for 2003 are not available for the city.)

As with other employment data, it is difficult to completely track all of the information over time. In some cases, assumptions can be made and analysis applied to the data; in other cases, the changes in census categories makes this task rather difficult and requires additional assumptions. With this in mind, data for the Employment Status and Occupation category may be considered in the manner shown in the following table.

<b>Employment Status of Kent Residents by Sector, 1970-2000</b>								
<b>Employment Sector</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Managerial, Technical, Sales and Admin. Support	6,583	58.7	7,502	59.8	8,379	56.0	9,528	57.5
Service	1,794	16.0	2,258	18.0	2,690	18.0	3,256	19.7
Operators and Laborers, Craftsmen and Repairmen	2,781	24.8	2,614	20.8	2,678	17.9	2,783	16.8
Farming and Agriculture	52	0.5	169	1.3	174	1.2	19	0.1

Employment patterns of Kent residents are somewhat different from the data for trends in the Industrial Employment category. The number of Kent residents employed in areas described as managerial, technical, sales and administrative support have increased by 45% between 1970 and 2000. The majority of Kent residents are employed in this job sector.

The number of Kent residents employed in the service sector has increased 81% and, as of 2000, constituted 21% of Kent's work force.

Unfortunately, Kent residents in the sector that includes operators, laborers, craftsmen and repairmen have not shared similar growth trends. In terms of the number of jobs, this sector has remained stable; however as a percentage of the total number of Kent residents, this sector has decreased by 9%. Likewise, both the number and the percentage of Kent residents involved in farming and agriculture has decreased in both number and as a percentage of the Kent work force.

Commuting to Work and Vehicles Available. Kent residents who commute to work are traveling an average of 21 minutes. In addition, the number of Kent residents who carpool (16.07% in 1980; down to 8.85% in 2000) and those residents who use public transportation (4% in 1990; down to 2.18% in 2000) have both decreased. Just over 50% of all the households in Kent own two or more vehicles, and just over 14% of the households own more than three vehicles. These statistics show a trend contrary to what some of the residents attending the district meetings indicated in their statements that they would like to see Kent be a pedestrian-friendly community that offers alternative forms of transportation and relies less on the automobile. To accomplish these preferences, residents will need to make lifestyle changes or adaptations to their daily routines. City government can indeed work with the appropriate groups and entities to provide Kent residents with increased transit service from PARTA and construct intermodal facilities in the community. It should be noted that since the 2000 Census, PARTA has already taken on a larger role in Kent and Portage County, thanks to increases in its operating revenue (see also, Appendix E).

Residents at the district meetings also stated a desire to see more hike-and-bike trails in the community, thus stressing a preference for health and recreation. It should be noted that the development of such facilities in other areas of Ohio has fostered some growth in local tourism that helps to support local restaurants and retail shops.

Housing Occupancy and Tenure. The number of renter-occupied housing units in the city has increased dramatically over the last 30 years, with 53% in 1970 compared to 62.2% of all housing units being renter-occupied in 2000. Because Kent is a university town, the slightly higher percentage of renter-occupied housing is not unusual. With the 2000 Census indicating that almost two-thirds of the housing in Kent is rental housing, this situation does have implications for the city. Property maintenance will continue to be an important component of city-provided services in order to ensure decent living conditions for rental residents and as a way of helping to preserve property values in neighborhoods. Many comments received at the district meetings indicated that Kent residents have a strong desire to see their owner-occupied neighborhoods protected from an influx of student housing. To help accomplish this, the city has and will continue to provide incentives for home ownership and the conversion of some rental units back to owner-occupied units. Likewise, the city should continue to consider ways in which it can encourage residential properties to be maintained and upgraded through incentives (e.g., low-interest loan programs) and active enforcement of housing and exterior maintenance codes (see also, Appendix E).

Housing Values and Rental Costs. The values of owner-occupied homes in the city have increased steadily, with a 40% gain in value between 1990 and 2000. Gross rent has increased 25% during the same period. The owner-occupied market has been bolstered since the early 1990s by the construction of new single-family homes as reported earlier in this special report. That trend essentially expanded into western Portage County and, to a lesser extent, into eastern Portage County from the residential expansion that was taking place in eastern Summit County in such places such as Tallmadge, Stow and Hudson. While the increase in gross rents has been somewhat subdued in comparison, it does not show that Kent already has some of the highest gross-rent rates in the area, if not the entire State of Ohio.

Typically many rental properties rent at rates higher than the fair market rates established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as part of its administration of federally assisted housing programs. These higher rental rates are a function of the concept of supply and demand and can be attributed to the fact that the student population competes with the local, non-student population for rental housing. With a constant demand being placed on the rental housing market, landlords can maintain rents at premium levels.

School Enrollment and Educational Attainment. As noted in the first section of this special report, Kent residents have attained a higher level of education than most of the places studied, including such levels for the State of Ohio and the country overall. The percentage of high school graduates within the City of Kent has increased from 85.89% in 1990 to 91.67% in 2000. Residents with a bachelor's degree also increased, from 33.63% in 1990 to 36.68% in 2000.

The number of students enrolled in elementary school has remained fairly steady over the years, but the number of students enrolled in high school has changed dramatically since 1970. Since that time, the number of high school students has dropped from 2,123 in 1970 to 929 in 2000. This trend can be attributed to the aging of the baby boomers, most of whom attended high school in the late 1960s and 1970s. Family sizes have decreased as shown in statistics discussed earlier in this special report related to the number of persons per housing unit (see also, Appendix E).