

DISTRICT PLANS

Introduction

The analysis of each district (neighborhood) is discussed separately. This discussion includes the following elements:

- **Description**. The description of the district is based on a survey conducted while driving each street within that area. The description includes comments on land use and infrastructure and building conditions.
- **District Sustainability Goals**. Responses from the district meetings are grouped according to the elements of sustainability each represents.
- **Implementation Plan**. The list of policy statements is then extended to create a list of implementation recommendations.
- **Implications**. Next is a discussion of the implications of the plan outlined for the district. Like the physics lesson about equal and opposite reactions, there are trade-offs and implications for each district's sustainability plan. One priority offered may negate another voiced concern. For instance, the creation of arts nodes may invite regional traffic, which in turn may create problems and prompt requests for traffic management and traffic calming. The question then becomes: How do we acknowledge the potential conflict to a workable, sustainable solution? These answers can only be resolved over time. The purpose is to raise awareness.

**A MAP OF THE
STANDING ROCK NEIGHBORHOOD
DISTRICT PLAN
IS AVAILABLE
FOR VIEWING
AT
THE CITY OF KENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
930 OVERHOLT DRIVE
KENT, OHIO**

Standing Rock District

Description

The Standing Rock District is a unique mix of land uses: commercial, public space (cemetery, arboretum, school buildings and grounds), and a mix of residential housing types, including historical homes and buildings. The area is hallmarked by many large and stately trees on tree lawns and in yards. The district is bisected by State Route 43 (North Mantua Street) and is bounded on east by the Cuyahoga River.

Approximately twenty percent of the land area is in public usage: Roosevelt Senior High School, Stanton Middle School, Franklin Elementary School, Davey Elementary School, the former Central Elementary School, Standing Rock Cemetery, and the Parks and Recreation Board Arboretum. The River Bend subdivision is the most recent residential development in this district.

It appears that approximately fifteen percent of the housing units in this district are rental units. Housing styles are mixed, and a number of houses are in various stages of renovation. Most properties are very well maintained and reflect a wonderful historic and architectural value and investment. Many areas could and should be targeted for property maintenance enforcement and housing rehabilitation fund programs.

Many of the roads are in need of repairs ranging from repaving to reconstruction. Storm drainage infrastructure in many parts of this district appear to be problematic and in need of redesign and/or repair. Sidewalks also are in need of repair and/or replacement. In a few isolated areas, sidewalks do not exist and should be constructed.

North Mantua Street, between Crain Avenue to Carthage Avenue, functions as a small commercial node with a mix of commercial activities. Many of the commercial properties are in need of facade and signage improvements. As the northern gateway into Kent, this area needs improvements in aesthetics. The area also includes a small commercial area along West Main Street in the southwest corner of the district; a small, adjoining industrial area; and two isolated, nonconforming industrial uses.

District Sustainability Goals

The Standing Rock District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Preserve Kent's unique history.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Support diversity.
- Encourage City of Kent officials and offices to be approachable and facilitate citizen involvement.

Economic

- Support appropriate economic development.
- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Standing Rock District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Promote traffic management with street maintenance and traffic calming.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system.
- Encourage the replacement of sidewalks, and construction of new where they are missing; facilitate and encourage pedestrian access and travel; improve district walk-ability.
- Encourage capital investment in drainage systems and road improvements. This district could serve as a pilot for the implementation of green-oriented drainage systems (including lot based rain gardens).
- Accept socially, cultural and economically diverse populations
- Develop artistic oriented businesses/cultural areas, coffeehouses and restaurants
- Re-develop and re-use underutilized buildings and properties.
- Encourage a diverse economic base including industrial uses, and technology spin-offs from Kent State University.
- Assist the retention and expansion of existing commercial and industrial businesses.
- Evaluate the use of tax incentives.
- Encourage the location of businesses that pay a living wage.

- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially along the Route 43 corridor; utilizing CDBG housing funds or the housing rehabilitation program where appropriate.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting homeownership loan programs. Investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements program.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available).
- Rezone the R-C (High Density Multifamily-Commercial Urban Residential) District on West Main Street to R-3 High Density Residential.

Implications

The Standing Rock District links the ideas of preserving Kent’s natural history and natural resources, the community’s diversity and a desire to support appropriate economic development. The vast majority of Kent is developed. Only a few remaining large parcels suitable for development remain. All of these parcels, however, are outside of the Standing Rock District (with the exception of uncompleted areas of the River Bend subdivision). Appropriate economic development is difficult to define and is a term that, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder.

Traffic management and preservation of trees were linked with the approachability of municipal officials and having a local economy that is based on the arts and art-related businesses that is diverse and sensitive to environmental and social issues. The relationship between the arts and supportive corollary businesses ties into the concept of preserving Kent’s natural resources, as these businesses may, more than likely, be located in existing buildings either downtown area or in strip centers elsewhere. It may not be necessary to construct new buildings. Arts businesses are directly related to tourism and invite regional traffic into the community. Traffic management and parking may become challenges, but they would be seen as good problems to have. A community working openly with approachable public officials to resolve these challenges will make a better and stronger community for all concerned.

The diversity of the district’s economy as it applies to the retail and service trades refers to the products and services that will be purchased by the Kent population without their having to leave the community. Such stores would be ones that appeal to both full-time residents and Kent State University students. Retailers need to be aware of this dichotomy—as do residents in communicating to retailers what their goods and service needs may be—rather than simply shopping in other communities.

The district’s economic diversity also implies the need for industrial and knowledge-based companies locating in Kent and, once established, expanding in Kent. The city has serious challenges in this regard. Fewer than 300 acres of land are available for this type of development. The acreage is divided among prime parcels that feature rolling topographies and is adjacent to Plum Creek, the Cuyahoga River and wetlands. Kent is now landlocked; Joint Economic District Development (JEDD) agreements have virtually negated any present or future discussion of annexation, initiating a new era of

cooperation with both Franklin and Brimfield Townships. All of the goals cited for the Standing Rock District also imply an inward view of development and redevelopment of existing buildings and an acceptance of the development of all remaining available parcels. Development codes must find a balance between environmental issues and the ability of businesses to build and provide employment opportunities.

The goals for the Standing Rock District are important in terms of finite resources and the use of these resources to provide a framework for Kent as a sustainable community.

**A MAP OF THE
CRAIN TO MAIN NEIGHBORHOOD
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KENT, OHIO**

Crain-to-Main District

Description

The Crain-to-Main District is a mix of industrial, single-family, multifamily houses and apartments, student rooming houses, and institutional and religious uses bounded by commercial uses on the north side of East Main Street. This district is heavily influenced by the proximity of Kent State University on the area's southern border and industrially zoned property to the north.

In 2000, the Smithers-Oasis Corporation completed construction of a 63,954-square-foot manufacturing and warehousing operation. As part of that project, the City of Kent and the State of Ohio reconstructed and lengthened Marvin Avenue, thereby opening up numerous acres for additional new industrial businesses and expansions.

Several medium and small apartment complexes can be found along Lake and East Main Streets. The University Woods single-family subdivision is in its last phase of construction. New houses and duplexes have been constructed along East Main Street within the last few years. A small development on Anna Drive for Coleman Professional Services was completed in Summer 2003. The Parks and Recreation Board recently acquired a three-acre parcel of land adjacent to Walls Elementary School on Doramor Street. It is likely that this area will remain in its natural state with some trails and picnic areas. This is the only public park in the Crain-to-Main District.

The majority of the single-family housing is well maintained, with some reinvestment noted; however, maintenance of the multifamily housing houses and apartments is mixed. A few are well maintained, while others are not. The condition of the multifamily housing ranges from needing minor repair to needing significant renovation and re-investment.

This district also is home to an increasing number of student rental houses, rooming houses and fraternity houses, which are easily identifiable. This is a source of constant tension in the district, especially in the neighborhood located between Crain Avenue and East Main Street. An increase in the number of student-housing units is causing increased vehicle and pedestrian traffic, increased noise, litter and parking problems, and expressions of concern that student housing is having a negative impact on property values.

Many of the roads in this district need repairs that range from repaving to reconstruction. Some streets (e.g., Highland and Marvin Avenues) were reconstructed recently. The storm drainage infrastructure in some older parts of this district appear to be problematic and in need of redesign and/or repair. Sidewalks in this area are in need of repair or replacement. There are a few isolated areas where sidewalks do not exist and should be constructed.

A small commercial plaza at the far eastern end of Lake Street can be found in this district. The plaza is full, and it appears to be functioning adequately.

Most East Main Street businesses appear to be functioning at a high level. Over the past two years, a proposal has been made to expand the Taco Bell restaurant into the adjacent residential neighborhood. This proposal was met with significant neighborhood opposition, and the developer withdrew the application. These pressures will likely continue, and developers should be encouraged to find ways to work within their existing sites and communicate openly with adjacent neighborhoods. In some cases, architectural standards will be important to visually enhance this entrance into Kent and to tie the architecture of the Crain-to-Main District and the University into building facades and site designs.

Some reinvestment has occurred in this commercial area that has not had a negative impact on the residential neighborhoods. Included among these are Chipotle's, Papa John's Pizza, Burger King, East Main Coney's and Discount Drug Mart.

District Sustainability Goals

The Crain-to-Main District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.
- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.
- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Crain to Main District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets and registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting homeownership loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stops sites.
- Connect the district to “The Portage” bike/hike trail system.
- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially on blocks that are predominantly student housing, as well as multifamily units that need maintenance and upgrading.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses (including small commercial node at Lake Street and city border) with available City of Kent, Small Business.
- Develop a diverse local economy.
- Encourage healthy retail downtown center.
- Retain a strong public educational system.
- Encourage the replacement of sidewalks, and construction of new where they are missing; facilitate and encourage pedestrian access and travel; improve district walk-ability.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available).
- Develop a neighborhood watch program with the Police Department.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development.
- Perform environmental studies and if necessary work to re-mediate and develop the industrially zoned properties on the north side of Lake Street, owned by the Lake Erie & Western Railroad Company.

Implications

The consensus of Crain-to-Main District residents is that quality of life is important. Critical to this quality of life are recreational opportunities and facilities in Kent and the retention of family housing in the district as opposed to increased student housing. At the same time, there is a recognition that Kent State University (and, by extension, Kent State University students) contributes to the local economy. Student housing has become a NIMBY (not in my back yard) issue for many Kent residents, but it must be recognized that students will live in Kent neighborhoods. Communication between Kent State University officials and students, the City of Kent and Kent residents needs to continue to

improve.

The Crain-to-Main District noted that the city's park system and the area's urban forest are assets. Other valuable assets noted include a small-town atmosphere, preservation of Kent's unique history, and an economy that is diverse and has a social and environmental consciousness. Support of the arts community and managing traffic are equally important to residents in the Crain-to-Main District.

The park system is an asset because of the existing system of neighborhood parks and larger community parks. The addition of new parkland in this district is important to its residents. Connection of these assets with a system of on- and off-street bike trails increases accessibility for Crain-to-Main District residents to the city's park system. The connection also is seen as contributing to the small-town atmosphere where the community is fairly compact and resources (such as stores and houses of worship) are nearby and a feeling of overall safety is evident. District residents also say that they, like residents of older small towns, want to highlight their historic buildings and create historic districts where century homes have been rehabilitated and renovated.

The preservation of Kent's unique history opens the discussion of architectural standards for use in the creation of historic districts. These two items—the city's history and architectural standards—will assist in the preservation that is being sought. Older preserved buildings tend to be places that draw artists and/or become galleries. Preserved buildings also tend to appreciate in value. The increased property values in turn can create a ripple effect that benefits other areas of the district.

For a viable arts community in Kent, arts-related businesses must rely on regional interest and traffic from outside the area. The city's residents are not likely to be the sole supporters and patrons of the arts in Kent. Also necessary for success is a greater presence of the local arts community and a willingness among such persons to rent buildings in the downtown for work and/or gallery space. Collectives may be needed to generate operating capital. Given the proximity of the Crain-to-Main District to downtown, increased tourist traffic into Kent to participate in arts events may well spill over into this district.

The interest in a diverse economy recognizes the need to balance the economic development of downtown, which tends toward retail businesses, with other types of businesses for the Crain-to-Main District. Options here include industrial and knowledge-based business development. Knowledge-based industries can be of two types: software-based companies and manufacturing companies with a biomedical and product-oriented operation. In some cases, existing buildings may be suitable sites; others may require new construction with sterile facilities inside the building. The existing rail yard adjacent to Lake Street is a long-term site for the construction of manufacturing-oriented businesses. The use of this land will require an environmental review of the property and possible remediation of the site. In any event, its eventual use will increase traffic on Lake Street and potentially on other nearby streets.

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KENT, OHIO**

Franklin District

Description

The Franklin District is a mix of single-family housing, senior apartments, student apartments, rental houses, duplexes, commercial establishments, a public school, local and federal government buildings, and industrial uses. This district is bisected by South Water Street (State Route 43). The district is flanked by Kent State University to the east and industrial uses to the west. These land uses create two very distinct neighborhoods as well as a diverse mixed-use planning district.

In 2002, the Heritage Development Corporation constructed a 70,287-square-foot shopping center that replaced an 110,000-square-foot Ames department store. The redevelopment of this under-functioning site with a Tops grocery store and a series of other stores is a significant development for this district and the City of Kent.

The area of the Franklin District to the east of South Water Street and between Summit Street and State Route 261 is predominantly single-family residential where the houses and yards are well maintained. The closer one gets to the Kent State University campus the more one can see large areas of student apartments and student rental housing. Upon closer inspection and a review of anecdotal information from full-time residents, it appears that student rental units are beginning to intrude further into this district. Within the older sections of this district, residents express concerns about drainage and sidewalk maintenance.

On the west side of South Water Street, a mix of housing and retail continue to predominate in an area where a significant amount of the land use is zoned industrial. One example is the Davey Industrial Park. Approximately one-third of this section of the Franklin District area is a combination of retail, offices or industrial uses. For most of the residential streets, significant property maintenance and nuisance code enforcement is needed. The maintenance of alleys, street maintenance and drainage issues also need to be addressed.

The Lincoln Commons residential development was proposed to and approved by the Planning Commission in 2003. The development is an infill project of 31 single-family homes. It was designed to be what is known as a Traditional Neighborhood Development. Yards are smaller and building setbacks shorter than one might normally expect. Streets are narrower and include an area of common green space along South Lincoln Street.

District Sustainability Goals

The Franklin District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Maintain trees as an asset.

Built Environment

- Value properties that link us to the past.
- Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation
- Improve pedestrian orientation.

Social

- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.
- Create a quiet, clean community maintained with effective code enforcement.
- Protect neighborhoods.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Franklin District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting first time homebuyer loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites
- Develop a diverse local economy
- Identify areas where sidewalks need to be constructed or repaired
- Focus property maintenance inspections in this area, especially on blocks that are predominantly student housing, as well as multifamily units that need maintenance and upgrading.
- Promote the availability of house paint for residents at the Portage County Recycling Center (as supplies are available)

- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent, Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs
- Retain the residential character of businesses located on State Route 43 between Summit Street and Cherry Street and Bowman Drive, via zoning and architectural overlay regulations
- Encourage businesses in this area to use existing residential designs.
- Encourage the use of rear parking and joint parking agreements with appropriate buffering
- Encourage the development of adjacent industrial properties, including the extension of utilities where needed
- Encourage and facilitate expansion of existing industrial companies
- Rezone the C-R (High Density Multifamily-Commercial Urban Residential) District on the west side of Water Street; from Summit Street to School Street to the rear of properties fronting on South Water Street to R-3 (High Density Residential).

Implications

Residents in the Franklin District identified a number of district priorities. As with the Crain-to-Main and Standing Rock Districts, a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness, less invasiveness of student housing in the district, and preservation of natural resources and historic properties are important. The preservation of natural resources links to the creation of a riparian-protection program that will include the Franklin District's Plum Creek.

Alternative transportation was identified as a need for this district. The need for such transportation not only suggests a linkage of the district to commercial and retail centers with bicycle routes and public transportation, but it also seems to reflect the trend of converting single-family rentals and owner-occupied homes to student housing units and the need for transportation to the Kent State University campus. Any redevelopment in this district needs to include both of these transportation modes.

Other priorities identified during the Franklin District meetings include waterways and trees; the area's pedestrian orientation; maintaining the quiet, clean community with effective code enforcement; and being a place where economic opportunities exist for all of Kent's diverse residents. Residents want to be able to walk in their neighborhoods and have sidewalks that are canopied with a healthy system of street trees. They also want to have green areas that link the district to places of retail, commerce, employment and recreation. The need for jobs also was raised during the district meetings. Employment opportunities that pay a living wage provide benefits and hold opportunities for advancement were deemed important.

With the increase in student housing in the district, residents voiced concern about the maintenance and upkeep of residential properties. Both landlords and tenants must be kept to a standard of maintenance, and their actions should not create a negative experience for full-time residents of the district. When problems do occur in a district, the

residents expect an appropriate and adequate level of response from City departments. They also believe it is important that efforts to increase and improve the level of communication between Kent State University officials and students and residents continue.

**A MAP OF THE
PLUM CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD
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Plum Creek District

Description

The Plum Creek District is the least developed and the least populated district in the City of Kent and is adjacent to Brimfield Township on the south. The district is primarily defined as being south of State Route 261, though it also includes adjacent parcels of land north of State Route 261 and west of Mogadore Road. The land uses in this area are diverse: rural single-family, multifamily, industrial, agricultural, open space and park area, medical, and commercial. Most of the residential areas are large lots with no utilities and no sidewalks. Three older homes, one of which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are located in this district. The majority of land in the Plum Creek District is undeveloped and has the greatest development potential of any area in the City of Kent.

Within the Plum Creek District is one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning Areas. This planning area is located at the southwest corner of State Routes 261 and 43. It is zoned for industrial uses, as are the parcels located at the southwest corner of Sunnybrook Road and State Route 261 and the adjacent acreage located between Sunnybrook and Mogadore roads. Development potential also exists in nonconforming residential properties located within industrially zoned areas on the west side of Mogadore Road.

Still other areas with development potential are located adjacent to Campus Center Drive, between State Route 261 and Meloy Road, and the former Spring Water Park swimming area on Howe Road east of Sunnybrook Road in which residential development is possible.

Plum Creek runs through this district. The Kent Bog, a natural preserve owned and operated by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, can be found in this district as well. The bog is an environmentally sensitive and historically significant site known for its tamarack trees and other endangered plant species.

District Sustainability Goals

The Plum Creek District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Preserve natural resources.

Built Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Social

- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Strengthen and diversify Kent's economy with arts and related businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Plum Creek District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Reverse the trend of rental housing unit growth by promoting first time homebuyer loan programs; investigate a possible 1-2 year property tax abatements.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites
- Focus on property maintenance code and rooming house zoning and health code enforcement
- Develop a diverse local economy.
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system
- Encourage the development of adjacent industrial properties, including the extension of utilities where needed
- Encourage expansion of existing industrial companies
- Encourage the development of the parcel at the Southwest corner of S.R. 261 & S.R. 43 per the Special Planning Area recommendations.

Implications

Residents of the Plum Creek District identified priorities that are applicable to this district and to the city at-large. The establishment of riparian corridors and the protection of waterways are positive measures for the area. The idea of preservation of trees in the areas may be problematic as this area has numerous tracts of land that can be available for development. Development can be done in a way that preserves some stands of trees and specimen trees; however, it must be noted that available properties will need to be developed for maximum utility and financial return to the community. This restriction is reflected in the district policy statement that calls for a cooperative relationship in the community where strong employment and a strong tax base provide for community amenities and employment opportunities.

Having available public and alternate forms of transportation may be difficult. Only one place in this District has the population density needed to make the provision of public transportation viable. The construction of bike paths and designation of bike routes may provide the alternate forms of transportation that are being proposed.

While there is not a great deal of student housing in this neighborhood, residents are concerned that student housing could become an issue in the district. Again, there is the dichotomy of being a university city; however, student housing is not seen as desirable, at least not if it is next door.

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University District

Description

The University District is dominated by Kent State University. The non-university housing in this district, is predominately multi-family, catering primarily to student apartment housing.

The Allerton Family Housing area was originally designated for students with families and international students. Over the years, the quality of the housing has deteriorated. Kent State University is planning to demolish these units and possibly reconstruct upgraded housing units on this site.

The area known as the Loop Neighborhood (i.e., Athena, Artemis and Olympus Drives) is a combination of single-family homes, condominiums, public housing and market-rate apartment complexes, and duplexes. Some of the apartments have upkeep and property-maintenance problems.

A portion of the University District was developed with Community Development Block Grants to facilitate affordable housing alternatives in the neighborhood. The Portage Area Development Corporation and the City of Kent have undertaken several projects aimed at investing in the creation of affordable single-family housing within the city of Kent. The Portage County Metropolitan Housing Authority facilitated the construction and management of the public housing apartments in this area.

University Townhomes on Summit Street is becoming a significant supplier of student housing and has become a significant source of disruptive student behavior in May of each year. The original intent of University Townhomes was that parents and other persons would purchase the units and then rent them to their college-aged children. Over time, however, this concept has gone by the wayside. Investigation into this development may be required to bring the area into compliance with the conditional-use permits that have been issued for the development.

Several apartment complexes in this district—Holly Park, Celeron Square, Whitehall, College Towers and Summit Gardens—all need exterior maintenance attention.

The Sunrise and Silver Oaks apartment complexes are well maintained. In 2003, the Four Seasons housing complex for the elderly was constructed and provides a needed housing option for senior citizen living in Kent.

That same year, Kent State University created a wetland on University-owned property in the area north of Summit Street between Route 261 and the campus. It also constructed an additional student parking lot at the corner of State Route 261 and Summit Street.

The only other single-family area in the district is the recently annexed Glad Boulevard area. The road, which needs some repair, is scheduled to have municipal water and

sanitary sewer lines installed in 2004. In 2003, the City of Kent also annexed Kent State University property along Summit Street, a tract of land that includes Dix Stadium.

District Sustainability Goals

Public meetings for the University District consisted of sessions for residents, faculty and staff, and students. In creating the plan for this district, responses from the three groups were taken into consideration and included in one table.

The three groups in the University District communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Kent State University Faculty/Staff

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Create a quiet, clean community maintained with effective code enforcement.
- Communicate Kent State University's opportunities for lifelong learning within the community.
- Support diversity.
- Preserve Kent's small-town atmosphere.
- Encourage university student housing to be less invasive into the neighborhoods.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

Kent State University Students

Natural Environment

- Preserve natural resources.
- Maintain trees as an asset.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.
- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.

Built Environment

- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Continue recycling programs.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.
- Celebrate Kent's convenient geographic location.

Economy

- Support appropriate economic development.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

District Meeting

Natural Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Built Environment

(Insufficient breakdown provided for this goal category)

Social

- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Support diversity.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the University District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Encourage Kent State University to continue to redevelop adequate student housing on campus
- Ensure Kent State University and the City of Kent continue to work on joint traffic management and parking programs, including bike path development with Portage County and Portage County communities
- Encourage Kent State University to develop public-private partnerships for additional student housing on or adjacent to the campus.
- Facilitate expansion of existing wetlands, creating conservation areas and easements with private property owners and not-for-profit groups; work with Kent

State University to continue its efforts with PLACE (Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education) and like groups to develop and maintain wetlands

- Connect this district to “The Portage.” Construct sidewalks along Whitehall Boulevard.
- Focus property maintenance inspections in the off-campus student housing area
- Continue the collaborative working relationship between the City of Kent, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and Kent State University.

Implications

The input from Kent State University staff and students and full-time residents of this district indicate that there are points on which all agree. This can be a starting point for a meaningful community-wide dialogue.

It is interesting to note that residents did not comment on Kent State University’s being a contributor to the local economy, while both faculty and students mentioned it as an important economic component to Kent’s sustainability. Kent residents believe that the city’s downtown is an economic focal point; Downtown was not cited as being important to either staff or students. Anecdotal evidence exists that Kent State University may not be the community-wide economic engine that it is believed to be. Many faculty and staff do not live in Kent, and many students do not know where downtown is, nor do they shop there. Surely other businesses immediately adjacent to the university have seen a positive economic benefit from the university and are doing very well as a result. Targeting students and faculty as a key market for both commercial and housing growth is a wise and sustainable economic development activity. The real emphasis is upon capturing local dollars that are currently escaping our community. Capturing these dollars is a wise sustainable strategy since local wealth increases without adding additional development demands on public services or increasing population since the targeted market is already part of the existing Kent demographics. To this end, student groups and the community, via the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Kent, need to communicate more regarding the retail and commercial needs of the student population and work together to attract those establishments.

Participants at each group meeting pointed out Kent’s small-town atmosphere. That may be why more than twenty-five percent of the adult, non-student population in Kent are Kent State University graduates. Diversity also was a common point among the participants.

Traffic management was cited as an important component to Kent’s sustainability. As more students enroll at Kent State University and more students live off campus and bring cars with them, traffic is only going to become more congested. The establishment of bicycle trails connecting the community with the campus will then become more important, as will new PARTA bus routes to service this area. Students living in Kent’s residential areas immediately adjacent to the campus will need to become more aware of available alternate transportation modes.

Student housing will always be an issue with students and the community. The challenge is to bring people together to resolve neighbor and neighborhood issues that are unique to a university community. Students must realize that while they are in Kent for four to five years, their actions while in Kent, establish a template, good or bad, for students who following them. Incidents such as the end-of-the-year problems experienced at the University Townhomes only jade the vision of the full-time community that lives near these developments and have a negative impact on the remainder of the community.

**A MAP OF THE
MIDDLEBURY NEIGHBORHOOD
DISTRICT PLAN
IS AVAILABLE
FOR VIEWING
AT
THE CITY OF KENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
930 OVERHOLT DRIVE
KENT, OHIO**

Middlebury District

Description

The Middlebury District is primarily residential in character. Single-family homes predominate, though there are small pockets of duplexes. Industrial uses border the eastern edge of the district, while commercial uses border the district on West Main Street. Most of the commercial uses along the south side of West Main Street are new and used automobile dealerships. West Main Street is also one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning areas. The Cuyahoga River, which buffers the district from a stretch of railroad tracks, State Route 261 and an existing asphalt plant, borders the district to the south.

Overall, the houses and yards are well maintained and have an attractive suburban character. This district is enhanced by wonderful stands of trees. The areas with duplex housing need exterior maintenance to bring them up to the standard of the rest of the district.

The majority of streets are in good condition; however, the Middlebury District is known for having drainage problems, specifically in the northwest corner of this area. The City of Kent is planning a major capital improvement to the drainage system aimed at solving the drainage problems. Several of the streets in the district do not have sidewalks.

The Middlebury District is home to Fred Fuller Park, the City of Kent Water Reclamation Plant and Longcoy Elementary School. This district provides access to the Summit County Hike and Bike Trail System on Munroe Falls Road. This access point will be a major connection to The Portage bike/hike trail system.

The used car lots on the south side of West Main Street in this district have a blighting effect on the overall landscape of that street and will be discussed in more detail in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

District Sustainability Goals

The Middlebury District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.
- Preserve natural resources.
- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system is an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Preserve Kent's unique history.
- Advocate the use of alternative forms of transportation.

Social

- Encourage City of Kent officials and offices to be approachable and facilitate citizen involvement
- Protect neighborhoods.
- Provide quality fire and police services.

Economy

- Promote a diverse economy with a social and environmental consciousness.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Facilitate economic opportunities for all of Kent's diverse residents.
- Recognize Kent State University's contribution to the local economy.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Middlebury District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Create a riparian corridor ordinance protection for the Cuyahoga River, and adjacent wetlands.
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a neighborhood watch program with the Police Department
- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system
- Encourage Kent State University to continue to redevelop adequate student housing on campus

Implications

Residents in the Middlebury District identify waterways as being an asset and are interested in preserving natural resources. They also value the city's park system and the quality of recreational opportunities and facilities. The impact of the Cuyahoga River and Fred Fuller Park on this district is apparent. Preservation and improvements to the Cuyahoga River and its Kent tributaries can be accomplished through riparian-corridor protections. Flood plains in this district would benefit from such protections as well. Other environmental aspirations include Kent having a pedestrian orientation, preservation of Kent's unique history and the use of alternative forms of transportation.

Within the next few years, The Portage bike/hike trail system is slated for construction along the Cuyahoga River. It will connect to the Summit County bike/hike trail on Munroe Falls Road. The path also will connect to Downtown Kent, the Kent State University Campus and Downtown Ravenna.

Middlebury residents said that Kent officials are approachable and encourage involvement. The residents also said they want their district to be protected and that they have a positive feeling about the services provided by the Fire and Police Departments. One of the issues related to the protection of neighborhoods is the beginning of an influx of student housing in the district. Like other districts in Kent, student housing is an issue.

Economically, Middlebury residents want to see a community where companies have a social and environmental consciousness and businesses are locally owned and independent. They also want to see economic opportunities available for all residents and see the value of Kent State University contributing to the local economy.

The Middlebury district is not an area that is going to be promoted for industrial development opportunities, with the exception of the renovation of industrial sites adjacent to the Haymaker Parkway Bridge. These industrial buildings and sites, unless demolished and given clean environmental bills of health, will not be sites for new technologies as they emerge from Kent State University. Such sites will continue to be associated with older manufacturing technologies and warehousing. Existing industrial parks and sites need to be nurtured and new industrial lands developed with sensitivity to the preservation of wetlands and green space.

The commercial areas along West Main Street can be areas for commercial redevelopment. The market will determine whether retail and commercial developments and redevelopments are locally owned and operated or whether they are corporate operations. The West Main Street Special Planning Area will be explored in more detail in Special Planning Areas section of this document.

**A MAP OF THE
FAIRCHILD NEIGHBORHOOD
DISTRICT PLAN
IS AVAILABLE
FOR VIEWING
AT
THE CITY OF KENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
930 OVERHOLT DRIVE
KENT, OHIO**

Fairchild District

Description

The Fairchild District is primarily residential, with a mix of single-family homes, duplexes and multifamily apartments. Commercial uses border the District on West Main Street, while a small industrial park is located in the District's northwest corner. Three parks also can be found in this district: Al Lease, Forest Lakes and Majors Lane.

The majority of commercial uses along West Main Street are a mix of automobile dealerships, restaurants and other business. Recent investments have occurred with Dalton Furniture and Weiss Motors. West Main Street is also one of the Bicentennial Plan's three Special Planning Areas. That area will be discussed separately in the Special Planning Areas section of this document.

Bicycle lanes on both sides of Fairchild Avenue connect to the Summit County Hike and Bike Trail System on Silver Meadows Boulevard and to the trailhead at Stow-Munroe Falls High School. These trails also will be connected The Portage hike/bike trail system.

The Fairchild Avenue area has been the site of new residential developments over the past seven to ten years. The new developments include Forest Lakes, Cottage Gate Condominiums, White Oak Hills, Fieldstone and the Lakes at Franklin Mills. In 2003, the Lakes at Franklin Mills was awarded the Environmentally Sensitive Building Award by the Portage County Environmental Roundtable for its preservation of land and sensitive development design. Despite the number of recent developments, though, some parcels on Fairchild Avenue remain available for limited residential development. The limitation stems from the wetlands and Fish Creek that surround many of the parcels

The apartment complexes are located along Silver Meadows Boulevard and Spaulding Drive. As a whole, the complexes are well maintained and sparsely landscaped. The duplex units located on Silver Meadows Boulevard need exterior maintenance.

Three intersections—Silver Meadows Boulevard/Sunset Way and Fairchild Avenue; Stone Water Drive/Adrian Drive and Fairchild Avenue; and Majors Lane and Fairchild Avenue—should be studied and monitored regularly to determine at what point traffic signals should be installed.

The streets and drainage systems in the northeast section of the Fairchild District do not appear to be functioning adequately and may require additional infrastructure study and improvements in the near future. During the writing of this report, sanitary sewers were being installed and the storm sewer system repaired on McKinney Boulevard

Healthy street trees and yard trees are a highlight of this district.

District Sustainability Goals

The Fairchild District residents communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.

Built Environment

- Promote traffic management.
- Use existing buildings for redevelopment.

Social

- Sustain Kent as a good place to raise a family.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Facilitate vibrant retail and service sectors.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Fairchild District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites
- Connect the district to "The Portage" bike/hike trail system
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent, Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development
- Provide transportation to recreation programs for children and/or recreation programming at local parks

Implications

Like many other districts in Kent, the Fairchild District considers quality of life to be important. Fairchild residents are interested in having quality recreational opportunities and facilities and believe that the city's park system is an asset. These residents also

believe that traffic management is important and that existing buildings should be used rather than demolished.

Residents at the district meetings said that Kent is good place to raise a family and that street and sidewalk maintenance is important. Economically, residents believe that Kent needs locally owned and independent businesses with Downtown Kent as a focal point. They would like to see Kent's retail and service sectors more vibrant.

The Fairchild District's two parks, Al Lease and Forest Lakes, make it second to only the Middlebury District in acreage dedicated to parks and open space. An expansion of Al Lease Park is being considered. If it is enlarged, that portion would be part of the Lakes at Franklin Mills development. The two parks also will connect to each other via bike and hike trails and to The Portage bike/hike trail system. The parks provide a quality of life and a family-oriented amenity that Fairchild residents say that they want.

An active downtown is as much a quality of life issue as it is an economic issue; downtowns are not what they used to be in terms of retail goods and services. There are many successful downtowns that feature boutiques and specialty shops. This can happen in Kent with the right amount of research and attention to products and services and marketing directed to both students and full-time residents. Of course, additional traffic to commercial centers, including Downtown Kent raises the issue of traffic management. Too much traffic in vibrant retail centers and Downtown will be good problems to have.

An active downtown and vibrant retail and service sectors would meet Fairchild residents' desire that Kent be home to many locally owned and independent businesses. There needs to be a greater spirit on entrepreneurship in Kent for this ideal to carry forward. There are many resources in Kent to assist start-up businesses, and these will be discussed in the Special Reports section of this document.

**A MAP OF THE
CENTRAL BUSINESS AREA NEIGHBORHOOD
DISTRICT PLAN
IS AVAILABLE
FOR VIEWING
AT
THE CITY OF KENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
930 OVERHOLT DRIVE
KENT, OHIO**

Central Business District

Description

Kent's Central Business District is predominately a traditional downtown commercial business district and includes two residential areas. The northern residential neighborhood includes Brady, Portage and Columbus Streets and small areas of Crain Avenue and Depeyster Street. The other neighborhood lies to the south and east, within the Campus Link Special Planning Area. This neighborhood includes South Depeyster, East Main Street (to Lincoln Street), South Willow Street, Tonkin Court, Erie Street, East College Street, College Court and a small area of Summit Street (between Depeyster and Summit Streets). The majority of properties in both residential areas need exterior maintenance attention. Many of the streets and sidewalks, with the exception of South Willow Street, need to be repaired.

In the Central Business District proper, many of the buildings need facade enhancements. Kent touts its downtown as historic; however, many facades are covered with treatments not reflective of the buildings' original architecture, resulting in a historic nature that is questionable at best. It is recommended that architectural standards for the downtown be adopted (see the Economic Development section of this document for a discussion of this recommendation).

The parking lots found behind the buildings in the southeast quadrant of downtown need to be consolidated and redesigned because the flow of traffic is uneven and difficult. A redesign and regrading of the area also will provide additional parking spaces. Property owners and business owners in this quadrant of downtown and in the northeast quadrant should improve their buildings by creating rear entrances for customer access.

The West River Neighborhood revitalization area is in the Central Business District. The City of Kent has purchased property in what is known as the triangle area as part of an economic redevelopment strategy. The renovation of the West River Medical Arts Building (previously the Kemp Building) and the West River Place Building (previously the Bissler Building) are part of that strategy. Parking will continue to be an issue for the sustainability of development in this area. The City of Kent has been able to procure parking leases with local property owners (i.e., First Christian Church, Kent Masonic Lodge, Kent Public Schools) to provide additional spaces; however, a permanent solution is needed. Issues of redevelopment of the Central Business District are addressed in the Economic Development section of this report.

The Central Business District also includes the Campus Link Special Planning Area, which will be addressed in the Special Planning Areas section of the report.

District Sustainability Goals

The Central Business District participants communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Maintain trees as an asset.
- Appreciate that waterways are a benefit to the Kent community.

Built Environment

- Improve pedestrian orientation.
- Promote traffic management.

Social

- Protect neighborhoods.
- Maintain streets and sidewalks.

Economy

- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.
- Stop sprawl.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities and a visual inspection of the Central Business District, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage PARTA to promote its services and develop additional bus stop sites
- Connect the district to “The Portage” bike/hike trail system
- Inventory the urban forest in this district and create a plan to retain the amount of trees and urban forest in this district.
- Promote traffic management through street maintenance and traffic calming where appropriate and consistent with the Traffic Calming Policy.
- Encourage café seating where allowable
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent, Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs
- Adopt an exterior maintenance ordinance for commercial uses.

Implications

Implications of the plan for the Central Business District are many. At the same time, however, the implications of not implementing this plan are risky for all concerned. It is

entirely possible that Downtown Kent will become the vibrant, pedestrian-friendly area of boutique shopping that attracts Kent residents, students and their parents. The cost of this transformation, however, is not inexpensive. The restoration of downtown buildings to their original architecture and the creation of easily accessible parking are keys to any downtown restoration. The restoration of buildings and the conversion of private parking lots into public ones is costly. Short of a conversion of this type, private parking lot owners must be open to the idea of jointly redesigning and reconstructing their lots and removing any physical barriers that may exist.

Building restorations can be financed in part with Community Development Block Grant funds, state tax credits and local tax-abatement programs. Restorations should however reflect a building's period architecture, with review by and approval from an Architectural Review Board.

Building owners will then be able to market their buildings to larger retail concerns, especially those that are relevant to Kent State University students. The city's Community Development Department and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce can take leadership roles in this effort to attract customers to downtown businesses. Funds will need to be made available for promotional materials for both agencies, whether produced separately or jointly.

Special Meetings: Business Community and Kent Area Chamber of Commerce

Description

In addition to the district meetings, special meetings were held for the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the business community. The results of these meetings have been combined, as many of the groups' responses were similar.

Responses from the business community and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce indicate that a sustainable community consists of a place where the downtown is an economic center with many locally owned, small businesses, a strong school system and a small town atmosphere. Quality recreational opportunities and parks enhance the quality of life, according to this group. The participants also noted that development that enhances Kent's unique history and uses existing buildings in redevelopment efforts is needed.

Sustainability Goals

The participants in the business community and the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce meetings communicated their values in a list of aspirational goals that define sustainability for their district as follows:

Natural Environment

- Provide quality recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Maintain the park system as an asset to the community.

Built Environment

- Use existing buildings for redevelopment
- Preserve Kent's unique history.

Social

- Retain a strong public educational system.
- Preserve Kent's small town atmosphere.

Economy

- Develop Kent's downtown as an economic focal point.
- Encourage and promote locally owned small businesses.

Implementation Plan

Based upon the above noted priorities, the following implementation plan will create a pathway to sustainability for this district:

- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to unite the downtown businesses for special planning for the downtown
- Encourage the Small Business Development Center to continue and expand its work to assist small locally-owned businesses
- Encourage the Chamber of Commerce to establish a program encouraging industrial, commercial and retail businesses in Kent to do business with other Kent locally-owned businesses
- Encourage local businesses to continue to sponsor and become involved in parks and recreation leagues and programs
- Consider expanding Adopt-A-Spot program to an Adopt-A-Spot parks
- Preserve historical buildings by establishing historic districts and/or streets; registering qualified homes with the National Register of Historic Places.
- Focus on the downtown redevelopment/development with a focus on maintaining the small town atmosphere
- Encourage the stability of existing businesses with available City of Kent, Small Business Development Center and the Chamber of Commerce programs
- Encourage business community support for the schools