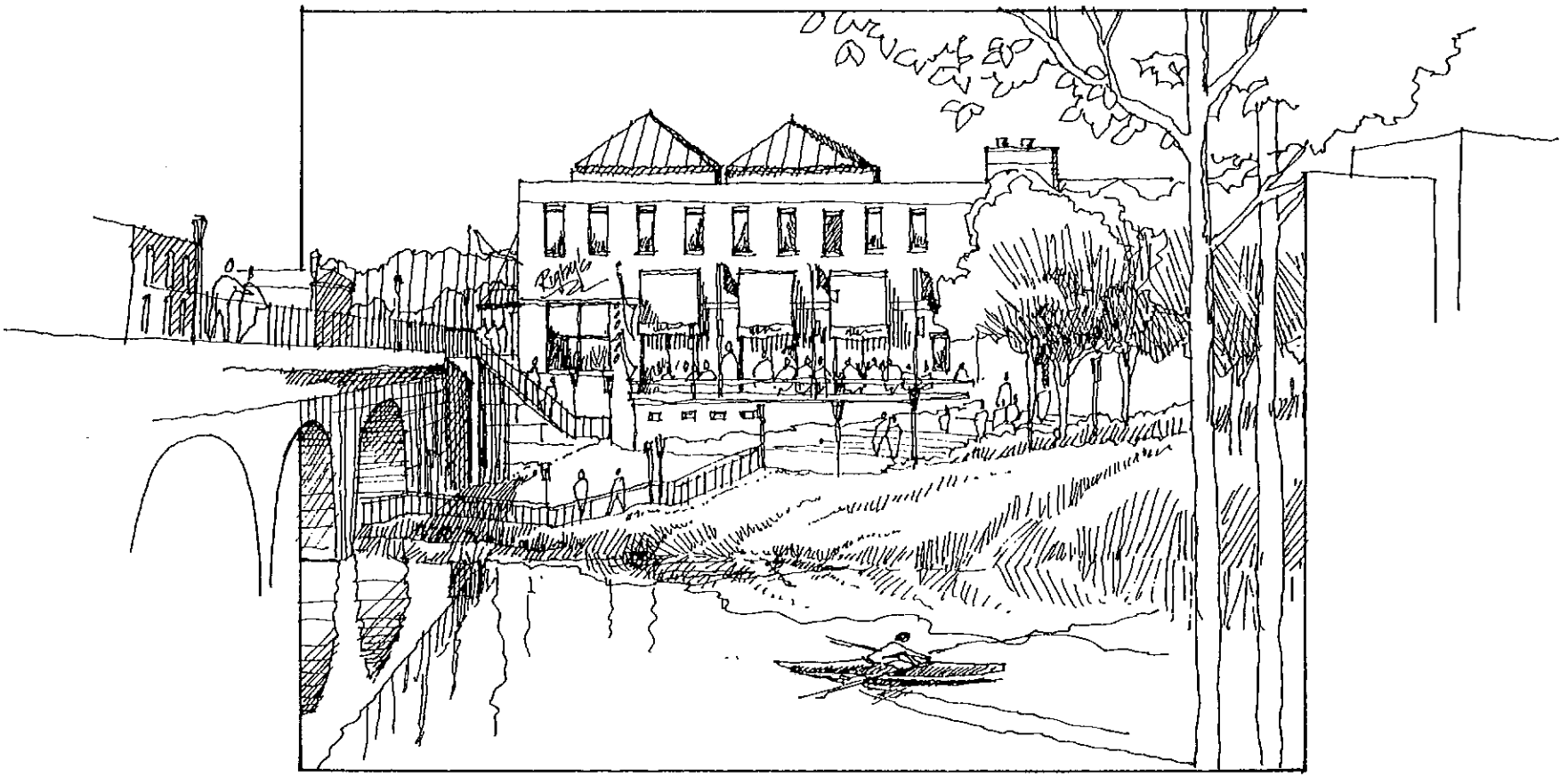
KENT, OHIO

Visions of a New Era



KENT, OHIO

Visions of a New Era

Edited by Lee A. Phillips Goodman

This report was prepared by the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio. The Urban Design Center is supported by the Ohio General Assembly and the Ohio Board of Regents through the Urban University Program.

Cover illustration by Seiw-Hong Ong

February 1993

To the Citizens of Kent:

On behalf of the people who participated in this design investigation of Kent's core, I am pleased to transmit to you this report which was prepared by the Urban Design Center of Northeastern Ohio with support from the Ohio General Assembly, the Ohio Board of Regents' Urban University Program, and Kent State University and Cleveland State University

The Urban Design Center endeavors to provide theoretical and practical bases for the study and research of design and planning. One of the purposes of the center is to provide design assistance to communities while supporting students with opportunities to relate theory and practice.

In this project, undergraduate and graduate students from the Kent State University School of Architecture and Environmental Design and the Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs teamed up to produce the ideas in this report. These ideas were generated through discussions with the Community Development Committee of Kent City Council and through meetings with other University, civic, and citizen groups.

Since the first presentation of this material, Kent City Council has passed legislation that has enabled the study area to secure special status as a district, thus recognizing the unique significance the area has within the city. This action also provides special incentives for development and redevelopment within the study area. My hope is that the city, University, and citizens of the community will continue to work together to improve the city, and that this report will serve as a catalyst for further action.

Foster D. Armstrong, AIA, AICP
Project Director

CITY OF KENT, OHIO

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

January, 1993

During 1992, an extensive urban design study was conducted by undergraduate and graduate students of the Kent State University which explored future options for the City of Kent. Co-sponsored by the School of Architecture and Environmental Design and the Cleveland State University College of Urban Affairs, this study has served as a catalyst to launch redevelopment initiatives throughout our community.

Without question, the analysis has created an atmosphere for positive change and enthusiasm throughout the community. As a result, the City of Kent will utilize the study as a foundation for public forums to explore the express values and viable alternatives that may be employed as we pursue future development directions. These proposals, as presented, embrace numerous concepts and ideas requiring further review and prioritization. Once this phase is complete, the City anticipates framing a substantive plan of action to steer our projected activities.

Today, the City of Kent faces a myriad of challenges as do most cities in America to address the demands of a rapidly changing world. Thanks to the innovative efforts demonstrated by the creative minds utilized for this study, Kent now stands better prepared to proactively seize today's opportunities so that we might solidly meet tomorrow's challenges. The City of Kent is grateful to all those who played an integral role in advancing the visionary propositions as contained in the analysis.

Priscilla J. Blanchard
City Manager

Acknowledgments

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Photographs

Photo of Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal
Courtesy of Mr. Brad Bolton
All other photos by Lee A. Goodman

Executive Summary

This report was prepared by the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio in order to present a summary of the ideas and proposals for revitalizing the city of Kent, Ohio. The ideas and proposals were prepared by students in the Kent State University School of Architecture and Environmental Design and the Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs.

Chapter One provides a clear image of the city of Kent today. From a description of geographic location, physical features, history, and demographic traits, emerges a picture which portrays Kent as a vital city possessing a rich diversity of natural resources. These resources provide the foundation for renewal and growth.

Located in Northeast Ohio near several major metropolitan areas, the city of Kent enjoys proximity to a wide variety of activities and conveniently located transportation routes allowing it to compete successfully in the regional and national economy. Kent is also the home of Kent State University, which brings national and international recognition to the city.

The Cuyahoga River, gently rolling hills, and a pleasant climate are some of the physical features which form an inviting and interesting setting for residents and visitors. These features contribute a unique quality that provides an exciting and memorable environment to the city of Kent.

Historically the city of Kent has remained prosperous throughout three significant eras of development spanning nearly two centuries. Established in the early nineteenth century as a mill town, Kent quickly learned to take advantage of the Cuyahoga River, and in the 1830s became an important part of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal system. This period is often remembered as the Canal Era. The next wave of prosperity reached Kent with the arrival of the railroad, transforming Kent from a small industrial town into a vital commercial center. With the dawn of the twentieth century, a new era was ushered in when, in 1910, Kent was chosen as the location of Kent State University. An unprecedented period of development occurred, and Kent has remained an active, exciting community ever since.

Kent State University dramatically impacts the population and economy of Kent, and, as a result, the majority of the inhabitants of Kent are relatively young, college educated, and employed in education-related fields.

Chapter Two explores a variety of evaluation and analysis techniques used to identify and understand the predominant physical characteristics present in the urban environment. By describing the city of Kent in terms of Land Use, Building Form and Mass, Vehicular Circulation and Parking, Pedestrian Pathways, Streetscape, Open Space, and Historic Preservation, one can establish a clear picture of how various physical elements shape the cityscape. Through the use of graphic illustrations, maps, and diagrams, existing conditions may be evaluated to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and to identify the organization, function, and character of the city. The evaluation and analysis process enables the designers, civic leaders, and community members to locate and identify the possible key areas for development and rehabilitation. These key areas have the potential to serve successfully as cornerstones for revitalization of the entire city.

Chapter Three outlines specific goals, objectives, and strategies for revitalizing the city of Kent. Seven general goals have been established which summarize the numerous objectives proposed by students and members of the community as a result of the evaluation and analysis process as well as a series of public forums:

I. *To improve the economic vitality of the area*
II. *To improve the identity and image of the area*
III. *To facilitate the safe and effective movement of pedestrians and vehicles*
IV. *To improve linkages between the downtown and the University*
V. *To utilize open spaces more effectively*
VI. *To utilize existing structures more effectively*
VII. *To preserve and enhance the history of Kent*

These goals provide a basic framework for setting priorities and organizing design strategies and may be used as an effective tool for assessing the potential success of ideas and proposals. Included in this chapter are a wide range of creative design strategies and methods for initiating revitalization efforts in the city of Kent. These ideas, which were prepared by students in the Kent State University School of Architecture, are intended to provide inspiration and promote enthusiasm throughout the community, fostering an atmosphere of positive change.

Chapter Four provides a summary of case studies prepared by students of the Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs. These studies focus on four key sites in downtown Kent. Selected as cornerstones for revitalization efforts are: the Franklin Hotel, the Kent Heirs Block, the vacant site on the corner of Water and East Main Streets, and the Bissler Building. Due to the prominent location, historical value, and unique features of each site, it will be possible to create strong anchors which contain the elements necessary to improve the vitality of the entire city and strengthen the identity and image of Kent. Each case study examines the development potential of the various sites and provides recommendations and ideas as to how they may be used more effectively to contribute to a renewed vision for Kent.

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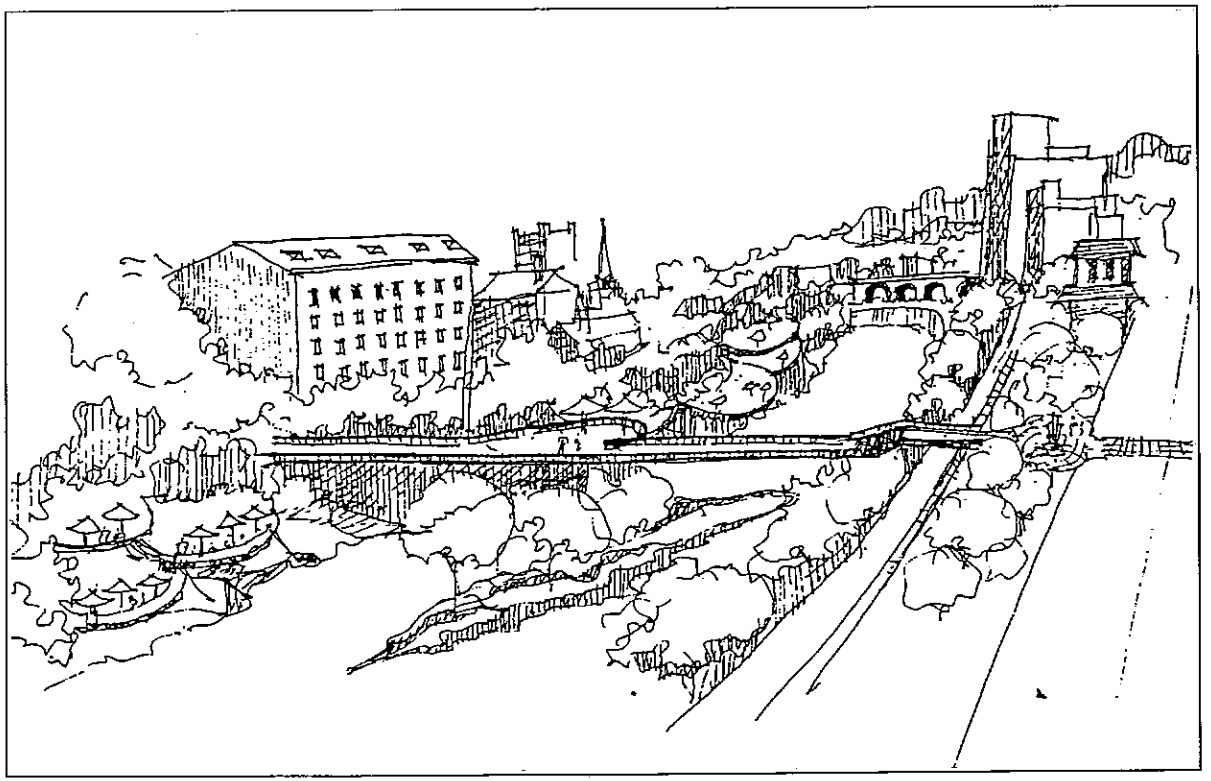
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Introduction

A New Era



Drawing by Sampatkar Pedapenki

A New Era

As the dawn of the twenty-first century approaches, many cities are preparing to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. Constantly shifting socio-economic forces, innovative new technologies, and fast-paced lifestyles are drastically altering the urban environments in which people work and play, the very places we call home. No longer can cities rely on traditional methods for change; they must explore new techniques and fresh ideas in order to move forward and embrace the future.

Kent, Ohio, is one such city, a city that must undergo a transformation to prepare successfully for the years that lie ahead. Possessing a strong sense of identity and a spirit rooted firmly in history, Kent has the fundamental elements necessary to meet the challenges of the coming century. With careful design and planning, along with creativity and imagination, a renewed civic vision for the entire community will foster an exciting atmosphere of change, allowing the city of Kent to welcome confidently a new era with open arms.

This document will attempt to serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of Kent by presenting a wide range of unique design concepts and establishing a solid framework for analysis and implementation of ideas.



Aerial photo of the city of Kent

Kent, Ohio

The Tree City

1



The Cuyahoga River

Evaluation and Design

In order to prepare an effective, comprehensive urban design proposal, it is essential first to become familiar with the general features of Kent's geographic location, physical description, history, and demographic traits. Together, these features aid in forming an image of Kent as a "place," and help in identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of the city.

Next a specific study area should be defined within which evaluation, design, and planning strategies may be focused in detail. This study area will serve as the foundation for revitalization efforts throughout the entire community.

It is necessary at this point to conduct an extensive information gathering process within the study area to understand how the historical and socio-economic forces have impacted the city and to establish a clear working knowledge of the many elements which shape the physical environment. A thorough evaluation and analysis of these factors becomes an essential part of the design process and facilitates the preparation of clearly defined goals, objectives, and strategies by which all future design proposals may be assessed.

Once the analysis has been completed and the goals and objectives have been defined, the conceptual plans and ideas may be explored. Included here are a wide range of creative and imaginative proposals that highlight Kent's qualities and which seek to strengthen the identity of the city. These proposals hope to provide inspiration for the entire community to work together in setting a new era in motion.

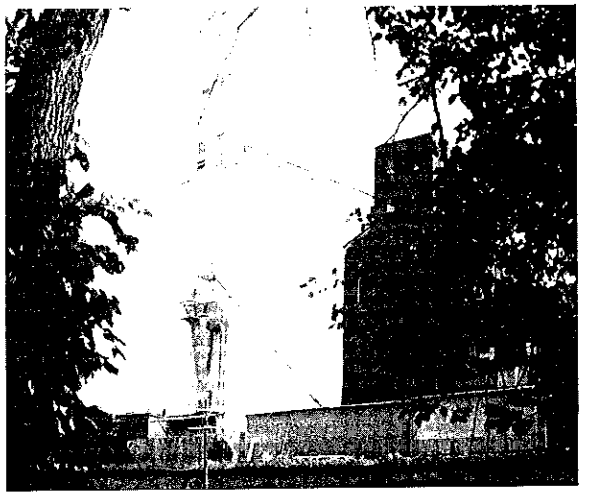


Photo of Kent Grain Tower



Photo of downtown Kent

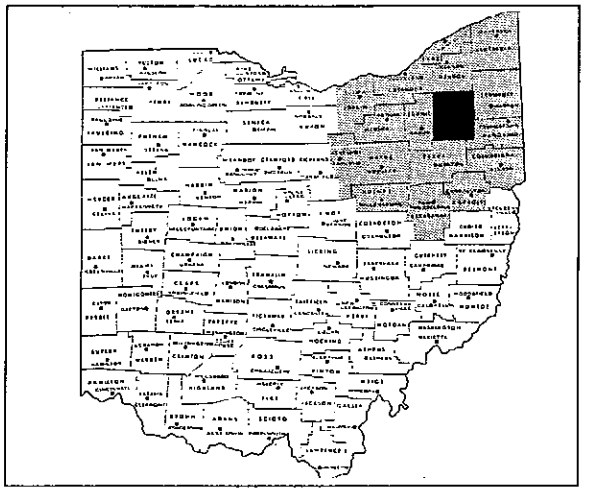
Location

Located among the rolling hills of northeastern Ohio in Portage County, the City of Kent occupies approximately 8.5 square miles of land in an area that was once part of the Connecticut Western Reserve.

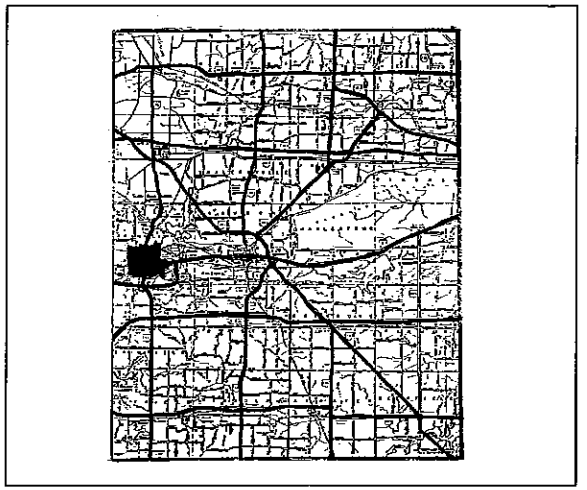
Ideally situated only a short distance from Cleveland, Akron, Canton, and Youngstown, the city of Kent serves as a significant link between several major metropolitan areas. This, coupled with convenient access to several interstate highways, railways, and airports, allows Kent to enjoy an active role in the region's economy.

Kent is perhaps best known for being the home of Kent State University, a major university which maintains an enrollment of more than 24,000 students. Offering a diverse range of educational programs and a rich variety of cultural events, the University is responsible for attracting large numbers of people to Kent each year.

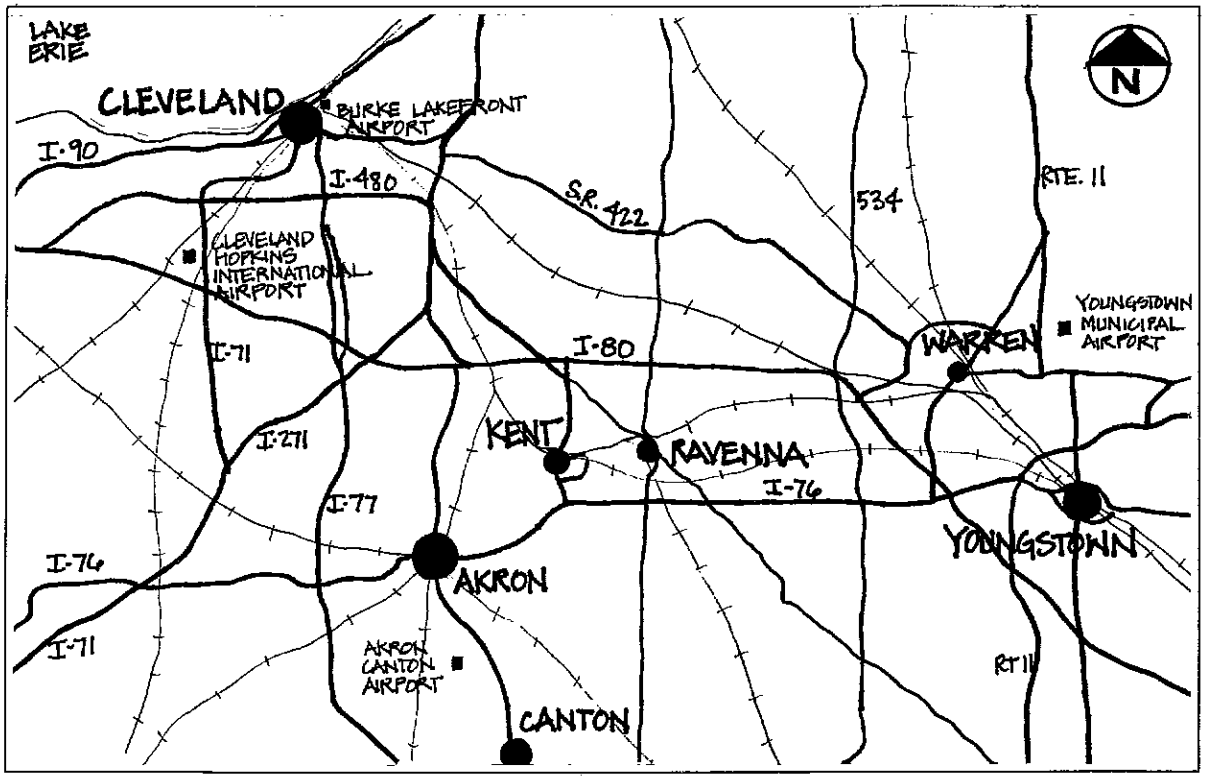
Proximity to Blossom Music Center, Sea World of Ohio, Geauga Lake Amusement Park, and the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area enables the city of Kent also to participate in the regional tourism market, and excellent opportunities presently exist for Kent to take advantage of its location and expand its role as a tourist destination.



Location of Portage County



Location of Kent



Major highways, railways, and airports of Northeast Ohio

Physical Description

Kent's most predominant physical feature is the Cuyahoga River, which flows gently through the downtown area and is marked by a beautifully cascading waterfall near the heart of the business district. A steep stone wall and double tiered railroad bed form the eastern river bank, while a strip of wooded park area shapes the western edge. From here the land slopes away from the river forming discernible hills to the east and west. Typical topography of the entire Kent area, these rolling hills are the result of glaciation which also created a terrain dotted with numerous kettle lakes, streams, bogs, and sand and gravel deposits.

Soils throughout the region are likewise the product of glacial material. The primary soil found in the city of Kent is the Chili type, a well-drained permeable soil that presents very few restrictions on urban or agricultural development.

Kent's climate is characteristic of the temperate region of Northeast Ohio and is best described as having warm, humid summers, moderate winters frequented by lake-effect snow storms (from Lake Erie), as well as daily and seasonal changeability. Extreme variations in temperature and precipitation amounts are not uncommon in this area largely due to the proximity of Lake Erie.

The mean average temperature in Kent is 49.7 degrees F, the mean average annual precipitation is 36.44 inches, and the mean annual snowfall is 48 inches. Kent's growing season generally extends from early May to late September.

When viewed as a whole, the physical features of the Kent area begin to suggest an overall image for the entire city. The Cuyahoga River serves as a very identifiable focal point, the topography provides rich visual relief, while the numerous water sources and parks provide for extensive outdoor activities and the climate allows for comfortable, pleasant summers with tolerable winters.



The banks of the Cuyahoga River

Kent, From Village to City

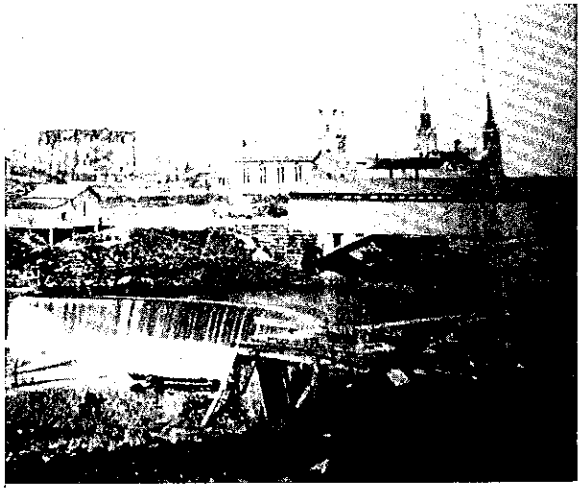
A Village is Born

Nearly two centuries ago, in 1805, an enterprising man named John Haymaker ventured westward to the newly formed state of Ohio and settled with his family on the banks of the Cuyahoga River. Taking advantage of the power offered by a nearby waterfall, Haymaker erected a gristmill operation, marking the beginning of many prosperous years for a village which would later become known as Kent.

Soon after Haymaker's arrival, a village began to take shape known as Franklin Mills due to the numerous mills and factories which dotted the river's edge. During these early decades, the Cuyahoga River was the essential element in the growth and development of Franklin Mills, providing power for a variety of grist mills, woolen mills, cabinet shops, glass factories, and tanneries, forming an industrial center which attracted many businesses from surrounding areas. By 1835, the population in Franklin Mills had grown to nearly 1,400 people.

The Canal Era

Development during the first half of the nineteenth century was located primarily along the west side of the Cuyahoga River, but plans in the 1830s to make Franklin Mills a stop on the Pennsylvania



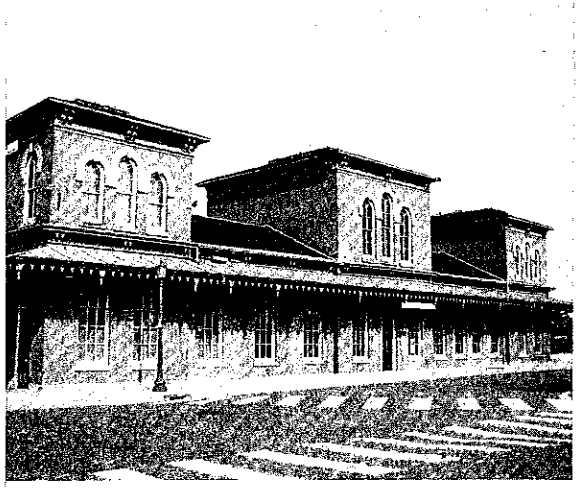
The Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal (photo courtesy Brad Bolton)

and Ohio Canal prompted a great deal of land speculation and development on the river's east side, forming the beginning of what is now the Central Business District.

With the opening of the P & O Canal in 1840, Franklin Mills experienced a new period of growth that lasted for nearly twenty years until the canal closed in 1861, unable to compete with the new mode of transportation sweeping the country, the railroad.

The Railroad Era

Seeing the potential for Franklin Mills to emerge as a vital commercial center, businessman Marvin Kent was instrumental in bringing the railroad to the area, and in 1863, the first cars of the Atlantic and Great Western rolled into town.



The Kent Railroad Station

Franklin Mills experienced an extraordinary new period of growth and development following the advent of the railway. In the Central Business District dozens of new retail, commercial, and manufacturing enterprises were established near the railroad station and the surrounding areas grew markedly as well. This new era of prosperity transformed the industrial town into a thriving commercial center, and, in 1863, the town was renamed Kent. Shortly thereafter in 1867, the town became incorporated as a village with a population of nearly 2,300.

The community enjoyed continued economic success until the turn of the century when reliance on the railways began to diminish and was replaced by motor transportation. Kent was again facing a new era and a new century as well.

The University Era

Probably the most significant event in Kent's history of development occurred when the village was selected as the site for a new normal school in 1910, stimulating an unprecedented new period of growth which would continue for nearly seventy years. Many new residents and businesses were attracted to the area, and in 1920 Kent attained official city status with a population of more than 7,000 citizens.

Presently the University continues to be an essential component of the city, serving as a vital anchor to the entire community.

It was also during this era that the Davey Tree Expert Company was founded by John Davey. Recognized internationally, the business is presently one of Kent's largest employers and is responsible for Kent becoming known as the "Tree City."



Kent State University

The People and the Economy

The People

Since obtaining official city status with more than 7,000 people in 1920, the population in Kent has grown to nearly 30,000 inhabitants. The presence of Kent State University is largely responsible for the present size of the population and clearly affects the composition of the entire Kent community.

Made up of slightly more females than males, the majority of Kent residents are between the ages of 19 and 24, white, high-school or college educated, and are natives of the United States. Employed primarily in professional, managerial, and educational occupations, the majority of jobholders work in Kent or within Portage County.

Kent is a city greatly affected by the presence of a large University, clearly reflected in the kind of individuals who form the community. These people possess the energy and ambition necessary to revitalize Kent successfully and make it a thriving city for future generations.

The Economy

For nearly two decades traditional manufacturing activities formed the primary basic economy of Kent; but with the establishment of the University in 1910, retail, education, and educational service-type activities now account for over one half of Kent's basic economy, with manufacturing making up about one-fifth of the overall activities.

Although there are actually fewer than ten businesses which can be classified as education or educational services, Kent State University employs more people than any other business making it the single largest basic economic activity in Kent.

Of the other nonmanufacturing type activities, eating and drinking establishments employ the second largest group of people in Kent, while government activities, food stores, automotive dealers/gasoline service stations, and health services each employ roughly the same numbers of people to become the next most popular economic activities. Machinery, rubber, and plastics industries compose the largest segment of Kent's manufacturing base, accounting for roughly one-half of the industrial activities. The production of electrical equipment, petroleum products, and fabricated metals complete the bulk of the manufacturing economy.

Maintaining a variety of business activities which meet the needs of the entire community, as well as the University, is essential for a healthy local economy, but to remain competitive in the regional and national markets, the city of Kent must prepare an aggressive campaign to draw new business enterprises into the area, especially in the diminishing manufacturing sector. Kent also has the ability to expand its role in the tourism market by taking advantage of its location and physical resources to become a destination.

The city of Kent derives approximately 80 percent of its revenues from local sources, mainly through city utilities, local income taxes, and federal aid, while major expenditures are directed to general government, security, and transportation.

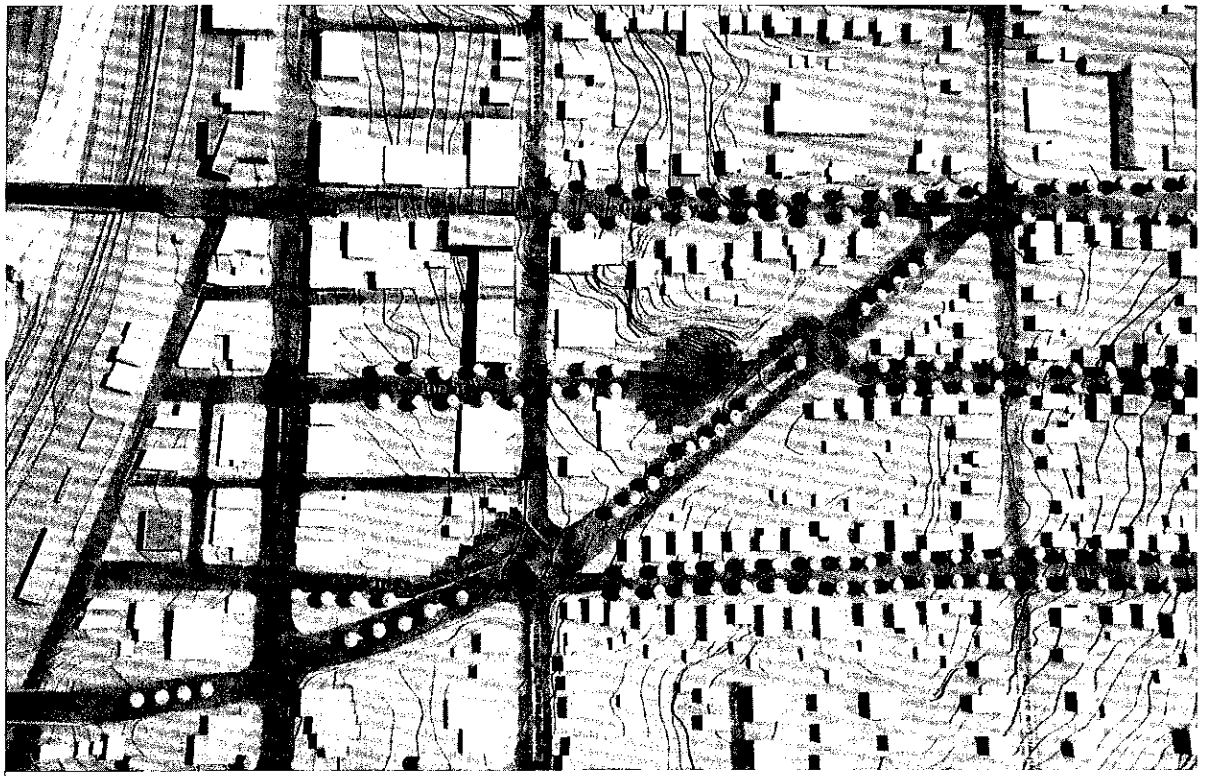
Summary

Having now become familiar with some of the basic historical, physical, and demographic traits of Kent, it is now possible to examine the city in greater detail, identifying specific strengths and weaknesses which provide a foundation for growth and renewal, utilizing knowledge of the general characteristics as tools for assessing the appropriateness of various design proposals and choosing those ideas which are most successful in strengthening Kent's identity.

Evaluation and Analysis

Forming an Identity

2



Model of the city of Kent (Team 2)

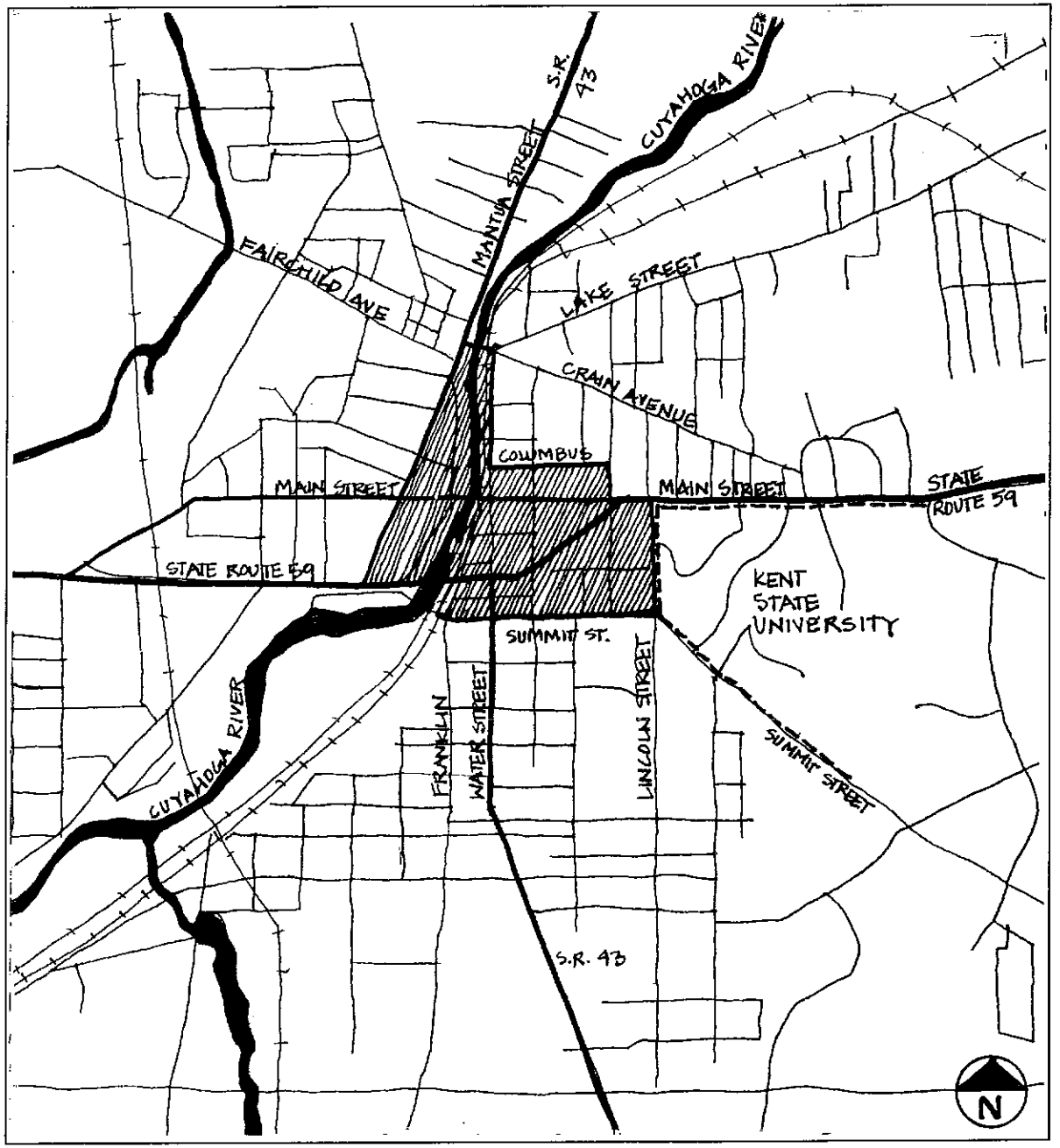
The Study Area

For the purpose of gathering information and identifying the specific elements present in Kent which best capture the identity of the entire community, it is useful to define a study area within which evaluation and analysis efforts may be focused. Utilizing a limited study area will allow key ideas and strategies to be developed in greater detail. These ideas can then be used as the basis for revitalization attempts throughout the surrounding areas.

The study area is defined as the area north of Summit Street from Mantua Street on the west to Lincoln Street on the east (western edge of Kent State University) and extending north to Crain Avenue (west of Water Street), Columbus Street (from Water Street east to Depeyster), and to the north side of East Main (from Depeyster to Lincoln).

This particular study area was selected because it is representative of the wide variety of activities and physical features found throughout the city. It includes most of the Central Business District, a mixture of residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and is adjacent to Kent State University. The Cuyahoga River also runs through the study area and serves as a major focal point.

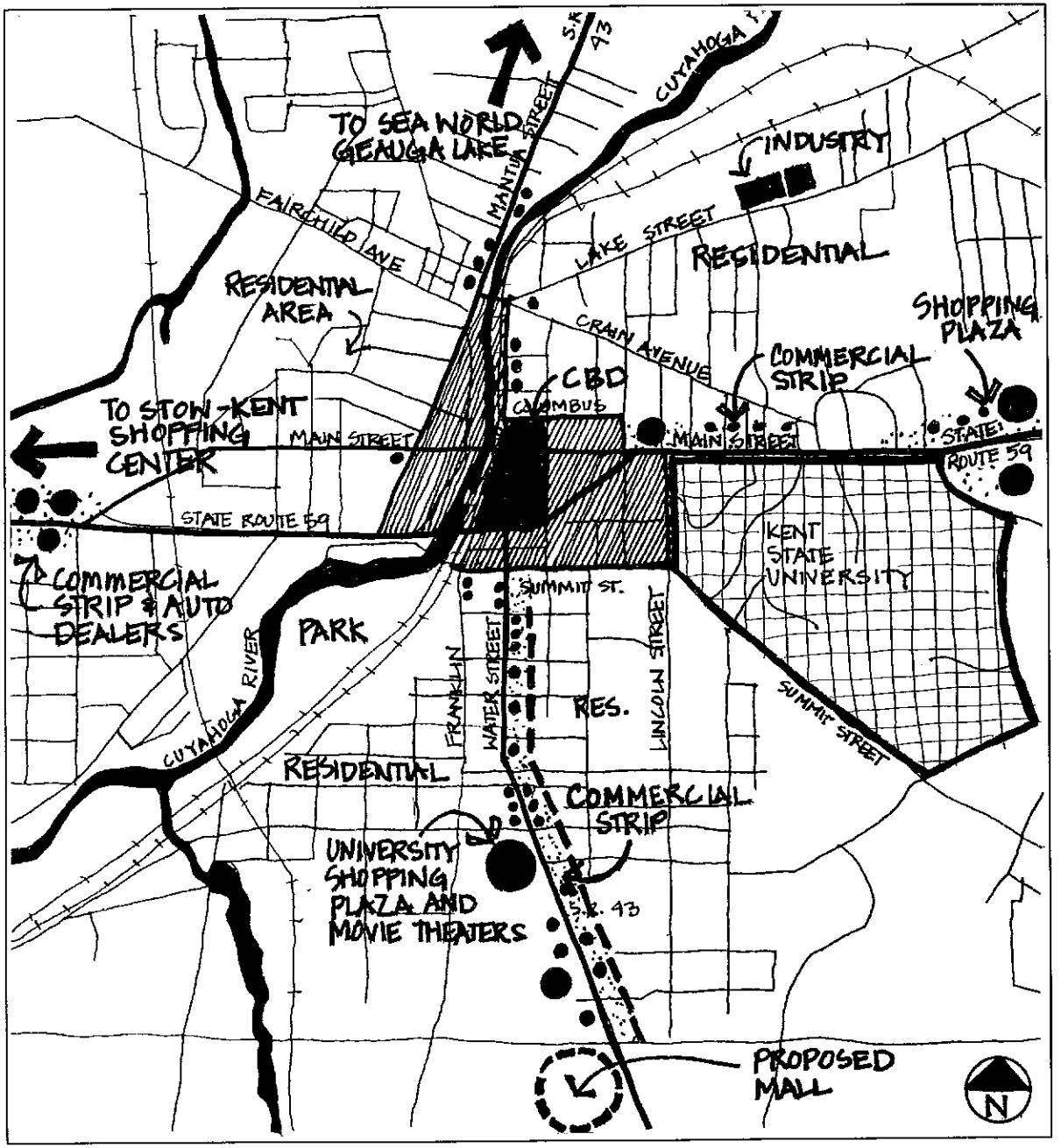
The study area is illustrated at right.



Kent study area

Outside Influences

Although the study area contains a wide sampling of features common to the entire city of Kent, there are several specific elements in the vicinity outside the study area boundaries which directly impact the function, character, and success of not only the focus area but also the whole city. Especially noteworthy are the retail nodes located west and east of the downtown area and the shopping center and proposed mall to the south. These commercial districts have a significant effect on the Central Business District. The presence of numerous lakes and parks in the region should also be considered as valuable resources. These elements are illustrated in the diagram at right.



Regional influences

Evaluation and Analysis

To enable the identification and understanding of the most useful physical characteristics existing within the study area, a series of categories, which group various elements together into themes which can then be utilized as tools for decision-making throughout the urban design process, has been established:

Graphic Physical Image

Land Use

Building Form and Mass

Vehicular Circulation and Parking

Pedestrian Pathways

Streetscape

Open Space

Historic Preservation

Each of these categories is evaluated to pinpoint the existing conditions which most significantly affect the organization, function, and character of the physical environment. Analysis of this information provides a clear understanding of those factors which are most successful in terms of providing a safe, efficient, and exciting urban atmosphere.

Graphic Physical Image

One of the fundamental principles of many urban design theories is the concept of "place." As individuals experience the physical environment, they form a mental impression based upon perceptible objects or conditions found in their surroundings. This image is then connected with a particular location and identified as a unique place. Usually there are many items which are recognized by a majority of people and which form a public image.

Author Kevin Lynch has established a method for describing images using five key elements: paths, edges, nodes, districts, and landmarks. Each category can then be assigned a graphic symbol to represent it on an "image map." This map is an outline of the most prominent aspects of the physical setting. An image map for the Kent study area has been constructed and is shown below. Using this map as a reference, Lynch's five elements are briefly described as follows:

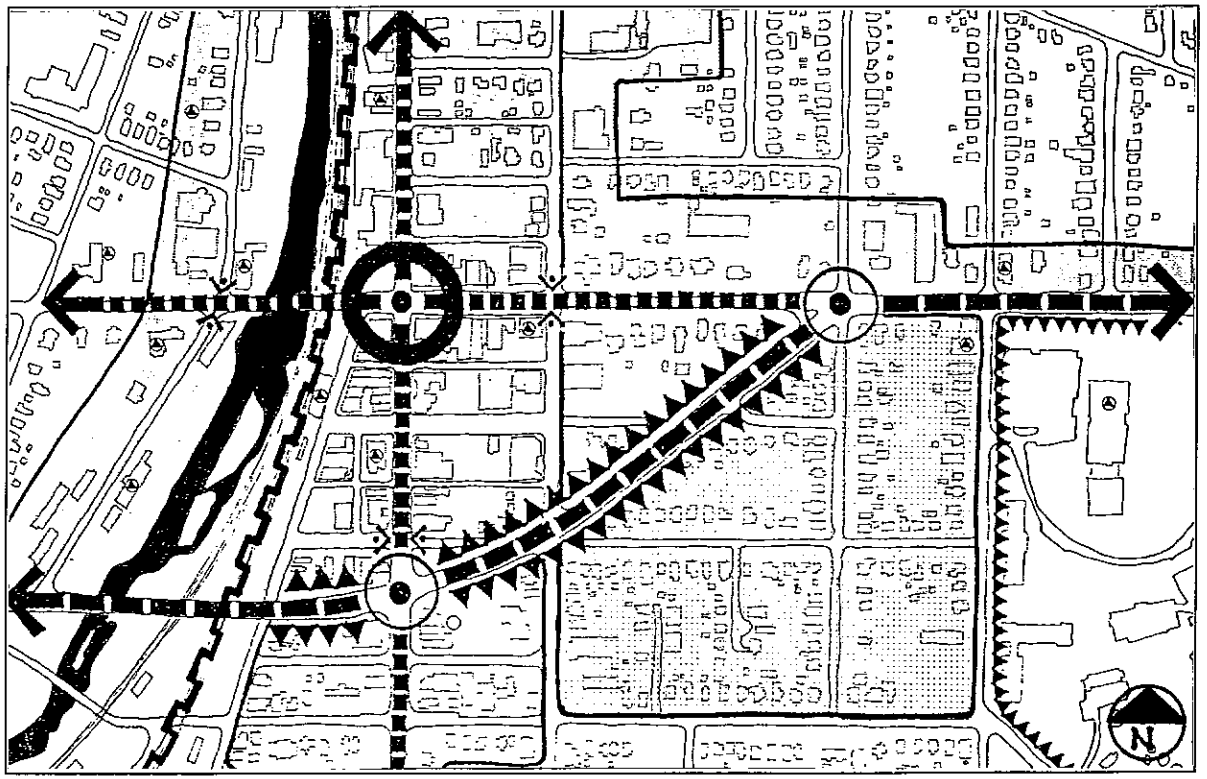


Image map of the Kent study area

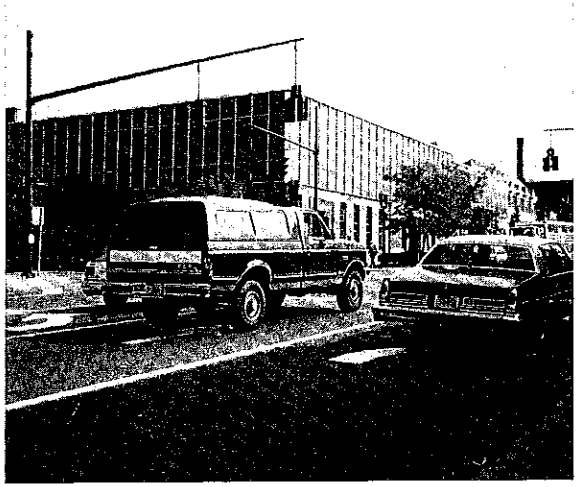
Paths

Best described as commonly used routes of travel, paths can take many forms. They may be horizontal or vertical (elevators), they may penetrate buildings or be highly recognizable as in a tree-lined street, or they may be subtle and implied with no physical boundary such as airline routes.

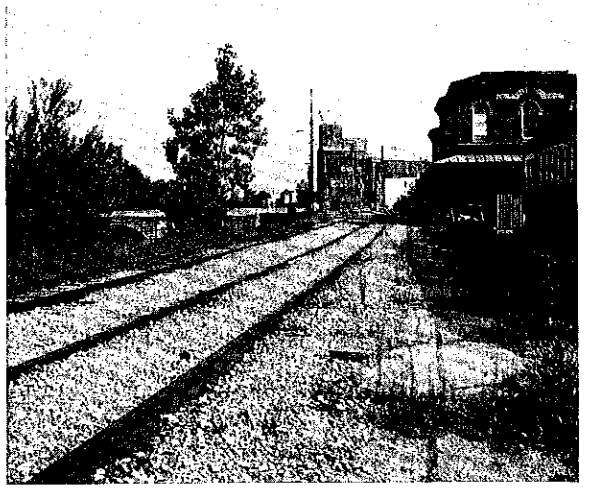
In Kent the primary pathways are mostly vehicular, particularly along the Haymaker Parkway and Main Street. Dozens of secondary, pedestrian pathways can be found linking the University to the commercial and residential areas and include such routes as Water Street and Lincoln Street. There is a great deal of potential for developing stronger pedestrian pathways that unite the downtown with the University.

Edges

One of the most visible and easily identified features found in the Kent study area is the edge. Typified as a linear element, the edge is often a boundary or district change which occurs between two areas. Frequently the edge may be a barrier preventing easy access to another place, but it might also be a penetrable seam marking a clear change in character or scale of physical elements.



Node of activity, the corner of Main and Water streets



The railroad forms an edge

In Kent two very prevalent features can be classified as edges, the Cuyahoga River and adjacent railroad bed and the Haymaker Parkway. Both of these features form a problematic boundary, severing two areas and limiting pedestrian penetration. An example of a secondary edge is the boundary of Kent State University along Lincoln Street, a boundary which can be viewed as a seam between two districts.

Nodes

When there is a focus of activity, a crossing of pathways, or a heightened concentration of similar characteristics, a node is often formed. Depending upon the relative point of view, a node may be considered very small, as in a juncture of two sidewalks, or quite large as in instances where entire districts or cities become nodes.

The heart of Kent's Central Business District, where Water and Main Streets converge, is an example of a node. Not only do two well-traveled roads cross, but also there is a good deal of activity in a setting with a distinct historical character. A very strong vehicular node occurs at the intersection of Main Street and the Haymaker Parkway due primarily to the volume of automobile traffic. The University itself also forms an unmistakable node.

The creation of a node is a valuable method for manipulating an urban setting. New links and activity centers can be generated to strengthen the fabric of the environment.

Districts

Districts can be distinguished as larger areas which display a visible degree of common characteristics. Similar building types and forms, inhabitants (ethnic communities, income groups, etc.), activities, and land uses (retail districts, industrial zones, etc.) are examples of various conditions likely to signify a district.

Within the Kent study area, there are a number of districts: Kent's downtown commercial area has been formally organized as the Central Business District; a small manufacturing district can be found along Water Street and Gougler Avenue; a residential area west of the University has been dubbed "College Park"; and a concentration of fraternity and sorority houses has created a "Greek " district.

Realizing the presence of different districts is an important part of the urban design process, as these districts are often associated with the identity of a city and can be used advantageously to strengthen and unify the community.

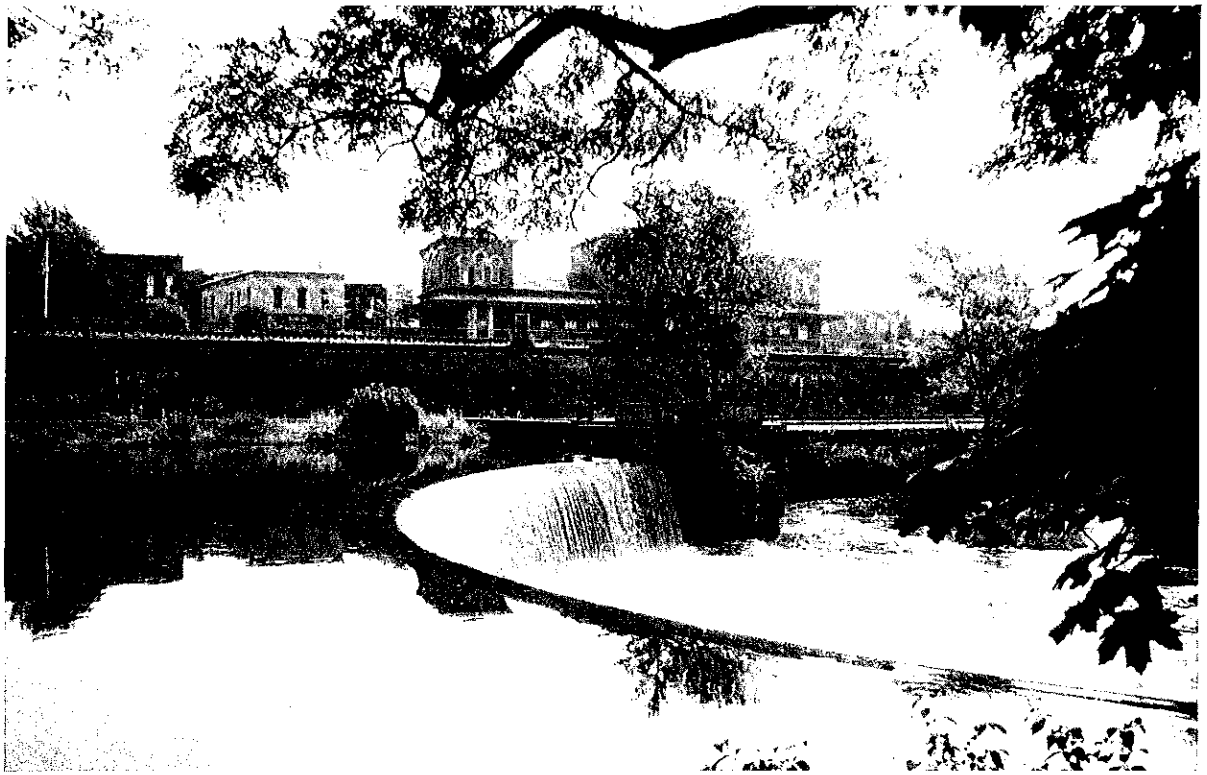
Landmarks

Those elements which are truly unique and become a point of reference to the observer can usually be considered landmarks. Varying widely in scale from the prominent and highly visible elements such as towers and church steeples to small but distinctive items such as a statue or a unique sign, a landmark can be any feature associated with one particular place or something which contrasts with its surroundings.

Numerous landmarks are present in the Kent landscape such as the Cuyahoga River and waterfall, the railroad station, grain silos, and the Kent State University water tower. Collectively these landmarks constitute a strong civic identity.

Summary

Evaluating the urban environment in terms of Lynch's five elements is an excellent method for capturing the image of any particular place and can be utilized throughout the design process to strengthen the identity of a city and add richness to the fabric of the environment.



Kent's landmark waterfall

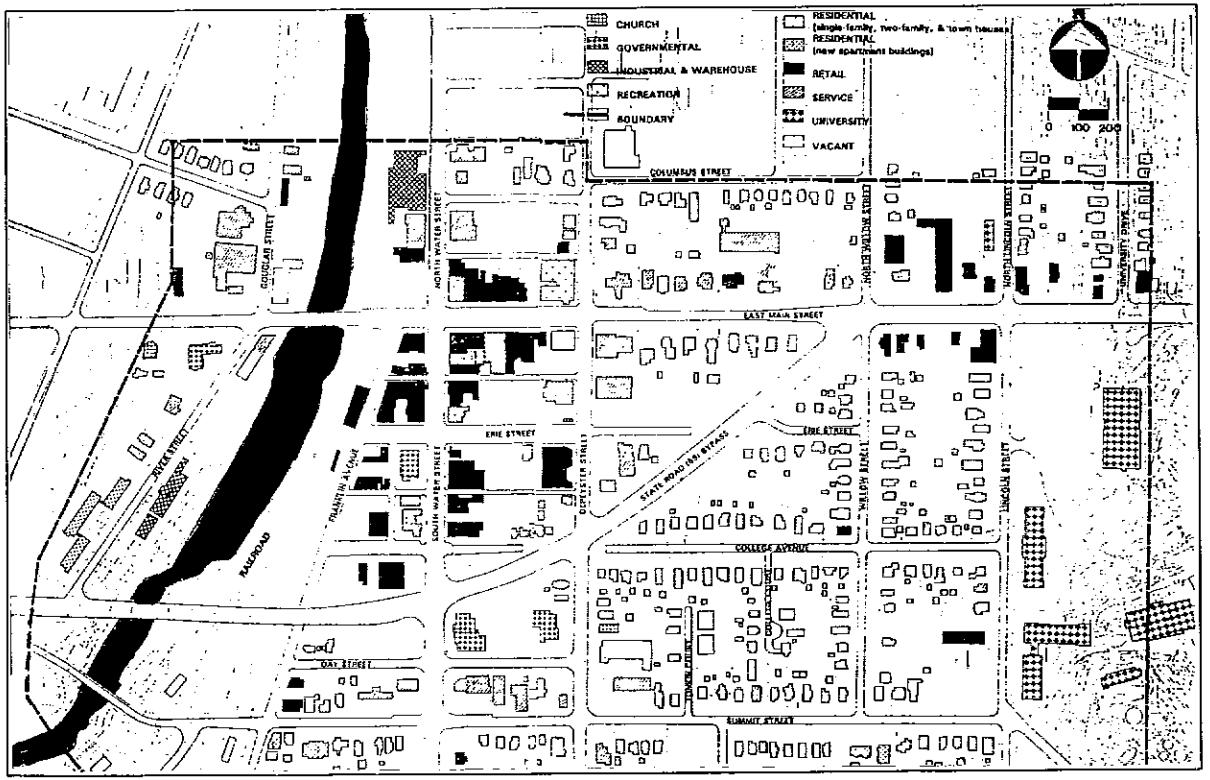
Land Use

Our urban landscape is shaped by a multitude of physical, historical, and socio-economical influences. These forces result in a complex mixture of development patterns and a diversity of activities forming the cityscape. By examining the location, size, and types of activities which occur, it is possible to evaluate how the uses affect each other, the community, and the built environment.

Once the various districts which are present within the study area are identified, the general types of land-use activities begin to emerge and define the character of the city. However, to pinpoint areas where possible conflicts of use occur, or to evaluate how and where new uses may be inserted into the existing urban structure, a more detailed analysis of land use is required. The creation of a graphic illustration, or "land-use map" is a common method used to locate and identify specific activities. A land-use map for the Kent study area is illustrated at right.

The system employed for visually describing land-use data on the map allows the information to be evaluated at three different detail levels: macro, meso, and micro. At the macro level it is possible to discern general land-use patterns or districts and locate the concentration of certain activities. At the intermediate, meso, level each building is classified as either commercial, industrial, governmental, civic, ecclesiastical, or residential, making clear distinctions between public, semipublic, and private uses. The final level, micro, is the most detailed. Here, each of the meso-level use categories is broken down more extensively into subcategories, and a corresponding letter designation is assigned to each building. (See key to map for categories.) At this level the composition of residential districts is also examined in great detail, distinguishing between single, multifamily, and student rental units.

A land-use map is a valuable tool to use throughout the urban design process in order to evaluate the potential for future growth and development. By referring to the map, the designer is reminded of the qualities that are present in the community and that form the physical environment, and he or she can make decisions accordingly to strengthen the image of the entire city and encourage positive growth.



Kent land-use map

Building Form and Mass

Evaluation of the two- and three-dimensional manifestations of the built environment can reveal a great deal about the urban qualities of a city and how the built environment physically affects the citizens moving about through the spaces.

At the two-dimensional level, one of the most frequently used graphic techniques for representing relationships between solid forms and void spaces is the construction of a "figure-ground" diagram. This graphic tool renders the contiguous footprint of building forms as black shapes ("figure") against a white background ("ground"). From the figure-ground study recognizable patterns emerge clearly and indicate the spatial qualities of the environment at the ground level.

Also visible are disruptions of patterns indicating discontinuities or gaps in the urban fabric. By analyzing these figurations it is possible to identify those areas which could benefit the most from infill techniques to reweave the community and strengthen links to other areas.

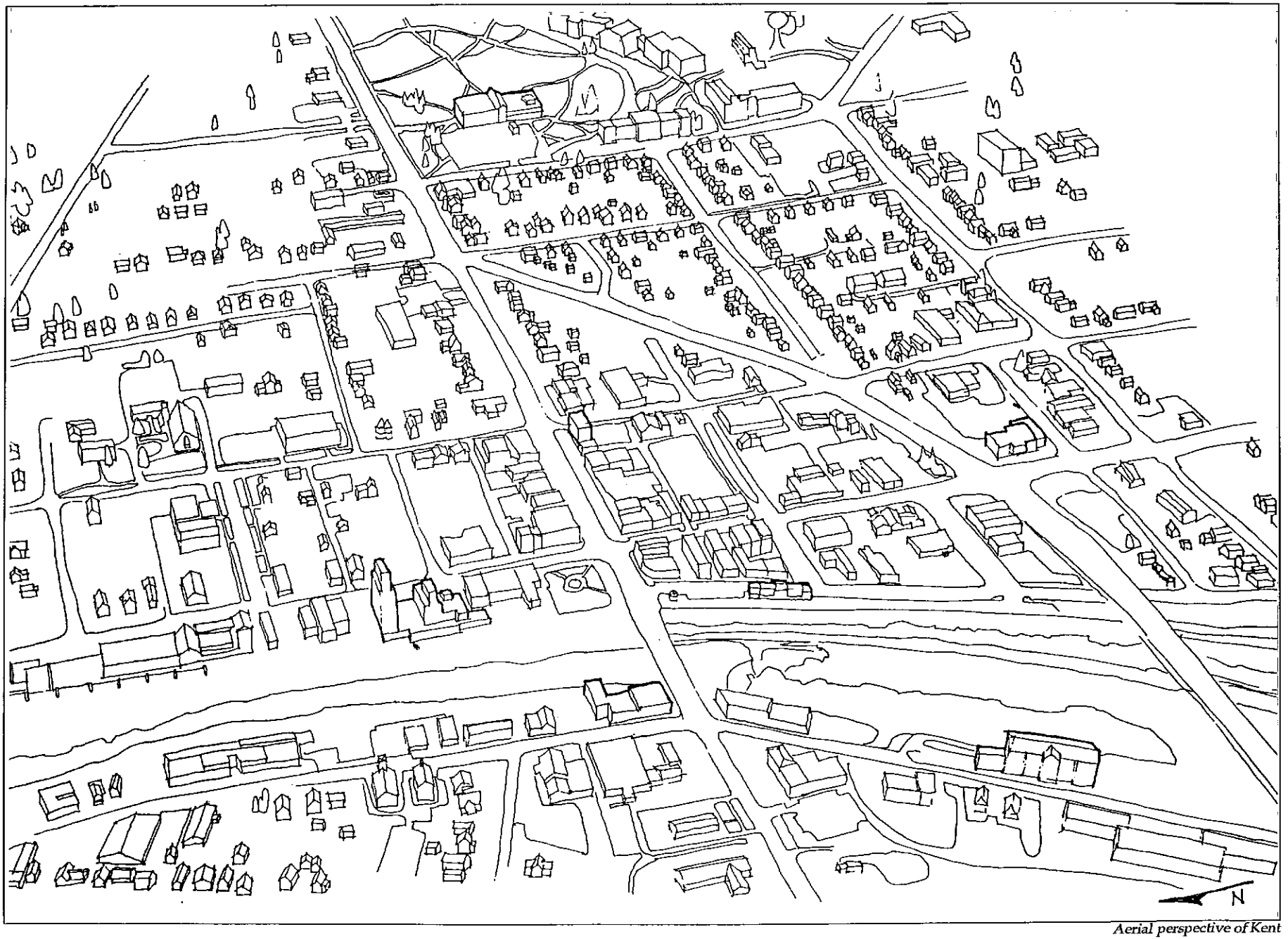
In the figure-ground drawing of the Kent study area, the most predominant break in the urban structure occurs along the Haymaker Parkway. Here the downtown area is severed from the residential districts, a break which has caused a devastating effect on the continuity of the city identity.

At a three-dimensional level, building forms can be evaluated for external volumetric qualities. The massing of structures creates positive exterior spaces, the quality of which is affected by the height, orientation, and scale of the building forms around them. These exterior "rooms" have a direct impact on the people and the activities which take place within them. When building mass begins to erode as buildings are torn down, the quality of positive space weakens, and the building forms themselves begin to lose identity and continuity. By identifying massing gaps and infilling them with appropriately scaled structures, the urban designer strengthens the formal manifestation of the cityscape. The best method for analyzing the three-dimensional aspects of the landscape is to construct perspectives or axonometric drawings of the actual spaces from the observer's point of view.

Since a great deal of the urban experience takes place in the exterior spaces, the evaluation of building form and mass is a necessary part of the design process and, if used effectively, leads to the creation of a very dynamic environment.



Figure-ground diagram



Aerial perspective of Kent

Circulation and Parking

Once the primary pathways and gathering places for pedestrians, our city streets are now crowded with one of the most pervasive symbols of the twentieth century, the automobile. Forever changing the character of the urban environment, the automobile has become an essential element of our modern society, drastically altering the manner in which we interact with the city and affecting the imagery of the cityscape.

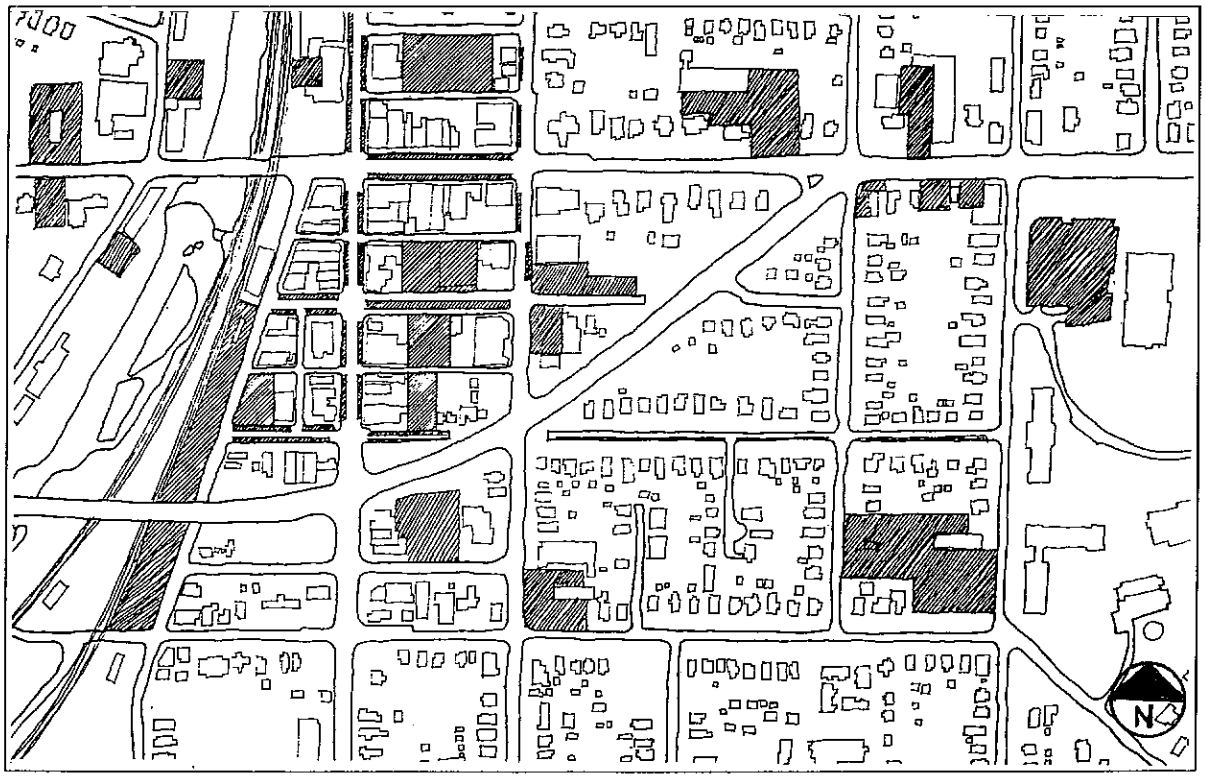
Circulation and parking are analyzed in order to identify and summarize all conditions, extant in the Kent study area, which relate directly to the activities of vehicular movement, including the visual characteristics associated with the physical manifestation of city streets and parking areas. It is intended that this summary be utilized as a tool to identify areas for potential improvement, areas which supplement best the needs of the city and enhance the quality of the city setting.

A recent study of parking in the Kent Central Business District conducted by the Urban Design Center of Northeast Ohio serves as the primary source of information for evaluating existing parking conditions. Some of the key results of the study have been summarized here to provide a general description of conditions. The study should be consulted for specific information pertaining to parking in the downtown area.

Circulation

The area of Kent that falls within the study boundaries was originally organized with a basic grid system starting at the Cuyahoga River and the intersection of Main and Water streets. That arrangement provided adequate circulation patterns for over a century until the popularity of the automobile began to strain the system's capacity for handling vehicle congestion in the downtown area. That problem was partially resolved with the construction of the Haymaker Parkway by-pass just south of the Central Business District. Connecting the west side of Kent with the Kent State University Campus, the by-pass alleviated the congestion, but effectively severed the downtown area from the rest of the community, thus destroying a vital link to the campus.

Presently vehicular circulation within the study area seems to be operating smoothly. The areas with the largest potential for improvement are those directly



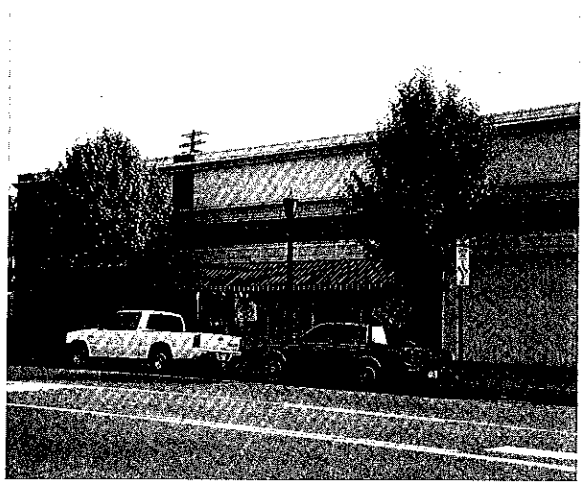
Kent parking map

adjacent to the Haymaker Parkway. In these areas pedestrian activity is extremely difficult and dangerous. Providing safer pedestrian access across the parkway would re-establish a stronger link between the city center and the University and would reunite the community.

Parking

Because of the reliance on the automobile to transport people conveniently to the doorstep of their destination, parking has become critical for management of car traffic. The resultant parking lots have manifested themselves as vast carpets of dreary asphalt that are usually neglected and treated as a mere necessity. Unfortunately, Kent, too, has fallen victim to the "ugly parking lot syndrome" with many areas in serious need of attention and repair.

The largest parking lots in the downtown area are located primarily behind the main commercial blocks between Water and Depeyster streets and along Franklin Avenue. These lots account for approximately 600 parking spaces. Additional on-street parking is located along Main, Franklin, and Water streets. Outside the Central Business District, parking lots are primarily reserved for private use, such as those located at the Kent Motor Inn, Campus Center, or DuBois Book Store.



On-street parking



Rear entrances to commercial establishments

The results of the survey indicate that many merchants and residents feel that there is not enough parking near the commercial establishments. Occupancy counts, however, indicate that many lots are under-utilized most of the time and that the real issue may be the creation of better access to the lots themselves. The second most noted complaint of those surveyed indicates that use restrictions of the various lots are not clearly identified and that the restrictions themselves were not appreciated by users.

Occupancy counts indicate that the periods of heaviest use for each lot vary according to the time of day. Adequate parking is nearly always available within 600 feet of the desired destination. The lots closer to the Kent Campus, however, seem to provide less than adequate quantities of parking for the large volume of activity adjacent to the campus.

Visually almost all of the parking areas surveyed are in need of physical improvements. An exception is the downtown, on-street parking which was the subject of a very successful renovation several years ago. The survey indicates that the merchants do not seem convinced that allocating funds for visual enhancement will positively affect the downtown area, even though customers frequently comment on the poor quality and condition of parking areas.

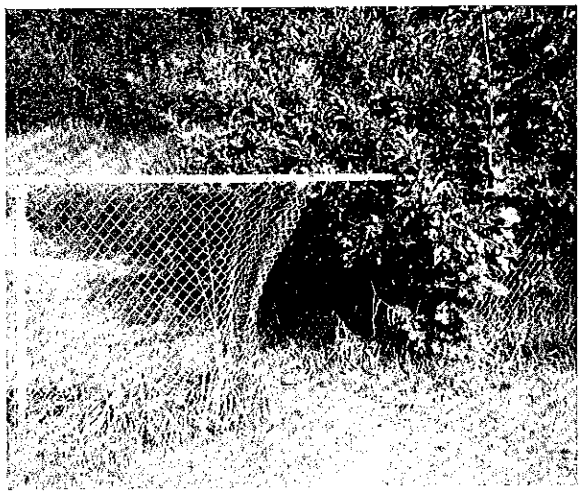
Providing a successful parking program within the study area can tremendously enhance the public interaction with the city setting and will surely generate pride in the community and help to foster a vital urban environment.

Pedestrian Pathways

The course by which a pedestrian travels from one destination to another is considered a "pedestrian pathway." Because of the high degree of pedestrian activity associated with a university town such as Kent, these pathways become an important design consideration. The existing routes should not only be evaluated in terms of safety and convenience, but they should also be considered as a valuable means for linking and integrating the downtown community with the University. Such factors as volume, pedestrian/automobile conflicts, handicap accessibility, natural paths, and path obstructions are some of the factors which need examination in order to prepare an effective pedestrian plan.

The best way to summarize the volume of use each pathway receives is to classify them as either primary, secondary, or tertiary routes. It was found that the primary paths in the study area are located along the main vehicular routes of Main Street and Water Street. There are numerous secondary routes in the residential areas near the University, and a number of tertiary paths exist in the downtown area which are usually alleys, shortcuts, and side streets.

In terms of pedestrian/automobile conflicts, the most problematic situation occurs along East Main Street between Lincoln and Willow streets. Because of the number of commercial businesses located on both sides of the street, there are considerable driveway curb-cuts, as well as, a great deal of vehicular activity. The Haymaker Parkway also presents a dangerous conflict between pedestrians and automobiles primarily because there are no organized places to cross the road safely. This parkway severs many direct paths between the University and the downtown area, effectively creating a barrier that is impenetrable to pedestrians.



Man-made pathway

Accessibility is another factor which needs consideration when evaluating and planning pedestrian pathways. For the most part, the primary routes are accessible with sloped sidewalks at crossing areas which are mostly in good condition.

Several natural pathways exist within the study area especially along the west bank of the Cuyahoga River. Traveling these paths is an activity in itself, and the opportunity exists to link these routes into a larger, regional park system. Expanding the network of pathways to include a bicycle trail is also a very viable consideration. A trail could promote outdoor activities and draw visitors to the area.

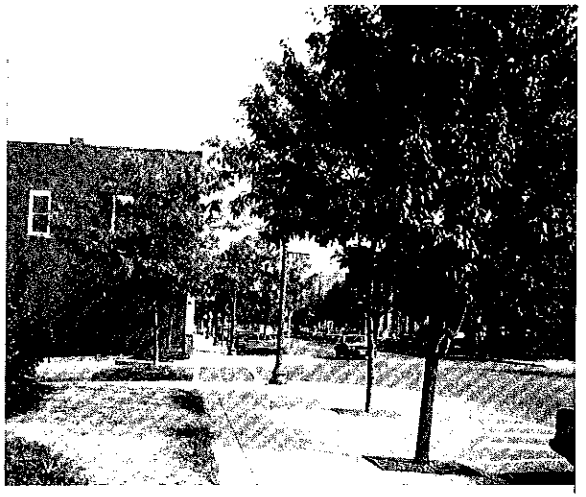
Pathways should also be examined for obstructions which prohibit safe and direct movement. Care should be taken to avoid placing utility poles, street signs, or other objects along sidewalks where view or access may be inhibited. In several areas of Kent, such as the area along Haymaker Parkway, paths have been "created" because there are no formal sidewalks. Here quite a few obstructions, such as fences and guardrails, make travel not only inconvenient but dangerous as well. The designer should always be aware of these conditions because they usually indicate that a more popular or convenient route might be needed.

Providing a safe means of travel for pedestrians is more than a necessity, it is also a means to connect different districts effectively and build a sense of continuity within the urban setting. Most of all, pathways can be a pleasant amenity for all to enjoy.

Streetscape

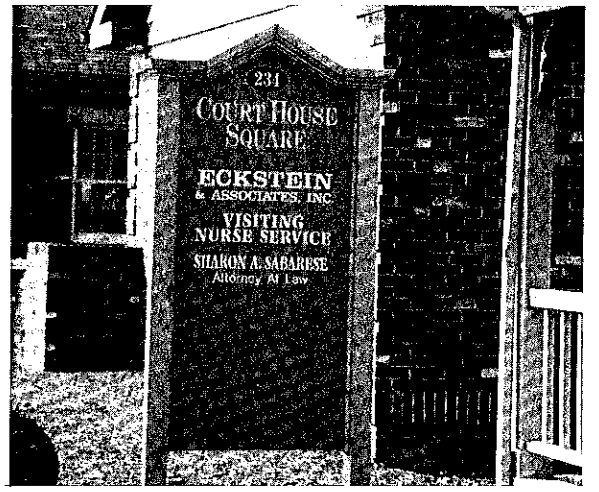
Since so much of the urban experience takes place in exterior open spaces, streets, and pathways, very important aspects of the built environment are the visual qualities of the streetscape. Signage, landscaping, lighting, and building materials all have a significant impact on the overall appearance, character, and image of the city.

One of the most obtrusive elements of the streetscape is the multitude of signage that is usually present. Without clear guidelines to control size, type, and location, signage can quickly become a confusing, ugly, and chaotic intrusion into the urban setting. The best examples of signage are those which remain sympathetic to the adjacent architecture, especially in the Central Business District. Reflecting the historic nature of the architecture in the signage can be an excellent method for creating a sense of unity and projecting an identifiable character. Controls limiting the size of signs help to keep them in scale with the rest of the streetscape and to create a sense of balance that is essential for providing a pleasant atmosphere for the public. Signage should also be located so as not to obstruct the view of pedestrians and motorists. With a little creativity and imagination, signs can be an exciting addition to the streetscape, providing an interesting addition to the visual environment.



Main Street streetscape

Landscaping is another element of the streetscape and one which should be considered a device for constructing a pleasing urban setting. With the addition of greenery, the hard edges of the city are softened and become much more inviting to the inhabitants. Trees and plantings can provide linkage with the various areas outside the city boundaries by utilizing rhythm and continuity to draw people through the area and by maintaining an overall character as well. Outdoor furniture can also be an excellent addition to the landscape, providing a place to gather and reflect on the surroundings. In addition, paving materials, awnings, window dressings, etc. can all be used to enhance the streetscape effectively by clearly defining pathways and adding texture to the setting.



Signage

Lighting, utility poles, and overhead wiring are other necessary considerations of the streetscape. Choosing lighting which is sympathetic to the character of the city can add a great deal to the quality of the urban experience, creating a sense of character and unity. Although not always possible, the best method for dealing with overhead wires and utility poles is to bury the service. Creatively concealing these items with landscaping can also be very successful.

When close attention is paid to these and the many other elements present in the streetscape, the urban setting can be a more exciting visual experience, thus enhancing civic pride.

Open Spaces

Exterior open spaces are a very vital part of an urban experience. Open spaces are used as gathering places, pathways, spots for quiet repose, and transitional spaces which link areas together. These spaces compose the stage for our social existence. Analyzing open spaces leads to an understanding of how they can be modified to provide an exciting setting for human interaction.

The framework for analyzing open spaces is based upon a hierarchy of spaces devised by author Roger Trancik, *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design* (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company) which defines five types of urban voids: entry-foyer, inner-block void, primary network of streets and squares, public parks and gardens, and linear open space systems. These five elements will be used to evaluate the open spaces in the Kent area for function and aesthetics.

Entry-Foyer

The entry-foyer space establishes the important transition or passage from personal domain to common territory. It is a gateway that announces the arrival to a "place." The Main Street Bridge over the Cuyahoga River is an important Kent landmark which serves as a gateway to the Central Business District, enhancing the quality of arrival into Kent. Other,



Rockwell Hall Atrium

similar gateways can be found at the crest of the hill on East Main Street, and at the intersection of the Haymaker Parkway and South Water Street.

On a smaller scale, many businesses and private homes contain exterior foyers and courtyards which are more private in nature. Many are overlooked, but with a small amount of attention these areas could be quite exciting as transitional spaces.

Inner-Block Voids

The inner-block void is a type of semi-public space which is most commonly found as an internal courtyard or plaza. An excellent example of an inner-block void is the Rockwell Hall atrium connecting the Kent State University Fashion Museum and the Shannon Rodgers and Jerry Silverman School of Fashion Merchandising, located on the northwest corner of the campus. The space succeeds aesthetically and functionally as a semi-private gathering area.

A prime example of an underdeveloped inner-block void is the enclosed vacant lot located between the "Loft" and the "Subway" buildings on Franklin Avenue. Whether or not building mass fills this space in the future, it is a highly feasible location for open space development at the present time. Another type of open space, largely ignored, is the internal area of many residential blocks. Many of these areas could be developed as semiprivate community green spaces.

Primary Network of Streets and Squares

Functioning as corridors within the city, the primary streets create an unusual type of exterior space linking different places and having high concentrations of activities. With the accentuation of focal points and view corridors, these spaces can be used as directional tools for moving people through the environment, or the spaces may be developed as focal points in themselves. For example, both Main and Water streets have strong visual corridors prompting movement to the other end, and the alleyways in the down-

town area have a great deal of potential for development as small pedestrian malls. Such spaces would not only be interesting and pedestrian friendly, they could also create possible revenues where currently inactive driveways exist.

There are presently no strong examples of squares or plazas in the study area, but a few sites have qualities that make them good locations to create such spaces: the northwest corner of Main and Water streets, the junction of Summit Street and Lincoln, and many of the vacant parking areas. Transforming these areas into quality places could foster a sense of civic pride.

Public Parks and Gardens

Usually parks and gardens are the first type of places which come to mind when considering open space. These areas bring nature into an urban setting by softening the edges of the built environment.

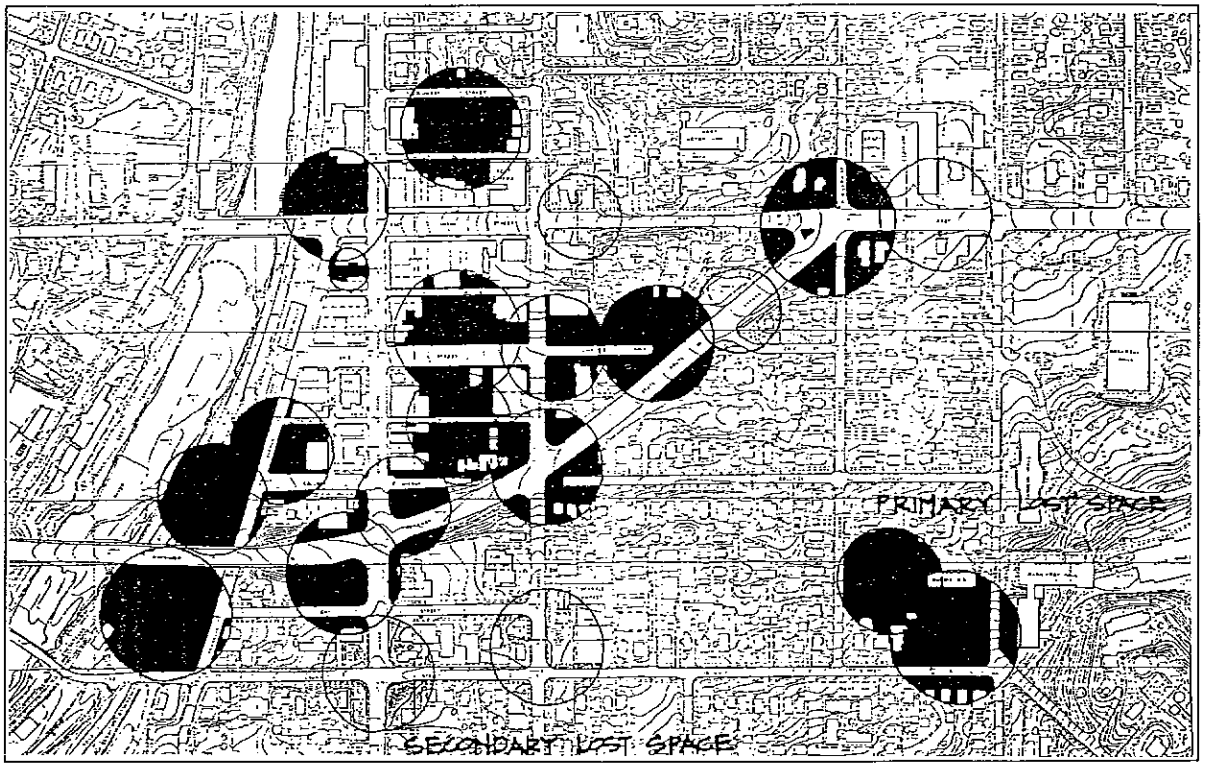
Kent can encourage visitors by taking advantage of its identity as the "Tree City" and by maintaining a city filled with beautiful green streetscapes and parks. The existing Riveredge Park and the areas surrounding it also have much more potential for development. By enhancing this natural resource, the city could benefit physically and economically.

Linear Open Space

The last element to be considered, linear open space, defines those spaces which relate to pathways, rivers, railways, etc. Many examples of this type presently exist in Kent, but the predominant spaces are along both sides of the Cuyahoga River and the Haymaker Parkway. Enhancement of the areas would reinforce them as vital urban places. New paving and landscaping along some of the city streets has already proven to add to the quality of the urban experience.

Summary

This analysis of open spaces in the proposed study area has highlighted existing resources which possess a great deal of potential to improve the quality of life in Kent. Assessments of the values of these places within the city has initiated a focus toward concrete goals, objectives, and strategies.



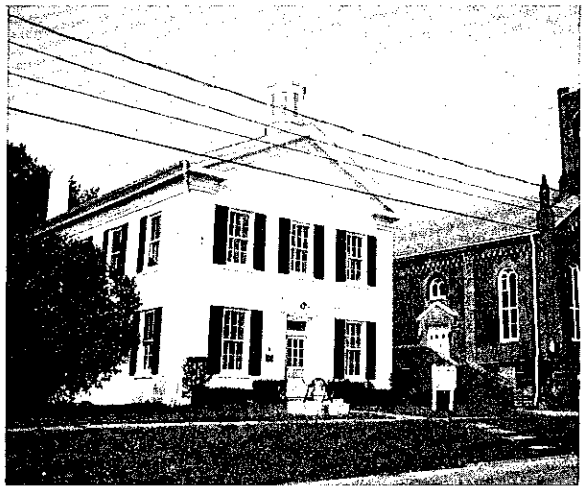
Open spaces

Historic Preservation

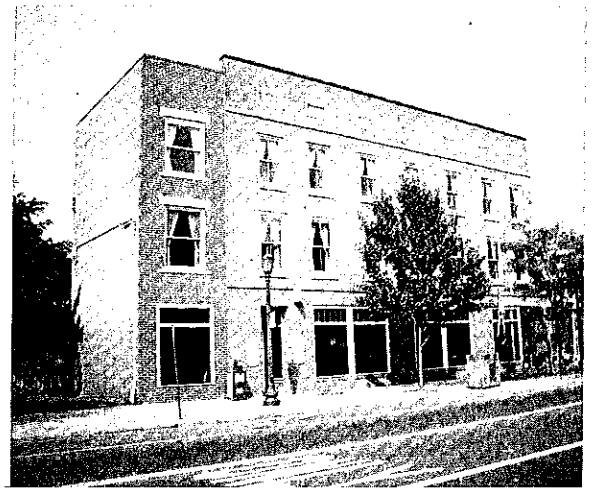
Much of the character of the city of Kent stems from a rich layering of historical influences most clearly represented in the architecture and various landmarks present. To evaluate the conditions in terms of historical value and preservation viability, it is necessary not only to consider cosmetic, visual factors, but also to take into account the socioeconomical, cultural, and psychological influences of the community as well.

Through the identification of the existing historic district, the acknowledgment of previous preservation efforts, and an understanding of the traditional methods of preservation planning, a proposal can be created which integrates these ideas and seeks to involve the active participation of the community.

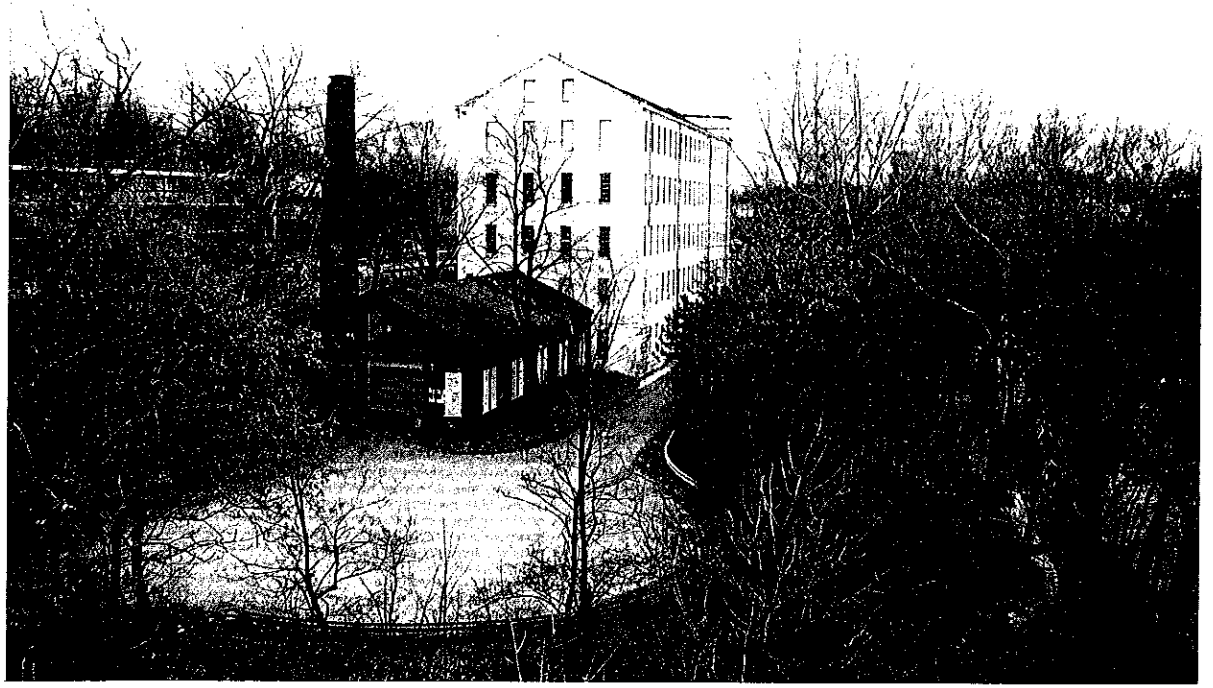
One of the first steps in creating a preservation strategy is to establish a history of place. By conducting interviews with members of the community, researching historical records, and studying examples of other preservation efforts, a comprehensive foundation for planning can be developed. Once data have been collected, a set of design guidelines may be formed which take into account the many aspects of community and civic involvement, as well as the physical factors required to maintain a cohesive character and identity for the entire city.



Township Hall, erected in 1839



The Franklin Block

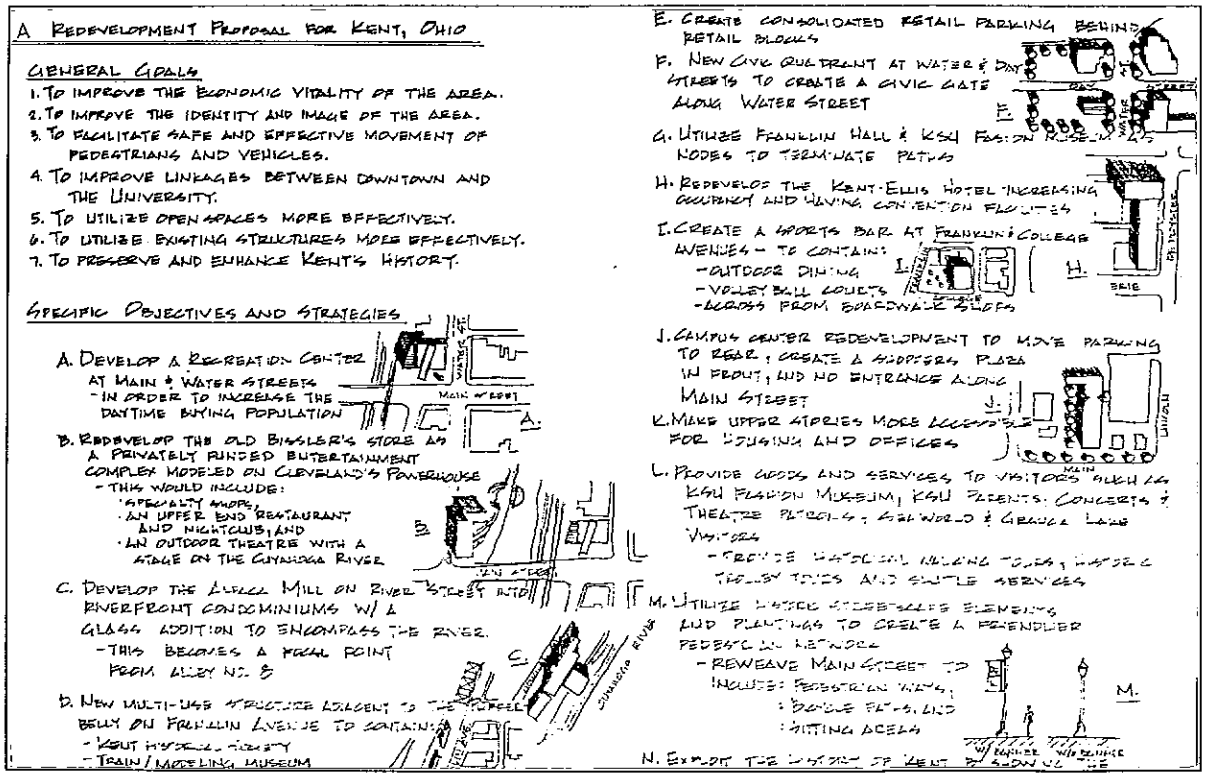


Alpaca Mill, erected in 1850

Defining Goals and Objectives

Having now completed an in-depth evaluation and analysis of many of the physical manifestations and conditions present within the study area of Kent and having gained a general understanding of some of the social, economic, and historical influences which have helped to shape the current environment, it is now possible to identify and outline specific goals and objectives which best provide a framework for accomplishing a comprehensive revitalization effort.

In addition to the information gathering process just completed, several public brainstorming sessions were conducted to allow the community to participate actively in the urban design process. From those sessions a list of concerns, wishes, goals, and ideas was formed. That list, coupled with the information acquired from the evaluation and analysis process, facilitated the compilation of an extensive set of very detailed and specific objectives and ideas.



Defining objectives with preliminary thumbnail sketches (Team 2)

In order to establish an organized structure for addressing the multitude of urban design issues within the study area, the list of objectives and ideas was divided into seven different general categories. A general goal statement was then defined which best summarized the objectives within each category:

I. **To improve the economic vitality of the area**

II. **To improve the identity and image of the area**

III. **To provide the safe, effective movement of pedestrians & vehicles**

IV. **To improve linkages between the downtown and the University**

V. **To utilize open spaces more effectively**

VI. **To utilize existing structures more effectively**

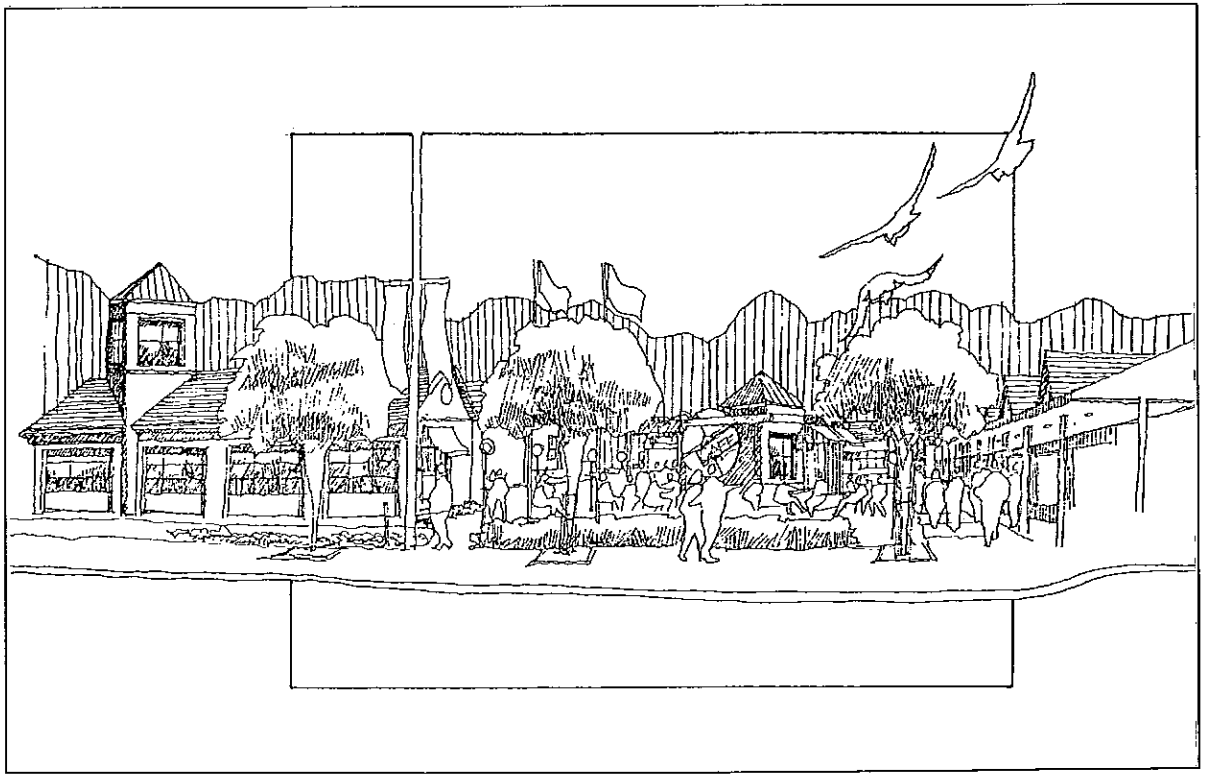
VII. **To preserve and enhance the history of Kent**

In the next chapter the objectives of each goal will be examined, and a series of design proposals and strategies will be illustrated to provide a basic set of ideas to initiate a viable civic revitalization.

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Planning for the Future

3



Drawing of proposed improvements to the Campus Center by Seiw-Hong Ong

I. Improve the Economic Vitality of the Area

One of the most essential goals in any revitalization process is to encourage new growth and development, which in turn boost the local economy and allow the city to capture a larger portion of the economic market. The key to accomplishing this goal is to provide reasonable, creative ideas and incentives for attracting new business and visitors by taking advantage of the positive elements already in place in Kent and remaining sympathetic to the existing setting and community.

The following outline provides a variety of ideas for strengthening the local economy. Numbered items are objectives, and the bulleted phrases which follow are suggestions made by townspeople or students as possible strategies for achieving those objectives. The suggestions are not intended as requirements but as ideas for accomplishing the general goal.

1. Invite customers and visitors from outside the Kent area

- Provide a unique experience to capture 1 percent of the regional tourism market
- Develop a hotel and conference center
- Maintain a level of high-quality retail
- Develop a strong Central Business District
- Promote local cultural and entertainment events
- Invite parents of Kent State University students

2. Create anchors at critical points in order to draw people through the area

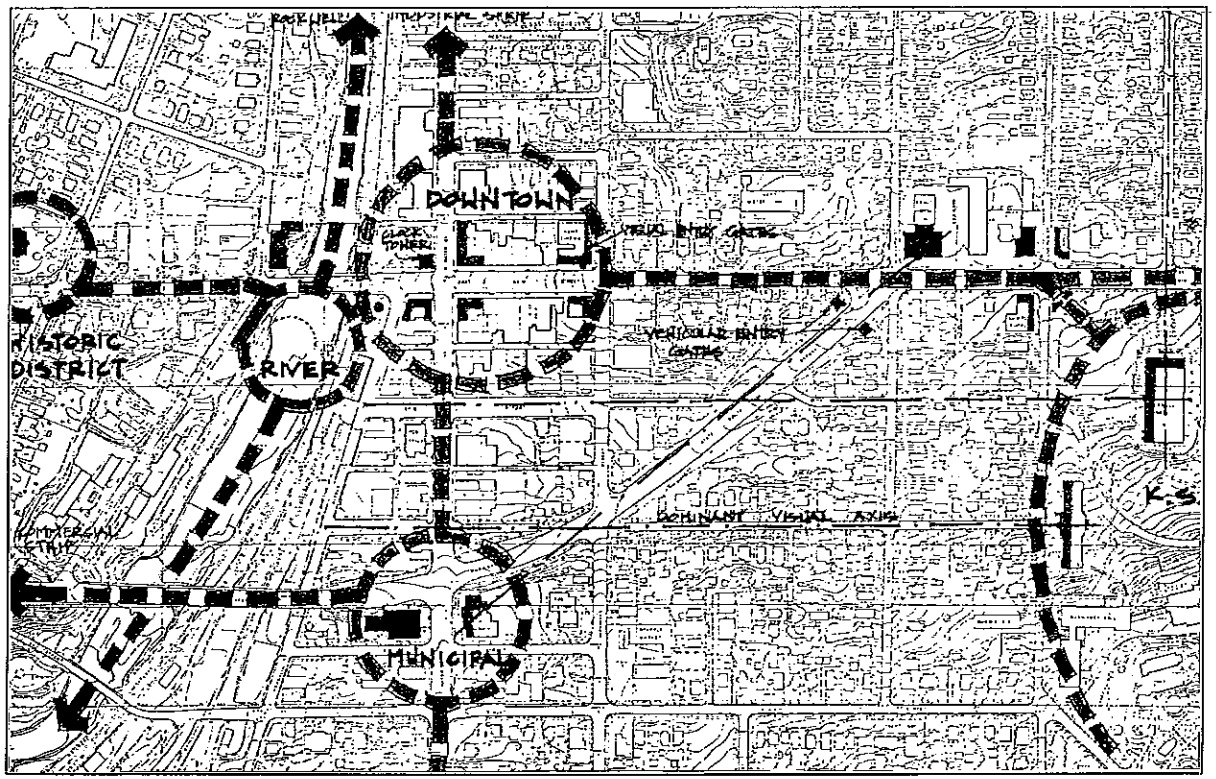
- Enhance shopping activities to draw people into the downtown area
- Encourage riverfront development along Gougler Avenue, use as a "gateway"
- Promote the historical aspects of Kent and promote new uses for existing landmarks
- Encourage development of park activities along the river banks
- Increase visibility of University offerings such as the Kent State University Museum

3. Utilize vacant sites more effectively and infill under-utilized spaces

- Develop hotel and conference center
- Encourage more high-density developments and mixed use areas
- Centralize parking areas, freeing up land for other uses
- Improve rear entrances to businesses and make upper levels more accessible
- Infill sites along Gougler Avenue to extend the business district

4. Encourage uses that extend activity period

- Encourage a variety of daytime and night time uses
- Increase residential density in the downtown area which extends market activity
- Promote a greater diversity of mixed uses



1.

4. Encourage new commercial and industrial business development

- Encourage mixed-use development and maximize limited land area
- Infill vacant land sites and increase density
- Encourage more riverfront development
- Consider incentives such as tax abatements for new businesses, especially for renovation of historic structures
- Enhance service area to appeal to residents and students

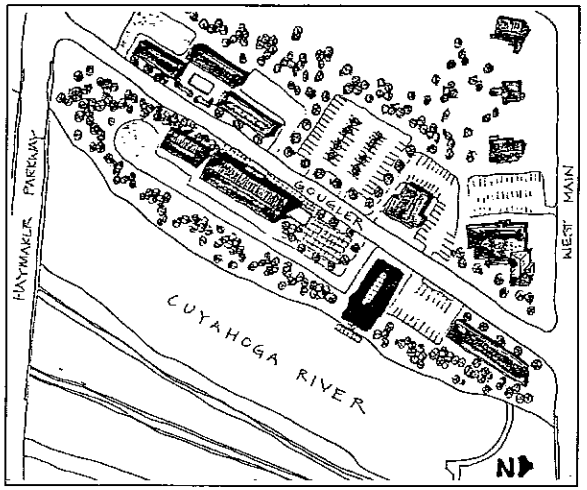
The following proposals are graphic strategies for accomplishing some of the objectives described above:

1. This diagram illustrates how predominant nodes can be used to link various areas of the community. Developing anchors in each node can effectively move people through the area. (Team 1)

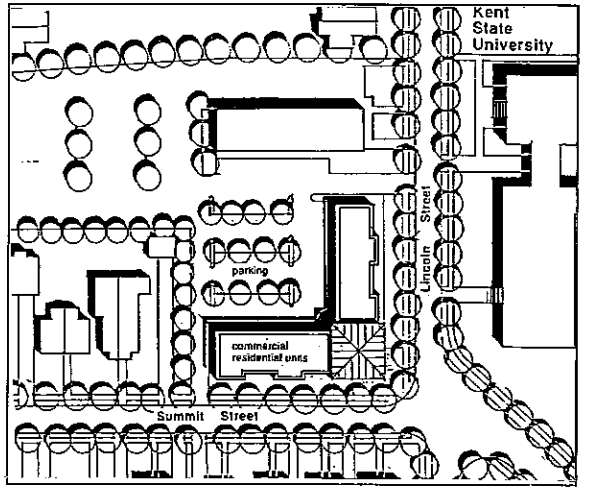
2. Developing the Alpaca Mill on Gougler into a special attraction and highlighting the historical connection to the mill era can provide a unique experience to entice tourists to visit the area. Possible development includes recreating a woolen mill and selling a product which is uniquely "Kent" or using the mill as an inn to encourage convention business. (Team 4)

3. Infilling vacant sites and encouraging mixed-use development can restore economic activity. This proposal creates a commercial center in a residential neighborhood providing services not previously available. (Team 5)

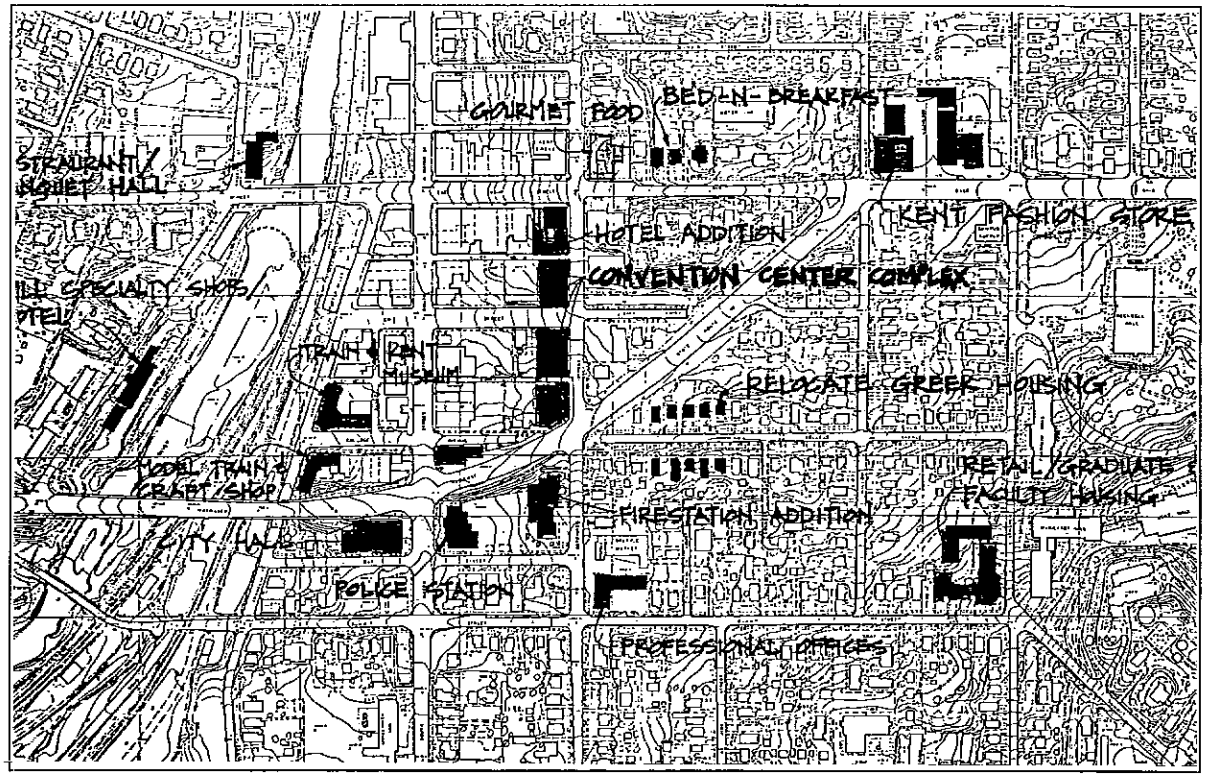
4. This illustration indicates locations for possible new development. The addition of restaurants, bed and breakfasts, a train museum and hobby shop, and specialty shops would provide a rich diversity of activities to visitors. (Team 1)



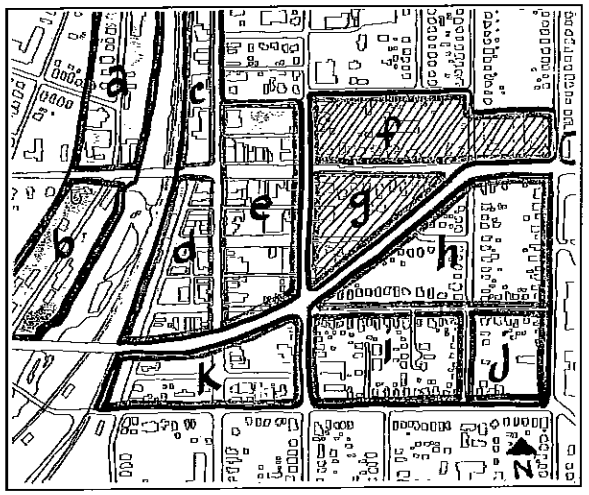
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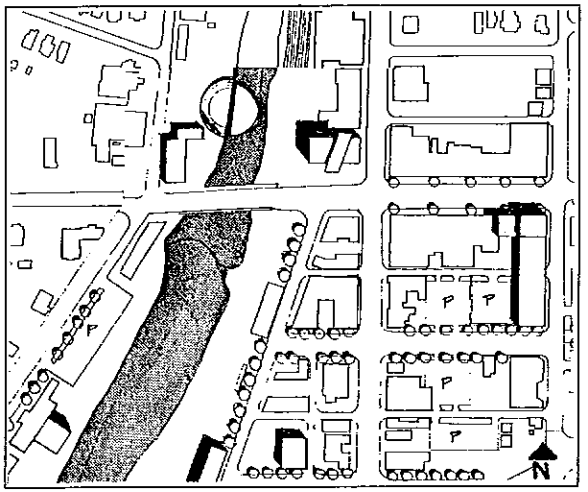
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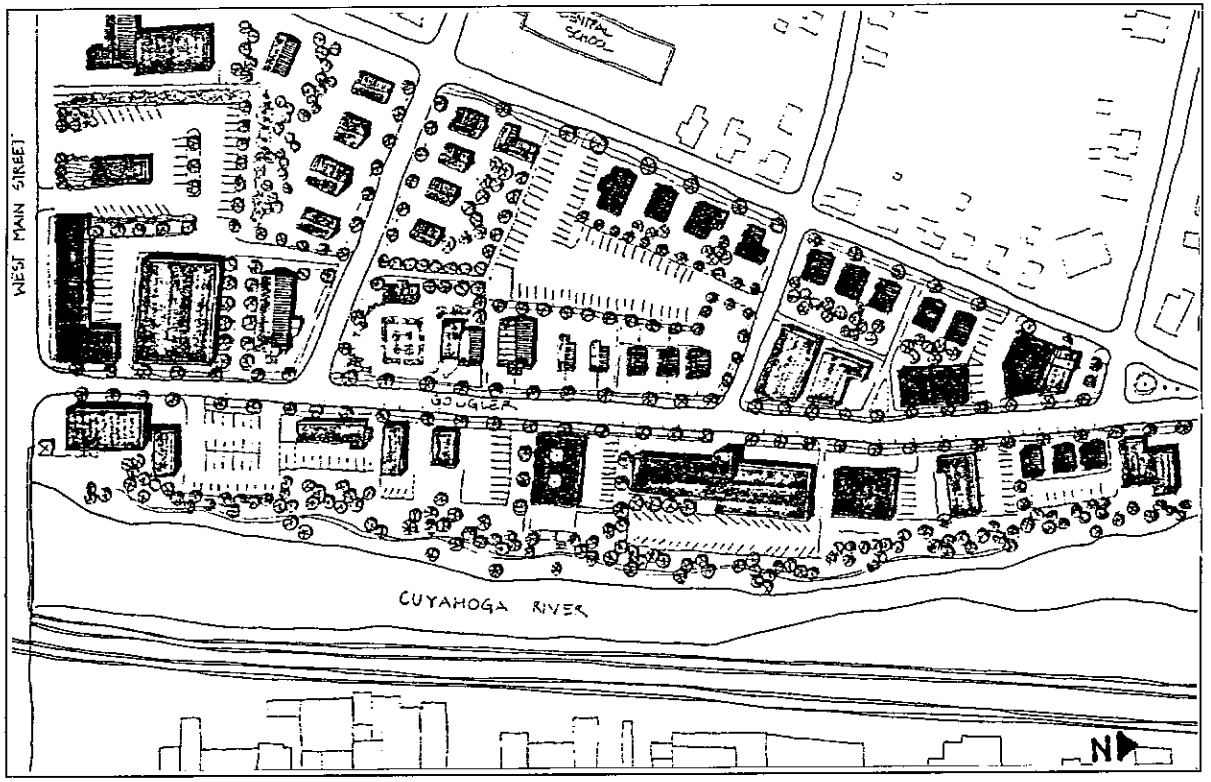
4.



5.



6.



7.

5. Economic Zone Map. This proposal divides the study area into districts and suggests focusing on developing a key idea, which would serve as the anchor node to draw people into and through each area. (Team 4)

6. The addition of an outdoor riverside theater would provide a unique activity to draw people into downtown Kent. Renovating the existing Bissler Building to include restaurants and specialty shops would extend the activity. (Team 2)

7. This proposal suggests initiating more development on the west bank of the Cuyahoga River along Gougler Avenue. Through the infilling of vacant sites with mixed-use development and the advantageous use of the riverfront, a previously neglected area could contribute significantly in boosting the city's economy. (Team 4)

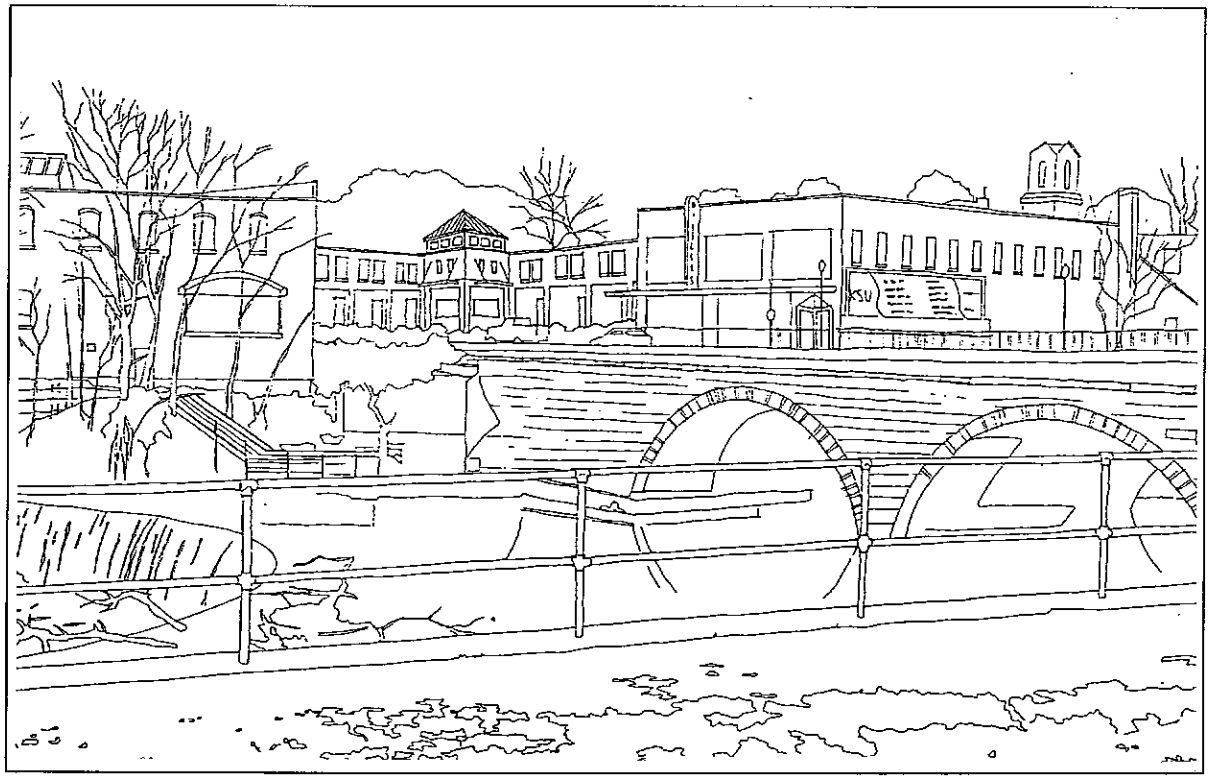
II. Improve the Identity and Image of the Area

In order to compete successfully in the regional marketplace, a city must project a clear image of the character and identity of the community. By enhancing and improving the existing features in the environment and promoting the addition of new elements, which highlight the historical and cultural influences of the city, it is possible for the city of Kent to strengthen its identity and attract attention in the regional market and be recognized as a unique tourist destination as well.

A few of the objectives and ideas for improving the identity and image of Kent are listed below. Again, these suggestions are not intended as requirements but as ideas for accomplishing the general goal.

1. Take advantage of historical and cultural influences

- Highlight the physical references to the canal and railroad eras
- Emphasize the architectural character of historic structures
- Develop "events" which attract attention and provide an experience unique to Kent
- Increase awareness of University events



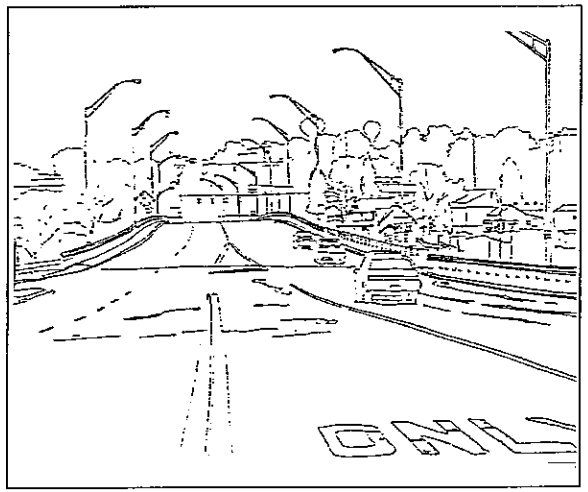
1.

2. Improve the quality of existing physical image elements (nodes, edges, paths, districts, and landmarks)

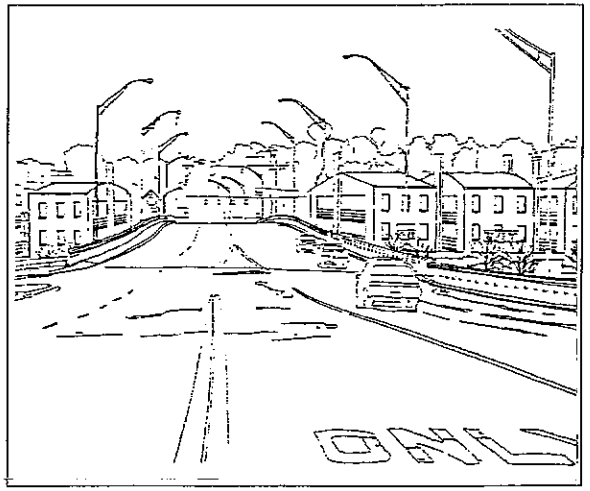
- Improve the character and quality of highly visible nodes of activity
- Use natural edges to create positive definitions of space and activity. Minimize barriers that prohibit access to adjoining areas
- Improve access and quality of existing pathways. Create new pathways that provide a memorable activity for visitors. (bike paths, riverwalk paths, etc.)
- Promote a clear vision for the various districts by defining specific roles for the industrial, commercial, and residential sectors of the community
- Take advantage of existing landmarks to promote the visual identity of Kent and project recognizable images to tourists

3. Improve the quality of physical space-defining characteristics (identifiable patterns and building form and mass)

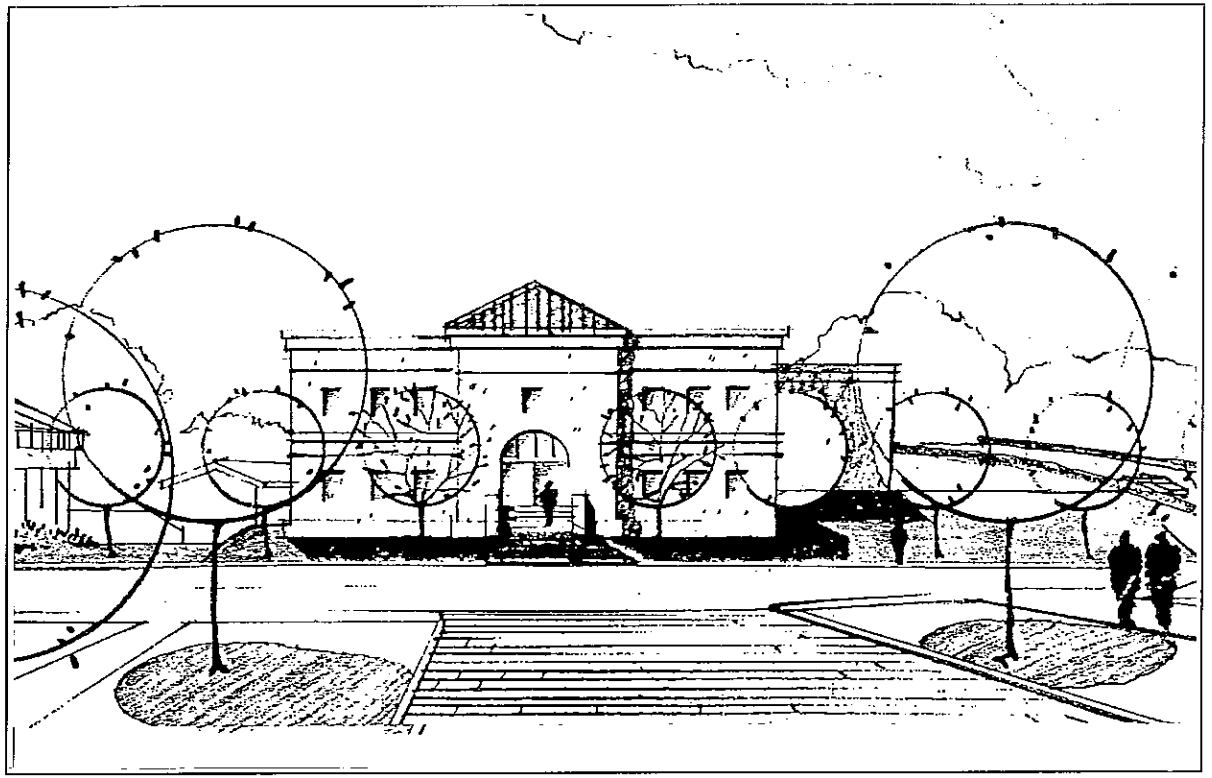
- Replace fragmented patterns and discontinuities in the urban fabric with identifiable patterns
- Define key spatial elements
- Create a visually coherent design
- Establish an open-space pedestrian network
- Utilize neotraditional town planning methods
- Use spaces to define activities and the character of the city



2.



3.



4.

4. Improve the streetscape

- Consider the street as a unifying element
- Utilize streetscape "furniture" to reinforce the physical character of the city and provide a sense of continuity
- Improve the physical condition of the streetscape and the buildings to project an image of civic pride
- Emphasize and develop strong points of entry or "gateways" into the city to accentuate the sense of arrival to a unique place
- Create a pleasant, safe, and exciting visual environment for outdoor urban activities

Key to illustrations.

1. (Previous page) A proposed mixed-use center at the northwest corner of Gougler and Main streets illustrates how a new building can reflect the architectural character of the surrounding area and project a cohesive image. If a vacant corner is infilled, commercial activity can be increased and extended to the west side of the river as well, anchoring further development in this area. This proposal also suggests the adaptive reuse of the existing Bissler Building as a community recreation center. (Team 3)

2. Illustration of how the western end of the Haymaker Parkway appears today. This bridge is one of the most heavily traveled entrances into the study area. (Team 3)

3. With the addition of residential housing units along the river, an identifiable "gateway" is created which marks the arrival to Kent. (Team 3)

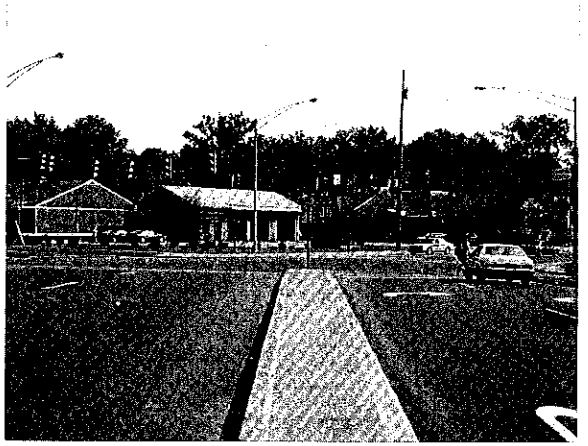
4. By incorporating architectural styles which are reminiscent of the historic character present in Kent, a sense of unity and continuity is maintained. This proposal suggests the addition of a new civic center across from the existing City Hall. (Team 5)

Key to illustrations:

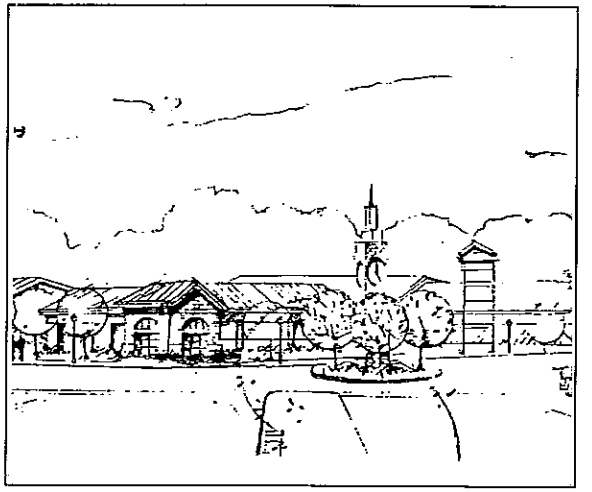
5. Photo of the Haymaker Parkway at the intersection of East Main Street as it appears today.

6. A proposed clock tower marks the transition point between the downtown and the University, creating a recognizable landmark which helps to organize a very active node and give it some identity. By carefully developing the northeast corner of Willow and Main beyond, a view is established which helps to move people through the area with less confusion. (Team 5)

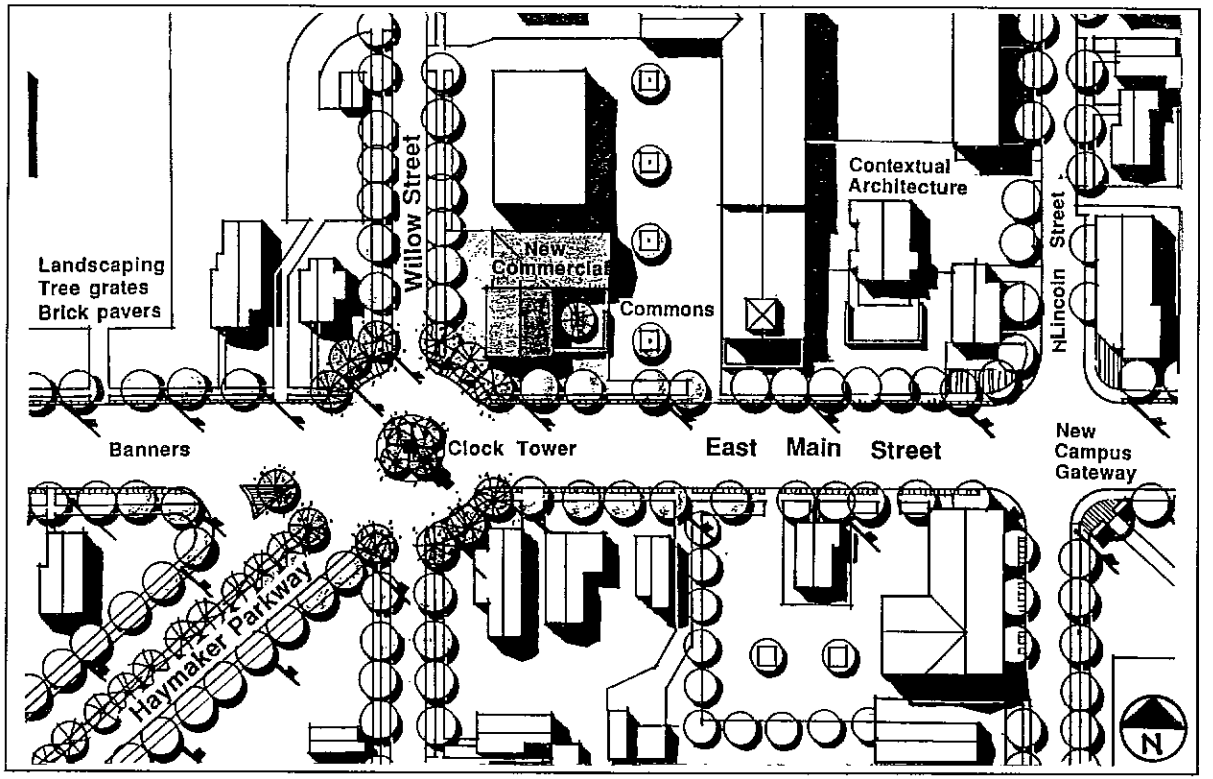
7. A plan of the intersection of the Haymaker Parkway and East Main Street illustrating how the proposed clock tower landmark can help to create a focal point and a gateway at a heavily traveled node. (Team 5)



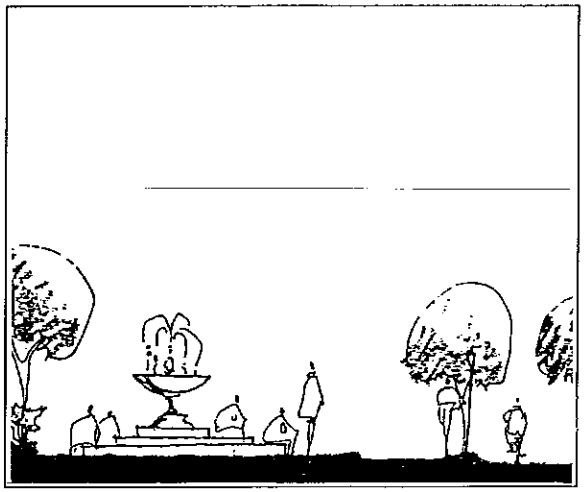
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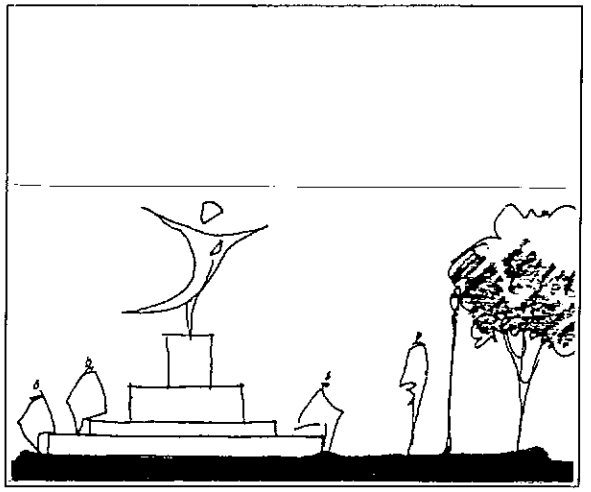
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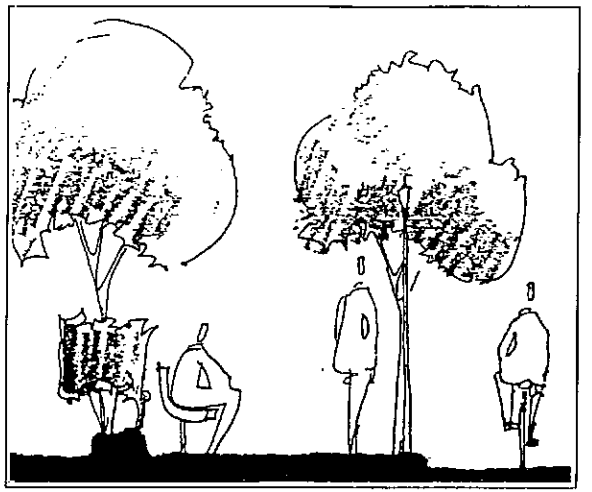
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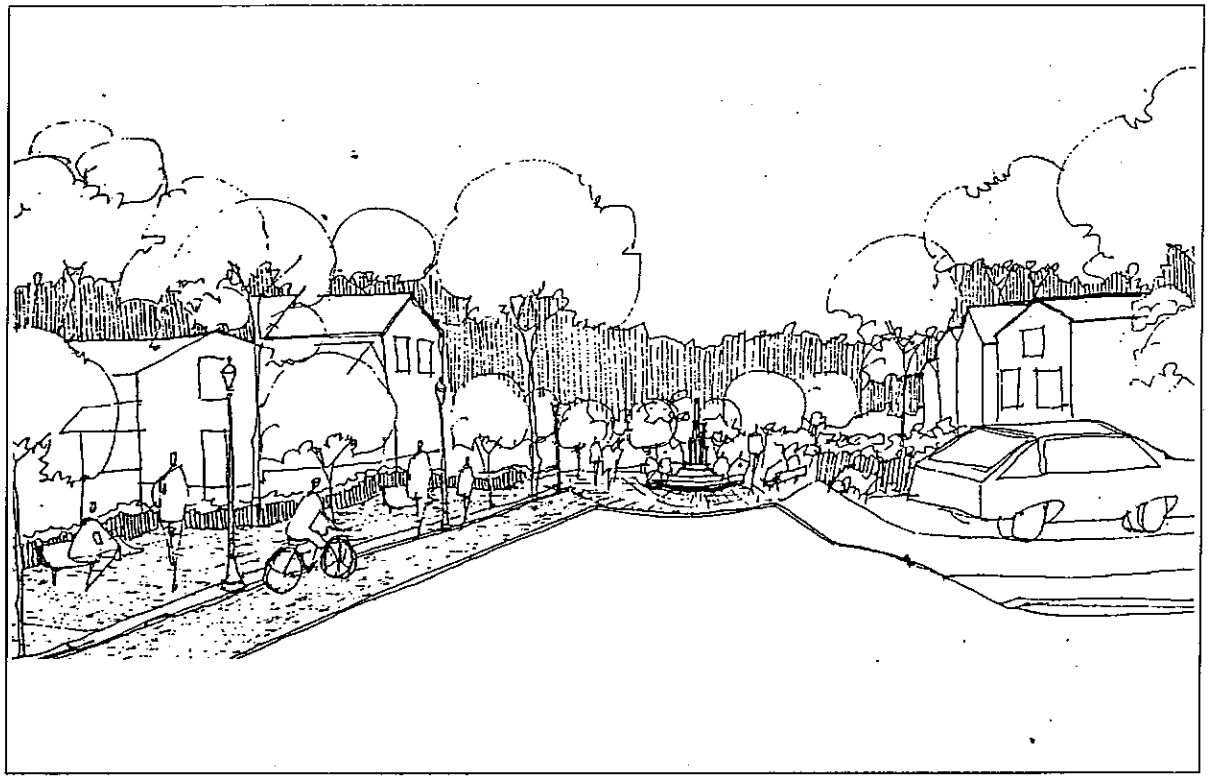
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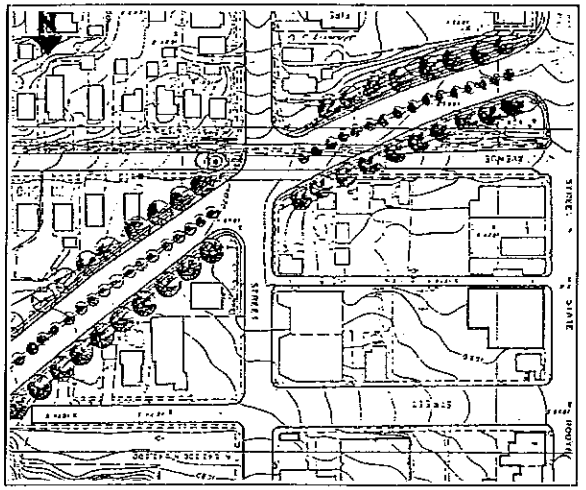
Key to illustrations:

8. Illustration showing how appropriately scaled streetscape elements, such as fountains, can enhance outdoor spaces and invite activity, thus creating a vital urban atmosphere. (Team 5)

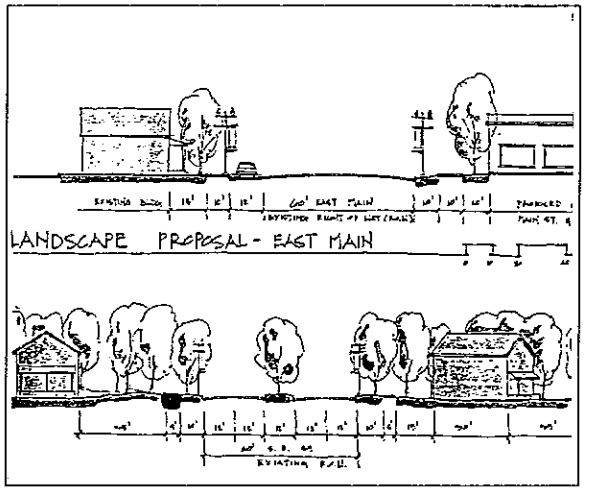
9. The addition of sculpture or outdoor art can provide memorable landmarks and improve the visual quality of the street setting. (Team 5)

10. By providing clearly marked pedestrian pathways, improved with the addition of furniture and landscaping, a continuity can be established and a pleasing activity is added which helps to project a cohesive image. (Team 5)

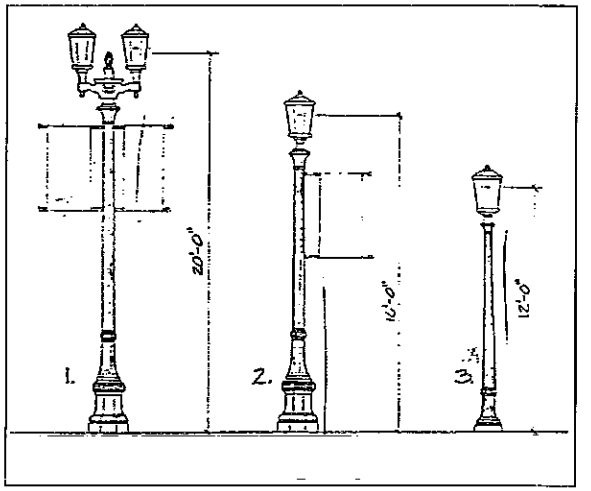
11. An illustration showing how an exciting streetscape can be designed to incorporate some of the items mentioned above. (Team 5)



12.



13.



14.

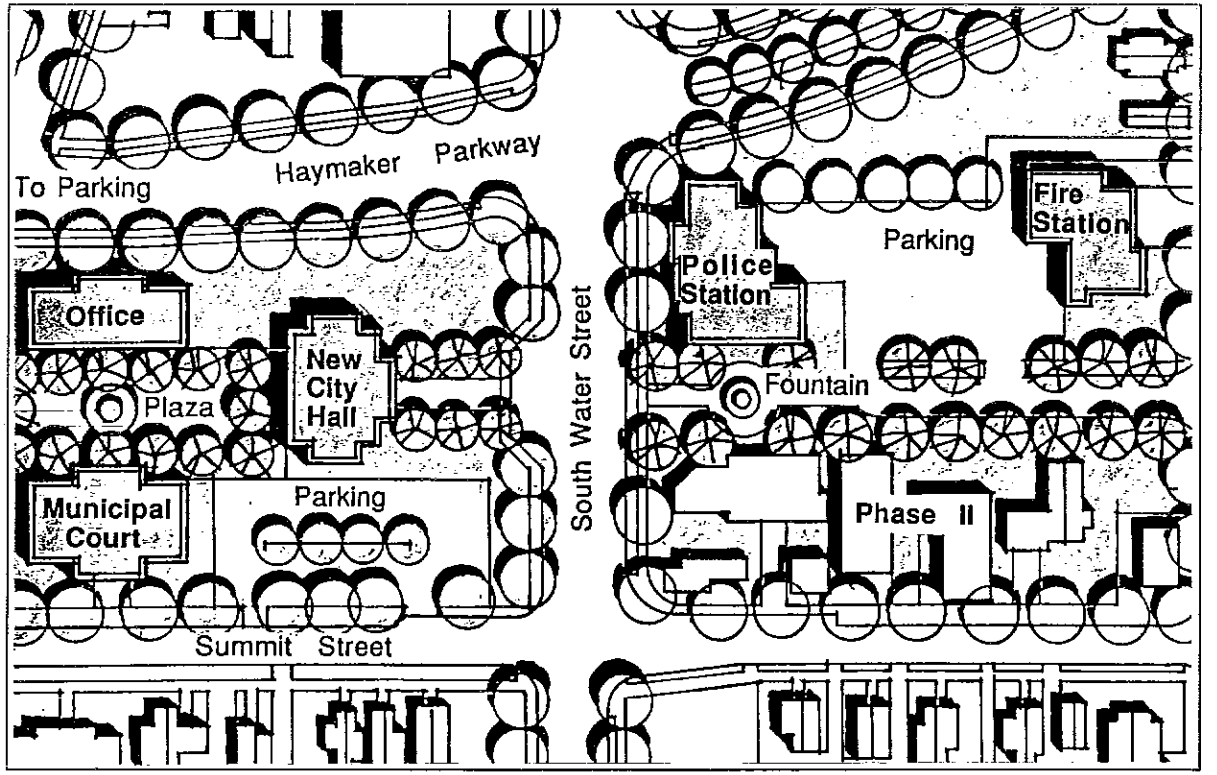
Key to illustrations:

12. Plan of the Haymaker Parkway suggesting the addition of trees along the edges and in a new median strip. Not only would this help to calm traffic, it would create a "boulevard" identity which complements the image of Kent as the Tree City. (Team 5)

13. Section through the proposed median strip showing how the space becomes more appropriately scaled to humans. (Team 1)

14. A proposed streetscape banner and lighting program would visually connect the downtown area with the University. The use of light fixtures which are sympathetic with the historic architecture in the area would complement the character of Kent. (Team 2)

15. This proposal illustrates how a municipal district could be created with the addition of a new city hall, a municipal court building , and an office building. By defining an entire district of similar uses a strong identity is created which projects a solid image to the community. (Team 5)



15.

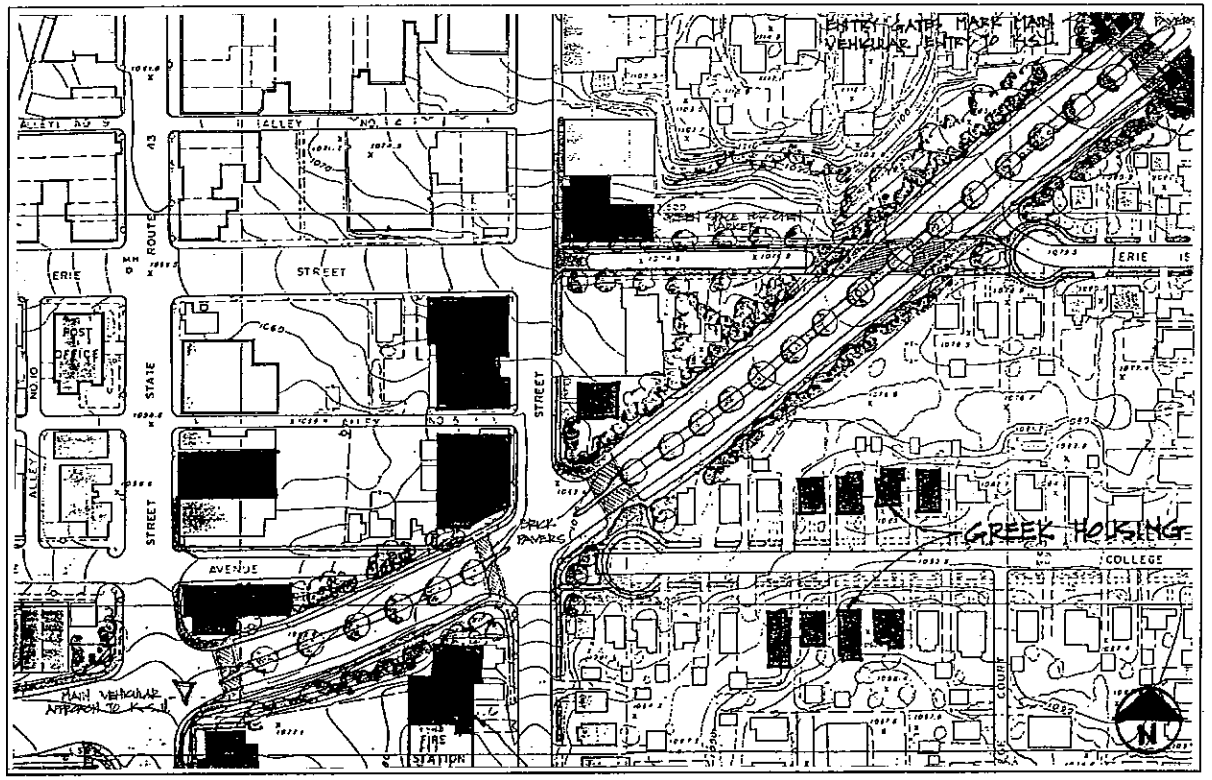
III. Provide Safe, Effective Pedestrian & Vehicular Movement

An important goal of the revitalization process is to maintain safe conditions for the people moving about in the environment at all times. As the analysis of pathways and circulation has shown, there are often physical conflicts which can occur between pedestrians and automobiles and which can create potentially dangerous situations. By taking appropriate measures to correct and improve existing conditions creatively, where these conflicts are present, the designer can provide an exciting urban environment.

The objectives which best define the idea of safe, efficient movement for pedestrians and automobiles are listed below. These ideas are not intended as requirements but as suggestions for accomplishing the general goal.

1. Reweave the street and sidewalk system where discontinuities occur

- Minimize barriers between the University and the downtown
- Improve links and accessibility between all districts
- Improve pedestrian access to buildings from parking areas
- Separate pedestrian and vehicular paths



1.

2. Reduce pedestrian - vehicular conflicts

- Eliminate curb cuts on main pedestrian streets
- Use "traffic-calming" measures to slow vehicular movement on main roads (Illus. 1)
- Creatively utilize paving and signage to mark pedestrian crossings clearly
- Create double-deck parking behind main buildings of the Central Business District to concentrate parking and allow better access to the upper stories of buildings
- Relocate State Route 43 outside the Central Business District
- Consider closing a portion of the street in the Central Business District to create a pedestrian mall

3. Lead by enticing movement

- Create view corridors with elements such as trees or signs to move people through an area
- Locate landmarks or enticing elements at the end of views to create a visual destination

4. Provide alternate means of travel

- Create a taxi service to provide greater access to the public
- Develop a stonger transportation system.
- Centralize parking areas and provide a shuttle to major commercial districts
- Create designated bike paths to allow for safer movement
- Set up a car pool program

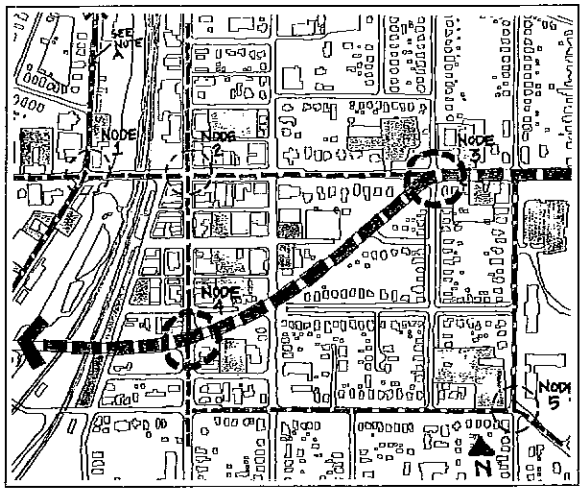
Key to illustrations:

1. Proposal indicating possible crossing locations across the Haymaker Parkway. By clearly defining the crossings with brick paving and planting trees in the median strip, traffic should be calmed considerably, and pedestrians will be able to cross this busy route safely. (Team 1)

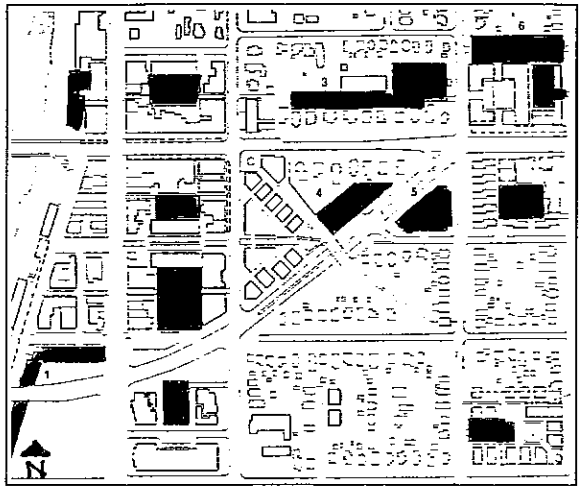
2. Diagram illustrating the most predominant vehicular routes and nodes of activity where pedestrian-vehicular conflicts are most likely to occur. Measures should be taken to assure the safe travel of all persons for any revitalization attempt to be successful. (Team 4)

3. Several possible sites for new parking areas are indicated on this drawing. By strategically locating parking throughout the study area rather than concentrated in the downtown area, many of the present parking problems can be alleviated. (Team 3)

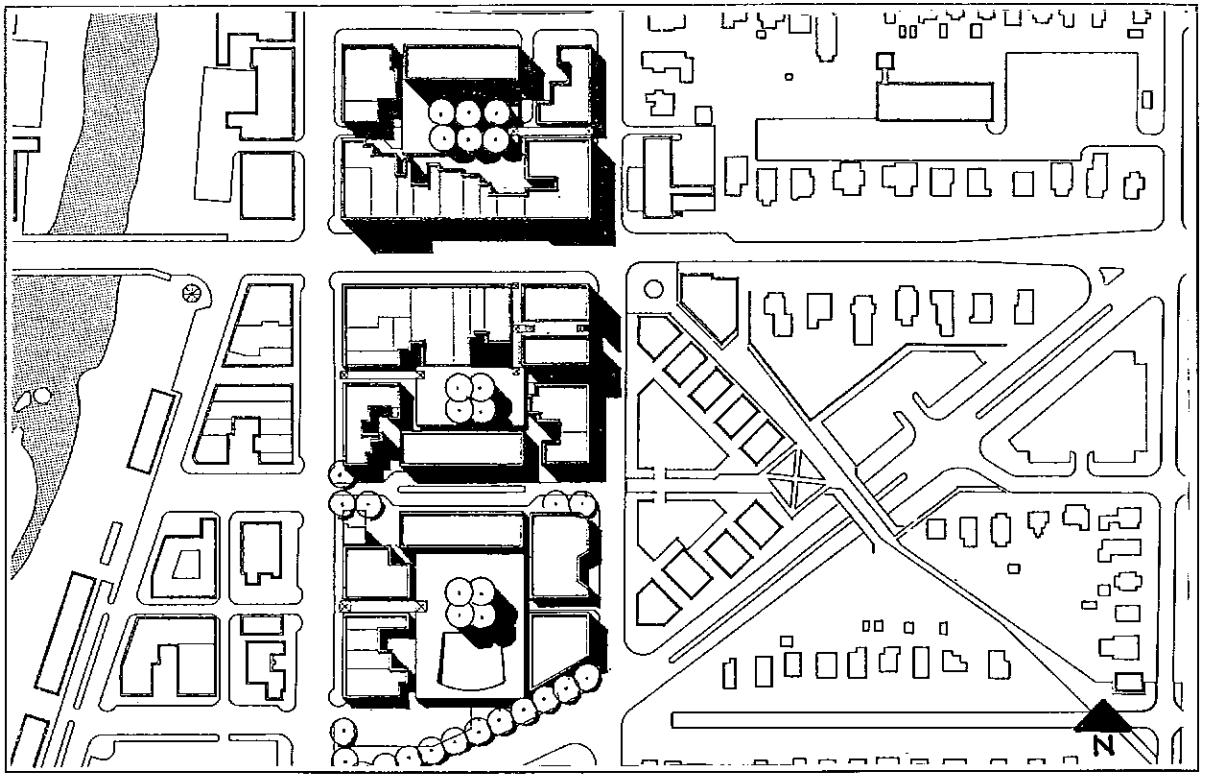
4. A creative proposal to improve the quality of existing parking areas behind the downtown commercial blocks suggests a parking garage with a public plaza above. With vehicular access provided at the lower Water Street level and plaza access located at the Depeyster Street level (and by ramps through the alleys), pedestrians may travel safely and conveniently in a very dynamic urban setting. This proposal also considers the idea of constructing a pedestrian bridge over the Haymaker Parkway linking the intersection of Main and Depeyster with the campus at Summit and Lincoln streets. (Team 3)



2.



3.

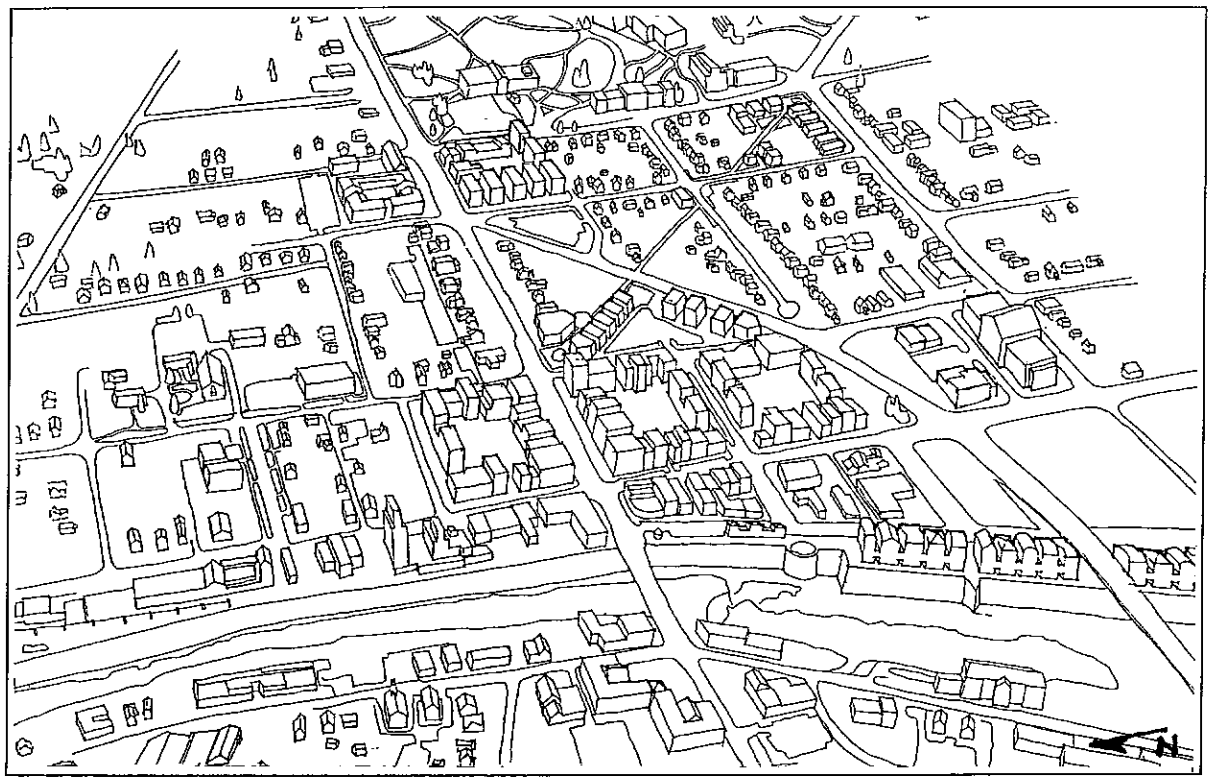


4.

IV. Improve University - Downtown Linkages

Kent State University plays a very important role in the history and economy of Kent. Without the University the city would certainly be a very different place today, but it is important that the image and identity of Kent be one which includes the entire community and projects a sense of unity. Over the years many of the links between the University and the downtown area have deteriorated, resulting in a breakdown in the urban fabric. It is the goal here to reconnect the pathways and character of the adjoining districts to restore the unified identity of the city and project the image of a rich and diversely composed community.

The following objectives outline methods for improving the link between the University and the other districts of Kent, especially the Central Business District. Numbered items are objectives, and the bulleted phrases which follow are suggestions made by townspeople or students as possible strategies for achieving those objectives. These suggestions are not requirements but as ideas for accomplishing the general goal.



1.

1. **Define and create nodes of activity to serve as anchors for connections**
   - Highlight existing landmarks to be used as destination points, such as the Kent State University Museum, train station, etc.
   - Develop new anchors such as hotels, stores, or activities to create nodes of interest which could facilitate moving people from the University to the downtown
   - Remove undesirable nodes of activity which inhibit links

2. **Utilize spatial and physical methods to create visual connections**
   - Create view corridors which lead by continuity and rhythm of elements such as trees, street lights, etc.
   - Place visible landmarks or create interesting views at the ends of major paths to entice movement
   - Eliminate path obstructions or elements which interfere with the consistency of the surroundings
   - Continue the character of the downtown into the University
   - Continue the streetscape elements onto the campus and connect to major nodes

3. **Create a seasonal banner program along major paths**
   - Combine University events and Kent community events into one program
   - Create logos and images which unite both communities
   - Encourage joint sponsoring of festivals and events

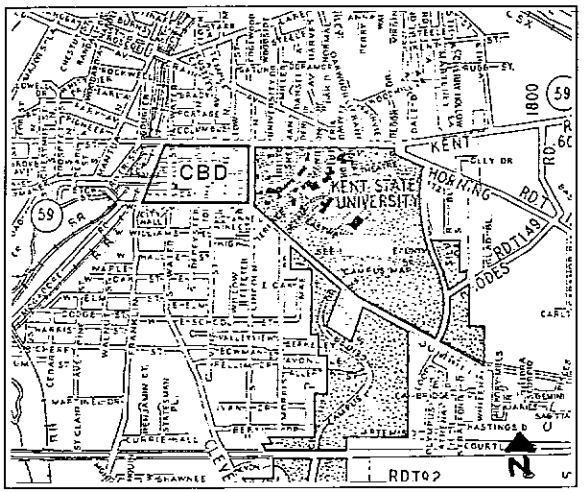
Key to illustrations:

1. Perspective drawing showing how a pedestrian pathway from the corner of East Main and Depeyster streets to the corner of Summit and Lincoln streets might appear. (Team 3)

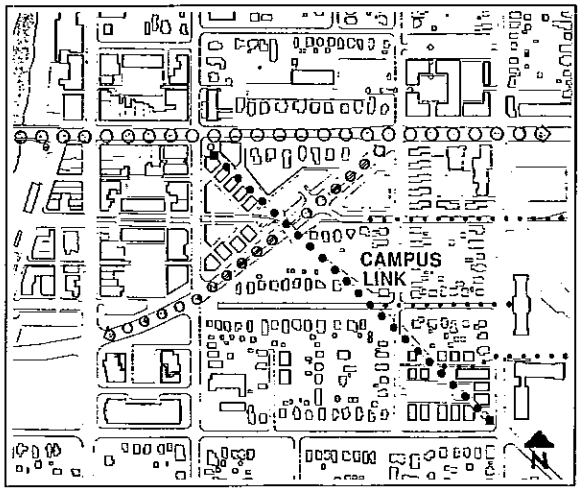
2. Map of the Kent area showing the strong directional impact and orientation of Summit Street on the study area. (Team 3)

3. Proposal which extends Summit Street with a pedestrian path through the College Park residential area making a connection with the downtown commercial district at Main and Depeyster streets. (Team 3)

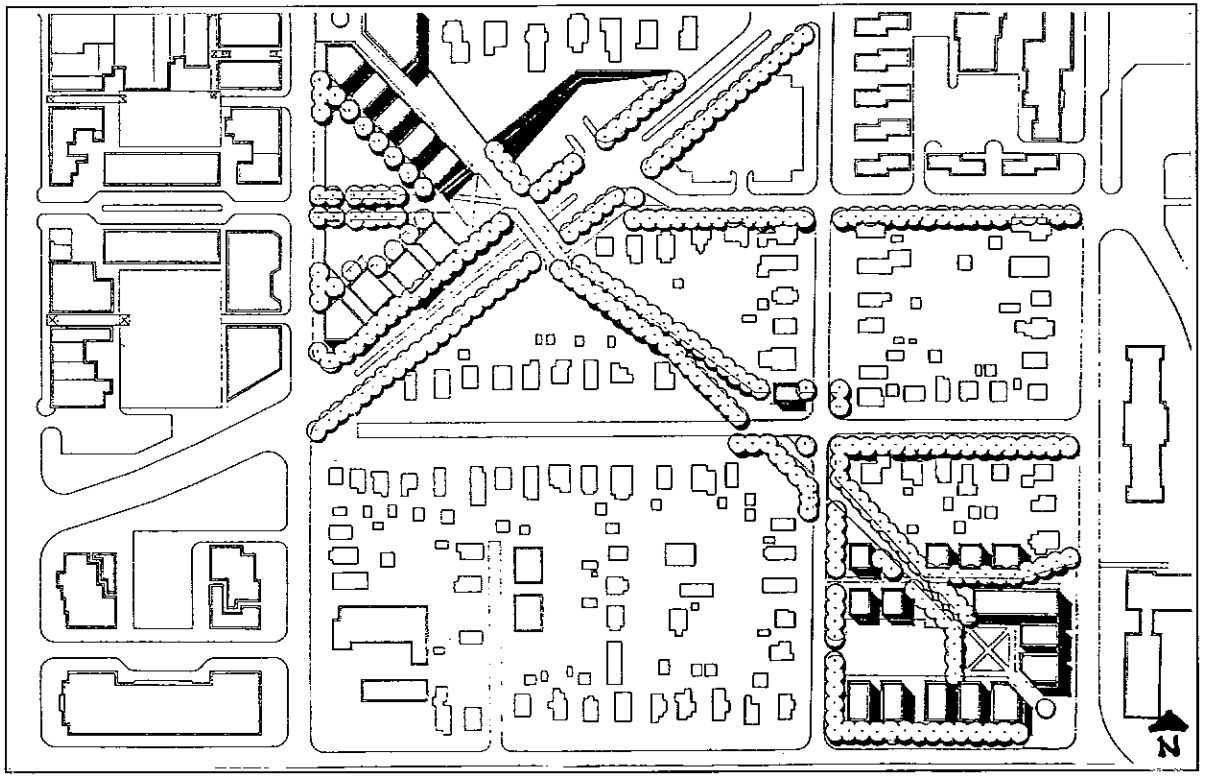
4. Proposed development of the pedestrian link between East Main and Summit streets illustrating how creating new nodes of activity can be used to draw people through the area. The diagonal orientation is an extension of Summit Street (See illustration 2 above). (Team 3)



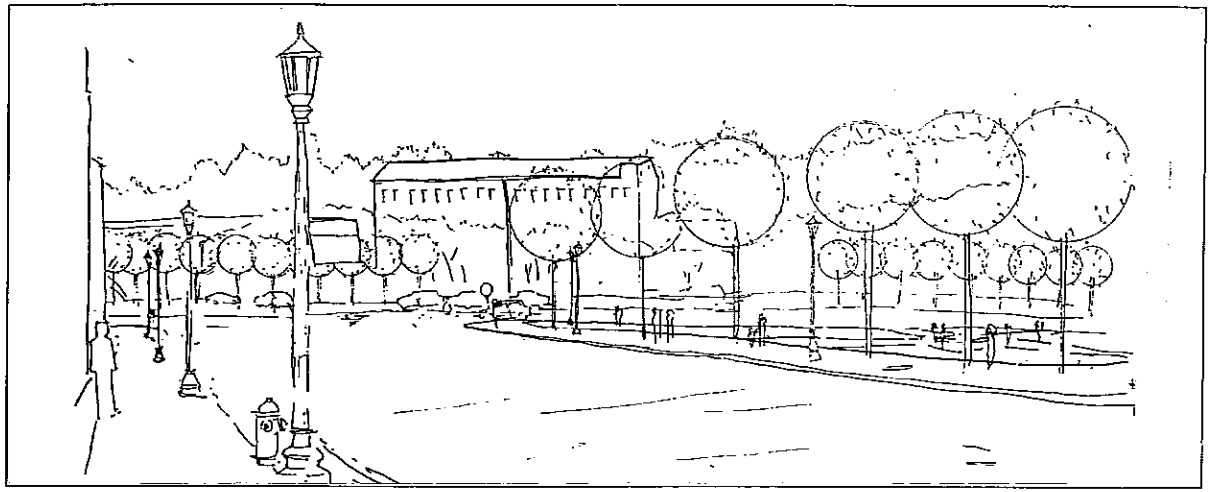
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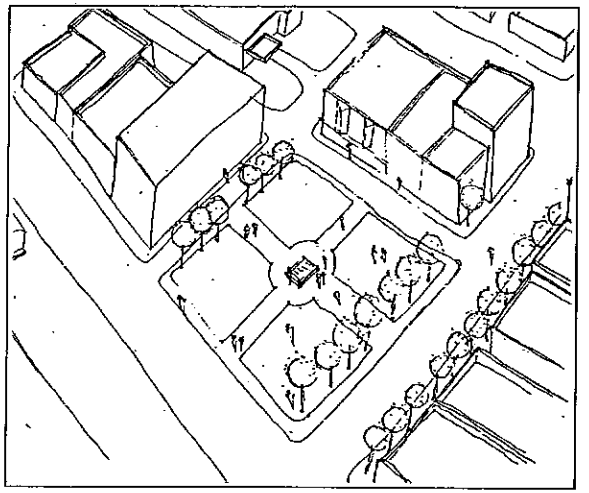
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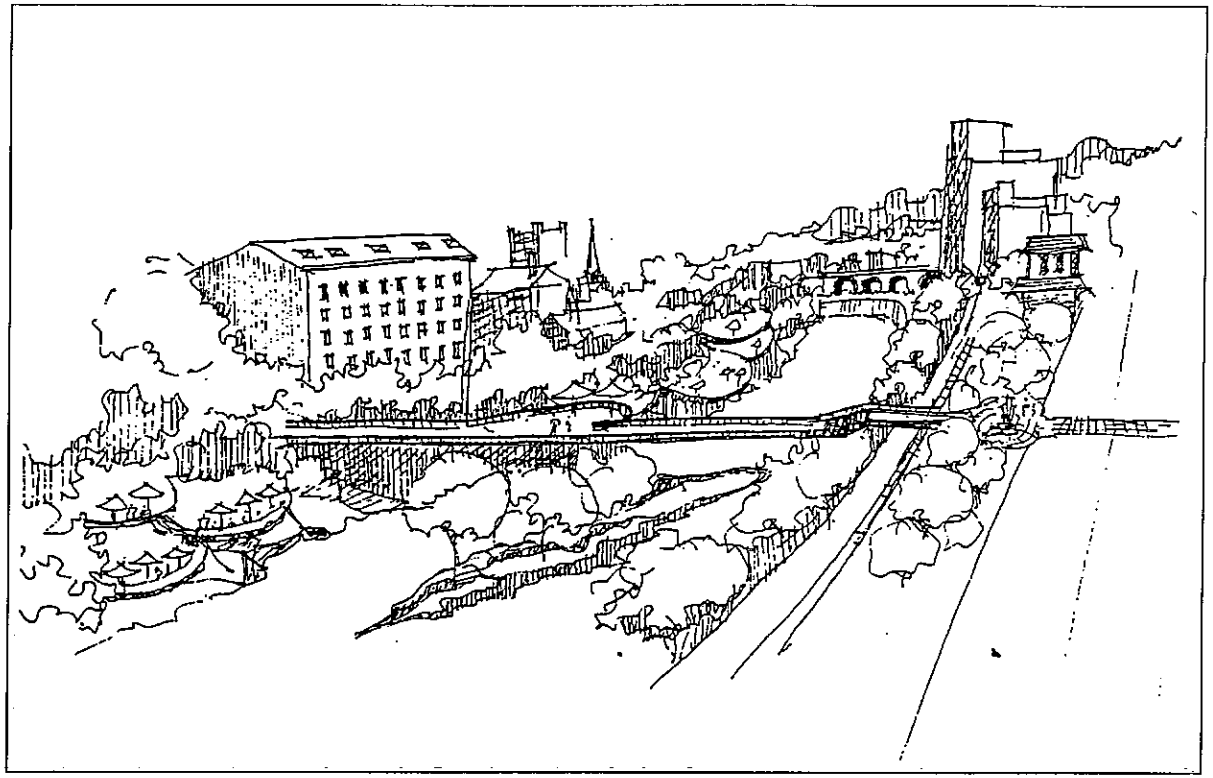
4.



5.



6.



7.

Key to Illustrations:

The drawings on pages 42 and 43 are all part of a proposal to create an exciting pedestrian link between the University campus and the riverfront along College Avenue. (Team 5)

5. A public park anchors the west end of the College Street pedestrian path at the edge of the Cuyahoga River, creating a pleasant urban node of activity and a destination point.

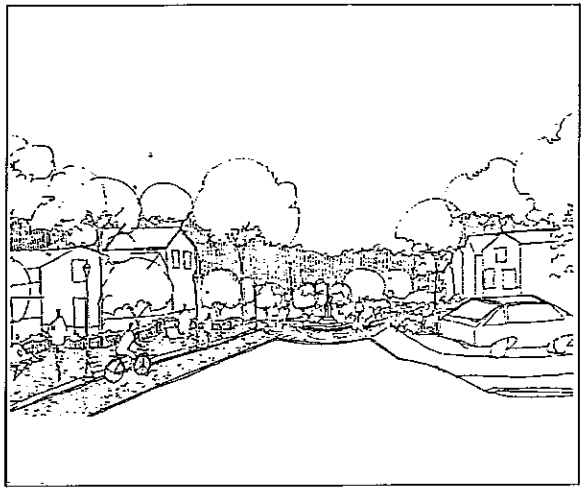
6. Plan view of the park at the west end of College Street between Franklin Avenue and Water Street.

7. A proposed pedestrian bridge crosses the Cuyahoga River at the foot of College Avenue creating an exciting and unique activity.

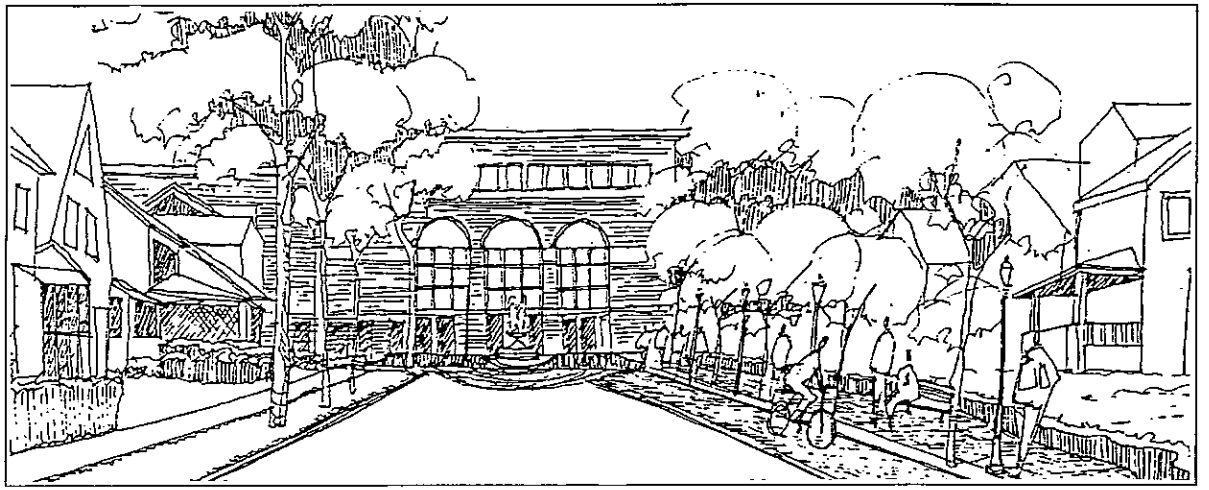
8. Addition of a fountain enhances the streetscape and provides a place to rest along the way.

9. Historic Franklin Hall on the Kent State University campus anchors the east end of the pedestrian path.

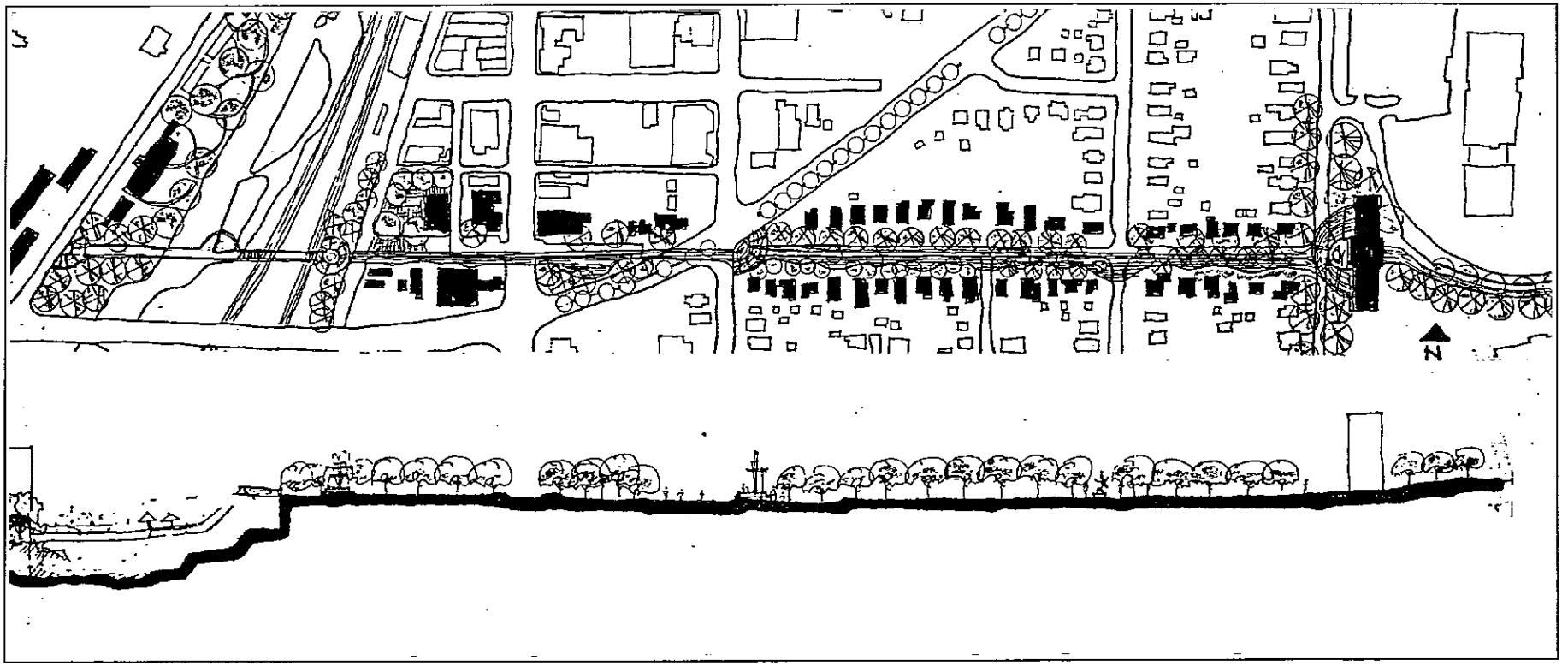
10. Plan and section of the College Street pedestrian path. Note that the path continues into the campus.



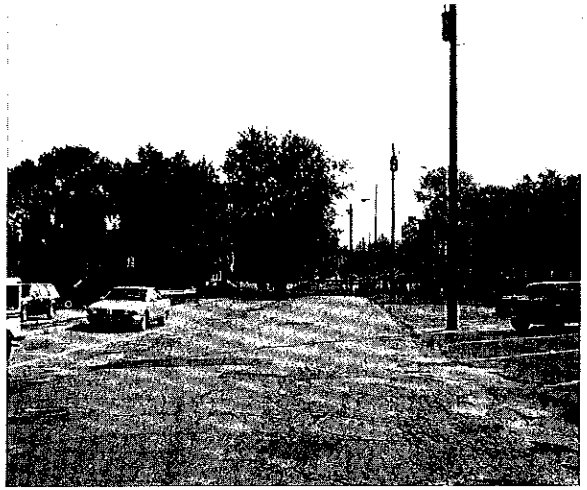
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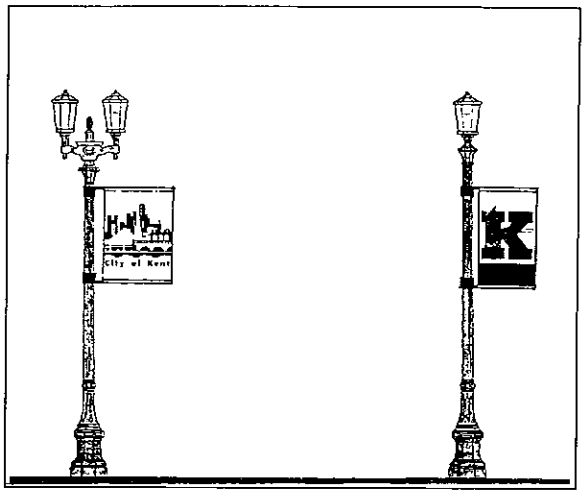
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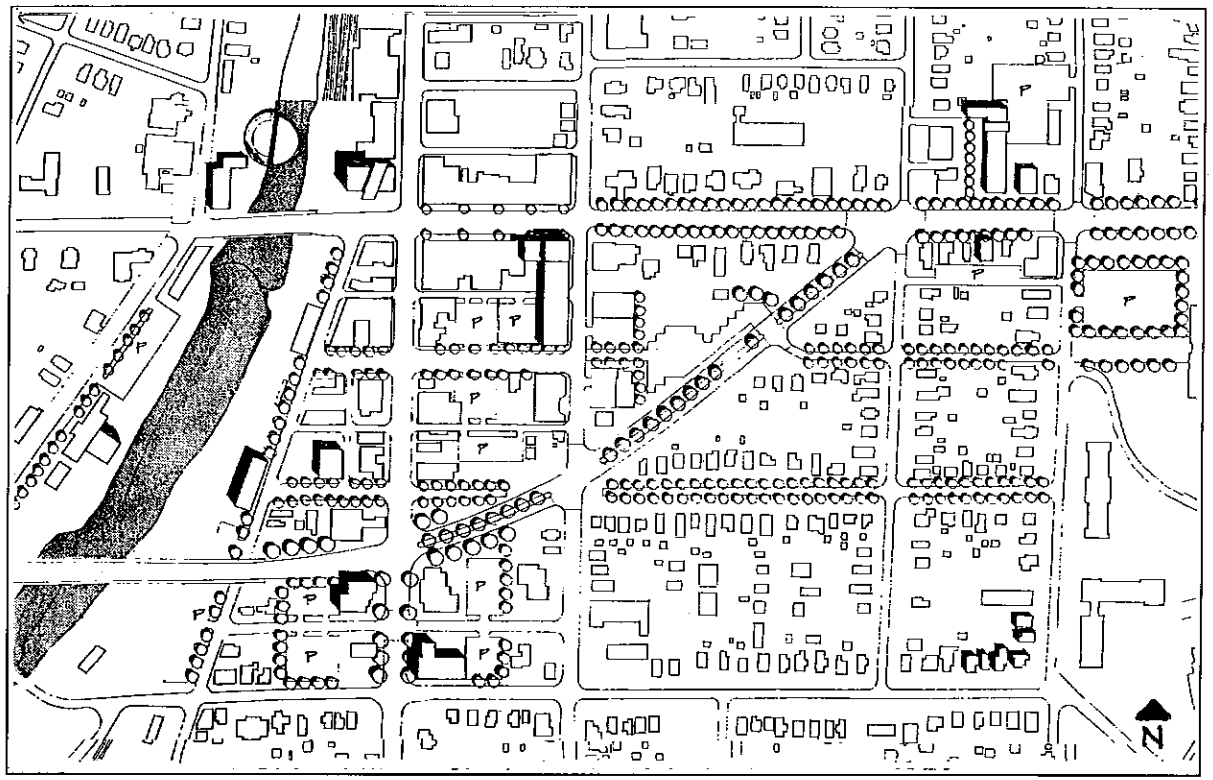
10.



11.



12.



13.

Key to Illustrations:

11. Photograph of how College Avenue appears today.

12. A banner program, which heralds forthcoming events on both the University campus and the downtown, creatively helps to unify the communities and can attract a great number of visitors. (Team 5)

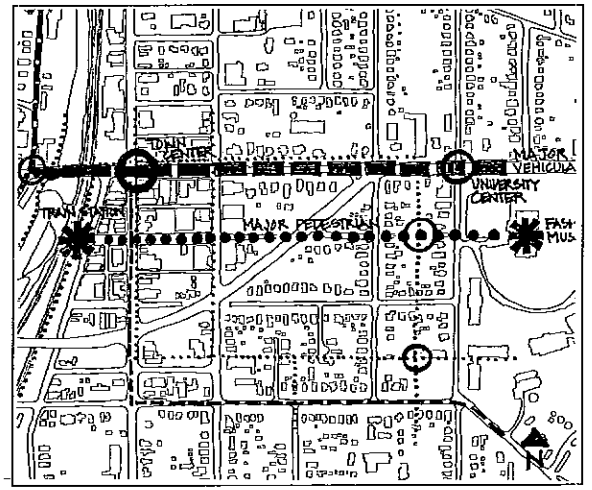
13. A proposal indicating developing and improving conditions to provide a pleasant streetscape along both College Avenue and Erie Street. (Team 2)

Key to illustrations:

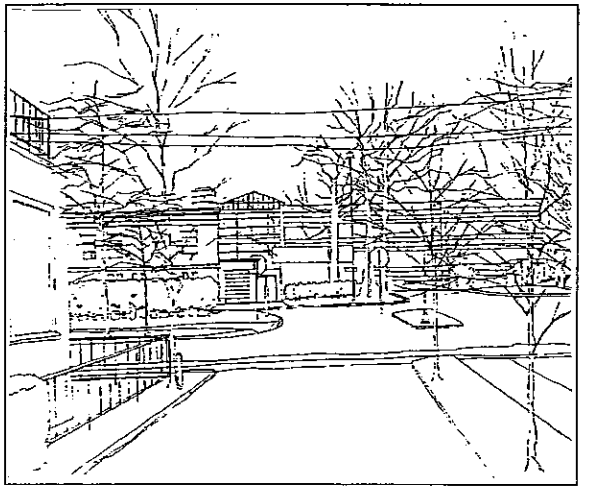
14. A proposal to construct a strong link between the Kent State University Museum, located on the University campus, and the riverfront downtown would effectively entice visitors to experience the commercial district. By locating restaurants and shops near the museum along the path, a variety of activities would help to draw people from different districts and reconnect the deteriorated urban fabric. (Team 4)

15. Improving the streetscape at the entrance to the museum in Rockwell Hall, creates a strong visual terminus to the Erie Street pedestrian path. (Team 3)

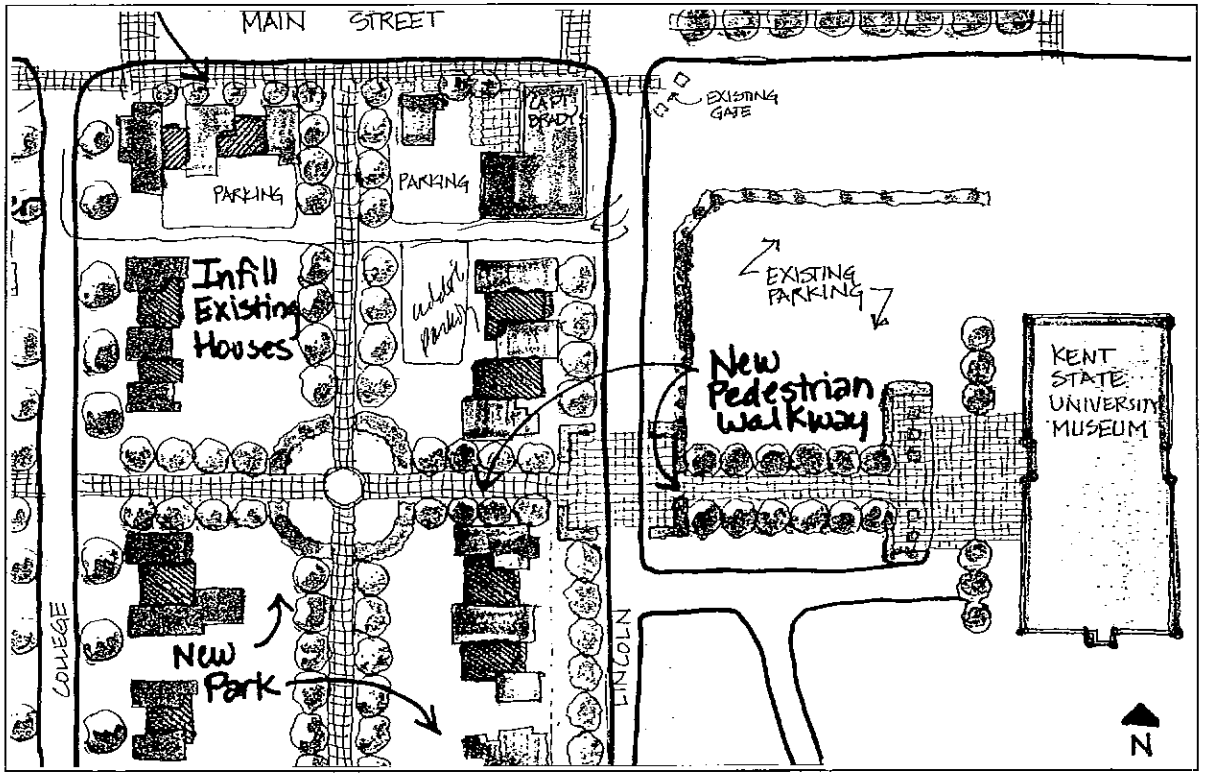
16. A proposal to create a semi-public park in an inner-block void to connect the Erie Street pedestrian path with the commercial establishments along East Main. (Team 4)



14.



15.



16.

V. Utilize Open Spaces More Effectively

Since the evaluation and analysis phase of the design process points out that exterior open spaces are a vital part of the urban setting, one of the important goals of revitalizing the Kent area should be the improvement of the quality and type of open spaces located within the study area. With the employment of creative and imaginative techniques, many of the neglected existing spaces can become dynamic settings for human activity, and new spaces can be created that highlight the many features of Kent.

The following objectives have been defined to help encourage ideas for utilizing open spaces to the best advantage. Again, these suggestions are not intended as requirements but are ideas for accomplishing the general goal.

1. Make riverfront more accessible and more visible to visitors and pedestrians

- Provide landscaped entries and clear signage to draw people to the area
- Open lower levels of Gougler Street buildings to the riverfront
- Encourage more activities to take place along the river, such as art festivals, concerts, etc.

2. Create gathering places for people

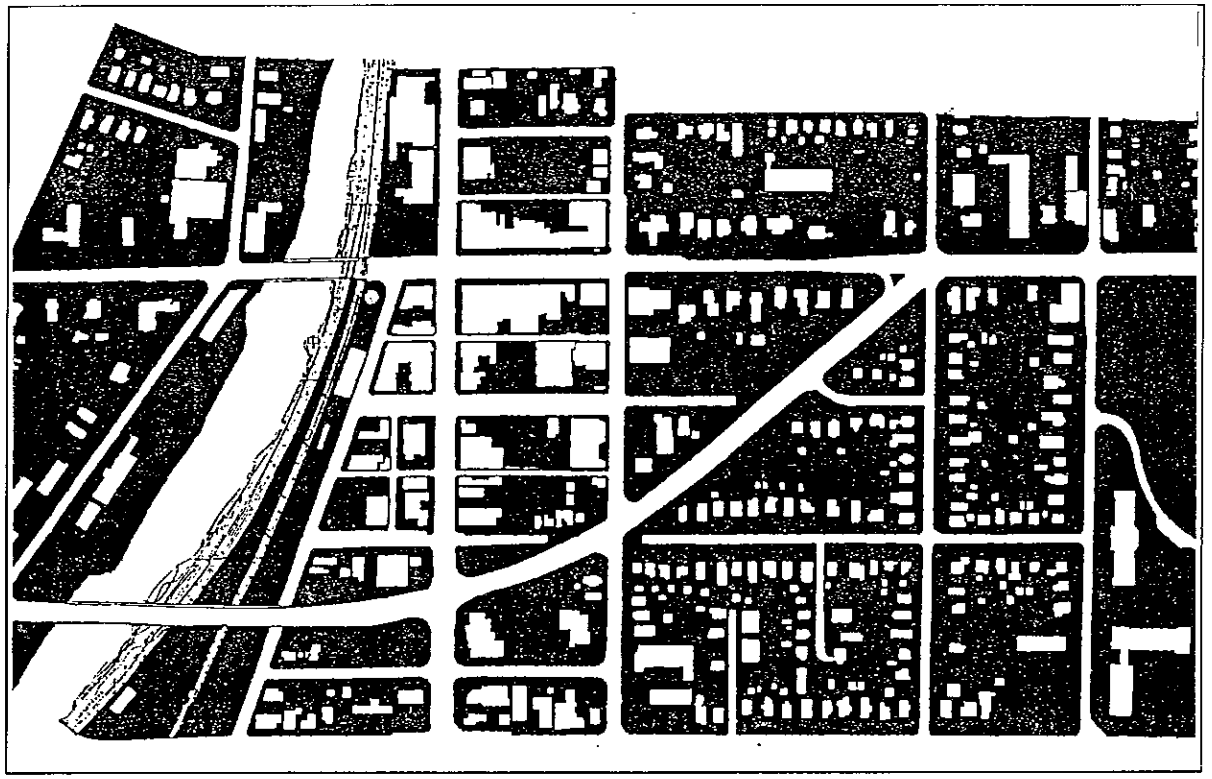
- Provide a designated area for festivals, concerts, and meetings which is a visible part of the landscape creating a unique landmark
- Create secondary nodes which can be used for casual meetings, resting spots, etc.
- Incorporate a community garden program to provide landscaping at various intervals along some of the pedestrian paths
- Encourage the construction of outdoor cafes and eating areas
- Designate a location for sports activities such as volleyball, roller skating, and frisbee
- Include a playground for children

3. Develop inner-block voids

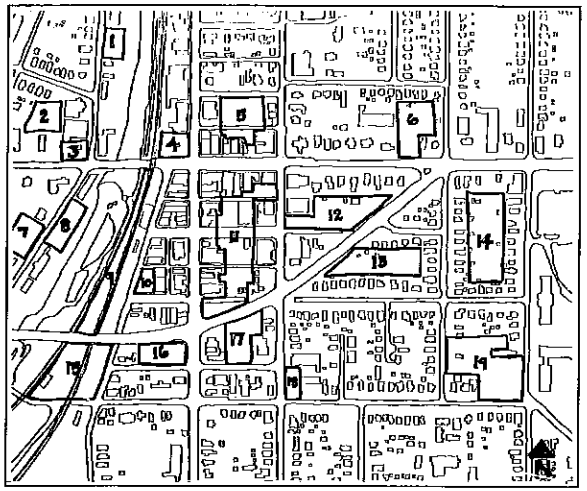
- Create semi-public spaces for gathering, eating, and playing
- Improve views from the rear of buildings
- Encourage spaces to be used as entrances to businesses
- Increase efficiency and improve quality of parking areas
- Develop more green spaces

4. Improve the open spaces along roads and pathways

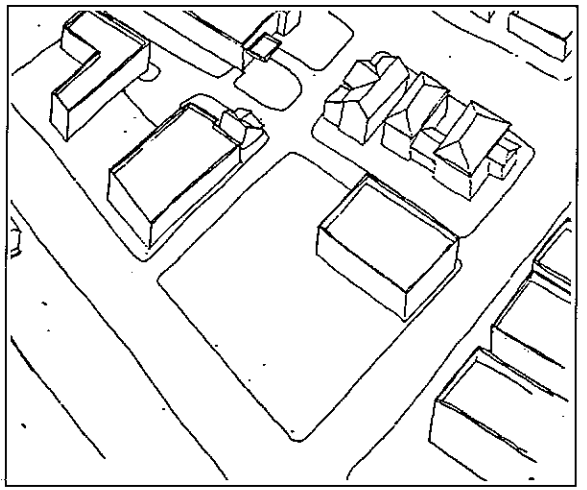
- Develop a greenbelt link between downtown and the University
- Add trees to strengthen the image of Kent as the "Tree City"
- Open up the river to views
- Improve the quality of the streetscape by adding benches, lights, and landscaping which echo the character of the surroundings



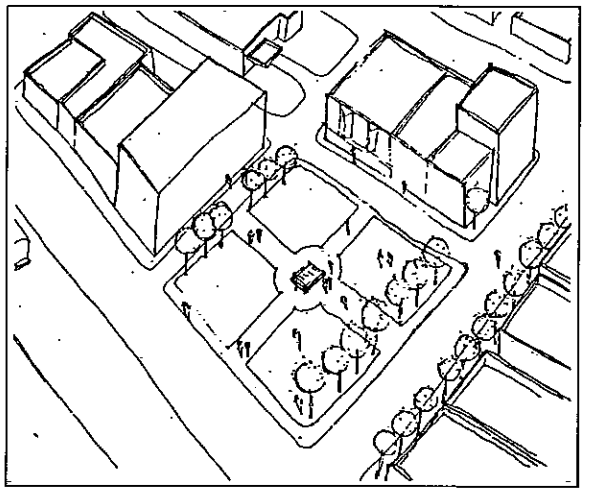
1.



2.



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4.

Key to illustrations:

1. A figure-ground diagram which clearly indicates the predominance of open space within the study area. (Team 5)

2. An illustration which locates those particular open spaces that need attention either by infilling new structures or by remaining as open spaces with improvements. (Team 4)

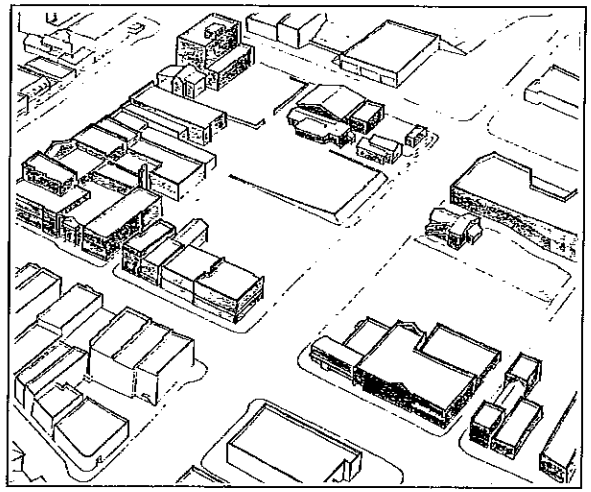
3. Many of the open spaces in Kent are vacant lots used for parking such as this space (no. 10 in illustration 2 above) at the corner of Franklin Avenue and College Street. This particular lot is in poor condition, and a portion is completely blocked off and unused. (Team 5)

4. View of the same open space improved as a public park, creating a pleasant gathering place adjacent to the river. Notice how adding height to the structures around the park helps to define the space. (Team 5)

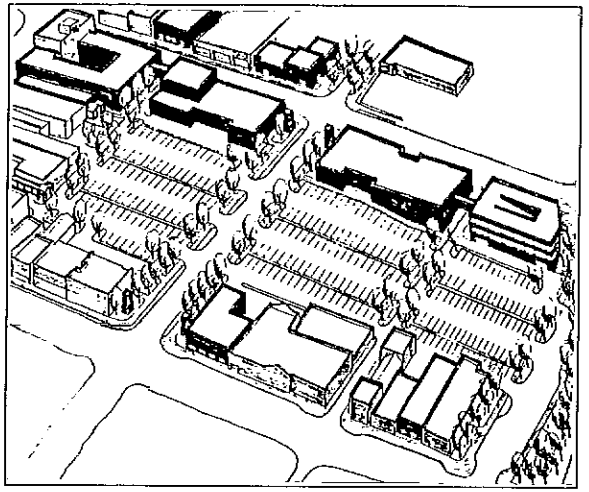
5. Another view of the park from the eye level of the pedestrian. New structures around the park reflect the historical architectural character of the area.



5.



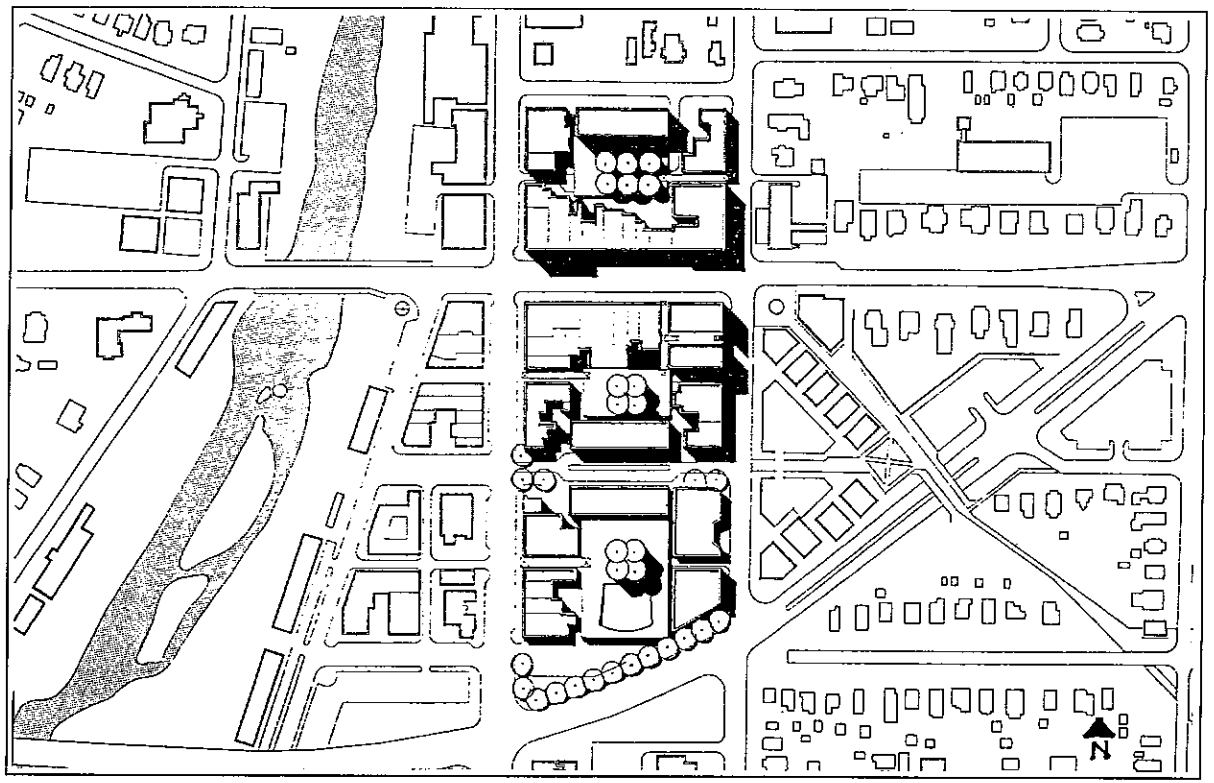
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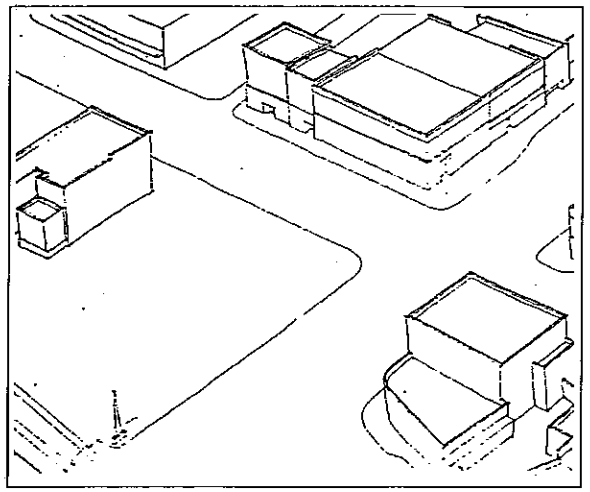
9.

6. Drawing of the current appearance of the Erie Street parking area between Water and Depeyster streets. (Team 1)

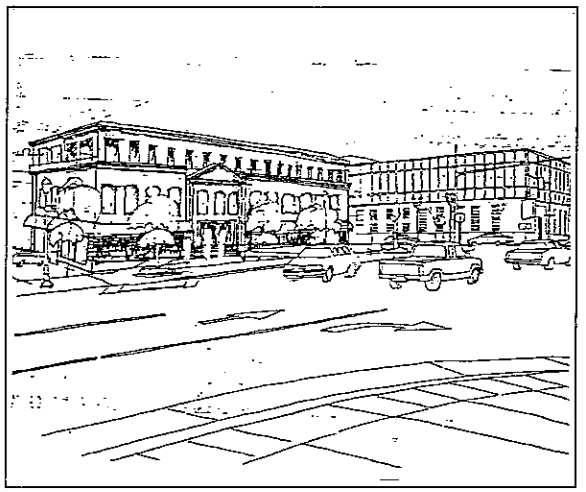
7. View of the Erie Street parking lot showing proposed infill structures along Depeyster Street. Structures help to define the scale and character of the space and can add much needed uses to the area such as hotel or office space. This proposal also suggests creating arcades in existing alleys to connect the parking area with the main streets, and adding streetscaping elements. (Team 1)

8. Photo of the existing Erie Street parking area.

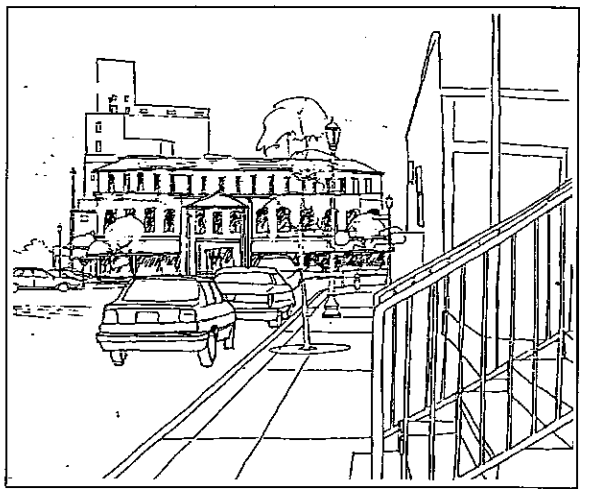
9. This proposal addresses the void spaces in the Central Business District where parking areas presently exist. It suggests the construction of a two-level structure which would provide parking on the lower level and a pedestrian plaza on the upper level, with access from both Water and Depeyster streets. This idea provides convenient access to unused upper stories of adjacent buildings and it makes excellent use of an existing inner-block void to create a pleasant location for such seasonal activities as summer jazz festivals, winter ice-skating, and springtime garden expos. (Team 3)



10.



11.



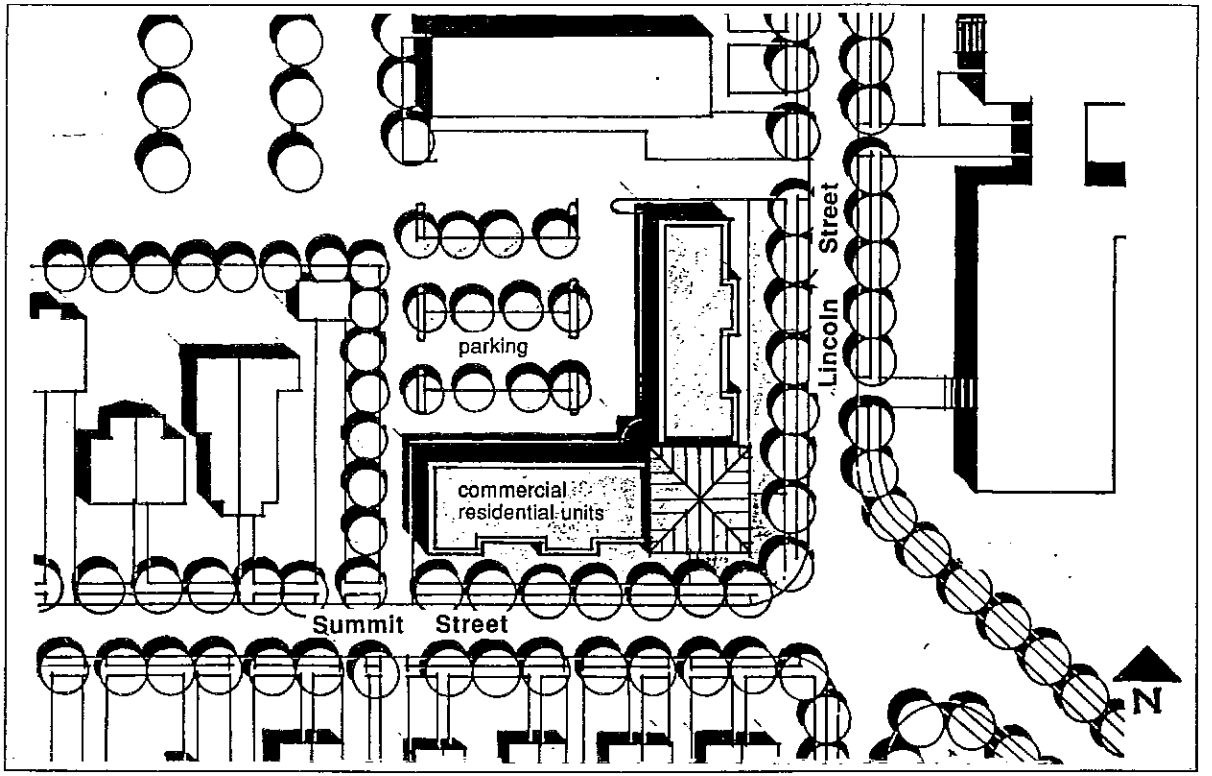
12.

10. One of the most important open spaces in the downtown area is the vacant lot at the northwest corner of Main and Water streets. Undeveloped since the Revco building burned down nearly twenty years ago, the space has created a gap in the continuity of the cityscape and caused the deterioration of the city center. (Team 5)

11. Illustration of a proposed infill building, which adds spatial closure to the heart of the commercial district at the corner of Main and Water streets, on the vacant site. By reflecting the scale, character, and rhythm of elements of the surrounding buildings, the proposed building restores a unifying image to the urban setting. (Team 5)

12. View of the proposed building from Franklin.

13. A proposal to locate a mixed-use building at the corner of Summit and Lincoln. The lot is currently vacant, but the new building would create a much-needed focal point at the corner and would serve as an incubator opportunity for the rest of the district and boost the economy as well. (Team 5)



13.

VI. Utilize Existing Structures More Effectively

Many of the structures and conditions already present in the Kent cityscape possess very positive features, which are either ignored or under-utilized in terms of their ability to contribute to the urban setting. No proposal would be complete without examining ways to enhance and improve the structures, which presently exist, and the goal of this section is to suggest imaginative and creative methods for utilizing these resources more effectively.

The following ideas suggest possible methods for improved utilization of existing structures. These are not intended as requirements but as suggestions for achieving the general goal.

1. Develop appropriate uses for important nodes of activity

- Define the architectural character which most successfully conveys the image of the area
- Suggest uses for unused historic structures such as the Bissler Building, the Ellis Hotel, the Alpaca Mill, and buildings along Gougler
- Suggest alternative and possibly more effective uses for buildings presently occupied, such as the fraternity houses along Main Street, the gas stations at Depeyster and Main, and the old Post Office

2. Encourage more intensive use of the upper floors of existing structures

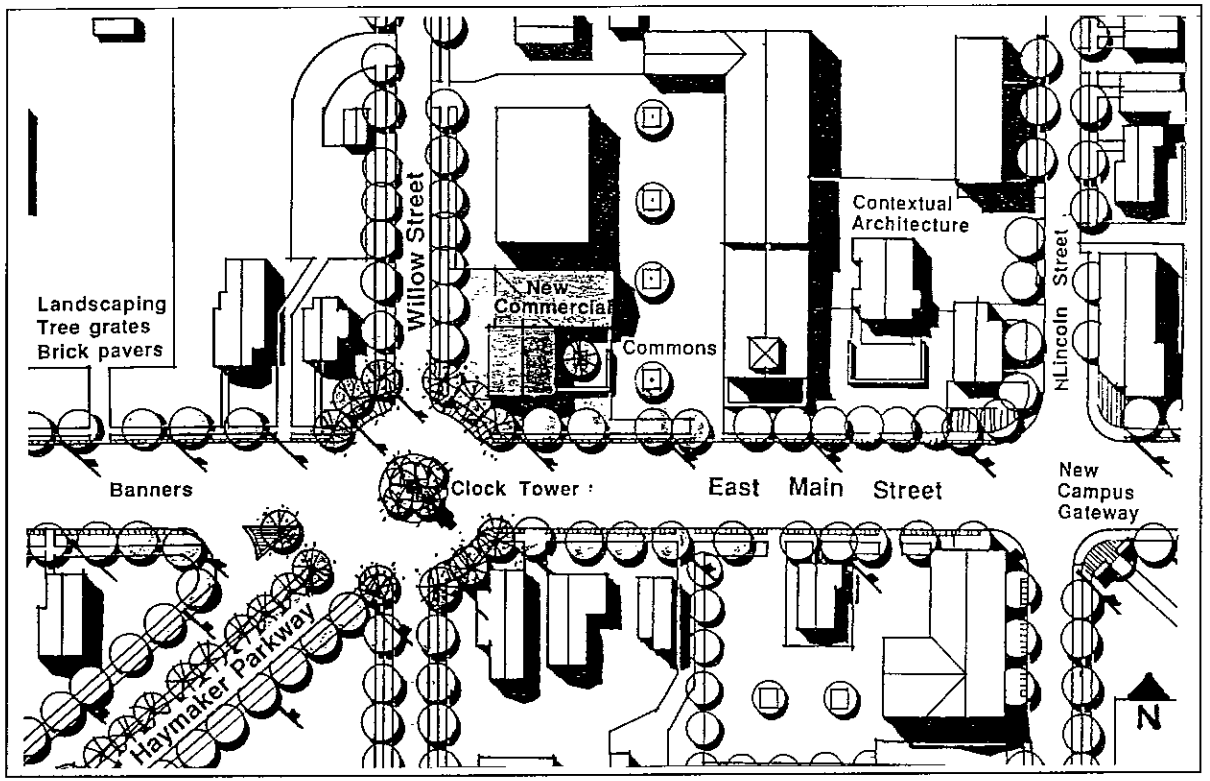
- Increase density of commercial and mixed-use districts
- New development should be sympathetic to the existing character and scale of buildings
- Create new commercial, retail, and industrial buildings to attract businesses from outside the area
- Strengthen the continuity and image of an area by filling the "missing teeth" with appropriate uses

3. Encourage more intensive use of the upper floors of existing buildings

- Encourage incubator businesses
- Develop residential housing for students, faculty, and community
- Promote student businesses such as art galleries, typing services, etc.
- Provide better access to and between the upper floors of buildings

4. Improve the quality of the rear elevations of commercial buildings

- Create new entries and provide quality signage and add landscaping
- Improve access from parking areas, adding lighting, ramps, etc.



1.

Key to illustrations:

1. This illustration suggests ways to improve the effectiveness of the commercial area along Main Street between Lincoln and Willow streets. By eliminating vehicular curb cuts and providing access from the secondary streets, a dangerous pedestrian situation is improved. This proposal creates a commons area in what is presently a parking area to provide a more pleasant atmosphere for the many pedestrians who use the space. By infilling the corner of Willow and Main with a new building, a focal point or gateway is created to help define and orient the large open space created at the intersection of the Haymaker Parkway. Also suggested is the addition of trees and landscaping to unify the district and give it some identity and link it more successfully to the downtown. (Team 5)

2. Photograph of the campus commercial district as it appears today.

3. Photograph of the rear elevation of building in the Central Business District from the parking areas.

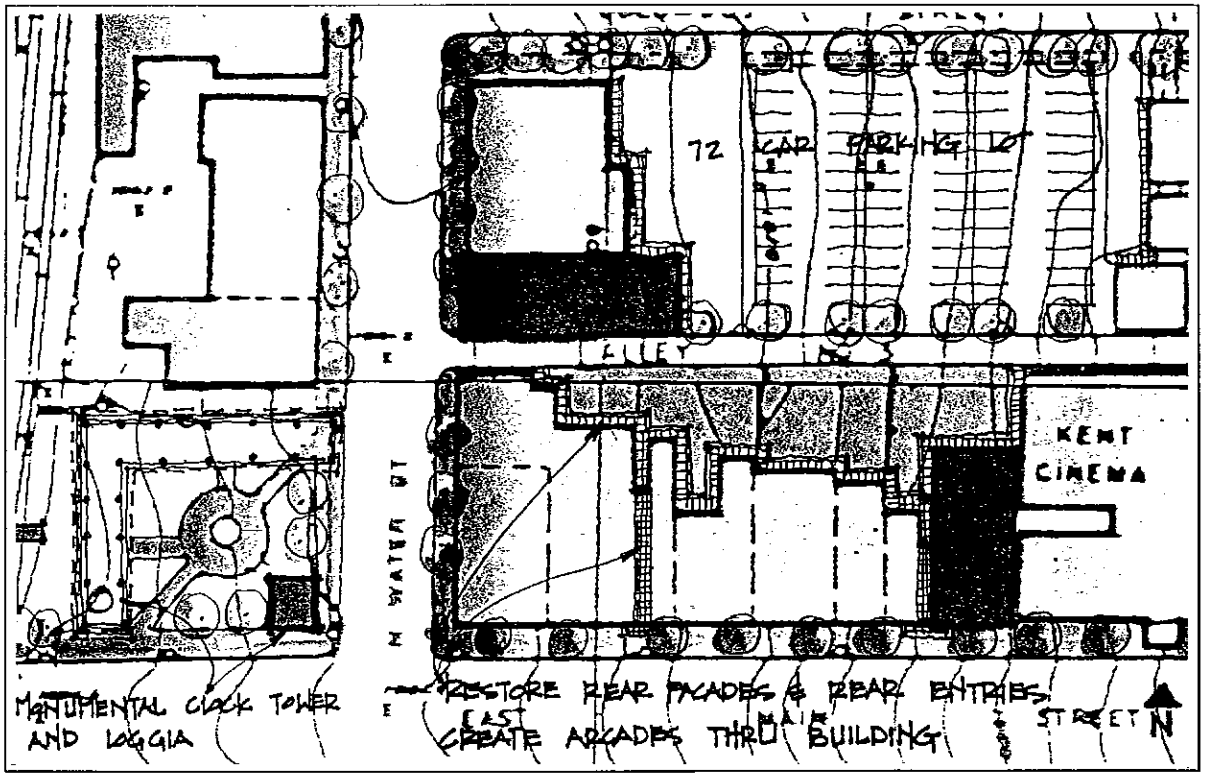
4. This proposal suggests creating arcades in existing alleys to connect the parking area with the main streets. Improving the quality of the rear facades of the buildings and providing convenient access to all the business establishments will encourage more consumer activity in the downtown area and visually enhance the cityscape.



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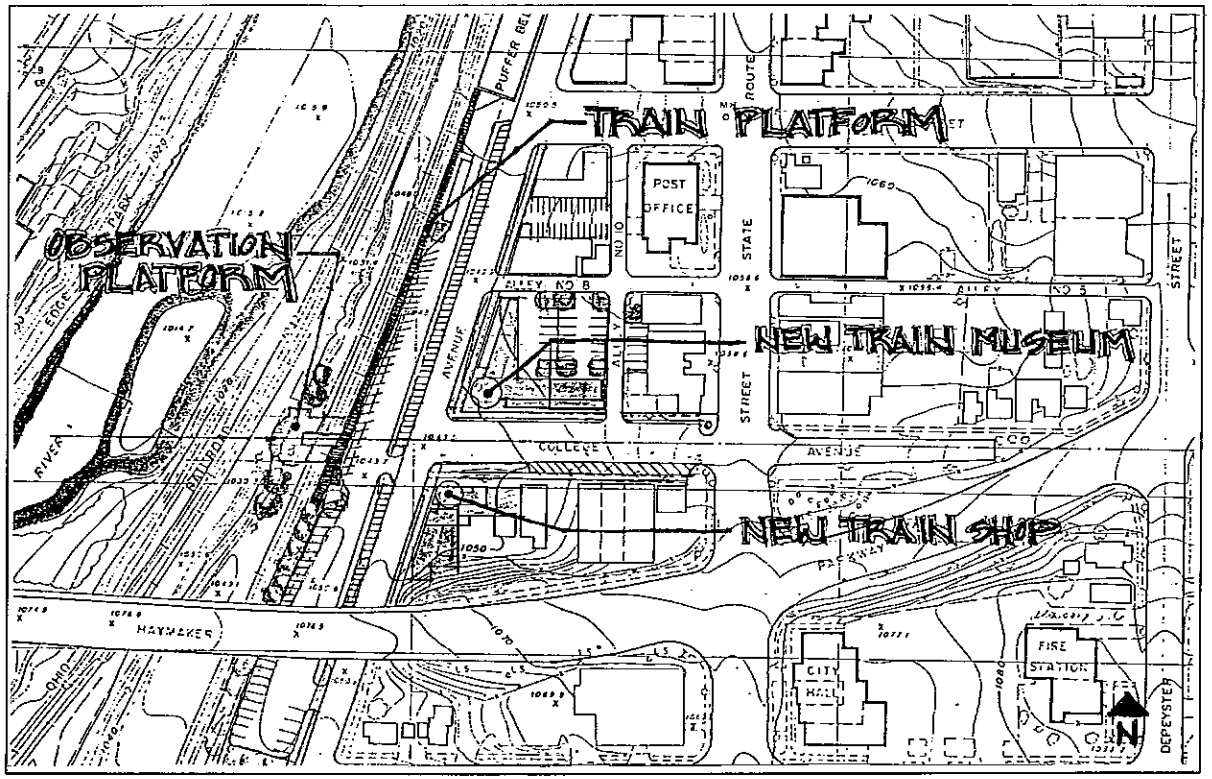
VII. Preserve and Enhance the History of Kent

Kent is a city with a rich heritage and an identity steeped in history. Part of the success that this community has enjoyed over the years is due to the available natural resources present in the environment and the ability of the inhabitants to adapt to the changing times. By maintaining a strong link with the historical influences which have shaped the city thus far, Kent will be prepared to face yet another new era of change. In order to accomplish this, an effort should be made to preserve and enhance the history of Kent.

1. **Encourage development which highlights Kent's history**
   - Focus on the Cuyahoga River, riverfront, mill ruins, mill era, dam, canal route, canal locks, etc.
   - Focus on the elements of the rail era such as the train station, railway cars, etc.
   - Focus on the University, the campus, historical structures, fraternities, sororities, bars, and restaurants

2. **Improve the appearance of historic structures not utilized to their best potential**
   - Find appropriate uses for vacant buildings such as the Bissler Building, the Alpaca Mill, the Ellis Hotel, etc.
   - Restore and repair historic facades on buildings such as the Huntington Bank, Gougler Machine, the Old Congregational Church, etc.
   - Maintain historic character for any new development or infill structures.

3. **Provide interpretation of the history of Kent to community and visitors**
   - Develop a marker system identifying historic structures or sites and create a walking tour
   - Clearly indicate historic events along riverfront pathways by signs, maps, etc.
   - Develop a plaque which can be used to identify historic structures and which is available to residents to place on their historic homes
   - Create images and logos which reflect the historical character of the city
   - Write and distribute a new book on the history of Kent



1.

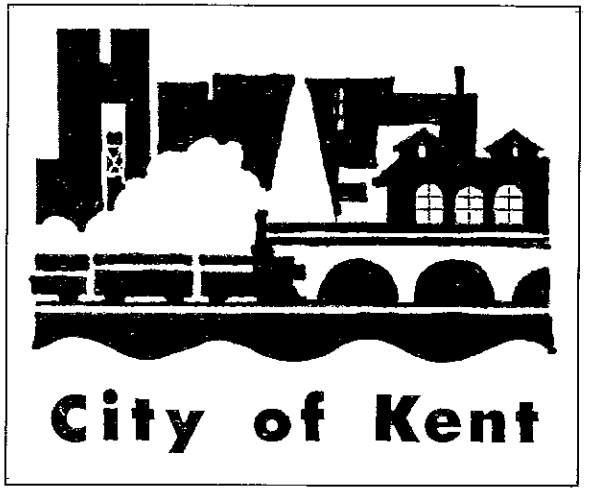
Key to illustrations:

1. A proposal indicating development of the existing railroad tracks to include a new boardwalk and observation platform reminiscent of the passenger rail days. This proposal also suggests creating a new train museum and a train hobby shop to highlight the rail era. (Team 1)

2. Drawing of a logo which reflects the river, railroad era, and the architecture. This type of logo could be used on sign markers, literature etc. (Team 5)

3. Making the city an extension of the Cuyahoga Valley Line rail tours would be an excellent way to bring visitors to the area and provide an exciting activity.

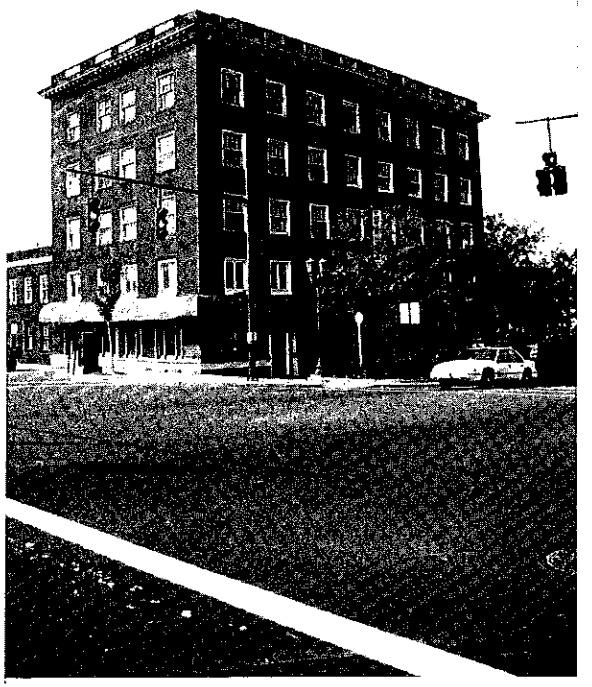
4. A photograph of the Kent Ellis Hotel, a building in need of serious attention.



2.



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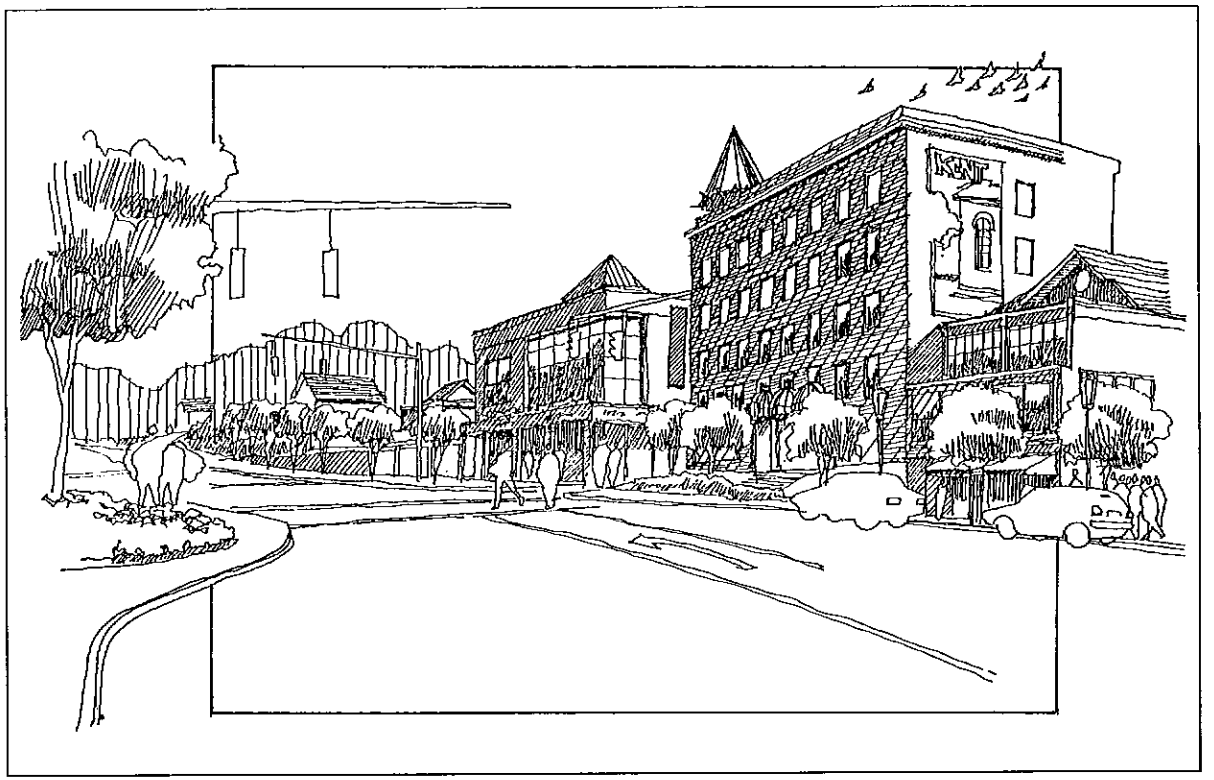
4.

Key Development Sites

Cornerstones for Change

4

As a part of the effort to prepare a comprehensive urban revitalization program for the city of Kent, students of the Cleveland State University Levin College of Urban Affairs have selected four specific sites within the Kent study area to examine in greater detail: the Franklin Hotel (also known as the Town House Hotel), the Kent Heirs Block, the vacant space at the corner of Main and Water Streets, and the Bissler Building. Each case study examines the development potential and economic viability of the particular location and provides recommendations as to how the site might be used more effectively for improving the vitality of the city and strengthening the image of Kent. These case studies have been summarized and are presented in the following chapter.



Proposed renovation of the Franklin Hotel by Seiw-Hong Ong

The Franklin Hotel

A Summary of Case Studies prepared by Jack Crews and Shirley Thompson

Located on the southwest corner of East Main and Depeyster streets, the Franklin Hotel (also known as the Town House Hotel) commands a prominent location in the Kent cityscape. The five-story structure, which rises from the crest of a steep slope, is a visual landmark clearly visible from many of the major entry points into the city.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the city of Kent enjoyed a period of prosperity due to the success of the railroad, expanding industry, and the opening of Kent State University. Consequently a group of local businessmen saw the need for quality lodging and in 1919 organized the Kent Hotel Company in order to construct a new hotel. One year later the Franklin Hotel was completed at a cost of $250,000. The simple brick structure, accentuated with classical details, sported an impressive two-story lobby behind a row of four expansive glass windows with elegant arched tops and offered forty-four rooms. Containing approximately 16,000 square feet of total floor area, the building was constructed of concrete and masonry on a solid stone foundation. Unfortunately, the hotel never experienced the success that its founders had anticipated. As a result of frequent changes of ownership, poor management, and financial difficulties, the hotel never operated as a profitable venture. During the ensuing decades, the advent of the automobile, a demand for modern amenities, and the opening of several new hotels in the vicinity prevented the Franklin Hotel from ever competing successfully as a hotel.

Today the building stands neglected and unused with the exception of the basement and a portion of the first floor, which house a tavern and lounge. Threatened with irreparable deterioration at the hands of disinterested owners, the future of the Franklin Hotel remains uncertain. Ironically as a new century dawns, the city of Kent is once again facing the need for increased, quality lodging. Might the Franklin Hotel finally become the elegant landmark first envisioned?

As part of the efforts by community leaders, residents, and students to put together a revitalization strategy for the city of Kent, the Franklin Hotel has been targeted as a key site for redevelopment. The central location, high visibility, and historical characteristics of the building mark it as a strong and identifiable node, possessing the potential to become a vital anchor and catalyst of downtown renewal.

Cleveland State University student Jack Crews is confident that the Franklin Hotel could be renovated and incorporated into a new hotel / conference center and has studied the feasibility of such an endeavor. Taking into account the positive features of the site such as its prime location close to both the University and downtown Kent, as well as some of the drawbacks such as the small size of the existing building and inadequate parking, Mr. Crews suggests that the property to the west and south of the present site be acquired to provide space for additional rooms, conference facilities, and parking. Consideration should also be given to providing a flexible and diverse range of accommodations to meet the varied needs of the University, the Kent community, and visitors.

Serving as precedent for Mr. Crews's redevelopment proposal is the Scanticon-Princeton Executive Conference Center in Princeton, New Jersey. Although the center is much larger in scope than the proposed Kent project, it serves as an example of how the University and the city can work together to create a positive impact on the community and economy.

Mr. Crews also considers the financial feasibility of the project. Although limited information precludes providing an accurate expense estimate for the entire project, he is confident that the restoration of the Franklin Hotel and the addition of new facilities would be a profitable venture, supported by the University and the community and playing an important role in reviving the downtown and inspiring positive change throughout the city.

The Kent Heirs Block

A Summary of Case Studies prepared by Jeannine Senft and Gail Visconsi

The fundamental goal of the Kent Center Project is to revitalize and improve the utilization of spaces and structures in the downtown area of Kent. By focusing on more specific goals, such as improving the economic vitality, identity, and image of the city; strengthening links between Kent State University and Kent's Central Business District; as well as preserving and highlighting the history of the area, a framework for assessing possible development strategies has been established. One particular area of downtown Kent, named the Kent Heirs Block, has been selected as a prime location for consideration because it contains a number of features which, used effectively, could successfully attain all of the goals above.

Roughly described as the north and south sides of East Main Street between Depeyster and Willow Streets, the Heirs Block is a mixed-use area consisting of a variety of commercial, residential, and boarding house properties, the majority of which are located in Victorian-era houses. This area serves as a distinctive connection between the University and downtown Kent, capturing a glimpse of Kent's history in its structures. Two houses in particular, located at 227 and 237 East Main Street have been chosen as sites to study for potential renovation as bed and breakfast or guest house-type inns.

Constructed during the late 1800s, both houses exhibit intricately crafted details and features characteristic of the period. They were maintained as single-family homes until the 1950s when a zoning change of the area from residential to commercial prompted the selling of the homes which were turned into offices or boarding houses (primarily for fraternity organizations). The changes drastically impacted the appearance of the area. Fortunately both properties under consideration were salvaged from neglect and further decline and have been extensively renovated and restored to their original beauty. Currently both houses contain office space and have been altered only as required to comply with local safety codes.

According to Cleveland State University students Jeannine Senft and Gail Visconsi, the two Victorian properties have been chosen as sites for guest house development because they have the unique potential to capture an untapped segment of the market. Guest lecturers, research analysts, and visiting professors connected to the University would certainly take advantage of such accommodations as would executives of local businesses such as Davey Tree Expert Company, Amtek/Lamb, and Gougler Industries. In addition the regional tourism market is another resource from which to draw business. Parents of Kent State University students and local residents might also find the guest house a welcome alternative for weekend lodging. Ms. Senft also suggests that the inn be used as an incubator business for students of food service and hospitality management programs.

Presently there is little competition for a venture of this type. Although the proposed sites are directly adjacent to the Inn of Kent, the type of experience to be offered at the guest house would be more individualized and upscale. Also in the vicinity is the Eidson House, which offers three rooms with a shared bath. However, indications are that the proprietor views the venture only as a part-time business.

Ms. Senft cites the Inn of Chagrin Falls as a model for developing a guest house. By securing the investment of a number of limited partners and obtaining bank loans the owners expect to make a profit within the first seven years of operation. A similar environment and market potential in Kent indicate that the guest house would be a profitable venture.

By focusing redevelopment efforts on the Victorian houses along East Main Street, it is hoped that a positive example will foster a commitment by adjacent property owners to improve the quality of the surrounding environment and preserve the historic character of the area, thus providing a unique urban experience for the community and visitors of Kent.



Kent Heirs Block House, East Main Street



Kent Heirs Block House, East Main Street



The Bissler Building, corner of Main and Gougler streets

The Bissler Building

Summary of Case Study prepared by Habib Musawwir

Ideally situated on the west bank of the Cuyahoga River at the foot of the Main Street Bridge, the Bissler Building commands a prominent place in Kent's cityscape and has served as a familiar landmark for nearly seventy years. Formerly home to the Bissler Furniture Store, the building has unfortunately been vacant since 1984. Realizing the adaptive-reuse potential of the site, Cleveland State University student Habib Musawwir has examined the possibilities of successfully renovating the structure and suggests appropriate ideas for development and use.

The strategic location of the Bissler Building at the corner of Main and Gougler streets and the amenities offered by the adjacent river are features which suggest that development of the site could create a strong anchor node with the capability to spur economic and social activity, serving as a catalyst for revitalization of the entire area west of the Cuyahoga River. In addition, Mr. Musawwir cites the Pufferbelly restaurant (in the former railroad station) and the law offices of Williams, Wilser, and Antognoli (at the southeast corner of Main and Gougler streets) as examples of successful adaptive reuse development in the vicinity, leading to the conclusion that similar treatment of the Bissler Building would be a viable endeavor.

Upon investigation of the building itself, Mr. Musawwir notes that the structure, constructed in 1924 of masonry and concrete, appears to be sound and has been well maintained throughout its vacancy. Containing a total floor area of approximately 22,600 square feet, the Bissler Building is comprised of a basement (with east side accessible at the riverbank level), a street level with an existing primary entrance along Main Street, and one upper-level story. Each level consists primarily of open space which makes the building easily adaptable for a variety of new uses. These existing conditions indicate that the Bissler Building would indeed be a good candidate for adaptive reuse, and Mr. Musawwir feels confident that development of this underutilized site would strengthen the urban fabric.

Mr. Musawwir explored three alternative uses for developing the structure: food and entertainment, office, and residential, considering the economic viability and the urban implications of each.

A review of food and entertainment establishments in the immediate vicinity suggests a need for additional restaurants or entertainment complexes comparable with the quality of the Pufferbelly restaurant. The open spaces of the Bissler Building would easily accommodate gathering spaces used for such activities as dining, dancing, gaming, etc., and few structural modifications would be needed, allowing optimal use of the existing space. Mr. Musawwir has estimated that the cost to build a new structure with like amenities would cost upwards of 2 million dollars and that adaptation of an existing structure would be preferable as it would minimize capital outlays.

Conversion of the Bissler Building for office space would also be a viable alternative and might be an attractive location for a variety of smaller tenants. Mr. Musawwir notes that a local architectural firm, Fuller Design Group, has investigated several ideas for using the building for office use and has suggested opening up the center bay of the structure with an atrium to provide an additional amenity for tenants. The architects also estimated that costs for basic renovation (not including the atrium) might be in the neighborhood of 1 million dollars (a preliminary estimate).

Residential development appears to be the least desirable alternative according to Mr. Musawwir. Because of the many code requirements necessary to convert the building into living spaces, and the possibility that the efficiency of usable floor space would not be cost effective, conversion to residential units would not likely result in a successful economic endeavor.

Corner of Main and Water

Summary of Case Study prepared by Robert Merchant

Possibly one of the most visible and important urban spaces in the city of Kent is the northwest corner of East Main and Water streets in the Central Business District. Located at the very heart of the city center, the site has remained vacant for nearly two decades. Considered as a critical and necessary anchor for successfully revitalizing the downtown area, the space has been chosen as a key development site for further study by Cleveland State University student Robert Merchant. By considering a hypothetical office/retail project to develop, Mr. Merchant has prepared an economic feasibility study for development of the site.

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During the prosperous building boom of the 1830s, a number of new brick buildings were constructed on the east side of the Cuyahoga River in what is now known as the Central Business District. One of these buildings, a hotel and business block known as the Franklin House, was erected at the corner of East Main and Water Streets by businessman Zenas Kent. Serving as a hotel for many years, the building also housed a variety of businesses such as a dry goods store, offices, a department store, drug store, and for a short time even became home to the Kent Free Library. Unfortunately tragedy struck on August 27, 1972, when the entire building (and the eleven businesses which were located in the block) was lost to a devastating fire.



Vacant corner of East Main and Water streets

Since the time of the fire, the site where the building stood for so many years has remained vacant. Ownership of the property has changed hands several times and the site is currently under joint ownership by Home Savings Bank and Williams Brothers Mill. There are no plans by either party to develop the site at the present time.

The vacant site covers approximately 25,00 square feet and is bounded on the north by the Home Savings Block, on the south by East Main Street, on the east by Water Street, and on the west by the Conrail tracks. Currently the lot has been maintained as a park by the Home Savings Bank.

As the basis for a financial feasibility study, Mr. Merchant has selected the following conditions as hypothetical parameters for developing the block as a commercial/office center: A 22,000 square foot mixed-use building of three stories with rentable space for both retail and office activities, a market space along Main or Water streets with a permanent canopy to be used for flea markets and seasonal activities, and a landscaped courtyard. The structure would be constructed of materials sympathetic with the character of the downtown.

Mr. Merchant considered land acquisition costs and construction costs to conclude that a project of this scope could be estimated to cost approximately 2 million dollars. Through the use of creative funding from both private and public sectors and considering the possibility of pursuing such incentives as tax abatements and low interest loans, it was estimated that the proposed development would actually result in a loss of net annual cash flow. If the market structure were eliminated, the project would probably result in a small cash flow gain, but Mr. Merchant feels that such an endeavor would be only marginally profitable.

Citing the limited site size and the parking requirements of the city as the key factors limiting success, Mr. Merchant concludes that any development actually proposed for the site will need the cooperative effort of city leaders and developers to become a viable consideration.

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