



Sustainable Kent News

The latest on sustainability efforts in Kent



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Happy Summer everyone! This is a great season to check out all of the awesome parks, hike, and bike trails the City has to offer!

Speaking of biking, the League of American Bicyclists administers the Bike League's Bicycle Friendly America program which it describes on the [website](#) as "a tool for states, communities, businesses, and universities to make bicycling a real transportation and recreation option for all people and it recognizes those doing it well."

The City of Kent earned Honorable Mention status within the [Bicycle Friendly Community](#) (BFC) program in the Spring of 2020 for its efforts. The BFC program runs on four-year cycles and the City is currently working to renew its application for 2025. Stay tuned as a rating decision is expected in December 2025.

In other exciting news, the off-street trail connection from the Freedom Trail to the Portage Hike and Bike Trail off Middlebury Road is complete and open to the public! Check out this beautiful new section of trail that provides switchbacks up the hill and a new bridge, allowing trail users to bypass the steep, curvy section of Middlebury Road.

Did you know that the City of Kent Parks and Recreation provides 16 different parks within Kent for folks to enjoy? To find a listing of and more information about these parks, be sure to visit [Parks | City of Kent](#).

Should you ever have questions, comments, and/or suggestions related to the City's CAP or other sustainability work, please feel free to contact the City's Sustainability Coordinator, Julie Morris, at: julie.morris@kentohio.gov.



New Freedom Trail Connector

CHRONICLING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

East Main Street Road Improvements Coming Soon!

Work will begin soon on East Main Street, the project that will make improvements to a three-quarter of a mile section of the road between Willow Street and Horning Road.

Road design was completed in early 2025, the project went out for bid and a contract has been awarded to Kenmore Construction. Work is expected to begin in late July/early August 2025, depending upon weather and other variables.

The City of Kent and its partners - the project's Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), Kent State University, PARTA (Portage Area Regional Transport Authority), AMATS (Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study) and ODOT (Ohio Department of Transportation) - are undertaking the \$25.5 million rehabilitation of the road.

The East Main Street Improvement project is aligned with the City's Climate Action Plan, with the goal of transforming this stretch of road to make it more bikeable and to complete an important spur to the Portage Hike and Bike Trail. These improvements include enhanced and higher visibility crosswalks and a shared use path for bikes and pedestrians on the south side of the street.

The project also addresses another component of the Climate action Plan, electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. There will be 34 dual-port EV charging stations installed for public use on the north side of the Kent State Campus adjacent to E. Main St.

Other project Improvements include two roundabouts; one at the intersection of South Willow St., East Main St. and Haymaker Parkway, and the other at the East Main St. and Horning Rd. intersection. There will also be an expanded tree-lined center boulevard, wider sidewalks and tree lawn on the north side of the street, decorative streetlights and new bus pull-offs and shelters.

Construction is estimated to last three years, with traffic being maintained for the duration of the project. More information is available on the [East Main Street website](#). Once construction begins, updates will be posted to the website.

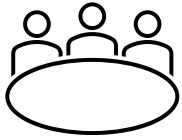
Questions can be directed to Jon Giaquinto in the City Engineering Division at Jon.Giaquinto@KentOhio.gov or 330-678-8106. You can also send your email address to Giaquinto if you would like to receive email updates on the project.



VISIT OUR SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW WEBPAGE!

The City has a webpage to highlight its sustainability work and keep the community posted about related Climate Action Plan implementation progress, programs, news, events, and more!

Visit: <https://www.kentohio.gov/business-building-development/sustainability-overview/>



AROUND THE CITY



Why Taking the Bus is Better for the Planet (and Easier Than You Think!)

By Denise Baba, Communications & Public
Advocacy Advisor at PARTA

Let's face it — we all want to do our part to protect the planet. But between busy schedules and daily routines, it can feel overwhelming to make meaningful changes. Here's some good news: one of the simplest ways to reduce your environmental impact is also one of the easiest — riding the bus!

Public transportation, like the services offered by the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA), helps cut down on greenhouse gas emissions, traffic congestion, and fuel consumption. Fewer cars on the road means less air pollution and a healthier community for everyone. In fact, according to the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), public transit produces *45% less carbon dioxide per mile* than private vehicles. Every time you hop on a PARTA bus instead of driving solo, you help clear the air and protect the environment.

So how can you make the switch in Kent, Ohio? Try these easy ideas:

Commute Smarter – If you work or take classes at Kent State University, PARTA has routes designed just for you. Avoid the stress of parking and ride comfortably to campus or downtown.

Run Errands by Bus – Need to grab groceries at Acme or make a pharmacy run? PARTA's fixed routes serve key shopping centers across town. Plan your trip using the Passio GO app and leave the car at home.

Get to Your Favorite Spots – Whether you're heading to the Kent Free Library, a yoga class, or a coffee meetup with friends, you can get there without the hassle of traffic or parking.

Make it a Weekly Habit – Start by choosing one or two regular outings to replace with a bus ride. You might be surprised at how convenient and relaxing it is — and how quickly it becomes second nature.

Small steps add up to big change. By choosing PARTA even a few times a week, you're helping to create a cleaner, more sustainable Portage County — and that's something to feel good about.

Ready to ride? Visit www.partaonline.org to explore routes, download the Passio GO app, or learn more about how PARTA is working toward a greener future.



Solar Hope the Mainstream News Isn't Covering, from the Kent Environmental Council

While there is much in the news to shake any environmentalist, there are positives that can give us hope. As of June 2023, the cost of renewables fell dramatically (90%) and now the cheapest way to create energy is to point a piece of glass (a solar panel) at the sun. This gives us a way to temper some of the worst climate change effects to a survivable degree, according to environmentalist [Bill McKibben](#), a prominent environmentalist, author, and journalist, is energized by this.

The climate is changing. In June 2023 we had the hottest temperatures in the past 125,000 years on the planet. But that year humans passed a line by installing over a gigawatt of solar power panels every day -- the equivalent of 1 nuclear power plant every day! Today, it is happening every 18 hours. China has been the clear leader for over half of the progress, but that leaves a fair amount happening in the rest of the world.

- Between April 2024 and April 2025, there was a 31.3% increase in solar production. And in just one month from March to April 2025, the U.S. saw a 13.8% nationwide increase in solar production. For a July 2025 Report on Solar Energy Generation by State, [click here](#).
- California has the 5th largest economy in the world, and since March of 2024 they have had 100% sun and battery use at times, and also use sun, wind, water and batteries for large stretches of the day. They have used 25% less natural gas to create energy, are cutting their carbon emissions and fighting climate change.
- In addition to California, Texas, Florida, Arizona, and Nevada round out the top five states. Ohio currently ranks #11 in the US.

But more good things are happening:

- In Vermont, which is one of the top 10 solar-producing states, Green Mountain Power is making it possible for people to have batteries cheaply or free. People “lease to own” batteries, for their homes, a great resource for them. Then Green Mountain can string these batteries together so in an emergency they create a virtual power plant dispatched centrally at critical moments. Texas is doing something similar.
- Solar and wind are cheaper than gas, oil, and ethanol. Currently 40% of US corn is turned into ethanol. One acre of corn would produce enough ethanol to drive an F150 truck 25,000 miles. But 1 acre of solar would produce enough electrons to drive a new electric F150 truck for 550,000 miles.
- Solar now generates power for 3 to 5 cents per kw-hour. Nuclear energy that some tout as more constant, requires expensive infrastructure that takes many years to build out. Maybe in the near future small nuclear reactors will be possible at scale. But the sun is a nuclear reactor ready for us to use – it’s just 35 million miles away.

Surprisingly, there are great advancements being made here in Ohio to make solar a more successful industry, despite zoning difficulties and setback requirements for installations.

- **Solar Manufacturing Leadership:** Ohio is home to some of the largest and most innovative solar manufacturing operations in the United States. Notably, First Solar operates three factories and a research and development center in Northwest Ohio, making it the nation’s largest domestic solar manufacturer. This campus is believed to be the largest of its kind outside of China and is expected to support over 30,000 jobs nationwide by 2026, contributing approximately \$2.8 billion in labor income. The region’s rich manufacturing history and skilled workforce have helped position Ohio as a cornerstone of the U.S. solar supply chain, reducing reliance on imported panels and supporting domestic energy security.

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- **Pioneering Agrivoltaics and Large-Scale Solar Projects:** Ohio is set to host the largest agrivoltaic farm in the United States. The Oak Run Solar project in Madison County will combine an 800-megawatt solar farm with active crop and livestock production across 6,000 acres. This \$1 billion project will power about 170,000 homes and generate \$8.2 million annually in tax revenue. The initiative requires significant integration of agriculture and solar, with mandates for sheep grazing and crop cultivation alongside solar panels. This approach not only maximizes land use but also addresses concerns about farmland preservation, making Ohio a national leader in agrivoltaics.
- **Expansion of Battery Storage and Grid Modernization:** Ohio is rapidly advancing in battery energy storage, a critical technology for integrating renewable energy into the power grid. The state has approved several large-scale battery storage projects, such as the Flint Grid BESS (200 MW/800 MWh) near New Albany and the Prairie Flyer Energy Storage project (85 MW) in Vandalia. These projects are designed to strengthen grid reliability, store excess renewable energy, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels during peak demand. Additionally, solar projects like Scioto Ridge and Stark Solar are being developed with integrated battery storage, further enhancing Ohio's ability to deliver clean, stable electricity.

These advancements—world-class solar manufacturing, leadership in agrivoltaics, and robust battery storage development—highlight Ohio's proactive role in the clean energy transition and its growing reputation as a renewable energy innovator.

Sun Day (<https://sunday.earth>) is a National Day of Action on September 21, 2025, celebrating solar and wind power, and the movement to leave fossil fuels behind. It will be a day to build, rally, sing, and come together in the communities needed to get laws changed and work done.

In the spirit of Sun Day, the Kent Environmental Council will present a short introduction to the benefits of solar at their meeting on August 21st and will devote their full meeting on September 18th to various local aspects of solar—from solar in the home, business, church, and agrivoltaics on the farm. Both meetings will begin at 6:30 PM at the Kent Free Library and are free and open to all. We will also share information about other local Sun Day events as we learn about them. We hope you will join us.

For references mentioned in this article, [click here](#).

For more information about the Kent Environmental Council, click <https://kentenvironment.org/blog/> or find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/KentEnvironment>



Product Alert: Do the materials we put in our recycle carts actually get recycled?

**By Judy Nelson,
Chair, City of Kent Sustainability Commission
Chair, Portage County Solid Waste District's
(PCSWD) Policy Committee**

I am happy to report the answer to this question is a resounding YES! According to the folks at the Oakwood Material Recovery Facility (MRF, pronounced Murf), this is the #1 question they get asked. I can personally vouch for the integrity of this answer because I recently had the opportunity to tour this facility during an open house event.

Operated by Waste Management (WM) and utilized via contract by other haulers, the Oakwood MRF is state of the art. With the introduction of single-stream recycling, this type of facility was designed to use technology to divide the different types of materials being collected via our carts. Although some manual sorting is still part of the process, the vast majority is done by a complex system of conveyer belts, tumblers, blowers, optical scanners, magnets, screens and the like. Millions of dollars have been invested to ensure this system is efficient and effective.

There *is* one caveat however. As the saying goes, garbage in/garbage out. If the materials we put in our carts are actually garbage and not from one of the categories of currently marketable materials, those items are separated and landfilled. That means the key to a successful recycling system, one we can all trust and support, is to do our part by knowing what materials our hauler, Republic Services, currently accepts and by following their guidelines. For Kent residents, this information can be found at this [Recycling Simplified: Recycle Smarter with Republic Services](#). I recommend you check it periodically for updates.

Last but not least, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the danger plastic bags/film pose to the MRF system. Single-use grocery bags, dry-cleaner bags, bubble and shrink wrap, trash bags, air pillows, and any soft plastic of this type can get tangled up in the mechanisms and cause a shut-down of the whole system. Very bad, but I have good news. There are other easy ways to recycle these materials, and I will go into more detail about those in the next edition of *Sustainable Kent*.



Judy Nelson on the WM MRF Tour



WM MRF bales of materials



Plastic bags in the WM MRF system



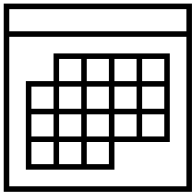
Inner Workings of the WM MRF system



Biking at Kent State University

We want to hear from you! Take the Kent State Bicycle Survey today and please share and pass along to others. This survey is being conducted by the Bicycle Advisory Committee to bring together and gain insight from students, faculty/staff, and our community who are interested in improving biking around Kent State University. The survey should take less than five minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your response. Kent State University Bicycle Advisory Committee Bicycle Survey: <https://tinyurl.com/KentStateBikeSurvey2025>





CALENDAR & ITEMS OF INTEREST

Supporting our local businesses and organizations is a key component of Sustainability! Check out the City's Culture & Community section of the website (www.kentohio.gov/culture-community/) for more details about the following:

- **Haymaker Farmers' Market**
 - Open year-round, every Saturday morning in Kent: Held outdoors in downtown Kent on Franklin Ave. from April through November, 9am to 1pm, and indoors at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent – Hobbs Hall from December to March, 10am to 1pm. Visit www.haymakermarket.com for full details.
- **Main Street Kent**
 - A non-profit organization that focuses on the promotion, beautification, and revitalization of downtown Kent. The City of Kent, Kent State University, local businesses, and community members support Main Street Kent. Check out their full calendar of events here: www.mainstreetkent.org/events/full-calendar/.
- **Kent In Good Company Podcast**
 - Hosted by Kent resident and small business owner, Katy Thomas, head to the Main Street Kent website at the following link to listen and learn more about Kent's local businesses: <https://mainstreetkent.org/discover/in-good-company/>.
- **The Kent Area Chamber of Commerce**
 - Visit www.kentbiz.com/events/eventcalendar for a full listing of Chamber and Community events.
- **Kent Historical Society & Museum**
 - Learn more about our community at Kent's primary history resource and reference center! Visit www.kentohiohistory.org for organization details and events.
- **Kent Parks and Recreation**
 - Offers a variety of locations, programs, and events for individuals and families to enjoy. They provide quality recreation and entertainment for the community through parks, sports, fitness, education and cultural arts. Visit their full program and event offerings at: www.kentohio.gov/culture-community/kent-parks-and-recreation/
- **Yard Waste Transfer Site Open!**
 - The yard waste transfer site hours are Tuesdays 9am-1pm, Wednesdays 5-8pm and Saturdays 9am-noon. The site is a place for residents of Kent to drop off your brush, clippings and other yard waste. It is also the place to get the grindings from the waste, to use like mulch, for free! Stop by near Cherry Street and Mogadore Rd, near the entrance to Plum Creek. Full details at: [Yard Waste | City of Kent](#)

- **Wizardly Weekend – 7/18-19/2025**

- Enjoy magical decorations, fun activities and events, themed merchandise and menu items at our local businesses, plus a vendor village featuring items hand-crafted in the spirit of the event and more. This is a family-friendly, inclusive event focused on our downtown businesses and celebrating themes of magic and joy. Full details and schedule of activities at: [Wizardly Weekend – Main Street Kent](#)

- **Haymaker Farmers' Market Community Potluck – 8/10/2025**

- Everyone is welcome to this free event, including vendors, customers, musicians, artists, and friends as we celebrate our local food community through laughter, delicious food, live music and pickles. Please bring a dish to share, consider entering (or judging!) the pickle contest, and enjoy your local food community! Full details at: [Community Potluck — Haymaker Farmers' Market](#)

- **Dog Days of Summer – 8/16/2025**

- Head downtown to Kent's Hometown Bank Plaza to enjoy the Madonio Animal Trust Annual Dog Days of Summer event on Saturday, August 16th from 8am to 5pm. Full details available at: [The Madonio Family Animal Welfare Trust Funding Programs](#)

- **Kent Parks & Recreation's Art in the Park – 9/6/25 & 9/7/25**

- Be sure to visit this free, family friendly experience that attracts residents from all over Northeast Ohio. Art in the Park will be held in Fred Fuller Park the weekend after Labor Day with hours as follows: Saturday, September 6th from 10am to 6pm and Saturday, September 7th from 11am to 5pm. For full details, visit: [Art in the Park | City of Kent](#)