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This report documents one possibility for a coordinated and focused approach to the revitalization of downtown Kent. This approach stems from the conviction that well-planned initiatives in many parts of the city, according to the opportunities and needs of each circumstance, can collectively result in high-impact comprehensive revitalization. Simply said, the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts.

There are no clear boundaries that define precincts or planning areas. However, we can define centers of influence. The accompanying diagram shows some of these centers.

In addition to making physical plans and images, the Kent revitalization initiative would benefit from well-considered strategies that appropriately prioritize development. Some issues include:

- Phasing;
- Investment priorities;
- Special Planning District (SPD) by-laws;
- Synergies.

By all measures, the city of Kent should take its place as one of the great towns with a university oriented environment. The university and local businesses provide a solid tax base and a dynamic community of people. Due to the vision of previous generations, the city has abundant vegetation, a good streets-and-blocks plan, heritage buildings, and a safe walkable environment. New development of downtown housing, new retail concepts and a transportation and public realm improvements plan could capitalize on opportunities for growth and provide for renewal of this existing legacy.
Coordinated Program of Development

While proposals from the private sector for whole blocks have generated hope for comprehensive renewal, only the city has the power and the oversight to achieve a coordinated program of development initiatives. Coordination would have the following benefits:

- Provide for public forums to gather valuable input from citizens and stakeholders;
- Provide for a fair process to make the difficult decisions about where to invest in public infrastructure and the public realm;
- Provide for a transportation plan that manages traffic, includes PARTA and locates multi-modal initiatives;
- Provide a structure for productive ongoing dialogue to make synergies happen with planning proposals by Kent State University;
- Allow for planning to encourage pedestrian and other non-vehicular transportation;
- Encourage private investment that benefits the physical environment of the public realm.

Kent State University has recently invested in extensive renovations to Franklin Hall at the east end of College Avenue. The university is also interested in developing a conference centre at the intersection of College Avenue and Haymaker Parkway. A development proposal at Erie/Haymaker has been discussed. There is a great opportunity for positive results through coordination of these initiatives and reinforcing of College Avenue as a pedestrian corridor connecting the university and downtown. The logical geographic place for this consolidation is the intersection of Depeyster Street, College Avenue and Haymaker Parkway.
This study investigates the consequences of establishing a new municipal precinct at the intersection of Depeyster Street, College Avenue and Haymaker Parkway. The rationale for this precinct is based on four main considerations:

- It makes sense to consolidate municipal functions around an existing cluster at Depeyster Street that includes the city’s offices, fire hall and public safety facility.

- The existing conditions around Haymaker Parkway are blighted, and change is needed to provide for an appropriate representation of the city.

- The city has long-term plans to renovate and expand existing municipal facilities, and this new architecture could contribute to a distinguished municipal precinct with no additional cost.

- A precinct in this location could serve to direct the College Avenue pedestrian corridor to the downtown.

We have investigated several road configurations for a municipal precinct. The options are urban design configurations that provide for a landscaped area and create a setting for distinguished building frontages.
A new landscaped space at the south intersection of Depeyster Street and Haymaker Parkway could provide the setting for new buildings. This plan demonstrates how the existing fire hall could front onto the new space. In addition, the plan shows two new buildings—a public safety building with new parking and a proposed conference centre. The conference centre is being discussed as a cooperative venture with Kent State University.

New development at the municipal precinct would benefit the development of lands north of Haymaker. The plan shows a proposed mixed use development, providing housing, offices, retail, structured parking and a hotel.

The municipal precinct would also benefit the area to the south by providing continuity with existing municipal buildings.
05 Views of a Municipal Precinct

Model views of Municipal Precinct with other proposed development in context

- Proposed public parkette
- Proposed new hotel
- Proposed new mixed use development and parking garage
- Proposed new conference centre planned in cooperation with Kent State University
- Proposed new municipal precinct amalgamating existing facilities and new buildings
One purpose of the proposed municipal precinct is to "tame" Haymaker Parkway. This is accomplished by diminishing the presence of the vehicular traffic and increasing the attractiveness of the environment for pedestrians. The proposed landscaped crescent-shaped space at the municipal precinct will be an important catalyst. New buildings, including a hotel north of Haymaker Parkway and the proposed conference center on the south side, will have dramatic impact.

Still, there are important other measures required along the length of this currently inhospitable arterial road. The accompanying sections the right-of-way are meant to convey the sense of scale that could be achieved through introducing a landscaped median. In addition to much-needed traffic calming, the median could significantly improve the appearance of the main approach to the campus of Kent State University.

More study is required to address the problem of poor pedestrian crossings at Haymaker Parkway. Currently, every week, hundreds of Kent State University students make that crossing to get to the entertainment district in the downtown. Under certain conditions, the crossing is potentially unsafe. Proposals for improving the situation could include pedestrian-activated signalized crosswalks and even a pedestrian bridge spanning the entire 105' right-of-way.
Summary of Proposed Development

- New conference centre planned in cooperation with Kent State University
- New pedestrian skybridge connecting conference centre and hotel/parking
- New municipal precinct amalgamating existing facilities and new buildings
- New hotel
- New public párkette
- New offices and place of work
- New parking garage
- New mixed use development with housing and retail
- New mixed use development with housing and retail

Existing City of Kent municipal offices

Depeyster Street

Existing City of Kent fire station

Water Street
View looking northeast, with the intersection of Water Street and Summit Street in the foreground
View looking east, with the intersection of Water Street and Haymaker Parkway in the foreground
View looking southeast, with the intersection of Water Street and Erie Street in the foreground
Credits

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Page 4 Rendering by Cupkovic Architecture LLC for Fairmount Properties
Plan of development by Cupkovic Architecture LLC for Fairmount Properties