Public Land in the Corridor

The city of Kent owns significant acreage along Breakneck Creek in the eastern section of the proposed Corridor. Most activity on this land is related to pumping and treatment of well water. Large holding ponds have been constructed to facilitate recharge in the immediate area. New regulatory agency guidelines may soon require municipalities to protect ground water supplies and recharge areas. A primary initiative in the Green Enterprise Development Corridor would be immediate designation of a Municipal Wellhead Protection Zone.

Kent State University also holds property along Breakneck Creek and adjacent to City of Kent land. This property is a mix of farmland and poorly-drained lowlands. Much of the agricultural land is fallow and the entire area is used for field trips and outdoor laboratories by faculty and staff in the natural sciences. Many of the areas provide very good habitat for wildlife, particularly birds, and offer excellent potential as open space for nature trails, hiking, and wildlife protection.

Lake Hodgson Park sits on the eastern extreme of the Corridor; the reservoir serves as the primary source of drinking water for Ravenna. Boat rentals, stakes, and a launch area are available as the park is dedicated to pay-fishing and picnicking. Outflow from the lake constitutes a major tributary of Breakneck Creek.

Portage County operates a waste water treatment plant in the Corridor and maintains a nearby park. (Towner's Woods)

Akron's waterworks is situated above the confluence of Breakneck Creek and the Cuyahoga River. The city's landholdings throughout the Cuyahoga watershed are extensive and those along the southern edge of Lake Rockwell and the treatment facility sit inside the proposed Corridor. Akron protects both the plant and the water supply by prohibiting public access to shoreline areas of Lake Rockwell.

Stow's Silver Springs Park is located beyond the Portage County line at the western edge of the proposed Corridor. Though not sitting directly atop the Breakneck aquifer, this extensive park and recreation area emerged from a depleted sand and gravel mine. It's an example of development, public or private, which offers protection to ground-water resources. Like Lake Hodgson, Stow's Park could anchor one end of the Green Corridor and provide rationale and impetus for linkage with adjacent communities on the issues of water supplies and recreation.

Active interest in a Green Enterprise Development Corridor by leaders of public entities mentioned would help launch this initiative and encourage involvement of private landholders.
Major Private Land Holdings in the Corridor

The Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education (P.L.A.C.E.), a non-profit land trust, holds a 93-acre parcel targeted for development as a conservation area and sustainable development demonstration site.

Large parcels near the confluence of Breakneck Creek and the Cuyahoga River are substantially undeveloped and held by local citizens interested in community affairs. Access to property south of this intersection is made difficult by the east-west passage of a CSX railroad track. Some sections of these properties are quite low-lying and are important ground-water recharge zones.

A public golf course extends between the Cuyahoga River and Kent-Hudson Road on what was once the Ellsworth farm. This property too is locally owned.

Located south of Ravenna Road on the west side of State Route 43, the Hugo sand and gravel operation has been active for many years. Here the aquifer has been 'opened' by dredging; lakes on the property are potential entry points for contamination. Because of these lakes, the favorable location, and water resources, this property would be vital to ground water protection in a Green Enterprise Development Corridor.

Another essentially undeveloped parcel is located just south of the Hugo sand and gravel operation and stretches across the highway to the Akron waterworks. This property is held by a Kent family with a history of involvement in local business activities.

The corporate and family owners of these properties may have great sensitivity to community needs and water reserves, but economic incentive is necessary for them to be interested in the goals of a Green Enterprise Development Corridor. Significant interaction would be required between owners and local officials to devise methods and benefits which ensure their participation. What enticements could be offered to golf course operators to assure environmentally sound practices are employed in horticultural activities? After years creating waterfront lots suited to eventual residential development at their gravel pit, what action could motivate ownership of Hugo to facilitate development of green industries, like aquaculture, integrated agricultural production, or recreational facilities? If owners of larger parcels become involved in the goals established inside the Corridor, owners of smaller plots are apt to follow.
Agricultural Land in the Corridor

Throughout the Fishcreek watershed area between Kent-Hudson Road and the Portage County line, north toward Streetsboro Township, agriculture has been the major land use. Recent activity has focused on vegetable production (including hothouse) tailored to fit topography and the poorly drained soils. With higher gross returns per acre in this type of agriculture, coupled to increased costs for residential development in lowlands, these properties have remained intact and active as farms longer than many in nearby areas of Summit and Portage counties.

Hay and corn production occurs on some higher ground, but much of this kind of land lies fallow. Livestock production, which once included beef and dairy is limited to a single stable providing boarding and training.

This agricultural segment of the Corridor is west of surface deposits comprising the Breakneck aquifer but sits on significant ground-water reserves found at greater depth. Agriculture can contribute to degradation of water supplies but the coupling of old practices rediscovered, with new technology, can reduce adverse impacts. Sustainable agriculture, integrated production systems, reuse of agricultural residues, organic farming, and aquaculture are recognized as emerging areas in American agriculture. Nationwide, renewed attention is being given to rural development, where introduction of these new approaches can provide attractive fulltime employment in agriculture, and slow migration to cities.

Agriculture has been an important element in Kent's history. Because of topography, drainage, and the aquifer, effort should be made to sustain viable agricultural activity in the proposed Green Enterprise Development Corridor. Most practices used in current operations are probably environmentally sound and with incentive could be expanded. Crops certified as meeting specific quality criteria tied to production methods are increasingly in demand; support for widespread local application of such methods could reduce potential for agricultural degradation of ground-water supplies and offer alternative food products to local consumers. The maintenance of small-scale farming enterprise is counter to national and local trends; nurturing such operations would require start-up support from traditional state and federal agricultural agencies. Designation of an Agricultural Enterprise Zone in the Corridor may be important to compete for necessary grant and loan monies.

The fencerows, woodlots, drainage ditches, and fallow fields of agriculture provide refuge for wildlife displaced by encroaching development. Maintenance of open space and preservation of wildlife habitat contribute to protecting ground-water and are beneficial spinoffs allied with agriculture.
Recreation in the Corridor
Recreation in the Corridor

Availability of recreational facilities and activities to the local population is impressive. Many opportunities in the Corridor are water-related including swimming, boating, fishing, and canoeing; other options are golf, horseback riding, and camping. Also there are numerous sports fields and courts to be found at city parks, University facilities, and around Twin Lakes and Brady Lake. In general such enterprise does not threaten water quality or availability, and can contribute to protection of ground-water reserves. Significantly these activities generate profit or income from fees, meeting the need for environmentally sound economic development while avoiding passive preservation.

Although ownership and management of these operations is a diverse mix of public entities, private investors, and individual landowners, there may be utility in linking aspects of recreation in the Green Enterprise Development Corridor. Like agriculture, those practices which serve to protect the aquifer, and generate economic activity, should be supported and encouraged. Might a lake park complex at the Hugo gravel pit be developed to complement similar parks in Ravenna and Stow, and lead to sale of common entry passes which support maintenance and expansion of enterprise in the Corridor? Could development of jogging and bike paths or nature trails connecting public land in the three communities generate citizen support and be made to pay? Could the riverwalk in downtown Kent be connected to a footpath network in the Corridor?

The agricultural land mentioned earlier, and parts of KSU property along Breakneck Creek, have genuine potential for long-term application as wildlife habitat and open space; involvement of a non-profit structure like P.L.A.C.E. offers one method for acquiring the management and financial support required to justify such land uses.

At least six golf courses operate in, or adjacent to, the proposed Green Corridor. Like agriculture, these operations can involve use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizer; compounds which can leach into groundwater supplies or be carried by runoff into surface waters and affect aquatic fauna. Can economically viable alternate methods be found to reduce use of chemicals which may degrade or contaminate the water supplies? As in agriculture, establishment of a Green Enterprise Development Corridor would provide the mechanism to seek support and technical assistance to address this need if it exists. Some federal programs which support integrated pest management, biological control, and reduced use of fuels and fertilizer, may already include golf course operators as a clientele group.
Energy and Rights of Way in the Corridor
Energy and Rights of Way in the Corridor

A web of tracks, pipelines, and powerlines cross the proposed Green Corridor. An obvious negative affect is ground-water contamination resulting from a ruptured pipe or wrecked tank car. Some companies involved in power transmission, oil and gas distribution, and rail transport, recognize potential problems and support environmental efforts, wildlife preservation, and recreation programs. Through the structure of a Green Enterprise Development Corridor contributions could be sought from local companies.

In many states, old rail beds have been converted into hiking trails, horse paths, even snowmobile courses. These in the Corridor might be a part of a trail network linking local recreation facilities or wildlife reserves. Such right-of-ways may also be important in establishing future interurban commuter traffic and transportation routes to the University.

Effective use of the pipeline and power line right-of-ways is less obvious than railroad beds. But, affordable energy is essential to attract investment and development. Besides favorable rates for power and natural gas it's also important to determine sites acceptable for tapping existing lines.

Throughout the Corridor there are many low volume oil and gas wells. Like pipelines and rail cars, these wells offer some risk to water supplies. The best protection possible may be nothing more than assurance from management. But, if well owners were financially involved in green industries inside the Corridor an extra measure of protection might be generated through self-interest. Both aquaculture and controlled environment horticulture require affordable energy year round. A local gas producer could play the key role in recruiting desirable agricultural ventures to the Corridor. The gas producer could provide natural gas, not capital, as investment in the partnership. By delaying payment for fuel until completion of a crop cycle, the gas is converted into fish flesh or produce having greater value. Some wells may actually be inactive now due to low well pressure and available to be applied in agriculture.

Focus on inter-community linkages may stimulate discussions on more long range issues like energy generation, recycling and conservation, including co-generation and composting, that would logically be a part of future development in the Green Corridor.
New Starts

This initiative would center on identification of new businesses and emerging green technologies which mesh well with conditions in specific areas of the Corridor. Requiring a more specific and longer term perspective than in the Linkage initiative, success in New Starts means setting up sections designated for certain types of activities. Mentioned earlier under Agricultural Land, was the possibility of creating in the Corridor an Agriculture Enterprise Zone to improve recruitment of innovative, environmentally sound agricultural ventures and to provide assurance that parties employ similar production ethics.

Another element of the Green Corridor would be formal establishment of a Corridor Enterprise Park. Situated adjacent to the Agriculture Zone, This Enterprise Park would sit over top sensitive and important areas of the aquifer where protection is vital. The key objective in New Starts is to match appropriate, economically viable activity to the setting, and avoid non-productive land uses.

Coordination

Several government and private initiatives in economic development are active in the area. The case for another, like the Green Enterprise Development Corridor, is threefold: narrow focus on the aquifer, immediate need, and small land area. Coordination with other offices is important and particular attention would be necessary with focused local initiatives like the Central City Redevelopment Program. The Central City effort could be extremely helpful in attracting green enterprise to the Corridor. This advantage can best be illustrated using an example:

An investor considering starting an aquaculture operation in the Corridor Enterprise Park or the Agriculture Zone, could, if made aware, be interested in conducting post-harvest activities in the Central City Redevelopment area. Buildings, services and incentives might be made available for processing, smoking, packaging, and retail sale. Perhaps part of output from a fish farm could go directly to the consumer through a farmers market or a restaurant downtown. Involvement in local recreation and tourism may be possible in river stocking programs, payfishing, provision of fingerlings, even management of an aquarium in the lobby of a renovated Kent Hotel.

Green industries attracted to the Corridor should match the products and services available from established Kent businesses. Using aquaculture as an example again, the requirement for processed ingredients in fish feed might offer new opportunity for output from the Williams Bros. Elevator and Mill. Similar connections can be made for any number of enterprises, other than aquaculture, and highlight the value of coordinating recruiting inside the Corridor with other development efforts.
Initiatives Related to the Corridor

The Green Enterprise Development Corridor dovetails with ongoing regional planning initiatives. The map on the following page identifies three ongoing initiatives described on page 21, they are:

Green Belt/Open Space Strategy

Riveredge Park Extension Master Plan (regional bike/hike trail system)

The Breakneck Creek Stewardship Center and Natural Area
Initiatives Related to the Corridor

KENT GREEN BELT/OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION STRATEGY

RIVEREDGE PARK EXTENSION MASTER PLAN
(A REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK)

BREAKNECK CREEK STEWARDSHIP CENTER AND NATURE AREA
Kent Green Belt / Open Space Conservation Strategy

The Kent City Council has adopted as one of its goals, the creation of a green belt or growth boundary around the city. This concept is being developed as part of the Portage County Regional Planning Commission Strategic Plan - Parks, Open Space and Trails Task Force.

The creation of a Green Enterprise Development Corridor would be an important step towards achieving this goal.

Riveredge Park Extension Master Plan

At their June 1993 meeting, the Kent Parks and Recreation Board adopted a Riveredge Park Extension Master Plan. The participatory planning process evaluated extensions of existing trails and the creation of a regional trail system for Portage County.

This plan proposes linkages with existing city, county and metropolitan parks, and the development of a "Greenway" that traces the Historic Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal and Atlantic and Great Western Railway corridors. This initiative would be a vital component of development within a Green Enterprise Development Corridor.

Breakneck Creek Stewardship Center and Nature Area

The Breakneck Creek Stewardship Center and Nature Area is a project of Portage Land Association for Conservation and Education (P.L.A.C.E.), a non-profit regional land trust.

The purpose of Breakneck Creek Stewardship Center is to demonstrate the dual objectives of P.L.A.C.E., by conserving a particular parcel of land and developing sustainable relationships between humanity and nature. Their plan calls for:

1. The development of a program for protection and restoration of natural ecosystems.

2. The development of an educational program about the natural and cultural history, present human impacts and future conservation of the Breakneck Creek Watershed.

3. The demonstration of sustainable development, including agriculture, aquaculture, and appropriate technologies. The Center could serve as a clearinghouse and be an essential aspect of the Green Economic Development Corridor.
Action Agenda

- Assess Interest in the Concept of a Green Enterprise Development Corridor in City and Township Leaders

- Assess Interest in the Concept of the Corridor in Leading Community Citizens and Officials in Adjacent Communities

- Secure Funding for Resource Inventory and Production of a Master Plan

- Confirm participation of Public Landowners in the Corridor to Set-up Opportunity for Immediate and High Profile Success upon Receipt of Funding to Establish the Program.

- Secure Regional/State/Federal Support for Start-up of a Green Corridor

- Acknowledge Creation of the Corridor with an Announcement of the Formal Cooperation and Coordination between the Several Public Landholders.

- Seek Targeted Funding (Public and Private) for Start-up of Special Elements Inside of, or Allied with, the Corridor:
  - Municipal Wellhead Protection Zone
  - The Agriculture Enterprise Zone
  - The Corridor Enterprise Park
  - The Central City Redevelopment Area

- Implement Strategy to Administer the Corridor in a manner that becomes self-supporting.

- Coalesce Similar Local Initiatives
  - Kent Green Belt/Open Space Conservation Strategy
  - Riveredge Park Extension Master Plan
  - Breakneck Creek Stewardship Center and Nature Area
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