SECTION 5B

TANNERY PARK TO MAIN STREET BRIDGE (EAST SIDE)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This area of the Riveredge is completely undeveloped. The riveredge has a low flood plain and remnants of Pennsylvania & Ohio Canal bed. A main line of the CSX railroad runs parallel to the riveredge as does a Conrail corridor. Remnants of the lock control structure remain, and stones for the lock remain in place below the water level. This area is a popular fishing spot that can only be accessed by trespassing on the CSX railroad tracks.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Legal access to lock/control structure for viewing falls, fishing and exploring historic structures.
2. There has been interest expressed in providing a means for portaging canoes around the falls.

ACCESS/ENTRY

Given the geography and development of the area, the east bank of the Cuyahoga is relatively inaccessible. Because of this, the two uses that are possible for this stretch are observation and portaging.

We have evaluated two methods for accessing the lock structure from the Main Street - Franklin Avenue grade. Both of these ideas were discovered to be rather old ideas.

1. The first idea is to access the lock structure from the level of the Conrail track (figure 5B2). This would be done by creating a walking perpendicular to the Pufferbelly, that would cross the Conrail tracks at grade, bridge the CSX tracks, and reach the control structure/lock remnant. The development of this solution is contingent upon the acquisition of an easement from the railroads and the continued low use profile of the Conrail service.

VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING

At present there are shrubs and trees growing in the stone of the control structure, as well as in a brick planter. To protect the historic structure from further damage, many of these will need to be removed. If development occurs in this area, the tree in the planter may be lost, in which case additional plantings could be designed into the final scheme.

SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP COMMENTS

In February, there was not clear decision made about whether development should occur in this area. On one side such development would provide safe access to fishermen and general observers, eliminating the need for people to (albeit illegally) walk up the CSX railroad tracks. The other perspective was that additional development could cause damage to that historic artifacts as well as possibly eliminate what little vegetation remains.

ACCESS/ENTRY

Given the geography and development of the area, the east bank of the Cuyahoga is relatively inaccessible. Because of this, the two uses that are possible for this stretch are observation and portaging.

2. A second idea is to create a stairway from the Main Street bridge, down to the level of the railroad retaining wall, and then a boardwalk over to the control structure where a deck would be built. (See figures 5B 2 & 3) This construction could also include docking facilities along the east side of the river as well as below the stone control structure. A wide stair down to this dock from the main level would provide access for the portaging of canoes.

This direction for east side access has advantages and disadvantages. One advantage is that there is no need for grade crossing of railroad tracks. A disadvantage is that it would bring trail users within 5 feet of an active track, (historically there was a stair in this location to provide access to railroad passengers).

Another advantage is that it would allow a relatively safe way of portaging a canoe to the lower stream of the Cuyahoga.

Other disadvantages include limited access to the disabled as well as possible conflicts with servicing sanitary sewers in this location.

ACTIVITY AREAS/RIVER ACCESS

The main activity area of such a development would be a portaging facility and a deck. These need not be extensively developed, but could include a display or directory of historic artifacts. This concept would provide a unique access/observation point.

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FIGURE 5B-2
RIVER ACCESS OBSERVATION DECK CONCEPT
HISTORIC & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

To primary historic consideration is the maintenance of the historic stonework of the dam and lock of the P & O Canal. While the lock is only visible at low water, its existence can be documented with an interpretive display with photos and model.

The stonework of the lock structure is being eroded by water and is in need of considerable restoration, lest be lost a significant historic artifact.

Environmentally, the development of this proposal would have a minor impact, except for the elimination of intrusive trees and shrubs.

Another idea that should be evaluated is the development of the hydro power potential. Since a 1982 study of the dam, small, inexpensive hydro systems have been established that could provide low voltage lighting for river edge development.

COST EVALUATION

Costs for these developments are difficult to estimate without further study. Rough square foot cost estimates based upon similar projects lead us to the following:

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<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elevated Bridge/Deck</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Stairs</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Docks</td>
<td>20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plantings</td>
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<td>Repair Lock Structure</td>
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<td>Signage &amp; Displays</td>
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<td>Lighting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design, Engineering and Administration</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>$130,000</td>
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</table>

FIGURE 5B-3

HISTORIC PHOTOS
DAM AND FALLS
SECTION 6

MAIN STREET BRIDGE TO BRADYS LEAP (Figure 6-1)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

This section of the park is characterized by a flat plain between steep embankments on the west and the east. Developed as a park in the 1970's, there are several well landscaped sections as well as a memorial to Nancy Wenninger(sp.). The Riveredge Park officially ends at Brady's Leap, a site where captain Samuel Brady is said to have leaped over the river in 1780 while being pursued by native indians.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The West River Neighborhood, of which this section of the park is found, was recently studied for its development potential. This study found that there is much interest in focusing upon the park as a primary amenity for the redevelopment of Gouger Avenue from Main Street to Crain Avenue. The Riveredge Park presently serves as a natural backdrop that can be integrated into a variety of proposed uses, from residential to retail and restaurant. An interest in developing the recreational component of this section has also been expressed. Development objectives therefore include:

1. Maintain and improve the area for picnicking and strolling.
2. Integrate park into development projects along Gouger Avenue.
3. Improve visibility and accessibility of Entries.
4. Encourage recreational use of the river.

ACCESS/ENTRY

Access to this section of the park occurs at 3 locations:

1. At West Main under the bridge and at the entry stair adjacent to the Bissler Building.
2. At Brady's Leap park entry off of Gouger.
3. At Brady's Leap via the rear of adjoining properties.

Each of these entries is in need of enhancement as part of a comprehensive upgrade of the park.

1. At the Main Street bridge, the walkway under the bridge is susceptible to flooding. As we discussed in Section 5A, this would be expensive to solve in an accessible fashion. If it was accepted that this stretch of the park cannot be fully accessible, modification of the existing walkway with a raised boardwalk would address the majority of the flooding that occurs in this location.
Just north of this bridge a walkway grade is a fairly steep bank that rises to the terrace level of the Bissler building. This embankment is severely eroded with underlying bedrock exposed. This area is in need of immediate repair, and could be reconstructed with a wood stair or with filled box type stairs as indicated in Figure 5A-3.

The metal entry stairs in the northwest corner of the Main Street bridge were renovated in 1990, providing a very visible sign of an access point to the park. As development occurs, it would be wise to locate a park directory at this location, as well as at the downtown Gazebo, as a way of describing the parks network for residents and visitors alike. A relief map, accessible to the visually impaired, as well as an audio tape describe historical and natural features would enhance the accessibility and encourage the use of the park. A box for interpretive brochures would also be a key component of this and other entries (See General Recommendations section of this report).

The entry at Brady's Leap park (Gouler Avenue) would logically be upgraded in conjunction with the reconstruction of Gouler Avenue, scheduled for 1993. Figures 6-2 and 6-3 indicate some preliminary designs that could be used for this purpose.

2. The Parks and Recreation board is negotiating the use of the Kent Visiting Nurse Association parking lot during off-hours to encourage further use of this entry. In general, this entry in all likelihood serves more neighborhood users than community wide users.

3. The entry at the point of Brady's famous Leap is of informal nature, with no legal easement held at this point. For all intents and purposes, this is the end of the existing park. In section 7 we look at the issues surrounding extending the park from this point to Crain Avenue.

ACTIVITY AREAS

This stretch of the park is a passive recreation area. It is used for walking and picnicking. As development occurs, there is potential for creation of deck and dock areas along the river. We recommend that a few specific areas be chosen as picnic sites and facilities be developed as appropriate.

As the river north to Breackneck Creek and the Akron Waterworks is navigable into small water craft, the development of a livery business (public or private) in this area might be a possibility. Paddleboat tours to a developed park at Riverbend might become a popular summer time activity if the City of Akron can be convinced to maintain a constant water level over the dam at Lake Rockwell.

FIGURE 6-2
ENTRY AT BRADY'S LEAP
If such development is encouraged, it might be wise to place a cable across the river to retain errant boaters from going over the falls.

**PATH SURFACES/BARRIER**

**FREE DESIGN**

The pathways in this stretch of park have been relatively undeveloped. This works well except in areas prone to erosion, such as the one location previously mentioned and at one other severely eroded area east of the Bisler building. At this point, a gravel base and underdrain should be installed, with compacted limestone screenings placed on the top.

In the long term, there might be a desire to pave this stretch to make it handicapped accessible, although there is no good place to access it at the present time.

**VEGETATION, LANDSCAPING, SCREENING AND BUFFERS**

This stretch of the Riveredge Park has some beautiful landscaping, due to the two decades that have passed since its development. It is a beautiful sight in the spring and fall as seasonal color abounds. These features also require a fairly large amount of maintenance, with trimming and mowing accounting for much of the labor.

There is a need for removing and trimming overgrown landscaping and weeds at Brady's Leap and Main Street entries. It might also be desirable to consider some additional shrubbery and native ground cover in lieu of high maintenance lawn in several locations.

At this point there are not any screening or buffering problems, although it may be desirable to buffer the parking lot at the north end of the park with some evergreen shrubbery.

**RIVER ACCESS**

One area that needs some attention is creating safe and appropriately designed locations to access the river's edge for observation and fishing. There are a few locations that are severely eroded that could receive stone rip rap, retaining walls and docks. This will especially be desirable if the use of watercraft is encouraged.

**COST ANALYSIS**

The costs of the developments described in this section would be as follows. These include all costs of using local funding including design and surveying. If federal monies are involved, these costs would be higher due to increased administrative and labor costs.

1. **Modification at Main Street Bridge**
   a. Boardwalk under bridge
      - Lump Sum 3,000
   b. New stair at eroded area 3,000
   c. Path improvements 5,000
   d. Landscaping improvements 5,000
   **SUBTOTAL** 16,000

2. **Entry at Brady's Leap Park**
   a. Landscaping 15,000
   b. Signage 3,000
   **SUBTOTAL** 18,000

3. **River Access/Activity Areas**
   - Lump Sum 15,000
SECTION 7

BRADY'S LEAP TO CRAIN AVENUE

DESCRIPTION

There has been a long standing dream of extending the river edge park north and east as far as Towner's Woods. The first step in that extension would entail continuing the trail from the place where it presently ends to Crain Avenue (figure 7-1).

This section is characterized by steep, exposed rock river banks, with flat, shallow and exposed rock plains on either side of the river. Tree cover consists of mostly locust and other small trees. On the east side, the area is completely within the right of way of the CSX railroad, widening from a few feet of the double set of tracks, to a broad, wooded area with a large barrier of stone left from when the right of way was blasted from the bedrock formation of the river valley. The eastern edge contains remnants of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal towpath with young undergrowth of locust tree, honeysuckle and a variety of berry bushes. If access to the east side is a desirable extension, then a bridge at Brady's Leap, site of the first settlers bridge across the Cuyahoga River in 1803, would be required (figures 7-2 and 7-3).

The west side, north of Brady's Leap, is the rear yards of several residences and businesses. Continuing the trail at its current distance from the river edge would require significant easements, or if the present clearances and yards are maintained, expensive board walk would be required due to the steepness of the banks. Given the potential for development of the West River Neighborhood, such an extension should be kept in mind for any property acquisitions or easements.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this section of the trail is the extension of the hiking trail to the north. In so far as it involves the historical towpath of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal and the site of the first bridge over the Cuyahoga, it would lend a good opportunity for interpretive displays, literature and programs. Another use of this location would be as a picnic area as it is very beautiful and relatively natural, even though it is in the heart of the city.

ACCESS AND ENTRY

As an extension of the existing park, this section of the trail does not have a well defined access point. At present, access to the Brady's Leap has been through the driveways of adjacent business. Such an access is not viable in the long run, and so the necessity of keeping this section in mind for any changes to development in this area. While some property owners in the area are interested in the trail development, there has been no attempt to discuss it with each
individual property. Should there be solid support for this section of trail, this will need to occur.

The north end of this section, whether on the east or west side of the river (or both) would require an access stair at the Crain Avenue Bridge. A proposed stair is shown in figure 7-4. We recommend that this stair be constructed out of wood due to the uncertain future of the realignment of the Crain Avenue Bridge. We do not recommend the creation of a "dead end" condition of developing a bridge at Brady’s Leap without such a stair. Our discussion with city and county engineers indicates that the realignment of the Crain Avenue Bridge is not likely in the next 10 years. The construction of a wood stair would allow it to be reconfigured as part of the future bridge relocation project.

ACTIVITY AREAS

The activity areas for this section of extension would be limited to some outdoor education and picnic areas. These would be placed adjacent to the west end of the proposed bridge at Brady’s Leap, and about 100 feet north of the east end of the bridge.

PATH SURFACES/BARRIER
FREE DESIGN

If the western option is pursued, the trail might need retaining walls and or boardwalks, given the space between buildings and the river. Removal or relocation of buildings could of course have a dramatic effect on the path configuration.

On the east side, the exposed rock of the historical towpath provides a ready made pathway, requiring only a minimal amount of clearing and some limestone screenings to fill some lower areas. This section could be made relatively barrier free, except for access from the north end. The path surface would need to be evaluated at the time of construction to verify obstacles and grades.

VEGETATION, LANDSCAPING AND BARRIERS

Development of the western option of this section would require careful development of landscaping and screening. The Eastern option is virtually developed as it is, except that some sort of barrier will be required for about 200 feet between the bridge/trail and the active railroad track. Discussions have begun with CSX regarding clearances, with initial indications being that a distance of 25 feet from the centerline of the closest track be maintained, and that some sort of fence with warning signs be installed. Landscaping to soften this edge would also be desirable.

FIGURE 7-2

BRADY’S LEAP 1904

FROM CHRISTIAN CACKLER’S RECOLLECTION OF AN OLD SETTER
1874, 1904, 1964
RIVER ACCESS

Given the height of the grade relative to the river as well as the steepness of the banks, safe access to the river on the east side would be impractical without some sort of stair (similar to the one south of the falls). On the west side, river access as related to some other development might be appropriate.

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This area is all very disturbed due to much human construction activity over the centuries. The pathway proposed on the east side would have virtually no impact on existing flora and fauna.

Some of the wooden structures on the west side of the river might be historic and worthy of restoration and renovations. Otherwise there are not known historic structures.

COST EVALUATION

Costs for construction of this section depend upon the actual level of development. For the sake of evaluation we have developed costs based upon contractor (non-prevailing wage) constructed work. Donations of labor and materials would certainly reduce these costs significantly.

BRIDGE AT BRADY'S LEAP
(Option #1, pre-fabricated)

- Foundations: 6,000
- Bridge: 20,000
- Installation: 2,000
- Landscaping Enhancements: 2,000
- Interpretive Display: 3,000
- Design, Engineering, Surveying, & Contract Administration: 5,000

SUBTOTAL Pre-fabricated 38,000
Bridged

(Add for custom/historic bridge) 10-20,000

WESTERN TRAIL/BOARDWALK

- Trail/Boardwalk: 800 lineal ft. x $60 = 48,000
- Buffer/Screen: lump sum: 10,000
- Signage: 5,000
- Design, Engineering, Surveying, and Contract Administration: 8,500

SUBTOTAL Western Trail 71,500

EASTERN TRAIL

- Trail/Boardwalk: 800 lineal ft. x $5 = 4,000
- Landscaping: 2,000
- Signage: 1,000
- Fence 200 ft heavy duty wire $10 If (Includes 50' of barrier at Crain Avenue): 2,000
- Design, Engineering, Surveying, and Contract Administration: 2,000

SUBTOTAL Eastern Trail 11,000

STAIR AT CRAIN AVENUE

- Construction: Risers 30 x 500 each = 15,000
- Decks 3 x 1000 = 3,000
- 1 Kiosk = 2,000
- Signage = 1,000
- Design, Engineering, Surveying, and Construction Administration: 3,500

SUBTOTAL at Crain Avenue 24,500

HISTORIC BRIDGE CONCEPT
FIGURE 7-4
PROPOSED STAIR AT
CRAIN AVENUE BRIDGE
FIGURE 8-1

OFF STREET BIKEWAY ON CONRAIL CORRIDOR
(Showin Crain Avenue, Kent to Towner's Woods Park)

PROPOSED TRAIL

ACCESS POINT
SECTION 8

CRAIN AVENUE TO TOWNER’S WOODS VIA THE CONRAIL RAIL CORRIDOR (A component of the Proposed Atlantic and Great Western Bikeway)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This section of the trail would be a 2.75 mile linkage from Kent to Towner’s Woods Park through the creation of a bike/hike/cross country skiing trail on an existing Conrail rail corridor (see figure 8-1).

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Continue regional bikeway to Towner’s Woods (with the possibility of going beyond to Ravenna and Warren), linking city and county parks for hiking/bicycling and cross country skiing.

2. Provide opportunity to explore historic ruins of railroad roundhouse, and the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal.

ACCESS AND ENTRY

The connecting point to the riveredge park would be at an access point/stair located near or connected to the Crain Avenue bridge. The bikeway would connect to the Metropark bikeway via North Water Street (see Section 1).

Access to this corridor would occur on the north side of Crain Avenue at the foot of the bridge. This entry is quite narrow, and so would require special signage and perhaps a barrier between the rail and the trail. There is a cross walk serving this location, but bicyclists would need to receive a special caution. There is no room for off street parking, with limited on-street parking available on North Water Street. While this point could become a trail head, the lack of parking would find or be directed to another location (perhaps Tannery Park or downtown facilities).

As with any other entry, signage and landscaping of appropriate size and design would enhance the trail head (see figure 8-2).

Other possible access locations to this trail could be located at Breakneck Creek, Marvin Avenue and Mason Avenue.

At Marvin and Mason Avenue, non-road grade crossings would be required. These entry locations would most likely only be used by neighboring cyclists/hikers, and therefore not be much of a safety concern.

The right of way is currently in early stages of abandonment. Attempts are being made to gain local ownership of the section from the west county line to Ravenna, in order to maintain freight service to several local industries. For a trail to be developed, a joint use/easement will need to be executed between the park board(s) and the new owners.

As with any railroad, this right of way is ideally suited for a bike trail, given its favorable grade. Beyond its Crain Avenue entry this corridor is 100’ wide at its narrowest width, and so offers possibilities for safe co-existence with an operating train. This section is intended to be a limited use low speed spur, with a few trains per day operating at a low velocity. (20-25 mph)

FIGURE 8-2

ENTRY AT CRAIN AVENUE

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ACTIVITY AREAS

The primary use of this area would be for a trail, the secondary use would be for the limited exploration of historic artifacts. No special facilities, other than interpretive signage and literature, would be required for these activities. The retention of these artifacts should be taken into consideration in any development plans for this area.

PATH SURFACES

The development of a path surface is contingent upon the desired use and standards applied. If state or federal bikeway funds are used, a 10' wide path with either compacted limestone, asphalt or concrete paving would need to be installed. (Asphalt has been the material of choice because of the relatively low maintenance costs.) These federal funds - passed through the state, require a 20% local share and a lengthy review process. Development of a trail can occur at a lesser standard if only local funds are employed. Trails as narrow as 6' wide have been used in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area.

For general purpose biking, a smooth surface is required. Hikers, cross country skiers, and equestrians (if allowed) would be accommodated in the shoulder area.

SCREENING AND BUFFERING

Perhaps the single most controversial issue regarding the use of an active railroad corridor is the separation of trail users from the rail. In our discussion with the railroads, Department of Transportation officials and local officials, there is a diversity of opinions as to what is an appropriate separation. Some say 25' and a very high fence. Some say a good landscape thicket. Others say a short fence and a comfortable distance, still others say good signage.

The appropriate solution will need to come from negotiations and evaluation of legitimate concerns. From an aesthetic perspective, the trail through the old rail yards cannot be considered beautiful, and any future development will need to be kept in mind. It would be our recommendation to create a multi-layered hedge of shrubs and small trees on both sides of a designated right of way in this area (see figure 8-3). This hedge, if carefully planned, could serve as screen, barrier, wildlife food and habitat and a source of firewood/fence posts. Occasional no-trespassing and warning signs should be adequate to advise legitimate users to stay on the trail.

In the stretch beyond the old railroad yard, the right of way narrows and so careful placement of the trail and barriers will need to be evaluated. Some bridge renovation and fencing will need to be accomplished to make the pathway usable.

FIGURE 8-3

PROPOSED PROFILE THROUGH BIKEWAY
Industrial Park Section - Conrail Corridor
BARRIER FREE DESIGN

This section of the trail, due to its minimum slope, is perfectly adapted for those who require barrier free design. Accessibility is another reason that most parks have chosen asphalt as a path material as it offers the smoothest surface. Other trails on railroad corridors have proved to be liberating for those who cannot climb hills or steps.

WORKSHOP COMMENTARY

At the May 16th Workshop, several property owners who live adjacent to the Conrail corridor expressed concern with the potential development. There has been a history of trash dumping and vandalism by individuals illegally using the corridor. These concerns will need to be addressed if the trail is developed.

MAINTENANCE COSTS

Maintenance costs for a bike-hike trail depend upon the actual development. If hard surface materials are used, they need little maintenance but need repair 15 to 20 years out (at a high cost). Using a crushed stone surface requires some work on an annual basis (up to $3,000 per mile). Fencing and signage need periodic repair, as do entry gates. If a center strip is used, that will need to be repainted occasionally. Right of way clearing/pruning also must occur occasionally. Maintenance costs could therefore run from $3-8,000 per mile per year.

HISTORY AND ECOLOGY

Historically, the railroad has been an important part of the economic development of Kent and Portage County. Remnants of the round house and the railroad yards present unfortunately, one of the few possible obstacles to the development of hazardous materials in the railyard area.

OPERATION

Operation costs would be minimal, unless a separate parks patrol is deemed necessary (see Security).

COST ANALYSIS

1. CRAIN AVENUE TO CITY LIMITS

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2. KENT CITY LIMITS TO RAVENNA ROAD

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Not Included: Survey, Environmental Assessment and Legal Fees.
SECTION 9
CRAIN AVENUE TO RIVERBEND PARK
(New City Park Land at Riverbend Development)

DESCRIPTION

A less direct way of reaching Towne's Woods than the Atlantic and Great Western Bikeway (see section 8), is to continue along the river edge to new city park lands adjacent to Standing Rock Cemetery. Several options that we have evaluated and discussed in workshop sessions include:

1. Continuing along the river edge.
2. Using boats between a point north of Main Street Bridge
3. Following the street (N. Mantua/S.R. 43)

The river edge on this section is characterized by steep, exposed rock river banks, for the first 500 or more feet. Then the embankment has areas of flat shallow and exposed rock plains and steep banks. There is considerable tree cover as well as areas of land fill. On the east bank of the river, the ballast of the railroad is literally up to the river edge.

Continuing the trail along the river would require an easement, as well as the construction of expensive boardwalks. The only present uses on the west bank that could possibly justify such an expenditure is the Acropolis Restaurant and Guido's Pizza, which sit adjacent to the river and the Crain Avenue Bridge, and command a good view.

The boating option of reaching Riverbend Rock Park, while not contributing directly to the goal of reaching Towne's Woods, adds a whimsical character to the recreational opportunities for Kent residents. With the development of a portage around the falls at Main Street and/or docking facilities north of the Main Street bridge, this river corridor would allow navigation of several miles of the Cuyahoga River and Breakneck Creek.

The on street option is less desirable due to the heavy traffic on N. Mantua Street. As more ecologically friendly modes of transportation such as buses and human powered vehicles become more predominant, consideration could be given to restricting the curb lane to such vehicles. Such a modification of street use, combined with strictly enforcing the speed limit and an aggressive comprehensive sidewalk repair program, could make the street more desirable for pedestrians and cyclists alike.

ACCESS, ENTRY, RIVER ACCESS AND ACTIVITY AREAS

As an extension of the park from Crain Avenue, this section of the trail would give the options of cycling/walking along Crain, or potentially hiking and/or boating along the river edge. An entry at Crain Avenue could be developed in conjunction with the entry stair on the south edge of the bridge, or if the western path is developed, by crossing under the bridge to the Acropolis. Any realignment of the bridge would of course effect this.

Other city owned access points that might be considered for observation, fishing and dock areas are located at Grant Street, Riverside Court and a 10 foot wide strip directly across from Cuyahoga Street. The base of Grant Street is the historic location of a Pennsylvania and Ohio Lock and a 5 story mill. This could be a potential location for developing a mini park and interpretive display.

PATH SURFACES/BARRIER FREE DESIGN

Development of the river edge option of this section would require careful development of landscaping and screening. This issue was discussed at the June workshop, with great concern raised by residents who own property in this area. Many of them were concerned with existing vandalism problems being enlarged, loss of privacy and obstruction of views of the natural landscape.

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This area is all very disturbed due to much human construction activity over the centuries. Any construction would naturally aim to maintain existing vegetation. Some of the structures along the river are among the oldest in Kent. This area was part of the original Northern settlement of Carriage. Of particular importance was the Cuyahoga house, an inn located at the Northwest Corner of Cuyahoga Street and North Mantua. It was the frequent stop over point for travelers on the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal and stage coaches that traveled the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the following options be pursued:

1. Development of board walk along the west bank only as far a Cuyahoga Street, where a city easement exists. This would provide opportunity to enhance existing commercial uses on both sides of N. Mantua by opening them to additional pedestrian traffic. Extension of the walkway beyond this point is neither cost effective nor responsible to the existing configuration of residential land use. (figure 9-4)

2. Develop the river access option for boating, developing facilities at Standing Rock Park and north of Main Street Bridge. Consider further evaluation of a pocket park at the end of Riverside or Grant Street.

3. Develop bicycling and pedestrian improvements on North Mantua Street.
COST EVALUATION

Costs for developing this section depend upon the actual level of development. For the sake of evaluation we have developed costs based upon contractor constructed work. Donations of labor and materials would certainly reduce these costs significantly.

RIVEREDGE BOARDWALK

Boardwalk Trail 5,400 lf x $100 lf 540,000
Landscaping/Buffing (included) 5,000
Interpretive Displays 5,000
Signage 5,000
Pocket Park Development 50,000
Design, Engineering, Surveying & Contract Administration 60,000
Sub Total Riveredge Boardwalk 600,000

RIVER ACCESS AND BOATING OPTION

River Access and Boating Option
Pocket Park Development at Grant or Riverside 50,000
Buffer/Screen lump sum 5,000
Signage 2,000
Design, Engineering, Surveying, & Contract Administration 6,500
Sub Total River Access and Boating Option 63,500

BOARDWALK, CRAIN AVENUE TO CUYAHOGA STREET

Lump Sum Cost up to $100,000

ON STREET ACCESS TO RIVERBEND PARK

Sidewalk Improvements
Lump Sum 20,000
Street Improvements (gates & stripping) 10,000
Landscaping in Right of Way 10,000
Signage 10,000
Design, Engineering, Surveying & Contract Administration 5,000
Sub Total on Street Access $46,000
FIGURE 10-1
RIVERBEND PARK TO TOWNER'S WOODS PARK

OPTION 1  ON PROPOSED ROAD
NATURE TRAIL

OPTION 2  RIVEREDGE ROUTE

OPTION 3  ON STREET ROUTE
SECTION 10

RIVERBEND PARK TO TOWNER'S WOODS

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this section is to continue the riveredge trail system to Towner's Woods. A secondary objective is to explore wetlands that have a rich variety of plant and animal life.

DESCRIPTION

No matter how one gets to standing rock park, the path to Towner's Woods is another matter all together. During the course of our planning, we investigated several options: (see figure 10-1)

1. Crossing a proposed bridge at the end of Riverbend Boulevard, and then:
   a. Connecting with the proposed bikeway or,
   b. Trailing along the east edge of Breakneck Creek to the Cuyahoga River, and then following abandoned railroad right of way on City of Akron Waterworks property and/or following Ravenna Road to Towner's Woods.

2. Following an existing river edge easement through the Riverbend development, then continuing along the riveredge through Oak Knolls Golf Course, and other private lands, finally connecting with Akron Waterworks property and Ravenna Road.

3. Following State Route 43 to Ravenna Road as an on road bike/hike trail.

Each of these options has advantages and disadvantages. Some of them have distinct obstacles.

A RIVER CROSSING

The first possible route, crossing a proposed bridge at Riverbend Boulevard, is of course contingent upon the construction of a bridge and the ensuing development that would require the development of a thoroughfare. Should this occur, attention should be given to assure that bike lanes are provided on the bridge and street or, preferably, a separate bikeway parallel to the road.

Since a road has not been located, if is difficult to know precisely where such a bikeway would connect up with the proposed Atlantic and Great Western Bikeway. Presumably there would be a bridge across the CSX rail, with a grade crossing of the Conrail line.

A NATURE HIKING TRAIL

From this spur, it would be possible to create a side hiking trail that would follow the eastern bank of Breakneck Creek. This area is a low flood plain, and a trail in this area would allow seasonal use only, or require the construction of some sort of boardwalk system.

The effected owners of these properties were somewhat open to this idea, although they would need information about management and other issues if they were to discuss such proposals. Some of them have allowed hunting on their land, so low impact uses such as hiking were not rejected out of hand.

We recommend that a way to begin such a use would be to have organized outings by naturalists, bird watching groups etc. coordinated through local parks districts.

THE ON-ROAD POSSIBILITIES

The last option that we evaluated was the possibility of a bike/hike circuit reaching Towner's Woods via existing roads and shoulders. The logical route is an approximately 2.75 mile route that follows State Route 43, Diagonal Road and Ravenna Road, which goes to Towner's. This route, to meet ODOT standards, would require widening of shoulders, striping and signs. Such a project would be an amenity for residents of Twin Lakes as well, with the exception of the narrowness of the bridge over the Conrail siding at Hugo Sand and Gravel, this would give safer access to Kent.

We also briefly evaluated the possibility of accessing the abandoned rail line that borders the Conrail siding at Hugo Sand and Gravel. Given the route 43 bridge elevation, access by bicycle would be difficult. Furthermore, the...
abandoned railway has a major trestle that would be extremely expensive to traverse with a trail. Proximity to the Akron Waterworks and their ownership of the property would probably be difficult obstacles to overcome.

ACCESS, ENTRY AND ACTIVITY AREAS

All of these proposed spurns eliminating from Riverbend Park would presume origins from the North Mantua neighborhood or in the case of cyclists, from elsewhere in the city. If the bridge and Atlantic and Great Western bikeway are construction, several possible circuits for commuting and recreational cycling are possible.

Riverbend Park would not necessarily be a logical community wide park, in that there is not space for extensive parking facilities. With its proposed boat launch it could be community wide amenity. More likely, Standing Rock Park would be a layover spot for fisherman, bird watchers, canoeists and the like.

PATH SURFACES/BARRIER FREE DESIGN

The development of these proposed trails would provide the opportunity for creation of barrier free recreation amenities. While there is not a complete sidewalk on Riverbend Boulevard to North Mantua, the completion of that is in conjunction with the river crossing, bikeway would be an excellent way of developing a thoroughfare. In other locations, asphalt bikeways have become popular with wheelchair walkers as they provide a smooth surface and unprecedented freedom of movement. The other spurs are less desirable from an accessibility perspective in that class III or shoulder type bikeways are not very comfortable for pedestrians in general. The Riveredge path at Riverbend would need to be examined for the level of desired development given its "dead-end" nature.

VEGETATION, LANDSCAPING AND BARRIERS

None of these proposals have dramatic impact on privacy and safety of adjoining residents. The river edge path at Riverbend is at the back of very deep lots so a simple warning sign near a public entry may be required. Since it is unknown how these lots will be developed, landscape screens may or may not be required. In general, protection of native landscaping should be high priority, especially since trillium and other wetland species are found on the river banks adjacent to drainage ways.

Along bikeways, whether on road or separated, landscaping can serve as a buffer, but must be chosen with safety of bicyclists mind. If Riverbend Boulevard is developed as a thoroughfare, berming and a landscape barrier adjacent to the CSX corridor would be serious consideration. Other plantings, to enhance the aesthetic experience of walkers and cyclists would be most appropriate.

RIVER ACCESS

Aside from protecting existing vegetation and wildlife habitat, the major environmental issues related to this section of the proposal are erosion of riverbanks and paths, and the implications of encouraging passive and non-motorized forms of recreation.

Historic consideration would be limited to archeological evaluation of the land in the oxbow of the Breakneck Creek/Cuyahoga River. Mark Seeman, a professor of archeology at Kent State University has indicated that this area has characteristics of a prime site for prehistoric inhabitants. If development of this area occurs, some testing may be required to determine if the site is of archeological importance.

Regarding the trestle of the railroad, it may be desirable for this structure to be registered as a national engineering landmark.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

We recommend that the on street paths be included in city and region wide trail schemes, and be developed as these roads are improved. As for the river edge path, it is not reasonable to assume that it can be extended through the golf course at this time, although this idea should remain a goal. Development of a nature trail along the east bank of Breakneck
Creek/Cuyahoga River may be possible, and could occur as an independent informal agreement with adjacent property owners.

COST EVALUATION

Costs for developing this section depend upon the actual level of development. For the sake of evaluation we have provided a few lump sums. Donations of labor and materials would certainly reduce these costs significantly.

BIKEWAY AT RIVERBEND BOULEVARD

If the bikeway is planned as a part of the overall development of this area, its additional cost compared to city subdivision standards would be negligible.

RIVEREDGE TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

For this section of the development we would recommend that no modifications be made to the path at this time other than developing a policy and appropriate signage. These costs should be less than $1,000.00.

ON STREET BIKEWAY IMPROVEMENTS

These modifications would have negligible impact on costs of roads, requiring minor widening of shoulders, some striping and signage.

Costs for this type of improvements, based upon ODOT standards, could be up to $50,000 per mile or nearly $150,000. If this was developed as part of a larger resurfacing project, these costs could be significantly reduced.

RIVERBEND PARK

Costs have not been carefully evaluated for Riverbend Park development.
FIGURE 11-1

CANAL TRACE TRAIL FROM CUYAHOGA RIVER TO PROPOSED REGIONAL NATURE CENTER

REFERENCE POINT
P & O CANAL BED (Approximate)
PROPOSED REGIONAL OFF ROAD BIKEWAY
PATHWAY WHERE IT LEAVES CANAL TOWPATH
SECTION II

CANAL TRACE:
CUYAHOGA RIVER TO PROPOSED
REGIONAL NATURE CENTER
(Figure 11-1)

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Trace the path of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal from the point it leaves the river north of Downtown, for historical and natural education and recreation.

RIVER TO BREAKNECK CREEK
(Point 1 to Point 2)

Somewhere east of the foot of Grant Street, the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal left the slack water of the Cuyahoga River via a lock with a nineteen (19) foot lift, one of the largest locks in all of Ohio's historic canals. From here it swept north east and then curved south east, connecting up with the Breakneck Creek near Brady Lake Road. In this stretch there is only a very short area where any canal remnant remains. (See figure 11-2)

As a hiking trail, this stretch is not very desirable, as access across the river at Grant Street would require a bridge that also crosses the CSX tracks. Such a bridge would span at least 100 feet and would be extremely costly. Assuming that a bikeway development goes forward, it would be better to work to retain the canal and roundhouse remnants as part of that development.

BREAKNECK TO BRADY LAKE ROAD
(Point 2 to Point 3)

From Breakneck Creek to Brady Lake Road there is limited room between the creek and a main line of the CSX railroad. There is a drive to this area that serves as access to private property. While the creek is very beautiful in this location, there is little room and a difficult grade for adequate access. A more logical place to access the bikeway would be further west via Mason or some other street that connects with the rail corridor.

BRADY LAKE ROAD
TO STATE ROUTE 59
(Point 3 to Point 5)

From Brady Lake Road to State Route 59, tracing the canal becomes more interesting, due to the existence of large sections of the canal bed. Unfortunately, the easiest place to access this area, the site of the former Kent Dump, directly off of Brady Lake Road, is now off limits, having been declared a U.S. EPA Superfund Site. There now stands a fence that encloses remnants of the historical canal, as well as countless buried drums of toxic contaminants.

To continue one trace of canal would require following Ohio Street some distance to appoint at the end of Kent Street in Kent Park (point 4), where it may be possible to again access the wetland area. The difficulty is that all of this land is in private ownership, and it would require conservation easements or right of ways for it to be used.

Assuming you could gain easements in this area, you could travel back behind Kent Village apartments, following the canal and the Breakneck Creek all the way to State Route 59. Included in the area that would be traversed are well lands of the City of Kent, and some graded and as yet undeveloped areas directly adjacent to the creek.

This area has potential for development as a recreational trail for the many apartment dwellers in the neighborhood. This stretch is entirely in Franklin Township and would need to be developed under a township or county parks program.

STATE ROUTE 59 TO
POWDERMILL ROAD
(Point 5 to Point 7)

Assuming that one can get as far as State Route 59 with a trail, then the next step would be to continue on toward the nature center. The bridge at Breakneck Creek and State Route 59 is a very busy location to cross, and so hikers would need to be accomodated with either warning devices or with sidewalks doubling back west to the State Route 261 intersection and then back east to Breakneck Creek. From this point South for about a mile there are twin channels of creek and former canal bed with various twists and turns. It would be possible to follow the west bank of the Breakneck Creek past the City Water Plant and the County Waste Water Plant on a relatively high and dry basis by staying on towpath and graded areas. There would be a need for some bridges as well as some boardwalk in wetter areas. Our sketch indicates that the canal bed would be left for a distance because it is possible to stay on public land and because there is not a comfortable place to cross given present ownership.

The Bolari property, which contains remnants of the Gillett and Austin powdermill and a few hundred feet of canal towpath/bed, would be an ideal long term acquisition by county parks and/or the county historical society.

At the place where Ohio Edison property and crosses the Creek, (point 6), would be a logical place for a bridge, for this would give very direct access back to Powedermill Road and the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal Bed. At point 7, there would be a need to cross Powedermill Road.

From point 6 it might be possible to develop an alternate connection down to Kent State property and crossing other wetlands. Such a connection could provide an "off road" access to the proposed nature center, with this hike in itself being an excellent
opportunity for nature interpretation.

POWERMILL ROAD TO
THE NATURE CENTER
(Point 7 to Point 9)

On the east side of Powdermill Road there is presently a gate limiting access to property owned by the City of Kent. From this point one can travel approximately one and one half miles east following remnants of canal bed all the way to Lakewood Road. As is discussed in section 12, this area is part of a proposed 800 acre conservation and well head protection area containing an incredible diversity of plant and animal species, including many rare and endangered species.

Assuming that a natural area is to be developed, the trail would be diverted from the towpath after following it for about 1/4 mile. At point 8 the proposed trail would head south east, crossing the creek and a wetland, and then traversing a ridge to a proposed nature center location.

ACCESS AND ENTRY

As was described above, the canal trace trail is a difficult one to access. There are however a few logical locations that could serve as trail heads for the neighborhoods where they are found. These are at points 1,2,4 and 7 on the map 11-1. At none of these access points is there a transit stop or much room for parking. In this regard, they would then serve only localized traffic or hikers on a larger loop or trail. Perhaps the most logical way of accessing the canal trace trail would be to use the nature center, (point 9), as the starting point for hikes of various lengths.

ACTIVITY AREAS

At this portion of the trail is proposed, there are no significant opportunities for developing activity centers. The ecological and historic features of the trail might warrant some free standing interpretive displays, yet more than likely published literature and interpretive hikes would be the most viable method of using this trail as an outdoor classroom.

PATH SURFACES/BARRIER FREE DESIGN

The profile, of this trail and its difficult terrain would indicate that its use would not necessarily be heavy. In this regard, trail surface development would be minor, with a few precautions necessary to minimize erosion. There would also be a need for some bridges and boardwalks to traverse wet areas.

Development of this entire trail to accessible standards, would be difficult, changes of grade and crossings of valleys and creeks requiring the construction of stairs and bridges. As this trail would likely be developed in sections relative to its use for natural and historic interpretation, the issue of accessibility would need to be evaluated relative to the actual use. It seems to us that this issue is contingent on the interest in the nature center and its development.

VEGETATION, LANDSCAPING
SCREENING AND BARRIERS

The development of this trail would have a minimal impact upon existing vegetation. Any development that would impact trees and shrubs will need to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Additional landscaping will generally not be required, unless there is interest in developing of indigenous species for food and cover for wildlife.

Barriers and screening may be required in a few instances where separation from private property is required.

WATER ACCESS

One of the most interesting features of this proposal is the proximity of the trail to both Breakneck Creek and the P & O Canal remnant. The water adds much to both the beauty and the abundance of wildlife.

Actual access to the water would probably be limited to incidental scientific experimentation. Some have canoed the Breakneck Creek through some of this area, but in general it is not very navigable on a consistent basis. While some do fish in the Breakneck, the stream size does not make it a candidate for an active public access program.

ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORICAL
CONSIDERATION

Obviously, the environmental and historic aspects of this trail make it an interesting possibility for recreational development. There are three especially significant ecological areas that come to light along this trail.

1. The EPA Superfund site at Second Avenue and Brady Lake Road.
2. The wetlands area between Points 5 and 6 that has much beaver activity.
3. The entire area east of Powdermill Road, bounded by CSX tracks to the north, Summit Street on the South and Lakewood Street on the east.

Historically, the elements of interest are the canal remnants, the roundhouse foundation, and the site of the Gillett and Austin Powdermill (on private property). A recent tour by the canal Society of Ohio about the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal is indicative of the interest in this long forgotten part of our past.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis of this trail indicates that it is not a readily usable trail because of the
fragments of accessible land and the need to
gain access to private property. We
therefore recommend that sections on public
property be pursued, especially in
conjunction the proposed regional nature
center (section 12). First and foremost, a
cooperative agreement with the county or
township parks district would be necessary
to develop any part of this trail east of Lake
Street.

If development is pursued, City and County
Parks and Recreation board members need to
realize that there was concern expressed at
the April workshop by neighboring property
owners in the Powdermill Road district. If
the plan is to go forward there would be a
need for conservation and or access
casements.

COST EVALUATION

As with other sections, the costs for
developing this section depend upon the
actual level of development. Given the
likelihood that this trail will not be heavily
used, few resources can be justified towards
its development. If and when the nature
center is developed, then it can become a
goal towards which the canal trace trail is
developed.

If mostly volunteer labor was utilized to
construct trail and related bridges, the cost
for this stretch could be less than $30,000.
SECTION 12

PROPOSED REGIONAL NATURE CENTER

DESCRIPTION

Tracing the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal leads to the second goal, a proposed regional nature center (figure 12-1). This nature center would be located in the center of an 800 acre Breakneck Creek Conservation area, one of the most biologically diverse areas in the entire state. This conservation area would be a multi-purpose, restricted use development that could join several agencies in a cooperative venture. Those agencies that would have primary interest would be the City of Kent, Kent State University, and the Portage County Parks District. Of secondary interest would be the City of Ravenna, Brady Lake Village, private property owners and local and state conservation organizations.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Preserve an area of great biological diversity as intact as possible.

2. Protect well fields and aquifer (City of Kent)

3. Create an outdoor laboratory, available for University, secondary, elementary and adult education in the areas of wetland ecology, and sub surface hydrology.


ACCESS AND ENTRY

Perhaps the most important element of the development of a Nature Center is the restriction of use to sufficient degree to maintain the wildlife found there. For this reason, the proposal put forth by Sam Marzoor, professor of biology at Kent State University, is for concentric rings of access with a tightly restricted core area (see figure 12-2).

The proposed hiking trail would thus be diverted south of this central area, connecting to an interpretive/research center located on high ground. A trail from this center would then connect to Summit Road and perhaps Lake Hodgson park and could continue east across the soon to be closed land fill back toward the Breakneck Creek.

Given the sensitive nature of this area, vehicular access should be severely limited. Since the Kent State Stadium is close by, its huge parking lot could be used as a transfer point for shuttles or hikes to the nature center. Developing a parking area for more than a few cars or buses would be inadvisable. A porous pavement driveway and a turnaround for a small bus would be an ecologically sensitive way of approaching access to the facility.

ACTIVITY AREAS

The primary activity in the proposed area would be interpretive, the active experience of the natural wonders of the area. This would be facilitated through minor development aimed at providing protection of interpretive displays and scientific equipment. To this end, the following are possible structures that could be built.

1. A water monitoring station, possibly incorporated into a larger facility. Size of this facility is unknown at the present time.

2. "Blinds" or bird and animal watching stations. Depending upon the number of people they accommodate, a blind can be as small as a four foot cube up to a ten foot cube. These would be designed to camouflage users. A limited quantity of perhaps 6 blinds would be used in the conservation area.

3. An interpretive/research center, to be used as a staging site for hikes into the conservation area. It would contain interpretive displays, a large meeting room, restrooms and related office space. A three thousand square foot facility would be a reasonable assumption at this point.

PATH SURFACES/BARRIER FREE DESIGN

Due to the limited access nature of the area, the development of extensive trails would need to be evaluated. At this point, the level of development is unknown. Any building open to the public would certainly be required to be fully accessible.

VEGETATION, LANDSCAPING AND BARRIERS

The goal of any development of this type is to minimize any intrusion on the natural character of the area. The use of earth bermsing, natural hedges and other screens would allow for the facility to disappear into the landscape.

With this in mind, fencing may be required on the perimeter of more protected areas to stop unauthorized intrusion, especially by motor vehicles.

STREAM ACCESS

Access to Breakneck Creek for scientific study would be an important component of this development. There would not be any need for substantial facility development for this purpose.
ENVIRONMENTAL/HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The central purpose of the nature center would be the discovery and communication of environmental knowledge. This knowledge would provide substantial information about the impact of human civilization on the natural world and the types of changes that must be made for development to be sustainable.

Along side of the environmental considerations there would be a tremendous opportunity to interpret the historical ramifications of the development of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Canal. Remnants of the canal bed and historic mill sites are nearby, including the Gillett and Austin Powermill, a part of the Austin Company, the first manufacturers of black gunpowder in Ohio. Blasting powder from the Austin works made possible the rapid development of the Iron and Coal industries of eastern Ohio.

COST EVALUATION

Costs for developing this section depend upon the actual level of development. Since the idea of the nature center is in its very preliminary stage, we can only guess as to the level of work and the size of facilities. We have thus developed costs based on per square foot estimates. This can only be used for preliminary purposes.

NATURE CENTER BUDGET

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END OF REPORT