Main Street Kent 2018
Final Progress Report

Marketing Committee – The Main Street Kent marketing team leads the way in promoting downtown Kent’s shops, restaurants, nightlife, arts, culture, events and unique character. Main Street Kent hosts many events year round, drawing people to the downtown district. This committee “gets the word out” about all we have to offer in Kent, promoting the businesses and features of downtown Kent through web, email, billboard, radio, print and social media. This committee is continually growing, with new people bringing their expertise to the table.

Committee members include: Pam Petrus (chairperson), owner of DIVERSA Advertising; Mike Beder, downtown business owner; Bethany Hammond, Each + Every community manager; Roger Hoover, Rust Creative owner/creative director; Cheryl Ann Lambert, Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication assistant professor; Susan McGann, Ohio Small Business Development Center business advisor; Krista Rohe, The Davey Tree Expert Company senior project manager; and Michelle Sahr, downtown business owner.

Marketing Plan – The Main Street Kent marketing committee works from a comprehensive marketing plan, with specific goals and objectives laid out to steer our efforts. We aim to increase the attendance and profitability of our events, strategically market to specific demographics/audiences, increase activity on our website and social media, collect email addresses/data from fans/followers/event attendees, and more. We use a wide mix of media when promoting our events and our downtown, since we’re trying to reach a wide variety of demographics.

Good Times Magazine – This is a half-page ad featuring many downtown Kent events and live music festivals. Several signature events for summer and fall are highlighted, as well as our website and social media, so people know how to stay connected to what’s happening in downtown Kent. 139,800 copies of this publication will be distributed throughout Ohio this year, and the publication has a great shelf life.

Social Media/Email Marketing – We continue to market the assets of Kent via social media, strengthening the Main Street Kent presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Additionally, we send an e-blast to our 3,365 Constant Contact subscribers twice per month, highlighting upcoming events, business of the week, and a volunteer spotlight.

Current followers: Facebook – 13,770, Rating: 4.8/5; Twitter – 3,122; Instagram – 3,623
Social media ads are placed on a monthly basis, depending on the marketing theme for the month. Other content is delivered on a daily basis covering events, business specials, art features, volunteers, and more.

**Digital Targeted Ads** – Each month, we place an ad with Thrive Hive. A theme is chosen based on events, seasonal activity, shopping, dining, etc. We feature “Friends of Main Street Kent” (businesses supporting MSK with an annual $150 donation) in these ads as an added benefit to supporting our organization. These ads drive traffic to our website. Example:

![Digital Targeted Ads Example](image)

**Kent Up Close** – The MSK marketing committee produced a two-minute video featuring several downtown businesses “up close” and personally, including Ray’s Place, Scribbles Coffee, Popped!, Troy Grille, Carnaby Street Style, Each + Every, and Troppus Projects. Business owners were interviewed and given the opportunity to talk about their businesses, what they bring to the community, and their thoughts on small business and Main Street Kent. The video resides on our website and has been used in various online promotions. Check it out! [http://www.mainstreetkent.org/upclose/](http://www.mainstreetkent.org/upclose/)

**Women in Business** – For the month of March, and in support of Women’s History Month, our focus was on Kent Women in Business. A special landing page was created on our website, and ads were placed on social media and in the Record-Courier to showcase many of the amazing women-run businesses in our city. The landing page showed each woman’s answers to questions about how long she has been in business in Kent, why she chose to open a business in Kent, why she chose to go into business for herself, and what business achievement makes her most proud. This campaign generated a lot of conversation and interest!
Scene Magazine – The “Best of Cleveland” and “Summer Event Guide” editions of this magazine are distributed widely in some of our target markets. Below are the half-page ads Main Street Kent placed in these publications, aimed at attracting visitors to downtown Kent for events and summertime fun!

91.3 FM The Summit – Listeners of this public radio station will hear Main Street Kent messaging throughout the year. Featuring events, outdoor patios, hike & bike trials, restaurant week, art walks, holiday shopping, and the many other assets Kent has to offer, these radio spots are aimed at attracting people from western PA and all over OH!

Main Street Kent Art & Wine Festival – Our twelfth annual event was another huge success, featuring ten Ohio wineries, sixty local artists, several local food vendors and a fantastic lineup of local music. The event footprint was expanded to include Franklin Ave. this year, allowing for some breathing room after many years of continued growth. Guests enjoyed many types of art, including painting, woodturning, illustration, photography, blown glass, fiber and more. Net proceeds exceeded $37,000 for our signature event this year!

Wizardly World of Kent – On Sat., July 28, downtown Kent was transformed into a magical world of wonder with over 100 merchandise vendors, 13 food trucks, and decorated storefronts/areas including “Dragon Alley” (Acorn Alley), “The Forbidden Forest” (Dan Smith Community Park), and “Goblin Bank Plaza” (Hometown Bank Plaza). Live entertainment featured magic shows, potion classes, wizard rock band performances, costume contests, dance classes, and more. The magical weekend kickoff event was “The Run That Shall Not Be Named” 5 ¼ K, which took place on the Lester A. Lefton Esplanade on Friday evening. Proceeds from this activity helped pay for the main event, and a portion of the proceeds benefited LoveLight, Inc. Our downtown businesses enjoyed a
weekend of new customers, increased sales, more foot traffic and an overall “nice crowd,” with visitors coming from as far as Texas and Canada. We also helped several organizations including the Kent Jaycees, Family & Community Services, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Children’s Advantage, and Habitat for Humanity raise funds through various activities – a great community event showcasing Kent as a destination – and an opportunity for Main Street Kent to raise some funds for our organization and others!

**Kent International Festival** – In partnership with Kent State University’s Education Abroad Program, we created a post-race event for Run the World 5K participants and the community. (The Run the World race series is a fundraiser for study abroad scholarships.) Attendees were able to partake in a “passport excursion,” where many downtown businesses offered food samples, crafts and activities from around the world. Unfortunately, this was a rainy day in Kent so we had to cancel entertainment at the Dan Smith Community Park, but hundreds of people still turned out for the event and enjoyed the passport excursion – exploring our downtown businesses.

‘Round Town Music Festival’ – We’re proud to partner with Crooked River Arts Council in presenting free live music at over 30 venues in downtown Kent! This year’s event drew record crowds, with beautiful weather and an amazing lineup at coffee shops, restaurants, bars, outdoor venues and local shops all around Kent. In 1966, the Kent State Folk Festival began, transitioning into the ‘Round Town Music Festival a few years ago. These events create a bustling downtown every time, and have a tremendously positive impact on downtown businesses.

**Kent Oktoberfest** – Our fifth annual Oktoberfest took place on Sat., Sept. 22 on Franklin Ave. and W. Erie St., an expanded event area to better accommodate our growing number of guests. A line of people crowded the entrance before the event kicked off at 12pm, and it remained busy until 10pm. It was a fantastic day of dancing by the German Family Society youth group, polka and other live music, and seasonal beverages. We had eight local establishments and food trucks vending German food, which the crowd loved. The community has grown to anticipate Oktoberfest, and we’re fortunate to have the continued, solid support of our partners and sponsors. Net profits for the event this year exceeded $24,000.
Kent’s Holiday Kickoff Weekend – The biggest shopping weekend of the year is right after Thanksgiving. This year, we worked with downtown businesses to create an exceptional experience for shoppers on Fri., Nov. 23 and Sat., Nov. 24, including live music, food samples, giveaways, crafts, and other perks.

**Design Committee** – Julie Kenworthy, executive director for the Kent Historical Society & Museum, leads the design committee. This committee is intended to be the “designing voice of the Kent community,” and is focused on the aesthetics of our downtown.

Committee members include: Dylan Ball, Competitive Interiors carpentry estimator; Alex Catanese, Each + Every design director; Kelly Dietrick, Troppus Projects owner/artist; Annie Flaherty, Envisage Group vice president of technology service; Doug Fuller, retired architect/preservationist; Tom Hatch, Focus Curriculum president; Larrie King, Glyphix Studio/KSU assistant professor; Jen Mapes, KSU Department of Geography assistant professor; Elaine Mattern, The Davey Tree Expert Company brand manager; Lisa Morde, KSU Office of Experiential Education and Civic Engagement coordinator; Allan Orashan, Century 21 realtor; Heather Heckman, City of Kent development planner; Dan Tillett, Troy Construction owner.

**Adopt-A-Spot** – The 2018 Adopt-A-Spot season was as beautiful as ever this year, with some new sponsors and gardeners joining the program. K&M Gardens cares for the hanging flower baskets and Freedom Lawn Care maintains the downtown flowerbeds. Planting day took place on May 26, and all beds were planted in time for the June 2 Art & Wine Festival. We’re happy to have The Davey Tree Expert Company and Smithers-Oasis on board to fully support/fund the hanging flower baskets for 2018.

**Spring Tulips** – Keep your eyes out for some tulips in the Adopt-A-Spot flowerbeds located near the Hometown Bank Plaza next spring! Our volunteers planted 1,000 tulip bulbs this fall, in four of the flowerbeds, so we’re hoping for a nice explosion of color in the spring.

**Historic Facades of Kent Project** – Main Street Kent continues to work with an intern from the KSU College of Architecture and Environmental Design to develop this program in partnership with DS Architecture and the Kent Historical Society. The project includes the historic documentation of downtown building facades from original to current, highlighting major changes over time, including photos and descriptions of building use, occupants, and original architectural styles. The final product will serve as a resource for the community and a guide for the design committee to use in promoting redevelopment of historic facades to owners of historic buildings, helping to reduce the upfront cost of façade renovation, and fulfilling a requirement on the application for the downtown loan/grant façade program. The goal is to eventually prepare 2-D drawings of possible façades for consideration, promoting redevelopment of historical buildings in the city of Kent.
**Downtown Banners** – In partnership with Glyphix Studio, the downtown banners were redesigned so we now have two “sets” which can be rotated. The banners are on display on the light posts throughout the downtown district, highlighting assets like the farmers’ market, outdoor recreation, our hotel, live music, shopping, rich history, and more. After a long process of creative work and special photo shoots, we’re proud to have completed this project!

**Graffiti Removal** – Unfortunately, graffiti comes in waves, but when downtown Kent gets hit, we’re fortunate to have volunteers who are willing to help remove it as quickly as possible. In mid-August, we had an influx of graffiti and were able to rally a group together to clean much of it up. Again in mid-December (thanks to an unseasonably warm winter day), work was done in an alley that is regularly hit with graffiti. Research shows the longer graffiti remains on a building, the more likely it is that additional graffiti will be applied. We’re fortunate to have so many people dedicated to the beautification and cleanliness of our downtown.

**Holiday Window Decorating Contest** – The Roosevelt High School Cheer Team judged this year’s window decorating contest. Our winners were the Kent State Hotel & Conference Center (1st), Defiance Tattoos (2nd), and Gracylane (3rd). Participation increased this year, and the downtown district looked beautiful with the addition of more lights on the W. Main St. bridge and the gazebo. We will continue working with the city and private property owners to increase the decorations and lights on display for the holidays each year, making Kent a more attractive shopping destination to those in communities around us.

**Traveling Stanzas / Utility Box Poetry Project - Part II** – The utility box poetry project expanded from the downtown district toward the Kent State University campus and farther north on Water St., with the addition of several installations this fall. This is a collaborative effort with the City of Kent and Wick Poetry Center, featuring poetry of local students and complementary local artworks on each utility box. The press of a button releases the sound of the featured poem being read aloud by the poet! This interactive public art project is of interest to people of all ages.
**Business Enhancement Committee** – Tom Wilke, economic development director for the City of Kent, leads this committee. The committee’s focus is to drive traffic through the doors of older business as well as newer ones. The committee searches out opportunities for the businesses to work together on events, promotions, and other collaborative efforts.

Committee members include: Mike Beder, downtown business owner; Mike Finley, Hall-Green Agency owner; Todd Kam enamelash, KSU assistant dean of students; Patrick Madonio, Brimfield Insurance owner; Maggie McKendry, KSU assistant athletic director; Josh Rider, KSU Center for Adult and Veteran Services director, Jessica Ryan, Handcrafted owner.

**Chocolate Walk** – Feb. 10, 2018. Due to the incredible popularity of this event, the MSK website crashed two days in a row with thousands of people trying to get tickets! The event generated great profits for Main Street Kent and heavy foot traffic for participating businesses during a particularly slow time of year. Three hundred tickets were sold at $25 each. Business owners met many new customers and had great sales during the event. This year, the Kent State Hotel & Conference Center donated an overnight stay, dinner, and breakfast for two as a grand prize package in which all attendees were entered to win. Guests came from cities all around us for this event where people love getting out of the house to enjoy a chocolate adventure in downtown Kent.

**Kent Mardi Crawl** – A first-time event for Main Street Kent, we partnered with Magic Hat and Labatt Brewing to bring the Kent Mardi Crawl to downtown Kent. Complete with Mardi Gras beads and masks, giveaways, a prize drawing and costume contest, this event drew over 300 people from cities all around to our downtown. The event encouraged guests to explore venues they don’t typically visit, and bar owners reported meeting lots of new customers. Main Street Kent donated a portion of the proceeds to Freedom House, a transitional housing facility for homeless veterans, in support of their renovation. We’re happy to be able to give back to our community!

**Seven Courses of Kent** – In April, we hosted this annual event at Treno Ristorante, and seven local eateries presented their best dishes to our guests. Each course was served with a beer or wine pairing chosen by Heidelberg Distributing. $65 per ticket included meal, pairings, service, tax and gratuity. Sixty tickets were sold, proceeds benefited Main Street Kent, and this was a huge HIT! Guests were thrilled with the variety and quality of food, and the opportunity to try seven different eateries in one evening.
Kent Restaurant Week – In partnership with Great Lakes Brewing Company, Main Street Kent hosted our first ever Restaurant Week from June 3-9. Each participating restaurant created a “prix fixe” menu, offering a choice of three menu items for one set price. It created an opportunity for people to explore eateries they had not been to before, during a slower time of year, and covered menu items from sushi to burgers to gourmet Italian!

First Friday Art Walks – On May 4, Main Street Kent kicked off monthly Art Walks to showcase the arts in Kent. Participating galleries, businesses and creative spaces in the downtown district stay open until at least 8pm, featuring local artists, exhibitions/installations, activities, live music and more. In partnership with Acorn Alley, Troppus Projects the Downtown Gallery, we plan to continue the program in 2019.

Discover Downtown – On Aug. 21, we joined with the city of Kent, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and others in welcoming new Kent State University students to our downtown. Complete with free cookies and sno-cones from downtown businesses and a scavenger hunt hosted by MSK, we were happy to welcome over 1,000 new students in just a few hours to their new “hometown.”

Family Friendly Halloween – In partnership with a Kent State University event planning class, this event included trick-or-treating at 34 downtown businesses, a spooky dance party at the Kent Jaycees train car; crafts, decorations, activities, and a costume contest at the Hometown Bank Plaza on Fri., Oct. 26. The weather was “iffy” but participation was not, as the sidewalks were packed with families dressed for the occasion.

Ugly Sweater Tavern Trek – For the third consecutive year, Main Street Kent partnered with Great Lakes Brewing Company for this festive event, where people dress in their favorite ugly sweaters and venture around the bars and restaurants in the downtown district, enjoying Christmas Ale along the way. Three hundred ticket holders enjoyed this holiday kickoff event, and MSK was able to donate $2,000 to Kent Social Services.
Operations Committee – Our Executive Team is focused on the overall sustainability of our organization, including succession planning for our Board of Directors, board development, and fundraising. Leadership for MSK is based in our Executive Committee:

- President – Regan Gettens, Fairmount Properties/College Town Kent
- Vice President – Eric Decker, Portage Community Bank
- Treasurer – Mike Lewis, Hometown Bank
- Secretary – Maggie McKendry, Kent State University Athletics

Board of Directors – Dylan Ball, Mike Beder, Joan Conaway, Mike Finley, Tom Hatch, Todd Kamenash, Julie Kenworthy, Pam Petrus, Robin Spano, and Tom Wilke.

Annual Accreditation – Heritage Ohio visited Kent on February 10 for our official annual evaluation. After a meeting with city manager Dave Ruller, MSK committee reports, and a thorough assessment of our program’s 2017 achievements, Main Street Kent received official certification for the year 2017. This certification reflects the strength of our board, staff, and volunteers, as well as the breadth of our relationships with other organizations, businesses and the city of Kent.

Heritage Ohio Annual Conference and Awards Celebration – This year’s awards ceremony took place on October 23 at the Allen Theatre in Cleveland. Several leaders from Kent were in attendance to celebrate our own Ron Burbick receiving the award for “Outstanding Leader in Revitalization”. Unfortunately, Ron was not able to attend, so Mayor Fiala received the award along with Michelle Hartman of the Burbick Companies, and Heather Malarcik of Main Street Kent.

Revitalization Series Training – Kent was host to the Promotions and Marketing quarterly training offered by Heritage Ohio on Feb. 15. Speakers included area marketing experts Alan Walker of Each & Every, Mike Salvi of Full Spectrum Marketing, and Maureen Harper of Falls Communications. The program took place at the Kent Free Library, followed by a tour of the LN Gross building and happy hour hosted by DS Architecture. Over sixty visitors attended the sessions, and many were impressed with the continued progress of our city.
Main Street Kent Annual Awards Celebration – Each year, we take an evening to celebrate our dedicated volunteers, board members, supporters, and friends with beverages, appetizers, and awards at the Kent Historical Society & Museum. Kelly Dietrick of Troppus Projects received “Small Business of the Year” for her exemplary first year in business and avid participation in Main Street Kent events and promotions; IdeaBase and Glyphix Studio received “Best Supporting Business” for their amazing contributions to the design and marketing committees; Leadership Portage County received “Non-Profit of the Year,” for having such a positive impact on so many individuals involved in the Main Street Kent organization; the “President’s Award” was given to Mike Finley, die-hard Main Street Kent board member and past president for Main Street Kent; “Volunteer of the Year” was given to Robin Spano, a key player in the Wizardly World of Kent event planning committee; and the “Ronald Burbick Award” was given to Popped! owner Gwen Rosenberg, for the value her business brings to our downtown, especially as a destination shop.

Friends of Main Street Kent – This year, we streamlined our billing/renewal process for our supporters of MSK. Rather than invoicing based on when businesses became Friends of MSK, we moved to annual billing in November for the following year. We are also working to grow our base of supporters! We rely on our downtown businesses and community members to support our organization so we can continue our great work in downtown Kent.

Volunteers – Volunteers are the driving force behind the success of Main Street Kent. We are continually recruiting new people to help us work toward our mission. This includes our Board of Directors, committee members, volunteer gardeners, event staff, and all of the great people who dedicate their valuable time to various Main Street Kent projects. At the end of 2018, volunteers have donated 2,662 hours of time and expertise to Main Street Kent. The national average value for one volunteer hour is $24.69, so that’s a total of $65,724 in time donated to MSK!

Volunteer Appreciation Party – Our volunteers are invited to this annual party dedicated to their commitment to MSK. Drinks, appetizers and raffle tickets are provided to attendees in appreciation for all the time, expertise and support they show over the year. Volunteers are the driving force of MSK, and they deserve to be recognized!

We appreciate the ongoing support of the City of Kent! We look forward to continuing our partnership with all of the organizations (http://www.mainstreetkent.org/our-supporters) that help us continue our mission:

Working to strengthen and beautify downtown Kent while fostering economic development, historic preservation, and a sense of community.