Marketing Committee – The Main Street Kent marketing committee is led by Heather Malarcik, executive director for Main Street Kent. The team focuses on promoting downtown Kent’s assets: shops, restaurants, bars, nightlife, arts, culture, outdoor recreation, music, events, public art, Kent’s unique character and more. Main Street Kent hosts many events year round, drawing people to the downtown district from the immediate area and from afar. This committee “spreads the word” about what Kent has to offer, promoting the businesses and features of downtown Kent though a variety of media.

Committee members include: Mike Beder, downtown business partner/owner; Roger Hoover, Rust Creative owner/creative director; Cheryl Ann Lambert, Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication assistant professor; Michelle Sahr, downtown business owner, Lesley Sickle, Main Street Kent marketing coordinator.

Marketing Plan – The marketing committee works from a marketing plan, aiming to reach a variety of demographics in many communities surrounding Kent. The main goals are to increase attendance and profitability of events, strategically market to specific audiences, increase activity on our website and social media through quality content and connections, collect email addresses and data from fans/followers/event attendees, and more. We use a wide variety of media when promoting our events and our downtown.

Kent State Student Media – In 2019, we worked with Kent State on a yearlong campaign, to better focus our messaging to students, faculty and staff. This includes paid tweets on Twitter, digital ads on www.kentwired.com, print advertising in a variety of publications, and utilizing their “street team” to disseminate events information on campus. This full-page print ad (right) was placed in Thrive magazine, which is distributed to all incoming freshmen and transfer KSU students. Other advertising efforts focus on things like patio season, outdoor recreation, Restaurant Week, Art Walk events, Homecoming, and Kent Oktoberfest.

Social Media/Email Marketing – We market the assets of downtown Kent daily via social media, strengthening the Main Street Kent presence on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. We also send an e-blast to our 3,765 Constant Contact subscribers twice per month, highlighting upcoming events, featured businesses, and a volunteer spotlight.

Followers: Facebook – 15,218, Rating: 4.9/5; Twitter – 3,268; Instagram – 4,300
Social media ads and “boosts” are placed on a monthly basis, depending on the scheduled marketing theme. Other content is delivered on a daily basis covering events, business specials, art features, Kent history, foodie features, new businesses/expansions, volunteers, beautification efforts, and more.

**MSK Website** – Our website got a mini makeover! With a fresh, streamlined look/layout and new content including a variety of “Kent Up Close” blog articles by locals, traffic has increased 77% over last year! Visitors can now read about living, eating, and shopping like a local at [http://www.mainstreetkent.org/](http://www.mainstreetkent.org/).

**Women in Business** – During March, our focus was Kent’s Women in Business – specifically those who are supporters of Main Street Kent (as a perk of being a “Friend of MSK”). A special landing page was created on our website, and ads were placed on social media to showcase many of the amazing women-run businesses in our city. This campaign generated a lot of buzz about these businesses: Metis Construction, Off the Wagon and Red Letter Days, Popped!, Diversa, Troppus Projects, Handcrafted, Carnaby Street Style, Belli & Streit Orthodontics, Franklin School of Dance, Troy Grille, Sugar Rush and Scratch Free Range Food.

**91.3 FM The Summit** – Main Street Kent messaging on this public radio station focuses on upcoming events and food/entertainment/shopping in downtown Kent. Ads are customized monthly to highlight the activities Kent has to offer, attracting people from OH and western PA!

**Scene Magazine** – Cleveland is definitely a market from where we want to draw people, so we continue to place ads in this publication to show off the food scene, events, live music and the outdoor setting downtown Kent has to offer. Kent is a short drive from many cities with a lot happening too, and we feel this audience is always looking for new places to explore and find a new experience.
Art & Wine Festival – The 13th annual event took place on Sat., June 1 at the Hometown Bank Plaza and surrounding streets. Featuring fifty artists, several food trucks, a dozen Ohio wineries and a fantastic music lineup, the event was a tremendous success. Unfortunately, a rainstorm forced us to end the event early, but overall, everyone had a great time and MSK had a successful day of fundraising and showcasing Kent to lots of visitors. Sponsored by Kent State University College of the Arts, College Town Kent, Acorn Alley, Hometown Bank, AMETEK, WNIR, The Summit FM, Kent State Ashtabula Wine Degree Program, and Hall-Green Agency.

Wizardly World of Kent – This event has now taken over an entire weekend in Kent. With people traveling from states around us and beyond, we’ve added activities to the Friday before the big day, to encourage visitors to make a whole weekend of it. The Run That Shall Not Be Named 5 ¾ K drew 400 participants, and the new Wobbly Wizard Bar Crawl drew over 300. Both of these events helped make this endeavor a profitable one for Main Street Kent. The main event took place on Sat., July 27, with vendors filling the streets to sell their wizardly wares and treats, and our downtown businesses offering fun photo opportunities, activities, magical menus, and event-themed merchandise. Entertainment and costume contests took place at the Hometown Bank Plaza and Dan Smith Community Park. Several non-profit organizations were able to raise funds for themselves through activities at the event, including: Kent Junior Mothers, Children’s Advantage, Scouts BSA, and the Kent Jaycees. We’re proud to offer this opportunity to our fellow organizations that work to strengthen our community in so many ways. Sponsored by Akron Children’s Hospital, College Town Kent, Portage Community Bank, Off the Wagon, Acorn Alley, PARTA, Hall-Green Agency, and Marathon Financial Services.

Oktoberfest – The sixth annual Kent Oktoberfest was a tremendous success, with fantastic weather, festive music, and a wonderful crowd of people all day. Local restaurants and food trucks served up German fare and the German Family Society youth group performed on the brick streets to a huge crowd. Local bands played into the night, the streets were filled with a great community vibe and we had a successful day of fundraising, thanks to the support of our sponsors: Spaten Oktoberfest, AMETEK, Acorn Alley, College Town Kent, Portage Community Bank and The Summit FM.

Design Committee – Julie Kenworthy, executive director for the Kent Historical Society & Museum, leads the design committee. Co-chair of the committee is Dylan Ball, who will take over as chairperson in 2020. This committee is focused on the aesthetics and historic preservation 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; Allan Orashan, Century 21 realtor; and Harrison Wicks, assistant to the City Manager.
**Preservation Subcommittee** – Doug Fuller leads this group in an effort to foster the appreciation for older buildings and neighborhoods in Kent’s commercial and residential areas. Some of the goals of this group are to educate community members about our heritage as reflected in our older buildings and neighborhoods; work with the city’s community development department to monitor the status of buildings older than 50 years that might be threatened with demolition; and participate in the creation of the city of Kent’s new Master Plan with an eye toward encouraging the preservation of Kent’s historic buildings and neighborhoods. Members of the group include Paula Treckel, Jennifer Hunter, Howard Boyle, David Sommers, and Allan Orashan.

**Adopt-A-Spot** – Adopt-A-Spot flowerbeds were planted in May, with some new sponsors and gardeners joining us this year. K&M Gardens cared for the hanging flower baskets, and Freedom Lawn Care weeded, watered and maintained the flowerbeds. We’re happy to have The Davey Tree Expert Company and Smithers-Oasis on board to fund the flower baskets each year, too.

**Spring Tulips** – Our volunteers planted 1,000 tulip bulbs last fall in four of the flowerbeds on Water St., near the Hometown Bank Plaza. In an effort to complement the tulip gardens that Hometown Bank plants each year, we wanted to add a splash of color and fill the gap before the flowerbeds got planted. A success! More bulbs were planted this fall, so we look forward to another pop of color in spring 2020.

**Burbick Way Public Art Project** – The alley between Woodsy’s Music and Skullz Salon has a beautiful historic mural on one wall, but other sections of the alley were often hit with graffiti. The design committee developed a public art project to expand the artistic character of the alley, with the hopes of eliminating/reducing vandalism. Local artist and Kent State University student Maya Culley’s design was selected, and the results are fantastic! Maya created a design to introduce color, and complement the existing black and white mural. Her work includes things that reflect nature, Kent history, and newer modern elements of design in the city. The committee also plans to add overhead lighting in the alley to further brighten the space.

**Historic Facades of Kent** – Upon completion of the Historic Facades of Kent project, which included the documentation of the history of each building in the downtown district, the committee has decided to publish a book. The MSK design committee has partnered with the Kent Historical Society Museum to publish the book, which is expected to be complete by Spring 2020. This will be a great resource to many and we’re excited to take the great work of Mark Prues to the next level. Many thanks to Tom Hatch for volunteering his editing expertise to this project!

**Clean Up Kent** – A spring clean up day took place on Sat., April 27 from 9am to 12pm. Dozens of volunteers met at the Destination Kent Visitor Centre to gather supplies, select an area on the map to work, and head out for some serious spring cleaning. Coffee and donuts were provided to volunteers who removed many graffiti “tags”, stickers and litter from the downtown district and along the river.
**Holiday Window Decorating Contest** – Nearly twenty businesses participated in this year’s window decorating contest, and their creations were truly magical! First place – Kent State Hotel & Conference Center; second place – Sue Nelson Designs; third place was a tie between Bent Tree Coffee and Over Easy Morning Café. All the windows really made downtown more festive for the holidays!

**Business Enhancement Committee** – Tom Wilke, economic development director for the City of Kent, leads this committee. Co-chair of the committee is Josh Rider, who will take over as chairperson in 2020. 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; Dominique Burrell, Habitat for Humanity community relations director; Todd Kamenash, KSU assistant dean of students; Patrick Madonio, Brimfield Insurance owner; Josh Rider, KSU Center for Adult and Veteran Services director, Jessica Ryan, Handcrafted owner and Michelle Sahr, downtown business owner.

**First Friday Art Walks** – This event series picked back up in May, and ran through December with more businesses participating this year than last. We added a monthly prize drawing sponsored by a different business each month; event goers could pick up an Art Walk card at any location, have it punched at four places during the Art Walk, and then enter a prize drawing. This event is marketed as a free, family-friendly, fun thing to do in downtown Kent on a Friday night. Sponsored by Troppus Projects, Acorn Alley, and the Kent State Downtown Gallery.

**Restaurant Week** – After a successful Restaurant Week in January, restaurant owners were happy to repeat this promotion during another traditionally slow time of year – the first week of June, when KSU students have gone for the summer. Plus, some new restaurants opted in this time. Participants offered a “prix fixe” menu, including three courses for one price, and survey responses indicated another highly successful promotion. This was promoted via social media to many surrounding cities, and in Scene Magazine.

**Chocolate Walk** – Feb. 9, 2019. Two hundred fifty tickets were sold in just over 30 minutes 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 raffle prize package in which all attendees were entered to win. Guests came from cities all around for this event where people love getting out of the house to enjoy an adventure in downtown Kent – right before Valentine’s Day.

**Putt Around Downtown** – This popular event was our official kickoff to spring! Attendees purchased tickets, and then went out to play miniature golf at 18 participating businesses. A post-event awards celebration took place at the Venice Café – the 19th hole. Wind Mill Lakes Golf Club donated great prizes, and attendees had a blast working their way around town on a sunny Saturday afternoon, shopping and enjoying food and beverages along the way! Sponsored by Windmill Lakes Golf Course and Hall-Green Agency; prizes donated by Jayz Timberworks, Sto-Kent Family Entertainment, and KSU.
**Seven Courses of Kent** – An annual favorite, this event was hosted by Treno Ristorante, and featured: Ray's Place, Troy Grille, Franklin Hotel Bar, Pacific East, Bistro on Main, and Nineteen 10. Each local restaurant provided one course, and each chef/owner spoke to our guests about the dish he or she prepared, and the restaurant. Featuring a variety of food paired with wine and beer samples, this is a great way to showcase many Kent restaurants all at once...and it’s another successful fundraiser for Main Street Kent. Sponsored by Heidelberg Distributing, Portage Community Bank and Instantwhip Foods.

**Kent Mardi Crawl** – We partnered with Abita Brewing Company to bring the Kent Mardi Crawl to downtown Kent. Complete with Mardi Gras beads and masks, giveaways, and a prize drawing, this event drew 300 people from cities all around to our downtown. Guests were encouraged to explore venues they hadn’t visited before, and bar owners reported meeting lots of new customers. Main Street Kent donated a portion of the proceeds to the Ben Curtis Family Foundation, in support of their efforts to fight childhood hunger in our city. We’re happy to be able to give back to our community! Sponsored by Abita Brewing Company.

**MSK Go! Scavenger Hunt** – During the month of August, we hosted an online scavenger hunt all around downtown Kent. Participants were challenged with a variety of questions and tasks to earn points. A drawstring backpack was awarded to each person/team who earned 50 points, and those who earned 100 points were entered in a drawing for $500 in gift cards to downtown businesses. This was a fun way to get people to explore businesses, public art, landmarks, and other interesting things in Kent. Incoming Kent State students who attended the Discover Downtown event were also invited to participate, and students had a lot of fun with it!

**Crime Prevention Workshop** – Hosted by Lt. Lewis and the Kent Police Department, many business owners, managers and staff members attended this presentation about crime prevention and employee safety. Creating an open dialogue between business owners and law enforcement is important to the success of managing many types of issues they face, such as shoplifting. All were glad to have attended and we plan to hold similar interactive, educational events in the future.

**International Festival** – In partnership with Kent State’s Run the World 5K, Main Street Kent hosted the International Festival, including live multi-cultural entertainment at the Dan Smith Community Park and a Passport Excursion where people could visit downtown businesses to enjoy tastes and activities from around the world. 5K participants received a passport in their registration packets, and others could purchase one for $5 and partake in the fun. A fun way to explore downtown Kent! Sponsored by AMETEK and Portage Community Bank.
**Family Friendly Halloween** – Each year, we work with a new Event Planning class at Kent State University to develop activities, decorations and a costume contest for the community to enjoy, along with trick-or-treating at the downtown businesses. Over 40 businesses and organizations participated and Mr. Black Squirrel and Flash assisted with judging the costume contest!

**Story Walk Kent** – We had the opportunity to collaborate with Kent City Schools on our first ever Story Walk Kent just as the holiday season kicked off in November! The book, “’Twas the Night Before Thanksgiving,” was deconstructed and displayed in the windows of sixteen downtown businesses; students and families were invited to enjoy the story, page by page, on a walk through downtown Kent. The book was written by Cleveland-born author Dav Pilkey, and the elementary school librarian initiated the project, seeking permission from him to do the project, and securing several autographed copies of the book for prizes. Main Street Kent received recognition from Kent City Schools for this collaborative effort, and we look forward to working together on others in the future.

**Gather Around the Globe for Small Business Saturday** – The Saturday after Thanksgiving is one of the biggest shopping days of the year, so we worked to create many fun reasons for people to choose Kent for their holiday shopping that day. A giant, inflatable snow globe was set up at the Hometown Bank Plaza where holiday music was played and volunteers handed out free white chocolate peppermint hot cocoa. Several businesses hosted free activities: make a snow globe ornament at Red Letter Days, decorate a cookie at Bent Tree Coffee, pick up a popcorn garland kit at Popped!, make a “squirrel in a sweater” ornament at Squirrel City Jewelers, and more. MSK randomly handed out free gift cards to people with shopping bags from shopping downtown in appreciation of their support. A fantastic holiday shopping season kickoff for Kent!

**Ugly Sweater Tavern Trek** – Our holiday tradition at MSK is to partner with Great Lakes Brewing Company for the Ugly Sweater Bar Crawl, hosting close to 300 people as they enjoy Christmas Ales and a good time with friends at over a dozen downtown bars and restaurants, then donate a nice chunk of the proceeds to Kent Social Services. This year we were able to donate $2,000 – a great opportunity to help our community in need.
Operations Committee – The Executive Team is focused on the overall sustainability of our organization, including succession planning for our Board of Directors and committee leaders, 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
- **Past President** – Mike Finley, Hall-Green Agency
- **Treasurer** – Mike Lewis, Hometown Bank
- **Secretary** – Maggie McKendry, Kent State University Athletics

Board of Directors – Dylan Ball, Competitive Interiors; Mike Beder, Tree City Coffee, Water Street Tavern, Franklin Hotel Bar & Venice Café; Dominique Burrell, Habitat for Humanity; Todd Kamenash, Kent State University; Julie Kenworthy, Kent Historical Society; Josh Rider, KSU Center for Adult and Veteran Services; Robin Spano, Kent State University Bookstore; and Tom Wilke, City of Kent.

Annual Accreditation – Heritage Ohio visited Main Street Kent in February for our annual evaluation. After a thorough assessment of our program’s 2018 achievements, Main Street Kent received national certification for the year. This achievement reflects the strength of our board of directors, staff, and volunteers, as well as the breadth of our relationships with other organizations, businesses and the City of Kent.

Annual Awards Celebration – In June, we held our annual awards party at the Kent Historical Society Museum. This is our opportunity to provide complimentary food and beverages to our supporters and volunteers, and celebrate the successes of the prior year. The following awards were given to our most impressive supporters: Volunteer of the Year – Alyssa Mazey; Non-Profit of the Year – Crooked River Arts Council; Small Business of the Year – Rust Creative; President’s Award – Bridget Susel; and the Ron Burbick Award – Michelle Sahr. Sponsored by Hometown Bank.

MSK Strategic Planning – It had been a couple years since developing our last strategic plan, so it was time for a “refresh”, especially with some new board members joining the MSK team since our last planning session. Facilitated by Frances Jo Hamilton of Heritage Ohio, we achieved many things, including a reworked mission statement, a defined transformation strategy for the organization, and goal setting. All of our efforts and committee projects must align with our organizational goals so we can continue our progress with good intentions and planning.

Main Street Kent’s mission is to make downtown Kent a fun, vibrant and thriving place!
**Heritage Ohio Annual Conference & Awards Celebration** – Held in Newark, OH this year, the Heritage Ohio team took the time to recognize and celebrate many exemplary Ohio communities for their work. This year, the City of Kent was recognized for the 2018 Better Block event as “runner up” for Best Main Street Community Event. This collaborative effort helped the entire community envision the future of The Mill District, complete with improved streetscapes, colorful crosswalks, activated spaces, and new business ideas.

**Friends of Main Street Kent** – The Friends of MSK program continues to grow, garnering support from an increasing number of stakeholders. We rely on our downtown businesses and community members to support our organization so we can continue our great work in downtown Kent. For a full list of “friends,” visit our website: [http://www.mainstreetkent.org/about/our-supporters/](http://www.mainstreetkent.org/about/our-supporters/)

Over 100 businesses and organizations are financial supporters of MSK!

**Volunteer Appreciation Party** – We spent some time at Ray’s Place celebrating the amazing people who make MSK such a strong and productive organization. We had drinks and food, and Hometown Bank hosted a prize wheel, so every single guest/volunteer won a prize. Our volunteers plant flowers, hang banners, pour beer, arrange display windows, clean-up litter, make decorations, take photos, plan events, and so much more; they spend an unbelievable number of hours working for the betterment of our community!

**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. In 2019, volunteers donated 2,669 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 $65,897.61 in time donated to MSK!

We appreciate the ongoing support of the City of Kent and our other partners. We look forward to continuing our work with the support of these organizations ([http://www.mainstreetkent.org/our-supporters/](http://www.mainstreetkent.org/our-supporters)) that help us continue our mission:

*Making downtown Kent a fun, vibrant, and thriving place!*