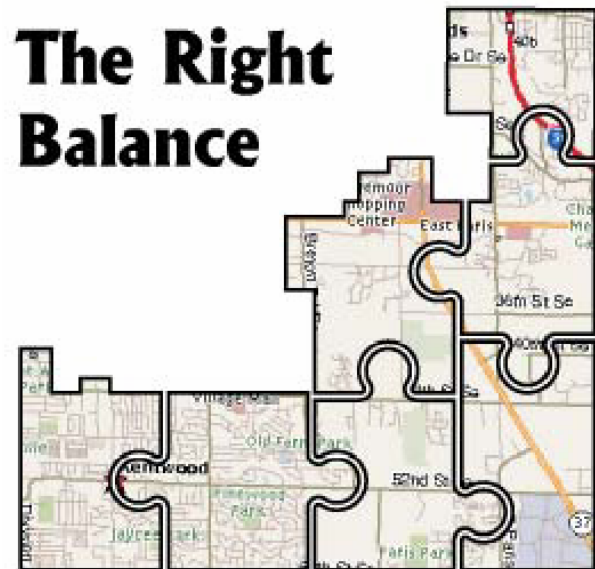


KENTWOOD

The Right Balance



INTRODUCTION

Summary and Background of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is an official public document adopted by the City of Kentwood Planning Commission. The Plan is a long-range guide for growth, land use, development, re-development, and open space conservation within the City. It is intended to guide future growth and redevelopment in a manner that is congruent with local and regional trends, market demands, and that responds to the goals and desires of the residents. The objective of this process will be to channel new population growth and redevelopment so that the identity of Kentwood is preserved, while protecting key environmental features, creating sustainable economic opportunities, and efficiently coordinating and providing public services. The Plan is also a guide for other decisions that are interrelated to growth and development. For example, this plan will help the City determine when and where new public facilities and improvements to infrastructure are needed.

To achieve these primary goals, the Plan identifies a series of principles designed to ensure an economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable Kentwood. Whereas this plan updates the 1995 Master Plan prepared for the City, particular emphasis has been placed on seven targeted zones in Kentwood – referred to as Sub Areas – and a series of specific issues and policies relative to housing, redevelopment of aging commercial areas, parks, open space, and recreation areas. In addition, the Master Plan also contains six key Planning Principles as developed during a series of community workshops which focused on each of seven Sub Areas. These Planning Principles identify specific areas where they should be applied – the Sub Areas as detailed in Chapter 5. They are also applied to the balance of the City as detailed in **Compendium A** and reflected in the Future Land Use Map in Chapter 6. The Master Plan concludes with a Strategic Implementation Plan which identifies how to best implement all of the recommended action items contained within the Master Plan.

Vision for the Kentwood Master Plan

As the City of Kentwood approaches full development it is imperative to sustain the viability of its unique economic, environmental, community and housing resources while enhancing the quality of life and creating a more balanced transportation system. The remaining undeveloped portions of the city must be addressed with sensitivity to wetlands, topography, and city services. Property maintenance and redevelopment of developed portions of the city are key issues as current uses compete with new development in outlying communities. Public and private collaborations and partnerships must be proactively developed and nurtured to achieve these ends.

What is in the Plan

The 2005 Kentwood Master Plan is an update of the City's existing Master Plan which was adopted in 1995. Once adopted, this new Plan replaces and supersedes the 1995 document. The Master Plan consists of goals, policies, and recommended actions which will guide land use decision-making for City Planning Commissioners and City Commissioners during the next 20 years. The Plan will be reviewed at least every five years and modified and updated as deemed necessary and appropriate by the City Commission.

The Master Plan is not a law or ordinance, but rather a guide for decisions on land use and the policies to support how growth and conservation will take place in the City. It clarifies long-term goals which the City will work to achieve, and it establishes guidelines and principles for when, where and how to provide civic improvements and appropriately guide development and re-development.

Some of the Plan's action items will be implemented upon adoption of the document, such as updating policies which support a balance of housing to accommodate home ownership and rental housing. Other action items, however, are not implemented directly by the Plan but rather through future

changes to the City's development regulations after adoption of the Plan. The six planning principles establish a vision for future development and how to plan for it. The principles then may, for example, result in amendments to the City's subdivision and zoning ordinances, landscape requirements, provisions for non-motorized trails, character-defining gateway treatments strategically placed at specific entry points into Kentwood, and plans for capital investments in support of all the above.

The Master Plan update also identifies areas for further in-depth studies - specifically the need for an overall housing study, a greenway development plan and a corridor study of the 28th and 29th Street Corridor.

Organization of the Master Plan

The purpose of the Master Plan is to establish a long-range vision for Kentwood. It contains background information, an inventory of existing conditions, guiding principles and subsequent recommendations. The Kentwood Planning Commission will use this Plan to as a guide - it will assist commissioners as they evaluate development proposals, rezoning requests and revise the City's zoning ordinance.

The organization for the Plan is reflected in the overall outline as part of the table of contents; however, some key points should be noted.

Community Background

The document begins with an assessment of changes in the demographic character within Kentwood, in Kent County and in the Grand Rapids metropolitan region. Changes to the composition of housing units, gross household income, and labor force / employment have also been tracked and reported as part of the demographic assessment. The demographic chapter summarizes the composition of land in different uses, such as commercial, industrial, housing, open space, etc. The existing land use summary has also been illustrated as part of an existing land use map, an existing zoning map, a water resources map, a parks, open and civic spaces map, and a

school districts map.

Issues, Policies, and Actions

This Master Plan is unique as it addresses a series of site-specific and or topic specific issues in the City and recommends specific policies, action items, recommendations and the appropriate implementation strategies. A number of working sessions were held with the project Steering Committee and the Planning Department staff to study and evaluate these critical key issues facing Kentwood. The specific issues and policies include:

- A review of the City's 70/30 Balanced Housing Policy;
- Determining what type of growth is appropriate along 44th Street relative to the impacts of the new Paul Henry/ South Beltline Freeway (M-6) and the planned boulevard improvements on 44th Street east of Division Avenue;
- Evaluating the redevelopment potential for portions of Division Avenue, portions of 28th Street, and some selected older commercial areas in Kentwood;
- Identifying policies to encourage the redevelopment of substandard housing in specific areas of the City;
- Reviewing the City's open space network and non-motorized transportation network and integrating the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan with key recommendations; and
- Reviewing the City's vision for the development and expansion of their government building campus – as a larger community gathering area.

Planning Principles

The Master Plan contains six important Planning Principles which express key planning priorities and intentional actions. Each of these Principles should inspire and influence future land use changes. The Principles were developed during meetings and workshops with the Stakeholders Committee, the Citizens Advisory Council, the Steering Committee, and citizen groups. As with the Issues and Policies component of the Master Plan, this document is unique in that site-specific locations have been

identified relative to where these Planning Principles should be applied. In addition, many of these principles have been applied on a broader scale across the balance of the City. Each Principle includes a description of why it is important, how to apply it in Kentwood, and illustrative examples of how the Principle might look in application.

The six Planning Principles include:

1. Open Space and Greenway Network
2. Traffic / Transportation / Transit Network
 - a. Major Arterials
 - b. Greening Arterials
 - c. Primary Intersections
 - d. Transit Corridors
3. Land Use and Place Strengthening
 - a. Gateways
 - b. Sharpening the Sense of Place
4. Alternative Community Forms
5. Land Use Modifications
6. Partnerships and Organization

Sub Area Analysis

A key impetus for updating the Kentwood Master Plan centered on developing clear plans and directions for areas of the City that are undeveloped, in need of redevelopment, experiencing a decline in commercial viability, suffering from traffic congestion, or containing significant natural features. There are seven Sub Areas (see Map 6, page 67) that this master planning process examined. They are not listed in order of importance but rather as east side or west side Sub Areas:

West Side

1. Division Avenue at 44th Street
2. 44th Street at Breton Avenue

3. The Kalamazoo Avenue corridor between 44th Street and 60th Street
4. Breton Avenue Extension between 52nd Street and 60th Street

East Side

5. Patterson Farm at Patterson Avenue between 28th Street and 36th Street
6. 28th and 29th Street commercial corridor
7. Industrially zoned land at the southeast corner of Kentwood bound by Patterson Avenue and Broadmoor Avenue (M-37), between 52nd and 60th Street

The goal was to develop plans specific to the existing conditions and future needs at each of the seven Sub Areas. These plans were developed over the course of three days of intensive workshops in March, 2004. The purpose for the Sub Area Workshops was to work with participants to develop a future vision for growth, redevelopment, enhancement, and preservation as appropriate for each of the sub-planning areas in Kentwood.

First, the planning team, along with the Stakeholders Committee, Project Steering Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, and planning departments from neighboring municipalities established and refined the goals and vision for each of the Sub Areas as part of the master planning process. Then, each of the committees and citizens actively participated in the planning process by helping to identify key elements to protect, enhance, or eliminate, where necessary.

Strategic Implementation Plan

The final and critical element in the Master Plan is the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) which details how to implement each of the recommendations contained in the Plan. The SIP identifies each recommendation, or Planning Principle, specifies which sub area it is located in, describes the action necessary to implement the principle, and identifies who is responsible for

implementing the action. The Strategic Plan is a critical step for implementing the Master Plan and it allows the Planning Commission and City staff to track the progress of each initiative on an ongoing basis.

Overview of the Master Plan Update Process

Public Input

Citizens Advisory Council (CAC)

The CAC is comprised of residents who are interested in planning for the future of the city. The principal role of CAC members is to provide a representative sample of the interests and opinions of the community at large. It is the CAC's role to voice those interests and opinions throughout the planning process, specifically by providing input and feedback to the Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team and Kentwood Planning Department staff. The CAC participated in the Public Information Meetings held on September 18 & 22, 2003, the Sub-Area Planning/Design Workshops in March of 2004, an open-house presentation of the Draft Master Plan, and at the presentation of the Final Master Plan.

Stakeholders Committee

The Stakeholders Committee included key leaders in the Kentwood area, business persons, landowners, representatives of local commissions and involved citizens.

Public Information Meetings

The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team, in conjunction with the City of Kentwood Planning staff, conducted two project information meetings with the general public in September of 2003. The public input phase is an essential building block of the Master Plan; the input phase is designed to foster on-going public involvement throughout the Master Planning process.

At these two meetings, the overall scope of the study was

explained along with how citizens can actively participate in the process. Key elements of the work plan were explained with milestones and products described. In addition to presenting the overall scope of the planning effort, these meetings provided a forum in which the public were asked to describe their goals and vision for the future of Kentwood. The Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team acted as impartial facilitators, listening to the needs of all involved and offering constructive recommendations where appropriate.

Specifically, the Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio team asked the public to describe their community today, placing emphasis on existing conditions. A second question asked participants to describe how they envision Kentwood in the future (perhaps in 20 years) if it were to continue to grow as it has. A final question asked participants what they would hope to find in Kentwood in 20 years if pro-active planning techniques were implemented today.

Data Gathering and Assessment

The consultant team spent five months reviewing existing conditions in Kentwood. This assessment included a comprehensive Retail Market Analysis, meetings with City and area planners, recreation providers, and engineers to discuss conditions and issues. The team also observed traffic flows and interpreted local and regional traffic volumes, compiled and reviewed demographic data, identified trends, and analyzed projected changes in the demographic makeup of Kentwood and the surrounding areas.

Interim assessment memos were prepared and reviewed with the project Steering Committee and City Planning Department staff. From these review sessions, key issues were identified and new policies were developed. Many of the action items, specific Planning Principles, key issues for the Sub Areas, and Strategic Implementation Plan recommendations of the Master Plan were developed directly as a result of the data gathering and assessment phase.

Issues and Policies

As described previously, the consultant team worked directly with the Steering Committee and Kentwood Planning Department staff to study and evaluate key issues. These issues included a critical review of the City's 70/30 Balanced Housing policy, the new Paul Henry South Beltline Freeway (M-6) and the impacts it will have on City thoroughfares such as Kalamazoo Avenue, providing for elderly housing and related services, redevelopment and joint planning efforts with the City of Wyoming for the Division Avenue and 44th Street neighborhood, reviewing the City's open space and non motorized trail network, and incorporating the City's vision for the government building campus as a community gathering space for civic events.

Many of the issues were incorporated as part of the discussion with committees, area planners, and the public during the sub area workshops. From these discussions, and preliminary planning and design solutions gleaned at the Sub Area Workshops, the consultant team developed many of the key Planning Principles, action items for implementing solutions to the specific issues and policies, and the strategic plan for implementation.

Sub Area Workshops

The Sub Area Workshops focused on seven key areas in Kentwood. The character of these locations ranged from older urban zones (such as the Division Avenue and 44th Street intersection) to undeveloped areas (such as the Breton Avenue extension between 52nd and 60th Streets). The workshops achieved multiple goals by providing a creative forum whereby the City Planning staff and Planning Commissioners, planners from neighboring municipalities, business owners, members of the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC), the Stakeholders Committee and the consultant team worked in small groups to identify key problems and craft solutions. From this work came many of the Planning Principles described elsewhere in this Master Plan. The goals for the Sub Area Workshops were:

- To develop clear vision statements describing the future character for each of the seven Sub Areas;
- To build consensus regarding how future redevelopment and reinvestment should occur;
- To allow workshop participants to identify what features should be added, removed, or enhanced;
- To identify what type of additional facilities are needed, where they might be located, and how these might be linked to existing facilities;
- To identify what role the City should play in guiding future growth and when to step aside and allow the private sector to implement these plans; and
- To integrate Kentwood's future plans for each of the Sub Areas with those of neighboring communities.

