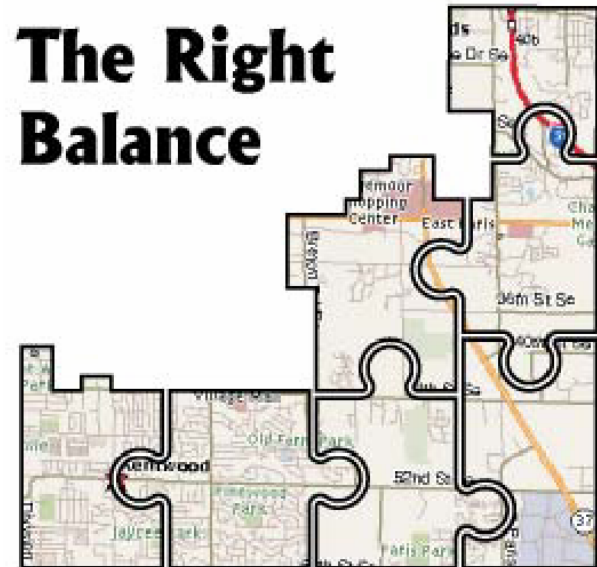


KENTWOOD

The Right Balance



PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Methodology

The following set of Planning Principles has been developed based on meetings and workshops with stakeholders and the Citizens Advisory Council and additional refinement by the consultant team during the Master Plan Update process. These principles express key planning priorities and intentional actions that should inspire and influence future master plan and land use changes that are considered by Kentwood Planning Staff, the Planning Commission, and City Commission.

Guiding Planning Principles

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

Planning Principle 1: Open Space and Greenway Network

Kentwood contains significant wooded areas and is laced with several important streams and drainage corridors, such as Plaster Creek. The City also contains a number of important undeveloped lands in addition to 16 existing public parks and another 11 planned park facilities.

These natural resources constitute a unique identity for Kentwood and the City should work to organize these existing open, green, and undeveloped spaces into a community-wide network of natural systems. This network would contain a combination of parks, protected lands and appropriate recreational trails designed for significant community use. Other elements of “green infrastructure” such as street trees, groves, trails and streetscape improvements can become a part of a green network as well, and need to be included in the larger green network.

It will be important to work on such a network with an organizational partner (a local land conservancy, the Nature Conservancy or Kent County, for instance) with the technical understanding, financial footing, and regional open space planning perspective to plan and implement a coherent, sustainable open space network for Kentwood.

Figure 11: Conceptual Open Space and Greenway Network Map



Planning Principle 2: Traffic/Transportation/Transit Networks

Kentwood’s transportation network is designed to move persons throughout the community - principally in motor vehicles. The network also contains a parallel but less-extensive network of sidewalks or trails for pedestrians and other non-motorized movements such as bicycles and in-line skaters. There are four elements that make up Planning Principle 2: Major Arterials, Greening Arterials, Primary Intersections, and Transit Corridors.

A. Major Arterials

Major arterial roads are designed to move traffic safely and efficiently with adjacent land use and planning issues handled at appropriate scales or “grains”.

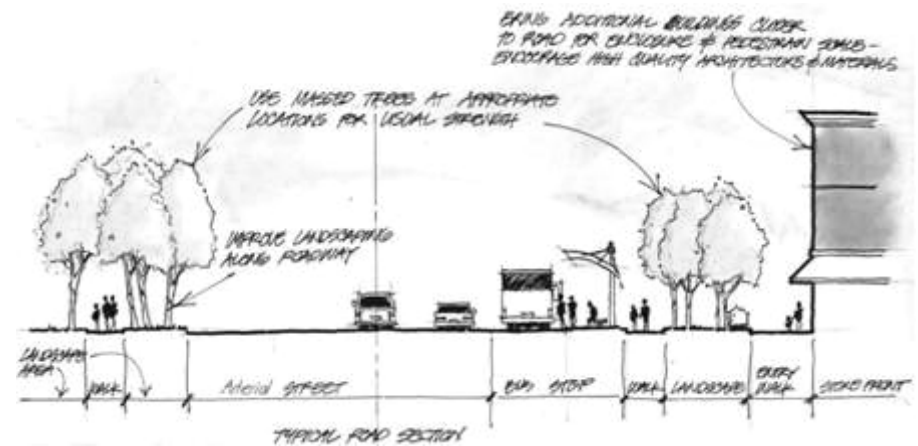
Figure 12: Major Arterials Map



For example, 28th Street carries a very high volume of traffic at

relatively higher speeds, while 44th Street carries a high volume of traffic at a more modest average speed. When 44th Street crosses Division Avenue, the volume remains relatively high, but the speed decreases in and around that commercial shopping area. It is important that planning ideas and solutions match the varying “grains” within these corridors. For example, curb cuts, signalization, parking requirements, as well as streetscape and pedestrian character along areas with these three different kinds of traffic conditions need to be tuned to the grain or scale of each particular condition.

Figure 13: Section of a Major Arterial Roadway Streetscape



B. Greening Arterials

Traditional tree planting within curb strips are fine for neighborhood streets, but not strong enough for high traffic volume arterial streets. The scale of the traditional small-caliper trees along these arterial routes is not large enough to create a visual impact or assist in traffic calming. In fact, the trees are obscured by signage and buildings and their impact is all but eliminated when viewed from a car passing at speeds in excess of 35 mph.

Rather than planting evenly-spaced small-caliper trees at wide

intervals, this principle suggests that small “groves” or orchards of trees at a variety of locations along these arterials will be a much more effective strategy for these corridors. Planting locations might also include adjacent but underutilized parking areas which might be re-claimed for such groves. Groves may be planted either within the public right-of-way or the City can work with private landowners to plant groves on private property.

Figure 14: Green Arterials Map

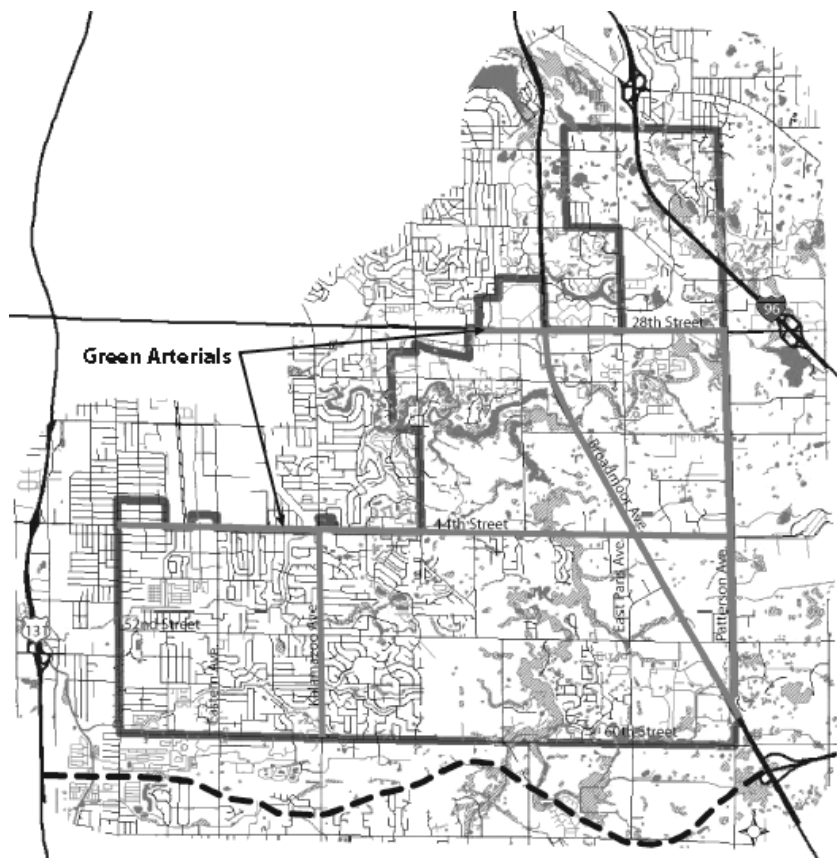


Figure 15: Illustration of the Green Arterial principle



Along the City’s heaviest volume transportation corridors, such as 28th and 44th Streets, it is recommended that groves of trees be added along the roadway in an effort to green and soften their impact on the landscape and on the user’s perception of these dominant movement corridors. For strategic reason the City should focus plantings in the more developed areas. However, there may be some locations in the rural areas where groves of trees are appropriate, such as at a gateway or a primary intersection.

There is no uniform standard for planting groves, each of these planting areas dictate the spacing and design of the grove. For example, a narrow five or seven foot lawn extension will dictate a more traditional linear planting pattern. However the “grove” effect can be achieved in such an area by spacing the trees at 15 to 20 foot intervals instead of the more typical 40 to 60 foot spacing. The grouping may be as few as three or four trees if the linear dimension of the planting area limits you. If there is more space is available, slightly larger groupings would be preferable and provide a stronger visual impact.

These grove plantings are also dictated by the context of the planting areas. In an informal grouping of trees it is easier use a mix of trees that might naturally occur together, which results in more diversity of street trees. In contrast, using a single species for an entire planting can reinforce the character of a formal planting with regularly spaced trees.

As with the design considerations for street trees, the selection of street trees is dependent on many variables and therefore difficult to simply create a list of trees. Tree selection should be based on the same criteria that are used for general street tree selection, including soil type and moisture, environmental conditions, the mature size of the tree, and hardiness in urban conditions, to note just a few. Another priority should be to use primarily native species that are adapted to the region and to prohibit the use of invasive species for street tree plantings. A broad species mix is desirable to encourage diversity within the street tree population. Avoiding extensive monocultures of single species reduces the risk of catastrophic tree loss from a single disease like Dutch Elm Disease or pest like the Emerald Ash Borer.

Figure 16: Application of the Grove Concept in the Green Arterial Principle



These principles are directed at improving the environmental and aesthetic quality of major transportation arterials such as 28th Street, 44th Street, and Kalamazoo Avenue. They are, however, equally important for other streets. The scale of the street will dictate the species of tree and the scale of the planting. For example, a grove of trees is appropriate for a major corridor, however, similar effects can be generated within residential neighborhoods using smaller trees spaced at uniform intervals. While a grove of Maple Trees may be appropriate for a major arterial road, evenly spaced flowering trees or smaller shade trees are more appropriate for smaller scale roads.

The concept of a green arterial also complements the open space and greenway network planning principle. Green arterials extend natural features and green space into more urbanized areas that are otherwise devoid of natural features. As discussed earlier, different scales or “grains” are necessary and appropriate for different streetscapes. While medians of high-speed, high-volume arterial roads may not be appropriate for large groves of street trees, other plant materials, such as shrubs and perennials, may be used instead.

Furthermore, there is the opportunity to incorporate alternative stormwater treatment and detention techniques as a part of the green arterial effort. In any event, all streets can benefit from additional tree and shrub plantings and, as a result, the resulting streetscape will better project the character of Kentwood.

C. Primary Intersections and the “Quadrant Approach”

Many intersections along Kentwood’s major traffic corridors have become increasingly complex due to increased traffic volumes and adjacent development patterns that have numerous and poorly planned access points. Consequently, ingress/egress is more difficult and the visibility of commercial destinations has been diminished. These changes suggest that a new planning approach is needed to accommodate traffic movement safely, while creating an improved context for development/business at these intersections.

The "quadrant approach" begins by shifting the planning paradigm from "two streets crossing at a point" to "four distinct quadrants of development meeting" at a shared transportation location. At least, this approach changes the planning scale to include a larger area and range of adjacent uses, and which is meant to involve a comprehensive approach to planning at intersections. This would especially be true for signalization for vehicular and pedestrian movements between quadrants (for example, quadrants are probably best connected across arterials with signals placed 1,200-1,500 feet from the primary intersection). An important distinction of the quadrant planning approach is that instead of planning the roadway intersection, the focus shifts to the parcels surrounding the intersection and emphasis is placed on creating and improving inter-parcel access, rather than creating personalized access points from the intersection for each parcel.

Figure 17: Schematic Drawing of Pedestrian Crossings at a Primary Intersection

Safe, Easy Pedestrian Crossings

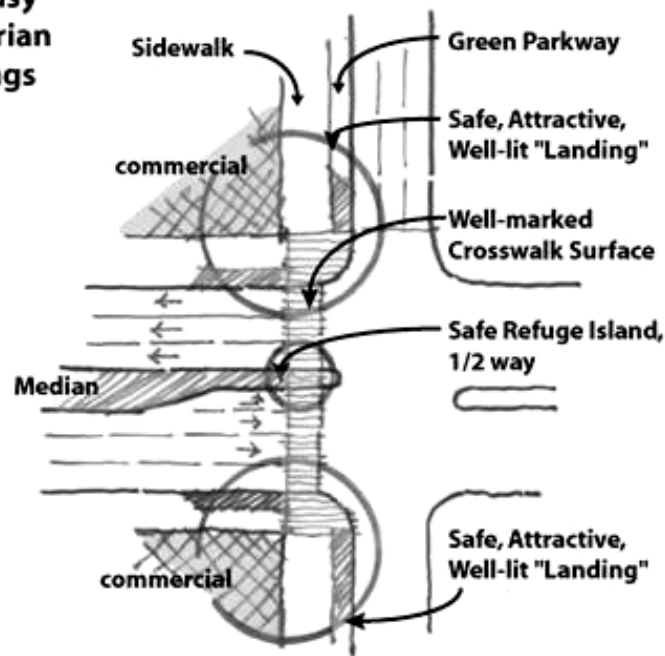
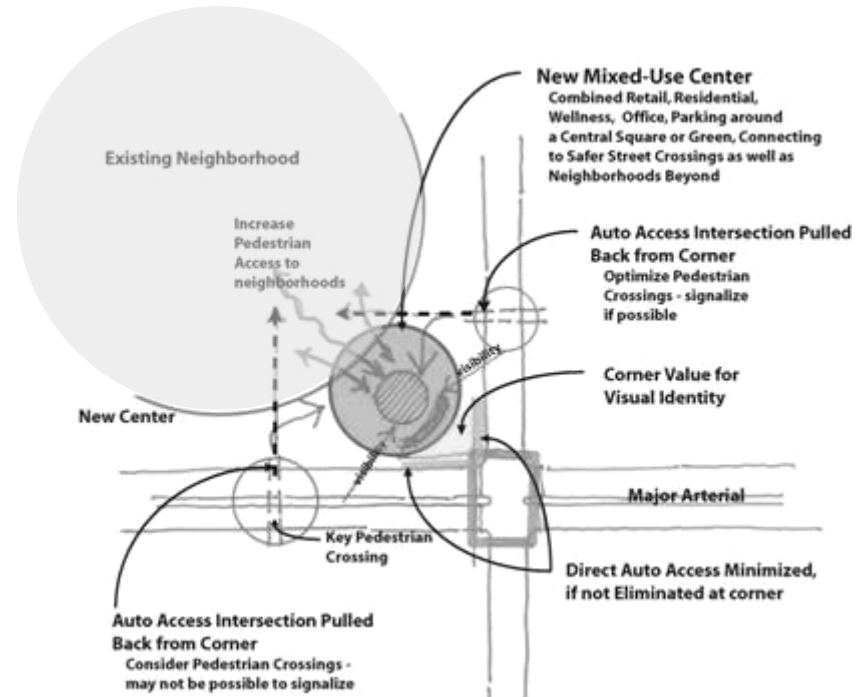


Figure 18: Schematic application of the quadrant approach showing several key elements within a larger planning context that are being reworked: vehicular and pedestrian circulation and safety; retail repositioning and visibility; and intersection identity.

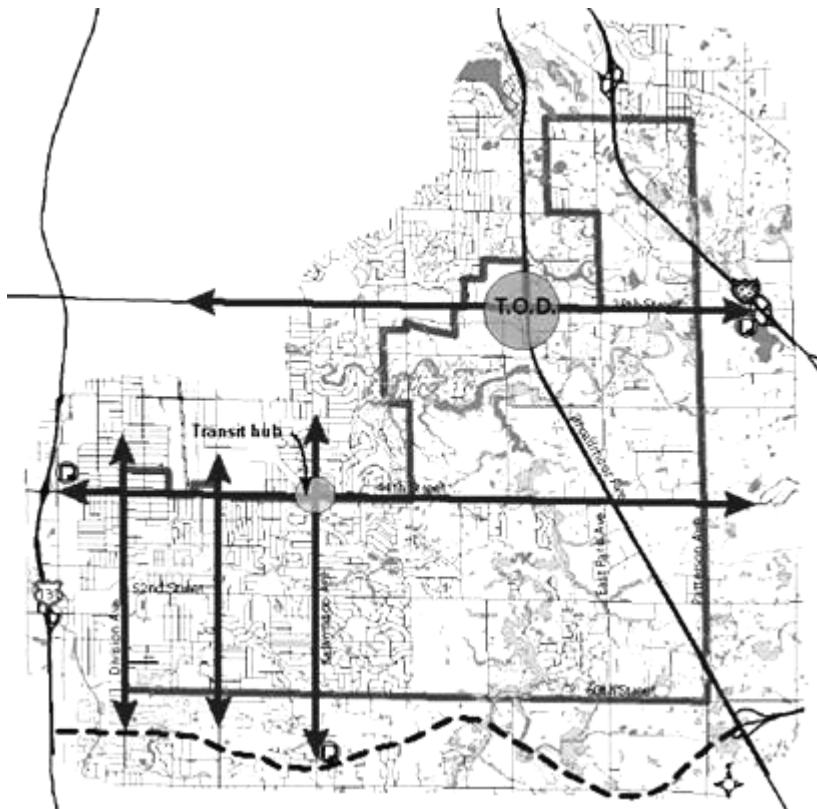


In addition, each intersection quadrant also needs to be planned to maximize its particular strengths and opportunities. In essence, each quadrant can take on the character of a mixed-use center which interacts with the adjacent quadrants via the common transportation links. For example, it is possible that additional residential uses (situated above ground floor retail businesses) and green park settings could be introduced into these intersection quadrant concepts to increase financial viability and attractiveness to users. The key to this planning approach, as touched on previously, is to create or improve interparcel access in each of the four quadrants, thus reducing the dependence upon the actual transportation network.

D. Transit Corridors

Public transit in the Grand Rapids Metro region is provided by the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP), known as “The Rapid”. Kentwood contains key public transit service corridors along 28th Street (Route 28), 44th Street (Route 44), Division Avenue (Route 1), Eastern Avenue (Route 4) and Kalamazoo Avenue (Route 2) as well as the industrial area adjacent to the airport (Route 5). Current Rapid transit services provide vital mobility and connections for many Kentwood citizens throughout the Greater Grand Rapids community. In 2005, the Rapid will be undergoing a comprehensive operational analysis that may alter existing routes.

Figure 19: Transit Corridors Map.



The Interurban Transit Partnership initiated the Grand Transit Grand Tomorrows (GT2) Study in 2002. The Great Transit Grand Tomorrow (GT2) Study is evaluating future transit needs for the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan area. The main focus of the study is a potential major fixed guideway transit investment in a primary travel corridor. Grand Rapids has a number of important travel corridors and a wide range of available transit modes, so the GT2 Study utilized a “tiered” evaluation process to narrow the options. Tier 3 was concluded in August 2004, recommending two modes (enhanced bus/bus rapid transit and streetcar) and two corridors (East Grand Rapids/Kentwood and south) for further evaluation. Ultimately, a locally preferred alternative (LPA) will be identified and selected in the next phase.

Land use decisions, site planning and street design along the two recommended alignment corridors in the GT2 Study must take into account and preserve the prospect of future fixed guideway transit investment.

Kentwood plans should reinforce and enhance opportunities for transit and park and ride in these and other future corridors through specific, intentional actions. These programs might include establishing more attractive and functional transit stops, adding sidewalks in commercial corridors, improving lighting, expanding the mix of uses in an area, increasing the number of approved residential and commercial units near transit corridors. Each of these actions would increase the market for, and the efficiency and quality of, current transit services, and strengthen transit oriented development (TOD) patterns and opportunities in the city.

Planning Principle 3: Place Strengthening

Kentwood is considered a first tier suburb of Grand Rapids, the metro area’s principal central city. As such, it shares many similarities with the Grand Rapids areas that it borders, as well as with other inner suburbs; thus, distinctions between governmental units blur and a clear identity is not readily

noticed. Recognizing this, the following planning ideas are meant to help distinguish Kentwood within the metro area and create a fresh expression about its identity.

A. Gateways

Gateways are simply marks of distinction within the community, and are typically placed along city boundaries on arterial roadways in visible and strategic locations. Gateways and gateway treatments can vary widely – and often involve art/urban/constructed works, special landscaping treatments, or very unique “artifacts”; for example, the Uniroyal automobile tire along Interstate 94 just outside Detroit, acts as a gateway into that city. These gateway icons should be taller than wide and should be illuminated at night.

Figure 20: Gateway Map.

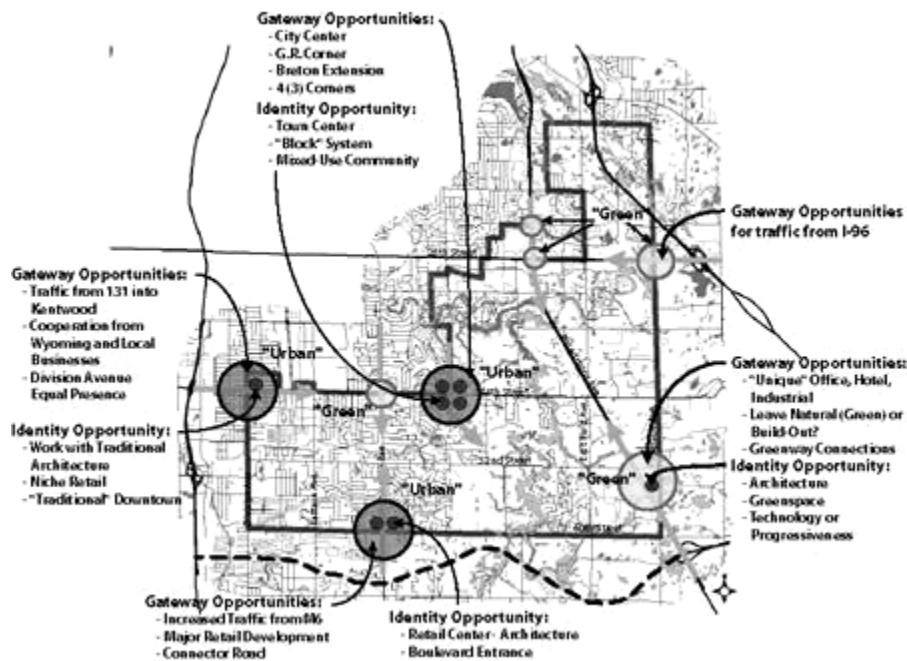
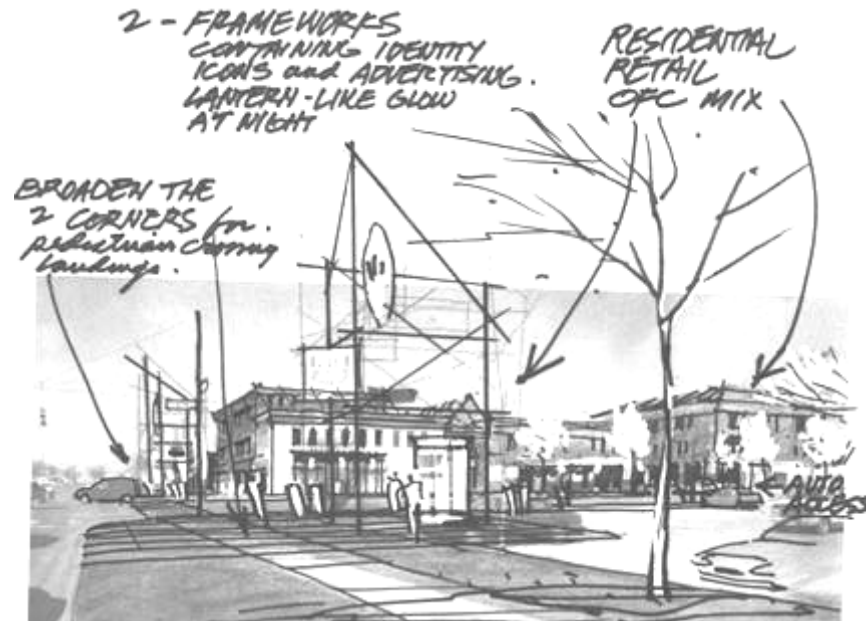


Figure 21: Existing "Gateway" configuration



Figure 22: Sample Illustration of a Gateway location at the 44th Street and Division Avenue Intersection



Several potential gateway locations were identified during the planning workshops, and were initially categorized as either “urban” or “green” gateway opportunities. This gateway planning concept is not the highest priority of Kentwood planners, but deserves additional attention and should be kept in mind as an enhancing element of future plans.

B. Strengthening the “Sense of Place”

In a metropolitan area with so many similar looking commercial developments and residential projects, it is important to continue to seek distinction and a sense of place in future Kentwood plans. By thinking in terms of neighborhood and pedestrian (finer grain) scale, and by beginning to cluster a wider variety of uses (commercial combined with residential, community services, green space and recreation, for instance), greater distinction will begin to emerge. These planning ideas will foster unique combinations of projects, increase an area’s identity and usefulness, and engender a greater sense of community and resident buy-in and pride.

Figure 23: Example of how a Sense of Place may be strengthened

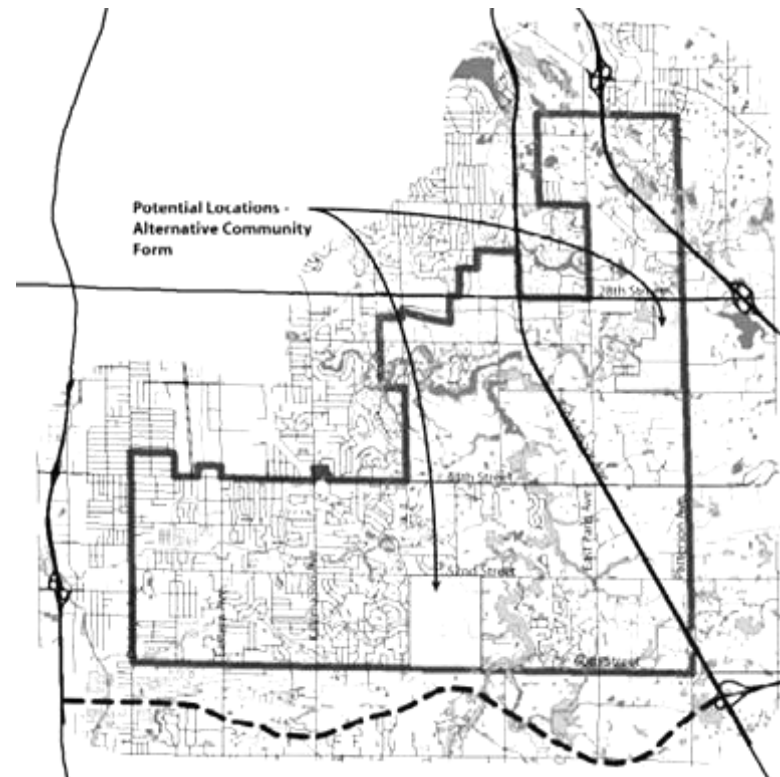


This general approach was illustrated earlier in the discussion about “Quadrant Planning” for major intersections, but this principle also applies to smaller commercial and single use centers areas around the community.

Planning Principle 4: Alternative Community Forms

In general, Kentwood residential neighborhoods are based on one of two urban forms – either on the grid system of subdivided urban blocks with 40 ft.- 60 ft. lots or post-World War II curvilinear subdivisions and cul-de-sacs with quarter-acre or larger lots. Public streets and often sidewalks plus the occasional park or school property make up the shared “common areas” of these neighborhoods.

Figure 24: Alternative Community Form potential locations



Due to their size and location, two undeveloped areas within Kentwood – the Breton Extension and Patterson Farm – Sub Areas are conducive to alternative planning approaches for residential development. In these cases, a conservation-oriented or small village clustering strategy might be used to preserve significant open space (ideally tied into a larger open space network) and to create a different residential “product” than is currently available in the City.

Planning for such projects begins by studying the natural features on a proposed site to determine which areas ought to be protected as “natural commons” for the benefit of all residents. The planning effort then divides the remaining land into streets, developable lots, and a network of sidewalks or trails which interconnect all home sites and the natural areas. In some conservation-oriented projects, a small “village or community center” is recognized or created/re-created. Often times, for example, an historic barn, silo or historic house is used as the community focal point and community center.

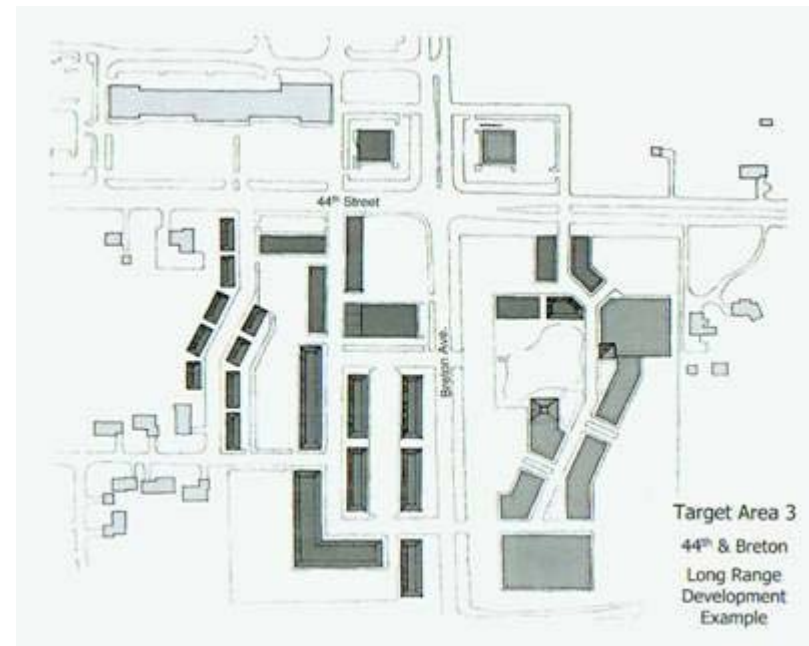
Both the Breton Extension and at Patterson Farm Sub Areas have sufficient size and unique landscape features to warrant a careful, comprehensive examination of a potential conservation-oriented development strategy. In the Breton extension, irrespective of exactly how the roadway connection is made between 52nd and 60th Streets, the intersection of the Breton Avenue extension and the existing Paul Henry trail provides a natural “center” of some kind. At Patterson Farm, the homestead and general setting provide a sense of place and reference to the heritage of Kentwood that could be folded into a unique conservation project. In both cases, flexibility and creativity on the part of potential developers and the City will be critical factors to finding the appropriate “alternative” development forms.

Planning Principle 5: Land Use Modifications

In light of significant shifts in the economic character and lifestyle dynamics of the greater Grand Rapids area, it will be important for Kentwood to be able to shift land uses through the

introduction of alternative/complementary uses to existing land uses. In general terms, these dynamics will require land use *flexibility* to enable “re-planning” and “re-purposing” efforts by City planners and private developers.

Figure 25: Conceptual Depiction of Land Use Modification Principle



In dominant retail corridors such as the 28th and 29th Street corridor, it may be necessary to re-assemble properties into larger planning parcels and to think more comprehensively about access roads and parking rather than the single-purpose models of the past. It may also be wise to introduce residential and/or office functions into these re-planned areas in order to economically balance and improve the area’s financial feasibility.

In industrial areas suffering from vacancies, introducing new and appropriate industrial uses will also be necessary to revive these areas.

In residential areas, the accommodation of senior citizens in new types of housing units and providing for their special needs with more appropriate medical and commercial services might provide winning strategies to re-invigorate aging neighborhood centers.

Such land use modifications will require a new planning paradigm based on flexibility and matching emerging market opportunities to current conditions. It will also require careful evaluation and judgment and might even involve some early trials or demonstrations prior to wide scale application.

Figure 26: Example of mixed use district



Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) and mixed-use developments are also appropriate land use modifications. TODs are developments that incorporate a close proximity to major transit routes, elements of commercial and office space and high-density residential uses. TODs are land use modifications applicable along Kentwood’s major transit corridors – Division and Kalamazoo Avenues, 44th and 28th Streets.

Figure 27: Example of a mixed use building



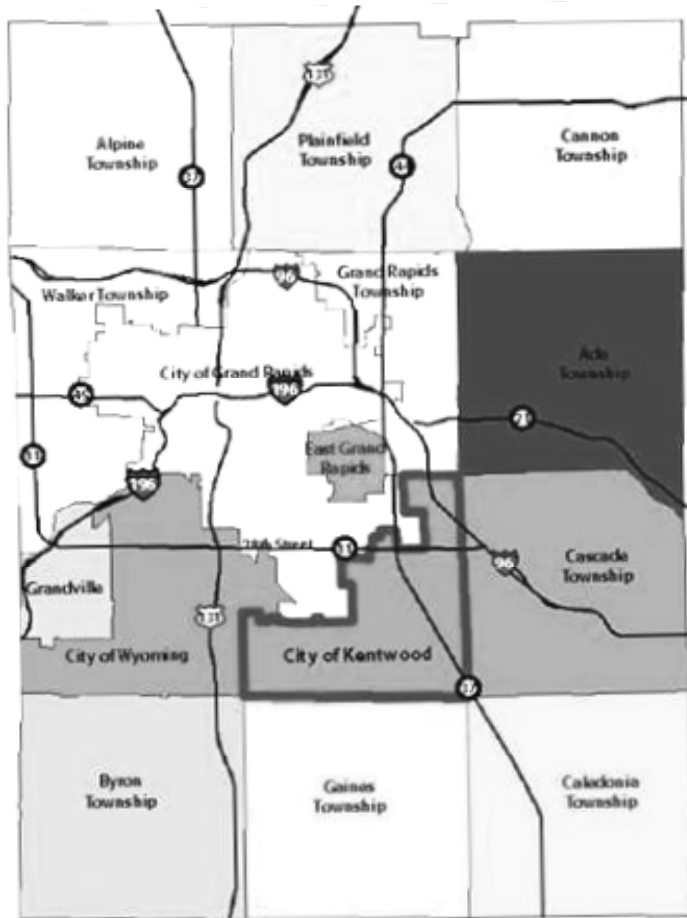
Mixed-use developments combine land uses, typically combining residential and commercial or office space. There are a range of different scales for mixed-use development, ranging from large TODs or new urban “lifestyle centers” to small neighborhood commercial areas with retail space on the ground floor and apartment units above. Mixed-use can refer to multiple uses within the same building, such as in a unit with retail on the ground floor and office space above. It can also mean having a district or neighborhood with different land uses (retail, office, residential, open space) within that area.

Planning Principle 6: Partnerships and Organization

While the City of Kentwood has the ability to plan land uses and growth within its borders, there are many external factors that affect the City’s planning efforts. Traffic, transportation, housing, economics, ecology and market dynamics are all influenced by regional forces that span geopolitical boundaries. Therefore, decisions made by communities across the greater Grand Rapids metropolitan region affect neighboring jurisdictions. To best address transportation, housing, economic and environmental concerns, Kentwood must engage the adjacent

cities and townships in partnerships so that the issues pertinent within each community, as well as each community's independent vision and future plans can respond to external influences. Building upon the cooperative examples advocated by the Metro Council and the West Michigan Strategic Alliance, the City of Kentwood should work to develop these mutually beneficial collaborative relationships to help guarantee that the recommendations in this Master Plan, in addition to future planning efforts, are neither conflicting nor redundant.

Figure 28: Regional Map of the Grand Rapids Metro Region



Due to changes in state law since the last Master Plan Update, there are now provisions for expanded multi-jurisdictional planning opportunities and greater regional cooperation. Thanks to this enabling legislation, it is now possible for neighboring and regional municipalities to work together to address planning issues that cross geopolitical boundaries. This planning principle permeates the previous five principles, as the regional cooperation and open dialogue is critical to successfully implementing many of these ideas. Partnerships, furthermore, are not limited to governmental partnerships. In fact, it will often be public-private partnerships that are most effective at implementing many of the planning principles in Kentwood.

