



# The Voice of the Next Generation

Student Survey Results

Dr. Richard Florida's insights broadened the lens through which Kent views economic development strategies as he demonstrated how economic performance in our multi-media, globally competitive, innovation-is-king world

is more than just dark blue business suits; it's just as much about spiked green hair and alterative lifestyles.

As part of Kent's efforts to compete for the next generation of businesses owners, homeowners and community leaders, a student survey was developed in 2008 to gauge Kent's appeal to that next generation. This data was incorporated into the design of the City's economic redevelopment program in order to capture a greater share of the next generation market.

Kent produces about 20,000 members of the creative class every year – and we are working hard to give them reasons to stay. The goal of redevelopment is to connect them to the community early and often, and build the emotional ties and roots that will keep them in Ohio.

Kent is exactly what the new economy is looking for – a city with global reach and recognition – in a town that is right-sized for living. Today's mobile workforce isn't willing to sacrifice lifestyle for career choice and Kent is making sure they don't have to. With the amenities of a big city, Kent keeps life personal and on a scale that works for people and business.

## What's Important

When students were asked what was most important in selecting a place to live, the priorities were as follows from most to least important:

- Safe streets and neighborhoods. **A vibrant downtown.** Arts, cultural and entertainment options. Gathering places like cafes, outdoor markets, street fairs. Over 70%
- An affordable place to live. A city with many different kinds of job opportunities. A place that welcomes diversity. A place to raise a family. Accessible, walkable streets. A good public school system for children. A place for people with many different lifestyles. Close to small service oriented businesses. A place that takes care of the environment. Over 60%
- A place with a strong sense of community. Active nightlife (bars, clubs, etc.) A vibrant music scene. Neighborhoods with interesting and unique character. Lots of natural scenic beauty. A good public transportation system. Near where my friends and family live. Close to hiking, biking, jogging trails. An area without a lot of traffic congestion. Over 50%
- Near large malls and shopping centers. A place with low taxes. 4 Seasons climate. Easy access to beaches or waterfront. A place with professional sports. Easy access to outdoor sports (rock climbing, kayaking, biking). Over 40%
- A place where I can start my own business. Warm weather year-round. Over 30%
- Near gaming/gambling casinos.

### "The best thing Kent could do to make it a more appealing place for me to live after I graduate is ..."

- ✓ **More Downtown Arts, Entertainment, Restaurants, Shopping** (27 comments)
  - More artistic entertainment options and vibrant scene
  - Increase the arts scene and downtown area
  - Have more of a music scene
  - Have more "day time" events downtown
  - Bring in restaurants, bars, clubs, and trendy companies to the entire Kent area. Also, come up with some popular hangout/meeting areas, and have huge events, that students will actually attend.
  - More upscale community hangouts - rec center, outdoor festivals and events, athletic events
  - Add more shopping and restaurants
  - Revitalize downtown

- ✓ **More Jobs** (11 comments)
  - Cheap public transportation and jobs
  - Jobs, we need to start some internet startups here
  - Attract a strong business base from Cleveland
  - Extend job market/opportunities

- ✓ **Stronger Sense of Community** (8 comments)
  - Gain a sense of community by keeping small and family businesses and not letting the impersonality of franchises and corporate feel take over and ruin the intimacy and community atmosphere

- ✓ **Better Housing and Facilities** (5 comments)
  - Build more parks and better housing projects
  - Newer or remodeled housing.
  - Better more affordable housing for families

✓ These preferences are built into the downtown redevelopment program.

# Unmistakably KENT



The eclectic mix of music, arts, natural beauty, historic downtown, Kent State University, and an international business presence in a small town setting is the Kent community signature. It's that unique mix that sets Kent apart and is Kent's competitive advantage. The downtown redevelopment project seeks to showcase these elements and leverage them in a winning economic formula that has been built by the people that live, work, learn, and play in Kent.

The idea of the downtown project is to take the best of the old Kent and seamlessly blend it with the best of what's new to keep Kent fresh, fun and prosperous for generations to come. University cities have proven to be economic engines, even in this tough economy, and Kent is ready to take its turn behind the wheel.



The Kent community has prepared a redevelopment program that aims to align city, university, and business assets in such a way that downtown Kent can be a catalyst for an economic revival that creates jobs, inspires new technologies, spawns entrepreneurship, and keeps Kent the kind of place people are proud to call home. Simply stated the redevelopment program seeks to put Kent's assets to work for the local and regional community.

For decades, residents, students, businesses, university administrators and Kent's elected officials have expressed a common desire to revitalize downtown Kent – and that's where this effort begins. The goal is to unlock the opportunities of downtown Kent in order to be part of the

rebuilding process for sustainable economic growth irrespective of the highs and lows of business cycles.

Downtowns are centers of commerce, entertainment, and cultural expression – and that certainly holds true for Downtown Kent. The CEO's of Kent's corporate community and the officials from Kent State University have stressed the importance of the downtown to their ability to compete for the best business talent, best employees, best students and best faculty.

The City of Kent depends upon the success of the University and the corporate base to supply new residents, foster new businesses and support a dynamic cultural setting essential for continued economic prosperity. Success in this shared mission depends upon the strength and quality of the physical networks and infrastructure that connect our community and bridge Town and Gown with the central business district.



# Downtown Kent

*The Multi-Modal Center is a \$21 million tipping point on a \$105 million deal*

The downtown re-development strategy is built on the premise that innovation and business growth enjoy a competitive advantage in places where the specialties of research, technology, commerce and culture are given opportunities to converge. The goal is to create a shared physical environment where people will gather, ideas will cross-pollinate, and innovation becomes a way of life.

Kent has a plan to transform the downtown into vibrant public space. With \$10 million invested, the project waits at the threshold of construction for the funding of the \$21 million Multi-Modal Center.

Congressman Ryan provided project development funds over the last 6 years to get this project on the drawing board:

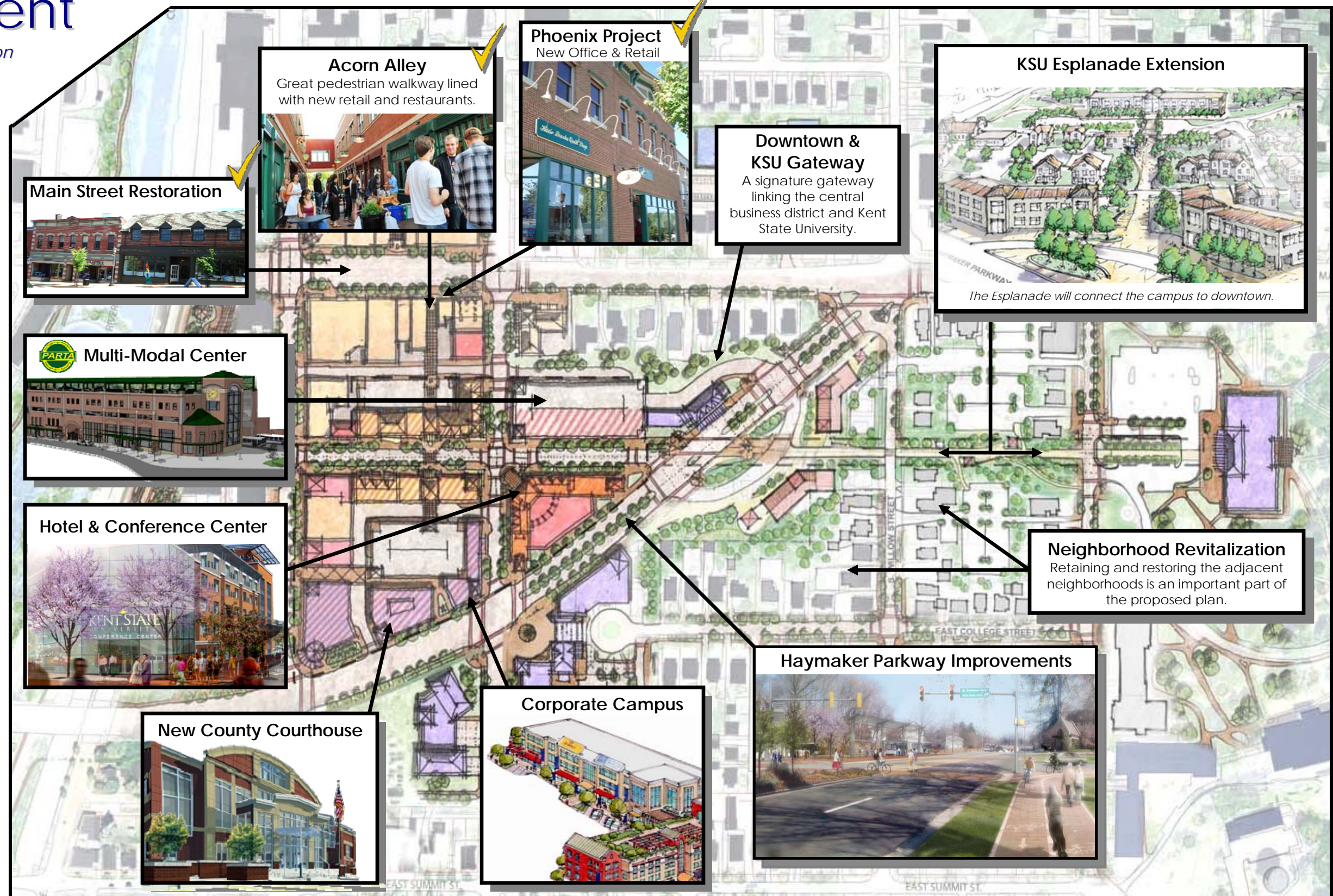
- \$215,371 in 2004
- \$364,077 in 2005
- \$190,357 in 2006
- \$200,640 in 2007
- \$217,360 in 2008
- \$225,720 in 2009
- \$1,413,525 in total

The Congressman's funding prepared the project for construction – now it's time to finish the job and get it built.

Securing \$21 million in funding for the Transit Center will trigger \$105 million in new investment and close the deal on the other anchors of the project. Every dollar invested in the Multi-Modal Center will generate another \$4 in new investment.

PARTA has submitted an application for \$21 million in Federal Transit Stimulus dollars (Tiger Discretionary Grant) to finance the Multi-Modal Center. The grant awards will be announced in January 2010.

Kent's future is already here, it's just distributed unevenly.



## Multi-Modal Center Details

- 10 bus bay stations, bike and pedestrian facilities
- 100 transit parking spaces, 250 additional parking spaces
- Serves regional bus routes from Kent to Cleveland and Akron
- Located on Regional "Portage" Hike and Bike trail
- \$21 million eco-friendly "geo-thermal" designed facility
- Center of civic activity

## Multi-Modal Readiness

- Planning Studies Completed
- NEPA Document Approved
- Design Plans 30% Complete
- Land Acquisition Underway
- Construction can begin in 9 months
- Shovel ready project

## Multi-Modal Value

- Transportation hub and parking for \$105 million Development that includes:
- 120 room Hotel
  - 10-15,000 sq. ft. Conference Center
  - 160,000 sq. ft. office space
  - 63,000 sq. ft. retail space
  - New County Courthouse
  - 1,000 new jobs