Introduction

The City of Kent, Ohio in the past twenty-four months has gone through a one hundred and ten million dollar revitalization through a very extensive collaboration between Kent State University, City of Kent, and local businesses. Kent State University and the City of Kent are very proud of our downtown revitalization, and the collaboration demonstrates the true spirit of Mayor Abernathy’s vision of what a town & gown relationship should be.

The signature of the collaboration between the City of Kent, Ohio and Kent State University is the revitalization of downtown Kent as a public-private partnership between Ohio developers, the city of Kent, private investors and the Kent State University Foundation, with a total investment of nearly one hundred and ten million dollars that will create 1,600 jobs. We submit this nomination because we truly believe that without the true town & gown relationship that the City of Kent and Kent State University possesses; the City of Kent’s downtown revitalization would never have been a realization. This redevelopment is the visible result of university, city and community leaders coming together to transform the community. Leaders at many levels in different areas of the university and local communities come together regularly to discuss a variety of issues. The university and city view themselves each as one component of a larger community.

The relationship between the university and the city has greatly improved under the direction of Kent State University President, Lester A. Lefton and City of Kent Manager, Dave Ruller. The collaboration between Kent State University officials, City of Kent officials, local politicians and business leaders has been very successful, which is evident through the City of Kent receiving the Ohio Economic Development Association’s 2012 Best Project of the Year award for the ongoing downtown revitalization project. This project that has seen the construction of multiple structures, with over thirty-two new businesses opening their doors in the central business district in the past 24 months and another 20 plan to open their doors downtown within the next year. Kent State University and the City of Kent have been working to make the City of Kent a more attractive and inviting place for students, parents and local residents.

Another aspect of the growing town & gown relationship between Kent State University and the City of Kent is the Office of Community Relations. Community Relations within the Center for Student Involvement at Kent State University is committed to enhancing city and university relations. The Kent State University Community Relations staff works to promote respect, civility, and collaboration between students and community members. We are actively involved with city officials, area businesses, the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce, and neighborhood canvassing efforts.

The success of Kent, Ohio’s downtown revitalization project and the day-to-day collaborations between the City of Kent and Kent State are exactly what Mayor Abernathy dedicated a great portion of his life to the City of Clemson and Clemson University. Kent State University and the City of Kent would be honored to be the first recipient of an award that symbolizes the values of a truly great man.
Comments from University, City and State Officials

Kent State University President, Lester A. Lefton

“I’m proud to say that the town-gown relationship between the university and the City of Kent has never been better, and through this partnership, incredible things are happening downtown, including the PARTA multimodal center, the University Hotel and Conference Center, the Acorn Alley commercial complex and more.”

“Our goal is to make the city of Kent a great college town – on par with any of America’s other best college towns. We would like it to be a place where students and parents will flock to shop and stay while they visit a great university and a lovely town. I personally can’t wait to see how wonderful the City of Kent will look when all of the current projects have been completed. In the meantime, please pardon our dust!”

Kent City Manager, David Ruller

“We want Kent to be more than just another university city where town-gown is mentioned as a friction point, or worse yet, as a community liability. Instead we shared a belief with Dr. Lefton and his senior staff that if we get this town-gown thing right in Kent, it can be one of our greatest assets.”

“These projects have been talked about for decades. President Lefton saw, much like the city saw, that the strength of the university depended on the strength of the town, and the strength of the town depended on the strength of the university. We’ve built something here that is pretty special.”

United States Senator, Sherrod Brown

“The university and community working together means potential job growth for the city, said Brown, whose work in Washington helped provide $20 million for construction of the PARTA Central Gateway Transit facility in the spring of 2011.”

“You take away that kind of cooperation here that will matter with job growth and job development, making Kent State a more attractive university and making students more want to come here when they see it’s part of something beyond the campus boundaries.”

Ohio Economic Development Association Board Member, Richard Rebadow

“This project is a catalyst that will have a lasting effect on Kent, Kent State University, Portage County and Northeast Ohio.” “And you did it during really challenging [economic] times.”

President of RLB Phoenix Properties, Ron Burbick

"The thing that amazes me is all the alumni I talk to who say 'Where was this when we were going to school? We didn't have anything like this.'

“One goal of the project is to attract students to downtown Kent. “We wanted to get more of the town and gown together, and this is an ideal way of doing it, it’s a good way to get students downtown.”
Kent City Economic Development Director, Dan Smith

“All of the new buildings and facilities have been planned to enhance the historic character of downtown. None of what is taking place in downtown Kent would be possible without the public/private partnership fostered by Kent State University President, Lester Lefton and Kent City Manager, Dave Ruller; along with PARTA, Fairmount Properties, Phoenix Properties, The Pizzuti Companies, Davey Tree and AMETEK.”

Construction Projects

PARTA Multimodal Center

Working in partnership, the city of Kent, Kent State University and Representative Tim Ryan from Ohio’s 17th district helped secure a $20 million TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant from the Department of Transportation. Then, acting together, officials from the university, city, regional and state political leaders, as well as PARTA (Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority), lobbied for the construction of a new multimodal facility in downtown Kent that will act as a transfer point for cars, buses, bikes and pedestrians as far away as Akron and Cleveland. This facility will feature a parking garage with more than 300 parking spaces, and space for retail, entertainment and other businesses.
University Hotel and Conference Center

Directly across from the PARTA construction zone is another busy job site. There, the new Kent State University Hotel and Conference Center is being built. This $16 million project is located at the corner of Haymaker Parkway and DePeyster Street. The hotel features 94 rooms and amenities, including spacious suites, an elegant cocktail lounge, a fitness center and an indoor heated pool. The conference center can accommodate up to 300 attendees and offers full catering services, making it ideal for community events and weddings, as well as business meetings and academic conferences.
Acorn Alley II, sequel to the popular and successful Acorn Alley I, located directly behind the Inn and Conference Center, opened this past fall and offers condominium living spaces and a collection of retail shops and dining establishments. It will also include Acorn Plaza – a new venue for live music and other outdoor events.
New Corporate Headquarters

The largest private project along this path is the 185,000-square-foot mixed-use project near the intersection of Water and Erie Streets. The upper floors of these buildings will house corporate offices of the Kent-based Davey Tree Expert Company and AMETEK, a technical and industrial products company, headquartered in Berwyn, Pa. The lower floors of the building will be filled with retail spaces and restaurants.
Revitalization of Historic Kent Hotel

Most recently, a local developer purchased the long-vacant Kent Hotel and plans to transform this historic structure into a collection of retail outlets and living spaces.

Extension of the Kent State University Esplanade

The extension of the Kent State University Esplanade that will strengthen the ties between the university and the city by providing a physical link, providing students with a safe pathway to visit, enjoy and patronize downtown Kent and its businesses, as well as connecting residents and visitors to the Kent Campus. The new building for Kent State’s College of Architecture and Environmental Design will be located along the University Esplanade extension.
Kent State University’s Community Relations

Regular Meetings with Kent State University and The City of Kent

Programs and services offered by either the city or university impacts the entire community. Therefore, it is imperative that KSU keeps close ties with city officials. By doing so, we collaborate and stay up to date with the issues and needs of the city. Because a staff member from the area of Community Relations attends community meetings, we are able to share thoughts with city officials and communicate pertinent information back to students and the university.

Staff attends monthly city meetings that include personnel such as Kent’s mayor, city manager, safety director, city planner, police chief, city council members, Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Kent. The group discusses events occurring on campus and in the city that may impact the larger community. Topics of discussion include downtown development, city plans, and updates on current projects. We also attend monthly meetings with City of Kent Emergency Services to discuss pressing issues such as budgets, services, and the needs of the police and fire departments. These meetings include Kent's safety director, police chief, fire chief, their administrative staffs, and selected members of the community.

Through the meetings and the collaborative relationship between city officials and campus leaders, everyone stays abreast of what is taking place in the town. The staff can inform the university of city plans that will have an effect on student life.

Kent State University connecting With Local Businesses

KSU's Community Relations members are continually visiting new and established businesses to build relationships and show our true interest in their success. We educate business owners on how to connect with students and the university and in doing so; a more cohesive environment between the university and community is created. On occasion we have linked students with local businesses for internship experiences, which results in an instant connection between the university and the local companies. Through these internships, we are assisting small businesses in tough economic times and also providing opportunities for students to gain true experience of working in a company setting. We want to see our students and the city develop and prosper.

Neighborhood Canvassing

Community Relations within the Center for Student Involvement implements neighborhood canvassing efforts with the purpose of identifying and preventing issues in neighborhoods surrounding KSU. The task force walks door to door in Kent neighborhoods to educate students on responsible citizenship. We want each student to realize that a poor decision made at 2:30 a.m., could have an effect on the rest of his or her life.

Educational pieces are distributed that explain how to have a "smart party," with content such as ways to avoid being a nuisance to neighbors and safety precautions. Members of university administration such as Vice President Greg Jarvie and the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) Street Team have assisted Community Relations in past efforts. A letter jointly signed by the dean of students and city manager is distributed in the fall to all off campus residents emphasizing citizenship and responsibility.

Four canvassing efforts are strategically conducted throughout the academic year based on traditional events in the Kent community. The first canvassing effort is at the start of fall semester to
set the stage for the school year. A second is before Homecoming weekend because of the many activities that take place on campus and in the surrounding area. A third is before Halloween, when traditionally there are 20,000-30,000 people in town to celebrate. Lastly, we implement a canvassing effort before the end of school year celebrations in the spring semester. We want to be proactive and prevent issues by educating our students on making smart decisions.

**Municipal Court/Office of Student Conduct Ordered Community Service**

The university’s Community Relations supervises all Portage County Municipal Court (Kent Branch) and the university’s Office of Student Conduct ordered community service. The community service sanction is intended to be an educational experience for the student with a positive outcome to a less than acceptable act. The Community Relations office ensures that the students fully complete their time in accordance with the policies of the two referring agencies.

**KENT POLICE - KENT STATE UNIVERSITY PUBLIC SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS**

The Kent Police Department (KPD) and the Kent State University Police Department (KSUPD) enjoy a cooperative working relationship, which has proven to be mutually beneficial. Although this relationship has always existed, new initiatives and joint ventures are always investigated to improve the quality of service to the Kent and Kent State communities.

**Special Events**

There are several special events that require KSUPD's assistance and cooperation to ensure a safe and tactically sound operation. The end of KSU's spring semester sparks many college age residential area events such as "Collegefest", "Drinkin' on Lincoln" and "Shermania". These unsanctioned block parties are advertised and attended by college age participants that often result in riotous activities. A heavy police presence is needed to quell these events and which KSUPD and KSU administrators are heavily relied on for assistance. Halloween has also proven to be an unsanctioned event that continues to swell and sprawl within the city. We have received continued support from KSUPD when planning and staffing our police response.

Other special events include sanctioned parades and road races that involve dual areas of responsibility and jurisdiction. Many of these events cater to the Kent State student population such as the Homecoming Parade, Bowman Cup 5K Race, and The Black Squirrel 5K Race.

**Training Opportunities**

KPD and KSUPD have been training together for years on various disciplines and enforcement tactics. We had the opportunity to have our officers co-train on campus in defensive tactics, active shooter Incidents and Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate (A.L.I.C.E.) instructor training.

**Joint Patrol District**

The City of Kent and Kent State University administrators have toyed with the concepts of "joint patrols and districts" for several years. These concepts have been realized and practiced for years in
other University communities such as Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati with success. This year our two agencies came to an agreement on a "joint patrol district". The districts are student populated areas within the city that also incorporate University owned properties. These areas include the Crain to Main triangle North of campus and the Lincoln, Summit, DePeyster, Main St. square to the West of campus. This agreement allows KSUPD officers to patrol, initiate, enforce, and report incidents in these areas without involving or initiating mutual aid first. This initiative assists KPD by allowing campus officers freedoms within these districts thus infusing officers into these populated areas. It is mutually beneficial to KSUPD to be responsive and responsible to their students and property directly.

C.A.D. and R.M.S. (Computer Aided Dispatch and Records Management System)

KPD and KSUPD collaborate in several ways in the areas of communications infrastructure, dispatch services and records management. For over thirty years, both departments have dispatched police services on a shared VHF radio frequency. Each department owns and maintains interconnected portions of the same two-way radio system that provides radio and emergency warning siren coverage over the entire city. Kent PD also dispatches Kent FD for fire and EMS services on campus as well. Since 2006, Kent PD has also shared KSUPD's computer-aided dispatch and records management platforms as well. This shared software platform allows officers from both departments instant access to the activity and databases of the other department via their dispatch centers, and desktop and vehicle mounted computers. The shared platform also allows either dispatch center to serve as a fully capable emergency backup for the other, should one suffer a catastrophic failure or natural disaster. These two shared systems have promoted further collaborations which include KSUPD monitoring burglar and fire alarm systems citywide via their certified central station, and a current effort toward a common set of standardized training and certification programs.

Additional Points of Collaboration

Message Board

A new message board was created with the downtown revitalization project, where both city and university events and announcements are shared.
**Joint Communications**

In addition to meetings attended by the University’s office of Community Relations, other leaders meet regularly as well. The Provost meets routinely with city officials and separately, the vice president for business and finance and his staff meet weekly with City of Kent officials to discuss a wide range of communications issues.

Kent Social Services and the office of Experiential Education and Civic Engagement also meet regularly about needs of the local community. The Campus Kitchen prepares weekly meals that are served in the Kent community.

**Portage County Suicide Prevention Coalition**

The Coalition’s mission is to offer training and provide education and prevention tools to schools and people of all ages in Portage County. The Coalition will also be working to reduce the stigma of suicide and depression by providing presentations to local groups. The coalition is comprised of both university and city representatives.

**KSU Transportation Study Group**

The Portage Area Regional Transit Authority is a bus service serving the Kent Campus and surrounding community. PARTA provides three on-campus routes: the Campus Loop, Allerton, and Stadium/Front Campus. These routes are open to all students and visitors of the university.

**Kent Citizens Police Academy (university participation)**

The Citizens Police Academy offers an opportunity for members of the Kent area to see first hand what police officers do and experience. University members along with local citizens participate together to learn more about local law enforcement.

**The Tannery**

The Tannery is a student-run, full-service integrated marketing communications firm that is located in downtown Kent. The firm works with clients from all around the Northern Ohio region and plans to expand regionally and nationally.

**Fashion Store**

The Fashion School Store located in downtown Kent, provides an opportunity for the fashion merchandising students of Kent State to practice classroom concepts through a real-world business.

**International Market**

International HOME Markets is student run International food store located in Acorn Alley in downtown Kent. The mission is to create a diverse ethnic environment for our local communities and for international students by providing authentic products and merchandise from a variety of countries.
Community Service Engagement of KSU Students in KENT

Kent Halloween Bash

Students assist Kent Parks and Recreation Department with annual family Halloween celebration.

Art in the Park

Students assist Kent Parks and Recreation Department with annual two day city art fair - children's game and recreation station, greeters, etc.

Senior Day of Service

Hundreds of KSU students assist with annual leaf raking, yard clean-up projects for seniors in the city. In addition, students from our construction technology major assist with ramp building and minor home repairs.

After School Program

Students provide an afterschool tutoring program at the Junction, a community center serving students living in poverty.

Habitat for Humanity - Kent, Ohio

Students volunteer each Saturday at local construction sites and at the Habitat Re-Store in Kent. In addition to volunteering, Habitat KSU conducts a major fund-raising effort (fashion show) to benefit Kent’s Habitat for Humanity and each fall partners with students from the fashion design school. The event is always a sell-out. During the summer 2012 KSU students, faculty and staff were engaged in several deconstruction projects as the University and local community cleared more property for the esplanade.

Campus Kitchen Project and Nutrition Outreach (CKPNO)

The CKPNO provides 160 hot dinner meals each week (year round) to those in need serviced by Kent Social Services. In addition, on a monthly basis nutrition education lessons and cooking lessons are provided to clients.

Farmers Market

Each Saturday KSU students volunteer at the Kent Farmer’s Market. They provide cooking demonstrations using local produce and products and provide nutrition guidance. In addition, the students assist local farmers with gleaning excess produce during summer months – this produce is then used to feed local individuals in need.

Super Service Saturdays

Through the Super Service Saturday program students provide service to a variety of Kent non-profits including Kent Social Services, Habitat for Humanity, Freedom House, Coleman Professional Services, Longcoy Elementary School, Stow Glen Retirement Village, Miller House, KentWay and more. In addition, staff and students from our residential communities are paired with local non-profits to engage in ongoing relationships and service.
Environmental Clean-ups

KSU partners with our local storm water program to engage in river-clean up days 3 times each year.

Summary

Through the leadership and collaboration of Kent State University President Lester A. Lefton and the Kent City Manager Dave Ruller the one hundred and ten million dollar revitalization of the City of Kent, Ohio has become a reality for the students, faculty and staff of Kent State University, the residents of the City of Kent, and the surrounding communities. The success of this collaboration illustrates the values of the International Town and Gown Association that Kent State University and the City of Kent possess.

The City of Kent downtown revitalization efforts have made a tremendous impact on enhancing the city and university relationship. The monthly meetings, the day-to-day collaborations and the involvement in each others projects and events truly demonstrate the hard work and commitment to make the City of Kent an enjoyable place to learn, work, and live.

Mayor Abernathy and his work with the City of Clemson and Clemson University should be an inspiration to all universities and the communities in which they reside. It would truly be an honor to be the first recipient of the Larry Abernathy Award, an award that both Kent State University and the City of Kent would cherish.

Articles & Videos

New York Times article on City of Kent downtown project

Kent, Ohio Rising College Town - video

Kent wins award for downtown revitalization project

Kent wins award for downtown project

City of Kent downtown project video

Downtown revitalization project is top story of 2012 in Kent

Downtown Kent revitalization project transition from construction jobs to permanent

Downtown Kent, Ohio rising Phoenix - like as city, KSU and businesses coalesce


http://www.DestinationKent.com/

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Kent-Ohio-Development/172007502823141

http://www.kent360.com/category/city-university-stuff