

**THE CITY OF KENT, OHIO
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WED., APRIL 22, 2009**

This meeting of the Community Development Committee of Kent City Council was called to order on Wed., April 22, 2009, by Rick Hawksley, Chair, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT: MR. AMRHEIN, MR. DELEONE, MR. FERRARA, MR. HAWKSLEY, MS. SHAFFER, MR. TURNER, MS. WALLACH, AND MR. WILSON.

ALSO PRESENT: D. RULLER, CITY MANAGER; J. SILVER, LAW DIRECTOR; AND S. CHESTNUTWOOD, ACTING CLERK OF COUNCIL

ABSENT: J. FENDER, MAYOR; MR. KUCHAR, COUNCIL; L. COPLEY, CLERK OF COUNCIL

Chair Hawksley said they would first discuss the Downtown Design Guidelines. He introduced **Mary Gilbert, Executive Director, of Main Street Kent**. Ms. Gilbert introduced **Ron Burbick**.

Mr. Burbick said he wanted to provide them with some background on the guidelines. He said Main Street Kent began their discussion about 2.5 years earlier, and had several false starts. He said about one year earlier, they decided to pursue this on a professional basis to avoid copyright questions. He said they partnered with the City to fund the design guidelines. He said they contracted with Chambers, Murphy & Burge, adding that Elizabeth Corbin Murphy will make the presentation. He thanked the Historical Society, city employees, and a lot of people who were present, that served on the committee and worked on this for the last six to eight months. He said they have a good document for the City to use.

Ms. Murphy said her company only handles recycled buildings, adding that some are landmarks. She said they were hired by Council and the Burbick Foundation to present a set of design guidelines that were developed through a specific process. She said the City and the Burbick Foundation funded the process, with Main Street Kent as the facilitator.

Ms. Murphy said they wanted to be sure they put together a set of guidelines specific to the city of Kent, as it has a distinct character. She said Kent is very eclectic. She said the philosophy was to preserve the character, with awareness and education to bring everyone on board. She said they wanted to preserve the cultural landscape, which is the whole package of how things fit together.

Ms. Murphy said there are benefits to the design guidelines. She said they have been proven in many other cities where design guidelines are beneficial. She said good design is beneficial to property owners, as it sustains property values. She said they increase pedestrian traffic and attracts big developers. She said good developers do not want to spend good money on a building, and have a poor developer next door. She said it keeps the community thriving and is a good tool.

Ms. Murphy said the guidelines were fashioned after a national model published by the Department of the Interior. She said the standards for rehabilitation were developed as the result of the National Preservation Act of 1966. She said they are principles to preserve the characters of historic buildings. She said there are ten standards. She said the main idea is to keep the defining characteristics, and to preserve craftsmanship. She said they generally ask that buildings be repaired, rather than replaced. She said if they repair it, they maintain the original piece, and it is more economical. She said the standards have suggestions and guidelines for proper cleaning of a building. She said the idea is to protect and preserve. Ms. Murphy said contemporary additions are okay, adding they ask that the addition be compatible.

Ms. Murphy reviewed Kent's basic guideline format. She stressed these were not design guidelines developed by her company only, but a process that had public meetings with stakeholders. She said they invited property and business owners, as well as homeowners and the university. She said they had a

good mix of people who had some type of investment in the downtown area. She said they also had two public meetings. She said they discussed what they discerned from the stakeholder meetings as well as Kent's history. She said they wanted public reaction from those not involved with the development of the guidelines.

Ms. Murphy said they generated goals for the design guidelines, adding they had nine goals. She said they presented the nine goals at the public meeting, and asked people to select those goals that were important. She said the one that came up first was the goal to perpetuate good design to help the economic vitality and sustain property values. She said the second goal was for the City to remain cohesive in the visual identity. She said the third goal was a better connection with the University, tied with a realistic transition from the Architectural Advisory Board to the Architectural Review Board. She said those were very specific goals.

Ms. Murphy said they presently have an Architectural Advisory Board, who responds to the Planning Commission. She said this board advises only, and cannot make any requirements. She said there was a lot of discussion as to whether this was beneficial, or if they needed a consistent method of review. Ms. Murphy said the guidelines do not address that issue.

Ms. Murphy displayed a map of the downtown area, showing properties that were listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. She said they were trying to show a concentration of buildings that follow the Secretary of Interior's standards. Ms. Murphy drew their attention to the Design Overlay District boundaries. She said this encompasses several of the properties and two of the districts on the register. She said the overlay was the result of discussions with the stakeholders and public groups, as to where concentration should be for offering the design guidelines. She said it can overlay more than one zoning district, adding it will not upset the zoning nor require any changes to current regulations. Mr. Burbick stressed it is a starting point, and Ms. Murphy agreed, adding it is a suggestion.

Ms. Murphy said the guidelines begin with establishing Kent's character. She said there is a little bit of history, along with some information on the development of guidelines. She said there is discussion on rehabilitation and new work, as well as specific issues, such as demolition. She said there is also a section on general maintenance and repairs.

Ms. Murphy said there are some key topics, such as the purpose and benefits. She said there are several architectural styles that are common in Kent. She said there is some information on preservation philosophy, as well as discussion on specific elements.

Ms. Murphy said they have specific discussion on building elements in terms of architectural design review. She said the committee tried to cover most elements, including items like skylights or satellite dishes. She said there was some discussion on exterior paint, also.

Ms. Murphy said in the appendix is a glossary of the terms used. She said the standards for rehabilitation are also printed, as well as other sources. She said they have information for things specific to Ohio, and things that can be used nationally. She said they are written on a level that most people can understand. She said there is also an inspection checklist, which an owner can do to their own building. She said an example deals with maple leaves in a copper gutter, as they are acidic.

Ms. Murphy reminded them the goals were established by public input, and not her office. She reminded them of the three goals at this time. She said they asked everyone in the two stakeholder meetings of their favorite place to visit. She said they checked to see if those places had published guidelines, and reported back at the meeting. She said 86% of the favorite places had design guidelines.

Doug Fuller, Main Street Kent: Mr. Fuller thanked City Council and the Burbick Foundation for their participation. He said they hoped the City would accept these guidelines as presented. He said they anticipate these guidelines to not be mandatory. He said they wanted them to be used by the Architectural Review Board as their guidelines. He said the City might use them when developers come to Kent.

Mr. Fuller said the guidelines hit on Main Street goals of design and economic restructuring. He said it is important to obtain quality developers. He said there are other things the guidelines can do, adding they could explore those further. Mr. Fuller said one of those things is a CLG, which is a partnership between the City, the State Preservation office, and the Federal Historic Preservation office. He said each party has obligations in an agreement. He said a CLG may help with funding projects, especially those that are historic projects. Mr. Fuller said there is funding available, adding the local portion can be in-kind funding.

Mr. Fuller said if they become a CLG, there are requirements. He said those requirements include design guidelines given to an Architectural Review Board who would use them, instead of being voluntary. He said they can promote the historic properties. Mr. Fuller said they would need a Design Review Board that reviews plans.

Mr. Turner asked Mr. Fuller to tell him what CLG stands for, and Mr. Fuller said it stands for Certified Local Government. Mr. Turner asked if they fall into that category currently, and Mr. Fuller said they are not, at this time. Ms. Murphy said there are about 43 in Ohio at this time. She said this is a designation bestowed by the State Office of Preservation. Ms. Murphy said it allows a city to make decisions that normally would have gone to Columbus.

Mr. Burbick said to be a CLG, they must have design guidelines. He said they also need an ordinance and a Design Review Board. He said all of those items are required, but an initial step deals with the design guidelines. He said whether they are a CLG or not, they need the design guidelines.

Ms. Wallach asked the name of the person at the Historic Preservation Department that does the CLGs, and Ms. Murphy said it is Glen Harper.

Ms. Wallach asked how many people showed up for the public meetings. Ms. Murphy said approximately 35 attended the first meeting, with 18 attending the second meeting. Ms. Wallach asked how many drafts they have developed, and Ms. Murphy said they have developed four so far. Ms. Wallach asked if there is another final plan, and Ms. Murphy said they will be finalizing the plan.

Ms. Wallach asked if they would be distributing the guidelines, and Ms. Murphy said they will be posted on the City's website.

Mr. Ferrara asked what teeth the Architectural Review Board would have to enforce the guidelines, and Ms. Murphy said if they become a CLG, with guidelines and a review board, the teeth would be that a certificate of appropriateness would be required along with a zoning permit. Mr. Ferrara asked about existing signage and structures, and Ms. Murphy said they would not go backwards. She said if a sign is against the current zoning code, it would be in violation. Mr. Ferrara asked what the City could do if something is not in compliance, and Ms. Wallach suggested they would be grandfathered.

Gary Locke, Director of Community Development: Mr. Locke said they are currently working on the Zoning Code. He said the timing of the guidelines works into the process. He said they plan to discuss signage and standards in June. He said the trick is to be sure they work this into the development review process, from the enforcement standpoint. He said they can have great design guidelines, but if they cannot enforce them, it is problematic. Mr. Locke said the signage issues will be separate from the Zoning Code. He said if there are specific design criteria, it would make sense to take the sign regulations for the downtown and match them up with the guidelines. He said the real question is how much further they go.

Ms. Shaffer said she had a question about remodeling within the district. She asked if a garage had to comply with the standards. She said she knew permits were needed. Mr. Burbick said there is an area that addresses fences. He said with the acceptance of the guidelines, they are not making them mandatory.

Ms. Shaffer said they have some more modern buildings within the district. She asked if they remodeled, if they had to become more traditional. Ms. Murphy said that "Fake Old" buildings are not encouraged. She said there is a lot of discussion, currently, on how to preserve modern buildings. She said that

modern buildings need to be embraced, same as other buildings. She said the guidelines stress the importance of looking at the character of a building, so that changes and enhancements reinforce the character. She said if someone chooses to build a 2009 building in a vacant lot that should be permitted as long as it is proportionate. Mr. Burbick said that taking a contemporary building and making it look old is almost as bad as making it look contemporary.

Mr. Ruller said the third goal dealt with the transition of the Architectural Review Board, and what he heard is that this is only relevant if they pursue the CLG. He asked if that was true, and Ms. Murphy said the City could make it mandatory citywide. She said there were other interim steps.

Chair Hawksley called for audience comment at this time.

Sandy Halem, 429 Carthage, Kent: Ms. Halem said she is the current president of the Board of Trustees for the Kent Historical Society. She said at their meeting on the previous Monday, they voted to encourage acceptance of the report by the City. She as a member of the Society for thirty-five years, she can attest to the fact that when they looked at the depot, there was no guidelines nor resource for them to review. She said they had to go to architectural designers and historians to give them a sense of how that building could have life. She said that no one in Kent would dispute that restoration of that building was an economic engine for the street and the entire community. She said it is a source of pride, and an icon. Ms. Halem said that is what they look at when defining the community. She said she was on the advisory board for ten years, adding there are no teeth for mandatory compliance. Ms. Halem said they have to begin with the acceptance of a philosophical guideline or structure, and then the City will know that people are behind them. She noted they have done "slow," and asked that they move quickly. She said as a citizen of Kent who remembers Kent when it was dark and dreary, she felt this was a great opportunity. She said they needed to move forward, as those who participated believe they should begin today.

Audrey Kessler, 1638 S. Lincoln Street: Ms. Kessler said she wanted to reiterate the importance of having the document edited. She said she reviewed the latest draft, adding it contained some items that needed cleaned up for clarity. Ms. Kessler said that while some may think that is trivial, with the amount of time spent, it would be well worth it to edit it. She said it might be good to do that before approving the document so people understand it.

MOTION MADE TO POSTPONE MAKING A FINAL DECISION ON ADOPTING THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES UNTIL THEY RECEIVE A FINAL DRAFT OF THE GUIDELINES.

Motion made by Ms. Wallach.

Ms. Wallach said they will be giving this document to developers, and will be given to homeowners when they want to restore their house. She said from what she has seen, there are a lot of spelling, grammatical, and communication errors. She said she would like to see it cleaned up. She said she has learned, as an educator, when something is in print, it must be clear and specific. She said there are several places that are still ambiguous where people may be unsure.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Shaffer.

Ms. Wallach said that some of the points are ambiguous, and she is not quite sure of the instruction. She said she would like to see them cleared up in a final version.

Ms. Shaffer commended the guidelines, adding she respected the process. She said they are 99% of the way there. She said they do need a final draft for approval. She said she respected the spirit of the guidelines and will support them. She said that she would like to see it cleaned up.

Mr. Wilson said he did not see the need to hold up on passage prior to the final draft. He said they pass things all of the time without all of the numbers. HE said he would vote against this motion, and planned to make a motion, accepting the guidelines, contingent on the final draft. He said at that time, they can make changes. Mr. Wilson said he assumed that this would be cleaned up, prior to full passage, adding he did not see a reason to have a second committee meeting.

Mr. Ferrara said he hates the process. He said he would vote with Mr. Wilson. He said he would rather send the message that this is something they want, contingent upon the final draft. HE said he would vote against the motion, but respected where Ms. Wallach was coming from in terms of finalization. He said he wanted to send the message that this is something they want to move forward, and suggested they expedite the process with their support.

Ms. Shaffer said she was comfortable with Mr. Wilson's comments that they can approve it, contingent on the finalization of the guidelines. She said she would have to reconsider her position.

The motion failed by a hand count of 1-7, with Ms. Wallach supporting the motion.

MOTION TO ACCEPT THE GUIDELINES, CONTINGENT ON THE FINAL DRAFT.

Motion made by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Ms. Shaffer, and carried by a voice vote of 6-0-1, with Mr. Hawksley abstaining.

MOTION TO SCHEDULE COMMITTEE TIME TO DISCUSS THE MERITS OF CREATING AN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD.

Motion made by Mr. Ferrara, seconded by Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Ferrara said the guidelines are a great document, but are worthless if they do not have any teeth. He suggested they start with enforcement.

The motion carried by a hand count of 6-0-1, with Mr. Hawksley abstaining.

Ms. Gilbert publicly thanked Mr. Burbick for helping to pay for the design guidelines. He received a round of applause at this time.

Chair Hawksley called for a brief recess at 7:50 p.m.

Chair Hawksley reconvened this meeting at 7:56 p.m. Chair Hawksley said they would receive a presentation on the Main Street 2009 Work Plan. He introduced Mary Gilbert, Executive Director, of Main Street Kent, at this time.

Ms. Gilbert said she was thrilled to work with the Main Street Board of Directors, and asked them to raise their hands at this time. They received a round of applause at this time.

Ms. Gilbert said there was an article in the Beacon Journal on the Phoenix Project. She said it says a lot in this economy that they have all of the "great stuff" happening in the downtown. There was another round of applause at this time.

Ms. Gilbert said they are required to develop a work plan in order to get their accreditation. She said the first item on the list was public relations and external communications. She said she distributed a brochure that contains a listing of all businesses, along with a map. She said they will continue the email and the Record Courier column. Ms. Gilbert said they are doing online advertising on the Courier's web page.

Ms. Gilbert said they will have more frequent updates on the website. She said they are also doing Facebook and Twitter at this time. Ms. Gilbert said they will improve their internal communications.

Ms. Gilbert said they have hired a KSU Graphic Design student who is going to rebrand and come up with a new logo. She said he will complete that by early June, and will unveil at the festival.

Ms. Gilbert said they are doing their capital campaign, which is their fund-raising. She said the official kickoff will be on July 4 at the Heritage Festival. She said Main Street guidelines are that 1/3 of the budget is covered by government; 1/3 by sponsorship; and 1/3 by events. She said their goal is to raise \$200,000 annually for five years. She said when they ask for a sponsorship, they are going to request it is done annually for five years. Mr. Burbick noted they already have some commitments.

Ms. Gilbert said the Promotions Committee will be doing the Wine and Art Festival, and have changed the name to Masterpieces on Main. She said it is moved to June, as they were fighting a lot of events in September. She said they would have more artists, adding they had to cancel and reschedule in 2008 because of the weather. She said they plan to reach out to the students at KSU who will receive a student discount on their booth. She said they will have more wineries. She said they will sell their bottles at retail at the event.

Ms. Gilbert said the Heritage Festival is July 4, and they help to plan it. She said they will have a booth for their fund-raising campaign. She said the booths will be in the middle of the street, instead of against the curbs, blocking the businesses. She said people will walk between the booths and the businesses.

Ms. Gilbert said on August 1, they will have the Tree City Triathlon, recently renamed the Black Squirrel Triathlon. She said they will have running, biking, canoeing, and kayaking. She said they will have a party on the Home Savings Plaza after the race.

Ms. Gilbert said on September 26, they will have the Sherlock Holmes Round the Town Clue Hunt. She said it will be the alphabet mystery, and will be a timed event. She said they will have prizes for the best time. She said they wanted this fun, with many different teams. She said the clues will be all over the downtown, encouraging people to go to the businesses.

Ms. Gilbert said they will have their ghost walk and family Halloween event. She said the Halloween event generates a lot of volunteers from the University. She said the event is fun, and they are done by the time the adults hit the downtown.

Ms. Gilbert said they will have a Christmas Carnival on Nov. 28, to help the downtown businesses with their Christmas sales. She said most businesses make their money thru the sales. She said they wrapped the gifts at the Stage the previous year. Mr. Burbick said they are also going to have a Christmas Window Decorating contest. He said all shops in the Phoenix Project will be invited to participate, adding he hoped the other businesses would also participate.

Ms. Gilbert said they have been doing promotional events and group advertising. She said they are at other events, and recently attended the Kent Expo.

Ms. Gilbert said the Design Committee oversaw the design guidelines. She said they are hoping to purchase about fifteen cigarette containers, and plan to ask for a donation from the Christenson Foundation. Mr. Burbick said his shops will have containers, whether they like it or not.

Ms. Gilbert said they purchased a sweeper from Kent State for \$800, and Mr. DeLeone noted it was \$30,000 when new. Ms. Gilbert said they have some insurance issues, as a nonprofit. She said it works well. She said she hoped it would be running in May or June.

Ms. Gilbert said Alan Orashan cleans up graffiti, which is an issue in Kent. She said they are going to coordinate volunteers, who will work with Mr. Orashan. Mr. Burbick said the Phoenix Project has 13 high resolution cameras being installed, which provides coverage of his property as well as other adjoining properties.

Ms. Gilbert said their last committee was the Economic Restructuring Committee. She said they have worked jointly with the Chamber, adding they are working well. Ms. Gilbert said they are doing a project on web-based marketing, adding she was at a Main Street seminar on web-based marketing and e-commerce. She said only about ½ of the downtown businesses have websites. She said she felt they could help them with some of the free services on the web. She said Andrew Dix from the Record Courier has offered to do the training.

Ms. Gilbert said they plan to have KSU students assist the businesses with the websites. She said they would be paid small amounts, and would not be as expensive as a consultant. She said they are going to update their website to do e-commerce. She said the computer science department at the University will

do all of the coding. Mr. Burbick said they hope that through one website, someone can make a reservation at the Pufferbelly and order something at the Fig Leaf. Ms. Gilbert said there were a lot of similar websites at the national conference. She said some included the ability to make hair appointments on one website.

Ms. Gilbert said they are kicking off these projects at a dinner on May 19 and breakfast on May 20 at the Phoenix building. She said she hoped to get all businesses in the door and train them on web marketing.

Ms. Gilbert said they will be talking about their pilot project, "Retail's in the Details." She said they applied for a grant, and have to match the monies received. She said they further discussed with Heritage Ohio, who was thrilled with what they have accomplished, and offered to use them as a pilot project to help businesses. Mr. Burbick noted they will fund the project entirely. She said it is free for Kent businesses, and will be done by a national consulting company. Ms. Gilbert said they will analyze everything from window designs, merchandise on the floor, to marketing plans. She said they will receive a report by mid-summer, allowing time for the businesses to make changes. She said they have good people downtown, and this is a great way to help the existing businesses.

Ms. Gilbert said they will have a webinar series, with breakfast meetings. She said it will help local businesses.

Ms. Gilbert said retail retention, expansion and recruitment are ongoing. She said they are doing ongoing work to keep the stable economic base downtown. She said they are looking at a meeting with property owners to suggest retail on the first floor owner. She said they are running out of retail space in the downtown on the first floor. She said they are meeting with students to show what they would like to see downtown.

Mr. Ferrara asked if they are doing anything in coordination with the Centennial at Kent State, and Ms. Gilbert said she has not heard a lot about it. Mr. Burbick said there are several things going on, including a marketing campaign by students. He said there is also a competition going on.

Hearing no further business, Chair Hawksley adjourned this meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Transcribed by Linda M. Copley on the 27th day of April, 2009.

Linda M. Copley

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

- 1) **TO ACCEPT THE DESIGN GUIDELINES, CONTINGENT ON THE FINAL DRAFT.**
- 2) **TO SCHEDULE COMMITTEE TIME TO DISCUSS THE MERITS OF CREATING AN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD.**