

OPERATIONS



ECONOMIC VITALITY



DESIGN



MARKETING & EVENTS



Main Street Kent: Innovative, Inclusive & Fun

At Main Street Kent, we work to make sure downtown Kent is for everyone, and that all feel welcome here. We work with community partners, businesses, volunteers and the City of Kent to make Kent a fun, vibrant and thriving community using the four-point approach to revitalization prescribed by Main Street America.

Marketing & Events

Main Street Kent's marketing efforts are concentrated in social media, digital marketing, our podcast and website. We promote Kent businesses, live music, events, activities, workshops, art exhibits/galleries, museums, the DORA, public art, walking tours, the Kent Card, outdoor recreation, the many assets of our diverse and inclusive downtown, and more!

Website - The Main Street Kent website offers a comprehensive list of businesses, robust calendar of activities and events, and ways for people to get involved and contribute to MSK as volunteers and financial supporters. Average number of unique visitors per month = **30,000+**

Facebook followers @ facebook.com/mainstreetkent: **28,250**

Instagram followers @ instagram.com/mainstreetkent: **11,047**

Weekly Newsletter subscribers: **3,000+**

Radio - In 2026, we're running spots on The Summit FM, gaining more exposure for our businesses and our city! Spots feature events, outdoor activities, and the many amenities of Kent.

New Day CLE - On July 2, we had the opportunity to highlight the Kent DORA Path and promote all that's happening in Kent, live on this show. Free exposure to thousands of viewers!

MSK Volunteer of the Week - Each week, volunteers are featured on our social media, highlighting their contributions to our work. Dedicated event volunteers, committee members and board members help to make us successful and we're grateful for the opportunity to work with them as they share their time and talents with us.

Friend of the Week - MSK supporters are highlighted on our social media, showcasing their dedication and participation in what we do! From bars, restaurants and service providers to retailers and non-profit organizations, we're proud to share the support that makes our work possible. A complete list can be viewed at: https://mainstreetkent.org/support/

Kent In Good Company Podcast - With 80+ episodes on 3 platforms, our host Katy Thomas features Kent businesses from long-standing staples to brand new ones, taking a dive into each origin story. Sponsored by Hall-Green Agency. https://mainstreetkent.org/discover/in-good-company/











Snow Day - January is a challenging month for our businesses and the community, so we hosted the third annual Snow Day — an event complete with live music, fire pits and s'mores, an ice carving exhibition and more. Businesses provided a variety of offerings including themed crafts and games, menu specials, workshops and music. Wind chills were dangerously cold that day, so live music was






moved indoors and other changes were made on the fly, so people were comfortable coming out to enjoy the event. Sponsored by the City of Kent, Kent State Center for Student Involvement, Portage Community Bank, Acme Fresh Market, Destination Kent CVB, Acorn Alley, Meijer, College Town Kent, Wright Heating, Each+ Every, Williams, Kratcoski, Griffin and Can, Daisy Makes, Daisy Pops, Klaben Auto, Hometown Bank, Kent State Hotel & Conference Center, The River Merchant, and Talk On Speech & Occupational Therapy.

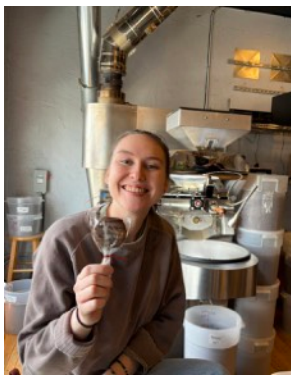



Coffee Walk - To increase winter time foot traffic and bring some caffeinated joy to the community, MSK hosted the second annual Coffee Walk on Sat., Jan. 10. Ticket holders received a CamelBak Coffee Walk tumbler at event check-in, then coffee—themed treats and items at participating businesses. From chocolate-covered espresso beans to a coffee plant, attendees had a wonderful day exploring our downtown. Business owners reported increased sales and foot traffic. Guests came from Cuyahoga Falls, Aurora, Youngstown, Stow, S. Euclid and other communities. Sponsored by Brimfield Insurance Group.

Chocolate Walk -At the Feb. 7 Chocolate Walk, 300 guests headed out with their shopping totes to over thirty participating businesses to collect chocolate treats. VIP ticket holders got to enjoy a



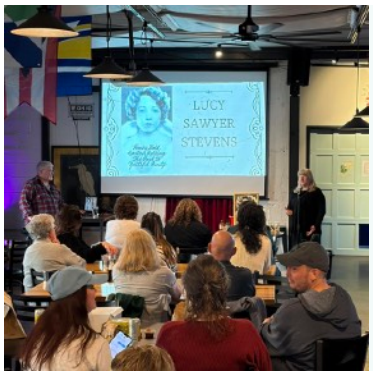




special beer and chocolate tasting with Bell Tower Brewing and Rosenberg's Candies at the end of the day. Sponsored by Squirrel City Jewelers and Keleigh Veraldo-Zucchero, Real Estate Advisor. All guests were entered in a raffle and one lucky ticket holder won a pair of diamond stud earrings!

Kent's Women in Business - During Women's History Month, we shared dozens of pictures and quotes from women who own and/or operate Kent businesses on our social media. A committee also planned these initiatives throughout the month: *Morning Mix,* hosted by Plexus, the LGBTQ+ and Allies Chamber of Commerce, at Tree City Coffee; *Her Next Level: New Heights, No Ceilings,* hosted by Stephanie Orwick, The Performance Collective, at Beware of the Leopard; *Tap Talks, Special Edition: 100 Years in Business with Michelle Sahr* at North Water Brewing; and MSK hosted a *Sip & Shop* event highlighting our female owned and operated shops, cafes, restaurants and breweries where businesses had special offers and giveaways and MSK gave out gift cards and zipper pouches.

Learn about 50+ Kent businesswomen at: https://mainstreetkent.org/female-owned-operated/









Crafty Crawl - This year's event featured local artists, craft beer and craft foods at Bell Tower Brewing, North Water Brewing and Laziza Craft Kitchen on April 19. Attendees enjoyed a free printmaking activity with one stamp at each location, as well as music and community fun on a Sunday afternoon. We're hearing this event is called "Sunday Funday" by some people now.

Celebrate the Signs of Summer - On May 21, MSK partnered with Wright Heating & Cooling for a summer kickoff party for the community, celebrating the warmer weather and the new design on the Kent sign, created by local artist Ian Marshall. Food, beverages, games, giveaways, an open house and lots of sunshine made for a perfect party on N. Water St. with families walking to the event from nearby neighborhoods.







Art & Wine Festival - MSK's signature event was held on June 6, filling the streets with incredible art, 15 Ohio wineries, food vendors, live music and lots of people. Weather threatened to put a damper on the day, but people were prepared and didn't miss a moment of the goodness prepared for this annual fundraiser. Presented by The River Merchant, sponsored by Anderson Windows, The Restoration Guys, Destination Kent CVB, Hall-Green Agency, Hometown Bank, Portage Community Bank, AMETEK, Klaben Auto, Williams, Kratcoski, Griffin and Can, and AlyKat Print & Stitch.






Tap Talk: The History of Main Street Kent - At North Water Brewing, Heather Malarcik presented the story of MSK from 2006 to present, recognizing the early efforts at downtown revitalization, the introduction of the Main Street concept in 2005 by Dave Ruller, and the steering committee, investors and support from Heritage Ohio that all helped get the program off the ground.

MSK's 20th Anniversary Events - MSK's executive committee and staff worked hard to put two events together on July 24 & 25 to commemorate two decades of downtown revitalization and community building. Sponsored by Acorn Alley, AMETEK, College Town Kent, Gigi's Ristorante & Market, Hall-Green Agency, Hometown Bank, Kent State University, Meijer, Minuteman Press, PARTA, Portage Community Bank, and Smithers-Oasis.









Main Street Kölsch - Bell Tower Brewing crafted a special batch of beer to support MSK, with $1 from each pint sold coming back to our organization. Awesome people, incredible support!

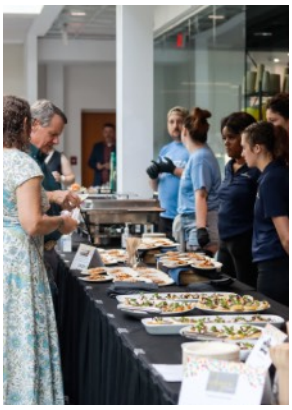
Party at the Plaza - Live music, chalk artists, cupcakes, balloons, popcorn, lemonade, balloon twisting, decorations, bubbles, free "Everyone's Downtown" bandanas, and a beautiful evening all made for a fun community event celebrating this big milestone for MSK. Kids were dancing in the grass, people were toasting to their community, and the party provided exactly what was intended — a free, enjoyable evening for everyone who attended.





MSK 20th Anniversary Celebration - The Rockwell Hall Atrium was filled with 13 Kent restaurants serving up tapas, tables were adorned with incredible centerpieces donated by Leaf Home & Blooms and Smithers-Oasis, etched commemorative glassware containing Rosenberg's Chocolates a parting gift for all who attended. DJ, dancing, food, MSK trivia, and a Golden Ticket drawing were the highlights. All food, coffee and chocolates were donated in support of MSK, thanks to Alley Mac, Bell Tower Brewing, Belleria, Bent Tree Coffee, Erie Street Kitchen, Gigi's, Laziza Craft Kitchen, Nineteen 10, Over Easy at the Depot, Rosenberg's Candies, Sonny & Olive's, The Nut House, The River Merchant, Troy Grille, and Water Street Tavern.

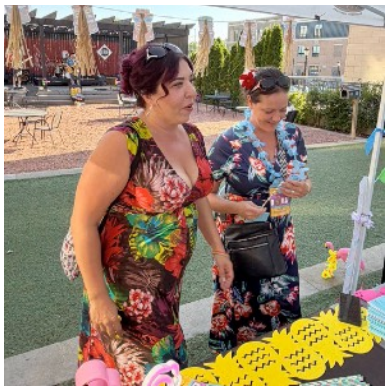


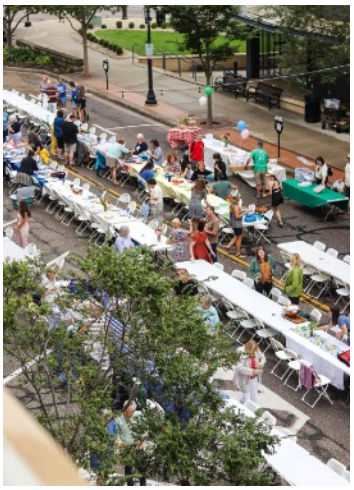




Tiki Bar Crawl / DORA Path Party - On Aug. 28, DORA Path passport holders were invited to Dan Smith Community Park for live music, free leis, and fun photo opportunities before heading out on the town for tiki drink specials at participating bars and restaurants. A fun way to get more passport stamps and celebrate summer! On Sept. 20, Kent DORA Path participants gathered at Laziza Craft Kitchen for the program finale, including food, drinks and raffle prizes — with the prizes donated by Kent bars, restaurants and breweries.









The Longest Table - In partnership with the City of Kent and local business Hazelmade, this second annual event took place on Erie St., between the Kent State Hotel & Conference Center and the PARTA parking facility. Tables were set for 480 guests who brought table decorations, food to share with their own table and desserts to share at the community dessert table. Quickly becoming a community favorite, there was also a live DJ, community craft activities and incredible community spirit.

Design

The MSK Design Committee is focused on the aesthetics of downtown Kent. This group of volunteers implements public art projects and works to keep Kent beautiful in many ways, including flower bed plantings and hanging flower baskets, seasonal clean up days, graffiti removal and more.



The KENT Sign Redesign - It was time for for the annual "refresh" of the the Kent Sign, so we put a call out to the public for new design submissions and received 60+ entries! After much consideration, the committee chose the work of Ian Marshall and his new design was unveiled on May 21 at a *Signs of Summer Celebration* with MSK and Wright Heating & Cooling. Kent sign redesign sponsored by Each + Every.

March for Art - MSK and Kent City Schools partnered on this new community-wide program to celebrate student creativity. Featuring nearly 800 works of art throughout downtown Kent, 20 businesses hosted art created by K-12 grade students on their walls for the month. There was a celebration at Kent City Hall for students and their families to pick up maps and 'March for Art Artist' buttons to wear before heading out the explore the artwork around town, and to meet Danny Likar, the artist who created the new piece hanging in the lobby at City Hall. This program was hugely popular and our hope is to continue and expand it next year!











Adopt a Spot - At the end of May, dozens of volunteers and sponsors filled the downtown flowerbeds and planters with thousands of beautiful flowers. In early June, the flower baskets were hung and have not stopped growing! Sponsors and volunteers are listed on our website at https://mainstreetkent.org/about/.



Clean Up Kent - On May 30, Kent City Councilman and MSK volunteer Benjamin Tipton led a group of community members in the spring edition of Clean Up Kent. Dozens of people came out to pick up litter, clean up graffiti and make our downtown look good!



Woven Mural - MSK worked with the city to create a vibrant public art installation on an 80-foot chain link fence, which provided a not-so-pleasant view into an area that will be redeveloped in the next couple of years. A woven vinyl mural by Stephen Tornero has been installed into the fence, next to Maddalena's, repurposing vinyl art pieces from previous art banners, creating a colorful, dynamic view! Picnic tables and flower pots make this a nice little area for people to relax and enjoy the view.

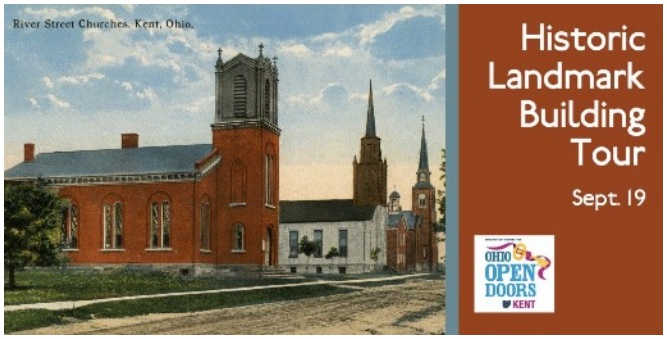


Self-Portrait Public Art Banners - A new set of vinyl art banners has been installed, thanks to the creativity of Davey & Walls Elementary 4th grade students. "Brighter Together" showcases their self-portraits in four locations throughout the downtown bringing vibrant, student artworks to our amazing public art scene. These self-portraits were a part of the March for Art program.





Paint the Town Blue & Gold - A new initiative this year, MSK worked with local businesses to decorate the downtown for the week leading up to Parents and Families Weekend, with Kent State University Homecoming happening the following weekend. Over 20 businesses decorated, plus the W. Main St. bridge was woven with blue and gold, complete with pole banners. Prizes were awarded to the #1 "Flashiest" (Bent Tree Coffee), #2 (Sun in Leo) and #3 (The Nut House) best decorated windows as decided by the KSU homecoming court.



Ohio Open Doors - Main Street Kent and the Kent Historical Society & Museum participated in this program coordinated by the Ohio History Connection. Five events took place between Sept. 15-20, including Tap Talks: History of Music in Kent, Kent Historical Society & Museum Open House, Kent State University Museum Tour, Historic Pub Crawl, Historic Landmark building Tour and Historic Homes Tour. All events were free and featured the history of our great city, with hundreds of community members and visitors celebrating Kent, OH. More details at https://mainstreetkent.org/discover/ohio-open-doors/

Economic Vitality

The Economic Vitality Committee creates programming to drive foot traffic to our businesses through "around town" promotions, develops opportunities for businesses to collaborate for the betterment of the downtown district as a whole, and creates tools and training opportunities to assist small business owners in the interest of cultivating an economically vibrant Kent.



Downtown Business Meet Ups - Each month, MSK partners with KACC to host Monday morning meet ups at local businesses, giving business owners a chance to meet, share stories and ideas, collaborate, and learn from each other. Topics have included The Power of AI, Social Media 101, Engaging with Kent State University Students, Building Your Brand, Next Level Social Media and more. A combination of new and veteran business owners fill the room and new relationships and collaborations are happening all the time.



Foodie February - This promotion was designed to help our eateries during the slowest time of year. Participants could pick up a BINGO card at any of 25 participating businesses, then get it stamped whenever they made a purchase of any amount during the month. Cards could then be entered in a drawing where $750 in Kent Cards were given as prizes; 20 people won $25 each and one person won $250. Prizes were sponsored by Emerson Consumer Care.

BOOMS Tracker - Main Street Kent is now using an Economic Vitality tool offered my Main Street America. The Building Opportunities on Main Street (BOOMS) Tracker is an innovative digital tool designed to help local leaders revitalize vacant and underused spaces in Main Street districts. The BOOMS Tracker allows us to collect, organize, and present data about our community's built environment — making it easier to identify potential for growth and redevelopment.



Kent DORA Path - Participants explored the Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area at 23 bars, restaurants, breweries, a board game cafe and a coffee/book shop in Kent not eh DORA Path. Sponsored by Jack Daniel's and El Jimador, our second year offered a digital passport option and more chances to win prizes just for making a DORA purchase at 5 locations during the three-month promotion. The promotion included a Tiki Bar Crawl and an DORA Path Party at the end.

Downtown Business Visits - Making visits, asking questions and encouraging dialogue with our business owners is important so we can support them and connect them to resources they may not otherwise know about. We are working to schedule more of these visits for intentional connection with our business owners, new and old, gleaning new ideas for our business meet ups too!



Flashes First Friday - Thousands of Kent State University students came downtown for a welcome event on Aug. 21, with businesses and organizations welcoming them for the new semester. MSK coordinated free food sample vouchers with local restaurants so students could experience a taste of Kent — including pizza at Belleria, ice cream at Good Golly, chips and guac at Barrio, and more. We all work to make students feel welcome so they visit downtown regularly as a part of our community.

Operations

The MSK Operations Committee is focused on fundraising, board development and succession planning, volunteer recruitment and retention, and the overall health of the organization.

MSK Board of Directors - This year, we welcomed Alicia Hall and Joe Robinson to the board and we're excited to have them on our team!

President - Ed Butch, CITI Program
Vice President - Bridget Tipton, Bell Tower Brewing and Studio Inlay
Secretary - Joy Pahls, Portage Community Bank
Treasurer - Colin Boyle, Hometown Bank
Economic Vitality Committee Chair - Eric Helmstedter, City of Kent
Design Committee Chair - Oliver Wuensch, Kent Parks & Recreation
Marketing/Design Staff - Lesley Sickle
Executive Director - Heather Malarcik





Board Members - Mike Beder, Cleveland Bagel, Kent Sportswear, Lake House Kitchen, The Loft, Venice Cafe, Water Street Tavern; Dominique Bollenbacher, City of Kent; Alicia Hall, Flourish Plant Mkt., Ron Petrosky, retired IT; Joe Robinson, Kent State University Center for Student Involvement; Jessica Ryan, Smithers-Oasis

Board of Governors - Mike Lewis, Hometown Bank



Volunteers - Our volunteers work on MSK committees, events and projects, and serve on our board of directors. During Q3 2026, we benefited from 2,150 volunteer hours. The average value of a volunteer hour of work is $34.79, so that's nearly $75K in time and expertise contributed to our program and city already this year!

Volunteer Meet Ups - Thanks to MSK volunteer liaison and board member Joy Pahls, we've hosted three volunteer meet ups this year at Last Exit Books on Jan. 12 and Fresco on May 7 and The Pub in Kent on September 24. Many longtime volunteers and several brand new folks gathered at each one, getting to know each other, learning how they can get involved.

National Accreditation - After a complete assessment with Heritage Ohio on Jan. 29, Main Street Kent received annual accreditation from Main Street America. This reflects our adherence to the Main Street America program's rigorous standards, which include:

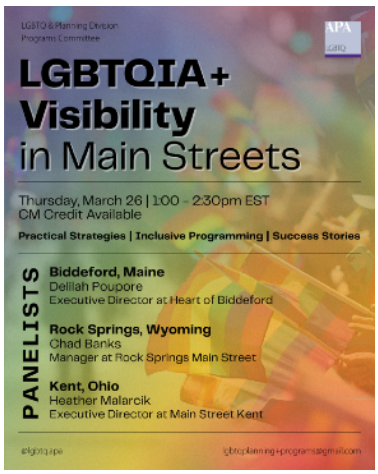
~ Building grassroots revitalization initiatives,

~ Cultivating strong public-private partnerships,

~ Expanding economic opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs, and

~ Actively preserving historic places, spaces, and cultural assets.

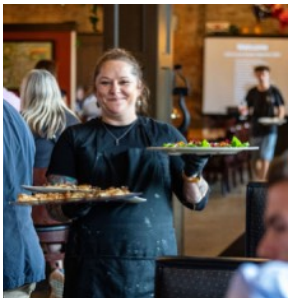
LGBTQIA+ Visibility in Main Streets - On March 26, Heather Malarcik participated in a panel discussion with 300+ virtual attendees from all over the country, sharing our experience with creating inclusive programming and other aspects of cultivating a community where all feel welcome.





MSK Annual Awards Celebration - We love celebrating and recognizing the people who make MSK awesome, as we could not do our work without their support. This year's celebration took place at Over Easy at the Depot, with delicious food and beverages, a short presentation and awards given to: Laziza Craft Kitchen (President's Award), Hometown Bank (Business of the Year), The Bookworms (Adopt a Spot of the Year), Bridget Tipton (Mike Finley Spirit of Main Street Award), Bell Tower Brewing (Bad Ass of the Year), Oliver Wuensch (Volunteer of the Year), Kent City Schools (Partner of the Year), Morgan Woodin (Event Volunteer of the Year), and Joe Robinson (Committee Volunteer of the Year).






Heritage Ohio Annual Conference & Awards Celebration - This year, we had several people from our team at the conference in Cincinnati, attending sessions and connecting with other Main Streeters from Ohio. Three of our nominations made it to the finals, with one big winner announced at the awards celebration: Bridget Tipton won Volunteer of the Year! Other finalists were Laziza Craft Kitchen for Business of the Year and our March for Art program for Main Street Event of the Year. We're happy to be recognized on the state level for the exceptional work of our people.





Thank you for your support of MSK.