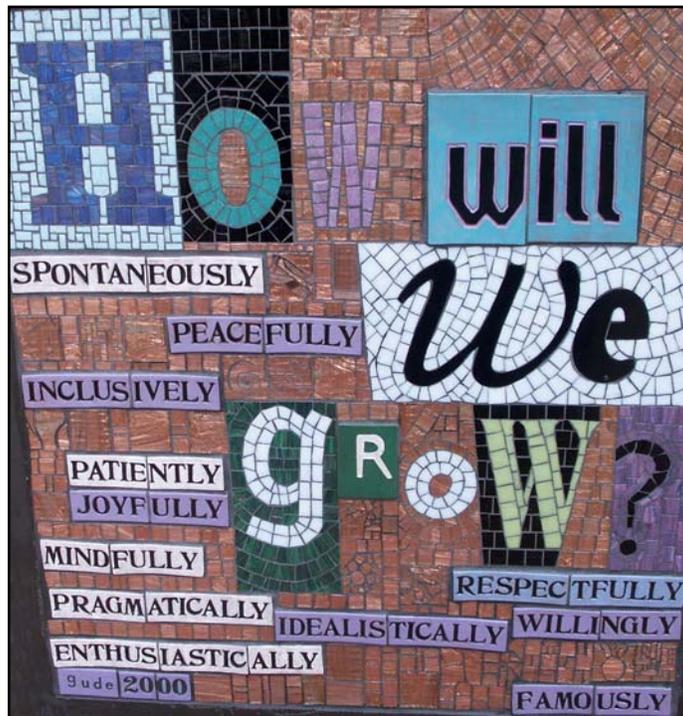


Building Covington's Future

A Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Process



center for great neighborhoods
OF COVINGTON



TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Mayor and City Commissioners	3
Introduction	4
Developing the Strategic Plan	6
Brief Covington History	8
Covington Demographic Profile	11
Overview of the Strategic Plan	13
<i>Visions, Goals, Strategies, and Priority Projects</i>	
Housing and Neighborhoods	18
Arts and Culture	23
Preservation	28
Education	33
Downtown	37
Greenspace	43
Safety	47
Transportation	51
Rivers	56
<i>Appendices</i>	
Appendix A – Detailed Covington history.....	60
Appendix B – All projects created by action teams.....	71



From the Mayor and City Commissioners

As you read this plan, you will see that it is not really just the City of Covington's Strategic Plan, it is the *community* of Covington's plan. As this city's elected leaders, we are exceedingly proud of what our residents, partners, city staff, and other stakeholders together have created: a vision for a vibrant community where we celebrate our heritage, our physical assets, and most importantly, the contributions of all of our residents.

The way this plan was developed reflects in a very real sense how we will make progress in our city. A broad spectrum of citizens and stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints will need to work together in collaboration for the shared vision of a better Covington. Although we may not always agree on *how* to get there, we should all agree to always respect each other and trust that we all *want* to get there. If we do that, we will fulfill the great potential of this plan and truly honor its integrity.

We, your City Commission, sincerely thank all of those who participated and who partnered with us in creating this plan. We know that this plan showcases our city's greatest asset: our residents and our other citizen stakeholders.

Mayor Irvin "Butch" Callery

Commissioner Jerry Bamberger

Commissioner Sherry Carran

Commissioner Steve Megerle

Commissioner Jerry Stricker

Introduction

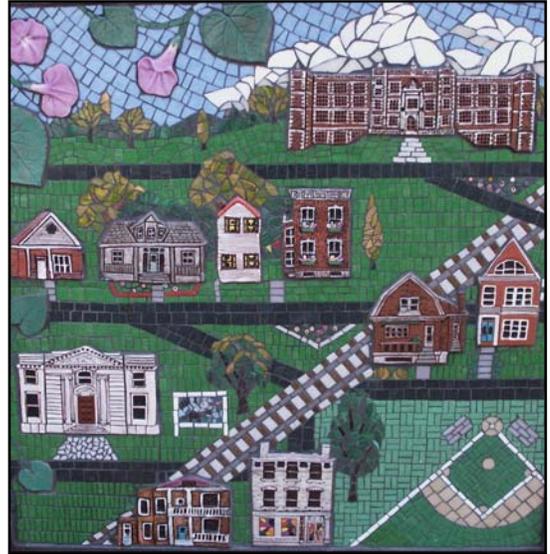
By: John Jay Fossett
Covington City Manager

"If you don't know where you're going, you probably will end up somewhere else."

-- Laurence J. Peter

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt



Before you can take a trip, you first need to determine your destination. Once that is determined, you can then get directions on how to get there. Without either – your destination or directions – you are simply lost.

Last year, the City of Covington and other city stakeholders did something unique: it asked its residents, business owners, and others to help determine the city's ultimate destination as a community and to help create the "road map" that will get the city to that destination.

The city -- in conjunction with its partners, the Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington, the Covington Business Council, and the Covington Independent Public Schools -- conducted a community visioning process that led to frank conversations and generated numerous ideas that coalesced into this strategic plan.

Since its inception, this process has placed a great deal of emphasis on public participation. Citizens have participated in all facets of the process: they attended community gatherings and retreats; they met as "break-out" teams to create the vision, goals, strategies, and projects of each of the nine topic areas; and they actually drafted the plan itself. They will also be the most important element in seeing that the plan and its objectives are implemented.

In his best-selling book, *The World is Flat*, author Thomas Freidman examined the great changes that are taking place in our time, fueled in large part by swift advances in technology and communications, changes that are "flattening" the world in which we live. In his book, Freidman discusses two important concepts – the self-directed consumer and collaboration – as dramatically changing the world in which we live. Both of these concepts are incorporated into and are important components of the Covington strategic plan.

In today's flat, Internet-savvy world, because of an abundance of choices, consumers now have more control over companies (and cities, for that matter) and the products and services these entities provide, and these consumers have adapted their choices accordingly. By allowing citizens to determine the city's future through a community visioning and strategic planning process, which we have done, these self-directed consumers are more likely to continue live and

work in Covington and continue to work to improve the city in which they have invested their time and energy. In addition, others are more likely to move into a city that is listening to its residents.

The second issue discussed by Friedman in this book is the essence of the entire community visioning and strategic planning process: collaboration. In his book, Friedman recognizes that the best companies in the world are also the best collaborators. The same goes for cities.

The process that led to this strategic plan has involved collaboration from start to finish – and will continue to require collaboration in the future to accomplish the goals, strategies, and projects set forth in the plan.

Collaboration started at the very beginning with the four partners who conceived and directed development of the plan: the City of Covington, the Center for Great Neighborhoods, the Covington Business Council, and the Covington Independent Public Schools. However, the collaboration really kicked into high gear when the city’s residents, employees, neighborhood associations, businesses, civic organizations, social service agencies, and other stakeholders got involved in the process.

The end result is a strategic plan in which Covingtonians, as self-directed consumers and collaborators, have told their local government -- not the other way around -- the type of community in which they want to live, work, and play. These same citizens have agreed that they will contribute their time and energy to achieving this vision in the future.

This strategic plan establishes clear, unified goals and strategies for the city’s future, and together with our citizens, we will implement these objectives. The plan also will guide the city in terms of service delivery and resource allocation priorities.

Finally, this strategic plan (and the goals contained in it) will provide a measure of accountability by allowing the city and the community as a whole to track how successful the community has been in achieving the objectives established in the plan. In other words, it will allow us to create a “report card” that will catalogue our successes -- or failures -- as the case may be.

The development of this strategic was an enormous undertaking and it could not have been accomplished without the hard work and dedication of many, many people. The partners wish to thank all those people who contributed their precious time and energy to this process. But remember, our work is not finished. In fact, we are at the beginning of another stage in the process – implementation of the plan – and we must continue to work together to make Covington an even better place to live, work, and play.

Developing the Plan

By: Jeffrey Stec
Facilitator



The Covington City Commission and the City Manager could have asked a dozen or so traditional leaders of Covington to spend a weekend together and create a strategic plan for the city. Those leaders could have presented a great plan to citizens and stakeholders, asking them to “buy in and help make it happen.” Such a plan,

however, would have probably failed to achieve any lasting results – just as the strategic plans of other bright city leaders have failed to create a future much different than the past – because citizens and stakeholders were not included in the plan development.

This plan was created differently, however. Our intention was to build Covington’s future by creating a public conversation based on mutual accountability and commitment. In other words, to create a better future, *all* Covington stakeholders must act as owners and co-creators of their city. To be a powerful owner of anything, we must make promises with no expectation of return and no conditions placed on another’s action. Without such a personal stance, we can merely react to the choices of others. To make such commitments, a foundation of trust must be built.

The planning process was sponsored by four organizations – the Center for Great Neighborhoods, the Covington Business Council, the City of Covington, and the Covington Independent Public Schools – all committed to *engaging the disengaged* in defining the city’s future. An inclusive range of stakeholders was invited to public meetings where everyone’s voice was heard and valued – and where decisions were actually made. And because the process was designed as a planning *and implementation* process, the same stakeholders who wrote the plan are expected and committed to make it happen.

Because of its design, this plan has *already* changed Covington for the better. There are nine citizen teams that developed the plan and are ready to begin implementing the plan *today*. These teams will come together and share priorities to create synergies. Because citizens have ownership of the plan, they are truly partnering with city government to build Covington’s future – and to engage even more people in implementation.

The planning process began with 10 public sessions (scattered across the city) designed to introduce the concept of citizen ownership and accountability, to explore nine different topics of civic concern (safety, green space, downtown, transportation, etc.), and to develop new relationships between stakeholders. People were divided into small groups so that they could get to know each other and engage in authentic conversation. This renewed hope that change could happen and inspired people to continue participating in the process.

Four community retreats, open to the public and held at Drees Pavilion or The Madison, were each attended by more than 125 stakeholders – including many faces new to community work – because word had gotten out that the city was *listening*. Working in rotating small groups organized around the nine topic areas, stakeholders brainstormed *what* was possible and *how* they might go about creating it.

Over the course of the community retreats, patterns and priorities were identified by engaging in dialogue that tapped into the collective wisdom of the group and unearthed common ground. Topic area teams were formed – any citizen or stakeholder could join a team – to put more detail on the ideas that came from the all-community retreats. Each team met several times to create a vision, goals, strategies and projects/programs for its topic area.

Eventually, citizen team-leaders, professional team facilitators, and a group of city stewards were asked to identify a comprehensive vision, core strategy, and project synergies from the ideas bubbling up from the topic area teams. By pulling together these diverse community threads, the group was able to craft a focused approach that will guide the allocation of city and citizen resources in pursuit of the plan’s goals.

We believe our primary purpose was achieved: use broad citizen engagement to create a powerful plan that inspires an ongoing city-citizen partnership to build Covington’s future. Still, the civic engagement work never ends, as more stakeholders are necessary to successfully implement the plan and build a future much different than the past. In Covington, however, the process is well underway.

Brief Covington History

Founded in 1814 on the west side of the Licking River at its confluence with the Ohio River, the town of Covington was originally platted to be five blocks by five blocks. Initially, growth in the city was slow, but by the mid-1800s, in large part because of the influx of German immigrants, Covington's population grew significantly, creating a number of distinct and diverse neighborhoods within the city.

Starting in the mid-1800s, the City of Covington expanded its boundaries through a number property annexations to the south and west of the original platted city. By the end of the 19th century, Covington was a thriving urban community, stretching from the Ohio River to the north and to Banklick Creek to the south. The population of Covington grew from 743 in 1830, to 24,505 in 1870, to 42,938 in 1900.



In its infancy, most of the commerce in Covington was connected with the rivers that formed the northern and eastern boundaries of the city. The city's first manufacturing concern, a cotton factory, was built near the river in 1828, and three years later, another business, a rolling mill and nail factory, was established along Scott Street near the riverfront.

The first commercial center of the city was established around the "public square" platted between Third and Fourth Streets and Scott Boulevard and Greenup Street. Later, in the mid-1800s, Main Street (in the area now known as Mainstrasse) became a thriving commercial center.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, in large part because of the construction of the Covington and Lexington Railroad, the Madison Avenue and Pike Street area became the city's and the region's primary commercial center. With a train stop at Russell and Pike Streets, which was also near the terminus of the Covington and Lexington Turnpike, this area of the city became a beehive of commercial activity. Packing houses, groceries, dry goods stores, meat markets, printers, jewelers, saloons, lumber yards, machine shops, hardware stores, and more than 20 hotels cropped up in this area of the city.

The next major project that spurred the economic growth of Covington was the decade-long construction of the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge between Covington and Cincinnati. Started in 1856, the bridge did not formally open until January 1, 1867, because of delays caused by the Civil War and other events. The Suspension Bridge - originally designed for horse cars and pedestrians - was reconstructed in the late 1890s to accommodate electric streetcars - and in a few short years, automobiles.



During the early 1900s, many new commercial and governmental structures were constructed in the city. The heyday for Covington as the commercial and cultural center for all of Northern Kentucky was the first two decades of the 20th century. During these decades, particularly the 1920s, the city's downtown was a bustling place of activity, with numerous restaurants, department stores, shops, saloons, banks, theaters, and offices bringing swarms of people downtown.

This was also a period when the manufacturing industry significantly increased in Covington. Of particular note was the growth of The Stewart Iron Work Company, which employed as many as 600 people in 1915. The Bavarian Brewery was a large employer in the west side with strong sales until Prohibition in 1918. Other manufacturing firms that operated during this time period include the United States Motor Truck Company and Kelley-Koett Manufacturing Corp. of Covington, Ky., one of the country's earliest manufacturers x-ray accessories and equipment.

Known for many of its beautiful churches, this was also the time frame during which one of the city's icons, St. Mary's Basilica Cathedral of the Assumption, was built, which was dedicated in 1910. It was also during this time frame when the city acquired two of its most prized parks: Goebel Park in the Mainstrasse neighborhood and Devou Park, more than 500 acres of pristine land in the western hills of the city.

The city's population grew to its highest recorded count -- 65,252 -- in 1930. The U.S. Census Bureau recorded the city's first drop in population in its history in 1940, when the population was documented at 62,018. For the next two decades, the population would remain in the low-to middle-60,000s. While the Great Depression of the 1930s devastated many Covington businesses and residents, the city's decline did not become pronounced until the 1960s. Post-World War II urban flight, coupled with a substantial reduction in the city's manufacturing sector, caused a significant decline in the city's workforce as well as its resident population.

If the 1920s was the last great decade for Covington, then the 1970s -- and to a certain extent the early 1980s -- was the nadir for the city, at least with respect to its downtown. It was then that the city began a downward spiral of disinvestment, which continued for several decades. In fact, in the late 1970s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development identified Covington as one of the country's "most distressed cities."

However, beginning in the mid- to late-1980s, Covington began its revival. New buildings were constructed, jobs were created, and population loss began to stabilize. In the past two decades, city's riverfront area has been redeveloped with the construction of office towers, hotels, a convention center, and entertainment venues. In 1994, Fidelity Investments established a 188-acre campus in south Covington, constructing three office buildings on the campus of approximately 780,000 square feet and employing 2,000 employees. Fidelity Investments is now

expanding this campus by building two new buildings, which will create an additional 1,500 to 2,000 jobs.

These and other recent accomplishments were due in part to the action of dedicated residents, neighborhood groups, and business advocacy groups. The first round of this neighborhood movement came about in the mid- to late-1970s as part of a reformist movement to improve the city and it continues today with several active neighborhood associations.



The renaissance that began in the 1980s continues today. Since last year, developers started construction of more than \$120 million in new residential housing in the downtown area of the city, with another multi-million dollar housing development now underway in south Covington. Among the downtown residential projects that currently are under construction are the \$55 million, 21-story condominium project known as the Ascent at Roebling's Bridge; The Views, a \$50-million, 125-unit residential townhouse development on the hillside off of Pike Street in the Lewisburg neighborhood; and Phase 1 of the \$13-million, 64-unit PULSE loft condominium project located in the heart of the Covington Arts District on Russell and Eighth Streets. In addition, a number of loft condominiums are being constructed in downtown historic buildings. A 1,000-unit residential subdivision is also underway in south Covington, off of Ky. 17, which will feature condominiums, patio homes, and single-family residences.

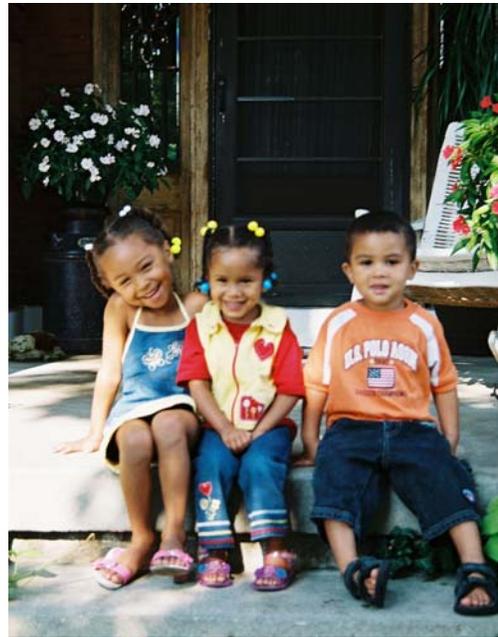
The city's economic growth and job creation continues to boom. In addition to the Fidelity Investments' expansion, St. Elizabeth Hospital/HealthPoint will soon start construction of a new \$34-million medical facility off of 12th Street near 1-75, which will create approximately 230 jobs. In addition, a number of new businesses, including three architecture firms, retail outlets, and dining and entertainment venues continue to locate and grow in the city and several other economic development projects are currently underway.

For a more complete history of the city of Covington, please see Appendix A.

Covington Demographic Profile

Population

Household growth is the main driver for housing demand. Even though population has grown only slightly, the number of households in the city has increased 4.7 percent to 18,257 units, according to the last census. Household size has continued to decrease since 1980 from 2.91 to 2.38 because of the decline in married-couple households and the increase in single-person households.



Minority populations have grown at a faster rate than the white population in Covington. The African-American population has increased to 4,310, or 31 percent, over a 10-year period, according to the last census, and the Hispanic population has increased to more than 600 in the same period.

Although Covington's educational attainment is similar to the region, a gap exists in the percentage of the population with college degrees. For example, in the city only 6.75 percent of the population more than 25 years old has obtained a bachelor's degree, compared to 13 percent for the region. The level of education is a prime determinant of income in the long run.

Income

Per capita and household income has increased in Covington by 64.5 percent, according to the last census, which is at a faster pace than the county and the region. Despite the percentage increase, the city's per capita and average household income lags behind the county and region in dollars. According to the last census, Covington's per capita income is \$17,094, compared to \$21,910 in the county and \$22,833 in the region. For the same period, Covington's average household income was \$40,879, compared to \$55,835 in the county and \$58,360 in the region. For income, the I-275 beltway is a major dividing line. To the north, median household incomes range from \$20,000 to \$30,000, and to the south, median household incomes range from \$57,000 to \$69,000.

The city's occupational license tax receipts for individuals has continued to increase over the last few years, which means that jobs and wages have grown. The highest percentage of the workforce is in technical/sales and administrative support positions, followed by managerial/professional specialty and administrative support positions.

Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity

Over the past several decades, Covington has become a more diverse community. White population has declined by 26 percent from 51,329 in 1970 to 37,862 in 2000, and the African-American population has increased from 3,341 to 4,310. Other ethnic groups have increased from 269 to 866 during the same period. Overall, the city population is 87 percent white and 13 percent minority.

Housing

The housing stock in Covington is comparatively old. The city has 21 historic districts, which is second in the state behind only Louisville. The median year for construction in the city is 1942, compared to 1966 in the region. Nearly half of the housing structures were built before 1939, according to the latest census. To help keep the housing stock in good condition, the city has aggressively enforced building and nuisance code violations through the Code Enforcement Department and the Code Enforcement Board. Fines for non-compliance can be \$100 per day, up to a total of \$10,000.

The homeownership rate for Covington reported in the last census was 45.5 percent, which trails the region at 61 percent and the county at 62 percent. Covington is challenged to compete for buyers in the housing market. Only 22 percent of the housing stock is valued above \$100,000, according to the last census, which means that the housing stock is relatively unattractive to move-up home buyers but is affordable for first-time home buyers. The more recent increase in market-rate new construction in the city is providing home ownership opportunities for young professionals, empty nesters, and alternative lifestyle buyers.

Vision Statement

Covington as a safe, prosperous, and beautiful city that uses its unique river heritage, vibrant downtown, and friendly neighborhoods to retain, attract, and engage diverse stakeholders in working cooperatively to build livable communities that include:

- Effective transportation systems, including alternative modes such as biking and walking;
- Abundant greenspace;
- Excellent community schools;
- Quality housing for all income levels;
- Good employment opportunities;
- Highly effective city government; and
- Commitment to arts, culture, and historic preservation.

Core Strategy: To connect people and places to build an engaged, caring community.

Community is built on relationships – the ongoing connections between people with a stake in the community. People who have relationships are more likely to share community responsibility, care for others they don't know, and become engaged in civic work. Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, has found that the level of connection between members of civic associations determines the effectiveness of their community-change efforts.

Consequently, the core strategy of this plan is to foster stakeholder relationships by:

- Interconnecting neighborhoods, green spaces, and community gathering spaces in a manner that allows for effortless resident interaction. Urban relationships are often started and maintained on the street, where people “bump into one another” and start talking. An interconnected community – whether for walking the dog, shopping, or visiting a friend – generates the meetings that are essential to creating a strong community fabric in an urban setting.

Moreover, market data shows that there is an unsatisfied demand for housing in walkable communities, especially in urban areas. By designing an alternative transportation system (walking and biking) that complements automobiles, the city can connect the following physical assets in a unique and marketable way:

- Neighborhoods;
- Downtown;
- Parks, greenspace, and riverfronts;

- Community focal points, including schools;
 - Arts venues (including the arts district);
 - Cultural destinations and preservation sites; and
 - Commercial districts.
- Engaging stakeholders in community projects improves the city. When people work together on things they care about, they build deep and lasting relationships. As relationships deepen and projects are successful, a beneficial cycle develops that continues to engage more people in even more successful projects. For example, citizen leaders plan to engage stakeholders in:
 - Building new, and maintaining existing, greenspace;
 - Creating neighborhood focal points as centers of community life;
 - Partnering with police to create safe streets;
 - Partnering with the city to strengthen code enforcement;
 - Organizing community events in parks, on riverfronts, and downtown; and
 - Improving the public schools;

Using relationships to implement projects that connect people will sustain long-term community engagement and success.

Strategy and Project Synergies

1. High impact and low cost mean quick starts and sustainable results.

- a. *Harness legislative leadership.* Up to this point, the city's elected officials have intentionally played a limited role in the process so that citizen voices could be clearly heard. The elected officials will now provide a more active role as they help implement the plan.
- b. *Expand stakeholder engagement.* The plan was created as a grass-roots effort and is intended to reflect both stakeholders' desires and their *continued* participation. The plan calls for engaging more stakeholders because the key strategies require broad engagement to be successful.
- c. *Build the capacity of neighborhood associations.* People are the primary focus of the plan because broad stakeholder engagement is the key to *sustaining* success in any area of civic development. While cities should support the efforts of citizens to mobilize their resources, community-building efforts are most effective when led by resident stakeholders. These efforts often require little or no expenditure of public resources. Consequently, stakeholders can efficiently address a number of goals set by the community, including:
 - i. Creating public art;
 - ii. Building and maintaining public green space;
 - iii. Promoting awareness of historic preservation and cultural assets;

- iv. Promoting strategies that connect people and places;
 - v. Creating unique neighborhood focal points;
 - vi. Planning events for public gathering spaces; and
 - vii. Contributing to the creation of a safe, clean, and vibrant downtown.
- d. ***Increase citizen involvement in public safety.*** While this has some overlap with the development of neighborhood associations, the importance of public safety is of such critical importance that this subject needs special emphasis. The plan emphasizes the importance of improving police/community relations and encouraging a culture of high expectations for community conduct, specifically:
- i. Enforcing the housing code;
 - ii. Keeping downtown and other neighborhoods safe and clean;
 - iii. Protecting green space and the citizens using it; and
 - iv. Ensuring compliance with historic guidelines.
- e. ***Partner with other regional, government, and quasi-government entities.*** A wave of civic planning is occurring at all levels of tri-state leadership. For this plan to have maximum impact, the city must combine its efforts with these other entities and jurisdictions. By forming a web of interdependence, each becomes stronger.
- f. ***Identify with and utilize heritage in building the city's future.*** From the architecture to the river, Covington is blessed with historic assets that distinguish it from other cities. By incorporating this heritage into all aspects of this plan, Covington's growth and success will be accelerated.

2. High impact, medium cost means getting started with strategic care.

- a. ***Hold free, citizen-driven events in public spaces.*** A cohesive community only happens when people gather. When gathered in public spaces, common bonds are built that generate momentum for more community projects. By providing free access to events in public spaces (through sponsorships or volunteer action), everyone can feel part of the community and will be more likely to participate in other ways.
- b. ***Build new, and improve existing, green space.*** Appreciation of Covington's abundant green space was a major theme throughout the planning process – people want to improve existing green space, build/develop more throughout the city (including pocket parks), and connect those green spaces and neighborhoods with walking/biking trails. This is a critical element in creating a user-friendly environment that will retain and attract residents.
- c. ***Ensure the city is safe and clean.*** This must remain a focus. In addition to low-cost citizen safety initiatives, medium-cost efforts would be undertaken by the city departments to improve safety and cleanliness. Essentially, this denotes an ongoing priority for the city budgeting process.

3. Low cost, medium/high impact means getting started now as a building block for other efforts.

- a. *Education Council.* As a national benchmark, Education Councils have proven to engage a diverse cross-section of all those touched by the school system – i.e. the entire community. By establishing a common forum, a holistic and integrated educational plan can be developed so that the entire community is working toward student achievement.
- b. *Community as classroom.* While the Education Council would spearhead general educational improvements, the “community as classroom” concept stresses the importance of getting students involved in civic life at an early age as well as promoting life-long learning in the community. Integrating student volunteerism and leadership opportunities into school curricula will engage more stakeholders in the emotional lives of children, build a tradition of civic activism, tap a wealth of resources for completing community projects, and provide more prosperity for adult learners and their families.
- c. *Citizen Arts and Culture Advisory Group.* Similar to the Education Council, this advisory group would engage all arts stakeholders to build an ongoing dialogue and common agenda to support the arts and culture community.

4. Medium cost, medium/high impact means getting started with careful planning as to how the work will be utilized.

- a. *Build a comprehensive way-finding system.* Residents and visitors alike would benefit from a comprehensive system of finding the many assets offered by the city.
- b. *Conduct separate housing, education, arts and safety economic impact studies.* To know how much city resources should be spent on any given project or initiative, the “return on investment” needs to be calculated, especially before high costs are incurred.
- c. *Conduct market studies.* Nearly every aspect of the plan needs baseline market data to effectively implement and track any strategies, goals, and projects.
- d. *Track data and compare against the plan.* For the plan to be successful, all projects and strategies must be continually monitored for effectiveness. With good data the plan will evolve and improve over time. An annual community “report card” will be developed to hold all stakeholders accountable for progress on the plan.

5. High impact but medium/high cost means starting now but with much planning and/or slow rollout.

- a. ***Create “alternate” (biking and walking) transportation system.*** National data shows that people of all ages crave walkable and bikeable communities that integrate lifestyle amenities in a concentrated area. Because of its infrastructure and design, Covington is poised to take advantage of that trend if it can build a network of alternate transportation that gives people the opportunity to live without dependence on a car.
- b. ***Build model zones to demonstrate comprehensive application of these strategies.*** Focusing comprehensive community development efforts in geographically concentrated and strategically important areas will 1) show what’s possible in Covington when everything is working together, and 2) quickly transform key areas to create a broader tipping point for the city as a whole.
- c. ***Administration-implemented broken-windows law and code enforcement.*** Nipping petty crimes, blight, and litter in the bud changes behaviors so that dramatic problems can’t take hold of a neighborhood. Having the city administration use such an approach can be costly, but combined with the model zone concept, it can be workable and is certainly effective in many places.
- d. ***Market city identity and assets.*** All groups identified the need to market what’s good about Covington, as awareness leads to pride, action, and improvement. Special interest was paid to the following:
 - i. Cultural, historic, and natural assets.
 - ii. Neighborhood identities and focal points.

6. High impact yet high cost means that these strategies are important, but will be slow to implement (step-by-step prioritization is necessary).

- a. *Improve streets, alleys, and streetscapes.*
- b. *Make major capital improvements to green space.*
- c. *Build major capital amenities along riverfronts.*
- d. *Create housing and commercial incentives to spur housing and commercial development.*
- e. *Build more parking.*
- f. *Add a streetcar system, shuttles, and a tram from Goebel Park to Devou Park.*
- g. *Design and implement a systematic, multi-modal transportation system (walking, biking, automobile, public transportation, and rivers) along the rights-of-way.*
- h. *Improve transportation connections among different neighborhoods and focal points in a context-sensitive manner.*

Housing and Neighborhoods



We want Covington neighborhoods to be a place people *choose* to live. A vibrant community is comprised of a healthy mix of lower-, middle-, and upper-income residents; homeowners and tenants; and young professionals, empty-nesters, and families with children. Through neighborhood associations and other civic groups, residents should be able to develop trust and work with neighbors on community improvement projects. Homes and neighborhoods should reflect pride of ownership and a very high standard of maintenance. Covington's housing market should reflect confidence in the city's future, and Covington should make economic sense for key investors – homebuyers, homeowners, responsible landlords, businesses, lending institutions, and government. Marketing this renewed confidence will improve the city's image and bring a surge of investment as property owners invest in renovation, new construction, and retail.

In developing this plan, the Housing Group considered input from the strategic plan retreats, the Vision 2015 visioning project for all of Northern Kentucky, the city's Housing Development Department, local financial institutions, real estate agents, and several neighborhood development plans. The group researched and discussed housing and neighborhood revitalization models from across the country, including the Chicago Bungalow Initiative, the Oak Ridge (TN) Housing Design Program, and a model from Battle Creek (MI). David Boehlke's article, "Leveraging Home-Ownership Promotion as a Tool for Neighborhood Revitalization," also had a significant influence on our discussions.

VISION

- Neighborhoods with highly desirable owner-occupied and rental housing in all price ranges.
- New and renovated housing that complements the character of existing neighborhoods.
- Tenants and homeowners who are responsible neighbors and who are respectful of their property, their neighborhood, and the city as a whole.

GOAL 1: Increase the homeownership rate in Covington.

Homeowners tend to be active, responsible neighbors who invest in and maintain their property to a high standard. Homeowners have significant financial and emotional investment in Covington. Homeownership is an asset-building tool as homeowners build equity in their property and provide a stable living environment for children and families. To determine the success of this goal, sales for single-family homes and condos sold on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) should be tracked every six months.

Strategy A: Provide incentives, both direct and indirect, to encourage residents of all income levels to buy a home in Covington.

Covington should be a mixed-income community in which diversity is valued. Homeowners have significant financial investment in their home, neighborhood, and city. Indirect incentives (such as a walkable neighborhood with nice city parks) are often more effective than direct incentives (such as down payment assistance) at enticing buyers to purchase a home. Enthusiastic homebuyers often become involved in neighborhood associations and other civic ventures.

Priority Projects:

- Assist banks and the city in marketing homebuyer and developer incentives more effectively. Also, create targeted incentives for public servants (lift income restrictions on down payment assistance for teachers, police, and city staff by using funds other than CDBG/HOME funds) and provide developer- and homebuyer-incentives (financing and subsidies) for housing rehab and new construction that is not income restricted.
- Conduct a Housing Economic Impact Study to determine the financial rate of return on investments in the city's housing stock and assess the feasibility of creating "special neighborhood housing taxing districts".

Strategy B: Improve the marketing of Covington housing.

Effective marketing will attract tenants and homebuyers who want to live in a vibrant urban area such as Covington. Marketing can also inspire confidence in existing owners, encouraging them to improve their property because they know that they will see a return on their investment. We need to create excitement that the housing market in Covington is strong.

Priority Projects:

- Do a market study to identify what will attract and retain buyers in Covington. Using market-study results, launch a targeted, regional construction and rehab campaign highlighting Covington as a great place to live and work.
- Support neighborhood development corporations in producing affordable and market-rate housing.

- Create a “super-group” of real estate agents, developers, appraisers, and bankers to market Covington as a great place to live. Educate buyers and sellers about the housing market in Covington. Hold roundtables for appraisers to get more accurate valuations of home sales in Covington. Persuade the Northern Kentucky Board of Realtors to list Covington properties for sale on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) by neighborhood; this would allow potential homebuyers (and their real estate agents) to focus on properties in a given neighborhood.

GOAL 2: Increase property values in Covington within 5 years.



Homeowners and their families should benefit from equity in their home. Several strategies can be implemented to increase property values. Increasing property values encourages homeowners to invest in their home because they will see a return on their investment. To determine success of this goal, we need to track the average sales price for single-family homes and condos sold on the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) for Covington North (urban core) and Latonia every six months.

Strategy A: Reduce the bank foreclosure rate on owner-occupied properties in Covington.

While homeownership can provide a stable living environment for children and families, foreclosures disrupt this. Foreclosures also reduce property values and can threaten confidence in a neighborhood’s housing market, thereby discouraging other positive investment. Houses that are foreclosed upon often sit vacant for a long time and/or are purchased by absentee investors, leading to neighborhood deterioration.

Priority Projects:

- Increase availability of financial literacy classes and materials offered by nonprofit organizations, local financial institutions, and the city. Discourage banks from making “bad” loans to homebuyer families (focus on underwriting criteria).

Strategy B: City staff and residents work to improve and maintain beautiful streets and public spaces and improve walkability.

Well-maintained neighborhoods attract investment by responsible tenants and owners, are safer, and discourage criminal activity (i.e., the “broken windows” theory). Attractive, interesting, historic, mixed-use neighborhoods in the northern part of the city appeal to one segment of the population while newer, suburban homes in the southern

part of the city appeal to another segment of the population. Public spaces are critical community-gathering spaces that can help build social capital and neighborly trust.

Priority Projects:

- Create incentives to encourage the demolition of non-contributing structures to make way for small residential parking lots and pocket parks (need to inventory potential lots).

GOAL 3: Increase the quality of housing to attract and retain responsible tenants and owners.

High-quality housing increases in value over time, attracts responsible tenants and owners, and can improve the quality of life for tenants and homeowners. Rental housing is important in providing a healthy mix of housing opportunities – not everyone wants to be or should be a homeowner. Active citizens and neighborhood associations help improve the quality of life in neighborhoods and can help citizens develop trust and keep an eye out for the neighbors. To determine the success of this goal, we need to track the number of complaints called into Code Enforcement Department and median rents every six months, and on a yearly basis, conduct an exterior building conditions survey in targeted areas.

Strategy A: Strengthen the Code Enforcement system and enforce it consistently.

Well-maintained buildings enhance a neighborhood’s physical condition, strengthen the market for property sales, and improve the neighborhood’s image. Conversely, poorly maintained buildings detract from a neighborhood’s health and decrease property values. Neighborhoods that are well cared for attract investment and discourage criminal activity (i.e., the “broken windows” theory).

Priority Projects:

- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of Code Enforcement system in the following manner:
 - Increase fines and other means to force property owners to be more responsive to complaints.
 - Ensure consistent treatment of landlords and homeowners by Code Enforcement Department.
 - Train residents to assist the city’s Code Enforcement Department.
 - Have neighborhood associations maintain a database of troubled properties to monitor them and assist with enforcement.
 - Add additional staff in Code Enforcement Department.
 - Have Code Enforcement staff meet with new tenants and landlords to review code, rights, and responsibilities.
 - Evaluate occupational licenses to identify irresponsible landlords.

- Designate a “model neighborhood” with stringent enforcement of all codes.

Strategy B: Encourage connections between neighbors to enhance trust, build civic pride, and develop citizen-driven projects.

Neighborhood associations are a critical vehicle for getting neighbors involved (civic engagement) and developing resident leadership. Research shows that residents who are “connected” to their neighbors are happier and healthier than their socially isolated neighbors. Resident-driven projects, such as gateway signs, community gardens, and progressive dinners, boost neighborhood pride, increase social capital, and are self-sustaining.

Priority Projects:

- Develop new and strengthen existing neighborhood associations in *all* Covington neighborhoods.

Arts and Culture

Covington has a rich cultural history and its arts and cultural resources are vital ingredients in strengthening our local economy by stimulating trade through tourism, creating jobs, and improving property values. The arts promote pride and attract people to who want to live, work, and invest in Covington. Active civic participation and collaboration is necessary to help nurture a thriving arts community that values diversity, beauty, stewardship, and a shared sense of history.



VISION

Covington as an arts destination widely recognized for its thriving arts community, cultural institutions, and historic preservation.

GOAL 1: Strengthen and support Covington's arts and cultural organizations, artists, and artist-owned businesses.

This goal will ensure that our existing arts and cultural organizations will survive and thrive in Covington. With the Covington Arts District incentives in place, it will be important to continue to attract new artists and emerging arts groups and to support the artists who already live and work in Covington.

Strategy A: Provide stabilization tactics for arts and cultural organizations, artists, and arts-related businesses.

Running an arts and cultural organization requires day-to-day operational support. Stabilizing our existing arts and cultural organizations is a pressing concern in a competitive funding environment. Operational support is often the most difficult funding to obtain for arts organizations. The following two projects would help existing organizations remain competitive and will help cultivate new arts organizations, individual artists, and arts-related businesses. These tactics will also help Covington compete regionally for new creative industries.

Priority Projects:

- Form a citizen advisory group of arts and cultural stakeholders, business leaders, and others for the purpose of developing collaborative efforts that will demonstrate the economic impact of the arts in Covington.
 - Projects should include the development of communication and publicity plans between arts groups and artists and a method of tracking attendance for all arts and cultural presenters. This group would take advantage of grants and projects, such as Preserve America or the Challenge America grants, which promote collaborative arts and cultural initiatives.
- Develop and utilize the Covington Artisan’s Enterprise Center as a vehicle to increase the business and artistic skills of Covington’s arts and cultural organizations, arts-related businesses, and visual and performing artists.
 - The Center should offer business and marketing skills in partnership with the NKU Small Business Development Center, the Arts Services Office, Arts Kentucky, and the Kentucky Peer Advisory Network. The Artisan’s Enterprise Center should promote the current arts-district loan programs and incentives offered by the City of Covington and local lending institutions. Through the Artisan’s Enterprise Center, art/business partnerships should be developed as well as the development of a new Co-Op Gallery.

GOAL 2: Create an environment that will attract the creative class to Covington.



The arts attract a well-educated work force -- a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. The arts contribute to the creativity and innovation of a community. As “knowledge workers” or employees of the creative industries, the “creative class” brings new ideas, high-tech industry, and regional growth to the cities where they live and work. With the creative class comes small, local-serving businesses, such as bookstores, bakeries, cafes, coffee shops, and many other services that contribute to the local economy and are attractive to the cultural tourist.

Strategy A: Recruit arts-friendly businesses to Covington.

This strategy positions the arts and culture sector as an economic development tool, one that attracts new businesses and jobs to Covington. The Covington Arts District has already seen the arrival of new businesses, such as the Pike Street Press, the Marx Building gallery and studios, the Passionate Arts Center, Powerhouse gallery and studio, Barking Fish, Jay TV, AGI Architects, and others. Recognizing and nurturing these businesses as enterprises will significantly help our local economy. The Covington Arts District should be an “activity generator” that attracts and supports other enterprises.

Priority Projects:

- Develop a welcome package for new artists and arts-related businesses that will help them navigate through the process of acquiring housing and/or developing a new business in the city, including how to obtain permits, licenses, zoning variances, etc. and include a housing resource list in this package. The city should partner with Covington Arts Merchants, Covington Business Council, and Center for Great Neighborhoods to develop the package.

GOAL 3: Increase arts audiences and participation in the arts.

Increasing audiences is important to any arts organization or business. Filling seats, bringing participants to art festivals, or increasing walk-in customers in a gallery means people are interested in and value the arts. Increasing our venues will ensure that Covington will have a diverse, vibrant arts community. It is also important to educate a new generation about why participation in the arts is important.

Strategy A: Educate the community about the benefits of arts participation.

The arts are much more than just fun “extra” activities for kids. Participation in the arts opens up children’s worlds and minds and offers them the skills they need for a bright future. In most cases, children are not getting enough art, in or out of school, according to research by Americans for the Arts. This research shows that youth who participate in the arts are:

- Four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Three times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools.
- Four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair.
- Three times more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- Four times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem.

An arts advocacy campaign would greatly benefit Covington’s youth and families. It would encourage them to participate in community building activities that can help generate tolerance and improve academic achievement while creating a new generation of arts audiences. Americans for the Arts has an arts advocacy campaign called “Art. Ask for More,” which can be used as a model.

Priority Projects:

- Develop a public education campaign about the benefits of arts participation, which should include public service announcements, bus ads, and testimonials. The campaign should include themed arts projects between arts groups, artists, art-related businesses, and the schools.
- Create inclusive arts activities for youth and adults that are fun and affordable. Offer “free” arts programming by Covington’s arts and cultural institutions and work with the

business and corporate community to develop sponsorships of these events. “Arts charters” could offer free transportation for groups to attend local regional arts events.

Strategy B: Market Covington’s Arts District, arts and cultural organizations, artists, and creative industries.

Promoting Covington’s arts and cultural assets will encourage more people to visit Covington and stimulate trade. It will attract cultural tourists -- people who visit historic and cultural sites. According to the Travel Industry Association, the cultural tourist spends \$623 per trip versus \$457 for other visitors and tend to stay on an average of two additional days. In addition, residents will view their own community with increased value and appreciation, which will promote community pride.

Priority Projects:

- Create Covington cultural heritage walking, biking, and driving tours. These cultural tours would include “wayfinding” street signs, building signage, and maps to direct the visitor to the Covington Arts District, arts and cultural organizations, historical sites, public art, and arts-related businesses. Provide a free or low-cost shuttle for cultural tours and for the First Friday Gallery Hops.
- Promote Covington’s arts and cultural events. This project would include the creation an Internet-based clearinghouse that is a one-stop shop for all things art in Covington. The site should include an up-dated arts calendar of events such as the First Friday Gallery Hops, the Duveneck Art Show, the Art Cars event, and the Art Off Pike event. Encourage the development of more arts and cultural festivals with community/ residential groups and connect them with regional collaborative events such as the 20/20 Festival or the Fine Arts Fund’s Sampler Weekend. Encourage cross-marketing -- combining art in non-art related venues and utilize non-traditional and grass roots marketing techniques, including word of mouth, guerilla marketing, home-school fliers, to name a few. Utilize Connect Covington website to promote arts events locally.

Strategy B: Increase Covington’s arts and cultural venues

Increasing Covington’s arts and cultural venues will stimulate the economy with increased rental rates and investment in the area near these venues and encourage additional small businesses to locate in this area. These venues will attract arts audiences from the Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area. Increasing the number of venues will increase diverse forms of visual and performing arts in the community. Encouraging new venues will build upon Covington’s current creative sector, attracting additional visitors, buyers, and new audience members and arts patrons.

Priority Projects:

- Develop and promote a national ad campaign to recruit new artists to live and work in Covington and create a logo to be utilized in signage, ad campaigns, etc.

- Develop affordable, accessible space to attract and maintain visual and performing arts groups. Work in partnership with the schools to develop a “barter system” for visual and performing arts groups – use of free space to rehearse or create in exchange for free arts programming both in and out of school.

Preservation

Covington's historic architecture and neighborhoods provide an exceptional opportunity to attract and retain residents, distinctive retail, distinguished restaurants, arts and cultural organizations, and other urban amenities. Covington's large, unique, irreplaceable stock of historic buildings should be protected and adaptive reuse should be encouraged. We should assist property owners in valuing and protecting our historic buildings because preserved buildings and intact urban neighborhoods encourage residents to become better stewards and provide a connection with our city's history. Owners of historic properties can enjoy a positive return on their investment and historic districts tend to have increased property values. Hence, historic preservation is a significant generator for economic development. Marketing our success in preservation will attract additional investment.



VISION

A community that values its historic architecture and makes preservation of this architecture an important component in future development efforts.

GOAL 1: Increase awareness, appreciation, and protection of Covington's historic architecture.

Covington has a large, unique, and irreplaceable stock of historic architecture that needs to be protected so that it is not demolished or irreparably damaged. By preserving historic architecture, people become better stewards and have a better understanding of their history. Historic preservation helps develop people's connected-ness with the area.

Strategy A: Educate the public, city officials, and developers on the uniqueness of Covington's historic architecture and the value it provides to the community.

Preservation of historic structures provides value to a community in terms of private and public economic development. Historic preservation enhances property values, increases the tax base, and creates local jobs. The economic benefits of historic preservation typically exceed those of new construction while increasing awareness of Covington's architectural stock and how it sets us apart from other communities. Historically appropriate infill construction should complement, rather than detract, from our rich architectural heritage,

further establishing Covington's heritage and identity. It will also increase the realization that when a historic structure is razed, a piece of the community is taken away.

Priority Projects:

- Work with Progress with Preservation to educate developers and elected officials about the importance of historic preservation.
- Develop a "welcome package" for new residents and business owners that describes the uniqueness of our historic architecture, their responsibility in its protection, including the need to follow the city's historic preservation guidelines, and resources for how to preserve historic buildings, including existing programs for preservation assistance and conservation easements/site easements available through Kentucky Heritage Council and Cincinnati Preservation Association.

Strategy B: Apply for historic overlay zones for the historic areas of Covington for which an overlay does not currently exist, within interested neighborhoods.

Designation of areas as historic overlay zones leads to neighborhood pride and better upkeep, resulting in increased property values and an economic development.

Priority Projects:

- Apply for an historic overlay zone for the area between 3rd and 4th Streets, from Sanford to Madison.
- Conduct micro-histories of properties to determine which buildings are worth fighting to keep and to determine where historic overlays are economically viable. Micro-histories are detailed property histories that include previous owners, events, families, physical structures, historical and current photos, and current condition of the property.
- Work with all Covington neighborhood associations to help them understand the value of historic overlays and determine if they are appropriate for their neighborhoods.

Strategy C: Make sure all public and private property owners comply with city regulations for historic preservation by stepping up enforcement of these regulations by city staff.

The city has adopted ordinances designed to protect the community's architectural stock. A low-tolerance policy should be adopted for violation of these ordinances to ensure the maintenance of the city's historic architecture.

Strategy D: Significantly increase resident participation in Covington's preservation activities and issues.

Preservation activities should be established and maintained on a grass-roots basis, with ownership of the vision taken on by Covington residents. A strong sense of community contributes to an improved quality of life. A sense of ownership of and connectedness to our shared architectural heritage will increase our sense of community.

Priority Project:

- Engage the community in developing micro-histories for historic property.

GOAL 2: Ensure that preservation is integrated into Covington’s economic development and that city and private industry decision-makers are cognizant of historic preservation issues.



The City Commission is responsible for deciding which areas are designated as historic districts. City support has been critical to awareness and protection of historic architecture. Private industry often defaults to new construction when they consider space needs when it should instead consider adaptive reuse. Historic districts generally create higher real estate values; therefore, they are usually good for economic development.

Strategy A: Enhance relationships with local, state, and national preservation groups and professionals to leverage their knowledge and resources and collaborate with them to document historic architecture in the city.

Local, state, and national preservation groups (e.g., Kentucky Heritage Council, Preservation Kentucky, Northern Kentucky Heritage League, Covington-Cincinnati Suspension Bridge Committee, Baker-Hunt Museum and History Lecture Series, Behringer-Crawford Museum, Northern Kentucky History Day at NKU, Friends of Covington, Cincinnati Preservation Association) can provide knowledge and resources to assist in historic preservation efforts in Covington. These organizations, working in conjunction with the Covington Historic Preservation Officer, can document our historic architectural stock.

Documenting the city’s architectural stock will help identify those structures most in need of protection. With the city’s architectural stock well defined, applications for historic overlays can be filed and this historic information can be used in the historic marker and way-finding programs.

Strategy B: Develop productive working relationships with the public and private sector organizations and share historic preservation objectives with them so they will adopt and promote the same objectives.

Developing relationships with city officials, developers, Southbank Partners, Tri-Ed, the county and state governments, the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Kenton County Historical Society, the Cincinnati Preservation Association, the Northern Kentucky Heritage League, and local, state and national preservation groups and sharing historic preservation objectives with these groups will help educate these groups about the importance of historic preservation and show these groups and its members how they will benefit from it. By developing these relationships, more stakeholders will be created, promoting preservation of architectural heritage as an integral aspect of Covington's identity.

Strategy C: Actively and consistently participate in all public fora that touch on economic development to ensure that preservation is a part of the conversation.

Preservation must remain a part of the public conversation to be a constant reminder of its importance. Historic preservation enhances property values, increases the tax base, and creates local jobs. The economic benefits of historic preservation typically exceed those of new construction.

GOAL 3: Leverage the beauty and uniqueness of the city's historic architecture to make Covington a destination for quality living, arts, cultural and entertainment venues, heritage tourism, unique shopping, restaurants, and core city services that are necessary in a vibrant community.

Covington's historic architecture is one of the features that make the city unique. Therefore, it is an important element for drawing tourists, investment, residents, and businesses to the city. Historic architecture defines Covington and to remove or change it makes us more generic and less unique. When someone says Covington, we want people to think of Covington, Kentucky (not other cities named Covington in the United States) and to understand and picture Covington in the same way people now do for Savannah, Philadelphia, Madison, and Charleston.

Strategy A: Create and sustain strong relationships with governments, civic groups, and businesses to develop a marketing effort, including the creation of a brand identity, which reflects Covington's "soul" emanating from its uniqueness, including its architecture and heritage.

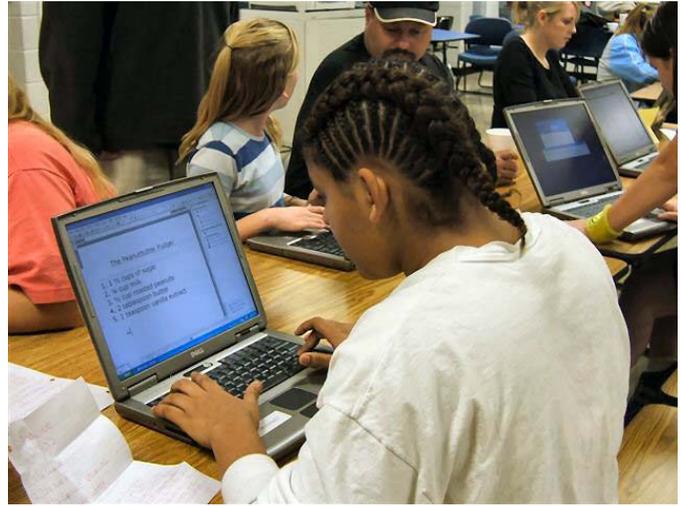
The city, the Covington Business Council, Covington Renaissance Board, Vision 2015, the Center for Great Neighborhoods in Covington, the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Kentucky Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and Covington's commercial sectors should work together to develop a plan to attract and retain arts and cultural programs, unique shopping destinations, distinguished restaurants, and core city services like grocery and specialty-food shops, dry cleaners, and other basic services that are necessary to create a vibrant urban center.

These groups should also develop a tourist, local shopping, and residential marketing campaign for Covington, including establishing a brand identity that incorporates the city's architectural heritage, which will create an immediate vision of Covington when its name is mentioned. This campaign will be used to educate businesses, tourists, and potential residents about who we are and how our architectural heritage set us apart. Integrating preservation with our identity will expand ownership of the preservation vision.

Priority Projects:

- Work with the city and Projects for Public Spaces to develop the public areas between 4th and 5th Streets, Scott to Madison, as a public square and public market, preserving historic buildings and transforming the non-historic buildings to functional public destinations.
- Apply for available grants, such as Preserve America, Save America's Treasures, and HGTV's Preservation Grant, to name a few, to promote historic preservation in Covington.

Education



Covington desires to be a vibrant, thriving community that values education -- a community where *all* residents have access to public or private schools that provide rich academic environments and engaging extracurricular activities, high-quality early childhood education experiences, and opportunities for education after high school and into adulthood. Our goal is to develop a community where life-long learning is a shared value. This will require a concerted effort on the part of the city, the schools, the business community, adult residents, and the youth of Covington. Working together, we can make Covington a community where excellence in education is expected.

VISION

A city that provides world-class learning opportunities for children and adults, which will invoke pride, attract new residents, and promote economic growth.

The Education Team developed the above vision based on several beliefs:

- All children and adults in our community deserve the best education possible;
- A high-quality education system will attract new residents, including families with children, to live in Covington; and
- A well-educated citizenry is necessary to a vital economy.

GOAL 1: Increase family and community engagement in all Covington schools.

Children perform better in school when their families value education and are engaged in the schools their children attend. Furthermore, when an entire community values education and are engaged in schools, student achievement increases.

Strategy A: Promote mentoring opportunities.

Mentoring has been shown to be an effective, low-cost way to support students, especially in the crucial adolescent years. Covington Independent Public Schools has two “formal” mentoring programs: Across Ages at Two Rivers Middle School and Bulldog

Connection at Holmes High School. Students at both schools are on waiting lists to be matched with a mentor. In addition, most elementary schools have an informal mentoring program, such as Lunch Buddies or Celebrity Readers.

Priority Projects:

- Partner with businesses, neighborhood groups, churches, and other civic associations (Rotary Club, older adult clubs, etc.) to recruit more members.
- Use personal experiences of current mentors, including local leaders as well as lesser-known folks, to recruit potential mentors.

Strategy A: Engage the entire community with the schools.

Engaging all community residents with schools in Covington will help to deepen “school pride community wide.” By connecting residents with events, advisory councils, and other activities, adults can help support students throughout the community.

Priority Projects:

- Utilize current communication tools to facilitate communication between schools and community members.
- Develop an innovative social marketing campaign to increase community engagement.

GOAL 2: Exceed national standards for student achievement and life readiness.

A global, knowledge-based economy requires educational systems to fully prepare young people for a rapidly changing world. Our goal is to see *all* Covington youth thrive in school and graduate with the skills necessary to enter college, other post-secondary training, or the workforce.

Strategy A: Recruit and retain the best staff in Covington.

Research -- and Covington Independent Public Schools’ experience -- shows that teachers in urban schools leave their positions earlier than teachers in suburban and rural schools. It also takes at least three years for new teachers to develop their skills. It is vital to student success to have high-quality, long-term teachers and staff.

Priority Projects:

- Get teachers and staff more deeply involved in the life of the community.
- Explore housing incentives for teachers to have them live in Covington.

Strategy B: Develop youth as community leaders.

Many cities are seeing the importance of accessing an underutilized resource -- the youth. Being connected to and involved in the community as a young person is an essential way to acquire leadership skills for a lifetime. One benefit of youth involvement is that adults view young people positively and value them, while youth develop relationships with adults in the community.

Priority Projects:

- Promote opportunities for community partners to offer leadership development programs for youth.

Strategy C: Increase quality early childhood education experiences in Covington.

Recent research has identified the importance of the first few years in a child's life. Fortunately, Covington has many high-quality options for early childhood education. It is our goal that all children in Covington have a positive early childhood experience.

Priority Projects:

- Market currently available pre-school opportunities.

GOAL 3: Increase the focus of the Covington community on learning as a life-long value and process.



A community that values life-long learning is a more attractive community to people of all ages and all walks of life. Children who see adults learning -- from reading books to earning advanced degrees -- will understand that learning does not stop with high school, technical training, or college graduation.

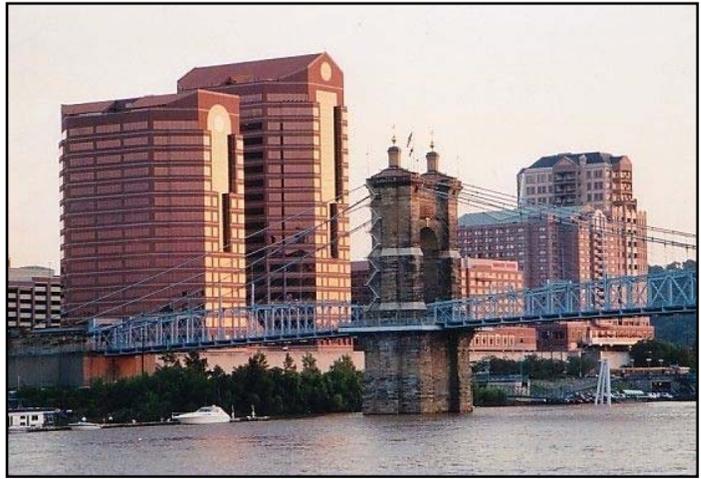
Strategy A: Promote a community-wide culture that understands, values, and invests in educational success at all levels.

This strategy focuses on learning as a community-wide investment. It is important for all residents to understand the need for education and training to help all of us -- residents, workers, and other stakeholders -- to participate in a global workforce and economy. When the community values and invests in life-long learning, everyone benefits.

Priority Projects:

- Create an “education council” as a community access point and resource for accomplishing the goals and strategies arising out of this component of the strategic plan.
- Community, business, and educational leaders create an “awareness campaign” emphasizing how supporting education and learning improves citizenship and neighborhoods.

Downtown



Downtown Covington should be a destination that attracts, excites, and benefits urban residents, suburbanites, and visitors of all ages and backgrounds. Downtown should be a vibrant and walkable -- a mixed-use

district that is home to residents, specialty retail, distinguished restaurants, live-music venues, movie theaters, a performing arts center, and an innovative public market. Safe, attractive public spaces will become active community gathering spaces and venues for outdoor festivals and other events. Our thriving downtown will serve Covington's diverse residents and livable neighborhoods and the Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati region as a whole. Extensive, coordinated marketing efforts will promote the events and excitement going on downtown.

A downtown is a city's heart and its soul -- a source of commerce that generates and pumps the lifeblood of the community -- and for many people, the downtown serves as the primary image or identity of the city itself. Until the mid-1900s, downtown Covington was a thriving urban commercial center serving a mosaic of diverse, livable neighborhoods throughout city and the region as a whole. The Downtown Team envisions a similar role for downtown Covington in the future.

The Downtown Team identified "downtown" Covington as the area bounded by the Ohio River to the north, 12th Street to the south, the west side of Greenup Street to the east, and Johnson to Fourth Street, Russell Street to Eighth Street, and Chesapeake Street to 12th Street to the west. In developing its plan, the Downtown Team examined and discussed many documents and sources of information, including conversations from community gatherings and retreats recorded held prior to the formation of the Downtown Team; the "Urban Renaissance" section of the Vision 2015 report, the report on the visioning process for all of Northern Kentucky; Christopher B. Leinberger's monograph for the Brookings Institute, titled "Turning Around Downtown: Twelve Steps to Revitalization;" maps of ongoing development projects in the downtown area; and the City of Covington Downtown Covington Core Planning Initiative from July 2001, to name a few.

VISION

Downtown Covington: a destination that attracts, excites, and benefits the entire region.

GOAL 1: Increase the number of targeted downtown residents and downtown jobs.

Downtown residents and employees pay taxes and have a vested interest in the community in which they live and work. They buy nearby products and services, increasing economic development in the downtown. People coming and going in their daily activities make the downtown a busy and attractive place. Individuals employed as professionals or with technical skills bring target demographics and a better tax base to downtown.

Strategy A: Increase the attractiveness and supply of market-rate housing – both owner-occupied and market-rate rental units – in the downtown area.

The “Urban Renaissance” section of Vision 2015 identified “market rate housing” as its #1 long-term goal. It recommended integration of “new market-rate housing – rental and owner-occupied, new and renovated, single-family and multi-units – that complements the existing character of the neighborhoods.”

Priority Projects:

- Create baseline data of current downtown residents and dwelling units, including the current population and supply and potential population and supply. This data needs to be collected and compiled because no compilation of such data currently exists and such data is needed so that city staff and interested stakeholders can assess current levels and establish benchmarks for future improvement.
- Establish a targeted demographic profile for downtown. Set goals, strategies, and specific benchmarks for attracting these targeted residents downtown.

Strategy B: Establish downtown Covington as a “need to be” locale for targeted professional, service, and high-growth industry companies.

Increasing and expanding professional businesses and jobs in the downtown is consistent with the Vision 2015 strategy for a competitive economy. See the “Economic Competitiveness” section of Vision 2015 for further details.

Priority Projects:

- Create baseline data of current employment in downtown, including profiles of both employers and employees.
- Design and implement business environment improvement strategies, including incentives to encourage developers to invest in the downtown to create quality office

space and other business enterprises and establishing marketing and needs assessments programs.

GOAL 2: Improve the appearance and utility of downtown Covington to all visitors, and in the process, improve the perception of downtown as a clean, safe, and green place.



People enjoy living, working, and visiting attractive places that are safe and clean. Downtown shoppers and visitors will stay longer if they feel safe and will buy more products and services if the area is attractive. Residents and businesses are more willing to pay taxes to support an area they view as clean, safe, and attractive. Businesses, employees, and residents want downtown places that are easily accessible and easy to use. Frustrated customers are less likely to return downtown and are

likely to express their frustrations to their friends. Easy to use with a small cost beats tough to use and no cost, i.e., parking in front of the store or just down the block, beats fighting traffic and walking across the mall parking lot *and* through the mall itself to a store.

Strategy A: Improve the appearance and usability of downtown Covington through new infrastructure improvements, provide more resources to make downtown clean and safe, and create and maintain parks and other spaces in the downtown area that are inviting to the public.

The city should continue to seek state grant opportunities as well as other public and private funding to improve the downtown streetscape, including new streets and sidewalks, new and improved public parking lots, better and context-appropriate street lighting, street furniture, garbage cans, flower containers, replace existing newspaper boxes with more uniform racks, and replace existing overhead utilities with underground utilities.

Public and private resources should be marshalled and allocated to eliminate litter and graffiti, increase the police presence in the downtown area, and create new and improve existing public parks and public spaces and to encourage the development of public and private greenspace.

Priority Projects:

- Create a Business Improvement District (“BID”) for downtown Covington.

This was one of the 12 “steps” recommended by Christopher Leinberger in his monograph. In a BID, called a “Management District” under Kentucky statutes, property owners in the district voluntarily assess themselves a fee to make improvements in the district. Funds generated by a BID are controlled by a board of directors comprised of property owners within the district, not city government, and these funds are used solely in the district in a manner that the board deems appropriate. These districts have been successfully created and utilized in cities such as Louisville and Cincinnati. A BID can be a valuable tool for downtown improvements at a time when municipal resources continue to be strained.

- Implement plans for the downtown public square and public market and acquire the public and private funding needed to complete this project.

The city has hired New York City-based Project for Public Spaces (“PPS”), the pre-eminent expert on the development of public spaces, to help it develop a public square and public market in downtown. PPS has identified the block bounded by Madison Avenue, Fifth Street, Scott Boulevard, and Fourth Street as the appropriate location for this project and has presented preliminary development drawings to the city for this project, with final development drawings expected in July 2007. A strategy for acquiring public and private funding needs to be developed and implemented.

Strategy B: Improve automobile traffic flow and its compatibility with pedestrians and bicyclists and make public parking for automobiles more attractive, easier to use, and easier to find.

One of the potential strengths of downtown Covington is its “walkable urbanity,” a term coined by Christopher Leinberger in his monograph, in large part because much of the downtown was developed prior to the advent of the automobile. However, the presence of a large number of automobiles in the downtown has created incompatibility issues with pedestrians and bicyclists and reduced the “walkable urbanity” of our city.

Priority Projects:

- Conduct a comprehensive transportation and parking study of the downtown area and develop a plan for improvements in this area.

A traffic study will identify incompatibility issues between automobiles, pedestrians, and bicyclists and suggest methods for improving the compatibility with other modes of transportation, improving traffic flow, slowing down automobile traffic in high-congestion areas, improving public transportation opportunities, and creating bike lanes and installing bike racks for bicyclists. Similarly, a parking study will identify existing problems with public and private parking in downtown Covington and suggest methods for improving this area.

GOAL 3: Create vibrant downtown commercial district(s) and promote these districts through concerted marketing efforts.

Residents, employees, and visitors like unique places where daily necessities are easy to obtain. Businesses can more easily attract employees if lunch and errands are close by. Commercial growth gives a greater range of businesses a vested interest in downtown and creates a diverse tax base. People can't and won't frequent businesses, taverns, restaurants, and events if they don't know about them. Ongoing marketing can support and attract desirable businesses and services.

Strategy A: Identify and recruit key businesses that are needed to improve residential living in downtown Covington and continue the expansion of the Madison Avenue and Covington Square entertainment districts.

The one common theme that the Downtown Action Team heard repeatedly throughout the community visioning process was the need for a "high-end" grocery store in downtown Covington. This could be accomplished by recruiting a national urban grocer, such as "Whole Foods," to locate in the downtown area or by encouraging an existing business, such as the Economy Meat Market on Madison Avenue or Heringer Meats on Seventh Street, to remodel and expand its store to appeal to a larger and more diverse audience. The idea is to have all the amenities of everyday living within the downtown area or a convenient walking/traveling distance to it.

Live-music venues continue to grow downtown with the recent addition of the The Avenue and Deadwood Saloon to the already established music venues at the Madison Theater and Mad Hatter. New entertainment venues, such as movie theaters and a performing arts center, should be courted to downtown's burgeoning Madison Avenue and Covington Square entertainment districts. A small movie theater in Key West, operated by a non-profit film group, was cited as an example of what could be done in Covington. We should continue to encourage unique restaurants, such as the Greenup Café, Pho Paris, and the Riverside Korean Restaurant, to locate in the downtown area.

In his monograph, Christopher Leinberger states that "walkable urbanity starts with urban entertainment venues and retail that are within walking distance of one another." As Leinberger recognizes, "The most important benefit of entertainment is to get 'feet on the street,' especially at night. And just as a crowded restaurant is the best recommendation that it is a good place, crowded sidewalks recommend downtown, signifying a safe environment, and providing an excitement and spectacle that draws people to the area."

Priority Projects:

- Recruit an upscale grocery store to locate or expand in the downtown area.

- Encourage the continued development of downtown entertainment venues, such as movie theaters, a performing arts center, live-music venues, unique restaurants, and speciality retail.

Strategy B: Promote the downtown commercial districts and improve the positive image of downtown through concerted marketing efforts.

The city should work with the business schools of local universities, such as Northern Kentucky University, and/or local marketing firms to gather relevant information and develop a marketing plan for downtown. Among the issues that should be considered in development of a such a plan are the creation of a downtown calendar (see Louisville's downtown calendar) and a downtown brochure. The city should also consider working with the Covington Business Council to create a marketing person/vehicle to promote downtown events and entertainment, including street, arts and crafts, and/or music festivals.

Priority Projects:

- Create a comprehensive marketing plan for downtown Covington.

Greenspace

Greenspace is an important aesthetic and environmental amenity that greatly enriches the quality of life in Covington. Greenspace improves the ecology of urban neighborhoods. For example, greenspace helps cool ambient air temperatures on a hot summer days.



Active use of greenspace -- such as walking, bicycling, or playing team sports -- promotes a healthy lifestyle for youth and adults. Attractive neighborhood parks can increase property values, provide a vehicle for resident participation, and connect neighborhoods to one another. Larger public greenspaces, such as Devou Park and a proposed Licking River levee walk, can attract visitors, promote a positive image of Covington, and serve as an economic stimulus.

VISION

Safe, well-maintained, connected natural spaces interspersed in neighborhood and commercial areas as well as along the riverfronts, highlighting the area's cultural and historic heritage, its natural beauty and economic interests, and providing aesthetic vistas and gathering spaces for a variety of activities.

Covington's natural resources should be valued, preserved, and protected. Safe, attractive greenspace encourages residents and visitors to engage in healthy outdoor activities, such as walking, biking, and gardening. Smaller, resident-driven greenspace, such as pocket parks, can bring residents together while larger spaces, such as Devou Park and the Ohio and Licking riverfronts, can spur economic development. Public greenspaces are critical community-gathering spaces that can help build social capital and neighborly trust.

GOAL 1: City leaders and residents working together to create, develop, and maintain aesthetically pleasing greenspace and focal points in neighborhoods throughout all of Covington, including South Covington.

Residents can build relationships by working together to develop and maintain public greenspaces, such as pocket parks, landscaped traffic islands, and community gardens in their neighborhoods. Greenspace improves the quality of life, builds civic pride, and increases property values. Larger scale greenspace areas can attract homebuyers and visitors to our city.

Strategy A: Conduct a city-wide greenspace assessment.

A city-wide greenspace assessment will inventory and assess the geographical qualities of each neighborhood, assess each neighborhood's need for neighborhood-focused greenspace, gauge the city's need for different types of larger public greenspace that meets various purposes, identify partners, and identify the legal and financial framework needed to support greenspace projects. It is important that the assessment look at greenspace within each individual neighborhood as well as greenspace that serves the city and region. The assessment will guide fundraising efforts and identify the best means to preserve and protect greenspace for future generations.

Priority Projects:

- Work with the Project for Public Spaces to model work in other cities to create new and improve existing greenspace.
- Explore new ways to generate revenue to create and maintain greenspace.

Among the ideas to consider would be adding \$1.00 to the greens fees at Devou Park, implementing a "greenspace assessment" charge on property taxes or service fees, and charging "greenspace" fees for use of ball fields.

Strategy B: Organize ongoing programming and events to promote the use of greenspace and encourage residents to value and take ownership of greenspace.

Greenspace that is created and maintained by residents is more sustainable and highly valued because of residents' investment of their time and talents. When citizens work together on community projects and events, they build civic pride.

Priority Projects:

- Partner with civic and community organizations to develop events that celebrate greenspace, including arts and cultural events, outdoor environmental education events, and youth-oriented activities ("community as classroom" and service-learning opportunities, to name a few).

Strategy C: Create new greenspace and enhance existing parks/greenspace to better meet their intended purposes.



Greenspaces are critical community-gathering spaces that can help build social capital and neighborly trust. Safe, aesthetically pleasing greenspace also drives economic development by increasing property values, improving the city's image, and serving as a destination for visitors. Attractive pockets of greenspace add to the quality of our downtown, the Arts District and other business districts, the riverfront, and residential areas.

Priority Projects:

- Create incentives to encourage the demolition of some non-contributing structures to make way for neighborhood gardens or pocket parks (after conducting an inventory of potential lots) and use lease agreements and/or deed restrictions on city-owned lots to ensure that community groups properly maintain their neighborhood gardens or parks.

Strategy D: Identify and address public safety, cleanliness, and maintenance issues in city parks.

Greenspace improves the quality of life in Covington. For residents and visitors to use greenspace for active or passive uses, it must be safe, attractive, and clean. Greenspace users who are not happy with their experience are less likely to return to that park and are likely to express their frustrations to their friends, reducing the potential pool of users for that space.

Priority Projects:

- Work with city to prepare a safety and security plan for all publicly-owned greenspace.
- Implement the Urban Forestry ordinance as originally intended. In particular, enforce the "tree trimming" section of the ordinance.

GOAL 2: Connect greenspace to facilitate safe, enjoyable, and efficient movement from one greenspace to another.

Connecting greenspace within the city allows residents and visitors to travel between smaller and larger sites, promoting walking and biking opportunities. Active use of greenspace, such as walking, bicycling, or playing team sports, promotes a healthy lifestyle for youth and adults.

Strategy A: Develop a “green beltway” of walking trails and bikeways to connect greenspace within and between neighborhoods and with other cities in Northern Kentucky.

A “green beltway” will link neighborhoods to one another and link Covington to other urban and suburban areas.

Priority Projects:

- Partner with Vision 2015 to create a regional greenspace plan, implementing multi-use trails throughout Northern Kentucky’s urban core, specifically creating a levee walking/running/biking trail along the Licking River.

GOAL 3: Effectively market greenspace to encourage its use.

Promoting Covington’s greenspace, natural assets, and outdoor “green” events will encourage more people to visit and/or buy in Covington and stimulate economic development. Residents will view their neighborhoods and city with increased affection and appreciation, which will promote community pride.

Strategy A: Utilize an array of marketing opportunities to promote the active use of greenspace.

Residents and visitors need to know more about our existing greenspace and the events held within it. We should make it easy for residents and visitors to find a variety of greenspace that meets their needs for active and passive recreation.

Priority Projects:

- Create maps and brochures for the public depicting all existing greenspace in Covington and create maps primarily for internal use showing planned greenspace. The maps of existing greenspace should include details about the intended use of each greenspace and events held there. Brochures should be available at City Hall, restaurants, hotels, the Convention Center, on the city’s website, and neighborhood associations. This work should be coordinated with activities proposed in the application for a Preserve America grant.
- Develop and install wayfinding signs to facilitate movement between greenspace.

Safety



Covington desires to attract new residents and keep current residents in the city. Cities that are perceived by residents and visitors as having high standards for community safety -- that is, residents who respect one another, have pride in the community, and maintain their property -- are more

successful at achieving this goal. Creating a safe and healthy Covington requires that citizens be active and empowered partners in shaping this reality. Developing strong police/community relationships -- a critical element in this endeavor -- requires education efforts, consistent information-sharing, and opportunities for ordinary citizens and the police to get to know, respect, and work with one another.

VISION

Covington as a city with empowered citizens, working together with police and safety personnel, to provide a safe and healthy community.

GOAL 1: Improve on the ground police/community relations and reduce crime in Covington.

Citizens and the police often feel misunderstood by one another, leading to a lack of trust. Creating strong police/community relationships requires education, information sharing, and opportunities for ordinary citizens and the police to get to know and respect one another. Covington wants to attract new residents and keep current residents in the city. Crime is one of the major concerns of residents and business owners and a major factor in their decision to move to or stay in Covington.

Strategy A: Equip citizens to be the eyes and ears of the police and other safety departments.

To be effective, the police and other safety departments need alert, active, and involved citizens. Unless citizens report safety issues, appropriate response is not possible. Unless citizens are informed and aware of what to report and how to report it, the police and other safety officials will not be able to respond efficiently and effectively to these reports.

Priority Projects:

- Develop a program with the Police Department and the Fraternal Order of Police to recruit and train citizen volunteers to help with community relations, to educate the community about police and safety issues, and to help police respond to safety issues. (Graduates of the “Citizen’s Academy” may be encouraged to get involved and to recruit other citizens.)
- Promote the Police Department’s “Citizens’ Academy” in the community to encourage more participation in the program. Additional publicity for the program should be done at public events and festivals. We encourage the Police Department to conduct more sessions and to consider developing a written format of the sessions that can be posted on the city’s website.
- Create a “Citizen’s Academy” targeted to youth, possibly by incorporating it into summer youth programs and at Holmes and Scott High Schools.

Strategy B: Build a strong, working partnership between citizens and the police by increasing the number and use of beat officers in the neighborhoods (“on-the-street” officers – either on foot or on bicycles).

When officers are “on-the-street,” it allows citizens to get to know them better. Citizens have the chance to develop a more personal relationship with officers, which leads to trust.

Priority Projects:

- Utilize a targeted approach by placing beat officers in areas where police-community relations need to be strengthened.
- Utilize a “community relations approach,” rather than a strict enforcement approach, to create good will and a sense of partnership between police and citizens. For example, provide notice (through neighborhood associations, block watch groups, or the city’s website) to residents on a particular street where parking regulations are consistently violated that strict enforcement will begin in a few days. The notice allows residents to comply voluntarily or to self-enforce.

GOAL 2: Create a culture in Covington of zero tolerance for petty crimes and “broken windows” code violations.

Spotty or inconsistent enforcement of criminal activity or housing and safety violations can reinforce the sense that no one really cares about the neighborhood or particular sections of the city. Communities that “set the bar” high tend to attract and retain residents who respect one another, have pride in the community, and maintain their property.

Strategy A: Increase district court judges' awareness of responding to citizen's priorities.

Citizens are frustrated that the police often focus on more serious crime and seem to ignore or not address "lesser" criminal activity. Police officers have been reprimanded by district court judges for cluttering their dockets with minor criminal issues. Citizens, the police, and judges are all important partners in creating and keeping a community safe and healthy.

Priority Projects:

- Civic leaders will meet with district court judges to explore new ways or alternative methods to deal with petty crimes. (Although it is important to have the support and assistance of the mayor, city manager, and police chief in this effort, it is critical that the judges hear *directly* from citizens)

Strategy B: Use a targeted approach to enforcement in small, well-defined sections of neighborhoods.



Creating an effective and well-coordinated partnership between citizens and safety personnel can best be developed on a small-scale. Given limited resources, targeted enforcement is a wise and efficient use of those resources. Targeted enforcement efforts in one area can demonstrate to the entire city the standards the community desires to set for itself. A targeted enforcement effort will create a model for future efforts in other parts of the city.

Priority Projects:

- Build on the current efforts of the Code Enforcement Department to educate and inform citizens of code enforcement regulations and procedures and to create an ongoing dialogue between citizens and the code enforcement department.
- Create a model program focused on a small (four- to six-block section of the city or a neighborhood) to combine increased education efforts with citizens and increased citizen reporting of crime and safety code violations with the use of "on-the-street" police officers, strict code enforcement, and safety education by the fire department.

GOAL 3: Create a more positive image of Covington.

Stakeholders in Covington, present and future, need to tell the story of the good things happening in Covington. In the minds of many people from surrounding communities, Covington still has a negative image based on past perceptions, lack of information, or negative publicity.

Strategy A: Get people into Covington for safe and successful events.

When people have a positive experience in Covington, it helps create a new image of the city in their minds. Every resident or business owner can contribute to creating a positive image of Covington by inviting a friend or relative to the city for a positive experience. Large and small events in Covington (such as Maifest, Art Off Pike, Oktoberfest, Gallery Hops) have proven to be safe and enjoyable experiences for visitors.

Strategy B: Create marketing campaign with Covington Business Council to let broader community know Covington's strengths.

Marketing Covington's strengths requires a combined effort between residents, the business community, and all stakeholders in Covington. The health and safety of our residential areas is closely tied to the image and the vitality of our downtown and other business activities. The Covington Business Council has relationships with people who have the resources and expertise to develop and sustain an effective marketing campaign.

Transportation

Safe, efficient transportation can make Covington a better place to work, live, and visit. To be effective, a transportation system must establish and improve connections within neighborhoods, between neighborhoods, and between the city and neighboring communities. The system should provide opportunities for residents to safely walk, ride a bicycle, use public transit, and drive their car, or utilize a combination of these modes of transportation. Transportation plans and designs must also be sensitive to the character, needs, and desires of neighborhoods, businesses, residents, and visitors.



VISION

To create in Covington a transportation system that effectively, efficiently, and safely connects people to destinations and to each other, integrates the automobile use with other modes of transportation, and improves the walkability of neighborhoods.

Transportation needs to be viewed as a system of many interrelated parts that are brought together to make the city a better place to live and visit. The ability to increase citizen interaction through cost-beneficial and safe-transportation alternatives builds communities. Whether urban or suburban, a well-planned and implemented transportation system will serve as a catalyst and not an impediment to the development and redevelopment of Covington neighborhoods and its downtown.

GOAL 1: Establish and improve connections among Covington's neighborhoods and neighborhood focal points, greenspaces, waterways, and other destinations and between Covington and neighboring and nearby cities.

Streamlined connections, free of traffic snarls and other hazards, creates a positive perception by Covington's residents and visitors. It allows residents to connect easily with each other and with destinations in and around Covington in daily life. Working with all of Covington's neighboring cities to promote this goal will enable a stronger economic performance and social integration in the region.

Strategy A: Design a systematic, multi-modal transportation network along rights-of-way.

This strategy provides for a comprehensive plan that results in a systematic integrated transportation network. Studies listed under projects relate to how the transportation network interlocks with each component of itself.

Strategy B: Assure sufficient financial resources are made available to sustain the transportation network.

This strategy assures that we are putting our resources in the right place with regards to priority of projects at the city, state, and federal levels.

GOAL 2: Create alternatives to the automobile to establish and improve connections.



While recognizing that the automobile will remain a significant transportation mode now and in the future, alternative forms of transportation will help define the city's future. Public transit, walking, and biking will support the walkable urbanity and neighborhood interconnectedness that will make the city thrive. Stop and smell the roses!

Strategy A: Plan for walking, biking, public transit, and automobile transportation modes and automobile parking throughout the city.

This strategy further specifically defines four alternative modes of transportation.

Strategy B: Separate through traffic from local traffic, improve directional signage, and develop appropriate vehicle speed limits and controls.

This strategy specifically identifies traffic control methods primarily for automobiles to make the city a destination, not a high-speed throughway, and to make neighborhoods safer.

GOAL 3: Be sensitive to the character, needs, and desires of neighborhoods, businesses, citizens, and visitors in transportation plans and designs.

Covington offers a variety of neighborhood housing and business districts. Some are historic and some are relatively new. Each has its own character. Transportation designs and plans must consider and preserve these unique characteristics.

Strategy A: Encourage communication with and input by stakeholders in developing and implementing transportation plans and designs.

This strategy encourages regular input from the community on transportation concerns, reflects it in transportation planning and designs, and communicates the status of transportation projects to the community. This is an ongoing process and requires commitment of active communication between the city and its neighborhoods.

Priority Projects:

Watch List: Items on this list are projects either funded for study, a study has been completed, funded for implementation, or underway.

- Advocate the Hands Pike/Wayman Branch Road Corridor study and assure community representation in the study.

The Hands Pike/Wayman Branch Road east/west corridor in South Covington is geometrically insufficient for the area. The streets are narrow with many curves that result in vehicle accidents and make the roads difficult to maintain. The plan is to reclassify Hands pike as a collector instead of an arterial street and use Wayman Branch Road as the primary east/west arterial for the area. This will increase safety, result in better traffic flow, and reduce congestion.

- Define and advocate the city's interest in the Brent Spence Bridge replacement.

The Brent Spence I-75/I-71 Bridge long ago exceeded the vehicle capacity for which it was built and is considered functionally obsolete. The bridge is part of one of the busiest interstate highways in the country. A study is now under way for the replacement/rehabilitation of the bridge. The project is expected to improve traffic flow, improve safety, correct geometric deficiencies, and maintain connections to regional and national transportation corridors.

Construction is not expected to take place until approximately 2015 but it is critical that the needs and concerns of the City of Covington are addressed now. These include improving exit and entrance ramps at 4th and 5th Streets, minimizing the impact to Crescent and Western Avenues and Goebel Park, minimizing the impact to the new St. Elizabeth development near the 12th Street exit east of I-75/I-71, generally minimizing the disruption to neighborhoods and businesses, and improving the traffic flow of local traffic in the area near the Interstate.

- Implement the city's portion of Dixie Fix, including improvements on Pike St. from Main Street to Dixie Highway. Other projects include improving Jillian's Way and Main Street, removal of on-street parking, making the south-bound I-71/I-75 exit ramp a dedicated right turn lane, improving on/off street parking from Montague to Bullock, and improving "the curve" at Montague.

Dixie Fix is an access management project involving ten cities in the region designed to relieve congestion along Dixie Highway in Kenton and Boone Counties. The project includes 36 prioritized projects, several of which are in Covington. The projects generally include street widenings, reducing curb cuts, creating turn lanes, and improving street traffic light locations and timing. The goals are to improve safety, improve mobility, maintain reasonable and adequate access to Dixie Highway properties, foster economic development, increase environmental stewardship through multi-modal options and design standards, and improve aesthetics.

- Implement the 4th Street/5th Street, west of Main Street, study recommendations.

The Central Area Loop Study, which was completed and approved in 2001, includes recommendations to reduce congestion on the 4th and 5th Streets. This project includes street widening, reducing curb cuts, creating curb lanes, improving street traffic light locations and timing, and modifications to the Clay Wade Bailey bridge entrance and exit.

- Advocate for the Licking and Ohio Rivers bikeway/walkway/green space study and assure community representation in the study.

Vision 2015 has established a strategy to develop an integrated system of regional parks, green space, and tourist destinations. One of the projects related to this strategy is the Licking and Ohio Rivers active greenspace study, which Vision 2015 is pursuing and the City of Covington supports. In addition to addressing the recreation perspective, the study also should include possible alternative transportation modes.

Study List: Items on this list are to be studied, in rank order; funding is not finalized for these projects.

- Study and implement street and alley design and traffic flow standards that enhance neighborhoods, develop neighborhoods, accommodate bike lanes on streets, and reduce the opportunity for crime.

A systematic, multi-modal transportation network design requires a set of transportation standards. These standards will not only optimize traffic flow but will also be context sensitive, mitigate traffic congestion, improve air quality, and include alternative to traditional transportation modes.

Identify design standards in 2008.

- Study the Madison Ave. /Scott Blvd. /Greenup St. corridor.

These streets represent that main north/south access to the city. The issues related to the corridor are as follows: traffic patterns and flow need to enhance Madison Avenue development as anticipated in the Madison Avenue Corridor Plan, including the Madison and 12th Street intersection; traffic patterns and flow need to accommodate the public square/public market development in the block bounded by Madison Avenue, Scott Street, and 4th and 5th Streets; through traffic in the Wallace Woods/Austinburg residential areas needs to be mitigated to reduce congestion and improve safety. It is expected that the study will include these issues in its scope.

Expect funding in 2007. Study to be completed in 2008.

- Study the Route 8/4th Street /5th Street, east of Main corridor.

This plan will determine the optimal traffic patterns along 4th and 5th Streets and the 4th Street Bridge connection to Newport. The study will include directing traffic away from residential areas and to more commercial areas. Consideration will be given to making 4th Street a two-way street from the 4th Street Bridge to Scott or Greenup Streets.

Expect funding in 2008. Study to be completed in 2008.

- Study and implementation of an efficient and cost-effective streetcar rail system.

This project will be complementary to a similar project being undertaken by the City of Cincinnati and will include access by Northern Kentucky cities in a loop configuration. It is anticipated that the system will include imbedded rails in the curb lanes of city streets for safer and more convenient user access. Of critical importance will be the placement of the system's route along city streets. The streetcar rail system is not only expected to be a convenient transportation alternative but is also expected to spur economic development along the route.

Expect funding in 2007. Study to be completed in 2008, including integration with the Cincinnati Study.

Rivers



Covington's unique location at the confluence of the Ohio and Licking Rivers has shaped its history and should inform our future. We should enhance and protect the natural environs and rich cultural heritage of our rivers through restoration of native vegetation, watershed and wildlife protection, and expansion of nature trails and historical interpretation. Vibrant riverfront destinations should include passive and active recreational opportunities, focal points, appropriate mixed-use development, and attractive spaces for outdoor events. These destinations can attract residents to move into Covington, draw in visitors, promote a positive image of the city, and catalyze economic development. Our rivers should be well connected to residential neighborhoods, downtown, and niche business districts.

VISION

The rivers as vibrant focal points drawing people to the water's edge, enhancing and integrating a healthy natural environment into daily life, and inspiring creative and sustainable economic investment.

Covington's history and future lie in its connection to its rivers. Enhancing and preserving physical access, personal enjoyment, environmental health, and economic opportunities will contribute to regional attractiveness. By leveraging natural beauty amid contemporary and historic urbanity, art, culture, and social interaction, we can nurture wondrous experiences resulting in an appreciation of Covington as an esteemed place to work, live, and visit. In doing so, we would create a multiplier effect in growing economic and life-quality returns.

GOAL 1: Maintain and improve our river corridors, thereby inspiring civic appreciation of this asset and increasing social interaction.

Covington exists because of its location to the Ohio and Licking River. Covington needs to understand and value its rivers to maximize their potential as the key assets they are. Perception and reality of a healthy and safe environment are prerequisites to attracting people to the rivers and community.

Strategy A: Clean the water within the rivers and protect and restore river banks.

This element is so basic and key to the entire effort that it should be woven into all other aspects of this plan and should be given top consideration on any city decisions affecting our rivers.

Strategy B: Bring people to the water's edge by increasing the desirability of river corridors and increasing the opportunities for social gathering places and river-oriented recreational activities.

Most importantly, the community needs to make sure that the water's edge works as a green-link system -- meaning that it is continuous and that it works in conjunction with and as a part of the river corridors. This strategy includes the following opportunities: paths for biking, running and walking; non-motorized boating facilities; musical entertainment venues; environmental/wildlife education opportunities; view-taking expeditions; special events (such as Paddlefest, art exhibits, kite flying); or simply creating a place to sit, meet, and eat. Improve access for everyone.

Priority Projects:

- Develop and improve river accessibility to the water's edge and riverfront designations by making sure a creative blending of the man-made and natural environments are incorporated in the planning and design, by using Project for Public Spaces principles for creating appropriate and user-friendly public spaces, and by integrating river-oriented recreational opportunities in the planning and design.
- Improve and enhance transportation modes and links to key points along the rivers.

GOAL 2: Plan riverfront development/investment with sustainable and green-design principles, establishing economic value that enhances and protects the city's cultural heritage and its natural environment.

Instead of simply capitalizing on prime locations near the river, any river development requires criteria to ensure that the special character of the area is enhanced. This requires compatible and creative design and planning that blends together the human-made and the natural environment and assures that community priorities are properly considered. The established design and planning criteria should utilize this plan as its base and include public-input meetings and/or design charettes.

Strategy A: Develop a comprehensive plan for Covington's river corridors that will lead to master planning for key areas.

Priority Projects:

- Implement Environmental Best Management Practices into zoning regulations that incorporate viewshed, hillside, and streamside (riparian) protection.
- Promote diversity of development, appropriate/compatible scale and use, and sustainable and green development practices.
- Integrate the arts and historic preservation into the master planning of key areas.

Strategy B: Design and develop a model riverfront project that incorporates the above-referenced priority projects, which would be used as a guide for future projects.

GOAL 3: Connect the region to Covington and its rivers.



“Connect” means taking a leadership role in promoting the stewardship, value, and vision for our rivers, which will, in turn, bring more people from the region to this asset.

Strategy A: Reinforce the perception and reality of Covington’s special place in history and its geography relating to its rivers by innovatively integrating the importance of the rivers into daily decision making and into quality of life in Covington.

Priority Projects:

- Explore and adopt policies that enforce positive impacts and discourage negative impacts on our rivers and other natural systems. Support state and federal policies that do the same.
- Promote the city’s river destinations and opportunities to the entire region.

Strategy B: Establish Covington as a strong voice in the advocacy and stewardship of the rivers.

Priority Projects:

- Identify and partner with other civic, community, and governmental bodies to promote and advocate legislative priorities, funding opportunities, and river-corridor efforts and projects that improve appreciation and stewardship of our river corridors.

Appendix A

Covington History and Profile

The Beginning

In 1814, John Gano, Richard Gano, and Thomas Carneal purchased 150 acres on the west side of the Licking River at its confluence with the Ohio River, referred to as “the Point,” from Thomas Kennedy for \$50,000. The men named their new riverfront enterprise the “Covington Company,” in honor of their friend, General Leonard Covington, an American officer who once trained troops in the area and was killed in the War of 1812.

The investors prepared a plat for the new city that was approximately five blocks wide by five blocks deep. The platted streets lined up with the streets of Cincinnati across the Ohio River, symbolically tying the future of the fledging city to its larger neighbor to the north. The first five streets, running east to west, were named for Kentucky’s first five governors: Shelby, Garrard, Greenup, Scott, and Madison.

In February 1815, the Kentucky General Assembly incorporated the land as the town of Covington. At the time of its incorporation, Covington and all of today’s Kenton County was a part of Campbell County. Shortly after its incorporation, the investors began selling lots for in the new city for \$385 a lot. However, for the next 15 years, lot sales were slow and disappointing. By 1830, the young city had a population of only 715 and lot prices were selling for half their value in 1815.

Housing and Population Growth of the City

After 1830, in large part because of the influx of German immigrants, Covington’s population began to grow significantly, creating a number of distinct and diverse neighborhoods within the city. This growth was recognized by the Kentucky legislature, which, in February 1834, incorporated the town as a city. By 1840, the population in the city increased to 2,026, which included eleven free blacks and 89 slaves.

Mutter Gottes and Mainstrasse

This population resided not only within the established boundaries of the city but outside, causing the city to undertake its first annexation, which extended the city to Main Street to the west and 12th Street to the south. This annexation brought the neighborhoods now known as Mutter Gottes and Mainstrasse.



Fueled in part by the European revolutions of the mid-1800s, many Europeans, particularly Germans, immigrated to Covington. At this time, the primary commercial district and gathering place was on Main Street near Sixth Street, the area now known as “Mainstrasse.” Sixth Street was laid out with a wide width that allowed the city, in 1861, to establish a public market in the center of the street with traffic lanes on either side. The nearby Mutter Gottes Kirche (Mother of God Church), built in 1871, was the center of another German-speaking neighborhood.

Seminary Square and Westside

At the same time the western area of the city was growing, development began to stretch to the south. In the late 1830s, the Western Baptist Education Society purchased 370 acres, which would define the city’s southern boundary in 1841. On this tract, the organization established a seminary and set aside 22 acres for a cemetery, which in 1843 would become known as Linden Grove Cemetery. To raise money to build its campus, the Baptists entered into the real estate market, subdividing the land and selling lots around its campus and cemetery, an area now known as Old Seminary Square and the Westside. In 1843, the city annexed most of the Society’s subdivisions, which expanded the city’s boundaries to 15th Street.

Within two years of opening the Western Baptist Theological Institute on Russell Street in 1845, the trustees of the organization became embroiled over the slavery issue. This ultimately ended with the dissolution of the institute in 1853 and the division of the property between the opposing factions. At the same time, the tracks for the Covington and Lexington Railroad were laid in the area, bisecting the college campus. Fifteen years later, the original St. Elizabeth Hospital moved into one of the old college buildings, where it operated from 1868 to 1911.

Austinburg and Lewisburg

At the same time that the Society was developing its property, Seneca Austin and his wife purchased and started developing 80 acres along the Licking River from approximately 16th Street to 20th Street, creating the neighborhood we now call Austinburg. In 1851, the city annexed all of the Austins’ land to Wallace Avenue as well as the western neighborhood now known as Lewisburg. Both communities were settled by largely German contingents, who established churches and parishes as focal points in their communities: St. Benedict’s Catholic Church and parish in Austinburg, and St. John’s the Evangelist Catholic Church and parish in Lewisburg.



Wallace Woods and Levassor Park



Immediately south of Austinburg were three large estates owned Robert Wallace, Daniel Holmes, and Eugene Levassor, all of whom were successful merchants.

In 1867, on 17 acres that he had acquired next to the Wallace and Levassor estates, Holmes constructed a 32-room redbrick English-Gothic “castle,” which was called Holmesdale. After Holmes died and his wife and children had returned to their native New Orleans, the family sold the mansion and 13 acres to the Covington Board of Education in 1915. The mansion served as the Covington High School until 1936, when the structure was razed and a new high school was constructed. This building and five others now occupy the former estate grounds as part of the Holmes High School campus.

In the 1890s, the Wallace and Levassor estates on either side of the Holmes estate were developed, creating upscale neighborhoods at the end of the streetcar line. Many stately homes were constructed on large lots in these neighborhoods.

Peaselburg

Just west of Wallace Woods and the railroad tracks, a German, working class neighborhood developed in the latter years of the 19th century. This community was known by its inhabitants as “Peaselburg.” In 1880, the community incorporated as an independent municipality and changed its name to Central Covington. In 1894, the Wallace Woods heirs agreed to be annexed by far less wealthy Central Covington because its tax rates were substantially lower than those assessed by the City of Covington.

The next year, Covington attempted to annex Central Covington, but support for the effort did not materialize. However, a decade later, many Central Covington businesses and homes were flooded by the eruption of a major sewer line. Covington offered to help the smaller municipality but only if the residents agreed to annexation, which occurred in 1907. Thus, Central Covington (and indirectly Wallace Woods) became a part of Covington. Six years later, St. Augustine Catholic Church was constructed on 19th Street, serving as this neighborhood’s focal point and community gathering place.

Latonia and Rosedale



In 1882, a group of investors formed the Latonia Agricultural and Stock Association to create a horseracing track south of Covington. Purchasing more than 100 acres north of Banklick Creek in an area then known as Milldale, and using the name of the nearby resort of Latonia Springs, the investors re-named this area Latonia. The track

opened in June 1883 but it wasn't until 1890 that Kenton County granted the Covington electric streetcar company the right to lay tracks from the Covington city boundary to this area of the county.

In 1896, a portion of this area was incorporated as the city of Latonia, with a starting population of about 1,500. Adjacent to Latonia to the south was a community known as Rosedale, which was actually a part of Latonia. In 1909, Covington annexed Latonia and Rosedale, in part to relieve Latonia of financial difficulties it was encountering.

Botany Hills (formerly West Covington)

The independent city of West Covington, formerly known as Economy and now known as Botany Hills, is located along the Ohio River on the hills west of downtown Covington. This city was platted in 1846 and St. Ann's Church was constructed in the area in 1862 and served this primarily German-Catholic community. After an unsuccessful attempt to annex this city in 1873, Covington annexed it in 1916, in part because of water problems in the area and a lack of a high school.

Smaller annexations in the mid 20th century

After the annexation of West Covington in 1916, the boundaries of Covington remained the same for the next 35 years while other municipalities were established in areas surrounding Covington, such as Park Hills, Fort Wright, and Lakeside Park, to name a few. In the 1950s and 1960s, the city annexed small tracts of land – 34 acres in Lewisburg in 1951, 70 acres in Latonia in 1956, and 47 acres that formerly occupied by a Benedictine Monastery (now the Monte Casino neighborhood) in 1963 – but these annexations were of a small scale compared to tracts annexed during the first 100 years of the city's existence.

1960s annexations (Kenton Hills and South Covington)

During the 1960s, the city annexed a considerable amount of property that would establish the current boundaries of the city. Starting in 1965, the city annexed 212 acres near Kyles Lane. In 1965, the city added 72 acres near Devou Park, which was then known and is still known as the Kenton Hills. Finally, in 1965, the city undertook its biggest annexation effort ever when it added 4,000 acres of unincorporated land in Kenton County south of Latonia, creating the community now known as South Covington.

Population growth

The population of Covington grew from 743 in 1830 to 24,505 in 1870 to 42,938 in 1900. From this number, the population grew to its highest recorded count – 65,252 – in 1930. Perhaps due to problems associated with the Great Depression in the 1930s, U.S. Census Bureau recorded the city's first drop in population in its history in 1940, when the population was documented at 62,018. For the next two decades, the population would remain in the low- to middle- 60,000s. Due in large part to urban flight that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, the city's population dropped from 60,376 in 1960 to the lowest recorded census count in recent history in 1990:

43,264. In the most recent U.S. Census, conducted in 2000, the city's population increased slightly to 43,370.

The Economic Growth of Covington

The first commercial development

In its infancy, most of the commerce in Covington was connected with the rivers that formed the northern and eastern boundaries of the city. Because the Kentucky side of the Ohio River was relatively shallow compared to the Ohio side of the river, Covington was never able to develop its riverfront as a viable public landing for boats and steamships, which instead moored on the Cincinnati side of the river, where steamship building facilities were also located.

The city's first manufacturing concern, a cotton factory, was built near the river in 1828, and three years later, another business, a rolling mill and nail factory, was established along Scott Street near the riverfront.

The city's first commercial center

The first commercial center of the city was established around the "public square" platted between Third and Fourth Streets and Scott Boulevard and Greenup Street. At this location, a market house was constructed in 1831 and a public well was dug approximately one block from the square. During the 1830s, along with the public market, retail stores, businesses offices, and other commercial establishments flourished in this area.

In the mid-1800s, two things promoted the growth of Covington. First, in 1840, the Kentucky General Assembly severed Kenton County from Campbell County. Despite the legislative directive that county seat be at the center of the county, Covington served as the *de facto* county seat until the City of Independence was incorporated in 1842.

Because Independence was sparsely populated and approximately 12 miles from Covington, the residents and lawyers of the thriving urban area found it more convenient to transact business and administer justice at the Covington courthouse, which was constructed near the public square in 1843. Recognizing that Covington was serving as the *de facto* county seat, the Kentucky legislature, in 1860, enacted a law authorizing Covington as the site for the recording of deeds and mortgages - making Kenton County only one of two counties in Kentucky with dual county seats (the other being Newport and Alexandria in Campbell County).

The Madison and Pike Street commercial corridor

The other major development occurring during this time period was the construction of the Covington and Lexington Railroad in 1853. While the public square remained a hub for the "courthouse crowd," in large part because of the railroad, the area of Madison Avenue and Pike Street became the city's primary commercial center during the rest of 19th century and into the 20th century.

With a train stop at Russell and Pike Streets, which was also near the terminus of the Covington and Lexington Turnpike, the area of the city soon became a beehive of commercial activity. Packing houses, groceries, dry goods stores, meat markets, printers, jewelers, saloons, lumber yards, machine shops, hardware stores, and more than 20 hotels cropped up in this area of the city.

The John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge



The next major project that spurred the economic growth of Covington was the decade-long construction of the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge between Covington and Cincinnati. Started in 1856, work on the bridge continued for two years before the effects of the 1857 depression brought construction to a halt. Work on the bridge resumed in 1863 but once again was delayed because of the Civil War. The bridge formally opened on January 1, 1867, promoting further commerce between Kentucky and Ohio.

In part because of depressions of 1873 and 1893, commercial construction was not significant in Covington during the latter part of the 19th century. However, that would change dramatically in the early 20th century for a number of reasons.

One of these reasons was that the Suspension Bridge – originally designed for horse cars and pedestrians – was reconstructed in the late 1890s to accommodate electric streetcars – and in a few short years, automobiles. During the early 1900s, many new commercial and governmental structures were constructed in Covington.

The heyday

The heyday for Covington as the commercial center for all of Northern Kentucky was the first two decades of the 20th century. During these decades, particularly the 1920s, the city's downtown was a bustling place of activity, with numerous restaurants, department stores, shops, saloons, banks, theaters, and offices bringing swarms of people to the downtown commercial district.

Among the buildings that were constructed during this high-growth period were several near the public square, such as the city and county building, dedicated in 1902 and the Cincinnati, Newport, and Covington Railway Company headquarters, completed in 1903 (later acquired by the Citizens Telephone Company), to name a few. In addition, a number of other commercial structures were constructed in the downtown commercial district that survive today, such as the Masonic Lodge at the corner of Fourth and Scott Boulevard, the Kentucky Times-Star Building in the 500 block of Scott, and the Edward Pieck pharmacy building (later the Greyhound bus station building) at the southeast corner of Fifth Street and Madison Avenue.

It was also during this time period that Covington became the financial center of Northern Kentucky, housing the following lending institutions, primarily on Madison Avenue: the First National Bank, German National Bank, Covington Savings Bank & Trust Co., Citizens National Bank, and Peoples Savings Bank and Trust Company, to name a few.

This was also a period when the manufacturing industry significantly increased in Covington. Of particular note was the growth of The Stewart Iron Work Company, which employed as many as 600 people in 1915. The Bavarian Brewery was a large employer in the west side with strong sales until Prohibition in 1918. Other manufacturing firms that operated during this time period include the United States Motor Truck Company and Kelley-Koett Manufacturing Corp. of Covington, Ky., one of the country's earliest manufacturers x-ray accessories and equipment.

Known for many of its beautiful churches, this was also the time frame during which one of the city's icons, St. Mary's Basilica Cathedral of the Assumption, was built, which was dedicated in 1910. It was also during this time frame when the city acquired two of its most prized parks: Goebel Park in the Mainstrasse neighborhood and Devou Park, more than 500 acres of pristine land in the western hills of the city.

The decline

While the Great Depression of the 1930s devastated many Covington businesses and residents, the city's decline did not become pronounced until the 1960s. As mentioned above, the city's population remained somewhat stagnant for three decades. But post-World War II urban flight, coupled with a substantial reduction in the city's manufacturing sector, caused a significant decline in the city's workforce as well as its resident population.

If the 1920s was the last great decade for Covington, then the 1970s – and to a certain extent the early 1980s – was the nadir for the city, at least with respect to its downtown. Despite construction of the IRS service center by the federal government in the 1960s, which brought many new jobs to the city, the city began a downward spiral of disinvestment, which continued for several decades. In fact, in the late 1970s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development identified Covington as one of the country's "most distressed cities."

During this time period, as new retail centers and malls grew in the suburbs, long-established Covington retail firms either closed or left downtown Covington. Among the stores and shops that left or closed were Goldsmith's Department Store, Eilermann's Department Store, Coppin's Department Store, Montgomery Ward, S.S. Kresge Co., Herzog's, Louis Marx & Sons Furniture, Modern Furniture, Woolworth's, Penney's, Sears, the First National Bank, and the Madison and Liberty theatres, to name a few. Many of these storefronts remained empty during this time period or were replaced with less attractive commercial endeavors or social service agencies.

A rebirth

Beginning in the mid- to late-1980s, Covington began its revival. New buildings were constructed, jobs were created, and the population loss began to stabilize.

The rebirth of Covington as a commercial center occurred in the same place where the city commercial growth first occurred – along the Ohio River and in one of the city’s first commercial district, Main Street. The rebirth on the river began modestly in 1984 when developer David Herriman built the \$4.4-million, 34-unit Riverside Terrace condominium complex on Riverside Drive. Two years later, Herriman constructed the 43-unit Riverside Plaza, a companion condominium project just south of Riverside Terrace, for \$7.5 million.

With the city and state investing approximately \$7 million in infrastructure improvements in the late 1970s and early 1980s, including construction of the 100-foot Carroll Chimes Bell Tower with its carillon and glockenspiel in Goebel Park, Main Street and Sixth Street was renamed “Mainstrasse,” and returned to its roots as a German village with restaurants, taverns, and specialty retail shops.

In the mid- to late-1980s, the city, using state and local funds, began acquiring properties along the Ohio River for redevelopment. In 1988, the city and local developer Corporex entered into a master development agreement to redevelop the city’s riverfront, which kicked the city’s renaissance into high gear. The first phase of this redevelopment occurred in 1990 when the \$110-million, 18-story Rivercenter office tower and a 230-room Embassy Suites hotel was built atop a 1,100-space parking garage constructed by the city.

In 1994, Fidelity Investments established a 188-acre campus in Covington, constructing three office buildings on the campus, totaling approximately 780,000 square feet and employing 2,000 employees. At the same time the Fidelity campus was underway, Wessels Construction built the IRS Gateway Center on Scott Boulevard, between Third and Fourth Streets, which would employ approximately 2,000 IRS employees when completed.

In 1997, Rivercenter II was built next to Corporex’s first downtown office tower, and during the same year, across Madison Avenue from the Rivercenter complex, a new garage was constructed by the Commonwealth of Kentucky. A year after the garage was finished, a 300-room Marriott hotel was built atop a portion of the garage. Two years later, on the remaining portion of the parking garage, eleven floors of office space was constructed, now known as Madison Place, and on top of this office space four floors of million-dollar residential condominiums were built.

In 1998, across the street from the Marriott hotel, the Commonwealth of Kentucky contributed \$30.5 million to build the Northern Kentucky Convention Center. In 2001, a block away from the convention center, Wessels Construction would add a 110,000-square-foot expansion of the Gateway Center on Madison Avenue and Third Street. Another block away, Towne Properties would build Roebing Row Apartments, an 86-unit luxury apartment building with architectural features compatible with nearby structures in the surrounding historic Licking Riverside neighborhood.

Meanwhile, a housing boom was taking place in the southern part of the city. Among new subdivisions built in South Covington in 1990s were Ridgeport (275 homes), Clover Meadow (88 homes), and Heathermoor (100 upscale homes).

The 21st century

Covington's resurgence has continued and expanded into the 21st century, making the city an attractive place to live, work, and play. The redevelopment along the riverfront in the 1980s and 1990s moved southward into the downtown area. A number of existing structures were rehabilitated and new businesses have located within these historic structures.

In the 400 block of Madison Avenue, two new businesses – a law firm and the upscale Avenue nightclub – have located in buildings formerly occupied by strip clubs. In the same block, at the northeast corner of 5th Street and Madison Avenue, the historic Odd Fellows Hall, constructed in 1856, was restored as Class A office space and retail after a devastating fire destroyed much of the building in 2002. It now houses a high-tech software and consulting services company, an architecture firm, a real estate agency, and a reception hall.

South on Madison Avenue, the city and local business leaders, Jim and Donna Salyers, created the Covington Wedding District, which is home to the Fabulous Weddings bridal store, the Wedding Mall, and several other wedding-related businesses. On Madison Avenue and Pike Street, the city created the Covington Arts and Technology Zone ("CATZ"). Artists and technology businesses are locating in this corridor, rehabilitating buildings, and bringing in a "creative class" of employees to the city.

The city is currently working on two major public projects that will further change the landscape of downtown Covington. In the heart of the downtown area, in the block bounded by Madison Avenue, Scott Boulevard, and Fourth and Fifth Streets, the city is developing a public square and public market. The city has hired the Project for Public Spaces, the pre-eminent expert on the development of public space, to conduct civic engagement workshops and to help design the public square and public market. Along the Ohio River, the city has plans for a new riverfront, which would include, among other things, a hiking and biking trail along the length of the river connecting with other Northern Kentucky river cities, restaurants at the foot of Madison Avenue, an upscale marina serving local residents, and large park between the floodwall and levee and the river.

Residential redevelopment is also moving quickly forward in the downtown area and elsewhere in the city. Since last year, construction of more than \$120 million in new residential housing started in the downtown area with another multi-million dollar housing development underway in south Covington.

In 2006, Corporex started construction on the 21-story residential condominium project, the Ascent at Roebling's Bridge. Designed by world-renown architect, Daniel Libeskind, this \$55-million project will offer breath-taking views of the 140-year-old suspension bridge and the Cincinnati skyline. The structure, which is creating a stir in the world of architecture, is scheduled to be completed in November 2007. Approximately 70 percent of the condominium units, which range from \$500,000 to \$5 million a unit, have been sold.

Also underway is The Views, a \$50-million, 125-unit residential townhouse development on the hillside off of Pike Street in the Lewisburg neighborhood. In the heart of the Covington Arts



District, Phase 1 of the new \$13-million, 64-unit PULSE loft condominium project, the first phase of which is nearing completion. In addition, loft condominiums are being built in rehabilitated buildings on Pike Street (Pike Street Lofts and Magnolia Lofts) and on Madison Avenue (Man Ray Lofts), to name a few. In addition, Fischer Homes is building a 1,000-unit residential subdivision in south Covington, off of Ky. 17, which will feature condominiums, patio homes, and single-family residences. The first phase of this development, the largest in Kenton County in more than a decade, is now underway.

In addition to the residential development now underway, city's economic growth and job creation is booming. Fidelity Investments is expanding its south Covington campus by

building two new buildings there, which will create of 1,500 to 2,000 new jobs (in addition to the existing 2,000 jobs) at the campus. St. Elizabeth Hospital/HealthPoint will create approximately 230 jobs when a new \$34-million medical facility is fully operational off of 12th Street near 1-75. Other commercial, educational, and office development is expected in this same area when the 12th Street reconstruction project is finished in 2009.

Covington's Neighborhood Movement

Covington owes many of its more recent accomplishments to the action of dedicated residents and neighborhood groups. The first round of this neighborhood movement came about in the mid- to late-1970s as part of a reformist movement to improve the city. Many neighborhood associations were formed at the time, and the Covington Neighborhood Action Coalition, or CNAC, was established. CNAC served as an umbrella organization for many active neighborhood associations, with each organization having delegates as part of annual CNAC conventions. CNAC addressed city-wide concerns and endorsed neighborhood issues, such as opposition to the proposed location of a coal dock in Latonia and advocating for the improvement of sewers in Peaselburg.

CNAC also received federal funding from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to create the city's first block watch, a forerunner to today's Neighborhood Watch. The neighborhood movement reached its peak in the early 1980s. By the mid-1980s, CNAC membership waned as many city-wide issues had been addressed and no funding was available for staff assistance to the neighborhood groups. Several neighborhood associations, such as those in Wallace Woods and Licking Riverside, persisted despite the decline of CNAC.

The Neighborhood Watch Program began in 1985 when Latonia residents began organizing neighborhood watches after a murder and several break-ins in their neighborhood. Watch members work closely with the Covington Police and Code Enforcement Departments and play an instrumental role in making our community safer.



South Covington, and Mainstrasse, also have active neighborhood associations that are not currently a part of CNC.

In 1996, residents initiated a call for a new CNAC-like organization. At the same time, the Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington, then known as the Covington Community Center, was reorganizing and defining strategic growth areas for its organization. At the request of residents, the Center agreed to help organize and staff the new organization, the Covington Neighborhood Collaborative. Today, CNC has 12 member organizations and works on both city-wide and neighborhood issues. Several other neighborhoods, including the Eastside,

Appendix B

All Projects Created by Action Teams

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

- Recognize exemplary performance for good landlords (take nominations from NAs and tenants) at the Friends of Covington's annual Beautification Awards Ceremony.
- Create and support a non-profit lending hand volunteer rehab program (need t-shirts for volunteers).
- Encourage "cottage conversions" – that is, educate and assist homeowners and homebuyers in rehabbing smaller cottages to meet modern-day needs. Provide a one-stop location for homeowners/homebuyers to acquire architectural drawings, a list of supplies and suppliers, a list of certified contractors, cost estimates, permits, and so forth. May need to reassign City staff and funds to create this program.
- Encourage "green" renovations and construction. Educate and assist homeowners and homebuyers in using green and recycled building materials (such as low-VOC paint, low-e windows, energy star appliances, and insulation) in rehab. Provide a one-stop location for homeowners/homebuyers to obtain a list of supplies and suppliers, a list of certified contractors, cost estimates, and so forth. May need to reassign City staff and funds to create this program. (modeled after the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative)
- Provide financial incentives to convert 2- to 4-family homes into single-family homes.
- Create a local "Angie's List" of good contractors. Post the list on Connect Covington.
- Revitalize alleys.
- Neighborhood associations engage in marketing their neighborhood and the city via house & garden tours, walking tours, brochures, rehab-a-rama, welcoming committees, etc. Utilize websites such as the City of Covington's, Connect Covington, Center for Great Neighborhoods, etc. for neighborhood information. Continue to utilize Covington's Resident Handbook for new and existing residents.
- Develop design criteria for neighborhoods
- Target a small area to model high-quality exterior home improvements and landscaping that inspires confidence and positive investment – use houses as "billboards"
- Bring national "Don't Borrow Trouble" campaign to Covington to stop predatory lending.
- Increase availability of homebuyer education courses offered by nonprofit organizations.
- Plant more new street trees each year (Covington currently plants about 200/year).
- Ensure that residents have input into Covington's annual Capital Improvements Budget that provides for a systematic way for improving streets, sidewalks, alleys, etc..
- Compel property owners to cover the costs of sidewalk repair via assessments (versus the City covering all of the costs).
- Increase funding to and availability of the City's Façade Improvement Program.

- Eradicate litter caused by neighborhood stores, residents, and visitors via enforcement of the City's impending anti-litter ordinance/campaign. Neighborhood associations, which have pushed so hard for the new ordinance, should help publicize the campaign. Maximize youth involvement in the campaign via community service projects, a youth environmental summit, and so forth.
- Enforce new zoning code requirements for minimum square footage and parking (insist on off-street parking for new residential units)
- Create a "Housing Court" through Kenton County's District Court.
- Explore funding sources for ongoing "operational" support of neighborhood associations (i.e., newsletters, recruitment, etc.) and projects
- City should sponsor an open, formal process to gather resident input on all projects in their community
- Neighborhood associations complete physical improvement projects such as installation of porch lights, creation of pocket parks, addition of historic plaques, etc.
- Encourage all neighborhood associations to work together on citywide and regional issues
- Increase City-sponsored social/recreation events (ie: Christmas trees, movies in parks, etc.)

ARTS AND CULTURE

- Create a fundraising mechanism such as the proposed "Covington Arts and Cultural Heritage Endowment Fund" (CACHE) to benefit arts development in Covington.
- Inventory creative industries in Covington, encourage all arts organizations to obtain a Dun & Bradstreet number to be included in the Americans for the Arts Creative Industries Report.
- Promote and market art events (such as the First Friday Gallery Hop) with restaurants and other entertainment venues.
- Track number of artists living and working in Covington

PRESERVATION

- Work with Friends of Covington to expand the reach and increase the profile of the Covington Beautification awards and to specifically tie awards to preservation/adaptive reuse. Timeline: By August 2007.
- Develop a citywide reclamation program so that when the decision has been made to tear down a building, we salvage important historic elements. Timeline: Back-half 2008.
- Create a program, "Citizens on Patrol for Preservation," that functions similarly to the Block Watch program, to distribute education materials and to document, report and follow up on code violations. Timeline: By end 2007. Work with Covington Neighborhood Collaborative.
- Garner support for new programs for preservation assistance from city, state and federal governments through research, lobbying, and letter writing. Timeline: Ongoing. Work with Preservation Kentucky.
- Promote and continue support of historic marker and plaque program. Timeline: As opportunities arise.

- Identify brick and cobblestone alleys and develop a plan to restore them. Note that Housing Committee has listed this. Timeline: Identify alleys in 2008.
- Collaborate with the Housing Committee to tie education and awareness into existing Covington Historic Preservation/ Adaptive reuse rehab tours. Provide Covington walking tour brochures. Timeline: Ask CGN for tour dates. Then develop timeline based on this.
- Ensure involvement in examining and improving traffic patterns (route 8 reroute) to maximize residential nature of neighborhoods, public safety and walk able urbanity. Timeline: On-going.

EDUCATION

- Advertise the variety of mentoring programs citywide
- Develop a business/neighborhood/school council around each school to increase dialogue
- Connect neighborhoods and businesses to parent councils
- Recruit businesses or neighborhood groups to sponsor family engagement events
- Develop opportunities for staff to have work experiences to enrich classroom instruction
- Explore private, corporate, or governmental funds for education enhancements
- Publicly recognize excellent teachers and other staff
- Increase in-school leadership opportunities
- Develop the concept of the “community as classroom” where projects occur in the community and the community comes into the classroom
- Promote character-building experiences
- Develop partnerships among childcare providers and early childhood education centers
- Explore existing licensing standards for childcare providers
- Schools and students market schools to the community, providing information and successes, via neighborhood associations and business/social groups
- Kids PR Campaign run by students, teaching media, advertising and public relations skills to get information and good news out to the general community otherwise still uninformed about the school systems, both public and private
- Schools introduce career day at lower grades. Set up a full career day experience out of school in the junior year
- Businesses set up job offers if students graduate and meet other goals (i.e., Citibank program)
- Community education and culture providers including Gateway, NKU, Urban Learning Center, other formal education programs, library programs, online learning, co-op and apprenticeship opportunities, arts organizations, etc., undertake a coordinated campaign to advertise their programs to the community, emphasizing learning “from the cradle to the grave”
- Community, business and education leaders create a “community scorecard”, utilizing neighborhood and business newsletters and other media, to recognize and record successes of students, citizens and other stakeholders in achieving individual and professional learning goals and achievements

DOWNTOWN

- Work with the City and private foundations, such as the CBC Foundation, to create demand incentives to encourage investment in downtown housing and quality office space.
- Create consumer housing incentives.
- Improve marketing efforts for downtown housing.

GREENSPACE

- Identify culturally and historically significant parks or public space with the involvement of Behringer-Crawford Museum, Baker Hunt, Public Library, the Covington Independent Public School District, and other partners.
- Host an annual conference to connect the Devou Park Advisory Committee, Covington Urban Forestry Board, Linden Grove Board of Overseers, Vision 2015, and other greenspace-focused groups. The focus of the meetings should be coordinating and connecting the work of the Boards.
- Partner with neighborhood associations to design and develop community flower and vegetable gardens.
- Partner with schools and other youth-oriented organizations to get kids involved in creating and maintaining greenspace.
- Ensure that residents have input into Covington's annual Capital Improvements Budget that provides for a systematic way for improving greenspace.
- Utilize "Where the River Bends" documentary on the history of Northern Kentucky to educate residents about Covingtons' natural resources.
- Promote "green friendly" attractions that create a positive attitude.
- Convert Clay Wade Bailey Bridge Yoke from gravel to greenspace.
- Beautify traffic islands and neighborhood gateways.
- Partner with St. Elizabeth Hospital, HealthPoint, and the Linden Grove Cemetery Board of Overseers in improving conditions in Linden Grove Cemetery.
- Properly maintain and schedule ball fields for team sports.
- Monitor progress of Devou Park Master Plan.
- Make sure lighting, visibility, and access is adequate to address safety concerns.
- Schedule and publicize maintenance and cleanup efforts in publicly-owned parks.
- Elicit support of various civic and social groups and organizations to participate in cleanup efforts.
- Connect existing alleys in a walking network.
- Connect Devou Park with Ohio Riverfront via walking and biking trails.
- Following completion of construction, landscape the new median on 12th Street to create a handsome gateway into Covington.
- With help from residents, plant more new street trees each year (Covington currently plants about 200/year) to create a greenbelt around the city.
- Create an information clearinghouse to share news from the Devou Park Advisory Committee, Urban Forestry Board, Linden Grove Cemetery Board of Overseers, and City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department.

RIVERS

- Organize ongoing programming and events. Coordinate programming with Northern Kentucky Kentucky Convention Center and regional events such as Tall Stacks and Paddlefest.
- Make the riverfront physically able to host events. Accommodate diverse demographics, including all ages and mobility. Remove the impediments to gathering in large social groups. Provide venue for inclusive Community expression and public gatherings. Infrastructure needs to support a variety of events and gatherings
- Create people-oriented focal points using consistent, emblematic elements. Coordinate with branding of Covington's image to instill community identity and create a sense of place.
- Build trails and bikeway. Coordinate and complement with ongoing Southbank Partners and Vision 2015 Riverway initiatives. Connect with "walkable communities" initiative and provides alternative to cars.
- Build light rail, trolley, or other connection between Covington, Newport, Cincinnati and other communities. Advances longstanding effort in Northern Kentucky to create a transportation loop.
- Promote and enable river taxis and river tours.
- Provide public access to river for small crafts at one or more boat ramps. Existing facilities in Covington are in disrepair and unusable. This key amenity is missing from mix of features along Covington's riverfronts. Provides opportunity for small affordable crafts such as canoes and kayaks.
- Enhance bus connections from different parts of the region to the river.
- Assure well-designed and adequate parking. Relieves parking pressure on residents and businesses.
- Connect the river to Mainstrasse, 5th Street, 6th Street park areas, and the Arts District. Connect neighbors to riverfront.
- Create more access points to rivers through and over floodwall and levees. Better access to the Ohio and Licking rivers. Need to coordinate with engineering review and safety. Turn floodwall into an asset and attractor rather than an obstacle. Use the topography creatively as a design asset in landform design.
- Continue riverfront walkway from Newport. Reduce barrier to movement. Draw folks to Covington's downtown and neighborhoods. Improve walkability and "bikeability". Support multimodal objectives (congestion, lifestyle, urban design). Connect and integrate now-separate parts of the Newport Levee History Walk and the Covington Statue Walk.
- Protect and restore riverbanks with native trees and other vegetation. Bioengineer solutions to streamside protection. Eliminate invasive species such as kudzu that are overwhelming native vegetation. Protect remaining floodplains from further erosion and loss of land.

- Partner with other stakeholders, including Sanitation District #1, watershed groups, recreation communities, tourism, historical society, government, development communities, tourism, historical societies. Meet national and state regulatory requirements including Clean Water Act.
- Extend and enhance existing trails and walkways. Coordinate with ongoing regional and National efforts such as American Discovery Trail Create a Covington trail and path system that includes nature paths as well as hard-surfaced trails. Provide outdoor passive recreational and education opportunities.
- Add to murals and historical interpretation and statues. Development, mapping, signage and maintenance of trails and path. Create wildlife habitat and viewing areas.
- Coordinate with cities upstream and downstream. Work to raise awareness that activities upstream affect communities downstream.
- Provide more mixed-use developments with different types of attractions (restaurants, stores - scuba stores etc).
- Redevelop a dynamic area west of Madison Place on RiverCenter Boulevard between 3rd Street and 5th Street to the south.
- Partner to promote related common legislation priorities and funding opportunities through NKY consensus process.
- Identify and integrate river other existing and anticipated river corridor efforts.