



**Kent County Strategic Plan  
Summary Document**

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## **Board of Commissioners: Over-arching Goals**

- Maintain long-term financial health of county: balance mandated services with discretionary services within limits of available resources
- Pursue legislative changes needed to support Board's decisions
- Assure adequate funding for current programs consistent with Strategic Plan
- Invest in maintenance of county's infra-structure and programs that encourage healthy lives for residents
- Invest in judicial system that is accessible to all citizens and efficient in its proceedings
- Encourage innovation at all levels of county government
- Conduct all county affairs in an open and accessible manner

## **External Factors Expected to Impact Kent County**

- The impact of technology and communication innovations will level the ability of communities to compete; combined with the decline in manufacturing (loss of manufacturing employment), the State economy is facing significant challenges
- The continued reduction in State and federal funding will likely result in less revenue for county government; county government will also experience pressure to replace State revenues lost by local non-profit organizations
- Changes in local private sector leadership may impact historical levels of philanthropy and commitment to the community.
- Voters have indicated an acceptance for taxation levels remaining at "status quo" but are generally unreceptive to new millage requests.
- Higher demand for county services as a result of demographic changes (aging of "baby boomers") and patterns of growth in the county;
- County-owned capital infra-structure is aging and in need of new investment.
- Changes in the cost of gas and oil-related products will impact commerce and travel patterns.
- The cost of over-lapping governmental activities and administration is becoming difficult to sustain.



## Issues that Impact Multiple Departments or Functional Areas

- Perception among some employees that Kent County is “flush” with cash and that efforts to reduce expenses are not “serious” or critical
- The cost of labor is a major component of departmental operations and is directly impacted by union negotiations. Some department directors feel they lack a substantive role in those negotiations and/or have no control over the item that is the single largest component of department operations.
- The need for increased and improved use of technology to improve efficiency of operations and reduce cost of operations (electronic storage and retrieval of information; transactions conducted on electronic basis). The IT department’s role is more of a reactive than pro-active partner in designing solutions in many situations.
- The mix of some departments reporting to elected officials with departments reporting to appointed administrators creates significant challenges for management and for creating a unified organizational culture
- The need to reduce the per-unit cost of doing business, and a commitment to do so by sharing resources across departments.
- Many employees have a perception that “adequate is good enough” – lack of motivation to strive for better performance.
- The lack of an “organizational culture” that transcends departmental and functional boundaries
- GIS system is increasingly important to multiple departments
- Training and re-training of staff is essential to all county operations
- All operations benefit from a strong and continually improving infra-structure
- The use of interns and externs from area colleges and universities will benefit all operations
- Multiple departments have issues that would benefit from legislative changes.
- Increasing focus among multiple departments on youth – courts, prosecutor, Sheriff, Friend of the Court, Health, Child Care Fund, Extension, Zoo.
- Diversity of the county staff needs to be increased in response to increased diversity in the market area
- Multiple departments require improved public relations/marketing efforts to improve awareness of their services/facilities



## Functional Area: Justice

### *Departments/Divisions*

District Court, Probate Court, Circuit Court; Services (FOC, Court Services, Juvenile Services, Child Care, Probation) and Adjudication (Civil and Criminal); Prosecutor

### *Strategic Goals*

- Continue to improve case processing; align staff and judicial and prosecutorial resources to focus on expediency
- Reduce recidivism
- Maximize collection of fines and fees (and restitution)
- Maximize effectiveness of existing staff and reduce staff growth
- Provide professional guardianship services to persons in need

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors (Factors that affect multiple departments within the functional area, as well as the functions' interaction with other functional areas)*

- SCAO is pressuring Court to collect more juvenile fines, fees, and restitution
- SCAO is requiring judges to report individually on aging of case-load
- SCAO is encouraging the expanded use of non-adversarial methods (mediation, diversion, etc.)
- Technology is becoming more user-friendly and pervasive
- Community is experiencing an increase in domestic violence, retail fraud, landlord/tenant issues, identity theft, pro-per litigants, and a decrease in drug-related crime
- Changing demographics of the community is increasing demand for interpretation services
- Court-appointed attorney compensation system has not been reviewed or revised in many years and needs updating
- System is experiencing continued pressure to reduce jail population and prison commitment (legislatively and as result of local facility over-crowding)
- State and federal legislation establish new mandates without funding support

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (by Department)*

- **District Court:** Secure and appropriately designed additional space
- **Circuit Court – Services:** Reduce out-of-home placement through more effective programming (in-home care, tether, etc.): FOC – increase the use of mediation in Child Custody cases; improve collections to equal or exceed best county in state; reduce level of arrears
- **Circuit Court – Adjudication:** Increase court-appointed attorney fees
- **Probate Court -** Explore ways to expand professional guardianship services to meet growing demand



## **Functional Area: Public Safety**

### *Departments/Divisions*

Sheriff, Community Corrections

### *Strategic Goals*

- Continue to control the cost of providing service at the jail
- Establish a base-line allocation method for road patrol
- Implement a computer-based system to allow citizens to report misdemeanors and receive written report (for insurance claims)
- Evaluate potential for more multi-township collaborative efforts to fund road patrol operations
- Increase jail capacity within next 5 years
- Expand use of jail-diversion strategies to make more effective use of jail space

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors*

- Continuation of efforts to work with Prosecutor and Courts to further improve jail diversion strategies
- Work with Prosecutor to reduce amount of time between hearing and arraignment
- Growth and development of residential and business areas in rural parts of county combined with service expectations of new "suburban/ex-urban" residents/businesses (more traffic) increases pressure for road patrol and response times
- Expected increase in the number of officers at Grand Rapids Police Department likely to have short-term impact on jail population (more arrests/incarceration)

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (System-wide)*

- Continue to develop jail diversion strategies for prisoners with mental health issues
- Develop a more effective community re-entry program
- Aggressively develop strategies to better manage the cost of inmate health-care
- Develop a more effective method for obtaining information from computers during criminal investigations
- Develop equitable funding formula for Central Dispatch
- Renew Corrections and Detention millage
- Expand the availability and utilization of alternative sentencing programs



## Functional Area: Health & Welfare

### *Departments/Divisions*

Health Department, Soldiers & Sailors Relief Office, Department of Human Services – Child Care Fund Operations, and Senior Millage

### *Strategic Goals*

Create a fair and equitable fee structure for Health Department services that is consistent with surrounding counties and captures 100% of cost of services provided

- Become more outcomes-based with the outcomes firmly grounded in public health science.
- Match county funds to expand Medicaid waiver program for seniors who qualify for nursing homes but desire to remain in their own homes
- Advocate for changes in the DHS business model to allow for more creative service delivery methods
- Re-locate DHS office to more appropriate office space

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors*

- Health Department Sheldon clinic and DHS office needs re-location (significant number of common customers/clientele)
- Animal Shelter needs to be relocated prior to corrections expansion.
- Senior Millage and Health Department both focus programming on improving the health of older adults and reducing health expenditures
- Local DHS office is limited in its ability to implement management changes that can improve efficiency of operations (technology applications must be state-wide for many programs)
- Renewal of millage for senior programs closely timed to renewal of millage for corrections

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (by Department)*

- **Health Department:** complete Phase II of departmental Strategic Plan; evaluate and possibly restructure MSS/ISS and WIC; improve department's public relations efforts with both public and elected officials; increase staff diversity and hours of clinical operations; improve outcomes in infant mortality, obesity, tobacco control, land-use decisions, and chronic disease
- **Soldiers and Sailors Relief Office:** increase the number of qualified veterans served by the Office and increase the level of financial support obtained for veterans from the Veterans Administration
- **DHS (Child Care Fund):** implement state-developed "Family to Family" program during 2006 to reduce expenditures for out-of-home placements (pilot program)
- **Senior Millage:** renew the millage that expires in 2005 and increase millage amount by 0.08 mills; complete survey study to evaluate the level of community "friendliness" toward seniors – establish goals and recommendations by Spring, 2006 based upon survey results and community focus groups.



## Functional Area: General Government

### *General Administration Departments/Divisions*

Administrator's Office, Bureau of Equalization, Community Development and Housing Commission, Facilities Management, Fiscal Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology

### *Strategic Goals*

- Politically advocate to protect current sources of revenue from legislative changes
- Reduce cost of Kent County government operations
- Develop internal and external communications strategy
- Diversify sources of revenue
- Be an employer of choice
- Grow/enhance a participative employee culture
- Maintain/enhance partnerships and relationships that support the Mission of Kent County government
- Develop a *Sustainability* mentality, to enhance environmental preservation within county facilities

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors*

- Contract requirements associated with a unionized work-force
- Elected officials – significant amount of office functions mandated by state or federal law
- New housing development in rural areas impacts work load and heightens issues with aging county drain infra-structure
- Opportunities for enhancing departmental efficiencies through accelerated use of information systems
- Demographic changes in the county, in combination with regional economic trends, are placing increased pressure on multiple county services and the supply of affordable housing

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (by Department)*

- **County Administration (Administrator's Office, Board Office, Fiscal Services, Human Services, IT):** develop tactical labor strategy to address staffing, diversity, training, pay and benefits; continue and enhance all forms of collaboration with other public and private entities; develop strategy to prevent encroachment on millage capacity; develop and expand training programs to promote County culture and enhance collaboration; enhance technology to improve internal efficiencies and provide services on 24/7 basis.
- **Community Development:** develop partnerships with community-based organizations to construct more single-family homes via MSHDA Home funds; increase program income by increasing amount of loans made for rehabilitation (vs. grants); provide more educational programming for prospective home owners; pursue opportunities to contract with outside vendors for rehabilitation work to reduce cost of operations; continue to collaborate and fund projects for local units of government and non-profit partners.





- **Housing Commission:** increase the number of housing choice vouchers available to service senior citizens; develop a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Home Ownership program to increase homeownership through voucher mortgage assistance.
- **Facilities Management:** review construction and maintenance contracts to assure state-of-the-art processes and procedures; administer property management program that achieves timely and cost-effective enhancements to facilities; promote processes that enhance the communication with county departments in identifying and resolving facilities needs; and continue to develop department-wide cost reduction programs, while focusing on improving customer service.
- **CIP Review Team:** Conduct annual review and obtain approval from Board of Commissioners for guidelines for capital project assessment and review; receive and approve relevant guidelines ensure consistency of project submissions; obtain appropriate analysis and recommendations from affected departments for major programs prior to review and approval of capital expenditures.

## Functional Area: General Government – Elected Offices

### *Departments/Divisions*

Clerk/Register of Deeds, Drain Commissioner, Treasurer

### *Strategic Goals:*

- Politically advocate for stream-lined election laws that improve voting process and enhance the integrity of elections
- Protect current revenue streams and explore methods to ensure changes in statutory allowable fees cover costs

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors:*

- Elected officials – high level of office functions are mandated by state or federal law
- Potential state take-over of vital statistics for federal terrorism-related issues
- Opportunities for enhancing departmental efficiencies through accelerated use of information systems

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (by Department):*

- **Clerk/Register of Deeds:** maintain a high-level of performance; monitor potential problems/opportunities resulting from increased federal “anti-terrorism” efforts and court mergers
- **County Treasurer:** monitor activities of other units or levels of government to consolidate tax collection programs; capture personal property tax collection; continue efforts to reduce cost of operations
- **Drain Commissioner:** expand un-petitioned maintenance of county drains; reduce level of storm water management and master planning services to townships; continue digitalization of records; upgrade GIS system; assess/recommend fee increases for administration of Subdivision Control Act; continue to use interns and honor camp individuals



## Functional Area: Culture and Recreation

### *Departments/Divisions*

John Ball Park Zoo, Parks Department, MSU Extension

### *Strategic Goals*

- Diversify funding sources – become more self-supporting
- Achieve a complete make-over of the zoo program and infra-structure within next ten (10) years
- Adopt a governing structure for the zoo that reduces County involvement in operations
- Achieve position as a consistent key tourist/recreation attraction in the Grand Rapids area
- Provide a comprehensive array of park experiences to the county population that meets/exceeds competitive leisure activity offerings
- Expand the bio-fuel development and sales of agricultural products grown in Kent County via efforts with MSU researchers
- Bring research from MSU to Kent County in multiple educational program areas: nutrition and health, youth development, agriculture and natural sciences, urban and rural development

### *Cross-Cutting Influencing Factors*

- Reductions in funding for area schools will increase the need for and the role of the zoo as an educational resource and scientific classroom
- Competition for residents' leisure time and money will continue to become more intense; variety of options available for leisure time require changes to "traditional" historical offerings
- Long-term success for the zoo and county parks will depend upon effective marketing/promotions to various audiences in the community
- Many of the current facilities were constructed in the 1950's and the infra-structure is aging
- As urban/suburban development increases in Kent County, competition for available land will become more intense and cost of available land will also increase
- Many programs offered by MSU Extension support programming offered by Health Department
- Demographic shifts from rural to urban/suburban areas will impact the delivery of Extension programming

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives (by Department)*

- **John Ball Park Zoo:** Formally improve exhibits, amenities, infra-structure, revenue sources, and presence in the community over next five (5) years; achieve a dominant position in local, state, national, and international conservation and research programs for zoological activities of its size; provide pre-eminent outreach and onsite educational experiences
- **Parks Department:** Maintain and renovate the existing parks to achieve a level of quality consistent with users' expectations; continue to implement the master plan of land acquisition; analyze, recommend, and obtain approval of a sustaining maintenance and operations budget that meets customer expectations; develop programming that increases usage and revenue
- **MSU Extension:** Leverage local resources to obtain increased matching funds; support county efforts to reduce infant mortality and improve overall health of children through nutrition education; provide support to the United Growth for Kent County program on informed land-use in both urban and rural areas; support the development of ethanol as a gasoline additive; continue to work with local groups to promote a viable agricultural industry in Kent County.



## Functional Area: Enterprise Activities

### *Departments/Divisions*

Department of Aeronautics, Department of Public Works

### *Strategic Goals: Airport and Public Works*

- Participate in the economic development and planning efforts of the region
- Sustain the appropriate useful life of infra-structure
- Continue to respond to changing economic and community demand, adjusting services accordingly
- Operate without the use of Kent County General Fund support
- Develop and implement a long-term energy generation and use strategy for landfill gas and district heating and cooling system
- Develop and implement a strategy for increased solid waste recovery, processing, and recycling services and systems

### *Short-Term Tactical Objectives*

- Improve the Geographical Information System (GIS)
- Improve electronic (digital) record-keeping (both)
- Pursue appropriate federal and state grants (both)
- **Public Works:** Complete landfill expansion into Allegan County; augment waste water collection services in cooperation with Township service districts