



# Kent County Strategic Plan Update

2022-2023





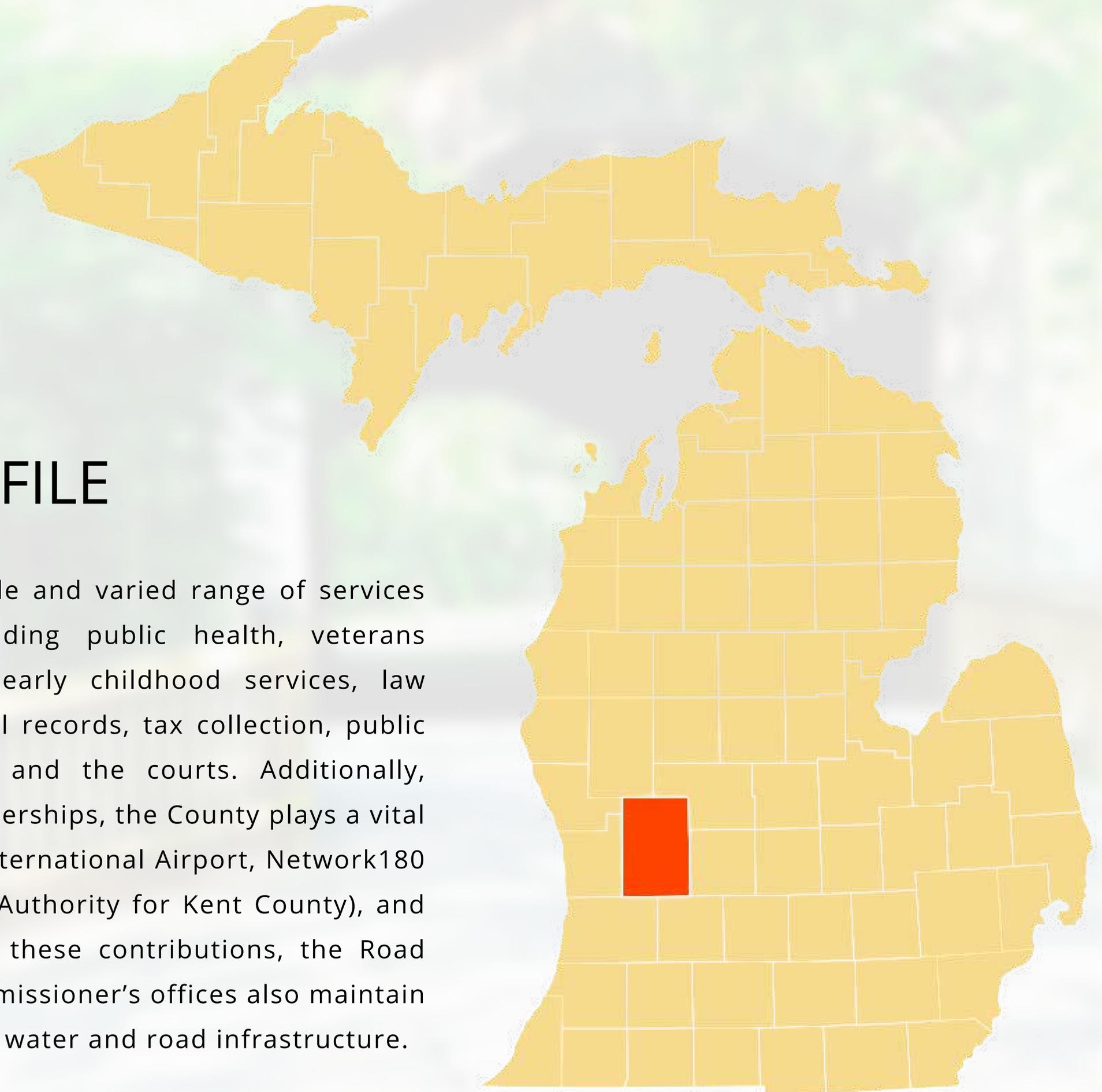


# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 4** County Profile
- 7** Strategic Plan Process
- 11** Strategic Business Plan
- 20** Assigned Resources & Deadlines
- 26** State of the County
- 45** Glossary

# COUNTY PROFILE

Kent County provides a wide and varied range of services across many areas, including public health, veterans services, senior services, early childhood services, law enforcement, elections, vital records, tax collection, public works, parks, corrections, and the courts. Additionally, through public-private partnerships, the County plays a vital role in the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, Network180 (Community Mental Health Authority for Kent County), and the John Ball Zoo. Beyond these contributions, the Road Commission and Drain Commissioner's offices also maintain hundreds of miles of critical water and road infrastructure.

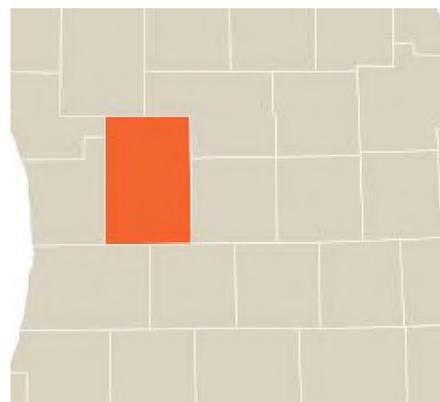




# AT A GLANCE

## GENERAL

Organized in  
**1836**



**872**

Square Miles

(16th largest county in MI by total land area)

- 9** Cities
- 5** Villages
- 21** Townships

Kent County is ranked the

**#1**

metro area to raise a family out of 100 largest metros. according to *Forbes*

## POPULATION



**669,839**

Kent County is home to a young, diverse, and educated population



**28%**

identify as ethnic or racial minorities



**51%**

of residents are below age 35



**+90%**

of residents have a high school diploma



**29K**

residents in Kent County are veterans

## COMMUNITY



**15**

colleges & universities



**17**

museums & historical societies



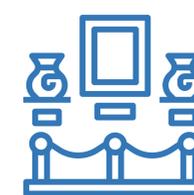
**24**

1 rural health clinic, 7 hospitals, and 16 Federally Qualified Health Centers



**+7,100**

acres of public open space and 42 parks



**#1**

ArtPrize is recognized as the most-attended public art event in the **world**



**1st**

John Ball Zoo is the first zoo in the **world** to be awarded SITES Gold certification under the Sustainable Sites Initiative





# STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

# Strategic Planning

## PROCESS SUMMARY

The 19-member Kent County Board of Commissioners is the chief legislative and policy-making body of Kent County Government. Commissioners are elected to 2-year terms from districts that are roughly equal in population. The Board is responsible for adopting the County budget and appointing County residents to serve on various County boards, commissions, and committees. These boards, commissions, and committees provide oversight for significant County services (Gerald R. Ford International Airport Authority Board, the Community Health Advisory Committee, the Community Mental Health Authority Board (Network180), the Road Commission, and the Veterans Services Committee). The Board also appoints a County Administrator who manages and maintains the long-term financial health of the County, fosters a culture of creative and strategic thinking to fulfill the mission of the County, and encourages the establishment of strategic internal and external partnerships. The remaining operations are managed by either elected officers (Clerk/Register of Deeds, Drain Commissioner, Prosecutor, Sheriff, and Treasurer) or the judiciary.

In September 2018, the Board embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to envision a desired future for Kent County. This process established a newly focused mission, vision, values, priorities, and goals for the next three to five years.



The initial plan was adopted on June 27, 2019, and implemented over the next three years. The Board now meets annually to review the strategic plan and develop an accompanying business plan comprised of objectives that serve as action steps toward achieving the strategic plan. The Board of Commissioners met on March 11, 2022, to review the current strategic plan and create the business plan for fiscal year 2022-2023. This involved an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) facing the County, confirmation of the major goals, and the development and ranking of objectives. After the Board established draft objectives, Administration assigned resources to each objective and developed outcome measures that will indicate success in completing the plan's goals. The results of the process follow.

*(Note: The Board of Commissioners is included in the plan where approval is needed. It is assumed that the Board will be involved in the planning and strategy for many of the strategic plan initiatives).*

# STRATEGIC PLAN ELEMENTS

## OUR MISSION

A **Mission** statement assists an organization in easily communicating to a variety of constituencies what it does, whom it serves, and why it does so. The Board of Commissioners has established the following mission statement:

*"Through responsible budgeting and thoughtful planning, Kent County government is committed to providing resources and services that promote a high quality of life for the entire community."*

## OUR VISION

A **Vision** statement indicates how an organization views its ideal, or ultimate, goal. The Board of Commissioners has established the following vision statement:

*"Kent County is where individuals and families choose to live, work, and play because we are a forward-looking, intentional, and inclusive community that serves as the economic engine of West Michigan."*

## OUR VALUES

A formal statement of organizational **values** was developed and adopted in 2018 to clearly identify not only the principles upon which the organization is based, but the way in which it treats its employees and residents.



*Act with integrity*



*Serve as responsible stewards of County resources*



*Provide high-quality service to internal & external customers*



*Work collaboratively*



*Embrace diversity, equity, & inclusion*

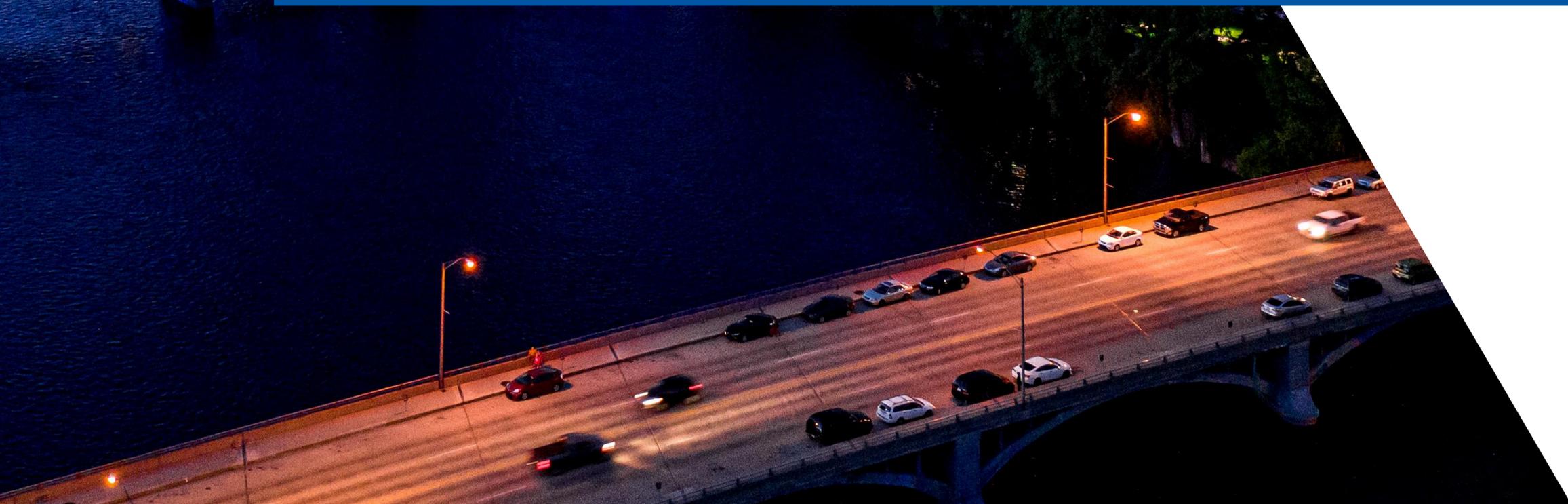
## OUR PRIORITIES

- ▶ **1** Economic prosperity
- ▶ **2** High quality of life
- ▶ **3** Excellence in service delivery
- ▶ **4** Inclusive participation
- ▶ **5** Effective communications





# STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN







## Business Plan 2022-2023

### *GOALS, OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS, & OUTCOMES*

While **goals** are relatively static in nature, the goals that assist in accomplishing the priority areas are likely to change annually. **Objectives** are items that give further meaning and substance to a goal. **Outputs** are specific items of action and **outcome** indicators are a measure of success, demonstrating the impact of actions conducted to achieve goals and objectives.



# Economic Prosperity

We will focus on sound fiscal management and policies to support the economic prosperity of the County as well as the West Michigan region.

*What do we want to do?*

*What will we do to get there?*

*How will we know actions were effective?*

**OUTPUTS**  
**OUTCOMES**

**Goal 1:** Maintain the financial stability of Kent County

- Explore improvements for fiscal strategies and provide the Board with necessary information to make key decisions in fiscal operations
- Evaluate the County's retirement program (pension vs. 401k)
- Identify financial threats and approve strategies to mitigate those threats
- Maintain AAA bond rating
- Invest funds in projects that lower County liabilities

- Review budget process schedule and change fiscal year to 10/1
- Investigate strategies regarding the County's retirement plan and present options to Board of Commissioners
- Review performance-based budgeting/management by objectives methods
- The Board receives information on financing tools and strategies
- Create the Kent County Insurance Authority

- Budgets are adopted on time without deficits
- The Kent County Insurance Authority is created
- The budget is linked to clear performance metrics
- Greater transparency and efficiency in the budget process

**Goal 2:** Improve the fiscal position of the County through increased state and federal advocacy

- Maintain a list of legislative priorities with regular tracking and updating to the Board
- Continue meeting with legislators to enhance relationships and County influence
- Coordinate legislative actions with lobbyists

- Participate in bi-monthly updates to/from Public Affairs Associates and Potomac Strategic Development
- The Board's legislative priorities guide the work of staff
- Hold regular meetings with legislators

- The County builds positive relationships with state and federal legislators and legislative staff
- County's legislative position statements are used by stakeholders in the legislative process

**Goal 3:** Position the county for multigenerational economic and population growth

- Invest funds in projects that remove/improve burdens for future generations
- Continue to evaluate ongoing multigenerational issues including energy, land use, and community infrastructure
- Continue supporting efforts and initiatives that help attract new residents, visitors, and businesses
- Convene community partners and local units of government for regional planning opportunities
- The Board supports and when necessary approves efforts that build Kent County's regional recognition and strengthen the County's economic stability
- Identify areas to invest in transformational change and qualified census tracts using federal relief funds

- Create, publish, and approve a comprehensive plan for distributing ARPA funds
- Research & implement feasible renewable energy and energy efficiency opportunities
- Convene local units of government to create tools to assist with growth and land-use strategies
- Partner with local units to share resources and expertise with Brownfield Authorities
- Complete a report and plan to improve medical examiner facilities
- The Board reviews and approves the necessary capital improvements

- The Board invests in an energy study or renewable energy options
- Land-use visions are well-understood by the County and local municipalities
- Consistency with brownfield remediation throughout Kent County
- Strengthen the long-term sustainability of County infrastructure
- Construct state of the art medical examiner facilities to serve the region
- Reduction of landfill use and more strategic waste management practices

# High Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life that promotes safe and healthy communities, strategic growth, and world-class outdoor resources.

*What do we want to do?*

*What will we do to get there?*

*How will we know actions were effective?*

**OUTPUTS**  
**OUTCOMES**

**Goal 1:** Ensure an appropriate public safety response to preserve safe communities

- Continue support and participation in Crisis Mental Health system improvements
- Evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of services provided through the criminal justice system
- Continue to provide for public safety through the work of the Sheriff, Prosecutor, Public Defenders, and Courts
- Reduce response time to emergency calls for service

- The Board receives updates on Crisis Mental Health system initiatives and impacts
- Obtain funding for the Mental Health Crisis Center
- Continue leadership and participation in the Kent County Population Health Consortium
- Conduct a staffing study for Sheriff's Office
- Continue trial of 9-8-8 mental health call line & ensure connectivity w/ Sheriff's dispatch
- Initiate creation of an additional 63rd District Court judgeship

- Improved behavioral-mental health responses and statistics throughout Kent County
- Improved morale in criminal justice related fields, reduced overtime/turnover, and effective service delivery in County courts and jail
- Enhanced efficiency and service delivery in Kent County's court system to ensure justice timelines do not lag
- Third 63rd District Court judgeship is added
- Resident surveys reflect positive views and feedback on public safety and the justice system

**Goal 2:** Address existing and emerging public health and environmental concerns

- Implement proactive environmental health policies
- Continue efforts to improve lead remediation
- Continue efforts to improve PFAS containment
- Address septic issues
- Investigate countywide curbside recycling opportunities
- Investigate PACE financing
- Maintain strong relationship and support for the Agricultural Preservation Board and the Soil Conservation District
- Continue to provide for the health of residents in Kent County through the Health Department and Network180

- Discuss potential Board special committee on Environment
- Research pay for success model for lead abatement
- The Board receives information about PFAS levels in the County
- Provide support and information to homeowners about their septic systems and how to make repairs
- Work to develop a countywide waste management solution with stakeholders (landfill, recycle, WTE, commercialization)
- Seek state/federal money to assist homeowners with fixing failing septic systems
- Engage KCHD in pandemic postmortem
- Research how the County and property owners can benefit from and implement PACE financing

- County proactively addresses health and environmental concerns
- Improved environmentally-friendly practices in industry
- Healthier living conditions throughout Kent County
- Provide a PACE finance research report to the Board for consideration to potentially adopt a PACE ordinance

# High Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life that promotes safe and healthy communities, strategic growth, and world-class outdoor resources.

*What do we want to do?*

*What will we do to get there?*

*How will we know actions were effective?*

**OUTPUTS**  
**OUTCOMES**

**Goal 3:** Support community efforts that improve the social determinants of health.

- Meet with community leaders to discuss mobility throughout the County
- Proactively address current social wellbeing issues, including: affordable housing, childcare, mental health, mobility/transit, substance use, etc.
- Continue to support the millage efforts of Ready by Five, Veterans' Services, and Senior Services
- Continue to provide for the health of residents in Kent County through the Health Department and Network180
- Continue the County's engagement with Housing Next and identify areas for support and collaboration

- Complete a study to increase childcare options (incubate private childcare providers)
- The Board/County Administration convenes regional mobility task force to develop a transit strategy
- The Board receives updates on affordable housing data and initiatives throughout the County
- The Board is regularly updated on new and existing childcare scarcity
- Research how the County and community partners can fund affordable housing efforts
- The Board stays up-to-date on public health, mental health, and public safety issues and the work County departments are conducting in these areas.

- Citizen surveys reflect positive views and feedback on public health and human services
- Decrease in people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless
- Decrease in ALICE population and residents living in poverty
- Increased numbers of children who are ready for kindergarten
- More affordable housing options throughout Kent County

**Goal 4:** Sustain and optimize alternatives to incarceration as well as inmate programming and services

- Expand and increase in use of specialty courts
- Enhance inmate programming that provide skills and treatment opportunities

- The County and 63rd District Court works with the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) to fund and support additional specialty courts
- Partner with community groups and service providers to provide skill and treatment opportunities for inmates

- Creation of more specialty courts (e.g., sobriety court, domestic violence court, etc.)
- Meaningful community re-entry for inmates

**Goal 5:** Develop and enhance park and trail facilities to improve access for recreation and leisure opportunities

- Purchase land/resources for parks system expansion
- Support community efforts for riverfront development
- Work with John Ball Zoo at their request for future strategy and funding initiatives

- Identify areas throughout the County for parks system expansion
- Continue building a positive relationship with the Parks Foundation
- Board receives updates and approves proposed Parks expansions
- Attend stakeholder meetings to receive information about riverfront development efforts

- More publicly available/accessible parks in Kent County

# Excellence in Service Delivery

We will adopt innovative ways to deliver services that maximize efficiency and provide an exceptional experience to those we serve.

What do we want to do?

What will we do to get there?

How will we know actions were effective?

OUTPUTS  
OUTCOMES

**Goal 1:** Ensure responsive services to areas with growing and/or changing demographics

- Ensure that Veterans, Senior, and Ready by Five millages are accessible in all municipalities throughout the County
- Consider various options for implementing countywide broadband
- Evaluate demographic trends in Kent County

- Work with RFP proposers to ensure County millage services and programs are available and accessible countywide
- Identify broadband service providers
- Complete short, medium, and long-term plans for broadband expansion
- Use public data surveys to analyze trends/changes in the County population and forecast future changes

- Improved service delivery meeting the needs of a wide range of human differences
- Increased access to broadband throughout the County
- Improved understanding of community trends and correlating impacts

**Goal 2:** Create an organizational culture that emphasizes excellence in customer service

- Continue to improve the performance management system
- Create opportunities for staff to learn about excellence in customer service
- Implement the "6Cs" organizational improvement initiative
- Bring back Employee Recognition program
- Enhance County dashboards to demonstrate transparency in customer service

- Work with Envisio to enhance County's performance management system
- Begin Disney Way customer service training for all County employees
- Enhance collaboration opportunities and teamwork among county departments/agencies/courts
- The 6Cs are unveiled to staff and implemented throughout the County

- Performance management system/process is more efficient
- Positive service feedback from internal and external customers
- Employees are actively involved in the continuous improvement of County processes and services
- Employees are recognized and feel valued for their contribution to excellent service delivery

**Goal 3:** Ensure that Kent County is an employer that attracts and retains diverse and top talent

- Continue to research and implement innovative talent attraction strategies
- Review/improve employee health insurance options
- Continue to invest in and enhance employee wellbeing opportunities

- Conduct a workforce needs study to determine remote/hybrid options
- Create a succession planning process for applicable County positions
- Determine job-specific benefit options
- Partner with consultants to improve employee brain health, stress, and health outcomes

- County workforce demographics become more diversified
- Turnover rates decrease
- Increased employee morale and job satisfaction
- Improved results on employee survey

# Excellence in Service Delivery

We will adopt innovative ways to deliver services that maximize efficiency and provide an exceptional experience to those we serve.

What do we want to do?

What will we do to get there?

How will we know actions were effective?

OUTPUTS  
OUTCOMES

**Goal 4:** Embrace innovation and continuous improvement to optimize County operations

- Research strategies to improve process efficiency
- Develop a future planning strategy/model for long-term strategic planning
- Establish policy review system
- Determine future facility and equipment needs
- Rework the citizen board application process

- Determine location and onsite workspace of various departments and staff (downtown locations vs. Fuller campus) and coinciding funding strategy
- Research Lean implementation opportunities
- Establish a process to implement a Futuring process into County operations
- Create an administrative policy review committee to update policies every two years
- Create a plan to expand Board room for 21 commissioners and improve sound capabilities

- Strategic Impact function is added to Administrator's Office
- Futuring/Foresight function is added to Administrator's Office
- Policy review committee works to update and improve policies for Board to consider
- Future plan for Administration location and staff is established

**Goal 5:** Strengthen the use of technology to foster efficient use of resources

- Explore ways in which County operations can improve through the use of technology to make operations more efficient and sustainable
- Utilize technology to enhance citizen experience and engagement

- Utilize artificial intelligence on County website; Implement chatbot on AccessKent
- Obtain funding and develop a plan to digitize judicial system and County records
- Improve Board room sound and provide commissioners with laptops for paperless meetings
- Create a plan for installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations where feasible at Kent County facilities
- Study County fleet options for possible implementation of electric vehicles where feasible
- Develop a robust plan for technology improvements (WiFi, data warehouse, AI, natural language processing, robotics)

- Improved user experience on AccessKent
- County records are more readily accessible
- County proactively stays up-to-date with efficient technology options
- Enhanced information available to the public

# Inclusive Participation

We will provide innovative and inclusive ways to engage residents and involve them in County government.

*What do we want to do?*

*What will we do to get there?*

*How will we know actions were effective?*

**OUTPUTS  
OUTCOMES**

**Goal 1:** Provide our residents with equitable access to efficient, effective, and culturally responsive services

- Leverage strategic relationships in the community to enhance multi-language written and electronic communication options.
- Continue partnering with community groups that serve underrepresented residents

- Provide signs, website content, and other communication in multiple languages
- Expand translation service availability countywide
- Make available customer service satisfaction surveys in multiple languages focused on the customer experience

- Translation services available for departments that interact with residents

**Goal 2:** Intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in our service delivery

- Continue to operationalize inclusion practices in County operations
- Continue participating and supporting community initiatives for welcoming new Americans and carrying out the Kent County Welcome Plan
- Continue forming partnerships with community organizations that serve underrepresented groups
- Intentionally build inclusion on citizen boards & commissions
- Provide learning opportunities for County employees to improve cultural competencies

- Develop and implement an inclusion strategic plan
- Improve citizen board recruitment
- Continue to provide cultural intelligence training
- Cultural Insight Council (CIC) provides updates to staff and the Board
- Begin implementing the Kent County Welcome Plan and engage with community partners

- Bias is removed from decision-making
- Employees better understand the wide range of cultural norms throughout Kent County

**Goal 3:** Recruit and retain a qualified, diverse workforce that reflects our continually changing community

- Continue to form partnerships and workgroups that inform human resource practices
- Explore new methods for proactively attracting new talent to the County

- Continue using HireReach to remove bias in County hiring process
- Enhance the County's presence at in-person and virtual career fairs

- Employee demographics closely reflect the demographics of Kent County
- Improved workforce attraction/retention practices

# Effective Communications

We will be transparent and clear in the communications and decisions of the County.

*What do we want to do?*

*What will we do to get there?*

*How will we know actions were effective?*

**OUTPUTS**  
**OUTCOMES**

**Goal 1:** Develop a new strategic communication plan for the County

- Continue to explore and implement effective methods for communications with employees, including: GovDelivery, Qualtrics, Administrator's Digest, social media, etc.
- Evaluate and invest in tools that enhance the reach and effectiveness of communication efforts
- Implement brown-bag lunches
- Begin branding campaign for Kent County

- Improve website navigation
- Implement Kent County branding campaign

- Citizen surveys reflect satisfaction with County communications
- Higher engagement with County content and events
- Better understanding of communication strategies and impact

**Goal 2:** Ensure visible County leadership and staff participation in community initiatives

- Continue the County's local unit quadrant meetings & other local government engagement
- Ensure County representation at local fairs, festivals, and community events
- Improve external collaboration

- Regular communication and meetings with local units of government
- Employees, Board, and residents regularly receive information and notification of community events

- Improved visibility and reputation by the community
- Positive relationships with community partners

**Goal 3:** Elevate the County's significant initiatives through regular, ongoing communication

- Regularly communicate about County initiatives through multiple media methods (digital, print, etc.)
- Continually improve resident engagement opportunities

- Create a strategy to publish content on AccessKent, YouTube, social media, etc. to educate the community about Kent County initiatives

- Residents are more informed about and engaged with County initiatives and plans

A large outdoor clock is mounted on a brick building. The clock face is light blue with black Roman numerals and hands. The building has a brick facade and a window with a metal railing. The sky is blue. There are decorative geometric shapes in blue, orange, and white on the left side of the image.

# ASSIGNED RESOURCES AND DEADLINES

# Kent County Strategic Business Plan

## Assigned Deadlines & Resources

Once objectives, deliverables and outputs have been established, it is important to assign deadlines and resources to ensure that the plan activities are completed.

### Priority 1: Economic Prosperity

	Projected Completion	Resources Assigned
<b>Goal 1: Maintain the financial stability of Kent County</b>		
Review budget process schedule and change fiscal year to 10/1	10/01/2023	Administration, Fiscal Services
Investigate strategies regarding the County's retirement plan and present a report to Board	06/30/2023	Administration, Fiscal Services, Human Resources
Review performance-based budgeting/management by objective methods	10/01/2023	Administration, Fiscal Services, Human Resources
Complete a review of financing tools and strategies	11/17/2022	Administration, Fiscal Services
Create the Kent County Insurance Authority	09/01/2022	Administration, Fiscal Services, Corporate Counsel
<b>Goal 2: Improve the fiscal position of the County through increased state and federal advocacy</b>		
Bimonthly updates to/from Public Affairs Associates and Potomac Strategic Development	Ongoing	Administration
The Board's Federal & State Legislative Priorities guide the work of staff	Ongoing	Administration, LHR Committee, Board of Commissioners
Meetings are regularly held with legislators	Ongoing	Administration

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 3: Position the county for multigenerational economic and population growth</b>		
Create, publish, and approve a comprehensive plan for distributing ARPA and other state and federal funds	12/31/2024	Administration, Fiscal Services, Board of Commissioners
Research & implement feasible renewable energy and energy efficiency opportunities	Ongoing	Administration, Facilities, MSU Extension
The County convenes local units of government to create tools to assist with growth and land-use strategies	Begin 08/01/2022 Ongoing	Administration, MSU Extension
The County partners with local units to share resources and expertise with Brownfield Authorities	Begin 08/01/2022 Ongoing	Administration, MSU Extension
Complete a report with recommendations to improve medical examiner facilities and present to Board	09/01/2022	Administration, Medical Examiner
The Board reviews and approves the necessary capital improvements	11/17/2022	Administration, Fiscal Services, Board of Commissioners

## Priority 2: High Quality of Life

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 1: Ensure an appropriate public safety response to preserve safe communities</b>		
The Board receives updates on Crisis Mental Health system initiatives and impacts	Ongoing	Administration, Sheriff, Network180
Obtain funding for the Mental Health Crisis Center	10/01/2022	Administration, Sheriff, Network180, BOC
Continue leadership and participation in the Kent County Population Health Consortium	Ongoing	Administration, Sheriff, Network180
Conduct a staffing study for Sheriff's Office	Begin 08/01/2022 Complete by 03/31/2023	Sheriff, Administration, Human Resources
Continue trial of 9-8-8 mental health call line & ensure connectivity w/ Sheriff dispatch	Ongoing	Sheriff, Network180
Initiate creation of an additional 63rd District Court judgeship	Begin 10/01/2022 Complete 01/01/2024	Administration, District Court, Board of Commissioners

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 2: Address existing and emerging public health and environmental concerns</b>		
Discuss potential Board special committee on Environment	09/30/2022	Administration, Board of Commissioners
Research Pay for Success model for lead abatement	11/17/2022	Health Dept. (LAT), Administration
The Board receives information about PFAS levels in the County	Ongoing	Administration, MSU Extension
Provide support and information to homeowners about their septic systems and how to make repairs	Ongoing	Administration, Health Dept.
Work to develop a countywide waste management solution with stakeholders (landfill, recycle, WTE, commercialization)	Ongoing	Administration, Public Works
Seek state/federal funds to assist homeowners fix septic systems	10/01/2022	Administration, Fiscal Services, KCCA
Engage KCHD in pandemic postmortem	Ongoing	Administration, Health Dept., Emergency Management
Provide a PACE finance research report to the Board for consideration to potentially adopt a PACE ordinance	09/01/2022	Corporate Counsel, Administration, Fiscal Services
<b>Goal 3: Support community efforts that improve the social determinants of health</b>		
Complete a study to increase childcare options (incubate private childcare providers)	06/01/2023	Administration, Human Resources
The Board/County Administration convene regional mobility task force to develop a transit strategy	06/30/2022	Administration
Complete report on status of childcare availability and cost in Kent County	12/31/2022	Administration
Research how the County and community partners can fund affordable housing efforts	11/17/2022	Administration, KCCA
The Board stays up-to-date on public health, mental health, and public safety issues and the work County departments are conducting in these areas.	Ongoing	Administration, Health Dept., Network180, Sheriff

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 4: Sustain and optimize alternatives to incarceration as well as inmate programming and services</b>		
The County and 63rd District Court works with the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) to fund and support additional specialty courts	12/31/2023	Administration, 63rd District Court, Board of Commissioners
Partner with community groups and service providers to provide job skill and treatment opportunities for inmates	Ongoing	Sheriff, Administration, Health Dept.
<b>Goal 5: Develop and enhance park and trail facilities to improve access for recreation and leisure opportunities</b>		
Identify areas throughout the County for parks system expansion	Ongoing	Administration, Facilities, Parks
Continue building a positive relationship with the Parks Foundation	Ongoing	Administration, Parks
Board receives updates and approves proposed Parks expansions	Ongoing	Administration, Parks, Facilities, Board of Commissioners
Attend stakeholder meetings to receive information about riverfront development efforts	Ongoing	Administration

### Priority 3: Excellence in Service Delivery

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 1: Ensure responsive services to areas with growing and/or changing demographics</b>		
Where applicable, require RFP responders to provide options for provision of service to local units of government at a reduced economy of scale fee	Ongoing	Administration, Fiscal Services
Complete and begin implementation of broadband expansion plan	10/01/2023	Administration
Use public data surveys to analyze trends/changes in the County population and forecast future changes	Ongoing	Administration

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 2: Create an organizational culture that emphasizes excellence in customer service</b>		
Work with Envisio to enhance County's performance management system	Ongoing	Administration
Begin Disney Way customer service training for all County employees	10/03/2022	Administration, Human Resources
Enhance collaboration opportunities and teamwork among county departments/agencies/courts	Ongoing	Administration
The 6Cs are unveiled to staff and implemented throughout the County	Ongoing	Administration
<b>Goal 3: Ensure that Kent County is an employer that attracts and retains diverse and top talent</b>		
Conduct a workforce needs study to determine remote/hybrid options	12/31/2022	Human Resources
Create a succession planning process for applicable County positions	05/01/2023	Human Resources
Review job-specific benefit options	12/31/2023	Human Resources, Fiscal Services
Partner with consultants to improve employee brain health, stress, and health outcomes	Ongoing	Administration, Human Resources
<b>Goal 4: Embrace innovation and continuous improvement to optimize County operations</b>		
Determine location and onsite workspace of various departments and staff (downtown locations vs. Fuller campus) and coinciding funding strategy	12/31/2022	Administration, Facilities, Fiscal Services
Research Lean implementation opportunities	Ongoing	Administration
Establish a process to implement a long-term futuring plan for the County	03/31/2023	Administration
Create an administrative policy review committee to update policies every two years	Ongoing	Administration
Create a plan to expand Board room for 21 commissioners and improve sound capabilities	08/31/2022	Facilities, Administration

**Projected  
Completion**

**Resources  
Assigned**

**Goal 5: Strengthen the use of technology to foster efficient use of resources**

Utilize artificial intelligence on County website; Implement chatbot on AccessKent

Ongoing

Administration, IT

Obtain funding and develop a plan to digitize judicial system and County records

10/01/2022

All County Departments

Create a plan for installing EV charging stations where feasible at Kent County facilities

09/01/2023

Administration, Facilities

Study County fleet options for possible implementation of electric vehicles where feasible

10/01/2023

Facilities, Administration

Develop a robust plan for technology improvements (WiFi, data warehouse, AI, natural language processing, robotics)

12/31/2022

Administration, IT

**Priority 4: Inclusive Participation**

**Projected  
Completion**

**Resources  
Assigned**

**Goal 1: Provide our residents with equitable access to efficient, effective, and culturally responsive services**

Provide signs, website content, and other communication in multiple languages

06/01/2023

Inclusion Office, Central Services, Administration

Expand translation service availability countywide

Ongoing

All Departments

Make available customer service satisfaction surveys in multiple languages focused on the customer experience

12/31/2023

Inclusion Office, Administration

**Goal 2: Intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in our service delivery**

Develop and implement an inclusion strategic plan

Ongoing

Inclusion Office, Administration

Improve citizen board recruitment

09/01/2022

Inclusion Office, Administration, BOC

Continue to provide and expand cultural intelligence training

Ongoing

Human Resources, Inclusion Office

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 2: Intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in our service delivery</b>		
Cultural Insight Council (CIC) provides updates to staff and the Board	Ongoing	Inclusion Office
Begin implementing the Kent County Welcome Plan and engage with community partners	Ongoing	Inclusion Office

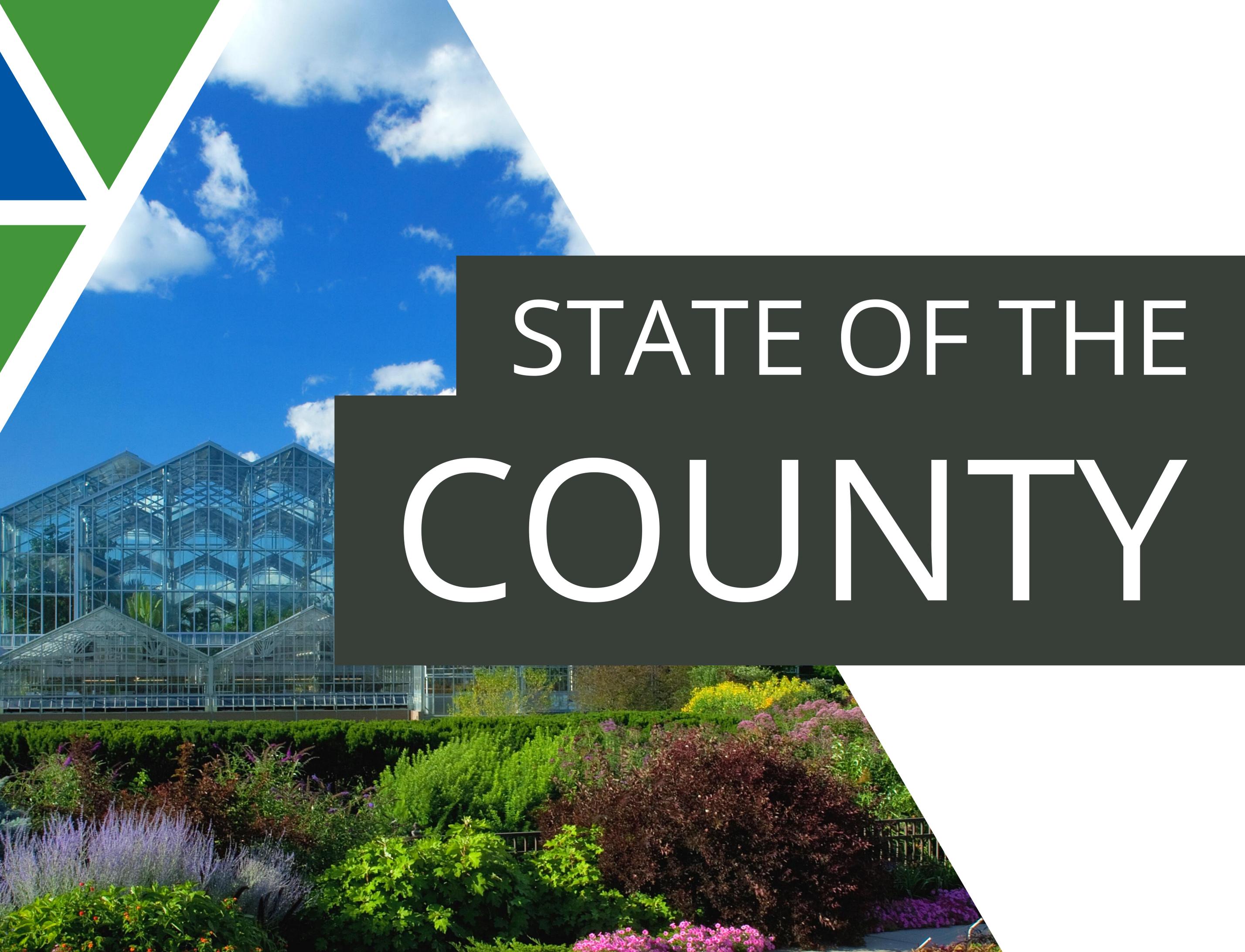
<b>Goal 3: Recruit and retain a qualified, diverse workforce that reflects our continually changing community</b>		
Continue using HireReach to remove bias in County hiring process	Ongoing	Human Resources, Inclusion Office
Complete a plan to enhance the County's presence at in-person/virtual career fairs and other methods of reaching job-seeking residents	12/31/2022	Human Resources, Inclusion Office

## Priority 5: Effective Communications

	<b>Projected Completion</b>	<b>Resources Assigned</b>
<b>Goal 1: Develop a new strategic communication plan for the County</b>		
Improve website navigation	09/01/2023	IT, Administration
Implement Kent County branding campaign	01/01/2023	Administration

<b>Goal 2: Ensure visible County leadership and staff participation in community initiatives</b>		
Regular communication and meetings with local units of government	Ongoing	Administration
Employees, Board, and residents regularly receive information and notification of community events	Ongoing	Administration

<b>Goal 3: Elevate the County's significant initiatives through regular, ongoing communication</b>		
Create a strategy to publish content on AccessKent, YouTube, social media, etc. to educate the community about Kent County initiatives	12/31/2022	Administration



# STATE OF THE COUNTY

# Kent County State of the County Address

*Transformational Change for a Better Future*

---

## **PRESENTERS:**

Stan Stek- *Chair, Board of Commissioners*

Al Vanderberg- *Kent County Administrator*

## **MC:**

Sara Smolenski- *Judge, 63rd District Court*

Frederick Meijer Gardens  
Wednesday, April 27, 2022





**T**hank you, Sara. It is certainly great to have you join us as our MC tonight. I can't imagine anyone I'd rather have warm up a crowd. On the other hand, most of our guests will likely say tomorrow morning, "I am not sure about those other guys, but that judge was pretty good!"

We also appreciate all you do in service to our courts and our county on a daily basis. You, and the rest of our judiciary in Kent County, are some of the best in the state. Thank you. And thank YOU all for being here.

A very special welcome to the elected and appointed government officials who have joined us tonight:

First, my fellow members of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. Could you please stand? While we are elected from different places on the political spectrum, this Board has worked collaboratively, committed to one shared vision for Kent County.

Our countywide elected officials who are here tonight – please stand when I say your names:

- Kent County Sheriff Michelle LaJoye Young
- Kent County Prosecutor Chris Becker
- Kent County Treasurer Peter MacGregor, and
- Kent County Drain Commission Ken Yonker

Thank you.

Many of our judges and court administrators from throughout Kent County are here. Their names are listed on the screen. I've always wanted to say this: Judges and administrators...all rise. Thank you for joining us.

Will our leaders from our local cities, villages and townships please stand and be recognized. The list is long, but their names are on the screen. Thank you all for coming.

And finally, a very heartfelt welcome aboard to our "new" Kent County Administrator, Al Vanderberg, who we'll hear from in a few minutes. Al, on behalf of the Board of Commissioners, I'd like to take this opportunity to say how grateful we are for your tremendous leadership since returning to Kent County. You are a results-focused, strategic, and data-driven leader, and your experience is exactly what Kent County needs as we move forward. You've already led us through some tough issues, and you've done so with insight and grace.

When the search team interviewed Al, we told him that our vision was to be the best run County in the state. And when he accepted our offer to become our County Administrator, he in turn stated he would not come to Kent County for anything less than being the best.

But life has not afforded us the luxury of pursuing our vision in a static predictable world. We are constantly confronted with challenges and what seems like tougher and tougher issues. Indeed, you hardly need me to tell you that these past few years have been difficult, and these past few weeks have been agonizing.

We have struggled for two years with the COVID-19 pandemic that brought illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. This includes the loss of one of our own - Kent County Sheriff Deputy David Cook - who died of COVID on November 1. We have strained under the burdens caused by the COVID mitigation directives limiting our lives and our liberties in many ways.



*But we must ask what we can learn from this and how we can help heal what is broken.*

We have had to deal with the corrosive effects of increased political polarization. Our employers have struggled with an extraordinarily tight labor market. We have found our spendable income eroded by inflation and a severe lack of affordable housing continues to oppress us. And, we have seen increasing negative impacts from environmental contaminations.

Even as we gather here tonight, we are in the throes of perhaps our greatest challenge as a value-driven community with the tragic death of Patrick Lyoya. Three weeks ago, we asked ourselves if we should cancel this event. We wondered if we could stand in front of you and talk about our community's accomplishments, promises and priorities at a time when these circumstances have forced us to reassess who we are and what kind of community we want to be. Few events have challenged our core values or compelled more soul searching than this one. When a community and its people are wounded and fractured, it can be difficult to be clear eyed. But we must ask what we can learn from this and how we can help heal what is broken. The answers will not come easily. It may be even more difficult to make changes. But we recognize that these are steps we must take together.

So, we gather together this evening with renewed hope and determination to build a community that is both equitable and welcoming, and is safe and secure for all. As we take these steps together, the first is to acknowledge that this event was a tragedy for those involved and for the entire community.

The second is to acknowledge that, while police work and the expectations of the community are changing dramatically, one of our highest priorities is maintaining a secure environment in which every person - regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political belief or economic status - can feel safe to live their lives as they choose. When you pair these two priorities, it's clear that, to meet our law enforcement obligations to this community, we must focus on:

- Attracting and retaining those individuals most suitable for law enforcement;
- Broadening the competencies of law enforcement;
- Providing them the best available technologies and systems;
- Maximum training the entire workforce; and
- Assuring that our law enforcement policies and systems promote our core community values.



We are not suggesting that there are simple solutions or that we have all the answers. Continued efforts to diversify law enforcement agencies so they are reflective of the communities they serve are vitally important. Work to build bridges and understanding between the community and law enforcement must continue. Innovative collaborations with behavioral health providers to design new response solutions are critical.

But the importance of de-escalation training, mental health training and use of force training has never been more apparent.

In pursuit of these objectives the Board of Commissioners has supported the Kent County Sheriff's initiatives to recruit and retain a highly qualified workforce that reflects our community. We have approved funding for new technologies and have fully funded our Sheriff's efforts of expand workforce training. For instance, Sheriff's Office law enforcement training staff completed a program at the Force Science Institute to become certified in the industry standard in de-escalation training.

The Sheriff's office has doubled its annual de-escalation and mental health training efforts for law enforcement and corrections staff over the past two years. The Sheriff's Office has made use of Mobile Crisis Teams, including a Juvenile Crisis Unit, from Network 180 since late 2020 and is working with Network 180 to expand the number of Mobile Crisis Teams that are active in the county. Law enforcement officers can call in a team for a co-response any time mental health issues appear to be in play.

The outcomes of these efforts are tangible. For instance, Kent County Sheriff's officers use of force at ANY level is extremely rare. They have tracked this data for years. It shows that Kent County Sheriff's officers use force in less than one half of 1% of all police contacts. We're proud of that statistic, and the Sheriff prioritizes annual training to ensure that those numbers hold.

Others have taken notice, as well. The West Michigan Training Consortium provides the most comprehensive training available to 47 law enforcement agencies and hundreds of officers throughout West Michigan. Many of the trainers come from the Kent County Sheriff's Office. I would like to thank Sheriff Michelle LaJoye Young and everyone at the Kent County Sheriff's Office for their vital service to our community. But we are again confronted with the need to be vigilant to what is not working and to be open to change to ensure that our actions are consistent with our values. So, as we look ahead to other steps we must take to heal and strengthen our community, we take direction from what we have gone through together.

That collective experience includes the careful administration of CARES Act dollars – a collaborative process that helped our community retain a solid footing throughout the crisis. Kent County was awarded \$114.6 million in Federal CARES Act funding on April 24, 2020. Over the following six months, the Board of Commissioners COVID-19 Relief Subcommittee, led by former Board Chair Mandy Bolter, met 17 times with more than a dozen community groups, foundations, chambers, agencies and representatives from several County departments, offices and agencies, all of whom provided vital data, information and resources. As the local administrator of the funding, the Kent County administration used the findings and recommendations of the subcommittee as the blueprint for a highly collaborative approach to allocating resources to the community.

In all, Kent County allocated more than 74 million dollars to public and private-sector entities throughout the county. The largest pool - \$34.24 million - went to business assistance grants allocated in partnership with the Grand Rapids Chamber. Together, we partnered with other local organizations to reach into urban, suburban and rural communities throughout the county to ensure broad and equitable funding distribution. Additionally, we allocated \$2.95 million to public, private, and charter schools, \$14.65 million to 32 local units of government, \$2.54 million in personal protective equipment to more than 6,400 employers, and partnered with the Heart of West Michigan United Way to allocate \$9.36 million to nonprofit organizations. Our goal with the CARES Act funding was to support those who were hurting as quickly as possible.

The County has now been awarded more than 127 million dollars in ARPA funding. With these funds, we will be able to be more strategic and identify where the dollars can be used for major transformational projects to benefit the entire community for generations to come.

At the April Board of Commissioners Executive Committee meeting, 5 categories of spending were discussed. They include:

- Community Resiliency
- Community Transformation
- Infrastructure
- Economic Innovations and Workforce Development, and
- Improving Government Operations

Prior to and throughout the pandemic, we've worked alongside community members - including many of you - on big issues like behavioral health, broadband and affordable housing. Going forward, we will continue to engage diverse community collaborations taking direction from what we have learned through the pandemic.

A great example of an initiative already in progress is the behavioral health continuum of care initiative, led by the Kent County Population Health Consortium, in partnership with Network 180. As chair of the Network 180 board, this reinvention of crisis care in Kent County is near and dear to my heart, so I'm going to take a deeper dive here. I will talk about a few of the other ARPA funding priorities.

Our community reassessed how we were responding to the increasing number of mental health crises flooding our jail and emergency rooms. Approximately five years ago, a Crisis Center Task Force was established to bring together individuals and expertise from across the community to explore how we can do this better. We learned that we were not providing vital crisis care in a timely and effective manner. And it was clear that the system of essentially 'boarding' people who are in crisis in our jail and emergency departments is a significant waste of taxpayer dollars. We were convinced we could do better. As new models for treatment response were developed, the task of making these ideas reality was transitioned to the Consortium.

The enormous spike in demand for behavioral health services during the pandemic further shaped this work. It has been an unprecedented example of collaboration and cooperation, convening the CEOs of all our local hospitals and healthcare systems, along with Network 180, the Kent County Health Department, law enforcement agencies, the Urban Core Collective and others. Special thanks to Mike Jandernoa, Tina Freese Decker, Matt Biersack, Mark Eastburg, Kent Riddle, Peter Hahn, Phil Weaver and, now, Tim Becker, Jill Krause and others - most of whom are here tonight. The group is focused on launching a new continuum of care for crisis mental health and substance use disorder services to ensure that critical care is effectively provided in a timely and efficient manner.

First, we're planning a new Crisis Stabilization Unit - a secure, high intensity therapeutic alternative to hospital emergency room admissions, jail admissions and full psychiatric hospitalization. It will be equipped to provide involuntary treatment

and accept direct drop offs from law enforcement. Any individual presenting with a behavioral health crisis - regardless of their ability to pay - will be stabilized at the center, released once stabilized, or transitioned to other appropriate care. This new unit will be jointly operated by Network 180 and Trinity Health St. Mary's and will be centrally located, on a bus line, on St. Mary's downtown campus.

Second, we're working to expand mobile crisis capacity that will enable mobile crisis teams to respond to behavioral health crises in all types of community and residential settings. These mobile crisis teams will consist of trained behavioral



health care workers and paramedics working in teams under the direction of law enforcement officers. These teams will be available 24/7 to respond directly to the point of engagement when a behavioral health crisis presents an immediate risk of harm to the person or to others. We have already implemented a model for this work with the Kent County Sheriff's Office and our partners at the Grand Rapids Police Department, and we look to expand these efforts to other agencies.

Third, the plan includes a new Peer Respite Center to be operated by Hope Network. This service model offers a home-like environment operated entirely by peer staff, who have direct, personal experience with behavioral health issues. Those experiencing a

behavioral health event can self-report to this center for immediate support and assistance.

Fourth, we are establishing an enhanced Substance Use Stabilization Unit in partnership with Mel Trotter Ministries.

And finally, we are working on a system to fast-track psychiatric inpatient contracting and admissions for hard-to-place individuals with the most complex and intense clinical needs. While meeting the most critical behavioral health needs here in Kent County, these innovations will ultimately serve as models for communities across Michigan seeking to solve similar behavioral health crisis challenges.

In all, it will cost over \$20 million to establish this continuum of services. Thus far, we've secured nearly \$9 million in grants, community support, and system funding. We have asked the state to appropriate another \$9 million, with the balance to come from ARPA funding. Once this system is in place, it will significantly improve the quality of care while at the same time dramatically reducing the cost to the taxpayers.

Acting on another lesson from the pandemic, the administration will seek Board of Commission approval for ARPA funding to update the record system for the Kent County Courts and law enforcement divisions and expand electronic filing in our courts. People less familiar with the court system in Kent County may not know that the County funds the 17th Circuit Court, the Kent County Probate Court, and the 63rd District Court. The County's funds are further utilized within the 17th Circuit to fund The Friend of the Court and several specialty courts, including The Specialized Business Docket, Girls Court, Juvenile and Adult Treatment and Support Courts - which include mental health and substance use disorder services and treatment - Truancy Court and the Young Sex Offender Treatment Program.

Our teams in the County's courts and prosecutor's office managed incredible caseloads through nearly impossible situations over the past two years, with multiple shutdowns forcing them to transition to virtual hearings and electronic filings for months at a time. While our Chief Judges and County Clerk determined new processes to keep justice moving, the situation demonstrated the need to get all records digitized. Once fully funded, this transformative project will securely digitize roughly 100 million pages of records for our courts, clerk of the court, prosecutor's office, and sheriff's office. Additionally, electronic filing will make the process of filing with our courts easier, more accessible, less expensive, and will streamline the judicial process.



In another significant investment in our court system, we approved one new probate judge along with dedicated staff in 2022. This will represent a significant investment in our court system and allow us to better serve Kent County's growing population.



*Kent County is focused on the future, not the past. On transformation, not incremental change.*

We are stronger today than ever before. In fact, just last week we learned that we maintained our AAA Bond Rating with both Standard & Poors and Moody's. In a few minutes, Administrator Vanderberg will address several initiatives moving ahead in the County. But for now, I assure you that we will continue to play a stabilizing role across our region, and we remain deeply committed to moving our community forward regardless of the challenge.

We understand that each sector and organization represented in this room has its own unique vision, mission, and role within our county. We look forward to continuing to work with you to secure a safe, healthy, and vibrant community in which you have an opportunity to make your vision a reality. Thank you.

*Stan Stek*

*Chair, Kent County Board of Commissioners*





**M**y thanks to all of you - for being here this evening and for your warm welcome back to Kent County. This is a great community, and I am both humbled and proud to serve as your County Administrator.

I've come to think of myself as the "time-capsule" county administrator. It's been fun to reengage with many of the people and successes from my time as deputy county administrator many years ago. I share Chair Stek's enthusiasm about the future of Kent County. This is the moment for transformational change.

Kent County is seeing significant population growth - 9% since 2010. That level of growth means changing demographics and evolving needs. Kent County is poised for growth on a scale that we have not previously seen.

- 55 percent of our population is under the age of 35,
- Diversity is on the rise. 29% of our residents identify as ethnically or racially diverse,
- Our educational attainment - including high school diplomas, associate's degrees, four-year and post-graduate degrees - exceeds both the state and national averages.



As your County government, we must lead transformational change to meet ever-evolving community needs. That calls for an agile environment and systems that allow our talent, technology, and space management practices to evolve, as well. We also must recognize that transformation is both a strategy and a future state of being. It's the decisive action we take now to make the future better.

Wayne "The Great One," Gretsky said it well:

*"I skate to where the puck is going to be, not to where it has been."*

I'll outline several pieces of our transformation strategy this evening that point to where we're going.

Anytime you seek to make change in the world, you must start at home. That's because an organization either moves forward or it falls back. So, as we work to become the best partner to help lead the transformation of Kent County, that's exactly what we are doing.

Our internal efforts are focused on five areas:

- ▶ 1 Cultural Transformation
- ▶ 2 Attracting Top Talent
- ▶ 3 Key investments in departments, offices, courts and agencies, and
- ▶ 4 Inclusive participation
- ▶ 5 Departmental Structure

Let's look first at **cultural transformation**. Last Tuesday, I presented an update to the Board of Commissioners' Executive Committee on our internal cultural transformation plan focused on 6 C's:

- Customer Service
- Creativity
- Communication
- Cultural Intelligence
- Competency, and
- Collaboration

Through this work, we are defining how we will rise to the challenge of serving our growing and diversifying community. Our team is 1,750 strong and works across 25 departments, offices, courts, and agencies. While we have vastly different job descriptions, we share a vision. That is to be your ready partner in building a welcoming place where everyone has an opportunity to thrive. As we focus on the 6 C's, we are developing a common language and understanding of our priorities, injecting new ways of thinking across the organization, and training team members to meet new expectations and hold ourselves accountable as individuals and as an organization.

We will adopt practices from the private sector, including Toyota Kata lean and innovation and design-thinking principles, and we'll develop some of our own next practices along the way. We are already a leading county in the state. But we aim to go from good to great. That calls for investments to train and equip our team for change. Because as John Maxwell said:

*"Change is inevitable. Growth is optional."*

Next, we're focused on **attracting top talent**. I'm sure many of you are, as well. Everything changed in 2020. Given today's competitive talent market, we're reassessing how we recruit and compensate employees, and we are redefining workspaces. A big shift over the past two years is that employees want a flexible work environment. We'll spend this year digging deep into what a network-based organization focused on customer service and quality outcomes look like. We'll also prioritize creating a fulfilling environment for those employees who simply can't work from home.

Our internal review also includes a space needs analysis. In October, we broke ground on a 13-million-dollar North Campus to meet the needs of our growing community. The 30,000 square foot facility, which is scheduled for completion in April 2023, will include a North Sub-Station for the Sheriff's Office, Health Department clinic, and 'hoteling' space for other County services. We are also carefully analyzing how our buildings at 300 Monroe, 320 Ottawa, 82 Ionia and our Fuller campus are utilized. We're asking if the right services are being provided in the right locations or if we need to make changes. And, we are anticipating the completion of our new Parks Department office near Millennium Park. These assessments and changes are being made to best serve residents now and into the future.

Next, we are making **key investments in our departments, offices, courts, and agencies**. Chair Stek mentioned that we will add a Probate Judge and will make major investments to digitize all court records. Further, we'll ask the legislature to approve the addition of another 63rd District Judge to serve the high-growth outer perimeter of the county. These investments will enable us to increase both capacity and efficiency in our court system and allow us to better serve our growing population. Additionally, in 2021, we promoted Teresa Branson as our first Chief Inclusion Officer, underscoring the organization's commitment to fully embed diversity, equity, and inclusion in our strategic priorities. This is important for everyone one of us. To paraphrase Theodore Roosevelt, "This county will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in."

We are also supporting the Sheriff's commitment to transparency in law enforcement. Kent County recently invested 2.2 million dollars to purchase body-worn cameras for all 200 law enforcement personnel in the Sheriff's Office. This investment was fully operational in 2021. The appropriation also funded replacement tasers and upgraded in-car cameras for all officers and police cruisers. Other public safety investments included a 25-million-dollar upgrade in our 911 radio dispatch system used to transmit public safety information to law enforcement agencies and personnel countywide.

And this year, the Sheriff's Office is budgeted to build and open a virtual reality de-escalation training center within their current firearms range. This multi-functional center will integrate virtual reality de-escalation training with firearm and taser training at a level that is nearly impossible to do with the use of live ammunition.

Those aren't the only investments we're making in County technology. I side with W. Edwards Deming when he said, *"In God we trust. All others must bring data."* We live in a day when the ability to collect and utilize data to drive quality outcomes is growing exponentially. So, in the year ahead, we will build a data center that will serve as a foundation for future use of artificial intelligence in service delivery. This will include the use of machine learning, natural language processing and robotics that will enhance the flow of information between residents and their County government and continually improve service delivery.

On the departmental front, we are considering a significant realignment in our animal shelter and animal control services in the months ahead. Details are being finalized, and you'll hear more about this next month. I can say that the plans have been deliberative, and we are very grateful to our animal shelter team, volunteers, and local animal welfare organizations. They've been wonderful partners working in the best interests of our community and the animals in our care. Transforming our internal culture, attracting top talent, and improving our facilities and departmental structure are critical to our ability to deliver excellent services and to help build a prosperous place for all.

But that's just part of the story.

2022 marks the 4th year of the Kent County Strategic Plan. With goals related to economic prosperity, high quality of life, excellence in service delivery, inclusive participation, and effective communications, the plan has provided clear guideposts for our work since 2019. But we had to shift focus during the pandemic. To get things back on track, the Board of Commissioners and I recently revisited the plan, developed a set of strategies to advance each of the five goals, and identified important outputs and desired outcomes of those strategies to track our progress. This exercise has been important as we identify funding and service priorities for the year ahead.

That includes helping to guide the allocation of ARPA dollars. We are committed to steering these dollars to support transformative action that will make a positive generational change and continue to reverberate into the future. As Chair Stek noted, Kent County was awarded more than 127 million dollars in ARPA funding. This provides us a rare opportunity to make strategic long-term investments, both within the County organization and throughout our county as a region.



To help us with this important planning process, we've hired Guidehouse - a consulting group that advises the U.S. Department of Treasury and the State of Michigan on how to distribute and leverage ARPA dollars. We're meeting with them to make sure we are in full compliance with the complex set of requirements that dictates how the money may be spent and, equally important, how these funds will be audited after the program ends.

The funding application process will kick off by early June. Leading up to that, Kent County will host three community engagement sessions in May where we'll hear from residents, community organizations and others about their priorities. We will take public input, funding applications and other county needs into account when prioritizing the final recommendations that go to the Board of Commissioners for approval. We also expect to use ARPA dollars to advance some major initiatives already underway.

# Transformational Initiatives Already Identified

## *Broadband*

Broadband is a priority ripe for ARPA funding. Right now, significant areas of Kent County don't have access to high-speed internet. In some areas where there is access, it is substandard. We need to change that. With the rise of the gig economy, the need was evident before the pandemic. But the true fallout from our lack of connectivity became painfully clear over the last two years. Not all residents could easily work or learn from home due to broadband deficiencies. CARES Act funding provided emergency access through limited hotspots. And our legislators have continued to champion this issue in Lansing.

Now, ARPA funding can help SOLVE the problem. But we need to better understand the extent of it at a parcel level before we can develop a county-wide solution. We will soon hire a consultant to assist in identifying and prioritizing the needs across the county. Drawing on regional expertise and insights from community groups, we'll ask how we can leverage ARPA dollars in partnership with the state, local communities and service providers throughout Kent County to make a meaningful impact. Once that analysis is complete, our goal will be to work with public, private and nonprofit partners to fund a collaborative and comprehensive solution. Without it, we cannot deliver on our collective commitment to ensure that Kent County is a place where everyone has an opportunity to thrive.



## *Medical Examiner's Office*

Within our own organization, we are in the early stages of planning for a new state-of-the-art medical examiner's facility that can better serve the entire region. It's time to get our medical examiner out of the small basement space where they've been operating since the early 2000's and into a modern facility that suits the operations of this vital community service.

We'll be able to share more as the plan takes shape later this year.

## Grand River Greenway

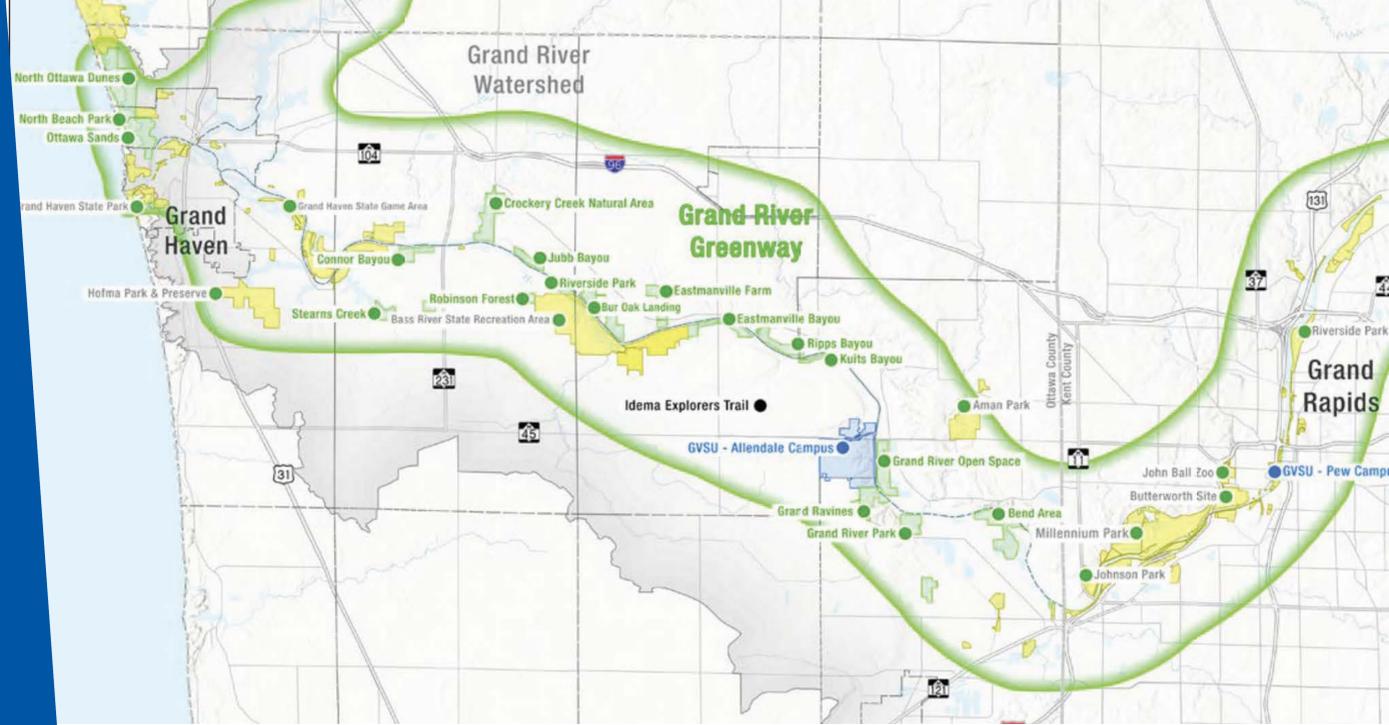
We also aim to leverage federal, state and local funding, including ARPA dollars, to further advance plans for the Grand River Greenway. A loosely-knit coalition of public, private and nonprofit organizations is working to develop a contiguous, non-motorized trail along the Grand River starting on the shores of Lake Michigan in Grand Haven and running to Lowell.

This 76-mile trail would connect the region's largest population centers with rural communities, parks, natural areas, rivers, trail networks and other amenities. The trail will also connect to many significant projects such as the Grand Rapids Public Museum expansion, Restore the Rapids, the proposed 12,000-seat amphitheater, and, potentially, an aquarium.

Work on the Greenway has been underway in Ottawa County for decades. Construction of the non-motorized Idema Explorers Trail, running from Lake Michigan to the Ottawa-Kent border, is nearly fully funded and due for completion in 2027. In March, DGRI secured 55 million dollars in State funding to build critical trail links and connections in Grand Rapids and extend the trail to Lowell.

Now, we are working to secure additional funding to build three key sections of trail along the Grand River in the City of Grand Rapids, Plainfield Township and Ada Township. These will serve as critical connectors and will spur completion of the remaining planned sections.

The Greenway is a monumental project that will leverage our region's most valuable natural assets to enhance our quality of life and our economy. Kent County and the Kent County Parks Department look forward to being part of the coalition that makes this decades-long dream a reality.





I take Kent County's role as a convener, a problem solver, and a partner that can help build a common vision very seriously. I'll close this evening with just a few more examples of where the County is leading or partnering on transformational change.

In September, we approved the issuance of 93.6 million dollars in revenue bonds to help finance the Gerald R. Ford International Airport Concourse A expansion. The expansion will add 8 gates and new amenities to accommodate projected passenger growth over the next 20 years. In fact, Chair Stek, other stakeholders and I were just at a beam-raising for this exciting airport expansion this morning.

Additionally, in partnership with Ford Airport leaders, we are advocating with Congress to move the air traffic control tower from its current location to the east side of the airfield. This would remove barriers to terminal expansion and allow Ford Airport to replace the second oldest operational air traffic control tower at a top-100 airport in the country. With these improvements, Ford Airport will continue to boost our local economy now and into the future.

Second, as a new member of the Kent Housing Next Board, I look forward to working alongside those in our community who bring tremendous insight into ways to remove barriers to housing at all price points. While we don't know exactly what Kent County's role will be in the year ahead, we stand as a willing partner, ready to work with other local units of government, nonprofits to find and implement solutions to this critical need.

Next, we will convene a regional mobility task force including Disability Advocates of Kent County, the City of Grand Rapids, and others to assess mobility challenges and develop a transit strategy to meet the needs of our growing population. To be clear, we're not talking about a county-wide transit system. More likely, a collection of solutions to ensure people throughout Kent County have access to transportation and all this community has to offer.

Knowing that we're more effective when we work together, I've also brought back quadrant meetings with elected and appointed leaders from cities, townships, and villages across the county. We'll be meeting in the four county quadrants twice a year to discuss priorities and joint initiatives, build relationships and learn from each other.



*I take Kent County's role as a convener, a problem solver, and a partner that can help build a common vision very seriously.*



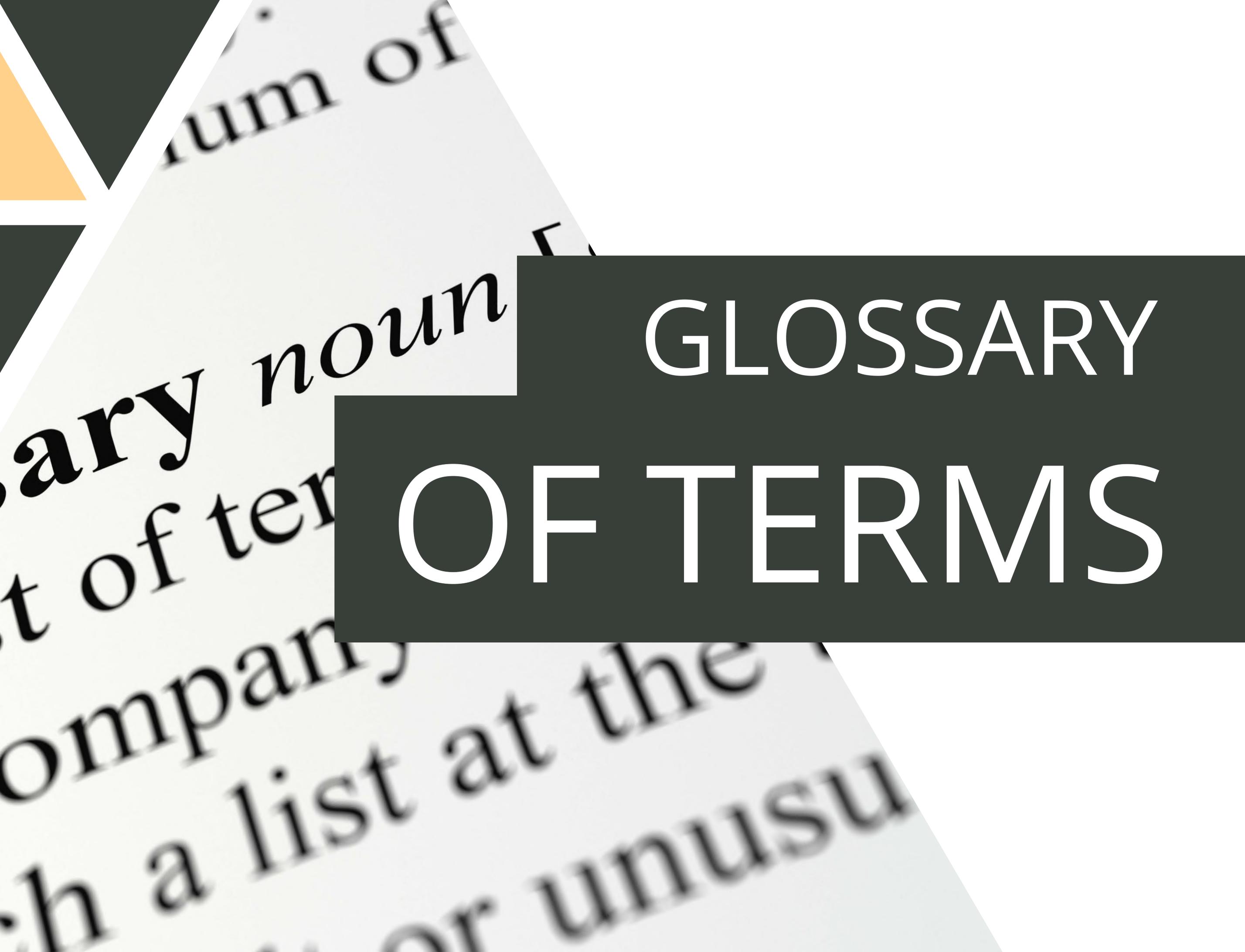
These are the kind of positive, transformative partnerships that we'll focus on in the year ahead.

**There's a new energy and optimism in Kent County.**

We are dedicated to thinking big and taking decisive action with all stakeholders to make Kent County the very best place it can be for generations to come. Thank you.

*Al Vanderberg*  
Kent County Administrator





# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

# Acronyms

**ALICE-** Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed; The term "ALICE" defines this population as households with income above the official Federal Poverty Level but below a newly defined basic survival income level.

**ARPA-** American Rescue Plan Act; This bill provides additional relief to address the continued impact of COVID-19 (i.e., coronavirus disease 2019) on the economy, public health, state and local governments, individuals, and businesses.

**BOC-** Board of Commissioners

**CARES-** The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act; In March 2020, U.S. lawmakers agreed to pass a \$2 trillion stimulus bill called the CARES Act to reduce the impact of the economic downturn set in motion by the global coronavirus pandemic.

**GR-** Grand Rapids

**KCHD-** Kent County Health Department

**LAT-** Lead Action Team

**PACE-** Property Assessed Clean Energy; PACE programs allow a property owner to finance the up-front cost of energy or other eligible improvements on a property and pay the costs back over time through a voluntary assessment.

**PFAS-** short for perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances and also includes chemicals known as PFOS, PFOA, and GenX; PFAS chemicals are known as "forever chemicals," a family of potentially thousands of synthetic chemicals that are extremely persistent in the environment.

**RFP-** Request for proposal; a document that an organization issues to elicit a response (a formal bid) from potential vendors for a desired IT solution.

**SWOT-** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis

**WTE-** Waste to energy

# Terms

**6Cs-** Customer Service, Creativity, Communications, Cultural Intelligence, Competency, Collaboration; an organizational improvement initiative aiming to improve practices and procedures to give residents more access to government and implemented a customer-centric approach to service delivery.

**AAA Bond Rating-** AAA (Triple A) is the highest possible rating that may be assigned to an issuer's bonds by any of the major credit rating agencies. AAA-rated bonds have a high degree of creditworthiness because their issuers are easily able to meet financial commitments and have the lowest risk of default.

**Disney Way-** a comprehensive customer service training providing management strategies from Disney expert and best-selling author Bill Capodagli, who has made a career of analyzing the incredible business phenomenon that is Disney.

**Envisio-** a strategic planning & performance management company. Kent County works with Envisio to improve how we execute plans, measure and improve performance, and share results.

**Foresight-** also known as "Strategic Foresight"; Foresight refers to a long-term strategic planning process that plans decades into the future. Foresight work includes a range of activities related to the production of knowledge about possible futures and calls for a detailed and systematic analysis of driving forces and trends of change before the development of strategies/plans.

**Kent County Population Health Consortium-** a local network of healthcare systems, payers, and community services committed to addressing Community Health Priorities and improving the health of all Kent County residents.

**Kent County Welcome Plan-** a community-led process aimed at implementing welcoming initiatives. This is spearheaded by 36 multi-sector organizations who value the diversity of the community and the need to celebrate and welcome all community members

**Lean-** a set of management practices to improve efficiency and effectiveness by eliminating waste

## **STRATEGIC PLAN TERMS:**

**Goals-** relatively static in nature and assist the County in accomplishing the five priority areas

**Objectives-** items that give further meaning and substance to a goal

**Outputs-** specific action items conducted to achieve goals and objectives

**Outcomes-** indicators and measures for success, demonstrating the impact of actions



[www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com)