Residential street construction increases since end of the recession

Subdivision development and new street construction during 2014 showed an increase over 2013 and a dramatic increase when compared to levels of activity only a few years ago. What’s more, even with a colder than normal fall the activity is expected to continue late into the year.

“There’s always the risk that street construction will slow down or stop when temperatures drop sooner than expected. But as long as they remain above freezing we know of at least two developments that are working toward adding more street before the end of the year,” said Scott Hiles, CPC, director of PDS’ infrastructure engineering department.

Subdivisions in unincorporated Kenton County and the cities of Erlanger, Covington, and Independence all saw new street construction in 2014. The majority of streets were located in the City of Independence.

“We haven’t seen this level of street construction since well before the recession,” said Hiles. “In looking back through our records, the amount of new street that was constructed this year quadrupled the amount we saw constructed just four years ago, and we’re not finished yet.”

Staff is also seeing signs that the upward trend in subdivision development will likely continue. In 2014 over 200 new lots were proposed and approved along new streets. In a few cases, construction was started this year on those new subdivisions but in no cases were any of these developments completed.

“Because we had more lots and street approved this year than was completed, we’re confident that this will carry over to next year and mean a busy 2015,” said Hiles.

One reason in particular to recognize the increase in street construction is its relation to the new subdivision regulations that are currently being written.

“A primary focus of the new regulations is better, longer lasting streets,” said Hiles. “It’s important to get these new regulations adopted so that all of the benefits to the community that they’ll bring can be incorporated into these new subdivisions.”

Hiles said that staff is continuing to work with a committee of engineers to reach consensus on a final recommendation to the Kenton County Planning Commission.

“Everyone is in agreement with most of the important issues. We’re working to finalize the last of the outstanding items and tie up some loose ends at this point. We understand the importance of getting the
process finished but more important is making sure the regulations are enforceable in the way staff needs them to be.”

Hiles said that he is confident that the new regulations will be finished and adopted by the planning commission before the beginning of the 2015 development season.

**Delivery of GIS data provides community with tree canopy inventory**

A recent grant from the USDA Forest Service through the Kentucky Division of Forestry to the Northern Kentucky Urban and Community Forestry Council has provided LINK-GIS partners with high resolution data on tree cover. SavATree, in collaboration with the University of Vermont's Spatial Analysis Laboratory, mapped Northern Kentucky’s land cover.

“We’re pleased to receive these new data,” said Dennis Gordon, FAICP, PDS executive director and managing partner of the LINK-GIS partnerships. “This collaborative effort with Northern Kentucky’s Urban and Community Forestry Council will be extremely helpful to PDS and our GIS partners as more and more emphasis is focused on air and water quality issues.”

The project succeeded in mapping land cover for Northern Kentucky with a high level of accuracy. The project was able to achieve its goals by leveraging existing data provided by LINK-GIS. The 7-class land cover will be useful for producing tree canopy and land cover metrics. The percent of forest was broken down for each city, watershed, block group, and even down to the parcel level.

Tree canopy data is now available on the base map of the [LINK-GIS website](http://www.linkgis.com). Questions should be addressed to the GIS staff at PDS.

**Direction2030.org provides interactive maps for those with questions**

*Direction 2030*, Kenton County’s first completely new comprehensive plan since 1972 and PDS’ first completely digital comprehensive plan was adopted three months ago. If you haven’t yet visited the [website](http://www.direction2030.org), take a few minutes to learn more about the vision for the community and interact with the electronic plan.

The online format allows users to navigate easily through the entire comprehensive plan in a way that was not possible previously using a hardcopy plan.

One of the more exciting features incorporated with the *Direction 2030* website is the addition of interactive maps that correspond with the plan’s different elements. Each map was customized to incorporate geographic features important to the element of the comprehensive plan they are supporting. Users can navigate in and around Kenton County and simply click on features in the map to find out more information.

The *Direction 2030* website marks the first time PDS has incorporated interactive mapping directly into an adopted plan or study. PDS has used similar technology in the past on the LINK-GIS website. This new approach, however, combines new mapping technology with a completely digital plan. The final product enables planners to reach a broader audience and empower the people of Kenton County to learn more about what the comprehensive plan means to them and their community.

“Our primary goal with the web-based plan was to use the power of technology to create a user-friendly experience for a plan that can otherwise be daunting,” explained Sharmili Reddy, AICP, planning manager for PDS and project manager for the comprehensive plan. “For instance, if you’re interested in learning more about the location of parks in the Community Facilities element of the plan, you can use the map feature, zoom into different areas, and get more information about the park, all on the same page.”
While users can view the embedded map with the associated text, there are more features just a click away. A link to a larger interactive map is available under the embedded maps on the website. Clicking the link for the larger interactive map opens a full screen sized map that not only provides the user a larger view but also offers the ability to turn layers on and off and measure features on the map.

In total there are ten interactive maps embedded in the comprehensive plan that include topics ranging from Environment to the Economy and everything in between.

Visit [www.direction2030.org](http://www.direction2030.org) to interact with the maps and learn more about Kenton County’s revolutionary new plan.

**PDS announces 2015 holiday schedule**

PDS offices will be closed on the following days in 2015: January 1 (New Year's Day); January 19 (Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday); February 16 (Presidents' Day); May 25 (Memorial Day); July 3 (Independence Day); September 7 (Labor Day); November 26-27 (Thanksgiving); December 24-25 (Christmas); and December 31 (New Year's Eve).

These holiday closings and all public meetings sponsored or hosted by PDS can be found at our [online calendar](http://www.direction2030.org).

... for whatever it’s worth...

“It's a charmed feature of family life that the oldest and youngest often find common cause. In league against the conservatism of parents, grandparents and grandkids might push for dessert before dinner or agree on the harmlessness of playing outside in the rain.

“It seems that the two cohorts have also found themselves in a natural alliance on urban planning. Both the old and the young, according to surveys, want to live where they can walk, use transit, and enjoy public space.”

Read the rest of this online blog published by CityLab under the headline, *As Boomers Age, Walkable Cities Become More Important*.

As always, this information is presented... for whatever it’s worth.

*Views expressed in this article do not reflect an official position or policy of the PDS. The article is presented here to provide input for those interested in land use planning issues.*

**Calendar Events**

**Pendleton County Joint City-County Planning Commission**  
Monthly Business Meeting  
Monday, November 29 at 7 p.m.  
Pendleton County Courthouse in Falmouth

**Kenton County Planning Commission**  
Monthly Public Hearing and Business Meeting  
Thursday, December 4 at 6:15 p.m.  
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell
PDS Management Board
Monthly Business Meeting
Monday, December 17 at 5:15 p.m.
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

Christmas Holiday
December 25-26
PDS office closed - Visit us online

New Year’s Holiday
December 31 and January 1
PDS office closed - Visit us online

For more meeting and event information, check out our online calendar.

* Banner photo provided by Tri-ED

PDS  pdskc.org  2332 Royal Drive, Fort Mitchell, KY 41017  859.331.8980