Independence disbands adjustment and code enforcement boards

Following the decision by its City Council to join the PDS One Stop Shop program, the City of Independence has dissolve its Board of Adjustment and Code Enforcement Board in favor of joining the respective Kenton County boards.

Many of the cities in Kenton County find it difficult to maintain their own boards for several reasons. Keeping the appointed members on these boards can be problematic because of the thankless nature of the job, the time commitment, plus the requirement of ongoing planning education.

Many of the smaller communities in Kenton County have an ongoing problem finding volunteers, not to mention keeping those appointees compliant with the state-mandated education requirements. There is also a cost incurred by each city to support those boards in the way of staff costs, attorney fees, notification fees, and stipends to the board members.

Fortunately, cities have an alternative in the way of joining the boards that are maintained by Kenton County and PDS. These boards carry no costs to the cities themselves beyond the regular One Stop Shop program costs. For the board of adjustment, if a city chooses to dissolve its board, their community automatically becomes a participant in the Kenton County Board of Adjustment, for which, application fees and the Fiscal Court carry the cost.

The Kenton County Joint Code Enforcement Board is enabled by an interlocal agreement between the participating local governments and supported by PDS and the fines collected by the board. Each participating government appoints one member to the board. The participating cities have not only eliminated the difficulty of managing the board and its members, but also see a real cost savings as well, which can be passed along to residents.

The added advantage to these boards is that, considering the small nature of many of the Kenton County cities, the county-wide boards offer a more diverse makeup and the reduced likelihood of a member actually knowing an applicant appearing before them, a relatively common occurrence in many of Kenton County’s cities.

“While our local BoA and CEB have done an outstanding job over the years, it became more cost effective to utilize the county boards when we opted to go with the One Stop Shop,” said Independence Mayor-Elect Chris Reinersman. “In addition, Independence is hopeful that, by virtue of the greater number of cases heard and frequency of meetings, board members will benefit from a broader knowledge base and level of objectivity.”
Independence has taken the necessary steps to utilize the Kenton County Board of Adjustment immediately and to participate in the Kenton County Joint Code Enforcement Board beginning in January.

**Direction 2030 adoption prompts terminology changes in zoning ordinances**

Adoption of the *Direction 2030* comprehensive plan in September marked the beginning of efforts to implement it. Almost immediately, several zoning text modifications needed to be made to each of Kenton County’s 20 zoning ordinances to reflect terminology that changed in the new plan.

Key terms such as ‘urban service area’ and ‘physically restrictive development area’ have been used in Kenton County’s planning documents and zoning ordinances for decades. *Direction 2030* established new terminology for these terms following calls from the community to develop new terms more reflective of the policies. Consistent terminology between the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinances is necessary to avoid confusion in administration.

Last month, the Kenton County Planning Commission approved a favorable recommendation on four zoning text amendments that are required to bring the zoning ordinance of each of Kenton County’s 20 jurisdictions into compliance with *Direction 2030*.

The first relates to physically restrictive development area (PRDA). This terminology was modified to developmentally sensitive area (DSA) in the comprehensive plan. References to PRDA occurred mostly in the hillside related regulations and will be referenced as DSA moving forward. The intent behind this policy is to alert developers of land that may be sensitive to development based on the presence of certain geologic characteristics. During the public process, the new term was determined to be more reflective of this intent.

The second modification is related to the term ‘urban service area’. This was modified to include two terms—‘urban/suburban focus area’ and ‘rural focus area’. Again, this is reflective of conversations pursued with the community during the comprehensive plan process.

The changing nature of agricultural operations in the county requires a certain level of service. Infrastructure such as internet and cell service is vital in keeping up with modern technology used in agriculture particularly as it relates to agritourism. The new policy promotes the idea of focusing on the specific needs of each area rather than looking at services for the county as a whole.

The third and fourth requests, while not related to *Direction 2030* require changes to be made to all zoning ordinances. NKAPC changed its name to Planning and Development Services of Kenton County (PDS) in July. Every zoning ordinance assigns certain responsibilities to staff and refers to NKAPC. The new name of the agency will now be reflected in ordinances following this change.

The fourth request pertains to clearly assigning the floodplain administrator in each jurisdiction.

“These amendments were anticipated during the final stages of the comprehensive plan process,” said Sharmili Reddy, AICP, PDS’ planning manager. “We’re working with our 20 legislative bodies now to act on these changes fairly soon to avoid any confusion.”

**New seven-minute video production tells the PDS story on YouTube**

An updated video about PDS and the services it provides is available now for online viewing on YouTube. The seven-minute presentation is part of a growing library of PDS documents and images.
This project was produced as a way of explaining, as the video says, “who we are and what we do.” It includes examples of staff members conducting business, animated graphics, and many current and historical photos.

[Click here to watch our video](#) and learn more about PDS.

**KY 536 to be studied for new alignment and recommended land uses**

A major widening of the KY 536 corridor from the Boone County Line to KY 17 has been planned for at least a decade and will provide much needed east/west connectivity to that portion of Kenton County. Extending that corridor to the Licking River and ultimately to US 27 in Campbell County is the focus of a scoping study initiated earlier this month by OKI and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet.

That 6.5-mile segment of KY 536 is the only remaining section of the entire corridor that does not have a preferred alternative or improvement plan in place.

“According to Transportation Cabinet officials, this segment was left until last because of its fragmented connections, drastic elevation changes, poor sight lines, broad range of environmental factors, and, most importantly, extremely high crash rates,” said Dennis Gordon, FAICP, PDS’ executive director.

“The crash rate for this segment of 536 is almost 3.4 times the statewide average for similar roadways across the Commonwealth. This means that drivers are more than three times as likely to have an accident on this stretch of road when compared to other similar roadways in Kentucky.”

This scoping study has been undertaken by OKI on behalf of the entire region to identify improvements that are needed to improve safety.

“We’re committed to making improvements that meet existing and future needs of the traveling public and the urban and rural communities KY 536 serves,” said Robyn Bancroft, AICP, project manager for the study at OKI.

“We are currently in the first phase of the study—data collection and analysis. Safety is our primary concern; however, traffic volumes are also being analyzed to determine not just what is needed today to make the corridor safer, but what will be needed in the future.”

This first phase of the study will identify the problems of the roadway and form the foundation upon which the study’s improvement alternatives will be drafted for public review. As the study progresses, additional information will be posted on the [study’s webpage](#).

The KY 536 Scoping Study itself will not involve new or altered land use plans or zoning amendments for the corridor. That is a separate process. PDS planners will begin working with University of Cincinnati planning students next month to examine the potential impact that expansion of KY 536 will have on adjacent neighborhoods and communities.

This separate PDS project, which is being funded by a grant from the Murray and Agnes Seaseongood Good Government Foundation, will study how the expansion of KY 536 will impact adjacent land uses. Students will document the existing conditions, explore primary planning elements (mobility, land use, environment, community facilities/utilities, concept map, economy, and housing), and address the potential for economic development, nodes of activity, connectivity, and community character.
A key component of the project will be to engage the public in these discussions, with a number of different opportunities being explored. The third year undergraduate studio work will conclude in April.

“The widening of 536 is critical to the continued economic stability of Independence,” said Chris Moriconi, Independence City Administrator. “In particular, [the KY 536 improvement project] will provide a much needed east/west corridor for our residents and businesses by providing a safe and improved corridor to I-75.”

“This will provide a unique experience for the UC students and for PDS,” said Andy Videkovich, AICP, senior planner at PDS and project manager for this study. “The students will get to work with a number of different agencies and jurisdictions to see how they coordinate large multi-jurisdictional projects. PDS will be able to tap into the energy and enthusiasm that the students will bring and use their work to further plan for the region.”

“It’s not very often that we get to plan for a roadway corridor like this,” concluded Gordon. “Looking at transportation and land usage at the same time is the way this is supposed to be done—and everyone benefits. Unfortunately, timing rarely work out like it will with these two efforts.”

**Dixie Fix Committee gears up for infusion of newly-elected officials**

Nearly ten years ago, PDS and OKI embarked on a collaborative study to plan for the future of Dixie Highway. This plan, which came to be known as the Dixie Fix, examined the corridor in Boone and Kenton Counties and provided recommendations for long range congestion mitigation, improved access, and increased safety. During the approvals phase of the project, each of the ten jurisdictions in the study area adopted the plan, signifying the importance of this main route through Northern Kentucky.

Realizing a plan’s vision takes the dedication and hard work of numerous people. The Dixie Fix has been fortunate in that the corridor has benefitted from the guidance of an oversight team since the plan’s official adoption. This team, comprised of representatives from jurisdictions within the study area and associated technical groups, has worked to bring the plan’s recommendations forward to fruition. Most recently the plan guided a $75,000 pavement/paver/sidewalk project in Elsmere and realignment of the Dixie and Garvey intersection, which resulted in one less traffic signal.

Soon the study group will reconvene to discuss progress on implementing the plan, focus on opportunities for 2015, and welcome new people to the team.

“After the results of the last election were finalized there were some newly-elected officials and city administrators serving cities along the corridor,” said James Fausz, AICP, principal planner with PDS. “We’re looking forward to them meeting with the team and welcoming their participation.”

The team will meet later this winter to discuss the plan and work towards new projects to implement. If you would like to learn more about the Dixie Fix project please refer to the plan’s [website](#).

**Taskforce to review building permit fees, suggest changes for FY 2016**

PDS’ One Stop Shop codes administration program will celebrate its tenth anniversary this coming June. As part of the agency’s look back and look forward for this popular service program, its FY15 annual work program calls for the creation of a taskforce to review fees charged by the program to pay for the services provided.
An 11-member group met this past week to begin the process of reviewing the fees along with a number of other issues specific to the program. Included among those issues are the following.

- Mixed use buildings were a novel idea when the current fees schedule was created; that’s not the case today. How should PDS’ fee schedule respond to projects including mixed uses in the same building?
- The current fee schedule is the result of adjusting the base fee schedule adopted on the inception of One Stop Shop on an annual basis with the percentage increase tied to the consumer price index promulgated each year by the Kentucky Department for Local Government. The taskforce will be asked to provide its opinion on that policy.
- Should homeowners planning to do their own work be charged the same amount as a professional hired to do the same work?
- Some have suggested that remodeling/rehabbing projects should be charged a lower permit and inspection fee since: (a) the base fee schedule was created with new construction in mind; (b) remodeling/rehabbing projects generally include less work than new construction projects; and (c) PDS should be encouraging remodeling/rehabbing. The taskforce will be asked to provide its opinion on this question.

Those agreeing to serve on the taskforce include: Tony Kreutzjans, Orleans Development; John Toebben, the Toebben Company; Bob Schroder, Arlinghaus Builders; Larry Klein, Covington City Manager; Jeanne Schroer, Catalytic Fund of Covington; Chris Moriconi, Independence city administrator; Chris Meyer, Covington architect; Paul Meier, Crestview Hills mayor; Josh Gunther, the Drees Company; Amanda Igo, Fischer Homes; and Chuck Eilerman, Covington Commissioner.

"I’m pleased with the caliber people we were able to enlist for this important review,” said Dennis Gordon, FAICP, PDS’ executive director. “I hope their work will stand the test of time as well as did their predecessors’ work completed in 2005.”

Gordon hopes the taskforce can have their review and recommendations complete by next March.

PDS Board awards contract to Heritage Bank following RFP review

After reviewing four proposals for banking services to PDS for calendar years 2015 through 2017, PDS Management Board members voted unanimously last week to pursue a contract with Heritage Bank, according to the terms proposed by that contract.

"Heritage Bank was aggressive with its proposal this time,” said Dennis Gordon, FAICP, PDS’ executive director. "We calculate the difference to be roughly $1500 for the contract period. "And, while that might not seem like a lot, every bit counts when budgets are tight.”

PDS announces holiday closures; online services open 24/7/365

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.
"Ever since Jane Jacobs' classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, urbanists have extolled the ideal of the dense, mixed-used, walkable neighborhood, contrasting it with the dull and deadly cul-de-sacs of car-oriented suburbs.

“If walkability has long been an ‘ideal’, a recent slew of studies provide increasingly compelling evidence of the positive effects of walkable neighborhoods on everything from housing values to crime and health, to creativity and more democratic cities.”

In a recent [online blog](#), noted author Richard Florida writes of a slew of new research that links walkable neighborhoods with safer, healthier, and more democratic places. As always, we provide this opinion piece 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.*

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**Calendar Events**

**Christmas Holiday**  
December 25-26  
PDS office closed - Visit us [online](#)

**Pendleton County Joint City-County Planning Commission**  
Monthly Business Meeting  
*cancelled* Monday, December 26 at 7 p.m.  
Pendleton County Courthouse in Falmouth

**New Year’s Holiday**  
December 31 and January 1  
PDS office closed - Visit us [online](#)

**Kenton County Planning Commission**  
Monthly Public Hearing and Business Meeting  
*rescheduled* Tuesday, January 6 at 6:15 p.m.  
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday**  
Monday, January 19  
PDS office closed - Visit us [online](#)

**PDS Management Board**  
Monthly Business Meeting  
Monday, January 26 at 5:15 p.m.  
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

**PDS Council**  
Quarterly Business Meeting  
Thursday, January 29 at 5:45 p.m.  
Commission Chambers, PDS Building, Fort Mitchell

*For more meeting and event information, check out our [online calendar](#).*

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* Banner photo provided by Tri-ED

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