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# Introduction



During the last several years the City of Crescent Springs has been interested in redevelopment of the area comprising this study. Prior to the last county-wide comprehensive plan update which was adopted in 2006, the city's Long Range Planning Committee identified that the study area was transitioning to commercial and industrial land uses and that a plan was needed as a guide. The 2006 plan update, entitled the *Comprehensive Plan Update 2006-2026: An Area-Wide Vision for Kenton County*, listed this plan as one of the future initiatives for the City of Crescent Springs.

In late 2008 the City of Crescent Springs contracted with the Northern Kentucky Area Planning Commission (NKAPC) and GEM Public Sector Services to conduct this study. GEM Public Sector Services prepared a market analysis that provided detailed information on existing and future economic conditions. NKAPC managed the project and provided the land use planning component for the study.

The following is a brief overview of some elements of this plan. The study area, which is almost completely developed, presents several challenges as the city moves forward with improvements. Understanding the components briefly described below will assist during the review of the remaining parts of this plan where more detail on each of these elements will be found.

## Study Boundary

The boundaries of the *Crescent Springs Gateway Study* are Interstate 71/75 on the east side, the Norfolk Southern railroad on the south and west sides, and the Crescent Springs city boundary on the north side. The area is primarily commercial with some single-family residential and warehouse industrial uses. For the purposes of this plan the study area is divided into two areas; Sub Area A is located on the south side of Buttermilk Pike, and Sub Area B is located on the north side of Buttermilk Pike (see Map 1).



Map 1: Crescent Springs Gateway Study boundaries

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## Vision and Goals

The Crescent Springs Gateway study area will redevelop into a mix of uses that are integral to an overall planned development. Future development may feature office, retail, highway retail, service or residential elements. These uses will compliment one another and be harmonious in regards to site and architectural design. Imaginative and thoughtful design within the study area will give a unified and impressive entrance into the city. The study area will be highly accessible and inviting for pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists. Redevelopment barriers will be removed to help make the study area an attractive place for developers to create a unique and vibrant gateway to the city. It is understood that the redevelopment of the study area will slowly evolve and each improvement, no matter how small, must be crafted with the future in mind.

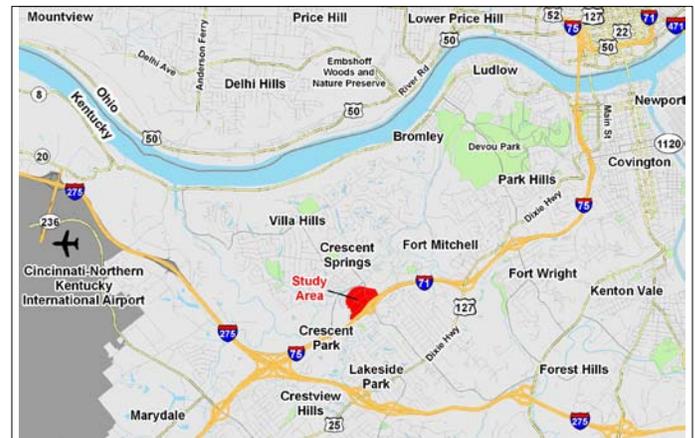
- Redevelop the study area into well-planned, sustainable, economically viable and productive uses.
- Improve the appearance and functionality of the study area by placing buildings close to streets preferably with parking areas in the rear.
- Use green infrastructure elements to improve infiltration of stormwater and improve air and water quality.
- Redesign the intersections to insure maximum traffic capacity.
- Improve connectivity within the study area and to adjoining areas by providing an optimal amount of sidewalks, and bikeways.
- Design a street system that improves access to the entire study area while eliminating excess right-of-way.

## Assets

The study area boasts many assets that provide significant appeal to potential redevelopment efforts. The very close proximity to I-71/75 provides major north/south interregional access by directly linking the state of Michigan to the state of Florida. The study area is located just off of a primary interchange to this highway and is positioned only a few miles from the core of the entire Greater Cincinnati metro region (see Map 2). This location provides the study area with high visibility and access to and from the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky metro region.

This interchange is also between the Cincinnati central business district and the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport making it yet again, a prime location to attract a high volume of activity. From the study area it is easy to reach the numerous commercial and residential areas in northern Kentucky and southwest Ohio.

The area is also relatively flat providing ample room for a large concentration of development. Surrounding this area are economically vibrant residential neighborhoods. Bisecting the commercial area is Buttermilk Pike, a major artery extending from Dixie Highway (US 42/127) to the City of Villa Hills, and connecting the cities of Villa Hills, Crescent Springs, and Fort Mitchell. An average traffic volume of 32,000 vehicles drive through the study area each day providing a strong local base for commercial activity.



**Map 2: Location of study area within region**

The concentration of commercial development is well on its way with the new Crescent Springs Towne Center, the Buttermilk Crossing Shopping Center, and the original commercial center of Crescent Springs. Located to the north of the study area and just outside of the Crescent Springs city limits, Grandview Drive boasts a large amount of office space. Additionally, the industrial land uses on Crescent Springs/Erlanger Road within the City of Erlanger strengthens to the area as a regional commercial center.

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**Figure 1: Aerial image of study area**

## **Limitations**

In addition to all of these assets, there are some limitations. Much of this land is already developed and most of the existing structures have become functionally obsolete. Though these buildings are physically sound, the size and/or design of the building does not meet the needs of current commercial uses typically found in these locations. Removing these structures adds considerable cost to redeveloping the area. The high cost of redevelopment limits the type of businesses that can afford to locate within the study area. Modern development also requires large parcels to accommodate the buildings and parking areas necessary for current economic conditions. These redevelopment limitations are particularly evident within Sub Area A.

This area is divided into a large number of small parcels and many of the current structures are becoming functionally obsolete. The large number of parcels indicates that acquisition of property from a variety of owners could be an additional challenge during the development process (see Figure 1).

The high volume of vehicular traffic that flows along Buttermilk Pike provides a large customer base to the study areas, but also causes some limitations. The congestion that typically occurs during peak travel times has the potential to discourage people from visiting the area, reducing overall commercial activity. Additionally, the interstate and the railroad isolate the study area from the surrounding area further reducing commercial activity. This isolation and high volume of traffic entering and exiting Sub Area A on

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Buttermilk Pike limits the number of vehicles that can exit Sub Area A to approximately 2,000 vehicles per hour. This restricted vehicular flow is likely to occur even after the recommended roadway improvements are made. This constraint places a limit on the amount of space that can be redeveloped within Sub Area A.

The scope of this plan and the difficulties outlined above will require the city to work patiently over many years to complete its recommendations. The Crescent Springs City Council will need to stay committed to the plan and be persistent in implementing changes to the road system while working with property owners and developers to fulfill the vision and goals of this study.

## **The Plan**

The *Crescent Springs Gateway Study* is a plan designed to provide the best uses for the study area given its assets and limitations. Currently the area is a mix of fast food restaurants, strip centers (with a variety of uses), single-family residences, warehouse and storage facilities, and office buildings. Since construction of the interstate, Sub Area A has developed in a haphazard manner. Commercial buildings were built amongst existing residences with little consideration of the area as a unified whole. Many of these commercial buildings are now functionally obsolete and difficult to reuse. A market analysis found the best uses of the study area to be highway retail and professional office. The market analysis also found that for redevelopment, many of the existing buildings will have to be removed and lots must be consolidated to create the larger tracts previously mentioned.

One of the main objectives of the plan is to create a place that can accommodate many different land uses while making effort an to alleviate traffic congestion. Interior roadway improvements and relocation of land uses are the primary recommendations in the plan to implement this component. Traffic flow should be simpler and more intuitive to provide a safer travel experience for both vehicles and pedestrians. The high traffic volume generated by highway retail uses should be confined to the area abutting Buttermilk Pike. Professional offices and general retail land uses will best be located in the middle of Sub Area A. Sub Area B is also best situated for professional office and general retail. Shared parking can aid in limiting the

total number of parking spaces needed and can minimize access points and allowing visitors to park centrally with access to many different uses at once. Industrial use will be located in the back of Sub Area A on the less valuable land in the study area and away from the more pedestrian oriented activities.

The study area is intended primarily to be a place of employment and retail services. Highway retail uses will likely remain at or about the same intensity that exists today. The amount of general retail is anticipated to increase as well with redevelopment. Retail land uses can help to enhance the area as a professional employment center by providing amenities within walking distance as well as provide goods and services to the local residents. Industrial uses have the potential to expand as well. The study area is intended to become a place where employers will want to locate to take advantage of convenient and easy to access to a variety of amenities within comfortable walking distances. Industry is not typically found within an area near an urban core because of high land values and the mix of retail and office uses. However with the limitations previously described with Sub Area A, light industry is a good use to fill space without adding significantly to traffic generation.

Single family residential land uses currently comprise a portion of land in the study area. Given the high value of the land it is expected that these uses will, over time, be replaced with commercial and/or industrial uses. This plan does allow for the potential of multi-family residential in the mixed use area; however this is not expected to be a large part of the future inventory of the study area. The high cost of redevelopment and noise generated by the interstate and railroad, may make multi-family units an unlikely addition.

## **Task Force**

A 16-member task force was formed to help guide the study and to make sure the study targeted the concerns of all interested bodies within the community. The Task Force consisted of business and property owners and residents of the study area, concerned residents of Crescent Springs, city employees, and city council members. The Task Force met once a month starting in March 2009 and worked with NKAPC staff on the issues facing the study area.

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The Task Force adopted a vision and a set of goals, then examined and discussed all of the information presented by the NKAPC staff. This group reviewed and debated the merits of the different redevelopment scenarios and took into consideration all public input gathered at the public meetings. This work culminated in the Task Force deciding on the final presented recommendations.

## Public Meetings

In addition to Task Force meetings, three public meetings were held to gather further public input. The first was held on March 27, 2009 to announce the study to the public and gather their concerns and opinions. The second public meeting was held on October 28, 2009. This meeting was presented as an open house designed to show the public the primary issues involved in the study and the various redevelopment options the Task Force was considering. NKAPC staff and Task Force members were present to explain the issues and options and hear people's comments. Comment sheets were also available for attendees to record their concerns and opinions. The final public meeting was held on March 17, 2010. This meeting took the form of a power point presentation with display boards. Task Force members and NKAPC staff presented the plans that had been chosen and worked to gather remaining public opinions and comments. Following each public meeting the Task Force met and discussed the comments and opinions collected and changes to the plan where made where deemed appropriate.

## Interim Report

The first step was a thorough review of current conditions of the study area and included a market analysis. This existing conditions review included a current land use evaluation, a review of the natural environment, transportation, demographics, community facilities and the utilities of the area, as well as a turn movement analysis for the principle intersections. Previous plans pertinent to the area were also reviewed. This information was presented to the Task Force and the public in the *Crescent Springs Gateway Small Area Study – Interim Report*. The Interim Report and Market Analysis can be reviewed and downloaded from the NKAPC website at <http://www.nkpc.org>.

## Review and Adoption

The City of Crescent Springs adopted the Crescent Springs Gateway Study on June 14, 2010 with a unanimous vote by the city council. The NKPC recommended the study to the KCPC on June 17th with a unanimous vote. Information meetings were held on July 21st, at 12:00 pm and on July 29th at 6:00 pm for KCPC members to become more familiar with the study. The KCPC adopted the plan as part of the *Comprehensive Plan Update 2006-2026: An Area-Wide Vision for Kenton County* on August 5, 2010 with a unanimous vote.



**Third public meeting at Crescent Springs City Building**

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