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**4.0**  
**design concepts**



## 4.0 Design Concepts

The City of Independence is not unlike many other communities around the nation. In the past 20 years, bedroom communities have formed around major cities in the U.S. thus expanding the urban perimeter. For many communities this has resulted in an irregular growth pattern and unplanned development. Upon the landscape this type of growth has been interpreted into the proliferation of fast food restaurants, gas stations, and strip malls whose lives are often short lived due to additional growth and the construction and relocation of new roadways and bypasses. While Independence may be considered a bedroom community, it has the opportunity to differentiate itself from other communities. Gas stations, fast food restaurants, and additional commercial and residential developments can significantly benefit a community when they are placed in strategic locations and implemented in such a manner that physically and functionally enhances the surrounding area.

What are the circumstances for the study area?

- + The “New” KY 17 corridor located to the east of the Madison Pike (KY 17) is nearly complete. The design and location of this corridor should essentially allow travelers to quickly bypass all of the established businesses and services located along the Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor (refer exhibit T-1).
- + Population projections from the market study suggest that the number of houses in Independence should nearly double from the year 2000 to 2011 (refer chapter 2.2).
- + There is a limited amount of commercial and retail services currently provided within the core study area thus leaving the market for commercial growth wide open (refer chapter 2.2).
- + Citizens in Independence have stressed the importance of (see chapter 3.0 and A Vision of Independence, 2006):
  - + Maintaining the rural character and preserving open space
  - + Revitalization of historic downtown and preservation of historically significant structures
  - + Connectivity throughout the corridor and improvement of sidewalks
  - + Need for additional entertainment/restaurant amenities, recreation facilities, retail, and neighborhood services
  - + Improved traffic conditions

With current conditions and regulations what happens?

As development pressures persist for the area, the community will be faced with a greater number of decisions to make about how development occurs. Current regulations provide the minimum amount of information endorsing development and layout standards and very little discussing the quality of the development and use of an appropriate style, materials, orientation, scale, and other design elements. The lack of description and identification of goals and objectives by the community often results in a hodgepodge of development clustered in arbitrary locations. Providing additional information assures the community a higher standard of development and may also enhance the planning process by eliminating much of the “guess work” conducted between developers and city officials when proposals and approvals are sought for residential, commercial, and mixed use projects.

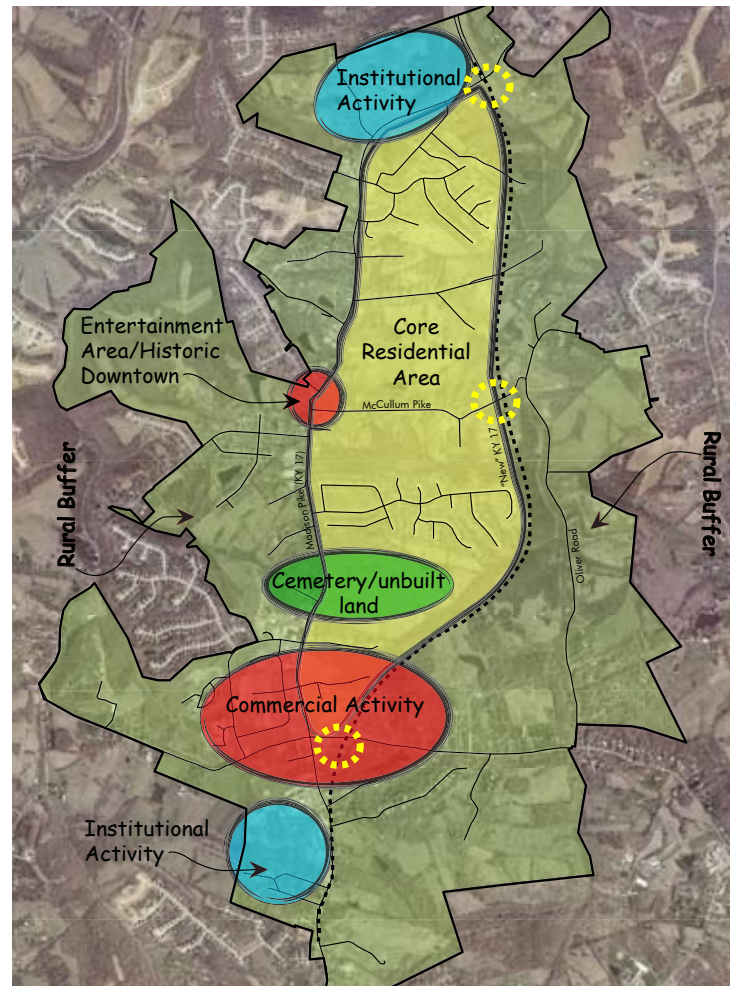
**Concept for Achieving Vision and Addressing Current Circumstances**

Independence is a community currently facing many issues. In order to address current circumstances it is important for the community to develop a vision and a concept for guiding future growth. The conceptual land use diagram is one concept for addressing current growth issues in the study area. The following text explains this image.

The roadway systems are often the backbone for many communities, for this study area they are the life blood. On a community scale they provide access to local services and amenities such as schools, grocery stores, banks, and city buildings. On a much larger scale, the roadways traversing the community are significant part of Kenton County and the Cincinnati metropolitan region. KY 17 is a primary north-south route for the county and provides most of the population in the study area the means for getting to and from work on a daily basis (refer chapter 2.4: principal arterials). As the area has become more populated and the corridor more developed, new roadways have become necessary to enhance access to existing development and alleviate congestion. The “New” KY 17 serves this purpose.

As the purpose of KY 17 is to improve accessibility it is important to stress the importance of maintaining the roadway hierarchy of all roads within the study area (refer chapter 2.4 and Exhibit T-1). One way to maintain efficiency of the “New” KY 17 corridor is to enhance the existing east west corridors (McCullum Pike, Shaw Road/Harris Pike, and the short jog along Madison Pike (KY 17) that travels east/west near the north end of the study boundary) between Madison Pike (KY 17) and “New” KY 17 as entries to the community. This will encourage development to continue to prosper along Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor and preserve the intended function of “New” KY 17.

Madison Pike (KY 17) may be referred to as the “front door” of the community. The corridor is the primary public activity area for the community. It currently has several businesses, schools, churches, historic establishments, and other community services located along its path. Significant clusters of activity are identified on the map, they include the institutional areas (blue circles) and entertainment/historic downtown and commercial areas (red circles). The cemetery holds a significant amount of space in the study area that will remain



**Conceptual Land Use Diagram**  
Source: NKAPC

undeveloped. It is represented by the green circle. With exception of the cemetery, these activity nodes hold significant opportunity for continued development and revitalization within the study area.

By market forces the study area is transforming into a more urbanized area. Evidence from the market analysis confirms that Independence is primarily a commuter community. Agricultural activity is no longer the economic foundation supporting the area. There is, however, a significant amount of forest land and open fields visible from the Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor which presents a rural feel (see exhibit EC-7). The land seen in the distance when driving along Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor and containing these forested areas, is what is labeled on the concept map as “rural buffer”. It is shown in light green. Most of these properties are currently zoned for residential use (see exhibit EC-2) and can potentially be developed into residential communities. When new development occurs, there are a number of ways an area may preserve the rural character. It can be implied through the scale of buildings, materials used along roadways, and layout and orientation of new development. One method that employs primarily a site orientation approach is the use of a conservation subdivision. It enables property owners to develop land and simultaneously ensure the integrity of the rural/natural landscape if and when land is developed (for a more thorough explanation refer chapter 5.3.1). Allowing residential development to occur in these areas and encouraging the use of techniques like conservation subdivision helps satisfy the need for additional housing and yet preserve the rural character.

In addition to conservation subdivision development on the outskirts of the community, housing needs may also be fulfilled by allowing additional residential development to occur between Madison Pike (KY 17) and “New” KY 17. This is the yellow area labeled on the map “core residential area”. Creating housing in this area will provide an added number of residences to help support commercial development in the entertainment area/historic downtown and further to the south at the Shaw Road/Harris Pike intersection. Providing adequate and improved sidewalk connections in existing and future residential areas to commercial and institutional areas will also enable people to access amenities and services more effectively.

The Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor acts as the central spine of the City and the main north-south connector. Connection throughout the the study area may be possible with sidewalks along main north-south and east-west connector roads. The Madison Pike (KY 17) corridor, apart from being a main connector road, also abuts different types of land uses which contribute to the cultural heritage of the City such as the historic downtown district and open space. The “historic downtown” of Independence includes several historic structures including the Kenton County Courthouse. The Memorial Park along with the Cemetery creates enchanting view corridors and relief to the south retail area. Development being proposed at the intersection of “New” KY-17 and McCullum Pike and the intersection will act as one of the entrance gateway opportunities of Independence.

### **Conceptual Design of Focus Areas**

The conceptual designs reflect desired improvements to enliven historic downtown Independence into a vibrant center of the community as it used to be and re-establish it as a central connecting piece to unify the different parts of the community. The following concepts also help to render an aesthetically pleasing revitalized areas within the study boundary that not only preserves the historic character and embraces the rich heritage but also creates a market and economically driven land use plan.

The conceptual designs have been subdivided into the following:

- + North Gateway Area Concept
  - + McCullum Pike and “New” KY-17 Area Concept
  - + Downtown Concept
  - + South Gateway Area Concept
- \* All concepts are shown at a larger scale in Chapter 8.0: Exhibits at the end of this document. Explanations of land uses and development models are given as well as imagery to depict possible character.

### 4.1 North Gateway Area Concept

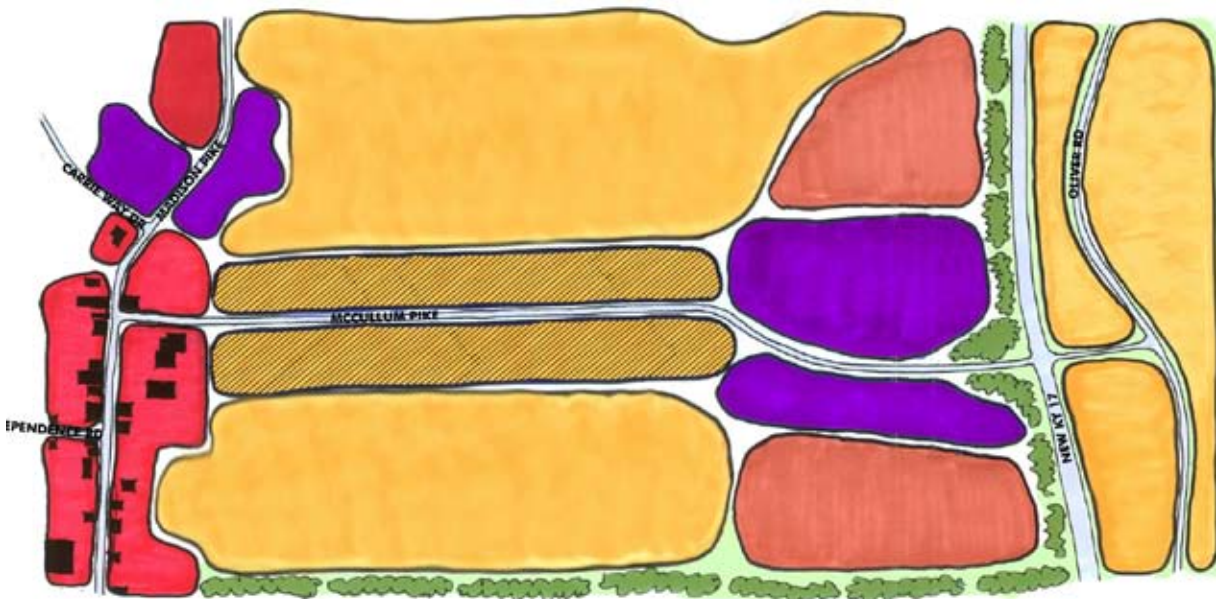
- + This area acts as the “gateway” to the City of Independence. Hence the intersection of “New” KY 17 and Madison Pike (KY 17) should be enhanced with “rural” gateway concept.
- + The identity of Independence should be embellished through appropriate signage for wayfinding and branding.
- + The “New” KY-17 should have an immediate greenway buffer on both sides. Residential developments may occur outside the immediate greenway in the form of a conservation subdivision.
- + Commercial development should be restricted to the nodal area at the intersection of Madison Pike (KY 17) and Sylvan Drive (refer exhibit C-4).
- + Summit View Elementary and Middle School should have walkable connections from adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- + All developments should be of a pedestrian scale appropriate to the character of the City and should be connected through sidewalks, trails etc. to the neighborhood-oriented retail and institutional uses.



**North Gateway Area Concept**  
(refer exhibit C-5 for detailed view)

**4.2 McCullum Pike (KY 17) and “New” KY-17 Concept**

- + The intersection of McCullum Pike and “New” KY-17 should act as a gateway and connection to “historic downtown” of Independence. Hence, the intersection improvement is necessary to create a welcoming effect along with significant green buffer (refer exhibit C-5).
- + Appropriate signage to foster the identity of Independence and possible boulevard entry is the highlight of this concept which should help to emphasize the gateway concept.
- + The “New” KY-17 should have heavy buffering on both sides and conservation subdivisions to be integrated with housing not to disturb Fowler’s Creek and existing natural areas, which should be connected through alternative methods of transportation.
- + To accentuate the gateway concept, any development near the intersection should have a scale in keeping with the same character of the City and should be a part of the City’s brand identity.
- + A corridor of mixed use is recommended as an overlay along McCullum Pike from “New” KY 17 towards historic downtown. The underlying use should be higher density residential in a conservation subdivision model. If mixed use development occurs, it should happen in a cluster form with aggregate land area of at least two plus acres.
- + The White Farm with its open greenspaces located to the north of the McCullum Pike corridor and being a cultural icon in the heart of the City should be preserved. This area along with the open/ green space to the south of McCullum Pike should be conserved through the conservation development model.



**McCullum Pike and “New” KY-17 Concept**  
*(refer exhibit C-6 for detailed view)*

### 4.3 Downtown Concept

- + The reinvention of Downtown Independence may not only require market sensitive infill developments but also selective replacement of existing ones to achieve a sustainable design approach.
- + The presence of historic buildings needs preservation efforts. The Kenton County Courthouse and its surroundings should help recreate the cultural center of the City.
- + Context sensitive infill development should be built to suit the modest scale of architecture present in the downtown area.



**Downtown Concept**  
(refer exhibit C-7 for detailed view)

- + Providing infill commercial mixed-use buildings as shown in the concept plan should help to eliminate voids and add streetscape character to the area as shown in the image above. Providing infill buildings on McCullum Pike may assist in accentuating the gateway to the downtown and transition of uses from single family residential towards more commercial character of downtown.
- + The courthouse square should be developed to act as a public gathering space with parking spaces lining the boundaries of the courthouse lawn with deeper setbacks towards courthouse from Madison Pike. This not only helps to increase convenience of the gathering space but should help to market the commercial spaces on the other side of Madison Pike (KY 17). To see a more detailed example refer to Exhibit C-6.
- + The perceived lack of parking spaces may be offset by providing additional parking spaces behind existing structures on Madison Pike (KY 17). This area also may open up into a community gathering space with amphitheatre and park-like setting with enhancement of the pond.
- + Parking should be also provided behind the courthouse on the east side and also on the south side with tree buffers to the residential area.
- + Addition of streetscape elements such as pavers, crosswalk, larger sidewalks, trees, street furniture including benches and trashcans should help to revive the character of the area and create a "sense of place".
- + Signage and wayfinding may be added to foster the feeling of destination within the community.
- + Selective organization of utility poles and repositioning lines underground may also help to create an aesthetically pleasing corridor.



**Existing View of Buildings on Madison Pike (KY 17) as seen from McCullum Pike**



**Possible "After" View**  
*(Refer Exhibit C-7 for proposed improvements)*



**Existing View of McCullum Pike Corridor looking east from Madison Pike (KY 17)**



**Possible "After" View**  
*(Refer Exhibit C-8 for proposed improvements)*





**Existing View of Courthouse**

**Possible "After" View with Farmer's Market Concept**  
*(Refer Exhibit C-9 for larger view)*



#### 4.4 South Gateway Area Concept

With the presence of Independence Town Center, the southern part of the study area near the intersection of Madison Pike (KY 17) and Harris Pike/Shaw Road has developed to be the commercial node for the residents. This is also the location for the future intersection with the “New” KY-17 as shown in the image below and C-10.

- + More developments are being proposed and are under construction north east corner of the intersection of Madison Pike (KY 17) and Harris Pike/Shaw Road. Because of the area’s adjacency to “New” KY-17, this can be deemed as another gateway to the City.
- + The gateway feature should be at all the major intersections in this area to project the area’s identity and also accentuate the street identity with wayfinding.
- + Lighting in the commercial areas should be appropriate to the scale of the City and should not affect the residential areas.
- + All the future projects in this area abutting “New” KY-17 should have deep setbacks with heavy buffers in the form of landscaping, berm and/or fencing appropriate to a small-town feel.
- + Significant landscaping should line up along “New” KY-17.
- + Internal walkability should be promoted to include bikeways and bus stops at key locations.
- + Mixed use and higher density residential should be adjacent to existing single family residential for better land use transition.



**South Gateway Area Concept**  
(refer exhibit C-11 for detailed view)

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