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Kent State University trustees approve \$1 billion-plus campus makeover

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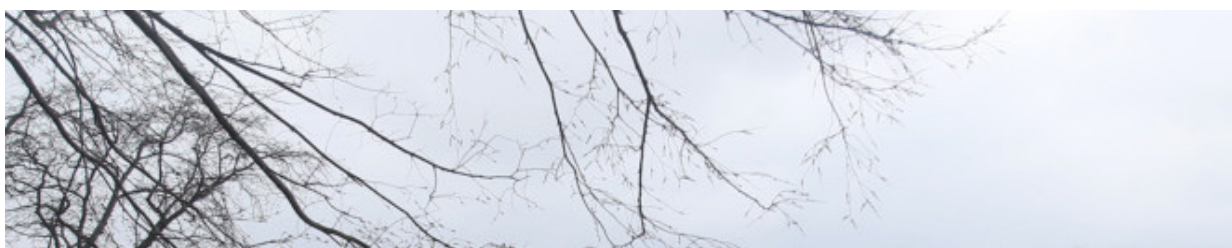


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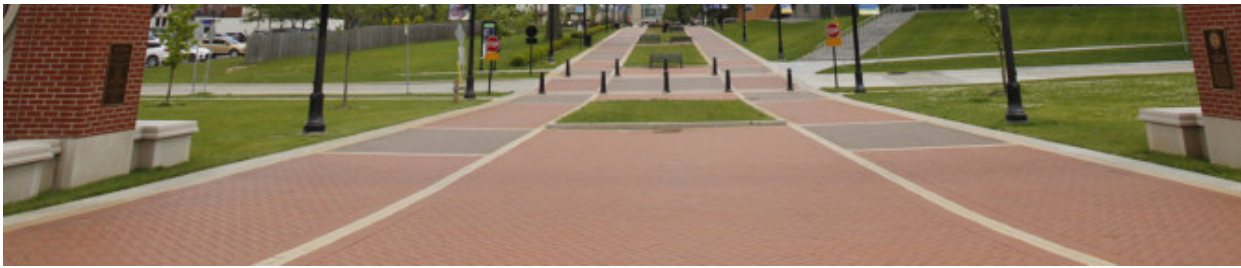
PURCHASE PHOTO

Kent State University C-Midway parking lot pictured will be the site of the new College of Business Administration. (Mike Cardew/Beacon Journal/Ohio.com)









By Katie Byard

Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

Kent State University is slated to get a \$1 billion-plus makeover that includes creating a gateway fronting Main Street and a host of new and renovated buildings along with bikeways and walking trails.

Trustees on Wednesday approved the 10-year main campus transformation plan with a \$221 million first phase that calls for a new College of Business Administration building.

It would front Main and be part of an “iconic front campus” that would boast more green space and walkways.

The plan so “beautifully aligns with the vision we have for a distinctive Kent State,” Kent State President Beverly Warren said at a news conference. “We’re excited about this opportunity to transform our physical space to match our vision for distinctiveness.”

Trustees on Wednesday also approved a “tuition guarantee” plan that allows the university to increase tuition 6 percent for in-state freshmen and then freeze it for those students for four years.

Ohio freshmen enrolling for the 2018 fall semester at the 28,000-student Kent campus will pay \$10,612 in annual tuition, and that rate will not increase for four years.

Under state law governing such guarantees, KSU could not increase the current tuition of \$10,012 more than 6 percent for incoming students.

The cost of a standard two-person room and basic meal plan also will be frozen at \$11,362 a year for incoming freshmen.

Tuition also was increased 6 percent for incoming freshmen on Kent State’s regional campuses.

Also included in the first phase: an addition and renovations to Rockwell Hall, home of KSU's Fashion School, projected to cost \$10.3 million; and a \$22.9 million parking deck next to the new College of Business Administration building that "will take the place of so many flat surface lots," Warren said.

The 10-year plan's first phase is scheduled to run through 2020.

Avoiding debt

Kent State officials are not planning to issue bonds to finance the first phase.

Contributions and public-private partnerships are to fund more than half the cost of the first phase: \$127.4 million.

Kent State is in the midst of what it has called its biggest fundraising campaign ever.

Officials say they will not reveal the fundraising goal during the campaign's "quiet phase."

The last big fundraising effort brought in \$265 million, exceeding the \$250 million goal. This campaign ran from 2003 to 2012.

A total of \$30 million is expected to come from state capital funding, and the university will use \$63.4 million in investment earnings gained in the last several years.

Trustee Ralph Della Ratta said, "It's serendipity that the [financial] markets have been so kind to us and that our [investment] results have been so strong."

He said using investment dollars is the "most conservative route... We don't want to be encumbered in debt. We've seen too many other universities have issues" with debt.

He didn't mention any school by name, but the University of Akron — Kent State's closest neighboring four-year public university — is facing financial problems due largely to a debt-financed building boom and enrollment declines.

A proposed key public-private partnership: Kent State officials envision a developer footing the bill for the cost for the \$72.3 million College of Business Administration building and then leasing the property back to the university.

Four developers answered a request for proposals on this project and in mid-April will present their designs and plans for financing the construction.

University officials also are discussing the idea of having a private company own the parking deck and lease it to the university. Private companies also could own the two other parking decks proposed for later phases.

Trustee Shawn Riley said the plan is “flexible,” and “nothing is cast in concrete” in the later phases.

Major makeovers

Here are other highlights of the first phase:

- An “innovation hub” and dining area in the former Art Building that would be renovated. Included will be “maker spaces,” a lecture hall and classrooms. (\$44.9 million)
- Renovations to White Hall, which houses the College of Education, Health and Human Services (\$8 million).
- Terrace Hall, which houses the campus’s ROTC program, is to be torn down at a cost of \$400,000 to make way for the parking deck off Main Street.
- A three-story addition to the Aeronautics and Technology Building that will include a 150-set lecture hall, classrooms and labs. (\$6.2 million)
- Mixed-use academic and retail space on university-owned land just west of the Starbucks at Lincoln and Main streets. This is slated to be financed by a public-private partnership. KSU officials say it will help link the university to Kent’s downtown. (\$21 million)
- Building out the lower level of the new Integrated Sciences Building to add lab space. (\$10 million)

Down the road

The second phase (2021 to 2023) calls for expansion of research labs at various sites, renovations to the Student Center, Bowman Hall (College of Arts & Sciences), an addition and renovations to Henderson Hall (College of Nursing) and a “connector” between the Memorial Athletic and Convocation Center and the Student Center that would house assembly space. Estimated cost of this phase is \$400 million.

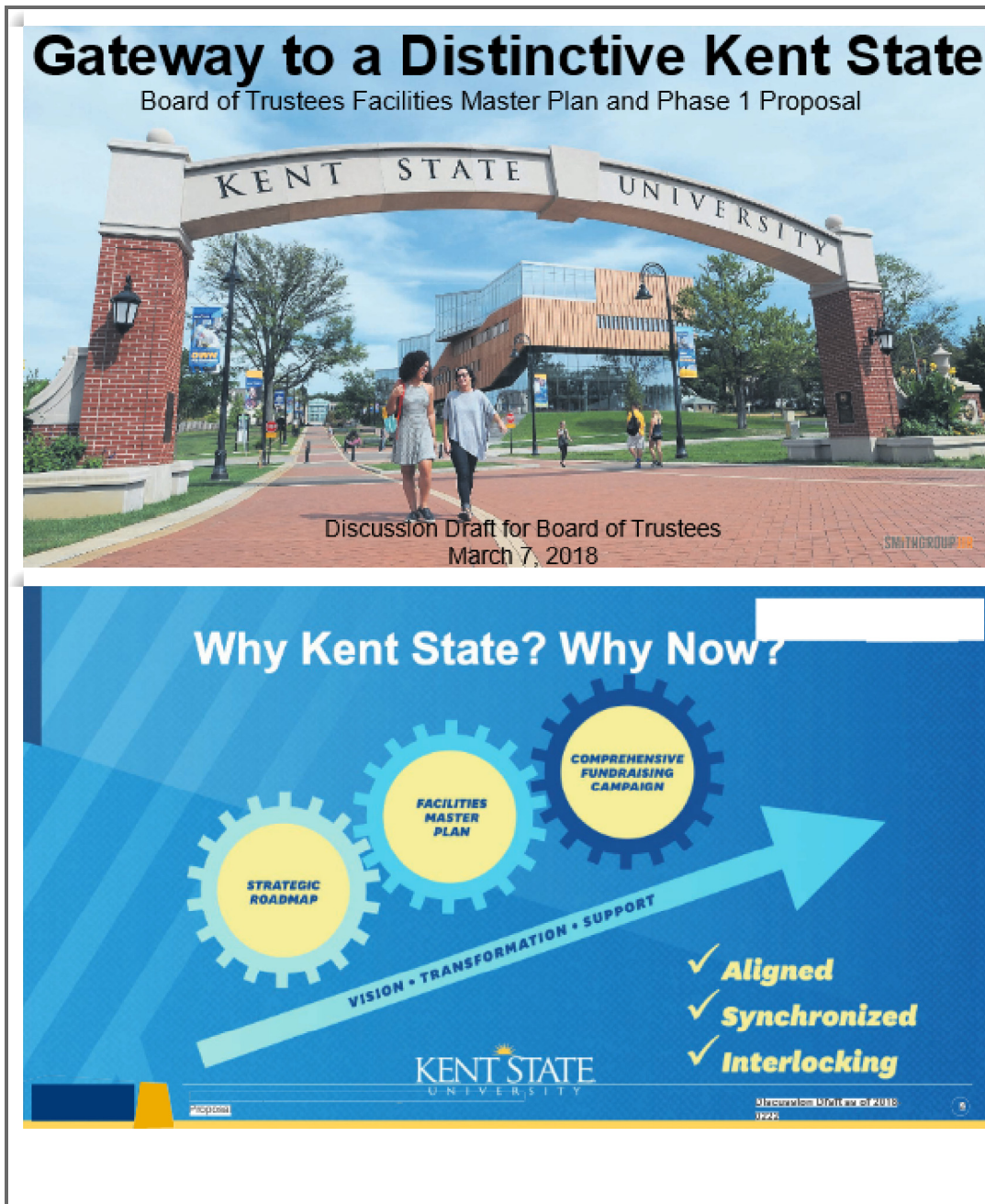
The third phase (2024 to 2027) calls for renovation of the University Library Tower and renovation of Nixon Hall. Estimated cost of this phase is \$106 million.

Independent projects that would not be pegged to any particular phase include building an indoor recreation facility and outdoor recreation complex as well as an addition to the existing Student Recreation and Wellness Center, renovations to Dix Stadium and a women's softball complex.

An "Intergenerational Village" — housing for students, faculty members and the public — could be among these projects.

Estimated cost of these independently phased projects is nearly \$400 million.

The plan was developed by architecture, engineering and planning firm SmithGroupJJR, which has offices in Michigan.



Details on the plan can be found at <https://atransformedksu.org>.

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