

# Engineering News - 1st Qtr 2025

Jim Bowling - Deputy Service Director/Superintendent of Engineering

The City Engineering Division is responsible for planning and implementing the city's capital improvement projects. This encompasses a wide range of projects: street and sidewalk repairs, bridge repairs, major road improvements, and replacing/maintaining the operation of our sewer and water facilities. Every year I give Kent City Council an update on our capital projects, you can read the [2024 plan](#).

Whatever the project, the question I am asked most often is "why are you doing this work" or "how do you decide which projects get done?" Believe it or not, there is a strategy and process involved in deciding which projects the Engineering staff takes on, and that's the purpose of this new column. Periodically throughout the year, I am going to use this space to talk about some of our larger projects and explain the "why" and the "how."

The underlying factor we look at is how the projects align with the City's vision, which is:

To be the City of choice in northeast Ohio for residents, businesses, and students seeking enriching community experiences that will last a lifetime.

We also look at the city's strategic values (see [2024 Plan](#)) when prioritizing our projects. Things like ensuring a safe community, an exceptional quality of life, creating distinct neighborhoods and maintaining the synergy between the university and the town. Of course, not every project meets each of these values, but we try to find a good balance that will improve the quality of life for those who live and work in Kent.

There are two major infrastructure projects that you'll see underway over the next few years, and both align with the city's vision and values. The first is improvements to East Main Street, between Willow Street and Horning Road. The goal is to provide an aesthetically pleasing, less cluttered, stress-free gateway into Kent that meets the current demands of all who use East Main Street. I'll talk more about that project in a future article, but know that work is expected to begin later this year and you can find out more details on our [website](#).

The other project is improvements to a section of N. Mantua St., from Needham Ave. to just beyond the northern Kent City limits. The City, Kent City Schools, and Davey Tree are partnering to make improvements to this well-traveled stretch of road that includes Theodore Roosevelt High School, River Bend residential development and the corporate headquarters for Davey Tree. This area also serves as the northern gateway into the city.

This section of North Mantua has a daily volume of 17,000-18,000 vehicles; concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety, speeding, and vehicular ingress/egress have been a concern in this area for more than 20 years.

A Citizens Advisory Committee has been working with the planning committee for the past year to develop a plan to transform this stretch of road. The purpose of the project is to:

- Improve traffic flow and safety for all users
- Provide connections for a future bike trail
- Create an aesthetic gateway
- Improve vehicle ingress and egress to drives and to River Bend Blvd.

As you can see, these align with many of the city's strategic values, such as safety, enhancing quality of life and creating strong neighborhoods.

The planned improvements include a single lane roundabout at the relocated Davey Tree driveways/N. Mantua intersection, addition of a right turn lane exiting River Bend Blvd., and an upgraded traffic signal at the Roosevelt Dr. intersection. The project will also include pavement resurfacing, installation of a new median boulevard, curbing, driveways, sidewalk, shared use path, drainage, streetscaping, lighting, signing and pavement markings.

The project cost is estimated at \$5 million, with over \$2 million secured in federal and state funding. Construction would begin in late 2026 and take approximately one year to complete.

To help visualize what this will look like, there is a [video](#) you can view and a [summary](#) of the overall project.

A public meeting was held in February and the city is accepting comments on the project until March 14, 2025. You can send your comments to me at [Jim.Bowling@KentOhio.gov](mailto:Jim.Bowling@KentOhio.gov), or you can call our office at 330-678-8106. Your feedback is an important part of the planning process.

I hope this column gives you some insight into how the Engineering Division operates. If there is anything you would like to know about, please let me know by calling or emailing me.