

# City of Kalamazoo

## Marketing & Branding Strategy

August 2017



*Prepared in association with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's  
**Redevelopment Ready Communities®** Program*



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# INTRODUCTION

## **About RRC**

The City of Kalamazoo is engaged in the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's (MEDC) Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. The RRC program provides no-cost evaluation and recommendations for improvement of a community's development processes and procedures. If a community meets all of the best practice requirements outlined by the MEDC, it can become an RRC-certified community.

Receiving RRC certification means that the community has "clear development policies and procedures, a community-supported vision, a predictable review process, and compelling sites for developers to locate their latest projects." For Kalamazoo, this certification can help show investors, residents, and visitors that the City offers deliberate, predictable, and transparent processes. Through this program, Kalamazoo hopes to join the short list of RRC-certified Michigan communities.

## **About this Strategy**

This Marketing & Branding Strategy is necessary to complete the requirements of RRC Best Practice 6.2 – *Marketing and Promotion*. Community marketing and promotion efforts take many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that enhances community pride and consumer and investor confidence. As such, strong community marketing plans should publicize and strategize around what sets a community apart from others.

An RRC staff evaluation of Kalamazoo's processes and plans found that the City does not have an up-to-date, comprehensive community marketing document that deliberately outlines strategies to connect with development partners and attract businesses, talent, and additional development. Thus, City staff, in conjunction with key community stakeholders, reviewed existing best practices and community input to develop key strategies and action steps to more effectively market the City of Kalamazoo as an attractive place to live, work, and invest. Detail on this process and the accompanying strategies for marketing and branding are outlined in this document.

# PROCESS

The development of this Strategy relied on the input of many individuals and synthesizes the efforts of several ongoing Citywide initiatives. The process employed to complete this Strategy included a substantial amount of background research, targeted input from a group of key community stakeholders, and the development of strategies and initial marketing materials for use by City staff and partners. The work carried out in the development of this Strategy is outlined in the following sections:

- **Background Research:** Contains an overview of the research that was completed in the early stages of developing this Strategy. This background research included reviewing marketing and branding efforts of several other Michigan cities, relevant planning efforts within the City of Kalamazoo, and previous Kalamazoo marketing strategy documents.
- **Existing Efforts:** From the time of the initial RRC evaluation to the development of this Strategy, City of Kalamazoo staff have developed a variety of marketing materials and documents that are currently being utilized. A summary of these existing efforts and materials is presented.
- **Kalamazoo RRC Task Force:** This section describes the input gathered from a Task Force of representatives from key partner organizations in Kalamazoo. This Task Force met three times during the development of this Strategy to provide input at critical junctures and to be sure strategies are aligned with cross-agency goals and values.
- **Strategies & Implementation:** Outlines the key action steps and proposed roles and timelines for enhancing Kalamazoo’s marketing and branding efforts. These strategies will help guide immediate action by City staff and key partners.

# BACKGROUND RESEARCH

To ensure that previous efforts and research were not overlooked or unnecessarily duplicated in the creation of this Strategy, a substantial amount of background research was conducted. Documents and initiatives focused on the City of Kalamazoo were reviewed as well as current efforts and best practices from several communities across the State of Michigan. This information was incredibly valuable to serve as a starting point for developing the strategies outlined later in this document. The following items were reviewed for their relevance to the development of this Strategy:

- **Michigan Peer Community Best Practices:** A subset of five Michigan cities were selected and researched to understand their existing efforts related to marketing and branding
- **Imagine Kalamazoo Strategic Vision and Input:** The input and information gathered from over 3,500 Kalamazoo residents during the City’s 15-month Imagine Kalamazoo engagement process was reviewed to identify key themes relevant to marketing
- **Additional Recent Planning Efforts:** Several additional studies and planning projects are currently underway or recently completed as of the writing of this Strategy. Key excerpts of these projects and their accompanying recommendations are summarized here

## Michigan Peer Community Best Practices

To get a sense of what other communities across the State are doing when it comes to marketing themselves, a high-level review of five cities’ marketing efforts was conducted, including Grand Rapids, Lansing, Battle Creek, Ann Arbor, and Traverse City. These cities were selected for their geographic proximity, similarity in size and/or demographics, and the fact that they have significant marketing efforts already in place. In summary, the following key themes and strategies stuck out as commonplace across our review of these communities.

### *Targeted Tourism and Promotional Materials*

Several of the cities reviewed have specific marketing materials from a tourism agency or visitor’s bureau, with the intent of promoting the city to tourists and visitors. These materials often came in the form of a website and were front and center, the first information to appear when searching for a specific city online. These websites often split ‘tourism’ into three categories: dining, lodging, and play (e.g., family activities, night life, outdoor recreation, etc.). Three examples of this theme include:

- **Experiencegr.com (Grand Rapids):** Lists ‘top 10 reasons to visit Grand Rapids’ and tourism awards with a focus on the arts, craft brewery scene, and family activities
- **Visitannarbor.org (Ann Arbor):** ‘Eat,’ ‘Play,’ ‘Stay,’ and ‘Meet’ sections with a focus on the University of Michigan and upcoming events. The website also contains an online quiz which helps each potential visitor tailor their Ann Arbor experience to their preferences
- **Traversecity.com (Traverse City):** Lists activities in Traverse City, with a focus on outdoor recreation, nature, wineries, and restaurants. Traverse City has a different version of their website for each season, with recommended activities based on the current season

### *Economic Development Partnerships*

Along with municipal economic development departments, many cities worked with other economic development companies or citizen boards to attract development and work with investors. These partners serve as a catalyst to attract potential clients, connect new businesses to a community, and aid in business retention and expansion efforts. Several examples of these entities include:

- **Ann Arbor SPARK:** Ann Arbor SPARK is an organization dedicated to the economic prosperity in the greater Ann Arbor region. Ann Arbor SPARK works with businesses by incentivizing growth, promoting entrepreneurship, and advertising available jobs. SPARK regularly receives International Economic Development Council and Michigan Economic Developers Association recognition for its work.
- **The Right Place:** Since its creation in 1985, The Right Place has been West Michigan’s leading economic development organization, offering confidential, comprehensive business services in the region. The Right Place has assisted thousands of West Michigan companies to invest more than \$4.7 billion and create 44,000 new jobs in the Grand Rapids region over 30 years.
- **Lansing Economic Area Partnership:** The Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) is a coalition of area leaders committed to building a prosperous and vibrant region where businesses can thrive. LEAP is the economic development organization representing the tri-county region of Ingham, Clinton, and Eaton counties.

### *Downtown Development Focus*

In the researched cities, downtown improvement was an economic development priority for the continued prosperity of both current and future businesses. Downtown improvement was led by each city’s respective Downtown Development Authority (DDA), including the following examples:

- **Downtown Ann Arbor:** The Ann Arbor DDA has worked on large infrastructure projects including the construction of parking structures and installation of transformative streetscape elements. The DDA also works on a variety of smaller projects, including free bus passes for downtown employees, bike parking, and grants to encourage the creation of new workforce housing units.
- **Downtown Battle Creek:** In 2008, the Battle Creek DDA announced the Downtown Transformative Initiative (DTI), which laid the groundwork for a long-term transformation of Battle Creek with public and private resources over multiple years to revitalize the central business district to create a downtown where food-science, innovation, and growth strategies synergize with education and urban lifestyles.

### *Kalamazoo Comparison*

In comparing to the five selected peer communities, it is clear Kalamazoo is already on the right track. On the targeted tourism front, we boast a strong presence of tourism-related efforts primarily from Discover! Kalamazoo, the official destination marketing organization for Kalamazoo County. In relation to economic development partnerships, there are several organizations within the area currently promoting regional economic development. Southwest Michigan First plays a primarily role in this realm, including hosting regular meetings of the region’s key economic development stakeholders. Finally, Kalamazoo has a deliberate downtown-focus through the work of Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc. and its partners, with a substantial amount of projects, plans, and resources devoted to improving the downtown on a regular basis. In all, it seems Kalamazoo is already doing many of the things our peers across the state are engaged in as it relates to economic development marketing and branding.

## **Imagine Kalamazoo Strategic Vision and Input**

Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 (IK2025) is the City’s current engagement process, which aims to create a shared community vision to enhance quality of life for all. IK2025 is about valuing and respecting contributions made by all people who live, work, and play here and believing that this diversity strengthens Kalamazoo as a whole. Currently, the IK2025 process is focusing on updating the City’s Strategic Vision and Master Plan via community meetings and events. IK2025 will act as the City’s guide to shape future activity and development in Kalamazoo.

A draft of the master plan was released in July 2017 and is under public review, with public hearings scheduled in October 2017. In addition, the Strategic Vision portion, including broad community goals, was approved in July 2017. A substantial amount of community input (from over 3,500 residents) has been



gathered during the Imagine Kalamazoo process. Key portions of the Strategic Vision and community input are relevant to the marketing and branding of the City of Kalamazoo and have been included here.

### *Strategic Vision*

The Strategic Vision from IK2025 is comprised of 10 *Strategic Goals*, each affecting a different aspect of the City of Kalamazoo with the long-term intention to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

1. **Shared Prosperity** – abundant opportunities for all people
2. **Connected City** – a city that is networked for walking, biking, riding, and driving
3. **Inviting Public Places** – Parks, arts, culture, and vibrant streets
4. **Environmental Responsibility** – A green and healthy city
5. **Safe Community** – A community where it is safe to live, work, bike, drive, walk, and play
6. **Youth Development** – A city with places and supports that help young people thrive
7. **Complete Neighborhoods** – Residential areas that support the full range of people’s daily needs
8. **Strength Through Diversity** – An inclusive city where everyone feels at home
9. **Economic Vitality** – A supportive infrastructure for growing businesses and stabilizing the local economy to the benefit of all
10. **Good Governance** – Making and implementing public decisions in ways that are collaborative, inclusive, and data-driven

This overarching vision for the City is a guiding force encompassing all work carried out at the City. These 10 Strategic Goals will serve as the basis for ensuring that the strategies outlined in this section meet the long-term vision of Kalamazoo residents.

### *Community Input*

Community participation is a vital element of the ongoing IK2025 process. Thus far in citizen surveys and community meetings, feedback was focused into two areas: neighborhoods and downtown. Meetings within every formally-recognized Kalamazoo neighborhood have been held during this process. In each community meeting, citizens were asked what is missing from each neighborhood, and how Kalamazoo could “fill in the gaps.”

While each neighborhood responded with what they believe is most needed, a number of common themes were found across many neighborhoods, including downtown. These themes include:

- **Pedestrian Infrastructure:** Increase networks, and street connections, ADA compliance, repair existing poor conditions, lighting, and bike lanes
- **Daily Needs/Shopping:** More retail, service, healthcare, and child care in the neighborhoods
- **Access to Recreation:** Consistent, family friendly programmed events in each neighborhood
- **Affordable Housing:** Properties to rent and own for all ages
- **Jobs Training:** For trades, technology, high-demand local jobs, including programs for youth
- **Beautification:** Including waste management, green buildings, community gardens, and landscaping
- **Multicultural & Family Activities:** Multicultural entertainment options were cited as being limited. In addition, residents noted they'd like to see more family activities

## Additional Recent Planning Efforts

In addition to the research and efforts discussed previously, a number of other relevant planning projects were completed shortly before the development of this Strategy. The findings and recommendations from these projects were reviewed and incorporated into the development of this Strategy as applicable. A brief summary of the key elements of each of these additional projects is included below.

### *Urban Growth Initiative*

The Urban Growth Initiative (UGI) is a project initiated by the City of Kalamazoo's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA). The BRA partnered with Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. (DKI) and the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research to create a strategy (currently in draft form) to further the development of downtown Kalamazoo. The UGI brought together key Kalamazoo stakeholders to strategically focus downtown development over the next 10 years. The stakeholders involved in this process outlined six priorities that are critical to downtown Kalamazoo's progress.

- **Business Recruitment and Retention:** Increase business growth in downtown Kalamazoo and the urban core. Sub-tasks key to this priority include incentivizing businesses to come to Kalamazoo, conducting a detailed real estate inventory of space downtown, hiring a "navigator" to help recruit new companies and maintain relationships with existing companies, and compiling relevant data about Kalamazoo's industry trends to share with businesses.
- **Infill to Meet Residential Demand:** Increase opportunities for market and affordable housing options in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. Key tasks within this priority include

working with nonprofits to create more affordable housing, relax zoning regulations and reduce parking requirements for desirable housing downtown, and streamline acquisition processes for potential homeowners.

- **Large-scale and Transformative Mixed-use Development:** Change the economic landscape of the downtown region. This includes reviewing how existing incentives are targeted towards downtown and improving marketing efforts of the downtown area.
- **Improving Mobility:** Increase accessibility of downtown Kalamazoo for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists, positively increasing economic and residential activity. This includes modifying parking regulations and evaluating the conversion of major downtown one-way streets to two-way streets.
- **Create a Healthy Living District:** Create a district that capitalizes on existing organizations to create synergy with the downtown neighborhoods. This includes establishing a formal structure that manages the relationship between Bronson, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, and additional relevant entities.
- **Coordinated Management for Downtown Activities and Initiatives:** Create an organizational structure and financing platform for supporting the previous five priorities. This includes evaluating the feasibility of enacting a Business Improvement District (BID), a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) structure, and modifying the DDA's current Tax Increment Financing (TIF) structure.

### *Retail Market Analysis*

In early 2017, a Retail Market Analysis was conducted by Gibbs Planning Group, a nationally-renowned urban retail planning consultant firm. If implemented, the recommendations outlined in the study could drastically boost the economy of downtown Kalamazoo and the entire City.

The study found that the downtown Kalamazoo area could support up to 27,800 square feet of new retail and restaurant development, which would generate nearly \$5.3 million in annual sales. However, the study also showed that the downtown retail market is underperforming due to non-market conditions, such as difficulty navigating shopping areas, poor parking management, limited marketing, and a lack of relevance to university students.

It was found that the area could support up to 156,500 square feet, equivalent to 45-60 stores, of additional retail and restaurant space, generating up to \$51.6 million in sales, *if the City of Kalamazoo were to implement a number of recommendations from the City's 2009 Downtown Consolidated Plan.* These recommendations, which have also been incorporated into the draft Master Plan, focused on:

- The creation of additional on-street parking, specifically on the Kalamazoo Mall
- The creation of an accessible and inviting pedestrian friendly streetscape
- The establishment of the downtown as the primary shopping destination through marketing
- The growth of local businesses through recruitment and retention programs
- The development of multiple new student-oriented businesses
- The installation of a retail incubator program to assist with start-up growth

In addition, the study recommended that the City of Kalamazoo implement a number of physical and policy improvements to meet or exceed industry standards for downtown shopping districts, including:

- Return streets to two-way traffic
- Expand on-street parking throughout the City
- Install more on-street parking meters and offer two hours of free parking in public parking garages
- Implement a comprehensive marketing plan for the downtown
- Consider a small- to medium-size, year-round public market

### *National Citizen Survey*

The National Citizen Survey™ (The NCS™) is a collaborative effort between National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The survey and its administration are standardized to assure high quality research methods and directly comparable results across The NCS communities.

The NCS captures residents' opinions within the three pillars of a community (Community Characteristics, Governance, and Participation) and across eight central facets of community (Safety, Mobility, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Economy, Recreation and Wellness, Education and Enrichment and Community Engagement). The NCS was completed in Kalamazoo (with 291 responses from 1,500 surveys mailed out) in late 2016/early 2017. Broadly, major findings from the survey include:

- **Residents in Kalamazoo enjoy a high quality of life.** Almost three quarters of Kalamazoo residents rated their quality of life as excellent or good. Residents identified three key attributes: Friendly, Collaborative, and Opportunity as terms to inspire future planning and development, and they would be willing to participate in future conversations of how to improve Kalamazoo.
- **Safety is a priority for the community.** A lower than average rating for the feeling of safety was found, and over 80% of residents indicated that a safe community should be a high priority for

Kalamazoo's City Commission in the coming years. However, safety services scored well, with at least 7 out of 10 respondents rating police, fire, and emergency services favorably.

- **Residents value economic vitality and emphasize its importance.** Kalamazoo's economic ratings were similar to those in other communities across the United States. Around 4 of 10 respondents felt the overall economic health of Kalamazoo was good to excellent. Unlike most national communities, the majority of Kalamazoo residents work in Kalamazoo. About three quarters believed that economic vitality should be a high priority for the City Commission.

# EXISTING EFFORTS

In the time since the initial RRC evaluation in 2015 and the completion of this Strategy, City staff have worked to create and update several key marketing materials and programs. Future steps regarding the utilization of these materials and any suggestions for enhancing or updating them are included in the *Strategies & Implementation* section of this document. This section outlines the work that is currently underway or recently completed that is relevant to the overall mission of more effectively marketing and branding the City of Kalamazoo’s development efforts.

## Business Information Packet

A “Business Information Packet” was created to give potential investors and outside business owners straightforward and useful information about the City of Kalamazoo and its economy. It includes charts on economic aspects such as market size, proximity to talent, affordability, labor market, as well as brief information and pictures about available sites throughout the City. This packet is formatted to be appealing and certain portions of the content can be reused for different prospects, while other portions can be customized to meet the needs of a particular request. The images on this page show clips from one version of such a “packet” (see *Appendix* for an example of a full sample packet).

**Major Organizations in the Kalamazoo Area**

Public Agencies	Healthcare Organizations	Educational Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Kalamazoo</li> <li>• City of Portage</li> <li>• Kalamazoo County</li> <li>• Michigan Department of Health and Human Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borgess Medical Center</li> <li>• Bronson Healthcare and Hospital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kalamazoo College</li> <li>• Kalamazoo Public Schools</li> <li>• Kalamazoo Valley Community College</li> <li>• Western Michigan University</li> </ul>

**Private Corporations**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amerifirst Financial Corporation</li> <li>• Bell's Brewery</li> <li>• Benteler Automotive</li> <li>• Duncan Aviation</li> <li>• Greenleaf Hospitality Group</li> <li>• Meijer, Inc.</li> <li>• Parker-Hannifin Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pfizer Inc.</li> <li>• State Farm Insurance</li> <li>• Stryker Corporation</li> <li>• Summit Polymers</li> <li>• Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.</li> <li>• Wal-Mart / Sam's Club</li> <li>• Zoetis</li> </ul>
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**Development.  
Simplified.**

THE CITY OF  
**Kalamazoo**

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Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
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COEconomicdevelopment@kalamazoo.org

## Request for Qualifications for Key Development Sites

The City of Kalamazoo is in the process of creating Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) for several City-owned sites that offer potential for catalytic development, the first of which is the River's Edge Development Site. Home of the old Kalamazoo Tank and Silo Company, the site is primed for development. The RFQ is being used as a marketing tool for the site, to gather responses from interested developers while explaining the site's characteristics and the perks of developing in Kalamazoo. The City will then have the opportunity to choose the developer that best suits the interests of Kalamazoo. A few images from the River's Edge RFQ are included here (see *Appendix* for full sample of an RFQ document).



## DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The objective of the RFQ process is to select a private developer or development team that will develop the Property consistent with the vision for the River's Edge area of the Northside neighborhood contained in The Kalamazoo Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, which is available through a link on the Resources page. In summary, the development objectives for the Property include:

- Mixed-use development
- Architecture that is aesthetically and functionally compatible with surrounding development
- Building façade at the property lines, with any setback limited to outdoor dining or public plaza
- No fewer than two stories with building forms that reinforce view corridors to the river
- Predominately ground floor transparent glazing with a horizontal façade break from upper floors for street facing buildings
- Utilize on-street parking with no on-site parking located next to a street or public space
- Incorporate the public greenway and nearby Harrison and Verberg Parks.



## Site Development Opportunity Briefs

To provide a snapshot of key development sites to interested parties, the City also developed 1-page "Site Development Opportunity" briefs. These documents describe a site more informally than an RFQ and quickly highlight the property, its features and nearby landmarks, as well as incentives to locate in Kalamazoo. The documents also include a community profile describing the strengths of the Kalamazoo economy and what makes the area unique (see *Appendix* for one example of a site development opportunity brief).

## Brownfield Success Stories

Brownfield success stories give overviews of completed Brownfield redevelopment projects in Kalamazoo. They detail the history of the site, the developer, the investment, and the use of the building post-redevelopment. These documents are hosted on the City's website and show the City is willing and able to partner with investors to make development happen and incentivize desirable projects. See right and below for an example of the information contained in one of these "success story" documents (see *Appendix* for one example of a brownfield success story document).

<b>Address:</b>	427 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI
<b>Building Size:</b>	13,733 square feet
<b>Former Use:</b>	Freight House
<b>Current Use:</b>	Commercial / Office Mixed Use

<b>By the Numbers:</b>
<b>BRA Assistance:</b> Approximately \$89,000 incentive with Tax Increment Financing
<b>Tenants:</b> HopCat, Maru Sushi & Grill, Cherry Tree Financial
<b>Total Investment:</b> \$3.6 Million
<b>Jobs Created:</b> 20-30 Full-Time Equivalent

<b>Project Partners:</b>
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the City of Kalamazoo MI Economic Development Corporation/ MI Strategic Fund PlazaCorp Realty Advisors, Inc.

# brownfield success



## case study of Depot Building

427 East Michigan Avenue

City of Kalamazoo  
Kalamazoo County, MI



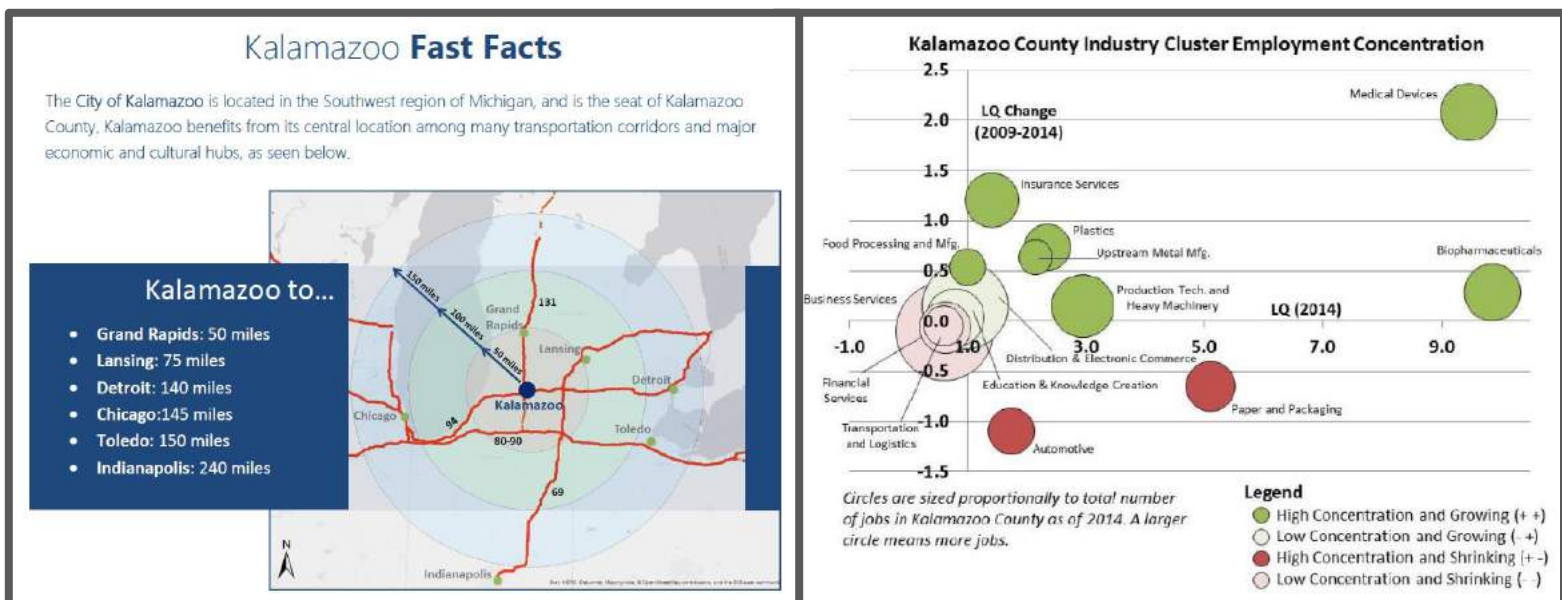


## 'Fast Facts' Briefs

To quickly share key information about Kalamazoo's economy, housing market, and labor market, a series of "Fast Facts" 1-page summaries were developed. These documents are now hosted on the City's website and provided to interested investors, developers, business owners, or other individuals who want quick overview information about Kalamazoo. City staff offer the option to provide additional detail and analysis to interested parties as well. As of the development of this Strategy, the following Fast Facts briefs have been developed (see *Appendix* for a sample of one of these documents):

- Kalamazoo Economic Snapshot:** The Economic Snapshot is a short promotional document displaying what makes the economy of Kalamazoo attractive to potential business owners' and investors. The snapshot describes the growing employment base, low unemployment, largest and fastest-growing industries, and major community anchors that support the City of Kalamazoo.
- Kalamazoo Housing Snapshot:** The Housing Snapshot is a quick information sheet similar to the Economic Snapshot, and details the portion of Kalamazoo housing stock in types other than the traditional single family homes. The document also depicts the mobility and growth of the market in recent years, with graphically displayed information and brief descriptions.
- Kalamazoo Economic Strengths:** The Economic Strengths document shows the concentration of industries in Kalamazoo County. The graph below shows the Location Quotient, or which industries have the highest concentration, and of those, which are growing and shrinking. This shows investors where Kalamazoo is headed and which jobs are currently popular.

Below are a few screenshots highlighting the kind of information contained in these documents.



## Greater Kalamazoo Business Resource Group

In an effort to more effectively leverage the services and resources of many organizations working to support small business and entrepreneurship development in the Kalamazoo area, City staff spearheaded the creation of the Greater Kalamazoo Business Resource Group. This Group meets regularly to discuss ongoing efforts and projects and opportunities to work together to create a pipeline of entrepreneurship-related services. As part of this effort, the Group created a resource guide that includes information about the organizations serving the Kalamazoo area and the various services they offer. A snapshot of this guide is included below (see *Appendix* for full document). Many Kalamazoo organizations are represented through this partnership, for more information and details, please visit [www.greaterkalamazoobusinessresource.org](http://www.greaterkalamazoobusinessresource.org).

# KALAMAZOO SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE GUIDE

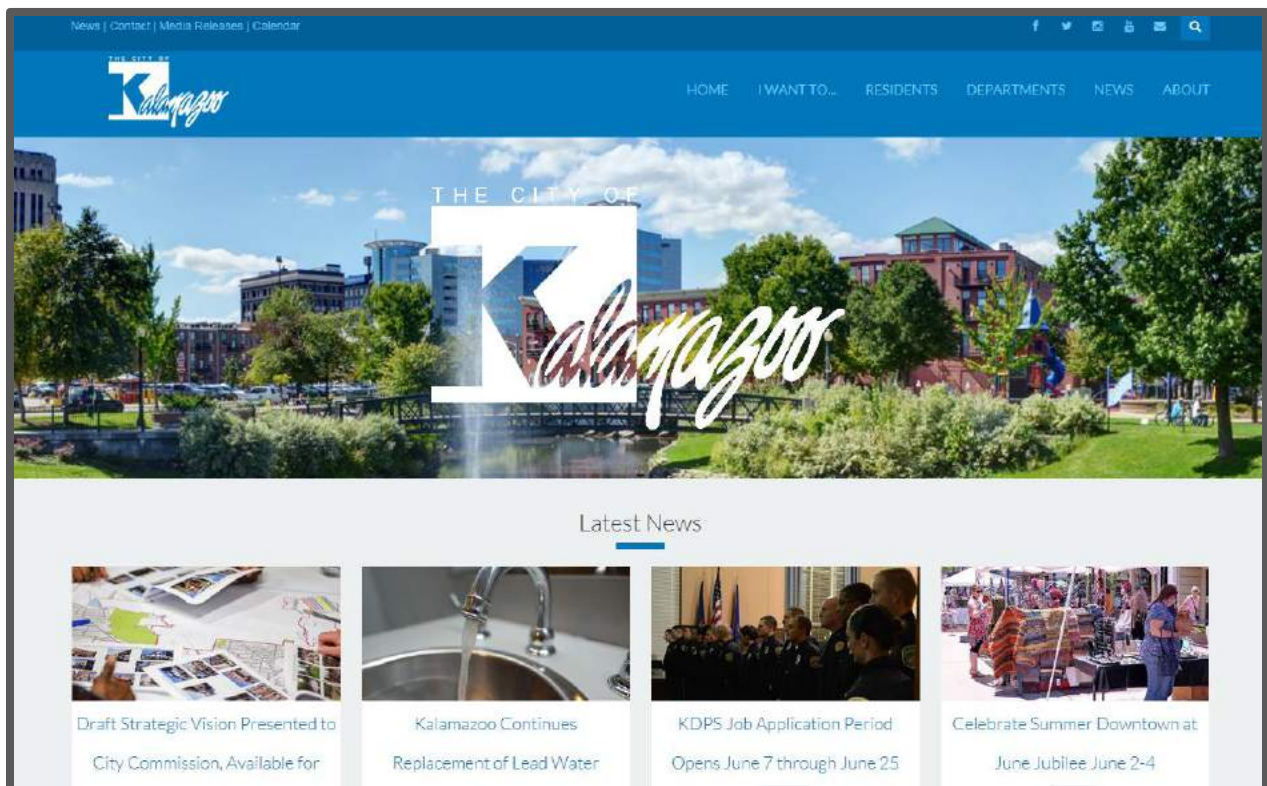
Starting a business is one of the most rewarding ventures a person can pursue, but it can be a daunting task to complete alone. Luckily there is help available for business owners and entrepreneurs in the Kalamazoo region for all stages of their business. The table below will help connect you with resources and assistance to ensure your business will be a success!

	Access to Capital	Strategy & Planning	Education	Facilities	Government Contracts	Mentoring	Networking, Sales & Marketing	Research & Development	Workforce	
IDEA										U.S. Patent & Trademark Office
	✓									Michigan Electronic Library
		✓	✓	✓						Start Up Grind
										Grand Rapids Investors Network
										Can-Do Kitchen
STARTUP	✓	✓	✓					✓		Michigan Small Business Development Center
		✓	✓							SCORE
		✓	✓	✓		✓				WMU Starting Gate Accelerator
										MSU Product Center
								✓		Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo
		✓	✓	✓				✓		WMU Business Connection

## New City of Kalamazoo Website

City staff are currently in the process of finalizing the City's new website. The old website was effective, but was becoming outdated, cumbersome, and difficult to navigate as more and more information was added. The new website has direct, user-friendly navigation and access to information that can be used by Kalamazoo residents, meaning the number of calls/questions to City Hall may actually decrease. With this greater access to direct information, this website will do a better job of marketing what Kalamazoo has to offer and improve the image of the City as innovative, technologically-savvy, and willing to help in a proactive way.

On the new site, economic development and brownfield projects are prominently advertised, highlighting current available sites with pictures and descriptions. The creation of an open data platform for Kalamazoo is also underway. The City is in the beginning stages of analyzing and collecting what data exists to then present to the public. In sum, this new, more user-friendly website should help keep citizens and potential visitors or investors of Kalamazoo up-to-date on beneficial City initiatives and programs. Below is a screenshot of the new website home page.



# KALAMAZOO RRC TASK FORCE

To be sure that the strategies developed through this process are inclusive of the entire development ecosystem in Kalamazoo, a variety of additional stakeholders were asked for their input to supplement the input and research already gathered through initiatives such as IK2025 and the UGI. This group of stakeholders, dubbed the Kalamazoo RRC Marketing and Branding Task Force (the 'Task Force') helped brainstorm and guide the City along on this process of developing this Strategy. The Task Force was comprised of roughly 15 members, including representatives from the following organizations:

- *Bronson Healthcare Group*
- *City of Kalamazoo Community Planning and Development Department*
- *City of Kalamazoo Economic Development Department*
- *Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated*
- *Kalamazoo College*
- *Kalamazoo Valley Community College*
- *Local Businesses*
- *Southwest Michigan First*
- *Western Michigan University*

This Task Force met three times over the course of the development of this Strategy and helped provide critical input to ensure this document helps to serve as a meaningful tool for the City and its partners. The members of the Task Force understood the importance of developing core messages and a shared vision when it comes to communicating the strengths of Kalamazoo. A summary of the discussion and input gathered from each of the meetings of this group is provided in this section.

## Meeting One: **Introduction**

The first meeting of the Task Force was held on Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup> at Kalamazoo City Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the RRC process to non-municipal partners and explain its relevance to the overall development ecosystem in Kalamazoo. The results from the June, 2015 RRC evaluation were presented, along with an overview of the Marketing and Branding Strategy and the City's overall RRC application status.



## *Discussion*

Key themes heard from the group during this initial discussion included the importance of this RRC process and striving for timely submission of the RRC application to the State. Task Force members saw the necessity and value of receiving the targeted redevelopment assistance from the MEDC that accompanies RRC certification, and viewed it as a way to help Kalamazoo stand out when it comes to potential future development projects. In addition, the group stated the value of undertaking a process such as this as a way to continue to unify and align the efforts of key stakeholders in Kalamazoo. Finally, the group noted that while the current scope of this Strategy is mostly focused on marketing the City when it comes to development, it could serve as a springboard or great baseline for undertaking more comprehensive marketing and rebranding efforts for the entire City.

## *Follow-Up: Existing Materials*

In the days immediately following this first meeting, the Task Force was asked to provide any existing marketing materials from each of their organizations to help the group think through the development of core messages and how each organization is currently communicating the value of their organization and Kalamazoo as a whole. Marketing materials were received from a handful of the organizations on the Task Force. The following themes stuck out as commonplace across the materials reviewed:

- **Fluidity of Strategy:** Some organizations mentioned their strategy is fluid and flexible, allowing them to adapt approaches depending on the audience.
- **Consistent Core Messaging:** Even with the fluidity mentioned above, many of the materials reviewed maintained core messaging across materials to ensure a consistent set of information is effectively communicated
- **Consistent Branding and Formatting:** Each organization had consistent style elements to their materials, including colors, logos, and general “look and feel” to documentation
- **Kalamazoo as an Area of Opportunity:** Many common strengths of Kalamazoo were communicated across organizations, including downtown, its affordability, its diversity, its educational institution strength (K-12 and postsecondary), and its collaborative spirit

## Meeting Two: **Strategy Brainstorming and Draft Input**

The second meeting of the RRC Marketing and Branding Task Force was held on July 10, 2017 at Kalamazoo City Hall. The purpose of this second meeting was to update Task Force members on the status of the draft document at that time, and discuss, as a group, how to form the *Strategies & Implementation* section. Three draft “Strategy Areas” were presented to the group with some potential “tasks” to include within each of these areas. The group agreed upon these three areas to categorize the tasks in the plan. Much of the discussion from this meeting can be found in the resulting Strategy Areas and Tasks in the following *Strategies & Implementation* section. A brief summary of the discussion from this meeting is outlined below.

### *Discussion*

The group was generally positive and excited about the opportunities presented by developing this Strategy and the potential for further collaboration between partners in Kalamazoo. Broadly, the group discussed the following items:

- **Attraction:** Why would a company or potential resident want to come to Kalamazoo? The group felt that we ought to be marketing our talent pool, infrastructure, strategic location, cultural amenities (i.e., we’re a “cool place” to be) as well as our incentives
- **Follow-Up Efforts:** The group strongly indicated that following up with new businesses or with developers after a development project is critical to learn what went well and how we can continue to improve these experiences for our “customers”
- **Internal Marketing:** While the conversation focused on marketing to outsiders about what makes Kalamazoo special, the group wanted to highlight the critical importance of marketing to residents and businesses already in Kalamazoo
- **Online Strategy:** Finally, the group discussed the importance of a consistent and deliberate online strategy for sharing information on all of the City’s various social media and web pages as well as with partners

### *Follow-Up: Draft Review*

All of the group’s input was compiled and the draft Strategy document was updated. In between the second and third Task Force meetings, the draft version of this Strategy was emailed to the group for an opportunity for detailed input to be provided.

## Meeting Three: **Final Input and Approval of Strategy**

The third and final meeting of the Task Force was held on August 7<sup>th</sup> at Kalamazoo City Hall. Task Force members provided their thoughts, comments, and questions about the draft of the Marketing & Branding Strategy document and next steps for submission and potential resources once RRC certification is received.

### *Discussion*

The group indicated they were pleased with the overall content and implementation steps outlined in the Strategy. They offered several minor comments to adjust some of the strategies and to include additional work currently being done in the Kalamazoo area. The group gave their approval for City staff to make these adjustments, finalize the Strategy, and submit to the MEDC. Upon finalization, the Task Force urged City staff to take the following next steps:

- **Align submission** of the Marketing & Branding Strategy and Public Participation Plan, which are the two remaining elements required for RRC certification
- **Ensure timely submission** of documents to the MEDC after they have been approved by necessary City administrative units
- **Share updates of status** and the final Strategy with Task Force members
- **Work closely with MEDC RRC staff** to determine what additional resources are available from the MEDC once Kalamazoo has received certification

# STRATEGIES & IMPLEMENTATION

Given the sheer amount of planning efforts, engagement, and research recently completed or underway, the City of Kalamazoo is in an ideal situation to move forward with a Marketing Strategy at this time. After reviewing all these existing efforts and carrying out discussions both internally and with key stakeholders, the following main Strategy areas were identified for this document:

- **Enhance the City’s marketing materials and efforts:** City staff will work to develop and update marketing materials to attract development and share information as well as conduct cross-department education to be sure City staff are knowledgeable of relevant programs
- **Strengthen partnerships through collective marketing:** Develop processes and implement strategies to align efforts and leverage resources of community stakeholders
- **Evaluate impact and conduct ongoing process improvement:** Deliberately plan for evaluation of these efforts, consider potential next steps, and make adjustments as necessary

## Implementation Table

The tasks, proposed timeframes, and desired outcomes associated with each of these broad strategy areas are outlined on the following pages. A column for “status” and “notes” are also included, as this implementation table will be treated as a living document for City staff and key partners. The Status column is starting out **red** for almost all projects (a few are already underway), meaning incomplete, but will be updated to **orange** (or “in progress”) and **green** (or “complete”) as work is completed. In addition, notes will be added over time in regards to each task, potentially including who is leading a task, detail on progress made, reasons for a delay, etc.

In this way, this Strategy will serve as a useful guide for moving forward key marketing initiatives in the City of Kalamazoo in the immediate future.



Strategy	Task	Timeframe	Desired Outcome(s)	Status	Notes
<b>Enhance the City's marketing efforts</b>	<b>Develop logo variations and branding guidelines</b> for various City initiatives/ departments (e.g., Parks & Recreation, IK2025, Foundation for Excellence, etc.)	<b>Less than 1 year</b>	At least 5 logo variations and accompanying design guidelines complete and in use	<b>In progress</b>	Working with City communications staff
	<b>Increase digital presence and website effectiveness</b> via Hootsuite and social media, newsletters, GIS, Google Analytics, and website benchmarks	<b>Less than 1 year</b>	Increase reach and audience and evaluate trends using these tools	<b>In progress</b>	Currently finalizing new website
	City staff will build relationships with and <b>write and publish articles</b> in both local (e.g., MLive) and major online publications (e.g., CityLab, Planetizen, NextCity) to share innovative projects / efforts	<b>Ongoing</b>	At least 2 non-local articles featuring Kalamazoo's work per year	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Develop and/or regularly update key process documents</b> , checklists, and help guides for City-operated development programs	<b>Ongoing</b>	All such documents are created, hosted online, and strategically reviewed annually	<b>In progress</b>	Currently reviewing Redevelopment Liquor License & Site Plan Review process & documents
	<b>Proactively guide new businesses / potential developments</b> in a "caseworker" fashion, rather than referring them to multiple departments	<b>1-2 Years</b>	Implement "caseworker" (or "concierge" / "navigator") methodology for at least 1 type of project (e.g., business attraction)	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Brand publicly visible City projects</b> (e.g., road improvement, park upgrades, etc.) with consistent signage and "For More Information" links to website	<b>1-2 Years</b>	Finalized signage and approach implemented for some 2018 and all 2019 public projects	<b>In progress</b>	Conversations about this effort have begun through the Imagine Kalamazoo process

Strategy	Task	Timeframe	Desired Outcome(s)	Status	Notes
<b>Strengthen partnerships through collective marketing efforts</b>	<b>Develop a process to share promotions,</b> successes, events, and development opportunities across regional partner communication channels (e.g., newsletters, press releases)	<b>Less than 1 Year</b>	Completed process outlining key means of communication (e.g., social media, newsletters, etc.) and contacts	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Work collaboratively</b> to develop a series of regional success stories that highlight prominent development successes (e.g., BTR Park / SmartZone, MidLink, etc.) and tie these past projects into current opportunities (e.g., Davis Creek Bus. Park)	<b>Less than 1 Year</b>	Development of at least three documents highlighting regional successes & current opportunities	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Align updates to ongoing planning efforts /</b> studies (e.g., Downtown Plan, Parking Plan, etc.) to limit duplicated work and engagement efforts	<b>Less than 1 Year</b>	Document that outlines all currently known ongoing planning efforts and update intervals	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Develop a series of events or initiatives to connect students to downtown</b> Kalamazoo (e.g., happy hour networking, student art exhibits / concerts, back-to-school events)	<b>1-2 Years</b>	Implement at least 1 new event by end of 2017 and at least 2 in 2018	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Create a subcommittee of organizations</b> with “external” marketing focus. Work to create continuity in messages being sent out, so each different organization can both relay their information and capture the ‘essence of Kalamazoo’	<b>1-2 Years</b>	Consistent outgoing messages about the City of Kalamazoo from multiple partner organizations	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	In conjunction with partners and local marketing firms, <b>develop a promotional video</b> about Kalamazoo that can be used to market the City both internally and to external parties	<b>1-2 Years</b>	Video completed and utilized by at least 3 partners	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Partner with MEDC and RRC staff</b> to leverage state resources for marketing, including identifying developers, hosting developer roundtables, and marketing key sites	<b>Ongoing</b>	Hold regular conversations with MEDC staff to understand / prioritize available resources	<b>In progress</b>	Have engaged in preliminary conversations to discuss potential state resources

Strategy	Task	Timeframe	Desired Outcome(s)	Status	Notes
<b>Evaluate impact and conduct ongoing process improvement efforts</b>	Use this Strategy as a baseline to evaluate the <b>creation of additional marketing efforts</b> , including a Downtown-focused plan and a broader Citywide branding effort	<b>2 or More Years</b>	Agreement among key partners regarding “go / no-go” with additional marketing strategies	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Revisit the strategies and tasks</b> outlined in this plan at least annually to evaluate progress, assign roles, and determine if any adjustments need to be made	<b>Ongoing</b>	Substantial progress or completion of all tasks outlined in this document by 2020	<b>Incomplete</b>	
	<b>Maintain accurate, detailed records and data</b> of activities carried out and identify relevant trends, patterns, and impacts of work	<b>Ongoing</b>	A set of relevant metrics that measure activities relevant to marketing in Kalamazoo	<b>In progress</b>	Various data tracking activities are underway (including a system to track business retention & expansion visits)
	<b>Conduct focus groups or surveys</b> of existing and/or new businesses to gather key feedback about what went well, what difficulties they've faced, and what resources were provided that were useful/not	<b>Ongoing</b>	Survey / focus group completed at a minimum annually. Use feedback to continue to improve processes	<b>Incomplete</b>	

# APPENDIX

**Business Information Packet Sample**

**Request for Qualifications**

**Site Development Opportunity Brief**

**Brownfield Success Story**

**Kalamazoo Fast Facts 1-Pager**

**Kalamazoo Small Business Resource Guide**

# City of Kalamazoo

## Economic Development



Business Information

Packet

**Development. Simplified.**

City of Kalamazoo Economic Development

241 West South Street

Kalamazoo, MI 49007

P: 269.337.8082

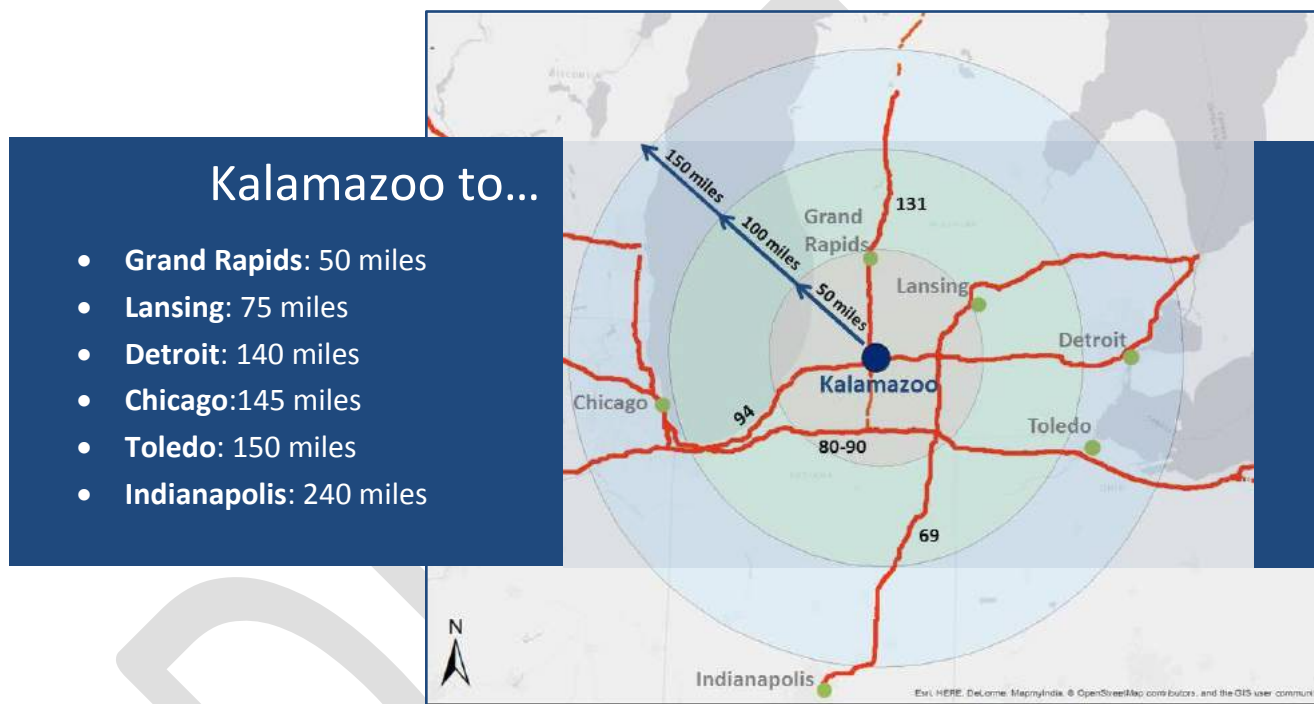
[COKeconomicdevelopment@kalamazoocity.org](mailto:COKeconomicdevelopment@kalamazoocity.org)

## CITY OF KALAMAZOO

### Business Information Packet

#### Overview

The City of Kalamazoo benefits from its location in the Southwest region of Michigan. Its location is central among many transportation corridors and major economic and cultural hubs, as seen below.



To help with your business location decision, we've gathered key information relating to Kalamazoo's population, economy, culture, and real estate market. We've also gathered similar information for quick comparison between Kalamazoo and Durango, CO; Traverse City, MI; and West Palm Beach and Miami, FL.

We hope this information helps you **choose Kalamazoo!** If you have further questions, don't hesitate to reach out to our Economic Development staff.



## Community Anchors

Kalamazoo’s economy benefits from the presence of a diverse range of employment anchors, including **public agencies, healthcare organizations, higher education institutions,** and **private corporations.** These institutions form the backbone of the Greater Kalamazoo economy, impacting workforce trends, local development, and educating the next generation of workers.

### Major Organizations in the Kalamazoo Area

Public Agencies	Healthcare Organizations	Educational Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City of Kalamazoo</li> <li>• City of Portage</li> <li>• Kalamazoo County</li> <li>• Michigan Department of Health and Human Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borgess Medical Center</li> <li>• Bronson Healthcare and Hospital</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kalamazoo College</li> <li>• Kalamazoo Public Schools</li> <li>• Kalamazoo Valley Community College</li> <li>• Western Michigan University</li> </ul>
Private Corporations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amerifirst Financial Corporation</li> <li>• Bell's Brewery</li> <li>• Benteler Automotive</li> <li>• Duncan Aviation</li> <li>• Greenleaf Hospitality Group</li> <li>• Meijer, Inc.</li> <li>• Parker-Hannifin Corporation</li> <li>• Pfizer Inc.</li> <li>• State Farm Insurance</li> <li>• Stryker Corporation</li> <li>• Summit Polymers</li> <li>• Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.</li> <li>• Wal-Mart / Sam's Club</li> <li>• Zoetis</li> </ul>		

*Initial Employer List from DemographicsNow, Gale Cengage Learning, Alteryx. Based on employee estimates as of 2015.*

## Health and Wellness

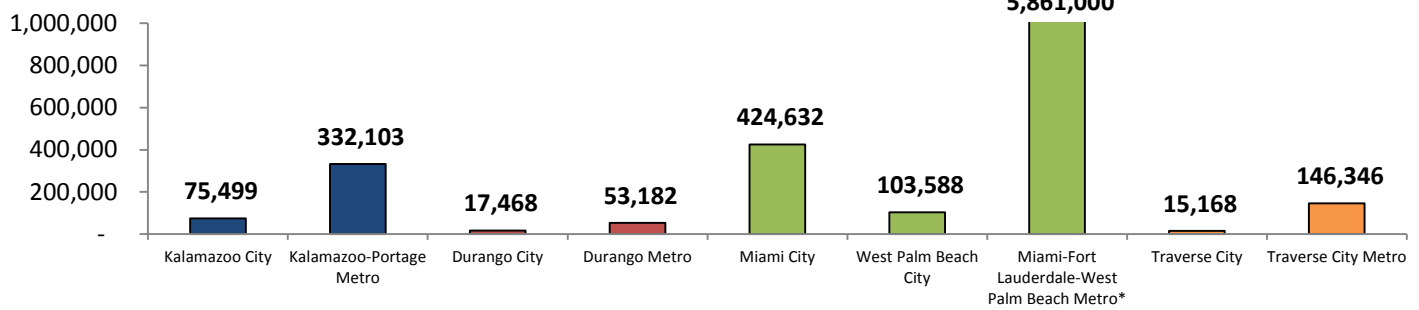
In addition to the organizations listed above, Kalamazoo has a strong presence of health and wellness related companies and organizations, including:

- **Specialized Degree Programs:** Both WMU and KVCC offer degree programs related to healthy living, including WMU’s Integrative Holistic Health and Wellness program and KVCC’s Culinary and Sustainable Food Systems and Sustainable Brewing degrees.
- **Bronson Healthy Living Campus:** A partnership between KVCC, Bronson Healthcare, and Kalamazoo Community Mental Health to provide targeted food, health, and lifestyle education
- **Organizations and Clubs:** Many Kalamazoo organizations have a healthy living component, including Bike Friendly Kalamazoo, Buy Local Kalamazoo, and the Kalamazoo Sports & Social Club
- **Businesses:** Kalamazoo is known for its strength in healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and innovation in general. Many businesses in the area are at the forefront of health and wellness initiatives nationwide

## Market Size

The City of Kalamazoo is home to roughly 75,000 people, within the Kalamazoo-Portage Metro Area of over 332,000. In comparison, Kalamazoo is substantially larger than both the Durango and Traverse City Metro areas, while the Miami Metro area is home to nearly 6 million people.

**Population, 2015**

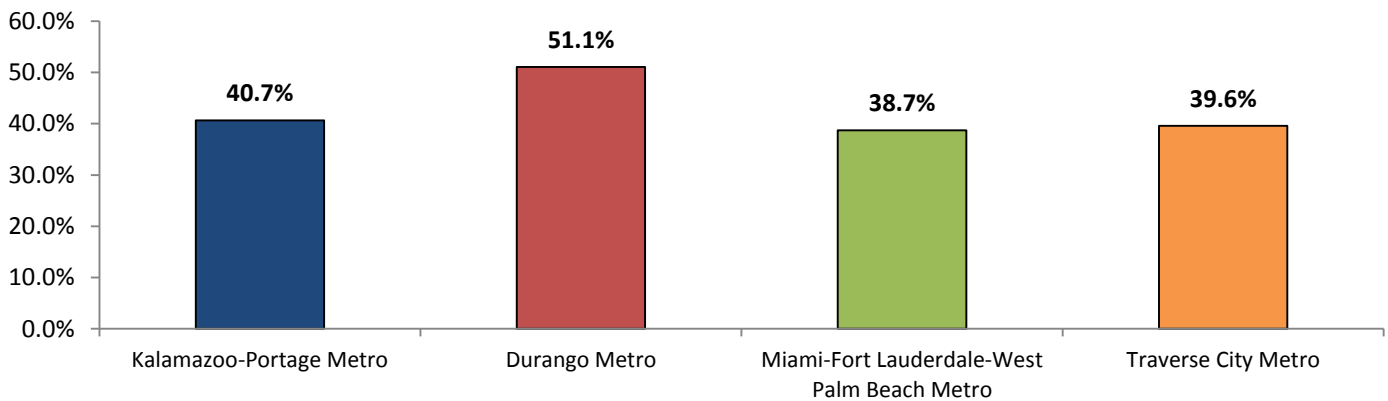


*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015  
 \*Scale was adjusted to improve visibility. Entire Miami Metro area has a population of almost 6 million.*

## Talent Pool

Kalamazoo is home to a diverse, educated, and young population. In particular, over 40% of the Kalamazoo Metro area population has a college degree. Of the other markets evaluated, only the Durango Metro area has a higher share of its regional population with a college degree.

**% of Population with a College Degree, 2015**



*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015*

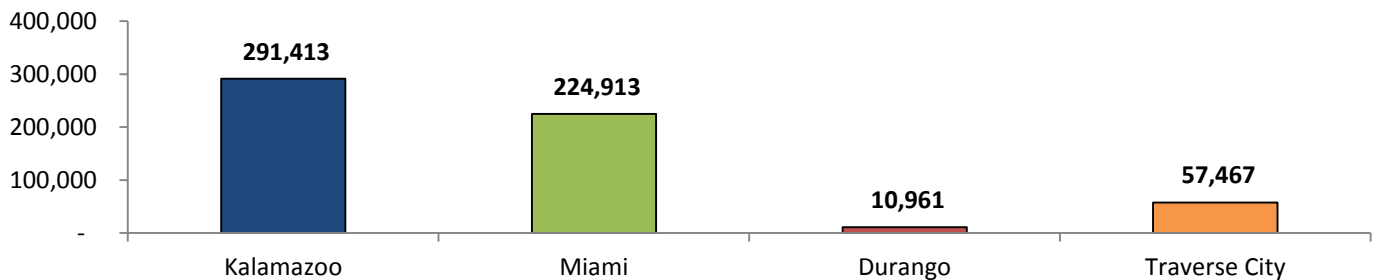


### Proximity to Talent

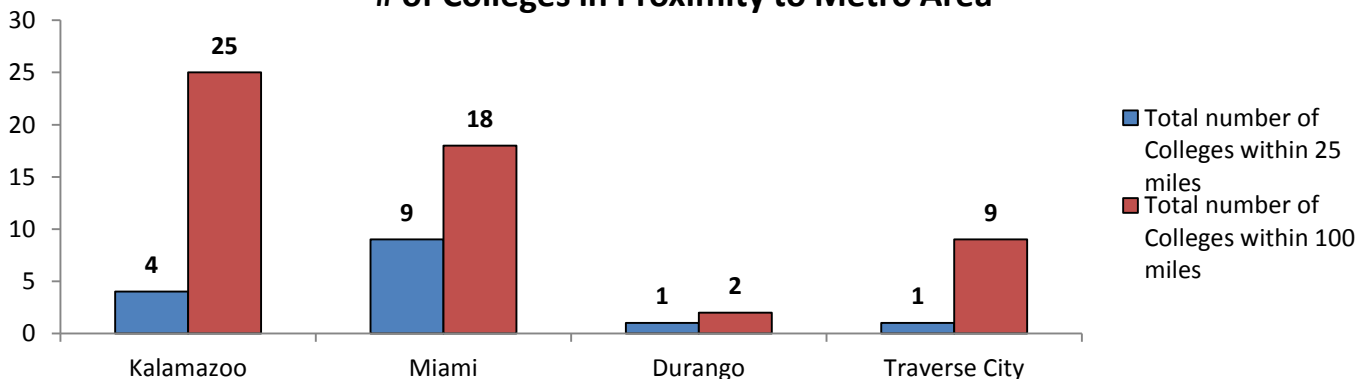
Kalamazoo is centrally located among many of the prominent postsecondary institutions of the Midwest. In particular, **Kalamazoo is within 100 miles of over 291,000 currently enrolled college students** at 25 institutions, the largest number of both students and institutions of any of the comparison regions. Of those, nearly 39,000 students and 4 of the institutions are located within 25 miles (i.e., directly “in” the Kalamazoo Metro area).

	Kalamazoo Metro	Miami Metro	Durango Metro	Traverse City Metro
# of Students within 25 miles	38,889	116,713	3,707	4,264
# of Students within 100 miles	291,413	224,913	10,961	57,467
Total number of Colleges within 25 miles	4	9	1	1
Total number of Colleges within 100 miles	25	18	2	9

**# of Students within 100 miles**



**# of Colleges in Proximity to Metro Area**

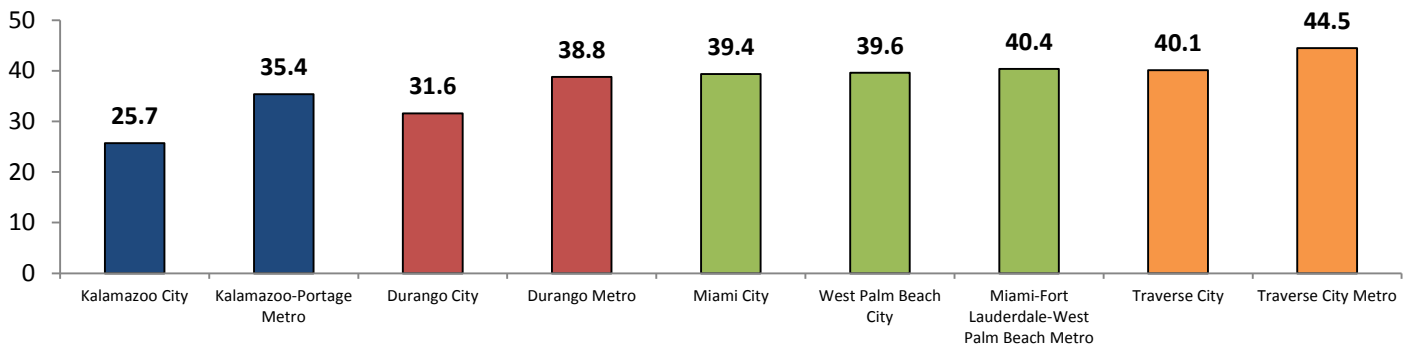


Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), College Navigator, 2015

## Age of Population

The City of Kalamazoo is young, with a median age of under 26 years old, thanks in part to a **strong postsecondary educational sector** from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, and Kalamazoo College all within the City. Kalamazoo’s Metro area median age of 35.4 is the youngest of any of the regions analyzed as well.

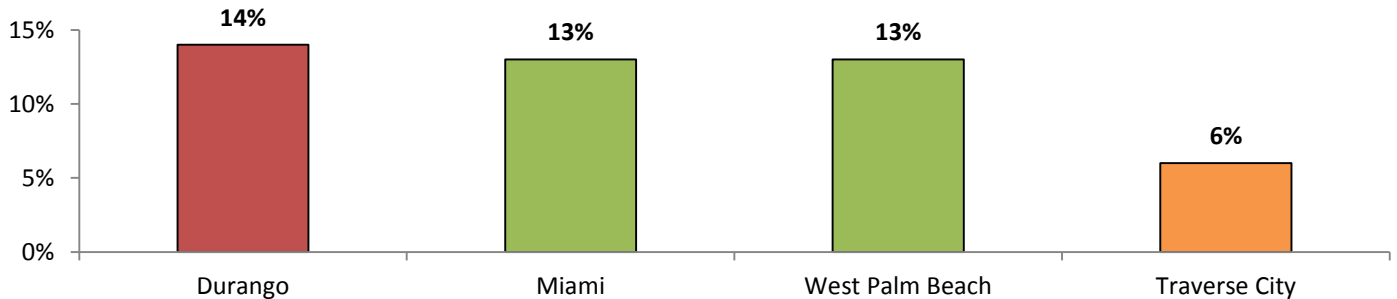
**Median Age, 2015**



## Affordability

According to the Council for Community and Economic Research, **Kalamazoo was ranked the 3<sup>rd</sup> most affordable urban area in the country**, out of over 260 areas, based on cost of living. Using a cost of living calculator, we are able to see that moving from Kalamazoo to any of the other comparison cities will result in an increase in cost of living, resulting in a 1-person household earning \$46,000 a year in Kalamazoo needing anywhere from an extra \$3,000 (in Traverse City) to \$6,000 (in Durango) to maintain the same lifestyle.

**Cost of Living Increase Compared to Kalamazoo**

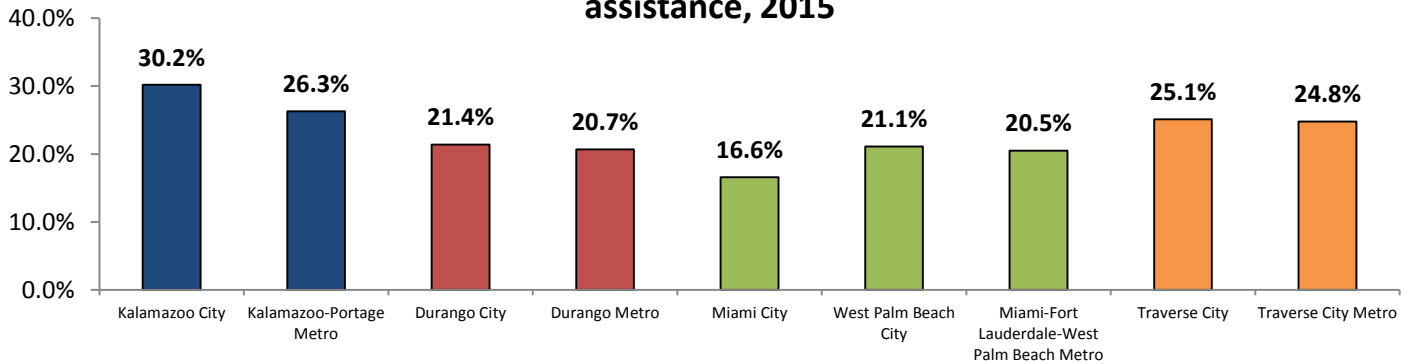


*Source: Council for Community and Economic Research and SmartAsset.com Cost of Living calculator*

## Labor Market

Due to the presence of postsecondary institutions as well as Bronson and Borgess Health systems, Kalamazoo has a substantial portion of its labor market in the *Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance* industry sector. Over 30% of the City's workforce is in this sector, both the Kalamazoo City and Metro area have the highest share of its workforce in this sector.

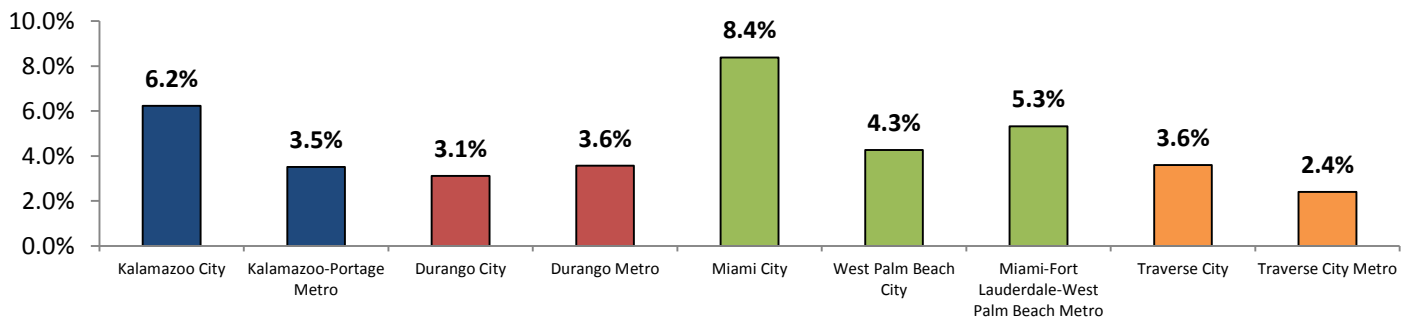
**% of Jobs in Educational services, and health care and social assistance, 2015**



## Growth

In addition, **Kalamazoo's employment base is growing rapidly**. Between 2013 and 2015, the City's employed population grew by over 6%, while the Metro area's grew by 3.5%. Only the Miami Metro area had faster employment growth across the board than Kalamazoo.

**% Change in Employed Population, 2013-2015**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2015



## Site Selection

Our Economic Development staff at the City of Kalamazoo are specialists in the area of site selection. In addition to a handful of City-owned sites and collaboration with the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, **we have partnerships with many additional regional organizations to ensure you find the right site for your business.**

To compare Kalamazoo to the other regions in this packet, available commercial real estate posted on [LoopNet.com](https://www.loopnet.com) was assessed for each region. Kalamazoo currently has 246 commercial properties available on LoopNet, while Durango and Traverse City have 117 and 163 respectively. Miami and West Palm Beach, being parts of a larger metro area, had over 500 properties, however, many of them were priced quite high.

## Meeting Your Needs

All of the available commercial properties for each area were narrowed down only to those between 2,000 and 5,000 square feet and roughly \$6 - \$13 per square foot. The breakdown of number of properties meeting these criteria was as follows:

- **Kalamazoo:** 16 properties
- **Durango:** 4 properties
- **Miami:** 14 properties
- **West Palm Beach:** 27 properties
- **Traverse City:** 10 properties

The 16 sites that meet these criteria in Kalamazoo range widely in their location and former use. The following page contains brief descriptions for a small number of the available properties in Kalamazoo that meet the above criteria. In addition to these sites, we are happy to **discuss additional options** that are available in the Kalamazoo area anytime.

We have substantial experience with **local and state incentive programs** as well. We strive to evaluate the feasibility of all potential incentive sources to make sure your project receives all the support it can.



Jodi K. Milks, CCIM — (269) 216-6770

Office Property For Lease

**FIFTH THIRD BANK BUILDING**

136 E. Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007



Total Space: 4,413 SF  
Available:  
Rental Rate: \$12 /SF/Year  
Property Type: Office  
Property Sub-type: Office Building  
Building Size: 90,489 SF  
Building Class: B  
Lot Size: 0.17 AC  
Listing ID: 17523193  
Last Updated: 15 days ago  
Find Out More...

Retail Property For Lease

**3928 S Westnedge**

3928 S Westnedge, Kalamazoo, MI 49008



Total Space: 3,266 SF  
Available:  
Rental Rate: \$10 /SF/Year  
Property Type: Retail  
Property Sub-type: Street Retail  
Building Size: 3,266 SF  
Lot Size: 0.32 AC  
Listing ID: 19621803  
Last Updated: today  
Find Out More...



Jodi K. Milks, CCIM — (269) 216-6770

Office Property For Lease

**101 E. Crosstown Parkway**

101 E. Crosstown Parkway, Kalamazoo, MI 49001



Total Space: 2,104 SF  
Available:  
Rental Rate: \$12 /SF/Year  
Property Type: Office  
Property Sub-type: Office Building  
Building Size: 6,103 SF  
Building Class: C  
Lot Size: 1.92 SF  
Listing ID: 17426304  
Last Updated: 15 days ago  
Find Out More...

Office Property For Lease

**125 South Kalamazoo Mall**

125 South Kalamazoo Mall, Kalamazoo, MI 49007



Total Space: 19,793 SF  
Available:  
Rental Rate: \$8 - \$15.50 /SF/Year  
Min. Divisible: 460 SF  
Max. Contiguous: 7,688 SF  
Property Type: Office  
Property Sub-type: Creative/Loft  
Building Size: 172,000 SF  
Lot Size: 0.76 AC  
Listing ID: 19171190  
Last Updated: today  
Find Out More...

Office Property For Lease

**913-917 Alcott Street**

913-917 Alcott Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49001



Rental Rate: \$9 /SF/Year  
Property Type: Office  
Property Sub-type: Office Building  
Building Size: 36,389 SF  
Year Built: 1963  
Lot Size: 1.09 AC  
APN/Parcel ID: 39000626121001  
Zoning Description: M-1  
Listing ID: 19523307  
Last Updated: 1 day ago  
Find Out More...

Retail Property For Lease

**1020 E Cork**

1020 E Cork, Kalamazoo, MI 49001



Total Space: 3,800 SF  
Available:  
Rental Rate: \$10 /SF/Year  
Property Type: Retail  
Property Sub-type: Strip Center  
Gross Leasable Area: 3,800 SF  
Lot Size: 3.26 AC  
Listing ID: 20049271  
Last Updated: today  
Find Out More...

# Development. Simplified.



City of Kalamazoo Economic Development  
241 West South Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
P: 269.337.8082  
[COKeconomicdevelopment@kalamazoocity.org](mailto:COKeconomicdevelopment@kalamazoocity.org)





# REQUEST FOR DEVELOPER QUALIFICATIONS/ DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

RIVER'S EDGE DEVELOPMENT SITE  
Home of the former Kalamazoo Tank and Silo Company  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006

RFQ Issued: July 17, 2017  
Pre-Proposal Conference: August 7, 2017  
Submittals Due: September 28, 2017



# INTRODUCTION

The City of Kalamazoo, Michigan, ("City") is soliciting proposals to redevelop a prime Brownfield Redevelopment Authority owned development site (the "Property") within the River's Edge Area. The Property is located southeast of the intersection of Gull Road and Harrison Street, two blocks north of Michigan Avenue adjoining the new roundabout at Gull and Harrison. The Property represents an outstanding opportunity for a public-private development partnership. The private developer will be able to leverage decades of public investment to help achieve the City's vision for Downtown and the Northside Neighborhood through private development of a superbly-located riverfront site.



## MAP KEY

The context in which the Property is located is illustrated above. One inch equals .125 miles. The Property is highlighted with a green line and is located in the River's Edge District, just outside of the Downtown



RIVER'S EDGE DEVELOPMENT SITE



COMMUNITY ASSET



CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



RECENT BROWNFIELD PROJECTS





Kalamazoo Mall



Fifth Third Building



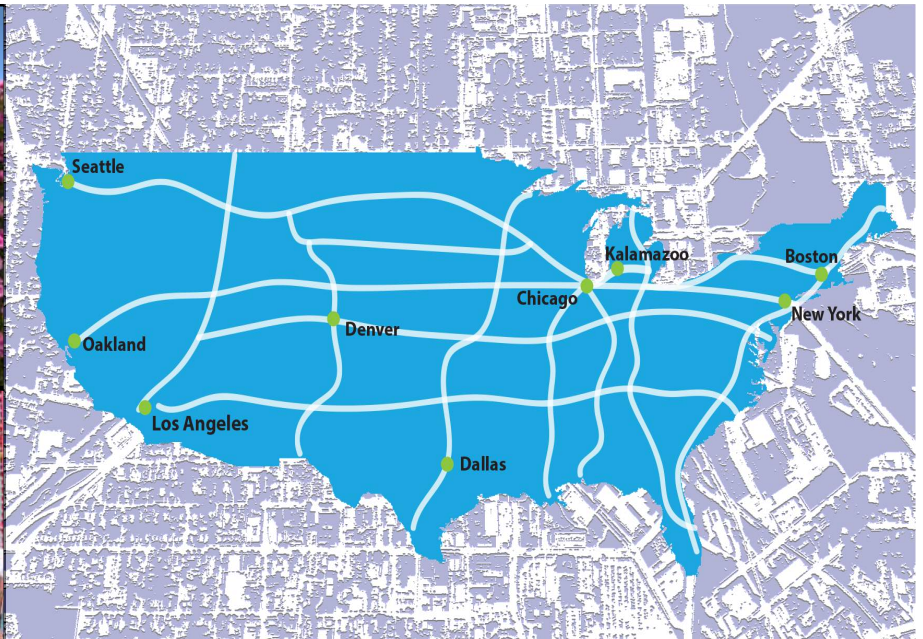
Ignertia Building



Bronson Park



Kalamazoo Mall



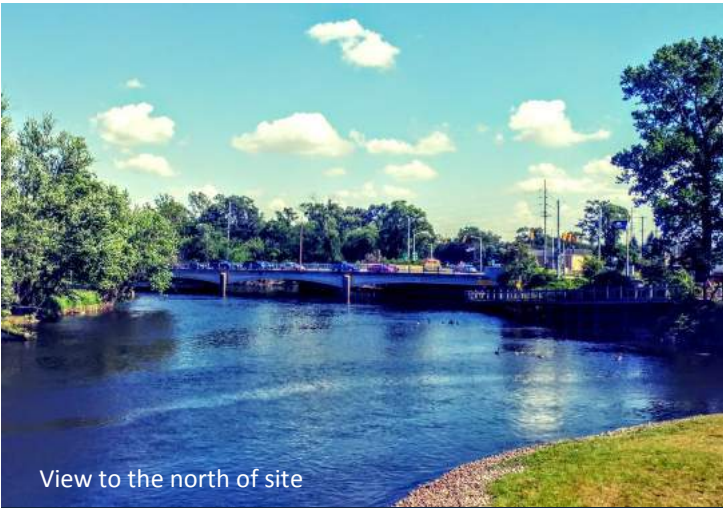
## COMMUNITY PROFILE

Kalamazoo is known for the openness and uniqueness of its people and local culture, some of which has to do with being the home of three higher education institutions with some 30,000 students. In fact, over 40% of the Kalamazoo Metro area population has a college degree. Kalamazoo is home to one of the State's busiest farmer's markets, to an activist cycling community, and to subcultures that have developed around social justice poetry slams, live music, comedy, and performing arts.

Due to the presence of postsecondary institutions, as well as Bronson and Borgess Health systems, Kalamazoo has a substantial portion of its labor market in the Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance industry sector. Over 30% of the City's workforce is in this sector, both the Kalamazoo City and Metro area have the highest share of its workforce in this sector.

Kalamazoo has also innovated two groundbreaking equity projects: The Kalamazoo Promise, providing up to 100 percent of tuition to any Michigan state college for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools, and The Foundation for Excellence, a new City program being funded by local donors to operate in perpetuity, with an aim to spend \$10 million per year on aspirational projects that contribute to dramatically reducing or eliminating generational poverty in the City. With a deep pool of scholarship resources acting as a catalyst, diverse individuals and organizations have responded in ways that are positive for Kalamazoo's economy, social fabric, and human capital.





View to the north of site



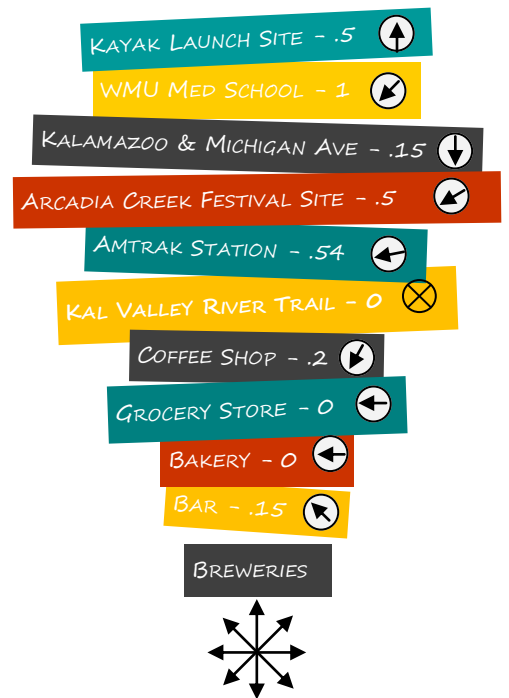
Norbridge Building

## RIVER'S EDGE REVITALIZATION

The City adopted the Kalamazoo Riverfront Redevelopment Plan in April 2003. Since then, the River's Edge has been transforming from a defunct industrial area to one of the more popular destinations in the region. The area plan focuses on creating a lively and vibrant riverfront district with unique urban flavor and character. The Redevelopment Plan emphasizes creating high quality public streets, parks and open space as the framework for a dynamic urban environment. As a result of this plan, the City will complete (Fall 2017) the reconstruction of the Gull Road and Harrison Street intersection with a roundabout, adding on-street parking, street trees, benches, and lighting.

The Rivers Edge district of Kalamazoo is located adjacent to the Northeast of downtown and is undergoing an unprecedented revival into an eclectic mix of businesses, shops, restaurants and affordable apartments. Focused on hip urban design and lively people, the area is transforming from an industrial and warehousing district into a cultural, residential, live-work-play community all within walking distance to the heart of downtown Kalamazoo.

Featuring nearby access to the Kalamazoo River, outdoor parks and the Kalamazoo Valley River Trail (KVRT) system, the Rivers Edge district is far from ordinary but close to everything.



## BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



The City of Kalamazoo was one of the first cities in Michigan to create a Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (KBRA). Substantial redevelopment throughout Kalamazoo has been supported since the program's inception. The KBRA has facilitated the approval of over 66 different sites into the Brownfield Plan for Brownfield incentive-eligible redevelopment projects including residential, mixed-use, retail, office and commercial uses.



## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Property is the southeast portion of the highlighted area on the map above and consists of one parcel approximately 5 acres, exclusive of right of way. The Jack Coombs trail runs south along the property and the river, and will be excluded in the property sale. It is a part of the Kalamazoo Valley River Trail and is owned by the BRA, but maintained by the County. Proposals need to be for the entire site. However, submittals that propose building in phases will be considered. Development needs to be compatible with adjacent properties and encourage pedestrian access.

The Property is in the Riverfront Zoning Subarea 4. Subarea 4 is intended for mixed use and has reduced parking requirements for commercial uses. Additionally, street facing buildings in this area have no setback requirements and building heights up to 50 feet. Currently, there is a disconnect between the vision for the area and the current adopted zoning ordinance. Staff will work with the developer to achieve the desired outcomes of the project including re-zonings, variance requests, or special use permits if necessary for the project. Information for the Riverfront Overlay District as well as additional plans, studies, and maps are available through links on the Resources page.

## SITE CONTEXT

The River's Edge area is in the middle of a renaissance. Developers building in this area are first and foremost interested in place-making, which requires creating unique living opportunities alongside cultural venues and nightlife, offering residents access to a hip social scene steps from their apartments. River's Edge is a progressive area of town where repurposing of obsolete buildings is beginning to drive a resurgence of community interest and neighborhood growth.

Recent downtown-area developments that have received KBRA incentives (see page 2 for locations):

- The Foundry (\$ 8 Million total investment)
- Walbridge Common (\$4.3 M total investment)
- Ignertia Building (\$1Million total investment)
- Norbridge Building (\$2 Million total investment)
- Arcadia Ales (\$7 Million total investment)
- People's Food Co-op (\$1 M total investment)
- MacKenzie's Bakery (\$1 M total investment)





## DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The objective of the RFQ process is to select a private developer or development team that will develop the Property consistent with the vision for the River's Edge area of the Northside neighborhood contained in The Kalamazoo Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, which is available through a link on the Resources page. In summary, the development objectives for the Property include:

- Mixed-use development
- Architecture that is aesthetically and functionally compatible with surrounding development
- Building façade at the property lines, with any setback limited to outdoor dining or public plaza
- No fewer than two stories with building forms that reinforce view corridors to the river
- Predominately ground floor transparent glazing with a horizontal façade break from upper floors for street facing buildings
- Utilize on-street parking with no on-site parking located next to a street or public space
- Incorporate the public greenway and nearby Harrison and/or Verberg Parks.



Walbridge Common



MacKenzie's Café and Bakery



# Downtown Context

Kalamazoo is a densely populated city with 75,000 residents and more than 325,000 in the metropolitan area. Kalamazoo is the sixth largest metropolitan area in Michigan and among the 150 largest in the country. It's large enough to support all the amenities and entertainment found in larger cities; and yet, you can be in the heart of farm country in 20 minutes, and Kalamazoo supports a thriving Farmers Market downtown May through November.

Major community destinations are within close proximity of the Property. Local festivals—featuring live music, arts and crafts, food and drinks—many of which are held at Arcadia Creek Festival Place downtown—attract crowds in the tens of thousands. The Kalamazoo Art Fair, held annually on the first weekend in June, is the second oldest community art fair in America and attracts 60,000 visitors over two days.

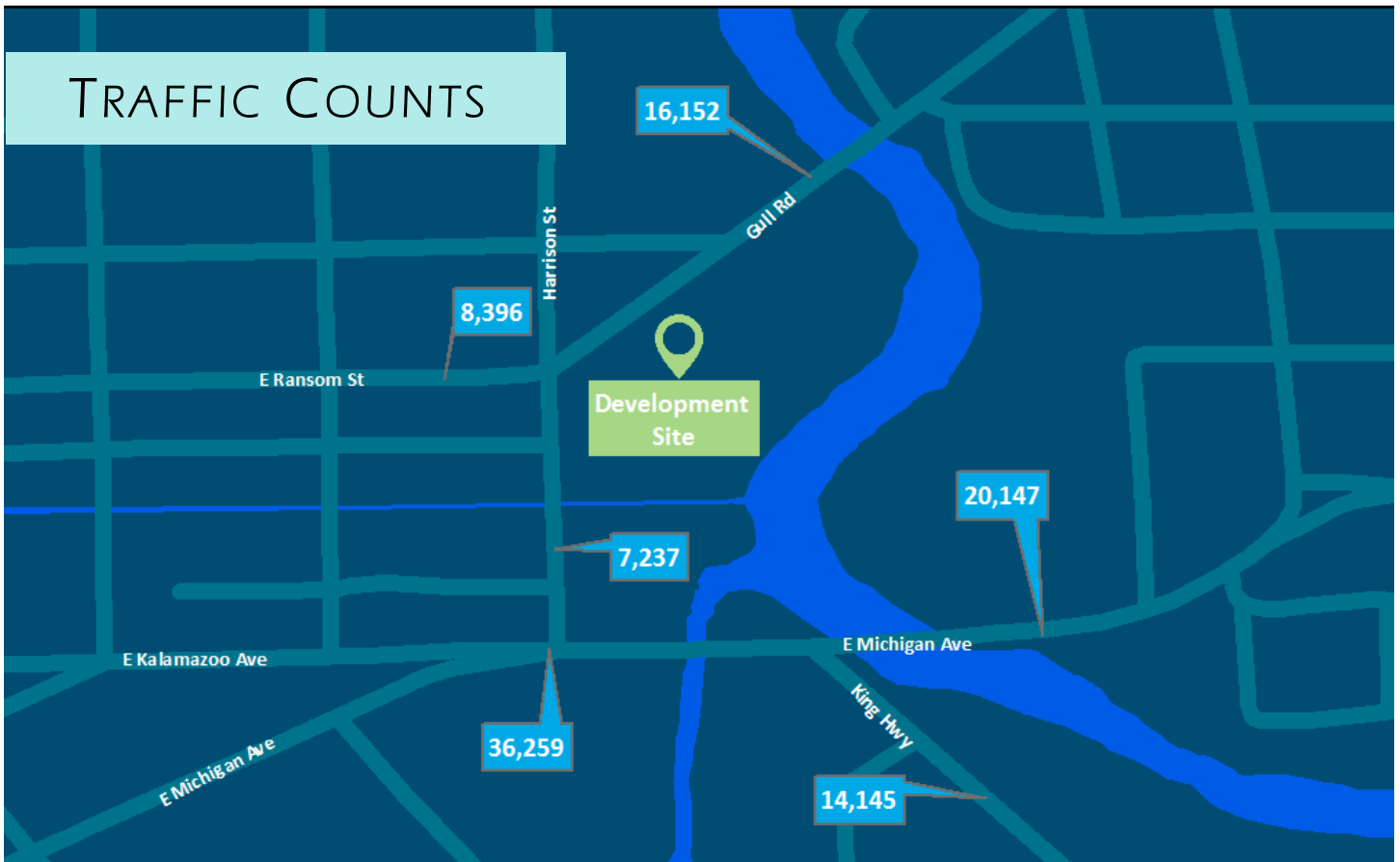
WMU's Miller Auditorium, the historic State Theater and a variety of local clubs offer a complete array of concerts featuring every kind of music and popular entertainment. Kalamazoo is a frequent stop for many of today's top comedians, musicians and other entertainers.

The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT) is a 22 mile (plans to connect to 140 miles) completed paved asphalt trail that runs along the property. Less than a mile from the development site is the Kal-Haven Trail, a 33.5 mile long linear multi-use trail that links Kalamazoo to South Haven, a Lake Michigan resort area.

Art Hop is a program of the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo - an evening of art exhibits and events, one of the great things to do in Kalamazoo. It's a free event held on the first Friday of every month. The Homer Stryker Field and Mayors' Riverfront Park are located less than 3/4 mile south of the Property (connected by the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail) and home to the Kalamazoo Growlers and Kalamazoo Football Club attracting over 100,000 spectators annually.



# TRAFFIC COUNTS



The daily traffic counts surrounding the property are shown above. The Property is marked on the map with a green pinpoint. Gull Road, Michigan Avenue, and King Highway serve as the three main corridors for commuters traveling into the downtown. Two new pieces of transportation infrastructure, the roundabout at Harrison Street, Ransom Street and Gull Road & a light at Harrison Street and Michigan Avenue, have started construction and are expected to be completed by end of Fall 2017. The River's Edge Roundabout (under construction) is shown below.

Development Site looking to the northeast



# PROPOSAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

## A. **Executive Summary**

Provide a concise summary of the overall proposal.

## B. **Development Team**

Detail and describe the proposed development team, including to the extent possible the master developer, architect, landscape architect, financial partners, and construction contractor. Demonstrate a track record of successfully financing, developing, completing and managing comparable projects.

- Identify the key individuals, companies and organizational structure of proposer.
- Identify roles and responsibilities of all proposal team members.
- Cite proposer's experience with other successful development projects; include roles and responsibilities for these projects' team members,.

## C. **Financial Capacity**

Provide clear and compelling information to demonstrate proposer's financial capacity to execute and complete the project successfully.

- Describe a clear strategy to fund all project costs.
- Specify and clearly describe all sources, types and amounts of equity, financing, grants and other funding sources for the proposed project.

## D. **Business Plan**

Include an initial project budget and uses. Demonstrate the proposed project's viability by including, to the extent possible, the following:

- Initial development schedule with major milestones that addresses planning, design, plan review, permits, construction and occupancy
- Proposed tenants/buyers/operators for the completed project.
- Development costs, including all site acquisition, construction costs, soft costs, and contingencies.
- Identify any gaps in the pro forma preventing the project from obtaining the target rate of return.
- Provide reasonable assumptions for all costs and revenues.

## E. **Level of Return and Benefit to the City**

Describe the economic, fiscal, employment (construction and permanent), and other tangible public benefits generated by the proposal. Qualitative public benefits such as social or recreational/health goals may be included as support to well-defined quantitative benefits.

## F. **Public Involvement Plan**

Describe the extent to which the team will engage the public in the design, implementation, and building phases of the project.



## G. Consistency with Adopted Plans and Development Objectives

Explain how the proposal is consistent with Kalamazoo Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

- Detail how the proposal is consistent with the Development Objectives described above.
- Describe the project including:
  - Gross square footage of project and each proposed use.
  - Number of parking spaces and location
  - Building height (feet and stories).
  - Cost estimates for individual project components.
  - Provide a conceptual site plan and building elevations (color recommended).
  - Identify any applicable phasing on the drawings.
  - Describe the utilization of the site, and if all or only portions of the site will be incorporated.
  - Describe how the project will exist in context with adjacent buildings, public amenities and other uses.

All costs incurred in the preparation of this proposal are the responsibility of the proposer. The City reserves the right to issue supplemental information or guidelines relating to the RFQ during the proposal preparation period, or to make modifications to the RFQ. All proposals shall be considered firm offers for a period of 180 days following the due date. Once submitted, proposals may not be changed without consent of the City. Six (6) printed proposals and a PDF version on a flash drive or DVD shall be submitted by 5:00 P.M., September 28, 2017, to:

Sara Jo Shipley, Redevelopment Project Manager  
City of Kalamazoo  
City Hall  
241 West South Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

## PRE-PROPOSAL CONFERENCE

A pre-proposal conference will be held on August 7, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. in the Community Room of the 2nd floor of City Hall, 241 W. South St, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Potential proposers are strongly encouraged to attend the pre-proposal conference to learn more about the Property, the development objectives, and the proposal evaluation process. Immediately following the pre-proposal conference in City Hall, potential proposers are invited to a site visit to learn more about the context of the Property.

## PROPOSAL EVALUATION & INTERVIEWS

Final selection will be made following a review and ranking of proposals received. The City reserves the right to interview and receive a formal presentation from only those development teams whose proposals best match the evaluation criteria. The City intends to select proposers for interviews on or around October 4, 2017. Interviews are anticipated to occur the week of October 16, 2017.

The City's objective is to select the development team best qualified to undertake the tasks identified. Priority will be given to development proposals that; highlight and incorporate the riverfront, incorporate the public greenway as a "green street" with multi-modal bike/pedestrian connection; bring unique mixed-use to the area; and have a substantive public outreach plan. The proposals will be evaluated on the basis of several factors, including:

1. Qualifications of the development team
2. Proposer's financial capacity to execute and complete the project successfully
3. Project viability, including operation and management of the project after construction
4. Level of return and benefit to the city
5. Consistency with adopted plans and development objectives
6. Project timeline

## NEGOTIATIONS AND SELECTION PROCESS

Upon receipt of an evaluation panel's recommendation, the City may invite one or more development teams to submit a final development proposal for further evaluation. Teams that submit a best and final proposal will be required to participate in a public open house. At the public open house, each team will be required to share information about their project including renderings, elevations, site plans, project timeline, and a short synopsis of the project, including any request for City assistance. The public will be able to ask questions and will be provided comment cards that will be collected and shared with the evaluation panel. The City anticipates that final development proposals will be due October 18, 2017, with selection of the best final proposal to be completed by November 15, 2017. Upon selection of the best final proposal, the City will negotiate final business terms with the selected development team. The commencement of negotiations does not commit the City to accept any or all of the terms of the proposal, and negotiations may be terminated by the City at any time, in which case the City reserves the right to enter into negotiations with other proposers. These negotiations may result in minor or material changes to the proposal, including both the business terms and the project. Successful negotiations will result in an award recommendation. Agreements addressing business terms and performance benchmarks will be entered into between the parties. The City reserves the right to reject, in whole or in part, any or all proposals.

If deemed appropriate to achieve the goals for development of the Property, the City reserves the right to make no selection and re-issue an RFQ. The terms and conditions of any development agreement resulting from this RFQ process are subject to approval by the BRA Board.

# RESOURCES

## Recent Planning/Visioning Efforts & Studies:

[2003 Kalamazoo Riverfront Redevelopment Plan](#)

[2008 Traffic Analysis](#)

[2010 Kalamazoo Master Plan](#)

[2011 River's Edge Corridor Plan](#)

[2011 Tracy Cross & Associates Analysis of Market Potential for Residential Development—Arcadia Commons West and Rivers Edge](#)

[2014-2018 Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#)

[2014 Michigan Municipal League Place Plan](#)

[2015 Analysis of Residential Market Potential](#)

[2016 Appraisal](#)

[2017 Gibbs Downtown Kalamazoo Retail Market Analysis \(draft\)](#)

[Due Care Plan](#)

[Traffic Counts](#)

## Development Incentives:

Negotiable Land Price

State and Local Brownfield Tax Increment Financing

Federal New Market Tax Credits

Michigan Community Revitalization Program



### INQUIRIES:

Sara Jo Shipley, Redevelopment Project Manager  
City of Kalamazoo  
(269) 337-8082  
shipleys@kalamazoo-city.org

# Site Development Opportunity

## Davis Creek Business Park - A Certified Business Park

Location: 2805 E. Cork Street

### Description:

Take this opportunity to develop with the City of Kalamazoo's award-winning Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA). Davis Creek Business Park is the City's first business park with roots in sustainability. The development standards apply principles, knowledge and technology of sustainable design. As a mixed-use BRA project, this site offers fiscal opportunities such as a variety of economic development tools and brownfield resources.

### Property Features:

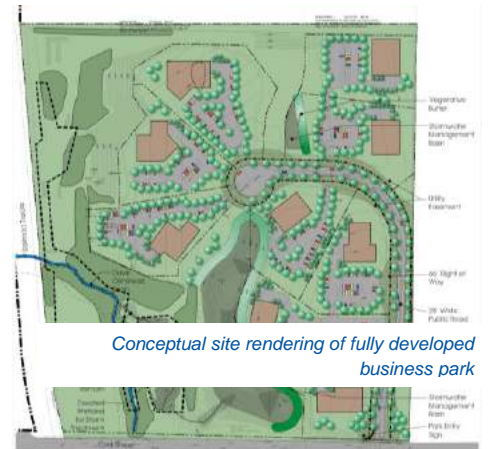
- 18.5 acre park; three development pods of four to seven acres
- Michigan Certified Business Park
- Close proximity to I-94, US-131, Kalamazoo-Battle Creek International Airport, public transportation route, and downtown Kalamazoo
- Site-wide stormwater handling system
- Sanitary sewer
- Municipal water
- Electric, gas, and telephone service
- Telecommunication conduit
- Pedestrian sidewalk and trail way amenities

### Incentives:

- Potential Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for eligible activities
- State liability protection through Baseline Environmental Assessment process
- Competitive and flexible land costs
- Potential gap financing for projects through the City's Economic Development Corporation



*Entrance off Cork Street*



*Conceptual site rendering of fully developed business park*



*\*Sale of this or any property owned by the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority is subject to negotiation and approval of a Redevelopment and Purchase Agreement.*



### Community:

Located midway between Detroit and Chicago at the intersection of I-94 and US-131 and 40 minutes from the beaches of Lake Michigan, Kalamazoo offers both small town ease and big city amenities – including a vibrant downtown and rich cultural opportunities. The City’s population is 75,000; the metropolitan area’s is over 335,000.

The economy is healthy and diverse, with industries including: pharmaceuticals, life sciences, plastics, medical equipment, fabricated metals, financial services, and healthcare.

It’s the Education City – five colleges, including Western Michigan University, educate more than 58,000 students. Home to the “Kalamazoo Promise”. The Kalamazoo Promise is a pledge to pay up to 100 percent of tuition at any of Michigan’s state colleges or universities for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools.

### From Forbes

#### Kalamazoo-Portage, MI Metropolitan Statistical Area

Unemployment: 3.9%

Job Growth: 2%

College Attainment: 34.7%

Cost of living is 9% below the national average!

### City of Kalamazoo Economic Development Division

241 West South Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
Phone 269.337.8082  
Fax 269.337.8429

COKEconomicdevelopment@kalamazoocity.org  
www.kzoobiz.org



*Location of Davis Creek Business Park*



*Looking north from stormwater handling system toward the back of the development*



*\*Sale of this or any property owned by the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority is subject to negotiation and approval of a Redevelopment and Purchase Agreement.*



# brownfield success



## case study of Depot Building

### 427 East Michigan Avenue

City of Kalamazoo  
Kalamazoo County, MI



### The Developers

Established in 1988, PlazaCorp Realty Advisors, Inc. is a leading developer in the City of Kalamazoo and greater southwest Michigan region. They have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into the region through property acquisitions and redevelopment projects. From major downtown developments to neighborhood enterprises, PlazaCorp's portfolio grows more diverse every year. Their latest completed project is the Depot Building. Located in a once neglected section of downtown, and formerly characterized by active and shuttered industrial and warehouse facilities and vacant land tracts, the east end of downtown is becoming a hub for redevelopment.

### Project Background

427 East Michigan Avenue was built in the mid-1920s and originally served as a freight office for Grand Trunk Western Railroad. The head house facing East Michigan provided a space for passengers and offices for the clerks who did the paper work for shipments leaving or coming to Kalamazoo. The large back part of the building was a freight house. The building is a long and narrow wood and brick building that has served as the home of a used furniture store, a guitar shop and other businesses over the years.

The Depot's basis for brownfield incentives was due to its listing as a "facility". PlazaCorp's agreement with the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) included a capital investment of \$2.9 million and

created between

20-30 Full-Time jobs. In return, the BRA will provide up to \$89,230 from captured tax increment revenues over 10 years to assist with the costs of the asbestos removal, demolition work, and site preparation. Additionally, the project received a \$484,435 Michigan Community Revitalization Program performance-based grant, as authorized by the Michigan Strategic Fund.

PlazaCorp began renovation on this building during the second half of 2015, shoring up the existing wood and brick building, as well as adding a new deck and square footage along the western wall. Many of the building components, floors, paving bricks, hardware, and rolling freight doors have all been retained or reused. Two main commercial tenants, HopCat and Maru Sushi & Grill, will occupy 12,000 sq. ft. of the building and the remaining will be leased for office use.

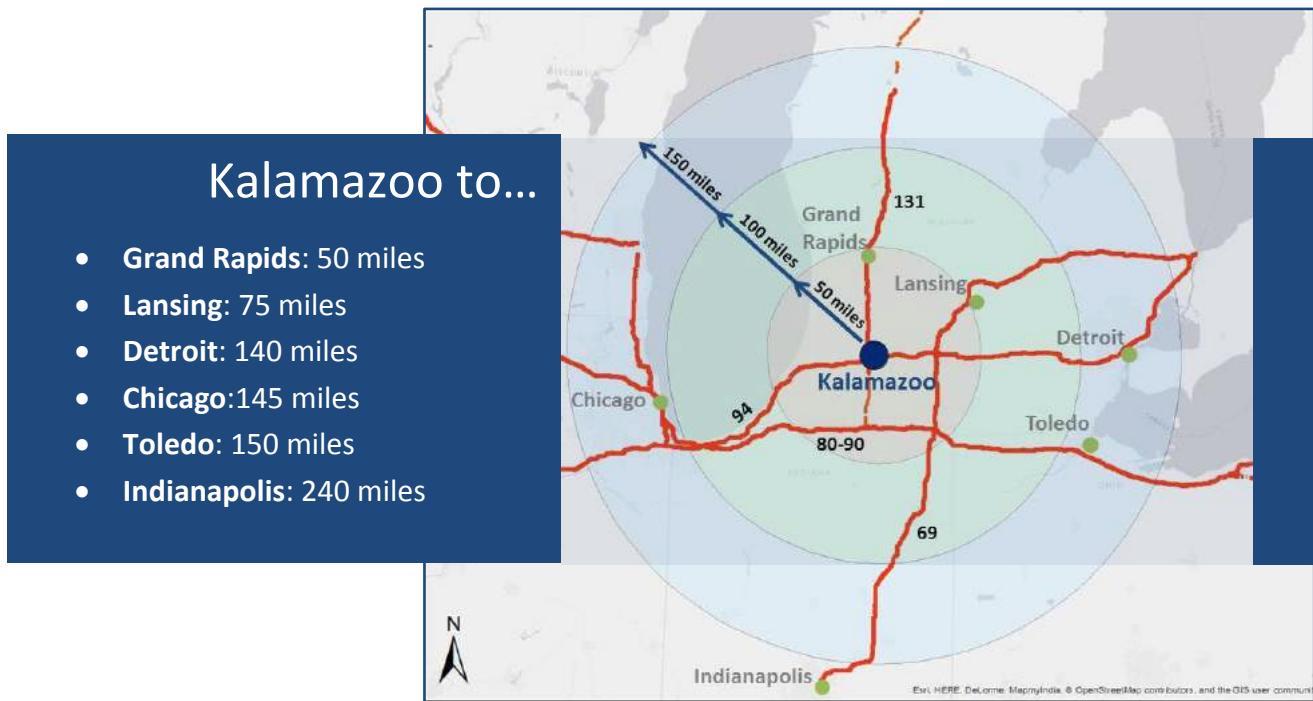
<b>Address:</b>	427 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI
<b>Building Size:</b>	13,733 square feet
<b>Former Use:</b>	Freight House
<b>Current Use:</b>	Commercial / Office Mixed Use

<b>By the Numbers:</b>
<b>BRA Assistance:</b> Approximately \$89,000 incentive with Tax Increment Financing
<b>Tenants:</b> HopCat, Maru Sushi & Grill, Cherry Tree Financial
<b>Total Investment:</b> \$3.6 Million
<b>Jobs Created:</b> 20-30 Full-Time Equivalent

<b>Project Partners:</b>
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of the City of Kalamazoo MI Economic Development Corporation/ MI Strategic Fund PlazaCorp Realty Advisors, Inc.

## Kalamazoo **Fast Facts**

The City of Kalamazoo is located in the Southwest region of Michigan, and is the seat of Kalamazoo County. Kalamazoo benefits from its central location among many transportation corridors and major economic and cultural hubs, as seen below.



Kalamazoo is home to a **diverse, young, and well-educated** population. In addition, Kalamazoo has **affordable, convenient** living options while still offering all the benefits of a thriving urban core and downtown.

Kalamazoo was named the 3<sup>rd</sup> most affordable urban area nationwide (out of 260 areas) in the 2016 national cost of living index.

Learn more at:  
[kalamazoo-city.org](http://kalamazoo-city.org)

Kalamazoo Fast Facts	City of Kalamazoo	State of Michigan
Total Population	76,040	9,922,576
% of Population Under 35	✓ 61%	45%
% of Population with a College Degree	✓ 47%	37%
Mean Travel Time to Work (in Minutes)	✓ 20	25
Median Rent	✓ \$670	\$803
Cost of Living Index*	✓ 79.7	-

*Table 1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Data, 2015  
 \*Based on Council for Community and Economic Research 2016 cost of living index. A score of 100 is the US average*

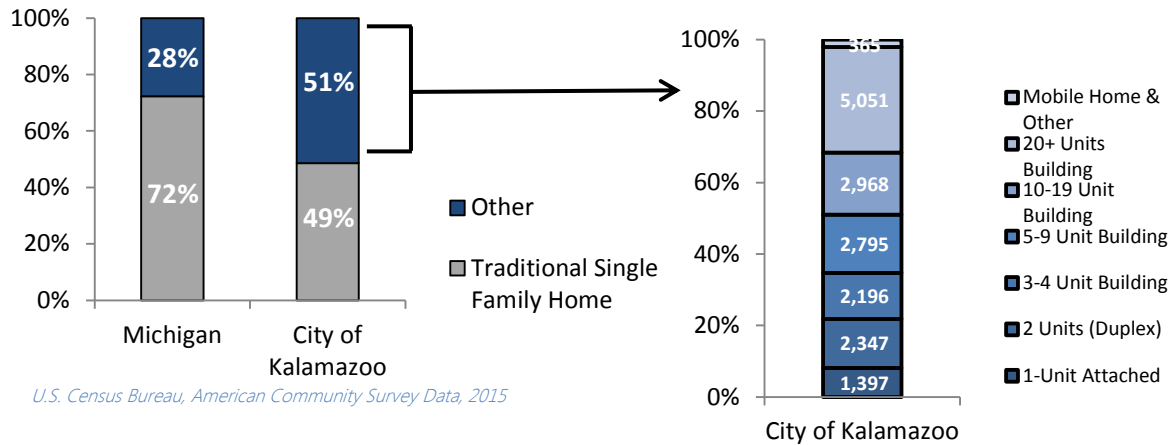




## Kalamazoo Housing Snapshot

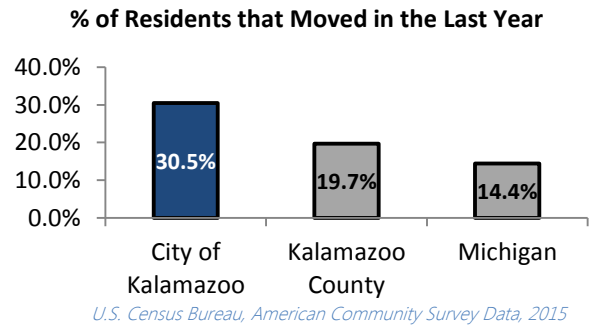
### A mix of housing options

Kalamazoo has a significant portion of its housing stock in types other than traditional detached single-family homes. Over 51% of Kalamazoo's housing is in this "Other" type, compared with only 28% statewide. Kalamazoo offers over 17,000 of these units, including duplexes, smaller apartment buildings, and larger multi-family apartments.



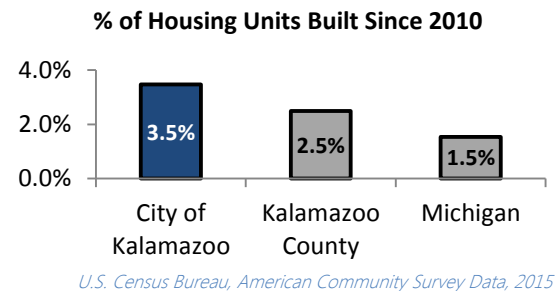
### A mobile market

Kalamazoo represents a "mobile" market, with over 30% of Kalamazoo residents having moved within the last year. Of these 22,963 Kalamazoo residents who moved last year, 13,413 of them (58%) simply moved within Kalamazoo County.



### A growing market

Kalamazoo has seen a recent resurgence in new residential construction. Since 2010, 1,157 housing units have been built in the City, accounting for 3.5% of the City's total housing stock, compared to similar growth of 2.5% in Kalamazoo County and 1.5% in Michigan as a whole.



## Greater Kalamazoo Business Resources Organization Information

### Mission

Connecting Greater Kalamazoo entrepreneurs to local resources.

### Vision

Create a healthy eco-system for business to thrive.

### Goals

- Create a process to breakdown obstacles facing small business and start-ups.
- Deepen relationships with key partners.
- Increase awareness of resources available to assist small and start-up businesses.
- Maximize the resources of our members/partners and minimize duplication of services and events.

## Organization Partners

### BUY LOCAL GREATER KALAMAZOO

A nonprofit professional association for local independent businesses and nonprofit organizations in the greater Kalamazoo area. BLGK provides community education, offers marketing assistance, B2B networking opportunities and an avenue to affordably reach the community to grow their business.

### CAN-DO KITCHEN

Can-Do Kitchen works to build foundations and remove barriers to food business ownership. They offer public workshops and a 12-week Can-Do Camp program about financial management, pricing, social media, branding, food photography, retail buyers, food licensing, packaging, and more. The Can-Do Kitchen is a low-risk, supportive environment that leads new food business owners through launch, growth and graduation.

### City of Kalamazoo- Economic Development Department

This department offers a wide range of programs and services that allow other economic development practitioners and private sector developers to leverage quality development projects. Their experienced and innovative staff is committed to helping you simplify the process of growing, expanding or developing your business.

### FETZER CENTER/WMU Connect

The Fetzer Center offers a full-service conference and catering center located on Western's campus. It can accommodate meetings and social events for 2 to 280 people. WMU Connect offers free and low cost networking for local businesses.

### James Lipsey

James is a native of Kalamazoo and Entrepreneur that believes in helping establish pathways to success through entrepreneurship and S.T.E.M. James is the website creator for GKBR and is actively involved with the KII and other nonprofits in the community.

### Kzoo Makers

Kzoo Makers is a project of the Kalamazoo Innovation Initiative (KII), a 501(c)3 non profit organization. They are a group of local artists, crafters, engineers, makers, and thinkers who work together to provide tools, workspaces, and learning resources to our members and to general public.

### Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

LISC is a national non-profit CDFI, which invests in low to moderate income neighborhoods to create neighborhoods of choice and opportunity for residents. In Kalamazoo, they provide financing and technical assistance to nonprofit and for-profit entities to create living wage employment opportunities for core city residents.

## Organization Partners Cont.

### SCORE - Southwest Michigan

An all volunteer organization of Entrepreneurs, Executives and High Level Managers who want to give back to the community by providing free and confidential business advice to 1) those individuals who want to start a company 2) those individuals who want to grow their company 3) those individuals struggling with their company 4) those individuals who just need some sound business advice.

### SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC)

The SBDC enhances Michigan's economic wellbeing by providing counseling, training and research for new ventures, existing small businesses and advanced technology companies. Our regional office at WMU provides entrepreneurs and business owners with convenient access to counseling and training throughout SW Michigan.

### W.E. Upjohn Institute - MI Works Southwest

The Michigan Works! Association was established in 1987 to provide services and support to Michigan's workforce development system. Through the association, members can access timely, relevant professional development opportunities and ensure high-quality programs for all customers.

### Southwest Michigan First- Small Business Division

They are here to support, educate and grow small business in Southwest Michigan. They provide networking programs, educational opportunities and advocacy for public policy issues that will impact your business and our community for the better.

### Southwest Michigan PTAC

PTAC helps businesses sell their products and services to the federal, state, and local government agencies. This assistance includes the following at no charge to your business: vendor registrations; finding bidding opportunities; bid proposal support; training/networking/matchmaking events; understanding acquisition regulations; individual counseling; competition research; subcontracting; and contract administration.

### Startup Grind Kalamazoo

The mission of Startup Grind is to educate, connect and inspire entrepreneurs everywhere. The main event is a monthly fireside chat with a local speaker, creating an intimate atmosphere to mingle and learn. They are one of 200 chapters worldwide.

### WMU STARTING GATE

Starting Gate is a student business accelerator that gives students rich and valuable resources to develop their startup companies. The accelerator is open 24/7 to all WMU students through a competitive application process in which students must demonstrate a promising idea for a product or service, which can be launched within a short period of time.

### WMU BUSINESS CONNECTION

WMU's Business Connection is a University office dedicated to strategically match Western's resources to the needs of the local business community. By working together with the numerous resources available on campus, the office serves as a "one-stop shop" for companies that want to engage with the University.

### WMed Innovation Center

The Innovation Center on the medical school's Parkview Campus is a 69,000-square-foot, purpose-built incubator and accelerator created to support life science, technology, and engineering ventures of all kinds, from the earliest startups to maturing companies.



Presented By Greater Kalamazoo Business Resources  
GreaterKalamazooBusinessResources.org

