

Executive Summary

“The promise of downtown is to be a focal point for a distinctive sense of community, forming the foundation for educational, economic and personal success for all.”

This vision statement, directly intended to support the “Kalamazoo Promise”, Kalamazoo’s unique free tuition program, guides us on a journey of projects, programs and policies that will define downtown Kalamazoo’s future throughout the next decade.

Vision Elements

The project planning team, a group of twenty professionals from a diverse group of downtown stakeholders, took on the task of distilling this work into the following **Vision Elements** designed to encompass these priorities. The future of downtown Kalamazoo should be **Accessible, Prosperous, Diverse, Green, Vibrant** and **Progressive**.

- **Accessible.** Approachable, available, convenient, nearby, unrestricted.
- **Prosperous.** Financially successful, well-off.
- **Diverse.** Different, distinct, diversified, varied.
- **Green.** Environmentally responsible/conscious.
- **Vibrant.** Energetic, vigorous, exciting, lively, dynamic.

- **Progressive.** Favoring change, improvement or reform.

Strategic Priorities

So what does that mean? What does the future of downtown Kalamazoo look like in five years? In the next ten years? Over the past twelve months, through a variety of focus groups and community forums, nearly 500 participants developed community values and guiding principles that resulted in six **Strategic Priorities: Residential, Retail, Students, Transportation, Jobs and Arts & Culture.**

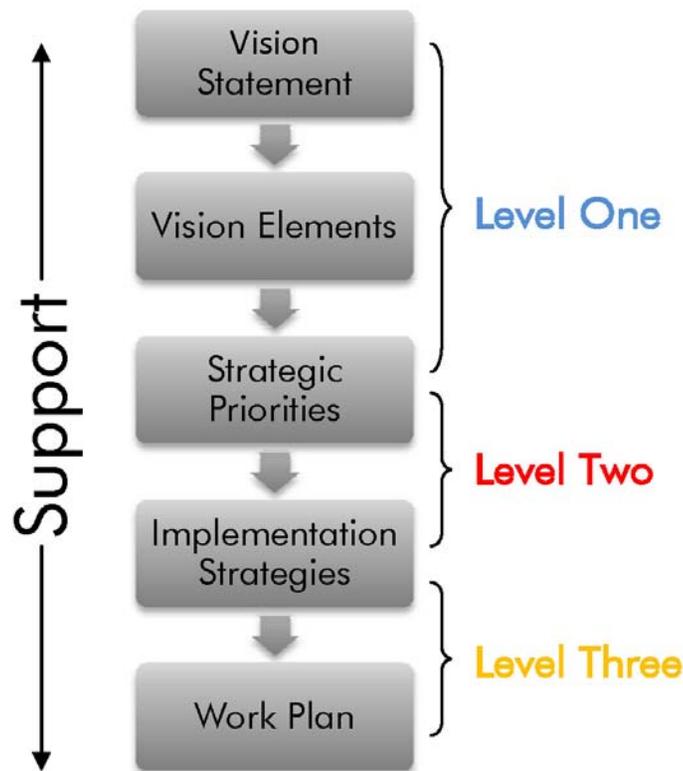
- **Residential.** Increase the number of affordable downtown residences.
- **Retail.** Continue to support and expand downtown retail opportunities.
- **Students.** Build stronger relationships with the education community, including students.
- **Transportation.** Improve traffic flow, ease of navigation and overall transportation facilities in and through the downtown.
- **Jobs.** Leverage public/private partnerships to support economic development and job creation.
- **Arts and Culture.** Continue to support arts and culture.

Implementation Plan

So, how do we get there? We have created a **Vision Statement** that is supported by **Vision Elements** and then distilled into **Strategic Priorities**. When the three are aligned, it provides a foundation that allows us to develop specific projects and implementation strategies that support each **Vision Element**. Blend in the traditional planning **Land Use Development** component along with several **Transformative Projects**; add in non-traditional **Opportunities** such as **Homelessness, Children, Seniors** and **Sustainability** and we have the

2009 Downtown Comprehensive Plan that is our recipe for the next decade.

So how do we use this plan? Well, it should be considered a “work in progress” and flexible. National, state and local trends such as the economy, demographics, technology and many unforeseen factors will affect what downtown Kalamazoo looks like ten years from now. The plan is a tool for making decisions *today* based on the community’s vision for *tomorrow*.



The Vision Alignment chart on page 1-11 aligns Strategic Priorities that best support the top three Vision Elements. For example the Strategic Priority of Retail best supports a *prosperous, vibrant* and *progressive* downtown.

In the Strategic Priority Retail chapter of this plan, a second level of detail is provided as Implementation Strategies are presented and aligned with their top three Vision Elements.

A third level of detail is presented in the final chapter by a Work Plan that identifies the Lead Agency, Support, Resources, Priority and cost for each Strategic Priority and their implementation strategies.

The Promise of Downtown Kalamazoo: 2009 Comprehensive Plan

Following are key recommendations for each strategic priority:

Residential

- Create 500 new residential units downtown over the next 10 years that address affordability.
- Strengthen the connection between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods by improving accessibility through pedestrian friendly streetscape enhancements.
- Support development projects that create senior living/assisted care and student living opportunities.

Retail

- Grow locally-owned retail businesses through strong recruitment and retention programs and incentives.
- Develop a retail incubator program which will assist at least 5 start-ups annually.
- Improve access to retail businesses through the conversion of one-way streets to two-way and pedestrian friendly streetscapes.

Students

- Improve the safety and connectivity of the pedestrian walkways between WMU and K College campuses and downtown.
- Assist in the development of three new student oriented businesses.
- Implement the Student Connector Trolley.

Transportation

- Implement the full one-way to two-way street conversion plan.
- Reconstruct the entire Michigan Ave. streetscape corridor from Lovell St. to E. Kalamazoo Ave. through traffic calming strategies, pedestrian friendly design and landscaping improvements.

- Encourage sustainable transportation initiatives including alternative modes of travel and new technologies.
- Implement the new Five-Year Parking Plan.

Jobs

- Develop new programs that support and encourage Kalamazoo Public School Promise graduates to select the local public higher educational institutions and offer internships with downtown businesses.
- Assist in the creation of 50 new jobs annually.
- Support the development of the downtown Bio-Medical/Life Science District for expanding Southwest Michigan Innovation Center start-ups.

Arts & Culture

- Continued support for the Arts and Cultural community and the development of new and unique programs downtown, such as "BLUE SKIES".
- Seek and encourage opportunities for more public art in green areas and pedestrian trafficked areas

Land Use and Development

- Adopt the Comprehensive Land Use Plan as a guide for growth.
- Continue to review and revise the Downtown Design Guidelines with a focus on Form-based codes and quality urban design strategies.
- Implement strategies and projects that will create "great" streets (Michigan and Kalamazoo), parks (Urban Nature Park) and retail districts (Kalamazoo Mall and Michigan Ave.).

Opportunities

- Support and assist Kalamazoo County with the Housing First Plan.
- Develop three new playgrounds for children and families.

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- Implement ten new sustainability programs for downtown businesses, property owners and residents such as recycling programs for residents, commercial and pedestrian/users.
- Identify trends and develop policies that address new demands such as growing senior population.

Transformative Projects

- 100 Block E. Michigan Ave. Redevelopment
- Two-Way Street Conversion/Streetscape Improvements
- Event Center/In-Town Neighborhood
- Lovell St./ Rose St. Development
- Haymarket Parking Lot # 9 Redevelopment
- Kalamazoo River Redevelopment/Portage Creek Trailway
- Medical/Biomedical/Life Science/Research Village

Now what? The adopted Plan will be used as a guide, a reference check for city leadership, downtown stakeholders, and those volunteers who, everyday, make decisions on the use of financial and human resources to improve downtown Kalamazoo. It will need updating from time to time and refreshed with changing community values. Downtowns evolve. Downtown Kalamazoo has been a leader, and will continue to be. From the opening of the first pedestrian mall in 1959 to its reopening in 1998, downtown Kalamazoo remains on the leading edge of progress, continually reinventing itself through efforts such as this.

Access to key documents of “The Promise of Downtown” the 2009 Downtown Kalamazoo Comprehensive Plan, including full report, Illustrative Summary, Executive Summary can be found at www.downtownkalamazoo.org. CD’s and jump drives are available (charges apply), as well as hard copies (charges apply). For more information, contact Steve

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