

Message from Downtown Coordinator

Summer is in full swing in Downtown Kalamazoo. From JumpstART weekend to the return of Beats on Bates, the season is off to a vibrant start. We're making progress—with alley activations and expanded recycling infrastructure—while partnering on long-term efforts like the Portland Loo and sustainability initiatives. Thank you for being part of what makes downtown thrive.

— Meghan Behymer



Ambassador Program

In May, the Downtown Ambassador team removed over 9,000 pounds of trash and 575 pounds of litter, completed 58 restroom cleanings, and provided 33 hospitality assists to support a cleaner, safer downtown. The team also pressure washed the entirety of the Kalamazoo Mall—including all tree planters—and refreshed Bates Alley with new mulch and layout prep ahead of Beats on Bates.

Program led by: [Meghan Behymer \(Downtown Coordinator\)](#)

Portland Loo

To address the need for additional public restrooms downtown, the Kalamazoo City Commission approved the purchase of a Portland Loo in early June 2025. The Portland Loo will take approximately 18 weeks to arrive, with full installation taking place 37 weeks after site selection.

While the City conducts a pilot using temporary restrooms at three locations outside the DDA boundary (June–November), DDA/DEGA Board and staff are working in partnership with the City to explore downtown district locations through business surveys, potential pilot testing, and site evaluations. A final recommendation is expected later this year.



Bigbelly Waste & Recycling

The expansion of downtown's Bigbelly Waste & Recycling Program is moving forward. We are anticipating a mid- to late-July installation.

- **Adding 26 New Units:** Expanding the network to 51 units will provide coverage and efficiency for collection
- **Relocating 4 Existing Units:** Optimizing placement based on waste patterns and pedestrian traffic will enhance service effectiveness
- **Unlocking Revenue Opportunity:** Next, we will build an advertising and sponsorship model to leverage Bigbelly as a sustainable, revenue-generating asset.



New Sustainability Initiative: WMU Student Intern Partnership to Improve Public Recycling

In partnership with Western Michigan University student interns with the City of Kalamazoo, this no-cost pilot program enhances the effectiveness of downtown recycling through research-driven behavior change. Contamination—when non-recyclables are placed in recycling bins—reduces material value and increases processing costs. This initiative seeks to address that challenge.

- **Live Waste Audits:** WMU student researchers will conduct real-time audits at our Farmer's Alley recycling location to identify contamination trends.
- **Smart, Photo-Based Signage:** Audit findings will inform clear, behavior-based signage placed on recycling bins—helping users make the right choice at the point of disposal.

Why This Matters

- Reduces contamination and improves recyclability of collected materials
- Decreases long-term costs for waste processing partners
- Strengthens Kalamazoo's reputation for innovation in urban sustainability
- Provides real-world learning for students and strengthens university-city ties
- Unlocks future funding and sponsorship opportunities for waste and recycling improvements

This effort supports key goals of the DDA/DEGA by promoting a cleaner, more welcoming downtown and demonstrating fiscal and environmental stewardship.

Program led by: [Meghan Behymer \(Downtown Coordinator\)](#)



Downtown Beautification

Downtown beautification efforts are nearly complete thanks to partnerships with the City's Parks & Rec, Forestry and Public Works departments, and Kalamazoo in Bloom.

Native plants (like the ones seen above) will brighten the Kalamazoo Mall, new trees will take root where old ones were lost, and Kalamazoo in Bloom filled Michigan Avenue with bursts of color.

Project led by: Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator), Ashton Anthony (Deputy Director of Parks & Rec) and Hannah Whiteman (Landscape Coordinator)



Imagine Kalamazoo 2035



Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK2035) is all about engagement: engagement with citizens, community groups, businesses, developers, investors, philanthropists, government and YOU. We're imagining a vision for Kalamazoo's future – discussing it, planning it, designing it, and acting on it.

"Plan It" Phase Wraps

Building on the input received during the "Imagine It!" phase, "Plan It" focused on confirming the strategic vision goals and establishing the community outcomes from these goals. Next up, "Design It!"

Updates can be found at: <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/Government/Programs-Initiatives/Imagine-Kalamazoo>

Project led by: Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager) and Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development)

In the News

[See inside downtown Kalamazoo's new senior apartments, a \\$20M development](#)

[2 downtown Kalamazoo apartment projects get tax break for renovation](#)

['JumpstART Summer' with Pride, art and Do-Dah in downtown Kalamazoo](#)

[Kalamazoo redevelopment project seeks to transform old county courthouse into hotel](#)

Upcoming Events

Beats on Bates

Bates Alley

Every Wednesday, June - September, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Caribbean Festival

Arcadia Creek Festival Place
June 27 - 28, 2025

Black Arts Festival

Bronson Park
July 12, 2025



Southwest Michigan First Chamber

Downtown Kalamazoo Business Townhall

July 8, 2025 @ 2 p.m.

180 East Water Street
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49007

Downtown Placemaking

Downtown Placemaking seeks to add to the vibrancy with another alley activation, plaza redesigns that act as connectors, and enhancing the experience of the Kalamazoo Mall as a more active and engaging place.



Project led by: Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager), Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development), Patrick McVerry (Parks and Recreation); Dennis Randolph (Public Services), and Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator)

- 1 North Kalamazoo Mall**
Construction project - pending federal grant approval
- 2 Exchange Place**
Mural project - pending property owner approval
- 3 Farmer's Alley**
Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza, lighting, and landscaping.
- 4 Rose Street Plaza**
Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza with furniture and landscaping. Coordination currently underway with adjacent property owners to partner on improvements on the public/private areas.
- 5 South Burdick (Lovell to Cedar)**
Currently on hold awaiting budget or grant opportunity.
- 6 Arcadia Creek Festival Place**
ACFP is undergoing a major renovation to improve infrastructure such as electrical and landscaping, supported by \$3.6 million in grants from the MEDC and City Commission, with additional funding being pursued for the \$14M project. Design focus groups were held in April with community input, and a public meeting was held in early June to share proposed design recommendations.

Kalamazoo Streets for All

Kalamazoo Streets For All is a lane conversion project that will transform downtown Kalamazoo into a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant destination that offers safe travel for all modes of transportation.

Updates can be found at: <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/Community/Projects/Streets-for-All>



Project led by: Rebekah Kik (Deputy City Manager), Christina Anderson (City Planner, Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development), and James Baker (Director, Public Services) with Consultants from Progressive AE, C2D, and Wightman Engineering

Parking Plan Implementation

The Parking Blueprint is organized into four sections defined by the following shared strategic objectives: (1) expanding parking supply/capacity; (2) managing parking demand; (3) improving/expanding mobility options; and (4) improving parking operations.

2025 Planned Changes:

- **Upgrade Meters:** Replace outdated meters with smart tech; decide on meter type, payment options, and quantity.
- **Adopt Tiered Rates:** Update pricing model to reflect demand and include evening enforcement zones.
- **Improve Accessibility:** Address gaps in barrier-free parking per 2024 inventory and code standards.

Project led by: Led by Rob Bacigalupi (Mission North Consulting) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison)

GUD Marketing

The GUD Marketing Consulting for Streets and Parking is to support the communication, marketing and branding of the City's Streets for All project.

Project led by: Led by Manny Garcia and Brooke Gieber (GUD Marketing) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Neal Conway and Michael Smith (Communications); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison)

WMU Economic Vitality Study

The WMU Economic Vitality Study is a collaborative research initiative between the City of Kalamazoo and Western Michigan University designed to better understand the economic health of Downtown Kalamazoo. The study aims to evaluate short- and long-term impacts of major downtown infrastructure projects, business activity trends, and the effectiveness of public investments.

- Third quarterly downtown business-focused survey closed in mid-April
- City staff are taking strategic efforts to improve the survey in collaboration with downtown businesses, enhance communication and outreach efforts, and shorten period between data collection and report.

Study led by: Center for Transportation and Livability at Western Michigan University – Dr. Jun Oh with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager’s Office Liaison)

Downtown Dollars

May saw \$1,425 Downtown Dollars spent locally and \$3,740 in new purchases—supporting 19 of our businesses!

| Month | # of Businesses that Redeemed DT\$ (% of total) | Total Sold | Total Spent |
|-------------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| January | 20 (38%) | \$935 | \$1,785 |
| February | 18 (34%) | \$620 | \$850 |
| March | 17 (30%) | \$785 | \$1,190 |
| April | 23 (41%) | \$900 | \$2,740 |
| May | 19 (34%) | \$3,740 | \$1,425 |
| June | | | |
| July | | | |
| August | | | |
| September | | | |
| October | | | |
| November | | | |
| December | | | |
| 2025 TOTAL | 31 (55%) | \$6,980 | \$7,990 |

May 2025 Stats

\$3,740

SOLD

↑ 30% vs. May 2024

\$1,425

SPENT

↑ 13% vs. May 2024

Program Life Stats

\$517K

SOLD

\$363.5K

SPENT

\$135.3K

IN CIRCULATION

Program led by: Chelsie Downs-Hubbarth (Community Investment Manager), Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator)