



*State of the City Address*  
**Mayor Bobby J. Hopewell**  
**Kalamazoo City Commission Chambers**  
**Monday, March 31, 2008**

Good evening and welcome to this year's *State of the City* Address.

Before I begin, I would like to take a minute to recognize other public officials, past and present and all of the volunteers that help our community who are with us tonight.

Kalamazoo City Commission - Vice Mayor Hannah McKinney, Commissioners Sean McCann, Don Cooney, David Anderson, Barbara Miller and Stephanie Moore

Kalamazoo City Appointees, Administrators and Staff - Special thanks to Acting Chief Mallery for taking on the leadership role in Public Safety and welcome to City Attorney Clyde Robinson.

Together, the City Commission, Administration, staff and hundreds of volunteers work everyday to make this City a great place. Thank you also to each of your loved ones for supporting your service to our community.

Finally, I would like to recognize all service men and women, especially, Public Safety Sergeant Daniel Smith and Officer Todd Christensen who are on active duty. We so appreciate the service they provide to this country.

Five months ago, I took the oath of office in this majestic chamber. The office of Mayor dates back to 1884 when Kalamazoo first became a City. I feel honored and humbled to stand before you tonight as the 58<sup>th</sup> Mayor of this great City; where I was born and raised, became an eagle scout, served as a paramedic and of course was given this great honor.

Tonight, I am pleased to talk about *Our City*.

Innovation has been defined as “the act or process of inventing or introducing something new.” Kalamazoo’s impressive history is full of innovative people who not only thought about a better Kalamazoo, but created one. From the Pottawatomie Indians who gave us the name Kalamazoo, to Titus Bronson and others who paved the way when Kalamazoo was settled in 1829, to the Upjohn and Gilmore families, the workers at Gibson Guitars as well as the founders of Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College, and of course the donors who gave us the *Kalamazoo Promise*; these people introduced “new” concepts that have propelled our community’s social and economic growth and have helped us build a vibrant and vital Kalamazoo.

I find it interesting, that the City's current strategic plan embodies some of the same concepts used by the people who founded Kalamazoo (i.e., Environmental Stewardship, Economic Vitality, Responsive & Responsible Government, Fiscal Stewardship, Neighborhood Development and Community Building.)

- For example, in the 1880's when new advances emerged in sanitation and sewer systems, City engineers had the foresight to keep the storm water and sanitary systems separate – Environmental Stewardship
- Goods such as wind engines, carriages, pharmaceuticals, musical instruments, paper products, celery and even beer were exported world-wide – Economic Vitality
- In 1884, Kalamazoo became the largest village in the United States to become a city and later in 1917 became one of the first cities to embrace a new “city manager - city commission” form of governance – Responsible and Responsive Government
- In 1938 in spite of the depression, the City paid off its last bond becoming America's only debt free city with a population of more than 50,000 people – Fiscal Stewardship

- Increased migration, better transportation and the appearance of new industries all played a role in the growth of Kalamazoo. Eventually, residents chose to move further away from the “inner core” and moved outward into neighborhoods now known as Stuart, Vine and Westnedge – Neighborhood Development
- In 1915, prohibition closed local saloons and breweries and as a result, the City built new parks such as Milham, Crane, West Main, and an amusement park at Oakwood Beach to redirect the energies of residents through city recreational events and activities. – Community Building

We now must continue, to build upon this spirit, leveraging and capitalizing on the legacy of innovation, tenacity and drive that has kept Kalamazoo a leader in Michigan.

Today, the City continues to be dedicated to environmental stewardship, and has initiated programs and practices that will help better preserve and protect our natural resources. Regulatory programs established for our water, wastewater and storm water systems have guaranteed protection of a most important resource, our water.

The City has identified several landfills and area aquifers to rid of contamination through its *Environmental Clean-Up efforts* including the Cork Street landfill, KL Avenue landfill and the former Allied Paper site. Preliminary clean-up plans have been established to prepare the properties for redevelopment.

I am proud of our staff and residents who successfully prevented PCB's from being dumped in Kalamazoo. These citizens came together, developed a plan and overcame the odds.

Another great example is the \$1.3 million investment in the *Davis Creek Business Park*, a former petroleum refinery that integrates a mixed-use development with an environmentally-sensitive design. This represents the City's commitment to regulations that help protect our environment.

Additionally, *Bronco Biodiesel* is an important environmental investment in our community. The partnership between the City's Environmental Services Division, Metro Transit and WMU will help us become one of the first in the nation to utilize biodiesel fuel in City vehicles resulting in cleaner emissions.

Kalamazoo joins other US cities that have also embarked on "Go Green" campaigns. I have met with Portage Mayor Pete Strazdas and Mayor Mark Behnke from Battle Creek about their cities efforts toward their commitment to the *US Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement*. Pete and I are discussing specific areas in which our cities can work together.

On April 7th Commissioner David Anderson, Directors Jeff Chamberlain and Bruce Merchant and the *Environmental Concerns Committee* will present a new policy to guide our sustainability plans.

*Our economic vitality shows through our regional economic partnerships, which are important to this area and have produced tangible results.* One result is the creation of the *WMU Business Technology and Research Park*. This collaboration between the City and WMU continues to attract new and existing bio-science and technology businesses. In fact, we are now one of the leaders in bio-science and technology in the State of Michigan due to this collaboration. As a result of the efforts of *Southwest Michigan First* and *Southwest Michigan Innovation Center (SMIC)*, the BTR Park is near capacity and will soon expand its facility. This will create new opportunities for bioscience investment in Kalamazoo.

Recently, the BTR Park celebrated a milestone with one of its original start-up companies, *Kalexsyn*. This company experienced tremendous growth and is the first to leave the *Innovation Center* and relocate to a facility in the *BTR Park*. In nearly four years, *Kalexsyn* has increased its sales by 180% to \$2.8 million, grown its staff of 23 to nearly 70 and moved from a 7,000 square foot operation to occupying a nearly 20,000 square foot facility, a \$4.5 million investment.

*ProNAi Therapeutics* is another, real Kalamazoo success story! Chief Operating Officer Robert Fogery and Chief Medical Officer, Donald Anderson have created a dynamic research organization that continues to discover and develop new therapeutic approaches for cancer and other diseases. My family was touched by this terrible disease when my Grandmother was diagnosed with and later died from liver cancer. I am sure some of you have been touch by this disease as well.

Just last week, *ProNAi* received FDA clearance to begin clinical trials of an entirely new class of drugs to fight cancer. With us tonight is Robert Fogery of *ProNAi*. Let's thank him and the scientists at *ProNAi* for taking on the battle against cancer and for investing in Kalamazoo.

Regionalization and collaboration are core undertakings that we continue to embrace as we move this community forward. Our unique collaborations do not stop with *WMU* and *Southwest Michigan First* but are also seen in our efforts with *Kalamazoo Communities in Schools* and *Kalamazoo Public Schools* to support the *Promise*; to our Pubic Safety mutual aid agreements with other governments and our ability to help other jurisdictions. Our work

with community partners is paramount to our ability to provide high quality, core services to our residents.

The City is taking the lead in a coalition of governmental agencies, corporations, educational and healthcare institutions in the development of the *Kalamazoo Regional Police and Fire Training Campus*. This campus will host, a state-of-the-art emergency training facility for police, fire and EMS professionals.

This new intergovernmental public/private partnership was shepherded by Fire Marshall Marty Myers, whose passion and dedication to the art of fire protection and public safety convinced all the partners that this joint venture would offer additional opportunities to improve the skills of those who respond when our residents “ring the alarm.”

Two weeks ago Marty’s efforts were recognized by the *Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce* when he was named *Public Servant of the Year*.

Another example of intergovernmental cooperation is *Southwest Michigan Alliance*, a community partnership that will employ the services of a lobbyist to make a significant impact on federal

legislation. This partnership, initiated by the *Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce*, includes the Cities of *Kalamazoo* and *Portage*, *Kalamazoo County*, *WMU* and the *Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport*.

This *Alliance* was formed to encourage federal funding for transportation improvements, airport enhancements, environmental assistance, increased enrollment at *WMU* and the development of youth programming to address concerns regarding youth violence. This type of collaboration is a first in this area and one of the first of its kind in the nation.

We can also take pride, that our City and region have been the benefactors of the impressive work of Ron Kitchens of *Southwest Michigan First and* Director Jerome Kisscorni of the City's *Economic Development* department as they have guided several new companies into the area while also helping established companies expand their operations.

Tonight we celebrate with *AT&T*, as they expand their *Kalamazoo* operation to include internet protocol and television services which will add 110 new jobs.

We are also very excited about the most recent contracts awarded to *Parker-Hannifin Corporation* totaling over \$2.5 billion for design and manufacturing of hydraulic controls used in the aerospace industry.

*Kaiser Aluminum*, a leading producer of fabricated aluminum products will relocate their operation to occupy space at the Midlink Business Park, yielding about 300 new manufacturing jobs.

In collaboration with the City and State of Michigan, *Fabri-Kal Corporation* will relocate its current operations to the former Mead Paper facility, one of our Brownfield sites. This \$41 million investment is expected to create up to 160 manufacturing jobs over the next five years and retain 42 positions.

So in Kalamazoo; manufacturing is still alive. Stay tuned, there are more job announcements on the horizon.

*A responsible and responsive city government must provide a safe and secure community; while also ensuring equal treatment for all citizens.* One such area of concern in which we found opportunity for improvement, was in the administration of freedom of information request.

The City Commission committed itself, to addressing this issue and appointed a committee to establish policies that will allow for better management of information requests. A policy now exists, practices have been upgraded, and administrators will be trained.

I would like to thank Commissioners Miller and Anderson as well as former Commission David Juarez for spearheading the development of the new FOIA policy.

For this City's government, to operate in a responsible and responsive way, we must always be willing to analyze and ensure that our work is as transparent as possible. Today, we operate the largest Public Safety Department in the country and continue to improve upon our strategic neighborhood initiatives to transform our incredible crime fighting capabilities and redirect vital resources to support and promote an effective community policing model.

A year ago there was much conversation, some disagreement and debate about expectations of our Public Safety Officers related to improving their interactions with community members. As a product of these discussions, the City Manager and Public Safety Leadership evaluated and made crucial decisions to change the perception of officers in the community. It set them on the path of reexamination by using the newly created Public Safety Work Plan.

This plan, created by Manager Collard, outlines the efforts of the City to bridge gaps between the community and Public Safety.

Parts of the plan include:

- the creation of a *Community/Public Safety Partnering Agreement*, that was completed and signed by community leaders and public safety officials outlining our commitment to work together to implement the ideals of “community” throughout Kalamazoo;
- the strengthening of the *Citizens’ Public Safety Review and Appeals Board (CPSRAB)* to guarantee the effectiveness of its work;
- the completion of the *Consolidated Public Safety Station*, which is scheduled to open in June;

- the enhancement of human relations between residents and Public Safety officers; and
- the establishment of procedures and practices to improve Public Safety operations including the continued evaluation of the *Office of Professional Standards* and the training of officers on the policies and practices of preventing racially biased policing.

This new direction has yielded over 1,200 relationship building conversation between officers and the community that they serve.

We had an opportunity to improve relationships in our community as it relates to race, equity and information sharing.....AND WE RESPONDED. This work contributed to the great strides that Public Safety is making today. Crime in the City has dropped, by 14.9% compared to the same time period last year, and shootings are down 80%. Additionally, complaints regarding officer conduct are down by 70%. These statistics are evidence that, once again, our Public Safety Officers have risen to the occasion, and demonstrated that yes they can build better relationships, with ALL segments of our community, while also demonstrating that they are a superior crime fighting force.

New leadership opportunities have been presented as the City Manager works to place a new Public Safety Chief and Deputy Chief. I continue to encourage and support City Manager Collard as he diligently continues his search to find the very best chief for our city.

The *Kalamazoo Promise* serves as a model for the country. *The investment in the future of a child, is an investment in our city and the foundation for community building.* It's no wonder that we have been named one of *100 Best Communities for Young People* and have been honored for our commitment to providing a healthy and safe environment for our youth.

In this City, we understand that public education provides students the tools needed to take advantage of the *Kalamazoo Promise* and the *Promise* provides the financial freedom students need to receive a college education. Along with their parents, we must help build the character of our youth and provide expectations, guidance, support, encouragement and opportunity for their success.

Commissioners Don Cooney and Stephanie Moore often remind us of the need to help our community partners facilitate meaningful

and constructive opportunities for our youth during the school year as well as the summer. Commissioner Barbara Miller is an advocate of the opportunities that Parks and Recreation offers our young people. Summer youth employment and recreation programs support our efforts to engage youth of all ages. Last year, the city and community partners employed 220 youth and offered over 1,000 recreational opportunities through the summer.

Some organizations and companies have embraced our approach and are participating in programs that promote youth in Kalamazoo. However, we need more corporate citizens to be actively engaged by either mentoring or employing our young people. An example of an innovative corporate strategy is the City's *Promise Partners*. This is a collaborative effort with *Kalamazoo Communities in Schools*. This program affords City staff the opportunity to mentor students in *KPS* during the work day.

On April 7<sup>th</sup> in my speech to the *Kalamazoo Rotary*, I will talk more about my passion for our youth and the importance of an effective corporate connection to youth in our City. It is the work that we all do today that will guarantee the future of our young people.

Our educational partners have been working hard to create a world class school system. This system will be key to our community's economic success. The KPS focus on the community-driven strategic plan will foster student achievement. But this plan will not work to improve our children or our economy if we can't fund the district. I am asking you, on May 6<sup>th</sup> to go and vote yes on the renewal of the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) millage. We can not afford to loose the momentum gained by the promise; loss of this millage will be a loss of that momentum.

The City and County have partnered in another community building effort to consolidate public transportation to provide needed services throughout the County. The City supported the creation of the *Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority* and ask that you continue your support by voting yes to the transportation millage renewal November.

Two years ago, Vice Mayor McKinney challenged us to develop a new financial model which changed the way we balanced the budget.

*Our fiscal stewardship is outlined in this new system, and requires us to responsibly address our fiscal challenges.*

As a result, this year,

- we balanced the budget with no required program eliminations;
- received an upgraded bond rating from “negative to “stable” making borrowed money less expensive
- reduced the solid waste millage;
- and established reserve accounts;

Additionally, investment in infrastructure and park enhancements has improved the quality of life in our City. Since implementing this fiscal plan we have not experienced any layoffs or reductions in core service since 2005; and we have invested more than \$13 million in roadway improvements since 2002. And yes we are aggressively dealing with our potholes. The work we’ve done makes us an anomaly in Michigan enabling us to continue our current level of service for our residents.

A true guardian of our neighborhoods, Commissioner Sean McCann, once said,

*“Attractive, safe and enjoyable neighborhoods are essential to Kalamazoo’s well-being and represent one of our greatest strengths on which we must build...”*

*The City’s neighborhood development initiative, A+ Neighborhoods is a perfect example, a vision for how we want to strengthen our neighborhoods.* This all neighborhoods initiative uses innovative strategies to eliminate blight, construct more affordable housing and secure funds for housing projects.

Over \$3 million of private funds have been invested in the most challenged neighborhoods in the City since 2003. The City, in conjunction with our volunteers on the Community Development Act Advisory Committee work diligently to provide *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development* funding to organizations that offer affordable housing to residents living at or near the poverty level.

Vice Mayor McKinney and County Treasurer Balkema in partnership with many organizations, worked together to provide foreclosure information to affected residents. Foreclosure is a serious problem in our community and in our nation. The City will work with the

State of Michigan as they implement the new “*Save the Dream*”  
Legislation developed to assist families threatened by foreclosure.

Kalamazoo, we’ve accomplished a great deal, but realistically,  
Michigan has a huge economic challenge. But because of pioneering  
programs, our community partners and our residents who are  
willing to take advantage of opportunities; Kalamazoo is the model  
of innovation for the State of Michigan and is in a great position to  
help catapult Michigan’s economy.

From the beginning of our Kalamazoo history, people have rallied  
together and affected change in government, created industry and  
jobs and provided recreational activities for their friends and  
neighbors. I would suspect they didn’t always agree on how to build  
a better community and I also suspect that their realities might have  
varied from neighborhood to neighborhood, and even person to  
person. But what is clear to me is that they created a magnificent  
“legacy” and incited the energy to overcome obstacles to form this  
City.

We are a work in progress and must continue to strive to be like the innovative community of our past and forge a Kalamazoo as good as its “*Promise.*” I believe if Kalamazoo is as good as its “*Promise,*” we must do more...

We must do more to bring industry to this community and provide good paying jobs!

We must do more to help our children understand that killing each other is not acceptable!

We must do more to prepare our children for success so they will be eligible for the *Kalamazoo Promise* and become World-Ready!

We must do more to help underrepresented populations find their way in our community!

We must do more to help residents find affordable housing in this area!

Kalamazoo we either rise together or fall together.

So when history is written about our journey, our community should be remembered for many things, but most importantly, for our

coming together and innovative spirit to creating the possible.

We will be remembered:

- as a world leader in bio-science and technology as we blaze the trail to find new cures and means to sustain life;
- as the economic engine of Michigan, creating good jobs for all in our region
- as a City with thriving, diverse neighborhoods and a vibrant downtown;
- as the country's eco-friendly leader, that cares for our planet;
- as a leader in the development of alternative modes of transportation to be the nation's foremost *walk-able* and bike-able community; and
- as education giants, modeling for the world, the most successful way, to develop excellence in our children.

I believe our will and tenacity gives us every possibility to make this place we call home . . . even better.

Thank you for taking this journey with me tonight God bless.