

City of Kalamazoo

First Amendment Assemblies

Q&A

1. What is the City of Kalamazoo doing to ensure organizers of protests or demonstrations follow the rules?

- At the City of Kalamazoo, our top priority is providing a safe community for everyone who lives, works and visits our city.
- The First Amendment guarantees the right to express opinions through non-violent, peaceful assemblies and demonstrations.
- We have created a set of guidelines and tools for organizers to follow and use for future events to ensure the lines of communication remain open and everyone understands what is expected of them.

2. What does the City of Kalamazoo consider a First Amendment assembly?

- First Amendment assemblies are peaceful, non-violent public demonstrations.
- First Amendment assemblies include marches, parades, picketing, rallies, sit-ins, street theater, vigils and flash events.
- The City of Kalamazoo and KDPS works hard to ensure all policies regarding First Amendment assemblies are applied and enforced equitably.

3. Do I need a permit to plan a First Amendment assembly?

- No. However, if you wish to reserve a specific park or wish to close a sidewalk or a street for a limited time, please complete a Special Event Form [available here](#) and submit it in advance of your event to city staff so they can help you coordinate the necessary venue.
- We ask that all event organizers contact us to ensure the lines of communication are open beforehand. This helps us ensure events are safe.

4. Where can First Amendment assemblies take place?

- Common event locations include city parks and streets/public ways.
- Permission is required if you plan to host an event on private property.

5. Will participants be arrested for participating in a First Amendment assembly?

- Peaceful protests are protected by the First Amendment. Participants can be arrested for encouraging and initiating violence or illegal activities or threatening to harm people or property.
- Our top priority is providing a safe community for everyone who lives, works and visits Kalamazoo.
- And a safe community means safer neighborhoods and a culture that promotes respect for one another.

6. What is the city doing to ensure members of the media or legal observers aren't arrested at events?

- Members of the media and legal observers play important roles in covering and observing marches, rallies and demonstrations.
- We have created guidance for both to follow and provided resources, so reporters and legal observers know what is expected of them.
- KDPS will incorporate additional training for officers regarding members of the press and legal observers during First Amendment assemblies.
- The City Manager's Office staff are engaging with media and community partners to strengthen relationships, improve communication, and explore the possibility for joint trainings.
- Moving forward, we remain committed to listening to the residents and leaders in our community — and that includes members of the media and legal observers — to help us make decisions, garner feedback and constantly improve.