City of Kalamazoo
First Amendment Assembly
Communication Strategy

Overview
The City of Kalamazoo’s preliminary subcommittee report released on August 28 identified the need to develop a First Amendment Assembly Communications Strategy to clarify expectations, enhance accountability and transparency, and define communications needs.

This memorandum outlines potential key tactics to help the City communicate before, during and after events with clarification on what information needs to be shared with who (audience), when (detailed timelines, frequency) and how (methods of communication).

Different communication tactics may be used for different types of events (e.g., communications for a planned large assembly will be different than for a small gathering in front of a governmental building) but the goal of this document is to provide the community, organizers, and city staff the necessary tools to effectively communicate, develop a shared understanding, and have a successful First Amendment assembly.

Audiences
- City Commissioners
- City staff & Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS)
- Community leaders
  - Ex. Boards and committees, such as Citizen Public Safety Review and Appeals Board (CPSRAB)
- Event organizers
- Legal observers
- Kalamazoo residents
- Media

Key Tactics

Communications materials and ongoing tactics

1. **Core messages**
   Using the City of Kalamazoo’s strategic goals and themes found in its Strategic Vision (Appendix A), a set of core messages will be developed and utilized in communications related to First Amendment assemblies.

2. **Stakeholder contact list**
   The City of Kalamazoo will compile its various stakeholder lists into one comprehensive list to enable faster communication. This list will be managed by the City Manager’s Office.

3. **Assembly landing page**
   To help provide information and foster transparent communications, a new landing page on the City of Kalamazoo’s website will feature information, safety protocols and expectations for First Amendment
assemblies. Information will also be provided for how event organizers can schedule a meeting or communicate with City or KDPS staff prior to an event.

4. **Assembly one-pagers for event organizers, legal observers and media**
   One-pager information sheets will be maintained by the City to outline current rules for assemblies. This can be provided to the event organizer to inform participants, legal observers and media of protocols and expectations. This will also include a checklist of details for organizers to consider and provide easy access to City resources to help organizers plan.

5. **Assembly guideline promotion**
   New resources, such as the First Amendment assembly landing page on the City’s website, will be promoted using the City of Kalamazoo and KDPS social media channels to increase awareness among residents and local leaders.

6. **City of Kalamazoo/KDPS training**
   The City of Kalamazoo and KDPS will conduct training with relevant City employees on assemblies and their roles in ensuring safety, fairness, equity, transparency, etc.

7. **Media relationships**
   The City of Kalamazoo will offer to work with local media to strengthen relationships and discuss potential tactics such as training opportunities and best practices (note: the City of Kalamazoo will not pursue a local media credentialing program).

8. **Implicit bias training**
   All City of Kalamazoo employees will be required to complete implicit bias training.

**Before First Amendment Assemblies**

1. **Event organizer outreach**
   When KDPS becomes aware of a planned assembly, KDPS will make attempts to reach out to coordinate a meeting with the event organizer. Each outreach attempt with organizers will be documented.

   KDPS will attempt to coordinate an in-person meeting between event organizers, the City of Kalamazoo, KDPS and other relevant parties. During this meeting, KDPS will explain safety protocols and expectations. To ensure all information is gathered, the City of Kalamazoo will develop a checklist that gathers key information, including:
   a. Nature of the event
   b. Organizer name(s) and contact information
   c. Estimated number of people expected to attend
   d. Permitting information, if required
   e. Number of officers on duty
   f. Participating jurisdictions
   g. Staging locations
   h. Possibilities for disruption, counter-protests, etc.
   i. Confidential details not to be shared with the public beforehand to allow for advance planning
2. **City Communications toolkit**  
   Develop a brief toolkit with core messages, Q&A, etc. for City staff to use in internal and external communication for events.

3. **Media outreach**  
   City Manager’s Office will coordinate outreach with local news media outlets to establish communication before scheduled events. Staff will provide start times, locations, safety information, protocols, etc.

4. **City Commission briefing**  
   City Manager’s Office staff will provide a First Amendment Assembly briefing update for City Commissioners, which will include an overview of groups involved in the assembly and the expected date, time and locations.

5. **Stakeholder outreach**  
   City Manager’s Office staff will provide relevant information to community leaders, neighborhood associations, etc. about planned assemblies as appropriate. Staff will be intentional in identifying the most effective communication methods for the intended audience.

**During First Amendment Assemblies**

1. **Community updates on closures, traffic issues, and other relevant concerns**  
   KDPS will publish updates on road closures, traffic issues and other relevant concerns to the community on the KDPS and City of Kalamazoo social media channels as well as to local print, radio and TV media.

2. **Safety signage**  
   In the areas where an assembly is expected to take place, KDPS will place signage outlining laws, permitted/closed areas, and safety protocols as feasible/when possible.

3. **City Commissioner briefing**  
   City Manager’s Office staff will provide updates to City Commissioners as necessary.

4. **Communications with event organizers**  
   As needed, City and KDPS staff will attempt to communicate with event organizers during an event when possible.

**After First Amendment Assemblies**

Communication should occur as soon as possible after events as needed. Depending on the size and circumstances of the event, media briefings and/or debriefs may not be warranted.

1. **Media**  
   City Manager’s Office and KDPS will keep the media apprised via a media briefing after the event, within 24 hours, if possible. This could be through the issuance of a written statement or a briefing event with interviews (virtual or in person).

2. **Debrief**  
   The City of Kalamazoo, KDPS, event organizers, community stakeholders and other relevant parties will attempt to hold a debriefing call to discuss the assembly. A report of this debriefing will be provided to
City Commissioners to ensure transparency and accountability. The City Manager’s Office will be responsible for adjusting Communication Strategy and future plans based on lessons learned.

Appendix 1

**Excerpt from the City of Kalamazoo Strategic Vision document (p. 6-7)**

**Strategic Goals**

- **Shared Prosperity** Abundant opportunities for all people to prosper.
- **Connected City** A city that is networked for walking, biking, riding, and driving.
- **Inviting Public Places** Parks, arts, culture, and vibrant streets.
- **Environmental Responsibility** A green and healthy city.
- **Safe Community** Creating a safe environment for living, working, and playing.
- **Youth Development** A city with places and supports that help young people thrive.
- **Complete Neighborhoods** Residential areas that support the full range of people’s daily needs.
- **Strength Through Diversity** An inclusive city where everyone feels at home.
- **Economic Vitality** Growing businesses and stabilizing the local economy to the benefit of all.
- **Good Governance** Ensuring the City organization has the capacity and resources to effectively implement the community’s Strategic Vision in a sustainable way.

**The three Themes of Kalamazoo’s Strategic Vision are:**

- **Connected & Accessible Community** Developing strong connections between a diverse range of people and places.

- **Equity & Opportunity for All** Limited resources and opportunities must be shared; and the inclusion of all people in every neighborhood must share in decision making processes.

- **Vibrant & Friendly Environment** Protect and improve the quality of our local natural environment, and create strong communities with targeted community driven investments.

View additional detail at [imaginekalamazoo.com/goals](http://imaginekalamazoo.com/goals).