



CITY OF KALAMAZOO

City Manager





The Position

The City of Kalamazoo is seeking its next City Manager, a pivotal leader who will build upon a foundation of strong community spirit and a shared progressive vision. This is a unique opportunity to lead a vibrant, financially sound “education city” with a thriving arts and culture scene, guiding it towards even greater shared equity, prosperity, and innovation. The ideal candidate will value collaboration, embrace strategic planning through the “Imagine Kalamazoo 2035” vision, and has a proven track record demonstrating impactful leadership to address key challenges, propelling Kalamazoo to the next level of excellence.

As the Chief Administrative Officer, the City Manager is responsible for planning, administering, directing, and evaluating all municipal operations. This includes oversight of essential public services such as water, sewer, streets, public safety, community development, parks and recreation, and administrative functions. The City Manager is tasked with ensuring efficient and effective service delivery, providing expert policy guidance to a high-performing senior leadership team, and serving as the primary administrative support to the City Commission, implementing their policy decisions with precision and foresight.

The City Manager will be instrumental in translating the City Commission's vision into tangible outcomes across critical areas. A paramount focus will be on economic vitality, driving strategies for stronger business attraction and retention, expanding the tax base, demonstrating a commitment toward diversity, equity and inclusion for all employees and residents, and downtown development and redevelopment. They will champion community well-being, develop innovative, collective solutions for pressing social issues. Operational excellence will be paramount, requiring a deep dive into departmental budgets to enhance efficiency, a global compensation study to attract and retain top talent, and a commitment to continuous improvement in all city services. Furthermore, the Manager will lead the strategic investment in and management of the City's critical infrastructure, while proactively pursuing vital federal grants.

Reporting directly to a highly engaged and collaborative City Commission, the City Manager works as a trusted partner, maintaining consistent and transparent communication to advance collective goals. The Manager will lead a unified and dedicated Senior Leadership Team, empowering them to drive operational excellence and achieve strategic objectives. Beyond City Hall, the Manager is the City's foremost ambassador, building and nurturing critical relationships with a vast network of external stakeholders. This includes a robust philanthropic community (e.g., Foundation for Excellence, Kalamazoo Community Foundation), key educational institutions (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Kalamazoo Public Schools), major employers (Stryker, Pfizer, Bronson Healthcare), the business community (Southwest Michigan First and The Chamber), and diverse community and advocacy groups (NAACP, faith communities, neighborhood associations, and grassroots organizations serving underserved populations). This leader must be visible, accessible, and intentional in their community engagement, ensuring the City Manager's office is deeply connected to the pulse of Kalamazoo.

Priorities

- Be a visible, accessible, and engaged leader in the community, reinforcing the City's commitment to transparency, diversity, equity, and inclusion and shared prosperity.
- Build strong, collaborative relationships with the City Commission through regular, transparent communication.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of City operations, finances, service delivery, and staffing structures to understand current strengths, needs, and opportunities for improvement.
- Engage with key community stakeholders – including residents, neighborhood groups, advocacy organizations, and institutional partners to understand community priorities and perspectives.
- Establish rapport and trust with department heads and City staff; promote a unified and empowered leadership team.
- Immerse fully in the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Strategic Plan and Master Plan; identify opportunities to align operations and initiatives with the plan's goals and values.





The Successful Candidate

The next City Manager for Kalamazoo is a visionary, strategic, and approachable leader who brings a deep commitment to community well-being, social equity, and sustainable economic development. This individual understands the complexities of local government and excels at navigating the intersection of service delivery, governance, and community engagement. With the ability to connect the dots across diverse systems and stakeholders, the successful candidate will bring clarity of purpose, and the strategic insight needed to advance the City's long-term goals – most notably the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 plan – while remaining flexible and responsive to emerging challenges.

As a communicator, this individual leads with empathy and clarity. This individual is a transparent and proactive leader who listens carefully, speaks thoughtfully, and ensures that communication, both internally with staff and externally with the community, is consistent, honest, and inclusive. The successful candidate values collaboration and is skilled at forging strong, productive partnerships with the City Commission, staff, and a wide array of stakeholders, including neighborhoods, nonprofits, business leaders, and historically underrepresented communities.

The City Manager will be highly visible and deeply engaged in the community, not only attending events and civic functions but also showing up in spaces where government presence has traditionally been limited. They will take the time to understand issues at a ground level, building relationships that are rooted in authenticity and mutual respect. This individual models accountability, takes ownership of mistakes, and cultivates a culture of integrity across the organization.

Kalamazoo is a community with ambitious goals. Therefore, the next City Manager must be a results-oriented leader who is not afraid to take smart risks and pursue innovative solutions. They are energized by challenges and bring a disciplined yet flexible approach to maximizing financial resources and aligning efforts across departments. Equity will not be an afterthought – it will be woven into every decision. The successful candidate will have a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, coupled with an understanding of the lived experiences of low-income and marginalized populations. Their leadership will reflect a belief in shared prosperity and an unwavering dedication to reducing disparities.

Internally, the City Manager must be a strong team leader who inspires confidence, empowers staff, and builds a collaborative culture where talent is recognized and nurtured. They will support professional growth at all levels of the organization and foster an environment where innovation, trust, and shared purpose can thrive. Organized and action-oriented, this leader brings a strong sense of urgency and focus, effectively balancing long-term planning with timely execution. Ultimately, the next City Manager will bring heart, vision, and discipline to a role that touches every corner of community life.

Qualifications

Minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, or a closely related field. Ten years of progressively responsible experience in local government management, public policy, economic development, planning or related experience. Five years of management experience, including coaching and mentoring, is also required.

Preferred qualifications master's degree, and demonstrated success in areas such as economic development, downtown redevelopment, affordable housing, public safety, and infrastructure management. ICMA Credentialed Manager certification is also preferred.

Inside The Organization

The City of Kalamazoo operates under a Commission-Manager form of government; a structure designed for efficient and professional municipal administration. Policy-making and legislative authority are vested in a seven-member City Commission, comprising six part-time Commissioners elected to four-year staggered terms and a Mayor elected to a two-year term on a separate non-partisan ticket. The City Manager serves as the Chief Administrative Officer, appointed by the City Commission, and is responsible for administering policies, ordinances, and overseeing the day-to-day operations by appointing and directing department heads.

Kalamazoo maintains a strong financial position, evidenced by receiving the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 25 consecutive years. The City operates on a calendar fiscal year, ending December 31. For Fiscal Year 2024, the City's primary government reported actual total expenses of approximately \$163.2 million, demonstrating its capacity to deliver a wide range of essential services and invest in community priorities. The 2025 General Fund budget anticipates further strategic investments.

The City is supported by a dedicated team of 697 FTEs as of FY2024, organized across various functions to deliver high quality services to residents and businesses.

Kalamazoo is guided by its comprehensive "Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Strategic Vision and Master Plan," which articulates a commitment to "shared prosperity, connected city, inviting public places, environmental responsibility, safe community, youth development, complete neighborhoods, strength through diversity, economic vitality, and good governance." This visionary framework serves as the blueprint for the City's ongoing initiatives and future growth.

Building on its strong foundation, the City is actively engaged in addressing critical community needs and fostering a thriving environment.

Key initiatives include:

Enhancing Economic Development: Driving stronger business attraction and retention efforts, increasing the tax base, and promoting downtown development and redevelopment.

Strategic Infrastructure Investment: Continuing ongoing efforts to improve and modernize aging infrastructure, particularly water and wastewater systems.

Leveraging Strategic Partnerships: Working closely with the robust philanthropic community, notably the Foundation for Excellence, which provides perpetual funding for aspirational projects aligned with the City's vision, including youth development, economic development, affordable housing, and neighborhood revitalization.

Organizational Transformation: Focusing on continuous improvement in administrative strategy, proactive communication, and fostering greater diversity, equity, and inclusion within City leadership.

Kalamazoo is a dynamic and forward-thinking community, poised for continued growth and innovation.



The Community

Just 35 miles from the shores of Lake Michigan and midway between Chicago and Detroit, the City of Kalamazoo offers the best of both worlds: a lively urban center surrounded by scenic beauty, with easy access to major metropolitan hubs. As the seat of Kalamazoo County, the City is a regional anchor known for its cultural vibrancy, economic diversity, and strong sense of place.

Home to more than 73,000 residents, Kalamazoo is one of Michigan's most diverse communities. The City embraces a wide range of racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, contributing to its rich social fabric. This diversity is reflected in its public schools, where more than 70 languages are spoken, and celebrated throughout the year in festivals, public art, and community initiatives that promote inclusion and belonging.

Education is central to Kalamazoo's identity. The Kalamazoo Promise, a groundbreaking scholarship program that offers free in-state college tuition to graduates of the Kalamazoo Public Schools, has drawn national attention and inspired similar efforts across the country. Neighborhoods throughout the City offer a mix of historic homes, modern apartments, and tree-lined streets, creating welcoming environments for families, students, artists, and professionals alike.

Kalamazoo's vibrant arts and culture scene rivals that of much larger cities. From the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and the historic Kalamazoo State Theatre to the Gilmore Keyboard Festival and local galleries, performance spaces, and street murals, creative expression is everywhere. Downtown Kalamazoo boasts an eclectic mix of restaurants, shops, breweries, and public spaces, fostering a pedestrian-friendly, year-round destination for residents and visitors.

The City is also known for its abundant green spaces. With more than 50 parks, miles of trails, and a robust Parks and Recreation Department, Kalamazoo offers many opportunities for outdoor activity, from hiking and biking to kayaking on the Kalamazoo River. The nearby Kalamazoo Nature Center and regional recreation areas provide even more ways to connect with the natural world.

With a history dating back to the early 1800s, Kalamazoo has long served as a hub of innovation and industry. Once a center for paper production and pharmaceuticals, the City has evolved into a thriving economy built around education, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and life sciences. It is home to Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, and a growing base of research-driven enterprises. Major employers include Stryker, Pfizer, and Bronson Healthcare, and the City's entrepreneurial ecosystem continues to attract startups and small businesses.

Kalamazoo consistently earns high marks for livability, innovation, and quality of life. It has been recognized as one of the top cities for millennial entrepreneurs and named among the best places to live in Michigan. With its strong civic spirit, commitment to equity, and unique blend of small-town charm and big-city amenities, Kalamazoo is a community with momentum – and a future shaped by those who call it home.

Quick Facts

- Population: 73,290
- Median Household Income: \$48,965
- Median Home Value: \$164,500
- Median Rent: \$1,031/Month
- Median Age: 26.8

All demographic information was sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau.



Compensation and Benefits

The expected hiring range is \$220,000-\$250,000, depending on qualifications, with an excellent benefits package. Learn more about our options and employee-based benefits [here](#).

Benefits offered include the following:

- Comprehensive Medical, Dental, and Vision Insurance (with City contributions to Health Savings Accounts for the HDHP plan)
- Employer-Paid Life and Long-Term Disability Insurance
- Robust Retirement Plans: Defined Benefit Pension, 457 Deferred Compensation with City Match, and a City-contributed Retirement Health Care Savings Program (HCSP)
- Generous Paid Time Off: Holidays, Vacation, Sick Leave, Personal Days, and Paid Parental Leave
- Flexible Spending Accounts (Medical & Dependent Care)
- Option to waive medical coverage for an annual payment
- Access to Voluntary Benefits (e.g., Critical Illness, Hospital Indemnity, Legal)



How to Apply

Applications will be accepted electronically by Raftelis at jobs.crelate.com. Applicants complete a brief online form and are prompted to provide a cover letter and resume. The position will be open until filled with a first review of applications beginning **September 12, 2025**.

In Michigan, applicants for certain public positions, including the City Manager's position, must specifically request confidentiality to keep their candidacy confidential. If you request this, Raftelis will make every effort to maintain the confidentiality of your application, in accordance with Michigan's Open Records and Open Meetings laws and statuses. We will also notify you in advance should your application be subject to public disclosure.



Questions

Please direct questions to Pamela Wideman at pwideman@raftelis.com and Kelsey Batt at kbatt@raftelis.com.