

# CITY VIEW

## From the City Manager

Hello, Kalamazoo!

It’s an honor to serve as your City Manager. I’ve spent years in public service, and I’ve seen that real progress happens when we listen, build trust, and work together. Strong cities grow from strong neighborhoods, and neighborhoods thrive on relationships.

I plan to stay present and involved, and to support our staff in keeping people and families at the center of what we do. Kalamazoo has a strong tradition of planning and community involvement, and the City staff here are dedicated. I want to work with them to find even better, more inclusive ways for residents from across the community to participate. I’ve noticed how this community cares for each other, especially those facing hardship. That matches my own family’s values. When a city cares for its most vulnerable, it becomes stronger for everyone.

Kalamazoo is not entirely new to our family. My wife, Joy, graduated from Western

Michigan University, and our son has lived and worked here for years. We are raising our young children here, and they’re enrolled in Kalamazoo Public Schools. Like many families, we care about safe neighborhoods, good schools, and clear opportunities for young people. The City plays a key part, but helping youth is something we all share with families, schools, and community partners. I want to support the work already happening in education, recreation, mentorship, and job training.

This work starts with listening.

A mentor once told me that when we visit neighborhoods, we should aim to make our eyes smile. I want to hear your stories, understand your concerns, and learn what makes your eyes smile in your community. That means listening to people and families who have faced obstacles and working with partners to make sure we approach this work with dignity, compassion, and a focus on lasting stability. I plan to be out in the city, at parks, schools, local shops, and community events, to meet you where you are.

Kalamazoo’s focus on equity and fair access to opportunity is one reason I wanted to be here. I want to work with residents and City staff to close gaps in access to financial resources, so families, entrepreneurs, and neighborhoods can move forward together.

What’s next?

In the coming months, I’ll prioritize attending neighborhood meetings, local events, and visiting the places that make Kalamazoo unique. I’m here to listen, learn, and contribute to the work already underway.

Thank you for the warm welcome. I look forward to meeting you and working together.

Sincerely,



Malcolm Hankins  
City Manager



## City Commission Adopts FY2026 Budget Focused on Infrastructure, Housing, and Safety

On January 5, 2026, the Kalamazoo City Commission approved the City’s FY2026 Budget, a balanced financial plan that reflects community priorities while continuing major investments in streets, housing, public safety, and essential infrastructure.

The FY2026 Budget totals approximately \$344 million across all City funds, including about \$128 million in capital investments. While the overall budget is smaller than last year, the change is largely due to the inclusion of significant one-time infrastructure projects in 2025. Even so, the City continues to invest at historically high levels in services residents rely on every day.

The adopted budget maintains the City’s 12-mill operating tax rate, which supports day-to-day City services. This rate remains significantly lower than in the past due to continued support from the Foundation for

Excellence, which contributes nearly \$22 million in 2026 to support City operations.

The General Fund totals approximately \$87 million and maintains a strong five-year fund balance of about 17%, exceeding the City’s minimum requirement and supporting long-term financial stability. Property tax revenue is projected to increase by about 4%, driven by rising home values, not an increase in tax rates. Reductions in State revenue sharing were absorbed without cutting services through careful planning and strong reserves.

Infrastructure remains a major focus of the FY2026 Budget. The City will invest \$56.3 million in local and major streets, including \$46 million from state and federal grants, representing a 33% increase in street funding. Additional investments include \$43 million for water system improvements, \$26.2 million for wastewater upgrades, \$38

million in federal funding for the Arcadia Creek flood mitigation project, and capital improvements in Milham Park and Spring Valley Park.

Staffing levels decrease slightly in FY2026, reflecting the end of grant-funded positions, while targeted new roles are added to strengthen core City services such as public works, utilities, labor relations, and public transparency, helping ensure efficient service delivery without expanding overall staffing.

The budget also dedicates significant resources to housing stability and community well-being, including \$500,000 for emergency shelter during extreme weather, continued funding for the Housing Development Fund and a new HomeShare pilot, and support for critical home repairs and foreclosure prevention. Public safety remains a priority, alongside investments in youth programs such as free summer camps, recreation, leadership development, and career exposure opportunities.

The FY2026 Budget reflects Kalamazoo’s commitment to fiscal responsibility, responsive services, and long-term investment, supporting today’s needs while building a stronger future for the community.



## Violent Crime Falls to 10-Year Low in Kalamazoo

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) is sharing key highlights from 2025, including continued reductions in crime and strong emergency response across the city.

**Violent crime in Kalamazoo reached a 10-year low in 2025, down 10% compared to a decade ago, with property crime also declining 17% over the same period. Over the past five years, serious offenses saw substantial drops, including homicides (-53%), robberies (-44%), and aggravated assaults (-28%).**

In 2025, KDPS responded to more than 122,000 police calls for service, maintained strong response times, and seized 407 illegal firearms. Fire and rescue crews handled nearly 14,000 calls, including emergency medical responses and structure fires.

KDPS also remained active in the community, participating in more than 100 engagement events and continuing to invest in its workforce.

These results reflect sustained efforts focused on prevention, partnership, and public safety. Learn more about KDPS's accomplishments at **KalamazooPublicSafety.org**.

## Public Hearing Scheduled for 4301 Stadium Dr Rezoning Request

The City Commission has scheduled a public hearing for Monday, January 26, on a request to rezone the property at 4301 Stadium Drive. The hearing will take place during the regular City Commission meeting at City Hall.

The property owner has requested to change the zoning of the 18.8-acre property from residential districts to Community Commercial. All property owners have the right to request a rezoning of their property.

At the January 26 public hearing, the City Commission will hear a presentation from City planning staff, a presentation from the applicant, and public comment from community members before considering the request.

Based on the strong public interest shown during earlier meetings, the City is planning for a large turnout. Staff are coordinating logistics to make the process as smooth and accessible as possible, including allowing call in comments on this item.

As required, the City will send written notice of the public hearing to nearby property owners and share additional information ahead of the meeting.

## Boil Water Advisories: What They Are & What The City Is Doing About Them

Kalamazoo's water system operates under constant pressure, which helps deliver water reliably and keep contaminants out. When crews must temporarily reduce pressure for repairs, pipe replacements, or new connections, that

protection is reduced. In these situations, the City issues a Boil Water Advisory as a precaution while two rounds of water testing are completed. During an advisory, residents are advised to boil water for two minutes before drinking or cooking, or use bottled water as a precaution. Most advisories are issued out of an abundance of caution and lifted within a few days once testing confirms the water is safe.

The City typically hand-delivers notices to affected properties, with larger advisories shared through media and online updates. Current advisories are posted on the City's website, where residents can subscribe for notifications.

Advisories are more common in winter because freezing and thawing place extra stress on underground pipes, especially older cast iron mains, making breaks more likely.

Reducing these breaks is one reason many street projects take longer than resurfacing alone. In many cases, the City is replacing aging underground utilities, including brittle cast iron water mains, with new, durable ductile iron pipes. City engineers have also analyzed the probability of failure for every water main in the system to help prioritize replacements and reduce future disruptions.

Boil Water Advisories may be inconvenient, but they are an important safety tool. Thank you for your patience as the City works to maintain a safe, reliable water system. Learn more at **KalamazooCity.org/BWA**.

## Honor the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 19

Commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by taking part in the annual Community-Wide Day of Service on Monday, January 19. This meaningful day invites residents to put Dr. King's teachings into action by volunteering for causes that strengthen our community and help make Kalamazoo a better place for all.

Community members are encouraged to volunteer with local organizations as a way to make it a "day on" rather than a day off. Many social service organizations across Kalamazoo County welcome volunteers throughout January and beyond. Participating in service, big or small, is one way to honor Dr. King's values and support neighbors in our community.

Following the Day of Service, community members are invited to gather for a commemorative walk and ceremony. Starting at 3:45 p.m., participants will meet at the Metro Transit Building (530 N. Rose St.) and walk together to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (507 N. Rose St.). A wreath-laying ceremony is expected to begin around 4:15 p.m. and will feature remarks from community leaders reflecting on Dr. King's life, legacy, and lasting impact. The ceremony will take place weather permitting.

Find more information about the Day of Service and events at **kalamazoocity.org/MLK**.

## Two New Local Businesses Bring Fresh Energy to Kalamazoo

Kalamazoo's small business community continues to grow, and we're excited to welcome two new locally owned businesses: The Zoo Scoop on Stadium Drive and Alley Cat in downtown Kalamazoo. Both bring fresh energy, new gathering spaces, and unique offerings to the community.

The Zoo Scoop, located at 3262 Stadium Dr, is a new ice cream and casual dining spot founded by Kalamazoo native Bradley Romstadt. Built on his background in hospitality and passion for creating welcoming spaces, The Zoo Scoop offers a wide variety of ice cream flavors, along with shakes, sandwiches, wraps, and specialty drinks. With daily specials and a family-friendly atmosphere, it's already becoming a sweet new destination for neighbors and visitors alike.

Downtown, Alley Cat has opened its doors at 266 E. Michigan Ave, bringing new life to a formerly vacant space. Created by longtime local hospitality professionals Jon and Heidi Best, Alley Cat focuses on craft cocktails, Michigan beer and cider, and a small menu of shareable plates. Designed as a relaxed neighborhood gathering spot, the bar blends classic cocktail culture with local character and historic charm.

Both of these new businesses reflect the passion, creativity, and commitment of local entrepreneurs investing in Kalamazoo's future. Join us in congratulating The Zoo Scoop and Alley Cat, then stop by, check them out, and help give them a warm community welcome.

## Holiday Tree Drop Off

Real holiday trees are biodegradable and easily recyclable! When it's time to take yours down, you can drop it off in the parking lot at 322 E. Stockbridge Avenue through January 31. Please remember to bring only real trees and be sure to remove all ornaments, lights, tinsel, and decorations before dropping off your tree.

Thank you for helping keep Kalamazoo clean and green after the holidays!

## Milham Park Sees Major Progress on Creek Restoration

Work to restore Portage Creek at Milham Park is nearly complete, marking another big step in returning the creek to a more natural, healthy condition. This phase built on earlier work that began with dam removal in 2021 and focused on improving water flow and habitat in the southern section of the creek.

Crews removed accumulated organic material and reused it to reshape the stream banks, helping create a deeper, more consistent channel and better conditions for wildlife. Native plantings will be added in spring 2026 to further strengthen the creek and its surrounding habitat.

More improvements are coming in 2026 as part of the Milham Park Master Plan. Thanks

City leaders join business owners Jon and Heidi Best to cut the ribbon at Alley Cat located at 266 E Michigan Ave in Downtown Kalamazoo.



to a \$500,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and City funding, planned upgrades include new creek overlook decks with accessible walkways, parking lot repairs along Kilgore Road, safer parking access near Lovers Lane, and additional accessible parking spaces.

Milham Park is one of Kalamazoo's most popular parks, and these projects represent the most significant improvements in decades. Learn more what's ahead at **kzooparks.org/MilhamPark**.

## Winter Family Scavenger Hunt Will Return in February

Looking for a fun way to get outside this winter? The Winter Family Scavenger Hunt is back, inviting residents of all ages to explore Kalamazoo's city parks and enjoy a seasonal adventure together.

From February 11–18, use a map and clues to search for hidden items in more than a dozen city parks. The hunt is self-paced, so you can explore on your own schedule—whether that's one park or many. Along the way, snap photos of what you find and submit them for a chance to win prizes.

Participation is easy and free. Just be sure to submit your photos before the hunt ends on February 18 to be eligible for prizes.

Bundle up, get moving, and discover something new in your neighborhood parks this winter. Find maps, clues, and full details at **kzooparks.org/ScavengerHunt**.

## Turn Up the Heat at the 2026 Chili Cook-Off

Get ready for one of Kalamazoo's spiciest winter traditions! The 2026 Downtown Kalamazoo Chili Cook-Off will take place on Saturday, January 31, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. across downtown. The event invites residents and visitors to stroll from business to business, sampling chili from local restaurants, shops, and community groups, then cast their votes for favorites in categories such as People's Choice, Best Restaurant, Best Retail, and Judges' Choice.

The Cook-Off is a free, family-friendly event that highlights Kalamazoo's vibrant local business community. In

previous years, winners have included neighborhood favorites like Factory Coffee, Kalamazoo Candle Company, and Bell's Brewery. Whether you're a chili connoisseur or just looking for a fun way to explore downtown, the Chili Cook-Off is a delicious way to start the new year. For details, visit the event website: **downtownkalamazoochilicookoff.com**.

## FFE Board of Directors

The Kalamazoo Foundation for Excellence (FFE) is now accepting applications for two volunteer Board of Director positions through January 31. These three-year terms will run from June 1, 2026, through May 31, 2029, and represent the Neighborhood Stakeholder and Arts Community Stakeholder sectors.

The Neighborhood Director must live in a City of Kalamazoo neighborhood with an established neighborhood association, while the Arts Community Director will be selected from a local nonprofit art, music, or performing arts organization.

FFE Directors help steward the foundation's endowment and recommend annual funding allocations to the Kalamazoo City Commission in support of priority community investments and the Imagine Kalamazoo Vision.

The application takes approximately 5–10 minutes and requires a resume or CV. Visit **www.kalamazooFFE.org/apply** to apply and learn more about FFE's impact in the community.

## Hiring Window For Public Safety Officers Opens January 12

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) will be accepting applications for Public Safety Officers (PSOs) from January 12 through January 28, 2026. During this application window, no prior training or experience is required; KDPS will provide all necessary training. Certified officers may apply at any time, not just during this hiring window.

Serving as a PSO is a rewarding career where you can make a meaningful difference every day, with opportunities to advance and specialize throughout your career. Learn more and apply at **joinKDPS.org**.

## What Do You Think of City View?

It's hard to believe we're entering the third year of the City View newsletter! Once again, we'd love to hear from you; what you enjoy, what you find helpful, and how we could make City View even more useful. The last time we asked for feedback, you shared great ideas, including requests for more information about upcoming projects and more coverage of City Commission meetings. In 2025, we adjusted the timing of the newsletter to better include those updates.

We hope you're still finding City View helpful, and we welcome your comments, constructive criticism, and suggestions as we continue to improve.

Scan the QR code to share your thoughts. Thank you helping shape this newsletter!



## Did You Know You Can Cross-Country Ski in the City?

Did you know there are groomed cross-country skiing trails right here in the city at Milham Park Golf Club? It's a fun, active way to enjoy Kalamazoo's parks during the winter months.

The trails are maintained by Kalamazoo Nordic Skiers, a completely volunteer-driven group that has been grooming local trails for more than 20 years. While some skiers use the trails for training, Milham Park's gentle, rolling terrain also makes it a great place for beginners. New skiers are always welcome, and the community is friendly and encouraging.

There is no charge to ski on the trails, and they are open all day during park hours as weather conditions allow. Trail grooming is supported entirely through donations to Kalamazoo Nordic Skiers, which help cover fuel and equipment maintenance. Donations can be made at a secure tube located on site or online at **kalamazoonordic.com**.

A full-service ski shop located at Milham Park Golf Course also offers cross-country ski rentals, making it easy to try the sport for the first time.

Whether you're a seasoned skier or just getting started, cross-country skiing at Milham Park is a great way to get outside, stay active, and enjoy winter in Kalamazoo.



Cross-country skiers enjoy fresh snow and winter scenery at Milham Park Golf Club, where groomed trails make it a popular winter destination for skiers of all levels.



## Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Enters “Design It!” Phase

Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 is entering an exciting new chapter with the launch of Design It!, the phase where big ideas start turning into real plans. Building on the community input gathered during the Imagine It! and Plan It! phases, Design It! moves the process from visioning to action.

Over the past year, thousands of voices helped shape a shared vision for Kalamazoo’s future, one that supports all neighborhoods with accessible, responsive, and sustainable services. Now, Design It! brings that vision to life by exploring how priorities like housing, streets, parks, businesses, transportation, and neighborhood spaces can become concrete strategies and design concepts that will guide the City’s Master Plan.

Design It! meetings are open-house style neighborhood events with hands-on, interactive activities. There’s no formal presentation, just a chance to drop in, explore ideas, ask questions, and share your perspective at your own pace.

Meetings will take place across the city from mid-January through March and April, with more dates still being added, including at least one larger downtown event. Everyone

is welcome and encouraged to attend and see how community ideas are shaping Kalamazoo’s future.

Come join the conversation and help design what’s next for Kalamazoo:

- **Edison**  
Friday, January 16 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
Washington Writers Academy
- **Burke Acres**  
Tuesday, January 20 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
New Life Fellowship Church
- **Westnedge Hill, South Westnedge, & Southside**  
Wednesday, January 28 | 6–8 p.m.  
Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan
- **Winchell**  
Friday, January 30 | 6:30–8:30 p.m.  
Winchell Elementary
- **Vine**  
Wednesday, February 4 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
Community Education Center/Chenery
- **Stuart & Douglas**  
Thursday, February 5 | 6–8 p.m.  
Woodward Elementary
- **Milwood**  
Tuesday, February 10 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
Milwood Middle School (Cafeteria)

- **Arcadia & Westwood**  
Wednesday, February 11 | 7–8:30 p.m.  
Arcadia Elementary
- **Oakwood**  
Thursday, February 19 | 5:30–7:30 p.m.  
Oakwood Community of Christ Church
- **Parkview Hills, Colony Farms, & Hill-n-Brook**  
Wednesday, February 25 | 5–7 p.m.  
Parkview Hills Clubhouse
- **Northside**  
Thursday, February 26 | 6–8 p.m.  
Northside Association Community Development
- **West Main Hill**  
Wednesday, March 4 | 7–9 p.m.  
Hicks Center
- **Eastside & Downtown**  
Details will be announced soon!

Additional meetings for other neighborhoods are still being scheduled. Updates will be shared as dates and locations are confirmed. Find a full list of meetings and complete details at [kalamazoocity.org/IK2035](https://kalamazoocity.org/IK2035) or scan the QR code.

Design It! is a key step in turning vision into real, actionable plans. Attend a meeting and help shape the future of Kalamazoo!



241 W South Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



### 56th Kalamazoo City Commission

City Commissioners are the elected representatives of Kalamazoo residents. The Commission meets twice each month at City Hall (241 W South Street), typically on the first and third Mondays. Informational Committee of the Whole meetings start at 5 p.m. and Business Meetings start at 7 p.m.



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### Watch Meetings Live

Meetings of the City Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and some other boards and commissions are televised and livestreamed by Public Media Network on Spectrum Channel 189-190, ATT Channel 99, and on the City of Kalamazoo’s Facebook page and YouTube channel.

### Meeting Calendar

You can find information about boards and commissions, a meeting calendar, minutes and agendas, how to watch meetings, and more at [kalamazoocity.org/meetings](https://kalamazoocity.org/meetings).

### About City View

City View is an official publication from the City of Kalamazoo. It’s delivered to every household every other month.

