We’re also excited for improvements that will happen in some of our parks. We’re investing in Southside and Emerald parks, and will be unveiling a plan and starting work in Millham Park too. Later this year, we expect to break ground on a multi-use building at the Farmer’s Market that can host youth programs and market events year-round.

There will be major investments in our streets and utilities and we ask for your patience during these projects. We know that road construction is frustrating and recognize the impact that it has, especially on residents and businesses in those areas. This year we’re committed to doing more to help and support the businesses so they can be successful through these projects. And when they’re over, we will have new and upgraded streets and utilities that will serve us all for the future.

To keep our community safe, we are continuing violence intervention programs and Kalamazoo Public Safety will work with our partners to advance the community’s Blueprint for Peace. We expect their Community Service team and new downtown substation will also help address some of the quality of life issues affecting the city, and do so while offering services and support to people in need.

There’s so much to be excited about, it’s hard to capture it all. We hope you will follow along as this work progresses and join the conversations as we look ahead to plan for 2025 and beyond. Our job is to serve the people in our great city and every voice is important.

Here’s to a great 2024!

Jim Ritsema
City Manager
Learn About 2024 Road Construction on March 19
Join us on March 19 for an update on upcoming street construction projects planned this year, including Westnedge Ave, Whites Rd, and work on the Inkster Bridge Street. Staff from our Public Services and Community Planning & Economic Development departments will be sharing the latest project details and discussing the scope of the projects, why they are needed, and how they will benefit our city.

The meeting will be held from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan building (601 W Maple St). You can also find project information at kalamazoozoo.org/projects.

Two Projects Will Help Create Safe Routes to Schools
This summer, two projects will help make it safer for children to walk to Winchell Elementary and Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts.

In Winchell, a new sidewalk on the south side of Winchell Ave will connect a school to a location with better visibility, and flashing signs and other enhancements will be added to better alert drivers.

These projects are based on the Safe Routes to School Planning process, which was started in 2019 in partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools and other community partners. Learn more at kalamazoozoo.org/SRTS.

Nine Students Recognized for Service and Leadership
In January the City Commission recognized nine extraordinary youths for their achievements and leadership toward racial and social justice. The Social Justice Youth Awards are given annually as part of Kalamazoo’s celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. These young leaders exemplify Dr. King’s values through their community service and volunteerism.

Congratulations to award winners Clark Atkinson, Mayalenia Alvarez, Layla Wallace, Anna Ransom, Ohmaz Clark, Jordan Pritchett, Mahalia Guidry, Sadaya Hamby, and Avery Pratt! Read more about the award and the winners’ accomplishments at kalamazoozoo.org/SJAVA.

Monthly Webinars Look to Help HUD Grant Applicants
If you’re with a nonprofit organization or affordable housing provider, join us for a (roughly) monthly webinar series about different aspects of HUD grants and being a subcontractor for these Federal funds.

The sessions cover different aspects of each topic from reviewing different funding types to discussing more specific information such as environmental reviews and reporting. We’ll focus on a different topic each session and make the recordings available to watch too in case you aren’t able to join live.

View upcoming sessions and watch videos at kalamazoozoo.org/HUDFundamentals.

City & Community Support Helps New Contractors Like Carter Contracting Co.
Starting her own business was never really the plan for Zjanice Carter, but when the demands of school, work, and being a new mom started to cause friction in her life, she had to make some tough decisions.

She started Carter Contracting Co. in 2021, taking on local painting and drywall projects. After a while, she had a small team of trained painters known as the Carter Crew. Along the way, Carter connected with many of the small business resources the City of Kalamazoo and its partners offer like the Kalamazoo Contractors and Developers Connect group, free lead abatement training, and the PFE-supported Core 60 program.

We’re proud to support Change of Status to help people make positive changes in their lives. You can find more information at urbanalliancekalamazoo.org.

What Do You Think About Reusable Take Out Containers?
We’re looking forward to sharing it once it’s ready and we expect to break ground on improvements sometime this year.

What’s Ahead for City Parks in 2024?
We’re excited to get to work on the new Kzoo Parks Master Plan, but we’re just as excited about what’s happening this year!

On Saturday, May 11, Kalamazoo City Public Safety will partner with local law enforcement agencies to host the spring Kalamazoo Regional Citizens Academy. The Academy offers participants an insider’s look at law enforcement and includes a highly interactive and dynamic one-day program. Participants get to go behind the badge and get behind the wheel to participate in live inspections, presentations, and numerous hands-on opportunities. The event is free, but seats are limited and registration is required. Learn more and apply by April 1 at kalamazoopublicsafety.org/academy.

Citizens Police Academy Scheduled for May 11
On Saturday, May 11, Kalamazoo City Public Safety will partner with local law enforcement agencies to host the spring Kalamazoo Regional Citizens Academy. The Academy offers participants an insider’s look at law enforcement and includes a highly interactive and dynamic one-day program. Participants get to go behind the badge and get behind the wheel to participate in live inspections, presentations, and numerous hands-on opportunities. The event is free, but seats are limited and registration is required. Learn more and apply by April 1 at kalamazoopublicsafety.org/academy.

“Change of Status” Offers People a New Path Forward
For people with a history of incarceration or behavioral issues, it’s not easy to overcome the barriers of their past and make a positive change for their future. But Urban Alliance’s Change of Status program can help. It’s a 12-week program that equips participants to break destructive tendencies and focus on equipping them for the future through lessons on planning, fatherhood, finances, business, and constructive recreation. Topics also include overcoming a criminal mindset, finding others and themselves, and navigating emotions.

Upon completion of the program, participants are celebrated by their families, peers, and community leaders for their growth. They may also qualify to receive $1,200 for meeting program commitments. Since 2019, 63 people have completed the program.

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New Cannabis Chamber To Help New Contractors Like Carter Contracting Co.
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New Cannabis Chamber To Share Industry Opportunities
In February, the City Commission created a Social Equity Cannabis Chamber organization to help share employment and ownership opportunities in the cannabis industry with people who have been most affected by its prohibition. It will offer services like workforce development, educational and mentorship opportunities, and personalized business support. It will also work with cannabis businesses to secure job placements and create on-the-job training opportunities.

Kalamazoo has been one of Michigan’s leading communities when it comes to promoting social equity in the cannabis industry. At least 25% of local cannabis tax revenues are required to be reinvested into equity initiatives, and we have strict requirements for businesses that are licensed in the city. The Social Equity Cannabis Chamber is another way to share the benefits of this new industry.

We’re excited to share more information about the Chamber and its programs soon. You can learn more about cannabis businesses in Kalamazoo at kalamazoozoo.org/cannabis.
Spring Kzoo Parks Programs Offer Something for Everyone
From sports and after school to field trips and Esports, Kzoo Parks has something for everyone this spring. Check out what’s in store below, and you can find full details and sign up at kzooparks.org/programs.

After School creates a fun atmosphere for students to finish their homework, reading, or other schoolwork after the regular school day ends. Tutoring and help are available, and there are games, computers, cards, and other fun activities for when schoolwork is done. The third trimester session starts March 11.

Moxie Volleyball offers two programs to help teach the sport to younger players and help more experienced players improve their game. The second winter session starts on March 14.

Esports introduces young gamers to the world of competitive gaming in the amazing environment of WMU’s Esports Arena. There is a session for elementary-aged students (starting in mid-March) and one for middle and high schoolers (starting in early April).

Youth Soccer programs are a great introduction to the sport and a way for young players to continue developing their skills. These programs start in mid-April.

PAL (Police Athletic League) offers a variety of sports programs, including a spring baseball league that starts in late April.

Visit kzooparks.org for complete details on all programs & events, registration, and to explore the dozens of great city parks throughout the city!

Summer Program Registration Starts April 1
Summer will be here before you know it, and registration for Kzoo Parks summer programs starts on Monday, April 1! This includes summer camp programs like Super Rec, Camp Kzoo, and All Things Possible, plus Creative Workshops, Swim Lessons, and more. Mark your calendar and sign up early before spaces fill up!

Seasonal Job Opportunities Available!
Every year, our team expands in the summer with a variety of job opportunities in our Parks & Recreation and Public Services departments. From park rangers to lifeguards to jobs in streets, water, and wastewater, there are a variety of opportunities to get experience and get paid this summer, plus you can get your foot in the door and start a career making our city a better place! View opportunities at kalamazoocity.org/jobs.

Financial Assistance for Youth Programs- Apply Now!
We don’t want the cost to prevent any kids from having fun and enriching opportunities. To make sure our programs are available to everyone, Kalamazoo Friends of Recreation offers financial assistance that covers from 50% up to 100% of a program’s cost! You just have to be a city of Kalamazoo resident to apply, and assistance is good for any Kzoo Parks activities. You can apply at any time, and then you’ll be ready when registration opens. Applications are good for one calendar year. Learn more and apply at friendsofrec.org.

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.