

CITY VIEW

From City Manager Jim Ritsema

I hope you enjoyed reading the first edition of City View, and found it to be a valuable way to learn what's happening in the city. Improving communication is a priority for our team, and this is one of the ways in which we are trying to make it easier to stay connected with the issues that touch our lives, the projects and programs that make our city stronger, and the events that bring us together as a community.

There is a lot to look forward to this year, and now that the budget is approved, our team is excited to get to work.

In 2024 alone, the City will invest more than \$4 million into affordable housing, and that's on top of millions of dollars that will be invested by Kalamazoo County through its housing millage and investments by nonprofit organizations.

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 Milham 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



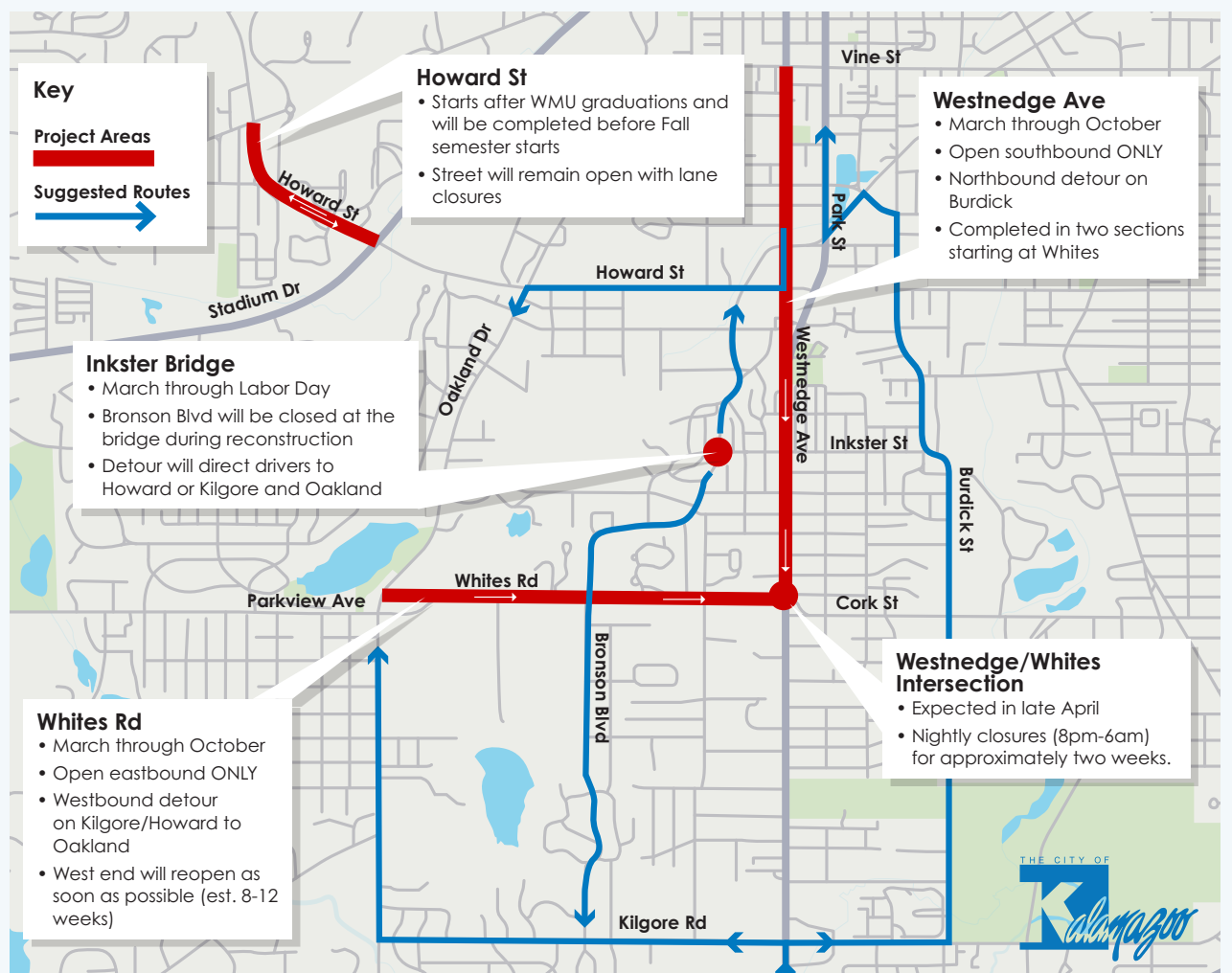
Work Starts on Whites, Westnedge, Ransom, and Inkster

2024 will be another ambitious year of investment in Kalamazoo's infrastructure. These projects will leave a brand new road surface for us to drive or bike on, but they include very significant utility improvements too. Most major projects will get underway at the beginning of construction season, starting in early March.

There will be traffic delays near some of this work so please plan ahead, stay up-to-date, and be patient. We know it's frustrating but a little patience now will leave our city with much better, safer, and reliable streets and infrastructure.

The area shown on the map will see some of the most significant work this year. If you regularly drive in this area, we suggest taking Kilgore or Howard to Oakland or Burdick as a detour, as **Whites will only be open eastbound**, and **Westnedge will only be open southbound** during construction. Give yourself a little extra time to get where you are going.

We'll also be working on Howard St, Riverview Dr, Exchange Pl & Corporation Aly, Ransom St, and Michikal St. You can find details on all road construction at kalamazoo.org/projects. You can also subscribe to a project and be notified whenever there is an update posted. Or,



you can subscribe to the entire list and be notified when anything new is added. It's a great way to stay updated on how construction is going, when detours change, and when streets are back open.



**View 2024
Projects**

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 Street Bridge. 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 [kalamazoo-city.org/projects](https://www.kalamazoo-city.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 create a connection from Oakland Dr to Rambling Rd. At Maple Street Magnet School, the crosswalk on Howard St will be moved closer to the 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 [kalamazoo-city.org/SRTS](https://www.kalamazoo-city.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, Mayalena Alvarez, Layla Wallace,

Annalise Ransom, Ohmaz Clark, Jordan Pritchett, Mahalia Guidry, Sadaya Hamby, and Avery Pratt! Read more about the awards and the winners' accomplishments at [kalamazoo-city.org/SJYA](https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/SJYA).

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 the different aspects of HUD grants and being a subrecipient 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 [kalamazoo-city.org/HUDFundamentals](https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/HUDFundamentals).

Action Plan for Federal Funding Available for Review

We're currently welcoming public comment on our Draft Program Year 2024 Annual Action Plan. The plan outlines how Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be invested to address our community's needs.

We anticipate receiving about \$2.26 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership funding. These funds are used to provide housing, improve neighborhoods, and help low-income people in our community. You can review the plan and provide comments at [kalamazoo-city.org/HUDPlan](https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/HUDPlan) through March 25.

The Next Public Safety Hiring Process Will Start April 24

Kalamazoo Public Safety will accept applications for Public Safety Officers (PSOs) between April 24 and May 8. PSOs combine law enforcement, firefighting, and medical services into an exciting and rewarding career with work/life balance and many advancement opportunities. Learn more at [JoinKDPS.org](https://www.joinkdps.org) and/or text 'JoinKDPS' to (269) 291-0199 to speak with a recruiter.

Citizens Police Academy Scheduled for May 11

On Saturday, May 11, Kalamazoo 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 discussions, 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](https://www.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 their lives for the future through lessons on planning, fatherhood, finances, business, and constructive recreation. Topics also include overcoming a criminal mindset, forgiving 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 2022, 63 people have completed the 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](https://www.urbanalliancekalamazoo.org).

New Cannabis Chamber To Share Industry Opportunities

In February, the City Commission created a Social Equity Cannabis Chamber, an 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 sessions, 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

A rendering of the new playground that will be added to Southside Park- in time for this summer!



the Chamber and its programs soon. You can learn more about cannabis businesses in Kalamazoo at [kalamazoo-city.org/cannabis](https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/cannabis).

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 FFE-supported Core 60 program.

We're proud to support local businesses like Carter Contracting Co. and to invest in programs that share opportunities with everyone in our community. Read more about Zjanice's story and find links to resources at [kalamazoo-official.org/Carter](https://www.kalamazoo-official.org/Carter).

Carter Contracting Co. was able to benefit from several opportunities supported by the City of Kalamazoo and the Foundation for Excellence.



MEI Shows Kalamazoo is Becoming More Inclusive

In Kalamazoo, we're committed to building a community where everyone belongs. The City's 2023 Municipal Equality Index (MEI)

score reflects our dedication to DEI and commitment to do the work. Kalamazoo's score was 86 out of 100, which is a 12-point increase from 2022.

The score is calculated by the Human Rights Campaign, which reviews laws and policies to determine whether a municipality is LGBTQ+ friendly. It shows the ways that cities are stepping up each year to find ways to empower the LGBTQ+ community where they live and work. One of the ways the City of Kalamazoo improved its MEI scorecard was by partnering with OutFront Kalamazoo to hold LGBTQ+ trainings for all City staff. The City also held a recent "Train the Trainer" session on LGBTQ+ hosted by the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety.

We're proud of our progress in helping all residents feel comfortable calling Kalamazoo their home. View the MEI scorecard at [hrc.org](https://www.hrc.org).

Egg Hunt Returns to Mayors' Riverfront Park on March 30

Thousands of eggs will be hidden at Mayors' Riverfront Park for children to find at this year's Egg Hunt on March 30! Join us from 2-4 p.m. to celebrate spring with friends, family, and neighbors!

There will be egg hunts starting at 2:30, 3, and 3:30 p.m., and the field will be separated into two age groups for each hunt (ages 0-5 and 6-9). Families can also enjoy springtime crafts and fun games, and get a photo with the bunny and the Growlers' mascot Porter.

Eggs on the field are empty, but kids can turn in their collected eggs for a bag of candy and toys. Some bags will even have a golden egg, which can be redeemed for a prize.

This event is free, and everyone is welcome to join the fun! Find full details at [kzoo-parks.org/egghunt](https://www.kzoo-parks.org/egghunt).

Kzoo Parks Adopts New Plan to Guide Improvements

In January, the City Commission adopted a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan to guide improvements to the park system over the next five years. It includes a

detailed analysis of the parks system and where capital improvement money should be invested. It also identifies ten parks that should be prioritized: Blanche Hull, Farrell, Knollwood, Princeton, Rockwell, Sherwood, Spring Valley, and Verburg parks, plus the Versluis/Dickinson Softball Complex and Fairmount Dog Park.

The plan is based on community input received during outreach last summer plus feedback from key partners and the goals of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan. Read the full plan at [kzoo-parks.org/plan](https://www.kzoo-parks.org/plan).

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! Here are a few park projects to look out for in 2024:

Southside Park will be getting a makeover with a new walking trail and basketball court, plus wifi at the park, and added storage. We're also going to build a new playground that should be ready for summer fun!

At **Emerald Park**, we'll be installing a new playground and completing some maintenance on the soccer fields later this year. This will likely happen in the fall so it doesn't disrupt the soccer leagues.

We started a master plan for **Milham Park** last year, and we are just finishing it up. We're looking forward to sharing it once it's ready and we expect to break ground on improvements sometime this year.

Celebrate Earth Day on April 22

Celebrate this Earth Day with local groups that are rooted in action. Bring friends and family and help clean up our neighborhoods, plant trees, prepare gardens, get outdoors, and enjoy live music! A number of events are planned starting April 7 and leading up to Earth Day on Monday, April 22. You can learn more and find event details at [kalamazooearthday.com](https://www.kalamazooearthday.com).

What Do You Think About Reusable Take Out Containers?

We're exploring interest in reusable containers at restaurants as a way to reduce waste. The idea is they would circulate through the city like a currency, and be longer lasting and more sustainable. Scan the QR code to let us know what you think!



Reusable Containers Survey

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 kalamazoo.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.



Apply for Financial Assistance



241 W South Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



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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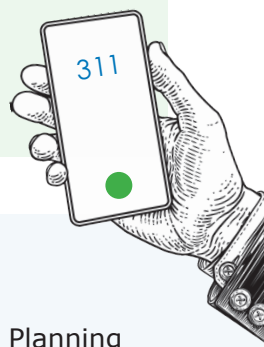


Alonzo Wilson
wilsona@kalamazoo.org

Need Help? Just call 311!

Dial 311 for help with any City services or to report any issues. We're available to help Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. If you're outside the city limits, call 337-8000.

Report issues online anytime at kalamazoo.org/311.



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 kalamazoo.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.