

CITY VIEW

From the City Manager

After more than a decade serving Kalamazoo, I write with gratitude and reflection. It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve this city, a place full of creativity, resilience, and community spirit.

When I began in this role, Kalamazoo faced serious financial challenges. Years of budget cuts limited our ability to provide essential services, and Michigan’s broken municipal funding model made recovery difficult. We had to take bold action to stabilize the City’s finances and secure its future.

We began by forming the Legacy Cost Task Force, which resolved the City’s unfunded retiree health care liability, protecting retirees and strengthening our financial foundation. Next came the Blue Ribbon Revenue Panel, which brought together community leaders to rethink how cities like ours could fund vital services.

Building on that momentum, we launched Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, the most inclusive master planning process in our history. Thousands of residents shaped a shared vision for growth and opportunity, and now more than 95 percent of the plan’s actions

are complete or underway. That work helped inspire the creation of the Foundation for Excellence, a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership that stabilized our budget, reduced property taxes, and created a \$500 million endowment to fund transformative investments, forever.

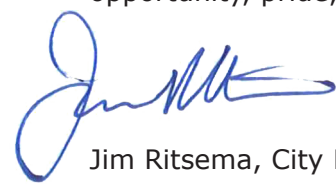
Because of these efforts, Kalamazoo is now in a position to make the kinds of investments our community deserves. Annual infrastructure investment has grown from about \$18 million in 2015 to more than \$180 million today, including historic improvements to streets, utilities, and flood mitigation. We secured over \$100 million in federal grants to fund the upcoming modernization of downtown transportation and create a safer, more connected city.

We’ve also made progress toward a more sustainable future. Kalamazoo adopted its first Community Sustainability Plan, converted heavy vehicles to biodiesel, committed to 100% renewable energy for city operations, and strengthened protections for natural features.

Our stronger finances have also allowed unprecedented investment in housing and small businesses. Projects like the

Creamery, Harrison Circle, and Lodge House have brought new housing and vitality to neighborhoods, while local partnerships like the Kalamazoo Attainable Homes Partnership are creating new homes and helping first-time homebuyers build stability and wealth. Equity has guided all of this work, as the City’s recently created Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ensures government reflects our values and opens opportunities for those historically excluded.

A lot of this would have been unthinkable in 2013, but now this is just some of the great work we have done in the past 12 years. Looking ahead, I know much work remains, but I am optimistic. I encourage you to support our new City Manager and City Commission, stay engaged, share your ideas, and help shape solutions that move our city forward. By working together, Kalamazoo can continue to become a stronger, more vibrant city. Thank you for the trust you placed in me, and for all you do to make Kalamazoo a place of opportunity, pride, and hope.



Jim Ritsema, City Manager



Kalamazoo Voters Choose 56th City Commission

The City of Kalamazoo is entering a new phase of leadership following the November 4 municipal election, with Mayor David Anderson soundly re-elected to a fourth term and three City Commissioners chosen for the next four years. Joining the Commission are newcomers Drew Duncan and Jae Slaby, alongside returning Commissioner Stephanie Hoffman, who was re-elected for a second term. Duncan, who received the most votes of any candidate, will serve as Vice Mayor. Commissioners Chris Praedel, Alonzo Wilson, and Jeanne Hess will continue their terms through 2027, while Commissioners Qianna Decker and Don Cooney will retire at the end of their terms, making way for the two new commissioners.

With more than a decade of experience on the City Commission and as Vice Mayor, Mayor Anderson campaigned on continuing his focus on housing affordability, regional collaboration, and sustainable growth. His re-election reflects strong community

support for continued progress as Kalamazoo faces key fiscal and infrastructure decisions in the years ahead.

Vice Mayor-elect Drew Duncan brings a background in community advocacy, affordable housing, and equitable economic development. His campaign emphasized practical leadership grounded in listening to residents, pursuing tenant protections, advancing zoning reform, strengthening public safety through community trust, and investing in climate-ready infrastructure.

Jae Slaby, a Vine Neighborhood resident with a master’s degree in city planning and past experience as the City’s neighborhood activator, ran on an agenda they call “Kalamazoo Go,” focused on making the city more connected, inclusive, and sustainable. Their platform prioritized neighborhood stability, small business support, civic engagement, public safety, and environmental stewardship.

Commissioner Stephanie Hoffman, the sole incumbent among this year’s candidates, continues her work advancing equity, housing justice, and violence prevention. She has long advocated that housing is a human right and that city policy must address root causes of inequity and community safety. Her return brings valuable experience and continuity to the new Commission.

The formal swearing-in ceremony for Mayor Anderson, Vice Mayor-elect Duncan, and Commissioners Hoffman and Slaby will take place at 5 p.m. on Monday, November 17, during the Committee of the Whole meeting. Their terms begin at that time and will run four years for Commissioners and two years for the Mayor.

With a mix of new voices and experienced leadership, the City of Kalamazoo is well positioned to build on ongoing initiatives while exploring fresh approaches to housing, neighborhood connectivity, local business support, and civic engagement. The 56th Commission is set to continue shaping a city where every neighborhood thrives and every resident is heard.

City Commission to Begin 2026 Budget Review in December

Approving the City Budget is one of the most important decisions the City Commission makes each year. The budget serves as the foundation for all of the City’s work in the year ahead: funding programs, projects, and services that support the community.

The City Charter requires a proposed budget to be published by December 1 each year. Once released, it will be available on the City’s website at kalamazoo-city.org/budgets for the community to review.

A special City Commission meeting to review the proposed 2026 budget will take place on Monday, December 8, at 5 p.m. This work session is the first step in the review and approval process. The proposal will then be presented for a first reading at a regular City Commission meeting in January, followed by a final vote at a subsequent meeting. The City Charter requires that the budget be adopted by January 31.

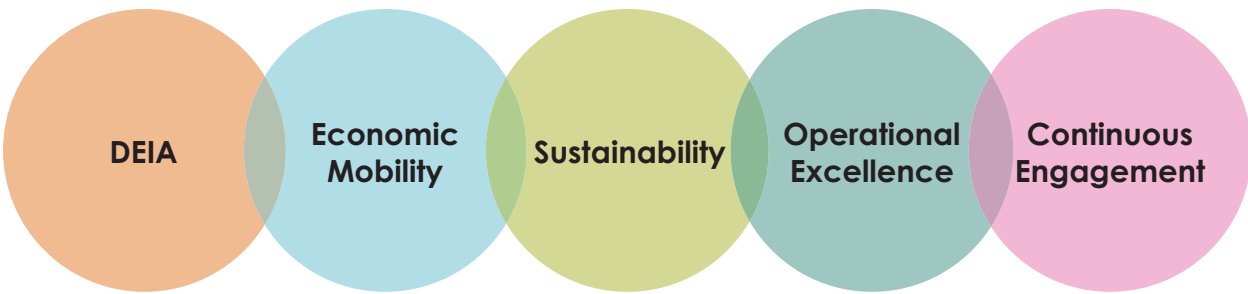
The City’s budget shapes how community priorities become reality. We encourage you to review the proposal and share your feedback with City Commissioners. You can provide input by emailing the Commission, calling 311, or commenting at any meeting where the budget is on the agenda.

Draft Strategic Vision Reveals Guiding Principles of IK2035

Kalamazoo is taking the next step toward a shared community future with the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Strategic Vision. Chief Operating Officer Laura Lam and Deputy City Manager Rebekah Kik recently presented the draft Strategic Vision to the City Commission, outlining the framework that will guide city decisions and investments over the next decade (you can watch it on the City’s YouTube channel).

The draft vision describes a community where “All Kalamazoo neighborhoods are supported by sustainable, responsive, and accessible services that lift people up and bring our community together at every stage of life.” Five guiding principles shape this vision: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA); Economic Mobility; Sustainability; Operational Excellence; and Continuous Engagement. These principles will influence city planning, projects, partnerships across every neighborhood and department.

The Strategic Vision document will be published for public review in early 2026



The Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Strategic Vision is built on these five guiding principles that will drive progress, equity, and connection across our community.

before it’s presented to the City Commission for adoption.

Next, the Design It! phase begins in January, inviting residents to participate in a series of meetings in neighborhoods across the city, as well as a large community event downtown. This phase will focus on how to turn the community’s shared vision into specific goals and actions. Look for more information to be shared soon!

Winter Shoveling/Plowing/ Parking Info

Snow isn’t far off, and many of our neighbors rely on sidewalks to stay connected all year long. Snow and ice can make sidewalks unsafe or even impossible to use—especially for older adults, children, and people with disabilities.

City ordinance requires all property owners to clear snow and ice from their sidewalks within 48 hours after a snowfall. Keeping sidewalks clear helps everyone get around safely and keeps our community accessible for all.

The City of Kalamazoo is responsible for clearing about 19 miles of sidewalks along City-owned properties. This winter, the City will also clear an additional 14 miles along key corridors, prioritizing high pedestrian areas and transit routes.

If you notice a sidewalk that hasn’t been cleared within 48 hours, please report it by calling 311 or using the online reporting system at kalamazoo-city.org/311. Reports can include any uncleared sidewalk, whether it’s along private property or City-maintained areas.

We’re committed to keeping sidewalks clear and safe, but if we miss a City property, your report helps us respond quickly. Together, we can keep Kalamazoo’s sidewalks safe, accessible, and welcoming all winter long.

Station 5/14 Project

The City of Kalamazoo is making a major investment to ensure clean, safe, and reliable drinking water for decades to come. In September, work started on the Eastside Water Treatment and Water Main Project, a \$60 million effort to upgrade water facilities and infrastructure serving thousands of residents in Kalamazoo and nearby townships.

The project includes construction of a new 15,000-square-foot treatment facility at Station 5 (Michigan Avenue and Schippers

Lane). This \$50 million plant will remove iron, manganese, and PFAS from the water supply, helping Kalamazoo meet new federal PFAS standards before they take effect in 2029.

An additional \$10 million will fund a new water main connecting the station at Spring Valley Park to the new facility. This will consolidate treatment, improve efficiency, and replace aging mains, service lines, and storm sewers along the route.

Construction on water mains will finish in 2026, with the treatment facility expected to be complete by November 2028.

The project is funded through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, which provides low-interest loans and partial forgiveness, significantly reducing costs for local ratepayers while strengthening Kalamazoo’s water system for the future. You can learn more about this project at kalamazoo-city.org/station5-14.

Winter Market Moving to New Farmers Market Events Building

The Kalamazoo Winter Market is moving to a new home this season- the new Events Building at the Kalamazoo Farmers Market, located at 1234 Bank Street. The market will run Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., December 6 through April 25.

The new location offers a warm, spacious indoor environment for vendors and shoppers, along with expanded opportunities for year-round events and community gatherings. Visitors can expect to find many of their favorite Winter Market vendors along with several new additions. SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks will continue to be accepted, helping make fresh, local food accessible to everyone.

The move marks an exciting new chapter for the Kalamazoo Farmers Market, creating more opportunities to support local growers, makers, and small businesses throughout the winter months.

Local Businesses Making Moves in Kalamazoo

This fall, our team was thrilled to help celebrate three incredible locally owned businesses making exciting moves right here in Kalamazoo!

In September, we joined Kristi Potts to celebrate the grand opening of Kzoo Cream in the Vine Neighborhood. Located in the former Taco Bob’s building, this sweet new spot specializes in Kristi’s famous Frosted Whispers cookies—along with other delicious treats you won’t want to miss!

In October, Kalamazoo Candle Company lit up downtown with the opening of its new, larger storefront in the former V&A Bootery space. The shop also features Zero, Kalamazoo’s only non-alcoholic bar—a beautiful, welcoming place to unwind and enjoy a guilt-free beverage on the Kalamazoo Mall.

And at Southwest Michigan First’s Small Business Conference, our team was proud to present the BIPOC Business of the Year Award to Daniel May, owner of Dabney & Co. Cocktail Bar & Lounge. Congratulations to all three businesses for helping make Kalamazoo a vibrant, thriving community!

The City of Kalamazoo is proud to support entrepreneurs and local businesses. If you’re interested in starting or expanding a business, connect with our Economic Development team to learn how we can help!

Chief Boysen Appointed to Mental Health Diversion Council

Kalamazoo Public Safety Chief David Boysen has been appointed to the Michigan Mental Health Diversion Council, representing local law enforcement from September 2025 through January 2029.

The council, part of the Michigan Department of Community Health, works to improve how individuals experiencing mental health crises are supported within the justice system. It helps guide the state’s Diversion Action Plan and recommends policy and program improvements.

Chief Boysen’s appointment highlights Kalamazoo’s commitment to compassionate, community-centered public safety. His leadership and experience will help strengthen efforts across Michigan to ensure people in crisis receive care and support rather than incarceration.

Rolling Sixes: Inside KDPS’s Elite Fire/Rescue Team

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety’s Station 6 is home to some of the City’s most skilled and dedicated first responders. As EO Technicians and members of the Kalamazoo Technical Rescue Team, these men and women face danger head-on—responding to high-risk emergencies while living, training, and working together under one roof.

Their world comes to life in the new video series Rolling Sixes, which premiered in October. The series offers a raw, cinematic look at the challenges and camaraderie that define life at Station 6, from intense rescue calls to everyday moments at the station.

Produced, filmed, and edited entirely in-house by the department’s Public Information Officer, Rolling Sixes captures the authenticity and heart of Kalamazoo’s Fire/Rescue team like never before.

Watch the series now on YouTube and experience the action, teamwork, and dedication that keep our community safe.

Holiday Events in Downtown Kalamazoo

11/22 | 63rd Maple Hill Holiday Parade

Get ready to ignite your holiday spirit as Kalamazoo celebrates 63 years of the Holiday Parade! This beloved tradition kicks off the holiday season in Downtown Kalamazoo, drawing thousands for a festive celebration.

The parade steps off at 11 a.m., starting on Lovell near Portage, traveling west to Rose Street, north to Michigan Avenue, east to Pitcher Street, and south back toward Lovell.

Enjoy giant balloons, 90 community groups, and 10 high school marching bands, then stay downtown for more fun: visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, live music, exclusive shopping promotions, and more holiday activities!

11/28 | Tree Lighting Ceremony

Every year our community comes together the day after Thanksgiving to light up Bronson Park for the holiday season and celebrate the diverse traditions that make it so special. The event starts at 5 p.m. and the lighting of the park will occur around 6 p.m. There will be a variety of holiday activities for the whole family to enjoy.

11/29 | Small Business Saturday

Kalamazoo is filled with unique shops, restaurants, and businesses that offer things you just can’t find anywhere else. This holiday season, make a point to shop small and support these entrepreneurs and make the gifts you give to your loved ones extra special. Many businesses will be running specials throughout the holiday season too, so don’t miss out.

11/28 - 12/31 | Holly Jolly Trolley

Hop aboard the Holly Jolly Trolley and enjoy FREE rides around Downtown Kalamazoo this holiday season! The trolley runs November 28 through December 24, with a special night of service on New Year’s Eve (December 31). Take in the festive lights and decorations as you travel between downtown shops, restaurants, and holiday attractions. The trolley runs Thursdays and Fridays from 5–9 p.m., Saturdays from noon - 7 p.m., and Sundays from noon - 4 p.m.

11/29 - 12/24 | Santa's Workshop

Come and enjoy the holidays with the tradition of visiting with Santa and his elves. Santa’s Workshop is located at 125 S. Kalamazoo Mall in the City Centre, on the second floor. The Workshop visit is free

and filled with holiday spirit. You can write a letter to Santa, decorate a shopping bag, and participate in special crafts on Saturday.

Thursday and Sunday hours feature a Black Santa, and Friday and Saturday hours feature a White Santa with Mrs. Claus.

12/5 - 12/20 | Gingerbread House Contest

Celebrate the season with Community Homeworks’ Annual Homes for the Holidays: Gingerbread House Contest. This event features dozens of gingerbread houses displayed in the windows of downtown shops and businesses. Stroll through downtown to see the creative entries and vote for your favorite. The entry with the most votes will earn the People’s Choice Award, while a panel of local judges will select additional winners in several fun categories.

12/11 | December to Remember

Join Kzoo Parks and the Youth Action Council for December to Remember from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. under the holiday lights in Bronson Park. Kids can enjoy hot chocolate, free holiday craft kits, and write letters to Santa. The event is free and open to everyone. It’s a perfect way to celebrate the season with family and friends.

12/12 | Moonlight Madness

Experience the magic of Moonlight Madness in Downtown Kalamazoo! The streets will sparkle with lights, music, and holiday cheer during this beloved nighttime celebration. Enjoy festive dancing, a dazzling holiday bike ride, and exclusive late-night shopping, with many stores open until 11 p.m. and beyond! Stroll through the glowing streets, sip warm drinks, and discover unique gifts and surprises in your favorite downtown shops.

12/31 | New Years Fest

Celebrating 40 years of providing a performing arts festival, New Year’s Fest features 22 artists that perform just over 72 different performances throughout the night on New Year’s Eve in Downtown Kalamazoo. Hosted primarily in buildings surrounding Bronson Park, attendees can create their own experience. Midnight features a ball drop and fireworks. Advance buttons can be purchased at a discount.

Find more event details at kalamazoo-city.org/holidays



Malcolm Hankins of Des Moines, IA Hired As Next City Manager

Following a national search and a multi-stage public process, the Kalamazoo City Commission voted at its October 20 Business Meeting to select Malcolm Hankins for the position of City Manager.

Commissioners cited Mr. Hankins’ deep experience in public service, his servant-leadership approach, and his commitment to equity and community engagement as key factors in their decision.

“When I look at Malcolm, I see an individual who has focused on overcoming racial disparities and integrating care and empathy into public systems,” said Commissioner Chris Praedel. “At this precise moment in our history, I don’t think it’s right for us to remain who we are. It’s time to challenge ourselves to become the next level, and my choice would be Malcolm.”

Outgoing Commissioner Don Cooney noted that Hankins’ record of neighborhood leadership and advocacy for underserved residents stood out during the selection process. “If we want to move this city forward, the voices and concerns of those who feel disenfranchised and unheard must be listened to,” Cooney said. “We need to move from distrust to partnership.

Mr. Hankins’ work in the neighborhoods, his efforts with the homeless, his deep commitment to those in need, his clear ability to listen and care, his life experience, his ability to welcome all people, these are the gifts we need to move this city forward.”

Mr. Hankins currently serves as Assistant City Manager for the City of Des Moines, Iowa, where he oversees key administrative functions, policy implementation, and community-based initiatives focused on equity, engagement, and municipal operations. He has more than 35 years of public service experience, including 22 years in management and six in executive leadership roles, with a record of building inclusive, collaborative programs across multiple cities.

Before joining Des Moines, Hankins served as Neighborhood Services Director for the City of Aurora, Colorado, overseeing neighborhood revitalization, homelessness programs, and community relations programs. He also served as Neighborhood Preservation Manager in Chandler, Arizona, where he developed new approaches to customer service and housing stability. Earlier in his career, Hankins held leadership roles with the cities of Scottsdale and



Phoenix, focusing on housing inspection programs, revitalization efforts, and performance-based management systems.

Hankins holds a Master of Arts in Ministry from Phoenix Seminary and is pursuing a Doctor of Education in Leadership at Drake University. He is also a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the Servant Leadership Institute, and the American Association of Code Enforcement Officials.

Hankins will start in January. He will succeed City Manager Jim Ritsema, who will retire this month after 12 years of service. An interim City Manager will be appointed for the period inbetween.

Visit kalamazoo-city.org/CityManagerSearch for information on the City Manager search process.



241 W South Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



55th 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.



Mayor David Anderson
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Vice Mayor Jeanne Hess
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Don Cooney
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Qianna Decker
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Stephanie Hoffman
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Chris Praedel
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Alonzo Wilson
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Watch Meetings Live

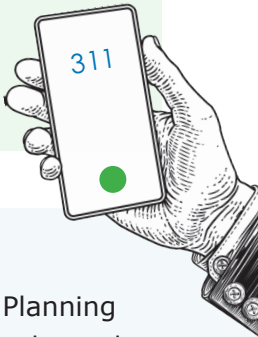
Meetings of the City Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and some other boards and commissions are televised and livestreamed by Public Media Network on Spectrum Channel 189-190, ATT Channel 99, and on the City of Kalamazoo’s Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Meeting Calendar

You can find information about boards and commissions, a meeting calendar, minutes and agendas, how to watch meetings, and more at kalamazoo-city.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.



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-city.org/311.