



241 W. South Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007-4796
Phone: (269) 337-8047
311 (269) 337-8000
www.kalamazoo.org

Winchell Neighborhood Communication

Crash and Traffic Calming Data

April 2024



Contact for City of Kalamazoo:
Dennis A. Randolph, P.E.
Traffic Engineer
(269) 337-8612
randolphd@kalamazoo.org

Media Contact:
Michael L. Smith
Communications Manager
(269) 226-6501
smithm@kalamazoo.org

The City of Kalamazoo presents crash and traffic calming data regarding the Winchell Neighborhood and the Oakland/Whites/Parkview intersection. The data highlights the following:

- Crash data for the City of Kalamazoo
- Oakland/Winchell Neighborhood Traffic and Speed
- Stop Sign Usage
- Traffic Crashes History
- Oakland/Whites/Parkview Intersection Changes
- Traffic Calming Efforts

City of Kalamazoo Crash Data

The City of Kalamazoo had a significant decrease in crashes in 2023, following a slight decline in 2022. While there was a more substantial decrease in 2020, this can be attributed mainly to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, traffic volumes have increased slightly based on Federal Highway Administration figures showing general increases in traffic in urban areas of about 2 percent. While it is too early to attribute the decrease in crashes to any specific factor, traffic engineers believe the City’s increasing emphasis on speed reduction and traffic calming efforts may be bearing fruit. The data warrants further review, and the City of Kalamazoo will continue updating the numbers.

Traffic and Speed Data

Data collected with automated speed detectors in the Winchell Neighborhood shows drivers speed on Winchell Avenue and, by extension, in the neighborhood overall. The posted and prima facie speed limit on Winchell and the rest of the neighborhood streets is 25 miles per hour. The average speed measured at the Winchell radar signs is between 27.0 and 29.7 miles per hour, meaning 50 to 60 percent of all drivers travel faster than the legal speed limit.

STOP Signs

Where crosswalks exist (such as at Broadway and Winchell), the Michigan Vehicle Code and City Ordinance require that drivers come to a complete stop **BEFORE THE CROSSWALK** and yield to pedestrians. The bump-outs (canoes) along Winchell are specifically designed to emphasize the STOP signs and to intentionally slow turning traffic to protect pedestrians crossing the streets at the intersections.

Traffic Crashes

City traffic engineers queried the Michigan State Police traffic crash system for traffic crashes reported in the Winchell Neighborhood, in the area shown on the following maps, between January 1, 2014, and March 14, 2024.

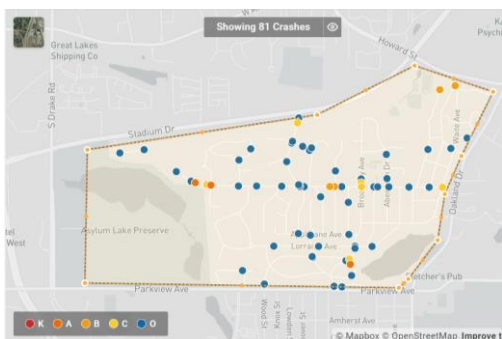


Figure 1 — Traffic Crashes: 2014 - 2021 (Before)

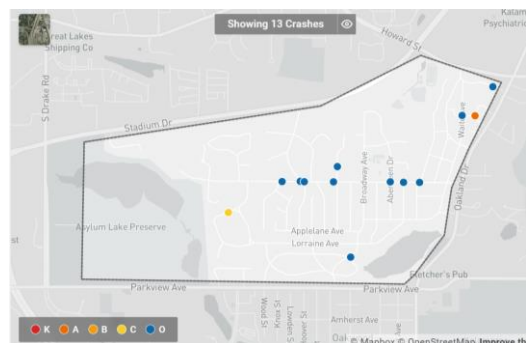


Figure 2 — Traffic Crashes: 2022—March 2024 - (After)

The figures show *reported* (to police) crashes, the standard used for traffic safety analyses. Each dot represents a crash, and the colors reflect the severity of the crashes: red for fatal crashes (no fatal crashes were reported), dark orange for incapacitating injuries, orange and yellow for less severe injuries, and blue for property-only damage crashes.

The map area encompasses the neighborhood’s streets rather than the surrounding major streets, such as Stadium Drive, Parkview Avenue, and Oakland Drive, as traffic calming efforts have focused on neighborhood streets. It is general practice in the traffic safety profession to use at least three years of crash history data before drawing statistically significant conclusions about safety impacts. Thus, the City of Kalamazoo has indicated the need to conduct trial safety projects for at least three years. City traffic engineers will also separately analyze the crashes on the immediately adjacent streets: Stadium Drive, Oakland Drive, and Parkview Avenue.

However, based on the *reported crashes* shown in Figures 1 and 2, traffic engineers can identify trends in neighborhood crashes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Before/ After Crash Trends

Number of Reported Crashes in Neighborhood		Crash Type
Before	After	
1/1/2014-12/31/2021	1/1/2022-3/14/2024	
68	11	Property Damage Only (PDO)
13	2	Personal Injury and Fatal (PI & K)
81	13	Total All Types
8	2.2	Length of Period (Years)
8.5	5.0	Annualized PDO (Crashes per Year)
1.6	0.9	Annualized PI (Crashes per Year)
10.1	5.9	Annualized Total (Crashes per Year)

Annualized totals reflect the average number of crashes and allow an “*apples-to-apples*” comparison of the *Before* and *After* periods. The annualized data shows a decrease in total, injury, and non-injury crashes in the *After* period compared with the *Before* Period.

Oakland/Whites/Parkview Intersection

Oakland/Whites/Parkview is a complex, multi-legged intersection. The extensive crash history there shows the need for improvements to protect drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The City’s objective is to improve the safety of all intersection users by decreasing crashes and lessening crash severity.

The intersection has seen a high concentration of traffic crashes from 2013 to 2023, with 244 reported crashes, including 30 injury crashes. This places the intersection at No. 41 on the City’s list of 100 highest crash intersections. About 36 percent of the drivers involved in these crashes were older, characteristic of an intersection with businesses such as grocery stores. About 40 percent of the involved drivers are reported as younger drivers. This characteristic of college-age people reflects that many students travel through the intersection to and from WMU’s Parkview and Main campuses.

An elementary school is located at the intersection's southeast corner. While the school is currently being refurbished, it is anticipated to reopen for the next school year, highlighting concern for traffic safety and for children who will begin regular crossings at that time and must be protected from motor vehicles.

The intersection at Parkview and Oakland has been under construction, and work was halted for the past winter. During the winter, the traffic signal was reconstructed, increasing its functionality. The intersection improvement is part of the Whites Road project, which is intended to improve the street surface, calm traffic, and slow excessive speeds (40 mph) along Whites Road.

Traffic Calming Efforts

The traffic calming efforts implemented internally in the Winchell neighborhood used modern traffic engineering and safety standards. The modifications followed Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) best practices, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) recommendations, and guidance included in the newest Federal Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) issued in December 2023.

The express intent of the traffic calming efforts has been to calm (slow) traffic (specifically what the local neighborhood associations have asked for), make the streets safer, and share the public's right of way with all users. While the benefit has been fewer crashes, the cost to most drivers in the neighborhood, including on Winchell Avenue and Chevy Chase Blvd, has been relatively small, amounting to an increased trip length time of around 15 to 30 seconds.

Conclusion

The methods employed in the Winchell Neighborhood have been used around the State of Michigan in cities including Ann Arbor, Battle Creek, Detroit, Flint, and Grand Rapids, as well as across the United States in many cities of all sizes. They have not been found unsafe or difficult for drivers to become accustomed to. The measures the City of Kalamazoo have taken consider what caused traffic safety problems in the past and improvements to make City streets safer for everyone in the future.

The number of reported crashes in the Winchell Neighborhood has been reduced more significantly than the general City of Kalamazoo crash reduction. While it is still too early to determine precisely what factors have contributed to the decrease in traffic crashes, one factor may be the increased awareness of traffic safety in the neighborhood brought about by the presence of traffic calming features that remind drivers to pay more attention to their driving, even if speeds have not yet moderated.

Traffic studies show that the City of Kalamazoo experiences many more crashes than should be expected for a city of the size and population of Kalamazoo compared with other Michigan cities. The City of Kalamazoo has implemented a series of *test projects* at the original urging of Winchell Neighborhood residents to slow drivers down and thus make the neighborhood's streets safer. The connection between speed and crashes and death and injury is well documented. The City's preliminary crash results so far show the calming efforts have been working, at a minimum, to raise awareness of drivers in the Winchell Neighborhood, but also to reduce the number and severity of crashes.

The test projects are intended to determine what works best for the Winchell Neighborhood and the City. Traffic engineers have taken a very conservative approach to implementing these tests to ensure whether crashes increase, and fatalities and personal injuries were prevented. The crash data shows that is the case. In conclusion, the City of Kalamazoo's primary objective in the Winchell Neighborhood and along the Oakland/Whites/Parkview intersection is to achieve **SAFE STREETS FOR ALL.**