

Reduce the demand for parking and put something more useful in place of some of the parking lots downtown,

A vision for Downtown: active, with plenty of living space; two-way traffic with bicycle lanes; a bakery on the mall, and a drugstore.

A world-class city is a place that people visit and leave wanting to come back and tell the world about. If we focus on our arts, culture and forward thinking, we will continue to thrive.

Downtown Life

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1. Downtown Life

IK 2025 participants envisioned a Downtown that is welcoming year-round, with inviting public spaces; events and activities for all ages and interests; and ease of movement in, around, and to Downtown.

As “everyone’s neighborhood”, Downtown is where Kalamazooans live, work, and play. Each user has slightly different needs. Those who live in Downtown desire a complete neighborhood where they can meet their daily needs, including shopping, recreation, and entertainment. Downtown employees envision easier access to its abundant goods, service, retail, and activities and safe transportation. Visitors imagine vibrant, active streets and gathering spaces with unique events and family-friendly activities that draw from the region.

1.1 Downtown Evaluation

Imagine Kalamazoo: Downtown. Input updating the Downtown plan was collected throughout each phase of IK 2025. A focused Downtown effort culminated with two days of meetings, that highlighted issues and opportunities.

- A walking audit of Downtown assisted by architects, urban designers, and landscape architects to help illustrate a vision and redevelopment possibilities.
- A public open house with hands-on activities based on whether participants lived, worked, or played in Downtown.
- Presentations on best practices and vision implementation by local, regional, and national experts.



Downtown Kalamazoo is a place to live, work, and play. Photo credit: Neal Conway

The Downtown workshop also served as the kick-off for the Downtown Retail Analysis project by the Gibbs Planning Group.

2009 Downtown Comprehensive Plan. The 2009 Downtown Comprehensive Plan envisioned an accessible, prosperous, diverse, green, vibrant, and progressive Downtown. The plan put Downtown on a path to realize this vision, but implementation was slowed due to the national economic recession.

IK 2025 input aligns closely with the 2009 vision goals, which include: strong placemaking to create a city for children and seniors, a conversion to 2-way streets, a stronger link to the nearby college campuses, additional and affordable housing options, utilization of form-based zoning, and revision to the DDA boundary. To facilitate implementation, the validated 2009 Downtown plan goals are incorporated into this document instead of remaining a stand-alone plan.

Housing Analysis (2016). Zimmerman/Volk Associates performed an analysis of the residential market potential for Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to determine the housing market demand. Their study found that, over a five-year period, the residential market could sustain over 1,400 new units, both for rent and sale in and near Downtown. Demand was found for housing types existing in Kalamazoo, known as the “missing middle.”

The variety of housing desired in Kalamazoo are: rowhouses or attached housing and smaller single family homes, in addition to condominiums, and loft style living. Housing demand in the Downtown is

much greater than the available supply of units. The study also elaborated on the importance of sense of place and how it can impact the demand for housing.

Existing conditions in Downtown possess many characteristics of a vibrant, urban neighborhood. However, circulation and navigation, speeding, and uncomfortable pedestrian environment resulting from one-way streets. The report also noted that numerous open parking lots disrupt the physical development pattern and further impact the feeling of safety and comfortable pedestrian experience.

Urban Growth Initiative (2017). The UGI transportation, housing, and economic workgroups gathered information to define a consistent, clear vision for Downtown's future. The UGI work compiled by the W.E. Upjohn Institute confirmed that there continues to be growth opportunities for development in Downtown. The study also considered steps toward creating a coordinated management outline for Downtown performance. Partnerships with the City, Downtown Kalamazoo Inc., and Downtown Development Authority will be looking at best practices and industry standards to accomplish the action items in this Master Plan.

Retail Analysis (2017). The Gibbs Planning Group, Inc. completed a retail market analysis for Downtown Kalamazoo as a part of the UGI process. Kalamazoo is well within a regional retail area that sees \$500 million spent annually. The study found that the Downtown could capture as much as \$50 million of spending with strategic investments and placemaking

considerations. These investments need to target where the Downtown is under-performing due to non-market or physical conditions that currently hamper further growth such as:

- Difficult navigation of the one-way street network
- Outdated parking management
- Lack of connection to adjacent office users and college students
- Limited marketing activities

Removal of these barriers could result in a Downtown able to support five times more square feet of retail and restaurant development. Gibbs noted that accomplishing many of the goals from the 2009 plan would greatly impact Downtown's ability to capture this potential.

1.2 2025 Vision for Downtown

Downtown Kalamazoo is to be a focal point for a distinctive sense of community, forming the foundation for educational, economic and personal success for all. To realize the vision for Downtown the City and Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. (DKI) must partner together and with others to do the following:

- Re-brand Downtown, update wayfinding.
 - A strong focus on business recruitment.
 - Refine the housing analysis to create infill targets for a mix of types, affordability, and location.
 - Coordinate the management and oversight of Downtown activities and initiatives through a single point of contact.
 - Establish a Business Improvement District and define income allocation for the maintenance and operations of the District.
 - Evaluate Downtown boundaries and structured agreements ensuring adequate funding for Downtown Management.
 - Improve parking standards to respond to the retail marketing analysis recommendations.
 - Improve the coordination of anchor institutions to foster and maintain a healthy living community.
- Remove physical barriers, with a focus on the Downtown street network. This includes converting to two-way streets.
 - Create policies and regulations that facilitate the envisioned development and streamline the review and approval process.
 - Create a Downtown Ambassador program.
 - Update all marketing tools for Economic Development at City and DKI.



The two-day Downtown meeting was an opportunity for residents, business owners, architects and designers, and community leaders to come together and plan for the future of Kalamazoo.

Photo credit: Neal Conway

2. Downtown Network

The Downtown transportation network should be easy to navigate and accessible to everyone. The combined streets, trails, sidewalks, bus, and rail services offer the opportunity to connect people throughout the city and the region. To continue maximizing the network to support the future of Downtown Kalamazoo, IK 2025 participants and three independent studies echoed the critical importance of improving Downtown quality of life through the ease of navigation and overall transportation connectivity for all users within the city limits.

2.1 Vehicular Network

For over 40 years one project has been studied over and over again. The one-way pairs in Downtown continue to impart the greatest challenge in Downtown for those that live, work, and play. Traffic calming the one-way pairs has been talked about for decades but no one solution has been acted on. Several of the original one-way pairs have been changed to two-way during these studies. Again, during this effort, IK 2025 studies that focused on retail, residential, and placemaking strategies reiterated that the solution to removing a major barrier to Downtown's retail growth, would be to solve the fast traffic, difficult navigation, and pedestrian crossing issues on the remaining one-way streets.

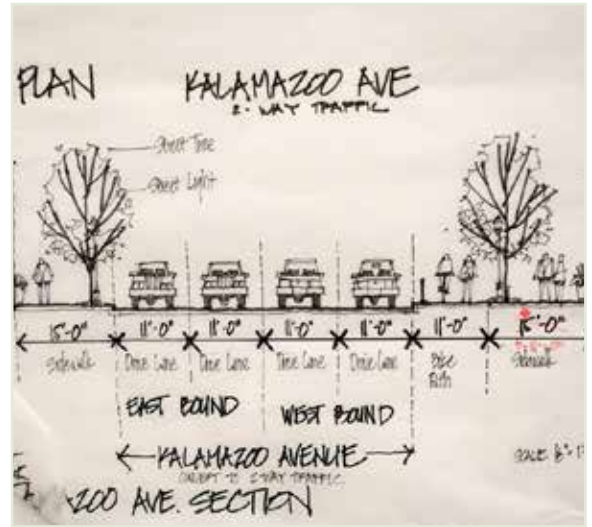
For this latest investigation, the City has partnered with the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to move toward one-way street conversions, including West Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo Avenue, Douglas Avenue, West Main Street, Edwards Street,

Westnedge Avenue, Park Street, Lovell Street, and South Street. The current Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study led by MDOT builds off of the 2014 charrette held to find ways to traffic calm Stadium Drive and W. Michigan Avenue.

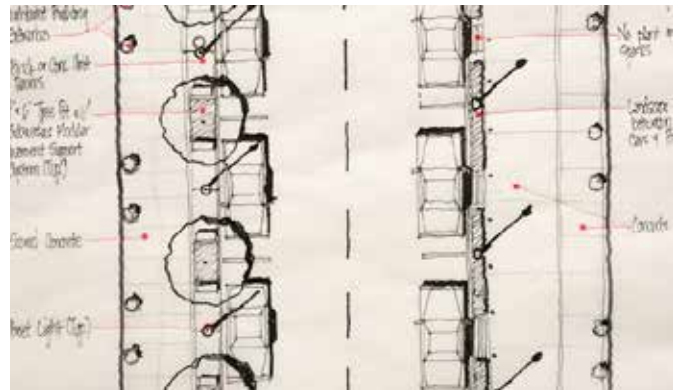
The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is using the PEL process to determine future improvements within the downtown Kalamazoo study area: Stadium Drive between Howard Street and Michigan Avenue; Michigan Avenue between Stadium Drive and Kalamazoo Avenue; Kalamazoo Avenue between Douglas Avenue and Harrison Street; Michikal Street between Michigan Avenue and Kalamazoo Avenue; Riverview Drive between Harrison Street and Gull Road; and Douglas Avenue between West Main Street and Kalamazoo Avenue. The PEL study will continue through 2018. (Figure X) More information can be found at: [http://www.michigan.gov/Projects_and_Programs/Studies/Planning_and_Environmental_Linkages_\(PEL\)_Studies/Downtown_Kalamazoo_Planning_and_Environmental_Linkage_\(PEL\)_Study](http://www.michigan.gov/Projects_and_Programs/Studies/Planning_and_Environmental_Linkages_(PEL)_Studies/Downtown_Kalamazoo_Planning_and_Environmental_Linkage_(PEL)_Study).

As the PEL project moves forward, important discussions include: future street jurisdiction and phasing of conversion. The City's Complete Streets Policy and the Street Types outlined in the Strategic Framework will guide the redesign, ensuring that the Downtown network is safely accessible for all modes of transportation and maintains a consistent network.

Kalamazoo Avenue. Kalamazoo Avenue is a Connector Street critical in the Downtown



Improvements to the pedestrian environment along Kalamazoo Avenue would make this critical street safer, more accessible, and attractive.



West Michigan Avenue is a gateway to the city that runs along an active commercial corridor. The intersection of West Michigan Avenue and Kalamazoo Mall is a vibrant downtown center; two-way conversion would expand this life and character to a broader segment of Downtown.



Improvements to South and Lovell Streets will make these important connectors to Downtown more vibrant and accessible.
Source: Google Maps

network and for travel from east to west in the City of Kalamazoo and to access the Metro Transit Transportation center. Enhanced crosswalks and pedestrian infrastructure, along with the addition of bulb-outs, will improve personal safety and overall appearance of street. This is particularly important at the intersection of Water Street and Rose Street. The Downtown Connector, a part of the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail (KRVT) network, is a new addition to the street that is a start to include non-motorized transportation to a heavily traveled route. Expanding the trail along Kalamazoo Avenue from Walbridge Street to Westnedge Avenue, including planters along the vehicular side of the path, adding striping, unique crosswalks, bicycle racks and amenities, and signage are some of the future improvements being discussed for 2018.

West Michigan Avenue. Through the Downtown, West Michigan Avenue is a Priority Street serving as an important gateway to employment, retail,

entertainment, and cultural amenities. West Michigan provides many visitors with their first impression of the City because it serves as the main route traveling to the east within the one way pair. Conversion to two-way simplifies the navigation and circulation around downtown. The street is a critical part of Downtown's primary retail and entertainment corridor and must be treated as a destination for pedestrians that is safe, convenient, and accessible. The street life along West and East Michigan is imagined with more active storefronts, residential and office uses on the upper floors, and an emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle mobility. This vision of a Downtown Main Street street will create a West Michigan Avenue to be a vibrant urban environment where pedestrians are treated with the highest level of service.

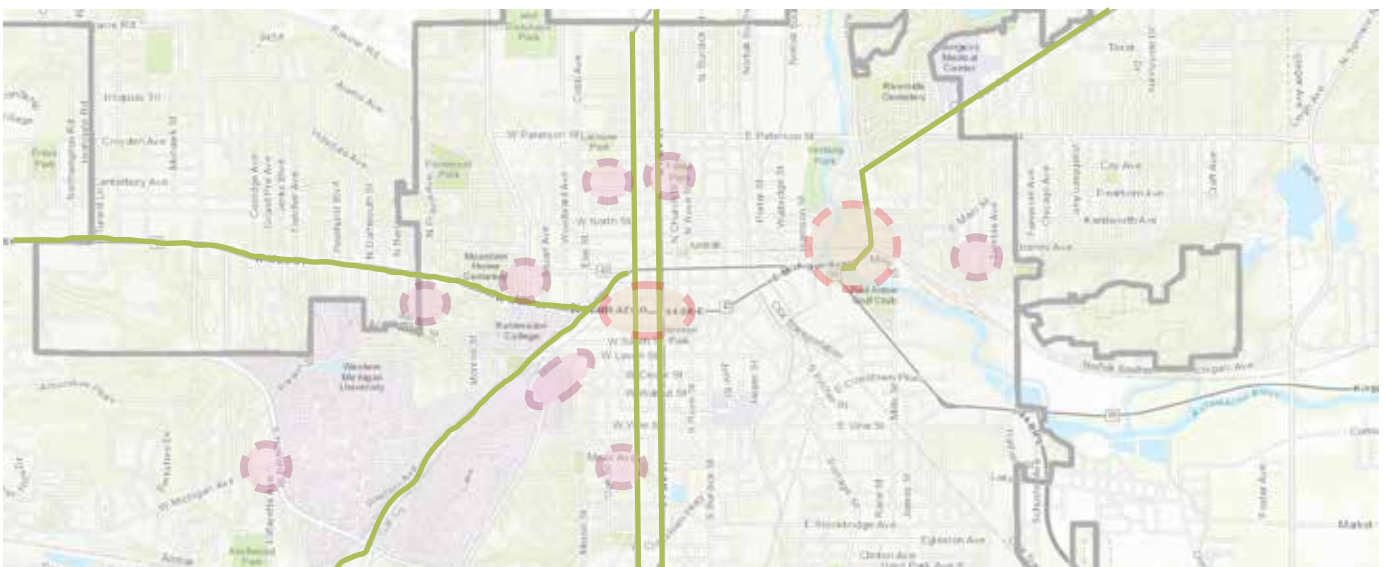
South Street. South Street is an important connection between Downtown and the west side of town. The Main Street designation in the Strategic Framework, acknowledges that improving safety, especially for

pedestrian and bicyclists, will be a priority. A variety of building types are located along South Street moving from residential to civic to commercial in the Downtown. Much of South Street to the west is a beautiful local historic district. Improvements to the street are desired to better circulate traffic, connect the east and west ends of Downtown, and create safer pedestrian and bicycling routes from Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College.

Lovell Street. Lovell Street currently serves as South Street's westbound partner in the one-way pair between Downtown and the West Main Hill Neighborhood. The street is designated as a Main Street in the Strategic Framework and is one of the most important east west connections to and from Downtown. If Lovell can be improved to have two-way traffic, it will serve as one of the most efficient transit and pedestrian connections east to west. The Main Street designation supports a mix of building types, including flexibility for additional housing units.



The Kalamazoo Mall is a pedestrian street north of West Michigan Avenue.



In order to support the growth of Downtown, all critical links must be evaluated.

This street type will allow Lovell to support near Downtown residents within walking distance, as well as ease of transportation circulation connectivity for students, employees, and consumers to the Kalamazoo Mall, Zoetis, Bronson, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College and other destinations Downtown.

Kalamazoo Mall. The Kalamazoo Mall is the most pedestrian friendly level of service, designated as a Priority Street, and continue to support active storefronts with retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses. To support the active retail uses along it, on-street parking should be expanded and the associated operations and maintenance fee schedules evaluated. This should be a part of the larger Downtown parking management strategy, informed by the 2017 Retail Analysis and Urban Growth Initiative.

To support a retail market and connectivity to the Northside Neighborhood, options to explore Burdick Street as a direct connection were discussed during the Downtown IK2025 meeting. Further study is required to determine if the Kalamazoo Mall should be converted to a two-way street linking the north and south of the City. The need for connectivity of the retail corridor to the Northside for both walking and bicycling, Gibbs Planning also considered the evaluation of opening the Mall to vehicular traffic north of West Michigan Avenue. This would simplify circulation to the south end of town, if the street was kept one-way; or open up new circulation if considered for two-way.

On-street parking is more efficient and can be a revenue generator. If a single on-street parking space turns over frequently — about 12 to 15 uses a day — it brings in as much as \$300,000 in revenues to nearby businesses.

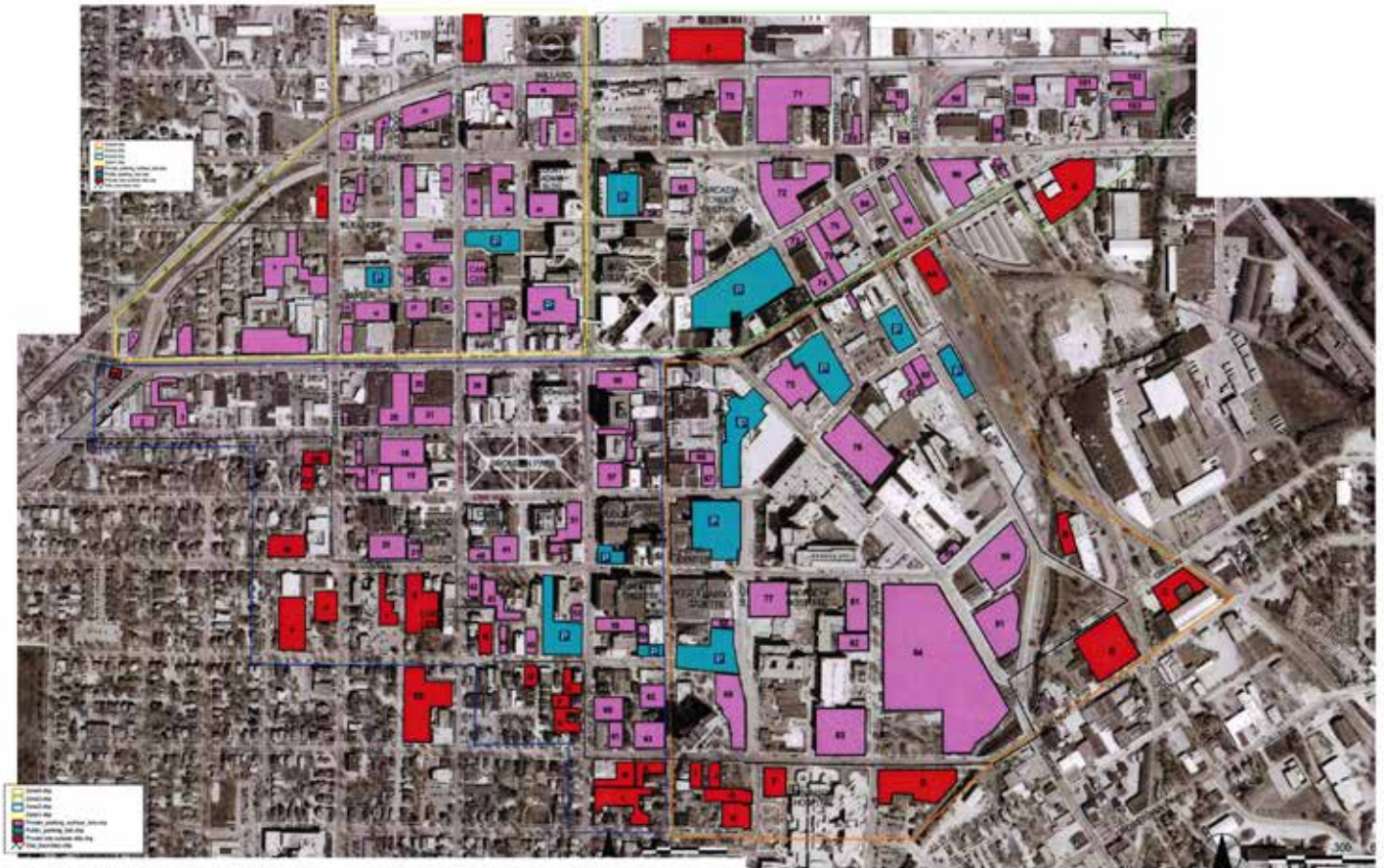
Shoup, D. 1999, abstracted from Journal) Instead of Free Parking. <http://shoup.boL.ucla.edu/InsteadOfFreeParking.pdf>

Other Critical Links to & from Downtown. Portage Street, Westnedge Avenue, Park Street, West Main Street/M-43, Stadium Drive, West Michigan, East Michigan, and Gull Road are key streets leading to and from Downtown. As the primary links, these streets should facilitate the flow of traffic by all modes. Each of these streets has been designated as either a Boulevard or Connector in the Strategic Framework Plan to guide future improvements. Reviewing each and its impact on mobility is a critical first step in improving access to Downtown.

2.2 Parking Management

Parking management is critical to the success of any thriving Downtown. The result of the Retail Market Analysis was very clear that parking in Downtown is a barrier to economic growth. Input from IK2025

Map of Downtown Parking



Map of available parking spaces in Downtown Kalamazoo.

echoes this view from both retail and customer perspectives. There is a firm belief among many Downtown visitors that there is not enough parking available, and what is available is expensive and/or not well located. A new strategy that embraces best practices for Downtowns should be studied for implementation. Downtown parking - on street, surface lots, or ramps - should be viewed as part of a larger system. Understanding this, the new strategy should consider the following best practices for each type.

On-Street Parking. On-street parking is critical to successful Downtown vibrancy and retail. The Gibb's

Retail Market Analysis recommends increasing the quantity of on-street parking, particularly along the Kalamazoo Mall. In addition to increasing the quantity of on-street spaces, the right fee structure needs to be developed. To evaluate meters, the location, time of day, and ramp availability should be taken into consideration. Turning over parking spaces in front of retail is critical for commercial success and for parking availability. On-street parking also serves as the perfect location for Downtown residents to park over night. A permit system, which considers the location and permitted hours should be studied and include best practices for residential parking strategies.

Parking Ramps. For successful Downtown ramp parking and safety of users, the existing parking ramps must be consistently maintained at a higher standard, including fresh paint, new lighting, and additional signage. Parking ramps must be attractive, conveniently located, and accessible to make them a viable component to the overall parking system. In conjunction with updates to the fee structure for on-street parking in Downtown, ramp rates should be revised. Best practices point to a model with higher on-street parking fees and free and reduced rates, with the first two hours free in ramps.

Future ramps should follow these standards:

- Be located centrally to maximize use by the many new Downtown employees and residents.
- Ensure driveway access is not from a Priority Street, as designated in the Strategic Framework.
- Designate spaces for electric and compact vehicles.
- Include indoor bicycle parking.
- Locate parking for permit holders, both employee and residents on the upper floors, allowing easy access for short term parking for retail and restaurant customers.
- Include active uses on the ground floor, and wrap the lower levels with office, retail, or commercial uses when located on any Priority, Main Street, or Connector, as designated in the Strategic Framework.
- Consider the future use of autonomous vehicles in planning.

Surface Lots. Surface parking lots can interrupt the urban fabric by creating activity dead zones and

increasing points of pedestrian vehicular conflicts. Future surface parking should be constructed using the following parameters.

- Surface parking is not permitted on corner lots or on the front or corner sides of lots within Downtown.
- Surface lots are not permitted on Priority Streets.
- Driveway access is not permitted from a Priority Street
- Low landscape and fencing should buffer the lot from the adjacent sidewalk or public space.
- Whenever possible, surface parking lots should be shared between multiple users.

Valet or Shuttle Service. Valet and shuttle services promote the use of remote parking facilities. These services can help development of land within the City core and deliver customers, employees, and students to key destinations. Services such as a circulator, could be employed temporarily for special events and holidays (Holly Jolly Trolley) or be a permanent part of the parking management and as a transportation alternative for Downtown visitors and employees.

Employee Parking. Many on-street parking spaces are currently used by Downtown employees. This limits space for customers and patrons impacting the economic health of Downtown. Understanding the value of an on-street parking space to expanding retail sales, employee parking must be considered elsewhere. Designating spaces in parking ramps or surface lots for employees is essential to the overall parking strategy. The City should work with Downtown Kalamazoo businesses, Downtown Kalamazoo Inc.



Currently, Kalamazoo Avenue isolates the Transportation Center from the core of Downtown.

Source: Google Maps

and Central City Parking to provide information to business owners on locations and fees.

Both small and large employers in Downtown should be considered in the parking strategy. A further collaboration between the City, DKI, and employers can also consider transportation demand management strategies.

These can include:

- Sliding fee scales based on location and time.
- Reduced/employer paid transit fares.
- Trolley service to/from remote parking..
- Shared lots between employers and other uses; such as overnight resident parking.
- Incentives for employees living within walking or bicycling distance.
- Incentives for carpooling; Increasing fee structures for parking that reward the employee if they do not drive.



Participants at the Downtown meeting liked the idea of using decorative crosswalks to enhance the pedestrian experience near the Transportation Center. Seasonal or event-based crosswalk art can bring vibrancy to Downtown.

To support the new strategy for parking management in Downtown, City policies and ordinances should be reviewed and revised as necessary to remove barriers. This includes a review of the parking exempt designation, revising parking minimums and maximums, better locating surface parking lots, and driveway/access management regulations.

2.3 Transit Network

The center of Kalamazoo County's hub and spoke transit system is the Kalamazoo Transportation Center, located at the north end of Downtown at



IK 2025 Downtown Charrette improving safety and adding crosswalks



Some Downtown pedestrian pathways are currently in need of improvement. Sidewalks like this are unappealing and can make pedestrians feel unsafe.

Kalamazoo Avenue between Burdick and Rose Street. Throughout IK 2025, participants expressed a desire for an expanded transit system, with additional stops, new routes, and additional transfer hubs.

The Kalamazoo Transportation Center also serves the Amtrak station, linking Kalamazoo to Detroit and Chicago. The Center has many travel options and is an asset yet to be capitalized upon. With an accessible and connected location in Downtown, it feels somewhat remote because of the traffic conditions along Kalamazoo Avenue. Pedestrian improvements on Kalamazoo Avenue and Rose Street, including special crosswalk treatments and wayfinding signage can strengthen the physical connection and serve as welcoming gateway for those arriving to the Center.

Development of the Center's retail spaces and the surrounding buildings with active uses could make the Center and the intersection a destination for more than just travelers. Pedestrian and retail activity around the Center would positively impact Downtown and address safety concerns.

2.4 Pedestrian Network

Walkability is integral in the success of Downtown Kalamazoo. Whether you live, work, or play Downtown, traveling by car, bike, or bus, everyone is a pedestrian at some point during their journey. The streets are also the pedestrian network and should be designed and maintained as such. In addition to being a safe and enjoyable place to travel, the pedestrian network helps to create a sense of place for social

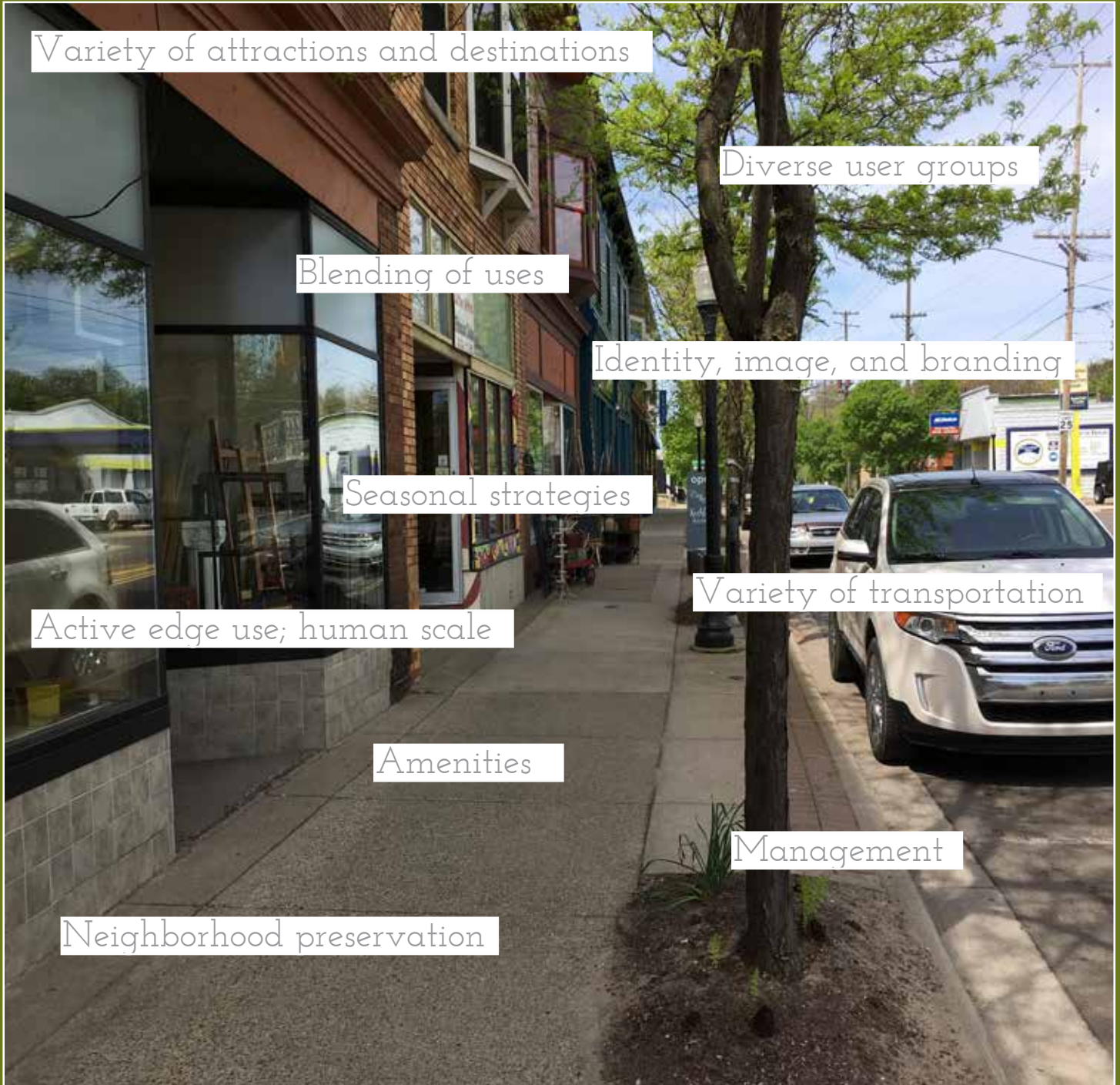
Best Practice - Pedestrian Network

Snow Melt. Since 1998, the City of Holland, Michigan has invested more than \$8 million into the largest publicly-owned snowmelt system in the country. 10.5 acres' worth of heated sidewalks eliminate the need for plowing and salting, and reduce sidewalk maintenance needs, saving the City money. The system does double duty by reusing wastewater from a nearby Public Works power plant.

The system was created in an attempt to make Holland's downtown commercial corridor competitive with nearby malls and other shopping centers - and it worked. Holland's downtown has been recognized by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as a Great American Main Street; the snowmelt system increases the popularity of downtown shopping, prevents slips and falls, and makes the downtown area accessible to people of all ages and abilities. The success of Holland's snowmelt initiative has spurred significant private investment in the system.

Source: Martinez, Shandra. "Why Michigan city spends millions to heat its streets during winter." MLive. February 26, 2016.

Power of 10+. The Power of 10+ is a placemaking approach that prioritizes the human experience. It is based on the premise that successful places have a wide variety of uses that create reasons for people to be there - this includes retail, food, art, music, and socialization. The Power of 10+ aims to create unique places that draw people in with distinct character and uses.



Source: Project for Public Spaces. "The Power of 10+ <https://www.pps.org/reference/the-power-of-10/>

and community activities. Best practices like the "Power of 10+" (Figure X) can guide decision-making that consider overall improvements to the pedestrian network ensuring that Downtown is an inviting public place. Other considerations for the comfort of pedestrians are discussed below. Each of these items should be taken as parts of whole that together create a pedestrian network plan.

Safe & Inviting. All Downtown streets should be safe for pedestrian travel. All sidewalks should be smooth, accessible with ramps, and connected; without gaps in the network. At the intersection, crosswalks shall be clearly marked, adjoining accessible curb cuts on each side of the street. Sidewalk extensions or "bulb outs" can be considered when on street parking is present. This treatment gives the pedestrian an advantage to see approaching traffic in front of parked traffic without stepping into the street and reduces the width of the street crossing. In addition to being safe, the pedestrian network should be inviting and aesthetically pleasing. Pedestrian amenities and streetscape elements,



The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail

Source: <http://www.eyeonmichigan.com/trails/kzoorivervalley/photos.php>

ranging from benches for resting to street trees proving shade all impact a pedestrian's experience and can help define the character of an area.

Snowmelt. In Kalamazoo it was commented many times that the City achieve a vibrant Downtown all year long. To achieve this, sidewalks must remain clear of snow, ice, and other debris to prevent falls. To achieve this consistently is through the installation of a snow melt system. This system located under the sidewalks heats pathways to melt snow and ice.

Snowmelt systems are a great tool to keep an area open and accessible as is achieved currently along the Kalamazoo Mall. A comprehensive study for



Current wayfinding signage.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/eridony/3261454739>

installing a snowmelt system throughout Downtown should include costs, alternative and innovative sources of heat, and a schedule for installation. The priority for installation should be on Priority Streets and Main Streets, with consideration given to areas with transit connections and high traffic around existing retail and commercial uses. New development projects in Downtown should include snowmelt in their plans.

Streetscape. Every street needs to be safe and accessible, with street type determining the level and type of streetscape improvements required.

All streets in Downtown are required to have:

- Trees
- Bulb-outs where on-street parking exists, or wide lanes to cross.
- Crosswalks at intersections and critical mid-block locations.

Priority and Main Streets must include:

- Low landscaping, flower baskets
- Pedestrian lighting
- Street furniture (trash/recycling bins, benches, bike racks)

Wayfinding. Downtown Kalamazoo's current wayfinding system was designed and installed in 1999. These signs are well located, including signs directed toward the vehicle and bicycle travel lanes and those for pedestrians on the sidewalks. As Downtown re-brands and revises its marketing strategy, the current signs should also be updated. New signage should continue to highlight the Downtown Districts, but also reflect the expanded trail network and new locations, including civic, institutional, and recreation uses.



Photo credit: Neal Conway

Bicycle Amenities. Kalamazoo has many bicycle routes moving through and around the City. To improve access and ridership, every neighborhood and college campus should have a clear route to Downtown. In many cases, these routes already exist but are not marked on pavement, well-signed, or advertised. There are multiple opportunities to enhance bicycling in Downtown including:

- Provide multiple bike racks at key locations, including trail heads, the Transportation Center, and by major employers to make commuting by bicycle easier.
- Locate 1-2 bicycle repair or service stations in Downtown.
- Locate bike share service throughout.
- Change zoning ordinances to include on-site bicycle parking at existing buildings.
- Install wayfinding signage with destinations and distances within Downtown and throughout the City.
- Study snow melt for bicycle routes.

3. Downtown Zoning

To achieve the Downtown envisioned in IK 2025, the policies and regulations need to align supporting desired development. Downtowns need vibrant streets, active and inviting buildings that respond to the walkable environment, incorporating the right mix of uses in the right locations. Through the Zoning Ordinance, the Downtown can define and specify the form of buildings and ground floor activity to respond to the Street Type and activity level desired.

3.1 Form-based Zoning Downtown

IK 2025 participants commented that Downtown should have predictable development and a high quality public realm. The definition of a “world-class city” frequently included relationship of the street to the built environment, pedestrian friendly buildings, limiting off street parking lots, encouraging mixed uses, and focus on retail along designated Main and Priority Streets. The desire for a vibrant Downtown

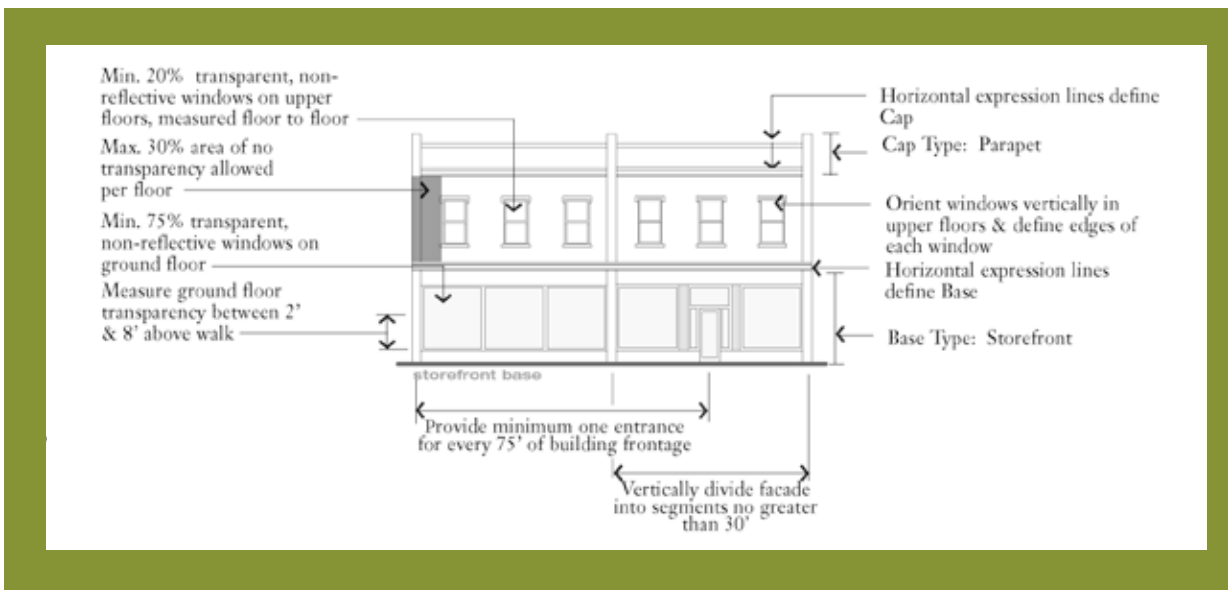
where working, learning, shopping, living, and entertainment all to occur within proximity of one another is becoming the norm for development.

Form-based zoning favors the form of buildings. The location and height can strengthen the relationship with the street and adjacent buildings; together, it is the what defines the context of a place. As a result, form-based codes can go beyond regulating a building's footprint to include pedestrian and public realm details such as: requiring an entrance from the sidewalk, minimum level of window transparency, and facade definition on the parts of a building facing public spaces, such as streets and parks.

Form-based zoning provides Downtown Kalamazoo with several benefits.

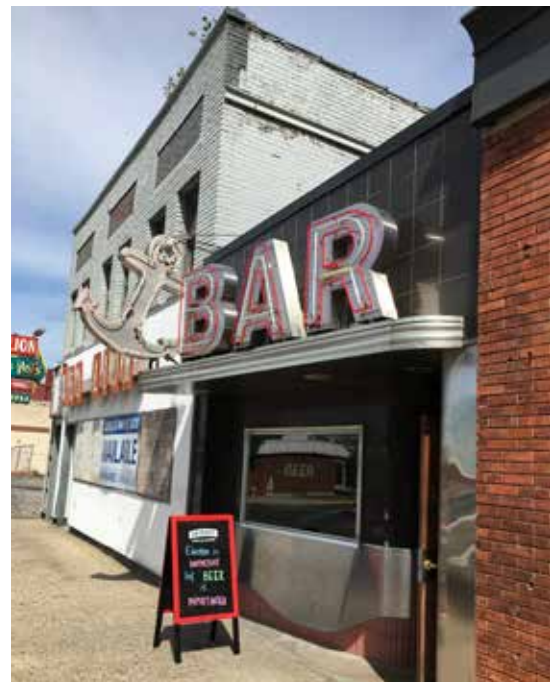
- *Economic Vitality.* The structure and design of Downtown buildings can have a profound impact on the success of ground floor retail.

Best Practice: Form-based Zoning Example



Example of building elements that form-based zoning can regulate. Credit: GVMC Form Based Code Study, <http://www.gvmc.org/landuse/formbasedcode.shtml>

Downtown & Node Signage to establish unique character



Attractive signage that is mindful of the building and its location can improve Kalamazoo's Downtown and Nodes.

Establishing retail industry standards for storefront development, for example, will help facilitate the economic health of Downtown.

- *Simpler.* Form-based codes strive to be a set of simple regulations. Written in plain language, they are context-based, heavily illustrated, and designed to be user-friendly with predictable outcomes.
- *Streamline Application of Regulations.* A form-based code removes the need for design guidelines, unless an area desires to regulate the architectural style of an area.
- *Streamline Review & Approval.* If the zoning regulations are crafted to achieve the desired outcome, fewer review steps will be required. Building within the parameters of the code could mean the ability to develop a lot by right.

Street-Facing Building Facades. Form-based zoning focuses on the relationship between a building and public spaces, such as streets. This relationship provides specific regulations for the building facades facing public spaces, major streets, and minor streets. The key elements are location of the primary entrances; minimum amount of transparency (windows especially on the ground floor); definition between first and upper floors of the building; and guidance for design of long buildings to match the pedestrian scale of the street.

Building Location. Building placement works to define the block. A form-based code is more responsive to context with building placement. Rather than use a setback, form-based zoning utilize a build-to zone (range in which the building must be located)

or a build-to line (precise location for building). The placement of buildings is particularly important at corners. Buildings should be located to cover or hold the corner of a lot. Driveways and parking should not be accessed and ideally not visible from, the front property line.

Height. Height is typically regulated in number of stories. In form-based zoning, the permitted range of floor heights, especially for the ground floor, is regulated in feet. This ensures retail industry standard heights for the ground floor, but also allows the flexibility for other uses in this space, including multiple story lobbies. Downtown currently has a minimum height requirement of two stories.

Signage. Signage is important in walkable urban areas. Signs not only serve to market the business or location, but can also add an element of uniqueness and become a brand for a district. A variety of sign types should be permitted by right in Downtown, including signs that project over the sidewalk and sandwich-board signs. The Node designations shall have the same signage types allowed.

Uses & Districts. Uses are not ignored in a form-based code, but permitted uses are simplified. A code may allow retail and office uses without listing every possible retail option. Prohibited uses and those that require a special use are listed with the applicable conditions. These uses may include those that impact traffic, environment, noise, and large scale.

Ground Floor Uses. Retail and entertainment

uses should be encouraged on the ground floor of buildings on Priority Streets and designated Node corridors, with residential and office uses above. Throughout the Downtown, office uses can be encouraged in all locations. Residential uses should only be permitted on the ground floor in specific locations and not allowed on the Priority Streets. Studies, such as a merchandise plan, can guide DKI to locate retail for the highest and best location and assist business development.

3.2 Green Zoning

Walkable urban areas are inherently sustainable as they provide people the opportunity to walk, bike, and use transit to access employment, housing, entertainment, and daily needs. The deeper impact of

sustainability for Downtown should include additional environmental actions.

- Stormwater in an urban area can be managed without requiring each development to provide its own green space. Innovative methods include green roofs, rooftop gardens, rain gardens, and permeable pavers.
- The use of solar and wind turbines in Downtown Kalamazoo should be promoted for energy efficiency. To facilitate their placement, zoning and building regulations should clearly state all requirements.
- LEED or other green building certifications for Downtown development should be incentivized.

Imagine Kalamazoo Downtown: Parks & Recreation Ideas



Several park and recreation opportunities exist in Downtown. Discussion at the Downtown Charrette centered on whether or not the right activities and programs exist in these spaces

4. Marketing Downtown

Updating the branding and marketing strategies for Downtown will boost Downtown's exposure as a key destination in the Southwest Michigan. Marketing strategies should support the existing businesses, as well as helping to attract new. The marketing strategy should take advantage of Kalamazoo's unique assets. Attracting more visitors from a wider area should also be a goal of the new marketing strategies and branding.

4.1 Vibrant Downtown Districts.

Currently, Downtown is divided into six districts, named for their historic functions during a 1999 wayfinding project. As the Downtown has evolved and created new stories, these names need to be updated. As part of the re-branding Downtown, the District names should be reviewed and updated as necessary. New signage should celebrate both the Downtown's history and be flexible to incorporate new stories as they come along.



East Michigan Avenue in 1956.

Source: Western Michigan University Archives



Kalamazoo Downtown District Map

Source: Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc.

Each of Kalamazoo's Downtown districts has a name that reflects its rich history. The Bronson Park District, for example, is named after Kalamazoo's founder, Titus Bronson, who stayed there on his first night in the city. The Haymarket District was once home to the city's first hay auction and hotel. Arcadia is named after Arcadia Creek, which sits at the District's original gateway, founded by Bronson. South Town used to be home to many of Kalamazoo's famous celery farms, and now houses a vibrant mix of residential, commercial, and public uses. The East End District has transformed from a railroad center to a home for breweries, coffee shops, and entertainment. As Kalamazoo has grown and changed, these districts have taken on new personalities while still reflecting their histories.

Source: Downtown Kalamazoo, Inc. <http://www.downtownkalamazoo.org/About-Downtown.aspx>

4.2 Growing and Attracting Businesses

During outreach through, IK 2025 and the Gibb's Retail Market Analysis, participants noted the need for a more active role by the City and DKI in supporting existing and recruiting new businesses. Several tools can assist with this task. A merchandise and a business recruitment plan will set the Downtown up for success in their discussions with potential businesses by putting the right information and details in the recruiter's hands before starting conversations. This makes direct contact with potential businesses and participation at International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) events more successful.

Attract New Businesses. The following tools are necessary for the Downtown to effectively recruit new businesses.

- *Merchandise or Asset Plan.* A merchandise or asset plans provides potential businesses with detailed physical information on available spaces in Downtown, as well as the lease/purchase parameters for each space.
- *Recruitment Plan.* A recruitment plan outlines the type of businesses the community would like to see in Downtown Kalamazoo, why Downtown is a successful commercial environment, and the advantages of locating in Downtown.

Support Existing Businesses. To support existing businesses, programs such as a storefront display and façade improvement grants should be considered in addition to updating the Downtown's brand and marketing tools.

- *Commercial Storefront Analysis.* A review of the front façade of buildings Downtown, specifically looking at window displays, transparency, signage, façade condition, etc. with the goal of approving appearances and boosting sales.
- *Façade Improvement Funds.* Grant funds should be made available for improvements to building facades, including signage in Downtown and Nodes.
- *Business Expansion/Improvement Funds.* Grant funds, or low-interest loans that can invest in barriers to growth or start up such as: elevators, fire suppression, or mechanical systems.

4.3 Marketing Through Transportation

Kalamazoo has many transportation amenities which can be utilized to promote the Downtown. Amtrak, County Transportation Agency, and the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail are all opportunities to market to visitors and residents through transportation. Marketing campaigns should include travel to events and businesses Downtown without the worry of finding a parking space.

Visitors coming into Kalamazoo along highways, also need better wayfinding along major interstates to locate central Downtown. Partnering with the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to best locate signage and distances.

Ride the Rails to Kalamazoo. During IK 2025 Downtown meetings, participants suggested a marketing campaign that capitalizes on the Amtrak

service. Kalamazoo is conveniently located halfway between Detroit and Chicago. Track improvements for high speed rail have decreased travel times and have other Amtrak lines to Chicago considering routes through Kalamazoo. A marketing campaign, not unlike those from the first half of the twentieth century around the Midwest, could attract new visitors to Kalamazoo.

Directional Signage. Downtown Kalamazoo is difficult to locate from area expressways. Signs from I-94 and 131 should direct visitors not only to the City of Kalamazoo, but to Downtown. Additional signs on Kings Highway, Portage, Westnedge Avenue, Oakland Avenue, Stadium Drive, West Main/M-43, and Park Street are needed to direct traffic once it has exited from expressway.

4.4 Attracting Residents

IK 2025 participants expressed a desire to make Downtown more active during both the day and at night. Increasing the number of Downtown residents is one way to ensure constant activity. The Zimmerman Volk Target Market Study (TMA), completed in 2016, noted the low vacancy rate in Downtown and the demand for a variety of options. To achieve an increase in available housing units both market rate and affordable, the following should be considered:

- Updating the zoning code to allow a wide range of housing types and sizes within the Downtown.
- Revising the zoning map to increase the locations where more intense residential development is permitted in and adjacent to Downtown.



Marketing campaigns, including posters like these, can highlight Kalamazoo as an attractive destination and make use of Amtrak partnership. Source: southshoreposters.com

- Providing a variety of housing unit sizes can positively impact affordability; work with developers to use tax credits and other subsidies to achieve attainable and sustainable housing.
- Partnering with lenders to provide nontraditional financing; Local businesses to fund down payment assistance for employees to live in the City.
- Working with area nonprofits to develop affordable housing.
- Seek to create an all ages Downtown; include needs of Senior populations and children.

Parks & Recreation Opportunities. More residential population naturally increases the need for outdoor spaces. The IK 2025 Downtown input asked participants to consider the existing park and recreation opportunities and what could be newly imagined. Participants discussed how to improve park spaces so that they serve those who live, work, and visit. New facilities desired included: a dog park and active recreation, such a playground on the southern

end of Downtown. The Arcadia Festival Site was also seen as an opportunity for more activity. In the 90's and until recently it has been the site of many summer festivals. However, when the festivals are not occurring the site is underutilized. Exploring a re-programming and a new design to include: restrooms, bicycle amenities, more visibility, and marketing plan are all suggestions for future needs.



Pop-up bikeway projects help residents and visitors imagine new routes and connectivity to parks and Downtown.

Photo credit: Neal Conway



Lunchtime Live brings mid-day energy to Bronson Park.
Photo credit: Neal Conway



On PARKing day, residents create temporary "parklets."
Source: MLive, September 2015. "Kalamazoo Pilots PARKing Day."

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5. The Arts & Events

The Arts and cultural events have played an important role in Downtown Kalamazoo creating an active and inviting place for decades. The Civic Theatre, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Gilmore Keyboard Festival, and the Arts Council celebrate our local artist as well as bringing internationally and nationally known talent to Kalamazoo regularly. Through IK 2025, participants praised Kalamazoo for its cultural offerings and noted a desire for more year-round activities, an increase in family friendly events, and more unique art and cultural installations that extend outside of the Downtown.

5.1 Downtown for All

Kalamazoo has a diverse resident population within its 22 neighborhoods. Supporting arts and cultural events that celebrate the African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans should be more intentionally planned to draw all people together to celebrate together. Throughout IK 2025 the input we received said again and again, "We need to come together more." That the City should have, "Community gatherings that bring together people who don't usually get to know each other because we are segregated."

To achieve the Downtown envisioned, all event programming and art installations should reflect the diversity of the community to the greatest extent. This starts with a thoughtful public art or event planning process. To guide this process, applicants requesting use of public spaces should begin to understand demographics of their events. The City will assist applicants in making connections with diverse interest groups and organizations to foster inclusion of Kalamazoo's entire population.

5.2 Four Seasons of Activities

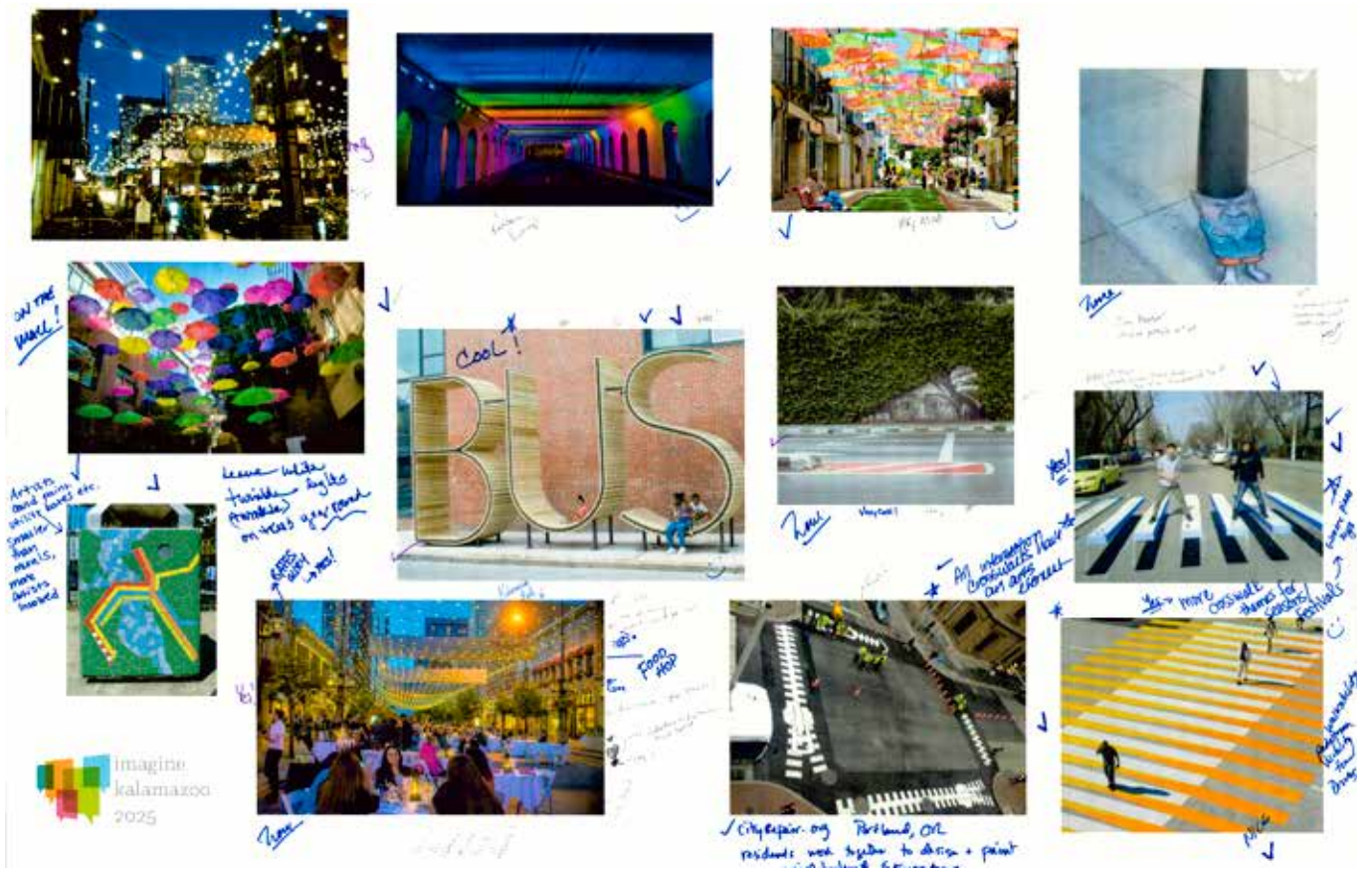
Activities that attract visitors Downtown in the winter are key to making it a year-round destination. IK 2025 participants were asked to consider what types of events they would like to see in Downtown and what events they currently go outside of Kalamazoo for.

Winter Activities. Ice skating, winter markets such as German Christmas markets, scavenger hunts, window displays, and increased use of streets for music and performances were among the ideas given. Year round programming will bring people to Downtown, even in traditionally slower seasons, positively impacting businesses and the attraction of Downtown to residents.

Expand Events. Art Hop, Music Hop, and Festivals like RibFest are very popular events. The Retail Market



Streetscape and pedestrian amenities can be used to create well-loved places.



Downtown meeting participants were excited about the prospect of more public art Downtown, noting Kalamazoo's artistic nature as an important strength.

Analysis found through its business owner interviews that a significant surge in sales occurs during Art Hop. Expanding the event offerings to different days, times, and themes will widen the audience of visitors and will provide more increased sales opportunities.

5.3 Inviting Public Places

Streets are public places; they are both a travel route and, if properly designed, a desired destination.

To create the inviting public places envisioned in Imagine Kalamazoo, Downtown streets such as the Mall need to be considered more like parks or open spaces than just through-ways for cars. This way of thinking will impact the streetscape choices and other design elements both within the public rights-of-way and on the adjacent buildings.

Several IK 2025 participants noted the great opportunities for informal gathering on the Mall and in parks such as Bronson Park by adding placemaking elements giving people the opportunity to gather. Placemaking can be as simple as tables, chairs, umbrellas, and planters. Other cities have included firepits, busking musicians, food carts and interactive public art. Additional spaces to consider are parklets, pocket parks, and improved pedestrian alleys, all can add to the vibrancy of the adjacent places.

Everyday Spaces. Seating along the Mall and in other locations Downtown serve as informal meeting spaces for Downtown employees, residents, and visitors. These spaces are well-used, and the retail study noted a need for more of them, including the addition of non-permanent cafe tables and chairs in key locations. Adding fireplaces, special lighting, and

art invites an ordinary street to become an extraordinary space.

Pedestrian ways, such as Corporation Alley, offer a unique opportunity to create a unique public Downtown place. A site for daily food trucks could benefit local businesses and bring people outside during mid-day. Additionally, the creation of parklets and pocket parks through events like PARKing day can create space for socialization and leisure.

5.4 I <Heart> Public Heart.

Art serves as a focal point, inviting people to come closer. to view it. Art can express the interests of a culture, heritage, or a unique element within a community. It can be passive or active. Whatever form it takes, more installations from a variety of artists are desired in Downtown. A well-designed walk can encourage visitors and residents to discover public art and architecture. Together with the streetscape design elements, public art can create unique places in Downtown.

