

Kalamazoo Foundation for Excellence

Helping us through COVID-19

The importance of partnerships and shared vision became clearer than ever as our community responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of individuals and dozens of organizations continue to devote themselves to helping in this crisis. The Foundation for Excellence is proud to help our community through this unprecedented time (read more inside).

\$120+ Million

In 2021, the FFE will surpass \$120 million committed to achieving Kalamazoo's vision (page 4).

Projects Map

FFE-supported projects are taking shape and impacting lives in all of Kalamazoo's neighborhoods (page 6).

Affordable Housing

The FFE is helping to keep people in their homes and add hundreds of new units of affordable housing (page 10).

Supporting Kalamazoo through COVID-19

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly changed life across the globe. The Foundation for Excellence quickly made life-saving and job-saving investments in Kalamazoo.

Helping the Helpers

The first action the Kalamazoo City Commission took to help soften impacts of the unfolding COVID-19 crisis was to support the **Disaster Relief Fund** (DRF) in partnership with the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region (UWBCKR). This fund supports direct service and non-profit organizations to help when things are most dire. Overall, 50 non-profit organizations were given financial assistance by the DRF between March and June 2020. Approximately 18% of DRF dollars came from the City's \$310,000 grant using Foundation for Excellence funds in March.

Themes of DRF giving were access, neighborhood involvement, and

collaboration. Access meant funding technology and navigator roles to help people through unemployment for the first time, language translation for meetings and printed materials, and basic resources for marginalized populations. Neighborhood involvement ensured needs were addressed in an orchestrated way, often on a block-by-block level.

"We came together in a crisis to solve problems and addressed immediate need," said Alyssa Stewart, VP of Impact and Engagement for UWBCKR, "and it brought us together to look at lasting solutions for how we can work together. Lives were saved."

Vital Support for Kalamazoo Businesses

"While federal websites were

crashing because of demand," said Director of Community Planning & Economic Development Rebekah Kik, "the City was lending bridge dollars. Small businesses got that money right away, and we are still working with them closely today."

Community Investment Manager Antonio Mitchell conveyed the scale of the undertaking. "We normally would not get this many resources out the door in a two year time period," he said, "what we did in those first three months."

Kalamazoo Small Business Loan Fund resources were made available in partnership with the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region. To date the Kalamazoo Small Business Loan Fund has disbursed \$1.35 million in 1% loans to 76 City businesses with fewer than 50 full-time employees and less than \$2.5 million in annual revenue. Of eligible businesses 82% were funded, and 55% of approvals were women and/or minority-owned.

"The City really stepped up,"



Students get help with their virtual learning at a **Learning Hub** hosted by El Concilio.

Mitchell said. "The Small Business Loan Fund has had a really good impact on the city. We helped people keep employees and keep lights on."

Longer term, the City is seeing a path forward out of COVID-19. "We are transitioning into a business response and stabilization plan in 2021 because of the COVID response work in 2020," Mitchell said. "A focus of the City is to increase and stabilize our business and tax base to further enhance the ability of the City to serve its residents and visitors."

The speed with which businesses needed to receive financial help also heightened concerns about how partners were going to best serve women and minority-owned small businesses in terms of outreach, grants versus loans, cultural competence, networking, and more.

One area of emphasis identified was in responding to the needs of all businesses. In a time of crisis, that included leveraging grant dollars to create a micro-enterprise fund for businesses that may not even have had the resources to apply for a low-barrier loan or were concerned about taking on additional debt during an uncertain time.

The **Kalamazoo Micro-Enterprise Grants** were born from these discussions and leveraged \$200,000 in additional funding to grant nearly \$500,000 to approximately 100 businesses, 42% of which were minority-owned and 63% women-owned.

Finding New Ways to Learn

All Kalamazoo Public School learners have the opportunity to be connected to free high-speed Internet through a one-

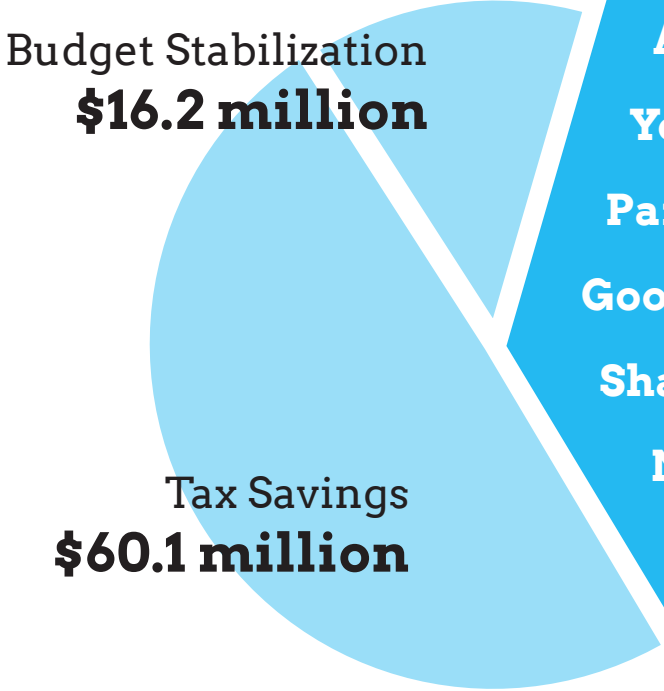
year program called **Digital Access for All**. This is a partnership of the City (with Foundation for Excellence funding), Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS), the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Kalamazoo Promise, and Kalamazoo Community Foundation. Up to 1,000 KPS households can receive access to create more equitable distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges remain for youth whose parents are essential workers, and for those experiencing housing instability or homelessness. That's why the City, with Foundation for Excellence funding, is supporting fourteen **Learning Hubs** created with KPS and the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network. Approximately 400 K-12 students most in need of a quality physical learning environment are benefiting from this additional support.

\$2.63 million to help with COVID-19

More than \$120 Million Committed

In just four years, the Foundation for Excellence (FFE) has budgeted more than \$120 million towards the success of Kalamazoo’s people and neighborhoods. This has allowed the City to lower taxes while still significantly increasing investments in our community. These investments in youth programming, parks, infrastructure, career development, transportation, economic and business support, and housing have a positive impact in every neighborhood. FFE funding has also stabilized the City of Kalamazoo budget so the City can focus on our community’s needs and vision.



Aspirational Projects: \$44.8 million

Funding Our Community’s Vision

Each year, Foundation for Excellence funding moves Kalamazoo closer to realizing our community vision. The results are clear: graduates starting new careers, youth engaged during the summer and after school, repaired sidewalks, new water services, more affordable housing units, and much more.

- Infrastructure \$ 12.2 M
- Economic Development \$ 9.2 M
- Affordable Housing \$ 7.7 M
- Youth Development \$ 6.0 M
- Park Improvements \$ 4.2 M
- Good Governance \$ 2.3 M
- Shared Prosperity \$ 2.1 M
- Neighborhoods & Other \$ 1.1 M

You can explore investments supported by the Foundation for Excellence through an interactive dashboard at www.kalamazoo.org/ffe. The dashboard is built from FFE budget data since its creation in 2017 and property tax analysis by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

Earning Trust and Proving Value

The Foundation for Excellence (FFE) is an independent non-profit organization created in 2017 to help address longstanding challenges to the prosperity of Kalamazoo and make it a dynamic, fulfilling and equitable community for all. The FFE provides more than \$25 million each year to stabilize the City’s budget, lower the property tax rate, and invest in aspirational community programs. FFE directly supports the work of the City of Kalamazoo, which is often in collaboration with partners whose missions align with the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Strategic Vision. To ensure this work continues sustainably forever, an endowment is being established with a goal of raising \$500 million.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is made up of ten Stakeholder

Directors that represent diverse sectors such as healthcare, education, and business. It also includes five City Directors, including the Mayor, City Manager, two City Commissioners and an At-Large Director.

There are annual opportunities for community members to apply to serve on the Board. The outreach and selection process prioritizes diversity of abilities, perspectives, and across sectors. There are no requirements on previous board membership nor restrictions on who can apply, though an overall percentage of city residents is required. More information is available at www.kalamazoo.org/FFE.

All board meetings are conducted under the Open Meetings Act, welcome the general public, and feature an opportunity for comment.

Strength through Diversity

Kalamazoo’s diversity is one of its greatest strengths. The FFE values and celebrates diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills in the membership of its Board of Directors.

63%
women

43%
people of color

Board of Directors

Dr. Angela Graham-Williams
President, Healthcare

James K. Ritsema
Vice President, City Manager

Adam McFarlin
Treasurer, Business

Barbara Hamilton-Miller
Secretary, Neighborhood Focus, Oakland-Winchell

David Anderson
Mayor

Sandra Calderon-Huezo
Neighborhood Focus, Edison

Alisa Carrel
Arts Organizations

Nathan Dannon
At-Large

Jeanne Hess
City Commission

Stephanie Hoffman
Housing

Rachel Lonberg
Faith-Based Organizations

Alice Taylor
Neighborhood Focus, Northside

Charlene Taylor
Affinity Organizations

Jack C. Urban
City Commission

Von Washington, Jr.
Education

Bobby J. Hopewell
Founding Director Emeritus

Selected 2020 Projects

The Foundation for Excellence invests in projects across the city to realize the vision of Imagine Kalamazoo 2025. This year, the FFE was able to bolster our community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to furthering its goals in housing, youth development, and other key needs in Kalamazoo.

-  Foreclosure prevention assistance
-  New single-family home
-  Single-family home rehabilitation
-  Multi-family housing preservation
-  Clouded title clearing
-  COVID-19 grant or loan
-  Business development grant or assistance
-  Youth development program
-  Learning Hub
-  Repaired sidewalk
-  Water service replacement focus area

Every Dollar Invested

The FFE is committed to transparency and welcomes you to see how every dollar has been invested. An interactive online dashboard shows where and what FFE is investing in by year, project, or neighborhood. Explore the map at www.kalamazoo.org/ffedashboard.

Artist Alexander Ladd's "Freedom Flow" at Davis Street Park is one of two new murals in the neighborhood this year. Public art is a priority of the Vine Neighborhood Plan.



Resources Meeting a Vision

2020 saw major progress made toward **Imagine Kalamazoo 2025** goals and objectives, even during the unprecedented upheavals, interruptions, and delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, at this time in 2019, five of 22 neighborhoods had adopted plans and 27% of actions had been completed. In

2020 two more plans have been adopted and the City is reporting 32% of actions completed, with a further 28% in progress. Work is on track to fulfill goals by 2025.

Neighborhood plans are important to the City's work because they draw ideas from grassroots, involve the neighborhood associations in organizing and work, and create funding possibilities

by the City for projects. This process and the relationships that it fosters have resulted in hundreds of neighborhood-level actions in the first several years, including murals, street and curb lawn improvements, traffic calming, and innovative projects in areas such as improving food access in the Eastside Neighborhood.

Community members are encouraged to visit www.imaginekalamazoo.com, where projects are updated regularly, residents can get involved, and stories are documented.

Gathering Momentum

Neighborhood plans help leaders map the future. Seven

have been completed to date, including Northside, Vine, Oakwood, Eastside, Edison, Parkview Hills, and Oakland-Winchell. Neighborhood plans take the themes and goals of Imagine Kalamazoo from the City level and figure out what they mean on a smaller, more local scale.

Since 2018, neighborhood plans have been successful in identifying resident goals for their community and taking action. Whether through connections made during the planning process or projects bringing new partners together, the momentum created by this collaborative effort continues today. Examples of projects include a fresh food program on the Eastside, Edison involvement in Farmers Market improvements, Oakwood wayfinding signs, Vine murals, and citywide traffic calming.

501 Launch

A request for proposals (RFP) to redevelop a brownfield site at 501 N Westnedge Ave in Kalamazoo's Northside neighborhood was launched with an on-site event on Saturday, November 7.

Details of the RFP were

developed with a committee of Northside residents. The RFP aligns with Northside Neighborhood Plan goals, and additional community feedback on desired or needed uses in the area. This project prioritizes resident ownership, goods or services that are affordable and meet resident needs, and promotes the goals of the neighborhood plan.

The RFP committee and Brownfield Projects and Finance Committee will recommend a proposal to the Brownfield Authority, which will select a winning proposal in spring 2021.

A new system of sensors and signage will route downtown traffic around trains, avoiding delays and backups.



A pedestrian island was added to Oakland Drive at Maple Street. This was identified as a "Safe Route to School" and part of Winchell's Neighborhood Plan.



Speed humps were installed on five streets in the Northside Neighborhood and other traffic calming measures were implemented in other neighborhoods.

Collective Action to Save Lives

“A **Continuum of Care** (CoC) represents the community plan to end homelessness,” stated Housing Resources, Inc Executive Director Michelle Davis. “They are the local body that supports partnership, accountability, and trust.” This is never truer than in a pandemic.

At the time that COVID-19 began affecting Kalamazoo, hundreds of individuals relied on local shelters coordinated within the CoC. Shelters quickly exceeded safe population levels, and action was needed to save lives.

The CoC, with the FFE and dozens of partners, provided a safe shelter. Within days partners created a quarantine and isolation shelter for those either positive for Coronavirus or awaiting test results. Partners also expanded shelter

options with a local hotel for homeless families to shelter-in-place.

“The people at the hotel are some beautiful people,” said Frank, a shelter resident during that time. “Everyone was very respectful and really concerned about [me] as a human being.”

In total, 105 hotel rooms were used to shelter families during the spring and summer months and not a single person tested positive for Coronavirus.

The CoC also supported opening a new temporary day shelter, provided restrooms and handwashing stations throughout the city, coordinated distribution of personal protective equipment, food and supportive services, and advocated for testing at local shelters and the hotel site.

“The CoC’s job was to coordinate it all,” said Sara Jacobs, CoC Coordinator, “but without the community, it wouldn’t have happened. They continue to step up today.”

The CoC is facing another huge task to safely care for local homeless people in the coming winter. Shelter and homeless service providers are working in greater partnership than they ever have before to make sure everyone has a safe place to sleep. Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services Department will continue to be a key partner in this work.

Good Neighbors

“I want you to know,” said Mr. Schuur from his home on Conant Street in Kalamazoo’s Northside Neighborhood, “that I live in the house where I was born and raised. And when you’re in a house for 79 years and you’re facing foreclosure,

“When seniors can stay in their home, remain independent, it’s kind of a life saving situation.”

it’s daunting to say the least. Quite frankly, I really didn’t know what I was going to do.”

Over the years Mr. Schuur has sought loans and help from his mortgage lender and the State of Michigan, but that has not been enough to keep his house on a low fixed income.

The City, County Treasurer’s Office, and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) began an innovative partnership in 2019 to eliminate tax foreclosures in

Kalamazoo, funded by the Foundation for Excellence and modeled on a pilot begun by the County Treasurer in 2018.

To date, 109 people have remained in their homes because of the program and not had to ask, as Mr. Schuur did, “Where are you going to go?”

“When seniors can stay in their home,” Mr Schuur said, “remain independent, it is kind of a life saving situation. No matter how humble your

surroundings are, it would be just preferable to stay in your own home. It’s just hard to find the words to adequately express, you know, what it really means.”

Clearing Clouded Titles

In 2020, the City (with FFE funding) and the County Treasurer’s Office, started a new and unique program to clarify ownership of homes and create wealth in those families. In its first year this program created approximately \$500,000 of fair market value for eight families in core neighborhoods, more than 90 times the investment of \$5,400 FFE dollars. Partners have set an annual goal of ten homes moving forward.

With support from FFE, the Home Builders Association builds a new single family home in the Vine Neighborhood.

Everyone deserves a place to call home.

Without a safe and secure place to live it’s harder to find or keep a job, learn in school, maintain your health, or access services when most in need. This is why housing is fundamental to FFE’s mission, and why millions of dollars are invested each year in building or rehabilitating units of affordable housing. In only a few years, the FFE, along with its partner the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, has been able to add hundreds of units of affordable housing in our community, and started new initiatives to keep people in their homes and help to build wealth for homeowners. **Since 2018:**

140
single-family homes
built or rehabilitated

508
multi-family units
built or preserved

0
homeowner tax
foreclosures

109
homeowners kept
in their homes

\$500K
of wealth created for
homeowners





In addition to their leadership roles in summer programming, Counselors in Training (CITs) participate in team-building exercises and field trips.

You're a Member of the Community

"What I would want people to know is that it's a very, very good opportunity."

Gina Bello was 13 when she started the **Counselor in Training (CIT)** program at the City's Parks and Recreation Department and, like many of us at 13, it took some encouraging to keep her engaged throughout the summer.

It wasn't long before she was won over. "I have grown more because of camp. It helped me a lot as a person to be more outgoing, be more social, talk to other people, take risks and chances, be more of myself, be more my own person," she states.

"Sometimes you might have to get up early in the morning.

But just getting up and doing something, it actually helps you be more on time with stuff."

Being a CIT helped Gina learn more about her own dreams in life.

"I wasn't actually too sure about what I wanted to do for my career. When I started working with kids I realized

that I really, really like working with kids."

This past summer was Gina's fourth and final year as a CIT. In that time, she says, she learned a lot about what it means to be a leader. "I can tell you personally I helped a lot of people to become leaders, and figure out what it is they actually want to do in the future."

CITs and summer campers take a break to pose for a photo at Upjohn Park.



"Most of the time I could teach the new incoming CITs what to do, you know, be a guide for them, be a teacher for them."

Gina closed by saying that working for the City says a lot of positive things about a person. "You help out your city, and you're a member of the community, which is a good thing."

Super Rec

Super Rec is the City's only free, drop-in, summer-long camp program, based in core neighborhoods. Super Rec provides day-to-day flexibility to meet the needs of working families. It provides nutritious meals as well as diverse activities for participants. The program's steady growth since its beginnings in 2017 shows how much it is appreciated.

Kalamazoo Youth Development (KYD) Network's quality assessment of City summer youth programs is now in its third year. Overall consistent improvement has been shown each year, both in youth social emotional skills (based on intake and exit assessments) as well as in program delivery.

All FFE-funded City Parks and Recreation youth programs partner with KYD Network and are assessed using the same tools. KYD Network

staff conduct external observations during July and August at each of the sites and rate the programs using a recognized national standard.

Be Prepared to Try

"They're very motivational," Keyamara Burnett said about the camp counselors for the **All Things Possible (ATP)** summer program sponsored by FFE. "Yeah, they joke," she said, "but when it comes down at the serious stuff they give good advice and they're very motivational."

ATP is a summer transition program working to reduce the so-called "summer slide" and eliminate skill gaps for students entering 9th grade. Each day consists of work skills, life skills, recreational activities, talent development, and career and educational exposure.

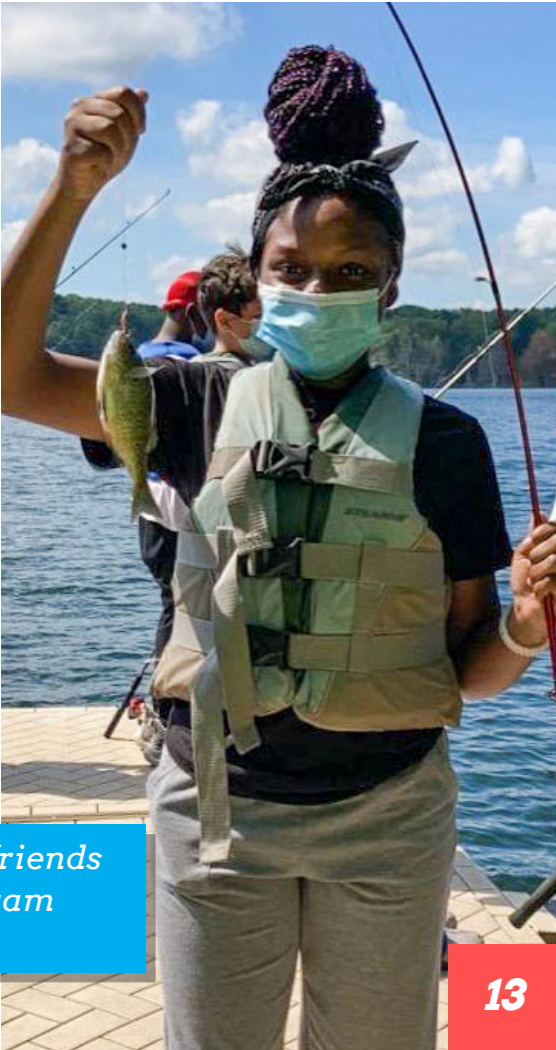
"I was interested in the medical field," Keyamara said, but ATP "did open my eyes to engineering. So I think that really helped me in finding who I want to be when I grow up."

Now in 10th grade, she reflected back on her first year in ATP. Without it, she said, as an eighth-grader, "I don't

think that I would even know how to go about anything in high school."

The Parks and Recreation staff make the difference, she said. "Because I'm pretty sure they've been through it before when they were kids like me. You can ask them anything."

ATP began with 30 participants in 2018 and expanded to 50 in 2019. 2020 saw a reduction to 50% capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions but will continue in 2021 and plans on returning to full capacity as soon as possible. For more information visit www.kzoo.org.



*Keyamara Burnett fishes with friends in the **All Things Possible** program offered by Kzoo Parks.*



Community Investment Manager Antonio Mitchell discusses a Request for Proposals (RFP) on site with a Northside resident.

Business Development Is Relationship Development

"We care about your small business and show that through technical assistance and financial support," said Community Investment Manager Antonio Mitchell. "We want to be the helpful space for small businesses that are feeling lost."

"The Community Planning & Economic Development Department's objective," Mitchell says, "is to reestablish business relationship-building practices. We had gotten away from that."

Mitchell said that the City has learned a lot through its response to the COVID crisis, done in partnership with the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region.

"One thing we learned from the **Micro Enterprise Grant**

program in particular is that most of the businesses we were helping were micro businesses. So the \$5,000 grant was really important."

"If you help a micro business that's a single mom, if they change their life with a micro business and they are doing six-figures in a two to three year period, then they have stabilized their household."

Economic Development at the City has evolved significantly since the adoption of the IK2025 plan. 2020 presented many challenges due to COVID but regularly planned activities were able to advance. In 2020, \$1 million was made available for **Strategic Site Acquisitions** for and by core neighborhood associations. Further capital investments included \$128,000 in core neighborhood **Storefront Improvement Grants**. **Technical Assistance** was offered in numerous areas

of business improvement to 18 small businesses; seven **Gap Grants** were made of up to \$25,000; 32 **Small Businesses Grants** were made of up to \$2,500. **Contractor Certifications** and trainings will resume when possible and **Loans** of up to \$35,000 remain available.

I Really Wanted To Grow My Team

From her position working in a school lunchroom, Heather Frayer saw a problem. On one hand, "A lot of people will say kids don't get fruits and vegetables at home." On the other hand, "I was noticing kids throwing away fruits and vegetables without even eating them," she said.

Fresh Food is Fun was created from this sense of need to, "promote wellness and increase positive associations with fresh food." Wearing a superheroine mask made to look like fresh greens and carrots and bringing those fresh veggies along with her, Frayer began visiting classrooms and doing teacher training events, learning as she went.

"I was doing this all by

myself," she said, "for maybe six years." It was nearly a full-time job in and of itself, and all while trying to build another small company, Kale-amazoo Chips.

"I really wanted to grow my team and I wasn't really even paying myself," Frayer said. When a loan program offered in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation came along, "it really helped me, because I was able to hire people and train them so that when we did have the extra business, they were ready to go."

Layla's Cool Pops

"It got started with a fourth grade economics project," said Layla Wallace, entrepreneur and owner, along with her family, of Layla's Cool Pops in Kalamazoo's Edison Neighborhood. "I sold Oreo pops to my class, and after that I was like, 'This is amazing, I want to start a business!'"

Today Layla's specializes in cupcakes, baked goods, and merchandise. The City's Community Planning & Economic Development Department provided an FFE-funded loan and technical assistance to support her

efforts over several years.

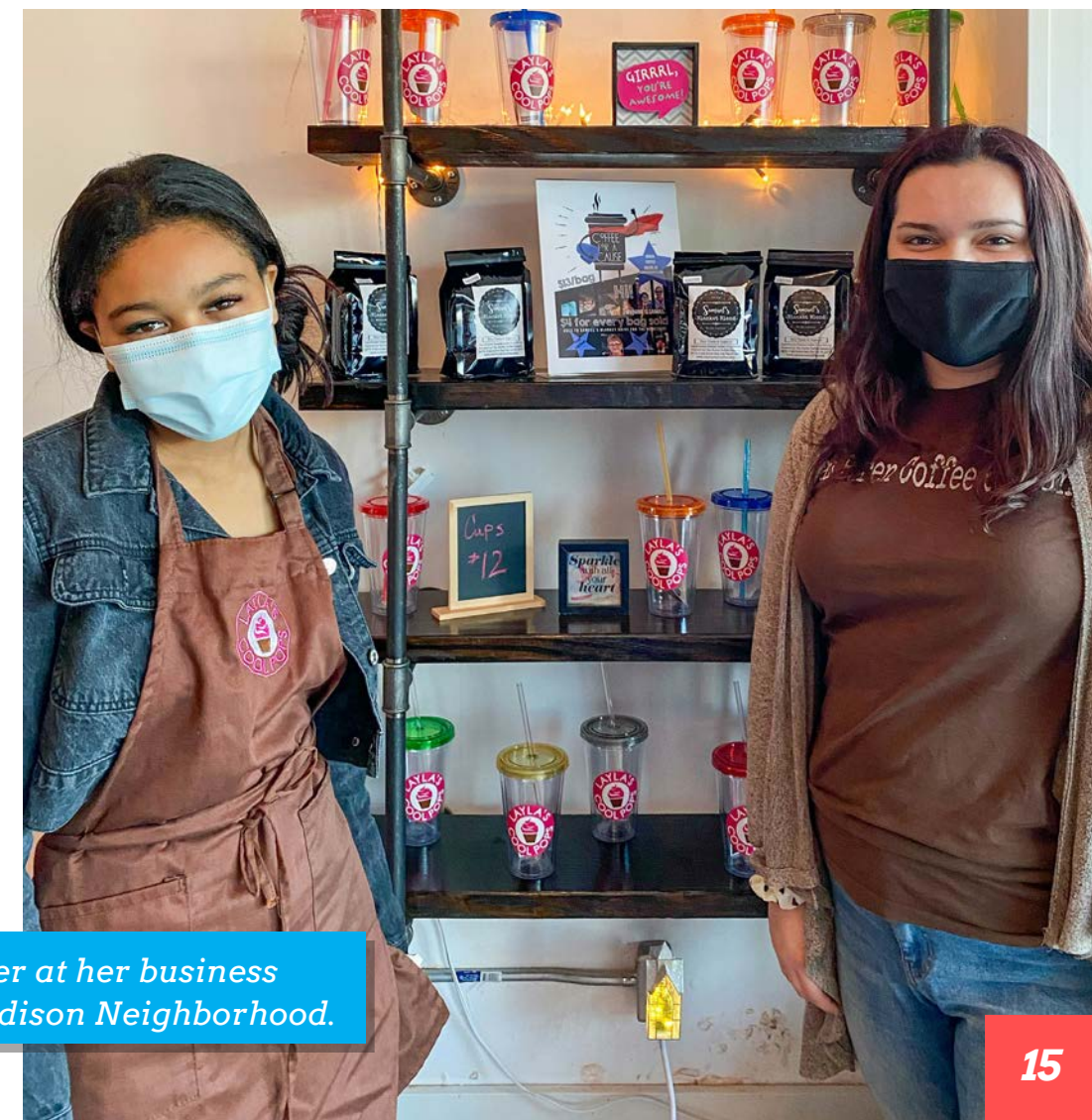
Layla's isn't like any other business. "I knew that whatever I did I had to help the homeless. This business has to help someone other than me. I've never experienced homelessness, but I see that it's something serious. So what I can do is try to help out the best I can."

Every week the business donates ten percent of profits to a local cause, like a shelter or pantry.

Now in tenth grade, Layla is an ambitious student focused

on organized sports and "working with our school to find better ways to include everybody" through Diversity Club. After high school she would like to study business at UCLA and attend a top culinary school.

"I think a challenge that right now I'm going through is time management. With school, plus the business, it's a little hard, because I still want to keep good grades, and do what I want to do with my business, but I can do it. I am succeeding right now and can continue to do it."



Layla poses with a supplier at her business Layla's Cool Pops in the Edison Neighborhood.

The Power of Connections in the Workplace

“Schools aren’t going to teach us the things that [MyCITY] can provide us. It’ll prepare you for the real world.” Donovan Wilson was a junior at Loy Norrix when he participated in YOU’s 2020 MyCITY Kalamazoo Summer Youth Employment Program. He says he joined MyCITY, “to prepare myself to get an actual job, so I mainly use the resources they gave us, like how to behave in an interview or what should you wear, how to treat your coworkers.”

For a program centered around in-person, on-the-job, paid work experience and interactions, COVID-19 presented a challenge that was met with innovation, passion, and dedication to

\$1.5 million earned

through youth employment and career exploration

Kalamazoo youth and their career pathway development. Each week, MyCITY participants received virtual activities that fell into five categories: career exploration, employability skills, office hours, group projects and a survey to ensure online MyCITY was as close to the traditional experience as possible.

For example, Felix Owinga participated in MyCITY in both 2019 and 2020. In 2019, he took part in a work-based learning opportunity with Bronson Hospital. Through his internship, Owinga was encouraged to pursue his interest in neurology through a connection he made at work.

“At one point, we were in a room with a patient,” he said. “I mentioned that I had an interest in neurology. And unbeknownst to me, [the nurse] had contact with a neurologist. And she helped me get in contact with him to talk to him about that career.”

Participants weren’t able to practice hands-on work experience in 2020, but each week they learned and applied career readiness skills, like the importance of developing a professional identity, as Owinga experienced in 2019.

In the 2020 program, Wilson learned professional communication skills like email, voicemail and, “the simple stuff that people look for in the workplace.” He also learned how to work effectively with groups, recounting, “when I first entered the program, I was a more to-myself kind of person. But after it, I can say I’m a lot more social because of the group work that we had to do together. That was a big part of the [MyCITY] program.”

Since 2017, over 1,200 youth have participated in

MyCITY, resulting in more than \$1.5 million in wages. In 2020, \$173,000 in wages and benefits were paid to 178 participants. Although focus areas had to shift with the virtual experience, participants left the 2020 program better equipped to navigate their new normal and beyond.

Career Training in Our Neighborhoods

“I am very happy that I found this program,” explained Jazmine White-Johnson, a graduate of the **Patient Care Academy**. “An opportunity like this comes and I’m like, ‘Ah! A career!’”

The Patient Care Academy was a partnership to improve residents’ access to in-demand career training and provide healthcare employers a more qualified and diverse talent pool. The partnership includes the City, with FFE resources provided through **Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo**, the Northside Association for Community Development (NACD), the Kalamazoo Promise, Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Urban Alliance, Bronson Methodist Hospital, Michigan Career and Technical Institute, and Michigan Works! Southwest.

Graduates from the program become Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), but for graduates like Kelly Campos,



Graduates of the **Patient Care Academy** are certified to begin careers in healthcare as **Nursing Assistants**.

becoming a CNA is just the first step to a career in healthcare. “My main goal is not just to be a CNA. I want to be a licensed nurse.”

“It’s helpful that it’s close, and that it’s ten weeks,” said Alijah Brown. “I won’t have to learn everything in two weeks.”

Six of the eight first year graduates are already working in the field.

A Second Chance

“**The Expungement Clinic** is important to me because I just received my degree. Being that I am getting this expunged off my record I can find a career in my field.”

This young woman was among the 150 who visited the NACD building on February 7, 2020, for Kalamazoo’s largest

expungement clinic event to date. At the clinics, people can get legal aid to determine if the details of their conviction history make them eligible for legally entitled expungement of offenses. Those who are eligible leave the clinic with all the paperwork completed and a fixed court date to complete the process. “I found it so uplifting that this is happening,” said a young man waiting for the final step in the process on February 7. “I was really happy to see people that I’ve known myself walk in here and get a second chance.”

The event was hosted through a partnership with the City of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo Defender, and funded by the FFE.



Felix Owinga poses in front of Bronson Hospital where he interned through the **MyCITY** program.

Community Development in My Hometown

Fresh fruit and vegetables should not ever be a problem for the citizens of Kalamazoo and surrounding areas to get," wrote **Kalamazoo Farmers Market** (KFM) vendors Susan and Douglas De Leo in a letter to the City.

The De Leos have been doing their part to help for over fifty years and today are among the 200 vendor businesses at the Farmers Market, 91 of which are women- or minority-owned and together employ nearly 1,000 people.

Research conducted by the People's Food Coop showed that, in 2018, about 4,600 customers attend weekend market days on average. These customers contribute over \$1.6 million to estimated sales. For every \$100 spent, \$68 stays in the community. Acceptance of SNAP benefits helps ensure everyone regardless of income has access to the KFM's offerings with nearly \$90,000 of redeemed food assistance from 1,700 transactions.

The community's vision for the KFM is documented in the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 plan and the Edison Neighborhood Plan, which seeks 'increased access to nutritious food.'

To achieve these goals, Kalamazoo's Parks and Recreation department is finalizing the first significant KFM improvements in decades. They will provide 350 paved parking spaces, a 40-percent increase in vendor spaces, updated activity spaces, and a play area. The **Kalamazoo River Valley Trail** will also link to the site for the first time.

"The Edison Neighborhood Association has been working closely with the City," wrote Tammy Taylor, Edison Neighborhood Executive Director. "We greatly appreciate their commitment, dedication, and grassroots community involvement."

L. Marshall, Ph. D., President of Kalamazoo Valley Community College, notes the Food Innovation Center and Healthy Living Campus are just blocks away. He is a champion and partner of the KFM project. "The Kalamazoo Farmers Market redevelopment is a critical next step," Marshall wrote, "toward realizing a shared vision of a vibrant, connected, 'Healthy Living District'."

Construction will begin in 2021 in conjunction with the Bank Street realignment project,

thanks to major funding from the FFE and City, and grants from the Irving S. Gilmore and Consumers Energy Foundations, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

More Than Just Walkways

"Even as a kid," said Raymond Ryan of Cobb Street on Kalamazoo's Northside, "I can remember it always being kind of jagged, you know, you really couldn't ride a bike that smooth across it."

Now 49, Ryan has witnessed a lack of investment in city sidewalks, and Cobb Street in particular. Raymond said his 82 year-old father is "still a work horse" and has

Farmers Market upgrades will bring more space for vendors and activities, and a connection to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail.



"I see that people are willing to pay attention to the needs of the people in the community."

tried to keep the broken sidewalk clear each winter for neighbors. "I've noticed there's three single moms that push strollers," he said, "and I watched this girl have her baby on the shoulder and walking her two kids, trying to get them to school, and having to try to make it down through that sidewalk when the road is just too bad to be on."

With FFE support, the City poured 7,731 linear feet of new sidewalk concrete in 2019, 4,097 in 2020, and has plans for 4,896 in 2021. Priority areas are within one-quarter mile of community resources, those on Safe Routes to School, and those identified by residents through interactive "walking surveys."

Back on Cobb Street, Ryan said he had his doubts about the City's responsiveness to sharing input about sidewalk conditions, but added, "I was really blown away, and that shows me that things are turning and, you know, going in the right direction."

"I see that people are willing to pay attention to the needs of the people in the community. I look out my window and see the work that's done."

And, what about Ryan's father? "He's damaged and tore up plenty of snowblowers over the years," Ryan says. This year, however, "He's very happy to see the new sidewalk and he can't wait to get over there and keep that clear."

In Only Four Years

FFE continues its annual support to **replace lead water services** in Kalamazoo, funding about 5% of replacements. Learn more about how the City of Kalamazoo protects our community from lead at www.kalamazoo.org/lead.

2,039
lead services replaced
since 2017

5%
directly funded
by FFE

Foundation for Excellence 2020 Newsletter

*"We've come through such a tumultuous year with protests and COVID, losing loved ones, businesses struggling. 2020 has been difficult personally, professionally, emotionally. **Through it all, the Foundation for Excellence has provided help and hope.** We'd like to remind our community that none of us is in this alone and, as residents, we have each others' backs."*

*Dr. Angela Graham-Williams
President, Foundation for Excellence*



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