



Community Vision Meets Transformative Generosity

The Foundation for Excellence (FFE) accomplished an ambitious milestone in 2021: a \$500 million endowment to ensure it can permanently support the City of Kalamazoo's vision and help residents achieve the lives they want for themselves and their families. Read more inside about this gift and how it will benefit everyone in Kalamazoo.

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Mayor Anderson, FFE Board Members, and City Staff announce the \$400 million commitment on the steps of City Hall on July 28, 2021.

(continued from cover)

News of the recent \$400 million, ten-year commitment, the largest of its kind to support an American City, was made on the steps of City Hall with FFE Board members, City staff, elected officials, and press in attendance.

“Remember this day, July 28, 2021,” Mayor Anderson said, celebrating the historic nature of this gift for Kalamazoo. He reflected on the fiscal challenges that dogged Kalamazoo for a generation before the FFE was created in 2017. “Every budget year we were talking about what we were going to cut.”

A municipality like Kalamazoo would traditionally navigate financial challenges by increasing taxes or cutting services. The

FFE, an independent non-profit, has changed that. To be fulfilled in ten consecutive annual installments of \$40 million, the gift adds to previous investments to establish a \$500 million endowment. In turn, endowment earnings allow the FFE to grant more than \$25 million to the City annually to stabilize its budget, lower the property tax rate, and invest in community-driven programs such as economic development, infrastructure, youth development, and more.

The FFE allows the City to pursue aspirational goals to benefit future generations. “We now have the opportunity to be bolder than we have been,” said Founding FFE Board Director and long-time Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell.

Our Community-Driven Vision

Residents are the beginning and the end of FFE’s vision and cycle of impact. All projects funded by FFE are driven by resident input through the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 planning process. This work builds on the City’s ongoing, broad community engagement and collaboration. Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 concentrates the City’s activities on core neighborhoods with high levels of generational poverty and needed investment but serves the whole community in many ways.

FFE’s Investment Map (found at kalamazoo.org/FFE) demonstrates that resources have been dedicated everywhere in our City and that the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 plan is working where it is needed most.

Deputy City Manager Laura Lam reflected on this process of community engagement. “What I love absolutely most about the city is our sense of hope that we can always make our community better, but more than that, our fierce determination that we will *make it better.*”

Mayor Anderson closed the press conference in July with a heartfelt call to action. “With this great gift comes great responsibility,” he said. “This gift will not be effective unless people lead with their hearts and work to make sure that no one is left behind. It will only be effective if people pull together. This can be the greatest place

to live on the planet. Let’s do that work together.”

Get Involved In FFE’s Cycle of Impact

There is opportunity for everyone to be involved in Kalamazoo’s success. Whether it’s by voting in local elections, volunteering, looking out for neighbors, keeping shared spaces safe and beautiful, or donating to FFE’s endowment, we all have a role to play.



FFE has set the table for transformation.

Before FFE, preparing the budget meant conversations about all the things we would not be able to do in the next year. Now, we can not only talk about basic infrastructure but also the things you could almost never dream about doing. How could anything be better than that?

- David Anderson
Mayor, FFE Director

How does FFE work?

Donations to the Foundation for Excellence are invested in an endowment to ensure it will last for generations to come. Every year, the endowment earnings provide millions of dollars to fund projects and programs to realize our community’s vision, stabilize the city budget, and reduce taxes. Annual grants are approved by the FFE Board of Directors before final approval by Kalamazoo’s elected representatives, the City Commission.



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Dear Neighbors,

When I first learned about the Foundation for Excellence, I honestly didn't know what to make of it. Using philanthropy to fund public projects is a unique model. I quickly learned, however, that the heart of FFE is a commitment to a better future for all residents in Kalamazoo. FFE is built on a legacy of philanthropy that gives Kalamazoo a historic opportunity to shape a strong and resilient future. Our track record—nearly \$150 million invested to date—shows we are on our way to doing just that.

I am proud to call Kalamazoo home and to serve as FFE Board President. I look forward to joining with you to make our city better for all.

Sandra Calderon-Huezo
Sandra Calderon-Huezo
FFE Board President

JOIN US!

Applications to join the FFE Board open in late December. Submit yours by January 28, 2022, to be considered for one of three vacant seats. All are welcome and encouraged to apply.

Learn more at kalamazoo.org/FFE.

Community Members Lead

The FFE is a nonprofit organization governed by an independent Board of 16 Directors representing elected officials and diverse community sectors such as healthcare, education, and business.

Proposed projects are evaluated to ensure they align with Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 goals and are positioned for success. These projects are proposed to the FFE Board of Directors and City Commission in alternating public meetings for review, discussion, and approval.

FFE's Guiding Principles

Listening: The FFE board is guided by resident input, directly and through Imagine Kalamazoo 2025.

Transparency: All board meetings are conducted under the Open Meetings Act, welcome the public, and include an opportunity to comment.

Representation: The board intentionally reflects the community it serves. The application and selection process prioritizes diversity of abilities, perspectives, and sectors.

Mission-Driven: FFE has a single focus on serving the people of the City of Kalamazoo.

Nearly \$150 Million for Kalamazoo Since 2017

Since being founded in 2017 the Foundation for Excellence (FFE) has budgeted nearly \$150 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.

Tax Savings
\$73.2 million

Budget Stabilization
\$20.5 million

Aspirational Projects:

\$52.7 million

Funding Our Community's Vision

Each year, Foundation for Excellence funding moves Kalamazoo closer to realizing the Imagine Kalamazoo 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, and much more.

Infrastructure & Safe Community	\$ 14.6 M
Economic Development	\$ 11.0 M
Affordable Housing	\$ 8.6 M
Youth Development	\$ 7.3 M
Park Improvements	\$ 4.2 M
Good Governance	\$ 2.8 M
Shared Prosperity	\$ 2.7 M
Neighborhoods & Other	\$ 1.3 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.

Selected 2021 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 continue bolstering our community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to furthering its goals in affordable housing, youth development, and other key needs in Kalamazoo. Project locations are approximated for illustrative purposes.

Map Legend

-  Neighborhood-led property acquisition
-  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 programs
-  Learning Hub
-  New tree planting
-  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 kalamazoo.org/ffedashboard.

NEIGHBORHOOD INVESTMENTS

Connected to Fresh Food

The Kalamazoo Farmers Market will reopen to the public at its Bank Street location during the 2022 season with its first ever connection to bike and walking trails.

"This Kalamazoo River Valley Trail section brings us one step closer to having a full network," said City Parks and Recreation Director Sean Fletcher.

Connectivity matters: the Farmers Market is a resource for all Kalamazoans. 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 Farmers Market's offerings with nearly \$90,000 of redeemed food assistance from 1,700 transactions.

The community's vision for the Market 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 improvements in decades. These include a 40-percent increase in vendor space, updated activity

For every \$100 spent at the Farmers Market, \$68 stays in the community!

spaces, a play area, more restrooms, and 350 paved parking spaces. The Kalamazoo River Valley Trail will also link to the site to nearby neighborhoods and downtown.

Kalamazoo Avenue KRVt Extension

This project tests improved bicycle mobility through downtown by creating a bike lane along Kalamazoo Avenue that connects existing KRVt trail at Edwards Street in the east to Westnedge Avenue in the west. This aligns with Downtown Street Design engagement, bike survey results, and Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 goals. The incorporation of public opinion has been important and highlighted sensitivities that City staff are taking into account in the project's design. The project is expected to open in the summer of 2022 followed by studies of the number of users during the larger project to convert Kalamazoo Avenue and other one-way streets downtown to two-way streets.



New crosswalks were installed at 12 locations on Park Street and Westnedge Avenue. Traffic calming will continue southward on these streets in 2022.

"The importance of this project on a street where two-way conversion is planned cannot be overstated," said City Planner Christina Anderson. "The future of mobility in Kalamazoo will look and feel so much safer, easier, and friendlier five years from now."

Westnedge and Park

Traffic calming and focused intersection improvements for pedestrian mobility are taking place on Westnedge and Park between Dunkley Street and Crosstown Parkway, supported by the Foundation for Excellence. The goals of this project are to reduce speeds on Westnedge and Park, better serve users traveling on foot or bicycle, and align Westnedge and Park with the adjacent Northside and Vine neighborhoods. Changes were designed following extensive input from six public events and on-line input to include narrowing the travel lanes and using the extra space for

a bicycle lane and expansion of on-street parking. Twelve intersections will also be improved for non-motorized users using signs and other means.

Street Tree Inventory and Tree Planting

Kalamazoo has tens of thousands of trees lining its streets to provide shade and beauty for residents, and habitat for wildlife. Trees help make Kalamazoo an inviting place to live, which is why the Foundation for Excellence continues to invest in tree maintenance and

planting each year. Beginning in 2018, the City was able to expand trimming and begin planting trees for the first time in many years. The next step forward is to complete the City's first comprehensive tree inventory. This establishes a baseline of what the City has and what it needs and will need in the future. The inventory will help with asset management and support data-driven decisions related to trees in the future. Trees will be trimmed throughout the city each summer, and up to 300 trees of varied species will be planted each autumn.

The KRVt will connect neighborhoods to a completely renovated Farmers Market starting in the 2022 season.



With funding from FFE, 300 new trees are planted each year in Kalamazoo's neighborhoods and parks.





The Kalamazoo Attainable Homes Partnership (KAHP) celebrates receiving an energy efficiency award at a new home built in the Eastside Neighborhood.

HOUSING FOR ALL

Housing for All Grants

The Housing For All program was created to assist small developers who need help financing projects in Kalamazoo. This help is known as “gap financing” and covers the difference between how much it costs to build a new home and how much it can sell for on the open market. Much of Kalamazoo’s housing shortage traces back to the fact that it doesn’t make financial sense for someone to build new housing.

Housing for All projects must align with Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Goals and can be proposed by any developer. The programs

also help developers get other funding supports such as low-income housing tax credits.

Several small-scale developments have already been completed using this funding and several more are currently in the works with funds committed. As a result of this program, at least ten small scale projects will have been identified, guided, and funded in 2021.

Lodge House

“We want to create a sense of community there,” said Lisa Willcutt, a Principal of Lockhart Management that is overseeing renovation of the former motel

on Westnedge Avenue into an attractive building offering 60 units of affordable housing. “There will be a main office and a multi-purpose community room,” she said, as well as “a grill garden,” with picnic tables for residents to use. “Support services will be offered to residents on site.”

“This will certainly make a difference,” said Mayor David Anderson, “offering more housing in Kalamazoo.”

Each unit of the renovated development, called Lodge House, will house up to two people. Units contain a full kitchen, bathroom, and open studio-style living area. Internet service will be provided free of charge to residents.

The Foundation for Excellence was eager to join other local funders to make the project possible. Projects like Lodge

House are one piece of our community’s broad and urgent work creating housing for people experiencing homelessness and affordable housing more generally.

Neighborhood-Led Affordable Housing

The Foundation for Excellence dollars were so important to us,” said Mattie Jordan Woods, Executive Director of the Northside Association for Community Development (NACD), “Because they gave us control of the land to then plan and build on with other grants.”

The FFE Business Development Fund helped NACD in the purchase of 308 W North St. for the Aging Gracefully senior housing project. Those completed buildings now house seniors to age in the community that they know and love for a reasonable fixed monthly rent.

That success continued a long-standing partnership between the City and NACD. A Site Acquisition Grant was also made to purchase seven properties so that development

of housing could be shaped by the Northside community in accordance with its approved neighborhood plan. As with Aging Gracefully, these dollars leverage additional grants and investments for construction and operation of housing units.

The City also made significant grants to the Edison Neighborhood Association and Eastside Neighborhood Association from its FFE-funded \$925,000 Key Site Acquisition budget to ensure that development in neighborhoods is guided by local plans and stakeholders.

Pathways Home

Pathways Home helps qualified low-income residents get into homes. Pathways consists of two programs: one partners with KNHS Home Ownership Services (KNHS) and the Home Builders Association to build and sell eight new single-family homes in designated neighborhoods (Eastside, Edison, Northside, Vine, and West Douglas). In order to qualify, households must earn less than 80 percent of area median income (AMI).

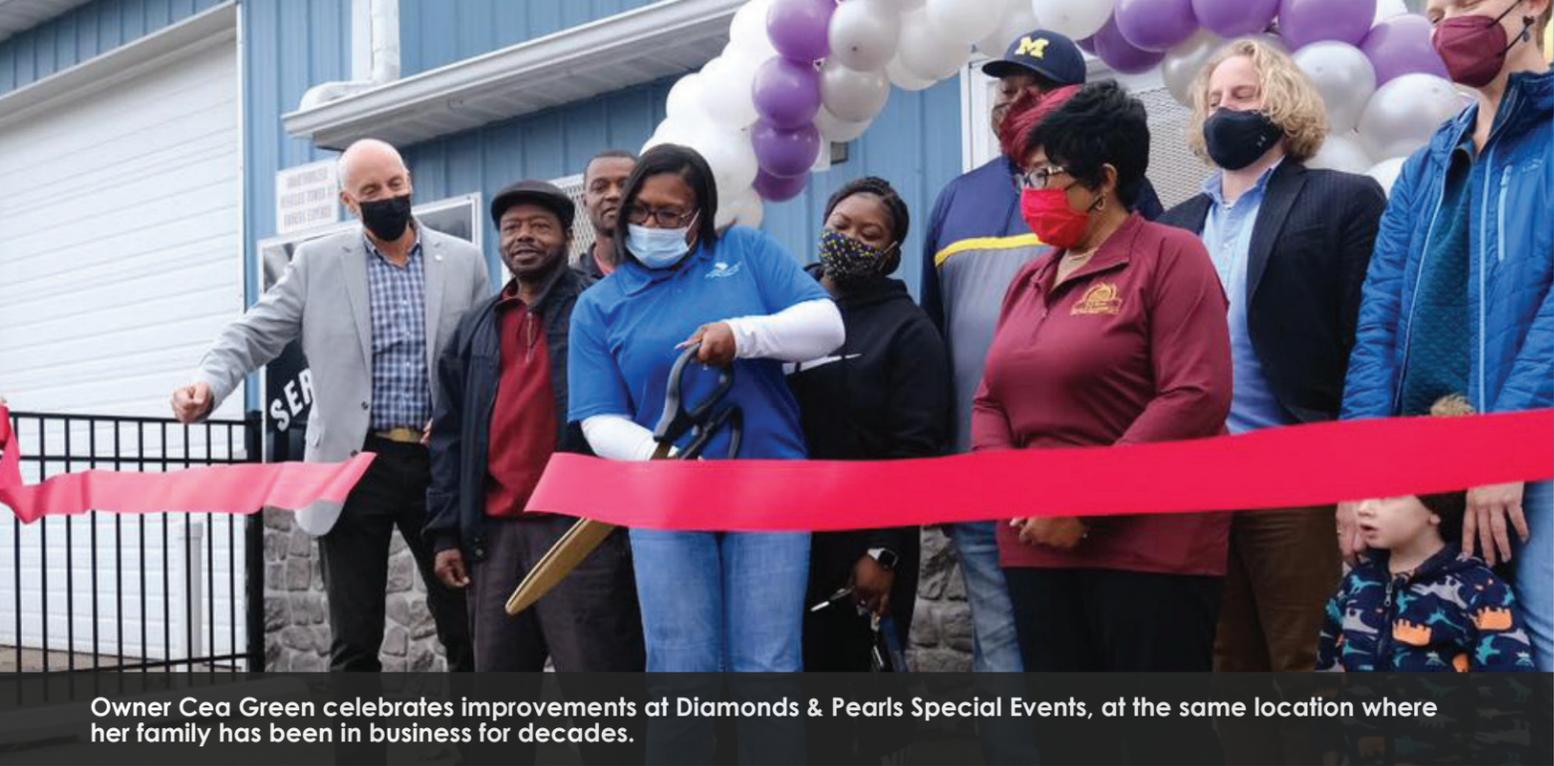
The second Pathways program will buy, rehab and sell four single-family homes to qualified low-income households through a “lease purchase” arrangement. In order to qualify, households must be less than 80 percent AMI, owned and occupied by the purchaser’s household, complete KNHS’ Homebuyer Education Program, and participate in homebuyer coaching.

One-hundred percent of program participants will move from renting to owning through this lease purchase opportunity. Purchasers must complete KNHS’ Homebuyer Education Program, participate in homebuyer coaching, meet KHNS’ loan underwriting criteria, and demonstrate an ability to make payment on a loan made for the purchase of a Kalamazoo Attainable Home Partnership (KAHP) home. Purchasers may receive down payment assistance.

The Pathways Lease Purchase program is a collaborative work between KNHS and Open Doors Kalamazoo.

With support from FFE, a rundown motel is being renovated to create 60 new units of affordable housing (rendering for illustrative purposes only).





Owner Cea Green celebrates improvements at Diamonds & Pearls Special Events, at the same location where her family has been in business for decades.

FFE MEANS BUSINESS

The Foundation for Excellence makes it possible to invest in neighborhood-based entrepreneurs and businesses. This helps build wealth, create jobs, and form more complete neighborhoods throughout Kalamazoo. \$746,000 was invested to help start or grow businesses in 2021 alone.

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 (UWBCKR).

"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. 2021 again presented many challenges due to COVID but regularly planned activities were able to advance.

With FFE funding, the Business Development Fund provides a variety of support for Kalamazoo businesses. Technical Assistance Grants help to develop and strengthen businesses through marketing, accounting and technical supports. Façade Grants help to make businesses and properties attractive to customers by renovating street-facing portions of the buildings. Whitebox Grants provide funding for any interior portion of the

In 2021

\$746,000

was invested to start or grow Kalamazoo businesses

business (i.e. exhaust hood, HVAC, structural changes). Gap Financing is available for businesses that have received 75% of project costs through traditional financing but still need to secure the balance. Larger loans are now also available via the expanded UWBCR Partnership.

33 small businesses were supported in 2021 totaling \$746,000 in investment:

- 25 businesses received technical assistance; now \$5,000 limit up from \$750. 22 were to minority-owned businesses.
- 10 grants of \$25,000 were for façade (storefront) improvements. 7 were minority-owned businesses, and 8 were in Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo Neighborhoods.
- 10 grants of \$25,000 were "white-box buildout" grants to make space ready for occupants. 5 were to minority-owned businesses.
- \$20,000 was invested in an accelerator for minority contractors.
- \$4,000 paid for 3 small-scale developers to attend Small Developers Boot Camp.

Continuing a Family Tradition

Cea Green loves parties. She started helping friends and family plan events when she was young and quickly realized it was something she was passionate about. In 2012, she planned her own wedding and saved the linens and other items as inventory to start her own special events business. In 2015, Cea started Diamonds & Pearls Special Events, offering planning and rental services for weddings, parties, and special events.

In 2019, the business received an FFE-funded grant through Local Initiatives Support Corporation to make improvements to the 3-n-1 Service Stop building where it's located. She installed overhead doors, removed trees, repaired asphalt, installed gutters, and added new signage to the building.

"It's helped my business be more recognized and cleaned up an eyesore in the neighborhood," Mrs. Green said of the storefront improvements. "People feel more freely to come in, look at displays, and spend time in our office now."

Diamonds & Pearls Special Events was also able to take

advantage of a Technical Assistance Grant and a Small Business Grant through the City of Kalamazoo's Business Development Fund. The support was used to install a point-of-sale system, for a website and marketing materials, and some office furnishings.

"It's a really true blessing and I'm very appreciative of this support to help make my dreams come true. A lot of people tell me they don't believe it until they see what's being done on that corner."

Entrepreneurship runs in Cea's Family. Her parents first became business owners in 1968, and when they built the 3-n-1 Service Stop on N Westnedge in 1996, she joined the family business with her three brothers. She worked with her mother in the candy store that was where Diamonds & Pearls is now located. Her brothers and father ran an auto repair business and car wash out of the building's three bays.

Cea is continuing the family tradition, with her mother and daughter as the other two employees at Diamonds & Pearls. Her three brothers are also business owners or entrepreneurs.

Looking to start or grow your business?
The City of Kalamazoo is here to help!
Call 311 or (269) 337-8000, or email hello@kalamazoo.org to get started.

SUPPORTING OUR YOUTH

Super Recreation All Summer Long

Super Rec is the City's only free, drop-in, summer-long camp program, and is based in Kalamazoo's core neighborhoods. Super Rec provides day-to-day flexibility to meet the needs of working families all summer.

"It's very joyous, it's very diverse," said site supervisor K.D., "it gives the kids a great opportunity to meet other kids from around town and actually do things that they don't get to do at home. We go on at least two to three field trips a week and we swim at least once a week at Kik Pool in Upjohn Park. We welcome everyone. It is very diverse and family-oriented, with

a lot of siblings, a lot of friends, a lot of cousins, and they all look forward to seeing each other."

COVID-19 did cause challenges to the program, but it also showed just how important it is to families and youth, according to K.D. "Giving them the opportunity to have fun and interact, especially with COVID happening, I would say that's the biggest piece of it. I want to make sure no one is left out."

But Super Rec is more than just fun and games. Overall, consistent improvement has been shown each year in youth social emotional skills (based on intake and exit assessments) through independent observation by Kalamazoo Youth

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

All Things Possible

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.

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 2022 and plans on returning to full capacity as soon as possible. For more information visit kzooparks.org.

ATP 2021 involved its 20 participants in photo editing, computer animation and

music editing at Kalamazoo Valley Community College and photography and journalism courses at Public Media Network. All participants completed Career Strengths Quest, and had experiences with Life EMS and Pretty Lake Camp's archery and fire building courses. ATP cultivates interests and skills through field trips and hands on activities, and participants help choose activities and field trips that interest them. Youth who fulfill requirements can earn free driver's training.

Re-Inventing Career Pathway Planning

"I gained more confidence to speak in front of people," said Hannah Getachew, a Loy Norrix Junior and 2021 MyCITY Kalamazoo participant. "I learned how to motivate myself to get my assignments done, preparing myself for the school year." Hannah's sister, Grace Getachew, had similar takeaways, noting, "MyCITY helped me realize how much architecture is needed right now, what the salary is, and other information about the job. Virtual Job Shadow was helpful because it showed me a wide variety of different careers I could do."

The MyCITY Kalamazoo program was re-invented once again this past summer to keep up with the ever-changing demands of our world. While the program is designed around in-person, on-the-job paid work experience and interactions, Kalamazoo youth met the unique challenges



Summer campers celebrate at Upjohn Park after the friendly "Gold Shoe" competition between summer camp sites (shown on cover).

that arose from online programming with dedication and enthusiasm.

This past summer, staff and participants engaged in over 300 hours of live, face-to-face meetings and participants logged over 1,700 hours of career planning in the Virtual Job Shadow, online career pathway planning platform.

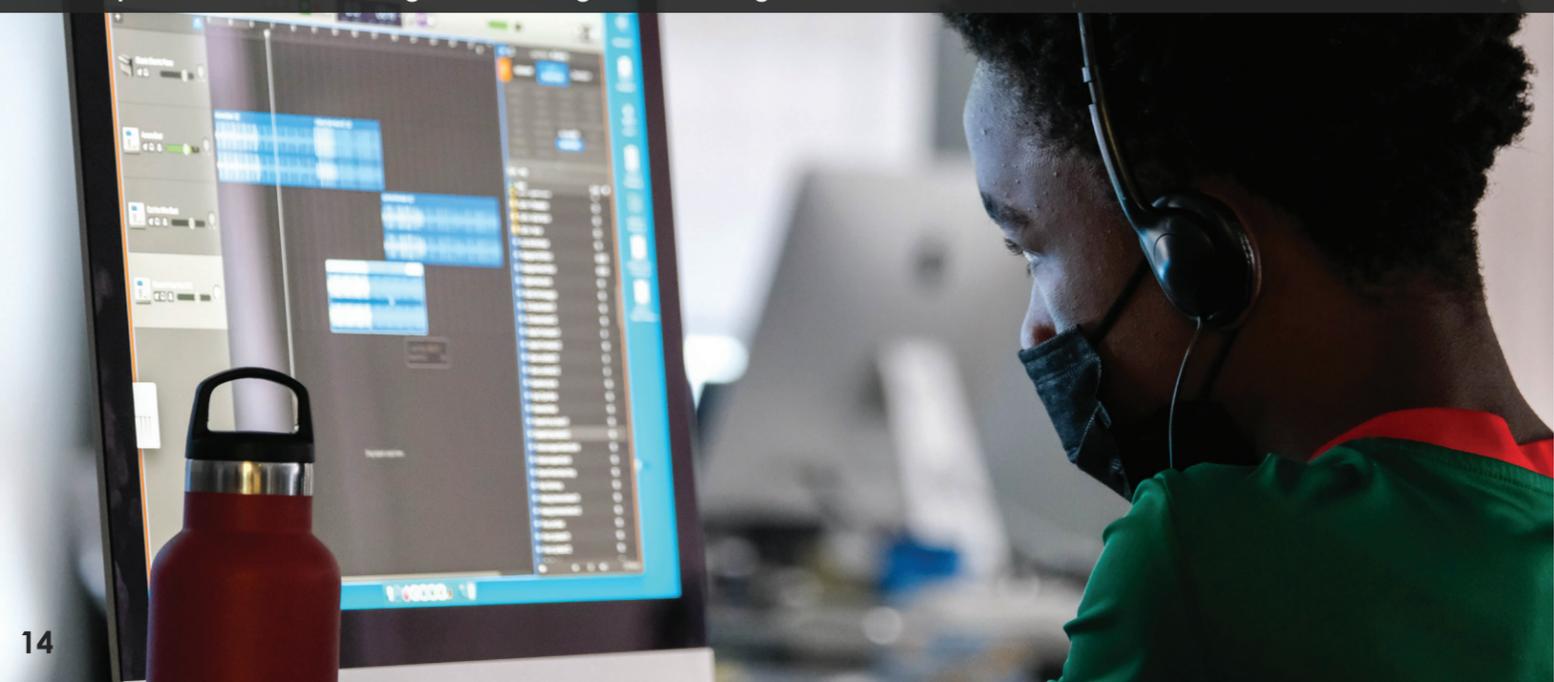
After using the Virtual Job Shadow platform, Hannah identified some long-term career goals she wants to pursue. "My number one focus right now is school. I'll be taking extra curriculums leading up to college and maybe will look into internships—I would like to go into 3-D Modeling or Industrial Design, where I can design objects online and then eventually turn them into real things!"

Each week of the program, participants engaged in activities related to five primary elements: career exploration, employability skills, social/emotional learning, goal setting, and a cumulative youth advocacy project—all geared toward defining participants' career goals and sharpening the tools they will use to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment.

"I need to prepare for interviews," Grace said, "I need to think about what I am going to say, and I learned how to search for interview questions so I can write down my possible answers ahead of time."

To learn more about program highlights, see participants' youth advocacy projects and work highlights, check out the interactive [MyCITY Kalamazoo Final Report 2021](#).

A young man produces a track in Garage Band at Kalamazoo Valley Community College, one of many experiences offered through the All Things Possible Program.



SHARING PROSPERITY

Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) is an ambitious plan to transform our community into a place where every adult and every child thrives and prospers, where no adult and no child is isolated or left behind due to poverty or inequality of opportunity. Current SPK grant partners were selected because their work aligns with this vision and because of their focus on impacting youth and guardians through what is known as a two-generational or 2 Gen approach.

Grant recipient KC Ready 4s has received funding for Preschool-Based Family Supports, which seeks to increase tuition assistance in the Edison and Eastside neighborhoods. The

pilot element seeks to increase support offered to the families of those young learners via a Family Advocate (FA) who is onsite at the preschools. This program will directly build relationships with families, meet quarterly with them, and support the individual needs of their learner, prepare for the transition to Kindergarten, engage in adult-child engagement activities on a variety of topics, and support their personal and professional career goals.

The Kalamazoo Literacy Council has received support for Parent Literacy Together: A Multi-Generational Approach to Learning, a program that will strengthen and expand multi-

generational learning activities in the Edison neighborhood through a jointly led program. The learning effort will increase the involvement of parents in their children's education and improve the literacy and academic attainment outcomes of both adult and youth learners. This program will provide multi-generational instruction for families and provide access to childcare that includes an age-appropriate academic curriculum that allows parents to focus on their academic goals.

Building upon a well-established youth development partnership between the Kzoo Parks and Kalamazoo Regional Education Service Agency (KRESA), the MyCITY 2 Gen project will consist of workshops, one-on-one career coaching, and a 2 Gen (two-generational) session. 2 Gen sessions will focus on financial literacy, trauma and resilience, strengths, goal setting, and healthy living. Participants will



Shared Prosperity Podcast

SPK Coordinator Kevin Ford and Neighborhood Business Coordinator Melody Daacon distill and discuss issues affecting poverty and prosperity on the Shared Prosperity Podcast, available now wherever you listen to podcasts. The show's guests include local leaders and entrepreneurs, national experts, and Kalamazoo residents sharing their lived experience with the audience.

receive a weekly stipend along with the opportunity to earn program incentives for successful completion.

In the area of housing, Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS) will be using grant funds for Pathway Home Partnership. This housing program will engage in barrier removal, financial capabilities education and coaching, homebuyer education and credit/homeownership coaching, assistance with down payment through lease purchase incentives, savings incentives, financial products, access to affordable houses (before they are made available to the market), and post-purchase support for the first three years of ownership. There will also be a match savings for customers that will be deployed over the next two years.

The Northside Association for Community Development (NACD) has received funding

for its project titled Residents Implementing our Plan Collaborative. NACD provides neighborhood-based training for health, construction, technology, and nutrition careers to the entire family. Scholarships provide for childcare and transportation for families involved in the neighborhood-based training programs. In addition, financial incentives are provided.

At the intersection of jobs, youth, and families, The Early Childhood Business Incubation Best Baby Zone program of the YWCA will develop an early education business incubation program that is designed specifically to meet the needs of the Northside residents. The program will work with the Edison Early Childhood Career Pathway Program to learn from and align with Northside work and develop a unique pathway to entrepreneurship within the early childhood field.

Two funded projects share the theme of psychological, spiritual, and bodily health. Dismantling Generational Curses: Parents for Transition, is a series of workshops for parents and youth with invisible disabilities, ages 13-22, to develop goals for after high school graduation, how to disclose disability at an appropriate time, which special education law pertains to specific disabilities, what services and support the family is eligible for, and how to ask for services and supports on their own. Combined with the educational component, self-care activities are provided by community partners to assist participants in learning how to decompress and cope with the struggles of having an invisible disability.

Rootdown: Generational Health, by Rootead, is BIPOC-centered healing, family empowerment through yoga, dance, and drumming, social-emotional learning and healing, racial healing, black and brown therapy collective, and accessible doula access.

The Eastside Youth Strong STEAM Academy taught students science, technology, engineering, arts, and math over the summer by planning food truck businesses and building rockets. The program received an SPK grant in 2020.



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

The Foundation for Excellence has provided major support for Kalamazoo through COVID-19. The Foundation for Excellence quickly made life-saving and job-saving investments in Kalamazoo.

Digital Access for All

All Kalamazoo Public School learners have the opportunity to be connected to free high speed Internet through a program called Digital Access for All. In total, 1,250 units have been made available with a second full year of free-to-users access. 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 1,250 KPS households can

receive access to create more equitable distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vital Support for Kalamazoo Businesses

In response to the economic hardships associated with COVID-19, the Kalamazoo Small Business Loan Fund was rapidly created in the spring of 2020 in partnership with the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region. To date the Kalamazoo Small Business Loan Fund has disbursed more than \$1.4 million in 1% loans to 82 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 35% of dollars were to minority-owned businesses.

"The Foundation for Excellence made career-saving and job-saving investments possible," said Antonio Mitchell, Community Investment Manager with the City of Kalamazoo. "The Small Business Loan Fund has helped people keep employees and keep the lights on."

Kalamazoo Micro Enterprise Grants

The Kalamazoo MicroEnterprise Grants were born out of a desire to respond 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 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. Since the program began, \$950,000 has been

\$950,000 was granted to 190 microbusinesses. 64% were minority-owned and 38% women-owned.

granted to approximately 190 city of Kalamazoo businesses, 64% of which were minority owned and 38% women-owned.

Longer term, the City is seeing a path forward out of COVID-19. "We transitioned both the loan and grant partnerships with UWBCKR into a business response and stabilization plan in 2021 and 2022," 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."

Disaster Relief Fund

The first action the Kalamazoo City Commission took in 2020 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). Overall, 50 non-profit organizations were given financial assistance by the DRF to aid them in helping residents meet basic needs including food, housing, and healthcare supplies. DRF helped fund technology and staff to help people through unemployment for the first time 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 needs," 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."

Learning Hubs

The City supported fourteen Learning Hubs created by the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network to provide comprehensive youth and family supports and space to participate in virtual "classrooms." The model coordinated support for KPS virtual learning through in-person programming, enrichment activities, family support services related to creating high quality learning environments at home, mental health supports, food distribution through Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes and Sherman Lake YMCA, tutoring by trained volunteers, and mobile dental and vision services.

KYD Network summarized Learning Hubs by saying that program partners "rose to the challenge and quickly pivoted to be able to provide day-time, in-person, high quality support to KPS youth so that they could fully engage in their virtual classrooms." Approximately 400 K-12 students benefited from this program.



1,250 wi-fi modems for remote learning



\$2.4 million to support Kalamazoo businesses



\$310,000 to address urgent needs through Disaster Relief Fund



Fourteen learning hubs to help students learn virtually



Support for all of Kalamazoo's neighborhoods



I was not able to get any of the grants or funding or PPP because I was a new business. The opportunity to get this loan was what helped me stay alive.

- Tanya Thompson
The Aroma Labs





Kalamazoo
Foundation for
Excellence

241 W South Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007



Kalamazoo is stronger together

We invite everyone to be involved in Kalamazoo’s success by participating in FFE’s cycle of impact. Whether it’s by voting in local elections, volunteering, looking out for neighbors, keeping public spaces safe and beautiful, or donating to FFE’s endowment, we all have a role to play.



Consider a gift
in support of FFE
and a bold vision
for Kalamazoo.



LEARN

- Read about the FFE’s impact in this newsletter
- Sign up for the City of Kalamazoo email list
- Follow @kalamazoocity on social media
- Join an FFE board meeting
- Visit www.kalamazoocity.org/FFE



GIVE

- Make a gift of any size to support this work for all of Kalamazoo online or by mailing a check to the address above
- Volunteer your time for a cause that advances our community vision



LEAD

- Apply to serve on the FFE Board of Directors or nominate someone you know
- Make your voice heard in a community or neighborhood planning meeting