

Agenda

Downtown Economic Growth Authority

Board of Directors

City of Kalamazoo



Monday, March 17, 2025

3:00 PM

Main Conference Room at Community Planning and Economic Development

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

1. Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this Downtown Development Authority is to halt property value deterioration and promote economic growth within its business district, to increase property value.

The purpose of this Downtown Economic Growth Authority is to correct and prevent deterioration in residential, commercial, and industrial areas, to authorize the acquisition and disposal of interests in real and personal property; to authorize the creation and implementation of development plans and development areas.

The Kalamazoo DDA and DEGA, acting in concert, have set forth the strategic objective of focusing its resources on improving "The First 16 Feet", a three-dimensional volume of space including buildings ground floor façade, the frontage that exists between the façade and the common space, and the common space that provides access to and through the district.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval of the minutes from the meeting of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board on February 17, 2025. (**Action: Motion to approve**)

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

1. Financial Report - January 2025
2. Committee Reports

3. Downtown Report

E. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1. 2025-2026 Slate of Officers (**Action: Motion to Approve the 2025-2026 Slate of Officers**)
Proposed Slate is as follows:
 - Chair: Curt Aardema
 - Vice-Chair: Jeff Breneman
 - Treasurer: Jessica Thompson
 - Secretary: Clarence Lloyd
2. 2025-2026 Committees (**Action: Motion to Adopt a Resolution to Establish 2025-2026 Committees and Appoint Committee Chairpersons and Members**)
3. Downtown Marketing and Promotion Vendor Approval (**Action: Approve an agreement with a5 Branding & Digital for Downtown Kalamazoo marketing and promotion services (Proposal Reference #: 91522-001.0) in the amount of \$50,000, approve an additional \$19,500 for services necessary to effectively complete the scope of work, for a total not to exceed \$69,500, and authorize the Board Chair to finalize the necessary contract terms and execute the agreement on behalf of DEGA.**)
4. Donation from Arts Council for Beats on Bates (**Action: Approve the acceptance of a \$1,700 donation from the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo to support 2025 Beats on Bates**)
5. Downtown Marketing Support (**Action: Approve \$10,000 to Bee Joyful Shop to support downtown marketing and promotion efforts**)
6. Short-term extension to Ambassador Program agreement (**Action: Approve and Authorize Short Term Month to Month Extension of existing contract with Block by Block for Ambassador Program in a form approved by Board Chair and subject to review by legal counsel**)
7. Downtown Waste and Recycling Program Expansion (**Action: Approve and Authorize Agreement with Bigbelly for expansion of services in a form approved by Board Chair and subject to review by legal counsel**)
8. Budget Amendment (**Action: Approve a budget amendment to increase both revenue and expenses in the 2025 Downtown Economic Growth Authority budget by \$1,700**)

9. Board Member Reappointment (**Action: Recommend the reappointment of Director Gyimah to a full term on the DEGA Board for nomination by the Mayor and approval by the City Commission**)

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

H. ADJOURNMENT

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

February 17, 2025, 3 p.m. | Community Planning & Economic Development, 245 N Rose Street

PRESENT: Susan Lindemann, Jessica Thompson, Matt Hollander, Curt Aardema, David Anderson, Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT: Stephanie Hinman, Kwame Gyimah, Jeff Breneman

STAFF: Meghan Behymer, Erin Hahn, Nathan Ekola

OTHER: Rick Searing, Jessica Wood (virtual)

A. CALL TO ORDER

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 3:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Susan Lindemann, Jessica Thompson, Matt Hollander, Curt Aardema, David Anderson, Clarence Lloyd

ABSENT: Stephanie Hinman, Kwame Gyimah

EXCUSED: Jeff Breneman

THE FEBRUARY 17, 2025 ATTENDANCE INCLUDING EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES IS RECORDED.

B. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO ADOPT THE FEBRUARY 17, 2025 AGENDA AS PRESENTED.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD ON JANUARY 27, 2025. DIRECTOR HOLLANDER SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY BOARD ON JANUARY 24, 2025. MAYOR ANDERSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

D. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

a. Financial Report – December 2024

Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator, presented the financial report, stating that in December, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received \$122,000 in

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revenue, comprised of the City of Kalamazoo Solid Waste Fund contribution to the Ambassador Program (\$32,000), Parking System contribution (\$20,000), Irving S. Gilmore Foundation grant for the Ambassador Program (\$50,000), and the Hall Foundation contribution to the Downtown Waste and Recycling Program (\$20,000). This brought year-to-date revenues to \$788,000, which is \$26,200 over budget.

Ms. Behymer stated that December expenses totaled \$122,870, with key expense categories including Professional and Contractual Services, Legal Services and Fees, Garbage Disposal, Community Promotion, and the Quarterly City Service Agreement. Year-to-date expenses totaled \$647,778, under revenues by \$140,422.

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2024 FINANCIAL REPORT. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

b. Committee Reports

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Events and Marketing Committee** meeting on February 3 was repurposed as a meeting of the Marketing RFP Evaluation Committee to discuss and review four proposals. The committee invited two of the proposers for interviews.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Business Recruitment and Retention Committee** meetings are paused until after march to align with key developments. She stated that in the interim, the committee will continue finalizing the marketing piece, developing an outreach list of regional brokers, and conducting outreach with downtown retailers to gather valuable insights.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Clean and Green Committee** met on January 29 to discuss the timeline of the Ambassador Program RFP and the membership of the RFP Evaluation Committee.

Ms. Behymer stated that the **Executive and Finance Committee** met on February 10 to review the February agenda packets and address key action items, including the 2025 audit approach and legal services agreement. She stated that the committee also interviewed prospective board members and is recommending the nominations and reappointments listed on today's agenda.

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c. **Downtown Report**

Ms. Behymer presented the **Downtown Report**, noting that she had just received the second quarterly report from the WMU Economic Vitality Study. Director Aardema asked if the results from the survey could be sent out to the Board.

Ms. Behymer also mentioned the City's work on a Memorandum of Understanding for the Rose Street Plaza improvements, which she hopes to bring before the Board in March.

Ms. Behymer stated that the total number of downtown dollars in circulation is \$137,645, and that there are 53 participating merchants. Erin Hahn, Community Investment Administrative Assistant stated that she is working with Community Investment Manager Chelsie Downs-Hubbard to develop a marketing plan and sponsorship program that will encourage the growth and future success of the program. Director Lloyd asked if there was an update on the wheel-spinning issue on the post-purchase screen of the Downtown Dollars webpage. Ms. Hahn said that she reached out to Conpoto to ask, but had not received a response yet and would follow up for an answer.

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee plans to meet with the Bigbelly sales representative to discuss the expansion and terms of the contract and hopes to have an update to share at the March Board meeting.

Ms. Behymer presented the **Ambassador Program Report**, highlighting the Ambassador's snow removal efforts throughout the month of December. Director Lindemann asked if there were any concerns from the Ambassadors about property owners not taking care of their own areas of snow removal and trash clean-up. Ms. Behymer stated that she has not heard of any instances of this, but would ask Adam Charette at their next weekly meeting.

E. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS**

a. **Approval of Director Curt Aardema as Secretary of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority**

Director Lindemann stated that Director Hollander needs to step down from his position as Board Secretary, and that Director Aardema has agreed to step up and serve for the

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remainder of the term. Director Lindemann stated that in March, the Executive Committee will be looking at the slate of officers for the Executive Committee for the next year.

DIRECTOR HOLLANDER MOTIONED TO APPROVE DIRECTOR CURT AARDEMA AS SECRETARY OF THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY. DIRECTOR LLOYD SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

b. Authorize Board Chair to execute legal services extension agreement with Dickinson Wright PLLC through February 2028

Ms. Behymer stated that the current legal counsel agreement with Dickinson-Wright for both DDA and DEGA was entered into in 2019 and has not been revisited since.

Dickinson-Wright proposed an hourly rate increase from \$190 to \$230, which will result in a moderate increase in legal expenses, but no budget amendment is currently required.

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee's recommendation is to continue with the current legal counsel due to their deep institutional knowledge and legal expertise with corridor improvement authorities.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO AUTHORIZE THE BOARD CHAIR TO EXECUTE LEGAL SERVICES EXTENSION AGREEMENT WITH DICKINSON WRIGHT PLLC THROUGH FEBRUARY 2028. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

c. Recommendation of DEGA Board Member Nomination to Mayor and City Commission

Ms. Behymer stated that the Executive Committee is recommending three new appointments to the Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board: Rick Searing, Trisha Kidd, and Stanley Steppes. Ms. Behymer stated that Rick Searing and Trisha Kidd are nominated for full terms expiring on March 31, 2029, while Stanley Steppes is recommended for a partial term expiring on March 31, 2028, filling Director Hollander's seat.

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Ms. Behymer stated that three candidates were interviewed for the three available seats, and none currently serve on other city boards, commissions, or committees. Rick Searing and Stanley Steppes reside downtown, while Tricia Kidd works in the district. All would be serving their first term and would be eligible for reappointment, with Stanley Steppes able to pursue a full term after his partial appointment.

Ms. Behymer highlighted that the candidates bring valuable experience, skills, and diversity to the board. Their engagement in downtown—whether as residents, employees, or through development work—aligns with the Authority’s mission. Their contributions are expected to support the continued growth of the downtown district.

Director Aardema stated that all three candidates were well-prepared and are clearly engaged in the work of downtown already, so their contributions to the board will be helpful and valuable.

Director Lindemann stated that Ms. Behymer and herself have been unable to reach Director Gyimah to ask if he is interested in serving another term.

Mayor Anderson asked who will be responsible for facilitating Board member orientation and what that process will look like. Director Lindemann stated that the Board has not had a formal orientation process for a few years, but that one is needed, along with a repository of documents for Board members to access. Mayor Anderson expressed the importance of having Attorney Wood involved in Board member orientation. Attorney Wood stated that she would be able to help with the orientation process.

DIRECTOR AARDEMA MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEGA BOARD MEMBER NOMINATION TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION. DIRECTOR THOMPSON SECONDED. NO OBJECTIONS. MOTION CARRIED.

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rick Searing stated that he resides on the North Kalamazoo Mall and works as a teacher at Portage Northern High School. He shared that he intentionally sought out a walkable urban environment like those in Europe and loves living downtown. He expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity to join the board if approved by the City Commission.

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G. DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Director Aardema expressed his condolences for the loss of Dean Hauck, owner of Michigan News Agency, who was an icon and advocate for downtown.

H. ADJOURNMENT

DIRECTOR LINDEMANN ADJOURNED THE MEETING AT 3:40 P.M.

Downtown Economic Growth Authority
Statement of Activity
1/31/2025

Total Available Cash 288,711

	2025 Budget	January	2025 YTD Actuals
Revenues			
Taxes	883,600		-
Other Revenue	82,000		-
Contributions and Sponsorships			-
Transfers			-
Charges For Services			-
Interest And Rentals	-		-
Total Revenues	965,600	-	-
Expenses			
Operating Supplies	2,004		-
Professional And Contractual Services	442,448	3,575	3,575
Solid Waste Disposal	7,500		-
Communication And Network Services	576		-
Repairs And Maintenance Services	2,000		-
Consulting Services And Fees	55,150		-
Audit Fees	13,800		-
Legal Services	30,000		-
Memberships And Subscriptions	3,000	650	650
Professional Development	13,000	340	340
Administrative Fees	125,000		-
Promotion And Advertisting	10,000		-
Contribution To General Fund	20,000		-
Community Promotion	113,150		-
Interest Expense - Notes Payable	52,400		-
Total Expenses	890,028	4,565	4,565
Revenues Less Expenses	75,572	(4,565)	(4,565)

Notes:

Long Term Debt:

Mavcon Agreement	TBD
City of Kalamazoo	1,060,000

Professional And Contractual Services:

Recycling Services - BIG BELLY SOLAR LLC

TOTAL

January	2025 YTD Actuals
3,575	3,575
3,575	3,575

Community Promotion:

TOTAL

-	-
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**Downtown Economic Growth Authority
January 2025 Financial Summary**

In January, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) received no revenue, bringing year-to-date revenues to \$0.

January expenses totaled \$4,565. Key expense categories included: **Professional and Contractual Services (\$3,575)** for the monthly Bigbelly contract; **Memberships and Subscriptions (\$650)** for an annual membership with the Michigan Downtown Association; and **Professional Development (\$340)** for use of the Nature Center space for the January Board retreat. Year-to-date expenses total \$4,565.

Downtown Economic Growth Authority Contracts

Contractor	Contract Description	Contract Period
Big Belly Solar	Bigbelly Units	December 2021 – December 2026
Block by Block	Ambassador Program	April 2024 – April 2025
City of Kalamazoo	Service Agreement	February 21, 2024 – February 21, 2027
Maestro, LLC	Website Hosting & Maintenance	January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024

**Downtown Economic Growth Authority & Downtown Development Authority
March 2025 Committee Reports**

The **Events and Marketing Committee** on March 3 was repurposed as a meeting of the Marketing RFP Evaluation Committee to discuss and make a final recommendation on the marketing firm, which is before the Board today for approval.

The **Business Recruitment and Retention Committee** is paused until after March to align with key developments. During this interim period, we will continue important initiatives, including finalizing the marketing piece, developing an outreach list of regional brokers, and conducting outreach with downtown retailers to gather valuable insights.

The **Clean and Green Committee** met February 19 to finalize the Ambassador Program RFP Evaluation Committee and discuss interview/presentation requirements as part of the RFP process.

The **Executive and Finance Committee** met on March 10 to review the March Board Agenda Packets.

Kalamazoo Streets for All Projects

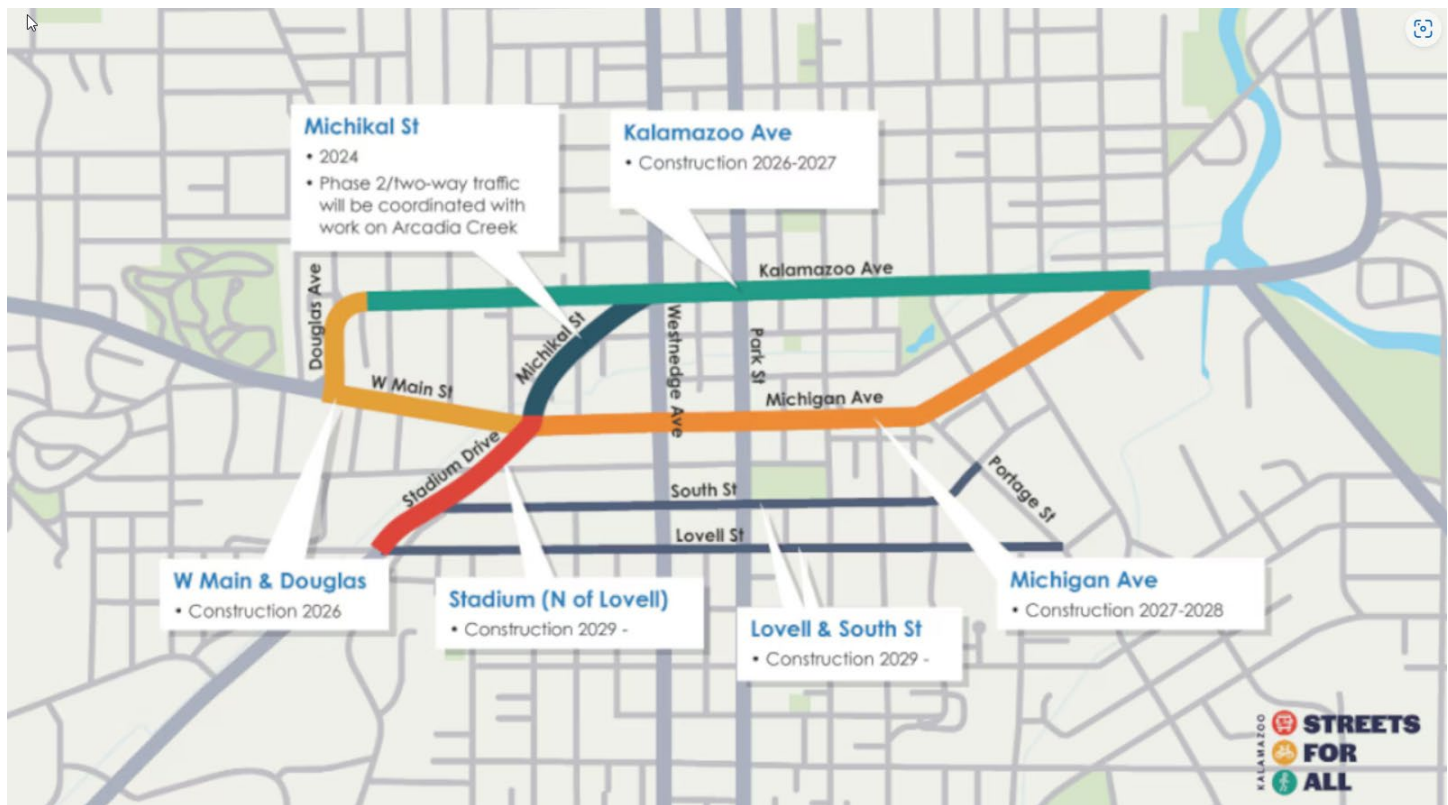
Kalamazoo Streets For All is a lane conversion project that will transform downtown Kalamazoo into a welcoming, inclusive and vibrant destination that offers safe travel for all modes of transportation.

Projects led by: Christina Anderson (Planning); James Baker (Engineering); Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison)

Consultant team is: Progressive AE, C2D, and Wightman Engineering.

Updates can be found at <https://www.kalamazoo.org/Community/Projects/Streets-for-All>

Sign up here: <https://kalamazoo.us3.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=ab294794047fd50bdfbb847e8&id=cbae2f83cf>



Michigan Avenue Planning and Design

The City of Kalamazoo is inviting residents to help shape the redesign of Michigan Avenue by attending a series of meetings. These meetings will gather input for the two-way street redesign, with design work expected to begin this winter as part of the broader "Streets For All" initiative.

- Feedback from the design engagement process and initial Michigan Avenue design alternatives (presented at the January open houses) will inform the creation of preliminary engineering plans.
- Early Summer 2025: A more refined set of plans will be presented to the community for additional feedback.
- Required revisions will be made based on community input, and plan sets will be finalized for final review.
- Finalized plans will be prepared for construction bids.
- Michigan Avenue construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2027

2022 Parking Plan Implementation

The Parking Blueprint is organized into four sections defined by the following shared strategic objectives: (1) expanding parking supply/capacity; (2) managing parking demand; (3) improving/expanding mobility options; and (4) improving parking operations.

Parking Team: Led by Rob Bacigalupi (Mission North Consulting) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph and George Waring (Public Services); Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison).

Parking Blueprint can be found at [parking-downtown-parking-management-blueprint-2023-update.pdf](https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/DocumentCenter/View/12345/parking-downtown-parking-management-blueprint-2023-update.pdf)

2023 GUD Marketing Consulting for Streets and Parking

The GUD Marketing Consulting for Streets and Parking is to support the communication, marketing and branding of the City's Streets for All project.

Communications + Marketing Committee: Led by Manny Garcia and Brooke Gieber (GUD Marketing) with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Neal Conway and Michael Smith (Communications); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison).

2024 WMU Economic Development Study

Awareness of impacts on local businesses as street conversion projects evolve throughout the Streets for All projects

Study led by: Center for Transportation and Livability at Western Michigan University – Dr. Jun Oh with City staff Christina Anderson (Planning); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); Meghan Behymer (Downtown Coordinator); and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office Liaison).

- Third quarterly downtown business-focused survey launched to gather feedback on economic activities and the accessibility of downtown. Survey period open until March 31

Imagine Kalamazoo 2035

Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 (IK2035) is all about engagement: engagement with citizens, community groups, businesses, developers, investors, philanthropists, government and YOU. We're imagining a vision for Kalamazoo's future – discussing it, planning it, designing it, and acting on it.

Project led by: Rebekah Kik, Assistant City Manager and Christina Anderson, City Planner and Deputy Director of Community Planning and Economic Development

Updates can be found at <https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/Government/Programs-Initiatives/Imagine-Kalamazoo>

"Plan It" Phase Begins March 2025

Building on the input received during the "Imagine It!" phase, "Plan It" will focus on confirming the strategic vision goals and establishing the community outcomes from these goals. These conversations will directly shape the update of the Strategic Vision, which will be released for public review and consideration later this spring.

Join us at one of the following meetings to discuss the Strategic Vision Goals & Outcomes. The presentation and activities will be the same at each meeting – please pick the one that works best for you!

- Tuesday, March 4 @ Milwood Middle School | 6:30 – 8 pm
- Tuesday, March 11 @ NACD | 6:30 – 8 pm
- Tuesday, March 18 @ K College Fieldhouse | 6:30 – 8 pm
- Thursday, March 27 @ KIA | 4-6 pm (Open House)

Downtown Placemaking Projects

2024 Projects from Notre Dame Public Realm Study

The Downtown Placemaking project seeks to add to the vibrancy with another alley activation, plaza redesigns that act as connectors, and enhancing the experience of the Kalamazoo Mall as a more active and engaging place. The city has identified 5 key public places downtown that are candidates for improvement.

Projects led by: Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office); Christina Anderson (Planning); Patrick McVerry (Parks and Recreation); Dennis Randolph (Public Services); PJ Thuringer (Economic Development).

- Consultant team is Smith Group – Allison Marusic and Bob Doyle
 - Surveys of all placemaking areas have taken place. Two construction projects and one public art project have been chosen to move forward with the current budgets. Construction documents should be complete by the end of the year; bidding for the project let by January – construction to take place in April/May pending weather. Mural will be completed during September Brush the Block mural festival.
- Placemaking – North Mall
 - Construction project – pending federal grant approval.
- Placemaking – Exchange Place
 - Mural project - Pending property owner approval.
- Placemaking – Farmer's Alley
 - Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza, lighting, and landscaping.
- Placemaking – Rose Street Plaza
 - Project is moving forward with construction documents to improve the concrete plaza with furniture and landscaping.
 - Coordination meetings are currently happening with adjacent property owners to partner on improvements on the public/private areas.
- Placemaking – S. Burdick between Lovell and Cedar
 - Currently on hold awaiting budget or grant opportunity.

Updates can be found at [Kalamazoo Placemaking \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

2024 Arcadia Creek Festival Place

Renovation effort for the Arcadia Creek Festival Place to include improvements of items like electrical and landscape, among other things.

Project led by: Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office); Patrick McVerry (Parks and Recreation); James Baker (Engineering)

- Received \$2 Million grant from Redevelopment and Placemaking Fund MEDC – approved by Commission 11/12
- Received \$1.6 Million grant from City Commission
- Applying for future grants to cover the estimated \$14 Million project
- MEDC Technical Assistance for survey and market study

Event Center Coordination

City Planning and Design team members include: Jim Ritsema and Rebekah Kik (City Manager's Office); Christina Anderson (Planning); James Baker (Engineering); Dennis Randolph (Public Services)

- Weekly meeting for utilities (Christina, Dennis, and James)
- Monthly design meetings (Christina and Rebekah)
- Annual meetings (Jim and Bill Johnson)
- Special meetings as necessary

2024 PROTECT Grant for Arcadia Creek along Stadium Drive and Michikal (Levy Project)

Led by: Christina Anderson (Planning) and James Baker (Engineering).

- Consultant RFP is being developed; Project may begin in 2025

Downtown Dollars Program

The Downtown Dollars program is designed to promote economic growth in the downtown area by encouraging local spending. Customers purchase Downtown Dollars to be redeemed at participating businesses, fostering a vibrant and thriving downtown community.

Program administered by: City of Kalamazoo, Community Planning and Economic Development

2025 METRICS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
# of Businesses	53	53										
DT\$ Purchased	\$935	\$620										
DT\$ Redeemed	\$1,785	\$850										

TOTAL February 2025

Downtown Dollars Purchased = \$620

Downtown Dollars Redeemed = \$850

Total Downtown Dollars in Circulation = \$136,265

TOTAL Program Life (09/2019 – 01/2025)

Downtown Dollars Purchased = \$511,530

Downtown Dollars Redeemed = \$357,915

Information can be found at [Shop local with Downtown Dollars - Kalamazoo Downtown \(downtownkalamazoo.org\)](https://downtownkalamazoo.org)

Downtown News

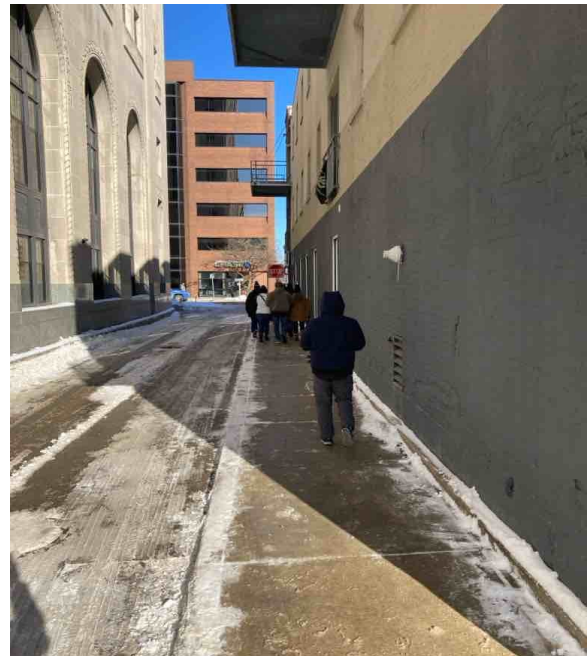
- [Kalamazoo "Economic Blackout" protests President Trump, Musk, big corporations](#) (Channel 3 News)
- [3/4/25: Construction relief? – NowKalamazoo](#) (Now Kalamazoo)
- [\\$19M U.S. 131 interchange project begins, adding new route to downtown Kalamazoo](#) (MLive)
- [Bar closes in downtown Kalamazoo, but its other locations will stay open](#) (MLive)
- [New apartments are coming to a historic downtown Kalamazoo building](#) (MLive)
- [City scales back road work to ease impact on Kalamazoo businesses after 2024 construction](#) (Channel 3 News)
- [Saugatuck Brewing closes downtown Kalamazoo taproom after August fire](#) (Channel 3 News)
- [Dine local: Greater Kalamazoo Restaurant Week serves up deals, cocktail competition](#) (Channel 3 News)
- [Rugger's Up and Under to close after more than 30 years in Kalamazoo](#) (Channel 3 News)
- [City commission approves downtown plans amid public calls for housing support](#) (Channel 3 News)



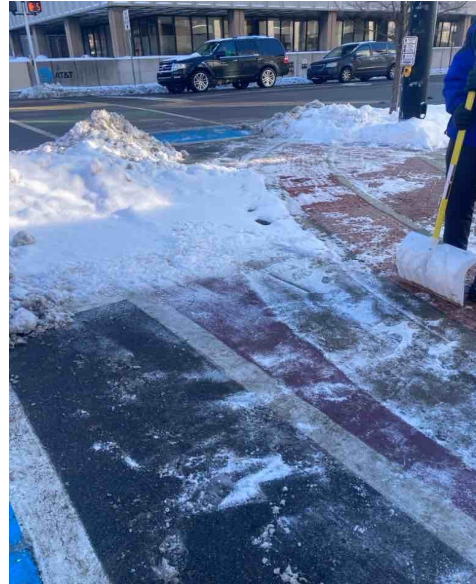
DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

JANUARY 2025 REPORT



AROUND TOWN IN JANUARY

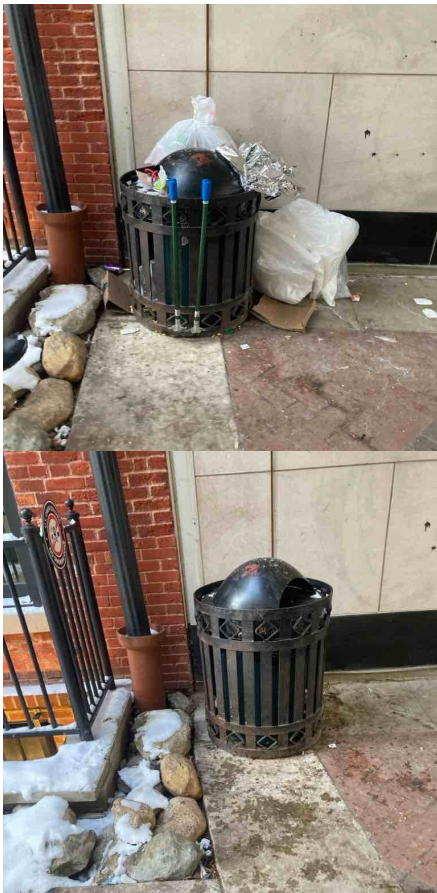


JANUARY 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



SNOW REMOVAL

Snow removal was a big part of our operations for January. We documented 122 hours of Snow removal for the month. We spent a lot of that time at Bates Alley. The Kalamazoo Mall had a number of areas where the Snow Melt system was failing that we also addressed.



WHISKEY ALLEY

While the population of unsheltered persons is lower than in the warmer months, we are still experiencing some effects of their presence. Whiskey Alley has been a hotspot for activity. We have shared these notes with KDPS and they are citing individuals when appropriate but the issue continues. The area is in consistent need of attention as a result.

PROGRAM UPDATES

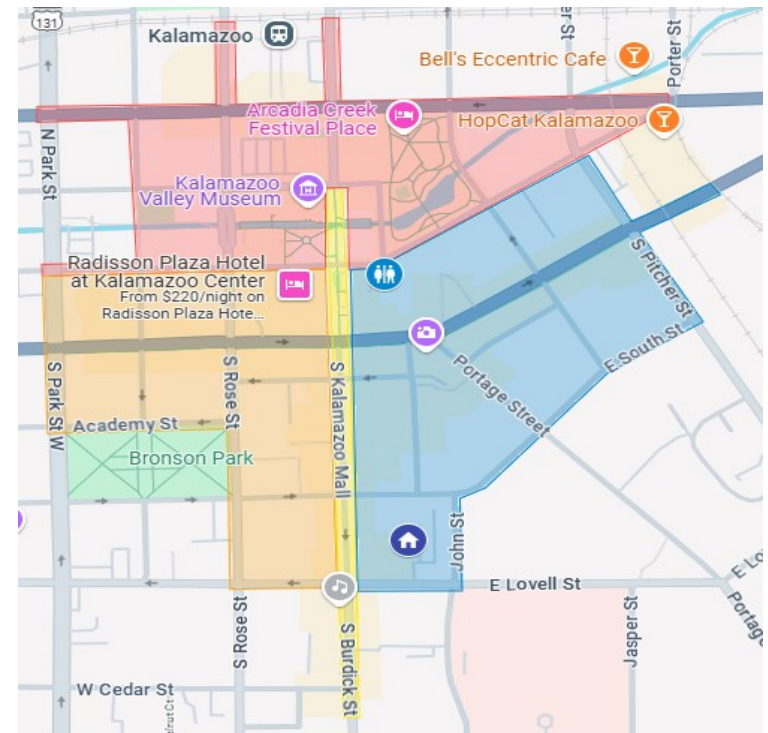
NEW SMART SYSTEM LAUNCH.

Fall of 2024 brought the launch of our updated SMART System. With the update we added/redefined a couple of our stats categories to give more context to our work. We also added four zones to our district map to help us with deployment and identifying what's happening where in the district. Currently you will see "NO ZONE" on the stats report. This is caused by a glitch in the system that our SMART team is working to resolve.



January 2025 Stats By Zone					
No Zone	East	Kalamazoo Mall	North	West	

January 2025 Stats By Zone						
No Zone	East	Kalamazoo Mall	North	West	Total	
CLEANING						
Abandoned Property	31	28	19	23	18	119
Area Cleaned	11	5	4	3	4	27
Biohazardous Material	10	13	10	2	1	36
Restroom Cleaned/Stocked		23				23
Graffiti - Removed	1	5	8	5	1	20
Lawn Care (hours)						0
Leaf Removal (hours)	6					6
Power Washing (hours)						0
Snow Removal (hours)	3	78	13	11	17	122
Trash (lbs)	525	2100	2450	725	1000	6800
Flower Watering (gallons)						0
Weed Abatement (block faces)						0
Special Project (hours)						0
HOSPITALITY						
Business Contact	5	3	18		1	27
Hospitality Assistance	10	11	18	2	2	43
SAFETY						
Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use	3		7	1		11
Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use						0
Needles Found		4		1		5
Panhandling - Aggressive						0
Panhandling - Passive						0
Public Defecation/Urination	1					1
Safety Escorts		1				1
OUTREACH						
Transient	9	3	6	9	1	28
Unhoused/Sleeping	18	18	28	36	10	110
Unsheltered Relocation	7	1	21	1		30



January 2025 Stats By Zone						
	No Zone	East	Kalamazooo Mall	North	West	Total
CLEANING						
Abandoned Property	31	28	19	23	18	119
Area Cleaned	11	5	4	3	4	27
Biohazardous Material	10	13	10	2	1	36
Restroom Cleaned/Stocked		23				23
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Power Washing (hours)						0
Snow Removal (hours)	3	78	13	11	17	122
Trash (lbs)	525	2100	2450	725	1000	6800
Flower Watering (gallons)						0
Weed Abatement (block faces)						0
Special Project (hours)						0
HOSPITALITY						
Business Contact	5	3	18		1	27
Hospitality Assistance	10	11	18	2	2	43
SAFETY						
Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use	3		7	1		11
Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use						0
Needles Found		4		1		5
Panhandling - Aggressive						0
Panhandling - Passive						0
Public Defecation/Urination	1					1
Safety Escorts		1				1
OUTREACH						
Transient	9	3	6	9	1	28
Unhoused/Sleeping	18	18	28	36	10	110
Unsheltered Relocation	7	1	21	1		30

2025 STATISTICS													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
CLEANING													
Abandoned Property	119												119
Area Cleaned	27												27
Biohazardous Material	36												36
Restroom Cleaned/Stocked	23												23
Graffiti - Removed	20												20
Lawn Care (hours)													0
Leaf Removal (hours)	6												6
Power Washing (hours)													0
Snow Removal (hours)	122												122
Trash (lbs)	6800												6800
Flower Watering (gallons)													0
Weed Abatement (block faces)													0
Special Project (hours)													0
HOSPITALITY													
Business Contact	27												27
Hospitality Assistance	43												43
SAFETY													
Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use	11												11
Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use													0
Needles Found	5												5
Panhandling - Aggressive													0
Panhandling - Passive													0
Public Defecation/Urination	1												1
Safety Escorts	1												1
OUTREACH													
Transient	28												28
Unhoused/Sleeping	110												110
Unsheltered Relocation	30												30



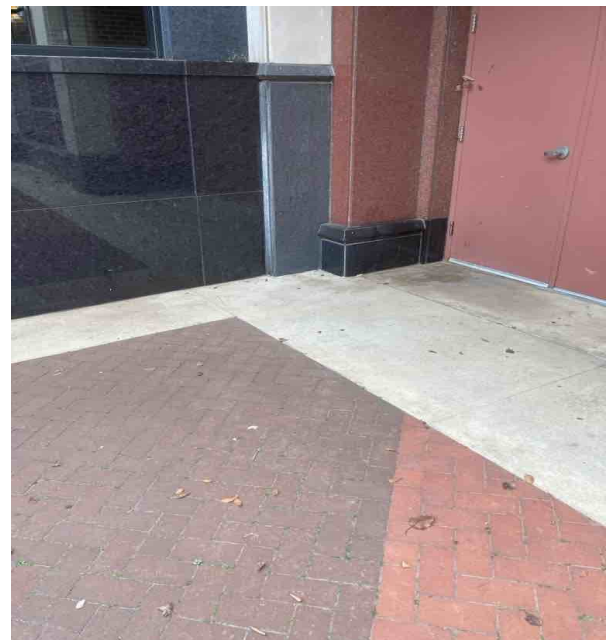
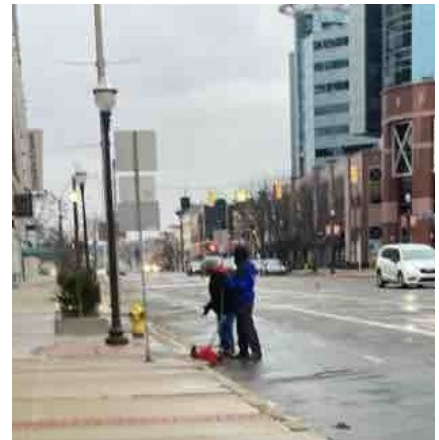
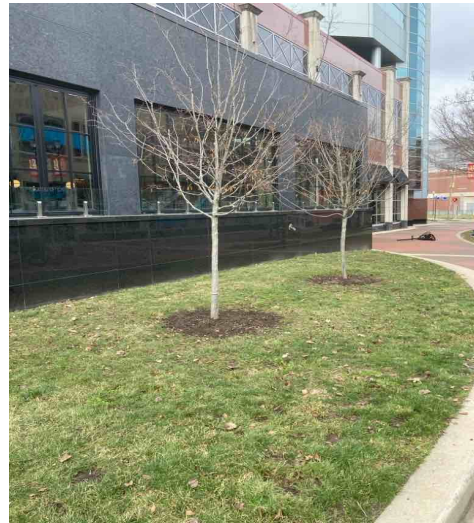
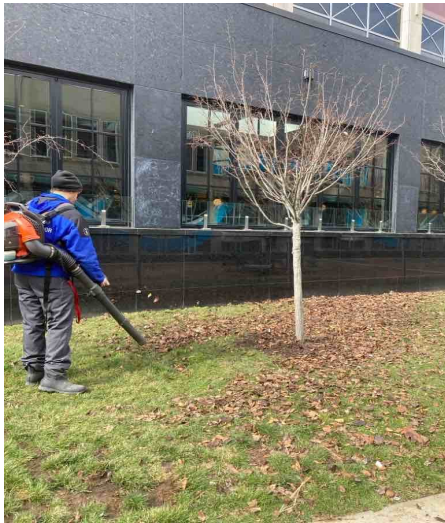
DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO

AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 2025 REPORT



AROUND TOWN IN FEBRUARY

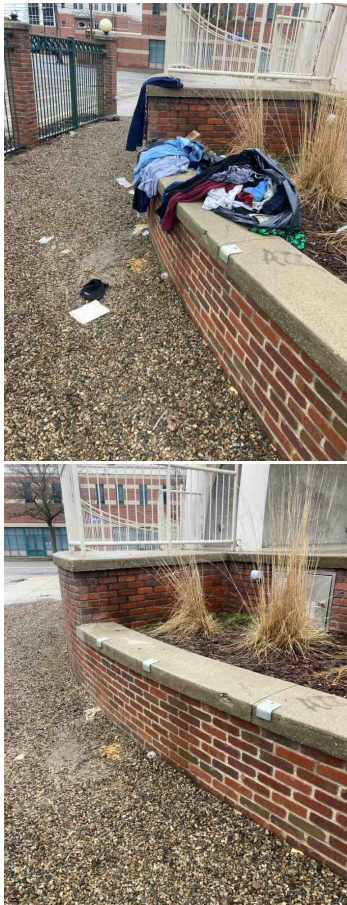


FEBRUARY 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



GRAFITTI

With warmer weather we were able to shift gears and remove some graffiti that would be hard to remove in cold weather. We will be working to get the district to a baseline of zero tags, posters or stickers as fast as we can in the early spring.



ABANDONED PROPERTY

With our Unsheltered Population we encounter a lot of Abandoned Property. We try to be sensitive to the fact that for some people the items left out may be all they have. We often will leave property in place for a few hours and circle back to see if it is gone, if it is still in place we will discard it.

February 2025 Stats By Zone						
	No Zone	East	Kalamazooo Mall	North	West	Total
CLEANING						
Abandoned Property	122	38	8	27	6	201
Area Cleaned	29	4	4	--	2	39
Biohazardous Material	20	11	8	1	--	40
Restroom Cleaned/Stocked	26	15	--	--	--	41
Graffiti - Removed	29	1	--	1	--	31
Lawn Care (hours)						0
Leaf Removal (hours)	4					4
Power Washing (hours)						0
Snow Removal (hours)	27	4	--	--	7	38
Trash (lbs)	3900	525	1050	175	125	5775
Flower Watering (gallons)						0
Weed Abatement (block faces)						0
Special Project (hours)					1	1
HOSPITALITY						
Business Contact	17	--	24	--	--	41
Hospitality Assistance	14	4	5	1	1	25
SAFETY						
Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use	7	4	--	--	1	12
Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use						0
Needles Found						0
Panhandling - Aggressive						0
Panhandling - Passive	1					1
Public Defecation/Urination						0
Safety Escorts	3	--	1	1	3	8
OUTREACH						
Transient	21 --		2	1 --		24
Unhoused/Sleeping	73	15	2	4 --		94
Unsheltered Relocation	9					9

2025 STATISTICS													
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
CLEANING													
Abandoned Property	119	201											320
Area Cleaned	27	39											66
Biohazardous Material	36	40											76
Restroom Cleaned/Stocked	23	41											64
Graffiti - Removed	20	31											51
Lawn Care (hours)													0
Leaf Removal (hours)	6	4											10
Power Washing (hours)													0
Snow Removal (hours)	122	38											160
Trash (lbs)	6800	5775											12575
Flower Watering (gallons)													0
Weed Abatement (block faces)													0
Special Project (hours)			1										1
HOSPITALITY													
Business Contact	27	41											68
Hospitality Assistance	43	25											68
SAFETY													
Observed Visible Alcohol/Drug Use	11	12											23
Interaction With Alcohol/Drug Use													0
Needles Found	5												5
Panhandling - Aggressive													0
Panhandling - Passive			1										1
Public Defecation/Urination	1												1
Safety Escorts	1	8											9
OUTREACH													
Transient	28	24											52
Unhoused/Sleeping	110	94											204
Unsheltered Relocation	30	9											39

**CITY OF KALAMAZOO
DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC GROWTH AUTHORITY
KALAMAZOO COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH 2025-2026 COMMITTEES AND
APPOINT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS AND MEMBERS**

WHEREAS, the City of Kalamazoo Downtown Economic Growth Authority (the “DEGA”) operates pursuant to the authority of the Corridor Improvement Authority Act, Act 280 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 2005, now recodified within Part 6 of Public Act 57 of 2018 (the “Act”); and

WHEREAS, the DEGA now desires to establish the Business Recruitment and Retention Committee, the Events and Marketing Committee, and the Clean and Green Committee in order to advance the mission of supporting a vibrant, thriving downtown district; and

WHEREAS, the Business Recruitment and Retention Committee shall review and recommend matters related to supporting the attraction, growth, and retention of businesses within the downtown district, including identifying opportunities for economic development, fostering partnerships, and addressing the needs of current and prospective businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Events and Marketing Committee shall review and recommend matters related to the promotion of downtown Kalamazoo, including branding initiatives, event sponsorships, marketing strategies, and public engagement to enhance the district's visibility and appeal; and

WHEREAS, the Clean and Green Committee shall review and recommend matters related to maintaining a clean, safe, and welcoming downtown environment, including initiatives for beautification, sustainability, and enhanced public spaces;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the Business Recruitment and Retention Committee, the Events and Marketing Committee, and the Clean and Green Committee are hereby established for the purposes detailed above.

2. That the following individuals are appointed to serve as Committee Chairpersons:

- Business Recruitment and Retention Committee: Clarence Lloyd
- Events and Marketing Committee: Jessica Thompson
- Clean and Green Committee: Curt Aardema

3. That the following individuals are appointed as members of each committee:

- Business Recruitment and Retention Committee:
 - Curt Aardema
 - Clarence Lloyd
 - Kwame Gyimah
 - Trisha Kidd
 - Chris Lampen-Crowell
- Events and Marketing Committee:
 - Jessica Thompson
 - Stanley Steppes
 - Kim Guess
 - Carl Brown
 - Sarah Mead
 - Brandy Gulley
 - Channon Russette Mondoux
 - Jennifer Hudson-Prenkert
 - Dana Wagner
 - Heather Holmer
 - Shannon Keene
- Clean and Green Committee:
 - Curt Aardema
 - Rick Searing

4. That all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict herewith shall be and the same are hereby rescinded.

YEAS: Boardmembers _____

NAYS: Boardmembers _____

ABSTAIN: Boardmembers _____

ABSENT: Boardmembers _____

RESOLUTION DECLARED ADOPTED.

Dated: March 17, 2025

Curt Aardema, Secretary

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Board of Directors of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority of the City of Kalamazoo at a meeting held on March 17, 2025 and that public notice of said meeting was given pursuant to, and in compliance with, Act 267 of the Public Acts of Michigan of 1976, as amended.

Dated: _____

Curt Aardema, Secretary

TO: Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board of Directors
FROM: Downtown Marketing and Promotion Evaluation Committee
DATE: March 17, 2025
SUBJECT: Downtown Marketing and Promotion Vendor Approval

Purpose

This memo serves to recommend that the Downtown Economic Growth Authority approve a one-year agreement with a5 Branding & Digital for downtown marketing and promotion.

Background

As part of the Downtown Economic Growth Authority's ongoing commitment to enhancing the visibility, engagement, and economic vitality of Downtown Kalamazoo, a request for proposals was issued for marketing and promotion services. Following a thorough evaluation process, a5 Branding & Digital has been identified as the preferred vendor to execute the proposed scope of work effectively.

a5 Branding & Digital has submitted Proposal Reference #: 91522-001.0, outlining a comprehensive approach to downtown marketing and promotion. The initial proposal is valued at \$50,000; however, an additional \$19,500 is requested to support necessary services beyond the initial scope to ensure a robust and impactful campaign. The total contract amount will not exceed \$69,500.

Scope of Work:

The base scope of work under the agreement includes the development of a comprehensive Brand Communications Plan to guide downtown marketing efforts, along with targeted Event Promotions to enhance awareness and engagement for key events. Additionally, a5 Branding & Digital will craft Brand Messaging and Storytelling strategies to create a consistent and compelling narrative for Downtown Kalamazoo.

To support these initiatives, the firm will provide Design and Communications services to ensure visually cohesive and engaging materials. They will also collaborate with event producers to align marketing strategies with downtown events, manage media relations and promotional efforts, and oversee Downtown Kalamazoo's digital presence. A Multi-Channel Engagement Strategy will be implemented to maximize reach across various platforms. The total cost for these services is \$50,000, inclusive of \$47,000 in professional fees and \$3,000 in travel and office expenses.

Additional Scope of Work:

To further enhance the effectiveness of downtown marketing efforts, we are requesting additional funds to support expanded services. This includes Community Listening Sessions as part of the Brand Communications Plan, allowing for up to two focus groups and ten one-on-one interviews to gather critical insights from stakeholders (\$5,000).

Additionally, funding is requested for the development of a Logo Design and Style Guide under Design and Communications (\$12,500), ensuring a refreshed and cohesive visual identity for Downtown Kalamazoo. Lastly, Digital Press Kits will be created as part of Media and Promotion Management

(\$2,000) to streamline communications and provide easily accessible promotional materials for media partners.

The total cost for these additional services is \$19,500, bringing the overall project budget to \$69,500.

Fiscal Impact

The additional funding of \$19,500 will be allocated from the Events and Marketing Committee's annual budget. This expenditure aligns with the committee's strategic objectives to enhance downtown promotion, increase event visibility, and strengthen branding efforts for Downtown Kalamazoo. Sufficient funds are available within the existing budget to accommodate this request.

Requested Action

Board approval is sought to:

- Approve an agreement with a5 Branding & Digital for Downtown Kalamazoo marketing and promotion services in the amount of \$50,000.
 - Approve an additional \$19,500 for services necessary to effectively complete the scope of work, bringing the total authorized amount to \$69,500.
 - Authorize the Board Chair to finalize the necessary contract terms and execute the agreement on behalf of DEGA.
-

Rationale

The selected vendor brings extensive experience in branding, marketing, and downtown revitalization strategies.

A strategic and well-executed marketing campaign is critical to maintaining business engagement, visitor attraction, and overall economic resilience, particularly in the context of ongoing and upcoming downtown development projects.

Allocating the additional funds ensures the flexibility to address evolving marketing needs and maximize the effectiveness of promotional efforts.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board approve the proposed agreement and funding allocation to advance the marketing and promotional objectives for Downtown Kalamazoo.

Proposal for City of Kalamazoo, MI:

Downtown Kalamazoo Promotion and Marketing

Proposal Reference #:
91522-001.0

January 7, 2025

a5 is a branding and digital agency that tells client stories in a clear, concise, consistent and compelling manner – to get results.

We begin by listening. Asking questions. Understanding your market and the competitive landscape. By offering recommendations and solutions. And telling your story – powerfully.

We work by a simple philosophy: to deliver great work that creates great places.

a5 Branding & Digital
1 N LaSalle, 47th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60602
708.227.5313

a5inc.com

Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator
City of Kalamazoo
241 West South Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Downtown Kalamazoo is a destination where innovation, culture and connection collide. Anchored by a thriving arts scene, unique local businesses and iconic landmarks such as Bronson Park and the Kalamazoo Mall, downtown offers an inviting space where people come together through culture and commerce. Home to festivals, galleries, breweries and historic architecture, Downtown Kalamazoo embodies the city's spirit of creativity and collaboration, inspiring pride and belonging for all who experience it.

At a5 Branding & Digital, we specialize in creating campaigns that drive engagement and elevate perceptions. With decades of experience in place-based branding and destination marketing, we have partnered with districts such as Downtown Oak Park (Illinois), the City of Charlevoix (Michigan) and Downtown Cuyahoga Falls (Ohio) to revitalize their identities, drive economic growth and create a shared sense of being and place. These projects highlight our ability to craft narratives that honor a place's unique character while positioning it for growth. Our expertise is well-suited to enhance Downtown Kalamazoo's reputation as a premier destination while elevating its role as an inclusive hub and community for all.

Our approach aligns with the priorities outlined in your RFP to:

- Establish a cohesive, inclusive brand identity that reflects Downtown Kalamazoo's distinctive assets and inviting atmosphere
- Engage residents, visitors and stakeholders through multi-channel campaigns and creative activations that celebrate the downtown experience
- Increase awareness and visitation while driving economic vitality across the district

For Downtown Kalamazoo, we propose a comprehensive strategy that includes:

- Brand Development: Crafting a unified identity that highlights Kalamazoo's creative spirit, local entrepreneurs and cultural institutions
- Storytelling and Campaign Design: Developing high-quality content that positions Downtown Kalamazoo as a regional destination for dining, arts and entertainment
- Targeted Marketing: Implementing data-driven, multi-channel campaigns that connect with residents and attract visitors

By amplifying Downtown Kalamazoo's strengths—its eclectic local businesses, cultural institutions and shared public spaces—we will create a narrative that solidifies its role as a catalyst for economic vitality and community connection. Through compelling storytelling and targeted marketing, we aim to position Downtown Kalamazoo as a destination that enriches lives, inspires pride and offers a dynamic place to live, work and play.

We are excited about the opportunity to collaborate with you. Thank you for considering a5 Branding & Digital. We look forward to helping Downtown Kalamazoo thrive as a place where creativity, connection and opportunity flourish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Harris", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Harris | Principal | 708.227.5313 mobile | jharris@a5inc.com

Why a5?

- **We tell your story with clarity and impact. We specialize in crafting identities that are clear, concise, consistent and compelling.**
- **We build bridges through communications. We understand how to cultivate connections and communicate the relationship between people and place.**
- **We have extensive experience in rebranding and wayfinding for communities across the country. From Charlevoix, MI to Naples, FL, we have successfully branded municipalities, business districts and community corridors, designing wayfinding systems and banners that enhance local identity and invite walkability.**
- **We know Michigan. We have worked in communities such as Watervliet, New Buffalo, Charlevoix and Grand Rapids, among others, and with Michigan-based companies including Intersect Studio, Wade Trim and Wightman. From 2005 up until 2019, a5 operated a Michigan office; our director retired, then the pandemic hit. Now, we are in the process of reestablishing our Michigan presence.**
- **We know that every community has its own story and sense of place. We listen intently to shape placemaking strategies that invigorate public spaces, elevate pedestrian experiences and support local businesses that are as nuanced and distinct as the communities themselves, from New Buffalo, MI to Chicago's Howard Street Corridor.**
- **We are committed to inclusive storytelling. Our projects reflect and celebrate diverse demographics. We prioritize engagement with historically underrepresented communities to ensure designs are reflective and representative of community voice.**
- **We are strategic, creative and drive a strong process. At a5, we work to set you apart by creating a visual and verbal architecture that shapes perceptions positively and attracts your intended audiences.**
- **We are team players and are focused on helping our clients grow. We always generate results for you.**

Firm Overview and Credentials

a5 Branding & Digital is a design-driven marketing and communications firm specializing in community and place-based branding, economic development and destination marketing. We have a strong track record of creating identities for municipalities, real estate developers, nonprofits and public agencies that reflect their history, foster community pride and support revitalization efforts.

Our clients include dynamic downtowns and business districts such as Downtown Oak Park, IL, Downtown Cuyahoga Falls, OH, and the City of Charlevoix, MI, as well as numerous cities, towns and economic development agencies across the country. We excel at broadcasting the power of place through tailored strategies that connect people to their communities.

What sets us apart is our sensitivity to and understanding of the built and natural environment. In addition to our team of designers, writers and creatives, we employ a Director of Place who offers expertise in urban planning, placemaking and real estate, ensuring our work draws meaningful connections between projects, people and place.

Our experience includes collaborations with organizations such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA National), Congress for the New Urbanism, and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), demonstrating our commitment to place-based identity and community-focused design.

Our Approach

At a5, we bring a collaborative and strategic approach to every project. From ideation to execution, we prioritize clear communication, active engagement and efficiency to ensure alignment with client goals and timelines.

What you can expect from us:

- A dedicated project manager to oversee each stage and ensure alignment with your goals
- Coordinated calendars and regularly scheduled check-ins to maintain momentum
- Regular progress reports to provide updates and maintain transparency
- Prompt responses to all requests, typically within 24 hours or sooner
- Senior team involvement throughout the project to ensure quality and strategic oversight

Our team is ready to become an extension of yours, bringing energy, creativity and a results-driven approach to this initiative. We thrive on telling authentic stories, designing meaningful experiences and making the process enjoyable and impactful for all involved.

Services

Branding

Market Research
Brand and Marketing Strategy
Positioning
Tagline Creation
Naming (Company & Product)
Marketing Plans
Product Launches
Content Development/Copywriting
Photography/Illustration Sourcing
Photography/Illustration
Art Direction
PR
Events & Experiences
Trade Show Experiences
Marketing Communications Consulting
Outsourced Communications Management

Brand Identity Creation

Logos/Graphic Identities
Identity Applications

Advertising

Creative
Print
Broadcast
Radio
OOH Highway Billboards
Public Transit Billboards
Media Planning
Media Buys

Print/Other Support Materials

Brochures
Direct Mail
Catalogs
Magazines
Newsletters
Signage and Banner Systems

Digital

Web Design

Bespoke Web Development
User Experience
Content Development/Copywriting
Content Management Training
Intranets/Extranets

Social Media Strategy & Campaigns

Video

Preproduction
Scripting/Writing
Casting
Location Scout Management
Storyboarding
Art Direction
Interviews
Production/Shooting
Editing/Post-production
Motion Graphics
Original Music Composition

Digital Advertising

Geofencing/Geotargeting
Display Ads
Sponsored Content
Remarketing

SEM/Google Ads

SEO

PPC

Content Marketing

Affiliate/Influencer Marketing

Email Campaigns

Audio Streaming/Podcasts/OTT

Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality

Work Experience

Communities & Business Districts

Fifth Avenue South (Naples, Florida)
Magnificent Mile Association
City of South Bend, Indiana
City of Valparaiso, Indiana
City of Toledo, Ohio
City of Flint, Michigan
City of Watervliet, Michigan
City of New Buffalo, Michigan
City of Charlevoix, Michigan
Downtown Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
Downtown Oak Park
Pleasant District of Oak Park
Howard Street, Chicago
Village of Bartlett, Illinois
Village of New Lenox, Illinois
Village of Hanover Park, Illinois
Village of Niles, Illinois
Village of Barrington, Illinois
Village of Gurnee, Illinois
Village of Algonquin, Illinois
Village of Olympia Fields, Illinois
Village of Hampshire, Illinois
Village of Northbrook, Illinois
Village of Oak Park, Illinois
Village of Richton Park, Illinois
Village of Mundelein, Illinois
Village of La Grange, Illinois
Village of Grayslake, Illinois
City of Crystal Lake, Illinois
City of Crest Hill, Illinois
City of Freeport, Illinois
City of Woodstock, Illinois

Park Districts

Chicago Park District
Lake Bluff Park District
Kansas Recreation & Park Association
Northbrook Park District
Illinois Park & Recreation Association
City of Elkhart- Parks & Recreation Department

Libraries

Glenview Public Library
Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District
St. Charles Public Library District
Urban Libraries Council

Tourism, Arts & Cultural Organizations

Krasl Art Center
Field Museum
Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
Chicago Children's Museum
Wonder Works Children's Museum
Betty Brinn Children's Museum
Bradbury Carnegie Museum
Great Exploration Children's Museum
Milwaukee Public Museum
Chicago Architecture Foundation

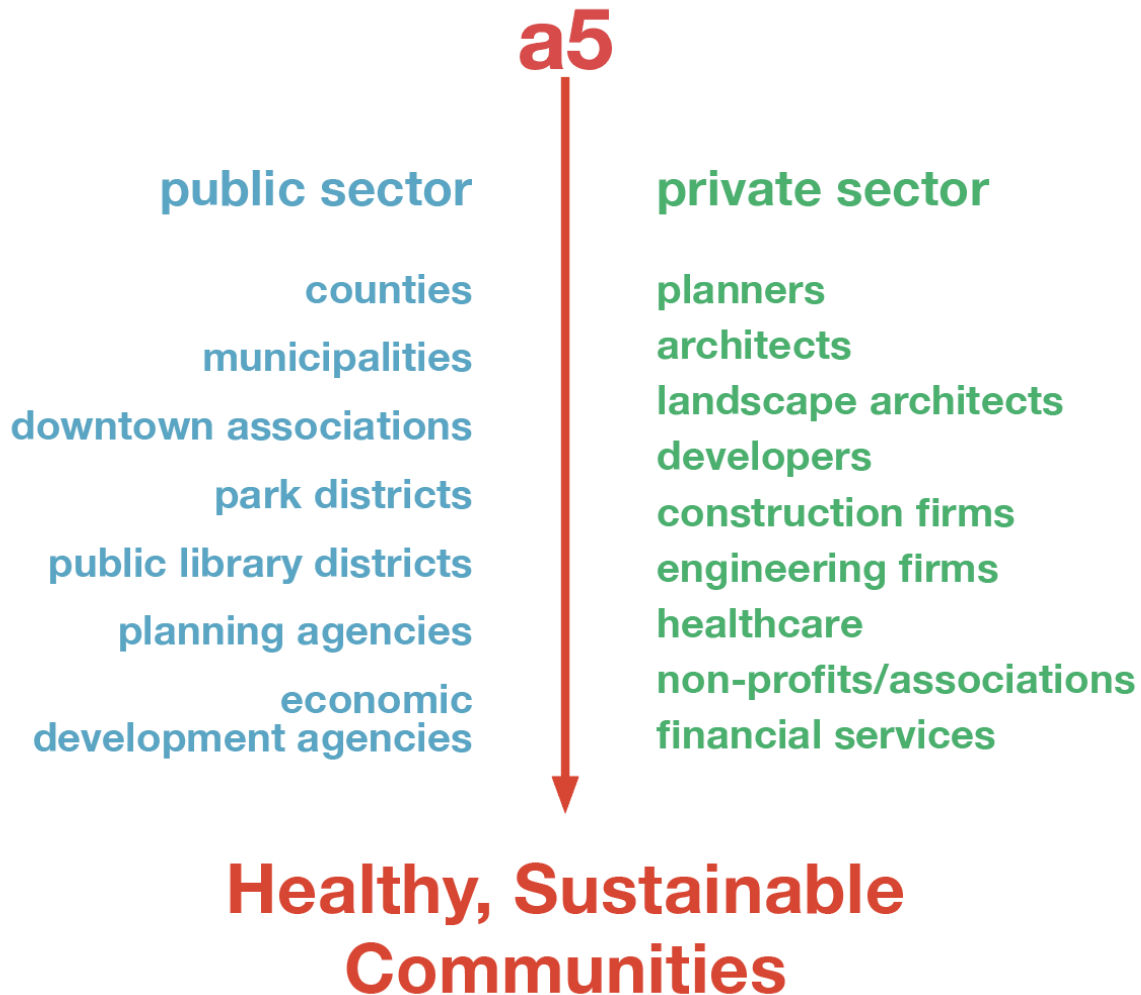
Architecture, Landscape Architecture

American Society of Landscape Architects
Illinois and Michigan chapters
Intersect Studio
Landmarks Illinois
Mariani Landscape
NatureWorks Landscapes
Christy Webber Landscapes
Foster Dale Architects
Tom Bassett-Dilley Architects
Nevin Hedlund Architects
AIA Chicago
Congress for the New Urbanism
Environmental Law & Policy Center

Non-profits

The Faraday Institution (UK)
Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Seven Generations Ahead
World Wildlife Fund
CNT (Center for Neighborhood Technology)
Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
Rolfe Pancreatic Cancer Foundation
Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois
Unity Temple Restoration Foundation
Chicago Community Trust
MacArthur Foundation
Wege Foundation
Community Foundation Oak Park-River Forest
Triton College Foundation
UI Labs
Oak Park Homelessness Coalition

**a5 works with public and private sector clients
to help build healthy, sustainable communities.**



Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

Mission-driven, a5 helps create healthy, sustainable communities. From economic development to environmental effectiveness to social equity, a5 is driven to provide educational and entrepreneurial opportunities for communities that traditionally have been underserved.

We are members of the Diversity in Design Collaborative (DID), a group formed by Herman Miller to promote diversity in design.

We are intentionally working to diversify our a5 team as we hire and promote. And we are working to foster a culture of belonging in the communities in which we work.

We also work with minority and women-owned creative partners, including photographers, and actively seek new relationships.



Team & Qualifications

We believe successful projects are built on strong partnerships and open communication. Our approach is collaborative, interactive and adaptable—recognizing that each community’s needs and goals are distinct. Throughout the process, we will tailor our strategies based on the feedback and conversations we cultivate with Downtown Kalamazoo’s stakeholders and leadership.

We prioritize clear communication structures, detailed schedules and efficient workflows to ensure seamless execution. Our experience working with municipal agencies, community groups and nonprofits has equipped us with the tools to deliver timely, responsive and impactful solutions.

While our process is structured for efficiency, our work is customized for every community we serve. We will be present on the ground in Kalamazoo to ensure a thoughtful and informed approach that reflects the city’s unique character and vision.

Our team structure is designed to combine creativity, efficiency and consistency for the duration of the project. For Downtown Kalamazoo, a5 will assign a dedicated team including:

a5 Branding & Digital

- John Harris – Principal: Expert in community branding, strategic communications and place-based marketing
- Fletcher Martin – Creative Director: Specialist in branding, visual identity design and wayfinding
- Ben Schulman – Director of Place: Skilled in placemaking, urban planning, real estate and community engagement
- Gabbie St. Pierre – Project Manager: Experienced in project oversight, stakeholder coordination and timely execution
- AJ Benson – Senior Designer: Talented in branding, illustration and visual storytelling that connects with communities
- Miah Emano – Graphic Designer: Focused on logo design, typography and branding solutions for community-based initiatives

This team brings the right mix of expertise to create a branding and marketing campaign that showcases Downtown Kalamazoo's unique assets, fosters community pride and drives engagement.

See below for detailed bios of the project team.



John Harris
Principal: Strategy/Content



Fletcher Martin
Creative Director



Clarice Harris
Director of Operations



Ben Schulman
Director of Place



Emerson Harris
Manager, Tampa Office



AJ Benson
Senior Designer



Juliane Allen
Account Manager & Digital
Media Specialist



Gabbie St. Pierre
Account Manager & Digital
Media Specialist



Miah Emano
Graphic Designer



Bailey Maguire
Digital Media Specialist/
Account Coordinator



Andrea Ramirez
Administrative Manager/
Account Coordinator

Project Team

John Harris - Principal

a5 principal John Harris helps clients tell stories in a clear, consistent and compelling manner to generate results from branding, marketing and communication programs. With the team at a5, John has helped drive investment in communities that has had significant impact on community building, economic development and tourism.

A former journalist for Forbes, John wrote the first national story on Starbucks, predicting that it would change our culture and society. He also wrote for the Milwaukee Journal and served as editor of Rockford Magazine before joining The Marmon Group, Inc. (then a \$6 billion organization owned by the Pritzker family) as director of communications in 1991. There, he consulted with Marmon's 100-plus companies on marketing communications and public relations issues in a wide variety of industries including financing, consumer and industrial products.

John has been branding communities with a5 for 24 years. Before co-founding a5 in 2001, John served as a strategic communications consultant for VSA Partners, advising such clients as Steelcase, Landscape Forms and US West on brand development and brand management. At a5, he has led branding and communications efforts for communities from Downtown Oak Park (IL); Cuyahoga Falls (OH); Charlevoix (MI); Fifth Avenue South (Naples, FL), and communities across the country, helping define, enliven and enhance community narratives to help drive tourism, economic development and community pride.

He has a passion for creating healthy, sustainable communities, and developed Green Town: The Future of Community, a one-day experience dedicated to bringing the public sector together with the private sector to create sustainable communities, with non-profit Seven Generations Ahead. Harris also leads the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition, which is working on affordable housing and a comprehensive approach to end homelessness in the community.

A graduate of Carroll University in Waukesha, Wisconsin, John has taught at Roosevelt University and Carroll University.

John serves on the boards of Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance, Takeout 25 Oak Park, Friends of Richton Park, Triton College Foundation and Carroll University.

Fletcher Martin - Creative Director

Fletcher is a founding principal and creative director at a5. He has been with the firm since its founding, 24 years ago. He is responsible for the design development and creative direction of a5 projects, including branding and identity, signage, interactive design, naming and more.

Prior to forming a5, he spent five years at VSA Partners in Chicago as a design director working with such clients as Steelcase, Harley-Davidson and H2O+. At a5, his client experience includes World Wildlife Fund, Downtown Cuyahoga Falls, Fairmount Properties, Illinois Department of Human Services, Magnificent Mile Association, Chicago Park District, Chicago Children's Museum, Field Museum, The

Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Chicago Architecture Foundation, Congress for the New Urbanism, Chicago Transit Authority and NYSE Euronext.

He has volunteered as creative director for two creative rallies for EPIC, a non-profit that pairs volunteer writers and designers with worthy causes and organizations. The EPIC projects Fletcher led include the rebranding of Illinois Humanities and messaging/collateral for Literacy Chicago. He is also a member of the Arts Club of Chicago.

Fletcher's work has been recognized by the Art Directors Club, AR100, British Art Direction & Design, Communication Arts, HOW Magazine and Type Directors Club, among others.

Fletcher graduated from Texas Christian University with a BFA in graphic design.

Ben Schulman - Director of Place

Ben is a5's Director of Place. His varied experience has been delivered across academic, non-profit, media, and private sectors to activate space and communicate the value of community development. Ben's writing has been featured in ARCHITECT, CityLab, Metropolis, and others. He was the editor of Chicago Architect magazine and the Design section of Newcity, where he also co-hosted "A Lot You Got to Holler," a podcast about urbanism, architecture and design.

Ben has lectured at Columbia University Graduate School of Planning, Policy and Preservation (GSAPP) and taught at the University of Memphis. As the Director of Communications for the Congress for the New Urbanism and AIA Chicago, Ben helped communicate the value, impact, and benefit of good urban design before moving on to help launch the real estate equity crowdfunding platform, Small Change, and to lead the real estate, planning, and placemaking portfolio as Vice President of the community development organization, the Memphis Medical District Collaborative (MMDC).

At MMDC, Ben conceived the creation of an architectural form book for vernacular infill housing and managed a variety of grant and loan funds with a focus on emerging and/or minority developers and small businesses, leading to over \$500M of planned and/or completed real estate development projects. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Community LIFT and the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation. Ben has worked with a5 in varying capacities for over 10 years, formally joining the team full-time in 2024.

Gabbie St Pierre - Project Manager

Gabbie is an account manager at a5. She is a strategic thinker who helps clients develop and execute plans to meet their goals. Gabbie specializes in project management, creative strategy and copywriting.

Prior to a5, Gabbie was an account manager and copywriter for Cisneros Design where she worked closely with clients across a variety of industries (including higher education, hospitality and healthcare) to help develop and maintain strong brands. She also brings nonprofit experience as the former events and communications manager for the Pujols Family Foundation. In this role, she planned and executed

fundraising events, developed communication strategies and helped share the mission of the foundation with the community.

Gabbie graduated from Marian University with a BA in communication and minors in writing and Spanish. She holds an MA in strategic communication and leadership from Maryville University St. Louis. She joined a5 in summer 2024.

AJ Benson - Senior Designer

Andrew (AJ) is a graphic designer at a5, with background in branding, illustration and wayfinding. AJ spent seven years in the Twin Cities, immersing himself in the creative and community development worlds as a member of AIGA Minnesota, volunteering with Minneapolis Parks Foundation, and worked with Minnesota firms from Studio MPLS, StoneArch, and Fishawhack Health (now Avalere). Clients included Downtown Minneapolis Council, Nordic Ware and Abbott Medical. At a5, AJ has worked on Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, Village of Mundelein and Village of Northbrook.

He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout with a BA in Graphic Design & Interactive Media. AJ has been full-time with a5 since 2022.

Miah Emano - Graphic Designer

Miah Emano is a graphic designer at a5 with a background in branding, logo and book cover design. She received her BA in Graphic Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she has had a variety of opportunities to design for startup companies at Research Park, the University of Illinois Press, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority under the College of Social Work. She values sustainability and is excited to help cultivate people and spaces through the power of design. Miah has been with a5 since 2023.

Case Studies

a5 has been branding and marketing communities for over a decade. We have worked with Charlevoix, Michigan; Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; Woodstock, IL, among many others.





City of Charlevoix, Michigan

The City of Charlevoix has a long, rich tradition of hospitality. Located in northern Michigan between Traverse City and Petoskey, Charlevoix welcomes visitors from all over each year. The beautiful city of 2,500 (during off-peak times) sits between Lake Michigan and Lake Charlevoix, offering stunning sunrise and sunset views. The downtown is vibrant and outdoor recreational opportunities are abundant. Yet, the cost of living is high and Charlevoix is challenged to grow year-round.

a5 worked with the City of Charlevoix and its Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau and Downtown Development Authority to create an umbrella brand for Charlevoix that could

work for the municipality, economic development and tourism.

We conducted a robust engagement process that included:

- Facilitated meetings with organization staff and board members
- One-on-one interviews with key stakeholders
- “Business After Hours” discussion with the Chamber
- Public meetings
- Blind email survey to thousands around the Midwest

The resulting brand is classic yet contemporary, and reflective of what has long been known as “Charlevoix the Beautiful.” Because the research showed that stakeholders still liked the longstanding slogan, the new brand offers a nod to the past with an eye to the future: “Classic Beauty.”

The Charlevoix brand has been adopted by the other organizations and enables each to retain some individuality while working together to promote the community with one look, one voice and one goal. After the new brand was adopted, the City asked a5 to name and brand a new business district. The Ferry Beach District has its own name and graphic identity, yet it clearly feels like a Charlevoix brand.



PRIMARY MARK



CITY ENTITIES



DEPARTMENTS



INITIATIVES

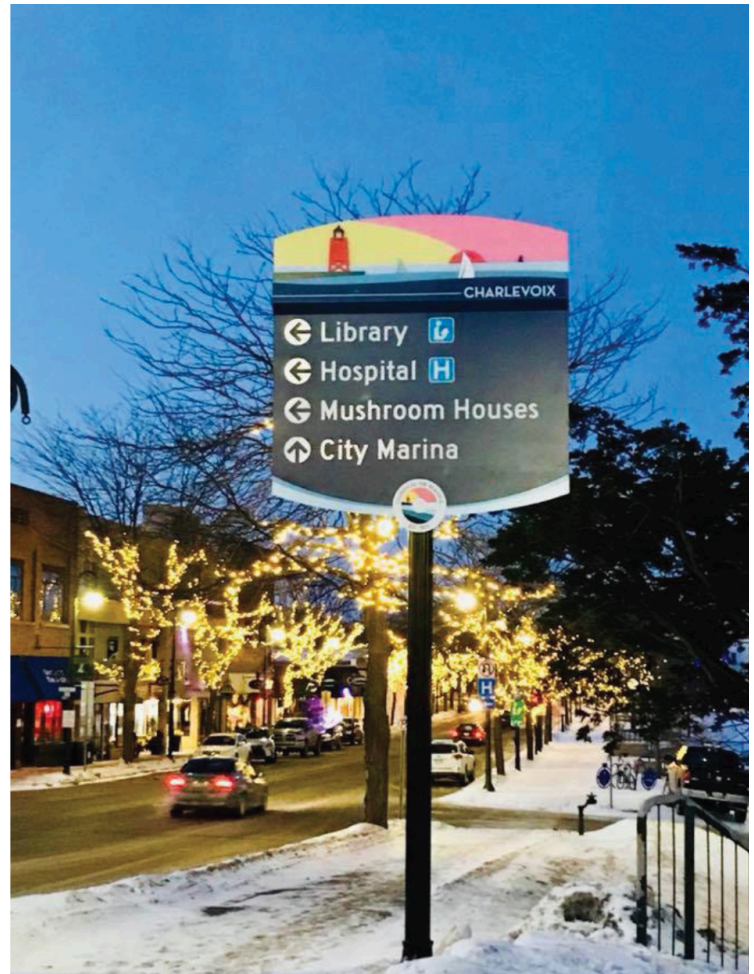


DISTRICTS



EVENTS







the fun flows here

Downtown Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

In Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, we helped the City secure City Council passage to redevelop the downtown. Like many communities, Cuyahoga Falls put in a pedestrian-only mall 40-plus years ago, and as has happened elsewhere, the mall died. Working with the city and consultants, we engaged the public in an innovative way, conducting one-on-one interviews at the community center and two grocery stores, holding public meetings and generating publicity.

We also organized a two-day bus tour of Midwest downtowns, including Oak Park, Illinois (which had taken out its pedestrian-only mall), Valparaiso, Indiana and South Bend, Indiana. More than 20 elected officials, city staff, residents and property owners attended, and weeks later, after seeing the transformative effects on these communities, the City Council voted to move forward with redeveloping the downtown. a5 then developed a downtown Cuyahoga Falls brand to capitalize on its location and newfound energy.





City of Woodstock, IL

Located 47 miles northwest of Chicago, Woodstock is a charming, historic community with a real town square, an historic Opera House and plenty of shopping, nightlife and culture.

a5 was hired by a newly formed public/private group called Promote Woodstock to develop a tourism brand and advertising campaign. First, a5 conducted in-person and phone interviews, small group

meetings and topic-oriented meetings with hundreds of members of the community. In addition, a5 organized an advisory council, which met twice annually, and coordinated connections with the business, education, arts and culture, tourism and government segments of Woodstock.

The campaign a5 developed, “Real Woodstock,” crafts a story around authentic experiences and has increased tourism, aiding economic development and building a stronger sense of pride and community. The brand launched in 2016 in Woodstock and across the Midwest and a5 ran the campaign until the pandemic in 2020. Since the campaign began, the population has grown, economic development has improved, tourism continues to increase and a stronger sense of community has been created.





Real WOODSTOCK

WELCOME HOME

**Real Charming.
Real Hospitality.
Real Woodstock.**

It's easy to fall in love with Woodstock. From abundant shopping and dining at independently owned businesses on the charming Woodstock Square to the enchantment of the Cherry Tree Inn, the friendly, welcoming vibe will make you

want to return—and think about moving here. Whether you are looking for excellent education, a creative community filled with arts and culture or your next home, Woodstock has it all. Welcome home.

realwoodstock.com/livehere



WELCOME HOME

In Real Woodstock, it's easy to connect with community and experience the outdoors. This summer, create wonderful family memories picking berries. Heider's Berry Farm is open for strawberry picking and, starting early July, for raspberry picking. McCann Berry Farm opens for blueberry picking Friday, July 17. Make a day of it and enjoy the shops and restaurants on and off the charming and historic Woodstock Square. You can also take the rolling hills. Walk the beautiful neighborhoods. Like through nature preserves.

realwoodstock.com/livehere

REAL OUTDOORS. REAL ADVENTURE. Real WOODSTOCK



WELCOME HOME

**Real Community.
Real Commitment to Every Child.
Real Woodstock.**

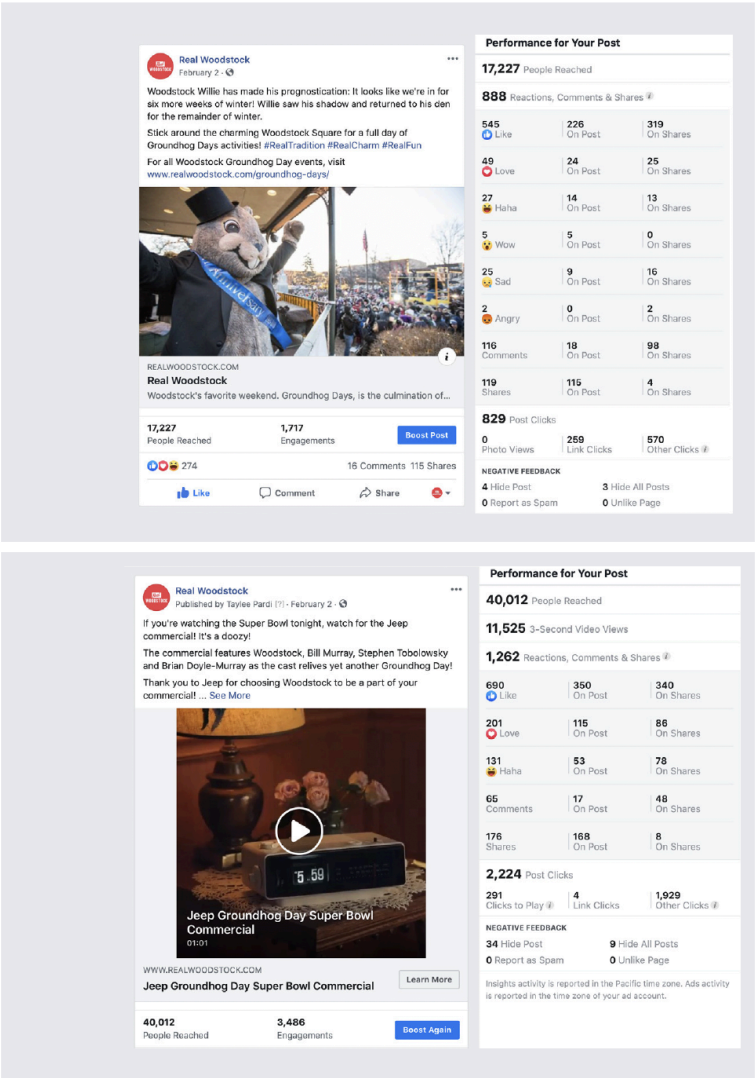
In Woodstock, Illinois, we are committed to the success of every child. From kindergarten on, our dual language program enables all children to learn English and Spanish, connecting cultures and fostering unity in our community.

"Because the kids have grown up in this program, they don't see themselves as different from one another. It's beyond tolerance, it's the norm for these kids. It opens them up to being open to other cultures in the future."

Liz Insteford, Second Grade, Westwood Elementary

realwoodstock.com/livehere





Project Understanding & Approach

Overview

Downtown Kalamazoo is a crossroads of cultural activity and economic opportunity, blending historic charm and entrepreneurial energy that cultivates community pride. This marketing initiative aims to position Downtown Kalamazoo as a vibrant, dynamic, year-round destination, emphasizing its role as a place to live, work and play, while celebrating its unique blend of history, culture and community.

At a5 Branding & Digital, we understand the importance of crafting a marketing campaign that elevates the identity of Downtown Kalamazoo while encouraging long-term engagement and investment. Our approach focuses on developing a comprehensive, year-round marketing plan that highlights the area’s diverse

strengths and dynamic character. By employing tailored messaging, innovative activations and multi-channel strategies, we will elevate, amplify and enhance Downtown Kalamazoo's position as a hub of innovation, culture and community.

Our approach will create a cohesive, consumer-focused strategy that showcases Downtown Kalamazoo's unique assets and strengthens connections among residents, visitors and business owners with a shared sense of place. This will be a marketing strategy that builds awareness, drives tourism, attracts new residential development and inspires pride in Downtown Kalamazoo.

We will design and implement a plan that:

- **Highlights Downtown Kalamazoo's** appeal as a destination to live, work and play
- **Engages diverse audiences** year-round with consumer-focused campaigns that reflect the area's inclusive, welcoming spirit
- **Equips business owners** with tools and resources to amplify and share the campaign effectively

Project Management Plan (PMP)

To ensure a structured and efficient approach to this project, a5 will develop a Project Management Plan (PMP) to serve as the framework for organizing, executing and tracking all tasks and deliverables. This plan will align directly with the priorities outlined in the RFP and will be designed to maintain accountability, transparency and progress throughout the engagement.

The PMP will include the following key components:

1. KPI Development and Performance Metrics
 - Working with the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) and City stakeholders, we will establish clear, measurable KPIs aligned with project goals. These KPIs will cover metrics such as website traffic, social media engagement and event tracking, among others. Performance benchmarks will ensure progress is quantifiable and actionable
 - Example KPIs may include:
 - i. A 15% increase in downtown foot traffic within the first year
 - ii. Growth in website traffic by 20%
 - iii. A 10% boost in foot traffic for key downtown businesses
 - iv. An average engagement rate of 5% across social media platforms
 - v. Positive changes in stakeholder and community survey sentiment (e.g., 85% satisfaction rate on campaign effectiveness)
2. Tracking Marketing Efforts
 - The PMP will include a detailed performance tracking system to monitor all campaign activities. Tools such as Google Analytics, social media dashboards and stakeholder surveys will provide real-time insights into the effectiveness of marketing strategies. These insights will be used to make data-driven adjustments to ensure alignment with the project's objectives.
3. Reporting Framework

- Monthly reports will be submitted to the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee, detailing activities completed, issues encountered, progress against KPIs, and recommended next steps to align with project goals
 - Ad hoc and tailored reporting capabilities will allow us to address specific issues or opportunities promptly. Each report will be shared with DEGA and other relevant stakeholders, ensuring transparency and collaboration
4. Timeline and Milestones
- The PMP will include a clear timeline that outlines onboarding, implementation and delivery of key milestones, such as the brand communications plan, event promotions and marketing campaigns. Regularly scheduled check-ins and updates will ensure that all parties remain aligned and that the project progresses on time and on budget

By integrating these elements into the PMP, we will establish a comprehensive roadmap to guide the project, ensuring that Downtown Kalamazoo's marketing strategy is implemented effectively and that all goals are met with measurable outcomes. At the conclusion of the contract, a Contract Closeout Meeting will be held to review the Project Completion Report, discuss lessons learned and outline next steps for ongoing marketing efforts.

Scope of Work

As referenced from the original RFP, Section 3.0, "The Consultant will be expected to provide the services identified below. The items listed represent the minimum services expected to be performed.

Section 3.1 Brand Communications Plan

Objective

Create and implement a Brand Communications Plan that coordinates event promotion, district marketing, and general outreach to inspire engagement among current and potential residents, visitors, business owners, and downtown workers. This plan will unify stakeholders around a cohesive identity and engage diverse audiences with compelling actionable messaging.

Activities

Stakeholder Engagement

1. Project Initiation Meeting
 - Host a kickoff meeting with the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee, Downtown Coordinator, sponsored event managers and Parks and Recreation staff. This meeting will align objectives, define roles and responsibilities and establish communication protocols
 - Review the project scope, timeline and deliverables while inviting initial input from stakeholders to ensure shared understanding and alignment
2. Community Listening Sessions **(Optional)**
 - Conduct up to two focus groups and 10 one-on-one interviews with business owners, residents and key stakeholders to gather insights into their perceptions of Downtown Kalamazoo, its challenges and opportunities

- Design and distribute surveys via email and QR codes to reach broader audiences, encouraging feedback on what makes downtown unique and what needs to be amplified
- 3. Monthly Stakeholder Engagement
 - Convene monthly meeting with the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee and other key stakeholders to review progress, provide updates and gather ongoing feedback to refine the plan as it evolves
 - Work with the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee, City of Kalamazoo Downtown Coordinator and sponsored event managers to ensure alignment on objectives and coordination of messaging
 - Share drafts of messaging frameworks and campaign strategies for collaborative input

Messaging Framework

1. Develop Core Messaging Pillars
 - Highlight Downtown Kalamazoo's distinctive assets, such as its walkability, vibrant arts and culture scene, historic character and entrepreneurial spirit
 - Tailor messaging for audience segments, including residents, visitors, business owners and downtown workers
2. Audience-Specific Storytelling
 - Create narratives that resonate with key demographics, showcasing the downtown as a place to live, work and play
 - Emphasize community pride and the inclusivity of Downtown Kalamazoo's spaces and events

Multi-Channel Strategy

1. Platform-Specific Execution
 - Design templates for digital content for the Downtown Kalamazoo website, social media and email newsletters
 - Develop print material templates such as brochures, posters and advertisements for local distribution
 - Introduce experiential activations including pop-up events, interactive installations and community engagement booths
2. Community Amplification
 - Equip business owners and community partners with branded toolkits containing ready-to-use graphics, messaging templates and promotional assets to amplify the campaign across their networks
 - Offer consultation sessions for small businesses to develop tailored strategies for integrating their promotions into the overall campaign
 - Develop a community partner network that includes cultural organizations, local nonprofits, and neighborhood associations. These partners will amplify campaign messages through their channels, reaching underrepresented groups and expanding the campaign's visibility
3. Performance Metrics
 - Establish KPIs, such as website traffic, event attendance, social media engagement and survey participation, to measure the campaign's success

- Track progress through detailed monthly reports submitted to the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee

Deliverables

- A Comprehensive Brand Communications Plan outlining strategies, timelines and audience-specific tactics
- Core messaging documents that define the brand pillars, audience segments and tone
- Branded toolkits for business owners and community partners to amplify the campaign
- Drafts and final versions of all communication materials, including digital and print assets
- Monthly progress reports tracking KPIs and summarizing activities, insights and recommendations
- A Contract Closeout Report summarizing outcomes, feedback and next steps

Why This Works

- Stakeholder-Driven: Engaging stakeholders and community members ensures the campaign reflects authentic perspectives and builds shared ownership of the brand
- Community-Centered: Listening sessions and surveys create opportunities for residents, workers and business owners to shape the narrative, fostering inclusivity and trust
- Integrated Strategy: Combining digital, print and experiential tactics ensures maximum reach and engagement, connecting with audiences through multiple touchpoints
- Data-Driven Impact: Regular performance tracking and KPI analysis allow for agile adjustments, ensuring the campaign remains effective and impactful throughout its duration

This robust plan positions Downtown Kalamazoo as a connected and inclusive hub of activity, driving long-term engagement and investment

Section 3.2 Event Promotion

Objective

Promote Downtown Kalamazoo as a dynamic destination by supporting existing events, attracting new ones and enhancing public spaces to engage residents and visitors while driving economic activity in venues such as Arcadia Creek Festival Place, Bronson Park and Bates Alley.

Activities

- Event Marketing Strategy Development
 - Couple placemaking interventions with an event marketing strategy tailored to Downtown Kalamazoo's unique assets and audiences
 - Promote existing events and attract new ones in Downtown public spaces, including Arcadia Creek Festival Place, Bronson Park, Bates Alley, South Kalamazoo Mall, North Kalamazoo Mall, Exchange Place, Farmers Alley, Michigan Avenue, Haymarket Plaza and other arteries of the downtown
- Stakeholder Collaboration

- Engage with event producers, sponsored event managers, the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee and City of Kalamazoo staff to ensure alignment on messaging and goals
 - Facilitate monthly meetings to coordinate event promotion efforts and gather feedback
 - Provide quarterly business workshops on leveraging the campaign's branding and marketing strategies. Topics include social media marketing, utilizing branded toolkits and amplifying messaging through customer networks **(Optional)**
- Placemaking and Community Activation
 - Leverage public spaces to create engaging event environments that bring people together, such as interactive art installations, pop-up performances and family-friendly zones
 - Design events and activations that celebrate Kalamazoo's cultural and historical identity
- Develop Seasonal Campaigns
 - Highlight Kalamazoo's year-round appeal, including:
 - Winter holiday markets featuring local artisans and themed light displays
 - Summer outdoor movie nights in Bronson Park
 - Fall harvest festivals showcasing regional produce and culinary talent
 - Spring art walks and pop-up galleries across downtown venues
- Creative Asset Development
 - Design tailored promotional assets including templates for print, digital and social media platforms. Examples include:
 - Event posters and flyers
 - Social media graphics and countdown posts
 - Email marketing templates for event-specific outreach
- Public and Business Engagement
 - Coordinate with downtown businesses to encourage their participation and amplify event messaging through their own marketing channels
 - Develop "Event Toolkits" with ready-to-use assets for business owners to share
- Community Engagement
 - Host pre-event surveys and post-event feedback sessions to understand community preferences and measure event success

Deliverables

- A detailed Event Marketing Plan outlining promotional strategies for existing and future events
- Templates for promotional assets for each key event, including digital graphics, print materials and social media campaigns
- Event Toolkits for downtown businesses to extend event reach
- Monthly performance reports detailing event promotion efforts, community engagement and attendance metrics

Why This Works

By integrating placemaking and event promotion, we create experiences that draw people together and enhance their connection to Downtown Kalamazoo. Tailored marketing strategies ensure events resonate with diverse audiences while public and business engagement amplifies their reach. These initiatives

support economic vitality, encourage repeat visitation and position downtown as a hub of culture, community and commerce.

Section 3.3 Brand Messaging and Storytelling

Objective

Generate brand messaging and storytelling to inspire residents, visitors, property owners and business owners to engage with Downtown Kalamazoo's evolving and active identity, celebrating its distinctive assets and fostering a shared sense of pride.

Activities

- Storytelling Framework
 - Develop a storytelling framework that reflects Kalamazoo's unique history, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Messaging will emphasize themes of connection, pride and opportunity to engage diverse audiences.
- Signature Campaigns
 - "From Bronson to Bates": Create a visual and narrative series highlighting key landmarks such as Bronson Park, Bates Alley and Haymarket Plaza. Share their historical significance, modern-day role in the community and the stories of the people and businesses that make these places thrive.
 - "On The Mall": Leverage the Kalamazoo Mall's iconic history as the nation's first pedestrian shopping mall to craft narratives that celebrate its evolution and enduring appeal. Highlight the businesses, cultural events and everyday moments that make the Mall a defining part of Downtown Kalamazoo's identity.
- User-Generated Content Campaigns
 - Launch initiatives such as "My Kalamazoo Moment," inviting community members to share personal milestones, favorite memories or unique experiences tied to downtown. Use these stories to create authentic and engaging content for social media, email newsletters and the website.
- Tailor and Translated Messaging
 - Creative translated and inclusive communications assets to resonate with diverse audiences
 - Multilingual content for key storytelling campaigns, utilizing a5's significant cultural competency and past translations services in Spanish, Arabic, etc.
 - Partnerships with cultural organizations to amplify narratives that reflect Kalamazoo's diverse community
 - Events and activations celebrating cultural heritage, such as a downtown multicultural festival or spotlighting minority-owned businesses
- Integrated Media Approach
 - Use multi-channel storytelling, including social media, blog posts, newsletters and video content, to ensure a consistent narrative across all platforms. Integrate visuals, testimonials and interactive elements to bring the stories to life.

Deliverables

- Brand narrative and messaging framework tailored to Downtown Kalamazoo
- Multi-channel storytelling campaigns, including “From Bronson to Bates” and “On The Mall”
- Content creation for digital, print and video platforms, featuring interviews, visuals and interactive elements
- User-generated content activation strategies and templates for community submissions

Why This Works

These strategies harness Kalamazoo’s rich history, unique spaces, and compelling stories to craft a cohesive narrative that reflects its energy and inclusivity. At a5, we specialize in amplifying the voices of individuals to highlight the power of place. By placing personal stories at the heart of every campaign, we create authentic connections that resonate across diverse audiences. Filtered through multi-channel approaches and tied to local landmarks like Bronson Park and the Kalamazoo Mall, this messaging deepens the community’s connection to downtown and drives sustained engagement among residents, visitors and stakeholders.

Section 3.4 Design and Communications

Objective

Create and coordinate a cohesive visual identity for event and district marketing materials, social media channels and other communications to elevate Downtown Kalamazoo’s brand recognition and appeal.

Activities

- Collaborative Design Process
 - Conduct a workshop with stakeholders to align on design goals, audience needs and branding objectives
 - Review existing materials and branding assets to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for alignment
- Custom Asset Development
 - Design high-impact marketing materials for digital and print platforms, including event posters, social media templates and district brochures
 - Examples include:
 - Signage
 - Street banners
 - Event-specific graphics and banners
 - Business owner toolkits with promotional templates
 - Email marketing visuals for newsletters
 - Seasonal campaigns with dynamic content
- Dynamic Logo and Design Integration **(Optional)**
 - Present five to seven logo concepts, incorporating color palettes, typography and design schemes tailored to Downtown Kalamazoo’s personality and goals
 - Each concept will include examples of real-world applications, such as business cards or social media posts, to help stakeholders visualize its usage
 - Upon acceptance of one direction, apply up to two rounds of design refinements

- Develop flexible designs with horizontal and vertical variations to ensure usability across formats and platforms
- **Style Guide Development (Optional)**
 - Create a detailed standards manual outlining the proper use of all brand assets, ensuring consistency across channels and applications.
 - Key elements will include:
 - Logo usage guidelines (e.g., sizing, placement, do's and don'ts)
 - Primary and secondary color palettes with print and digital specifications
 - Typography standards for headers, subheaders and body text
 - Guidelines for imagery, photography and graphics
 - Copy tone and messaging tips
 - Examples of how all elements come together in marketing material
- **Social Media Strategy and Management**
 - Develop templates for consistent posting across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn
 - Curate content calendars with diverse themes (e.g., "Shop Local Spotlights," "Kalamazoo Nightlife Now")
 - Leverage social media analytics to refine content strategies and increase engagement

Deliverables

- Comprehensive suite of event and district marketing materials
- Monthly content calendars for social media with pre-scheduled assets
- Refined logo options with two rounds of design revisions **(Optional)**
- A user-friendly style guide ensuring consistency and adaptability for future applications **(Optional)**

Why This Works

A visually cohesive and strategically managed approach to design and communications will amplify Downtown Kalamazoo's appeal. By blending creative assets with consistent brand messaging across all channels, this strategy will:

- Elevate engagement with residents and visitors alike
- Strengthen partnerships with local businesses and stakeholders
- Position Downtown Kalamazoo as a hub of cultural, social, and economic activity

Section 3.5 Collaborate with Event Producers

Objective

Work closely with event producers to ensure brand consistency and clarity across all marketing materials and messaging. Leverage Downtown Kalamazoo's owned channels to amplify event promotion and position Downtown Kalamazoo as the central confluence point for all downtown activities.

Activities

- Brand Alignment: Collaborate with event organizers to integrate Downtown Kalamazoo's branding and newly designed assets into all promotional materials, ensuring consistent visuals, messaging and tone across all events.
- Content Coordination: Provide templates, guidelines and key messaging for event producers to adapt for their specific needs, maintaining alignment with the district's overall brand identity and new visual elements.
- Owned Channel Amplification:
 - Coordinate the distribution of messaging through owned channels, including the Downtown Kalamazoo website, social media platforms, email newsletters and digital signage, ensuring consistent outreach and brand alignment
 - Develop event-specific content for owned channels, such as countdown posts, email blasts and blog features, ensuring the inclusion of unified branding elements
 - Highlight event calendars on the website and distribute via social media and newsletters to engage residents, visitors, and stakeholders
- Create a series of placemaking interventions in partnership with local vendors and organizations to draw people downtown for novel experiences

Placemaking Activation Examples

- Bronson Park Community Nights: Organize outdoor movie screenings, yoga classes or seasonal craft fairs to reinforce Downtown Kalamazoo's role as a community hub
- Haymarket Plaza Art Series: Partner with local artists for gallery nights, live painting demonstrations or small musical performances that showcase the creative spirit of the district
- Farmers Alley Culinary Pop-Ups: Spotlight local culinary talent with seasonal food festivals, farm-to-table workshops, or pop-up dining experiences
- Arcadia Creek "Festival Fridays": Host a recurring series of mini-festivals with live music, food trucks, and themed activities, incorporating Downtown Kalamazoo's newly designed assets
- Michigan Avenue Night Market: Transform the thoroughfare into a pedestrian-friendly evening market with local vendors, street performers and family-friendly activities

Deliverables

- Event-specific templates incorporating new brand assets for consistent messaging and branding
- Coordinated content calendars integrating event promotions across owned channels
- Tailored content for digital platforms, including social media, website, and email newsletters

Why This Works

This approach emphasizes Downtown Kalamazoo's identity as the central confluence point for activities, unifying events under a cohesive visual and messaging strategy. By incorporating newly designed assets and leveraging owned channels, the strategy ensures broad and consistent outreach, drives engagement, and positions Downtown Kalamazoo as the heartbeat of the city's vibrant cultural and community activities.

Section 3.6 Manage Media and Promotion

Objective

Develop and execute a robust marketing and public relations strategy that increases visibility for Downtown Kalamazoo, generates positive media coverage, and engages residents, visitors, and stakeholders in meaningful ways. Strengthen partnerships with event, tourism, and business organizations to maximize reach and align messaging with the downtown's brand identity.

Activities

- Media Strategy Development:
 - Design and implement an integrated media strategy that highlights Downtown Kalamazoo's unique assets, events, and attractions through digital, print, and grassroots efforts.
 - Align all media activities with the downtown brand identity to ensure consistent messaging and maximum impact.
- Public Relations and Media Outreach:
 - Develop up to four press releases/media advisories
 - Pitch stories to local and regional outlets and directly with local writers such as Encore Magazine, mLive, the Kalamazoo Gazette, WMUK 102.1 FM, and Second Wave Southwest Michigan.
 - Cultivate relationships with influential regional journalists such as Mark Wedel and Tiffany Fitzgerald to position Downtown Kalamazoo as a destination of choice.
 - Coordinate familiarization tours that offer firsthand experiences of downtown's attractions, events, and businesses.
- Press Kit Development: **(Optional)**
 - Create a comprehensive digital press kit including fact sheets, event details, key messages, high-resolution images, and brand assets.
 - Ensure press kits are accessible and updated regularly to provide media with the latest information.
- Advertising Campaign Execution:
 - Develop and execute cohesive ad campaigns across social media, digital platforms, and traditional media channels.
 - Utilize storytelling-driven visuals and messaging to resonate with diverse audiences.
- Partnership Collaboration:
 - Work with such organizations as Discover Kalamazoo, Southwest Michigan First, and local business associations to amplify promotional efforts.
 - Share branded content and campaigns through partner networks to extend reach and build unified messaging.

Deliverables

- Integrated media and public relations strategy with defined objectives and timelines
- A schedule of planned press releases and media pitches tied to key events and milestones
- Advertising and social media assets tailored to specific campaigns and audiences

- Monthly performance reports detailing media reach, engagement metrics, and public relations impact
- Comprehensive digital press kit with branded materials, updated monthly **(Optional)**

Why This Works

By engaging directly with local media outlets, influential writers, and regional organizations, we ensure that Downtown Kalamazoo's story is authentically represented and widely shared. Tailored narratives and cohesive campaigns help build momentum, while data-driven strategies guarantee consistent refinement and measurable success.

Section 3.7 Digital Presence Management

Objective

Ensure Downtown Kalamazoo's digital platforms serve as dynamic and engaging hubs for information, community engagement, and promotional efforts. Consistently update and enhance the website, social media channels, event calendar, and email newsletter to showcase Downtown Kalamazoo's vibrant activities, businesses, and opportunities.

Activities

- Website Management:
 - Provide editorial calendar and guidance to regularly update the Downtown Kalamazoo website with fresh content, including news, event details, business spotlights, and seasonal promotions
- Event Calendar Updates:
 - Manage and update Downtown Kalamazoo's event calendar to serve as a dynamic and engaging hub for all events and activities, ensuring comprehensive and accurate listings across categories such as family-friendly, live music, food and drink and more
 - Include user-friendly features such as filters for event types (family-friendly, live music, food and drink, etc.)
- Social Media Management:
 - Manage daily postings on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter), ensuring content aligns with the overall branding strategy
 - Incorporate real-time coverage of events, highlighting experiences and encouraging community participation
 - Develop a social media ambassador program enlisting local influencers and community leaders to create user-generated content and extend the campaign's reach organically
- Email Newsletter Creation:
 - Design and manage an email newsletter (frequency to be mutually determined) featuring event highlights, business promotions, and engaging storytelling content
 - Develop segmented mailing lists to deliver tailored content to residents, visitors, business owners, and other stakeholders
- Google Ad Management: **(Optional)**
 - Create and manage geo-targeted Google Ad campaigns to promote events, local businesses, and downtown initiatives, ensuring visibility to key local and regional audiences

- Use dynamic ad formats such as carousel ads and video ads to maximize engagement
- Continuously optimize campaigns based on performance data and audience insights, providing regular updates on click-through rates, impressions, and ROI

Deliverables

- Fully maintained and regularly updated website with optimized SEO
- Comprehensive event calendar with filtering options and up-to-date listings
- Daily social media content across multiple platforms, including real-time event coverage
- Bi-weekly email newsletters tailored to different audience segments
- Monthly performance reports on website traffic, social media engagement

Why This Works

A strong digital presence ensures that Downtown Kalamazoo remains top-of-mind for residents and visitors alike. By combining consistent updates, interactive content, and strategic advertising, this approach maximizes reach and engagement across all platforms. Geo-targeted Google Ads amplify visibility for key events and promotions, ensuring that marketing efforts connect with the right audiences at the right time.

Section 3.8 Multi-Channel Engagement Strategy

Objective

Develop and implement a cohesive multi-channel engagement strategy to reach at least 80% of Downtown Kalamazoo residents and workers, ensuring consistent delivery of updated brand messages through digital, print, in-person, and experiential touchpoints.

Activities

- Digital Channels
 - Deploy targeted social media campaigns on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to amplify messaging
 - Launch geo-targeted Google Ad campaigns focused on residents and workers, highlighting events, local businesses, and downtown updates
 - Distribute bi-weekly email newsletters with personalized content segments for residents, workers, and businesses
- On-the-Ground Engagement
 - Develop a series of pop-up activations at high-traffic downtown locations including Bronson Park, Bates Alley, and the Kalamazoo Mall to connect directly with residents and workers
 - Partner with local businesses to co-host community engagement events featuring live music, giveaways, and interactive branding opportunities
- Traditional Media
 - Utilize local print outlets such as the *Kalamazoo Gazette* and WMUK for strategic ad placements and feature stories
 - Distribute branded posters and flyers to local businesses, workplaces, and community hubs

- Partnership Engagement
 - Collaborate with large employers in Downtown Kalamazoo to deliver branded materials and updates through their internal communication channels
 - Partner with residential property managers to integrate campaign messaging into community boards, newsletters, and shared spaces
- Community Ambassadors Program
 - Establish a network of community ambassadors composed of local business owners, workers, and residents to share campaign updates through their own networks and platforms
 - Provide ambassadors with branded toolkits, including social media assets, posters, and event invites

Deliverables

- Targeted social media campaigns with audience-specific content and tracking metrics
- Geo-targeted Google Ad campaigns with regular performance updates
- Bi-weekly email newsletters segmented for residents, workers, and businesses
- Branded print materials distributed to strategic locations and businesses across Downtown Kalamazoo
- Pop-up activations and community events designed to engage downtown audiences directly
- A community ambassador toolkit with shareable resources

Why This Works

This multi-channel approach ensures that updated brand messages reach Downtown Kalamazoo's diverse audiences through their preferred mediums. Digital channels maximize real-time engagement, while print and in-person interactions create tangible connections with the community. Partnerships with employers and property managers enhance reach and credibility, while the community ambassadors program fosters authentic peer-to-peer advocacy. Together, these efforts ensure that Downtown Kalamazoo's vibrancy and opportunities are top-of-mind for residents and workers alike.

Proposed Timeline

The below timeline is an anticipated outline. The timeline can be adjusted according to your needs. The project is to be completed no later than April 2025.

Project authorized	Week 1
Engagement kickoff meeting	Week 1
Research & discovery	Weeks 2-3
Community & Stakeholder Engagement	Weeks 4-6
Initial Findings Presentation	Week 7
Brand Strategy Development	Weeks 8-9
Creative Concept Development	Weeks 10-12
Presentation of Initial Concepts	Week 13
Refinement & Iteration	Weeks 14-16
Launch Multi-Channel Campaign	Week 17 - ongoing
Event-Specific Campaign Support	Ongoing (Months 6-12)
Performance Tracking & Reporting	Ongoing (Monthly)
Mid-Project Review	Month 6
Second Campaign Push	Months 7 - ongoing
Contract Closeout	Month 12 (April 2025)

References

Mark Heydlauff

City Manager
City of Charlevoix, Michigan
231-547-3270
markh@charlevoix.mi.gov

Mike Turner

Mayor
City of Woodstock, Illinois
262-422-5663
maturner@ix.netcom.com

Fred Guerra

Planning Director (Retired)
City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio
330.858.3361

SECTION II PROPOSAL AND AWARD

The undersigned having become thoroughly familiar with and understanding all the proposal/contract documents incorporated herein, agrees to provide consulting services as specified herein:

DOWNTOWN KALAMAZOO PROMOTION AND MARKETING

The total combined price to be paid for all services provided by
Consultant pursuant to this Contract shall not exceed:

\$ INCLUDE IN PRICE PROPOSAL

A price proposal shall be submitted in a separate sealed envelope marked “**Price Proposal**”. **The pricing in the sealed envelope shall be the only listed pricing in the proposal.** This Price Proposal shall only be opened by City personnel after the scoring of other evaluation criteria has been completed.

The total combined not-to-exceed price quoted must include all costs associated with the performance of the services specified, including materials, supervision, labor, insurance, transportation, delivery, fuel or other surcharges, demurrage, and related costs. Charges not listed in the RFP response will not be allowed. All prices and fees must be in U.S. dollars.

Price stated shall be firm for the full term of this Contract.

Proposer/Contractor has examined and carefully studied the bidding documents and attachments, and acknowledges receipt of the following addenda:

Addendum No: #1

Dated: 12/16/24

Proposer shall provide all of the information as requested herein with their proposal. **Failure to do so and/or failure to provide post-proposal requested information may be cause for rejecting the proposal as non-responsive.**

By my signature below, I certify that the firm bidding on this contract, when making hiring decisions, does not use a past criminal conviction as a bar to or preclude a person with a criminal conviction from being considered for employment with the bidding firm unless otherwise precluded by federal or state law. I further certify that I have read and agree to be bound by the provisions of the City’s Non-Discrimination Clause found in Appendix A and as updated by City Ordinance 1856.

Signed: Clarice Harris Name: 01/03/25

Title: Director of Operations

QUALIFICATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions completely. You may submit answers on this form or as an attachment to this document, additional information (brochures, illustrations, etc.) will also be used in determining qualifications. If not using this form, please follow its format.

1. Firm name: a5 Branding & Digital
2. Established: Year 2001 State IL
3. Type of organization:
 - a. Individual
 - b. Partnership
 - c. Corporation x
 - d. Other

4. Former firm name(s) if any, and year(s) in business:
a5 , June 2001

5. Home office business address and telephone number where work will be performed.
1 N La Salle St #4700, Chicago, IL 60602

6. Branch office(s) if work will be performed there:
N/A

7. Personnel of firm who will be working on this project. Attach resumes of key personnel:

YRS			
NAME AND TITLE	SPECIALTY	EXPERIENCE	EXPECTED ROLE
John Harris, Principal		33	(See proposal)
Fletcher Martin, Creative Director		31	(See proposal)
Ben Schulman, Director of Place		15	(See proposal)
Gabbie St Pierre, Project Manager		7	(See proposal)
AJ Benson, Senior Designer		8	(See proposal)
Miah Emamo, Graphic Designer		2	(See proposal)

QUALIFICATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE (cont.)

8. Total personnel of firm:
- a. Professional: 12 b. Non-professional: _____
9. Attach a list of similar projects performed over the last five (5) years. Include: description of professional services provided, project size, contact person and phone number. Projects should demonstrate experience in the types of consulting services you wish to provide.
10. Identify projects in Item 9 which most closely match the work required by the City.
- Charlevoix, MI
- _____
- Cuyahoga Falls , OH
- _____
- Woodstock, IL
- _____
11. Provide your understanding of the project and any special qualifications you bring to this project.
12. Identify any additional professional consulting service(s) you will utilize to work on this project and their expected role(s).
- N/A
- _____
- _____
- _____
13. Provide the address for your website.
- <https://a5inc.com/>
- _____
14. Have any similar agreements held by Proposer for a similar project to the proposed project ever been canceled? Circle one: ☒ No Yes If yes, please explain: _____
- _____
- _____
15. Indicate registration, license numbers or certificate numbers for the businesses or professions, which are the subject of this RFP. Please attach certificate of competency and/or State registration.
- Dun & Bradstreet: 603789988, Fein/Tax ID: 36-447-1512M.
- _____
- IL Secretary of State file number: 61846301
- _____
- _____

QUALIFICATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE (cont.)

16. List the pertinent experience of the key individuals of your firm (continue on insert sheet if necessary):
See " Team & Qualifications" section (pg 9) in proposal

17. State the name, title, and contact information of the individual(s) who will have personal management of the day-to-day contract work:

John Harris, Principal (jharris@a5inc.com); Fletcher Martin, Creative Director(fmartin@a5inc.com);

Ben Schulman, Director of Place (bschulman@a5inc.com); Gabbie St Pierre, Project Manager (gstpierre@a5inc.com);

AJ Benson, Senior Graphic Designer (abenson@a5inc.com); Miah Emano, Graphic Designer (memano@a5inc.com)

18. Litigation/Judgments/Settlements/Debarments/Suspensions – Submit information on any pending litigation and any judgments and settlements of court cases relative to providing the services requested herein that have occurred within the last three (3) years. Also indicate if your firm has been debarred or suspended from bidding or proposing on a procurement project by any government entity during the last five (5) years.

N/A

19. Disclosure of Conflict of Interest

VENDOR SHALL DISCLOSE BELOW, TO THE BEST OF HIS OR HER KNOWLEDGE, ANY CITY OF KALAMAZOO OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE, OR ANY RELATIVE OF ANY SUCH OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE, WHO IS AN OFFICER, PARTNER, DIRECTOR OR PROPRIETOR OF, OR HAS A MATERIAL INTEREST IN THE VENDOR'S BUSINESS OR ITS PARENT COMPANY, ANY SUBSIDIARY, OR AFFILIATED COMPANY, WHETHER SUCH CITY OFFICIAL OR EMPLOYEE IS IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THIS PROCUREMENT OR NOT.

Name

Relationship

N/A

I hereby certify that all of the information provided is true and answered to the best of my ability.

Signed: Clarice Harris

Name: Clarice Harris
Type or Print

Title: Director of Operations

Date: 01/03/25

**CITY OF KALAMAZOO
LOCAL PREFERENCE POLICY AND CERTIFICATION
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**

When evaluating the qualifications of the responses received for professional service contracts, the location of Kalamazoo County professional firms will be given additional consideration. The City of Kalamazoo is the sole determiner whether a professional firm qualifies as a Kalamazoo County firm and the ranking of its qualifications as compared to the qualifications of the other professional firms being considered.

During the qualifications evaluation process, an additional weight of approximately two percent will be added to the qualifications of Kalamazoo County professional firms in recognition of the positive economic impact resulting from contracting with them. This weight is given over and above any score already given for location of the firm as it relates to increased efficiency and effectiveness as a result of the proximity of the firm to the City. It is understood, however, that due to the subjective nature of the qualifications evaluation process, and the number and weight of all criteria used, it is impossible to apply a precise, numerical local preference score to those proposals.

To qualify as a Kalamazoo County professional firm, the business must meet both the following criteria:

1. Have a physical presence in Kalamazoo County by maintaining a permanent office in Kalamazoo County and with employees working in Kalamazoo County.
2. Have paid real or personal property taxes related to said business to the City of Kalamazoo, County of Kalamazoo or other municipal corporation within Kalamazoo County in the previous tax year, except that a non-profit entity need not meet this requirement.

This local preference policy applies only to purchases for professional services that are over \$25,000. If more than 50% of the contract is sub-contracted to firms located outside of Kalamazoo County that proposal does not qualify for the local preference policy outlined above. The local preference policy will not apply if prohibited by law. The Purchasing Manager has the authority to make final determination if the bidder qualifies as a Kalamazoo County bidder as set forth herein. The Purchasing Manager may take into account the permanency of the business in Kalamazoo, and whether the business appears to be claiming to be a Kalamazoo County business solely or primarily to qualify as a Kalamazoo County business under this Resolution, and any other material factors.

CERTIFICATION

If you qualify as a Kalamazoo County professional firm and wish to be considered for the local preference provisions as provided above please certify that fact by providing the information requested below and attesting to its accuracy.

Firm Name: _____

Street Address of Business: _____

City, State, and Zip Code: _____

Number of employees working in Kalamazoo County: _____

Name the city or township to which business real and/or personal property taxes are paid or provide non-profit status:

The above information is accurate:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

CITY OF KALAMAZOO EX-OFFENDER POLICY CHECKLIST

As part of the City's commitment to reducing unacceptable poverty, encouraging rehabilitation, reducing recidivism and strengthening families in Kalamazoo, the City has updated its Purchasing Policy to ensure that firms with whom the City does business share in this commitment by utilizing hiring practices that do not unfairly deny people with arrest and conviction records gainful employment. *(Important: This requirement also extends to any subcontractors the bidder intends to use to fulfill the contract for goods or services being sought from the City.)*

Part I: Proof that the bidder does not inquire about an individual's past arrest or criminal history on the bidder's employment application form

- ☐ Attach a copy of the current application for employment being used by the bidder

Part II: Certification that the bidder does not use an individual's past arrest or criminal history to unlawfully discriminate against them by checking *one or more* of the following:

- ☐ That pursuant to federal or state law bidder is precluded from hiring persons with certain criminal records from holding particular positions or engaging in certain occupations by providing a cite to the applicable statute or regulation; if checking this box, provide a citation to the applicable statute or rule upon which the bidder is relying: _____
- ☒ That bidder conducts criminal history background checks only as necessary, and only after making a conditional offer of employment; that any withdrawal of an offer of employment to an individual because of a past criminal history is job-related and consistent with business necessity after the individual has been provided an individualized assessment opportunity to review and challenge or supplement the history of past criminal conduct being relied upon by the bidder;
- ☐ That the use by bidder of criminal history background checks complies with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Enforcement Guidance on the Consideration of Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions and that the bidder has not had a determination rendered against it in past 7 years that it discriminated against a person through the use of an individual's arrest or criminal history

I CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE STATEMENTS ARE TRUE.

01/03/25

Date

Clarice Harris

Signature

Clarice Harris

Printed Name

Director of Operations

Position

November 2017

I hereby state that all of the information I have provided is true, accurate and complete. I hereby state that I have the authority to submit this proposal which will become a binding contract if accepted by the City of Kalamazoo. I hereby state that I have not communicated with nor otherwise colluded with any other proposer, nor have I made any agreement with nor offered/accepted anything of value to/from an official or employee of the City of Kalamazoo that would tend to destroy or hinder free competition.

The firm's identification information provided will be used by the City for purchase orders, payment and other contractual purposes. If the contractual relationship is with, or the payment made to, another firm please provide a complete explanation on your letterhead and attach to your bid. Please provide for accounts payable purposes:

Tax Identification Number (Federal ID): 36-4471512

Remittance Address: 1 N LaSalle St #4700, Chicago, IL 60602

Financial Contact Name: Clarice Harris Financial Contact Phone Number: 708-404-5313

Financial Contact Email Address: charris@a5inc.com

I hereby state that I have read, understand and agree to be bound by all terms and conditions of this proposal document.

SIGNED: Clarice Harris NAME: Clarice Harris
(Type or Print)

TITLE: Director of Operations DATE: 01/03/25

FIRM NAME: a5 Branding & Digital
(if any)

ADDRESS: 1 N La Salle St #4700, Chicago, IL 60602
(Street address) (City) (State) (Zip)

PHONE: (312) 877-5500 FAX: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: info@a5inc.com

FOR CITY USE ONLY - DO NOT WRITE BELOW



**MANAGEMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
PURCHASING DIVISION**

241 W. South Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007-4796
Telephone (269) 337-8020
FAX (269) 337-8500
cokpurchasing@kalamazoo-city.org

**ADDENDUM #1
December 16, 2024**

TO: ALL Prospective Bidders
PROJECT: Downtown Kalamazoo Promotion and Marketing
BID REFERENCE #: 91522-001.0
BID OPENING DATE/TIME: January 07, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m. Local Time (ET)

The purpose of this addendum is to clarify and/or modify the Drawings and/or Specifications for this project. All work affected is subject to all applicable terms and conditions of the Bidding and Contract Documents.

QUESTION 1: How many events are planned for the 2025 year?

ANSWER 1: The events currently planned for 2025, which will be supported through marketing efforts, include:

1. **Beats on Bates:** Every Wednesday, June - September
2. **Workout Wednesdays:** Every Wednesday, June - August
3. **Salsa Cook-Off**
4. **Kalamazoo Restaurant Weeks**
5. **Summer Sidewalk Sales**
6. **Arcadia Creek Festival Place Promotions** (e.g., Pride Festival, Caribbean Festival)
7. **SkeleTour**

Additional events may be added as planning progresses.

QUESTION 2: Does the \$50,000 yearly budget noted in Section 7.1 include paid media placements, or is that a separate plan/budget?

ANSWER 2: The \$50,000 yearly budget referenced in Section 7.1 does not include paid media placements. Vendors are welcome to include recommendations for paid media plans but must at minimum submit an organic marketing and communication proposal.

QUESTION 3: Are you considering contractors with a primarily remote presence?

ANSWER 3: Yes, the Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) will consider proposals from contractors with a primarily remote presence. However, DEGA prefers vendors with a broader and more experienced understanding of downtown areas, including insights into the unique challenges and opportunities of downtown Kalamazoo.

QUESTION 4: Is there a current process for how events are shared/communicated with the communications lead, or would that process need to be set up from scratch?

ANSWER 4: DEGA has established relationships with many downtown event producers and will work with the communications lead to share event details. While the list of downtown events evolves throughout the year, there are anticipated events outlined in the response to "How many events are planned for the 2025 year?"

QUESTION 5: If the contract is renewed after the first year, what will the subsequent marketing funds be?

ANSWER 5: The DEGA board will need to approve any subsequent marketing funds at the time of an optional contract renewal.

QUESTION 6: Is there a specific date by which the City of Kalamazoo and DEGA want the marketing and communications plan in place after selecting a firm/agency?

ANSWER 6: Assuming a vendor selection in January 2024, the marketing and communications plan should be completed by April 1, 2024.

QUESTION 7: Regarding Scope of Work, 3.5, within "Collaborate with Event Producers," does DEGA already have established relationships with collaborators, or will the selected firm be responsible for creating these connections?

ANSWER 7: DEGA has established relationships with many downtown event producers. For anticipated events, please refer to the response to "How many events are planned for the 2025 year?"

QUESTION 8: Regarding Scope of Work, 3.7, within "Digital Presence Management," will this require web design and/or programming, or is it limited to simple CMS updates?

ANSWER 8: At this time, we anticipate only simple CMS updates to templates that are already implemented.

QUESTION 9: Regarding Scope of Work, 3.8, within "Multi-Channel Engagement Strategy," how will the City and DEGA determine that messaging has reached 80% of downtown residents and workers?

ANSWER 9: The DEGA will collaborate with the selected vendor to determine appropriate methods for measuring whether messaging has reached 80% of downtown residents and workers, using a combination of suggested strategies. Potential approaches include leveraging digital tools, such as email and social media analytics, conducting brief surveys, and engaging local employers and community organizations to distribute and verify the messaging reach. Together, DEGA and the vendor will evaluate available resources, refine strategies, and implement data collection techniques that align with the campaign's goals and capacity constraints.

QUESTION 10: Regarding the budget noted in Section 4.5, will there be media and printing expenses outside of the proposed \$50,000 agency budget?

ANSWER 10: The \$50,000 yearly budget does not include paid media placements. Vendors are welcome to include recommendations for paid media plans, but must at minimum submit an organic marketing and communication proposal.

QUESTION 11: Will someone from your team create the graphics seen on socials, such as the Trolley Route, Beats on Bates, Art Hop, and other event flyers, or will the proposer be responsible for creating graphic assets like these?

ANSWER 11: The responsibility for creating graphics depends on the event coordinator. For DEGA-led events, such as Beats on Bates, the vendor will support graphic creation. For events led by external coordinators, such as the Trolley, those entities typically provide their own graphics, which we then share.

QUESTION 12: Do you currently have a photo release form for individuals photographed for your socials? For example, regarding the two little boys in skeleton costumes, does the city require parental sign-off on a photo release, or are releases unnecessary since Downtown Kalamazoo is a public space?

ANSWER 12: Photo release forms are generally not required for individuals photographed in public spaces like Downtown Kalamazoo. However, the vendor should exercise courtesy by ensuring that photography subjects are comfortable being photographed whenever possible.

QUESTION 13: Currently, I do not see engagement on socials, such as liking or replying to people interacting with posts. Will the hired firm be responsible for community engagement of this nature? Do they also need to answer inbox messages to the best of their ability.

ANSWER 13: Yes, the selected vendor will manage community engagement, including responding to comments and inbox messages to the best of their ability.

QUESTION 14: Do you have a monthly budget for digital ads across the platforms being managed, such as Meta ads? To confirm, is this separate from the yearly \$50K budget and not included in it?

ANSWER 14: The \$50,000 yearly budget does not include paid media placements. Vendors are welcome to include recommendations for paid media plans but must at minimum submit an organic marketing and communication proposal.

QUESTION 15: Regarding the “ex-offender policy,” can you expand further on the requirement to “Attach a copy of the current application for employment being used by the bidder”? Could you clarify what specifically is being requested?

ANSWER 15: The ex-offender policy confirms how the potential vendor hires their employees. If contractor’s do not ask about an individual’s criminal history, a current employment application is requested to provide proof of that. Only 1 box should be checked for the ex-offender page and does not sway any decisions.

QUESTION 16: When would the official start date for the chosen party to take over social media activation be?

ANSWER 16: Social media activation will begin after the final communications and marketing plan is presented to and approved by DEGA. Assuming a vendor selection in January 2024, the plan should be completed by April 2024, at which point the vendor will take over activation.

QUESTION 17: On page 13, under section 3.6, “Manage Media & Promotion,” it mentions managing media and press releases. What specifically is required here? How often would this be needed? Would the bidder be responsible for writing and deploying press releases? Additionally, would the bidder manage media buys, such as TV and radio? Is there a separate budget for media buys?

ANSWER 17: The selected vendor will draft press releases based on direction and information from DEGA or its representative. The \$50,000 yearly budget does not include paid media placements. Vendors are encouraged to propose paid media recommendations but must at minimum submit an organic marketing and communication strategy. Media buys, such as TV and radio, would be managed by DEGA separately if approved.

QUESTION 18: On page 13, under section 3.7, “Digital Presence Management,” what type of website updates are needed, and how frequently? For email newsletters, do you need a template developed along with weekly or bi-weekly e-blasts created and sent out by our team? Or would the responsibility only involve contributing relevant topics to another person in charge of creating and deploying the newsletter?

ANSWER 18: Website updates include, but are not limited to, posting of press releases, publishing of events, and editing copy on existing pages. Currently, there is not an existing regular newsletter communication related to the scope of this RFP for downtown marketing, though it is a goal. Upon the creation of a newsletter, the vendor would be responsible for contributing relevant topics and messaging in line with the overall marketing and communications strategy.

QUESTION 19: For DEGA meetings, would the chosen party's entire team need to be present, or would attendance by a key account manager suffice? Are these in-person or virtual?

ANSWER 19: Attendance by a key account manager is sufficient. Committee meetings can be attended in-person or virtually, while Board meetings will require in-person attendance.

Questions related to this addendum may be addressed to Meghan Behymer, at behymerm@kalamazoocity.org. The Addendum can be viewed and downloaded from the City's website at <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/bidopportunities>.

In order for a bid to be responsive, this signed and dated addendum must be returned with your bid. If you have already submitted your bid, acknowledge receipt and acceptance of this addendum by signing in the place provided and returning it to the undersigned and it shall be incorporated in your bid. Please identify your return envelope with the bid reference number and project description.

Sincerely,



Michelle Emig

Purchasing Division Manager

c: Meghan Behymer, Community Planning

FIRM: a5 Branding & Digital

NAME: Clarice Harris

SIGNED: *Clarice Harris*

DATE: 01/07/25

SECTION III INDEMNITY AND INSURANCE

Contractor, or any of their subcontractors, shall not commence work under this contract until they have obtained the insurance required under this paragraph, and shall keep such insurance in force during the entire life of this contract. All coverage shall be with insurance companies licensed and admitted to do business in the State of Michigan and acceptable to the City of Kalamazoo within ten (10) days of the Notice of Award. The requirements below should not be interpreted to limit the liability of the Contractor. All deductibles and SIR's are the responsibility of the Contractor.

The Contractor shall procure and maintain the following insurance coverage:

Workers' Compensation Insurance including Employers' Liability Coverage, in accordance with all applicable statutes of the State of Michigan.

Commercial General Liability Insurance on an "Occurrence Basis" with limits of liability not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence and aggregate. Coverage shall include the following extensions: (A) Contractual Liability; (B) Products and Completed Operations; (C) Independent Contractors Coverage; (D) Broad Form General Liability Extensions or equivalent, if not already included and (E) XCU coverage if the nature of the contract requires XC or U work.

Automobile Liability in accordance with all applicable statutes of the State of Michigan, with limits of liability not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence, combined single limit for Bodily Injury, and Property Damage. Coverage shall include all owned vehicles, all non-owned vehicles, and all hired vehicles.

Additional Insured: Commercial General Liability and Automobile Liability, as described above, shall include an endorsement stating that the following shall be *Additional Insureds*: The City of Kalamazoo, all elected and appointed officials, all employees and volunteers, all boards, commissions, and/or authorities and board members, including employees and volunteers thereof. It is understood and agreed that by naming the City of Kalamazoo as additional insured, coverage afforded is considered to be primary and any other insurance the City of Kalamazoo may have in effect shall be considered secondary and/or excess.

To the fullest extent permitted by law the Contractor agrees to pay on behalf of, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Kalamazoo, its elected and appointed officials, and employees against any claims, demands, suits, or loss, including all costs connected therewith, and for any damages which may be asserted, claimed, or recovered against or from the City of Kalamazoo, by reason of personal injury, including bodily injury or death and/or property damage, including loss of use thereof, caused in whole or part by any negligent act or omission by the Contractor, its employees, agents, or officers which arises out of, or is in any way connected or associated with, this contract.

Cancellation Notice: All policies, as described above, shall include an endorsement stating that it is understood and agreed that thirty (30) days, or ten (10) days for non-payment of premium, Advance Written Notice of Cancellation, Non-Renewal, Reduction, and/or Material Change shall be sent to: City of Kalamazoo, Purchasing Division, 241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

Proof of Insurance Coverage: The Contractor shall provide the City of Kalamazoo at the time that the contracts are returned by him/her for execution, or within 10 days of Notice of Award, whichever is earlier, a Certificate of Insurance as well as the required endorsements. In lieu of required endorsements, if applicable, a copy of the policy sections where coverage is provided for additional insured and cancellation notice would be acceptable. Copies or certified copies of all policies mentioned above shall be furnished, if so requested.

INDEMNITY AND INSURANCE

Continued

If any of the above coverages expire during the term of this contract, the Contractor shall deliver renewal certificates and/or policies to City of Kalamazoo at least ten (10) days prior to the expiration date.

Scope of Coverage: The above requirements and conditions shall not be interpreted to limit the liability of the Contractor under this Contract, but shall be interpreted to provide the greatest benefit to the City and its officers and employees. The above listed coverages shall protect the Contractor, its employees, agents, representatives and subcontractors against claims arising out of the work performed. It shall be the Contractor's responsibility to provide similar insurance for each subcontractor or to provide evidence that each subcontractor carries such insurance in like amount prior to the time such subcontractor proceeds to perform under the contract.

SPECIAL INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

The selected Consultant/Professional Firm shall provide insurance coverage as follows:

- A. Comprehensive professional (errors and omissions) liability insurance with limits no less than \$1,000,000 aggregate which shall insure against acts which are in the nature of professional services. If a contract is entered into, the Firm shall maintain such insurance during the life of the contract.

SECTION IV SCOPE OF WORK & SPECIAL CONDITIONS

1. INTRODUCTION/OBJECTIVE

The Downtown Economic Growth Authority (DEGA) of Kalamazoo, Michigan, is seeking a qualified marketing and communications firm to partner with on the overall promotion of Downtown Kalamazoo through a consumer-facing lens. Downtown Kalamazoo is the economic hub of Kalamazoo County, and a thriving downtown is critical to the prosperity of our region. This partner (Consultant) will help highlight the vibrancy of our downtown and communicate all the reasons why Downtown Kalamazoo is a great place to live, work, and play. The focus will be on the “first 16 feet” of the downtown streetscape, which will include new business openings, construction impacts, navigating downtown, arrival and mobility, and community events taking place.

The DEGA board, established by the Kalamazoo City Commission in 2018, is comprised of volunteers serving as catalysts in the development of the community’s downtown district. The DEGA is looking for a partner who will put together a comprehensive marketing and communications plan that will engage residents, workers and visitors. Successful proposals should give detail on how the firm would develop the overall marketing plan, methods for communications and advertising, and how success would regularly be measured. Monthly reports and attendance at DEGA meetings will be expected.

2. CONTRACT PERIOD AND EXTENSIONS

The contract shall be in effect for a one (1)-year period, commencing on Consultant’s receipt of Notice to Proceed from the City of Kalamazoo. The DEGA may opt to extend the contract for up to four (4) additional one (1) year periods upon mutual agreement of both parties made in writing.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

The Consultant will be expected to provide the services identified below. The items listed represent the minimum services expected to be performed. In your response to this Request for Proposals (RFP), identify other related services that you will provide, if applicable.

- 3.1. **Brand Communications Plan:** Work with the DEGA Marketing and Events Committee, City of Kalamazoo Downtown Coordinator, sponsored event manager(s), and City of Kalamazoo Department of Parks and Recreation staff to coordinate a brand communications plan, event promotion, and general marketing of the downtown to current and potential residents, visitors, business owners, and downtown workers. Monthly reporting will be submitted to the DEGA Marketing and Events committee.
- 3.2. **Event Promotion:** Provide marketing services to promote the downtown experience, including supporting existing events and attracting new events in Downtown public spaces: Arcadia Creek Festival Place, Arcadia Creek, Bates Alley, Bronson Park, South Kalamazoo Mall, North Kalamazoo Mall, Exchange Place, Farmers Alley, Michigan Avenue, Haymarket Plaza, and other arteries of the downtown.

- 3.3. **Brand Messaging and Storytelling:** Generate brand messaging and storytelling to inspire residents, visitors, property owners, and business owners to engage in our evolving and active downtown.
- 3.4. **Design and Communications:** Coordinate the design of event and district marketing materials, social media channels, and other communications.
- 3.5. **Collaborate with Event Producers:** Collaborate with event producers to ensure brand consistency and clarity, and coordinate distribution of messaging through owned channels.
- 3.6. **Manage Media and Promotion:** Manage all marketing, media, press releases, and promotion. Partner with event/tourism/business organizations to ensure maximized reach.
- 3.7. **Digital Presence Management:** Manage and update Downtown website, calendar, social media, and email newsletter.
- 3.8. **Multi-Channel Engagement Strategy:** Develop a clear multi-channel engagement strategy to reach 80% of downtown residents and workers with updated brand messages.

4. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicant should include the following in proposal:

- 4.1. **Cover Letter:** Submit a cover letter giving an overview of why your firm is interested in this project and why you think your firm is best suited for this work. Within the one (1)-page cover letter, include your firm's full company name, address, phone number, and the email address for your firm's contact person for the RFP.
- 4.2. **Firm Overview and Credentials:** Include an organizational chart (maximum 2 pages) that depicts the project team organization and lines of authority. Clearly indicate superior/subordinate reporting relationships. Provide names of each position and identify the firm or sub-consultant. For each key person identified, list their length of time with the firm and at least two (2) comparable projects in which they have played a primary role. There are no limitations on the number of key positions the firm may provide. However, at a minimum, the firm must provide the primary consultant and at least one (1) person from each sub-consultant identified. Each resume is limited to one (1) page.
- 4.3. **Case Studies:** Identify no more than three (3) marketing projects, preferably those with work in communities like ours, where you and your firm were the sole or primary consultant. Demonstrate the experience of your firm and/or proposed team, including all subconsultants, on projects like that described in this RFP for similar services. The projects submitted should also demonstrate that the consultant and/or the team have performed a similar type of service to be considered relevant. Also include any accreditations and affiliations. Each case study should include project goals, measurable KPIs, and results.
- 4.4. **Project Understanding and Approach:** Provide a narrative to describe the firm's approach to the Scope of Work outlined above. Include information on how you would develop a comprehensive, year-round, consumer-focused marketing plan that promotes the vibrancy of Downtown Kalamazoo and why people should want to live, work, and play here. The plan should not be limited to social media and should also describe ways that business owners can amplify and share this information.

Include information on:

- How you would develop KPIs
- How you would track performance of the marketing efforts
- How you would report on the work
- Your proposed timeline for onboarding, implementation, and key project milestones and deliverables

- 4.5. **Budget:** Provide a proposed budget for a full year of work showing the breakdown in costs for any strategy execution, media and communications planning, creative development, account management, and any other estimated costs for items detailed in your proposal.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated by the DEGA Board, and the Marketing and Events subcommittee based upon the responsiveness of the Proposal to this RFP. All proposals will be evaluated using the criteria listed below:

1	Proposed marketing plan and demonstrated ability to meet the needs of scope of work	35%
2	Relevant experience and credentials	25%
3	Demonstrated ability to track KPIs and report on the success of this marketing work	20%
4	Effective partnership	10%
5	Timeline and budget	10%

6. REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Conduct Meetings

- **Project Initiation Meeting:** The project will commence with a Project Initiation Meeting, aimed at handing off critical information, aligning on objectives, and addressing any initial questions. This meeting will include City staff, the DEGA committee, and any other relevant representatives. It will be held either at the City offices or via videoconference, as deemed appropriate by the City and DEGA. The agenda for this kickoff meeting will cover introductions, a review of the project scope, roles and responsibilities, the project timeline, and the communication plan.
- **Regular Communication:** Maintaining alignment throughout the project will require regular communication and meetings. These meetings, which will include the DEGA marketing and events committee, downtown event planners, and other relevant stakeholders, can be conducted in person or virtually. They will be scheduled at the project kickoff and will occur as needed throughout the contract term, with a suggested minimum frequency of monthly meetings.
- **Contract Closeout Meeting:** At the conclusion of the project, a Contract Closeout Meeting will be held to review the Project Completion Report, discuss lessons learned, and outline any next steps if the contract is extended. This meeting will involve DEGA, City staff, and other relevant stakeholders and will be conducted in person or virtually, as appropriate. The agenda will include the presentation of final deliverables, a discussion of project outcomes, a feedback session, and the documentation of lessons learned. The deliverables for this meeting will include the final Project Completion Report, which will summarize outcomes, KPIs, feedback, and recommendations for future projects.

6.2. **Reporting Requirements**

- **Monthly Reports:** The consultant will be responsible for providing Monthly Reports that detail the progress of the project. These reports should outline activities completed, upcoming tasks, any issues or risks encountered, and KPI tracking.
- **Ad Hoc Reports:** The consultant may be required to produce Ad Hoc Reports as requested by DEGA to address specific concerns or provide updates on aspects of the project.

6.3. **Documentation and Deliverables**

Key documentation and deliverables will include a comprehensive year-round Marketing Plan, encompassing strategies, timelines, and budgets. The consultant will also provide drafts and final versions of all Communication Materials, including both digital and print assets. Performance Metrics will be regularly updated to measure the success of the marketing efforts, ensuring that all goals and objectives are being met effectively.

7. **COMPENSATION**

A price proposal shall be submitted in a separate sealed envelope marked **“Price Proposal”**. **The pricing in the sealed envelope shall be the only listed pricing in the proposal.** This Price Proposal shall only be opened by City personnel after the scoring of other evaluation criteria has been completed.

The total combined not-to-exceed price quoted must include all costs associated with the performance of the services specified, including materials, supervision, labor, insurance, transportation, delivery, fuel or other surcharges, demurrage, and related costs. Charges not listed in the RFP response will not be allowed. All prices and fees must be in U.S. dollars.

- 7.1. State an offered not-to-exceed price for the project, keeping in mind the total project yearly budget of \$50,000.
- 7.2. In addition, itemize the cost of project work items which make up the total price for the project. Detail all services to be performed for the price offered.

8. **SELECTION CRITERIA**

The DEGA shall conduct a formal evaluation to determine the best-qualified respondent meeting the City’s needs. This evaluation shall be based on the Evaluation Criteria listed in section 5.

No rating or evaluation under the terms of this RFP shall be construed as a guarantee or promise of a contract and no such contract shall be binding on the DEGA absent approval through the DEGA’s approval process.

The requested information is intended to provide information that will assist the DEGA in the selection of the most qualified, competent, experienced, responsive, and economical Consultant, who will best serve the needs of the DEGA. During the evaluation process, where it may serve its best interest, the DEGA reserves the right to request additional information or clarifications from proposers, to reject any or all proposals or unauthorized modifications, to allow corrections of errors or omissions, or to waive irregularities. A selection committee will evaluate the proposals based upon the proposal requirements/selection criteria. After a review of the written proposals, selected firms may also be asked to make a presentation or field follow-up questions. The DEGA will choose the proposal(s) that best fits its needs. The DEGA is not obligated to award the contract based on cost alone. The selected firm will be required to enter into a written agreement with the DEGA that will detail the specifics of the relationship and include scope of work, compensation,

insurance requirements and other matters. If an agreement cannot be reached, the DEGA reserves the right to render the proposal invalid and may award the contract to another qualified proposer in its sole discretion.

This RFP does not commit the DEGA of Kalamazoo to pay for direct or indirect costs incurred in the preparation and/or presentation of a response. All finalists will pay their own costs incurred in preparing for, traveling to, and attending interviews. The DEGA of Kalamazoo reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in part or in its entirety.

The DEGA reserves the right to make an award without further discussion of the submittal with the offeror. Therefore, the proposal should be submitted initially on the most favorable terms that the firm or individual might propose.

9. **POST PROPOSAL INFORMATION**

After review of proposals, the DEGA may request further information or clarifications. Requested information shall be provided by the respondent either in writing or by oral presentation, at no cost to the DEGA.

10. **CHANGES AND ADDENDA TO PROPOSAL DOCUMENTS**

Each change or addendum issued in relation to this RFP will be posted on the City's website at <https://www.kalamazoocity.org/bidopportunities>. It shall be the proposer's responsibility to make inquiry as to the changes or addenda issued. All such changes or addenda shall become part of the contract and all proposers shall be bound by such changes or addenda. **In order for a proposal to be responsive, all addenda should be returned (signed by the proposer) with the proposal.** If you have already submitted your proposal, acknowledge receipt and acceptance of addenda by signing in the place provided and returning them to the Purchasing Division and they shall be incorporated in your proposal. Please identify your return envelope with the proposal reference number and project description.

11. **PAYMENT DEFAULT**

No bid or proposal shall be accepted from any party (contractor) who is in default on the payment of taxes, licenses, or other monies due to the City of Kalamazoo.

12. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Submitting firms shall notify the DEGA of any potential conflicts of interest in their proposal submittal.

13. **ASSURANCE OF DESIGNATED PROJECT TEAM**

Proposers shall ensure that the designated project team, including sub-consultants (if any), is used for this project. Departure or reassignment of, or substitution for, any member of the designated project team or sub-consultant(s) shall not be made without the prior written approval of the DEGA.

14. RFP TIMELINE

Following is a detailed schedule of activities that identifies procurement process milestones. Dates provided are subject to change.

ACTIVITY	DATE
Issue Request for Proposals (RFP)	November 25, 2024
Deadline for Written Questions	December 9, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. (ET)
Response to Questions Posted Online (Addendum)	December 16, 2024 (If Necessary)
Proposals Due	January 07, 2025 at 3:00 p.m. (ET)
Review and Scoring of Proposals	January 8-13, 2025
Interviews/Presentations (If Necessary)	January 2025
Contract Award	January 2025
Notice to Proceed	January 2025

15. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the scope of work of this project may be addressed to Meghan Behymer, Community Planning and Economic Development, 245 N. Rose Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007. (tel:269-337-8000). Questions relative to general proposal requirements may be addressed to Michelle Emig, Purchasing Manager at (269) 337-8445. This does not relieve the proposers, however, from the requirements of Item 3, Page 1.

**SECTION V
TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

1. AWARD OF CONTRACT

- A. The contract will be awarded to that responsible proposer whose proposal, conforming to this solicitation, will be most advantageous to the City according to the criteria outlined herein. The City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals and waive informalities and minor irregularities in proposals received.
- B. Notification of award will be in writing by the Purchasing Manager. Upon notification, the Consultant/ Professional Firm (hereinafter Firm) shall submit to the Purchasing Division all required insurance certificates and such other documentation as may be requested or required hereunder. Upon their receipt and subsequent approval by the City, the Purchasing Manager will forward to the Firm a written **NOTICE TO PROCEED**. Work shall **NOT** be started until such **NOTICE TO PROCEED** is received by the Firm.
- C. Unilateral changes in proposal prices by the proposer shall not be allowed. However, the City, at its sole option, reserves the right to negotiate with proposers.

2. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL AS CONTRACT

Should modifications (after proposal opening) NOT be necessary; this Request for Proposal (RFP) together with its addenda, amendments, attachments and modifications will be executed as the contract. In the event modifications of any nature do occur, a separate agreement shall be negotiated containing mutually agreeable terms and conditions from this Request for Proposal and any addenda.

3. SUBCONTRACTORS – NON-ASSIGNMENT

Proposers shall state in writing any and all sub-contractors to be associated with this proposal, including the type of work to be performed. The Firm shall cooperate with the City of Kalamazoo in meeting its commitments and goals with regard to maximum utilization of minority and women-owned business enterprises.

The Firm hereby agrees and understands that the contract resulting from this proposal shall not be transferred, assigned or sublet without prior written consent of the City of Kalamazoo.

4. TAXES

The City of Kalamazoo is exempt from all federal excise tax and state sales and use taxes.

5. INVOICING

All original invoice(s) will be sent to the Financial Services Division, 241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007 or via email at apinvoice@kalamazoocity.org. The Finance Division processes payments after receipt of an original invoice from the Firm and approval by the department. The City of Kalamazoo's policy is to pay invoice(s) within 30 days from the receipt of the original invoice, if the services or supplies are satisfactory and the proper paperwork and procedures have been followed. In order to guarantee payment to the vendor on a timely basis, the vendor needs to receive a purchase order number before supplying the City of Kalamazoo

with goods or services. All original, and copies of original invoice(s), will clearly state which purchase order they are being billed against.

The City of Kalamazoo is a government municipality and therefore is tax exempt from all sales tax.

The vendor is responsible for supplying the Finance Division with a copy of their W9 if they are providing a service to the City of Kalamazoo.

6. PAYMENTS

Unless otherwise specified by the City in this contract, the Firm will be paid in not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of a properly executed invoice, the sum stipulated herein for supplies delivered and accepted, or service rendered and accepted. Payments are processed by the Management Services Financial Services Division after receipt of an original invoice from the Firm and approval by the department.

7. CHANGES AND/OR CONTRACT MODIFICATIONS

The City reserves the right to increase or decrease quantities, service or requirements, or make any changes necessary at any time during the term of this contract, or any negotiated extension thereof. Price adjustments due to any of the foregoing changes shall be negotiated and mutually agreed upon by the Firm and the City.

Changes of any nature after contract award which reflect an increase or decrease in requirements or costs shall not be permitted without prior approval by the Purchasing Agent. City Commission approval may also be required.

ANY CHANGES PERFORMED IN ADVANCE OF PURCHASING AGENT APPROVAL MAY BE SUBJECT TO DENIAL AND NON-PAYMENT.

8. LAWS, ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

The Firm shall keep itself fully informed of all local, state and federal laws, ordinances and regulations in any manner affecting those engaged or employed in the work and the equipment used. Firm and/or employees shall, at all times, serve and comply with such laws, ordinances and regulations.

Any permits, licenses, certificates or fees required for the performance of the work shall be obtained and paid for by the Firm.

This contract shall be governed by the laws of the State of Michigan.

9. RIGHT TO AUDIT

The City or its designee shall be entitled to audit all of the Firm's records, and shall be allowed to interview any of the Firm's employees, throughout the term of this contract and for a period of three years after final payment or longer if required by law to the extent necessary to adequately permit evaluation and verification of:

- A. Firm's compliance with contract requirements,
- B. Compliance with provisions for pricing change orders, invoices or claims submitted by the Firm or any of their payees.

10. HOLD HARMLESS

If the negligent acts or omissions of the Firm/Vendor or its employees, agents or officers, cause injury to person or property, the Firm/Vendor shall indemnify and save harmless the City of Kalamazoo, its agents, officials, and employees against all claims, judgments, losses, damages, demands, and payments of any kind to persons or property to the extent occasioned from any claim or demand arising therefrom.

11. DEFAULT

The City may at any time, by written notice to the Firm, terminate this contract and the Firm's right to proceed with the work, for just cause, which shall include, but is not limited to the following:

- A. Failure to provide insurance and bonds (when called for), in the exact amounts and within the time specified or any extension thereof.
- B. Failure to perform the services within the time specified herein, or any extension thereof.
- C. Failure to make progress if such failure endangers performance of the contract in accordance with its terms.
- D. Failure to perform in compliance with any provision of the contract.
- E. **Standard of Performance** - Firm guarantees to perform the services rendered herein in accordance with the accepted standards of the industry or industries concerned herein, except that if the specifications calls for higher standards, then such higher standards shall be provided.

Upon notice by the City of the Firm's failure to comply with such standards or to otherwise be in default of this contract in any manner following the Notice to Proceed, the Firm shall immediately remedy said defective performance in a manner acceptable to the City. Should the Firm fail to immediately correct said defective performance, said failure shall be considered a breach of this contract and grounds for termination of the same by the City.

In the event of any breach of this contract by the Firm, the Firm shall pay any cost to the City caused by said breach including but not limited to the replacement cost of such services with another Firm.

The City reserves the right to withhold any or all payments until any defects in performance have been satisfactorily corrected.

In the event the Firm is in breach of this contract in any manner, and such breach has not been satisfactorily corrected, the City may bar the Firm from being awarded any future City contracts.

- F. All remedies available to the City herein are cumulative and the election of one remedy by the City shall not be a waiver of any other remedy available to the City, either listed in this contract or available by operation of law.

12. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

At all times the Firm, any of its employees, or its sub-contractors, and their subsequent employees shall be considered independent contractors and not as City employees. The Firm shall exercise all supervisory control and general control over all workers' duties, payment of wages to Firm's employees and the right to hire, fire and discipline their employees and workers. As an independent contractor, payment under this contract shall not be subject to any withholding for tax, social security or other purposes, nor shall the Firm or its employees be entitled to City paid sick leave, pension benefit, vacation, medical benefits, life insurance or workers' unemployment compensation or the like.

13. MEETINGS

The Firm and/or Project Supervisor shall be available to meet with the Department Head or Project Manager at a mutually agreeable time to discuss problems, issues or concerns relative to the contract. Either party may call a meeting at any time. When such a request for a meeting is made, the meeting date shall, in no case exceed five (5) working days after the request; and, if in the sole opinion of the Department Head, the severity of the circumstance warrants, no more than one (1) working day.

14. CITY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The City agrees to provide full, reliable information regarding its requirements for the services to be provided. In addition, the City agrees to provide, at its expense and in a timely manner, the cooperation of its personnel and such additional information with respect to this agreement as may be required from time to time, to be provided by the City for the performance of the Firm's work.

15. TERMINATION

This Agreement may be terminated by either the City or the Firm by giving written notice at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of termination.

- A. In the event of such termination by the Firm, the City, together with any other remedies which are legally available, may withhold any subsequent payment due under this agreement until such time as the services required to be performed under this Agreement have been completed by the City or another firm. In the event that the City incurs additional expenses caused directly or indirectly by the termination of this Agreement, together with such other remedies as are legally available, the City shall be entitled to deduct such expenses from any unpaid amount due to the Firm under this agreement.
- B. In the event of such termination by the City, the City shall pay the Firm for services and reimbursable expenses performed or incurred prior to the termination date plus all costs and expenses directly attributable to such termination for which the Firm is not otherwise compensated.

16. NO WAIVER

Either party's failure to insist on strict performance of any term or condition of the contract shall not be deemed a waiver of that term or condition even if the party accepting or acquiescing in the nonconforming performance knows of the nature of the performance and fails to object to it.

APPENDIX A
NON-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE FOR ALL CITY OF KALAMAZOO CONTRACTS

The Contractor agrees to comply with the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended; the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1991 as amended; the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended; the Elliott-Larson Civil Rights Act, Act. No. 453, Public Act of 1976 as amended; the Michigan Handicappers Civil Rights Act, Act No. 220, Public Act of 1976 as amended, City Ordinance 1856 and all other applicable Federal and State laws. The Contractor agrees as follows:

1. The Contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, height, weight, marital status, physical or mental disability, family status, sexual orientation or gender identity that is unrelated to the individual's ability to perform the duties of the particular job or position. Such action shall include, but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment advertising, layoff or termination; rates of pay or other forms of compensations; and selection for training, including apprenticeship.
2. The Contractor will, in all solicitations or advertisements for employees placed by or on behalf of the Contractor, state that all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, height, weight, marital status, physical or mental disability family status, sexual orientation or gender identity that is unrelated to the individuals ability to perform the duties of the particular job or position.
3. If requested by the City, the Contractor shall furnish information regarding practices, policies and programs and employment statistics for the Contractor and subcontractors. The Contractor and subcontractors shall permit access to all books, records and accounts regarding employment practices by agents and representatives of the City duly charged with investigative duties to assure compliance with this clause.
4. Breach of the covenants herein may be regarded as a material breach of the contract or purchasing agreement as provided in the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act and City Ordinance 1856.
5. The Contractor will include or incorporate by reference the provisions of the foregoing paragraphs 1 through 4 in every subcontract or purchase order unless exempted by the rules, regulations or orders of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission* and will provide in every subcontract or purchase order that said provision will be binding upon each subcontractor or seller.
6. The Contractor will not preclude a person with a criminal conviction from being considered for employment unless otherwise precluded by federal or state law. (for contracts over \$25,000)

The Elliott-Larson Civil Rights Act, Sec. 202 of Act. No. 453 of 1976 reads in part as follows:

Sec. 202. (1) An employer shall not:

- (a) Fail or refuse to hire, or recruit, or discharge or otherwise discriminate against an individual with respect to employment, compensation, or a term condition or privilege of employment because of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight or marital status.
- (b) Limit, segregate or classify an employee or applicant for employment in a way which deprives or tends to deprive the employee or applicant of an employment opportunity or otherwise adversely affects the status of an employee or applicant because of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight or marital status.
- (c) Segregate, classify or otherwise discriminate against a person on the basis of sex with respect to a term, condition or privilege of employment, including a benefit plan or system.

* Except for contracts entered into with parties employing less than three employees.

Budget

a5 Fee Summary

a5 fees are based on a5's experience with similar projects, using a blended billing rate of \$175/hour. Fabrication, printing, photography and other third party costs are not included in a5 fees or a5 office expenses. Legal expenses (for name checks and copyrighting, etc.) are not part of a5 fees. The below table represents pricing for core services as outlined in the proposal.

3.1 Brand Communications Plan	\$7,500
3.2 Event Promotions	\$7,500
3.3 Brand Messaging and Storytelling	\$6,000
3.4 Design and Communications	\$8,000
3.5 Collaborate with Event Producers	\$5,000
3.6 Manage Media and Promotion	\$6,000
3.7 Digital Presence Management	\$5,000
3.8 Multi-Channel Engagement Strategy	\$2,000
Total a5 Fees	\$47,000

Estimate of a5 Expenses

a5 travel expenses are based on three trips for two people and meals. Office expenses include color copies, FedEx and the like. Fabrication, printing, photography and other third party costs are not included in a5 fees or a5 office expenses.

Travel & Office Expenses	\$3,000
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Estimate of Optional Add-Ons

The below table represents optional add-ons, as presented in the proposal, that can be provided by a5 as part the scope of services.

3.1 Brand Communications Plan: Community Listening Sessions (up to two focus groups, 10 one-on-one interviews)	\$5,000
3.4 Design and Communications: Logo Design and Style Guide	\$12,500
3.5 Collaborate with Event Producers: Quarterly Business Workshops for Marketing Best Practices	\$4,000
3.6 Manage Media and Promotion: Digital Press Kits	\$2,000
3.7 Digital Presence Management: Google Ad Management & Geo-Targeted Campaigns	\$6,000
Total a5 Fees	\$29,500

TO: Downtown Economic Growth Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Meghan Behymer, Downtown Coordinator

DATE: March 17, 2025

Subject: Approval Request for \$10,000 Social Media Marketing & Management Agreement

Purpose

This memo serves to recommend that the Downtown Economic Growth Authority approve \$10,000 to retain Jessica Thompson (Bee Joyful Shop) for social media marketing and management from March to September 2025.

Background

Over the past 74 weeks, Jessica has voluntarily managed Downtown Kalamazoo's social media presence, significantly enhancing community engagement and visibility. Since assuming the role of Downtown Kalamazoo's primary social media manager, Jessica has:

- Increased Downtown Kalamazoo's social media following by over 2,000 across platforms.
- Consistently posted three times per week on Facebook, Instagram, and X, with regular story updates.
- Actively engaged with the community through comments, direct messages, and external interactions.
- Supported local businesses and organizations by regularly featuring them in content.
- Promoted all major and minor downtown events through tailored posts and campaigns.
- Managed marketing for key seasonal and weekly initiatives such as Beats on Bates, Workout Wednesday, Sidewalk Sales, and In The Zoo events.
- Authored six newsletters to further engage the community.

Proposed Scope of Work (March – September 2025)

Jessica's continued support is essential to maintaining a consistent and impactful digital presence while we transition to a new marketing firm. For the next seven months, Jessica will:

- Continue posting three times per week on Facebook, Instagram, and X.
- Develop a coordinated social media content calendar in collaboration with Downtown Kalamazoo staff.
- Provide event promotion, including pre-event marketing and post-event recaps.
- Maintain engagement by responding to comments, messages, and community interactions.
- Support Downtown Dollar promotions and other business-focused initiatives.
- Assist in the transition to a new marketing firm by providing a full overview of social media strategies, insights, and key performance data.
- Continue writing and managing Downtown Kalamazoo's newsletter.

Industry-standard social media management fees range from \$12,400 to \$46,500 for the proposed 31-week timeframe. Jessica is offering services at a significantly reduced flat rate of \$10,000 (\$322 per

week), ensuring high-quality content creation, engagement, and strategic oversight at a cost-effective rate for DEGA.

Fiscal Impact

The \$10,000 agreement will be funded as follows:

- \$1,700 from Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo donation for Beats on Bates
 - \$1,150 reallocated from the Maestro website agreement
 - \$7,150 from the Community Promotion Budget.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board approve the Social Media Marketing & Management Agreement and funding allocation to advance the marketing and promotional objectives for Downtown Kalamazoo.