



Agenda

Committee of the Whole Meeting

City of Kalamazoo

Monday, August 4, 2025

5:00 PM

City Commission Chambers – 241 West South Street

- A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**
- B. COMMUNICATIONS**
- C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
- D. SPECIAL AGENDA ITEMS**
- E. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**
- F. WORK SESSION**
 - 1. City of Kalamazoo Communication Plan
- G. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**
- H. ADJOURNMENT**



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Enhancing Communication Reach and Impact

2025 - 2028

Plan Summary

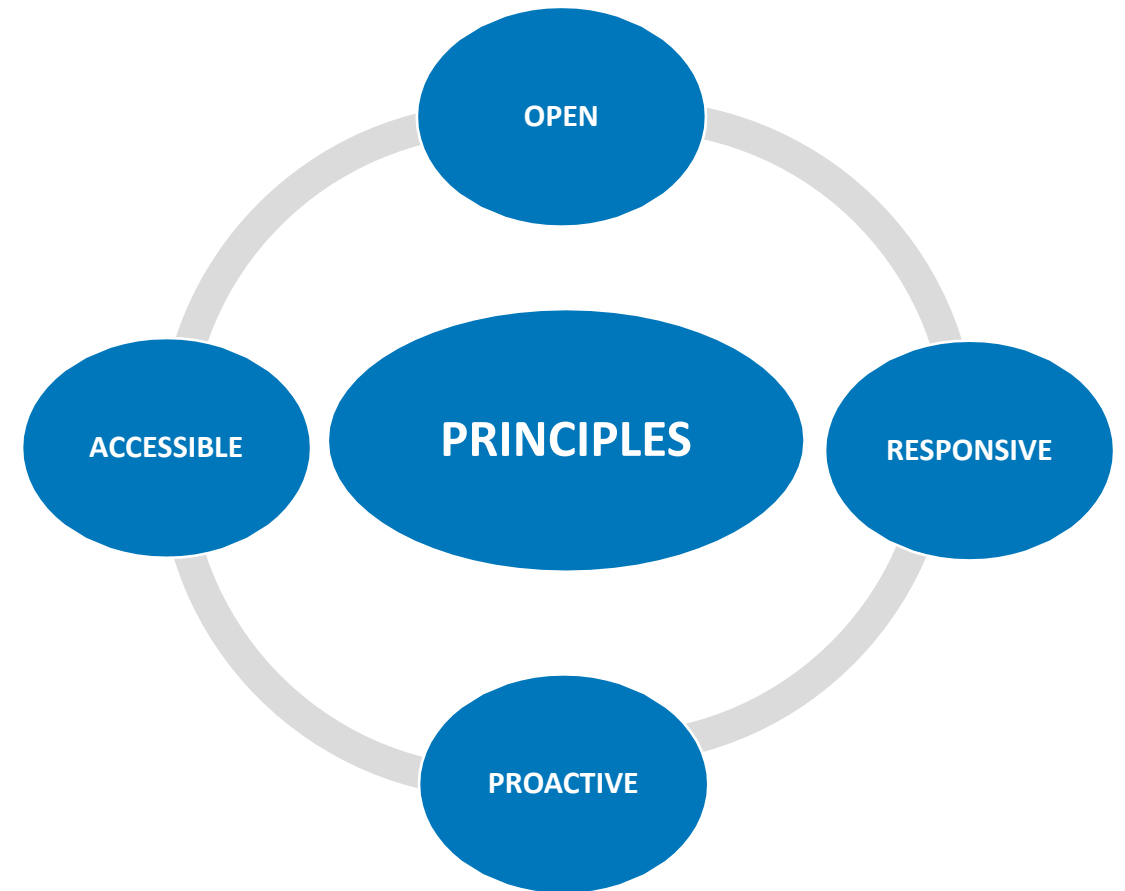
- Support and connect the City of Kalamazoo Strategic Plan as outlined by *Imagine Kalamazoo 2025* and vision for Kalamazoo's future.
- Strengthen City engagement with key stakeholders: residents, neighborhoods and community groups, businesses, county and regional governments, and City departments.
- Establish annual strategic priorities in collaboration with departments and the Kalamazoo City Commission.



Guiding Principles

Communications involve information that is connected and consistent.

- **Open:** Provide for government transparency for all audiences.
- **Responsive:** Respond quickly to change.
- **Accessible:** Make information easy to find, and available to all audiences.
- **Proactive:** Engage City stakeholders to provide information and determine their future needs.



City Communications Organizational Chart & Responsibilities

Communications Manager

City Spokesperson
Media Relations
Media Releases
Key Messaging Lead
City Stakeholders
Public Relations
Social Media Lead
Editorial Lead
City View Newsletter
Kalamazoo & You Public Affairs Series
Crisis Communications
Metric Tracking

Public Safety Public Information Officer

KDPS Spokesperson
Media Relations
KDPS Social Media
Announcements
Media Releases
KDPS Videos
Metric Tracking

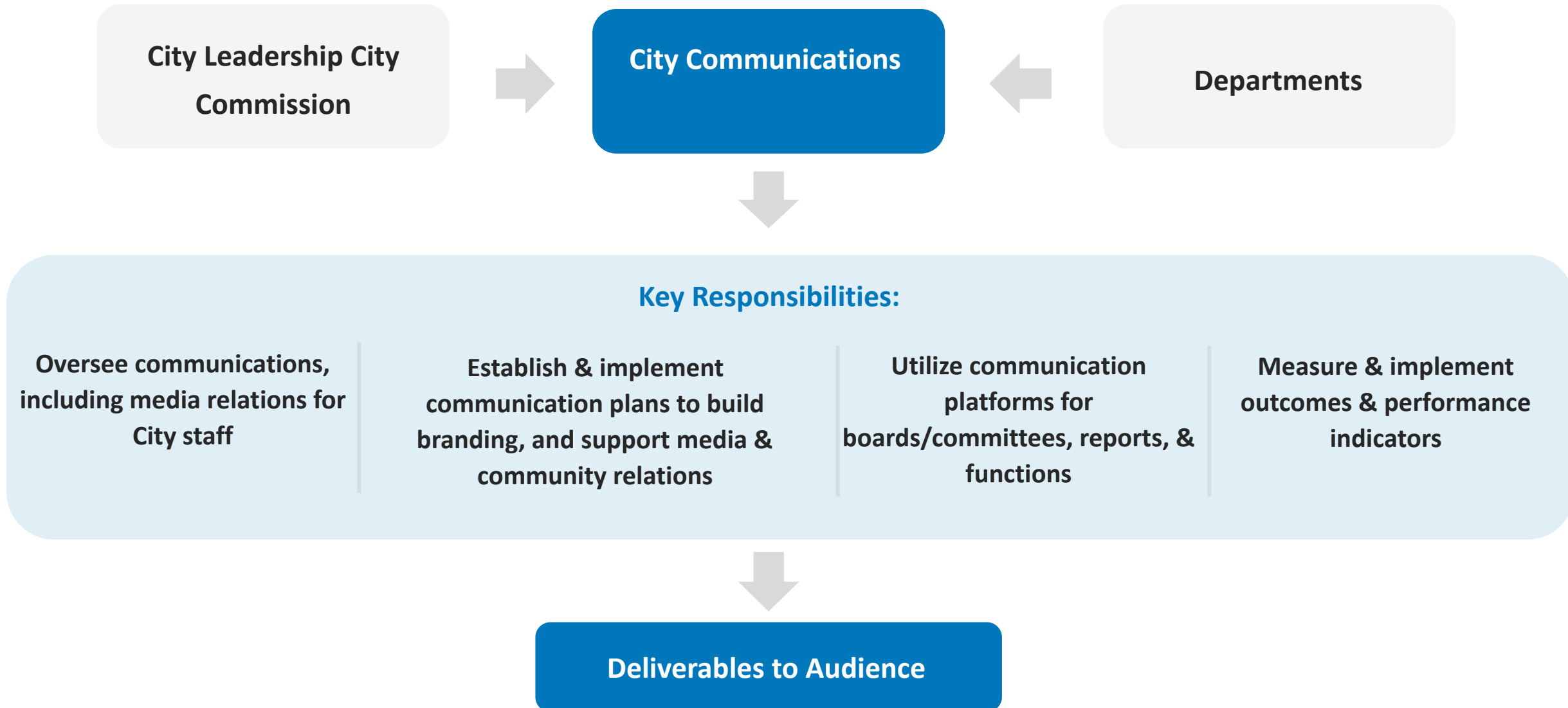
Communications Coordinator

Videography
Photography
Community Newsletters
FFE Newsletters
Media Releases
Metric Tracking
Social Media
Website Management

Marketing & Comms. Specialist

Social Media
Photography
Media Releases
Graphic Design
Videography
Website Management
Biweekly Newsletter

Communications Flow & Structure



Strategic Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Telling Our Story

Share timely, accurate, important, and relevant information to internal & external stakeholders.

- Communicate City decisions and actions through media and digital platforms.
- Make information readily available and easy to comprehend.
- Guide City leadership on media relations and projects to ensure they are communicated through City brand.

Action Highlights

- Speeches, statements, talking points, FAQs.
- Videos, media releases, social media posts.
- *City View* newsletter, City Commission meeting highlights, *Kalamazoo & You* video series
- Information content and community calendars.

Measurement

- Growth in media analytics.
- Growth in online and social media postings.
- Media analytics growth in “reach” and “likes.”

Video Highlights

City Commission Updates



Public Affairs Programming





Kalamazoo Public Safety Videos

Riding with Roddie



Sitting in the Bay



Infrastructure Videos



City View Newsletter Publication



MAY 2025

KALAMAZOOCITY.ORG

CITY VIEW

New Housing Developments Create Options for New Homeowners, Seniors

In March, the City of Kalamazoo celebrated two major housing initiatives that are expanding opportunities for homeownership and senior living in the community.

The Kalamazoo Attainable Homes Partnership (KAHP) welcomed community members to tour a newly built home on N Rose Street, which was in the process of being purchased by a first-time homebuyer. This highly energy-efficient home, based on the City's pre-approved cottage house plan, was one of eight new KAHP homes in the Northside, Edison, and Eastside neighborhoods. Each will be sold to a first-time homebuyer who has completed homeownership coaching through KNHS Homeownership Services. With 32 infill homes already completed and five more breaking ground in May, KAHP continues to strengthen Kalamazoo's core neighborhoods

through a partnership between the City of Kalamazoo, KNHS Homeownership Services, and the Home Builders Association of Western Michigan.

Meanwhile, the Legacy: Senior Housing development broke ground in the Northside Neighborhood at 127 E Frank and 120 E North Streets. The celebration featured live music, food, and remarks from elected officials and project partners, including Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Edison Community Partners, and the City of Kalamazoo. The City is supporting the project with \$1 million for construction, \$500,000 for affordable units, and a PILOT providing \$5.7 million in tax reductions over 45 years.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to expanding housing access and fostering strong, inclusive neighborhoods.

Below: Two new KAHP homes completed on N Rose St in the Northside Neighborhood, both sold to first-time homebuyers. Right: A rendering of the Legacy Senior Living development, also in the Northside Neighborhood.



Right: Community members discuss goals and outcomes at a Plan It! meeting hosted at Kalamazoo College.



Plan It! Phase Nearly Complete

The Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 planning process is moving forward, and the "Plan It!" phase is nearly complete! During this phase, we've been working with community members to confirm what was heard during the "Imagine It!" phase, especially around the community's goals, priorities, and desired outcomes for the future.

To make sure everyone's voice is reflected, we hosted five public meetings where participants worked together in small groups to share feedback and discuss priorities. In addition, staff have met with subject matter experts through a series of focus groups to dig deeper into specific strategic goals.

Two online activities are open through mid-May, so you can still participate at kalamazoocty.org/IK2035.

If you'd like to review the input gathered during the "Imagine It!" phase, it's available at kalamazoocty.org/ImagineIt.

Your input is helping shape a shared vision for the future of Kalamazoo—thank you to everyone who has participated so far!

From City Manager Jim Ritsema

Spring is definitely in the air! The days are getting warmer and longer. The grass is starting to grow and turn green, the trees are budding leaves, and flowers are pushing up out of the flower beds. They are all a sign of growth.

Speaking of growth, how about the Broncos! The WMU Men's Hockey Team worked hard all season long and today are NCAA Hockey National Champions! It was a historic season, and we congratulate and salute a team that grew as a unit and clinched their first-ever national title in program history!

Here in Kalamazoo, we place a strong emphasis on growth, too. It is an aspiring goal, and we have a lot of initiatives and events happening that will help spur growth and impact our future for years – and perhaps decades – to come. Consider "Imagine Kalamazoo." If you aren't familiar with Imagine Kalamazoo, it is a community-driven planning process to create a new Strategic Vision and Master Plan for the City of Kalamazoo. Imagine Kalamazoo 2025, which we began in 2017, is in the rearview mirror and we're now preparing for the next ten years through Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 – with the City's growth being in the driver's seat. You can learn more about IK2035 by visiting kalamazoocty.org/IK2035.

Our growth also reflects the changes taking place throughout Kalamazoo. For example the City's 2025 budget increases capital spending by over \$100 million. And we're constantly investing in our infrastructure and our streets. Now, we're not doing construction projects at the level or complexity of last year but there will be several infrastructure projects starting soon that will last through the summer. The major ones at or near downtown will include milling and paving on Westnedge Ave from Vine to Michigan, and utility work on

Westnedge near the construction of the new event center. And, of course, construction is starting on the \$300 million event center. It's not a City of Kalamazoo project, but we're thrilled to see its foundation starting to take shape.

There's a lot of work ahead over these upcoming months and a lot of issues to address. If you participated in the National Community Survey earlier this year, you shared your aspirations and concerns for the City. We're taking them to heart, and we are eager to build and strengthen your trust.

Our growth ensures a better tomorrow. We intend for you to benefit from that growth and have an enjoyable and prosperous year!



Jim Ritsema

CITY VIEW



MAY 2025

Goal 2: Public Engagement

Engage the public through participation in events, digital platforms, and City services.

- Increase awareness, participation in City programs and activities.
- Address community feedback from biannual “National Community Survey” (NCS™) related to City communications.
- Provide communication through community platforms involving organizations and neighborhood associations.

Action Highlights

- *City View* newsletter distribution.
- Engagement with partner organizations and neighborhood associations through IK2035.
- Established community database.
- Recorded interviews on City issues, City Commission meeting summary.
- Public Affairs programming.

Measurement

- Growth in Imagine Kalamazoo online traffic.
- Increase in community engagement media coverage.

Goal 2: Public Engagement

NCS™ 2025 Report Communication Key Findings:

- **Preference:** Respondents prefer direct mail, City website, and local news outlets as sources for obtaining information about City of Kalamazoo projects, programs, and initiatives.
- **Governance:** Kalamazoo gets slightly lower national benchmarks for being open and transparent to the public – **36% (2025) vs 39% (2021)**.
- **Inform:** Kalamazoo gets similar national benchmarks on informing residents about issues facing the community – **41%**.
- **Inclusivity and Engagement:** Residents give similar national benchmark ratings on connection and engagement with their community – **47% (2025) vs 46% (2021)**.

Goal 3: Brand Management

Ensuring the City brand is used consistently, and brand messages and logo are used appropriately and often in all communication.

- Quality communication that adheres to community industry best practices and standards.
- Brand identity reflects and represents the City in the minds of stakeholders.

Action Highlights

- Collaborate with City partners and social media influencers to extend brand reach.
- Develop City brand and style guide.
- Respond to social media messages.

Measurement

- Monitor organizational brand consistency.
- Higher media coverage – media analytics.

Goal 4: Emergency Communication

Develop and disseminate emergency information, prepare department leaders and emergency responders, manage media relations.

- Complements existing emergency management plans and collaborates with Emergency Preparedness and Resource Coordinator.
- Engages with media to inform the public.
- Report issues and events to Senior Leadership.

Action Highlights

- Speeches, statements, talking points, FAQs.
- Media release distribution regarding situation.
- Communication engagement with county municipalities & orgs.
- Engage with Public Safety Emergency Coordinators.

Measurement

- Growth in City coverage – media analytics.
- Higher online and social media postings.
- Media analytics growth in “reach” and “likes.”

Goal 5: Media Relations

Developing and maintaining positive working relationships with members of the media.

- Spokesperson (Communication Manager)
- Proactive news releases, briefs, media advisories, and other announcements.
- Media requests, timely responses accordingly.
- Update, expand, and align Media Relations Policy with communication industry trends.

Action Highlights

- Distribute media releases regarding programs and services.
- Direct communication with reporters to deliver information, discuss stories, and schedule interviews.
- Biannual meetings with local media outlets.

Measurement

- Conduct analysis of media contacts, social media, media relations policy.
- Growth in online and social media postings, increased media coverage – media analytics.

Goal 6: Employee Engagement Communications

Informing internal audiences on communication initiatives and channels.

- Build awareness and support among City staff on effective communication.
- Educate staff on media relations and social media to promote greater staff media interaction.

Action Highlights

- “Inside the City” SharePoint (intranet) as primary internal portal.
- Cross-department meetings.
- Greater interaction with HR, Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- CMO internal staff email distribution.

Measurement

- Growth in intranet engagement, measure department usage of brand.
- Growth in City positions, staff recruitment and retention, critical DEI programs.

Goal 7: City Commission Communications

Prioritizing communication and community relations through “Good Governance” outreach and supporting leadership and policy direction for the community.

- Assist with communicating decisions.
- Nurture and sustain City Commission and resident relationships.
- Assist with partner organizations.
- Strengthen relationships with City Manager’s Office, City staff.

Action Highlights

- City Commission video highlights (produced by Comms. staff).
- Assist Commissioners on media releases, City-related statements, and speaking points on City issues and events.
- Recognize City staff at Commission meetings to highlight staff experience and expertise.

Measurement

- Higher City coverage – media analytics.
- Increase percentage media exposure.
- Media analytics growth in “reach” and “likes.”

Social Media Summary

Estimate (2025)

Facebook



- Nearly 32,000 followers
- 2.6 million views, 45,000 visits
- **Audience:** 69% females, 31% males; Roughly 20% 35-44 age group

Instagram



- 10,000 followers
- 190,000 views, 1,600 visits
- **Audience:** 66% females, 34% males; Roughly 22% 35-44 age group

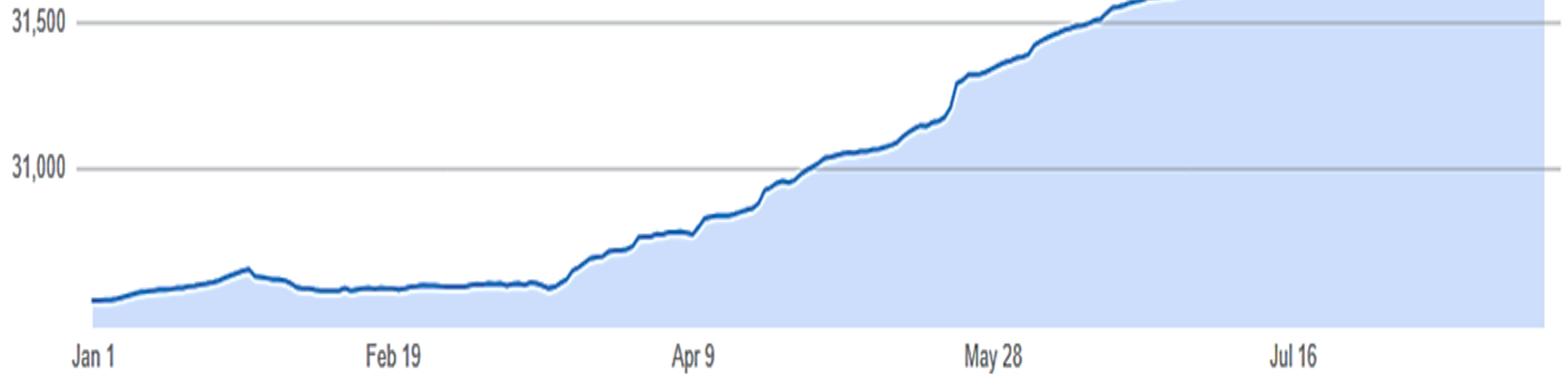
LinkedIn



- 52,000 impressions
- 1,100 reactions

Facebook Summary (year to date)

+3.6% from previous 243 days

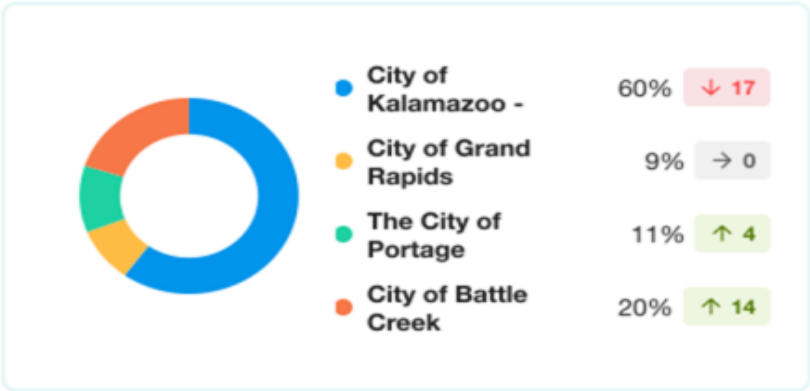


Regional Cities Social Media Mentions

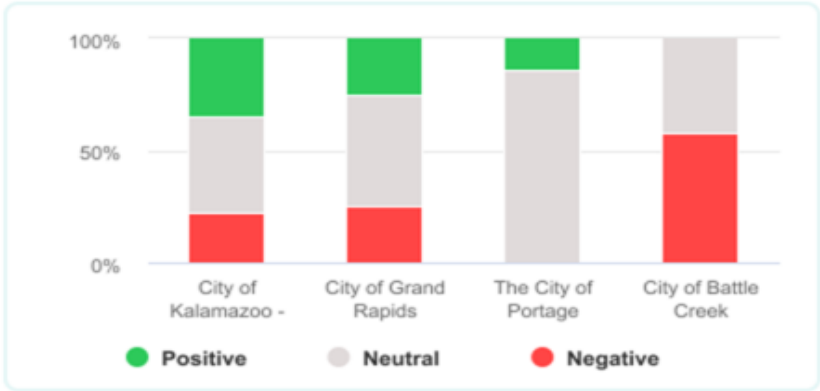
June 2025 Highlights

- City of Kalamazoo accounted for 60% of Share of Voice by Mentions.
- Facebook gave the City of Kalamazoo the most coverage with 24 Mentions.

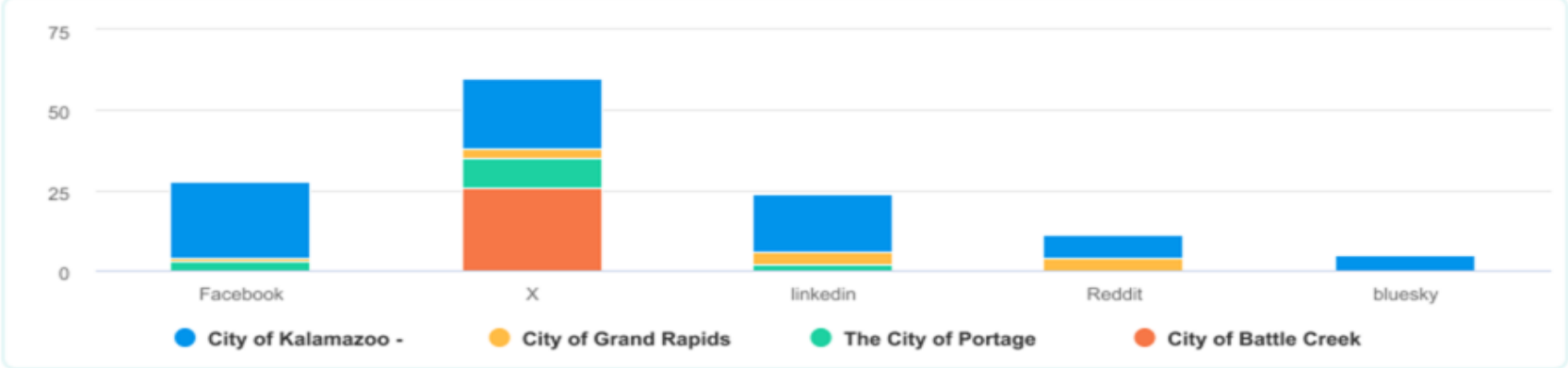
Share of Voice by Mentions



Sentiment Comparison



Social Channel Mix



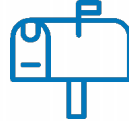
What We Do



Press releases, talking points, FAQs



Community Newsletters



Direct mail & postcards



Community contacts database



Internal staff emails



Video series & highlights



Websites & social media



“Inside the City” (intranet)



City Commission email updates

Key Outcomes:

- Expand videos to help “Tell Our Story.”
- Grow positive approval ratings among residents on services and the “livability of Kalamazoo” via National Community Survey.
- Grow online & social media postings.



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An aerial photograph of a city park, likely in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the foreground, there is a large, calm pond surrounded by lush green trees and grass. A small bridge crosses a narrow stream that flows into the pond. In the background, a dense urban skyline is visible, featuring several modern high-rise buildings. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "Questions?" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Questions?