



Agenda

Committee of the Whole Meeting

City of Kalamazoo

Monday, March 2, 2026

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**
 - 1. Economic Development Division and Strategy Update
 - 2. Closed session to discuss an attorney/client privileged communication. (**Action: Motion to go into closed session**)
- E. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**
- F. WORK SESSION**
- G. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**
- H. ADJOURNMENT**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Get news, information, and alerts from the City of Kalamazoo. Sign up at www.kalamazoocity.org/connect, follow @KalamazooCity on Twitter, and search for The City of Kalamazoo on Facebook.

Questions regarding agenda items may be answered prior to the meeting by contacting the City Manager's Office at 269.337.8047. Persons who wish to contact members of the City Commission prior to the meeting to provide input about items on the meeting agenda may do so via email to CityCommission@kalamazoocity.org.

Agendas for the Committee of the Whole meetings of the Kalamazoo City Commission are available on the Internet at: www.kalamazoocity.org. You may also use the QR Code below to access agendas and agenda packets.

**QR Code to Access the Agenda & Agenda Packet**

Use the camera on your phone or mobile device to scan the QR Code and then follow the instructions that appear on your screen.

The link will take you to <https://kalamazoomi.portal.civicclerk.com/> where you can view the meeting agendas and agenda packets.

The Kalamazoo City Commission's Committee of the Whole meetings are held on the first and third Mondays at 5:00 p.m. and are shown live on the Public Media Network (channel 190 for Charter customers, channel 99 for U-Verse customers). The Kalamazoo City Commission Business meetings are held immediately after the Committee of the Whole meetings at 7:00 p.m. Both meetings are also streamed live on the City's [Facebook page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).

Economic Development Division 2025 Report

Economic Development
Strategy Update



EDC Strategic Framework

4 STRATEGIC PILLARS



Fostering the Business
Environment



Strengthen
Neighborhoods &
Community Connections



Improve Downtown
Experience



Advance Conditions for
Growth





Executive Snapshot – 2025



• Ribbon
Cuttings: +300%



• Investment
Advanced:
\$278M+ (incl.
\$103M bond)



• Capital &
Grants \$500,000



• Downtown
Brand Approved



• Salesforce +
PlacerAI Live



Approval of PR
Campaign



Workforce and
Program funding
\$200,000+
Secured

Pillar 1: Business

Fostering the Business Environment:

Reducing barriers, supporting business operations, and enabling investment

- Streamlined permits and local approvals (marihuana, liquor, social district)
- Launched a PR and business attraction campaign to elevate Kalamazoo's visibility
- Expanded Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) engagement
- Ribbon cuttings expanded
- \$182K BCO | \$20K ICMA | MEDC Match on Main
- Sponsorship of Entrepreneurship events i.e.. Startup Zoo Entrepreneurship summit. Chamber Awards- we sponsored and presented the BIPOC Business of the year award.
- Through EDC we have given out 4 EIF Loans to businesses to help their business projects go thru fruition.
- Given out 100 K-MEG grants to small businesses in the city. \$5k a grant.

DABNEY & CO.

BIPOC-OWNED BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Pillar 2:

Community

Strengthen Neighborhoods & Community Connections:

Inclusive engagement, equity-focused supports, and trust-building across districts.

- **Social Equity & Policy :**
 - Led Social Equity Cannabis Chamber coordination—connecting residents and entrepreneurs to resources.
 - Active member of state CRA DEIW Workgroup, bringing local perspectives to statewide equity policy.
- **Neighborhood Corridor Outreach**
 - Built and maintained a citywide business directory to improve outreach and reduce undeliverable communications.
- **Workforce Pathways & Community Partnerships :**
 - Secured \$182,000 for LISC Bridges to Career Opportunities (BCO) at NACD, connecting underemployed residents (ALICE/BIPOC) to high-demand careers with wraparound supports.
- **Community-Facing Activation & Inclusion**
 - Sponsored and presented at Entrepreneur Summit (StartupZoo), Chamber Small Business Awards (BIPOC Business of the Year), and BUY Local e-commerce site—helping small businesses sell online and mitigate road-construction impacts.
 - Monthly NAACP presentations and Quarterly Black & Brown Connect briefings on opportunities and the ED strategy.



<https://www.shoplocalgreaterkalamazoo.com/>

Soft launch during business recruitment and onboarding.

Slow and intentional build into and through Q1-3 2026, avoiding grand rollout

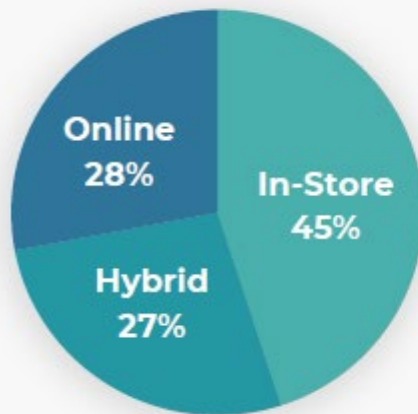
2026 holiday season (November 1) = Grand Rollout

Recruiting City businesses now is key! Let's get the word out together.

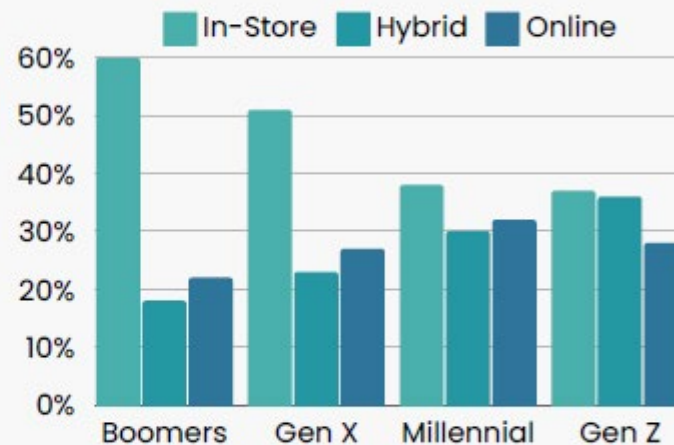
Let's curate the most comprehensive locally-owned business platform and drive new and enhanced revenues to our small business community.

CONSUMER SHOPPING TRENDS OF ONLINE VS IN-STORE

Average American
Shopping Habits

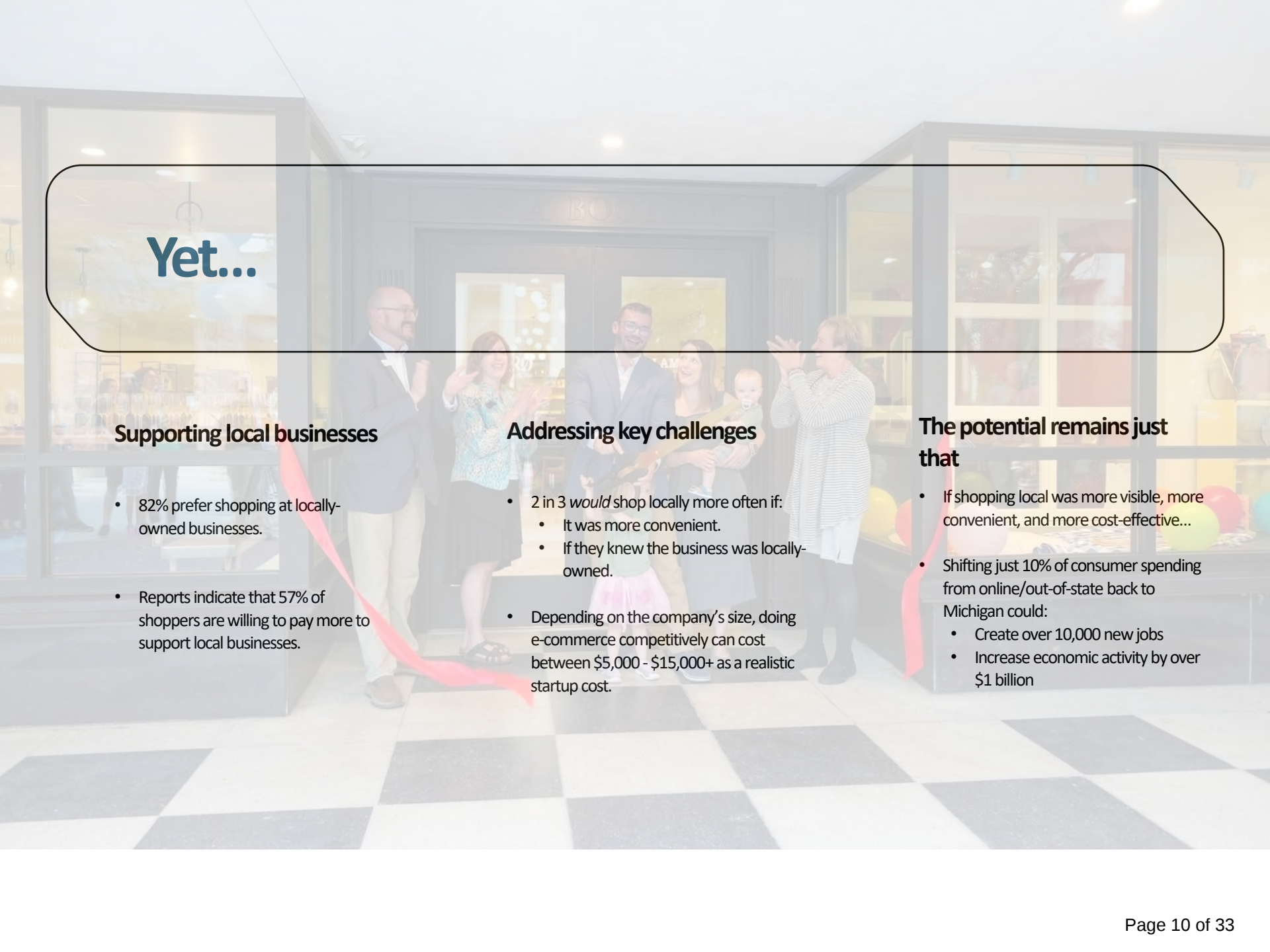


Primary Shopping
Method by Generation



Statistics highlight that more and more customers are shopping online and preference towards online/hybrid experiences.

Statistics: [Capital One Shopping](#)
Last Updated: December 28, 2023



Yet...

Supporting local businesses

- 82% prefer shopping at locally-owned businesses.
- Reports indicate that 57% of shoppers are willing to pay more to support local businesses.

Addressing key challenges

- 2 in 3 *would* shop locally more often if:
 - It was more convenient.
 - If they knew the business was locally-owned.
- Depending on the company's size, doing e-commerce competitively can cost between \$5,000 - \$15,000+ as a realistic startup cost.

The potential remains just that

- If shopping local was more visible, more convenient, and more cost-effective...
- Shifting just 10% of consumer spending from online/out-of-state back to Michigan could:
 - Create over 10,000 new jobs
 - Increase economic activity by over \$1 billion



Our Solution

- Shop Local Greater Kalamazoo is a **comprehensive online platform** dedicated to small, locally-owned businesses
- Easy to navigate making it easier for consumers to see who is local and to shop local.
- Streamlined product offerings both levels the playing field for microbusinesses and provides more established companies enhanced visibility.
- All in one solution includes merchant processing, social media promotion, responsive customer support.
- Categories include by community, by product type, by business, by ownership, even able to focus on businesses in active construction zones.



Support Local Business Your Way

Enjoy Convenience AND Shop Locally

- Avoid the perceived hassle of traffic, parking and construction while still supporting locally owned businesses.
- Shop local and still access a variety of offerings with delivery and pickup options set by the business owner.
- Discover local gems you might have never found!
- Shop whenever you want. Always open.
- Most community bucks are still accepted (does not include Downtown Dollars)
- Shop with multiple stores and check out with one cart.





Improving Downtown Experience:

Clean, safe, vibrant, and welcoming—supported by identity and activation

Pillar 3: Downtown

- Downtown brand launch
- PR & Activation
- Big-belly sponsorship
- Increased statewide visibility by securing the 2026 Michigan Downtown Association Conference
- Stabilized Downtown Ambassador Program through a 3-year contract

Pillars 4 : Growth

Advancing Conditions for Growth:

Governance, strategic planning, policy, and major investments that unlock long-term prosperity.

- **Major Project Facilitation:**

- Facilitated \$103M bond for a senior complex development via the EDC board.
- Liason-ing with NCBDA Board to advance a \$100M Transformational Brownfield project in the City.

- **Policy Participation & Equity:**

- State CRA DEIW Workgroup and LEAP/ICMA/WKKF initiatives— positioning Kalamazoo to scale inclusive economic mobility and capital access.

- **Systems & Tools (Division-wide):**

- Salesforce reconfiguration—defining parameters for reporting and performance; enabling transparent tracking of goals across permitting, business attraction, and outreach.
- PlacerAI—integrating location intelligence to guide site selection, investment prioritization, and event planning.

Strategic Objectives



1

Unify City Branding

Align downtown and citywide messages under a shared visual identity and tone.

2

Attract New Investment

Promote Kalamazoo's business advantages — location, talent, infrastructure, and culture.

3

Showcase Real Stories

Elevate authentic voices from residents, business owners, and community partners.

4

Highlight Key Projects

Connect the city's major development milestones (Event Center, Sports Complex, airport, healthcare corridor) to a broader narrative of growth.

5

Drive Engagement

Increase national, regional, and local visibility through integrated PR, storytelling, and digital campaigns.

Key City-Wide Messaging Pillars



1 Perfectly Placed for Growth

Centrally located on I-94 between Chicago and Detroit, Kalamazoo offers unmatched access to regional markets, freight, and logistics.

2 Innovation and Industry Live Here

Home to global leaders like Pfizer and Stryker and powered by Western Michigan University's research and workforce pipelines.

3 Culture, Creativity, and Connectivity

A place where art, entrepreneurship, and opportunity meet — from downtown's creative heartbeat to emerging districts across the city.

4 Momentum and Major Investments

The \$500M Event Center, youth sports facilities, and airport expansion signal a new era of economic vitality.

5 Community-Powered Growth

A philanthropic model unique to Kalamazoo reinvests local dollars into neighborhood programs, nonprofits, and business development.



Signature Marketing Element

“This is Kalamazoo” Video Series

A cornerstone of this campaign will be a citywide video storytelling initiative produced in collaboration with local creatives and media partners.

- Feature interviews with residents, business owners, and community leaders — both local entrepreneurs and regional/national brands.
- Spotlight distinct neighborhoods and commercial districts — showing their culture, activity, and development potential.
- Showcase available sites, retail spaces, and investment-ready areas throughout the city.
- Tie each neighborhood's identity to Kalamazoo's overall economic and cultural brand through visual storytelling.

Kalamazoo Micro-Enterprise Grants

Overview 2020-2024

Kalamazoo Micro-Enterprise Grants (KMEG) provides \$5,000 grants to eligible micro businesses located within the City of Kalamazoo. Launched in 2020, the program is designed to offer relief and support to small businesses facing financial challenges and continues to operate today. This report includes analysis from FY 2020–FY 2024, incorporating both program data and the lived experiences of grant recipients. We analyzed the program data across multiple identities and business characteristics.

501 Awards

**\$2.5 Million
in Funding**

**66% Person
of Color**

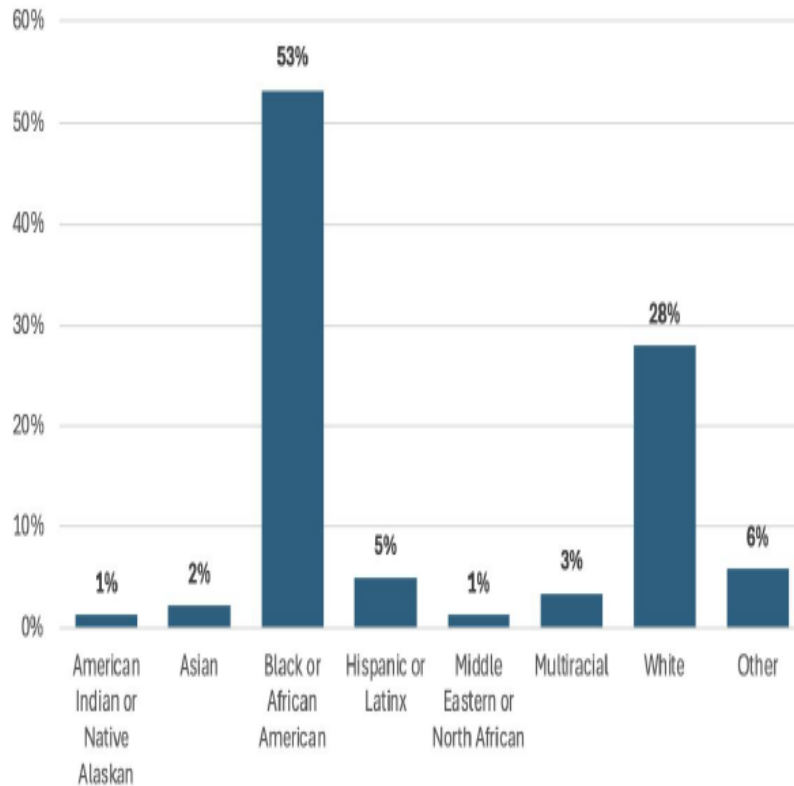
57% Women

57% SPK

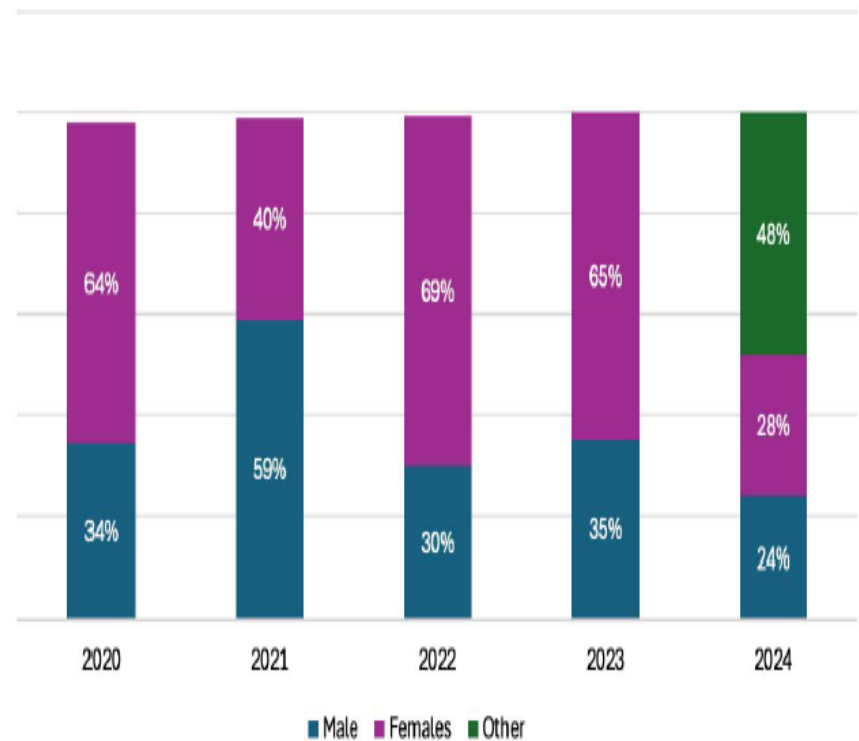
KMEG Approvals

By Identity

FY 2020- 2024 Race and Ethnicity

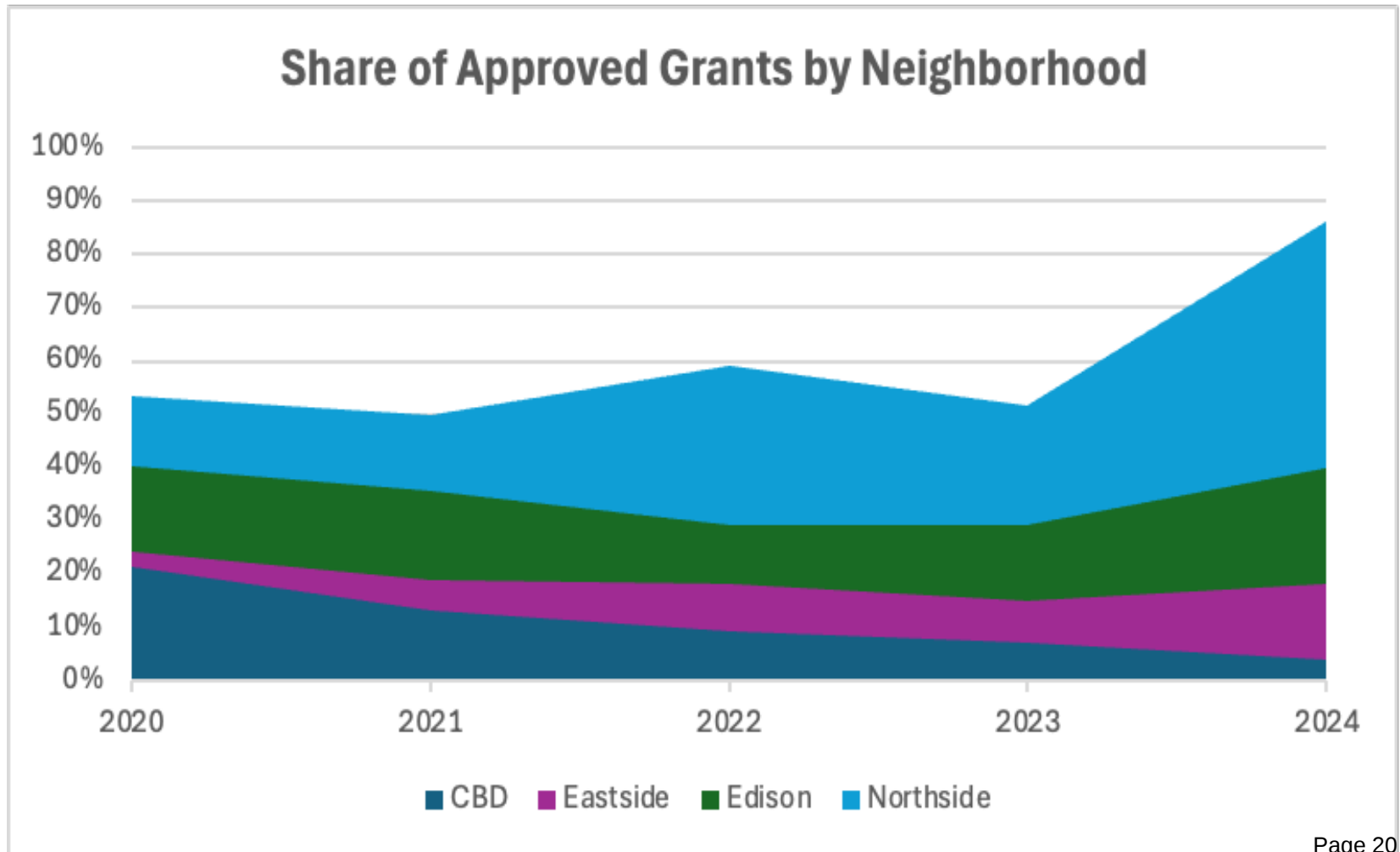


Share of Approved Grants By Gender



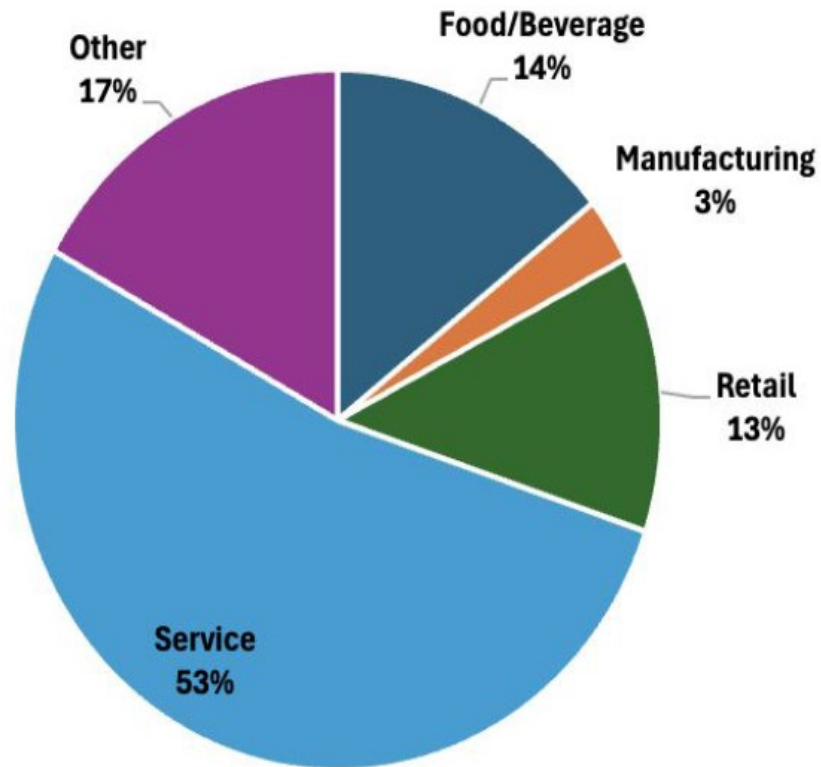
KMEG Approvals

Neighborhoods



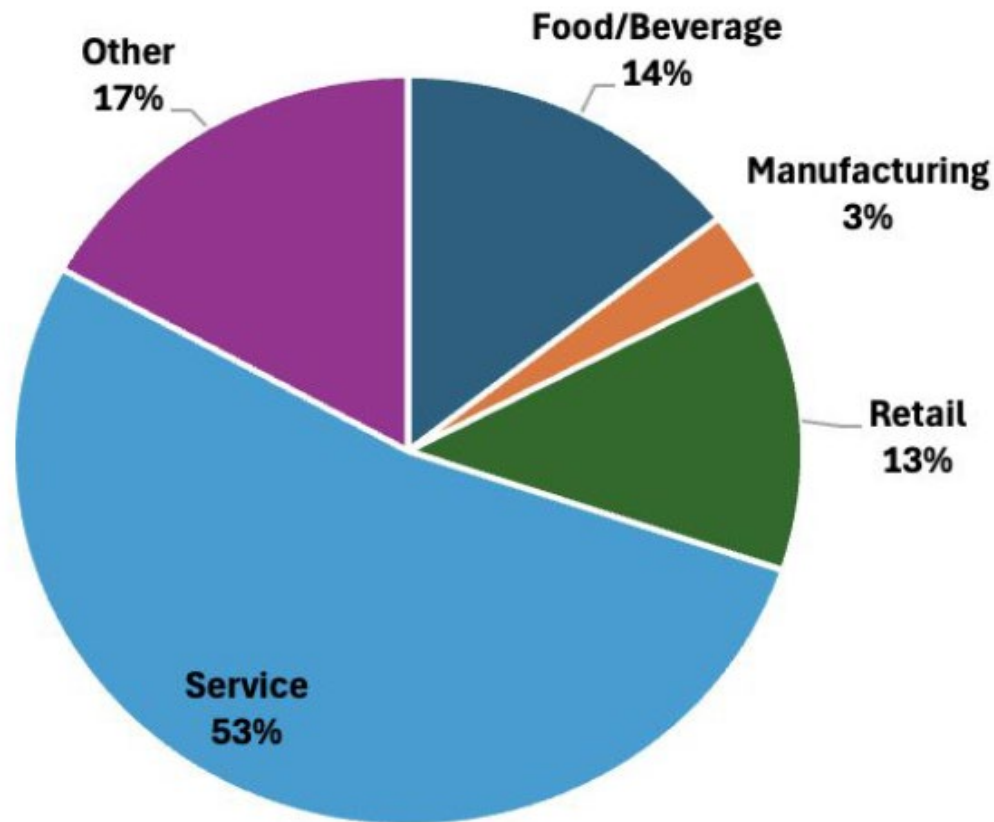
KMEG Approvals By Industry

Share of Approved Grants by Industry, FY 2020-2024



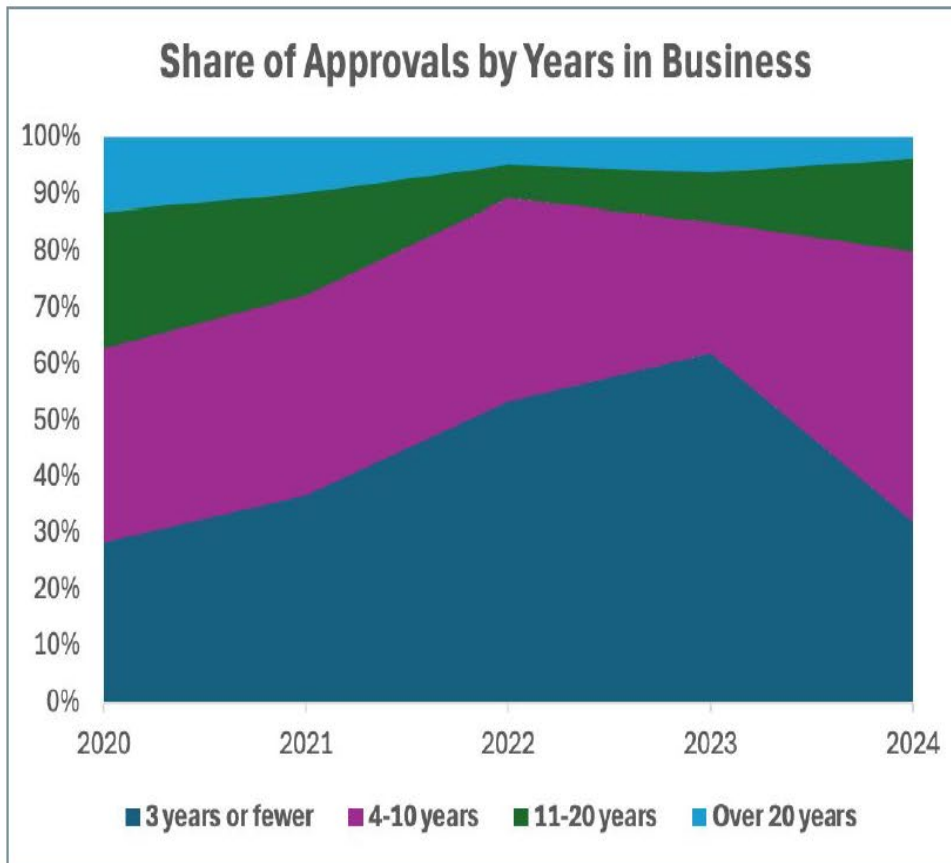
KMEG Approvals By Industry

Share of Approved Grants by Industry, FY 2020-2024

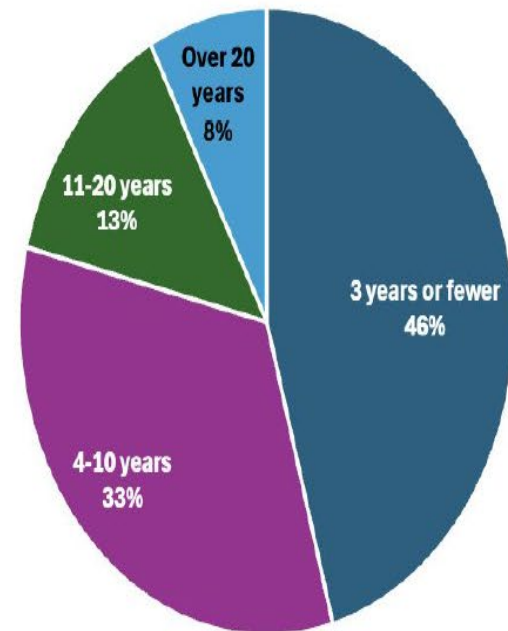


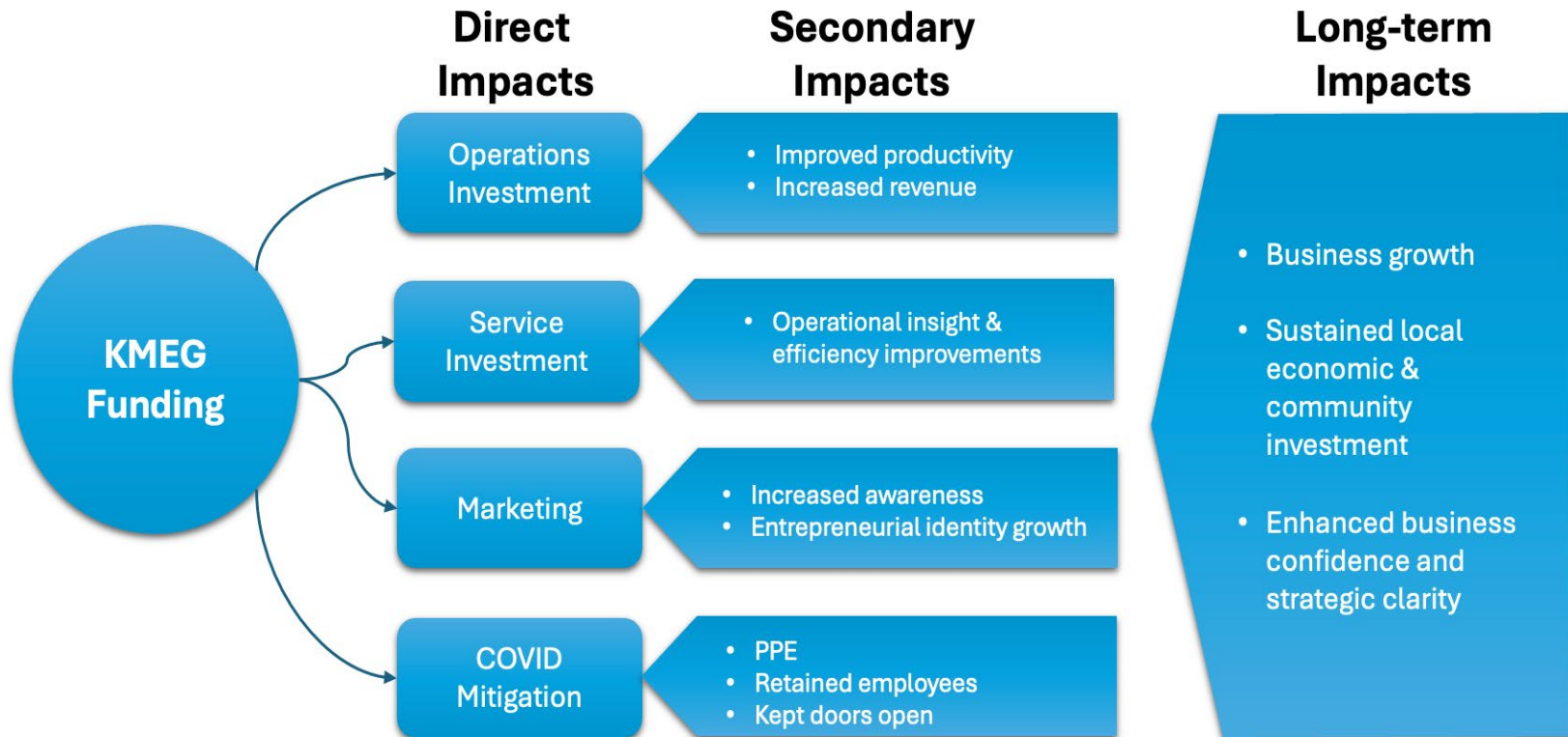
KMEG Approvals

By Years in Business



Share of Approvals by Years in Business, FY 2020-2024





YEAR OVER YEAR GOALS

What We Wanted to Achieve



2024:

Build programs and access points.



2025:

Expand participation and strengthen advocacy.



2026:

Deliver measurable outcomes and develop a full cannabis business ecosystem.



SOCIAL EQUITY CHAMBER: STRATEGIC EVOLUTION (2024-2026)

2024

FOUNDATION BUILDING

Launched core programs to support social equity participation in the cannabis industry.

2025

EXPANSION & ENGAGEMENT

Scaled programming to meet demand and strengthened industry voice.

2026

MEASURABLE IMPACT & ECOSYSTEM LEADERSHIP

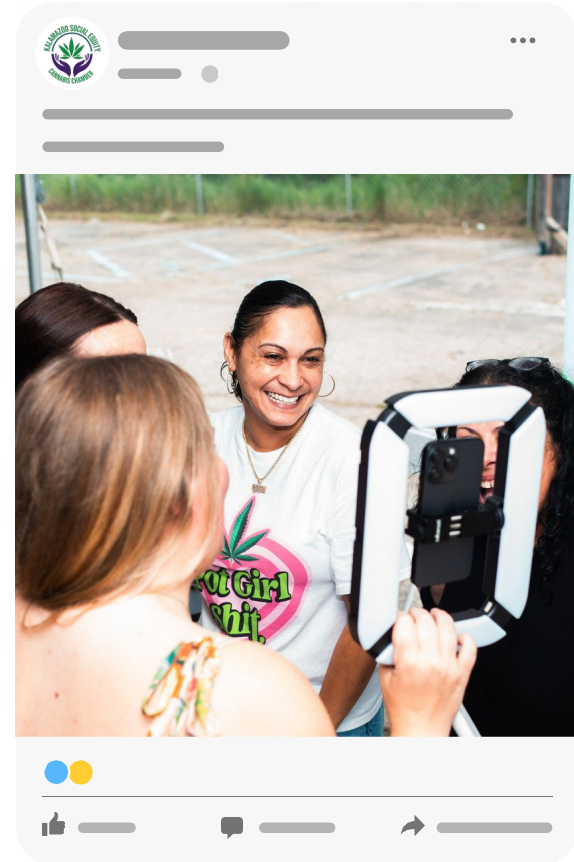
Transitioning from programs to outcomes that drive economic mobility.

A photograph showing the lower half of three people sitting at a wooden table. One person is using a laptop, and another is holding a white mug. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor setting like a cafe or office.

Our Shift: From providing access → to producing outcomes → to building a sustainable economic ecosystem.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS





BUILDING ACCESS THROUGH EDUCATION, WORKFORCE, AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

60 Total Events Hosted

- 2024: 14 events (6 in-person + 8 webinars)
- 2025: 40 events (10 in-person + 30 webinars)
- 2026: 6 events (2 in person + 4 webinars)
-
- 2,000+ Total Registrations Across Two Years
- Attendance conversion averaged 55–60%, outperforming typical free-event benchmarks.

Repeat participation continues to grow 157 repeat attendees in 2024
255 repeat attendees in 2025 (20% increase).

PROGRAMS & EVENTS IMPACT (2024-2025)

WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

2024 Fall Job Fair: 250 registrations → 10 interviews → 5 job placements.

2025 Spring Career Fair: 150+ attendees → 10 confirmed placements

- Total Job Placements so far: 30
-

INDUSTRY COMMUNITY BUILDING

- Summer Budtender BBQ convened 250+ cannabis professionals statewide.

Lansing lobby days



Demonstrates growing trust in the Chamber as both a workforce connector and professional hub.



KVCC WORKFORCE EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP IMPACT

CREATING DIRECT PATHWAYS INTO THE LEGAL CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Hosted 10 informational sessions (3 in 2024 + 6 in 2025 + 1 in 2026). Reached 300 total attendees through these sessions.

Generated 370+ registrations tied to KVCC-related engagement.

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION

70 total participants enrolled across cohorts.

61 certifications completed to date.

48 graduates live in Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo (SPK) neighborhoods.

6 graduates advanced into new certification programs launched in 2026.



This validates the Chamber's role as a workforce pipeline—not just an awareness organization.

EQUITY, DEMOGRAPHICS & LOCAL ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

REACHING COMMUNITIES HISTORICALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE INDUSTRY

70% of participants identify as women. 60% identify as BIPOC. 65% come from SPK low-income neighborhoods. 87% live within the City of Kalamazoo (strong local workforce retention).

INTENTIONAL ECONOMIC INCLUSION

100% of 2025 vendor partnerships were women- and minority-owned businesses.



This transformed the Chamber into a visible, place-based economic development resource.





OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS....

\$75,000

Scholarships Awarded:

61

Graduates

35

Job & Internship Placements

Small Businesses Supported

\$90,000

in services from local businesses

\$100,000

Community Donations

45

Mentorship Matches–

\$1,500–\$3,000

Average small business invoice spend:

2026 Roadmap



- PR campaign rollout
- Downtown brand Phase 1-3
- Bigbelly activation and MRC presentation
- Ambassador expansion
- MDA Conference prep
- **United Way**
 - Launch KMEG 2.0 \$5K & \$10K program
- **Cannabis Chamber**
 - Launch Chamber Led Certificate programs
 - Scale Neighborhood Education Series on safe Cannabis Consumption

Questions