A Message from the Board

Serving the community through the visionary work of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank is an honor. The last decade has been one of Repurposing, Renewing and Reconnecting throughout Kalamazoo County. We’ve seen significant gains in terms of increasing affordable housing stock, regenerating commercial districts in urban core neighborhoods, and forging exciting partnerships.

As we celebrate a decade of growth in 2020, we reflect on what makes the Land Bank work so rewarding:

“We help improve the community by being a catalyst for renewing properties, both residential and commercial. Our greatest strength is that our shared focus makes Kalamazoo County a better place to live for everyone.” --Brian Hudson, Treasurer & Secretary

“The Land Bank concentrates efforts in areas of our community that need it the most. We have great impact through strategically repurposing blighted parcels to become greater than their sum and to create viable and vibrant places that make us all proud.” -- Holly Crump

“We have great impact through neighborhood-enhancing programs like Side Lot and Adopt-A-Lot, as well as through transformative projects like the Eastside Gateway. Our greatest strength is a very strong staff that is committed to improving communities in our county.” --Carl Roberts, Vice Chair

“Projects are not done to the neighborhoods, they are done with the neighborhoods. The Land Bank engages in trust-building long before there is even a fully-conceived project, which means that when the hammers start to fly, everyone is on board and the work progresses quickly.” --Becky Fulgoni, Retired Vice Chair

“We are exploring new opportunities to increase our affordable housing supply by transforming blighted properties. We have great impact through our community partnerships and letting resident voices shape our future direction.”--Rebekah Kik

“The Land Bank strengthens the tax base, builds neighborhoods, and beautifies our county. Our greatest strength is the talent in our staff and our impact in the community.” --Mary Balkema, Board Chair

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank’s Board looks forward to the coming decade by continuing to listen to and incorporate residents’ visions. This Land Bank is Your Land Bank!

Sincerely,
The Kalamazoo County Land Bank Board of Directors
2019 marks the end of a transformational decade in terms of reducing blight. Significant abandoned and disinvested urban properties were the outcome of the recession, decades of movement out of inner cities into suburban areas, and discriminatory historical practices. Your County Land Bank welcomes the next ten years as ones in which the healing and re-visioning of urban landscapes continues.

Land banking across the state has reached a new milestone. With the widespread demolition of significant numbers of properties that were no longer safe or functional, we’re now actively working to redevelop that land with an equity lens. How can we make these spaces inclusive, walkable, attractive and supportive of quality of life for all?

Our community wants high design aesthetics and quality new structures that will stand the test of time, and ones that also encourage residents to step outside their doors and connect with each other. For inspiration, we are turning to examples of successful urban core planning from the past, as well as new ideas that incorporate environmental sustainability, the arts and small scale quality places.

Since 2010, we’ve been engaged in reactivating neighborhood spaces with leadership, help and involvement from many local residents and agency partners. In Kalamazoo, we can look to Riverview Launch, the Eastside Gateway and Washington Square as examples of what can happen when you provide a platform for collective community vision.

Part of the Land Bank’s work involves creating space for our residents to shape the future of how our abandoned and vacant land will be Repurposed, Renewed and Reconnected. As an active partner in the Kalamazoo Community Foundation’s Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation effort, we are committed to approaching this work with an equity lens and with an attitude of humility and continuous learning.

This is complicated work. There are no easy answers. But together with residents and local organizations, we can build sustainable urban spaces that embody inclusion, vitality and diversity.

Best regards,

Kelly Clarke
Executive Director & Past MALB President

Michelle Tombro Tracy
Assistant Director

Chelsie Hubbarth
Communications, Grants & Operations Manager

Tammy Lahman
Finance Manager

Kenn Hartmann
Assets & Construction Manager

Anna Roeder
Administrative Assistant

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269.762.6191
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Progress by the Numbers

In 2019, a total of 397 properties were managed in our inventory and 36 properties were returned to the tax rolls. Titles were cleared in 225 parcels through Quiet Title. The Land Bank acquired 10 parcels through the tax foreclosure process in 2019, and completed 16 Fair Market sales, 12 Side Lot sales, and 7 Nonprofit lot sales.

Tax foreclosures have significantly decreased. In 2019, there were 77 tax foreclosures representing the first time since 2009 this number was under 100. In addition, there were zero owner-occupied tax foreclosures in the City of Kalamazoo.

### Year End Inventory

- Residential Vacant (327)
- Commercial Structures (10)
- Commercial Vacant (19)
- Industrial Structures (2)
- Industrial Vacant (9)
- Residential Structures (15)

### Disposition

- Local Governance (2)
- Side Lot (12)
- Fair Market (16)
- Nonprofit (7)

Kalamazoo County Tax Foreclosures & Acquisitions

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Home Ownership Opportunities

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE HOME OWNERSHIP

The Land Bank recognizes the strong need for affordable housing in Kalamazoo County. In response to that need, we support a variety of opportunities to increase home ownership. To reconnect abandoned properties with potential owners, the Land Bank has an internal revolving program to fund needed repairs and improvements on abandoned houses. These houses are sold as affordable, owner-occupied properties.

To repurpose vacant parcels and add affordable housing, the Land Bank is selling lots at a significant price reduction from the appraised value to local nonprofits for affordable housing projects. The Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., in partnership with Local Initiatives Support Corporation and with support from a MSHDA Mod Grant, completed a house on Stockbridge in Edison with assistance from the Home Builders Association.

“At KNHS, we’re really happy to be partnering with the Land Bank,” said Matt Lager, KNHS Executive Director. “If we were having to shop for lots on the open market, we would not be building in these places. We can buy these lots at an incredibly reduced price for the benefit of both a homeowner and the neighborhood.”

Through a generous fund provided by Kalamazoo’s Foundation for Excellence, KNHS has purchased three more lots and has construction underway. Habitat for Humanity, who has previously partnered with the Land Bank, has purchased two lots on which they will build affordable homes.

“Addressing the need for affordable housing is a top priority of the City, which is why in 2020 we will be investing an additional $2 million in this area from the Foundation for Excellence. Infill housing that makes smart use of limited available land is a key part of our strategy. We are excited to partner with stakeholders to continue moving this work forward.” --Mayor David Anderson, City of Kalamazoo

BLIGHT MANAGEMENT

Abandoned houses and properties in disrepair create significant health and safety issues in a community. The Land Bank continues to be committed to reducing blight in Kalamazoo County by restoring properties when possible, and demolishing when necessary to open opportunities for affordable housing, community-enhancing businesses and gardens, and greenspace or playing space through our Side Lot and Adopt-A-Lot programs. In 2019, The Land Bank managed over 1,500 maintenance services that included lawn mowing, trash removals, building maintenance calls and tree removals.
A NEIGHBORHOOD REMEMBERED

“Working with the Land Bank has been a positive experience, primarily from the residents’ point of view that something is actually happening over here and people are thinking of doing development activities after so many years of not,” said Pat Taylor, Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association Director. “I see a resurgence of the pride that makes the Eastside the Eastside. It’s really cool to see.”

The Land Bank has completed all elements of its portion of the Eastside Gateway & Pocket Park! This net zero ready, affordable, small house development was envisioned by residents and neighborhood leaders and embraced by the Kalamazoo community. Many in the neighborhood have said the Gateway, with the public Pocket Park & Labyrinth, surpassed the original vision. A memorable Open House & Community Celebration in May drew over a hundred residents and community members.

**Eastside Gateway Highlights:**
- The project was driven by resident vision and supported by neighborhood leadership
- Over $1.1 million was raised in philanthropic support
- Over 50 community partners were involved
- The Pocket Park features a lovely labyrinth and ‘gateway’ artwork by Conrad Kaufman inspired by Eastside Voices
- Four of the five completed net zero ready, affordable houses are now homes to grateful new owners
- Habitat for Humanity will construct the final two houses in 2020, helping fulfill the vision of a mixed-income development

“The Gateway is a great project,” says Tom Tischler, Habitat for Humanity’s Director of Construction Operations. “Habitat is happy to be involved in a partnership with multiple agencies. The Gateway project sign has almost 50 logos from partners. It’s wonderful to see a community come together like that to do so much good.”

For over a decade, the Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association and the Land Bank have worked together on the Eastside. This is the second year of a five-year commitment to the Eastside by the Land Bank Board. The next few years promise to be exciting.
Eastside Voices, an intergenerational oral history project featuring stories shared from current and former residents, was unveiled during the December Art Hop at the Eastside Neighborhood Association. Coordinated by local artists, Buddy Hannah and Sid Ellis, Eastside Voices included the training of local youth who helped capture Eastside stories from older residents.

The Eastside Voices Unveiling at the December Art Hop showcased storyboards, a half-hour video completed by Public Media Network, and a bound book that features the transcripts. To reflect elements of the oral histories, a permanent outdoor art installation, completed by artist Conrad Kaufman and funded by MSHDA’s Neighborhood Enhancement Program, has been installed at the Pocket Park of the Eastside Gateway Project. Eastside artist Gerald King designed a Voices-inspired semi-permanent mural for 1616 East Main, a Land Bank property slated for demolition that is the site of the upcoming neighborhood vision for a commercial district called Eastside Square (see more on Back Page).

“This project revealed the history of the neighborhood and the pride of the people who grew up on the Eastside. A lot of people said they thought the Eastside had been forgotten. They felt good about the attention that’s being paid to the Eastside now and the improvements that are being brought by the Land Bank, Vibrant and the City of Kalamazoo. They have an awakening of pride.”

— Buddy Hannah, Coordinator with Sid Ellis of Eastside Voices, an intergenerational oral history and arts project

Eastside Voices Video: https://archive.org/details/PMNEastside_Voices_Community_Storytellers
Eastside Voices Book: https://kalamazoolandbank.org/eastside-voices
Riverview Launch

Riverview Launch, a multi-purpose community facility redeveloped by the Land Bank, is home to a variety of organizations that each seek to make Kalamazoo a vibrant, healthy place to live. These organizations include the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, Open Roads Bike Program, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, and most recently, Farmers Bloom Flower Company.

Available for rental during business hours, Riverview Launch hosted several multi-day events last year for organizations such as the Family Health Center, Stryker Corporation, the Kellogg Foundation, Bell’s Brewery and Seibold + Baker, a medical furniture supplier who held a pop-up showroom. Visitors enjoy the natural light and river views.

In September, Vibrant hosted its first fundraising dinner, Out By the River, at Riverview Launch. This farm-to-table dinner, catered by Organic Gypsy, was a festive affair that exceeded its fundraising goal. We thank all who sponsored and attended the fun evening!

Out by the River Sponsors
FARMERS BLOOM FLOWER COMPANY

Local florists and designers looking for a ranunculus or an anemone can find these rare cut flowers, plus 70 more varieties, at Farmers Bloom Flower Company. Owner Kristiana Couto is thrilled to be occupying a space that was formerly Riverside Greenhouse, a blighted property that was redeveloped and repurposed by the Land Bank. Kristiana said she sees her flower business as “a destiny thing” because of the former greenhouse on the premises.

Kristiana’s specialty is growing rare and hard-to-ship flowers. In the coming year, Kristiana plans to conduct workshops about the importance of locally-grown cut flowers as a sustainable option to relying on imported flowers “Riverview Launch is a perfect place for me to spend my time during the winter months,” said Kristiana, who also owns a small family farm in Cooper Township. “The space won my heart: greenhouse plus beautiful barn plus community space equals big plans for the future of Farmers in Bloom!”

OPEN ROADS BIKE PROGRAM

In its 11th year, Open Roads continues to expand its bike-focused and social emotional learning programs for Kalamazoo youth. The new lounge, which opened in 2018, is a major attraction, and the pop-up bike repair shops and Earn-a-Bike programs, draw hundreds of participants each year.

Over the last year, Open Roads welcomed new leadership. Beth Keith, Program Manager, joined in late 2019. Open Roads plans to expand its community presence in 2020 by adding to existing programs at the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home, holding more Earn-a-Bike camps in city neighborhoods, and finding ways to work with Kalamazoo’s growing refugee population. Beth said she loves Riverview Launch with its proximity to the KVRT trail. “I think it’s gorgeous and I’m able to bike to work,” Beth said. “Our garage is full. Our shop is full. The space is perfect for our little organization.”

KALAMAZOO RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council advocates for protecting and improving the river, tributaries, lakes, wetlands, and watershed—all 123 miles of them! By working with residents, educators and governmental agencies, the Watershed Council, under the direction of Patty Hoch-Melluish, supports a variety of river-friendly educational programs each year. The Land Bank appreciates the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council’s ongoing work in making our world a more water-wise place.
Vibrant Kalamazoo

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Vibrant Kalamazoo, a 501(c)3 supporting organization, is the community engagement and fundraising arm of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank. To help facilitate the Land Bank’s mission to engage residents in community planning, Vibrant volunteers host neighborhood events, such as workshops, charrettes, Art Hops, and open houses to help gather resident input. The Land Bank then transforms resident ideas into impactful projects, such as Riverview Launch, Washington Square commercial corridor, Eastside Gateway Project, and most recently Eastside Square.

To raise money to support these vital engagements, Vibrant hosted its first annual Out By the River Event in September, which was a huge success, exceeding its fundraising goal. In July, Vibrant Kalamazoo also hosted the Service of People & Places brunch to thank the people and organizations that have been crucial supporters. Both Vibrant and the Land Bank are grateful for the community’s engagement in the Land Bank’s mission to Repurpose, Renew & Reconnect.

“Working with the mission, vision and goals of the Land Bank and Vibrant on are rewarding. This year we took on the Eastside Gateway Project, building five brand new homes on East Michigan and Foresman which provided opportunity for new construction ownership that might not be possible for some. The work we do fills in gaps in opportunity and it is a reward to interact with the community and see their joy in knowing they are not forgotten. We share in the pride they have in their community.”

--Paul Valentin, Vibrant Board Member

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank is audited annually in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The most recent audit demonstrates the Land Bank’s commitment to professionalism and good financial management. The Land Bank also developed a two-year-budget for sustainability. With its commitment to equity, inclusion and integrity, the Land Bank is implementing Positive Organizational Culture, a program facilitated by University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business, and is an active participant in the Kalamazoo Community Foundation’s Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation initiative. “We are grateful to have skills, expertise and professionalism amongst our staff,” said Land Bank Director Kelly Clarke. “They continue to make your Land Bank stronger every year.”

Land Bank staff were guided through the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts’ recent Black Refractions exhibit as part of Positive Organizational Culture.
AFFORDABLE SENIOR HOUSING

The Land Bank seeks to provide a wide variety of opportunities for affordable housing. An often under-served community is seniors. In 2011, the Land Bank acquired the former Southwestern Michigan Tuberculosis Sanitarium and Kalamazoo Psychiatric complex, located on the top of a hill in Kalamazoo’s Fairmont neighborhood.

In partnership with Western Michigan University and the City of Kalamazoo, the 6-acre site became Prairie Gardens, an attractive, mixed-income 24-unit housing development for seniors 55 years and older. With accessible and energy-efficient cottage style duplexes, abundant nature, walking trails, community gardens and a pavilion for gathering, the development enhances the wellbeing of its residents.

The popular senior housing community has undergone growth and change since its inception and completion.

“Prairie Gardens is a delightful community with a tight-knit group of lovely individuals,” said Holly Sweis, Vice President of Intrepid Professional Group, property manager of Prairie Gardens, adding that 2019 has seen lots of updates in the community. “The flooring in the pavilion has been replaced with a beautiful, wood-like flooring for a long life span and to help keep the pavilion looking pristine, and a treadmill was provided so the residents can continue to keep healthy in the winter months.”

In addition to cultivating a raised bed community garden, residents often gather in the pavilion, including for a Mother’s Day brunch and summer barbeque.

“Seniors living at Prairie Gardens have let us know they love the property and the units,” said Kelly Clarke, Land Bank Director. “It really is beautiful and has been transformative when we look back at the blighted tuberculosis sanitarium that was demolished.”
When the Land Bank first became involved with the block just five years ago, Washington Square was 50 percent vacant. Through focused efforts that involved community input, planning, developing, and many partners, Washington Square has transformed into a welcoming, sustainable commercial corridor. Today, the Square boasts Pho on the Block, Kzoo Nutrition, Community Promise Credit Union, Tremolo Guitar Shop, and two spirited murals by Edison artist Patrick Herschberger. And the Square continues to grow!

Two new restaurants, currently under development, will open in 2020. With its location central to the Washington Square branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library, the Bank Street Farmer’s Market, and the Edison Neighborhood Association, the corridor has become both a neighborhood gathering and destination spot. The bold vision has been brought to life!

The once dilapidated former Color Lab site, 1324 Portage Street, is undergoing transformation to become W & P Diner, owned and to be operated as a vocational training hub by KPEP. Edison residents have listed a family-friendly diner on their neighborhood plan wish lists for decades. The former Jersey Giants Subs location, 1324 Portage Street, will open in 2020 as Frida’s Taqueria, an authentic Mexican restaurant whose name was inspired by colorful Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

With the success of Washington Square established, the Land Bank, as planned, is beginning the process of selling the Washington Square buildings. KPEP purchased 1324 Portage Street in 2018, and 1350 Portage Street, home to Tremolo and seven upstairs apartment units, was sold at fair market value to private ownership in 2019!

“Working with the Land Bank was awesome and we’re excited to open Frida’s. We want the restaurant to be bold and authentic, much like the artist we so love and admire,” said Fernando Aguirre, co-owner with his wife, Hilda, and business partners Thierry and Aurora Hazes. “Washington Square is changing. It feels like a walking-friendly place. Ten years ago, there were no businesses open here for us to stop at. Now we can walk to Pho on the Block. A new breakfast place is planned across the street. When The Creamery is finished, it will boost everything. Washington Square is getting better and better!”
The former Klover Gold Creamery, 1101 Portage St., will soon be the site of a brand new $14.7 million development. The proposed platinum LEED-certified, three story building will feature affordable housing, rooftop terrace, YWCA drop-in day and night care for residents, and additional commercial space. Developed by Hollander Development Corp. and designed by Byce & Associates Inc., the 48,920 square foot mixed-use building has many funding partners, including the City of Kalamazoo, MSHDA and the Michigan Strategic Fund.

The Land Bank “un-paved” the way for the project through demolition of the old Creamery, which had become a safety hazard. Following demolition, the Land Bank created high quality greenspace with native plantings, paths and a butterfly garden until a developer able to execute the community’s 2011 articulated vision was secured.

In 2011, partnering with the Edison Neighborhood Association, the Land Bank gathered ideas and dreams for the mixed-use project. Through a series of meetings convened by the Land Bank and the neighborhood association, the community dreamed up a short and long-term vision for the site. Top on the list for a long-term plan was affordable housing, mixed use, and high-quality design that would create a special place on Portage Street.

“The Land Bank not only coordinated demolition, but gave us a clean site to work with,” said Matt Hollander, President of Hollander Development Corp. “That was pretty huge for us. We would have never been able to do the project had they not given us a vacant site.”

“The Land Bank did robust community engagement around the vision and gave us something to work with that was solidly desired by people in the neighborhood. Having a vision meant we had to protect it. That’s something I thank the Land Bank for. It was difficult. It didn’t make anything faster or easier, but we got a better project in the end as a result of it.” --Matt Hollander, President of Hollander Development Corp.
Nonprofit Partnerships

KPEP BUILDING TRADES

In 2018, the Land Bank’s partnership with Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program expanded to include vocational training for the Building Trades. KPEP residents work side-by-side with contractors to rehabilitate houses, learning tangible skills while earning OSHA10 and CPR certificates. Female participation in the program has been progressively climbing, with some 2019 rehabs including as much as half who were women, said Lindsay Marshall, KPEP’s Chief Operating Officer.

“The skills the women are learning in what is traditionally a predominantly male field has shown them they are just as capable,” said Lindsay. “The women are proud of their work. They strive for perfection. And they really enjoy the opportunity.”

COMMON GROUND

Common Ground is a community garden hub that connects area gardeners by being a source of shared information, resources and support. As a partnership between Vibrant Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo County Land Bank, Kalamazoo County MSU Extensions & Master Gardeners, and the KVCC ValleyHUB at the Food Innovation Center, Common Ground supports community garden projects throughout Kalamazoo County with a special emphasis on low-income and food-insecure residents.

Common Ground hosts annual summer guided bicycle and trolley garden tours, as well as a popular Plant Giveaway with vegetable and herb starts at the KVCC Food Innovation Center each spring.

The Common Ground Garden Tours, both by bicycle and trolley, are popular summer events.
Thank You, Partners!

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
ABC Supply Co.  
Abode Building Center  
All State Crane and Rigging  
Andrew MacKay  
Anthony Brooks  
Bank of America  
Bartholomew Heating & Cooling  
Best Way Disposal  
Bierlein Companies  
Bolle Contracting  
Buddy Hannah  
Byce & Associates  
Carter Lumber  
Chau Nguyen  
Chase Bank  
Chemical Bank  
CJ Drenth  
Community Promise Federal Credit Union  
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Jason McBride Drywall  
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Jim Roberts Construction  
Jim Schuon Photography  
JMB Demolition  
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Juan Ruiz  
Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association  
Kalamazoo Farmers Mark  
Kalamazoo in Bloom  
Kalamazoo Metal Recyclers  
KalBlue  
Kalsec  
KPEP  
Kzoo Nutrition  
Lake Michigan Credit Union  
Landmark Homes of MI  
Landscaping Plus  
Lee Kellogg  
Lil Brothers BBQ  
Linda Whitlock  
Lolita’s Tacos  
Lyster Exteriors  
Maria Ortiz  
Martz Home Builders, LLC  
Menards  
Mercantile Bank of America  
Michigan Realtors Who Care  
Mi Pueblo Mexican Restaurant  
Michigan LISC AmeriCorps  
Miller Davis Company  
MSUE Master Gardeners  
Naylor Landscape Management  
NewCraft Cabinetry  
Northside Assoc. For Community Development  
OCBA Landscape Architects  
Old National Bank  
On the Ground/Southwest Michigan Second Wave  
Paramount Charter Academy  
Pat Taylor  
Pho on the Block  
PNC Bank  
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Portage Plumbing, Inc.  
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Quality Touch Painting, LLC  
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Rickey Lynch  
River Street Flowerland  
Rooted African Drum & Dance  
Rotary Club of Kalamazoo  
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Ryan Koziatek  
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ServiceMaster of Kalamazoo  
Sidney Ellis  
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T & L Rental & Inflatables  
The Campus Beet  
Tremolo Guitar Shop  
Trybal Revival Gardens  
Vague Photography  
Vine Neighborhood Assoc.  
Walnut & Park Cafe  
Warner Norcross & Judd  
Washington Square Co-op Senior Apartments  
Waterways, LLC  
Wausau Homes Kalamazoo  
Wild Ones - Kalamazoo  
William Hicks  
WKZO - WVFM  
WMUK  
Wolthuis Brothers Concrete Construction  
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City of Parchment  
City of Portage  
Comstock Township  
Cooper Township  
Kalamazoo County  
Kalamazoo Township  
Oshtemo Township  
Schoolcraft Township  
Texas Township  
Village of Climax  
Village of Schoolcraft  
Village of Vicksburg  
Wakeshma Township  
NON-PROFIT & FOUNDATION PARTNERS  
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Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Kalamazoo  
Building Blocks of Kalamazoo  
Center for Comm. Prog. Community Homeworks  
Consumers Energy Foundation  
Dorothy Dalton Foundation  
El Concilio  
First Source Foundation  
Friends of the KRVT  
Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation  
Irvings Gilmore Foundation  
Jim Gilmore Jr. Foundation  
Kalamazoo Community Foundation  
Kalamazoo County MSU Extension  
Kalamazoo County Parks Foundation  
Kalamazoo in Bloom  
Kalamazoo Nature Center  
Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services  
Kalamazoo Public Library  
Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety  
Kalamazoo River Watershed Council  
Kalamazoo Valley Community College  
Kalamazoo Valley Habitat for Humanity  
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts  
KVCC Food Innovation Center  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Michigan Association of Land Banks  
Michigan CLASS  
Michigan Homeowners Assistance Nonprofit Housing Corp.  
Michigan State Housing Development Association  
Michigan Land Bank Fast Track Authority  
Michigan Municipal League  
Mt. Zion Baptist Church  
Northside Ministerial Alliance  
Okun Foundation  
Open Roads Bike Program  
Stryker Johnston Foundation  
Suzanne Upjohn DeLano Parish Foundation  
Tyler Little Foundation  
Urban Alliance

Thank You, Partners!
What’s Next?

Eastside Square: A Neighborhood Dream

Eastside residents have a can do attitude when it comes to re-visioning nine parcels of land the Land Bank assembled on the 1600 block of East Main Street. The Land Bank gathered ideas during a series of charrettes in the spring and summer, which were attended by over 200 residents. Eastsiders envisioned a family-friendly district that “blends in, but stands out,” and reflects the “comforts of home.” Suggestions for uses included a family-friendly diner, outdoor pocket plazas, and an interim gathering spot for food trucks to help understand what the neighborhood would like and what could be possible.

In the fall, the Land Bank asked Lil Bros Food Truck, a local vendor, to provide their amazing barbeque at the final charrette meeting where residents viewed and commented on drawings and vision for Eastside Square. When residents were asked what they liked most about the plans, by far the greatest response was New Development! Eastsiders are ready to see something new on East Main, once a corridor that hosted many neighborhood businesses. Plans for the development include retail space, pocket plazas and moderately-sized and moderately-priced condominium units. These condominium units would be an alternative to more expensive downtown condominium units and a pathway to ownership for households interested in smaller living units or an option for individuals no longer wishing to upkeep their larger and older home.

“With the Land Bank’s and Vibrant Kalamazoo’s help drawing out voices from the neighborhood on this question, a design standard has evolved about what the neighborhood character needs to be: warm, welcoming and celebratory,” said Pat Taylor, Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association Director.

Your Land Bank is Turning 10!

Over the last 10 years in the State of Michigan, land banks have revolutionized the way in which blighted, abandoned and tax-foreclosed properties have been repurposed and returned to the tax roles. In 2020, your Kalamazoo County Land Bank is turning 10. Throughout the year, we will be reflecting on our history, attending to our present projects, and visioning for the next 10 years and more. Please plan on celebrating this important birthday with us later in 2020! More details to come!