

# Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority 2021 Annual Report

Repurpose. Renew. Reconnect.



## A Message from the Board Chair & Interim Director

Despite pandemic-related challenges in 2021, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank staff and board are proud to share that we've maintained the agency's high standards regarding our property acquisition programs, redevelopment projects, accessibility and support for small developers, and advances that support diversity, equity and inclusion through our policies and staff, board and committees.

After the pause in construction during 2020, the Land Bank resumed its plans for Eastside Square, a mixed-use affordable housing redevelopment on the city's Eastside. The first phase, the Eastside Sunrise Plaza, which was supported by local philanthropic organizations and a Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs grant, was completed in late summer to an enthusiastic reception by residents. The plaza has sense been host to resident gatherings and celebrations.

In 2021, the Land Bank continued its stewardship of nearly 400 properties. Both debris and tree removal intensified during the pandemic, which had a significant impact on maintenance expenses. In our ongoing work to connect these properties to residents and nonprofits who plan to build affordable housing, we created a popular Small Developer Training which is posted on our website.

As one of its board-adopted Core Values, the Land Bank acknowledges systemic racism which is a context of our work. With that awareness in mind, the Land Bank team has been working tirelessly to implement equitable policy changes and inclusion. Our staff, board and committees all reflect increased diversity, representation that has helped deepen and enrich our work of reconnecting the properties in our care to those who intend to use them to support county, municipal and neighborhood desires.

The past year also brought some unanticipated events. In July, a large fire destroyed a Merchants Crossing building at 20 Mills, and in the fall of 2021, the Land Bank's founding and long-time director Kelly Clarke announced she was leaving for another position. Though it was difficult to say goodbye, we are grateful that Kelly left a legacy of transformational redevelopment projects across the county, positive and impactful stewardship, and a vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion for the agency.

Throughout the year, staff and board worked to proceed with our ever-more important work of repurposing, renewing, and reconnecting. Thank you for allowing us to share these successes with you in the following pages.

We hope you'll join us.

Sincerely,

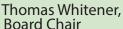
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Thomas Whitener KCLBA Board Chair

J. Coty O'Nel

Theresa Coty O'Neil Interim Director

#### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**



Kalamazoo County Treasurer Carl Roberts, Vice Chair Retired V.P. Engineering, BorgWarner Thermal Systems

#### Brian Hudson, Treasurer & Secretary Executive Director, Chase Commercial Banking

#### Rebekah Kik Director of Community, Planning & Development, City of Kalamazoo

Holly Crump Senior Weath Manag. Assoc. Greenleaf Trust



Qianna Decker Escrow Specials, Amerifirst Home Mortgage City of Kal. Commissioner

#### Elizabeth Schlott Supports Coordinator, Integ. Serv. of Kalamazoo

#### Kalamazoo County Liaisons





Veronica McKissack

## Land Bank Team

#### STAFF



Kelly Clarke Executive Director & Past MALB President



Theresa Coty O'Neil Communications & Grants Manager Interim Director



Reality Rojas Senior Operations Coordinator



Tammy Lahman Finance Manager



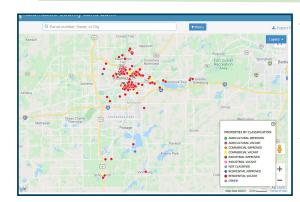
l'yanna Wilson Communications Intern

Thanks to Tammy Lahman for her years of dedicated service to the Land Bank. Special thanks to founding director Kelly Clarke for her 11 years of impactful leadership.



## PARTNER WITH US!

We've worked hard to make sure our programs and information are accessible for everyone. With 307 parcels in our inventory, the Land Bank is eager to continue our work with residents, small business partners, and developers. If you have questions, we're happy to answer them!



This map features our Property Search Engine that is located on the righthand corner of our website.

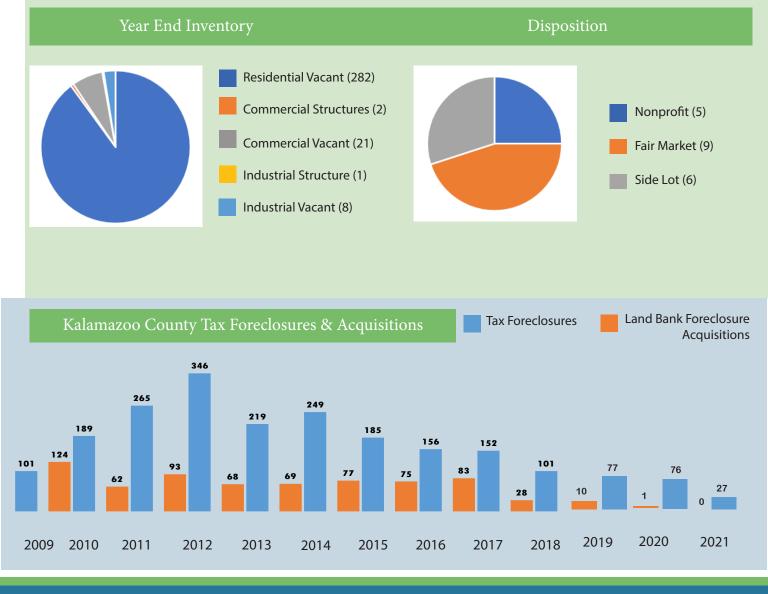
Check out our website for Zoom training opportunities for overview of the database and Land Bank programs to browse our inventory.



1523 Riverview Drive, Suite A Kalamazoo, MI 49004 269.762.6191 landbank@kalamazoolandbank.org

## Progress by the Numbers

In 2021, a total of 339 properties were managed in our inventory and 20 properties were returned to the tax rolls. Titles have been cleared on 331 parcels through Quiet Title. The Land Bank acquired 0 parcels through the tax foreclosure process in 2021, and completed 9 Fair Market sales, 6 Side Lot sales, and 5 Nonprofit Lot sales. Tax foreclosures have again significantly decreased. In 2021, there were 27 tax foreclosures representing the lowest number in over a decade. In addition, there were zero owner-occupied tax foreclosures in the County of Kalamazoo.



# Nonprofit Partners & Property Stewardship

In alignment with Kalamazoo County's commitment to housing for all as demonstrated by the historical passage of the Kalamazoo County Housing Millage, the Land Bank stewards and maintains buildable vacant parcels and repurposes those lots to support neighborhood, City, and County plans for increasing affordable housing stock.

The Land Bank's Nonprofit Property Transfer Program was well-utilized this year and included such partners as the Northside Association for Community Development, Habitat for Humanity, Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., Young Kings and Queens, and the City of Kalamazoo. With a mission to repurpose, renew and reconnect property with the community, the Land Bank invests considerable time and resources to manage the maintenance. This includes mowing, trimming, tree removal and debris removal. The Land Bank is proud to have connected five parcels this past year with nonprofits in the county that plan to build affordable housing, with another 20 parcels under option for future nonprofit projects.

## FIRE DESTROYS 20 MILLS

After 12 years of stewarding properties, including hundreds of demolitions of blighted buildings during the Great Recession, the Land Bank currently has only two standing structures in its inventory, one of which is pending demolition. The other structure, at 20 Mills (Merchants Crossing), is the remaining rear part of a building which was home to a former printing press. The front part of the building was destroyed by fire in the summer of 2020 and is in the early stages of plans for reconstruction. When the white box redevelopment is completed, the Land Bank hopes to have the new construction to be well-utilized by a community partner.

#### PROPERTY MAINTENANCE



Habitat for Humanity volunteers work on the final Eastside Gateway home. The Land Bank completed its portion of the Eastside Gateway in 2020.





As a steward of the over 300 proprties in its inventory, the Land Bank spends an average of \$414 per lot each season to ensure the parcels are mown and trimmed. This cost does not include debris or tree removal, both of which have increased in price and quanity since the pandemic.

The Land Bank is grateful for its contracting services, Valley Vision Construction and Development with owner Darnell Clay and 2nd Chance Lawn Care with owner Thomas White, for their comittment to tending of Land Bank parcels throughout the county.



## The Sun Rises on the Eastside

## EASTSIDE SUNRISE PLAZA





The Eastside Sunrise Plaza Design Team gathers to break ground in spring of 2021.

The Eastside Sunrise Plaza, conceived in partnership with the Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association and with the support of a Design Team of local artists, was completed in September. The plaza is the first stage in a larger community-envisioned redevelopment project called Eastside Square, which will feature one and two-bedroom affordable housing units and commercial space.





"The plaza gives residents some bragging rights" said Pat Taylor, KENA Director. "It also gives the broader community a way to look at the Eastside and see things do happen over here. It just takes a little creativity, imagination, and effort."

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council for





## Eastside Redevelopment

#### EASTWOOD KPL LIBRARY EVENTS

Buddy Hannah, Eastside radio personality, poet, DJ, playwright, actor, director and teacher, and Gerald King, conceptual artist, former Eastside resident, and photographer, discussed the making of Eastside Sunrise Plaza at 1616 E. Main, at a Kalamazoo Public Library event.

Buddy shared stories about Kalamazoo's Eastside neighborhood and talked about the haiku he wrote inspired by those stories which have been inscribed in ceramic tiles and placed throughout the plaza. Gerald discussed the creation of his 30-minute documentary on the project which was supported by Public Media Network.

To view the Eastside Sunrise Plaza documentary, please visit our website at kalamazoolandbank. org and check under Transformational Projects.



#### PROJECT BACKGROUND:

In 2019, Buddy Hannah and co-coordinator Sid Ellis, in partnership with the Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association and the Kalamazoo County Land Bank, spearheaded the training of youth in interviewing 17 current and former residents for Eastside Voices. Elements of the stories have been artistically conveyed in a semi-permanent mural by former Eastside resident Gerald King, and in a permanent art installation by Conrad Kaufman at the Eastside Gateway Pocket Park on East Main and Phelps.

#### THANK YOU, PLAZA PARTNERS!

The Kalamazoo County Land Bank is incredibly grateful for the support from its many community partners: Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, Stryker Johnston Foundation, Dorothy U. Dalton Foundation, Suzanne Upjohn Delano Parrish Foundation, Marvin & Rosalie Okun Foundation, Jim Gilmore Jr. Foundation, Tyler Little Foundation, Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation, Fifth Third Foundation, Old National Foundation, and Huntington Foundation. After construction delays due to the pandemic, plans are to break ground on Eastside Square in late 2022.

#### KENA PURCHASES 1802 E. MAIN



With small developer support from Land Bank staff, KENA has purchased 1808 East Main, one of the last commercial buildings in the Land Bank's inventory. Plans are underway for development with ideas including an entrepreneurial hub for residents or a diner.



As momentum develops on East Main, residents have expressed they are excited to see the new changes. The City of Kalamazoo has repaved the streets and offered grants for façade improvements for both residents and businesses. We're excited to see what 2022 brings to a dormant commercial corridor that is finally getting some well-deserved love.

## **Riverview Launch**

The Land Bank offices are in Riverview Launch, a transformational redevelopment on Riverview Drive. Located on the River Valley Trail, the launch is shared with our tenants: Open Roads, Kalamazoo River Watershed Council, and Farmers Bloom, an organic flower grower that occupies the greenhouse. The grounds include drought-tolerant gardens, native plantings, butterfly gardens, a view of the river, places to rest or picnic, and a big red barn. Our indoor facilities include a large conference room and hub with kitchen that opens to create an indoor/ outdoor gathering space. Rentals are available on a limited basis. If interested in visiting or renting the facility, please inquire at landbank@ kalamazoolandbank.org.



We welcome all to use the trail behind the offices with free after-hours and weekend parking in the front of the building. Several benches provide places to rest and watch the monarchs that visit the waystation.

Photos by Fran Dwight.



# **Riverview** Launch



A combination of native plant restoration and perennial gardens provide beauty and tranquility in all seasons.



The Directional Sign, created by local artist Conrad Kaufman, provides a list of distances to various sites along the trail.

## **Riverview Launch Tenants**

#### FARMERS BLOOM FLOWER COMPANY, OWNER, KRISTIANA COUTU

Farmers Bloom had a busy 2021. Floral supply chains were disrupted due to pandemic-related shipping delays and weather issues in South America. Since the vast majority of the fresh flowers in the U.S. are imported, this left florists and event designers scrambling.

"We were able to help fill the void with our local flowers, providing a practical and meaningful solution," said Owner Kristiana Coutu.

In line with a commitment to the environment, Farmers Bloom also obtained Michigan Agricultural. Environmental Assurance Program verification for the greenhouse





#### OPEN ROADS BICYCLE PROGRAM

Open Roads had a milestone year in 2021 from receiving their largest grant ever to reconfiguring the shop space into a comfortable and educational environment. Open Roads has been able to utilize on community support to continue fulfilling their mission of empowering and engaging youth through bicycles to learn practical life skills for the future. "In 2021, over 250 students joined for Open Shop sessions and learned to fix their own bikes, and we were delighted to expand our hours on Saturday," said Isaac Green, Executive Director. "Open Roads is a proud supporter of after-school learning and is grateful for the community support we have received."

#### KALAMAZOO RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council takes a science-based approach to advocate for protecting and improving the river and all the tributaries, lakes, wetlands, and lands within the Kalamazoo River watershed—connecting communities across 10 counties in Southwest Michigan. In 2021, the KRWCs coordinated in-person paddle and cleanup events. The KRWC also led efforts to inform the public about progress in restoring the health of the Kalamazoo River, and about remaining challenges that hinder the health and use of the river, including PCBs, PFAS, and loss of sediment from Morrow Dam.



## Vibrant Kalamazoo

## SUPPORTING FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS AND OUR PARTNERS

Vibrant Kalamazoo, a 501(c)3 supporting organization, is the community engagement and fundraising arm of the Kalamazoo County Land Bank. In 2021, Vibrant gathered a robust group of engaged board members, Land Bank board members, staff, nonprofit leaders, neighborhood leadership, and bankers to provide financial literacy, resources, and home ownership preparation for low-income residents, People of Color, and Non-English Speakers. Out of this committee, a Facebook page, called Pathways to Homeownership, has been created. The committee, partnering with Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association, helps to organize and staff KENA's annual Show Me the Money Day.



## AFFIRMATIVE MARKETING CAMPAIGN





The Affirmative Marketing Campaign, a committee that seeks to address issues of inequity in homeownership by offering coaching, resources and financial education helped plan and staff KENA's 2021 Show Me the Money Day held at the Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association.

## VIBRANT KALAMAZOO BOARD:



Thomas Whitener, Board Chair Treasurer, Kalamazoo County



Adrian Vazquez

Director, El Concilio

Holly Crump, Vice Chair Vice President, TCF National Bank



Juliet Altman Realtor and Interpreter

Vice President & General Counsel,

Ian Kennedv

Kalsec, Inc.



Paul Valentin Realtor, Jaqua Realtors



Kelly Clarke, Ex Officio Executive Director, KCLBA



# Engaging with the Community

#### SPREADING THE WORD

Thanks to the generous support of Public Media Network, the Land Bank launched into podcasting, both with On the Spot with I'yanna, a show featuring our community partners and hosted by Communication Intern I'yanna Wilson and with Kalamazoo, Let's Talk about Money, a podcast hosted by radio show personality Buddy Hannah sponsored by the Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association.



In 2021, On the Spot with I'yanna was created in partnership with Public Media Network to highlight work by our partners.

Kalamazoo, Let's Talk Money features local bankers, financial experts and lending agents with "downhome advice" for those who want to learn how to better manage their money. The podcast includes a Spanish edition in partnership with El Concilio. To listen to podcasts, please check them out on the Public Media Network website.



ublic media

KALAMAZOO EASTSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



The Land Bank staffed a table at El Concilio's Dio De Los Muertos and enjoyed the festivities while sharing information about its programs and the upcoming Eastside Square.



Kalamazoo Pathways to Homeownership, a Facebook page with resources and support for first-time homebuyers, is sponsored by the Land Bank and its Affirmative Marketing Committee.

#### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!





# Supporting New Ventures

#### WASHINGTON SQUARE RENEWAL COMPLETE!

In 2021, the Land Bank sold its final Washington Square properties to Black Wall Street, which included the development Twine Urban Winery, the area's first black female-owned winery, and to Ty's Joint, a southern soul food restaurant located on the corner of Lake and Portage, former home to Pho on the Block. W & P Diner, a family-style restaurant run by the Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program (KPEP) that will also serve as a way to train cooks and serving staff plans to open in 2022. After nearly 10 years of redevelopment work in partnership with the Edison Neighborhood Association, the Land Bank is thrilled to see the historic, commercial corridor include diverse and neighborhood-based tenants. The success of the revival of Washington Square is testament to the power of focused work among many partners to help a neighborhood's vision come alive.



Restraunteur Tyrone Griffis opened Ty's Joint, a popular eating spot that serves "casual but sophisticated" food.



William DeBoer, KPEP Executive Director, proudly explains the layout for W & P Diner. After construction delays due to the pandemic, plans are to open the diner in 2022.



Twine Urban Winery is Southwest Michigan's first black, female-owned winery and tasting room. Featured wines are the Roche Collection, a local luxury and fruity blend.

#### BLACK WALL STREET

During the pause that the pandemic created for many who worked in the public sector, local psychologist and Kalamazoo's Black Wall Street founder Nicole Triplett said a combined gift of time to focus and crisis support from the government allowed her to bring her urban winery plans to fruition.

"Washington Square was at one point its own downtown," said Triplett on choosing to locate her business there. "The Land Bank recognizes the need to make financially-sound decisions while staying focused on community. Money was not the major driving force. Community was. And I appreciate that."

BLACK - KALAMAZOO

Black Wall Street increases awareness and visibility of Black businesses through social, marketing and educational experiences.



Nicole Triplett, owner of Twine Urban Winery and founder of Black Wall Street Kalamazoo, and Kelly Clarke, Land Bank Exec. Dir., celebrate the Washington Square closing.

# Looking Ahead

#### PRAIRIE GARDENS TURNS 10!

In 2012, the first 14 units of Prairie Gardens, a transformational redevelopment situated on the highest point in the City of Kalamazoo were completed. A former tuberculosis sanitorium, the six-acre site became home to an attractive, mixed-income housing community for seniors with accessible, energy-efficient cottagestyle duplexes. Today this popular senior community boasts 24 units, a clubhouse, and a raised bed community garden.





## AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Land Bank is honored to be a partner in the Northside Association for Community Development's visionary plans to create 17 affordable houses on 21 parcels on the Northside. Funding efforts are currently underway for this exciting project supported by the City of Kalamazoo.





Kalamazooo Neighborhood Housing Services purchased four lots on Rose and Egleston on which they plan to build four-bedroom, two-bath, affordable houses.



#### YOUNG KINGS & QUEENS

Young Kings & Queens is a Kalamazoo nonprofit run by Takisha Johnson that provides services and support to teens in foster care. They have purchased property on South Burdick to construct a building that will provide affordable one-bedroom apartments to young adults transitioning from the foster care system. The project will also include a community boxing gym. For more information on their plans and the organization, please see Takisha's podcast interview on On the Spot with I'yanna on the Public Media Network website.

# Core Values & Small Developer Training

## CORE VALUES

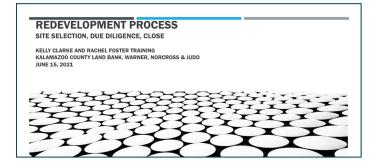
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The following Core Values were adopted by the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Board in 2020 to inform the basis for our work.



#### SMALL DEVELOPER TRAINING

Recognizing the challenges of small development projects for individuals and small nonprofits, especially those that seek to address the need for affordable housing, Land Bank Executive Director Kelly Clarke, Rachel Foster, legal counsel with Warner Norcoss + Judd, LLP, along with many nonprofit and municipality leaders, collaborated on a virtual small developer training.



Training topics included building a team, selecting a lot, deciphering zoning, and approaching construction. Over 100 people registered for the popular training which was recorded and posted on the Land Bank's website at kalamazoolandbank.org.

Thank you to these partners!



## Thank You, Partners!

#### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Abode Building Center All State Crane and Rigging Andrew MacKay Anthony Brooks Bank of America Bartholomew Heating & Cooling Buddy Hannah Byce & Associates Carter Lumber Chase Bank Chemical Bank CJ Drenth Community Promise Federal Credit Unión Conrad Kaufman Country Lane Electric, Inc. Cutting Edge Dale Abbott & Tomme Maile DeLoof Builders, LLC DeVisser Landscape Services DLZ Michigan Douglas & Son, Inc. Edison Neighborhood Assoc. Edison Business Association Eikenhout, Inc. Envirologic Technologies ETNA Supply Fabri-Kal Fader Equipment Farmers Bloom Fifth Third Bank Fran Dwight Photography Foundation for Excellence Gerald King Glas Associates Great Lakes Waterproofing Company Greater Kalamazoo Association of Realtors Heritage Community of Kalamazoo Holly Crump Hoeksema Builders, LLC Hoekstra Roofing

Home Builders Association Home Energy Solutions Howard Printing Howard's Party Store Huntington Bank Hutcherson Construction InForm Architects Intrepid Professional Group Janette Evans Jaqua Realtors Jason McBride Drywall Jerome Gates Jim Roberts Construction Jim Schuon Photography IMB Demolition JP Sanderson Insulation LLC Juan Ruiz Kalamazoo Eastside Neighborhood Association Kalamazoo Farmers Market 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 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 Southwest MI Second Wave Paramount Charter Academy Pat Taylor PNC Bank Portage Building Components Portage Plumbing, Inc. Porter Corp Public Media Network Quality Touch Painting, LLC Revite Group Rickey Lynch River Street Flowerland Rootead African Drum & Dance Rotary Club of Kalamazoo Rossman Homes Rvan Koziatek Sackett's Flooring Solutions ServiceMaster of Kalamazoo Sidney Ellis Signature Wiring, LLC The Campus Beet Tremolo Guitar Shop Twine Urban Winerv Ty's Joint 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 MUNICIPAL PARTNERS City of Kalamazoo

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 NONPROFIT &

#### FOUNDATION PARTNERS

Ascension Borgess Fdn. Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo Black Wall Street Boys & Girls Clubs of Gréater Kalamazoo Building Blocks of Kalamazoo Burdick-Thorne Foundation. Comm. Economic Dev. Assoc. of Michigan 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 Irving S. Gilmore Fdn. Jim Gilmore Jr. Fdn. 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

Mich. Council for the Arts & Cultural Affairs

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

Parker Foundation

Stryker Johnston Foundation

Suzanne Upjohn DeLano Parish Foundation

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Rootead

Urban Folk Art Exploratory Tyler Little Foundation Urban Alliance

# Eastside Square is on its way!

