

KALAMAZOO COUNTY
LANDBANK
2015 Annual Report

Repurpose. Renew. Reconnect.

A Message from the Board

Now in our sixth year, the Kalamazoo County Land Bank Authority continues to be a community and economic development tool for all of Kalamazoo County. We are a governmental authority that manages tax foreclosed properties in Kalamazoo County with the end goal of returning the properties back to productive use and creating vibrant communities. Every year, we receive a new inventory of tax foreclosed parcels through the Kalamazoo County Treasurer. Our work includes managing blight, stabilizing, renovating and selling properties, establishing community gardens and revitalizing the neighborhoods that surround our properties.

In 2015, the Land Bank reached another milestone and completed the redevelopment of the former Riverside Greenhouse. This previously foreclosed and abandoned structure was transformed into a community jewel. We are very proud of the work, the partnerships, and the community who encouraged us with their vision and financial support.

This past year we completed our senior housing development, known as Prairie Gardens. This project sits on the site of the severely blighted former Tuberculosis Sanitarium on Blakeslee Street. It was a dream of community leaders that this beautiful site would be re-developed. The complex is now 100% occupied with a community of seniors who have the opportunity to live in comfortable, affordable housing. We would like to thank MSHDA for making this project possible, and the design and build teams at Byce & Associates and Glas Associates for their excellent work and partnership with the Land Bank.

Thank you for your interest in the work we are doing. We continue to believe this is important and necessary work that makes good use of public dollars. Finally, I offer my sincere gratitude for the board, staff, funders and the community who make all of this work happen.

With Gratitude,



Mary Balkema
Chair, Board of Directors

THANK YOU!

We couldn't continue repurposing, renewing and reconnecting vacant spaces in Kalamazoo without the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners, who so generously support the work of the Land Bank.



Mary Balkema
Board Chair

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Amanda Wilholt
Administrative Assistant

In 2015, the Land Bank moved our offices into Riverview Launch – a newly renovated community asset transformed from a blighted and foreclosed greenhouse. While speaking about early work on this site, Gordon Evans of WMUK asked "Was your initial goal to take an impossible task and move it from impossible to difficult?"

This question is indicative of the challenges we face in Kalamazoo and in cities across the state that share a common legacy of blight. Residents on blocks with foreclosed and abandoned properties struggle with declining property values, health and safety issues, and trash dumping. Long abandoned commercial and industrial structures drain community confidence. At first glance, the task of creating something brighter from this legacy of decline often seems impossible.

At the same time, academics, community activists, residents, business leaders, public sector leaders and non profits are talking now more than ever about what makes great urban places – places that inspire, promote the outdoors, and increase connectivity between and amongst the diverse set of people that make up communities.

We are continuously reminded of the resilience and creativity of our community. When invited, hundreds have participated in transforming previously vacant spaces to community places while bringing their ideas, talents, time, leadership, energy and enthusiasm. We have highlighted many of these stories in the annual report and extend our sincere thanks to a big-hearted community that makes all of this work possible.

Best regards,



Kelly Clarke
Executive Director



KALAMAZOO COUNTY
LANDBANK

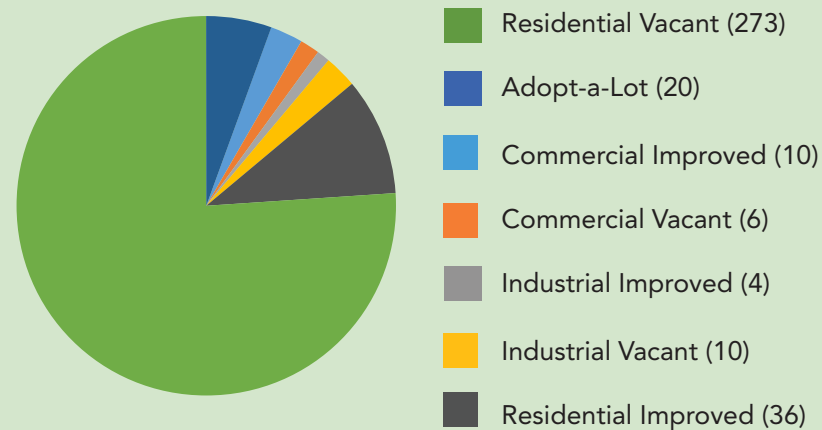
1523 Riverview Drive, Suite A
Kalamazoo, MI 49004
269.762.6191
landbank@kalamazoolandbank.org

Progress by the Numbers

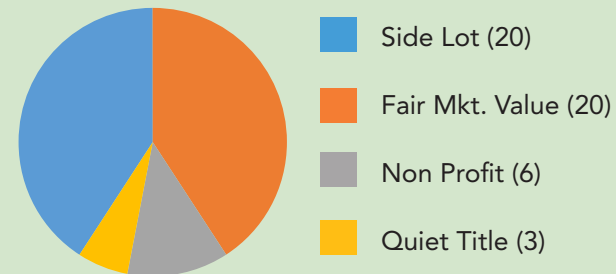
In 2015, the Land Bank worked to repurpose vacant, abandoned, foreclosed, and blighted properties. A total of 49 properties were returned to productive use in 2015.

The Land Bank acquired 77 parcels through the tax foreclosure process in 2015, handled 20 Fair Market Value sales, 6 Non Profit sales, and 3 Quiet Title transactions.

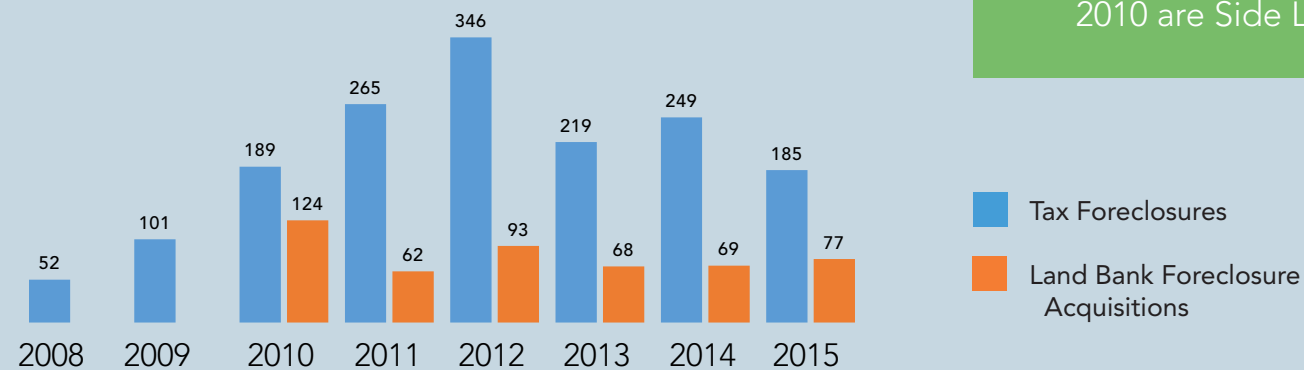
Year End Inventory



Disposition

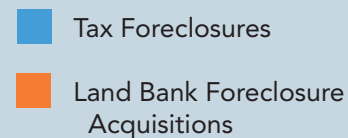


Kalamazoo County Tax Foreclosures & Acquisitions



Did You Know...?

Nearly half of all properties sold by the Land Bank since 2010 are Side Lots



Washington Square

1315 PORTAGE - VACANT TO VIBRANT

Washington Square gained momentum in 2015 and is moving toward vibrancy once again thanks to the efforts of the Land Bank and our partners, who worked to bring empty spaces like the one at 1315 Portage Street back to active use.

The Irving S. Gilmore Foundation supported the renovation of 1315 Portage Street, which enabled the opening of the Washington Square Market. This partnership with the People's Food Co-op team gave artisans and local entrepreneurs a beautiful space to display and sell their goods, and room for performers like Rooted African Dance & Drums to showcase their talents.

In 2016, the Land Bank and People's Food Co-op team will be working together to transition the suite at 1315 Portage to a permanent tenant who will utilize the space for offices or a retail shop.

Down a few doors from the Washington Square Market is 1301 Portage, a cornerstone space that was once a bank, drug store, and host to numerous other businesses over the years. The once blighted facade received a makeover that was completed in 2015, thanks to funding from the City of Kalamazoo. Exciting things are in store for this space in 2016, as the Land Bank and partners work to give it new life.

"The People's Food Co-op team was excited about the possibilities for activating this space in 2015 and connecting the vendors we work with to a pop-up space for local artisans, right around the corner from the Kalamazoo Farmers' Market. We can't wait to see what's next for Washington Square."

— Chris Dilley
General Manager, People's Food Co-op



Washington Square

BRIGHTENING THE STREETS

Washington Square looked brighter in 2015 thanks to a fresh new streetscape, with overhead building lights, shop signs, and a more pedestrian-friendly street and sidewalk. The City of Kalamazoo repaved Portage Street and installed traffic calming measures to make it easier to walk and bike through the area.



"Community Promise opened its doors for the first time in Washington Square and is committed to this neighborhood. We have been actively involved in the various Art Hop events, joining the business community in welcoming people back to this area. As a financial organization that helps people who aren't served by traditional banking institutions, we've seen the positive effects of community engagement in this neighborhood; it helps raise awareness of our services and brings people together to celebrate the changes happening here."

— Angela Brown
CEO, Community Promise Federal Credit Union

HOLIDAYS IN THE SQUARE

Washington Square rang in the 2015 holiday season with a collaborative Art Hop event, complete with lights, shopping, art, music and dance performances. Every business in the Square participated by hosting artists, musicians, or vendors. Tremolo Guitar Shop invited a jazz trio to play and hosted the youngest ever Art Hop artist, seven-year-old Lily Moaiery.

The Edison Neighborhood Association opened a pop-up thrift shop in a neighboring storefront that had been vacant. The shop volunteers decked the halls with lots of lights, ornaments and holiday cheer, creating a bright and welcoming space for neighborhood residents to find some gently used items, and explore Washington Square.



ART HOP

In May, August, October, and December of 2015, the Square was hopping with interesting activities, art, music, and crowds of people excited to join in. Art Hop in Washington Square brought everything from pumpkins and scarecrows to bagpipers, hula hoopers and unicycles to the formerly vacant spaces on this block. Activities ranged from the fun and silly, like riding in the Big Banana Car, to jamming with the soulful blues band, Groove Platter; Art Hop showcased the exciting energy that's created when people come together to make something brighter in their neighborhood.

"We celebrated Edison Month in August with a full schedule of community-oriented activities, including Art Hop in Washington Square, and Saturdays in the Square events, which brought residents and visitors together to celebrate the amazing diversity and vibrancy of the Edison neighborhood."

— Tammy Taylor, Executive Director
Edison Neighborhood Association

"Rootead had such a great time drumming and dancing at Washington Square, we were invited back two more times. We love to share African roots and culture with our community. We're grateful for the opportunity to spread the love!"



— Kama Mitchell
Rootead African Dance & Drumming

Riverview Launch

NEW BEGINNINGS

The grand opening of Riverview Launch in September was a joyful, fun-filled celebration of the vision, the years of hard work, and the strength of the partnerships that have made this project successful. Over 250 people joined the party and explored the newly renovated spaces - indoors and out - that were made possible by the generosity of the donors on the opposite page, as well as the many volunteers who dug into the work of making this community place beautiful again.

In June, the Land Bank and Open Roads moved into their new home at Riverview Launch, bringing new life to this formerly vacant space. In just three years, the community has rallied to volunteer their time and talent, participate by the hundreds in placemaking events, and raise over \$1.9 million to make this a vibrant place called Riverview Launch.

"Moving into Riverview Launch has increased our capacity to serve youth. In 2015, we were able to host over 160 kids at our new workshop space. Youth from surrounding neighborhoods attended weekly bike repair clinics, Earn-a-Bike programs, and Youth Advisory board meetings in our new space. We were even able to hire a youth Apprentice to help run our new retail shop! Finally having a permanent space has enabled us to host more community members as well as a growing staff and volunteer base. We are incredibly thankful to have a home at Riverview Launch."

— Erin Denay, Executive Director, Open Roads



RIVERVIEW LAUNCH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

SYCAMORE

Irving S. Gilmore Foundation
Kalamazoo Community Foundation
Kalamazoo County
Kalamazoo County Land Bank
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Northwood Foundation
State of Michigan Land Bank
Stryker Johnston Foundation

HERON

Chemical Bank Foundation
Consumers Energy Foundation
Dorothy Dalton Foundation
Harold & Grace Upjohn Foundation
Jim Gilmore, Jr. Foundation
Title-Check, LLC
Tyler Little Family Foundation & Borroughs Corp.

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The Burdick-Thorne Foundation
Environmental Action Fund
Fabri-Kal Foundation
Fleis & VandenBrink
Glas Associates
Havirmill Foundation
The Home Depot
The H.P. & Genevieve Connable Fund
InForm Architecture, LLC
Landscape Forms
Tim & Joy Light
George & Clare Todd
Tom & Kristy VanderMolen

MONARCH

A-1 Refrigeration
Byce & Associates
City of Kalamazoo
John Kittredge
Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority
Naylor Landscape Management
OCBA Landscape Architects
Old National Bank Foundation
Reliable Glass Installers
Roberts Commercial Interiors
Spirit of Community Environment Fund
Warner, Norcross & Judd

PAINTED TURTLE

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Mary Balkema
Larry Bell
Fritz & Marisa Brown
Central Tile & Terrazzo
Kelly Clarke & Thomas Crothers
Cutting Edge
Division 5 Metalworks
Division 7 Contractor DLZ
Douglas Plumbing
Envirologic Technologies
Esper Electric LTD
Becky & John Fulgoni
Handley's Tree Service
Hazelhoff Builders
Integrated Exteriors
Keystone Community Bank
Lam & Associates
McKinney Whitmore
Newhouse Excavating
Old National Bank
Martha Parfet
PMV Custom Finishes

Marc Schupan
James & Lynn Spurr
Martha Todd
Chuck & Peggy Vliek
Vliek Family Fund
Wolthuis Brothers Concrete

HONEY BEE

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Anne Arbetter
Fischell & Family
Herb Ayres
BDO Accounting
Mayor Bobby J. Hopewell
Mike & Catie Boring
Josie Boucher
Sherwood & Kathryn Boudeman
Matthew Burian & Karen Mazei
Kevin Davis
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Samuel Fletcher
Thomas M. & Sandra L. George Family Fund
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The Isacksen Family
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Aaron & Elizabeth Lane-Davies
Brenda Longman
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Chris Tracy & Michelle Tombro Tracy
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Perry & Anne Wolfe

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Amy Bruursema
Anne & Tommy Crothers
Maeve & Gus Crothers
Pat Crowley
Melody Daacon
Michelle Davis
Michael DeDitius
Karen A. Douglas
Violet & Miles Drost
Eppinga
Sarah Frame & Dan Altenritter
Karl Freed
Philip Goff
Darlene Gray

Sharon Hunter
Intentional Yoga
Kathy Jennings
Tammy & Jeff Lahman
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Paul & Elizabeth Lyke
Gail Lyons
Jamie McCarthy
Parchment Garden Club
Senator Margaret O'Brien
Krysta Parmelee
Marc Pineda
Tom & Stephanie Renuart
Robyn Richardson
Kathy Roberts
Pat Taylor
Tammy Taylor
Patricia Timmerman
Robert & Patricia Townsend
David Tunk
Greg Vlietstra
The Wester Family
Stelle D'Oro Williams
Holly Wolfe
Laurel Wolfe
Marjorie Wolfe
Brian & Deb Wood

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

You can still be a part of the Riverview Launch community by supporting this project!
www.Fundly.com/Riverview-Launch

Riverview Launch

EVENTS

Riverview Launch was alive with events ranging from the Grand Opening to the Kalamazoo Water Festival, which brought over 800 people to the site for fun and educational activities centered around the importance of our water resources. Hosted in partnership with the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council and the Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner, Pat Crowley, the Water Festival was held on a bright Saturday in September. This event was a perfect realization of the vision for this site - people and families from all over Kalamazoo enjoying the outdoors and each other in a beautiful, revitalized space.

Pedal to Your Mat returned to Riverview Launch for the second year in a row, allowing over ninety people to enjoy an early morning bike ride on the KRVF and a refreshing yoga session on the lawn.

Go Places also returned to Riverview in 2015 with a showing of the documentary "Landscapes of Longevity" and an in-depth discussion with the filmmakers Asa Eslocker and Harriett Jameson about the intersections between place and health.



Did You Know...?

Riverview Launch facilities are available for event rentals. Find out more at:
www.RiverviewLaunch.com

COMMUNITY GARDENING

Working with friends and partners in the Common Ground community gardening collaboration, the Land Bank helped organize the 2015 Plant Start Giveaway and Community Garden Tour. The Community Garden Shed kept busy with gardeners borrowing tools to use in creating and maintaining their gardens.

In May, the Kalamazoo Nature Center kicked off the Plant Start Giveaway by providing a wide variety of plant starts of heirloom tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and lettuce for sixteen gardeners to use in their community gardens around Kalamazoo.

In July, twenty five people boarded a trolley and another fourteen set off on their bikes for the 4th Annual Community Garden Tour. The tour highlighted the hard work of community gardeners all over the area, from Fruit of the Vine, in Kalamazoo's Vine neighborhood, to the Kfirst Community Garden in Portage. In its first three years, Kfirst's team of volunteer gardeners have harvested over 12,000 lbs of fresh produce, which was donated to local ministries who serve people in need.



Common Ground



Land Bank Programs



SIDE LOT

The Side Lot Program gives neighbors and community members the opportunity to purchase vacant lots that result from recent demolitions. Since 2010, 138 lots have been sold through the Side Lot program. In 2015, twenty lots were repurposed to expand yards, improve quality of life in Kalamazoo neighborhoods, and contribute to the tax base.



"I have big plans for this yard. After finishing the fence, I plan on putting in a nice lawn, flowers, and landscaping this area so my family can enjoy being outside and my daughter can play in a safe area."

— Juan Nunez

Edison Neighborhood Resident & Side Lot Owner

ADOPT-A-LOT

Adopt-a-lots are vacant land leased to a neighbor or community group who agrees to care for the land, and in return uses the lot to create a garden or enjoy more green space in their neighborhood. In 2015, twenty vacant lots were adopted out for community or individual use, reducing the burden of maintenance on the Land Bank, and allowing neighbors to make vacant spaces in their community a little brighter.

The Ranney-Orborne garden is an Adopt-a-lot in the Vine neighborhood, brought back to life in 2015 as a part of the revitalization efforts of a group who have worked to make an positive impact in a targeted section



"The Ranney-Orborne resident action group, initiated by Building Blocks of Kalamazoo, has sustained resident-driven development efforts since 2012. We've found that energetic and collaborative efforts between residents and agencies within a neighborhood are linked to sustainable improvements in the quality of neighborhood life. We are excited, inspired, and encouraged by the work of groups such as Ranney-Orborne and hope to continue similar initiatives in Kalamazoo."

— Carrie Drake, Executive Director, Building Blocks of Kalamazoo



RESPONSIBLE DISPOSITION

The Land Bank had thirty six vacant homes in its inventory in 2015, many of which needed significant investments to become liveable again. In order to keep these properties from continuing the cycle of blight and decline, the Land Bank sells the houses through the Responsible Disposition program to buyers who have shown they have the capacity and a solid plan to revitalize the home.



Cesar and Angelica Garcia purchased a house on Courtlandt Street, on Kalamazoo's northeast side, through the Responsible Disposition program in 2014. They were ready to make it into their dream home, and have spent the past year rebuilding and transforming it from broken to beautiful. It's hard to recognize the home now, since they added a second story, took down the dilapidated garage, and completely renovated it, inside and out. Without the Garcia's hard work and willingness to see potential in a rough exterior, this house might still be blighted and vacant, instead of the wonderful home they created.

3521 Duke Street has seen a lot of changes over the past year. This property was tax foreclosed in 2012 and became a rental property until it was sold through the Land Bank's Responsible Disposition program in 2015. The purchaser, Scott Shepard, invested over \$30,000 for interior renovations to every room in the house. He sold this freshly rehabbed home within six months to a first time homeowner.

"I saw potential in this property and was happy to have the opportunity to make this a house a home that's an asset to the South Westnedge neighborhood. I'm already making plans with the Land Bank for my next project house."

— Scott Shepard



Blight Elimination

The Land Bank remains committed to reducing blight in Kalamazoo County, which helps prevent property value decline in surrounding homes, reduces health and safety risks to residents, and improves quality of life in struggling neighborhoods. In 2015, the Land Bank participated for the third year in a partnership between local governments in Kalamazoo County. Tax foreclosed properties that were blighted were demolished, with

funding coming in equal parts from the Kalamazoo County Treasurer and the property's municipality. The Land Bank joined this partnership to manage the demolition process. Sixteen blighted properties were demolished in 2015 thanks to this local collaboration. An additional thirteen demolitions were funded by the Kalamazoo County Treasurer, bringing the total to twenty nine unsafe structures demolished in 2015.



1787 Colby, Cooper Township

Kalamazoo County and Cooper Township participated in a 50/50 partnership to fund the demolition of this blighted home on Colby Ave. The Land Bank managed the demolition of this building, and sold the vacant lot to a neighbor through the Side Lot program.



"The Kalamazoo County Land Bank is an awesome partner serving the Kalamazoo community. We work side by side with the Land Bank and Treasurer on 50/50 cost sharing in the elimination of blighted properties, improving the quality of life for the people in our Kalamazoo Strong community!"

— Jeff Sorensen, Cooper Charter Township Supervisor

910 Staples, City of Kalamazoo

This burned out home in Kalamazoo's Northside neighborhood was demolished in 2015 in partnership with the Kalamazoo County Treasurer. The vacant lot was then sold to neighbor Rosalinda Olivarez through the Land Bank's Side Lot Program.



Prairie Gardens

PHASE II

In 2014, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority awarded \$1.4 million to the Land Bank for development of Phase II of Prairie Gardens, a senior housing development on Blakeslee Street in Kalamazoo's Fairmount neighborhood. This area once held a long-vacant Tuberculosis Sanitarium, an unsafe structure that attracted crime to the neighborhood. It was demolished through a partnership with the City of Kalamazoo and Western Michigan University. The Land Bank completed Phase I in 2013; fourteen senior residents, 55 and older, moved into their newly-built accessible and affordable homes. Throughout 2015, the Land Bank worked with construction managers, Byce & Associates and builders, Glas Associates, to complete five additional 1 or 2 bedroom, cottage-style duplexes. In total, there are now twenty four units, and the newest residents have been welcomed into the Prairie Gardens community.



"For 53 years, I lived and raised a family in my house on Douglas Street, just a few blocks away from here. It was time to say goodbye to the house, but I wanted to stay in this neighborhood that has been my home for so long. After two years on the waiting list, I was thrilled to find out I would get to live at Prairie Gardens. It's such a quiet, beautiful place, and I feel lucky to have the chance to make a new home here."

— LaVonna Trowbridge
Prairie Gardens Resident

Thank You Partners!

COMMUNITY/ EVENT VOLUNTEERS & OTHER PARTNERS

Dale Abbott & Tomme
Maile
Bellydance Kalamazoo
BenJammin Educational
Music
BDO Volunteers
Better Than Cake
Angela Brown
Tom Brown
Byce & Associates
Ursula Chapman
City of Kalamazoo Parks
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Coffee Rescue
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Federal Credit Union
Lydia Cook
Crepes by the Lakes
Crescendo Fiddlers
Cutting Edge
Diva of DomesticaShon
Fran Dwight Photography
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Groove Platter
Howard's Party Store
Improv Effects
Intrepid Professional
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Washington Square Market
Greg Wells
Wenke Greenhouses
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Wild Ones - Kalamazoo

Area Chapter
Tammy Wilson
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Ronald Reid
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Chuck Vliet

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City of Portage
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Cooper Township
Kalamazoo County
Kalamazoo Township
Oshtemo Township
Schoolcraft Township
Texas Township
Village of Climax
Village of Schoolcraft
Village of Vicksburg

2015 LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

5/3 Bank

Pitsch Companies

PNC Bank

*The Leadership Circle is a
dedicated group of civic-minded
businesses that support the Land Bank's
mission to create vibrant communities.*

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Kalamazoo Arts Council
Kalamazoo Community
Foundation
Kalamazoo Nature Center
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Open Roads
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