

Seeing Farther

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Collaborative Renovation at the Kalamazoo Farmer's Market

Innovative project partnerships revitalize a pillar of the Kalamazoo community

Sometimes the best way to get your project off the ground is to combine it with other ideas and objectives, using efficient funding to create a bigger impact. The Kalamazoo Farmers Market, a pillar of Bank Street and the Kalamazoo community for over 75 years, has done just that. The market had historically faced various challenges due to economic fluctuations and changing community dynamics. Plans to renovate and upgrade the market had been discussed in the past but struggled to gain traction or implementation.

This changed in 2018, when the nearby Portage Creek Bicentennial Trail was poised to receive substantial funding, rekindling interest in the market's revitalization. The idea of integrating the trail through the market sparked renewed enthusiasm for its renovation. At the same time, the Kalamazoo Engineering Department was working on improving the watermain infrastructure along Lake Street with plans to extend it down Bank Street, enhancing the overall infrastructure in the area and further generating interest in the project at the market.



The market has become a walkable and bikeable destination with connections to nearby neighborhoods and the downtown area.

The Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Department secured grants, including \$100,000 from Consumers Energy and \$521,300 from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, which were pivotal in expanding and renovating the market. The revitalization was divided into two phases for funding purposes, with further funding coming from the City of Kalamazoo, the Foundation for Excellence, and the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation.

Prein&Newhof assisted with the design process throughout the project. **Project Manager Ryan Russell, PE** says, "Phase I focused on realigning Bank Street to enhance safety, increase parking, and improve visibility. It also included substantial upgrades to vendor sheds, new access to the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, a new restroom and office facility, and property acquisitions to provide additional parking space." Phase II also included an event building for the winter market and a playground, further enriching the community's opportunity for engagement and to utilize amenities.

In addition to the project creatively addressing limited space challenges by realigning Bank Street and providing additional parking, it also improved traffic flow for vendors, particularly for the People's Food Co-op box trucks. Designated parking stalls for food trucks were added to accommodate visitors and enhance convenience for outdoor dining.

The construction phase was well-managed by Miller-Davis, with Cornerstone Construction & Builders as the prime contractor and Peters Construction Company serving as the excavating subcontractor. Despite challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, material delays, price increases, and labor shortages, the project was completed on schedule thanks to the team's knowledge and professional expertise.

The site posed environmental challenges due to past contamination from Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and its location within a floodplain. Soil removal and balancing, along with water management solutions to address flooding, were implemented. Coordination with the Michigan Environmental Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) was crucial to address these floodplain and wetlands concerns.

Community relations played a significant role in the project's success. Updates were shared on the city's website and various media outlets to promote transparency and community engagement. Project collaboration involved numerous agencies and organizations, and weekly meetings ensured all stakeholders were consistently informed. Sustainability was also a key focus, with the project incorporating elements such as electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and solar panels on the new restroom and office building.

The Kalamazoo Farmers' Market has undergone a remarkable transformation, with improved entry and exit points, stormwater management solutions, environmental remediation, a new restroom and office building, ample parking, expanded vendor space, and sustainable features. The project is a testament to the power of community collaboration, forward-thinking and planning, and sustainable practices. The revitalization of the market sets a precedent for modernizing and revitalizing assets to promote engagement both within the Kalamazoo community and as a model for other communities to follow.

If you have interest in creating diverse gathering spaces and want to see farther for your community, call Ryan Russell, PE at 616-364-8491.



Realigning Bank Street (vertical to the right) by straightening it at its intersection with Lake Street (horizontal in the distance) allowed for increased parking and improved visibility.



"A beloved asset in our community, the investment made in this important asset will offer an even better experience for the public by having the space for more vendors, entertainment, local goods, and better opportunities for local growers and makers."

*-Sean Fletcher,
Former Parks & Rec Director
City of Kalamazoo*

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Parks and Recreation Funding Opportunities with MDNR

Many of our clients have successfully implemented their parks and recreation projects with the help of 27 different grant programs from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). Our most common success stories have utilized the Natural Resources Trust Fund and the Recreation Passport Grant Program. Each of these opportunities has the potential to benefit your community!

The **Natural Resources Trust Fund** obtains finances from the development of state-owned, profitable resources. Applications are accepted from communities seeking to acquire land for the conservation of natural resources, which can include many opportunities from public facilities to trails. Matching funds are typically a requirement, and other deciding factors include financial need and regional significance. Before applying, the community also needs a five-year recreation plan approved by the MDNR by February 1st. This master plan takes inventory of a community's assets and rates their accessibility while gathering public input and developing goals, objectives, and a prioritized project plan. The five-year recreation plan has proven to be enormously beneficial to communities in many other ways outside of just funding applications.

The **Recreation Passport Grant Program** is another excellent opportunity to fund parks and recreation projects. You've likely noticed that when you renew your driver's license each year, you have the option to add the annual "recreation pass" for a low cost. You may know that this checkbox allows you to enter any state park without additional payment, but do you know where that money goes? It goes right back into your community's recreation facilities. In addition to establishing new amenities, facilities that have been loved and used beyond their "useful life expectancy" are invited to be restored with this grant. Renovated facilities could include kayak launches, splash pads, restrooms, drinking fountains, pickleball and other sport courts, or pavilions. To be eligible for this program, a community must either have an approved five-year recreation plan on file by February 1st or submit a capital improvement plan with their application.

*Need assistance with your grant submittals or want to begin preparing a plan for the following year? Call **Matt Levandoski, PLA** at 616-394-0200.*



The Boardman Lake Loop Trail utilized funding from the Natural Resources Trust Fund.

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