

FOR RELEASE
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**Shop Local Mission Strengthened as Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo Merges
Under the Southwest Michigan First Chamber**

Unification Expands Resources and Support for Locally Owned Businesses in Kalamazoo County

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Southwest Michigan First is pleased to announce that Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo (BLGK) is officially moving under the Southwest Michigan First Chamber. This strategic transition unites efforts to champion small and locally owned businesses throughout Kalamazoo County.

Though Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo will cease to exist in name, its mission to support and promote locally owned businesses will continue and be strengthened through the Chamber’s expanded network of resources and benefits.

By aligning efforts under the Chamber, small business owners will now have a single, streamlined point of contact for the additional tools, resources, and support they need to grow and succeed. This transition ensures that businesses who were members of Buy Local can now gain access to the same level of support, visibility, and partner benefits already available to Chamber members.

“The unification of the shop local mission into the Southwest Michigan First Chamber strengthens our ability to champion and serve locally owned businesses—driving economic development, job creation, and community pride by keeping dollars and partnership opportunity right here at home,” said Clarence Lloyd, vice president of Southwest Michigan First and Chamber director.

Business owners who previously engaged with the former BLGK will now experience greater impact through Chamber membership. Some of the benefits include expanded relationship-building opportunities, exclusive discounts, increased visibility and promotional opportunities, and educational programming specifically for small- and medium-sized businesses.

Whether operating a brick-and-mortar shop, an online storefront, or a service-based business, locally owned companies will have greater access to support tools, promotional opportunities, and advocacy that help them thrive in today’s competitive market.

Community members may continue to support the local economy by shopping locally whenever possible.

Beginning May 1, the Chamber’s online business directory will be expanded to make it easier than ever for residents to discover and support locally owned businesses. Shoppers can simply filter by “locally owned” or look for the local icon to shop and support businesses rooted in the greater Kalamazoo community.

Business owners interested in being featured in the directory and maximizing their membership can learn more at southwestmichiganfirst.com or by contacting chamber@southwestmichiganfirst.com.

About Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo

Founded in 2008 by independent business owners and community advocates, Buy Local Kalamazoo was created to spotlight and support businesses that strengthen the local economy. The initiative championed the importance of choosing locally owned, independent businesses through education, marketing, and community engagement.

In 2025, the group merged under the umbrella of the Southwest Michigan First Chamber. While Buy Local Greater Kalamazoo as an organization no longer exists, its mission continues with an even greater impact powered by the Chamber's extensive network of resources.

About Southwest Michigan First

Southwest Michigan First is a privately funded community and economic development organization whose mission is to increase economic prosperity for all in Southwest Michigan. Founded in 1999 on the principle that *the greatest force for change is a job*, the organization works across all industries to advance economic, workforce and community development initiatives throughout the seven counties the make up the Southwest Michigan region.

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