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## **New Event Center Planned for Downtown Kalamazoo**

**Construction would be privately funded so the residents of Kalamazoo County would not face new or increased taxes.**

**Kalamazoo, Michigan** – For the benefit of Southwest Michigan, Catalyst Development Co. has announced plans to construct a privately funded event center in downtown Kalamazoo. The 320,000+ square foot, state-of-the-art facility will have capacity to host over 230 events per year while generating over \$54 million of annual economic impact regionally.

“The event center is an absolute game-changer for Kalamazoo and our entire region,” said Aaron Zeigler, president of Zeigler Auto Group and board chair for Southwest Michigan First. “This project will transform downtown and dramatically improve quality of life for residents. To build a project of this size completely privately, with no public taxes required, is almost unheard of around the country.”

In addition to hosting a wide variety of community events, conventions, and family shows, the event center is designed to support programming for local and community user groups, such as Western Michigan University (WMU) Athletics and the Kalamazoo Wings. Early design concepts have included a primary arena, practice space for basketball and hockey teams, multi-purpose areas, abundant parking, and more.

“Southwest Michigan First, Catalyst Development, and the Events Center Design Working Group have put together an exciting vision and we are fortunate to have WMU Athletics included in the discussion,” according to Dan Bartholomae, WMU athletic director. “They are on a path to creating an innovative partnership that would be a tremendous asset for our community and aligns with WMU Athletic’s vision of comprehensive excellence. The current vision will address facility deficiencies which inhibit our student athletes’ experience, hinder our ability to recruit and compete at the highest level, and will provide amenities that fans expect, students deserve, and that our community can enjoy. I look forward to next steps, which will include more detailed and collaborative discussion on design. I am excited about this vision because it offers great possibilities and a bright future for our students, athletic department, and this community.”

According to a feasibility study conducted by Conventions Sports and Leisure International (CSL), downtown Kalamazoo was identified as the most beneficial location for a new event center in Southwest Michigan due to the density of nearby lodging, visitor amenities, attractions, and transportation/parking infrastructure.

“Bringing the event center to downtown Kalamazoo is a huge win for our community,” said Jane Ghosh, president and CEO of Discover Kalamazoo. “People who come for events will discover our fabulous restaurants, unique shops, and world-class attractions, generating foot traffic that will help our whole area stay vibrant and enable us to attract even more visitors in the future.”

The CSL study estimates that along with an immense economic impact to the county, there are a number of community benefits associated with the event center that cannot be quantified. These include, but are not limited to, spin-off development, an anchor for revitalization of targeted areas within the community, and an enhanced quality of life for community residents.

The excitement surrounding the opportunities provided by a new, downtown event center is shared among many stakeholder groups. Here is a sampling of what community leaders are saying:

“After many years of discussion and thoughtful planning, we’re excited to help make this exciting project a reality,” said John Taylor, chairperson for the Kalamazoo County Commission. “It really has been a team effort to get to this point and the positive impact for all our residents is going to be incredible.”

“I am impressed with the event center planners’ expressed commitment to create a vibrant, engaging, inclusive development that serves the entire community and contributes to the energy and connectedness of our downtown, neighborhoods, city, and the region. I look forward to continuing fruitful community conversations. Great cities have great downtowns,” said David Anderson, City of Kalamazoo mayor.

“I would like to thank the County and private stakeholders for prioritizing the residents of the Northside and making a catalytic investment in our transformational work with the Northside Cultural Business District, job training, quality of life programming and affordable housing,” said Mattie Jordan-Woods, Executive Director of the Northside Association for Community Development.

“Moving the Kalamazoo Wings into a brand-new facility would enhance the fan experience,” said Tim Rayman, CEO of Greenleaf Hospitality Group. “Not only would people be able to enjoy the in-game entertainment, but the downtown experience allows for families to shop, dine, and enjoy all of what the city has to offer.”

#### **ABOUT SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST**

Southwest Michigan First is an organization of privately funded economic development advisors who act as the catalyst for economic success in Southwest Michigan. Founded in 1999 on the principle that the greatest force for change is a job, the organization works across all industries throughout the seven counties making up the Southwest Michigan region.

#### **ABOUT CATALYST DEVELOPMENT CO.**

For nearly two decades, Catalyst Development Co. has served tenants throughout Kalamazoo, Grand Rapids, Traverse City, and Birmingham. We built our management company based on our values of customer service and our mission of ensuring that every tenant knows that they are well cared for. Our love for our properties and our appreciation of our tenants permeates everything we do and motivates us to always go that extra mile.

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