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The Power of a Promise

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2

What Came Before

Why did the donors behind the Kalamazoo Promise believe there was the need for such a program in their community, and why did they choose this particular approach? An examination of the region's economic and social history sheds some light on both questions. But there is an equally compelling reason for surveying the history of Kalamazoo: The proliferation of programs modeled on the Promise suggests that many other communities see in Kalamazoo a reflection of their current predicament and a possible solution to it. Indeed, southwest Michigan has been affected by most of the large-scale social forces that shaped the nation in the twentieth century.

In the late 1800s, Kalamazoo's economy shifted from an agricultural to a manufacturing foundation. Production contracted during the 1930s and rebounded during World War II. Growth continued into the 1950s, as the creation of the interstate highway system, rise of the suburbs, and general prosperity led to an expansion of the auto industry and related manufacturing activities. But, as in the rest of the nation, the "affluent society" described by John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958 hid both poverty and racial tension and, in the 1960s, the civil rights movement came to Kalamazoo, challenging the community's social structure and ushering in the kind of urban unrest (albeit on a small scale) witnessed across the nation. The conflict played out in the schools, with a court-ordered desegregation plan, mandatory busing, and "white flight" in the late 1960s and 1970s. The black-white and urban-suburban divisions that characterize Kalamazoo today date from this era. In the 1980s and 1990s, the region's leading industries confronted globalization and technological change, and Kalamazoo began a wrenching transformation that included plant closings, mergers, job losses, and rising poverty, especially within the urban core. By 2005, the city's poverty rate for families stood at 17.6 percent—almost twice the national average and almost three times the rate for the rest of Kalamazoo County.¹

In some ways, Kalamazoo was more fortunate than many of the other communities affected by similar trends. Its economy was rela-

tively diverse, with reliance on multiple industries rather than a single corporation (as in nearby Battle Creek, where the Kellogg Company has long held the key to the community's financial health). The economic blows were also cushioned by a large philanthropic sector that has devoted substantial resources to both economic revitalization and social well-being. (In Battle Creek, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation plays a similar role.)

But Kalamazoo also faces special challenges, especially a system of local governance in which metropolitan regions are comprised of very small jurisdictions, each with its own governing body, public officials, and property tax rate. Kalamazoo County, with a population of approximately 240,000, encompasses 24 local jurisdictions grouped into nine separate school districts, making it the fifth-most fragmented metropolitan area in Michigan, one of the states most conducive to such a "little box" system.² This arrangement has made it easy for residents to leave the central city and its urban schools behind by relocating only a few miles in any direction, lowering their tax rates and keeping their jobs while sending their children to schools that are largely white and middle class. One indicator of these demographic trends is a 20 percent decrease in the population of the city of Kalamazoo from 1970 to 2007, at the same time that the county's population grew by 19 percent.³ As it has in other cities, such a jurisdictional system also has intensified the process of suburbanization and facilitated a growing concentration of minority and low-income families in the urban core and the public schools (see Table 2.1).

The rise and decline of Kalamazoo is a familiar story, and familiar solutions have been tried. Experts have touted the benefits of regional cooperation and unified governance. Tax abatements have been offered to companies threatening to move out, and incentives offered to those considering a move in. Bidding wars have erupted between neighboring cities and even states (the Indiana border is only 40 miles away). Downtown revitalization has been pursued, and successive regional economic development entities have taken the lead in wooing businesses and jobs. Sporadic efforts have been made to integrate the large population of college students, numbering more than 35,000, into the community. An emerging life sciences industry has been identified by some as the solution to Kalamazoo's woes, and the city's educational, arts, and cultural organizations have been marketed as powerful attractions for new resi-

Table 2.1 Population Trends, 1970–2007

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007
KPS enrollment ^a	17,285	13,280	12,584	11,245	11,378
% African American	17 ^a	30	36	44	48
City of Kalamazoo pop.	85,555	79,722	80,277	77,145	71,441
% African American	10	15.6	18.8	20.6	20.8
Kalamazoo County pop.	201,550	212,378	223,411	238,603	244,153
% African American	4.8	7.5	8.7	9.7	9.9

NOTE: School enrollment numbers from Kalamazoo Public Schools' September 2007 head count (rounded to nearest percentage point)

^aData for 1970 are not broken down by race; this number represents all minority students.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey.

dents. Yet the economic downturn has continued, with some indicators approaching what urban expert David Rusk has called “the point of no return” for urban areas (Rusk 1995).

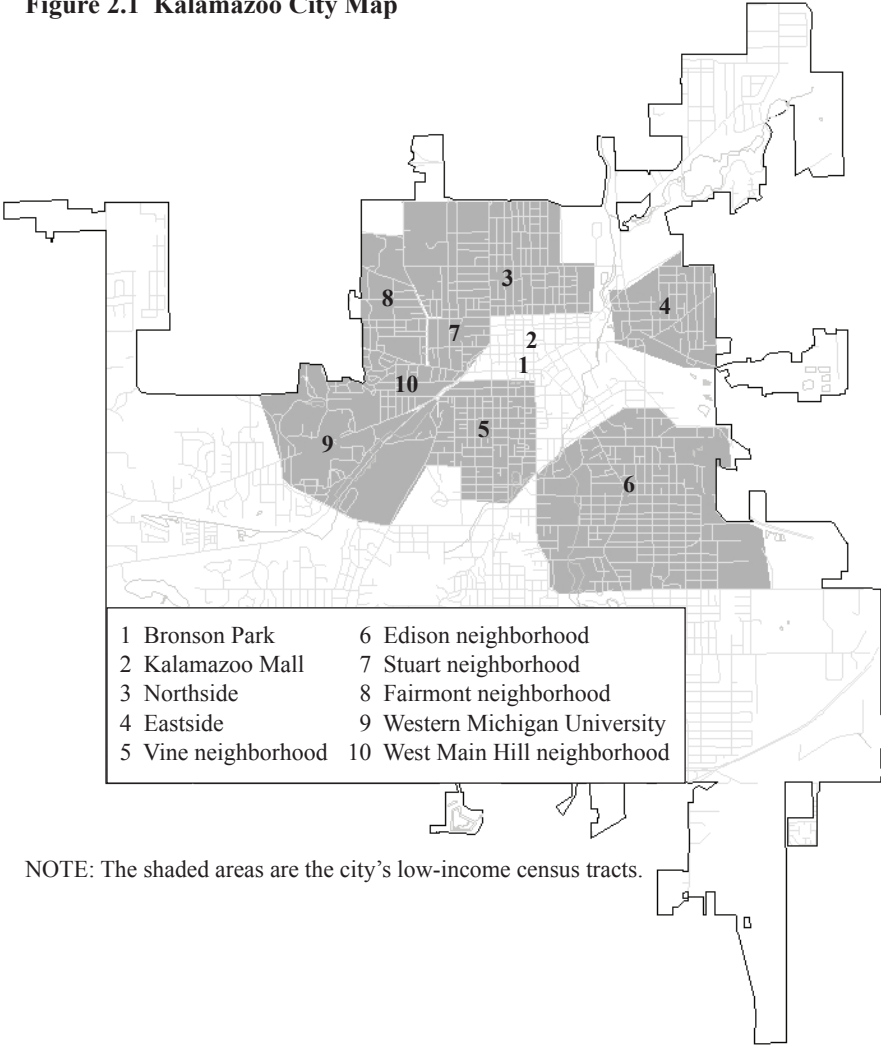
One interpretation of the Kalamazoo Promise is that the city and the school district have declined together and that their revival will require attention to both sectors. In this sense, the Kalamazoo Promise is much more than a scholarship program; it is a potentially powerful tool to shift Kalamazoo away from the tipping point of urban decay and set it on a virtuous cycle of school improvement, population growth, and economic revitalization. To understand how this might happen, it is helpful to have a mental map of the community and some knowledge of its history.

A TEXTUAL TOUR

A tour of Kalamazoo might begin at Bronson Park (see Figure 2.1) in the heart of downtown—what a recent magazine article called “a town center straight out of the 1930s,” ringed by churches, city hall, and the Civic Theatre (O’Brien 2006).

A short walk brings one to the Kalamazoo Mall, the nation’s first outdoor pedestrian mall, constructed in 1959. Lined with family-owned businesses (there are no chain stores in downtown Kalamazoo apart

Figure 2.1 Kalamazoo City Map



NOTE: The shaded areas are the city's low-income census tracts.

from fast-food franchises), the street's fortunes declined when the first enclosed malls were built in the 1970s. To increase commercial traffic, a road was carved through the Kalamazoo Mall in 1998, accompanied by heated sidewalks to melt the snow, benches, and new historic markers. Stores have opened, stores have closed, and despite myriad efforts to entice people downtown, until recently one could stroll down the street most days at noon and see only a handful of local office workers making their way to lunch.

But downtown Kalamazoo is a neighborhood in flux. In 2007, 9 businesses closed in the downtown district while 14 opened, and 79 percent of the available office space in the area is rented.⁴ Downtown foot traffic is increasing, while monthly "art hops" and other special events draw large crowds. One block beyond the mall is a 14-screen movie theater with loft-style condominiums above it that opened in 2006. The first downtown cinema in 20 years, it is a development that city planners and local businesses hope will attract college students and other young people and support the mini-renaissance under way in the surrounding streets. In 2007, *Urban Land* magazine named downtown Kalamazoo one of the nation's top 10 downtown turnaround stories, putting it in the company of much larger cities like Memphis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco (Nyren 2007).

Moving north across the railroad tracks, the renovated buildings, coffeehouses, and microbreweries give way to a no-man's-land of shuttered factories, vacant lots, and the occasional light manufacturing operation. There are no amenities and virtually no pedestrians. The Kalamazoo River borders this abandoned landscape, once home to heavy industry and several junkyards, much of which is now designated a brownfield site. The city of Kalamazoo is working to develop the riverfront, and while clean-up costs are formidable, a range of federal and municipal resources exist to make such an effort possible.

A few blocks away is the heart of the Northside, a largely African American neighborhood and one of the city's low-income census tracts. Here, street life centers on the area's many churches, the newly renovated train and bus station, and two nearby homeless shelters. The neighborhood also has a high concentration of social service providers, a mixed blessing for those who are working to encourage retail activity. Economic development efforts led by local residents have yielded modest but meaningful gains—a supermarket, a pizza franchise, and

some small businesses—but the commercial center is confined to a few blocks. There are two magnet elementary schools in the neighborhood—Lincoln International Studies School, until recently the home of a highly regarded dual-language immersion program, and Northglade Montessori School, one of the few Montessori-certified public schools in the United States. Despite these unique attributes, designed to draw students from across the district, both schools still enroll a high percentage of minority and low-income students.⁵

The Northside neighborhood became home to Kalamazoo's African American population after World War II, when the explosion of manufacturing industries enticed many Southern black families to move north in search of jobs. Those who came to Kalamazoo settled in this older, formerly Dutch neighborhood where housing prices were low and properties were not covered by the restrictive covenants that banned nonwhite residents, as was the case in the city's newer neighborhoods. (Federal mortgage-lending policies intensified patterns of segregation in Kalamazoo as they did elsewhere, with the Federal Housing Administration refusing to insure mortgages for blacks in white neighborhoods and vice versa.)⁶ As white residents moved out at a faster rate than black residents moved in, the population began to shrink, and when restrictive lending practices were banned, middle-class African Americans left as well. Between the 1970 and the 1990 censuses, the Northside's overall population fell and the percentage of the black population rose. In 2000, 81 percent of the neighborhood's 5,776 residents were African American, and the poverty rate for the neighborhood stood at 37 percent.⁷

The city's other low-income neighborhoods are more racially mixed, and each has its challenges. The Eastside is a neighborhood of 2,610 cut off from the rest of the city by a highway bypass, railroad tracks, and a major artery. Its physical isolation means that many longtime Kalamazoo residents have never even driven through the area, where almost one-third of the population lives in poverty. The area is hilly and in places has an almost rural feel. There are fewer churches and community organizations here, and little commercial activity. Plans are under way for the construction of a youth center in the neighborhood, in part because of concerns over the lack of after-school or summer activities for Eastside youth, but financial resources are limited.

To the south of downtown is the Vine neighborhood, one of the oldest in Kalamazoo. Here, owner-occupied homes vie for space with

rental housing for students from the nearby college and university. Vine actually has the city's highest poverty rate—41.5 percent—but many of these are the “college-student poor” living in apartments or large homes divided into multiple living quarters. The relationship between long-term residents and the more transient student population can be strained, and homeowners complain about widespread building code violations by absentee landlords. Vine Street School, which housed KPS's alternative-education programs through 2005, sat shuttered at the center of the neighborhood until a new dual-language elementary school opened there in 2008. The adjacent Old Central High School building—home to the highly regarded Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center—also is in active use, and its gem of an auditorium has recently undergone a multimillion-dollar restoration effort.

The Edison neighborhood, to the southeast of downtown, is the largest low-income census tract in the city, with over 8,000 residents. Edison was the location of the city's minuscule red-light district, complete with topless dance club and adult bookstore, until organizing efforts by community members forced these businesses to relocate. Now a variety of revitalization efforts are under way. Edison is home to much of the city's Hispanic community (Hispanics officially make up 4.8 percent of the population, according to the most recent U.S. census estimate,⁸ but that number may be unduly low in light of the undocumented population—for example, Hispanic students accounted for 9.5 percent of KPS enrollment in 2007–2008)⁹ and the major street through the neighborhood boasts a Mexican grocery, bakery, and several small retail stores. Two of KPS's magnet elementary schools are here, Washington Writers' Academy and Edison Environmental Science Academy, both enrolling a largely poor, minority population, and serving as important hubs for the surrounding community.

The city's final low-income census tract encompasses the Stuart and Fairmont neighborhoods, adjacent to each other and just to the west of downtown. The Stuart neighborhood includes the city's largest collection of Victorian houses, most built in the 1870s and 1880s. During the twentieth century, these homes were gradually converted to multifamily rental units, but in 1976 the area was designated a local historic district and new owners have returned many residences to their original character. The oldest elementary school still in operation is located here, now called the Woodward School for Technology and Research.

Together, the city of Kalamazoo's low-income neighborhoods account for 36.5 percent of its total population (Kalamazoo County Health and Community Services 2006). They are also home to most of the region's minority population, as well as much of its violent crime and what many consider to be nascent gang activity.

Plenty of middle-income families choose to live in Kalamazoo; indeed, some of the region's most desirable housing stock is located within city boundaries. In family-oriented neighborhoods like Westnedge Hill, Winchell, and Milwood, parents load up on enough candy on Halloween to satisfy the several hundred children likely to ring their doorbells. Each of these neighborhoods has a local elementary school that helps anchor the community; Winchell Elementary was the first to reach its maximum enrollment the year after the Kalamazoo Promise was announced. The West Main Hill neighborhood is anchored by Kalamazoo College on one side and WMU on the other, and contains some of the most diverse housing stock in the city. The most elegant street in the city may be Long Road, just up the hill from the Vine neighborhood, with 20 or so homes that would not be out of place in the nicer reaches of Beverly Hills.

But many more middle- and upper-income families have opted for newer housing in Portage to the south or Oshtemo and Texas Township to the west, due in part to lower tax rates outside the city proper. The wealthiest among them have built sprawling new homes on the area's outlying lakes or in rural areas. With the construction of the two highways that intersect in Kalamazoo—I-94 that links Chicago and Detroit, and U.S. 131 running north to Grand Rapids and south to Indiana—the commercial and residential focus of the community shifted away from downtown. This is where the big box stores and major chains have continued to locate, with commercial activity spreading ever further away from the center. These areas are overwhelmingly white and nonpoor, a demographic makeup also reflected in the public schools. (See Table 2.2 to compare the characteristics of the two largest school districts in the county—KPS and Portage Public Schools.)

The urban core retains many of the region's most important amenities: educational institutions, including WMU (along with its entertainment and athletic venues), Kalamazoo College, and the downtown campus of Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC); the art museum, public library, symphony, and other cultural institutions; churches and

Table 2.2 School Characteristics, 2007

	Kalamazoo	
	Public Schools	Portage Public Schools
Enrollment	11,684	8,889
Minority enrollment (%)	60.1	14.6
Economically disadvantaged	65.0	20.0 ^a
Reading proficiency (%)	64.4	90.4
Math proficiency (%)	54.3	85.4

^a Data provided by Portage Public Schools.

SOURCE: Standard & Poor's SchoolData Direct.

parks; a public swimming pool, the fairground, and a newly developed downtown festival site; and restaurants and businesses. Because of the nonprofit status of many of these entities, close to 50 percent of the property in the city of Kalamazoo is tax exempt—a fact that has had negative implications for public finances and limits the potential impact of Kalamazoo Promise–related development on city coffers.¹⁰

Even for those who live within its borders, Kalamazoo remains a city of communities that often seem separate and unequal. Robert Putnam, a Harvard University professor and expert on social capital who has visited the town several times, reports being surprised by the extent of what he calls the “donut effect”—a poor and black urban core ringed by middle-class and largely white neighborhoods. The president of Kalamazoo College, Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran, commented shortly after her arrival in town on what she perceived as the physical separation between the black and white populations. Dr. Wilson-Oyelaran, who is African American, compared Kalamazoo to her previous hometown of Winston-Salem, where “You will find successful people of color all over the town . . . In Kalamazoo, the community appears much more racially isolated. It sometimes feels as if the black community is cordoned off.”¹¹

There are other divides as well, as is evident to anyone who lives in Kalamazoo and wonders where WMU's 25,000 students go when they are not in class. They are seldom seen downtown, in part because the university is physically separated from the business district by a four-lane thoroughfare and a set of railroad tracks, and in part because, until recently, few central city businesses have made a concerted effort to

cater to the student population. The town-gown relationship is notably different from Ann Arbor, where the transition from the University of Michigan's main campus to the surrounding business district is virtually seamless, with students streaming off campus between classes and at the end of the day to eat at downtown restaurants, drink at downtown coffeehouses, shop at downtown bookstores, and dance at downtown clubs.

It is difficult to decide where a tour of the city might end—perhaps heading even farther south or west, where farmland is increasingly giving way to Wal-Marts, new housing tracts, and other commercial development. Or we can return to the southeast corner of Bronson Park, where the city's past, present, and future meet. Across the street stands the Park Club, a private dining club established in 1904 and still catering to the city's elite. On the opposite corner is the glass-walled Kalamazoo Public Library. Constructed in 1959 and extensively remodeled in 1996, it was named National Library of the Year in 2002. On the fourth corner, a new office tower was completed in 2007, home to one of the area's largest law firms and a step toward the downtown revitalization that many hope will be one of the outcomes of the Kalamazoo Promise.

ECONOMIC EBB AND FLOW

While Native Americans from the Potawatomi tribe had inhabited the area since the 1600s, the first white settlers arrived in Kalamazoo County in 1828. Titus Bronson came the following year and purchased the land where downtown Kalamazoo is now located. In 1831, he and his brother-in-law registered their land with the county, naming it the "Village of Bronson." Five years later, the town's name was changed to Kalamazoo.¹² (Historians speculate that Bronson had by then alienated many of his fellow settlers with his outspoken views on politics and denunciations of alcohol, tobacco, dancing, and card playing [Kekic 1984].) By the late nineteenth century, Kalamazoo had become known as "Celery City" because of the rich, mucky soil and the many Dutch immigrants who cultivated a sweeter, paler variety of celery than is eaten today. Celery fields covered the region and, by 1871, the amount

of celery shipped from Kalamazoo by rail made the city the second most active freight center in Michigan after Detroit. The town regularly named a “Celery Queen,” and local farmers were known to board trains as they stopped in Kalamazoo to sell celery to the passengers. More significant for the local economy, the celery industry spawned a variety of patent medicines based on the supposed purifying and aphrodisiac qualities of the plant. While some of the producers of these medicines were charlatans, others were respected members of the community and legitimate drug manufacturers.

As late as 1939 there were still more than 1,000 acres of celery beds under cultivation in the area. But the celery business declined as growers failed to adapt to new techniques, competition from other areas increased, and the proliferation of paper mills lowered the water table. By 1985, there was only one celery farmer left in the area, and by the end of the century there were none. Agriculture, however, remains a part of the local economy, farmers having converted to new crops, especially bedding plants. Kalamazoo is home to the nation’s largest bedding plant cooperative and the outskirts of town are dotted with greenhouses (Peipel 2005).

Ever since Glenn Miller’s recording of “I’ve Got A Gal In Kalamazoo” occupied the number-one Billboard Records spot for eight weeks in 1942, Kalamazoo has been best known as home to “that freckle-faced kid.” But the city’s economic claim to fame is the variety of industries that thrived here over the centuries. Local historian Peter J. Schmitt wrote that “much of Kalamazoo’s history is the story of talented inventors and businessmen who recognized a need, developed a solution, and marketed a product” (Massie and Schmitt 1998, p. 8)—a deceptively simple strategy that could bring Kalamazoo renewed economic success in the twenty-first century.

Kalamazoo may seem out of the way today, tucked into the southwest corner of Michigan, but its location on a railroad line equidistant from Chicago and Detroit, and access to labor (largely in the form of immigrants) and natural resources (including plentiful lumber and the Kalamazoo River) positioned it well for the industrial age. By the early twentieth century, 272 factories produced a remarkable range of goods for the national market. Among these was the Gibson Mandolin-Guitar Manufacturing Company, incorporated in 1904 and headquartered in the city until 1981. The Gibson plant closed three years later, but sev-

eral of its craftsmen opted to remain locally based, accounting for the surprisingly large number of guitar makers in the area. Other manufacturers included the American Playing Card Company, which produced up to 18,000 decks of cards daily; Henderson-Ames, which made uniforms and regalia; the Kalamazoo Stove Company, which closed its doors in the 1950s; the Kalamazoo Corset Company, which at one time produced 1.5 million corsets a year; and Checker Motors, which built its famous yellow cabs in Kalamazoo from 1923 until 1982.

The area's two most important products by far were paper and pharmaceuticals.¹³ The first paper mill opened in 1866, and by the 1930s more paper was produced in Kalamazoo's 15 mills than anywhere else in the world. The industry thrived thanks to a steady supply of immigrant labor; the railroad, which provided access to nearby markets; and the Kalamazoo River, relied on by the mills for production and disposal of their by-products. By midcentury, the paper industry accounted for approximately 32 percent of the combined sales of all industries in the area and 24 percent of residents' total personal income (Smith 1958). The decline of the industry beginning in the 1970s was hastened by technological change, foreign competition, and environmental concerns. (Paper production is notorious for the pollutants it generates, and the Kalamazoo River—designated a superfund site because of the presence of toxins in its fish, sediment, and surface water—is still recovering from the industry's impact even after 30 years of clean water legislation.) Thousands of semiskilled workers lost their jobs as the plants closed, five in 2000 alone, and since then local governments have struggled to procure the resources to demolish the old mill sites, rid them of toxic substances, and find new uses for them.

The city's dominant employer for much of the twentieth century was the Upjohn Company. The firm was established in Kalamazoo in 1886 as the Upjohn Pill and Granule Company by Dr. William E. Upjohn, a graduate of the University of Michigan Medical School, and his three brothers. Their invention of the first easily dissolvable pill spawned a company that grew into a worldwide provider of pharmaceutical, agricultural, and chemical products. By the 1950s, the Upjohn Company had become one of the nation's top pharmaceutical manufacturers, and by the mid-1960s, it was Kalamazoo's largest employer. In 1978, the company's annual sales surpassed \$1 billion for the first time, and in 1980, 6,400 workers were employed locally. In 1995, the Upjohn Com-

pany was swept up in the ongoing agglomeration of pharmaceutical firms into ever-larger entities when it merged with the Swedish company Pharmacia, headquartered in Stockholm. Neither party wanted the new headquarters to be located in the other firm's hometown, so the headquarters of what was now the world's ninth-largest pharmaceutical firm was established in Windsor, England, where a skeletal staff of 30 supervised global operations. Over the next two years, Kalamazoo lost more than 1,000 local jobs, and in 1998 the headquarters of the U.S. operation relocated to Peapack, New Jersey, close to the nation's other major pharmaceutical firms. In 2000, Pharmacia & Upjohn merged with Monsanto (attracted by its G.D. Searle pharmaceuticals unit) and was renamed simply Pharmacia. A short two years later, Pfizer Inc. announced a \$60 million deal to purchase Pharmacia, and the following year all research activity was moved out of Kalamazoo, translating into an additional 1,200 jobs lost in the county. In contrast to earlier layoffs when the paper mills and a large auto plant shut down, many of the Pfizer-related job losses were well-paying positions held by highly educated workers, and their departure hurt not only the employment picture of the region but also its tax base and housing market. In January 2007, Pfizer announced plans to close its human-drug-testing operation in Kalamazoo by 2008, eliminating another 250 jobs downtown, although a large manufacturing plant in Portage and the veterinary research operation remain in place. The Upjohn Company's fate cut into the budgets of many nonprofit organizations, as the firm had been Kalamazoo's leading corporate philanthropist for decades and a generous supporter of the community's arts and cultural organizations.

Kalamazoo lost a second corporate headquarters when First of America Bank Corporation was acquired by National City Bank of Cleveland in 1998. Many of First of America's 3,200 Kalamazoo jobs, including hundreds of well-paying executive positions, were eliminated or relocated to Ohio, and the renovated downtown buildings in which First of America's employees had worked still stand largely vacant.¹⁴

While Checker Motors cut back production in the 1970s, the automobile industry had a continuing regional presence in the form of General Motors' Fisher Body stamping plant located just outside the city of Kalamazoo.¹⁵ The plant employed almost 4,000 skilled laborers when it opened in 1965. Retrenchment in the auto industry led to successive waves of layoffs and the ultimate closure of the two-million square foot

facility in 1999. Another source of steady employment for blue-collar workers had been lost, and the massive plant was converted to an industrial park that is not yet fully occupied.

One homegrown company has bucked these trends, becoming one of the country's most profitable firms. Beginning in the 1930s, Dr. Homer Stryker, an orthopedic surgeon practicing in Kalamazoo, developed a series of products to serve his patients, including a turning frame for hospital beds and an oscillating saw to remove casts. These inventions, which were first marketed in the 1940s, launched the Stryker Corporation. Today, Stryker is one of the world's leading medical device companies. With over \$6 billion in sales in 2007, the company is best known among investors for its regular double-digit increases in annual profits (*Fortune 500* 2008). A newly constructed 70,000-square-foot facility suggests that Stryker will remain headquartered in Kalamazoo, even though most of its 15,000 workers are located outside the region.

The continued presence of firms like Stryker and Pfizer, two major hospitals, a research university, and the availability of venture capital have helped position the region as a potential center for the life sciences industry. The Southwest Michigan Innovation Center, a public-private collaboration initiated in 2002, has served as a source of support for start-up companies in this field, many of them founded by scientists who once worked for Pfizer. A major expansion by the regionally based preclinical drug testing company MPI Research, announced in 2008, has lent credence to the viability of this life science-based strategy (see Chapter 6 for details).

As this survey suggests, Kalamazoo's economy in its heyday offered employment to workers with a broad range of skills and a home to entrepreneurs whose inventions formed the basis for highly successful companies. These firms and their employees contributed not only to the economy but also to the area's quality of life through their community involvement and philanthropic giving. The mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s and 1990s and the larger forces of economic restructuring that led to a decline in manufacturing thus hurt both Kalamazoo's job market and its social fabric, as many families chose to relocate while others turned to lower-paying jobs.

Its many years of economic prosperity did endow Kalamazoo with medical, educational, cultural, and philanthropic institutions that have helped buffer the negative effects of change. Borgess Medical Center

and Bronson Methodist Hospital, both located in the urban core, are the second- and fourth-largest employers, respectively, in the region.¹⁶ Educational institutions, including Kalamazoo College, a private liberal arts college founded in 1833; WMU, a public university founded in 1903; and KVCC, founded in 1966; draw thousands of young people to Kalamazoo each year from around the state and the nation. High-profile cultural events, such as the biennial Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, attract music lovers from well beyond southwest Michigan, while many local events and festivals bring thousands of people downtown each summer to eat, drink, and dance. A well-endowed group of foundations, as well as a strong United Way, make up a diverse philanthropic and nonprofit community focused on local needs. These assets, however, have left untouched many of the region's critical problems, such as the decline of manufacturing industry, flight from the urban core, and racial segregation in the housing market and the schools, all of which have increased strains on the public education system.

THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION

For most of the nineteenth century, public education for Kalamazoo's children was limited to tax-funded "common" schools, the rough equivalent of today's elementary schools. The first schoolhouse opened in 1833 and also served as a temporary church and courthouse. By 1848, four schools were in operation, including a brick schoolhouse that cost \$606 to build. Initially, the schools operated separately, but they were soon consolidated into a single district by legislative act. The community also decided upon the construction of a Union School to serve the entire village of Kalamazoo, and in 1858 a districtwide school was built on a five-acre site near the present location of Old Central High School, at a cost of \$45,000. A separate school served the community's African American children from 1861 to 1872, when the district was officially integrated.¹⁷ By 1876, enrollment had climbed to 2,000 students, although census figures show that there were more than 3,000 children of school age in the district. Also by this time, individual elementary schools had been established and the Union School became a high school.

The dual purpose of the high school was to prepare a select group of students for higher education and to give everyone else the more advanced vocational skills they would need to find employment within a changing economy. In the 1850s, a state law had been passed allowing school districts with more than 200 children to elect school boards that could set up high schools funded by local taxes, provided that the district's citizens voted in favor of the proposal. Kalamazoo Union High School operated with only minor opposition until 1873, when three prominent property owners filed a suit challenging the school board's right to fund the high school through local taxes. The grounds for the lawsuit were that Kalamazoo's residents had never voted to establish the high school and that the decision instead had been made by the school board acting on its own. One of the plaintiffs in the case was Charles E. Stuart, a former U.S. Senator from Michigan. Stuart, like others of his time, believed that a common school education was sufficient for most children and that any additional schooling should be paid for privately. His opponents argued that universal high school was an essential measure for bridging the gap between common school and university, and should be accessible to all. The case was decided by the Circuit Court in favor of the school board and appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. Justice Thomas M. Cooley, former dean of the University of Michigan Law School, upheld the decision of the Circuit Court and in the Kalamazoo School Case decision of 1874 put to rest the question of public financial support for high schools in Michigan. This landmark case served as one of the precedents for legal challenges to universal high school elsewhere and had an important effect on the number of high schools in the state, which increased dramatically in the 20 years following the decision.¹⁸

Initially, these high schools were attended only by the children of wealthy and middle-class families. Michigan was among the first states in the nation to pass (in 1871) a compulsory school attendance law, and by 1890 this law required youth ages 8–14 to attend four months of school each year. In the 1880s, a child labor law had been enacted at the state level, placing some restrictions on working conditions for young people. But as long as jobs (especially those in the relatively high-paying manufacturing sector) did not require a high school education, the only children attending Kalamazoo's high school were those whose parents could afford for them not to work. As a result, the school's

initial emphasis was on collegiate preparation, as these students were also likely candidates for higher education. (Beginning in 1899, at least 60 percent of the high school's graduates went on for further study [Bennett 1956]). After 1910, due to changes in the economic conditions of the community and the needs of business, the high school's emphasis on "practical education" through manual training and vocational courses grew in importance.¹⁹ As the relative demand for white-collar workers in manufacturing rose in the early twentieth century, and blue-collar jobs began to require and reward formal schooling, the financial returns to a young person from each year of schooling grew, and high school attendance became the norm among most social classes. National trends mirrored those in Michigan; in 1910, the rate of enrollment in secondary schools had been only 18 percent nationwide, but by the 1940s it had risen to 71 percent (Goldin and Katz 1997, p. 27).

Another factor that affected rates of high school attendance and graduation across the nation was a state's commitment to fund its colleges, since public support served as a powerful incentive for young people to graduate from high school and continue their education (Goldin and Katz 1997). The University of Michigan, founded in 1817, was one of the first public universities in the United States and the recipient of the most generous level of state financing.²⁰ It remains the most prestigious school in Michigan, whether public or private, but is only part of a varied postsecondary landscape. Michigan State University, established by the state legislature in 1855, served as the prototype for 72 land-grant institutions later established under the federal Morrill Act. Eastern, Western, Central, and Northern Michigan Universities were established between 1849 and 1903 as two-year teacher training schools, while Wayne State University was founded in 1868 as a medical school. All are now large research universities. The near quadrupling of the nation's higher education enrollment rates from 1940 to 1970 was facilitated by the addition of other public four-year institutions and a network of community colleges, currently numbering 29 in Michigan, as well as the GI Bill of 1944 that paid for veterans to attend college.

Despite its diversity, Michigan's system of higher education has suffered in recent years. The state's college enrollment rates have declined faster than the national average (by 7 percent, compared to a national decline of 2 percent, between 1992 and 2006), and access to affordable higher education has been curtailed by stagnant wages, tuition increas-

es, and limited investments in need-based financial aid (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2006). The state's ongoing struggle to adapt to the declining fortunes of the manufacturing sector, especially automobiles, has set in motion a vicious circle of lower tax revenues, budget cutting, reduced funding for higher education, tuition increases, and declining enrollment that will be difficult to reverse.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE SCHOOLS

The evolution of Kalamazoo's public school system was profoundly shaped by a second major court decision—the school desegregation order of 1971. The issues that KPS faces today have their roots in the years leading up to and following this judicial battle. And, as with the evolution of its economy, Kalamazoo mirrored national trends in race relations and their impact on public education.

Kalamazoo was hardly a pioneer in the fight for civil rights. It wasn't until 1955 that KPS hired its first black teacher, and minority representation among teachers and administrators remained low, even as the black population of the district grew in the 1960s and 1970s. At WMU, student housing was segregated throughout the 1950s—if a black student and a white student wanted to room together, they each had to submit a written request as well as a letter of consent from their parents (WMU Library). Even so, by the early 1960s, race relations had become a regular topic of campus dialogue, and in this context Dr. Martin Luther King was invited to speak at the university in December 1963. In his address, attended by an estimated 2,000 people, he stressed the need for Congress to pass the civil rights bill before it at that time, claiming the need for legislative changes even if they did little to change attitudes; in King's words, "After laws are passed the heart can then be persuaded to change its feelings" (*Western Herald* 1963).

That same year, Northside residents picketed the Dutch-owned Van Avery Drugstore located in the neighborhood, claiming that its owners refused to hire a black clerk even though nearly half their customers were black. After three weeks of picketing and negotiations, a settlement was reached with the local chapter of the NAACP. This event marked the beginning of civil rights activism in Kalamazoo and raised

public awareness that something needed to be done to address the problems of the Northside neighborhood, as well as the larger issues of de facto housing and school segregation in Kalamazoo.

In 1966, 11 years after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, state officials in Michigan called on all school districts to develop plans to balance their schools racially. In 1968, a committee of citizens was designated by the school district to draft such a plan. At the time, Kalamazoo's schools were highly segregated, with 91 percent of all black public elementary school students attending five schools on the Northside, out of the district's 19 public elementary schools. Fourteen elementary schools had minority enrollments of less than 10 percent, and 5 of these schools enrolled no minority students. In addition, 96 percent of all black junior high school students attended three of the district's five junior highs, while 93 percent of all black high school students were enrolled at Kalamazoo Central High School. The newer of the district's two high schools, Loy Norrix, had been built in 1961 at the very edge of the school district—land actually had to be annexed from Portage to construct the school—in an area with virtually no black population. While the school was open to anyone in the district, students had to provide their own transportation, effectively placing it out of reach for low-income black students from the Northside. In 1969, Kalamazoo Central's student body was 20 percent black, while Loy Norrix's was less than 2 percent black.

Edward P. Thompson, a lawyer and member of the school board at the time, was later asked to reflect on the desegregation period in a speech to a local business club. Thompson was a member of the “old” board that ultimately came to support desegregation, and his comments provide valuable insight into changing attitudes about race in Kalamazoo, especially among the elite. He wrote: “Before the racial confrontations I was sympathetic to the demands of blacks without being involved . . . I, like other members of the school board, believed that our local black population did not have these [civil rights] complaints, but we soon found out that they did . . . Kalamazoo always tried to be fair and progressive with regard to the black community, but that was the judgment of a white community still shackled by old attitudes and assumptions about blacks” (Thompson n.d.).

The Citizens' Racial Balance Committee announced its plan in 1969, and opposition formed almost immediately. The plan called for

a gradual process of educating the public about racial segregation, increasing the proportion of black professionals in the schools, reorganizing the district, and ultimately busing elementary school students to achieve racial balance by the 1971 school year. The committee argued that its plan would not only bring the schools into compliance with the law, but also help overcome the achievement gap between middle-class and low-income children, both black and white.

The years leading up to the desegregation order had been tumultuous. The students entering Kalamazoo Central High School each autumn came from highly segregated elementary and junior high schools, and racial tension flared regularly. One of the earliest disputes occurred in 1967 over the racial integration of the all-white cheerleading squad, which had been mandated by the school board. In 1968, the high school closed for 10 days due to fighting on school grounds. In 1970, black students boycotted Kalamazoo Central and three junior high schools amid accusations of institutional racism. A junior high school principal stated that at one point as many as 20 race-related fights per day were occurring in his school, which was 40 percent minority at that time (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1977).

In January 1971, the school board voted to proceed with the citizens' committee's desegregation plan, a vote strengthened a few months later when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the use of mandatory busing to achieve integration. The spring of 1971 saw intense public debate over the issue, with one meeting in May drawing 2,100 attendees, 130 of whom spoke during a four-hour session. A month later, the district's voters rejected a millage (bond) proposal by a 2–1 margin and on the same ballot voted to elect two antibusing candidates to the school board, eliminating the majority in favor of busing and putting the desegregation plan on hold. In August 1971, the NAACP filed a lawsuit seeking an injunction to reinstate the busing plan. With the injunction upheld, busing went ahead in September 1971. It took two years for the case to work its way through the courts, but in fall 1973, after a six-week trial, U.S. District Judge Noel P. Fox ruled in favor of the NAACP in *Oliver v. Kalamazoo Board of Education* and imposed a long-term desegregation plan. His opinion states that “the board had by its actions and inactions ‘followed a purposeful pattern of racial discrimination by creating and maintaining segregated schools.’” The newly constituted school board voted 6–1 to appeal, but the appeal was rejected by the

Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in 1974 and the Supreme Court in 1975 (Mah 1991).

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights tracked the Kalamazoo case as 1 of 29 studies of communities around the nation that had experience with desegregation. It found that the elementary schools had become markedly less segregated in the five years following the court order. By 1976, with the closure of five largely white schools (due to a rapid decline in enrollment) and cross-district busing, the highest concentration of minority students in any one elementary school was 54 percent and there were no all-white schools (the smallest minority proportion in any school was 14 percent). The two high schools had been balanced racially, with a minority population of 25 percent at Kalamazoo Central and 22 percent at Loy Norrix. These changes occurred at a time when the minority population of the district was growing overall, in part as a result of the busing order as well as the racial unrest that had preceded and accompanied it. Most “white flight” out of the district took place in the years immediately before and after the desegregation order, with white enrollment falling by 8.5 percent between 1968 and 1978 and by 15 percent between 1970 and 1973 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1977). Another of the primary goals of the desegregation order was to increase the percentage of minority teachers, which rose from 7 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 1976 (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1977); this stood at 17.3 percent for the 2007–2008 school year.²¹

An equally important finding of the commission’s report was a rapid decline in the level of interracial violence among students in the years following the desegregation order. As one principal explained at the time, “Before elementary school desegregation, students came to this junior high unaware of other races and the trouble began quickly. Now, with every incoming class there is less and less tension between blacks and whites, since each succeeding class has been in a desegregated setting for a longer time than the preceding class” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1977).

In 1991, following a series of federal court decisions that made mandatory busing unenforceable, *Oliver v. Kalamazoo Board of Education* was amended to allow the district to meet its desegregation goals through a magnet school system that had resulted from the most recent redistricting.

The desegregation battle coincided with a long slide in enrollment in KPS. District enrollment declined from its high point of 18,054 in 1970–1971 to 13,752 a decade later. The downward trend was exacerbated by the end of the baby boom (1946–1964), which had inflated the number of school-age children throughout the nation. But enrollment continued to fall through the 1990s and into the new millennium, contracting to a low point of 10,187 in 2004. The decline in enrollment among white children was especially pronounced, with 14,285 enrolled in KPS in 1970 as opposed to only 4,133 in 2000. The percentage of black children in the public schools rose from 16 percent in 1970 to 44 percent in 2000, far outpacing the rate of increase in the city’s African American population, which grew from 10 percent of total population in 1970 to 20 percent in 2000. The Hispanic population of the city and the school district also rose.²² These shifts had something to do with local demographics—in particular, the growing number of Kalamazoo residents without school-age children—but they also reflected flight from the area’s urban core. While the population of the city of Kalamazoo declined by 15 percent between 1970 and 2005, the population of Kalamazoo County rose by more than 5 percent over the same period. In other words, people moving to the region or choosing to remain within it opted increasingly to locate outside the urban core and its school district.

Especially after the passage of Proposal A in 1994, school finances suffered since virtually all of KPS’s operating budget now came from the state’s foundation grant, which is based on enrollment numbers.²³ Between 1999 and 2005 alone, more than \$19 million was cut from the KPS budget, involving reductions in positions and programs, the closing of several school buildings, and the partial privatization of custodial and grounds services.²⁴ One response to these financial pressures has been greater involvement in the schools by social service and community organizations, many of them coordinated through the private nonprofit Kalamazoo Communities In Schools. Another is the occasional philanthropic gift to support special programs sometimes funded by anonymous donors. The Kalamazoo Promise fits into this pattern of private support for public institutions and draws attention to the resiliency and innovation of the community’s philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

A GIVING SPIRIT

Kalamazoo has a long tradition of local philanthropy and civic engagement. A number of individuals who made their wealth in Kalamazoo have chosen to reinvest much of it locally, as have their descendants. The Upjohn family, which dates its local connection to 1835, is the best-known example. As the Upjohn Company became increasingly successful, W.E. became one of the community's leading philanthropists, helping to create Bronson Methodist Hospital, the Civic Auditorium, and the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, and providing an endowment that led to the establishment of the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. After W.E.'s death in 1932, the Upjohn Company continued to play a central role in the philanthropic life of the community, creating the Kalamazoo Area Mathematics and Science Center to develop scientific talent among youth across the county, and serving as a powerful force behind the ambitious annual campaigns of the Greater Kalamazoo United Way (GKUW). Many of W.E.'s heirs still live in the community and contribute to community life as board members and donors to Kalamazoo educational, cultural, and social service organizations.

Over the years, several generations of Upjohns intermarried with members of another leading family, the Gilmores. The Gilmores, too, had earned their fortune in Kalamazoo, in their case by opening a dry goods store on Burdick Street in 1881 that grew into Gilmore's Department Store. The store served as one of the anchors of downtown until it closed in 1999, and the family played an important role in strengthening the city's center as a commercial and cultural destination. The youngest of the three Gilmore brothers, Irving S. Gilmore, was known throughout the community for his generosity, often granted anonymously. His formal giving focused on the arts and human services, and in 1972 the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation was established. The foundation has invested more than \$100 million in the community over the years, although in a mark of respect for Gilmore's memory, organizations receiving grants from the foundation are not allowed to disclose the amount. Notable among the programs supported by the foundation is the Irving S. Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, which every two years brings the world's leading pianists to Kalamazoo for several

weeks of performances and every four years chooses a Gilmore Artist to receive one of the world's most prestigious and largest piano performance awards. The foundation was also pivotal in transforming another shuttered department store on the Kalamazoo Mall into the Epic Center, where many of the region's arts and cultural organizations are based. In 2007, when Michigan's budget crisis forced a moratorium on payments to arts organizations from the state arts council, the foundation stepped in and provided the missing funds to ensure that local arts organizations could continue with the projects they had already planned; Kalamazoo was the only community in the state where such private funding was forthcoming.

A third family to play an important role in the community's philanthropic life is the Strykers. Two of Dr. Homer Stryker's three grandchildren, both of them exceptionally wealthy, still live in Kalamazoo.²⁵ Ronda Stryker serves on the board of Kalamazoo College and operates a foundation with her husband, William D. Johnston. Johnston is chairman and president of the Greenleaf Companies, owner of (among other investments) the Radisson Plaza Hotel, a 650,000-square-foot hotel and convention center in the heart of downtown Kalamazoo. Ronda Stryker's brother, architect and national political activist Jon Stryker, founded and is the sole donor to the Arcus Foundation, the main mission of which is the advancement of social justice inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and race. Jon Stryker has also contributed to the resurgence of downtown Kalamazoo with an award-winning historic preservation project that converted the city's abandoned railroad depot into a home for his foundation and other community nonprofits.

Not all of Kalamazoo's philanthropists are business owners or their heirs. The chemist who set up the Upjohn Company's first formal research laboratory, along with his wife, established the F.W. and Elsie L. Heyl Science Scholarship Fund in 1972. The coveted Heyl Scholarships go to academically high-achieving graduates of KPS and cover the full cost of attending Kalamazoo College (close to \$40,000 a year for 2008–2009). The awards also support graduate study at WMU's School of Nursing and at Yale University. More than 400 KPS graduates have received Heyl Scholarships.

Personal wealth and civic-mindedness have interacted in Kalamazoo to create a community rich in philanthropic institutions. Many of these trace their origins to wealthy individuals, but their continued vi-

tality rests on a tradition of philanthropy that extends throughout the community. The GKUW is a prime example. In 2007, the organization ranked 72nd out of more than 1,350 United Way communities nationwide in dollars raised annually and was the third-largest United Way in Michigan, despite the fact that the county has only the seventh-largest population. The GKUW, with its 43 local member agencies, serves not only as a critical source of funds for social service organizations but also a focal point of networking and information sharing among organizations.

The Kalamazoo Community Foundation is also an exceptionally large and healthy institution relative to the size of the community. Established in 1925 with an initial investment of Upjohn Company stock worth \$1,000, today the foundation has assets of \$295 million and distributed \$16.3 million in grants in 2007.

This philanthropic culture underpins an arts community that is unusually large, diverse, and financially healthy relative to the size of the population. The Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, founded in 1921, has grown into the third-largest professional orchestra in Michigan, supported by an endowment that gives it a degree of financial stability virtually unheard of in the cash-strapped world of symphony orchestras. The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, founded in 1923, also has a healthy endowment and a multimillion-dollar budget. The area's theater companies, modern dance company, chamber music organization, and contemporary music ensemble have all been recognized nationally in their respective fields, and the community supports not one but two performance organizations devoted to the music of J.S. Bach.

Kalamazoo's civic-mindedness is not confined to the philanthropic sector. In a Harvard University survey of social capital in 40 communities nationwide, Kalamazoo respondents scored highest (and well above the average) on informal socializing, diversity of friendships, associational involvement (including participation in a wide variety of groups), and giving and volunteering (Saguaro Seminar 2001). Multiple service organizations, many of them founded in the early twentieth century, remain active, including the Rotary Club (founded in 1914), the Kiwanis Club (1917), the League of Women Voters (1920), and the Junior League (originally the Service Club, founded in 1928).

Perhaps even more significant than the variety of institutions that characterizes civic involvement and cultural life in Kalamazoo is the

degree to which they are linked to each other. Networks play an important role in facilitating communication and collective action among groups with similar missions. Most of the community's major social service organizations are members of the GKUW, which operates a variety of programs in addition to its annual fund-raising campaign. One of these is the Kalamazoo Youth Development Network (KYDNET), which brings together about 80 local organizations focused on the needs of young people. Its monthly "Action Fridays" regularly draw representatives from several dozen organizations, ranging from the Boys and Girls Club to the Great Lakes PeaceJam to the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home.

The Northside Ministerial Alliance fulfills a similar networking function, with weekly meetings that draw not only church leaders but also representatives from the public schools, the police department, city government, and others to discuss issues facing the Northside neighborhood and the African American community more generally. A broader group of religious organizations are connected through Interfaith Strategy for Action and Advocacy in the Community (ISAAC), a network devoted to advancing social justice through a congregation-based organizing model.²⁶ As in other communities, neighborhood associations, business groups, and parent-teacher organizations of varying cohesiveness dot the landscape.

One network that is critical to the success of the Kalamazoo Promise is Kalamazoo Communities In Schools (KCIS). Formed in 2003 from the merger of three existing student support organizations, KCIS brings together major service providers, school officials, community volunteers, business leaders, and citizens to focus on the needs of students enrolled in KPS. Among its activities, KCIS helps facilitate student access to services, such as dental care or mental health counseling, and coordinates many of the community's tutoring, mentoring, and after-school programs. The Kalamazoo Promise unleashed a flood of volunteer energy and added urgency to KCIS's mission of supporting student success. Kalamazoo Communities In Schools, which relies on private and philanthropic resources for its funding, is struggling to build its capacity to meet these needs. An ambitious capital campaign launched in 2007 is likely to strengthen KCIS's effectiveness in supporting the goals of the Kalamazoo Promise.

Kalamazoo is already a community rich in social capital, as exemplified by its networks, the propensity of citizens to join groups, local philanthropic resources, and an overall high level of education (a critical determinant of social capital). But, as in many communities, it has been far easier to create and maintain social capital of the “bonding” or inward-looking variety, in which networks link people who are similar in crucial respects, than the “bridging” or outward-looking kind, where networks transcend different groups and interests. Putnam and Feldstein (2003) liken the former to “sociological Super Glue” and the latter to WD-40, and stress that both types are crucially important: “A society that has only bonding social capital will look like Belfast or Bosnia—segregated into mutually hostile camps” (pp. 2–3).

In practice, it can be difficult to distinguish between these two types of social capital. A single network can play both a bonding and a bridging function—for example, the member agencies of the Greater Kalamazoo United Way share an emphasis on social services and a regional focus but represent different constituencies and missions. The agencies that participate in KYDNET are all committed to serving youth, but the group’s networking function is expressly designed to facilitate information sharing and partnerships among different kinds of organizations. Given the community’s racially polarized history, one of the most pressing questions for Kalamazoo is the extent to which networks bridge racial divides. The Northside Ministerial Alliance brings together the leaders of multiple churches, most led by African American ministers, with representatives of the broader community, including police officers and school officials. ISAAC’s congregation-based organizing approach represents bonding among those with a religious affiliation but provides a forum for the bridging of black and white congregations. Some of the best examples of bridging social capital in Kalamazoo, as in other communities, are found in tutoring or mentoring programs, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, that are designed explicitly to bring together individuals from different generations and often different socioeconomic groups.

The Kalamazoo Promise has the potential to strengthen the community’s stores of social capital through several avenues. The first of these is an increase in residents’ average level of education whether through increased high school graduation rates, higher college attendance and completion rates, or the attraction of better-educated workers, since the

propensity to form networks of trust and reciprocity increases in line with educational attainment. The second is an expansion in the activities of community- and faith-based organizations in the city's poorest neighborhoods intent on supporting disadvantaged youth with the resources they need to benefit from the Promise. Since the scholarship program was announced, these organizations have presented information fairs, held rallies, provided assistance with financial aid applications, and offered tutoring and family support programs. A third avenue is the proliferation and expansion of mentoring programs that focus specifically on bringing students together with adults who can help them navigate the transition from high school to college. Fourth, the increased engagement of parents in the schools, whether as volunteers or advocates for their children, is another crucial element in creating social capital that bridges the schools and the broader community. (Teachers report that the proportion of parents of all income groups attending their children's teacher-parent conferences rose markedly after the Kalamazoo Promise was announced.) Finally, the intensive efforts of community leaders and grassroots organizations to align their work around the goals of the Kalamazoo Promise (discussed in Chapter 4) has led to a surge in communication and sometimes even collaboration across different organizations—a positive sign in a community that has remained fragmented by class, race, and neighborhood despite its wealth of social capital.

The issues facing the community in November 2005 were multifaceted: a wrenching economic transformation from manufacturing to something as yet unknown; a school district grappling with shrinking enrollment, fewer resources, and needier students; a community where networks abound and social capital is high, yet where divisions persist; and a scholarship program that many believe is the answer to all of these problems. The next chapter examines the Kalamazoo Promise within the broader context of college financial aid and economic development strategies in order to understand how the program might help address these critical challenges—not only in Kalamazoo but in communities around the nation that confront many of the same issues.

Notes

1. The poverty rate for individuals in the city of Kalamazoo was 30.2 percent in 2005—more than twice the national average—but the large proportion of college students in the community tends to inflate this number; a more accurate assessment is provided by the family poverty rate (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).
2. As measured by the Metropolitan Power Diffusion Index (MPDI) developed by David Y. Miller and calculated by David Rusk based on 1992 data.
3. U.S. Census Bureau data from 1970 and 2000; U.S. Census Bureau estimate for 2005.
4. See the “State of the Downtown Address, 2008,” available for download from <http://www.central-city.net/download>.
5. According to data provided by KPS, in 2006–2007, Lincoln International Studies School had a minority population of 90 percent and a free and reduced-price lunch population of 87 percent, and Northglade Montessori School had a minority population of 86 percent and a free- and reduced-price lunch population of 72 percent.
6. For an excellent treatment of the role of federal housing and lending policy in creating segregated cities, see Sugrue (1996).
7. Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3)—Sample Data, Detailed Tables P1, P6, P53, P87.
8. Fact Sheet: Kalamazoo, American Community Survey 2007, U.S. Census.
9. Data provided by KPS.
10. 32.28 percent of the city’s land area is strictly exempt property; 13.31 percent is roads; and 3.68 percent is part of special collections districts (City of Kalamazoo Assessor’s Office 2008).
11. Author’s interview with Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran, Kalamazoo College president, March 30, 2006.
12. The word Kalamazoo, which probably comes from the language of the Potawatomi Indians who lived in the area, has a long and ambiguous history, with meanings that range from “boiling pot” to “mirage” to “reflecting river.” See Rzepczynski (1998).
13. For more on the history of Kalamazoo businesses, visit the Local History Collection of the Kalamazoo Public Library online at <http://www.kpl.gov/collections/LocalHistory/AllAbout/default.aspx>.
14. The bank has never released the exact number of layoffs or transfers resulting from this acquisition.
15. Checker Motors still produces auto parts in Kalamazoo, although the last Checker Cab was manufactured in 1982.
16. Borgess Medical Center was established in 1889 by leaders of the Catholic Church. Bronson Methodist Hospital, originally called the Kalamazoo Hospital, was founded in 1904. For a list of the region’s largest employers, see the Web site of the Kalamazoo Regional Chamber of Commerce: <http://www.kazoochamber.com>.
17. This paragraph draws on Dunbar (1969).

18. The number of high schools in the state rose from 107 in the early 1870s to 278 by 1890 (Timmerman 2000, 2005).
19. Some of the subjects taught at Central High School during these years were geometry, algebra, band and orchestra, physical education, and zoology. In 1905, the school's menagerie, established for the benefit of the zoology classes, contained a rooster, a "Bayer," a coon, a crane, and a wolf (Bennett 1956, p. 17).
20. This was unusual for the time. Willis Dunbar (1955, p. 308) writes, "In Michigan, as nowhere else in the nation, the resources of a State were concentrated upon the building up of one great State institution of higher learning, rather than being dissipated and divided among a large number of small, weak, struggling, faction-ridden institutions."
21. Data provided by KPS.
22. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2007, the Hispanic/Latino population of the city of Kalamazoo stood at 4.8 percent; however, Hispanic students accounted for 9.5 percent of KPS enrollment for 2007, according to KPS.
23. The foundation grant for KPS was \$7,733 per full-time enrolled student for 2007–2008. In an effort to equalize the disparities in funding between school districts across the state, Proposal A shifted public school financing from local property taxes to a per-pupil foundation grant related directly to enrollment numbers. For more information, see Summers-Coty (2007).
24. "Budget Reductions, Kalamazoo Public Schools," provided by the office of the Deputy Superintendent for Business, Communications, and Operations, November 1, 2006.
25. Forbes's 2008 ranking listed Ronda Stryker with \$3.0 billion in assets and Jon Stryker with \$2.1 billion (Forbes.com 2008).
26. The Interfaith Strategy for Action and Advocacy in the Community is an affiliate of the national Gamaliel Foundation, "a network of grassroots, interfaith, inter-racial, multi-issue organizations working together to create a more just and more democratic society." See <http://www.gamaliel.org>.