

OP-ED

# KALAMAZOO IN CRISIS

By: Geoffrey Fields

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## **A Community on Edge**

In the heart of Michigan, nestled amidst the scenic beauty of the Great Lakes, lies Kalamazoo—a city grappling with a myriad of challenges that threaten its very essence. From the scourge of homelessness to a surge in crime rates and corruption, the once vibrant streets now echo with the cries of a community in distress. Voices like that of Larry Bell, the renowned business tycoon behind Bell's Brewery, ring out in defiance, demanding action and accountability from city officials.

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“The first duty for a city manager is to see that all laws & ordinances are enforced...If the city can't guarantee that they are going to protect my personal property, why would I stay?” according to Larry Bell and MLive.

### **The Homelessness Crisis: A Growing Menace**

With each passing day, the specter of homelessness looms larger over the streets of Kalamazoo. Tent cities spring up like mushrooms after a storm, while parks and business districts serve as makeshift shelters for those without a roof over their heads. Services like 'Open Doors' beckon the homeless, drawing them to the city in search of refuge and support. Yet, as the numbers swell, the city finds itself ill-equipped to address the burgeoning crisis.

According to WWT - Citizens like Quintin Slovacek and Audrey Chapmen claim encounters with the homeless populace now seem ubiquitous in downtown Kalamazoo. “Homeless hanging out in Bronson Park with their belongings.” Their presence, once sporadic, has now become a constant reminder of the city's struggle to keep pace with the problem at hand.

City leaders, including Commissioner Don Cooney, acknowledge the gravity of the situation they've created, confessing to being overwhelmed by its scale. “I think why there has been an increase here is we provide services here that a lot of other services in the county don't, so people come here so they can get some services... We can't keep up with the problem.”

### **Population down 19% since 1970**

Under the leadership of Mayor David Anderson, the city has garnered the dubious distinction of being the 7th most violent city in Michigan—a sobering reality, according to Neighborhood Scout.

When the problem exploded in recent years it prompted the police departments of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo Michigan to issue a historic joint-statement denouncing local leaders for their “defund the police” rhetoric and stifling recruitment.

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Statistics paint a grim picture: crime rates have soared, with property theft and violent offenses witnessing alarming spikes. Successful efforts to decriminalize certain misdemeanors like: littering, public urination and defecation have produced expected results. The streets of Kalamazoo remain fraught with danger, leaving residents questioning decisions their so-called leaders have created.

According to FBI data, crime in Kalamazoo has surged beyond the national average, with crime up by a staggering 166% and violent crime soaring by 269%. Shockingly, one in fifteen individuals is projected to fall victim to property theft, underscoring the pervasive nature of the crisis.

### **The Education Front: Controversy in the Classroom**

Even within the confines of its educational institutions, Kalamazoo finds itself embroiled in controversy. Recent Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by TTA Owner Geoffrey Fields unearthed documents revealing the presence of trans ideology within Kalamazoo Public Schools. Guidelines allowing students to use facilities corresponding to their gender identity and the promotion of LGBTQ extracurricular activities have sparked heated debates within the community.

### **Editorial Notes and Comments**

With no end in sight, or true solution being offered by anyone of notoriety like Mayor David Anderson... Bidenomics, liberal policy and economic failures have 56% of households in Kalamazoo living within the minimum income level necessary for survival.