



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Kalamazoo County Welcomes First Climate Sustainability Coordinator to Lead County-Wide Climate Action Plan**

KALAMAZOO, Mich. – Kalamazoo County reinforces its commitment to combatting climate change and advancing sustainable practices with the appointment of Taylor Van Winkle as the county's inaugural Sustainability Coordinator.

“Hiring our first Sustainability Coordinator is a crucial step forward in promoting a sustainable future for Kalamazoo County,” said Rachael Grover, Planning & Development Director. “Taylor’s expertise and leadership will be instrumental in developing a county-wide climate action plan that aligns with our values of environmental stewardship and climate justice. We are confident that Taylor's passion and dedication will drive meaningful change and foster strong partnerships within our community to shape a greener, more resilient future for Kalamazoo County residents.”

Having served as an Associate Planner for the City of East Lansing, Van Winkle possesses diverse prior experience, including working with Michigan counties, developing urban greenspace planning frameworks on an international level, securing grant funding for community projects, and fostering collaboration with local community members and groups. Van Winkle also holds an undergraduate degree in biology and history from Kalamazoo College and recently obtained a master's degree in urban and regional planning with a focus on climate resiliency from Michigan State University.

This milestone hire comes as part of the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition's three-year, \$300,000 grant awarded by the United States Environmental Protection Agency through the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy in 2022.

The grant, a joint effort between the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition and Kalamazoo County, will provide vital resources to develop a county-wide climate action plan rooted in climate justice. The plan aims to establish collaborative partnerships with county municipalities and community groups, define ambitious goals, identify actionable steps, and kick-start implementation in its final year.

Van Winkle's return to the City of Kalamazoo marks a homecoming that will greatly contribute to the county's sustainability efforts. Expressing excitement about the new role, Van Winkle emphasized the significance of community support in undertaking the creation of a county-wide climate action plan.

"I'm happy to be back in Kalamazoo," Van Winkle said. "There's no place quite like it. Nothing worthwhile is done alone, and we have an excellent foundation and community here to build on."

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