

Hannah R. Johnson
234 W Cedar St, Apt 159
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

June 12, 2025

To the hiring manager,

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application for the Neighborhood Activator position. I've taken the message at the bottom of the job listing to heart, and believe that my extensive experience in community development and engagement is highly transferable for this role.

For over fifteen years, I have dedicated myself to activating communities and fostering connections, a passion that began long before my professional career and continues to drive me. The Neighborhood Activator role with the City of Kalamazoo resonates deeply with my proactive approach to problem-solving and my extensive experience in transforming challenges into opportunities for collaboration and growth, whether in digital spaces or face-to-face interactions.

My background in community management, from founding Communitrix to roles at Community.co and Internet Brands, has provided me with a robust toolkit directly applicable to the responsibilities outlined. I have a proven track record of:

- **Building and Sustaining Organizations:** I've consistently supported businesses in creating and maintaining strong organizational structures, fostering communication networks that connect leadership with clients and users—a key aspect of the described duties.
- **Facilitating Engagement and Collaboration:** My entire career has revolved around getting diverse individuals and groups to connect, collaborate, and work towards common goals. This includes facilitating countless discussions, organizing engaging events (both online and in-person, such as for Model Mayhem), and developing strategies to ensure all voices are heard. My theatrical training has further honed my public speaking and presentation skills, allowing me to confidently address and engage large groups.
- **Supporting Community-Driven Solutions:** I excel at understanding community needs and helping to shape solutions from the ground up. This involves active listening—a skill I've sharpened extensively, particularly in resolving conflicts and addressing concerns in public-facing roles like my recent position at the Air Zoo—and then translating those needs into actionable plans and reports.

While my professional title has never encompassed urban planning, my understanding of urban dynamics is both personal and academic. I'm familiar with the principles of New Urbanism and organizations like Smart Growth America and Project for Public Spaces, driven by a keen interest in how urban layouts impact communities. This is an interest solidified by firsthand experiences, like living in the food desert of downtown Seattle where the best food options involve a car. Even before seeing this role, I've found myself observing Kalamazoo's layout, considering how it could better serve residents, such as improving grocery accessibility near the downtown mall.

This practical observation is complemented by my anthropological studies, where my focus on archaeology and community land use provided a strong theoretical foundation. This academic

background included foundational GIS work, and I've consistently applied skills in data collection and analysis throughout my career, preparing reports for diverse stakeholders, from internal management to potential investors at the Air Zoo. I believe this blend of real-world observation and analytical skill is crucial for developing impactful Neighborhood Plans. Furthermore, I am adept at mastering new tools and processes, as demonstrated by my self-taught proficiency in the Adobe Creative Suite and my success in navigating complex procedures like trademark and copyright registration independently.

Regarding grant writing, while I don't have direct professional experience with municipal grants, my extensive background in preparing detailed proposals, technical documentation, and persuasive reports showcases a strong aptitude for the meticulous research, clear writing, and adherence to guidelines that successful grant applications require.

I am particularly enthusiastic about the prospect of dedicating my skills to this community. I want to learn all the secrets of Kalamazoo's neighborhoods and then apply my experience in building relationships with my neighbors. I am confident in my ability to quickly understand local priorities and connect with residents, partners, and leaders, and to connect them with each other.

The opportunity to serve as the city's champion for outreach and engagement is one I would approach with immense passion and commitment. I am ardently inclusive when it comes to participation, and have a history of developing and implementing effective outreach strategies. This often involves creating multi-channel communication campaigns that use everything from email newsletters, social media engagement and online forums to direct messaging to ensure information reaches diverse segments of the community. I also believe in making participation as accessible as possible, which has led me to create policies such as hybrid attendance options for workshops.

I am confident that my blend of hands-on community organizing experience, strong communication and facilitation skills, and a genuine passion for empowering local communities makes me a strong candidate for the Neighborhood Activator position. I am eager to bring my proactive, resourceful, and collaborative spirit to the City of Kalamazoo.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hannah Johnson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Hannah Johnson

[linkedin.com/in/findserendipity](https://www.linkedin.com/in/findserendipity)