

**City of Portage
Community Visioning Project
Renewal Event 2008**

April 30, 2008

Planning Report



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“The Renewal Event 2008 will help ensure that the City of Portage remains A Place for Opportunities to Grow.”

Peter J. Strazdas,
Mayor, City of
Portage

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Introduction

Renewal Event 2008: “The Next Five Years”

In 2007, Portage residents helped to develop the framework for the future of Portage through the **Portage 2025** visioning process. We developed visions and goals for what the community could be like in the year 2025 in seven key areas: Culture and Leisure, Economic Development, Environment and Natural Resources, Human Services, Municipal Services, Neighborhoods and Transportation.¹

To build upon the Portage 2025 vision, we held the Portage 2025 **Renewal Event 2008**. Almost eighty residents, together with staff and city council members, reviewed the exciting progress of the first year and created strategies for achieving each area’s top goals.

Participants also developed preliminary concepts for a collective vision of the Portage City Centre area.

On behalf of the City Council and Administration, we want to thank those who invested their time in an endeavor that will pay dividends for many years.

Members of the current and future City Councils, Boards, and Commissions will use the outcome of the Portage 2025 Renewal Event 2008 as a guide as they shape the future of the City of Portage. The vision and goals developed through Portage 2025, and now the ideas from the Renewal Event 2008, will help ensure that the City of Portage remains “A Place for Opportunities to Grow.”

Maurice S. Evans
City Manager, City of Portage

Peter J. Strazdas
Mayor, City of Portage

¹ Further information regarding Portage 2025 is available at www.portagemi.com



Renewal 2008 Participants		
Culture and Leisure	Peter Cook Kim Elliott Keith Maisto Marciniak Bethany Mark Anthony Martin Don Ramlow* Pamela Reed	Jamie Schuring Marianna Singer Babette Smith Tyler Smith Andrea Stork* Joanne Willson
Economic Development	Joe Cekola Jeff Chyrstal Mary Kay Davis Frances Denny Gordon Groves Bill Kovats Michael Marshburn	Jim Pearson Frank Peterman Scott Peterman Martin Separik Paul Welch*
Environment and Natural Resources	Martha Dahlinger Sarah Dirksen Jim Hoppe Michael Lunney	Mary Maisto Mel Visser Sara Wick* Roy Williams
Human Services	Cory Bailes* Mike Drew Christine Granaderos* Andrew Krietz Pat Maye	Kathy Olsen Rick Reeves Lawrence Smith Lyndsey Wessendorf
Municipal Services	Denise Clegg Dan Corradini Tom Eddy* Dave Gordon Bill Johnson	Ric Kienbaum Bill Patterson Jackie Patterson Philip Stohrer* Douglas Wagner
Neighborhoods	Gary Brown* David Droghetti Thomas Fox* Jeannette Greselin Shirley Johnson	Cyndi Koster Melanie Kurdys William Virgo Ted Vliek
Transportation	James Atkinson Paul Ecklund Cameron Lambe* Betty Lee Ongley Arthur Roberts Nate Sachritz	William Schwartz Celeste Stoneburner* Nancy VanderRoest Carl Wespinter Sandra Zukowski

* denotes co-chair



Acknowledgements	
City Council	<p>Mayor Peter J. Strazdas Mayor Pro Tem Ed Sackley Elizabeth Campbell Larry DeShazor Margaret O'Brien Claudette Reid Terry Urban</p>
Visioning Steering Committee	<p>Peter J. Strazdas, Mayor Elizabeth Campbell, Council Member Ed Sackley, Mayor Pro Tem Maurice S. Evans, City Manager Sean McBride, Assistant City Manager Dr. Peter Dams, Consultant and Facilitator</p>
Staff Liaisons	<p>Chris Barnes, City Engineer Brian Bowling, Deputy City Manager Bill Deming, Director of Parks, Recreation & Property Management Jeff Erickson, Director of Community Development Chris Forth, Deputy Director for Planning and Development Services Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services Devin Mackinder, Chief Information Officer/ Technology Director Rick White, Chief of Police Dallas Williams, Director of Transportation and Utilities</p>
Staff Support	<p>Mary Beth Block, Administrative Assistant Devin Mackinder, Chief Information Officer/ Technology Director Ric Kienbaum, Portage Cable Access Mike Story, Portage Cable Access</p>
Portage West Middle School	<p>Larry J. Killips, Principal, and staff, Portage West Middle School Marsha A. Wells, Superintendent, Portage Public Schools</p>

Portage 2025 Visions





Overview - Renewal Event 2008

Building On a Foundation

To build upon the foundation laid during the four community visioning session of 2007, the City of Portage invited residents to explore in depth possible strategies for implementing their “top goals.” Top goals were defined as two goals from each workgroup participants felt most critical for the future growth and prosperity for the City of Portage.

Participants also elaborated upon the City Centre concept. This concept of a Portage downtown was first mentioned in City documents over 25 years ago.

Opening Session

Following registration and refreshments, Mayor Strazdas welcomed the almost 100 residents, council members, and staff liaisons to the Renewal Event 2008. City staff then reported on the accomplishments of the Portage 2025 progress for each workgroup area (see next section). Mayor Strazdas challenged the audience to consider in their planning work the economic opportunities and challenges for the City of Portage and the region.

Director of Community Development Jeff Erickson familiarized participants with detailed overview of the City Centre concept. Besides historic information, Mr. Erickson also outlined different approaches to planning a city center. Part 2 of this report, “The City Centre Concept,” summarizes the key elements of this presentation.

Facilitator Dr. Peter Dams of Dams & Associates, Inc. concluded the opening session by specifying the planning steps and outcomes.

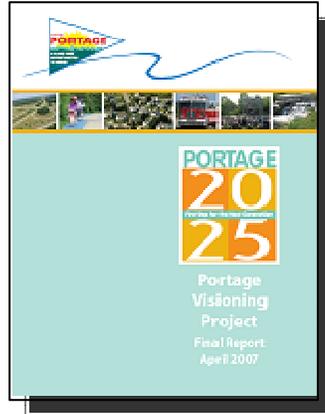
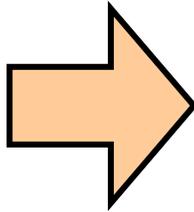
Planning Sessions

Renewal Event workgroups deliberated for two hours to identify their top two goals and develop potential strategies for their implementation. They concluded their planning session with a discussion of the City Centre concepts.

Following the planning session, workgroup co-chairs presented the results to all participants. The remainder of this report documents the Portage 2025 accomplishments, the top two goals for each workgroup, and the five key elements of an appealing City Centre.

Visioning Timeline

Visioning
Community
Forums -
2007

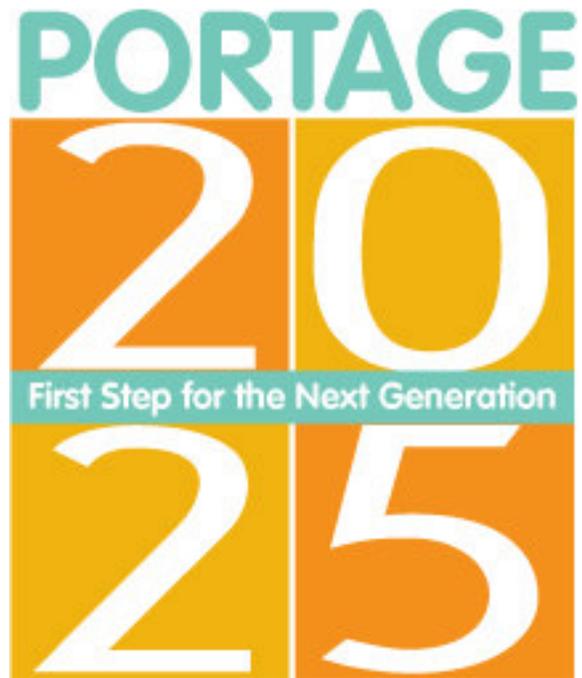


Celebration Event April 2007

Implementation Ongoing

Renewal
Event 2008

“The Next Five Years”



Portage 2025 Accomplishments



Plans, Actions and Outcomes

In Review: 2007 - 2008

Portage 2025 visions and goals provide a framework for the future of our community. The City Council and City Administration are working toward the visions and goals identified by approximately 130 Portage 2025 participants.

The Portage 2025 visions and goals provide guidance at the “30,000 feet” level - basic directions without specific detail. The City Council held two retreats in July and December 2007, to further develop the action goals for the achievement of both short and long-term Portage 2025 visions and goals.

Although there are 17 years remaining until the year 2025, several plans were developed and actions achieved to met the Portage 2025 visions and goals.

The following material, compiled by city staff, documents the many *plans, actions, and outcomes* achieved in 2007 and early 2008. *Plans, actions, and outcomes* listed under one workgroup may also apply to the visions and goals of other workgroups.

Culture and Leisure

The city has been awarded a \$139,000 Accessible by Design Award grant that, combined with a Capital Improvement Program funds match of \$60,000, will provide for a redeveloped playground at Ramona Park, incorporating materials and design to allow access for individuals with physical disabilities.

The city has received a \$200,000 grant commitment from the Michigan Department of Transportation for construction of the Northwest Portage Bikeway extension. The proposed trailway will run through the Crossroads Mall and connect to the Millennium Trail and Portage Creek Bicentennial Trail systems. Construction of this project is contingent on obtaining easements from several business properties.

Planning is underway for the development of a dog “bark” park and a disc golf course within the next few years as funding is identified.

The 2008 Recreation and Open Space Plan is in the process of being updated and approved by the Parks Board. The Open Space Plan provides long-range planning for items such as trailways, park space, open space and recreation facilities.

In cooperation with the city, private fundraising efforts are underway for the development of a water spray park to be located at Ramona Park.

The 2007 Portage Community Survey contained the following responses:

- 90% of respondents: satisfied with the condition of city parks.
- 94% of respondents: satisfied with the city’s recreation programs.
- 97% of respondents: satisfied with the condition of bikeways/trailways.



Plans, Actions and Outcomes

Economic Development

The Planning Commission is reviewing and updating the City Centre Plan, developed in 1982. As part of the update, citizen input will be sought, including input from Renewal Event participants. The goal of the update will be to create the framework for developing a vibrant City Centre.

To encourage retention/expansion of existing industries and to attract new industries, industrial tax abatement incentives permitted under Michigan statute are under review by the City Council. In accordance with state law, the tax abatement provides for tax reductions on property improvements and on eligible manufacturing equipment for new and expanding industries in return for private investment and tax base growth, retaining existing jobs or creating new job opportunities for area residents.

The City Administration works collaboratively with Southwest Michigan First on mutually beneficial economic development projects and initiatives.

During 2007, 78 businesses located or expanded business facilities in Portage. Approximately, 750 jobs have been added and 605 jobs retained. In an effort to facilitate quality growth and development investment by property owners/developers, the City Administration works collaboratively and proactively with these private sector entities.

Environment & Natural Resources

The city diesel fleet currently operates on Bio-Diesel fuel. The fleet consists of 33 street maintenance vehicles and 6 fire apparatus. Additionally, the city fleet contains five flex fuel vehicles that operate on E-85 ethanol blend fuel.

City facilities will utilize energy efficient lighting. Installation of energy efficient lighting in City Hall and the Senior Center is scheduled over the next several months. Energy efficient lighting upgrades have already been completed in most other facilities, including Police Headquarters, all fire stations and the Public Services Facility.

Design is nearly complete and construction is targeted to begin this summer for an Arsenic Removal Water Treatment Facility located off of Garden Lane. The Water Treatment Facility will enable the city to meet future demands for quality and safe drinking water. The Water Treatment Facility is designed to utilize and meet the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards.

Portage provides a comprehensive recycling program that serves 7,500 residences and collects approximately 111,000 pounds of recycled material weekly. Efforts to expand the scope of recycling are constantly under review; recently the City added recycling of computers, certain types of plastics and mercury thermometers.

In an effort to facilitate reuse of existing commercial sites through redevelopment, projects including the new Gordon Foods Store, Southland Mall renovations and Main Street Pub projects, among others, were constructed on existing commercial sites.



Plans, Actions and Outcomes

Human Services

Portage continues to support and partner with human service providers through the annual financial support. Over the past five-years, more than \$1 million in funding has been provided from the General Fund (\$801,000) and the Community Development Block Grant Fund (\$311,000) to support programs that offer emergency shelter, food, clothing, financial assistance and transportation assistance for families; aide runaway youth; assist victims of domestic violence and prevent eviction and foreclosure.

The City Council formed a committee to consider financial support from the city to the Kalamazoo County Affordable Housing Fund. A recommendation for the City of Portage to contribute funding in support of this effort is expected to be considered as part of the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget process. The Affordable Housing Fund is designed to provide qualified individuals/families transitional housing vouchers, homeless prevention support and permanent housing opportunities.

The Portage Community Center (PCC) has recently upgraded/expanded facilities by relocating to the City Centre area and has expanded activities to include the Family Health Center and Kalamazoo County Head Start program. The relocation was done in cooperation and through funding assistance provided by the City of Portage. The PCC is the primary human services agency serving the community.

The Portage Senior Center provides and enhances programming and services that meet the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of participants. The “Partners Program” brings youth and seniors together to participate in educational programs and community service projects. The Personal Action Towards Health (PATH) program promotes the development of self-management skills for individuals suffering from a chronic disease.

Municipal Services

2007 Community Survey results reveal a continued positive perception of service value by residents, with 88% of survey respondents indicating they believe they receive good or excellent service for their tax dollars. Additionally, 86% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of service received from a city employee.

The City Council created the Ad-Hoc Cable Access Committee to identify efforts to enhance community access cable programming and services.

The City Council created the Ad-Hoc Youth Involvement Committee to identify efforts to improve youth participation in municipal government. Implementation of a Youth Advisory Board and identifying designated youth participants for selected Advisory Boards and Commission are underway.

The South Westnedge Enhancement Projects (SWEPs), described in further detail under Transportation, includes the undergrounding of overhead utility lines along South Westnedge Avenue from approximately I-94 to north of Trade Centre Way.



Plans, Actions and Outcomes	
Municipal Services - continued	<p>The City Council and City Administration are committed to working collaboratively with other regional organizations. To the benefit of the community, the city regularly works in cooperation with Kalamazoo County, the City of Kalamazoo, Portage Public Schools, the Portage District Library, the Portage Community Center, Southwest Michigan First, the Kalamazoo Area Chamber of Commerce and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority, to name a few.</p> <p>The City of Portage Fiscal Year 2007-2008 millage rate of 10.4892 is the 8th lowest of 43 comparable municipalities.</p>
Neighborhoods	<p>The Portage Police Department is working towards a “district officer” staffing model. This model utilizes components of community-oriented policing as well as data management and analysis to facilitate proactive policing methods. Additionally, efforts towards developing more neighborhood watch organizations have been pursued.</p> <p>To protect and preserve neighborhood quality of life, implementation of the Neighborhood Support Program continues, which includes efforts for renewal and maintenance of existing housing stock and blight prevention.</p> <p>Through the Community Development Block Grant Program, the city provides funding to support emergency home repairs, housing rehabilitation, down payment and predevelopment activities for low and moderate income owner-occupied households.</p>
Transportation	<p>The Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority has established three additional fixed-bus routes and demand-response service to Portage. The new routes average approximately 5,000 rides per month.</p> <p>Construction of the South Westnedge Enhancements Projects (SWEPs) will begin this spring. The first phase of construction includes widening South Westnedge Avenue to three lanes in both north and southbound directions between I-94 and approximately Kilgore Road.</p> <p>The Portage Holiday Express was a trolley that served South Westnedge Avenue between Milham Avenue and Romence Road during the holiday season. The Holiday Express was funded by the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority as well as private business donors.</p> <p>Kalamazoo Metro Transit has plans to install up to nine additional bus shelters by June 2008 at key areas throughout the city.</p>



Plans, Actions and Outcomes

Transportation - continued

In an effort to provide a well-maintained street network, major street enhancements were constructed in 2007 at Bacon Road between Portage Road and South Westnedge Avenue, Kilgore Road between Lovers Lane and east of Portage Road and intersection improvements at South Westnedge Avenue and Shaver Road. During the 2008 construction season, Romence Road from Oakland Drive to Angling Road and Moorsbridge Road from East Centre Avenue Boulevard to approximately Muirfield Drive will be reconstructed. Planning is underway for improvements to Milham Avenue between Oakland Drive and 12th Street, with construction scheduled to begin in 2009.



Reflections on Accomplishments

Overview

To begin the planning part of the Renewal Event 2008, participants discussed and captured their thoughts about the accomplishments reported by city staff. Some of the workgroups recorded their reflection on this progress.

Culture and Leisure

(positive [+] and negative [-] ratings by participants)

- + Holly-jolly trolley holiday
- + Need for night life, events, cruisers
- + Play ground Ramona Park
- + Seasonal pool
- + Dog park
- + Walking/trails
- + Better connectivity
- + Working the park plan! (Kudos bill Deming)
- + Maintaining parks
- + Municipal building
 - like to see more focus
 - Senior – like to see more
- + Summer entertainment series
- + Positive process
- + Northwest bike trail expansion
 - Want to see more connectivity / Need more bike racks
- + More programming (e.g., reenactment)
- + Partner with existing facilities (pool)
- + Positive progress on 2025 vision – yeah!
- Economic factors

Human Services

- Planning for future citizens regarding Portage central site
- Emphasize “hidden” assets – Portage Senior Center/Community Center
- Youth involvement on citizen committees
- PCOC moving to City Centre with integration of services (e.g., Head Start, using library services)

Transportation

- Bikeway expansion
- Public transportation – efficient high use
- Center needs to be identified
- Smart lights and traffic flow
- Westnedge plan – egress, pedestrian-friendly
- We’re Happy!

PORTAGE



**Part 1:
The Next
Five Years**



Overview

Top Goals

All goals developed during the 2007 Portage 2025 sessions are important to City of Portage council members and leadership.

However, limited resources constrain the amount of goals the City of Portage can pursue at any one time. To guide the City in establishing feasible and realistic plans for *the next five years*, workgroups selected their top two goals they considered most critical for the future growth and prosperity for the City of Portage.

Participants considered the current economic reality and the economic outlook for the next five years for the region and the State of Michigan.

Top Strategies

After voting for their top two goals, participants brainstormed how they could break down these top goals into smaller steps or milestones.

- What should the City do first?
- What’s the best way of reaching your goal within five years?
- If the complete goal cannot be reached in five years, then which aspects should be in place five years from now?

While the overall goals represent a big picture view of Portage’s future taken at the big picture – or 30,000’ - level, “strategies” provide more focused detail - the 20,000’ level – without becoming too specific.

This section of the report documents the top goals and strategies for each workgroup. For historic purposes, each workgroup’s vision and other goals are listed as well.



Top Two Goals - At A Glance	
Culture and Leisure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a municipal complex for sports, recreation and culture to include: indoor/outdoor facilities, pool, theatre, exhibit space and senior- and youth-friendly activities. 2. Expand and improve the park system with four-season activities for all ages (for example, evening activities, pocket parks, dog “bark” parks, golf course, disk golf, and soccer fields).
Economic Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas. Live! Work! Play! 2. Retain, grow and attract diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
Environment & Natural Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pursue regional cooperation: Multiple opportunities for recycling for the entire community (industrial, commercial, residential); Sustainable groundwater vision to protect drinking water quality/quantity; 2. Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
Human Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a leader in regional cooperation, Portage will maximize resources by creatively sharing funding, facilities and services with external (municipalities, businesses) and internal (library, schools, senior center, PCOC) community partners. 2. A full-service intergenerational community system that meets the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of all citizens.
Municipal Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage economic development and diversity with such things as an aesthetically pleasing, multi-use research park consistent with an active lifestyle. It is important to develop the necessary infrastructure to create jobs, retain population and increase tax base. 2. Continue to be an active participant in local and regional government leadership and cooperation to deliver better services to our community. Portage will be a leader in fostering intergovernmental cooperation.
Neighborhoods	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times. 2. Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods: City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A reliable public transportation system for all providing accessibility throughout the region to points of public interest and use. 2. Portage citizens have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and hike and bike trails, which connect regional trail facilities.



Culture and Leisure	
Vision	Portage – a leader in diversified, sustainable and flexible cultural and leisure activities, promoting creativity, a healthy lifestyle and well-being.
Top Goal #1	Develop a municipal complex for sports, recreation and culture to include: indoor/outdoor facilities, pool, theatre, exhibit space and senior- and youth-friendly activities.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding 2. Location (old Sam's Club?) 3. Priorities established – needs assessment/time table established 4. Develop the programs first then build to suit. 5. Build up
Top Goal #2	Expand and improve the park system with four-season activities for all ages (for example, evening activities, pocket parks, dog “bark” parks, golf course, disk golf, and soccer fields).
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Survey / Needs Assessment 2. Funding 3. Locations 4. Marketing / Promotion 5. Regional Cooperation / Partnerships



Culture and Leisure

Other Goals

Acquire green space for parks while continuing to protect, maintain and enhance the current park system.

Create enhanced, lighted, safe, accessible non-motorized trails, integrated with other trail systems and with separation for pedestrians and cyclists and four-season amenities.

Continue as a destination for community-wide seasonal celebrations and multi-weekend themed events.

Recognize and support the importance and reputation for a quality, accessible park and trail system, arts and culture as planning and funding priorities.



<h2>Economic Development</h2>	
Vision	Portage will be a dynamic, entrepreneurial and opportunity-rich community that proactively and adaptively supports responsible economic development.
Top Goal #1	Create mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas. Live! Work! Play!
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that land-use plan, zoning and parcel availability are supported. 2. Focus on what we are known for – shopping and eating. 3. Facilitate easy access, traffic flows and parking. 4. Excellent cooperation and facilitation by City Hall. 5. Attractive presentation of city marketing and economic develop information via website and in City Hall. All information will be current and user friendly.
Top Goal #2	Retain, grow and attract diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide/share workforce and population statistics. 2. Foster a vibrant City Centre. 3. Marketing, marketing, marketing: capitalize on natural aesthetics, exploit strategic location (US131/I-94) and guide visitors in with way-faring signs, promote life-science sector, emphasize can-do of Portage, market Portage outside Portage and explain what we are.



Economic Development

Other Goals

Cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs a skilled workforce.

Pursue economic development strategies that respect the environment and set priority on use of existing physical resources.

Nurture a small-town feel and sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.

Advance ubiquitous, high-tech infrastructure.

Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant city center.

Be a leader and partner in intergovernmental cooperation to promote positive economic development.



Environment & Natural Resources	
Vision	Portage will be recognized for sustainable planning based on ethical environmental standards and incentives.
Top Goal #1	Pursue regional cooperation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple opportunities for recycling for the entire community (industrial, commercial, residential); • Sustainable groundwater vision to protect drinking water quality/quantity;
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with business and apartments to develop in-house recycling effort. 2. Environmental Board to promote “Green Star” award for recycling. 3. Redirect untreated storm water runoff to retention area. 4. Community education promoting ground-water protection and recycling.
Top Goal #2	Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City policies that encourage re-use of existing policies. 2. Seek funding to pursue state property if it becomes available. 3. Encourage more use of open space development concepts. 4. Seek alternatives to preserve open space



Environment & Natural Resources

Other Goals

Protect the environment including flora, fauna, water and especially Portage Creek and Bishop's Bog.

Provide measures and incentives for man-made pollution control in cooperation with the entire community.

Provide recreational opportunities for all including creation and maintenance of high-quality parks and trails.

Develop the Westnedge area parking lots as the site of an urban village served by a fixed-route trolley and walkable hub design.



<h1>Human Services</h1>	
Vision	Portage will embrace innovative strategies and partnerships to ensure her diverse population the tools needed to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle.
Top Goal #1	As a leader in regional cooperation, Portage will maximize resources by creatively sharing funding, facilities and services with external (municipalities, businesses) and internal (library, schools, senior center, PCOC) community partners.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey existing programs/services to determine and identify potential city partnerships. 2. Identify existing and potential financial resources, including private entity investment. 3. Explore sharing of facilities, finances and in-kind resources. 4. Provide input into school facility projects to explore/include shared community use. 5. Establish committee of 2025 participants, HSB, Senior Board, youth advisory group, Library, PCC, etc., to study above.
Top Goal #2	A full-service intergenerational community system that meets the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of all citizens.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goal 1 objectives are means to achieve Goal 2. 2. Increase senior center facilities and programs and expand to an intergenerational audience. 3. Provide a wide array of facilities, programs and services to serve the needs of all youth. 4. Facilitate the support of caregivers in all types of families. 5. Develop broadly-utilized resources, service information and referral system.



Human Services

Other Goals

Portage encourages and promotes an environment in which her citizens are integrated, included and welcome within the community.

Existing and new housing is fully integrated, inclusive, mixed-income and accessible.

Support and partner with other community entities to increase awareness of and deter substance abuse for all citizens.

Support and facilitate engagement of citizens of all ages in civic activities resulting in high-voting rates, active neighborhood associations and watches and increased volunteerism.



Municipal Services	
Vision	Portage shall be a leading-edge city providing equitable state-of-the-art municipal services that ensure the highest quality of living and outstanding economic opportunities.
Top Goal #1	Encourage economic development and diversity with such things as an aesthetically pleasing, multi-use research park consistent with an active lifestyle. It is important to develop the necessary infrastructure to create jobs, retain population and increase tax base.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong infrastructure to support development. 2. Developer friendly. 3. Comprehensive communication / marketing system. 4. Actively seek business and investment. 5. Incentives – Tax Abatements – Culture / School / Parks. 6. Relocation Services – Promote civic pride. 7. Community Ambassador Program.
Top Goal #2	Continue to be an active participant in local and regional government leadership and cooperation to deliver better services to our community. Portage will be a leader in fostering intergovernmental cooperation.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Market Portage to Southwest Michigan First, et.al. 2. Provide leadership in shared services – analyze and recommend. 3. Increase joint bids / purchases. 4. Investigate human resource services and how they can help meet Portage needs. 5. Explore a county-wide 2025



Municipal Services

Other Goals

Convert all existing above ground utilities to underground utilities.

Eliminate stormwater retention basins and encourage innovative stormwater treatments that are environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing, such as rain gardens.

Continuously enhance excellent delivery of police, fire and EMS services as the city grows.

Promote excellence in image by creating streetscapes and encouraging the development of additional green space around commercial areas and neighborhoods.

Create a friendly walkable downtown area with ample lighting, pathways and benches, incorporating landscaping and rain gardens that integrate with the existing commercial/retail district along South Westnedge Avenue.

Define and communicate an identity that attracts and retains residential, commercial and industrial prospects.

Maintain favorable tax rates and user fees.

Encourage and facilitate the development of urban villages or lifestyle centers by developing the appropriate zoning codes and infrastructure.

Maintain and improve municipal services as the city grows and provide capital assets to ensure the highest standard of municipal services.

Develop as a citywide wireless communication hotspot.



<h1>Neighborhoods</h1>	
Vision	Portage will offer desirable and diverse neighborhoods through progressive planning and active citizen involvement.
Top Goal #1	Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance accessibility for residents to access neighborhood crime information on the web including a picture and information about the district officer. 2. Encourage and maintain neighborhood watches. 3. Increase police officer presence in neighborhoods through walking/biking as well as periodic neighborhood meetings. 4. Police Department to partner with neighborhoods to develop crime-prevention strategies. 5. Establish and maintain a 24-hour city help line that is highly publicized.
Top Goal #2	Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods: City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing zoning regulations and revise, when applicable to preserve residential character with an emphasis within the transitional area between residential and non-residential uses. 2. Review zoning code regulations to allow non-invasive commercial development in neighborhoods. 3. Review zoning code regulations surrounded by houses. 4. Review zoning code regulations to allow low-intensive commercial uses and residential uses in the same building. 5. Solicit neighborhood input regarding desired neighborhood commercial uses and establish a distribution list for use by the development community.



Neighborhoods

Other Goals

Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern and involvement.

Housing stock is renewed and maintained.

Cost-effective city services meet neighborhood needs while maintaining a low tax rate.

Neighborhoods have a variety of housing types with low-impact, non-residential uses.

Condition and availability of entry-level housing meets demand.

Portage neighborhoods celebrate and contribute to a readily recognized identity.

Intra-neighborhood transportation system.



Transportation	
Vision	Portage will have a safe, efficient, multi-modal, optimally-accessible and environmentally-friendly transportation system that connects with the region.
Top Goal #1	A reliable public transportation system for all providing accessibility throughout the region to points of public interest and use.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expanded coverage of routes to include all quadrants of the city. 2. Expanded frequency. 3. Accessible, well-lit and sheltered stops. 4. Pursue integration of community vans with existing routes. 5. Continually expanding community education regarding public transportation.
Top Goal #2	Portage citizens have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and hike and bike trails, which connect regional trail facilities.
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand trailways. 2. Neighborhood and regional connectivity. 3. Major thoroughfare pedestrian walkways or sidewalks. 4. Snow removal enforcement and seek creative solutions to permanent snow removal.



Other Goals

Transportation

The Portage Transit Center is an attended facility for awaiting buses and taxis; an hourly express van provides shuttle service to the airport and Kalamazoo Transportation Center; free parking ensures easy access to inter- and intra-city buses, trains and airplanes, facilitating increased usage of public transportation with reduced traffic congestion and auto emissions.

- Environmentally-friendly and user-friendly transportation system.
- Parking remains free throughout Portage.

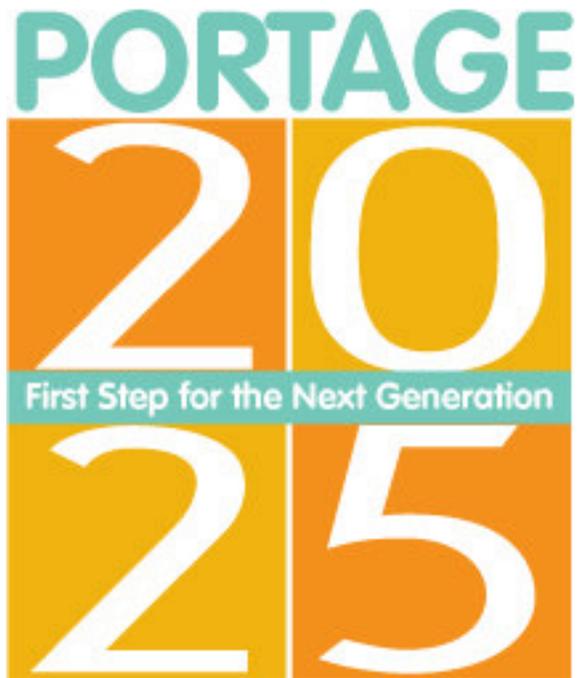
Every signalized intersection has state-of-the-art technology for pedestrians to ensure safe mobility in high-traffic areas.

Portage has a walkable civic center that connects entertainment, restaurants and retail venues and is connected to trailways and transportation.

Portage has a well-maintained street network that provides:

- smooth flowing traffic,
- easy-to-read signage including block numbers,
- safe street design to protect pedestrians and bicycle traffic and
- cross-access on South Westnedge Avenue.

New technologies will be evaluated and adopted as they are shown to be affordable and feasible.



**Part 2:
The
City Centre
Concept**



Overview

Purpose

The purpose of Part 2 of the Renewal Event was to get citizen input on the City Centre concept. Community Development Director Jeff Erickson explained that since its inception, the Portage City Centre concept has been envisioned as a functional, symbolic, aesthetic focal point - as Portage’s “downtown and destination.”

First mentioned in 1981 by the Portage Comprehensive Plan and the Portage 2000 Report, the City Centre has been on the planning agenda ever since.

The following pages summarize Mr. Erickson’s presentation on the City Centre’s history, current status, and desired development.

Participant of Portage 2025 developed these goals related to the City Centre

“Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant city center.” *Economic Development*

“Create a friendly walkable downtown area with ample lighting, pathways and benches, incorporating landscaping and rain gardens that integrate with the existing commercial/retail district along South Westnedge Avenue.” *Municipal Services*

“Portage has a walkable civic center that connects entertainment, restaurants, and retail venues and is connected to trailways and transportation.” *Transportation*

“Nurture a small-town feel and sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.” *Economic Development*

Planning Exercise – The Top Five Appealing Characteristics of a City Centre

Workgroups brainstormed what a city centre could look like from the specific perspective. Participants were encouraged to draw on their personal experiences of city centers.

Based on their experiences, participants identified appealing city center characteristics and discussed how this appeal could be applied to the City of Portage. Workgroups also brainstormed elements of city centers they did *not* want to see in Portage.

During the final report-out, co-chairs reported their workgroup’s top five City Centre elements. City council members and staff will refer to these top visions in their continued pursuit of developing the City Centre.

Top 5 Appealing Characteristics	
Culture and Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gathering place 2. Vertical focal point 3. Night life 4. Social events 5. Appealing to hip/young creativity
Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Riverwalk and water features (Portage Creek) 2. Park and walk (mobility) 3. Feel safe 4. Something visually distinctive (clock tower, etc) 5. Mixed-use development
Environment and Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More green space, native plantings, flowers and trees 2. Preserve residential neighborhoods near City Centre 3. Walkway/bikeway connections 4. Convenient public transportation 5. Mixed use of buildings
Human Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pedestrian-scale / walkable City Centre 2. Multi-modal wayfinding signs 3. Gathering places / activities 4. Alive day and night with housing and mixed uses 5. Wireless facilities - technology
Municipal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gathering areas / destination spot 2. Adequate walkways with separation for bikes, walking, vehicles 3. Reconfigure Westnedge, Shaver, Centre, City Property 4. Family friendly (multi-generational)
Neighborhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Common outdoor themes (lighting) to tie the City Centre Area together 2. Consider the conversion and relocation for Portage Central athletic fields to a highly-visible and safe central park similar to Bronson Park with benches and pedestrian-friendly commercial uses such as coffee shops 3. Encourage evening gathering places and daytime service center such as comedy clubs, restaurants within walking distance of the park 4. Promote a highly-visible and accessible City Centre Area 5. Establish a central parking and transportation hub
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reroute vehicle traffic from/around City Centre 2. Provide green space with benches 3. Ensure parking structure is an integrated part of the plan 4. Distinctive, stand-out, architectural variety will be a priority 5. Reroute or bury train tracks



City Centre Milestones

**Portage
Comprehensive
Plan (1981)**

“integrated municipal complex”

**Portage 2000
Report (1981)**

“emphasize the central section of Portage”

**City Center
Plan (1982)**

“functional, symbolic and aesthetic focal point”

**Portage 2020
Report (1991)**

“a community cultural center”

**Comprehensive
Plan Update
(1996)**

“to enhance the City Centre Area”

**Comprehensive
Plan Update
(2002)**

“identified as ‘downtown’ . . . and . . . ‘destination’ for the public”

Great Places

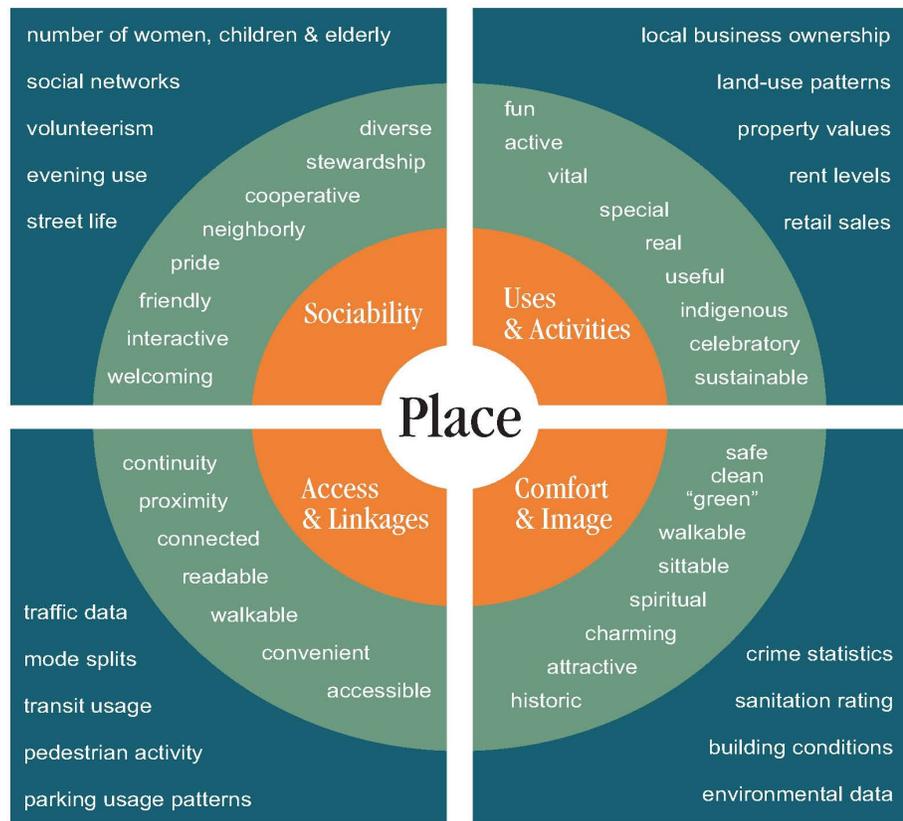
Place Diagram

Mr. Erickson concluded his presentation by sharing this Place Diagram developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS).

The Place Diagram helps evaluate “places.” The inner ring represents key attributes, the middle ring intangible qualities, and the outer ring measurable data.

What Makes a Great Place?

- key attributes
- intangibles
- measurements



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Appealing City Centres

Planning Exercise

Participants discussed how on their travels throughout Michigan, the United States, and around the globe, they experienced different city centres. During this exercise, they identified characteristics of these city centres that appealed to them the most.

Culture and Leisure

- Gathering place
- Night life
- Social events
- General commerce
- People and place
- “feeling” of a lively cool city
- Chicago is a cool city: Walkability, transportation, arts, restaurants (unique), cultural/educational venue, all the “needs” in a compact area (eateries, meeting places), retail walkability
- Municipal buildings to become the City Centre
- An “outside” identity
- Green spaces
- Hip/young/creative – appeal to tech-savvy youth
- Hub/spoke
- Multi-social
- Vertical buildings – focal point
- Coffee shops, book store

Economic Development

- Attraction (“Mercury Bean” in Chicago’s Millenium Park)
- Mixed-use development (Naval Air Station)
- Riverwalk, water features (Naperville, IL)
- Park – then walk around
- People movers – trolley
- Something visually distinctive - clock tower
- Feel safe
- Bike racks

Appealing City Centres

Environment and Natural Resources

- Workgroup did not record this discussion.

Human Services

- Boutique shops
- Theme facades, complementary architecture
- Wildlife
- Statues – connect outdoor art
- Restaurants with outdoor patios
- More concerts - regular days (e.g., brown bag Wednesday afternoon)
- Safe walking without risk of being run over
- “Gathering” places – centralized organized place with different activities where people can intermingle – pedestrian-scale, walkable
- Shuttle
- Multi-modal signage to help people find things – forms that people with disabilities can use
- Save green space in from of library
- Focus on how to get to city centre area - accessible, safe (e.g., tunnel, bridge)
- Intersperse services with leisure (e.g., ice cream parlor)
- Alive at all times of day/night
- People living in area (housing)
- Travel accessibility
- High spots more visible (e.g., band shell)
- Need to incorporate things to do, not just function destinations
- Housing
- Zoning that allows for mixed use (retail and residential); overlay zones
- The heart of Portage – place where people can meet and socialize
- Technology (e.g., wi-fi)

Appealing City Centres

Municipal Services

- Small (local) businesses
- Compact
- Walkable
- Bikeable
- Accessible for cars (lots?)
- Green space (streets/walks)
- Cafes, restaurants, art galleries, civic auditorium, ice cream
- Barrier accessible
- Clean, safe, debris-free
- Public facilities
- Lighting
- Areas within areas

Neighborhoods

- Common outdoor lighting – tie together
- Convert field into a safe central park: similar to Bronson Park with benches and near coffee shops
- Evening gathering place – comedy club, post office, food, shops within walking distance of park
- Promote highly visible and accessible City Centre
- Parking at transportation hub

Transportation

- Green space including benches
- Distinctive “stand-out”
- Architectural variety
- Local flavor
- Neighborhood atmosphere

Avoiding the Worst

Planning Exercise

Based on their observations in other cities, participants described city centre elements or ambience they did *not* want to see in Portage.

Culture and Leisure

- Super-tall – over seven stories
- Traffic: Heavy, congestion, gridlock
- Blight, vacant space
- Crime
- No place to park
- To be perceived as (comfortable) “snobs” / not high-brow
- Not a place for homeless to establish
- Franchises, but unique

Economic Development

- Expanses of asphalt
- Poor maintenance
- Vacant shops
- Critical mass of vitality
- Landscape and building upkeep
- Insufficient lighting
- Lack of parking
- Haphazard building (have a cohesive cityscape: style- street lights, signs, retaining walls, etc.)

Environment and Natural Resources

- Traffic congestion, water, air, and noise pollution
- Excessive vision pollution
- Excessive pavement
- Lack of public seating
- Negative wildlife/human interaction

Human Services

- Workgroup did not record this discussion.

Municipal Services

- Isolation “feel”
- Close at 5:00 p.m.
- Adult entertainment
- Casinos
- Public works complex



Avoiding the Worst

Neighborhoods

- Exclude traffic from center of City Centre
- Unlit areas (crime)
- Buses (trolleys OK)
- Building design uncomplimentary
- Minimize franchises
- Big boxes

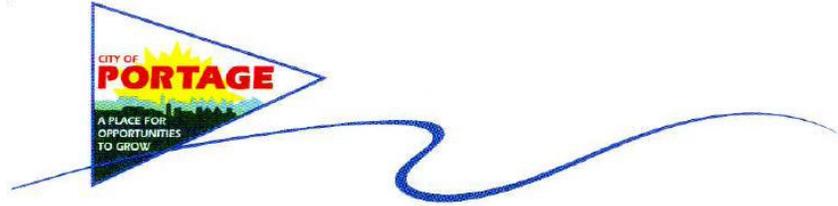
Transportation

- Huge parking lots
- Not more of the same as on Westnedge/West Main
- Not more traffic congestion
- No strip malls
- No public restrooms restrictions



Contact Information

City of Portage



Contact Sean McBride
Assistant City Manager

Phone (269) 329-4403

E-mail mcbrides@portagemi.com

Web Site www.portagemi.com

Address 7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002

Visioning Consultant



Contact Peter C. Dams, Ph.D.
President

Phone (269) 501-3000

Email pdams@damsandassociates.com

Web Site www.damsandassociates.com

Address 8449 35th Street South
Scotts, Michigan 49088