

Portage Visioning Project

Final Report
April 2007



Dear Citizens of Portage:

The City of Portage has a great past and its citizens anticipate a rewarding future for their children and grandchildren. How do we create this vision of our future? Perhaps the more important question is how do we get there? The answers to these important questions rest with you...the citizens of Portage. The people of Portage have the character and willingness to make our city a special place to live, work and play. This character can best be summarized by Robert Kennedy when he stated: "The future is not completely beyond our control. It is the work of our own hands."

The Portage 2025 process, our first step to defining our future, was a success because of the citizen participation. The full auditorium, lively break-out group sessions and website hits were an affirmation that Portage residents were fully engaged in determining the future vision of our great city. On behalf of the City Council and Administration, we want to thank those who invested their time, energy and intellect in a process that will prove to pay dividends for many years.

The end result of Portage 2025 will not be a report that collects dust on a shelf, but ideas that will be used as a tool by future City Councils, Boards and Commissions as they go about their statutory and advisory roles to govern and shape the City of Portage. The vision and goals developed from the Portage 2025 process will serve as the framework for taking the first step for the next generation and will help ensure that the City of Portage remains "A place for opportunities to grow."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maurice S. Evans'.

Maurice S. Evans, City Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter J. Strazdas'.

Peter J. Strazdas, Mayor

Visioning

The Portage City Council, as part of their 2006 Goals and Objectives, identified the importance of conducting a community visioning project. The process of developing and articulating a shared vision of the future is the first step needed in order for a community to build and sustain success. Portage 2025 will serve as the framework for identifying and accomplishing future city goals.

Participants

Following a series of community-wide announcements in the *Portager* monthly newsletter, the City of Portage website, local media and presentations to local organizations, Portage residents were invited to submit applications to participate in Portage 2025. To volunteer for the process, participants committed to attending all four visioning forums and be registered to vote in the City of Portage. Individuals under 18 years old were required to be full-time students residing in Portage.

Over 150 individuals signed-up to participate and 133 residents participated in the first forum held on January 17, 2007. The participants represented a diverse cross-segment of Portage including all ages from high school students to senior citizens, all types of professional experience and all types of civic involvement from three past Mayors to those participating in local government for the first time.



The Portage City Council and several employees of the City of Portage participated as liaisons to the workgroups. The liaisons offered technical and practical insight on the topics being discussed.

There were also opportunities for those residents not attending the forums to follow the visioning process and provide input. On the city website, results of each forum were posted and comments from the public solicited. Portage Cable Access filmed and rebroadcast each forum three times during the following week. The *Portager* also provided regular updates on the process. Residents could provide input by writing comments on the City of Portage web blog which could be accessed from the Portage website.

Process

In August 2006, the City retained the services of Dams & Associates to plan and facilitate the visioning process. A Steering Committee comprised of Mayor Peter Strazdas, Councilmembers Claudette Reid and Ed Sackley, City Manager Maurice Evans, Assistant City Manager Sean McBride and Consultant Dr. Peter Dams began the



detailed planning process. One of the key considerations of the Steering Committee in designing the process was to have a citizen-based process, where the participants took leadership and ownership in developing the visions and goals.

One of the other key considerations was to build on the previous Portage visioning process that was conducted in 1991 called Portage 2020. Specifically, it was determined to retain and build from the overall vision of Portage 2020.

Portage 2020 Vision

The City of Portage will be a world class community where the needs of its diverse population will be met through coordinated efforts of city, county and regional services.

To build on the vision it was determined that the Portage 2025 process would develop specific visions and goals for seven key topic areas that include:

- Culture and Leisure
- Economic Development
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Human Services
- Municipal Services
- Neighborhoods
- Transportation



To develop visions and goals, the volunteers met at four forums conducted on Wednesdays from 6 to 10 p.m., January 17 and 24 and February 7 and 21, 2007. Each forum began with a keynote speaker who set the stage for the evening’s dialogue. Participants then divided into their seven workgroups to focus on issues related to their topic area. Volunteers stayed with the same workgroup throughout the four forums. The workgroups conducted a series of exercises that over the course of the forums led to the development of visions and goals. At the end of each evening, all participants got back together to present the findings of the workgroups and ultimately identify a vision for 2025 for their topic area. The format of each forum included the following:

<p style="text-align: center;">Forum I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Portage Today–Keeping the Best –Eliminating the Worst January 17, 2007</p> <p>Keynote John Brown, Chairman of the Board and Retired President and Chief Executive Officer, Stryker Corporation; and Rosemary Brown, Educator and Community Volunteer</p> <p>Work Group Session Task Work groups created draft goals for their strategy areas that they would like the City of Portage to emphasize or increase (best) or reduce or eliminate (worst) by 2025 based on the best and worst of Portage today.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Forum II</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Portage 2025–Achieving the Best –Avoiding the Worst January 24, 2007</p> <p>Keynote George Erickcek, Senior Regional Planner, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research</p> <p>Work Group Session Task Work groups created draft goals for their strategy areas that they would like the city to achieve or avoid by 2025.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Forum III</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area February 7, 2007</p> <p>Keynote Ron R. Kitchens, CECD, Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Michigan First</p> <p>Work Group Session Task Work groups developed a 2025 vision for their strategy areas.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Forum IV</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pulling it Together February 21, 2007</p> <p>Work Group Session Task Work groups created their final vision and goal statements. Final vision and goals were based on exercises conducted during the first three forums.</p>

Portage 2025 Vision Statements

Economic Development

Environment and Natural Resources

Culture & Leisure

Portage will be a dynamic, entrepreneurial and opportunity-rich community that proactively and adaptively supports responsible economic development.

Portage will be recognized for sustainable planning based on ethical environmental standards and incentives.

Portage— a leader in diversified, sustainable and flexible cultural and leisure activities, promoting creativity, a healthy lifestyle and well-being.

The City of Portage will be a world class community where the needs of its diverse population will be met through coordinated efforts of city, county and regional services.

Human Services

Portage will embrace innovative strategies and partnerships to ensure her diverse population the tools needed to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle.

Transportation

Portage will have a safe, efficient, multi-modal, optimally accessible and environmentally-friendly transportation system that connects with the region.

Portage will offer desirable and diverse neighborhoods through progressive planning and active citizen involvement.

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.

Neighborhoods

Municipal Services

Culture & Leisure



Vision Statement

Portage—a leader in diversified, sustainable and flexible cultural and leisure activities, promoting creativity, a healthy lifestyle and well-being.

Goals

- Recognize and support the importance and reputation for a quality, accessible park and trail system, arts and culture as planning and funding priorities.
- Develop a municipal complex for sports, recreation and culture to include: indoor/outdoor facilities, pool, theatre, exhibit space and senior- and youth-friendly activities.
- 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.)
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

*Andrea Stork
Kathleen Tosco*

Participants

*Kim Elliot
Lara Hobson
Keith Maisto
Bethany Marciniak
Klaas Maring
Mark Anthony Martin
Brenda Orwig
Don Ramlow
Pamela Reed
Babette Smith
Tyler Smith
Todd Swanson
Joanne Willson
Sam Zomer*

City Council Liaison

Larry DeShazor

Staff Liaison

*Bill Deming, Director of Parks,
Recreation & Property Management*



Economic Development



Vision Statement

Portage will be a dynamic, entrepreneurial and opportunity-rich community that proactively and adaptively supports responsible economic development.

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.
- Create mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas. Live! Work! Play!
- Advance ubiquitous, high-tech infrastructure.
- Retain, grow and attract diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
- Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant city center.
- Be a leader and partner in intergovernmental cooperation to promote positive economic development.

Participants

Co-Chairs

Elizabeth Campbell
Bob McGraw

Participants

Laura Bailey
Judith Beattie
Mike Coon
James Curry
Shari Curtiss
Christina Dargitz-Hallett
Mary Kay Davis
Frances Denny
Ted Dornbos
Thomas Drabik
Dianne Hollenbeck
Kevin Hollenbeck
Gary Hunt
Darren Malek
Paul Welch
Jamie Williams

City Council Liaison

Ed Sackley

Staff Liaison

Jeff Erickson, Director of Community Development



Environment & Natural Resources



Vision Statement

Portage will be recognized for sustainable planning based on ethical environmental standards and incentives.

Goals

- Pursue regional cooperation
 - Multi-modal transportation system that minimizes traffic congestion and maximizes air quality.
 - Multiple opportunities for recycling for the entire community (industrial, commercial, residential).
 - Sustainable groundwater vision to protect drinking water quality and quantity.
 - Expand the network of environmental education resources.
- Protect the environment including flora, fauna, water and especially Portage Creek and Bishop's Bog.
- Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

Stuart Eddy
Sara Wick

Participants

Edwin Almodovar
Becky Argue
Rand Bowman
Martha Dahlinger
Monica Dubray
Lynne Harrison-Ley
Keith Layzell
Deane Meredith
Mary Lou Petrulio
Rick Searing
Bonnie Sparacino
Gary Spicer
Melanie Stoughton
Gerald Taylor
Mel Visser
Roy Williams

City Council Liaison

Mayor Peter Strazdas

Staff Liaison

Chris Barnes, City Engineer



Human Services



Vision Statement

Portage will embrace innovative strategies and partnerships to ensure her diverse population the tools needed to lead a healthy and productive lifestyle.

Goals

- Portage encourages and promotes an environment in which her citizens are integrated, included and welcome within the community.
- 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.
- A full-service intergenerational community system that meets the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of all citizens.
 - Increase senior center facilities and programs and expand to an intergenerational audience.
 - Provide a wide array of facilities, programs and services to serve the needs of all youth.
 - Facilitate the support of caregivers in all types of families.
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

*Cory Bailes
Christine Granaderos*

Participants

*Rebecca Clore
Dorothy Endres
Wendy Flora
Wilma Kahn
Andrew Krietz
Claudine Liesinger
Pat Maye
Kathy Olsen
Randy Orwig
Mary Prange
Lawrence Smith
Lyndsey Wessendorf*

City Council Liaison

Claudette Reid

Staff Liaison

*Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director
of Neighborhood Services*



Municipal Services



Vision Statement

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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

*Philip Stohrer
Tom Eddy*

Participants

*Ronald Berridge
Denise Clegg
Dan Corradini
Dave Gordon
James Graham
Halle Hudson
Bill Johnson
Ric Kienbaum
Dennis Kuhn
Eric Loyd
Bill Patterson
Jackie Patterson
Robert Slade
Samuel Stoneburner
Douglas Wagner
Chuck Warner
Audrey Wierenga
Paul Wilson*

City Council Liaison

Margaret O'Brien

Staff Liaison

*Brian Bowling, Deputy City
Manager
Devin Mackinder, Information/
Technology Director*



Neighborhoods



Vision Statement

Portage will offer desirable and diverse neighborhoods through progressive planning and active citizen involvement.

Goals

- Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods.
 - City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
- Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern and involvement.
- Housing stock is renewed and maintained.
- Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

*Thomas Fox
Gary Brown*

Participants

*Price Alexander
Mark Broeckel
David Droghetti
Jeff Hansen
Shirley Johnson
Cyndi Koster
Melanie Kurdys
Larry Lamble
Jim Migliaccio
Stacy Nieto
David Ostrem
Bob Peterson
Nick Pratt
William Stannard
Donald Stoneburner
William Virgo*

City Council Liaison

Mayor Pro Tem Ted Vliek

Staff Liaison

*Chris Forth, Deputy Director of
Planning & Development
Services
Rick White, Chief of Police*



Transportation



Vision Statement

Portage will have a safe, efficient, multi-modal, optimally-accessible and environmentally-friendly transportation system that connects with the region.

Goals

- 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.
 - A reliable public transportation system for all providing accessibility throughout the region to points of public interest and use.
 - 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 citizens have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and hike and bike trails, which connect regional trail facilities.
- 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.

Participants

Co-Chairs

*Cameron Lambe
Celeste Stoneburner*

Participants

*Robert Atkins
James Atkinson
Bruce Bejcek
Philip Drake
Paul Ecklund
Russell Kreis
Nancy Martin
Benjamin Ofori-Amoah
Betty Lee Ongley
Arthur Roberts
Nate Sachritz
William Schwartz
Gary Vincent
Carl Wespinter
Sandra Zukowski*

City Council Liaison

Terry Urban

Staff Liaison

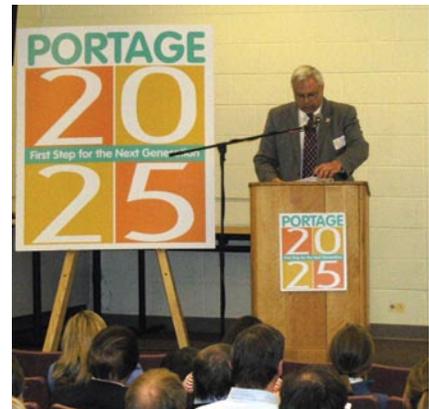
*Dallas Williams, Director of
Transportation & Utilities*



The Future

The Portage 2025 vision will serve as the framework for identifying and accomplishing future City of Portage goals. The outcomes of Portage 2025 will be utilized in the development of annual City Council goals, the development of the annual municipal budget and Capital Improvement Program and with other long-range planning processes. The Portage City Council is planning a retreat for the summer of 2007 to map out future steps that will build on the Portage 2025 process. The participation of the community will be essential to achieving the future vision and goals.

The Portage 2025 vision will serve as the framework for taking the first step for the next generation and will help ensure that the City of Portage remains "A Place for Opportunities to Grow".



Acknowledgements

City Council

Mayor Peter J. Strazdas
Mayor Pro Tem Ted Vliek
Larry DeShazor
Margaret O'Brien
Claudette Reid
Ed Sackley
Terry Urban

Visioning Steering Committee

Peter J. Strazdas, Mayor
Claudette Reid, Councilmember
Ed Sackley, Councilmember
Maurice S. Evans, City Manager
Sean McBride, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Peter Dams, Consultant and Facilitator

Staff Support

Mary Beth Block, Administrative Assistant
Devin Mackinder, Chief Information Officer and Technology Director
Matt Roon, Portage Cable Access
Ric Kienbaum, Portage Cable Access
Mike Story, Portage Cable Access
Marianne Walkington, Communications Coordinator
Lisa Yesh, Secretary

Portage Public Schools

Dr. Peter McFarlane, Superintendent, Portage Public Schools
David Babcock, Principal, Portage Central Middle School
Larry J. Killips, Principal, Portage West Middle School

For more information regarding the Portage 2025 process, please contact the Office of the City Manager at (269) 329-4400, or log on the city website at portagemi.gov



PORTAGE
20
First Step for the Next Generation
25