



7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002
www.portagemi.gov
(269) 329-4400



The Portage Bikeway – A Natural Place To Move Celebrate Bike Week with the Mayors' City to City Ride!

A Natural Place to Move. It's more than a tag line, it's our

identity. Portage has over 55 miles of bikeway (paved trails and bicycle lanes) and is designated a *Bicycle Friendly Community* by the League of American Bicyclists. Portage can be proud of this astounding recreational and transportation asset. After a long, cold winter, what better way to celebrate Portage and its beauty but to enjoy the sounds and scenes of spring from a bicycle.

An annual rite of spring is Kalamazoo Bike Week, which runs this year from May 9 - 16, 2015. The purpose of Kalamazoo Bike Week is to raise cycling awareness, promote the use of cycling as a means of transportation and to explore the possibilities cycling has to offer in terms of enjoyment, health, fitness, social and environmental benefits.

The annual Mayors' City to City Ride will kick off Bike Week on Saturday, May 9. Portage Mayor Peter Strazdas and

Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell will celebrate their commitment to the joys of bicycling by participating in this fun event. The Mayors' City to City Ride will start at Portage Creek Bicentennial Park (PCBP) at 910 East Milham Avenue on May 9, 2014 at 9 a.m. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. The ride will lead cyclists along the PCBP Trail and on the Kalamazoo Bike Route system before returning to PCBP. "The route will remind riders about what makes our greater community so bike friendly, from our wonderful trail systems to the growing network of bike routes that link us together," said Paul Selden, Mayors' City to City Ride Organizer.

Participants will be asked to sign a release form and be required to wear a helmet. While a good portion of the route is made up of off-road trails or pathways, some of the route uses paved shoulder bicycle lanes adjacent to city streets and may not be suitable for young children.



Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell and Portage Mayor Peter Strazdas get ready to hit the trails at the 2014 Mayors' City to City Ride.

For more information about Kalamazoo Bike Week, to view the Mayor's City to City Ride route map and to view information about the many events scheduled during Bike Week 2015, visit www.kalamazoo bikeweek.com.

City of Portage Youth Advisory Committee Hosts Sticker Shock Campaign

The Kalamazoo County Substance Abuse Task Force *Sticker Shock* campaign empowers youth in our community to raise public awareness about underage drinking and youth access to alcohol. Local students partner with area alcohol retailers to place underage drinking awareness stickers on multi-packs of alcoholic beverages.

On Saturday, March 28, 2015, the City of Portage Youth Advisory Committee hosted the annual *Sticker Shock* campaign at Portage City Hall, which brought together close to 100 youth. Several student organizations were represented, including the

Youth Advisory Committee, Peer Power, Jeter's Leaders, Hackett Catholic Central High School and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Close to 10,000 stickers were placed on packs of alcoholic beverages this year at 40 participating alcohol retailers.



These young people were involved at each step of the campaign, from the design of the awareness message (printed on stickers, posters, T-shirts and billboards) to the promotion and implementation of the campaign. The youth worked with vendors to let adults in our community know that it is illegal and unsafe to provide alcohol to minors.

To learn more about the Portage Youth Advisory Committee, please contact Adam Herringa, Deputy City Clerk, at 329-4512 or at herringa@portagemi.gov.

Credit Card Payments Now Accepted at the Treasury Window Inside City Hall

New financial software installed recently by the City of Portage allows the city to accept credit card and most debit card transactions at the Treasury window inside City Hall. This new feature supplements online and telephone credit / debit card transactions already available to residents and customers. Payment for utility bills (water/sewer), tax bills, special assessments and building permits are accepted at the Treasury window with a MasterCard, Visa, American Express or Discover card, along with debit cards that do not require a PIN number.



A convenience fee of \$3.95 for most utility bills and a 3% fee (\$2.00 minimum) for all other payments is charged by and paid to Point & Pay, a third-party credit card processor. Online payments can be made at www.portagemi.gov – look for *Online Payments* under *Quick Links*. Customers wishing to pay with a debit or credit card by telephone may call (866) 270-5701.

Annual Water Quality Drinking Report Available Online

The City of Portage 2015 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report is available online. The report contains important information about the source and quality of the municipal water supplied to Portage water system customers. Visit <http://www.portagemi.gov/FilesCustom/HtmlEditor/Files/Transportation/15WQR.pdf> to view the 2015 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report. Questions about the report or requests for a paper copy can be made to the Department of Transportation & Utilities at 329-4422.

Severe Weather Season is Here – Are you Ready?

Springtime in Michigan brings warming temperatures and spring flowers but also threat of severe weather. The Portage Department of Public Safety urges residents to be prepared for severe weather.

Before the Storm

Preparation for weather disasters is key to protecting your family during severe weather. Here is what you can do to be prepared:

- ◆ Build a Disaster Supply Kit (visit www.ready.gov to learn how) and ensure that all family members know the location of the kit. Consider building kits for vehicles as well.
- ◆ Designate a “safe” room (basement, interior room/hall, bathroom, closet, etc) where your family can shelter during a storm.
- ◆ Decide what family members will do if you are not together when a disaster strikes. Do you know how you will get to a safe place; how you will contact one another; how you will get back together? Consider appointing an “out of town” contact who family members can notify that they are safe and who can relay important information to other family members.
- ◆ Know how you will be warned of impending severe weather. Sources include **PORTAGEALERT**, NOAA Weather Radio, TV and radio news broadcasts, the Emergency Alert System on radio and TV programs and outdoor sirens (see related article).

- ◆ Once the preparation is complete, practice your plan. Sound a “siren” and practice getting to the “safe” room quickly. Test the batteries in your NOAA radio. The National Weather Service suggests changing the batteries in the spring and fall when Daylight Savings Time begins and ends.
- ◆ When severe weather is forecasted, keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of light or increasing wind and listen for the sound of thunder. Keep your NOAA radio nearby.

During the Storm

When you are alerted to impending severe weather, put your plan into action and monitor the various sources of weather information.

During a Thunderstorm:

- ◆ Follow the *30/30 Lightning Safety Rule*: If after seeing lightning, if you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder, go indoors. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.
- ◆ Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- ◆ Unplug electronic equipment well before a storm arrives.
- ◆ If outdoors, try to get inside a building or hard top vehicle (not a convertible). Although you may be injured if lightning strikes the car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside. Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning. However, the steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection to those not touching metal.

During a Tornado:

- ◆ If in a home or building, shelter in the designated “safe” room and stay away from windows.
- ◆ Mobile homes, even if anchored, offer little protection from tornadoes. Drive to a sturdy nearby building or a storm shelter.
- ◆ If you see flying debris while driving, pull over and park. Stay in the car with the seat belt on, put your head below the windows and cover your head with your hands and a blanket if possible. If you can get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit the car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

Portage Outdoor Warning System



The City of Portage maintains a system of outdoor warning sirens, which provide notification in the event of a weather emergency. It is important to note that the outdoor warning system is designed to warn citizens while they are **outdoors**. The sirens are not designed to wake residents from sleep or be heard over other home activities – a NOAA weather radio is important to have for just this reason. In Portage, the sirens are sounded when a tornado warning has been issued, winds exceed 70 mph or large hail is present. If you hear the outdoor warning sirens, go indoors immediately and monitor local media reports for further information. In the City of Portage, the outdoor warning sirens are tested on the first Saturday of each month at 1 p.m.

After the Storm

After the storm passes, prevent injury by taking these precautionary steps:

- ◆ Continue to monitor NOAA radio or television for the latest information. As in any emergency, follow the instructions given by local emergency management officials.
- ◆ Never drive through a flooded roadway.
- ◆ Be careful when entering a damaged structure. Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves and gloves when handling or walking on or near debris. Be aware of hazards from exposed nails and broken glass.
- ◆ Stay away from downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines. Report electrical hazards to the police and the utility company.
- ◆ Use battery-powered lanterns rather than candles to light homes without electrical power. If candles must be used, use sturdy candle holders and keep them away from curtains, paper, wood and other flammable items. Never leave a candle burning when out of the room.
- ◆ To avoid exposure to carbon monoxide, do not use generators, grills, camp stoves or other devices fueled by gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal inside a home, basement, garage or camper - even outside near an open window, door or vent.

PORTAGEALERT Have You Signed Up?

PORTAGEALERT allows the city to send urgent voice and/or text messages to home phones, businesses, local agencies and mobile phones in just minutes during emergencies or other urgent situations.

PORTAGEALERT is also a great way for the city to remind you of upcoming service dates in your neighborhood, like leaf pickup or brush collection.



Visit www.portagemi.gov or scan the QR Code to register your contact information. Those without internet access are encouraged to call 329-4405 to provide current contact information.

Portage Police Department Receives Reaccreditation Award

In a formal award ceremony on Saturday, March 21, 2015, the Portage Department of Public Safety – Police Division received its 5th accreditation award from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). This award will be valid for the next three years, at which time the department will be re-evaluated.

The process of CALEA accreditation begins with a rigorous self-assessment of all policies and practices measured against internationally accepted public safety standards. This is followed by an on-site audit by a group of independent assessors who have significant public safety experience. The team of assessors conducting this review solicit and receive input from members of the department and the community to assess the agency’s effectiveness and overall service delivery capacities. The final decision for award rests with a twenty-one member commission following a public hearing and review of all reports and documentation. CALEA, in written correspondence to the Portage Police Department wrote, “CALEA congratulates the Portage Police Department for demonstrating a commitment to professional excellence through accreditation.”

Campfires Regulations

Many Portage families enjoy spending an evening by the outdoor fire. Recreational fires are permitted in Portage only if a permit has been obtained from the Fire Division. To apply for a permit, contact the Fire Division at 329-4487 or visit Fire Station #1, 7830 Shaver Road, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Original permits will be issued to property owners only after an inspection of the site of the proposed fires. Permits are valid for two years. A renewal permit may be granted without a reinspection if no complaints have been received by during the previous permit period. The current fee for a recreational fire permit inspection is \$20, with a \$5 renewal fee. A permit is not required for a commercial outdoor fireplace or similar device; however the rules and regulations for recreational fires must still be followed. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to apply for a renewal if one is desired. Beginning in January 2016, expired recreational fire permits that are 90 days expired will not be eligible for a renewal permit; a new permit application will be required, along with an inspection of the site. Property owners can sign up to receive a renewal reminder email by calling the Fire Division at 329-4487.

Among other rules and regulations, recreational fires may only be kindled:

- ◆ If a permit has been obtained
- ◆ If the fire is attended by an adult until extinguished
- ◆ When the wind speed is less than 10 mph
- ◆ If a garden hose connected to a water supply is readily available

Please visit www.portagemi.gov > Public Safety > Fire Division > Recreational Fires for a complete list of rules and regulations and fire pit construction requirements.



Home Buyer Assistance Available

Spring is a great time for home buyers. If you or someone you know is looking to purchase a home in the City of Portage, assistance is available! Qualified applicants purchasing homes in specific neighborhoods may receive a 0% interest, deferred loan up to \$3,000 to cover up to 50% of the required down payment plus eligible closing costs. Up to \$5,000 may be available for the purchase of bank-owned foreclosed properties or vacant properties that were previously renter-occupied homes.

Eligibility for the program includes household income requirements established annually by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and mortgage pre-approval from a lending institution.

For more detailed information, a map of eligible neighborhoods or for an application package, please call the City of Portage Department of Community Development 329-4477.



Household Size	Maximum Annual Income	Minimum Annual Income
1 Person	\$33,750	\$16,880
2 Person	\$38,550	\$19,280
3 Person	\$43,350	\$22,880
4 Person	\$48,150	\$24,080
5 Person	\$52,050	\$26,040
6 Person	\$55,900	\$27,920
7 Person	\$59,750	\$29,880
8 Person	\$63,600	\$31,800

Selecting a Contractor with Confidence

Your home is one of the most important investments you have. Like any investment, it should be maintained and managed properly. Whether building an addition, finishing a basement or replacing a roof or windows, selecting a quality contractor to perform the work is important. When selecting a contractor it is a good idea to:

- ◆ Avoid high pressure sales. Rush decisions often bring unintended consequences. Companies or contractors offering “now or never” bargain options should be avoided. Quality work at a fair price is usually your best bet. Take the time to carefully think through your project.
- ◆ Get several quotes for the project and review each quote carefully. Rates for construction projects vary depending on the contractor’s workload, materials used and related factors. Review each quote carefully and compare “apples to apples.”
- ◆ Make sure the contractor is licensed and insured. The State of Michigan requires contractors to be licensed and insured when performing work on a residential house. Ensuring the contractor is licensed should avoid unsafe conditions or future problems often associated with unlicensed vendors offering to “save you money” by performing work without the necessary credentials. Avoid contractors who require you to obtain the building permit. This may signify the contractor is not properly trained, licensed or insured for the work.



- ◆ Get it in writing. Contractual agreements should be clearly identified in writing and understood by both parties. Your expectations for a project may be different than that of the contractors. Make sure you both have a clear understanding of the project details, including the start and completion date, the builder’s responsibility to obtain necessary building permits (and provide you with a copy) and an itemized list of costs and payment expectations. In addition, make be sure to have proper contact information for the contractor, including their State of Michigan license number. Do not start work until a signed agreement has been established and necessary permits are obtained.
- ◆ Ask for and check references. Ask for references such as the contractor’s last two or three jobs. If they can’t provide recent references, it may indicate that recent history is not good.
- ◆ Never pay in full up front. To help ensure the project is fully completed in accordance with the contractual

agreement, arrangements for partial payments throughout the project may be necessary. While the contractor may require some funds for the purchase of material, payments for the project should correspond to the work completed. Final payment should only be provided once the project has been completed to the terms of the agreement and your satisfaction and when the necessary final inspections by the city have been performed and approved.

- ◆ Communicate with your Contractor. An open line of communication throughout the project is important. If you have questions or concerns regarding the project, let your contractor know as soon as possible. It is far easier to modify the project in its earlier stages than towards the end.



By following a few simple steps and investing a little time, your project will be successful. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.

South Westnedge Open for Business

Construction Anticipated to Start Early May

Although South Westnedge Avenue will be under construction this summer, South Westnedge Avenue businesses will remain open and dedicated to serving their customers. The City of Portage is committed to keeping the traffic flowing during the construction period. There will be periods of lane restrictions but access to all businesses will be maintained.



The project includes the replacement of the water main on the east side of South Westnedge Avenue, traffic signal improvements and pedestrian signal upgrades at major intersections, sidewalk improvements and new asphalt surface from Mall Drive to Dawnlee Avenue. The long-term benefits to the South Westnedge Avenue business corridor will be substantial. Residents and merchants are urged to have patience during the construction process. Residents are also urged to continue shopping and supporting South Westnedge Avenue businesses during this construction season.

Friendly Reminder Control Tall Grass and Weeds

Portage residents are reminded of the importance of property maintenance activities. Desirable, high-quality neighborhoods are key to Portage remaining *A Natural Place to Move!* Please take time to properly maintain your property by controlling weeds and keeping lawns mowed on a regular basis. Growth in excess of eight inches is prohibited by city ordinance. To view the complete City of Portage Code of Ordinances and learn more about these and other community quality matters, visit the Quick Links section of the city website. To report a community quality concern, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477 or use the online Report It! tool on the city website – www.portagemi.gov > Quick Links > Report It!



Don't Forget to Vote May 5!

The Office of the City Clerk is preparing for the Special Election to be held on May 5, 2015. Voters will be asked to vote on the State of Michigan Proposal 1 and a Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (Kalamazoo RESA) Special Education Millage Proposal.

Precinct Information

The City of Portage is divided into 19 voting precincts. Where you vote depends on where you live. All precincts will be open and, unless you have changed your address or been notified otherwise, where you voted last November is where you will vote on May 5. If you are unsure of your polling location, review your voter identification card, visit

the Michigan Voter Information Center at www.michigan.gov/vote or contact the Office of the City Clerk at 329-4511.

Permanent Absentee Voter

The City of Portage maintains a permanent list of absentee voters for those interested voters who are over the age of 60 or meet various criteria. Voters on the permanent list automatically receive an absentee ballot application that must be completed and returned prior to 2 p.m. on the Saturday before an election. To be placed on the permanent list, please contact the Office of the City Clerk at 329-4511.



Parks & Recreation Opportunities for Spring 2015!

Spring is the perfect time to get outdoors and enjoy your Portage Parks. These May events are just the beginning of a summer filled with outdoor recreation opportunities. Please refer to the 2015 Summer Programs and Events brochure (enclosed) for additional details on these events and a complete list of summer recreation events, activities and camps.

May Parks & Recreation Opportunities

- Ramona Park Beach Opening** Ramona Park
May 22 – 25 and May 30 – 31, 10:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Vehicle permit required (see related article).
- Family Fishing Fair** Ramona Park
Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
FREE
- Canoe/Kayak/SUP demos** Ramona Park
May 9 & 23, 12 noon – 4 p.m.
FREE
- Recycled Art in the Park** Celery Flats
May 16 – 23
FREE
- Safe Kids Bicycle Camp Adventure** Haverhill Park
Saturday, May 30, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.
FREE

Ramona Park Beach

8600 South Sprinkle Road, 1/2 mile south of Centre

Ramona Park beach is a great spot to spend a sunny afternoon with the family! Come on out and enjoy the sandy swim area with lifeguards, picnic areas, fishing dock, beach volleyball, concessions, playground, changing rooms and much more! Vehicle permits, for entry into Ramona Park, can be purchased on site near the park entrance during regular beach hours.

Beach Hours:

Monday – Thursday 12 noon – 7 p.m.
Friday – Sunday & Holiday's 10:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Open Daily:

May 22 – 25
May 30 – 31
June 5 – September 7

Vehicle Permits:

City Resident Daily Permit	\$ 5
Non-Resident Daily Permit	\$10
City Resident Annual Permit	\$25
Non-Resident Annual Permit	\$45



City Centre Floral Displays Volunteers Needed

Every summer, in cooperation with Kalamazoo In Bloom, the Portage City Centre is transformed into a showcase of colorful floral displays that grace and beautify the area. Residents have two opportunities to contribute to this important quality of life effort.

Planting Day – May 15, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Show your community spirit by helping to plant the annual bedding flowers, a key ingredient to our local economy. Volunteers are needed to plant on Friday, May 15 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Lunch provided.

“Adopt-a-Bed” – Volunteers are needed to adopt a flower bed in the Portage City Centre Area. In addition to planting annuals, an adopter cares for a bed throughout the season – weeding, deadheading as necessary, etc. Watering will be provided by the city.

Interested volunteers may contact the City of Portage at 329-4522, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday or by email at rsvp@kalamazooinbloom.org.



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City Closings

Non-emergency city offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Memorial Day

Monday, May 25

The next edition of the **Portager** will be published in June 2015.

Portage City Council

Portage City Council meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) in Council Chambers at 7:30 p.m. and are always open to the public.

The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. Citizens are encouraged to contact the City Administration with concerns or complaints about city services by calling Complaint Resolution at (269) 329-4404 or by visiting www.portagemi.gov > Report It!



Mayor Peter J. Strazdas
327-4478
peter.strazdas@portagemi.gov



Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson
303-5459
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Nasim Ansari
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616-560-8328
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Terry R. Urban
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Laurence Shaffer, City Manager
329-4400
shafferl@portagemi.gov

Televised City Meetings



All City of Portage City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on channel 190.

AT&T U-Verse customers can access the City of Portage government meetings on channel 99 and then follow the prompts to access the various meetings.

May

- 7 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 11 7:00 p.m. Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
- 12 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting
- 21 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 26 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting