



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

## Curbside Recycling Program Changes Make Recycling Easier

Last month, we told you about some big changes coming to the Curbside Recycling Program **beginning October 1**.

**No More Sorting!** Mix all accepted recyclable items in a single container. Simply place all of your clean recyclables in the cart together. See the information to the right to learn what materials are recyclable and how to prepare the materials. Be mindful that depositing soiled materials into the cart can contaminate an entire load of clean recyclable items; compliance with these preparation instructions is essential to the success of the program. The new automated recycling collection process includes GPS capabilities and video detection equipment.

**Ditch the bin!** Residents have a choice of a 96-gallon or 64-gallon wheeled cart to replace the current 18-gallon bin. The cart is easier to maneuver to the curb and prevents recyclable materials from being blown around on windy days. Residents may keep the existing 18-gallon bin for other uses or return it to the Portage Department of Public Services (7719 South Westnedge Avenue) from October 1 through October 16.

**Half the trips to the curb!** The introduction of larger wheeled carts means more space to store recyclable materials and fewer trucks through your neighborhood. More importantly, collection of materials once every two weeks will result in a decrease in fuel consumption and emissions and the wear and tear on city streets. The day of the week that your recycling is collected stays the same – it will now be collected every other week.

We know that big changes sometimes cause many questions. A public meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 16 at 7 p.m. at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) where city staff will review the changes to the *Curbside Recycling Program* and allow citizens to ask questions and voice any concerns.

### Accepted Items & Preparation Instructions

- ◆ Newspapers, including inserts, comics and advertisements.
- ◆ Magazines, catalogs, phone books, office paper, unwanted mail, paper bags, etc.
- ◆ Paperboard, such as cereal boxes, cracker boxes, paper towel rolls, etc.
- ◆ Corrugated cardboard.



- Place papers directly into the recycling cart – no need to bag papers separately.
- Food boxes must be clean and free of food and food residue.
- Corrugated cardboard must be flattened or cut down to a size that will fit in the recycling cart.
- Shredded papers can be placed in a brown paper bag and placed in the cart.
- Papers placed in plastic bags are not accepted.

- ◆ Glass jars and bottles of any color.
- ◆ Aluminum cans, foil pie tins, etc.
- ◆ Tin or steel food cans and lids.
- ◆ Plastic bottles such as milk jugs, detergent bottles, personal care product bottles, cleaning solution bottles, etc.
- ◆ Plastic food tubs such as butter, yogurt, etc.



- Rinse all containers well – all materials must be clean and free of food, liquid or original contents.
- Labels are OK. Remove caps from bottles.
- Place materials directly into the recycling cart – no need to separate from papers.
- Only RIGID plastics marked with these symbols are accepted:

### Did You Select Your Cart Size?

A postcard was sent to Portage residents in mid-August that requested you to select a cart size by September 1. If you missed that deadline or didn't receive a postcard, simply visit [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Departments > Public Services > Curbside Recycling Program to select your cart size. Beginning September 21, wheeled carts will be delivered to those residents who have made a cart size selection. Please call the Department of Public Services at 329-4444 with any questions.

**Beginning October 1, recycling will only be collected from the new wheeled cart.**



## Portage 2025 Visioning Project Renewal Event

### Help Shape the Future of the City – October 3, 2015

In 2007, together with the Portage City Council and city staff, 133 Portage residents helped to develop the framework for the future of Portage through the Portage 2025 visioning process. Visions and goals for what the community could be like in the year 2025 in seven key areas were developed: Culture and Leisure, Economic Development, Environment and Natural Resources, Human Services, Municipal Services, Neighborhoods and Transportation.

To build upon the Portage 2025 vision, a Portage 2025 Renewal Event was held in 2008. Almost eighty residents 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



Portage citizens worked together over four evenings in 2007 to develop the framework for the future of Portage.

collective vision of the Portage City Centre Area.

On Saturday, October 3, 2015, the community will again come together to review the progress to the Portage 2025 established goals and refine future city goals. To set the stage for the day's dialogue, the event will include an examination of demographics and "placemaking." Participants will then divide into the seven workgroups to focus on issues

related to the particular topic area. Finally, the refined goals for the seven key areas will be presented.

The event will be held on **Saturday, October 3, 2015 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Portage Central High School (8135 South Westnedge Avenue)**. Lunch will be provided.

The City Council hopes for a broad representation

of individuals throughout the community to sign up to participate. "The city must build on the past successful visioning sessions and to do that, we must have representation from all parts of our community," commented Mayor Peter Strazdas. "The ideas and input from Portage citizens are critical to the Council as we will use the results of this process as a guiding document for the next ten years."

### Register for the Portage 2025 Renewal Event

Portage residents wishing to participate in the October 3 renewal event at Portage Central High School can register at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) – click on the Portage 2025 link. To ensure that participants are placed in the most appropriate workgroup, registrants will be asked to select their top three choices from the seven key areas and submit information about their personal and professional experiences. To assist the city with planning, **please register by September 25**. Registrants will be contacted with additional event information. Please call 329-4405 with any questions.

# Back-to-School Time: Getting There Safely

As the summer school break comes to an end and back-to-school season begins, the Portage Department of Public Safety offers these safety tips for getting there safely.

Riding the bus, driving, walking or biking – no matter how a student travels to and from school, make sure he or she is always thinking about safety.

## Riding the Bus to School

Students should use sidewalks where possible to travel to the designated bus stop and stand at least ten feet away from the edge of the roadway while waiting for the bus to arrive.

When crossing the street to board the bus, always cross in front, staying about ten steps in front of the bus. Don't stop in the middle of the street or cross behind the bus.

Always look to the bus driver for a signal that it is OK to cross.

## Driving to School

Young adults driving to school are not only the most inexperienced drivers, but are often the most distracted drivers. Distracted driving includes electronic distractions, like navigation systems and cell phones, or more conventional distractions, like interacting with passengers



and eating. Texting is the most dangerous of all distractions because it involves manual, visual and cognitive distractions simultaneously. According to the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, a quarter of teens respond to a text message once or more every time they drive. A full 20 percent of teens admit that they have extended, multi-message text conversations while driving.

Before sending your student off to school behind the wheel, ask him or her to pledge not to text or talk on the cell phone, access the Internet, watch videos, play games, use MP3 devices or any other distracting technology while driving. Drivers should also avoid eating, drinking and reading while driving.

Before sending your student off to school behind the wheel, ask him or her to pledge not to text or talk on the cell phone, access the Internet, watch videos, play games, use MP3 devices or any other distracting technology while driving. Drivers should also avoid eating, drinking and reading while driving.

## Walking or Biking to School

Make sure your student knows the safest route to school. Visit [www.portageps.org](http://www.portageps.org) > Departments > Transportation to view Safe Walking Routes for each Portage school.

There is safety in numbers; encourage students to walk or bike with a friend or in a group. Adding reflective stripes

on backpacks, coats or shoes ensures that kids remain visible in low-light conditions. Does your child know what to do if confronted by a stranger? If you need to send someone to pickup your child, arm him or her with a code word so that they know it's safe to go with that person. If the person can tell your child the code word, he or she will know it is safe. When bicycling, your student should always wear a helmet that is properly fitted. The rules of the road dictate that cyclists ride on the right side of the road or trail in a single file line (one bike behind the other) in the same direction as other vehicles and come to a complete stop before crossing streets.

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## Keep Your Possessions Safe at School

When doing your back-to-school shopping, consider labeling or engraving the student's name on expensive equipment, such as graphing calculators or electronic devices. Recording the serial number can also be helpful if the equipment is lost or stolen. Register electronic devices with your student's school resource officer to help quickly return recovered items to the rightful owner. Likewise, bicycles can be registered with the Department of Public Safety at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Departments > Public Safety > Police Division > Bicycle Registration.

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# Wanted: Citizen Input on the Ten-Year 2016-2026 Capital Improvement Program

During the month of September 2015, the City of Portage will launch the annual update of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and is seeking input from Portage residents, business owners and other interested persons.

The CIP is a 10-year financing plan that identifies both short and long-range physical development and capital investments, such as:

- ◆ major and local streets, including non-motorized transportation;
- ◆ municipal water, sanitary sewer and storm drainage facilities;
- ◆ parks, bikeways and multi-use trails;
- ◆ public facilities such as City Hall, Senior Center, Public Services and technology; and
- ◆ public safety facilities, vehicles and equipment.

The CIP is an important implementation tool for various City of Portage planning efforts. Examples include:

- ◆ The 2014 Comprehensive Plan, which addresses long term goals and needs pertaining to land use, the transportation network, recreation and open space, natural/cultural resources, economy and market place, utility infrastructure and community facilities;
- ◆ Strategic plan studies such as the 2015 Wellhead Protection Plan, 2013 Water Reliability Study, Storm Water Design Criteria Manual, and;
- ◆ Periodic municipal facility audits, annual reports (e.g. utility operation and maintenance reports, annual traffic count and signal studies), citizen surveys; among others.

A community-supported CIP helps ensure that decisions made on capital investments will maintain and enhance the community.

## Community Open House

To garner public input and citizen engagement, an Open House will be held on Monday, September 28, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the Portage City Hall Council Chambers, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue.

The purpose of the Open House is to gather initial public comments about future capital improvement projects in the city. Stop by to learn about the CIP, proposed municipal projects and interact with city staff to review preliminary concepts, ask questions, and provide important feedback on the process.

## Online Citizen Survey

In addition to the Open House meeting, an online survey will be available during the month of September 2015 for interested persons to submit ideas for capital improvement projects and/or provide feedback on projects already in the planning stages. To complete the survey or learn more about the planning process, proposed projects and investments, please visit the FY 2016-2026 Capital Improvement Program web page on the City of Portage website ([www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov)).

For more information, please feel free to contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.

# Housing Rehabilitation Program Expanded Increase in Maximum Level of Financial Assistance

The City of Portage, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), offers financial assistance to Portage homeowners to complete a variety of housing improvement projects. In an effort to better assist Portage homeowners, the owner-occupied Housing Rehabilitation Program has been expanded to provide a greater level of financial assistance and include more types of eligible home improvement projects.

Previously, the maximum amount of financial assistance provided was \$15,000. The maximum amount has now been increased to \$20,000. Additionally, the types of eligible home improvement projects have been expanded to also include replacement windows, doors and siding. These types of projects are in addition to other eligible interior

or exterior repairs such as insulation, sewer and water connections, plumbing upgrades, electrical upgrades, roof and gutters, and furnace/hot water heater repair or replacement.

Eligible homeowners can obtain a low interest or no interest deferred loan to complete repairs. Deferred loans do not require annual payments as long as the home is owner-occupied. To qualify, household income must be at or below the income levels listed to the left. Please call the Department of Community Development at 329-4477 for more information and an application form today.

Household Members	Maximum Income
1 Person	\$33,750
2 People	\$38,550
3 People	\$43,350
4 People	\$48,150
5 People	\$52,050
6 People	\$55,900
7 People	\$59,750
8 People	\$63,600



# Portage Senior Center Celebrates National Senior Center Month

Aging isn't what it used to be and neither are today's senior centers. With a growing focus on wellness, lifetime learning and volunteerism, senior centers are modernizing to meet new needs. So, when it comes to finding tools for staying healthy and involved or finding information about services, senior centers are the place to start. This September, during National Senior Center Month, the Portage Senior Center invites the community to take part in its programs and to find out more about its services.

The Portage Senior Center will also promote this year's national theme: *Celebrate LIFE at Your Senior Center*. The theme embraces positive, active aging and takes a holistic approach to senior center wellness.

"Older adults are a dynamic generation who want the opportunity to share their diverse skills and talents," said

Kim Phillips, Manager of Portage Senior Center. "We provide an outlet for individuals to learn and commune with their contemporaries, as well as offer tools, resources and opportunities to help them manage their health to stay independent."

The Portage Senior Center was established in 1979 and is the first nationally accredited senior center in Michigan. The center offers innovative activities and programming, such as Tai Chi, computer classes, wellness workshops, and more.

"From the youngest baby boomers turning 50 to honored centenarians, older adults today are looking for



empowerment and senior centers are evolving to support their needs," said Maureen O'Leary, Program Manager of the National Council on Aging's National Institute of Senior Centers. "Senior center services provide learning, independence, friendship and the opportunity for healthy energy through valuable programs, activities and access to benefits and services."

To learn more about the Portage Senior Center, call 329-4555. The Portage Senior Center is located at 320 Library Lane.

## Have You Been To Ramona Park Lately?

Ramona Park beach is a great spot to spend a sunny afternoon with the family! During the summer months, users enjoy the sandy swim area with lifeguards, picnic areas, a fishing dock, beach volleyball, concessions, an accessible playground, changing rooms and much more! New this year, the city installed a wheelchair/handicap accessible ramp into Long Lake that provides a safe water experience for individuals who need some assistance. While, beach operations (lifeguards, concessions, etc.) cease on September 7 – along with park entrance fees – park patrons can continue to use the beach area. Swim at your own risk.



### Beach Hours:

Monday – Thursday 12:00 noon to 7:00 p.m.  
Friday – Sunday & Holidays 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Open Daily through September 7

### Entrance Fees (through Labor Day)

City Resident Daily Permit	\$5
Non-Resident Daily Permit	\$10

Ramona Park has so much to offer park patrons, including basketball courts, ball fields, three picnic pavilions, picnic tables, barbecue grills and fishing. A project is currently underway to renovate two tennis courts and construct four dedicated pickleball courts. Pickleball is gaining popularity, especially in Portage, and these are the first dedicated courts in the city! The City of Portage is excited to be leaders in promoting this sport to enthusiastic pickleball players of all ages!



## What's Happening at the Portage Senior Center?

### Bits of Business Mini Senior Expo

Thursday, September 17, 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Free!

The Portage Senior Center (PSC) will host a two-hour *Bits of Business Mini Senior Expo* on Thursday, September 17 from 9 to 11 a.m. Representatives from local businesses and organizations with products or services of interest to mature adults will be on hand with displays, literature and information.

Visit the PSC to learn about all of the vendor offerings, ranging from footwear to hearing services, senior housing options, ambulance and emergency services, health and human services and much more.

The *Bits of Business Mini Senior Expo* is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served and don't miss the door prizes! The PSC is located at 320 Library Lane. For more information, please call 329-4555.

### Evening Meals at the PSC

The PSC offers evening meals on the third Tuesday of each month. Meal service runs from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m., and is provided by a local caterer. These events are open to the public. Participants can request their meals "to go" when making reservations.

Reservations are requested no later than one day prior to the day the meals take place. These special dinners are available for a suggested donation of only \$10.00. Main entrees are listed below, and all meals include sides, dessert and beverage. Call the PSC Reception Desk at 329-4555 to make your reservation.

- ◆ September 15 – Pot Roast
- ◆ October 20 – Chicken Casserole
- ◆ November 17 – Roast Pork



## Get Involved In Your Community You Can Make A Difference!

Recently, a Portage resident received a traffic ticket for failing to obey a railroad crossing device at the South Westnedge Avenue / Shaver Road intersection, across from the Public Safety complex. This intersection adjacent to the Grand Elk Railroad is equipped with railroad flashing signals and two sets of traffic signals – one on the near side (before the railroad tracks) and one on the far side. These two sets of signals are "phased" such that the near signal turns yellow then red, while the far signal remains green, allowing traffic to clear the railroad tracks.

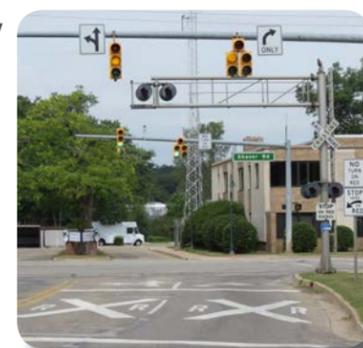
In this instance, the resident was waiting at the signal for traffic coming from the west. Her location in relation to the stop bar painted on the roadway resulted in her being unable to see the near traffic signal and the railroad flashing signals. Now, as a train approached, the railroad signals began flashing and the near traffic signal turned yellow then red – all unbeknownst to the resident. However, as the far traffic signal finished changing, she proceeded through the intersection, which resulted in the traffic ticket.

The resident returned to the intersection several times to determine how she could have been unaware that the railroad signals were flashing. During her return visits, the resident watched other cars proceed through the intersection and saw several waiting under the near

signal and railroad signal, some even overhanging the tracks. She believed that something could be done not only to better inform drivers where to stop so that the all of the signals are visible, but more importantly, to improve the safety at the intersection.

First, the resident gathered information and created a photographic record of the signs and signals at the intersection. Next, she spoke with the Director of Transportation & Utilities, Chris Barnes, to outline her concerns and petition for a change. And, unlike the old adage that one "can't fight City Hall," Chris Barnes agreed with her input. He ordered a new sign be prepared and installed. The new "Stop Here On Red" sign reinforces where traffic should stop to ensure the traffic signal and the railroad flashing signals are visible. The resident was very appreciative and expressed what a good experience she had with the city.

The lesson is simple. Portage belongs to its citizens. Get involved. If something appears to need a change, contact city officials. City staff is happy to facilitate the changes that make the community a better and safer place to live.



# Nominate a City Employee for the Outstanding Customer Service Award

Have you received superior customer service from a City of Portage employee? Do you frequently interact with a City of Portage employee who consistently delivers outstanding customer service? If so, the City of Portage would like to hear from you!



Nominate a City of Portage employee for the annual Outstanding Customer Service Award. To be selected, an employee must deliver superior customer service on a consistent basis. Superior customer service can be demonstrated in a number of ways. The manner in which an employee converses with a customer, the delivery of accurate and complete information and exceeding customer expectations are examples. The award can also be given to an employee based, in part, on a one-time event that is very unique, complicated or significant.

Nominations can be made at the City of Portage website ([www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov), click the Customer Service icon) or by calling 329-4533 to request a nomination form. Nominations are due by October 2, 2015. The recipient of the Outstanding Customer Service Award will be selected by the City Manager. Up to three employees may be selected for honorable mention. The awards will be announced in mid-November.

## 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. The city has also begun using PORTAGEALERT to provide updates to residents about road construction projects. Once registered, click on subscriptions and select the particular project of interest to you.



Visit [www.portagemi.gov](http://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.

# Summer Tax Payments Due September 14

The 2015 summer tax bills for the City of Portage were mailed to Portage property owners in July and are due by 5:00 p.m. on September 14, 2015.

Payment for property taxes can be made at the Treasury Office in City Hall in the form of cash, check, credit / debit card or money order. The Treasury Office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with the exception of Labor Day on September 7, 2015. To pay by credit card via telephone, call 1-866-270-5701. To pay by credit card online, visit [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Quick Links > Online Payments.

Payment by check authorizes the city to convert the check to an electronic funds transfer and your bank account may be debited as soon as the same day the city receives the check payment. A 3% convenience fee is charged for all credit / debit card payments, which is collected by the city's third-party payment processing partner, Point & Pay.

Tax payments received or postmarked after September 14, 2015 will be charged a 3% late fee on the outstanding amount. To avoid the late fee, mailed payments must be postmarked by the Post Office on or before September 14, 2015 and received by the Treasury Office before

September 21, 2015. If you choose to mail your payment on or after September 10, the Treasury Office strongly recommends taking the payment into the Post Office and asking a clerk to postmark the envelope.

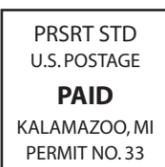
Questions regarding the tax bills may be directed to the City of Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455. Taxes that remain unpaid on March 1, 2016 will be transferred to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection where additional fees will be added.



7900 South Westnedge Avenue  
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER



## City Closings

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

### Labor Day

Monday, September 7

The next edition of the *Portager* will be published in October 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](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Report It!



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## Televised City Meetings

All City of Portage City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on channel 190 and via live streaming at <http://www.publicmedianet.org/watch-live>. 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.



### September

- 3 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 8 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting
- 14 7:00 p.m. Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
- 17 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 22 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting

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