

**City of Portage
Community Visioning Project**

January 17 – February 21, 2007

Visioning Report



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“Portage 2025 will be used by future City Councils, Boards and Commissions as they go about their statutory and advisory roles to govern and shape the City of Portage.”

Peter J. Strazdas,
Mayor, City of
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Introduction

The report

This report documents the Portage 2025 Visioning process conducted by the City of Portage, Michigan. It describes the visions and goals developed by seven self-facilitated volunteer work groups and details each planning session’s process and outcomes.

Readers will be able to follow community residents’ deliberations from initial brainstorming to their final visions and goals.

Seven strategy areas

Portage residents established visions and goals for these seven strategy areas:

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

Portage 2025 – *First Step for the Next Generation*

Portage 2025 will serve as a framework for developing annual City Council goals, the municipal budget, and the Capital Improvement Program. The visions and goals developed by Portage residents will further inform the City’s boards and commissions in their planning.

The mission for this project was to develop a “First Step for the Next Generation.” This first step will help ensure that the City of Portage remains “A Place for Opportunities to Grow” for generations to come.

Introduction

Portage 2025: The Next Steps

“The future is not completely beyond our control. It is the work of our own hands.”

Robert F. Kennedy

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 answer 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 who 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 work group sessions, and website hits affirmed 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 in an endeavor that will pay dividends for many years.

The end result of Portage 2025 will not be a report that collects dust on a shelf. Instead, its ideas 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 through Portage 2025 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.”

Maurice S. Evans
City Manager, City of Portage

Peter J. Strazdas
Mayor, City of Portage

Visioning Participants

Culture and Leisure

Kim Elliot
 Lara Hobson
 Keith Maisto
 Bethany Marciniak
 Klaas Maring
 Mark Anthony Martin*
 Brenda Orwig
 Don Ramlow

Pamela Reed
 Babette Smith
 Tyler Smith
 Andrea Stork
 Todd Swanson
 Kathleen Tosco
 Joanne Willson
 Sam Zomer

Economic Development

Laura Bailey
 Judith Beattie
 Elizabeth Campbell
 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
 Bob McGraw
 Paul Welch
 Jamie Williams

Environment and Natural Resources

Edwin Almodovar
 Becky Argue
 Rand Bowman
 Martha Dahlinger
 Monica Dubray
 Stuart Eddy
 Lynne Harrison-Ley
 Keith Layzell
 Deane Meredith

Mary Lou Petrulio
 Rick Searing
 Bonnie Sparacino
 Gary Spicer
 Melanie Stoughton
 Gerald Taylor
 Mel Visser
 Sara Wick
 Roy Williams

* participated in Portage 2020 (1991)

Visioning Participants - continued

Human Services

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

Municipal Services

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

Neighborhoods

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

Transportation

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

* participated in Portage 2020 (1991)

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, Council Member
Ed Sackley, Council Member
Maurice S. Evans, City Manager
Sean McBride, Assistant City Manager
Dr. Peter Dams, Consultant and Facilitator

Staff Liaisons

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

Staff Support

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

Portage Middle Schools

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

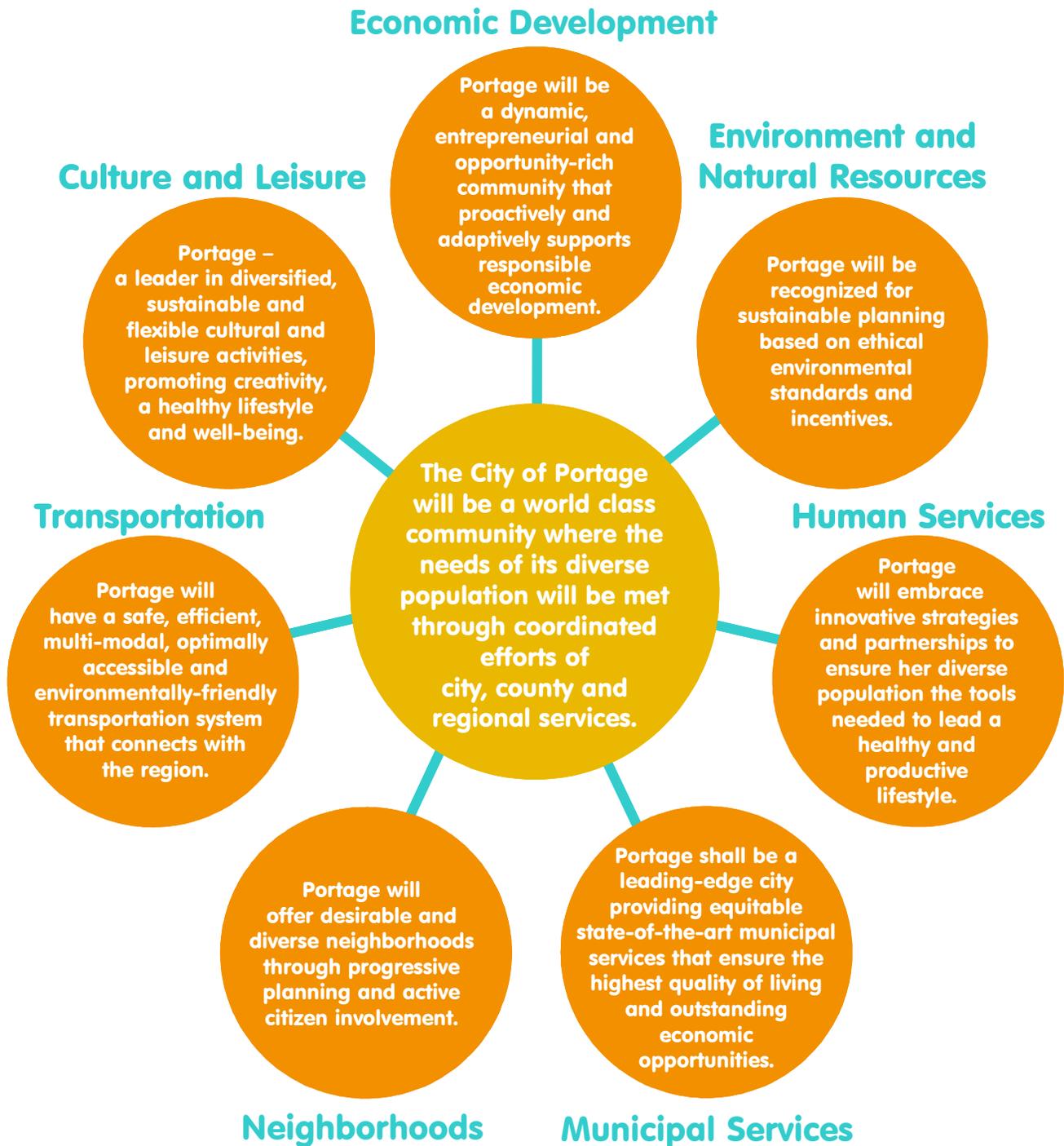
** participated in Portage 2020 (1991)*

PORTAGE



Visions and Goals

Portage 2025 Visions



Culture and Leisure

Vision

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

Goals

1. Recognize and support the importance and reputation for a quality, accessible park and trail system, arts and culture as planning and funding priorities.
2. Develop a municipal complex for sports, recreation and culture to include: indoor/outdoor facilities, pool, theatre, exhibit space and senior- and youth-friendly activities.
3. 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).
4. Acquire green space for parks while continuing to protect, maintain and enhance the current park system.
5. Create enhanced, lighted, safe, accessible non-motorized trails, integrated with other trail systems and with separation for pedestrians and cyclists and four-season amenities.
6. Continue as a destination for community-wide seasonal celebrations and multi-weekend themed events.

Numbering of Culture and Leisure goals is for reference only and does not reflect work group preference.

Economic Development

Vision

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

Goals

1. Cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs a skilled workforce.
2. Pursue economic development strategies that respect the environment and set priority on use of existing physical resources.
3. Nurture a small-town feel and sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.
4. Create mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas. Live! Work! Play!
5. Advance ubiquitous, high-tech infrastructure.
6. Retain, grow and attract diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
7. Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant city center.
8. Be a leader and partner in intergovernmental cooperation to promote positive economic development.

Environment and Natural Resources

Vision

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

Goals

1. 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.
2. Protect the environment including flora, fauna, water and especially Portage Creek and Bishop's Bog.
3. Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
4. Provide measures and incentives for man-made pollution control in cooperation with the entire community.
5. Provide recreational opportunities for all including creation and maintenance of high-quality parks and trails.
6. Develop the Westnedge area parking lots as the site of an urban village served by a fixed-route trolley and walkable hub design.

Human Services

Vision

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

Goals

1. Portage encourages and promotes an environment in which her citizens are integrated, included and welcome within the community.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Existing and new housing is fully integrated, inclusive, mixed-income and accessible.
5. Support and partner with other community entities to increase awareness of and deter substance abuse for all citizens.
6. 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.

Goals

1. Convert all existing above ground utilities to underground utilities.
2. Eliminate stormwater retention basins and encourage innovative stormwater treatments that are environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing, such as rain gardens.
3. Continuously enhance excellent delivery of police, fire and EMS services as the city grows.
4. 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.
5. Promote excellence in image by creating streetscapes and encouraging the development of additional green space around commercial areas and neighborhoods.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Define and communicate an identity that attracts and retains residential, commercial and industrial prospects.
9. Maintain favorable tax rates and user fees.
10. Encourage and facilitate the development of urban villages or lifestyle centers by developing the appropriate zoning codes and infrastructure.
11. Maintain and improve municipal services as the city grows and provide capital assets to ensure the highest standard of municipal services.
12. Develop as a citywide wireless communication hotspot.

Neighborhoods

Vision

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

Goals

1. Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods.
 - City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
2. Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern and involvement.
3. Housing stock is renewed and maintained.
4. Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.
5. Cost-effective city services meet neighborhood needs while maintaining a low tax rate.
6. Neighborhoods have a variety of housing types with low-impact, non-residential uses.
7. Condition and availability of entry-level housing meets demand.
8. Portage neighborhoods celebrate and contribute to a readily recognized identity.
9. 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.

Goals

1. 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.
2. Every signalized intersection has state-of-the-art technology for pedestrians to ensure safe mobility in high-traffic areas.
3. Portage citizens have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and hike and bike trails, which connect regional trail facilities.
4. Portage has a walkable civic center that connects entertainment, restaurants and retail venues and is connected to trailways and transportation.
5. 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.
6. New technologies will be evaluated and adopted as they are shown to be affordable and feasible.

Visioning Themes

Across strategy areas, participants identified the following services as important for Portage’s future regardless of their work group’s topical boundaries. The numbers refer to each work group’s goals.

Visioning themes are ranked per number of work groups that included the theme in any of their goals.

	Strategy Areas						Total Work Groups	Total Goals	
	Culture and Leisure	Economic Development	Environment and Natural Resources	Human Services	Municipal Services	Neighborhoods			Transportation
Protect the environment	4	2	1,2,3,4		1,2,5		1	5	10
Regional cooperation		8	1	2,5	4		1	5	6
Village centers		4,7	6		10		4	4	5
Trail system	1,5		5				3,4	3	5
Walkability			6		6		2,3,4	3	5
Multi-modal transportation system			1				9	1	3
Technology (e.g., wireless)		5			12		6	3	3
Westnedge Avenue			6		6		5	3	3
Housing				4			3,6,7	2	4
Civic Center	2			3				2	2

PORTAGE



The Visioning Process

The Bridge Builder

**Poem recited
by Rosemary
and John
Brown**

Opening Keynote,
January 17, 2007

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening, cold and gray,
To chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
The sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way;
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide --
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pit-fall be,
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

Will Allen Dromgoole (1860 – 1934)

Visioning Milestones

December 2005	City Council identifies “Long-Term Visioning for the Entire Community” as a priority for 2006
July 6	City issues request for consulting proposals
August 17	City selects Dams & Associates, Inc.
September 6	Steering Committee holds first planning meeting with consultant
November 7	November <i>Portager</i> invites residents to participate Visioning web site goes live
November 7– 24	Portage residents sign up via web site, mail, and telephone
December 11	City formally invites volunteers to participate in Portage 2025
December 20	City staff and consultant pilot Visioning Toolkit
January 10, 2007	Toolkit orientation session for co-chairs and liaisons
January 17	Forum I: <i>Portage Today: Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst</i>
January 19	Debriefing with co-chairs and staff liaisons
January 24	Forum II: <i>Portage 2025: Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst</i>
February 7	Forum III: <i>Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area</i>
February 21	Forum IV: <i>Pulling It Together</i>
April 11	Celebration Event

Visioning Milestones - continued



Planning Process

One year in the making

During its December 2005 annual goal setting session, the Portage City Council identified “Long-Term Visioning for the Entire Community” as a priority for 2006. *Portage 2020*, the City’s first and only community-wide visioning project, had been conducted over 15 years ago. It was time to take a fresh look at Portage’s future.

In August 2006, the City hired Dams & Associates, Inc. to plan and facilitate the project. Together with the consultant, the Visioning Steering Committee began the detailed planning phase.

Highly productive meetings

The Steering Committee decided early on that the Visioning process should involve a limited number of highly productive meetings within a two-month period. This key requirement turned out to be the project’s greatest design challenge and its greatest asset.

The consultant recommended that participants facilitate their own work groups to ensure Portage 2025 would be their product, their visions, and their goals – not those of an outside facilitator.

The Portage City Council and several City employees participated as liaisons to the workgroups. Liaisons offered technical and practical insight for each workgroup’s strategy area.

Visioning Toolkit

A key to the successful self-facilitation of four high-energy meetings was the “Visioning Toolkit” developed by Dams & Associates. The Toolkit guided participants through all planning exercises, specified timelines, and outlined desired outcomes.

The Toolkit underwent intensive reviews to ensure instructions were clear and the timelines feasible. These reviews included (1) an evaluation by an instructional designer, (2) a pilot session with City staff, (3) an orientation session with co-chairs and liaisons, and (4) a debriefing with co-chairs, staff, and council members after the first Community Forum.

The Toolkit orientation session on January 10 ensured also that each work group included four members trained in the Visioning process.

Planning Process - continued

Planning guidelines

The Visioning Toolkit included planning guidelines outlined by the Steering Committee. The purpose of the guidelines was to maintain group processes and keep discussions focused. The consultant carefully reviewed these guidelines at the orientation and the first Community Forum.

Do . . .

- Think “big picture” – don’t get lost in details.
- Spend time on creating ideas.
- One person speaks at a time – respect others’ contributions.
- Keep your discussions positive. Encourage thoughtful disagreement.
- Most of all – participate and enjoy the process!

Avoid . . .

- *Focusing on today’s hot topic.* Remember you are here to take a long look at the future.
- *Resolving potentially conflicting goals between work groups.* The City Council and the City’s standing boards and commissions are the forums for more detailed and balanced discussions.
- *Spending time on municipal statutes or city ordinances.* City Council and Administration will explore legal aspects as necessary.
- *Deliberating items that are outside the City of Portage’s municipal influence.* Other important topics may relate to your strategy area, such as education or health care. Without doubt, these topics are important for our community.

To a large extent, these issues fall outside the City’s municipal jurisdiction. While they may inform your deliberations, they should not become the focus of your discussions.

Planning Process - continued

Participant roles

To create effective and productive planning sessions, the Visioning Steering Committee developed the following participant roles and responsibilities. These descriptions were included in the Toolkit.

Session Chair

Session chairs kept the discussion flowing and reminded participants of ground rules when needed. They reported work group results at the end of each Forum and alternated their roles with the Recorders.

Recorder

Recorders captured key discussion items on flip charts and served as the work groups' first editing point. As co-facilitators, they maintained focus and, when needed, asked for clarification.

Timekeeper

Work groups selected timekeepers at the beginning of each session. Timekeepers used specially designed work sheets to track the group's progress.

Work Group Members

Work group members' job was to "listen – contribute – ask." Through engaged and spirited discussions, participants crafted the visions and goals of *Portage 2025* presented here.

Council and Staff Liaisons

Liaisons provided technical assistance and information but did not participate in work group deliberations.

Planning resources

Prior to the first Forum, City staff notified participants via email that planning resources were available on the Visioning website (see Exhibit I).

Participants received their own copy of the Visioning Toolkit at the first Forum.

Planning Process - continued

Creating goals

The development of goals preceded the development of visions for each strategy area. This unorthodox approach of setting goals *before* developing visions allowed participants to become familiar with their strategy areas. Forum IV allowed participants to review their draft goals against their visions before finalizing both.

Best/Worst of Portage Today and Portage 2025

The foundation for the Visioning process was the “Best/Worst” planning exercise. The best/worst exercise encouraged a balanced perspective across four parameters of change – increase or eliminate what currently exist, and achieve or avoid future what not yet exists.

	Best	Worst
Portage Today	Increase	Eliminate/Improve
Portage 2025	Achieve	Avoid

In Forum I, participants established goals around current items they would like the City of Portage to increase or eliminate/improve by 2025. In Forum II, participants established goals around future items they would like the City of Portage to achieve or avoid by 2025.

The resulting best/worst lists include a number of benefits to pursue and pitfalls to avoid. These best/worst items will be a helpful resource as City Council and Administration implement Portage 2025.

Creating visions – Building upon Portage 2020

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. *Vision from Portage 2020*

Portage 2025 used this broad vision from the Portage 2020 visioning project as a stepping stone. The new visions for each of the seven strategy areas, supported by concrete goals, add much needed detail.

By retaining and building upon Portage 2020, the City of Portage honors its community’s prior work and carries forward the community-wide visioning process begun in the 1990s.

Call to Residents

Participant sign-up and assignment

Following announcements in the *Portager* newsletter, the City of Portage web site, and local media, over 150 Portage residents signed up for Portage 2025. 144 volunteers met the eligibility requirements of being (1) registered voters in the City of Portage (except high school students) and (2) committed to attending all four Community Forums.

On their applications, volunteers indicated their top three work group choices. With few exceptions, City staff accommodated participants' preferences while balancing work group size. On January 17, 2007, 133 participants attended the initial Community Forum. Throughout the remaining three Forums, volunteers stayed with the same work group.

Work group process

While work groups followed the Visioning Toolkit, they also individualized the planning process to accommodate co-chairs' and work groups' styles and preferences. In other words, participants took ownership of the process and its outcomes right from the start.

Throughout the Visioning process, a number of participants reported, "This is hard!" They added, however, that they enjoyed the challenge as they felt their efforts would lead to worthy outcomes. Exhibit III ("Visioning Statistics," page 110) provides detailed information about participants' perceptions of the Portage 2025 project.

Media coverage

The *Kalamazoo Gazette* in its countywide and Portage Hometown editions announced the upcoming Visioning Project. Articles about the first and last Forum informed readers outside the Portage area about this project.

WWMT TV covered Portage 2025 extensively throughout the day of the first Community Forum. Interviews with elected officials and participants were aired after Forums I and IV.

Forum Events

Community Forums – Sequence of events

Registration and Refreshments

Each Community Forum began with 30-minute registrations during which participants signed-in, mingled, and enjoyed refreshments. At the first Forum, participants also received their Visioning Toolkit, name tags, and beautiful Portage 2025 commemorative lapel pins.

Welcome and Keynote

Welcome and keynote sessions took place in the schools' auditoriums, emceed by Dr. Dams.

Mayor Strazdas and City Manager Evans alternated in welcoming the participants and introducing the keynote speakers. Four community leaders and experts in planning and economic development set the stage for the first three Forums.

- *John Brown*, Chairman of the Board and Retired President and Chief Executive Officer, Stryker Corporation*
- *Rosemary Brown*, Educator and Community Volunteer*
- *George Erickcek*, Senior Regional Planner, W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- *Ron R. Kitchens* , CEcD, Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Michigan First*

**Portage residents*

A detailed overview of each evening's planning tasks by Dr. Dams concluded the opening sessions.

Work Group Sessions

Following the welcome sessions, participants moved to assigned classrooms and created goals and visions for their strategy areas.

Report-outs

After two hours of brainstorming and planning, participants returned to the auditorium to report on their work. City staff quickly entered work groups' flipcharts into a computer and projected them on a large screen as co-chairs presented their work groups' results.

Forum I	Program and Work Session
	January 17, 2007 – Portage West Middle School
Theme	<i>Portage</i> <i>Today</i> Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst
Welcome	Mayor Peter J. Strazdas
Keynote	John Brown , Chairman of the Board and Retired President and Chief Executive Officer, Stryker Corporation; and Rosemary Brown , Educator and Community Volunteer
Work group sessions	<p>Define strategy areas.*</p> <p>Brainstorm the Best and Worst of Portage Today.</p> <p>Participants individually brainstormed items currently existing in their strategy areas they would like the City of Portage to emphasize or increase (Best) or reduce (Worst) or eliminate by 2025.</p> <p>Participants voted for their top Best/Worst ideas.</p> <p>Work groups created draft goals based on the Best and Worst of Portage Today.</p> <p><i>Goal characteristics:</i> Specific long-term accomplishments / Written in active language / Positive statements about strategy areas in 2025 / Balanced across the needs of the children, youth, adults, families, and seniors of today and tomorrow / Within Portage’s municipal influence.</p>
Report-out	<p>Work Groups Reports Draft Goals.</p> <p><i>* Throughout this document, brainstorm results are listed in alphabetical order.</i></p>

Forum II	Program and Work Session
	January 24, 2007 – Portage West Middle School
Theme	Portage 2025 Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst
Welcome	City Manager Maurice S. Evans
Keynote	George A. Erickcek, Senior Regional Planner, W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
Work group sessions	<p>Work groups discussed how the keynote relates to their strategy area.*</p> <p>Brainstorm the Best and Worst of Portage 2025.</p> <p>Participants individually brainstormed items that - to a large extent - do not yet exist in the City of Portage and that they would like the City to achieve by 2025 or avoid during the next two decades of growth.</p> <p>Participants voted for their top Best/Worst ideas.</p> <p>Work groups created draft goals based on the Best and Worst of Portage 2025.</p>
Report-out	Work Groups reported draft Goals.
	<i>* Some work groups recorded this discussion.</i>

Forum III	Program and Work Session
	February 7, 2007 – Portage Central Middle School
Theme	Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area
Welcome	Mayor Peter J. Strazdas
Keynote	Ron R. Kitchens , CEcD, CEO, Southwest Michigan First
Work group sessions	<p>Work groups discussed how the keynote relates to their strategy area.*</p> <p>Work groups developed visions for their strategy areas. Visions were designed to build upon the City vision from Portage 2020.</p> <p>Participants individually brainstormed answers to two questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage? 2. In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services in your strategy area that are world class? <p>Participants voted for the top key phrases from the answers to the visioning questions and individually drafted initial vision statements.</p> <p>Participants shared five vision statements, identified key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision for their strategy area, and collectively drafted their work group’s vision statement.</p>
Report-out	<p>Work groups reported their final draft visions.</p> <p><i>* Some work groups recorded this discussion.</i></p>

Forum IV	Program and Work Session
	February 21, 2007 – Portage West Middle School
Theme	Pulling It Together
Welcome	City Manager Maurice S. Evans
Work group sessions	Work groups created their final vision and goals statements.
Report out	Work Groups reported their final set of strategy areas visions and goals.
Concluding remarks	Mayor Peter J. Strazdas

Engaging the Community

Portage 2025 sought comments from the entire community

True to the spirit of making Portage 2025 a community-wide process, the City Council invited all residents to participate and contribute in the Visioning project. The City provided the following means for informing and engaging Portage’s 45,000 residents.

Progress Reports Posted on Visioning Website

City Administration posted work group results from each Forum on its Visioning website, together with brief explanations of each Forum’s tasks. Visitors to the web site were invited to comment on the progress reports and informed that their comments would be forwarded to the work groups.

Visioning 2025 Project Blog

The Visioning 2025 Project Blog allowed Portage residents to share their ideas on making the City of Portage a great place to live, work, play, and ultimately *A Place for Opportunities to Grow*. Visioning participants were encouraged to contribute and review blog entries throughout the Visioning process.

Portage Cable Access

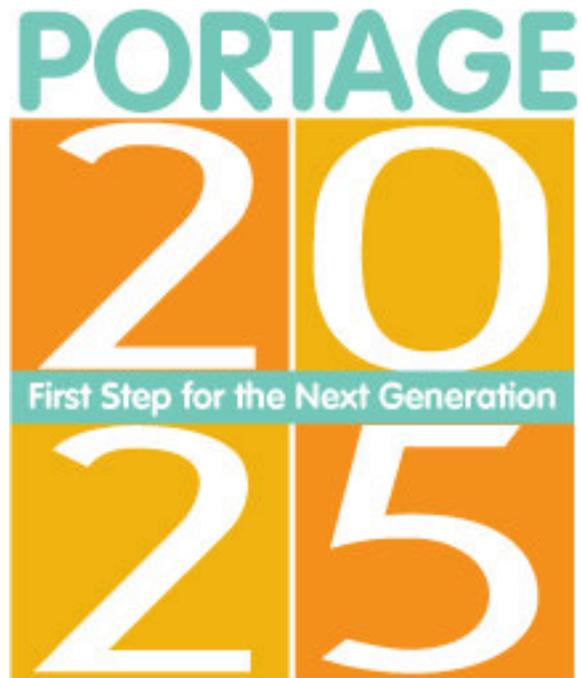
Portage Cable Access staff filmed each Forum’s opening and report out sessions. Forums recordings featured an introduction by Assistant City Manager McBride and were rebroadcast three times during the following week.

Portager

Beginning in October 2006, Monthly *Portager* community newsletters updated residents on the Visioning project. Future newsletter will report on each strategy area’s vision and goals.

City Hall Contact Information

The web site invited residents to contact the Assistant City Manager for additional information about Portage 2025 via a direct telephone number and email address.



Work Group Accomplishments

Culture and Leisure

Co-chairs

Andrea Stork
Kathleen Tosco

Participants

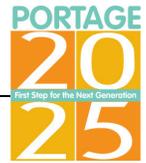
Kim Elliot
Lara Hobson
Keith Maisto
Bethany Marciniak
Klaas Maring
Mark Anthony Martin
Brenda Orwig
Don Ramlow
Pamela Reed
Babette Smith
Tyler Smith
Todd Swanson
Joanne Willson
Sam Zomer

Council Liaison

Larry DeShazor

Staff Liaison

Bill Deming, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Property Management



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Strategy area definitions

Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit

- Arts, theatre, music
- Athletics
- Park amenities and facilities
- Special events

Content area developed by work group

- Access for culture/leisure (city use) in the schools
- Cable access
- Fourth of July fireworks
- Ice rink (indoor)
- Information culture/leisure kiosk
- Newspaper
- Portage foundation to fund culture and leisure
- Public golf course(s)
- Recreational agreement with arts/leisure
- Support of lake activities
- Swimming pool
- Teen activities
- Trails
- Web posting of events
- Wireless-in-the-parks

Forum I	<i>Portage Today</i> Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
Items to emphasize or increase by 2025	Best	Votes
	Accessibility	
	Celery Flats	
	Indoor activities (putter, etc.)	
	Library	
	Maintain/protect trails (year-round access)	5
	Protect/maintain parks/lakes	6
	Ramona Park	
	Shakespeare theatre	
	Skate parks	
	State-wide recognition	
	Summer entertainment	6
	Support of senior center	1
Tree lighting ceremony	2	
Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025	Worst	Votes
	Dependence on arts and culture in Kalamazoo	2
	Disappearing green space (tree-city)	4
	Displacement of wild life	
	Eliminate low attendance at cultural activities	
	Lack of a civic center (cultural center)	6
	Lack of an arena	
	Lack of fireworks	
	Lack of public golf-courses	2
	Lack of public swimming pool	2
	Lack of visual arts (fine arts)	
	No activities for teens / lack of activities for teens	4
	Not re-using buildings (historic preservation)	
Parking at cultural activities		



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today

Portage has increased attendance at cultural activities through a year-round arts center for all ages embracing performing and visual arts.

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

Portage has expanded recreational activities and facilities year-round for all ages, including: Indoor/outdoor pool, golf course, skate park, and senior center.

Portage enhances accessible non-motorized trails and integrates them with other trail systems and parks with separation for pedestrians and cyclists and four-season amenities.

Portage becomes a “destination spot” for community-wide seasonal celebrations such as: Festival of Lights, Fourth of July fireworks and winter recreational fest.



Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Comments on keynote by George Erickcek

- 10-minute city
- Aging population – needs and service opportunities
- Are we really a small town? Where is the city center? Is it a town at all?
- Area for festival events
- Celery Flats, off-site parking, etc – create festival center/city center from what we have
- City center, connected feeling would give small town feel
- Downtown – walk across main street
- Even without a city center, Portage feels like community
- Focus on Portage
- How do we get people to stay?
- Library, senior center, police, fire – central service area
- Potential to work on city center development
- Westnedge among top 12 busiest streets in Michigan

Items to achieve by 2025

Best	Votes
Cultural arts center	5
Disc golf (Frisbee golf) course and competition. 2008 tournament	
Diversity of restaurants and recreational festivals – celebrate cultural diversity	
Dog park section of parks	
Festival of lights	1
Light rail – park-and-ride	
Lighted trails, evening activities (sledding)	2
More competitive events to draw	
More pocket parks	1
Multi-weekend events on a theme, link with other communities (Portage in lead)	3
Neighborhood names and park names	
New retractable-roof municipal sports/recreation complex. Focus on indoor recreation – pool, indoor walking	8
Outdoor rental facilities	
Re-develop state streets as city center	
Senior-friendly activities (e.g., free golf, Senior Olympics)	
Skate boarding event, summer celebrations	
Small conference/meeting space 50 – 100	



Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Items to avoid during next two decades of growth

Worst	Votes
Avoid additional retail on Westnedge	
Avoid chain stores	1
Avoid cutting park services/maintenance	
Avoid eliminating public use by over-booking for private use	
Avoid empty parking areas – reuse: turn faster	
Avoid locating services throughout Portage. Centrally located public service area, parks and recreation, culture and leisure facilities	5
Avoid losing green space for more development	2
Avoid losing more unique flavor – more local, less franchise	
Avoid more neighborhood fenced stormwater retention areas – could be used as park space	1
Avoid more traffic	
Don't lose identity in recreation and culture	
Don't lose sight of importance of trail systems or other parks (50% are from outside Portage)	5
Don't reinvent the wheel. If it is good and close, don't try to duplicate	3
Duplication of services in culture, leisure, and retail	
Loitering	1

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025

Develop a centrally located municipal center for sports, recreation, and culture to include: indoor facilities, pool, theatre, senior- and youth-friendly activities.

Multi-weekend themed events (cultural, athletic, senior, and youth) in which Portage takes the lead and links with other communities to draw attendance.

Portage expands and improves park system with four-season activities that include: Lighted trails, evening activities, pocket parks, dog “bark” parks, golf and disc golf, and soccer fields.

Portage keeps sight of the importance and reputation for a quality, accessible park and trail system as a funding priority.

Explore options for adaptive re-use of empty structures and open green space areas for culture and recreation.

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Comments on keynote by Ron Kitchens

- Alternative ideas (age → coffeehouses?)
- Comfortable/edgy
- Cultural opportunities: fine arts, symphony
- Culture incubator
- Inter-generational
- Keep in mind future trends/generations
- Look at big picture – top features that will put us in the top (world class) cities
- Park land
- Poetry slam
- Pub/micro brew
- Sense of place
- Trails/bike – as infrastructural value
- Value
- What do trails/cultural facility provide
- What types of spaces for active lifestyles

Forum II Question & Answer

- Building up – tall/higher buildings
- Corner/outlots (e.g., at Oakland and Romence)
- Green spaces - boulevards
- How to incorporate arts/leisure in the future growth
- Sprawl versus city center

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Active recreation	
Adapt and reuse	
Attract people	
Community pride	
Edgy/cool	
Expanding personal horizons	
Expansion	
Healthy living/well-being	6
Increased interaction	
Opportunity	4
Physical/mental health (holistic)	3
Promotion	
Retention of citizens	
Sense of community	
Social	3
Stress relief	

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
24/7 recreational/cultural center	4
Event diversity meets needs	
Funding mechanism (diversify/renew streams, sustainability – user fees, volunteers, bartering)	3
Low cost (user fees/non-profits)	
Partnerships (regional/public/private)	6
Recognize importance of culture and leisure	
Safety in culture and leisure	
Site – location/location/location	
Take lead role	
World class festivals	



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Key Phrases	Votes
24/7 rec/cultural center	8
Event diversity (age, genre, opportunity)	
Health living/well-being	10
Partnerships	9
Sociability	3
Sustainability (revenue streams)	9

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. In 2025, the City will be providing financially sound programs promoting healthy mental/physical lifestyles.
2. Portage is the destination for diverse events and leisure activities spanning all age categories in southwest Michigan.
3. Creates an atmosphere of healthy living and well being through the creation of outside venues, and a recreational cultural center through partnerships throughout the community and region.
4. Caring community leader in recreational and park facilities for a diversified community.
5. Portage highlights central 24/7 arts and leisure center in partnership with commercial and industrial enterprise.
6. Portage will be a city that will offer opportunities to the southwest Michigan region that promotes healthy living and offers unique cultural events that unite the City’s diverse ethnic background.

Initial collective drafts

Portage will promote opportunities and access to diverse arts/cultural/leisure activities as deemed important and useful by the citizens, in a world class fashion/method.

Portage will provide a diverse and culturally active community promoting healthy lifestyles through the formation of strategic alliances and partnerships and creative funding mechanisms.

Final draft

Portage will be a regional leader in diversified, sustainable, and flexible cultural and leisure activities promoting health and well-being.



Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. Recognize and support the importance and reputation for a quality, accessible park and trail system, arts and culture as planning and funding priorities.
2. Develop a municipal complex for sports, recreation and culture to include: indoor/outdoor facilities, pool, theatre, exhibit space and senior- and youth-friendly activities.
3. 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).
4. Acquire green space for parks while continuing to protect, maintain and enhance the current park system.
5. Create enhanced, lighted, safe, accessible non-motorized trails, integrated with other trail systems and with separation for pedestrians and cyclists and four-season amenities.
6. Continue as a destination for community-wide seasonal celebrations and multi-weekend themed events.

Economic Development

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

Council Liaison

Ed Sackley

Staff Liaison

Jeff Erickson, Director of Community Development



Forum I

Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst

Strategy area definitions

Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit

Jobs

Mix of retail, professional services, and manufacturing

Content area developed by work group

Attracting

Balance of developed and undeveloped land

Good reputation

Infrastructure, sewers, airport, technology, etc.

Intergovernmental cooperation

Looking at jobs of the future

Retention and promoting

Services provided for cost of taxes



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Items to emphasize or increase by 2025

Best	Votes
Area for expansion	
Clean city	4
Colleges	
Continued growth	2
Diversified job base	5
Encourage developers and ent.	
Few blighted areas	
Good environment	
Green spaces	
Highway access	
Increase in variety of retail/rest.	
Land set aside for business parks	
Location – location – location	
Low taxes	3
Neighborhoods = citizen pride	
Nurtured relationships between city leaders and business owners	1
Opportunity	
Parks and recreation	
School system	
Skilled workforce	5
Small business opportunities	
Small town feel with big town opportunities	3
Strong comm/city environment	
Support system of business accessible	
Technology	
Traffic	

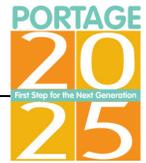


Forum I

**Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025

Worst	Votes
Airfare costs	
Big box	
Brain drain	
Build new while old sites empty	8
Business myopia (world markets)	
Community impact of what goes into mall	1
Complacency of economy	3
Diversification of commercial businesses	
Eliminating brownfields	
Homogenization of housing	1
Job growth doesn't mean land growth	
Lack of identity	2
Lack of opportunities for higher education grads	4
Land use plan with additional sprawl of commercial uses	
Land zoning and rezoning	
Loss of character for City	3
Need to expand key indicators	
Perception as retail center	
Recognize burden of aging community	
Reduce waste of resources	1
Technology gap reduction	1
Traffic on Westnedge	



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today First round

- City of Portage encourages innovative use of existing architectural structures to minimize the environmental impact of economic growth.
- Continue to maintain and grow the current skilled workforce by providing sufficient opportunities for higher education grads
- Create an environment that attracts/cultivates a diversified workforce and businesses that also retain workers and grads in Portage – not dependent on a few employers.
- Portage is prepared for a new economy. Skilled, trained workforce with jobs to match.
- Portage supports visionary businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs its skilled workforce.
- Portage provides a dynamic economy that fully employs the area’s diverse workforce.
- Portage to cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs a skilled workforce.

Final draft

- Portage will cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs a skilled workforce.
- Portage will pursue economic development strategies that respect the environment and set priority on use of existing physical resources.
- Portage nurtures a small town feel and a sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.

Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Comments on keynote by George Erickcek

- Empty-nesters attracted to Portage parcels
- Focus young professionals, seniors, and singles
- Keep people in Portage
- Landlocked
- Lost opportunity for acreage
- Reuse and think smart
- Risk with retailers
- Westnedge – Main Street

Items to achieve by 2025

Best	Votes
Better pathways – high traffic	
City pool / indoor recreational arena	
Community that welcomes ethnic variety and immigrants	
Cooperation with schools and city of economic development	
Create corporate incentives to fill empty corporate buildings	
Expand amenities	
Full occupancy of corporate empty boxes (building)	5
Get state-sponsored education funding	1
Green business park	
Highlight historical/tourism in city	
Hotel/convention center	1
Manufacturing cooperation with other countries	
Mixed-use developments with higher density and higher quality	3
More diversity in job sectors	1
Small unique retail centers	
Village centers – <i>community gathering area</i>	4
Web site access for developers	
Wireless community	4

Forum II

Portage 2025 Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst

Items to avoid during next two decades of growth

Worst	Votes
Avoid alienating ourselves from other communities	1
Avoid empty boxes and vacant retail space	2
Avoid traffic flow issues	1
<i>Clique-ness</i> of neighborhoods and natural resources	
Declining neighborhoods – lack of balance	10
Declining of airport	
Having entities that are tax exempt	
Ignore weaknesses we have	
Less retail – more industrial	
More sprawl	
More traffic	
Over-reliance on one company’s presence	5
Quantity – not quality	
Too many restaurants	

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025

- Portage will create several mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas, fostering a sense of community by 2025 (live, work, play).
- Portage will reuse and revitalize empty corporate and retail buildings.
- Portage will be a wireless community.
- Portage neighborhoods will be strong, desirable, and welcoming for all (i.e., life cycle of families).
- Portage will retain, attract, and grow diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
- Portage will have a distinct, identifiable, and vibrant city center.
- Portage will be a partner and leader in intergovernmental cooperation to promote positive economic development.

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Comments on keynote by Ron Kitchens

- Boundaries – not all things to all people/focus
- Cultural infrastructure
- Education is key
- Highest value versus low taxes
- Need help from legislators to remove obstacles
- Open to alternative interest lifestyles
- Speed/barrier-busting

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Δ from transitional city to Mecca	
Assemble together	
Best-in-class services	
Business investments	
Cutting-edge technology	
Diversity with interconnectedness	
<u>Dynamic economy</u>	2
<u>Embracing change</u> , thrill of discovery	3
Family-friendly	
Find a niche / competitive advantage	
High incomes/purchasing power	
<u>Knowledge-based</u> strategies	6
Magnet, catalyst, glue	
New perspectives	
<u>Opportunity</u> community	1
Redevelopment	
Respecting environment	
Support <u>regional job growth</u> and retention	4
Village center	2



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

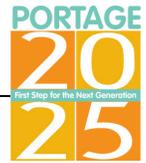
World-class services	Votes
<u>Adaptive / responsive</u>	5
Be the “go-to” place for businesses	
Benchmarking	
Communications for community	
Community support of learning facilities	
Economical	
Inspired	
“ <u>Model</u> ” process – we’re a <u>service to businesses</u>	1
More public involvement/educated/communicated (informed)	
Pedestrian versus automotive community	
<u>Proactive/risk-taking</u>	7
See economic development as our core business	
Shared (cooperation)	
Turnkey approach	1

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. Portage will be a dynamic, entrepreneurial opportunity-rich economy that proactively and adaptively supports business development.
2. Portage uses model process to be proactive, responsive, and takes calculated risks in order to embrace change in its dynamic economy.
3. Portage provides a dynamic development process that is proactive, takes risks, adapts to economic change, and responsive to community needs.
4. Portage will be knowledge-based mecca for dynamic and entrepreneurial companies.
5. Portage will enjoy a diverse, dynamic, economy fueled by regional job growth, knowledge-based strategies and adaptive proactive risk-taking philosophy of its leaders.

Final draft

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



Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. Cultivate a dynamic economy that fully employs a skilled workforce.
2. Pursue economic development strategies that respect the environment and set priority on use of existing physical resources.
3. Nurture a small-town feel and sense of community while facilitating access to cultural and recreational amenities.
4. Create mixed-use developments that will become village gathering areas. Live! Work! Play!
5. Advance ubiquitous, high-tech infrastructure.
6. Retain, grow and attract diverse businesses (e.g., size and type, old and new).
7. Establish a distinct, identifiable and vibrant city center.
8. Be a leader and partner in intergovernmental cooperation to promote positive economic development.

Dynamic

Welcoming change
Vibrant
Responsive

Entrepreneurial

Problem-solving
Risk-taking
Open to new ideas
Technology
Small business (cultivating)
Visionary

Opportunity-rich

Welcoming
Small town feel with access to cultural and recreational amenities
Diverse employment
Live, work, play
Resources (people, financial, environment)
Added value

Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Community

- Small-town feel
- Neighborhoods
- “Village” gathering areas
- City Center

Proactively

- Reaching out
- Assertive
- Seeking
- Visionary
- Creative
- Anticipatory
- Forward-thinking
- Regional leadership

Adaptively

- Flexibility
- Meet variety of needs
- Fluid
- Revitalization
- Open to policy change
- Partners with “neighbors”

Responsible economic development

- Respecting the environment
- Reusing and revitalizing
- Respecting individual rights
- “Green” development
- Balanced approach to live, work, play

Environment and Natural Resources

Co-chairs

Stuart Eddy
Sara Wick

Participants

Edwin Almodovar
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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

Council Liaison

Mayor Peter Strazdas

Staff Liaison

Chris Barnes, City Engineer

Forum I	<i>Portage Today</i> Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
Strategy area definitions	<i>Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit</i> Lakes, creeks, flora and fauna Water and environmental quality and safety	
	<i>Content area developed by work group</i> Discussion was not captured on flipcharts.	
Items to emphasize or increase by 2025	Best	Votes
	Bishop’s Bog	
	Blight control	
	Clean water/drinkable tap water Household hazardous waste Leaf pickup Recycling system Spring pickup (monthly limb/Spring trash)	4
	Cold water trout stream (Portage Creek)	2
	Consolidated drain areas Stormwater treatment areas	0
	Diversified plantings (trees, etc; native plantings) Native plants and trees Rain gardens	2
	Informed and educated citizenry about environment	
	Lakes (access if not living on lake) Parks Trails/linear paths/bikeways	8
	MDEQ training and literature	
	Motion sensing traffic control	
	Open space (undeveloped)	1
	State game area/Gourdneck	



Forum I	<i>Portage Today</i> Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
	Worst	Votes
Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025	Air pollution	
	Cell phone tower proliferation – killing birds; noise at ground level at equipment buildings	
	Clear-cutting for development	1
	Contaminated fish in our lakes	1
	Deer in neighborhoods	1
	Development along Portage Creek	1
	Geese	
	Invasive species (garlic mustard)	
	Lack of environmental education in “Portager”	
	Lack of groundwater protection	1
	Light pollution	
	Loss of farmland	1
	Noise pollution (including highway and airplane/Pfizer/trains)	3
	Nutrient-loading into water shed and stream bank	
	Stormwater into Portage Creek	2
	Over-development of lake shores	
	Recycling for businesses and apartments	1
	Salt use on winter roads	
	Traffic problems (including air pollution; lack of mass transit)	4
	Tree trimming without apparent reason	
Vacant buildings and remnants		
Water management during heavy rainfall		
Weed invasion in lakes	3	



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

**Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today
First round: Best**

Parks/lakes trails/linear paths/bikeways: Portage creates and maintains high-quality parks and trails.

Recycling/leaf pickup/monthly limp pickup/spring trash/household hazardous waste: Portage provides multiple opportunities for recycling for the entire community.

Diversified plantings/trees/native plants/rain gardens: Portage protects its existing environment including flora, fauna, water, open space, Portage Creek and Bishop’s Bog.

First round: Worst

Traffic problems, including air pollution and lack of mass transit

Invasive species and weed control (lakes)

Noise pollution (Highway, Pfizer, airport)

Final draft

Portage provides a multi-modal transportation system that minimizes traffic congestion and maximizes air quality.

Portage provides appropriate measures for manmade pollution control including noise, light, air and other contaminants.

Portage provides multiple opportunities for recycling for the entire community.

Portage creates and maintains high-quality parks and trails.

Portage protects its existing environment including flora, fauna, water, open space, Portage Creek and Bishop’s Bog.



Forum II	<i>Portage 2025</i> Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
	Best	Votes
Items to achieve by 2025	Better environmental education (incl. youth)	1
	Better retention basin design	1
	City-wide recycling available	
	Connect bike trails over busy streets with overpasses	1
	Create community garden and market	
	Create no moving vehicle zones	
	Develop a trolley system	
	Green building education	
	Involve greenhouses in environmental education	
	Native landscapes along roadways	
	Nature center with education	2
	On-site stormwater discharge	
	Reusing commercial sites	5
	Sustainable ground water vision and policy	5
	Underground parking at large streets	
	Underground utilities	
Westnedge area surface parking lots are the site of an urban village served by a fixed route trolley and walkable design. Create a walkable hub connected with other communities.	5	

Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Items to avoid during next two decades of growth

Worst	Votes
Avoid abandoned/vacant disrepair properties	
Avoid additional light and noise pollution	2
Avoid chain restaurants	
Avoid conflict with business over environmental interests	1
Avoid damage to stream corridors (riparian)	
Avoid increased nutrient loading to Portage creek	
Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open space	11
Avoid polluting drinking water	1
Deer population expansion	1
Development of heavy industry	
Expansion of Westnedge corridor without provisions for pedestrians	
Inadequate green buildings	1
Loss of coordinated regional planning	
Loss of locally-owned businesses	
Many blighted neighborhoods	
No plan for reusing large industrial sites	1

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025

- Create a sustainable groundwater vision to protect drinking water quality and quantity.
- Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
- Create a network of environmental education resources including a nature center, resource center, and web site.
- Westnedge area parking lots are the site of an urban village served by a fixed trolley and walkable hub design.
- Be proactive with the prevention of pollution through partnerships with area businesses and community resources for sustainable development.



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Accessible	
Aesthetics/beauty/green/breathable/walkable	
Clean	
Drinkable/peaceful	
Expanded environmental education integrated with schools	1
Multiple	
Natural	
Open	
Preservation of ecological balance	4
Preserve abundant natural features	2
Pure	
Quality environmental areas	1
Standards of environmental ethics	4
Surface and ground water quantity and quality assured	3
Sustainable	
Variety	

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
Access to free environmental education	3
Diverse integrated recreational ops	1
Drinkable water	1
Environmental incentives	
Exemplary sustainable planning	7
Facilitate regional cooperation	3
Innovative	
Open spaces	
Preservation of natural habitats	1



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. Portage will be recognized for environmental planning, maintaining, proclaiming, and sharing (regionally) the features of a very desirable community.
2. The City of Portage will be a world class community where exemplary sustainable planning will provide all the necessary tools to protect the city’s natural features by using sound ethical environmental practices.
3. In 2025, Portage will have a plan for an environmentally balanced ecological community.
4. In 2025, Portage will use exemplary sustainable planning thru the use of environmental ethics and incentives to maintain a diverse habitat.
5. In 2025, Portage will maintain diverse and integrated environmental and natural resources which are sustainable and innovative.
6. Portage’s preserves, parks and paths, and educational resources will be integrated to provide recreational opportunities for all ages.

Final draft

Portage is recognized for sustainable planning based on ethical environmental standards and incentives characterized by a balanced ecological community with regionally integrated natural resources, environmental education, and recreation opportunities for all.

Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. 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.
2. Protect the environment including flora, fauna, water and especially Portage Creek and Bishop's Bog.
3. Avoid overbuilding and loss of natural habitat and open spaces through reuse of residential and commercial sites and open space development.
4. Provide measures and incentives for man-made pollution control in cooperation with the entire community.
5. Provide recreational opportunities for all including creation and maintenance of high-quality parks and trails.
6. Develop the Westnedge area parking lots as the site of an urban village served by a fixed-route trolley and walkable hub design.



Human Services

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Vicki Georgeau, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services



Forum I

Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst

Strategy area definitions

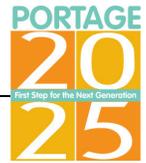
Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit

- Senior citizen services
- Services for disabled and at-risk populations
- Youth services

Content area developed by work group

- At-risk population: Handicapped, low income, single parent
- Disabled
- Grandparents raising grand children
- Housing
- Physical/mental wellness
- Public library
- Sandwich generation
- Senior services
- Transportation: Access and assistance
- Youth services

Forum I	<i>Portage Today</i> Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
Items to emphasize or increase by 2025	Best	Votes
	Access housing facilities	
	Community center expand	
	Economic diversity	
	Emergency medical care and safety	
	Expand limited income/low income housing projects (senior/at risk housing)	
	Health promotion/disease prevention programs for all ages: Fitness, diet, life style	1
	Improved assistance for housing for at-risk	
	Meal assistance	
	Neighborhood jobs	
	Portage Community Center (PCOC): Program expansion	2
	Public library	
	Public transit services	
	School and city partnership: Use/share existing facilities for more activities (e.g., walking)	4
Senior center: Expand transportation, expand services to offer to all groups	4	
Youth facilities and services/programs: Skate parks, youth activities in a non-school base, move youth services from churches and schools to community base, youth mentoring	4	
Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025	Worst	Votes
	Diversity/more minority-friendly/barriers/lack of community involvement / Increase sense of community/connecting neighborhoods	6
	Misconceptions of community problems People at low and very low income levels	3
	Negative public perception of people with disabilities Removal of obstacles for handicapped individuals	1
	Scams on vulnerable citizens	
	Sidewalks	
	Youth apathy on civic activities	
	Youth drug abuse/all age groups/better awareness, education, intervention	6



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

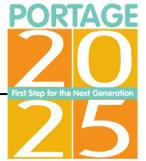
Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today First round

- Substance abuse all age groups
- Community diversity and inclusiveness
- Affordable and accessible housing for all age groups
- Expand senior center and services
- Increase youth services and facilities

Final draft

- Portage supports and partners with other community entities to educate and deter substance abuse for all citizens.
- Portage will demonstrate the spirit of inclusiveness and support and promote initiatives that increase diversity.
- Support and encourage strategies to increase affordable and accessible mixed income housing.
- Increase senior center facilities and programs and expand to an intergenerational audience.
- Portage will provide a wide array of facilities, programs, and services to serve the needs of all youth.

Forum II	Portage 2025 Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
Items to achieve by 2025	Best	Votes
	Coherence, accessibility, safety (e.g., sidewalks, bus shelters, street lights, access for disabled)	2
	Community-wide wireless	
	Expand bike paths to increase access to retail areas, neighborhoods	
	Explore partnerships between City and schools	
	Full-service senior center which is attractive to seniors (e.g., facilities, programs) <i>Centerized</i> community center – intergenerational (local, neighborhood activities)	7
	Fully-integrated, inclusive, welcoming watchful neighborhoods	4
	Mentoring programs for youth involving seniors and business community	1
	One-stop shop (<i>full service</i>) located near senior/community center for human/social services	
	Senior citizen housing – along continuum of care	
	Shuttle bus transit, special needs service for all citizens (access to prime retail areas and cultural events, etc.)	1
	Universal design standards built into building codes	



Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Items to avoid during next two decades of growth

Worst	Votes
Avoid overgrowth, <i>concrete jungle</i> , sprawl	
Decrease in maintaining financial support for schools due to increasing financial pressures and decreasing tax base	1
Idle buildings, dilapidated housing, increase green development	2
Increase in youth gangs and crime	
Lack of aggressive residential redevelopment	
Lack of civic engagement (volunteerism, voting, neighborhood associations and watches, etc.)	1
Letting our poverty areas continue to decay (housing and surrounding areas). Rehab housing programs, for example, marginalizing the poor.	7
More cooperation; reverse image of isolationism	
We ignore services and supports for families	3

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025

Portage has a full-service intergenerational community center system that meets the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of all citizens.

Portage has systematic redevelopment of existing housing and building of new neighborhoods that include mixed incomes, resulting in no economically isolated neighborhoods.

All Portage neighborhoods are fully integrated, inclusive, accessible, and welcoming.

The City of Portage supports and facilitates engagement of citizens of all ages in civic activities (e.g., high-voting rates, neighborhood associations and watches, volunteerism).

As a leader in regional cooperation, Portage will maximize resources by creatively sharing facilities and services with external (municipalities) and internal (library, schools, senior center, PCOC) community partners.

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Acceptance of diversity	1
Accessibility	1
Affordable housing	
Affordable services	
Caring	
Civic engagement	1
Cultural competence	
Cutting-edge	
Dignity	
Diverse opportunity	2
Engaged	
Flexibility	
Growing knowledge	
Healthy population	4
Home	
Intergenerational	1
Mobility	
Open communication	
Partner	
Quality	
Reliable	3
Safety	
Services	
Teamwork	
User-friendly	1
Welcoming	1

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
Awareness	
Best value for taxes paid	2
Connectivity	
Continuum	
Cooperation	1
Cultural and linguistic competent	1
Effective use of amenities	
Equitable	
Expedient	
Grow	
Imaginative	
Innovative	6
Leverage	
Meets consumer needs	
Modern	
Multi-modal	
No wrong door	
Partnerships	1
Sharing regional resources	
Solicit business and citizen input	
Special needs transportation	1
Technology	2
Uniqueness	
Volunteer management	1



Forum III

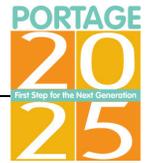
Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. In 2025, Portage utilizes a variety of creative partnerships to create and continually improve innovative approaches for increasing the health and wellness of all her citizens.
2. In 2025, the City of Portage will be a world class community whose citizens’ overall wellness is maintained via innovative services, technology, and partnerships.
3. In 2025, Portage will provide innovative and advanced techniques in order to ensure (give) its citizens the tools they need to lead healthy, productive lifestyles.
4. In 2025, Portage will provide services that promote physical, mental, and emotional wellness for all citizens utilizing innovative programs, materials, and technologies.
5. In 2025, Portage will have a physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy population created through ongoing innovative strategies.
6. In 2025, Portage will provide services that are accessible, affordable, diverse, inclusive, and reliable for consumers of all ages and needs, using innovative partnerships and technology that provide the best value for healthy living.

Final draft

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



Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. Portage encourages and promotes an environment in which her citizens are integrated, included and welcome within the community.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Existing and new housing is fully integrated, inclusive, mixed-income and accessible.
5. Support and partner with other community entities to increase awareness of and deter substance abuse for all citizens.
6. 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

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Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

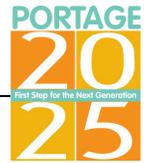
Strategy area definitions

Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit

- Infrastructure
- Involvement of public in government/public relations
- Public facilities
- Technology

Content area developed by work group

- Access to roads/traffic flow
- Boards/commissions
- Brush
- Cable broadcasts
- Cable services
- Community access
- Community center
- Interactive web site
- Leaves
- Plan for infrastructure (growth)
- Portager newsletter
- Private sector partnering
- Public pool
- Recycle
- Senior center expansion
- Shared services
- Spring pickup
- Staff accessibility
- Technology (wireless) infrastructure in place
- Underground utilities (where not)



Forum I

**Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Items to emphasize or increase by 2025

Best	Votes
Bikeways/trails	
Boards/commissions	1
City streetscapes	3
Increase curb site pickups	
Infrastructure	4
Interactive website	
Leaf services	
Long-term planning and zoning	
Parks	
Private wireless system	
Public safety	5
Public/private sector partnering	
Recycling	
Road improvements	1
Sidewalks/curbs	
Smart lights	
Technology plan	1
Underground utilities	4
Water production	1



Forum I

**Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

**Items to
reduce or
eliminate by
2025**

Worst	Votes
Above-ground utilities	
Cable carrier contract accountability	
Dry wells/retention elimination	5
Eliminate area biases	2
Eliminate silo thinking	6
House deterioration	2
Inadequate street lighting	
Joint municipal project coordinator	1
Lack of downtown	
Lack of green space (commercial)	5
Light signal synchronization	
More citizen involvement	
Phone service	
Single usage of individual buildings	
Sprinkle Road jurisdiction	

**Draft goals
based on
Best/Worst of
Portage Today**

Portage has an existing plan for requiring new developments with underground utilities. We would like to see all existing above ground utilities put underground by 2025.

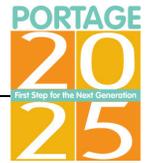
Eliminate stormwater retention basins and encourage innovative stormwater treatments that are environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing (e.g., rain gardens).

Portage has excellent delivery of police, fire and EMS services that shall be continuously enhanced as the city grows.

Portage shall continue to be an active participant in local & regional government leadership and cooperation to deliver better services to our community. Portage will be a leader in fostering intergovernmental cooperation.

Portage continues to do a great job with image and creating city streetscapes. We encourage developing additional green space around commercial development.

Forum II	<i>Portage 2025</i> Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
Comments on keynote by George Erickcek	Aging housing	
	Downtown	
	Isolation	
	Reinvention	
	Reusing commercial buildings	
	Services = growth	
	Tech stagnant	
	Traffic – auto dominated	
	<i>Urban villages</i>	
	Walkability	
Items to achieve by 2025	Best	Votes
	Burying utilities	
	<i>Coffee with City Council/Staff</i>	
	Community center	1
	Community identity – identify and carry out	3
	Designated urban downtown / urban village	3
	Develop whole depth of lots	
	Economic development and diversification	2
	Information technology – wireless hot spot	3
	Infrastructure to support manufacturing and professional development	1
	Leadership in regional government	
	Partnerships	
	<i>Portage Promise</i>	
	Rain gardens	
	Research and development park with streetscapes and green space et al.	3
	Upgrade and expand water system	1
	Voting within walking distance	
	Walkable access in com. areas	3
	Webcasting	
	Westnedge more pedestrian friendly	



Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Items to avoid during next two decades of growth

Worst	Votes
Avoid aging/deteriorating houses	
Complacency	1
Discourage <i>dirty</i> industry	
Excessive millages – avoid in the future	3
Friction with neighboring governments	1
Incentive for brownfield redevelopment	1
Keep police-fire separate	
Loss of fire stations	
No hostile environment for city government	
No <i>other side of the tracks</i>	
No restrictive codes and ordinances. Don't be inflexible	1
Not neglect existing infrastructure	1
Pockets of disrepair	1
Prevent retail/commercial stagnation (28th Street)	10
<i>Toothpick city</i> – too many cell towers	

Forum II

Portage 2025

Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025 First round

Goal 1

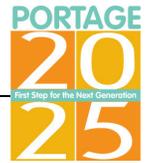
- Green space
- Downtown
- Com. Development
- Streetscapes, rain gardens, trees, walkability
- No 28th Street [referring to Grand Rapids]
- Hot spots – wireless

Goal 2

- Diversification
- Diverse economic development
- Research development park
- Infrastructure to support job creation / fix houses / lower taxes
- Create environment with flexible codes to enhance development

Goal 3

- Portage identity
- High educational standards
- Green space/urban village/trails/streetscapes/walk/etc.
- Leadership in government – in region
- Safe
- Healthy



Forum II

**Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst**

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025 Final draft

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

Portage shall encourage economic development and diversity with such things as a research park encompassing green space, rain gardens, and beautiful streetscapes. It is important to develop the necessary infrastructure to create jobs, retain population, and increase tax base.

Portage will define and communicate an identity that attracts and retains residential, commercial, and industrial prospects.

Portage shall continue to maintain favorable tax rates and user fees.

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

Portage shall continue to maintain and improve capital assets to ensure the highest standard of municipal services.

Portage shall continue to develop as a citywide wireless communication hotspot.

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

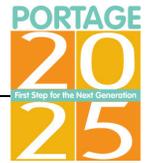
Quality of life	Votes
Clean	
Connectivity	
Cooperative	1
Cost-effective	5
Cultural flexibility	
Dependable	
Diverse	
Efficient	
Flexibility	
Goal-driven	
Green	1
Identity	
Informed	
Large	
Less intrusive	
Place to be	
Proactive	1
Reactive	
Safety	
State of the art	5
Supportive	
Value	3
Wide tax base	1

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
24/7 communication	
Adaptive	1
Best practices	3
Collaboration	1
Connectivity-ready	
Educational opportunities	2
Fast response	
Financially prudent	
Forward thinking	
Green	1
High expectations	
Individual response	
Leader – not follower	
Leading edge	5
Needs-driven	
New technologies	3
No downtime	
Open and willing	
Safety and security	
The Benchmark	1
Wide-ranging values	



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. In 2025, Portage will epitomize the leading edge in the region promoting best practices and state of the art new technologies in a cost-effective manner for a value-based community.
2. City of Portage to provide the best practices and the most cost-effective qualities of life for their citizens in the year of 2025
3. In 2025, Portage will deliver world class municipal services that are state-of-the-art offering great value and cost-effectiveness.
4. . . . a city on the leading edge providing state of the art services offering value to all.
5. In 2025, Portage will be a cost-effective provider of leading edge state-of-the-art services through value-driven best practices.

Final draft

Portage shall be a leading edge city providing state of the art services offering value to all.

Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final 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.

Final goals

1. Convert all existing above ground utilities to underground utilities.
2. Eliminate stormwater retention basins and encourage innovative stormwater treatments that are environmentally friendly and aesthetically pleasing, such as rain gardens.
3. Continuously enhance excellent delivery of police, fire and EMS services as the city grows.
4. 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.
5. Promote excellence in image by creating streetscapes and encouraging the development of additional green space around commercial areas and neighborhoods.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Define and communicate an identity that attracts and retains residential, commercial and industrial prospects.
9. Maintain favorable tax rates and user fees.
10. Encourage and facilitate the development of urban villages or lifestyle centers by developing the appropriate zoning codes and infrastructure.
11. Maintain and improve municipal services as the city grows and provide capital assets to ensure the highest standard of municipal services.
12. Develop as a citywide wireless communication hotspot.

Neighborhoods

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William Virgo

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Mayor Pro Tem Ted Vliek

Staff Liaison

Chris Forth, Deputy Director for Planning and Development Services
Rick White, Chief of Police



Forum I

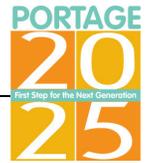
Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst

Strategy area definitions

Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit
Environment of inclusiveness
Public safety
Type of housing stock and housing opportunities

Content area developed by work group
Aging buildings/houses
Aging populations
Commercial encroachment
Neighborhood associations
Neighborhood city services
Parks – convenience
Transportation
Zoning implications

Forum I		Portage Today Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
Items to emphasize or increase by 2025	Best	Votes	
	Access to parks and rec / More parks / Trail ways	3	
	City informing citizens Neighborhood services	2	
	Clean neighborhoods Variety: Look/feel	1	
	Friendly neighborhoods Strong family focus	6	
	Great police/fire	1	
	Increase affordable housing		
	Infrastructure investment secure	1	
	Intergovernmental cooperation		
	Low tax rates	2	
	Planned development – comprehensive plan		
	Volunteerism		
Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025	Worst	Votes	
	Balance economic development and neighborhoods/housing Commercial encroachment	4	
	Declining housing condition and quantity – entry level	5	
	Diversity	1	
	Drinking water variations		
	Eliminate dark streets Elimination/lack of sidewalks Shorten fire response time	3	
	Eliminate isolation Remove communication barriers	2	
	Eliminate lake/river degradations		
	Eliminate neighborhood crime Law/ordinance enforcement (pet and students)	2	
	Eliminate staff		
	Reduce need for individual drivers Vehicle traffic issues	1	



Forum I

Portage Today
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst

Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today
First Round: Best

Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern, and involvement.

Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.

Cost effective government services that meet community needs while maintaining a low tax rate.

Portage will continue to invest in the maintenance and expansion of parks and rec.

First Round: Worst

Condition and availability of entry level housing meet demand.

Portage pedestrians walk safely in all neighborhoods at all times.

Create balance between neighborhoods and non-neighborhood land uses.

Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods

Final draft

Condition and availability of entry level housing meet demand.

Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods.

Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern, and involvement.

Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.

Cost effective government services that meet community needs while maintaining a low tax rate.

Forum II	Portage 2025 Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
Items to achieve by 2025	Best	Votes
	A. Renew housing stock renewal incentives; city fund - low % funds	6
	B. Adult-restricted community	
	C. Wireless Bury utility lines	1
	D. Neighborhood stores and gas stations Urban villages Low impact neighborhood retail Water parks and pools to connect to neighborhoods Community center facility	4
	E. Determine critical to quality Citywide block party Define Portage brand Attract and keep residents	6
	F. Intra-city transportation Every resident – water/sewer Use finite space wisely Use traffic cameras for tickets 2+ people lanes and parking	
	G. Increase representation on plan development	
Items to avoid during next two decades of growth	Worst	Votes
	A. Business encroaching on neighborhoods Avoid negative perception of city planning	4
	B. Avoid lack of code enforcement Avoid dying/decaying neighborhoods	4
	C. Eliminate car and fossil fuel dependence	6
	D. Avoid overbuild vacant space	
	E. Avoid housing fix cost increase	
	F. Avoid regional housing competition	
	G. Avoid road condition deterioration	
	H. Avoid neighborhood segregation	1



Forum II

Portage 2025
Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst

**Draft goals
based on
Best/Worst of
Portage 2025**

- Housing stock is renewed and maintained.
- Portage celebrates a readily recognized identity.
- Neighborhoods have a variety of housing types with low-impact retail and parks.
- City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
- Intra-neighborhood and city transportation reduces the need for fossil fuels.

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Accessible	4
Active	1
Affordable	
Clean, maintained, neat	
Commu thru participa	
Connected	7
Diversified	
Fam oriented	
Fresh	2
Friendly	
Fun	
High value	
Inclusiveness	
Integrated	
Interconnected	
Low crime	
Pedestrian-friendly	
Safe	2
Stable	
Strong	
Welcoming	
Wireless	

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
Be recognized	
Communal – shared services	2
Designed villages	3
Devel neigh commu sources	
Implement innovation	
Intergov coop	
Involved populace – volunteerism	3
Parks and streets	1
Planning	
Powerful	
Progressive	6
Value-driven	1

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

1. Involved populace and government keep Portage safe.
2. Portage will be a progressive city with high involvement of residents and excel coop with other nearby communities.
3. Portage will offer diversified hoods thru progressive and innovative plan and devel comm integration.
4. Progressive Portage has planned and implemented several villages, thereby fostering inclusiveness and increasing property values.
5. Portage provides innovative planning to devel diverse and integrated hoods promoting strong sense of community and coop.
6. Additional key phrases:
Connected
Accessible

Final daft

Portage offers desirable and diverse communities through progressive planning and active citizen involvement.

Forum IV

Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. Strong economic development while protecting neighborhoods.
 - City planning avoids commercial development at the expense of neighborhoods.
2. Strong neighborhoods promote cohesiveness through communication, concern and involvement.
3. Housing stock is renewed and maintained.
4. Portage neighborhoods are safe at all times.
5. Cost-effective city services meet neighborhood needs while maintaining a low tax rate.
6. Neighborhoods have a variety of housing types with low-impact, non-residential uses.
7. Condition and availability of entry level housing meets demand.
8. Portage neighborhoods celebrate and contribute to a readily recognized identity.
9. Intra-neighborhood transportation system.

Transportation

Co-chairs

Cameron Lambe
Celeste Stoneburner

Participants

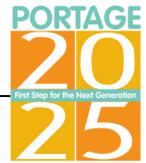
Robert Atkins
James Atkinson
Bruce Bejcek
Philip Drake
Paul Ecklund
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Betty Lee Ongley
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Council Liaison

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Staff Liaison

Dallas Williams, Director of Transportation and Utilities



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

Strategy area definitions

Suggestions per Visioning Toolkit

- Connections to other transportation channels (I-94, US 131, airport, train service)
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
- Road infrastructure
- Transit (Bus service, etc.)

Content area developed by work group

- Access to: Services and public places
- Connections
- Egress
- Employment transportation
- Handicaps considered (i.e., ADA requirements)
- Intersections
- Land use
- Pedestrian/bike
- Road infrastructure
- Sidewalks
- Snow removal
- Transit
- Transport hub
- Travel modality

Forum I	Portage Today Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst	
Items to emphasize or increase by 2025	Best	Votes
	Access to I-94	
	Adequate bus stops	
	Alternative routes to major arteries	6
	Bike lanes on streets	
	Bike trail ways	6
	Care-A-Van / Metro Van service	1
	City park connections	
	Increased sidewalks	1
	Light synchronization	
	North-south arteries	
	Pedestrian-friendly	
	Road surface condition	1
	Street signs	1
	Talking traffic signals	2
Traffic signal sensors		
Turning lanes		
Items to reduce or eliminate by 2025	Worst	Votes
	Intersection confusion	1
	Lack of north-south arteries	
	Lack of public transportation to public services and facilities	11
	Lack of sidewalks	1
	Lack of transportation choices	2
	Lacking regional connections	1
	Low volume/poor repair talking signals	
	Poor bike trail/lane maintenance	1
	Poor speed limit enforcement	
	Road surface poor condition	
	Speed control in residential areas	
	Too many boulevards	
	Too many commercial driveways	
	Traffic congestion	2
Unsafe pedestrian intersections		



Forum I

***Portage Today*
Keeping the Best – Eliminating the Worst**

**Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage Today
First round – Best**

Portage will have every signalized intersection with “state-of-the-art” technology for pedestrians.

Portage has street signs with block numbers at every intersection.

Portage citizens will have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and bike trails with regional trail facilities.

Portage will continue to develop alternative routes to major arteries.

Portage will have excellent road surface conditions on all city streets.

First round – Worst

Portage has full, reliable public transportation to all services, facilities, retail, recreation, residential, and educational institutions, as well as, regional connectivity.

Portage traffic flows smoothly at all times on all roads without any intersection confusion.

Final draft

Portage has full, reliable public transportation to all services, facilities, retail, recreation, residential, educational and regional connectivity.

Portage traffic flows smoothly at all times on all roads without any intersection confusion.

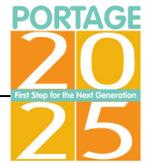
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Portage citizens will have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and bike trails with regional trail facilities.

Portage will continue to develop alternative routes to major arteries.

Portage will have excellent road surface conditions on all city streets



Forum II	<i>Portage 2025</i> Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
	Best	Votes
Items to achieve by 2025	All services pedestrian-friendly	2
	Alternative arteries	
	Better illumination	
	Bus shelters	1
	Care-a-Van numbers	
	Commuter train	
	Connected bike trails	1
	<i>Fast</i> lane on Westnedge	1
	Horse trails	
	Integration of mass transit	
	Integration of residential/services	
	More alternative options	1
	Ongoing evaluation of urban trends	
	Reinvent vehicles	9
	Traffic circles	1
	Traffic sensors evaluated?	
	Transit hub	
	Transport to/from residential/service	
Walkable downtown	2	

Forum II	<i>Portage 2025</i> Achieving the Best – Avoiding the Worst	
Items to avoid during next two decades of growth	Worst	Votes
	Drive-through liquor	
	Environment unfriendly fossil fuel	
	Excessive curb cuts at major arteries	1
	Gridlock	
	Losing <i>small town</i> feel	1
	Lovers Lane too commercial	
	Michigan <i>lefts</i>	
	No pedestrian overpasses	
	North/south bypass	
	Other streets like Westnedge	
	Paid parking	4
	Too many parking lots	1
	Under-engineering	
Unmanaged traffic	3	
Unplanned growth	9	
Draft goals based on Best/Worst of Portage 2025 Best	<p>Portage has designed a transit system that uses alternative energy to connect with intra/inter-city transportation and includes a central Portage transit hub and covered bus shelters.</p> <p>Portage has a citywide network of dedicated bike trails and pedestrian walkways with regional connectivity.</p> <p>By eliminating unplanned, non-integrated growth, Portage develops a walkable civic center that includes entertainment, restaurant and retail venues and is connected to railways and transportation.</p>	
	Worst	Portage has a limited access fast lane on South Westnedge Avenue.
		Portage has entirely free parking.
	Portage has minimal curb cuts to ensure limited egress to major streets.	

Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will your strategy area contribute to quality of life in the City of Portage?

Quality of life	Votes
Access	3
Adaptable	
Affordable	
Attractive	
Connections	1
Desirable	
Diverse options	1
Draw community	
Efficient	
Environmentally correct	
Friendly	
High-speed	1
Infrastructure maint.	1
Innovative	1
Innovative / state-of-the-art / progressive	5
Melting pot	
Mobility	
Outside appeal	1
Pedestrian friendly	
Quality	1
Safe	
State of the art	2
Thriving	
Ubiquitous	1
User-friendly	1
Visually pleasing	

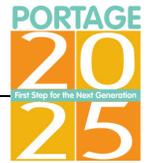
Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

In 2025, how will the City of Portage provide services that are world class?

World-class services	Votes
Alternative transportation	4
Commercial support	1
Community support	
Continuous improvement	
Convenient	1
Cost-effective	
Create cross streets	
Highly efficient	1
Highly visible signage	
Hike-n-bike	
Hourly shuttle	
Parallel equestrian	
Pedestrian crossovers	
Rapid	
Regional	1
Regional cooperation	
Transportation hub	6
Vehicle flow system	1
Well-maintained	1

Quality: Top items	World class: Top items
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progressive / innovative / state-of-the-art 2. Accessibility 3. Connectivity 4. High-speed 5. Outside appeal 6. Diverse options 7. Quality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transportation hub, a.k.a. transfer station 2. Alternative transportation 3. Convenient 4. Regional 5. Well-maintained 6. Vehicle flow syst. 7. Commercial support 8. Highly efficient



Forum III

Creating Visions for Each Strategy Area

Draft five initial vision statements and identify key phrases capturing the essence of the group’s vision

Draft	Votes
1. In 2025, Portage will be a highly mobile, <u>high-speed convenient</u> community with a <u>transportation hub</u> that offers <u>alternative</u> transportation to many <u>regional</u> destinations.	1
2. In 2025, Portage will have a <u>state-of-the-art</u> network of reads, <u>hike-n-bike</u> trails and <u>mass transit system</u> that will <u>connect</u> people to the community while facilitating commercial and civic growth and avoiding gridlock.	5
3. In 2025, Portage will have a transportation system that serves as a <u>regional hub</u> with <u>high quality, progressive, diverse transportation options</u> allowing for maximum <u>accessibility</u> and <u>convenience</u> .	6
4. In 2025, Portage will possess an <u>efficient, effective</u> transportation system meeting the needs of our citizens and promoting economic development.	3
5. In 2025, Portage will build <u>accessible</u> transportation routes through <u>connectivity</u> of streets.	

Final draft

Portage has a diversified, optimally-accessible, and environmentally-friendly transportation system with regional connectivity.

Forum IV

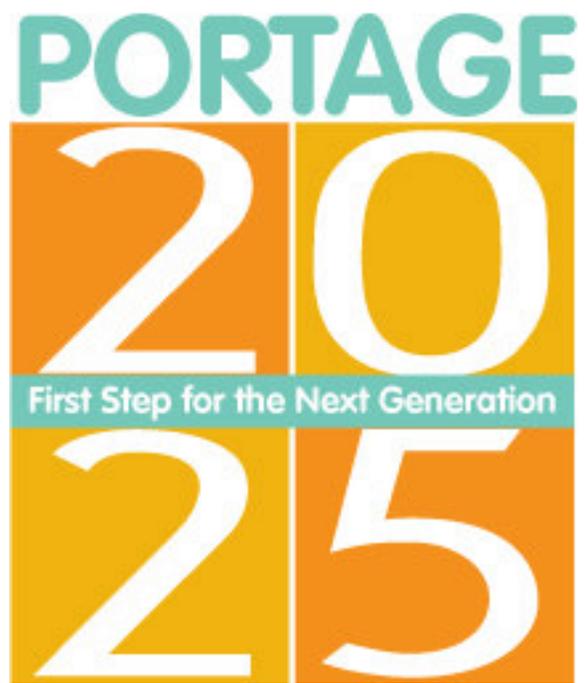
Pulling It Together

Final vision

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

Final goals

1. 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.
2. Every signalized intersection has state-of-the-art technology for pedestrians to ensure safe mobility in high-traffic areas.
3. Portage citizens have full access to the city on well-maintained pedestrian sidewalks and hike and bike trails, which connect regional trail facilities.
4. Portage has a walkable civic center that connects entertainment, restaurants and retail venues and is connected to trailways and transportation.
5. 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.
6. New technologies will be evaluated and adopted as they are shown to be affordable and feasible.



Exhibits



Exhibit I	Visioning Resources
<p>General resources</p>	<p>The City of Portage provided participants with the following general resources via the Portage 2025 Visioning web site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2006 Portage Community Survey 2006-07 Budget 2006-16 Capital Improvement Plan Census Data 2000-05 City Profile Participants Visioning Toolkit Portage 2020 Visioning Document
<p>Culture and Leisure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo Bikeway Brochure Bishop's Bog Celery Flats Facility Rental Guide Greenway Map Map and Activity Reference Guide Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Guide and Map Recreation and Open Space Plan West Lake Nature Preserve
<p>Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2002 Comprehensive Plan Portage Economic Development Opportunities and Resources
<p>Environment and Natural Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bishop's Bog Kalamazoo County Lake and Stream Monitoring Kalamazoo River Watershed Michigan Department of Environmental Quality West Lake Nature Preserve

Visioning Resources – continued	
Human Services	<p>2005-09 Community Development Block Grant Consolidated Plan 2006 Standard Equalized Value and Building Permit Trend Graphic Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Web Site Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Web Site (Area Statistics) Kids Count in Michigan Data Book 2006 Neighborhood Support Program Brochure Poverty in Kalamazoo County 2006 Subsidized and/or Special Needs Rental Housing Map Transitions 2005 Annual Report, Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services</p>
Municipal Services	<p>City Services Web Pages: Curbside Collection Program/Recycling Program/Household Hazardous Waste Edison Electric Institute Study PDF New Resident Guide to City Services Portage Cable Access Rain Gardens / Portage Retention Basins Shared Government Services PDF</p>
Neighborhoods	<p>City Assessor 2003-06 Average Single-family Residential Sale Price History Report City of Portage Comprehensive Plan 2002 W.E. Upjohn Institute Report on New Private Housing Units for Kalamazoo County</p>
Transportation	<p>Interstate 94 and US-131 Kalamazoo /Battle Creek International Airport Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study - 2025 Plan Major Streets Report Michigan Rail Map Norfolk Southern Railroad</p>

Exhibit II

Forum II Keynote by George Erickcek

Portage 2025 Visioning:
Demographic and economic issues
plus some thoughts of my own

George A. Erickcek
W.E. Upjohn Institute
January 24, 2006

1

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Overview

- The metro area is expected to grow slowly in the coming years.
 - Productivity in manufacturing will limit employment growth.
 - Small cities blues
 - Portage's current role in the metro area appears stable.
 - Residential
 - Retail/Commercial
 - Manufacturing
-

2

Overview (cont'd)

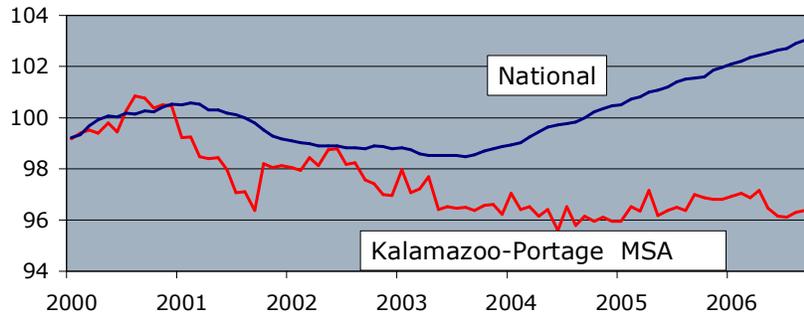
- Still, local population growth is occurring elsewhere in the county—neighboring townships are capturing the new growth in the region.
 - Challenges:
 - Aging housing stock in the more-established neighborhoods
 - Continuous redevelopment of existing retail areas
 - Highly dependent on the car where current urban design focuses on "urban villages" concepts
-

3

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Kalamazoo-Portage MSA's employment trends flat-lined in 2003.

**Employment Index
(Average of 2000=100)**

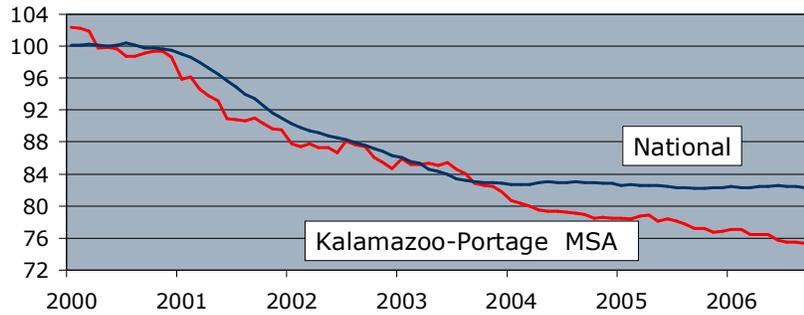


Source: BLS and W.E. Upjohn Institute.

4

Kalamazoo's manufacturing employment has been hit hard.

**Employment Index
(Average of 2000=100)**



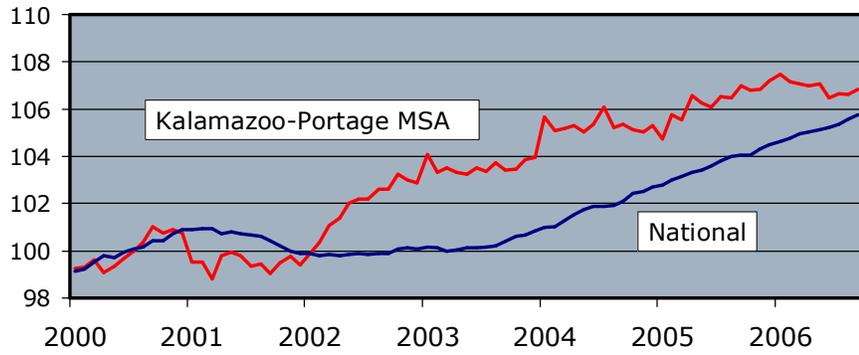
Source: BLS and W.E. Upjohn Institute.

5

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Good news: The area's service-providing sector is surprisingly strong

**Employment Index
(Average of 2000=100)**

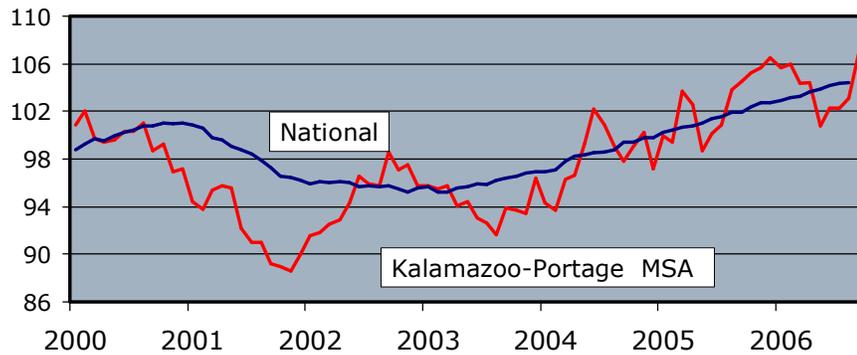


Source: BLS and Upjohn Institute.

6

And professional and business services are holding their own!

**Employment Index
(Average of 2000=100)**



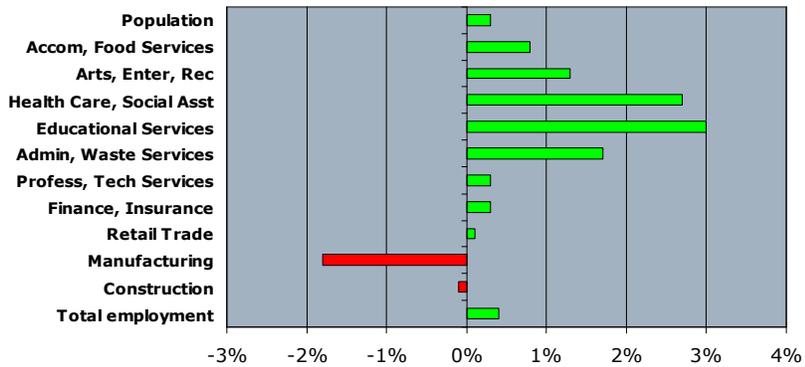
Source: BLS and W.E. Upjohn Institute.

7

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Employment growth for the Kalamazoo-Portage MSA is expected to be modest in the next 10 years. *Employment: 0.4% per year, Population: 0.3%*

Annual Average Percent Change



Source: W.E Upjohn Institute.

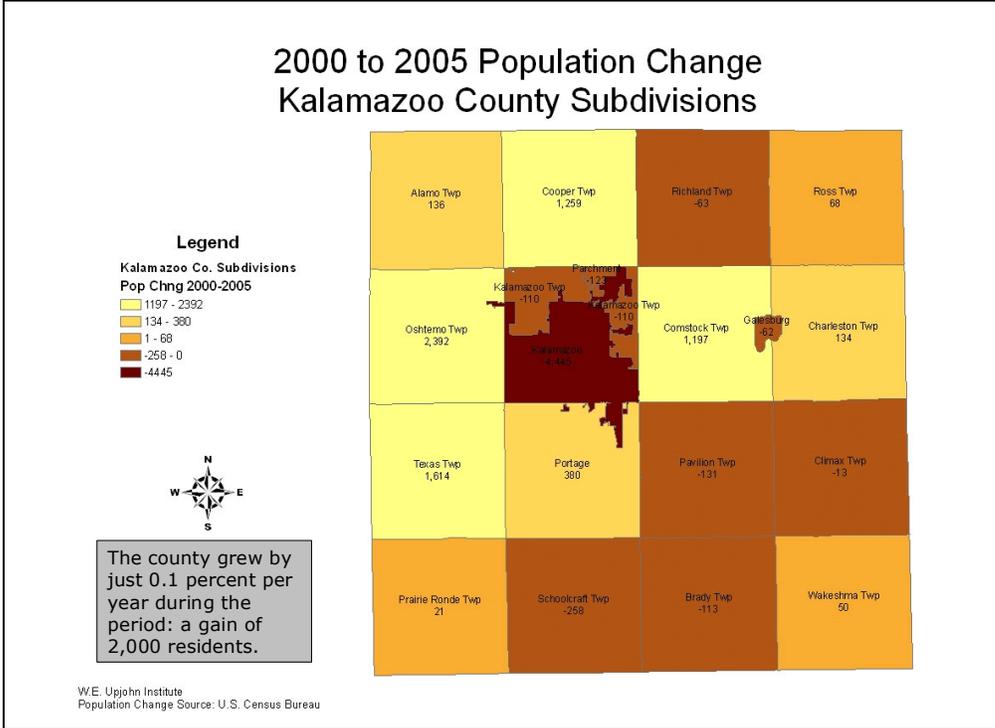
8

Even in an environment of slow growth, there can be “high-growth” areas.

- ❑ Life cycle of families.
- ❑ “Five acres make for good neighbors.”
- ❑ The key question is: If these patterns continue, what impact will they have on Portage’s retail and commercial development?

9

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued



Note:
Mr. Erickcek left this slide blank and provided some editorial remarks.

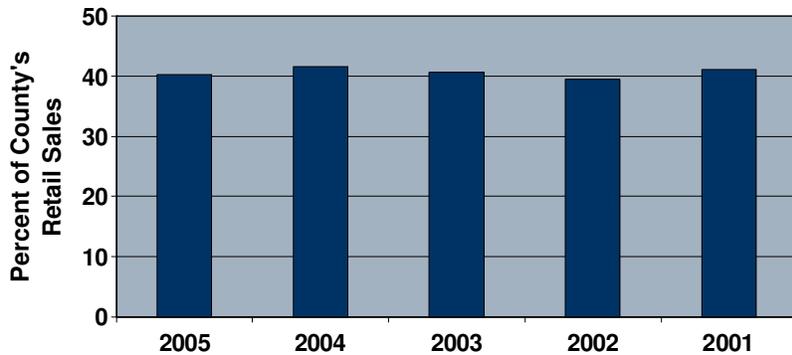
Current Conditions – Holding Steady

11

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Westnedge Avenue remains stable.

Portage's Portion of County's Retail Sales

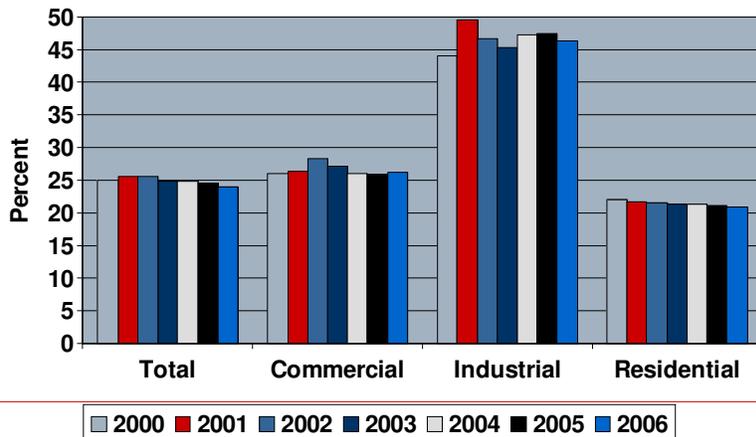


Source: Sales & Marketing Management.

12

Portage's SEV is highly concentrated in manufacturing.

Percent of County SEV (Real and Personal) by Sector



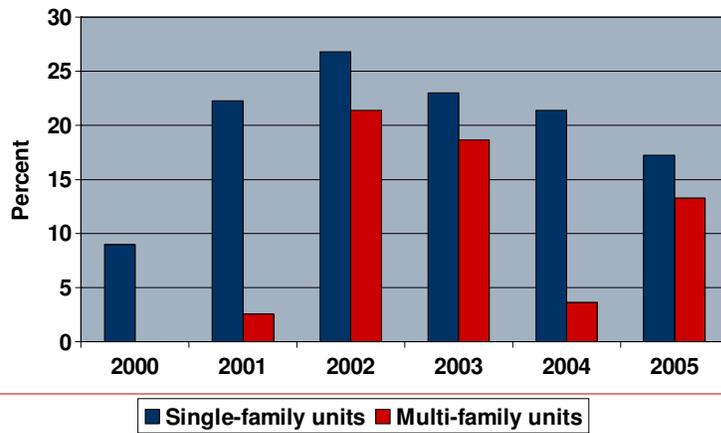
Source: Kalamazoo Equalization Department.

13

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Portage residential construction remains focused on single-family units.

Percent of Building Permits Issued



Source: Local governmental units collected by the Upjohn Institute.

14

Closing Thoughts

- Portage’s existing role in the metro area should remain stable.
 - Retail areas remain strong.
 - Single-family residential development—a great place to raise a family.
 - Manufacturing area along Sprinkle Road is still attractive.

15

Keynote by George Erickcek - continued

Closing Thoughts (cont'd)

Challenges:

- Reusing, not abandoning retail buildings and areas.
 - Aging housing stock, which was built in the current era.
 - Auto-focused neighborhoods which counter current urban design trends.
-

16

Questions: Troubling and Not

- Where is downtown Portage?
 - How many of you have tried to walk (run) across Westnedge Ave?
 - What should Portage residents look for in Kalamazoo?
 - What does Portage offer that is not available in the surrounding townships?
-

17

Exhibit III	Visioning Statistics				
<p>Participant evaluation</p> <p>At the conclusion of Portage 2025, 90 of the 113 residents who attended the last Forum (80%) completed a brief evaluation and shared their perceptions.</p> <p>Overwhelmingly, participants considered Portage 2025 an enjoyable process. They felt that they contributed to their work groups and created meaningful outcomes. Council and staff liaisons and the Visioning Toolkit received high marks as valuable resources.</p>					
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
I enjoyed participating in Portage 2025	81 90.0%	8 8.9%			1 1.1%
I am satisfied with the outcome our work group	59 65.6%	29 32.2%	1 1.1%		1 1.1%
I was able to contribute to my work group	68 75.6%	22 24.4%			
The <i>Visioning Toolkit</i> explained what was expected of me	58 64.4%	27 30.0%	5 5.6%		
The <i>Visioning Toolkit</i> helped my work group stay on track	52 57.8%	35 38.9%	2 2.2%	1 1.1%	
Council and staff liaisons were valuable resources	72 80.0%	17 18.9%			1 1.1%
West Middle School was a good place for the Forums	66 73.3%	21 23.3%	2 2.2%	1 1.1%	

Visioning Statistics - continued

Representative comments

“I feel we ultimately hammered out a very solid vision and goals that will make Portage an even greater place to learn.”

Visioning participants shared over two hundred comments about Portage 2025. Many of them appreciated the opportunity to participate in the Visioning process. Others noted how they learned about city government or met residents who shared their interest in creating the future for the City of Portage. What follows, are comments that represent the sentiments expressed by many Visioning volunteers.

“Finalizing our vision and goals to everyone’s satisfaction! Very positive experience. Very organized, focused, informative and rewarding.”

“I felt that the process helped keep us on track without “forcing” any predetermined outcome.”

“I was privileged to work with such great leaders.”

“Learning so much about my community. This inspired me to remain in Portage long-term – especially knowing my ideas are considered by local government.”

“Outcomes to be proud of.”

“Realizing a “meeting of the minds” among diverse members of a group was satisfying. Seeing how visions and goals from various groups mentioned the same topics/themes.”

“This was an awesome experience for me. I liked it very much and enjoyed the whole process.”

“Thoroughly enjoyed our committee and the excellent input from staff. Have much better knowledge of the workings of the City of Portage.”

Representative suggestions

“I would like to see more high-school and college aged participants.”

“A yearly review of progress on the 2025 visioning project. Reorganize goals and direct to boards and commissions, which will be responsible for action.”

Visioning Statistics - continued								
Sign-up	Internet 110							
	Paper 33							
	Call-in 1							
	Total sign-up 144							
	Male 85							
	Female 59							
Participation	Forum I 133							
	Forum II 128							
	Forum III 110							
	Forum IV 113							
	High-school participants 6							
	Participated in Portage 2020 8							
Continued civic involvement	A substantial number of participants expressed interest in continuing their participation in future municipal volunteer opportunities, such as boards, commissions, and follow-ups to the Portage 2025 recommendations.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Yes</th> <th>Maybe</th> <th>No</th> <th>No Answer</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>76 84.4%</td> <td>2 2.2%</td> <td>1 1.1%</td> <td>11 12.2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Yes	Maybe	No	No Answer	76 84.4%	2 2.2%	1 1.1%
Yes	Maybe	No	No Answer					
76 84.4%	2 2.2%	1 1.1%	11 12.2%					
	While many residents were already engaged in civic activities prior to volunteering for Portage 2025, these high numbers suggest that the Visioning project nurtured, and possibly created, ongoing commitment to preparing the community for the next generation.							

Exhibit IV **Contact Information**

City of Portage



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Consultant**



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