



Portage 2025

First Step for the Next Generation

Plans, Actions & Outcomes

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

The Portage 2025 visions and goals were developed to provide guidance at the “30,000 feet” level, or in other words, in a way that provides basic direction but does not provide specific detail. The City Council held two retreats this past year, in July and December 2007, to further develop the action goals for the achievement of both short and long-term Portage 2025 visions and goals.

Although there are 17 years remaining until the year 2025, several plans were developed and actions achieved to ensure the Portage 2025 visions and goals are met. This document serves as an overview of the many plans, actions and outcomes that were achieved in 2007 and early 2008. Plans, actions and outcomes identified are only listed under one workgroup but may also be applicable to visions and goals of other workgroups.

Culture & Leisure

- ❖ The city has been awarded a \$139,000 Accessible by Design Award grant that, combined with a Capital Improvement Program funds match of \$60,000, will provide for a redeveloped playground at Ramona Park, incorporating materials and design to allow access for individuals with physical disabilities.
- ❖ The city has received a \$200,000 grant commitment from the Michigan Department of Transportation for construction of the Northwest Portage Bikeway extension. The proposed trailway will run through the Crossroads Mall and connect to the Millennium Trail and Portage Creek Bicentennial Trail systems. Construction of this project is contingent on obtaining easements from several business properties.
- ❖ Planning is underway for the development of a dog “bark” park and a disc golf course within the next few years as funding is identified.
- ❖ The 2008 Recreation and Open Space Plan is in the process of being updated and approved by the Parks Board. The Open Space Plan provides long-range planning for items such as trailways, park space, open space and recreation facilities.
- ❖ In cooperation with the city, private fundraising efforts are underway for the development of a water spray park to be located at Ramona Park.
- ❖ The 2007 Portage Community Survey contained the following responses:
 - 90% of respondents are satisfied with the condition of city parks.
 - 94% of respondents are satisfied with recreation programs offered by the city.
 - 97% of respondents are satisfied with the condition of city bikeways and trailways.

Economic Development

- ❖ The Planning Commission is reviewing and updating the City Centre Plan, which was developed in 1982. As part of the update, citizen input will be sought, including input from participants of the Portage 2025 Renewal Event. The goal of the update will be to create the framework for developing a vibrant City Centre.
- ❖ To encourage retention/expansion of existing industries and to attract new industries, industrial tax abatement incentives permitted under Michigan statute are under review by the City Council. In accordance with state law, the tax abatement provides for tax reductions on property improvements and on eligible manufacturing equipment for new and expanding industries in return for private investment and tax base growth, retaining existing jobs or creating new job opportunities for area residents.
- ❖ The City Administration works collaboratively with Southwest Michigan First on mutually beneficial economic development projects and initiatives.
- ❖ During 2007, 78 businesses located or expanded business facilities in Portage. Approximately, 750 jobs have been added and 605 jobs retained. In an effort to facilitate quality growth and development investment by property owners/developers, the City Administration works collaboratively and proactively with these private sector entities.

Environment & Natural Resources

- ❖ The city diesel fleet, consisting of 33 street maintenance vehicles and 6 fire apparatus, currently operates on Bio-Diesel fuel. Additionally, the city fleet contains five flex fuel vehicles that operate on E-85 ethanol blend fuel.
- ❖ City facilities will utilize energy efficient lighting. Installation of energy efficient lighting in City Hall and the Senior Center is scheduled over the next several months. Energy efficient lighting upgrades have already been completed in most other facilities, including Police Headquarters, all fire stations and the Public Services Facility.
- ❖ Design is nearly complete and construction is targeted to begin this summer for an Arsenic Removal Water Treatment Facility located off of Garden Lane. The Water Treatment Facility will enable the city to meet future demands for quality and safe drinking water.
- ❖ The Water Treatment Facility is designed to utilize and meet the United States Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards.
- ❖ Portage provides a comprehensive recycling program that serves 7,500 residences and collects approximately 111,000 pounds of recycled material weekly. Efforts to expand the scope of recycling are constantly under review; recently the recycling of computers, certain types of plastics and mercury thermometers has been added.
- ❖ In an effort to facilitate reuse of existing commercial sites through redevelopment, projects including the new Gordon Foods Store, Southland Mall renovations and Main Street Pub projects, among others, were constructed on existing commercial sites.

Human Services

- ❖ Portage continues to support and partner with human service providers through the annual financial support. Over the past five-years, more than \$1 million in funding has been provided from the General Fund (\$801,000) and the Community Development Block Grant Fund (\$311,000) to support programs that offer emergency shelter, food, clothing, financial assistance and transportation assistance for families; aide runaway youth; assist victims of domestic violence and prevent eviction and foreclosure.
- ❖ The City Council formed a committee to consider financial support from the city to the Kalamazoo County Affordable Housing Fund. A recommendation for the City of Portage to contribute funding in support of this effort is expected to be considered as part of the Fiscal Year 2008-2009 budget process. The Affordable Housing Fund is designed to provide qualified individuals/families transitional housing vouchers, homeless prevention support and permanent housing opportunities.
- ❖ The Portage Community Center (PCC) has recently upgraded/expanded facilities by relocating to the City Centre area and has expanded activities to include the Family Health Center and Kalamazoo County Head Start program. The relocation was done in cooperation and through funding assistance provided by the City of Portage. The PCC is the primary human services agency serving the community.
- ❖ The Portage Senior Center provides and enhances programming and services that meet the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of participants. The "Partners Program" brings youth and seniors together to participate in educational programs and community service projects. The Personal Action Towards Health (PATH) program promotes the development of self-management skills for individuals suffering from a chronic disease.

Municipal Services

- ❖ 2007 Community Survey results reveal a continued positive perception of service value by residents, with 88% of survey respondents indicating they believe they receive good or excellent service for their tax dollars. Additionally, 86% of respondents were satisfied with the quality of service received from a city employee.
- ❖ The City Council created the Ad-Hoc Cable Access Committee to identify efforts to enhance community access cable programming and services.
- ❖ The City Council created the Ad-Hoc Youth Involvement Committee to identify efforts to improve youth participation in municipal government. Implementation of a Youth Advisory Board and identifying designated youth participants for selected Advisory Boards and Commission are underway.
- ❖ The South Westnedge Enhancement Projects (SWEPS), described in further detail under *Transportation*, includes the undergrounding of overhead utility lines along South Westnedge Avenue from approximately I-94 to north of Trade Centre Way.
- ❖ The City Council and City Administration are committed to working collaboratively with other regional organizations. To the benefit of the community, the city regularly works in cooperation with Kalamazoo County, the City of Kalamazoo, Portage Public Schools, the Portage District Library, the Portage Community Center, Southwest Michigan First, the Kalamazoo Area Chamber of Commerce and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority, to name a few.
- ❖ The City of Portage Fiscal Year 2007-2008 millage rate of 10.4892 is the 8th lowest of 43 comparable municipalities.

Neighborhoods

- ❖ The Portage Police Department is working towards a “district officer” staffing model. This model utilizes components of community-oriented policing as well as data management and analysis to facilitate proactive policing methods. Additionally, efforts towards developing more neighborhood watch organizations have been pursued.
- ❖ To protect and preserve neighborhood quality of life, implementation of the Neighborhood Support Program continues, which includes efforts for renewal and maintenance of existing housing stock and blight prevention.
- ❖ Through the Community Development Block Grant Program, the city provides funding to support emergency home repairs, housing rehabilitation, down payment and predevelopment activities for low and moderate income owner-occupied households.

Transportation

- ❖ The Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority has established three additional fixed-bus routes and demand-response service to Portage. The new routes average approximately 5,000 rides per month.
- ❖ The Portage Holiday Express was a trolley that served South Westnedge Avenue between Milham Avenue and Romence Road during the holiday season. The Holiday Express was funded by the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority as well as private business donors.
- ❖ Kalamazoo Metro Transit has plans to install up to nine additional bus shelters by June 2008 at key areas throughout the city.
- ❖ Construction of the South Westnedge Enhancements Projects (SWEPs) will begin this spring. The first phase of construction includes widening South Westnedge Avenue to three lanes in both north and southbound directions between I-94 and approximately Kilgore Road.
- ❖ In an effort to provide a well-maintained street network, major street enhancements were constructed in 2007 at Bacon Road between Portage Road and South Westnedge Avenue, Kilgore Road between Lovers Lane and east of Portage Road and intersection improvements at South Westnedge Avenue and Shaver Road. During the 2008 construction season, Romence Road from Oakland Drive to Angling Road and Moorsbridge Road from East Centre Avenue Boulevard to approximately Muirfield Drive will be reconstructed. Planning is underway for improvements to Milham Avenue between Oakland Drive and 12th Street, with construction scheduled to begin in 2009.