

PORTAGER

A Natural Place to Move



A Message from Mayor Patricia M. Randall

Mayor Column June 2025

Everyone likes options. As our two public high schools graduate the 2025 senior classes – Portage Northern (279) and Portage Central (335) – students will pursue different paths. Of this year's graduating class, 95% will attend college and 1% will join the armed services, leaving just 4% to enter into the work force. Expectations run high, but national data tells us that only thirty percent will actually graduate from college: One third with a Masters' degree and two thirds with Bachelors' degrees.

What about the other seventy percent? Where will they land and have we done all that we can to equip them with the skills they need to thrive in the future?

Upcoming Junior and Senior students in Kalamazoo County – including each of the public schools and eighteen non-public schools – will have an array of new options next year thanks to Kalamazoo County taxpayers. In 2019, taxpayers approved a millage to pay for a Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA) Career Center that will

allow students to explore and train for alternate careers. In 2021, an anonymous donor came forward with a \$100 million gift and the property to build the new KRESA "Career Connect Center." That generous donation covered the construction and furnishings of the building and accelerated the timeline for the project. The millage will fund all of the operational costs.

This facility will help prepare 1,300 students with exciting career opportunities in well-paying, high-demand and high-growth occupations. Graduates will be equipped with the industry-recognized credentials they need to move directly into the workforce right out of high school.

The new campus will host a continuum of career and technical education programs offering specific skills training and certifications for a variety of occupations. High school students will be able to study architecture and the construction trades including electrical, plumbing, HVAC, ventilation and refrigeration. Health sciences, hospitality and tourism, agriculture, manufacturing and automotive technology, culinary arts, and information technology will also be available. The facility will be centrally located and accessible through our county-wide transportation system. Proximity to various employers will enable them to engage directly with students through internships and work-based

learning opportunities.

This initiative replaces the Education for Employment (EFE) programming offered at various locations for the last 35 years. Other career training options will still be offered throughout our county and will not be duplicated at this new location. They include cosmetology, aviation, accounting, law enforcement, business management, and marketing.

Options will be expanded and futures transformed thanks to the vision and commitment of so many to make this a reality. This proven-to-be-successful alternative to the traditional college path and the enormous debt that comes with it will change many young lives. Hopefully, student graduates armed with these specific skills will enrich our community by choosing to stay and build their families here. Ideally, they will fill the many open trade positions resulting from retirement.

This is yet another shining example of our community coming together to identify and deliver real solutions: Doors open to the first students this fall! As you drive past the site via I-94 or Sprinkle Road, I hope you take pride in knowing that your tax dollars have expanded opportunities for our youth in a very meaningful and lasting way.

– Patricia M. Randall

City of Portage Adopts Balanced Budget for Fiscal Year 2025–2026

The Portage City Council has approved a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 that maintains the city's millage rate, preserving the city's position in the lower twenty percent (20%) of all Michigan cities with populations between 30,000 and 70,000 in terms of millage level. The budget, which spans from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, protects core services and supports infrastructure improvements across the community.

With **no increase in taxes** and no reduction in services, the adopted budget reflects the city's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility and high-quality service delivery. This year's total proposed expenditures across all 25 city funds total \$106.1 million, a 2.9% increase over the previous fiscal year.

Key Budget Highlights

General Fund

Increased by \$928,000 (3%) to \$36.4 million, largely due to public safety equipment upgrades, inflation-related expenses, and cost-of-living adjustments.

Expenditures	FY 23-24 Adopted	FY 24-25 Adopted	FY 25-26 Adopted	Difference	% Change
General Fund	\$31,054,460	\$35,428,107	\$36,356,526	\$928,419	2.62%
CIP	\$24,012,500	\$23,054,944	\$28,599,452	\$2,089,508	7.88%
Water Fund	\$7,502,367	\$7,120,141	\$7,517,607	\$397,466	5.58%
Sewer Fund	\$11,538,279	\$12,506,724	\$12,263,344	(\$243,380)	-1.95%
Streets Fund	\$8,543,299	\$10,212,846	\$9,261,892	(\$950,954)	-9.31%

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

\$23.9 million in project investments, including:

- » *Austin Lake Trail* – \$4.7 million project (90% funded by grants) to construct a three-mile non-motorized trail.
- » *Portage Road/Lake Center Corridor* – \$4.5 million for reconstruction of Portage Road between Weatherbee Avenue and Lakeview Drive.
- » *Farmers Market* – Continued work on the upgraded market space.

Water Fund

Increased 6% due to planned evaluations for long-term improvements at the Shuman Wellfield.

Sewer Fund

Decreased 2%, reflecting the completion of major inspection work last year, offset by increased treatment charges from Kalamazoo.

Utility Rates

The budget includes moderate increases in utility rates based on the 2025 Utility Rate Financial Study:

- » Sewer: 8.45% increase
- » Water: 4.96% increase

Combined, this results in an average monthly residential increase of \$5.28.

A Strong Financial Foundation

The city's long-term financial stewardship continues to deliver results:

- » Since 2008, the city has reduced its debt burden by 57%, from \$105 million to \$45.2 million.
- » The city holds a strong AA+ bond rating from S&P Global Ratings, one step below the top AAA rating.
- » Taxable value in Portage rose to \$2.797 billion, a 7.21% increase and the highest in city history – Portage remains the municipality with the largest tax base in Kalamazoo County.

The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget represents a financially sound path forward, with targeted investments in public safety, infrastructure, and community well-being – without adding new tax burdens. View the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget at portagemi.gov/Budget25-26.

City Awards Funding to Human Service Agencies

As part of the FY 2025-2026 budget, the City Council awarded grants to human service agencies that provide essential services to improve the quality of life for individuals and families. Funding comes from the city's General Fund and the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

The Human Services Board reviews applications and recommends funding allocations based on how well programs meet basic human needs, accessibility to Portage residents, the number of residents served, and outreach efforts. City Council then awards the funds based on these recommendations.

This year, in addition to supporting traditional public services, the city awarded grants for "opioid remediation" through the National Opioid Settlement. Funding was allocated to four Portage Public Schools programs focused

on prevention education, harm reduction, and recovery support – part of a broader effort to combat substance use disorders in the community.

City Council approved the allocation of funds as shown in the table. Portage has awarded these grants annually for over 20 years, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to residents' well-being and public health. The city's investment in opioid prevention and recovery underscores its dedication to addressing this pressing public health issue.

For more details on the Human Public Service Grants and to access application forms, visit portagemi.gov/180.

Opioid Settlement Fund

PPS-525 Foundation Presentation, Author of One Choice	\$15,500
PPS-Contraband Detecting Canines Deterrent Program Expansion	\$8,265
PPS-Responding to Student Addiction: Substance Misuse Therapy	\$28,000
PPS-Understanding Teen Substance Misuse	\$200

City of Portage General Fund

Catholic Charities	\$11,000
Community Healing Centers	\$6,000
Community Living Options	\$5,000
Disability Network of Southwest MI	\$10,000
First Day Shoe Fund	\$4,500
Gryphon Place	\$2,000
Housing Resources, Inc. (HRI)	\$23,000
Kalamazoo Literacy Council	\$5,000
Kalamazoo Habitat for Humanity	\$15,000
Lending Hands of MI, Inc.	\$3,500
Portage Community Center (PCC)	\$63,000
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	\$15,000
Ripple Effects Community Inclusion Ctr	\$2,000
Senior Services – Milestone	\$15,000
Shepherd's Center	\$10,000
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church	\$4,000
Twelve Baskets	\$22,000

YOUR BACKYARD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Portage Farmers Market

Deliciousness abounds at the Portage Farmers Market! June begins with sensational strawberries and ends with bountiful blueberries. In between, you'll find locally raised meats perfect for a backyard BBQ, a variety of gourmet cheeses, perfect pet treats for your furry friends, and unique gifts just in time for graduation! Whether you want to indulge in a cup of coffee and a pastry, or meet your friends at one of the food trucks, there are new flavors and tried-and-true favorites at the market every Sunday.

- » Sundays, 9 AM – 1 PM
- » Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge)

Creative Corners

Tailored to students with special needs and artists of all abilities, Creative Corners allows participants to follow a lead artist through projects and experiment with artistic expression.

Session 1: Nature Prints - Wednesday, June 11

Using natural elements, like flower petals, fish models, leaves, and sticks, create a take-home masterpiece to celebrate the summer season.

Session 2: Fairy Houses - Wednesday, June 18

Design a unique fairy house for your windowsill, back porch, or garden using natural materials.

Wear clothing that can get messy, as students will explore different artistic mediums. The program fee covers all materials. Participants are encouraged to bring a chaperone (fee waived for chaperones). Artwork designed during this program may be featured in future art exhibits.

- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per participant (Registration required)

Scalin' Up for Summer

A fun, interactive, and informative event packed with exotic creatures and wild activities. Come see the 2,000-gallon Hawg Trough fish tank or get up close and personal with some slithery reptiles. Gather information on ways to enjoy summer in Michigan from boating, fishing, swimming, paddleboarding, biking, and keep the fun going with hands-on crafts and balloon artists.

- » Saturday, June 14, 10 AM - 1 PM
- » South Westnedge Park (9010 South Westnedge Avenue)
- » FREE (No registration required)

YOU HAVE MORE FRIENDS THAN YOU KNOW

The Pickle Ball

An Evening with Tony Fields Music

Get ready to groove! Join us for a night of great music, great company, and great vibes – all for a great cause. Tony Fields Music will bring the best of R&B, funk, and old-school jams, so whether you're on the dance floor or just soaking up the energy, you're in for a fantastic evening!

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, a silent auction, and more at this Friday night bash, kicking off a weekend of FUNdraising sponsored by the Friends of the Portage Senior Center. While the action continues Saturday with the Pickleball Tournament at Ramona Park, *The Pickle Ball* is a party all its own – so even if you'll never pick up a paddle, don't miss out! Snag your Ball tickets now at friendspsc.org and help support PZSC's activities and services.

- » Friday, June 13, 6:30 - 9:30 PM

» \$25 Members / \$30 Non-Members (Tickets required)

Portage Parks & Recreation Events, Camps & Classes

1,000 Acres. 20 Parks. One City.

The Portage Parks system is multi-faceted with activities and opportunities for families and people of all ages. To find out more and register online, visit mypark.portagemi.gov and click  REGISTER NOW!

Juneteenth Celebration

Juneteenth, observed on June 19, marks the 1865 emancipation of the last enslaved African Americans in the U.S. This federal holiday honors the resilience, achievements, and ongoing contributions of African Americans. Visit Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park for a self-guided tour exploring the history of Juneteenth and the journey to freedom. Reflect at meditative benches, stroll through the "Garden of Hope," and learn from the interpretive kiosk highlighting African American history and perseverance. Take time to remember, learn, and engage in preserving our shared story.

- » June 16 - 20, 7 AM - 10 PM (normal park hours)
- » Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park (1000 MLK Drive)
- » FREE (No registration required)

Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Yoga

Combine your love for nature, adventure, and yoga with Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) yoga. Whether you are a first-time paddleboarder or an experienced yoga practitioner, this class is for you. Led by Kaitlyn VanDermeer, a certified and experienced SUP Yoga Instructor from KP Fitness, each session, begins on land with an introduction to SUP equipment and safety. This program is open to participants ages 16 and up.

- » Wednesday, June 18, 6:30 - 8 PM
- » Ramona Park Beach (8600 South Sprinkle Road)
- » \$30 per participant, per class (Registration required)

Sound 'Scapes with Wind Willow Consortium



WIND WILLOW CONSORTIUM

Experience a sound immersion journey with Wind Willow Consortium, soothing melodies using a variety of instruments designed to evoke deep relaxation. Participants will experience the therapeutic benefits of sound therapy in a tranquil group setting. Bring a blanket, pillow, or cushion for added comfort. This program is designed for ages 12 and up (those 15 and under require an adult chaperone).

- » Friday, June 27, 6 - 7:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$25 per participant, per session (Registration required)

Friday at the Flats

Join the fun at Celery Flats for an evening of food, music, and community! This year we're adding community vendors where you can



engage with local businesses, service providers, non-profits, entertainers, crafters, and more. Friday at the Flats - where great food, music, and community come together!

- » Fridays, June 27, 5 - 8 PM
- » Celery Flats (7335 Garden Lane)
- » FREE (No registration required)

Movies in the Park

Sonic the Hedgehog 3



Settle in under the stars for a delightful summer movie. Bring a blanket or some comfy chairs to spread out on the grass, and come dressed as your favorite character.

- » Friday, June 27 at dusk (about 9 PM)
- » Celery Flats Historical Area (7335 Garden Lane)
- » FREE (No registration required)

BioBlitz

Embark on an adventure through West Lake Nature Preserve to discover animals, insects, plants, and fungi that call this nature preserve home. Help Portage Parks & Recreation, the Portage District Library, and the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy catalog the area's flora and fauna as we work toward a collective goal of identifying and counting the organisms around us. This family-friendly event offers engaging activities for both youth and adults. Learn how to use apps, field guides, and other tools to help you on your journey to becoming a citizen scientist.

- » Saturday, June 28, 10 AM - 12 PM
- » West Lake Nature Preserve (9001 South Westnedge Avenue)
- » FREE (Registration required)

Kids Try It! Sports

Kids will have a blast playing a variety of fun sports, practicing different skills, and experiencing a wide range of outdoor sports activities. Learn the basic principles of a new sport each week and develop gross motor skills over this five-week session while learning the value of fair play, sportsmanship, and teamwork. Two classes are offered for kids ages 4 to 5 and ages 6 to 7.

- » Tuesdays, July 1 - 29
- Session 1: Ages 4 - 5, 10 - 10:55 AM
- Session 2: Ages 6 - 7, 11 - 11:55 AM
- » Westfield Park (4500 West Milham Avenue)
- » \$30 per participant (Registration required)

Portage Zhang Senior Center Events, Activities & Classes

Explore More. Have Fun. Live Well.

Find us at 203 East Centre Avenue | mypzsc.portagemi.gov | To find out more or to register, call 329-4555

Experience a vital, vibrant community offering a wide variety of services and activities that match the needs of active older adult.

Membership and participation at the PZSC is open to anyone over the age of 50. Portage residency is not required.

All events are held at the Portage Zhang Senior Center unless otherwise noted.

Michigan Secretary of State Mobile Office

Now Taking Appointments!



The Secretary of State Mobile Office is returning to the Portage Zhang Senior Center. This convenient mobile office can help you with all sorts of transactions, like getting your State ID, taking care of driver and vehicle services, renewing your license plates, and registering to vote. If you're looking for a quick and friendly experience, schedule an appointment with us by calling 329-4555

- » Wednesday, June 18, 10 AM - 3 PM
- » FREE - SOS fees apply (Registration required)

Celebrate a Century of Life at the Portage Zhang Senior Center!



**TIDES OF TIME
CELEBRATING A
CENTURY OF YOU**

Are you turning 100 in 2025 – or already there? The Portage Zhang Senior Center invites you to be our guest of honor at the Centenarian Brunch on Thursday, July 24, 2025, from 11 AM to 1 PM. This year's theme, *Tides of Time: Celebrating a Century of You*, honors the wisdom and resilience of our community's oldest members. Each Centenarian may attend free with two guests. To RSVP or learn more, contact Kimberly Middleton at 329-4554. Join us as we celebrate lives that continue to inspire.

- » Thursday, July 24, 11 AM - 1 PM
- » FREE (Registration required)

PORTAGER

City Launches Facade Improvement Grant Program to Enhance Commercial Properties

The City of Portage is proud to introduce its city-wide Facade Improvement Grant Program, a new initiative to revitalize commercial properties and enhance the city's visual appeal. This competitive grant program offers a 50/50 matching grant of up to \$25,000 for qualified street-facing facade project costs on commercial properties (retail, restaurant, service, office) within Portage. Additionally, the city will reimburse up to \$2,500 in architectural fees for approved projects, with no matching funds required.

The program is designed to assist businesses in upgrading their building exteriors, contributing to the overall aesthetic and economic vitality of the community.

Interested applicants are encouraged to act quickly, as funds are limited. For more information on the program and to access the application, please visit portagemi.gov/incentives. Questions can be directed to the Department of Community Development at 329-4474.

FAÇADE IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM 50/50 MATCHING GRANT FOR UP TO \$25,000

BEFORE



AFTER



Help Shape the Future of Portage Road

Join the City of Portage for the fourth **Portage Road 360**

Community Open House on

Wednesday, June 18, from 5:30 to 7 PM at the Portage Zhang Senior Center (203 East Centre Avenue). This event is an opportunity for residents, business owners, and visitors to help shape the long-term vision for Portage Road between East Osterhout Avenue and East Centre Avenue.

This open house is an important step in advancing the Portage Road 360 initiative, which builds on the Lake Center District Subarea Plan, part of the city's 2024 Master Plan, to create a safe, accessible, and vibrant corridor for all.

At Open House #4, the city's Portage Road 360 planning specialists will present new materials highlighting feedback gathered through ongoing community engagement efforts. Engineering consultants will

share their recommended preliminary corridor designs, featuring street cross-sections, multi-user paths, intersection layouts, and traffic-calming elements informed by public input and traffic research.

Portage Road 360 Projected Construction Schedule

- » Forest Drive Traffic Signal – Fall 2025
- » Wetherbee Avenue to Lakeview Drive – 2026
- » Lakeview Drive to Forest Drive/Zylman Avenue – 2027
- » Forest Drive/Zylman Avenue to Centre Avenue – 2028

Attendees can also explore a variety of interactive stations and speak directly with project specialists to help prioritize design features such as site furnishings, lighting, gateway elements, pavement treatments, landscaping, and green infrastructure strategies.

Don't miss your chance to be part of the planning process!



7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160
portagemi.gov | (269) 329-4400

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
KALAMAZOO, MI
PERMIT NO. 33

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER



City Closing Notices

Non-emergency city offices will be closed on the following dates:

Juneteenth

- » Thursday, June 19

Independence Day

- » Friday, July 4

Congratulations to the Portage Graduating Class of 2025



Mayor Patricia M. Randall
(269) 329-4400
patricia.randall@portagemi.gov



Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson
(269) 303-5459
councilmemberjp@portagemi.gov



Chris Burns
(708) 710-3102
chris.burns@portagemi.gov



Vic Ledbetter
(269) 330-6404
vic.ledbetter@portagemi.gov



Nicole Miller
(269) 924-1901
nicole.miller@portagemi.gov



Terry R. Urban
(269) 323-8160
terry.urban@portagemi.gov



Jihan Ain Young
(269) 759-0323
jihan.young@portagemi.gov



Patrick McGinnis, City Manager
(269) 329-4400
mcginnip@portagemi.gov

Televised City Meetings

City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on Spectrum channel 995 and AT&T channel 99. All meetings can be viewed via live streaming at portagemi.gov/205.

JUNE 2025

10	6:00 PM	City Council Meeting
24	6:00 PM	City Council Meeting

The Portager

The *Portager* is the official publication of the City of Portage, used to inform residents of city services and events, as well as city projects that have significance to Portage citizens. The newsletter is published monthly and delivered to every mailbox in the 49002 and 49024 zip codes.

This month's front and back cover photo features Stuart Manor in the Celery Flats Historical Area.

PORTAGER Editor
Mary Beth Block | blockm@portagemi.gov