

PORTAGER

A Natural Place to Move



A Message from Mayor Patricia M. Randall

Where we choose to live has a significant impact on our lives. It influences our health, our well-being and even our

personalities. Access to resources, environmental conditions and social determinants all help shape one's sense of self. Our behavior can also be traced back to our upbringing. My childhood home in Portage was built in 1966 for \$27,500. Last month that house sold for \$275,000, appreciating 900% over 59 years.

As home prices soar, wages have not kept up. This has put homeownership out of reach for many. A house built in Portage for \$250,000 five years ago now sells for \$375,000. Residential interest rates have jumped from 3% to 7%. Down-payment requirements increase as the percentage of the sale price increases. Five years ago payments were only \$1,417 versus the \$2,983 they are today when comparing carrying costs on a monthly basis, including insurance and property tax.

Housing options have shifted in reaction to the market. In a period of ten days in May and June, I attended ceremonies for four vastly different housing options, each introducing

a new concept to our community. All are affordable for the middle income wage earner, referred to as Workforce Housing according to the "Area Medium Income" scale. The "AMI" is a key metric in affordable housing. This benchmark is calculated each year by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development on a regional basis to determine the midpoint of income ranges for federal and state housing programs.

In our region, the AMI for a single wage earner ranges from 80-120%, or \$53,680 to \$80,520 annually. By including units below market rate, the developer accepts less rental income in exchange for financial incentives offered by county, state and federal programs. It is a complicated puzzle, but helps address the housing crisis by making such projects financially feasible.

Starting with Stanwood Crossings – the first ever city-driven, 42 single family home development – we took "affordability" head-on. This neighborhood is uniquely positioned as both 100% workforce and 100% owner occupied, and will remain so into perpetuity. The land will be owned by the Portage Community Land Trust, while the homes are owned by an individual or family within the AMI income range. This will include people working as teachers, police officers, fire fighters, nurses, retail and office managers, etc.

Tall Timbers is a 180-unit, LEED apartment complex offering luxury living, with 10% of the units committed to workforce housing for the next 20 years. The ten acre development is environmentally focused with features including panoramic views and underground parking.

Oakland Commons offers 58 single-family, duplex, triplex and quad unit homes, all for lease. This community also features a unique layout: The homes face a central courtyard rather than the street. Creekside Commons offers 48 single-family and quad homes, also all for lease. Both of these "rent-a-home" neighborhoods are a new concept within Portage. Twenty percent of each of these developments will be dedicated to workforce housing for fifteen years. With all landscaping and plowing performed by the developer, they will be beautifully maintained.

These four housing projects will supply an additional 326 housing units and a total investment of \$97 million within the city of Portage. They are projected to generate over \$1.4 million in taxes paid each year, per assessment at their current market value. The numbers speak for themselves.

One thing we can take away from all of this: Portage continues to be a desirable place to live. For that, I am grateful.

– Patricia M. Randall

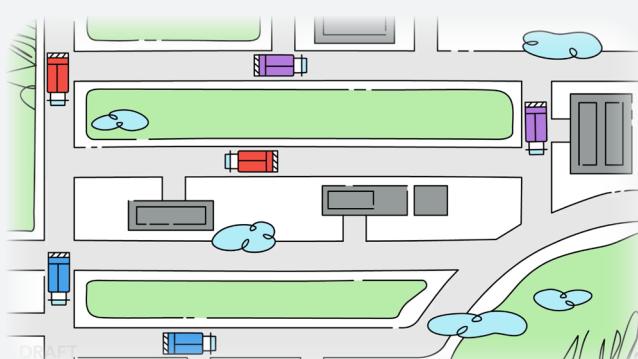
A Smarter, Safer, More Affordable Way to Collect Trash in Portage

The City of Portage is exploring a transition to a single-hauler waste collection system in an effort to streamline garbage, yard waste, and recycling services for residents. In January 2025, the City Council amended the City Code of Ordinances to allow for an exclusive provider to handle the collection and processing of solid waste, bulk items, yard waste, and recyclables.

This decision reflects long-standing City Council goals to deliver waste services that are more cost-effective, efficient, transparent, and less damaging to public infrastructure. Following a comprehensive analysis and a competitive bidding process, city officials are recommending the selection of a single provider to enhance public safety, lower costs, and simplify waste collection for all Portage households.

Why Make the Switch?

Currently, three different garbage companies operate throughout Portage. This patchwork approach results in overlapping routes, variable pricing from household to household, heavy truck traffic on neighborhood streets, traffic congestion, safety hazards, and a larger environmental footprint.



One Hauler, One Smart Solution

A single-hauler system would consolidate trash and recycling services under one provider using an optimized citywide route to reduce heavy truck traffic, improves efficiency, reduces emissions, and increases accountability.

Reducing Wear and Tear on Neighborhood Streets

On any given trash day, up to six garbage trucks serve a single street causing road wear. Each of those heavy trucks does the damage of 8,000 passenger vehicles. That's equivalent to 240,000 vehicles per week rolling across Portage roads. Less truck traffic means less wear and tear on city streets, extending the lifespan of local roads and reducing long-term maintenance costs.

Supporting Sustainability

Streamlined routes mean more efficient operations. Fewer vehicles on the road translates to lower fuel consumption and reduced emissions, contributing to the city's broader sustainability goals.



Enhancing Service and Safety

With one provider, the city can establish performance standards to ensure reliable service, timely pickups, consistent billing, and responsive customer support. Fewer garbage trucks traveling through neighborhoods will also reduce traffic congestion and minimize the risk of accidents, making streets safer for drivers, pedestrians, and children.

Lower Costs, More Predictability

One of the most significant advantages of a single-hauler system is cost efficiency. By consolidating services and negotiating bulk pricing, the city estimates that Portage households will save an average of 44% on waste collection services.

To ensure residents receive the best service at the lowest cost, the City of Portage invited all licensed waste haulers to submit competitive bids to serve the entire city. The low bid came in at \$14.04 per month for garbage service, an average savings of 44%.

Residents currently pay anywhere between \$14.50 and over

\$50 per month for garbage service, depending on their provider and plan. With a single hauler, every household will pay the same low rate for the same quality service.



44% Savings!

Billing will also become more transparent. Instead of navigating contracts and varying rates from multiple companies, all residents will receive consistent, predictable billing directly from the selected hauler. Importantly, these costs will not be added to property taxes; households will be billed directly by the waste provider.

While some concerns have been raised about reduced competition, city officials emphasize that the move is not about eliminating choice, but rather about improving service through a more strategic, city-wide approach. All qualified haulers were invited to submit their most competitive bids. This process ensures transparency and fair competition while delivering the best value and service to Portage residents.

What's Next?

The City Council will review the City Administration's recommendation and vote on the selected provider during an upcoming City Council meeting. If approved, the transition to a single-hauler system is expected to begin in the coming months, with additional information and timelines provided to residents in *The Portager*, at portagemi.gov and through our social media channels.

YOUR BACKYARD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Geo Mystery Tour: History Hunt

Uncover Portage's secrets and legends through local lore, true stories, and tall tales. For the best experience, use an Apple or Garmin device. Register online to get weekly GPS coordinates and clues via email – solve the mystery by month's end!

- » Now through July 3
- » Portage Parks
- » FREE (Registration required)

Yoga in the Park: Slow Flow Yoga

Presented by Intentional Yoga for all skill levels, focus on building strength, stamina, and balance while improving flexibility, endurance, long-term health, and stress reduction. Bring your own yoga mat and wear comfortable exercise clothing. Open to participants ages 14 and up.

- » Thursdays, July 10 - 31, 10 - 11 AM
- » Central Park (7810 Shaver Road)
- » Rain Location: Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$65 per participant, per session (Registration required)

Forest Bathing

Join Kerri Barker from Nourish Nature Connection to experience Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese practice of Forest Bathing. Reflect, relax, and explore its health benefits through gentle walking and seated time on the grass. Ages 16+. Bring a mat or blanket.

- » Friday, July 11, 6:30 - 8:30 PM
- » Schrier Park (850 West Osterhout Avenue)
- » \$25 per participant (Registration required by July 10)

Youth Tennis Camp

Presented by the YMCA of Greater Kalamazoo, this tennis camp is perfect for beginner players ages 5 to 14. Participants will learn the fundamentals of all tennis strokes on scaled-down courts using developmental equipment.

- » Monday, July 14 - Thursday, July 17, 9 - 11 AM
Friday is reserved as a make-up day for inclement weather
- » Oakland Drive Park (7650 Oakland Drive)
- » \$60 per participant (Registration required)



Kingpins Drumline

Students with special needs are invited to join a five-week drumming program designed for performers of different abilities. Led by an experienced instructor, each session will help students develop listening skills, follow instructions, and learn the art

YOU HAVE MORE FRIENDS THAN YOU KNOW

Seeking Our Centenarian Honorees

Sponsors: The Mary Thompson Foundation, Area Agency on Aging 3A, and Storyline Company.

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)

Summer Lunch "Out" – Food Truck & Live Music!

Join us in the PZSC Courtyard for a fun-filled summer afternoon featuring lunch from The Lunchbox food truck and live music by Two Dudes in Flip Flops. Enjoy beachy tunes, a cash bar, and your choice of delicious entrees like

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!

of collaboration through music. Chaperones are welcome and encouraged to attend.

- » Tuesdays, July 15 - August 19, 6 - 7 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » FREE (Registration required)

Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) Yoga

Join certified instructor Kaitlyn VanDermeer from KP Fitness for a relaxing SUP yoga session. Start with a brief intro and paddle, then anchor and flow on the water. Fee includes all equipment. Ages 16+.

- » Wednesdays, July 9, 16, 23 & 30, 6:30 - 8 PM
- » Ramona Park Beach (8600 South Sprinkle Road)
- » \$30 per participant, per class (Registration required)

Chinese Tea Ceremony

Join Senior Tea Master Tao Ping from the Chinese American Association of Kalamazoo for a hands-on introduction to Chinese tea culture. Explore the art of tea brewing, the history and philosophy behind the Chinese tea ceremony, and the health benefits of tea. Participants will brew and sample a variety of teas. Tea sets, a selection of teas, and snacks are provided. Open to ages 13 and up.

- » Friday, July 18, 9 - 11:30 AM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$40 per participant (Registration required)

Friday at the Flats

Where great food, music, and community come together!

Come join the fun at Celery Flats for an evening of food, music, and community! Engage with local businesses, service providers, non-profits, entertainers, crafters, and more.

- » Friday, July 25, 5 - 8 PM
- » Celery Flats (7335 Garden Lane)
- » FREE (No registration required)

Movies in the Park

Captain America: A Brave New World

Bring a blanket or some comfy chairs for an evening filled with a touch of movie magic. Come dressed as your favorite character and relax with us at the park.

- » Friday, July 25, at dusk (approximately 9 PM)
- » Celery Flats Historical Area (7335 Garden Lane)
- » FREE (No registration required)

Portage Zhang Senior Center Events, Activities & Classes

Explore More. Have Fun. Live Well.

Find us at 203 East Centre Avenue | mypypsc.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.

pulled pork sliders, mango chicken tacos, white cheddar mac, or a BBQ sundae. Sides include apple slaw and seasoned kettle chips, plus a variety of ice cream for dessert! Bring your appetite and your summer spirit.

- » Thursday, July 10, 12 - 2 PM
- » \$15 Members / \$17 Non-Members (Registration required)

Portage Public Safety Showcase

Ever wonder what happens behind the scenes during police, fire, or medical emergency calls? Now's your chance to find out! Join the Portage Department of Public Safety for a two-day, hands-on Public Safety Showcase. Go beyond the headlines and experience the inner workings of our 911 system, from dispatch to response. This interactive class covers it all: Police, K-9 Unit, SWAT, Drone Operations, Fire Services, Emergency Medical Services, Crime Scene Investigation, and more. Explore the tools, techniques, and teamwork that keep our community safe. Lunch, snacks, and water will be provided, thanks to our Lunch Sponsor,



Life EMS Ambulance. Space is limited and participants must attend both days. Don't miss this unique opportunity!

- » Tuesday, July 29 and Wednesday, July 30, 10 AM - 3 PM
- » Portage Department of Public Safety, Fire Station No. 1 (7830 Shaver Road)
- » FREE (Registration Required)

Coming Soon: Virtual Reality at the PZSC!

Get ready to experience the world like never before – Virtual Reality (VR) is coming to the Portage Zhang Senior Center! With our new VR programming, you'll soon be able to:

- » Take virtual tours of world-famous landmarks
- » Relax on a serene tropical beach
- » Enjoy guided meditation and light exercise
- » Revisit cherished memories, or discover something entirely new

VR is safe, user-friendly, and – best of all, fun! Our friendly staff will be on hand to help you get started and make the most of every experience. A new way to explore, relax, and connect is just around the corner!

PORTAGER

2025 Summer Property Taxes

The 2025 summer tax bills for the City of Portage will be mailed to property owners on Friday, July 11, 2025. Payment is due by 5:30 PM on Monday, September 15, 2025. Property owners who do not receive a summer tax bill by July 18, 2025, are encouraged to contact the Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455. Failure to receive a tax bill does not relieve the property owner of the responsibility for payment of the tax and applicable fees. Property tax information is updated daily and is available at portagemi.gov/154.

Payment Options

U.S. Postal Service Mail: Mail your check or money order to:

City of Portage
7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, MI 49002.

Please include payment and the bottom portion of the tax statement. To avoid the 3% late fee, mailed payments must be postmarked by the U.S. Post Office on or before September 15, 2025, and received by the city no later than September 22, 2025. When mailing payments on or after September 9, 2025, the Treasury Office recommends hand delivering payments to the Post Office to witness the clerk postmark the envelope. In all late payment disputes, the Treasury Office will rely on the postmark applied by the Postmaster (metered postmarks are not accepted). Please be aware that all payments mailed in Portage go through processing in Grand Rapids, which can add several days to delivery times.



City Hall Drop Box: A 24-hour drop box is located at the south Exit Only door of City Hall at 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Look for the "Night Drop Box" sign near the curb. Please include the bottom portion of your tax statement with your check or money order. Payments deposited

after 7:30 AM or on weekends may be processed on the next business day.

Pay by Phone: Call 1-844-943-3997 and follow the prompts to pay with a credit/debit card (3% - minimum \$2.95 processing fee*) or e-check payment (\$2.50 processing fee*). This phone payment service charges an additional \$0.75 processing fee*.



Your tax bill is comprised of taxes from eight taxing jurisdictions, including Kalamazoo Valley Community College, Kalamazoo Regional Education Service

Agency, State Education Tax, Portage Public Schools (or for some Comstock Public Schools or Vicksburg Public Schools), Kalamazoo County, the Central County Transportation Authority, and the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority, in addition to the City of Portage.

Pay Online: Visit portagemi.gov, and click the "Bill Pay" icon at the bottom of the home page. Select "Sign In to Pay Current Property Tax." If you don't have an account yet, select "Register or Pay Current Taxes, select "Summer Tax," enter your Parcel ID (found on your tax bill), and click "Search Invoices." Select your summer tax bill and click "Register Selected Invoices." Enter the requested information and create a password then click "Complete Registration." Follow the prompts to pay your invoice with a credit/debit card (3% - minimum \$2.95 processing fee*) or e-check payment (\$2.50 processing fee*).

Auto Pay: Visit portagemi.gov, click the "Bill Pay" icon. Follow the instructions above to sign-in or create an account. Select "AutoPay," add a credit/debit card (3% - minimum \$2.95 processing fee*) or banking information (no processing fee), then set up Auto Pay.

Online Banking: Contact your financial institution to learn if an online bill pay service is available. Online banking payments should be scheduled no later than September 2, 2025, to ensure timely delivery of funds to the City of Portage to avoid late fees. Use your parcel number as your account number.

In-Person at the Treasury Office: Payments in the form of cash, check, credit/debit card (3% - minimum \$2.95 processing fee*), and money orders are accepted at the Treasury Office in Portage City Hall. Payment by check authorizes the city to convert the check to an electronic funds transfer; your bank account may be debited as soon as the same day the city receives the check.

City Hall Business Hours

- » M-Th: 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM and F: 8 AM - 12 PM
- » Closed Monday, September 3, 2024, for Labor Day.

Summer Deferment

Summer taxes may be deferred until February 16, 2026, if your 2024 total household income was less than \$40,000, the property is your primary residence, and you meet one of the following requirements:

- » 62 years of age or older
- » Paraplegic, Hemiplegic or Quadriplegic
- » Totally and Permanently Disabled or Blind
- » Eligible Service Person, Veteran, Eligible Widow or Widower

Applications for Summer tax deferments are available at the Treasury Office and must be returned with the bill remittance portion by September 15, 2025.

Questions regarding property tax bills and payment options may be directed to the Treasury Office at 329-4455. All 2025 taxes that remain unpaid on March 3, 2026, will be transferred to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection, where additional fees will be added by the county.

*All processing fees are set and retained by the payment processing vendor (Invoice Cloud).



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

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City Closing Notices

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

Independence Day

- » Friday, July 4

Regular Business Hours

- » Monday - Thursday: 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM
- » Friday: 8 AM - 12 PM

Portage City Council

Portage City Council meetings are held twice a month on Tuesdays at 6 PM at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) in Council Chambers and are always open to the public.



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



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



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



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

The City Manager

The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. Citizens are encouraged to contact the City Manager with concerns or complaints about city services by visiting reportit.portagemi.gov or by calling Complaint Resolution at 329-4404.



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



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

JULY 2025

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|----|---------|-----------------------------|
| 8 | 6:00 PM | City Council Meeting |
| 17 | 7:00 PM | Planning Commission Meeting |
| 22 | 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 Ramona Park Beach Kayaks.

PORTAGER Editor
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