

PORTAGER

A Natural Place to Move



A Message from Mayor Patricia M. Randall

Human emotions are complex and involve physiological, psychological and behavioral responses. They are the fundamental part of the human experience that influence our thoughts, actions and interactions with others. Fear and sorrow are near the top of the list of human emotions and have the power to unite us all.

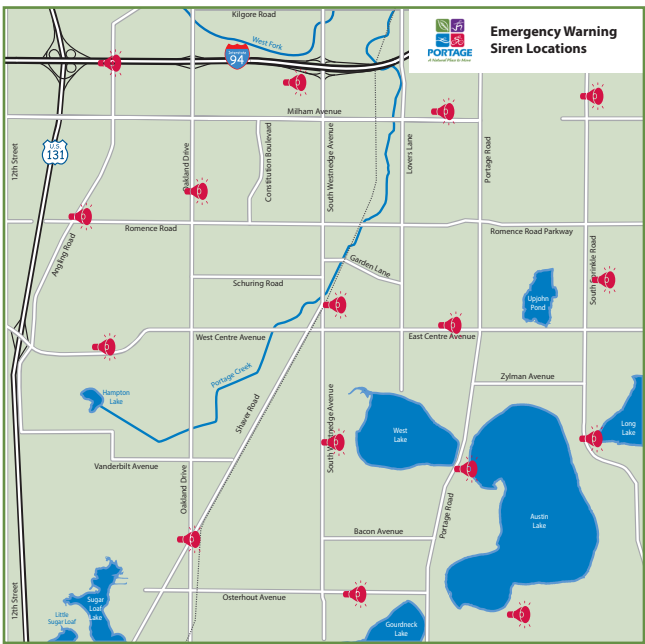
As our country tuned in, we were horrified by the July 4 tragedy in Kerr County, Texas as the Guadalupe River rose 26 feet due to heavy rainfall. The loss of so many children while attending summer camp moved each of us. Watching family members respond as they learned that their loved one was one of the 135 people who had drowned was heartbreaking. We have all witnessed extreme weather and changing climate patterns. But still I ask, “How could this happen?”

Today we know that warning systems were triggered too late, if at all. There was no one at the helm to even make the call. That’s a lot of missing parts with the technology we possess today. Serving as your Mayor, this led me to question what the City of Portage has in place to alert our citizens and their families in the event of an emergency.

We know the power of advance warning. The city’s public alert system includes sixteen sirens strategically placed throughout the community (see map). The system began with just one siren in the 1960s, was upgraded in the 1970s to four sirens and again in the 1980s following the Kalamazoo tornado to the current network of sixteen. The sirens, which cost about \$30,000 each, are tested on the first Saturday of every month at 1 PM and are maintained through a contract with a service provider in Allendale, Michigan. Should an emergency arise, they are activated by the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority (KCCDA), our 911 call center that operates 24/7.

Portage also adopted PortageAlert in 2014. Any citizen can sign up for emergency alerts and the city will then send notification via text directly to their mobile phone. During our tornado last year, I learned that this system works around the world. To sign up for PortageAlert, please visit portagemi.gov/PortageAlert. Independent of the city – but still useful – are the many apps available to notify you of weather emergencies.

There are always lessons to be learned. The first, “emergency preparedness” begins well before any storm. Going forward, this community will forever experience sorrow for the lives lost while appreciating the ability to prevent tragedy via emergency alerts that technology has made possible.



Current city leadership and those serving before us deserve our thanks for budgeting for sirens, consolidating far-flung dispatch centers (in 2018) and for investing in PortageAlert. Those actions make our community safer today. I hope you can sleep more peacefully knowing this.

– Patricia M. Randall

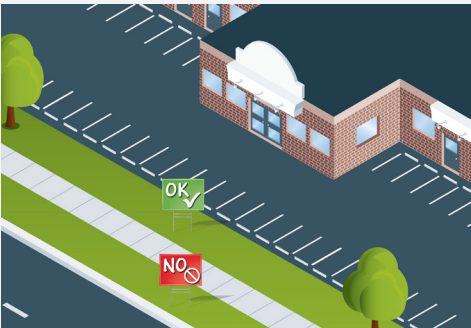
Smart Sign Placement

The City of Portage is committed to maintaining the appearance of its neighborhoods, public spaces, and infrastructure. To prevent blight caused by unauthorized signs, the city enforces regulations (Portage Code of Ordinances, Sec. 42-543) to preserve the aesthetic and functionality of its streets. While businesses and residents have the right to display temporary signs, the size and placement of signs, not the content, is regulated.

At any time, on any residential lot (those with a principal single-family residential use) temporary signs that total not more than six square feet may be posted. A typical yard sign is three square feet, so up to two such signs are allowed any time on any residential lot.

Election Season Signs

Temporary signs are most common during election season, when residents and businesses exercise their right to free speech by showing support for candidates, causes, and ballot proposals. To balance these rights with the community’s need for safety and aesthetics, the City of Portage allows greater flexibility during this period. For the 45 days before and five days after an election, all



Temporary signs in any zoning district cannot be placed in the public right-of-way, in medians, on park property or any other city-owned property.

properties may display up to 40 square feet of temporary signage. This allowance helps ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate in the democratic process while keeping sign usage clear and consistent.

Where Signs Are Not Allowed

Signs are not allowed in the public right-of-way (the strip between the curb and sidewalk), medians, park property, or any city-owned property.

Attaching signs to poles, utility equipment, or traffic systems is also prohibited. These signs can damage infrastructure, create traffic hazards, block storm drains, and pose safety risks to utility workers.

Like graffiti or litter, sign blight creates a negative impression. Help maintain Portage’s reputation as a clean, welcoming community by avoiding illegal signage. Let’s work together to keep Portage litter free and ensure it remains *A Natural Place to Move!*

» Learn more at portagemi.gov/921.

» Report illegal signs at reportit.portagemi.gov.

Portage Road 360 Final Open House – September 25

The Portage Road 360 design project is entering its final stretch, and the City of Portage invites you to attend the last community open house on Thursday, September 25, from 5:30 to 7 PM at the Portage Zhang Senior Center, 203 East Centre Avenue.

At this event, you’ll have the chance to:

- » Explore the updated design concepts for the North, Core, and South sections of Portage Road.
- » See how community feedback has influenced the plans.
- » Share your thoughts before the design process concludes.



Since the June workshop, where the preliminary corridor designs were first unveiled, the city has continued gathering feedback through focus groups, a mailed letter to corridor property owners, and an online survey promoted on the city website, social media, and in the August newsletter. Thank you to everyone who shared their input—your comments are helping project engineers refine the next round of designs and shape the future of this important corridor. These updated concepts will be presented at the Portage Road 360 Open House on September 25.

This is the final workshop in the planning process to weigh in on the future road plans for Portage Road. Whether you live, work, or travel along the corridor, your perspective is important. We hope to see you there!



POCKET PAY Merchant Spotlight



At 13 Cookies, we don’t just bake cookies – we craft them into edible masterpieces. What began in a cozy home kitchen (with more butter than we care to admit) has grown into a Portage favorite, built on late-night recipe testing, wild flavor ideas, and a whole lotta love. We’re not your average cookie shop – and we like it that way. Our small but fierce crew whips up nostalgic classics and unexpected twists, all in small batches with ingredients your grandma would approve of.

You can find us in the back of the Carillon Centre on South Westledge Avenue. We’re typically open Wednesday through Saturday (hours vary, so check Google), and you can always reach us at 548-7633 or visit 13cookiesmi.com for more information. You’ll also find us at the Portage Farmers Market on Sundays and at other markets and events throughout the community – follow us on social media to stay up to date.



Portage Pocket Pay BOGO expires October 31. Get 50% in Bonus Value!

Purchase your eGift cards at portagemi.gov/pocketpay

Portage Public Safety Ready for the New School Year

As the 2025–2026 school year begins, the Portage Department of Public Safety reaffirms its commitment to fostering a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for all students, staff, and families in the Portage community. With Portage Public Schools serving more than 8,800 students across 14 buildings – and standing as one of the city’s largest employers – the department plays a vital role in supporting educational success through safety and preparedness.

Central to this mission is the department’s School Resource Officer (SRO) program, which places trained officers within school buildings to build positive relationships, ensure security, and serve as first responders when needed.

Returning to his role at Portage Northern High School is Officer Burleson, a familiar and trusted presence known for his dedication and strong connections with students and staff alike. In this role, Officer Burleson also serves at the Portage Community High School, North Middle School, Amberly Elementary, Haverhill Elementary, 12th Street Elementary, and Angling Elementary. His ongoing service provides continuity and confidence for the Northern community.



School Resource Officer Burleson



School Resource Officer Garrison

Joining the team this year is Officer Garrison, who will serve as the new SRO at Portage Central High School. Officer Garrison brings energy, professionalism, and a strong desire to become an integral part of the Central family. Like Officer Burleson, Officer Garrison also serves at Central Middle School, West Middle School, Central Elementary, Lake Center Elementary, Moorsbridge Elementary, and Woodland Elementary. His goal is to build trust, promote safety, and be a resource students can count on throughout the year.

The Portage Department of Public Safety acknowledges the increasing national concern around school safety, particularly in light of the rise in school-related violence across the country. The presence of SROs is a key component in the district’s comprehensive approach to prevention and emergency response. These officers are not only there to handle incidents, they also act as mentors, educators, and everyday role models.

By working closely with students, faculty, and school administrators, SROs help identify early warning signs and de-escalate issues before they disrupt the learning environment. With the growing influence of social media and digital communication, early intervention is more important than ever. Portage SROs are trained to assess concerns swiftly and take appropriate steps to protect the well-being of the school community.

The department’s ongoing partnership with Portage Public Schools underscores its long-standing dedication to serving and protecting the city’s youth. As the new school year kicks off, the Portage Department of Public Safety is proud to stand ready – supporting safe schools, strong communities, and a brighter future for all.

Back to School Safety Tips for a Safe Start to the School Year

As summer draws to a close and the back-to-school season begins, it’s time for students, parents, and drivers to refresh their awareness of important safety guidelines. Whether children walk, bike, ride the bus, or are driven to school, ensuring they travel safely is a top priority.

Here are key safety tips to help protect students as they return to classrooms this fall:

For Walkers

Walking to school can be a healthy and enjoyable way for children to start the day, but safety should always come first:

- » Encourage children to walk with a buddy whenever possible.
- » Talk to them about “stranger danger” – remind them never to talk to or accept rides from strangers. Consider establishing a secret safe word known only to you and your child for emergencies.
- » Always use sidewalks. If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic.
- » Before crossing the street, teach children to look left, right, and left again, and only cross when it is safe.
- » Always cross at crosswalks or intersections, and make eye contact with drivers before stepping into the street.



For Bike Riders

Biking is another great way for kids to commute, but it comes with its own set of rules:

- » Ride on the right side of the road, going with the flow of traffic.
- » Stop completely before crossing streets and walk bikes across intersections.
- » Stay alert at all times and avoid using earbuds or phones while riding.
- » Always wear a properly fitted helmet and dress in bright, reflective clothing for visibility.

For Bus Riders

Riding the bus is one of the safest ways for children to travel to school. Make sure they understand how to stay safe around the bus:

- » Accompany your child to the bus stop to show them how to board and exit safely.
- » Remind them to stand at least 6 feet back from the curb while waiting.
- » If crossing in front of the bus, children should walk far enough ahead to make eye contact with the driver before stepping into the road.
- » Stay seated and respectful on the bus to avoid distracting the driver.



If You’re Driving Your Child to School

Drivers play a critical role in keeping school zones safe. Here’s what you need to know:

- » Always obey school zone speed limits and follow posted drop-off and pick-up procedures.
- » Never pass a school bus that is loading or unloading children. Yellow flashing lights mean slow down; red flashing lights mean stop – whether you are behind, meeting, or approaching a bus at an intersection.
- » Stop for school crossing guards when they are holding a stop sign.
- » The area within 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children. Give plenty of space to allow safe entry and exit.
- » Make eye contact with children crossing in front of your vehicle to ensure they see you.
- » And finally, remember Michigan’s distracted driving law is now in effect. Drivers may not manually use a cellphone or other device for texting, calling, video chatting, checking GPS, or using social media while driving.

A Safe Start for Everyone

Starting the school year with a focus on safety helps set the tone for months to come. Whether you’re a parent, student, or driver, taking a few extra moments to be cautious can make all the difference.

Let’s work together to keep our kids and our community safe this school year.

Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection

The City of Portage will conduct its fall round of the quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program by zone through September and October. To find your week, reference the collection map to the right or visit and the schedule below.

2025 Fall Schedule

- Zone 1:** Week of September 29
- Zone 2:** Week of October 6
- Zone 3:** Week of October 13
- Zone 4:** Week of October 20



Program Guidelines

- » Place brush at the curb by 7 AM on Monday of your zone’s week. Crews begin Monday and will clear the entire zone by week’s end. Crews follow a strict daily route and cannot return for leaves placed out late.
- » Branches must be 4 to 6 feet long and under 3 inches in diameter.
- » You may place brush at the curb edge or directly on the street as long as it does not obstruct traffic or pedestrians. Some small debris may remain; please help with final cleanup.

What’s Not Collected

- » Whole trees, large trunks (over 4 inches), stumps/roots, vines, lumber/building materials, or debris from professional tree services.
- » Leaves, ornamental grasses, and other yard waste. Bagged leaves and ornamental grasses are collected during the spring brush collection only.
- » Items set out after 7 AM Monday of your week.

For complete program details, visit www.portagemi.gov/280.

2025 FALL BRUSH COLLECTION ZONE MAP



The program serves residential areas only (not commercial establishments, churches, schools, or private streets without an approved indemnification form).

Questions? Contact the Department of Public Works at 329-4444.

Fall Leaf Pickup Program Kicks Off October 27

The annual Fall Leaf Pickup Program will run from October 27 through December 5 and includes the collection of leaves along public streets. The city is divided into eight pickup zones, a change that was introduced last year to better accommodate leaf volumes.

Each zone will receive three collections or until weather conditions prevent further pickup. The schedule and map below show the pickup dates for all eight zones. Collection dates and a convenient address locator tool are also available at portagemi.gov/282.

This program does not include commercial establishments, churches, schools, or private streets (unless all property owners on the street have signed an indemnification form).

- » Place leaves at the curb by 7 AM on your scheduled pickup date. Crews follow a strict daily route and cannot return for leaves placed out late.
- » **ONLY loose leaves or leaves bagged in biodegradable paper yard waste bags will be collected.** Leaves in plastic bags (including biodegradable plastic bags) will not be collected.
- » Rake loose leaves off the grass and into the street. Bagged leaves should be placed near the curb, as close to the street edge as possible, **without blocking traffic or bike lanes.**
- » Please note, the Fall Leaf Pickup Program is separate from the Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program (see previous page for details). After the third and final collection, public streets will be swept, weather permitting.
- » **There is no burn period in Portage.** The burning of leaves is not permitted at any time.

Keep the City Right-of-Way Clear for Safe and Efficient Service

To keep Portage streets safe and ensure efficient collection services, residents are reminded not to place objects in the city right-of-way. Common obstructions include portable basketball hoops, trash and recycling carts, and other personal items.

The city right-of-way is the area between the curb and the sidewalk. For properties without sidewalks, it extends 33 feet from the center of the roadway. According to the Portage Code of Ordinances (Chapter 66, Article 1, Section 66-2), placing objects in this area is prohibited.

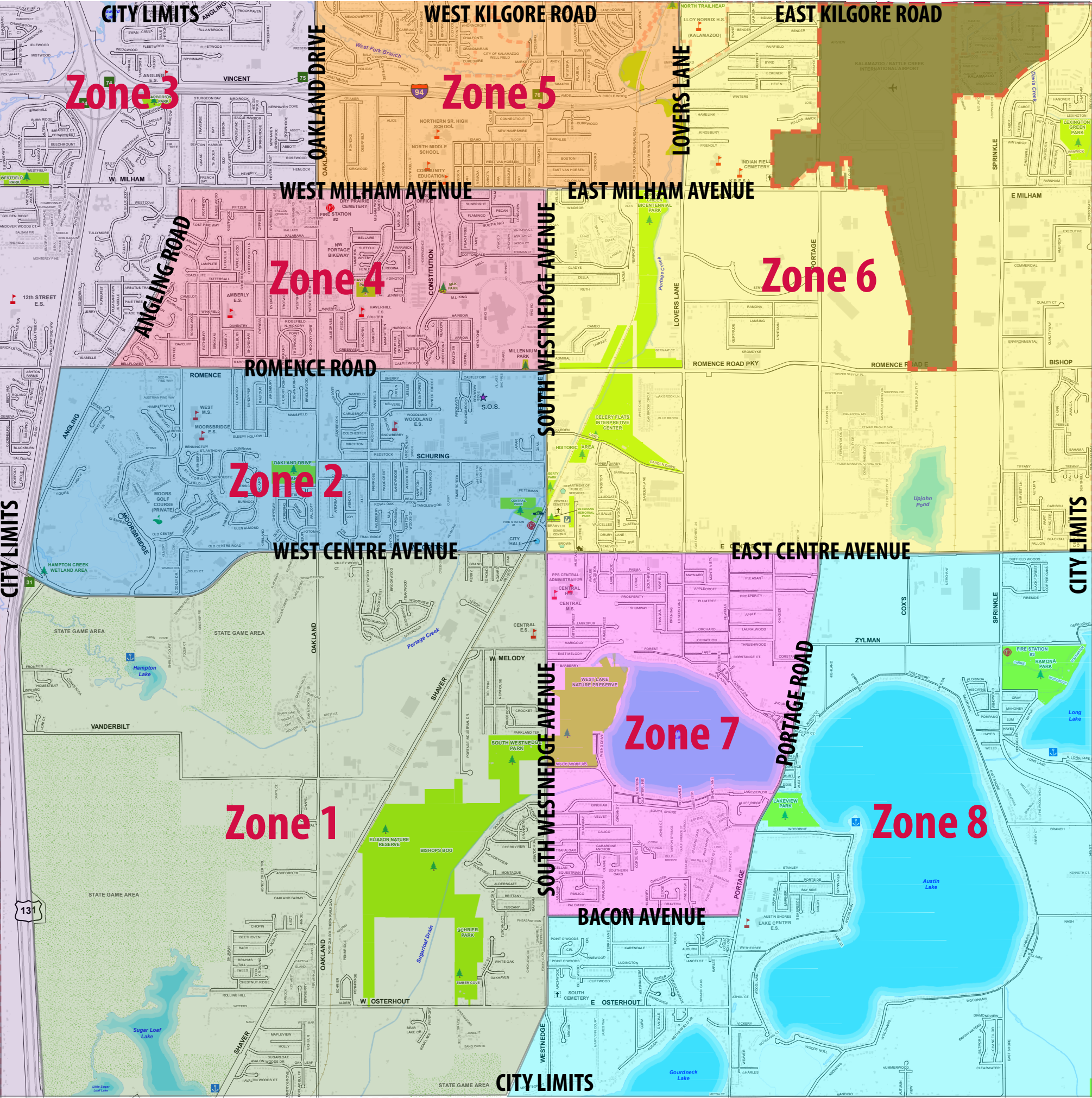
Why does this matter? Items in the right-of-way:

- » Block collection of leaves, brush, trash, and recycling.
- » Interfere with snow plowing and street sweeping.
- » Pose a risk of damage to both personal property and city equipment.

To help avoid these issues:

- » Position permanent items, such as basketball hoops, at least 33 feet from the center of the road.
- » Place trash and recycling carts at the curb, not in the street.
- » **Keep bike lanes and sidewalks clear of leaves, brush, and containers.**

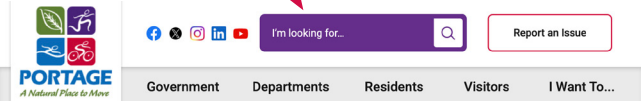
Your cooperation helps Public Works crews safely deliver essential services to every neighborhood. For more information, contact the Department of Public Works at 329-4444.



Summer Property Tax Payment Reminder

City of Portage 2025 summer property tax payments are due on Monday, September 15, 2025 by 5:30 PM. If you did not receive a tax bill, please contact the Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455.

Property tax information is updated daily on the city website. Visit portagemi.gov – enter *Property & Tax Lookup* in the search bar.



Search your property address and click the *2025 Tax Information* tab to see your tax payment history.

Remember, failure to receive a tax bill does not exempt you from making timely payment. A 3% late fee is charged for all late payments.

Payment Options:

- » Mail your payment to the City of Portage. Ensure it's postmarked by September 15, 2025, to avoid late fees.
- » Use the 24-hour drop box at City Hall.
- » Call 1 (844) 943-3997 to pay by phone (fees apply).
- » Visit portagemi.gov and use the "Bill Pay" option (fees apply).
- » Set up Auto Pay through the city's website (fees may apply).
- » Schedule payment through your bank by August 30, 2025.
- » Visit the Treasury Office Monday through Thursday, 7:30 AM to 5 PM, and Friday, 8 AM - 12 PM.

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.

Contact the Treasury Office at 329-4455 with any questions. Remember, unpaid taxes after March 2, 2026, will be transferred to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection.

November City General Election November 4, 2025

The 2025 Portage City General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 4. The ballot includes the local offices of Portage Mayor, Portage City Council (three positions), as well as millage proposals for the Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA), Portage Public Schools, and Comstock Public Schools.



Absentee Voting

Double-check your mailing address! If you are part of the Permanent Absentee Ballot List or plan to be out of town in November, ensure you have asked the Portage City Clerk's Office to mail your absentee ballot to your desired location. The USPS will automatically forward the application for a ballot, but by law, ballots cannot be forwarded by the Postal Service.

Election Day Voting

The City of Portage now has 13 precincts. You can find your Election Day precinct location by visiting the Michigan Voter Information Center at mi.gov/vote.

No Early Voting This Time

Under Proposal 22-2, Early Voting only occurs with for state and federal elections in even-numbered years. This local election will not have Early Voting, but it will resume in 2026.

Important Dates

September 25	Absentee Ballots are mailed
October 20	Last day to register to vote by mail or online
October 21 - November 4	Must register to vote in person with the City Clerk's Office
November 4	ELECTION DAY! Polls are open 7 AM to 8 PM

Step Up, Get Involved, Make an Impact in Portage

The City of Portage is looking for dedicated community members to serve on Citizen Advisory Boards. By volunteering, you'll help guide City Council decisions on important topics such as invasive species management, human services, parks, and senior programs.



Openings are available on the Environmental Board, Human Services Board, Park Board, and Senior Citizens Advisory Board.

If you're passionate about making a difference in your community, we want to hear from you!

For details, contact the City Clerk's Office at 329-4511 or visit portagemi.gov/151.

CLEAN SWEEP PROGRAM

Protecting our groundwater. Recycle used or unused yard and garden chemicals and pesticides.

A collection of household hazardous waste items including bottles of bleach, paint cans, and other chemicals.

A QR code that links to the website for more information.

For more information visit our website: kalcounty.com/hhw or call 269-373-5211.

This service is provided by the Kalamazoo County Household Hazardous Waste Center through a voter-approved millage.

PC vs NC Rivalry for a Cause

The Portage Central Mustangs and Portage Northern Huskies are gearing up for their biggest game of the season on Friday, October 10 – but this year, the competition starts long before kickoff.

Now through October 9, fans can show their school spirit by dropping off non-perishable food donations at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue), Monday through Thursday from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM and on Fridays from 8 AM - 12 PM. When you donate, place your items in the Mustangs bin or the Huskies bin to give your team the edge.



At stake? Bragging rights in the ultimate community challenge. The team with the most donations will be crowned the champion – but when it comes to fighting hunger, the whole community wins. All food collected will be distributed to **Twelve Baskets**, helping families across Portage.

Popular donation items include canned vegetables and fruit, peanut butter, pasta, rice, cereal, and other shelf-stable goods (please, no glass or expired items).

So, whether you're rooting for Central or Northern, step up for your team and your city. Let's see who can pack the pantry – and the stands – this fall.

It's in the Bag Purse & Jewelry Sale

The Friends of the Portage Zhang Senior Center invite you to one of the most anticipated shopping events of the year – the annual *It's in the Bag* Purse and Jewelry Sale! Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 4, 2025, and get ready to treasure hunt through hundreds of gently used purses and thousands of sparkling jewelry pieces.

Shoppers will discover something for every style and budget, including a special boutique section showcasing higher-end handbags and designer finds. With bargain prices throughout the sale, it's the perfect chance to refresh your look or pick up unique gifts without breaking the bank.

Best of all, every purchase supports the activities and operations of the Portage Zhang Senior Center, making this a shopping spree you can truly feel good about.

Bring your friends, parents, siblings, and children. This event is for all ages! Don't miss your chance to shop, save, and support a great cause.

It's in the Bag! SALE

Purses, Jewellery & Accessories

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4
9 AM - 1 PM
PORTAGE ZHANG SENIOR CENTER
203 EAST CENTRE AVENUE

Donate your gently-used purses and jewelry! Drop off your items at the Portage Zhang Senior Center at 203 East Centre Avenue, Monday - Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM.

Summer Flavors Still Going Strong at the Portage Farmers Market

Although we often think of Labor Day as the end of summer, as far as agriculture is concerned, it's still great weather for growing delicious fruits and vegetables. Come to the Portage Farmers Market and capture the last of those amazing summer treats: tomatoes, peppers, melons, stone fruit, herbs, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, spinach and much, much more.

Welcoming visitors every Sunday from 9 AM to 1 PM, now through October 12.

With over 35 local vendors every week, you will find an incredible selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, cheese, meats, eggs, baked goods, flowers, handmade crafts, and unique gifts. From farmers to specialty food producers, artisans, and crafters, there's something for everyone!

Stay connected and never miss an update - follow us on Facebook and Instagram **@PortageMarketMI**.

- » Sundays, 9 AM - 1 PM
- » Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue)
- » FREE and open to the public (No admission fee)



YOUR BACKYARD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Portage Community Art Award Exhibition

Kathleen Mills is the winner of the 8th annual Portage Community Art Award. An exhibition of Kathleen’s works, including her winning piece titled, “Ophelia”, an egg tempera painting will be exhibited in the lobby of Portage City Hall from September 12 through November 7 during normal business hours. “Ophelia” will be available for viewing for one year. The Portage Community Art Award is presented as part of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (KIA) annual West Michigan Area Show, a juried exhibition of the visual arts from community talent spanning a 14-county region.

- » Friday, September 12 - Friday, November 7
- » City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue)
- » FREE (No registration required)



Geo Mystery Tours: Oak Oddities

Put on your thinking cap, grab your compass or GPS, and get ready - it’s geocaching time! Iconic oak trees stand sentinel over us and our local ecosystems. Unpack the wildly interesting secrets that oaks keep and learn about wildlife that depends on them. Join the story at any time, but be sure to complete all adventures by the end of the month. For the best experience, an Apple or Garmin device is recommended. Each week, registered participants will receive starting GPS coordinates and secret instructions via email. Visit each cache station to uncover clues and solve the mystery!

- » Portage Parks, Self Guided
- » FREE (Registration required)
- » Now - September 30

Oktoberfest

The Portage Parks Foundation Oktoberfest returns to South Westnedge Park. Enjoy authentic German food and beer, LIVE music from The Packard Family Band, and cornhole competitions. Food and refreshments will be available for purchase. This FREE community celebration is the perfect way to welcome fall with friends, family, and neighbors. Prost (cheers) to an afternoon of fun!

- » Saturday, September 13, 2 - 7 PM
- » South Westnedge Park (9010 South Westnedge Avenue)
- » FREE (No registration required)



Monster Mash Graveyard

Join the fun at this year’s Monster Mash by creating your very own gravestone for display in the Monster Mash Cemetery! Gravestones must be made of wood or plywood at least ½ inch



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!

thick, with a protective outdoor topcoat. The size must be at least 2’ x 2’ but not larger than 4’ x 8’ and must be cut into a shape (please don’t submit a plain square sheet). Designs should be family-friendly, non-denominational, and feature fictional characters only (no real names). Gravestones must be weather-proof for outdoor display.

- Drop Off:**
- » September 15 - October 3
 - » Department of Public Works (7719 South Westnedge Avenue)
- Pick Up:** (Gravestones not picked up will be disposed of by the city.)
- » October 20, 9 AM - 2 PM or October 21, 4 - 8 PM
 - » Ramona Park (8600 South Sprinkle Road), Monster Mash Cemetery
 - » FREE (No registration required)

Fall Fest

Step back in time with fun historical demonstrations like pottery, blacksmithing, quilting, tours of historic buildings, and more. Marvel at antique tractors and engines. Enjoy a sample of ice cream powered by an antique hit and miss engine. Enjoy the petting zoo, craft station, and boutique market while savoring the delicious eats from the on-site food trucks. Go back to a simpler time with bluegrass and folksy sounds of the Bourbon Brothers, and take a scenic tractor ride running to and from the Portage Farmers Market.

- » Sunday, September 21, 10 AM - 2 PM
- » Celery Flats (7335 Garden Lane)
- » FREE (No registration required)

Farm Tour

Pressing Cider at VerHage Fruit Farms

Experience seasonal farm activities and connect with the local farmers at VerHage Fruit Farm & Cider Mill. With apples in season, this is a fun day at the farm you won’t want to miss! Tours begin and end at Portage Parks & Recreation, where participants will board a bus to VerHage Fruit Farm & Cider Mill at (8619 West ML Ave, Kalamazoo). This family-friendly, immersive experience includes a farm tour, a cider mill demonstration, and cider and a donut. You’ll have plenty of time to pick your own apples and explore the farm market. This program is recommended for participants ages 5 and up. Please wear closed-toed shoes and dress for the weather.



- » Wednesday, September 24, 3:45 - 6:30 PM (Bus departs at 4 PM)
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$30 per participant (Registration required)

*The fee does not cover apples or purchases from the market.

Creative Corners

Monster Mash Graveyard

Be part of this year’s Monster Mash. Design a spooky gravestone to display in the Monster Mash Cemetery. This one-hour program is tailored to artists with special needs and all abilities. Please wear clothing that can get messy. The program fee covers materials used. Participants are encouraged to bring a chaperone. Artwork designed for this workshop will be on display at the 2025 Monster Mash event

at Ramona Park on October 18. Gravestones must be picked up at Ramona Park on Monday, October 20, from 9 AM to 2 PM or Tuesday, October 21, from 4 PM to 8 PM. All remaining gravestones will be disposed of by the city.

- » Wednesday, October 1, 6 - 7 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per participant (Registration required)

Dance Classes

No Class November 6

- » Thursdays, October 2 - November 20
- » Schrier Park (850 West Osterhout Avenue)
- » Registration required by Wednesday, October 1

Beginning Line Dance – Level 1

Build your confidence and earn the basic line dancing steps to popular songs and routines. No partner needed.

- » 5:20 - 6:10 PM
- » \$50 per participant (Registration required)



Intermediate Line Dance – Level 2

Take your dance skills to the next level! If you enjoyed our Beginning Line Dancing course and are ready for more, this class is for you.

- » 6:15 - 7:05 PM
- » \$50 per participant (Registration required)

Social Dancing for Couples

Perfect the art of dancing together! Explore and practice popular moves to get you and your partner out on the dance floor with confidence and style.

- » 7:10 - 8 PM
- » \$75 per participant (Registration required)

Holiday Card & Tree Walk

Summer may just be winding down, but the holidays are coming! Help the city decorate for the season with the annual Holiday Card & Tree Walk, where families, businesses, and groups turn the Celery Flats Historical Area into a winter wonderland.



Holiday Cards

Create a giant, weatherproof holiday card (4’x8’ plywood, ½” thick) with a non-denominational winter theme. Cards will be displayed outdoors for all to enjoy.

Drop Off: October 1 - November 4 at the Department of Public Works (7719 South Westnedge Avenue)

- » Pick Up: January 13 - 20, 2026
- » FREE (Registration required by November 1)

Holiday Trees

Decorate a tree with your own festive flair! Each group receives a tree and 300-count white lights.

Decorating: November 25 - December 1 at Celery Flats (7335 Garden Lane)

- » Pick Up Decorations: January 2 - 6, 2026
- » FREE (Registration required by November 1 or while supplies last)

New Online Recreation Catalog & Reservation System Launches September 2

Portage Parks & Recreation is moving to a new, more user-friendly registration and reservation system! Beginning September 2, 2025, residents will use CivicRec, a cloud-based platform from CivicPlus, to browse and register for programs, reserve park facilities, and make payments, all from one convenient site.

If you’ve participated in Parks & Recreation programs or events before, registration will look a little different this season. All participants will need to create a new account in the system.

How to Sign Up

1. Visit mypark.portagemi.gov.
2. Click the “Register Now” button.
3. Select “Login With Email.”
4. Fill in the required fields and click “Create Account.”
5. Check your email and verify your email address.
6. Log back in and complete your account details.
7. Start exploring!

REGISTER NOW!

If you prefer in-person help, stop by the Parks & Recreation office at 320 Library Lane during normal business hours, and staff will assist you in creating your account and registering for programs.

CIVICREC®

With CivicRec, residents will enjoy:

- » Easy access to programs, classes, sports, and youth leagues.
- » Online facility reservations for pavilions, indoor buildings, and more.
- » A mobile-friendly platform for convenient registration and payment from any device.

This transition from ActiveNet to CivicRec is part of the city’s ongoing effort to make Parks & Recreation services more accessible and convenient for the community.

For questions or assistance, please call Portage Parks & Recreation at 329-4522.

YOU HAVE MORE FRIENDS THAN YOU KNOW

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.

New2Medicare

Are you approaching your 65th birthday and feeling overwhelmed by the transition to Medicare? Join us for New2Medicare, a helpful presentation designed to guide you through the basics of Medicare, including what it covers, how and when to enroll, and the differences between plans.

» Choose one: September 9, 10 AM - 12 PM or September 17, 5:30 - 7 PM

» FREE and open to the public (Registration required)

Podiatry Care

Dr. Jennifer Griffin, DPM of West Michigan Podiatry House Calls, PLLC provides podiatric treatment for day-to-day foot issues including wound care, toenail clipping/filing, fungal nail infections, ingrown toenails, corns, calluses, verruca's, athlete's foot, flat feet, bunions, heel pain, aging feet, blisters, gout, and sports injuries. Payment can be made with cash, check or card, or can be billed to insurance (does not accept BCBS Advantage/Blue Care Network, Medicare PPO or Humana Medicare).

» Choose one: September 18, or October 23, 9 AM - 5 PM

» \$50 and open to the public (Registration required)

Vaccine Clinics

Regular and senior doses of the flu vaccine and the most recent COVID-19 vaccination will be offered at the Portage Zhang Senior Center in partnership with Advanced Health Pharmacy. You must be 65 years or more, or immunocompromised to be eligible for the COVID-19 booster. In addition, it must have been at least 6 months since your last COVID-19 booster.

Please bring your driver's license or ID, insurance card and your Red, White and Blue Medicare card if you have one to your appointment. Vaccines are covered by most insurance.

» Choose one: Friday, September 19, 11 AM - 1 PM or Wednesday, October 22, 2 - 4 PM

» Open to the public (Registration required)

The Silent Epidemic

Loneliness & Social Isolation in Aging

Join us for a powerful and compassionate session exploring one of the most pressing – but often unspoken – challenges faced by older adults today: loneliness and social isolation. Led by Dr. Julie Sorenson, this presentation will examine how these experiences affect mental and physical health,

especially as we age. Learn practical strategies for navigating grief, rebuilding connections, and finding renewed purpose in community.

» Monday, October 6, 11 AM - 12:30 PM

» FREE and open to the public (Registration required)

Introduction to Virtual Reality

Curious about virtual reality? Join us for a friendly, hands-on introduction to VR technology – specially designed with seniors in mind! Whether you're new to tech or just want to try something exciting and new, this session is all about making VR fun, easy, and comfortable. In this intro session, you'll learn what VR is and how it works, try out a VR headset, explore virtual environments like a museum, a garden, or even outer space, and Discover practical uses – like virtual travel, brain games, fitness, or virtual tours of senior living communities. No experience required. We'll go step by step, at your pace.

» Choose one: September 18, September 25, October 9, or October 16, 3 - 4 PM

» FREE and open to the public (Registration required)



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City Closing Notices

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

Labor Day

» Monday, September 1

Employee Training

» Wednesday, September 3
Closed: 7:30 AM - 12 PM
Open: 12 PM - 5:30 PM

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.

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.

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.

SEPTEMBER 2025	
4 7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting
9 6:00 PM	City Council Meeting
18 7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting
23 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 the Portage Parks & Recreation Summer Concert Series at the Overlander Bandshell.

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