



Public Involvement Summary

Public Involvement Plan – September 2013
Public Open House Summary – October 2, 2013
Youth Advisory Committee Input – October 16, 2013
Top Ten Identified Issues and Maps – November 2013
Lake Center Focus Group summary – December 12, 2013
West Lake Association Lake Center meeting – March 27, 2014
Public Review Period – April-June 2014

Public Involvement Plan

The goal of the comprehensive plan update is to address the community’s challenges, preserve its assets, plan for future changes in the economy and population, create a more sustainable city, and enhance the quality of life for current and future residents. It is essential that the comprehensive plan update process maximize citizens’ involvement in order to gain public consensus on the plan recommendations.

The comprehensive plan update blends professional technical evaluation and input from city officials, stakeholders, and the public. This document describes the process and techniques that will be used. It is anticipated this may be revised through the process in response to input. This document may also be updated to reflect progress at key points in the process, such as following public meetings.

The work plan engages the public at key stages in the process. The public involvement program includes a public awareness campaign so that “if they choose to” they are welcome to participate in the process. A publicized timeline and clearly established milestones help ensure transparency (refer to Table 1 below). Events will be hosted in easily accessible locations and providing a welcoming atmosphere for all of the community’s diverse populations to encourage participation and broaden the array of voices that are heard.

The following pages and Table 1 below detail the various elements of our public involvement process which includes three meetings: a Public Open House, Lake Center Focus Group meeting, and informal presentation before the Public Hearing.

Community Engagement Activities:

- Public Open House
- Website/Twitter
- Lake Center Focus Group
- Briefings by city staff to elected/ appointed officials and other staff
- Public Hearing

Table 1

Phase	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
1 Meeting with Staff	●			●		●	●			
Public Participation Plan	◀									
Open House/Community Workshop		◆								
2 Existing Conditions Report			◀							
3 Lake Center subarea plan					◀					
Lake Center focus group				◆						
4 Draft Plan Text							◀			
Planning Commission – Review of Draft Plan								■		
City Council – Review of Draft Plan								■		
Distribute Plan for 42-day Agency Review										
5 Final Edits								◀		◀
Public Hearing										◆
6 Adoption										■
● Meeting with Staff										
◀ Deliverable										
◆ Public Meeting										
■ Planning Commission or City Council Meeting										

Public Meeting Notices

All meetings will be posted in accordance with the Michigan Planning Act, the Open Meetings Act, and City protocol. The following are examples of outreach methods to be used:

- Post reminders on City's website and project website and Twitter, along with questions to spark discussion
- Press releases
- Emails to neighborhood organizations, advisory boards, commissions, other email lists on file
- Public access TV
- Portager newsletter

Project Website

The project website will be used to explain key milestones, communicate the schedule, post drafts of the plan excerpts, and to provide opportunity for additional input. The website will have a brief survey tool to ask questions such as:

- What makes Portage a great place to live?
- If you could change one thing in Portage what would it be?
- What will encourage children in Portage today to want to return or remain in their hometown as adults?
- Where is your favorite place to ride your bike in Portage?
- What is your favorite thing about your neighborhood in Portage?

Public Open House

Purpose: For the public to review goals from the previous plan, learn about current trends and best practices, and provide feedback on existing conditions and what they would like to see in the future.

Format: Stations will be set up in the lobby and Council Chambers for participants to peruse at their own pace. Each station will be staffed by a project team member who will answer questions, guide interactive feedback exercises, and listen to ideas. A brief introductory presentation will be given twice during the evening summarizing the planning process and evening's activities.

Presentation

10-15 Minute Intro Presentation

In Council Chambers, same presentation given twice at 4pm and 6pm

Welcome Station

- What is a Comprehensive Plan?
- Previous plans
- Project timeline
- Did you know? (population data)
- List goals from previous plan
- Recent accomplishments
- Information from other city departments
- Map to identify where participants live or work

Community Identity Station

- City services/facilities
- Sustainability
- Culture/history
- City Center Area

Land Use and Development Station

- Ingredients to great neighborhoods
- Mixture of housing types/aging in place
- Existing land use map

Transportation Station

- Complete Streets: Automobiles/Pedestrians/Bicyclists
- Transit
- Infrastructure

Following the open house, exhibits will be posted on the project website. The questions asked on the comment cards will be formatted into SurveyMonkey for those who could not attend the workshop to provide their feedback.

As deliverables are completed, such documents will be uploaded to the project website with an announcement on Twitter as well. The City will set-up, monitor, and update the website and Twitter through the course of the project.

Each Topic Station will have

- **interactive map** (stickies and dots to identify strengths/weaknesses)
- **overview board**
 - challenges
 - did you know?
 - Best Practices
- **comment card with 2 questions**

Throughout the process, if any hot topic issues arise, these issues can be discussed/considered during regularly scheduled monthly planning commission meetings.

Lake Center Area Focus Group

LSL will summarize findings from the April meeting and October Open House in an informal presentation. Sharon Woods, from LandUse | USA, will present her market findings and opportunities and help lead a discussion of redevelopment opportunities. LSL will present corridor design guidelines, intended to serve as a pattern book for building, site, and streetscape design. Upon completion of the meeting, Sharon will provide a succinct report that LSL will incorporate into the Lake Center Area chapter in the comprehensive plan. We will refine our design recommendations based on the discussion.

Public Hearing

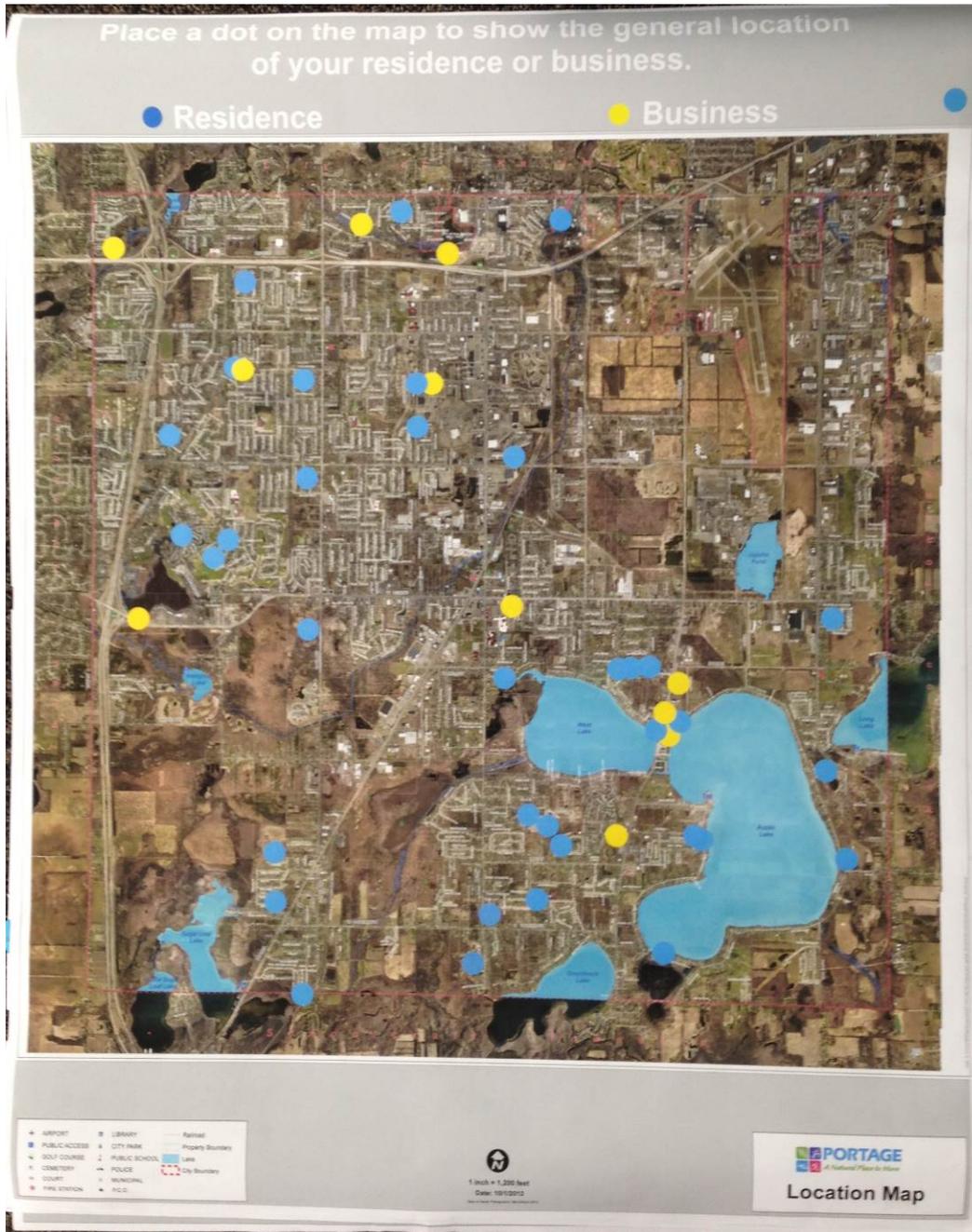
Prior to the Public Hearing at a planning commission meeting, an informal presentation of the plan will be held. The public can hear a short presentation on key plan recommendations, peruse copies of the plan, and ask City Staff and LSL questions prior to the formal public hearing. This approach helps the Public Hearing meeting run more smoothly by giving the public a more informal way to ask questions.

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

October 2, 2013 4-7pm

City Hall

Total number of participants: ~40 (3 online survey responses after the Open House, collected until 11-6-13)



*Analysis: Fairly well-represented across neighborhoods, lacking representation in northeast Portage
Decent representation from businesses, include Lake Center businesses.*

Vision Statements and Goals

- Promote the use of riparian buffers next to lakes and streams
- Do a better job of promoting mixed-use planning and mass transit options such as light rail
- Preserve/restore Eliason Reserve as a unique natural treasure, yes

Community Identity + Character

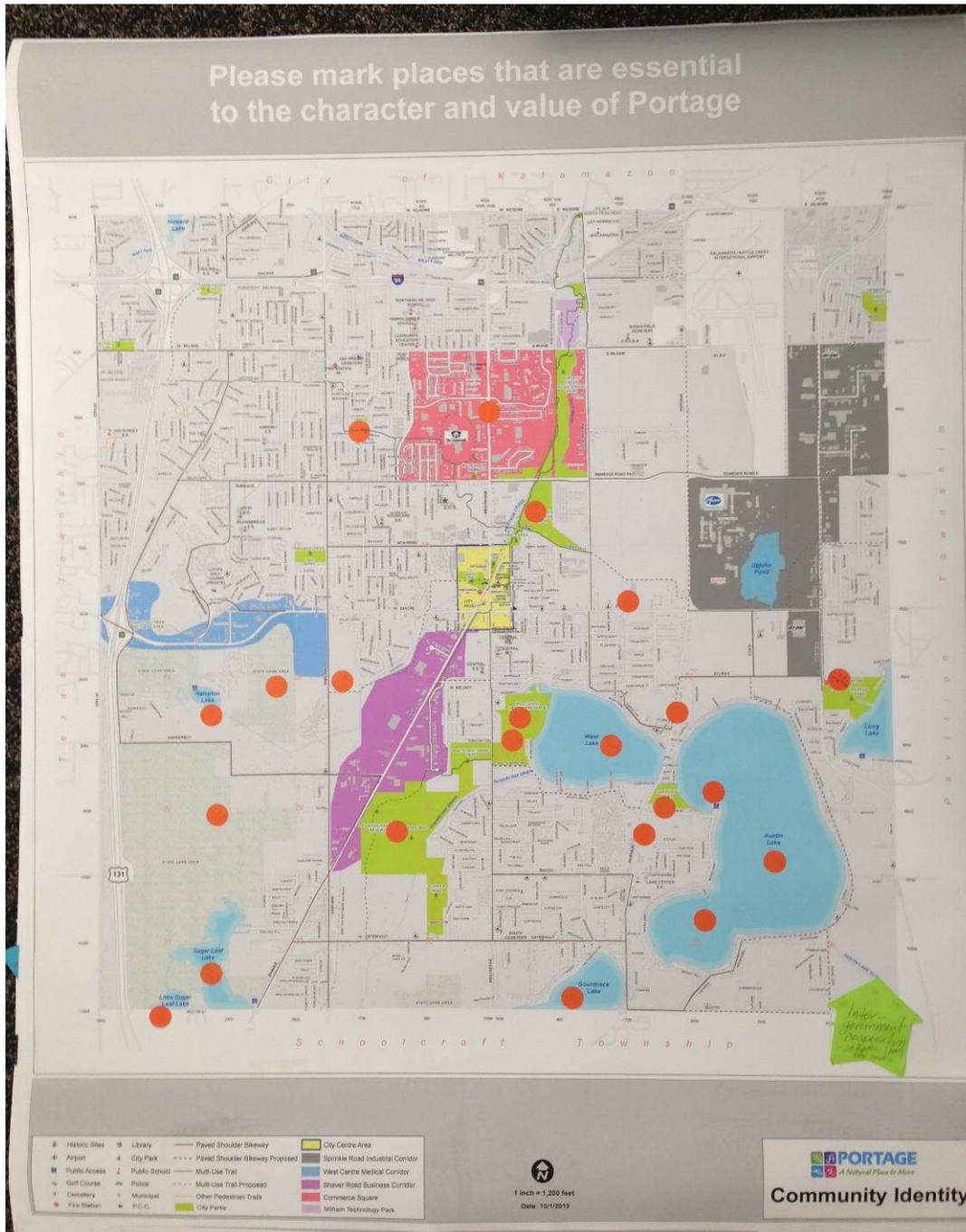
Comment Cards:

Q. When you tell someone you are from Portage, Michigan and they ask “What’s it like? What do you say?”

- I like the intersection greenspace like at Romance and Oakland. Can we do that more at major intersections?
- Great people, lakes, parks, bike paths, sr. centers.
- Nice place to live, good schools, lot of retail, nice bike paths, good parks.
- It is a city with great parks, transport activities and flexibly responds to the citizenry.
- Stifling
- I love living here
- The Parks, trail system and the aesthetics of the city.
- A great city to live in.

Q. What will it take to keep/attract the “future” residents? (new families, young professionals, seniors?)

- Arts and culture
- Maintain a dedicated professional staff. Respond to young families and professional. Adopt technological and other changes. Don’t become the Bill Knapps of Governors.
- Mixed use planning/zoning that allows retail/commercial transit/light rail that allows people to not drive and work, live, and play in same area.
- Neighborhood identification signs (Plat names would be an example)
- keeping those special areas up and walk paths having safe asphalt or cement areas
- My job is to work with communities to help them define an identity that makes them different from others-- basically to define their competitive advantage in the State. The differentiator for Portage is the Parks, quality of life for families and individuals. I think to create Portage into a Smart City with technology availability and a high quality of life by promoting the parks, healthy living and the environment is what the new knowledge workers are looking for and there is not another municipality that has defined this as their image in our region.
- affordable housing/ many opportunities



Map 1: Community Identity

Map Comments:

- Trailways
- Fire station

- Intergovernment cooperation: schools, library, city government

Online Survey Question “What are 2 or 3 parts of the city that are essential to the character and value of Portage?”

- Walk paths and parks
- The landscaping, the parks, and the Romence Blvd area.
- great place for dining and shopping

Summary: Natural features are most important: waterbodies, preserves, parks

Transportation

Comment Cards:

Q. What is one thing that could be done that would result in more people walking and biking?

- Having places where people live, work and play be close together.
- More City bikelanes
- some neighborhoods need some connecting sidewalks that make sense to get some where easier, such as schools and stores
- Continuing to extend the walkways to connect more neighborhoods and beautifying some of the existing areas. Some area could use wildflowers and other landscaping to make them all a bit different, possibly a fountain too. I love the wooded look but some of the paths like the route to 131 (northwest bikeway) past 12th St. could use some landscaping features. It's nice to follow the trails and come to different environments or settings that were different from the last one. Some have playgrounds, some wetlands, others forest and streams, so possibly gardens or other landscape features in the others.
- more lighting on walking trails

Q. My least favorite place to drive is?

- Westnedge. It is always very busy and crowded.
- Traffic lights at Centre & Greenspire are needed.
- Westnedge, big street, too fast
- Portage Road south of Centre needs to be more attractive. It needs a look all its own and with more landscaping. It looks like the worn down section of Portage. A lot has been done but it needs an identity as a shopping district. It has the lakes and maybe vintage lamp posts and a central park area with walkways so it looks like a waterfront area.
- None

Map Comments – Transportation:

- Bike facility along Osterhout to connect parks to Lake Center district
- City council subcommittee has Lake Center committee – discussed pedestrian crossings pros and cons
- Connect bike path to Schrier Park
- Road diet on Portage south of Woodbine
- Austin Ct: look at extending bike path along utility easement or to E Shore (to east) to Highland St
- Add separate bike trail or improve existing on Westnedge south of Melody
- Walking paths around state game area and connection to sidewalks and neighborhoods
- 3-way light or roundabout or close off boulevard so no left turns either way with addition of SW MI Dermatology traffic will increase significantly (Centre and Old Centre)
- Possible signal at Cooley and Centre or crosswalk
- Dedicated recreation trail connecting Woodbridge Hills to existing recreation trail (near Moorsbridge)
- Unsafe road for kids to cross, no speed control by police department (Moorsbridge)
- Put a sidewalk on Muirfield past St Anthony on east side of street between Moorsbridge and St Anthony crossing alleviating crossing at Moorsbridge and Muirfield
- Need safe routes to school near West Middle School, Moorsbridge Elementary
- A pedestrian bridge would be great here, there is a fair amount of traffic throughout the day and can be hard to cross (refuge island on Oakland south of Milham)
- Traffic signal at Rosewood/Oakland
- Improved traffic signal timing on Westnedge (between Milham and Romence)
- Walkway on west side of Portage from Centre to Milham
- Anyway to connect northeast neighborhood to the bike trails?
- Sidewalks along both sides of Westnedge – Kilgore to Centre
- Road connection Fir Tree to Beacon Harbor
- Oakland Dr add bike lane in gap Kilgore to I-94
- Walking and bike trail around Wellfield connection neighborhood to Westnedge

Online Survey Question *“What are 2 or 3 areas in Portage that need transportation or infrastructure improvements?”*

- Don't have a bus come from the Downtown area to the mall, it is bringing young kids that are very disruptive to the Crossroads Mall
- I would like to see the new Eliason Park developed more.
- Public transportation is good, no improvement is needed

Map Comments – Lake Center:

- Lake Center: not much development in 30 years: consider overlay zoning for district to spur investments

- Lake Center needs reinvestment: zoning problems, owners rent and don't make improvements
- Character of Lake Center: water? Retro motif? Other? Doing a flag banner
- Lake Center had a district wide garage sale to raise money for the Autism Center
- Lake Center refuge islands, streetscape, power lines underground, farmer's market



Land Use and Development

Comment Cards:

Q. One thing I really like about my neighborhood is...

- Close to where I work. It also looks fairly nice
- I can access all the things I need within ¼ mile of my house, bank, grocery store, hardware, drug store, gas station, park, church, etc. – Lake Center.
- It is convenient to everything (Woodbridge Hills)
- The sidewalks, the mature trees, and the easy connection to the trail system.
- It is quiet, safe and well maintained

Q. Something that is missing from my neighborhood is...

- Streetscaping – investment to make the roadway more attractive; connectivity across Portage Road for pedestrians and bicycles
- Rezone Kilgore Road property North of Lowe's and West of Westnedge to retail.
- Traffic light at Centre Street and Greenspire.
- A few key sidewalks and a street light that covers the area of Heather ridge, its black and that is the South entrance to the neighborhood. And a red, green and yellow lite at Old Centre/Centre or no left turns or BLOCK OFF BLVD (close it)
- I am pretty happy with my neighborhood
- neighborhood watch program

Map notes:

Preserve:

- Lakes
- Fire station #3
- West Lake Nature Preserve
- State Game Area
- Good buffer from industrial uses on east side south of Bishop
- Trail at Oakland just south of Milham
- Beautiful boulevard at West Centre
- The parks and current walkpaths
- The landscaped boulevards, the Tree City concept, the trail system and parks.
- Parks, walking trails, shopping areas

Enhance:

- In general, need to maintain older housing, address vacant and/or foreclosed housing, plan for vacant lots where homes were razed
- Some blighted properties in the “states” district (north of Milham between Oakland and Lovers Lane)
- Potential for a farmers market or grocer for a better and healthier neighborhood (northeast)
- Zone for mixed-use development (Romence/Lovers Lane area)
- Eco-house development opportunity? Demonstration project at Romence and Lovers Lane
- Enhance greenspace just west of City Centre district
- Lexington green park
- Residences leaving along Centre between Lovers Lane and Portage
- Needs lighting at Corstange/Zylman/Portage
- More commercial, improve commercial and access management South Shaver east of Oakland
- Improve access to preserve/state game area
- Farmers market on newly acquired 16 acres off Osterhout
- The PCOC front on Center st across from the High School its a mess to say the least, we invest millions in a new school and have that across the street
- Portage Road south of Center, landscaping on some of the new trails near 131 (Northwest Bikeway?), Oakland Drive does not have a good bike lane south of Center.
- nothing comes to mind.

Transform:

- Vacant land at Milham/Lovers Lane/Portage convert outside frontage to commercial office and industrial
- Turn Pfizer building and adjacent land into an art center like a Frederick Meijer Garden (Portage/Romence)
- Airport Inn (only place sexual molesters can live)
- Trailer park in northeast
- Greenhouses

- Flooding issues on Forest/Newells
- No lighting, very dark need street lights at Heather Ridge
- Restore native environmental conditions at Eliason Reserve
- Encourage commercial development south on Shaver, Portage, and Sprinkle
- Only one elementary school on east side
- The Portage Northern housing area, Shaver Road corridor
- Portage Road (south of Center), Oakland Drive (south of Center) primarily a trail or paved road area since the road is pretty broken up, more large community events.
- nothing

Non-motorized/transportation:

- Continue trail to Kalamazoo on Lovers Lane
- Why do bike routes dead end on Romence between Oakland and Lovers Lane?
- Improve trail continue asphalt south Westnedge south of Central Elementary School
- Continue paved shoulder on Shaver near big boxes
- Extend Vanderbilt to Westnedge
- More trail mileage markers



Lake Center Area

Preserve

- Specialty shops are unique. They've been here for ages... but need new shops to keep coming.
- Restore areas; don't demolish the character. For example... non-conforming signage (i.e. signage at West Lake Drive In) is part of the eclectic charm of the area.
- Keep wooded areas around neighborhoods. They are excellent places to play and provide a nice place to walk and even have planned trails.
 - Portage Rd is fine, just slow it down especially at Bacon and Osterhout
 - The roads are nice with the sidewalks
 - all are good as they are

Enhance

- Schools as the center of the community
- Neighborhood 'hubs' are the schools
- Small buildings along the corridor are nice, but how do we "dress them up" and make them destinations?
- The street needs to be more attractive so that people will want to SLOW down and visit businesses. Right now it is just a commuting corridor and no one really stops.
- Need better branding for the area. But the eclectic look is what we love! We don't want it to look like Westnedge or make it generically the same. Retro... Beachy... Is it possible?
- Use vacant areas for events
- Lakeview Park is an Anchor. Make better connections from neighborhoods with bikeways, safer sidewalks and routes. Trees... make it beautiful.
- Branding Ideas: colored or stamped concrete sidewalks, banners, more boats painted by artists, hold art contest with boats, quirky, patchwork ideas that are unique.
- DON'T want grandfathered uses, need to help business owners beautify their properties without having to bring them up to complete code.
- Daanes area Boating Company (make is more like a marina)
- Add a plaza to stop at, add walkways at waterfront such as the old drive-in (or develop this as a waterfront area, vintage lamp posts along the road with banners, better landscaping for beautification.
- nothing

Transform

- Bury the power lines so that trees can be planted
- workmanship on Forest street reconstruction is terrible. It was supposed to make drainage better; it is now worse. The rolled curb creates huge puddles and is going to get damaged by snow plows. It was a waste of money since it doesn't work, looks ugly and will be destroyed this winter. The drain is also not located in the right place and they destroyed the person's yard that it is near.
- Vacant buildings - can SWMI First help?
- Reuse of some buildings are impossible because they need to be brought up to code or have a limited number of uses they could actually be used for.
- Promote mixed-use and buildings on empty lots that are easily adapted to changing uses. One reason that some buildings are vacant is because they were for a specific use. Keep them small(ish) so that small business owners/ start ups can afford them.
- Traffic calming! sidewalks, make the area safer for bicycles.
- Use overlay zoning to create a district that is unique. Non-conforming uses that can be legal.
- Change the speed limit from 45 to 35 (then people will actually go 45...)
- Events: Run/ Walk; More garage sales; Farmer's market; art market
- Work on parking issues (are there any??)
- The grocery store
- Develop a waterfront area with possibly food vendors, landscaping to help connect all the businesses into one unified look, give the area its own identity as a shopping district.
- nothing

General Conversation

- People relocate to the area for work or the school access.
- There is a disconnect between residents and the City officials. Residents feel that the city is difficult to work with. However, business owners feel that the City has been working with them to achieve many goals.

Map Notes:

Map 1: Lake Center North

General:

- Housing neighborhood
- Walkability, uses in proximity to businesses

- Garage sale was noticeable and good for the corridor
- Embrace the differences

Location-specific:

- Develop Pfizer along road (Zylman)
- Gateway feature (at Centre)
- Slow down traffic and friendly to businesses (north of Zylman)
- Bury power lines (at Zylman)
- Bury lines so we can have TREES! (at Zylman)
- Need lights on Corstange off Portage Rd to Oakside
- Slow traffic at Center and the Park, currently 45 mph
- Question re: telephone poles with pink ribbons (near Zylman)
- Widen sidewalks and include bikelane (near Forest)
- Traffic light at Forest and Portage Rd, crossing is difficult for bikes and peds (bank, store)
- Ames – north safety for cars turning

Map 2: Lake Center South

Location-specific:

- Preserve wooded areas for recreation (across from Lakeview Park)
- Fill in residential (between Woodbine and Stanley)
- Create streets for connections (through Stanley/Woodbine property)
- Speed indicator lights (Bacon/Auburn Woods/Wetherbee area)
- More multi-family (vacant property north of Osterhout)

Map 3: Lake Center Existing Land Use

General:

- Slow traffic
- Farmer's Market in district

Location-specific notes:

- Allow exception to zoning requirement (between Corstange and Forest)

- Widen this narrow corridor with cantilevered boardwalk, encourage redevelopment of Mavcon and drive-in to include a boat-up food take-out, fueling point etc. through all experience developer and overlay area on district (isthmus between Dixie and McClish)
- Mini-band shell in Lakeview Park
- Access to water, canoe livery? (next to Lakeview Park)
- Pedestrian bridge like across Milham at the park and go across Portage Road to Lakeview Park



Map 1: Lake Center North



Map 2: Lake Center South



Map 3: Lake Center ELU

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Input on Portage, October 14, 2013

What the Youth Advisory Committee likes about Portage:

1. Quality education and facilities
2. Multi-use trails
 - Connectivity (can get to a various destinations such as Celebration Cinema or Crossroads Mall using the trail network).
 - Alternative way to get around without the need for a car.
 - The off-road multi-use trails are a safe alternative to public streets (don't have to worry about cars).
3. Efforts by the city to preserve the natural areas of the community.
4. Efforts to balance the natural and manmade environments.
5. Like living in a smaller city but close to major urban centers such as Grand Rapids, Chicago or Detroit.
6. Safety and security of living in a smaller city.
7. Concentration of the commercial areas. They are easy to get to and from.
8. People in the community are very friendly.
9. Zoning. Residential areas are protected from the impacts associated with businesses.

What the Youth Advisory Committee does not like about Portage:

1. Poor mass transit (None of the committee members had ever ridden a bus in Portage).
2. No convenient and direct mass transit option from Portage to downtown Kalamazoo (e.g. non-stop or few stops from Crossroads Mall).
3. No separate PNHS football stadium.
4. Need more entertainment options similar to Craig's Cruisers or Full Blast.
5. More efforts are needed to better publicize events/activities sponsored by the city (i.e. Facebook or Twitter).
6. Need more locally-owned and operated businesses.
7. Need a health food store such as Sawalls.
8. Bring back the Summer Entertainment Series.
9. Plow the multi-use trails in the winter.
10. Need more public awareness of the excellent parks and recreational opportunities.
11. Don't have an e-edition of the Portager (i.e. magazine app.).
12. Don't plow residential streets soon enough after a snowfall.

What the Youth Advisory Committee wishes Portage had:

1. Bike trails on 12th Street
2. More sidewalks in residential neighborhoods
3. More restaurants around the lake areas
4. Canoe/kayak rentals at Ramona/Lakeview parks
5. Coffee house and wi-fi at parks (e.g. Ramona Park)

Reasons why some of the Youth Advisory Committee members won't stay/return to Portage after high school/college:

1. Larger cities offer more independence to children.
2. Will consider living abroad.
3. Want to experience other locations.
4. More opportunities in larger cities (e.g. jobs).
5. Portage is not a location for college age people, but may move back later in life.

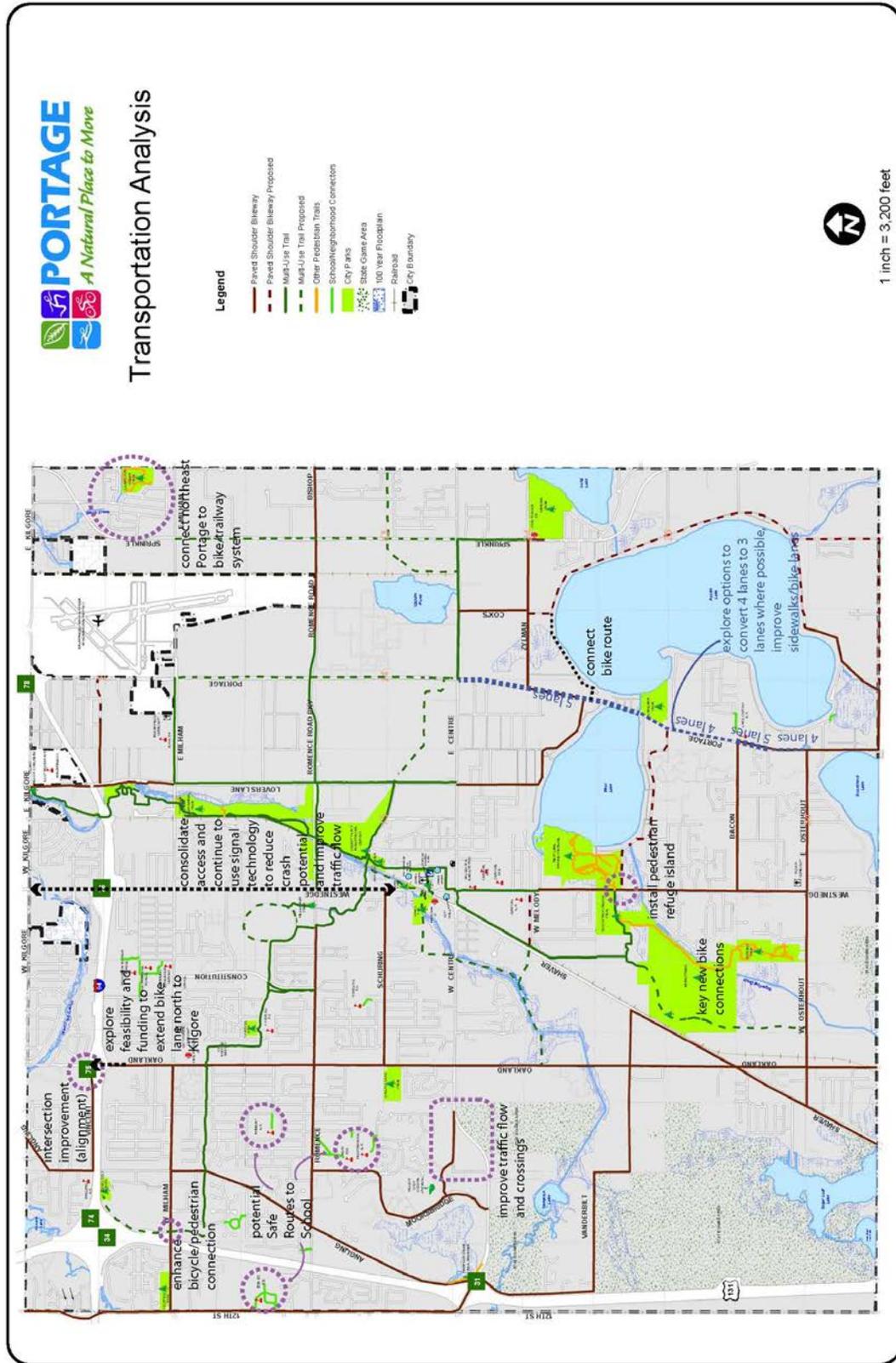
One member said he will stay in Portage because he likes the safety, security and quality schools/education.

November 25, 2013

Community-wide issues and opportunities to consider during the Plan Update

The following list of community wide issues were identified through the public input process, including a public open house and Youth Advisory Committee meeting, as well as through city staff and consultant analysis. The attached analysis maps summarize many of the issues and opportunities identified.

1. Continue the investment to expand and/or enhance city parks, bikeways and multi-use trails with emphasis on connecting areas not served to the central/existing system.
2. Encourage more mixed use developments, especially in the City Centre Area.
3. Focus on maintaining and/or improving residential neighborhoods, especially older areas, by addressing vacant/foreclosed housing, property maintenance and building code concerns.
4. Lake Center Area: Enhance Portage Road to be a vibrant, commercial corridor that is walkable and safe.
5. Create a complete streets policy that addresses multi-modal transportation elements including sidewalks, shared shoulder bike lanes, multi-use trails and connections to public transit
6. Continue to improve non-motorized connections throughout the city that appeal to varied skill levels of existing and potential bicyclists through additional bike ways and trail connections
7. Retain South Westnedge as a regional business anchor but continue efforts to improve traffic flow and safety
8. Define boundaries of the core South Westnedge commercial area and develop strategies to buffer from adjacent residences
9. Create aging in place opportunities to ensure Portage residents can maintain an active lifestyle throughout their lifecycle and by providing a variety of housing types to accommodate a variety of age groups, with a special focus on seniors.
10. Form a strategy for conversion of greenhouses if transition to other uses occur.
11. Identify opportunities for commercial and industrial development at vacant parcels along Portage Road and Shaver Road
12. Provide transportation guidance for locations identified as problematic such as intersections/crossings at Centre, Old Centre, Vincent, Oakland, among others
13. Utilize Eliason Nature Reserve to its fullest potential and create connecting non-motorized links
14. Enhance gateways to the city, fully utilizing the new brand "A Natural Place to Move" to contribute to a strong sense of community



Lake Center Focus Group Meeting Notes—December 12, 2013

Attendance:

- 15 citizens/business owners
- 4 Planning Commissioners (Patterson, Welch, Stoffer, Dargitz)
- 3 City Council (Ansari, Reid, Strazdas)
- 3 consultants (Duffy, Woods, Kik)
- 2 staff (Georgeau, West)

Meeting Takeaways

- Capitalize on opportunities before they become missed opportunities (5 lanes near school could've been a better implementation of complete streets, new house near The Edge's lake access, gas station brownfield remediation)
- Evaluate traffic impacts on Ames from potential Forest light/crossing, probably better to shift crossing south to Ames/McClish area
- Promote buy-in from resident lake associations—selling points:
 - Improve their access to amenities at Lake Center core: boat docks, jet ski food from Drive In
 - Increased property values from revitalized corridor
 - Not talking about adding boat traffic (no new launches) and wouldn't ever be as busy as bass tournament anyway
- Build a district-wide brand, not just the businesses: the park, residences, churches, school
- Generally supportive of 4-3 and 5-3 lane reductions, just concerned about traffic impacts: will people slow down? Won't it cause more accidents? People trying to get from southern townships to Kalamazoo aren't going to stop anyway, just want quick way through town, aren't really better alternatives. Need better education and traffic analysis to support.
- Utilize the channel connecting the lakes for docking at park, and dredge it so bigger boats can get through— ped/bike Bridge over channel? Could have a complete path around the lake that way
- Increase park amenities and use as an anchor: canoe rentals, pavilion, docking, swim beach
- Improve neighborly site maintenance and upkeep
- Curiosity about funding mechanisms, grants, TIF-related programs—Rebekah sending some of her insight

Comments/Concerns/Ideas:

- Concerns about narrowing of Portage Road from 4-lanes to 3-lanes, increased accidents, bottleneck (citizen).
- Believes narrowing of Portage Road from 4-lanes to 3-lanes is a good idea and will slow traffic, make roadway more safe and improve business activity (citizen).
- Traffic light at Forest Drive (citizen).

- Location of pedestrian refuge island, move to Ames Drive and Portage Road (citizen).
- Reduce speed limit on Portage Road, from 45 mph to 35 mph (citizen)
- Concerns about increased non-riparian access to Austin Lake-West Lake with any waterfront development (citizen).
- Planning efforts should involve the Austin Lake and West Lake Associations, especially with any proposed waterfront development (Reid).
- Portage Road corridor should "make a statement" and "look different" "look special" (Strazdas).
- Turn the Lake Centre Area into an "entertainment area" (citizen).
- Dredge/widen channel between Austin Lake-West Lake and install boat docks that will allow boaters to access area businesses through Lakeview Park (citizen).
- Provide better pedestrian access/linkage from Lakeview Park to area businesses to north, restricted where lakes converge (citizen, Dargitz).
- Make Lakeview Park a "centerpiece" with increased amenities like swimming area, small bandshell, better pedestrian linkage to north (Dargitz).
- Retain/enhance local business ownership with any revitalization efforts, no big box or national chain businesses (citizen, Dargitz).
- More coordinated/compatible planning efforts for area businesses to reduce adverse impacts such as dumpsters facing adjacent business (citizen).
- Resurrection of Lake Center Business Association with new logo, banners, canoes/boats and other placemaking and branding efforts (Dargitz).

March 27, 2014 West Lake Association Follow-up Meeting

Community Development Director Georgeau met with the West Lake Association following completion of the draft subarea plan to present the concepts and field questions related to the Lake Center plan. The subarea plan was generally well received. Several attendees noted a desire for traffic calming along Portage Road and redevelopment of several commercial properties. It was suggested that both the West Lake Association and Austin Lake Riparians meet with the Lake Center Business Association to discuss common goals. Finally, the attendees expressed concern with implementation strategies that may increase boat access to West Lake and/or increase the capacity of boats on the lake. Staff noted the plan seeks to increase amenities on the lake front but not boat access.

Public Review Period PENDING

The State of Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires a 42-day public review period for comprehensive plan updates. The Portage Planning Commission endorsed the draft on April 17th, 2014, City Council approved the draft for distribution on April 29th, 2014 and a public hearing was held at the Planning Commission meeting on June 19th, 2014.