

2024 The Crossroads Area Transition Plan



The Crossroads shopping mall was a transformational commercial investment in the City of Portage when it opened in 1980. At the time, it was the only two-level mall in Michigan outside Metro Detroit. The mall created a community identity and served as the anchor for the largest shopping district in the region during the last quarter of the 20th century.

Times have changed. The market is different. Declining demand for brick-and-mortar retail and a corresponding increase in online shopping have led to many vacant mall spaces in 2023. Property values for The Crossroads and many surrounding commercial parcels have fallen in the past decade. Left to market pressures, the value and condition of the mall and surrounding neighborhoods are likely to decline further.

The City of Portage can lead an effort to attract investment to create a vibrant community node and give this stretch of South Westnedge Avenue a new beginning. This plan is an outline to follow, amend, and update in the coming years to guide the city's efforts.

The plan that follows is rooted in three truths. These truths support the city's ongoing active participation in the redevelopment of The Crossroads shopping mall and the South Westnedge Avenue Commercial Corridor.

3 Truths That Support the City's Participation

1 There is a surplus of commercial square footage in the South Westnedge Avenue Commercial Corridor.

2 Broad public and private collaboration is essential.

3 The time is right for city leadership and involvement.

Future actions to attract investment in the The Crossroads area will be guided by the above elements.

The Crossroads Area Transition Six Point Plan of Action

1. Discover Desired Outcomes

- » City Council
- » Planning Commission
- » Citizenry
- » Business Community
- » City Staff

2. Planning

- » Inventory existing uses
- » Conduct a detailed market analysis to establish demand
- » Enlist the best talent in the State of Michigan to help develop a land use plan that can bring about intended outcomes
- » Adopt a new Mall and Westnedge Area Plan in the Master Plan to establish the visionary goals
- » Create best practices zoning overlay

3. Tools

- » Detail existing toolbox (local, state, and federal)
- » Create new tools (local, state, and federal)

4. Connect and Collaborate

- » Develop mentors – team up with local, talented developers to seek ongoing, real-time advice
- » Establish consistent dialogue with all existing owners to ensure clear, routine communication

5. Market

- » Create communications plan
- » Attract developers and investors

6. Compliance

- » Consistently enforce all codes to ensure public safety at mature properties