

# Portage County Vision Plan

*2022 - 2032*

APPROVED DECEMBER 1, 2022





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## Board of Commissioners

Sabrina Christian-Bennett, President  
Anthony J. Badalamenti, Vice President  
Vicki A. Kline, Board Member

Dear Portage County Residents,

The Portage County Commissioners are excited to share our strategic plan for the future of our county. In 2021, Portage County embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to vision a desired future for the County and translate this vision into priorities, goals, and a mission to define the next five to ten years. As part of this process, we gathered input from a variety of stakeholders including:

- Township Trustees
- Zoning Inspectors
- County Department Heads
- Community partners
- County residents

The goals and objectives found on the following pages are a guide to accomplish our mission: To provide public service and strive to work creatively with local communities, businesses, and residents to further enhance communities, economic development, social well-being, and overall quality-of-life through effective communication and collaboration. And to further the vision of our community

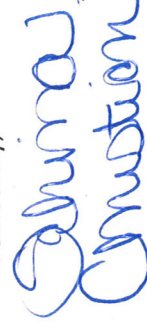
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*"Create a sense of place through inspirational leadership and communication at all levels to maximize quality of life opportunities."*

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The 2022-2023 Portage County Vision Plan reflects our growing County and embodies our commitment to be efficient and forward-thinking with County resources. With the vision plan completed, work on developing goals, strategies, and actions to move forward through the coinciding Comprehensive Plan continues. We are committed to working together and to focus investments on community initiatives. Thank you for all who participated.

Sincerely,

  
Sabrina Christian-Bennett  
  
Anthony Badalamenti  
  
Vicki Kline

President, Board of  
Commissioners

Vice President, Board of  
Commissioners

Board of Commissioners  
Member





## **VISION PLAN COMMITTEE**

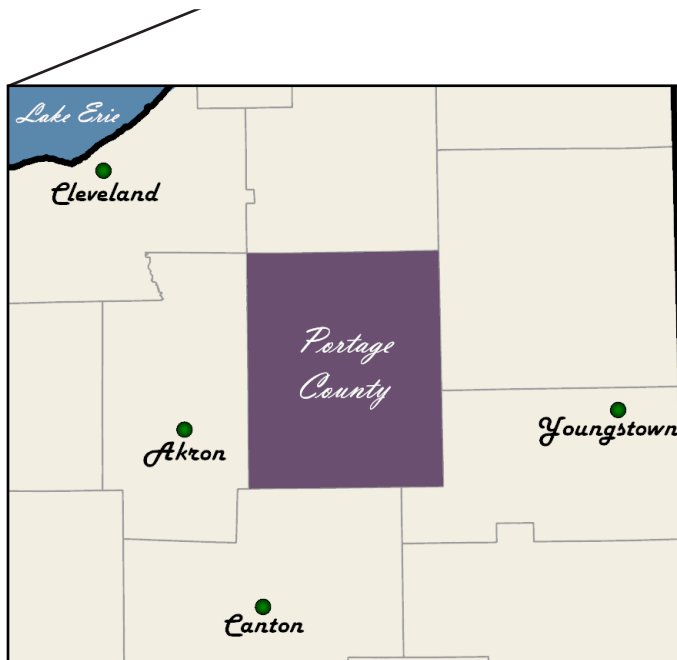
|                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Anthony Badalamenti | Patrick O'Malia |
| Nic Coia            | Ron Kotkowski   |
| Jeff Derthick       | Janet Coon      |
| Chris Szell         | Terrie Nielsen  |
| Tim Patrick         | Brett Housley   |
| Emily Lashley       | Dave Kemble     |
| Cheryl Wood         | Chris Craycroft |
| Shawn Gordon        |                 |

## **STAFF MEMBERS**

|              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| Todd Peetz   | Maria Palmisano |
| Gail Gifford | Grace Petitjean |

# County Profile

Portage County is in Northeast Ohio between Akron, Cleveland, and Youngstown. The General Assembly created Portage County on June 9, 1808. The County is bordered by Cuyahoga and Geauga Counties to the north, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties to the east, Stark County to the south, and Summit County to the west. A wide variety of lifestyles are available to county residents as Portage County enjoys the benefits of urbanization while also offering a rural atmosphere.



# General Information

**1808**

Year organized by the Ohio General Assembly. Portage County consists of 18 townships, six villages, and five cities.

**504**

Portage County is over 500 square miles.

**161,791**

Based on the 2020 Census, Portage County's population grew by 0.23% from 2010.

**13.6%**

Percent of minority population.

**2.17%**

Percent Hispanic and Latino/a.

**5**

Universities and Trade Schools: Kent State University, Northeast Ohio Medical University, Hiram College, Maplewood Career Center, Kent Theodore Roosevelt Career Technical program.

**92%**

Percent of population with a high school diploma or higher.

**28.7%**

Percent of population with a Bachelor's Degree or higher.

**4**

There are four hospitals and health centers in the County including UH Portage, Akron General Children's, UH Streetsboro Health Center, and UH Kent Health Center.

**14**

State Parks and Preserves including the Cuyahoga River Water Trail and Scenic River.

**0.7%**

Percent of Portage County owned by the Portage Park District. State Parks, Preserves, and County Parks account for 8% of Portage County.

**1**

Camp James A. Garfield Joint Military Training Center is 21,000-acre facility operated by the Ohio Army National Guard.

# ***Why a Vision Plan?***

A vision plan, sometimes called a strategic plan, is a guiding document that identifies priorities, sets a direction, and aligns resources to implement goals and strategies. It is not meant to encompass all programs, initiatives, and services, but rather be a broad overarching guide. This plan was developed through input from Township trustees and representatives from the cities, villages, University Hospital, and Northeast Ohio Medical University.

## ***Process***

The Portage County Regional Planning Commission developed the Vision Plan in conjunction with representatives from the Townships, County, Villages, Cities, and local organizations. The plan was created during six meetings with the vision plan committee held over the course of seven months. Internal meetings were held with commissioners and department heads to capture their thoughts. Survey results from the coinciding Comprehensive Plan were used to help shape priorities and goals. The goals and objectives developed as part of the Vision Plan will be expanded upon in the Comprehensive Plan.

## ***Survey Results***

Top challenges to living or working in Portage County:

1. Loss of farmland
2. Access to broadband, especially in rural areas

Top benefits to living or working in Portage County:

3. Location and access
4. Rural living
5. Affordability





# *Plan Elements*

## **VISION**

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- » Single encompassing statement about the future direction of the County shared by its communities
- » Encompasses a variety of local perspectives
- » Remains true of a long period of time
- » May or may not be achieved, i.e., the vision represents a dream

## **MISSION**

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- » Explains the overarching goal the County is working to achieve
- » Remains consistent but can evolve as the County grows

## **PRIORITIES**

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- » Items to accomplish as the County works to fulfill its mission
- » Developed with input from the Vision Plan committee
- » Reevaluated every three to five years

## **GOALS**

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- » Broad goals that work to achieve the Vision and Mission statements and uphold the priorities
- » Reevaluated on an annual to biannual basis

## **OBJECTIVES**

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- » Specific measurable results
- » Evaluated semi-annually to track progress toward achieving the goals and ultimately the mission and vision.
- » Action that an individual, groups of individuals, or departments can take to work toward the goal

# ***Vision***

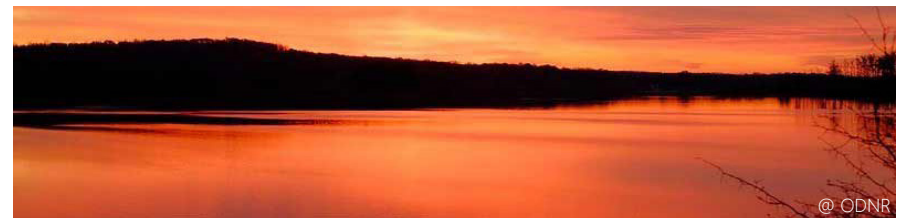
Create a sense of place through inspirational leadership and communication at all levels to maximize quality of life opportunities.

# ***Mission***

To provide public service and strive to work creatively with local communities, businesses, and residents to further enhance communities, economic development, diverse and equitable social well-being, and overall quality-of-life through effective communication and collaboration.

# ***Priorities***

- » QUALITY OF LIFE
- » COMMUNITIES
- » ECONOMIC WELL-BEING & PROSPERITY
- » HUMAN SERVICES
- » EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
- » ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
- » EXCELLENT SERVICE DELIVERY



# Quality of Life

Quality of life is the health, comfort, and happiness experienced by individuals and communities. The County plays a critical role in improving quality of life for its residents. The vision plan builds on existing efforts that focus on improving life for residents and communities.

## Themes:

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Education</i>          | 5. <i>Infrastructure</i>     |
| 2. <i>Recreation</i>         | 6. <i>Improvements</i>       |
| 3. <i>Workforce</i>          | 7. <i>Social Equity</i>      |
| 4. <i>Development</i>        | 8. <i>Community Arts</i>     |
| 9. <i>Housing Diversity</i>  | 10. <i>and Entertainment</i> |
| 11. <i>and Affordability</i> |                              |

## Highlights:

1. *Maintain rural character.*
2. *Promote parks, recreation, and fun and engaging activities.*
3. *Enhance job readiness.*

## GOAL: TO CONTINUE TO GROW WHILE PROVIDING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE PRIMARY TANGIBLE AND IN- TANGIBLE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

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**OBJECTIVE:** Support education at all levels, through communication, collaboration, promoting safety, and through connecting private sector businesses to schools, trades, and universities.

**OBJECTIVE:** Work with communities, Portage Park District, private sector, and non-profits to provide fun and engaging activities.

**OBJECTIVE:** Engage with educational institutions to align with the needs of the community, including job readiness.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage communities and private sector to provide diverse housing types to meet a variety of income levels.

**OBJECTIVE:** Identify infrastructure needs by collaborating with communities and state agencies.

**OBJECTIVE:** Leverage emerging, expanding, and changing technologies that will benefit Portage County and its residents.

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure information is available to our diverse community about opportunities to improve their lives.

**OBJECTIVE:** Support the tourism industry and encourage local access to community arts and entertainment.

**OBJECTIVE:** Maintain commitment to public safety and emergency services.

# Communities

Vibrant communities are culturally diverse places that support a high quality of life and foster a healthy inclusive environment for all. They provide access to basic needs and services, encourage involvement, and build connections between residents and the larger community. Arts, entertainment, and expression are encouraged. There is often an emphasis on walkability, bike ability, beautification of the community, and sense of place.

## Themes:

1. *Live-Work-Play*
2. *Sense of Place and of Community*
3. *Festivals or Community Events*
4. *Community Centers*
5. *Retain People in the Community*
6. *Shared Resources*

## Highlights:

1. *Create distinct community identities.*
2. *Collaborate on local resources.*
3. *Ensure equity and access to government services.*

## GOAL: COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO FURTHER ENHANCE SENSE OF PLACE.

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**OBJECTIVE:** Foster a sense of place unique to Portage County that communities can build on and enhance to create their own distinctive identity.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote culturally diverse events celebrating our residents heritage.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage special events and assist in marketing and promotion of those events.

**OBJECTIVE:** Assist and promote community centers, where residents can come together to host a variety of events, recreation, or social club gatherings.

**OBJECTIVE:** Create and support community amenities that will allow for people to continue to live in Portage County, like diverse job opportunities or aging in place.

**OBJECTIVE:** Collaborate with communities to share resources, materials, and cost for the betterment of our residents.

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure equity and access to government services.

# *Economic Well-Being & Prosperity*

Economic well-being and prosperity include growth and security. It is essential to the well-being of every community and is a key element of quality-of-life. Portage County is working to maintain its diverse economic base.

## **Themes:**

1. *Infrastructure*
2. *Brownfields and Redevelopment*
3. *Retain, attract, grow*
4. *Marketing*

## **Highlights:**

1. *Market our area.*
2. *Further public-private partnerships.*
3. *Enhance infrastructure.*

## **GOAL: CREATE VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY THROUGH COLLABORATION, MARKETING, EDUCATION, AND INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABILITY.**

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**OBJECTIVE:** Collaborate with communities and private sector for infrastructure maintenance and expansion.

**OBJECTIVE:** Identify areas that need to be renewed and develop local public-private partnerships to energize those areas.

**OBJECTIVE:** Work with state, regional, and local agencies to market our area, with an emphasis on our local economic development leaders, chambers, economic development agents, planners, realtors, and businesses to meet our needs.

**OBJECTIVE:** Develop a marketing and information strategy to tell the story of Portage County showcasing the opportunities that exist.





# Health & Human Services

Portage County's departments and agencies provide many health and social services which are devoted to improving the health, safety and well-being of its residents.

## Themes:

1. *Health Care*
2. *Mental Health*
3. *Social Services*
4. *Senior Living*

## Highlights:

1. *Promote senior services.*
2. *Enhance access to health care.*

## GOAL: HELP THOSE WHO NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE, WHETHER IT BE BASIC LIVING NEEDS, HEALTH CARE, MENTAL HEALTH, OR AGING RELATED ISSUES.

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**OBJECTIVE:** Utilize and leverage the vast network of health care and social service providers to ensure access to state of the art, nationally recognized care services.

**OBJECTIVE:** Address, as a County, the social determinants of health within communities.

**OBJECTIVE:** Coordinate with and promote the service providers who address mental health issues.

**OBJECTIVE:** Work with social service agencies to help direct people to the various services provided.

**OBJECTIVE:** Continue senior services and, through public-private partnerships, address the growing need for elderly housing.



# Effective Communication

Portage County seeks to increase communication between residents and businesses and local government and/or leadership. The County will increase transparency in all interactions and decisions.

## Themes:

1. *Government Transparency and Collaboration*
2. *Public Education and Outreach*
3. *Address Public Perception*
4. *Communication Plan*

## Highlights:

1. *Establish a public information policy.*
2. *Share the good to great things occurring in the County.*
3. *Utilize information technology to enhance public communication.*

## GOAL: COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH COMMUNITIES AND THE PUBLIC THROUGH A VARIETY OF SOURCES.

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**OBJECTIVE:** Build on relationships and collaborate with communities and businesses to achieve community goals and aspirations.

**OBJECTIVE:** Working together with both education and businesses to promote training and opportunities and engage students to meet their needs.

**OBJECTIVE:** Strive to effectively communicate, educate, and provide clear direction and understanding for the public.

**OBJECTIVE:** Develop a communication strategy to maximize community, public awareness, and transparency.

# Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is defined as the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being. Portage County encourages the adoption of sustainable policies by its communities, residents, and employees. Preserving farmland and our natural heritage is a priority for the County.

## Themes:

1. *Farmland Preservation*
2. *Agricultural Identity*
3. *Land and Water Conservation*
4. *Ecosystem Integrity*
5. *Resiliency to Impacts of Climate Change*

## Highlights:

1. *Maintain agricultural character.*
2. *Promote agricultural diversity.*
3. *Conserve, restore and be good stewards of natural areas.*

## GOAL: PRESERVE OUR AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT THROUGH LAND USE AND INFRASTRUCTURE DECISION MAKING.

**OBJECTIVE:** Work with landowners and farmland preservation programs that will assist in the long-term utilization of farmland.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote our farmland heritage through the County Fair and our diverse agricultural production.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote land conservation that enhances accessibility to the public for their enjoyment.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote water quality and conservation.

**OBJECTIVE:** Inform the public about the value and cost reduction of conservation.

**OBJECTIVE:** Conserve important ecosystems and enhance biodiversity.

**OBJECTIVE:** Educate the public on the value of diverse agriculture and environmental ecosystems.



# Excellent Service Delivery

Delivering cost effective quality services to its residents in a professional manner is a priority for Portage County. Portage County is committed to retaining public trust and confidence. Changing technologies can be challenging for employers, employees, and customers alike to keep up. The County will work to implement and integrate new technologies into its operations and infrastructure.

## Themes:

1. *Infrastructure*
2. *Fiscal Responsibility*
3. *Efficiency*
4. *Innovation*

## Highlights:

1. *Promote long-term capital improvement planning.*
2. *Strive to hire the best available employees.*
3. *Embrace technology.*

## **GOAL: PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE TO RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES WITH EFFICIENCY AND INNOVATION.**

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**OBJECTIVE:** Provide County facilities that adequately meet long-term needs.

**OBJECTIVE:** Maintain fiscal stability and responsible spending.

**OBJECTIVE:** Provide superior customer service responsive to rapidly growing areas, changing demographics, and community needs.

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure that Portage County, as an employer, can attract and retain highly skilled, qualified individuals with competitive salaries and an excellent benefit package.

**OBJECTIVE:** Optimize County operations by embracing technology and continuously innovating.

**OBJECTIVE:** Lead the County by embracing green energy technologies and addressing climate change.



JCT  
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SEAN'S  
PUB  
& EATERY

Slime & Jumbo's  
Neighborhood Bar and Grill

TWO TAPERS  
TAVERN

JAMES A. GARFIELD  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
8107

HIGH ST

ONE  
WAY  
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