

KALAMAZOO

# Zhang family donates \$2M to Portage Senior Community Center project

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Portage Mayor Patricia Randall announced the public phase of fundraising for the \$11 million senior center project on Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2019.

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PORTAGE, MI -- The public fundraising for Portage's planned \$11 million senior community center has been accelerated by a \$2 million donation from Lynn and Charles Zhang announced this week.

The city of Portage has agreed to match a public donation goal of \$5.5 million for the new facility. The public portion of the capital campaign now sits at \$3.5 million after Tuesday morning's kick off.

The Zhang family, owners of Zhang Financial in Portage, announced the donation during a special city council meeting in Portage Monday, Sept. 16. As a result of the donation, the center will now be named after the couple as the Charles & Lynn Zhang Portage Community Senior Center.

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Randall said the Zhangs' donation "really moved the dial" and "helped other donors jump on board" with the vision she had for the center.

The senior center was a key platform for Mayor Patricia Randall during her 2017 campaign. [Randall and three other members of Portage City Council whose terms expire in 2019 are all running unopposed](#) in their bids for reelection this November.

Lynn Zhang told a crowd of donors, city officials and county commissioners that the new senior center will serve as a physical reminder of the city's values that remain present throughout an ever-changing technology landscape.

"We want everything now and everything new," Zhang said. "Through all these changes somethings never change and that's the fundamentals that hold the community together."

The senior community center will serve as the Portage community's "living room" for generations of residents to gather, she said. Zhang joked she would even donate a mahjong set for the new center's game room.

The decision to build a new senior center in Portage is a response to the growing number of baby boomers retiring, Randall said.

An estimated [10,000 baby boomers reach retirement age every day](#) and that [trend will continue until 2030](#), according to Pew Research and AARP. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates 19.3 percent of the county population is made up of seniors.

Currently, more than 7,200 seniors reside in Portage and 35,000 seniors reside in the county, according to a press release from the city.

In 2018, Kalamazoo County voters [passed a six-year senior millage with 65.8% of the vote](#). The tax money was intended to address the wait list for in-home services, which allow seniors to live longer in their own homes and support families taking care of their elderly parents.



## Kalamazoo County passes \$2.8M senior millage in landslide

In 2017, the Portage Senior Center was used by 2,200 individuals aged 50 and over, according to a press release from Portage. Of those who participated in the services at the 36-year-old center on Library Lane, 58% were Portage residents and 42% were residents from the greater Kalamazoo County region.

The new facility will continue to be open to everyone, Randall said.

The new building will be 32,000 square feet — four times larger than the current facility — and feature space for recreational activities like pickleball and basketball as well as space for games and reading. Additionally, commercial kitchen will be installed for cooking classes and catered events.

The fundraising campaign continues and Portage residents will receive pledge cards in the next edition of the community newsletter, The Portager. A donation website has also been set up at [E3.PortageMI.gov](http://E3.PortageMI.gov)

It was also announced at Tuesday's reception that an anonymous donor has stepped forward offering to match any donation up to \$20,000 in the name of former mayor Betty Lee Ongley. A room in the center will be named after the city's first female mayor.

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Construction is planned to begin in 2020 at the new center's location at 203 E. Centre Ave.