

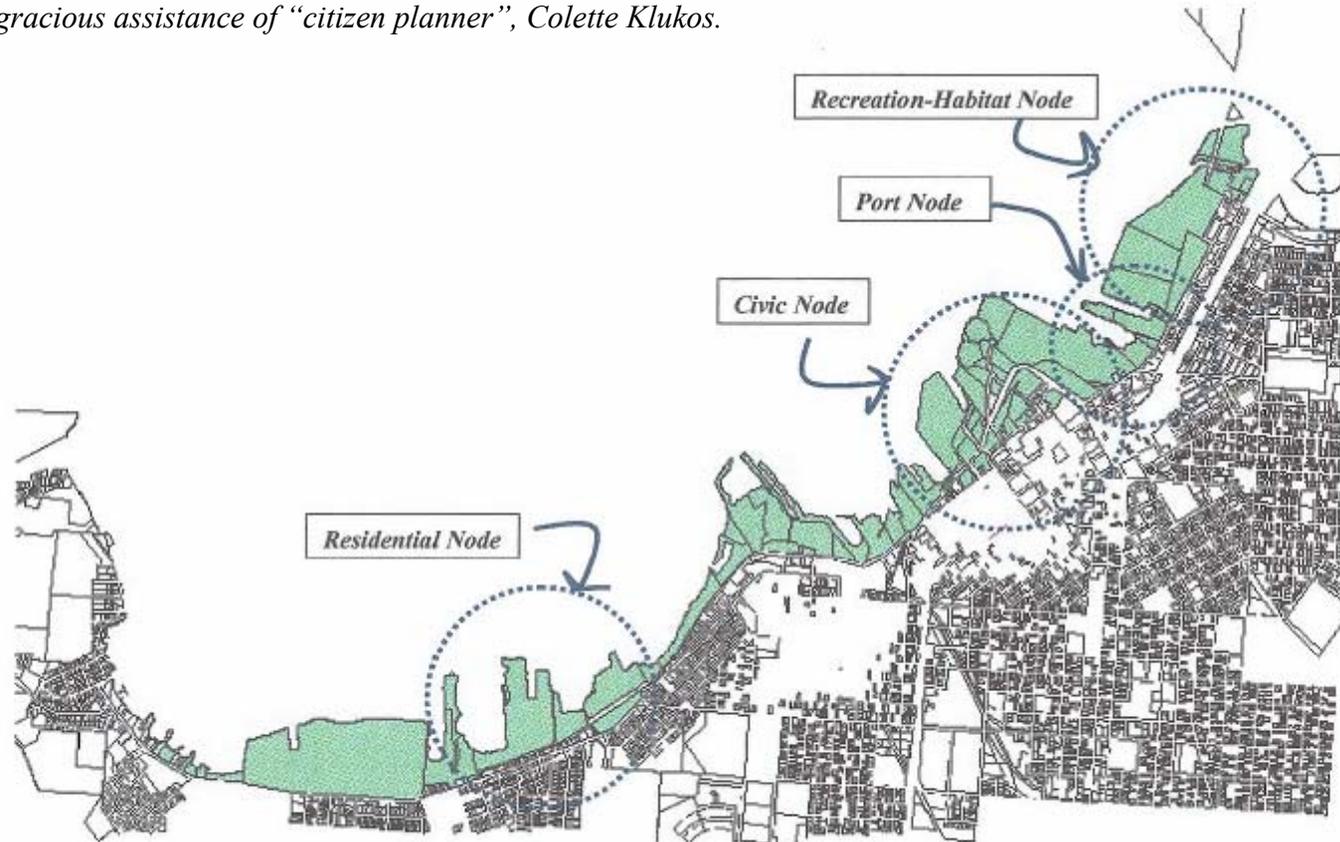
# City of Muskegon

## Waterfront Redevelopment Plan - 1999

Prepared by:

City of Muskegon Department of Planning and Economic Development in  
Collaboration with MEGA's Lakefront Development Task Force,

... and with the gracious assistance of "citizen planner", Colette Klukos.



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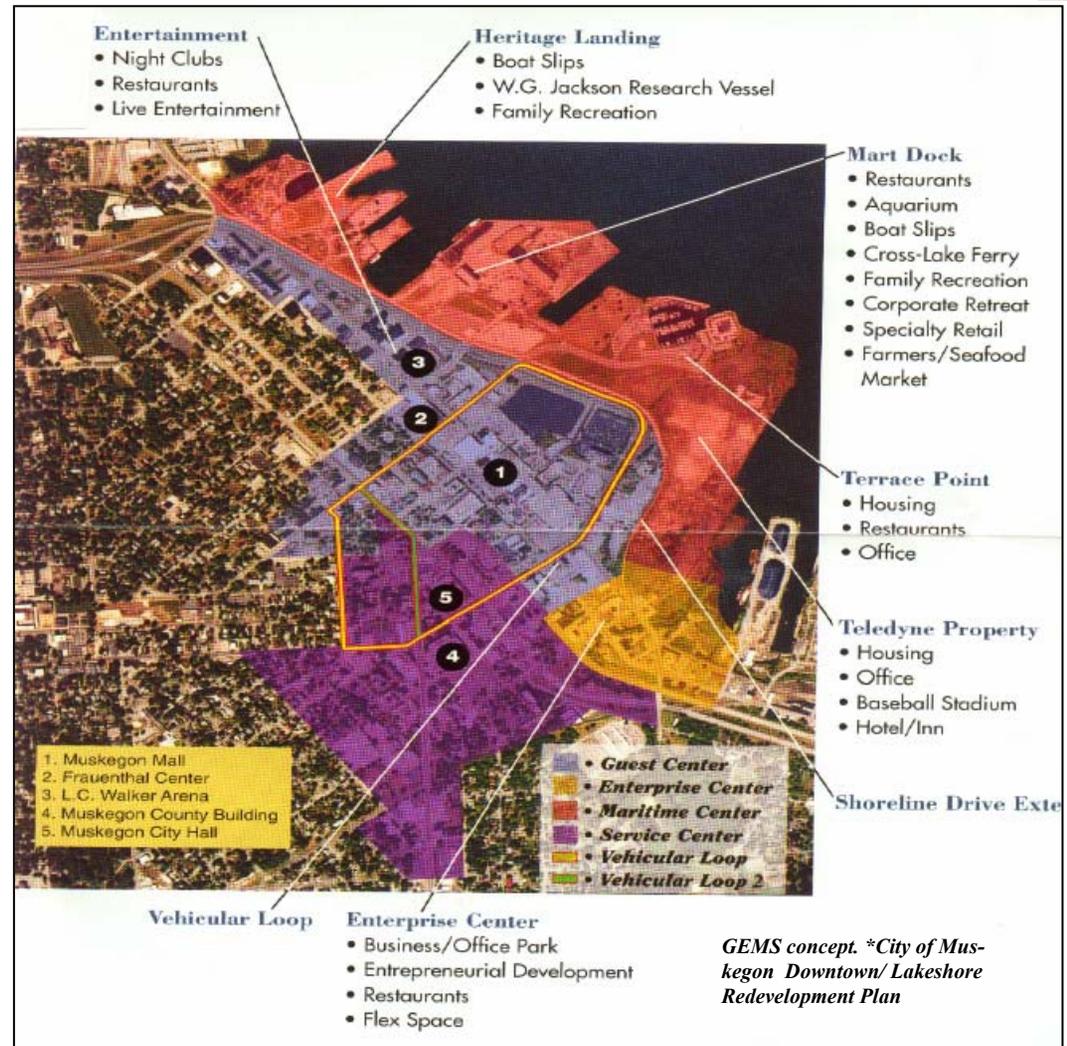
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## Introduction

The Muskegon Waterfront Redevelopment Sub-Plan has been drafted as an addendum to the City of Muskegon *Downtown Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan* adopted in 1997. It is a procedural step in a planning sequence designed to refine - and give physical shape to - many of the conceptual recommendations of that plan with regard to both generalized land use, and specific projects. The plan also expounds upon many of the principles put forth in the Muskegon *Lakeshore Trail Master Plan*, and attempts to enhance and augment that project's impact along the lake.

In addition to "fleshing out" some of the concepts included in the Master Plan's "menu" of projects, the intent of the Sub-Plan is to incorporate and synthesize ideas which have recently entered the public debate. Perhaps more importantly, the Sub-Plan helps fill in some of the gaps in the City's current lakefront planning efforts which heretofore have been concentrated primarily on the downtown waterfront. Accordingly, the plan boundary areas include a fairly narrow swath of land between Lakeshore/ Shoreline Drive and the water's edge, from Bluffton on the west, to the Causeway on the east. This stretch of land is over 8 miles in length, and contains nearly every





conceivable type of land use imaginable. Although geographically limited in scope, the analysis is not circumscribed by physical boundaries. This is due to the knowledge that the ensuing discussion centers on what is arguably the City's most valued asset, and that all developments within its vicinity are likely to have wide-ranging repercussions throughout the City and region. Therefore, the recommendations herein, seek to better integrate or link the proposed activities along the shore to existing inland land uses, in spite of the fact that the mechanics of such linkages are not always spelled out in precise detail.

### *Organization*

The plan is composed of two principle sections. Part I briefly discusses current land use, historical development and recommended land use policies, and helps provide the rationale for the site-specific recommendations of the plan which are covered in section II.

Section II contains specific recommendations for major changes and relocations of land uses. These recommendations are discussed in terms of four

primary lakefront nodes: Civic/ Cultural, Resort/ Residential, Habitat/ Recreation, and Commercial Port.

Although the nodes appear to be geographically isolated, in actuality, they are conceived as overlapping, integrated and non-mutually exclusive. That is, each is expected to contain a mixture of (often similar) land uses which support, and are most compatible with, the primary proposed use such as "residential", "port facilities" etc. In no instance should these "nodes" be construed as a traditional, *segregated* zoning scheme.

Finally discussion of each node concludes with a brief discussion of planning and design considerations and standards appropriate to each. The intent is to form the basis for future Planned Unit Development (PUD) design and development guidelines applicable to all waterfront properties.

### *The Current Context*

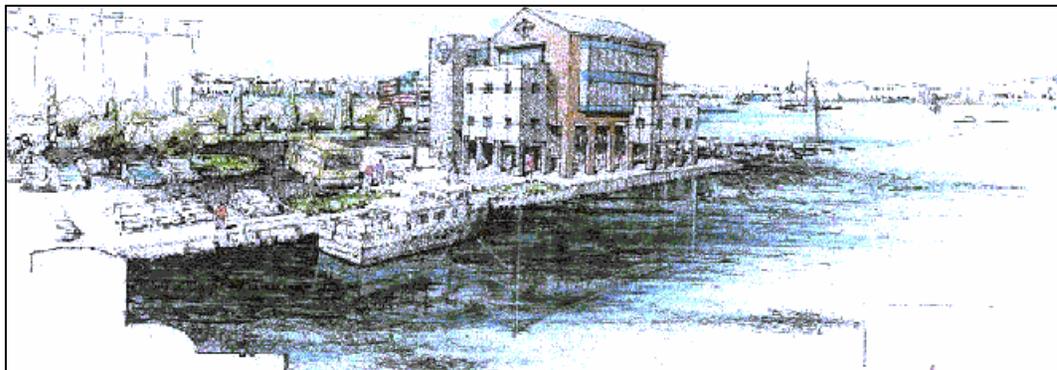
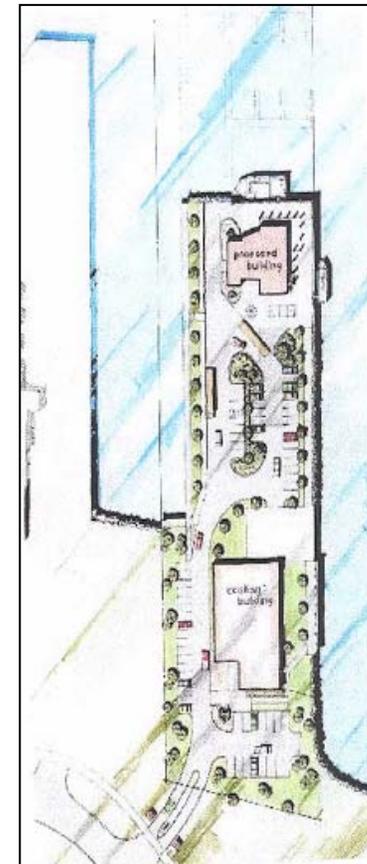
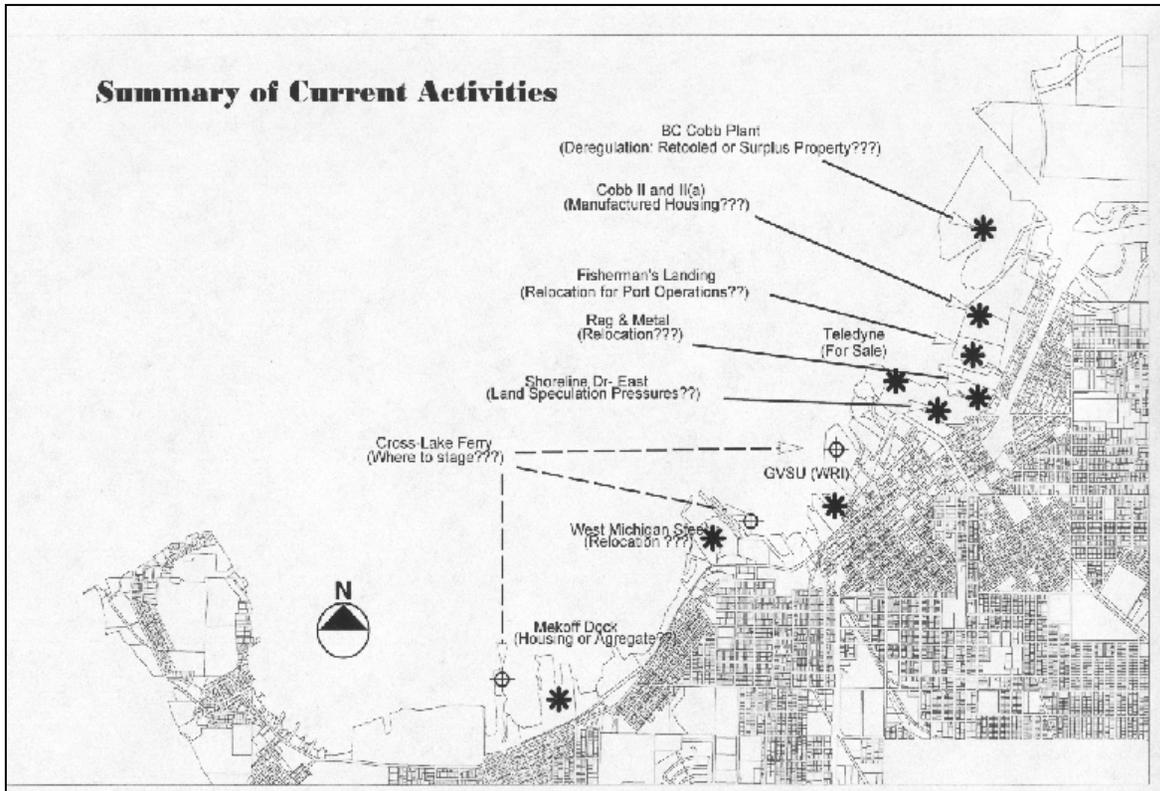
The need for a comprehensive and specific lakeshore plan has arisen due to a number of projects either in-progress, planned or still in the discussion phases which, if realized, will have a lasting influence on both the profile of the lake-

front and City as a whole. Chief among the former are the previously mentioned Lakeshore Trail bicycle/ pedestrian path, the second phase of Shoreline Drive (Shoreline Drive- East), the much anticipated Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Water Resources Institute, the possible reincarnation of cross-lake passenger ferry service, and the Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) which has earmarked \$50 million for waterfront environmental site remediation and redevelopment.

In addition to the projects cited, a number of alternative development proposals have recently entered the public dialogue (in the aftermath of the failed waterfront gambling referendum). These include potentially controversial projects such as bulk handling operations and manufactured housing. Several of these projects are likely to involve significant changes in property ownership, land use and access.

If viewed in piecemeal isolation, opportunities for infrastructural economies of scale and/or positive spin-off development created by the projects cited above may be lost.

**Summary of Current Activities**



*Top: A flurry of recently proposed projects underscores the need for a balanced, methodical planning effort along Muskegon Lake.*

*Above and left: Conceptual site plan and perspective of the proposed GVSU Water Resources Institute. \* Hooker/ DeJong Architects.*



Shortsighted decision-making on the part of City leaders may cause misgivings among potential investors, over the viability of Muskegon as a “destination” city, and underscores the need for proactive planning of the lakefront (and not planning in a vacuum). The intent of this plan therefore is to set the stage for a comprehensive, coordinated and proactive planning program for Muskegon’s most cherished asset - its waterfront - and the multitude of opportunities it presents.

### *The “Post Industrial” Waterfront*

A number of general, and site-specific principles have guided the development of the overall plan, and its component projects. Foremost among them is the recognition that the industrial heritage of the City and lakefront is something which should be *celebrated* rather than eradicated. Cities as diverse as Baltimore (the Inner Harbor) Cleveland (The Flats), San Francisco (The Embarcadero/Ghiradelli Square) have all capitalized on their industrial pasts to create interesting, inviting and “animated” waterfronts.

The key to their success, and those of other cities, has been the realization

that most people want to see the “real” working city (or facsimile thereof) and not a sanitized landscape stripped of all historic references.

While dirty “heavy” industry should certainly be kept away from the lake and its most sensitive resources, it is important to remember that the lake - more specifically the bulk shipping it permitted - holds the City’s “*raison d’etre*”. Were it not for the ample natural harbor, it is doubtful that the City would have ever attained its present stature as an important Midwestern industrial center or acquired the proud moniker, “Port City”.

Although bulk shipping on the Great Lakes has been greatly diminished, it is obvious that the lake figures no less importantly in the economic future of Muskegon, as it did in the past. Although tourism should no doubt play an important role in such a future, tourism alone tends to be seasonal, and acutely sensitive to the vagaries of the economy, and the whims of the traveling public. Moreover, it tends *not* to create jobs which pay family-supporting wages.

Greater economic balance would be afforded by investments in lakeside

residential and commercial development, as well as additional Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations. Such developments often require substantial public expenditures for infrastructure but can help spur ancillary economic activity resulting in an active, year-round, lakefront.

A major premise of this plan therefore is that all manner of land uses proposed for the lakefront need not be mutually exclusive, and are in fact desirable. Industrial, recreational, commercial and residential land uses can, and do successfully coexist, often with great effect. In fact their coexistence has proven to be the crucial ingredient in the projects cited above and dozens of others both in the U.S. and abroad.

With its sizable lake frontage, and proud industrial past, there is no reason to believe that Muskegon’s prospects for a revitalized lakefront, incorporating such varied uses as residential development to port facilities, cannot also attain the same level of acclaim.

### *Assets & Areas of Concern*

It is a widely held belief that cities with water amenities enjoy a significant advantage in attracting tourism and development. If this is indeed true, Muskegon, with its miles of shoreline has the potential to become a premier Lake Michigan destination city and Great Lakes port-of-call.

The City has been variously described as a sportsman's paradise and a developer's dream. With its miles of shoreline fronting on two lakes, these alternative visions need not be dichotomous.

In western Michigan only Traverse City with its meandering peninsulas and inlets has more water frontage. Because it satisfies the natural human instinct to be near water, the lake, and its rare natural beauty, is a constant source of community pride and visitor interest.

In addition to its aesthetic appeal, the lake also offers abundant recreational activities such as boating and fishing, as well as areas of natural habitat. Its mid-coast location and excellent transportation links also makes it attractive as both a general cargo and passenger service port.



*In earlier decades, the lakefront was the nucleus of most commercial, industrial and transportation activity in the City.*



## Concerns

Among the many amenities offered by the Lake, are the spectacular views it affords from the various promontories and other vantage points along the shoreline. However, despite its omnipresence, there are an abundance of physical and visual barriers to the water's edge. Long stretches of shoreline are currently off limits to the public both physically and visually.

Where public access is allowed, a general lack of landscaping and signage makes them difficult to find and/ or visually uninviting. Furthermore the entire network of lakefront parks and public access points suffers from a lack of physical linkages and "active" recreational spaces.

Other concerns include real and perceived environmental problems, continued loss of natural habitat, and obtrusive industrial facilities located in residential and recreational areas.

## Primary Goals & Objectives

Because it is arguably the City's most coveted asset a number of general goals

and objectives have been identified which seek to better capitalize on the City's waterfront location. Tourism, habitat conservation, recreation, commerce, historic preservation and residential development are all individual goals of the plan. All are treated as interrelated components in creating an active year-round lakefront.

Implicit in the discussion is the axiom that the lake and its environs should principally be the realm of Muskegon citizens, and that large stretches of lake frontage should never be permanently off-limits to them, physically, visually or economically. Other goals:

**\*Goal:** *Creation of a critical mass of activities along the lake within walking distance of downtown that will serve as a regional tourist destination and community focal point.*

Objective: Establishment of a downtown accessible staging area for a cross-lake ferry and other forms of water-borne transit (including a permanent destination for the Queen's Cup regatta, and transient boat slips, water taxis).

Objective: Creation of linkages between the lakefront and inland land uses (especially in the downtown and Lakeside commercial districts) that will help spur complementary spin-off development.

Objective: Relocation of existing non-fixed attractions (Siversides, Farmers Market, Milwaukee Clipper) to downtown-waterfront locations to maximize the potential for ancillary development, and maximize the capture of visitor spending (i.e. "synergy").

**\*Goal:** *Maximize the economic development potential of the lake.*

Objective: Maximize patronage of downtown and Lakeside commercial district by visitors drawn to otherwise single-purpose events such as the Queen's Cup regatta, Summer Celebration, Parties-In-The-Park and events at the Frauenthal Theater and Walker Arena.

Objective: Establishment of a Muskegon Port Authority or similar entity (with bonding and condemnation powers) to effectuate port related infrastructural improvements and promotional activities.

Objective: Expand/ Increase Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations on Muskegon Lake.

Objective: Mitigation of the environmental concerns associated with lakefront development, and the various planning issues they pose.

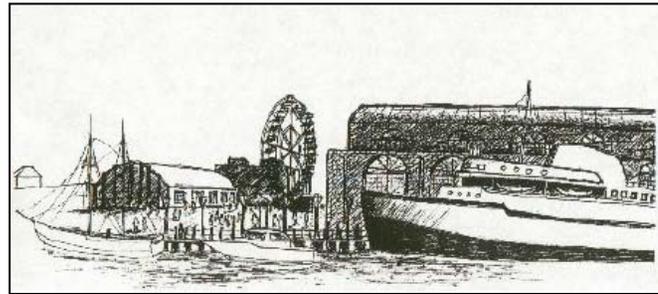
Objective: Increase the mixture of land uses (especially housing) along the lake.

**\*Goal:** Conservation, protection and enhancement of sensitive waterfront resources.

Objective: Mitigation of the impact of new development on existing viewsheds and natural habitats.

Objective: Relocation and concentration of heavy industrial waterfront uses, and the reduction of the conflicts they pose with less intensive uses (such as residential and recreational).

Objective: Preservation and adaptive reuse of water related historic resources such as the Mart Dock.



*Lakefront focal point containing a variety of sites and activities within in walking distance of each other, and downtown.*

Objective: Increase awareness of natural features and wildlife habitat, and encourage zoning and design criteria for the protection of same.

Objective: Elimination/ mitigation of existing environmental hazards.

**\*Goal:** Enhance the attractiveness and accessibility (physical and visual) of the lakefront.

Objective: Accommodation of various forms of passive and active forms of public recreation along the lake.

Objective: Unification of the lakefront through an integrated network of pedestrian/ bicycle pathways, lookouts, public finger piers, and public access easements.

Objective: Application of general design standards for lakefront development which seek to preserve views, insure public access, and promote environmentally sensitive land use.

Objective: Reduction of land use conflicts. Mitigation of land uses that are uncomplimentary or conflicting.

Objective: Buffering lakefront industrial facilities that are the most visually and environmentally obtrusive and/ or “animating” their appearance.

# Part I

## Current Conditions and Recommendations For the Future

### Historical Overview

Due to the City's industrial legacy, few places along Muskegon Lake's southern shore have been left unaltered by human activity. The extensive lumbering activity which took place in Muskegon during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries resulted in a wholesale re-configuration of the shoreline through dredging, filling and other activities designed to make the shoreline more conducive to shipping.

By the middle of the Century, the lumber industry had largely given way to heavy "smoke stack" industry such as steel production. The cumulative effect of this prolonged and intensive exploitation (utilization) of the natural harbor and its waterfront (a situation certainly not unique to Muskegon) resulted in a series of environmental and land use

issues which, until only recently, appeared intractable.

Although historically utilized for industry and bulk shipping, the City of Muskegon also has a long history as a cross lake passenger port linking many cities on the western side of Lake Michigan to Muskegon. During the off season, ships such as the Milwaukee Clipper were used to transport freight (including vehicles from Detroit) to various ports in Illinois and Wisconsin.

During the height of Great Lakes shipping (post WWII) Muskegon also saw regular shipments from European ports whose ships made their way to Muskegon via the Saint Lawrence Seaway and later, the Erie Canal.



*Former Goodrich Docks*

Over the past several decades, bulk shipping on the Great Lakes has concentrated in fewer ports and reduced in tonnage due to the ascendancy of the interstate highway system and the trucking and containerization it has facilitated. As a smaller Great Lakes port without the infrastructure, or shipping volume required for containerized shipping, Muskegon, has suffered as a result of this new paradigm.

## A. General Land Use

### Existing Conditions

Although much industry has left the shores of Muskegon Lake over the past several decades the physical remnants of its industrial past still remain in the form of the numerous jetties, wharves and docks which dot the shoreline. Because of its history, the southern shoreline of Muskegon Lake has a pronounced “jagged”, or uneven profile which stands in marked contrast to the northern shore which saw much less cutting, filling and dredging.

Although pockets of industrial “scar tissue” can be found along the entire length of shoreline, from Bluffton (sand mining) to the Causeway (power plant), the most intensive industrial uses were generally concentrated between what is today the Great Lakes Marina on the west, to what *was* the Teledyne - Continental Motors property on the east. Along this approximately 3 mile stretch are a number of sites which have been deemed (contaminated) “facilities” pursuant to recent site assessment activities. Many others have been identified as having underground storage tanks (UST sites).

Recent improvements in this area include the SPX development and Heritage Landing, both in the immediate vicinity of downtown. The most pristine sections of shoreline are generally at the extreme east and west. Bluffton/Harbourtown and Richards Park/ Veteran’s Park respectively.

### General Recommendations:

#### *Greater Mixture of Land Uses*

As a visible reminder of the lakefront’s utilitarian history, large tracts of waterfront land remain in a semi-industrial or *de-industrialized* state. Much of this property, although rezoned for more waterfront compatible use, remains in the hands of a relatively small number of landowners who have not sought to redevelop their properties to their “highest and best” use..

The reasons for the present inertia may include: residual commercial/ industrial activity, environmental cleanup concerns, land speculation and/or a lack of recent development pressure. Although greatly improved over recent years by projects such as Heritage Landing and the Great Lakes and Hartshorn marinas, these facilities have generally failed to



spur significant private investment along the water.

By increasing the mixture of land uses along the lake to include more housing, public recreation and other waterfront compatible uses, the city will become physically oriented to the water instead of turning its back to it. With a wider variety of uses, the lakeshore will be animated with a variety of year-round, 24 hour activities, and more fully integrated into the larger city.



*Bird's eye view of the southern shore of Muskegon Lake, circa 1940. Much of the industry that fueled the City's booming wartime economy, was located directly along the shore.*



*The shoreline in the 1990s. Sections of waterfront have been reclaimed for public use such as Heritage Landing (foreground).*

### *Relocation of Industry*

Increasing the mixture of land uses along the lake requires opening up large sections of shoreline for uses such as recreation and housing. In many instances this may involve the movement of existing land intensive activities such as industry and bulk handling in order to effectuate the necessary changes.

Although certain “benign” industries should be allowed to remain on the lake, the relocation of several non-water dependent industries inland would have to be facilitated. Those industries that are dependent on water frontage should be allowed to remain on the lake, or relocated to a “central port” location.

Key objectives in relocation are mitigating existing visual and traffic impacts, the utilization of existing deep water berths and the availability of nearby transportation linkages.

### *Unify the Lakefront and Improve Public Access.*

As alluded to in the introduction, existing public access points along the lake

are rather disjointed and poorly linked. The City has already undertaken remedial efforts in this regard through the construction of Shoreline Drive



*A “step down” development pattern would help accentuate Muskegon’s modest topography and protect views. The lakeward end of Third Street should terminate with a strong visual element.*

and the pending construction of the Lakeshore Trail; a project designed to serve as the recreational spine of the waterfront.

Expanding on the success of projects such as the aforementioned Lakeshore Trail as well as Heritage Landing should be a top priority of the City’s lakefront redevelopment efforts. New

recreational nodes should be created which tie into the bike trail. Active recreational spaces for sports activities, are particularly needed.

### *Downtown - Waterfront Focal Point*

An equally critical land use goal, and one directly related to the above, is to “wed” downtown to the lakefront. The *downtown* waterfront should be used to accommodate a variety of public and quasi-public facilities that will both feed, and be fed, by downtown.

(Aquarium, cross-lake ferry, Maritime Museum, public pier, housing, outdoor markets, shops, planetarium-observatory, arboretum, botanical gardens, amphitheater, public sports complex etc.)

It is critical that these facilities be located in a fairly dense pattern so that pedestrian cross-traffic and spill-over into downtown is fostered. The dedication of a waterfront site primarily for public cultural and recreational use, in direct proximity to downtown, will help catalyze the “synergy” currently lacking in both.

## **B. Commercial & Industrial Development**

### **Existing Conditions**

While bulk handling no longer dominates the shores of Muskegon Lake, it still exists in the likes of such companies as LaFarge, Verplank, J. Bultema, and Sappi Paper. Since their existence depends wholly or in part on a lakeside location for the loading and unloading of large quantities of raw materials, they cannot easily adapt to inland locations and therefore must maintain a presence on the lake.

The most problematic issue surrounding these industries is not necessarily what they do, but *where* they do it. Their dispersal along the shoreline often causes them to interface poorly with residential and recreational land uses. This is especially true in the Lakeside area, which along with Bluffton and the Nims neighborhood, contains some of the City's most desirable housing stock.

Lighter commercial activity is generally associated with the various public and private marinas which are interspersed among industrial, or formerly

industrial lands. The largest of these is the Great Lakes Marina in Lakeside.



Besides the downtown central business district, the largest commercial use concentrations are found at the Lakeside commercial strip (neighborhood commercial), and in the vicinity of east Western Avenue, immediately northeast of downtown and parallel to U.S. 31. The sole office building directly fronting on the lake is the SPX headquarters at Terrace Point.

### **Recommendations**

### *Port Development*

At present, bulk shipping operations are spread rather thinly along almost the entire southern shore of Muskegon Lake. This distribution is one of the principle reasons why large stretches of shoreline are currently under-utilized and off limits to the public. In addition, these uses tend to be land intensive which makes their presence on the lake very conspicuous and often unsightly.

As a means to both promote shipping activity and to encourage more compatible lakefront development, it is recommended that a long-term goal of the City should be to work toward relocating and clustering heavy industrial and commercial port operations. A preferred location would be one which is visually and environmentally least obtrusive, and where access to the City's transportation linkages to the state highway system is also available.

(See discussion of Port Facilities Node, Part II below).

With adequate public infrastructure, concentration of such activities in a primary area may eventually encourage the development of more technologically advanced cargo operations (i.e. containerization) which would increase the attractiveness of Muskegon as a cargo port.

Modernized cargo facilities would promote economies-of-scale in the existing break bulk operations found along the lake by allowing existing bulk handlers to share facilities. They may also promote more Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations. These facilities may be best planned and managed under the aegis of a port/ harbor authority (see appendix).

#### *Other Recommendations:*

~~□ Promote the formation of a Muskegon Port Authority/ Harbor Commission to manage commercial shipping, and ancillary development along the lake.~~

□ Work with private industry, U.S. Customs and the Department of Com-

merce to designate more Foreign Trade Zones along Muskegon Lake.

□ Provide suitable public infrastructure and access at favored port operation location.

□ Work with existing industries to help improve or mitigate their physical presence on the lake.

□ Work with Lakeside businesses to enhance the Lakeside commercial strip.

## **C. Recreation & Natural Habitat Areas**

### **Existing Conditions**

Like the scattered industrial/ bulk handling operations along the lake, public recreational land uses are distributed fairly evenly along the shoreline. While such a distribution is far more desirable than in the case of the former, they are poorly linked, and sometimes difficult to find - a situation likely to be greatly remedied by the pending construction of the Lakeshore Trail bicycle/ pedestrian path.

Many of these recreational facilities are small, residual lands, or property converted/ adapted from formerly industrial use. The most celebrated of these is Heritage Landing which serves as the City's premier festival park.

Noticeably absent are "active" recreational areas containing ballfields, swimming, playgrounds etc. One of the few remaining natural habitat areas of any size is in the vicinity of Richard's Park, where the tributaries of the Muskegon River flow into Muskegon Lake.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Integration of Recreational Facilities*

A fundamental component of a revitalized lakefront is increasing the number and sizes of recreational land uses along the lake. Equally important however, is the goal of creating more

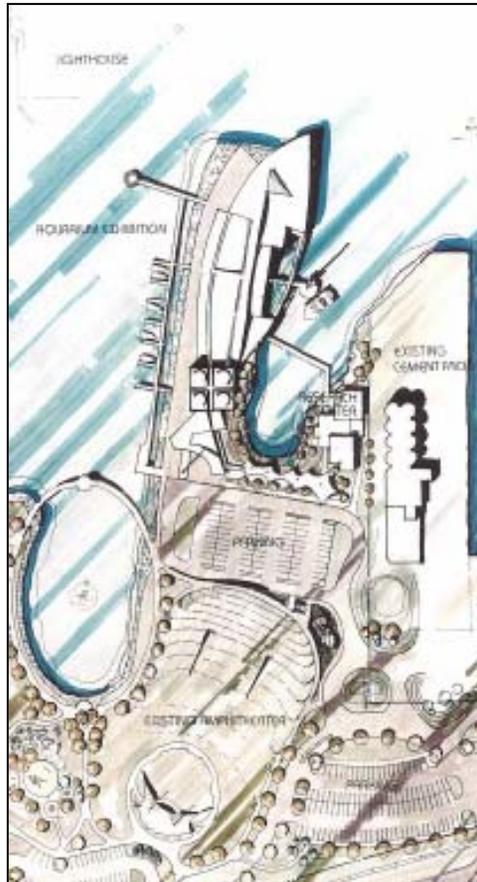


*The Lakeshore Trail project will help connect the many sites and activity areas along the shoreline. Clockwise: Richard's Park, Heritage Landing, Fisherman's Landing and the Mart Dock.*

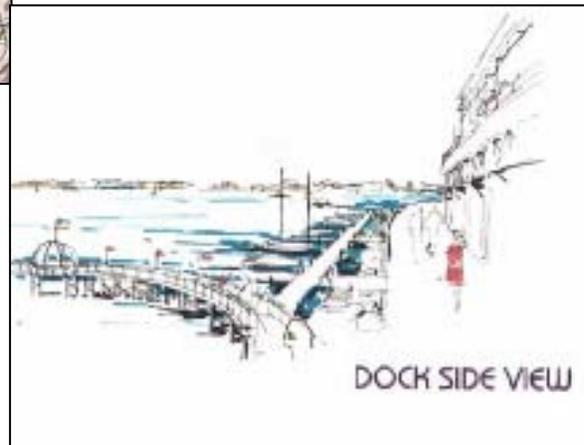


effective physical linkages between them. Although the aforementioned Lakeshore Trail project will effectively achieve this, large sections of the proposed bicycle-pedestrian path are set well back from the shoreline and therefore physically and visually off limits to the water's edge.

While the jagged profile of the shoreline clearly makes the development of a continuous pedestrian network of shore-hugging trails impractical (to say nothing of the legal and financial issues involved), large tracts of water frontage



suitable to the development of esplanades and boardwalks do exist and should be pursued. These could be obtained via easement (preferred), purchase (less preferred), or condemnation (least preferred). Where the profile of the shore makes this physically infeasible (i.e. where there are numerous jetties and land spits), a series of trail spurs, finger piers and lookouts should be developed. These should be connected to, and architecturally consistent with, the proposed Lakeshore Trail. These spurs could run perpendicular to the Trail, and would be chosen for maximum contact with the water, and widest possible view radius.

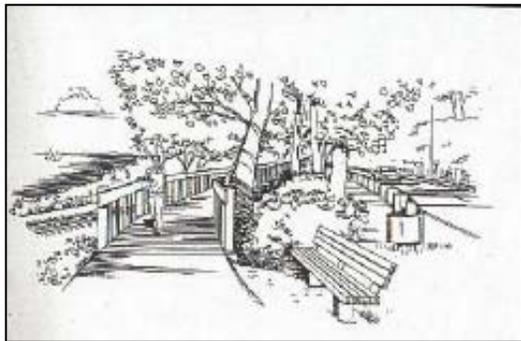
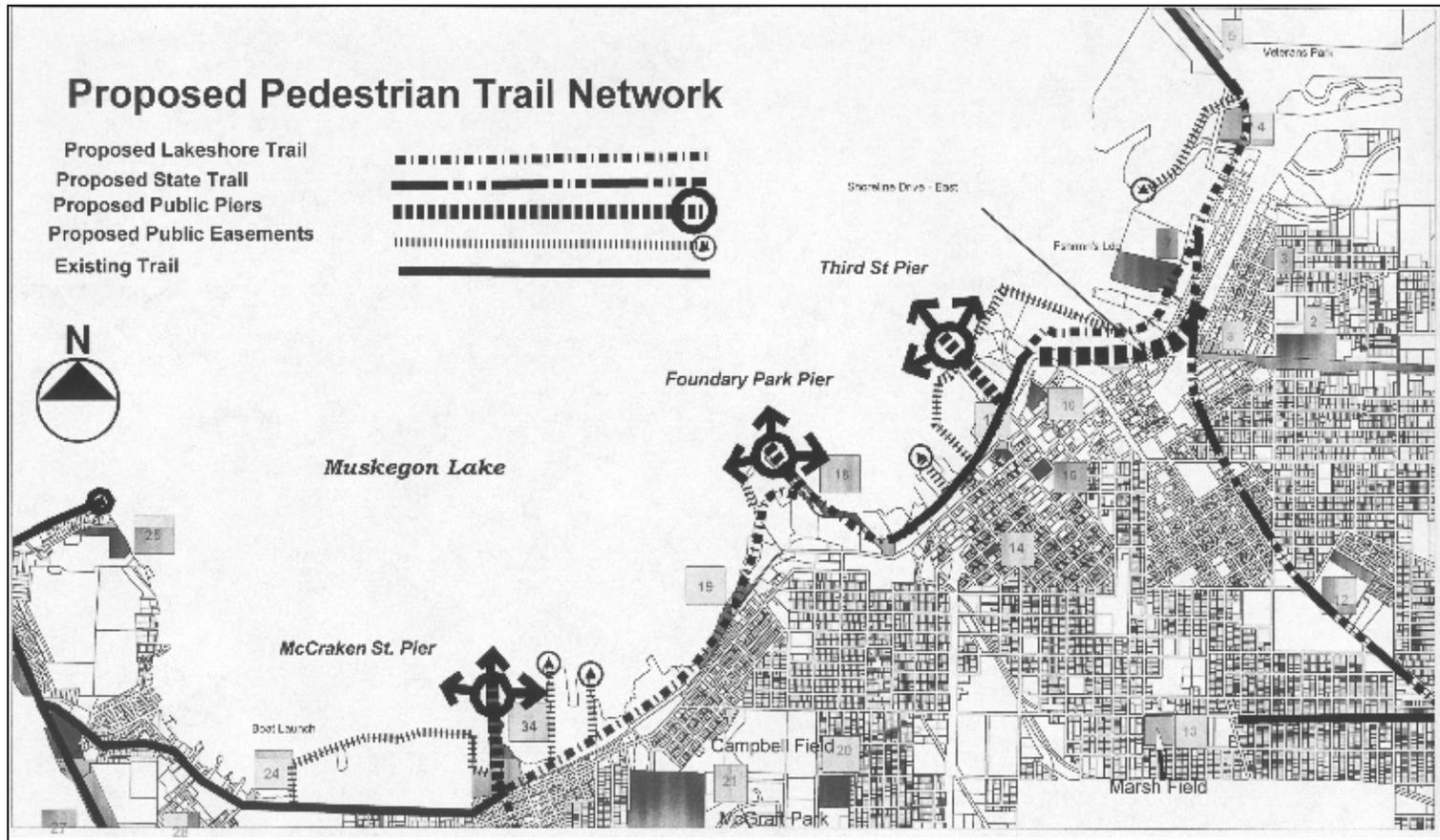


### *Funding Sources:*

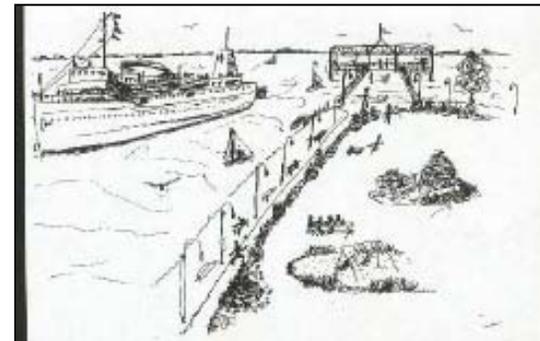
Possible funding sources include Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Coastal Management Grants and Clean Michigan Initiative (CMI) grant funds.

### *Other Recommendations:*

- Increase the number of active recreational spaces for activities such as swimming and sports.
- Increase the number of transient boat slips (especially proximate to downtown).
- Capitalize on the educational potential of natural habitat areas by developing nature walks that highlight/profile indigenous wildlife and plant species.
- Work to increase the size of - and create more effective linkages between - isolated areas of natural habitat (wildlife corridors).
- Work with landowners to donate, dedicate, and develop public access easements. Create zoning incentives for same



*Above and left: Proposed pedestrian trail system. Trail spurs (perhaps in the form of public piers) should be developed on major jetties to take advantage of superior views. Right: Conceptual focal point element at the end of Third Street.*



## D. Residential Development

### Existing Conditions

Despite the fact that some of the City's most remarkable neighborhoods are located on the bluffs overlooking Muskegon Lake (e.g. Bluffton, Nims and Lakeside), the immediate southern shore of Muskegon Lake contains very little in the way of residential development of any type. Small enclaves of "high end" housing can be found in Harbourn town, Bluffton, and in a newer gated community near Cole's Bakery however large stretches of shoreline contain no housing whatsoever.

With the exception of Bluffton, the housing that presently exists directly along the shoreline is mostly of the large single family variety. Higher density residential development (apartments, condos etc.) is noticeably absent along the water's edge, as in most parts of the City as a whole.

Although separated from the lake by the chasm formed by U.S. 31, the Jackson Hill neighborhood north of downtown has the highest concentration of

vacant lots, and one of the lowest population densities of any neighborhood in the City. Large tracts of cleared land in this neighborhood, along with its proximity to the lake, makes it potentially ripe for redevelopment.

### Recommendations:

#### *Mixed-Density/ Clustered Housing*

Along with recreational, and commercial land uses, housing is a key ingredient in creating an active year-round waterfront. As such, a primary objective of lakefront redevelopment efforts should be to encourage more - and a greater variety of - residential development in select waterfront locations.

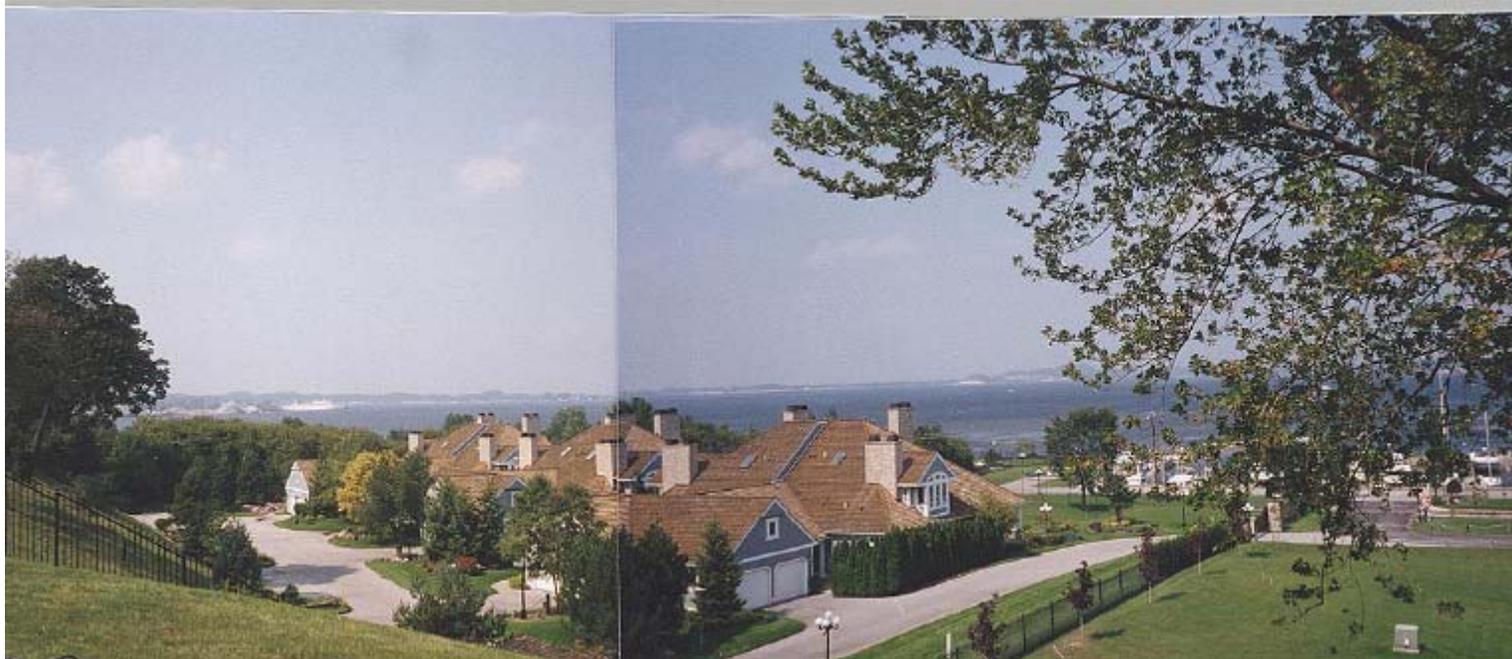
Such housing could take the form of large single-family detached dwellings to multi-unit attached apartments and condominiums (or combinations thereof) depending on location and physical site constraints. Whatever forms they take, it is important that a clustered (PUD) site planning approach is used in order to assure: (1) efficiency in the provision of infrastructure and utilities and, (2) maximum physical and visual access to the shoreline.

#### *Other Recommendations:*

- Continue to promote the adaptive reuse of older industrial buildings in the vicinity of the lake and Downtown for housing (Amazon, Shaw-Walker).
- Work to encourage new lakefront employers to adopt walk-to-work programs for their employees.
- Promote the construction of new housing units in Downtown and Jackson Hill.
- Promote mixed-use commercial-residential projects containing second floor housing.



*Muskegon Lake offers tremendous opportunities for various forms of residential development. Building such as Shaw-Walker and the Amazon (left), have excellent loft/ condo reuse potential. Lower density development such as Harbourtown and Coles (bottom) has only recently arrived on the shores of Muskegon Lake. Below: The “Actor’s Colony” at Bluffton.*



*Waterfront Redevelopment Sub-Plan 19*

## **E. Historic Resources Inventory**

### **Existing Conditions**

Few of the City's impressive collection of historic buildings are actually located directly on the lakefront. Most are located in the heart of downtown, or in the several designated historic districts contiguous with it. However, contained within the City's premier historic district (Clay-Western) are the waterfront buildings which comprise the historic Mart Dock.

The importance of these buildings goes well beyond their aesthetic qualities. These are Works Progress Administration (WPA) era structures which serve as a lasting reminder of the New Deal's impact in Muskegon. They are also emblematic of the City's seafaring tradition and perhaps best define a industrial iconography of Muskegon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. One (the former Mart Auditorium), served as the City's first public auditorium and ice rink. The other was both a warehouse and passenger terminal for thousands of people who visited the City by ferry

from places such as Chicago, Milwaukee and Sheboygan, WI.

Both buildings add a distinctive historic character to the downtown waterfront, and once restored, could compare favorably to similar waterfront reuse projects in such places as Baltimore (the Powerhouse), San Francisco (Ghiradelli Chocolate Factory, Cannery and Embarcadero), Monterey, CA (Cannery Row), Boston (Fanueil Hall, Quincy Market), Chicago (Navy Pier), Alexandria VA (the Torpedo Factory)

Other waterfront historic resources include the former Waterfront Center and nearby buildings, and the intimately scaled Bluffton "Actor's Colony" with its significant supply of Midwest vernacular beach cottages and bungalows.

A number of non-fixed historic resources also have the potential to provide historic reference points along Muskegon Lake. These include the USS Silversides currently berthed in the Muskegon channel, the Milwaukee Clipper car ferry berthed at the end of the McCracken Street wharf, and the Muskegon Trolley cars which make regular summer runs along Lakeshore Drive.

### **Recommendations:**

#### *Adaptive Re-Use*

- Work with property owners to preserve and/ or adaptively reuse historic properties (Mart Dock, Waterfront Center, Shaw-Walker).
- Increase awareness of historic preservation tax credits, facade improvement grants and other incentives for historically sensitive renovations.
- Dedicate the Bluffton "Actors Colony" as the City's 9<sup>th</sup> historic district, and/ or nominate it to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Work to locate a downtown location for the Silversides and Milwaukee Clipper, and help secure grants and in-kind services for same.



*The Mart Dock was one of the few additions to the City's building stock during the Depression (above). It served as a combination wharf, auditorium and outdoor market.*



*Although the buildings have suffered from poor maintenance over the years, they retain much of their historic character (below). Center: Parapet detail. Inset: Navy Pier, Chicago.*



## F. Urban Design Considerations

The City of Muskegon enjoys some of the most spectacular lake views of any city on the Great Lakes. The numerous bluffs and plateaus offer many panoramic views of Muskegon Lake and surrounding dunes. Through projects such as Shoreline Drive, the Lakeshore Trail, and the dedication of waterfront parks such as Heritage Landing (a former scrap-yard), and Fisherman's Landing the City has taken great strides in reclaiming waterfront land for public use, and improving the general aesthetics of the lakefront.

In spite of these efforts however, there remains a general shortage of public spaces, and an abundance of visual clutter directly along the water. Much of this clutter is composed of large, utilitarian structures, piles of raw materials, salvage materials and other discards of the City's industrial past; many of which conceal or obscure views to the water. In addition, many lakefront properties have a raw, unkempt appearance which makes them appear harsh and forbidding.

Accentuating the lack of visual transition between land and water is the lack of relationship between downtown and waterfront land uses. At present, there are few visual linkages between downtown and the lake. Each are separate entities devoid of any sense of physical unity. Neither place is made more special by its proximity to the other.

### Recommendations:

#### *Waterfront Focal Points*

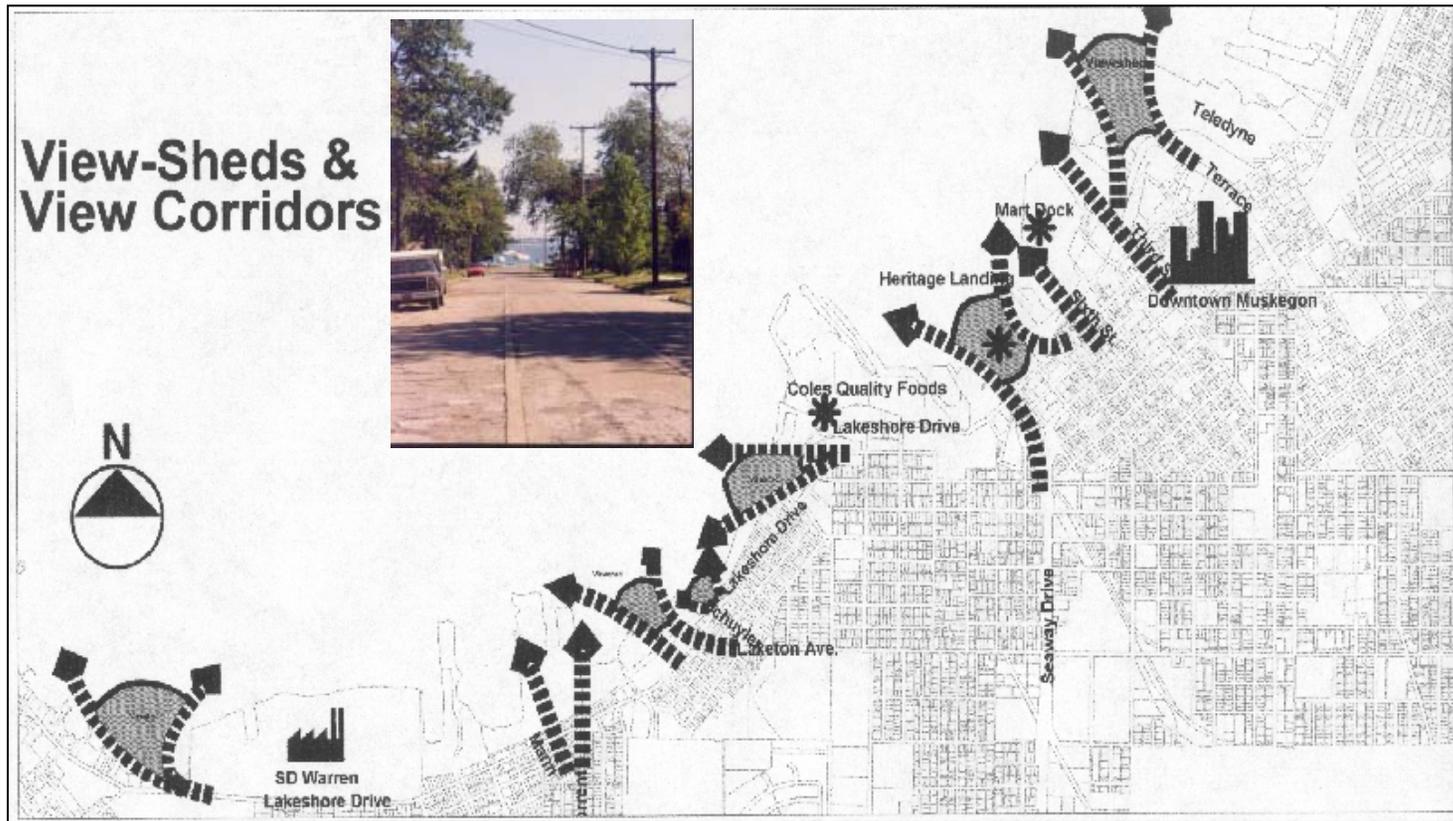
The pavilion at Heritage Landing is a good example of an attention-catching focal point which helps make a visual connection between the lake and downtown. It calls attention to the civic life of the City, and acts as a counterpoint to the City's modest skyline. More importantly, it beckons the passerby to explore it, and the waterfront beyond. Its prominence is made more commanding by the fact that it stands out against the backdrop of Muskegon Lake, and is the first thing to come into view as one approaches



Shoreline Drive from U.S. 31 from the south.

*Silos transformed into public sculpture. Boston, MA. \*Source: "Waterfronts: Cities Reclaim their Edge" Breen & Rigby 1994.*

Despite its high visibility, Heritage Landing is too far removed from the heart of downtown to effectively connect downtown to the lakefront. Sorely needed, are more effective linkages between downtown's primary east-west streets, and where they terminate at Shoreline Drive. The need is especially acute at the end of Third Street, where the otherwise unobstructed view to the lake is made unremarkable by the lack of visual focus at the water's edge.



*The shoreline offers numerous view-scapes worthy of protection. The development pattern in Bluffton, where streets run directly to the water's edge (top), preserves the visual accessibility of the lake. Such a pattern is worthy of duplication in newer waterfront developments.*

*Other Recommendations:*

- Increase the visual “porosity” of the shoreline (more places that allow at least a glimpse of the water.)
- Implement streetscape and design program for the Lakeside commercial district.
- Provide incentives for animating or softening the appearance of industrial facilities along the lake.
- Preserve the industrial *character* of the waterfront. Integrate new buildings/ uses that interface compatibly with this character.
- Promote human-scaled, pedestrian-oriented development along the lake, and in downtown. Promote development that seeks to create a visual connection between downtown and the waterfront.

## **G. Transportation & Circulation**

### **Existing Conditions**

The combination of Lakeshore/ Shoreline Drives forms the principle trans-



portation spine of Muskegon Lake. Major streets which feed into this system are Laketon Avenue, Apple Avenue via Terrace Street, and U.S. Business 31. The western leg of Shoreline Drive, completed in the mid 1990s, serves as the City’s lakefront parkway, and has been credited with increasing access and investment activity along the lake.

Major improvements to the area’s transportation infrastructure are pending completion of Shoreline Drive - East, and the Lakeshore Trail bicycle path. Both projects are being developed

concurrently as a means to unify transportation and land uses along the lake.

In terms of commercial transportation, a number of deep draft berths can be found at various scattered sites along the lake. The most heavily used among these is the dock at the CMS power plant at the extreme northeastern edge of the lake. This dock receives frequent shipments of coal to help fuel power plant operations. Running parallel to Lakeshore/ Shoreline is one of the few remaining active railroad corridors left in the City and operated by CSX Railroad.

Despite periodic plans to reestablish cross-lake ferry service, water-borne passenger transit has been dormant in Muskegon since the retirement of the Milwaukee Clipper in the mid 1970s.

### *Lakeshore Drive*

Although the current “level of

service” of lakefront streets is considered good to excellent, new housing developments underway at Bluffton Bay and along McCracken will likely cause a noticeable increase in traffic on Lakeshore Drive (especially in the summer months). If other proposed developments materialize (such as at the present-day, MeKoff Dock), a further increase in traffic volume can be expected.

An area of current concern, is the heavy volume of truck traffic generated by Sappi Paper, along Lakeshore Drive. Heavy shipment volumes and cramped conditions at the entrance to the mill, have resulted in frequent truck queues as trucks attempt to negotiate the mill’s gates.

### **Recommendations:**

#### *Unifying the Waterfront*

The pending completion of Shoreline Drive - East is widely viewed as a catalyst for redevelopment of major sections of shoreline. One planning objective of the new road is for it to serve as the new downtown segment of U.S. Business 31; thus allowing traffic to be

diverted from Muskegon and Webster Avenues.

While this will likely make the core downtown more pedestrian friendly, it will accentuate the existing “divide” between downtown and the lakefront, unless steps are taken to mitigate this effect.

Possible solutions include boldly marked/ textured crosswalks at Third Street and Shoreline Drive, and at Seventh and Shoreline. If future traffic volumes warrant, pedestrian bridges and visual devices (i.e. pavers, boldly marked crosswalks etc.) intended to strengthen the physical connection between downtown and the waterfront should be explored.

#### *McCracken Corridor*

Clearly, one of the most pressing transportation issues facing the City is the current traffic volumes on Lakeshore Drive in Lakeside. With possible plant expansions at Sappi and with new residential developments at Bluffton Bay, along McCracken and at Harbortown, (and with more lakefront housing proposed under this plan) it is important that alternative transportation

routes be developed - or traffic demand management measures implemented - to relieve the burden of this route. Improvements to McCracken Street would be a logical first step in attempting to disperse traffic in this area.

#### *Other Recommendations:*

- Institute a “way-finding” system in downtown and along the primary routes to Shoreline Drive (Apple, Laketon/ Seaway) designed to highlight the locations of key downtown and waterfront attractions.
- Develop the necessary transportation and infrastructure needed for more fully developed port operations *at the desired location* for such operations.
- If future circumstances warrant, develop an overpass at the

current junction of U.S. 31 and the Causeway (Veteran's Memorial Highway).

- Work to develop a staging area for a cross-lake ferry near downtown.
- Work with Sappi officials to better manage truck traffic volume on Lakeshore Drive. Options include: physical modifications to entrance and unloading areas, as well as traffic flow management measures such as, restrictions/prohibitions on truck arrivals/ departures during commuting hours.
- Further study the development of alternative route from Lakeshore Drive to Sherman Blvd.

## **H. Zoning**

### **Existing Conditions**

With the exception of higher density residential areas, the City's existing lakeshore zoning includes almost every zoning classification found within the larger City. A few special designations such as Lakefront Recreation (L-R) and "Waterfront Marine" (W-2) are used to address the special types of land uses

which are encouraged along the lake (i.e. restaurants, hotels, recreational facilities).

Typical of most zoning schemes in mature urban areas, many aspects of the City's current zoning appear largely to affirm historic land uses, rather than attempting to change them in any profound way. Besides the aforementioned W-2 and L-R, the major classifications include Industrial (I-2), Open Space Conservation (OSC), and Business (B-2). Conspicuously absent, are most residential classifications although most would be allowed in other zones as a permitted or special use.

### **Recommendations:**

#### *Lakefront P.U.D.*

In attempting to control the quality of development in sensitive lakeside areas, a Planned Unit Development (PUD) overlay zone is strongly suggested along the entire lakeshore. PUD should not be construed as an additional layer of regulatory control, but rather as a way to encourage a superior level of design, responsive to the particular characteristics of a given site.

Primary goals of such oversight are to encourage a higher level of aesthetics, preserve/ protect view-sheds, provide public access, and promote environmentally sensitive design in exchange for greater site plan flexibility.

Integral to an effective PUD program, is the adoption of specific design criteria for all residential, waterfront marine, commercial and industrial zones along the lake. Design considerations should include:

- Detached or recessed garages and carports (residential areas).
- Maximum setbacks or "build-to" lines (residential and commercial areas).
- Maximum/ minimum residential lot sizes (residential areas).
- Discourage/ prohibit gated communities (residential areas).

□ Extension of street grid to the lakeward side of Lakeshore/ Shoreline Drives (all areas where feasible or practical).

□ Require larger commercial buildings to be situated at right angles to the shoreline (except where a different treatment is warranted).

□ Limit building “footprint” size through floor area ratio (FAR) or other bulk control devices (commercial and industrial).

□ Promote/ require a reduction in the visual mass of larger buildings through such design devices as recessions and protrusions in the building wall, gables, L-shapes, change of roof height/ pitch etc. (all areas).

□ Prohibit “pole-barn” type construction. (unarticulated building walls, metal surfaces etc.)

□ Encourage buildings that have maximum transparency (numerous windows and other openings). Limit use of tinted or reflective glass).

□ Require parking lots to have generous perimeter and interior landscaping.

□ Apply maximum height and/or bulk restrictions in sensitive view-sheds. (\*Note: Variance should be allowed if it can be shown that development minimally or favorably impacts an existing view-shed. Variance may also be allowed if the developer mitigates the view impact by narrowing the building footprint (bulk), orienting the building at an angle to the shoreline, or by dedicating and developing public access easement.)

## I. Environmental Issues

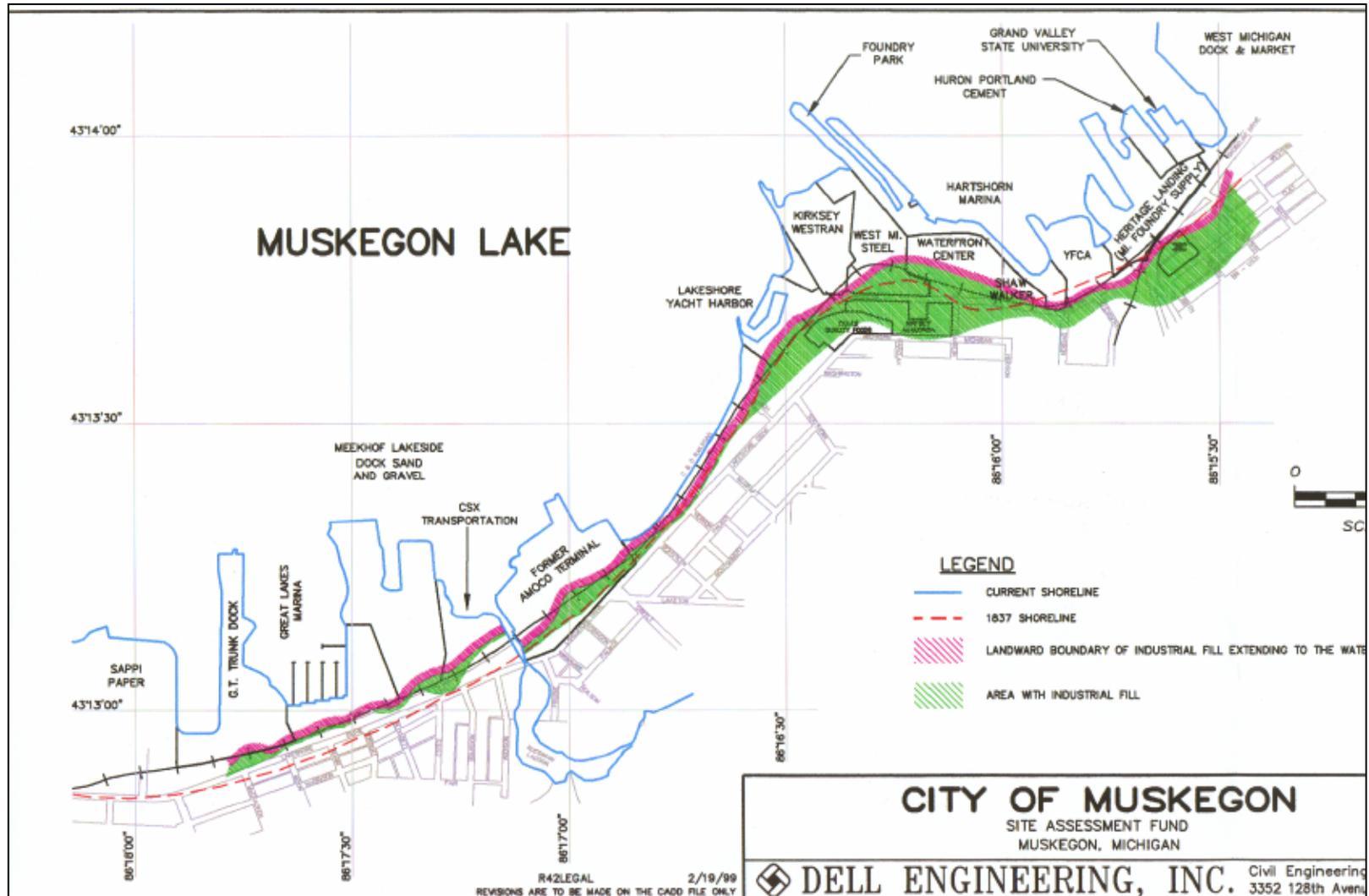
As discussed above, the historical development of the Muskegon Lake shoreline involved extensive cutting, filling and dredging to accommodate waterfront dependent industry and commerce. It is widely known that much of the fill material used to create the numerous land spits and jetties were waste materials originating from these industries themselves; most notably foundry sands and lumber mill debris.

Foundry sand was commonly used as fill throughout the City, and is generally considered hazardous if disturbed. The latter material is mostly harmless (benign), but is notoriously unstable and often requires additional filling to prevent settling.

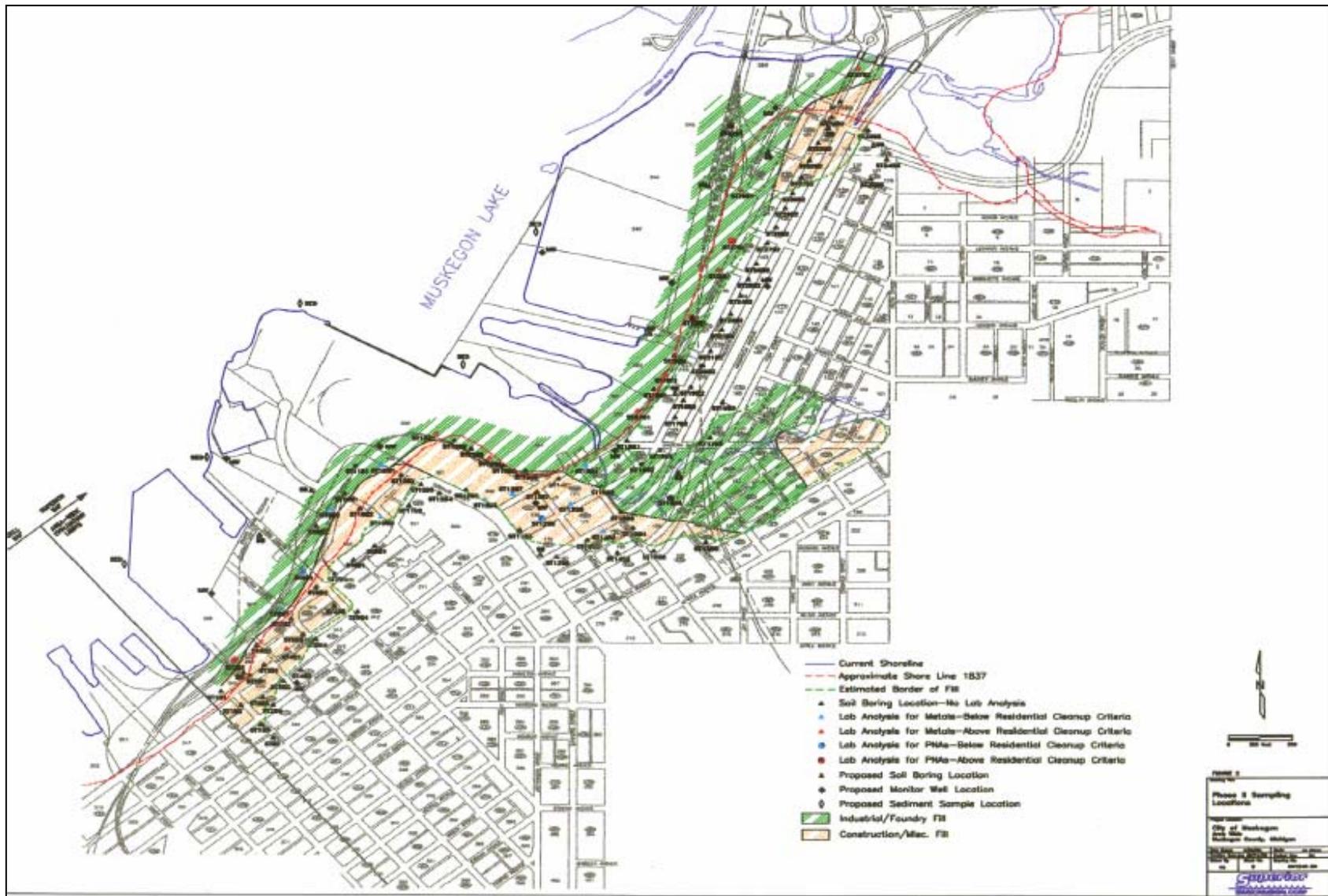
Other potential hazards include underground storage tanks especially in the vicinity of the petroleum tank farm where the remaining presence of petroleum based contaminants continues to pose a hazard to Muskegon Lake.

Finally hazardous runoff into Rudimann Creek and other tributaries continue to present hazards to local wildlife. While nearly the entire lakeshore has been classified as a “facility” by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), there are no known CERCLA (Superfund) sites on the southern shore of Muskegon Lake.

As discussed in the *City of Muskegon Master Plan*, and in the *Muskegon Lake Remedial Action Plan (RAP)*,



The maps above show the findings of recent site assessment activities along Muskegon Lake. The dashed red line indicates the approximate location of the shoreline in 1837. The shaded areas represent fill materials; typically: foundry sands, lumber mill waste, and building demolition debris. The map on this page shows the western site assessment area from Heritage Landing west to the Grand Trunk Dock in Lakeside. \*Source: Dell Engineering.



The eastern site assessment area from Mart Dock to CMS Energy. \* Source: Superior Environmental Corp.

he lake continues to be a DEQ “Area of Concern”. This is due to continued high levels of contaminants found in Muskegon Lake and its many tributaries.

Most of these contaminants are residual affects from previous industrial practices (i.e. leeches from hazardous fill and releases from historically contaminated sediments) as well as current industrial and municipal discharges. Other toxins enter the watershed through “non-point source” runoff originating from urban storm water and agricultural activities (i.e. animal waste, pesticides, fertilizers etc.).

According to the 1994 RAP update, there has been no detectable deterioration or improvement in the water quality since the time the original RAP was drafted in 1987. According to the document cited, toxicity levels at 14 of the 15 sites sampled as part of the RAP update exceeded federal EPA standards. Problem areas include: Ryerson Creek, the 11<sup>th</sup> Street outfall, Ruddiman Creek and points near Sappi Paper.

(\* Many of the recommendations below expound upon those previously contained in the City’s *Master Plan* and the *Muskegon Lake RAP*.)

## **Recommendations**

- Work with Sappi Paper, and Consumers Energy (Cobb Plant) to mitigate the effects of olfactory emissions.

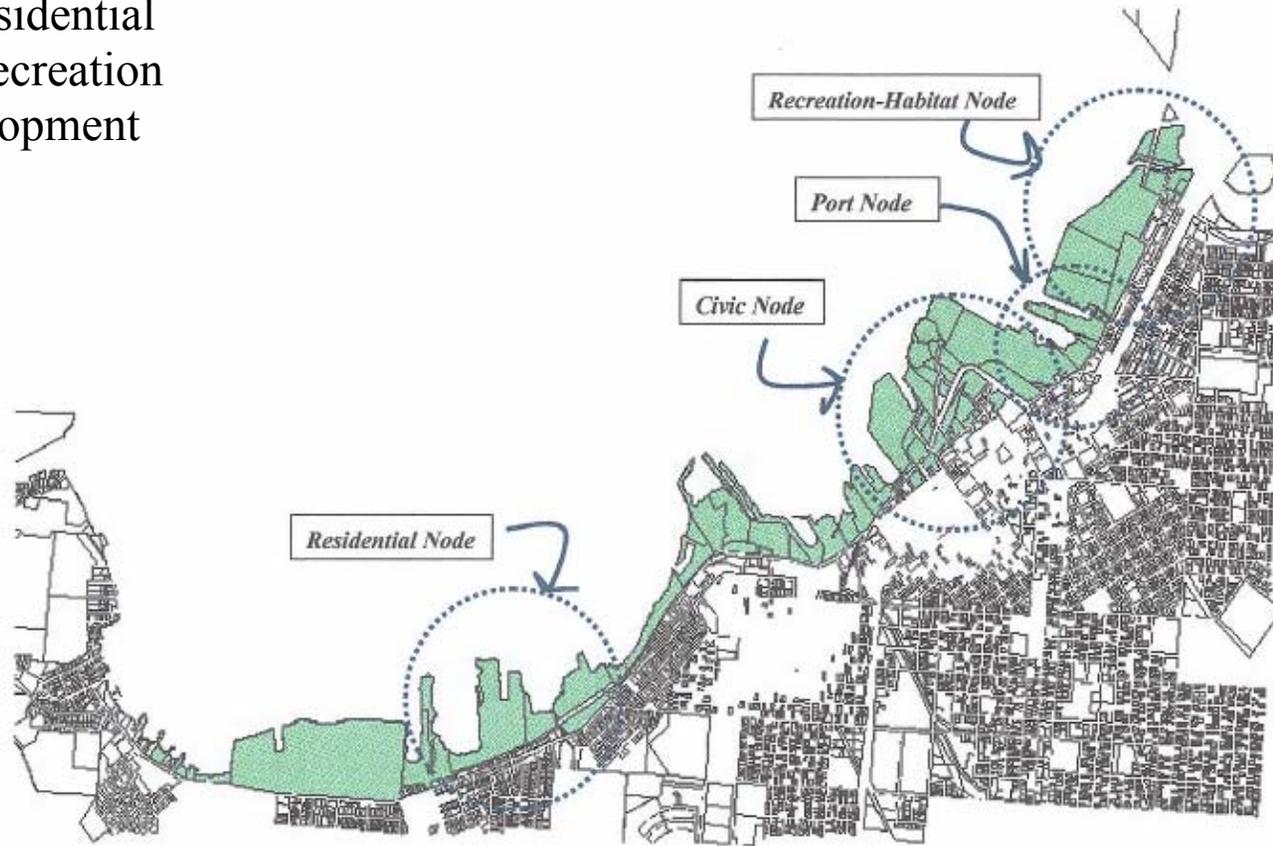


- Work to relocate existing heavy industry inland, or to a central port location.
- Aggressively promote the incentives offered by the City of Muskegon’s Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, and Clean Michigan Initiative to encourage environmental cleanup and redevelopment along the lakeshore.
- Increase public awareness of recent changes in liability laws designed to protect “innocent” brownfield investors.
- Identify additional lakefront properties for future MDEQ and EPA Site Assessment/ Remediation grants.
- Organize a consortium consisting of: DNR, DEQ, Soil Conservation District, Muskegon Lake Public Advisory Council (PAC), Grand Valley State Water Resources Institute, the Lake Michigan Partnership (U of M), and private landowners to identify, eliminate/ mitigate non point sources of contamination
- Work with the above groups to develop a program, or series of guidelines to avoid/ mitigate future habitat loss associated with new waterfront development.
- Produce and implement institutional environmental response guidelines to address known fill materials.
- Complete Area-Wide Site Assessment, including an approved Baseline Environmental Analysis (BEA) for the entire lakeshore.

# Part II

## Lakefront Nodes:

- Civic/ Cultural
- Resort/ Residential
- Habitat/ Recreation
- Port Development



## Lakefront Nodes

As stated in the introduction, the conceptual framework of this plan is premised on the designation of four primary land use nodes along the Muskegon lakefront: recreation/ natural habitat, residential, commercial/ industrial and public/ institutional. The nodes, described below, were selected for their physical characteristics and location, the level of current infrastructure, and their compatibility with surrounding land uses.

The node designations are not meant to preclude development identified primarily with one particular node, at other locations along the lake, or the mixing of uses between nodes. For instance, it may be perfectly acceptable, and in fact desirable, to have housing near port facilities even though housing is most strongly associated with resort/ residential development (of the type envisioned for Lakeside). Similarly commercial uses, albeit limited in some cases, may be appropriate at each node and in the stretches of shoreline in between nodes. In all cases, recreational uses and public access to the shoreline are encouraged.

Although a mixture of land uses is typically desirable, to assure year-round use, there are instances where concentrating uses is advantageous either to contain adverse impacts, or to catalyze positive ones. Such affects are also accounted for in the nodal concept outlined below.

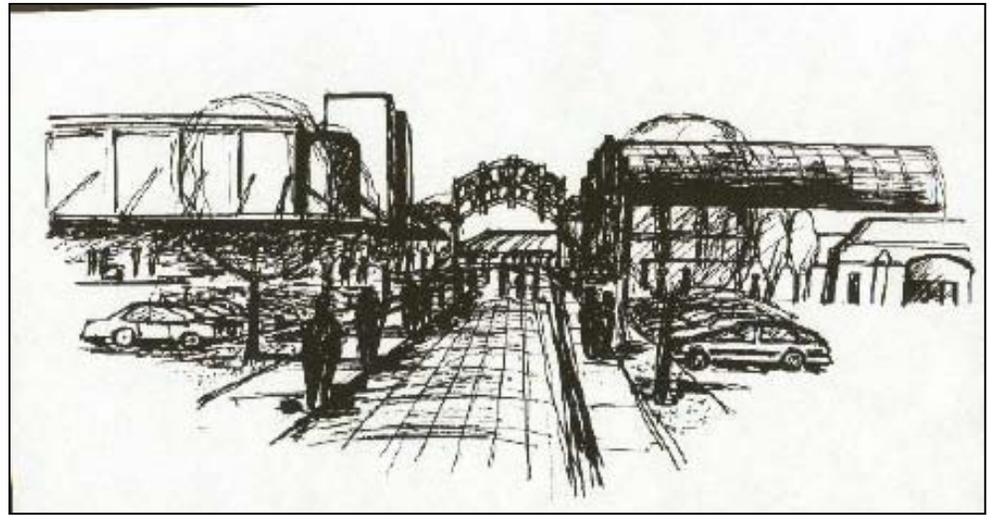
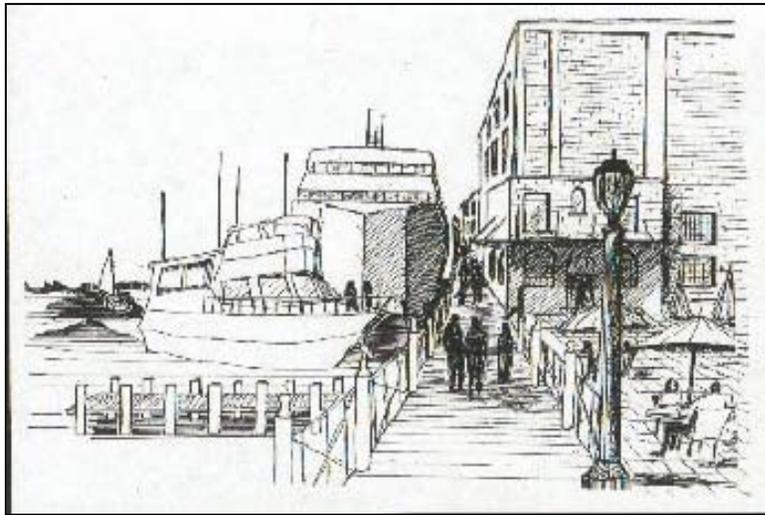
For instance, while certain port operations may actually help “animate”, or add interest to the waterfront, *heavy* port operations and aggregate storage are best concentrated at one particular area to mitigate impacts on (or take advantage of) area infrastructure, to reduce noise and other environmental and visual impacts. On the other hand, cultural and “tourist” facilities are best concentrated near downtown where they can form a “critical mass” of activities whose economic benefits can spill-over into the heart of the City.

In short, the nodal concept should not be interpreted, or applied rigidly. By design, the boundaries are both porous and overlapping.

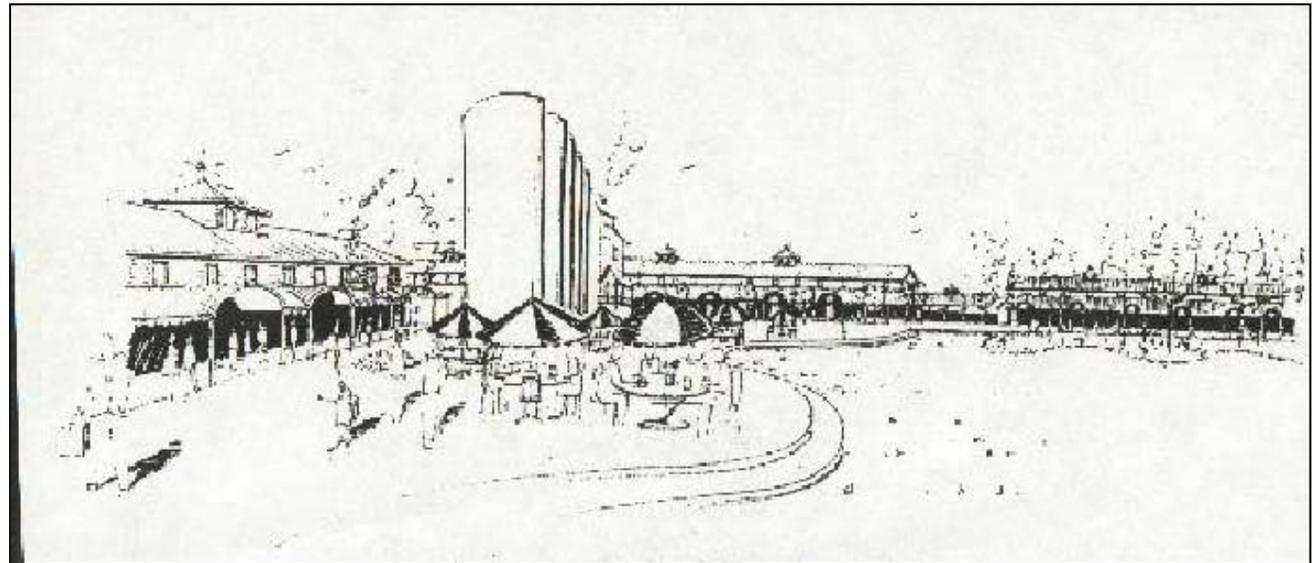
### A. Civic/ Cultural (Downtown Waterfront)

The Civic & Cultural node is conceived as the centerpiece of the lakefront, and a principle focal point for the entire City and region. Because of this dual role, it is important that it is visually linked to downtown, and be physically integrated with it in terms of site planning and streetscape. It is also important that the activities planned at this location be distributed densely enough to encourage pedestrian cross-traffic and spill-over into downtown.

Principle uses appropriate for this node include those recommended in the Master Plan, and repeated (augmented) here: Aquarium, Planetarium-Observatory, Arboretum-Botanical Gardens, Great Lakes Maritime/ Industry Museum, outdoor recreation/ sports facilities, municipal fishing pier, hotels, conference center/ research institute(s), produce/ seafood market, restaurants, ferry landing, transient boat slips, amphitheater,



*The vignettes shown on this page express a design vocabulary consistent with the industrial origins of the Mart Dock. Preservation and adaptive reuse of the original brick structures, and integration of new construction consistent with their character, would provide an historic “wharf” theme for the downtown waterfront. Uses appropriate to this site include: ferry terminal (above left), shops and outdoor market among others.*

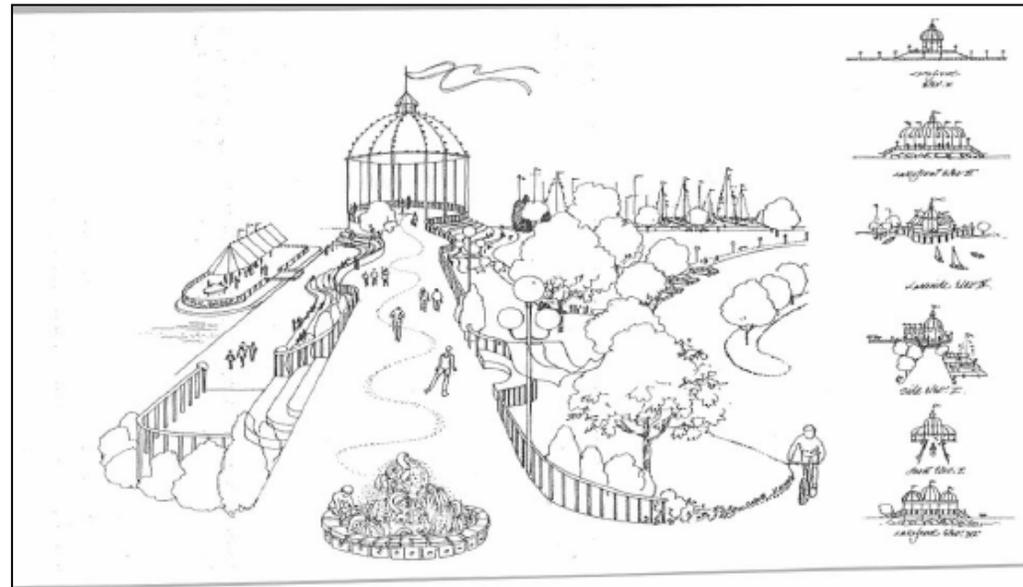
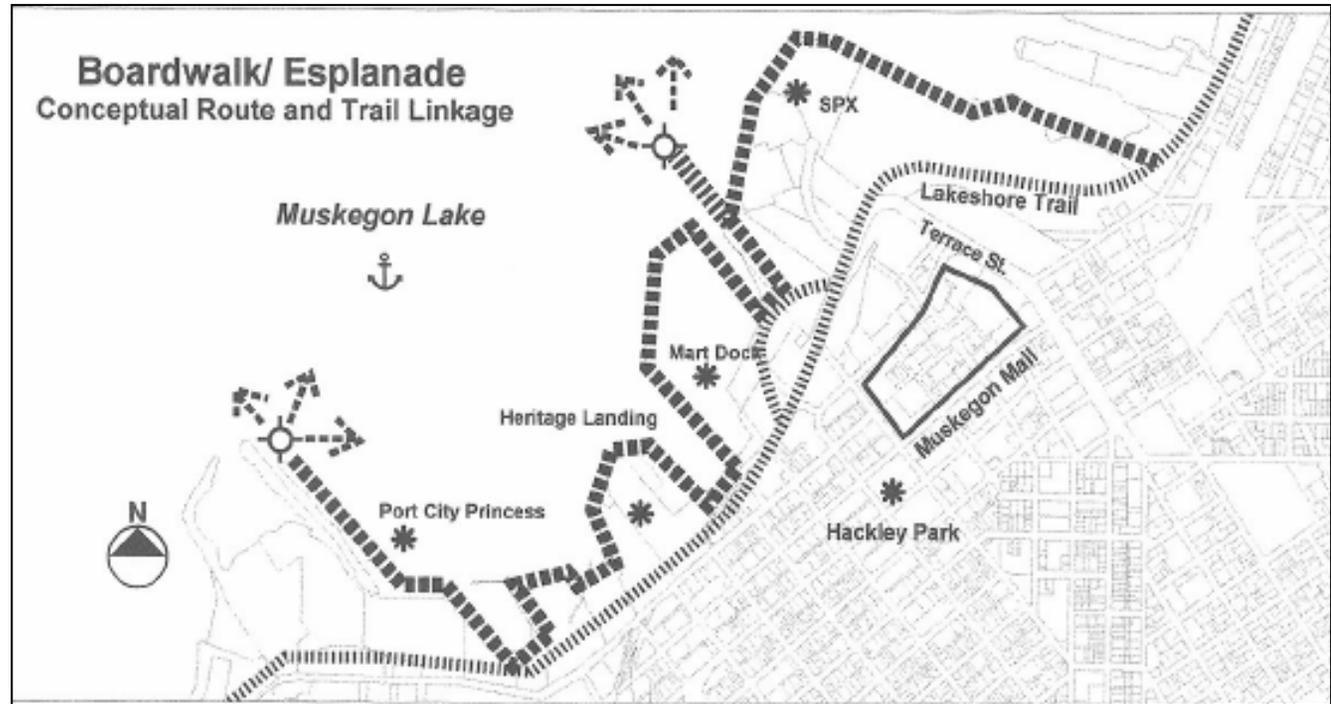


arboretum/ sculpture gardens and limited condo/ apartment housing.

Although a waterfront baseball stadium is not incompatible with the uses described above, such a facility requires large amounts of parking and is used only infrequently. Therefore, it would be best located on the eastern edge of this node (Teledyne), where its presence would not overwhelm or “strand” other nearby uses.

### *Funding Sources*

In addition to private sector investment, possible funding sources for these projects could come from a variety of sources including: donations or endowments, CMI (environmental cleanup and new construction), Coastal Management grants (recreational facilities), EDA and MJC loans and grants (typically projects tied to job creation), Federal TEA-21 grants (transportation projects with an historic preservation and/or “intermodal” aspect) as well as, EDA Brownfield Assessment Demonstration Pilot grants, and DEQ Site Assessment



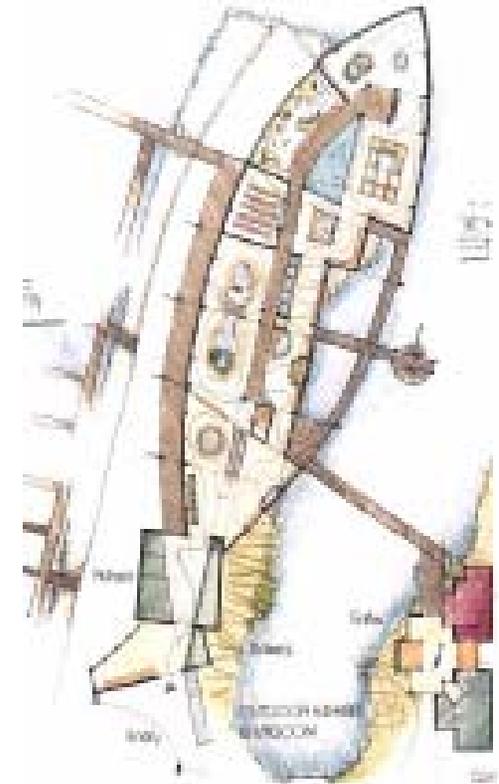


Opposite page: The Civic Node should be tied together with an esplanade (top) directly along the water's edge. A focal point element on axis with Third Street (bottom), would provide a badly needed visual linkage between downtown and the waterfront. \* Drawing by Colette Klukos.

This page: Conceptual site plan for the Mart Dock (top). New construction includes: Great Lakes Museum (6), indoor/outdoor sports complex (1), hotel (10).

Bottom: Early conceptual rendering and site plan of a proposed aquarium for property near Heritage Landing.

\* Hooker/ DeJong Architects.



## **B. Resort/ Residential - (Lakeside)**

While housing can and should be integrated to varying extents at most points along the lake (excepting areas designated natural habitat), not all types of housing are appropriate for every waterfront location. Factors to consider in residential site planning and design include topography, views and surrounding land uses and architectural styles.

In very general terms, new residential development should relate to existing housing nearby. To the extent that higher land use densities are found in areas closer to the central city, so too should be residential densities in downtown waterside locations. In all cases, there should be a variety of housing styles and types to choose from.

Because of the strongly residential profile of its surroundings, the formerly industrial lowlands immediately east of the Great Lakes Marina, and across from Pinchtown, is best suited for residential use (predominantly of the single-family variety). While other compatible land uses should not be ruled out, this area is a prime location for single-family housing for several rea-

sons which include the proximity to the established neighborhoods of Nims, Lakeside and Bluffton, the commanding views of Muskegon Lake (which would likely be lost on, or possibly obstructed by, more intensive uses).

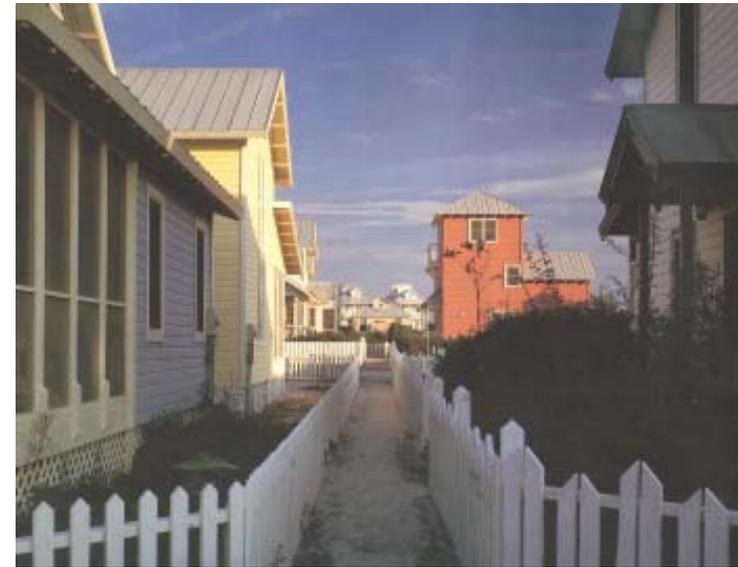
This site is also far enough away from existing lakeside industry that the presence of companies such as Sappi Paper and West Michigan Steel will not likely undermine the market appeal of higher end residential housing.

While limited neighborhood and waterfront serving commercial development could (and should) be incorporated into any new development at this location (preferably along Lakeshore Drive), it should be carefully designed and sited so as not to diminish the existing viewshed, or visually overwhelm the residential character of the area. In general, this means commercial buildings of modest scale with larger buildings located at an angle to the water's edge.

To preserve the view corridors to Muskegon Lake formed by Lakeside's north-south streets, and to harmonize new development with old, new Planned Unit Development at this location should strive to extend Lakeside's

street grid to the water's edge. Gated communities and suburban styled site planning (i.e. excessively wide, curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs) should be discouraged while architectural designs which hint at local vernacular styles with garages recessed or to the rear of the property, should be encouraged. All but the most *benign* industrial uses in the vicinity should be relocated to the maximum extent possible.

Serving as a prototype for the type of residential community appropriate to this location are the neighborhoods of Bluffton and Lakeside themselves, which are some of the City's most stable and desirable residential communities. With its traditional shopping strip (which includes the City's only movie theater), Lakeside is also perhaps the most self-contained. In fact, the neighborhood stands as a model of traditional town planning principles of the type that have enjoyed a resurgent popularity in recent years: a variety of housing



*Top: New “Neo-Traditional” residential development at Seaside, FL. The variety of housing styles grouped along traditional residential streets underscores the distinction between mere subdivision and “community”. \* Source: “The New Urbanism” Peter Katz.*

*Although somewhat less dense, the widely acclaimed Seaside, borrows the scale and architectural vernacular of Muskegon’s own Bluffton (right).*



on smaller lots served by neighborhood commercial uses.

Although most houses are modest in scale and appearance, property values here are among the highest in the City. This undoubtedly is attributable to the general condition of the properties as much as to their proximity to Muskegon Lake. Yet despite the water's closeness, most of the Lakeside neighborhood is largely cutoff from the water by large swaths of privately held lands, previously utilized for industrial use, and the railroad tracks that served them.

By developing the northern side of Lakeshore Drive for single-family housing of appropriate design and scale, the Lakeside neighborhood would be allowed to expand in a consistent and unified manner. As stated above, this type of development approach would interface well with, and



reinforce, the predominantly residential character of the area. Public access and recreational facilities for activities such as sports and swimming should be incorporated into, and made a condition of, any new residential development in the area.

### ***The Lakeside Commercial Strip***

*Clearly, what gives the Lakeside neighborhood its distinct sense of insularity and cohesiveness is its approximately 3 block long commercial strip along Lakeshore Drive. This is perhaps the last economically viable pedestrian district outside of downtown Muskegon. It is one of the few places remaining in the entire county where one can walk from home to a movie, grocery store, pharmacy or restaurant/ tavern.*

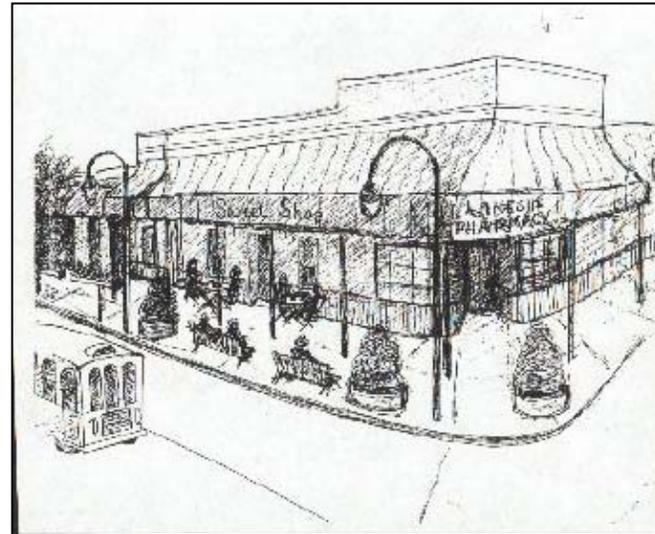
*Unfortunately the strip suffers from too many gaps in the streetscape, and a lack of a consistent architectural theme. To remedy this situation a streetscaping theme should be developed for the district which seeks to enhance the strip's attractiveness to local residents as well as tourists. Items to consider include benches, planters, stylized streetlights, and a permanent trolley stop complete with shelter. Business owners should be encouraged to enhance the "curb appeal" of their buildings with dis-*

*play windows, awnings and outside seating.*

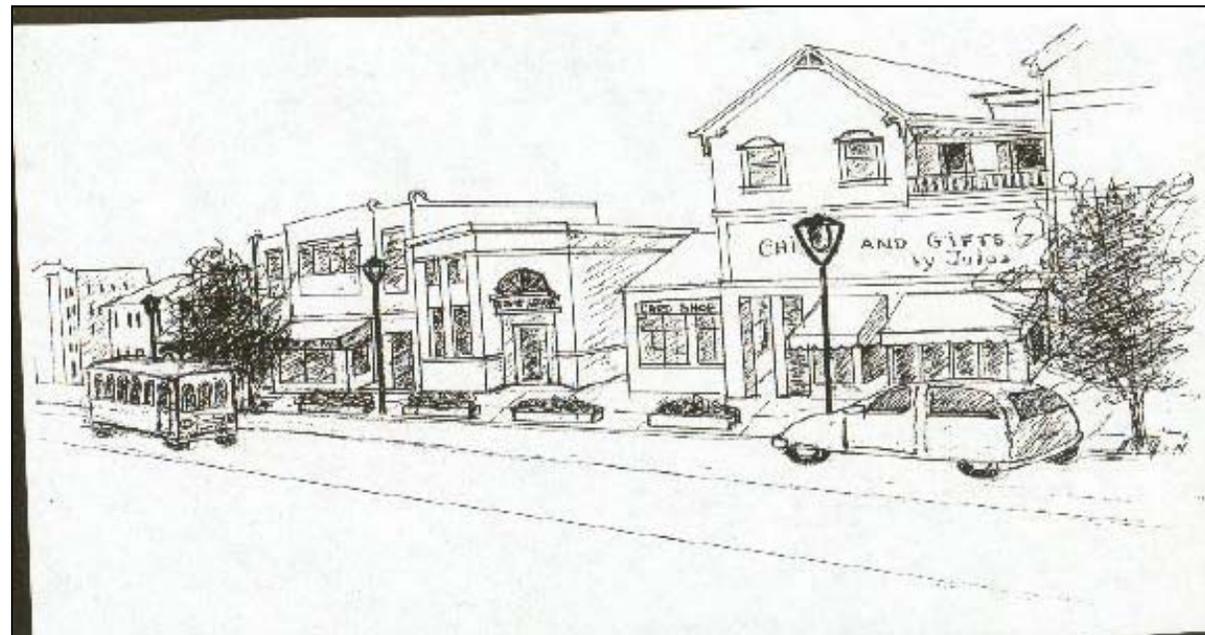
*Critical to an overall development program for the Lakeside commercial district would be to physically unify both sides of the strip through the development of pedestrian oriented infill buildings on the north side of Lakeshore Drive. Because this is primarily a neighborhood commercial strip, parking requirements should be greatly relaxed. Off-street parking should be placed behind building wherever possible. Shared parking arrangements between predominantly evening based businesses (i.e. taverns, theater) and daytime businesses (pharmacy, grocery store) should be encouraged and coordinated.*

### ***Funding Sources***

*Funding for common, "public" improvements could come from the formation of a Lakeside Business Improvement District (BID), or from concessions for off-site improvements exacted from residential developers (i.e. in exchange for relaxing or forgiving on-site zoning restrictions under a PUD scenario. Note: the latter technique, could also be used to make necessary road improvements along Lakeshore Drive and McCracken to mitigate the inevitable traffic impacts caused by new residential development in the area.)*



*The Lakeside commercial strip would greatly benefit from a consistent street-scape program, and selected facade improvements. At present, the north side of Lakeshore Drive is made barren by the expanses of asphalt parking which greatly diminish the visual interest of the strip. Sensitive infill, consisting of shallow buildings (with parking at rear) with traditional storefronts could make the strip a destination for tourists and residents alike.*



## C. Port Facilities - (Eastern Shore)

Muskegon's long held slogan, "Port City" stems from its long and storied history as a Great Lakes port-of-call for the shipping of locally abundant raw materials, primarily lumber. However it belies the fact that the City has never had an official *foci* for its shipping and break-bulk activities; only scattered wharves, docks and bulkheads located at various points along the Lake.



While this historical pattern of development has added a distinctive 19<sup>th</sup> Century character to parts of the waterfront, it has also perpetuated a land use pattern destructive of the environment and of the public's enjoyment of the lake. Worse still, the negative externalities associated with port operations (i.e. dust, noise, truck and train traffic), routinely spill over into residential sections of the City.

The concentration of port operations and heavy industry on the lake (perhaps under the aegis of a Port Authority or other quasi-public agency) can be seen as benefiting both industry and the general public in a variety of ways. In the case of the former, economies-of-scale and other efficiencies can be achieved through the common use of port related infrastructure such as: booms, stevedore (gantry) cranes, deep water slips, warehousing and transportation facilities thus relieving each operator of the need to maintain separate facilities. Perhaps more importantly, effective management of port activities could eventually lead to full containerization capabilities and more expansive use of Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations.

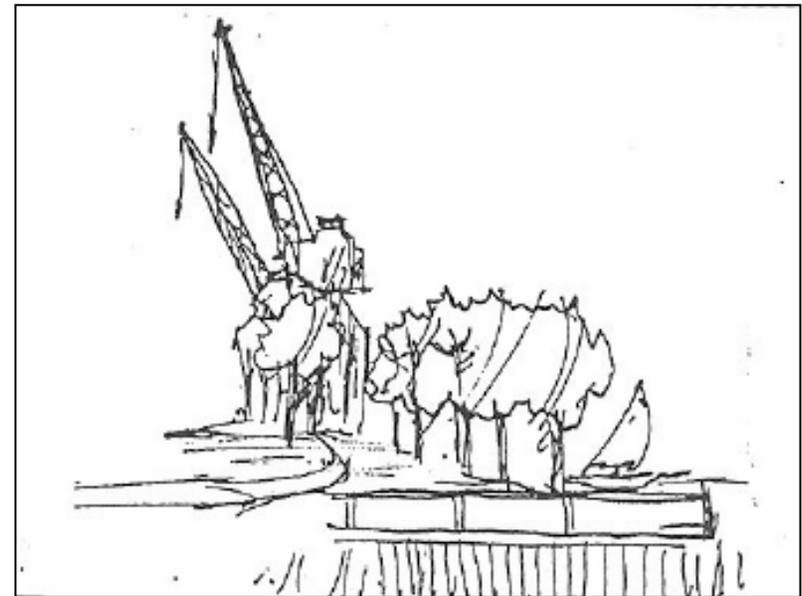
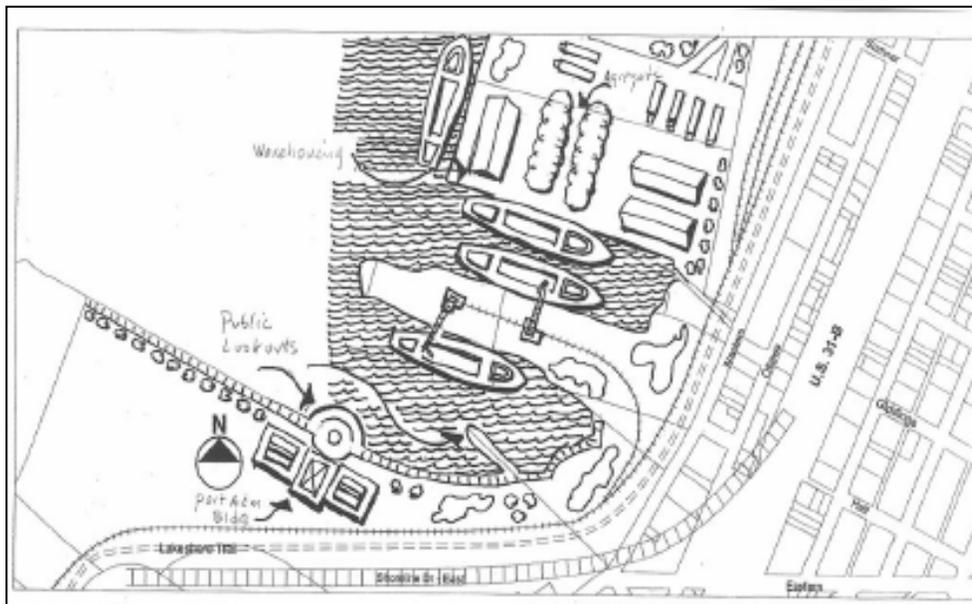
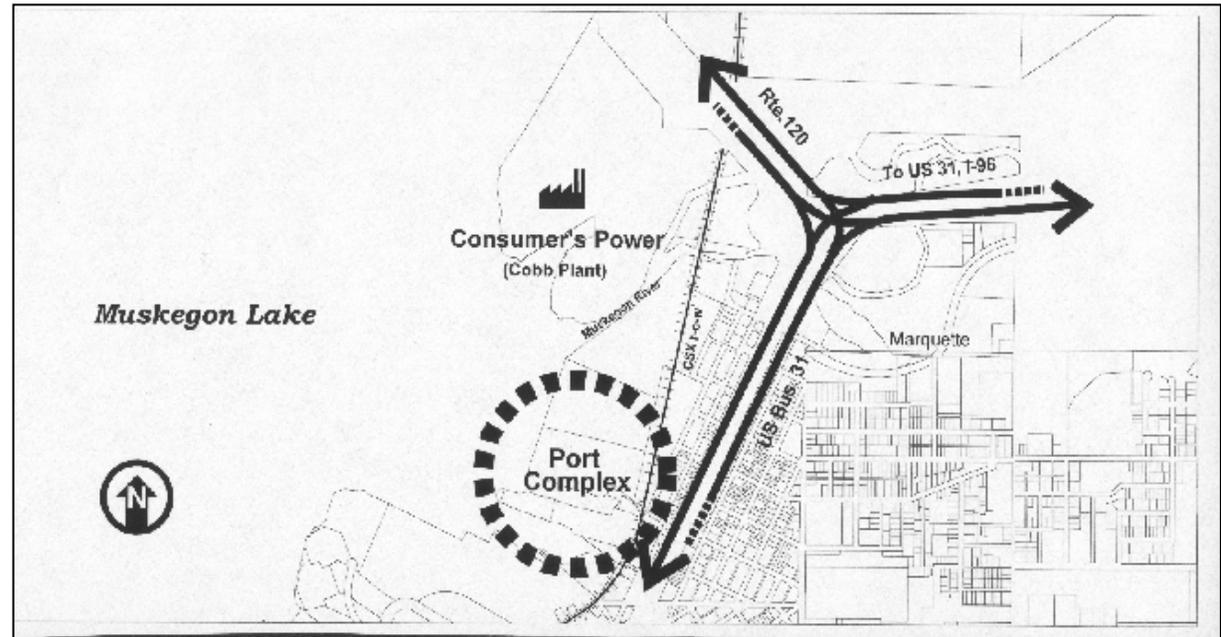
From the public's standpoint, large tracts of formerly inaccessible waterfront lands would be opened up for more optimal uses such as housing and recreation. Truck traffic, and the wear and tear it causes to local roads, would be more effectively contained to more compatible areas away from high concentrations of housing. In short, the

clustering of the heaviest port activities can be seen as an integral part of attracting a greater variety of desired land uses to the lake while at the same time, enhancing Muskegon's viability as a general cargo port.

At a minimum, the logistical requirements for a port include ample land for storage and warehousing, deep water berths, and convenient access to a regional transportation network. Of all the sections of shoreline historically used for industrial purposes, the section of shoreline between Fisherman's Landing and the CMS, Cobb Plant perhaps best meets all of these criteria. Along this stretch of shoreline there are several deep water slips, ample acreage for storage and access to inland rail transport. Most importantly, it is only a short distance to U.S. 31 and its confluence with I-96.

A key benefit to a central port at this location is the reduction in truck traffic

*This page: Conceptual planning for port facilities on Muskegon Lake. Shipping operations should have good access to the regional transportation network, and incorporate public viewing areas wherever possible. Aggregate storage and warehousing should be limited to the northern edge of the site.*



n downtown and along other sections of the lake. Trucks could quickly and easily access the port and circumvent downtown altogether. Greatly reduced would be the heavy truck traffic along Muskegon and Webster Avenues.

Consideration however, would have to be given to the amount of dredging required to accommodate large ships at this location. The existing slips are not currently wide enough to fit two ships side by side and at some point the slips may have to be widened and/or deepened. Given the present restrictions on dredging

activities in Muskegon Lake (due to sediment contamination), a



mitigation plan may have to be coordinated with the DEQ and/or EPA to effectuate the necessary improvements, including disposal of the hazardous

sediment. At the very least, special measures would have to be implemented to move the materials to a Class II disposal site.



*Observation Areas*

The call for greater public access to the lake (made elsewhere in this sub-plan) applies equally to any proposed port operations. It is widely

acknowledged that the watching of ships and shipping operations have long provided a source of genuine entertainment for people of all ages and

backgrounds. The presence of commercial vessels both animates and adds character to many urban waterfronts.

Although port facilities have historically been treated as forbidden wastelands, many ports have recently attempted to soften their appearance

by developing public observation decks and piers. It is therefore important, as with all other sections of shoreline, that the future development of any port facilities in Muskegon include adequate public access and viewing areas.

*Funding Sources*

Possible funding sources include: private capital investments, TEA-21 transportation grants, and the creation of a port authority entity with full bonding and condemnation powers.



*Port facilities should be visually accessible, and incorporate the public realm. \*Drawing by Collette Klukos.*

*Facing page: Playground in Vancouver, B.C., with port facilities as a backdrop (top). As in Muskegon, a passing ship proves to be an “event” on the Duluth, MN waterfront (bottom).*

*\* Source: Waterfronts: Cities Reclaim Their Edge, Breen & Rigby.*

## **D. Natural Habitat/ Mixed Recreation Areas - (Muskegon River)**

An added benefit of port facilities at the location suggested above, is the absence of major land use conflicts nearby. Presently both Fisherman's Landing and Richards park tenuously coexist with the scattered industrial activity surrounding them. Their awkwardness is exacerbated more by their isolation and poor access than by any conflicts posed by nearby salvage and barge operations. (In fact in many cases, clean port operations have proven to be better neighbors to recreation and wildlife areas than other uses which attract more human activity.)

To make a port project work at the proposed location (present day Fisherman's Landing) requires the relocation of the existing boat launch and camping facilities in order to take better advantage of the existing deep water berths. Such a project promises to be both costly and time consuming.

Notwithstanding potential problems associated with acquisition, a number of sites along Muskegon Lake could be

used to accommodate a relocated Fisherman's Landing. Of these, the river-mouth site just north of present day facility (owned by CMS Energy) perhaps offers the most possibilities. At this location, it would serve as a better neighbor to the presently isolated Richards Park immediately to the east (and the latter to it). The connection of the two parks would serve both the interests of

recreational boaters, campers, nature enthusiasts and wildlife itself by joining together two highly compatible land uses. This arrangement would also provide for frontage on two separate water bodies which would make it a popular location among fisherman and nature enthusiasts alike.

A particular area of concern surrounding the relocation of Fisherman's Landing, is the adequacy of boat launching

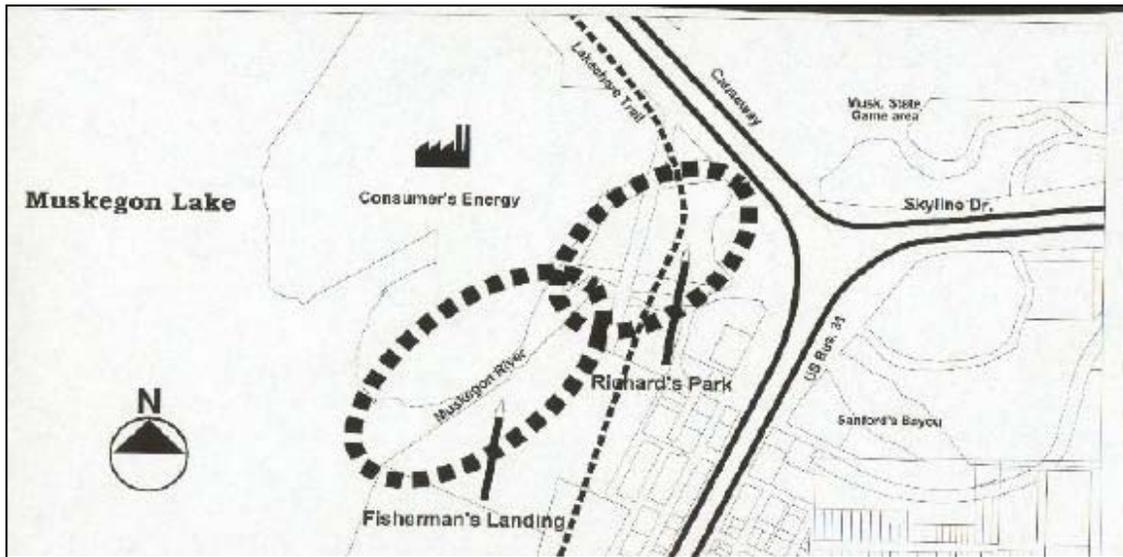
facilities at the new location. While pleasure craft do not require the same water depths as larger commercial ships, they do need water depths in the 8-12 foot range to accommodate larger recreational vessels.



A potential problem of a location near the Muskegon River, is river-mouth sedimentation and the need for regular re-dredging. Therefore the boat launch itself may need to front on the lake rather than the river unless a maintenance plan is implemented, and monies budgeted, to

address this recurrent problem.

Regardless of its ultimate location, it is important that Fisherman's Landing, along with all other waterfront recreation facilities, be strongly tied into the Lakeshore Trail project. Furthermore, care should be taken to limit the disruption of natural habitat at the new local

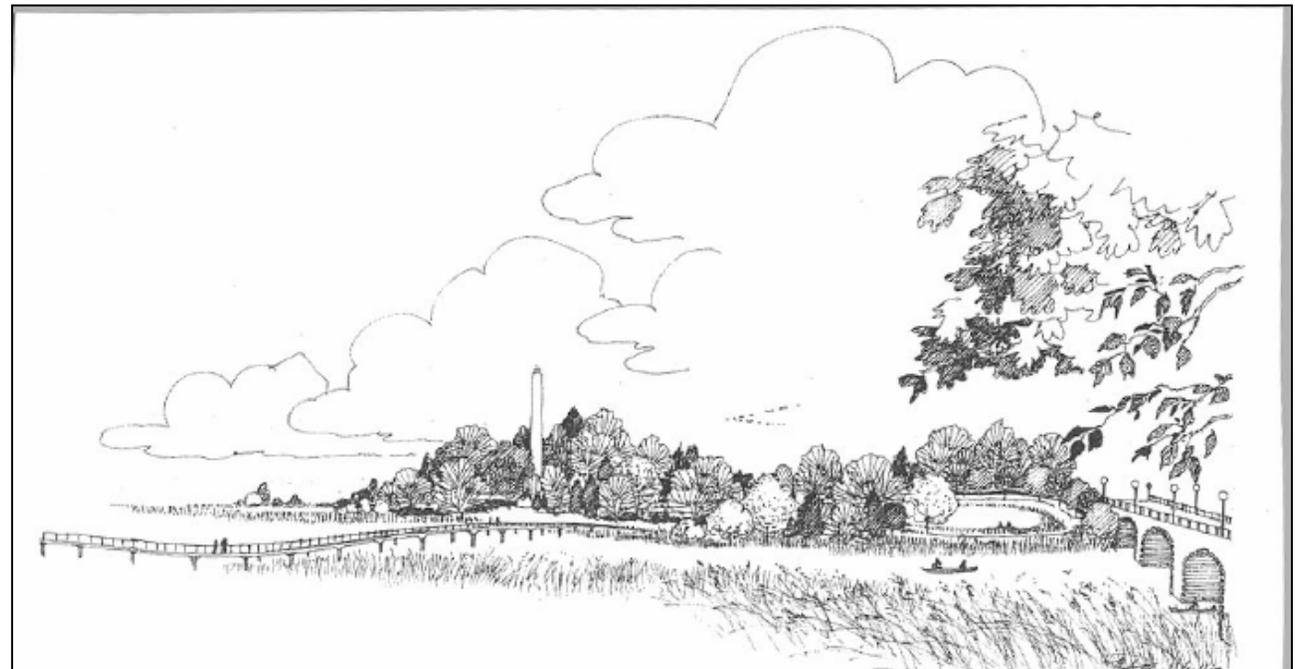


Left: Relocated Fisherman's Landing linked to Richard's Park via the Muskegon River and nature trail (below).



Right: Conceptual rendering of the south branch of the Muskegon River with elevated boardwalk to Fisherman's Landing. In this scene, the river is conceived as the spine of a linear park containing both active and passive recreational uses. \*Drawing by Colette Klukos.

Opposite page: The Muskegon River at Richard's Park.



tion, as in all lakefront redevelopment projects. Finally, passive recreational areas and wetlands would be greatly enhanced with interpretive nature trails and boardwalks.

### *Funding Sources*

Because Fisherman's Landing was developed using Federal grant monies, any relocation of the facility would have to take place pursuant to a cumbersome and lengthy land conversion process. Under this process, the existing site could not be sold until a new, comparable site was secured. In addition, an alternative funding source would have to be used to rebuild the permanent facilities existing on the present site (i.e. restrooms, docks etc.)

Funding for the interpretive trails, and natural habitat enhancement measures could come from a variety of sources previously mentioned, especially Coastal Zone Management Grants, and Great Lakes Fisheries Trust Funds (CMS). Funding for the building of new facilities at a relocated Fisherman's Landing, could come from agreements exacted from private developers in exchange for the sale of the existing Fisherman's Landing site.

## **Conclusion**

### *The Future*

The plan outlined above is designed to serve as the *conceptual framework* for projects which may or may not ultimately resemble those presented in this document. This is due to the knowledge that absent a port authority or other supreme planning body, development activities will be carried out individually by private property owners. While efforts to involve individual property owners in the planning process proved, in most instances, to be effective, these individuals may not always agree on every aspect of the plan, or the means necessary to carry it out.

As Muskegon continues to experience the type of development pressure alluded to in the introduction, it will become apparent that the planning process will need to be fluid and adaptable to exigent and complex circumstances. In short, the plan should be taken in its "*spirit*", and not its "*letter*".

### *Public Participation*

As a sub-plan building on the ideas put forth in the City's Master Plan adopted in 1997, the public participation component of this document can be traced directly back to the numerous surveys, interviews and questionnaires completed as part of the Master Planning process. It should be noted that the City of Muskegon won the Michigan Society of Planning Officials (MSPO) award for the public participation component of its Master Land Use Plan in 1998.

The planning process resulting in this specific document began in earnest in late summer of 1998. At that time, a broad-based coalition of business and community leaders known as the Lakefront Development Task Force approached the City of Muskegon, and requested that City staff join ranks with them in creating a plan that would serve as a rough blueprint for future waterfront development activities. Over the ensuing months, City staff along with the task-force, began to develop preliminary graphics that were subsequently published in the *Muskegon Chronicle*. Although initial comments

were few, the plans were generally well received.

A series of individual meetings with selected property owners was held over a period of approximately four months followed by a general meeting of a majority waterfront property owners on April 1, 1999. The comments being generally favorable, a tacit endorsement to proceed with the planning program was received by City staff.

### *Plan Adoption*

Before the plan is officially adopted, the draft plan will undergo a lengthy public comment period during which time, the general public will be invited to critique the plan, and its component projects. Finally, the plan will be the subject of a public hearing before being adopted by the City's Planning and City Commissions.

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# Appendix

