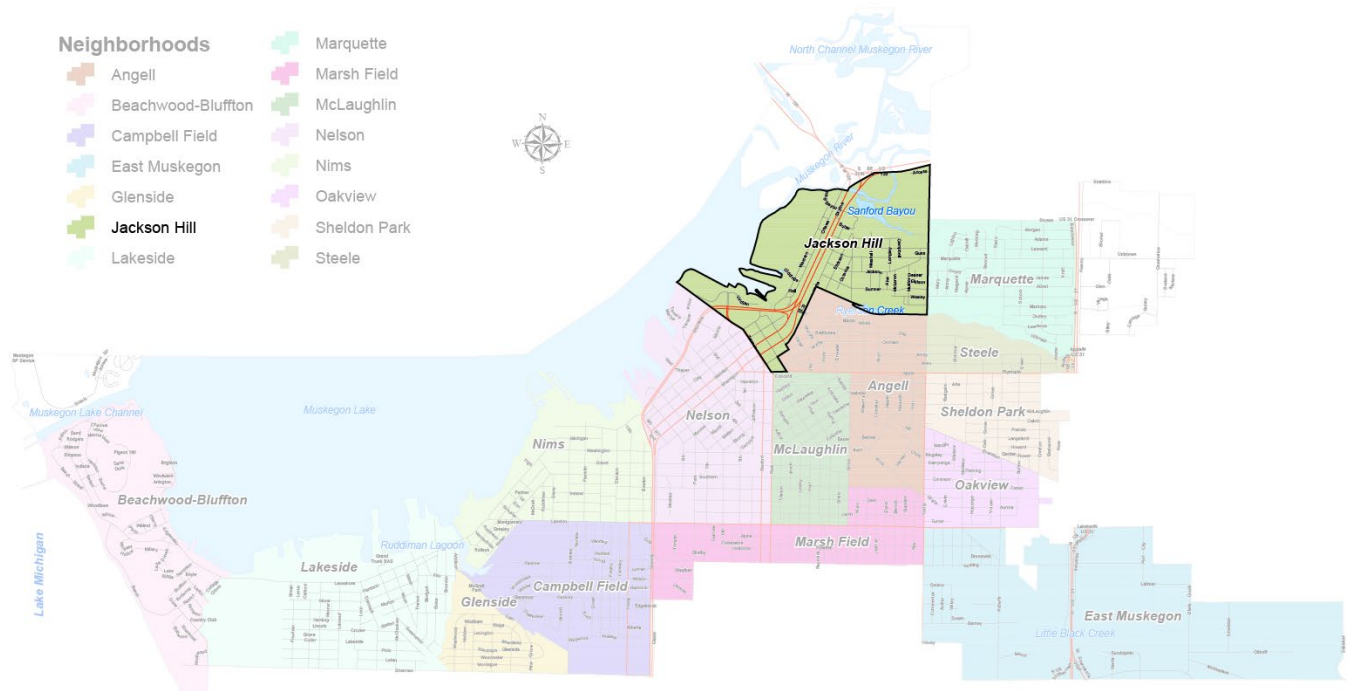


Jackson Hill

City of Muskegon Neighborhood Association Map



Neighborhood Description

The Jackson Hill neighborhood is positioned between two creeks, Four Mile Creek to the north, and Ryerson Creek to the south. The neighborhood offers sweeping views of its natural surroundings thanks to its location on the high ground between the creek valleys. Ample recreation opportunities exist in the neighborhood's six public parks as well as its acres of preserved, open space. Combined, parks and open space account for 1/5th of Jackson Hill's zoned land area.

Although open space is one of the celebrated features of Jackson Hill, one negative aspect is the large number of vacant lots scattered throughout the neighborhood. Notably, the area was home to one of Muskegon's three Urban Renewal projects undertaken with Federal funds starting in the mid-20th century. Urban Renewal efforts in Jackson Hill (then known as Froebel) resulted in the demolition of over 200 structures in the neighborhood, with the remaining vacant land controlled by the City of Muskegon to be marketed for redevelopment. The City still owns a significant number of these vacant lots despite decades of marketing efforts.

In the early 1960's all properties along the now vacated Prospect Street (which ran between and parallel to Yuba and Ottawa) were demolished to make way for the highway now known as Moses J. Jones Parkway. Some neighborhood residents may remember the time before the highway when Ottawa Street served as the commercial hub of the neighborhood. Today, the location of the expressway limits access to walkable commercial options in downtown Muskegon as well as the Muskegon Lake waterfront.

This page intentionally blank

Zoned Land Use

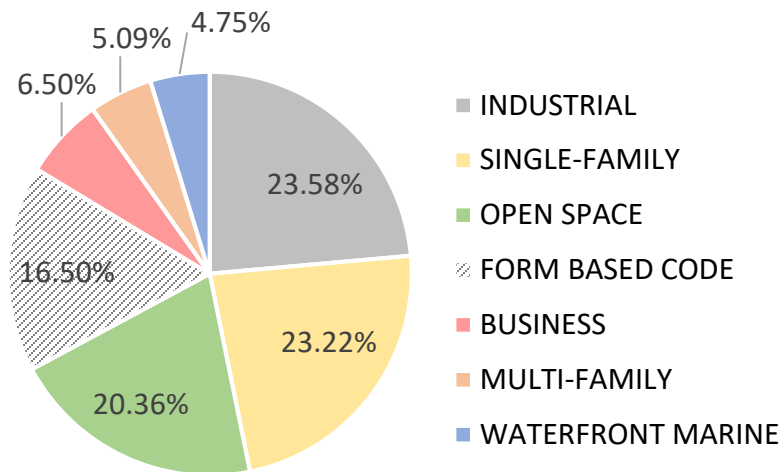


Chart 1: Jackson Hill zoned land use as a percentage of the neighborhood's total land area

The Jackson Hill neighborhood consists of a mix of land uses that primarily include single-family detached housing; industrial uses primarily concentrated along the Muskegon Lake waterfront and north of Four Mile Creek; open space and recreational uses centered on Ryerson and Four Mile Creeks; and mixed-use and missing middle housing options mainly found in downtown's Form Based Code zoning district. Nearly all business zones are located along Ottawa Street and Getty Street.

Housing Choice

Jackson Hill's housing stock generally consists of single-family detached houses. Some missing middle housing types exist, but most of them are single-family detached houses that have been modified to contain more units. In the past, without strict zoning regulations in place, some houses were allowed to increase the number of dwelling units they contained and now face overcrowding and parking issues. Existing single-family houses would not be suitable for additional units, but the large amount of vacant land introduces many opportunities for new and diverse housing options in the neighborhood.

Home ownership is fairly high in the neighborhood, with three-quarters of all detached structures being owner-occupied. Families or individuals that seek rental housing are not presented with much variety in housing options; most rental properties are single-family detached houses, a small number of missing middle housing types exist, and the neighborhood contains no large apartment complexes. Just under one-third of the houses in Jackson Hill are rented which is below the citywide average. Of those rented properties, less than 10% contain multiple-units on the same property.

Commercial Inventory

Getty Street and Marquette Avenue Intersection – This intersection may be the best location for potential neighborhood-serving businesses within the neighborhood. The southeast corner contains vacant commercial buildings and vacant lots, alongside a few detached houses. These parcels are zoned to allow for limited business uses, but prohibit most residential housing types. It may be appropriate to rezone to a designation that would encourage neighborhood-serving retail, while not limiting residential development.

The northeast corner of the intersection consists of multifamily housing, and the southwest corner is a church. Should the church ever relocate, or consider on-site housing options, additional multi-family housing as is found on the northeast corner, would provide additional neighborhood residents that could help sustain neighborhood-serving retail. Consider rezoning the southwest corner to allow for multifamily housing.

Ottawa Street Corridor – The Moses J. Jones Parkway limits walkability to this commercial corridor and the types of businesses that exist are unlikely to serve residents’ needs.

Terrace Street (east side of street) – The eastern edge of downtown is located in Jackson Hill though it, too, is disconnected from many neighborhood residents as it is not within walking distance. Commercial uses are scattered among a variety of other uses along Terrace from the Muskegon Lake shoreline to Apple Avenue.

Pine Street Corridor – The businesses on Pine are most commonly associated with downtown Muskegon, but many are located within the Jackson Hill neighborhood’s boundaries. Like Terrace Street, the corridor’s location at the far west end of the neighborhood leaves it disconnected from many residents.

Industrial Inventory

Waterfront Industrial and Ottawa Street – The former, 98-acre powerplant property allows for waterfront industrial and port activities as does the vacant, 52-acre property at 205 E. Western Avenue. Planning efforts over the past several decades have focused on relocating waterfront industrial and shipping operations to the east end of Muskegon Lake. These properties offer relocation options for the remaining properties to the west.

The north side of Ottawa Street is zoned for heavy commercial, however, most parcels are smaller than the minimum area requirement, technically making these existing uses legally non-conforming.

Getty Street (north of Leonard Avenue) – Roughly 40 acres of industrial property is located on the east side of Getty Street.

Parks/Recreational Opportunities

Jackson Hill neighborhood parks, community gardens, public/private park and open spaces, etc.:

- Smith-Ryerson Park
- Aamodt Park
- Ryerson Creek
- Green Acres Park
- Fourmile Creek
- Fisherman’s Landing Boat Launch (excluding campground)
- Lakeshore Trail
- Richards Park
- Veteran’s Memorial Park
- Baha’i Peace Park (Privately-owned)
- Terrace Street Linear Park
- Moses J. Jones Parkway greenspace (BR-31)

Community Nodes

Marquette Avenue and Getty Street Intersection – Shared with the Marquette Neighborhood to the east.

Marquette Avenue and Wood Street Intersection – With proximity to residents in mind, this intersection offers a great place for neighbors to meet up. Increased residential development could provide the density needed to sustain neighborhood-serving commercial options. Faith-based institutions bring a steady influx of people to the area and also provide community spaces.

Smith-Ryerson Park

Pine Street and Walton Avenue Intersection

Transportation

The Transportation and Mobility section of the Master Plan contains further discussion and recommendations. Major Streets in the Jackson Hill Neighborhood include:

- Getty Street
- Marquette Avenue

- Wood Street
- Ottawa Street
- Yuba Street (Spring Street to Eastern Avenue)
- Spring Street
- Pine Street
- E. Western Avenue
- Terrace Street (Apple Avenue to Shoreline Drive)
- E. Clay Avenue
- Webster Avenue
- Muskegon Avenue
- Walton Avenue

Possible road diets could occur on Getty and Marquette.

Active transportation options include a nearly complete sidewalk network throughout Jackson Hill. The Lakeshore Trail runs through the northwest part of Jackson Hill near the Muskegon Lake shoreline, but is separated from the majority of the neighborhood by Moses J. Jones Parkway/BR-31. A non-motorized path connection could be made utilizing the former railroad right-of-way along Ambrosia Street, near Apple Avenue in the Angell neighborhood. This path could connect to the Lakeshore Trail and would also be easily accessible from Yuba Street, giving Jackson Hill residents a north/south non-motorized trail option.

Public transportation serving the neighborhood includes MATS Route 11, 12, and Go2 Service. Jackson Hill is well connected to the citywide street network via Marquette Avenue, Wood Street, and Getty Street. Access to US-31 is very convenient via BR-31 which crosses the neighborhood’s west end. A complete network of streets within the neighborhood allows for easy navigation to and from residences. Some street rights-of-way exist where topography and water levels prevent development options (Giddings, Hall).

Blight/Beautification

Longstanding vacant buildings show signs of distress.

Illegal dumping in natural areas.

Historic Preservation

The Jackson Hill neighborhood does not presently contain any designated historic districts or sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. A State of Michigan Historic Marker is sited at Richards Park commemorating the role of the lumbering industry in the area’s early growth. Many of the neighborhood’s historic building stock was lost to Urban Renewal and general deterioration, but there is potential that some historically significant resources still exist in the neighborhood alongside Jackson Hill’s remaining, architecturally significant resources.

Significant Redevelopment Properties

417 Jackson Avenue – A 7-acre parcel containing the former Froebel School building and surrounding vacant property offers potential for residential and commercial redevelopment. Saving the historic school building is a priority, however, demolition will be considered if no viable redevelopment proposal is presented within a reasonable timeframe. The property surrounding the school building could accommodate a range of housing types.

445 Marquette Avenue – A 0.99-acre vacant lot on Marquette Avenue between Charles and Wood. The privately-owned parcel at 407 Marquette completes this half-block area and occupies the prominent, southeast corner of Wood and Marquette. Missing Middle Housing, even possibly set in a cottage court placement, would provide a unique living option within the neighborhood.

495 S. Getty Street – Should the church ever relocate, or consider on-site housing options, additional multi-family housing as is found on the northeast corner, would provide additional neighborhood residents that could help sustain neighborhood-serving retail. Consider rezoning the southwest corner to allow for multifamily housing.

Future Land Use

See future land use map in Appendix

Project 1: Protect wildlife by improving wildlife connections between large natural areas.

With Fourmile and Ryerson Creeks bordering the neighborhood to the north and south, respectively, Jackson Hill is also home to a variety of wildlife that often travel between the two creeks. Development of a wildlife corridor plan could identify opportunities to better connect the neighborhood's natural areas.

Jackson Hill is bordered by natural areas to the north and the south. Ryerson Creek (south) and Fourmile Creek/Sanford Bayou (north) meander through wetlands and forests at the bottom of ravines. These areas are home to many different species of wildlife, which often traverse between the two locations. The natural features and associated wildlife has been considered an amenity to the neighborhood, and one that is not usually available in an urban setting. While the need for new housing options on vacant lots is understood, residents requested that efforts be made to leave the neighborhood's natural settings undisturbed and avoid displacing wildlife. Opportunities exist to extend natural features farther into the neighborhood.

Action Steps

- Develop a wildlife corridor plan for the neighborhood. Such a plan should include suggestions on connecting the wildlife areas to one another through methods such as living fences (fencerows) and safer crossings.

Project 2: Bring neighborhood-serving commercial businesses back to Jackson Hill.

An array of neighborhood-serving businesses supported by residents once existed, but have left or closed. Efforts to promote grassroots businesses owned by neighborhood residents, and existing for residents, could reintroduce such amenities to Jackson Hill.

Jackson Hill once contained a number of neighborhood civic/commercial centers within its borders. Businesses that catered to neighborhood residents' needs filled buildings along commercial corridors like Ottawa Street and Getty Street, and concentrations of civic buildings like schools and religious institutions were also found throughout the neighborhood. Over past decades, these neighborhood-serving destinations were largely outlawed by zoning or unable to compete with, and ultimately replaced by, suburban shopping centers or big-box stores.

Action Steps

- Promote the community nodes identified in this plan as places for businesses to locate and offer economic incentives to ensure successful businesses.
- Update land use regulations for properties around potential community nodes to allow commercial and moderately-dense residential options.

Project 3: Protect remaining historic sites to the extent possible.

Jackson Hill has lost many of its historic structures, and disinvestment continues to threaten those buildings that remain. These structures must be documented and researched, and viable uses for them made possible to ensure their futures.

Historic buildings, such as the Freddie Townsend Center, Froebel School, and Jackson Avenue Church serve as physical ties to the past and can strengthen the neighborhood's identity. Land use regulations are restrictive throughout the neighborhood, and historic buildings such as these can be the most at risk; regulations should be updated to allow for more diverse uses and the necessary economic development programs must be provided to assist with redevelopment efforts. Those deteriorating buildings that need to be demolished should salvage historic- or architecturally-significant building materials for re-use in redevelopment projects, if desired.

Action Steps

- Continue to market the City-owned former Froebel School building. Redevelopment is difficult due to the way the building was constructed, which is not conducive to residential conversion. The building will most likely not survive many more years without serious investment. Consideration should be given to saving materials or certain features of the building if ultimately demolished.

Project 4: Right-size overbuilt streets.

Some streets in the neighborhood like Marquette Avenue and Getty Street are likely oversized for the amount of traffic they carry. Traffic studies could support “road diets” to right-size the number of lanes and make these streets safer for all who use them. Issues with speeding and dangerous driving can often be attributed to poor street design.

Getty Street through Jackson Hill is oversized for the amount of vehicular traffic it carries, unsafe for all road users, uncomfortable for those not in a vehicle, and is detrimental to the quality of life in the neighborhood. In some places, a “road diet” (a reduction in the number of lanes or the lane widths) could lessen the amount of pavement dedicated to vehicular traffic. Formerly unavailable space within the R.O.W. could be repurposed for green terraces with street trees, while also creating a more comfortable street for users other than drivers.

Action Steps

- Identify which streets are considered overbuilt and determine when they are next due for reconstruction. Start designing plans for those streets that are in need of repair the soonest.
- Road Diet streets are identified and plans are designed in anticipation of their reconstruction dates.

Project 6: Increase access to the Muskegon Lake shoreline.

The Imagine Muskegon Lake Plan includes a series of recommendations for better connecting the neighborhood to the Muskegon Lake shoreline, and should continue to be referenced during future planning efforts and when making recommendations for private development projects that may be seeking relief on certain zoning requirements to ensure improved connections to the waterfront.



Short of changes to the configuration of Moses J. Jones Parkway, Marquette Avenue holds potential for a non-motorized connection to Ottawa Street, then the Lakeshore Trail and Muskegon Lake shoreline.

Action Steps

- Continue to implement connection recommendations from the plan. On an annual basis, rank suggested projects in terms of importance and likelihood to occur.