

Nelson Neighborhood Master Plan Projects

Reutilize vacant, interior commercial/industrial buildings.

Vacant commercial and industrial buildings can be found scattered throughout the neighborhood. Options exist for reuse of these buildings, but acceptable uses should be better defined to avoid long-term vacancy or neglect.

Provide small- to medium-sized retail spaces for small business incubation and growth.

Small business incubator spaces exist in a few places in Nelson, but a gap exists in “next-step” storefront options for small or new businesses. Moderately-sized commercial buildings or small retail units between 500 and 2,000 square feet would allow growing businesses to continue to do so.

Redevelop the former industrial property at Laketon Avenue and Seaway Drive.

Large formerly industrial parcels exist throughout the city and are often adjacent to residential areas that grew up around former employment centers. The site at Laketon and Seaway offers huge redevelopment potential for the neighborhood.

Protect the aging housing stock.

Many houses in the neighborhood were constructed many generations ago, and are beginning to show major signs of distress. In 2017, grant funds enabled the City to demolish dozens of homes in the neighborhood that were neglected to the point of being unsalvageable. Greater effort must be provided to protect the aging housing stock and avoid future large-scale demolition.

Protect historic buildings and complete the historic infill program on Muskegon Avenue.

Nelson is home to several historic districts and a handful of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Unfortunately, some historically significant structures risk demolition due to neglect or the inability to find an owner willing to restore the property. The City of Muskegon’s historic infill program resulted in the relocation of several historic houses to Muskegon and Webster Avenues between 4th and 5th Streets, and the City owns one remaining lot in this area. Efforts should be made to relocate another historic house to this site rather than new construction.

Partner with schools and faith-based institutions to fully utilize recreational amenities, meeting spaces, kitchens, and gathering halls.

The neighborhood is home to six educational facilities, nine faith-based institutions and three government facilities. Many of these sites contain amenities that are underutilized and sometimes underfunded. The City should assist in neighborhood residents’ efforts to utilize these facilities, which in turn could assist in funding efforts.

What is a Master Plan?

The City of Muskegon Master Plan is designed to be a guide and strategy for future land use. It is intended for use by decision makers during the process of making choices between varied and often competing interests. The Master Plan:

- Serves as the basis for the City's various zoning districts
- Addresses land use & infrastructure issues; may project 20+ years into the future
- Working tool for planning-related recommendations and decisions by the Planning Commission
- Reviewed at least every 5 years, often incorporating standalone plans. Recent plans adopted as updates include:
 - 1999 Waterfront Redevelopment Plan
 - 2003 Imagine Muskegon Plan
 - 2008 Downtown & Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan
 - 2015 Downtown Parking Strategy
 - 2017 Imagine Muskegon Lake Plan
- The Master Plan defines the vision for the future, but is not a binding contract
- Changes to land use policy (e.g. zoning) determine the outcome
- The development patterns of the city are reflective of the land use policies in place (these have changed over time)
- Future changes will guide direction of future development.

Master Plan → City Policy → Development

Citywide Goals for Housing & Neighborhoods

Create a policy framework to provide housing choice within all neighborhoods.

Infill vacant residential lots with new housing options.

Create walkable neighborhood centers within a short distance of all residents.

New development that provides public amenities to all residents.

Encourage participation in neighborhood associations to create strong neighborhoods with invested residents empowered to address their common needs.

Reduce blight, dumping, and other negative external effects on neighborhoods.

Create linkages to parks and waterfront.

Strive to protect existing neighborhood residents from displacement as well as the cultural practices of diverse groups within the same space.