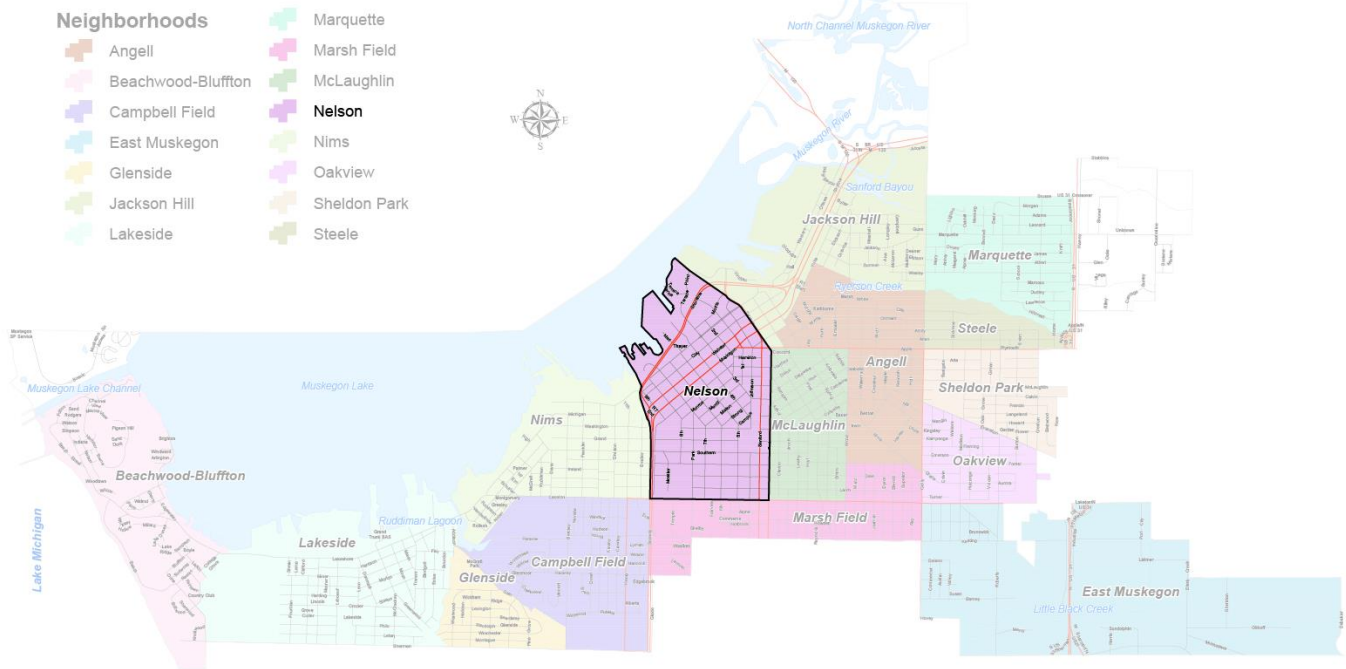


Nelson

City of Muskegon
Neighborhood Association Map



Neighborhood Description

The Nelson neighborhood includes, at its north end, Downtown Muskegon and bridges between Jackson Hill neighborhood, to its northeast, McLaughlin neighborhood to its east, and Nims neighborhood, to its west. Nelson contains significant Muskegon Lake shoreline as well as downtown Muskegon’s West Western Avenue and 3rd Street business districts. The neighborhood’s waterfront is home to the Heritage Landing festival grounds, and marinas with the adjacent Lakeshore Trail connecting these attractions.

Like nearly all of Muskegon’s waterfront property, the neighborhood’s lakefront parcels were once home to industrial or port-related land uses, with a few still remaining. Due to Nelson’s unique range of building types, the city’s first form based code zoning district regulates the majority of the neighborhood’s land use.

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Zoned Land Use

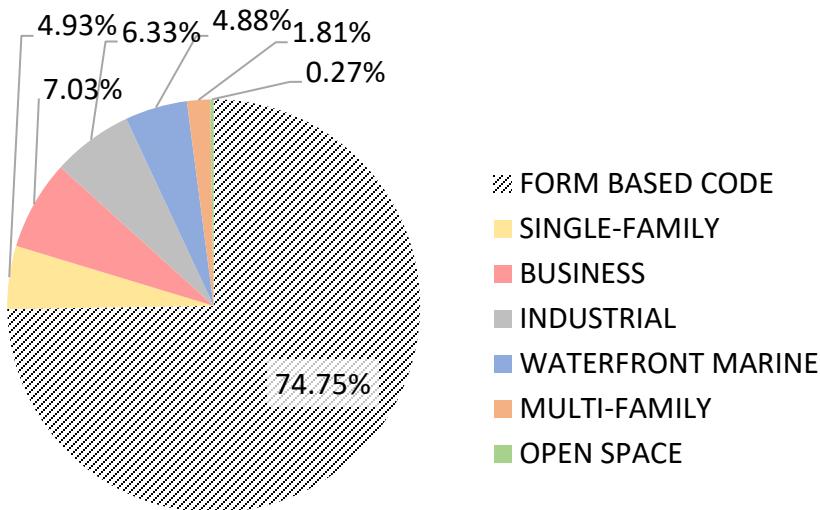


Chart 1: Nelson zoned land use as a percentage of the neighborhood's total land area

Nelson neighborhood offers a broad cross-section of land uses, typical of an urban neighborhood. As the historical core of the city, the variety of land uses, found especially in the northern part of Nelson, is unparalleled throughout the rest of the city and county, and is present only in a handful of cities in west Michigan. As such, the form based code accounts for a full three-quarters of zoned land uses. The remaining land in the neighborhood includes a small portion of single-family zoning in the southern part of the neighborhood, around Jefferson Street, multi-family zoning designations on Peck Street, business zones mainly along Laketon Avenue, and industrial zones at the southwest corner of the neighborhood. The neighborhood's heavily developed Muskegon Lake waterfront land accounts for waterfront marine zoning districts.

Less than 1% of land is zoned for parks and/or open space, but that number is not indicative of the total amount of land in Nelson used for parks. The neighborhood contains a wide array of park types, open spaces, and civic buildings that do not directly correspond with their zoning classification and are not discouraged by it.

Housing Choice

Nelson historically contained – and still does, to an extent – a wide variety of housing types; prior to the introduction of zoning that allowed for missing middle housing, already offered a number of housing options. Nearly half of the housing stock in the neighborhood is rented. In 2019, much of the remaining single-family residential zoning classifications in the Nelson neighborhood were rezoned to form based code zoning district's Urban Residential context area. That change removed limitations to the construction of new missing middle housing types, and allowed for development of additional residential formats, and legalized small neighborhood-serving businesses in new areas. Nelson is a step ahead of other neighborhoods in permitting construction of diverse housing types, and although the neighborhood still contains many vacant residential parcels, infill redevelopment efforts in recent years have added many new housing options.

Commercial Inventory

Downtown

3rd Street (Midtown)

Laketon Avenue

Glade Street

Peck and Sanford Streets

Interior Commercial Buildings: 354 W. Dale Avenue, 1667 7th Street, 260 Mason Avenue, 248 Mason Avenue, 485 Houston Avenue, 491 Houston Avenue, 1656 6th Street, 1664 6th Street

Industrial Inventory

Laketon Avenue and BR-31 – Twenty-eight acres of combined industrial land highlighted by the vacant, 18-acre former industrial facility.

Parks and Recreational Opportunities

Nelson neighborhood parks, community gardens, public/private parks and open spaces, etc.:

- Lakeshore Trail
- Laketon Trail
- Heritage Landing – County-owned
- Rotary Park
- Hackley Park
- Clara Shepherd Park
- Old Indian Cemetery
- St. Joseph Park (privately-owned, maintained by the City of Muskegon)
- Day of Caring Park (privately-owned)
- Root Park
- Robert C. Lighton Memorial Park
- Terrace Street Linear Park
- Borgman S Nelson Park (privately-owned)
- 2nd & Muskegon
- 4th & Jefferson
- 6th Street Pocket Park
- 7th Street Pocket Park
- Mike Miller Memorial Garden
- Roger Allison Memorial Garden
- First Congregational Community Garden
- Love Community Garden
- Heritage Memorial Garden – Privately-owned
- Monet Gardens
- Victorian Garden (privately-owned)

Special Use Facilities

- Trinity Health Arena (formerly L.C. Walker Arena)
- Farmers Market
- Western Market Chalets
- Social Sandbox (privately-owned)
- 3rd Street Promenade
- Former Elementary School Grounds
- High School Grounds

Community Nodes

Downtown

3rd Street (Midtown)

5th Street and Mason Avenue Intersection

6th Street and W. Dale Avenue Intersection

Transportation

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

- W. Laketon Avenue
- W. Southern Avenue
- Houston Avenue
- W. Muskegon Avenue
- W. Webster Avenue
- W. Clay Avenue

- W. Western Avenue
- First Street (Shoreline to Morris, Clay to Webster, Apple to Houston)
- Second Street (Morris to Houston)
- Third Street
- Fourth Street (Western to Houston)
- Fifth Street (Campus to Laketon)
- Sixth Street
- Seventh Street (Shoreline to Park)
- Park Street
- Eighth Street
- Ninth Street
- Glade Street (Houston to Southern)
- Sanford Street
- Peck Street
- Strong Avenue
- Campus Avenue
- Jefferson (Clay to Campus)
- Terrace Street
- Morris Avenue
- Terrace Plaza Court
- Terrace Point Drive (Shoreline to Viridian)

Possible road diets could occur on Laketon Avenue, Sanford Street, Park Street, and Shoreline Drive.

Active transportation options include a fairly complete sidewalk network throughout the Nelson neighborhood. The Lakeshore Trail runs along the Muskegon Lake shoreline, and is publicly accessible via a series of cross streets. The Laketon Trail runs along Laketon Avenue, then angles northwest around Park Street to its terminus at Grand Avenue. A connection between the Laketon Trail and the Lakeshore Trail utilizing the Sanford Street and Terrace Street right-of-way will better serve the neighborhood. Few designated bike routes exist through the neighborhood, with sharrow markings on Muskegon, Webster, Strong, 3rd, and 9th; most interior streets serve as safe biking routes.

Public transportation serving the neighborhood includes MATS Routes arrive and depart from the terminal at 365 Morris Avenue. Routes 1, 2, 11, 21, 22, and 31 also have multiple stops throughout the neighborhood along with Go2 Service.

Blight/Beautification

Small, commercial and industrial buildings in the interior of the neighborhood are inappropriately zoned which limits permitted uses often leaving these structures vacant.

Historic Preservation

As one of the city’s earliest developed areas, Nelson is home to the National Register, Clay-Western, Houston, Boilerworks, Campus, Jefferson, and Clinton-Peck historic districts. The neighborhood contains a number of historic resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places as well as a number of State of Michigan Historic Markers. A considerable number of historically significant buildings are not located in a designated historic district and, therefore, not protected from demolition or significant exterior alterations.

Significant Redevelopment Properties

1700 Messler Street – Over 20 acres of vacant, industrially-zoned property at the intersection of Seaway Drive and Laketon Avenue. All options for redevelopment should be considered, but the proximity to Seaway Drive could be attractive for commercial or industrial uses. The property could also accommodate housing in the form of high-density residential development. The central location could also make this property ideal for a relocated Public Works building. All redevelopment plans should consider reconnecting the street grid where possible.

550 W. Grand Avenue – The 80,000 square foot former school building sits on a 9.5-acre site and could be redeveloped into housing. Vacated streets should be considered for reestablishment if the building were to be demolished.

372 Morris Street – This 7-acre vacant property has some limitations due to environmental issues, but redevelopment is possible. Mixed-use development or high-density residential should be considered for this site.

1144 3rd Street – A 30,000 square foot building sits on a nearly 3-acre site and has been used for storage in recent years. Redevelopment options should draw from the scale and design features typical of the mixed-use buildings across 3rd Street.

Future Land Use

See future land use map in Appendix

Project 1: Reutilize vacant, interior commercial and industrial buildings.

There are many vacant commercial buildings throughout the interior of the neighborhood. While prior zoning changes made intensive land uses illegal and may have had some benefits to the quality of life of the neighborhood, but the current zoning restricts many options for reuse, ultimately leading to vacant, dilapidated buildings. Acceptable reuse options should be discussed among the community.



Examples of small, non-conforming commercial and/or industrial buildings found throughout the neighborhood.

Action Steps

- Hold public meetings with the neighborhood association to define acceptable uses for the reutilization of these buildings.

Project 2: Provide small- to medium-sized retail spaces for retail incubation and growth.

A few small business incubator spaces exist 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.

New mixed-use buildings downtown are providing larger, and usually more expensive, commercial spaces. There is a lack of affordable, moderately-sized commercial buildings available for business growth and expansion.

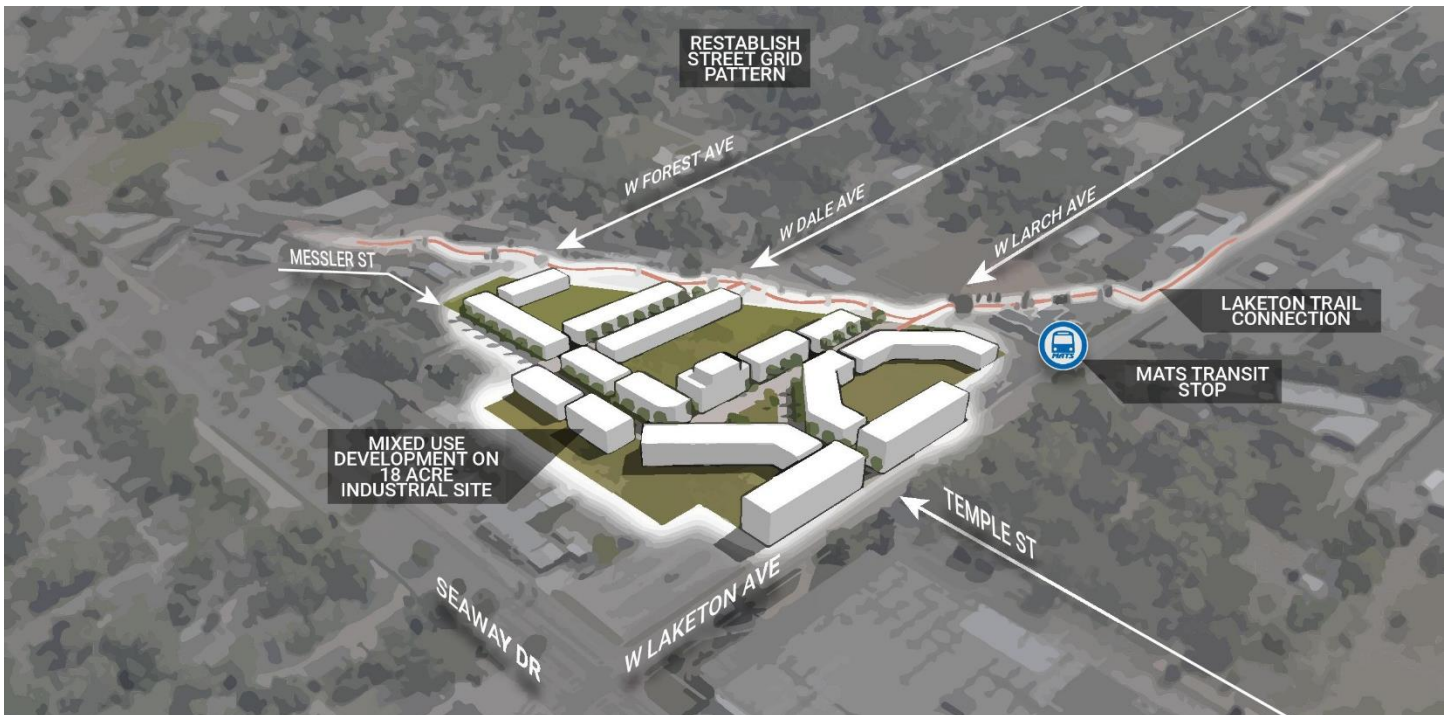
Tax abatement policy is updated to increase incentives for providing 500-2,000 square foot retail spaces. Grant programs, such as facade improvement grants, prioritize projects that provide these missing retail spaces.

Action Steps

- Incentivize the creation of small-to-medium sized retail spaces. Consider tax incentives
- Grants.

Project 3: Redevelop the multiple large-scale, underutilized properties in the neighborhood.

Redevelopment opportunities in the neighborhood includes several large, vacant parcels. These include properties such as the former industrial site at Laketon and Seaway, the former car dealership on 3rd Street, the school property on Grand, and the former large vacant lot on Morris Street. Together these properties encompass over 40 acres of land with massive redevelopment potential. Redevelopment of these properties should consider reusing existing buildings, where feasible, and should include uses harmonious with the surroundings. Reinstating the street grid should be encouraged if buildings are to be demolished. Public access accommodations should be made – such as pedestrian walkways or waterfront promenades – where possible.



A mixed-use redevelopment concept for the former industrial site at Laketon and Seaway incorporates strong ties to a variety of transportation options and the surrounding street grid.

Action Steps

- The City assists in marketing these important redevelopment sites including potential redevelopment incentives. Incentive bonuses will be given to projects that increase public access through the development or along the waterfront.
- The City updates its priority redevelopment sites with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Project 4: Protect the aging housing stock.

Many houses in the neighborhood were constructed 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 efforts are needed to protect the aging housing stock and avoid future large-scale demolition.

Action Steps

- Research potential programs utilizing Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds to assist with major structural stabilization projects.
- Amend tax abatement policies to ensure the neighborhood is included in residential improvement development incentives like the Neighborhood Enterprise Zone program through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

Project 5: Protect historic buildings and complete the historic infill program on W. Muskegon Avenue.

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 10 historic houses to Muskegon and Webster Avenues, and the City owns one remaining lot in the project area. Efforts should be made to relocate another historic house to this site rather than new construction.

Nelson is already home to several historic districts and homes listed on the National Register. However, some houses, like the Nelson House, risk demolition because of neglect and the inability to find a buyer willing to invest the necessary money into restoring the property. The City of Muskegon has an infill development program that has resulted in several historic houses being relocated to W. Muskegon Avenue. The City owns the remaining lot in the target area and efforts should be made to relocate another historic house on this site rather than new construction.

Action Steps

- Conduct an historic building inventory and highlight those that are most susceptible to deterioration. Work with property owners to address issues and provide incentives where possible. The City will also participate in programs such as the Certified Local Government Program through the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office, which it was granted approval for in 2022. Programs such as these offer grant funding for certain historic restoration projects. Efforts will be made to move an historic house to the last remaining lot in the historic infill program target area.
- An historic building inventory will be created and it will highlight the properties that will be most susceptible to deterioration. The last remaining lot in the historic infill program target area will remain undeveloped until an historic house can be moved there.

Project 6: 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 with funding efforts.

Action Steps

- Incentivize institutions to allow residents to use amenities. This could be done through efforts like the Neighborhood Stabilization Program or possibly the creation of a new program.