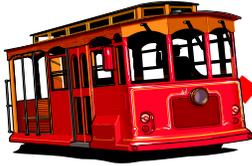


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Introduction

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



The Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan presents a pragmatic, results-oriented strategy for the revitalization and redevelopment of Downtown Muskegon and adjoining Muskegon Lake waterfront. As a framework for action, realization of the plan requires long-term commitments of focused resources, time, and public support.

The plan focuses on specific steps and actions necessary to accomplish goals that define a desired future for Muskegon's Downtown. Those goals include:

- ◆ Establish a framework for investment in Muskegon's Downtown core;
- ◆ Enhance the viability of existing assets and opportunities;
- ◆ Create a 365-day-a-year Downtown;
- ◆ Develop portions of the City as a regional employment center;
- ◆ Enhance the productive interaction of the various assets;
- ◆ Develop portions of the City as an entertainment and visitor center;
- ◆ Improve the City's image; and
- ◆ Improve links between the core Downtown and waterfront.

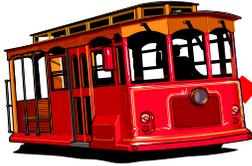
The plan is a framework for action that is supported by findings and recommendations based on:

- ◆ Perceptions of the City's past, present, and potential future, as shared by

members of the City and regional business, governmental, institutional, banking, investment, development, educational, entrepreneurial, and residential communities;

- ◆ Business owner, neighborhood, City official, and City staff workshops;
- ◆ Downtown shopper and patron surveys (215 individuals were surveyed);
- ◆ A telephone survey of 450 households within the Downtown's market area as defined by the shopper and retail patron surveys;
- ◆ A physical analysis of Downtown Muskegon which included an examination of land use, pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, concentrations of activity, and of primary Downtown facilities; and
- ◆ A retail market analysis that determined general market conditions and identified the market potential for retail, service, and other redevelopment activities.





Introduction

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

1. Introduction

Presents a plan overview.

2. Issues, Assets, and Opportunities

An overview of issues, assets, and opportunities relevant to the City and Downtown as identified during the planning process. The plan defines issues as those aspects or features of the Downtown that are perceived as problematic if not addressed or resolved. Assets and opportunities are those aspects and features of the Downtown that are perceived as positive, vital components of the City's past, present, and potential future.

3. Goals

An overview of goals for enhancing the Downtown established during the early phases of the planning process.

4. Defining a Manageable Downtown

Delineates a core Downtown consisting of four distinct functional centers in which specific development and redevelopment activities should be focused.

5. Market Analysis

Presents a detailed overview of commercial use patterns, attitudes and perceptions, and the demographic and socio-economic issues relevant to the Downtown. The market analysis component provided a pragmatic basis for Downtown enhancement, redevelopment, and plan implementation actions.

6. Proposed Projects

Describes a variety of completed, proposed, and in-process projects that can benefit Downtown development and redevelopment efforts. It also describes other projects that will enhance the Downtown and assist in an on-going process of building Muskegon as a regional focal point.

7. Physical Design Considerations

Provides a range of recommendations for physical maintenance and improvements within the Downtown.

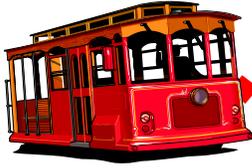
8. Implementation Actions

Describes specific means and methods that should be used in the process of implementing the plan.

The plan offers a variety of exciting concepts and challenges that are based on some of the finest urban assets and opportunities found in West Michigan. The plan retains historic aspects of Downtown Muskegon, and blends those aspects with contemporary ideas. Moreover, it builds on

past planning and development initiatives rather than overlooking them. As a framework for action, realization of the plan requires long-term commitments of focused resources, time, and public support.





Introduction

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Over time, City leaders, staff, and the public will be faced with difficult decisions regarding the expenditure of public resources. “Should economic development resources be concentrated on the revitalization of a core Downtown, or should all projects be considered on an equal basis regardless of location and Downtown impact?” In response to such questions, this plan recognizes that Muskegon comprises more than just a Downtown, and that all areas of the City are important.

However, one might view the Downtown as the “heart” of the City, providing life to the community and region as a whole. Accordingly, one must ask; “what are the long-term implications of failing to sustain the Downtown?”





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



ISSUES

Issues are defined here as those aspects of Muskegon's Downtown that are viewed by various interest groups in a negative light. They are also perceived as problematic if not addressed and resolved.

An overview of the most important issues identified by participants in the process of preparing the Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan follows:

Where/What is Downtown Muskegon?

Downtown Muskegon was identified by different people in different ways. Because of its location along the waterfront, Downtown Muskegon has historically developed in a linear orientation. Its land mass is substantial. Key facilities and activity centers such as Muskegon Mall, Frauenthal Center, waterfront, City Hall, Hackley Library, Muskegon Art Museum, and the Muskegon County Building, etc., are dispersed.

Perceptions of the diversity of Downtown facilities and activity centers is clouded by the Downtown's physical scale, the distance between facilities and centers, and by the absence of clearly defined pedestrian and vehicular routes and linkages.

One-on-one interview and Downtown shopper and telephone survey results indicated that the distance between Downtown facilities and activity centers is unreasonable.

Disjointed Nature of Activity

Downtown Muskegon exhibits little sense of place. From a physical and economic perspective, most uses do not relate to other nearby uses.

People unfamiliar with the Downtown have difficulty finding their way between the Muskegon Mall and Hackley Library, or between the Art Museum and Heritage Landing.

Lack of Focus for Activity

The Downtown exhibits no strong focus or concentration of activity. In many Downtowns, point of entry and a Downtown core are clearly defined by concentrations of buildings, government facilities, and other clusters of activity.

The dispersal of investment in the Downtown, and the absence of a Downtown plan and plan implementation program, have contributed to the current lack of focus.

Past Attempts and Support

A great deal of public and private money has been invested in the Downtown and waterfront. Private sector investment has often been unsuccessful, and public sector investment has often been criticized. Thus, much of the boldness, aggressiveness, and risk-taking inherent in a successful Downtown building process has diminished or been lost.

Long-Term Viability of Muskegon Mall

While retailing is alive and well in downtowns throughout the United States, traditional downtown retailing has been





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



challenged, and is often no longer successful. Today, most successful downtown retail activity is associated with unique offerings and product mixes, intermingled with entertainment and visitor based attractions or activities.

While the mall serves a viable function to a sufficiently large population, and experiences reasonable sales volumes, the prognosis for its long-term viability in its current form, market position, and tenant mix may be less than positive. Future increased competition from various sources will likely diminish its economic health.

Timing for Expansion of Muskegon Mall

Proposals to expand the mall to accommodate one or more traditional anchor tenants and additional stores have been made over a number of years. While past proposals may well have been a viable option, they may no longer represent the best alternative for expansion of retail or retail-related activity to Downtown Muskegon.

Recent and proposed expansion of retail activity elsewhere in the Muskegon area, and significant retail growth of similar activity along the Alpine Avenue corridor (near and north of the M-37/I-96 interchange) in Kent County may decrease the viability of expanding the mall, and minimize the prospect of attracting tenants.

Previous Waterfront Investment

Over the years, private commercial investments have been made in the downtown and along the waterfront. These investments were substantial, though often

not in close proximity to other entities. Many of these investments proved not to be prudent to the initial investing parties.

The lack of return on and success of investments, or financial failure of individual ventures, has diminished the market for new commercial investment along the waterfront.

Much of the public and private investment along the waterfront appears to be visually isolated from the downtown core area. Linkages between the waterfront and the downtown are not readily apparent.

Waterfront residential development has met with much greater success. Examples include Harbour Towne and Cole's residential condominium projects. Both projects represent high-end residential development.

Industrial History and the Environment

Much of the Downtown and Lakeshore are perceived as tainted remnants of Muskegon's industrial history. Although the Downtown borders one of the regions largest inland lakes, its history and the current "brownfield" nature of many properties present a perceptual hurdle to appreciating this natural asset.

In combination with the other issues discussed here, this perception can block individuals from seeking out activities in the Downtown.

This perception can also block private sector investment in the Downtown. Environmental liabilities present a perceived hurdle to some investors and





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



businesses.

Image in Larger Region

Success of the recent county-wide millage to enhance the Walker Arena, Frauenthal Theater, and immediate surroundings within the downtown, and the success of activities like the Muskegon Summer Celebration, and Parties-in-the-Park, indicate a public awareness of the importance of some of the downtown's activities and facilities to the regional population.

The downtown and City as a whole continue to suffer an image problem. From an economic perspective, many people in surrounding areas view Muskegon as they perceived the community to have been in the 1950s and earlier. While the City's economic base has changed, members of the public and investment communities are not fully aware of the transformation; and visitor activity, business opportunities, and investment have suffered.

Private/Public Sector Communications

There are perceptions that "one hand is not aware of what the other hand is doing." Communications between the public and private sector, and within the private sector, seem to be inconsistent to non-existent. Partnerships between the public and private sector seem to be weak to non-existent.

Private Sector Influence

Many communities have a group of private sector interests and individuals that have the ability to influence private and public sector decisions. Interviews with

individuals who are known entrepreneurs in City and regional business communities suggest that such a group no longer exists, or is no longer willing to exercise its influence.

Such a group can play a significant role in increasing and channeling investment in a productive manner.

Business Recruitment Activity

Success in a competitive environment calls for an aggressive approach to recruitment of business and investment.

Current regional recruitment activity, to the extent that it exists, is appropriately geared toward attracting new business and investment on a regional basis. While this is positive, there does not appear to be any significant organized attempt at recruiting activity targeted toward either the City of Muskegon proper or the downtown in particular.

Perceptions of Crime

Contrary to Police Department statistics, many people perceive sections of the downtown to be unsafe, particularly during the evening hours. These perceptions stem primarily from loitering youth and other activities that make individuals feel at risk in the downtown.

Visual Character and Maintenance

The downtown's visual character contributes to a lack of sense of place, disjointed activity, fear of crime, and other issues. Physical improvements and enhancements that have been made in one





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

area do not appear to blend or be consistent with improvements in another area.

The downtown exhibits limited vibrancy due to a lack of contrasting colors. Many prominent buildings are fully earth tone or gray in color. There are few colorful flower beds, banners, flags, sculptures, and other features that soften the built environment.

Some of the downtown's most visible spaces present a poor image due to limited or non-maintenance. Examples include the Western Avenue streetscape (torn and missing banners, weed infested terraces, damaged pavers) and mall entries (broken sidewalk and pavers, non-paved public parking area, weeds, litter).

Shoreline Drive

Shoreline Drive was frequently referred to by the public and City staff during interviews and surveys as the "downtown bypass." Construction of the initial phases have increased the awareness and view of the waterfront, but did not dramatically increase access to the downtown. It can be argued that Shoreline Drive has created a significant barrier to movement between the traditional core area and the waterfront in Muskegon.

Vehicular Circulation

Visitors have difficulty finding their way between downtown facilities and activity centers.

Streets and circulation routes throughout much of the downtown are disjointed and confusing.

One-way streets, streets bisected by buildings, limited direction signage, the decentralized nature of development, limited public parking at activity centers, and similar factors contribute to unpleasant experiences for visitors unfamiliar with the downtown.

Western Avenue Historic District

Over the years, a variety of plans have been proposed for revitalizing Western Avenue. Approximately eight years ago, a streetscape program was instituted starting at the Third Street/Western Avenue intersection and extending several blocks south. Since that time, a few buildings and sites have been rehabilitated, including the recently renovated Union Depot that houses the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Western Avenue remains largely undeveloped, exhibiting a variety of vacant and underutilized buildings and sites. The streetscape has not been well maintained. This results in mixed impressions of Western Avenue.

Many feel the Avenue has great potential for future development of an historic nature. Others believe the Avenue has lost its historic potential, and express a desire to see most of the buildings removed, opening the way for new opportunities.

County and Metro Planning and Development

Although a County Metropolitan Planning Commission and Regional Planning Commission have existed for some time, Muskegon County lacks a comprehensive land use/development plan.





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Planning and development initiatives tend to be accomplished in isolation, with little regard for cross jurisdictional impacts.

County Metropolitan planning is generally not accomplished within the framework of goals and policies that recognize the need to cooperatively participate on matters of local and regional development. Past attempts by the staff of individual units of government to cooperatively tackle regional planning issues have met with only limited success.

The area's three largest cities (Norton Shores, Muskegon Heights, and Muskegon) share common borders and common issues. Each has a recognized downtown center or area and each employs full-time planning staff. Unfortunately, there is no established forum for sharing information, discussion of common needs and concerns, or for reviewing pending projects of metro/regional significance.

ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Assets and opportunities are those aspects of Muskegon's downtown that are perceived as positive, or are viewed by various interest groups as important and vital to the City's present and future.

An overview of assets and opportunities follows:

Improved Access - Shoreline Drive

Rather than being viewed as a bypass that hinders access to downtown, Shoreline Drive can enhance ingress and egress to the heart of the community and nearby waterfront. Opportunities exist with respect

to enhancing the completed and uncompleted portions of Shoreline Drive so that the roadway provides for the smooth flow of activity in and out of downtown.

History and Image

Along with Muskegon's image as a union town comes a proud history and work ethic that is, if properly marketed and promoted, important to future economic development efforts. Stressing the historic importance of Muskegon as a blue-collar working community with a quality-oriented, hard working, and dependable labor force can be a viable marketing concept.

Historically the waterfront has been used primarily for industrial purposes. Utilization of this history can be an asset. Residential activity, mixed with a working industry, is in vogue in many waterfront communities, creating an urban ambiance not otherwise achievable.

The City's industrial entrepreneurs brought with them a desire to expand cultural opportunities. At least 17 theaters existed between 1867 and 1955 along Western Avenue between Third and Pine. Most of these were in buildings that were incorporated into Muskegon Mall. The potential to revive some of that history along Western Avenue may still exist.

Muskegon Lake Waterfront

Throughout the Country, there is no greater asset to quality development than a viable waterfront. Muskegon's waterfront represents probably the largest concentration of underutilized, developable land along Michigan's coastline. Creative





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



use of the Muskegon Lake waterfront is an option unavailable to many other mature urban centers.

The City and County have instituted a variety of shoreline redevelopment measures to support and/or compliment future activity. A large State of Michigan grant was obtained by the City to assess the environmental condition of lakefront properties, and several industrial properties have already been razed (e.g., the Teledyne industrial complex) or replaced with land uses that reflect the tremendous asset of Muskegon Lake and provide public access (e.g., Heritage Landing). The City continues to aggressively pursue lakeshore redevelopment and the wise use of its brownfields. These activities position the lakeshore for excellent development and enhancement activities.

The waterfront also represents an opportunity to maintain or enhance wildlife habitat and public access to the shoreline. Such factors can provide additional reasons for people to experience the downtown.

Grand Valley State University Research Vessel

One waterfront project that has reached fruition is the siting of a GVSU research vessel along the waterfront in the heart of the community. This can be catalytic to focusing both related and unrelated development nearby.

Related development opportunities include a Great Lakes Aquarium, educational facilities and programs with a marine orientation, nearby placement of the U.S.S. Silversides, fishing sites, pedestrian

boardwalks, piers, and other waterfront facilities.

The above opportunities offer synergistic benefits to nearby retailers and services resulting from visitors attracted to waterfront development.

U.S.S. Silversides Submarine and Maritime Museum

Considered the nation's most famous surviving World War II submarine, the U.S.S. Silversides draws over 30,000 visitors annually. The submarine is currently berthed along the Muskegon Lake Channel, a significant distance from the downtown. Berthing the submarine at a downtown waterfront location would compliment the other marine facilities proposed for the downtown, and could add to the downtown visitor base.

Waterfront Housing

Waterfront housing projects have fared better from an investment perspective than waterfront commercial projects. Waterfront housing represents an additional opportunity to create a 24-hour commercial center of town, when coupled with marinas and other amenities.

Visitor Base

The number of visitors to Muskegon County, and influx of visitor dollars, continues to grow on an annual basis. While other parts of Muskegon County have captured an increasing number of those dollars, Muskegon and the downtown have largely been passed up as a destination. The waterfront and other





Issues, Assets, & Opportunities

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



assets, if properly developed and marketed, can reverse this pattern, creating a new flow of revenues and employment opportunities.

Activities including charter boat and on-shore fishing, daytime and evening cruises, gambling, weekend visitor packages (offering theater, fishing, and golf), and other lake related/marine activities have the potential to significantly enhance the downtown's tourism base.

Availability of Developable Land

The availability of land in the current commercial core and waterfront area is a significant opportunity. With targeting of public and private resources, phased development, and proper marketing, the land, much like the water, provides Muskegon with the opportunity to plan for and define its own destiny.

Existing Institutions

Downtown Muskegon is blessed with a diversity of facilities, activity centers, and institutions that continue to serve the entire region. Examples include the Frauenthal Theater, Walker Arena, Hackley Library, Muskegon County Museum, and Muskegon County Museum of Art.

Some of the area's largest corporate interests maintain offices or hold significant investment in the downtown.

Muskegon is the county seat, and houses the central offices for both the City and County governments. It continues to offer regional retail activity, and contains some of the areas best known restaurants.

Muskegon County's Heritage Landing was developed as a multi-use waterfront park that is used to stage events and other outdoor activities. Heritage Landing has met with success and positive public feedback.

Farmer's Market

While the Farmer's Market is not located in the core downtown, it attracts people on a regular basis during its operating season. Patrons of the Market then have the opportunity to come further Downtown and experience its assets. Opportunities exist to enhance spin-off, synergism, or the sharing of patronage associated with the Farmer's Market.

In-Town Historic Districts and Structures

Several residential historic districts (including a National Register District) are located within walking distance of the downtown. A portion of Western Avenue, an historic district comprised of commercial development, is part of the downtown and home to such notable facilities as the Amazon Building and recently renovated Depot. These districts help bolster the energy of the downtown via their population base and visitor draw. New development and preservation opportunities exist with the districts, which could further enhance the visitor base.





Goals

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Nine goals associated with Muskegon’s Downtown and lakeshore were established during the early stages of the planning process. These goals are based on input provided during public, elected and appointed official, and City staff workshops; one-on-one interviews; and Downtown shopper and telephone surveys.

These goals describe general destinations or conditions Downtown Muskegon should reach or attain. They provide a vision for the Downtown, to be achieved through a comprehensive enhancement and redevelopment program.

Goals are statements that answer the questions:

- ◆ **“What should Downtown Muskegon’s future be?”**
- ◆ **“What needs to be done to attain that future?”**

The proposed projects, physical design considerations, and implementation recommendations described in Sections 6, 7, and 8 of this plan are specific statements describing the means and methods by which the above goals can be accomplished or attained.

Summary of Goals	
1. Establish an acceptable framework in which public and private investment in the core of the City for the foreseeable future can focus.	6. Create a 24-hour Downtown through the development of appropriate uses and activities.
2. Enhance the viability of existing assets.	7. Develop the Downtown as the regional employment center, and expand the current employment base.
3. Enhance synergism or sharing of customer and patron bases among current and future activities and uses.	8. Develop the Downtown as the entertainment center of Muskegon County and the West Michigan Central Shoreline area.
4. Improve the linkage between the established core of activity and waterfront.	9. Undertake physical enhancements which improve the image of Downtown through the creation of landmark/reference points and viewscapes; and implementation of improved landscape designs, pedestrian lighting, and coordination signage.
5. Create a 365-day or full year Downtown.	

Achievement of any or all of the goals will require the establishment of strong public-private partnerships, targeting of limited public and private resources, leveraging

limited resources, aggressive marketing, and public support.





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



INTRODUCTION

The geographic limit of Muskegon's Downtown is not formally defined or delineated. This has resulted in decentralization of development within the City's developed core, a lack of concentrated resources, and loss of potential business synergy.

This section of the plan delineates a manageable core downtown consisting of four distinct functional areas within which public and private resources should be focused so that the goals described in Section 3 can be attained. The geographic limits of the core downtown and downtown functional areas are based on an analysis of:

- ◆ The location and concentration of current activity centers, land uses (Figure 4.1), and anchor facilities;
- ◆ Physical geography, amenities, and history;
- ◆ Opportunity to concentrate additional, similar economic activity or like employment;
- ◆ Current synergism; and scale or distance.

DOWNTOWN CORE GEMS FUNCTIONAL AREAS

The analysis of Muskegon's Downtown resulted in the delineation of a core downtown area consisting of four distinct functional areas that exhibit compatible and complimentary land uses, activity centers, and anchor facilities that provide stability to

and draw high volumes of people into the downtown.

Collectively, the "GEMS" functional areas define and delineate the downtown core, and provide the opportunity to focus the downtown on geographic and functional areas and activities that are both compatible and complementary.

Each of the functional centers, with the exception of the Enterprise Center, possess recognized activity centers and anchor uses. GEMS functional centers are illustrated in Figure 4.1 and the current anchor facilities in Figure 4.2. GEMS functional centers are briefly described as follows:

Guest and Entertainment Center
The Guest and Entertainment GEMS Center includes Hackley Park, Frauenthal Theater, Walker Arena, the Hackley Library, the art museum, the County Historical Museum, Muskegon Mall, Western Avenue, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau housed in the renovated Union Rail Depot.

Enterprise Center
The Enterprise Center encompasses significant areas of vacant land along the Muskegon Lake shoreline, and areas of existing commercial and industrial development along the current and future Seaway Drive corridor.

Maritime Center
The Maritime Center includes vacant and developed land along the Muskegon Lake Shoreline.

Service Center
The Service Center encompasses City and County government facilities, and other nearby uses.





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

The GEMS acronym offers a relatively easy means of identifying the general focus and purpose of each functional area, though it is not intended for use as a marketing tool. It should be noted, however, that limited use of the functional area acronym and functional center names has proven successful during the process of preparing this plan. Subsequent public meetings and public feedback find participants employing the terms rather frequently, and with positive connotation.

Scale or distance issues became a significant factor during the process of delineating the downtown and GEMS functional centers. Employees and visitors to a downtown will regularly walk no more than six blocks to go from one facility to another. During the winter months, the distance is limited to three blocks. People employed in downtown areas making lunch trips generally do so to establishments within a three block area. While they will go further, such trips are less frequent, or involve the use of a vehicle.

Existing land use was also an important factor, particularly as it relates to separating the core downtown from nearby single-family residential neighborhoods. The Existing Land Use Map (shown in Figure 4.5) illustrates land uses within the core downtown.

Guest and Entertainment Center

The first of these functional areas is the Guest and Entertainment Center. Included within the boundaries are noted downtown activities and facilities such as Hackley Park, Frauenthal Theater, Walker Arena, major downtown hotel, public library,

public art museum, county historical museum, public transit station, and the mall. The Guest and Entertainment Center also includes the historic commercial strip along Western Avenue which includes the recently renovated depot and the Amazon Building.

The Guest and Entertainment Center abuts the shoreline Maritime Center. The Guest and Entertainment Center provides opportunity to concentrate a variety of entertainment, service, and retail uses in close proximity to existing facilities of local and regional significance, and to compliment the activities of the Maritime Center. As indicated, the Guest and Entertainment Center includes Western Avenue. Western Avenue is known for its historic structures and linkage to both the downtown and nearby historic residential districts. The Avenue is directly linked to the Walker Arena, Frauenthal Theater, Muskegon Mall, and County Depot, with nearby proximity to Heritage Landing. Western Avenue offers significant potential for commercial development of a specialty/theme nature, as well as basic services and facilities. Redevelopment of Western is key to not only its underlying functional center, but also the downtown core as a whole. Accordingly, this component offers additional detail and commentary regarding the Avenue. The subsequent section on Proposed Projects provides additional suggestions.

Above all, the Guest and Entertainment Center should be viewed as a way to bring people downtown for eating, cultural activities and experiencing a vibrant urban atmosphere that is a primary function of a City. The older, historic feel and proximity





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

to Muskegon Lake and other amenities establish a framework to build upon as this Center is further established. Anchor facilities for it are already present with the several restaurants, the beautiful Frauenthal Theater, the Muskegon Mall, the improving Walker Arena, and the Downtown Hotel. Additional restaurants, nightclubs and other retail/guest businesses could greatly facilitate the achievement of a 24 hour City center.

The historic buildings along Western Avenue are generally in good to excellent shape with few exceptions. The style of the architecture is unique to small Midwestern downtowns; one and two-story commercial and multi-story industrial buildings with quality brick and terra-cotta work and storefront windows. Typically as a city increases in size, these older, non-monumental buildings have been destroyed and replaced by featureless contemporary structures. Muskegon is unique in that these buildings remain with only minor changes to their original facades. Many of these buildings are still in use today, although they could be better or more thoroughly utilized.

The general image perceived along Western Avenue is of the chasms left in the urban fabric where buildings have been destroyed and replaced with parking or empty lots. Where buildings once provided a homogenous and textured streetscape, there are gaps that cause the flow of downtown to be interrupted and disturbed. This area is perceived to be too far from the heavier used portion of downtown, but as sensitive infill replaces the holes in the fabric, this area will become the important link

between downtown, the waterfront, and the historic neighborhood.

Many of the buildings along Western Avenue are kept in excellent condition, clean, and in continuous use. A few of the buildings detract from the quality only because they are not being used to their potential. Some of the structures detract from the quality because their abundant and grand windows have been boarded over. When these become functioning structures, with minor, sensitive architectural renovation to restore their former glory, they will become contributing factors to the style and glamour that could be achieved along Western Avenue.

The facade of the former hotel (593 though 603 Western) cannot be duplicated for style and significance. Typically, facadism is not recommended as a method of historic preservation, but this building is in very poor condition, with much of the existing structure already demolished. The facade could be salvaged in its existing position with a large, significant structure built to replace the portion of the hotel that has been demolished. This new building could lend itself to almost any function, including a health club or spa, theater, or science/aquatic center.

Due to alteration of its original facade, the Eagles complex is less than desirable in its architectural style; however, the buildings are maintained and have functioned well for the same owner for more than 50 years. This does provide a drawing influence to downtown for Eagle members, most of whom drive from the suburbs or other urban neighborhoods to this destination.





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

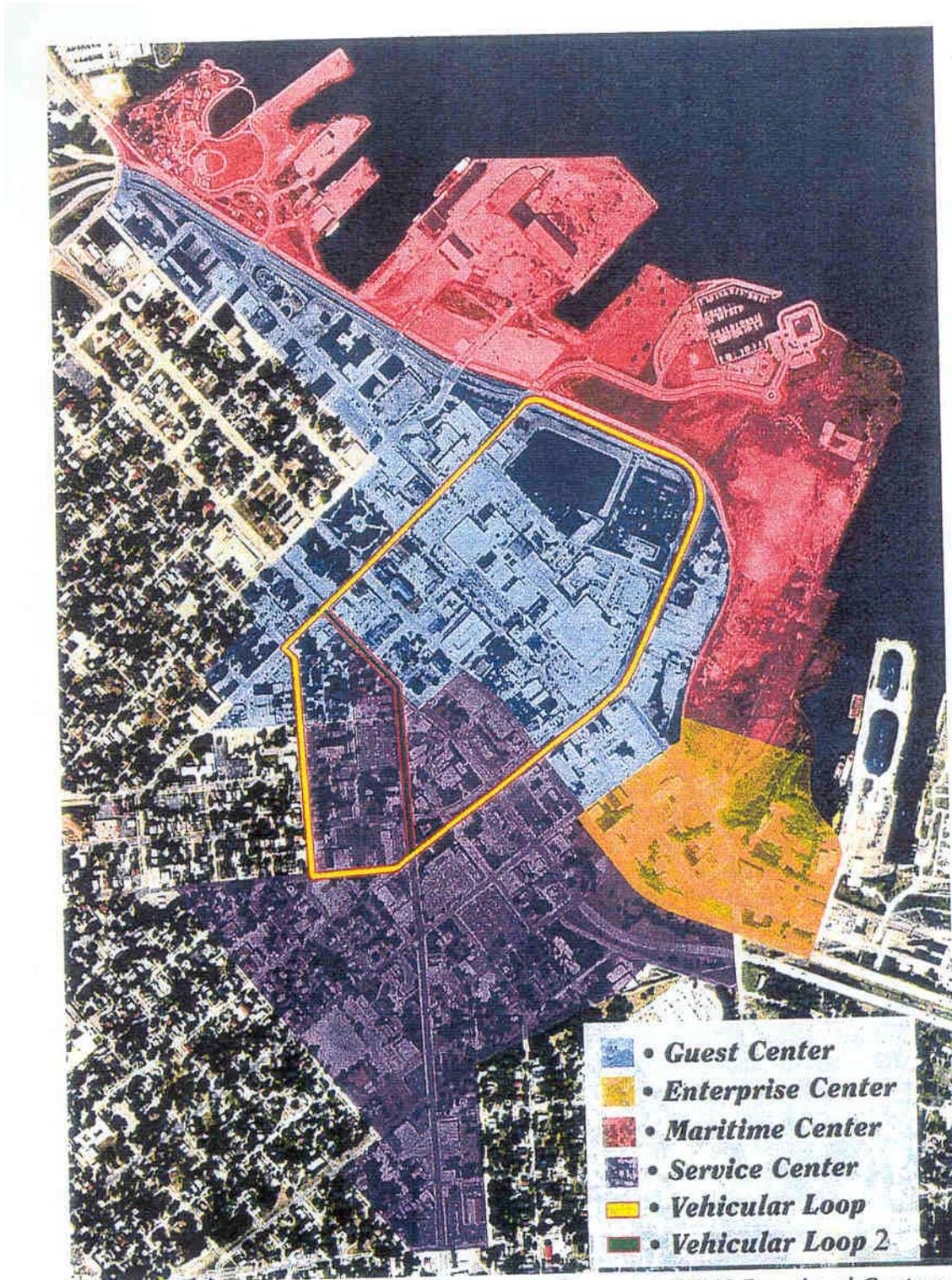


Figure 4.1 GEMS Functional Centers
City of Muskegon



Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

Most of the buildings along Western back directly up to the historic neighborhood. If they were to provide the necessary services for the neighborhood, they would provide a link. Such uses could include a grocery store, a health facility, beauty/barber shop, banking, a hardware store, video store, coffee shop, bakery, restaurants, and entertainment facilities, including a small multi-purpose theater. They would provide much desired services to the neighborhood, as well as the working community of Downtown.

Muskegon Hardware already maintains a large storage facility and wholesale hardware business between the downtown and the neighborhood. Possibly opening a small hardware store specializing in historic restoration items would not be far from reality. The large red brick building (521 through 531 Western) across from the Amazon Building would make an excellent grocery store, with two-story shopping or studios above. The Boiler Works building (1196 Eighth Street) requires a fair amount of renovation, but could be used for housing, offices, shopping, museum, health club or spa, or education facility. Many of the smaller buildings would lend themselves nicely to shops, restaurants, bars, and professional offices.

One of the more prominent, but under utilized buildings along Western Avenue is the Amazon Building. Overall, the Amazon is in good condition and is a monumental structure in the downtown. It is in need of general repair, more intense usage, and potential demolition of smaller, deterring additions. The potentials for this building are somewhat limited because of its size. Retail would be best if restricted to the

lower level only. Because of the C-shape of the building, with the open courtyard toward the water front, the upper, narrow floors would provide top-quality office or residential space, with spectacular views of the lake and excellent natural lighting. These would make exceptional working artists studios, however, this would be a less desirable economic venture.

Adding mass to the Avenue is desirable to replace the lost architectural fabric. Eliminating surface parking in exchange for low-rise parking structures that have been sensitively designed to fit the historic neighborhood would be a desirable way to resolve the parking issue. However, the perception among those visiting downtowns is that parking is not available if they cannot see open parking lots. Unfortunately, this is also the wrongly perceived view when numerous small parking lots are provided at the rear of buildings. Existing street parking should be maintained as much as possible, as it provides scale to the building facades and will be reassuringly familiar to visitors.

Visual linkages could be formed with vistas through existing open spaces or possible as-framed vistas between infill structures. Upper story views along Western should remain open to the waterfront if possible. Excluding the Mart Dock because of its charm and character as a maritime facility, existing contemporary storage facilities on the waterfront must be addressed as visual clutter.

Enterprise Center

The second area is defined as the Enterprise Center. It consists of largely vacant or





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

under utilized land near the waterfront and in the vicinity of the yet-to-be-constructed next phase of Shoreline Drive. The land was once used primarily for industrial activity and commercial establishments. This area presents an excellent opportunity to establish a concentration of heavy commercial and high-tech, light industrial, and product development oriented business. The development of these employment generating activities should be enhanced by the extension of Shoreline Drive through this area.

Employment activity created in the area will have quality access to both the north and south, will have a competitive advantage in serving regional needs, and will provide additional clientele to the retail and service sector of the core downtown.

As the Enterprise Center develops, efforts to enhance the flow of its employees to the other Centers should be made. Open and safe pedestrian pathways between it and the other areas should be established, and efforts should be made to keep the architecture at human scale. The Shoreline Drive extension should incorporate the needs of pedestrians, and adequate access should be provided for all appropriate means of transportation.

The Enterprise Center offers investors a unique opportunity to locate in a downtown environment, rather than in an industrial park, air park, or other traditional location. The Enterprise Center can provide opportunities for the establishment of high-quality facilities in a secure, urban environment easily accessible to governmental, legal, business, entertainment, and lakeshore services.

There are numerous uses potentially suitable for placement in the Enterprise Center. These include professional and corporate office buildings; flex-space facilities for business and high-tech (non-polluting) industries; professional and business services such as the office of design professionals, print/reproduction operations, photographic and arts supply, and computer services; media productions; select sales facilities requiring outdoor display areas; marine design and supply; etc.

The Enterprise Center is not to be viewed as a future, heavy industrial area. The Center should be developed in high-quality, business park fashion, accommodating the uses referenced above or other enterprises determined to be appropriate. This may be accomplished utilizing the existing roadway network or through select street vacating and land assembly should the opportunity arise.

The Enterprise Center should include minimum design standards for all future projects. These include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Prohibition of pole-type structures. This does not preclude steel buildings. However, steel buildings should be designed incorporating high-quality, long-lasting, facade materials such as brick. Such buildings should also include window treatment along public right-of-way to avoid the sterile appearance common to many industrial structures. Brick and glass buildings, and building incorporating unique designs and high-quality materials should be encouraged.





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan





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- ◆ Identification signs should be ground-mounted, monument varies, of high-quality design and materials. Pole signs should be prohibited.
- ◆ Sites involving yard areas should be well landscaped. This may include attractive landscape and architectural features and/or vegetation. Creative use of site lighting to highlight buildings and site features, and to enhance pedestrian safety should be encouraged.
- ◆ Security fencing, unless properly incorporated into the overall site design, should be discouraged. Cyclone, stockade, and similar fencing should be prohibited unless necessary for the security of buildings and equipment. In all cases, the visual impacts of such fencing should be mitigated through other site enhancements.
- ◆ Outdoor storage, except for the display of select automotive, marine, and recreational vehicles ready for direct retail sale, should be discouraged.

Of the four GEMS Centers, the Enterprise Center may have the greatest potential for full development within the shortest time span. This is largely due to the relatively small geographic size of the Center.

Maritime Center

The third area is the Maritime Center, which focuses upon much of the developed and undeveloped waterfront properties in the core of the City. The potential exists in this area to further capitalize on the water through the creation and development of

uses that complement other activities throughout the downtown. The Maritime Center will also provide opportunity to enhance the City's tourist trade.

The Maritime Center must exploit Muskegon's greatest asset: Muskegon Lake. The visual, cultural, historic, habitat and tourist benefits of the Lake should be incorporated into its planning and development. Fishing and water sport activities, such as charter boats, marina's and piers, should be considered. Seafood venues and restaurants would fit nicely. Public access and enjoyment should be an important component to lure people to the Downtown and its activities and businesses. The developing lakeshore bike/recreation path is an excellent example of this development. Enhancing the beauty and appreciation of this exemplary natural resource will change the psychology and perception of the Downtown, and the City in general.

A major focus of the Maritime Center is the compatible blending of shoreline development with the retail and service sectors of Western Avenue to create a sense of visual linkage and ease of pedestrian flow between the two. Historically, such linkage has not existed.

As detailed in later sections of the plan, the Maritime Center has been divided into four subareas based on existing land use, development potential, identified development and redevelopment needs, and other factors. However distinct, some overlap of development opportunities may occur and should be considered.

This plan recommends that all future





Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



development within the Maritime Center be subject to either special land use or planned unit development guidelines and standards. This will ensure better integration of individual sites, and potentially result in higher quality site use and design. Moreover, these tools provide the City with the highest level of design oversight.

General industrial development within the Maritime Center should be prohibited. Sufficient area exists along other shoreline locations and in other industrial areas to accommodate the City's industrial needs. Similarly, use of the Center for storage, warehousing, bulk product sites, maintenance facilities, and other such uses should be highly discouraged.

Service Center

The fourth area is the Service Center, which gives a home for community, even region-wide services and functions. Government facilities already have a distinct and positive influence on this area, and this should continue. City and County government is well represented, and state and federal government investment should be encouraged. The recent movement of the County government into the former Baker College campus is an excellent means of continuing to develop and enhance this Center.

Other office and professional uses should be encouraged. Several important law firms reside in this area and similar professional activities should continue to find a home. Sensitive retail and commercial development should be encouraged, especially along the major

streets. Such uses provide a transition between the surrounding residential neighborhoods and the other developing GEMS.

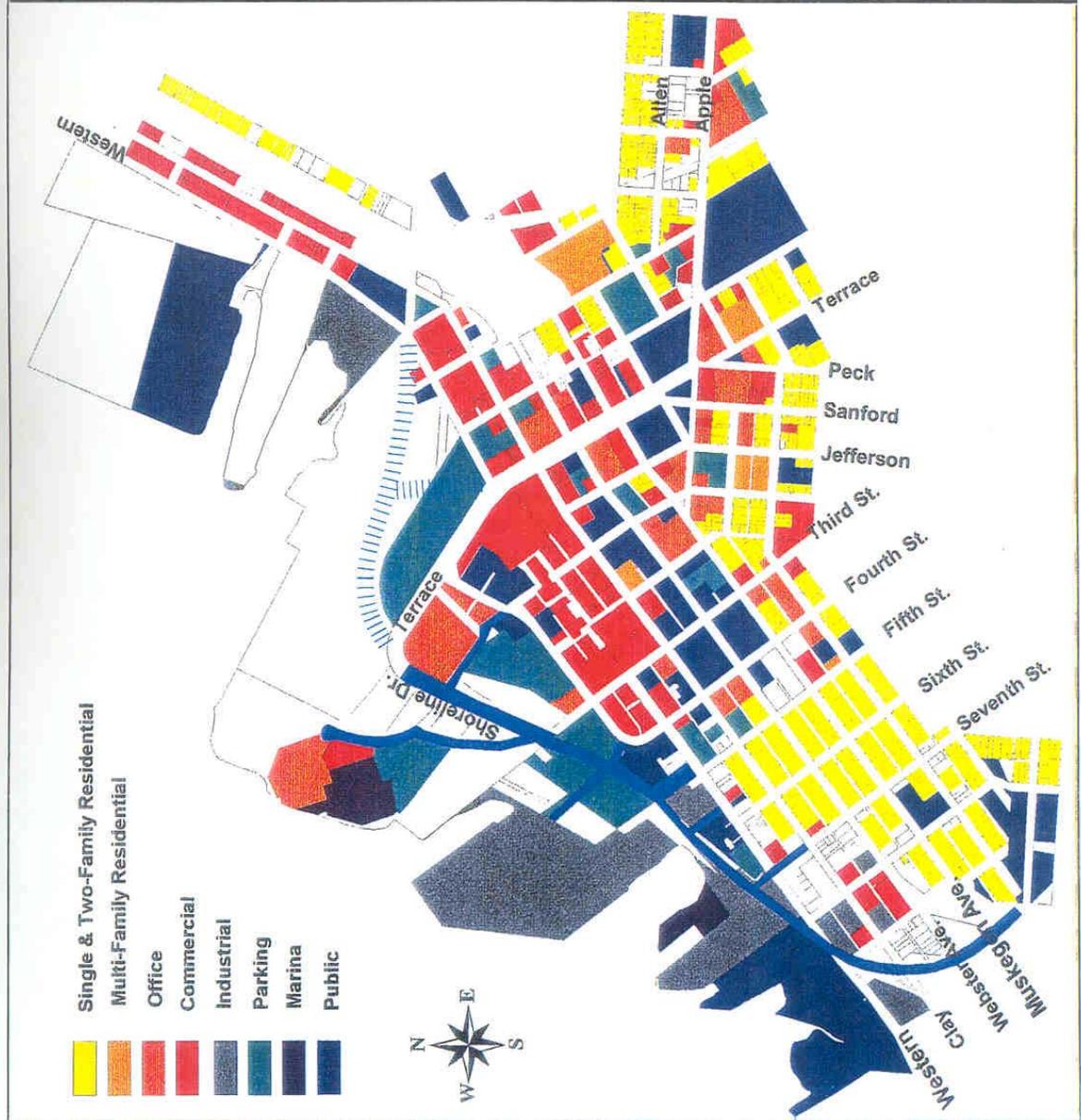
As the Service Center further develops, linkages between the other Centers should be increased. Note that the Service Center often acts as a gateway to the Downtown. Besides for providing an beneficial home for professional, government and commercial activities, this Center functions as an important transition zone into the newly enhancing Downtown.

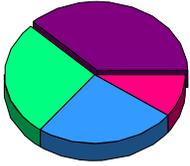




Defining a Manageable Downtown Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

FIGURE 4.3 EXISTING LAND USE





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



INTRODUCTION

Market research and analysis was conducted to develop a Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment plan and plan implementation program that was practical, pragmatic, and results oriented. The research process involved one-on-one interviews; one-on-one surveys of 215 Downtown shoppers/patrons; a region-wide, 450 household telephone survey; and an analysis of known and available market, demographic, and economic data.

One of the two surveys performed was a customer intercept or patron survey. A sample of Downtown shoppers and patrons was obtained on-street in front of various commercial establishments in the core Downtown and inside of the Muskegon Mall during June and July of 1995. The second survey was a large sample telephone survey of households from throughout the entire Muskegon area. In both cases, significant, original information was generated with respect to commercial use and patterns, attitudes and perceptions with respect to Downtown and specific activity or uses Downtown, as well as demographic data on those surveyed.

The shopper surveys were conducted inside of the Muskegon Mall and in front of various Downtown businesses. The telephone survey was conducted within the market area defined by shopper survey data.

Information was generated with respect to numbers of, and reasons for trips Downtown; stores or places of business requested by shoppers and others; age, income, an employment status of shoppers;

perceptions of Downtown Muskegon; and a variety of other data.

Although the wealth of information contained in this section of the plan may be viewed as being of limited utility to general audiences, it is intended to provide information to members of City, regions, State and wider business, development, and redevelopment interests that is vital to Downtown enhancement, development, and redevelopment efforts.

An overview of the market analysis follows (see Figure 5.1):

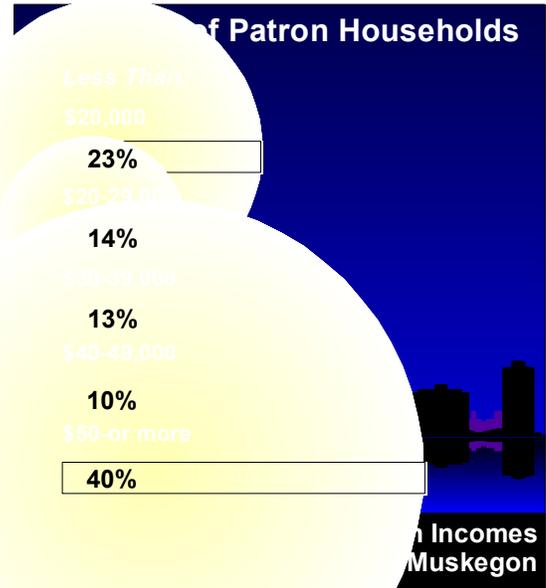
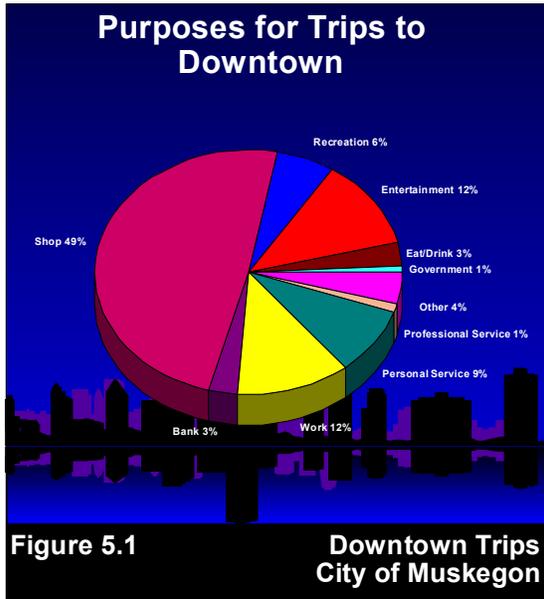
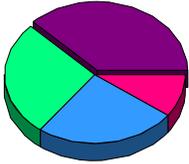
CUSTOMER SURVEY FINDINGS

- ◆ The vast majority of Downtown patrons (84%) reside in Muskegon County. Few are visitors from other areas. The preponderance of these live in zip code areas 49440 through 49442.
- ◆ Only about one-half (50%) of the primary customer base comes to the area to shop. Other significant reasons for coming Downtown include: work (12%), entertainment (12%), personal service (9%) recreation (6%), eat or drink at a food establishment (3%), and conduct banking business (3%).
- ◆ About one-half (50%) of all those who come Downtown only go to one business or establishment. This low level of synergism reflects the geographic distance between various activities and services, as discussed elsewhere in this plan.



Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

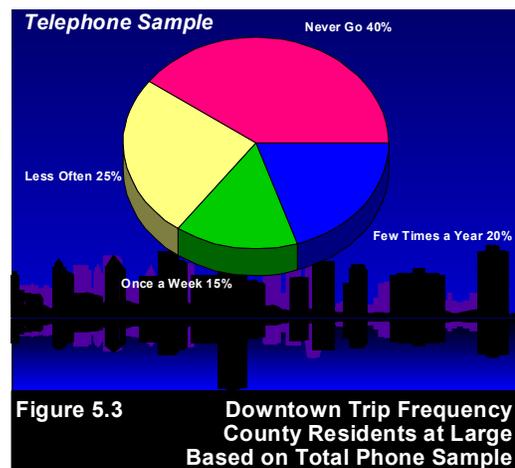


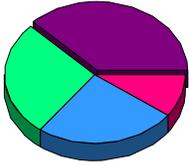
- ◆ About one-half (50%) of the customer base is employed, with about one-half (50%) of these being employed Downtown. Thus, Downtown workers represent a significant (about one-fourth in total) share of the customer base. Increased employment Downtown could be a significant factor in expanding business activity.
- ◆ Much of the current patronage is approaching senior citizen status or are seniors. About 20% of the customers are 65 or older. About one-fourth are between the ages of 50 and 64.
- ◆ Household incomes of the customers are often substantial. About 45% of the customers have annual household incomes of \$50,000 or more (see Figure 5.2).
- ◆ The Muskegon Lake waterfront (“water element”) was defined as the Downtown’s greatest attribute by the patrons.

REGIONAL TELEPHONE SURVEY FINDINGS

The following represent selected highlights from the Muskegon area household survey.

- ◆ While 92% of the respondents remarked that they were familiar with Downtown, 40% do not go to activities or conduct business in Downtown





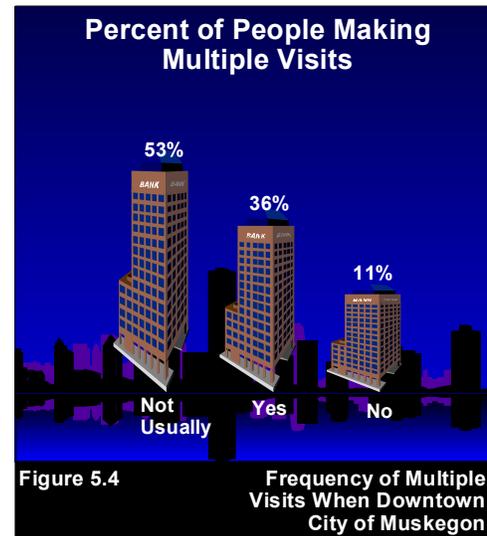
Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

Muskegon. This finding is collaborated by the on-street surveys. Of those who go Downtown, about one-fourth go there at least once per week. On the other hand, about one-third go there a maximum of a few times per year.

Thus, about three-fourths either do not go Downtown or do not go there on any regular basis. Whether for the purpose of shopping, conducting other business, or participating in other activities, Downtown's current market penetration level is relatively low (see Figure 5.3).

- ◆ While about two-thirds of all those who go Downtown at least occasionally go there to shop, many go primarily for other purposes, or for a combined trip to shop and for other purposes. Almost one-third go to food establishments at least occasionally. More than one-fourth (27%) attend sporting events at the arena at least occasionally, while 21% attend other events at least occasionally.
- ◆ Once again reaffirming the patron survey findings with regard to the low level of synergism, only about one-third (36%) most often go to more than one business or establishment (see Figure 5.4). In total, 12% of those who frequent Downtown most often go there by public transportation. While Sears and Steketee's at the Muskegon Mall attract many for clothes shopping, many others go to Wal-Mart, K-Mart, or other commercial areas in Norton Shores, or to Grand Rapids.
- ◆ About 27% of all respondents go to see live theater at least on occasion. Of



these, only about one-fourth partake of such activity in Downtown Muskegon. Only about 20% follow professional hockey.

- ◆ Given the substantial senior community, employment levels are reasonable within the population surveyed (see Figure 5.5). About 40% of the households have two people employed full-time. About one-fourth of all households have someone employed part-time.
- ◆ About one-fourth of all households have a female as the primary income earner; 20% of all households have annual incomes of \$50,000 or more. Only 4% of the households receive any form of governmental assistance.

MARKET BASED DEMAND

Introduction

Based on the data base on spending and

Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan

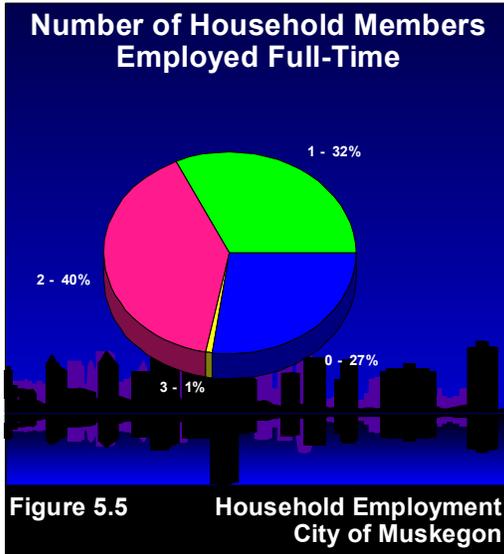
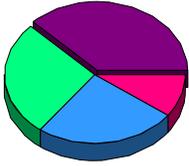


Figure 5.5 Household Employment City of Muskegon

other issues developed through the consumer surveys, one-on-one interviews, and secondary sources of information, a detailed analysis of the potential for activity in the Downtown area was conducted. The following are conclusions from that analysis.

There are three basic potential groups that contribute possible revenue to activity in the Downtown area:

- ◆ Visitors/Non-Residents (non-City or County);
- ◆ Residents of Muskegon; and
- ◆ Muskegon County Residents (exclusive of City residents).

Note that the dollar estimates included in this discussion include inflation adjustments for the present day (1995-1996) and therefore; future estimates have not been inflation adjusted.

Visitors/Non-Residents

Visitors not living in the City or County represent the smallest market force at this time. Information salient to the visitor demand follows:

- ◆ The majority of visitors to Muskegon County are from out of state. Based on requests made to the local visitors bureau and various travel related entities, about 21% of all visitors are from Illinois. About 17% of the visitors are from Michigan, and 15% are from Indiana. Figure 5.6 contains information on the proportion of visitors to Muskegon County coming from various states.
- ◆ Most of the visitors to the general area around Muskegon come primarily for leisure purposes. About 20% come at least once a year for general vacations, while another 16% come for sightseeing. An additional 13% defined their primary purpose as being

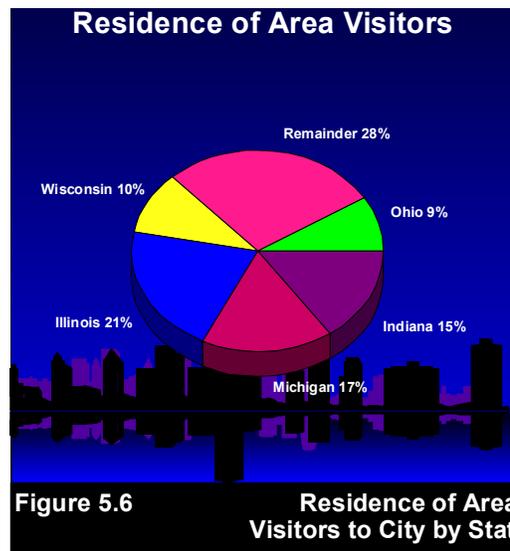
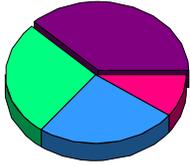


Figure 5.6 Residence of Area Visitors to City by State





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



water recreation or the beach, with an additional 12% coming for the quiet atmosphere. The more frequent visitor trips have a tendency to be water oriented.

- ◆ As defined through a survey conducted by the West Michigan Tourist Association in 1993, the visitors to the area are more often than not highly educated, empty-nesters. Eighty percent (80%) of the visitors are married, with 55% having at least a college education. About one-half are over 46, with one-third define themselves as professionals. Almost one-half have annual incomes above \$50,000.
- ◆ Muskegon County room tax collections have risen significantly since 1988 and 1989, as a result of both increases in occupancy or room nights, and increases in the price of rooms.
- ◆ Visitor spending in Muskegon County has also risen from the 1988-1989 period to the present. Spending has risen by at least 6% in Muskegon County. While visitor spending was estimated at \$62.8 million in the 1988-1989 period, visitor spending within Muskegon County is estimated to be between \$69 and \$71 million during the 1995-1996 period. By the year 2000, spending could reach the \$80 to \$85 million level.
- ◆ The visitor spending within Muskegon County is distributed between a variety of functions and activities, including but not limited to transportation, lodging, non-food retail, food purchases, and entertainment. Between 1996 and the

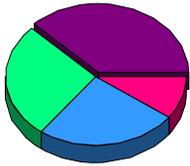
year 2000, spending on non-food retail by visitors to Muskegon County is expected to grow by about \$0.5 million. The combination of restaurant or food establishment sales and entertainment is expected to grow by about \$1.5 million. Table 5.1 contains information on the estimates of visitor spending in Muskegon County in selected areas or functions.

- ◆ The potential for increased visitation and visitor spending exceeds the noted estimates if significant visitor based activity is established in the area. In the short-term, or over the next five years, visitor based spending could exceed the estimates by 50%, with an additional \$7 to \$8 million in additional spending annually on food, entertainment, and other retail within Muskegon County. The Downtown waterfront of Muskegon is one of the more likely places from which additional visitor based activity could be spawned.
- ◆ While the demand will increase from the visitor component, such demand is not likely to yield sufficient revenue to attract another large hotel facility to Downtown in the next five or so years. Room night expansion could be sufficient to create the opportunity for a small inn or several bed and breakfasts located in close proximity to the water.

Spending Category	1995-1996	2000
Non-Food Retail	\$3,300,000	\$3,800,000
Entertainment	\$3,500,000	\$4,000,000
Food	\$8,600,000	\$9,950,000

Table 5.1 **Muskegon County**
Visitor-Based Estimates





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	\$34,065,000	\$48,961,000	\$57,827,000
Eat/Drink	52,923,000	43,650,000	44,885,000
General Merchandise	35,201,000	54,562,000	56,106,000
Furniture	24,411,000	25,208,000	25,921,000
Automotive	112,366,000	87,191,000	82,177,000
Drugstore	22,591,000	14,550,000	14,962,000
Apparel	14,114,000	14,586,000	14,999,000
Hardware	19,359,000	23,607,000	24,275,000
Auto Service	14,431,000	14,914,000	15,336,000
Miscellaneous	22,519,000	36,520,000	37,553,000
Total	\$351,980,000	\$363,749,000	\$374,041,000

Table 5.2 **Estimated Sales Retail & Related Services
City of Muskegon Residents**

Residents of Muskegon

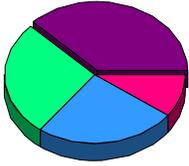
As defined through the survey data, the residents of the City of Muskegon are a significant share of the current potential market for goods and services in the Downtown area. The following summarizes the potential associated with this second major component of demand.

- ◆ Retail and related services demand generated by residents of the City of Muskegon is substantial and will grow in the future. Retail and related services sales generated by the residents are estimated at \$352 million for 1995-1996. These sales are expected to grow to about \$364 million by the year 2000 and to \$374 million by 2005. Retail and related services sales can be subdivided into ten major categories of retail. The sales estimates for five year incremental periods for retail and related services generated by the

residents of the City of Muskegon are contained in Table 5.2.

- ◆ The sales estimates have been divided into numerous subcategories or store types. About fifty different store types or subcategories were examined. The sales estimates by subcategory are converted to supportable space through the application of per square foot productivity levels. A sales productivity level is the level of sales at which a business operation is assumed to be able to pay all costs of operation and provide a reasonable return on investment. Sales productivity levels vary for each type of operation.





Market Analysis

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Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	88,390	127,042	150,048
Eat/Drink	192,447	158,727	163,218
General Merchandise	169,338	262,475	269,901
Furniture	106,407	109,882	112,988
Automotive	548,868	425,897	401,405
Drugstore	68,458	44,091	45,339
Apparel	57,217	59,129	60,804
Hardware	104,638	127,599	131,209
Auto Service	104,046	107,529	110,571
Miscellaneous	116,481	188,903	194,247
Total	1,556,290	1,611,274	1,639,730

Table 5.3

**Estimated Supportable Retail Space
City of Muskegon Residents**

In Table 5.3 retail and related services space supported by the residents of the City of Muskegon is estimated. Retail and related services space supported by the market component is expected to grow only marginally over the next ten years. Muskegon Mall currently has a reasonable penetration into this market. No additional retail space focused primarily on this component of the market is advisable at this time.

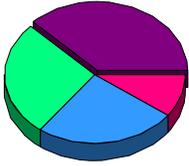
- ◆ Socio-economic and demographic changes in the community are expected to generate a growing demand for services, most likely to be situated in office structures, or space converted to offices. Based on the age of the population, the increased need for medical services, and other cumulative factors, it is estimated that the residents of the City will generate about 20,000 square feet in demand for new space annually over the next ten years. The estimated demand does not include any

need for expanded government services, space linked to or created by the relocation or creation of a regional or national service operation, nor the growth necessary to stimulate shifting employment needs.

Muskegon County Residents (Exclusive of City Residents)

The third primary component of demand is the Muskegon County population, exclusive of the population associated with the City of Muskegon. This third market component is essentially the largest potential base to be served. It is also one in which current market penetration is very low. Thus, many potential dollars are not coming from this segment of the market into the Downtown at present, including Muskegon Mall. The following reflects market demand associated with Muskegon County residents, excluding those in the City of Muskegon.





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



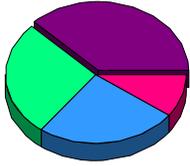
- ◆ The market potential associated with the residents of the area is more than twice that of the potential associated with residents of the City of Muskegon. Furthermore, the remainder of Muskegon County's population is generally younger and more affluent than the City of Muskegon population, reflecting differing needs, particularly as reflected in terms of commercial development associated with both retail related services and office space.
- ◆ Current retail and related services sales generated by this component are estimated at about the \$884 million level (see Table 5.4). Over the next ten years, the sales are expected to increase to \$1.372 billion, or about 55%. This represents an average annual growth of 5.5%.
- ◆ The increase in sales will result in a substantial increase in supportable space. Over the next ten years, about 2.2 million additional square feet will be supportable by the market. Much of the increase will come in four categories. The increases in two of those categories could have significant implications to Downtown. Those categories consist of eating and drinking establishments, and miscellaneous. The miscellaneous category is composed of numerous types of businesses, many found in traditional Downtown areas or in regional shopping malls.
It is also noted that the increase anticipated in general merchandise space, the category associated with traditional department stores and value oriented retailers, is expected to grow at only a modest level. Planned new

development is likely to outstrip the growth in demand. Thus, a weakening of the market in this category and a possible "shake-out" is possible. Table 5.5 contains the estimates of supportable space for retail and related services generated by residents of Muskegon County, excluding those living in the City of Muskegon.

- ◆ While current market penetration is small, there is no reason to believe that unique activity located Downtown cannot increase market penetration, and therefore, revenue from this potent source.
- ◆ In addition to retail and related services, demand for additional office space over the next ten years generated by the market could reach between 500,000 and 1 million square feet, depending upon the assumptions. Once again, while not capturing a significant share of the market growth, the enhanced access provided by Shoreline Drive, coupled with recruitment and marketing, could result in expansion of the market share.

In addition to the noted market components, additional demand could be drawn from households residing outside of Muskegon County, but within the Greater Grand Rapids/Tri Cities/Muskegon region. Generally, current retail customer movement in the greater region is away from Muskegon and towards these other areas, with the possible exception of people pursuing recreational activities. Reversal of the pattern is conceivable and has been accomplished by other communities along Lake Michigan. Holland is a notable example of a reversal.





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



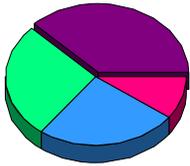
Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	\$132,366,000	\$166,075,000	\$177,217,000
Eat/Drink	83,131,000	132,086,000	147,182,000
General Merchandise	237,449,000	297,708,000	328,941,000
Furniture	46,746,000	66,814,000	74,663,000
Automotive	196,401,000	295,753,000	336,397,000
Drugstore	26,816,000	49,354,000	54,888,000
Apparel	35,461,000	49,478,000	55,025,000
Hardware	60,876,000	80,077,000	89,056,000
Auto Service	49,856,000	68,161,000	75,469,000
Miscellaneous	15,206,000	28,341,000	33,364,000
Total	\$884,308,000	\$1,233,847,000	\$1,372,202,000

Table 5.4 **Estimated Sales: Retail and Related Services
Muskegon County Residents (non-City)**

Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	343,458	430,926	459,835
Eat/Drink	302,295	480,313	535,207
General Merchandise	1,142,267	1,432,147	1,582,397
Furniture	203,765	291,240	325,454
Automotive	959,349	1,444,648	1,643,179
Drugstore	81,261	149,558	166,327
Apparel	143,756	200,578	223,066
Hardware	329,040	432,824	481,356
Auto Service	359,457	491,435	544,126
Miscellaneous	78,658	146,597	172,580
Total	3,943,306	5,500,226	6,133,527

Table 5.5 **Estimated Supportable Retail Space (square feet)
Muskegon County Residents (non-City)**





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



While not currently a factor with respect to sales and activity in Downtown Muskegon, other than to diminish captured demand or dollars from residents of Muskegon County, this additional market component is important because it is so large. The retail and related services sales generated by the regional population, exclusive of those living within Muskegon County, is estimated at \$7.7 billion. It is expected to grow over the next ten years, reaching a \$12.3 billion level (see Table 5.6).

The amount of supportable space generated by this market component will grow by about 20 million square feet over the next ten years. Demand for eating and drinking establishments, often critical to the long-term viability of Downtowns, is expected to grow to a level sufficient to support about

1.5 million square feet of additional space along (see Table 5.7).

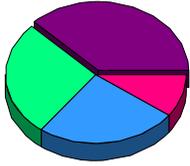
Thus, the potential exists to capture a larger share of the growing market components, including visitors and residents of the region. However, capturing an increased share of the market will require concentrations of marketable activities oriented toward the regional population and visitors to the general region.

Numerous activities have been proposed for either the established core of Downtown, the waterfront within Downtown, or potential areas near Downtown. The following section contains some of those proposals that would serve potential market growth components or would be catalytic to stimulating other activity Downtown.

Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	\$929,078,000	\$1,645,868,000	\$1,911,528,000
Eat/Drink	688,775,000	950,087,000	1,106,581,000
General Merchandise	1,466,236,000	1,653,941,000	1,929,138,000
Furniture	579,566,000	795,753,000	923,404,000
Automotive	2,005,385,000	2,530,519,000	2,942,135,000
Drugstore	201,184,000	302,416,000	352,704,000
Apparel	309,396,000	425,583,000	494,789,000
Hardware	500,025,000	688,788,000	800,793,000
Auto Service	401,660,000	551,879,000	641,621,000
Miscellaneous	629,916,000	1,068,228,000	1,236,181,000
Total	\$7,711,221,000	\$10,613,062,000	\$12,338,974,000

Table 5.6 **Retail and Related Services Sales Estimate for the Remainder of the Grand Rapids-Muskegon Region**





Market Analysis

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Category	1995	2000	2005
Food	2,410,737	4,270,635	4,959,960
Eat/Drink	2,504,636	3,454,862	4,023,931
General Merchandise	7,053,446	7,956,416	9,280,275
Furniture	2,526,315	3,468,669	4,025,096
Automotive	9,795,590	12,360,682	14,371,278
Drugstore	609,648	916,412	1,068,800
Apparel	1,254,254	1,725,262	2,005,814
Hardware	2,702,684	3,722,967	4,328,364
Auto Service	2,895,935	3,979,002	4,626,034
Miscellaneous	3,285,310	5,525,527	6,394,279
Total	35,038,555	47,380,434	55,083,831

Table 5.7 **Supportable Space Generated
by the Remainder of the Grand Rapids-Muskegon Region**





Proposed Projects

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

A variety of projects offer the potential to bring new synergy to Downtown Muskegon. These range from projects in the planning and discussion stages, as well as those recently completed or underway. The projects described below represent those considered beneficial to the Downtown.

1. W.G. Jackson Research Vessel

The recent dedication of the Grand Valley State University's research ship represents a first of several possible water-oriented facilities that could become a new focus for the Downtown area. The research vessel, dedicated during the summer of 1996, could be catalytic to the expansion of marine science activity if located within close proximity to the vessel.

2. Aquarium

Of all proposals, none is likely to have a greater impact on the long-term visibility to attract the visitor base to complement the research vessel, or contribute to youth education in the Downtown area, than the proposed aquarium. A location along the water near the current core, in close proximity to other water-oriented activity such as the research vessel, is preferred. The aquarium could well be linked to other facilities through research on marine and other environmental issues.

3. Boat Slips

The increased availability of boat slips for visitors coming to Muskegon would assist with increasing the viability of Downtown as an attraction.

4. Cross Lake Ferry

In the past, Muskegon was linked by ferries to other communities around Lake Michigan. The growth and improvements to other transportation modes lead to the decline of ferries. However, with an increasing visitor base to the area, and improvements in ferries (e.g., their speed), a ferry or ferries could become an important and unique part of Downtown Muskegon. Note that a smaller ferry system within the immediate Muskegon area is possible, as well as a larger Lake Michigan ferry. Both could act to enhance the Downtown.

5. Improvements to the Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts

In 1996 voters approved a millage to enhance the Frauenthal Center, clearly recognizing the importance of the Downtown cultural facility to the regional population. The improvements should assist in recapturing some of the dollars being spent by Muskegon County residents who currently seek live theater outside of Muskegon. Increased patronage could stimulate internal and nearby restaurant activity, and would make the Frauenthal catalytic to the creation of expanded entertainment and the proposed entertainment district.

6. Improvements to the Walker Arena & Conference Center

Sports and sporting activity have proven to be catalytic to enhanced activity in Downtown areas. Sports facilities situated Downtown, such as Jacob's Field in Cleveland and Camden Gardens in Baltimore, assist with maintaining Downtown evening patronage. The patronage for the events and activities held at such facilities create the opportunity for synergistic or spin-off establishments, including restaurants, sports bars or taverns, and sporting goods operations.





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Furthermore, improvement to the facility will help to improve the likelihood of attracting increased local or regional oriented meetings, smaller conferences, trade exhibits, and other events that draw people to the core area.

7. Minor League Baseball Stadium

Along with improvements to the Walker Arena, the construction of a minor league baseball stadium could increase the role of spectator sports in the Downtown. Similar facilities built in other communities have had positive impacts on the Downtown and the communities in general. Wilmington, Delaware, successfully integrated such a facility into their waterfront with great success. While unlikely to have an impact of the magnitude of the aquarium in terms of spin-off economic return, a baseball stadium does represent a viable component if properly planned and developed.

8. Waterfront Gambling Facilities

The purpose of this plan is not to suggest or support the concept for one or more gambling-oriented facilities located along the waterfront in Muskegon. There are arguments on both sides as to the validity of such inclusion within a community. However, the proposed Downtown program would be remiss if such facilities were not accounted for. They have been discussed extensively by the public in the past, and will likely be discussed and proposed by others again in the future.

From a planning perspective, the attempt here is to: 1) recognize that the proposals exist; 2) provide some guidelines from a planning prospective so that if a gambling facility is built, it will be compatible with the other components of Downtown. Should gambling facilities be built, the following

guidelines for location and maximizing the economic development potential should be incorporated.

- ◆ Facilities should be located along the waterfront;
- ◆ Facilities associated with the activity should provide hotel lodging accommodations;
- ◆ On-site parking should be minimized;
- ◆ A jobs program linking hiring to residency in Muskegon City and County should be developed; and
- ◆ The amount of on-site restaurant and retail activity should be minimized.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

The following are activities or components of the Downtown that are also suggested for incorporation into the plan. These activities will enhance the Downtown and assist with establishing the core areas as a regional focal point.

1. Wholesale/Retail Seafood - Farmer's Market Complex

The current farmer's market could be a synergistic attraction for Downtown if situated in a location capable of sharing patronage with other nearby activities. We suggest that the Farmer's Market be relocated to a site closer to the Muskegon Mall, or be situated along the waterfront, and be expanded to include a seafood market and household flower and plant market.

Creation of an indoor/outdoor market complex along the waterfront, combined with other water-related activities, adds a unique feature and ambiance to the Downtown not available in other West Michigan communities. A waterfront





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seafood market would help make the waterfront come alive 365 days a year, 24-hours a day.

Facilities associated with a market complex might include slips for charter and pleasure boats, a lakefront pedestrian boardwalk with finger piers for fishing, seafood restaurants, tourist related marine craft, such as the USS Silversides, marine oriented specialty retail, and uses of a similar nature.

Options for relocating the Farmers Market were addressed in more depth in a previous study. In addition to the Downtown, a number of other possible locations were assessed. While not conclusive, the Farmers Market Relocation Study found that a Downtown site was at least as good as other possible sites. The Downtown location was preferred by the Market vendors, and viewed as having good site access.

While the Farmers Market Relocation Study went into greater detail than this Plan, several factors relating to possible relocation to the Downtown can be noted:

- ◆ Shoreline Drive, particularly when completed, offers the same level of exposure as the present routing system. In fact, exposure may be greater. The high number of people destined for the Downtown from Norton Shores, Grand Haven, Fruitport, Spring Lake, etc., are more likely to be exposed to a Downtown/shoreline location than the present one.
- ◆ Based on the principle that proximity invites greater use, a Downtown location is more likely to access a greater number of Downtown workers during the noon hour.
- ◆ A Downtown location is more likely to capture a larger portion of spin-off traffic

from events such as those occurring at Heritage Landing.

- ◆ A Downtown location compliments, and is complemented by, other retail trade and uses which draw people into the Downtown from all points of origin.
- ◆ A Downtown location compliments the existing and future "tourist" aspects of the City. The present location tends to be more isolated and distant.
- ◆ At least one, and perhaps more, rural communities lying north of the City are seriously investigating development of a Farmer's Market. While the impact of such a facility on a Downtown location cannot be ascertained, it is highly probable that any impact would be greater on the present location than a Downtown location.
- ◆ A majority of survey respondents viewed the Downtown location favorably.

2. Waterfront Housing

In general, housing along the waterfront in Muskegon has met with much greater success than commercial activity. We suggest that waterfront housing be incorporated into the very core of the City, not simply along other areas of the waterfront. Such housing should be "market rate," and where possible, include amenities such as boat slips. All units should take advantage of waterfront views. Specific development projects should provide for enhancement of public waterfront access.

3. Expansion of Family-Oriented Waterfront Activity

There have been attempts to incorporate





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permanent, public, family-oriented open space and activity along the waterfront in the core area of Muskegon. A noteworthy example is Heritage Landing incorporated into the southern end of the Downtown waterfront. However, there are many additional “soft play” and other family-oriented activities that could be incorporated. Examples include water-oriented amusements, miniature golf, and beach volleyball. Many of these activities often provide a fairly quick return on limited capital investment. Thus, the facilities represent a form of “land banking” or temporary facilities providing activity, excitement, and economic return prior to construction of more permanent facilities or increased private investment.

A family-oriented activity that is generally missing from the Downtown, but with potential, is that of sport fishing from the shore. Limited public access, combined with a lack of suitable areas and facilities from which to fish Muskegon Lake, render sport fishing almost non-existent along the lake in the core Downtown. Fishing areas and facilities, such as finger piers and linkages with the Shoreline Trail system, can encourage greater use of the lakefront in the Downtown, provide an excellent and inexpensive means of family recreation, and compliment other waterfront activities.

4. Corporate Retreat or Conference Center

The Walker Arena provides an opportunity to incorporate conference activity into the Downtown. However, that is not the original design intent or primary function of the facility and conference activity will always play a secondary role. Based on Muskegon’s history of industrial development, and certain projects suggested in this plan to recreate a significant employment center, a corporate

retreat center or specifically designed conference facility would be an important year-round asset. Underutilized space in the Muskegon Mall should be examined for possible redevelopment as a conference center.

5. Health Spa and Indoor Recreation Complex

Coupled with increased Downtown housing opportunities, enhanced employment activity, and an increase in full year activity, an indoor health and recreation spa would be an additional asset. Such a facility could include an indoor Olympic swimming pool, indoor track, sports medicine related activity and equipment, a full gym, exercise and weight training equipment, tennis courts, and other courts and activities. Such facilities should compliment rather than compete with the nearby YFCA.

Such facilities also often incorporate a health education component. Increasing numbers of such facilities are linked to hospitals, HMOs, or networked physicians groups.

6. Entertainment District Focused on Quality Restaurants Offering Live Evening Entertainment

The existence of the theater and arena, the character of the existing structures along Western Avenue, and the expanding regional market, provide the opportunity to create an expansion of entertainment activity in the Downtown area. The focus of the new activity would be quality restaurants offering music, which could range from jazz and blues to rock, country, and small and big band revival.

Entrepreneurial activity would be an important component of the development.





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While chain facilities would be welcome, many of the businesses would be expected to be “one-of-a-kind” or unique. Such a clustering of facilities in one area would help to enhance the Downtown as a regional

attraction in the evening and on weekends, as well as provide an additional inducement to attract corporate retreats, conferences, and increase boaters. See Figure 6.1 for an illustration of the possible “look” of Western Avenue.





Proposed Projects

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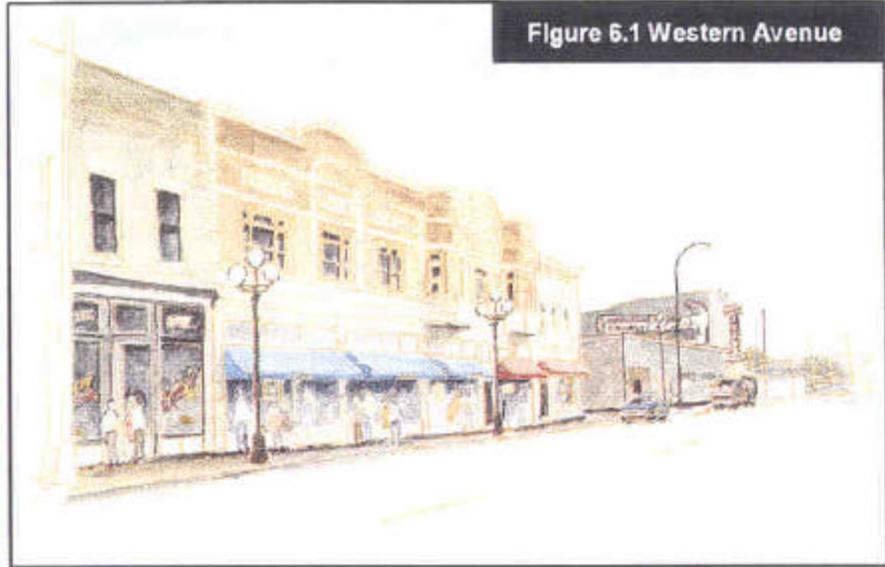


Figure 6.1 Western Avenue

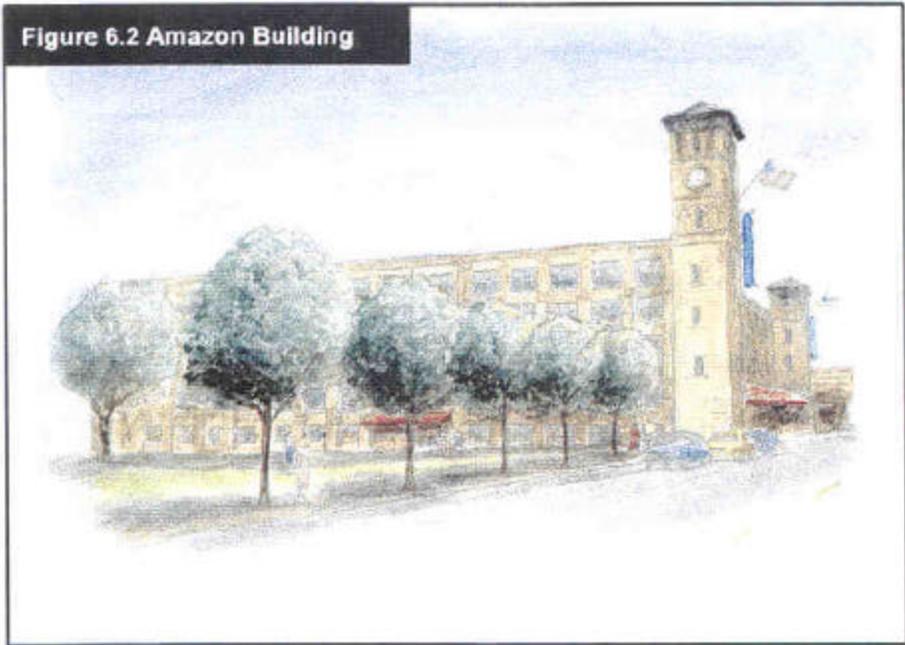


Figure 6.2 Amazon Building



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7. Inn

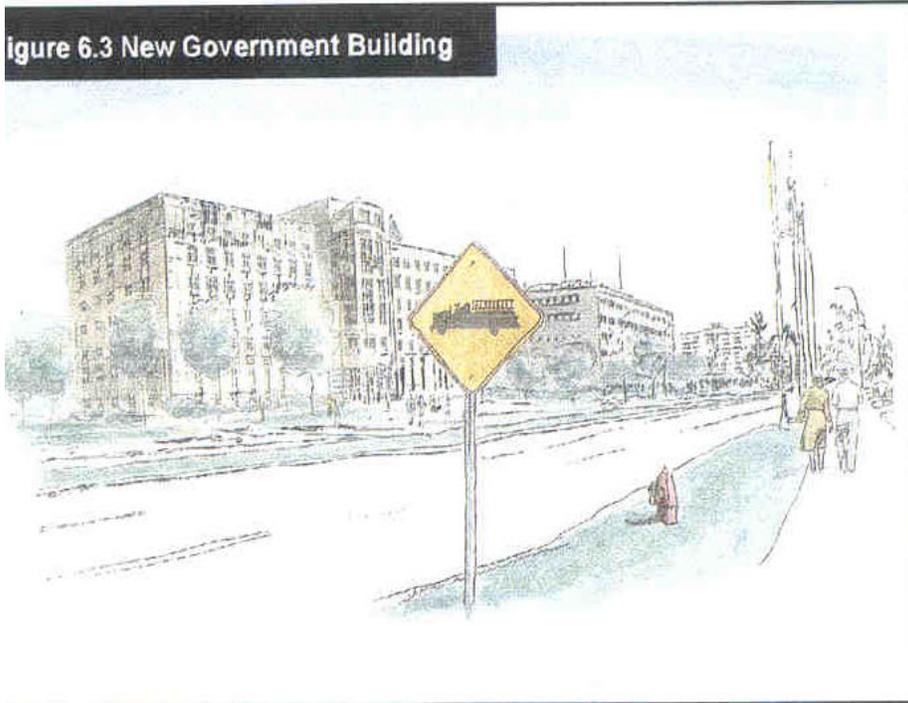
The range of transient accommodations available in or near the Downtown is limited at the present time. There is one major Downtown hotel facility. The creation of a small inn (maximum of 50 rooms) with associated restaurant and entertainment would be an added option to the commercial core. The facility should be incorporated into the Guest and Entertainment district, and could possibly be developed in one of the existing historic buildings on Western Avenue. In the future, additional nearby bed and breakfast operations could be established, allowing for the conversion and recycling of older historic structures.

cornerstone of Downtown Muskegon. As the population within Muskegon County continues to grow and change, there will inevitably be an increased demand for a number of services. Increased demand will translate into expanded space needs. Those needs should be accommodated in one or more new structures within Downtown Muskegon to increase synergism within the County and to maintain the hub of the institutional activity. A concept drawing of new governmental building is shown in Figure 6.3. Location within a defined geographic areas as a means of stimulating regional economic development and job growth in areas of need, such as Muskegon, should be incorporated into public policy at the County and other levels of government.

8. Expansion of Government Presence

Institutional activity has been, and will be, a

During completion of the Downtown study, Baker College announced plans to relocate to the former Muskegon Regional Center near Muskegon Community College. This provides an opportunity for the County to consolidate various facilities and services in close proximity to the main County Building. In the event such a consolidation occurs, we advise that the following recommendations be implemented.



◆ The high-quality landscape along Apple Avenue and throughout the site should be maintained.

◆ Primary use of the facility and site should be office in orientation, as opposed to residential (individual or congregate housing whether short or long term), penal, or medical. While the City recognizes a need for such





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facilities, it has its fair share based on metro population, and should avoid future concentrations to help promote the Downtown's diversity and viability.

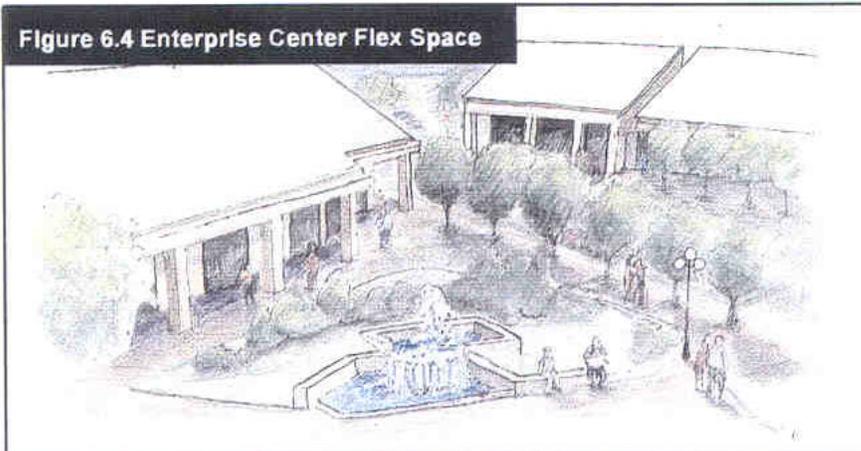
- ◆ Use of the site for the parking, storage, or maintenance of trucks, buses and other equipment should be very limited.
- ◆ The perimeter cyclone security fence located along the boundaries should be replaced with decorative fencing to soften the industrial appearance of the site.
- ◆ Identification signs should be coordinated between the Baker College Campus and the present County Building. All signs should be of high-quality, attractive, design.
- ◆ The City should exercise site plan review or special use permit control over potential uses and modifications, even if certain programs are determined to be excluded from local zoning and other regulatory measures.

We suggest that as a good neighbor, and due to the potential impacts on the Downtown, Muskegon County should be willing to submit its plans for City review.

9. Expansion of Educational Offerings

There are opportunities to expand and attract new educational facilities to the Downtown. The GEMS Enterprise Center offers opportunities to expand all levels and curriculum of higher education in one or more cooperative efforts by a host of institutions, offering selected programs, advanced degrees, entrepreneurial training, or technical skills. An aquarium and the Grand Valley State University research vessel provide other opportunities to further expand education activity in Downtown.

Figure 6.4 Enterprise Center Flex Space





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10 Flex Space & Corporate Business Park

The GEMS Enterprise Center can become a unique regional asset in terms of industrial-related employment growth in the immediate future and should be considered for development as an industrially oriented employment center. Low-rise, flex space development could accommodate development, and small manufacturing and distribution. This space can act as an incubator for new business development. Figure 6.4 illustrates the type of low-rise development proposed.

Uses in this GEMS Center should be employee intensive so as to enhance pedestrian activity in the Downtown. Low employment generators such as warehousing, distribution centers, and the like, should be located in the City's other industrial areas.

Creation of an in-town, high-tech industrial business park would also enhance the potential to attract owners, managers, and other executives to Downtown housing. The creation of a large employment mass in the Downtown would enhance the position of ancillary facilities such as restaurants, retailers, and the like.

11 Muskegon Mall - Expansion and Improvements

Without attempts to attract additional regional market forces, or expand into non-traditional retail activity, Muskegon Mall will suffer from increased competition. We suggest that, in the short term, the Mall attempt to refocus itself for the future through entry and interior improvements, placing increased emphasis on water linkages and resources. This can be

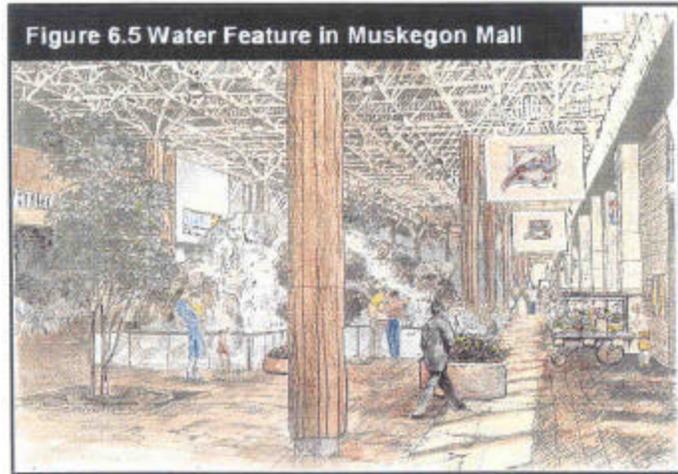


Figure 6.5 Water Feature in Muskegon Mall

accomplished by incorporating a major water feature (See Figure 6.5), creating linkages with the proposed aquarium through displays and other activities, promotion of the Grand Valley State University research vessel activity, and creation of an enhanced image through a new name and exterior changes.

Currently, the Mall appears to have primarily "back doors" instead of "front doors." Parking areas surrounding the Mall are similar to "seas of asphalt," and should be softened with landscaping and other improvements. Human scale and pedestrian linkages to the Mall's surroundings should also be provided. General exterior and site maintenance needs should also be addressed to help improve the Mall's image.

In the longer-term, tenant mix and composition changes are likely to occur. A section of the Mall or nearby sites could be appropriate for use or conversion to the commercial recreation options mentioned above, as well as corporate retreat and convention activity.

12 Trolley System





Proposed Projects

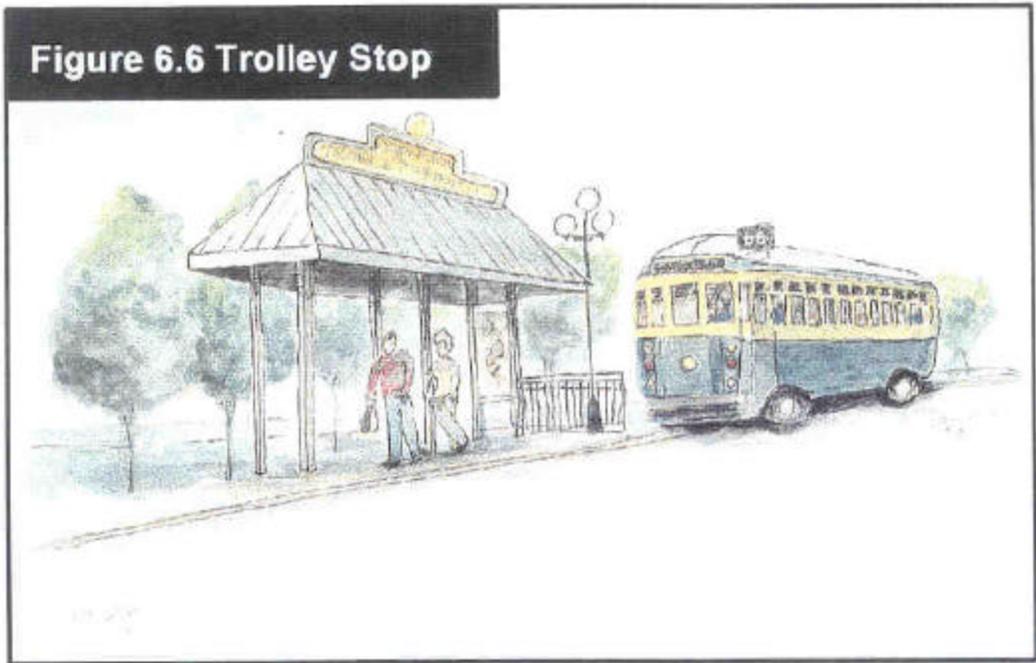
Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



While Shoreline Drive will dramatically enhance access to the Downtown, it also represents an impediment to pedestrian movement between the waterfront and the other Downtown elements. Bridging that barrier is best done through a combination of centralized parking, coupled with a trolley system or other visitor based vehicular system. See Figure 6.6 for a concept drawing of the trolley and trolley stop. Such a system will also be important to creating linkages between the various GEMS centers.

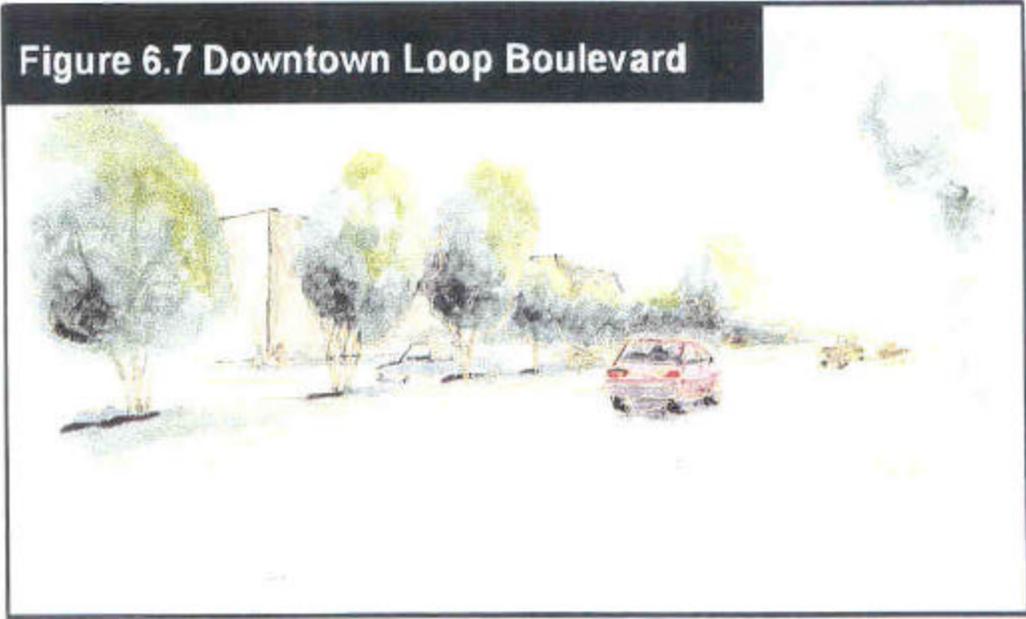
1 3 Parkway Concept - Downtown Loop

Two of the major roadways within the Downtown area, Terrace Street and Shoreline Drive, are boulevards with central landscaped medians. The opportunity exists to make the Downtown the “avenue of the boulevards” by creating a rectangular looped roadway system through enhancement of Third, Houston, and Peck. See Figure 6.7 for illustration of this boulevard concept.





Proposed Projects Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



While we recognize that the most effective loops are those with few, if any, major through streets, creation of the proposed parkway offers an excellent means of providing a "Downtown identity facility," linking all GEMS functional areas and providing high visibility of the Mall. Much of this system is already in place.

Houston was selected for inclusion as part of the Downtown circulation route for the following reasons:

- ◆ To fully link the Third Street commercial district located southeast of Muskegon Avenue with the remainder of the Downtown. Historically, this area has been isolated although it possesses several facilities of regional importance, including an auto dealership, appliance dealership, and large office facility.
- ◆ To provide an alternative to the present Apple Avenue/Muskegon Avenue intersection, which tends to be

confusing to motorists unfamiliar with the City.

- ◆ To provide a convenient vehicular loop, offering limited impact on (single-family) residential development.
- ◆ To provide a secondary means of convenient access to Sanford and Peck Street.
- ◆ To establish a system capable of supporting future growth and development within the core Downtown.

Attributes and benefits of the parkway/loop include:

- ◆ Linkage of the four (4) functional areas.





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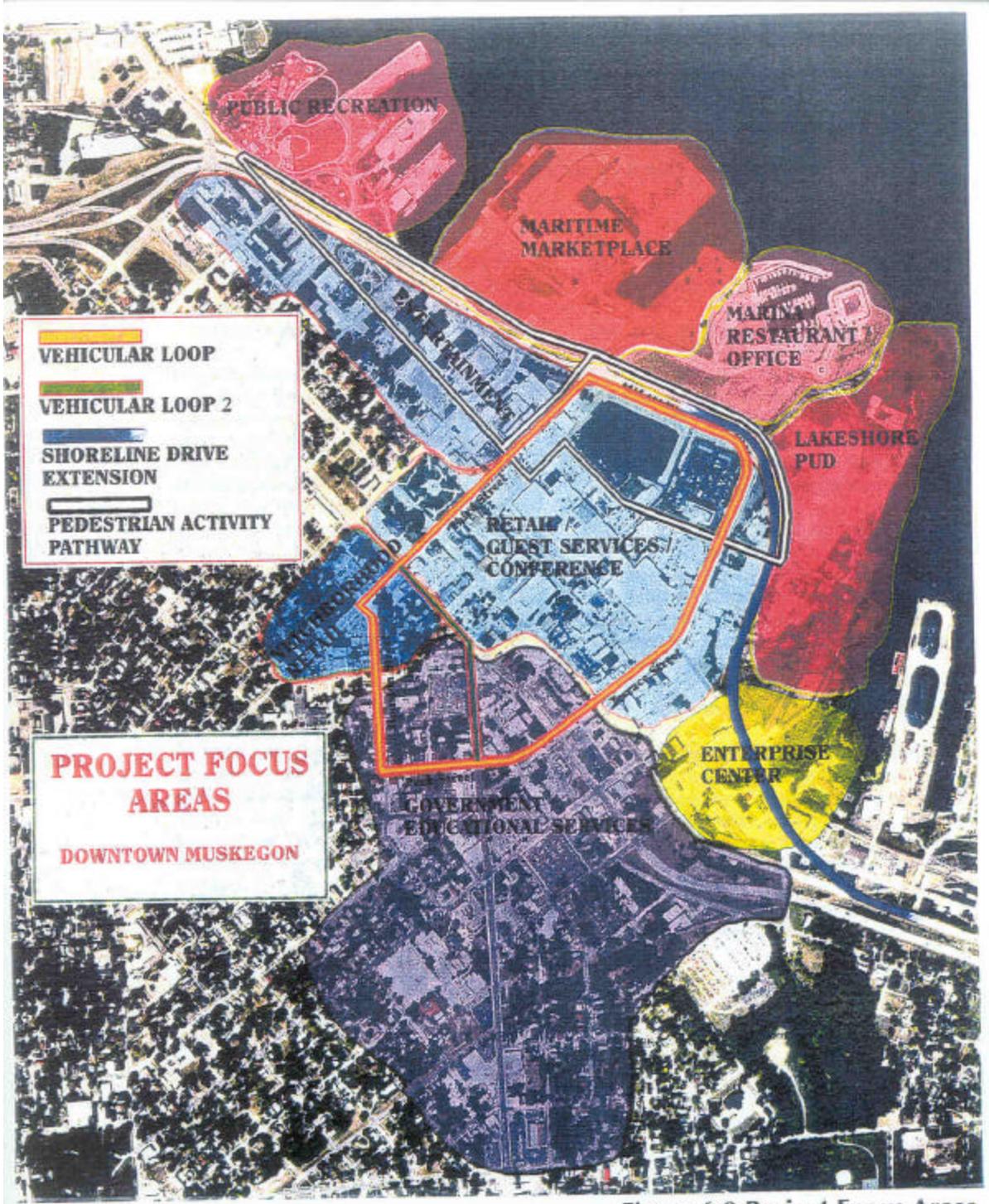


Figure 6.8 Project Focus Areas
City of Muskegon



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- ◆ Ease of vehicular movement throughout core Downtown while offering convenient access to and from major through routes.
- ◆ Entry may be achieved from all directions.
- ◆ High visibility for the Muskegon Mall.
- ◆ Exposes some of the City's highest quality features, including a southerly vista of Western Avenue, the hotel, Frauenthal Theater, Hackley Park, Muskegon Lake, and various historic structures. It presents the City at its best!
- ◆ Reduces confusion/fear associated with being lost.
- ◆ Increases the likelihood that traffic will be reduced on Webster and Muskegon, these streets might then be narrowed.
- ◆ Much of the system is in place.
- ◆ Increases visibility of the Third Street business node (small business center lying east of Muskegon Avenue.
- ◆ Provides an identifiable, easily traveled route for those entering the Downtown but unfamiliar with the location of various facilities.
- ◆ Helps create a "sense of place" for the Downtown. It makes the core Downtown recognizable as the City's prime business center.

Houston is the weak link in the loop and will require the most improvement. The cross section should be widened to three lanes, not only to provide a center left turn lane, but also to provide a section that is at least

somewhat similar to the rest of the loop. The widening will provide better recognition to drivers that it is part of the loop. Also reconfiguration of Houston near its intersection with Third will be necessary to provide a smoother transition and stronger loop identification. Third Street will likely need reconfiguration along with some elimination of on-street parking.

Third, Houston, and Peck need not be converted to boulevards to make the loop function as a uniform, aesthetically attractive system. As indicated earlier, the system parallels a variety of attractive features which off-set the need to provide a boulevard. Instead, it is recommended that uniform signage, mast arms at signals instead of span wire, pedestrian scale lighting, and other such features be used to achieve identity and continuity.

If the completed Shoreline Drive reroutes a major portion of through traffic, the City may be able to reduce the cross sections of Webster and Muskegon in order to make the loop a higher priority system for vehicular movement.

1 4 In-Town Historic Housing District

The area, generally bounded by Houston Avenue, Fourth Street, Clay Avenue, and Ninth Street, is part of the historic district area known as Heritage Village. It links directly with historic Western Avenue and Hackley Park. The district includes outstanding examples of late 1800 Victorian and Italinatate architecture.

The residential area should be marketed as an In-Town Historic District with residential, and, perhaps, bed and breakfast compatible structures on available sites. The in-town image versus Downtown image will position the community uniquely in the market.





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15. The Addition of Creative Retail

Movement from traditional retail activity as suburban competition grows to non-traditional creative retailing is not a simple task. However, much like other development where land banking and event activity often come before the actual development of structures, so too can creative, unique retail be brought to the scene using short-term options.

Creative, unique retail can be introduced through the development of carts and kiosk activity that can change regularly and provide differing themes. The introduction and concentration of this activity can promote interest in the Downtown, as well as promote entrepreneurial attitudes amongst less advantaged individuals. Micro-business development should be fostered through the use of seasonal carts, temporary kiosk or covered facilities in a defined area of Downtown Muskegon. While this initial activity is recommended for the summer months, during the fall or holiday season a limited, controlled craft market could also be incorporated (see Figure 6.7).

16. Creation of Downtown Housing Opportunities

Waterfront housing opportunities, including executive oriented housing, infill housing within the in-town historic district, and renovation of structures for lofts and studios in the entertainment district have all been defined as housing opportunities within or near Downtown.

Additional housing opportunities exist. Low-rise, market-rate, adult and senior housing could also be incorporated into the waterfront. Senior housing, both market rate and non-market rate, should be

incorporated into other sites in the Service Center area and elsewhere.

PROJECT MATRIX - FUNCTIONAL AREA LOCATION AND LEVEL OF PRIORITY

The matrix shown in Table 6.1 provides a listing of each project, its functional area orientation, and level of priority. Location is based on the GEMS Functional Center considered most appropriate and of highest synergistic potential. In some instances, more than one center may be appropriate (refer to GEMS Functional Center Map in Section 4).

Priority is based on three implementation levels. Level "A" reflects projects considered to have the highest priority due to immediate positive influence on the Downtown and potential for implementation. In some instances, projects have been completed or are underway. Priority "B" projects are important to the Downtown and will have a positive influence on its growth. However, due to planning needs, present market conditions, funding, and the like, priority "B" projects are likely to require additional time to materialize. Priority "C" projects include those of a more speculative type. These projects require extensive market analysis to determine feasibility. Large capital investment will also be required.

The prioritization of projects helps one proceed in a focused, organized, manner to accomplish identified tasks. However, as with most programs, lower priority projects may rise on the forefront and require immediate attention. This may result from the onset of unanticipated private investment, availability of state or federal



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grant or loan funds, and like factors. Priorities may also change. As projects materialize, the City and/or investors may discover new or modified opportunities necessitating priority modification.

In all instances, the key to a revitalized Downtown is the concentration of synergistic projects which will initiate increasing levels of public use.

PROJECT FOCUS AREAS

To provide guidance for the placement of identified projects, a Project Focus Area graphic was prepared (see Figure 6.8). Focus areas help refine the land use/project orientation of the GEMS Centers. The Enterprise and Service Centers have been designated as single focus districts. That is, they have not been divided into sub-area sectors.

Land uses within the Service Center are largely associated with, or influenced by the County Building and Baker College campus, and City Hall. All future development should compliment these uses.

The Enterprise Center is relatively small in size and has the potential to be totally redeveloped using a "planned unit development" design process. This center should be oriented towards "high tech" businesses in a high quality business park environment.

The Maritime and Guest/Entertainment Centers have been divided into several focus areas representing a desired development orientation. The Guest and Entertainment Center incorporates three focus areas:

1. Entertainment along Western Avenue.

2. Retail, guest services, and conference facilities centered around the Muskegon Mall; and

3. Neighborhood retail on Third Street, east of the Muskegon/Webster pair.

The Maritime Center includes four focus areas, each providing opportunity for a variety of projects with some overlap. The areas and general listing of project types are delineated in Table 6.2.





Proposed Projects

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Project	Guest Entertainment	Entrepreneurs	Maritime	Service	Priority
A1	W.O. Jackson Research Vessel		●		A
A2	Aquarium		●		A
A3	Boat Slips/Marina Facilities		●		B
A4	Cross Lake Ferry		●		C
A5	Frauenthal Center Improvements	●			A
A6	Walker Arena & Conference Center	●			A
A7	Minor League Baseball Stadium		●		C
A8	Waterfront Gambling Facilities	■	●		C
B1	Wholesale/Retail Seafood-Farmer's Market Complex	■			A
B2	Waterfront Housing		●		B
B3	Family-Oriented Waterfront Activity		●		A
B4	Corporate Retreat or Conf. Center	■	●		B
B5	Health Spa & Indoor Rec. Complex	●	■	■	B
B6	Restaurants/Live Entertainment	●	■		A
B7	Inn	●	■		B
B8	Government Facilities (Consolidation of the Downtown)			●	B
B9	Expansion of Educational Offerings			●	B
B10	Flex Space Business Park		●		A
B11	Changes to Mall and Expansion	●			A
B12	Trolley System	●	●	●	B
B13	Vehicular Loop	●	●	●	A
B14	In-Town Historic Housing District	N/A	N/A	N/A	A
B15	Creative Retail	●	●		A
B16	Downtown Housing Opportunities	●	●	●	B
B17	Movie Theater	●			B
B18	Museum/Fine Arts Center	●			B
B19	Office Expansion	■	●	■	B
B20	Pedestrian/Guest Pathway	●	●	●	B

Notes: ● - Preferred location (may include more than one functional area).
 ■ - Secondary area. Appropriate, but not the preferred functional area if given a choice.

Priority: **A** Project with immediate or short range priority. Reflects present to six year period implementation focus. In-Town Historic Housing District rated due to influence on the Downtown
B Project with longer range priority. Reflect 6 to 12 year implementation focus
C Project of a more speculative nature and requiring extensive analysis and potential capital investment.

Table 6.1

Recommended Projects by GEMS Center





Proposed Projects

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Project Type	Public Recreation	Maritime/Marine Marketplace	Restaurant/Office	Lakeshore PUD
W.G. Jackson Research Vessel	●	●		
Aquarium		●		
Boat Slips Marinas	●	●		
Cross Lake Ferry		●		
Baseball/Sports Complex				●
Waterfront Gambling				●
Farmers/Seafood Market		●		
Housing			●	
Family Oriented Recreation	●	●		
Corporate Retreat		●		
Restaurants		●	●	
Creative Retail		●		
Office			●	●
Hotel/Inn				●

Table 6.2

Project Activity by Focus Area





Physical Design Considerations

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS & MAINTENANCE NEEDS

In addition to specific project activity, there are basic physical improvements and maintenance needs considered necessary or desirable for the Downtown. Maintenance needs are addressed first, but note that some areas need both maintenance and improvement.

Maintenance

Street Cleanup

Like many urban centers, the City experiences the seemingly never ceasing problem of litter and debris along Downtown streets. While this problem relates more to public and merchant attitude and action (or inaction), it typically falls on the City to handle cleanup. Failure to do so only exacerbates image concerns. To help reduce litter, while promoting a positive Downtown image, we recommend the City:

- ◆ Adopt and enforce a strict anti-litter ordinance. Erect litter enforcement penalty signs.
- ◆ Prepare and implement a street sweeping program for the core Downtown. During the April through October period, all streets should be cleaned at least once per week. At peak use periods, the parkway/loop may require more frequent cleaning. To achieve the highest benefit, cleaning should occur during non-business hours.

Western Avenue Streetscape

The Western Avenue streetscape suffers from a lack of maintenance. Banners are either missing or torn and faded. As needed, brick pavers should be repaired, vegetated terraces and tree grates cleaned of weeds, and new banners erected.

Muskegon and Webster Terraces

The Muskegon and Webster terraces (green space between the curb and sidewalk) need on-going maintenance. In most instances, the responsibility for this lies with the adjoining private property owner. However, areas owned by public entities tend to be under maintained and should receive proper attention.

Mall Entries

Brick pavers and walks need repair and cleaning, weeds need to be removed from plant beds/areas, and litter removed. The unpaved parking lot on the east side of the Mall should be paved.

Lighton Park

The wood sculpture/water fountain is not functioning, benches need repair, trees need trimming, and litter abounds.

Tree Removal/Trimming

Trees provide a positive element to the Downtown. However, there are locations where existing trees block the essence of the Downtown as an urban place, or block building identification signs or views of the waterfront, etc. Examples include:





Physical Design Considerations Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



- ◆ The Muskegon City Hall sign along Terrace is blocked by trees. The color of the sign also blends with the building wall.
- ◆ Poor quality trees and other vegetation along the north side of Terrace, west of Western Avenue, block potential lake views for traveling motorists.

Clay Street Public Parking Structure Sign

Improve the parking sign at the entry to the Clay Street Public Parking Structure. The sign looks dated and non-professional. It is difficult to read the “free parking” notation. Also, entry doors on the various decks need lights.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

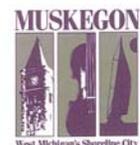
Pedestrian Activity Pathway

Develop a unified pedestrian activity pathway linking Maritime and Guest Center Functional Districts. The proposed route is shown on the Project Focus Area graphic. The pathway should include at least three pedestrian crossing points (Heritage Park, Third Street, and Terrace). The pathway should compliment/supplement the proposed Shoreline non-motorized trail.

Redesign of Lighton Park

Lighton Park should be redesigned to serve as a highly visible entry feature for incoming motorists to the Downtown and the Downtown loop. It is recommended trees be selectively removed to offer open/through views of the park. A lighted water fountain and/or sculpture should be added as central focal point.

To provide additional interest and color, a display of municipal flags on large poles could be added along the perimeter of the site. We suggest that flags representing the United States, State, County, and Municipal governments within the County be displayed. A flag display may be particularly appropriate given the nearby location of the City and County Buildings, designation of the City as the County Seat, and desire of the City to serve as the cultural, entertainment, and employment center of the county as a whole. This feature offers opportunity for the City to exhibit a bond with neighboring municipalities. A secondary benefit is that





Physical Design Considerations

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



the feature is likely to serve also as a recognized “Downtown” landmark. A conceptual sketch of this improvement is shown in Figure 7.1

Unified Sign Program

A unified identification and directional sign program should be developed and implemented for the Downtown. These include signs for placement at public facilities, along the Downtown vehicular loop, and various directional signs to public facilities and services. We recommend signs be of a more traditional, versus contemporary or standard MDOT, design.

Streetscape Guidebook

The City should prepare a streetscape/landscape guidebook for use by entities undertaking development and redevelopment projects in the Downtown. The guidebook should include basic, minimal, landscape parameters, with detail on the themes of the various functional areas. A suggested range of appropriate streetscape materials (plants, lighting, screens, etc.) And design concepts should be provided.

The guidebook should be linked with the City’s site plan review process.

Muskegon and Webster One-Way Pair

Until Shoreline Drive is fully in place and functional for a period of two years, we recommend the one-way pair remain unchanged. A two-year period is needed to assess the overall impact on traffic circulation and the potential for system modification. During that period, however,

on-street parking could be permitted (one lane per roadway) based on an examination of adjoining land uses and impacts on pedestrian movement. With on-street parking, a potential reduction in speed limit may be warranted.

Parking

Adequate parking exists in the Downtown for virtually all activities and events. However, as with most cities, the location of that parking is often perceived as inconvenient.

We recommend that new parking along the waterfront, except for employment areas, be limited. Parking should be located away from the waterfront to encourage linkage with the Guest and Entertainment Center and to maximize use and development of water related property. It is important, however, to provide adequate pedestrian connection between parking and activity centers to ensure convenient and safe movement. Where possible, facilities should be designed to utilize joint/shared parking. Greater use of trolleys should be encouraged.

The parking structure on Clay is currently underutilized, but has excellent potential to provide additional high-quality parking. The structure could be particularly important should the Mall be modified to include convention/conference use or otherwise experience high pedestrian traffic. The proximity of the structure to the Mall may provide opportunity for an aboveground, enclosed walkway linking the two facilities.





Physical Design Considerations

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Redesign of Muskegon Mall Exterior

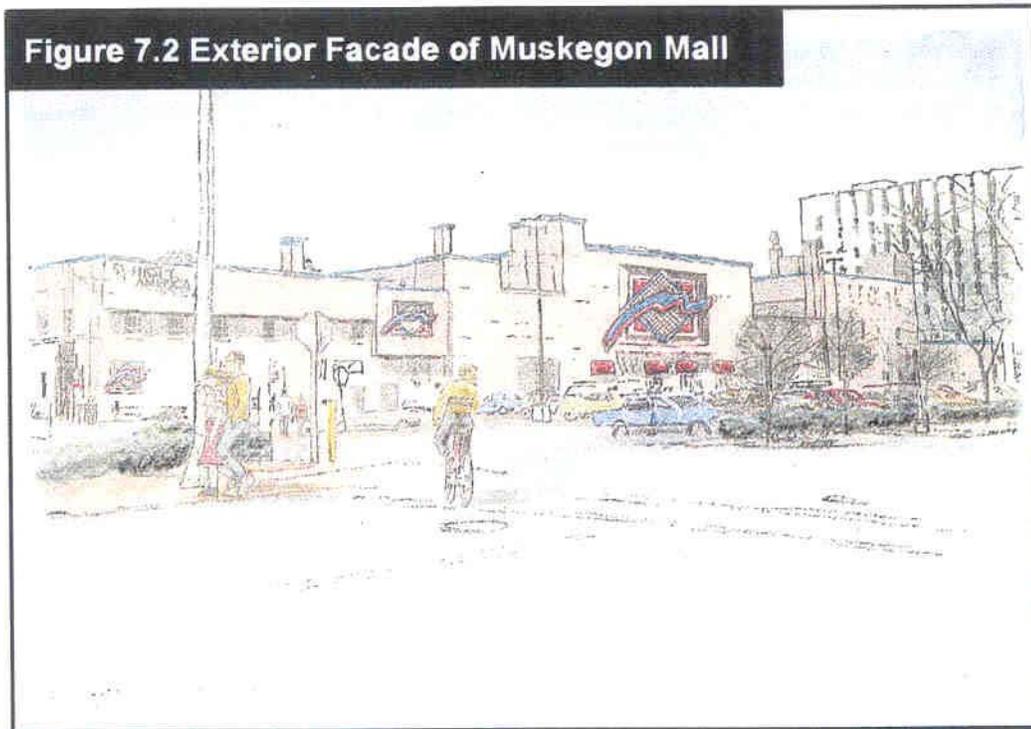
Virtually all entries to the Muskegon Mall exhibit a backdoor appearance. Due to its high visibility from all sides by passing motorists, all major entry points should be redesigned. If the Mall is expanded on the Muskegon Lake side, an upper level walkway along the outside wall facing the Lake could allow excellent views of the waterfront and any associated activities. A concept sketch showing modest exterior facade changes, improving the Mall's appearance, is shown in Figure 7.2

Waterfront Development Facades

New waterfront projects should be designed with high-quality, "street side" and "waterside" facades.

Waterfront Vistas

The Muskegon Zoning Ordinance should include site development standards which ensure maintenance of public access and allow for views and linkages to the waterfront.





Implementation Actions

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Implementation Actions

The following elements and initiatives represent an implementation program for the Downtown/Waterfront Redevelopment Plan. Consideration was given to the likely limited availability of public resources and the need for private sector leadership.

The range of implementation activities suggested are largely dependant upon the injection of minimal local public dollars and the maximum leverage of private resources.

Revolving Loan Fund or Pool

Use of the City's revolving loan fund or loan pool for business expansion can be a beneficial tool for stimulating reinvestment, growth, and attraction of new activity to Downtown.

Micro-Business Loan Program

Micro-business activity is likely to be critical to creative retail, an expanded market, and the entertainment district. Pooling private commercial resources is the foundation of such a program. By pooling resources, risk is shared among the group. Existing micro-business loan programs within the City should continue to be utilized.

Funding for Corporate Retreat Center

Enhanced convention facilities or the development of a corporate retreat center in Downtown could be funded largely through private investment. The building, or parts of the building, could be sponsored

by corporate interests as part of their corporate marketing activity.

Private fund raising, much like that associated with the aquarium, could also be employed. A third option, potentially combined with the others, could include a condominium type economic structure, with interests purchasing certain rights, ability to use over a period of time, etc.

Funding for "Public" Investment

This plan calls for the enhancement of public infrastructure and amenities. Along with traditional public sector capital sources, corporate and residential resources could be tapped as well. Landscape, streetscape, signage, and other efforts could be attributed to civic and social organizations. Bricks along promenades could be purchased by individuals for birthdays, anniversaries, and other personal contributions, with the name, event, and date placed on the brick, stone, etc. In addition to the obvious benefits of revenue enhancement, such activity can generate civic pride, community involvement, and organizational development.

Design Guidelines for Private and Public Actions

To provide for a stronger sense of place within GEMS functional areas, and the Downtown as a whole, and to avoid discordant and incompatible investments in public infrastructure, design guidelines and streetscape should be set for private investment.





Implementation Actions

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Enhanced Communications Between County and City

Enhanced communications between the City and Muskegon County regarding public infrastructure projects would be beneficial to development and redevelopment efforts. Without such communication, projects by both entities could produce unintended consequences detrimental to each.

We suggest that a joint planning and public works committee for the City and the County of Muskegon be established, and meet regularly through planning and implementation stages of Downtown enhancement and revitalization activity.

RFP Process

Several of the proposed facilities will require public sector involvement, even if not financing. Creation of an enhanced farmer's market, seafood market, or combined "City" market, is just one example.

Regardless of the ownership of any specific parcel, involvement on the part of the private sector in development, ownership, and management of such facilities should be solicited through an RFP process. By applying such a process, it is not necessary for the public sector to own or control any or all specific sites.

Public-Private Partnerships

Implicit in the above are the formation of public-private partnerships. Implementation of the plan, as well as its individual pieces, through partnerships is fundamental beyond the level often

practiced in Muskegon in the past. For Downtown Muskegon to reach its full potential, key constituents from the public and private sector must plan and work together over the long-term.

A public-private partnership should take the lead in development and redevelopment efforts, and work to bring about cooperation and results over the long-term. An effective public-private partnership can 1) bring together key players and interests for the benefit of Muskegon's Downtown; 2) provide leadership necessary to redevelopment efforts; 3) gather staff, volunteer, and funding resources to assist with the implementation of the Downtown/Waterfront Redevelopment Plan; 4) assure that key constituents and other members of the community are included in the redevelopment process.

Promotional Events, Publicity and Discussion

During the development and implementation of the various recommendations presented in this Plan, promotional events associated with these recommendations should be held. These events can promote the Plan concepts and help create an atmosphere ripe for investment. Such activities can promote public discussion and involvement, and enhance the likelihood of success. The first several years of implementation should include new investment in these activities.

Marketing

Enhanced or expanded marketing efforts by Muskegon are essential to successful Downtown improvements.





Implementation Actions

Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan



Perceived negatives often mentioned, such as the “labor” town image, can be turned into a positive, promoting the quality, hard working, reliable work force.

Current available land can and should be touted as an investment opportunity. Industrial history can be fundamental to marketing Muskegon and creating a new technology-oriented industrial base, having unique water-view and access amenities.

Events properly marketed or promoted can quickly expand the visitor or tourist base. The up-front dollars spent on marketing will be more than returned over time in the creation of a vibrant Downtown.

Business Recruitment

The City of Muskegon must take an increasingly responsible position in business recruitment for Downtown and the City in general. While sharing common interests with the region, increased competition for activity requires a full-scale effort with respect to recruitment.

This effort is likely to require the preparation of marketing materials, and staff time, to aggressively pursue business interests through direct mail solicitation, “door knocking,” and other means.

An aggressive business recruitment effort will require resource allocation by both public and private sector interests. The effort should be complementary to other programs and activities.

Close cooperation with commercial real estate interests in the Downtown area and City will be required. A specific marketing

committee within economic development functions of the City should be established.

Prioritization

No community will ever have the resources to simultaneously pursue all the components of a comprehensive plan. To ensure success, a strategic approach must be developed and followed. The development of a strict sense of priorities is essential.

Experience has shown that a focused investment of resources in one element of a strategic plan can lead to success in other elements.

Muskegon must focus its efforts. All relevant implementation tools, resources and programs must be focused on the same priorities. Loan programs must be targeted to the same areas and projects as private sector investment and fund raising efforts. After formal adoption of the plan, the initial step must be to achieve consensus on the order of priorities for the implementation actions.

