

Land Use

The primary authority to plan for land use and utilize zoning as a land use policy implementation tool lie at the township and municipal level in the state of Michigan. The legal authority for land use planning at the township level is established under the Township Planning Act 168 of 1959. Zoning authority for townships is established under the Township Zoning Act 184 of 1943. Municipal planning authority was established under the Municipal Planning Act 285 of 1931. Zoning authority for cities and villages was established under the City and Village Zoning Act 207 of 1921.

State law does provide for regional planning. Under the Regional Planning Act 281 of 1945, “a regional planning commission may conduct all types of research studies, collect and analyze data, prepare maps, charts, and tables, and conduct all necessary studies for the accomplishment of its other duties; may make and coordinate the development of plans for the physical, social, and economic development of the region, and may adopt, by resolution of its governing body, a plan or the portion of a plan so prepared or any objective consistent with a plan as its official recommendation for the development of the region.” It is in this context that land use will be discussed as a part of the Muskegon Area-wide Plan.

In Muskegon County, there are 27 planning and zoning jurisdictions. Each of the townships has planning and zoning jurisdiction. Additionally the cities of Montague, Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, North Muskegon, Norton Shores, Roosevelt Park, and Whitehall and the villages of Casnovia, Fruitport, Lakewood Club, and Ravenna have planning and zoning authority.

Muskegon County has a land area of 509 square miles, or 325,760 acres. The 2000 population density was 334 people per square mile. Muskegon County, like many areas in Michigan, has abundant inland water resources. The five largest named lakes in the county have a combined surface area of 5,102.5 acres, or 1.6 percent of the surface area of the county. The largest lake is Muskegon Lake, which has an area of 4,150 acres alone. Additionally, 12,500 acres of Muskegon County’s area are controlled by the State of Michigan in the form of Duck Lake State Park, Muskegon State Park, Hoffmaster State Park (part in Ottawa County), and the Muskegon State Game Area (Muskegon County portion only).

The character of Muskegon County ranges from industrial urban areas to villages, shoreline areas, and rural areas. The urban areas have a rich industrial heritage, much of which was dependent on the county’s location on Lake Michigan. Ravenna is a small agricultural community that also plays a role as a commuter city to both Grand Rapids and Muskegon. Casnovia is situated on top of a hill overlooking mid-west Michigan’s beautiful orchard country. Lakewood Club is a quiet residential community situated around beautiful Fox Lake. Fruitport is a scenic town including a park on the lake, adjacent to the center of town, where one can watch the boats coming to visit. The shoreline is changing along Muskegon Lake and White Lake. Much of the shoreline was once dominated by industrial activity, but recently there have been efforts to restore public access and beaches. Agriculture, particularly orchards, remains important to the character of rural Muskegon County.

The developed area of Muskegon County increased by 24 square miles, or 4.7 percent, between 1978 and 1998. While much of the new development occurred in the areas

between existing urban areas, there was also significant new development in Fruitport, Dalton, and Mooreland townships. Map 3.32 highlights the decentralized nature of the new development.

Land uses are typically classified as agricultural, residential, commercial/office, industrial, public/semi-public, or recreational in nature. Residential uses include all types of structures where people live. Commercial/office space is used in the sale of goods or services and/or the production of service outputs. Industrial land uses are for the manufacture, assembly, and distribution of goods. Public and semi-public uses include government owned lands and schools.

There are 337,088 acres of land in Muskegon County. Of that, nearly 162,200 acres or 48 percent is in forest land. An additional 27 percent is in agricultural or open space uses. Water accounts for 3.7 percent of the surface area and wetlands

account for 2.2 percent. These combined uses are more than 80 percent of the land in the county. Nearly 30 percent of the land is in uses such as forest, water, and state and federal lands that are not likely to be developed.

The largest urban land use in Muskegon County is residential uses, occupying more than 43,000 acres, or 12.9 percent of the land area. Commercial uses account for nearly two percent of the land area and industrial uses account for another one percent. Utilities account for 3.7 percent, largely due to the amount of land at the wastewater treatment facility. Urban land uses in Muskegon County are concentrated near Muskegon Lake and Mona Lake, and near White Lake.

Land Use by Category

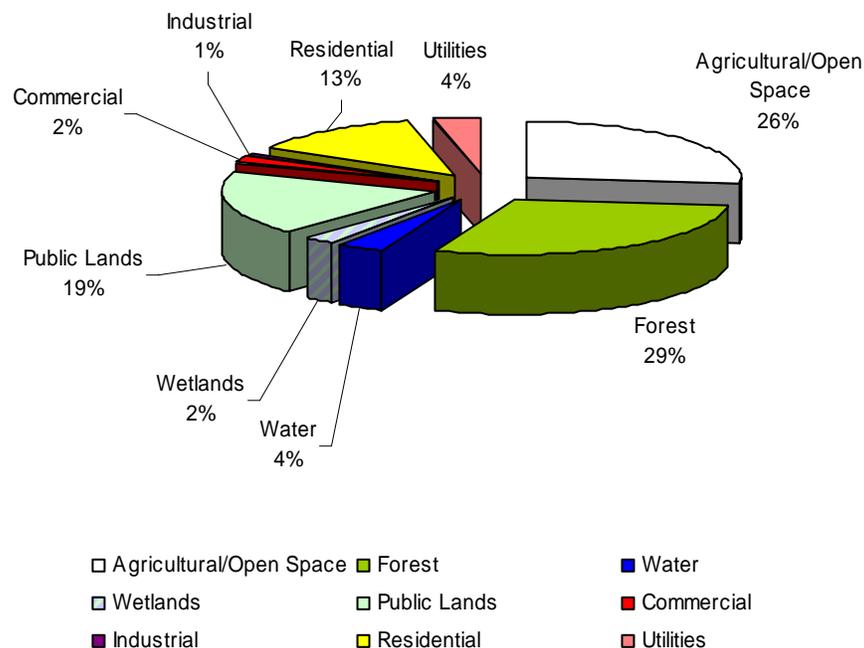
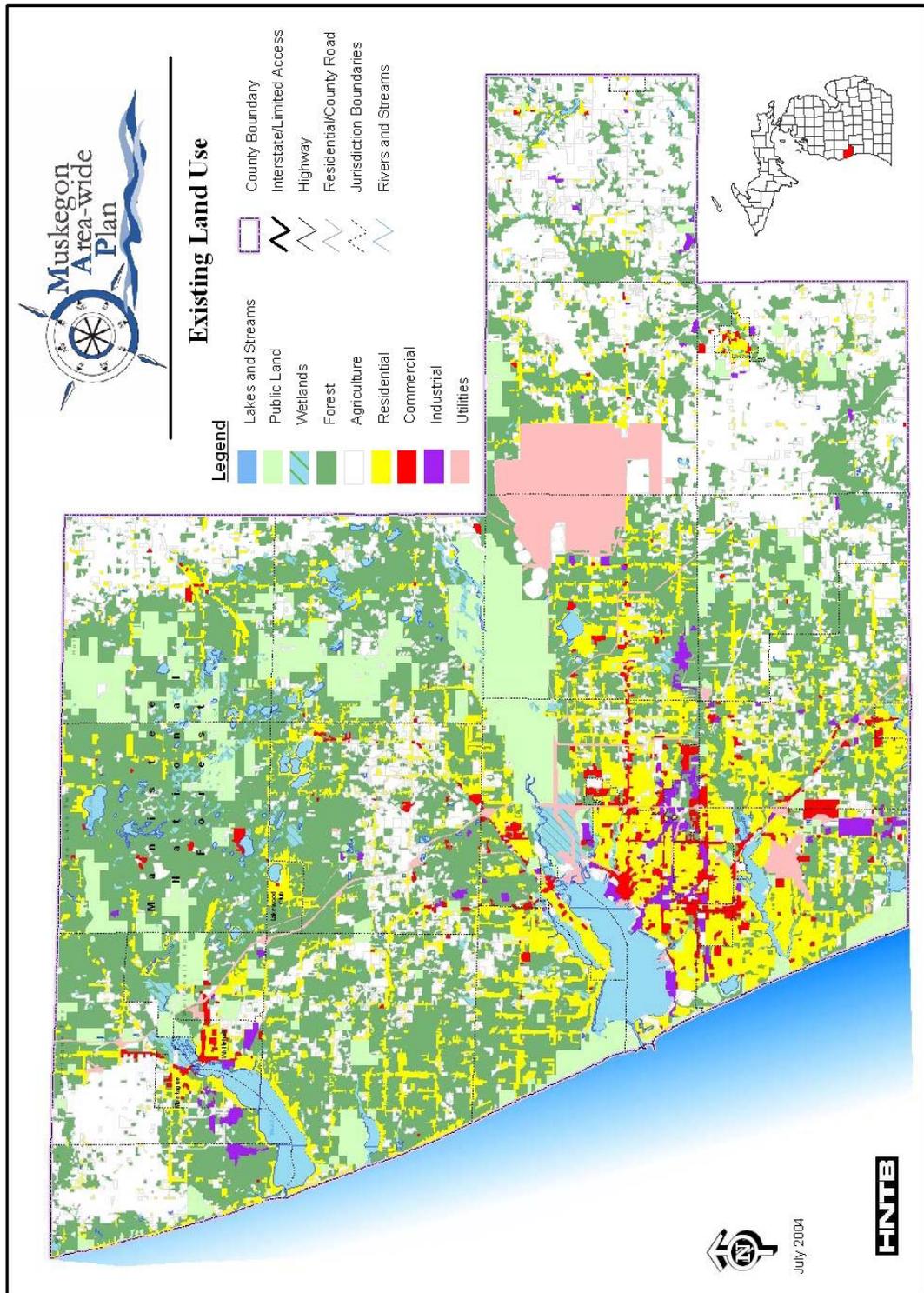


Chart 3.31: Land Use by Category

Map 3.33: Existing Land Use



Residential

The dominant land use in the county is residential uses, which account for 12.9 percent of all land uses. This is the dominant land use in the county other than agriculture, forest, water, wetlands, and open space. Residential uses include single-family homes, multi-family homes, and mobile homes. Multi-family residences account for one half of one percent of the land use in the county. There are a variety of housing types in the county including single family homes, mobile home parks, apartment buildings, loft apartments, senior communities, and condominium developments. The higher density residential areas are concentrated near the urban centers of Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, North Muskegon, Norton Shores, and Roosevelt Park. There are also higher density residential areas in Fruitport, Montague, Ravenna, Whitehall, and Wolf Lake.



Commercial/Office

Commercial land accounts for 1.9 percent of existing land uses in Muskegon County. Seven commercial corridors have been identified in Muskegon County:

- M 46/Apple Avenue
- M 120
- Colby Road/Business US 31
- Henry Street
- Sherman Boulevard
- Sternberg Road/Harvey Street
- Whitehall Road

Commercial land also includes office spaces. The heaviest concentration of office space is in the Muskegon central business district. There is also a significant amount of office space located in Norton Shores. All together there are 893,865 square feet of office space in Muskegon County, with an additional 129,500 square feet of speculative office space anticipated. Most of the office space in the county is more than 15 years old and has physical signs of deterioration.¹

The Whetstone Project is a business accelerator designed to assist in the development of new and emerging businesses. It is located in historic Muskegon Heights.

Retail is also a major commercial function. According to the Muskegon Chronicle survey conducted by MORI Research, Inc. in 2003, the top four shopping destinations in the Muskegon area are the Lakes Mall, Lakeshore Marketplace, Sherman Boulevard/Henry Street, and Henry Street/Norton Avenue. Shopping out of town has declined since the construction of the Lakes Mall (Alexander).

Meijer is a major retail force in the Muskegon Area. It remains the top grocery location, with 85 percent of those surveyed having shopped there in the past month and

78 percent shopping at Meijer for groceries. Wal-Mart has captured 37 percent for groceries in the past month and Plumb's has captured 40 percent. Meijer is also the major player in the home improvement market, followed by Menards, Lowe's, and Home Depot. There are two Meijer stores in Muskegon County: M 120 north of Muskegon and Henry/Norton Streets. A third Meijer is proposed at the intersection of Harvey and Sternberg Road (Alexander).

The survey found that Muskegon shoppers like discounts. Of the discount and department stores in Muskegon County, the leading six are value-oriented. This is also reflected in the top places to shop for women's clothing. Meijer again ranks first, Wal-Mart and Target follow, with JC Penny finishing fourth (Alexander).

Downtown Muskegon

There are approximately 239,400 square feet of office space in the Muskegon central business district. All of the class "A" office space, in the Terrace Point building, remains vacant. Most of the office space in the downtown area is older office space, some in renovated buildings and some in buildings that are showing signs of deterioration.² There are three speculative projects including office space planned for the central business district, totaling 87,500 square feet. These projects include the National City building, the Muskegon Hotel, and the Boilerworks (Grub & Ellis). Completed and planned improvements to downtown Muskegon exceeded \$180,500,000.

One completed project is the residential lofts of the Amazon Building. Also completed is the Hartshorn Centre mixed used development and Shoreline Drive. The GVSU Water Resources facility, Heritage Landing improvements, Muskegon Chronicle expansion, and Shoreline Inn & Suites have also been completed. In

addition, the Lake Express Cross Lake Ferry began in the spring of 2004.

Renovation projects completed include the Muskegon Harbor Holiday Inn, the Hartshorn Municipal Marina, and Fifth Third Bank.

Projects still under construction include Edison Landing, the Muskegon Trail System, and Shaw Walker. Coming soon are the Third Street Project, and the former Muskegon Mall project. The former downtown mall has been deconstructed and will be developed as a new "Urban Village" which will feature offices, retail, and residential space.

M46/Apple Avenue: Apple Avenue is a five lane corridor running east/west through the central portion of the county. It is lined with strip malls and restaurants. There is one big box business (Kmart) located on corridor near the US 31 interchange.

Colby Road/Business 31: Colby Road is a local business route through northern Muskegon County's White Lake area. It is primarily a three lane corridor, although is five lanes near the US 31 interchange. The corridor is lined with local retail and commercial business.

Henry Street: Henry Street is a five lane corridor running north/south through the western portion of the county. The corridor is lined with strip malls, restaurants, and banks. It has two recently vacant big box buildings with the relocation of JCPenney to The Lakes Mall and the recent closing of Kmart. However, there is a proposed redevelopment for the former JCPenney property in the City of Roosevelt Park.

Sherman Boulevard (Near US 31 interchange): Sherman Boulevard is a

major corridor with recent growth over the past five to seven years. It is one of the County's major retail areas with several big box developments including Target, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Lowe's, and Circuit City. The corridor also has many smaller retail stores and restaurants. All commercial and retail development is located east of the interchange. Immediately west of the interchange is Mercy General Hospital surrounded by several related medical offices.

Sternberg Road/Harvey Street: This is a major retail area located in southern Muskegon County at the corner of Sternberg Road and Harvey Street. Development in this area includes The Lakes Mall, Kohl's, Lakeshore Market Place, Menard's, and many restaurants and smaller retail stores. Other development in the area includes apartment buildings, condominiums and small office buildings.

M120/Whitehall Road: Whitehall Road is primarily a three lane corridor (five lane near US 31 interchange) running southwest/northeast through central Muskegon County. The corridor includes many strip malls with local retail and commercial establishments.



Industrial

Industrial land accounts for an additional one percent of the land in Muskegon County. There are several industrial areas in the county, though the largest industrial areas are near Muskegon Lake and in Muskegon Township.

Muskegon Lakeshore SmartZone

Muskegon is one of eleven communities statewide that has partnered with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to develop a university-supported technology park through the SmartZone program. Michigan SmartZones are collaborations between universities, industry, research organizations, government, and other community institutions intended to stimulate the growth of technology-based businesses and jobs by aiding in the creation of recognized clusters of new and emerging businesses, those primarily focused on commercializing ideas, patents, and other opportunities surrounding corporate, university or private research institute R&D efforts. SmartZones provide distinct geographical locations where technology-based firms, entrepreneurs and researchers can locate in close proximity to all of the community assets that will assist in their endeavors. SmartZones coordinate all of the community assets and services necessary to support technology development in the knowledge based economy. The Muskegon SmartZone includes Edison Landing which is a mixed-use development that combines university resources with new energy technologies, corporate offices, residential, and retail offerings. The Michigan Alternative & Renewable Energy Center is also in the SmartZone and is operated by Grand Valley State University. It includes a business incubator, research facility, and a conference center. Of the 34 total acres on the site, 26 are available. The site is zoned for convenience and comparison business.

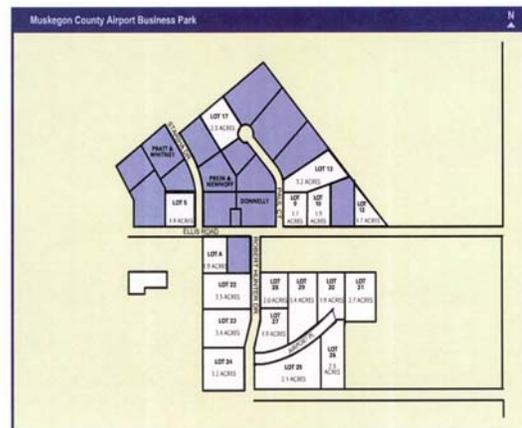


Renaissance Zone Program

There are four Renaissance Zones and six subzones in Muskegon County. The Renaissance zones are: Muskegon County Business Park North, Muskegon Mall, Seaway Drive Industrial Park, and Shaw Walker. The subzones are: Hoyt Street Site, Mona View Development, Sanford Village, Seaway Drive, Western Avenue, and Whittaker Electric. Renaissance Zones are regions of the state set aside as virtually tax-free for any business or resident locating in or moving to one of the zones.

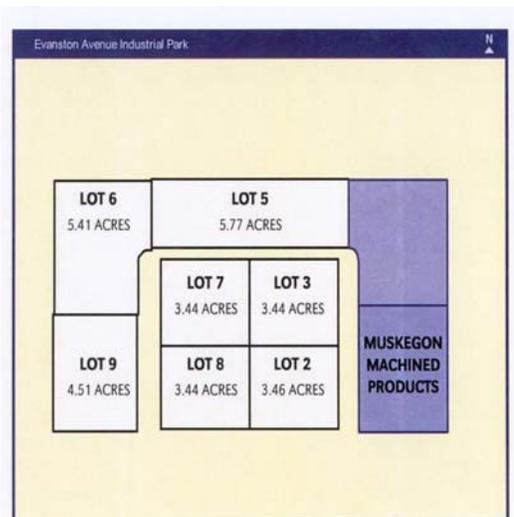
Airport Business Park

The Airport Business Park is a 76 acre park located in the City of Norton Shores. Nearly 40 acres remain available. The site is zoned as a special use district with light industrial and office uses considered acceptable uses. The park is a Verizon Smart Park, which means it is wired with fiber optics and data-quality copper cables allowing for high-speed, reliable data, voice, and video transmission.



Evanston Avenue Industrial Park

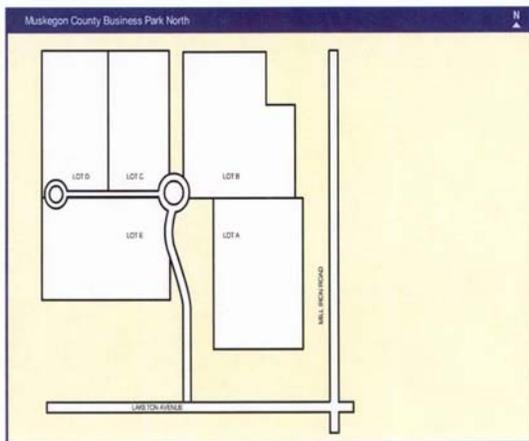
The Evanston Avenue Industrial park is a heavy industrial park located in Egelston Township. The site is less than 45 acres and approximately 34 acres remain available.



Muskegon County Business Parks

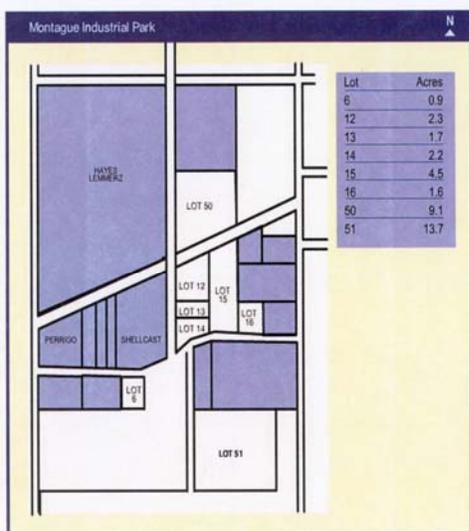
The Business Park East is located in Egelston and Moorland Townships and has 2,300 available acres; it is planned for large tenants that need 100 acres or more. The land will be rezoned from agricultural to general industrial.

The Business Park North is located in Dalton Township and has 210 acres available for 10 acre facilities. The zoning is for industrial uses. It was an abandoned industrial site that is being redeveloped as a business park under the Renaissance Zone program. Energy companies are being targeted for this development as a part of the areas economic development strategy.



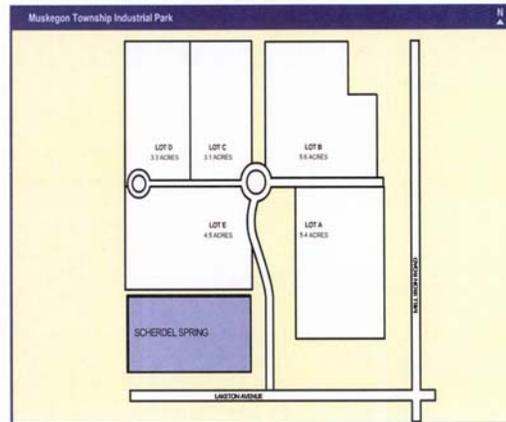
Montague Industrial Park

The Montague Industrial Park is a 158 acre park in the City of Montague, with 71 acres available. The park is zoned for light industrial uses.



Muskegon Township Industrial Park

This 31 acre park is located in Muskegon Township and all 31 acres are available for light industrial uses.



Norton Industrial Center

This 137 acre center is located in the City of Norton Shores and has 16 acres available. The property is zoned for general industrial uses.

Port City Industrial Center

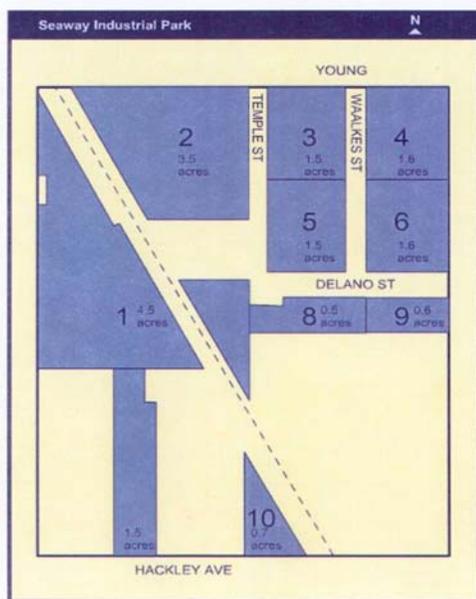
This 425 acre center is located in the City of Muskegon. 120 acres are available and the property is zoned for general industrial uses.

Porter Properties

This is a 24 acres site located in the City of Norton Shores. All of the acreage is currently available and is zoned as a PUD, light industrial/office.

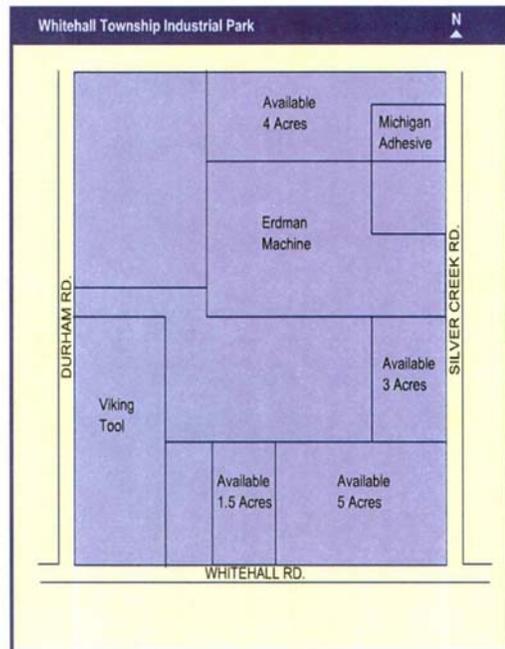
Seaway Industrial Park

The Seaway Industrial Park is a 40 acre industrial park located in the City of Muskegon. Eighteen acres of the light industrial zoned land remain available.



Whitehall Industrial Park

This is a 345 acre industrial park with 65 acres available in the City of Whitehall. The land is zoned for light industrial uses.

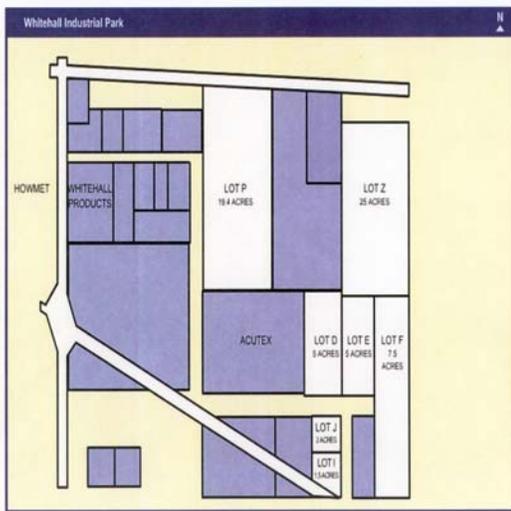


Public/Semi-Public

Public and semi-public uses include public buildings and facilities such as city halls or village halls, township halls, post offices, fire stations, police stations, and libraries. This category also includes public educational facilities. Public uses account for 1.1 percent of land uses in Muskegon County.

Government facilities

There are 28 jurisdictions in the MAP planning area. These jurisdictions include Muskegon County, the 16 township in the county, seven cities (Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Montague, North Muskegon, Norton Shores, Roosevelt Park, and Whitehall), and the villages of Fruitport, Lakewood Club, Ravenna, and Casnovia. The facilities of each of these jurisdictions are detailed elsewhere in the plan.



Whitehall Township Business Park

This is a 40 acre industrial park in Whitehall Township. More than 13 acres remain available. The land is zoned for light industrial uses.



Schools

There are 38 public elementary schools, 13 public middle schools, and 12 public high schools in Muskegon County. Three Charter schools are located in the region, all located in the City of Muskegon. Also within Muskegon County, there are 14 non-public schools.

The Montague Area Public Schools district operates one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, all located within the City of Montague.

The Whitehall District Schools operate two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The Holton Public School district operates one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school, all located on one campus.

The Oakridge Public Schools operate two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The Reeths-Puffer Public Schools operate one preschool/kindergarten school, five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The Orchard View Public Schools operate one preschool/kindergarten school, two elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The Muskegon Public Schools district operates 10 elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school campus. It also operates the Muskegon Museum of Art and the Muskegon Training and Education Center (MTEC).

The Muskegon Heights Public Schools district operates six elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The North Muskegon Public Schools operate one elementary school, and one middle school, and one high school.

The Fruitport Community School district operates three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The Mona Shores district operates four elementary buildings, one middle school, and one high school.

The Ravenna Public Schools operate one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school.

Churches

There are many churches in the county covering a range of denominations.

Recreation

Recreational uses cover approximately 25,000 acres and account for 7.4 percent of land in Muskegon County. There are over 20 jurisdictions that provide park and recreation opportunities in the county. The federal and state governments manage more than 23,000 acres of park and recreation land in the county.



The Manistee National forest lies in northeast Muskegon County and covers 12,501 acres. State parks account for more than 2,600 acres in Muskegon County. The facilities that are located in the county include Duck Lake State Park, Muskegon State Park, and Hoffmaster State Park (part in Ottawa County). The Muskegon State Game Area is a 14,000 acre facility, with 8,637 acres in Muskegon County and approximately 5,300 acres in Newaygo County.

There are more than 700 acres of county parks. The county parks include:

- Blue Lake County Park, located on Big Blue Lake north of Muskegon. This 25 acre park has nearly 600 feet of frontage along the southeast shore of the Lake.
- Deremo County Park is a paved launch that is maintained for boating, water-skiing and fishing on Big Blue Lake.
- Meinert County Park is located on Lake Michigan north of Montague. The Park is approximately 88 acres.

- Patterson Park is located on the Little Rio Grande Creek two miles southwest of Ravenna. The park is 28 acres on the river flood plain.
- Pioneer Park is a 145-acre park located on Lake Michigan north of Muskegon with over 2,000 feet of white sand beach frontage.
- Twin Lake County Park is located on Twin Lake north of Muskegon. Twin Lake Park is a 15-acre park.
- Half Moon Lake
- Moore County Park in Casnovia

The county also has the 11,700 acre wastewater facility that is considered recreation land.

There are also more than 1,100 acres that are controlled by the various municipalities in the county and nearly 300 acres controlled by townships. The City of Muskegon owns more than 600 acres of parkland and open space. Major parks include Fisherman's Landing, McGraft Park, Pere Marquette Park, Bronson Park and Sheldon, Seyferth, and Beachwood Parks provide passive and active recreation opportunities to adjoining neighborhoods. The City of Montague owns and operates four community parks, totaling approximately 30 acres of recreational facilities. The City of North Muskegon owns and operates five community parks and recreational facilities, over 25 acres total. The City of Roosevelt owns and operates eight community parks and recreational facilities, over 14 acres total.



Ten of the townships operate parks: Casnovia, Dalton, Egelston, Fruitland, Fruitport, Laketon, Muskegon, Sullivan, Whitehall, and White River. There are also fourteen golf courses in the county. Twelve of the courses are open to the public.

Three villages also operate parks: Fruitport, Lakewood Club, and Ravenna.

The county is also home to Michigan's Adventure Amusement Park, the largest amusement park in the state. The park features one of the world's longest wooden roller coasters.

Parks are covered in further detail later in this chapter.



Agriculture

The unique geographic qualities of Michigan encourage the production of a wide variety of agriculture crops. Michigan has relatively high-quality soils and a range of microclimates created by glacial landforms and the surrounding Great Lakes (Wyant, 2003). Michigan agriculture is among the most diverse in the nation. Farmers in the state produce more than 125 agriculture products, second only to California in agriculture diversity (Wyant, 2003). Overall agriculture is the second largest industry in the state, contributing more than \$37 billion to the economy (Wyant, 2003).

As for Muskegon County, farming is a significant component of the local economy, and the monetary value of the goods produced is an indication of the importance to society of those goods. The monetary value of agricultural production in cash receipts in 2002 for Muskegon County was \$48,852¹ per square mile (Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002). Muskegon County supports the production of a wide variety of agriculture crops including corn, soybeans, hay-alfalfa, small grains, and fruit orchards, just a sample of the crops grown in the counties 410 farms². In 1997 there was over 73,000 acres of agricultural land in Muskegon County, with the average sized farm at 178 acres (USDA, 1997). In addition to agriculture crops, dairy, cattle, sheep, and

¹ This indicator reports the dollar value of the annual output of major crops and livestock. The value is determined by multiplying the amount of output by the prices received by farmers (in 1999 dollars). The data are presented both nationally over time and by location for the most recent year available, 1999 (Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2002).

² Final 2002 Census of Agriculture data at the national, state and county levels will be released on June 3, 2004.

³ Muskegon County ranked 5th in blueberry production in 2000, 2001, and 2002, all years for which data was available.

hog production facilities also contributed to the value of agriculture in the County.

Farm Statistics

In 1997, there were 410 farms in Muskegon County, using a total of 73,113 acres of land. The average farm size was 178 acres. By 2002, there were 545 farms using 73,918 acres. The average farm size was 136 acres. The average size of farm did not significantly change from 1987 to 1997, but decreased more than 40 acres between 1997 and 2002. In 1997, more than 70 percent of the farms in the county were between 10 and 180 acres in size. Thirty-five percent were small farms of 10 to 49 acres and an additional 35.1 percent were in mid-sized farms of 50 to 179 acres. By 2002, three quarters of the farms were between 10 and 180 acres, and nearly 45 percent were between 10 and 49 acres.



Of the 545 farms in the county, 456 are devoted to cropland, totaling 49,139 acres. The remaining land in farms is devoted to livestock and poultry purposes. There were 154 cattle farms in the county in 2002, 21 hog/pig operations, 22 sheep farms, and 52 poultry operations.

According to the Census of Agriculture from 1997, 429 acres in 14 farms were protected farmland under either the wetland reserve or conservation reserve program.

The Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and the Conservation Reserve Program are

administered by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Landowners who choose to participate in WRP may sell a conservation easement or enter into a cost-share restoration agreement with USDA to restore and protect wetlands. The landowner voluntarily limits future use of the land, yet retains private ownership. The landowner and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) develop a plan for the restoration and maintenance of the wetland. The program offers landowners three options: permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreements of a minimum 10-year duration.

Permanent Easement. This is a conservation easement in perpetuity.

30-Year Easement. This is a conservation easement lasting 30 years. Easement payments are 75 percent of what would be paid for a permanent easement.

Restoration Cost-Share Agreement. This is an agreement (generally for a minimum of 10 years in duration) to re-establish degraded or lost wetland habitat.



The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, landowners can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.

The average value of farm machinery and equipment was \$68,752 per farm in 1997.

The average value of agricultural products sold was \$108,379. The average farm expenses totaled \$83,991 per farm. The average net cash return to the farm was \$24,468. More than half of Muskegon County farm operators listed something other than farming as their principal occupation and 44 percent worked more than 200 days of the year off farm.

Special crops for Muskegon County

Muskegon County ranks fifth in the state of Michigan for blueberry production.³ It is identified as one of the five “blueberry counties” in the state, all of which are along the western shore of the Lower Peninsula.

There were 920 acres of blueberries grown in Muskegon County in 2000. This number has been decreasing over time. In 1991 there were 1,000 acres, which increased to 1,090 in 1994 and then declined to 920 in 1997. The number of blueberry farms has also decreased. In 1991 there were 35, by 2000 that number had declined to 25. Of the 920 acres in blueberry fields, 520 acres had overhead irrigation in 2000, and 200 acres had some other form of irrigation. An additional 200 acres were not irrigated.

However, blueberries are not the only fruit grown in Muskegon County. Muskegon is in the West Central fruit district for the state. There were a total of 44 fruit farms in Muskegon County in 2000. 2,300 acres were in the growing of apples, 170 acres for tart cherries, 95 acres for peaches, and 20 acres for other fruits. In 1997 there were a total of 3,995 acres in fruit production, by 2000 that number had declined to 3,505, a 12 percent decline in acreage.

Muskegon County also ranks second in the state in cucumbers.

Agricultural Laws in Michigan

Michigan is a Right to Farm state. In 1981 the Michigan Legislature passed PA 93 to provide farmers with protection from nuisance lawsuits. As a part of that legislation, the Michigan Department of Agriculture has created a series of Generally Accepted Agriculture & Management Principles (GAAMPs) that are voluntary practices for farmers.

Additionally, the state has recently created a program called the Farmland and Open Space (FLOS) protection program. The FLOS program has five methods for preserving farmland and open space: farmland development rights agreements, purchase of development rights, agricultural preservation fund, local open space easements, and designated open space easements. The purpose of the agricultural preservation fund is to provide grants to eligible local governments for purchase of conservation easements through the purchase of development rights (PDR) programs. Generally the program allows a farm owner to enter into an agreement with the state that ensures that the land remains in agricultural use for a minimum of ten years. The maximum enrollment is for 90 years, agreements are extended in 7 year increments beyond the initial 10 year agreement. The primary benefits of the program to farm owners are tax credits and special assessment of the farm land. Land owners may still sell their land when it is under a conservation easement, but the agreement runs with the land, not the owner.

Muskegon County is currently writing the ordinances necessary to implement a PDR program locally, with a focus to permanently protect the prime and Locally important farmland.

American Farmland Trust: Farming on the Edge

According to the recent study by the AFT, Michigan grows more beans, blueberries, tart cherries, cucumbers, flowering hanging baskets, geraniums, Niagara grapes, hosta, and impatiens than any other state. It is ranked as the 9th most endangered farm state. The study found that the prime soil that is the most fertile is being lost to development, and that every state is losing some of its best food producing farmland.

Parks and Recreation

Manistee National Forest

The Huron-Manistee National Forests comprise almost a million acres of public lands extending across the northern lower peninsula of Michigan. The Huron-Manistee National Forests provide recreation opportunities for visitors, habitat for fish and wildlife, and resources for local industry.

The forests of northern Michigan are rich in history. In the late 1800s logging was at its peak and these forests were quickly cut and cleared. In 1909, the Huron National Forest was established and the Manistee National Forest was formed in 1938. In 1945, these two National Forests were administratively combined.

Muskegon State Park on Lake Michigan

Muskegon State Park is located four miles west of North Muskegon on the shore of Lake Michigan. With over two miles of shoreline on Lake Michigan and with over one mile on Muskegon Lake, this is one of the top recreational areas in the region. The park features 1,165 acres of land and recreational facilities include wildlife viewing, boating, fishing, swimming, picnic areas, playgrounds and a luge run is available for winter park visitors.

Duck Lake State Park

Duck Lake State Park is a 728 acre park, located in Muskegon County. The Park stretches from the northern shore of Duck Lake to Lake Michigan. The Park contains a mixture of open brush land to mature hardwood forest, with some pockets of open meadows mixed in. The Park features include hunting, swimming, fishing, picnic areas, hiking, boating and snowmobile areas.

Hoffmaster State Park on Lake Michigan

The Hoffmaster State Park is a 1,100 acre park featuring forest covered dunes along nearly three miles of Lake Michigan shore. Its sandy beach is one of the finest shores in the area and a focal point of the Park is the Gillette Visitor Center. The Gillette Visitor Center is located at the top of a large sand dune surrounded by a pristine wooded back-dune, the center features state-of-the-art exhibits to tell Michigan's unique sand dune story. With exhibits, interactive displays, multi-image slide shows, and other nature programs to orient visitors to Michigan's unique cultural and natural features, this attraction is one of the top attractions in the State. The center has a variety of programs to help visitors enjoy and understand the unique environment of the sand dunes of the Great Lakes.

The center features an exhibit hall depicting the ecological zones of the unique dune environment. Multimedia presentations on the dunes and seasonal nature subjects are shown in an 82-seat auditorium. In addition, the Center offers educational opportunities for students and families throughout the year.

Hart-Montague Trail State Park

The Hart-Montague Trail State Park is a paved, 22 mile trail passing through the rural forested lands of the Park. Scenic overlooks and picnic areas are located along the route. The Park is approximately 22 acres in size and is accessible from the communities of

Hart and Montague, as well as other communities between the two cities along US 31. Additional recreational amenities include wildlife viewing, fishing, biking, and snowmobile areas during the winter.

Blue Lake County Park

Blue Lake County Park is located on Big Blue Lake north of Muskegon. This 25 acre park has nearly 600 feet of frontage along the southeast shore of the Lake and provides water recreation activities including boating, fishing, waterskiing and swimming. In addition to these water activities, other features include picnicking, camping and hiking. The Park offers 25 modern campsites for recreational vehicles with open and shaded sites. All campsites offer water and electric hookups.

Deremo County Park

Deremo County Park is a paved launch that is maintained for boating, water-skiing and fishing. The Deremo access site is located on Fruitvale Road on the north side of Big Blue Lake. Deremo access site hours are from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and is open year-round with limited snow removal.

Meinert County Park

Meinert County Park is located on Lake Michigan north of Montague. The Park is approximately 88 acres with rolling dunes, including a large parabolic dune³ and scenic overlooks that provide visitors a spectacular view of Little Flower Creek and Lake Michigan shoreline. The Park features picnicking, swimming, camping, hiking, and rental cottages.

³ Parabolic dunes, defined by their distinctive U-shape, are found only in moist environments where extensive vegetation cover often stabilizes the dunes. Parabolic dunes slowly move inland as sand is pushed over the crest and deposited on the leeward side.

Picnicking shelters are available for rent and seat approximately 40 people. The Park offers 67 modern campsites for recreational vehicles with open and shaded sites.

County Park Acreage	
Muskegon County Parks	Acres
Blue Lake	22
Deremo	10
Heritage Landing	7
Hilt's Landing	232
AC Fairchild	20
Meinert	54
Moore	36
Muskegon County Fairgrounds	160
Patterson	28
Pioneer	145
Twin Lakes	8
Veterans Memorial Park	19
Muskegon County Wastewater	11,700
Total	12,441

Table 3.34: County Parks

All campsites offer water, electrical, and sewer hookups. Rental cottages are offered for a family or group of six, on a weekly basis Memorial weekend through Labor Day or on a weekly or daily basis before Memorial Day and after Labor Day. The cottages include 3 bedrooms, living room, kitchen and dining room, and full bath.

Heritage Landing

During the summer, Heritage Landing provides the venue for the Summer Celebration, Michigan Irish Musical Festival, Christian Music Festival, and Lunch on the Landing, a free weekday lunch concert series. With carnival rides, music from popular musical performers, and fireworks displays, Heritage Landing brings excitement to the Muskegon Lake waterfront.

Patterson County Park

Patterson Park is located on the Little Rio Grande Creek two miles southwest of Ravenna. The park is 28 acres on the river flood plain with wooded and open areas. A variety of wild flowers bloom throughout the spring and summer offering the visitor the opportunity to view species not common to most areas in Muskegon County. The park is a quiet setting with restrooms, a small picnic shelter grills and tables. Walking along the riverbank and sitting next to the small dam and spillway are picturesque and relaxing activities.

Pioneer Park

Pioneer Park is located on Lake Michigan north of Muskegon and has over 2,000 feet of white sand beach frontage. This popular 145-acre park offers camping, swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, tennis, softball, basketball and volleyball. The park is filled with a variety of mixed oak, maple, white pine and hemlock pine trees. This is the Counties largest and most popular park.

A lodge building is available to rent for family reunions, company, church picnics, or other group activities where shelter is desired. The park offers 213 modern campsites for recreational vehicles, with open and shaded sites, and offer water and electric hookups. In addition, a group camping area is available for family, church groups, and camping clubs with up to 27 camping units.

Twin Lake County Park

Twin Lake County Park is located on Twin Lake north of Muskegon. Twin Lake Park is a 15-acre park with 800 feet of frontage on Twin Lake with shaded and open areas for family outdoor activities including picnicking, swimming, tennis, volleyball, and boating. The lodge building and two picnic shelters are available to rent for family reunions, company and church picnics, or other group activities where

shelter is desired. Shelters offer seating for 60 people, a large park grill for cooking and electrical outlets.

City of Montague

The City of Montague owns and operates the two acre Maple Beach Park and eleven acres at Medbury Park.

Maple Beach Park has playground equipment, picnic facilities, beach area, and restrooms. Medbury Park has picnic tables, beach area, and a boardwalk.

Lake Front Park has a band shell and restrooms. It is adjacent to the Montague Boat Launch. Each area is approximately three acres.

Additional investment in Maple Beach Park is planned for 2006, with \$250,000 to be invested in acquisition and development.

City of Muskegon

The City of Muskegon owns nearly 600 acres of parkland and open space. Major parks include Fisherman's Landing, McGraft Park, Pere Marquette Park, Bronson Park and Sheldon, Seyferth, and Beachwood Parks provide passive and active recreation opportunities to adjoining neighborhoods.

Other recreational facilities include special use facilities typically providing unique or unusual recreational opportunities. These facilities include Hackley Park (formal central City park dedicated in 1890, on National and State historic registers, strong, attractive, historic element), the Indian Cemetery (the oldest known Indian cemetery in the area, circa 1800s), L.C. Walker Arena/Convention Center (sporting and cultural events, public/private skating, banquets, flea markets and meetings), Hartshorn Marina (only municipal marina on Muskegon Lake and home of the Port City Princess), the Kruse Park observation deck, and Jaycee's Launch Ramp (heavily

used public launch ramp on west end of Muskegon Lake).

All schools in the Muskegon Public School District provide outdoor recreational facilities. Because schools are distributed throughout the City, their recreational facilities function as local neighborhood playgrounds used by school age children in surrounding neighborhoods.

City of Muskegon Heights

The City of Muskegon Heights has 87 acres of park and recreation land. Local parks include the Little Black Creek Major Park, Mona Lake City Park, West heights Park, the Johnny O. Harris Playfield, War Memorial Park, and Rowan Park.

City of North Muskegon

The City of North Muskegon has more than 20 acres of park and recreation land in five locations.

City of Norton Shores

The City of Norton Shores has more than 230 acres of parkland. The majority of the parkland is at the Lake Harbor Park. The second largest park is Ross Park at 43 acres.

City of Whitehall

Funnell Field is a neighborhood park that has softball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, Little League fields, playground equipment, restrooms, and picnic facilities. The Goodrich/White Lake Municipal Marina is a regional community park with a fifty slip marina, playground equipment, and restroom and picnic facilities. City Hall/Slocum Park has tennis courts and picnic amenities. Gee Park is a neighborhood park with playground equipment and picnic facilities.

Village of Fruitport

The Village of Fruitport has five parks and a bike path. Pomona Park has a playground,

picnic shelter, and band shell. The other park sites are a boat launch site with access to Spring Lake, Grand River, and Lake Michigan; a handicap accessible fishing pier; and, two small area access sites. The bike path connects to Spring Lake, Ferrysburg, and Grand Haven.

Village of Ravenna

There are two public parks in the Village of Ravenna. Conklin Park has a number of recreation courts and fields, picnic tables and grills, restrooms and concession stands, and playground equipment. Thatcher Park has two pavilions with picnic tables, restrooms, and playground equipment.

Village of Lakewood Club

The Village of Lakewood Club has a 9.5 acre park with a baseball field, playground, and a pavilion with a grill. The park was deeded to the village from Dalton Township, but can revert to the township if the village ceases to use the park for public purposes.

Local Pak Acreage	
Local Parks	Acres
City of Montague	
Cullen Athletic Field.....	10
Ellenwood Park	0.25
Koon Creek Park	2.75
Lake Front Park	3
Maple Beach Park	4.5
Medbury Park	6.5
Montague Boat Launch	3
City of Muskegon	
Aamodt Playground	2
Beachwood Playground	3
Beukema Playfield	10
Bronson Park.....	32
Campbell Playfield	10
Chase Hammond Golf Course	214
Cottage Grove Launch Ramp	
Curve Park	24
Gidding Street Launch Ramp	
Green Acres Playground.....	5
Hackley Park.....	2
Hartshorn Marina Launch Ramp	
Lake Michigan park.....	55
Marsh Playfield.....	6
McCrea Playfield	9
McGraft Park.....	92
Pere Marquette Boat Launch	
Pere Marquette Park	32
Reese Playfield.....	13
Richards Park - Boat Launch.....	7
Ryerson Valley Park.....	72
Seyferth Playfield	16
Sheldon Playfield	6
Smith Playfield	23
Yacht Club Mooring Basin	
City of Muskegon Heights	
Johnny O. Harris Playfield	11
Little Black Creek Major Park	20
Mona Lake City Park.....	47
Rowan Park.....	2
War Memorial Park.....	2
West Heights Park.....	5
City of North Muskegon	
Bear Lake Park	7
Block 58 - Lakefront Sports Park	7

Causeway Memorial Park	4
Custer Park	0.5
East End Park	0.75
Ruddiman Overlook	1
Walker Park.....	1
West End Park	4
City of Norton Shores	
Avondale Park	2
Chapman-Veurink Park.....	2
Hidden Cove Park.....	20
Lake Harbor Park.....	184
New Development	1
Ross Park.....	43
City of Roosevelt Park	
Community Recreation Center	4
Delmar Playfield	5
Germaine Road Park.....	0.5
Hubert D. Carsell Park	0.5
James Davies Park.....	1
James V. Wells Park.....	0.5
Leon Lambert Park.....	1
Post Road Park.....	0.5
Princeton Road Playground.....	0.5
Tennis Courts	0.5
City of Whitehall	
City Hall/Slocum Park	2.5
Covell Park.....	4
Funnell Field	12.5
Gee Park.....	1.5
Goodrich Park.....	8.5
Lions Park	3.5
Mill Pond Peninsula	4.5
Norman Park.....	1
Svensson Park.....	4
Veteran's Memorial.....	0.5
Village of Fruitport	
Pomona Park	2
Village of Lakewood Club.....	9.5
Village of Ravenna	
Conklin Park	10
Thatcher Park	2
Total	1107.25

Table 3.35: Local Parks

