

C. Port Facilities - (Eastern Shore)

Muskegon's long held slogan, "Port City" stems from its long and storied history as a Great Lakes port-of-call for the shipping of locally abundant raw materials, primarily lumber. However it belies the fact that the City has never had an official *foci* for its shipping and break-bulk activities; only scattered wharves, docks and bulkheads located at various points along the Lake.



While this historical pattern of development has added a distinctive 19th Century character to parts of the waterfront, it has also perpetuated a land use pattern destructive of the environment and of the public's enjoyment of the lake. Worse still, the negative externalities associated with port operations (i.e. dust, noise, truck and train traffic), routinely spill over into residential sections of the City.

The concentration of port operations and heavy industry on the lake (perhaps under the aegis of a Port Authority or other quasi-public agency) can be seen as benefiting both industry and the general public in a variety of ways. In the case of the former, economies-of-scale and other efficiencies can be achieved through the common use of port related infrastructure such as: booms, stevedore (gantry) cranes, deep water slips, warehousing and transportation facilities thus relieving each operator of the need to maintain separate facilities. Perhaps more importantly, effective management of port activities could eventually lead to full containerization capabilities and more expansive use of Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations.

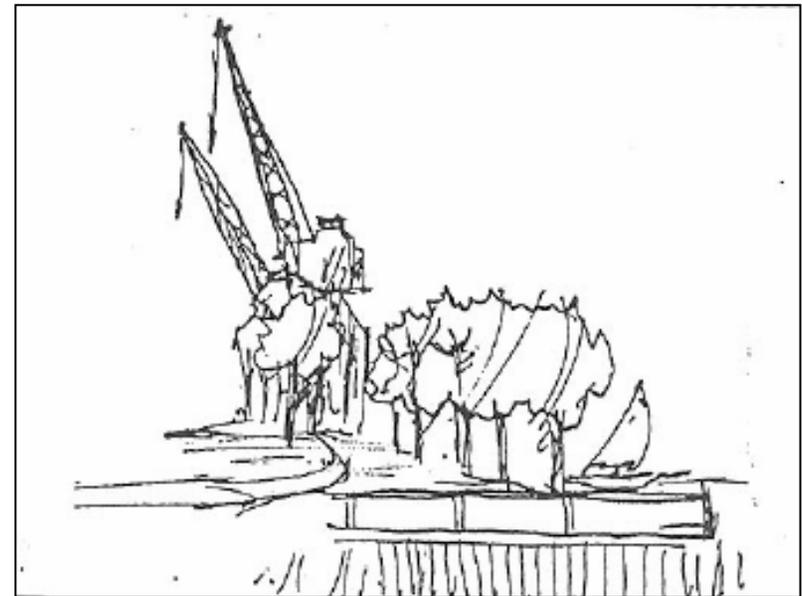
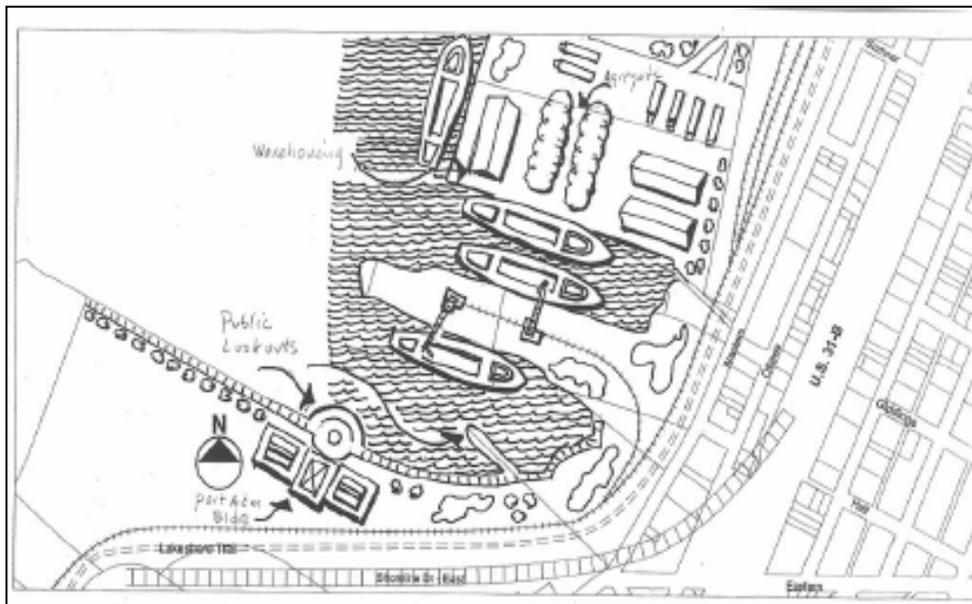
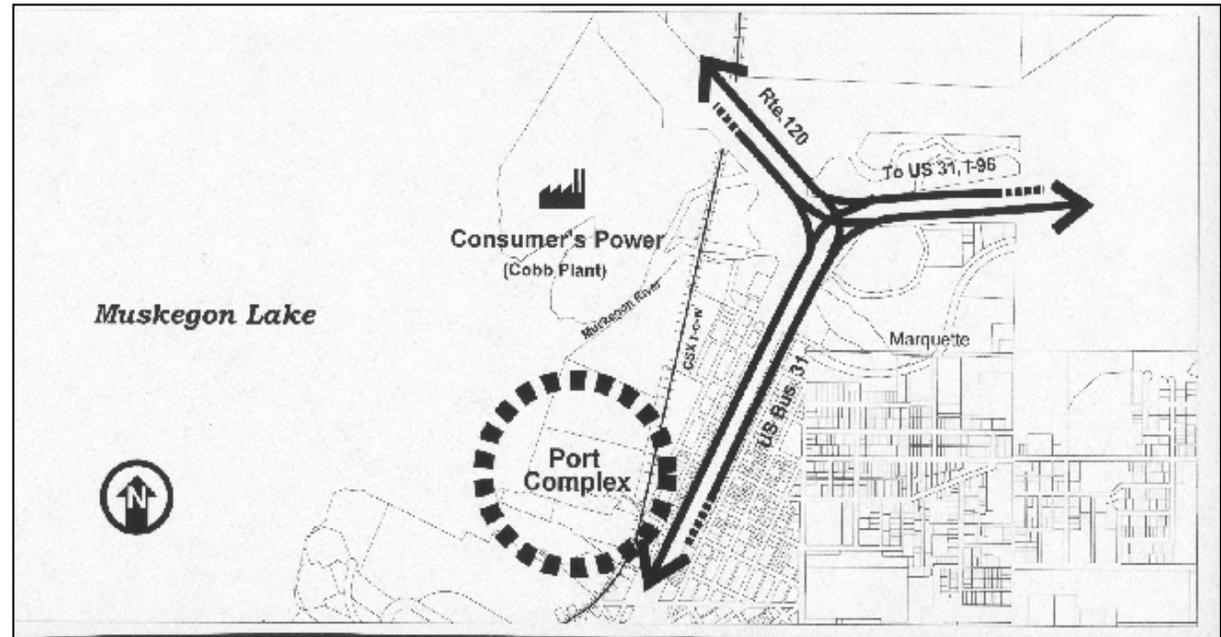
From the public's standpoint, large tracts of formerly inaccessible waterfront lands would be opened up for more optimal uses such as housing and recreation. Truck traffic, and the wear and tear it causes to local roads, would be more effectively contained to more compatible areas away from high concentrations of housing. In short, the

clustering of the heaviest port activities can be seen as an integral part of attracting a greater variety of desired land uses to the lake while at the same time, enhancing Muskegon's viability as a general cargo port.

At a minimum, the logistical requirements for a port include ample land for storage and warehousing, deep water berths, and convenient access to a regional transportation network. Of all the sections of shoreline historically used for industrial purposes, the section of shoreline between Fisherman's Landing and the CMS, Cobb Plant perhaps best meets all of these criteria. Along this stretch of shoreline there are several deep water slips, ample acreage for storage and access to inland rail transport. Most importantly, it is only a short distance to U.S. 31 and its confluence with I-96.

A key benefit to a central port at this location is the reduction in truck traffic

This page: Conceptual planning for port facilities on Muskegon Lake. Shipping operations should have good access to the regional transportation network, and incorporate public viewing areas wherever possible. Aggregate storage and warehousing should be limited to the northern edge of the site.



n downtown and along other sections of the lake. Trucks could quickly and easily access the port and circumvent downtown altogether. Greatly reduced would be the heavy truck traffic along Muskegon and Webster Avenues.

Consideration however, would have to be given to the amount of dredging required to accommodate large ships at this location. The existing slips are not currently wide enough to fit two ships side by side and at some point the slips may have to be widened and/or deepened. Given the present restrictions on dredging

activities in Muskegon Lake (due to sediment contamination), a



mitigation plan may have to be coordinated with the DEQ and/or EPA to effectuate the necessary improvements, including disposal of the hazardous

sediment. At the very least, special measures would have to be implemented to move the materials to a Class II disposal site.



Observation Areas

The call for greater public access to the lake (made elsewhere in this sub-plan) applies equally to any proposed port operations. It is widely

acknowledged that the watching of ships and shipping operations have long provided a source of genuine entertainment for people of all ages and

backgrounds. The presence of commercial vessels both animates and adds character to many urban waterfronts.

Although port facilities have historically been treated as forbidden wastelands, many ports have recently attempted to soften their appearance

by developing public observation decks and piers. It is therefore important, as with all other sections of shoreline, that the future development of any port facilities in Muskegon include adequate public access and viewing areas.

Funding Sources

Possible funding sources include: private capital investments, TEA-21 transportation grants, and the creation of a port authority entity with full bonding and condemnation powers.



*Port facilities should be visually accessible, and incorporate the public realm. *Drawing by Collette Klukos.*

Facing page: Playground in Vancouver, B.C., with port facilities as a backdrop (top). As in Muskegon, a passing ship proves to be an “event” on the Duluth, MN waterfront (bottom).

** Source: Waterfronts: Cities Reclaim Their Edge, Breen & Rigby.*