

F. Urban Design Considerations

The City of Muskegon enjoys some of the most spectacular lake views of any city on the Great Lakes. The numerous bluffs and plateaus offer many panoramic views of Muskegon Lake and surrounding dunes. Through projects such as Shoreline Drive, the Lakeshore Trail, and the dedication of waterfront parks such as Heritage Landing (a former scrap-yard), and Fisherman's Landing the City has taken great strides in reclaiming waterfront land for public use, and improving the general aesthetics of the lakefront.

In spite of these efforts however, there remains a general shortage of public spaces, and an abundance of visual clutter directly along the water. Much of this clutter is composed of large, utilitarian structures, piles of raw materials, salvage materials and other discards of the City's industrial past; many of which conceal or obscure views to the water. In addition, many lakefront properties have a raw, unkempt appearance which makes them appear harsh and forbidding.

Accentuating the lack of visual transition between land and water is the lack of relationship between downtown and waterfront land uses. At present, there are few visual linkages between downtown and the lake. Each are separate entities devoid of any sense of physical unity. Neither place is made more special by its proximity to the other.

Recommendations:

Waterfront Focal Points

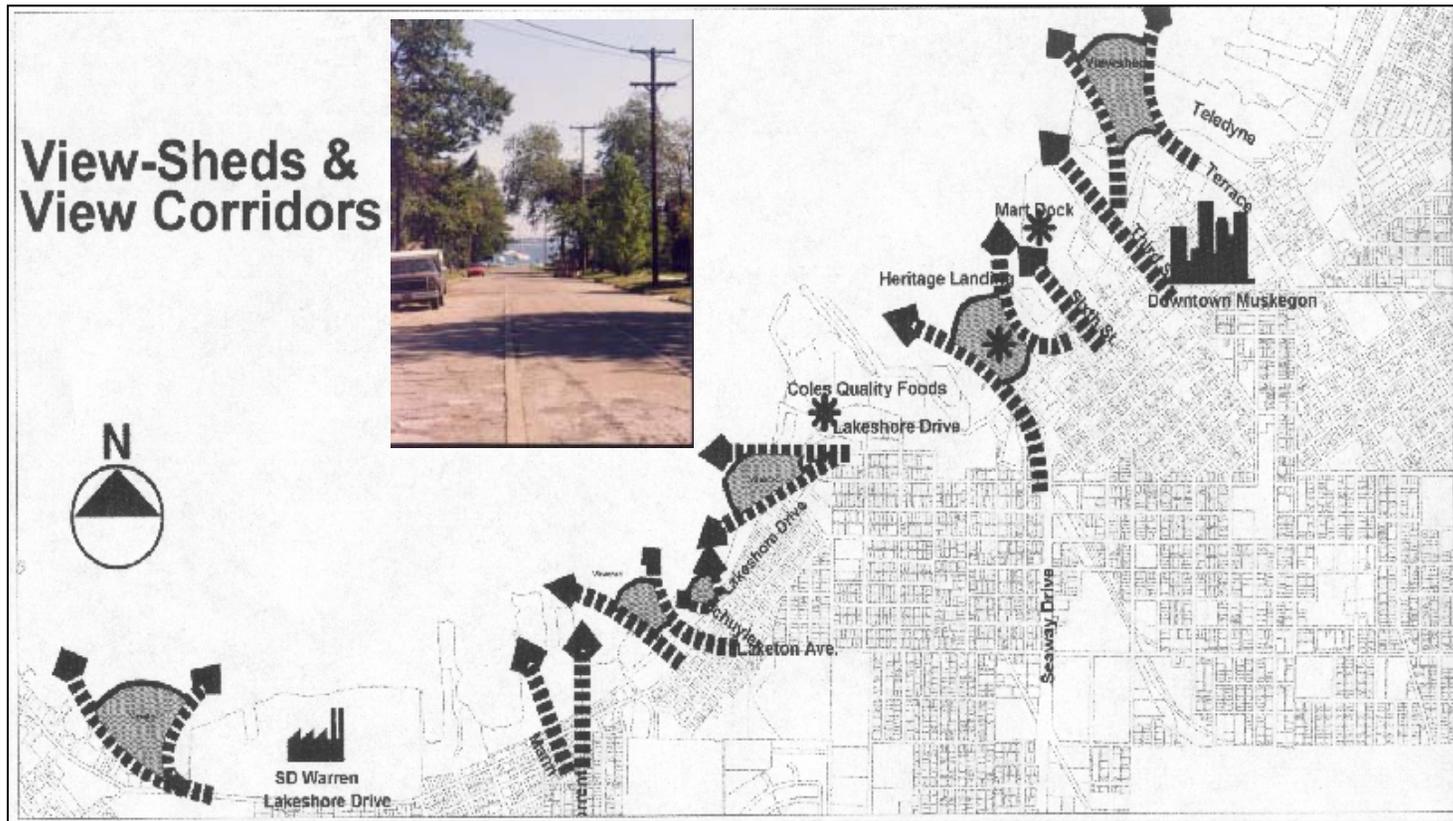
The pavilion at Heritage Landing is a good example of an attention-catching focal point which helps make a visual connection between the lake and downtown. It calls attention to the civic life of the City, and acts as a counterpoint to the City's modest skyline. More importantly, it beckons the passerby to explore it, and the waterfront beyond. Its prominence is made more commanding by the fact that it stands out against the backdrop of Muskegon Lake, and is the first thing to come into view as one approaches



Shoreline Drive from U.S. 31 from the south.

*Silos transformed into public sculpture. Boston, MA. *Source: "Waterfronts: Cities Reclaim their Edge" Breen & Rigby 1994.*

Despite its high visibility, Heritage Landing is too far removed from the heart of downtown to effectively connect downtown to the lakefront. Sorely needed, are more effective linkages between downtown's primary east-west streets, and where they terminate at Shoreline Drive. The need is especially acute at the end of Third Street, where the otherwise unobstructed view to the lake is made unremarkable by the lack of visual focus at the water's edge.



The shoreline offers numerous view-scapes worthy of protection. The development pattern in Bluffton, where streets run directly to the water's edge (top), preserves the visual accessibility of the lake. Such a pattern is worthy of duplication in newer waterfront developments.