



# Introduction

## Master Land Use Plan



Located along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, the City of Muskegon is a dynamic urban community. The City is home to the nationally acclaimed Cherry County Playhouse, the Muskegon Museum of Art, the Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts, colleges, regional health care institutions, and a host of national firms, including representation in the Fortune 500.

Recreational opportunities abound. Lake Michigan's sandy beaches attract visitors from throughout the Midwest. The Muskegon Lake shoreline provides scenic views and natural areas. Both lakes are important sport fisheries.

Muskegon is a community of ethnic and cultural diversity. The City is home to approximately 42,000 residents. It is the region's largest city and the seat of Muskegon County government. Founded on a lumbering base, and supplanted by automotive and other industries, the City is



now experiencing significant growth in high-tech industrial development and tourism.

The City is accessible by Interstate 96 and US-31. Muskegon Lake provides deep harbor access for commercial, industrial, and recreational watercraft. The Muskegon Airport, located minutes from the City, provides full-service passenger facilities with linkage to major national airports. Within West Michigan, the City is considered a prime location for significant growth due to lakefront development opportunities, an existing industrial base, a skilled labor force, and an extensive range of educational, cultural, and recreational amenities.

The City of Muskegon Master Land Use Plan is designed to be a guide and strategy for future land use. It is intended for use by decision makers during the process of making choices between varied and often competing interests.





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The Master Land Use Plan is made up of three elements: the overall Master Land Use Plan document; a focused Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment plan; and an extensive geographic information system. The Master Land Use Plan summarizes numerous data gathering efforts, subsequent analytical steps, and comprehensive land use recommendations. The Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan represents similar steps and recommendations, but focuses on the Core Downtown and Muskegon Lakefront. The geographic information system digitized vast quantities of data for use in unlimited analysis and presentation of land use issues.

All elements of the Master Land Use Plan were generated during approximately 28 months of work in 1995 to 1997 by a large team of citizens, City and business officials, and consultants. The level of dialogue and effort put into thinking, discussing, proposing and finalizing a plan for the City of Muskegon was unprecedented in the City's history. All participants should be proud.

The Master Land Use Plan should be used as follows:

- ◆ As a tool when developing, coordinating, and preparing specialized plans and plan implementation programs; and when addressing issues such as neighborhoods, natural resources, and land development proposals.
- ◆ As a guideline during the process of administering zoning and other land development ordinances. Decisions on requests for special use permits,

rezonings, site plan reviews, variances, and the like should be evaluated on the basis of consistency with specific plan recommendations and standards.

- ◆ As a guide for augmenting current land development regulations.

The Plan presents a framework for future land use that is supported by findings and recommendations which are based on:

- ◆ Perceptions of the City's past, present, and potential future, as shared by members of City and regional business, governmental, institutional, banking, investment, development, educational, entrepreneurial, and residential communities.
- ◆ An analysis of demographic trends and projections.
- ◆ An analysis of traffic and accident data and transportation needs.
- ◆ An analysis of land use, development patterns, and natural resources.
- ◆ An analysis of potentially contaminated property and redevelopment of former industrial land.
- ◆ Neighborhood, business owner, City official, and City staff workshops conducted during the process of preparing the Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan component of the Master Land Use Plan.
- ◆ Information gathered during downtown patron and regional household surveys.





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- ◆ An examination of previous City planning documents.

The plan is presented in thirteen sections:

1. Introduction
2. Population & Socio-Economic Characteristics
3. Existing Land Use
4. Transportation
5. Natural Features Inventory
6. Historic District
7. Parks and Recreational Facilities
8. Brownfield Analysis
9. Residential Quality
10. Neighborhood Issues
11. Sub-Area Plans
12. Future Land Use Recommendations
13. General Plan Recommendations