



Park, Recreation, and Community Facilities

Master Land Use Plan



The City of Muskegon Parks and Recreation System serves a potential user population of nearly 41,000 City Residents. This figure grows considerably when the residents from the surrounding metropolitan areas are included in the number of people who use the City's facilities on a routine basis. For all practical purposes, the system serves a potential user population in excess of 100,000 people.

The City's Department of Leisure Services prepared a Leisure Services Master Plan which was approved by the City Commission in 1993. The plan serves three broad purposes:

- ◆ Provides a rational basis for programming maintenance and improvement programs for the parks, recreational, and community facilities.
- ◆ Establishes long-range goals for the Department's program, service acquisition, facility acquisition, and improvements projects.

- ◆ Maintains eligibility for recreational grant funding programs administered by the Recreation Services Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The long range goals adopted to guide the City in the development of the City wide Parks and Recreation System described in the 1993 Leisure Services Master Plan, are summarized in Table 7.1.

The 1993 Leisure Services Master Plan and on-going Leisure Services Department planning efforts are essential to the City's ability to accommodate the diverse recreational needs and desires of City and metropolitan residents.

The 1993 Leisure Services Master Plan presents an inventory of park and recreational facilities, provides a detailed description of the condition of each facility, and sets forth specific action plans for a variety of improvement and development projects. The Plan indicates retention of all





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existing facilities, as well as a continued emphasis regarding the recreational aspects of the Muskegon Lakeshore. (The Muskegon Downtown/ Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan also emphasizes the recreational aspects of the Muskegon

Lakeshore). Table 7.2 lists the twenty capital improvement projects presented in the 1993 Muskegon Leisure Services Master Plan. These capital improvements have been completed or are currently in progress.

1. Maintain and improve the quality of programs, facilities, and parks for benefit and enjoyment of City residents.
 - ◆ Provide recreational facilities and activities which contribute to neighborhood stability.
 - ◆ Provide City parks to enhance and contribute to the urban living environment.
 - ◆ Provide accessible, enriching recreational opportunities and experiences for all citizens regardless of race, sex, age, color, religion, handicap, national origin or ancestry.
 - ◆ Advocate the preservation of natural environmental resources.
 - ◆ Promote good stewardship of park lands.
 - ◆ Provide a broad range of waterfront recreational facilities.
 - ◆ Maximize the use of private and public recreational facilities.
 - ◆ Provide for a safe environment for park users.
2. Offer recreation programs and facilities which promote tourism.
 - ◆ Increase and promote the development of public/private waterfront recreational facilities.
 - ◆ Preserve and promote the historical and cultural heritage of the City.
 - ◆ Preserve the natural resources of the City of present and future generations.
 - ◆ Promote development of public/private regional recreational facilities/activities.
 - ◆ Market the City Leisure Services facilities to attract tourists.

**Table 7.1 Muskegon Leisure Services Master Plan 1993
Summary of Goals**





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- ◆ Muskegon Lake Frontage (Muskegon Lakeshore Trail)
- ◆ Smith-Ryerson (enlarge gymnasium, nature trails, enlarge parking area)
- ◆ Seyferth Park (new restroom/shelter building, playground equipment, pave parking area, irrigation system, trim trees)
- ◆ Hackley Park (paving, trees)
- ◆ Walker Arena
- ◆ Beachwood (pave parking lot, playground equipment, irrigation system, restroom/shelter building)
- ◆ Pere Marquette Park (bike/walkways - part of Muskegon Lakeshore Trail)
- ◆ Bronson (Kruse) Park (parking, dune walkways, campgrounds)
- ◆ Fisherman's Landing (paving, landscaping)
- ◆ Hartshorn Marina (small boat basin docks, shoreline protection, paving)
- ◆ Case Hammond Golf Course (tree removal, finish new nine)
- ◆ Beukema (playground equipment, pave parking)
- ◆ Marsh Field (concession/maintenance building, pave parking, roof grandstands)
- ◆ McCrea (pave parking, playground equipment)
- ◆ Campbell Playfield (playground equipment, irrigation system)
- ◆ Sheldon (sidewalks, irrigation, playground equipment, pave parking)
- ◆ Reese (pave parking, playground equipment, resurface courts, new restroom/maintenance building, new restroom/shelter building)
- ◆ McGraft (pave parking, playground equipment, irrigation, new picnic shelter)
- ◆ Causeway - Veteran's Park (light fountain)
- ◆ Fisheries Interpretive Center (facilities construction)

Table 7.2 List of Capital Improvements from 1993 Muskegon Leisure Service Master Plan





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CITY PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

The City owns more than 800 acres of parkland and open space. All but 214 acres (the municipal golf course) are located in the City limits. Improved and natural park facilities serve a variety of functions, and meet a variety of recreational needs within City and regional population groups. An overview of park and recreational facilities is as follows:

Tot Lots

Tot lots are stand-alone facilities that serve the neighborhoods in which they are located. Aamodt Park and the Ninth Street Tot Lot serve the Froebel and Nelson neighborhoods, respectively.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are found at elementary schools and at the City's larger park facilities.

Neighborhood Parks

Sheldon, Seyferth, and Beachwood Parks provide passive and active recreation opportunities to adjoining neighborhoods.

Playfields

Playfields are the backbone of the City's parks system. Beukema, Smith-Ryerson, Reese, McCrea, Marsh, and Campbell playfields provide facilities for intensive, active recreational uses including tennis

and basketball; playgrounds; softball, baseball, and football league play; and a variety of other organized sporting activities.

Major Parks

Major parks serve the City, region, and outlying areas. Major parks include Fisherman's Landing (sportfishing/ tourism industry), McGraft Park (large improved and natural areas), Pere Marquette Park (northernmost point along a 2.5 mile long City owned segment of Lake Michigan shoreline), Bronson Park (dune system, sandy beach, picnic facilities).

Special Use Facilities

Special use facilities typically provide unique or unusual recreational opportunities. These facilities include the Chase Hammond Golf Course (18 holes, driving range, club house and cross country ski trails), 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), Heritage Landing (a multi facility-use 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).

Open Space Parkland





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Open Space Parkland is represented by Veteran's Memorial Park (lagoon, memorials and fountain), Richards Park, Ryerson Creek Open Space (wooded ravine along length of creek), Muskegon Lakeshore Open Space (wooded open space in residential area), Lake Michigan Park shoreline dune between Pere Marquette and Bronson Parks, and Seaway Drive (greenspace along entryway to City).

Public School Recreational Facilities

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.

The City and School District have a reciprocal use agreement encompassing park and recreational facilities owned or operated by each entity, excluding the L.C. Walker Arena and Annex, and the Senior High School gymnasium and swimming pool. An overview of school district facilities is as follows:

Elementary Schools

These school facilities include playgrounds typically providing a variety of active play areas, playground equipment, basketball courts, and softball diamonds. Tennis courts are located only at Craig School.

Junior High Schools

Steel (eastern portion of City) and Bunker (western portion of City) Junior High

Schools have gymnasiums and indoor swimming pools.

Senior High School

Muskegon Senior High School has excellent gymnasium and swimming pool facilities. Hackley Stadium is an excellent 6,500 seat venue for football, track, and field events. These facilities primarily serve the needs of the City's high school population, and secondly are used in conjunction with Community Development Block Grant funded recreational programs. The football field is also used for Peewee Football League play.

Non-District/Private School Recreational Facilities

The Greater Muskegon Catholic Schools, West Michigan Christian Schools, Muskegon Intermediate School System, and Muskegon Community College provide additional facilities. An overview of these facilities is as follows:

Catholic Central High School and St. Michael Elementary School

Catholic Central High School has a football field; track and field facilities; baseball and softball diamonds; and an open area for other field games. St. Michael Elementary School has a playground and open space area for field games. These facilities primarily serve school population groups, and are not heavily used by the City's general population, or by residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

West Michigan Christian High School





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West Michigan Christian High School provides a comprehensive recreational complex which includes tennis courts; basketball courts; soccer and open space playfields; baseball and softball diamonds; track and field facilities; and playgrounds. These facilities receive a fair amount of use by residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Intermediate School District Wesley Street School



The Intermediate School District Wesley Street School provides a playground and an open space area that are not heavily used by residents in the surrounding neighborhood.

Muskegon Community College

Muskegon Community College provides numerous recreational opportunities to surrounding neighborhoods, and the City as a whole. Facilities include lighted tennis and basketball courts; ball fields; a soccer field; an open space area for field games; and a nature trail. These high-quality facilities are underutilized by neighborhood residents and the general population.

Other Facilities

The City's Leisure Services plan lists numerous public, semi-public, and private facilities that provide City, neighboring community, and region-wide residents with a variety of recreational and cultural facilities. Golf courses (two), miniature golf courses (three), bowling alleys (two), marinas, and state and county campgrounds serve active recreational needs.

Cultural facilities include the Frauenthal Center for the Performing Arts and Beardsley Theater (owned by the Community Foundation for Muskegon County) providing 1,800 and 200 seat venues for concert and stage productions. The Muskegon County Museum, Muskegon Museum of Art, and Hackley Public Library provide cultural activities beyond those typically found in a city the size of Muskegon.

The Victorian Era Hackley-Hume Home National Register properties and other nearby properties are open to the public and play a central role in the City's overall historic preservation efforts.

Special Facilities

The City provides a limited number of facilities geared toward the handicapped or elderly. Senior citizens use the community buildings at McGraft and Smith-Ryerson parks, and the shuffleboard complex at McGraft Park.

Barrier free facilities are provided at Fisherman's Landing (wheelchair lift at boat





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launch), Bronson Park (Lake Michigan access), and Heritage Landing (pathways, play structure, Muskegon Lake overlook, fishing area, and paved parking). Additional and augmented barrier free facilities will be included in future recreational and park development and redevelopment efforts.

In-Process & Proposed Recreational and Park Facilities

Land along the Muskegon Lake shoreline formerly devoted to industrial land uses presents a range of opportunities for waterfront residential, commercial, and recreational development. The Muskegon Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan also emphasizes the recreational aspects of the Muskegon Lakeshore. That document calls for a future recreational emphasis along portions of the shoreline to compliment Heritage Landing, existing marina development, and proposed projects such as the Lakeshore Aquarium and relocation of the Silversides to a downtown site. An overview of recreational and park facilities under or proposed for development include the following:

Terrace Point

Located on the Muskegon Lake waterfront immediately north of downtown, Terrace Point is being developed and maintained by the SPX Corporation. Terrace Point is home to the SPX Corporate Headquarters, a dockominium facility, a clubhouse, and a high quality restaurant. A 150 foot wide passive use easement provides public access to the waterfront. Building sites are available for additional development.

Heritage Landing

Heritage Landing is a 19 acre mixed-use recreational facility located on the Muskegon Lake waterfront immediately west of the YFCA. The facility includes a playground (large, small scale, and barrier free play structures); barrier free waterfront access and fishing areas; a multi-use pavilion/amphitheater; and restroom facilities. Heritage landing is the site of a variety of pubic festivals and outdoor concerts.

Muskegon Lakeshore Trail

The 1990 Muskegon Lakeshore Trail Master Plan presents a detailed examination of the feasibility and costs associated with development of a proposed 14.1 mile non-motorized multi-use trailway. The proposed trailway will showcase the Muskegon shoreline by providing access to waterfront and shoreline areas currently inaccessible to large segments of the population, including many elderly and handicapped persons.

The trail will highlight unique shoreline and waterfront attributes, provide new recreational opportunities, and foster renewed interest in, and awareness of, the diversity of environmental features along the City's Muskegon Lake and Lake Michigan shorelines. The trail will also provide a safe means of access from residential neighborhoods to recreational facilities, businesses and employment centers. The Lakeshore Trail will provide linkages to adjoining community and state trail systems.





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Consumers Power Property

Consumers Power Company owns 323 acres of land (297 acres within Muskegon City limits) at the northeasterly end of Muskegon Lake. The company's electrical generation facility (coal storage, conveyor systems, transmission towers, and parking areas) occupies 40 acres of land. The remaining 283 acres (portions of which were at one time used for fly ash disposal) are undeveloped.

The undeveloped acreage is traversed by tributaries of the Muskegon River, and includes high-quality wetlands. This undeveloped acreage exhibits environmental features that present a variety of recreational and other developmental opportunities.

West Michigan Steel Foundry Property

This property, located adjacent to Hartshorn Marina, offers additional waterfront recreational opportunities. The City has leased a small portion of the property, called Foundry Park, for development of an on-shore fishing pier. The northern portion of the property may be developed for other waterfront recreational uses.

Grand Trunk Property

This property, located at the foot of McCracken on Lakeshore Drive, offers great potential for waterfront recreational development. The property includes a City-owned boat launch ramp and parking area. The State of Michigan has acquired a portion of this property for possible additional development.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

City Hall

The City of Muskegon City Hall is located at 933 Terrace Street at the intersection of Terrace and Muskegon Avenue. The building lies adjacent to the Muskegon County Building (across Terrace). Collectively, the two structures are a major landmark in the City's downtown.

The present facility was opened in 1970, and contains the majority of administrative offices and meeting facilities used by elected and appointed officials. It houses the offices of the City Manager, City Clerk, Treasurer, Water Department, Finance Department, Assessor, Building Inspection Department, Planning and Community Development Offices, Leisure Services, Engineering, and Police Department. Meetings and public hearings of the City Commission, City Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic District Commission, and like bodies are normally conducted at City Hall.

The building is being renovated to enhance internal efficiency to better meet staff and public needs. Small off-street parking areas are located immediately adjacent to the building, adjacent to the Police Department and between City Hall and the Fire Department.

Employee parking is provided at a more distant lot, across Apple Avenue. Public spaces within close proximity to the building are limited. As such, it is recommended the overall site plan be analyzed for potential redevelopment and/or reconfiguration to determine new





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parking opportunities. Also, opportunity for the public to use the current employee parking area for overflow parking should be explored.

Police Department

The Police Department is located within the City Hall structure, physically separated from other office functions by the internal design of the building.

Fire Department

The Fire Department is headquartered at Central Station immediately adjacent to City Hall along Terrace Street. Station No. 5, called Marquette Station, is located in the north-easterly portion of the City in the Marquette neighborhood. Mutual aid agreements are in effect with all surrounding City and Township areas to provide mutual assistance in the event of a substantial fire.

Other Municipal Facilities

Other municipal facilities include the Public Service Building located at 1350 E. Keating which provides sewer, water, and general public works functions for the community. The site contains a modern office structure and associated storage and service facilities. Other City facilities include several public cemeteries, the Farmer's Market, and various parks and recreational facilities.

Water Filtration Plant

The City's water filtration plant is located along the Lake Michigan Shoreline adjacent to Pere Marquette Park. Lines extend into

Lake Michigan where water intake is accomplished and the facility filters and treats the water prior to distribution throughout the community. The plant building was recently upgraded.

Libraries

The City is served by two libraries. The Hackley Public Library, operated by the Muskegon Public Schools, is located at 316 W. Webster Avenue. The second library facility is operated by Muskegon County, and is located at 635 Ottawa Street.

Schools

Other community facilities include the schools provided by the Muskegon Public School District and the Muskegon Community College located in the northeast portion of the City.

Public schools include:

- Angell School
- Bluffton School
- Bunker Middle School
- Career/Technical Education Center
- Craig Alternative High School
- Even Start/Pre-Kindergarten
- Early Childhood Education Center
- Froebel Special Education Center
- Glenside School
- Marquette School
- McLaughlin School
- Moon School
- Muskegon High School
- Nelson School
- Nims School
- Oakview School
- Phillips School
- Steele Middle School





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There are also a variety of parochial schools throughout the City area providing elementary and secondary education.

Public Facilities and Services

Other public and quasi-public community facilities of note include Mercy, General, and Hackley Hospitals, Baker College (currently located in the downtown but soon to relocate to a site near Muskegon Community College), the Muskegon County Building, various private schools, and a range of public service facilities including Every Woman’s Place, Muskegon Rescue Mission, Muskegon Family Center, Council on Aging, Senior Services, Community Action Against Poverty, local neighborhood associations, and others.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated at the beginning of this Chapter, on-going parks and recreation planning efforts are essential to the City's ability to effectively provide for and accommodate diverse and changing recreational needs. The City's ability to meet these needs has (and will continue to) reap ever increasing benefits for City and metropolitan residents over the short and long-term. Continuing to coordinate such efforts with other City and area-wide neighborhood, business, and land use planning efforts is consistent with the overall intent and purpose of this plan.

Extensive interviews with local Neighborhood Associations, the populace at large, and governmental and agency

leaders indicated broad satisfaction with the overall range of community facilities and services. Of particular note were the City's parks and recreational facilities. Residents expressed high satisfaction over the present park's system and level of maintenance.

Major areas of concern generally centered on the need for enhanced enforcement of property maintenance codes, desire for additional police presence in the core downtown, and improved street maintenance. These factors have also been addressed in the Downtown/Shoreline Redevelopment Plan.

A review of survey results recently compiled by the Muskegon Oceana Community Reinvestment Corporation for several of the City's neighborhoods indicated concurrence with the above findings.

While the City exhibits a rather strong system of playgrounds and parks, a need exists for a neighborhood oriented community center offering a wide range of year-round indoor recreational and educational opportunities. A community center might incorporate game rooms, computer labs, a gymnasium, fitness rooms, arts and craft workshops, playrooms, dining room, and a child care facility. While this type of center would cater to all age groups, its major focus should be area youth.

A community center should provide a sense of place to city residents - especially youth - and be neighborhood oriented, easily accessible by bike or walking, and capable of operating year round. While a specific location is not been identified by this plan, it is recommended the center be located in





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an area of low to moderate income residents, with a relatively high youth population. If possible, a location somewhat central to the city (city neighborhoods) would be most appropriate.

Community facilities are extremely important to the well-being of the city and its residents. Parks, playgrounds, libraries, museums, schools, and places of worship contribute to city residents quality. For many residents, city facilities provide the primary (or only) means of recreational or other life enrichment opportunities.