

# Updating the City of Muskegon's Lakefront and Downtown Plans

## Table of Contents

### Preface

<b>I.</b>	<b>Overview .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Community Vision .....</b>	<b>3</b>
	City Commission Vision	
	Downtown Neighborhood Vision	
	Lakeshore Neighborhood Vision	
	Shared Vision for Neighborhood Health	
<b>III.</b>	<b>Issues, Opportunities, and Strategies</b>	
	<b>Land Use.....</b>	<b>5</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	
	<b>Housing.....</b>	<b>8</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	
	<b>Community &amp; Economic Development.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	
	<b>Design &amp; Amenities.....</b>	<b>14</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	
	<b>Preservation.....</b>	<b>16</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	
	<b>Transportation.....</b>	<b>17</b>
	Issues	
	Opportunities	
	Strategies	

# Preface

## **History**

In 1997 the city adopted an updated Master Land Use Plan. The previous plan was 1970's vintage and was in dire need of an update. A Master Plan is a land use policy document. By law, city land use and development decisions must be consistent with the Master Plan. The 1997 planning process took nearly two years to complete and involved a good deal of public input. Soon after the overall Master Plan was developed, it was determined that there should be more of a focus on the waterfront and the downtown. The Downtown/Lakeshore Redevelopment Plan (1997) and the Waterfront Redevelopment Sub-Plan (1999) were written as sibling documents to the Master Plan to provide more focus for those areas.

## **Plan Updates**

Any viable, defensible plan needs periodic updates. Most professionals recommend that plans be reviewed at least every five years. Because Muskegon has many prospects and challenges in its redevelopment, the need for timely and thorough updates is probably even more critical. In addition to updating the plans, there has also been concern expressed that our plan(s) still do not provide enough detail to guide major development, especially on the waterfront and the Lakeshore Drive corridor, west of the Sappi Plant.

The basic information in our existing plans is still a good working foundation. Proposed changes to the plans will be processed as amendments to the original plans. The language of the old document will be edited to both clarify community intent and provide more direction to decision-makers and developers. The attached summary of public input will be drawn upon to amend the plans.

## **Process**

In the fall of 2001 the "Turn-Back" Committee, an ad hoc committee of the Muskegon Heritage Association, and several Neighborhood Associations sponsored a series of community meetings in conjunction with the Planning Commission and City Planning Department. The purpose of the meetings was to gather information from the public to update the Downtown Lakeshore and Waterfront Redevelopment Plans. The "downtown" was loosely identified as those areas with more intense and diverse development--from the Causeway to Cole's Bakery with a southern boundary of Monroe and Walton Avenues. The "lakeshore area" was loosely defined west of Cole's Bakery with Harrison, Palmer and Grand Avenues being the southern boundary. The area west of Cole's was viewed as primarily residential and recreational.

All large property owners, business interests, and about one-third of all households in the study areas were invited to participate in these "brainstorming" sessions (472 contacts). Public notices were also published. Ninety-five individuals participated in the sessions, the focus of which was to first to identify concerns about development, then to document strategies to address those concerns.

## Public Comment Summary

### I. Overview

A Master Land Use Plan typically focuses on land use and community design. While listening to meeting participants, it became clear that perhaps community efforts should span beyond pure land use planning and address neighborhood and community development issues. Social issues like blight, crime, and racism are real problems that need to be addressed. Considering land use and design apart from these realities will not properly foster healthy neighborhoods.

### II. Community Vision

#### A. Leadership Vision (taken from the City of Muskegon's Mission statement)

In general, the vision for the city as outlined by the City Commission is to maintain the city as a "Premier Shoreline City." When the City staff and Commission were asked what makes a premier city, the vision was further defined by outlining the following:

- Community diversity. Diversity meaning, "different" or "variety". In the context of building a desirable city, diversity relates to not only a healthy mix of racial, ethnic groups and socio-economic levels, but also to a variety of choices in housing, employment, shopping, transportation, educational, recreational and cultural opportunities.
- Leadership. Leadership comes in many forms and strong communities draw on leadership from the public sector, businesses, churches, human service groups, and neighborhoods. Building a sense of community pride and leadership in youth is also an important part of the vision.
- Sustain existing resources: Existing community resources include everything from natural, cultural, historical and recreational amenities to economic, educational and human resources.
- Collaboration: Successful communities maintain a high quality of life through teamwork and collaboration. Representatives of business groups, human service interests, cultural entities, educational institutions and various levels of governments must work together to build and keep healthy communities.
- Enhancement of residential neighborhoods, infrastructure and community facilities. This includes everything from aggressive capital improvement plans, to consistent code enforcement, to diverse leisure service programming. The city needs to be viewed as a collection of neighborhoods and business centers with various needs and characters, all under the umbrella of one unit of government.

#### B. Downtown Neighborhood Vision

Residents of the downtown were asked what they wanted to see in their neighborhoods and the downtown. The following is a summary of recurring themes among the participants.

In 2015, the downtown and connecting neighborhoods are diverse, vibrant and exciting places to be. Muskegon has become a focal point for the region offering events, services, shops and dining not found elsewhere in the county. Homeowners eagerly seek downtown neighborhoods to be close to downtown services and activities. Homes and business properties are preserved and well kept. Residents represent

various age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural and racial heritages. This variety is also reflected in thriving establishments of the downtown. Locally owned and operated shops and dining establishments offer a wide range of ethnic and specialty products that draw customers from throughout the county. Local establishments hire and train local residents, which help strengthen community bonds. People are attracted to the downtown for its unique blend of entertainment, dining and specialty stores. Large converted historical structures house businesses and residents and add to the character of the area. These mixed-use establishments contribute to a high level of downtown activity.

City streets are clean, safe and attractive places to be. People like to linger and mingle downtown. Pedestrians stroll along the waterfront and through the downtown to admire the beauty and ambiance of lakefront views and the Heritage District. New developments fit in well with historic buildings. Business and residential areas are laced with beautiful plantings and outdoor amenities like seating, bike racks, fountains, kiosks, interpretive plaques, and sculpture. Bikers, joggers and walkers have attractive paths to enjoy and carriages and trolleys safely share the road with cars. While cars are accommodated downtown, they do not dominate the environment. Institutions like schools and churches continue to be strong and dynamic parts of the community.

Landmark homes, as well as quaint bungalows, are admired for their charm. There is a good mix of housing opportunities, including high quality, affordable apartments, condominiums, cottage-like homes for smaller households, and stately homes for larger families.

### C. Lakeshore Neighborhood Vision

Residents outside of the downtown and adjacent to the lakeshore were asked what they wanted to see in their neighborhoods, on the waterfront, and in neighborhood business areas. The following is a summary of recurring themes among the participants.

In 2015, the lakefront and connecting neighborhoods maintain the charm and small-town coziness that has been a part of neighborhood living for decades. Beach, marina and boating centers remain a strong part of coastal character. New developments are tucked among older developments and do not impose upon neighborhoods or the shoreline. Older homes are well-kept and primarily owner-occupied. Residents represent various age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, cultural and racial heritages.

Locally owned and operated shops and dining establishments thrive and serve both the year-round and seasonal populations. The quaint village character of the Lakeside business district is maintained and enhanced. Local establishments hire and train local residents, which help strengthen community bonds.

Everyone enjoys the ambiance of free, beautiful public beaches, water, and sunsets. The area is a regional focal point for recreational activity. Tomorrow's children will enjoy the same activities and pleasant waterside scenes, as did their great-grandparents.

City streets are clean, safe and attractive places to be. People like to linger and mingle in the area. Pedestrians stroll through beautiful neighborhoods and along the waterfront on a well-established trail system to admire the splendor of lakefront views. Business and residential areas are laced with beautiful plantings and outdoor amenities like seating, bike racks, and interpretive plaques.

The single-family nature of existing neighborhoods remains strong and desirable. Some new housing choices are provided in the area to offer a variety of housing opportunities for various household and life-stage needs, including small pockets of quality, affordable apartments, limited low-density condominiums, and townhouses. Mixed-use housing and small-scale commercial developments are

integrated in diverse and well-designed clusters. New single-family developments follow traditional city patterns and function as interactive neighborhoods.

Alternative modes of transportation are encouraged and expanded. Sidewalks, non-motorized trail connections and other amenities are well developed which reduce dependency on the automobile.

#### D. The Shared Vision

City leadership, and all residents of Muskegon share a common desire to have healthy neighborhoods. A common theme heard by staff clearly ties to the function of a "traditional" neighborhood: *"watchwords for neighbors are mutual support and respect. People look out for one another and neighbors often become surrogate parents and mentors for the youth of the neighborhood. Through cultural interaction, established neighborhood standards, and formal recreational and school functions, children learn self-respect, community pride and the sense of responsibility they need to become happy and productive adults. They want to return to the neighborhoods in which they grew up. In general, residents are very proud of their community."*

### **III. Issues, Opportunities and Strategies**

The following section, in table format, is a compilation of a significant amount of community input. The comments of initial brainstorming sessions were recorded and reported back to the participants for refinement (e.g., corrections, additions). Participants then identified general categories that their comments could be grouped into to better organize the collective thoughts of the group. Once a subcommittee of participants edited the comments, this distillation was presented to all original participants for ratification. The primary purpose of this summary of issues, opportunities and strategies is to provide a clear frame of reference of community desires. Neighborhood groups, City Commissioners, appointed boards and commissions, and city staff can use this as a focal point for our collective efforts to build and maintain healthy neighborhoods in this premiere waterfront city.

### **Land Use, Downtown Issues**

1. Participants were concerned that long-established single-family districts are being encroached upon or transitioned into commercial or multi-family uses.
2. Housing stock continues to be reduced in the central city.
3. There was concern that public access to the waterfront not be lost in development and redevelopment projects.
4. Because the City of Muskegon is a working city with strong residential areas, there are concerns that tourist-oriented businesses might get out of balance with non-tourist residents and businesses.
5. When asked what kinds of uses they thought were inappropriate downtown participants indicated:
  - Heavy Industry
  - Trucking
  - Pawn shops
  - Rent to own
  - Tattoo Parlor
  - Junk yards
  - Aggregate on Lakeshore
  - Chain restaurants
  - Single family conversions to multi-family
  - Casino
  - Over-sized parking lots
  - Check cash shops
  - Adult entertainment
  - Tire store
  - Commercial Storage
  - Strips of storage bldgs.

### **Land Use, Lakeshore Issues**

1. There was concern that the single-family/cottage nature of residential waterfront areas would be significantly altered or overwhelmed by a concentration of poorly placed, high-density, high-rise development outside the downtown. Downtown areas are more appropriate for higher density development. Appropriate densities for residential uses need to be determined for the entire Lakeshore area.
2. Various forms of residential development need to be encouraged in appropriate areas of the Lakeshore. The scale and nature of new development, especially residential, need to blend with the scale of the majority of existing contiguous development. Each new waterfront development should be carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
3. Long-established, stable single-family neighborhoods should not be encroached upon or transitioned into commercial or multi-family uses.
4. There was a fear that Pere Marquette and other contiguous areas (Channel Park, Lighthouse Park, and Beechwood Park) may be infiltrated by year-round, permanent commercial ventures. The land is dedicated Charter Park and should remain so. Existing seasonal businesses have not realized the profit margin they hoped for and additional permanent structures should be prohibited, especially if an established business area (Lakeside) struggles to maintain support.
5. The use (or misuse) of Planned Unit developments and other "flexible" zoning techniques within the Lakeshore area that fundamentally change the character of a single family neighborhood require careful scrutiny by staff and the public.
6. If Lakeshore industrial uses phase out, there should be a thoughtful reuse plan for the property that considers the context of the area.
7. The Muskegon Lake and adjacent aquatic habitat promotes an important fishery. Land use decisions that strip vegetation from the shores negatively impacts the fishery and should be prevented.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Land Use, Downtown <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To redevelop vacant sites.</li> <li>2. To rehabilitate old industrial structures for housing and mixed uses.</li> <li>3. To develop the downtown into a specialty shop, restaurant and entertainment center.</li> <li>4. To integrate good public access to the waterfront in cohesive design.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Land Use, Lakeshore <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access and proximity to the waterfront and resources of Muskegon Lake and Lake Michigan.</li> <li>2. To develop new single-family and low density residential development.</li> <li>3. To consolidate aggregate operations on the east end of Muskegon Lake.</li> <li>4. To improve alternative and non-motorized transportation.</li> <li>5. To negotiate waterfront access as part of new development.</li> <li>6. Development potential of the McCracken peninsula.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Land Use, Downtown <u>Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Except for the designated Port Zone, relocate waterfront industry out of the study area.</li> <li>2. Institute flexible zoning districts that promote mixed use of residential, commercial and office uses. Promote mixed-use developments that have first-floor service or retail uses with office and/or residential uses on upper floors.</li> <li>3. Place townhouses, condominiums and other high-density, middle to high income housing near the downtown waterfront where the scale of such development fits with the downtown skyline rather than scattering it along the coastline outside of the downtown. Promote some higher density housing along Western to promote a 24-hour presence of human activity.</li> <li>4. Prevent the transition of single-family homes to multiple units by downzoning areas of the city, especially in the downtown.</li> <li>5. Consolidate commercial uses along Western Avenue, Pine Avenue, and Third Street.</li> <li>6. Limit the density of office uses on Western Avenue to promote a 24-hour downtown.</li> <li>7. Move activities into the downtown that will benefit downtown neighborhoods (e.g., the farmer’s market).</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Land Use, Lakeshore <u>Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amend the Planned Unit Development standards of the ordinance to provide more guidelines for appropriate application.</li> <li>2. Downzone the paper mill to at least an I-1 designation only if there is an indication that the mill being phased out. This would prevent heavy industry from occupying the waterfront. Since the property is large enough to be its own enclave, staff should work with the property owners to discuss a mixed use development for the site that could include light and clean industrial, commercial and/or residential development. Natural shoreline in that area should be preserved and/or restored.</li> <li>3. Any recreational development on the Amoco Property should promote a natural buffer strip.</li> <li>4. Assess zoning of the Lakeshore corridor and consider downzoning business areas and rezoning some business to multi-family designations where appropriate.</li> <li>5. Assess existing waterfront districts for an appropriate mix of land uses.</li> <li>6. Existing marina establishments should be maintained. Dockage and slips on Muskegon Lake are a premium and should not be transitioned into other uses, especially those that are not water-compatible. Preserve existing publicly accessible slips on Muskegon Lake.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>7. Clarify zoning district regulations to differentiate uses and protect waterfront, Lakeshore and neighborhood character.</li><li>8. Businesses located on or adjacent to the waterfront should be water-dependent. Legitimate water-dependent uses include marinas, commercial fisheries, docks, restaurants or other facilities that require waterfront ambience.</li><li>9. Relocate aggregate operations in Lakeside to the east end of Muskegon Lake where water dependent industrial uses are consolidating.</li><li>10. Increase access to the water through better use of existing access and acquiring additional access where feasible.</li><li>11. Explore seasonal uses for Pere Marquette under a multi-use pavilion that could also be used for recreational functions (e.g., dances)</li></ol>
--	--

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Downtown Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High-speed commercial traffic is not compatible with the nature of downtown neighborhoods (i.e., small yards setbacks, higher density design).</li> <li>2. Many neighborhoods are cramped for parking because the city was laid out well before society become dependent on automobiles. Many homes lack driveways and alley access is limited. Congestion is aggravated by home conversions to apartments.</li> <li>3. The concentration, quality and proliferation of rental housing. There is also a concern over not having a healthy mix of housing.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Lakeshore Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A large portion of the housing stock is well over 50 years old and may need updates and/or significant maintenance. Older citizens or first time home-owners may not have the resources to make such home improvements.</li> <li>2. The quaint single-family nature of the neighborhoods could be jeopardized by intensive, high-scale residential development.</li> <li>3. There are limited senior housing opportunities in the neighborhood. When a senior wishes to move from their single-family home they have to leave the area.</li> <li>4. Evidence of blight is showing more in the single-family neighborhoods.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Downtown Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The downtown has affordable housing choices.</li> <li>2. Downtown housing is within walking distance of cultural and business activities.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Lakeshore Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The waterfront and lake is a significant amenity which keeps the desirability, and therefore property values of the area strong.</li> <li>2. The area has an inherent high standard of property maintenance.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Downtown Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure in-fill homes are of high quality and are consistent with the character of the downtown.</li> <li>2. Build infill homes or move homes on vacant city lots.</li> <li>3. Investigate “point-of-sale” inspections with special attention to land contract sales. This program may be as simple as requiring proof of a home inspection by a certified professional for major items like foundations, furnaces, opening windows and roofs.</li> <li>4. Strengthen housing code enforcement to prevent deterioration of homes. Hold owner-occupied homes to rental standards.</li> <li>5. Increase the frequency of rental inspections from once every four years to at least once every two years.</li> <li>6. Investigate the use of shared garage space or parking areas in those areas with limited on-site parking (e.g., the notion of “mews” of British design).</li> <li>7. Investigate the adaptive reuse of large homes not viable for single family development on a limited basis for offices, cottage industry and studios.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Housing, Lakeshore Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amend the Planned Unit Development standards of the ordinance to provide more guidelines for appropriate application of high-density housing.</li> <li>2. Assess zoning of the Lakeshore Drive corridor and consider downzoning business areas and rezoning some business to multi-family designations where appropriate.</li> <li>3. Assess existing waterfront districts for an appropriate mix of land uses</li> <li>4. Additional multi-family development near Lakeshore areas outside the downtown should be low-level, low to moderate-density, and appropriately placed near the water, but not adjacent to it.</li> </ol>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community &amp; Economic Development, Downtown <u>Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As with many other urban centers, the City of Muskegon has experienced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A significant out-migration of residents to the suburbs.</li> <li>- Retail abandonment as fringe and highway interchange malls replaced or displaced downtown business areas;</li> <li>- Economic displacement as industry automation, migration and consolidation required fewer workers;</li> <li>- Maintenance challenges of aging water, sewer, street and public utilities systems.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Despite a certain level of disinvestment in the City since the 1950s, service demands have increased. The growing need for reinvestment can outstrip resources.</li> <li>3. There is a lack of business density and geographic definition to the central business district. There are too many vacant buildings and lots. There is a need for more unique shops and services to serve residents and tourists, particularly near the waterfront.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community &amp; Economic Development, Lakeshore <u>Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business areas should be confined to the existing concentrations between Estes Ave. and McCracken. High-impact businesses should locate outside of the neighborhood business district in B-4, General Business zones.</li> <li>2. Measures need to be taken to fill economic gaps when waterfront industry relocates or gets phased out.</li> <li>3. Lakeside business and tourist activities are relatively isolated from the Downtown.</li> <li>4. Blight and empty storefronts in the Lakeside Business District.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community &amp; Economic Development, Downtown <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The City can capitalize on the fact that it is situated on the largest inland lake in West Michigan, with a deep-water port, that has access to Lake Michigan.</li> <li>2. There are large areas of waterfront land available for redevelopment.</li> <li>3. The history of Muskegon shows the community and its waterfront has evolved significantly since its incorporation some 133 years ago (1869). Nearly seven generations later, it is still a unique community with regionally significant assets. This includes an historical character and downtown that cannot be duplicated by suburban counterparts.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Community &amp; Economic Development, Lakeshore <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The City of Muskegon can capitalize on the fact that it is the largest city on Michigan's west coast. Its character includes a unique blend of waterfront resort and urban entertainment.</li> <li>2. There are several talented artists in the focus area and throughout the City whose talents could draw activity to the City.</li> <li>3. The City has a great deal of existing infrastructure including public water, sewer, stormwater and a parks system. Full-time public safety and public works personnel are equipped to assist with regional level events (festivals, etc.).</li> </ol>

**Community & Economic Development, Downtown Opportunities**

4. The City’s natural and cultural assets have regional significance. The city is home to:
- Cultural assets like the Frauenthal Center, County Museum and associated facilities (Hackley/Hume homes, fire barn).
  - Muskegon Museum of Art
  - National Historic sites like the Hackley Library and Hackley Administration building;
  - Walker Arena and Muskegon Fury hockey team;
  - Hackley Hospital and Mercy General Health Partners;
  - Community Foundation for Muskegon County;
  - Heritage Landing and the historic [Union Depot](#)
  
  - Grand Valley State University's Water Research Institute, Baker College and Muskegon Community College;
  - Regional offices for national human service groups like United Way, Red Cross, YMCA, and Goodwill;
  - Hackley Park, the farmer's market, boat launches and public marinas;
  - A host of special events like Summer Celebration, Cherry County Playhouse, Shoreline Spectacular, and AVP Volleyball.
  - Commercial tourism like the Silversides, the Port City Princess, and the Milwaukee Clipper.

### **Community & Economic Development, Downtown Strategies**

1. The downtown should be developed and marketed to set it apart from the suburban offerings of strip malls and department stores. Focus on the development of specialty or niche businesses.
2. Build on the existing downtown cultural center. Arts, entertainment and regular events like "Parties in the Park" provide a focus for the downtown. Special events like Summer Celebration bring an excitement to the downtown.
3. Promote convention business development in the downtown.
4. Work with neighborhood and business groups to develop consistent design themes for the downtown. The effort should include recommendations for:
  - The location of street furniture, kiosks, formal bus stops, shelters and picnic tables.
  - Fixtures that are consistent and fit the historic nature of the downtown including street signs, streetlights, fencing, etc.
5. Concentrate regional-draw businesses around the arts and entertainment centers on Western Avenue.
6. Promote neighborhood service businesses in the Third Street and Pine Street Corridors.
7. Consider increased police presence as the downtown blossoms. Foot, bike, golf-cart shuttles and horse patrol should be considered.
8. Define the types of uses that will receive any additional Renaissance Zone designations and tie their designation to property-owner performance guarantees.
9. Provide better/more public access to Muskegon Lake, including tie-ups for small power and non-motorized boats, especially near downtown.
10. Provide more of a draw for boaters docking near the downtown (small shops, convenience stores, etc.).
11. Investigate the merits of water-taxi or water shuttle services to destinations along the City's shoreline.

### **Community & Economic Development, Lakeshore Strategies**

1. Target the Lakeside business district for business development assistance. Link technical assistance resources with the business owners association to assist them with development and design issues.
2. Promote connections between the Lakeside area and the Downtown area on entertainment and waterfront activities that might be centered in either district (e.g., shuttles, boat transportation, programming).
3. Investigate the potential of drawing boaters more into business areas. Perhaps more transient docks are warranted.
5. Develop a better design for seasonal cart and kiosk businesses at Pere Marquette.
6. Promote development that can accommodate local artists and promote unique products and crafts of the area.
7. Promote an antique mall for Lakeside Business District.
8. Consider developing a water shuttle to the North side of the channel.
9. Promote winter recreation and tourist attractions by co-marketing with the county and other municipalities.
10. Engage in holistic marketing to promote all features, attractions and amenities to make the City a destination.
11. Consider the use of business incentives and tax capturing techniques to upgrade the Lakeside business district.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Downtown <u>Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of neighborhood continuity. The presence of the wide, one-way, and relatively high-speed corridors of Muskegon and Webster aggravate the situation. Downtown neighborhoods need to be reintegrated with the central business district with the redesign of the Muskegon and Webster corridors.</li> <li>2. Concerns with the waterfront being built-up to the point where Muskegon Lake cannot be seen. Residents were concerned with public access to Muskegon Lake and thought structures should be placed as a backdrop and not impose upon or block the waterfront.</li> <li>3. Poorly lit areas and streetlights which are maintained or out of scale/context with the nature of the neighborhood.</li> <li>4. Providing more low-cost recreation and entertainment for downtown residents (seniors and youth in particular). Regional parks and other general recreational offerings are outside of the downtown and not easily accessible by downtown residents.</li> <li>5. Poorly maintained city property (most notably, vacant lots).</li> <li>6. Failure to replace or maintain elements of downtown design (e.g., banners, Christmas decorations, and street landscaping).</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Lakeshore <u>Issues</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduction of the public’s visual and physical access to the water from development design that is not well thought-out.</li> <li>2. Dock and marine service facilities in poor repair detract visually from the shoreline. Scrapped or obsolete equipment litters the coast.</li> <li>3. Unmaintained seawalls, broken concrete and unmaintained docks which detract from the visual beauty of the coastline create a poor image for the City.</li> <li>4. There was concern that development of new boat slips not encroach upon the navigable waters of Muskegon Lake.</li> <li>5. In some areas along the business district and bike trail lighting is poorly maintained, glaring or non-existent.</li> <li>6. Lack of organized beautification/design efforts for the Lakeside Business District.</li> <li>7. Permanent dock with appropriate parking and access for the Milwaukee Clipper.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Downtown <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are many redevelopment opportunities downtown that can incorporate outstanding design features as part of the redevelopment.</li> <li>2. There are several unique and impressive facilities and structures that provide an existing urban fabric on which to build.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Lakeshore <u>Opportunities</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The backdrops of Lake Michigan and Muskegon Lake can be accentuated with good design.</li> <li>2. The waterfront offers a theme that can unite elements of the community.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Downtown <u>Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Incorporate design standards in zoning regulations that address building facades, pedestrian access, street furniture and non-motorized vehicle access.</li> <li>2. Make design ties north/south from downtown neighborhoods to the Muskegon Lake shoreline.</li> <li>3. Eliminate the artificial hills on the waterfront.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Design and Amenities, Lakeshore <u>Strategies</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Start a streetscape beautification plan with the Lakeside businesses to include façade improvement and street amenities (e.g., kiosks, street furniture, etc.).</li> <li>2. Consider the adoption of a Harbor Ordinance, which could regulate the condition of docks, seawalls and other shoreline infrastructure.</li> </ol>

### **Preservation, Downtown Issues**

1. The need to revitalize the historic, quiet nature and high quality of downtown neighborhoods by paying particular attention to:
  - Neighborhood design (e.g., streetlights, architecture, and general beautification).
  - Code enforcement on poorly maintained properties before they deteriorate and get demolished.
  - Protecting and rehabilitating historic structures rather than demolishing them.
  - Infrastructure upgrades.
  - Pedestrian-friendly and public transit-responsive services.
  - Chronic public safety and image concerns like street corner drug deals, solicitation and gang activity.
  - Empty storefronts.
  - Undesirable or poorly suited land uses downtown (e.g., warehousing and businesses with high outdoor storage requirements).
  - Needed recruiting for service businesses (e.g., grocery).
2. The deterioration and lack of use or misuse of unique structures, e.g., the Century Club, and "grand old houses" having been cut-up for multi-family units which further crowd neighborhoods. The condition of structures on the Pine and Third Street corridors is of particular concern.

### **Preservation, Lakeshore Issues**

1. Muskegon Lake is a prime fishery that has been diminished by development. Currently, the percentage mix of relatively undisturbed aquatic and shoreline habitat is on the lower end of what is considered healthy for a good fishery.
2. Dredge and fill around Muskegon Lake can re-suspend contaminants and destroy aquatic life.
3. The amount and quality of public access to Muskegon Lake and Lake Michigan is of concern. Public facilities need to be maintained and protected. Additional access opportunities need to be developed whenever feasible through enhancing existing access or acquiring new access as available.
4. Waterfront habitat in the City should be preserved where practical.
5. Although the environmental quality of the area is greatly improved from the 1950's. There are lingering issues with sediment contamination, stormwater runoff and damage to remaining habitat.
6. Muskegon Lake becomes a sink of contaminants as streams, groundwater and stormwater carry pollutants to the receiving body (i.e., contaminants in Ruddiman Creek).
7. The "ovals" vegetation at Pere Marquette Park should be protected to prevent blowing sand to residential areas.

### **Preservation, Downtown Opportunities**

1. Historic tax credits for structures in historic districts are an excellent means to promote rehabilitation.
2. There are many unique local businesses we could promote. Some of the suggested businesses include:

Antique shop	Aquarium	Artists lofts/shops
Bakery	Professional sports	Bike Rental Places
Bingo Hall	Brew Pub	Casino
Coffee house	Convention/Vocational center	
Cross Lake Ferry	Dance Club	Deli
Dive shop	Drug Store	Dry Cleaner
Ethnic and local restaurants		Financial institutions
Food Courts	Florist	Fresh fish shop
Gas Station (fringe)	Gift Shops	Gift Shops/Boutiques
Grocery Store	Gym	Ice Cream parlor
I-Max Theatre	Indoor Carnival	
Indoor farmer's market & flea		
Motel	Movie Theater	Office Bldgs
Photographers	Pool hall (classy)	Reception facility
Sidewalk Café	Spa	Specialty Clothing
Specialty shops	Sports Bar	Subway
Tailor	Water taxi	Marine recreational industries

3. Participants were asked about key sites for development and redevelopment

Anaconda (Westran) site	Apple & Pine (Dobben)
Area at Terrace/Western	Boiler Works
Carpenter Bros. Property	Century Club
City Parking Ramp	Clay & 9 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup>
Clay & Eastern	Clay & Spring
Ginman Tire Area	Mart Dock
Leighton Park	Lower Western to Ninth
Medical Arts Center	Michcon site
Muskegon Mall	North end, Witt Buick
Old Bishop/Heethuis Bldg & vacant lot	Old small train station
Ottawa Ave.	Parking lot east of the Hume
Richards Park	Seaway and Eastern (off towers)
Shaw Walker Building	SPX Building
St. Joe's property, Monroe St.	Stable property on Clay
Street development of West end of Henry to Downtown	
Teledyne Medical Arts Center	Pine St. – Apple to Western
Empty Lots on Muskegon & Webster	Excess lands from Shoreline Drive
Farmers Market to Ninth & Western	Fisherman's Landing

### **Preservation, Lakeshore Opportunities**

1. West Michigan is one of the *few places in the entire world* with freshwater dune systems. Muskegon is a city tucked into the dunes and against Lake Michigan. Quality of life in the City is very high, in part because of its geographic location.
2. The city's entire Lake Michigan shoreline, over two miles worth, is held in public ownership. Everyone can enjoy the ambiance of beautiful beaches, water and sunsets for free.
3. Muskegon Lake is a 4,100-acre water body with many commercial and recreational opportunities. Further, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service classifies the Muskegon Lake, Muskegon River, and associated wetlands as a significant national wetland system. This resource niche gives Muskegon economic and community development options many other cities simply do not have.

Foundry property at end of Western Further devel.of Heritage Landing.  
Seaway and Eastern (off towers)  
Shaw Walker Building St. Joe's property, Monroe St.  
Third St. Corridor  
Street development of West end of Henry to Downtown  
Pine St. – Apple to Western

4. Take advantage of existing ambiance, historic structures, horse and carriage service, etc.
5. Young people are coming back downtown, buying homes and fixing them up.
6. Beauty and presence of historic buildings like the redevelopment of the Amazon.
7. Private initiatives that enhance the downtown (e.g., Monet Garden).

### **Preservation, Downtown Strategies**

1. Continue to relocate saved historic homes in the infill areas downtown.
2. Reevaluate historic district boundaries and educate owners about their rights and responsibilities.
3. Use historic tax credits to promote rehabilitation.
4. Be more assertive about reutilizing key Western Street structures like the Heethuis/Bishop building.
5. Promote the designation of single-property historic districts.
6. Establish programs and regulations that better protect historic resources.
7. Clarify and strengthen codes to better address blight issues. Work more diligently to clean problem properties, including trash in yards, dilapidated homes and junk cars.
8. Focus rehabilitation efforts on older homes in the downtown. Provide incentives to stimulate additional reinvestment in homes.
9. Develop an aggressive tree replacement and enhancement program for the downtown, especially along the Muskegon and Webster Avenue corridors.
10. Tie the neighborhood, cultural amenities and waterfront together with marked walkways, kiosks, landscaping, signs, and interpretive plaques.
11. Identify significant view lines and enhance or preserve them.
12. Continue promoting the influx of new residents downtown.

### **Preservation, Lakeshore Strategies**

1. Enhance and preserve water quality through the use of natural vegetative buffers along the shoreline. Also limit direct discharge of stormwater.
2. Continue with cross-community and intergovernmental cooperation to address concerns with Ryerson and Ruddiman Creeks.
3. Work with state fisheries officials and the County Conservation Office to augment and protect fish habitat in Muskegon Lake.
4. Encourage the use of Michigan Department of Natural Resources hearing process to discuss concerns with dredging, filling, coastal armoring and encroachments on navigable waters.
5. Large-scale or mixed use developments should be guided with incentives and design standards that protect and enhance natural amenities including aquatic and shoreline habitat so the Muskegon Lake fishery is not diminished.
6. Work with the Water Research Institute to monitor and improve water quality.
7. Stay educated on environmental studies and clean-up needs. Work with other organizations and the state to facilitate clean-up of such sites.
8. Limit armoring of the coastline to existing established facilities. Encourage use of alternative or “soft shoreline” stabilization methods. Additional transition of any natural shoreline should be carefully evaluated.
9. Become familiar with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources fisheries standards and manage waterfront resources.
10. Promote the use of native landscaping species to prevent invasive species from intruding on the ecosystem.
11. Increase the level of access to the Muskegon Lake waterfront by better utilizing the land already held in public ownership.
12. Consider an additional historic district for segments of Lakeshore Drive.

**Transportation, Downtown Issues**

1. Safety, noise, speed, vibrations and isolation problems associated with a major trunkline cutting through the downtown neighborhood (Muskegon and Webster). Truck traffic, privacy, small front yards, and lack of trees along the corridors are also of concern.
2. The changes to Muskegon and Webster Avenues after the completion of Shoreline Drive. The general consensus was to step down the function of the street and turn them back into two-way, local service streets.
3. The ability of Shoreline Drive and the downtown to accommodate an increasing number of special events and increasing attendance at special events. Residents are particularly concerned about:
  - Adequate public safety resources (fire, ambulance and police) and their ability to respond in a crowded environment.
  - Congestion and poor vehicular and pedestrian circulation;
  - The invasive nature of some of the events on the neighborhood (e.g., trespass, noise, illegal parking).
  - Adequate, well-placed and well designed parking areas.
  - Adequacy of the route/design for truck traffic.
4. Shoreline Drive’s design creates a barrier between the central business district, its neighborhoods, and the waterfront.
5. There are conflict points between pedestrians and cars along north/south streets as people try to access the waterfront, especially on 9<sup>th</sup> street.

**Transportation, Downtown Opportunities**

1. Downtown neighborhoods can be strengthened by new developments when Shoreline Drive is complete. There is an opportunity to integrate the downtown with the shoreline and the neighborhoods with commercial activity during this process.

**Transportation, Lakeshore Issues**

1. Lakeshore Drive is the primary access to a growing peninsula. With truck traffic and additional residential development there needs to be care not to overly congest the area. East of Lincoln Avenue the issue is compounded by the fact that the road narrows and there is limited or no shoulder.
2. The amount, location and design of parking areas in the Lakeside Business area has been an issue in the past. Thoughtful design needs to be employed in new development and redevelopment to improve this situation.
3. Beach Street is very congested at Lakeshore Drive. A bottleneck is created at peak use times.
4. Truck traffic often totally blocks Lakeshore Drive. As development increases this hazard will become more of a problem.
5. Heavy truck traffic down Lakeshore disrupts the neighborhoods, and the ambiance of the area.
6. From Laketon Avenue to Country Club Drive, the sidewalk is inadequate for a bike and pedestrian use.

**Transportation, Lakeshore Opportunities**

1. Development of the bike trail west of Laketon Avenue.
2. The presence of water offers the opportunity for various modes of water transportation.

### **Transportation, Downtown Strategies**

1. Assemble a design team (e.g. engineer, urban designer, transportation planner) to work with neighborhood representatives, city staff, commercial interests and Michigan Department of Transportation to retool the Muskegon and Webster corridors and revitalize urban neighborhoods. Consider:
  - Start the process with a design group that actively involves the residents and business representatives. This process should serve as the foundation for design efforts.
  - Two lanes of traffic, two-way with two lanes of parking in select areas.
  - Restrict access to Muskegon Avenue where it meets Shoreline Drive.
  - "Bump-out" terraces in various areas to improve neighborhood design and calm traffic.
  - Narrow the streets.
  - De-sync traffic lights, remove some signals and provide 4-way stops in residential stretches of the corridor.
  - Create a small scale internal loop to cross-link neighborhoods with commercial districts and the shoreline.
  - Expand terraces in select spots and plant street trees in bump-out areas.
  - Provide boulevard islands along parts of the stretch.
  - Limit truck traffic on the corridors. Create truck routes and weight limits throughout the city.
  - Provide a traffic calming transition between the residential and business areas of both the Muskegon and Webster corridors, such as, curbing bump-outs or pavement narrowing in the residential area that may not be applied in the commercial area.
2. Perform a comprehensive downtown traffic study that evaluates traffic patterns, (especially all one-ways downtown) in light of Shoreline Drive being completed.
3. Evaluate problem intersections like the Pine and Clay intersection and the

### **Transportation, Lakeshore Strategies**

1. The design of parking areas along Lakeshore should promote shared parking and design connections for foot traffic among facilities.
2. Do not locate parking lots adjacent to the water. Design parking so it does not isolate people from the water or block waterfront views.
3. Investigate the use of other modes of transportation to limit congestion during summer events at Pere Marquette Park.
4. Consider a turn-lane where Edgewater Street connects with Lakeshore Drive.
5. Help facilitate common or shared parking agreements among Lakeside merchants.
6. Review on-street parking policies and spaces. Consider working with the paper mill to redesign staging areas to keep trucks from using the main thoroughfare as a maneuvering lane and docking area.
7. Encourage the reduction of truck traffic on Lakeshore Drive from gravel transport by facilitating the relocation of Lakeside gravel operations to the east of the lake.
8. Provide signs on common truck routes to prevent truckers confusion or misdirection.
9. Limit high-density residential and commercial development along Lakeshore Drive to limit concentrations of high-volume traffic since opportunities to expand the roadway are limited.
10. Provide well-designed pedestrian crossings in the Lakeside business district, particularly along marina/business district interfaces where boaters may want to cross Lakeshore to business establishments. Consider pedestrian right-of-way walks like those found in coastal communities along the east coast.
11. Use traffic calming techniques and design to slow traffic along the Lakeshore corridor, especially near business and marina areas.

<p>Spring and Webster intersection.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Investigate the needs of alternative transportation, including expanded bus service, shuttles, trolleys, boaters and bikers. Pay particular attention to crossings and overpasses over Shoreline Drive to connect the central business district and its neighborhoods to the waterfront. Look to Chicago and Duluth as models for doing this.</li> <li>5. Provide alternative transportation amenities throughout the downtown like bus-stops, cab stands, marked walking or jogging routes. Pay special attention to a connection between the downtown and the High School.</li> <li>6. The design of parking areas in the downtown should promote consolidated, shared parking and parking decks or ramps where appropriate.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Investigate realigning Lakeshore Drive by the paper mill to make room for maneuvering and loading areas off the public right-of-way.</li> <li>13. Consider an extra lane at Beach Street to separate right and left turning movements.</li> <li>14. Consider seasonal traffic control at the Beach, Lakeshore Drive intersection.</li> </ol>
---	---