

## **B. Commercial & Industrial Development**

### **Existing Conditions**

While bulk handling no longer dominates the shores of Muskegon Lake, it still exists in the likes of such companies as LaFarge, Verplank, J. Bultema, and Sappi Paper. Since their existence depends wholly or in part on a lakeside location for the loading and unloading of large quantities of raw materials, they cannot easily adapt to inland locations and therefore must maintain a presence on the lake.

The most problematic issue surrounding these industries is not necessarily what they do, but *where* they do it. Their dispersal along the shoreline often causes them to interface poorly with residential and recreational land uses. This is especially true in the Lakeside area, which along with Bluffton and the Nims neighborhood, contains some of the City's most desirable housing stock.

Lighter commercial activity is generally associated with the various public and private marinas which are interspersed among industrial, or formerly

industrial lands. The largest of these is the Great Lakes Marina in Lakeside.



Besides the downtown central business district, the largest commercial use concentrations are found at the Lakeside commercial strip (neighborhood commercial), and in the vicinity of east Western Avenue, immediately northeast of downtown and parallel to U.S. 31. The sole office building directly fronting on the lake is the SPX headquarters at Terrace Point.

### **Recommendations**

### *Port Development*

At present, bulk shipping operations are spread rather thinly along almost the entire southern shore of Muskegon Lake. This distribution is one of the principle reasons why large stretches of shoreline are currently under-utilized and off limits to the public. In addition, these uses tend to be land intensive which makes their presence on the lake very conspicuous and often unsightly.

As a means to both promote shipping activity and to encourage more compatible lakefront development, it is recommended that a long-term goal of the City should be to work toward relocating and clustering heavy industrial and commercial port operations. A preferred location would be one which is visually and environmentally least obtrusive, and where access to the City's transportation linkages to the state highway system is also available.

(See discussion of Port Facilities Node, Part II below).

With adequate public infrastructure, concentration of such activities in a primary area may eventually encourage the development of more technologically advanced cargo operations (i.e. containerization) which would increase the attractiveness of Muskegon as a cargo port.

Modernized cargo facilities would promote economies-of-scale in the existing break bulk operations found along the lake by allowing existing bulk handlers to share facilities. They may also promote more Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) designations. These facilities may be best planned and managed under the aegis of a port/ harbor authority (see appendix).

#### *Other Recommendations:*

~~□ Promote the formation of a Muskegon Port Authority/ Harbor Commission to manage commercial shipping, and ancillary development along the lake.~~

□ Work with private industry, U.S. Customs and the Department of Com-

merce to designate more Foreign Trade Zones along Muskegon Lake.

□ Provide suitable public infrastructure and access at favored port operation location.

□ Work with existing industries to help improve or mitigate their physical presence on the lake.

□ Work with Lakeside businesses to enhance the Lakeside commercial strip.

## **C. Recreation & Natural Habitat Areas**

### **Existing Conditions**

Like the scattered industrial/ bulk handling operations along the lake, public recreational land uses are distributed fairly evenly along the shoreline. While such a distribution is far more desirable than in the case of the former, they are poorly linked, and sometimes difficult to find - a situation likely to be greatly remedied by the pending construction of the Lakeshore Trail bicycle/ pedestrian path.

Many of these recreational facilities are small, residual lands, or property converted/ adapted from formerly industrial use. The most celebrated of these is Heritage Landing which serves as the City's premier festival park.

Noticeably absent are "active" recreational areas containing ballfields, swimming, playgrounds etc. One of the few remaining natural habitat areas of any size is in the vicinity of Richard's Park, where the tributaries of the Muskegon River flow into Muskegon Lake.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Integration of Recreational Facilities*

A fundamental component of a revitalized lakefront is increasing the number and sizes of recreational land uses along the lake. Equally important however, is the goal of creating more