

D. Natural Habitat/ Mixed Recreation Areas - (Muskegon River)

An added benefit of port facilities at the location suggested above, is the absence of major land use conflicts nearby. Presently both Fisherman's Landing and Richards park tenuously coexist with the scattered industrial activity surrounding them. Their awkwardness is exacerbated more by their isolation and poor access than by any conflicts posed by nearby salvage and barge operations. (In fact in many cases, clean port operations have proven to be better neighbors to recreation and wildlife areas than other uses which attract more human activity.)

To make a port project work at the proposed location (present day Fisherman's Landing) requires the relocation of the existing boat launch and camping facilities in order to take better advantage of the existing deep water berths. Such a project promises to be both costly and time consuming.

Notwithstanding potential problems associated with acquisition, a number of sites along Muskegon Lake could be

used to accommodate a relocated Fisherman's Landing. Of these, the river-mouth site just north of present day facility (owned by CMS Energy) perhaps offers the most possibilities. At this location, it would serve as a better neighbor to the presently isolated Richards Park immediately to the east (and the latter to it). The connection of the two parks would serve both the interests of

recreational boaters, campers, nature enthusiasts and wildlife itself by joining together two highly compatible land uses. This arrangement would also provide for frontage on two separate water bodies which would make it a popular location among fisherman and nature enthusiasts alike.

A particular area of concern surrounding the relocation of Fisherman's Landing, is the adequacy of boat launching

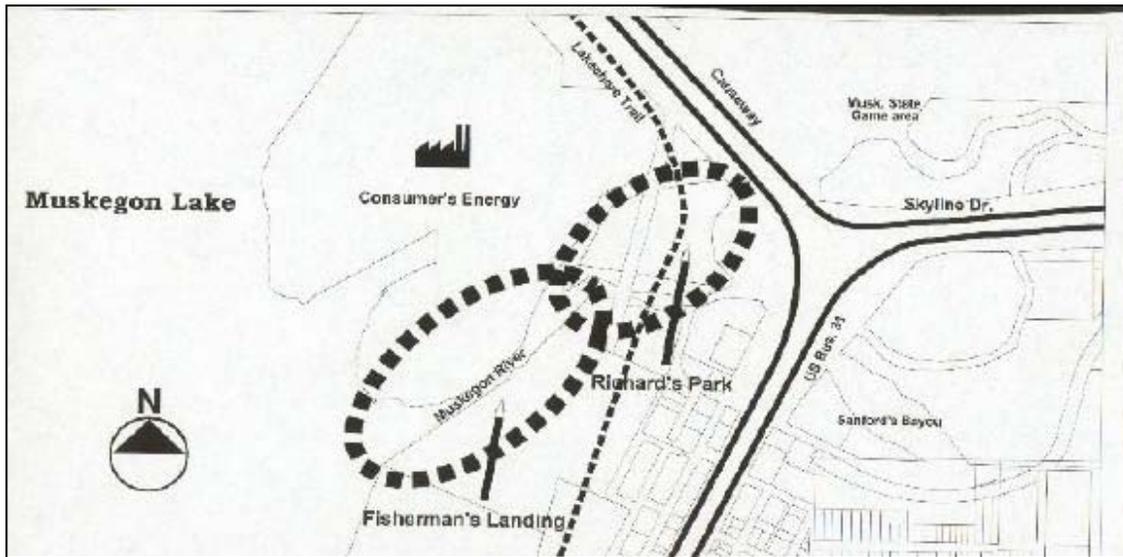
facilities at the new location. While pleasure craft do not require the same water depths as larger commercial ships, they do need water depths in the 8-12 foot range to accommodate larger recreational vessels.



A potential problem of a location near the Muskegon River, is river-mouth sedimentation and the need for regular re-dredging. Therefore the boat launch itself may need to front on the lake rather than the river unless a maintenance plan is implemented, and monies budgeted, to

address this recurrent problem.

Regardless of its ultimate location, it is important that Fisherman's Landing, along with all other waterfront recreation facilities, be strongly tied into the Lakeshore Trail project. Furthermore, care should be taken to limit the disruption of natural habitat at the new local

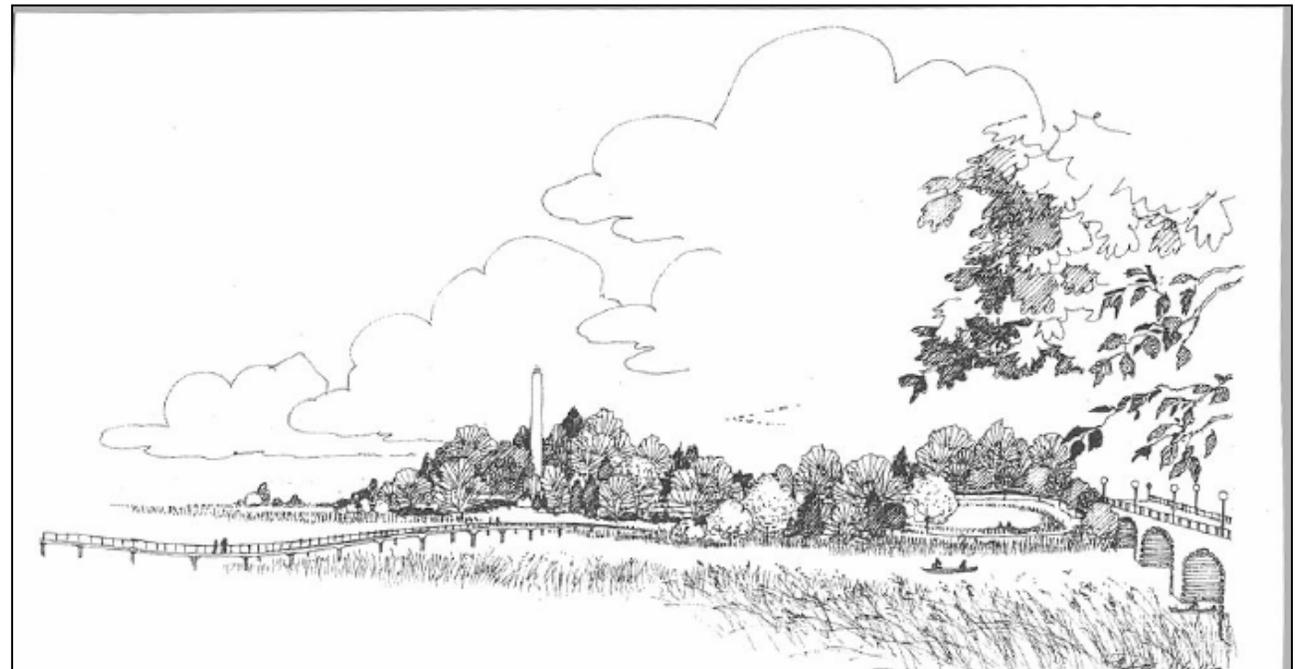


Left: Relocated Fisherman's Landing linked to Richard's Park via the Muskegon River and nature trail (below).



Right: Conceptual rendering of the south branch of the Muskegon River with elevated boardwalk to Fisherman's Landing. In this scene, the river is conceived as the spine of a linear park containing both active and passive recreational uses. *Drawing by Colette Klukos.

Opposite page: The Muskegon River at Richard's Park.



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tion, as in all lakefront redevelopment projects. Finally, passive recreational areas and wetlands would be greatly enhanced with interpretive nature trails and boardwalks.

Funding Sources

Because Fisherman's Landing was developed using Federal grant monies, any relocation of the facility would have to take place pursuant to a cumbersome and lengthy land conversion process. Under this process, the existing site could not be sold until a new, comparable site was secured. In addition, an alternative funding source would have to be used to rebuild the permanent facilities existing on the present site (i.e. restrooms, docks etc.)

Funding for the interpretive trails, and natural habitat enhancement measures could come from a variety of sources previously mentioned, especially Coastal Zone Management Grants, and Great Lakes Fisheries Trust Funds (CMS). Funding for the building of new facilities at a relocated Fisherman's Landing, could come from agreements exacted from private developers in exchange for the sale of the existing Fisherman's Landing site.

Conclusion

The Future

The plan outlined above is designed to serve as the *conceptual framework* for projects which may or may not ultimately resemble those presented in this document. This is due to the knowledge that absent a port authority or other supreme planning body, development activities will be carried out individually by private property owners. While efforts to involve individual property owners in the planning process proved, in most instances, to be effective, these individuals may not always agree on every aspect of the plan, or the means necessary to carry it out.

As Muskegon continues to experience the type of development pressure alluded to in the introduction, it will become apparent that the planning process will need to be fluid and adaptable to exigent and complex circumstances. In short, the plan should be taken in its "*spirit*", and not its "*letter*".

Public Participation

As a sub-plan building on the ideas put forth in the City's Master Plan adopted in 1997, the public participation component of this document can be traced directly back to the numerous surveys, interviews and questionnaires completed as part of the Master Planning process. It should be noted that the City of Muskegon won the Michigan Society of Planning Officials (MSPO) award for the public participation component of its Master Land Use Plan in 1998.

The planning process resulting in this specific document began in earnest in late summer of 1998. At that time, a broad-based coalition of business and community leaders known as the Lakefront Development Task Force approached the City of Muskegon, and requested that City staff join ranks with them in creating a plan that would serve as a rough blueprint for future waterfront development activities. Over the ensuing months, City staff along with the task-force, began to develop preliminary graphics that were subsequently published in the *Muskegon Chronicle*. Although initial comments