

Shoreline Trails and Greenways Focus Group Meeting #3

Thank You for Your Input!



When & Where: On Thursday, April 17, 2025, the Muskegon Shoreline Trails and Greenways (STAG) project hosted its third focus group meeting with Greater Muskegon Economic Development (GMED), business affiliates, local entrepreneurs and community stakeholders. The focus group welcomed just over 10 attendees and took place at the Muskegon Chamber of Commerce. Attendees brought energy and enthusiasm, eager to share their thoughts and vision for a more connected and inclusive trail system.

Why: This session focused on gathering insight from the business community and economic development leaders about the existing trail network and future opportunities for a more connected and activated shoreline. The conversation emphasized the role that trails and greenways play in supporting local commerce, accessibility, and placemaking—especially when thoughtfully connected to business corridors and downtown areas.

What We Did: Participants engaged with several interactive stations used throughout the STAG engagement process:

- **Survey Station:** Attendees completed both digital and paper surveys, providing feedback on trail use and priorities.
- **Vision Drawing Station:** Several participants shared creative ideas by sketching and sharing with the group what they hope to see for trails and greenways in five years.
- **SWOC Activity:** A facilitated discussion encouraged attendees to voice the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges associated with Muskegon's existing trails and shoreline connections. Attendees participated through written and verbal responses.





What We Learned: From focused group conversations to thoughtful drawings and completed surveys, this session surfaced rich feedback that adds depth to our understanding of the community's vision:

What's Working Well:

- Muskegon's trails are well-maintained and include unique routes with scenic lakefront access.
- The Lakeshore Trail is particularly well known and appreciated.
- There is physical room for expansion and improvement, including trail enhancements and new connections.
- Trails contribute to the accessibility and appeal of downtown Muskegon.

Opportunities for the Future:

- Create a clear, unified trail map with Google Maps integration and color-coded routes.
- Improve wayfinding and year-round access with rentals and seasonal programming.
- Repurpose vacant lots for trail access and enhance public spaces with local art and history.
- Strengthen connections, especially linking Muskegon Heights to downtown.

What Needs Improvement:

- Trails are missing from Google Maps and current maps are inconsistent.
- Many residents don't know how to access or navigate the full trail system.
- Major gaps exist, especially in Norton Shores and between Muskegon Heights and other key destinations.
- Limited amenities and unsafe or isolated areas reduce comfort and usability.

Challenges to Consider:

- Funding and balancing diverse community needs will be ongoing hurdles.
- Community collaboration is key, especially in areas where non-motorized transit is underutilized or met with resistance.
- Safety and accessibility must remain a top priority to ensure trails are welcoming for all users.

What's Next: With three focus groups completed, we're building a well-rounded understanding of Muskegon's trail and shoreline needs—from residents to environmental groups to business leaders and others who want to see connections improve in the city and region. This valuable input will help shape future engagement and the long-term trail network vision. Additional focus groups and pop-up events are still ahead as we continue co-creating a trail system that reflects Muskegon's unique identity and priorities.