



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Compilation

Regarding Connecting Community to Water, Ports and Parks

This document was printed on 1/27/25. As we engage and hear more questions from the public additional questions and answers will be added. The most updated version of this document is available on our Connect Muskegon page under the supporting documents section.

Connect Muskegon Webpage: mkgcity.com/portsparks

Mart Dock Questions

1. Why can't Mart Dock use the Verplank Property for port operations instead of Fisherman's Landing?

The Fisherman's Landing property has a shipping berth for unloading Great Lakes vessels. The Verplank property isn't suited for this but would work well for public access and enjoying the river and lake views.

2. What happens with the current Mart Dock site once the port operations are moved to Fisherman's Landing?

Current plans include a mixed-use development, Maritime attractions, a boardwalk (public access), new streets and much more. These would come to life over many years.

3. Would Mart Dock have any port operations at Mart Dock?

Once the Fisherman's Landing port operations open, the Mart Dock port operations would stop. Both would not be operating at the same time.

4. Where will the Aquastar be?

Current plans show the Aquastar in the docks between Mart Dock and Third St Wharf.

5. What happens if Mart Dock doesn't get the grant?

If Mart Dock does not receive the Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) Grant, they will have the option to pay for the build-out of the port on their own. That would impact timelines which would need to be adjusted. If Mart Dock chooses not to move forward with moving operations, Fisherman's Landing would remain city property, and the city would keep the 3rd St Wharf perimeter.

Port / Economic Impact Questions

6. Will the port operations do anything to help the local economy?

Yes. This will be a different type of operation than what the Mart Dock currently does, and it will focus on modern container operations in addition to the traditional Great Lakes port operations. This will allow for jobs on-site, and it is expected that the spin-off jobs/operations will occur over time along the Ottawa St corridor and throughout Muskegon County.

7. Can a local person get a job at the new Mart Dock port facility? What type of training is required?

There will be jobs available on-site for anyone to apply for. Certain jobs will require specialized training, but that training will often be paid for by the employer or free of charge to the individual. This link (<https://muskegonrotary.org/page/muskegon-rising-podcast>) will bring you to a podcast featuring Maritime and Port Operation jobs being featured on the Muskegon Rising podcast.

8. Are port operations dirty? How nice could a park area be next to a shipping yard?

Throughout the Great Lakes (and the world) port operations are often neighbors with parks, wetlands and residential areas and are not dirty. Modern ports are good neighbors and serve as enhancements to communities. Here in Muskegon, we have active aggregate docks directly adjacent to Grand Trunk, Fisherman's Landing, as well as recreational and residential areas. Muskegon is not unique in this regard – Marquette; Oshawa, Ontario; Cleveland, Ohio (among others) all successfully marry port operations with recreational and residential areas. When planned properly with active partners win-wins are the outcome.

9. How would the port oversight board be comprised and would there be any investment in the community by the port operators?

There would be an advisory board/commission for the port. As envisioned it would have 7-9 members with representatives from the city, county, community, and Mart Dock. There would be revenue sharing with the intent to benefit the community – the advisory board would have significant control over how those dollars are distributed (this is a type of Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) that would be ongoing).

Verplank / New Park Questions

10. How will the city pay for the Verplank Property?

The city would sell Fisherman's Landing for fair market value to Mart Dock. The proceeds from the sale would be used to purchase the portion of the Verplank Property intended for public use. It should be noted that the money we receive for Fisherman's Landing will be prorated against the value of property we would be receiving at the Third Street Warf.

11. Regarding the public space expansion - How will the public access it, what type of amenities would be there, and what's the timeline?

Once the land is purchased and boundaries are established, the city will seek public input to guide its development. There are some restrictions due to the wetlands and the site's former industrial history. Still, some options include walking paths, fishing spots, wildlife viewing areas, and access for non-motorized boats. This property acquisition would not occur until Mart Dock took control of Fisherman's Landing for port operations. This will be dependent on grant cycles for federal Port Development dollars. Regarding access, it's anticipated that the public will be able to get to the Verplank recreational area by car, bike, or foot.

12. Have other former industrial areas been repurposed for parks and public access to the water or other non-industrial uses?

Yes. Much of the Muskegon Lake shoreline (north of Shoreline Drive) is infill from our past or was used for some type of industrial/lumbering operations. Harbor 31, Terrace Point Landing, Terrace Point, The Lake House, Heritage Landing Park, Adelaide Pointe, and the former Amoco Site (among others) all sit on former industrial sites that have been repurposed for residential, recreational, and commercial uses.

13. How will updates at the new park be paid for?

The city anticipates this will largely be through grant processes (public and private). We are already actively talking with grant funders about programs that would be appropriate for this project.

14. Are you able to include in the planning process how residents access the new public access? For example, walking, bus routes, driving, Shoreline Dr, Moses J Jones, and connecting to Richards Park

Accessing the new public space is a few years out. However, at this point, access to the Verplank Property is expected to be the same as accessing Fisherman's Landing which is by foot, bike and car.

15. Can we do something to make crossing at Third St and Marquette safer?

The City of Muskegon will be working with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to find ways to make crossing Business 31 safer at multiple points. This is a long-term conversation because the road is state controlled. It's the city's goal to make it easier, safer and faster to cross.

16. Are you going to bring the Ottawa St Bridge back for cars?

No, the state has required the city to close the bridge because it is not safe. Rebuilding the bridge for car traffic is millions of dollars and the city is slated to receiving state dollars to remove the bridge, **but** the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has recently listed the bridge as a potential historic structure. Until that is reviewed, the project is on hold. It is possible that someday a pedestrian bridge could be constructed.

17. Who would pay for the environmental cleanup at Verplank site?

The city would work with Consumers Energy to develop a plan regarding a best course of action to accommodate recreational activity on the site. We would then apply for grants to help with estuary restoration.

Why Consumer's Energy? Consumers Energy would be responsible for the cleanup because they are the entity that caused the contamination on the site. Under environmental laws and regulations, the party that contributed to pollution is typically held liable for its remediation. This ensures they address the damage caused and restore the site to a condition safe for public use and the environment. By partnering with Consumers Energy, the city can collaborate to develop a plan that balances environmental restoration with the community's desire for recreational use of the area.

18. We have enough parks that aren't all taken care of, why add more?

Although the city has many parks, this opportunity to have lakefront public access is unique. The last time an opportunity like this was available was nearly 100 years ago when the City of Muskegon acquired Pere Marquette and Thin Beach.

Fisherman's Landing / Camping Questions

19. How long would the campground remain?

Assuming the project moves forward, the campground will be open at least through 2026.

20. Will there be other camping opportunities in Muskegon?

Muskegon County is planning a campground at Dune Harbor Park, two locations within the park are currently being considered. Although a different type of camping experience, it will offer multiple camping options with access to Dune Harbor Lakes and close access to Lake Michigan. Additionally, boat launches at Cottage Grove and Grand Trunk are a short drive away.

21. Will I still be able to launch my boat at Fisherman's Landing?

Yes! The portion of the Fisherman's Landing property that Mart Dock would be acquiring is the campground and a portion of the first bay of parking immediately south of the campground. The city will retain ownership of the launch ramps, kayak launch, fishing dock, office building, fish cleaning station, etc...

22. Couldn't we just make Fisherman's Landing into a great waterfront park?

We could. However, it does not expand the overall amount of public access to Muskegon Lake. With this plan, the community is afforded an opportunity to truly expand public access along Muskegon Lake in Downtown and to the east in a way that we've never had before. Additionally, the high-quality public access possibilities along the south branch of the Muskegon River, in addition to lake access, affords our community a unique opportunity to provide fishing and wildlife viewing.

23. Fisherman's Landing is used for Bass Fishing Tournaments, now what?

Fisherman's landing will still be able to be used to launch boats for tournaments and recreational purposes.

24. Why didn't you do an RFP or accept any other proposals for Fisherman's Landing?

The city was presented with an opportunity of a specific plan, and the City Commission decided to entertain the idea.

25. What are the plans for making the Ottawa St business section livelier?

The Ottawa St corridor is an area of interest for the city's economic development office. It has potential to create a Business Improvement District. In addition, we believe the shipping and port operations will help bring more life to the district and spur additional investment.

26. Would there be a right of way from the Fisherman's Landing Boat Launch to the new Verplank Property?

It is our intent to have an access point (most likely an easement) from the Fisherman's Landing parking lot into the new park at the Verplank Property. The site is also accessible from the bike trail and there's a possibility of access from Richards Park and/or the east end of Ottawa Street.

27. Is Fisherman's Landing Campground an expense for the city?

No. Fisherman's Landing Campground has a management agreement. The management agreement outlines that the management firm handle all financials and the city does not cover any expenses or benefit from revenue.

28. Where can I get more information on what's happening at Heritage Landing?

For all questions regarding Heritage Landing and other Muskegon County assets please visit their website: <https://muskegoncountyparks.org/>

Timeline and Next Step Questions

29. What does the Muskegon City Commission have to approve to move forward?

City of Muskegon staff and the Mart Dock are currently working on an agreement which will outline the particulars of the project. Once complete, the Muskegon City Commission will be asked to consider approving that agreement which would approve the partnership/project. Staff assumes this would happen in the first quarter of 2025.

30. What happens when the Muskegon City Commission approves the agreement?

- A. The city would obtain the perimeter of the Third Street Warf and begin planning improvements to it. This would be paid for with a \$2.8 million allocation that the city previously received from the state for that purpose.
- B. The city, county and Mart Dock would collaborate on a Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP) Grant with the goal of submitting a grant application in the 2026 grant cycle. Other aspects of the project would be in a waiting period until the grant funds are known.