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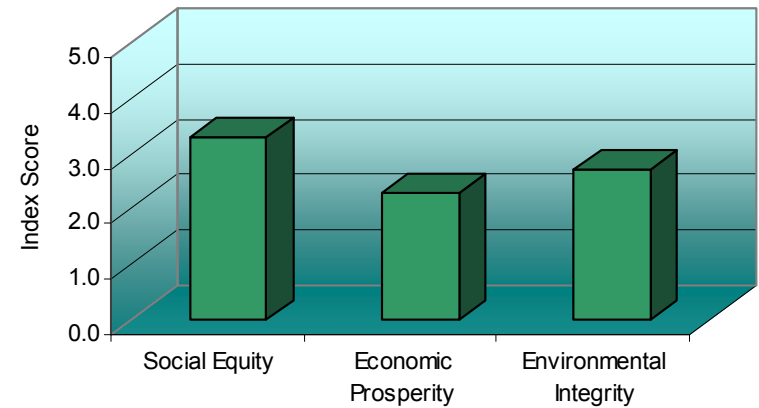
- Statistical Consulting Center, Grand Valley State University
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Prosperity Index

Muskegon County, Michigan

October 2007

Prosperity Index Score: **2.8**



2005 Sustainability Sector Scores

Is prosperity possible?

Yes, prosperity is possible for all Muskegon County residents because diverse groups in the community are committed to make it happen. In early 2007, a group of human service, business and environmental representatives formed the *Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition* out of a belief that a prosperous and sustainable future was possible with collaboration and planning. The *Prosperity Index* was developed by the Coalition as a tool to track progress and guide actions to assure that Muskegon County is a community that thrives and is desired and enjoyed by this and future generations.

Why an index?

The *Prosperity Index* for Muskegon County began as a way of condensing volumes of data into a simple, easy to understand format. As the idea developed, its potential to stimulate conversation and understanding became apparent. Sectors of the community that had not previously engaged in the past began to work together on common interests. The Index will be a valuable tool in monitoring progress and developing more comprehensive responses to Muskegon County's challenges and opportunities.

About the time ideas for the Index were being developed, local interest and support emerged for the concept of integrated community development known as "sustainability" (see below.) Out of this interest, the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition was formed. The Coalition adopted the *Prosperity Index* as its first major project.

What is sustainability?

The most often quoted definition of sustainability is a state where development "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Sustainability is meant to ensure that prosperity is achieved without sacrificing the resources and assets of future generations.



It requires an integrated focus on the core values of social equity, economic prosperity and environmental integrity. The emphasis on balance between the three core areas is also referred to as the "triple bottom line" and is a recognized pathway to long-term community success.

Environmental integrity

The indicators selected for the Environmental Integrity sector, and shown in [Table Four](#), focus on air quality, pollution, land use or sprawl, and waste management.

In terms of air quality, or the volume of particulate matter found in the air, Muskegon County scored well. With its high percentage of land devoted to agriculture, the County also achieved a relatively high score.

Table Four: Environmental Integrity Sector – 2005 Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		Michigan		U.S.		Comparable Counties	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Toxic Release Inventory <i>mill. lbs.</i>	1.99	1.1	1.23	2.5	1.38	2.5	1.50	2.3
Particulate Matter 2.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	11.3	4.2	11.1	4.3	11.5	4.1	10.6	4.4
Land for Agriculture	19.9%	4.0	22.7%	4.6	19.5%	3.9	31.1%	5.0
Land for Urban	9.5%	2.2	5.5%	3.9	2.6%	5.0	5.4%	3.9
Average Commute <i>minutes</i>	20.8	3.6	24.1	2.0	20.7	3.7	20.3	3.9
Solid Waste – Type II <i>cubic yards</i>	217,091	1.2	133,904	2.8	43,321	4.6	N/A	N/A
Sector Index	2.7		3.4		4.0		2.8	

Data Sources: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, U.S. Census Bureau.

Residents in Muskegon County average relatively short commute times to work. Shorter commute times offer prospects for less sprawl and growth of road systems, and lower fuel consumption.

Reductions in toxic releases, improved solid waste management, and containment of urban sprawl could improve the overall index score for this sector.

More Information

A complete report with more detailed information on the data sources, selection of indicators, and the scales used in calculating the scores can be viewed and downloaded from the website

www.sustainablemuskegon.wikispaces.com/prosperity+index

Economic prosperity

The indicators selected for the Economic Prosperity sector are shown in [Table Three](#) below. The indicators selected were those that are known to reflect a community's economic growth and development.

Table Three: Economic Prosperity Sector – 2005 Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		Michigan		U.S.		Comparable Counties	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Per Capita Personal Income	\$25,692	2.2	\$32,804	3.2	\$34,471	3.4	\$26,623	2.3
Employment Growth <i>Average/year 2001-2005</i>	0.21%	1.3	-0.80%	0.0	0.30%	1.5	1.75%	3.7
Employment Distribution	0.893	1.9	0.909	2.1	NA		0.997	3.0
Bachelor's Degrees <i>ages 25 to 34</i>	18.5%	2.2	28.2%	3.3	29.9%	3.5	19.5%	2.3
Average Weekly Wages	\$635	2.1	\$793	4.1	\$782	4.0	\$610	1.8
Population Growth <i>Average/year 2001-2005</i>	0.79%	4.2	0.48%	4.5	0.24%	4.8	1.69%	3.3
Sector Index	2.3		2.6		3.1		2.7	

Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

A modest yet manageable level of population growth was a bright spot among the economic prosperity indicators. The indicator with the greatest room for improvement is the percentage of employment growth. Muskegon County did achieve positive employment growth that was close to the U.S. average despite being located in a state that struggled with loss of employment during the same period. Michigan received the lowest index score possible on this indicator.



"Green Roof" installation at a lakefront condominium development in Muskegon

Commitment and criteria

To achieve the purpose and potential of the Prosperity Index, the organizations committed to its development agreed it should be simple to understand and published on a regular basis. To accomplish this, the Index would have to be easy and inexpensive to produce. Finally, to be worthwhile, the Index would have to be valid and reliable. To meet these objectives, the indicators selected for each sustainability sector were limited to six.

Choosing a limited number of indicators was a challenge. Several potential indicators were eliminated because the available data were not comparable or reliable, or required additional expense or resources to collect and analyze.

Once the indicators were identified, the next decision was how the data would be indexed. To ensure the index would be useful for monitoring local outcomes and trends, it was decided to use a fixed index. That is, an index score is calculated from how the indicator compares to a fixed scale – or “rubric” – of standards. The intent is to allow score comparisons from year to year, and support monitoring of trends.

The selected indicators provide a broad, overall view. While the overall index score indicates the community as a whole is at a near sustainable level, it does not reflect that some sub-groups – particularly core city African Americans – do not enjoy the same level of socio-economic well-being. Over the next several months, and on a continual basis, subsets of the indicator data, such as breakdowns by race or location, and other more detailed data sets will be collected and analyzed. These data sets or “drivers” will help to identify and target appropriate actions for specific groups and areas that could improve the overall outcomes and indicator scores.

Reading the tables

The index scores are based on a 5-point scale. A score of 5.0 is the highest score and indicates a community is “thriving.”

Score	Prosperity Level Achieved
4.0 to 5.0	Thriving
3.0 to 3.9	Sustainable
2.0 to 2.9	Needs Improvement
1.0 to 1.9	Cause for Concern
Less than 1.0	Failing

What are the trends?

Table One below is a summary of the overall and individual index scores calculated for the years 2000 and 2005 for each sustainability sector – Social Equity, Economic Prosperity, and Environmental Integrity. Also included are narrative interpretations of the trends these scores indicate for the five-year period. From the data and trends, Muskegon County has seen a decline across all three sectors since 2000.

Table One: Prosperity Index Scores and Trends from 2000 to 2005 by Sustainability Sector

Sustainability Sector	Sector Index	Muskegon County		Michigan		U.S.		Comparable Counties	
		2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
Social Equity	Score	3.7	3.3	3.6	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.2
	Trend	down		down		down		down	
Economic Prosperity	Score	2.5	2.3	3.1	2.6	3.5	3.1	2.7	2.7
	Trend	down		down		down		same	
Environmental Integrity	Score	3.1	2.7	2.6	3.4	2.7	4.0	3.5	3.9
	Trend	down		up		up		up	
Overall Index	Score	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.3
	Trend	down		same		up		up	

Beginning on the next page are three tables – one for each sustainability sector. Each table shows data for the six indicators selected for the sector. The data presented in each table are for the year 2005 or the most recent period closest to that year for which data are available. Data are shown for Muskegon County, the United States, and Michigan.

Also shown are the averages for ten comparable counties located throughout the U.S. The counties were selected because they are similar to Muskegon County in population, demographics and urban/rural configurations. The selected comparable counties are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bay County, Florida | Mohave County, Arizona |
| Berrien County, Michigan | Shasta County, California |
| Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana | Shawnee County, Kansas |
| Canyon County, Idaho | Smith County, Texas |
| Hernando County, Florida | Whatcom County, Washington |

These locations are not targets or benchmarks. They show how similar communities might score on the index, and may help to identify other factors that could influence index scores.

Social equity

The indicators selected for Social Equity, and shown in Table Two below, focused on the areas of income, life, learning, and community. Muskegon County scored relatively well on the two income indicators selected – median household income and household income spread.

Table Two: Social Equity Sector – 2005 Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		Michigan		U.S.		Comparable Counties	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Median Household Income	\$41,911	3.3	\$46,039	3.5	\$46,242	3.5	\$39,933	3.2
Household Income Spread	\$10,763	4.7	\$13,969	3.2	\$16,314	2.5	\$13,188	3.5
Infant Mortality per 1,000 live births	8.4	2.8	7.9	3.0	6.8	3.6	7.8	3.1
Nursery/Pre-School Enrollment	16.2%	2.5	23.7%	3.5	23.6%	3.5	20.9%	3.1
Home Ownership	82.1%	5.0	74.7%	4.3	66.9%	3.4	69.8%	3.7
Unemployment Rate	6.9%	1.6	6.8%	1.6	5.1%	2.5	5.4%	2.3
Sector Index	3.3		3.2		3.2		3.2	

Data sources: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Center for Disease Control and various state or county health departments.

Improvements are needed in life (infant mortality) and learning (pre-school enrollment.) In terms of community indicators, Muskegon County scores exceptionally well with its high percentage of owner-occupied homes, while its high rate of unemployment resulted in the lowest score among the six indicators.

As noted earlier, future work on the “drivers” will further identify areas of improvement in social equity for particular groups or locations throughout the County.



Cleanup project volunteers at a downtown Muskegon revitalization site