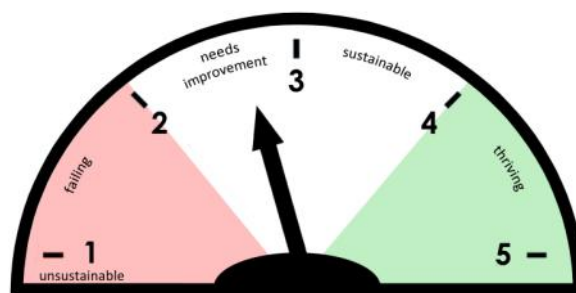




2011 report

## Prosperity Index Muskegon County, Michigan



**Current Index Score: 2.6**

It's no secret that education is inextricably linked to prosperity: The more one learns, the more one earns, and the more the community thrives.

For decades, people in Muskegon County enjoyed high paying jobs that did not require a college education or even a high school diploma. Young people able to develop skills in lumbering or manufacturing were guaranteed work that provided a substantial living.

For generations, education rarely was a necessity or even an expectation. But now, Muskegon County is a different place with a globally-oriented, knowledge-driven economy requiring a highly skilled, technologically savvy, and educated workforce.

With that said, however, Muskegon currently lags in educational attainment. It's no wonder local businesses are having trouble filling positions from the local workforce and are turning to other communities to meet their needs. It's no wonder the percentage of Muskegon residents living in poverty exceeds that of both the State and National average. Those living in Muskegon County at the highest level of poverty generally have only a high school education or less.

Education goes hand in hand with personal and societal prosperity: The more education the residents of Muskegon County obtain, the more local workers will contribute to the economic health of the community, and the more the community will grow and prosper and be able to compete on a global level.

*Marissa Higgs, Coordinator, Muskegon Opportunity*

## BACKGROUND

The *Prosperity Index for Muskegon County* began as a way for the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition to define and measure sustainability by 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 *Prosperity Index* grew out of several community conversations and initiatives, all focused on ensuring a future for Muskegon County by strengthening cooperation between various community sectors, identifying priorities and evaluating outcomes, and establishing a framework for action around prosperity. Designed as a tool to track progress and guide actions, the *Index* can help Muskegon County develop a more comprehensive response to challenges and opportunities, ensuring that our county is a community that thrives, is desirable, and is enjoyed by current and future generations. The first summary report of the *Prosperity Index for Muskegon County* was produced in October 2007 and analyzed data from 2005; this fifth annual report includes the most current available data in all categories through October 2011. The *Index* remains a key project for the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition and its partners, serving as a means to monitor progress toward prosperity and establish cross-sector accountability for community outcomes.

### SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLE:

*Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

*- Brundtland Report, 1987*

## SUSTAINABILITY

Achieving a sustainable community requires a balanced, integrated focus around three core values, also known as the triple bottom line:

**Social Equity**

**Environmental Integrity**

**Economic Prosperity**

Each core value is represented as a separate sector in the Prosperity Index.

## INDEX SCORES

Index scores were calculated for each indicator based on how the measure compares to a fixed scale of standards. The rubrics allow score comparisons from year to year and monitoring trends within indicators and sectors.

The index scores are based on a 5-point scale with 5.0 being the highest score. An overall score of 4.0 or higher indicates a community is **thriving**. A score of 3.0 indicates a **sustainable** level has been achieved.

Score	Prosperity Level
4.0 to 5.0	Thriving
3.0 to 3.9	Sustainable
2.0 to 2.9	Needs Improvement
1.0 to 1.9	Failing
Less than 1.0	Unsustainable

## SUSTAINABILITY SECTOR AVERAGES

The table below shows overall average index scores by sector for Muskegon County, West Michigan (Muskegon/Kent/Ottawa counties), Michigan, and the United States.

Because 2000 is regarded as a peak year for various economic and social indicators, it is used as the starting year for trend comparisons. The current Social Equity score for Muskegon County shows a decline from the 2000 score; unemployment rates have been a key reason for such a precipitous drop. The Muskegon County score for Environmental Integrity shows an increase between the 2000 and the current score, while Economic Prosperity shows a declining trend.

The next pages contain summary analyses and data for the indicators selected for each sustainability sector. More detailed information on the indicators and index score calculations may be found at [muskegonasc.org](http://muskegonasc.org)

Summary Table of Prosperity Index Scores and Trends *							
Sustainability Sector	Sector Index	Muskegon County			West MI (Muskegon/Kent/Ottawa)		
		2000	2006	Current	2000	2006	Current
Social Equity	Score	3.7	3.5	3.0	3.8	3.6	3.0
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		
Environmental Integrity	Score	2.7	2.8	3.3	2.6	2.9	3.5
	Trend	<i>rising</i>			<i>rising</i>		
Economic Prosperity	Score	2.7	2.4	1.6	3.0	2.7	2.4
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		
Overall Average	Score	3.0	2.9	2.6	3.1	3.1	3.0
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		

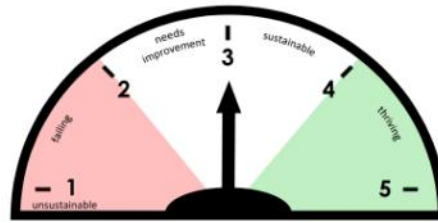
Sustainability Sector	Sector Index	Michigan			U.S.		
		2000	2006	Current	2000	2006	Current
Social Equity	Score	3.6	3.2	2.6	3.3	3.2	2.8
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		
Environmental Integrity	Score	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.6
	Trend	<i>rising</i>			<i>rising</i>		
Economic Prosperity	Score	3.1	2.6	2.1	3.5	3.1	2.9
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		
Overall Average	Score	3.2	3.0	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.1
	Trend	<i>declining</i>			<i>declining</i>		

\*Using a 3 year average, only score changes greater than  $\pm 0.1$  are classified as rising or down.

***We have not inherited the earth from our ancestors,  
we have only borrowed it from our children.***

- Native American Proverb

## SOCIAL EQUITY



Current Index Score: 3.0

How you can help move the **Social Equity** dial...

- Volunteer and/or donate to worthy causes.
- Participate in school, neighborhood and community activities.
- Vote in every election.

### Social Equity Sector - Current Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		West MI		Michigan		U.S.	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Median Household Income	\$38,621	3.0	\$46,486	3.4	\$45,413	3.3	\$50,046	3.5
Household Income Spread	\$11,601	4.0	\$13,246	3.5	\$14,359	3.1	\$18,213	1.9
Infant Mortality per 1,000 live births	7.1	3.4	6.5	3.7	7.6	3.2	6.6	3.7
Nursery/Pre-School Enrollment	43.5%	2.9	44.6%	3.1	44.8%	3.1	47.6%	3.5
Home Ownership	75.1%	4.4	74.3%	4.3	65.1%	3.1	72.2%	4.0
Unemployment Rate	13.4%	0.0	11.5%	0.0	12.3%	0.0	9.6%	0.0
<b>Sector Index</b>	<b>3.0</b>		3.0		2.6		2.8	

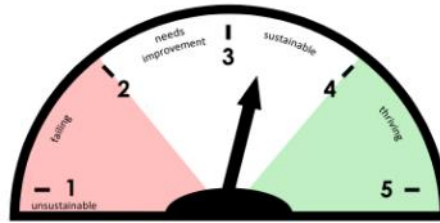


The “big lake” is such an important part of our community, yet there are children here who have never walked the beach.

Social equity is a key part of who we are today and what we hope to be in the future. Providing early education resources, strong school districts and post-secondary educational attainment opportunities; reducing health disparities; creating sustainable jobs; teaching financial literacy; making sure everyone can read; supporting our older population... all these factors and more help us lay the foundation for a healthy, stable society for both today and tomorrow.

To see some of the agencies working to support social equity, visit <http://cccmuskegoncounty.org/lists.aspx>

## ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY



Current Index Score: 3.3

How you can help move the **Environmental Integrity** dial...

- Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.
- Conserve energy and water at home and work.
- Walk. Bike. Carpool. Mass Transit.

### Environmental Integrity Sector - Current Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		West MI		Michigan		U.S.	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Toxic Release Inventory <i>lbs per capita</i>	10.5	3.6	4.8	4.4	7.7	4.0	12.7	3.3
Particulate Matter <i>2.5 μm/m<sup>3</sup></i>	10.2	3.6	11.1	3.5	11.3	3.5	10.8	3.6
Land for Agriculture <i>acres per capita</i>	.46	1.8	.40	1.7	1.0	2.7	3.0	5.0
Urban Sprawl <i>Fatal Traffic Accidents /100,000 population</i>	8.1	4.0	8.6	3.9	9.9	3.5	11.0	3.2
Ozone <i>parts per million</i>	72.0	3.1	69.5	3.2	69.0	3.2	72.0	3.1
Solid Waste <i>cubic yards per capita</i>	2.5	3.7	2.0	4.0	3.5	3.2	na	na
<b>Sector Index</b>	<b>3.3</b>		3.5		3.4		3.6	



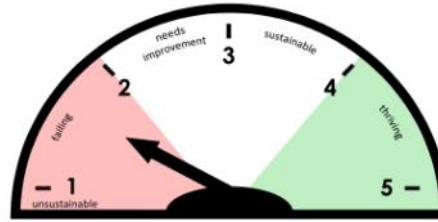
Water defines the greater Muskegon area. From the Great Lake to our west to the numerous inland lakes, rivers, and watersheds, we must be careful stewards of the environment to protect this precious natural resource for future generations.



Restoration projects are underway throughout Muskegon County to help restore healthier ecosystems. A healthy physical environment is the basis for a thriving, prosperous community.

To learn more, visit [muskegonlake.org](http://muskegonlake.org) or [gvsu.edu/wri/](http://gvsu.edu/wri/)

## ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



Current Index Score: 1.6

How *you* can help move the **Economic Prosperity** dial...

- Support local businesses.
- Mentor a young person; encourage post-secondary education.
- Advocate for a diverse business climate.

### Economic Prosperity Sector - Current Indicators and Scores

Indicator	Muskegon County		West MI		Michigan		U.S.	
	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index	Measure	Index
Per Capita Personal Income	\$27,792	1.5	\$31,254	1.9	\$34,315	2.2	\$39,635	2.8
Employment Growth avg/year 2004-08	-2.46%	0.0	-2.03%	0.0	-2.20%	0.0	-0.90%	0.0
Employment Distribution	0.90	2.0	0.98	2.8	0.91	2.0	NA	NA
Bachelor's Degrees ages 25 to 34	15.8%	1.8	27.1%	3.2	28.3%	3.4	31.1%	3.6
Average Weekly Wages	\$707	2.3	\$748	2.6	\$855	3.5	\$899	3.8
Population Growth avg/year 2004-08	-0.22%	1.8	0.15%	3.7	-0.39%	1.6	0.68%	4.3
<b>Sector Index</b>	<b>1.6</b>		2.4		2.1		2.9	



"Water is an important driver of our economy here. We need to use that water but protect it to make sure that the quantity and quality is available for future generations."

*Dr. Alan D. Steinman, Director, GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute*



The concept of Blue Water Economy involves leveraging the abundant water resources of our region to stimulate economic activity and help our economy thrive. Muskegon has always had a Blue Water Economy, from the early days of Native Americans and settlers to our lumber and manufacturing industries. Going forward we need to attract and retain businesses that are focused around the need for high quality and abundant supplies of water.

To see Dr. Steinman's TEDxMuskegon talk on Blue Water Economy, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=88kmoepAL1q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88kmoepAL1q)

## WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW IN MUSKEGON COUNTY

Muskegon County has many good things happening to help move the dial...

### SOCIAL EQUITY

**Tanglewood** - this unique multi-agency senior service and activity center impacts the lives of older adults and their families every day. Tanglewood Park has received two national awards, the STAR award from the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services and an Achievement Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Programs housed in this collaborative center include Tanglewood's Medical Equipment and Supply Closet, AgeWell, CALL-2-1-1, LifeCircles, Senior Resources, and Harbor Steel 'Meals on Wheels'. [www.tanglewoodpark.info](http://www.tanglewoodpark.info)

**READ Muskegon** - this non-profit organization is dedicated to positively impacting the lives of adults through improved literacy. They serve learners who are either not yet ready for adult basic education, not a good fit for the adult education classroom setting, or need extra help to improve their skills. [www.readmuskegon.org](http://www.readmuskegon.org)



### ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

**Muskegon County Landfill** - the landfill currently sends out between 300 and 600 Standard Cubic Feet per Minute of landfill gas to the Eagle Alloy Foundry and Sun Chemical. This gas would have been flared off at the landfill and wasted if it were not for this energy recycling project. Prior to the installation of the gas collection and distribution system, the gas simply went into the atmosphere. Instead of wasting this gas, the County earns money for sending it to Eagle Alloy and Sun Chemical who burn the gas in their respective production processes.

**Festival Recycling** - 100 recycling bins were acquired through a \$10,000 fundraising campaign undertaken by the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition; among those contributing to the project were Alcoa Howmet, Louis Padnos Iron and Metal, Inc., and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. The goals of the project were to reduce the mounds of trash that summer festivals generate and to promote the practice of recycling and sustainable practices. <http://muskegonasc.org/recycling.aspx>



### ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

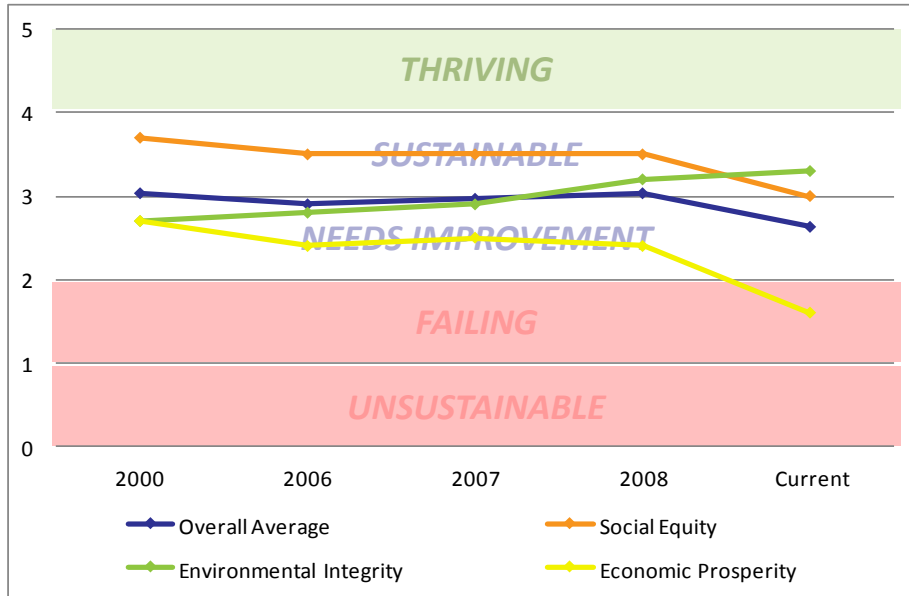
**United Way of the Lakeshore's "Reality Store"** - this financial literacy activity for kids teaches them about budgeting and saving money for the future. [www.unitedwaylakeshore.org](http://www.unitedwaylakeshore.org)

**Asset Building Coalition** - this cross-sector group promotes the building of financial, property, social, and personal assets to create prosperity for individuals, families, and the community through advocacy, awareness, education, and collaboration. The coalition's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program directly impacts the financial stability of working families. [www.facebook.com/ABCwm](http://www.facebook.com/ABCwm)



## TRENDS

Based on the current indicators and data sources, the **overall Prosperity Index** score is currently at a “needs improvement” level, having dropped to 2.6. Overall averages for the **Social Equity** sector, while declining, have stayed at or above a sustainable level since 2000. The averages for the **Environmental Integrity** indicators continue to improve each year. The **Economic Prosperity** indicator averages, lagging the other sectors since 2000, have dropped to a “failing” level.



The best way to **continue the positive trends** and **reverse the negative trends** is for **everyone in our community to do their part** in making our community sustainable - **meeting our needs today without compromising the future of our children** and the generations to come. For more information on how to help, visit [muskegonasc.org](http://muskegonasc.org) or [cccmuskegoncounty.org](http://cccmuskegoncounty.org) and click on the Prosperity Index tab.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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