

# Planning for Coastal Resilience in the South Haven & Casco Community



**WELCOME**

# Building Resiliency In Coastal Communities

## Funding Provided By Michigan Coastal Zone Management Program



### The PURPOSE of this program:

- Study and analyze the potential coastal hazards along the Great Lakes
- Engage citizens, public officials and community stakeholders
- Help inform local land use policy and future master planning efforts
- Create hazard-ready coastal communities





Holland Farmer's Market

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# Project Planning Process

Meeting One  
October 28<sup>th</sup>

- Review Great Lakes coastal dynamics
- Group discussion on overarching barriers and opportunities to coastal sustainability in South Haven/Casco Community

Meeting Two  
December 8<sup>th</sup>

- Review comments from Meeting One
- Discussion to identify community priorities and solutions

Meeting Three

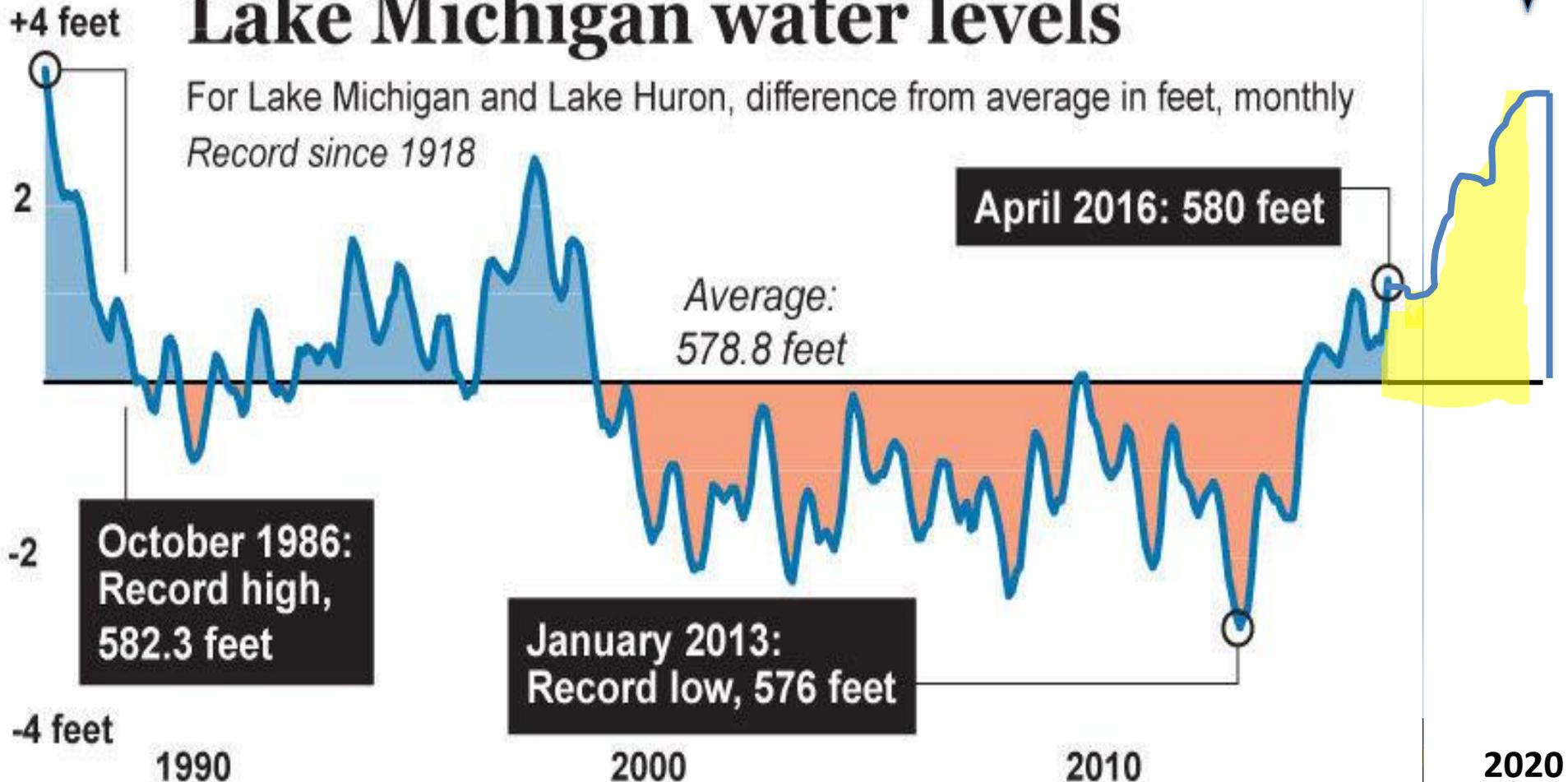
- LIAA presents draft master plan chapter addendum
- LIAA presents summarized findings from group discussions

# Water Levels Recent History

June, 2020: 582.3 feet ?

## Lake Michigan water levels

For Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, difference from average in feet, monthly  
*Record since 1918*



# Lake Michigan Beach in 2008

Michigan – Indiana boarder



# Lake Michigan Beach in 2018

Michigan – Indiana border



# Lake Michigan Beach in 2020

Near Burleson Property



MLive.com video February 2020



**Great Lakes  
Research Center**  
Michigan Technological University

Questions before  
we proceed?



# What we asked...

Question 1:

What are the current challenges the South Haven/Casco community is facing because of changes in the Great Lakes?

Question 2:

Is the community doing everything it might to address coastal community resiliency through its planning and zoning? If not, why not?

# Planning Categories

Governance

Infrastructure

Data & Information

Environment & Safety

Economy

# What we heard...

## Governance

- **Few local coastal regulations** other than those set by EGLE
- Some property owners pursue shoreline hardening while others do not – **competing interests** between neighbors
- The issue becomes emotional and contentious
- Some homes, for various reasons, do not have the option to relocate
- How should planning guide **new development siting** in the community?
- How does the community address decisions that were made years ago?
- What effect would **zoning changes** such as stricter setbacks have?
- With so many issues at once, local officials are often **more reactive than proactive**
- **Need to plan during high and low water**
- Need **more coordination** between municipalities, the county, State of Michigan to solve local issues
- EGLE decision would put greater emphasis on need for **local planning**

# What we heard...

## Infrastructure

- Water supply, sewer
- Wastewater treatment plant
- Power lines
- Marinas
- Roads
- Community well that is located on beach
- Critical infrastructure that serves all three municipalities affected

# What we heard...

## Data & Information

- Need for **more information** in the decision-making process (shoreline erosion, wave energy, historical OHWM, economic impact)
- More **education** on coastal dynamics visible to the public
- Need to **engage the whole public** in the planning/decision making process
- Should use various mediums to **communicate information** to the public (mailings, municipal website, social media, etc.)
- Need **subject matter experts** to advise planning and zoning
- Would **different decisions** be made if **more information** were available?
- Where is data available? How is it shared? Who is responsible for managing?

# What we heard...

## Economy

- Damages to local investments (e.g. recently renovated lighthouse)
- Home values affected
- Tourism impact
- Cost to renourish beaches
- How would additional land use regulations, creation of nonconformities affect property values and potential for regulatory takings?
- Who bears the cost of cleanup? How do we pay for this?

# What we heard...

## Environment & Safety

- Increase in calls for rescues
- Bluffs impacted by erosion
- High waters, increased wave activity have taken away access to the beach
- Wave energy poses risk to pedestrians
- Increased storminess, flooding poses threat to residents' safety
- Public safety officials are well trained, well staffed – any opportunities for improvement?
- Potential loss of beach, natural habitat

# Breakout Rooms

- How it works
  - You will be separated into breakout rooms to discuss the questions
  - Each group will have 10 minutes to discuss each category
    1. **Designate 1 person to take notes and report out to everyone**
    2. Allow each person to share their initial thoughts
    3. Prepare to report the room's key findings to the group
- Ground rules
  - Be respectful of everyone's opinion. Though you may not agree with every idea presented, we want everyone to feel welcome to participate.
  - Allow time for everyone in the group to share. **Remember you only have 10 minutes!**
- Why we're doing this
  - Before we can identify actionable steps forward, we need build consensus around goals that the community should strive for

# Breakout Room 1

- Looking at the South Haven-Casco shoreline in 15 years, what changes have been made?
- What could the community do in 2021 to begin working towards these changes?

- No revetments
- Beaches have returned to levels in 2008-09
- Ability to walk long stretches of beach (E.g. Miami Park to South Haven)
- Ability to walk from South Haven to Van Buren Park (6 miles)
- Fewer developments, homes built close to lake & bluff

- Protections to the north of pier to leave natural beach
- South of the pier – renourishment, less revetments
- More education to the community on coastal dynamics
- Identify properties at risk of erosion who would be likely to request permits for armoring

- Casco Twp and South Haven Twp now have coastal data available (south side is 85% armored, public South Beach is the remaining natural beach)
- City – bring in an expert to assist municipality (council, township board, planning commissions) in promoting alternative options to shoreline hardening
- Active “scorecard” – develop benchmarks towards reaching visions
- Consistent follow-up on projects
- Need to create a project timeline for implementation
- Need to identify funding sources
- Return the piers (currently armored) to previous state to encourage freer movement of sand, water

- Homes further setback
- Homes spaced further apart
- Return of sand beaches, ability to walk unimpeded
- Future aerials of lake not showing revetments
- Need to develop an accurate picture of the shoreline
- Start building consensus among differing viewpoints in the community (ongoing engagement)
- Expert involvement to communicate need for change to constituent groups
- Consolidated stairs along bluff rather than each property having its own

- Identify property least likely to be affected by erosion in a development context
- What areas (sand dunes, clay banks) are most suited to natural processes versus engineering solutions?
- Difference between north of the river and south of the river – intergovernmental approach to build consensus with property owners
- Need to involve, learn from communities outside of South Haven-Casco

## Breakout Room 2

- How could the community get more coastal information and education out to residents?
- Who could take the lead in organizing and communicating coastal data from different resources? (local units, county, state, universities)

- Real estate agents and developers, lodging
- Dedicated website on coastal info
- Info on public access rights
- Lodging facilities (encourage to place signage with info)
- “Shoreline Authority Visitors Education” – representatives from each municipality to ensure ongoing public engagement – equal representation and cost sharing for programming

- How to garner community support, active role in developing solutions
- The issue affects everyone
- Town hall meetings (preferable to council meetings, PC meetings, etc.)
- Municipal staff are best suited to organize, communicate data
- Need outside expertise to provide training, educational programming (e.g. Edgewater)

- Council, elected officials, leadership should put issue at the forefront
- Public schools
- Information on tax bill, utility statement
- Signage (QR code) to see effects of erosion at various sites – help public visualize the issue
- Communication by ward (city)
- Town hall meetings with subject matter experts
- Engaging seniors and students (engagement aimed towards different age groups) – increase generational local knowledge on the issue

- How do we get people interested in this information?
- Why should anyone think about this?
- Signage (historic data and images that creates a shoreline narrative) to get people thinking
- Electronic distribution of data – more searchable website (coastal resilience data all in one place)
- Joint effort between local governments (consistent narrative for the community)
- Clear information, position (what is the problem, how are we working to solve it?)

- Meet people where they are – not a one-sized-fits-all issue (many competing interests)
- Figure out where people’s minds are
- What are the differing opinions amongst different groups?
- Need to demonstrate how coastal issues personally impact residents (soft approach)
- Educate on different planning scenarios (revetment versus no revetment)
- Need for local gov to practice the same message it’s sending out to the public
- Rumor control – central place for factual information
- Macro versus micro approach must consider local context

# Next Steps

- At the final meeting (time TBD)
  - LIAA will present the draft master plan chapter, sustainability assessment and action plan
  - Attendees will discuss the action plan for final edits

Keep up with this project at  
[resilientmichigan.org/south\\_haven](https://resilientmichigan.org/south_haven)

Questions or comments? Email Zach Vega at  
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