



PHOTO: TIM PRIEST

**Jon Rooks, the new owner of the Shoreline Inn & Suites in downtown Muskegon plans to make upgrades to the seven-year-old structure including adding WiFi to all rooms and a business center.**

## Shoring up the Shoreline

By Karen Gentry | MiBiz  
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Rafferty's Restaurant and Terrace Point Marina from the Paynes.

MUSKEGON — New amenities and decorating changes are planned for downtown Muskegon's **Shoreline Inn & Suites** by the new owner/operator, a well-known developer.

Jon Rooks, owner of **Parkland Investments Inc.** and a Grand Rapids condo developer, took ownership of the 7-year-old structure on April 17. He is impressed with the construction and waterfront views of the hotel.

"It's really the only waterfront hotel in Muskegon or Ottawa counties," Rooks told *MiBiz*. "This has turned into an unbelievable opportunity to own and operate the biggest hotel on the West Michigan shoreline and the tallest hotel in the county."

John and Susan Payne built the 140-room hotel about eight years ago and although they are credited with a vision for downtown, they could not make it a viable operation, Rooks said. In the transaction, Rooks also assumed

City officials and Rooks believe that operating as an independent, non-flagged hotel is tough in large part because it is difficult for tourists and business travelers to find it during Web searches.

"I think the past problems of the hotel were associated with marketing and service and perhaps some of the amenities that were missing," Rooks told *MiBiz*.

He plans to make decorating changes, as well as add WiFi to all the rooms and a business center with an Internet cafe.

"I think that 95 percent of what made this hotel something that could be potentially successful was done properly and five percent of the job was left incomplete," Rooks said.

He described the Shoreline Inn as a "boutique hotel" with the feel of a bed and breakfast but with all the amenities that new hotels offer.


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## Economic Development

### ROOKS

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Rooks said the Shoreline Inn was well built with an exterior of brick and stone, indoor and outdoor pool, exercise facility and meeting and conference facilities. Hotel features include watery views and balconies in all rooms, full-sized refrigerators and kitchens and some two-room suites.

"We're excited to play a larger role in the whole renaissance and rediscovery of Muskegon by West Michigan residents. The more we learn about Muskegon and the recent, positive steps it has made, the more we get excited," Rooks said.

Jill Foreman, tourism manager for **Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau**, said the CVB is pleased the Shoreline Inn will remain a hotel.

"We're very excited to already be witnessing some great changes. They've made the transition seamless for the guests," Foreman told *MiBiz*.

Downtown Muskegon is also home to the 201-room **Holiday Inn Muskegon Harbor**.

"In order for us to compete for larger meetings, we really do need another hotel in our downtown area," Foreman told *MiBiz*.

Rooks closed the 9,000-square-foot Rafferty's Restaurant and is transferring the liquor license and searching for a tenant to run and own the restaurant. The restaurant, featuring 200 feet of dining room on the water, will be fully renovated. A "nano-wall" — a part of a room that opens up to create an outdoor seating space — will be installed. If no tenant is found, Parkland Properties will run the restaurant, Rooks said.

Parkland Properties is adding new piling, water lines and dock boxes and adding an outdoor pool and making other capital improvements to the Terrace Point Marina, which includes 114 boat slips of varying sizes.

The hotel, marina and restaurant encom-

pass five acres and are adjacent to 15 acres of vacant property that can be developed in the future.

Muskegon Director of Community and Economic Development Cathy Brubaker-Clarke said Rooks has been "a real delight to work with" and commended him for becoming active in the community. She noted there are various incentives available depending on what Rooks chooses.

### Other Muskegon developments

Parkland Properties is constructing a model on the sixth floor of the **High Point Flats** development in the former Hackley bank building in downtown Muskegon. Rooks said 32 of the 70 units have been reserved for the eight-story building.

High Point Flats, originally planned as a mixed-used development, is now 100 percent residential so as to be able to offer the best financial packages for buyers and be competitive in this economy, Rooks said. **Clifford Buck Construction** is the contractor and Grand Rapids-based **Serve Studio** is the architect for the project.

**True North** CEO Dan Henrickson said his company is proceeding with **Harbor 31**, a mixed-used development planned next to the **Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center (MAREC)**. True North owns 12 lots on 25 acres in the property formerly known as Edison Landing.

"Basically, what we set out to do is an entirely sustainable development with the ultimate goal of being off the grid," Henrickson told *MiBiz*. He said True North is trying to create strategic partnerships and that a government agency is considering the site and could be the first in the development.

Build-out for the development could take at least 10 years, although road, sewer and water are already in place on the brownfield site.

"We want to move along systematically and carefully," Henrickson said. *MiBiz*