



Active Michigan Communities

Summer 2007

Welcome

Aaahhh. Michigan summer. What a gorgeous time of year to be in Michigan. The season when we take full advantage of all our natural resources like miles and miles of shorelines, trails, rivers and lakes. I'm sure your communities are in full swing with multiple festivals, recreation programs, charity walks/runs and much more. Take notice of your active community. Do more than take notice, take pictures. Collect stories. Promote your community's various offerings through a fitness directory or simply by sending an email with upcoming physical activity events. And share your musings with us. Read this newsletter to find out how you can share your community's success stories as collectively we become a more Active Michigan.

Enjoy your summer!

Risa

Risa Wilkerson
Vice President of Active Communities
Governor's Council on Physical Fitness



Community Spotlight: Portland

The City of Portland is working to ensure that the community's environments, policies, and programs support and encourage physical activity. These three active living components function like three legs of a stool; each is essential for a comprehensive approach to create and maintain an active community. Highlighted below are some of the great things Portland is doing to become a model of active living.



Current Environment

Portland created a "safe highway" across town with the construction of an 8 mile, fully ADA accessible hiking/biking trail. The quiet and scenic trail connects most of the parks, schools and downtown district and utilizes the Grand and the Looking Glass Rivers as focal points. The trail includes 3 bridge underpasses, which allow pedestrian traffic to cross under three major street intersections. It also includes 4 bridges (one fabricated and three historic bridges) to cross the two rivers in Portland.

Policies

One of the 2002 Master Plan goals is to "encourage and facilitate traditional neighborhood development patterns and enhance the walkability of the City." The Master Plan also outlines innovative approaches, such as mixed use, overlay zones, and ordinance revisions that encourage traditional neighborhood, to help realize this community vision.

Programs

The Portland Parks and Recreation Department hosts the Walk Michigan Program. These scheduled walks are a great way build a sense of community and increase participation in physical activity. In 2006, Portland hosted its first Labor Day Bridge Walk. Over 80 community members walked 4 miles and crossed all 6 bridges in town.

Portland is clearly taking important steps to encourage its residents to be more physically active. If you would like more information about what Portland is doing to be an active community, contact Mary Ellen Scheurer, Director of Parks, Recreation & Cemetery at (517) 647-7985 or RecreationDirector@portland-michigan.org.

Share Your Community's Success Stories

What is your community doing to create and sustain environments, policies, and programs that support active living? As communities recognize the impact of design, policy and programs on residents' health, there has been a growing movement in Michigan and throughout the country to create more walkable, bikeable communities to increase opportunities for physical activity. Is your community part of this growing movement? Tell the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports your story!

To make it easy for you to share your community's successes, the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness has launched a new online tool to collect stories about the successes communities have achieved in the realm of health and the built environment. Please visit: <http://www.michiganfitness.org/stories.php> to share stories about what your community is doing to remove barriers to physical activity. Your story could be featured on the Michigan Fitness Foundation website, in publications, or in presentations.

Sharing your success stories will not only raise awareness about the great things your community is doing to become a model of active living, but it will also inspire and motivate other communities to embrace active living principles. So, please encourage everyone in your community to share their stories with the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness. The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports and the Michigan Fitness Foundation envision a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle *in communities designed to support physical activity*.

For more information about the storytelling campaign, please contact Gretchen Mensing, Marketing Coordinator, at the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness at (800) 434-8642 or gmensing@michiganfitness.org.

Partnering with National Expert Raises Awareness of Active Living

Partnering with national organizations and/or experts is one way to increase the visibility of community efforts to create and maintain active living communities. In Flint, part of the efforts to increase awareness and facilitate an active community culture includes a partnership between the Safe and Active Flint (SAF) Coalition, a community-based organization funded by the Ruth Mott Foundation and facilitated through the Michigan Fitness Foundation and the Crim Fitness Foundation that is working to create an accessible walkable and bikeable street network in Flint, and the League of American Bicyclists.

Andy Clarke, Executive Director of the League of American Bicyclists, visited Flint in May to help spark a community discussion about walking and bicycling. Clarke is a nationally recognized walking and bicycling expert frequently sought after to help communities create, interpret, and implement non-motorized transportation (e.g., walking and bicycling) policy. Clarke has managed a range of bicycle and pedestrian planning projects at the state and local level, and has worked extensively with advocacy groups.

As part of his work with the SAF Coalition, Andy and his team conducted an assessment of Flint municipal codes, planning documents, and traffic and parking studies to determine how the Flint community can remove barriers to non-motorized transportation. The assessment also included a review of existing non-motorized transportation policies from college towns across the US to compile "best practices" and consider strategies that Flint could adopt to ensure that non-motorized transportation is an essential component of the community.

There was a lot of media coverage surrounding Clarke's visit, which resulted in increased awareness about active transportation in Flint. In addition to sparking media interest to raise awareness about active transportation, collaboration with nationally recognized organizations or experts can help motivate local-level groups already working within the community because they can provide resources and expertise that might otherwise be difficult to access.



Good Health is for EveryBody!

Local Lansing radio and Public Broadcasting System (PBS) television station, WKAR, is helping listeners and viewers define “good health” and suggesting ways to fit more of it into their daily lives through their new program “Good Health is for EveryBody.” Launched this spring, the program will help address the health needs and concerns of Michigan residents. The 3-year outreach initiative will focus on nutrition, exercise, and health education. The target audience is children ages two to eight, parents, and families, but everyone will find valuable health-related information that they can use.



This project will provide Michigan communities with a better understanding of what “good health” means, while offering practical ways to incorporate good health principles as part of an everyday lifestyle. Program goals include empowering children—and their families—to make wise choices that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. To accomplish this, multiple communication methods will be utilized, such as a bi-monthly newsletter as well as radio and television promotions that disseminate locally-produced health content during children’s programming.

By strategically targeting and promoting children’s health programming, becoming a portal for new and existing health-based content in conjunction with local agencies, and by being a catalyst for Michigan residents to interact in an ongoing conversation related to healthy lifestyles, WKAR will raise awareness and help affect change in the health habits in Michigan communities. Although WKAR is Lansing-based, the station has pledged to work with affiliates state-wide to disseminate health-related information. Encourage your local media to take a tip from WKAR and cover health-related issues happening in your community.

For more information on the “Good Health is for EveryBody” program, please visit <http://wkar.org/goodhealth/>.

The Fitness Fleet



The Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, will bring fitness benefit opportunities to Lansing Old Town employers and employees starting in late summer. The Governor’s Council will provide a “Fitness Fleet” of bicycles that can be checked out free of charge to promote using active transportation. Bikers can ride to meetings, errands and appointments. The Governor’s Council moves to Old Town this August and shares the community’s vision of promoting an active, healthy community. The four Fitness Fleet bikes as well as helmets, bike locks and a bike rack will be purchased from local Lansing bicycle shops.

The Dick Allen Lansing to Mackinaw (DALMAC) Fund provided a grant to the Governor’s Council to support this program. The DALMAC Fund promotes bicycling in Michigan and provides grants to programs that encourage bicycle use, teach bicycle safety or develop bicycle routes or facilities. The revenue for the fund comes from the DALMAC bicycle tour that takes place at the end of August, beginning in East Lansing and ending in Mackinaw City. For more information about the DALMAC fund, please visit: <http://www.biketcba.org/dfund/dfund.html>.

Community work and school sites that offer opportunities for physical activity during the day is a key component of an active living community. If you would like to have a “Fitness Fleet” of bicycles or something similar at your work or school site, partner with your wellness committee (if applicable) and/or encourage upper level administrators to pursue this opportunity.

Transit and Economic Development: A Golden Opportunity

By Ben Stupka, Land Programs Policy Specialist, Michigan Environmental Council

The Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), Michigan Suburbs Alliance (MSA) and Tourism Economic and Development Council of Detroit (TEDC) have announced a joint effort to execute Michigan's Golden Spike, a project designed to help southeast Michigan communities qualify for funding from the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program, which would support the planning and engineering of a commuter rail line along the Ann Arbor to Detroit corridor.

To qualify for the federal funding, regional communities must implement a process that involves developing the appropriate planning and zoning to provide community benefit from transit oriented development (TOD). To help these communities, our coalition has received a \$150,000 grant from People and Land to execute Michigan's Golden Spike, a project that seeks to educate and provide technical assistance on TOD to communities along the Ann Arbor to Detroit corridor. To be prepared, communities must build citizen and local government support, and create zoning ordinances and master plan changes that allow for the easy integration of TOD.

TOD, which has become common practice elsewhere in the United States, creates compact, walkable communities centered on high-quality transit systems. It can best be understood through its components. The highest priority of TOD is to plan and zone at the human or walkable level. A community with a transit station would plan for dense housing, retail, and commercial development within walking distance to the station, generally considered a quarter mile to a half mile. Planning and development of this type requires zoning standards that encourage high-density, mixed uses rather than wasteful parking-to-building-occupant ratios. Clearly, TOD can be a part of an active living community because the design encourages residents to walk or bicycle for purpose-driven trips.

TOD is a proven practice. It has been an economic boon to every local government that has chosen to implement it. Through implementing TOD overlays, St. Louis has seen substantial redevelopment and real estate investments near its Metro Link light rail system, which opened in 1993, generating approximately \$1 billion in the Metro's service area. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit light rail starter line has generated over \$922 million in development through TOD. Also, within five years of the construction of Portland, Oregon's light rail line, over seven million square feet of new development valued at over \$900 million occurred adjacent to the system.

The proposed line has extraordinary potential to revitalize several communities in an economically depressed region of Michigan. With the assistance of Michigan's Golden Spike, the proposed rail line promises to benefit the older municipalities along the Ann Arbor to Detroit corridor in southeast Michigan by helping them capitalize on their unique attributes to realize new economic benefits.

Endorsed Physical Activity Events

Get the Governor's Council's seal of approval on your event! The organization endorses events that encourage physical activity in communities across the state. Physical activity events that range from running races to softball tournaments are eligible to be endorsed by the Governor's Council. Having your event endorsed is free, and gives you additional publicity through the Governor's Council website! Do you have an event that you think could be endorsed by the Governor's Council or do you want to find events that have already been endorsed? Visit <http://www.michiganfitness.org/endorsements/index.php>. If you have questions about the endorsement program, contact Tricia Fraas at (800) 434-8642 or tfraas@michiganfitness.org.



Michigan Hosts 1st Safe Routes to School National Conference

The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership proudly present the **1st Safe Routes to School National Conference: Creating, Building and Sustaining Momentum**. The conference will be held **November 5-7, 2007**, at the historic Dearborn Inn in Dearborn, Michigan, with an opening reception at the internationally renowned Henry Ford Museum. The Michigan Fitness Foundation is honored to host this inaugural event. Everyone who's interested in the health and safety of school children is encouraged to attend.

The conference will address the unique needs of those in urban, suburban and rural settings and will be of interest to those working in education, transportation, law enforcement, design, health, community/advocacy, government, and, of course, Safe Routes to School programs.

To register or to learn more about the conference, including sponsorship opportunities, please visit the conference website at www.saferoutesmichigan.org/nationalconference.htm.



Assess Your Community for Active Living



How do you know if your community is designed to promote physical activity? One resource that can help is Michigan's Promoting Active Communities (PAC) program. The PAC Program includes an online self-assessment tool that a team of community members use to evaluate their community's environments, policies, and programs related to promoting and supporting physical activity. Assessment questions address issues such as community planning, recreation and bicycle

facilities, public transportation, and strategies schools and worksites use to encourage physical activity. Since 2000, over 80 communities in 40 Michigan counties have completed the online self-assessment and used the personalized community feedback report for planning purposes. For their efforts, these communities also earned an award which recognizes them for using innovative approaches to make it easier for their citizens to lead an active lifestyle. Any city, township, charter township or village in the state of Michigan can complete the assessment and be eligible to receive one of five levels of an award. **The deadline to submit completed assessments for award consideration is August 15.**

If you would like to see the PAC program initiated in your hometown, talk to your local planning department, parks and recreation department, or any city official to let them know that you would like your community involved with the PAC program. "The great thing about the Promoting Active Communities program is that it is more than an assessment tool and award," said Wilkerson. "It also brings together multidisciplinary local stakeholder groups that can advocate for community change in the realm of health and the built environment." Communities can learn more or register to complete the self-assessment (and be eligible for an award) at <http://www.mihealthtool.org/communities>. The PAC online self-assessment tool was created in partnership with the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Michigan State University, and the Prevention Research Center of Michigan.



About Us

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports was established in 1992 to improve the health of, and increase physical activity among, Michigan residents. The Michigan Fitness Foundation was created in 1994 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit public charity foundation to expedite Governor's Council policies and programs and provide a broader funding base to pursue its mission of Getting Michigan Moving. The foundation is licensed by the Michigan Attorney General to solicit and receive charitable gifts and grants (MICS 11523).

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Our Mission

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports envisions a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle in communities designed to support physical activity.

Resources

Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach, Federal Highway Administration. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/Design.htm>

Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Transportation Enhancement Program, <http://www.michigan.gov/tea>

Creating a Bicycle Friendly Community, <http://www.bikeleague.org>

ADA Standards for Accessible Design, <http://www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm>

"Non-Motorized Advisory Committee Creation," League of Michigan Bicyclists at <http://www.lmb.org>

Promoting Physical Activity—A Guide for Community Action. Available at <http://www.humankinetics.com>

Exemplary Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. Available at <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/pp/exemplary.htm#2>

Pedestrian- and Transit-Friendly Design: A Primer for Smart Growth, <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth>

