



Active Michigan Communities

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Welcome

A couple of weeks ago I was in Portland, Oregon at the Active Living by Design annual grantee meeting. It was fantastic to see how a community's commitment to becoming more walkable and bikeable can pay off. There were bike facilities everywhere and cars actually stopped when a pedestrian stepped off of the sidewalk to cross the street. The conference itself was informative and it was great to see how communities across the U.S. are working to create active living environments. What struck me was the repeated message that to truly create an active living community, it takes reaching out to partners in seemingly disparate professions and with differing interests. Each participating community that shared a "rolling reflection" emphasized how essential a multi-disciplinary group of stakeholders was to implementing projects that support active living. Dr. Howard Frumkin, a health and the built environment expert at the CDC, put it best when he said that we need to create synergy around active living. An active living community is one where residents experience increased fitness levels and improved health, but it is also one where there is a thriving economy, a cleaner environment, and enhanced community connections. Anyone can be an advocate for active living, so remember to reach out across disciplines and collaborate to realize active living goals. After all, everyone wants the same thing: a great community in which to live, work, and play.

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Community Spotlight: Fremont

Over the past few years, the City of Fremont has worked to develop a master plan and zoning ordinances that incorporate Smart Growth and active living principles, both at the City and regional levels. The City has been working collaboratively with Sheridan Charter Township and Dayton Township to create a Joint Comprehensive Development & Growth Development Management Plan. Recently, these communities have begun to see the results of the hard work put forth by all of the organizations involved in the regional active living initiatives.



Arbor Bridge in Arboretum Park

Specifically, the City of Fremont and the Fremont Planning Commission adopted the new Fremont Hybrid Form-Based Zoning Ordinance to replace previous zoning ordinances; this shift will better manage local development. The Fremont Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is working to revitalize the downtown to create a sense of place and establish it as a destination area where residents from the surrounding communities can come to shop, eat, work, and play. The Fremont Planning Commission and Chamber of Commerce are also encouraging the inclusion of sidewalks in all downtown construction projects to better connect the area to adjacent neighborhoods and to the regional non-motorized transportation network. In doing so, they will improve access to the downtown shops, increase regional connectivity, and improve community connections. The regional non-motorized transportation and continuous open space system is a collaboration between Sheridan Charter Township, Dayton Township, Sherman Township, and the City of Fremont to increase open space connectivity in Newaygo County. One very tangible example of their work is the Town & Country Path, which underwent construction in 2003 and is now into Phase 2 of development. When completed, this trail and open space network will span 25 miles and connect communities across the county and beyond.

But the local efforts to become active living communities include more than transportation networks and a vibrant downtown. Fremont hosts a summer Farmer's Market to give residents access to fresh, local produce and further create a sense of community. The City also installed street art to promote the region's culture and add to street aesthetics. As time progresses, this rural community shows what can be accomplished through collaboration and hard work to become an active living community. Visit: www.cityoffremont.net.

Changing Michigan Streets into Places

During the summer months, you may notice an increase in the number of residents spending time outside, whether going for an evening stroll or eating lunch at an outdoor café. Creating walkable and bikeable transportation networks makes these activities possible by helping to turn streets into places, or destination areas to shop, eat, socialize, or relax.



A streetscape in Traverse City

Seeing streets as places is a movement from the organization Project for Public Spaces (PPS). The “Streets as Places” initiative from PPS aims to develop more destination points along city streets that are easily accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. PPS believes that by redesigning transportation networks through the use of traffic calming techniques, adding pedestrian-and bicycle-friendly amenities, and promoting mixed use development, streets can become vibrant places in a community.

Michigan communities can benefit from changing auto-oriented streets into pedestrian-friendly places. A *Cool Cities* survey of young Michigan adults revealed that “safe streets” and “walkable streets” are among the top five attributes that they look for when deciding where to live. By creating pedestrian-and bicycle-oriented environments, you can attract these young adults, boost your local economy, and create a better sense of community. To learn more about how to transform your streets from auto spaces to community places, visit: [www.pps.org/info/streets as places](http://www.pps.org/info/streets_as_places).

New Recognition for Bicycle Friendly Businesses



Is your business or worksite bicycle-friendly? The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) recently developed a new campaign to recognize worksites that are socially responsible and try to reduce their carbon footprint by providing employees with opportunities to bicycle commute throughout the workweek. The LAB created the Bicycle Friendly Business campaign to allow all worksites with more than two employees to be honored for their efforts to accommodate bicyclists at the work place, regardless of whether their communities are recognized as bicycle-friendly through the LAB Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) campaign.

This campaign is founded on the belief that employees who are encouraged to bike commute to and from work, run errands by bike, take a spin over the lunch hour, or bicycle during their leisure time, perform better at their jobs because they are energized and more productive. These activities can provide numerous benefits for the employer as well, including reduced healthcare costs, reduced absenteeism, higher productivity of employees, and improved connections in the community through increased social responsibility.

The Bicycle Friendly Business campaign is comprised of an application process that allows worksites to better understand the barriers to implementing a bicycle-to-work program and highlights existing amenities that can be used as a foundation for improvements. Applications are accepted twice a year; deadlines are in August and April. All applications are reviewed by LAB experts with feedback from the worksite’s employees. Recognition is then awarded in four levels– platinum, gold, silver, and bronze.

To learn more about the program and benefits of becoming a bicycle-friendly business, or to apply for the recognition, visit: www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicycledfriendlybusiness/apply.php.

Is Michigan a bicycle-friendly state? The League of American Bicyclists has expanded the Bicycle Friendly Community campaign even further with Bicycle Friendly State recognition. LAB will annually rank states by their bicycle-friendliness, providing interested states with the opportunity to apply for a bicycle-friendly award to receive further recognition and promotion of their state-wide efforts to accommodate bicyclists. Report coming soon! Visit: www.bikeleague.org for more information.

Beat the Heat on Michigan Trails

Is the summer heat keeping you from enjoying outdoor physical activity? Beat the heat by using your community's trails and greenways. These non-motorized multi-use paths provide excellent opportunities to be physically active while you enjoy Michigan's natural beauty in the relief of the shade.

In Michigan, there are more than 2,000 miles of rail-trail and non-rail-trail corridors, making Michigan the state with the second highest trail mileage in the nation, and that number is growing quickly. More than 2/3 of Michigan's counties either have a trail system or are in some stage of developing one, helping communities to become connected through miles of non-motorized transportation networks. Visit:

www.michigantrails.org to view links to the many different trails in your region. Also, discover ways that you can use these trails in your regular commuting and physical activity routines year round.



Potter Park, Lansing

Kick Off Back to School With Safer Routes



Walk-to-School Day, Jackson

With the new school year quickly approaching, now is the time to raise awareness in your community about the importance of safer walking and biking routes to school. In Michigan, the Safe Routes to School program (SR2S) is helping more than 300 schools make it safe, convenient, and fun for students of all ages to walk or bicycle to school.

Searching for ways to jump start SR2S participation? One easy way is through participation in the International Walk-to-School Day, which will take place this year on Wednesday, October 8th. Walk-to-School Day is an event that encourages physical fitness, raises awareness of traffic and walking safety and environmental pollution around schools, provides quality experiences for families and communities, and is an ideal way to create interest in the Safe Routes to School program.

Join the hundreds of Michigan school children, families, and community members this October 8th, and start the day with an early morning walk to school. If the designated day does not work for your school, just choose an alternate day for your walk and begin planning your local celebration. Take advantage of this great opportunity to engage residents in your community in physical activity and encourage healthy lifestyles of local school children. Visit: www.saferoutesmichigan.org/w2sd.htm.

Map Your Walking/Biking Routes Online

Google Maps and Map My Run are helping to encourage more Americans to bike and walk instead of drive a car by creating online systems to provide walking and bicycling directions. These search engines allow you to create personal databases of popular destinations and routes, and provide customized walking and biking routes to enhance your travel or physical activity needs.



Beginning July 22nd, you can now use Google Maps to find walking directions. This search engine will provide the most direct, flat, and pedestrian-friendly routes for any walking distance 10k (6.2 miles) or less. Find the easiest way to walk to work, school, or run errands, at: <http://maps.google.com>.



The Map My Run website is commonly used by fitness enthusiasts, but can also be a useful tool to find routes and distances for everyday walking, running, or biking. This website provides user ratings and feedback on street aesthetics, traffic/sidewalk congestion, and noise. Start mapping your routes at: www.mapmyrun.com.

Share Your Community Story



Has your community embraced active living? If so, we want your stories! With this year's Promoting Active Communities (PAC) program complete, the PAC staff is working to collect stories from communities across the state that encourage and support physical activity among residents. Community members, local government officials, teachers, and worksites alike can share their experiences to provide different perspectives of the impacts, barriers, and strategies to incorporating active living environments into a community.

By sharing the lessons you have learned through your work to create an active living community, you will not only provide information that can be used to improve the PAC, but your stories can also help other communities stay motivated or inspire new communities to participate in the PAC in future years.

It only takes a few minutes to share your community story. Visit: www.michiganfitness.org/stories and fill out an online form. By completing the form, your story maybe featured on the PAC homepage, on the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness website, or in other publications. Help us help more Michigan communities become active living communities!

New PACket of Resources

Are you searching for more resources to enhance your active living efforts? The Promoting Active Communities (PAC) program has expanded its resources to provide easy tips, facts and links, and examples from active Michigan communities. Advocating for active living just got easier thanks to the following new tools.

- Downloadable template presentations, including (1) brief overviews of the PAC and active living, (2) Michigan active living community stories, and (3) a community results presentation for previous PAC participants.
- PAC mentors, which allow you to talk with your peers about the PAC program and learn about active living initiatives in Michigan.
- Model Ordinances from Michigan communities using innovative strategies to integrate active living into zoning ordinances and master plans.

These new resources are available at: www.michiganfitness.org/active/ActiveMichiganCommunities.

Looking for more resources? Visit: www.michiganfitness.org/active to find fact sheets that highlight the multiple benefits of active living and a resource guide with links to active living websites and publications. And don't forget to download your free copy of Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities, an ideal resource for any planning project in your community. Available at: www.mihealthtools.org/communities.

Add to your active living toolbox with these national reports and fact sheets:

- The *Easter Seals Project Action* released a new fact sheet for people working to include persons with disabilities in transportation planning. The fact sheet titled, "Including People with Disabilities in Coordinated Transportation Plans," is available for free download at: http://secure2.convio.net/es/site/Ecommerce/508447018?FOLDER=1071&store_id=3863
- Funder's Network for Smart Growth continues its transportation policy report series with the release of its most recent series on Transportation and Healthy Communities. This series focuses on the relationships of transportation systems to obesity, pollution, and pedestrian/bicycle fatalities and injuries. View the entire paper at: www.completestreets.org/documents/fundersnetwork_trans_july2008.pdf.
- Complete Streets has released a "Complete Streets and High Gas Prices" fact sheet for pedestrian and bicycle advocates to use to support their case for reducing the nation's dependence on oil through designing walkable and bikeable communities. Available at: www.completestreets.org/documents/cs-gasprices-screen.pdf.

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.



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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.

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.

Additional Resources

Connecting Michigan: A Statewide Trails Vision and Action Plan. The year-long efforts of 10 task forces in Michigan culminated with this report that examines funding, natural resources, trail design standards, mapping, coordination and collaboration, and advocacy for joining all Michigan communities within a trails and greenways system. Download the report at: www.connectingmichigan.org.

Tips for Communicating about Health Impacts. Design for Health, a partnership between the University of Minnesota, Cornell University, and the University of Colorado, offers a unique document that provides tips on how to communicate about the health impacts of the built environment. View the document at: www.designforhealth.net.

The Quick Easy Guide to School Wellness. Now available through the Healthy Schools Campaign (HSC) out of Chicago, this guide provides steps to creating a healthier school environment for children, covering easy nutrition and fitness changes that almost every school can accomplish. To learn more and view the guide for free, visit: <http://healthyschoolscampaign.org/campaign/wellness/>.

Network for a Healthy California-Worksite Program. The California Department of Health Services provides this guide and business kit to help employers develop and implement a culture and environment at their workplaces that support healthy eating and physical activity among employees. Visit the website to learn more about the program and obtain ideas on how to implement a healthy employee program at your worksite. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/WorksiteProgram.aspx>.

To Subscribe to the Active Michigan Communities Newsletter

Contact Sarah Panken at (800) 434-8642 or slpanken@michiganfitness.org to provide an e-mail address