



Active Michigan Communities

November/December 2006

Welcome

Happy Holidays. This is a fabulous season for physical activity. Take a walk through the neighborhood with someone you love to see the festive lights. Park farther away when you shop. Consider physical-activity related gifts for your family (and yourself!) and embrace some winter fun—build a snowman or try a winter sport like snow shoeing or cross-country skiing.

In this newsletter, you'll read about how the mid-sized community of Wyoming is working to promote physical activity through new parks and recreation programs and community planning. So many places in Michigan are moving toward the active living vision. Tell us about your community for a future community spotlight.

You'll also read about the "Top 10" Land Use Policy changes suggested by planners in South Carolina during an Active Living by Design (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant program) learning network discussion.

We hope you enjoy this issue and be sure to write to us with your feedback on anything you read or on ideas for future newsletters.

Until next time, stay warm, dry and active!

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Community Spotlight: Wyoming



Wyoming is located in southwestern Michigan in Kent County. The city is a mid-sized community with many amenities, including 21 city-maintained parks, public recreation facilities, active senior center, and access to the Kent Trails. This year, Wyoming was one of ten first-time participants in the Promoting Active Communities Program, which is an online self-assessment tool to determine how the community is encouraging an active lifestyle for its residents and where changes could be made to enhance Wyoming as an active community. The hard work of the community resulted in Wyoming being recognized with a Bronze level award. Besides participating in the Promoting Active Communities Program, Wyoming is also using these other exciting strategies to encourage active lifestyles:

- In July, the community actively promoted *Play Day* with festivities that included a one mile walk/run and a variety of games and activities designed to get people motivated about physical activity.
- Development of new Parks and Recreation programs
 - Geocaching
 - Parent/Child Sports
- The Stepping Stones Program began offering aquatic therapy at local YMCAs
- Review of the Community Recreation Master Plan will begin in 2007

For more information about the great programs in Wyoming, please contact the Park and Recreation Department at (616) 530-3164, parks_info@ci.wyoming.mi.us, or visit <http://www.ci.wyoming.mi.us/>.

“Caching” Physical Activity Fever

Mike Steklac, Chelsea City Manager, is using an innovative approach to get residents and visitors to participate in fun physical activity. He is promoting geocaching; a recreational activity in which participants use a Global Positioning System (GPS) to find the location of hidden objects, known as “geocaches,” using latitude and longitude coordinates. Geocaches usually consist of containers that hold a log book and sometimes items to trade.

Using the Michigan Steps Up! Program goal to promote healthy lifestyles in Michigan as inspiration, Mr. Steklac developed the *Charming Chelsea City Cache* in Chelsea to encourage people to be physically active in the community. This cache consists of a series of four geocaches located throughout the city that participants must find in a particular order. The first geocache gives you clues to find the second, and so on. Participants obtain partial coordinates from the first three geocaches to enable them to find the final geocache. In addition, participants have to solve a series of questions using the Walking Map in downtown Chelsea to get access to the final geocache. Placing the geocaches throughout the community encourages residents and visitors to get out into the community and explore Chelsea while promoting physical activity.

For more information about geocaching, visit: www.geocaching.com or Mike Steklac’s Blog, The Chelsea Report, at <http://chelseacitymanager.blogspot.com>.



A typical geocache



Chelsea's Walking Map

Michigan Vehicle Code More Bike-Friendly

In August Governor Granholm signed into law SB 1224 which outlines vehicle code, including bicycles. This bill provides clear language in reference to bicycles and their operation on Michigan roads. Key provisions of this law pertaining to bicycles are as follows:

- **Yield the right of way:** Vehicular traffic must yield the right-of-way to bicyclists or pedestrians lawfully in an intersection or adjacent crosswalk.
- **Mandatory side path:** Persons using an electric personal assistive mobility device may, by local ordinance, be required to use a designated path for bicycles.
- **Exceptions to far right:** Bicyclists must ride as far to the right as is practical unless they are passing, preparing to turn left, going straight through an intersection, on a one-way street with at least two marked lanes, or conditions make riding on the right side of the street unsafe.
- **Two abreast riding:** Bicyclists may not ride more than two abreast, unless a path or portion of the highway or street has been designated for bicycle use.
- **Parking a bicycle on a sidewalk:** Bicycles may be parked on the sidewalk as long as it is not prohibited by an official traffic control device or it impedes lawful movements of pedestrians or other traffic.



A companion bill, SB 1225, has been introduced by Senator Tom George. This bill stipulates that education about bicyclists and their rights on the road be taught in driver’s education classes. Currently, SB 1225 is holding in the Senate Transportation Committee under review. For more information about SB 1224 and 1225, visit <http://www.michiganlegislature.org/mileg.asp?page=Bills>.

“Top 10” Land Use Policy Changes

On October 17, Active Living by Design (ALbD) sponsored a “learning network” conference call to highlight approaches that can effectively influence land use policy change and potentially make your community more active living-friendly. Dan Hatley, Planning Director, and Alec Brebner, Assistant Planning Director, for the Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments in South Carolina discussed the top ten land use regulations/policy changes that communities can use to complement their efforts to design and promote active lifestyles. They focused on making changes to the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations. The delivery was “David Letterman Top-Ten” style and began with number ten and worked up to number one.

10. Require sidewalks in subdivision regulations

⇒ Ensuring that new developments include sidewalks is a simple way to increase opportunities for physical activity

9. Amend the zoning ordinance to allow Accessory Dwelling Units

⇒ Accessory Dwelling Units such as “mother in-law” or garage apartments attached to an existing single family residence can increase the population density of an area. Increased density often means that there are more destinations in close proximity that people can access by walking or biking. It also suggests that there is more demand for active living amenities like public transportation.

8. Require a grid pattern of streets, eliminate or minimize cul de sacs, and require connections to surrounding development in subdivision regulations

⇒ Connecting sections of a neighborhood or adjacent neighborhoods can make travel by non-motorized transportation modes more convenient.

7. Reduce parking requirement in zoning ordinance

⇒ Less parking means that there is an opportunity to create more facilities, or destinations. Having destinations clustered together gives people a reason to use walking or biking for purpose-driven trips.

6. Allow subdivision regulations to require alleys and on-street parking

⇒ Alleys with garages in back of residences provide a nicer environment for pedestrians, while on-street parking provides a buffer between pedestrians and road traffic.

5. Amend the zoning ordinance to allow for shorter setbacks

⇒ This allows for buildings to be closer to the lot line, which can increase social interaction among neighbors and provide a more inviting atmosphere for pedestrians.

4. Narrow right of way width in subdivision regulations

⇒ A more narrow thoroughfare slows down traffic, which is safer for pedestrians.

3. Reduce lot size requirements in zoning ordinance

⇒ Smaller lot size requirements can result in more compact development and clustered destinations.

2. Limit large block size in subdivision regulations

⇒ Limiting large block size ensures that the scale of development is pedestrian-friendly.

1. Include a provision in the zoning ordinance for mixed use

⇒ Having employment, schools, shops, and residences clustered together in the same area makes walking and biking to destinations convenient.

Lansing's Walking and Biking Task Force



To examine solutions to make Lansing a more pedestrian and bicycle friendly community, Mayor Virg Bernero formed the Walking and Biking Task Force on October 20. The Task Force is co-chaired by Andy Kilpatrick, Director of the City of Lansing's Parking and Transportation Division, and Jessica Yorke of the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Committee, but is comprised of representatives from various organizations and agencies. Thus, this is a collaborative effort in which health, business, environmental, transportation, and community advocacy groups come to the table to share their vision as to what the City of Lansing needs to do to promote and encourage walking and biking. Through a visioning process, members discuss what they think Lansing is doing well in terms of non-motorized transportation and where improvements can be made. After the visioning phase, members will re-group and create an action plan. Eventually the Task Force will make recommendations to the Mayor for improving street and sidewalk design, signage, and traffic signals.

Grant Opportunities

Environmental Protection Agency FY 2007 Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup Grants

Deadline for Applications: December 8, 2006

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that \$72 million in funding is available for the Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund (RLF), and Cleanup grants.

Geographic information system (GIS) technology is applicable to brownfield redevelopment at many stages of the process including inventorying, prioritizing sites, conducting environmental assessment and site characterization, tracking cleanup efforts, and promoting revitalized properties.

Examples of ESRI GIS software solutions for this grant and full grant guidelines are provided in the ESRI Sample Text document, accessible by registering or updating your information on the ESRI Grant Notification System at <http://www.esri.com/grants/nonesri/housing.html>.

Hamburger Helper Announces Grant Program for Local Communities Across America

Deadline for Applications: May 31, 2007

Hamburger Helper, a General Mills food brand, is looking to lend a "helping hand" to neighborhoods across the United States with its "My Hometown Helper" grant program. Individuals from communities and organizations across America can visit the program's Web site to submit a written essay describing how the "My Hometown Helper" grant would help improve their community project.

Examples of possible community projects include: lights or bleachers for baseball, soccer, or football fields; playground equipment for a park; new uniforms for Little League teams, etc. Applicants can request a one-time award of between \$500 and \$15,000 during any single month.

All requests for funding must be sponsored by a municipal or civic organization or public school. The program will award "helping hand" grants each month from online applications received through May 2007. Applications will be evaluated monthly. Funds will be awarded based on the merit of the project, including its impact on and support within the community. For more information on the "My Hometown Helper" program and complete guidelines, visit the program's Web site: <http://www.myhometownhelper.com/>.



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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).

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

The **National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO)** is a national organization representing local health departments. NACCHO works to support efforts that protect and improve the health of all people and all communities by promoting national policy, developing resources and programs, seeking health equity and supporting effective local public health practice and systems. The website has a section on Community Design and Land Use Planning as it relates to health and the built environment. It provides resources such as a "Public Health in Land Use Planning & Planning Design" fact sheet, a guide to working with city officials to promote healthy land use planning, and an environmental checklist for health officials. For these great resources and more visit:

http://www.naccho.org/topics/hpdp/land_use_planning/LUP_Toolbox.cfm

For more information on bicyclist rights, biking events, and policy affecting bicyclists in Michigan, visit the League of Michigan Bicyclists website: www.lmb.org

Active Living by Design is national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is part of the UNC School of Public Health in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. This program establishes innovative to increase physical activity through community design, public policies, and communication strategies. For more information visit: www.activelivingbydesign.org

The Surface Transportation Policy Project is a diverse, nationwide coalition working to ensure safer communities and smarter transportation choices that [enhance the economy](#), [improve public health](#), [promote social equity](#), and [protect the environment](#). Visit their website at: www.transact.org

