



Active Michigan Communities

2008 Issue 5

Welcome



Recently, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to attend the Physical Activity and Public Health Institute: Practitioner's Course in Park City, Utah. As part of the course, the public health practitioners (and me) conducted a walking audit with a group of local stakeholders who are in the process of trying to strategically improve non-motorized transportation access and safety in the community. The problem area we focused on was the main drag into town, which is currently not particularly safe or inviting for pedestrians or bicyclists. As we conducted the walking audit, we noted sidewalk gaps, lack of bike facilities, and poorly designed crossings. After the walking audit, we re-convened to discuss feasible (and some not so feasible) approaches to make this area more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. Through the course of the discussion, I found it interesting that the local folks wanted to focus almost solely on infrastructure fixes. It reminded me of the adage, "if you build it, they will come." I appreciate the tendency to focus on infrastructure, after all it's what you see (as noted above); it's tangible. But, improving the infrastructure is only part of the solution (albeit an important one). Don't forget to think about creative solutions to improve non-motorized transportation opportunities in your community. To complement infrastructure changes, be sure to consider education, encouragement, and enforcement solutions. This more balanced approach will help ensure the sustainability of active living in your community.

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Community Spotlight: Birmingham

The City of Birmingham is a great example of how hard work and dedication can transform a community into an active living community! Since 2006, local organizations and community members have been working to enhance Birmingham's policies, programs, and built environment to better accommodate healthy, active lifestyles of residents.

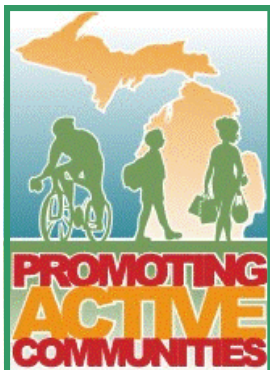
Birmingham has undergone an active living transformation. The local city council and planners recently developed a new master plan for the community's Triangle District, which is designed to be a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented destination place for work and leisure activities. In addition, the zoning ordinances for the downtown area have been replaced by form-based codes. Having these new codes will help to better manage local development in the Triangle District and surrounding neighborhoods. To gain local support for these changes, charrettes, or development workshops, were used to engage community members in the planning process.



The City of Birmingham's transition to an active community also includes the expansion of local multi-modal paths and walkways to promote biking and walking; new maps highlighting walking and biking routes throughout the community; a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly downtown; and the addition of new facilities at the more than 20 parks and recreation areas in Birmingham. Furthermore, the City of Birmingham is dedicated to creating a sense of place in the community. The Arts Board and Cultural Council created the Cityscapes program that gives local artists the opportunity to display sculptures throughout the city, and provides residents and visitors with a walking map of sculpture locations. The community also hosts a concert series and a seasonal farmer's market.

All of these improvements show that Birmingham is becoming a vibrant, active community and is setting an example for what can be accomplished here in Michigan. For more information about Birmingham or any of the current community projects, please visit: www.ci.birmingham.mi.us.

Twenty-Three Michigan Communities Receive Active Living Award



Twenty-three Michigan communities have earned a Promoting Active Communities (PAC) award in recognition of local efforts to promote and support daily physical activity; a concept called *active living*. Teams of local stakeholders in these communities are using innovative strategies to create more walkable and bikeable environments, which have been shown to yield economic prosperity, enhanced community health, and an overall higher quality of life for all residents.

These honored communities are eligible for a PAC award because of their successful completion of the Promoting Active Communities *free*, online self-assessment, which is a tool to review community policies, programs, and the built environment as it relates to active living. Through participation in the PAC program, communities gain valuable information about barriers and potential assets within the community; develop partnerships as teams of community stakeholders work together to complete the assessment; raise awareness of the importance of active living; and receive a personalized community feedback report that is ideal for future planning.

GOLD AWARD

- City of Ann Arbor*
- City of Birmingham*
- Meridian Charter Township*
- City of Novi*
- City of Portage*

SILVER AWARD

- City of Big Rapids*
- City of Cadillac*
- Canton Charter Township*
- Georgetown Charter Township*
- City of Manistee*
- City of Mount Pleasant*
- City of Sandusky*
- City of St. Clair*

BRONZE AWARD

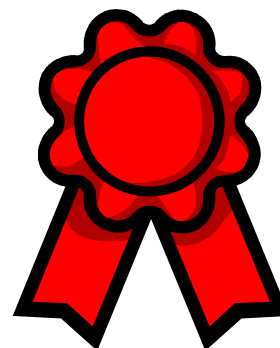
- City of Eastpointe*
- Village of Kalkaska*
- City of Lake City*
- City of Montague*
- City of Saginaw*
- Superior Township*
- City of Vassar*

COPPER AWARD

- City of Sault Ste. Marie*

HONORABLE MENTION

- Crockery Township*
- Village of Newberry*



Want to learn how to become an active living advocate and discover ways to initiate participation in the Promoting Active Communities program, visit: www.michiganfitness.org/active. Take advantage of the multiple resources to enhance your active living efforts. Learn more about the PAC program and begin working on your self-assessment at: www.mihealthtools.org/communities.

Ceremony to Honor Active Michigan Communities

The 23 communities that participated in the 2008 Promoting Active Communities program will be honored at a reception on Wednesday, December 3rd, in downtown Lansing. The Governor, state legislators, community and public health workers, and city planners are invited to recognize the hard work and dedication of these active Michigan communities. Dr. Barry Franklin, Director of Cardiac Rehabilitation & Exercise Laboratories for Beaumont Hospitals, will be the special guest speaker and will discuss the multiple benefits of designing active living communities in Michigan.

These 23 communities are now part of a network of more than 95 Michigan communities in 49 counties that have embraced active living.

Forty-One Michigan Schools Receive SR2S Funding



Forty-one Michigan elementary and middle schools will receive funding for Safe Routes to School programs in the 2008-2009 school year. On September 30, Lieutenant Governor John Cherry announced that these schools have been awarded a total of more than \$8.7 million in federal Safe Routes to School funding. The awarded money will be used to increase education and encouragement of walking or bicycling to school as well as improve infrastructure to make routes safer for children to get to and from school.

The following counties, communities, and schools will receive Safe Routes to School funding this academic year:

Berrien County:

The City of Benton Harbor

Calvin Britain Elementary School
Seely McCord Elementary School

The Village of Stevensville

Roosevelt Elementary School

The City of Watervliet

Watervliet South Elementary School
Watervliet North Elementary School
Watervliet Middle School

Genesee County:

The City of Flint

Williams Elementary School

The City of Grand Blanc

Grand Blanc Middle School

Kalamazoo County:

The Village of Augusta

Galesburg-Augusta Intermediate School
Galesburg-August Middle School

Kent County:

The City of Lowell

Cherry Creek Elementary School

Mackinac County:

The City of St. Ignace

St. Ignace Elementary School

Muskegon County:

The City of Muskegon Heights

Ellen Grace Loftis Elementary School

Oakland County:

The City of Pontiac

Herrington Elementary School

Saginaw County:

The City of Saginaw

Herig Elementary School

Tuscola County:

The Village of Mayville

Mayville Elementary School

Wayne County:

The City of Detroit

Barbour Magnet Middle School
Burt Elementary School
Fleming Elementary School
Frank Murphy Elementary and Middle School
Harms Elementary School
Maybury Elementary School
Munger Elementary School
Nichols Middle School
Nolan Preparatory School of Excellence
Peter Vetal Elementary and Middle School
Stewart Elementary and Middle School
Trix Elementary and Middle School

Grosse Ile Township

Grosse Ile Middle School
Parke Lane Elementary School
Meridian Elementary School

The City of Hamtramck

Bridge Academy
Dickinson East Elementary School
Frontier International Academy
Hanley International Academy
Holbrook Elementary School
Kosciuszko Middle School

The City of Highland Park

Barber Focus School
Cortland Academy
Henry Ford Academy

The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports coordinate the Safe Routes to School program in Michigan, in collaboration with the Departments of Community Health and Education, as well as several non-profit organizations and universities. To learn more about the program or find out about how you can get involved with SR2S, visit: www.saferoutesmichigan.org.

Holiday Emphasizes Need for Walkable Neighborhoods

Trick-or-treat! Words that might scare you, but not because of the neighborhood children dressed up as goblins and witches. Instead, that common Halloween phrase might make you concerned about the safety of these children as they are out walking around your community. The fear of an unsafe neighborhood includes pedestrian safety. Are there sidewalks? Will children have to cross busy streets with high speed traffic? Will drivers be able to see the children who are dressed up in dark costumes with no reflective qualities?



All of these concerns emphasize the need for a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood design that is conducive to these types of celebrations as well as daily walks and bike rides. A simple way for you to improve the pedestrian and bicycle safety in your neighborhood can be completed during Halloween trick-or-treating. Conduct your own walking audit. Tag along with your children or your neighbors and their children as they walk from door-to-door on October 31st. Note any problem areas or safety concerns that are highlighted on your journey. Present that information to your community leaders and planners to initiate projects to improve pedestrian safety and create walkable neighborhoods for future trick-or-treaters! For more ways to help your neighborhood celebrate Halloween safely, visit: www.halloween-safety.com.

Three Michigan Communities Host Bike Exchange Events

As part of the ServiceNation campaign, three Michigan communities hosted bike exchange events. Detroit, Grand Rapids, and Lansing each held a Day of Action on September 27th, providing various bike-related activities for all attendees. Some activities included free bicycle maintenance checks, bicycle safety training, bike repairs, and donation services. The communities of Detroit and Lansing also hosted group rides following the event.

ServiceNation is a national campaign that encourages service and volunteerism. Thanks to this service event hosted by Hub/Back Alley Bikes in Detroit, Motion Initiative in Grand Rapids, and MSU Bikes & Share-a-Bike in Lansing, 28 bikes and 22 bike parts were donated to the bike exchange programs. To learn more about the bike exchange event, visit: www.michiganfitness.org/bikeexchange/index.html. For information regarding the ServiceNation campaign, visit: www.bethechangeinc.org/servicenation. To donate a bike or bike parts, visit: www.bikes.msu.edu/donations/index.html.

Online Community for Livable Streets

The Livable Streets Network is an online community for people working to create sustainable cities through sensible urban planning, design, and transportation policy. The Network provides free, open source, web-based resources for citizens interested in developing a greener economy, addressing climate change, reducing oil dependence, alleviating traffic congestion, and providing better access to good jobs in healthy communities.



Some of the free online resources include a blog to facilitate communication between advocates of active living across the nation; a database of films produced by the Livable Streets Network that highlight different ways that cities across the world are reclaiming their streets; an online encyclopedia to help you learn about sustainable transportation; implementation and design ideas for policies, programs, and practices; and online meeting groups. The Livable Streets Network provides photos, testimonials, and case studies to enhance your active living advocacy efforts here in Michigan.

For more information and to join the Livable Streets Network, visit: www.livablestreets.com.

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

Government Includes Bicycle Commuter Benefit in Bailout. Buried within the recent government bailout is the Bicycle Commuter Act. Section 211 of House Resolution 1424 includes a bicycle commuter reimbursement. Starting next year, employers who provide bicycle parking, shower facilities, tune-ups, or other support for bicycle commuters, can deduct up to \$20 a month per participating employee from their taxable income. To read more about the resolution and the implications for bicycle commuters, visit: www.bikeleague.org/news/100708adv.php.

Build for America Five-Point Plan. Transportation For America has developed a five-point plan for transportation investments that will help to stimulate an economic recovery. The plan aims to help families save money, reduce American dependence on foreign oil, fix existing street systems, and influence the use of cleaner forms of transportation (e.g., walking, biking). To view the plan, visit: www.t4america.org/docs/buildforamerica.pdf

Grand Blanc Township's ClearZoning Codes Now Available Online. Grand Blanc Township's new interactive zoning ordinances are now available online. These ordinances were developed by *ClearZoning*, a service that transforms municipal zoning codes from black and white documents into colorful, graphic documents that are interactive and more user-friendly. Grand Blanc Township is the first community in Michigan to implement *ClearZoning*. The intent of adopting *ClearZoning* is to retain the regulatory aspect of the codes, but to change the way that community members view and interact with municipal codes. To view the document, visit: www.clearzoning.com.

To Subscribe to the Active Michigan Communities Newsletter

Contact Sarah Panken at (800) 434-8642 or

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