

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR

Active Michigan. Communities

**Imagining, Creating, and Improving Communities for
Physical Activity, Active Living, and Recreation**



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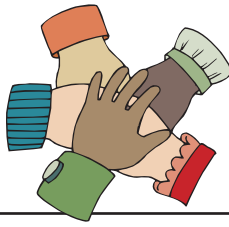
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INTRODUCTION: GETTING MICHIGAN MOVING!

“Active living environments are places where all people are able and inspired to use their feet to get them places. They are places where people of all ages, incomes and abilities can walk and bike—both for recreation and for transportation.”

—Michigan Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports

During the late 1990s, leaders at the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and the Michigan Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports created a new state initiative on physical activity. Their goal was to inspire Michigan communities to change their policies and built environment to make it easier for local residents to be physically active. The resulting program, Promoting Active Communities (PAC), helps communities analyze how they can improve their support for active living. The PAC is a web-based self-assessment tool that enables communities to scrutinize their policies, programs, and environments by completing a checklist (<http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities>). The assessment requires teamwork between community leaders, professionals, and citizens, and generates abundant ideas for community improvements. Upon completion, every community receives an award from the Michigan Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports, based on their assessment score.

Since 2001, more than 70 communities have completed the PAC and received awards. Over 20 communities have completed the assessment multiple times, and most of those have made enough improvements in their community to move up the awards ladder.

Encouraged by so many successes, in 2003 MDCH and the Governor’s Council teamed up with the Prevention Research Center of Michigan/University of Michigan School of Public Health and Michigan State University to improve the PAC Award system, increase promotion efforts, and evaluate the program’s effectiveness. The first step was to form a Michigan Promoting Active Communities Steering Committee of statewide experts, officials, and organizers who work in relevant areas, including social services, legislation, health care, recreation, transportation, urban planning, education, law enforcement, and land use. (Members of the steering committee are listed in the acknowledgements on page 6).

The steering committee oversaw three processes that guided the PAC improvements. First, a systematic review of research on public health, urban and regional planning, and transportation helped identify evidence-based environmental and policy indicators associated with physical activity. Second, focus groups gathered feedback from previous PAC users and neighborhood leaders. Finally, existing tools for assessing neighborhood walkability, bikeability, and built environments were evaluated for use in the PAC. Twenty-seven national and state experts then reviewed all the materials.

Creating an active living community can require oversight, patience, and purposeful planning. One comment consistently heard from previous PAC Award recipients was the need for more specific guidance on how to move forward to achieve a more active community. *Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities* is the new companion guide to the PAC program. This book was created to help people in Michigan—city and township leaders, elected officials, planners, transportation professionals, parks and recreation professionals, bicycle enthusiasts, business owners, and neighborhood residents—envision and create safe, walkable, bikeable, and enjoyable Michigan communities.

Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities is organized into seven chapters.

- Chapter 1, “The Active Living Vision,” sets the stage by describing active living communities. It calls attention to the benefits of these communities and highlights some important Michigan initiatives.
- Chapter 2, “Design Essentials for Active Living,” defines guiding principles for active living that can be applied in rural, suburban, and urban areas.
- Chapter 3, “Designing for Pedestrians,” illustrates common characteristics of pedestrian-friendly communities related to sidewalks, street crossings, and traffic calming.
- Chapter 4, “Designing for Bicyclists,” outlines some of the key features of bikeable communities, including street design elements and bicycle facilities.
- Chapter 5, “Parks, Shared-Use Paths, and Trails,” highlights parks, and shows more possibilities for active travel and recreation on paths separated from motor vehicles.
- Chapter 6, “More Active Living Design Ideas,” provides information on several areas of active living design that are not specific to any one type of user, such as construction and maintenance issues, seasonal concerns, and the design of public transportation and public spaces.
- Chapter 7, “Steps for Creating an Active Living Community,” shares ideas for community planning, organizing, and advocacy.

At the end of the book, you’ll find an annotated guide to resources, a glossary, and a bibliography.

We hope that you and your community members will enjoy this guidebook. Share it with your neighbors and colleagues, and consider changes that your community can make to support active living. We also encourage you to visit the PAC website, gather a PAC team, fill out the assessment questionnaire, and receive an award as you work to *get Michigan moving!*