





7 STEPS FOR CREATING AN ACTIVE LIVING COMMUNITY

Making your community's active living dream a reality requires action. Citizen involvement in the planning process is crucial. This isn't hard to accomplish: Planning meetings are open meetings. In addition, planning processes—such as approvals of new subdivisions—require public hearings and citizen input, and the final decision makers are city councilors, township trustees, and other leaders elected by you! Remember, you aren't alone in your desire to create an active community environment. Urban planners, architects, landscape architects, and developers as well as members of the business, health, and education communities are getting excited about the design approaches recommended in the previous chapters.

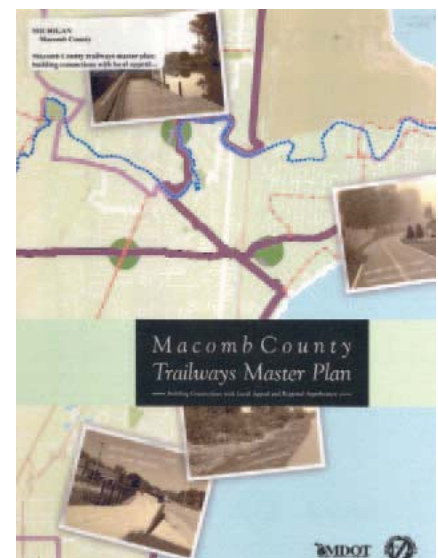
Four steps will get you started: (1) raise awareness and build coalitions; (2) conduct a community audit; (3) participate in planning; and (4) revise your regulations. If you don't know much about planning, you're not alone. The following primer on planning provides some helpful information before this chapter discusses each of the four steps.

Planning 101

Planning is a *process* whereby people and their elected representatives make decisions about their community and its future. In Michigan, the state legislature has given every local government the right to plan for its community and to designate appropriate land uses through zoning. The legislation that grants these rights also lays out guidelines for planning processes, such as requiring open meetings and official records of what happens at meetings.

This section provides a quick guide to help you participate more fully in your local planning process and help move your community toward an active living environment. The following pages describe some of the actors, plans, laws, and processes involved in local planning.

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The Actors

Many people are involved in planning. These include persons who represent the public interest, such as citizens groups, planning commissioners, professional planners, and elected councilors, as well as individuals from the private sector, such as developers, business owners, and landowners. Above all, local residents play a very important role in determining how their community looks and functions.

In local government, several key personnel are responsible for the planning process. *Planners* are professionals who collect data on the community and conduct important analyses for long-term plans. They are the local government employees with whom developers and investors first interact when they have a project for the community. Planners aren't the sole decision makers, but they provide the information that helps citizens and leaders understand their options and select the best course of action.

The *planning commission* (also called the *planning board*) is a body of volunteers appointed by their local government. Planning commissioners represent citizens' views on their community. They help draft community plans and make decisions on specific development projects. Planning commissioners also act as advisors to elected officials.

Members of the *zoning board of appeals* (also called the *zoning board of adjustment* or *ZBA*), as the name suggests, make decisions regarding disputes over zoning. The decisions of these government-appointed volunteers are final but may be appealed in the courts. For example, if a person living in a single-family residential zone wants to change the use of his or her house from a single-family home to a business office, the person will probably have to appear before the ZBA to explain why this should be allowed. Allowing an owner to use property in a way that conflicts with an ordinance is known as *granting a variance*.

Community residents vote into office *elected leaders*, such as city and village councilors and township trustees. In some communities, a member of the council or board also serves on the planning commission. Decisions about planning and zoning (including those made by the planning commission) become binding and legally enforceable once passed by the elected leaders.

In the private sector, *land owners* and *private developers* are critical actors. Although some of a community's infrastructure is built by the city, town, county, or even state (for example, highways), much more is constructed by the private sector. Private developers create housing subdivisions, shopping centers, malls, and office parks. How they do so is largely directed by the other actors and by local plans and ordinances.

The Plans

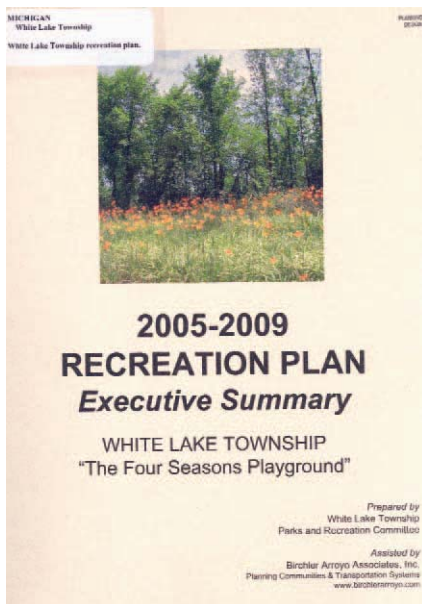
Local governments can craft an unlimited number of plans—and sometimes they do! Communities often create three types of plans: master plans, recreation plans, and neighborhood plans. Metropolitan planning

THE MASTER PLAN IS IMPORTANT

The master plan:

- Establishes a shared vision for your community and its future
- Lays out tangible goals and specific projects for local government investment
- Provides the basis for local regulations that govern land use and development
- Serves as a community calling card, presenting your community, its vision, and its plans to non-residents and would-be investors





organizations (such as regional planning commissions or councils of government) create a fourth type of plan: regional transportation plans.

The *master plan* (also known as the *comprehensive plan*) identifies a community vision, lays out specific goals and objectives, and details action steps to get there. It is long-term in scope, often extending 20 years into the future. An important aspect of the master plan is the *future land-use map*. This map details where growth is anticipated and what type and intensity of uses are expected or desired.

Master plans often have a section on transportation that sets objectives and investment priorities for local streets. A pedestrian master plan is a specific plan to enhance the walkability of a community. A bicycle master plan, likewise, focuses on making a community more bikeable.

Recreation plans cover parks, open spaces, associated facilities, and recreational and cultural programming. These plans have narrower scopes and shorter time frames than master plans. In Michigan, many recreation plans have been created in response to funding programs offered by state government and administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Neighborhood plans (also called *sub-area plans*) analyze a limited geographical area such as a neighborhood or a commercial shopping area, create a vision for that area, and make recommendations for action. Larger cities that have multiple, distinct neighborhoods or shopping districts often use these plans.

If you are in an urbanized area, the transportation network for your community is also greatly influenced by a *regional transportation plan* (RTP). Most RTPs have as key objectives the safety, accessibility, and reliability of the transportation system. The federal government requires regional planners to prepare an RTP before any federal transportation dollars can flow to the region. RTPs determine how federal funding for transportation is spent. In recent years, most transportation plans have increased spending on non-motorized transportation because the federal government has explicitly supported this expenditure. However, funding for non-motorized transportation is still minuscule compared to that for motorized transportation.

For rural areas, transportation needs are identified through coordination between the Michigan Department of Transportation and local elected officials. Rural Task Forces are often formed to collaborate and identify projects.

GREENWAYS PLANS

The term *greenway* refers to a linear open space or natural area, often



running along a watercourse such as a creek or river. A greenway can connect people to parks, natural areas, and historical sites. Many greenways facilitate physical activity such as walking, biking, and bird watching. Greenways provide several environmental benefits and are a great asset for active living.

A greenways plan is a plan that compiles information on existing greenspaces, determines ways to protect them from development, identifies funding sources, and establishes appropriate uses and management approaches that will provide benefits for all residents. Greenways plans are normally developed at a regional level, often in conjunction with planning for watershed protection.

A very exciting and ambitious greenways project in southeast Michigan, the Downriver Linked Greenways Initiative, began construction in 2005. The project will link 17 downriver communities and Wayne County, and will provide non-motorized access to over 6,800 acres of parkland. This collaborative effort involves local government, private industry, local foundations, universities, and health and faith-based organizations.

Technical advice on developing greenway plans is available from the GreenWays Initiative at <http://greenways.cfsem.org/>. You can also check out the website of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy at <http://www.railtrails.org> and the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance at <http://www.michigantrails.org>.

The Laws

For plans to become reality, they need to be backed up by law. Local-level laws are known as *ordinances* (sometimes referred to as *codes*). Local-level ordinances are passed in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community. The main ordinances important to planning are zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances.

Zoning ordinances split all the land within the boundaries of a locality into *land-use zones*. The ordinances dictate how owners can use their property within each zone. A classic zoning ordinance has two parts: a map showing the zones and a text explaining each zone and its appropriate uses.

The idea of *nuisance* forms the basis for zoning. Some land uses are not complementary—such as placing a loud, polluting factory next to a nursing home. Zoning separates uses that will likely conflict (and hurt the community’s health, safety, and welfare). The separation of uses, however, can go too far. Previously, planners thought that commercial and residential uses were a poor mix, but now many people recognize that such mixing is the hallmark of a vibrant community and a critical element of an active living environment.

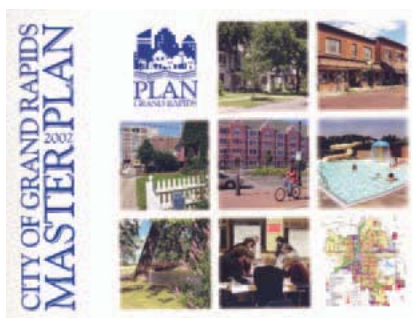
Many communities are investigating and adopting *form-based codes*. These codes focus attention on physical design, the form of the building, and its uses and relationship to the street. Unlike zoning ordinances, which generally provide two-dimensional maps and text, form-based codes use graphics and three-dimensional illustrations of desired forms of development.

Subdivision ordinances control the act of subdividing land within incorporated areas (such as cities or townships). A request to split a piece of land into two or more parcels generally has to go through a governmental review. Local governments first started to pay attention to land subdivision to make sure that road networks were adequate; now the review focuses on ensuring that the resulting parcels are designed appropriately so that utilities can be provided, public safety ensured, and aesthetic standards met. Subdivision ordinances lay out dimensional standards and other criteria—such as minimum lot size, setbacks from the road, road widths, and landscaping requirements—that are critical to active living environments. Many of the recommendations in this book relate to subdivision ordinances.

The Processes

Two main planning processes exist at the local level: the master planning process and the site plan review process. They take place at different geographic scales (one for cities, villages, or townships, the other for parcels) and cover different time periods (one long, the other short).

Master Planning In the *master planning process*, community members create a vision for the development of their community and then outline the steps needed to reach it. The process differs from one com-



munity to another but typically goes through several stages characterized by different tasks and different actors. At the beginning, professional planners inventory community assets, identify current land use, and project future land requirements (such as for a new state highway). They also analyze the local economy, trends in population growth, housing stock and affordability, and the transportation system. (However, planners have not usually considered the health of community members.) These findings are typically presented to local citizens for feedback about desired community goals. Alternative plans for achieving those goals are formulated, and ultimately a preferred path is selected as the master plan. (See the Walkersville flow diagram later in this chapter for an example.)

The local planning commission usually takes a lead role in developing a master plan, but members of the public are also asked to join planning task forces. Required public comment and feedback sessions are held frequently.

Once written, a master plan is unlikely to become reality unless three things happen: (1) it is officially adopted by the governing body; (2) the actions and investments identified in the plan make it into the city budget, most importantly, the *capital improvements budget*; and (3) the plan's objectives (for instance, to enhance business activity by allowing mixed-use development) are given legal backing through changes to local ordinances.

Site Plan Review In the *site plan review process*, local governments review and approve proposed development plans for a particular piece of property. This review ensures that the proposed land use or activity complies with applicable local ordinances and state statutes. The development plans should also be compatible with the character of the surrounding area, the adjacent land uses, the natural environment, the capacities of public services and facilities, and residents' health, safety, and welfare. Local government units differ in which types of developments they require to go through site plan review. Subdivisions and major developments usually are reviewed by the planning commission; individual single- and two-family homes and minor remodeling of existing buildings are often reviewed by the zoning administrator or exempted.

Site plan review can be a time-consuming process for both the developer and the local government unit. Some planning departments invite developers to pre-application conferences to discuss elements of the development project and the procedures of local site plan review. Pre-application conferences can facilitate smoother and speedier reviews; they also provide a wonderful opportunity to talk about local objectives like enhancing walkability and bikeability.

After reading this quick overview of local planning, you're ready to learn more about the four action steps that will help you create an active living community.



A recent non-motorized training for Michigan Department of Transportation employees (MDOT). MDOT is a great resource for your community. Photo source: MDOT

Action Step 1: Raise Awareness and Build Coalitions

To move your community toward active living, people must understand the connections between land use, transportation infrastructure, and physical activity. Coalitions can help you educate people and guide your community as it makes changes. The following steps can help get you starting working toward creating an active living community.

1. **Create partnerships and coalitions.** Many groups share your interest in active living environments. Your local parks and recreation department, businesses that promote outdoor recreation, and biking and walking clubs are natural allies. With the growing focus on childhood obesity, schools (particularly those with Safe Routes to School programs) and parents are quite motivated to consider the health effects of land use and urban design. Your local city and county public health departments, Michigan State University Extension, universities, and health care providers are also potential allies due to their concerns about obesity, chronic disease, and environmental health.

Consider contacting professional, community, and advocacy organizations as well as business and merchants' associations to support events or spread the word. Planners, architects, landscape architects, and their professional organizations, such as the Michigan Association of Planning, are very interested in new ways to create better environments and urban places. Statewide environmental, bicycle, trail, and greenway organizations can help you advocate for a more physically active community. You could also contact groups that champion the rights of elderly or people with disabilities. Working together, you can create a groundswell of enthusiasm that will be heard at city hall and beyond.



Tip: Working to complete the Michigan Promoting Active Communities Award (mentioned in Chapter 1) is the perfect way to bring like-minded individuals together to think about active living. You can find the web-based application at <http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities>.

2. **Build relationships with the development community.** When building coalitions and partnerships, don't forget about the development community. Developers build much of a city's infrastructure but often have little input in its visioning and planning process. Many know that they can profit from increased real estate values by building vibrant, higher-density, walkable developments but have a difficult time getting innovative projects approved. Engaging even one developer in your community can be very rewarding.
3. **Use the local media.** Many Michigan residents don't know about active living concepts. Newspapers are always trolling for local

interest stories; many accept articles or essays from their readers. You could also contact a reporter who covers land use and local planning issues and ask him or her to write about active living. Radio and television stations may provide ways to educate the public through local-access programs. Getting press coverage may be easier than you think.

4. **Make public presentations.** Another way to spread the news is to speak to local service groups (such as the Rotary Club and the Optimists), community-based organizations (such as the local Parent Teacher Association), and concerned business groups (such as the Chamber of Commerce). You can find many ideas for presentations in the “Active Living and Recreation Resources” section of this book.
5. **Lead by example.** Probably the best way to raise awareness is to lead by example. Walk whenever and wherever you can. Pull your bike out of the garage and head down to your local farmers’ market. Tell the people you meet on the street why you are doing it and what your experience is like.

Some people in your community may resist these ideas. You may have to explain the ideas behind complete streets, road diets, and other concepts that don’t fit traditional models. Thankfully, professional organizations, influential reference materials (such as the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* [AASHTO, 1999] and the *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities* [AASHTO, 2004]), and experiences with active living design are beginning to undercut resistance and illustrate the benefits of these design approaches. For example, the Michigan Department of Transportation’s non-motorized transportation team has worked with a number of communities and their engineers to develop walkable and bikeable transportation networks.

Members of the local police, fire, and public works departments might fear that making narrower streets and other design changes could lower service levels or put the public at risk by delaying emergency response. It is important that code changes and traffic calming interventions result from a collaborative process with all partners at the table. A publication of the Local Government Commission, *Emergency Response: Traffic Calming and Traditional Neighborhood Streets* (Burden, provides a reasoned discussion of facts and myths associated with emergency response and traffic calming that can be a useful centerpoint for this discussion.

Finally, retailers may worry that changes such as adding on-street parking will discourage customers. In fact, studies show that enhanced street amenities, slower traffic, and more pedestrians increase retail sales. (For more information, see http://www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/focus/walk_to_money.pdf or <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/lets/0703ltb.html>.)



Walkability expert Dan Burden led these participants on a recent audit of Flint. You can do this in your own community by following the suggestions outlined in this section. Photo source: MDOT

Action Step 2: Conduct a Community Audit

Before you can make change happen, you need to know the existing conditions of your roads, sidewalks, and community layout. Earlier chapters suggested you go out and hit the streets, whether on bicycle or on foot. Now it's time to do so methodically, writing down your experience and documenting areas of your community that are problematic or exemplary. This process is known as *conducting a community audit*.

Community audits are easy and fun. Many available checklists or questionnaires can guide and document your experience.

The Promoting Active Communities Award program mentioned in Chapter 1 provides a checklist tailored to Michigan communities. As stated earlier, the assessment requires teamwork between community leaders, professionals, and citizens, and generates ideas for community improvements. Every community that completes an assessment receives an award from the Michigan Governor. You can complete the assessment at <http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities>.

You can also find two easy-to-use neighborhood audit checklists offered by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center at <http://www.walkinginfo.org/cps/checklist.htm> and <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/cps/checklist.htm>. At the end of this book, "Active Living and Recreation Resources" lists some other sources for audits. Select one that seems most appropriate for your community and objectives.

Tips for Auditing

These tips will help you get the most benefits from your community audit.

- **Don't audit alone.**

Invite your local government planner, engineer, private developer, members of the downtown development authority, representatives of neighborhood associations, law enforcement, or public

works supervisor to participate. Involve your friends and neighbors, and try to work with people of all ages.

- **Take a camera.** Photos will help you remember details and convey information to others.

- **Take a map.** Larger communities with many neighborhoods and shopping areas vary in their walkability and bikeability—you will need to keep track of where you have been. Look at a map of your entire city or



Audits can be really low tech! This audit team measures widths in human arm spans. Photo credit: National Center for Bicycling and Walking

town: Does the street network where you are walking or biking reflect the layout of the rest of your city?

- **Choose an appropriate time of day for your audit.** For example, if your objective is to increase walkability so more children can walk to school, you will want to walk when school starts and lets out because traffic volumes change throughout the day.
- **Don't audit only in ideal conditions.** It is easy and pleasurable to walk on a sunny, 75-degree summer day. But successful communities support physical activity year-round. Walk or bike when it is rainy, when there is snow, and/or when it is hot and humid. Do pedestrians have sufficient protection from the elements? Are sidewalks kept clean? Do elderly people have places where they can rest and cool off? You may also want to assess the area when it is dark to see if adequate lighting exists.
- **Be safe.** Wear reflective clothing and pay attention to traffic. Safety is another reason to bring other people along.
- **Share your findings.** You need to share the results of the audit, particularly with decision makers. Use this information to talk to your local school board, planning commission, elected leaders, and county road commissioners. They can help you determine how to fund improvements.

Action Step 3: Participate in Planning

The next key step to creating an active living community is to participate in planning. You can attend planning commission meetings or even serve as a planning commissioner yourself. The immediate task, however, is to read your community's plans to see whether they address residents' needs for physical activity.

Which Plans Should We Look At?

Local governments create a dizzying array of plans, but for active living purposes, two local plans are most important: the Master Plan and the Recreation Plan. You also should review the Regional Transportation Plan prepared by your Regional Planning Commission or Council of Government. (See "Planning 101" earlier in this chapter for some basic information about these plans.) Call the main information number listed for your local government offices to find out how you can receive copies of these plans.

The Master Plan (also called the Comprehensive Plan)

A common shortcoming of the master plan is that it lays out a great vision but fails to identify tangible steps to get there. The more concrete the plan, the more likely the plan will be realized. The ideal master plan—like that presented for the mythic township of Walkersville on the next pages—carries active living concepts from vision to expenditure. Read your community's master plan to see how well it addresses ways to achieve its vision.



East Lansing dubbed its master plan process the "Big Picture." Achieving a more walkable community is a key objective. Photo credit: East Lansing Planning Dept.



East Lansing residents participate in the "Big Picture" process. Photo credit: East Lansing Planning Dept.

WALKERSVILLE:

DECISIONS FOR ACTIVE LIVING, FROM MASTER PLANNING THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

1. INVENTORY THE COMMUNITY AND READ THE EXISTING MASTER PLAN

Examples of Findings

- Only 65 percent of Walkersville neighborhoods have sidewalks.
- City has 10 parks; 8 out of 10 are developed for active recreation; 2 include nature areas.
- Downtown has adequate street lighting. However, street lighting is inadequate in most neighborhoods (lights on poles over main intersections).
- All schools have marked crosswalks and/or crossing guards.
- Strip commercial centers on South Ash Street are not connected; sidewalks are missing on the east side of the street.
- Entry point for Lakeland Rail-Trail exists in nearby Rockville (3 miles away), but residents must drive to it because M21 has no sidewalks or shoulders, and traffic speeds are high.

2. UPDATE THE MASTER PLAN

MASTER PLAN VISION STATEMENT

Walkersville will improve its position as a beautiful and vibrant small town surrounded by rural countryside and working farms. Walkersville will be a place where individuals, families, and businesses enjoy and value a sense of history; a healthy, attractive, and walkable central business district; a strong regional economy; conservation of natural resources; diversity and accessibility of recreational opportunities; fair and effective land development laws; and efficient public safety and local government services.

Master Plan Goals

Active Living Goal #1: All existing streets will be attractively landscaped and serve people using a full spectrum of travel modes, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists.

Active Living Goal #2: A greenspace system throughout Walkersville brings nature closer to residents and provides multi-purpose pathways for non-motorized transportation and recreation.

Other Master Plan Goal Topics

- Transit opportunities
- Safe pedestrian and bike access and connectivity
- Visual quality and amenities of public places
- Mixed land use

WALKERSVILLE:

DECISIONS FOR ACTIVE LIVING, FROM MASTER PLANNING THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION

3. IMPLEMENT THE MASTER PLAN

Master Plan Policies

Active Living Policy #1: It is the policy in Walkersville that sidewalks or paths should be provided to link businesses with each other and with residential areas.

Active Living Policy #2: It is the policy in Walkersville that streets will be developed in a manner that maximizes connections between places. Subdivisions based on cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets will be discouraged.

Active Living Policy #3: It is the policy in Walkersville that all arterial and connector streets shall be constructed with minimum 5-foot-wide bike lanes.

Active Living Policy #4: It is the policy in Walkersville that a greenspace system will be established that provides connected greenway trails and natural habitats.

Integrate into Zoning Ordinance

Add concepts of mixed use, access management, and new standards for sidewalk and street construction.

Educate Walkersville Citizens, Developers, and Local Officials

Teach people about active living.

Update the Walkersville Capital Improvements Program

Include funds for sidewalk construction, right-of-way purchases, easements, pedestrian and bike bridges, and lighting.

Have Developers Coordinate with Walkersville Officials

Determine sidewalk locations, connections, and standards for sidewalks, greenspace, and greenway trails.

Master Plan Action Statements

Active Living Action Statement #1: Revise the Walkersville zoning ordinance to require sidewalks, trails, and pathways in all condo, planned unit development, and other projects requiring a special use permit and site plan review.

Active Living Action Statement #2: Amend the Walkersville subdivision regulation to require sidewalk connections within new plats.

Active Living Action Statement #3: The Walkersville planning commission will develop a greenspace plan that provides greenway connections within Walkersville and to trails and destinations in nearby communities.

Active Living Action Statement #4: Include sidewalk construction costs and trail right-of-way easement purchases in the Walkersville capital improvements program.

Active Living Action Statement #5: Develop and circulate active living design guidelines to Walkersville officials, developers, and citizens.

Have Officials Coordinate with Adjoining Units of Government

Work together to fund and construct pathways and non-motorized connections.



IMPROVING THE SITE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS



Site plan review is the process of checking and approving detailed plans for a development before construction. A planning commission can perform site plan review, but this technical process usually requires input from many professionals. Reviews typically check that a project complies with local, state, and federal regulations; provides for an adequate road network and other public services; and meets aesthetic and landscaping requirements, among other factors.

Improved site plan reviews also consider health and physical activity objectives. The National Association of County and City Health Officials developed a simple checklist for examining such concerns associated with land use. You can find this checklist at <http://archive.naccho.org/Documents/LandUseChecklist-03-10-03.pdf>. Look it over and talk with your local planner about using it during site plan review in your community.

The Recreation Plan

To address the needs of all your community residents, the recreation plan for your community should consider both passive and active recreation. Passive recreation refers to recreation that involves natural resources, such as hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, bird watching, kite flying, and canoeing. Enhanced opportunities for passive recreation are particularly important for people who have limited physical abilities. Active recreation refers to organized team sports and other activities that typically require playing fields, facilities, or extensive equipment. Communities should provide recreation opportunities for all ages and during all types of weather—indoor and outdoor, summer and winter. Check to see whether your community’s recreation plan covers these areas.

Transportation Plans

For active living purposes, it is useful to look at two regional documents relating to transportation. If you are in an urban area, the first document to look at is the regional transportation plan (RTP) for your region. If you are in a rural area, transportation planning is jointly coordinated between the Michigan Department of Transportation and local elected officials. Most transportation plans have as key objectives the development of a safe, accessible, and reliable transportation system. Your regional transportation plan should have explicit objectives and investment projects for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

The second document is the transportation improvement program (TIP) that applies to your locality. The TIP is a list of all transportation projects receiving federal funding for your region. It reflects the investment priorities of local governments and transportation agencies arising from your region’s RTP or local plans. Many are available online from your regional planning commission or council of government.

What to Consider When Reading Community Plans

After reading these planning documents, write down your impressions. Here are a few questions to get you started.

- Do the goal statements in the plans include walkability or bikeability objectives?
- Do the goal statements specify that the community must meet the needs of residents of all ages, including elderly people? Communities should be built so that residents can “age in place” or grow older without having to change communities.
- Do the plans inventory and evaluate the community’s existing facilities and resources for physical activity?
- Do the plans allow mixed-use development, strengthen downtown shopping areas, or support historic preservation?
- Do the plans detail explicit actions to take or identify and prioritize investment projects for active living?

Pleasant Hill BART Station Building Envelope Standards Townhouse Sites

Height		<p>The building shall be between 2 and 4 Storeys in height. The 4th storey shall be either set 16 ft back from the sidewalk or built as an attic storey with FORMERS.</p> <p>The first storey finished floor elevation of any residential unit shall be between 36 and 60 inches above the fronting sidewalk. The first 3 storeys shall have at least 8 feet 8 inches in clear height.</p> <p>Any unbuild REQUIRED BUILDING LINE (RBL) shall have a STREET WALL built along it and any unbuild rear or COMMON LOT LINE shall have a fence along it, both between 6 ft and 15 ft in height.</p>
Siting		<p>The STREET FACADE shall be Built 7/8 the REQUIRED BUILDING LINE (RBL) within 7/8 ft of any BUILDING CORNER, and not less than 90% of the RBL overall. There are no required side setbacks.</p> <p>Any unbuild RBL shall have a STREET WALL along it, between 6 feet and 15 ft in height.</p> <p>The garage, parking for vehicles (autos, trailers, boats, etc) shall be at least 20 ft from any RBL (excepting basement garages). Parking access shall be from a designated GARAGE ENTRY.</p> <p>The lot/unit width shall be between 18 ft and 36 ft. A maximum of 6 units shall be contiguous as a single building. There shall be a 10 ft gap (gated) between multiple TOWNHOUSE buildings.</p> <p>*Except where otherwise designated on the REGULATING PLAN.</p>
Elements		<p>A STOOP, not more than 5 ft deep and 6 ft wide (plus steps) is required forward of the REQUIRED BUILDING LINE (RBL). (Excluding upper units where one unit is stacked above another.)</p> <p>A fence, 30 to 40 inches in height, is permitted along the STREET FRONTAGE and along the COMMON LOT LINES of the front yard. Privacy fencing, between 6 and 8 ft in height, shall be placed along any unbuild rear and COMMON LOT LINES.</p> <p>OBSCURATION shall be between 30% and 70% for all RBL building facades (measured for each facade and storey between 3 and 8 feet above the finished floor). Blank lengths of wall greater than 20 linear feet are prohibited.</p>
Uses		<p>Upper storeys shall be exclusively for residential use.</p> <p>The ground floor may, in addition to residential uses, have small professional office, building lobby, building manager's office, ancillary retail grocery, and cafe uses (each less than 1,000 sq ft).</p> <p>The garage, parking for vehicles (autos, trailers, boats, etc) shall be at least 20 feet from any RBL. (excepting basement garages).</p> <p>*Except where otherwise designated on the REGULATING PLAN.</p>

GEOFFREY FERRELL ASSOCIATES FINAL DRAFT
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Source: The New Pleasant Hill BART Station Property Code, Geoffrey Farrell and Associates.

Form-based codes are a new type of ordinance emerging in the planning arena. These codes, which are most appropriate for urban areas, focus more on street and building designs, and less on land uses. Form-based codes address the whole street experience, with the intent to create attractive settings for people to live, work, and shop.

Recently the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council completed a form-based code study. Learn more about it at <http://www.gvmc.org/>.

- Does the recreation plan provide for both passive and active recreation?
- Does the RTP give high priority to non-motorized transportation? Is there prominent discussion of walkability and bikeability as objectives or goals?
- Does the RTP set aside increasing amounts of money to develop bike trails and shared-use paths?
- Does the RTP include a policy of building bicycle lanes on all new transportation routes or redeveloped/repaved roads?
- What projects does the TIP support? Are projects with non-motorized elements slated for funding and development? (SEMCOG provides this information online for southeast Michigan at <http://www.semco.org/>. Check out Washtenaw County's TIP for ideas on spending money on non-motorized transportation.)

Action Step 4: Revise Your Regulations

Now that you've read the plans and understand local policy and goals, it's time to turn to law. Many current environments that impede physical activity didn't just happen: it was mandated by law. Local laws like zoning ordinances and subdivisions regulations helped create the unfortunate auto-dependent, architecturally monotonous, and even characterless nature of many American cities. One commentator has called this the "geography of nowhere" (Kunstler, 1993).

To make your community an exciting and distinct destination that is amenable to physical activity, it is necessary to critically examine the local zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and site plan review processes. (See "Planning 101" earlier in this chapter for explanations of these ordinances and processes.) Collect your community's zoning ordinance, zoning map, and subdivision ordinance. (Your community's subdivision ordinance might be a chapter in the zoning ordinance.) In some localities, you will want the comprehensive codebook, in which all local laws—including those associated with land use and urban design—have been compiled.

To help you examine these documents, the large table in this chapter pulls together a matrix of active living design elements and some recommended actions to take or standards to adopt. Compare the provisions of your ordinances to these standards. Differences you find provide a starting point for discussions about community design, regulation, and ways to encourage physical activity through land-use planning. Your community may need only a few key changes to its regulations to promote active living.

Revising regulations is a technical process that requires local government leadership, so you will need to present your findings in a persuasive manner to your local government planning commission, community planning staff, and public safety, engineering, and legal staff. Once they have agreed that changes are needed, these actors should take a lead role in revising or writing regulations specific to your community. They might even want to adopt form-based codes that focus more on design and less on land uses. (See "Form-Based Codes" on p. 71.)

Now that your community is well on its way to active living, remember that these changes will not happen overnight. With lots of patience and perseverance, your active living goals can become positive changes within your community. To help guide you along the way, numerous resources are listed in the following section. We encourage you take advantage of the information and guidance provided by these organizations, documents, and websites. Best wishes in becoming a healthier, happier, active living community!

REVISE YOUR REGS: ACTIVE LIVING DESIGN STANDARDS MATRIX

This chart will help you scrutinize your community’s regulations, development standards, and processes to see how well they support designs that encourage people to get more physical activity. Be sure to consult with appropriate guidebooks (for example, AASHTO 1999 and 2005) and with specialized professionals (such as walkability-oriented engineers, planners, and landscape architects) as you move forward.

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Active Living Design Element	Revise Your Ordinance or Plan to:	Recommended Standard or Action
Building setbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce building setbacks to create development that is inviting to pedestrians and enhances safety by raising the numbers of “eyes on the street.” Establish New Urbanist or traditional neighborhood design (TND) zones and standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow zero or near lot line development (buildings situated at the front of parcels and built right up to or close to sidewalks) for both residential and commercial developments in mixed-use zones. Establish “build to” lines of 10–15 feet.
Mixed-use zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish mixed-use zone(s). Create appropriate descriptions of an array of complementary uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed-use zones should allow for mixing of residential, office space, schools, retail shopping, food/restaurants, outdoor recreation, and civic/public uses. Allow neighborhood stores, day care, small office buildings, and schools in existing residential neighborhoods. Allow second-story apartments and offices in neighborhood commercial buildings.
Parcel sizes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce or eliminate minimum parcel size requirement. Raise the number of houses allowed per acre to enable compact design and support transit systems. Allow for longer, narrower lot sizes that increase the number of lots facing the street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compact design has residential densities ranging from 6 to 12 units/acre. Higher densities (13–45 units per acre) are appropriate for mixed-uses zones or established urban centers.
Parking for commercial areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the required number of parking spaces per square foot of retail space or set maximum parking allowances. Allow for parking at the rear of commercial buildings. Create separate walking areas through parking lots to safely separate motorists and pedestrians. Allow on-street parking on arterial streets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum parking allowance: 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial leaseable space. Enable flexible parking standards (e.g., negotiated in the site plan review). The number of spaces can be varied to reflect other available parking such as on-street parking or lots that can be shared with users with different peak times (e.g., office parking space shared with bar/restaurant).
Residential garages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage placement of garages at the rear of parcels; avoid “snout houses” in which forward-jutting attached garages dominate the street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow the development of rear-entry garages and detached structures using alleyways in new subdivisions.

Adapted from these sources: Burden, 2002; Bicycle Federation of America Campaign to Make America Walkable, 1998; Hirschhorn and Souza, 2001; Ewing, 1999a; AASHTO, 1999.

chart continues on next page

Active Living Design Element	Revise Your Ordinance or Plan to:	Recommended Standard or Action
Bike Lanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require accomodation of bike lanes on all arterial streets (including both new road construction and reconstruction). • Add bike lanes to existing streets by narrowing the width or reducing the number of automobile travel lanes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AASHTO recommended widths for bike lanes: for roads with no curb and gutter, minimum 4 feet; for roads with on-street parking, 5 feet. (For more complete information see AASHTO, 1999.)
Buffer zones and planting strips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require planting strips or buffer zones of adequate width between sidewalks and streets. Roadways with higher vehicle speeds require greater separation from sidewalks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting strips can range from 4 to 12 feet in width; minimum recommended width is 6 feet. • Place trees along existing planting strips. • Maintain obstruction-free pedestrian area
Crossing Signals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide crossing signals at key intersections to help pedestrians determine when to cross. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian signals should be integrated with streetlights (automatically giving pedestrians time to cross) at intersections on high-volume roads • Crossing signals should give adequate time for elderly or disabled people to safely cross the road; slower pedestrians travel at approximately 3 feet per second. • For high pedestrian volumes, consider countdown timers on pedestrian signals.
Crosswalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using marked and raised crosswalks near all schools. • Require marked crosswalks at all major intersections with signals. • Add pedestrian signals and other amenities; crosswalks alone are not enough to protect pedestrians. • Maintain high-visibility pavement markings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended standard width for crosswalks: 10 feet. • Width of marking lines should be selected according to needed visibility. A minimum of 10–12 inches wide is recommended; 18–24 inches wide is appropriate for places requiring greater visibility. • All legs of intersections with traffic signals should be marked and available for pedestrian use.
Curb Cuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize curb cuts, like driveways, that increase the possibility of crashes between pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt access management approaches; consult Michigan Department of Transportation for more details. • Scrutinize curb cuts closely during the site plan review process.
Curb Ramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer using two curb cuts at 90 degrees to align with sidewalks instead of using one continuous ramp. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum width of curb ramp: 5 feet. • Scrutinize curb ramps at all intersections; upgrade to standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Median and central crossing islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require the installation of islands on newly built wide streets. • Require islands on all reconstruction projects of wide roads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider median islands for all roads wider than 60 feet. • Island dimensions: 8–10 feet long and a minimum of 6 feet wide, with a minimum island size of 50 square feet. • Islands should be illuminated and have curb ramps or cut-throughs for accessibility.

STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Active Living Design Element	Revise Your Ordinance or Plan to:	Recommended Standard or Action
On-street parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow on-street parking on both sides of the street in residential neighborhoods. • Allow angle parking where speeds are appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restripe wide streets to provide on-street parking and/or designated bike lanes. Bike lanes should be a minimum of 4 feet, with 5 feet allotted next to parked cars.
Paved shoulders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require wide shoulders on all new or reconstructed major county roads or heavily traveled roads with speeds 35 mph or higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum width for paved shoulder with painted shoulder line: 4 feet.
Sidewalks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require sidewalks on both sides of all city streets and in new residential subdivisions. • Require extensions or connections between previously developed sidewalks and new sidewalks. • Place sidewalks in rural areas at schools, businesses, and worksites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum sidewalk widths: 5 feet in residential neighborhoods; 10 feet in commercial areas outside downtown; 12 feet in downtown shopping areas.
Sidewalk maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all sidewalks to be cleared of snow within 24 hours of snowfall. • Schedule routine maintenance with higher frequency in spring and fall (storm debris and leaves, respectively) • Create a sidewalk repair program to periodically replace deteriorating or buckled concrete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an inspection and maintenance schedule and checklist for the public works department. • Require annual reports on sidewalk maintenance from local government officers.
Street and lane widths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for narrower street widths in residential neighborhoods. • Reduce lane widths on arterial and collector streets to calm traffic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended street widths: 24–26 feet for roads in residential neighborhoods; smaller streets can work (for more information, see Burden, 2002). • Standard lane widths in commercial areas (12–14 feet) can be reduced to 9–11 feet. • Eliminate unnecessary travel lanes (e.g., reduce four lanes to three).
Street connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require streets to connect to other streets and destinations. • Support a grid street design. • Prohibit dead-end streets or cul-de-sacs unless terrain or existing road patterns require them. • If cul-de-sacs are used, provide pedestrian/bike connections at the ends of streets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use block lengths of 250–350 feet (measuring from intersection to intersection).
Street lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require appropriate lighting in all new and redevelopment projects. • Require lighting at all road intersections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height for pedestrian-appropriate lighting fixtures: 8–12 feet. • Full-spectrum light is recommended to reduce glare and provide more realistic colors at night. • Lights should be shielded downward to reduce light pollution.
Street trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all new developments to plant street trees along roadways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees should be regularly spaced along streets at intervals ranging from 15 to 50 feet apart. Smaller intervals create more attractive streets, but intervals must take into account the size of mature trees and their canopies. • Trees appropriate for planting are 8–10 feet high with a 2-inch diameter trunk at time of planting.

OTHER BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN, AND RECREATION AMENITIES

Active Living Design Element	Revise Your Ordinance or Plan to:	Recommended Standard or Action
Bicycle parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require commercial buildings and shopping areas to provide bicycle parking places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate parking within 50 feet of entrances. Transit stations and high-volume locations should offer covered bike parking. See recommended codes (in Resources section) for examples of bike parking standards.
Open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require new developments to set aside land for playgrounds or pocket parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use cluster zoning to protect open space. Consider giving density bonuses (e.g., allowing additional housing units) to developers that use cluster zoning. Work with developers to provide walking trails on open space provided in projects. Require a neighborhood park or other common space for subdivisions of 30 or more parcels.
Pedestrian amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require benches, trash cans, and street trees in public areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amenities should be placed close to buildings or along roadways in buffer zones without blocking sidewalks.
Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support transit lines and transit stops in or along all new developments and reconstruction projects. Include bike racks on buses and vans in urban areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local transit officials to provide transit stops throughout the community. Ensure that transit stops are free of obstacles and accessible to people with disabilities. Provide a minimum 4-foot-wide clearance zone for opening bus doors. Provide well-lit shelters and covered structures, where feasible.
Two-way shared-use paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support development of shared-use paths. Prepare a greenway plan to identify appropriate open space and participate in regional trails-planning efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum shared-use path width: 10 feet. Provide 12 feet in areas with high levels of use. Install proper signage at heights appropriate to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists to warn of trail crossings. Unpaved (dirt or ground) 2-foot shoulders can reduce potential conflicts and increase capacity at minimal cost.