

"Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities"

Creating an active living community can require oversight, patience, and purposeful planning. The Promoting Active Communities (PAC) program provides a self-assessment tool for Michigan communities to evaluate how they are able to promote physical activity and health. *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.



Mackinac Island. Photo Credit: Russ Soyring

To Request a Copy of *Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities*:

Contact Risa Wilkerson, Michigan Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Sports, and Health at (517) 347-7891, or rwilkerson@michiganfitness.org. Postage and handling may be required. *Design Guidelines* can be downloaded for free at: <http://www.mihealthtools.org/communities>.

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Publication Available: Design Guidelines for Active Michigan Communities



Photo Credit: Grand Rapids Department of Parks and Recreation

"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



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Design Guidelines Extend Usefulness of Promoting Active Communities Assessment Tool

Active living communities make it easy for people to include physical activity in their daily lives. Walking or biking to work, school, the store, or just for fun is safe and convenient. Recreation opportunities are accessible—parks, playgrounds, and all kinds of sports facilities are located near people’s homes and are open to all residents.

The Promoting Active Communities Award 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. The assessment results in a personalized community report that can be used for planning purposes.

The *Design Guidelines* were developed in response to community requests for guidance in improving neighborhood walkability, bikeability, and built environments. The Guidelines are full of illustrations that provide inspiration to develop active Michigan communities.

Communities that incorporate active living design characteristics achieve many benefits:

- **Economic** Improved real estate values & business growth.
- **Environmental** Improved air and water quality.
- **Greater social equity** Convenient and safe opportunities for all citizens to be active.
- **Increased safety** Decreased traffic speeds & crime.
- **Enhanced community connections** Increased social interactions and stronger ties to the community.

Design Guidelines 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 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.

This unique online self-assessment tool was created in partnership with the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Michigan State University, and the Prevention Research Center of Michigan. This project was funded through the Land Policy Institute Grants Initiative.

