Building More Livable Communities

Corridor Design Portfolio

November 2014

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Land Policy Institute

MMPGS MID MICHIGAN PROGRAM FOR GREATER SUSTAINABILITY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Building More Livable Communities:
Corridor Design Portfolio

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Image source (cover): Holly Madill, Planning & Zoning Center at MSU (bottom left); Dover Kohl and Associates (all other photos).

INTRODUCTION

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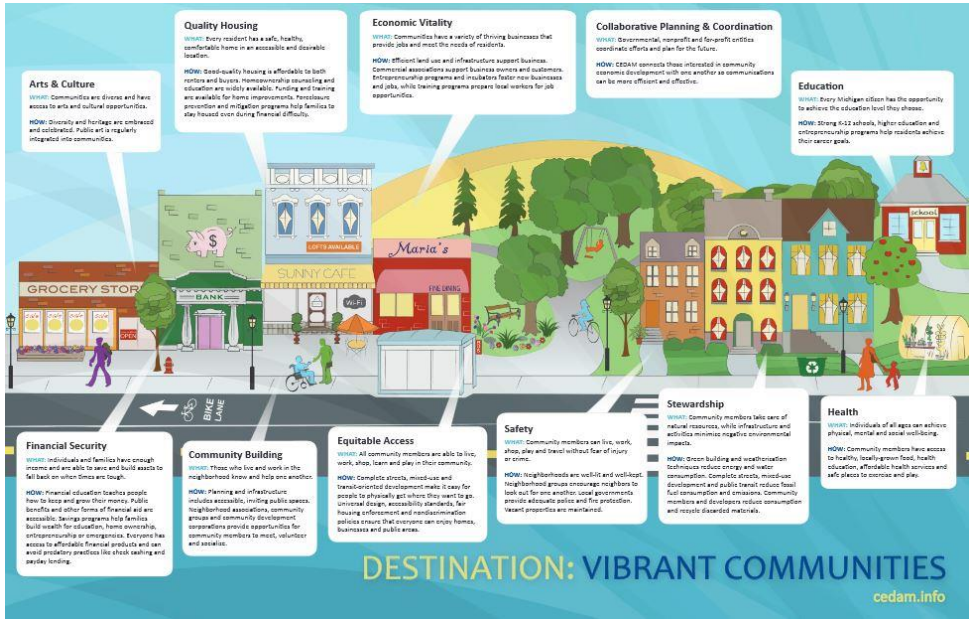

Graphic source: Community Economic Development Association of Michigan Vibrant Communities Brochure.

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WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

"There are many definitions, and there are many different ways for communities to attain a more sustainable future. The sustainability of a community depends on creating and maintaining its economic and environmental health, promoting social equity, and fostering broad-based citizen participation in planning and implementation. Communities that engage citizens and institutions to develop` sustainability principles and a collective vision for the future and that apply an integrative approach to environmental, economic, and social goals are generally likely to be more successful.

Job creation, energy use, housing, transportation, education, and health are considered complementary parts of the whole. Since all issues are interconnected they must be addressed as a system. The process includes:

- *Broad and diverse involvement of citizens;*
- *The creation of a collective vision for the future;*
- *The development of principles of sustainability;*
- *An inventory of existing assets and resources and additional assets that would benefit the community;*
- *Clear, measurable goals;*
- *The development of community indicators to evaluate progress;*
- *Open and transparent communication;*
- *Early, visible results; and*
- *Celebration of success.*

Sustainability is a process of continuous improvement so communities constantly evolve and make changes to accomplish their goals. The initiatives and resources on this website have been selected to help you learn about ways to make your community healthier, safer, greener, more livable, and more prosperous." Sustainable Communities

This portfolio shares these goals and purposes, and hopes by using a wide range of local examples, that citizens can see that communities in the Tri-County Region (Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties), in general, and neighborhoods along the Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue, in particular, are working diligently at a wide variety of sustainability initiatives.

Context for Portfolio

Mid-Michigan is blessed with the Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue Corridor (the Corridor), which to many is the Region's "main street." For the purposes of this Portfolio, the Corridor extends from the State Capitol in Lansing to Webberville. It traverses through several central business districts, regional health science clusters, internationally recognized educational institutions, suburban shopping districts, and seven of the region's 10 largest employers. The Corridor also carries more than 1.7 million transit trips annually. As part of the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability (MMPGS) project, a two-part design charrette was commissioned to help develop a vision for the Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue corridor.

There are two other major initiatives that serve as an important backdrop to this Portfolio, providing both valuable examples for inclusion in it and simultaneously creating the need for it: HUD Sustainable Communities program grants and a statewide placemaking initiative.

The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission's Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability was one of six projects in the state funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the HUD Sustainable Communities program, and one funded by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). The other six projects are listed below.

1. City of Grand Rapids, Planning Department - *Michigan Street Corridor Plan;*
2. Washtenaw County - *Washtenaw County Sustainable Community* project;

The Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue Corridor looking East from the Capitol (bottom center) to Williamston (upper right).

Source: Dover Kohl and Associates, under contract to the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, reproduced with permission.

3. Northwest Michigan Council of Governments – the *Grand Vision to Grand Action: Regional Plan for Sustainable Development;*
4. City of Flint – *Imagine Flint: Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint.*
5. Southeast Michigan Council of Governments – *Creating Success: Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant; and*
6. City of Marquette - *Third Street Corridor* plan.

This infusion of funding for major planning initiatives focused on sustainability across Michigan is unprecedented. There are also population and demographic changes forcing market shifts that municipalities must respond to in order to be competitive. As these plans are finalized and adopted, communities will move toward implementation and seek unique ways to meet their goals. The Portfolio can provide examples of both current and innovative techniques to help communities and neighborhoods do just that.

Within the last five years, Michigan has developed a major Placemaking Initiative that is also both driving the need for the information and examples in this Portfolio and producing them. The MIplace Partnership Initiative is a collaborative effort between state agencies and about 40 stakeholder organizations, including the MSU Land Policy Institute. Following is the official description of the MIplace Partnership Initative from its website (www.miplace.org):

> *"Michigan is at the forefront of a national movement embracing placemaking policies in 21st century downtown community and neighborhood planning. The movement is founded on the understanding that people, companies, and talent do not move to specific communities—they move to regions. Being globally competitive as a region requires understanding, mapping, and pooling regional resources and assets. It means local governments, the private sector, schools, higher education, and nongovernmental and civic organizations must all work cooperatively to market the region. Our job begins by working together to build and maintain quality places. Thriving communities and successful regions are places that are attractive to employees, places where connections can happen, where productivity and creativity increase, and where professional networks foster collaboration and innovation.*
>
> *The goal of The MIplace Partnership Initiative is to create more jobs, raise incomes, and thereby restore prosperity in Michigan at least in part, through targeted local and regional placemaking activities. A significant amount of State, regional, local, and private resources would be marshaled to make significant physical change in a relatively short period of time (such as 2-6 years). Action projects would be planned in collaborative public, private, and nonprofit entity partnerships, and be largely built by the private sector (in some cases with state financial support, or credits).*
>
> *Achievement of this goal requires development of toolkits to assist local officials and stakeholders and provision of direct technical assistance to those that need and request it; broad education/training of State and local government staff and officials and key stakeholders about what placemaking is and how to effectively engage in it; preparation of regional and local strategic action plans for targeted placemaking improvements; local engagement and local action; targeted state technical assistance by key state agency consultants to assist local officials resolve barrier and gap problems; and specific local project action plans need to be prepared that meet the requirements of all entities involved."*

A six-module, three-level Placemaking Curriculum has been developed to educate decision makers, developers, and citizens about Placemaking. The curriculum was launched in 2013 and now in September 2014, about 10,000 people in hundreds of venues have been exposed to the curriculum.

The Strategic Placemaking advocated for and implemented by the MIplace Partnership Initiative targets efforts toward centers of commerce and culture in each economic region, investing in areas that have the potential for the quickest and largest return on that investment.

This Portfolio is an opportunity to serve as a model resource for all future Placemaking projects in and outside the Tri-County region, and draws examples not only from this corridor but also from other HUD Sustainable Communities and a variety of new local plans (Lansing, Grand Rapids, Northwest Council of Governments Grand Plan, Detroit, Flint). It also draws heavily from the two charrettes that were conducted in the Corridor. Occasionally examples from other parts of the country were used when a local example couldn't be found, or the alternative example was especially good.

LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Provide more transportation choices.
Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

Promote equitable, affordable housing.
Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

Enhance economic competitiveness.
Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

Support existing communities.
Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.
Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices, such as locally generated renewable energy.

Value communities and neighborhoods.
Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban or suburban.

About the Portfolio

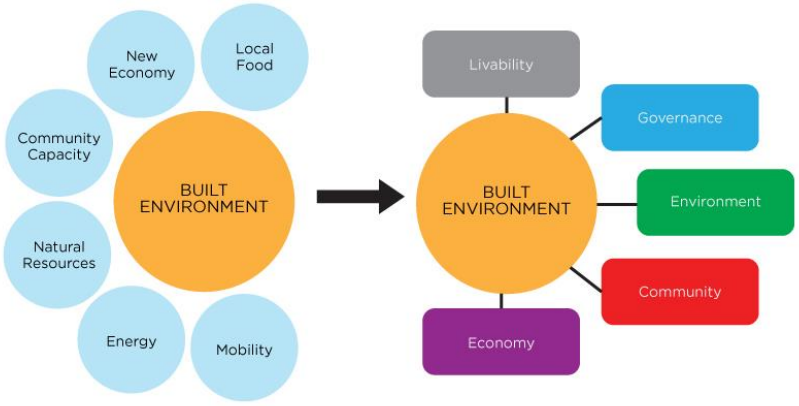
Development of this Portfolio began in September 2012 with the first meeting of the Sustainable Corridor Design Portfolio Task Force. Early taskforce meetings focused on educating participants about demographic, economic, and geographic characteristics of the corridor and built interest in and support for the corridor charrettes. Work began in earnest on the Portfolio in late 2013 with outlines and sample techniques. Most of the content was developed in 2014, after the Corridor Plan was complete, with review of the first draft of the Portfolio taking place during that summer. The final draft was completed in September 2014.

Designed for online distribution only, the Portfolio is laced with links to other websites and online resources. It is meant to be a highly visual, educational tool for citizens, neighborhood leaders, developers, and local officials. The Resources provided in each technique, however, are often more technical, and are probably most useful to practitioners.

The five major chapters (Livability, Governance, Environment, Community, and Economy) focus predominantly on the built environment and are based on another companion tool developed by the MSU School of Planning, Design and Construction, the Sustainability Audit Tool. While these two documents are complementary, they also are philosophically based on the key principles of many Quality-of-Life Movements, including Placemaking, Smart Growth, Livable Communities, Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities, and the Partnership for Sustainable Communities' livability principles (inset on opposite page).

The five sustainability categories of Livability, Governance, Environment, Community, and Economy (based on the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives' (ICLEI) STAR Community Index *"Sustainability Goals & Guiding Principles"*) pull from common sustainability topics that communities face today, including energy, local food, built environments, mobility, natural resources, capacity, and economic development.

The Livability chapter is by far the largest, covering a wide range of topics. It also underscores the struggle with placing techniques that are multi-disciplinary into only one subchapter. By their very nature, topics related to sustainability are often systems-oriented and overlap with each other making placement difficult. Many techniques are, therefore, cross-referenced throughout the Portfolio.



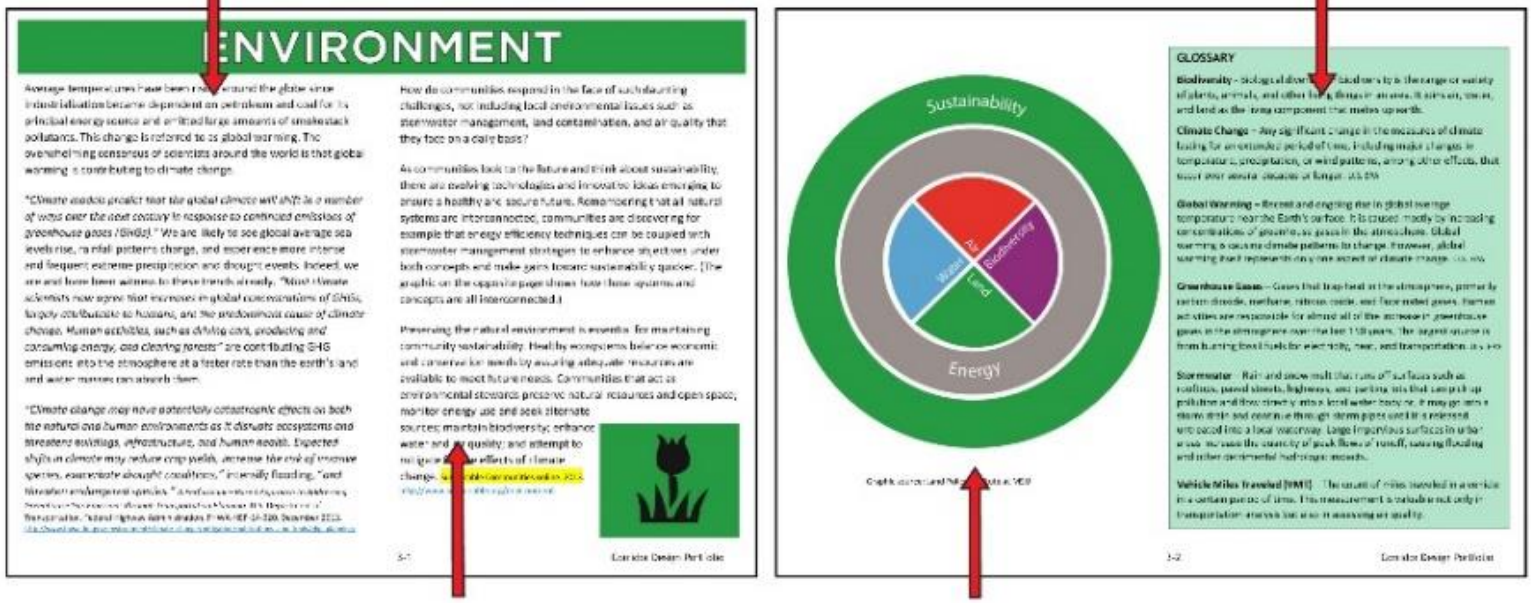
Graphic source: Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University.

How to Read the Portfolio

Each chapter supplies an introduction to the overall topic, an image displaying their relationship, and a glossary of concepts that the reader will encounter throughout. Each subchapter also provides a more focused introduction to the subject matter along with some graphics that display the information visually. Techniques are presented in a two-page, landscape layout.

Overview of issues associated with the topic, topic's relevance to sustainability and livability principles, and general introduction to the elements that will be examined

Definitions of elements and terms that are used in or will help provide helpful context for this chapter



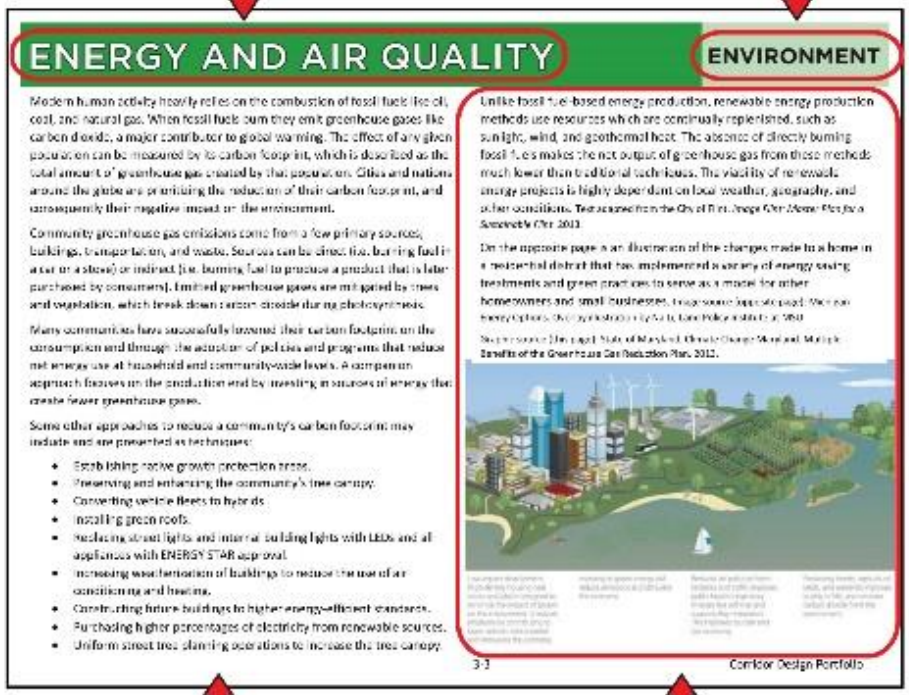
Indicators of sustainability that are covered in the sustainability audit tool (hotlink)

How the elements of the topic relate to each other. These include the subchapter topics and may include other relevant topics as well

Subchapter Title

Chapter Title

Illustration depicting some of the characteristics or qualities associated with the subchapter topic



ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY

ENVIRONMENT

Modern human activity heavily relies on the combustion of fossil fuels like oil, coal, and natural gas. When fossil fuels burn they emit greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, a major contributor to global warming. The effect of any given population can be measured by its carbon footprint, which is described as the total amount of greenhouse gas created by that population. Cities and nations around the globe are prioritizing the reduction of their carbon footprint, and consequently their negative impact on the environment.

Community greenhouse gas emissions come from a few primary sources; buildings, transportation, and waste. Sources can be direct (i.e. burning fuel in a car or a stove) or indirect (i.e. burning fuel to produce a product that is later purchased by consumers). Emitted greenhouse gases are mitigated by trees and vegetation, which break down carbon dioxide during photosynthesis.

Many communities have successfully lessened their carbon footprint on the consumption end through the adoption of policies and programs that reduce net energy use at household and community-wide levels. A complementary approach focuses on the production end by investing in sources of energy that create fewer greenhouse gases.

Some other approaches to reduce a community's carbon footprint may include and are presented as techniques:

- Establishing native growth protection areas.
- Preserving and enhancing the community's tree canopy.
- Converting vehicle fleets to hybrids.
- Installing green roofs.
- Replacing street lights and internal building lights with LEDs and all appliances with ENERGY STAR approval.
- Increasing weatherization of buildings to reduce the use of air conditioning and heating.
- Constructing future buildings to higher energy-efficient standards.
- Purchasing higher percentages of electricity from renewable sources.
- Uniform street tree planting operations to increase the tree canopy.

Unlike fossil fuel-based energy production, renewable energy production methods use resources which are continually replenished, such as sunlight, wind, and geothermal heat. The absence of directly burning fossil fuels makes the net output of greenhouse gas from these methods much lower than traditional techniques. The viability of renewable energy projects is highly dependent on local weather, geography, and other conditions. Text sourced from the City of Eau Claire's Energy & Climate Plan for a Sustainable Future 2013.

On the opposite page is an illustration of the changes made to a home in a residential district that has implemented a variety of energy saving treatments and green practices to serve as a model for other homeowners and small businesses. [illegible]

Text sourced from the Maryland Climate Change Commission, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland Energy Administration, Maryland Public Service Commission, and Maryland Department of Planning. 2012. Maryland's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan. Annapolis, MD. Available at: http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Air/ClimateChange/Documents/Maryland%20Greenhouse%20Gas%20Reduction%20Plan.pdf. Accessed 2013.

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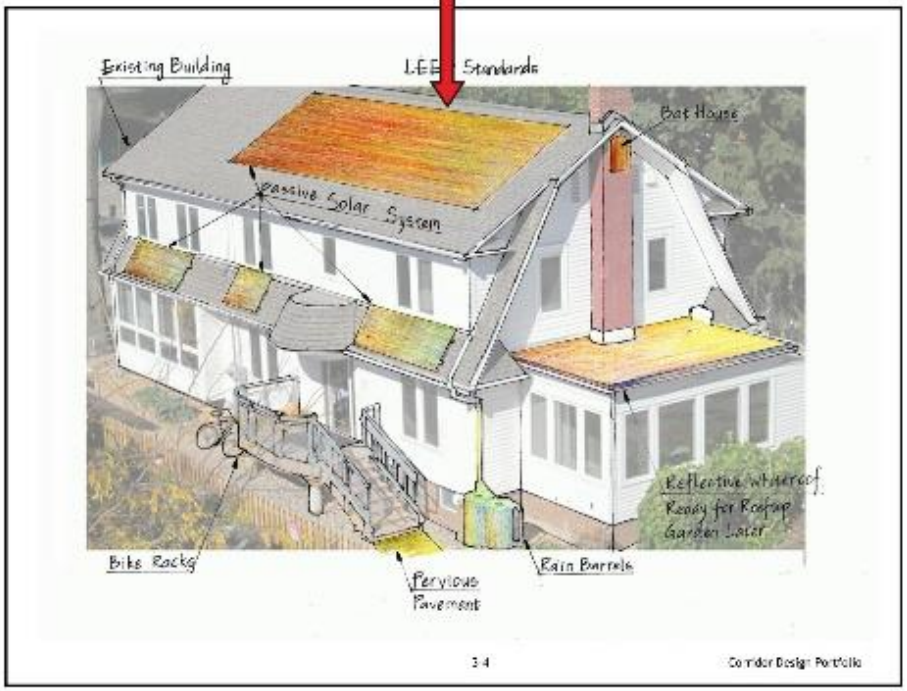
Corridor Design Portfolio



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Corridor Design Portfolio

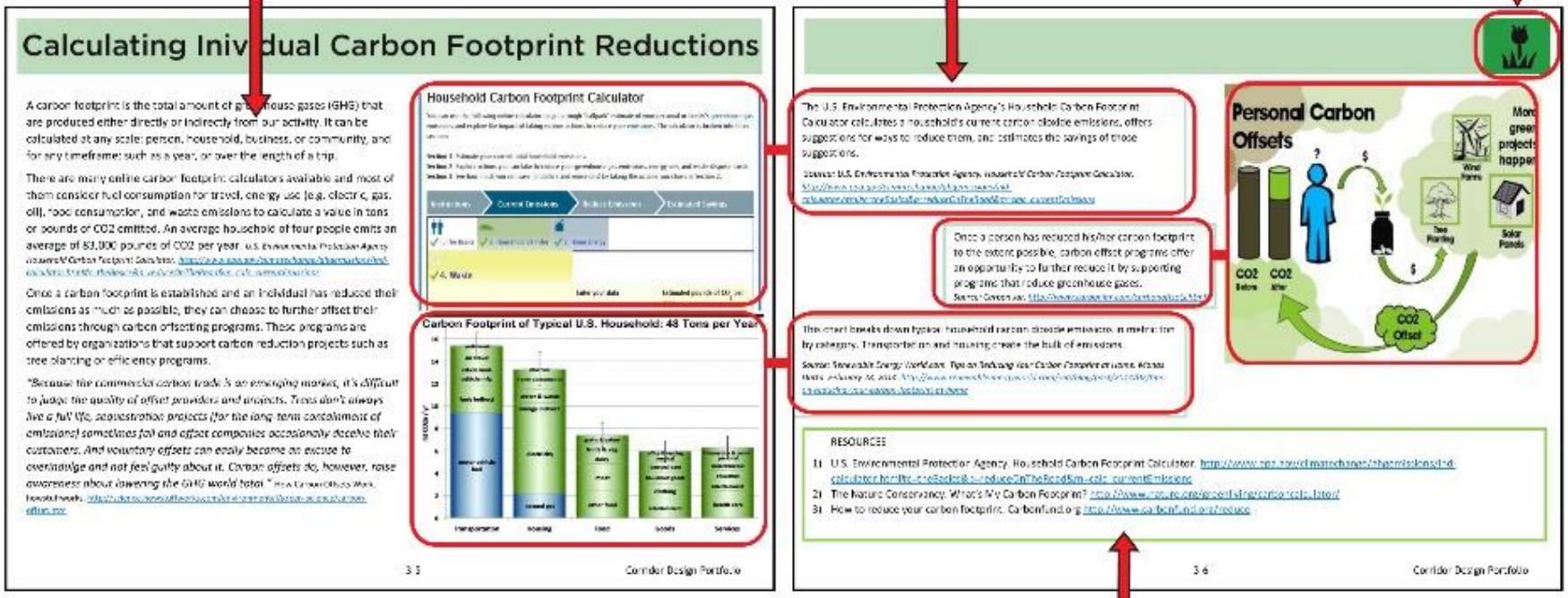
Description of the concept to be presented through the techniques

Graphic or information that helps illustrate the subchapter topic further

General information about the technique

Images and caption boxes expand on information, providing examples

A quick visual reference for which chapter you are in



Resources for further examination of the technique (These are geared more toward practitioners)