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Obesity has important consequences on our health and economy. It is linked to a number of chronic diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some cancers (NIH Clinical Guidelines, 1998). The prevalence of obesity in Michigan (and the U.S.) has been consistently increasing since 2000. In 2012, over 30% of Michigan adults were obese. Michigan's children are similarly at risk with over 13% of Michigan youth being obese in 2011. (*The State of Obesity: Michigan. F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future*. The Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.)

As a result, public health officials have sought solutions besides the traditional programmatic interventions that targeted specific population groups. Seeking interventions that had quicker and broader impacts across the community, health officials realized the built environment could impact public health, both positively and negatively. At the same time, interest in walkable and bikeable communities began to rise. This convergence of interests, in part, renewed the long-stagnant relationship between planning and public health. Indeed, the field of planning was born out of the public health problems caused by overcrowding and the industrial revolution. Public health officials attempting to protect communities from industrial pollution (air, land, and water) began examining how communities functioned and were designed. Separation of land uses was one outcome that became a fundamental principal of planning.

Today, the Healthy Communities movement recognizes how policy and the built environment can positively impact a community's health. Interventions such as supporting farm markets and parks and recreational facilities, ensuring that healthy foods and health services are accessible to the most vulnerable populations, and working towards creating safe, walkable communities are cornerstone interventions that can positively impact an entire community. Some of these concepts are represented in the image on the opposite page.

Recognizing that the built environment is founded by policies, public health practitioners now advance healthy living practices through both infrastructure change (e.g., installing sidewalks or farm markets) and policy level change (e.g., working with communities to adopt Complete Streets ordinances or requiring healthy food standards in schools).

Public health has once again found an ally among planners as the goals (equity, health, safety) of each are often indistinguishable from one another. The techniques presented (Health in All Policy, HIA, and Smart Commute Programs) are all areas where these disciplines intersect.



*Graphic source (this page): Michigan Department of Community Health.*

*Image source (opposite page): Dover Kohl and Associates, under contract to the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, reproduced by permission. Overlay illustration by Na Li, Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University.*

Built Environment Impacts Public Health

Shade

Education

Lightings

Doors Are Recessed

Walkability

Crosswalk

Fair Access

# Health in All Policy

A Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach to decision making recognizes that our greatest health challenges—chronic illness, health inequities, climate change, and spiraling health care costs—are highly complex and often linked. The HiAP is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. It engages diverse governmental partners and stakeholders to work together to promote health, equity, and sustainability, and simultaneously advances other goals such as promoting job creation and economic stability, transportation access and mobility, a strong agricultural system, and educational attainment. There is no one "right" way to implement a HiAP approach, but there are five key elements of HiAP:

1. Promotes health, equity, and sustainability through incorporating key elements into specific policies, programs, and processes, or embedding their considerations into government decision-making processes.
2. Supports intersectoral collaboration by bringing together partners from the many sectors that play a major role in shaping the economic, physical, and social environments.
3. Benefits multiple partners by addressing the policy and programmatic goals of both public health and other agencies by finding and implementing strategies that benefit multiple partners.
4. Engages stakeholders to ensure that work is responsive to community needs and to identify policy and systems changes necessary to create meaningful and impactful health improvements.
5. Creates structural or process change by institutionalizing a HiAP approach throughout the whole of government.

Source: American Public Health Association.
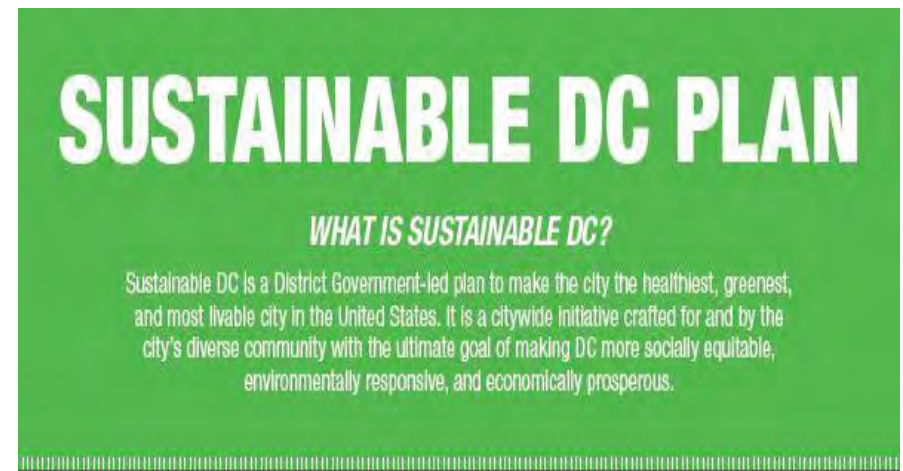
In November 2013, Washington D.C.'s mayor executed a new Sustainable DC Transformation Order that establishes a HiAP Task Force as part of his Administration's efforts to further the Sustainable DC Plan and improve the health of DC Residents. The HiAP Task Force has one year to develop recommendations on how a HiAP program can be implemented in D.C.

*Source: Sustainable DC Plan.*

This is the Table of Contents from the Health in All Policies Task Force Report to the Strategic Growth Council of California.

*Source: Strategic Growth Council of California.*

The Ingham County Health Department has launched a Health in All Project initiative that seeks to help various partners in the Tri-County Region include health considerations in local and regional decisions.

*Source: Ingham County Health Department.*

## Table of Contents

RESOURCES

1) NACCHO Health in All Policies.
2) American Public Health Association.
3) Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Government. Public Health Institute. The California Endowment, American Public Health Association. California Department of Public Health. 2013.
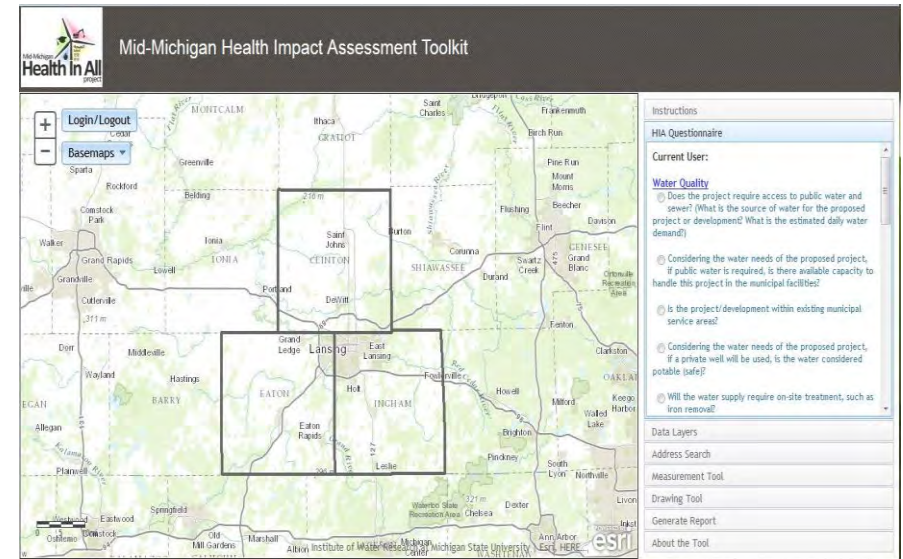
# Health Impact Assessments

The National Research Council defines Health Impact Assessments (HIA) as "a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods, and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population. The HIA provides recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects."

The major steps in conducting an HIA include

- Screening (identifying plans, projects, or policies for which an HIA would be useful),
- Scoping (identifying which health effects to consider),
- Assessing risks and benefits (identifying which people may be affected and how they may be affected),
- Developing recommendations (suggesting changes to proposals to promote positive health effects or to minimize adverse health effects),
- Reporting (presenting the results to decision-makers), and
- Monitoring and evaluating (determining the effect of the HIA on the decision). (Centers for Disease Control.)

The HIA is different from other health assessment tools in that they are intended to inform a policy, program, or project *prior* to the decision to pursue it. Because HIA is a specific methodology that defines health broadly, it can be used in nearly any type of setting. They can be conducted at any decision-making level (i.e., local, regional, state, national) and across any sector (agriculture, food, drug; built environment; climate change; community development; criminal justice; economic policy; education; housing; labor and employment; natural resources; energy; physical activity; transportation; and water).



## Contents

Since 2004, Meridian Township has been using a voluntary Health Impact Assessment Checklist on every new development project, and reports to the Ingham County Health Department on the various projects that have been modified as a result of the checklist. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, health departments in Clinton, Eaton, and Ingham Counties, and Michigan State University partnered to create an online, regional HIA toolkit.

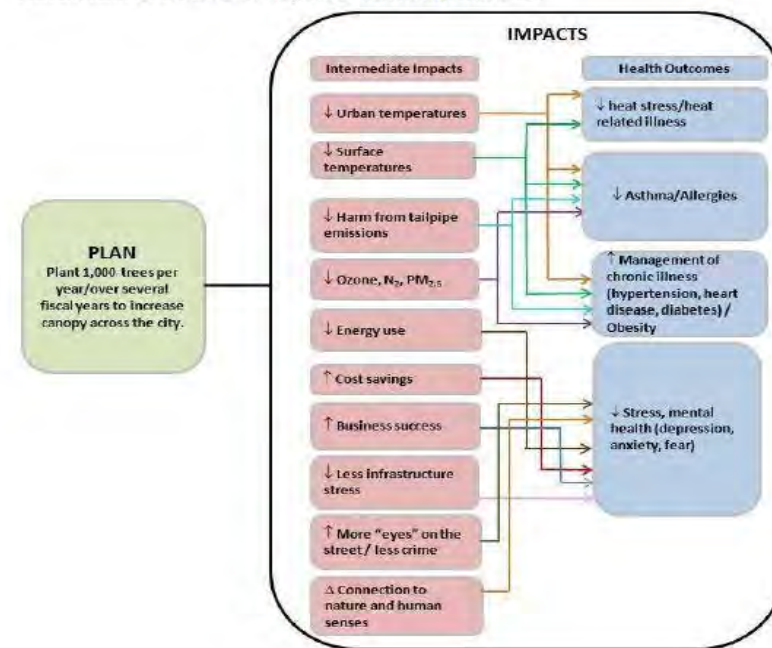*Source*: *Mid-Michigan Health Impact Assessment Toolkit*.

A tree canopy HIA in Ann Arbor examines the links between planting trees and the effects on environmental and social conditions.

*Source: Michigan Department of Community Health. January 2014*.

This Table of Contents, from an HIA conducted in East Lansing, assessed the recommendations for non-motorized improvements from the city's Climate Sustainability and Non-Motorized Transportation Plans. It found that they could have a significant positive health impact at the city and neighborhood levels.

*Source: Michigan Department of Community Health*.



Figure 1: Pathway Diagram Linking Ann Arbor Urban & Community Forestry Management Plan Decision to Intermediate Impacts and to Health Outcomes

RESOURCES

1) Health Impact Assessment. Healthy Places. Center for Disease Control.
2) Health Impact Project.
3) Michigan Climate & Health Adaptation Program (MICHAP). Michigan Department of Community Health.

# Smart Commute Programs

Smart Commute programs are designed to help individuals make efficient trips that conserve energy, and money. They also promote active transportation and healthy lifestyles. There is typically no fee to participate. Smart commute programs are often competitions among partner organizations and firms to see who can collectively make the most smart commutes in a given period of time.

Smart commuting can be defined broadly as a trip that includes more than one occupant in a motor vehicle (ride sharing), walking, bicycling, transit riding, paddling, or individuals riding in green cabs. (Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council.)

There are many benefits to smart commuting including cost savings, improving personal health, and reducing the amount of non-renewable energy used.

The ultimate goal of smart commute programs is to incentivize people to try non-traditional commutes for a small period of time in hopes that they continue to explore non-motorized transportation options afterwards. Smart commute programs help individuals change their commuting routines and help them discover other ways to commute.

For more on non-motorized transportation options see the Transportation section (starting on p. 1-79).

Image of a smart commute poster for Lansing from 2013. Smart Commute programs are typically held in late spring to early summer.

*Source: Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council.*

The Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) promotes clean commuting through its annual Clean Commute Challenge where participants compete by logging the miles they bus, carpool, vanpool, bike, or walk. CATA's website also promotes Clean Commute information.

*Source: CATA.*

Three parking spaces, designated by the Flint DDA, in front of the Crim Fitness Foundation were turned into a park-like setting for "Spin Outside the Crim" during Flint's Smart Commute challenge. It offered a variety of stationary bikes for interested persons to experience different types of bicycles.

*Source: Flint's Smart Commute Challenge. MI Smart Commute.*

RESOURCES

1) MI Smart Commute.
2) Mid-Michigan Smart Commute. Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council.
3) Jackson Smart Commute. Fitness Council of Jackson.

Michigan is filled with diverse recreational opportunities across the state, and has made the expansion of these opportunities a policy priority at the local, regional, and state levels. Michigan boasts over 11,000 inland lakes, 3,000 miles of freshwater shoreline, 36,000 miles of rivers and streams, eight million acres of public hunting land, and the largest number of miles of rail trails and pathways in the nation.

The natural features and geography of the state provide local recreational opportunities that can enhance the quality of life of residents and Sense of Place for communities. Natural resources are assets that can be harnessed to enhance tourism and promote community and economic development in communities large and small throughout the state. The image on the opposite page shows how improvements to McKinley Park on Thread Lake in Flint can provide for greater use and promote increased activity.

Studies indicate that current workers prefer to live in areas with ample and diverse recreational opportunities. Recreational options can be leveraged to make a community more attractive to visitors and potential residents. Recreational opportunities also enhance a community's ability to provide active and healthy lifestyles for its residents.

This section covers the following opportunities for local recreational improvements:

- Public Parks,
- Trails,
- Waterfront Opportunities,
- Shared Use Agreements, and
- Themed Events.

Michigan is unique in that it provides year-round recreational opportunities throughout the changing seasons, with unique natural features and amenities that can be promoted for the use and enjoyment of local residents and visitors across the state.



Image source (this page): Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (top), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (bottom).

Image source (opposite page): McKinley Park, Thread Lake, Flint. Na Li, Land Policy Institute, Michigan State University.

Connections to Community
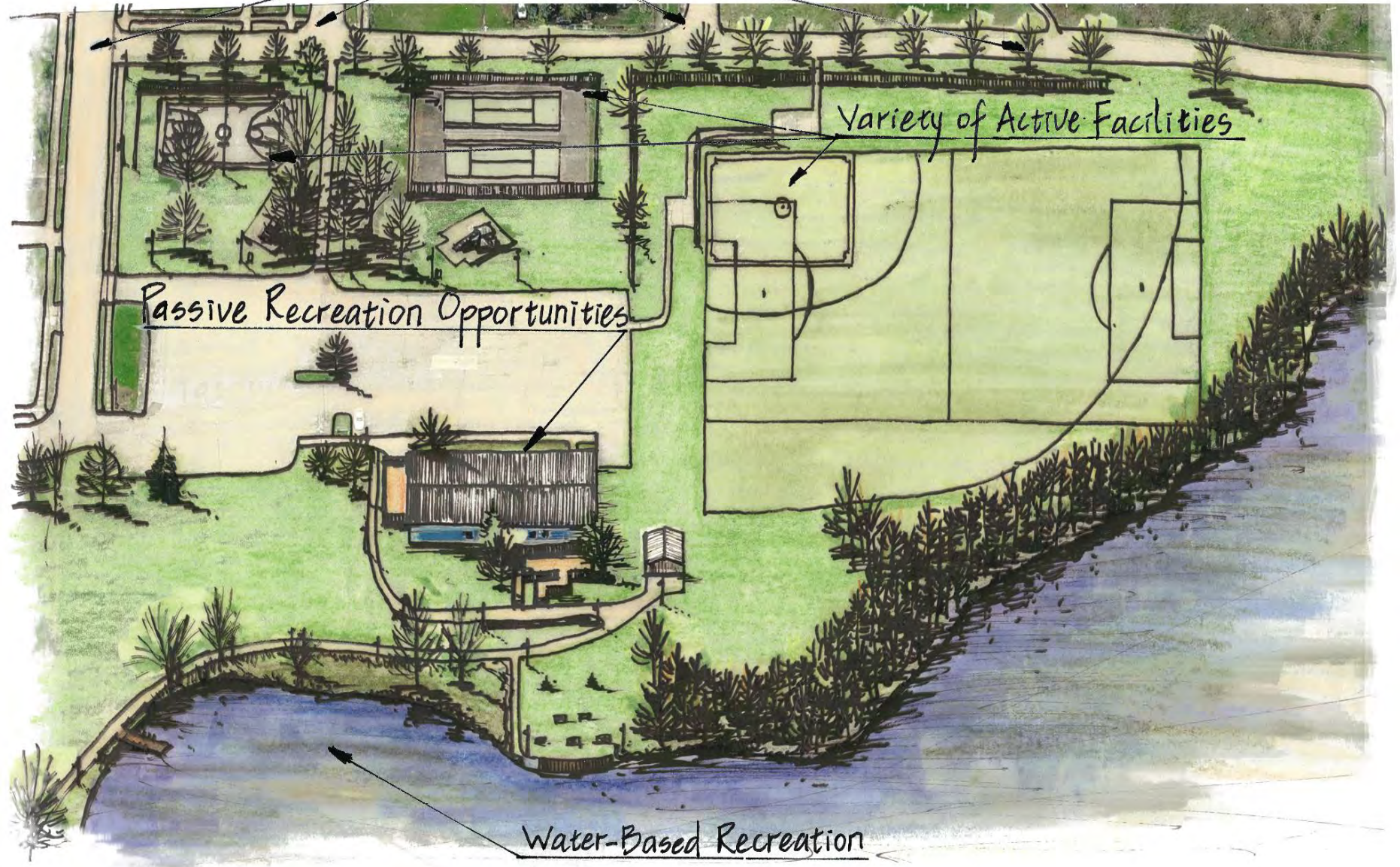
Variety of Active Facilities

Passive Recreation Opportunities

Water-Based Recreation

# Public Parks

Public parks play a vital role in neighborhoods and communities by providing a central gathering space in a naturalized setting. When properly designed, public parks can form networks of green space that connect neighborhoods and form a common bond amongst local residents. Parks can range in size from small squares or pocket parks to larger, vast, natural open spaces. Successful park spaces feature creative amenities and recreational functions that meet the needs and demands of all members of the community.

Parks greatly contribute to a community's physical, mental, and social well-being by providing:

- Active, open areas for exercise and recreation,
- Naturalized green space for relaxation and meditation,
- Large public spaces for community events/concerts/festivals,
- Educational summer youth programs/workshops, and
- Inviting, user friendly, public land that can help build social equity and encourage public participation.

By embracing natural green space within the urban environment, a community provides its residents access and proximity to parks, trails, and other natural resources that encourage more active and healthy lifestyles. Similarly, a community receives environmental benefits through green and blue infrastructure opportunities that are created through the proper planning and maintenance of parks, rivers, streams, and other natural amenities of the locale.

Located directly across from the public library, Reutter Park in Lansing is used by many downtown employees for a lunch break respite. The park also features a weekly concert series around its historic fountain through the summer months.

*Source: [Reutter Park. Facebook](#).*

Rosa Parks Circle in downtown Grand Rapids is a popular public art space that features concerts, community events, and seasonal activities, such as ice skating.

*Source: [Until Love is Equal](#).*

Lansing's historic Moores Park swimming pool was built in 1922 and designed by City engineer Wesley Bintz. One of the last of its kind still in use across the nation, the pool illustrates how unique park amenities create a destination spot for residents and visitors, and serve as a source of local pride for the community.

*Source: [Lansing State Journal](#).*

RESOURCES

1) [Project for Public Spaces](#).
2) ["The Future of Michigan's Parks and Outdoor Recreation." 2012. Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel](#).
3) [City Parks Forum. American Planning Association](#).
4) [Active Living Research](#).

# Trails

Trail systems on both a local and regional level form linkages to networks of green space within in the community as well as surrounding area. These connections promote outdoor recreation and physical exercise while bringing the community closer to its natural amenities such as rivers, lakes, forests, and public park system. Trail networks spur more active lifestyles making the community more walkable, connected, and accessible to outside users from surrounding towns or cities.

Trails and greenways encourage greater mobility and lead to improved health and fitness amongst residents, impacting a community's medical expenses. They also have social impacts in the interpersonal exchanges that take both along the trail and the connecting public green spaces or trailheads, and help form further connections between nearby neighborhoods and other local destinations. With the reliance on automobiles for commuting and daily personal travel, communities with strong trail networks and user-friendly connections offer its residents a healthier option for traversing through the city. Such efforts lead to positive impacts not only for community health but the natural environment, as well as reducing the amount of pollutants in the air from vehicular travel and traffic congestion.

Many abandoned former railroad lines provide an accessible right-of-way for communities to build upon, and many in Michigan have taken advantage of these areas to form trail corridors and greenway connections within their communities and across the state. Such vast connecting routes attract further tourism and travel in communities along the trail, and lead to additional opportunities for placemaking applications in key destinations and attractions in the region.
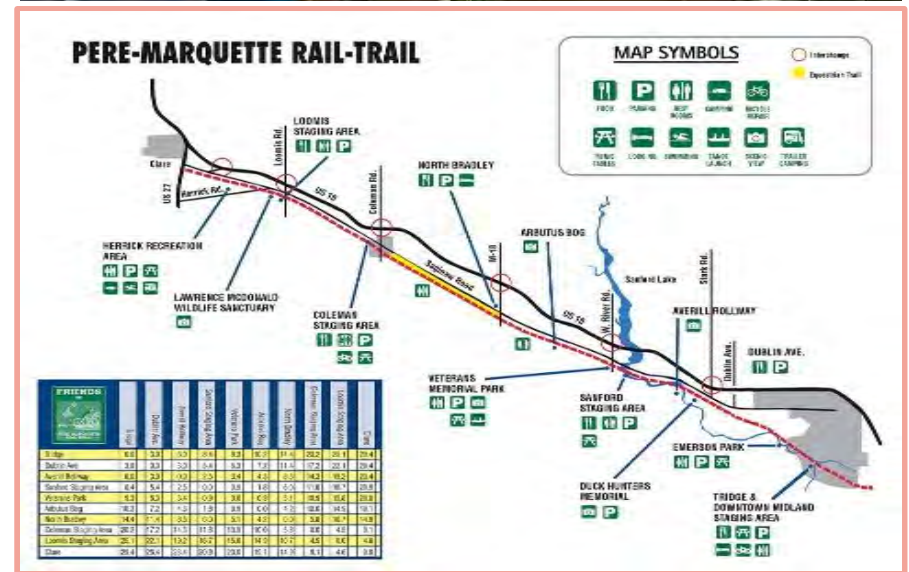
The Lansing River Trail is approximately 13 miles long stretching from the west side of Lansing to East Lansing along the Grand and Red Cedar Rivers. The trail has spurs that provide residents connections to parks, such as Hawk Island Park and attractions, as well as Old Town and the Lansing City Market.

*Source: Pure Michigan. Michigan.org.*

Dequindre Cut Greenway in Detroit was created from a former below-grade rail corridor to improve neighborhood connections to the Detroit River and Eastern Market District.

*Source: Smith Group JJR. Dequindre Cut Greenway.*

The Pere Marquette Rail Trail stretches over 56 miles of former CSX Railroad line, running east-west across the middle of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The trail is used by pedestrians, cyclists and snowmobilers to travel through towns from Baldwin to Clare and all the way to Midland.

*Source: Pere Marquette Rail Trail. Mobile Maplets.*



RESOURCES

1) "The Future of Michigan's Parks and Outdoor Recreation." Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel. 2012.
2) Steps for a Walkable Community: A Guide for Citizens, Planners, and Engineers. America Walks, Sam Schwartz Engineering.
3) Michigan Trails & Greenway Alliance.

# Waterfront Opportunities

Many Michigan communities possess natural amenities, such as lakes or rivers within their borders that offer various opportunities for public recreation, social engagement, community and economic development, as well as forums for educational, cultural, and artistic events. During the first half of the 20th century, communities featured amusement parks situated along local lakes, such as Lansing, Flint, and Jackson. People came from near and far to enjoy roller coasters, merry-go-rounds, bumper cars, and boat rides, reinforcing these natural areas as regional destinations and sources of community pride. This is one way lakes and rivers represent key assets a community can embrace and build upon to maximize their full potential for both local residents and regional neighbors to share and enjoy.

Today lakes and rivers provide a natural setting within an urban locale, and are also key components for green and blue infrastructure initiatives that address issues, such as stormwater management and improved water quality. Redevelopment along a waterfront should incorporate techniques to ensure preservation of these natural resources. Such efforts provide educational opportunities through public workshops or volunteer water quality monitoring.

Placemaking opportunities that can occur near lakes, rivers, streams, and surrounding green space include: pedestrian/bike trails encircling the lake or along the river; kayak/canoe/paddleboat rentals; fishing; picnic pavilions/amphitheaters; sites for concerts, festivals, and special events; public art and historic markers/monuments; and many other creative applications that attract users and create a natural destination for the region. These spaces showcase local identity and call attention to the community's natural assets. As such, they should be easily accessible, and offer unique amenities that attract a variety of park patrons. Surrounding buildings should focus less on residential or commercial uses and instead provide flexible design and creative functions that further enhance activity around these valued natural resources of the community.

Many waterfront amenities also offer floodwater storage as they are likely situated within floodways. Developing them for recreation purposes while allowing natural flooding utilizes the land without significant harm to resources or the built environment during flood events.

Thread Lake amusement park was one of two historic lakeside parks that served Flint and the surrounding region from the early 1900s to 1950s. Many similarly located amusement parks were a popular attraction in communities throughout the state in the first half of the 20th century.

*Source: Flickr.*

Detroit's renovated riverfront extends 5.5 miles from the Ambassador Bridge to Belle Isle.

*Source: Riverwalk Carousel. Bridgette's Detroit Wedding. 2009.*

Adado Riverfront Park abuts the Grand River as it flows through downtown Lansing. The park plays host to several arts and music festivals throughout the year, and is connected to Old Town, downtown and other local destinations by the Lansing River Trail.

*Source: Static.Panoramio.com.*



RESOURCES

1) 10 Qualities of a Great Waterfront Destination. Project for Public Spaces.
2) Green Infrastructure: Design and Placemaking. 2011. The Scottish Government, UK.

# Shared Use of School Facilities

School facilities represent a huge local investment and have features that lend themselves to use by other local entities such as auditoria, classrooms, meeting halls, etc. Many school districts have long shared these facilities for a wide range of uses and for public and sometimes private functions. Now there is even more attention being paid to shared use.

A shared-use agreement is a formal agreement between two government entities that establishes the criteria for utilizing public property for the greater good of both institutions. Shared-use agreements often occur between a city, township, county, and/or public school with the aim of maximizing efficient use of physical assets and public property for the entire community.

An example of a shared-use agreement is one that occurs between a school district and the city that permits use of the school's recreational facilities, playgrounds, courts, track, and park space by the general public. The agreement may be limited to either outdoor or indoor facilities, or could include both. This type of shared-use agreement can be a cost-effective strategy to enhance the quality of life of community residents by providing recreation opportunities and adequate space for children and families to exercise and play.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of these agreements and limit potential trespassing and vandalism, clear signage should be displayed at shared-use facilities that outlines the following:

- Clearly identifies eligible facilities and grounds that may be used for recreational purposes;
- Clearly defines eligible users and the times when facilities are available; and
- Specifies any liability and repair responsibilities for eligible users.

Signage is a legal and wayfinding obligation to both the users and property owners in the shared-use agreement. Shared-use agreements can also apply to private functions and festivals at municipals parks or other public property governed by the city or county.

The Marshall Armory in Lansing shares a lot with Lansing Catholic High School. The shared lot provides green space and a walking trail for workers at the Armory and recreational facilities for students at the school.

*Source: Capital Gains Media.*

Many Relay for Life fundraisers take place on tracks at local high schools in Michigan, which is an example of the shared use of a facility.

*Source: The Rockford Squire.*

The Meridian Township Farmers Market is held at the Meridian Township Municipal offices and is an example of a shared-use agreement.

*Source: Meridian Charter Township.*

RESOURCES

1) Bridging the Gap: Shared Use Agreements. February 2012.
2) State Memos on Shared Use Liability. Change Lab Solutions. 2009.
3) Nuts and Bolts: Creating a Shared Use Agreement. Change Lab Solutions.

# Themed Events

Themed events can consist of a variety of social, cultural, historical, artistic, and political components that draw large crowds together in a community public space. Citywide marathons and 5K races, arts and crafts festivals, sports competitions, charity fundraisers, and park concerts are just a sample of themed events prevalent in communities of all shapes and sizes. When properly planned these events hold vast placemaking potential that can lead to various positive impacts:

- Encourages community participation;
- Builds civic pride;
- Helps form a local identity;
- Strengthens neighborhood and community bonds; and
- Promotes tradition through a recurring social occasion.

Annual or recurring themed events also provide a key attraction for a community to market and build upon each year, such as Mint Festival in St. Johns, the Coast Guard Festival in Grand Haven, or the Charlevoix Venetian Festival. Events on this scale attract new visitors to the region and help raise awareness of a community's assets, which leads to further tourism opportunities. By locating events in or around key hot spots or signature destinations, a community can further showcase its local amenities.

Themed events represent a form of taking back public space in order to maximize its uses for the community. When festivals, races, concerts, fairs, and other creative events fill these spaces with colorful, lively activities, the community becomes an attraction point for local residents as well as the surrounding region.

The Capital City Dragon Boat Race takes place in the Grand River along the shorelines of the Adado Riverfront Park in downtown Lansing. The event draws large crowds, with racing teams made up of local businesses, private organizations, community groups and other eager competitors.

*Source: Greater Lansing Sports Authority.*

Annual programs such as Lansing's Be a Tourist in Your Own Town promote participation and showcase community activities and amenities.

*Source: My Love Letter to Lansing. Blog.*

The annual Detroit Free Press/Talmer Bank Marathon attracts several thousands of participants to the downtown area every October. The route traverses the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel below the Detroit River, and crosses back over via the Ambassador Bridge.

*Source: Tell Us Detroit.*

RESOURCES

1) What Makes a Successful Place? Project for Public Spaces.
2) *Northern Michigan Community Placemaking Guidebook: Creating Vibrant Places in Northwest Lower Michigan*. March 21, 2011. Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NMCOG).