

Incorporating Active Living in your Community: Highlighting Michigan's Active Communities

Michigan's program, "Promoting Active Communities" has made them a leader in the promotion of active living communities. Active living communities are those that make it easier for residents to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. The State of Michigan collaborates with several programs to develop an online self-assessment. Each municipality can use the assessment to evaluate their environment, policies and programs related to physical activity.

Both community leaders and citizens complete the assessment. Each community is given then one of five levels of awards along with individualized ideas for improvements for the community. The awards range from copper to platinum.

The copper award is for communities that have made a

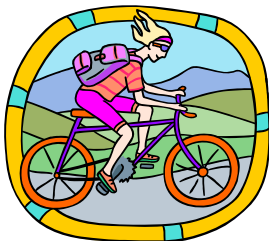


For ideas and more information, visit Michigan's Active Communities webpage at:
www.mihealthtools.org/Communities/

commitment to becoming a healthier place to live and have begun to take steps toward removing barriers to physical activity. The platinum award goes to communities that are models of commitment to healthy, active living. A guidebook assists in envisioning and creating active living communities within Michigan. While Michigan is one of the leaders in this effort, Minnesota is a state that may benefit from a similar program.

In Minnesota, Active Living Ramsey County (ALRC) is working to create a recognition program to recognize communities who promote active living. As ALRC moves forward Michigan's plan provide a helpful model. ALRC encourages Ramsey County communities to improve and create active living communities while also recognizing those who stand out as leaders.

Complete the Streets



A complete street improves the safety, convenience, efficiency, and accessibility of the transportation system for all users. Many Ramsey County municipalities acknowledge the importance of active transportation and providing safe and assessable routes for those who

wish to bike or walk. Across the U.S., coalitions have gathered to promote complete streets to help communities enhance policies to make their built environment more accessible and connected to further support physical activity.

The complete streets website offers suggestions for creating a good complete streets policy. According to the website, a complete streets policy:

- ⇒ Specifies that "all users" includes pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists of all ages and abilities.
- ⇒ Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations.
- ⇒ Recognizes the need for flexibility: all streets are different.
- ⇒ Directs the use of the latest and best design standards.

The Active Living Resource Center and the Complete Streets website both provide useful information about complete streets. Both websites are listed under Useful Resources.

Transit for Livable Communities Initiates Bike Walk Twin Cities Website

Recently, Transit for Livable Communities created a new Bike Walk Twin Cities website to promote biking and walking in the metro area. The website provides facts about benefits of biking or walking, assists in reducing barriers, and provides a variety of other resources.

The bike/walk website hopes to encourage Twin Cities residents to bike and walk for several reasons, including:

- ⇒ To increase residents' amount of physical activity.
- ⇒ To decrease the amount of carbon dioxide emissions.
- ⇒ To provide examples of how physical activity can be fun and economical.

In addition to health benefits, another reason to encourage biking and walking is to improve the

cleanliness of the environment. According to the website, avoiding 10 miles of driving every week per person would eliminate about 500 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions each year. Further, runoff from roads and parking lots can make water unsafe to drink. Choosing biking or walking to run an errand is not only good for personal health, it benefits our physical environment too!



Did You Know?

- ⇒ Minnesota leads the country in bicycle trails. Wisconsin is a close second. Each state has approximately 1300 miles of trails, which is nearly a quarter of the bike trail miles in the entire country.
- ⇒ Over 30% of the CO2 emissions in Minnesota come from cars and trucks.
- ⇒ Ramsey County along with its municipal partners has prepared a 100-mile regional trail comprehensive plan goal to link every city and township within the county. This would connect the existing 56 miles of trails with 44 new miles of proposed trails.

For more information on the regional trail plan visit the website at: <http://www.msa-ps.com/?pid=78&gid=157>

Active Living Ramsey County!
2785 White Bear Avenue North
Suite 350
Maplewood, MN 55109-1320

Active Living Ramsey County is a collaborative effort working to create and promote environments that make it safe and convenient for people to integrate physical activity into their daily routines.

Do you have suggestions, comments or something to share? Please contact Amber Dallman at amber.dallman@co.ramsey.mn.us or 651.266.1179 for more information.



USEFUL RESOURCES

- ⇒ The Bike Walk website provides variety of resources and interesting facts. For more information about the Bike Walk website visit: <http://www.bikewalktwincities.org/index.html>
- ⇒ America Bikes-Complete the Streets coalition and the Complete Streets website are devoted to informing and educating the public about current topics regarding complete the streets and helping to promote complete streets. Log on at: <http://www.americabikes.org/default.asp>, or <http://www.completestreets.org/howtogetto.html>
- ⇒ For biking and pedestrian design and planning guidance and requirements, and links to city and county websites, see the Mn/DOT bike/pedestrian home page at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bike/>.
- ⇒ Where ever you are in Minnesota you can find events, news, and trails about walking, biking, canoeing and more at the Minnesota Trails website. For more ideas visit: <http://www.mnbiketrails.com/>
- ⇒ To calculate the walking score for various locations visit www.walkscore.com. It will provide restaurants, parks, schools, grocery stores and coffee shops near the desired location.

We're on the web:
activelivingramseycounty.org