



## SR2S and the Master Plan: Part 5

A healthy, high quality environment; safe, vital neighborhoods; schools that can be accessed by bike or on foot; a sense of community--these are important to Michigan's residents, are a basis of good planning, and contribute to state's economic well being.

In order to retain existing residents, and attract new ones, Michigan communities must provide the amenities that studies show residents desire. People are not only looking for a house, they are looking for a community, and one that offers a variety of mobility options. Surveys show that we favor shorter commute times; sidewalks and places to walk; opportunities for physical activity; and amenities that support healthy living. Heightened awareness about the benefits of physical activity drives the desire to create communities that support physical activity for both mobility and recreation. Increasingly, policies addressing these issues are embedded in the recommendations of a community's master plan.

The location of schools, and their accessibility to families, has been given short shrift in recent years, particularly as more and more new schools are being constructed further from the students they serve. High quality neighborhood schools are one of the most important decision making factors when considering where to live. Community planners play a critical role in the creation of those quality places that attract residents, and a community plan that integrates the most desired characteristics, including high

quality and accessible schools, will result in a community that attracts and retains residents. By planning for connected streets and sidewalks within the transportation system, and for the thoughtful placement public buildings like schools, healthy living environments that provide natural opportunities for physical activity – like walking or biking to school - can be achieved.

### SR2S AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

A master plan is the official document that outlines a community's characteristics, articulates a vision, and establishes goals and strategies for realizing that vision in the future. A comprehensive master plan addresses all elements of a community including transportation systems, housing, environmental and natural resource preservation, economic development, parks and recreation, and public utilities, and buildings, among many others.

As the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program gains prominence both nationally and in Michigan, planners have come to recognize that the desired outcomes of the SR2S program mirror many of the land use goals and policies being advanced by local government. The parallels between local best planning practices and the philosophies advanced by SR2S are striking; including SR2S principles to the planning process can advance the goals shared by both.

### HOW TO INTEGRATE SR2S WITH THE PLANNING PROCESS

Healthier communities CAN be created if policy makers, community planners, school

officials, and residents work together to create plans that include healthy infrastructure and physical design recommendations, policies, and goals. Almost every element of a master plan can advance the shared value of making communities healthier and creating opportunities to be more active.

To align your master plan with SR2S philosophies, and to create integrated options for mobility, special attention should be given to the goals and objectives sections of specific elements of your plan: transportation; parks and recreation; bike, pedestrian and non-motorized; neighborhood; and the overall land use plan.

### TRANSPORTATION PLAN

A community's transportation plan element can be easily modified to include goal statements that support bicycle and pedestrian friendly activities which incorporate SR2S philosophies:

1. **Pedestrian Safety**
  - a. Create a street system that ensures pedestrian safety through the construction of sidewalk connections between schools and the neighborhoods they serve.
2. **Pedestrian Access**
  - a. Prioritize routes to school which enable pedestrians, and especially students, to safely and freely bike or walk to school.
  - b. Plan, build, and maintain pedestrian supportive infrastructure such as cross walks, islands, signage, curb cuts, etc.
  - c. Provide universally safe and equal access (ADA, crossings, access to destinations, reducing conflicts and collisions).
3. **Streetscaping and Land Use**

- a. Provide pedestrian amenities
- b. Promote land uses that enhance public spaces and neighborhoods.

**4. Education**

- a. Educate citizens, community groups, and associations about safety, health, and civic benefits of walkable communities.
- b. Develop supportive education, encouragement, enforcement, and coordination programs.
- c. Encourage all schools in the municipality to become a Safe Routes school.

**5. Implementation**

- a. Integrate pedestrian considerations based on federal guidelines into projects, policies, and the community planning process.
- b. Plan, build, and maintain supportive infrastructure for walking (design standards, maintenance standards, funding priorities, and development review).
- c. Require all new development to install sidewalks to community adopted standards.

**6. Infrastructure**

- a. Infrastructure investments will be based on the concept of creating “complete streets” that integrate the needs of all modes of travel, including walking, bicycling, transit, and motor vehicles.
- b. Sidewalk connectors between neighborhoods and schools within the municipality will be evaluated and included in the CIP.
- c. At intersections near schools, the city shall install raised crosswalks to help reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian visibility.
- d. Curb extensions will be added to shorten the pedestrians crossing distance, eliminate parking on and near the crosswalk, and improve sight distance for pedestrians.



**Many existing goals within the transportation, parks and recreation, and general land use plans support bicycle and pedestrian friendly activities and SR2S philosophies.**

of a network of trails, paths, and connected sidewalks is integral to the use of such facilities not only for recreational purposes, but as a mode of alternative transportation.

Bike and pedestrian friendly goals that can be included in the Parks and Recreation Plan include:

**1. Coordinate Transportation and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Planning**

- a. The adopted parks and recreation plan should be coordinated with, and be considered, an integral component of the city’s on going transportation planning activities.

**2. Pathway Network**

- a. Develop and improve the public pedestrian pathway system.
- b. Create and maintain a pedestrian route network that provides direct connections between activity centers, recreation facilities, parks, and schools.
- c. Allocate resources to identify and improve unimproved pathways.

**3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

- a. Encourage bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- b. Provide facilities (sidewalks, traffic calming features, crossings and accessibility features) in new construction, reconstruction, and maintenance projects.
- c. Recommend/mandate bike racks and lockers with site plan submittals

**HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

Neighborhood plans can include many recommended goals and policies that advance connectivity, mobility options, compact development, reduced vehicular trips, all of which create healthier communities.

**1. Interconnectivity**

- a. Require transportation interconnectivity between neighborhoods and between neighborhoods and destination areas like shopping or employment areas, including roads, bike paths, walking paths, sidewalks, transit lanes.

**2. Pedestrian Mobility**

- a. Enhance pedestrian and bicycle and mobility within neighborhoods by connecting complete sidewalk system; connecting sidewalks to bike paths.
- b. Create sidewalk prioritization policies.
- c. Establish and repair continuous sidewalks in neighborhoods.

**3. Traffic Calming**

- a. Improve pedestrian crossings within neighborhoods and connecting land uses.
- b. Establish areas for traffic calming features.

**GENERAL LAND USE PLAN**

The overall land use plan for a community can address overarching goals like mixed use developments that reduce vehicular trips; compact or higher density development that shortens the distance between destinations; preservation of open spaces and green belts; aesthetic and practical improvements that enhance the experience of the community as a biker or a pedestrian. These goals might include:

**1. Streetscaping**

- a. Encourage street amenities.
- b. Recommend the inclusion of street furniture, landscaping, and art in pedestrian improvement projects.

**2. Community Health**

- a. Promote land uses and site designs that make walking convenient and enjoyable.

**3. Innovative Land Development Techniques**

**PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN**

Perhaps your community has a Parks and Recreation Plan; communities that receive state or federal funds are required to adopt such a plan. It has been reported that biking and walking are the most popular forms of physical activity; the development

