

# Using Health Impact Assessments to Enhance Health Outcomes

## Examples from Three Michigan Communities

A **HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT** is a tool for evaluating the potential health impacts of a project or policy and provide recommendations to increase positive health co-benefits and mitigate negative health impacts.

According to the World Health Organization, an HIA is a “means of assessing the health impacts of policies, plans, and projects in diverse economic sectors using quantitative, qualitative, and participatory techniques.” HIAs can help decision makers evaluate alternative scenarios and better understand ways to prevent disease, injury, and disparities, and improve public health.

The following details three case studies of HIAs in Michigan that deal with climate-related issues.



### ANN ARBOR

#### *An HIA of the Ann Arbor Urban & Community Forest Management Plan*

This HIA examines the potential health benefits associated with targeting tree planting in residential areas of Ann Arbor that are most vulnerable to high heat events.

**Using data that highlights areas of the community with the heat island effect and public health information, the City of Ann Arbor is prioritizing where to plant trees to yield the greatest public health benefits.**

Development of Ann Arbor’s first Urban & Community Forest Management Plan (AA-UCFMP) began in 2010, utilizing a street tree inventory that identifies 42,000 street trees and 8,000 stumps or planting sites.

Canopy can reduce urban temperatures by 4C (7F), therefore, more urban canopy cover will be critical as temperatures climb as a result of global warming.



Ryan Stanton, The Ann Arbor News

### EAST LANSING

#### *An HIA of Non-Motorized Transportation Improvements in East Lansing*

In 2012, the Ingham County Health Department, the City of East Lansing, and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission conducted an HIA of key non-motorized transportation elements of the City of East Lansing’s Climate Sustainability Plan and Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.

**The HIA found that many of the recommendations from both plans promote greenhouse gas mitigation and improve air quality.**

This HIA found that a number of recommendations promoted a mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality. Specifically, if adopted, all the recommended measures in the non-motorized transportation and climate sustainability plans would likely increase the amount of residents utilizing non-motorized transportation and thus improve health outcomes. Additionally, prioritizing sidewalk improvements, creating additional crosswalk opportunities, and improving the existing crossings would likely increase pedestrian activity.

### GRAND RAPIDS

#### *An HIA for the Michigan Street Corridor Plan*

The Michigan Street Corridor Plan covers four-mile stretch along Michigan Street, from the Grand River to the East Beltline

**This HIA explored a number of health focus areas, including:**

- 1. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly design.**
- 2. Access to affordable fresh foods.**
- 3. Reduction in vehicle emissions by providing alternative transportation options.**
- 4. Tree canopy cover.**

Health indicators in and around the study area were evaluated to identify areas with high concentrations of obesity, incidence of personal injury, asthma and heat-related illness, and access to transportation and services.

Recommendations designed to have positive health outcomes and support climate adaptation:

1. Accommodate all modes of transportation, and especially enhance mobility for individuals with disabilities.
2. Provide zoning and economic development incentives that attract one or more options for healthy food access.
3. Enhance and expand tree canopy cover.