



Section One Introduction

Since the early 1970's, the popularity of pathways has increased for both transportation and recreation opportunities. A comprehensive non-motorized pathway network encourages alternative modes of movement within the community while contributing to a balanced transportation system. Further, pathway systems provide an outlet for much needed recreation. Statewide, a growing number of people have recognized the benefits of pathways including economic, cultural, social, and recreation, impacts which help define the quality of life for a community, not to mention the increased public health, safety, environmental protection and alleviated pollution which results from pathway systems.

The Charter Township of Brighton recognizes these benefits and has pledged a commitment to development of a comprehensive pathway system. In 2002, the Township updated their Master Plan which included a survey of Township residents and business owners. The survey revealed that the number one recreation facility that the respondents would like improved was the presence of nature trails, bridle trails and bikeways. In response, the Master Plan recommends the development of a coordinated public pathways system, and design that promotes, rather than prevents, their use. Additionally, the Future Land Use Plan recommends the installation of pedestrian paths and cycling trails in and between residential areas and subdivisions. The Plan further identified a number of main corridors throughout the Township that should be developed with non-motorized pathways. Since its adoption, the Township has updated the Zoning Ordinance, which was revised to require pathways or sidewalks along those corridors identified in the Master Plan.

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Purpose of the Plan

Brighton Township has experienced a steady period of growth, which is anticipated to continue. Development threatens to reduce access to some of the natural areas, public lands and recreational opportunities in the Township and surrounding area. Brighton Township is located amidst many regional park facilities and within a short distance of downtown Brighton and connectivity to these areas is important for a comprehensive system. While the automobile will certainly remain the primary mode of transportation here, many residents desire other choices as well. They want to be able to walk to a friend's house or to the store, or to take their bikes to the many nearby parks and schools. Now is the time for pathways planning in Livingston County before continued development makes future pathways more difficult. It is for these reasons that we are planning for our collective future in Brighton Township by developing this Pathways Plan.

This Plan is intended as a Township-wide pathways plan. This Plan recognizes the East Grand River Corridor Plan which was adopted by the Township Board in early 2006 in response to the planned road improvements to I-96. This corridor-specific Plan recommends eight to ten foot asphalt pathways along Grand River between Kensington and Old U.S. 23 in conjunction with the County's Plan to widen this segment of Grand River to accommodate the diverted traffic. Already in engineering and design phase, the Plan assumes the development of the pathways along Grand River, and therefore this section of Grand River was not analyzed as part of this Plan.



Benefits of Pathways

Pathways positively impact residents and improve communities by providing a number of benefits ranging from the obvious recreation and transportation opportunities to the more obscure benefits of improved economics, health, public education, and quality of life. Specifically, benefits provided by pathways include:

- **Recreation Opportunities.** The increased demand for recreation is resulting in the increased presence of pathways throughout the nation. Pathways provide for a diverse range of interests including walkers, joggers, hikers, runners, cyclists, rollerbladers, cross country skiers, and horseback riders. Pathways provide an opportunity for

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residents to enjoy their community and take in the natural and cultural features of Brighton at their own pace, any time of the day.

- **Transportation Alternatives.** A network of non-motorized pathways in Brighton Township will ensure that residents, particularly children, can travel safely, without the use of an automobile. The Plan identifies pathway connections to residential neighborhoods, schools, recreation facilities, and commercial nodes to provide a safe alternative towards accessing these destinations.
- **Environmental Protection.** Pathways can help preserve important natural landscapes, provide needed links between fragmented habitats and offer numerous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species. In addition, reduced reliance on the automobile leads to reduced pollution and traffic congestion.
- **Enhanced Economics.** It has also been shown that pathways actually tend to reduce crime and increase property values. Experience nationwide has shown that well-planned trails attract families, local residents, and other friendly, responsible people, whose presence on the trails serves in effect as a neighborhood watch, driving troublemakers away. Access to pathways is one of the most desirable amenities that homebuyers seek, and the value of most properties is enhanced by being located near a pathway.
- **Improved Health.** Health problems such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and obesity are all linked to a lack of exercise. Pathways help people of all ages and health incorporate exercise into their daily routines by providing them with safe and easy access to the places they need or want to go and contribute towards the fight against obesity and inactivity. Possible health benefits of regular pathway use include weight loss, reduce blood pressure, protection against developing non-insulin dependent diabetes, and improve symptoms of depression and anxiety.



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- **Outdoor Education.** Pathways traverse a wide range of environments and can be used as an outdoor classroom. The installation of interpretive signage can describe natural, cultural or historic aspects of community.
- **Quality of Life.** The quality of life is a primary attractor and marketing tool for communities and helps keep residents satisfied with their community. Areas perceived as having a high quality of life, often include amenities and features such as frequent parks, ample open space and good schools, with a safe and walkable environment.

Planning Process

The planning process was a cooperative effort spanning six months. Initiated by the Township staff and government, the planning effort was led by the Township planning consultants LSL Planning, Inc. and engineers Orchard, Hiltz & McCliment. The following highlights the major steps involved in the Plan development:

- **Pathway Committee Meetings.** The Township held a number of meetings with an informal pathway committee consisting of representatives from local communities, SELCRA, MDOT, Livingston County and others to develop the vision for the pathway system. These meetings were used to confirm the goals and recommendations of the Plan, to coordinate planning efforts occurring at the various governmental levels, discuss issues in regard to potential non-motorized routes, and review draft versions of the Plan.
- **Focus Groups.** Focus Group sessions were held in February 2006 to gain input from stakeholder groups regarding the development and maintenance of pathways in the Township and to reach general consensus on the preferred routes. Individuals from neighboring communities, community and interest groups, and county, regional and state agencies were invited to participate.
- **Public Workshop.** A public workshop was held in March 2006 to introduce citizens to the pathways Plan concept, answer questions, and identify needs, concerns and issues regarding the proposed pathways. The workshop asked participants to describe the type of trails that they would like to see, to identify opportunities for pathway development, to prioritize trails for current and future development, to comment on various pathway proposals, and to express their ideas

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and concerns. A summary of the comments heard at the meeting and in the survey distributed at the meeting are as follows:

- a. The vast majority agreed that pathways will be beneficial to Brighton Township.
- b. About half were in favor of all off road multi-modal paths while others wanted to see a mixture of both off-road multi-modal paths and on-road lanes.
- c. Concern was expressed regarding the amount and width of pathways proposed.
- d. Pathway segments that were viewed as the most important include those that lead to schools (Hilton, Spencer, Hyne, Hacker & Taylor), those that lead to parks (Kensington, Spencer, Old U.S. 23), Grand River (north of City of Brighton), those that lead to activity nodes (Hilton, Spencer, Old U.S. 23 & Grand River) and Kensington Road.
- e. Over half of the participants were willing to support a slight increase in taxes or millage in order to support the development of pathways.
- f. Participants wanted to ensure that maintenance and funding sources were identified.

The concerns that were heard are typical issues heard during almost any pathway project. Although these concerns are typical, they reflect real issues that will need to be addressed.

- **Plan Development.** The planning for a Brighton Township pathway system began with the collection and gathering of data on the existing conditions for non-motorized travel. Needs and safety concerns are identified as well as an analysis of current roadways and pathways in relation to their suitability for various types of pathways. This data, along with input heard from the pathways committee, general public, and Township staff was used in the development of the Plan goals, objectives and recommendations.
- **Plan Completion and Adoption.** The Planning Commission held a public hearing to present the Plan in June 2006 and solicit public input prior to adoption by the Township Board. In general those in attendance were supportive of pathways and the Plan. Following minor edits to the Plan, the Plan was recommended for approval to the Township Board. The Plan was made available for public review prior to adoption.