



Everything Michigan

'Complete Streets' might come to city of Zeeland

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A plan for "Complete Streets" might come to the city of Zeeland.

Kathryn Gray, public policy specialist for Disability Network/Lakeshore, recently presented information to the City Council and other city leaders on Complete Streets, which are achieved when local organizations and agencies routinely plan, design, construct, re-construct, operate, and maintain the transportation network to improve travel conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, and people with disabilities in a manner consistent with, and supportive of, the surrounding community.

Development of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure offers long-term cost savings, improved public health, economic development, a cleaner environment, reduced transportation costs, enhanced community connections, social equity, and more livable communities. Streets that support and invite multiple uses, including safe, active, and ample space are more conducive to public life and efficient movement of people than streets designed primarily to move automobiles.

The work to bring Complete Streets to Zeeland began last year after the Livable Communities Event hosted by Disability Network/Lakeshore. Abby deRoo, city of Zeeland marketing director, who represented Zeeland on the Livable Communities Event Workgroup, was excited to begin a grassroots conversation regarding walkable and livable communities, including the concept of Complete Streets.

Zeeland residents were overwhelmingly represented at the Livable Communities Event showing setting the tone that Zeeland embraces an inclusive community. Thus, under the director of Gray, The Zeeland Walkability and Livability Coalition was formed to further educate Zeeland on Complete Streets.

Planning Commissioner Doug Barensse and downtown business owner Eleanor Seavey, owner of On Silver Shores, have also been part of ongoing discussions on how to best educate the community on Complete Streets. This meeting was just the first step in a partnership between the city, Disability Network/Lakeshore, and the Ottawa County Health Department.

The Ottawa County Health Department received a grant to work with Zeeland to develop a Complete Streets Ordinance. Disability Network/Lakeshore has already passed four policies in West Michigan and was recruited by the Health Department in working with Zeeland on this project.

"The city of Zeeland has made several strides in moving towards a walkable and livable community," Gray said. "However, there is always more we can be doing as a city to create a sense of belonging which truly represents the citizens of our community."

"The City of Zeeland's dedication to an accessible and mobile community in which all ages and users are welcomed is extremely important. Because of this dedication, Complete Streets is a perfect fit for the Zeeland community."

In Michigan, more than 55 communities have adopted a Complete Street ordinance or resolution.

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