Explore how the growing number of Maryland Local Governments discovered the best option for their health insurance needs.

Since 2010, LGIT Health has provided insurance programs for the benefit of towns, cities and counties in the state of Maryland. LGIT Health helps its members by providing stable rates and predictable costs for municipalities while providing outstanding benefit coverage to their employees. LGIT Health has expanded its offering by adding a fully-funded health plan provided by Kaiser Permanente.

Best of Both Worlds
Giving you more options with dual funding: fully-funded and self-funded.

Kaiser Permanente
Fully-funded health plan
- Fixed monthly premiums
- No risk for claim underfunding
- Price stability
- Multi-Specialty telehealth
- Region’s leading health system

Cigna
Self-funded health plan
- Fixed monthly premiums
- Reward based on group experience
- Price stability
- Extensive provider network
- Maintain your own benefit design

As well as these advantages:
- Integrated Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Dental, Vision, Life, and Disability Programs Available
- Post 65 Retiree Health Program
CONTENTS

SEPTMBER/OCTOBER 2021

Vol. 52 | No. 2 | September/October 2021

Municipal Maryland

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Scott A. Hancock Publisher Patricia Foss-Bennie, CAE, IOM, CMP Editor-in-Chief
Justin Fiore Contributing Editor Bill Jorch Contributing Editor Thomas C. Reynolds Contributing Editor
Sharon P. Easton Circulation

Municipal Maryland (USPS 331-980), a publication for and about Maryland's cities and towns, is published six times a year (bi-monthly January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December issues) by the Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

The Maryland Municipal League is a non-profit, non-partisan association of Maryland's cities and towns. Information in Municipal Maryland does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Maryland Municipal League.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Municipal Maryland, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Second-class postage paid at Annapolis, Maryland 21401

For advertising rates contact: Jess Burnside, Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis MD 21401
Telephone: 301-836-1516 ext. 412, Email to: JBurnside@Fovndry.com • Subscription rate: $40/year

Design by: Paragraph2Media.com

ON THE COVER
Original Art "Cumberland, Maryland" by Angela Hedderick, Mockingbird Fine Art Studio

4 BREATHE by Gary Allen, Maryland Forestry Foundation
7 The Way Forward: Health in All Policies by Celeste James, Kaiser Permanente, Mid-Atlantic
10 Covid-19 and Climate Change by Brandy Espinola, Environmental Finance Center
11 Citizen Health: The Frontier of Community Planning by Gary Allen, Maryland Forestry Foundation
12 Nature Play at the Local Park by Sandi Olek, Maryland Department of Natural Resources; Nancy Strinsite, Early Space LC & Sharon Danks, Green Schoolyards America
14 Community Spotlights: Riverdale Park Food Security
Bel Air Farmers’ Market
College Park’s Permaculture Garden
17 Centerfold: Embracing Health in All Policies Design by Michelle Baca
21 Community Spotlights: Hyattsville Food Forest
Westminster
24 Blue Index: Measuring the Healing Power of Water by Kevin Jeffery and Sarah Davidson, Co-Founders, Blue Index
25 Community Spotlight: Emmitsburg Trail Network
26 Biking & Walking - Destination: Better Towns, Better Health by Mike Hunninghake, Program Manager, Sustainable Maryland
29 The Nexus Between Energy & Health by Arjun Makhijani, Institute For Energy and Environmental Health
32 Don’t Waste a Good Opportunity by Smiti Nepal, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
34 Upcoming Events & Meetings

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Scott A. Hancock Publisher Patricia Foss-Bennie, CAE, IOM, CMP Editor-in-Chief
Justin Fiore Contributing Editor Bill Jorch Contributing Editor Thomas C. Reynolds Contributing Editor
Sharon P. Easton Circulation

Municipal Maryland (USPS 331-980), a publication for and about Maryland’s cities and towns, is published six times a year (bi-monthly January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December issues) by the Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

The Maryland Municipal League is a non-profit, non-partisan association of Maryland’s cities and towns. Information in Municipal Maryland does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Maryland Municipal League.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Municipal Maryland, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Second-class postage paid at Annapolis, Maryland 21401

For advertising rates contact: Jess Burnside, Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis MD 21401
Telephone: 301-836-1516 ext. 412, Email to: JBurnside@Fovndry.com • Subscription rate: $40/year

Design by: Paragraph2Media.com

Vol. 52 | No. 2 | September/October 2021

Municipal Maryland

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION of MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Scott A. Hancock Publisher Patricia Foss-Bennie, CAE, IOM, CMP Editor-in-Chief
Justin Fiore Contributing Editor Bill Jorch Contributing Editor Thomas C. Reynolds Contributing Editor
Sharon P. Easton Circulation

Municipal Maryland (USPS 331-980), a publication for and about Maryland’s cities and towns, is published six times a year (bi-monthly January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December issues) by the Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

The Maryland Municipal League is a non-profit, non-partisan association of Maryland’s cities and towns. Information in Municipal Maryland does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Maryland Municipal League.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Municipal Maryland, 1212 West Street, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Second-class postage paid at Annapolis, Maryland 21401

For advertising rates contact: Jess Burnside, Maryland Municipal League, 1212 West Street, Annapolis MD 21401
Telephone: 301-836-1516 ext. 412, Email to: JBurnside@Fovndry.com • Subscription rate: $40/year

Design by: Paragraph2Media.com
We begin life with a first breath — we breathe to live so often we are unconscious of the act. Breathing is autonomic and essential to our health, well-being and energy. Perhaps the same can be said of a variety of local government actions. We see them so as basic, essential and necessary that they too are autonomic, almost unconscious attributes of how we function as leaders. Yet these actions shape how we feel about the quality of our lives and directly impact the cycles of our work, health, sense of safety, and energy. This special issue is designed to raise our consciousness about how local government supports and prioritizes human health. We will share examples, highlight actions and provide context for helping local leaders understand more clearly how you can and likely already do help those in your communities reach their full potential and BREATHE.

Everything we do requires energy. But it’s commonplace these days to find ourselves struggling to summon enough energy to meet the challenges life throws at us in addressing the tasks we’ve set for ourselves, let alone do things we enjoy.

We glance continually at the clock, always anticipating the “next thing,” only to find time has slipped away, our energy depleted,
and our anticipation has turned to anxiety. Our natural energy can be thought of in three ways: physical, mental and emotional. Physical energy defines how we move our bodies around. Mental energy engages our minds and holds our attention when we do activities like reading, watching something or someone and learning. Emotional energy engages our feelings, fears, enthusiasm, responses, and demeanor.

Science tells us our energy levels follow natural cycles or “rhythms” each day that fluctuate for each of us. At peak times, we feel sharper, more efficient and most effective. Conversely, in troughs, life and tasks feel more demanding and difficult. At times things can seem impossible, while at other times, those same tasks are quickly addressed.

What does this have to do with local government? Some may think “nothing,” but let’s reflect further as a local leader. How do we and how can we help those in our communities store up energy, use their bodies efficiently, calm their spirits, engage their minds, and build their strengths?

There are many ways local government leaders impact community health. You provide access to recreation and nature. You prioritize public safety and efficient transportation. You demand healthy water and green infrastructure as you manage waste and runoff. You make planning for a better quality of life a criterion for growth. Your work makes getting outside easier, attractive, organized, and even celebrated. All these things are done without considering the natural energy cycles of citizens. But these community services allow citizens to “breathe easier” because their city or town focuses on their needs and ensures that they get the most out of their day, their community, and yes, their tax dollars.

A focus on health is especially appropriate as we transition to “normal” after one of the most trying years in our lifetimes. COVID-19 has caused great loss for many, strained all of our lives, our economy, and even our perceptions. The pandemic added new words to our vocabulary like “Zoom” and will require additional new options for our future.

This special issue explores in depth how you as a local leader can “feel the rhythm” and consciously act to support and strengthen the health of your community and its citizens. Specifically, our authors will highlight the value of getting outside, the important role that health should play in basic local planning and community services, defining healthy energy choices, being sensitive to the disparate impact of the choices we make, and working toward institutionalizing health through networks and infrastructure. These are challenging topics for challenging times, meant to frame the choices we make every day as leaders. Municipal Maryland has never looked at these issues from a health and energy perspective before. Perhaps you have not either. Take a deep breath and relax as you read and reflect. Imagine how you can make your community healthier and happier as you consider the authors’ ideas and examples of what some of your colleagues are doing in Maryland.
Health Care Leaders Learn Here

Health administrators and managers are in high demand. Advance your career in the health care field by earning a bachelor’s, master’s or certificate from the School of Health and Human Services in The University of Baltimore’s College of Public Affairs.

We offer flexible, affordable programs at both the Baltimore campus and The Universities at Shady Grove campus in Rockville, Maryland:

B.S. in Health Management
Launch or advance your career as a health care manager through our certified bachelor’s program, with face-to-face Saturday classes offered in 10-week semesters.

Certificate in Health Systems Management
This 12-credit program provides a fast track to advance your current health care career or gain entry into a new career.

M.S. in Health Administration
Designed for health care managers and program administrators who want to advance their careers on their schedule, classes are held Saturdays and online in 10-week semesters.

Learn More:
UBALT.EDU/HEALTHANDHUMAN SERVICES

University of Baltimore
College of Public Affairs
The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare universal inequities in access to healthcare across the country. It also brought to light the dramatic disparities in health outcomes based on factors that extend beyond the medical exam room. The current healthcare climate has given rise to the popularity of a Health In all Policies (HiAP) approach.

HiAP is “a collaborative approach that integrates health considerations into policymaking across sectors, and at all levels, to improve the health of all communities and people.” HiAP provides a framework for community and government to assess and prioritize the health impacts of current and future policy. This leads to better health outcomes, stronger communities and overall greater potential and prosperity for impacted regions.

More than a decade ago, then Director of the Alameda County Health Department, Dr. Anthony Iton, said, “I can predict your life expectancy by your zip code.” At the time this was a shocking claim, further proven true with a cross-referential study of population demographics, neighborhood environments, and life expectancy in Alameda. The study found that when looking at race, education, socioeconomic status, access to services and other social factors (all known as the social determinants of health), residents living in poorer communities of color, on average, had a 20-year shorter life span than neighboring zip codes that were more affluent. It is now widely understood that an individual’s health and well-being are not simply determined by their genetics, or by how often they go to the doctor, but by factors beyond healthcare. According to the Maryland Health Department, the average life span in our state is 79.2 years – which ranks Maryland at 25 out of 51 states and territories. In addition, the average life expectancy of a white female is 82.4 years, while the average life span of a black male is only 73.1 years, an almost ten year difference. This stark data, combined with the realities of ongoing post pandemic health struggles and concerns about a second COVID wave, make it a critical moment for government and community to work together to address key issues that affect health and well-being.

The conditions in which people live, work and play have a far greater influence on health than traditionally thought. According to the National Academy of Medicine, it’s estimated that an individual’s health outcomes are impacted 10-20% by medical care, 30% by health-related behaviors (smoking, alcohol intake, eating habits, etc.), 10% by physical environment (pollution, secure housing, and transportation), and 40% by social and economic factors (education, income, social services availability, and risks to personal safety.)

Social determinants of health such as economic stability and access to education and affordable housing fall within the jurisdiction of policy and policymakers. State and local policies drive these conditions within communities from all sectors, because all policies can affect health. Policy drives locations for transportation hubs, grocery stores and farmers markets. It also drives how pollution of air and water is managed and how much affordable housing is developed and accessible.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) HiAP is an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically
HiAP isn’t a rigid framework; there is no one right way to execute a HiAP approach. However, there are five key guiding principles:

1. **Promote Health Equity and Sustainability:** Given the strong ties between inequity and poor health outcomes, it is critical to address and promote health equity vs. health disparities. Health disparities are defined as “differences between specific population groups in the incidence, prevalence, mortality or burden of disease and illnesses.” Health inequities are defined as “the differences in health that are the result of systemic, avoidable and unjust social and economic policies and practices that create barriers.” (Virginia Dept of Health 2012). Health disparities are the symptom of the disease of health inequity.

2. **Intersectoral Collaboration:** Bringing diverse partners from every sector to the table will provide a 360 view of policy impacts and integrate untapped knowledge and wisdom into the decision-making process. Sectors such as housing, transportation, development, and parks and recreation play significant roles. Often, more input sources and greater diversity of opinions slow down process, but the need for sustainable change requires us to set aside our desire to make things happen quickly and instead to look at how to make change that will have lasting impact. This African Proverb describes it best: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

3. **Benefits to Multiple Partners:** Finding the win-win among agencies is critical to keeping stakeholders engaged, increasing access to limited resources, and removing barriers to execution. It is vital to listen for and understand different sectoral goals and priorities. The goal is to find overlap or synergy in the execution of those goals. For example, a school district prioritizes lowering chronic student absenteeism, and the health department wants to lower the incidence of youth ER visits due to chronic disease. By partnering and sharing data processes via cross-referencing student absenteeism with youth ER visits, both entities might identify causal relationships and come closer to meeting their different but synergistic goals.

4. **Engage Stakeholders:** Seeking input from a wide variety of stakeholders ensures that policies reflect the vision of those impacted. Engaging community members, non-profits, businesses, faith-based organizations, and other voices taps into a legacy of knowledge and increases buy-in, support and implementation success.

5. **Create Structural or Procedural Change:** HiAP is not a one-off venture. For successful HiAP implementation, the practice must be institutionalized; thereby becoming the status quo for decision making. Creating sustainable policy requires sustainable processes.

Here are some regional examples of HiAP success:

- In Baltimore, the comprehensive revision of the city’s zoning code provided an opportunity to discuss how zoning and the built environment impact residents’ health. This led to a 2010 health impact assessment of the first draft of the code. The health impact assessment recommended limiting the concentration of alcohol outlets and instituting land use and design elements to reduce crime (e.g., lighting standards), also important for promoting walkability. Subsequent drafts of the municipal zoning code reflect this input.

- In Washington, DC, a 2013 executive order on HiAP was included to facilitate implementation of the Sustainability Plan. It contained provisions to improve health by improving access to parks, addressing food insecurity and access to nutritious foods, and increasing access to safe and affordable housing. The order created a multi-agency HiAP task force to “coordinate across agencies to embed practices to improve health.” The study is currently in progress.

Maryland’s rank of 25th in life expectancy in the United States suggests an opportunity to make measurable improvement. By addressing the social determinants of health with a HiAP approach, Maryland will move the needle towards longer life expectancy, thriving communities, and health equity.

Legislators can act now by prioritizing health, familiarizing themselves with the Social Determinants of Health, and implementing recommendations from the resources below. Together we can ensure that all of Maryland’s citizens, regardless of zip code, are able to live the long and healthy lives that all deserve.

For Resources To Get Started: [https://www.mdmunicipal.org/958/12275/Health-in-All-Policies?activeLiveTab=widge ts#liveEditTab&versionsList](https://www.mdmunicipal.org/958/12275/Health-in-All-Policies?activeLiveTab=widge ts#liveEditTab&versionsList)

---

1 Health in All Policies: A Framework for State Health Leadership, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, [https://www.astho.org/HiAP/Framework/](https://www.astho.org/HiAP/Framework/)
2 Health in All Policies: Strategies to Promote Innovative Leadership, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, [https://www.astho.org/Programs/Prevention/Implementing-the-National-Prevention-Strategy/HiAP-Toolkit/](https://www.astho.org/Programs/Prevention/Implementing-the-National-Prevention-Strategy/HiAP-Toolkit/)
3 Health in All Policies From Start to Finish, Changelab Solutions, [https://www.changelsolutions.org/product/start-finish-health-all-policies](https://www.changelsolutions.org/product/start-finish-health-all-policies)
4 Health Equity Moving Beyond Health Disparities, Policy Link, [Health Equity 101 Final May 2014 AS pdf.pdf](policylink.org)
5 Virginia Department of Health, [Definitions – Health Equity (virginia.gov)](virginia.gov)
Great news! Your organization has partnered with T-Mobile, which means you and your family can experience Unlimited talk, text, and smartphone data on our network at an amazing price. Switch today to get some of the best benefits in wireless—all from America’s largest and fastest 5G network.

**T-Mobile Work Perks** Switch and save more than $900 over Verizon with $10/mo. discount on Magenta® MAX, and get premium UNLIMITED Talk, Text and Data!

Compared to 3 lines of Verizon Get More Unlimited over 20 mos. with approx. taxes and fees. Carryover features and fees may differ. Req. new acct. on Magenta MAX. $5/mo./line discount up to 2 lines for 20 mos.

Activate up to 4K UHD streaming on capable device, or video typically streams at 480p.

**Magenta 55+** Customers ages 55 and up get our best Unlimited plans, now with Netflix. That’s two lines for just $70/mo. with no unexpected price hikes, ever.

With AutoPay, Taxes & fees included. Min. age 55. During congestion, customers on this plan using >100GB/mo. may notice reduced speeds until next bill cycle due to data prioritization. Video typically streams on smartphone/tablet at DVD quality (480p). Up to 5GB high-speed tethering then unlimited on our network at max 3G speeds.

**First Responder & Military** Qualified first responders, veterans, and service members get 50% off family lines. 50% off additional line price for lines 2-6 vs. Magenta; with AutoPay. Present U.S. military or first responder verification for account holder at activation, maintain military or first responder line, & re-verify when requested; otherwise plan becomes Magenta (additional cost up to $20/per line/month).

Be sure to mention your employer to receive this offer.

855-570-9947
t-mobile.com/workperks
t-mobile.com/store-locator

---

**Save on Unlimited talk, text, & smartphone data**

Limited time offers; subject to change. At participating locations. Plans: Credit approval, deposit, $10 SIM card, and, in stores & on customer service calls, $20 assistant or upgrade support charge may be required. U.S. roaming and on-network data allotments differ: includes 200MB roaming. Unlimited talk & text features for direct communications between 2 people; others (e.g., conference & chat lines, etc.) may cost extra. Not available for hotspots and some other data-first devices. Capable device required for some features. AutoPay Pricing for lines 1-6. Without AutoPay, $5/mo./line/mo. May not be reflected on 1st bill. Int’l. Magenta MAX; Unlimited high-speed data US only. In Canada/Mexico, up to 5GB high-speed data then unlimited at up to 256kbps. Not available for hotspots & some other data-first devices. Capable device required for some features. Activation required to deliver video streams at speeds that provide up to Ultra HD video capability (max 4K); some content providers may not stream their services in UHD. May affect speed of video downloads; does not apply to video uploads. Int’l. Roaming: Usage may be taxed in some countries. Calls from Simple Global countries, including over WiFi, are $.25/min. (no charge for WiFi calls to US, Mexico and Canada). Standard speeds approx. 256 Kbps. Not for extended international use; you must reside in the U.S. and primary usage must occur on our network. Device must register on our network before international use. Service may be terminated or restricted for excessive roaming. Capable device required; coverage not available in some areas. Some uses may require certain plan or feature; see T-Mobile. Military: Submit U.S. military verification at my.t-mobile.com/profile. First Responders: Present first responder verification in store or if activating by phone/online within 45 days of promotion.t-mobile.com/FirstResponder). For eligible state & local law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical response personnel, pensioned retirees, & parents, children, or spouses of first responders killed in the line of duty. Not available to federal employees. Confirm your organization considers you eligible. In Magenta Military/First Responder Plans, you may need to combine with other promotions/discounts and features; existing customers who switch may lose certain benefits. Unlimited high-speed data US only. In Canada/Mexico, up to 5GB high-speed data then unlimited at up to 256kbps. Not available for hotspots and some other data-first devices. Capable device required for some features. Video streams at up to 1.5Mbps. Optimization may affect speed of video downloads; does not apply to video uploads. For best performance, leave any video streaming applications at their default automatic resolution setting. Int’l. Roaming: Not for extended international use; you must reside in the U.S. and primary usage must occur on our network. Device must register on our network before international use. Service may be terminated or restricted for excessive roaming. Usage may be taxed in some countries. Calls from Simple Global countries, including over WiFi, are $.25/min. (no charge for WiFi calls to US, Mexico and Canada). Standard speeds approx. 128kbps without MAXUp; with MAXUp approx. 256 Kbps. Unlimited 55+: Prepaid only. Max 4 voice lines. Participating retail locations (and for existing customers, Care) only. Not eligible for discounts. Not combinable with other accounts or rate plans. Capable device required for some features. Video streams at up to 1.5Mbps. Optimization may affect speed of video downloads; does not apply to video uploads. For best performance, leave any video streaming applications at their default automatic resolution setting. Int’l. Roaming: Usage may be taxed in some countries. Calls from Simple Global countries, including over WiFi, are $.25/min. (no charge for WiFi calls to US, Mexico and Canada). Standard speeds approx. 128kbps without MAXUp; with MAXUp approx. 256 Kbps. Unlimited high-speed data US only. In Canada/Mexico, up to 5GB high-speed data then unlimited at up to 1.5Mbps. Not for extended international use; you must reside in the U.S. and primary usage must occur on our network. Device must register on our network before international use. Service may be terminated or restricted for excessive roaming. T-Mobile Work Perks: Qualifying credit, new acct. with 12 or less lines, & port-from AT&T, Verizon, or Claro required. Enroll and validate eligible employment within 30 days of active enrollment over 20 mos. may be required. Must be active & in good standing to receive bill credits. Allow 2-6 bill cycles. Credits stop if you cancel any lines. May not be combined with some other discounts; limit 1 T-Mobile Work Perks Corp node per acct. Fastest 5G: Opitional Awards - USA; 95 User Experience Report January 2021, based on independent analysis of average speeds from mobile measurements recorded during the period September 16 - December 14, 2020 © 2021 Opitional Limited. Capable device required; coverage not available in some areas. Some uses may require certain plan or feature; see T-Mobile.com. Coverage not available in all areas. Network Management: Service may be slowed, suspended, terminated, or restricted for misuse, abnormal use, interference with our network or ability to provide quality service to other users, or significant roaming. During congestion the small fraction of customers using >100GB/mo. for most plans, & 100GB/mo for Magenta may notice reduced speeds until next bill cycle due to data prioritization. On-device usage is prioritized over tethering usage, which may result in higher speeds for data used on device. See T-Mobile.com/OpenInternet for details. See Terms and Conditions (including arbitration provision) at www.T-Mobile.com for additional information. T-Mobile, the T logo, Magenta & the magenta color are registered trademarks of Deutsche Telekom AG. © 2021 T-Mobile USA, Inc.
The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly impacted how Maryland municipalities provide services, conduct business, and engage with residents. The pandemic further stretched already capacity-strapped local governments and reshaped how we think about governance in a time of crisis. The past year and a half demonstrated that the business-as-usual approach is poorly equipped to deal with a crisis that does not recognize borders, cannot be easily contained, and has the power to impact both lives and livelihoods of our communities. While local governments continue to fight COVID-19 and grapple with how to safely reopen and recover from potentially long-term economic impacts, it is important to inventory lessons learned and apply them to another global crisis - climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact peoples’ mental, physical, and financial wellbeing. While most everyone has experienced these consequences, they have been disproportionately felt by certain segments of the population. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) were among those hardest hit by COVID-19. Research shows, too, that these populations are far more likely to be hospitalized than other groups. Already overburdened with racial, social, and economic injustices, BIPOC communities are disproportionately represented in the essential workforce and often lack the privilege to work from home and, hence, limit their exposure to the virus. Furthermore, lower rates of health insurance and higher rates of comorbidities such as respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes further exacerbate the negative impacts on already vulnerable populations.

Like COVID-19, climate change will disproportionately prey upon low-income, overburdened, and under-resourced communities. Many of the same social determinants of health that have caused inequities in the coronavirus pandemic will have similar impacts in the impending climate crisis. Historic environmental injustices in BIPOC communities such as greater exposure to industrial activity and less access to green space and tree canopy will further exacerbate climate-related issues such as poor air quality and resulting respiratory issues; hotter neighborhoods and heat-related illness; and sea level rise, stormwater flooding and resulting damages to the built environment, including buildings, roads, and utilities.

While we were caught unprepared by the virus, time to prepare for the impacts of climate change remains, and with great urgency. If done strategically, climate action can also play an integral role in your municipalities’ recovery from the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. Any recovery effort will need to address both the near-term economic and community health needs and set your city or town on a long-term trajectory towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building community resilience. Climate action now provides enduring economic benefits, addresses issues of health and equity, and enables communities to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis are the proverbial canaries in the coal mine. We must confront the social, environmental and economic injustices that have made these communities so vulnerable. Climate solutions can be created to help undo historical harm. Whether through health-based and community well-being initiatives like building better more affordable public transportation, increasing tree canopy, and developing climate resilience projects or removing fossil fuel infrastructure, efforts must ensure that those who have the least means and have faced historic discrimination do not continue to carry the biggest burden.

As the recovery takes shape, significant investments in people and long-term sustainability will be needed from all levels of government. The recovery should support public health improvements that increase community resilience and reduce community risk from future public health threats. In focusing on local economic development that will increase active transportation safety and accessibility and reducing combustion of fossil fuels to improve outdoor and indoor air quality, your municipality can help ensure a cleaner, healthier, safer, more connected Maryland for all citizens.
In the midst of our national health care crisis, insights are emerging. Michael Lewis, in his most recent book “The Premonition: A Pandemic Story,” tells a tale of an unknown but knowing group of extraordinary collaborators who overlook the chaotic organization of local public health to bring together their experience, insight and varied resources to sound the alarm and mobilize resources to address a threat most could not recognize. It is not that public agencies lacked potential. According to Lewis, they lacked connection, coordination, flexibility and timely responsiveness.

While health is everyone’s concern, no one of us can solve our health needs alone. With globalization and hyperconnectivity as the main drivers of diseases, communities find themselves in a double jeopardy bind of being both the exposed and the exposor. Success in addressing new challenges is co-dependent on both health experts and the private health care industry. Together we have the social responsibility and economic interest to be agile and responsive to citizen health needs by creating a partnership long in the making, but frequently still showing poor performance.

With these motivations it is essential for local governments to work at reimagining public health. Many of the examples shared in this publication reflect excellent work in various areas that impact citizen health in our communities. However we lack a coordinated perspective in community planning and decision making. Based on current assessments and insight, these examples most frequently represent independent decisions on specific needs in recreation, land use, transportation, commerce, and education, but lack collaborative planning or communication about community health needs.

A lesson of the COVID-19 crisis is that we have overlooked an important public responsibility which left our health security exposed and locally vulnerable in part because, at every level, we divided opportunities into categories. By not viewing these opportunities as a whole, their values and benefits are obscured. To realize the full potential of local authority, we must step back and look broadly at prevention, collaboration and communication. We need to realize these core competencies require technical, structural and cultural shifts in our mindset about how local government can work.

Innovation in health will require enhanced education for staff and leadership on awareness of issues and opportunities. This is especially true when compliance with public health recommendations is distrusted, and even vilified, by significant segments of the public. Local government can set an example by not only communicating, but complying with good health practices. Current examples include masks, hand washing, social distancing, and isolation when exposed.

Lewis’s book highlights the fragmented nature of addressing public health at every level of government. It also notes great potential for improvement. We can learn from this crisis, not pointing the finger at others, but instead reflecting on what we, as local leaders “closest to the people,” can do. In the examples and perspectives shared in this issue, we will see the opportunity for our communities to elevate health as a critical criterion for our decisions, our plans, and a measure for our success. This can and should be a turning point.
Nature play areas are not nature-themed manufactured playgrounds, but actually made from nature using logs, boulders, plants and such. They can be co-located near other park amenities -- ball fields, picnic areas or structured playgrounds. The natural materials used invite visitors to “touch me, climb on me, and in some cases, “pick me up and move me.” They can be as simple as materials for fort building that can spark creativity, a stump-jump that offers a physical challenge or a butterfly garden that provides an opportunity to observe pollinators in action. Research shows that different types of play occur in structured play areas versus natural play areas. In natural play area, children are more likely to play in creative cooperative ways that support positive social interactions and language development.

Installing a nature play area is often less expensive than a traditional playground and while some items (such as tree parts) may weather and decay faster, replacing those items is not complicated and offers the opportunity to update and make the space a more dynamic play area. Nature play areas should be treated as regular playgrounds with visual safety inspections, regular surfacing and fall zone maintenance.

The space should be designed according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines. Regular safety inspections should be conducted, and a log kept of recommended or completed improvements and repairs. You should consult your insurance company and, if necessary, update your policy before beginning construction of the play area. You should also include proper signage with phone numbers and the hours the play area is open. For guidance, ideas, and inspiration from nature play areas in Maryland and the region visit the Maryland Project Green Classroom and Maryland Department of Natural Resources nature play website at https://dnr.maryland.gov/pgc/Pages/NPS/index.aspx and https://earlyspace.com, and look for the book Nature Play at Home, which features the first nature play focused municipal park in the national capital region, Constitution Gardens Park in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Nature play areas and local parks provide a popular visitor destination for communities and a valuable service for local schools for field trips, outdoor classrooms and more. During the pandemic, many school districts realized that outdoors was the safest place to be. As schools and districts considered how best to take learning outside, many faced challenges with limited footprints, dense multi-storied classroom buildings and few existing outdoor facilities. At sites shared by multiple school partners with competing demands, many found that their campus could not accommodate all they wished to move outdoors. Thinking
beyond campus boundaries and imagining possibilities in the wider community led to creative partnerships between parks and schools.

Parks, public lands, nature play areas and other outdoor spaces offer valuable opportunities to extend learning beyond the school site, and into the community. Schools with the fewest resources and smallest campuses benefit most from partnering with local parks departments to use parks and other public spaces for outdoor learning and nature play adventures.

The National COVID Outdoor Learning Initiative (NCOLI) created a library of resources for outdoor learning during the pandemic and beyond. Their Outdoor Learning Offsite chapter advises recognizing that not everyone has the same access to well-maintained parks and public spaces to support outdoor learning. Many cities have an uneven distribution of parks, limited public transportation and wide variations in accessibility, size and quality of available spaces. Outdoor learning can reinvigorate local communities’ connections to outdoor spaces.

Each school and community is unique and may be starting from a different place. There is no one-size-fits-all model for outdoor learning and many different solutions. Creative thinking outside the campus literally opens doors and is needed for many schools and districts otherwise unable to access fresh air and the benefits of mental, physical and emotional health that nature provides.

According to NCOLI, “Moving school classes and programs offsite and into outdoor spaces in the community is useful and rewarding, but also takes some specialized planning to efficiently accomplish. We recommend that plans to move learning offsite be undertaken at the school district level, rather than by individual schools, so that a whole school district may partner with their local parks department or another agency to seek integrated, systemic solutions that will create consistent, equitable outcomes for all students.”

For resources on key planning and logistical questions related to using offsite locations for outdoor learning, visit the National Covid Outdoor Learning Initiative Learning Library: https://bit.ly/National-Outdoor-Learning-Library.
The pandemic intensified existing economic inequities and impacted residents, business owners, workers, property owners, nonprofit organizations, geographic areas, and racial groups differently. In response to this dynamic, the Town created the Partners in Economic Recovery Initiative (PERI). Several programs were developed as part of the PERI with three focused specifically on food security: Bountiful Buckets, Carryout Cash, and Farmers Market Dollars. The Town also amended plans for a Community Garden, instead developing a Food Forest alternative to address food insecurity in the community.

The Bountiful Buckets program provided residents without space for a garden in their backyard the ability to grow vegetables. The Town purchased five-gallon buckets, soil and vegetables to create individual bucket gardens. The Bountiful Buckets were assembled and delivered by the Town's Department of Public Works to residents in our multifamily buildings. All the initial buckets and vegetables were distributed which received positive feedback from the residents.

Carryout Cash is designed to assist both residents and businesses. The program provides residents with additional funds when purchasing from Town restaurants. The Town’s website provides a link to purchase a digital gift card for use at participating restaurants. After the participant purchases the card, the Town provides an additional card worth 20% of the original purchase. Purchasing the card provides the resident with 120% of their original purchasing power, limits the funds to be used only at participating Town restaurants. Finding a gift card vendor to partner with on this program was difficult and this program has not seen as much activity as our other food security programs.

The Farmers Market Dollars program has been the most successful of the three programs. Every week, the program provides households in need with $25 vouchers redeemable at the Riverdale Park Farmers Market. The program got off to a quick start, with dozens of households signing up in the first few weeks. There are currently over 200 households participating. To date, participants have redeemed more than $170,000 through Farmers Market Dollars vouchers. The Town is now considering a transition from physical vouchers to a digital alternative due to increasing operating costs.

The Food Forest contains vegetables planted and maintained by the Town’s Public Works Department. Residents who need assistance can collect the food they require at no cost. The Food Forest is expanding this year to include fruit trees, which the Town will plant in the fall.

Each of these programs received assistance through the CARES Act funds and the Town anticipates also using American Rescue Plan Act funds to also assist these programs. Additionally, the Town contributed to food security programs developed by other organizations, such as Greater Riverdale Cares.
The Bel Air Farmers’ Market is in its 45th season. In a County known for a rich agricultural history, it is no surprise there are well over 50 vendors that participate in the weekly tradition located in downtown Bel Air.

Farm fresh, locally grown, in-season produce is available along with local meats, eggs, dairy products, and baked goods. The Market also includes a rotating selection of local breweries and wineries to the mix alongside vendors of flowers, vegetables, and herb plants for those that have a green thumb. Live music from local performers enhances the market experience along with edibles from vendors and food trucks. April and November are Art Months that allow local artisans offering handcrafted jewelry, pottery, paintings and more into the Market.

The Bel Air Farmers’ Market benefits the environment and supports the local economy. It is one few markets that allow pets, helping to facilitate social interaction with neighbors and friends. The Town of Bel Air is fortunate to have such a benefit.

Here are a few suggestions for any municipality looking to start or support a Farmers Market:

- Start with a strong core of farm producers who can provide a foundation for the Market. Too many crafters, artisans or merchandisers will dilute the true mission of providing healthy, locally grown food.

- Locate the Farmers Market in the downtown area. This helps attract people who will visit shops and restaurants that need a weekend boost.

- Make sure the Market is independent and sustainable. Support from the municipality is needed in the beginning with logistics and marketing, however once established, the Market should run itself behind a strong elected board.

The Bel Air Farmers’ Market is open from 7-11am each Saturday from April 13th thru December 21st. For more information visit http://www.belairfarmersmarket.com few weeks.
For seven years, College Park residents have been learning from and enjoying the fruits of the City’s permaculture garden, located along the ped/bike Trolley Trail in the Berwyn neighborhood. This edible, native garden was designed to demonstrate how permaculture practices can help people and the environment. It provides a variety of free, fresh, healthy foods to passers-by and inspires replicating a permaculture practice at home.

The permaculture garden became a reality in 2014 after the City’s Mayor and Council passed a resolution for its installation. Advisory boards (including the Committee for a Better Environment which conceived the project), residents, City Council and staff and a hired landscape architect engaged in the initial planning process. The garden was planned to be co-located with the Trolley Trail to capitalize on the trail’s high visibility and heavy use by people of all ages from the surrounding community, along with those passing through from north and south. Educational and interpretive signage was recommended to draw attention to and highlight many of the plants with edible parts in the garden.

Although some initially expressed concerns about maintenance, the City has found that the garden requires supplemental maintenance to help control a few persistent (non-native) weeds that infiltrate larger beds. The City informed its landscape contractor to avoid mowing down emergent perennials. With increased local and national attention on food deserts and food insecurity and limited space for community gardens, the City has come to believe in the importance of dedicating a portion of the landscape space to integrate free and healthy food plantings into the City’s landscape. The garden is regularly included as a Good Neighbor Day project to provide volunteer maintenance. This helps increase awareness about the importance of the permaculture planting.
Embracing Health in All Policies (HiAP)

Community health and well-being is more than just access to healthcare and medical services, it is access to things like clean air and water, green and natural spaces, healthy foods, and alternative transportation. To ensure healthy communities can thrive and prosper regardless of race, education, or socio-economic status, local governments will need to embrace collaborative approaches that integrate and articulate health considerations into policymaking across sectors, and at all levels. Adopting a Health in All Policies (HiAP) framework can help local governments assess and prioritize the health impacts of current and future policy, leading to better, happier, and healthier communities.

HiAP Guiding Principles

1) Promote Health Equity and Sustainability
   Focus on the economic policies and practices that create differences in health outcomes.

2) Intersectoral Collaboration
   Bring diverse partners from every sector to the table, especially those that have a significant role in community health, e.g. housing, transportation, development, education, environmental protection, and parks and recreation.

3) Benefits to Multiple Partners
   Find the win-wins to keep stakeholders engaged, increase access to limited resources, and remove barriers to execution.

4) Engage Stakeholders
   Seek input from a wide variety of stakeholders to ensure that policies reflect the vision of those most impacted, e.g. community members, non-profits, businesses, faith-based organizations, and educational institutions.

5) Create Structural or Procedural Change
   Institutionalize HiAP and make it the status quo for local government decision making.

Local leaders and policymakers should examine and approach all policy making from a human health perspective. Together we can ensure that all of Maryland’s citizens, regardless of their zip code, are able to live the long and healthy lives that we all deserve.
Human health and well-being are intricately linked to the state of the environment. As municipalities start to explore a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, consider how local governments can provide community-wide health benefits through environmental initiatives. Relevant environmental policies and programs that could be involved in a HiAP approach help support equitable access to clean energy and transportation, safe and affordable housing, nutritional healthy foods, and urban green spaces and natural environments.

**Effective & Equitable Government**
- Adopt a HiAP Ordinance
- Offer City Staff & Leadership HiAP Training
- Develop HiAP Goals & Indicators
- Integrate HiAP into Community Plans & Budgets
- Establish Community-based Planning Approaches

**Clean & Renewable Energy**
- Climate Action Plan
- Green Power Purchasing Policy
- Green Building Energy Ordinance/Incentives
- Renewable Energy Financial Incentives
- LED Streetlight Upgrades

**Active Transportation**
- Safe Routes to School Program
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plans
- Complete Streets Policy/Program
- Walking Audit
Discover some opportunities that municipalities can take to bridge the gap between human health and the environment below.

**Clean Transportation**
- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Planning
- Parking Maximum Policy/Ordinance
- Transit Oriented Development
- Asthma Reduction & Management Plan

**Housing Policy**
- Affordable Housing Policy/Incentives
- Lead, Mold, & Asbestos Abatement Programs
- Energy Efficiency & Weatherization Programs
- Renovation & Resale of Foreclosed Home Program
- Aging in Place Program

**Access to Healthy Foods**
- Healthy Food Zoning Overlay District
- Staple Foods Ordinance
- Farmers Markets
- Shared Use of Community Kitchens
- Community Food Pantry/Little Free Food Pantry

**Urban Agriculture**
- Urban Agriculture Ordinance
- Backyard Chicken/Beekeeping Ordinance
- Community Gardens
- Food Forests

**Parks & Recreation**
- Parks & Trails Master Plan
- Park & Playground Accessibility Policy
- Park Renovation Plan
- Integrated Pest Management Policy

**Urban Green Space**
- Green Infrastructure Program
- Tree Canopy & Urban Forestry Plan/Goals
- Equitable Tree Planting Policy

**Natural Environments**
- Forest & Wetland Conservation Ordinances
- Watershed Protection Plan
- Conservation Easement Inventory
- Farmland Preservation
- Brownfields Remediation Plan
Health in All Policies

Resources to Get Started

Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- Health in All Policies
- CDC Health in All Policies Resource Center
  https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hiap/resources/

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)
- Health in All Policies – Strategies to Promote Innovative Leadership
  https://www.astho.org/Programs/Prevention/Implementing-the-National-Prevention-Strategy/HiAP-Toolkit/
- Health in All Policies A Framework for State Health Leadership
  https://www.astho.org/HiAP/Framework/
- Environmental Health in All Policies
  https://www.astho.org/Programs/HiAP/Environmental-HiAP/

American Public Health Association (APHA)
- APHA/PHI Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments
- Introduction to Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments
  https://www.apha.org/-/media/Files/PDF/factsheets/HiAPGuide_4pager_FINAL.ashx
- Health in All Policies Webpage
  https://www.apha.org/hiap

World Health Organization (WHO)
- What you need to know about Health in All Policies
- HiAP Training Manual
  http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/151788/9789241507981_eng.pdf?sequence=1

Healthy People 2030
- Social Determinants of Health – Healthy People 2030

Changelab Solutions
- Health in All Policies from Start to Finish
  https://www.changelabsolutions.org/product/start-finish-health-all-policies

National Association of County & City Health Officials
- Local Health Department Strategies for Implementing Health in All Policies Webpage
  https://www.naccho.org/programs/community-health/healthy-community-design/health-in-all-policies
The City of Hyattsville is committed to positive environmental change through leading by example and creating opportunities for residents to lead healthier, more sustainable lives. The recent installation of a city-owned food forest provides community members with hands-on environmental education and the chance to enjoy the “fruits” of their labor. Food forests are biodiverse, edible landscapes anchored by fruit- and nut-bearing trees and shrubs. Formerly an abandoned lot, Hyattsville’s Emerson Street Food Forest is now reinvigorated as a community gathering place.

The Emerson Street Food Forest was designed in partnership with Forested Creative Ecology. It was officially launched in 2016 with a community planting to raise awareness about the garden and its benefits. The forest is open year-round and has places for rest and reflection amongst the garden beds. Leafy greens, herbs, fruits, and nuts begin ripening in the early spring and harvests continue through the early fall. Plants are organically maintained, and local students can tour to learn about agriculture and permaculture.

The garden engages residents from all over the city, with families frequently seen picking berries in the summer months. Signage and on-site education give Hyattsville staff and volunteers a platform to share knowledge on everything from the harmful effects of pesticides to healthy eating or protecting native plants and pollinators. It has been such a success that Hyattsville has begun the implementation of a second food forest on the other side of the city.

For other municipalities looking to install food forests, Hyattsville’s Environmental Programs Manager Dawn Taft recommends starting with a small space and planting densely to save weeding and maintenance time.

“The first few years of maintenance to ensure plants were thriving is where we spent the largest investment of time,” Taft says. “Once the plants mature and fill the space, you can slowly increase your boundaries using overgrowth from your established plantings free of charge!”

Taft’s other advice includes launching a routine volunteer maintenance group early in the process and developing plant identification and harvest pamphlets or signage, so residents know what and when to harvest. Community outreach is also essential to give residents buy-in to the project. “The more the community is connected to the garden, the more they will be invested and supportive of its long-term care,” Taft shared.

To view a map of the Hyattsville’s Emerson Street Food Forest and items currently available for harvest, visit www.hyattsville.org/food-forest.
Community Spotlight: Westminster

BY STEVE ALLGEIER, CHAIR OF THE WESTMINSTER TREE COMMISSION

Having served on the Westminster Tree Commission for over 25 years, I’ve come to realize that Kermit the Frog is spot on -- “it’s not easy being green.”

Like many small urban areas, our “green canopy” or tree cover is challenged by classic issues that many communities face including limited budgets, lack of suitable planting sites, tree loss, changing environment/climate, invasive species, and at times waning public interest or indifference.

In troubleshooting our green problems, we have turned to better data to help make decisions and plan for the future. Additionally, we varied our outreach to the community through some novel events and partnerships with Tree Services, McDaniel College, local high school environmental clubs and others.

Andrew Gray, Comprehensive Planner for the City of Westminster, helped our City Tree Commission refocus our efforts and effectiveness by guiding the creation of a new Comprehensive Tree Plan that incorporates scientific data. Sharing his master’s thesis data and outcomes with the commission helped develop the plan. His thesis, “Analyzing The Urban Heat Island Effect in the City of Westminster, Maryland, with Attention to Mitigative and Adaptive Measures”, contained valuable data such as Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI - graphical representation of vegetation found throughout Westminster) and Land Surface Temperature (LST) Maps. Rather than just filling in empty tree pits on Arbor Day, we can direct plantings to defined areas.

Our new Comprehensive Tree Plan has also become a “living plan” and is updated with new data.

The Tree Commission engages with community members through events. One example is a beneficial insect release held in the spring or summer. This annual family-oriented event helps educate about integrated pest management while helping many overcome a fear of bugs.

A group of interested high school students, having completed their study of a city stream to evaluate the health of this unbuffered waterway, plan to install a forested buffer along this stream. The tree buffer will improve water quality and increase local canopy cover.

Citizens have varied wants and needs. Frequently the connection between environmental and human health becomes lost. While people love the idea of having trees in their city or town, they aren’t sure how to accomplish this. Involving the local community in novel activities to “green” the City generates interest and support.

SUSTAINABLE MARYLAND

2011-2021

Join us this year as we celebrate 10 years of fostering Green Teams and supporting sustainability in Maryland’s towns and cities

www.sustainablemaryland.com

HELPING COMMUNITIES INVEST TODAY FOR A MORE LIVABLE TOMORROW
Stop chasing overdue debt. We’ll collect the money you’re owed.

If overdue fines and fees are putting a strain on your budget, we’ll help you collect the money you are owed from both individuals and businesses. Established in 1982, Alacrity averages $30 million in collections processed annually and our recovery is twice the national average.

- We treat everyone with respect, protecting your image and ours.
- Based in Annapolis. No outsourcing to other states or countries.
- Interpreters are available.
- We are ACA certified Professional Collection Specialists.

We work older accounts (240 days or more), but the sooner you send them (120 days), the more you will collect.

800.752.9663
info@accmd.com | AlacrityCollections.com
When most people think about Austin, Texas, they think of live music and BBQ. Many do not realize until they visit that water contributes a large part to the city’s mystique. To Austinites, water is an undeniable essence that imbues the city, nurtures it, and enables it to be one of the most desirable places to live.

City managers and water advocates work tirelessly to achieve this feeling and the healing effect water can bring. Between 2016-2019, the Blue Index Austin study identified that most people experience improved wellbeing when next to a waterscape and a third of participants expressed strong positive feelings about Austin waterways including relaxation, connection and love.

Blue Index is an innovative project that is changing the way we think about water, public space design, emotional health, and participatory mechanisms. It aims to measure the impact of waterscapes on the emotional health and wellbeing of those who visit them. It is a new tool for managers throughout the country to better engage with the public around urban waterscapes and for local communities to have a voice on the waters that matter to them.

What makes this tool so useful is that it allows the public to engage with municipalities about outdoor spaces in a non-confrontational and productive manner. The demonstration project in Austin collected over 1800 assessments, expanding public participation in water management and bringing new perspectives to the conversation.

The global pandemic and ongoing struggle for racial justice together have created a need for people to get outside and engage with each other in safe, meaningful and equitable ways. Blue Index draws on the interaction between community health and social justice at a time when the public is actively redefining how public space looks and functions. It offers an opportunity to harness this energy and direct it towards creating spaces for healing, while also building a bridge between decision-makers and the public.

Blue Index is currently looking for partners, from municipalities to non-profit organizations, and everyone in between. Your Maryland city or town can join us in growing this effort. For more information, visit our website at www.blueindex.org.
It was no surprise that when the COVID-19 shutdown arrived, more of us than ever before turned to the outdoors for our wellbeing. Use of parks, playgrounds and trails has seen a massive spike and this is awesome! Trails especially have become more popular, inviting a diverse community of users seeking an opportunity to be active in a natural setting. What they leave with is potent -- a boost in their physical and mental health.

The Town of Emmitsburg is home to multiple trail systems. The Emmitsburg Trails include a one-mile paved trail and 15-mile ribbon of natural surface trail which rolls and loops on hundreds of wooded acres owned by the Town. They are located in Eugene Myers Community Park and in constant use.

Our trails were professionally designed and built with Recreational Trail Program grants, volunteer labor and donations. Built for mountain biking, hiking, trail running and simple strolling, their popularity grows steadily. Ask a mountain biker why she’s there and she will offer it’s the workout. Ask a hiker why he’s there and he might cite the scenery. We all have our reasons to be in the woods.

My personal experience may offer one window on why it’s been great to be on the mountain trails. As the shutdowns progressed, I found myself not commuting to work. My three children returned home from their colleges and graduate school and I loved having my kids home. My wife’s schedule remained mostly unchanged, but the rest of us were either distance learning (my kids) or distance teaching (myself).

Sometimes as a family or individually, we would find ourselves on nearby trails, enjoying a true change of scenery. I am the creator of Emmitsburg’s trail program. It was profoundly rewarding seeing family, friends, neighbors and others out and about on the Emmitsburg Trails.

I never could have predicted how these trails would positively impact our community. Some trail users have progressed as riders, becoming more skillful and fit in their mountain biking. A friend used hiking to supplement his efforts to get more fit and lose weight. His success was tremendous.

Another demographic of a trail user I did not anticipate has been the empty-nester, coffee drinking, dog walking couple. Like clock-work on Sunday mornings, a few of these couples would park at the main trail head near Rainbow Lake, leash their dog and stroll off in to the woods, coffee in hand. I do not know whether they were solving family crises or were just enjoying the changing leaves. I do know they seem pleased when they returned.

Perhaps the group most directly affected by the shutdown, were our youngsters. Sport seasons were stopped, bedrooms became classrooms, and socializing often became virtual. Some sports programs were resilient. Consider The Monocacy Composite Youth Mountain Biking Team and their 2020 Emmitsburg Trails Enduro event. This event gave 60 young mountain bikers an opportunity to ride with friends in a socially distanced format through the woods. Outcomes included fitness, smiles, confidence, fatigue, and happy kids and parents. The benefits to Town businesses measured were 15 pizzas sold, multiple gasoline sales, tools purchased at the hardware store for pre-event trail maintenance, happy kids and parents.

Whether seeking inspiration, perspiration or both, the Emmitsburg Trails deliver. If one ascribes to the notion of the physical and mental benefits of a “forest bath,” meaning refreshing one’s mind in a forest setting, the Emmitsburg Trails deliver -- sound body, sound mind, wellness!

About the author: Completing his fourth term as an Emmitsburg Town Commissioner, Tim O’Donnell currently serves as the President of the Town Council. His lovely bride and he have three awesome kids and one cool dog.
Access to good biking and walking opportunities has always been important in Maryland, but the need became pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Outdoor exercise, including walking, biking, running and hiking, was one of the few approved activities allowed since social distancing could be practiced. Such activities, for both recreation or transportation, surged in popularity over the past year, putting tremendous strain on many of Maryland’s trails, bike lanes, and other public spaces.

Communities where these amenities were already in place were more readily able to respond to such increased demands for healthful outdoor activity. The pandemic made it clear for others that without deliberate attention, opportunities for safe biking and walking couldn’t happen in time as these were not previously planned or implemented. This illustrated how important planning for active transportation can be and how many of today’s development and infrastructure practices do not automatically solve for these outcomes. Walkable and bikeable communities must be deliberately planned and programmed by residents and local leaders. Maryland has great examples of how to support these outcomes and considerable power for such improvements is in the hands of local leaders.

The 2019 Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan provides an important resource for how to improve bike and walk access. The plan reflects how the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and State agencies hope to progress and local leaders’ critical role. It highlights current shortcomings: U.S. Census estimates, for example, suggest that only 2.7% of working adults in Maryland commute regularly by bicycle or walking, while 74% rely instead on single occupancy vehicles. A 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Study from the same period showed that an estimated 68% of Maryland adults were obese or overweight. Integrating active transportation and recreation into a daily routine helps maintain a healthy weight and reduce major health risks like heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, and some cancers. Biking and walking can be made more attractive by improving safety and system connectivity though local land use decision-making.
LAND USE AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

A 2018 survey conducted by MDOT showed that distance was the number one factor cited by Maryland residents for not walking or biking to work. A common rule of thumb among planners is that residents may be willing to regularly walk to destinations that lie within a half mile of their starting point and bike to destinations within 3 miles. In Maryland, opportunities for such short trips are limited and when available, often impeded by the automobile-oriented infrastructure. Given the history of single use zoning and solving for auto mobility and access, it is not surprising that some of Maryland’s most walkable communities are historic Main Streets and neighborhoods that pre-date such development regulations. Recognizing the need for auto-oriented planning, some regulations may no longer be needed and impede accessibility efforts for active transportation.

Integrating active transportation into comprehensive and land use is a significant step that local leaders can take to support biking and walking. Your local comprehensive plan can be a powerful tool to reshape how residents move around. Incremental changes can also help ensure safe biking and walking.

The Maryland Department of Planning and other organizations help promote best practices and guidance, such as a recent publication the Congress for New Urbanism and AARP. Communities have access to toolkits, guidance documents and other resources to help address barriers and provide opportunities for active transportation.

One way your community can find opportunities for active transportation is to rethink parking requirements and related regulations and improve access and use of outdoor spaces. As pandemic conditions helped illustrate, roadway space is a critical resource for outdoor access and can be repurposed or reprioritized where conditions allow. Several Maryland towns were able to create slow streets and reallocate parking or travel lanes for outdoor dining and walk access. This strategy was broadly successful in both large urban districts and smaller communities. For example, Hyattsville, Havre de Grace and Snow Hill tested this new road use with inexpensive movable barriers and signage, which may lead to more permanent changes.

SOLVING FOR CONNECTIVITY

Although the pandemic introduced major changes to mobility patterns, they did not end the serious safety concerns that face pedestrians and bicyclists on Maryland roadways. Despite dramatically fewer cars on our roadways in 2020, pedestrian and bicycle crashes remain at unacceptable levels and contribute the greatest proportion of serious injury and death on Maryland’s roadways. MDOT’s strategies for combatting such trends are reflected in the recent update to the 2021-2025 Strategic Highway Safety Plan. While the state-level plan reflects critical engagement at the local level, it also recognizes that every community is unique. The next critical step involves local leadership in solving roadway safety challenges specific to their communities.

To address safety issues and improve multimodal access, the MDOT State Highway Administration recently introduced their Context Driven approach, an initiative that provides a framework to tailor roadway design and engineering for a community’s land use needs. It provides a resource can be used to develop a Pedestrian Safety Action Plan (PSAP) to identify challenges, set goals and priorities to improve pedestrian safety. MDOT is also developing a statewide bicycle level of traffic stress (LTS) evaluation to match roadway and trail segments with user groups. The Plan will provide more refined routing and network analysis and enable local jurisdictions to identify gaps and target investments to need.

Many Maryland jurisdictions have already examined connectivity and access, adopting bicycle and pedestrian master plans to guide improvements. Collaborative initiatives to conduct pedestrian safety audits and assess pedestrian comfort levels are also gaining traction using resources from MDOT such
as the bike and pedestrian-related programs administered by MDOT. Several communities enhance programs by adoption of the Complete Streets policies and ordinances, which require consideration of all users in all types of roadway projects.

Local strategies for improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are key elements in community development and tourism strategies in Maryland. The growing popularity of active tourism and fitness vacation outings has resonated strongly in many of Maryland’s Heritage Areas. The importance of biking and walking is increasingly recognized as a core need in the Sustainable Communities Designation process led by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Designated communities use the Community Legacy and Maryland Main Streets Programs to develop streetscape and trail-related improvements that support local businesses. Universities and hospitals can be potential local investment partners. In Baltimore, creative coalitions between community groups and area hospitals have emerged. With local support these partners help target resources from the Seed Anchor Institutions Program to areas where health indicators show pronounced need. Even where fiscal constraints limit locals’ direct investment, partners can help make the connections.

**PARTNERS AND EVENTS**

Local leaders can have a key role by expanding collaborative partnerships and advance programming of bike and walk activity. Hosting events and using social media will engage residents to plan and participate. State agencies benefit of inputs from the Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The Committee, created by State Statute, includes representation from every region in Maryland and provides best practices for expanding biking and walking opportunities. The benefits of creating a local bicycle and pedestrian advisory group, although challenging, is a means for communities to leverage energy and awareness through volunteer action and produce sustained momentum for active transportation.

One example during the pandemic is where traffic was diverted at Lake Montebello in Baltimore City. Departments of parks and transportation partnered with bike advocates and non-profits for races and events with free access to bicycles.

Local races and “Bike To Work” Days are also great ways to help residents get active and outside. In Central Maryland, the traditional May event has been expanded for 2021 to also include a Love to Ride Challenge in September. For activating communities beyond such special events, the League of American Bicyclists, also has great ideas as part of their Bike Friendly Community program. Seven Maryland communities have already been recognized as part of this program, which helps provide a roadmap for communities seeking to improve bicycle access and activity. Similarly, the Highway Safety Research Center recently launched national recognition for Walk Friendly Communities which offers many great programs and resources.

Jurisdictions across Maryland are also stepping up with a series of walk-focused events and activities. In 2008, Maryland became the first state in the nation to declare walking as the official state exercise. Shortly thereafter, the Maryland Department of Health launched its annual celebration of walking, known as Walk Maryland Day which continues to grow with each passing year. This year’s event, scheduled for October 6, 2021, is now an integral part of MDOT’s expanded celebration of “Walktober.” Walktober 2021 is scheduled to include a broad range of events across the state, as well as a great series of free webinars with pointers on improving safety and walkability.

This Fall, as we emerge from the pandemic, is a great time to start getting active about supporting active transportation. Whether this means joining as a partner for Walktober or merely checking out some of the resources discussed here, there are plenty of great opportunities for local action. Whatever may come next, the pandemic experience has helped underscore the importance of supporting a more active Maryland to create a stronger Maryland for now and for future generations.

**Made You Look!** The Center for Social Design of the Maryland Institute College of the Arts (MICA) in Baltimore – has been working with community partners with support of MDOT MHSO to develop design solutions to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are seen and prioritized.
The use of fossil fuels is a leading cause of pollution and ill-health. Combustion of fossil fuels produces carbon dioxide, the driving force in climate change contributing to more extreme fire and flood events which results in destruction, ill-health and death. Air pollution – fine particulates, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and ozone (indirectly) are largely caused by combustion of fossil fuels. MIT’s Laboratory for Aviation and the Environment has estimated that air pollution is responsible for about 200,000 premature deaths in the United States each year, with transportation being the leading cause. Continued use of fossil fuels and worsening climate change could increase heat related deaths from 12,000 to nearly 100,000 every year by the end of this century.

A little known, but important problem is indoor air pollution. Natural gas stoves, especially older, unvented ones create nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and carbon monoxide pollution, sometimes at levels considerably exceeding outdoor air pollution limits. A 2017 study of 30 Baltimore homes, of which 29 were African American owned or rented, found 24-hour NO2 concentrations above 100 parts per billion in more than one-fourth of the homes. 100 ppb is the one-hour outdoor air pollution limit set by the Environmental Protection Agency. Among other things, NO2 pollution aggravates respiratory diseases, especially asthma. Children and the elderly are most vulnerable.

Inefficiency also plays a major role. We use far more fuels than needed for things like heating homes or getting from one place to another. An automobile only converts 15 to 20 percent of the energy in gasoline to mechanical power. The rest is wasted with most going out of the tailpipe. Ill-insulated homes use two to four times the fuel to heat them compared to the best built ones.

The big picture solution is clear – eliminate burning of fossil fuels and make energy use much more efficient. Eliminating use of almost all fossil fuel is technically possible as well as more economical. Many studies, including a multi-year study modeling a
Maryland energy transition done by my colleagues and me (Prosperous, Renewable Maryland, 2016) support this. This study included the cost of dealing with the variability of wind and solar by combining storage and other available advanced technologies.

Electrification and renewable energy are the keys to a healthy energy system. Going from gasoline to electric vehicles roughly increases efficiency 20 to 80 percent, counting losses in battery charging. Electric vehicles are decreasing in cost and comparable passenger vehicles are more economical if factoring in lower maintenance costs. Using solar and wind to charge the vehicles, almost all associated routine pollution in road transportation can be eliminated. To facilitate equitable transition, greater efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of increased roads and electric vehicles, investment in zero emission public transport should be prioritized.

Electrifying buildings efficiently is also critical for both economy and the environment. Using induction stoves eliminates pollution associated with natural gas cooking. Although frying and roasting using any energy source creates some pollution, it will remain important to vent kitchens adequately.

I don’t want to give the impression that the transition to a healthy and economical system will be a slam dunk; the transition will be complex. It will involve building up the electrical distribution system and changing the way utilities that own the transmission and distribution system are compensated because the grid will remain essential. New institutions, like distribution system operators, will be needed to coordinate thousands of rooftop and community solar plants and storage systems. Investments will be needed to make the grid smarter and more resilient. For example, the long-term parking lots at Baltimore-Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport could become a large vehicle-to-grid power plant with those parking there paid to do so.

It will be essential to make a just transition for workers and communities dependent on fossil fuels before those jobs are lost, including converting existing power plant sites to new uses. An example is a major owner of coal-fired power plants, Talen Energy, and their plan to convert several to battery storage facilities. This will not only benefit the communities but enable use of existing transmission infrastructure.

It is also important to ensure that pollution in disadvantaged communities does not increase. This could happen if gas turbine power plants are started up and shut down more frequently to accommodate variable solar and wind. Good design and early conversion of existing sites, as exemplified by the Talen Energy proposal, can avoid such problems.

With much ingenuity and hard work, the technical and economic essentials to make a transition to climate-and-economy-friendly energy are possible now. It is certain to improve health in equity if integrated into the design. Will we be wise enough to seize the moment?

About the Author: Arjun Makhijani, President of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, has his Ph.D. from the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences of the University of California, Berkeley. He has been a member of MCEC’s Advisory Council since 2013.
WITH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES FOR YOUR MUNICIPALITY

WE GET YOU. AND WE’VE GOT THIS.

These days, keeping your citizens informed and engaged is more important than ever. Trust FOVNDRY (previously named Van Eperen) to help strengthen those relationships via all the right channels. As a Maryland-based communications agency for more than 16 years, we know how to deliver on the wants and needs of businesses, organizations, and municipalities across the state. Just ask MML. We’re their strategic partner.

Ready to make an impact? Contact us today!

Public Information Services
Content Development
Crisis Communications
Graphic Design
Traditional & Social Media Management
Audio & Video Production (PSAs)
Professional Development & Training Workshops for Staff

FOVNDRY.COM | 301.836.1516 | INFO@FOVNDRY.COM
Waste, a byproduct of our society, is part of our daily lives. We encounter disposing of waste from when we wake up in the morning until we go to bed at night in the water we use, the trash that we throw away and with the transportation we use to get from one place to another. Increasing population density has created a growing challenge for waste management, wastewater management and air pollution control. Did you know that Maryland has one of the highest population densities in the nation?

The collection of wastewater has existed for thousands of years, but in the Middle Ages, most Europeans went back to using outhouses and cesspits. Untreated sewage sent to rivers led to epidemic outbreaks. London (re)introduced one of the first sewage systems after rapid urbanization caused the Thames to “smell like death.” Historically and now, lack of management of the waste in all its forms has had direct public health consequences. In 1854, John Snow helped determine that cholera was caused by contaminated water (as opposed to bad air, which was the prevailing theory). Snow mapped cholera occurrences to show their proximity to drinking water supply wells. He found that certain wells were the centers of disease outbreaks, and these wells were taking water from the most contaminated portions of the River Thames.

Advances in disinfection technologies have helped address disease causing pathogens. But waterborne pathogens are still a threat when water infrastructure is not functioning.
Wastewater treatment and waste management facilities are critical infrastructure. When systems fail, the effects can be dire.

Locally in Maryland, the advancement of wastewater and waste management infrastructures has ensured the protection of the environment and human health. Along with the management of pathogens and other contaminants in wastewater, Maryland has reduced nutrients in the Chesapeake Bay by managing nutrient output from wastewater treatment plants and funding the upgrade to enhanced nutrient removal for 67 municipal facilities through the Bay Restoration Fund.1

Advancement in waste management with landfill liners, leachate collection and groundwater monitoring wells are protecting groundwater. Through an engineered system with perforated pipes, landfill gas is being collected to be flared or transferred into energy. The composition of municipal (household) landfill gas is roughly 50 percent methane, 50 percent carbon dioxide and a small amount of non-methane organic compounds.2

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas 28 to 36 times more effective than CO₂ at trapping heat in the atmosphere over a 100-year period.2 Landfill gas must be either flared or have an alternate use (gas to energy) to prevent its release into the atmosphere.

We have come a long way from the Middle Ages when society did not understand how waste was key to human health. Infrastructure exists now that manages our waste, keeps us safe and protects our environment. The operation and long-term maintenance of these utilities are generally through ratepayers of the populations they are serving. Additionally, Federal and State grant and loan programs (such as State Revolving Funds3 and Water Infrastructure and Innovation Act4 loans) help these utilities perform much-needed upgrades. Still, more investment is needed to improve our infrastructure and build the future workforce to run these utilities. These systems contribute to protecting our health and the environment and cannot be ignored.

References:

1. Maryland’s Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan to Restore Chesapeake Bay by 2025 (4/11/2019)
4. Water Infrastructure and Innovation Act https://www.epa.gov/wifia Access Date: 7/16/2021

Emergencies and disasters come in all kinds, sizes, and complexities - from power outages to floods to cyberattacks - and each one presents unique challenges and risks. Learning how to prepare for and respond to them shouldn’t be a one-size-fits-all effort!

That’s where the MACEM&PS comes in. Our unique blend of collegiate expertise and practitioner experience lets us offer customized, innovative education, training, and professional solutions for you, your organization, or your jurisdiction. Everything we do is centered on the latest research and built to hold up to the demands of the real world, so you can get ready with confidence.

Our services include:

- Public Safety Training Program Development
- Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planning
- Emergency Plan Research & Development
- Exercise Development and Facilitation
- Threat & Risk Analysis
- Mitigation Research & Strategy
- Situational Awareness Training

Are You Ready?

Mid-Atlantic Center for Emergency Management & Public Safety

Emergency Management • Fire Service Administration • Criminal Justice • Geographic Information Systems • Police Science • MD Dept. of Ed. Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness • Apprenticeship

Frederick Community College MACEM@frederick.edu • 240.629.7970
UPCOMING

MARYLAND MUNICIPAL LEAGUE • (410) 295-9100
SUMMER CONFERENCE
June 12-14, 2022 • Ocean City Convention Center

FALL CONFERENCE
October 10-12, 2021 • Turf Valley Resort, Ellicott City

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES • (202) 626-3105
CITY SUMMIT
November 17-20, 2021 • Salt Lake City, UT
November 16-19, 2022 • Kansas City, MO
November 15-18, 2023 • Atlanta, GA
November 13-16, 2024 • Tampa, FL

CONGRESSIONAL CITIES CONFERENCE
March 6-9, 2022 • Washington, DC
March 12-15, 2023 • Washington, DC
March 17-20, 2024 • Washington, DC

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION • (202) 962-3540
October 3-6, 2021 • Portland
September 18-21, 2022 • Columbus, OH
October 1-4, 2023 • Austin, TX
September 22-25, 2024 • Pittsburgh, PA
October 26-29, 2025 • Tampa, FL
October 18-21, 2026 • Long Beach, CA

MEETINGS
SEPTEMBER 2021
1 Legislative Committee Virtual Meeting
10 Board of Directors, Salisbury
11 Conference Planning Committee Hybrid Meeting, Annapolis
13 Hometown Emergency Preparedness Ad Hoc Committee Virtual Meeting
13-16 Municipal Police Executive Association Annual Conference
15 Legislative Committee Hybrid Meeting, Annapolis
15 Southern Maryland Chapter, Leonardtown
16 Carroll Chapter, Westminster
16 Prince George's Chapter Virtual Meeting
16 City/Town Administrators Department Meeting, Gaithersburg
16 Municipal Clerks Department Virtual Meeting
22 Engagement and Outreach Committee Hybrid Committee, Annapolis
23 Montgomery Chapter Virtual Meeting
27 Washington Chapter, Keedysville

OCTOBER 2021
10 MML Board of Directors, Turf Valley
11 Legislative Committee, Turf Valley
14 Municipal Parks and Recreation Virtual Department
21 Cecil-Harford Chapter, Havre de Grace
21 Montgomery Chapter
21 Prince George's Chapter Virtual Meeting
21 Frederick Chapter
27 Engagement & Outreach Committee
28 Joint County/Municipal Attorneys Meeting

NOVEMBER 2021
13 Conference Planning Committee Virtual Meeting
18 Joint Montgomery/Prince George's Chapters Virtual Meeting
22 Washington Chapter

Stay tuned for BREATHE Part Two - still more to come in the next issue - Look for your copy of the November/December issue of Municipal Maryland
Software for Managing Public Assistance Programs

COVID-19 Relief, Mortgage / Renter Assistance, Small Business Grants, Emergency Food, etc.

To schedule a demo go to www.GTechAZ.com/Demo/PublicAssistance
MML members get a 15% discount if you sign up by August 31st.

623.349.4277
gtechaz.com
Chesapeake Employers’ Strategic Business Unit (SBU) team is focused on providing a “high touch professional level” of customer service to Maryland’s municipalities and counties. It is our local and expert SBU workers’ comp insurance professionals like Michael Malooly, Safety Services Consultant, who truly make the difference for our customers.

Take advantage of all the benefits of insuring with Chesapeake Employers:

- Strong relationships with both agent-represented and direct municipal customers across Maryland
- Competitive prices
- Premium discounts for eligible safe policyholders
- Local and responsive safety and claims services
- Convenient, easy, fast & secure online services
- Corporate dividend program for qualifying policyholders