

### Section 3.4: Local Age Groups

The demographics of an area bear heavily on the extent to which its residents are likely to rely on walking and biking as primary modes of transportation. People who are too young to drive are likely to look for non-car options when trying to get around, and so one can expect a higher demand for non-motorized travel options in places with a disproportionate number of children. Likewise, the availability of walking options is becoming increasingly recognized as crucial for the mobility of older adults. As people age, they often outlive their ability to safely operate an automobile.<sup>1</sup> Without the presence of easily accessible walking destinations, they may then lose a great deal of independence.

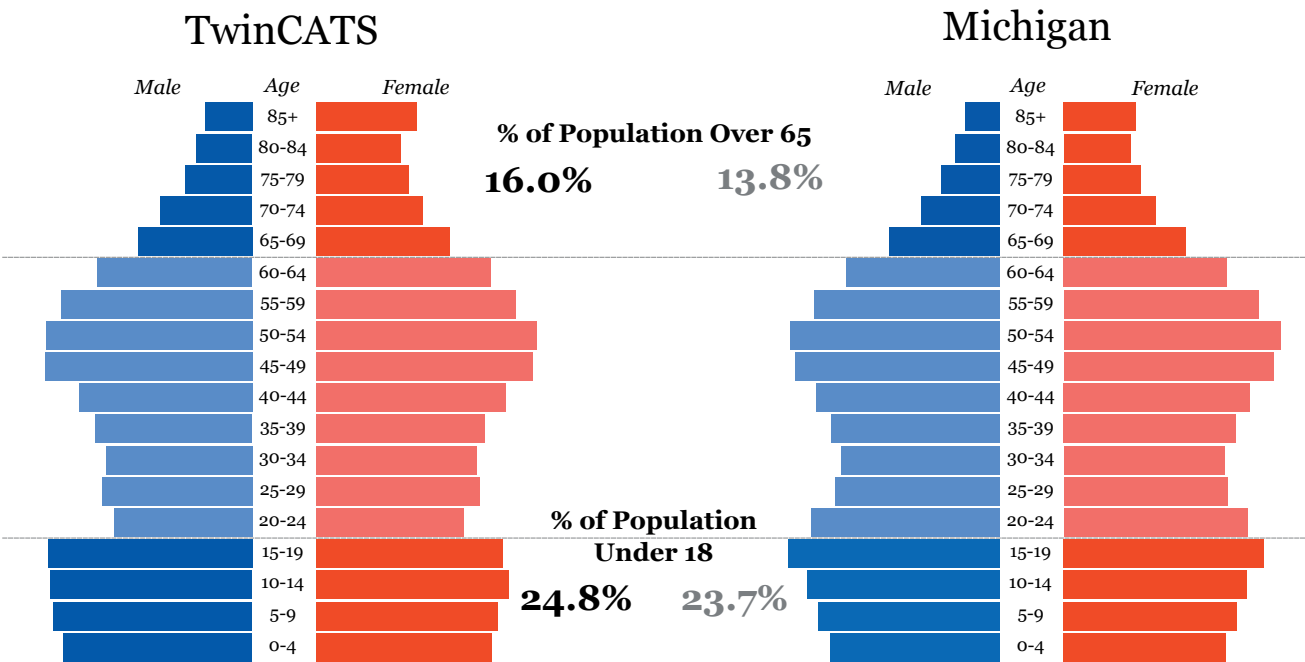
In addition to indicating a greater demand for walking and biking facilities, the demographics of an area can indicate special considerations for designing such facilities. For example, older pedestrians may benefit from extended crossing signals, crossing islands, and smoother, less demanding walking surfaces. Likewise, children may benefit from enhanced safety features, such as separated paths and

signs and signals alerting drivers of their presence.

Given the importance of old and young age groups to non-motorized transportation, it’s interesting to note the peculiar demographics of the TwinCATS area. As shown in Figure 3.5, the TwinCATS population when compared to the whole state of Michigan has both a higher proportion of residents over the age 65 and a higher proportion of residents under the age of 18; the same comparison holds for the country as a whole. Figure 3.6 shows a map of age trends within specific TwinCATS neighborhoods. All of Benton Harbor, surrounding portions of Benton Township, and east and south portions of Lincoln Township and Royalton Township have a disproportionately large population of children. Meanwhile, many neighborhoods throughout the entire region see a high population of adults aged 65 and older.

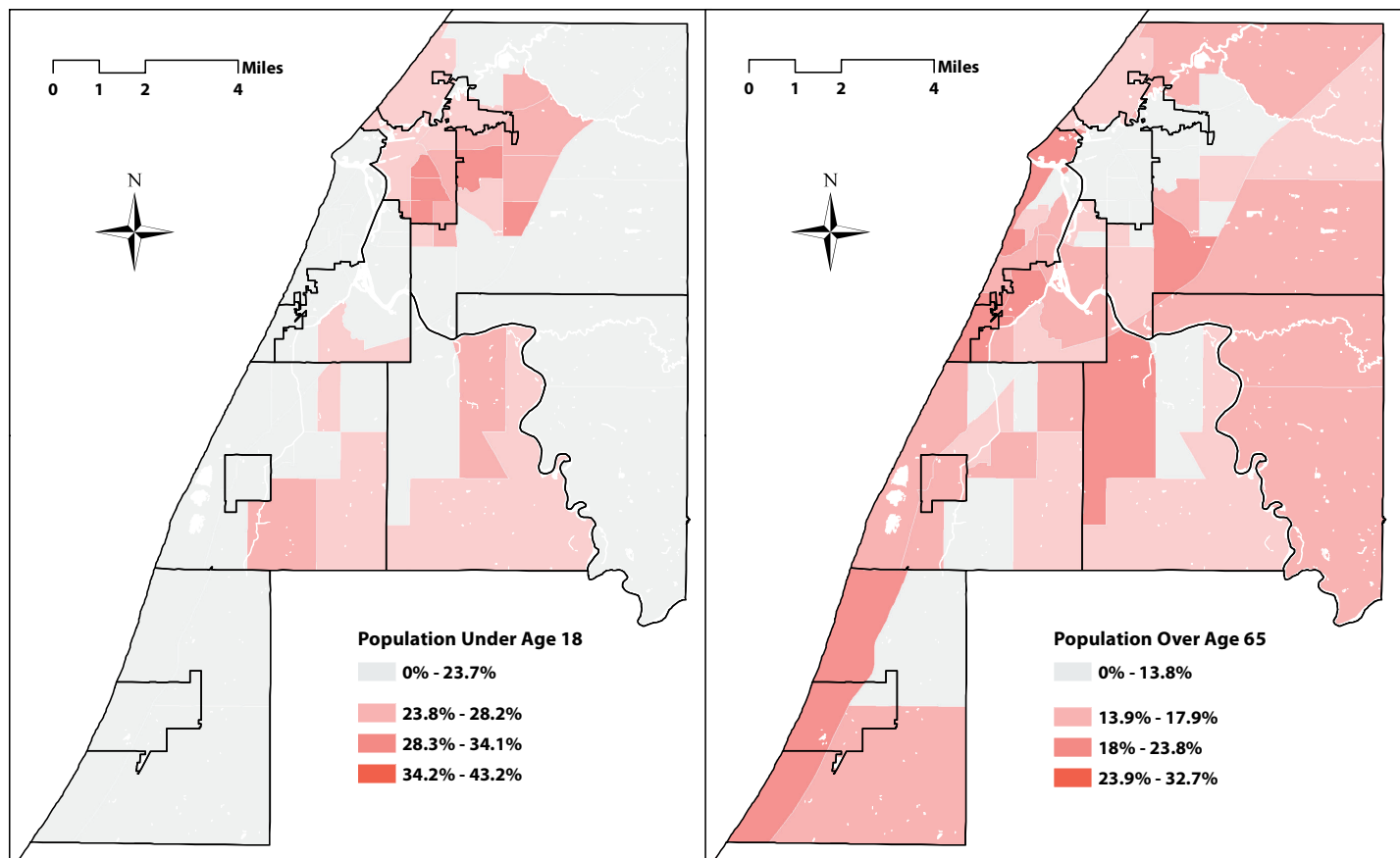
1. See, for example, Daniel J. Foley et al., “Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health* 92, no. 8 (August 2002): 1284-1289.

Figure 3.5: Comparison of Age Groups in TwinCATS Jurisdictions and the State of Michigan, 2010



Data is from United States Census Bureau, 2010.

**Figure 3.6: Map of TwinCATS Neighborhoods with Prevalence of Young and Old Age Groups, 2010**



Data is from United States Census Bureau, 2010. Colored regions of maps represent neighborhoods with age group prevalence greater than the state average,