Biosketch: Richard C. Sadler, PhD

Richard C. Sadler, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at Michigan State University. A medical/urban geographer by training, Dr. Sadler was one of the first hires in the College of Human Medicine's newly developed Division of Public Health research unit housed in Flint, Michigan. This research unit was developed in consultation with community and institutional partners, who expressed the need for community-based public health researchers who would work toward eliminating disparities in the social determinants of health.

Dr. Sadler was trained in the Human Environments Analysis Lab, a multi-disciplinary health geography lab at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. His experiences growing up in the Flint region—where industrial growth and subsequent deindustrialization have had a profound influence on the built form—shaped his drive to resolve inequalities that arise from imbalances between the salutogenic and pathogenic properties of urban areas.

Dr. Sadler's research interests reflect this concern, and include an integration of urban planning and public health topics related to neighborhood effects on health. Some such topics include local food systems, urban agriculture, access to healthy food, urban disorder, blight elimination, residential segregation, urban form, and active travel. Methodologically, he combines spatial analysis and community-based participatory research approaches to address challenges in the urban environment. Underpinning his work lies experiential training in cultural competence and a recognition of historical processes of discrimination which have exacerbated spatial and health inequalities.

Fortuitously, existing connections to Hurley Medical Center enabled Dr. Sadler's involvement in mapping the spatial distribution of blood lead levels, a task which helped bring to light the environmental injustice now known as the Flint Water Crisis. Throughout all of his work, the overarching goal is to strengthen the understanding between the built environment and health behaviors/outcomes with the goal of shaping land use policy to build healthier cities.