

January 5, 2015
Smart Growth America Complete Streets Technical Assistance Workshop
1 Month Report
Hot Springs, Arkansas
Jean Wallace, Parks & Trails Director

The City of Hot Springs, Arkansas benefited from a Smart Growth America Technical Assistance Workshop held on September 18, 2014. A spirited group of 30 community and city leaders met with the Smart Growth technical assistance team of Craig Williams and Michael Dannemiller. Roger Millar, Director, National Complete Streets Coalition and Suzanna M. Perea, EPA's Region 6 Smart Growth/Green Infrastructure Coordinator joined us as well.

A hybrid workshop agenda of policy development and implementation was proposed since Hot Springs had already drafted a Complete Streets Policy based on citizen enthusiasm and input. This draft policy was critiqued during the workshop and many solution oriented revisions were suggested to strengthen policy language specifically for the Connectivity, Design, Context and Implementation components. After much discussion and based on the follow-up Technical Assistance Report and Suggested Next Steps from our consultants, the idea to re-format our draft policy to reflect Smart Growth America's ten best practice Complete Streets elements emerged. Therefore, Hot Springs Planning Assistant, Daniel Messplay, researched every one of the best policies from the cities mentioned during the workshop, took the basic intent from our old draft and merged everything into a new draft.

City staff (Deputy City Manager, Public Works, Planning & Development, Parks & Trails and City Engineer) met several more times to discuss the new draft and we are prepared to take it to an upcoming City Board meeting for adoption.

As an aside, several important items have occurred since the September 2014 workshop that have kept the Complete Streets movement in the forefront: 1) Historic Downtown Central Avenue was designated as One of the Best Ten Streets in America by the American Planning Association, 2) the City of Hot Springs was awarded a "Blossoming Community" status by the Arkansas Coalition of Obesity Prevention's Growing Healthy Communities program for our efforts to combat obesity and, 3) Hot Springs was selected as the host city for the 2015 Environmental Protection Agency's Stormwater Conference in October. And, as a bonus, our 2015 City budget includes funding for a Green Infrastructure Plan that will serve as a springboard for future Complete Streets efforts as well as identifying health, quality of life, and the ensuing economic benefits and opportunities that nature can offer to a built environment.