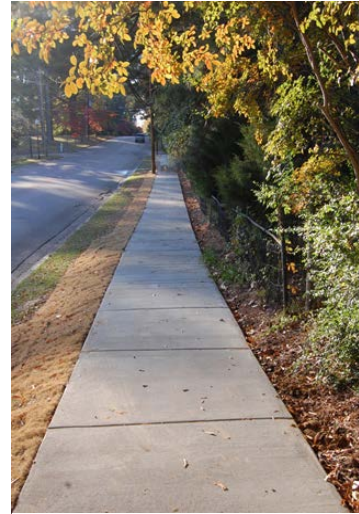


Stories from Small Towns

Hernando, Mississippi (Pop.15,000)

Hernando's Complete Streets policy mandates sidewalks in new subdivisions and new roads. A Mississippi law transferred liability for ill-repaired sidewalks to the City, rather than the homeowner, with the result that sidewalks are now kept in repair.

Hernando mayor Chip Johnson created a park system that now has eight new parks and 23 different programs. A charette funded by a Mississippi Main Street grant led to design standards and natural environment protection features. In the past ten years, Hernando has seen community events, bicycle clubs, yoga at the farmers' market, and a first-time soccer league for a thousand kids.



Sidewalk in Hernando, courtesy of the mayor's office.



Rubberized track ribbon cutting. Used by permission of the mayor's office.

The city also

obtained a grant to replace the old track around the football field with one that is rubberized, making it easier on joints--a plus for senior citizens and younger folks, too. A culvert under the road connecting the middle and high schools had been used long ago to move cows from one pasture to another, but had been blocked off for years. Hernando cleaned it up and opened it as a safe route to school.

Most of all, Hernando has created a culture of health. You can walk safely down the street, jog or cycle safely, and get fresh produce. Mayor Chip Johnson sums up his responsibility: "If you wake up and decide you want to be healthy, you should have that opportunity available to you."

Key Lessons

- Get feedback. People wanted bike lanes and sidewalks. They like connecting with their community on foot.
- Even the naysayers may turn around. One man was angry about bicycle lanes in front of his house until he noticed traffic going much slower. Now he is one of the most vocal supporters.

Thanks to Mayor Chip Johnson and Community Development Director Gia Matheny, Hernando, Mississippi.