

Press Release

WARSAW NAMED AS HAVING ONE OF 12 BEST COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES IN U.S.

City Administrator and Planner Randy Pogue was notified on March 22 that Warsaw had been selected as having one of the 12 Best Complete Streets Policies in the U.S. in 2017. It joins 11 other cities who received the recognition from the National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC), including Baltimore, MD; Las Cruces, NM; Quebec City, Quebec; Florida, FDOT; Philadelphia, PA; Stonham, MA; Bloomfield, NJ; Bonita Springs, FL; Alexandria, VA; Rochester, NY; and South Bend, IN.

“We are extremely excited for recognition from a national organization.” stated Mayor Eddie Simons. “We believe this is an example of what our rural community can achieve by working together” There is still much we want to do in the community by improving the roadways and sidewalks, but this designation will help us to pursue funding, due to its national recognition.”

The organization wanted to highlight communities around the country that have already taken great strides to address equity and implementation through their Complete Streets initiatives. In its recognition of Warsaw, it further stated that “Despite its small size and limited budget, Warsaw successfully implemented its extensive trail network and kicked off a broader Complete Streets program by using a “three P’s” approach: **planning, partnerships, and personnel.**

Warsaw developed its 2006 Trail Masterplan through a collaborative **planning** process between town staff, community members, and landscape architecture students from Drury University. These groups conducted visioning exercises to develop a rough concept plan for the trail network that engineers later refined. Having an established plan and vision for the entire network made Warsaw more competitive for state and federal grants. The collaborative process got community members excited about the project and gave internal staff clear direction for how to build out its network. Warsaw’s planning efforts also facilitated public and private investment near the trails for everything from historic building restoration projects to new entertainment and recreation facilities.”

According to the NCSC, “To make the waterfront trail network and on-street Complete Streets connections a reality, Warsaw curated strong **partnerships** with local, state, and federal agencies, including MODOT and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Due to Warsaw’s proximity to the Truman Dam, the Corps of Engineers owns a great deal of waterfront property in and around the town, and they lease many of these properties to Warsaw for its recreational facilities. These include Warsaw’s golf course, baseball sports complex, mountain bike system, and historic Drake Harbor, all of which connect to the waterfront trail network. The Corps of Engineers was a valuable partner throughout the planning and construction processes by authoring strong letters of endorsement to support grant applications.

MODOT was another instrumental partner in creating on-street connections to the trail network. When MODOT planned to repave State 7 that runs through Warsaw, the town advocated for the addition of buffered bike lanes along the route to extend access to the trail network.

Finally, Warsaw took steps to empower town **personnel** to get their hands dirty implementing projects on the ground. The town held training for its Parks Department staff to equip them with the skills they’d need to construct and maintain their own trail projects. In addition to building skills, this training shifted

the internal culture at Warsaw's Parks Department by giving staff members a sense of pride and responsibility over these projects and helping them understand the value they bring to the community. The training also made it far easier for the town to fund and implement small-scale projects by providing additional staff time and labor to satisfy grant requirements, and Warsaw saved time and money that might otherwise have been spent on outside contractors."

"We've created a sense of pride here for the community. When people come here, they're amazed with what we have." states Randy Pogue. "I attend several meetings and functions out of town each year, and at every one of them that I attend, someone from another community comes up and asks me how we achieve all this. I tell them it is important to understand that it all starts with a lot of planning and community support. We complete and update our planning process about every five years. The main planning process that has achieved our current successes was completed in 2008 and was titled, 'Building on Success to capitalize on the Future.' This plan outlined five areas to improve the quality of life in Warsaw. The downtown and riverfront were two of these five areas of study."

Mayor Simons further stated, "I have attended some of the functions that Randy talks about and one of the key items that I have taken from them is that rural communities are at a disadvantage in competing for business attractions. It has been stated, to compete against larger communities rural communities must set themselves apart by capitalizing on revitalization efforts." This is the approach we have taken, and plan on continuing, to improve Warsaw's ability to attract business investment here, and most importantly, improve the quality of life for the people that calls Warsaw home."