Walkable Cabot

A Pedestrian Plan for Cabot, Arkansas

August, 2016

Introduction

The key to a good plan is the level of public involvement in its development.

In 2006 and 2007, Cabot citizens came together to participate in a series of workshops and meetings. They gave up their evenings, dinner and TV plans, once even braved torrential rain, for the purpose of developing a plan for making their city connected and accessible to people who both need to and choose to walk. *Walkable Cabot* was the result of that effort.

Since the City adopted the plan, *Walkable Cabot* has been used as a blueprint to provide our residents with safe, ADA-quality walkways that connect to schools, parks and downtown shopping. All new residential subdivisions are to include sidewalks, and special effort has been made to connect our most important asset, our children, to their schools. We are proud of the work that has been done, but there is still much to do. As our city continues to grow, we are committed to giving its residents the quality of life people have come to associate with living in Cabot.

This update is intended as a supplement to the original *Walkable Cabot*. The plan continues to follow the principles that were set out by the people of Cabot, and includes new maps and information on population demographics, as well as a "report card" on the progress that we have made since 2007.

William A. "Bill" Cypert
Mayor, City of Cabot, Arkansas

Changes and Challenges

Changes

We've changed the format! This update is presented in an easily-read and portable format that complements but does not replicate the 2007 publication.

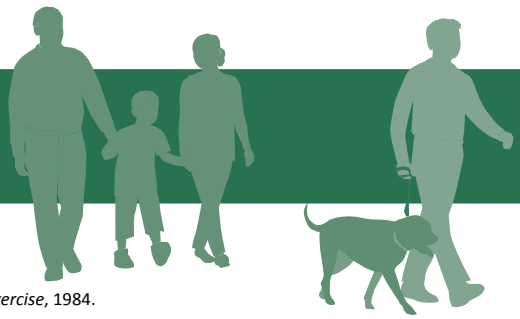
No "Tiers". Some sections of the 2007 *Walkable Cabot* are obsolete. In 2007, as workshop participants mapped their preferences for sidewalks, a priority "tier" system emerged. Those priorities were incorporated into the plan narrative and maps. Tier 1 priorities were to be addressed first, followed by Tier 2, and then Tier 3. This update does not attempt to prioritize the entire sidewalk system. Although some roadways and areas have been flagged by the City for more immediate attention, system-wide tiers proved inflexible and have outlived their usefulness. Instead, the City, with public input, will evaluate the pedestrian network annually to develop a program of sidewalk projects.

Additional plans and studies.
Cabot is on the move and as the city grows additional planning is necessary to meet the needs and expectations of its residents.

A master plan for Cabot's parks and recreational facilities, including off-road bike and trail facilities, has been recently completed by the firm of Crafton Tull. This document, which has been adopted by the City Council, provides a blueprint for city officials and planners to target areas for creating neighborhood parks, which will determine where sidewalks should be installed for connecting those parks to neighborhoods. Although not part of the scope of either this plan or the parks and recreational facilities plan, the inclusion of off-road biking trails will give the city a starting point for a future bike plan.

Benefits of Walking

just 10 minutes of walking can boost your mood for 2 hours



*Robert Thayer, *Calm Energy: How People Regulate Mood with Food and Exercise*, 1984.

Demographics and Progress. An updated demographic profile is included, as is a summary of progress made in implementing *Walkable Cabot*.

Challenges

Ever wonder why some projects take longer than others? Projects as straightforward-sounding as "building sidewalks" can occasionally encounter obstacles that present challenges.

Road and topographical constraints. US 67/167 provides needed access to commuting vehicles. It also separates the community. For example, Cabot residents have repeatedly expressed a desire to safely walk to the Walmart and stores located within the shopping area to the west of 67/167. While the city continues to search for opportunities to make the area more walkable, the highway is a barrier to all but motor vehicles.

State highways add a layer of complicating bureaucracy to address pedestrian concerns. State roads in Cabot are:

- Hwy 367 north-south (2nd Street)
- Hwy 5 north-south runs south of Cabot; intersects with 89 and turns to 321/Bill Foster Memorial Highway to the south
- Hwy 89 east-west (Main Street)
- Hwy 38 connects with 367/North 2nd Street

Walking is for people of all ages!

The residential street layout is not conducive to sidewalks, nor is it intuitive for walkers. Cabot's development pattern lacks a grid beyond its central area, and many streets end in cul-de-sacs. Such a layout is not conducive to sidewalks, nor is it intuitive for walking.

Paying for sidewalks. This is a perennial challenge for municipalities. The City of Cabot designates an annual budget of $110,000 for the purpose of building and repairing sidewalks. Additionally, the City aggressively pursues grant opportunities.

Transportation grants for pedestrian facilities are still available, usually requiring a 20 percent local match. Recent transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) opens the door to a wide range of grant-eligible project types, such as complete streets, urban street retrofits, trails and other low-cost projects. These low-cost projects often address a community's highest priorities for livability and safety. The FAST Act includes a provision that allows local governments to use the street design manuals of their preference (for example, the NACTO guide) and preempt their state DOT's design requirements for locally designed projects.

The FAST Act has slated metropolitan regions for a slight increase in funding. Metroplan typically receives $11 million per year, of which about $700,000 is allocated to local Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funded projects. TAP grants are awarded on a competitive basis.

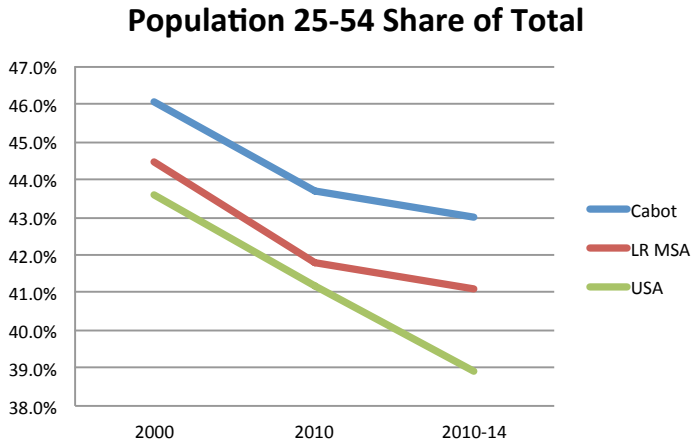
In 2016, the City of Cabot was awarded a grant of $125,000 for sidewalks on 1st Street.

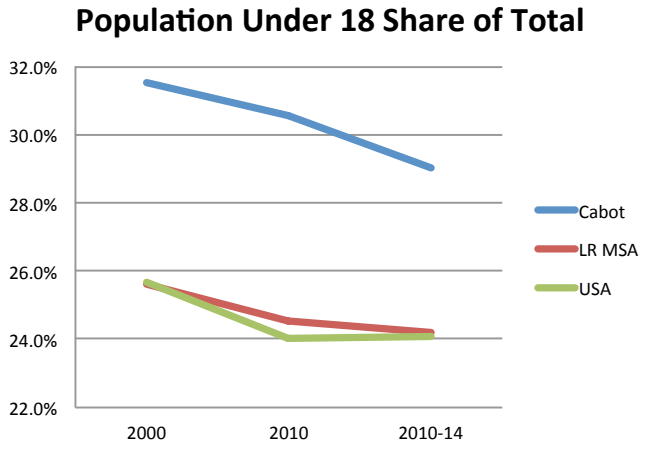
Demographic Profile

Families

It will come as no surprise to Cabot residents that this is a family town. Cabot has a higher-than-average share of family households and a particularly high share of traditional married-couple family households with children under 18. This is reflected in the number of sports facilities, playgrounds and schools that address the needs and desires of active young families. Connecting these facilities and neighborhoods with walkable, safe routes is a priority of the City.

Cabot has a high share of traditional married couple family households with young children.

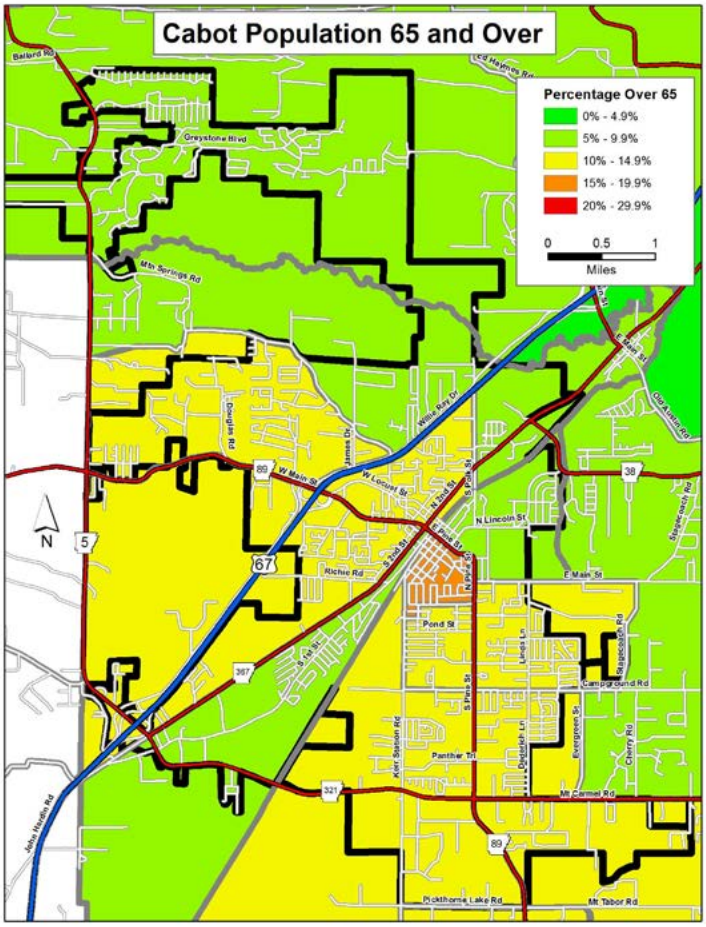




Elders

Like our nation as a whole, Cabot is aging, albeit at a slower pace. The map below shows population age 65+ in and near Cabot by Census block group. The US average of population 65+ was 13.7 percent in 2010–14, compared with 12.9 percent for the metropolitan Statistical Area and 10.9 percent for Cabot. Only one block group, in central Cabot, showed an above-average share of elders, at 19.9 percent.

As people grow older, the need to stay connected socially becomes essential. Access to services is vital, but studies have shown that social isolation is an even greater threat to elders. Providing sidewalks that are constructed to ADA standards and are well-maintained not only connects people, but promotes physical and mental health.



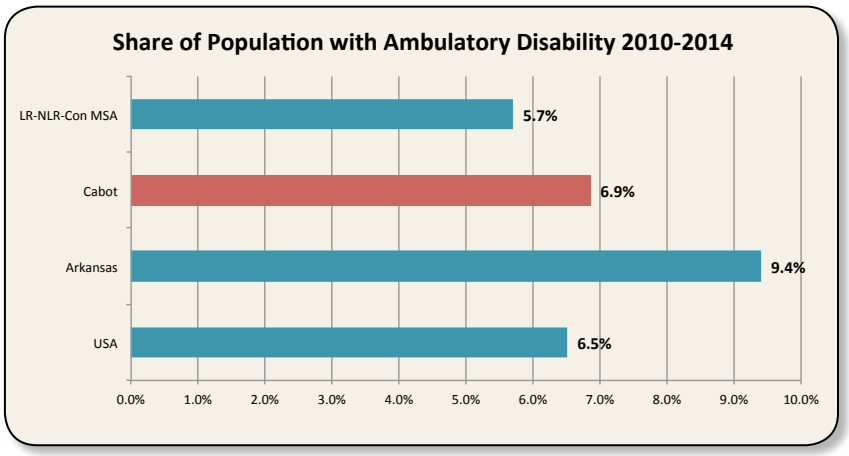
Walking prevents dementia.

Older people who walk six miles or more per week are more likely to avoid brain shrinkage and preserve memory as the years pass. Since dementia affects one in 14 people over 65 and one in six over 80, walking is a very smart idea.

People with Disabilities

Although many people link aging with disability, the two are not the same. The fragility that often accompanies old age may result in a disability—for example, a broken hip may necessitate the use of a walker or wheelchair—and may be prevented or delayed. People with congenital conditions that render them disabled, or who become disabled through accidents, are not limited to one age group.

The chart at right shows the percentage of Cabot residents with an ambulatory disability—in other words, people whose ability to walk is limited in some way, and includes those who must use a cane, walker or wheelchair. Among such people, social isolation is a perennial issue.



Source: American Community Survey 2010–2014

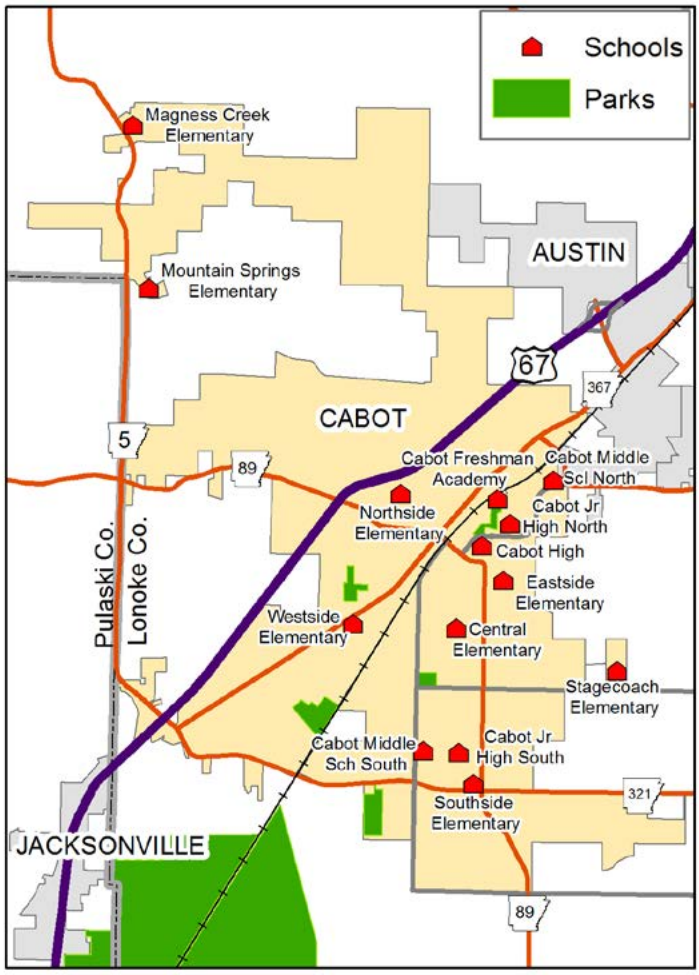
*Total population figure represents civilian noninstitutional.

Schools, Parks and Sports Facilities

Schools

Reflecting the younger population, there are nine elementary schools in Cabot, two middle schools, two junior high schools and one high school. Additionally, Cabot also boasts the Cabot Freshman Academy, Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) and Cabot Learning Academy.

Connecting schools to neighborhoods is a key component of walkability. Creating a safe, walkable environment to schools is a priority first articulated in 2006 and 2007, when Cabot residents met to map out the most desirable and needed sidewalk routes. Accordingly, the City has made this a high priority for sidewalk construction. In addition to budgeting funds for sidewalk



construction, the City regularly pursues grant moneys from transportation programs, notably the Safe Routes to School (SRTS). Transportation grants are typically funded at 80 percent of the total project cost, with the City providing the remaining 20 percent match. Although the SRTS program is no longer available, current federal legislation provides similar opportunities for funding locally significant sidewalk and trail opportunities.

Raised crosswalks induce traffic to slow down, and are helpful for child safety near schools.

The Magness Creek Bridge enables children to walk to school from their neighborhood. The bridge was funded through Metroplan and AHTD TAP grants. Photo credit: Fox 16 News.

Parks and Sports Facilities

Cabot residents are sports-minded and the city has provided a number of facilities to meet the fitness and recreational needs of a variety of interests.

The City is providing ample large park and recreational facilities, especially as relating to a range of sports. According to Crafton Tull's analysis under the Parks and Recreation Plan, Cabot is somewhat lacking in smaller, neighborhood parks. As the city moves to provide this type of community park, it will require enhanced connectivity to surrounding residences.

Walking outdoors boosts Vitamin D which affects bone health and immune systems.

Cabot High School's new stadium.

Parks and Sports Facilities

Cabot Municipal Pool	502 Richie Road
Cabot Skate Park	508 North Lincoln
Allman/Bevis Sports Complex	3001 South First Street
Richie Road Park	502 Richie Road
Cabot BMX Complex	2351 Willie Ray Road
Cabot Sportsplex and Water Park	1245 Bill Foster Memorial Highway
Veterans Park Community Center & Veterans Monument	508 Lincoln
Fairlen Ward Memorial Park	off South First Street
Cabot Community Pond & Walking Track	1881 Kerr Station Road

Parents have expressed a desire to allow their children to walk to school and play areas, but also raised some concerns regarding safety. To address this, sidewalks must be constructed so as to be visually perceived as safe: five feet wide, and buffered from street traffic by a minimum of four feet, preferably with grass or low plant material. Pedestrian-scale lighting (as opposed to vehicle-scale "cobra-head" lights) is desirable. As sidewalks are constructed and linked with park trails, a network of walkable neighborhoods will emerge to further connect the city.

Speed humps like this one slow traffic and make the neighborhood safer for children.

All new subdivisions developed in Cabot are required to provide sidewalks.

Walking lowers disease risk.

Seriously. A regular walking habit strengthens your heart, helps you lose weight, and drastically slashes the risk of **type 2 diabetes .**

Cabot Community Pond and Walking Track encourages family and leisure activities and provides a peaceful a setting for taking walks (3 laps around the pond equals 1.16 mile!).

A "Report Card"— Progress made since 2007

Coming out of the 2007 public engagement and subsequent study were a series of recommendations for developing a strategy of creating a walkable environment.

- CARTS Design Standards should be the guideline for new and retro-fit sidewalk construction.

  The City of Cabot adopted this recommendation. As of this writing, the CARTS Design Standards are being reviewed and updated.

- Pedestrian facility construction and maintenance should be made budgeted line items in Cabot's Public Works annual program.

  The City of Cabot adopted this recommendation.

- All new residential and commercial construction should incorporate sidewalks.

  The City adopted this recommendation and has stood firm on implementation.

- Wherever possible, sidewalks will include a four-foot grassy buffer. Where sidewalks must be built to back-of-curb, sidewalk width will be extended to a minimum of six feet.

  The City makes every effort to provide an appropriate buffer. Right-of-way availability is a challenge on several roadways. Another challenge is that several roads are State-owned facilities.

- Maintain and improve existing sidewalks.

  Since 2007, Cabot's Public Works Department has made repairs to 6,600 linear feet.

- Provide appropriate furniture to pedestrian facilities.

  Off-road and recreational facilities are addressed in the Crafton Tull report. Benches, trash receptacles, public art and other amenities may be appropriately addressed through partnerships with the City and Chamber of Commerce, private developers and other interested groups.

- Provide safe and convenient pedestrian crosswalks and refuges.

  The City is addressing this, most aggressively near schools.

- Make use of innovative pedestrian technology for construction, signing and regulating crosswalks and other facilities.

  The City is exploring new technologies in upcoming projects.

- A shared path/walking trail plan and a bikeway plan is in progress.

These plans have not been implemented. The City has contracted with Crafton Tull (consulting planners) to develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. That report will briefly address elements of biking and shared trails, but only as they impact the Parks and Recreation Plan.

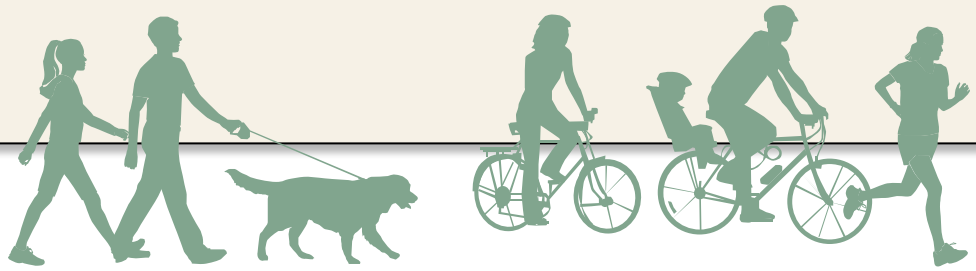
The numbers tell the story!

Since adopting *Walkable Cabot* in 2007, the City has built more than 28,776 linear feet (5.5 miles) of new sidewalks.

Ongoing Progress!

Cabot has made much progress toward building a walkable network that provides a true alternative to driving; promotes health; contributes to the City's vibrant downtown and business area; and strengthens neighborhoods. The list below summarizes a few suggestions, goals and aspirations.

- **Continue to implement Walkable Cabot**
  - Continue to increase priority for connecting recreational facilities to neighborhoods.
  - Continue to increase priority for connecting neighborhoods to schools.
  - Continue to include sidewalk access as neighborhood parks are developed.
  - Contiue following the "Complete Streets" policy.
- **Work with the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department (AHTD) to find viable ways to address pedestrian needs along State highways in Cabot.**
- **Solicit public input/advice on pedestrian issues in an ongoing manner. For example, include a comment section advertisement on the city's homepage. This can be regularly monitored by professional planners, who can troubleshoot easy fixes throughout the year.**
- **As the City's walkable network continues to develop, introduce planning for bicycle travel.**



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