



Growing Our Communities Together

**2015 Missouri Municipal League  
INNOVATION AWARDS  
Nomination Summaries**

## **Small City Category (population under 5,000)**

### **La Plata - City Park Bathroom Project**

The City Park in La Plata was in need of public restrooms in order to eliminate the monthly fee for a Porta-Potty as well as spending over \$2,500 each fall during our annual Soybean Festival. No public facilities had been available for several years. With the assistance of the La Plata Promotional Committee, a non-for-profit organization, the city of La Plata was able to obtain a grant from the Macon County Economic Development Board in the amount of \$12,688.69. Other funds were received from a memorial fund in the amount of \$10,627.99 and donations from community members and former residents in the amount of \$7,220.00. Volunteer labor was used except for the laying of the blocks, which was contracted out. The total cost of the project was in excess of \$32,000.00. The new red and white facility in the City park has two handicap units and two units with three facilities each for men and women. It is very attractive and has been very beneficial.

### **Louisiana - Provenance Project Revisited**

The City wanted to grow the economy through the recruitment of artists, artisans and new retail, thereby filling vacancies in the downtown, generating sales tax, dollar turnover and foot traffic. The Louisiana Economic Development Committee, the Mayor's office of Economic Development and the Louisiana Visitors and Convention Bureau would invite these groups to locate in Louisiana. Through its general fund, LEDC would contract with local landlords for an annual lease. LEDC would also contract with the new business, an agreement that could include: time commitment, return of funds, volunteerism and return investment in marketing for the community. LEDC could negotiate and pay all or a portion of the first year's lease. The City would contract with the new business to return the City's share of any sales tax generated during the first year of sales. The new business would commit to using the rebate to build inventory and market for the area in general. The LVCB would commit to quarterly marketing of the businesses to attract visitors, increase traffic for events.

### **North Kansas City - Solar Panel Installation**

Through North Kansas City's participation in Kansas City Power and Light's (KCPL) Solar Energy Rebate Program, solar panels were installed at seven City-owned facilities in 2014. The city council unanimously supported the project for three reasons: 1) Long-term savings on ever-increasing energy costs, 2) The opportunity to take advantage of KCPL's Solar Power Rebate Program, and 3) Utilization of solar energy is an environmental initiative that reduces the City's carbon footprint. North Kansas City paid up-front for the solar panel installation, to maximize energy savings. The total cost of the project was \$651,780, but after KCPL rebates, North Kansas City's share was only \$299,180. The City expects to save more than \$44,100 in energy costs annually and more than \$1.1 million over the next 25 years. Missouri House Bill 142, enacted in 2013, requires all electrical corporations in Missouri to provide the same rebate program. There is no better time than now to install solar panels while the state-mandated rebate program continues.

### **Peculiar - Disconnection from City Service Utilities**

On the first of March 2015, the Mayor and Board of Alderman voted and passed a resolution that requires all structures connected to the City's public utilities services to pay a meter (service) availability fee to recover the principle and interest on bonds that were used to construct the infrastructure. Since the issuance of the first service available fee bill, Public Works has received several calls concerning the new Service Availability Fee. Some property owners have asked, "Is there a way to be exempt from those monthly charges?" As long as these structures are physically connected to the City services, the City must plan on supplying those water and/or sewer services. Water, wastewater, storm water and all the amenities must be held in case the City is asked to make services available to that structure.

## **Medium City Category (population 5,000 – 15, 000)**

### **Bellefontaine Neighbors - Youth Life Skills Recreation Program**

Due to the many adult and youth misconceptions regarding the police in the North St. Louis County, Missouri, area, the Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department's Youth Life Enrichment Skills/Recreation Camp was introduced. This camp was created and suggested by the police department's school resource officers who work in the Riverview Gardens School District. The primary objective of the program was to encourage, inspire, motivate, and challenge youth to excel on all levels of social and personal growth. Additional objectives of this camp were to build and develop youth self-confidence as well as teach respect for themselves and others. Furthermore, they gained a better understanding of the core function of policing as it concerned protecting and serving the community. Overall, the program encouraged youth to become achievers, role models and effective leaders in school and community.

### **Fulton - New Fulton Animal Shelter Initiative**

The New Fulton Animal Shelter Initiative was created by Mayor LeRoy Benton to privately raise funds for a new city-owned shelter. Since City funds were not available to pay for construction outright, the mayor felt a fundraiser was the best option to achieve his goal. A committee was formed, made up of citizens who are passionate about animals and who wanted to help raise the needed funds. They reached out to possible donors and after two years of fundraising, enough money was raised to start construction. Expenses were further reduced on this project thanks to volunteer labor as well as members of the local prison's work release program. City crews, meanwhile, graded the site, dug a detention pond and more. Reaching out to citizens directly to raise funds for projects can be successful for other cities, so long as it is a project the public deeply cares about.

### **Mexico - Mexico Community Garden**

The Mexico Community Garden is a partnership of private charitable organizations and public agencies. It is a free program in Martin Luther King Park that allows citizens of the community to grow fresh produce for themselves or the Help Center. The Help Center manages funds for the partnership and any part-time employees the partnership hires. Funds are held in a dedicated account reserved for the sole use of the Mexico Community Garden Steering Committee. Mexico Housing Authority, Help Center, and Central Missouri community Action are leaders in getting information about the gardens opportunities in front of the community members that need its services the most. The Audrain County Master Gardeners teach, train, and mentor new gardeners to provide the skills needed for them to succeed. The City of Mexico provides free land for the project, physical support, and light construction support. The University of Missouri Rural Sociology Department and University Extension provide free seeds and technical support.

### **Nevada - Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Nevada Police Department**

In 2011, the Nevada Police Department implemented the Crises Intervention Team (CIT) program. CIT is a valuable resource to assist in the handling of calls for service involving people with a mental illness in a crisis situation. The staff of the Nevada Police Department recognizes that our community has a significant population of people suffering from mental illness and is taking a proactive approach to making sure that these types of call for service are handled accordingly. The most important aspect to be addressed by law enforcement is communications between the various functional areas who work with the mentally ill and their families. Nevada has formed a CIT Coordinating Council. The council brings together police, medical services, mental health and community. This group meets to solve problems and establish productive relationships. The goal of the Nevada Police Department is to have one trained CIT officer on duty at all times. As of summer 2015, fifteen police officers out of 21 authorized commissioned positions and four Vernon County Sheriff's Deputies have been trained.

### **Trenton - Body Camera Community Committee**

In June 2014, the Trenton Police Department recognized a greater need for transparency and accountability to the citizens they serve. They began testing and evaluating body cameras but realized that they would need public approval and support for such an endeavor. They knew that it would be an unbudgeted and costly expense what would not be able to be facilitated until the following fiscal year unless the community would support such a project and partner financially. The police engaged the community and formed a community committee, comprised of business persons, attorneys, educators, community planners, elected leaders, the press and other individuals within the community. The committee would decide if the need existed, procedures, and how to fund such a project. The project received overwhelming support from the committee and the community. The committee decided that the cameras were good for the community and began a fundraising project that raised over \$11,000 in donations in a matter of several months. The police body cameras were purchased and by January 2015, each officer in the Trenton Police Department is using a body camera.

### **Large City Category (population more than 15,000)**

#### **Belton - Cost-Share Program**

Like most cities, Belton struggles to maintain its transportation system at an acceptable level, particularly residential areas. City code requires the property owner to maintain the sidewalks, but the City's practices and enforcement have been inconsistent. With flat revenues, increasing costs, and deteriorating assets, the Public Works Department and its Public Works Committee (PWC) made up of citizens, developed the idea that if citizens would pay for the materials, the City would provide the labor and resources. All of this work is supported by maintenance software with its foundation being the inspection of every segment of road, curb, and sidewalk in a systematic manner. The discussions with PWC regarding the condition of the system began in 2013, and the new Cost-Share Program, including the replacement of sidewalks, curbs, and culverts, was adopted by City Council in January 2015. At the end of June 2015, there have been 15 property owners participate and several more that have agreements and are expected to commit soon.

#### **Blue Springs - How to Open a Business**

In early 2013 the city of Blue Springs partnered with the Blue Springs Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation (EDC) as well as the Jackson County EDC to create the How to Open and Grow Your Business in Blue Springs guide. This step-by-step guide was created in-house as the result of a two-year planning process. By providing the business community with a centralized source for their needs, the guide consolidated the City's fragmented business development resources, creating one voice across multiple agencies. This guide has sparked change in City regulations as well as the creation of a new Business Services Division that acts as a liaison for the business community and to streamline the business development process. Since its publication, the city of Blue Springs, the Chamber and the EDC have hosted ten presentations and two expos, reaching more than 500 community members. As a direct result of expo attendance, two entrepreneurs were able to obtain Small Business Loans.

#### **Columbia - cITySOFT – A Software Sharing Project**

The cITySOFT software sharing project was born of necessity in late 2014. With shrinking budgets and never-ending demands on IT staff, the City wanted to do something to lessen the demands on IT development shops across Missouri. While the City's software development team is solving problems for the city of Columbia, they asked themselves, why can't they help solve the same problems for their colleagues in other cities and counties? This idea inspired the City to make a development change to create software in a way that could be used by other organizations. All local governments have similar needs, but they may not have the resources to buy or build the software that fits. The projects' objectives were achieved with the release of the first shareable software application and a method to share the software. The first application available for sharing is used to track individual canine use and training for public safety agencies. The City achieved their goals without added costs.

### **Independence - McCoy Park Inclusive Play Project**

During a master planning exercise, an unfulfilled need was discovered. Jackson County has far more children with disabilities living within its borders than any other county in the Kansas City region. Of the cities within Jackson County, the city of Independence has more resident children with disabilities than any other in the County. The study also proved the City was extremely lacking in truly accessible play spaces to accommodate their special needs. It was necessary to locate a source of \$1,000,000 in funding for development of accessible play space. It was clear adequate funding simply was not available. Staff developed relationships with non-profit groups, churches, private corporations, civic and labor organizations, the State of Missouri and residents to fund the project. This approach not only yielded the necessary funding and labor to produce inclusive play facilities, but also brought an entire community together. The City cut the ribbon on an inclusive playground and an ability baseball field in 2014, less than two years after the need was identified.

### **Manchester - Manchester Arts**

The City of Manchester has been innovative in the formation of the Manchester Arts Council. Becoming increasingly aware of the community's interest in the arts, the birth of the Manchester Arts Council took place in 2011. Five city arts advocates/visionaries formulated an initial plan. A seven-person task force, formed in 2012, developed and wrote an arts master plan, establishing a board of directors to guide the future of Manchester Arts. By resolution, the Manchester Art Master Plan was adopted in 2013. The purpose of this newly-formed council was determined to create and promote an atmosphere for participation and enjoyment of fine arts in the community. The fine arts could be in the form of paintings, sculpture, photography and music, encompassing visual, musical and theatrical arts, and be showcased through community art show, exhibits and concerts. The arts council would be led by community volunteers who believe that art is vital to the life and growth of a community.

### **Nixa - Crime-Free Multi-Housing Training**

Drugs and meth labs are two things you don't want in your community. In 2012, the Nixa Police Department noticed it was spending a lot of time on the same type of calls on two specific streets. In fact, calls for service in this area averaged 2.9 per day, which means an officer was responding to the same locations around 3 times per day. That would be taxing on any municipal police department with only 25 officers. Nixa Police noticed that most of the calls were going to rental property. After meeting with local property owners, Nixa Police began the Crime-Free Multi-Housing program. This program educated property managers on how to attract and sustain higher-quality renters. Nixa Police saw immediate results. Calls for service in this area dropped drastically to .43 calls for service a day, or about a call every other day. A property owner even recognized a meth lab the day after taking the training. With this one class, we are working toward improving the quality of multi-family residents as well as assisting landlords in preserving and protecting private property ownership.

### **Raymore - Sidewalks on Undeveloped Lots**

In January 2014, Raymore implemented this program to eliminate gaps in the sidewalk network occurring in developing subdivisions within the City. Construction of a home on every lot in a subdivision can often take years to be completed. If the City only required a sidewalk to be installed when a home is constructed on the lot, then gaps in the sidewalk network would frustrate existing residents in the subdivision possibly for years. Raymore's program requires property owners to install a sidewalk on an undeveloped lot when 66 percent or more of the lots on the same side of the street in the same block already have a sidewalk. When the threshold is met, property owners are provided notice of the program requirements to install the sidewalk. If the property owners fail to install the sidewalk, the city may install the sidewalk and place a special tax assessment on the property to recover the costs. Creation of this program was a combined effort of residents, city officials and the development community.

### **Springfield - Homeless Court**

Springfield Homeless Court Program (SHC) is a system of justice that facilitates understanding and remediation of the underlying causes of homelessness. Ideal participants are offenders who have current Springfield Municipal Court fines, costs, and/or warrants. Participants in SHC will be given credit for their fines based on individual accomplishments that may include: maintaining housing, searching for/gaining employment, obtaining medical care, attending chemical dependency meetings, etc. Allowing participants to clear their fines through SHC will reduce burdens on the court system and law enforcement, improve public safety, and create a sense of pride and achievement for the participant. SHC strives to help participants achieve self-sufficiency by obtaining permanent housing and employment. The SHC works in conjunction with The Kitchen Inc.'s Housing First program, so that each participant has assistance in finding housing. Prior to being accepted into the program, all applicants must complete an interview and screening process with the Springfield Municipal Court probation officer.

### **St. Charles - St. Charles Project Management System**

The ability to systematically manage and oversee costs, resources, schedules, risks, etc. across multiple projects is a challenge in many municipalities and agencies. Prior to 2011, the St. Charles Public Works Department identified consistent problems achieving project goals and expectations. Challenged by elected officials and stakeholders in St. Charles, and in spite of a mandated hiring freeze, the Engineering Division of the public works department set out to establish a comprehensive and systematic process of project management to improve control, transparency, communication, costs, and time delivery of public works projects. This was achieved through a three part system: project-based staff restructuring and training; a standards manual for project management practices based on best practices from the Project Management Institute and the American Public Works Association; and a cloud-based project management software tool. Now in its third year of implementation, the St. Charles Public Works Project Management System is achieving its goal to deliver more projects and improve governmental transparency by doubling the annual amount of projects delivered, reducing average project duration by 40 percent, and establishing a publicly accessible web project dashboard.

### **St. Louis - The Strategic Plan for Francis Park**

Francis Park, located in the heart of the 16th ward, serves as a centerpiece of the St. Louis Hills neighborhood and is used by residents of the area, as well as visitors from all over the region. Because Francis Park is a neighborhood park, it does not receive the same stream of revenue that city parks are guaranteed. A strategic plan for Francis Park was developed to bring stakeholders in the 16th Ward community together to determine how to undertake deferred maintenance projects and to make the park a constantly improving recreational destination for St. Louis Hills and the surrounding community. Friends of Francis Park, a 501 (c) (3), was created to allow community members to partner with the Parks Department and Alderman Baringer to leverage limited funding by applying for grants, obtaining corporate sponsorships and fundraising. The accomplishments that have followed are a testament to the transformative results of collaborative partnerships.

### **Wentzville - Fire Protection Tap Waiver Program**

The city of Wentzville was founded in 1855 and became an incorporated City in 1872. The City has over 60 commercial structures that are 50 years or older. The majority of these commercial structures are located in the Downtown Wentzville area. To help ensure that Downtown Wentzville will continue to remain as a commercially viable area, and to support the rehabilitation of aged structures, a proactive Fire Protection Tap Waiver Program was adopted by the City's board of aldermen in June 2015. The purpose of the program was to create a win-win for the City and downtown business community. Those involved in establishment of this program included the City's downtown committee, mayor and board of aldermen, the Downtown Business Association and City staff. This program allows a waiver of the City's Fire Protection Tap Charge that can save a business owner from \$9,300 - \$22,000, depending on the size of the meter. This program could be successfully implemented by communities interested in supporting downtown revitalization.

### **Wildwood - Wildwood Farms Community Garden**

Since March 2011, the city of Wildwood has offered a community garden for its residents. The idea for the garden came from a resident, Cindy Wright, whose passion and expertise was greatly valued by the Department of Planning and Parks staff members. Thus, with Ms. Wright's idea and an area of land leased to the City by Ed Kohn and Robert Greenberg of Greenberg Development Company, the Department of Planning and Parks moved ahead to create a special place for its residents. The main objective of Wildwood Farms Community Garden can best be described by its mission statement, "Wildwood Farms Community Garden exists to create and nurture community involvement and foster education and appreciation of gardening by providing a safe and enjoyable place for members committed to sustainable gardening practices to meet." The garden has been successful in achieving this mission and objectives through work parties, harvest parties, and educational programs. Moreover, City staff have met with other area community leaders, who have been inspired by Wildwood Farms, to create their own spaces and keep the garden movement going.