



74th Annual All-America City Award

Denver, Colorado

June 9–11, 2023





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Michael B. Hancock
Mayor



City and County of Denver

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April 19, 2023

All-America City Award
Hilton Denver City Center
1702 California St.
Denver, CO

Greetings:

As the former Chairman of the Board of the National Civic League, it's my pleasure to welcome the 2023 All-America City Award event participants to the Mile-High City. After three years of a virtual event, we are thrilled to have the spirit and inspiration of the All-America City Award back in person. This year, the League is spotlighting communities that are engaging youth to help solve our country's most pressing and complex issues. With this focus, the National Civic League hopes to learn more about how communities are breaking down barriers to meaningful youth participation and enacting programs that will improve quality of life for youth and all members of a community.

The All-America City Award – now celebrating its 74th year – is the National Civic League's flagship program, celebrating the best in American civic innovation since 1949. I congratulate each of the participants for being finalists for this prestigious designation and for contributing to be a community that has demonstrated collaboration, innovation, engagement, inclusion, equity and a can-do spirit. We urge you to take full advantage of this time in Denver to tell your story, bond with your community's participants and learn from your fellow finalists.

I am inspired by your All-American stories of the dedicated people working together in your community to make things better for all, and I encourage you to take the time to reflect and celebrate the great things that have been accomplished, as well as recommit to addressing the challenges that lie ahead.

On behalf of the City and County of Denver, please accept my gratitude for your dedication to bringing your entire community's unique voices to the table. I wish all of you a successful and productive event!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Hancock", followed by a horizontal line.

Michael B. Hancock
Mayor



COLORADO
Governor Jared Polis

June 9, 2023

Greetings!

On behalf of the State of Colorado, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 All-America City Award Event. We are proud to host this event on its 74th anniversary.

We recognize your commitment to civic engagement and thank you for your dedication to strengthening your communities. Key to these efforts is the intentional involvement of young people in community decision-making. Communities thrive when all residents are active and engaged in the policies and decisions that shape their lives.

Here in the Centennial State, public, private, and non-profit partners have worked together to help Colorado become the healthiest state in the nation and to strengthen our early literacy programs. We will continue to look for ways to collaborate to create innovative solutions to address some of the most pressing challenges that our residents face.

Once again, Colorado is privileged to host civic leaders from towns, cities, and counties across our great nation. We are confident the 2023 All-America City Award Event will be a transformative experience that will inspire you with new ideas and equip you with new tools as you head back home.

You have my best wishes for a successful and memorable weekend!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis".

Jared Polis
Governor

2023 All-America City Finalists

in alphabetical order by city/county/region

Charlotte, North Carolina

Dallas, Texas

Davie County, North Carolina

Decatur, Georgia

Fayetteville, North Carolina

Franklin Township, New Jersey

Fulton, Missouri

Gardena, California

Gonzales, California

Hampton, Virginia

Independence, Ohio

Mesa, Arizona

Monrovia, California

Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

New York, New York

Port St. Lucie, Florida

Redwood City, California

Saginaw, Texas

San Antonio, Texas

Wellington, Florida



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Event Timeline

74th All-America City Award Event
Creating Thriving Communities through Youth Engagement

Hilton Denver City Center
1701 California Street, Denver, CO 80202
June 8-11, 2023

Thursday, June 8, 2023

6:00pm – 8:00pm

Registration

Lower Level 2

Friday, June 9, 2023

7:30am – 4:00pm

Registration and Help Desk

Lower Level 2

7:15am – 7:45am

Finalist Delegation “Captain” Briefing

Mattie Silks

Daily in-person briefings are an opportunity to go over the day’s agenda and for delegation captains to ask questions to keep delegations informed and on time.

8:00am – 4:15pm

Finalist Presentation Rehearsals

Colorado Ballroom

9:00am – 10:30am

Authentic Youth Engagement in Civic Life

Denver Ballroom

Designed for anyone interested in empowering young people to become active participants in their communities. Youth civic engagement is a powerful tool for communities to develop and deliver effective youth and family programs, as well as develop young leaders and encourage life-long civic participation. Authentic and meaningful youth engagement entails a genuine partnership to amplify youth voice, involve youth at multiple levels of decision-making and celebrate youth achievements. As a participant, you will learn about successful models for youth civic engagement and receive resources and tools to get you started and deepen youth civic involvement.

11:30am – 1:00pm

Innovative Models for Increasing Political Participation

Denver Ballroom

This workshop will examine the various factors that contribute to low voter turnout and explore innovations in both voter engagement strategies and election systems that are moving the needle. The League of Women Voters of Colorado will speak about their unique approach for empowering voters to defend democracy, as well as key election reforms for increasing turnout. Young Invincibles will discuss their successful strategies for engaging youth in elections and beyond. Attendees will have the opportunity to discuss their local election barriers and turnout efforts.

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Lunch on Your Own



2:30pm – 4:00pm

Roundtable Idea Exchange

Denver Ballroom

Think “speed dating,” but for community problem-solving! Attendees will move from different tables every twenty minutes to discuss a new topic. Table topics will include youth leadership; voting and elections; civics education; public safety; mental health and trauma systems; economic vitality and job readiness; equity and inclusion; and climate change.

5:00pm – 6:00pm

All-America City Opening Ceremony

Colorado Ballroom

Attendees will be welcomed to Denver by League President, Doug Linkhart and Denver’s Mayor, Michael Hancock.

Keynote Speaker: Scott Warren, Founder, Generation Citizen & Fellow, SNF Agora Institute

Saturday, June 10, 2023

7:15am – 7:45am

Finalist Delegation “Captain” Briefing

Mattie Silks

Daily in-person briefings are an opportunity to go over the day’s agenda and for delegation captains to ask questions to keep delegations informed and on time.

8:00am – 4:00pm

Registration and Help Desk

Lower Level 2

8:00am – 9:25am

Jury Presentations

Colorado Ballroom

9:35am – 10:50am

Motus Theater Presents Stories of Marginalized Voices

Denver Ballroom

Attendees will hear from two autobiographical monologists who will speak to their experiences with the immigration and criminal legal systems. Audience members will be guided through a reflection and shared conversation about the devastating impacts of these systems, specifically as it relates to the impact on young people in their communities.

Speakers: Brandon Wainright, JustUs Project & Alejandro Fuentes Mena, UndocuAmerica Project

11:00am – 12:35pm

Jury Presentations

Colorado Ballroom

12:35pm – 1:30pm

Lunch on Your Own

1:30pm – 4:05pm

Jury Presentations

Colorado Ballroom



4:30pm – 5:30pm

AAC Civic Action Fair

Tour exhibits of this year's finalist communities, learning about their history, culture, and more. Bring local items to swap!

Denver Ballroom

5:30pm – 7:00pm

An All-America Night of Entertainment and Celebration

Keynote Speaker: Mayor Jaylen Smith, Earle, AR

Colorado Ballroom

Announcement of supplemental awards, followed by the cultural entertainment showcase.

Sunday, June 11, 2023

8:00am – 8:30am

Finalist Delegation "Captain" Briefing

Daily in-person briefings are an opportunity to go over the day's agenda and for delegation captains to ask questions to keep delegations informed and on time.

Mattie Silks

9:00am – 12:00pm

Jury Presentations

Colorado Ballroom

12:00pm – 1:30pm

Lunch on Your Own

1:30pm – 3:30pm

AAC Festival of Ideas: Peer discussion of community projects

Group 1: Denver 1-2

New York, NY
San Antonio, TX
Dallas, TX
Charlotte, NC

Group 3: Colorado A-B

Redwood City, CA
Mount Pleasant, SC
Wellington, FL
Gardena, CA

Group 5: Denver 3

Fulton, MO
Gonzales, CA
Independence, OH
Franklin Township, NJ

Group 2: Colorado C-D

Mesa, AZ
Fayetteville, NC
Port St. Lucie, FL
Hampton, VA

Group 4: Denver 4

Davie County, NC
Monrovia, CA
Saginaw, TX
Decatur, GA

3:45pm – 4:45pm

Elected and Appointed Officials Dialogue

Denver 5-6

5:30pm – 6:30pm

Pre-Awards Reception (light hors d'oeuvres)

Denver Ballroom

6:30pm – 8:00pm

Awards Ceremony

Keynote Speaker: Mayor Malik Evans, Rochester, NY

Colorado Ballroom

8:00pm – 9:30pm

Awards Celebration and Music! (light hors d'oeuvres)

Denver Ballroom



Thank You!

Jury Members

- Wendy Willis (Jury Foreperson), Executive Director, Kitchen Table Democracy
- Christine Benero, Executive Director, Mile High United Way
- Traci Callender, Annie E Casey Foundation
- Naima Criss, Leadership Out Loud Participant, Girls Inc.
- Kenia Hansen Guzman, Student Board Vice President, Colorado Student Leaders Institute
- Benoy Jacob, Director, Community Development Institute, University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Charles Ozaki, Former City Manager, Broomfield, CO
- Anthony Santiago, Senior Consultant, Equal Measure
- Lyric Swift, Youth Commissioner, Denver Youth Commission
- Scott Warren, Founder, Generation Citizen & Fellow, SNF Agora Institute
- Teryn Zmuda, Chief Research Officer and Economist, National Association of Counties

Event Sponsors

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| • Gladstone, MO | • Rancho Cordova, CA | |

AAC Event Support

A special thank you to the application review committee, Youth Civic Engagement Advisory Committee, youth award interviewers, keynote speakers, and our spirited volunteers!

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- Hon. John Dailey, Mayor, City of Tallahassee, FL

continued on next page



Thank You!

- Hon. Johnny DuPree, PhD, Frmr Mayor, City of Hattiesburg, MS
- Lee R. Feldman, Senior Advisor, Local Government Strategy, Zencity
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- Hon. Ron Loveridge, former Mayor of Riverside, CA
- Derek Okubo, Executive Director of the Denver Agency for Human Rights & Community Partnerships (HRCPP)
- Charles Ozaki, former City and County Manager, City and County of Broomfield, Colorado
- Joni Pattillo, Retired City Manager, City of Dublin, CA
- Donovan Pinner, past winner, All-America City Youth Award
- Sarah Rubin, Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, California Department of Conservation
- Hon. David M. Sander, Ph.D., City Council Member and Former Mayor, City of Rancho Cordova
- Daniel Schugurensky, Professor, School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University & Director, Participatory Governance Initiative
- Sean Smoot, Principal Consultant, 21st Century Policing LLC
- Antonella Valmorbidia, Secretary General, ALDA - The European Association for Local Democracy
- Michael Wenger, Senior Consultant on Race Relations and the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Dr. Lyle Wray, Executive Director, Capital Region Council of Governments

Staff

A special thank you to the staff, consultants, and senior fellows of the National Civic League, particularly Rebecca Trout, Director, DC Office & All-America City Award. For more information on our program, please email Rebecca at Rebeccat@ncl.org.



Rehearsal Schedule

All rehearsals will take place in the Colorado Ballroom

Friday, June 9, 2023

8:00am-8:20am	Charlotte, NC
8:25am-8:45am	Dallas, TX
8:50am-9:10am	Davie County, NC
9:15am-9:35am	Decatur, GA
9:40am-10:00am	Fayetteville, NC
10:05am-10:25am	Franklin Township, NJ
10:30am-10:50am	Fulton, MO
10:55am-11:15am	Gardena, CA
11:20am-11:40am	Gonzales, CA
11:45am-12:05pm	Hampton, VA
12:10pm-12:30pm	Independence, OH
12:35pm-12:55pm	Mesa, AZ
1:00pm-1:20pm	Monrovia, CA
1:25pm-1:45pm	Mount Pleasant, SC
1:50pm-2:10pm	New York, NY
2:15pm-2:35pm	Port St. Lucie, FL
2:40pm-3:00pm	Redwood City, CA
3:05pm-3:25pm	Saginaw, TX
3:30pm-3:50pm	San Antonio, TX
3:55pm-4:15pm	Wellington, FL

Presentation Schedule

All presentations will take place in the Colorado Ballroom

Saturday, June 10, 2023

Block 1

8:00am – 8:10am	Jury Introductions
8:15am – 8:35am	Charlotte, NC
8:40am – 9:00am	Dallas, TX
9:05am – 9:25am	Davie County, NC

Workshop Break

Block 2

11:00am – 11:20am	Decatur, GA
11:25am – 11:45am	Fayetteville, NC
11:50am – 12:10pm	Franklin Township, NJ
12:15pm – 12:35pm	Fulton, MO

Lunch

Block 3

1:30pm – 1:50pm	Gardena, CA
1:55pm – 2:15pm	Gonzales, CA
2:20pm – 2:40pm	Hampton, VA

Break

Block 4

2:55pm – 3:15pm	Independence, OH
3:20pm – 3:40pm	Mesa, AZ
3:45pm – 4:05pm	Monrovia, CA

Sunday, June 11, 2023

Block 5

9:00am – 9:20am	Mount Pleasant, SC
9:25am – 9:45am	New York, NY
9:50am – 10:10am	Port St. Lucie, FL

Break

Block 6

10:25am – 10:45am	Redwood City, CA
10:50am – 11:10am	Saginaw, TX
11:15am – 11:35am	San Antonio, TX
11:40am – 12:00pm	Wellington, FL



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2023 All-America City Finalist Program Summaries

Charlotte, North Carolina

Over the last decade, Charlotte has seen tremendous growth and consistently ranks as one of the top-growing cities in the U.S. People are attracted to Charlotte because of its healthy, growing economy with thriving finance, healthcare, and professional sections. However, rapid growth brings social, economic, and public safety challenges. The City of Charlotte recognizes the importance of being innovative in its approach to addressing these challenges and is intentionally engaging residents in building Charlotte's future.

The Mayor's Youth Employment Program (MYEP)

School-to-career systems in the U.S. remain poorly aligned with 21st century requirements. Fifty-three percent of U.S. jobs are middle skill, meaning they require some form of education and training beyond a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree. Yet only 43% of U.S. workers are trained at this level. The MYEP program focuses on providing youth with opportunities to obtain the skills and training required for modern career readiness.

MYEP is the largest producer of paid summer internships in the Charlotte-Metro region, providing traditional, virtual and hybrid internships, as well as pre-apprenticeships and a best-in-class Job & Career Readiness Training (JCRT) program so youth have equitable opportunities to explore the world of work, build social capital and enhance economic mobility.

MYEP serves all Title 1, Priority, and Focus Area Schools, districtwide in Charlotte, making it the largest program serving disconnected youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Participants are offered paid opportunities in 12-16 different industries; partners in these industries offer paid work-based learning opportunities that help youth develop career goals, stay in school, achieve academically, and enhance social skills that enable them to succeed in life.

Over the past three years, 1,659 youth have been trained and 765 have gone through an immersive workplace experience through the MYEP. 69% of participants are youth of color, and 60% are women. MYEP is creating a talent pipeline for the City of Charlotte and other businesses in the Charlotte area, while simultaneously setting up youth for successful futures.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD): Community Services Division

Youth from disadvantaged communities may lack positive role models and guidance which results in making decisions that can lead to criminal behavior. CMPD's Community Services Division is taking an innovative approach to remove barriers which often lead to the inability of youth to have a connection or relationship with law enforcement. As a result, youth are shifting how they engage with law enforcement and recognizing the positive impact of making good decisions.

CMPD Youth Diversion Program: In 2012, CMPD created and implemented the Youth Diversion





CHARLOTTE



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Program in response to disproportionate minority contacts and the school-to-prison pipeline. The pre-arrest diversion program's goal is to break the cycle of youth justice system involvement and mitigate an arrest record for youth who commit first time misdemeanor offenses. Youth participate in up to eight hours of interpersonal skills workshops designed to address specific areas of concern as indicated by an assessment tool.

Since the program's inception in 2012, juvenile arrest has decreased by 46%, racial and ethnic disparities have decreased by 45%, and 90% of youth do not reoffend.

Respect, Engage, Accountability, Character, and Honesty (REACH): CMPD also offers the REACH Academy, a complementary program that provides leadership opportunities and educational seminars for younger individuals who show potentially early signs of trouble but have not yet committed any crimes. The program aims to rehabilitate participants and teach them positive behaviors, and it has been successful in maintaining positive relationships between police officers and youth in the Charlotte area.

Youth Envision Academy: Youth, along with 15 CMPD mentors, come together to envision the future of their lives and Charlotte during this 8-week program. Upon completion of the program, youth present their lessons learned and a vision of their future, as well as the future of Charlotte.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations: Community Affairs Division

The Community Affairs division develops, implements, and supports programs and initiatives that advance its mission to empower, collaborate, engage, and promote opportunities to create positive outcomes.

Their primary focus areas are police-community relations, engagement and outreach, diversity, equity and inclusion, youth programs, partnerships, and community harmony.

The Peer Club Program and Peer Mediation Program are the two core youth programs led by Community Affairs. The goal is to give young people the platform to express themselves in safe and open conversational-style sessions. These sessions cover conflict resolution, communication skills, civic engagement, and leadership. It is designed to be flexible to current events or concerns.

Some topics covered include:

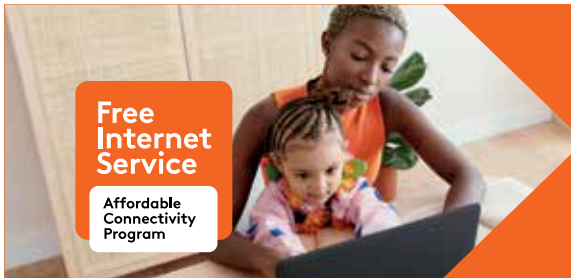
- Conflict Resolution Style
- Reframing discussions
- Parent-child relationships
- Consequences of decisions/choices
- Interpersonal relationships
- Substance usage
- Boundaries

Sessions are kicked off with group guidelines and agreement from participants, allowing the space for mutual buy-in. Field trips are often incorporated into the programs and summer events are held to teach the youth about local government, civic leadership, career readiness, education, the arts and more.

To make the youth programs accessible to everyone, transportation to and from program activities is provided and staff take time out of their personal schedules to serve as mentors.

The Community Affairs Division has received positive feedback from school administrators as they have seen significant improvement and reduction of in-school suspensions, truancy, and academics amongst participating youth.





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Dallas, Texas

The City of Dallas has a rich history of youth activism and engagement. The Dallas Youth Commission was founded in 1994 to provide a much-needed voice for students with the purpose of addressing and advocating for issues of importance to youth wellbeing. As highlighted in its All-America City application, Dallas is committed to keeping Dallas a Welcoming City to immigrants, leveraging partnerships to promote meaningful youth civic engagement, and supporting and growing a sustainable cultural ecosystem that ensures all residents and visitors have opportunities to experience arts and culture.

Dallas Youth Commission Youth Strategic Plan

The Dallas Youth Commission is a 15-member

board consisting of high school students that provide a voice for Dallas youth and bring change to the community. Since its inception, the Dallas Youth Commission has spearheaded various initiatives that include youth forums, community service events, crime prevention programs, an anti-smoking ordinance, and a youth resources guide. The commission has also focused on increasing student voter registration and turnout in local and national elections.

Below is a breakdown of some of the commission's key initiatives:

- The Dallas Youth Magazine encourages youth leadership and community involvement by featuring the work of 40 students to a distribution of over 40,000 high school students.
- The Teens for Dallas Grant financially



supports youth organizations and clubs in exchange for completing community service projects throughout Dallas. The initiative has awarded 10 organizations with grant funds and participated in community-wide cleanups and tree planting initiatives.

- The Community Closet initiative provides personal hygiene products to high school students who cannot afford them. Since opening, it has served 300 students and collected over 85 boxes of hygiene products.
- A Town Hall for Teens was hosted by the commission to bring teens together to discuss issues that directly affect them. Local elected officials were in attendance to answer questions about areas of concern such as police and youth relations, social media and professionalism, and voter registration.
- The Mayor's Intern Fellows Program (MIFP) provides students with an eight-week paid summer internship in industries of interest. The program has provided over 3,500 students with internships, work-readiness training, and leadership development.

Welcoming Dallas Strategic Plan

Immigrants have contributed significantly to the population growth of Dallas, with two in five children having at least one immigrant parent. To support the social incorporation of immigrants and refugees, the Welcoming Dallas Strategic Plan was unanimously approved by the city council in 2018. Through the Welcoming Dallas strategic planning process, city staff engaged community residents to understand challenges inhibiting immigrants in Dallas. It is through this process, that city was able to identify the greatest barriers to immigrant and refugee integration as fear of immigration enforcement due to heightened federal policies, lack of English language skills, poverty and lack of resources, lack of transportation, and lack of affordable housing. To address

these needs, the plan prioritizes celebrating the contributions of immigrants, promoting equitable access to government services, strengthening trust with law enforcement and government leaders, increasing access to ESL and legal services, and offering economic empowerment and youth enrichment opportunities in multiple languages.

The City of Dallas has made significant progress in integrating immigrants and refugees into every aspect of city life through civic engagement and has been certified as a Welcoming City by Welcoming America.

Some achievements include:

- An official Welcome Week and Proclamation
- A Community Resources Hub
- Welcoming Task Force convening
- A Ramadan dinner celebration
- Human Trafficking Awareness
- Culturally Competent Community Engagement
- An Enhanced Library Card
- Collaboration with Dallas Area Rapid Transit
- A Dallas Language Map
- Hosting Naturalization Ceremonies
- A Community Ambassadors Program
- Increased Voter Access

Dallas Cultural Plan

In 2017, the City of Dallas launched a cultural planning process to improve access to arts and culture. Following a year-long process with over 150 public, committee, and taskforce meetings that engaged nearly 9,000 Dallasites across the city, the new Dallas Cultural Plan was unanimously adopted by city council and includes six priorities: Equity, Diversity, Space for art, Support for Artists, a Sustainable Arts Ecosystem, and Communication. The Cultural Organizations Program (COP) contracts with established non-profit arts and culture organizations that adhere to these priorities.

Examples of funded programs include:

- Dallas City of Learning (DCoL) is a partnership between Big Thought, the Dallas Mayor's Office, Dallas Independent School District, and local and national organizations to provide free and low-cost learning experiences that cultivate creativity, build social and emotional skills, and boost academic achievement. In 2022, the DCoL network impacted 22,632 unique participants through 1,308 programs offered over 1.4M cumulative learning hours.
- Artivism empowers teenagers to express themselves and advance social issues through the creation of visual and performance art. 84% of youth said that this program helped build confidence, and 83% said that "because of this program, I can better express my ideas and feelings."
- Creative Solutions is an arts-as-workforce intervention program for youth in the juvenile justice system, ages 10 - 17, who have been referred by their probation officer. The program offers year-round sessions at Dallas County Juvenile facilities and a 7-week summer intensive at Southern Methodist University. Its trauma-informed approach aims to improve job skills, promote positive self-image, and increase social and emotional development. Creative Solutions has achieved an average recidivism rate of 10% compared to the average rate of 38% among other intervention programs.



"Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life."

Our HCA Healthcare and HealthONE mission extends well beyond patients to our colleagues and communities. We are proud to partner with the National Civic League on creating vibrant communities through volunteerism, giving, workforce development and community engagement.

Davie County, North Carolina

Davie County has established a shared vision that emphasizes building a sustainable future, celebrating rural heritage, and enhancing quality of life. The county has implemented comprehensive plans to facilitate this vision, with objectives such as delivering quality education and increasing career pathways. Davie County provides both formal and informal opportunities for public engagement, including public meetings, surveys, and intentional access through booths and roundtable discussions. The county works with community partners to address difficult issues, such as the opioid crisis, hate speech, and race relations.

IGNITE DAVIE

In Davie County, less than 33% of high school graduates (age 25-64) continue their education



and earn an associate degree or higher. With most jobs requiring some education and/or training beyond high school, Davie County's postsecondary attainment and completion rates indicate many students do not have the requisite qualifications to compete in the modern workforce.

Recognizing that the cost of higher education and competition for limited scholarship funds are two of the most persistent roadblocks to higher education, the Davie County Chamber of Commerce began discussing the possibility of a community scholarship program. A group of key community stakeholders began meeting and quickly embraced the idea. Following several meetings and much research, the group created the IGNITE DAVIE College Promise program.

Program goals include:

- Improve high school graduation rates.
- Increase post-secondary attainment & completion rates.
- Strengthen the workforce and ensure alignment with business & industry needs.

The IGNITE DAVIE College Promise program is a place-based scholarship program that enables students in Davie County to continue their education beyond high school graduation without incurring significant student loan debt. The program is funded by donations from a cross-sector community collaboration that includes businesses, foundations, and private individuals. The scholarship is for all students who live in Davie County and graduate from a public high school or a registered home school. Any student who desires to attend Davidson-Davie Community College (DDCC) is given the opportunity, with the scholarship amount coinciding with the number of school years the student resides in Davie County.

In 2020, 25% of Davie High's graduating class

enrolled at DDCC through IGNITE DAVIE. To meet the needs of additional students, IGNITE DAVIE will expand this fall to include four short-term training programs that are designed to support students who want or need to join the workforce right after graduation by offering them the ability to work and go to school part-time to learn the marketable skills local employers seek.

Davie Works

The Davie County School System (DCS) and Career and Technical Education Program (CTE) aim to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in all future endeavors, whether pursuing a university education, attending a technical school, joining the military, or going directly into the workforce. One of the strengths of CTE is that it begins at the middle school level with exploratory courses so young people can sample and find what sparks their passion.

DavieCONNECT complements the CTE program by addressing the need for both a skilled workforce and educators familiar with local workforce opportunities. Through strong partnerships with business and industry, DCS, and Davidson-Davie Community College (DDCC), several programs were developed to connect employers to students to provide career awareness, onsite tours, work-based learning opportunities, post-secondary education opportunities, and pathways to 21st-century careers. DavieCONNECT hosts programs like Manufacturing Day tours for middle school students and a Teacher Summer Externship program to provide in-depth tours of business and industry to "teach teachers" about the local businesses community, their employment needs, and career opportunities.

In addition to the basics, including computer labs and smart classroom technology, CTE students enjoy an impressive array of



resources. Culinary students have access to professional-grade kitchens, engineering classes house multiple 3D printers, automotive students can service vehicles in the fully equipped, seven-bay garage, construction students have a full wood-working shop and masonry lab, and agriculture students can care for livestock in a “working farm” barn.

Programs offered through Davie Works are building student resumes, enhancing college applications, and distinguishing students in an increasingly competitive job market and post-secondary education environment.

S.U.R.F. Board Grantmakers

After conducting a needs assessment, the Davie Community Foundation (DCF) found that youth issues, such as substance misuse and drop-out rates, were a major concern in Davie County. To address this, DCF established a Youth in Philanthropy program in 2005, which empowers youth to address youth-related issues and provides them with training to develop leadership skills.

The program led to the establishment of a youth grants board, S.U.R.F. (Student Understanding Real Futures) Board Youth Grantmakers, to grant funds for youth-led projects. Youth board members learn the importance of giving their time, talent, and treasure to make their community a better place. They plan an annual retreat, a fundraising event, and discuss ideas for projects that address youth needs. The POPSICLE 5K, hosted by S.U.R.F., has become the largest fundraising effort, raising between \$8,000 and \$14,000 for grant awards annually.

Grant funded projects have addressed issues such as poverty, hunger, technology needs, youth workforce development, placemaking, and racism.



Decatur, Georgia

Located six miles east of downtown Atlanta, Decatur places a priority on providing a high quality of life in an urban environment. Decatur's development patterns are typical of many historic cities and offer the timeless benefits of traditional planning. These make Decatur a place where daily needs can be met within the city limits, where young people can walk and bike to school (and after-school hangouts), and where people of different lifestyles have ample civic spaces in which to interact.

Decatur celebrates its bicentennial in 2023 and continues its commitment to ensuring all voices are heard and valued. The creation of a youth council, building of an inclusive playground, and the commitment to become a Child Friendly City are just a few efforts featured in Decatur's All-America City Award application.



Decatur Legacy Park

After Decatur purchased the former United Methodist Children's Home (UMCH), an eight-month visioning process was launched to determine its use. The process included four phases: Investigate, Illuminate, Ideate, and Innovate. During the Investigate phase, the visioning team worked to understand existing conditions. Throughout the Illuminate phase, community engagement solicited ideas and input. The Ideate phase took the input and created several concepts to which the community responded. The Innovate phase analyzed all the community feedback and stakeholder interviews to create a final concept, implementation strategy, and recommendations.

Several subsets of Decatur residents were asked for their input throughout the process. One group whose feedback proved particularly important were 3rd grade students. 3rd grade teachers were contacted specifically because their curriculum focuses on community partnerships, diversity, and inclusivity. After spending a day in the old park, 3rd graders were particularly interested in the dilapidated state of the two playgrounds on the property, making note of the lack of accessibility. As a result, the 3rd graders sent a letter urging planners to include an inclusive playground in the master plan. The final concept, among other things, included a rehabilitated dairy barn, bike paths, cross country and nature trails, preservation of an existing community garden, retention of most of the existing buildings, and new, inclusive playgrounds.

Decatur applied for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the design and installation of a totally accessible and inclusive playground at Decatur Legacy Park, providing a facility for all children and their caregivers regardless of their physical and mental abilities.



Mayor Patti Garrett and Mayor Pro Tem Tony Powers celebrate Decatur's 2018 designation

Proud to be included with
the finalists for 2023!

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Decatur received the CDBG grant and began installing the first playground in December of 2022.

Decatur Youth Council

The Decatur Youth Council (DYC) was established in 2016 to provide opportunities for high school-aged youth to learn more about local government and to encourage them to participate in the city's decision-making process. The council has a permanent seat at the table of every planning process conducted in Decatur and assists with implementing the recommendations of various city-wide plans.

The DYC participates in:

- Assisting city staff with public education and outreach
- Coordinating with established programs and organizations in the community



- Identifying and researching potential new programs
- Reviewing local, state, and regional DEI policies
- Identifying physical and perceived barriers to active participation
- Identifying the latest developments in community and youth engagement
- Providing recommendations regarding the implementation of various citywide plans

In addition to attending monthly meetings, members must:

- Attend a city commission meeting each semester.
- Develop and organize a city-wide function or event.
- Develop a public service announcement for the adolescent population.
- Research and make recommendations to the city commission regarding a specific task from the current strategic plan.
- Volunteer for a minimum of 16 hours.
- Report NYC's accomplishments to the city commission.

The NYC routinely contributes to the community in a variety of ways. One recent example is the establishment of Legacy Park Orchard as part of NYC's participation in the master planning process for Legacy Park. The NYC and volunteers from Decatur High School planted 25 blackberry bushes, 19 pear trees and 14 apple trees obtained through a grant they researched, applied for, and received.

Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI)

The CFCI is a program established by UNICEF to create safer, more just, equitable, inclusive, and child-responsive cities and communities worldwide. In 2021, Decatur signed a

memorandum of understanding with UNICEF. The process involves a child rights situational analysis to establish a baseline, development of a local action plan, an implementation phase, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and formal recognition by UNICEF as a "Child Friendly City."

Decatur's Children & Youth Services Division took the lead on the process, identifying other local child-focused agencies to serve on the leadership team. The leadership team led the community assessment process and recruited the Decatur Youth Council (DYC) to help.

The adult-led leadership team began the transition into a Teen Leadership Team (TLT) in September 2022 by recruiting teens through the school system. Requirements were simple - you had to be a teen who lives in Decatur and one who wants to be involved. The 28 teens selected for the TLT used the data generated by the community assessment to identify five top priorities:

1. All young people regardless of background are treated equally.
2. Improve access to and awareness of mental health resources.
3. Increase trust with police and security guards.
4. Improve public spaces, with special attention to accessibility.
5. Make Decatur more environmentally conscious.

Workgroups are currently turning their priorities into goals, which will be used to create a Local Action Plan with intended results, indicators, and clear criteria for recognition.





CONGRATULATIONS 2023 ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALISTS!

Asheboro, North Carolina wishes you the best of luck in the competition



Fayetteville, NC

The City of Fayetteville is the sixth largest city in North Carolina and is the proud home of Fort Bragg, the largest military installation by population in the world. Experiencing unprecedented growth and transformation, Fayetteville has become one of the most diverse cities in the state.

Like most communities, in recent years, Fayetteville has wrestled with issues around public health, growth, social justice, racial equity, and the relationship between law enforcement and residents. The community has responded by relying on the power of conversation and collaboration, working toward the common good and approaching everything with the desire to succeed and improve. These qualities have earned Fayetteville the moniker of America's 'Can Do City.'

The Market House Repurposing Project

Following nationwide protests in the summer of 2020 and critical conversations around racial disparity and social justice, Fayetteville began exploring options for Market House, a longtime community fixture and historic landmark. After careful consideration, the city determined it was time to bring the community together to address head-on the full, true, and accurate history of the city, including the Market House.

The city leaned into the conversation and went to the community and civic leaders for assistance and input. A working group of diverse community stakeholders was assembled to identify, develop, and prioritize strategic recommendations for the repurposing of the Fayetteville Market House. After the extensive conversation, the working group presented five repurposing options and then sought extensive input and engagement from a diverse cross-section of the community.

Several community events were hosted and included diverse individuals in terms of age, race, gender, and professional background. Following the events, a report was compiled and shared with the city council; the recommendations prioritized structural modifications, arts exhibits connected with a true and accurate history, and themed events promoting education and enrichment. At the request of the council, additional opportunities for community feedback were provided, including a virtual online survey, three additional in-person feedback sessions, and affinity group meetings with a variety of civic organizations.

The collective body of feedback led to the proposal of a dramatic repurposing plan for the storied structure. While frustration and anger engulfed many communities grappling with equity conversations, Fayetteville engaged in





2023 All-America City Finalist



those tough conversations to find solutions to move forward together, rather than apart.

Fayetteville-Cumberland Youth Council (FCYC) and the Fayetteville NEXT Commission

Fayetteville prioritizes engaging youth through the FCYC and the Fayetteville NEXT Commission, both of which have positively impacted the community.

FCYC provides an avenue for youth to develop leadership skills while implementing innovative service projects. The mission of the group is to generate a passion for and desire to serve their community in a meaningful way. Each year, they develop and implement a variety of innovative service projects that help the community and instill in the members the importance of their engaged commitment in the neighborhoods where they live.

FCYC was recently recognized for the Most Innovative Service Project, The Period Project, which involved collecting women's menstrual products and distributing the donations to schools and organizations.

With the success of FCYC, the city council also wanted to provide opportunities for generations entering the workforce and in the early career stages. Fayetteville NEXT was established to advise the city on economic development and social matters as well as potential actions affecting young adult residents. Through their engagement, members establish and sustain diverse and inclusive network connections for young adult residents and connect young adults to engagement opportunities with the larger community.



Education, Mentorship, and Empowerment Programs

With an eye toward building capacity, improving relationships between youth and public safety personnel, and increasing workforce and job readiness, city departments have brought innovative and impactful programs to give pathways for young people to grow and learn.

Aviation Career Education (ACE): The Fayetteville Regional Airport organized ACE to provide middle and high school students the opportunity to explore careers in STEM and aviation-related fields. The academy included hands-on experience in various aviation areas and advice on pursuing a career in aviation.

Police Activity League (PAL): PAL is a program of the Fayetteville Police Department aimed at preventing juvenile crime and violence through mentorship, athletics, education, and recreational activities.

PAL hosted a two-week Summer Empowerment Camp during which youth selected drug use as the topic that they felt was affecting their community. With the help of police officers, the youth members conducted research to write and film a public safety announcement addressing the dangers of drug use in the community.

PAL activities and mentorships are preventing juvenile crime while building strong relationships with local officers.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): The Fayetteville Fire Department hosts an annual Teen CERT Academy for high school-aged individuals to teach them skills in disaster preparedness, medical operations, search and rescue, teen bullying awareness, gang awareness, interaction with law enforcement,

CPR Certification, fire extinguisher training, and other hands-on lessons from the fire department. The training is provided by various emergency services organizations in the community, and the program empowers youth to respond to their community's needs in the aftermath of a disaster.

Congratulations
TO THE 2023
ALL-AMERICA CITY FINALISTS

AURORA COLORADO



Franklin Township, NJ

Historically an idyllic place to call home, trouble started in Frankling Township when gang activity led to several youth deaths from gun violence. Prior to the pandemic, the township had plans to build a youth center to provide a place for constructive youth recreation, but construction delays became inevitable due to nationwide pandemic



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closures. While the township was coping with the pandemic, the Franklin Township Police Department underwent a major transformation in department leadership. As part of the restructuring, a new community policing plan was created.

The new unit, the Community Relations Bureau (CRB), was designed to be a proactive, community-based unit, engaging the community through programming, events, and other community activities. The primary focus of the CRB was not to be crime-driven but rather community-driven. Officers were given the opportunity to create and lead programs based on their passions, which led to the creation of programs that addressed the basic needs of the community. The programs and events featured in Franklin's All-America City Award application have helped bring

the community together and changed the relationship between the community and the police department.

Cooking with Cops CWC

CWC was one of the first programs that helped to launch Franklin Township Police Department's Community initiatives. Detective Burwell designed and wrote the curriculum for the seven-week course, where students are taught food safety, kitchen safety, food preparation, proper food storage and are exposed to a variety of cooking methods. Students have prepared delightful meals such as, chicken francese, chicken and waffles, steak, vegetable medley, salads, and macaroni & cheese. His class rapidly gained popularity among students and parents, requiring a relocation to the high school that had more



commercial cooking facilities and could accommodate more students simultaneously.

Detective Burwell uses the time in the kitchen to talk to students about life choices, expose them to the possibility of a career in law enforcement, and even helps them to resolve issues or conflicts they encounter in their daily lives. He shows kids there are alternatives to solving problems that do not include fists, knives, or guns, all while teaching them to cook.

The program has also received community support, including donations of food and funding, and partnerships with local businesses. The owner of The Stage House Tavern in Somerset was so impressed with the program that he offered up his restaurant as a location. With this partnership, students attend their last class at the restaurant and work alongside professional chefs to create meals, which they then serve to the invited guests – parents and siblings. Some students have even been offered jobs at the restaurant.

Community Relations Bureau (CRB) Franklin FIT Program

The Franklin FIT program focuses on promoting a healthy and fit lifestyle among youth in Franklin Township. The program follows the CrossFIT model and is led by certified head coach, Detective Bobby Brown. It started with eight students in the summer of 2020 and has now enrolled well over 100 township youth. The program emphasizes mental and emotional benefits of exercise and builds self-confidence among participants. Many adults know that “blowing off steam” by exercising helps them to think clearer. Kids on the other hand, may not be able to make that association. Franklin FIT teaches kids how to use the mental and emotional benefits of exercise to their advantage.

Each class starts with a question of the day, which elicits discussion between cops and youth. With a diversity of participants, youth’s minds are opened by having conversation with people ‘different’ from themselves.

Other CrossFIT gyms and local businesses have seen the impact of the program and have supported it by donating gym equipment and workout gear. Showing that exercise can help combat a myriad of stressors has allowed the officers to form bonds with the young attendees, building trust and limiting fears.

Citizen Academy

The Franklin Township Police Department offers a 12-week Citizen Academy for adult residents and local business owners to learn about the law enforcement profession and its officers. The program includes classes on various topics such as patrol, detective bureau, traffic bureau,



community policing, internal affairs, and use of force. The most eye-opening classes are the Firearms Simulator and Motor Vehicle stops. The participants get to try their hand at real-life shoot or don't shoot scenarios as well as being the officer on a simulated motor vehicle stop with an agreeable driver and one that isn't.

The program also aims to bridge the divide between officers and community members through authentic communication. Officers hear from community members during discussions about policing, tactics, laws, and controversial topics. The officers want the participants to engage in conversation and even challenge things that they hear. The program has been attended by residents of all ages, business owners, and township elected officials. It is an opportunity for everyone to learn and share to create a partnership between the community and the police department.



Fulton, MO

Founded nearly 170 years ago, Fulton, Missouri has a rich history, including Winston Churchill's famous speech at Westminster College. Today, the city is in a period of change. Over the last five years, Fulton welcomed new leadership in its schools, non-profits, local government, and public housing institutions. This new collective leadership has come in with fresh eyes and ideas. While the day-to-day work at these institutions continues, Fulton is beginning to have conversations and dream about ways to modernize and collaborate to better support the changing community.

Refugee Resettlement

Following the withdrawal of the U.S. military from Afghanistan, over 120,000 Afghans were airlifted out of the country, with 76,000 making it to the United States. After over two decades in a war-torn country, the Afghan people who left suddenly faced a different type of traumatic experience - leaving, for many, the only home they ever knew and fleeing into a drastically different culture. In response, communities across the U.S., including Fulton, began to help.

Fulton Rotarians proposed that the club lead the resettlement efforts in Callaway County, Missouri. More than 30 additional community members joined the Fulton Afghan Resettlement Committee, including representatives from educational institutions, faith groups, and other civic organizations. The committee worked with Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri to welcome five families into the community, including 10 adults, 30 children, and 2 babies. The community helped to secure housing for these families, including a fraternity at Westminster College that offered its annex to house the largest family of 14 people. Community

members donated furnishings, food, clothing, and money to meet the needs of the family.

The community's goal is to integrate these families into the Fulton community by enrolling children in schools, helping adults obtain jobs, enrolling families in English language classes, and providing transportation to appointments and shopping trips. Local businesses helped families obtain jobs and the area habitat for humanity is working on building the families permanent housing.

The innovation, dedication, and compassion Fulton residents showed not only helped the families that resettled in the community, but also inspired other towns and small cities in Missouri to act.

Community Recreation Center Plan

The City of Fulton's interest in a recreation center dates to a 2000 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan which cited the construction of an indoor recreation center and an indoor/outdoor pool. The plan considered the project a great improvement to the quality of life for residents and a potential attraction for new residents. Seven years later, the majority of respondents to a park's facility study again supported the idea of a recreation and community center.

It came up again eight years later, in 2015, when another study of the community asking about facility projects saw an indoor recreation center at the top of the list. This time the study informed the development of the Parks Facility and Programming Master Plan that laid out the next 10 years of park improvements.

In 2018, the Fulton community passed a half-cent sales tax to support this longtime community priority. The tax, intended to be the main funding source for this project, brought in \$375,000 in 2016 and \$493,105 in revenue in 2022.

Planning for the recreation center started in 2017 and Legends Rec-Plex opened in June 2021 with a two-week free period for the community. The facility includes a banquet hall, gymnasium, fieldhouse, elevated mezzanine, cardio and fitness center, padded activity room, game room, and a banquet room. The facility has proved to be a very popular amenity, with approximately 59,000 visitors in 2022.

Since opening, staff members have worked to identify different services that would benefit the community, including an after-school program for students. The facility has hosted events such as magic shows, youth tumbling



competitions, father-daughter dances, and graduation parties.

The Local Lemon- Youth Entrepreneurship

The local businesses in Fulton are the backbone of the community's economy, and the Brick District is a group of downtown business owners focused on promoting and preserving the historic downtown area. To support and foster future entrepreneurship in the community, the Callaway County Chamber of Commerce launched a new six-week program in 2022 called The Local Lemon, which targeted youth (ages 6-16) and taught them how to start, own, and operate their own lemonade stand.

The program focused on entrepreneurship topics such as goal setting, product choice, cost, location, marketing, funding, and customer service. All participants were required to complete coursework, including finalizing their business plan, operating their lemonade stand, and generating at least \$50 in gross sales. The youth entrepreneurs learned from local business owners about different business types, the importance of goal setting, determining the break-even point for their business, and how much they needed to sell to make a profit. They also selected a location for their lemonade stand and learned about marketing their business. The participants sold 271 total cups of lemonade and made over \$1,500 in gross sales. The participants received awards for most cups sold, highest gross sales, most creative stand, best customer service, and most entrepreneurial spirit. The program helped reduce summer learning loss by keeping students engaged in education and gave them the opportunity to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Best wishes and good luck to all of the 2023 AAC finalists.



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Gardena, CA

Gardena is a small but dynamic city in Los Angeles County with a reputation for taking risks and making positive changes. Once a home for farming and known as the berry-growing capital of Southern California, it is now referred to as the "Freeway City" because of its proximity to three main freeways.

The city is in a state of change, shedding policies that no longer serve it and investing in services that benefit the community. Gardena is committed to reflecting on past mistakes, failures, and challenges while focusing on community growth and creating more opportunities for the future.





Emergency Services Division

For 40 years, the Emergency Services Division (ESD) in Gardena has been providing families access to a food pantry, case management services, homeless services, and youth and family programming. When the pandemic hit, it brought about new challenges for young people, specifically an increase in suicide rates. As a result, the ESD has committed to investing in youth by building new programs and partnerships in the following areas:

- Mental Health- ESD hosts a 12-week series of mental health workshops for adults/parents to learn about different mental health diagnoses, behaviors, and symptoms. Additionally, ESD strengthened their partnership with the school district by participating in campus events such as Passport to Wellness, Recovery Month, Suicide Prevention Month, and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.
- Youth Programs- The largest community partnering events are the Back-to-School Giveaway and Police Department's National Night Out, both of which give youth, families, and neighbors an opportunity to build relationships with the city and police department. Holiday programs are also hosted, providing food drives and gifts to children and teens.
- Homelessness Prevention- Gardena has been working on bringing more homeless services to the community by building relationships with local organizations, hosting surveys and community forums, and obtaining funding to prevent homelessness. The city has also been working on its first-ever Homeless Plan with the community's feedback. The Food Pantry has expanded its services by growing partnerships and providing food and hygiene supplies to those experiencing homelessness.



CONGRATULATIONS!

TO THE 2023 ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARD FINALISTS!



City of Hayward

"The Heart of the Bay"



The City of Gardena has increased services for all populations, reduced mental health stigma, and increased youth programs and events in collaboration with stakeholders.

Gardena Juvenile Justice and Intervention Program

The Gardena Police Department founded the Gardena Juvenile Justice and Intervention Program (GJJIP) in May 2015 after monitoring many youths cited for misdemeanor offenses. The police department identified that youth would benefit from restorative services such as case management, service planning, life skills workshops, and community referrals rather than punishments such as harsh fines and court procedures. Since its inception, GJJIP has provided 746 youth, ages 11-17, with alternatives to suspensions, expulsions, and criminal records. In collaboration with the police

department, school district, and community-based organizations, GJJIP aims to treat the underlying needs of at-risk youth and create a pathway away from the criminal justice system.

GJJIP serves at-risk youth facing stresses such as financial insecurity, negative family dynamics, and substance abuse that often lead to harmful coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, gang activity, and crime. GJJIP and its partners offer resources, workshops, and life skills classes to help youth and their caregivers make positive decisions.

Numerous success stories of youth who completed the program involve those who have turned away from gang involvement, finished high school, pursued continuing education, and entered the workforce.

Response to Low Voter Turnout

Despite changes to state regulations to encourage youth participation in elections, Gardena's voter turnout remained low. In response, the city established programs to engage and educate youth and promote their civic participation. Programs were designed to instill civic engagement, inclusiveness and equity, collaboration, and innovation to create a shared vision that includes the community's needs.

- Youth Commission- The Gardena Youth Commission focuses on professional development, encouraging youth to pursue careers in the public sector, providing youth insight to city policies, and engaging in local service projects such as the homeless count, clean-up days, canned food drives, and creating holiday baskets.
- Youth in Government Day (YIGD)- Gardena planned and hosted its inaugural YIGD in partnership with local organizations



and schools. The event aimed to provide legislative and judicial experiences for grades 6-12, educate and empower teens regarding civic involvement, and highlight job opportunities when they turn 18. Over 75 students participated in the event, which included breakfast with the city council, team building and communication presentations, and tours of city departments. Students also worked on a project to identify a community need and present a solution using available resources.

- Seasonal Camps- Spring, winter, and summer camps allow teens to earn volunteer hours within the community. Camps focus on encouraging safety, fostering connections, preventing juvenile crime, and improving academic performance.

The City of Gardena aims to increase voter turnout and community engagement through an innovative communications strategy and the continued development of programs that promote civic involvement.

Gonzales, CA

The City of Gonzales, California has a predominantly Hispanic population with a third of residents being foreign-born and many speaking a language other than English at home. About half of residents have a high school diploma, and one in four residents live at or below the national poverty level. Rather than focus on the limitations of being a small, lower-income, rather isolated town, Gonzales capitalizes on its strengths and opportunities with a can-do approach, often referred to as “The Gonzales Way.”

Over the past 10 years, the city has made significant accomplishments in expanding healthcare access, increasing job opportunities, and adopting sustainability practices and policies. Gonzales has launched dozens of initiatives that are transforming the city into a laboratory for collaborative efforts designed to build a healthy community.

Community Center Complex

The City of Gonzales has wanted to build a community center for over 20 years. In 2001, a Community Facility Needs Assessment illustrated that the city suffered from a severe shortage of gathering spaces needed to accommodate the rapidly growing population. In 2020, after passing Measure X, the City of Gonzales began conducting extensive community outreach in both English and Spanish including several town hall meetings, community pop-up surveys, and presentation

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sessions to solicit feedback from residents on what they would like to see included in a potential community center. Prior to that, the Youth Council was planning the idea of creating a teen innovation center space.

After much collaboration and engagement, a design was decided upon for the Community Center Complex. The complex will be comprised of a community hall, teen innovation center, indoor and outdoor theater space, and a county library that will be relocated from the current rental space. The community areas will include the community hall, a commercial kitchen, staff offices, meeting rooms, classrooms, a fitness center, and indoor and outdoor theater. This facility will provide programs focused on health, education, childcare, senior services, recreation, and social services. The teen innovation center will include a teen lounge, innovation lab, game room, and outside courtyard.

Funding sources include tax measure funds, state funding, grants, and a \$10 million dollar capital campaign that has raised over \$6 million so far.

Community Health Worker (CHW) Program

CHWs help improve health care access and outcomes, strengthen health care teams, support health equity for underserved communities, and enhance quality of life. During the pandemic, residents were constantly calling city hall for information and support around COVID-19. In response to this need, in 2020, the city implemented a CHW program. The goal of the program was to reach residents most impacted by the pandemic and provide outreach, education, and wrap around support to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and promote full recovery by ensuring adequate isolation and quarantine support.

Gonzales CHWs went beyond their duties to support the community during the pandemic, helping with food access, rental assistance, vaccine registration, mass vaccine clinics, and even securing diapers for those in need. The health workers put an emphasis on outreach to the hard-to-reach populations and multi-generational households. Gonzales made significant inroads in their vaccination efforts early on and was the first city in the county to reach over 90% vaccination rate.

Community health efforts have continued post-pandemic with CHWs partnering with community stakeholders to host offerings such as a healthy cooking demo and mental health forum.

Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) Mental Health Project

The Gonzales Youth Council (GYC) is a unique youth leadership and development program that seeks to engage youth in the civic life of the city and its schools through projects and direct participation in city government and decision-making. The GYC is comprised of 12-15 students and the group is led by two Youth Commissioners. Each year, the Youth Commissioners participate in a paid four-week Summer Fellowship program, receiving leadership training, working with city and school leaders, and gaining an understanding of internal city workings. They become participatory members of the city council, attending meetings, and making recommendations and presentations on behalf of the GYC.

The GYC selects an annual service-learning project based on current community concerns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the GYC decided to tackle the issue of youth mental health. The Youth Supporting Youth project began with the development of a mental

health and social-emotional well-being survey for 355 middle and high school students. The survey revealed elevated levels of anxiety symptoms and stress. When asked if they knew where to access mental health support most respondents said “no” and explained that they had no idea where or how to seek those services out, adding to the gravity of the issue and validating the call for more readily available local mental health resources and support.

The GYC created a Mental Health Awareness video and continued outreach and education via email and social media to support their peers, outlining tips for how teachers and families could provide support. The Youth Commissioners also presented their survey findings to various stakeholders, resulting in the funding of a second school-based licensed clinical social worker.

Hampton, VA

The City of Hampton doesn’t have a “city” plan, it has a community plan developed by 1,500 to 3,000 residents, business owners, property owners, educational institutions, and a variety of non-profits and associations over a two-year period. The plan guides the future of land use, city governance, the school system, and the community.

Civic engagement in Hampton doesn’t stop with the community plan, participation avenues range from online surveys, social media outreach, community discussions, steering groups, and boards and commissions. Residents have a real voice in policy and directly participate in the design and implementation of community programs.

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Transformative Education Programs

One key area of focus in the Community Plan was to create a system to “promote career exposure and the development of life skills.” This initial focus morphed into One Division, One Transformation, Hampton’s K-12 education reform. A community-driven process addressed one profound question: “What should young people know, do, and understand to be successful after high school?” The collaborative leadership of the school system, city, industry leaders, business partners, postsecondary academia, teachers, parents, and students created the vision: All students will graduate equipped with tools, attitude, and drive to successfully navigate postsecondary pursuits, whether it is college, careers, or the military.

To give every student the academic, technical, and employability skills and knowledge for success, hundreds of community stakeholders translated the vision into reality. Through shared decision-making and action planning, stakeholders redesigned teaching and learning through integration of rigorous academic content, learning experiences, and enrichments that cultivate essential skills, mindsets, and knowledge needed to become lifelong, self-directed learners with the skills and resilience to be successful. The community set goals, outcomes, and curriculum expectations; established and designed college and work-based learning (WBL) experiences; and transformed traditional classrooms into 21st-century learning environments that allow students to apply their learning and inspire them to achieve greatness. Stakeholders continue to plan and execute the tactics to accomplish the vision.

A cross-sector collaboration connects what students learn in school with their career goals. A large network of employers and industry leaders support a system of workforce

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development strategies that provide equitable opportunity and access to career development experiences while also building the talent pipeline that meets industry’s current and emerging workforce needs.

Hampton Police Division Community Relations

Community relationships are vital to maintaining public safety, yet across the nation the gulf between public safety agencies and those they protect is growing. The Hampton Police Department (HPD) worked with diverse partners to create several initiatives to open communication and understanding with members of the community, especially those who live in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by gun violence.

Among them:

- Coffee with a Cop brings uniformed officers into conversation with residents at a variety



of restaurants.

- National Faith and Blue Weekend is a Vigil of Understanding.
- Kickin' It in the Community is a kickball tournament between officers and Boys and Girls Club members,
- Eagles vs. Everybody: Headtapping Violence is an initiative soliciting volunteers and city resources to respond to the most vulnerable communities.
- Junior Commonwealth's Attorneys is a week-long summer program that takes a diverse group of students through all the steps in the justice system.
- Camp Fury is a camp teaching girls about the fire service and other male-dominated fields.

Additionally, School Resource Officers (SROs) in Hampton focus on partnerships through increased communication and cooperation with school faculty and staff, students, and parents. They provide classroom instruction on topics such as being a good citizen, personal safety, bullying, and gangs. These state-specific curricula taught at the middle and high school levels help educate students on Virginia laws and help students develop skills needed to make sound decisions and to become active citizens in their schools and communities. SROs serve as mentors and resources to students before and after school, building lasting relationships that have carried on past graduation.

Collaborative Programs for Young People

The Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities ensures that Hampton creates better outcomes for its younger residents. Staff strive to provide meaningful alternatives to violence, drugs, and gang participation while addressing unresolved trauma and supporting returning citizens.


One of the first programs of the office was

the Summer Youth Employment Program. The program offers job opportunities within city and school departments, local businesses, and non-profit organizations to youth and young adults in Hampton ages 16-24. The 10-week summer work experience provides students an opportunity to explore professional and personal career aspirations.

Hampton's philosophy is that the government does not need to lead all programming, so it provides grants to grassroots, community-based organizations and neighborhood groups supporting youth. A sampling of awarded grants include:







- A dance school that uses drumming to enhance social-emotional learning.
- A team that provides "been-there" discussions led by people who have been imprisoned with young people already in the juvenile justice system. Conversations






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teach cognitive behavioral therapeutic conflict resolution.

- A health and wellness intervention program that uses yoga, group clinical therapy, fitness, and mindfulness training for teen girls.
- An organization that supports LGBTQ adults, especially those who are gender transitioning.
- A nationally recognized drill team that uses physical training, individualized and group instruction, behavior instruction, and academic and leadership training to support young people.
- An agency that supports incarcerated adults will expand their services to young people who are under court supervision, have active court cases, or are having challenges acclimating back into society after incarceration.
- An organization that fosters positive youth development and awareness of substance misuse and mental health will create a summer volunteer program.

Independence, OH

A suburb of Cleveland, Independence has the spirit and quaintness of a small town, while simultaneously being the host to one of the largest business corridors in the area. Premier city services, quality schools, and beautiful recreation and civic facilities make Independence a premier community in which to work, live, visit, and raise a family. The projects featured in its All-America City Application show why Independence is the “Heart of Cuyahoga County.”

No Place Like Home

33% of Independence residents are 60 or older, and the community has several services that help these seniors to remain in their homes, increasing quality of life and enabling self-sufficient living.

- Lifeline Medical Alert System: In the event of a fall or other type of emergency, with a click of a button Lifeline connects residents to a trained dispatcher who can send help quickly.
- Meals on Wheels: Prepared and delivered by Vista Springs Ravinia, an assisted living facility in town, Meals on Wheels is an affordable home meal delivery service for residents who are homebound or unable to prepare meals for themselves.
- Senior Snow Removal Service: The city offers annual snow removal services to 650 senior residents and residents with disabilities.
- Transportation Service: Transportation services are provided to seniors who do not drive and do not live with anyone who drives. Seniors are taken to medical appointments, errands, and even social visits.
- Drive-Thru Lunches: Born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Drive-Thru Lunch program provides a catered meal for residents 60+ for a nominal fee via contactless pickup at the Civic Center.
- Daily Welfare Check: Each day senior



individuals living alone call the Civic Center to let them know they are okay. If they do not call in by a certain time, the police department visits the resident's home to perform a welfare check.

- KnoxBox Rapid Access System: A lock box that is mounted on an outside entry door of the home contains a house key which, in an emergency, can be used by the fire department for quick access to a home, providing life-saving minutes.

Youth Engagement

Social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted young people's mental health. The city and local schools provided youth with several opportunities for engagement and belonging.

- Holiday Hangouts: The city brings 5th - 8th grade students together at the Civic Center for engaging and enjoyable activities like arts & crafts, interactive video games, cooking classes, and dance parties. Activities are planned and modified based on feedback from the youth.
- IndyAlive!: IndyAlive! is a community partnership involving the city, schools, churches, youth, and parents who work together to enhance the safety and wellbeing, not only of youth, but of all members of the community. Established in 1999 as a grass-roots movement to address concerns about underage drinking, IndyAlive! developed informative programs, school assemblies, and recreation activities to offer an alternative to underage drinking. After 24 years of hard work and community collaboration, the dedicated team broadened the group's mission to focus on bullying, internet safety, drug and sexual experimentation, and character development.
- Relationship with the Local Schools: A

licensed social worker, partially funded by the city, serves the school district as a full-time Prevention Specialist. The Prevention Specialist counsels students with a variety of emotional concerns, providing resources for anxiety, depression, and other common issues. Referrals come from faculty members as well from the Community Services Department's staff at the before and after school programs.

- Workforce Development: The City's Economic Development Department is working closely with the local schools and business community to develop a comprehensive workforce development program that will provide career opportunities and soft skills to students.



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Services and Programs for Residents Needing Assistance

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more Independence families than ever faced financial challenges, even those who were incredibly secure before. Fortunately, the following programs and services, in place for many years, provided both temporary and long-term support to individuals and families in need.

- Yuletide Hunger Program: Since 1982, the Yuletide Hunger Program has been providing meals to children, adults, and families living in food insecure households. Independence collaborates with neighboring suburbs to collect donations that are used to buy gift cards that recipients can use to augment food and household goods that are donated.
- Adopt a Family: Adopt a Family is a program offered around the holidays to community members with children under the age of 18. Through community donations, families on the Adopt a Family program are provided with a \$100 gift card per child to spend as needed on clothes and gifts.
- St. Michael Food Bank: The city proudly maintains a relationship with the local food bank which is hosted at St. Michael Church. The food bank serves dozens of area families who otherwise wouldn't know where they would get their next meal.
- South Hills Lend-A-Hand Food Pantry: For over 30 years, Lend-A-Hand has been providing emergency food for families and individuals in Independence and surrounding neighborhoods. The pantry is supported by local churches, area businesses, community organizations, and individuals through monetary contributions and food donations. Once a month, Lend-A-Hand provides eligible families with groceries and other sundries.
- Shop with a Cop: Gifts are often the first thing cut from the shopping list when

money is tight. Along with neighboring suburbs, the Independence Police Department hosts the Shop with a Cop event every December. Community children in need of some holiday cheer are paired with a police officer as a personal shopper and allowed to pick out their own gifts and supplies with a large budget. After shopping, the kids come together for a huge pizza party.

- Neighbors Assisting Neighbors (N.A.N.): N.A.N. is a partnership between the city, the Independence United Methodist Church, Garfield Schools, and other groups that provides financial assistance to individuals and families in need. Funds are put towards school supplies, field trip costs, bills, and more.

Mesa, Arizona

People from different races, places of origin, languages, faiths, and identities interweave to give Mesa its vibrancy. However, in a time of divisive rhetoric and misinformation, it was vital to keep focused on the strength of Mesa's diversity, which is why the city passed a Non-Discrimination Ordinance, memorializing its commitment to equality, diversity, and fair access to opportunities. Through the unifying process, Mesa empowered marginalized groups, increased civic participation, worked across the aisle, and brought more voices to the table. The alliances and partnerships that helped pass the ordinance established a spirit of trust and innovation needed for building a thriving community.

Hactivate Mesa

Hactivate Mesa was created to celebrate youth ideas and encourage collaboration with professionals to increase civic engagement and elicit the exploration of careers in civil service. The collaborative event brings



students together to study and analyze data on pertinent topics or problems in their community to help promote data science, STEM, critical thinking, problem solving, presentation skills, community pride, and civic engagement.

Events began in 2019 as a partnership between the city, Mesa Public Schools, and the business community. Initially designed as an annual 2-day event for high school students, Hacktivate Mesa now includes activities throughout the year for students in 8th grade to master's candidates at Arizona's three public universities.

During Hacktivate Mesa, students have access to real city data. Students are tasked with identifying patterns and trends about a community issue to make recommendations for addressing it. To promote inclusiveness and understanding of equity, the projects always include data on community demographics and areas of disparate impact. The youth benefit from leadership development, problem solving, better understanding of the community around them, increased job readiness and potential employment opportunities.

The city has leveraged youth insights into actual programs. The 2022 Hacktivate presentations informed initiatives that helped shape ongoing efforts such as centralized homeless resources/services, crisis intervention training for School Resource Officers to improve mental health and trauma systems for youth, a food waste into gas program, and more.

Project Lit

Arizona has consistently ranked among the bottom five states for the quality of its public-school education. Studies suggest that incorporating the arts results in a more

complete and well-rounded educational experience. When implemented, the arts foster linguistic, numeric, and aesthetic literacy, alongside discipline, creativity, and enhanced self-esteem; however, 50% of schools in Arizona have no budget for arts education.

Founded in 2015, The City of Mesa's Project Lit is an arts learning program that uses poetry, hip hop, and drama to promote literacy and activate social and emotional development with young and emerging adults. Project Lit primarily serves students who attend Title 1 schools in grades 7-12, through 16-to-24-week school residencies with professional teaching artist mentors. In each residency, youth engage with the tools of creativity to find, develop, and publicly present their unique voice, while also learning to foster empathy and compassion as a means of critical thinking. In addition, upon completion of their residencies, students are offered an opportunity to publicly share their work in a community performance space and submit their poems to be published in an annual student anthology.

Through Project Lit, students are given the space for exploration, freedom, and discovery through a unified framework that centers on collaboration between the Teaching Artist Mentors, classroom teachers, peer mentors and students. This framework provides a common set of learning objectives, integrating literacy and social and emotional development with the respective artforms and classroom needs.

Since the program's inception, Project Lit has expanded to engage 23 host schools or community-based sites and 400 students. Project Lit aims to create lifelong learners who approach the world through a critical but compassionate lens.



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SPARC Youth Programs

In response to the challenges facing police departments across the nation, Mesa is taking a holistic approach to community safety by connecting with and supporting youth and families to promote positive experiences with law enforcement.

Administered through the Mesa's Police Department (MPD)'s Community Relations & Recruitment Division, SPARC (Sports, Programs & Activities Reuniting Community) promotes positive experiences with law enforcement through sports and simulation activities.

SPARC includes:

- **Sports**
 - Running club
 - Soccer and basketball clinics
- **Programs & Activities**
 - Teen Community Engagement Academy is a one-day experience that allows participants to learn about police operations and obtain a personal view of what a day in the life of a police officer is like.
 - Youth Leadership Academy is a two-week summer program that builds character, leadership development, and appreciation for community services and good citizenship.
 - ASPIRE Academy is a four-day leadership camp where high school aged girls get hands-on experience in firefighting and law enforcement operations and work side-by-side with women in these fields.
- **Activities**
 - Teen Court gives youth a practical experience of the judicial system by allowing the offender, victim, and community to hear actual cases and determine an appropriate, constructive, and restorative solution.

- Youth Community Forums provide an avenue of communication between MPD and youth to address cultural and quality of life issues that transcend ethnic, cultural, religious and geographic barriers.

An average of 300 individual youth and their families are impacted by SPARC initiatives each school year. Initiatives like SPARC help to strengthen police-youth relations.

Monrovia, California

Frequently referred to as “The Gem of the Foothills,” the City of Monrovia provides a premier quality of life through broad and robust community engagement. The resiliency of the City of Monrovia community was tested in the past three years with challenges arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic, nationwide civil unrest after George Floyd's murder, and a major wildfire that burned over 116,000 acres of land.

During each major event, the community came together to meet the moment and remain focused on the future. Monrovia's youth remain at the center of efforts to build a thriving community; Monrovia is committed to increasing youth engagement and political participation to preserve and strengthen its deep-rooted culture of community-based problem-solving.

Youth Employment Services (YES) Intern Program

The YES Intern Program provides leadership opportunities, improved job readiness, and employment opportunities for Monrovia youth. Each spring, the City of Monrovia partners with the school district, chamber of

commerce, and local non-profits to recruit high school students for the summer program. Interested students apply for the program and applications are reviewed, with the most qualified students being invited for an interview.

The internship program aims to provide youth with caring supportive mentors, enhance the local employment pool, and diminish the achievement gap by increasing the likelihood of post-secondary education or job readiness.

The 8-week program assigns interns to city employees in various departments, and other interns are placed at an office within the school district or at a local participating organization. Community partners allow YES Interns to receive the benefits of real-world experience in an administrative office, a science and technology lab, an afterschool club for youth, a performing arts studio, or even a community garden.

Each intern works up to 20 hours per week and is assigned a project in which they need to identify a community challenge and develop a possible solution. At the end of their internship, each intern publicly presents his/her project to other interns, mentors, parents, and city staff, giving them a platform to practice their presentation and public speaking skills.

At the conclusion of the program, some interns have been hired by the city, while some have transitioned into becoming college interns with community organizations or returning to mentor future interns.

Citywide Park Master Plan

In 2016, the city participated in a countywide park needs assessment, which engaged

the community to gain an understanding of existing parks and recreation facilities to determine the scope, scale, and location of park needs.

Using resident input obtained through the assessment process, staff began developing a comprehensive Park Master Plan (Plan) to provide a roadmap to upgrade existing parks and better position the city to apply for competitive park grant funds. The city sought community input for the Plan through community surveys, stakeholder discussions, and a community workshop.

After the Plan was approved, it was identified that Lucinda Garcia Park, a park that recognizes Monrovia's rich Latino heritage, met the minimum requirements for Proposition 68 grant funding.



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Las Vegas



Staff engaged in substantial outreach efforts, including seven outreach meetings, as part of the overall grant application to make improvements to Lucinda Garcia Park. City staff spoke with over 100 different people across all meetings. Outreach efforts included unscheduled pop-up events, door-to-door home visits, community workshops, commission meetings, and specifically targeted meetings with special needs groups and parent associations. Improvements identified for inclusion in the grant process included:

- Construction of two new playgrounds
- Adding fall safety surfacing
- Installation of five exercise fitness stations
- Upgrading the landscaping
- Construction of two demonstration gardens
- Improved walkways with enhanced lighting and distance markers
- Interpretive signage about Lucinda Garcia
- Addition of a bike rack with a fixit station and drinking stations

Monrovia was one of 52 agencies awarded Proposition 68 funding, receiving \$675,000 to make all the necessary improvements to Lucinda Garcia Park. The city began the renovation project during the summer of 2022, and it is set to be completed in March of 2023.

Monrovia Renewal

As the fourth oldest incorporated city in Los Angeles County, Monrovia's infrastructure was aging and in need of repair. In 2016, the city undertook Monrovia Renewal, the largest multi-year infrastructure project in its history at \$55 million.

In anticipation of impacts to the community, the Monrovia Renewal Citizen Advisory Committee (Committee) was established. The Committee was made up of five community

members who monitored project progress, the budget, and kept the community informed. The Committee helped ensure that every resident, business, and school that was going to be impacted received important notifications.

Local utility companies and the local school district were also contacted to provide them with an opportunity to schedule any planned improvements in conjunction with the city's proposed work. The city held regularly scheduled meetings to discuss every step of the project and solicit feedback from stakeholders.

Infrastructure needs were identified by the commissioned Sewer, Water, and Street Master Plans. Improvements made as part of Monrovia Renewal included:

Water: Critical water mains were more than 90 years old, resulting in 184 water-related repairs that included leaks, mains, services, hydrants, and meters.

- 800 new water service lines were installed.
- A 130-year-old water basin was replaced with a new, expanded basin that allowed for additional water storage.

Sewer: The sewage system faced deferred maintenance, which caused consistent issues citywide. In 2015 alone, the city saw 45 related work orders and 8 sanitary overflows.

- 5 miles of sewer improvements were made, including 197-point repairs to sewer lines.
- 363,000 linear feet of the city's sewer system were cleaned and inspected.

Roads and Sidewalks: A citywide Pavement Conditions Index (PCI) Survey concluded that the average PCI rating for all city streets was determined to be 57.1 (not good).

- 2.1 million square feet of roadways were improved. Improvements ranged from micro-surfacing and asphalt overlay to complete roadway reconstruction.



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Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

The art of sweetgrass basket making is a Gullah tradition that has been passed on from generation to generation in Mount Pleasant. Local sweetgrass pulled from the marshes and creeks is used by basket makers who spend endless hours weaving the grasses together. Just like basketmaking takes patience and creativity, so too does building an engaged and resilient community.

When double-digit growth rates led to challenges and discontent, Mount Pleasant implemented growth management tools and adopted new methods for engaging the public. Like the sweetgrass baskets patiently sewn, through collaboration, innovation, and engagement, Mount Pleasant created an intricate pattern of diversity and bonded the community in new ways that have ensured quality of life, equity, and safety.

Weaving Diversity into the Workforce and Business Community

Two local mothers with distinct neurodivergent children have galvanized and inspired a new Intellectual Disability Inclusion Movement in Mount Pleasant.

Sensory-Friendly Places

Layla Luna, the mother of a young autistic son, created Just Bee, a non-profit company connecting neurodivergent people with sensory-friendly places. Frustrated by her experience trying to find places that did not cause her son sensory overload, Layla worked with the chamber of commerce and town officials to help businesses create sensory-friendly environments.

The business community is encouraged to become a 'Beeliever' in three easy steps:

complete a training workshop, commit to a pledge, and become a certified Bee Spot. Businesses are learning that dimmed lights, lower volumes, and specific hours of operations for sensory-affected customers can allow them to access an untapped market and create an equitable and inclusive business environment.

Intellectual Disabilities and the Workplace

Similarly, Debbie Antonelli, a long-standing advocate of people living with Down Syndrome and mother of a young adult living with Down Syndrome worked to educate local businesses to promote the hiring of young adults living with Down Syndrome or other disabilities. Several businesses, with the support of the chamber and strong advocates in the community, are creating safe and accessible workplaces where employees with disabilities can thrive.

With today's employment challenges, businesses benefit by accessing an untapped source of capable and motivated workers. In turn, teens living with Down Syndrome and looking to enter the workforce are finding opportunities for income and independence.

Weaving Light into Dark

The dual epidemic of suicide and substance misuse has impacted the youth of Mount Pleasant and therefore the fabric of the community.

Mental health amongst teenagers is a priority of Mount Pleasant's Youth Council. Their efforts have included appearing before the mayor and council to advocate for better mental health services in schools and asking elected officials to cosign a letter addressed to the state legislative delegation requesting funding for certified mental health counselors in schools.

In addition to the work of the youth council, WakeUp Carolina works to empower young people, individuals, and families battling substance misuse. WakeUp Carolina was created by Nancy Steadman Shipman in the memory of her beloved 19-year-old son Creighton who died of a substance misuse disorder. WakeUp Carolina offers support groups for those coping with opioid substance misuse disorder and their families, as well as recovery coaching programs.

The Mount Pleasant Police Department has also been able to launch several programs to address the opioid crisis. A prescription takeback program allows individuals to walk in and anonymously drop off unused or expired prescription medications. Additionally, all police officers are equipped with Narcan kits and trained in their use.

While all impressive individual efforts, it is through working in partnership that Mount Pleasant became more successful in the battle against opioids and mental health issues. The Our Community, Our Children symposium—hosted by WakeUp Carolina in partnership with the police department, mayor, and youth council—kicked off a very uncomfortable but necessary discussion on improving mental health and trauma systems for local youth. The symposium was the catalyst for several cooperative initiatives, including efforts to create a multi-disciplined response team for both mental health and drug misuse.

Weaving Bonds of Trust

Mount Pleasant has been successful in maintaining strong police and citizen relationships because of their extensive community-police programs, two of which have grown exponentially – the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program and the Explorer Program.

The epidemic of school shootings in America prompted Mount Pleasant Mayor and Town Council to invest in school resource officers and post them in every school. Right away, officers began building relationships with students, particularly those who often were in trouble at school. Officers have engaged and built relationships with children as young as four or five years old, allowing children and teens to interact with officers in a positive way every day.

The Explorer Program is an important transition from young children's programs to more mature teenagers' initiatives. The program promotes respect for the rule of law, physical fitness, good citizenship, and patriotism. The Explorer Program can be a positive experience for those interested in serving their community and can in fact become a recruiting tool for the police department. As part of their training, the Explorers seek out worthwhile community service projects. They have assisted with traffic control for events such as the Cooper River Bridge Run, Fourth of July celebrations, and the Christmas Parade.

Mount Pleasant has invested heavily in community programs that are designed to foster bonds between police officers and young people.

New York, New York

New York City has a tradition of robust community engagement efforts. However, historically, engagement has not been coordinated, which leads to duplicative, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory efforts. With this context in mind, during the transition of mayoral administrations, Mayor Eric Adams established the first-ever Civic Engagement Transition Committee.



The committee was charged with identifying successful models of community engagement, troubleshooting existing pain points, recommending opportunities to streamline engagement, and centering the voices of everyday New Yorkers in key strategies.

NYC Speaks

Launched during the height of the pandemic, NYC Speaks is a public-private initiative led by the City of New York in partnership with a civic coalition of everyday New Yorkers, community-based organizations, and philanthropy. This initiative engaged New Yorkers in shaping the policies and priorities of the new administration. NYC Speaks funded 19 Community-Based Organizations to meet New Yorkers where they live and work, in the communities hardest hit by COVID-19.

Survey

The goal of the NYC Speaks survey was to amplify the voices of New Yorkers on issues that impact them most directly, especially New Yorkers typically excluded from government decision-making. The survey was designed with the help of a Civic Policy Council—made up of restaurant owners, artists, religious leaders, teachers, activists, hospital workers, and more.

New Yorkers gave their input on 27 high-impact policy questions across 10 issue areas: health and well-being, arts and culture, housing and neighborhoods, economy and workforce, racial equity, climate and infrastructure, education and youth development, public safety, gender justice, and civic engagement. The NYC Speaks survey reached a diverse and representative selection of New Yorkers, capturing the voices of youth, as well as vulnerable populations, such as those living in public housing, those experiencing homelessness, previously incarcerated individuals, and members of the disabled community.

Conversations

The NYC Speaks Community Conversations brought the survey data back to communities to interpret and reflect upon. Conversations were an additional opportunity for New Yorkers to dig into the issues they cared about most. Attendees were asked: Does this approach make sense to you? How else might you approach it? What ideas would you prioritize?

NYC Speaks coded over 1,000 community insights. More than 4,800 New Yorkers participated in over 220 Community Conversation events across the city in April and May of 2022. They were hosted in each borough, convened in 8 different languages, and served populations that have historically been marginalized.

Action Plan Workshops

Action Plan Workshops (APWs) were in-person events that provided community leaders, policy experts, and funders an opportunity to collaborate with city leadership and staff on priority actions to be advanced and included in the NYC Speaks Action Plan.

The shared vision of the APWs was to enhance transparency and civic trust by creating a public-facing Action Plan that clearly articulates how the administration is acting based on the data collected through NYC Speaks surveys and community conversations. The public-facing Action Plan highlighted the importance of community-generated data and solutions, summarized the NYC Speaks process—what was heard, how New Yorkers shaped the plan, and what comes next. The Action Plan included five action areas each with a clear north star. Each north star included initial commitments, metrics, key agencies, and potential future actions that the city and partners may choose to advance.

Through APWS, the city brought community-gathered data to the table for each North Star, brainstormed frameworks to address the issues raised through the civic engagement process, and co-created solutions that have the potential to inform upcoming administration plans, community programming, advocacy, and legislative agendas.

The NYC Speaks Action Plan was launched at a public event at Gracie Mansion, which was also streamed online so that residents who were unable to attend in-person could join virtually. One-page summaries of the plan, that have been translated in 10 local languages, are publicly available on the NYC Speaks site and are actively being distributed to the 50 Community-Based Organizations who led community conversations. A youth-focused event is being planned which will include a thorough read out of the plan, as well as updates on how the commitments have evolved.

Civic Engagement Commission

From 202-2021, the Civic Engagement Commission (CEC) ran a participatory budgeting (PB) process designed by youth, for youth. The goal of the project was to engage and empower young people to decide how to spend \$100,000 of expense funding on projects that meet their needs, address their interests, and strengthen youth engagement across the city. The project was launched in the early stages of the pandemic, while so many youth were experiencing isolation, depression, and anxiety in a prolonged remote educational and social setting.

Youth Fellows participated as digital platform moderators, developing messaging, and promoting the process on social media, and designing and facilitating thirty-two

conversations with over two hundred young people throughout the city. Youth provider organizations were then invited to submit proposals, in consultation with youth, that directly addressed the ideas and needs youth identified in the first stage of the project, including mental health, career and college readiness, and investing in youth advocacy to ensure young people's needs and voices are heard. Youth votes determined the projects awarded. In the end, the process funded five \$20k youth-focused projects.

In 2021, The CEC launched "The People's Money," a \$1.3 million PB process in the 33 neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19. Residents decided how to spend over \$40K in expense funding in programs and services in their neighborhood.

Starting in Fall of 2022, the CEC launched the first citywide PB process. All residents, aged 11 and up, will be able to vote on how to spend \$5 million in mayoral expense funding on projects in their neighborhood.

Port St. Lucie, FL

The City of Port St. Lucie (PSL) was originally founded as a retirement community and therefore didn't have a historic downtown or key infrastructure - like sidewalks, streetlights, water, and sewer. Over six decades, PSL became one of the fastest growing cities in the nation and had to adapt to offer important amenities to meet the priorities of a growing population. PSL addressed these growth challenges and opportunities by using data and balancing it with resident feedback.

PSL Jobs Corridor

Port St. Lucie's annual scientific community survey, and feedback from other platforms,



showed that a consistent, primary concern for residents for years was the need for more high-paying, local jobs. In response, the city purchased approximately 1,200 acres of land in Southern Grove, an area in the city that was identified as the ideal place for a job's corridor. Upon completion of the sale, the city worked with the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, the Urban Land Institute, and residents to develop a master plan for the development.

Experts said it would likely take 30 years to sell all the parcels within the Southern Grove land purchase; however, in just five years almost every parcel in the Southern Grove has been sold or is under contract. Leaders of companies that invested reported that they did so out of the trust they had in city leaders, along with excellent customer service and a business-friendly environment. The fact that the city was in control of developing the land with a well-thought-out master plan gave buyers the stability and confidence they needed.

Here's a quick list of some of the companies that have invested:

- City Electric Supply
- Sansone Group
- Amazon
- Cheney Brothers, Inc.
- Accel International Holdings, Inc.
- OCULUS Surgical
- Warehomes Precision, LLC
- Cleveland Clinic
- Florida International University

Thousands of jobs have been created and city leaders are excited about the potential that remains within the Southern Grove jobs corridor.

The City of Port St. Lucie, FL *is proud to be an* **All-America City Award Finalist**

Congratulations to all the cities recognized in 2023!



PSL Youth Engagement Activities

Nearly 20% of PSL's population is under 18 years old, so over the past five years, youth engagement has been prioritized and thousands of young residents have engaged in offered youth programs, some of which are detailed below.

Government Week: Working with the Florida League of Cities, PSL engaged students in Florida City Government Week, a week-long annual event that celebrates, showcases, and engages citizens in the work of municipal government.

City staff and council members visited four schools and hosted five separate assemblies for more than 1,000 students to discuss how local government operates, ways to be engaged, and the importance of voting.



Government Week has evolved over the years, sometimes including a City Hall field trip, job shadowing day, or in pandemic years, virtual panels with city leaders.

Police department connections

To build trust and transparency between law enforcement officers and youth, the police department has coordinated multiple engagement efforts:

- A Model Traffic Stop Program focuses on positive behavioral expectations for drivers, passengers, and police officers during a traffic stop.
- The Junior Police Academy is a two-week summer camp-style program offering public safety training.
- National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie.

Forum on Race Relations and Inclusion (FRR)

The City's FRR Committee invited teens to participate in "A.N.D.?" (Acceptance Not Discrimination), an interactive seminar designed by teens primarily for teens to engage in candid conversation about LGBTQ+ issues in a safe environment. The FRR Committee also hosted a Gaining Appreciation by Adjusting Perspectives (GAAP) session focusing on interactions with law enforcement.

#lamPSL Citizen Summit

With attendance at strategic planning meetings decreasing, and demographics of remaining attendees skewing older, Port St. Lucie City began the #lamPSL Citizen Summit in 2018 to reimagine how it could engage more residents and use their feedback to make improvements.

The #lamPSL Citizen Summit's purpose is to dive more deeply into the National Community

Survey data by empowering participants to co-create solutions to challenges that can be incorporated into the strategic plan. The Citizen Summit is held each year on a Saturday over a period of several hours. Residents provide feedback at interactive booths and play games representing the city's seven strategic goals.

The Summit is geared toward all ages, with every participant, including kids, being given \$100 in play money to identify and prioritize where additional taxpayer dollars should be spent. The budget activity allows the city council to see residents' spending priorities when forming the year's strategic plan update.

The 2020 Summit was held shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic and drew more than 500 participants. In 2021 and 2022 the city held an interactive virtual summit and organized an outdoor Strategic Plan Trail, during which residents strolled through a park learning about current and future projects and giving play money to their favorite ideas. The 2023 Citizen Summit was co-created by local youth with creative new elements; the first fully in-person summit since the pandemic was attended by over 800 residents!

The Citizen Summit has allowed the city to co-create solutions with residents, build connections, and strengthen civic capital.

Redwood City, California

Redwood City is a vibrant community devoted to preserving its rich history, maintaining today's quality of life, and carefully planning a sustainable future. Focused on collaboration and civility, Redwood City's strong partnerships across government, education, business, and nonprofit sectors contribute to the success and health of the city.





As a former mayor and 2012 AAC Award recipient, congratulations to all **2023 All-America City Award** winners and finalists!

Angel Taveras, Partner
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hangout spaces, and peer-based support groups. Looking into this youth data offered staff an initial picture of some potential root causes of youth misbehavior downtown and some potential strategies to address it.

At the same time, the city manager called on local youth development champions to talk directly to the youth involved in the disruptions about their needs and interests. Trusted adults worked with youth to co-create the Purposeful Action Creation & Engagement (PACE) Plan. Created with and for youth, the PACE Plan includes long-term programs, strategies, and policy recommendations to frame a more sustainable, equitable, and effective system of after-school programs, entertainment activities, coaching and mentorships, and events for transition-age youth.

PACE Program activities have already resulted in an increase in youth involvement and reduced youth crime. To support youth programming and sustain PACE as a permanent strategy, the city has secured \$230,000 from local philanthropic partners.

Magical Bridge Playground

With an old playground in desperate need of repair, families, youth, and people who have disabilities, approached the City of Redwood to build a special play space that could accommodate everyone's needs. The city partnered with the Magical Bridge Foundation to make this dream a reality.

Magical Bridge Playgrounds are universally designed to be a socially inclusive playground for everyone. The Magical Bridge Foundation worked with the city and the Redwood City Parks and Arts Foundation to fully engage the entire community in the design of the

Youth Engagement

Beginning in May 2022, over 200 youth on bikes took to the streets, making Downtown Redwood City their own space by riding on sidewalks, doing tricks in the roads, and setting off fireworks near pedestrians and businesses. Tensions came to a head one night when illegal fireworks scared downtown visitors, sending the theater into lockdown. While the immediate response was to arrest the youth, rather than double down on enforcement, the city opted for a long-term engagement strategy.

Using data from an extensive participatory budgeting process, the city reviewed priorities previously identified by youth. Youth responses highlighted interest in youth employment, after school program scholarships, more



park. Several community engagement opportunities were held during the planning of the playground. In addition to three general community meetings, specific stakeholder meetings were held with the school district, teachers who work with children with special needs, the County of San Mateo Commission on Disabilities, board members from the Sequoia Health Care District, and board members from the Kainos adult special needs organization.

The community also rallied together to match the city's contribution of \$3.5M. Schools held coin drives, parents pledged funds, business leaders stepped forward, and local foundations and health organizations donated.

Magical Bridge Redwood City was completed in December 2020 and goes well beyond typical playground designs that do the minimum to meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. Magical Bridge Redwood City is a play space where all ages, all abilities, and all people will be able to play together on a variety of specialized slides, swings, spin, and sway equipment.

The playground welcomes over 1,500 people a day; hosts numerous youth-focused visual and performing arts events; and has a specialized "Kindness Ambassador" volunteer program.

Anti-Displacement Strategy

As the rising cost of housing in the Bay Area has resulted in challenges for many residents, Redwood City has worked together to address homelessness, anti-displacement, and Safe Parking for RVs.

On June 27, 2022, the City of Redwood City adopted its Anti-Displacement Strategy to preserve affordable housing and protect housing options for low- and moderate-

income residents. The city conducted extensive outreach efforts over a two-year period while developing the strategy. Civic engagement included five focus groups, seven workshops, dozens of 1-on-1 meetings and interviews, a mobile home survey with 90 participants, and an online tenant survey with 140 participants. Meetings were offered in English, Spanish, virtually, and in-person to ensure as many residents as possible could participate. The focus groups consisted of both tenants and landlords to get all perspectives. Participants shared their primary housing challenges and gave feedback on tenant protection policies. Partner organizations promoted workshops at churches, food bank lines, schools, and through tenants' neighborhood associations.

Based on this extensive community engagement, the city identified the following long-term strategies:

- Increase tenant protections.
- Preserve unsubsidized affordable housing.
- Preserve mobile home living.
- Develop anti-harassment policies.
- Limit renovation-related evictions.

Policy recommendations include adopting a Just Cause Eviction Policy, expanding Relocation Assistance, improving minimum lease term requirements, establishing a dedicated Housing Preservation Fund, supporting community land trusts, ensuring mobile home parks are zoned under the Mobile Home zoning category, adopting a Mobile Home Park Ordinance, providing resources to mobile park residents to support safe and stable housing, and exploring anti-harassment policies and the right to return policies for renovation-related evictions.

In addition to the Anti Displacement Strategy, the city created the largest RV Safe Parking program in San Mateo County, transitioning

most RVs off of city streets and into a parking lot where those residents could safely park and work on a path to permanent housing.

Saginaw, Texas

Originally settled in 1882 as a small railroad town, Saginaw is expected to grow to a population of 34,492 residents by the year 2040. Growth has resulted in a community of varying age groups, education levels, ethnicities, and walks of life. To accommodate growth, the city has conducted impactful efforts to engage the residents of Saginaw to align city services with the values of the community. In doing so, several commissions, committees, and boards have been created which have resulted in a future for Saginaw by Saginaw.

Student Apprenticeship Program (SAP)

The long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor markets continued into 2021, resulting in the “Great Resignation.” Multiple departments within the city began to see a need for additional help while being constrained by a highly competitive labor market. Pinched for funds and additional help, city staff began seeking alternative options to offset the high cost of labor while still being able to recruit capable and integral employees. Further realization of the need for high school students to gain career experience led to the creation of the Saginaw Student Apprenticeship Program (SAP).

SAP was implemented in June 2021, providing youth with summer employment and life skills, and city departments with eager employees amidst an incredibly difficult and competitive labor market. To entice the right candidates for the program, city staff worked with local schools to help advertise Saginaw SAP.

Students are interviewed and selected in the spring and work at their respective stations in the summer months. Youth have been placed in the parks and recreation department, public works, police department, library, and animal shelter. Participants are evaluated twice throughout the program and given valuable feedback as well as career guidance via mentors. Those who finish the program have the opportunity of being offered full-time employment with the city, where available opportunities exist.

Police and Fire Junior Academy

The Police and Fire Junior Academy/Camp are aimed at increasing the awareness of how to handle emergencies, as well as increasing the trust of Saginaw youth in emergency personnel.

Police Academy

The police department’s Junior Police Academy is designed to help the youth of Saginaw learn about law enforcement, build leadership skills, and encourage community participation. This program offers a unique and interactive experience that allows young people to gain firsthand knowledge about law enforcement while having fun and building relationships with members of the police department. Through classroom instruction, hands-on training, and scenarios, students learn about different aspects of law enforcement, including patrol work, crime scene investigation, K-9 handling, and traffic stops.

Another important aspect of the Junior Police Academy is its focus on promoting physical fitness. Students are encouraged to stay active and learn the importance of physical fitness in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The program also addresses important topics like social media, bullying, and online safety.



Fire Camp

Each June the Saginaw Professional Firefighters Association (SPFFA), in coordination with the city, conducts a week-long day camp for approximately 30 students from the Saginaw area. Students are brought to fire facilities within the city, where they receive guidance and information from experienced and trusted fire personnel. Students experience exercises to familiarize themselves with fire prevention equipment. General fire safety is taught as well, such as the importance of smoke detectors, and drills, such as “STOP DROP, and ROLL”. Students are also taught extensive lessons in CPR, and First Aid.

Hoping to inspire the generation of tomorrow, the Saginaw Fire Camp hopes to build future fire personnel, while educating and empowering local youth.

Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council (MYAC)

The City of Saginaw, Texas, faced a problem with the lack of youth involvement and input within the community. In response, the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council (MYAC) was created in 2018. MYAC aims to educate local teens on the functions of local government and receive their input on community issues.

The program runs for five months, involving education on the essential, core functions of a city and presentations by MYAC members to the city council on ways the city could be more accommodating toward the youth. Participants are selected from high schools in the community through a combined effort of city staff and school staff. After interviewing the applicants, the committee is officially formed, composed of juniors and seniors from various high schools in the area. Committee members meet once a month to learn from city staff about the community, the functions

of local government, and MYAC’s role as an advisory committee.

MYAC members are also given tours of city facilities such as police and fire stations where they can interact with public safety leadership and see first-hand what services they provide to residents. City staff works with MYAC to answer any questions, as well as explain any additional processes or functions of the city.

After the first few meetings, MYAC members are divided into groups and pick a topic to present to the council. The topics have included sidewalk repairs, walkability near schools, and library needs.

MYAC has given youth a platform to share their concerns and ideas with local governments. This has encouraged greater civic engagement among young people and has helped them feel more invested in the future of their community. Additionally, MYAC has been successful in influencing local policy; youth recommendations put forward by the committee have resulted in direct improvements to the community.

San Antonio, Texas

Like many large, urban cities in the United States, San Antonio residents have been challenged by seemingly intractable levels of poverty and attendant social, political, environmental, and economic challenges that were impeding growth and quality of life. Because traditional methods haven’t had the impact to systemically reduce poverty for all residents, especially children and the most vulnerable neighbors, the city and its partners sought durable, new solutions.

NXT LEVEL Youth Opportunity Center

In 2018 the City of San Antonio identified the need to serve opportunity youth—young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from education, work, and major social institutions. To support opportunity youth with reconnecting to education or career opportunities, the City of San Antonio Department of Human Services, in collaboration with Goodwill of San Antonio and Communities in Schools of San Antonio, opened the NXT LEVEL Youth Opportunity Center, a comprehensive youth re-engagement center.

Throughout the process of designing the center, no input was more valuable than that received from the opportunity youth themselves. Paid youth consultants provided insights into programming as well as physical attributes such as building specifications, paint colors, décor, and logos.

When participants enroll at the NXT LEVEL Youth Opportunity Center, they are paired with an education and life coach to come up with a participant lead plan to help them reach their goals while working to remove any life barriers. The center has monthly education, career, and life workshops. Through the workshops, young adults learn work/life balance, anxiety reducing techniques, career exploration, work values, and other critical life skills. Participants have input on which topics are covered and often have the opportunity to co-host sessions alongside NXT LEVEL Coaches.

NXT LEVEL services have been provided to 1,405 youth, 31.5% of whom have become employed or enrolled in education or training.

Fostering Educational Success

Every year in Bexar County, more than 600 young adults age out of the state foster care system without being adopted. The challenges they face are obvious and frightening – where to live, how to get a job, can they enroll in/afford college and if so, how.

The City of San Antonio has joined four local institutions of higher education and multiple non-profits in changing these dynamics and bringing resource equity to youth aging out of foster care. The Bexar County Fostering Educational Success (BCFES) Program is an evidence-based, trauma-informed strategic framework tailored to meet the needs of youth with foster care history. The model prioritizes students' academic aspirations and pursuits while recognizing the social, emotional, and environmental factors that may create barriers to attainment.

BCFES provides barrier-free access to education and housing and promotes the power of students' voices. The program works with youth in, or formerly in, foster care to inform them of resources available through BCFES as well as tuition and fee waivers offered by the State of Texas.

Participating academic institutions are responsible for providing comprehensive, strengths-based resources to foster educational success among youth who have aged out of foster care, including opportunities for the development of supportive relationships and connections to programs known to advance physical and mental health and address common challenges such as finances, employment, and housing. Campus-based support programs offer students the opportunity to build a sense of community and give them access to a campus coach, and direct services and referrals.

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Future Ready Plan

Geographic, racial, ethnic, and economic disparities continue to shape the destinies of far too many San Antonio children and youth, a longstanding pattern that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To counter these disparities, local leaders are embracing a shared mission: to ensure that all young people in the City of San Antonio and Bexar County are ready for the future.

The first step toward meeting this mission was taken by the UP Partnership, a local education-focused collective action initiative. Foundational partners were joined by local non-profits, educational institutions, elected officials, and youth stakeholders in the development of Future Ready Bexar County - San Antonio's North Star for Youth Outcomes. Collaborators spent over a year identifying and describing metrics and opportunities for shared action and the Future Ready plan was produced in early 2022. The plan provides leaders with shared language, goals, metrics, and practices needed to drive real progress on youth outcomes in this community.

The plan was developed with in-depth institutional interviews and focus groups, which yielded input from hundreds of stakeholders. Their ideas and concerns were synthesized into the plan's equity pillars - healing, access, voice - essential for youth success in and out of school, and the North Star goal: by 2030, the percentage of Bexar County High School graduates enrolling in a post-secondary degree or credential program to 70%.

UP Partnership will serve as the backbone organization for implementation of the plan, including data measurement and coordination, collaborative improvement supports, leadership coaching, and convening.

Wellington, Florida

Wellington has grown from what was once a sleepy bedroom community to a thriving suburban municipality today. With state-of-the-art facilities, engaged residents, strong partnerships with district schools and local businesses, safe neighborhoods, beautiful parks, and unparalleled programming and events, the Village of Wellington truly is a 'Great Hometown.'

Since its incorporation in 1995, Wellington's culture of engagement within its community has remained a priority and Wellington continues to come up with innovative ways to connect with its diverse population.

HYPE

Wellington students from low to moderate income households were struggling academically and falling behind in their studies throughout the school year and over summer breaks. Many of these students come from non-English speaking households, making academic success more difficult. Through its positive ongoing relationship with local schools, Wellington partnered with the school administration and was able to identify students in need of academic assistance and launched a free tutorial service called HYPE.

HYPE is a partnership with the local schools, the Palm Beach County Board of Education, and the Boys and Girls Club, with funding provided by grants. Throughout the school year and summer, the HYPE program academically assists up to 80 low-income students per week.

The HYPE program provided reading and math tutoring to kindergarten through fourth grade students. Academic improvements were measured using pre and post assessments, with

reading scores improving by 43% and math scores improving by 83%.

Tom Atkins Civics 101

Youth are important to the future of our planet, our country, and our community. Educating our youth on the importance of civic engagement is key if they are to know the impact they can have on the future of their communities. When young people learn about their municipal government and get up close and personal with local decision makers, they are more likely to become an engaged community member.

Wellington's Tom Atkins Civics 101 is a civic engagement program for the Village of Wellington's middle and high school students that provides an opportunity for them to meet their elected officials and learn more about the policy-making processes and operations of municipal government. The Tom Atkins Civics 101 program is named after the Palm Beach Central High School teacher who played a pivotal role in the creation of the program in partnership with the Village of Wellington.

Since its inception in 2010, over 1,400 students have completed the Tom Atkins Civics 101 program. The Civics program, offered to middle and high school students, is broken down into four sessions.

1. Project Selection
2. Question and Answer with Elected Officials
3. Departmental Breakdown with Village of Wellington Staff
4. Mock Council Meeting

The program is designed to align with the lifecycle for the village's municipal projects, as they are presented to the village council. Students are divided into several groups and assigned projects to present to a mock village council. A mock council meeting is then held

where each group must present their project for "council approval." Students engage as elected officials, municipal staff, and residents.

Participation in the Tom Atkins Civics 101 program during the past 5 years has increased over 40% and volunteerism has increased by 300%.

SWAG

The Village of Wellington created Students Working to Achieve Greatness (SWAG) in 2017 to address the needs of underserved high school students in Wellington. The program was designed to support rising juniors and seniors academically, as well as provide exposure to employment and social opportunities through thoughtful mentorship and internships with community partners. As part of the SWAG program, the village partners with the Crowned Pearls of Wellington as the program's sponsor. The Crowned Pearls of Wellington is an official graduate chapter of the international Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc. organization, the nation's oldest sorority for African American women.

One of the primary goals of the SWAG program is to assist rising juniors and seniors in their pursuit of higher education. The SWAG program aims to support students in their career objectives, as well as expose them to employment opportunities and cultural experiences to broaden their shared experiences. As program sponsors, the Crowned Pearls of Wellington also act as mentors for the students, create a curriculum in life skills such as in financial management and professional and workforce skills development, and provide academic, intellectual, and community support. Cultural outings and a paid summer internship are also key components of the program.



The SWAG program is primarily broken out into three elements: tutoring; internships; and mentoring, with key objectives including:

- Demonstrated gains in academic achievement
- Acquisition of leadership skills
- Increased confidence
- Increased school attendance and graduation rate
- Preparation for advanced education
- Increased student community and civic responsibility

Since the SWAG program began in 2017, 250 students have completed the program and 71 students have received internships. One hundred percent of SWAG participants graduated from high school after completing the program and 80% of participants have gone on to attend a 4-year university upon graduation from high school.



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