



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2012 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 16, 2012

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Livable City Sustainability Plan

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of El Paso, Texas

Jurisdiction population(s): 649,121

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2011, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: October Year: 2009

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, October 2012. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Joyce A. Wilson

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of El Paso

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Marty Howell

Title: Sustainability Manager Jurisdiction: City of El Paso

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City of El Paso

Livable City Sustainability Plan

Here at the City of El Paso, we define sustainability as *“balancing what we have, what we use and what we want for today and tomorrow.”* The mission is *“By 2014, El Paso will be a model of sustainability and smart growth by building on its roots as an international hub, promoting sustainable enterprises and wisely using natural resources.”* The Sustainability program strives to make El Paso the “most livable city in the United States” while preserving our resources and saving tax-payer dollars.

Problem Assessment

City leaders envisioned a city that improved the quality of life while preserving the environment. While different groups within El Paso had been very effective in implementing solutions that are moving us towards sustainability, the city did not have a coordinated vision. With the goal in mind to preserve the environment, the “Livable City Sustainability Plan” was created. The “Livable City Sustainability Plan” is the result of a collaborative City-wide effort to define an integrated, strategic framework for sustainability while providing an overall strategy for future efforts to improve the quality of life in El Paso. Program developers and city officials focused on the following six areas of operation for implementation: Air, Community, Development & Buildings, Energy, Transportation, and Waste Resources. Much of the effort toward sustainability was driven by the urgent need to address the local causes of global climate change. The economy, social equity, and the environment are three factions that drive the

community. Sustainability is El Paso's answer to innovation, and rethinking the way El Pasoans live their day-to-day lives.

Program Implementation & Costs

El Paso's sustainability program was adopted by City Council in October of 2009. The plan included goals to fundamentally change transportation, develop solar projects, improve air quality, retrofit city buildings, and divert waste from landfills. As of today, the City of El Paso has invested approximately \$11.5 million in sustainability. This investment includes recycling bins, bike racks, solar projects, "green" and electric vehicles, solar powered trash compactors, and public education. Additionally to the investment, the sustainability program was awarded over \$700,000 in solar rebate funding that facilitated in financing fifty-four new solar energy projects around El Paso.

Measurable Outcomes of the Program

The "Living Sustainability Plan" is responsible for numerous successful projects. Since the plan's implementation, program leaders have been able to reach out to over 5,000 members of the community to educate citizens on sustainability initiatives. Community outreach was a crucial objective for the program and its success. Currently, the program is still reaching out to the community through forums, and community seminars. The City's Environmental Services Department released the Curbside Recycling Program with the "Drop it in the Blue" public outreach campaign on Earth Day of 2007. The award-winning program has been a huge success, with over 85% of El Paso single-family houses participating.

One of the goals set forth by the plan was to cut energy usage by 30% by 2014. As of 2007, energy consumption was reduced by 23%. In 2010, 5.7% of energy generated was from renewable energy. However, the plans that are in place today will contribute to increase the amount of renewable energy significantly. In 2010, of the new homes that were built, 53% of them were “Energy Star Rated” homes in El Paso. This is a 40% increase of Energy Star Rated homes in 2005. “Green” Campaigns were also implemented to urge citizens to purchase Energy Star rated light bulbs, and appliances. In addition to the plan for reducing energy consumption, the City has retrofitted nearly 100 city buildings in the past years for energy efficiency. The retrofitting of these City buildings resulted in over \$3.5 million in utility savings to date, *and growing!*

The City of El Paso added over 70 hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles to the City's fleet in the past 18 months, including an all-electric Nissan Leaf. The General Services Department was awarded a State Energy Conservation Office grant to support the alternative fuel vehicle fleet. Some Police vehicles have also been modified to reduce fuel usage by 20%. El Paso’s public transit system, Sun Metro, was named as the American Public Transportation system's Outstanding Transportation system for 2011.

Lessons learned

The biggest lesson learned has been educating the public. Clear policy direction and strong leadership has been a crucial part of educating the program directors. In an effort to see how El Paso’s employees and city officials understood sustainability, El Paso’s Sustainability Manager, Marty Howell, personally interviewed and surveyed city officials and employees. The

results of the survey provided many answers on what the sustainability program needs to do in order to tailor the program to educate more citizens. Some questions on the survey included:

- What is the City's mission related to sustainability?
- What role does your department play in accomplishing that mission?
- What help do you need to fulfill your role?

All of these questions provided insight to sustainability managers on how to properly educate employees.

Sustainability is much more than just a way of life and there are many goals that the plans laid out that many people said were unattainable. However, those “unattainable goals” are always taken into consideration and they are still goals that the program hopes to achieve. One of the goals is to improve air quality. Currently El Paso is in compliance with federal air quality standards, but the challenge arises at the El Paso-Ciudad Juarez port of entry. The El Paso/Southwest -region continues to face serious air quality challenges particularly due to the large number of trucks that circulate between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso. The El Paso-Ciudad Juarez region is served by three major commercial truck ports of entry. The El Paso-Ciudad Juarez border crossing is one of the busiest ports of entry in the world, with an estimated daily average of 250,000 people going through the checkpoints and the adjacent bridges spanning the Rio Grande. This bi-national issue continues to be the focus for sustainable living, and definitely not dismissed as an unattainable goal!