



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations: March 3, 2015

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: RiversEdge Concert Series

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Jurisdiction population(s): 62,258

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 for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: June Year: 2013

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Joshua A. Smith

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Name: Tim Werdmann

Title: Deputy City Manager Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

Name: Adam Helms

Title: Director of Resident Services Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Shamima Jahan

Title: Fellow Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, Ohio

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2015 ICMA Community Health and Safety Awards

Program: Summer Concert Series

The City of Hamilton, Oh

Title of the Article: Concert on a Brownfield

The need that prompted the city to develop the program

Hamilton is a rust belt city in southwest Ohio with 62,258 residents. As an economically struggling rustbelt city it could not offer much recreational options to its residents. Hamilton people waited for long and the city tried for long to have good recreational facilities and community engagement opportunities in the downtown. In 2013, the city established its first and only permanent outdoor entertainment facility, a riverside amphitheater called RiversEdge. Hamilton's most popular Summer Concert Series is being held at the amphitheater every year since 2013. However, the series started in 2011. Many other cities already have this program but it was quite ambitious to implement this in Hamilton. There were significant financial challenges to arrange the event and also it was uncertain if the event would be successful or not. It may sound simple, but let the story be told.

The city people were unhappy with closing of Mercy Hospital in 2001 that caused the city lose \$400,000 per year in taxes and displacement of 630 employees. This incident added fuel to Hamilton's declining economy. Mercy Hospital was demolished in 2007. The City of Hamilton holds the title of the site. Multiple revitalization proposals were received, public meetings were held to move forward with revitalization plans for the space. Nothing was working out and at some point, the vacant space was for sale for a while. At that time, a company wanted to invest \$12m for redevelopment to build retail, commercial/office space and hundreds of housing units. Therefore, a very careful and thoughtful decision was required to establish a focused and flexible public amenity to support Hamilton's Live, Work, & Play strategies for the downtown. Finally, the location was used to build a riverfront public park, RiversEdge, which offers a vibrant urban location for outdoor recreation, live entertainment and an enhanced view of the river. The RiversEdge Park and Amphitheater is located along the City of

Hamilton's beautiful riverfront, nestled between downtown and the German Village Historic District. It was a courageous decision by the city leaders to create a park and amphitheater rather than commercial or residential buildings in an economically declining city. Therefore, the city needed some successful efforts through events and programs to ensure proper utilization of the RiversEdge project site. Considering all other events and programs, the Summer Concert Series is the most successful one that makes all the people happy and be proud of their city.

Program Implementation and Costs

The Summer Concert Series idea came from the City of Hamilton employee Adam Helms. He came to the city as a young working professional in 2010 and found that the city did not have enough community engagement events and it needed a source of entertainment, a place to see new music and to meet other city residents. From that need, he began working on the Concert Series in early 2011. At that time, there was no permanent or convenient venue to hold the concerts. Therefore, the first series of six to eight shows was organized on the Butler County Historic Courthouse's lawn in 2011. On its second year, the series was held under the city-parking garage, on market street portion between North 2nd and 3rd street. Since 2013, the series is being held at the RiversEdge Amphitheater.

At the beginning, it was very challenging to start and continue the series. For the benefit of the community, the city and local businesses spread their helping hand to support the events. The event money was arranged from donations from the local businesses, \$1000 by the Deputy City Manager, beer sale during the concert, Dine to Donate- a support RiversEdge merchandise in local cafes where ten percent of one's dinner that goes to concert series programming. It was not possible to pay the electricity bills and volunteers by the money raised for the series. The city authority waived the electricity expenditure and the city employees happily volunteered for free. The way from famous performers and volunteers to the sponsors, the concert series remains a homegrown event. In 2014 Helms said, "The volunteer base that runs the events helps keep the overhead cost significantly down

and enhance the hometown feel. Any money we make is from beer sales and vendor fees, and that goes all right back into the fund to pay the bands.” Helms and the rest of the dedicated committee members that volunteer their time and effort to the Concert Series are the reason the Summer Concert Series is able to offer an extensive mix of eclectic, compelling, and high quality entertainment options. This, combined with the committee’s effective fundraising efforts, is the reason RiversEdge is able to provide free, high quality entertainment that is open to everyone.

This popular Summer Concert Series brings thousands of people to downtown Hamilton to enjoy live music. Last summer, RiversEdge Amphitheater hosted its third annual Summer Concert Series twice in June, July and August in 2013. It attracted thousands of concert goers in its inaugural year and last year the concert area was overflowing with people. A few of the big concerts last year included 90 Proof Twang, Signs of Life, a Pink Floyd Tribute Band, and The Revivalists. All concerts are free and begin at 6 p.m. unless otherwise noted. The concert series kicks off its fourth season on May 30 and runs through Sept 12, 2015 and this year will host a daylong festival for the first time on June 20, featuring Hamilton native David Shaw’s band the Revivalists and five other musical acts.

Tangible Outcomes:

Riversedge and the summer concert series is the symbol of happiness to the people of Hamilton. The Concert Series is not only bringing people together but also it is very beneficial for the local businesses. Before and after the concerts, people go to local bars, restaurants and shops to purchase goods and services and thus helping to boost local businesses. All these positive impacts made the local businesses became more interested to sponsor the concerts.

Many people have expressed their excitement to City’s Volunteer Coordinator about the amphitheater and commented on how beautiful the structure looks along the river. The Concert Series added value to the amphitheater and made it a very valuable asset to the city. It brings out the young crowd that lives here. Usually not a single person is available on the sidewalks after 6pm in the

downtown. Because of the concert series, people are doing something in downtown Hamilton after 8 o'clock or 5 o'clock and this indicates a great change.

The Summer Concert Series has differentiated itself from other such free public series in the region by consistently recruiting top-notch, up-and-coming national talent to Hamilton from notable music hubs of Nashville and New Orleans, among others. The series has developed a reputation of being a great show and a great time, regardless of whether the band is known or not. The Concert Series has led to establishing RiversEdge as a true entertainment hub that can attract acts from around the country and thousands of concert-goers from throughout our region into Hamilton. RiversEdge has brought life to the city. The canopy lights are bright at night and looks like the heart of our city. "We wanted to bring the community together through music," said Helms, Director of Resident Services, City of Hamilton.

The RiversEdge Concert Series' review on Facebook is 4.7 out of 5 star. 92% of the reviewers rated it as great and 80% provided gave a 5 star. Some of the comments from people include -

- "I'm in love with rivers edge! I'm so excited I can hardly wait for summer to attend the venues. The best thing to happen in the city in a long time!!!!"
- "It's great for the community just to have something to do because there is nothing to do here. Hamilton's been dying for a while ... so it's nice to see it liven up and see people together."
- Many people said "My favorite place in Hamilton!"
- "Great event, my grandkids had a blast."
- "I love the tranquility of sitting by a river mixed with the excitement of listening to great live music! Thank you, Hamilton, for bringing in such outstanding talent and providing this venue for friends to gather!"
- David Owens Sr. said, "I moved away about 37 years ago but I like to come up now and then."

The Summer Concert Series is more than just concerts. It has been a powerful representation of Hamilton's progress as a city. The concerts engage people with the transformation of downtown and

represent the quality of life activities that Hamilton hopes to continue to build. Also the success of the Concert Series has a spillover effect on the local economy as concert-goers regularly drink and dine before and after the concerts. As Hamilton's downtown revitalization continues, these concerts be continue to play an important role in bringing people downtown. It's a great achievement that RiversEdge is currently listed as the number one on Cincinnati A-List's best live music venue.

Lessons Learned During Planning, Implementation, And Analysis of the Program

After years of economic setbacks and revitalization, efforts that never quite picked up steam, both civic and city leaders believed the RiversEdge public park and amphitheater could provide the necessary ingredients to trigger a turning point for downtown Hamilton, and how residents and neighbors view the city. "It's kind of back to the future for a certain extent," the City of Hamilton's Mayor Moeller said. "We moved away from the river for development, and now we're moving back to the river for development." Through the concert series it has become clear that, Hamilton is a unique community where people not only give their time, but their money when they see the need is great enough.

Recently, Adam Helms has received City of Hamilton's Vision 2020 Award in 'Play' category for his efforts to make a large impact on the community through his work with the RiversEdge Summer Concert Series. He showed what is possible with true passion and a set of enthusiastic volunteers. His works are directly impacting the city through creating and sustaining a series of live and tremendously fun recreational events which is one of the most visible positive changes in the city. "Adam volunteered and primarily on his own time works with a committee that raises funds, books acts, promotes, and operates the concerts today," said City Manager Joshua Smith. "Based on the corporate sponsorships the 2015 Hamilton Concert Series received, he has been the primary architect of a sustainable amenity that is enjoyed by a growing cross-section of our community."

2015 ICMA Community Health and Safety Awards

Program: RiversEdge Summer Concert Series

Jurisdiction: The City of Hamilton, OH

Rendered image of RiversEdge Project area



RiversEdge Area in Summer 2014



Poster 2015:

DAVID SHAW'S
BIG RIVER
GET DOWN

JUNE 20TH, 2015 **RIVERSEGE AMPHITHEATER**
HAMILTON, OHIO

THE REVIVALISTS
PLUS SPECIAL ACOUSTIC SET BY DAVID SHAW
THE MAIN SQUEEZE
MAGGIE KOERNER • THE HEARD
WILD ADRIATIC • ELEMENTREE LIVITY PROJECT

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT WWW.BIGRIVERGETDOWN.COM

PRESENTED BY MILLER LITE

Looking Back



Photo : Hamilton native David Shaw performing along with his band Revivalists at the RiversEdge Amphitheater in 2013



Photo : Hamilton native David Shaw performing along with his band Revivalists at the RiversEdge Amphitheater in 2014

Summer Concert Photos 2012 (Before RiversEdge Amphitheater)



Photos: 2012 Summer Concert Series under the City Garage on Market Street portion between North 2nd and North 3rd Street.

Summer Concert Photos at the RiversEdge Amphitheater



Photo: The City of Hamilton Mayor Pat Moeller speaking during the Installation of tensile structure (canopy) and dedication ceremony at the RiversEdge in 2013. From Left: Architect Mike Dingledein, Mayor Moeller, Councilman Wile, Councilmember Fiehrer, Councilmember Klink and City's Volunteer Coordinator Wittmer.







Photo: at the concerts people sometimes meet their neighbors whom they did not know about

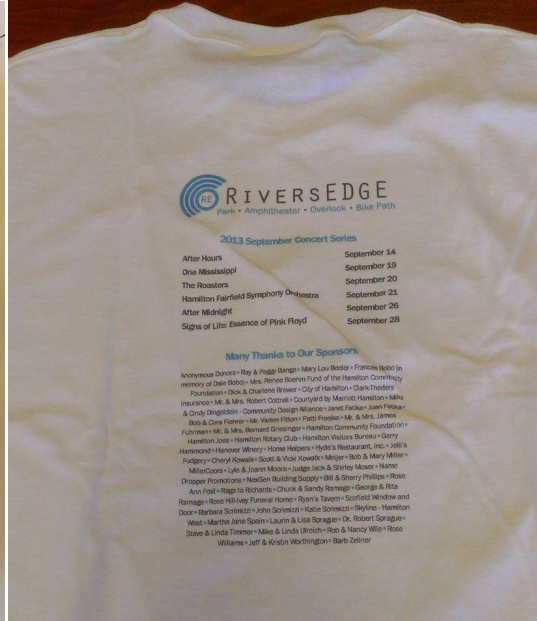




Photo: City employees volunteering at the concert series at the RiversEdge during Summer Concert Series in 2013

Support RiversEdge Merchandise

koozies and T-shirts



Hamilton Summer Concert Series Founder: Adam Helms



Photo: Adam Helms making an announcement at the RiversEdge amphitheater during 2013 Summer Concert Series



Photo: Adam Helms receiving Vision 2020 Awards at Courtyard by Marriott, Hamilton, Oh on Mar 26, 2015. For his efforts, he has won [Vision 2020](#) Awards. Find more info in the [newspaper](#) and his video speech on [TvHamilton](#).