



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
- X Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: DeKalb County's Strategic Leadership and Governance Initiative

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: DeKalb County Georgia

Jurisdiction population(s): 50,000 and greater

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: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: 2011

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: Marcus Kellum

Title: Code Enforcement Administrator Jurisdiction: DeKalb County

## SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Marcus Kellum

Title: Code Enforcement Administrator Jurisdiction: DeKalb County

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**DeKalb County Code  
Enforcement Community  
Partnership Initiative**

**2015 ICMA Local Government  
Excellence Awards Program**

**Community Partnership Awards**



Submitted by:

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## **DeKalb County's Community Partnership Initiative**

### **DeKalb County History**

DeKalb County is Georgia's most culturally diverse county with a population of over 739,956 residents and 64 spoken languages. The County has experienced prolonged budgetary constraints, and was forced to significantly downsized staff across several departments. These obstacles have made it difficult for the County to improve service delivery, and grow its economic base. Despite its rich history, diversity and resources, DeKalb County with other counties throughout the United States has been a victim to the economic and foreclosure crisis. Within the last 5 years, the County has experienced a high rate of foreclosures, municipal incorporations, and annexations of highly desirable residential and commercial areas. The foreclosure rate has significantly decreased property values, while incorporations and annexations have diminished resources at the County's disposal to provide services to areas hit the hardest.

To remain viable and become competitive within the metro region, nationally, and globally, DeKalb County recognized the need to evaluate its external core functions, and identify opportunities to create greater efficiencies and better respond to the needs of its constituents. The County developed the Neighborhood Ambassador's Program to get citizens involved to assist county employees, partner with Secure View and the implementation of the "Sick of Signs" campaign. The programs are initiatives to empower and educate residents on the importance of Code Enforcement and County codes in improving quality of life.

## **Neighborhood Ambassador Program**

In the true spirit of community engagement, Neighborhood Ambassadors help to maintain and enhance the quality of our community through the Code Enforcement's mission: "To enforce the codes of DeKalb County in order to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community; and, where violations occur, to work with our citizens to achieve compliance through an efficient and fair process." The Neighborhood Ambassador Program empowers residents to maintain and enhance their neighborhoods to sustain a safe and aesthetically attractive environment.

Residents act as additional "eyes and ears" within neighborhoods to identify, photograph, and report exterior code violations as well as assist with the removal of illegal signage located within the right-of-ways. To date one hundred and twenty-five Neighborhood Ambassador Volunteers have helped control their neighborhood.

### **The Purpose of the Program**

- To develop a partnership between DeKalb County and neighborhood volunteers
- To empower citizens to assist county employees with the removal of illegal signage located within the right-of-ways
- To identify and report exterior code violations
- To help maintain and enhance the "Quality of Life" within unincorporated DeKalb County
- Ambassadors act as additional "eyes and ears" throughout the neighborhoods
- Assist the county in educating the public
- This program allow the Code Enforcement Officers to enforce the codes more systematically and increase surveys within neighborhoods

## **Qualification Requirements for Appointees**

- Ambassadors must complete required application and related documents.
- Must be a law abiding full-time resident of DeKalb County
- Applicants must be at least 21 years of age
- Applicants must be willing to provide any information necessary to demonstrate that they will be responsible in the performance of their duties
- Applicants are appointed as volunteers, and must be willing to serve without compensation
- Applicants must be willing to take full responsibility for injuries, and damage to personal property, incurred as a result of performing their duties.

## **Training topics**

- Purpose of the Ambassador's Program
- Identify the Ordinances
- How to file a complaint
- How to process a complaint via the "internet"
- Identifying code violations
- Reporting code violations

## **Duties of the Ambassadors**

- The Ambassadors remove signs located in the right-of-way in unincorporated DeKalb County
- The Ambassadors contact the Code Enforcement Officer assigned to their area for retrieval of the illegal signs

### **Secure View Pilot Program**

With the third highest rate of foreclosure in the State of Georgia, many residents complain that the vacant houses, which are boarded up with plywood as dictated by current County Code, leave their neighborhoods looking blighted and uninviting. To fix that problem, the county launched a pilot program in November 2013 with Secure View, a company that has developed an alternative system of securing homes with a clear polycarbonate material that fits over windows and doors. Secure View allows public safety personnel to have a clear view of the interior of the property while keeping vagrants and squatters out. The installation in DeKalb County was the first in the State of Georgia. The launch of this product received local and national media attention. This has created interest by other government agencies throughout the state. DeKalb County is currently implementing legislation changes to include this product as an alternative boarding method.

### **Sick of Signs Campaign**

DeKalb County launched the “Sick of Signs” campaign, a national effort designated by the American Association of Code Enforcement, against the proliferation of illegal signs that blight communities. Homeowner organizations, civic, and community groups participate by partnering with DeKalb County Code Enforcement Division to remove signs along roadways throughout the County. The Code Enforcement Division continues to improve the delivery of services throughout the County. Since January 2013, Code Enforcement Officers have processed over 7,500 sign related service requests by residents of the county.

The DeKalb County Board of Commissioners recognized that if left completely unregulated, the number, size, design characteristics, and locations of signs in the county can become a threat to public safety, a traffic hazard and a detriment to property values and to the county's general public welfare, as well as create an aesthetic nuisance. To this effect, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution requiring all employees who drive county issues vehicles to pick up illegal signs along the roadways as an attempt to address illegal signage.

In 2013 and 2014 during the Sick of Sign events, DeKalb County Code Enforcement and community partners removed over **41.91 tons** (89,750 lbs.) of illegal signs, and have been recognized nationally as a leader in the fight against illegal signs.

The Neighborhood Ambassador's Program, partnering with Secure View and the Sick of Signs Campaign are programs that the Code Enforcement Division utilizes to promote community partnership, educate, and to increase the flow of information to empower DeKalb County residents.