



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:

Eco Village

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated:

City of River Falls, Wisconsin

Jurisdiction population(s):

15,000

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:

April

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:

Scott Simpson

Title:

City Administrator

Jurisdiction:

City of River Falls

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of contact: Roy French  
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## **ICMA Award – Community Sustainability in River Falls, Wisconsin**

The City of River Falls is pleased to submit the Eco Village sustainable housing community for consideration of a Community Sustainability Award. The Eco Village is a first-of-its-kind housing development that balances community needs and the City's commitments to affordability and environmental stewardship. As a product of innovation and collaboration from inception to implementation, the Eco Village serves as a model for empowering low income residents without compromising sustainability.

Providing quality housing for low income residents is a challenge that communities across the country face. The City of River Falls and the St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity recognized an opportunity to provide high quality, affordable, and sustainable housing to residents in River Falls. In addition, the City and Habitat for Humanity challenged themselves to provide affordable housing that achieves the triple bottom line of sustainability: environment, economy, and society.

The City of River Falls and its Municipal Utilities are recognized as regional and national leaders in environmental sustainability. The River Falls City Hall is the first LEED certified City Hall in the State of Wisconsin and the Municipal Utilities ranks number four in the nation in green power sales. River Falls Municipal Utilities provided \$25,000 in funding for energy efficient heel trusses to be used in constructing Eco Village houses. The Municipal Utilities also hosted lunch-and-learn sessions to educate contractors on sustainable building practices.

As a result of the efforts of the River Falls Municipal Utilities and the Habitat for Humanity, the Eco Village has the following environmentally sustainable features:

- Solar paneled rooftops for energy generation.
- Solar thermal systems for the production of hot water.
- Rainwater cisterns to capture rainwater for discretionary use by homeowners.
- The use of sustainable and efficient construction materials.
- A community garden for low cost, high quality food options.

To promote economic sustainability, the City donated a parcel of City-owned land for use by Habitat for Humanity. Today, the value of the land is approximately \$285,000. The affordable homes that are built upon the donated land have added high quality, long lasting, and sustainable homes to the housing stock in River Falls. The River Falls Municipal Utilities also provides bill pay assistance for income qualified customers in the Eco Village. Residents of the Eco Village also have the opportunity to receive credits at the retail rate for producing more energy than they consume.

City staff participated in two intensive design charrettes to assist Habitat for Humanity in designing a neighborhood that contributes to social sustainability. The Eco Village incorporates the use of cul-de-sacs with front facing porches on each home to promote the feelings of community and belonging among residents. The community garden encourages feelings of self-actualization and pride in working together to literally feed the community. Excess food produced at the community garden is

donated within the community or sold at the local farmer's market which increases community awareness of the benefits the Eco Village provides to River Falls.

Adhering to the triple bottom line of sustainability has produced a number of measurable benefits to the residents of the Eco Village and River Falls. Residents in Eco Village save, on average, between \$578 and \$715 annually as a result of the photovoltaic solar paneling on the houses. During summer months, the solar thermal systems produce enough hot water to average a hot water supply that is five times greater than demand.

In addition to measurable benefits, there are a number of tangible benefits of the Eco Village. Permeable pathways in the neighborhood ensure that the Kinnickinnic River, a Class One trout stream, is protected from storm water runoff. The residents of the Eco Village are currently in the process of forming a Homeowner's Association. Such an Association empowers the residents to make their own decisions and build toward the Habitat's goal of citizen empowerment and self-determination.

The first phase of housing construction provided an opportunity to improve construction practices for subsequent phases of construction in the Eco Village. More efficient construction materials were used and the home builders became more efficient at construction methods and techniques. As a result of the lessons learned, costs of housing construction were reduced between 9 and 12 percent on subsequent home constructions.

The Eco Village in River Falls is a demonstration project that will be implemented by Habitat for Humanity in other Wisconsin communities in the future. This first-of-its-kind project has successfully provided affordable housing for low income residents while empowering the residents to become self-sufficient and stewards of the local environment. The collaboration between residents of the Eco Village has resulted in the residents providing benefits that are recognized by the River Falls community.

The City of River Falls is proud to be a partner in ensuring sustainability across the community. With the triple bottom line of sustainability in mind, the Municipal Utilities has implemented a wide variety of programs to help make the Eco Village a success. The innovative methods used to create a high quality, affordable, and sustainable housing development not only leads the pack, but is far ahead of the pack. The Eco Village will be a model for community sustainability for years to come.