

The 2007 All-America City Awards

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A billboard from the mid-1980s seemed to say it all: “WOULD THE LAST PERSON TO LEAVE DUBUQUE, IOWA, PLEASE TURN OFF THE LIGHTS?”

Like many other manufacturing towns in the industrial Midwest, Dubuque was suffering the combined effects of a short-term economic recession and a long-term transition from a smokestack economy to the brave new world of information technologies and financial services.

“Dubuque took a serious hit,” recalls Assistant City Manager Cindy Steinhauer. “Our major manufacturer and largest employer was John Deere. There was a huge layoff and exodus of people who no longer had jobs. We had unemployment that reached as high as 14 or 15 percent. To this day people still refer to that time, and it is very vivid in their memories.”

Things look quite different today. Not only is Dubuque experiencing a major economic comeback, civic leaders are daring to think big about the future. One audacious plan is to make downtown Dubuque a “cool community” for twenty-something workers, complete with free wireless Internet access, coffee houses with exposed brick walls sporting the work of local artists, and an integrated transportation-parking system to balance the needs of workers and residents.

All of this change hasn't been lost on the editorial board of the *Des Moines Register*, which published a tip of the hat in 2002: “Few Iowa cities were hit harder in the 1980s, and few have a better outlook now. . . . The Dubuque story might offer lessons for every Iowa city” (p. 10A).

Dubuque is one of ten exemplary communities recognized for civic excellence in the 2007 All-America City Awards. “All-America cities symbolize the spirit of grassroots democracy and community problem solving,” says Gloria Rubio-Cortes, president and CEO of the National Civic League. “Their award-winning efforts addressed some of the most difficult challenges facing communities today.”

Health care, environmental protection, demographic change, economic development, promoting the arts, innovation in parks and recreation programs, cultural diversity, education, neighborhood revitalization, youth involvement in local decision making, and public safety—these are only a few of the tough issues that AAC winners have tackled.

Since its creation in 1949, the AAC Awards have seen more than four thousand applicants, with some five hundred cities named All-America Cities. It is the oldest community recognition program in the county, and winning it can have a far-reaching impact on the vitality of a community.

“The process of applying and winning is worth the effort and cost,” says Lula Butler, community improvement director for the two-time winner (1993 and 2001) Delray Beach, Florida. “It is not about prestige, but validation of how the relationship between government and its community should work.”

Communities chosen to be an All-America City have all benefited from the award in several key areas, namely economic growth, communal pride, and prestige, and most important bringing their community together by increasing cooperation between various individuals and agencies.

Emily Lembeck, superintendent of schools in Marietta, Georgia, a community that won the award in 2006, brags about using the award to promote a local literacy program. “The honor has brought the city and school district to an unprecedented level of cooperation and mutual support,” she says.

Michael Schmit, city administrator of Wilmar, Minnesota, a 2005 All-America City, says his community has used the award in an extensive marketing campaign to promote economic development. Although he can’t prove it, he’s convinced that the award has played a significant role in bringing new jobs and industries to the community. “Our bond rating has increased,” he adds, “and to be sure, we talked to the rating companies about winning the award.”

Schmit attributes much of this economic activity to the increase in community cooperation and pride. He advises future winners to take pride in their achievement and to use the award as a basis for “doing bigger and better things. “People still get excited about winning the award, and it often comes up in conversations.”

The 2007 AAC Winners

Delegates take the competition aspect of the All-America City awards very seriously, often accompanying their twenty-minute jury presentations with music, video, PowerPoint productions, drama, and dance.

But it is also a chance for community leaders and activists from across the country to meet and exchange information about serious issues: youth civic engagement, economic development strategies, environmental sustainability, housing development, neighborhood improvement, and downtown revitalization.

The 2007 competition was held in Anaheim, California, in early June. After an extensive application

and screening process, twenty finalist communities sent a delegation of civic activists to present three examples of collaborative community problem solving.

The AAC jury had a tough time selecting ten winners from among the finalists, a list that included: Calabasas, California; Kissimmee/Osceola County, Florida; Covington, Georgia; La Porte, Indiana; Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana; Lawrence, Kansas; Shawnee, Kansas; Independence, Oregon; Laredo, Texas; and Radford, Virginia. Winners were selected for their ability to engage a broad cross-section of the community, including youths, business leaders, elected officials, city staff, and nonprofit groups in civic dialogues leading to tangible results.

The *National Civic Review* is proud to publish these ten stories of community change, culled from interviews with local movers and shakers and the detailed applications submitted by participants in the awards competition.

Reference

“Dubuque Shows How.” *Des Moines Register*, Dec. 2, 2002, p. 10A.

FLOWING WELLS, ARIZONA

From Forgotten Neighborhood to Livable Community

Only a handful of neighborhoods have won the All-America City Award. Flowing Wells is one of them.

It was until recently a forgotten neighborhood, half of it inside the Tucson city limits, the other half part of unincorporated Pima County. Flowing Wells lacked infrastructure, government services, and physical amenities.

“I remember standing at my back fence, and I was so disgusted with what was out there,” says local activist par extraordinaire Ellie Towne. “People

racing around in their vehicles, drug activity, kids building those dirt mounds to go over on their bikes. There were fires. Grass would grow, and weeds, and nobody to take care of it. Now it is so much nicer. There are football fields, a walking path, people jogging or riding their bikes.”

Towne wasn't active in neighborhood improvement efforts until she retired from her job and started spending more time at home. Like many other Flowing Wells residents, she lives in a mobile home. Across the street was a methamphetamine lab.

After joining the Flowing Wells Neighborhood Association and Community Coalition (FWNACC), Towne spent her postretirement evenings riding around with the local neighborhood watch. She carried a tape recorder to make note of illegal activities and kept a weekly log. The volunteers worked closely with the Pima County Sheriff's Department to close down meth labs.

They painted over graffiti and worked with the County Board of Supervisors to bring in better lighting and flood control. The coalition started applying for grants to fund a growing and ambitious list of community improvement projects.

In 2000, thanks to community activists such as Towne, the Pima County Board of Supervisors chose Flowing Wells to participate in a federal Housing and Urban Development Department block grant program to develop and implement a five-year neighborhood revitalization strategy.

The plan was authored in 2001 by twenty-eight community members, school and government officials, and social service organizations to ensure a balanced perspective in arriving at a blend of eighty-seven identified strategies and twenty-nine goals for the community. Public safety, neighborhood appearance, housing, infrastructure, social services, education, and economic and job opportunities—all of these goals were part of the plan.

Since 1999 the FWNACC has brought in \$15.4 million in goods and services. These projects include:

- Development of two parks
- A community center
- A health center
- A new Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Center
- The Pima County I'm Home housing project
- Development of the Flowing Wells Business Corridor

During 2002–03, the FWNACC organized and completed a major cleanup of the revitalization area. The 3.1 square miles of the improvement area were broken down into a manageable twenty-eight sections, which encompassed 166 to 225 homes each. The project included nineteen partners, and 291 volunteers contributing 1,715 hours of service to remove a total of 216 tons of trash. There were many elderly neighbors who received assistance so they could also participate.

The FWNACC was instrumental in forming the Flowing Wells Community Justice Board. People who have been convicted of minor offenses can have their punishment adjudicated by members of the community.

For years, the group held yard sales to support its efforts. Recently it received its yearly Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) of \$5,000 to cover expenses (registration fees for education and training purposes, office supplies, and insurance) as well as \$10,000 for a revitalization coordinator, who works mostly on grant writing.

“When we started with this revitalization plan, we had no services in the area,” says Towne, who now serves as president of the FWNACC. “Our children had no place to play. Neither did anybody have a place to go to have fun with their families. Now we have parks. Our second park is opening in September.”

Flowing Wells had no place for the community to come together to meet. There were several bars but not one family restaurant. It was difficult to arrange meeting with partners when you must leave the community to convene. Although neighborhood activists were able to use local churches for meetings, the scheduling time was often a logistical challenge.

The FWNACC wanted a place to hold their monthly meetings and have activities for the seniors, children, and teens. Large meeting rooms with the capacity to hold celebrations were vital also. Educational opportunities needed a venue. In short, they were looking for some type of hub where people could gather and socialize.

Flowing Wells District Park

The recently completed Flowing Wells District Park includes a t-ball field, the largest fourplex basketball court in the county, a volleyball sand court, two tot lots, horseshoe pits, two ball fields complete with lighting and bleachers, restrooms, picnic tables complete with ramadas, and grills. Used daily by a nearby charter school, the park is also the home field of the Northwest Fast Pitch Team. There is a perimeter walking path, and the park feeds into the Rillito River Park, which is a divided urban pathway along the bank of the wash.

Ellie Towne/Flowing Wells Community Center

The Ellie Towne/Flowing Wells Community Center celebrated its grand opening in September 2007, the largest community center constructed by the county to date. The 20,000 square foot facility has a campus-style layout with four buildings and a central courtyard. The buildings are zoned to house a large dividable multipurpose room, a pair of youth activity rooms, a senior center, and multiuse small child, art, dance, and computer rooms. The central courtyard area will be covered with a unique fabric canopy that produces shade but allows air movement within the cool space. The public art portrays a flowing glass stream on the floor of the courtyard. This complex will also house the Flowing Wells Health Center.

Flowing Wells Health Center

The Flowing Wells Health Center opened in December 2005, the result of a partnership among two faith-based groups, the school district, and the community. The elementary schools in the immediate area serve a population in which 95–98 percent qualify for free or reduced-cost lunch. The Flowing Wells School District wanted to assist these children but was unable to find a location that was available at any of their existing campuses. The Victory Assembly of God Church had temporary space. St. Elizabeth of Hungary is a local health clinic operated by Catholic Social Services. All came together for the benefit of the community to meet the health needs of the uninsured such as immunizing children and treating the effects of lead poisoning from the contaminated soil.

Next Steps

A meeting with HUD officials in March 2007 revealed that the revitalization plan surpassed all expectations. Now it was time to revisit key members of the community in order to adopt new resolutions.

Though the plan has been updated yearly, it no longer reflects current conditions. The eighty-four-page bound strategic plan will be set aside and a new one will be forthcoming in the near future. HUD extended the five-year period for this revitalization area because of the work that has been accomplished within this time period.

HUD officials now consider the Flowing Wells Neighborhood Association and Community Coalition (FWNACC) a community based development organization. The mission statement is to “promote pride by bringing people together to improve the safety and quality of life of the Flowing Wells community.” The vision statement is “strong families living in a safe community.”

Ellie Towne says her community has already begun to reap the benefits of AAC recognition. “It’s already beginning to happen,” she says. “We’ve had

some celebrations here and reports in the newspaper and on television. People are now coming to us and wanting to help, businesspeople and others who don't even live in the area, which is fantastic. When we started, we were out there trying to find people who were interested in our area, and now we've got people coming aboard who want to help us."

SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA

Attracting Residents and Visitors Downtown

In 1875, the famous horticulturalist Luther Burbank sold his rights to the Burbank potato (an earlier version of the russet) for \$150 and moved from Massachusetts to Santa Rosa, a small town in the wine country of northern California. "I firmly believe, from what I have seen," said Burbank, "that this is the chosen spot of all this earth as far as Nature is concerned."

Santa Rosa has worked hard to keep it that way. "We have always been a community that has wanted to maintain our environment and natural beauty," notes Santa Rosa Assistant City Manager Patricia Fruith. "We were a sustainable community before it was a popular thing to be."

In the late 1970s, it became the first community in the country to have a full curbside recycling program. The city has one of the largest water reclamation projects in the country, fully recycling its treated water to irrigate area crops and replenish water tables in nearby Napa County, where geothermal geysers are tapped to supply electricity to nearby communities, including Santa Rosa. Santa Rosa's tertiary treated recycled water supports crops on more than six thousand acres and recharges the geyser steam field with thirteen million gallons of water per day.

An earthquake in 1969 changed the direction of city planning. The city hall building, among many others, had to be demolished, and the local planners decided to build a shopping mall near the underpass

for Interstate 101, a major highway that separates the east side of the city from the west. The idea was that shoppers would park at the mall, finishing shopping and stroll over to the downtown pedestrian mall.

The shopping mall was successful, but things didn't work out for downtown quite as planned. Most shoppers simply parked, shopped, and drove away, and the location of the mall blocked streets leading from the west side of town to the city center.

Like many cities, Santa Rosa has its share of growth issues: traffic, increased violence, a struggling central core, and not enough affordable housing. The median house price is in the mid-\$500,000 range, making it difficult for a low- or moderate-income household to purchase a home in Santa Rosa.

Downtown Santa Rosa has been described by residents and visitors alike as having a "lackluster" image. Highway 101 bisects the city's downtown and other parts of the community. Many people drive through downtown Santa Rosa but never stop. Tourists are drawn to smaller, quainter neighbors such as Sonoma, Healdsburg, or Napa. Many businesses downtown struggle to remain viable while competition mounts from discount centers, big box warehouse retailers, and shopping centers up and down Highway 101. In addition, there is a perception of a lack of safety downtown.

The challenge for Santa Rosa is to create a vibrant downtown, a destination for visitors, and also a great place to live and work.

Once an agricultural community, Santa Rosa now faces urban challenges, particularly gang violence. Young people, some only ten years old, are being recruited into gangs. As a result of the increasing violence, people told city officials they were afraid of certain areas in the city, including downtown. That fear also generated prejudice against certain segments of the community.

In 2004, the city faced a public safety crisis. The State of California had diverted millions from local coffers to address its own budget shortfalls. In addition, the local economy was struggling following the technology downturn. During the same period, Santa Rosa began experiencing a significantly increased demand for police, fire, and emergency services. A grand jury report cited significant problems with fire response times in various parts of the city.

Police were forced to eliminate eighteen positions, including the Downtown Enforcement Team and an Investigative Support Section that targeted gang problems. The fire department proposed eliminating one fire engine and one ladder truck company, along with nine firefighters. The challenge was how to maintain service levels acceptably while at the same time providing resources to proactively address the growing gang problems within the community.

Santa Rosa Downtown Arts Program

The Santa Rosa Downtown Arts Program brings a range of arts and cultural programming into the area to strengthen the community's image and sense of place, increase cultural unity, and stimulate economic development. Leadership and funding from public and private sectors guarantee the program's strength and growth.

Artists design sculptures, informational kiosks, benches, light poles, and news racks. Cultural programming includes diverse music, dance, theater, film, and literary arts.

Measure O Public Safety Sales Tax Measure

A quarter-cent public safety sales tax measure was placed on the November 2004 ballot. The measure generates approximately \$7 million per year for police, fire, and gang prevention and intervention efforts. The ordinance set up a citizen oversight committee and has strict rules preventing any "supplanting" of existing services or funding in the gen-

eral fund. This project has allowed significant progress to be made in vital areas at a time when core public safety was threatened.

Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force

Four years ago, the city aggressively moved into action to address a growing gang problem. The city began with public outreach and education on the growing issue. Staff and policy leaders traveled to other cities to learn from their programs. The mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force was established to confront the issues and the risk to youth. The task force consists of a policy team and an operational team. The former is made up of forty policy leaders from throughout Sonoma County whose agencies work with young people or law enforcement. The members of the latter team work directly with youths. They include thirty vice principals, police sergeants, and directors of nonprofits offering prevention and intervention services. These programs and services are primarily funded by a quarter-cent sales tax measure that dedicates 20 percent to gang prevention and intervention measures.

Santa Rosa's Vision

Last year, the community embarked on developing a vision for the next twenty-five years that would reflect its uniqueness, address community goals, and take a longer-range view of what they want it to become in the future. The vision has five major initiatives:

1. Creating a vibrant downtown
2. Promoting thriving, diverse, healthy, and safe neighborhoods
3. Building a more inclusive community
4. Delivering appealing transportation alternatives
5. Offering breathtaking stretches of open space and inviting gathering spaces

Citizens, community organizations, and stakeholder groups met to review and revise the 2030 vision document and broad initiatives and developed a series

of strategies that would enable them to reach their desired future. Throughout the process, many revisions were made to reflect the community's values and thoughts. Council and key staff members went back into the community with the revised vision and initiatives to seek additional input. This time, citizens were asked to respond and participate in more depth around the individual initiatives.

The city's vision for the future: "In 2030 Santa Rosa will be a dynamic, healthy, safe, and sustainable center with its citizenry participating in the arts, culture, business, education, and recreation encompassing a vital urban downtown and thriving, diverse, multicultural neighborhoods with spectacular natural beauty."

Asked why they decided to enter the All-America City awards, Patricia Fruht said, "We really feel like as a community, we're doing a lot of things right. So we really wanted to be recognized nationally for some of the things we are doing."

SIERRA MADRE, CALIFORNIA

Preserving a Small-Town Feel

There aren't many towns like Sierra Madre in the metropolitan region of Los Angeles. A small village situated between Pasadena and the San Gabriel Mountains, Sierra Madre has no stoplights within its three-square-mile limits. The town still has an all-volunteer fire department. An ancient air horn shoots off an ear-shattering blast to mark the mid-day hour. Then there is the world's largest blooming plant, the Wisteria Vine, as certified by the *Guinness Book of Records*.

One hundred fifty years ago, developer Nathaniel Carter purchased a large tract of land at the base of the mountains and founded the town. This year, the City of Sierra Madre is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary—dating from its time of incorporation in 1907. Early residents were attracted to the rural

environment, clean air, easy access to hiking trails, and neighborly spirit of this foothill community. Residents continue to be attracted to the town for the same reasons.

"We are mostly just houses," says Elisa Weaver, deputy director of community and personnel services. "We have a small downtown area that makes a little L shape, and that's mostly mom and pop stores. It was 2000 before we got a Starbucks."

"Everybody wants it to stay a small town," she adds. "They want their mom and pop shops, their small town feel. How to accomplish that is where it gets tricky. So there has been a lot of debate over the past couple of years as to the best ways to accomplish that."

As an affluent community with high property values, the city faces the challenge of providing affordable housing for families with children and for seniors, not to mention doing its fair share for the region's growing population. The eleven thousand residents of Sierra Madre feel fortunate to live in a town with such a strong sense of place and a history of community involvement. At the same time, they know they will share the responsibility for keeping things that way. "We have a great group of volunteers," says Weaver. Alluding to a famous film title, Weaver comments, "We have a slogan that the treasure of Sierra Madre is found in its volunteers."

Sierra Madre has the highest per capita number of older Americans of any city in the San Gabriel Valley, with most of the seniors retired and on a fixed income. Keeping seniors active and vital requires many extra services, including public transportation, emergency services, housing, exercise programs, and meal programs. Because Sierra Madre operates on a limited budget, with a significant amount of its revenue coming from pre-1978 fixed property tax, the needs of its senior population can occupy a disproportionate percentage of the city's budget.

“One of the neat things about Sierra Madre is that you have families who have lived here for generation after generation,” notes Weaver. “Many seniors have been here since their twenties and they have never sold their houses, so a lot of their houses are in the pre-Proposition 13 category and they are paying very low property taxes. We don’t have a lot of money to play with. We have a very low general fund, about \$8 million. We have a very hard time keeping our infrastructure updated. Our streets don’t always get paved as often as we’d like, and our trees don’t always get trimmed.”

It can be a challenge meeting the needs of local seniors with such limited resources. Another challenge is the preservation of open and natural space for the residents to enjoy—which is far from simple. Bordered on the north by the San Gabriel Mountains and on all other sides by surrounding cities, Sierra Madre encompasses three square miles of nearly completely built-out land, with virtually no room left for expansion.

The task has been twofold: to protect the foothill area of the town from the encroachment of urban sprawl, and to preserve and increase the open space of parks in the face of the need for more recreation facilities and infrastructure, all the while meeting state housing mandates.

Sierra Madre seems to have a master plan for everything. These master plans constitute the “treasure maps” toward Sierra Madre’s future. Each plan has its own volunteer committee, which conducts a needs assessment taken through community surveys, focus groups, and public hearings, where each plan helps create the vision for what Sierra Madre might be. With this input, residents, business owners, and city staff members assess strategies for development and recommend programs and measures to fill needs not being met. A master plan contains realistic recommendations, strategies for implementation, and measurable goals—making it a living document for many years

to come. The plans are designed to preserve the nature of the town while anticipating inevitable change.

Senior Master Plan

In 1999–2000, the City of Sierra Madre completed the first Senior Master Plan, with unparalleled input from civic leaders, city and local government members, and most important the seniors themselves. Five major areas of need for seniors were identified at that time, and plans were put in place to address those needs: housing, transportation, health and safety, recreation, and resources. In 2006, the community thought it valuable to revisit those senior needs and craft an updated Senior Master Plan based on prior accomplishments and new challenges.

Parks Master Plan

The adoption of the Parks Master Plan was the culmination of a long history of Sierra Madre’s dedication to protect and preserve open space throughout the city. By formalizing these ideals in a master plan, the city has been mandated by its residents to actively pursue these three recommendations:

1. Any new building in the parks should not infringe upon the open space that currently exists.
2. The city should explore alternatives for joint-use agreements with area schools to fulfill the need for additional active youth space.
3. Any vacant parcels of land that become available should be explored for purchase through alternative funding sources.

Youth Activity Center

During the 1998 Youth Master Plan process, the steering committee stated that a youth activity center was among the greatest needs identified for twelve-to-eighteen-year-olds in the city. At that time, the city created a temporary Youth Activity Center (YAC) for teenagers to have a place to talk to other young adults about issues affecting their lives, while also providing counseling services, classes, and

social activities. The previous YAC was an old church in the middle of a residential neighborhood. This facility was considered only a temporary solution, so after extensive study by the community the city council approved moving the YAC to the Community Recreation Center as a second-story addition in order to preserve open space in the park.

Noting that 2007 marked the village's hundredth anniversary, Weaver calls winning the All-America City Award the best birthday present ever, a line she says she borrowed from Mayor Enid Joffe.

As for the future, Weaver doesn't know exactly what new challenges may arise, aside from the perennial problems of filling potholes on limited budgets and preserving Sierra Madre's "village in the foothills" environment. "It's something new every day," she says. "I'm just confident that Sierra Madre is going to be able to take on challenges as they come, because this is a community that just does that."

HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

Partnerships for a Better Community

The City of Hollywood was incorporated by Joseph W. Young in November 1925. As it was then known, "Hollywood-by-the-Sea" was the "dream city" of its founder. Unlike most cities of its day, it did not grow haphazardly but was planned in its entirety. To understand Hollywood as it is today, you have to understand the vision of its founder.

Young believed that a plot of land should be laid out with streets, parks, shopping areas, public buildings, and a nucleus of homes and commercial buildings before the first lot was offered for sale. Young wanted Hollywood to be a city for everyone, from the top of the industrial and social ladders to working people.

At the peak of the 1925–26 tourist season, Hollywood's population grew to 30,000 people (including tourists). But then the boom ended with the devastat-

ing hurricane of 1926, which destroyed much of the city. Although Young continued to work to rebuild his dream, it was decades before Hollywood reached its former glory. For example, in 1950 the permanent population had grown to 14,351; 4,402 single family homes had been constructed.

The city continued its steady growth through the sixties, seventies, and eighties until it reached a relatively stable population of approximately 121,000 people. Hollywood had another growth spurt in the 1990s. The population in 2000 was 139,261. The population grew not only in size but in diversity.

Today, Hollywood is characterized as a mature built-out city. More than 95 percent of the city is developed. The remaining 5 percent consists mostly of in-fill lots. With a limited amount of vacant land and an aging housing stock and infrastructure system, Hollywood is faced with the challenge of finding new ways to stimulate development and redevelopment, and to foster activities and programs to improve the quality of life for its culturally and ethnically diverse population.

Eighty-two percent of the dwelling units in Hollywood were built before 1980. To ensure the continued viability of both owner- and renter-occupied housing supplies, the city must provide programs that encourage rehabilitation and new construction. Preservation of the housing stock also requires protecting neighborhoods. In 2000, the city created a Department of Housing and Community Redevelopment to focus attention and resources on residential and neighborhood issues.

In addition to strengthening the physical residential environment, the city was faced with the dilemma of assimilating an ever-growing influx of newly arrived citizens into the cultural mainstream of the community. Hollywood has formal representative bodies to address the needs of major ethnic and cultural populations, such as the African American Advisory Council, Hispanic Affairs Council, and Racial Justice Task Force. In addition, members of the com-

munity are encouraged to participate in special boards and commissions of interest to their cohorts: the Education Committee, Crime Watch Advisory Board, Citizens' Transportation Committee, and Human Services Advisory Board.

To draw as many citizens as possible into the mainstream of Hollywood activities, an extensive volunteer program has been created to tap the diverse talents of all residents. Programs such as the Citizen Police Academy, Seniors vs. Crime, Cash for Trash program, the Citizens Code Academy, Summer Youth Program, and others all allow residents to become involved in improving their community.

Housing prices across Florida increased tremendously between 2002 and 2005. The median price of a single family house grew by 80 percent, while the median family income only increased 1.4 percent, thus creating a huge affordability gap for the average family. Compounding the problem is the increase in real estate taxes resulting from booming property values and the higher cost of property insurance thanks to recent hurricanes. Furthermore, rising gasoline prices demand an even greater share of a family's monthly budget, forcing unattractive decisions to be made between housing, food, health care, and other basic life necessities.

As a result of these cumulative influences, new families are priced out of the housing market and existing homeowners are confronted with ownership costs that make it very difficult for them to maintain the homes they have lived in for many years. Single-family homes are purchased by investors to make a quick profit, and as a result neighborhood investment and appearance deteriorate. New approaches to housing and neighborhood improvement needed to be developed.

Hollywood Housing and Neighborhood Development Strategy (Hollywood HANDS)

In 2000, the City of Hollywood created the Department of Housing and Community Redevelopment specifically to evaluate the importance and vis-

ibility of neighborhood and housing issues in the city. Through the involvement of neighborhood associations, nonprofit agencies, local business, and local government, tremendous improvements have been made in the quality of life and appearance of Hollywood's most distressed neighborhoods. Under the overarching mantle of the Hollywood HANDS philosophy, new affordable housing was developed, individual homes were improved, streetscapes were enhanced, new homebuyers were assisted, the crime rate fell, and neighborhoods coalesced around the core values of empowerment, responsibility, accountability, authority, and focus.

Hollywood Partnerships Represented in Diverse Environments (Hollywood PRIDE)

Hollywood is an extraordinarily diverse community. There are ethnic groups from dozens of countries within its city limits. The challenge of melding the languages, behaviors, and beliefs of this varied cultural composition is a formidable task, one that Hollywood has successfully undertaken in its effort to make the community a totally inclusive environment for all residents.

The goal of Hollywood PRIDE is to bring together all of the community's diverse cultural segments to work for a better community. To accomplish this goal effectively, the city has created one of the most extensive volunteer programs in the country, known as Volunteer Hollywood. Cultural diversity and the opportunity to work together through volunteerism are a natural match. The alignment can only happen, however, if a forum is created to allow the community to work jointly to solve common concerns. Hollywood has furnished that forum.

Born to Read Program

The Born to Read Program breaks the cycle of illiteracy and the lack of home-based educational support from prenatal stages through youth in low-income families. By encouraging parents to read to their children from the earliest time of their lives, the level of literacy so often lacking in low-income households is raised and the human capital of young

people is enhanced and enabled to pursue all the creativity and skills a child may possess. The goal is accomplished through the innovative approach of positioning a full-time librarian at the Memorial Primary Care Clinic, who interacts with each family with young children. Each family is given a library application, a resource guide, and the child's first book. New parents are instructed how to improve their child's intellectual abilities through reading. The instruction is reinforced with every health care visit the family makes to the clinic.

Hollywood's Vision

More than a thousand citizens, gathered in more than a hundred meetings over a twenty-month period, created the vision for Hollywood's future by contributing to development of the Citywide Master Plan.

The community's vision is to build on Hollywood's historic development pattern to preserve and enhance single-family residential areas, strengthen multifamily areas, and promote intense development in existing commercial and mixed-use corridors. The vision calls for positive public sector action in concert with the private sector, both for-profit and not-for-profit. All elements of Hollywood's rich, culturally diverse population will be engaged in defining the city's future.

The successful attainment of the vision will encompass these principles:

- Enhance the qualities of Hollywood's historic urban plan and built environment
- Maintain and improve the natural environment
- Preserve and enhance single-family residential areas
- Improve mobility, within the City of Hollywood and the surrounding region
- Promote continued growth directed to specific and adequate areas
- Identify areas to channel public and private investments and actions to accomplish the desired sustainability and development goals

In a press release issued last June, Hollywood City Manager Cameron Benson described winning the All-America City award as the culmination of the city's planning initiatives adopted in 2000.

The AAC Award wasn't the only accolade the city earned in 2007 for impressive community partnerships. In February, Hollywood was named one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People by the America's Promise organization. In August, it was named one of thirty-five finalists in the National League of Cities 2007 Awards for Municipal Excellence.

POLK, FLORIDA

Anticipating Future Growth

Polk County, Florida, is a haven for those seeking refuge from the big-city grind. Polk is two thousand square miles of palm trees and orange groves with seventeen municipalities resting between Orlando and Tampa. Even though Polk is located close to two of Florida's largest cities, the way of life within Polk hardly resembles that of its neighbors. Most of the population resides in its unincorporated areas, and the largest city only has ninety thousand citizens. Polk is a place where people put down roots. It is not uncommon to find fifth- and sixth-generation residents of Polk County because of its "one street-light" cities and its small-town appeal. The enticing lifestyle has made it one of the largest and fastest-growing counties in one of the nation's largest and fastest-growing states. Polk County is located along the I-4 corridor only forty minutes away from the huge metropolises that surround it. This makes it very appealing to people who want to live in an intimate community but need a big city close by.

Consequently, Polk is experiencing a population influx from Orlando and Tampa, which has brought about a need to implement growth strategies for a traditional economy based on phosphate mining, agriculture, and tourism. Discovery of phosphate

rock in 1881 initiated mining of the world's largest deposit, known as the "Bone Valley Deposit," which yields 75 percent of the nation's phosphate supply. Agriculturally, Polk is ranked first in the state for commercial citrus groves and third in number of beef cattle. Polk's citrus industry alone employs eight thousand citizens and generates \$878 million in revenue. In addition, the many attractions of Polk County such as the Historic Bok Sanctuary and the world-famous Cypress Gardens Adventure Park draw tourists by the millions. Not to mention the fact that Winter Haven, Polk's second largest city, is known as "the Water Ski Capital of the World." However, with the sudden interest in the county, this community is readying itself for future changes. Polk County is implementing various programs to ensure that long-term growth will be sustainable and beneficial to all, as put forth in the Polk County Community Vision.

Prosperity Through Partnerships

The Prosperity Through Partnerships campaign was launched to bring civic organizations, government agencies, and businesses together to share resources, market assets, network, and develop strategies to revitalize the economy. Two new key initiatives employed to spark recovery through this project are the Polk County Bonus Incentive Program, which rewards quality job generation, and the award-winning Hurricane Heroes campaign, which thanks and markets Polk County to the thousands of out-of-county electric company line workers, insurance adjustors, and FEMA staff who assisted with the 2004 hurricane recovery.

Park Partners

Park Partners, created in 2003 as a pilot program to enlist neighborhood volunteers, focuses on park rejuvenation in low-income high-crime areas prone to vandalism. The program asks community members to assume ownership of a park by signing an adoption pledge to care for and maintain park facilities. A parks staff volunteer from Polk County Leisure Services oversees the program and meets

monthly onsite to work with community participants to lay out and maintain the landscaping. Park Partners has developed a system by which plants can be propagated, planted, and maintained solely through neighborhood and community volunteers. Folks buy and plant vegetation in local parks, which gives them a sense of ownership toward a public place, subsequently producing an incentive to maintain those very parks. The community is taking responsibility for its own parks.

Youth Leadership Team (YLT)

Collaborating with school personnel and community leaders, YLT's mission is to educate teens and encourage them to set healthy goals and make appropriate and responsible choices. As a division of the Healthy Start Coalition's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA), team members are also asked to advise the alliance on many aspects of their work and give a voice to the unique perspective and opinions of teens throughout Polk County. The YLT comprises an ethnically diverse group of local students, ranging in age from ten to nineteen years, representing nineteen public and private schools and home-schooled students. During the three hurricanes in 2004, teen pregnancy spiked. It is unknown whether the hurricanes set the conditions for the increase in teen pregnancy or it was merely a coincidence, but the YLT had its hands full, mainly focusing activities toward ages ten to fourteen. As a result, teen pregnancy has since decreased, thanks to YLT's efforts.

Community Vision

Polk Vision, a twenty-six-person steering committee, was formed to bring residents together with government and community leaders to examine and address the issues they face. Phase one of Polk Vision began with a series of sixteen focus groups followed by five community meetings to gain insight into perceived strengths and weaknesses of the county. More than seven hundred county residents identified issues important to their lives and their community, and five task forces were created to rep-

resent the region. These task forces, formed with some 390 community stakeholders, met to review the issues identified in the focus groups and community meetings. The result of their collaboration is a shared vision for the future of our community. Before 2024, Polk County will have:

- A world-class, fully integrated education system that supports the needs of a vibrant, progressive community
- An economic development environment that attracts quality businesses with higher-paying jobs, improves productivity, and retains youth
- Growth management and infrastructure that protects the environment and quality of life, supports education and economic development, and is economically sustainable
- A comprehensive system of government that is effective, efficient, and diverse while responding to the basic needs of its citizens
- A quality of life that encourages diverse backgrounds to live in harmony while developing physically, spiritually, mentally, and culturally within a healthy and safe environment
- Private sector leadership that drives the partnership with government and citizens in ensuring that Polk County is a premiere place to live, learn, work, and play

The Polk County Community Vision was enacted in 2003; however, less than a year later the program faced a huge obstacle. In the summer of 2004, three hurricanes ripped across the county, taking with them jobs, houses, and livelihoods. Losses from hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Jeanne totaled more than \$1 billion, 45 percent of which had to be paid by the community. Two thousand people were left without jobs, and Polk's beautiful landscape suddenly looked as if a war had just been fought there. The whole community needed rebuilding and revitalizing; the hurricanes put everyone back to square one.

Instead of seeing a disaster, the Polk community saw an opportunity. Parks needed to be beautified and

maintained, jobs had to be created, and the economy must get back on track. To Polk, the three natural disasters actually proved to be a great catalyst for implementation of the Polk Community Vision. After the hurricanes, it was obvious that the county needed a roadmap to rebuild and grow. To accomplish these community necessities, citizens, businesses, and government leaders came together to implement initiatives to revitalize Polk County and ensure its future prosperity.

Instead of being discouraged by the natural disasters of 2004, Polk embraced the challenge. Community leaders, governments, and businesses united to make sure that the Polk County Community Vision was the one thing that did not get swept away in the hurricanes. The Polk community implemented new policies and enhanced old ones in order to revitalize the area. As a result, Polk County's attraction has not faded a bit. Unemployment is low as businesses and citizens from the surrounding cities find sanctuary in Polk. Meanwhile, the Polk community is ensuring that its renowned beauty lasts in this time of growth by improving and maintaining the many parks.

DUBUQUE, IOWA

Riverfront Restoration and Downtown Revitalization

The road to economic recovery began in 1985 for Dubuque, when the city was selected for the Urban Main Street program, a national effort to renew older commercial centers in American cities. Economic development efforts, combined with improvements in the physical environment, brought in new industry to Dubuque—insurance, technology, publishing, health care, education, and tourism. Revitalization of the city's waterfront area included a national museum and aquarium to celebrate ecosystems along the Mississippi River.

Dubuque now ranks number one among Iowa's metro centers for job growth on both one-year and

three-year bases. From November 2005 through November 2006, Dubuque created one out of every ten jobs in the entire state of Iowa.

Over the past three years, Dubuque has had a 9.3 percent growth rate, the highest in the state. The Dubuque area has seen fifty-four hundred jobs gained since 2003, bringing the total number of jobs in Dubuque from as low as thirty-six thousand people working in the 1980s to more than fifty-seven thousand people working today.

Located on the Mississippi River in part of north-eastern Iowa that borders Illinois and Wisconsin, Dubuque is the major commercial center for the tri-state region. As Iowa's oldest city, Dubuque has a large number of older and architecturally significant buildings. It is situated in a beautiful, natural setting with rolling hills and steep river bluffs.

"Dubuque is unique in Iowa in terms of our physical appearance," boasts assistant City Manager Cindy Steinhauser, an energetic civic booster. "When people come here they are really amazed at what they find: water skiing, downhill skiing, ecosports. We have big limestone bluffs and old houses on the top of the bluffs."

Civic leaders conducted a series of visioning processes over the past twenty years. They developed a comprehensive plan for the city in 1994, updating it again in 2000 and 2006. Thousands of citizens have participated in efforts to boost the local economy and revitalize the city's downtown and waterfront areas.

The city has continued to strengthen its commitment to funding and partnerships for downtown revitalization, neighborhood revitalization, and historic preservation. Neighborhood investment has been one of Dubuque's strong suits over the last ten years. Since 1997, the city has spent more than \$13 million for land acquisition, utility extensions, new streets, and site development costs

for industrial parks. These investments have opened up thousands of acres to meet development needs.

Equally impressive is the recent transformation of the waterfront, especially considering the shape of things at the Port of Dubuque when the effort started.

"Boy, you know, 'brownfield' isn't enough of a description," recalls Steinhauser. "We had huge oil tanks and dilapidated buildings. We had a concrete wall that was constructed in the 1970s. You could not physically see the waterfront, standing there. The old brewery closed its doors in 1999. That building was full of bats and broken windows. We had log storage on the riverfront and salt storage."

The America's River Project

In the 1980s, the Port of Dubuque, the city's riverfront area, was plagued by environmental issues. A chaotic mix of heavy industrial uses alongside museums and river tours, it was the epitome of what urban planners call a brownfield zone with major obstacles to successful redevelopment. Citizens and visitors alike were physically and psychologically disconnected from the world's third largest river, one that drains two-thirds of North America. The community didn't know how to reconnect with the river and take full advantage of its opportunities.

In recent years, the city has seen a transformation of ninety acres of brownfields at the Port of Dubuque into a historical, environmental, educational, and recreational mecca for the Mississippi River. Designated as a National Interpretive Center for the Upper Mississippi River by the U.S. Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the recipient of a Smithsonian affiliation, the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (NMRMA) showcases the beauty of the river while teaching the world about the river's importance to the environment and commerce, and giving a much-needed boost to Dubuque's struggling economy, tourism, and image. Visitors are able to walk along the river, interact with it through

hands-on displays and aquariums, experience how the river boosts the economy, and explore its genius—its backwaters—in a wetland environment. People learn about the river in a classroom setting at the Grand River Center, a conference center built to enhance the educational efforts of the NMRMA. The two-hundred-room Grand Harbor Resort is Iowa's first indoor water park, offering stunning views of Dubuque and the Mississippi River.

The \$188 million project demonstrated the community's ability to develop lasting partnerships among city, county, state, and federal officials, not to mention governors along the Mississippi River, national navigation associations, and thirty national environmental groups.

Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan resulted from two "housing summits." These were communitywide discussions bringing together a variety of stakeholder groups with concerns about the condition of downtown housing. Participants quickly realized that addressing housing issues downtown required a larger view that looked at associated challenges such as transportation and open spaces, delivery of city services, employment opportunities, and entertainment. The Downtown Master Plan was crafted through a four-year process that included more than two thousand individuals involved in community meetings, a citizen questionnaire, a reactor group session, and a validation survey. In 2004, the City Council approved the Downtown Dubuque Master Plan born from this process. The plan has six elements of downtown revitalization incorporating a "live, work, and play" spirit, each representing a major focus of activity.

Workforce issues are a top concern as new employees entering the workplace express a desire to live and work in "cool communities." Creating a cool community means quality, unique, and affordable downtown housing options; teleconnectivity; twenty-four, seven activity in down-

town; and a culturally diverse environment. In addition, expansion of housing in the downtown brings the challenge of managing the parking system, which balances the needs of daytime employee and customer parking with the needs of nighttime residents and customers.

"Today's younger demographic, which we are trying to recruit in order to keep pace with the job growth that we are looking for, is looking for unique spaces," says Steinhauser. "So historic preservation has an important role there, because these kids coming out of college are looking for the cool apartment with the exposed brick walls, and that urban environment where they can put on their flip-flops and go downstairs with their laptops and have coffee with wireless Internet in a shop downtown that has artwork hanging that is from an area artist. They are looking for cultural experiences in terms of food and music, as well as technology to support their new ways of communicating."

"If you were to ask the average young person whether they wanted to live in Denver, Portland, or Dubuque, they wouldn't necessarily think of Dubuque," admits Steinhauser. "But we are trying to help people understand that if you are looking for a town where you can go down to the farmers' market with your laptop and tap into the downtown wireless system, run into your friends and decide to go have Mexican food or Greek or Thai, you can do it in downtown Dubuque."

Crescent Community Health Center

The Crescent Community Health Center is a free-standing health clinic that provides medical, optical, and dental care for the community's underinsured and uninsured citizens. The CCHC employs an executive director, full-time physician, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, two dentists, three hygienists, three dental assistants, and support staff. The 7,300 square foot facility is housed in a low-income neighborhood. The actual building site was an abandoned warehouse that has been restored to its origi-

nal beauty. The first floor houses the CCHC, while the upper three floors are renovated, creating thirty-six affordable apartments. CCHC values include accessibility, collaboration, diversity and dignity, quality, advocacy, service, and support.

Dubuque's Vision

In 2005, a community foundation and the chamber of commerce launched a new visioning process known as Envision 2010, a local grassroots process run by volunteers who engaged tristate area citizens from Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin in an open discussion to develop a variety of ideas for the future of greater Dubuque. Thousands of community members contributed ideas and narrowed them down to five top goals:

1. Improved connectivity: transportation and communications
2. Diverse, strong economy
3. Planned and managed growth
4. Partnering for a better Dubuque
5. Riverfront development

In addition, the mission statement for Envision 2010 says, “To engage tri-state area citizens in a community visioning process: an open, all-inclusive discussion to develop a variety of ideas for the future of greater Dubuque.”

Here is Dubuque’s vision statement, as described in its 2007 All-America City Awards application: “a progressive, sustainable city with a strong, balanced economy and connections to the world; a community that takes pride in its history and heritage and actively preserves its picturesque Mississippi River waterfront. It would also be a community where citizens have choices of quality livable neighborhoods, fun things to do, and get actively engaged in the community.”

It is an ambitious vision, but considering how much things have changed since 1985, the community seems well on its way.

LEWISTON, MAINE

Looking Out for One Another

Not many people would think of a connection between Lewiston, Maine, and Somalia, but the fact of the matter is that the town in southwestern Maine actually is home to a large number of Somali refugees. Back in 2000, Somalis started migrating from Portland north to Lewiston one family at a time. Now, there are around three thousand Somalis living in Lewiston, a town with a population of forty thousand. The Lewiston community welcomed the Somalis with open arms. “We worked collaboratively to respond to the influx.” A huge education reform was launched across the city to accommodate the needs of the new residents, which included English as a second language programs in schools throughout Lewiston. Now, seven years later the Somalis are actively participating in the Lewiston community—most notably in the “Lots to Gardens Program.”

Lots to Gardens

Lots to Gardens is a youth and community-driven organization using sustainable urban gardens to improve access to fresh food for at-risk populations. Unlike most antihunger solutions, Lots to Gardens believes immediate needs must be coupled with long-term solutions to effectively break the cycles of poverty and hunger. Fifteen community gardens located primarily within Lewiston’s most impoverished areas assist in improving health, developing useful skills, fostering self-reliance, and building toward positive communitywide change. Believing it is effective for those facing hunger to participate in addressing hunger’s root causes, Lots to Gardens gives youths and adults hands-on experience in food systems and antihunger work by building urban gardens and raising awareness of healthy eating and the value of eating locally grown produce. More than two hundred residents age three to eighty, nearly all of whom are low-income, regularly participate. Adult and senior gardeners are diverse, with 55 percent being Somali and 90 percent women; more than half of those in children and youth programs are refugees.

Take the Money; You've Earned It

At the end of the day, the Lewiston, Maine, community is out to help each other. In a 2004 city coalition between Lewiston and Boston, the "Take the Money, You've Earned It" campaign was launched to bring unclaimed tax dollars back to the Lewiston community. Since the program's initiation, \$4 million have been brought back to the low- to moderate-income (LMI) families of Lewiston.

Lewiston also stepped outside the traditional municipal government role by leading a volunteer-based coalition targeted at enhancing eligible LMI residents' quality of life by advocating the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). As a result, from 2004 to 2006 \$2.3 million was refunded to area residents.

Three Lewiston city council members visited Boston in 2003 to learn about its successful EITC campaign and returned with news of a "step towards prosperity" for LMI workers. EITC promotes increased financial stability by reducing the tax burden, supplementing wages, and assisting in the welfare-to-work transition. Lewiston's leadership was recognized through a U.S. Conference of Mayors "Outstanding Achievement" City Livability Award in 2006. Coalition members establish free tax preparation sites, offer training and IRS certification for volunteer preparers, do e-filing of returns, and extend asset-building opportunities and follow-up.

Lewiston Youth Advisory Council (LYAC)

Even the young people of Lewiston are actively seeking to better the community with the Lewiston Youth Advisory Council.

The Lewiston Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), enacted by the city council, consists of twelve high schoolers and one college student. LYAC engages youths to improve the community and enhance their own lives. Members experience municipal government and civic engagement by initiating community projects, partnering with state and local officials, City of Lewiston staff, and peers.

Following LYAC's leadership of Lewiston's 2006 All-America City quest, in the fall of 2006 LYAC began developing its own "youth-to-youth" initiative regarding the consequences and health-related dangers of underage drinking. It is entitled U Booze U Looze (UBUL), and Maine's attorney general lauded the initiative as "the first of its kind in Maine." Seven months later, LYAC applauded the U.S. Surgeon General's March 6, 2007, "call to action" to prevent or reduce underage drinking and spoke at the State Capitol to further advocate UBUL. The Maine Department of Education Citizenship Education Task Force touts LYAC, a 2006 National Harris Wofford Award top six finalist for service learning and civic engagement, as an effective youth engagement model.

Tragedy struck when LYAC was first planning a campaign against underage drinking. Friends of LYAC members were killed in a drinking and driving accident. This horrific event really drove the point home, and LYAC launched a full fledged assault on underage drinking. Their efforts did not stop in the Lewiston area either. LYAC is now trying to get a video about the dangers of drinking and driving into driver's education classes nationwide.

All members of the Lewiston, Maine, community, Somali refugees, youngsters, businesses, and government officials, are looking out for each other and their hometown. The diversity and willingness to collaboratively solve civic problems is what makes Lewiston an All-America City.

BARNSTABLE, MASSACHUSETTS

Growth Management

It is the epitome of grassroots problem solving: citizens and members of the community respond when faced with civic problems. Usually through mass mailings, townspeople have no qualms about dropping what they are doing to get together with town

officials and work through problems that threaten their community. “It’s really a collaborative effort,” says Stephanie Ostapowich, the Barnstable special projects manager. Barnstable is truly “an engaged community.”

In the middle of Cape Cod lie the seven villages (one of which is the birthplace of John F. Kennedy) that make up Barnstable, Massachusetts. Barnstable was nothing more than four schoolhouses, a few stores, and a tavern 177 years ago. Today, it covers seventy-two square miles with two shores and is home to approximately fifty thousand people. Visitors from around the world are drawn to Barnstable’s dunes, fresh-water kettle-hole ponds, and of course magnificent coasts—all blanketed by a temperate summertime climate.

But Barnstable’s lure is also its biggest threat. Like the Cape Cod area in general, Barnstable’s economy is centered on tourism. Although Barnstable has seasonal fishing and farming industries, the tourist industry is the focal point of the community. Barnstable’s beauty is attracting more people than its infrastructure can handle. The equivalent of more than 200 percent of Barnstable’s population flows in during the summer months; furthermore, the number of permanent residents is increasing rapidly. In less than fifty years, the population has grown tenfold. The increasing population compounded with summertime swells of tourists has locals asking themselves questions regarding how to preserve the quaint villages of the already fragile Massachusetts peninsula under this newfound burden.

Barnstable’s biggest challenge today is growth management. The recent growth has surfaced some potential future pitfalls. Citizens, economy, and environment are pressured by the population influx. Because Cape Cod is a playground for the wealthy, summer money has effectively pushed year-round residents of Barnstable out of the housing market. Second-home buyers looking for vacation and summer property have increased the housing market

demand, inflating housing prices above the reach of the middle class. The yearly income needed to buy a median-priced home is \$106,400, and to afford a two-bedroom apartment a worker must earn \$19.29 per hour. Such outrageous housing prices have forced an exodus of workers in the twenty-five-to-thirty-four age range from Barnstable to less-affluent locations. Teachers, nurses, and firefighters—vital to the town’s present and future livelihood—are leaving as a result of unaffordable housing.

Without the help of outside resources to combat the housing crisis, town officials are relying on fiscal discipline to fund affordable housing projects. Recently, they identified illegal housing units resulting from decades of accommodating seasonal shifts in population and converted them into legal units through an innovative accessory apartment program in order to provide quality housing at an affordable price.

Along with the housing market, the ballooning population is also taking its toll on Barnstable’s environment. The narrow roads and lack of sidewalks are contributing to congested traffic jams and increased pollution as people commute to urban areas from the suburban sprawls. As more people come to live in Barnstable, the less space there is for residential use, so people are building on the outskirts, which is an exercise in strategic urbanism that focuses on developing underdeveloped properties with existing infrastructure for more residential and commercial activities in the more urban village of Hyannis instead of building new properties in the six less urban villages. Basically, Barnstable is redirecting growth to more environmentally suitable places. In order to manage rapid and increasing growth, the community has recognized the need for changes to be made in the infrastructure of the town and have enacted policies and plans accordingly. Here are a few of these changes.

Economic Development Stimulus Plan

Faced with sprawling residential developments, unbearable traffic jams on the town’s major arteries,

and blighted and underperforming properties in downtown Hyannis, the community forged a consensus that Barnstable's growth had to be directed in a more thoughtful manner. The town government, nonprofits, business, and the citizenry as a whole collaborated to develop a vision for Barnstable's future, which encouraged and concentrated development in downtown Hyannis, where the infrastructure exists to accommodate denser growth on smaller environmental footprints. Consistent with smart growth principles, the resulting Economic Development Stimulus Plan encourages mixed-use development and walkable neighborhoods, creates new streetscape improvements and arts and culture activities, and restructures government regulations. These broad goals have been translated into a variety of land use and economic development strategies that have focused growth where it is environmentally and socially appropriate and has led to the renaissance of downtown Hyannis. The sweeping renovation of downtown Hyannis has been described as an "improvement snowball." As one downtown building cleans up its storefront, others are compelled to follow suit with a sense of civic pride.

Meanwhile, the community has endorsed improvements on local roads to alleviate traffic and has made Barnstable more pedestrian-friendly by adding more sidewalks. A free trolley installed recently on Main Street is already a favorite mode of transportation among locals.

Affordable Housing Plan

With business and community groups urging that unless the town's housing crisis was addressed there would be negative consequences, the Barnstable Town Council unanimously approved an Affordable Housing Plan on January 31, 2001, with the ability to periodically amend the plan to reflect changing needs. The objective of the plan is to ensure that at least 10 percent of the town's year-round housing stock is affordable to those residents earning 80 percent or less of the area median income. The plan outlined the methods by which

the town would strive to increase its inventory of affordable housing units, with the ambitious goal of producing one thousand units of housing over a ten-year period. In crafting the plan, the town's housing committee, which includes members of the business, housing, and human services communities, proposed innovative strategies to meet this goal, including dedication of town-owned land, conversion of existing market rate units, and changes in land use regulations.

Barnstable Youth Commission

In 2004 the town created a Youth Services Division within its Community Services Department for the purpose of creating youth and family service programs and offering support to the town's newly formed Youth Commission, which can potentially quell the exodus of young workers. These programs include the Youth Advisory Group and five committees (prevention, skills education, youth center, caring adults, and service learning). The Barnstable Youth Commission comprises five voting members, who must be residents of the town between thirteen and nineteen years old, and two nonvoting adult members. The youth commission serves as an advisory committee to the Barnstable Town Council, putting forward ideas and making recommendations for programs and legislation that will benefit the town's youths and their families. The commission is based on the five promises of the America's Promise program. Barnstable County was recently selected for the second consecutive year as one of America's Promise 100 Best Communities for Young People. The Youth Services Division assisted with the award submission.

Community Vision

Though nearly 90 percent of residents rate the quality of life in Barnstable as excellent or good, they recognize that the town's strengths need to be preserved while actively addressing its weaknesses. In an elaborate community process, each of the seven villages within the Town of Barnstable developed a Village Vision Plan that analyzes issues, goals, poli-

cies, and strategies. With town assistance, these individual plans are then reconciled into one Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP). The LCP goes through a formal local and regional review process before being adopted by the town.

What does the plan say? In short, the future of Barnstable is about balance. There is a need to balance preservation of historic values with the ability to evolve as a community. There is a need to balance the character of each individual village with the common goals of the town as a whole. Also needed is a balance of environmental sensibilities with the pressures of development. To remain connected to the vision of the community, the town administration is dedicated to ongoing visioning sessions. Here is a list of goals generated during visioning sessions that the community seeks to achieve:

- Create consistency with the historic and maritime character of the area.
- Create livable neighborhoods for year-round residents.
- Create housing opportunities for households of all income levels.
- Enhance pedestrian access and public spaces.
- Preserve views and public access to the waterfront.
- Promote traffic reduction and alternate transportation modes.
- Foster history, culture, and the arts.
- Protect and enhance natural systems.
- Make development review decisions predictable, fair, timely, and cost-effective.
- Promote private investment in buildings and structures and support appropriate economic development.

Barnstable's allure is attracting visitors and future residents on a global scale, but such growth must be managed and directed. Recognizing such a need, all members of the community have come together to effectively manage a rapidly growing population. With programs directed toward housing and zoning,

Barnstable is accommodating the new townsfolk in an environmentally friendly manner while not forgetting those who live there year-round.

CLINTON, NORTH CAROLINA

Investment in Education and Training

Like many other U.S. manufacturing cities, Clinton is facing a time of change. Throughout the last half of the twentieth century, a substantial portion of the workers in Clinton have relied on the manufacturing sector for their livelihood. However, as the new millennium approached, the once-guaranteed and plentiful jobs in manufacturing began to leave as companies found cheaper labor in overseas markets. Now, the town of Clinton is in transition as the townspeople overcome outsourcing of manufacturing jobs.

Along with manufacturing, Clinton has always had a significant agricultural base. Cotton, sweet potatoes, vegetables, and tobacco have been grown in the southeastern North Carolina town since before the Civil War. In the 1980s, the many small farms in the area consolidated and Clinton became a center for corporate agribusinesses. Clinton has recently emerged as a national leader in pork and poultry production, and in 2005 *Farm Futures* named Sampson County the number one county in the nation for agribusiness production.

Unfortunately, wages in manufacturing and agriculture are subpar at best; in fact, 18.1 percent of Clinton families live below the poverty level and the 2000 median household income was \$25,904—\$13,280 short of the national average for the same year. The low wage of Clinton's agriculture and manufacturing industries combined with the loss of jobs due to outsourcing is forcing the community to reevaluate and transform their traditional economy.

As a short-term solution, Clinton is lobbying hard to attract more businesses for the jobs and money that

come with them. As Mayor Starling puts it, “We’re just trying to get what we can.” What they’re getting, though, is big business. Schindler Elevator—the only commercial escalator manufacturer in the U.S.—is located in Clinton and is described as “a wonderful employer.” Just recently, Clinton was able to get a Venezuelan aluminum processor to locate a plant in the rural North Carolina town, and the Venezuelan company has already begun hiring. Unlike the textile and lumber plants that have located in Clinton in the past century, these new companies are here to stay. Right now the Clinton community is lobbying a British green energy company to locate in their city.

As a more long-term solution to outsourcing of manufacturing, Clinton is investing heavily in education and workforce training programs. In July 2005, an occupational training center was completed through a combined effort between Sampson Community College (SCC) and local industry. Businesses and governmental leaders together raised \$6.5 million for construction and purchase of training equipment. This facility will provide training programs to equip students with necessary skills to enter the local workforce. Building even further on this achievement, SCC then partnered with Clinton City and Sampson County Schools to establish Sampson Early College High School. The Gates Foundation awarded a grant to the high school and Governor Mike Easley recognized it as one of the first early colleges in North Carolina. Another investment in education and occupational training that emerged in Clinton is the Community Technology Learning Center.

Community Technology Learning Center (CTLC)

In December 2001, Clinton City Schools (CCS) opened a Community Technology Learning Center (CTLC). The center was opened with two purposes: (1) to give CCS’s students in grades K–12 a free after-school program that assists them with homework and technology, and (2) to offer the entire

community access to technology. In the after-school program, high school students work at the center as tutors. They assist with homework and place special emphasis on improving reading, writing, mathematics, and technology skills. The tutors serve as positive role models for students they help. Students who attend the center are motivated by their tutors and encouraged to reach their full potential. The CTLC also has a community component in which free adult technology classes are available to community members and local business and civic groups, encouraging lifelong learning and improving marketability in the workforce.

Following construction of the CTLC in March 2005, the Sampson County Board of Commissioners approved a Capital Improvement Plan for construction of three high schools, an elementary school, and an early childhood education building at Sampson Community College. The estimated construction cost for these projects was approximately \$110 million, with \$30 million allocated for a new high school. To pay for these schools, the progressive and altruistic community of Clinton accepted a 30 percent increase in property tax. Funding was in place and construction was about to begin on the high school when the roof caved in as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Ripping across the southern United States, the hurricane also caused a substantial increase in the cost of raw materials for the new Clinton High School.

Following Katrina, the cost of the new state-of-the-art school rose by \$1.4 million. The Clinton community took action. A group of concerned citizens banded together and came up with an event that would not only solve the school dilemma but also combat another dilemma rampant in their community: obesity. Sixty-six percent of adults in Clinton are overweight or obese, with a 16.7 percent rate among children. So what did the Clinton community do? They organized a march. The “March to a Million” campaign raised more than \$2 million for the new high school and took aim at the obesity epi-

demic at the same time. Not stopping at the March to a Million, Clinton continues its fight against obesity with its own “Fitness Renaissance.”

March to a Million

The goal of March to a Million was to rally the entire community to raise \$1.4 million in four months, ensuring that the new public high school contained all the elements the students and community need and deserve. The goal was to:

- Ensure adequate up-to-date teaching space for an expanding student population
- Ensure inclusion of a 650-seat auditorium for cultural art opportunities for students and the entire community
- Ensure inclusion of an auxiliary gym to relieve space constraints
- Instill a feeling of ownership for the new Clinton High School (CHS)

March to a Million skyrocketed past its goal because of a dedicated, totally involved community led by a thirty-six-member committee that involved the entire community in accomplishing its goal: businesses, school employees and students, civic organizations, churches, individuals, alumni, booster clubs, and government agencies.

Fitness Renaissance

An innovative, school-based program called Fitness Renaissance was combined with a state-of-the-art community-based Center for Health and Wellness to lead the fight against obesity and lack of physical exercise. Fitness Renaissance is an exercise and awards program designed for children in grades K–5 in which physical education teachers assess and assign individual students fitness goals in five exercises: the V-sit reach, the quarter-mile run, the flex-arm hang, push-ups, and the shuttle run. On the basis of overall performance to goals, children are presented gold, silver, or bronze awards at school-wide assemblies. The Center for Health and

Wellness is a 28,000 square foot exercise and aquatic center with a membership representative of a broad spectrum of individuals and businesses. The center offers free-form exercise and structured programs seven days a week, including fitness classes, exercise sessions, and aquatic sessions.

Clinton has no intention of ceasing its relentless effort to bring business, education, and fitness to the community. The town vision shows that the community has plans well into the future to ensure that these three necessities keep coming.

Community Vision

As the largest incorporated community in the nation’s leading agribusiness county, Clinton would like to be “a city of beauty and opportunity whose leadership is dedicated to providing its diverse citizenry a quality of life unsurpassed in the region.”

This vision statement was developed following annual district meetings to discuss short- and long-range visions for Clinton. These meetings give the City Council and staff the opportunity to put aside day-to-day responsibilities of city operations and meet with citizens to develop a strategic plan. The plan can be subdivided into visions for infrastructure and economic development to improve beauty and opportunity, and visions for health care, education, and recreation to improve quality of life.

The vision for infrastructure and economic development includes a revitalized downtown to spur new private investment, a modern detention facility to alleviate overcrowding and safety concerns, an expanded airport to serve an increasing number of corporate aircraft, and upgrades to water and sewer to accommodate industrial expansion and protect the environment.

The vision for health care establishes Clinton as a regional medical hub. The medical community is striving to accomplish this vision through recruitment

of medical specialists and expansion of medical facilities, including a Wellness Center, a radiation and oncology center, and an outpatient diagnostic facility as well as growth of private clinics.

The vision for education will give citizens access to high-quality programs such as technology training and an early college high school as well as postsecondary education. Modern facilities are envisioned to manage student growth and maintain small class size.

The vision for recreation in Clinton includes expanding existing services in an inner-city neighborhood, creating a soccer complex to accommodate a regional soccer league, and creating additional programs for senior citizens such as bridge tournaments, basketball leagues, and travel.

Along with the campaigns for more education and more exercise, Clinton is currently renovating the downtown area to bring in more business. Downtown is going through a “big aesthetic push” that includes undergrounded utilities, omnipresent flower boxes, and total road resurfacing. Mayor Starling describes the modern state of Clinton: “We are trying our best to clean up the town and show people that although it’s in rural North Carolina, it is a great place to live.”

HICKORY, NORTH CAROLINA

Response to an Economic Downturn

In 1944, one of the largest polio epidemics in American history devastated Hickory. Located between Charlotte and the Blue Ridge Mountains, Hickory was without any outside aid, so the community came together to handle the crisis. All members of the community—no matter their race, status, or education—worked together to build an emergency polio hospital to take care of the sick from Hickory and the surrounding mountain communities. Now, sixty-three years later, a twenty-foot obelisk stands in downtown Hickory to commemo-

rate this collaborative community achievement, which is known as the “Miracle of Hickory.” The obelisk also serves as a reminder because Hickory is currently faced with another crisis that requires collective community action.

Hickory’s founders adopted the motto *vestige nulla retrorsum*, meaning “no steps backward.” In its infant stages during the late 1800s, Hickory was a simple trading center on the Western North Carolina Railroad. However, with its progressive spirit Hickory became a manufacturing powerhouse at the turn of the twentieth century owing to textile and furniture industries. The Hickory area remains one of the top U.S. producers of furniture today. Following World War II, Hickory continued expanding, and by 1961 the city boasted forty-six furniture plants, eighty-nine textile plants, and twenty-seven other manufacturing companies as well as a vast amount of urban renewal and redevelopment.

The economic boom in Hickory continued through the 1990s as fiber optics became the largest manufacturing industry in the Metro Area. In the later part of the twentieth century, Hickory produced the largest amount of fiber optic cable in the world.

But manufacturing success came to an unwelcome end. The city was devastated in the early 2000s by the effects of globalization. Because of cheap labor, new technology, and more efficient transportation, a vast amount of manufacturing was outsourced to foreign countries. The unemployment rate jumped from 2 to 11 percent as 12,600 jobs were lost between 2001 and 2003. Unlike many other manufacturing communities during this time, however, Hickory’s residents came together to solve what was considered the worst setback yet in the city’s history.

Manufacturing was Hickory’s bread and butter. Jobs were always available to even the lowest-educated and skilled laborers. Consequently, when manufacturing all but disappeared from Hickory, many unskilled and uneducated workers were in need of a

source of income as well as a future. Among workers twenty-five and older, the Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) had the lowest percentage of high school and college graduates of all eleven MSAs in North Carolina.

Two consequences surfaced from the unexpected and fast economic reversal: Hickory has to deal with a surplus of uneducated, unskilled workers; and crime is sure to rise as citizens find themselves without jobs and without hope. The student dropout rate must be reduced and retraining programs for traditional workers must increase. Raising the education level will serve individuals in their search for jobs as well as give Hickory a readily accessible, trained workforce to attract the new business and industry that can foster those jobs. Recognizing this, Hickory is implementing programs to educate and train the labor pool.

Hickory is also implementing programs to maintain a safe environment for its citizens while the city restructures economically. Community policing, along with special programs to target services for those in need of food, homes, jobs, and transportation, are being developed to serve the neediest citizens and therefore keep this a safe community. As a community, Hickory is developing ways to create an educated, skilled workforce while maintaining a safe environment through a number of programs:

- *Hickory Metro Higher Education Center.* HMHEC is a collaborative partnership among Appalachian State University (ASU), Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC), Lenoir Rhyne College, University of North Carolina Charlotte, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Western Carolina University, and Winston-Salem State University located in Hickory. Its mission is to enhance the educational attainment of residents as well as the economic development of the Hickory region by offering a range of college and university degree programs requested by local businesses and students in the community.

Its creation was a quick and direct response by Hickory area leaders to an economic downturn of unprecedented dimensions in the early 2000s. HMHEC is the first such higher education center established in North Carolina, and more than five hundred students now are enrolled. It has been cited by Governor Mike Easley as a model of educational innovation.

- *Exodus Homes.* Exodus Homes is a nine-year-old nonprofit agency that offers seventy-six beds of transitional to permanent supportive housing for homeless recovering addicts, alcoholics, and formerly incarcerated persons who are returning to the community from treatment or prison. Exodus now owns and occupies two apartment complexes, one apartment building, and three houses, all previously public nuisance properties. Exodus also rents a duplex in partnership with a local church. Including the church and a warehouse, Exodus is located in five neighborhoods in Hickory. Exodus aims to rebuild the community as the lives of its residents are restored.
- *Project Potential.* Project Potential is a scholarship program designed to reach young people who, because of their circumstances, may not expect or envision a successful future either in high school or in higher education. Therefore, it is aimed at eighth grade students who show promise for higher achievement but who are considered at risk of dropping out of high school. To remain in the program, students are required to maintain a 2.0 average and graduate from Hickory Public Schools. They must also participate in service projects and other monthly activities, and they cannot be involved in any criminal activity. If all of these requirements are met, a \$2,500 scholarship is given to assist students in continuing their education at a community college or other institution of higher education upon graduation. The unique aspect of the program is that every student chosen is paired with a volunteer mentor from the community who encourages him or her through their four years of high school to ensure that the student never gives up

on future dreams. Project Potential is already having an impact on lives: Jenny, a project participant, says, “As the seventh born of eight children raised by a single mom, Project Potential has helped provide me with the means to pursue my dream of becoming a pharmacist.”

Along with these three programs, Hickory has also created the Future Forward plan to combat the consequences of a devastating hit to the manufacturing sector. Future Forward is a roadmap for Hickory resulting from community workshops and focus groups attended by more than 550 citizens. Participants compiled a blueprint of strategies and action items that will help the region achieve new economic development goals. The Future Forward leadership team is finding ways to retrain and create new jobs for Hickory’s citizens and invest in public infrastructure to attract regional businesses with the new, well-paying jobs they bring. The vision of the Future Forward plan, as stated by its twenty-one-member committee, is: (1) an increase of skilled citizens with higher levels of educational attainment who are earning higher wages, and (2) innovative and productive new and existing businesses and industries.

Results from these programs show that the Miracle of Hickory is still very much alive today. In the early 2000s, Hickory was experiencing double-digit unemployment rates, but through community pro-

grams, the unemployment rate has dropped to around 6 percent. Hickory’s educational programs are moving what once was a strictly manufacturing economy toward a more service-based economy. The declining unemployment is a good sign for their economy as well as the prospect of decreasing crime.

With a history of collectively solving social problems, Hickory is building its future on that very concept as well. Hickory does not merely wait for problems to solve themselves as many cities do; the community recognizes problems when they arise and resolves them as a community in order to move forward. Just like the miracle that Hickory created in 1944 to quell a polio epidemic, it is now implementing policies and plans to reverse an economic downturn. Citizens, governments, and businesses in the area have united to create jobs, reeducate the workforce, and maintain a safe environment to increase the future welfare of the community. “Hickory is a city where individuals, organizations, and businesses take care of one another and work together to solve problems—no matter how large or small,” says Mayor Rudy Wright.

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