

2023 Missouri Municipal League Innovation Award Summaries



Growing Our Communities Together

What is the MML Innovation Award Program?

The Innovation Awards program showcases municipal programs or projects that have been successfully implemented and demonstrate new approaches for solving municipal challenges. It may also serve as a model for other communities.

To enter, a municipality must be a member of the Missouri Municipal League. Only one entry per city will be considered. Joint or multi-city projects are welcome (population category will be based on the largest city in the project). Nominated programs or projects must be completed or well established.

The awards will be given in five categories:

- Extra Large (population more than 30,000)
- Large (population 15,000 to 30,000)
- Medium (population 5,000 to 15,000)
- Small (population under 5,000)
- Member Choice - all nominees are eligible, and all members are welcome to vote.

Nominees for 2023 In Alphabetical Order

Camdenton

Mayor's Art Gallery

(Small City Category: population less than 5,000)

This project is a partnership between the Camdenton R-III School District Arts Department and the city of Camdenton to display students work at City Hall. Each quarter art teachers from all grade levels select students' art from the previous quarter to display at City Hall on the front of the dais. Each student is also presented with a certificate signed by the mayor in recognition of their work being displayed at City Hall. This has driven positive foot traffic/visits to City Hall for students to show their parents. Staff takes advantage of this opportunity to have a positive interaction with the student and their parents by taking their picture with the artwork and asking them if they have any questions about City Hall. This has cost the City nothing as one of the art teachers arranges the artwork and mounts it after school. There have been numerous positive benefits to the City through social media posts by the City, as well as parents tagging the City in their posts bragging on their children. The school district also reaps positive benefits from the social media posts.

Columbia

Civic Academy

(Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

The city of Columbia launched the Civic Academy pilot program in fall 2022, as a priority outlined by City Manager De'Carlon Seewood. This program was designed to engage residents and increase their understanding of their local government and the services it provides. The program was designed to be interactive, with each session rotating at a different city-owned facility for tours and demonstrations. The pilot program was six weeks long, with sessions from 6-9 pm on Thursday evenings. It featured different departments each session, with directors and managers presenting on the overall operations of their department, as well as how their department fits into the City's *Strategic Plan* and *Climate Action and Adaptation Plan*. The goal for the program was to engage residents. At the end of the six weeks, all 17 of the participants successfully completed the program. Of those 17, at least one has applied to serve on a city board and several others have signed up to participate in city volunteer activities. The City plans to offer this program to residents twice a year.

Creve Coeur

39 North Innovation District

(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)

The city of Creve Coeur has partnered with the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, and other organizations and institutions to implement the bold vision of the 39 North Innovation District. The District is a 600-acre global hub for plant and life sciences located in Creve Coeur. The 39 North Innovation District has five main objectives to transform the District into a global leader in plant and life sciences: strengthen corridors and establish new traffic patterns; connect assets and opportunity sites; establish a cohesive development framework; create a mixed-use center of activity; and communicate the District. After years of planning and community input, the framework to achieve these objectives has been well established. Several significant projects have been recently completed or are underway to physically transform the District and attract leaders in the agriculture technology industry, including a major intersection reconfiguration, main street corridor redesign, and greenway planning. Regional stakeholders involved, in addition to those mentioned above, include Bayer, St. Louis County, and the city of Olivette. The development of the 39 North Innovation District models how other cities can partner with regional stakeholders to establish an innovation district within their city.

Grandview

I-49 Outer Roads Conversion Project

(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)

Grandview is a city divided by an interstate. Since the 1980s, one-way traffic along the I-49 outer roads had limited access and effectively killed any businesses along the outer roads. This division also made driving to the other side of the City a challenge even with the invention of GPS. After 40 years of one-way traffic and an increasing number of drivers on I-49, more than 90,000 cars daily, Grandview decided two-way traffic on the outer roads was necessary and led the charge for transformation. The I-49 Outer Roads Conversion made history as the Missouri Department of Transportation's first city-led, design-build project funded with federal dollars. Upon announcing the project, Grandview has seen development and redevelopment of at least eight businesses, including a new hotel, reuse of a vacant Sam's Club, new quick-service restaurants, and a new flagship convenience store.

Jefferson City

Bicentennial Bridge

(Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

Since the 1960s, a goal of the city of Jefferson, was to construct a "signature" pedestrian bridge from the grounds of the Missouri Capitol to a 30-acre parcel of land known as Adrian's Island (technically a peninsula). The project also incorporated a park, decorative display panels, a veteran's memorial, signage and a brick plaza. Under the direction of Mayor Carrie Tergin, the primary construction contractor, Phillips Construction, and engineering firm, Bartlett and West, and other key stakeholders were engaged to oversee the bridge concept, design, construction, and fundraising. The vision is for the bridge to attract tourists, provide residents an opportunity to enjoy and experience the riverfront, and to encourage physical fitness and recreational uses. The project, including requirements by the railroad and unique site characteristics, necessitated the development and use of several innovative construction methods. For example: due to site constraints, the innovative use of "micropiles," rarely used for bridge construction, was implemented. The total construction cost of the bridge was approximately \$4.9 million, with more than \$4 million in private donations. The bridge and park have gained rave reviews from the public. Immediately upon opening, the park was highly visited, with 50,000 visitors in the first three months.

Kearney

Pickleball & Skate Park Complex

(Medium City Category: population 5,000 – 15, 000)

In 2017, the City entered into an agreement with the Kearney School District to convert the district's old tennis courts into a city facility with three pickleball courts and skatepark. With pickleball growing at such an astounding rate, three courts severely limited the youth and adult league play. In addition, the old surface was settled and cracked, there was limited parking, ineffective lighting, and only portable toilets. The City soon realized they needed a new facility to better serve the community. This past year, the City developed a plan to construct a new 12-court pickleball facility with LED lighting, bleachers, permanent bathrooms, asphalt parking for 70+ vehicles, storage building, and a new skatepark surface. In April 2022, voters approved a use tax, that is being used to fund the project. The original tennis courts were constructed with a grant through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The City and school district had to go through the LWCF "Change in Sponsor" and "Declaration of Obsolescence" processes. Approval allowed the property to be acquired by the City, the old tennis courts to be demolished, and the new complex to be constructed.

Lathrop

Playground Update At John Burns Memorial Park

(Small City Category: population less than 5,000)

In 2019, the Lathrop Park Board began to discuss the need to update the playground equipment at John Burns Memorial Park. The current playground was erected in 1997 with used McDonald's playground equipment. Slides had already been removed, that were no longer safe, and the remainder of the equipment was outdated. While the need was obvious, a way to fund the additions was the hurdle. Major donors looked for a plan before committing funds. As discussions proceeded, the Board was approached by Senate Bill 40 Board about a universally accessible park where all children can play and interact side by side. With their help the Park Board was able to work with Unlimited Play, an organization that helps communities through this process. The community of 2,272 population applied for and received a Land and Water Conservation Grant for \$278,000, and collected a total amount including, the grant, of \$1,000,000. In the end, the city was able to build an approximately 10,000-square-foot, universally-accessible playground. Fundraising was so successful a splash pad and a bandstand will be added in the near future.

Macon

Innovative Funding Solutions - Doing the Hard Work

(Medium City Category: population 5,000 – 15, 000)

The city of Macon and Macon Municipal Utilities have a long history of seeking grant funding opportunities to build its capital improvements. Its latest American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant of \$3.4 Million caps a series of innovative approaches and hard work to acquire grant funding for its wastewater utility. Previously, Macon's Transportation Department and Wastewater Utility joined forces to obtain a Small Community Engineering Assistance Program grant from Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The results from an engineering report found that Macon was eligible for this year's ARPA stormwater grant. Macon is the smallest combined wastewater/stormwater community in Missouri. Being a combined system, Macon experiences significant peak flows at its wastewater treatment facility. Macon is also unique in that the stormwater infrastructure is managed by the transportation department, but the responsibility for the stormwater's water quality falls to the wastewater department. The initial collaboration between Macon's departments led them to seek and win the ARPA award that will be used to divert stormwater flows out of the combined wastewater collection system.

Marshall

Design/Build Solution For Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements

(Medium City Category: population 5,000 – 15, 000)

Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) installed its wastewater treatment facility's aeration equipment in the early 1990s. In 2021, the aeration system had reached the end of its usable life with only one of two existing aeration trains operational and numerous blowers out of service. The engineering team from Burns & McDonnell developed several conceptual alternatives to improve the secondary treatment process and restore the facility to its full treatment capacity. MMU decided to proceed with this rehabilitation project using a Design/Build contracting method. The project consisted of replacing a rotating bridge process with retrievable diffusers and submersible mixers that are mounted from the system's new, full-diameter bridges. This allows all equipment to be maintained without taking the basin out of service. The new screw-type positive displacement blowers provide process air, while improving on energy-efficiency and allowing for more fine-tuned process control with variable frequency drives. The optimized aeration design reduces the required number of blowers from seven (number of existing blowers) to three (number of screw-type blowers required) and diffusers from thousands to less than 700. The three final clarifier mechanisms were also replaced. The initial contract price was \$8.94 million. Cost savings were achieved by using a Design/Build contracting method. The final contract price on the original scope of work was \$8.64 million, saving the ratepayers \$277,060.

Maryland Heights

Maryland Heights Sustainability Center

(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)

The city of Maryland Heights recently opened the Sustainability and Interpretive Center on Creve Coeur Mill Road. This project, located next door to Pattonville High School, on a five-acre parcel, is a campus focused on urban agriculture and renewable resources. The Center is a partnership between Waste Connections and the city of Maryland Heights and will include greenhouses, offices, meeting and classroom space for educational programs. Two Ceres Net Zero greenhouses have been constructed, and one will be used exclusively by Pattonville High School students and faculty, providing a unique hands-on learning opportunity. Among several goals, the City would like this location to facilitate field trips to showcase Waste Connections' sustainability solutions at the landfill and offer community programs for youth and adults. There are also plans being developed for a retail area where plants will be sold. Other opportunities include a community garden area, edible landscaping, permaculture garden, demonstrations of solar and wind power, and much more.

Moberly

City Of Moberly Fennel Complex Project

(Medium City Category: population 5,000 – 15, 000)

Moberly acquired three adjoining dilapidated buildings that are a cornerstone in the downtown dating back to the 1870s. Knowing the City could not let them fall, funding was approved to try and white box them and determine an end use later. The City was only able to salvage the external walls of the north section and came up with a plan to turn it into an outdoor event center for the downtown. The building amenities included new concrete flooring in the building footprint; outdoor greenspace; custom wrought iron fencing around the facility and greenspace; off-street parking; and climate-controlled year-round bathrooms with overhead café lighting; full hookups and sound systems for a band or DJ; and food truck power ports. Last year's event included a farmers' market, concerts, food truck events, car cruises, weddings, and alumni events with more scheduled for 2024. The other adjacent buildings have been renovated with new roofs, tuck pointing, and brick repair is nearly complete. New doors and windows are going in with further renovations planned with the Community Revitalization grant that will turn the indoor space into a year-round community center to complement the outdoor space.

Nixa

L.E.A.D Nixa (Listen, Encourage, Advocate, Demonstrate)

(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)

"L.E.A.D. Nixa" is a diversity, equity and inclusion initiative that began in 2021. The idea came from community input during the 2020 "Imagine Nixa" Strategic Planning process. Residents and leaders asked for a concerted effort to promote diversity and inclusion in the Nixa community. City staff began working with a mentor from SCORE of Southwest Missouri to assist with this project. The "L.E.A.D. Nixa" program (Listen, Encourage, Advocate, Demonstrate) is designed to bring people together for more discussion, togetherness, relationship building and constructive ideas. On Sept. 22, 2021, L.E.A.D. Nixa hosted a listening session for the community to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion. More than 150 community members participated in honest and challenging conversations. During the session, the need for additional events was identified. Since that first listening session, L.E.A.D. Nixa has held highly successful events, including "Cocoa with the Community" in Dec. of 2021 and 2022; a second listening session on March 23, 2022; and Nixa's first-ever Multi-Cultural Festival on Aug. 20, 2022. Nixa plans to expand upon these events in 2023. This is a very low-cost program that could be easily implemented by other cities. These efforts also earned positive news coverage that enhanced the city of Nixa's reputation as an open and welcoming community.

O'Fallon

O'Fallon's Path of Heroes

(Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

The city of O'Fallon's Path of Heroes is a 7.8-mile route through the heart of O'Fallon that honors O'Fallon residents who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country. The route that passes several city landmarks including the City's nationally recognized Veterans Memorial Walk, CarShield Field, several city parks and the O'Fallon Municipal Centre, was introduced as part of O'Fallon's annual Veterans Day ceremony. Through the program, families may apply to have one of their family members honored on a memorial sign designating that segment of roadway in honor of their fallen loved ones. Each honoree will have two identical signs placed along the path, marking the end of the individual's segment and enabling drivers to see the signs when traveling in either direction. Each sign lists the honoree's name, rank and branch of service. There is no cost to families to participate as the City is covering all costs. Families complete the application process on the City's website. The City has committed to honoring up to three individuals each year. In 2022, the program launched honoring the City's three most recent fallen heroes: Lance Cpl. Jared M. Schmitz, Marines; Cpl. Gunnar W. Zwilling, Army; and Spc. Mark D. Blakely, Jr., Army.

Riverside

Reaching Riverside

(Small City Category: population less than 5,000)

Citizen participation in the process of local government across the country is on the decline. The city of Riverside understands that as they embark on a new comprehensive planning process, it is important to engage the entire community in casting a vision for the future of the City. While most of the residents live in multifamily housing, the past planning efforts have seen little participation from those residents – leading the outcomes to overly emphasize the priorities of the single-family neighborhoods. This lack of engagement also poses challenges for the City in making sure that basic services are being provided equitably and consistently across the community. The City launched the “Reaching Riverside” campaign in 2022 to actively engage all residents regarding the comprehensive planning process. The campaign involved easily customized templates for banners, flyers, mailers and social media assets sharing upcoming family-friendly events hosted by the City. Riverside partnered with neighborhood associations and multi-family management companies to reach as many residents as possible. Each event featured a DJ or live music, food, children’s activities, equipment displays and more. At these events, citizens could share input on plans for the City and engage in a meaningful way.

Saint Charles

Recruitment & Retention Committee

(Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

In response to hiring difficulties and increased employee turnover faced by municipalities and businesses throughout the region, the city of Saint Charles established a Recruitment & Retention Committee to identify and implement policies and benefits that would help retain existing employees and attract top talent for open positions. The committee was comprised of representatives from every city department, and identified six key areas for improvement, including a new flexible work schedule; new vacation time and holiday policies; enhanced internal communications; and new employee recognition measures. Following the implementation of the committee’s recommendations, the City has demonstrably increased employee morale and retention, embraced emerging workplace trends, established the City as a premier workplace in the region, and positioned Saint Charles for success in its future hiring goals.

Warrensburg

Sidewalk Improvement Program

(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)

The city of Warrensburg has revamped its approach towards residential sidewalk management to meet the needs of the citizens such as having walkable, accessible and connected sidewalks, and doing so in an equitable manner. The Sidewalk Improvement Program (SIP) takes a “zone” approach where the City is divided into zones (e.g., Zone 1, Zone 2, etc.). Each zone is inspected annually by city staff and any conditions that do not meet applicable standards will be marked for removal and placed out to bid. The City has budgeted \$160,000 to cover the entire cost of the sidewalk construction and reconstruction. The City anticipates fixing approximately 9,300+ linear feet of sidewalk in the first year of the SIP. The City will also collect and inventory sidewalk conditions for American with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.) ramps, or the lack thereof, and curb and gutter conditions that will eventually be noted for repair with the Street Maintenance Program. This Sidewalk Improvement Program fits into the City’s Strategic Plan under Focus 1: Investment in Infrastructure.

Wentzville

Creation And Implementation of Historic Downtown Business Development Grant (Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

The city of Wentzville created and implemented a successful Historic Downtown Business Development grant in March 2022. The competitive grant was created to attract new businesses to the City’s historic downtown and to assist businesses to expand their footprint and/or services in the downtown area. The business development grant is a matching grant, based on a three-year term up to \$10,000 per property. The newly created business development grant assists businesses in renovating and updating interior improvements, such as floors, walls, lighting fixtures and countertops. In its first year of implementation, funded by an allocation from the general fund, three applications were successful in achieving the award of grant dollars. For 2022, the aggregate proposed business development grant renovations from all three businesses totaled more than \$92,300. The total aggregate amount the businesses received from business development grant dollars was \$21,150. Other municipalities may certainly benefit from designing similar grants for their downtown areas or commercial districts. By targeting specific geographic areas and creating a competitive grant, the new policy, application, and grading matrix offer an innovative way for cities to leverage available funds and achieve maximum benefit to the community.

Congratulations to the 2023 Innovation Award Winners!

City of O'Fallon

(Metro City Category: population more than 30,000)

O'Fallon's Path of Heroes

City of Maryland Heights

(Large City Category: population 15,000 - 30,000)

Maryland Heights Sustainability Center

City of Kearney

(Medium City Category: population 5,000 - 15,000)

Pickleball & Skate Park Complex

City of Riverside

(Small City Category: population less than 5,000)

Reaching Riverside

City of Moberly

(Member Choice Category)

City of Moberly Fennel Complex Project

**Thank you to all those municipalities
that submitted nominations
for this year's
Innovation Awards!**

It is truly appreciated!

Remember...

**if you have a great innovative
program or project that your
municipality has implemented, 2024
applications can be submitted
starting Dec. 1, 2023!**