

# 2020 Missouri Municipal League Nomination Summaries

September 15, 2020

*Innovation  
Awards*



Missouri  
**Municipal**  
League

Growing Our Communities Together

## ***2020 MISSOURI MUNICIPAL LEAGUE INNOVATION AWARD NOMINATION SUMMARIES***

### **What is the MML Innovation 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's Choice - all nominees are eligible, and all members are welcome to vote.

### **Nominees for 2020**

#### **City of Brentwood**

##### **Resistograph Tree Inspection Program**

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

The city of Brentwood made management of its urban forest a priority in 2016, after years of deferred maintenance. A tree inventory revealed that nearly 100 trees were in critical condition. In addition, 250 Ash trees, threatened by Emerald Ash Borer infestation, needed to be removed. This added up to a 15% loss of the City's tree inventory. Staff made retention of mature trees in the City's inventory a primary objective. Extending the life of a mature tree would save the City thousands of dollars in ecological benefits and management costs while also allowing newly planted trees time to become established.

A significant obstacle to the retention of mature trees is the public perception of large trees with visible defects as being dangerous. One of the few tools available that provides hard data regarding the stability and integrity of trees is the resistograph, an instrument that detects wood decay, cracks, cavities, and stages of rot. Staff has used resistograph technology to retain many mature trees that showed visible defects. In many cases, the resistograph determined the trees were structurally sound. Retaining these trees saved the City \$16,980 in removal costs while preserving \$819.53 worth of annual measurable ecological benefits.

#### **City of Cameron**

##### **Dilapidated to New**

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

Dilapidated properties can cause many issues for a community, such as increased crime, a risk to health and welfare, and municipal costs for the community. The city of Cameron, Missouri, offers the opportunity to remove dilapidated structures that pose an imminent danger to the community, through a demolition program. In many cases, property owners either inherit property, abandon or neglect issues that have plagued communities for years. This program

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allows the City to encourage property owners to remove certain structures that are substandard, hazardous, and dangerous through several options. Each year the city of Cameron appropriates funds to partner with residential property owners to remove these structures. Dangerous structures are defined as properties that are hazardous and dangerous to the public health and welfare and are beyond repair.

The City offers two programs for demolition of these properties. Property owners can elect to participate in the 50/50 or 100% demolition program. The 50/50 demolition program is designed to allow property owners the opportunity to share the cost of removing dilapidated structures. The average cost per structure is \$7,000 per single family home. The 100% program allows property owners with limited funding to sign over the property entirely and allow the City to remove the structure. The City covers the total cost of the demolition process. Once the structure is removed, the property is placed for sale. As part of the demolition agreement, the buyer of the property is responsible for constructing a single-family home within two years. The great thing about this program is that it is almost revenue neutral for the City.

### **City of Fulton**

#### **Community Christmas Tree**

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

In the fall of 2019, the city of Fulton officials were looking for a new way to celebrate the holiday season. Many old decorations that were wrapped around light poles had become dangerous to use, but the cost to replace them was more than the City could afford. The solution was a 45-foot tall, wire tree featuring 1,700 lights placed in the City's only roundabout. In order for the project to become a reality, the City had to receive permission from the Missouri Department of Transportation, who owns the traffic circle and the Fulton Garden Club, who uses the roundabout to plant species that are native to Missouri. Both parties gave their approval.

Gary Blackburn, a local muffler shop owner, fabricated the base using muffler pipe. The utilities department handled constructing and lighting the tree. Reaction to the tree was swift and quite positive. More comments and likes were received on Facebook regarding the tree than any other city post ever created. This feedback from citizens proved the tree was a great idea. It also demonstrates that a single display can be created at a fraction of the cost for new street pole decorations and have a greater community impact.

### **City of Hazelwood**

#### **Hazelwood Obstacle Course Race**

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

The city of Hazelwood's Howdershell Park had underutilized and antiquated park equipment. Improving Howdershell Park provided the City with a chance to bring a unique and exciting new program, called Hazelwood OCR, by creating a ninja obstacle training course for people over the age of 13, and opened the opportunity to host competitions and demonstrations, building a culture of health, wellness and fitness in the City. Parks and Recreation Superintendent Doug Littlefield worked with Landscape Structures Inc., to design a completely brand-new line of commercial sports and fitness equipment never before seen in the United States. Since being installed, Hazelwood has hosted five different races that have generated more than \$15,000 in revenue and created a ninja and obstacle course race (OCR) following in the City and

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regionally, bringing in people from five different states to compete in the races. Hazelwood OCR builds on the American Ninja Warrior popularity and shows how cities can utilize a similar program to attract new people to their area and parks.

### **City of Jackson**

#### **Walk Jackson Challenge**

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

In May of 2019, the city of Jackson's Public Works Department challenged its citizens to Walk Jackson. The Walk Jackson Challenge requested that walkers report any issues with public works' assets to City Hall. Requiring them to come to City Hall to get a t-shirt, and log onto the website to register, achieved its main goal of getting citizens to find us and discover how to communicate with us. Walkers were challenged to log 133 miles, the equivalent of all the streets in Jackson, or at least the same amount of miles in their ward. Some of the participants even let the City know of public works assets that needed attention.

The public works staff, street, parks, and maintenance departments worked together to create and hide specially marked rocks that could be found and redeemed for prizes along the way. All 69 registrants were eligible for the grand prize drawing at the end. The challenge successfully introduced citizens to public works in an entertaining and enjoyable way, while informing them about their political wards. It also encouraged people to walk other wards to complete the entire challenge.

### **City of Joplin**

#### **Water Quality Variance for Zinc**

**(Extra Large City Category: population more than 30,000)**

Burns & McDonnell Engineering, LimnoTech Inc., AquaLaw PLC, assisted the city of Joplin in composing and compiling documentary evidence to support a water quality variance (Variance) application to the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (Department). The Variance requested a time-limited effluent concentration for total recoverable zinc discharged from the Turkey Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The Variance established a 10-year zinc effluent limit that provides Joplin the time and flexibility to make incremental water quality improvements. The Burns & McDonnell team determined that the City should request a variance based on "human-caused conditions or sources of pollution prevent the attainment of the use and cannot be remedied or would cause more environmental damage to correct than to leave in place".

Historically, Joplin's Turkey Creek WWTP has had difficulty meeting zinc effluent limits consistently due to the ubiquitous presence of zinc throughout the Joplin area from past mining activities. In addition to direct contamination of soil, groundwater and surface water by mine wastes, the City used mine tailings, or "chat", as bedding material for its wastewater collection lines. During the Variance's tenure, the effluent limits that would typically be based on the zinc water quality criteria were replaced with limits based on the highest attainable conditions met at the Turkey Creek WWTP. The Burns & McDonnell team established that the Variance could require total recoverable zinc effluent limit concentrations of 396 micrograms per liter (ug/L) (as a daily maximum) and 228 ug/L (as a monthly average) be met. In addition, Joplin is required to follow a zinc minimization plan to ensure reductions in future zinc pollution loadings. Based

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upon the efforts of the team and the Department's recommendations, Missouri's Clean Water Commission granted Joplin the Variance for total recoverable zinc on January 9, 2020. This is the state of Missouri's first successful Factor 3 Water Quality Variance for a heavy metal.

### **City of Kansas City**

#### **User-Centered Design and Randomized Evaluation**

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

This project was submitted for the MML 2020 Innovation Award on behalf of the city of Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO). The project took place between October 2018 and July 2019 as a collaboration between the finance department and the city manager's office. The goals for the project were to: 1) Increase the compliance rate for KCMO business owners who are delinquent in renewing their annual KCMO business license; 2) utilize a project approach that is measurable, low-cost, scalable and sustainable; and. 3) continue the City's efforts at creating official government forms and letters that are easier for the public to read, understand and use.

Based on the findings of academic research in behavioral science and public policy, the project team designed a new notice targeted to business license owners who are delinquent in renewing their annual business license. The new letter's effectiveness on increasing the compliance rate was then tested and measured through a randomized evaluation. The findings of this project resulted in numerous operational and cultural impacts for the City and better customer service for KCMO residents. KCMO business license owners that received the new notice were 21% more likely to comply. This project is a cornerstone to an organizational culture shift that increasingly prioritizes clearer communication with the public on official government documents and testing the effectiveness of messaging through evaluations and an evidence-based approach.

### **City of Lebanon**

#### **Mayor's Student Engagement Project**

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

During the summer months of 2019, Mayor Carr of Lebanon continued to search for effective methods to engage the youth in policy decisions. He recognized the importance of a collaborative approach that includes all segments of customer base, with a focus on Lebanon youth. He engaged two teachers from Lebanon schools, and together, they decided if it were difficult to get youth to attend council meetings, these meetings would come to them.

The Mayor spent a full day at Lebanon High School speaking to seven different 10th grade classes. As a result, a list of what students wanted to see was created. From this list, the student body voted on what projects they felt were most important. The Mayor has committed to completing these projects in a timely manner, while also educating students on the legislative process, funding mechanisms, design and engineering, right-of-way acquisition and the process of building consensus. The result is, the City will complete the projects voted as most important to the student body, while also including these students on how local government works for them.

**City of Nixa**

**9 pm Routine: Crime Prevention Through Social Media**

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

The Nixa Police Department wanted to reduce theft of valuables from unlocked cars parked in driveways or unclosed garages. After getting the idea from Pasco County, Florida, Nixa Police Lieutenant Jeremy Whitehill began using Facebook to create awareness of the importance of removing valuables from vehicles every night, locking the doors, closing garage doors, and leaving lights on outside the home. They call it the #9pmRoutine. In 2019, Nixa PD posted 134 times about the #9pmRoutine using creativity, humor and internet memes to help it stick in the memory of its residents.

The posts reached more than a quarter million people and were seen a total of 330,000 times, garnering engagement from more than 18,800 individuals. Members of the Nixa community thanked the department for reminding them of easy ways to prevent themselves from becoming property crime victims. The department became known in the area for its effort and earned positive media coverage for it. The best part, the campaign actually worked; contributing to a 41% reduction in theft from motor vehicles year-over-year, and a 60% reduction in monetary losses by citizens to such thefts. The project did not cost a dime and any city could implement it.

**City of O'Fallon**

**O'Day Park**

**(Extra Large City Category: population more than 30,000)**

O'Day Park is the culmination of concepts that stand alone as innovative and together offer a multi-faceted strategy to be in concert with today's environmental concerns. In 2001, the city of O'Fallon was gifted 54 acres of land off Highway DD, one-mile south of Interstate 64, to build and develop a natural park that would provide green space and nature-based amenities on the south end of town. This project would satisfy a desire for such space within the community and expand the footprint of O'Fallon's parks system. Funding for the project was approved by voters in 2016 through Proposition PARKS. The O'Day Park project team, consisting of the mayor, City Council, parks and recreation department, engineering department, SWT Design, and Navigate Building Solutions, set out to maintain the natural character of the land; protect the habitats and ecosystems native to the area; conserve and reuse water for irrigation in the rest of the park; create an adventure playground; and provide indoor and outdoor event space. This unique park opened to the public on April 27, 2019 and has been well-received by its visitors.

**City of Ozark**

**Video Library**

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

What do citizens know about your city? What should they know? To affectively address this issue the city of Ozark has established a video library as a source of information for both citizens and employees. The video library is another step in the evolution of the City's public information office's strategies. Many of the videos are distributed via social media and most are housed on the City of Ozark's website. The City also has established a YouTube Channel as a way to provide closed captioning and ensure the videos are ADA compliant. Currently video topics on the website include police video; top things to do in Ozark; public works videos; planning and development videos; law department videos; and events in Ozark videos. Citizens

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and employees is very positive. The public information department is actively encouraging ideas for new videos. Based on the initial public reaction, leadership believes the videos are critical to increasing civic literacy. The work of the public information office and the willingness of city employees to star in videos makes the video library a success. Cities looking to start their own video library would need a video camera and video editing software.

### **City of Perryville**

#### **Recreating Economic Development**

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

The city of Perryville, along with public and private partners, saw a need to recreate its economic development efforts after the resignation of its industrial development authority (IDA) director in 2012. For nearly 30 years, the City and County both appointed individuals to a non-elected, volunteer board and completely delegated the task of economic development to this group of volunteers. In 2012, the City facilitated several meetings of interested parties and ultimately worked with its partners to reinvent the antiquated IDA model in favor of a brand-new economic development authority.

This new group would be equally funded by the city of Perryville and Perry County. The Perryville Development Corporation (PDC) would also provide nominal funding and bring with them the ownership of the Industrial Park and the power of a 20-person board of directors made up of business and community leaders. The new EDA Board would consist of two elected city officials, two county commissioners, two members of the PDC, and two members of the old IDA Board. The group would meet on a monthly basis and oversee the activities of an executive director. In addition, the city administrator would serve as an ex officio member.

### **City of St. Charles**

#### **New Business Ambassador Program**

##### **(Extra Large City Category: population more than 30,000)**

In October of 2019, the city of St. Charles, Missouri, recognized the frustrations of business owners seeking to open businesses within city limits. This frustration was primarily caused by the forwarding of prospective business owners to multiple city departments in order to obtain the appropriate paperwork for their inspections, occupancy permit, building permits and business license.

The department of community development, with the help of the finance department and under the direction of Mayor Daniel J. Borgmeyer, established a new streamlined program to assist businesses through the various processes to start a business within the city of St. Charles. As part of this process, a planning division member, functioning as a new business ambassador, provides one-on-one assistance to the business owner through all approval processes necessary to open a business. This program bridges gaps between multiple city departments and allows a business owner to have a single point of contact for all of their questions related to city approval processes. Since its inception, 72 new businesses have been assisted through this program with very positive feedback from applicants.

# **Congratulations to the 2020 Innovation Award Winners!**

## **Cameron**

**Dilapidated to New  
(Member's Choice and  
Medium City Category: population 5,000 – 15, 000)**

## **Nixa**

**9 PM Routine: Crime Prevention Through Social Media  
(Large City Category: population 15,000 – 30, 000)**

## **O'Fallon**

**O'Day Park  
(Extra Large City Category: population more than 30,000)**

**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, 2021 applications can be  
submitted starting Dec. 1, 2020!**



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