

MML Innovation Award Summaries 2024

Belton - The Belton Advantage

The city launched an ambitious plan to shift the organization's culture and employee engagement at city hall. To accomplish this, City Manager Joe Warren introduced The Belton Advantage. This program took elements of the successful KU School for Public Management's High Performing Organization and introduced all staff at every level of the organization to the concepts, ideas, and metrics from the master's level coursework. By encouraging everyone to be a leader, the organization began to see huge improvements in employee engagement, communication and – most importantly – customer service with residents.

Berkeley - National Fitness Court

The city embarked on a project to join the National Fitness Campaign and construct an outdoor Fitness Court for the community. The court is a structure that provides a free outdoor gym for citizens to utilize in order to meet their fitness and wellness goals. The fitness court focusses on calisthenic based exercises in culmination with being outdoors to create a well-rounded fitness experience that is adaptable for all users no matter the level of fitness. Along with the court, a Sun Sail was installed to create shade and protection to the court and its users from the sun and other weather conditions. The court was built in order to promote health and wellness and help bring healthy options to an impoverished community and serves as a symbol of a city moving forward and creating better lives for its citizens.

Brentwood - Crosswalk Lighting Improvements Project

Strassner Drive is a collector road that receives over 5,000 vehicles per day and connects two arterial roads. There is a midblock crosswalk the YMCA. The project objective was to add lighting improvements to provide pedestrian awareness to motorists during low ambient light conditions. Lighting closer to the actual midblock crossing and use of solar-powered equipment for the lighting was a major consideration for project sustainability. The project's objectives were achieved since Tapco, the equipment manufacturer, and Brentwood Public Works were able to install the VizMark equipment and improve lighting conditions in advance and at the crosswalk.

Butler - Kenton and Friends Inclusive Playground

Kenton and Friends Playground was the fruition of a community-driven, city-supported inclusive playground project. The aim was to create a community-accessible recreational space that could be enjoyed by people of all abilities and ages within Butler and surrounding communities. The project was led by a committee of volunteers with support from city officials that involved seeking proposal bids for playground equipment that accommodated individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities, as well as catering to other, typical community-goers. The ultimate goal was to foster social inclusion, promote physical activity, and provide an engaging environment where everyone could play together without barriers.

Columbia - The Shops at Sharp End

This initiative creates a collaborative retail space, reducing barriers for underrepresented entrepreneurs in Columbia. The project provides incubation space for retail startups through workshops, mentoring, and business coaching in a shared space that allows them to prove their concept by selling their products and learn the necessary skills to grow their business into a viable retail operation. This project is a strategic partnership between Regional Economic Development Inc., Central Missouri Community Action, and The District Downtown CID (The District), as well as the City of Columbia and Boone County. This program supports minority-owned businesses, stimulates economic growth, and enriches the local entrepreneurial climate.

Ellisville - Elevate Ellisville Pandemic-Era Community Engagement

The project aimed to develop the Elevate Ellisville Comprehensive Plan, serving as a guiding framework for responsible growth over the next two decades. It sought to engage the community in decision-making, prioritize inclusivity, and address community needs and aspirations amid the COVID-19 pandemic. It successfully achieved its objectives by actively involving the community, leveraging innovative online engagement tools, and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of current challenges and future opportunities. The final plan reflects community values and priorities, establishing a roadmap for sustainable and successful growth. The use of online platforms, storytelling techniques, and interactive events offers scalable strategies for fostering community participation and ownership in planning processes.

Florissant - Esports - Fusion 314

The city was introduced to the compelling idea of creating an Esports facility. They visited area universities Esports facilities and confirmed the rising trend of Esports. In February of 2023 the city hosted a meeting and presented the idea. Public of all ages attended, and their response was an overwhelming YES. The city secured \$200,000 from ARPA to fund this endeavor. Fusion 314 is a new equitable way to engage the community, help the youth thrive, and provide a space for the community to gather. Fusion 314 is a safe, inexpensive, visually stunning, ADA compliant and highly accessible facility with the latest gaming technology for anyone to use.

Fulton - Fulton's Pop-Up Splash Pad

The city organized a Pop-up Splash Pad event last summer, with the objectives of offering water play opportunities, fostering interdepartmental collaboration, and providing a low-cost community event. Minimal costs were incurred, with only \$30 spent on supplies, while the rest was covered within existing budgets. Held at Carver Park on September 2, 2023, the event featured water streams set up by the Fire Department and water games by the Parks and Recreation Department, with the Police Department ensuring safety. Approximately 85 people attended, meeting the event's objectives.

Grandview - Monarchs on Main

Grandview's Main Street underwent a \$6 million transformation 2012-2016 spurring a revitalization of what's considered by many today to be the heart of the city. When the city decided to eliminate contracted maintenance of Main Street and add a horticulturalist, Parks & Recreation staff took the opportunity to grow Main Street into

something more. Staff came up with *Monarchs on Main*. By supplementing milkweed to the existing native landscaping along the street, the plant life would provide life-sustaining resources for part of the ecosystem in the form of a butterfly highway. With just \$10,000 and some mulch and milkweed, a one mile stretch of Grandview Main Street now blossoms and blooms April through September and has become a Certified Monarch Waystation contributing to monarch butterfly conservation and its spectacular migration.

Harrisonville - Kiwanis 100-year Anniversary Playground Project

The Harrisonville Kiwanis Club spearheaded a community project to commemorate its 100th anniversary by establishing an inclusive playground and picnic area at Harrisonville City Park. With the involvement of the Kiwanis Club, the City of Harrisonville, and support from the Sunderland Foundation and the community, the project was a success. The playground features interactive play equipment like the Yalp Sona Arch, currently the only one in the Kansas City area. The Sona Arch offers 29 different games to play, with categories including Brains, Fitness, Imagination, Music, and Reaction, promoting physical activity and social interaction. Additionally, wheelchair-accessible picnic tables were installed, enhancing inclusivity. The interactive playground arch provides the Parks and Recreation Department with analytic numbers to gauge how much the playground is being utilized.

Independence - Independence TOGETHER

The city, Community Services League and the Missouri Department of Transportation launched a roadside clean-up program, Independence TOGETHER. With the help of ARPA funds, the program focuses on addressing two key community priorities – assisting residents who are experiencing homelessness, and community beautification. Individuals who are unhoused or experiencing unstable housing are paid daily at a rate of \$12/hour for their work cleaning up roadside litter along main city streets. An additional \$3/hour is put in a housing savings fund. After every 100 hours, employees can request the \$300 be paid toward housing expenses. On top of monetary benefits, employees are also provided with proper work attire and supplies. Launched in March 2023, this program has seen numerous ‘graduates’ move into stable housing. In the first 10 months, the program has had 73 total applicants (which had to be paused due to the long wait list). Of the 25 applicants that have been hired, 15 have been moved into permanent housing.

Jennings - Community Tree Grant Program

In 2023, the city launched a Tree Removal Grant for the residents within the municipality. With the intent to assist residents with upkeep and maintenance of their property, the city made available \$5,000 for each property owner. The process included the residents receiving three bids from licensed tree services and submitting them with pictures of the location and tree to be serviced. Jennings would then choose the most reasonable and responsible bid. The funding for the residential grant program was provided from ARPA funding. Tree service contractors were remitted payment for the services once the work was verified, and proper business paperwork was submitted.

Jennings was able to provide services for more than 135 residents and funded approximately \$350,000 in services.

Kanas City - Kansas City Fire Department Drone Program

The Kansas City Fire Department (KCFD) has pioneered a groundbreaking drone program, deploying seven drones across various firefighting disciplines. The primary objective is to improve efficiency and speed in life-saving operations. Operated by five licensed pilots, these drones are equipped with thermal imaging technology to aid in locating victims. In a notable case, a drone was deployed to locate a person at risk of jumping from a 75-foot-high bridge into the Missouri River. Additionally, at the recent Super Bowl Championship parade, drones played a crucial role in locating victims in a crowd after gunshots were fired.

Kearney - 19th Street Interchange & Complete Street Project

The 19th Street Interchange and Complete Street Project included the construction of a new Diverging Diamond interchange at Interstate 35 and 19th Street and the construction of a Complete Street between Nation Road and Watson Drive. The project connected the community that was divided by the interstate and provides safer access for all. The project included three new roundabouts working in concert to support traffic and economic activity as the area develops. The Complete Street portion of the project included bike lanes and shared use paths and sidewalks. The project team included city staff, MoDOT, adjacent property owners, Federal Highway Administration and other regulating agencies.

Lee's Summit - Safe Passage

The Lee's Summit Police Department teamed up with Heartland Center for Behavioral Change, American Addiction Centers, and the Kansas City Assessment and Triage Center, to find recovery options for citizens struggling with substance use. When a person approaches the Police Department seeking treatment, they are not at risk of arrest for any substances found on them. Instead, the Police Department removes and destroys any drugs and paraphernalia and locates a treatment center for them. There is no cost involved, no insurance requirement and if a participant is initially unsuccessful, they can always return and attempt treatment again.

Maryland Heights - Fee Fee Renewable Energy Center

The city partnered with Ameren Missouri to participate in their Neighborhood Solar program. The community center parking lot was a prime location to capture solar power. The city now hosts canopy-style solar panels that provide clean energy to the community grid. They also serve as a hub for renewable workforce development and solar education across the region. Providing shade and weather protection to parking for those visiting our community center, the panels hold 1,335 solar modules, which have a capacity of 500 kilowatts of energy generation at any single point in time. This is equal to the energy used by about 55 homes over the same time. Between April 18, 2023, and February 6, 2024, our solar array generated over 590,394 Kilowatt hours, which is enough energy to provide the complete electrical needs of 60 homes, exceeding initial projections in only 10 months.

Nixa - One Nixa, One Read

The city, Nixa Public Schools, and the Christian County Library created the “One Nixa, One Read” program. These organizations encouraged the entire Nixa community, young and old, to read the same book together at the same time. They gave away free copies of the book “Wonder” by R.J. Palacios (one per household). Summer-school teachers integrated the book into curriculum plans. They held a kickoff event at the library, which also hosted weekly book club meetings, and the parks department hosted the bookending “Movie in the Park” where the community watched the movie based on the book they had read together.

O’Fallon - O’Fallon Park Passport

At the start of the 2023 summer, Parks & Recreation introduced a new engagement opportunity to the community: the O’Fallon Park Passport. With more than 400 acres of parkland spread across O’Fallon, the goal of the Park Passport program was to help connect residents and visitors to the multitude of amenities provided throughout their great parks. In addition to connecting the community with the parks, the Passport was created to educate families on the many departments who work alongside the city to make the recreation programs and events successful. The Park Passport was a great tool the department was able to use to engage and educate residents.

Republic - Rooting Republic

Rooting Republic is a successful volunteer program focused on bringing neighbors together through gardening in city parks. The group meets regularly to work in various community gardens, flower beds, and landscaped areas. The Parks Maintenance Division began the program with the objective of encouraging everyone to volunteer and make a difference while learning more about gardening and the community. Rooting Republic relied on feedback from volunteers to find unique and innovative ways to build excitement. The benefits of this program include a renewed trust between the community and city that continues to build relationships and values that define the community.

Sikeston - Stalcup Building Project

The city found the historic Stalcup Building in downtown Sikeston in danger of collapse, with an owner unable to stabilize and repair the building. City officials saw a need to purchase and rehabilitate the building, the oldest building in the city, and put it back on the market for resale. The goal was to preserve a fixture of the historic downtown community and restore a significant part of the community into a thriving business by making it attractive to potential buyers. The City Council along with City Staff determined the building needed rehabilitation and secured the funds to purchase the building from the owners. The city was successful in its endeavor, purchasing the building and making needed improvements. The building was then sold and is now a popular restaurant that has become the anchor of the downtown district.

St. Joseph - Impacting a Community Through Infrastructure Investment

Facing tight budgets and aging infrastructure, an effort was launched with a multi-faceted approach to revitalize the city. Through a collaborative effort with residents (voter-approved bond issuances and sales taxes) and federal/state partners (airport modernization), the approach tackled critical areas. Innovative financing, like Energy Performance Contracts, helped modernize City Hall. This approach also ensured continued viability of the city's iconic 26-mile parkway system and brought the River Bluff Trails Park to life, attracting regional visitors. By utilizing creative financing and engaging the community, municipalities can achieve cost savings, promote sustainability, and potentially stimulate economic growth, all while preserving their history.

St. Peters - Sensory Trail at Ollie's Fun Forest

The Sensory Trail at Ollie's Fun Forest is an impactful community amenity welcoming children and adults of all ages and abilities. The unique setting is an immersive, multi-sensory and accessible nature trail that engages the senses while fostering nature exploration and learning. The Sensory Trail creates spaces for activities that promote physical and mental well-being, relaxation and family interaction. Play areas designed with natural elements encourage children to explore, learn and connect with the forest environment. The trail's design complements the natural beauty of the mature forest, providing visitors with a visually pleasing and harmonious experience while incorporating sustainable materials and landscaping practices to minimize the environmental impact, preserving old-growth trees. City staff across multiple departments were involved in every step, from trail design to asset management. Community organizations and experts also partnered with the city.

Waynesville - Small Business Enhancement Program

The city instituted a program to help small businesses with projects to assist with the property clean up, renovation and functional programs for business enhancements. Two distinct programs were developed with this initiative. The Small Business Enhancement Program was an ARPA funded municipal grant initiative aimed at assisting existing small businesses by assisting with startup costs, supplies and equipment. The program was funded with a \$30,000 budget and had five awardees in 2023. The Small Business Renovation/Demolition Program was an ARPA funded municipal grant initiative aimed at assisting existing small businesses to improve their businesses and locations by assisting them with remodeling costs, demolition, paving, or other activities related to making commercial properties more attractive. The program was funded with a \$50,000 budget and had 10 awardees in 2023 and 2024.