



## 2018 CITY LIVABILITY AWARDS

### FIRST PLACE (Populations 100,000 and above)

Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn

Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn's **Stay and Play Program** was created to reach at-risk teens and help curb the rising tide of violence that plagued east and central Tampa. The Stay and Play Program provides a safe and productive environment for teenagers at parks and recreation facilities during the summer. Since 2015, 70,369 teens have enjoyed free admission to 13 community centers and pools, from 6 pm to midnight during their summer vacation. The benefits have been enormous, with a reduction in drugs and gang violence in East Tampa resulting in an 8.9% drop in the crime rate.

### FIRST PLACE (Populations below 100,000)

Broken Arrow (OK) Mayor Craig Thurmond

The **Saving Historic Downtown - Birth of the Rose District** is a redevelopment plan for a new arts and entertainment area in the historic part of the Broken Arrow, which over decades had become a neglected and economically challenged area. Many new businesses, with expenditures of over \$25 million, relocated into this once declining district. These changes have elevated the quality of life for residents and brought more than 1,000 new jobs and over 70 new businesses into the area. Over the last six years, new development has resulted in an increase of almost \$4 million in local property taxes. Annual municipal sales taxes collected in the area during that same time-period have also gone up from about \$18,885.00, to over \$400,000 – a 2,025% increase.

## **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT** **(Populations 100,000 and above)**

Austin Mayor Steve Adler

The **Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP)** is an innovative model for collaborative partnerships for planning, maintaining, and improving Austin neighborhoods. NPP provides a platform for neighborhood and community organizations to affect public improvements by sharing in the costs of those efforts with the City of Austin. Through the program, assistance is given to neighborhood groups in developing, resourcing, and executing small- to medium-sized improvement projects in the City's right of way or on City-owned property.

Bridgeport Mayor Joe Ganim

The **Mayor's Initiative for Reentry Affairs** serves ex-offenders and people who are being released to Bridgeport from prison. The program assists and provides resources for employment readiness and placement, housing, mental health and addiction services, and education. In 2003, Mayor Ganim resigned after being convicted on federal felony corruption charges. After serving 7 years, Mayor Ganim was re-elected to another term in 2015, demonstrating that second chances are possible for returning citizens.

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price

**FitWorth** is a family-focused grassroots initiative of Mayor Betsy Price to address the growing trend of childhood obesity in the city. This active campaign was strategically designed and carefully implemented to create a culture of wellness through physical activity and mindful eating. To engage and encourage citizens, Mayor Price launched an annual FitWorth Mayor's Challenge, a four-week healthy tracking challenge for youth with nearly 33,000 children participating at 113 Fort Worth I.S.D. elementary, middle, and high schools annually.

Plano Mayor Harry LaRosiliere

The **Plano Mayors Summer Internship Program (PMSIP)** provides rising juniors and seniors high school students with meaningful summer employment during an eight-week paid summer internship. In 2017, an innovative "Teacher Externship" partnership with the Plano Independent School District was added to the program. Revolving around teachers spending two to four weeks of their summer in local businesses and industries, these externships give educators the opportunity to experience real-work applications in fast-changing fields.

Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum

The **Tallahassee Future Leaders Academy (TFLA)** is an innovative eight-week summer employment program offered by the City of Tallahassee to provide eligible youth with an enriching summer work experience. TFLA is based on five foundational pillars: Job Readiness Training, Employment, College Exposure, Financial Literacy and Education, and Community Impact. In 2015, the inaugural class of 100 youth were employed within the City of Tallahassee Departments. The program has increased by nearly 50 or more participants each year. Now in the fourth year of programming, TFLA has served over 500 youth and provided over 460 professional certifications.

**HONORABLE MENTION**  
**(Populations 100,000 and above)**

Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan

The **Embracing our Immigrants & Refugees & the Natural Helpers Program** helps newly arrived men, women and children successfully integrate into the Aurora community and American society. Through the Natural Helpers Program, newly arriving immigrants and refugees are provided with the tools needed to address linguistic and cultural barriers, partner with law enforcement agencies, reach for opportunity, and learn about city resources.

Clarksville Mayor Kim McMillan

Fort Campbell supports the 5th largest military population in the Army and the 7th largest in the Department of Defense with approximately 29,000 active duty, 50,000 family members, 112,600 retirees, 4,000 civilian employees and 18,000 reservists. The **Fort Campbell Warrior Transition Battalion Education and Employment Initiative** assists soldiers employment readiness as they transition into civilian life. The City and Fort Campbell entered into a Memorandum of Agreement to partner in the effort to train soldiers as they prepare for transition from the military.

Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss' **Digital City Hall** is a municipal website redesign effort to provide effective digital services on the Grand Rapids City website. Mayor Bliss wanted to offer a new way for the community to interact with city government, and knew enabling digital self-service on the new website would be the centerpiece of the 24/7/365 customer service transformation. The new site offers the community access to city services and information on any device, on any browser, at any time, from any place.

Warren MI Mayor James Fouts

**"Operation Clean Sweep"** is a program to improve Warren's older neighborhoods, where blight had lowered property values and led many residents to move. A well-organized program of intensive house-to-house and business-to-business inspections and cleanup were conducted in older neighborhoods. A task force comprised of representatives from city departments, including police, public service, building/property maintenance, sanitation and communications executed weeklong sweeps of targeted neighborhoods. Follow-up inspections showed 95 percent compliance.

### **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT (Populations below 100,000)**

Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus

After a 2015-2016 King County Community Health Needs Assessment showed Auburn as having the highest percentages of behavioral/mental distress, obesity, smoking, diabetes, low income, and unemployment and more. Auburn Mayor Nancy Backus created the **R.E.A.D.Y. (Real Emergency Aid Depends on You)** community health program to address the behavioral/mental health/substance abuse crisis in Auburn. To help improve the health of the community a one-hour course was created to help citizens understand the availability of the life-saving drug for opioid overdose – Naloxone. The second objective of the program was to increase awareness within the community about common behavioral/mental health/substance issues to remove the stigma.

Huntington Mayor Steve Williams

The **Quick Response Team (QRT)** is a collaborative effort among law enforcement, medical care providers, mental health agencies and university researchers to bring a rapid response to the opioid epidemic in Huntington, West Virginia. This multifaceted, multidisciplinary team provides support to individuals within 72 hours of experiencing a drug overdose. Although it has only been in operation since December 2017, of the 128 clients with whom the QRT has successfully made contact, 45, or 35 percent, are now in treatment.

Lima Mayor David J. Berger

**Lima Stadium Park** is a twenty-year revitalization and repurpose of the severely deteriorated structure and land surrounding the historic stadium. The project revitalized five acres of land creating 3 acres of open green space to the existing stadium grounds. Meandering sidewalks, extended

stadium viewing areas, enhanced public lighting, a new public restroom facility, a giant public splash-pad waterpark, and a grotto area which commemorates the five local high schools from over the years now contribute to an aesthetically pleasing, vibrant community space.

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul A. Dyster

The **Niagara Falls Zombie Fight Project (ZFP)** was created to address vacant homes (also known as zombie properties) and help expedite the process of specific properties stuck in lengthy bank foreclosures. The cause of the City of Niagara Falls' zombie and/or blighted vacant and abandoned property problem is population loss. The program began in April 2017, and as of February 2018, 55 properties have been inspected, 12 foreclosures/sales have been forced, seven are currently filing for expedited foreclosure, two have been demolished, and an expedited foreclosure settlement is currently pending.

Sumter Mayor Joseph McElveen.

When the local school district started freezing money for field trips and busing costs, Sumter Mayor Joseph McElveen realized that wanted a program for underserved students to attend live performances at the Opera House, so he created the **Y.E.S. (Youth Education Scholarship) Program**. Y.E.S. provides scholarships to the performances, which are available to any student who is on a free or reduced lunch program. Since its Fall 2016 inception, over 7,000 K-12 students from the Sumter School District have participated in the program. Through their participation, these youth were exposed to an otherwise inaccessible experience

### **HONORABLE MENTION (Populations below 100,000)**

Gloucester Mayor David Mayer

**Project SAVE (Substance Abuse Visionary Effort)** focuses police efforts and practices beyond the "first arrest" and instead combines policing initiatives into a more flexible and productive practice involving prevention and intervention. One of the most significant initiatives associated with Project SAVE, the SAVE Advocate, entails having a drug and alcohol professional in the Gloucester Township Municipal Court. Gloucester Township was the first in the state to add a professional licensed alcohol and drug counselor to its court. Since the implementation of Project SAVE in June of 2014, the SAVE Advocate has offered services to a total of 158 subjects. Of these 158 people involved in substance abuse, 131 (82%) have engaged in the project - meaning that they have participated in some

level of treatment. Additionally, of these 131 people, 24 (18%) have fully completed treatment, which may consist of either in-patient or outpatient treatment. Seventeen (17) of the 24 (71%) have remained arrest free since completing the Project SAVE Program. Interestingly, 10 of the 24 that completed the program were on probation.

Dublin Mayor David Haubert

**Valor Crossing** is a centrally located affordable veterans housing establishment, which is also a key component of the City's downtown revitalization effort. Valor Crossing opened in May 2017 and consists of 66 total units (24 one-bedroom, 20 two-bedroom, and 21 three-bedroom units). These units are intended to be affordable to households making a total earning of 30-60% of the area median income, with a preference for veterans and their families. The City was able to leverage economic development tools to help make the project financially viable. By increasing the overall number of residential units in the downtown area, the City hopes to invigorate the area and increase demand for additional retail, restaurants and entertainment in the downtown.

Gulfport Mayor Billy Hewes

**Urban Living Room, A Community Project**, began under the leadership of Mayor Billy Hewes, Fishbone Alley is a narrow, pedestrian-oriented street that is designed to focus on livability, instead of parking and traffic. One block long and 20 foot wide, located in historic downtown Gulfport. Before the alley was revitalized, it was a common place for illegal dumping, tons of trash; rodents were always present, as well as some other unsavory activities. With the addition of Fishbone Alley local businesses now have a sought after community and tourism destination. Fishbone Alley was conceived to be, not only a destination for visitors, but also a heartbeat in the middle of downtown Gulfport, drawing the community to be part in creating the ultimate "Urban Living Room". Art programs, funded through the Gulfport Main Street Assoc., create an atmosphere of art in motion, an ever-changing diorama of sculpture, art and entertainment.

Marion Mayor Nicolas AbouAssaly

Marion, Iowa is no longer imagining how art might transform an underutilized alley in the heart of its commercial business district. The ImaginArt in the Alley project, now referred to as **Uptown Artway**, has given the district new life. The space features nine, permanent public art installations and serves as a pedestrian destination and community "living room," with new restaurants, pubs, gathering spaces and lighting to illuminate the night scene. The business district has experienced a rebirth

with new businesses and residents recognizing the lure of this unique gathering space. Since the project began, five new businesses have been established in adjacent properties and five buildings have been purchased and restored.