



2007 All-America City Award Application

Community Information

Community name and state:

City of Sierra Madre, California

Your community is applying as a:

Neighborhood Town City County Region

Has your community applied before? Yes No If Yes, which years: 2006

Has your community been a Finalist before? Yes No If Yes, which years: 2006

Has your community been an All-America City before? Yes No If Yes, which years: _____

Contact Information

All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout entire competition and for follow-up):

Name: Elisa Claire Weaver

Title: Deputy Director of Community & Personnel Services

Organization: City of Sierra Madre

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**List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application (add additional lines if needed):
(Provide name and title; organization; phone; e-mail address)**

Joshua Moran, Webb-Martin Realtors / Community Volunteer / Application Chair, 2007 Sierra Madre AAC Steering Committee, 626-808-8083, joshuamoran@gmail.com

Jan Reed, Retired Businesswoman / Community Volunteer / Application Committee, 2007 Sierra Madre AAC Steering Committee, 626-355-3999, donjan555@earthlink.net

Elisa Weaver, Deputy Director of Community & Personnel Services, City of Sierra Madre / Community Volunteer / Chair, 2007 Sierra Madre AAC Steering Committee, 626-355-5278, eweaver@ci.sierra-madre.ca.us

The community applying will receive one complimentary membership (or a membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name: Elisa Weaver, Deputy Director of Community & Personnel Services
Address: 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.
City, State, Zip Code: Sierra Madre, CA 91024
Phone Number: 626-355-5278 **Fax:** 626-836-6656
Email: eweaver@ci.sierra-madre.ca.us

If we are designated an All-America City, we agree to follow NCL's rules (available on the Web site) regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Name: Elisa C. Weaver **Title:** Deputy Director of Community & Personnel Services

Community Statistics

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (*source suggestions:* U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Economic Security, State Department of Finance, Department of Public Health, and local school statistics)

POPULATION (*in year 2000 or most recent*): 11,023
Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1990-2000 (*indicate + or -*): -1.7 %
Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN (*percentage*):

White alone	82 %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	10 %
Black or African American alone	01 %
Asian alone	05 %
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) alone	0.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOP) alone	01 %
Some other race alone	.03%
Two or more races	.04%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 79,588

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 1.9%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 1.7%

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP (percentages, if available):

19 years old and under	20.6 %
20-24	3.3 %
25-44	30.8 %
45-64	29.7 %
65 and over	15.7 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP: 62.6 %

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:

<u>Management, professional and related occupations</u>	<u>57.2 %</u>
<u>Sales and office occupations</u>	<u>25.2 %</u>
<u>Service occupations</u>	<u>8.2 %</u>

Source/Date: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

★★ Please attach a state map with your community clearly marked. ★★



Part I

Civic Infrastructure

Describe your community. Using the four major sections of the National Civic League's *The Civic Index, Second Edition* (see www.ncl.org for more information), examine your community's civic infrastructure and civic capacity and describe how your community *lives* each of the answers to each of the following questions. Please include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths and faced its challenges. The roman numerals correspond to parts of *The Civic Index, Second Edition*. Also see the application instructions for this section.

Add lines as needed for your responses

I. What is our community vision for its future? (300 word maximum)

"The treasure of Sierra Madre is found in its volunteers..." As Sierra Madre celebrates its Centennial with banners streaming through the downtown, we have reflected over the past 100 years on how the town has become a City through the commitment of its volunteers. The Centennial is not only a time to reflect on the past 100 years, but it is a benchmark for looking forward to the next 100 years. We know, without a doubt, that these years will take shape with the continued support of the volunteers who are the "treasure of Sierra Madre."

Sierra Madre is a village of leaders and planners as illustrated by the number of community master plans. These master plans provide the "treasure maps" toward Sierra Madre's future. Each of these plans 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. Empowered with this input, residents, business owners and City staff assess strategies for development, and recommend programs and measures to fill needs not being met. Each master plan contains tangible recommendations, suggests strategies for implementation, and lists measurable goals -- making it a living document for many years to come.

Each of these plans strives to preserve the nature of our small town while anticipating inevitable change. Their creation and implementation perfectly illustrate our town's vision of the future: that we all share the responsibility of preserving for generations to come the true "Treasures" of Sierra Madre: the mountain views, the village character and the volunteer spirit.

II. How are we fulfilling the new roles for community governance?

With Sierra Madre City Council as the engine, six Commissions and over 20 committees join the train of volunteers in the governance of the City.

The City Council is elected by the residents while Commissioners and committee members are appointed by the Council, and meet, observing the Brown Act, at least once a month at various locations. All Council members are limited to two consecutive terms, after which they must go off the Council before running again. These term limits, however, are not codified in any resolution or ordinance; rather, they have the same preclusive effect as long-standing small town traditions.

A prime example of a new role of community governance is the teenage Commissioner on the Community Services Commission giving our community's youth a voice.

The City's six volunteer Commissions have a number of sub-committees which report back to the Commissioners. The Commissions then provide insight to the City Council which make policy decisions that reflect the wishes of the community. These Commissions and committees include:

- Planning and Cultural Heritage Commission
 - Ad-hoc Hillside Management Zone Committee
 - Downtown Specific Plan

- East Montecito Specific Plan
- Community Arts Commission
 - Cultural Arts Master Plan
 - Art Review Board
- Senior Community Commission
 - Senior Master Plan
- Tree Advisory Commission
- Library Board of Trustees
 - Friends of the Sierra Madre Library
 - Library Foundation
- Community Services Commission
 - SMTV3 Community Cable Channel Committee
 - Ad-hoc Transit Committee
 - Parks Master Plan
 - Youth Master Plan

These are in addition to other city-coordinated and community-coordinated event committees.

All City Council and Planning Commission meetings are televised and are replayed throughout the week. The Cable Channel Committee is looking to broadcast the meetings through the City's website. These efforts at community outreach and governance are reflected in the over 60% voter turnout in city elections.

II. (a). What is the extent and nature of community member participation in community improvement efforts? (300 word maximum)

Imagine a pair of Eagle Scouts who spent weekends repainting the town's band shell. Imagine the dozen or so dog owners who saw their dream of a dog park come to fruition. Imagine the thousands of citizens who have volunteered over the years, serving on Commissions and committees. Sierra Madre residents have always been the driving force behind community improvement efforts. Our town wouldn't function without the zealous participation of its community members.

The true definition of Sierra Madre's community involvement can be found in the groups formed outside the boundaries of city government.

- In 1994 and again in 2003, community members rallied to save our aging pool, raising \$175,000 in both campaigns to replace the pool's mechanical equipment.
- In 2000, a group of forward-thinking residents formed the Community Foundation to create a charitable endowment to benefit town projects.
- In 2003, the youth sport organizations teamed together with residents and the school district to renovate the fields in town, raising over \$200,000 and adding much-needed field space.
- The Friends of the Library have raised in excess of a quarter of a million dollars, and lobbied for grants and funds to renovate our existing library.
- The Sierra Madre Environmental Action Council has been preserving open space and maintaining our natural parks for years.
- Most notably, our Volunteer Fire Department has been responding to calls and putting out fires since 1921.

Additionally, the community has come together in a number of other projects which raised money to renovate the elementary school auditorium, to build a veteran's memorial, and to preserve our traditions through the historic archives.

Sierra Madre's residents not only initiate community improvement, they see it through, year after year.

II. (b). What role does government play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

In Sierra Madre, we hold government to three very important roles: government as a facilitator, stimulating discussion and providing a range of alternative ideas; government as an implementer, ensuring that the will of the community is carried out in an appropriate fashion; finally, government as a problem-solver, identifying problems and providing valuable and meaningful long-term solutions.

The role that government plays in decision-making is always apparent, but two specific issues identified by the community stand out:

- **Senior Housing:** Sierra Madre has the highest per capita number of seniors in the region. With property values rising and senior housing diminishing, it became apparent that seniors are becoming more vulnerable. Therefore, the City government worked with the senior community to plan for additional affordable housing. We were able to pull local, county, state, and federal resources together to accomplish this goal. The result is a beautiful senior housing project.
- **Open Spaces:** With beautiful views of the San Gabriel Mountains, we love to hike, bike, run, and just be outside. With land at a premium in Southern California, the City Council made it a priority that there would always be adequate open space for residents to participate in their favorite outdoor activities. Taking direction from the community, the City Council updated existing park equipment and facilities, procured hillside land to create a Mountain Conservancy and negotiated the purchase of open space for a new passive park, Goldberg Park.

A healthy collaboration between the people and their elected officials is the benchmark for success of any great town, and indeed for an All-America City. In Sierra Madre, leaders are often recognized as friends and neighbors who are accessible and open to discussion, debate and community input.

Sierra Madre is a beautiful example of what happens when the people and the government come together to work, putting their community first.

II. (c). What role does the non-profit sector play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

Nonprofits play a critical role in Sierra Madre's decision-making process by providing a platform for communication and by engaging all Sierra Madreans to get involved. Not only do our churches, organizations and foundations contribute their own ideas, they sponsor and host forums and town halls so all community stakeholders can be informed and heard.

Sierra Madre's nonprofits fund and staff nearly all events offered in the City. They are part of a rich tradition of collaboration where City, business community, and nonprofits work together to achieve greater things than any group could by itself. This cooperative volunteerism is a hallmark of Sierra Madre's quality of life.

For instance, the Sierra Madre Rose Float Association enters the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade each year. Our nonprofits contribute the necessary funding and manpower for the venture to succeed. Built without public or corporate funding and at a fraction of the cost of other floats, Sierra Madre's 2007 entry won the second highest honor awarded to a float by Pasadena's Tournament of Roses.

Our Wistaria Festival is another showcase of cooperation. This is the Sierra Madre Chamber of Commerce's flagship event, celebrating the "Largest Blooming Plant," the Wistaria Vine, as designated by the Guinness Book of World Records. This annual celebration of our community and our famous vine could not take place without Kiwanis, Rotary, the Woman's Club, the Civic Club and the other nonprofits that staff the event.

Sierra Madre's Relay for Life also exemplifies how nonprofits bring us together in a common purpose to accomplish results that surpass the size of our community. It is a model effort that involves every organization in

Sierra Madre. In fact, Sierra Madre's Relay is the American Cancer Society's most successful Relay for Life in terms of per capita fundraising and participation.

II. (d). What role does business play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)

The relationship between the City and business owners could be called "a good marriage." And that's what it takes to develop a successful downtown atmosphere that draws residents into the center of town.

Through a partnership between City Community Services and downtown business owners, the City closes a downtown through-street on Friday nights during the spring and fall to show movies, free-of-charge, to the community. Business owners sponsor this event, easily garnering results of increased activity as residents pour into the heart of Sierra Madre to enjoy chatting with neighbors while watching a movie.

Each year the City of Sierra Madre hosts a "Sierra Madre Honors..." Dinner in the fall. One of the many community awards given is the Wistaria Award in recognition of City/Community partnership, presented to a local business whose major contributions to Sierra Madre have demonstrated a partnership which assists in and provides services, programs or enhances the general welfare of the community. Webb-Martin Realtors, the 2006 recipient, sponsored and held two community neighborhood watch meetings and sent postcards to every residence to ensure community awareness of budget hearings. In addition to their sponsorship and participation in community events, Webb-Martin employees volunteer on 17 different community Commissions and committees.

Another example of business contribution is that one of our banks, Washington Mutual, folds bills of money for members of CLIMB (a school for multi-handicapped blind) which is located in Sierra Madre. Local merchants are able to identify these same CLIMB students calling them by name. What a boon for young people with the life-long handicaps exhibited by CLIMB residents.

By working together, the City leaders and business owners have forged a positive relationship, much resembling that "good marriage," that carries both entities to the best results for Sierra Madre: increasing foot traffic downtown, therefore, increasing sales tax revenue.

III. How do we work together as a community?

The City works together through long-term planning processes such as updating the City's original General Plan, and through smaller, more localized programs such as the Friday Family Movie Nights or Sunday Concerts in the Park, which pull together all the threads of the community.

Sierra Madre prides itself on having a "family atmosphere" and one where volunteers are vital and their contributions are honored and recognized.

From the many Commissions and committees that deal with diverse subject matter, to awards like the Citizen of the Year, Older American of the Year, and the annual "Sierra Madre Honors... Dinner" – the focus is on community involvement and participation in a manner that unites people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate our treasures.

III. (a). How does our community recognize and celebrate its diversity? (300 word maximum)

The Center for Living Independence for the Multi-Handicapped Blind (CLIMB) has been a longstanding example of Sierra Madre's diversity. Its mission (to design and deliver vocational, residential and community integration services to developmentally disabled individuals) has thrived because the nature of the community was "deemed

ideal” by founder Bill Young. Sierra Madre’s tolerant citizenry, and a City Council that believed civic responsibility took precedence over litigious concerns, has helped the program flourish for 30 years.

Multi-handicapped, blind CLIMB resident Jo Anne Seamus, when asked about being part of the community, responded, “The people love us and are very honest. And we love the townspeople for accepting us and looking out for our well-being.”

Many cities celebrate religious and cultural activities during the holidays. Sierra Madre, striving to be an All-America City, attempts to recognize them all with the Woman’s Club-orchestrated Prayer Breakfast featuring local ministers who bring thanks for our “Foothill Village.” Similarly, on the third Sunday in December the Candlelight Walk features a sea of citizens whose candles illuminate the night sky which can be seen for miles around as they walk from the top of Baldwin down to Kersting Court where leaders of all religious denominations bring words of faith and hope.

Our City is now in the process of producing its first Cultural Arts Master Plan which will focus attention on ways to recognize, promote and celebrate its artistic diversity.

Sierra Madre “partners” and provides support for Southern California Lyric Theater, a nonprofit, volunteer-run, theater education and performance organization. SCLT not only fulfills its educational mission through weekly youth workshops and the rehearsal and performance of mainstage productions, but also mainstreams, both as actors and as technical staff, theatrically talented students with physical, emotional, educational and mental disabilities.

III. (b). How does our community work with neighboring communities to address shared challenges? Is there a shared regional vision? (300 word maximum)

The City of Sierra Madre is integrally involved in a number of regional efforts by neighboring communities to address shared challenges. Several years ago, the City partnered with Los Angeles County to successfully purchase 125 acres of open space in the foothills above the City. This ensured the property was preserved as open space for the entire community to enjoy in perpetuity.

Similarly, the City is actively working with the adjoining cities of Arcadia, Monrovia, Los Angeles County and the United States Forest Service to develop a permanent solution that will ensure Santa Anita Canyon Road, a one-way road into the Angeles National Forest that is widely used by hikers, campers and others in the Los Angeles County area, remains open, maintained in an operable condition, and accessible to everyone. The road, which crosses all the respective jurisdictions, has been a concern in this regard for over 30 years, and, thanks to the regional efforts of the City, a permanent solution is close at hand.

Finally, in what is perhaps the best example of regional cooperation to address shared challenges, the City of Sierra Madre has worked successfully with the City of Arcadia since 1996 on joint water infrastructure projects. The two cities collaborated with the US Army Corps of Engineers in a Seismic Reliability Study (SRS) of both cities’ water systems. Since the SRS was completed in 1997, the Cities have continued to work together on projects that serve to benefit the reliability of their water systems, including a water system interconnect (1999), reservoir replacements (ongoing), and groundwater recharge studies and recharge project (ongoing). The two cities have expanded the scope of their efforts, initiating regional studies for the benefit of groundwater recharge and water supply improvements throughout the San Gabriel Valley and along the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains.

IV. How does our community strengthen its ability to solve problems? (300 word maximum)

One of the best methods of solving problems is to solicit ideas from large numbers of residents and to incorporate their ideas into the solution. Sierra Madre is a City with a high level of community interest and participation. As such, it is not unusual for Sierra Madre’s stakeholders to see a given problem from many different perspectives.

Sierra Madre's tradition of addressing issues openly and approaching solutions collaboratively strengthens our ability to solve problems.

When problems are identified, the community's input is solicited. Depending on the nature and magnitude of the problem, public forums are often hosted by the City and nonprofit organizations, ad hoc committees formed, and study sessions held. As the solution or solutions take shape, the community's level of involvement typically increases until finally there is a collaborative effort to resolve the problem. Granted, this process has been known to take years but Sierra Madre does not run from its problems; it faces them head-on.

The process of information flow and exchange among residents, property owners, business owners, and civic leaders affords everyone the opportunity to be heard and to participate. It also reinforces the fact that, even when we disagree, we share a common love for our community.

The Youth Activity Center and Open Space Acquisition (See Projects below) are examples of the community identifying problems, building consensus and working together on solutions. In both instances, problems were identified and everyone came together to engage in long-term plans and projects that would address and resolve these issues in a comprehensive manner.

However, we acknowledge that this process is not an easy one, as our residents are currently embroiled in heated debates over the preservation of our treasured downtown. Though we have yet to reach a consensus, our residents are actively involved in developing a solution for this City we all love.

Part II:

Community Background and Community Challenge Section

Add lines as needed for your responses

1 (A). Community Background: Set the background for your community. Tell its story. Summarize your community's history, successes and struggles. Describe how your community got to where it is today and your community's current state of affairs. (700 word maximum):

One hundred fifty years ago, developer Nathaniel Carter purchased a large tract of land at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains and founded the town of Sierra Madre. This year, the City of Sierra Madre is celebrating the 100th anniversary of its incorporation in 1907. Early residents were attracted to the rural environment, the clean air, the easy access to hiking trails and the neighborly spirit of this foothill community. Today, more than 100 years later, residents continue to be attracted to the town for the same reasons.

Sierra Madre, "Mother Mountain," is an oasis in urban Los Angeles. Residents and visitors refer to the town as "paradise." Commuters talk about the sense of peace they feel when they return to the foothills after a hectic day.

The character of Sierra Madre is defined by many long-standing traditions including:

- No stoplights within the 3 square miles of the town;
- The ancient air horn that shoots off an ear-shattering blast to mark the midday hour;
- The last volunteer fire department in Los Angeles County and the Sierra Madre Search and Rescue team, both composed of volunteers who readily walk out of corporate meetings when paged for a rescue;
- Opening day of Little League and Girls Softball, when hundreds of eager youths line up on Heasley Field against the beautiful backdrop of the mountains.
- The world's largest blooming plant, the Wistaria Vine, as certified by the Guinness Book of Records. Each year in March, thousands of residents and visitors stroll through the gardens of two private residences to inhale the perfume of the wistaria vine. Even the spelling of the name "wistaria" is a local tradition.

If we have learned anything over the past 100 years, it is that the sense of community and place that characterizes Sierra Madre didn't just happen. It was created by the early residents and carefully nurtured by successive generations of volunteers.

City officials and local volunteers have worked hard to retain the character of the community by preserving a town square, small shops and the walkable scale of the downtown area. In Sierra Madre, it's not unusual to walk through downtown or stop for a coffee at a local eatery and be greeted by name. Residents don't worry about the safety of their children because the local police officers know their kids by name.

As in most small cities, the municipal budget doesn't begin to cover the expenses necessary to maintain the quality of life in the community. The City's efforts are supplemented by thousands of volunteer hours each year, donated to activities such as the Wistaria Festival, the Volunteer Fire Department, and trail maintenance to name a few. In addition, many residents contribute money to town projects such as a joint city/school district "Fix the Field" or the Senior Center "Cinderella Project."

Sierra Madre citizens engage in vigorous debates about issues that move them. Residents, watching the Council meeting at home in their pajamas, have been known to go down to City Hall to comment on an agenda item they feel strongly about. And no issue is more passionately debated than how to preserve the small town character, mountain views and open space. While other towns court big box retailers and car dealerships, in Sierra Madre, drive-through restaurants are prohibited by City code. Parcels of land are small, and most shops are individually owned.

The struggle facing Sierra Madre today is how to preserve the village character of our urban oasis while responding to the economic and social demands of the 21st century. As a relatively affluent community with high property values, we face the challenge of providing affordable housing for our children and our elders, as well as doing our fair share for the region's growing population.

The 11,000 residents of Sierra Madre know they are fortunate to live in a town with such a strong sense of place and a history of community involvement. At the same time, we know that we all share the responsibility of preserving for generations to come the true "Treasures" of Sierra Madre: the mountain views, the village character and the volunteer spirit.

1 (B). Community Celebration: Why should your community be selected as an All-America City? Describe what makes your community a great place to live, work, and play. (300 word maximum)

Sierra Madre's small size is unique among the incorporated cities of Los Angeles County and Southern California. While citizens in larger cities might feel anonymous and insignificant, Sierra Madreans enjoy a village lifestyle where we smile and wave to everyone, attend community activities and functions. We celebrate and celebrate often.

As one writer wrote of our Annual Fourth of July parade, "It's been said that half the town marches in the parade and the other half comes out to watch it."

The Friends of the Library raise approximately \$50,000 each year from three events: the Best Used Book Sales, an Annual Cuisine and Wine Tasting Gala in February and a Fine Arts Fair in May. In March, our downtown park and streets are abuzz in celebration of the world's largest flowering plant with the Chamber of Commerce's Annual Wistaria Festival.

In April, kids line up with their fishing poles for the Huck Finn Fishing Derby and Community Campout hosted by the Civic Club, Kiwanis, Interact, and Sierra Madre Volunteer Firefighters' Association. In the month of May, over 300 intrepid runners brave the 8.6-mile Mount Wilson Trail Race.

In June, the Historical Preservation Society kicks off a flurry of summer celebrations with an old-fashioned Ice Cream Social. Sundays in the summer find hundreds of people picnicking in the park and reveling in free concerts in the park sponsored by businesses, service clubs and nonprofit groups.

In September, we come together in support of the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and then again for Pioneer Days, when we celebrate our rich history and California heritage. October also sees us celebrating Halloween with downtown trick-or-treating and a costume parade.

Finally, our year of community celebration ends as we welcome the holidays with a candlelight procession down Baldwin Avenue to Kersting Court in the heart of our city's downtown.

1 (C). Community Challenges: Based upon your community's current status, describe your community's two most pressing challenges.

Challenge #1: (200 words maximum)

Sierra Madre has the highest per capita number of older Americans of any other city in the San Gabriel Valley, with most of the seniors retired and on a fixed income. Keeping our 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 our senior population can occupy a disproportionate percentage of our

City's budget. The challenge is to supply the needs of our seniors and keep them vital with our limited resources. The Senior Master Plan was undertaken and put in place to address these challenges, and it is enjoying success.

Seniors gravitate to Sierra Madre because of its safety, good local transportation and convenience. And they are welcomed by the merchants and are enfolded in the town's activities.

Challenge #2: *(200 words maximum)*

The second challenge that besets Sierra Madre is the preservation of open and natural space for the residents to enjoy -- a challenge that is far from simple.

Bordered to 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. With the recent rise in the housing market and the trend toward over-development, property has become a very precious commodity in our town, a challenge to many communities.

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

Part III: Community-Driven Projects

Add lines as needed for your responses

Part III requires descriptions of three collaborative community projects that have significantly affected the community.

The first two projects should be drawn directly from the two community challenges stated above.

The third project should be reflective of what your community is doing for children and youth.

PROJECT ONE (Challenge #1)

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)

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 importantly, the seniors of Sierra Madre. Five major areas of need for seniors were identified at that time, and plans were put in place to address those needs. These five major areas included: Housing; Transportation; Health & Safety; Recreation; and Resources. In 2006, the community thought it valuable to re-visit those senior needs and craft an updated Senior Master Plan based upon what was accomplished and what new challenges for our seniors surfaced.

2. Describe the relationship between this project and your first challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)

Seniors have unique needs, and we are faced with an ever-growing senior population. A Senior Master Plan was thoughtfully put together in 1999-2000 and re-evaluated in 2006.

Below are the Master Plan's five goals and the accomplishments revealed in the 2007 update:

- 1) Housing: In 2002, the City adopted a Senior Housing Specific Plan. The result: a new 46-unit for-rent Senior Housing project for low-income seniors. This is the first affordable Senior Housing project in the City, and one that is intended to serve as a model to other small, higher socioeconomic communities throughout the region.
- 2) Transportation: Despite decreased funding from local sources, we worked to maintain our Gateway Coach which provides needed transportation for seniors to medical appointments, the grocery store, and other places of necessity. Sierra Madre also lobbied the MTA for an education grant to help utilize public transportation.
- 3) Health & Safety: In the summer of 2006, residents encouraged the City Council to implement an EMT/Paramedic Service. In addition, a Pneumovax Clinic was initiated on an annual basis to ensure that Seniors have access to Pneumonia vaccinations. Finally, the City has partnered with two local hospitals to provide yearly Health Fairs.
- 4) Recreation: To increase exercise and activities for Seniors, swimming pool hours have been extended, and more exercise classes are being offered. The City also lobbied the County for a \$200,000 grant to update our aging Senior Center with much-needed improvements. The County stated that our Master Plan was instrumental in the grant's approval.
- 5) Resources: A resource handbook was developed for seniors as a quick reference guide to access emergency, transportation, recreation, and City service numbers.

The Sierra Madre Senior Master Plan Update of 2007 revealed that we were meeting the important needs of our seniors, but also showed room for improvement. Seniors, civic and government leaders identified an additional sixth area: better communication about community resources and activities.

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

The 2007 Sierra Madre Senior Master Plan Update involved an extensive community outreach and public input, including extensive input from our Senior Community Commission. Over 400 surveys were collected, two community workshops were held, and a comprehensive and exhaustive review of our City's current services was undertaken by the Senior Master Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was comprised of City staff, City Council representatives, members of the Senior Community Commission, senior in-home care providers, and other interested Older Americans.

Our update revealed how Sierra Madre successfully pulled together local, county, state and federal resources and grants to meet our seniors' needs. Each of the five major goals identified in our 1999-2000 Senior Master Plan involved input and/or funding from local, county, state, and federal resources.

- The City purchased a vacant lot, and through cooperation with Los Angeles Community Development Block Grant and the Accessible Housing Corporation, came the first affordable housing project in the City dedicated to senior living
- The City and residents have continually worked with the MTA and neighboring communities to provide transit services
- Through the collaborations with two local hospitals, the Seniors now have one of the best attended per-capita health fairs in the San Gabriel Valley
- Because of a new MOU with a local high school, the swimming pool now has the funding to reinstate the afternoon Lap Swim during the off-season
- Thanks to hundreds of hours of volunteer manpower, the Senior Center, once referred to as the "Cinderella Project," has received a face-lift and is looking forward to more improvement with County funds

As identified above, the completion of the initial Senior Master Plan in 1999-2000 and the Update in 2007 continues to help the City to successfully pull together the necessary resources to meet our seniors' needs.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

The successful outcomes from our Senior Master Plan Completion and Update can be quantified in many ways, but the results speak for themselves:

- The Sierra Madre Senior Housing Project provides 46 low-cost units
- Creation of EMT/Paramedic Services enabled the City to hire 40 paramedics to protect and save the lives of our seniors and residents at-large
- Annual Health Fairs/Pneumovax Clinics provided the opportunity for over 359 seniors to get the flu shot and another 46 with Pneumovax immunization
- Successful lobbying for local grants totaling \$220,000 to update the Senior Center and to provide education for our seniors on accessing public transportation
- Doubled the number of fitness classes and opened the swimming pool for an additional seven months to keep seniors active
- Working to increase Gateway Coach hours to assure that seniors have necessary transportation to medical visits, the grocery store, and other places of necessity

With extensive public input, the Sierra Madre Senior Master Plan and Update of 2007 show how a city can be successful in meeting its challenges when it works together with local, regional, city and state resources to address the needs of the community. We did it in Sierra Madre, and the ongoing work continues.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. *(This person may be contacted to verify information.)*

Bruce Inman, Director of Public Works, City of Sierra Madre. 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd, Sierra Madre, CA 91024. 626-355-7135; binman@ci.sierra-madre.ca.us

PROJECT TWO (Challenge #2)

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. *(150 word maximum)*

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:

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

2. Describe the relationship between this project and your second challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? *(300 word maximum)*

An attempt by developers to build on two large parcels of foothill land caused area residents to rise up in opposition. Soon to follow was the formation the Sierra Madre Mountain Conservancy. Incorporated in 1989, this was the first conservancy in the San Gabriel Valley, providing neighboring cities with the model needed to start 15 more conservancies in the region.

Because of the efforts of this conservancy, in 1992 the City adopted the Hillside Management Ordinance (HMZ), which set limits on the development of parcels in the hillside zone. The language of this Ordinance also helped the City acquire a line-item earmark for \$1.2 million in Los Angeles County Proposition A funds. With this money, the City has purchased 125 acres of once privately-owned land, making them part of the conservancy, with easements curtailing future development. Sierra Madre has also adopted the terms of the Quimby Act, which states that new development must also include park space, or money donated to the existing park programs.

In 2000, the Parks Master Plan Committee was created, comprised of a wide variety of residents, to give them a breadth of perspective. They surveyed the community to determine the current uses of the parks, as well as future wants of the residents. From the surveys, the two greatest concerns were seemingly irreconcilable: no new building in the open space, but more facilities for children and teen activities. The solution was to build a teen center as a second story to the existing recreation center which allowed us to use the remainder of the Proposition A funds because we were, in effect, preserving open space.

We were also able to more than double the amount of ball-field space through joint use agreements with local public and private schools. And finally, we were able to acquire our first new park in over 40 years.

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

The City did not achieve these goals on its own; it required the hard work and dedication of not only the City employees and Council members, but also the incredible volunteers who gave of their time and money.

Because of limited field space, Little League, Girls Softball, T-Ball, Pony/Colt, AYSO and local schools had been adversaries for years, each group needing more and more field time as participation numbers grew. When the opportunity came to acquire two additional fields, the leaders of these organizations came together with the common goal of raising \$200,000 necessary to renovate the field at Sierra Madre Elementary School. This grassroots partnership was helped by the City Council, which made a concerted effort to negotiate a Joint Use Agreement for field space with the City of Pasadena and the Pasadena Unified School District. This relationship with the school district had been cold for decades. However, with an eye toward better regional relationships among the neighboring cities, the City reopened the lines of communication with positive results.

Last summer, a privately-owned, one-acre lot (earmarked in the 1970s as a potential park site) came up for sale. With no money in the general fund for such an acquisition, the City decided to sell two vacant City-owned buildings as well as the land that the Community Nursery school has leased for the past 60 years in order to purchase the park land. This co-op school, which operates on a shoe-string budget, where parents must volunteer their time in the classroom, has raised over \$200,000 for the down payment on the property. This truly embodies the spirit of volunteerism that infuses the community.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

Sierra Madre continually works on the issue of open space preservation, and in the past three years, we have been able to:

- Purchase a one-acre park -- this is our first new park in over 40 years. City staff members are currently applying for Land and Water Conservation Federal Funds, a 50/50 matching grant to landscape this park. The matching monies will be raised through private contributions made to the Sierra Madre Community Foundation.
- Limit a future 63-acre hillside development to 29 lots -- thanks to community discussions, the hillside ordinance and the Quimby Act. Furthermore, despite several lawsuits, the developers are setting 30 acres aside for natural space.
- Cooperate with the neighboring City of Pasadena and with a private school to open up two new ball fields. Volunteers have raised over \$200,000 and given time to grade, lay sprinkler systems, add backstops and equipment storage to make these fields playable. Practice and game-time for these organizations, which was once limited to 30 hours per week, have more than doubled to almost 70 hours per week.
- Redesign the Youth Activity Center as a second story to the existing Community Recreation Center. Furthermore, the skate park, which was an overwhelming request from the kids in town who participated in the design project of the YAC, was built in an existing patio, with money raised by the teens.
- Use volunteers who consistently maintain the Mount Wilson and Bailey Canyon Trails. Money from the Quimby Act, combined with matching grant money, has allowed for renovations of trail markers and the addition of bathroom facilities.
- Create new plans, like the proposed library – are all for use on existing lots, building up instead of out.

Sierra Madre continues to debate about open space and preservation issues; however, the accomplishments listed above are tangible reminders that this community has the skills and abilities to work together to better our community.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

Michelle Keith, Community and Personnel Services Director. 232 W. Sierra Madre Blvd, Sierra Madre, CA 91024. 626-355-7135. mkeith@ci.sierra-madre.ca.us

PROJECT THREE

As a commitment to America's Promise, the National Civic League has issued the Youth Initiative Challenge. We ask that at least one project from each All-America City applicant document ways in which the lives of children and youth have been tangibly improved.

1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)

During the 1998 Youth Master Plan process, the Steering Committee stated that a Youth Activity Center was among the greatest needs identified for 12-18 year old youths 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 only considered 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.

Imagine how our kids now feel about themselves – we cared to do the very best for them and they truly appreciate it.

2. Describe the relationship between this project and the challenge it is addressing, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)

The original Youth Master Plan was created in 1998 to address the issue of increased drug and alcohol use, smoking and bullying. After a comprehensive survey of our City's youth, identifying their disenfranchisement and the community's intergenerational disconnect, the Steering Committee recognized that a Youth Activity Center (YAC) was essential for Sierra Madre's 12-18 year olds.

The City created the YAC, providing a place for Junior and High School students to hang out after school. Over the years, the staff at the YAC have led many programs and activities from barbecues to dog washes to our Monday Speaker Series. Monday topics range from healthy cooking, to career options, to drug and alcohol awareness. When gang activity infiltrated our community and a near fatality occurred, the YAC provided grief counseling and gang awareness education for both the youths and their parents in conjunction with the School District and Police Department.

When the City Council finalized a permanent place for the Youth Activity Center, the community, especially the teens and kids, were an integral part in the design and functionality of the new space. Multiple open forums were held with the architects so that teens and parents could give input on the design of the new building.

Approximately 100 community youths participate in the YAC on a regular basis. The most recent update of the Youth Master Plan (including ongoing surveys and community services records) documents specific improvements in youth behavior as evidenced by a drop in alcohol use, smoking, marijuana use and in bullying. The YAC embraces diversity by partnering and providing rehearsal space for the nonprofit Southern California Lyric Theater. This mainstreams special needs youth with disabilities into its educational workshops and performance productions.

3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)

Construction for the YAC was a tremendous challenge for a small town such as Sierra Madre whose overall General Fund budget is approximately \$5 million. The City pulled together a wide variety of funding sources to cover the \$1.5 million project cost. Of this, \$372,000 came from State Park Bond funds as well as Proposition 12 and 40 monies, and an additional \$950,000 from Prop A Open Space monies and grant funds, which were obtained through partnerships with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, including Supervisor Michael Antonovich, and U.S. Congressman David Dreier. We scraped together funds from every possible source.

But at the end of the day, we did not have enough money to furnish the new facility. So, our enthusiastic youngsters wrote donation request letters, participated in fundraisers as waiters, recycled low flush toilets, and took on projects for the City such as hanging street signs, giving all their earnings to furnish their center. This further inspired local businesses and civic groups to donate money and equipment, such as a piano, couches, a big screen TV and two pool tables. The fundraising continues each year with the Annual Oktoberfest Golf & Tennis Tournament where last year, the youths raised over \$4,000 to continue the betterment of their facility.

Our City's kids have learned the value of money and how it can be raised and used effectively toward a fulfilling project.

4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)

The Original Youth Master Plan included the initial community survey, performed by an outside agency, that documented alcohol, smoking, drug use and bullying among the community's youths and now serves as a benchmark for future surveys. The Master Plan has since been updated several times, most recently in 2004, when a second survey was administered to the youth. This second survey showed that since the creation of the Youth Activity Center and the teens' involvement in the development and creation of their space, the following specific improvements have been made:

- 14% decrease in smoking
- 9% drop in bullying
- 8% drop in alcohol use in minors
- 7% decrease in marijuana use
- Reading for pleasure rose from 24% to 41%
- Those participating in community service rose from 59% to 74%

Other resources for our youth have been created:

- A Youth Employment Services (YES) Program
- A number of classes are held ranging from Driver's Ed to Baby-sitter's Training to Lifeguarding
- Partnership between local schools and Police Department to identify at-risk youths
- Community service projects taken on each year by proactive youths including:
 - Dog Wash Fundraiser which raises money to maintain the Dog Park
 - Bailey Canyon Park clean-up days with Sierra Madre Environmental Action Council
 - Volunteering at the community festivals and events
- Support of a theater company that mainstreams special needs youth

These are just a few examples of the community problems being resolved and the support for diversity directly attributable to the construction of the YAC and the services it provides to our youth.

Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and E-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

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End of Application

See www.ncl.org/aac/ or the application instructions for detailed application instructions and sample applications from previous All-America City Winners.



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