



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

## 2010 Annual Awards Program

### Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

**Deadline for Nominations: March 12, 2010**

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

#### SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- ☐ Community Health and Safety
- ☐ Community Partnership
- ☒ Community Sustainability
- ☐ Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: City of Peoria Desert Fusion Garden

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Peoria, Arizona

Jurisdiction population(s): 156,000

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2009, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: September Year: 2005

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in San José, California, October 2010. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Carl Swenson

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Peoria, Arizona

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Jurisdiction: \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

|                  |                                          |                 |                                |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
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## **ICMA 2010 Program Excellence Award Nomination**

### **Category: Community Sustainability**

### **Nomination: City of Peoria, Arizona Desert Fusion Garden**

#### Scope, importance and value

In 2005, the City of Peoria Utilities Department had a unique opportunity to demonstrate Peoria's dedication and commitment to water conservation. An idea was born to replace the unused grass mounds in front of Peoria City Hall with beautiful, low water use landscaping, also known as Xeriscape. The area has since become the Desert Fusion Garden. The garden serves not only as an oasis for employees, residents, and visitors, but it also provides a place to learn about Xeriscape and to gather ideas for creating low water use landscapes.

In water conservation circles, the idea of Xeriscape is well-understood and highly regarded as a tool for landscape water conservation. However, it is not always easy to convey what Xeriscape is to the general public. The Desert Fusion Garden serves as a hands-on place to learn and experience Xeriscape. Visitors to the main City Hall complex and those interested in learning more about Xeriscape benefit not only from the educational experience the garden offers its visitors, but also from the beautiful and relaxing place it has become. In addition, the community as a whole benefits when residents incorporate Xeriscape ideas into their own landscapes to create an aesthetically pleasing landscape that has the added benefit of water and money savings.

The Desert Fusion Garden goes beyond a normal demonstration garden to provide a unique experience to its visitors. It represents a fusion of low water use plants from around the world. However, the garden is more than a museum of plants. It not only shows people what low water use plants are available to them, but it also shows people how to use low water use plants in combination to create different effects. The garden is organized around five themed areas. Each was designed to stand alone as its own landscape for easy translation into a residential setting, which is a truly innovative feature of the garden.

By encouraging the use of low water use landscaping to reduce water use, the Desert Fusion Garden helps the city maintain adequate water supplies for its residents now and into the future.

#### Effectiveness Measure

The Desert Fusion Garden impacts the community in several ways. The garden encourages people to rethink preconceived ideas of what low water use landscaping looks like, ultimately helping citizens understand what Xeriscape is and is not. It reveals that color, dimension, creativity, and even turf can work harmoniously together to create a beautiful low water use landscape. It clearly demonstrates that Xeriscape is colorful and attractive as opposed to the hot and barren look of zero-scape, which many people misinterpret as Xeriscape landscaping.

In addition, creation of the garden showcases the city's dedication to and leadership in landscape water conservation, thereby increasing the city's credibility when it asks its citizens to reduce their own water use. The garden also provides the opportunity for the community to bring the family for an educational escape from our urban environment.

Practicing water conservation makes economic sense from a utilities perspective. Water conservation can prevent or postpone the purchase of new water supply and building of new water supply infrastructure. It may also extend the life of existing water supplies and infrastructure, saving utility customers the cost of building new systems or renovating existing ones. Conservation can also reduce the amount of water that needs to be processed by wastewater treatment plants, again preserving infrastructure and also reducing the amount of waste.

Water availability, out of necessity, will shape future growth. Promoting landscape water conservation is a way to extend current and future water supplies. There is also a matter of aesthetics and the image projected. Xeriscape not only uses less water, but it also shows a sensitivity to and understanding of the climate we are in. With more than half of residential water use going towards watering landscapes, reducing individual landscape water use is a great way to reduce the city's overall water needs. In this desert environment, the availability of a stable water supply is intimately connected to Peoria's ability to grow and develop economically.

### Quality and Creativity

The garden is organized around five themed areas. Each was designed to stand alone as its own landscape for easy translation into a residential setting, an innovative feature of the garden. Individual areas are defined by the plants within them, all of which (except the grass) are on the Arizona Department of Water Resources Phoenix Active Management Area Low Water Use Plant List. The Child Friendly area contains thornless plants and an area demonstrating the use of appropriate turf to show that Xeriscape works with families. The Color Explosion area provides nearly year round

color through the use of plants that have long and staggered blooming seasons to exhibit that Xeriscape is colorful. The Northern Latitudes area is composed of plants that have dense, dark green foliage and plants that are evergreen, like those in higher elevations to reveal that Xeriscape can look much different than a desert. The Sonoran Accents area consists of a wide variety of plants native to the Sonoran Desert, with a few from the Chihuahuan Desert, to illustrate that there are low water use options beyond cacti. The Tropical Oasis area includes more dense plantings consisting of plants with broad leaves and more showy flowers to demonstrate that Xeriscape can be lush.

#### Other Factors – Partnerships, Community Engagement, Positive Feedback

The garden project partnership included other city departments such as finance and community services which ensured a timely and well planned plant variety that enhanced the current City campus area. Plant donations came in from local plant nurseries which helped keep costs down while communicating the importance of promoting Xeriscape and low water use plants.

Through the unique experience that is the Desert Fusion Garden, the city demonstrates to its residents that Xeriscape is more beautiful than traditional grass, can complement their lifestyle, and saves water. Free community classes are held to educate citizens on the principles of Xeriscape and design ideas. The kiosk in the garden is stocked with free information and maps of the garden. The garden is open with unrestricted access seven days a week and has become a focal point for city events. Visitor response has been highly complementary.