



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

**2015 Local Government Excellence Awards Program
Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form**
(All programs nominated must have been fully operational for a minimum of 12 months, prior to January 31, 2015)

Deadline for Nominations: March 3, 2015

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
- X Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: DeKalb County's Strategic Leadership and Governance Initiative

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: DeKalb County Georgia

Jurisdiction population(s): 50,000 and greater

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 for at least 12 months prior to January 31, 2015, to be eligible. The start date [on or before January 31, 2014] should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: _____ Year: 2011

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, September 2015. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: Marcus Kellum

Title: Code Enforcement Administrator Jurisdiction: DeKalb County

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Marcus Kellum

Title: Code Enforcement Administrator Jurisdiction: DeKalb County

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**DeKalb County Code
Enforcement Complete and
Sustainable Communities
Initiative**

**2015 ICMA Local Government
Excellence Awards Program**

Community Sustainability Awards



Submitted by:

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DeKalb County's "Complete and Sustainable Communities" Initiative

DeKalb County has the third highest rate of foreclosures in the State of Georgia. Since 2011, DeKalb have 11,457 registered properties. The toll of this crisis on the residential communities is significant and requires a multi-dimensional strategy. Code Enforcement is a proactive, innovative and comprehensive response to this problem and aims to revitalize and stabilize communities devastated by foreclosures.

Assessment

Code Enforcement has taken a proactive comprehensive approach that includes strategic initiatives effective policies, and volunteerism. A successful strategy to address this issue is to proactively respond to the problem upon discovery. Having a proactive Code Enforcement program allows County officials to address the broken windows, or within a short time, begin enforcement activities that will address the issues. These types of issues are instantly addressed and the host of problems normally associated with dilapidation never occurs, thus the residents of DeKalb County benefit from this enhanced service.

Strategic Initiatives

In Rem/Demolition Program

DeKalb County has established a demolition program for the purpose of eliminating and preventing slum areas and urban blight. The overall goal of the program is to develop and maintain viable communities for its citizens.

Demolition for approved Complaint In-Rem properties is a collaborative process engaging our Law Department, Human and Community Development Department and our Planning and

Sustainability Department- Code Enforcement Division. Since 2013, fifty-five blighted properties have been demolished and to date, forty are pending.

DeKalb County Foreclosure Registry

In 2010 DeKalb County was the first municipality to implement a Foreclosure Registry in the State of Georgia. The DeKalb County Foreclosure Registry was established as a means to protect neighborhoods from becoming blighted through the lack of adequate maintenance and security as a result of properties that are foreclosed or where ownership has been transferred after foreclosure.

On October 27, 2010, creditors or mortgagees who foreclose on a property were required by law to register the property with DeKalb County and pay a fee of \$100 or face fines up to \$1,000 or required to designate a local property agent located within the State of Georgia to ensure security and maintenance of the property in compliance with County Code.

Vacant Property Registry

In 2013 the DeKalb County Vacant Property Registry was established as a means to protect neighborhoods from becoming blighted through the lack of adequate maintenance and security of properties that are vacant. Improperly maintained and unsecure vacant properties can become a hazard to the health and safety of anyone who may come on or near the property and can adversely affect the aesthetic and economic attributes of communities. Property owners are required by law to register the property with DeKalb County within 90 days of vacancy and pay a fee of \$100 or face fines up to \$1000.

The registries reduce the burden on local government resources by removing the time consuming tasks of researching and tracking ownership information and managing cases that go unresolved for extensive periods of time. A specialized team of Code Enforcement Officers assigned to the registries enforces and manages cases to obtain resolution.

Interior Code Compliance

In December 2010, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners enacted the Interior Code Compliance Ordinance effecting 92,582 units/650 apartment complexes in unincorporated DeKalb County. The ordinance requires individuals who manage or own multi-family rental properties or derive income from four or more multi-family rental properties to certify and obtain inspections by a certified building inspector to ensure that the dwelling units meet the minimum building standards for the State of Georgia. To date seventy-five percent of all multi-family rental properties are register

Effective Policies

Civil Process

In 2011, the Board of Commissioners adopted a civil hearing process for code violations (similar to traffic court), wherein, an appointed judge will hear cases without personal service and utilizing door hangers and public notice. Utilizing the Civil Process, service obtained by posting, mailing and publication on the court website, is now sufficient to move a case forward even if the defendant chooses not to appear in court. A finding against the defendant results in civil fine which can result in a lien on the property or other collection measures. The Civil Process reduced the number of failure to appear and created a greater compliance environment for property owners.

Volunteerism

Neighborhood Ambassador Program

The Neighborhood Ambassador Program helps to empower residents to maintain and enhance their neighborhoods to sustain a safe and aesthetically attractive environment.

The Ambassadors attends and complete 4-hour training and complete a 4-hour ride along with a code enforcement officer. Residents act as additional “eyes and ears” within neighborhoods to identify, photograph, and report exterior code violations as well as assist with the removal of illegal signage located within the right-of-ways.

Code Advisory Council

In 2010, DeKalb County established the DeKalb County Code Enforcement Task Force. The task force, which included community leaders, county officials, and other key individuals, identified and assisted in the implementation of solution-driven recommendations to address code enforcement issues affecting communities throughout DeKalb. As a result of Code Enforcement Task Force the Code Advisory Council was established to assist the county in moving forward with implementation of the recommendations from the Code Enforcement Task Force. Its mission is to protect residential neighborhoods and property values by ensuring that DeKalb County residents understand and follow the rules of law relative to “quality of life” issues.



Benefits of a proactive comprehensive approach

- Greater Efficiency – Expanded service delivery by existing staff
- Elevated skill sets -Sharing knowledge applicable to different service areas; cross training
- Shared Resources – Technology, access to information, tools and budgeting
- Streamlined and Consistent Processes – Inspection activities, courtroom procedures, customer service
- Cost Reduction – Enhanced service with less staff

These proactive comprehensive approaches not only meet immediate concerns, but create a system of service delivery that results in greater effectiveness and improved code enforcement and regulatory performance. This proactive service delivery is beneficial to current and future stakeholders.