

## Program Excellence Award for Citizen Involvement

POPULATIONS OF LESS THAN 10,000



## Park City, Utah

*ICMA's Program Excellence Award for Citizen Involvement recognizes successful strategies designed to inform citizens about the local government services available to them and to include citizens in the process of community decision making. The award concentrates on such areas as community consensus building and adult (nonstudent) citizenship education. This year, ICMA presents the award in the less-than-10,000 population category to Park City, Utah, and to Acting City Manager Thomas Bakaly for the Leadership Park City program.*



Residents participate in a Leadership Park City team exercise.



THOMAS BAKALY

Following decades of decline and decay with the bust of its silver mining economy, Park City, Utah (pop. 7,500), is now grappling with unpre-

cedented growth as a world-class resort community. Today the central focus of citizen concern is the conundrum of managing prosperity and absorbing tremendous growth while maintaining environmental integrity and a sense of community.

While laws and ordinances can regulate growth, they cannot sustain the spirit that knits a small community together and provides its charm. Rather, it takes people committed to working together for a common good and toward a positive vision of the future. When relationships are constantly fostered and new residents are brought into the fold, issues get resolved with civility and foresight.

These were the premises behind CommunityVision, a prolonged dialogue between Park City and its citizens beginning in the late 1980s. After several years and many neighborhood meetings, focus groups, and training sessions, the citizens produced an action agenda to manage the changes buffeting the town.

Central to this agenda was the formation of a local community leadership program to welcome, inspire, and train future leaders. In 1994–1995, Leadership Park City was born.

Unlike most community leadership programs, which are run by chambers of commerce or other professional and business organizations for the benefit of their members, Leadership Park City was conceived as a grand partnership between public and private businesses and community entities with the express purpose of bringing citizens together in new and exciting ways while providing them with the necessary personal and community-building skills to effect positive and long-lasting change. To facilitate this goal, Park City took the lead in organizing and operating the program.

A fundamental precept from the outset was that Leadership Park City represent the community's diversity and not be hijacked by special interests. Consequently, sponsors were carefully selected to include local governments, private businesses (e.g., ski resorts), and associations and nonprofits (e.g., the Board of Realtors, the school district, and the ecumenical council). It was also decided that the program provide scholarships to *all* participants, ensuring that neither financial constraints nor individual

circumstances dilute the diversity of the applicant pool.

Ten years and 250 alumni later, the program prospers. Graduates include the mayor and two members of the current city council, as well as numerous chairs and members of citizen boards, neighborhood associations, and nonprofit and community organizations. Many graduates credit the program with heightening their ability to succeed.

But the untold story is the tremendous and continued support given by Park City itself. The city provided a physical home for the program and devoted considerable staff resources and facilities to ensure its continuity. Working together with the other sponsors, the city freely shared its resources for the common good without ever claiming ownership. This attitude of cooperation and overarching dedication to bringing people together has led to many successes, not the least of which was Park City's hosting of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games, probably the best organized and executed winter Olympics in history. The successes are also seen daily in the networking of alumni who continue to work tirelessly, knitting this dynamic and growing community together to build its future.

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In 2002 Leadership Park City was honored by the International Community Leadership Association as one of the most innovative small community leadership programs in the country. Now it is Park City's turn to be recognized for its role in fostering citizen involvement through creativity and sustained commitment. ■