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City agency focuses on beautification

The city of Grand Prairie, Texas (127,000), has an ambitious program, Keep Grand Prairie Beautiful (KGPB), that uses volunteers and partnerships with local businesses to preserve and enhance the city's environment. The program includes numerous opportunities for hands-on participation as well as extensive educational programs.

Implementation notes

Leadership/staffing KGPB is overseen by a full-time coordinator, assisted by a full-time volunteer. In 2003, more than 4,500 volunteers (10 percent of the city's population) contributed almost 22,000 hours of labor to the program.

Timeline The program was founded in the 1960s by a person who is now a city council member. In 1999, the city decided to turn the program, which was then housed in the solid-waste division, into a separate city agency. At that time, the first full-time program coordinator was hired.

Budget/funding This year, the program received \$109,000 from the city. It also receives numerous grants from the state for education programs and in-kind donations from local businesses.

Program description Adults and youth from churches, civic groups, businesses, and associations regularly volunteer through KGPB to pick up trash. KGPB offers T-shirts and snacks as incentives to participate in these programs. The chamber of commerce encourages all area businesses to join KGPB's clean-company program, which ensures that construction sites are kept clean. Through the program's adopt-a-street/adopt-a-spot program, 79 groups (including schools) and individuals have agreed to clean up their spots or streams at least four times a year. These individuals and groups also keep an eye on the sites that experience the most illegal dumping.

KGPB's community forestry program has trained more than 45 citizens in trimming, planting, and caring for trees. When citizens call for assistance in caring for or removing

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a tree that is on public property, one of these “shademakers” can be called on for assistance. The program also provides appropriate street trees (all native to Texas) for free to residents who are willing to take care of them and put them in locations where others can enjoy them. Through KGPB’s Clean Campus program, all 33 public schools in the city have appointed coordinators who receive special training and meet monthly. These coordinators plan campus beautification projects, recycling programs, and educational programs in environmental stewardship. KGPB has also been instrumental in requiring the inclusion of funds for community art in the budgets of all new municipal construction projects.

Results KGPB has had a major impact on the city. As a result of KGPB’s community forestry program, 500 new trees have been planted, with irrigation, hardscaping, and entryway signage. Through the community art program, a life-size bronze sculpture was placed in front of the new public safety center, and the tourist center has a new outdoor art piece.

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Joint wastewater management

When the cities of Georgetown (9,000) and Andrews (3,000), South Carolina, found that their wastewater plants were nearing capacity, they learned that it would be cheaper to share a new facility than to upgrade their existing plants. Today, wastewater from Georgetown and Andrews, as well as the Georgetown County Water and Sewer District (which covers nearby rural areas) is treated at the new facility in Georgetown. Georgetown County (56,000) turns the sludge material produced by the plant into compost. The Georgetown Water and Sewer District paid most of the plant’s \$25 million cost with federal assistance. The city of Georgetown owns the plant and its staff operate the facility, but the other partners are allocated a certain number of gallons and they pay for maintenance on the basis of these figures. A regional oversight board provides input into the facility’s budget, which is overseen by the Georgetown city council.

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