



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 Extended to March 30, 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
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Kingfisher Flood Plain Relief Phase I

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: Kingfisher, OK

Jurisdiction population(s): 5,000

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 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: April 2012 Year: July 2014

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: Dave Slezickey

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Kingfisher

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact

Name of contact: Dave Slezickey

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: Kingfisher

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The City of Kingfisher recently completed Phase I of a Flood Plain Buyout Program utilizing \$7 million of local, state, and federal monies from the Oklahoma Capital Improvement Authority State Bond and Federal Emergency Management Administration funds to voluntarily acquire to demolish structures on 34 properties and relocate occupants to prevent continued damages and injuries to people and property.

The City of Kingfisher is located in adjacent to drainage basins of 215,000 acres for Uncle John's Creek and Kingfisher Creek watersheds that drain to the Cimarron River. Flooding is a recurring, and expensive, natural occurrence in Kingfisher that negatively impacts businesses and residents. From the 1950's through mid-2000, seven studies from the US Army Corps of Engineers and National Resources Conservation Services assessed and reviewed the problems. Each study revealed similar results, in that the projected dams, levees, and stream management proved to be too costly and overall effectiveness was unpredictable.

In August of 2007, Kingfisher gained national media attention when remnants of Tropical Storm Erin caused a 500-year flood in Kingfisher, causing an excess of \$20 million dollars of documented damages. Following this recent flooding event, residents and business owners took the initiative to set forth on a long journey to find resolve. Resident Brian Walter, owner of Walter Building Center on Main Street, emerged as the group leader, progressing with stamina and drive through a "never say never" and "can't just won't work for us" attitude. Brian recalled the Monday following the weekend storm when Governor Brad Henry was visiting with him expressing his sympathies. The grass roots effort emerged under the attitude that we don't need sympathy, we need a solution.

The group was able to involve local leaders and have the City sponsor the cause. The group worked very hard to collaborate with Kingfisher County, Kingfisher District Conservation, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Oklahoma Emergency Management, Oklahoma Capital Improvement Authority, National Resource Conservation Services, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration for over five years to make this project a reality.

The project reviewed dams and levees with the same results of the past fifty years, too expensive, and too many external factors that could impede effectiveness. As well, new regulations regarding downstream easements made dam control very difficult to obtain. Early warning detection systems were also reviewed. After all assessments were studied, there was no single effective measure to prevent flooding, other than moving structures and people out of the floodplain area.

In July of 2008, the State of Oklahoma committed support to the project with OCIA provided \$4 million in a state bond for flood mitigation. In March of 2009, the NRCS committed to assisting, and along with the OCC, imitated the steps to receive \$3 million from FEMA. In 2011, the engineering firm of Meshek

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and Associates were brought in and assisted in leveraging the state bond money to receive 75% reimbursement from FEMA through a Hazard Mitigation Project for a voluntary acquisition and relocation program.

Meetings and hearings were held, and 48 properties were selected based on flood depths to structures using FEMA standards. Of the 48 properties eligible for the voluntary acquisition, 34 property owners participated. 17 residential, 16 commercial, and 1 church are no longer subject to future flooding damages. Occupants and tenants were authorized relocation allowances per FEMA standards. 9 properties were repetitive losses, meaning FEMA or flood insurance claims had been paid out more than once. The structures were demolished and the land has returned to natural conditions.

The City is also engaged in a related, yet separate, project of utilizing additional funding to provide dry flood-proofing adaptations to multiple buildings on the campus of Pioneer Tele-Communications Co-op. Pioneer is a region service provider offering telephone, internet, cable TV, and mobile services from Kansas to Texas with corporate headquarters in Kingfisher. Pioneer employs 800 residents in the area and has a footprint of over two dozen buildings on their campus in Kingfisher.

The successful Phase I project has also provided for a roll-over fund to continue progress for an additional Phase of flood property acquisition and relocation. The City is currently seeking funding allocations from FEMA to continue the project for an additional 30 properties.

With the City taking ownership of the property, parks and trails are planned for future use to enhance the quality of life in Kingfisher as an additional benefit to protecting citizens and property that are no longer exposed to flood damages. This project stumbled through numerous obstacles and challenges, but the Oklahoma Strong mentality pursued to result in success for Kingfisher.

The project received the Oklahoma Municipal League Innovations Award for small communities presented at the Annual OML Conference in September 2014.

Point of Contact: Dave Slezcick, City Manager citymgr@pldi.net (405)375-3705