

**OFFICIAL ENTRY  
1988**

I hereby nominate \_\_\_\_\_

(community)

(county)

(state)

**ALL-AMERICA CITY AWARD  
for  
Citizen Action, Effective Organization  
and Community Improvement**

**sponsored by**

**National Civic League**

The All-America City Award is intended as a constant reminder that people in a community can work together to identify and solve their common problems. The 38 year old AAC Program is a major part of the National Civic League's effort to encourage and recognize civic excellence. The stories of All-America Cities are the stories of citizens, government and business joining together to make their communities better places to live. Central to our approach to the issue of civic excellence has been the development of the concept of "civic infrastructure." In our view, analogous to the physical infrastructure of a community—roads, bridges, buildings—is an equally important *civic* infrastructure which is vitally important to the future of the community and equally in need of periodic maintenance and revision. Civic infrastructure is a qualitative concept intended for use in evaluating the social and political fabric of a community: how decisions are made, how citizens interact with one another and government, and how challenges in the community are met. We have developed a CIVIC INDEX of ten components which we believe constitute a means to evaluate a community's civic infrastructure. The specific components are less important than the recognition that difficulties in the community are recognized, confronted, and resolved in ways that involve a broad sampling of the population and a high degree of consensus. The All-America City program includes the CIVIC INDEX in its application process so that communities will examine their civic infrastructure and find ways to strengthen it.

1. Set the background for your community's story. Summarize your community situation, not the projects described in Question #2 below, but events which contributed to and/or resulted from those projects.

- (1) The most basic problems and concerns of the community.
- (2) Extent and nature of citizen participation.
- (3) Degree of success attained.
- (4) Emphasize activity since 1983.

Pasture and woods just 21 years ago, the planned community of Reston is home to families and couples, youngsters and seniors, teachers, executives, lawyers, government employees, and clergymen of all faiths and income levels.

As an expression of our concern for the future, The Reston Forum, made up of 150 concerned Restonians representing all viewpoints, met in 1987 to recommit the now 50,000-strong community to the maintenance of its ideals and dreams, and the continuance of its dynamism in harmony with its environment.

Reston blends with its woods and lakes, having over 50 miles of paved pathways for the enjoyment of both. Other blessings include two award winning newspapers, an acclaimed theater group, a nationally known chorale, two art galleries, top highschool athletic and debate teams, and award winning highschool band and cheerleaders. Reston's children and schools consistently win recognition and awards, as well as scholarships to the nation's finest universities and service academies.

We boast the largest youth/adult sports program in the state, with over 40,000 participating. Our annual triathlon draws contestants from the entire U.S.

The Reston Board of Commerce, Reston Homeowners Coalition, Reston Community Association, and the Reston Association -- all volunteer organizations -- are working actively toward a goal of self government in two years.

With over 200 volunteer organizations, from an arts center to Meals on Wheels, we are a community of activists. In concert with our neighboring towns of Herndon, Drainsville, and Great Falls, citizen action brought a maternity ward to the Reston Hospital Center in 1987. In a county of more than half a million, 32 percent of the members of the Fairfax County Land Use and Transportation Committee were Restonians.

Reston has not only dynamism and diversity; Reston has heart, as well. Our volunteerism resulted in 1987 in the first permanent shelter for homeless families and individuals in the county. We have over 26 percent of all low to moderate income housing in the county. With two senior citizen housing complexes operating, a third is under construction. Add to this the thousands of volunteer hours and bundles of clothes, and the food, furniture, counseling, and basic companionship given by Restonians to their less fortunate neighbors, and you have a true picture of Reston, a community that cares.

2. Briefly describe the main projects (concentrate on only three) that citizens have accomplished in the community to merit an All-America City Award. How does each project relate to the components of the Civic Index? (See Civic Index, attached)

#### **Town Hall Preservation**

As undeveloped land in Reston became scarce and more in demand for commercial use, developers set their sights on the Wiehle town hall. Built in 1890, this is the oldest structure in the new town, thus representing an irreplaceable link to our past. Last used as a bonded whiskey warehouse, the town hall and its land were about to be offered for sale; its demolition was thus imminent.

Many community organizations, but particularly GRACE (The Greater Reston Arts Center), reacted to the threatened loss with several initiatives to save the old town hall. By a combination of community mobilization through the two local newspapers and an effective speaking program, as well as focused discussions with developers and Fairfax County leaders, volunteer efforts saved the town hall and a priceless link to our past.

#### **Shelter for Homeless Families**

The very existence of the Reston Homeless Shelter resulted from the joint action of hundreds of citizens and all the community's religious organizations to remedy the plight of the homeless. Previously, temporary shelters in various local churches and even the County Supervisor's office had been used. Lobbying the county by hundreds of citizens and by Reston Interfaith finally led to opening, in 1987, of the first permanent Homeless Family Shelter in the county. Although staffed by professionals, hundreds of volunteers contribute in every way, from driving residents to religious services to giving clothing.

#### **Local Obstetrical Unit**

When the Reston Hospital Center opened in 1986, it had no obstetrical unit, forcing area mothers-to-be to go 15 miles to have their babies, often delaying medical attention for up to an hour depending on traffic and weather. State Hospital officials had twice defeated efforts to have a birthing unit approved. Community leaders formed a special committee of concerned citizens who obtained more than 5000 signatures on petitions, lobbied state health officials, and participated in hearings. In 1987, a 26-bed OB unit was approved for the Reston Hospital Center. By this success, the communities of Reston, Herndon, Drainsville, and Great Falls have demonstrated the value of neighbors working together to achieve a needed and worthwhile cause.

3. What prompted the action and how was it organized?

Many Restonians became concerned with saving as many historical buildings as possible from the rapid pace of development. GRACE members conducted telethons and formed a task force and advisory board of community leaders to spearhead its consciousness raising and fund raising efforts to save the old town hall and put it to new uses for the betterment of the community.

After Reston Hospital Center administrators were unsuccessful in two attempts, the continued lack of a birthing unit closer than 15 miles to the Reston area prompted community leaders to form a special committee of concerned citizens to attend hearings, circulate petitions, and lobby state health officials.

Growing public concern for homeless families in Reston and Fairfax County led Reston Interfaith, the Reston Homeowners Association, and Reston Community Association to work with elected county officials, church groups, and citizens in a concerted effort to have a county shelter located in Reston.

4. List the principal groups and organizations and the number of members actively involved in these efforts. Include community action groups organized around the specific issues.

Name	Active membership	Contribution
Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE)	450	Contributed 1000s of volunteer hours coordinating fund raising. Saved the most historical building in Reston.
The Reston Hospital Center Volunteer Steering Committee	5000 Vols.	Coordinated 4 committees and 5000 volunteers. Brought OB unit to community.
Reston Interfaith	300	Coordinated Citizen and Church groups and civic organizations. Brought first family homeless shelter to Fairfax.

5. How did these groups attempt to involve the citizens directly affected by the projects and to what extent were they successful?

We utilized local newspapers to raise community consciousness on these three projects. Special committees were also formed to address the many Reston volunteer groups, such as PTAs, churches, scouts, sports groups, and elected leaders at the county, state, and federal level.

6. Identify five individuals who were active leaders in the effort. (If possible, include leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors.)

Name	Address/Phone	Title
Ann Thomas	1590 Moorings Dr., Reston 437-7250	Exec. Director, GRACE
Judith Forst	2513 Pegasus La., Reston 860-0551	Board Pres., GRACE
Barbara Happ	2461 Freetown Dr., Reston 860-1845	Chair-Steering Committee, Reston Hospital Center
Connie Pettinger	11701 Indian Ridge Rd., Reston 860-1437	Exec. Director,
Martha Pennino	12000 Bowman Towne Dr., 478-0283	Fairfax County, Board of Supervisors

7. (a) What was the nature of any obstacles to the efforts and from what segment of the community did obstacles originate?

(a) State Health Agency statistics were not current, and failed to show need for a maternity ward in the Reston area. Obstacles originated in the State Health Agency and Fairfax County Hospital.

Developers wanted to use the town hall/warehouse land for industrial development/office space.

The public perceived that the influx of homeless would exceed the community's ability to provide adequate services. This was expressed by numerous community leaders.

- (b) How were the specific obstacles overcome?

(b) The special task force developed current data and community support for a maternity ward, enabling the State Health Agency to revise its decision.

Numerous discussions with the developer, GRACE, the real estate community, and community leaders demonstrated the value of saving the historical building.

Community concerns were allayed by establishing home occupancy limits and job placement services in the Reston Homeless Shelter.

8. What component of the Civic Index would you consider to be the strongest in your community? How was this achieved?

Our strongest points are volunteerism and philanthropy. Our over 200 volunteer organizations include Meals on Wheels, Reston Interfaith, Reston Youth Sports, Reston Homeowners Coalition, Reston Chorale, Scouting, Greater Reston Arts Center, Reston Board of Commerce, and a host of other groups involving over 20,000 community volunteers and hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours and dollars.

Our Reston Community Center, Reston Association, and Reston Visitor Center serve as clearing houses for volunteerism. The Reston Board of Commerce coordinates the many significant contributions from our business/corporate sector; large corporations such as Reston Land and Unisys, and local businesses such as Village Cleaners, Reston Hardware, and Better Impressions Printing, as well as many real estate agencies, all make major contributions to the betterment of Reston.

We are fortunate in having excellent elected government representatives, particularly Martha Pennino, our representative on the County Board of Supervisors. The various organizations and citizens working with Ms. Pennino, the county staff, and other government agencies help to make Reston what we believe to be an All American City.

9. Which Civic Index component would you consider to be the weakest in your community? What constructive steps have been taken to strengthen it?

Our weakest component is clearly our lack of self government. Nevertheless, certain of our volunteer organizations, such as the Reston Community Association and the Reston Homeowners Coalition, work closely with county and state governments to help in obtaining Reston's fair share of services.

Although we feel fortunate to be represented on the County Board of Supervisors by Martha Pennino, this is no substitute for controlling our own destiny.

In recognition of these concerns, we have formed a Governance Committee of citizen volunteers and business representatives who are actively studying the needed services and are developing a charter to obtain formal self government for Reston, a goal we believe we will achieve within two years.

10. Of the specific techniques that contributed to your community's success, which factors do you feel others might adopt?

Effective communication is, by far, the most powerful technique we used. Both of our weekly newspapers - The Connection, and The Reston Times - proved consistently approachable and interested in community concerns, causes, and activities. Availing themselves of this resource, our groups became adept at writing press releases, producing newsworthy events, and learning press deadlines and how to obtain press coverage. We were thus able to communicate effectively and quickly to inform and arouse community interest in these three projects, as well as numerous others.

Joint meetings among several organizations enabled us to capitalize on each group's strengths - such as writing, planning, legal advice, environmental expertise, financial insights - to address a wide range of concerns and develop common strategies; in union there is strength. Not only was this technique effective on the three projects described herein, but we have joined forces on goals, such as governance, and on events, such as Reston's twentieth anniversary celebration.

We believe these techniques have been demonstrated as invaluable to our community's success, and strongly urge other to adopt them, as well.

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For the information provided below, please indicate the year upon which statistics are based.

FORM OF GOVERNMENT <u>Unincorporated</u>	POPULATION BREAKDOWN (if available)
POPULATION 1985 <u>43,400</u>	below 18 years <u>36.8 %</u>
-,+ PERCENT CHANGE 1970-85 <u>+4.79 %</u>	18-25 <u>6.6 %</u>
POPULATION DENSITY(per sq. mi.)	26-35 <u>23.21 %</u>
1980 <u>2,870</u>	36-50 <u>21.9 %</u>
PERCENT MINORITY <u>11.1 %</u>	51-65 <u>8.1 %</u>
Black <u>7.3 %</u>	Over 65 <u>3.2 %</u>
Hispanic <u>1.2</u>	EMPLOYMENT (% employed)
Asian <u>2.4</u>	Manufacturing <u>20 %</u>
Other <u>.2</u>	Trade <u>30 %</u>
MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME _____	Agriculture <u>0</u>
%FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY	Service <u>50 %</u>
LEVEL <u>12.6 %</u>	AGE OF HOUSING STOCK <u>Avg 10 Years</u>
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE <u>3.3 %</u>	NO. OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS <u>20 %</u>

All-America City Award Applicant (Does not have to be same person designated as the program contact)

Name: DAN McGUIRE

Title: President Reston

Organization: Reston Homeowners Coalition

Address: 2202 Guildmore Rd

State, City, Zip: Reston Va - 22091

Phone: 703 620-9879 (H) 703-648-7779(W)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

All-America City Award Contact (Major contact available throughout competition and for follow-up)

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

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

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

State, City, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The entry blank should be completed and mailed, along with two(2) photocopies, to the All-America City Awards Program, National Civic League, 55 West 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036, at the earliest possible date but must be postmarked not later than March 15, 1988. Enclose \$250 filing fee. A Screening Committee of civic affairs experts will choose the finalists who will then be invited to send representatives to appear before the All-America City jury in May to present the finalists, cases. The jury will then select the winners who will take part in a National Awards Ceremony.