



## *2008 All-America City Award Application*

**Application Deadline: Friday, February 29, 2008 (5 p.m. MST)**

**Finalists Announced: Friday, March 14, 2008**

**Competition and Awards Announced: June 4-6, 2008 in Tampa, Florida**

### **All-America City Awards Criteria**

- Cross-sector collaboration among the public, private and nonprofit sectors and key constituencies;
- Inclusiveness demonstrated by recognition and involvement of diverse segments and perspectives (ethnic, racial, socio-economic, age, etc.) in community decision-making;
- Innovation demonstrated by creative solutions and leveraging of community resources;
- Significant and specific community achievements;
- Projects that address the community's most important needs and demonstrate results and impacts (for example, dollars raised or lives impacted); and
- Cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries.

Support of the All-America City Awards provided by:



Jones Day



The Official Airline of the All-America City Awards

Marriott International

Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel and Marina

# Community Information

## Community name and state:

Akron, Ohio

---

## Your community is applying as a:

Neighborhood  Town  City  County  Region

## If applying as a region, name participating communities:

---

## If applying as a neighborhood, name city:

---

Has your community applied before?  Yes  No If Yes, which Years: 1981 and 1995

Has your community been a Finalist before?  Yes  No If Yes, which years: 1981 and 1995

Has your community been an All-America City before?  Yes  No If Yes, which years: 1981 and 1995

## Contact Information

### All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout entire competition and for follow-up):

Name: Helen Tomic

---

Title: City Planner

---

Organization: City of Akron

---

Address: 166 South High St Rm 405

---

City, State, ZIP: Akron, OH 44308

---

Phone (business/day): 330.375.2090

---

Fax (business/day): 330.375.2387

---

Phone (home/evening): 330.633.5675

---

Fax (home/evening):

---

E-mail Address: [tomiche@ci.akron.oh.us](mailto:tomiche@ci.akron.oh.us)

City/Community Web Site: [www.ci.akron.oh.us](http://www.ci.akron.oh.us)

---

### List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application (add additional lines if needed):

#### (Provide name and title; organization; phone; e-mail address)

David A. Lieberth, Deputy Mayor,	City of Akron	330.375.2345	liebeda@ci.akron.oh.us
----------------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------------------

---

Bernett Williams, President	Urban League	330.434.1301	ulbernett@aol.com
-----------------------------	--------------	--------------	-------------------

---

Jerry Craig, Manger Clinical Services	ADM Board	330.762.3500	craigg@admboard.org
---------------------------------------	-----------	--------------	---------------------

---

The community applying will receive one complimentary membership (or a membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?

Name Helen Tomic  
Address 166 S. High St Room 405  
City, State, Zip Code Akron, OH 44308  
Phone Number 330.375.2090 Fax 330.375.2387  
Email [tomiche@ci.akron.oh.us](mailto:tomiche@ci.akron.oh.us)

If we are designated an All-America City, we agree to follow NCL's rules (available on the Web site) regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: David A. Lieberth Title: Deputy Mayor of Administration

### Community Statistics

Note: Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (*source suggestions*: U.S. Census Bureau, state, local government, and local school statistics)

POPULATION (in year 2000 or most recent): **217,074**  
Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1990-2000 (indicate + or -): -6.84 %  
Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

### RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN (percentage):

White alone	<u>67.2</u> %
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	<u>1.2</u> %
Black or African American alone	<u>28.5</u> %
Asian alone	<u>1.5</u> %
American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) alone	<u>0.3</u> %
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOP) alone	<u>0</u> %
Some other race alone	<u>0.4</u> %
Two or more races	<u>2.1</u> %

Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$ 39,381  
Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL: 14.0 %  
Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: 4.7 %  
Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

**POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP** (percentages, if available):

19 years old and under	<u>28.2</u> %
20-24	<u>7.6</u> %
25-44	<u>30.3</u> %
45-64	<u>20.3</u> %
65 and over	<u>13.5</u> %

Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

---

**PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP:** 59.4 %

Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

---

**WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:**

<u>Services</u>	<u>42.5</u> %
<u>Manufacturing</u>	<u>18.6</u> %
<u>Trade</u>	<u>15.5</u> %

Source/Date: U.S Census Bureau, 2000 Census

---

★★ Please attach a state map with your community clearly marked (attach as a separate sheet).

## Part I Civic Infrastructure

Describe your community. Using the four major sections of the National Civic League's *The Civic Index, Second Edition* (see [www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org) for more information), examine your community's civic infrastructure and civic capacity and describe how your community *lives* each of the answers to each of the following questions. Please include real examples of how your community has demonstrated its strengths and faced its challenges. The roman numerals correspond to parts of *The Civic Index, Second Edition*. Also see the application instructions for this section.

**I. What is our community vision for its future?** (300 word maximum)

The Mayor of Akron challenged the community to participate in a comprehensive effort to set goals for the city for the coming years. *Imagine.Akron:2025* was a citizen-led planning effort that engaged more than 1,000 residents in a structured, 18 month dialogue in 1999 and 2000.

Citizens joined 40 different Workgroups, attended over 20 public meetings, and were selected randomly for a survey conducted by the University of Akron. Many of the sessions were televised live on Time Warner Cable.

*Imagine.Akron's* charge was to focus principally on the city's delivery of services to families, education, neighborhoods, and business.

The result was a community presentation and publication of 25 specific goals with agreed-upon strategies and an identification of resources necessary to achieve the goals.

The community dialogue has continued in different ways:

Akron Public Schools adopted the name, *Imagine Akron Public Schools* for its long-term planning process (discussed *infra*) which has involved hundreds of neighborhood residents in the planning to re-build every Akron school as a new Community Learning Center;

*Imagine Downtown Akron* was an additional two-year dialogue involving over 100 volunteers who sought to implement the goals that recognize downtown as the county's largest employment and entertainment center. Visitors seeking entertainment number 4 million per year. Downtown employment has grown from 15,000 to 31,000 since 1995.

Goodwill Industries adopted the *Imagine.Akron:2025* report on workforce development as its own roadmap for future planning.

A lasting contribution of *Imagine.Akron* is the benefit obtained from city workers and residents sitting together to discuss issues and the high regard developed for each other.

The project was supported with city funds and private contributions from *Akron Tomorrow*, a private organization made up of the city's largest employers.

## **II. How are we fulfilling the new roles for community governance?**

### **II. (a). What is the extent and nature of community member participation in community improvement efforts? (300 word maximum)**

The City of Akron, the Akron Public Schools and the Ohio School Facilities Commission entered into an unprecedented partnership - a 15-year plan to rebuild or renovate every Akron Public School as a Community Learning Center (CLC). To gather community input before plans for each school building are started, public meetings are held that include the team of designers, teachers and members of each neighborhood, who build the "Program of Requirements" which lay the groundwork for each building.

A different partnership, between the City, the Akron Community Foundation, and neighborhood-led organizations invest \$200,000 annually in small but important neighborhood initiatives such as safety and education programs, clean-up projects, neighborhood festivals, and newsletters. The "Neighborhood Partnership Program" provides grants of up to \$7,500 to organizations who match the cash award with in-kind contributions and volunteer time.

With the support of the Neighborhood Partnership Program, the West Hill Neighborhood Organization (WHNO) has been working to build and strengthen ties between residents and businesses, strengthened their relationship with Akron Police at frequent neighborhood meetings, and have initiated a Pooch Patrol, a visibility initiative whereby residents and their dogs walk the streets to show they're not afraid and support the neighborhood. 154 residents participate in WHNO activities. Committees monitor crime

and safety issues, advocate for proper zoning, and provide the neighbors with a quarterly newsletter.

Residents Improving Goodyear Heights Together (RIGHT) Committee has been funded primarily through a Neighborhood Partnership Grant since its founding in October 1997. It distributes 2,500 newsletters six times a year, created a gazebo park & rose garden, holds a Library “lock –in” for youths, a Candidates' Night, and more. Currently 300 residents participate in RIGHT activities.

Since 2005, 82 organizations have received \$700,000 to implement these neighborhood-based projects.

**II. (b). What role does government play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

Akron has benefited from the imagination and determination of a strong Mayor and a collaborative City Council.

In 2003, Akron’s municipal leaders won a 1/4 of one percent income tax increase to trigger the release of over \$400 million to rebuild every Akron school as a Community Learning Center. This process has been replicated throughout the State of Ohio.

The City is the lead entity for the Continuum of Care planning process that directs resources to homeless needs. The Continuum of Care receives \$3.5 million annually. The City of Akron has established a strong working relationship with providers in an effort to reach all homeless populations. When the City identified the need to demolish an aging downtown hotel due to severe structural deterioration that would have forced the evacuation of 190 people -half with mental health issues - the City led the community discussion and worked with a team of federal and local partners to enable the closure of the building and relocate residents throughout the community.

In 2007, Mayor Plusquellic quarterbacked the city, county, state, and federal team that assembled the public investment of \$200 million that led to Goodyear’s announcement to build new world headquarters in Akron. This will result in \$1 billion dollars of new investment in an aging blighted industrial part of Akron, and permit Akron to retain 3,000 jobs at the global tire maker.

The Mayor and Council are now stepping-up to meet a challenge from Bridgestone Firestone Co. to re-build its new Technical Center that would retain 600 high-paying technology jobs and an add an additional 400 jobs in Akron.

**II. (c). What role does the non-profit sector play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

Akron enjoys the confidence of public and private foundations that collaboratively provide leadership in projects relating to education, health, arts, and workforce development.

Akron’s three non-profit public hospitals combined forces with foundations and the city health department to create ACCESS TO CARE -a safety net for low-income adults who

cannot afford health insurance. 250 volunteer physicians donate their time. \$1 million of free pharmaceuticals and nearly \$14 million worth of donated care by the hospitals have served more than 2,000 uninsured adults.

When Akron's 104-year old YWCA organization faced financial default, Akron's foundations led the effort to determine if a jolt of funding would turn around a decade of decline. The decision was made to close the YWCA and ask for its programs to be picked-up by other agencies:

The Boys & Girls Club – The “Girl Power” program. 154 young women in 2007.  
The Urban League - Career Clothing Bank for women seeking jobs. 458 served.  
YMCA - After school programs  
City of Akron -fitness needs.  
Battered Women's Shelter - The Rape Crisis Center served 939 individuals.

Summit County Children Who Witness Violence is a collaborative program of Akron Children's Hospital and six other organizations to decrease trauma among children witnessing violence through home-based services:

Crisis intervention available 24/7/365;  
Ongoing trauma support including counseling for the child and family.  
Services are voluntary, confidential, and free.  
Since 2003, the program has served 1545 children.

With the city, county and the U.S. Marshal, Akron's faith community conducted a model Fugitive Safe-Surrender program. 136 non-violent felony offenders turned themselves in at participating churches. Volunteers joined with law enforcement, attorneys, prosecutors, judges, and public and private agencies to help fugitives resolve re- entry problems.

In 2007, the City held a “Goods for Guns” gun buyback event at the Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church. A total of 964 guns were surrendered. Gun donors received gift cards for groceries. Funding: City of Akron, \$20,000. Other local governments donated a total of \$70,000.

**II. (d). What role does business play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

There is a strong collaboration among the City government, the Schools, the non-profit community and the Greater Akron Chamber, the principal alliance of local businesses.

In 2006, more than 680 employees representing 29 companies and organizations tutored nearly 1,400 students in 40 public elementary schools one-on-one for an hour a week through the “Akron Reads” program in the Akron Public Schools.

The United Way and its Volunteer Center organized 1,970 volunteers from over 130 businesses to assist non-profits. Aircraft Braking Systems provided 38 volunteers to assist with landscaping and spring cleaning at Booth Manor apartment units serving homeless families.

One hundred fifty (150) companies hosted food and fund drives for the Harvest for Hunger Campaign benefiting the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank and collected 103,000 pounds of food and \$500,000 in donations, which ranked Akron second in the nation.

Akron's hospitals are Greater Akron's largest employers, with over 11,000 workers. They have joined with Mayor Plusquellic and the University of Akron to create The Akron Biomedical Corridor, an initiative that will retain and create jobs, and recognizes Akron's great strengths in the research and fabrication of new materials. Jointly, the partners have applied for state funds to build a national institute devoted to Orthopedic Medicine.

The Home Builders of Greater Akron and the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors (PHCC) sponsor "Education in Action," with Akron Public Schools. Teen workers from Career Education in five public high schools build houses and gain expertise in masonry, electrical, plumbing, and carpentry. 81 students enrolled in the 2007-2008 school year. Since 1997, 75% of the students who have participated in the project have been hired into local firms. Akron Public Schools provide for the purchase of tools, safety wear and other items.

### **III. How do we work together as a community?**

#### **III. (a). How does our community recognize and celebrate its diversity? (300 word maximum)**

Akron is the birthplace of "Coming Together," a community-wide multiracial dialogue program begun in 1993 after the Akron Beacon Journal's Pulitzer Prize winning series on race. The program eventually became a coalition of 200 organizations with a commitment to race relations. The newspaper reported in January, 2008 that the program appeared to have "run its course." That same week, about 200 Akron area church leaders attended a kick-off of a new movement to revive Martin Luther King's message of reconciliation and unity. "Love Akron Inc," promises to be the "tie that binds members of the clergy and their congregations together."

Akron also has partnered with the Diversity Center of Northeast Ohio in Cleveland to provide opportunities for teenagers.

The African-American Festival, held each year and co-sponsored by the City, promotes an African centered world view focusing on culture, art, philosophy and music. Approximately 30,000 people attended the 2007 event.

ASIA, Inc. -Asian Services in Action - sponsors mentoring programs, health fairs, settlement options, and outreach. With Mayor Plusquellic's trips to China and Japan, ASIA is a bridge between Akron and the Eastern world. Nearly 300 people attended "An Afternoon in Asia" with displays of art, dance and culture. The event allowed Asians to affirm their cultural identity and share their culture with the people of Akron.

For the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the City and its business partners sponsored Chriskindl Market, America's most authentic German Christmas Market, in Downtown Akron in cooperation with Akron's German sister city, Chemnitz. More than 70 Chemnitzers

come to Akron between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day to celebrate our shared cultural heritage. Germans make up the largest ethnic origin of European descendants in northeast Ohio. Since 2004, more than 250,000 people from 140 Ohio cities, 44 states and 10 foreign countries have visited Akron's Chriskindl Market.

**III. (b). How does our community work with neighboring communities to address shared challenges? Is there a shared regional vision? (300 word maximum)**

Akron, Summit County, and the Greater Akron Chamber are contributing partners to "Team NEO," the first regional economic development initiative that has been sustainable in northeast Ohio with measurable results.

Akron's Joint Economic Development Districts have demonstrated a decade of spectacular results. (Akron led Ohio's legislative initiative to create JEDD's - with the city of Fairlawn and the townships of Bath, Copley, Coventry, and Springfield.)

JEDD funds paid for the following developments.

A \$4 million soccer complex - 8 grass fields plus amenities built by the City with Copley Township and the Ohio Youth Soccer Association representing 55,000 youths aged 5 to 19.

In Coventry Township, a \$1.8 million softball complex expanded the sports area of Akron's rural neighbor with four new fields for girl's softball.

The Springfield-Akron JEDD Park is a \$2.5 million sports facility featuring three softball fields, one baseball field, and one soccer field that are used by youth sports teams from both communities.

Akron owns and manages four reservoirs and 19,000 acres of land in its watershed in rural Portage and Geauga counties, and with Ohio's wildlife division as a partner, will manage public recreation in the watershed.

Burton Township, Akron, and the Trust for Public land jointly purchased 98 acres adjacent to Akron's Watershed, where deed restrictions will preserve the land in its present state of farmland, wetlands and forests.

With regard to social issues, Summit County government convened local leaders, nonprofits and residents for a countywide environmental scan, "The Quality of Life Project," an unprecedented success in the battle to improve health and expand economic opportunities. Twelve agency committees and 300-plus volunteers have implemented those tasks of greatest need. The Child Family Health Services Consortium has helped 600 women access prenatal care in conjunction with the Infant Mortality Risk Reduction Project and an additional 150 high-risk women with regular prenatal care.

#### IV. How does our community strengthen its ability to solve problems? (300 word maximum)

There are 14 juvenile mental health courts in the U.S., nine in Ohio. Summit County Juvenile Court's, "Crossroads Probation Program" is an intensive response to juvenile crime developed by Judge Linda Tucci-Teodosio to assist delinquent youths who suffer from "co-occurring" disorders. A delinquent child - typically between 12 and 17 - with diagnoses of mental illness and/or substance abuse/dependency, enters the four-phase program for one year. Built on a foundation of accountability, treatment includes family, school, and juvenile justice problems. 446 families have been served since its inception.

The Akron Municipal Mental Health Court is the first in Ohio. A collaborative effort between the Summit County Mental Health Board, Community Support Services, and the Court, the Mental Health Court provides residential treatment at Oriana House. Defendants complete an intensive two year probation which includes regular meetings with the judge and compliance with all treatment-related counseling requirements. There have been 200 graduates since 2001.

Our community is building leaders through:

**Leadership Akron.** Over 675 graduates represent positions of influence at every level of greater Akron's business, government and non-profit sectors.

**The Child and Family Leadership Exchange** hosted by the Summit County Domestic Relations Court and the Children Services Board. Emerging leaders in social services can network, collaborate and learn about other agencies. There have been 100 graduates since 2003.

**Project Blueprint** is a minority volunteer development program designed to help United Way, and its member agencies become more inclusive, responsive and reflective of the culturally diverse communities which they serve, and accelerate the involvement of minorities in becoming policy makers on agency boards and committees. Project Blue Print has graduated 115 class members.

The neighborhood leadership training program of the **East Akron Community House** is building a new foundation of neighborhood leaders to fill the gap in our community. Since 2005, 75 residents have graduated from the program.

## Part II: Community Background and Community Challenge Section

**1 (A). Community Background:** Set the background for your community. Tell its story. Summarize your community's history, successes and struggles. Describe how your community got to where it is today and your community's current state of affairs. (700 word maximum):

In 1983, Rock and Roll Hall of Famer Chrissie Hynde and her Pretenders recorded the radio favorite, "My City Was Gone." Chrissie, a graduate of Firestone High School, was talking about Akron.

Built alongside the Ohio-Erie Canal which first brought prosperity to Ohio, this is where the canal crossed the north-south watershed divide. Even today, the waters in south

Akron flow to the Ohio river, the Mississippi, and the Gulf of Mexico and the waters in north Akron flow to the Cuyahoga, the Great Lakes, and the Atlantic ocean.

Yankee settlers brought with them their New England values that supported Akron's home-grown abolitionist John Brown, Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" speech at an 1851 Women's Rights convention, and in 1935, helped launch Alcoholics Anonymous, a worldwide phenomenon that AA pilgrims celebrate in Akron every June.

Irish immigrants built the canal and German immigrants capitalized on its success. Akron is where much of American industry has its roots: farm machinery, cereals, ceramic sewer tile, manufactured toys, and rubber. Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone, and General became cherished American brands.

Between 1910 and 1920, no American city grew faster. A wave of migration from West Virginia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky to Akron exploded its population from 70,000 to over 200,000 in one decade.

By 1930, nearly half of the nation's tires were built in Akron. By 1983, there were virtually no tire building jobs in the "Rubber Capital of the World."

Between 1970 and 1990, Akron lost nearly a fifth of its population. Headquarters for Firestone and the new owners of Goodrich moved out of town.

Since 1990, Akron has been required to re-invented itself.

The presence of high tech polymers, plastics, composites and metals allowed Akron to leverage its 20<sup>th</sup> century dominance in the tire industry to evolve into a global center for materials research. *Newsweek* selected Akron as one of America's "top ten hot tech cities."

Since 1987 when he took office, attracting new jobs has been a priority of Mayor Don Plusquellic. With its partners, Akron has aggressively pursued European companies, 24 of whom have settled in the community, employing over 500 people. *Expansion Management* Magazine ranked Akron metro among the top 15 in the nation in European investment for three consecutive years.

The University of Akron is Ohio's only university to have a science and engineering program ranked among the top five nationally. It serves the cluster of polymer companies in the region, which has sales of 22-billion dollars annually.

The University's \$500 million "New Landscape for Learning" has seen a campus construction boom, and outside of the campus, the neighborhood of University Park is being transformed with assistance from partners Summa Health System, the Metropolitan Housing Authority, the City and others. The University Park Alliance has received the largest single grant ever given to a community by the John S. And James L. Knight Foundation (Akron brothers who founded the *Beacon Journal*,) \$10 million over 5 years.

The University joined Mayor Plusquellic, representatives from Akron's hospitals and some 20 private businesses on a 2006 mission to Israel, which leads the world in

cultivating innovation through technical incubators. The chairman of Akron-based GOJO (Purell) company and Mayor Plusquellic jointly agreed on behalf of the community, to invest \$1 million or more from public and private sources in Akron into the *Targetech Innovation Center*, a privately-owned Israeli incubator. Companies emerging from Targetech will use Akron as their U.S. base. Akron is the first city in the United States that has put together such a public - private partnership with an Israeli incubator.

That collaborative venture led to the formation of Akron's "Biomedical Corridor." This boomerang-shaped, 500 acre district includes 11,000 health care professionals, 1,000 physicians, and 1.5 million outpatient visits and 80,000 patient admissions annually. Because of the strong presence of the University of Akron and the Northeast Ohio Universities College of Medicine, Akron is already luring new research and product development to the Biomedical Corridor.

On September 6, 2007, Chrissie Hynde celebrated the opening of her new restaurant, *VegiTerranean*, as part of a \$30 million mixed use development in a developing downtown neighborhood.

Chrissie Hynde admitted that "her city was back."

**1 (B). Community Celebration:** Why should your community be selected as an All-America City? Describe what makes your community a great place to live, work, and play. (300 word maximum)

Akron is an American success story. Profoundly impacted by global economic changes, Akron is replete with stories that demonstrate leadership, collaboration, and character.

The 71-mile **Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail** goes through the center of Akron and puts city-dwellers within a bicycle ride of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which hosts 2 million visitors/year.

The City will invest \$1 million this year from its JEDD funds to underwrite arts and culture for the region:

60 free outdoor concerts. Attendance: 80,000

Four free outdoor performances of the **Akron Symphony**. Attendance: 9,000

Four weekends of free professional ballet, a 30 year tradition in Akron. Attendance: 8,000

**Lock 3 Summer Arts Experience.** 65 high school students, some with disabilities, work with professional artists for 4 weeks and create public works of art Graduates: 325. Works of public art: 20.

America's most authentic **Chriskindl Market**. Attendance: 70,000

**Firestone Country Club** has long been home to the PGA tour, raising over \$20 million for Akron charities. 1,000 volunteers run the week-long event.

*Sports Illustrated* picked the **All-American Soap Box Derby** as Ohio's best sports symbol. 700 Akron area men and women volunteer to run this racing classic.

Akron's own LeBron James has replaced 7 public basketball courts. LeBron will host his 3<sup>rd</sup> "**King for Kids Bikeathon**" in 2008. 2,000 cyclists. LeBron will donate another 300 bicycles to needy kids.

The **6<sup>th</sup> Roadrunner Akron Marathon** will attract over 5,000 runners. One of "50 Great Marathons, From Fairbanks to Boston."

**Akron's Art Museum**, opened in 2007, is Wolf Prix' first work in the United States. The 300 foot long, 400 ton cantilevered roof was positioned with GPS technology by local tradesmen. The contemporary steel armature hugs Akron's 1899 Post Office, one of more than 50 historic buildings preserved in the city. \$40 million.

**1 (C). Community Challenges:** Based upon your community's current status, describe your community's two most pressing challenges.

**Challenge #1:** (200 words maximum)

Like many aging industrial cities, Akron has watched young families moving to the suburbs leaving the city with an older and poorer population. Student test scores had begun to slide in a public school district, once Ohio's best "Big Urban School District." Many students were housed in deteriorating buildings with an average age of 75 years. New buildings were going to be needed eventually, and after two decades of public service, Mayor Plusquellic was determined to implement the suggestions of the *Imagine.Akron* report that neighborhoods needed greater access to their school buildings after school hours, on weekends, and in the summer.

Mayor Plusquellic realized the importance of rebuilding neighborhoods around modern, inviting schools. Akron got that opportunity when the State provided matching money for a massive state-wide school building program from its tobacco-settlement funds.

Akron had invested in itself in other ways for the previous 10 years: a minor league ballpark a convention center, the National Inventors Hall of Fame, and new community centers and libraries had been constructed. The city began replacing old housing. New homes were being built. But still missing, were middle-class families with elementary and middle school-age children.

**Challenge #2:** (200 words maximum)

There was a time in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that people said, "When Detroit sneezed - - Akron caught cold," so close was the relationship between automakers and tire makers. Akron was a one-horse town, riding on rubber, and the local economy went through "boom" or "bust" periods, and nothing in between.

Key to establishing a post-rubber manufacturing economy has been the need to create vehicles that will let Akron travel a different journey - along a route of diverse businesses and industrial specialties.

Today, there are 2,500 polymer-related companies within a 3 hour drive of Akron. Advanced materials include polymers and metalworking, and remains one of the region's strong "clusters" of economic prosperity. Other clusters are information technology and biomedicine.

Akron's role in the world of advanced manufacturing is well-established. Making things on heavy machinery in Akron today more often requires the brains behind a computer keyboard than the brawn behind a wheel or a lever.

Key to the region's economic growth is to find ways to reward entrepreneurship, to encourage technology advances, and to find effective ways to transfer the new technology to commercialization.

## **Part II: Community-Driven Projects**

Part III requires descriptions of three collaborative community projects that have significantly affected the community. The first two projects should be drawn directly from the two community challenges stated above. The third project should be reflective of what your community is doing for children and youth.

### **PROJECT ONE (Challenge #1)**

#### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

Akron, Ohio is the only place in the United States where every public school building is being constructed as a **Community Learning Center (CLC)**. In the late 1990's, the State of Ohio began an enormous rebuilding project of all public schools in the state, beginning with the urban districts. A sliding scale of matching funds was required in order for a district to take advantage of the state money. Without knowing how the district would meet the match, the Akron Public Schools (APS) held a series of city-wide meetings and developed a Master Plan for rebuilding all of its schools. The Master Plan was eventually approved by the Ohio School Facilities Commission (OSFC).

Mayor Plusquellic saw an additional opportunity for community-based groups like the Urban League, the YMCA, and others to join the project as community partners and save capital dollars for new buildings they wanted to build on their own.

#### **2. Describe the relationship between this project and your first challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

In 2002, Mayor Plusquellic approached Summit County government and requested a half-cent increase in the county sales tax dedicated to "a reliable, countywide revenue stream to help school districts meet their local share of construction costs" to rebuild or renovate schools. It was the first such sales tax initiative in Ohio. Revenue of almost \$1 billion over 30 years would be shared equitably among the county's 17 public school districts. In November, 2002, the levy failed with 70% of county voters rejecting it.

Akron decided to move forward on its own, and the Mayor created the Community Learning Center Project – also the first in Ohio. Akron voters approved an increase of ¼

of one percent in the income tax in May, 2003 with a 64% approval margin. The increase was dedicated solely to secure the matching funds of \$409 million from OSFC.

The City of Akron, APS and OSFC entered into an unprecedented partnership and a co-ownership agreement and began a massive 15 year plan to rebuild or renovate nearly fifty APS structures as Community Learning Centers (CLCs). The City and School Board signed a comprehensive Cooperative Agreement governing construction and management of the new buildings with a Joint Board of Review consisting of school and city representatives.

At the same time, the Akron Urban League, a respected institution supporting the poor of the community and a voice for the African-American minority, looked at its building, which had served the community well since 1950. Equipped with an auditorium, gymnasium, swimming pool, meeting rooms, classrooms, library, lounges and a kitchen, the building had begun to deteriorate. The Urban League had started planning to either renovate or build a new center, knowing that the community would have to raise a significant amount of money. Mayor Plusquellic suggested the idea of a partnership between APS, the city and the Urban League that would benefit both organizations and the city as a whole.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

The Community Learning Centers concept became a reality through the highest degree of collaboration. The community planning process began in December, 2003 with community input gained from open discussions, focus groups, citizen dialogue and critical direction provided by the Mayor, civic leaders and the school board. The City of Akron and the Akron Public Schools made a concerted effort to involve neighborhood residents, teachers and students in the planning process. The potential partnering organizations, the local design team, school staff, parents, neighborhood residents and leaders participated in a series of directional planning meetings. Concurrently, the partners/co-owners held dozens of ongoing sessions with the Urban League; The University of Akron; National Inventors Hall of Fame; Child Guidance; Family Services; Children's Hospital; Summa Health Systems; churches and faith-based organizations. Enthusiastic representatives from the Crouse Caring Community Program, the Community Action Agency, the YMCA, the International Institute, neighborhood block clubs and nearly 40 affiliated United Way Agencies also joined the conversation.

A winning partnership was created between the Akron Urban League, the City, and the Akron Public Schools to build the Helen Arnold CLC in conjunction with a new Urban League headquarters. It was a monumental step that spearheaded a renaissance of a once-dying neighborhood where the last school closed in 1980. This stunning new CLC highlights a unique joint venture housing APS grades K through five and the Urban League's administrative offices and its numerous programs. The City of Akron's Recreation Department is responsible for after hours programming and assures availability of the CLC's use as a classic community asset.

The new Helen Arnold Community Learning Center and Urban League has been and will be a catalyst for more than \$80 million of new investment as Akron's Metropolitan Housing Authority re-builds 172 public housing units as part of a Hope VI program.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Since 2003, seven schools have been built, seven are under construction and approximately 26 buildings remain to be built or renovated. All Akron Public School buildings are operated as CLCs.

The City's hopes for community use of the CLC's is succeeding beyond our expectations. The City estimates that the CLCs will be booked for about 3000 after-hours use in 2008.

Helen E. Arnold CLC shares the site with the Akron Urban League but functions independently. The two entities share a gymnasium, art and music room, media center and "cafetorium," a multi-purpose room. The CLC is a stunning 62,000 sq. ft. two-story building enrolling 452 students. The gymnasium - high-school sized for multiple uses - is 8,000 sq. ft.

In the same building, the Urban League continues its heritage of empowering and transforming communities. The League continues to offer programming for children, youths, adults, seniors and other clientele.

The City of Akron initiated and funds an extensive after school program at Helen Arnold and 10 other elementary buildings. "Akron After School" serves about 1,500 at-risk students system-wide. The program emphasizes tutoring and homework assistance by certified teachers. Once students have met that requirement, they participate in hundreds of enrichment programs, all of which emphasize the core curriculum.

One component, the Olympian Butch Reynolds Care for Kids program, focuses on African-American boys, grades 3 to 5. At Helen Arnold, the 36 boys in the program have not had a single disciplinary problem since enrolling and the school's suspension rate decreased by 65%. One mother wrote that her young son gained two father figures in the men who run the program.

In January, 2008 "Akron After School" was chosen by the Ohio Department of Education as a statewide case model for after school study.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

David James, Ex. Dir., Business Affairs, Akron Public Schools, 70 N. Broadway, Akron 44308, 330 761 2805, [djames@akron.k12.oh.us](mailto:djames@akron.k12.oh.us)

## **PROJECT TWO (Challenge #2)**

### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

The **Akron Global Business Accelerator** is a story of hope, promise and fulfillment.

Formed in 1983 as the Akron Industrial Incubator, the evolution to the Akron Global Business Accelerator in 2006 was not just a name change, but a leap of faith by local policy makers to become prime movers in the technology-based knowledge economy.

The Global Technology Commercialization Initiative was started in July, 2006 to stimulate the creation and development of technology-based entrepreneurial innovation, and helps drive new, domestic start-ups and the attraction of foreign firms to the Accelerator around key technology sectors.

The project, like the Incubator before it, offers low-cost rent, skilled management oversight, no cost and low-cost accounting, legal advice, and subject-matter experts - all available to tenants of the Accelerator.

Because there are 37 companies in the Accelerator today, their very proximity to each other creates a supportive network of like-minded entrepreneurs with opportunities for synergy among tenants.

### **2. Describe the relationship between this project and your second challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

For most of its history, the Accelerator was a mixed-use incubator, focusing on attracting start-ups in light manufacturing, assembly and supply chain distribution. The Accelerator grew from 30,000 sq. ft. in 1983 to a 60,000 sq. ft. building in 1990. In 1995, the Incubator moved into a 200,000 sq. ft. nine story building that was once home to the B.F. Goodrich Company that had moved out of town twenty-five years earlier.

With a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration, \$3.6 million was used to convert the upper three floors of the facility into a technology commercialization "Accelerator."

An open space office environment was conceived to accommodate the needs of today's technology entrepreneur, with movable and portable wall modules to enable existing tenant space requirements, and allow for ease-of-entry and future growth.

Two types of laboratory modules were constructed: individual modules with wet lab, fume hoods, lab cabinets, with water and expanded electrical outlets to appeal to high usage enterprises; and a common use lab available on a fee-for-use basis for those tenants needing occasional, but regular lab use for proof-of-concept, product characterization and testing.

The Accelerator also reached out to its corporate partner, the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, who donated approximately \$1 million worth of scientific test, measurement and environmental equipment to this program.

This new program has allowed us to meet an unmet and growing need in attracting entrepreneurs who wish to commercialize technology in biomedicine, advanced energy, wireless communications and information technology.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

When news was disseminated to the local and regional business community, it quickly became apparent that this program struck a responsive chord not only with emerging technology entrepreneurs, but also with regional referral agencies NorTech (the NE Ohio economic development agency for technology) and JumpStart (a regional early stage venture capital group).

The Greater Akron Investment Partnership (GAIP), founded by members of Akron's Jewish Community, created a pool of funds that together with a matching investment by the City of Akron invested \$1.5 Million into the Israeli Targetech Incubator. The City of Akron and the Accelerator jointly funded the services of an international business consultant to perform product and market due diligence activities for potential entry into US markets. Out of 22 initial Targetech candidates, six were invited to present their business plans. This effort resulted in the first Targetech graduate to execute a lease, bringing their US sales, marketing and engineering personnel to the Accelerator in early 2008.

Leveraging the positive community relationship that Akron enjoys with its sister city in Chemnitz, Germany, the Accelerator is collaborating with its Chemnitz' own Incubator by introducing a client to potential customers in Ohio, which led to initial orders secured with Proctor & Gamble. The Chemnitz client has executed a lease to bring sales and engineering personnel to the Accelerator in early 2008.

Akron General Medical Center (AGMC) and the Accelerator executed a Memo of Understanding to jointly commercialize biomedical related research, and develop joint programs to foster entrepreneurship. This, in turn, led to an invitation by AGMC to the Accelerator to join the Wound Care Consortium; and work with the consortium to develop a center of excellence...the foundation for future technologies to be commercialized.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

On this, the 25th anniversary of the Incubator, the Accelerator has since 1983, graduated 65 companies from its program, who at the time of graduation had created 645 jobs.

**Less than eighteen months after completing our build-out, we have attracted twelve new high-tech, early-stage firms to the Accelerator; increasing our occupancy rate to eighty percent. Over the past six months, these firms have attracted \$16.4 million in new investment capital.**

To build the Accelerator improvements, the stakeholders in our city were instrumental in attracting resources at the state and federal level:

- US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration grant, \$1.75 million.
- City of Akron matching grant of \$2.45 million.
- State of Ohio Edison Incubator Program annual grant \$350,000. (Doubled previous annual funding as a result of the Accelerator's new initiative.)
- Entrepreneurial Signature Program grant from Ohio Third Frontier Program; three year program at \$120,000 per year, directly targeted at providing management services to Accelerator technology entrepreneurs.
- Ohio's Edison Incubator Program doubled its investment to \$350,000 annually.
- NorTech awarded the Accelerator a three year \$360,000 grant to fund a State- led Entrepreneurial Signature Program for our client/tenants.

Three international companies (from Israel, Italy and Germany) have executed leases to join the Accelerator in the first quarter, 2008.

We have executed a lease for a biomedical start-up that will provide pre-clinical and clinical studies for biotech firms seeking FDA registration; and should help attract other biomedical and medical device start-ups.

As a partner in the Wound Care Education & Research Consortium, our first wound care spin-out company from the Consortium is expected to join the Accelerator in the first quarter, 2008.

The Accelerator has become the catalyst around which other technology development and deployment activities revolve.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Michael LeHere, Chief Executive Officer, Akron Global Business Accelerator, 526 S. Main Street, Akron, Ohio 44311, 330.375.2173. mlehere@akronincubator.com

### **PROJECT THREE (Youth-Related)**

The National Civic League has issued the Youth Initiative Challenge. At least one project from each All-America City applicant should document ways in which the lives of children and youth have been tangibly improved.

#### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

To keep at-risk youth off the streets while supplementing their academic experience, Akron Public Schools and the John S., and James L. Knight Foundation (founded by two Akron brothers) are experimenting with new methods to provide safe and productive out-of-school-time programs to students. Perkins Middle School is at the edge of a changing neighborhood in west Akron. By creating the **Perkins Activities Central (PAC)** out-of-school – time enrichment programs are provided for Simon Perkins students with collaborative organizations. One of the best ways to keep students active,

productive and safe is to provide structured activities. The goal of PAC is to provide youths of all ages, races, socioeconomic classes, and backgrounds the benefits of out-of-school-time programs. Such out-of-school-time programs do a great deal in closing the increasingly disturbing achievement gap minority students face in school.

**2. Describe the relationship between this project and the challenge it is addressing, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

Every day, young people around America go home to an empty house after their school day has concluded. Without supervision or structure, it's a recipe for trouble. When other children are involved – older or younger – it can be a problem for an entire neighborhood. Unsupervised youths are at greater risk of truancy, stress, poor grades, and risk-taking behaviors. Repeated studies have shown most risky teen behavior usually occurs between 3 pm and 6 pm when children are left to fend for themselves. While many parents are concerned about their children's safety, they are often unable to find or finance a solution because of their own work obligations and limited incomes.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation researched community priorities in Akron in 2003 and found that residents had a significant concern about this trend, also prevalent in other communities in which the foundation operates. In Akron, 53% of African American parents said that their children would participate in an out-of-school-time program if one were available to them.

The Knight Foundation has committed to investing over \$6.3 million in collaborative efforts in Akron over five years to address after-school issues. The Akron community is participating by providing programs that will increase positive outcomes for the middle school students attending Simon Perkins Middle School. This building was identified in particular because Perkins failed to meet any of the Ohio Department of Education proficiency standards.

The Knight Foundation grant funds opportunities for positive outcomes by strengthening collaborations between the school and local out-of-school-time service providers. The program increases students' access to enrichment programs and provides targeted services for these students. The Knight Foundation is committed to fostering positive youth development through safe and quality out-of-school-time specialized services and programs to a vulnerable population.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

To achieve the positive results that the Knight Foundation will measure, the enrichment programs offered need to be more than just a safe place to pass time. Quality programs require resources and trained, diverse staff who are committed to providing challenging and age appropriate development opportunities. Students need to be given opportunities to build new skills and interests, and receive support from peers and adults alike. Quality out-of-school-time programs also need to meet the needs of working parents. There was a desire to develop mentoring relationships between the program providers and participating students.

With the goal of providing new, appealing and distinctive experiences for the youths in this urban middle school, Akron Public Schools administrators have coordinated efforts of various community agencies throughout Akron and Summit County. Those agencies offering out-of-school programs include:

Hale Farm & Village provides youths an opportunity to watch demonstrations of blacksmithing, pottery, glassblowing and discover what life was like in the 1800's.

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens provides youths an opportunity to explore the extraordinary grounds and historic gardens while learning about landscape design, horticulture, ecology, and history.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Summit County offers educational opportunities and life skills activities to youths.

Alchemy, Inc. meets with boys ONLY to incorporate literacy, mythological stories and social development in character development.

Caring Communities of Summit County meet with youths who are being raised by their grandparents.

The First Tee of Akron exposes youths to golf.

Greater Akron Musical Association provides private music lessons with professional musicians.

Because He Cares, Inc. teaches youth video production techniques

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

The PAC program and activities have demonstrated success not just in controlling where students "hang out," and what they do in the afternoons, but the educational performance of participants in PAC have enhanced critical grade levels.

One of the goals of PAC was to improve student academic achievement by increasing their school engagement. Preliminary assessments have confirmed improved student achievement, attendance, and behavior among participants.

During the 2006-2007 school year 307 students attended PAC. Sixty-eight percent of the sixth graders attending PAC passed the Reading Achievement Test while only 23.7% of the Non-PAC students passed. Seventy-four percent of PAC eighth grade students passed the Reading Achievement Test while 49.4% non-PAC students passed. While math scores were generally lower, PAC students continued to outperform the Non-Pac students. Thirty-two percent of the PAC sixth graders passed the Math Achievement Test while 15.3% of the non-PAC students passed. While two-thirds of the students believed their grades were good or excellent, almost three-fourths of them felt they were doing better in school since they started going to the after school program

PAC gives students an opportunity to learn and develop peer friendships in a controlled environment. Eighty-five percent of the students report that they enjoy the PAC. Furthermore, 92% of parents felt the program had helped their child do better in school. In addition to the assistance that PAC is providing their children, two-thirds of parents agreed that because of PAC, it is now easier for them to focus on their employment and to keep their jobs. Among parents of PAC students, half are able to work more hours. A third of the parents who were not employed before their student(s) enrolled in PAC are now able to begin working.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Carla L. Sibley, Program Director, Akron Public Schools, 70 North Broadway Avenue, Akron, Ohio 44308, (330) 761-3297. Sibley, Carla [cchapman@akron.k12.oh.us]

---

*End of Application*

See [www.ncl.org/aac](http://www.ncl.org/aac) or the application instructions for detailed application instructions, sample applications from previous All-America City Winners, and more information. For questions contact: Kristin Seavey, [kristins@ncl.org](mailto:kristins@ncl.org) or 303-571-4343 ext. 1210.