

2008 FLC CITIES OF EXCELLENCE AWARD NOMINATION
CITY OF DUNEDIN

Governance/Administration

Incorporated in 1899, Dunedin is believed to be the oldest city on the West Coast of Florida south of Cedar Key. It is organized under the Council-Manager form of government, with the City Manager serving as the city's Chief Executive Officer. The Mayor and City Commission provide general oversight of city activities and set policy. Dunedin's population is approximately 37,000; and its residents are afforded extraordinary opportunity for local government involvement through nearly forty Commission-appointed citizens' advisory committees and a local government philosophy that emphasizes public meetings on every topic that affects the city and its residents and businesses. An example would be the Community Visioning process undertaken by the City Commission in 2004, through which the public was given the opportunity to let the City Commission know the course Dunedin should follow over the next several decades. Some of the results of Dunedin's strong citizen/staff/elected official teamwork have been:

- Receiving the *Livable Communities for All Ages* award from the State in 2005.
- Written and illustrated architectural guidelines for future development in the city.
- Being named the first *Purple Heart City* in America by the Military Order of the Purple Heart, in 2006.

City Leadership

City Management has gone beyond the usual "customer satisfaction" philosophy that has become the watchword in most local governments. The City Manager and executive team view the public as the *owners* of local government, and strive to treat them accordingly. Through a Strategic Long Term Planning process, citizen needs are incorporated into goals and objectives for each department, and those in turn are incorporated into the city's budget and work program. When dissatisfaction was expressed with the city's site development and permitting process, the City Manager formed a Customer Task Force to get input and suggestions; and used that information to revamp the entire process, including the creation of a position that acts as a facilitator between the public and the various departments involved. When faced with the need to

make significant reductions in the budget, due to the recent economic developments and voter mandates, city management turned to the employees and the public, garnering over two hundred suggestions for efficiencies and revenue enhancement, over 150 of which came from city staff.

Intergovernmental Cooperation

The City of Dunedin actively seeks cooperative efforts with other local governments, as well as state and federal government where appropriate. The city has received nearly \$20 million in state and federal grants over the past fifteen years, using the funds to achieve projects from renovating spring training facilities to eradicating invasive plant species in city parks. Locally, Dunedin has worked with the Pinellas School District to provide open and unprogrammed sports fields at Dunedin Middle School, making recreation available to an underserved community on the southern end of town; and has an ongoing agreement with the School District for the mutual use of school and city facilities for recreation programs. The city has worked with Pinellas County government to provide a par-three municipal golf course. The city has worked with its neighbors in a variety of ways, including "loaning" other cities the services of the Dunedin harbormaster to assist them in setting up business model-based marina operations.

Citizen Outreach and Involvement

As previously noted, Dunedin has an extensive network of citizen advisory committees, which advise city staff and the Commission on everything from the budget to parks and recreation operations. Advisory committee initiatives have led to significant accomplishments, such as the completion of the William E. Hale Senior Activity Center in 2003, which began as the Committee on Aging's desire to find more space for a senior computer class. A citizen's committee also plans and organizes the annual Diversity Week events, during which the contributions of the city's ethnic, minority, international and other communities is celebrated. There is an active Neighborhood Watch program, run by the Sheriff's Office. And residents and visitors can attend any or all of over fifty special events, many of which are organized by community groups.

Dunedin is currently implementing a Citizens Response Module on its website, whereby residents can click on a "City Manager's Hotline" link to ask questions, make suggestions, or report issues. This module tracks staff response and is monitored by the Assistant City Manager to ensure timely responses to citizen inquiries and concerns.

Technology

In addition to the CRM noted above, the City Manager's Hotline also incorporates a telephone line that citizens can use to make direct contact with City Hall. Information from the telephone line can be plugged into the CRM for tracking and response; and all questions are incorporated into a "top ten" list of Frequently Asked Questions" that citizens can access on the website.

Dunedin has nearly completed the installation of an automatic meter reading system for potable and reclaimed water customers. With this system, it is no longer necessary for the meter reader to physically remove the meter cover and read the meter. The information is entered electronically and wirelessly as the meter reader drives through the neighborhoods. The system provides an increased level of information to the staff as well as to the customer; and has already detected several water line leaks, saving several water customers significant money.

The city's television station, Dunedin TV, has gone beyond the standard broadcast of City Commission meetings and information scrolls, and features professionally produced programs such as *Roundtable*, which goes on location (complete with a round table) to explore the details of city operations, policies and actions. *Spotlight on Dunedin* also airs regularly, informing residents of new city programs and featuring areas of interest around the community.

Innovative Programs and Services

Dunedin has long been on the cutting edge of programs that improve the quality of life of its residents and enhance the economic climate for its businesses. An early example from the 1980s was the city's *Adopt-A-Tree* program, which won a national award, presented

to the city by the President of the United States at the White House. This tradition has continued with programs like *Day of Good Deeds*, during which staff and volunteers go out into the community performing work for seniors, the disabled and the disadvantaged. The *Neighborhood Enhancement Program*, a fairly recent initiative, assists neighborhood with the beautification of their entryways and public areas; and the *Business Façade Program* makes matching funds available to business wishing to improve the appearance of their storefronts.

Fiscal Management

The City of Dunedin continues to maintain a strong financial standing, in spite of recent budget and revenue issues. Utilizing input from the Commission-appointed Board of Finance, policies have been established stipulating the amount of reserves that should be maintained; and management, staff and elected officials remain firmly committed to working within the parameters of the available revenues to provide a high level of service to the community.