2017 All-Star Community Award Application

City: Monticello

Title of Project: Pocket Park

City's Population: 3,796

In a few sentences, give a summary of the project and why it was needed:
The pocket park is a downtown oasis that was created in the footprint of two downtown buildings damaged by fire in November, 2012. The City Council determined that new construction on these two lots was unlikely, and to promote the rebuilding of another building/business damaged by the same 2012 fire adjacent to the park and the renovating of another, made the decision, in concert with the Chamber of Commerce and downtown business and building owners, to create an upscale pocket park in the center of town while also acquiring a duplex located to the rear of the park to develop a new parking lot and improved alleyway access to the rear of this block of town. The footprint of the Park is approx. 40' x 100'. The park surface is made up of both new paving stones and pavers that were salvaged from original Monticello streets and the Monticello Railroad Depot grounds. The grounds are landscaped, include a fountain, historic fencing from the Monticello City Park, an art wall made up of painted tiles by Monticello 3rd graders, metal tables and benches, and a concession building designed to look like an old RR building. Donors are recognized with engraved bricks and stones. Free Wi-Fi is provided, music piped in, and the Park is handicapped accessible.

Explain the specific role of your city in this project:
The City Council invested approximately $230,000 of the $405,000 project, taking steps to acquire a duplex to the rear of the park, that had suffered a bit of fire damage as well, to re-route numerous utilities in and around the duplex and alleyway, and to create a parking lot and improved alleyway allowing for additional downtown parking and access to businesses. The City oversaw, coordinated, and managed the entire project, from negotiating with the property owners to obtain ownership of the lots on which the park rests (one was donated and one was sold at a very reduced rate ($3,000) to the City), to working with the engineer, design team, contractors, and utility companies. The creation of the park, parking lot, and improved alleyway were critical to the rebuilding and renovating decisions made by the aforementioned businesses. The City was very involved in the negotiations with those businesses and the planning and implementation of the Pocket Park and related parking lot improvements.
In a few sentences, what future impact will this project have on your community?

Monticello does not have a town square or a downtown area meeting place. While a downtown fire is never desired, City leaders, business owners, and the community as a whole made the best of the situation and worked in concert to create a great outcome and result. The primary goal going into the project was to not create an "open space", but rather to create a great space, a space that didn't look like a space where buildings must have burned down, but a space that looked planned out, intended, and completely desired. The park will be used for casual meetings and lunches, small weddings and receptions, Chamber of Commerce gatherings, and other pre-planned and our casual events. The Park has become a gathering place for Prom and High School graduation pictures as well. In addition to those "social" uses, the location and quality of the Park will help promote the downtown and the community, showing existing and prospective business owners, visitors, and potential residents, that Monticello cares about and takes pride in our community.

Total cost of project: 404,909

List where funding came from. (grants, donations, city funds, etc):

City of Monticello $230,331; Commemorative Brick Purchases $11,600; Donations $53,535; Grants $78,233; Misc./Other $17,790; In-Kind $13,420;

Total time project took/projected to take for completion. Please include start date and end date. (To qualify the project must be operating or completed between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016):

Early 2013 through August 19, 2016 (Grand Opening)

Resources. (Please list Web sites judges may reference if they seek additional information.):

www.ci.monticello.ia.us