



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

2011 Annual Awards Program

Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

Deadline for Nominations: March 11, 2011

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: Havana Business Improvement District

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Aurora, Colorado

Jurisdiction population(s): 325,000

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 by or before January 31, 2010, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: November Year: 2007

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 2011. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: George "Skip" Noe

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Aurora, CO

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Jurisdiction: _____

SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator / Primary Contact

Name of contact:	<u>Kim Stuart</u>		
Title:	<u>Director of Communications</u>	Jurisdiction:	<u>City of Aurora, CO</u>
Street address:	<u>15151 E. Alameda Parkway</u>		
City:	<u>Aurora</u>	State/Province:	<u>CO</u>
Zip/Postal Code:	<u>80012</u>	Country:	<u>USA</u>
Telephone:	<u>303-739-7008</u>	Fax:	<u>303-739-7123</u>
E-mail:	<u>kstuart@auroragov.org</u>		

HAVANA BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT/ON HAVANA STREET

The Havana Business Improvement District (BID) dba *On Havana Street*, was created in 2007 by businesses located in the area, neighborhood leaders and the city of Aurora working together to build a stronger, better community, make the area a destination and attract commercial and retail activity.

The 4.3 miles along Havana Street between 6th Avenue and Dartmouth that would eventually become the Havana BID was just starting to grow in 1961. The area became known for a building dubbed the Fan Fare building. Fan Fare was built as a discount shopping facility by an architect known for many notable buildings in Colorado, and featured a futuristic look with a “bubble” roof and exterior supports that jutted out at an angle from the walls. The architect incorporated many architectural elements unique to the era, and it created a buzz around the Denver/Aurora metro area.

In 1965, Fan Fare closed its doors and it sat vacant until the early 1980s, when Western Electric moved in. They moved a few years later, and the building has been sitting vacant since 1985.

Havana Street was also home to Aurora’s first indoor mall, Buckingham Square, built in 1971, and at the time, served as a prime destination for shoppers throughout the Denver/Aurora metro area.

In 1976, Aurora’s city hall moved from Original Downtown Aurora to a newly constructed office building just south of Buckingham Square.

The area also included a variety of small retail outlets, grocery stores and auto dealerships that were thriving along Havana during this time, and the area was poised to become the city's commercial/retail hub.

In the early 1990s, the Buckingham Square mall began a slow decline. In the late 1990s, the city of Aurora announced plans to build a new municipal center near the center of the city, creating an urban area that would become the new center of government, retail, commercial and multi-family housing. At the same time, the Fan Fare building continued to be a growing concern. Its crumbling façade and asbestos riddled interior had become an eyesore along the Havana corridor.

During this time, Aurora began expanding to the east and south with new retail, commercial and housing opportunities.

With the changes taking place along Havana, and many smaller businesses falling to challenging economic times, the area was left with declining revenue and major redevelopment and image issues.

In 2003, the city of Aurora's Comprehensive Plan identified the Havana corridor as a strategic area with its own identity and function within the city, and it became known as the Havana District. The District, despite its vacancy issues, had the potential for redevelopment and to become a major contributor to the city's retail tax base.

The Havana District became the focus of the city's master planning efforts, with the Fan Fare Building and Buckingham Square mall being at the top of the list.

The Denver Regional Council of Government's Metro Vision 2030 Plan, which addressed long-range future growth and development in the entire metropolitan region, recognized the Havana District as a potential urban center. Urban centers - areas of concentrated mixed-use pedestrian-friendly development with accessibility to multiple transportation modes - were one of the key strategies for Metro Vision 2030.

In 2004, the Regional Transportation District implemented FasTracks, a regional mass transit plan that would benefit the Havana District by providing easier access to light rail and improved bus service to the area.

At the same time, the city was working on a conceptual plan for the District in cooperation with citizens, businesses and property owners, and several agencies, including the City of Denver, the Lowry Redevelopment Authority and the Regional Transportation District.

This plan would develop a concept for a unified image for the District that would include signage, lighting, artistic elements to enhance identity, the identification of primary activity centers and gathering places and the enhancement of intersections and gateway features to designate the District.

In 2005, the city of Aurora provided \$24,000 to conduct a business district feasibility study to help determine if the business leaders in the area were ready to move forward with plans and proceed with the formation of a BID and provide guidance in the process of forming the BID. The outcome of this study mirrored what city leaders had believed – the time was right and the shareholders were ready to form the Havana Business Improvement District.

In early 2007, major businesses and stakeholders formed the Havana BID LLC to raise seed money and pay expenses for an election and formation of the Havana BID. They raised \$29,478, and began the process of preparing for an election. The majority of the money raised, \$26,500, came from 13 business owners in the form of a loan, which was repaid from first year tax revenues after the creation of the district. Additional funding came from a Farmer's Markert (\$2,500) and \$978 from other sources.

The expenses related to forming the district totaled \$28,978, with \$17,462 being used for attorney fees to set up the district and the costs of running an election, and \$500 in fees to the city to hold the election. The BID LLC spent \$8,500 to hire a contract employee to assist with the process, market the BID to shareholders to gain their support and prepare an action plan for the BID. Fees and insurance were required in order to form the BID, at a cost of \$1,710. An additional \$1,806 was used for printing, advertising and other miscellaneous expenses that were incurred.

In November 2007, the real property owners in the District voted to tax themselves 4.5 mills in property tax to create the Havana Business Improvement District and help fund redevelopment. A nine-member board, made up of businesses from the district, was appointed by the Aurora City Council to oversee the BID. The contract employee who had been working with the BID was hired to serve as the executive director and handles day-to-day activities in the BID.

The city of Aurora provided \$5,000 to the new BID to help with start-up costs while it waited to receive its first revenues from the property tax. This funding, along with the \$24,000 provided for the feasibility study and the costs to hold the election, brought the cost to implement the BID to \$57,978.

One of the catalysts for the creation of the BID was a decision by the Aurora City Council to designate the Buckingham Square mall site as an urban renewal area. The Gardens on Havana, a mixed-use project serving surrounding neighborhoods in Aurora and adjacent Denver, opened in 2009 at the site of the former Buckingham Square mall.

The ongoing issue of the still vacant Fan Fare building was also a key project for the BID. In partnership with the city, a number of workshops were held in 2009 to create a new vision for the Fan Fare building and surrounding areas, resulting in the creation of the Havana North Concept Plan. This plan envisioned a mixed use redevelopment of the area surrounding the Fan Fare building that would include a combination of small businesses and office uses, commercial, retail, restaurants and condos/townhomes.

The Havana North Concept Plan was approved by the city of Aurora in 2010 and the Havana BID partnered with the city to hire a consultant to perform a formal Blight Study of the Havana North Area. The Blight Study determined that the Havana North Area had 10 of 11 significant factors of blight, including unsanitary or unsafe conditions, environmental contamination and deteriorating structures. Establishing the area as blight could allow the city to secure potential funding to help redevelop the area.

Plans for the Havana North Urban Renewal Area have been submitted and approval by the city of Aurora is expected by the end of April, 2011.

While working with the city on these two major projects, the Havana BID branded itself as “*On Havana Street*,” with its primary mission being the economic development of the entire Havana corridor. These efforts included business support and attraction, marketing, special events, image enhancement, branding the area and helping to create an identity for the district.

The efforts of the BID are quite visible when visiting the district:

- Identity markers and logo panels have been installed at several key locations, improving the look, feel and marketability of the District.

- Several signature events are drawing people from throughout the Denver/Aurora metro area to the Havana BID, including the Cruzin' Havana Car Show, Aurora Farmers' Market, Summer Rose Garden Concert Series at the Gardens on Havana and International Restaurant Week.
- The Havana Street Overlay District streetscape plan has been implemented to help beautify Havana.
- The Havana BID is enhancing the business climate to recruit, retain and grow businesses and new development as evidenced by new business activity. Retail vacancy rates in the Havana BID area are 8.2 percent; less than the Aurora average of 12 percent.

During its first full year of operation in 2008, the 4.5 mill levy to fund the BID increased by 7 percent, allowing an operating budget of \$364,003 in 2011.

The number of real commercial properties increased by 6 percent and there are 40 new businesses and tenants, creating 106 new jobs in the District during 2010.

The assessed value of commercial properties grew by 14 percent to \$84,220,260. More than 10 percent of the total sales tax revenue generated in the city comes from the BID.

The Havana Business Improvement District has made it possible for the property owners and businesses along Havana, and the city of Aurora, to see the benefits of the steps that have already been taken and realize the potential for increased redevelopment along Havana Street

What was old is now new, and Havana Street is once again a thriving and vital part of the city.