

2025

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

1. Describe your community and its specific characteristics. Please include demographics and a brief history. (125 Words)

In 1957, the City of Richwood was founded and is strong in Texas history. It was founded on land that was part of Stephen F. Austin's original land grant from the Mexican government. With an approximate population of 4,850 residents, it is located just 50 miles south of Houston in Brazoria County. This diverse working-class community has access to many amenities while also enjoying the benefits of a small and semi-rural community. The pride of Richwood is its parks, schools and neighborhoods. The six public parks and the Richwood Community Garden are clean and inviting. With the home and commercial construction on the rise, Richwood's future is promising. Although Richwood doesn't yet have a Main Street, a library or even a post office, its commercial and shopping venues are growing in number.

2. Texas is one of the fastest-growing states in the country. How has your community adapted to address the population shifts your community might be experiencing, and what role have litter abatement initiatives played in this process? (125 Words)

Over the last few years, new home and commercial construction has been on a steady incline throughout Richwood. The city infrastructure has required both expansion and repairs, including a new water plant. There are numerous new subdivisions with opportunities for ownership and rentals. Both new housing and business development are continuing an upswing. New

construction frequently means increased construction and demolition debris, but our code enforcement officer meets with contractors personally to educate them on best practices of containing construction waste. These conversations include our requiring wire mesh litter containers at each individual construction site, and they are designated as dump areas for waste concrete.

3. How have partnerships with state or national organization(s) related to litter prevention, beautification, community improvement, and/or waste reduction/recycling helped increase the impact of your community work? (125 Words)

Partnerships with state and national organizations have been critical in litter prevention, beautification, community improvements and waste reduction programs which KRB has sponsored. With the help of KTB, Master Gardeners, Texas A&M AgriLife, Don't Mess with Texas Program, and Take Care of Texas social media posts, KRB has obtained and then shared important information for our litter prevention programs. In association with KTB, our organization has supported various clean ups throughout our city – both a spring and a fall sweep. With our affiliate partner, Keep Brazoria County Beautiful, we also offered electronics recycling. KRB also teamed up with the Brazoria County Parks Department and the City of Richwood in reducing waste by participating in Dunes Day, the repurposing of discarded Christmas trees to fortify dunes at Surfside Beach. Finally, we also pass out educational materials from partners like TCEQ.

4. How are your community improvement programs (programs focused on litter prevention, beautification, and waste reduction/recycling) organized, structured, and funded? Describe support (staff

and volunteers) for your community improvement programs. (125 Words)

Keep Richwood Beautiful currently consists of four board members, an Executive Director and the City of Richwood Secretary. The funding of KRB is primarily provided by a \$1.00 monthly donation added to residents' monthly water bill totaling \$15,000.00 of our annual budget. In addition, The City of Richwood generously donates \$5000.00 annually to our organization. Some of these resources are used to provide refreshments at clean ups, volunteer t-shirts, tools and other related items. Our staff and volunteers working on community improvement projects consists primarily of our board members, director and volunteers who are recruited via social media, schools and other organizations. We participated in the NextTrex Recycling Challenge which consisted of a challenge of collecting and recycling 1,000 lbs. of soft plastics within a 12-month period. KRB accomplished this challenge in 4-1/2 months.

5. How are your community leaders staying up to date with best practices and current information related to litter prevention, beautification, and/or waste reduction/recycling? (75 Words)

The Keep Texas Beautiful website and affiliate portals, and the Keep Texas Beautiful conference have been valuable in helping the new Executive Director to learn the best practices for these issues. The City Code Enforcement officer also receives training on a regular basis to maintain the most up to date information regarding changes to state statutes and regulations, including recent classes on illegal dumping. Weekly, the Executive Director participates in KTB webinars, researches Master Gardeners, Texas A&M AgriLife, Don't Mess with Texas Program, and Take Care of Texas social media posts and web training opportunities.

Public Awareness and Outreach – 12 Points

1. Describe the outreach efforts of your community improvement programs through the use of media, speeches, social media, websites, events, workshops, bulletin boards, technology, printed materials, and/or other channels. (200 Words)

To reach our community, Keep Richwood Beautiful actively utilizes the tool of social media. The Keep Richwood Beautiful Facebook page currently has 1200 followers and an average page reach of over 10,000 people according to our page insights. KRB's Richwood Community Garden page has another 634 followers with a 1.9k reach. Another tool for reaching out to the public is the City of Richwood, City of Richwood Police Department, and City of Richwood Emergency Management Facebook pages, where they post and share event information for us. The city has 4,700 followers on their page, reaching thousands of people daily. Another way the City of Richwood promoted Keep Richwood Beautiful events was posting the information on their new electronic marquee at City Hall. A new tool we used this year was simply a QR code on display at the City's events that took people to a sign-up sheet to get more information about Keep Richwood Beautiful and to serve as a volunteer and/or Board member.

2. What efforts does your community use to reach diverse or underserved audiences? (Seniors, people with disabilities, low-income, non-native speakers, etc.). (150 Words)

Keep Richwood Beautiful cares deeply about serving our community and reaching the underserved. For the fourth year in a row, we collaborated with the Richwood Police Department's Shop with a Cop program. Thanks to generous donations from the community, this event allowed more than 33 children to have

a very Merry Christmas. KRB also reinforced our partnership with Brazosport Cares Food Pantry, donating 500 lbs. of food between them and the community at large. We have a large cart at the garden where we leave harvests for our residents, but we've also hand-delivered fresh fruits and vegetables to some of our seniors that couldn't get to the garden or food pantry to pick them up. Additionally, we have a textiles bin where gently clothing and shoes are donated.

3. How has your community promoted the Don't Mess with Texas® campaign or similar anti-litter messages, and what efforts have you made through Keep Texas Beautiful or other initiatives? (150 Words)

We share social media posts from the DMwT program that include the yearly art contest, scholarship opportunities, and litter prevention. These posts have created lots of engagement from the community. On March 3, 2024, KRB participated in the local event "Servolution", in which we conducted trash pick-up and clean-ups. In November 2024, KRB hosted a "Fall Sweep" and a separate litter survey, from which we removed trash from a 3-mile circumference which included a State Highway. Additionally, we participated in the NexTrex Challenge. Four businesses and residents participated heavily to meet the challenge of collecting 1,000 lbs. of soft plastics within a 365-day period. We met the challenge in 4.5 months.

4. Describe how community awards and recognition programs have helped increase local support of your community improvement programs. Note awards and other forms of recognition offered by your program and those it has received. (100 Words)

KRB has established a Yard of the Month Program to reward exemplary lawn care in the community as well as specialized yard

of the month programs for Halloween (Spookiest Yard of the Month) and Christmas (Best Decorated Yard of the Month). There are awards and prize packages given to the winners. On the receiving end of awards, KRB remained a Gold Star Affiliate with KTB and maintained the Sustained Excellence Award for 3 years in a row. KRB usually offers a \$500 scholarship, but with a multi-lapse of an Executive Director unfortunately that was not feasible for 2024. With our new Executive Director and outreach to the local high school organizations who participate in volunteer opportunities, we hope to reinstate this scholarship in 2025.

5. What educational efforts, projects or programs are available in your community to teach the general public about recycling, waste reduction, litter prevention or beautification issues? List the impact, and any data or available measurable results. (200 Words)

Social media became our primary method of disseminating educational material about waste, recycling & beautification to the public at large. KRB shared ways that residents could beautify their lawn and gardens, shared information about nearby recycling and shredding opportunities, the benefits of growing Texas Superstar Plants, water conservation, and waterway litter prevention. We also held multiple in-person gardening education and hands-on training at the community garden for children. One of these was the creation of “pizza towers”, where the children planted the herbs and vegetables used in making pizza. They also did art paintings on cement blocks used as planters within the Community Garden. On Earth Day (April 22), our KRB board chairman visited two special needs classes conducted an anti-litter awareness day for students. Recycling and composting were discussed. He instructed them on what could and could not be recycled and composted, having a “hands on” demonstration and two bins labeled for each category. There was a box filled with items and they were dumped onto the floor. He then had the

children pick the items and place them in the appropriate bin and explain why that bin was chosen. Attendance included 30 children, 4 teachers and 2 teacher assistants. (128)

Environmental Education and Youth Engagement – 12 Points

1. How is your community engaging youth in efforts toward litter prevention, beautification, community improvement, and/or waste reduction/recycling? Does your community have a youth advisory board or council, and how are they working in conjunction with other community efforts to engage youth?

On Earth Day (April 22), our KRB board chairman visited two special needs classes and conducted an anti-litter awareness session for students. Recycling and composting were discussed. He instructed them on what could and could not be recycled and composted, having a “hands on” demonstration and two bins labeled for each category. There was a box filled with items and they were dumped onto the floor. He then had the children pick the items and place them in the appropriate bin and explain why that bin was chosen. Attendance included 30 children, 4 teachers and 2 teacher assistants. At our Richwood Community Garden, we added composting bins as well as textile recycling bins. There is signage instructing residents on what is eligible for composting. We also hosted several Garden workdays in which children were encouraged and did participate. (200 Words)

2. What topics (solid waste/recycling, water reduction, energy savings, etc.) does environmental education in your community’s schools cover? Describe what kind and how many environmental education programs, groups or special events are offered for youth in schools and your community’s involvement. Include any

youth, preschool, elementary, secondary, and college/university programs in your community. (150 Words)

Our area schools have rich science departments & proudly promote environmental stewardship & sustainability. One such program in our local high school is a Plant Science program where students learn about horticulture and the environment. Keep Richwood Beautiful offers workdays at our community garden where students can see firsthand how the plants start as seeds and then develop to produce mature fruits or vegetables as well as about the benefits of composting, organic pest control and the benefits those efforts have on the environment. Our local college also offers an AS in Environmental Science that educates them, among other things, on pollution, waste management, sustainable environmental solutions, the environment, and human health. At City-wide events, KRB distributes educational materials to children and adults to educate and provide awareness on the benefits of litter/waste reduction and recycling.

3. How do your community's schools use environmental curricula such as Project Wild, Project Learning Tree, and/or other educational activities or outdoor learning opportunities? Do you have any programs to train educators on these learning opportunities and have those programs changed over the past year? (200 Words)

This year at the virtual Keep Texas Beautiful Conference, our KRB chair learned about, then shared with the schools, information about EcoRise's Sustainability Intelligence Program, including curriculum and grant opportunities. We also regularly have learning opportunities for the youth at our community garden, educating about composting. Our compost bins each are in varying degrees of decomposition - planting, transplanting, thinning, pruning, and this year, gardening in drought conditions.

While operating fully within compliance of our city's drought contingency program, we still managed to achieve a comparable harvest of 500# of donated produce.

Beautification and Community Improvement – 12 Points

1. Describe beautification efforts in public spaces (parks, community gardens, etc.) in your community, such as tree and owner planting, native or adaptive landscaping, public art, increasing trail networks, and landscape maintenance. Include any applicable metrics. (200 Words)

This year we were pleased to partner with the Alpha Gappa Gamma Omega (formerly Tea Rose Pearls), a sorority whose members are all from Houston or beyond (50+ miles). In the fall 2024, they came to plant vegetables, then donated vegetable seeds which will be planted in the spring. KRB received a donation of two Magnolia trees from the Fort Velasco Chapter, DAR which will be planted in mid-March 2025. We also added additional raised beds and planted vegetables. The Parks Dept. regularly mows, and they also leveled large ant mounds. The Police Department broadcast Texas wildflower seeds in front of City Hall which is facing and on State Highway 288. We offer weekly (when harvest and weather permit) free fresh vegetables from the garden for our residents and donate to the local food bank – The Food Basket.

2. How has your community worked to instill pride and communicate the positive impact on economic development and the prosperity of your community as a result of beautification and community improvement programs? (175 Words)

Richwood pride runs throughout our small town. It can be seen in everyday happenings like adults exercising on the walking trails,

kids riding their bikes on the sidewalks, and a general feeling of safety and well-being. Richwood residents are vigilant on keeping their property litter-free. During our Fall Sweep, we only collected 25 lbs. of litter. KRB recognizes the economic impact that these families have on our community and strives to create family friendly events and practical green spaces to entice these people to live, work, and play here. To that end, several times a year, KRB also hosts or partners to provide events that provide free food and entertainment. It is important to Richwood that our small-town culture reaches across all demographics to encourage people to move here and shop here. Our Yard of the Month prizes and our events always utilize Richwood businesses from which we purchase refreshments, door prizes, gift certificates, etc.

Litter Prevention and Cleanup – 12 Points

1. Does your community conduct any type of study or survey to determine the extent of littering? If so, how do you use the results of these tools to inform your programming? (125 Words)

Through the partnership of the Parks and Public Works employees and KRB, we conduct an analysis of the current litter conditions across town on an ongoing basis by “window surveys” through the City. Our residents are vigilant in maintaining clean yards and streets. We more deliberately monitor the trash in and around the Community Garden on a weekly basis during the weekly workdays. Using the data collected and analyzing where we saw the most trash. We were able to install the trash cans we purchased in 2023. We participated in Spring and Fall litter “sweeps” as well as the optional litter survey for which we separately submitted this to the litter database and KTB.

2. Uncovered trucks, construction sites, motor vehicles, and pedestrians are the primary sources of litter

found on roadways. Describe how your community specifically addresses roadside litter (125 Words)

Violations of litter from uncovered trucks, motor vehicles, or pedestrians are not common in Richwood. Richwood citizens are very meticulous in maintaining clean and litter-free properties. While homes under construction in our newer subdivisions can cause significant amounts of dirt on the roadways that cause hazardous conditions for motorists, the HOA in these subdivisions have strict rules to keep the roadways clean for its residents. Builders are contacted and given 24 hours to clean up the site if violations occur. Failure to comply results in a halt in construction and \$100 per day fines. Code Enforcement officers post signs at all new residential construction sites advising the construction personnel of the ordinances related to job site and roadway cleanliness, and routine inspections are performed to keep compliance. Social Media awareness is another tool KRB uses.

3. Our waterways currently have men carry trash from one community to the next and even all the way to the sea. If your community has waterways (ocean, rivers, lakes, streams, tributaries, bayous, and creeks.), describe your waterway litter prevention efforts. (125 Words)

Our residents enjoy outdoor activities - from walking to playing in our parks and sports teams using our fields for practice and games. Social media is used to help our residents always be aware of litter as they are out in the community and how to dispose of it. As a result, our Code Enforcement Officer, who is out every day inspecting our city, has had to address only one ordinance violation relating to debris in the ditch or other forms of waterway pollution, and that led to immediate compliance. Containing stormwater runoff contamination is a priority for Richwood, so keeping our ditches clean of debris is important to us. We have no waterways as named in this statement #3.

4. What was the overall impact on the environment and/or the public's attitude toward litter prevention and cleanup based on your litter prevention programs? How does your community assess the effectiveness of its litter prevention programs? (150 Words)

Richwood residents are proud of our city, as evidenced by the vast contrast of the amount of litter found within the city (around parks and in neighborhoods) and that found along the 2 major thoroughfares which connect us to neighboring cities). Because of our city's location, we have infinitely more traffic that goes through Richwood than just from Richwood residents themselves. As a result, our 2 large cleanups are primarily focused on those major thoroughfares where people throw out trash as they pass through. When we are doing a highway cleanup, we always know which cars are Richwood residents because they're the ones honking and waving in thanks. The community assesses the effectiveness of its litter prevention programs by eagerly receiving litter prevention awareness literature and maintaining their city as well kept and litter-free.

5. List the community cleanups you held and the measurable results of those events. Nontraditional cleanups can also be included with this question. (150 Words)

Richwood held the annual Don't Mess with Texas Trash Off/Spring Clean Up in April where 15 volunteers cleaned 2.1 miles of roadway and collected 31 large trash bags of litter and debris. In November we held the Fall Sweep where 3 volunteers collected 25 pounds of trash along a 3-mile stretch of roadway, a major thoroughfare. With both events each year, we also provide 2 roll-off dumpsters for residents to dispose of large items and we waive the fees for garage sales at that time, too, resulting in 2 neighborhood-wide garage sales to help limit the amount of stuff

that gets thrown away. Also in November, we conducted an independent litter survey near our Community Garden.

Solid Waste Management – 12 Points

1. Describe your community's typical involvement in solid waste management, including work with local waste haulers, businesses, civic groups and citizens. If your community has a recycling program, describe community efforts to reduce and address recycling contamination, which typically is around 25%. (125 Words)

Twice a year, our partner, Waste Connections, provides us with two 30-foot roll-off bins for large waste disposal, usually netting a total of 8 tons cumulatively. They also provide curbside heavy trash pick-up once a month. Being on the Gulf Coast, we frequently have storms that produce downed tree limbs and fences, so it's convenient that residents can place those types of large items at their curb for pickup. A big focus in our Earth Day program in the schools this year was the importance of reducing recycling contamination, teaching the kids that if they couldn't find a way to re-use it was better to put it in the trash than in the recycle because it could damage the machinery. Additionally, we have two textile bins permanently located at the Community Garden, with Green City Recycler making bi-weekly pickups. This encourages residents to donate (re-use) gently used clothing and shoes.

2. Describe how your community has supported source reduction, recycling, reuse, and composting to diverting materials from landfill space. Please address all four topic areas. List measurable results if applicable. (200 Words)

Keep Richwood Beautiful uses source reduction through the Richwood Community Garden. Not only have we provided five compost bins to reduce food and lawn waste, but KRB planted, grew, and distributed over 500 pounds of fresh produce to residents of Brazoria County. By growing and distributing our own produce, we bypass the intermediary and therefore have no food waste from grower to consumer. Additionally, residents donate the plastic containers their store-bought vegetables come in, and we, in turn, use those containers to package up the vegetables we harvest to donate back to the community. Compost bins at the Community Garden are open to the public 24/7 with signs that educate residents on which items can be composted (green and brown waste such as leaves, grass clippings, eggshells, coffee grounds, newspaper and other paper shreds, and vegetable scraps) and which items can't (meat, dairy, greasy items, etc.). KRB uses social media to share posts on recycling, reminders to use the compost bins, and what we as a community can do about keeping materials out of our landfills.

Litter Law and Illegal Dumping Enforcement – 12 Points

1. Describe community efforts to educate and work with law enforcement personnel (city, county or state) to review and reinforce local and state litter laws, including litter abatement and/or illegal dumping. (125 Words)

Keep Richwood Beautiful works closely with Richwood Police and Code Enforcement departments to review and enforce local and state litter laws. Keep Richwood Beautiful, in conjunction with the Police department, frequently reminds the community of local and state litter laws by sharing information via social media and during our city-wide clean ups held throughout the year. This strong partnership helps us create a community that remains beautiful and nuisance free. If there is an issue, the city follows a standard operating procedure to remedy any violations. This year, we had 100% compliance with our notices sent out to violators and no citations

were issued. We believe this to be due to our diligent efforts to keep our community educated.

2. Describe community efforts to reduce nuisance issues such as graffiti, grass and weed violations, dilapidated structures, junked cars and similar issues. (125 Words)

Conclusion – 6 Points

1. Describe any positive changes that have impacted your community programming this year. Do you have any community effort successes you would like to share that are specific to this year's accomplishments? (150 Words)

Our Community Garden is by far our most popular attraction for civic group service. For the fourth year now, we have hosted Brazos Pointe Fellowship Church for their annual Servolution. This year, they sent out 10 volunteers to our Community Garden to help prepare our beds for Spring planting. This year we also hosted four members of Alpha Gappa Gamma Omega sorority (formerly Tea Rose Pearls) who travelled 50+ miles twice this year to donate and plant seeds and vegetables so we could continue to grow and donate fresh produce to our community. (140)

2. Explain how your community's overall environmental efforts have made your community a better place to live, work and play. Use this space to address anything related to community improvement programs that have not been covered in this application. (125 Words)

Keep Richwood Beautiful's efforts to promote environmental stewardship and sustainability provides a sense of ownership and responsibility in our community. Our visits to the schools, donation of environmental awareness materials, guides on planting and native wildflowers, etc. gives them the tools to enhance their interest, knowledge and awareness of their personal responsibility to our environment. As mentioned above, the juxtaposition of the amount of litter in Richwood, in our neighborhoods, our parks and around our businesses, compared to the litter on the major roadways that basically encircle us is enormous. Our residents take great pride in our city and strive to keep it clean.

One program that isn't mentioned elsewhere in this application is that our Community Garden is participating in a strawberry-growing trial that is being conducted by Texas A&M's Agrilife extension office to help them determine the best varieties to grow in Texas, specifically on the Gulf Coast. This study will benefit all strawberry-loving Texans!

PROGRAM PORTFOLIO- 10 Points

PROGRAM PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

1. All support material must take place in the reporting period of 1/01/2024 - 12/31/2024 unless otherwise noted.
2. Support material is meant to support what is written in the application itself. These should not act as a standalone application.

PROGRAM PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS

1. SUPPORTING PHOTOGRAPHS:

- 10 photographs are required, but up to 15 photographs are allowed

- Only photographs may be submitted in the photograph section (i.e. no newspaper articles, social media posts, etc.).
- Photograph collages (and anything that has more than one photograph on it) are not permissible.
- The word count limit for each photo caption is 20 words. The caption should describe the photo. Points will be deducted for captions over 20 words.

2. SUPPORT MATERIALS:

Applicants must submit support materials from 3 of the 5 following options:

- 2-3 examples of public awareness or promotional materials.
- 2-3 examples of local media support (i.e. news articles, publications, social media).
- 2-3 examples of educational materials developed for use in adult or youth educational activities.
- 2-3 city or county ordinances related to litter prevention, litter law, waste management, or illegal dumping. Include the complete ordinance, including section, title, details, and website line (if applicable). The reporting period does not apply (i.e. ordinances that were passed in previous years can still be submitted).
- 2-3 examples of awards, recognition, and/or proclamations given to the community or community programs recognizing environmental stewardship.