



# Press Release

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## Municipal Excellence Award Winners Honored

**JACKSON, Mississippi, June 26, 2019** - The Mississippi Municipal League (MML) is excited to announce the 2020 Municipal Excellence Awards Winners. Winning municipalities will be recognized during the 2021 Mid-Winter Legislative Conference that will be held January 12 – 14, 2021, at the Hilton Jackson.

The Excellence Awards program, which began in 1993, recognizes cities that utilize innovative problem solving, excellence in management, citizen participation and community partnerships to provide increased services and a better quality of life for its local citizenry. The competition is divided into two population categories: under 10,000 and over 10,000. Within each population category, cities can vie for awards in City Spirit, Planning and Economic Development, Public Safety and Public Works. Judges also select one application as the Best Overall.

The 2020 Excellence Awards winners are as follows:

### **City Spirit, Population Under 10,000**

#### **Town of Carrollton – “Pilgrimage and Pioneer Day Festival”**

The Carrollton Pilgrimage Board and the Carroll Society for the Preservation of Antiquities worked together to host the annual Pilgrimage and Pioneer Day Festival to showcase their historic architecture and talented residents. The town created a walking tour app that covered 26 of the 65 sites on the National Register of Historic Places based on a lesson plan for middle and high school classes. Also, local artists were able to showcase their talents and sell their art on the courthouse lawn. Visitors from all over the country came to enjoy this two-day event.

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### **City Spirit, Population Over 10,000**

#### **City of Tupelo – “New Year’s Eve Party”**

New Year’s Eve presented an incredible opportunity for the city of Tupelo to create an unforgettable event. The city hosted a celebration of its sesquicentennial and the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday of Elvis Presley, Tupelo’s favorite son. The huge celebration was held downtown, with live music, children’s activities, fireworks, and the infamous ball drop. The occasion was an overwhelming success for the city and its residents.

### **Planning and Economic Development, Under 10,000**

#### **Town of Pontotoc – “Tanglefoot Trail Gateway Project”**

Pontotoc city leaders purchased a blighted area along the Tanglefoot Trail and decided to make a gateway to the trail, including a city park. The old cotton warehouses were torn down and replaced with restrooms and parking lots. State Senator Nicky Browning and Representative Mac Huddleston helped secure funding to build a pavilion that serves as the focal point of the park.

### **Planning and Economic Development, Population Over 10,000**

#### **City of Hernando – “Reliable Equipment Brownfield Redevelopment Project”**

The public-private partnership between the City of Hernando, the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, the Mississippi Development Authority, and a local dentist wanting to have a positive impact on his community resulted in the transformation of a restaurant and boutique. The city was awarded a Brownfield Community Wide Grant by the EPA. They opted to use this funding to focus on the downtown area to attract more businesses and redevelopment opportunities. The new restaurant, Uncle Bubba’s Barbecue, is now a local hot spot and has created a total of 50 jobs for the city. The second business, Social x Saint, is an upscale shop that offers unique and local pieces which allows residents to shop locally and support small businesses.

### **Public Safety, Population Over 10,000**

#### **City of Gulfport – “Homeless to Housing Hub Gulfport (H2H Gulfport)”**

The Gulfport Police Department formed a partnership with the Salvation Army, Open Doors Homeless Coalition, Goodwill Industries, Feed My Sheep, Mental Health Association of South Mississippi and the Gulf Coast Ecumenical Fellowship, in order to develop a common strategy to address unsheltered homelessness in Gulfport. This partnership has resulted in the housing of 73 people, and it can be expected that this program will reach even more in the coming years.

### **Public Works, Population Over 10,000**

#### **City of Clinton – “Clinton Tank Rehabilitation Project”**

The city of Clinton maintains an excellent potable water system for approximately 25,000 people. When the Old Vicksburg Road water tower required routine maintenance, the junior high students were asked to submit suggestions for the color and logo design. An unconventional color and logo were chosen for the tank. Using high-tech coatings that incorporate school colors and logos, the city has an award-winning



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landmark that students can take pride in for years to come.

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### **Best Overall**

#### **City of Gulfport – “Mississippi Aquarium”**

Besides being the second largest city in Mississippi, Gulfport’s economy is profoundly based on tourism, which contributes to 27 percent of the local economy. Beginning in 2014, under Mayor Billy Hewes’ leadership, Gulfport had the vision to create a landmark tourism-based attraction on nine acres, overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. Those efforts developed the Mississippi Aquarium in Historic Downtown Gulfport. The aquarium is a year-round, state of the art, marine-life based source of family entertainment which will open in late 2020. There will be otters and alligators, traveling exhibits, an aviary which will feature native birds, a dolphin exhibit, and much more.

Established in 1931, MML represents 289 city, town and village governments in Mississippi. The mission of the MML is helping cities and towns excel through training, lobbying at the state and federal level, and providing resources and networking opportunities with state, federal and private entities. For more information about the Mississippi Municipal League, visit [www.mmlonline.com](http://www.mmlonline.com).

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