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# Wichita's an All-America City

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The Wichita Eagle

For the first time in a decade, Wichita is carrying an All-America City banner.

The distinction was bestowed on the city Friday night in Tampa, Fla., by the National Civic League for outstanding civic accomplishments.

Mayor Carl Brewer said Saturday that the award brings bragging rights to the city and will be a boon to its economic development efforts.

"It tells businesses that the city is doing lot of the right things," he said. "It definitely says that city of Wichita is one of the finest cities in the United States."

Brewer said a celebration is planned July 31 in Old Town.

City Council member Lavonta Williams was among a group of 30 Wichitans who traveled to Tampa for the competition. She said 143 cities entered the contest and 32 were invited to the finals in Tampa. Ten were named winners.

The judging focused on three areas, one of which involved highlighting three local projects that reflect outstanding collaboration. Judges also considered a 10-minute presentation that showcased the projects, and a 10-minute question-and-answer session.

The projects highlighted this year were:

- The Opportunity Drive campus on East 21st Street, which includes a preschool, the new Gordon Parks Academy, and the Boys & Girls Club of South Central Kansas.
- Visioneering Wichita, the public-private strategic planning effort that addresses quality of life, economic development and education.
- Mennonite Housing Rehabilitation Services, which helps low-income and elderly Kansans repair and own their homes.

The city's presentation, titled "City or No City," was a spoof of the "Deal or No Deal" game show. Brewer played "Mayor Howie Do-It" in the skit and was supported by such characters as "Willie Chancett."

During the question-and-answer session, representatives discussed such topics as diversity, volunteering, public art and the new Laid-Off Workers Center.

Mennonite Housing president Andy Bias admitted he was nervous before the presentation but said he was proud of how the group performed.

"I thought we did an excellent job letting everyone know the importance of collaboration and teamwork," he said.

The other winners are Phoenix; Inglewood, Calif.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Somerville, Mass.; Albany, N. Y.; Kinston and Statesville, N.C.; Caroline County, Va.; and Richmond, Va.

Wichita was previously named an All-America City in 1961, 1993 and 1999.

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