



Milwaukee Wins Cities of Service National Competition to Revitalize Neighborhoods

Milwaukee will receive \$25,000, expert technical assistance from Cities of Service, and support from two AmeriCorps VISTA members dedicated to fighting blight

Milwaukee, WI - July 17, 2018 — Cities of Service yesterday announced Milwaukee as a winner of its *Cities of Service City Hall AmeriCorps VISTA Love Your Block* competition. Love Your Block enables local governments to engage communities in neighborhood revitalization efforts benefiting low-income communities. Milwaukee will receive \$25,000 to be used for mini-grants and resources to support the efforts of citizen groups and local nonprofits to prevent or eliminate property blight through home repairs, lot transformations, and community cleanups. In addition, two AmeriCorps VISTA members will serve the City of Milwaukee to build capacity and raise awareness.

This year's Love Your Block competition was targeted specifically to legacy cities — older, industrial cities, some of which have faced population loss. The winning cities were selected based on potential for impact and clarity of vision for their proposed projects.

Milwaukee was ideally suited to receive this grant because of its established programs supporting neighborhood-based revitalization efforts. The AmeriCorps VISTA members and the Cities of Service financial support and technical assistance will buttress several efforts including Milwaukee's Community Improvement Projects (CIP). The CIP program provides matching grants to sustainable projects that physically enhance a neighborhood and increase resident interaction.

"A [recent study from the Urban Institute](#) has shown us that the impact of Love Your Block goes beyond cleaning up neighborhoods and creating more park space," said Cities of Service Executive Director Myung J. Lee. "It is also bringing neighbors together and strengthening communities. We are excited to help Milwaukee revitalize neighborhoods and build trust between city hall and residents as part of these efforts."

The Urban Institute study found that the connection that Love Your Block forges between city leaders and citizens at the neighborhood level can be an essential catalyst for collective action by neighborhood residents. This connection between city officials and citizens boosts the social capital exercised by citizens who plan and implement Love Your Block projects and strengthens social cohesion. Love Your Block volunteers believe their efforts also positively influence public safety and community ownership of public spaces.

"We know that strong neighborhoods are safer, healthier and more economically vibrant. We focus much of our local efforts on working with residents to build that strength," Mayor Tom Barret said. "I appreciate the assistance from Cities of Service. This will help Milwaukee do even more."

Since 2009, Cities of Service has helped dozens of cities implement Love Your Block. More than 10,000 volunteers have been engaged to remove over 480,000 pounds of trash, clean up nearly 600 lots, and create more than 180 art displays, in addition to numerous other community projects.

Using the Cities of Service [Love Your Block blueprint](#), city leaders will engage citizen volunteers and local nonprofits in co-creating solutions to urban blight. Cities of Service will provide expert technical assistance to winning cities for two years. *Cities of Service City Hall AmeriCorps VISTA Love Your Block* is made possible with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).



The other winning cities are: Buffalo, New York; Gary, Indiana; Hamilton, Ohio; Hartford, Connecticut; Huntington, West Virginia; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Newark, New Jersey; Richmond, Virginia; and South Bend, Indiana.

About Cities of Service

Cities of Service is an independent nonprofit organization that helps mayors and city leaders tap the knowledge, creativity, and service of citizens to solve public problems and create vibrant cities. We work with cities to build city-led, citizen-powered initiatives that target specific needs, achieve long-term and measurable outcomes, improve the quality of life for residents, and build stronger cities. Founded in 2009 by New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Cities of Service supports a coalition of more than 250 cities, representing more than 73 million people across the Americas and Europe. Visit us at citiesofservice.org or follow us on Twitter [@citiesofservice](https://twitter.com/citiesofservice).

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