



## *2008 All-America City Award Application*

### **Community Information**

**Community name and state:**

Lenoir, North Carolina

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**Your community is applying as a:**

\_\_\_ Neighborhood \_\_\_ Town x City \_\_\_ County \_\_\_ Region

**If applying as a region, name participating communities:**

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**If applying as a neighborhood, name city:**

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**Has your community applied before?**  Yes  No If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

**Has your community been a Finalist before?**  Yes  No If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

**Has your community been an All-America City before?**  Yes  No If Yes, which years: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contact Information**

**All-America City Award contact (primary contact person available throughout entire competition and for follow-up):**

Name: Kaye Reynolds

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Title: Economic Development/Main Street Director

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Organization: City of Lenoir

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Address: PO Box 958

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City, State, ZIP: Lenoir, North Carolina 28645

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[www.cityoflenoir.com](http://www.cityoflenoir.com)

City/Community Web Site

**List the 3 individuals who most actively participated in filling out this All-America City Award application (add additional lines if needed):**

**(Provide name and title; organization; phone; e-mail address)**

Reverend Terry Hunt, Bushtown Mennonite Brethren Church, 828-729-0558; [twhunt@netzero.net](mailto:twhunt@netzero.net)

Deborah Ashley, President/CEO; Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce; 828-726-0616;  
[deborah@caldwellcochamber.org](mailto:deborah@caldwellcochamber.org)

Barbara Weiller, Allocations Committee, Lenoir Economic Development Board; 828-758-2505;  
[bweiller@charter.net](mailto:bweiller@charter.net)

**The community applying will receive one complimentary membership (or a membership renewal if an AAC application was submitted last year) to the National Civic League for one year. To whom should this membership be directed?**

Name Lane Bailey, City Manager

Address PO Box 958

City, State, Zip Code Lenoir NC 28645

Phone Number 828-757-2199

Fax 828-757-2162

Email [lbailey@ci.lenoir.nc.us](mailto:lbailey@ci.lenoir.nc.us)

**If we are designated an All-America City, we agree to follow NCL's rules (available on the Web site) regarding use of the All-America City Award logo, a registered trademark of the National Civic League.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 2-28-08

Name: Lane Bailey

Title: City Manager, City of Lenoir

## Community Statistics

**Note:** Use the most up-to-date statistics possible for your neighborhood, town, city, county, or region (*source suggestions:* U.S. Census Bureau, state, local government, and local school statistics)

**POPULATION** (*in year 2000 or most recent*): 18,588

**Source/Date:** North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management

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**POPULATION PERCENTAGE CHANGE 1990-2000** (*indicate + or -*): +18.33%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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### **RACIAL/ETHNIC POPULATION BREAKDOWN** (*percentage*):

<b>White alone</b>	80.9%
<b>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</b>	4.3%
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	14.7%
<b>Asian alone</b>	0.7%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) alone</b>	0.2%
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (NHOP) alone</b>	0.1%
<b>Some other race alone</b>	2.3%
<b>Two or more races</b>	1.1%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME:** \$37,280

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL:** 10.4%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE:** 6.4%

**Source/Date:** North Carolina Employment Security Commission, January 2008

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### **POPULATION BREAKDOWN BY AGE GROUP** (*percentages, if available*):

<b>19 years old and under</b>	25.2%
<b>20-24</b>	5.8%
<b>25-44</b>	27.5%
<b>45-64</b>	23.3%
<b>65 and over</b>	18.3%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**PERCENTAGE OF HOME OWNERSHIP:** 63.1%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**WORKFORCE DISTRIBUTION -- Name the three largest employment sectors in your community and provide the percentage of total employed in each:**

Manufacturing	41.3%
Education, health & social services	14.4%
Retail trade	12.2%

**Source/Date:** U. S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

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**★★ Please attach a state map with your community clearly marked (attach as a separate sheet).**

**State Map with Lenoir Marked**

City of Lenoir  
Caldwell County, North Carolina



## **Part I: Civic Infrastructure**

### **I. What is our community vision for its future? (300 word maximum)**

Lenoir, North Carolina, is a city that epitomizes the power of citizens working together to re-define the future of their community. Known as a furniture manufacturing center for over 100 years, the identity of the city was shaken as thousands of manufacturing jobs were lost from 2000 to 2006 as furniture and textile factories closed or outsourced labor.

Rising to the challenges brought by the rapid loss of its economic base, groups of elected officials, civic organizations and private investors worked together to identify key objectives for achieving the vision for the future of Lenoir. Through the city's Comprehensive Plan development, the Caldwell Heritage Council's Strategic Planning process, and the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce's SWOT analysis for Tourism Development led by Appalachian State University's Business School, citizens were provided opportunities to participate through neighborhood meetings, public hearings and surveys. The vision that emerged was that of a city with small town charm, economic opportunities for all its citizens, and a quality of life enriched by recreational and cultural activities as well as the health and wellness services necessary for its people to lead healthy, active lives.

The objectives to achieve the vision were as follows:

- diversify the economic base for Lenoir and revitalize the historic central business district
- identify, develop and promote the unique cultural, historic and recreational resources of the community to build community pride and increase the potential for tourism revenue
- provide services to bridge the economic gap for individuals and families created by the loss of jobs

### **II. How are we fulfilling the new roles for community governance?**

#### **II. (a). What is the extent and nature of community member participation in community improvement efforts? (300 word maximum)**

People in Lenoir take great pride in making their city a better place to live and experience community. The public and civic sectors join to tackle challenges. Caldwell County Social Services, Communities in Schools and local businesses led a "School Tools 2007" campaign to provide over **two tons of school supplies** for area children who needed them to start school as well-equipped as their peers. When family members of the 1450<sup>th</sup> National Guard unit had difficulties making phone calls to their loved ones deployed in Iraq, the Lenoir Fire Department and the local radio station spearheaded a phone card donation campaign with **\$10,000 dollars worth of phone cards** going overseas to servicemen and women in time for the 2006 holiday season. The Bank of Granite, described by Warren Buffet as "the best-run bank in the United States," has led

the fundraising efforts of Hospice each fall with a standing-room only celebrity benefit luncheon. Funds raised from the luncheon created an endowment for Hospice enabling the program to move forward with a **5.3 million dollar expansion of services** including 5 in-patient and 7 Hospice residential beds.

In addition to helping provide for the physical needs of the community, civic groups also help to create beauty and improve the aesthetic appeal of Lenoir. Local volunteers from the Master Gardeners program select materials and plant **30** streetscape planters in downtown Lenoir each spring and fall. Tucker's Gallery, a nonprofit arts collaborative, coordinates with artists to provide **new outdoor sculptures every 6 months** in the heart of downtown. Citizen donated **\$30,000** for memorial pavers, helping to fund the construction of an outdoor plaza and stage. The Stage on the Square is now a community gathering place in downtown Lenoir.

**II. (b). What role does government play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

The City of Lenoir encourages partnerships with its citizens through the following ten boards and commissions:

- ABC Board
- Airport Authority
- Housing Board
- Planning Board
- Board of Adjustments
- Lenoir Economic Development Board
- Recreation Advisory Board
- City/County Coordinating Committee
- Sister Cities Board
- Comprehensive Planning Committee

The 88 citizens comprising these groups demonstrate leadership in tackling difficult challenges. The following are just a few examples of the ways that city government has worked with them to improve Lenoir:

- The Lenoir Economic Development Board, using Main Street Four Point™ principles, developed and administered a Building Rehabilitation Grant program resulting in rehabilitation/adaptive re-use of 7 downtown historic buildings. The board's annual awards program "The Spirit of the Clock" recognizes individuals and businesses who have contributed to the downtown revitalization program.
- Members of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board conducted a facilities needs assessment resulting in design improvements for public recreational facilities.
- The Lenoir Housing Authority collaborated with the Lenoir Police Department and the Lenoir Fire Department to sponsor a Winter Festival "Up with Hope, Down with Dope." Police officers cooked and served a barbeque supper and presented an interactive hands-on session about gangs and their impact on the community.
- The Comprehensive Planning Committee worked over a period of 18 months to develop the city's first comprehensive plan since 1974. The committee sponsored a series of neighborhood meetings with citizens, gathering their ideas about the strengths and weaknesses of the city and forming a vision for growth and development. The city's website featured an interactive visual preference survey

**II. (c). What role does the non-profit sector play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

The non-profit sector in Lenoir embodies the heart and soul of the community and literally addresses the needs of our citizens from cradle to grave. The following are only a few examples of how non-profit organizations have improved the lives of the people of Lenoir:

- Caldwell Council on Adolescent Health successfully tackled the reduction of Caldwell County's teen pregnancy rate (once one of the highest in North Carolina) through education and mentoring in the public schools.
- Communities in Schools tackled the the challenge of high drop-out rates by creating programs to mentor high-risk students and scholarship programs to encourage continued education. In 2007, 300 students received services from 260 volunteers with 98% of the students staying in school.
- The Wig Bank, the first non-profit of its kind in the state, raised funds to renovate a donated house as a center for helping cancer patients boost their self-esteem and to increase community awareness of cancer screening programs offered by area hospitals.
- Caldwell County Arts Council's annual Sculpture Celebration brought national recognition to Lenoir, leading to the creation of a collection with more pieces of public sculpture than in any other community of its size in the United States.
- When planning began for the Lenoir Greenway, the local Rotary Clubs (Caldwell and Lenoir) raised funds for shelters and enhancements on the trails. Caldwell Pathways helped acquire project easements.
- Caldwell Memorial Hospital Foundation used proceeds from its annual gala to furnish 17 hospital rooms with lift chairs to aid in patient recovery in 2007.
- Lenoir Service League raised over \$190,000 to aid Hospice in building the first Hospice building for in-patient care in North Carolina in 1984 and annually funds over 24 other non-profits from the proceeds of its downtown thrift shop.

**II. (d). What role does business play in community-wide decision-making and how do they contribute to improving the community? (300 word maximum)**

As Lenoir diversifies its economic base, new businesses are joining the tradition of business involvement in the community. Representatives from local businesses serve on boards and commissions for the city and provide volunteer representation on non-profit boards and civic groups throughout the city. Examples of business support and involvement include the following:

- 27 local businesses paid for advertising on a full color city street map for free distribution to citizens and visitors.

- 32 businesses in the central business district formed the Lenoir Uptown Business Association (LUBA). During its first two years, LUBA has accomplished the following:
  1. published a downtown shopping guide for distribution in area hotels
  2. created a website promoting special events and downtown businesses
  3. developed a Folk Art and Antique festival
  4. organized a holiday decorating promotion “Light Up Lenoir” that won a state award as “Best Downtown Promotional Event in 2007.”
- When the city created a “Friday After Five on the Square” concert series and a “Fabulous Family Films” outdoor movie series, local businesses provided sponsorships to support the programs. Local restaurants displayed concert and film series listings on their dining tables to help promote the events.
- Bo’s Family Entertainment and the Bold and the Beautiful hair salon teamed with The Wig Bank to sponsor the “Giving Tree” celebration that provided a holiday party for 25 children from 13 families affected by cancer.
- Alvin Daughtridge, Fairfield Chair executive, applied his personal philosophy, “When people park their ego at the door and engage in face-to-face dialogue, problems frequently become opportunities and win-win solutions emerge,” to broker the connection between the Thurston Arthritis Research Center (UNC-Chapel Hill) and Caldwell Memorial Hospital, resulting in an arthritis care clinic in Lenoir.

### **III. How do we work together as a community?**

#### **III. (a). How does our community recognize and celebrate its diversity?(300 word maximum)**

Lenoir is home to people of many cultures, races, and ethnic groups. The rapidly growing Latino population is represented in a number of thriving owner-operated, small businesses, particularly in the central business district. Miguel Garcia Colchado and Maricruz Franquiz began Mi Casa Tienda Mexicana in a rented building on West Avenue. In 2005, they purchased a 10,000 square-foot building at 906 West Avenue to house their growing business. Their freshly-baked pastries draw customers to their business daily.

Centro Latino provides educational programs and assistance and sponsors cultural awareness events such as the October-November 2004 exhibit at the Caldwell Arts Council by local Mexican artists Jorge Torres, Angel H. Vite, and Arsenio Sanchez. Centro Latino also worked with Caldwell Community College’s Small Business Center on a program designed to provide computer training and small business assistance to their clients.

The annual Harambee festival in August is sponsored by the city’s Parks and Recreation department. In 2007, the festival was recognized for its diversity of programming with an award from the state association of Parks and Recreation professionals.

The Lenoir/Caldwell chapter of the NAACP sponsors an annual downtown walk honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. each February. The 2008 event featured speakers from local

churches and a diverse group of community members walking together to honor the life and work of Dr. King.

Over 15,000 Hmong refugees make their home in western North Carolina. The annual Hmong Festival at the Caldwell County Fairgrounds in Lenoir features food, music, games, and a fascinating look at Laotian culture. The three-day festival in late November of 2007 brought over 10,000 participants, some from as far away as California and Minnesota.

**III. (b). How does our community work with neighboring communities to address shared challenges? Is there a shared regional vision? (300 word maximum)**

Lenoir participates with other cities and counties across regional boundaries through the following agencies and task forces:

- ***Future Forward***

This regional economic development organization for western North Carolina brought together more than 150 citizens from 12 counties who articulated a blueprint of strategies and action items to rebuild the economic base of the region. One strategy, the creation of an engineering school to provide training for future manufacturing needs became a reality in 2007. The school is a collaborative effort supported by all the member partners of *Future Forward* and is a part of the University of North Carolina system with instructors and administrators from Western Carolina University and Appalachian State University.

- ***Greater Hickory Metro Tourism and Unifour Recreation Planning***

Representatives from the counties and cities that make up the Western Piedmont Council of Governments are working on the combined branding and marketing of outdoor recreational facilities and tourist attractions in the region. A Greater Hickory Metro tourism website has been developed to promote the region.

- ***North Carolina Main Street program and National Trust Main Street***

The Lenoir Main Street program is an active participant in the state network of 52 Main Street communities. In 2007 the Lenoir program was designated as one of only 13 accredited Main Street programs in the state by the National Trust.

- ***Unifour Air Quality Committee (UAQC)***

After being designated as being in “nonattainment of acceptable ozone levels” in 2004, Catawba County formed UAQC with Lenoir and 9 local governments to coordinate air quality planning activities in the Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir MSA. Lenoir assisted with the Early Action Compact (EAC), formed with the United States EPA and the NC Division of Air Quality to reduce air pollution through public education and awareness.

**IV. How does our community strengthen its ability to solve problems? (300 word maximum)**

Lenoir has learned that partnerships are the keys to solving challenges in our community. Working with citizen groups and civic organizations to develop a vision for the city and strategies for achieving that vision has broadened the base of citizen participation and investment in the future of the city.

When the local newspaper, the *News- Topic*, sponsored a community survey in the fall of 2004 (both in print and on-line), the responses were amazing. The survey focused on what citizens valued in their community and the areas that were of concern to them. Hundreds of citizens responded to both the on-line survey and the print surveys. Some residents wrote pages of responses to the survey questions. The city's downtown revitalization goals emerged in response to the desire of the citizens to preserve a sense of place in the heart of the city.

When a group of concerned citizens approached the city in the fall of 2006 with its concerns about gang-related activity among young people, unemployment, and other neighborhood concerns, the Lenoir Police Department and the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce created a task force with neighborhood churches to develop strategies to combat these problems. The Learning Investment Network for Kids (L.I.N.K), an after-school and summer intervention program for at risk youth, was developed as a result of the efforts of the task force.

When alumni of the award-winning Lenoir High School band program came together for a reunion concert, the seed was born for the Lenoir High School Foundation (LHS). Created with the goal of restoring the high school band building, LHS evolved into the James C. Harper School of Performing Arts.

## **Part II:**

### **Community Background and Community Challenge Section**

**1 (A). Community Background.** Set the background for your community. Tell its story. Summarize your community's history, successes and struggles. Describe how your community got to where it is today and your community's current state of affairs. (700 word maximum):

The original settlement of Lenoir was first known as Tucker's Barn after the family that settled on the north side of Lower Creek around 1765. The Tucker homestead became a gathering place, serving as voting precinct, muster ground, store and a place for "frolics" and celebrations. At least one large Fourth of July celebration included a drum corps, a march of Revolutionary War veterans and speeches by General William Lenoir. The place was so popular that a piece of music suitable for violins was composed and entitled "Tucker's Barn."

When Caldwell County was formed in 1841, a commission was appointed to select a county seat. Since more people lived on the north side of Lower Creek and Tucker's Barn was accessible in the event of a Spring "freshet," Tucker's Barn was chosen. The new county seat was named Lenoir in honor of General William Lenoir, a Revolutionary War hero and trustee of the University of North Carolina.

Prior to the Civil War, Lenoir's economy was based on agriculture with large farms producing cotton, corn and some tobacco. Hogwaller, a marketplace for bartering farm

produce and animals, thrived in the center of town. Davenport College, a school for young women flourished. Four opera houses, a large library and a rich tradition of musical and artistic talent led one newspaper of the time to describe Lenoir as the “Athens of western North Carolina.” By late 1880, the development of a locally-owned rail line and the abundant natural resources of water and timber set the stage for the birth of the furniture industry.

From 1889, when the Lenoir Furniture Company was formed, until 2000, the furniture industry developed into an industry that supplied thousands of jobs in factories bearing the names of Bernhardt, Broyhill, Thomasville, Hammary, Kincaid, and Fairfield Chair. Entrance signs to the city proudly proclaimed, “Furniture Center of the South.”

Fine hand-crafted furniture made in Lenoir graced homes in over 30 different countries. The Southern Furniture Market brought buyers from all over the United States to Lenoir to get “sneak” previews of the furniture lines that would be on the market. Furniture executives would host market buyers in their homes and lavish parties made Lenoir’s brand of Southern hospitality famous.

Textile and plastics manufacturing joined furniture in providing steady wages for Lenoir’s citizens as well as a dependable, stable tax base in business property taxes. Unemployment rates were so low that recruiting new industry was almost impossible. Civic and political leadership in Lenoir was dominated by the furniture industry.

The identity of the community was shaken, however, as thousands of manufacturing jobs were lost as furniture and textile factories closed or outsourced labor. The December 5, 2006, *Business Journal for Greensboro/Winston-Salem* reported that some 25,000 furniture jobs had been lost in North Carolina from 2000 to 2006. One fourth of those jobs—some 5,000 workers—were once employed in furniture factories in Lenoir. With the closing of Broyhill Furniture’s Plant #1, the dominance of furniture manufacturing in Lenoir’s economy was changed forever.

Rising to the challenges brought about by this rapid loss of Lenoir’s economic base, citizens began to re-define their vision for the future by building on the city’s greatest resources:

- its location as a gateway to the beauty of the Appalachian mountains
- its rich traditions of music and artistic talent
- its strong network of civic organizations

City government began aggressively seeking state and federal grants and loan programs to supplement local funding for projects to help rebuild the infrastructure in the central business district of the city. Private investors purchased and rehabilitated commercial buildings.

In 2006, the Caldwell County Economic Development Commission and local and state leaders offered unprecedented incentives to bring Internet giant Google, and a minimum 600 million dollar investment to Lenoir. The Google website describing the Lenoir project answers the question “Why did Google choose Lenoir?” as follows:

Lenoir has the right combination of energy infrastructure, developable land and available workforce for the data center. Additionally, the team from the local community that welcomed us has worked exceptionally hard throughout the selection process. All of this has truly distinguished Lenoir as a great place for our new data center.

**1 (B). Community Celebration:** Why should your community be selected as an All-America City? Describe what makes your community a great place to live, work, and play. (300 word maximum)

Lenoir is an All-America city. Lenoir's citizens are working together to make a good community a great community. Lenoir is emerging from a city struggling to regain its economic base and redefine its image to an energized city dedicated to revitalization and diversification of economic opportunity. The historic downtown has become a community gathering place for events and festivals such as the annual Blackberry Festival and the summer concert series, Friday After Five on the Square.

Volunteerism is strong in Lenoir, with citizen volunteers of all ages helping to support nonprofit organizations throughout the community. From the Satie's Ladies who organize the annual Christmas arts sale at the Caldwell Arts Council to the dozens of volunteers who man aid stations and provide refreshments to the participants of the annual "Bridge to Bridge" bicycle ride, people in Lenoir give freely of their time and talents to make good things happen in the community.

Lenoir is located on the beginning slopes of the Appalachian High Country, providing a perfect setting for outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, bicycling, soccer, golfing, canoeing and more. The Lenoir Aquatic and Fitness Center has both an indoor junior Olympic-sized pool and an outdoor Olympic-sized pool. The beautiful T.H. Broyhill Walking Park is used daily throughout the seasons.

The Caldwell Heritage Museum displays fascinating historic exhibits throughout the year and the Caldwell Arts Council maintains several visual arts galleries in various locations around the city as well as in its main gallery at the Broyhill House on College Avenue. In addition, St. James Episcopal Church is home to a wonderful collection of art by one of its early rectors, Johannes A. Oertel, renowned 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian artist.

**1 (C). Community Challenges:** Based on your community's current status, describe your community's two most pressing challenges.

**Challenge #1:** (200 words maximum)

In less than six years, Lenoir's economy shifted from one based on stable manufacturing jobs and an employment rate of less than 2% to job losses in the thousands and the highest unemployment rate in the state. The city's financial base went from being number one in the state in its business real property tax to having a declining general revenue as factories closed or moved their manufacturing equipment overseas. Revenues from water and

sewer use also declined as a result of the changes in manufacturing, reducing the city's fund balance to dangerously low levels.

Infrastructure in the historic central business district had deteriorated so badly that recruiters for physicians for the local hospital were embarrassed to bring the doctors they were trying to recruit to the community to downtown Lenoir.

**In order to compete successfully for industries offering higher-skilled, better-paying jobs, Lenoir has been challenged to revitalize its central business district and diversify its economy.**

**Challenge #2:** *(200 words maximum)*

As manufacturing jobs left Lenoir, the gap in quality of life between people who had educational opportunities and those who did not widened. Traditionally, furniture workers did not need higher levels of education to provide a good quality of life for their families. However, the types of jobs replacing furniture jobs require a much more skilled workforce. Unfortunately, the Hickory-Lenoir-Morganton Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has the lowest percentage of high school and college graduates of all eleven MSAs in North Carolina.

As unemployment benefits ran out, fewer people had health insurance coverage. Many unemployed workers were forty years old or older—ages at which many health problems can be minimized with good, but often expensive, medical treatment. The children of unemployed workers were often at a disadvantage from other children in the community. The number of children eligible for free and reduced lunches at Davenport, West Lenoir, and Lower Creek schools in Lenoir increased dramatically.

**Lenoir has been challenged to find innovative ways to address the gap in quality of life between individuals and families who have access to health care insurance coverage and economic opportunities and those who do not.**

### **Part III: Community-Driven Projects**

Part III requires descriptions of three collaborative community projects that have significantly affected the community. The first two projects should be drawn directly from the two community challenges stated above. The third project should be reflective of what your community is doing for children and youth.

#### **PROJECT ONE (Challenge #1)**

**1. Project summary, name and give a brief description.** *(150 word maximum)*

The **Downtown Lenoir Revitalization** project is a collaborative partnership between the City, state and federal agencies, private investors, local small businesses and hundreds of

private citizens. The project entails public infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation of privately-owned commercial buildings and the creation of a series of special events to encourage the use of downtown for community gatherings.

The commitment to proceed with the downtown revitalization program in spite of extremely challenging economic conditions was initially met with harsh criticism from some people in the community who did not understand the importance of preserving and redeveloping the traditional central business district.

With the completion of the first phases of revitalization, public appreciation and praise for changes brought about by the project continue. The infrastructure improvements around the downtown Square received special recognition in January 2008 for best public space improvement at the North Carolina Main Street Conference.

**2. Describe the relationship between this project and your first challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

Although Lenoir had been a Main Street community since 1984, the historic central business district had continued to decline. The original Main Street program for downtown revitalization had been absorbed by city government because the program committee could not raise funds to employ a program director. Streets and sidewalks were in need of repair and a number of historic buildings had been demolished. There was no organization of downtown merchants or businesses to promote the district.

The decaying downtown business district had become a symbol of public despair at the loss of the local furniture industry and the rising rate of unemployment in the community.

Tapping into citizen interest and concern for the future of the community, the city created a citizens advisory group, the Lenoir Economic Development Board (LEDB). The LEDB became the Main Street program group for Lenoir, identifying improvements to the downtown streetscape and recruiting volunteers to work with the City on those improvements.

City staff worked with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments in developing a revitalization plan for a 2.5 block area of downtown that received \$900,000 of Section 108 loan funds from HUD. A transportation enhancement grant of \$650,000 from the North Carolina Department of Transportation supplemented \$424,000 of city funding for street improvements and conversion of traffic patterns in the district.

Encouraged by the development of revitalization plans for downtown, private investors purchased and renovated 8 downtown buildings, supplementing their private investments with \$53,166 from the Building Rehabilitation grant program developed by the LEDB and funded through the City's municipal service tax district.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

The first phases of the Downtown Lenoir Revitalization program involved many partnerships and collaborations such as those outlined below:

#### Partnerships for infrastructure improvements:

- The City collaborated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to develop a truck by-pass away from the revitalization area, enabling some one-way streets to be converted back to two-way streets.
- The City's Public Works employees worked with Duke Energies and BellSouth to minimize the costs for underground utilities by trenching and covering conduit for the project. Street department workers learned how to color and stamp concrete for patterned crosswalks, allowing the City to expand the project area at a reduced cost.
- Citizen donations provided funding for planters, benches and trash cans in the project area. Over 300 individuals and families purchased 12 x 12 inch concrete engraved pavers, helping to defray the cost of constructing a stage and plaza on the northwest quadrant of the Square. Future donations will fund improvements to the remaining three quadrants of the Square.

#### Partnerships for promoting downtown:

- The Caldwell County Arts Council provided Grassroots grant funding for programming for an outdoor film series for downtown. The City's Parks and Recreation department purchased a 20 foot outdoor movie screen for the series. Audiences for the movies included senior citizens from Koinonia Apartments, young families from neighborhoods surrounding downtown and summer visitors to the area.
- The Lenoir Downtown Cruisers planned and carried out classic car cruise-ins twice monthly during from April until October, attracting over 2,000 people to each event.
- Downtown merchants worked with City staff to plan and implement special events to attract people to downtown such as the annual Christmas Parade and the Lenoir Folk Art and Antique Festival. Other local businesses helped sponsor events such as the outdoor movie series.

#### **4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Many cities and towns carry out successful downtown revitalization programs but the uniqueness of the Lenoir Downtown Revitalization program is that it began in spite of community economic conditions and succeeds because of citizen partnerships.

Initial budget estimates for infrastructure improvements were over 33 million. Through resourceful collaborations with state and federal agencies, the City secured 1.5 million dollars in grants and loans. City employees partnered with utility companies and sub-contractors to make project dollars stretch further. Instead of large corporate donations, individuals donated small amounts to make the community stage and plaza on the Square a reality.

The infrastructure improvements in the first phases of the streetscape project have been impressive with a budget of under 2 million yielding the following:

- Underground utilities on Main, Church, Boundary streets and West Avenue
- Patterned sidewalks and crosswalks around the Square

- Pedestrian lighting on Main and West
- Angled parking on West; conversion of Main and Mulberry to two-way traffic
- New traffic signalization on the Square
- Stormwater improvements, parking, and pedestrian lighting at Hogwaller Plaza
- Community stage plaza with landscaping and lighting on the northwest quadrant of Square
- 30 streetscape planters in partnership with Master Gardeners
- 13 outdoor sculptures in collaboration with Tucker's Gallery

The economic impact of the program yielded these results:

- Over 9 million dollars of private investment
- 163 new jobs in the revitalization area
- 68 new businesses

The cultural and social impacts of the program continue to increase:

- Downtown district named a National Register Historic district in fall 2007
- Over 40 community events (2 festivals, 2 parades, 3 cycling events, 8 movies and 20 concerts) on the Square
- Selection of Lenoir for 2009 national T-Bucket Alliance convention

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

Chuck Beatty, Planning Director  
 City of Lenoir  
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## **PROJECT TWO (Challenge #2)**

### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

**The Caldwell Health Access Program (CHAP)** is a partnership between the Helping Hands Clinic, Caldwell County Health Department, Caldwell Memorial Hospital, as well as private physician offices and retail pharmacies. CHAP was created as a cooperative, county-wide system of health care for the uninsured. A hybrid of the traditional free clinic model and Project Access programs, CHAP is the only program of its kind in North Carolina as it increases healthcare resources to uninsured community residents by addressing four primary needs:

- Assignment of one primary care physician for chronic disease management
- Increased access to acute care
- Increased access to ancillary services
- Access to prescription medicines

CHAP is based in the Helping Hands Clinic. Located in the heart of downtown Lenoir, the clinic is easily accessible to volunteers and clients.

**2. Describe the relationship between this project and your second challenge, the project's history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

With the loss of manufacturing jobs, the number of uninsured people increased dramatically in Lenoir. The emergency room at Caldwell Memorial Hospital was swamped with people who did not have insurance to see a private physician. The Caldwell County Health Department was also faced with growing numbers of clients who did not have private insurance or were too young to qualify for Medicare.

CHAP was formed in 2004 to improve the health outcomes of the community's uninsured by providing greater continuity of care through community partnerships. Rather than utilizing an assortment of primary care venues and receiving only marginally consistent care, each patient has only one physician monitoring his or her diseases and treatment medications.

As chronic disease patients are referred into private physician offices, more appointment times are available for those patients needing immediate treatment of acute conditions. A physician was hired to work clinics to replace physicians who were volunteering in their offices and the Helping Hands Clinic opened two additional days to see more patients. This increased access to acute care provides an alternative to the local emergency departments, which are expensive and ill-equipped to treat minor illnesses such as a sore throat or sinus infection.

CHAP operates as a program of Helping Hands Clinic. CHAP accepts patient referrals from the Clinic, Caldwell Memorial Hospital's Emergency Department, Caldwell County Health Department, and participating local physicians. In order for a patients to be referred to CHAP, they must meet Helping Hands Clinic eligibility guidelines and have at least one chronic medical condition. The CHAP partnership has allowed Helping Hands Clinic to leverage an additional \$1 million of in-kind services annually to total \$2.5 million. As a result for every dollar donated in 2006, Helping Hands Clinic provided \$9 in free healthcare.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

CHAP is a true collaborative effort. Once referred into CHAP, the CHAP Director appoints each patient to a primary care physician. Caldwell Memorial Hospital and the Caldwell County Medical Society assist with recruitment of these physicians with 96% of all primary care physicians currently participating. Labs, x-rays, surgical services and diabetic education are provided by Caldwell Memorial Hospital. Should a patient need more focused care, specialist referrals are also available. The Caldwell County Health Department provides all family planning and immunization services as well as \$20,000 in funding per year.

Helping Hands Clinic Pharmacy serves as the primary pharmacy for all patients. Most brand-name medications are ordered by the Medication Assistance Program Director from pharmaceutical company Patient Assistance Programs to avoid exorbitant medication

costs. All generic medications are donated by Caldwell Memorial Hospital, saving the clinic approximately \$250,000 a year.

In 2007 Helping Hands Clinic served 1,300 active patients, had 220 volunteers and 7 paid staff and an operating budget of \$324,000. Remarkably, the clinic was funded entirely by private donations and received no state or federal funding. The tremendous increase in access to healthcare for the uninsured did not go unnoticed. Individual donations have increased by 110% over the past 2 years and overall giving increased 30%.

Another important collaboration is that of the patients with the clinic. Over 80% of the patients made voluntary donations of \$5.00, making up 10% of the clinic's operating budget.

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Medical outcomes for CHAP patients are impressive with some examples listed below:

- Of CHAP patients diagnosed with hypertension, systolic pressures above 120 dropped 14% and diastolic pressures above 80 dropped 21% over a two year period.
- Over the past two years, the percentage of CHAP patients with high cholesterol has decreased by 17%.
- In CHAP patients diagnosed with diabetes, the average hemoglobin A1C has decreased from 8.3% in 2005 to 7.5% in 2007.

The National Institutes of Health have designated these three objective health indicators as the ABC's of defining risk of heart attack and stroke: A1C, Blood pressure and Cholesterol. Providing CHAP patients with consistent medical care and prescriptions has clearly made a difference in controlling chronic disease, decreasing risk factors and preventing more serious and life-threatening conditions.

Evidence that CHAP has met critical needs can be seen from 2004 to 2006 statistics. Medical visits increased by 197%, new clients increased by 96%, prescriptions dispensed increased by 44% and referrals for labs, x-rays and specialists increased by 196%. In contrast, emergency department data from Caldwell Memorial Hospital shows that uncompensated emergency care has decreased by 11% and charity care levels have leveled off despite massive job losses over the last two years. Hospital leadership attributes these changes to the advent of CHAP.

Its dedication to quality has led Helping Hands Clinic and its CHAP partnership to be recognized by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation for excellence in evaluation and has been accredited at the highest level by the North Carolina Association of Free Clinics.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address. (This person may be contacted to verify information.)**

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### **PROJECT THREE (Youth-Related)**

The National Civic League has issued the Youth Initiative Challenge. At least one project from each All-America City applicant should document ways in which the lives of children and youth have been tangibly improved.

#### **1. Project summary, name and give a brief description. (150 word maximum)**

**The Lenoir High School Foundation (LHS) provides quality musical education to people of all ages regardless of income through the James C. Harper School of Performing Arts.** The Harper School began operation in January 2006 with the mission of “Celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Caldwell County through quality music education for students of all ages.”

The Harper School offers private instruction on all instruments and styles including piano, voice, classical organ, guitar, wood wind, brass and percussion instruments. The Harper School offers the highly-recognized Suzuki curriculum for students age 3 and up in violin, viola, cello and piano. Group lessons and performance groups include The Harper Concert Band, Harper Wind Ensemble and the Harper Jazz Ensemble. The school offers the only Music Together® class in western North Carolina. Music Together® is a research-based developmental program for children from birth to 5 years old and their parents.

#### **2. Describe the relationship between this project and the challenge it is addressing, the project’s history, and how it is being sustained? (300 word maximum)**

The Harper School enables students of all financial means to receive quality music education, helping bridge the economic and opportunity gaps that have been created by the changes in Lenoir’s economy. The school also employs talented musicians in the area and attracts people to downtown Lenoir through lessons, concerts and performances.

The LHS Foundation was formed in 1985 to restore and preserve the former Lenoir High School campus. In 1997, the Foundation re-energized after Lenoir High School Band alumni convened for a Reunion Band concert to raise money to restore their former band building. There was not just any high school band. Created in 1924 by Captain James C. Harper, the band won every music award for high school bands for decades. Alumni of the band achieved stellar careers as musicians and music educators. Joseph Robinson, principal oboist of the New York Philharmonic, summed up the impact of the band on his life in “*What I Learned in the Lenoir High School Band*,” saying that “Captain Harper bet his entire life and family fortune on the premise that no foundation board of directors would have accepted—namely, that a handful of mountain children in North Carolina deserved to have a conservatory education free of charge.”

The LHS Foundation commissioned a feasibility study in 2004 for the renovation of the band building. Consultants recommended establishing a community music school and postponing the band building restoration until the school was firmly established.

In September of 2005, after raising funds to support a school, LHS Foundation hired an executive director. The Foundation has successfully carried out fund-raising for the school, securing a number of large donations from local foundations and philanthropists. Because of the board's success in fund-raising, over 40% of the school's students receive scholarships.

**3. Describe the partnerships and collaborations involved in the creation, development, and implementation of this project. (300 word maximum)**

The rapid success of the Harper School in attracting students to the school and raising funds for the school is due to the many partnerships and collaborative relationships that the school's board of directors and the school's executive director, Janet Bloom have developed. The following list describes some of these relationships:

- Saint James Episcopal Church donated space for the school's operations.
- Partnership with Davenport A+ School brought over 200 students into the violin program for two years and master classes for advanced students.
- Collaboration with Caldwell County schools in offering summer band and choral workshops built on skills students learned throughout the school year. Pre-performance workshops offered beginning students an opportunity to get a head start on their fall programs.
- Grant from Wal-Mart provided funds for Music Together® classes at Family Resource Center.
- Collaboration with the Wig Bank provided Music Therapy for cancer patients.
- Partnerships with Western Piedmont Symphony enabled workshops and youth symphony concerts.
- The Harper School's reputation for excellence continues to attract highly-qualified instructors including graduates of the Appalachian State University School of Music.
- Students from a five-county area are enrolled in the school

**4. Describe the qualitative and quantitative outcomes of this project in the last 3 years and explain how this project has been a success. (300 word maximum)**

Since its opening, the Harper School has provided instruction to 481 students. The High School Youth Wind Ensemble, an honors band comprised of students from 11 different high schools, has 57 students. Over 200 students have participated in the Suzuki Violin partnership with Davenport A+ School.

Two sessions of the World Drumming classes have been pre-selected. A Unifour Foundation grant provided for a drumming program at West Lenoir School and Valmead Elementary School and continues that commitment for future classes.

The Harper Concert Band has 56 adults who participate regularly. The Harper Concert Band presents an annual Christmas concert and a spring concert in the Lenoir High School auditorium. This summer the Concert Band will present a patriotic concert as part of Lenoir's Independence Day celebration.

Music Together®, a program focusing on adult/child interaction with music and movement using original music and traditional folk tunes, will be offered at no cost to 20 low income families at the Family Resource Center. Funds were secured with a Wal-Mart grant.

In recognition of the success of the Harper School over the past two years, financial support is growing. The Broyhill Family Foundation provided a grant of \$25,000 with an additional \$5,000 per year pledged for the next three years. The McCarl family provided a \$25,000 challenge donation to the school in 2006 and matching funds were raised. The \$60,000 goal for un-designated gifts was met in 2007. The Hogan Family Foundation has provided support as well.

The commitment to provide opportunities for high-quality music education for the children and youth of Lenoir that Captain Harper began 84 years ago is continuing in the school that bears his name.

**Name the primary contact for the project. Provide name & title, organization, address, telephone, and e-mail address.** (This person may be contacted to verify information.)

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*End of Application*

See [www.ncl.org/aac/](http://www.ncl.org/aac/) or the application instructions for detailed application instructions, sample applications from previous All-America City Winners, and more information. For questions contact: Kristin Seavey, [kristins@ncl.org](mailto:kristins@ncl.org) or 303-571-4343 ext. 1210.