



# City of Beaumont

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Dear League of CA Cities:

I would like to express my support for the City of Perris's Enchanted Heights Sewer Project. The City of Perris is applying for a Helen Putnam Award in the category of CCS Partnership Intergovernmental Collaboration Award for its innovative collaboration with four other agencies to greatly improve the lives of the residents of Enchanted Heights, a disadvantaged community located in portions of the City of Perris.

For many years, the residents of Enchanted Heights have lived with raw sewage running down their streets during rain events. This runoff creates a potential public health hazard. It is not unusual to see school children picking their way through sewage laced runoff on their way to school.

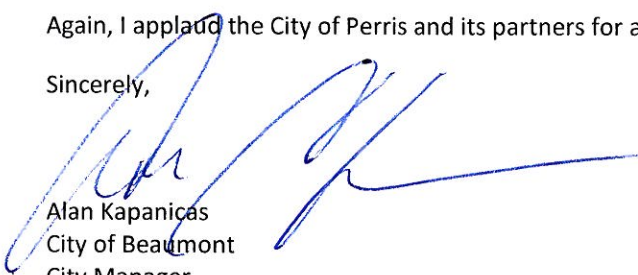
In 2011, the City of Perris partnered with two other local agencies; the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District to find a solution to this very critical problem. Working together as a team, the city and its partners applied for and received \$15 million in grant funding to build a sewer system in the Enchanted Heights community. Once the funding was secured, the real work began.

The residents of Enchanted Heights are largely Spanish speaking immigrants from Mexico. The community of Enchanted Heights lies in two jurisdictions; one half is in the City of Perris and the other half is in the County of Riverside. As a condition of the grant, which would spare the residents of any costs associated with the building of the sewer project as well as the onsite connections, the residents would have to sign a Right of Entry form which would allow the construction contractor to enter the yards of the residents. The City and its partners were committed to treating the community as a whole unit and the Community Involvement Program did not differentiate between the two jurisdictions.

Realizing that getting residents to sign anything is a challenge, which is even more so in a Disadvantaged Community which had cultural and language barriers. The City of Perris therefore conducted a bilingual Community Involvement Program. This program not only educated the residents as to the need for the project, but it also explained the Right of Entry process in Spanish and English so the residents were fully informed about the issue and what they were signing. Four formal community meetings were held at the local elementary school which was conducted in partnership with the County of Riverside and Eastern Municipal Water District. More than 200 residents attended the meetings which were held in Spanish and English. Eastern Municipal Water District provided bilingual notaries so the residents would not have to pay any costs associated with notarizing the Right of Entry form. To date, the majority of residents have signed the Right of Entry form. The success of the Community Involvement program is evident in the enthusiastic response to the project by the residents. I truly believe that the Enchanted Height Sewer Project Outreach program is a model for other agencies because of the success in engaging a disadvantaged community in a culturally appropriate manner which resulted in the desired outcome.

Again, I applaud the City of Perris and its partners for an innovative job well done.

Sincerely,

  
Alan Kapanicas  
City of Beaumont  
City Manager