Press Release

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**Fraser Wins 2018 Community Excellence Awards Competition**

**GRAND RAPIDS, Michigan** – The community of Fraser was honored with the Michigan Municipal League’s 2018 [Community Excellence Award](http://cea.mml.org/) on Sept. 22 during the League’s annual Convention in Grand Rapids.

The peer-nominated Community Excellence Awards (CEA), affectionately called “[The Race for the Cup](http://www.mml.org/awards/cea.html),” was started by the League in 2007 to recognize innovative solutions taking place in Michigan’s cities, villages and urban townships. It’s the highest and most prestigious award bestowed on a community by the statewide League. The winning community receives a large trophy cup that they get to have on display for the next year. Last year’s winner was the City of Hudsonville.

Fraser, located in Southeast Michigan with a population of about 14,480, won for [McKinley Barrier-Free Park and Playground for People of ALL Abilities](http://cea.mml.org/?cea=frasers-mckinley-barrier-free-park-playground-people-abilities).

“This award represents the culmination of 12 or more long years of work, fundraising, and thousands and thousands of volunteer hours by a dedicated group of people,” said Michael Lesich, Fraser councilmember and member of Fraser First Booster Club. “As I take this award back, I think they’ll feel the same pride that we do for this project and our community.”

McKinley Barrier-Free Park has been a 12-year long volunteer effort led by a partnership between the City of Fraser, Fraser First Booster Club, and other groups and organizations. They have transformed a previously underused 15-acre park in the city into a barrier-free park and playground, offering accessible outdoor recreation for children and adults of all abilities, with a particular focus on the needs of those with special challenges.

“This park has really given our community an engaging, exciting place for people of all abilities and all ages,” said Christina Woods, Fraser Parks & Recreation director. “I really hope this park will serve as a reminder to all the volunteers who have been involved that with hard work, dedication, and passion you can make big things happen. Hopefully, it will spur other volunteer efforts in the future.”

Fraser was one of four finalists in the statewide Community Excellence Awards competition. The other three finalists were:

* [Muskegon – Muskegon’s Western Market](http://cea.mml.org/?cea=muskegons-western-market)
* [Owosso – The Armory Project](http://cea.mml.org/?cea=armory-project-owosso-michigan)
* [Saginaw – Downtown Saginaw SVRC Marketplace](http://cea.mml.org/?cea=downtown-saginaw-svrc-marketplace)

The finalists were among 15 projects, programs, and initiatives involving 15 Michigan communities vying for the statewide [Community Excellence Award](http://cea.mml.org/)s (CEA)—the most prestigious Michigan Municipal League honor.

The 2018 Race for the Cup began in the spring. Communities submitted projects on topics ranging from civic engagement and innovative delivery of services to placemaking and redevelopment. Each entry was ranked by a panel of judges, and the public had a chance to weigh in through an [online voting](http://cea.mml.org/vote/) component. The projects’ final score was based on the judges’ ranking (75 percent) and online voting (25 percent). The top four entries advanced to the final round.

Representatives from the final four presented their projects at the League’s 2018 Convention in Grand Rapids, Mich, Sept. 20-22. After hearing the presentations, Convention attendees voted for their favorite project, with Fraser receiving the most votes. Fraser was awarded the coveted CEA Trophy Cup at the conclusion of the Convention Saturday, Sept. 22. [View past CEA winners here.](http://www.mml.org/awards/index.html)

For photos of the CEA winners, go to the “Awards and Honors” album on flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/michigancommunities/albums/72157701007476724>

Photos can be downloaded from the League’s flickr page for free. We just ask that the following photo credit be given: *Michigan Municipal League/mml.org*

For more information, contact Matt Bach, director of communications, at mbach@mml.org or 810-874-1073.

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