

## City earns 'Voice of the People' award

Under the leadership of City Administrator Tony Cox, with the direction of City Council and the support of city staff, the goal has been steady improvement.

In Cox's tenure, the city has tackled major budgeting issues, addressed outdated equipment needs and begun a process to upgrade substandard city roads.

But these aren't the only areas being addressed, even in departments that are frequently recognized as high performing, like police and fire, the goal has been to get better.

According to the National Research Center, that goal is being met.

The City of Morristown was announced as a winner of the Voice of the People Award for Transformation in Safety by the NRC. Voice of the People Awards are given to jurisdictions that best listen and act to improve their communities.

Awards were given based on citizens' responses to the National Citizen Survey which is sent out each year to a sampling of residents. According to results this survey, Morristown residents report the highest levels of improvement with safety compared to all other participating jurisdictions.

"It's important that we know what citizens think about the City's services" said Mayor Gary Chesney. "We try to find different ways to reach out to citizens and the survey is an important part of that effort."

City officials will continue to utilize survey data to pinpoint citizens' top areas of concern.

"We are constantly trying to improve our services. The Citizen Survey and the Tennessee Municipal Benchmarking Project are very important to our continuing improvement," Cox said.

To enhance public safety, police expanded walking patrols in the downtown and shopping centers. Police leadership organized a panel of local representatives from all areas of the community to get feedback and strengthen partnerships within the community.

"It is important that our department listens to and works with residents" said Police Chief Roger Overholt. "These efforts are a part of our overall community engagement program."

City leaders are working to make more effective use of technology for public safety. Use of Geographic Information System (GIS) to map crime incidents has allowed for better communication with residents as well as a more focused allocation of manpower to trouble areas.

"Residents see Morristown firefighters as helpers," said Fire Chief Bill Honeycutt. "We work to keep the public informed. From providing smoke detectors to those who need them, to training in CPR, we try to help citizens prepare for emergencies."

The Fire Department is using GIS to track and maintain important infrastructure in the field such as hydrants. They are also working to better integrate this information into their pre-fire planning programs.

"Meeting the needs of our community is our mission" said Cox. "Effective citizen engagement is vital to that task."

This is the second year the city has been recognized by NRC. In 2015 Morristown was a finalist for transformation in mobility.

"Ongoing communication is what allows us to improve our services. We are very pleased that this award showcases our progress," Chesney said.

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