

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 28, 2022  
Contact: Dana Olson, Communications Manager  
Email: [olsond@cityoflakeforest.com](mailto:olsond@cityoflakeforest.com)  
Phone: 847.810.3672



### **City of Lake Forest Rethink Recycling Campaign Receives 2022 ICMA Program Excellence Award**

**Lake Forest, Illinois** – The City of Lake Forest’s Rethink Recycling Campaign received the 2022 Community Sustainability Program Excellence Award from ICMA, the International City/County Management Association.

ICMA’s Community Sustainability Awards recognize the innovative local government programs or processes that demonstrate innovation, excellence, and success in balancing that community’s social, economic, environmental, and cultural needs. City Manager Jason Wicha and former Assistant City Manager Mike Strong accepted the award on behalf of the City of Lake Forest on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at the ICMA Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio.

The City of Lake Forest partnered with the Lake Forest Garden Club, a local branding and graphic design firm, and a recycling processor to launch the Rethink Recycling with Bart the Cart campaign in 2020. The campaign’s goal was to reduce recycling contamination rates over a two-year period in order to achieve a meaningful reduction in processing costs.

The campaign leveraged social media, a website ([BartTheCart.com](http://BartTheCart.com)), an “Oops Tag” program, curbside recycling audits, and interactive engagement platforms with an animated spokesperson (Bart the Cart) to increase awareness of recycling contamination and change resident recycling behavior. Over the two-year period, contamination rates fell from 25% to just below 10%. The reduction in contamination has already saved the City over \$50,000 annually in recycling processing costs, with additional savings expected to continue into the future.

“Changing market conditions in the recycling industry have created significant strains on municipal budgets across the country,” said City Manager Jason Wicha. “This City-wide effort has lowered processing costs to the community, which in turn ensures the economic sustainability of our recycling program,” Wicha added.

The ICMA Local Government Excellence Awards Program highlights creative contributions to professional local government management while demonstrating the difference that effective and committed management makes to the quality of life in our communities.

“Utilizing Bart the Cart has been an especially effective method for us to reach a wide audience, and we are grateful for the Lake Forest families who have pitched in by adopting new recycling behaviors,” said Mayor George Pandaleon. “With more than 90 percent of our families actively recycling, we have been able to put our recycling program on a path to becoming among the cleanest in the nation.”

“The City is especially thankful to the Lake Forest Garden Club for their generous contribution that helped fund the program,” added Mayor Pandaleon.

To learn more about Rethink Recycling, please visit [BartTheCart.com](http://BartTheCart.com).

#### ***About the City of Lake Forest***

*With highly rated schools, a historic downtown, and a beautiful beach, the City of Lake Forest appeals to everybody from young families to retired citizens. Learn more at [cityoflakeforest.com](http://cityoflakeforest.com).*

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Picture included



*Lake Forest City Manager Jason Wicha (center) and Assistant City Manager Mike Strong (right) accept the Community Sustainability Program Excellence Award from International City/County Management Association Immediate Past President Jim Malloy (left).*