

Huntington Herald Dispatch

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Huntington named America's Best Community

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HUNTINGTON — Huntington has won the title of America's Best Community and will take home the grand prize of \$3 million.

Other finalists in the competition were Chisago Lakes Area, Minnesota; Darrington/Arlington, Washington; Lake Havasu City, Arizona; Madison, Indiana; Statesboro, Georgia; Tualatin, Oregon; and Valley County, Idaho.

The city of Huntington, Trifecta Productions and the Cabell-Huntington Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted a watch party Wednesday at Trifecta Productions, 555 5th Ave.

The announcement was made at a ceremony at 7 p.m. in Denver, Colorado.

Earlier Wednesday, representatives from Huntington presented their revitalization plan.

For the past three years, the city of Huntington has been judged on its revitalization plan, also known as the Huntington Innovation Project (HIP), which outlines four projects and ideas that are aimed at jump-starting the local economy and enhance quality of life.

The plan focuses on three key initiatives in the Highlawn, Fairfield and West End neighborhoods and how they can be linked with high-speed broadband.

The Highlawn brownfields project would redevelop 78 acres of vacant heavy industrial property along the Ohio River using a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. The development would be anchored by Rubberlite Inc.'s Polymer Technology Center of Huntington, or PolyTeCH.

The Hal Greer Health Innovation Corridor aims to transform the Hal Greer Boulevard gateway and Fairfield neighborhood by replacing dilapidated public housing with commercial and residential redevelopment, street improvements and enhancing Cabell Huntington Hospital's role as a regional center for health care jobs and healthy lifestyles.

West End revitalization will continue the city's River-to-Rail initiative to renew Huntington's West End as well as rejuvenating the Central City commercial district along 14th Street West by improving building facades, streetscapes and green infrastructure improvements.

Gigabit City will connect the aforementioned areas of Huntington and downtown with high-speed broadband through a public-private partnership.

Since the launch of the ABC competition the city has leveraged \$12.7 million in resources for its revitalization plan.

Huntington HIP Plan — \$1,009,000 leverage including winnings from the ABC competition, private sector contributions and federal grants.

Huntington Brownfields Innovation Zone — \$3,525,000 leveraged from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grants, local organizations and the Appalachian Regional Commission grant.

Fairfield Innovation Corridor — \$1,030,000 leveraged from Cabell Huntington Hospital, West Virginia Department of Transportation and local contributions.

West End and West Edge Factory — \$6,990,000 leveraged from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Appalachian Regional Commission grant, the EPA and local contributions.

Gigabit City — \$148,000 leveraged from National Institute for Trial Advocacy Training funds and the West Virginia Broadband Deployment Council for Feasibility Study.

Huntington's presentation as well as the award ceremony was streamed on America's Best Communities Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AmericasBestCommunities/>.

The America's Best Communities competition is a \$10 million community revitalization campaign sponsored by Frontier Communications, DISH Network, CoBank and The Weather Channel.