

Mesquite, Texas (Population Category 9)

**Community Leadership and Coordination:** Mesquite is a dynamic community of 134,623 people, is less than 15 minutes from downtown Dallas and is located at the intersection of 5 major highways. In 2007, the City of Mesquite (COM) launched a deliberate process of positive community revitalization called “Project Renewal”, an aggressive plan to improve the aesthetic appearance of the city, revive older neighborhoods, and bolster retail and commercial development. In 2010, Project Renewal continued with funding for infrastructure and street improvements, beautification, increased code enforcement, recycling initiatives, redevelopment in key areas of the city, and the launch of a new marketing/economic development campaign which outlines the COM’s vision to create a sustainable, vibrant community ([mymesquitetexas.com](http://mymesquitetexas.com)). A key component of this plan is the development of "city gateways" identified as being attractive for development and having maximum exposure to a high number of commuters. By transforming the visual image of the city, these designated gateways will attract new development projects. KMB is excited to be an integral partner during this time of positive change.

KMB is a proud affiliate of KAB, KTB, Arbor Day Foundation, TREES, Texas Turfgrass Assoc. (Golf Course Renovation of the Year) and is ranked as a Tree City USA (20 yrs.). The COM earned Silver Level Scenic City Certification that recognizes cities that implement high-quality scenic standards for public roadways/spaces, with the goal of improving community image. Bonus points were given for youth education and public awareness programs: Nature Explore Classroom, Butterfly Trail Beautification Project and a Historic Tree Preservation Plan.

KMB is funded through a combination of private donations, local sponsorships, memberships, water bill solicitations, hotel/motel occupancy tax and in-kind government support. KMB’s annual operating budget of \$45,250 is composed of 48% hotel/motel occupancy tax, 31% water bill insert donations, and 21% local donations and sponsorships for special events, memberships, and fundraising activities. KMB partnered with Historic Mesquite, Inc. (HMI) to create a certified Nature Explore Classroom bringing in sponsorships of \$60,000.

KMB has a part-time Executive Director, a 20 member Board of Directors, interns, and volunteer force. The COM offers in-kind support and cooperatively works as a team to effectively promote KMB’s mission. On-going litter prevention, beautification, waste reduction and community improvement projects include Mesquite Recycles Day(2), Trash Bash(2), Recycling Fashion Show, Yard of the Month, School Presentations, Youth Environmental Leaders, Arbor Day, LHOC and Community Appearance Index. Programs are supported/run by the KMB Board

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of Directors, COM Solid Waste staff, COM Parks & Rec. Dept., in cooperation with local businesses, community volunteers, Mesquite ISD, Eastfield College, Garden Club, Master Gardeners, Interns and HMI.

Training is provided during the year for board members. Each board member is required to attend a minimum of 1 training each year. The trainings offered include new member orientation; an annual Board Training Session; webinars through KAB, KTB and TREES, Inc.; paid attendance fees for the KTB conference; and attendance fees and lodging for the KAB conference for the Board Chair. KMB's Executive Director completed a competitive Nonprofit Leadership Cohort Certification Program through SMU and graduated from Leadership Mesquite.

**Public Awareness:** KMB works to promote public awareness of our programs. This past year KMB received over 200 inches of print coverage from The Dallas Morning News, The Mesquite News and Neighbors Go plus corresponding websites. Mesquite is also unique in that it has its own radio station (88.9FM KEOM) operated by MISD and partners with KMB on promoting special events. KMB converses with students through twitter and facebook. KMB's website ([keepmesquitebeautiful.org](http://keepmesquitebeautiful.org)) also serves as a means to educate and inform the public. In 2010, the KMB website had 163,867 hits and 30,895 visitors. In addition to these press mediums, KMB also had informative water bill inserts and articles published in the COM's newsletter, *Mainstream*, which is distributed to over 36,000 homes monthly. Other public awareness events include the Yard of the Month program, 2 informational kiosks located at City Hall, and a fundraising Pancake Breakfast event which sold 100 tickets.

This year, KMB was one of the lucky recipients of the Don't Mess with Texas (DMWT) Litter Force presentations! Kimball Elementary (350 students/ 20 teachers), recognized as having one of the district's most successful recycling programs, hosted the Litter Force team as the students learned about litter prevention and waste reduction. Television and news media were on-site as well as the district's media crew which put the presentation on the MISD website for the entire district to see (37,000 students)! To support the DMWT Campaign throughout the year, KMB distributed bumper stickers, re-usable trash bags, and window decals with the TxDOT message. In 2010, KMB attended 12 local health fairs at which 1,500 parents (and students) attended and received information. In addition, over 6,500 pieces of literature were distributed at local special events including Trash Bash, Taste and Trade, Mesquite Recycles Day, Christmas in the Park, and at local speaking presentations to civic and community groups, such as the Mesquite Exchange Club, MISD Council of PTAs, Rotary and other local groups. DMWT information is posted on KMB's website, facebook and twitter!

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**Education:** KMB is actively involved in reaching today's youth with messages of litter prevention, waste reduction and recycling through our in-school programs. KMB worked with 8 scout groups, 7 student groups from Eastfield College, our local Phi Theta Kappa chapter, 20 elementary schools, 11 groups of students from 4 local high schools, and 4 church youth groups for our bi-annual Trash Bash and Mesquite Recycles Day. KMB proudly promotes our Youth Environmental Leaders (YEL) which consists of local high school students who have a passion for protecting the environment. These 25 students meet monthly to discuss relevant topics such as "Going Green", recycling and other Waste in Place curriculum as well as participating in all KMB special events. A new program this year for YEL has been recycling clothing at the MISD Clothes Closet (benefitting underprivileged students). YEL helped produce KMB's 2<sup>nd</sup> Recycling Fashion Show where MISD students had the opportunity to design outfits and educate attendees about the importance of recycling. Participants modeled 10 outfits made from recycled material to over 175 attendees! Over 100 MISD Cheerleaders participated in KMB's "Greenest Cheer Contest", while Mrs. Dallas County emceed the event. YEL members participated in KMB-related events such as Trash Bash, Recycles Day, and Christmas in the Park where YEL assisted KMB in making and distributing recyclable ornaments and literature to over 14,000 people who attended the 3-night event.

To promote our programs in schools, KMB presents Lucky the Ladybug's School Presentations on litter prevention, waste reduction and recycling. Lucky is KMB's "First Lady of Litter Prevention in Mesquite." Students participate in an interactive 30 minute skit, receive an educational item, and have their photo taken with Lucky. On several occasions the MISD mascot, Recycle Michael, joined in song and dance with the students! KMB presented programs to 1900 students at 10 different local elementary schools. KMB also partners with MISD and HMI to provide field trips (500+ students) to the Lawrence Homestead Outdoor Classroom (LHOC). The LHOC is comprised of three phases: historical cabin, nature trail and an earthen amphitheater. Colorful and educational signage engages trail walkers in thoughtful comparisons of yesterday to today, as the full circle of life through recycling, building practices, and the wild, becomes increasingly apparent. Students also participate in hands-on environmental activities from the Nature Explore program. District-wide recycling initiatives were implemented through a cooperative partnership between MISD, COM, KMB and Republic-Allied (the city's commercial waste hauler). Through its *Clean-N-Green in MISD* Program, MISD has implemented one of the most successful recycling programs in the region.

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**Beautification and Community Improvement:** The COM beautification efforts include tree/flower plantings, native/adaptive landscaping, and landscape maintenance. A few examples are the Community Services Building which features a Water Wise/Native Landscape Garden; a High Profile Median Color Program (MCP) that plants over 25,000 annuals; an Urban Forestry Program (UFP) that provides trees planted at all new park site developments and routine tree replacements due to storm damage and disease; a Wildflower/Butterfly Trail that is comprised of native wildflowers that attract birds, butterflies and hummingbirds ; and an Integrated Pest Management System that limits the use of chemicals and/or utilizes low toxicity chemicals if needed for maintenance. The LHOC incorporates both native and historical-era plants in order to maintain the look and feel of the time period. KMB/COM have worked very hard to improve the appearance of the city to provide a positive impact on Mesquite's economic development and prosperity. Mesquite's UFP has allowed the COM to plant over 27,000 trees while the MCP gives citizens a splash of color. The Wildflower/Butterfly Trail, Water Wise Garden and Outdoor classroom are all used for educational purposes for the general public and MISD. The LHOC brought the entire community together, instilling a deep sense of pride and achievement. Additionally, the COM continued to focus on beautification in conjunction with Project Renewal. KMB/COM held an Arbor Day observance ceremony at the new LHOC. Over 80 people attended the dedication of the Certified Nature Explore Classroom and the planting of 10 Eastern Red Cedars. During the community wide "Addressing Mesquite Day", 700 volunteers (28 organizations) worked 2,800 hours to repair and beautify 70 homes. Each project promotes a sense of community pride, reinvests in target areas of the city and provides a clean and beautified image to boost economic development. Furthermore, the COM maintains all TxDot Highway systems (over 5 major highway systems) within the city limits and is responsible for mowing and performing maintenance activities on state right-of-ways to improve the overall look of our city as citizens and travelers pass through our area.

**Litter Prevention and Cleanup:** KMB leads Mesquite's efforts in litter prevention. Board members annually participate in the KAB Community Appearance Index (1.93 ranking, 1.36 optional indices). Based on these index results, key areas are targeted for Trash Bash. KMB addresses litter prevention/cleanup through our school programs, education brochures, website, public education kiosks, 2 Trash Bash events and KMB's newest Sign Program which places 50 anti-littering signs throughout the COM. COM addresses pedestrian, residential, and motor vehicle waste through education efforts in MISD schools. Uncovered trucks, constructions sites, motor

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vehicles and loading docks are handled through the COM's Code Enforcement Dept while improperly handled residential waste and commercial waste containers are handled through the Solid Waste/Recycling Department.

KMB's bi-annual Trash Bash events, in conjunction with the GAC and DMWT Trash Off, targeted 25 key areas within the city, had a total of 856 volunteers, and removed 7,500 pounds of trash! KMB's fall Trash Bash was selected as an official SLANT 45 Program (a North Texas Superbowl Volunteer Initiative). In 2010 KMB also completed a third Waterway cleanup. The event, held in conjunction with the September Trash Bash, cleaned a ½ mile of Mesquite Creek. KMB was also a recipient of the KAB Nestle Pure Life grant!

**Solid Waste Management:** KMB partnered with the COM SWD through several community-wide events. The bi-annual Mesquite Recycles Day (MRD) event is publicized with 39 well-placed median signs throughout the city in addition to public service announcements from MISD's radio station, KEOM. The theme, *Going Green, Giving Back*, allows KMB to partner with local charities that benefit from donations of reusable items. MRD collected 13+ tons of paper and 40,000 lbs of e-waste from 1150 vehicles. KMB provided reusable shopping bags with coupons from local "green" businesses and flyers on proper disposal of HHW, solid waste and recycling. The SWD provides weekly garbage, large brush and junk, yard waste, white goods, and curb side recycling collection for 37,500 homes. The COM operates a compost facility and convenience center to its residents which offers a drop off location for trash disposal, recycling, white goods/scrap metals, cardboard, refrigerators, automotive batteries, tires and e-waste at no charge. Because Mesquite is committed to developing sustainability practices that support environmental stewardship, waste reduction, recycling, and conservation, the COM maintains one of the most successful yard waste and composting facilities in Texas. Also, the compost facility works with landscape companies providing them with a place to dump their organic waste (diverting it from landfills). All yard waste is processed into mulch or compost (provided free of charge to residents). This past year the SWD converted 30,000 tons of yard waste and collected over 2200 tons of recyclable material.

To promote Texas Recycles Week, the SWD provided MISD students free blue bags. 25+ schools participated and KMB performed 10+ presentations on recycling/waste diversion to MISD schools (2.5+ tons of recycling was collected). MISD held an Earth Day Contest to collect plastic grocery bags for recycling. MISD partnered with the COM, Tom Thumb, and TREX (a company which recycles plastic bags into a decking product) and collected 3,000+ pounds of plastic bags (enough to fill 2 18-wheelers). The SWD partners with the city's

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commercial waste hauler, Republic Services (RS), which provides commercial trash pickup/recycling to local businesses. RS provides recycling at no charge to any business in the COM and has been a valuable partner to MISD in implementing one of the finest school recycling programs in Texas. Another very successful partnership occurred during the COM's annual Real Texas Festival (RTF). SWD placed recycling containers throughout the event, distributed flyers, and made public service announcements during the concert venues during this 2-day event which drew 20,000+ visitors from the North Texas. The RTF was proclaimed a litter-free event.

**Litter Law & Illegal Dumping Enforcement:** The COM, City Council and KMB continued their efforts to educate law enforcement and enforce litter laws and illegal dumping regulations. The Environmental Code Division (ECD) removed 11,560 illegal signs from public rights of ways and 120 cases of graffiti. The ECD also handled 4,343 trash and junk cases, 1354 junk and inoperable vehicle cases (down 1.09%), 714 parking-in-the-yard violations (down by .84%), 7,014 cases of high weeds, 1,644 dilapidated fence cases and 33 illegal dumping violations. The ECD works with the COM's Volunteer Department to help elderly, disabled and low-income residents with code violations. The ECD attends Neighborhood Watch meetings to explain code violations and why they are harmful to our community and the environment. In addition, environmental impact articles about noncompliance are circulated to over 36,000 homes through the City's Newsletter, the *Mainstream*.

**Conclusion:** With a vision to create a more livable, sustainable community, KMB and the Police Department are making Mesquite a **better place to live** through the launch of the *Safe, Clean and Secure Neighborhood Watch Program* which allows Neighborhood Watch groups to purchase community signs promoting safety and environmentalism. The program evolved from the famous Broken Window Theory and empowers residents to take charge and better their neighborhood. Public, private and nonprofit partnerships are a prime example why Mesquite is a **better place to work**. Becoming a "greener community" is a central goal that all entities agree on and support. In addition to the outstanding park and athletic facilities in Mesquite, new programs such as the Nature Explore certified, LHOC, make Mesquite a **better place to play**, literally! The LHOC is the first certified Nature Explore Classroom located in Mesquite; first KTB Affiliate to be certified in Texas and the first to be constructed at a historical park in the US. Through the hard work, dedication, and financial contributions from the entire community – Mesquite children now have a place to play outdoors in an interactive learning environment where they can learn to love nature and understand the importance of preserving it.