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## **Seven Communities Earn Top Marks From U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Smart Growth Efforts**

*National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement recognize excellence in local planning, neighborhood investment*

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WASHINGTON — Seven communities across the country earned National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement today from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), achieving high marks for their efforts to invest in existing communities and to build prosperous, sustainable neighborhoods near jobs, shops and schools.

“The Smart Growth Achievement awards honor towns and cities making the kinds of investments that will pay long-term dividends for economic growth and their residents’ quality of life,” says Smart Growth America President and CEO Geoffrey Anderson. “In big cities and small towns alike, these places are transforming neighborhoods into vibrant, thriving places to raise a family. And in rural areas, we are seeing a tremendous energy to protect productive farmlands and to drive local economies forward amid population and demographic changes.”

“Smart growth strategies impact economies, the environment, transportation choices and housing markets, but most of all they affect people,” Anderson says. “The winners are creating better places for each and every one of their residents. We congratulate them on their important work, and thank the EPA for this opportunity to acknowledge their important achievements.”

The 2012 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement recognized communities in four categories, and will be presented at an awards ceremony on December 5, 2012 in Washington, DC. This year’s awards include four winners and three honorable mentions, selected from a pool of 47 applicants from 25 states.

The winning entries were chosen based on their effectiveness in creating sustainable communities; fostering equitable development among public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; and serving as national models for environmentally and economically sustainable development. The award categories and winners are:

### **Overall Excellence—Winner**

*BLVD Transformation Project, Lancaster, Calif.*

The redesign of Lancaster Boulevard helped transform downtown Lancaster into a thriving residential and commercial district through investments in new streetscape design, public facilities, affordable homes, and local businesses. Completed after just eight months of construction, the project demonstrates how redesigning a corridor guided by a strategic vision can spark new life in

a community. The project has generated almost \$300 million in economic output and nearly 2,000 jobs.

### **Equitable Development—Winner**

*Mariposa District, Denver, Colo.*

The redevelopment of Denver's historic and ethnically diverse La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood is turning an economically challenged area into a vibrant, transit-accessible, district. The community's master plan preserves affordable housing while adding energy-efficient middle-income and market-rate homes. Thanks to extensive community engagement, development includes measures to improve the health of residents, reduce pollution, and control stormwater runoff.

### **Main Street and Corridor Revitalization—Winner**

*The Cooperative Building, Brattleboro, Vt.*

As the only downtown food store, the Brattleboro Food Co-op was faced with the difficult decision of moving to less expensive space outside of town or creating a new building on site that was big enough to accommodate the store's expansion. The Co-Op made a strong commitment to stay at its downtown location. The result is an innovative four-story green building on Main Street with a grocery store, commercial space, offices, and affordable apartments. In addition to offering classes on nutrition, the Co-Op puts healthy food, new jobs, and housing within walkable distances of downtown and public transit.

### **Programs and Policies—Winner**

*Destination Portsmouth, Portsmouth, Va.*

After completing a revision of its comprehensive plan, the city of Portsmouth undertook a broad review of its development and land use regulations. The result was Destination Portsmouth, a package of new plans, zoning ordinances, and other development policies developed in collaboration with community stakeholders. The overhaul of the city's codes encourages development in targeted growth areas, encourages businesses to locate in the city, and protects the character of Portsmouth's historic neighborhoods.

### **Equitable Development – Honorable Mention**

*Northwest Gardens, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.*

Through safer streets, job training and education programs, and high-quality, affordable homes, the once struggling Northwest Gardens neighborhood is rapidly becoming a model for economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The redesigned neighborhood offers a range of energy-efficient, affordable housing choices and is one of the first communities in the nation to receive LEED for Neighborhood Development certification. A local housing authority program also provides disadvantaged youths with construction training as they complete their GEDs.

## **Main Streets and Corridor Revitalization – Honorable Mention**

*Larkin District, Buffalo, N.Y.*

Community organizations and a local developer partnered with the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning to help revitalize the Larkin District, an old manufacturing district located one mile from downtown Buffalo. Architectural students worked with the developer and the city to create a master plan for an urban village that now features new office space, restaurants, apartments, parks, and plazas. New sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, bicycle lanes, and bus shelters reduce pollution from vehicles by making walking, biking, and public transit more appealing.

## **Programs and Policies – Honorable Mention**

*Bay Area Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund, San Francisco, Calif.*

Lower-income residents often find it hard to afford homes in the Bay Area near public transportation; many are pushed outside city limits, away from jobs and public transit. In response, the Bay Area Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund is providing loans for developers to build affordable homes near public transportation. So far, the fund has provided loans for a 153-unit high-rise for low-income families located two blocks from a major transit station, and for a 64-unit building for seniors close to a light rail station that will provide free transit passes for all residents.

“Each award winner demonstrates a unique approach to smart growth,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “Government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and residents are working together in these communities to improve local economies and create jobs. These efforts increase housing, transportation, and healthy food choices and reduce pollution by improving options for walking and bicycling.”

## **Learn more about this year’s winners of the National Awards for Smart Growth**

**Achievement** visit the EPA’s Office of Sustainable Communities [hyperlink to 2012 winners page].

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**The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** created the National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2002 to recognize exceptional approaches to development that protect the environment, encourage economic vitality, and enhance quality of life. In the past 11 years, 54 winners from 26 states have shown a variety of approaches that states, regions, cities, suburbs, and rural communities can use to create economically strong, environmentally responsible development. EPA’s Office of Sustainable Communities manages the awards program.

**Smart Growth America** is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks to ensuring more homes are built near public transportation or that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth helps make sure people across the nation can live in great neighborhoods. For additional information visit [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org).