

EPA National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement

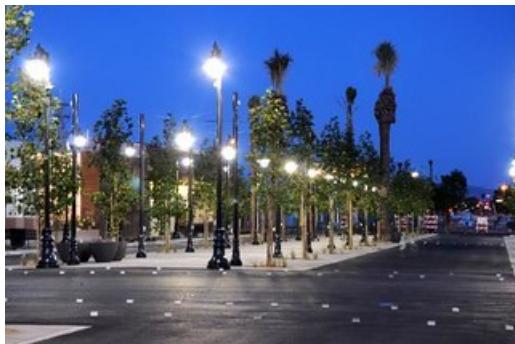
2012-11-30

by Kaid Benfield



The US Environmental Protection Agency announced seven winners of its 2012 National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement. As I have [noted in the past](#), the smart growth awards are given for creative, outstanding initiatives that protect the health and the environment of our communities while also strengthening local economies. One of this year's winners is a personal favorite, [Denver's Mariposa \(South Lincoln\) revitalization](#).

The 2012 award winners are being recognized in four categories, below:

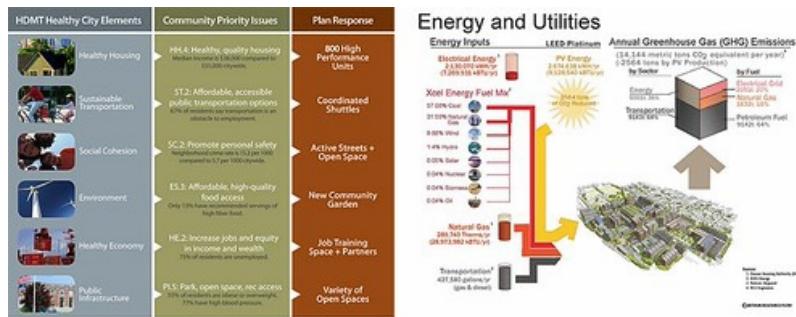


Overall Excellence

BLVD Transformation Project, Lancaster, California

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 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

Mariposa District, Denver, Colorado

It's hard for me to overstate how much I love this project. In particular, the redevelopment of Denver's historic and ethnically diverse South Lincoln neighborhood is turning an economically challenged area into a lively and transit-accessible community enthusiastically supported by current residents. The community's master plan preserves affordable housing while adding energy-efficient middle-income and market-rate homes. Influenced by extensive community engagement, the newly named Mariposa development will include actions to improve the health of residents, reduce pollution, and control stormwater runoff.



Main Street or Corridor Revitalization

The Cooperative Building, Brattleboro, Vermont

The Brattleboro Food Co-op, the town's only downtown food store, made a commitment to remain at its downtown location by constructing an innovative, four-story green building on Main Street that will include a grocery store, commercial space, offices, and affordable apartments. The Main Street location provides healthy food, new jobs, and housing within walkable distances of downtown businesses and public transit.



Programs and Policies

Destination Portsmouth, Portsmouth, Virginia

The city of Portsmouth revised its comprehensive plan and undertook a broad review of its development and land use regulations. As a result, the initiative *Destination Portsmouth* prepared a package of new plans, zoning ordinances, and other development policies in collaboration with community stakeholders. The overhaul of the city's codes encourages development in targeted growth areas and helps businesses to locate in the city while also protecting the character of Portsmouth's historic neighborhoods.



Equitable Development - Honorable Mention

Northwest Gardens, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

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. Certified by LEED for Neighborhood Development, the redesigned neighborhood offers a range of energy-efficient, affordable housing choices, while a related program provides disadvantaged youths with construction training as they complete their GEDs.



Main Street or Corridor Revitalization - Honorable Mention

Larkin District, Buffalo, New York

Community organizations and a local developer partnered with the University of Buffalo School of Architecture

and Planning to help revitalize the Larkin District, an old manufacturing site 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 other transportation choices more appealing.



Programs and Policies - Honorable Mention

Bay Area Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund, San Francisco, California

The Bay Area Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing Fund is providing loans for developers to build affordable homes near public transportation. At this point, the fund has provided loans for a 153-unit building 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.

I am a longtime fan of EPA's work on these issues and of this awards program. [A press release](#) issued by the agency says that this year's winners and honorable mentions were selected from 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.

In the past 11 years, 54 honorees 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.

EPA will host a ceremony on December 5th to recognize the seven honorees.

Kaid Benfield is a cofounder of the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system; cofounder of the Smart Growth America coalition; author of [Once There Were Greenfields](#), [Solving Sprawl](#), [Smart Growth In a Changing World](#), and [Green Community](#); and was voted one of the "top urban thinkers" in a 2009 poll at [Planetizen](#).

This guest post is a reprint of "[EPA Honors Seven Outstanding Community Sustainability Projects](#)" by Kaid Benfield, copyright ©2012. The article originally appeared in [Switchboard](#), the staff blog of the [National Resources Defense Council](#), and is published here with permission of the author.