

SACOG HONORS REGION'S BEST AT AWARDS CEREMONY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2008

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SACRAMENTO – The Sacramento Area Council of Governments today honored outstanding regional efforts in transportation, smart growth planning and air quality as part of the 2008 *SACOG Salutes!* Regional Awards Program. The high-profile awards were presented to individuals and organizations whose achievements and innovations made a significant difference in the Sacramento region in 2008. This is the 10th year SACOG has recognized outstanding work by organizations, businesses and individuals through this program.

Blueprint Excellence: Capital Village, City of Rancho Cordova
for innovative planning and implementation of a smart growth community based on community input and values

Bill Hughes Elected Official of the Year: Senate President pro Tempore Darrell Steinberg
for working collaboratively with local governments and stakeholders throughout the region

Citizens of the Year: Ted Link-Oberstar and Terry Preston
for building safer routes to schools in the South Natomas community

Employee of the Year: Janet Ruggiero, City of Citrus Heights
for exemplary leadership in planning, community development and public involvement

Project of the Year: Fix I-5, Caltrans District 3
for innovative project delivery and public outreach

Agency of the Year: Urban Land Institute Sacramento
for exemplary professional practice, education and engagement on regional land use, transportation and air quality issues

Business of the Year: LJ Urban
for commitment to livable communities and sustainable growth in the region

Special Recognition: Tower Bridge Pedestrian & Bike Improvements, cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento
for exemplary government collaboration and improving multimodal access

SACOG instituted the annual awards program in 1999 to honor outstanding regional work by organizations, businesses and individuals. Detailed background on each recipient follows. Photos of recipients are available upon request. For further information on the awards, categories and past recipients, please visit: <http://www.sacog.org/about/categories.cfm> or contact Erik Johnson at 916-321-9000.

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Citizens of the Year

Ted Link-Oberstar and Terry Preston

In 2002, Terry Preston and Ted Link-Oberstar co-founded Traffic Tamers at Bannon Creek Elementary School in South Natomas to promote safe walking and bicycling to school. The group of parents worked to create safer walking and bicycling routes to Bannon Creek School. They initiated two inventive programs, Walk to School Wednesday and Walking School Bus for students.

The work of Link-Oberstar and Preston also resulted in a Safe Routes To School grant that funded pedestrian and bike infrastructure around three elementary schools and a full-time Safe Routes to School program manager at Natomas Unified School District. They have also helped develop, coordinate and support a Walk to School program across the district, working on intersection improvements across West El Camino Boulevard, which served as a barrier to walking to Bannon Creek school.

The work that Link-Oberstar and Preston have done as citizen volunteers at Bannon Creek has served as a model and inspiration for many programs around the region. Both often serve as informal resources and advisors to people and organizations looking to initiate Walk to School programs or write grants.

Link-Oberstar and Preston have served as examples of what concerned parents can do to make their children's lives healthier, more active and more fun, each day while walking to school.

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Bill Hughes Elected Official of the Year Senator Darrell Steinberg

Bill Hughes was the driving force in the expansion of the SACOG Board, bringing voices from all of the region's cities and counties to the table. He was a tremendous supporter of the Blueprint project and was chair of the SACOG Board at the time of his sudden passing in 2003. This category recognizes leadership excellence by an elected official who has made a significant contribution to transportation, air quality, or land use planning in the Sacramento region at the local, state, regional or federal level.

Senator Darrell Steinberg is the first California Senate President pro Tempore from the Sacramento region in 125 years. This tremendous accomplishment is a testament to his hard work and the important issues he is committed to.

In 2007, Steinberg authored Senate Bill 375 to address land use and greenhouse gas emissions. With this bill Steinberg is actively pursuing California's greenhouse gas reduction goals set out in 2006 with Assembly Bill 32, which set the goal of reducing California's greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020. This bill also establishes a sustainable, intelligent model for regional development. Specifically, it will utilize a better approach to housing planning in that each region's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) will align with the land use plan in the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Regional Transportation Plan. This bill also provides for CEQA reform to create incentive in the many different regions of California to place priority on transit projects. Continuous and progressive development plans are critical to the future of this region.

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Employee of the Year

Janet Ruggiero

Janet Ruggiero recently retired from the city of Citrus Heights, after 35.5 years of public service in the SACOG region. Janet has long been an advocate for smart sustainable growth in our region.

She has positively impacted many communities. Janet uniquely possesses the ability to provide practical solutions to challenging issues, a skill that allows her to meet the demands of both day-to-day events and long range planning issues. While working for the city of Woodland, Janet oversaw the development of the first General Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the newly incorporated city. She also worked for Yolo County as an Assistant Planner, Associate Planner and Deputy Director of Advance Planning.

She most recently worked on the city of Citrus Heights' MarketPlace Visioning project to develop a plan for a lively 24-hour destination where people shop, live, work, and can find culturally rich activities, entertainment and actively engaged neighbors on tree-lined walkways and plazas.

In addition to her work locally, her volunteer efforts have benefited groups statewide. Ruggiero developed a public relations program to promote importance of planning profession in the state. She also expanded and maintained a legislative advocacy program at the State Capitol to make planners a player in the development of planning legislation. Ruggiero expanded the professional development program to include more continuing education opportunities statewide at a reasonable cost. She has devoted countless hours to other organizations dedicated to advocating the interests of planning and helping to educate local officials about good planning including recent work for Senate Bill 375.

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Project of the Year

Fix I-5

The Fix I-5 project was initiated because substantial rehabilitation was required to repair drainage systems and replace pavement for a three-quarter mile section of Interstate 5, the “Boat Section”, in downtown Sacramento. The Boat Section is a major artery through the Sacramento area, carrying more than 190,000 vehicles each day. Caltrans faced a challenging dilemma in making repairs to the I-5 Boat Section through downtown Sacramento. Significant work was needed including full-lane closures and projected high-peak traffic interference. The success of this project hinged on a minimum interference into the central business district, a comprehensive public outreach campaign, and collaborative partnerships.

Caltrans and a host of key stakeholders worked together to ensure thousands of local commuters were able to plan their way around a vital project in one of the region’s major employment centers. Before work could begin, Caltrans partnered with the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento to fund and prepare traffic management plans. With full messaging and travel plans in place throughout the region, Caltrans was also able to work with the contractor to adjust the original construction timeline to reduce peak traffic interference from 305 days to just 35 days.

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Blueprint Excellence Capital Village

The Capital Village project progressed from a Blueprint-friendly plan to a completed project that will serve as a model for other infill development in the region. The success of Capital Village results in part from the unique design process undertaken by the project developer, Beazer Homes, and the city of Rancho Cordova.

Through design to construction, the process included strong coordination between the developer, the city staff and city council, and the residents of Rancho Cordova. The result is a project that meets the developer's needs for a financially viable project and the city's desire for a quality community.

Capital Village implements the city's vision of a vibrant place where people can live, work, and play. The city has embraced the concepts of the regional Blueprint, incorporating the Blueprint principals into its General Plan and within project level designs. While the higher density development envisioned under the Blueprint has regional benefits, it is critical to the city of Rancho Cordova that residents receive benefits if they are to forego the large lot single family homes of conventional subdivisions. In lieu of large, private yards, Capital Village provides high quality design features, urban oriented parks and easy access to retail and entertainment. The Capital Village project is a strong example of how communities that are still relatively suburban in character can move toward a denser and more urban form. By placing housing, recreation and commercial opportunities in close proximity to existing employment districts, Capital Village creates a functionally cohesive community.

For implementing innovative planning and implementation of a smart growth community based on community input and values, the SACOG *Salutes!* for Blueprint Excellence was presented to the city of Rancho Cordova.

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Organization of the Year:

Urban Land Institute Sacramento

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) provides a forum for valuable education programs related to best practices in development and public policy initiatives that affect the development community. Each year, more than 2,000 elected officials; staff from local, state and federal government agencies; members of the development, architectural design, engineering and construction industry; non-profit agencies; and private citizens attend a wide variety of ULI programs.

The programs convened by ULI result in substantive dialogue on a wide range of topics, including affordable housing and housing options, economic development, smart growth principles, transportation and transit-oriented development, sustainability, regional planning, civic amenities, urban and suburban redevelopment, infill and greenfield development, and detailed analysis of the impact of legislation pertaining to the real estate and development industry.

ULI Sacramento boasts 550 members, coming from both public and private entities, and has grown an average of 20 percent for the past eight years. Members represent the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines. They are developers, city and county public officials, builders, property owners, investors, architects, planners, consultants, brokers, attorneys, and others from a variety of fields.

One of the most exciting aspects of ULI Sacramento is that nearly 33 percent of its members belong to the Young Leaders Group, those under 35 years of age. This is the fastest growing segment of the membership. This group provides networking opportunities, and has a mentorship program called Young Leader Forums with the Sacramento region's established professionals in the real estate industry. The Young Leaders attend a series of professional development programs throughout the year to stay ahead of the top industry topics.

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Special Recognition

Cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento, Tower Bridge Bike & Pedestrian Improvements

The historic and prominent Tower Bridge has framed the gateway to Sacramento since 1935. However, the sidewalks were narrow and did not accommodate large crowds or people with disabilities. The historic bridge serves as a critical access point into both downtown Sacramento and to the bustling businesses and entertainment venues; and West Sacramento with access to Raley Field for baseball games, summer concerts and special events.

Although the bridge is owned by Caltrans, the cities recognized that taking responsibility for widening the sidewalks was necessary for future riverfront development. Prior to and throughout the project, a public outreach campaign kept stakeholders such as Old Sacramento businesses, public transit operators, transportation management associations and commuters informed of traffic impacts and the necessary bridge closure.

The Tower Bridge Pedestrian and Bikeway Improvements Project widened the sidewalks from three feet to nearly 10 feet to allow pedestrians and bicycles easier access to Sacramento's waterfront. The improved pedestrian access provides enhanced connectivity and safety for recreation along the waterfront in Old Sacramento and River Walk Park. The new and improved bridge also serves as the backdrop for the exciting riverfront development of tomorrow.

For exemplary government collaboration and improving multimodal access, the SACOG *Salutes!* Special Recognition Award is presented to the cities of Sacramento and West Sacramento.

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Business of the Year

LJ Urban

LJ Urban represents a new breed of developer, focused on a commitment to livable communities and sustainable growth in the region. They are working to change the way people look at urban growth. They envision places to live that give back to the community in energy, design, and vibrancy. LJ Urban builds projects for sustainable living. Through smarter use of resources and alternative technologies, they are able to bring greater comfort to projects while reducing the environmental impact.

Their current projects include 35 individual LEED Neighborhood Design certified homes in West Sacramento's Washington district called "Good". The project is in pre-sales on Phase II, selling homes ranging from approximately 1100 to 1800 square feet. Some of the innovative features of their homes include an air conditioning system that automatically uses natural ventilation when the outside temperature drops below the inside temperature, insulation made from almost 100 percent recycled content, and efficient framing that uses about 15 percent fewer materials.

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