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NH Planners Association Annual Awards

The New Hampshire Planners Association's executive committee solicited applications this spring for its annual awards – Professional and Citizen Planners, Plan, and Project of the Year. This year a record number of nominations were received, a true testament to the quality of planning work across New Hampshire. The winners were announced at the Annual Conference's Thursday lunch on June 4, 2009.

Citizen Planner of the Year

R. Mark Adams, Chair
Lempster Planning Board

R. Mark Adams has served for 31 years on the Lempster Planning Board and the most recent ten years of his tenure he has served as the Board's chair. Quoting Mark's nomination "It is safe to say that he has done more to advocate for and advance community planning in Lempster than any other person in the town's 240 year history." Mark has lead the community's efforts to develop a Capital Improvement Plan and Subdivision Regulations. His dedication to public participation led to an 85% response rate on the community MP survey. Notably, he has let the town through many recent "crises" including the development of an automotive race track and the Lempster Mountain wind energy facility. The Town's divided response to the wind towers led to a call for reactionary emergency zoning. Mark channeled this energy to develop a well-researched and conscientious Zoning Ordinance proposal over the last two years that the town is now considering.

Professional Planner of the Year

Michael Behrendt, Chief Planner
Rochester, NH

There is a saying (attributed to a variety of sources) that "Truth passes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Second it is violently opposed. Third it is accepted as being self evident." Michael has had the fortitude and courage to consistently promulgate the "truths" of Planning and has been a fervent advocate of "New Urbanism" and to "Traditional Neighborhood Development." He has been able to effectively engage the development community and achieve positive results on the City's behalf. One developer, that had the opportunity to meet with Michael, stated "[he] was unlike any...he engaged me in a meaningful conversation

on how to arrive at my vision of land design and to merge it with the City of Rochester's vision of quality design...I left my initial meeting with the realization that this city planner truly cared about quality and that any development of my parcel must reflect this.” Michael’s dedication to planning in New Hampshire does not end at his tireless devotion to the City. He has published numerous articles in Town and City, The Granite State Planner, Rochester Times, and for the Congress for New Urbanism.

Project of the Year

10% Challenge

City of Keene, NH

The City of Keene’s 10% Challenge project one of many items identified in the City's 2004 Climate Change Action Plan, part of the City’s Master Plan, that was also supported by 2008 community vision and 2007 Climate Change Adaptation Plan. The project encourages local small businesses to reduce their energy use and green house gas emissions by 10 percent. Businesses register on the community volunteer created website and utilize a calculator developed in partnership with ICLEI. Beyond using the website for calculating energy use and emissions, the site serves as a portal to more information on energy efficiency and other programs of interest. The only funding received and utilized to create this program was a \$1,000 donation received from two local business that were provided to create a brochure and window decal that participating business can display. At the time of nomination the City had 15 businesses signed up and some have already realized greater than 10 percent reductions.

Plan of the Year

Moving Forward Together: Keene Community Vision 2008

City of Keene, NH

The Keene City Council and Planning Board began its comprehensive Master Plan update through a community-wide visioning process devised by the people that know Keene best – its citizens. The result was a community-owned, city-supported initiative, with extensive community participation. A diverse group of over 100 participants engaged in the planning process gathered in a series of 16 small group discussions, called “Visioning Conversations,” comprised generally of eight to ten people and based upon the study circles method. Ultimately the process engaged over 1,200 members of the greater Keene community (about 5% of the population) and generated nearly 1,000 pages of notes and information, indicating common ideas, themes, and concepts shared by participants, were reviewed and summarized in the creation of the vision. The draft vision underwent extensive public review by both the steering committee and the general public, several open houses and public hearings were scheduled, and people were able to directly submit comments through a variety of means. The development of the comprehensive master plan, based upon this vision, is currently underway.

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