



NATIONAL AWARD FOR  
**Smart Growth**  
ACHIEVEMENT

**2013**



## A Message from...

# EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy

Gina McCarthy  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



As the 13<sup>th</sup> Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), it is my pleasure to congratulate the 2013 winners of the National Award for Smart Growth Achievement. This year's winning projects show that smart growth approaches are having a visible impact on communities across the country—large and small, cities and suburbs, towns and rural places. They show that the choices communities make about how they develop can protect people's health and the environment while contributing to local economic growth. Most importantly, they show other communities that the path to a sustainable future is just around the corner.

One of my major commitments at EPA is to make a visible difference in America's communities. We want to support communities that are fostering healthy local economies and strong neighborhoods through strategies including using green infrastructure to manage stormwater, prioritizing cleanup and redevelopment of hazardous brownfield sites, providing transportation choices that reduce air pollution, and considering the impacts of development decisions on all community members. I am proud to say that our 2013 winners have masterfully employed these techniques and more. They have developed and implemented creative, flexible, and sustainable smart growth solutions that will curb carbon pollution, protect public health, and safeguard the environment.

President Obama and I know that smart growth strategies are smart for the environment, smart for our economy, and smart for our communities. Please join me in once again congratulating the winners of the 2013 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement and the communities they represent.

# Winners

## Overall Excellence

**Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail and Historic Fourth Ward Park, Atlanta, Georgia:**

The redevelopment of a formerly contaminated rail corridor into a multi-use trail and connected park system is sparking economic development, community engagement, and new affordable housing options in 45 city neighborhoods.

## Corridor or Neighborhood Revitalization

**Historic Millwork District and Washington Neighborhood, Dubuque, Iowa:**

The conversion of a mostly vacant former mill district into a lively mixed-use neighborhood reconnected the area to downtown and the adjacent residential neighborhood.

## Policies, Programs, and Plans

**GO TO 2040, Metropolitan Chicago, Illinois:** This seven-county regional plan for growth and economic development engages a wide variety of partners and links local planning efforts to a broad regional vision through tools and technical assistance.

**Honorable Mention: Lower Eastside Action Plan, Detroit, Michigan:** This grassroots effort formed a plan for revitalization that engaged residents in creating a vision for a low-income, high-vacancy neighborhood and influenced citywide planning.

## Built Projects

**La Valentina, Sacramento, California:** An energy-efficient, mixed-income, mixed-use apartment building on a former brownfield site next to a light-rail station is transforming an industrial neighborhood and giving residents transportation options.

**Honorable Mention: Via Verde, The Bronx, New York:** This affordable, transit-oriented, highly energy-efficient building features design that emphasizes health and wellness for residents.

## Plazas, Parks, and Public Places

**Charles City Riverfront Park, Charles City, Iowa:** This multi-facility park built on a flood plain connects to downtown and adjacent low-income housing, brings economic benefits, and has become the recreational heart of the city.

## ABOUT THE AWARD

EPA created the National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2002 to recognize exceptional approaches to development that respect the environment, foster economic vitality, enhance quality of life, and provide new opportunities for disadvantaged communities. Over the past 12 years, EPA has received 886 applications from all 50 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico. This year, EPA received 77 applications from 31 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

The winning entries were selected based on their effectiveness in creating sustainable communities; showing innovative smart growth planning and implementation; establishing a robust public involvement process; generating partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; and serving as national models.

Award winners were selected by two separate panels. The first consisted of experts from the planning and design professions, nonprofits, academia, and federal agencies. The second was an internal EPA panel that provided additional comments. EPA's Associate Administrator of Policy made the final award determinations.

# How Smart Growth Protects the Environment

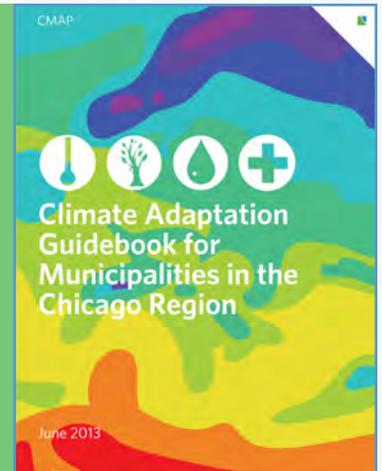
President Obama announced a national climate action plan in June 2013, ramping up and coordinating federal efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help communities prepare for climate change. Local and state governments, along with regional entities, have been working on climate change issues for many years, discovering innovative ways to reduce emissions and plan for climate impacts while also bringing other environmental, social, health, and economic benefits. Many places have found that smart growth strategies can help them both mitigate and adapt to climate change by providing transportation and housing options that use less energy, encouraging compact neighborhoods where daily needs are within easy reach, and using green infrastructure that mimics natural processes to capture, filter, and absorb stormwater runoff.

This year's National Award for Smart Growth Achievement winners illustrate some of the climate change mitigation and adaptation measures communities can implement that give multiple benefits for every dollar spent. The strategies these places are using—including creating parks that can absorb flood waters, using renewable energy and energy efficiency to reduce fossil fuel consumption, and providing a variety of transportation options—make neighborhoods more attractive, draw activity that spurs further economic development, and help keep housing affordable for all income levels by reducing energy and transportation costs. Just as importantly, these strategies can help communities better weather the changes already evident in our climate, as well as changes projected for the future.



The city of Atlanta designed Historic Fourth Ward Park with an innovative alternative to a conventional stormwater facility. A beautiful lake captures excess rainfall, reducing downstream flooding and saving the city \$15 million in infrastructure costs. It is also a valued neighborhood asset—a site for everything from festivals to weddings to simply strolling along the shore.

To help communities in the Chicago region prepare for the effects of climate change, which will include more heavy rain events, increased flooding, higher temperatures, and more heat waves, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning developed a climate change adaptation toolkit with specific strategies local governments can adopt. Approaches include identifying vulnerable populations that need special assistance during heat waves and encouraging green infrastructure to capture stormwater runoff.





After the Cedar River flooded to record levels in 2008, Charles City used land acquired through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) buyouts to build a riverfront park that gives the river room to expand during heavy rains, reducing the likelihood that homes and businesses will be flooded. The park put the buyout land to productive use while providing a community amenity at little additional cost to the city.



La Valentina takes advantage of Sacramento's sunny weather by installing solar panels on the roofs of its mixed-income townhomes. This photovoltaic system, combined with energy-efficiency features such as double-glazed windows and ENERGY STAR appliances, drastically reduces monthly utility bills—particularly important for low-income residents. The development functions almost entirely on renewable energy, and its location next to a transit station further reduces its residents' greenhouse gas emissions.



Rather than building additional sewer lines under a neighborhood that had been increasingly affected by flooding over the past several decades, the city of Dubuque restored the natural flow of Bee Branch Creek above ground, reducing the risk of flood damage to 1,155 properties and creating a 4,500-foot linear neighborhood park.

## SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

- Mix land uses.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

# ATLANTA BELTLINE, INC.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

## Partners:

Atlanta BeltLine Partnership  
Capital Campaign  
Atlanta City Council  
Atlanta Department of Parks  
and Recreation  
Atlanta Department of  
Watershed Management  
BB&T  
Georgia Power  
Historic Fourth Ward Park  
Conservancy  
PATH Foundation  
Trust for Public Land  
Wells Fargo

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## Overall Excellence

### *Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail and Historic Fourth Ward Park*

The Atlanta BeltLine is comprised of four individual “belt lines” that were built as railroad bypass routes around downtown Atlanta in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The city’s original industrial area flanked the railroad tracks, but when the rail lines shut down, the belt line areas became blighted, contaminated, and desolate. This 22-mile loop of mostly abandoned rail corridors is being redeveloped into a network of modern streetcar and light-rail transit, multi-use trails, 1,300 acres of green space, thousands of affordable homes, and billions of dollars worth of new economic development.

Beginning in 2008, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. led a collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies, along with community members, businesses, neighborhood groups, foundations, and nonprofits, to redevelop an underused and contaminated area around the blighted belt lines. Local residents of the 45 neighborhoods that make up the BeltLine helped map out exactly how they wanted this land to be used through an interactive design process. Parts of the Atlanta BeltLine corridor have already gone from being eyesores to becoming great assets for the city, connecting neighborhoods, commercial areas, and people.

The 2.25-mile Eastside Trail is the first section of the Atlanta BeltLine trail system to be redeveloped within the old rail corridor. The trail connects five formerly divided neighborhoods by providing 30 acres of landscaped greenway, a highly used pedestrian

and bicycle trail, and an arboretum with nearly 700 newly planted trees and native grasses. It also links to other citywide multi-use paths, making it easier for people to get to jobs, schools, and shopping.

The Eastside Trail also connects to Historic Fourth Ward Park, a former brownfield that has been cleaned up and is now a 17-acre park planted with beautiful native plants. The park had formerly been a drainage basin for sewer overflow and industrial waste, requiring not just cleanup but a forward-thinking strategy on how to prevent future flooding. Developers created a stormwater capture basin that doubles as a stunning 2-acre lake. This feature is not only attractive, it also handles runoff from more than 300 acres. The park’s energy costs are 45 percent lower than other local parks thanks to LED lighting and photovoltaic solar panels.



The Atlanta BeltLine connects neighborhoods throughout the city by providing bikeable, walkable pathways, shared public spaces, and new access to local businesses.



Historic Fourth Ward Park and the Atlanta BeltLine have helped to spark over \$775 million in private development, including the mixed-use redevelopment of the long-abandoned Sears Warehouse Building.



Some water features at Historic Fourth Ward Park help filter stormwater and prevent flooding, while others create a fun recreation area for children.

Both the park and the trail suffered from high levels of contamination that needed to be cleaned up before development could begin. Project developers removed 1,700 tons of contaminated soil from the trail and remediated more than 15 contaminated acres in the park.

The Eastside Trail and Historic Fourth Ward Park have catalyzed tremendous economic growth along the corridor. The trail and park, which represent a \$63 million investment, have spurred more than \$775 million in private development, including more than 1,000 new mixed-income condominiums and apartments currently under construction. The 1.1 million square foot Ponce City Market, the redevelopment of Sears Roebuck's former regional headquarters and Atlanta's largest adaptive reuse project, will bring retail,

restaurants, office space, and residences. Situated between the Eastside Trail and Historic Fourth Ward Park, Ponce City Market will further expand the economic impact of the BeltLine.

The Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail and Historic Fourth Ward Park's most outstanding achievement has been to connect people. Neighborhoods that were separated for decades are now accessible through the multi-use trail that provides both recreation and transportation routes. What were once a deserted industrial landscape and an unused, overgrown, and debris-filled rail corridor are now thriving, active neighborhood assets where neighbors come together to socialize, exercise, shop, commute, and enjoy great new public places.

***“We moved our business from northwest Atlanta to a new location right next to the Atlanta BeltLine Eastside Trail. Within a matter of months, our business was up more than 100 percent. The customer traffic we get coming off the BeltLine is huge, and most of the folks coming in are pedestrians.”***

— Matt Hinton  
Owner, Bell St. Burritos

# CITY OF DUBUQUE

DUBUQUE, IOWA

## Partners:

Community Foundation of Greater  
Dubuque  
Dubuque Area Chamber of  
Commerce  
Dubuque Main Street  
East Central Intergovernmental  
Association  
HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for  
Sustainable Communities  
Four Mounds HEART Program  
Greater Dubuque Development  
Corporation  
Gronen Restoration  
Iowa Economic Development  
Authority  
Iowa Finance Authority  
National Endowment for the Arts  
National Trust for Historic  
Preservation  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Economic Development  
Administration  
Washington Neighborhood  
Development Corporation

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# Corridor or Neighborhood Revitalization

## *Historic Millwork District and Washington Neighborhood*

Once a bustling center of regional economic activity, Dubuque, Iowa's Millwork District sat vacant for decades after it fell victim to the economic shifts that touched much of the Midwest in the mid-1900s. The adjacent Washington Neighborhood was affected by the Millwork District's decline, facing disinvestment and neglect when the mills began to shutter their doors and residents moved away from downtown. Today, thanks to strong community partnerships, public engagement, and an overarching citywide commitment to sustainability, Dubuque is successfully restoring both the Millwork District and Washington Neighborhood to the vibrant neighborhoods they once were.

In 2006, Mayor Roy D. Buol and the Dubuque City Council identified sustainability as their top community priority, prompting a citizen task force to create a new sustainability initiative—Sustainable Dubuque. Reinvestment in Dubuque's historic Millwork District and neighboring Washington Neighborhood were key to the community's plan.

The Millwork District covers 11 city blocks, including more than 1 million square feet of formerly vacant warehouse space, and sits prominently between Dubuque's downtown core and the Mississippi River. Its redevelopment builds upon the city's sustainability vision and capitalizes on the district's existing assets to create a compact, walkable environment where over 1,000 new residents will inhabit the refurbished

warehouses. The rehabilitation of the anchor building—the old Caradco factory—is already complete. The building incorporates a variety of retail, commercial, social, art, and civic spaces, which has brought culture and vibrancy back to the area. This type of multi-use development is the model for the district's future growth. The district includes innovative green infrastructure and energy-efficiency technologies to improve environmental quality and public health for the neighborhood's residents and Dubuque as a whole.

The Millwork District's success directly affects the revitalization of another central Dubuque neighborhood. The adjacent 128-acre residential Washington Neighborhood, one of the city's oldest and most economically challenged areas, has used the progress made in the Millwork



The arts community has been a catalyst for redevelopment. A rehabilitated warehouse hosts rotating art exhibits, live performances, and other cultural events, bringing new energy to downtown.



The Millwork District contains affordable and market-rate apartments, retail space for small businesses, art studios, and many of Dubuque's nonprofits.



Original elements of the old mill buildings, such as open staircases, south-facing windows, and thick, insulating exterior walls, showcase the district's character while creating energy-efficient spaces.

District to catalyze its own redevelopment. No longer geographically cut off from downtown by vacant factories, Washington Neighborhood residents can now easily walk, bike, or ride the bus to Dubuque's central business area, including the retail and social services in the Caradco Building. As part of the citywide sustainability initiative, community groups in the Washington Neighborhood, many of which have office space in the Millwork District, have restored dozens of homes, providing downtown housing options. Other projects in the neighborhood, including community gardens, parks, and public art, have improved quality of life for residents. The community has also reduced the flood risk to over 1,100 flood-prone properties by "daylighting" Bee Branch Creek, uncovering and redirecting the creek so that it now flows above ground. By restoring the creek to its native path, the city avoided having to spend millions of dollars to build new storm sewers because the creek performed the same

function in a natural way. Daylighting the creek not only saves money but provides residents of nearby neighborhoods an attractive community park.

The goals of Sustainable Dubuque have come alive through these revitalized central neighborhoods. The converted Caradco Building and surrounding streetscape combine environmentally friendly technologies and complete streets with the reuse of existing assets—an inherently sustainable approach. A renewed feeling of community has emerged as a result of the Millwork District's focus on the arts through festivals, classes, and gallery space. The mixed-income apartments and single-family homes in both neighborhoods bring people from all socioeconomic backgrounds together downtown. By catalyzing redevelopment of these great places, Dubuque demonstrates that nothing is more sustainable than strengthening existing neighborhoods.

***"I have lived in this neighborhood since I was 8 years old. I have seen what it was, and I can honestly say that with the programs and projects in place, I have never seen the homes and neighborhood look so good."***

— Gary Carner  
Washington Neighborhood Resident

# CHICAGO METROPOLITAN AGENCY FOR PLANNING

METROPOLITAN  
CHICAGO,  
ILLINOIS

## Partners:

Active Transportation Alliance  
Center for Neighborhood  
Technology  
The Chicago Community Trust  
Chicago Wilderness  
Illinois Tollway  
Metropolitan Mayors Caucus  
Metropolitan Planning Council  
Metropolis Strategies  
Openlands  
HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for  
Sustainable Communities  
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# Policies, Programs, and Plans

## GO TO 2040

GO TO 2040 is a policy-based regional plan and metropolitan Chicago's first comprehensive plan since 1909. Developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), it aims to help the region's 284 municipalities and seven counties cope with common challenges and build a sustainable, prosperous future.

CMAP was created, in part, as a reaction to previously fragmented local and regional planning. The goal was to develop a single, wide-ranging, implementable, and comprehensive regional plan that would harmonize efforts among the many local governments in the area. The region's anticipated population growth of more than 2 million residents over the next three decades, along with increasingly limited federal and state resources, made this long-range planning effort particularly important and pressing.

Actively engaging regional partners and local stakeholders was integral to both development and implementation of the plan. Municipal leaders, nonprofit organizations, and private-sector and philanthropic stakeholders from across the region were involved in the three-year plan development process. Working with these organizations helped CMAP address a wide variety of topics beyond traditional planning and ensure buy-in from the business community. CMAP also solicited feedback from more than 35,000 residents during its "Invent the Future" public engagement campaign in summer 2009.

The resulting GO TO 2040 plan, adopted unanimously by leaders across the region in October 2010, is goal-oriented, practical, and comprehensive. GO TO 2040 aims to create a region where residents have more housing and transportation options, more jobs closer to their homes, more parks and open space, cleaner and healthier water and air, and a better quality of life. The plan focuses its 12 recommendation areas under four themes: livable communities, human capital, efficient governance, and regional mobility. Each area includes specific actions that the region's diverse communities could take.

GO TO 2040's implementation began immediately. The day after the plan was adopted, CMAP received a \$4.25 million grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities to launch a Local Technical Assistance Program. The program, supported by many partner organizations, encourages communities to think regionally in their local planning efforts by providing them the tools to implement GO TO 2040's vision. It focuses on lower-income communities that would not otherwise have planning resources. Since March 2011, more than 100 local projects have been



In the Fairmont Neighborhood, CMAP's Local Technical Assistance Program helped develop a neighborhood plan, which proposed new community gardens.



Tens of thousands of Chicago-area residents participated in the development of the GO TO 2040 plan through in-person community meetings and interactive online tools.



GO TO 2040 is divided into 12 primary recommendations, the first being achieving greater livability through land use and housing.

initiated under this program, with almost half already complete. Projects, many of which are multijurisdictional, address a variety of topics, including aging in place, green infrastructure, and redeveloping vacant land. In addition, CMAP's Local Ordinance and Toolkits Program supplies model language and guidance for communities to incorporate creative approaches to common issues such as transportation, arts, and local food planning.

CMAP has also led innovative policy work to help implement the plan's recommendations. The agency created a task force to analyze state and local tax policies' implications for land use and economic development decisions—for example, examining how certain tax classifications might impede redevelopment. CMAP also analyzed the region's freight and manufacturing clusters, identifying important strategic advantages and workforce, innovation, and infrastructure challenges.

The agency works with partners to align other investments in the region, including philanthropic grants, with GO TO 2040. CMAP is implementing performance-based funding for regional and state transportation projects to ensure limited resources are invested to maximize the region's mobility, quality of life, and economic vitality. CMAP also tracks implementation of GO TO 2040, working with the Chicago Community Trust to develop MetroPulse, which tracks regional indicators and creates community-specific data snapshots.

GO TO 2040 is key to metropolitan Chicago's future economic prosperity and quality of life. The plan helps the region's diverse communities, businesses, and civic organizations ensure they are working together toward a common vision.

***“Through CMAP’s Local Technical Assistance Program, we were able to develop sustainability indicators that will help us track implementation progress of our own plan, which aligns with many regional priorities set forth in GO TO 2040.”***

— Gary Cuneen  
Executive Director,  
Seven Generations Ahead

**Partners:**

California Pollution Control  
Financing Authority  
California Tax Credit Allocation  
Committee  
Domus Development  
Sacramento Municipal Utility  
District  
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# Built Projects

## *La Valentina*

Lying vacant for over 20 years, the area surrounding the Alkali Flat/La Valentina light-rail station in downtown Sacramento was known for crime, blight, and contamination. Former auto repair shops left the area polluted with dangerous amounts of arsenic, mercury, and lead, and development in the area had all but stopped. In 2007, a public-private partnership between the city of Sacramento and Domus Development brought together community groups to address neighborhood concerns and create a new vision for the area. From that vision came a 100 percent affordable, mixed-use complex of two buildings next to the light-rail stop using cutting-edge, energy-efficient features — La Valentina and La Valentina North.

When redevelopment planning began in the Alkali Flat Neighborhood, residents were initially skeptical. Years of crime and blight left many doubtful that any plans for revitalization would be successful, particularly investments in affordable housing. However, the city and Domus engaged residents in a series of community meetings, explaining the project's goals and potential. Eventually, it was residents' preference for a mixture of housing, commercial, and retail space that became the basis for La Valentina's design.

Planning and zoning posed significant challenges for La Valentina. Sacramento's zoning laws had not been updated in nearly 50 years, allowing very limited residential infill development. The developer worked with the city to obtain dozens of permits and variances to legalize the project. The city, in turn, took

what it learned from La Valentina and changed its zoning code to permit and encourage infill around the entire city.

Brownfield cleanup, energy efficiency, and environmental health were priorities for community residents and therefore key factors in the vision for La Valentina. The project site was a decades-old brownfield, and its contamination had to be fully cleaned up before any development could begin. Domus used green technology and design in construction, installing energy-efficient heating and cooling systems and appliances and open-air breezeways and staircases, to cut down on energy consumption in the buildings. Permeable paving and native, drought-tolerant vegetation reduced stormwater runoff. La Valentina North contains 18 highly energy-efficient townhomes, with almost all of the



La Valentina residents have easy access to light rail, which can take them to jobs and services downtown in less than 10 minutes.



Energy-efficient features integrated into the building, such as awnings that shade windows, lower costs and reduce energy consumption.



La Valentina's residents take advantage of many amenities like free after-school care, public gathering places, and a local farmers market—all on what used to be a polluted, empty lot.

energy required by residents and common areas generated by the rooftop solar panels. Proximity to transit, schools, parks, and a weekly farmers market let residents get around without having to drive, further reducing energy consumption, air pollution, and traffic congestion while saving people money and encouraging healthy living. Located near Sacramento's central business district, one-third of La Valentina's 170 residents walk, bike, or take transit for their daily commute—more than three times the national average.

La Valentina is truly changing the Alkali Flat Neighborhood. Crime is discouraged through an increased pedestrian presence, new businesses are opening, and residents

benefit from on-site social services like free after-school care and adult continuing education classes. Strategically placed windows and balconies put eyes on the street around the clock, preventing much of the criminal activity that had been prevalent in the area. Surrounding lots are already slated for redevelopment, heralding more economic vitality and bringing new amenities and residents to the neighborhood. With its focus on affordability, energy efficiency, transportation choices, and brownfields redevelopment, La Valentina is a model for sustainable growth in a neighborhood with more than its share of challenges.

***“It feels really good to be this close to downtown. Everything we need is right here, so it’s great. We don’t use our car anymore, because we don’t need to.”***

— Jenny Anderson  
Resident

# CITY OF CHARLES CITY

CHARLES CITY,  
IOWA

## Partners:

AHTS Architects  
Charles City Eagle Scouts  
Charles City Girl Scouts  
Charles City Parks and  
Recreation Board  
CharlesCity365.com  
Circle K Communications  
Floyd County  
Iowa Department of Natural  
Resources  
Iowa Great Places Program  
Iowa State University  
Department of Landscape  
Architecture  
Nelson Engineering  
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Recreation Engineering and  
Planning

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# Plazas, Parks, and Public Places

## Charles City Riverfront Park

After decades of fighting against the often-flooded Cedar River, Charles City transformed it into an asset. Using land acquired through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood buyouts, Charles City created a vibrant, inviting riverfront park with a whitewater course. Capitalizing on the river's natural features to help prevent future flooding, Charles City turned the river from an obstacle into an ecological and social benefit. Members of the community were involved in the design and construction of the park, creating a space for people to reconnect with the river. Riverfront Park is a model of how to strategically use flooded properties to create a sustainable, economically valuable amenity for the environment and the community.

The Cedar River runs through the heart of Charles City, crossing directly under historic Main Street and flowing past Charles City's downtown neighborhoods. Despite this central location, open green space on the river banks remained largely unused due to persistent flooding and lack of easy access for recreation. FEMA bought the land through its buyout program, which purchases flooded properties from owners and allows empty lots to become open public space. In 2006, the city's Parks and Recreation Board began a redevelopment plan to encourage use of the area and maintain a natural environment to mitigate flood risks and generate economic activity.

The board engaged the community in the planning process. Previous plans from students at Iowa State University were included as options for the riverfront redevelopment. One of the most popular ideas was proposed by

a local kayak and paddle enthusiast: create a multi-functional recreational space that would include the first whitewater course in the state of Iowa. Planning halted in 2008, however, when the Cedar River flooded to record levels, destroying homes along the river banks. Despite limited resources and competing financial interests, leaders in Charles City remained committed to the residents' vision for a multi-use park. By June 2010, with restored grant funding, the first phases of construction began. In the river itself, hydrologists minimized swimming safety hazards and flood risks by installing in-stream features that also improved the river's health for local fish species and provided safer access for fishing. New paths now connect the park to downtown and link to existing trails and major intersections, letting pedestrians walk directly to the park and other downtown amenities, such as a grocery



Community organizations, school groups, and volunteers helped build and design elements of Riverfront Park. Eagle Scouts built a retaining wall to help mitigate flooding.



The Charles City Whitewater Course attracts kayakers and tourists, helping people reconnect with the river and adding to the local economy.



Playground equipment was built using natural materials that protect the area from flooding while providing fun features for kids to explore.

store, post office, and city hall. Subsequent federal funds allowed the community to extend this path to a neighboring affordable housing complex, improving river access for residents.

Stormwater mitigation features, like the stormwater fountain and ravine play area, create landscape sculptures that slow water flow and trap sediment before it enters the watershed. The stormwater fountain uses existing curbs and drain pipes to slow stormwater flows and disperse water when it rains. The ravine play area increases the river's capacity for flooding by eliminating the steep bank while creating gently sloping riverfront access. The park has been so popular that the community organized a committee to continue developing the original master plan, adding a labyrinth and amphitheater in 2011. Eagle Scouts donated time and effort constructing retaining walls

and a disc-golf course, and volunteer groups are installing a rain garden and children's memorial.

Incremental investment in the park by the city and local stakeholders has resulted in renewed interest and new events along the river. Local business owners have felt the impact, with increases in pedestrian and bicycle traffic bringing new economic activity to downtown. People from all over the country have flocked to Charles City as a kayaking destination, and the new public spaces such as the natural play area, fountain, and picnic area have brought local residents back to the river. Charles City Riverfront Park has helped reap civic, economic, and ecological rewards while respecting the city's most underused amenity—the Cedar River.

***“The Riverfront Project in Charles City has been a great addition to our family’s quality of life. As a grandmother of six, it has been a blessing to know they have occupied themselves not only with the water features but also with the awesome fishing now available.”***

—Christine Guthart  
Resident

# DETROIT CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

DETROIT,  
MICHIGAN

## Partners:

Chandler Park Neighborhood  
Association  
Church of the Messiah  
Nonprofit Housing  
Corporation  
Community Development  
Advocates of Detroit  
Creekside Community  
Development Corporation  
Data Driven Detroit  
Detroit Catholic Pastoral  
Alliance  
Erb Family Foundation  
Fellowship Nonprofit Housing  
Corporation  
Genesis HOPE Community  
Development Corporation  
Jefferson East, Inc.  
Smith Group JJR  
University of Michigan  
The Villages Community  
Development Corporation  
Warren/Conner Development  
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# Policies, Programs, and Plans

## Lower Eastside Action Plan



The LEAP process helped the city of Detroit connect directly with residents to incorporate their ideas into the broader, citywide plan.

For decades, the residents of Detroit's Lower Eastside Neighborhood watched the homes, people, and businesses in their community gradually disappear. By 2010, the formerly vibrant neighborhood had the largest number of vacancies in the city. However, a group of local community development organizations knew residents just needed some direction and planning assistance to start making positive change. They created the Lower Eastside Action Plan (LEAP) and planning process designed to engage residents in making decisions on their neighborhood's future, stabilizing the thriving areas still left, and transforming vacant properties to improve quality of life.

LEAP started with the assumption that parts of the Lower Eastside might not repopulate, so for revitalization to occur, the community must salvage the few remaining vibrant areas and find a new purpose for vacant spaces. With support from community foundations and public-private partnerships, LEAP amassed a team of residents, business leaders, public-sector partners, and technical experts working pro bono to engage in a planning process. The first step was training residents to take surveys and map the area. Technical experts presented information monthly to a residents' Stakeholder Advisory Group, which helped analyze data, facilitate discussions, and develop new visions for the neighborhood. After months of discussions, the group created a Future Directions plan and took it back out to the community for input. LEAP project managers estimated that more than 7,000 residents participated, and many are now helping to implement the Future Directions projects.

As the LEAP plan was being developed, Detroit was undergoing a citywide planning process and incorporated LEAP's work into the city's master plan. Two other neighborhoods are using the LEAP model and creating similar plans, which the city will also incorporate. LEAP shows the value of deep resident engagement in local planning and how neighborhood planning can help improve a city.

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***"We in the community were welcomed as valued partners in the process. We came to the table with city administrators, urban planners, academics, and architects to create an exciting, workable plan that improves the quality of our lives."***

—Barb Martin  
Resident and Member of  
Crane Street Block Club

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# NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT

THE BRONX,  
NEW YORK

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## Built Projects Via Verde



Via Verde's rooftops serve residents by providing fresh produce in community gardens, places to socialize in public spaces, and energy through solar panels.

Via Verde, a LEED Gold, mixed-income, 222-unit housing development in the Bronx, sets a new standard for how design and energy efficiency can help improve residents' health and create a sense of community. The project, a partnership between the New York Department of Housing Preservation and Development and private and nonprofit developers, sits on a cleaned up former rail yard in a low-income neighborhood. Via Verde's location near subway and bus lines, plus innovative design and attention to residents' needs, can be a model for other developments.

Via Verde's features promote health and a strong sense of community among residents. The 151 low-income rental apartments and 71 owner-occupied townhomes are arranged around a central courtyard with an amphitheater and playground. The rooftop is built as a series of terraces with vegetable gardens, gathering areas, green spaces, and an exercise route around the entire complex. There is also a medical clinic on the ground floor that serves the entire neighborhood. Via Verde incorporates various strategies to use energy 30 percent more efficiently than standard buildings. Low-tech approaches include the building's terraced design, which provides maximum natural light and outdoor access, cross-ventilation to keep apartments cool with natural airflows, and natural lighting in stairwells and common areas. More technologically advanced elements include photovoltaic panels, high-efficiency mechanical systems, green roofs, and energy-conserving appliances. In addition, the buildings were constructed with green materials.

Via Verde's impact goes beyond its residents, or even its neighborhood. The city planning department used its permitting experience with Via Verde to create new green zoning rules, making it easier to use green design features throughout New York City. These zoning changes are expected to help the city meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals while saving residents and building owners citywide up to an anticipated \$800 million on energy bills each year.

***"The emphasis at Via Verde on healthy living and rooftop gardening has made it easier to maintain a healthy diet that has us both fitter and healthier than we've been in years."***

—Emmitt and Barbara Thrower  
Residents

# Past Winners

## ARIZONA

- City of Tempe—*Smart Growth and Green Building* (2009)

## CALIFORNIA

- City of Pasadena Planning and Development Department—*Policies and Regulations* (2005)
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments—*Community Outreach and Education* (2004)
- City and County of San Francisco—*Civic Places* (2010)
- San Francisco Housing Authority and Mercy Housing California—*Equitable Development* (2008)
- City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County—*Policies and Regulations* (2002)
- City of Santa Cruz Department of Housing and Community Development—*Policies and Regulations* (2004)
- Department of the Navy—SW Division (San Diego)—*Built Projects* (2003)
- City of Lancaster—*Overall Excellence* (2012)
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (Bay Area)—*Programs and Policies, Honorable Mention* (2012)

## COLORADO

- Town of Breckenridge Planning Department—*Built Projects* (2002)
- Denver Urban Renewal Authority—*Overall Excellence* (2005)
- City of Lakewood and Lakewood Reinvestment Authority—*Built Projects* (2005)
- Denver Housing Authority—*Equitable Development* (2012)

## CONNECTICUT

- Town of Redding—*Small Communities* (2005)

## FLORIDA

- City of Orlando—*Military Base Redevelopment* (2005)
- The Housing Authority of the City of Fort Lauderdale—*Equitable Development, Honorable Mention* (2012)

## GEORGIA

- Atlanta Regional Commission—*Policies and Regulations* (2008)
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs—Office of Quality Growth—*Community Outreach and Education* (2003)

## ILLINOIS

- Chicago Department of Planning and Development—*Equitable Development* (2006)
- Chicago Housing Authority—*Built Projects* (2009)
- Town of Normal—*Civic Places* (2011)

## KANSAS

- City of Wichita—*Built Projects* (2006)

## MAINE

- Gateway 1 Communities and Maine Department of Transportation—*Rural Smart Growth* (2010)

## MARYLAND

- Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development—*Smart Growth and Green Building* (2010)
- Silver Spring Regional Center—*Overall Excellence* (2008)

## MASSACHUSETTS

- Town of Barnstable—*Waterfront and Coastal Communities* (2007)

- Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development—*Overall Excellence* (2006)
- Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs—*Community Outreach and Education* (2002)
- Urban Edge Housing Corporation—*Built Projects* (2008)

## MINNESOTA

- Metropolitan Council (Minneapolis-St. Paul)—*Overall Excellence* (2003)

## MISSOURI

- City of St. Louis and the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group—*Overall Excellence* (2011)

## NEW MEXICO

- City of Albuquerque—*Smart Growth and Green Building* (2011)
- San Juan Pueblo Office of the Governor—*Small Communities* (2004)

## NEW YORK

- Borough of Manhattan—*Equitable Development* (2007)
- New York City Departments of Transportation, Health, Design and Construction, and City Planning—*Overall Excellence* (2010)
- University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning—*Main Street or Corridor Revitalization, Honorable Mention* (2012)

## NORTH CAROLINA

- Charlotte Department of Transportation—*Policies and Regulations* (2009)
- Town of Davidson Planning Department—*Overall Excellence* (2004)
- City of Greensboro Department of Housing and Community Development—*Built Projects* (2004)
- City of Raleigh and Wake County Public School System—*Public Schools* (2003)

## OHIO

- Cuyahoga County Treasurer's Office—*Policies and Regulations* (2003)

## OREGON

- Housing Authority of Portland—*Overall Excellence* (2007)
- Metro (Portland)—*Programs, Policies, and Regulations* (2010)

## PENNSYLVANIA

- Lancaster County Planning Commission—*Overall Excellence* (2009)
- Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development—*Policies and Regulations* (2006)

## SOUTH DAKOTA

- Miner County Development Corporation and the Rural Learning Center—*Rural Smart Growth* (2011)

## TEXAS

- City of El Paso—*Programs, Policies, and Regulations* (2011)

## VERMONT

- City of Winooski—*Small Communities* (2006)
- State of Vermont—*Policies and Regulations* (2007)
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board—*Main Street or Corridor Revitalization* (2012)

## VIRGINIA

- Arlington County—*Overall Excellence* (2002)
- City of Portsmouth—*Programs and Policies* (2012)

## WASHINGTON

- Seattle Housing Authority—*Built Projects* (2007)

# Acknowledgments

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## Photo Credits

**Front Cover – Atlanta, GA**

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*Page 4, top: Christopher T. Martin*

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*Page 5, top left: Charles City Press*

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**Award Winners**

**Overall Excellence – Atlanta, GA (page 7)**

*Left: EPA*

*Middle and right: Christopher T. Martin*

**Corridor or Neighborhood Revitalization –  
Dubuque, IA (page 9)**

*All photos: EPA*

**Policies, Programs, and Plans –  
Chicago, IL (page 11)**

*Left: Lockport Township Park District*

*Middle and right: Chicago Metropolitan  
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**Built Projects – Sacramento, CA (page 13)**

*Left: Bruce Damonte*

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**Plazas, Parks, and Public Places –  
Charles City, IA (page 15)**

*Left: Kevin and Sara Hemann*

*Middle: Charles City Press*

*Right: EPA*

**Honorable Mentions**

**Policies, Programs, and Plans –  
Detroit, MI (page 16)**

*Jefferson East, Inc.*

**Built Projects – The Bronx, NY (page 17)**

*David Sundberg/Esto*



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