

2009 CCAPA AWARDS

Val Ferro, Weston Solutions-Awards Committee Chairperson

The Inn at Middletown provided a wonderful setting for this year's CCAPA Annual Awards Luncheon. Nearly 80 attendees gathered to recognize recipients in all eight award categories. Despite the economic downturn, there was a full complement of submissions and the Awards Committee was impressed with the diversity as well as the caliber of planning projects that merited recognition.

■ COMMUNICATIONS AWARD

This year two awards were given. The Town of Bloomfield was recognized for its unique and colorful presentation of its revised zoning regulations. Thom Hooper, Director of Planning, and Mike Kosilla, Zoning Enforcement Officer, accepted the award on behalf of the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials was recognized for its informative and comprehensive website that serves as a repository for regional information. Jonathan Chew, Executive Director of the HVCEO, accepted the award.

http://www.bloomfieldct.org/1252527489_Zoning_Regulations_2009.pdf
<http://www.hvceo.org/>

■ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Several members of Old Saybrook's Founder's Memorial Park Ad Hoc Committee along with Town Planner Christine Nelson accepted this award in recognition of its success in transforming a former landfill into a public park. Through visioning, sound planning and public outreach, the Committee engaged the entire community in planning and constructing the park. The land had been gifted to the Town in 1993 by members of the 10th generation of direct descendents of the Clark family, original settlers of the Saybrook Colony. The land is adjacent to the Silvio Conte National Refuge and boasts spectacular views of Long Island Sound and the CT River.

■ IMPLEMENTATION AWARD

Richter Park was created in 1968 to provide golf and cultural amenities to residents of Danbury. The golf course is considered one of the top 25 municipal courses in the nation. The Richter Park Authority recognized that despite the Park's success, the changing demographics of the City warranted the creation of a new master plan. Through an extensive outreach program and site assessment techniques, a master plan was developed that incorporated cultural as well as recreational goals. Within one year of completing the plan, the Authority has adopted an administration plan, developed a

non-profit fundraising mechanism, implemented a series of environmental recommendations and obtained a grant for studying the historic Richter House. Jane Didona of Didona Associates accepted the award on the Authority's behalf.

■ PUBLIC PROGRAM AWARD

The City of Torrington's Conservation Commission was this year's recipient for its Urban Tree Maintenance program developed through funding from the City as well as the CTDEP, the US Department of Agriculture and an "America the Beautiful" grant. To kick-off the program, an informative, an eye-catching brochure that folds out to become a poster was created to call out the benefits of and need for trees in Torrington. An extensive outreach effort was then launched including presentations to the Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Commission and distribution of the brochure at Earth Day, to applicants at the Planning and Zoning office and the Architectural Review Committee. This program has educated residents and businesses of proper tree planting and care and drawn attention to the value of trees particularly in Torrington's downtown center. Kim Barbieri, who championed the program for the City, accepted the award on the Commission's behalf.

http://torringtonct.org/Public_Documents/TorringtonCT_BComm/Final%20Urban%20Tree.pdf

■ PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

The Town of Preston created the Norwich Hospital Advisory Committee back in the 1990s to work with the State in anticipation of its closing the mental hospital that had operated for decades and had been one of its largest employers. The Committee consisted of town officials as well as citizens of various political affiliations and diverse backgrounds. Over the last several years, Committee members devoted countless hours in weekly meetings and on their own in order to evaluate two separate private development efforts. While neither resulted in an acceptable plan, this Committee provided leadership and ultimately guided the Town through its acquisition of the site in 2009. Its final effort was the creation of the Norwich Redevelopment Agency to ensure that had the necessary mechanism to carry out redevelopment. Committee Co-chairs Mike Sinko and Joe Biber accepted the award along with First Selectman Bob Congdon and Bruce Chudwick from Shipman & Goodwin, who had made the nomination.

■ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AWARD

When a national chain came to the West End neighborhood in Hartford, its plan to redevelop an existing restaurant site called for placing the building in the middle of the site with the narrowest face along the frontage. The circulation pattern appeared more conducive to a commercial corridor rather than the heart of a neighborhood.

Two well-established neighborhood organizations, the Farmington Avenue Alliance and the West End Civic Association, chose to work collaboratively with the developer and the consultant, Gwen Asbaugh of Lenard Engineering, rather than opposing what was to become a KFC. There was considerable back-and-forth but as the project evolved, the building was rotated to fill the frontage, two driveways were consolidated into one and sustainable features were incorporated. The owner granted an easement on his property and financed a bus shelter to relocate it from a difficult stop on Sisson Avenue. Despite its small-scale, the project has had a positive impact and its sustainable features will hopefully set the bar for subsequent development within the neighborhood and the City. Representatives of the Farmington Avenue Alliance and the West End Civic Association accepted the award.

■ CITIZEN PLANNING AWARD

Nothing pleases the Awards Committee more than to be able to bestow the Citizen Planning Award. While professional planners and consultants are often credited with achieving significant results, it is truly citizens and lay people who often make measurable differences in our communities. In 1999, City of Stamford planners launched a youth outreach campaign as part of its anticipated update to the City's Comprehensive Master Plan. Through this process, 3rd graders at KT Murphy School analyzed other school grounds and discovered that they had the least amount of land of any of the City's elementary schools. They built models and lobbied the Planning Board for a playground and green space. Two years later, the Master Plan was adopted and the students' project was added to the City's Capital Program. Another 4 years later, in 2006, the owner of adjacent property recalled the students' appeal and offered it to the City for purchase. The persistent students, now in high school, showed up at the Board of Finance and Board of Representatives meeting to once again plead their case again. The purchase was approved but another 2 years went by before the playground was constructed. Some of the very same students who petitioned the City nearly a decade ago were on hand at the August 2008 ribbon-cutting event. Robin Stein and Erin McKenna, both of whom had remained involved from the start, accepted the award on the students' behalf accompanied by two of the involved teachers from KT School. Twenty-one individual certificates were also provided for eventual distribution.

■BRUCE HOBEN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

The Chapter lost an ardent supporter, Bruce Hoben, on June 15' 2009. The Distinguished Service Award has been renamed in recognition of Bruce's selfless involvement with our Chapter and his significant and enduring contributions to the practice of planning throughout Connecticut. In presenting this renamed award for the first time, Chapter President Don Poland remarked that the recipient, Dwight Merriam from Robinson & Cole, continues to give back to the Chapter while maintaining a national presence in land use and zoning law. After serving in Vietnam, Dwight obtained his planning and law degrees. He joined Robinson & Cole in 1978 and is credited with starting the Land Use Group, the first in the country to employ planners. Dwight has been involved with more than 60 organizations and has published over 200 articles and five books including his most recent, The Complete Guide to Zoning. For several years, he conducted the Chapter's land use law workshop and recently began assisting with student mentoring sessions at the annual regional conference. Dwight was a friend and a colleague of Bruce's and it was fitting that Bruce's wife Susan attended the luncheon and accompanied Dwight to the podium to receive his award.

The Awards Committee consists of Fran Armentano, Marty Connor, Linda Farmer, Valarie Ferro and Linnea McCaffrey.