

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Day, January 9, 2013

Contacts: Roberta Rewers, APA, 312.786.6395; rrewers@planning.org

Augusta's Laney Walker/Bethlehem Revitalization Initiative Receives Prestigious National Planning Award

WASHINGTON DC – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the American Planning Association (APA) have recognized the Laney Walker/Bethlehem Revitalization Initiative (Laney Walker/Bethlehem) in Augusta, Georgia, as one of two recipients of the 2013 HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award. Laney Walker/Bethlehem is employing a multi-phased approach to guide redevelopment, growth and sustainability in a historic community.

The HUD Secretary's Award, presented jointly by HUD and APA, recognizes a plan, program, or project that has been in effect for at least three years and improves the quality of life for low- and moderate-income community residents. Emphasis is placed on how creative housing, economic development, and private investments have been used in or with a comprehensive community development plan to empower a community.

"The impetus for and success of this project is a direct result of a few brave community leaders who actively engaged all members of the community and insisted that inner-city quality of life issues be addressed," said Ann C. Bagley, FAICP, 2013 APA Awards Jury chair. "It is not surprising that the Harvard Student Journal on Real Estate cited it as a potential 'game-changing' model for public-private partnerships."

"This initiative continues to become a model for the rest of the nation to follow and we should all be very proud of it," commented Mayor Deke Copenhaver. "I would like to thank Chester Wheeler and his staff at the Augusta Housing and Community Development Department, APD Urban Planning and Management, and Melaver McIntosh as their groundbreaking initiative continues to evoke a sense of civic pride throughout our community"

The HUD/APA award is especially gratifying for Augusta's housing and community development director, Chester A. Wheeler, III, whose agency serves as master developer for the revitalization. "Our careful planning efforts laid the groundwork for the renaissance now taking place in Laney Walker/Bethlehem. To be recognized by two leading organizations that are so integral to improving our urban neighborhoods is truly an honor."

The Laney Walker/Bethlehem Revitalization Initiative, involving two historic African American neighborhoods in Augusta, Georgia, is a pioneering effort to reverse decades of blight and disinvestment and regenerate nearly 1,100 acres of Augusta's urban center. This long-term project draws upon local bond financing (established in 2008) supplemented with HUD NSP, HOME and CDBG funds as seed capital to catalyze mixed-income/mixed-tenure housing and mixed-use, sustainable development.

This large scale (1,100 acres), long term (50 years) revitalization effort is anticipated to provide

housing for approximately 10,000 residents for a total investment of \$2.8 billion, create 38,000 new jobs, and result in total investment into the local economy of \$4.5 billion over the next five decades.

All aspects of this comprehensive effort could be adapted by other communities, including layered financing, policy framework, land assembly strategies, green strategies, development and homebuyer incentives, risk mitigation and collaborative community programs. The project also offers lessons for meeting physical challenges (land acquisition, zoning, nuisance buildings, infrastructure); financial constraints (lender financing for mortgages, construction loans, appraisals, etc.); and managing community awareness, engagement, and acceptance of change (revitalization vs. gentrification).

The 2013 HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Awards will be presented at a special awards luncheon held during APA's National Planning Conference in Chicago on Tuesday, April 16, 2013. In addition to Laney Walker/Bethlehem, the Owe'neh Bupingeh's Preservation Plan in Ohkay Owingeh, New Mexico, was also recognized with the HUD Secretary's Award. Both award recipients will be profiled in *Planning* magazine, APA's flagship publication.

To view all of the APA 2013 National Planning Excellence and Achievement Award recipients, visit www.planning.org/awards/2013. APA's national awards program, the profession's highest honor, is a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago to recognize outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

The American Planning Association is an independent, not-for-profit educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Ill. For more information, visit www.planning.org.

###