

PRESS RELEASE

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250 Guests Attend PlanSmart NJ's 44th Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ - PlanSmart NJ, a non-profit land use planning and smart growth organization based in Trenton, held its annual dinner and awards ceremony on Thursday evening, November 8th at The Heldrich in New Brunswick, NJ. Approximately 250 land use planners, business leaders, public officials, academic and non-profit leaders were in attendance.

The dinner celebrated six innovative projects and people from throughout NJ in the areas of regional & community development, economic development, resource efficiency, environment and regional equity.

“These awardees embody the best of NJ. PlanSmart NJ is honored to recognize these projects and visionary leaders working to restore our economy and create a vibrant future for all New Jersey residents. “ extolled Richard Goldman, Esq., Chairman of the Board of Directors for PlanSmart NJ. “During these economically challenging times, it is encouraging to see bold investments and strong leadership that are turning New Jersey’s economy around. Our award winners are to be commended for their leadership and vision.”

The 2012 award recipients are:

Regional & Community Planning Achievement Award:

Ocean Burlington Joint Land Use Study for their collaboration and regional planning efforts. Burlington and Ocean Counties were faced with an enormous challenge when the Department of Defense announced the closing of Fort Dix, Fort McGuire, and Lakehurst Naval Warfare Center. Fortunately, a compromise was reached and a joint base was formed. The creation of a joint base created a real land use planning challenge for the region. In response, Ocean and Burlington Counties undertook a joint land use study for the proposed future uses of the 42,000-acre Joint Base, which borders 10 municipalities in Burlington and Ocean Counties. The study includes recommendations for which areas are appropriate for preservation and which are potential locations for commercial development to complement base activities. The planning effort included counties, municipalities, the Pinelands Commission, state agencies, and the area’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Outstanding Individual Leadership & Economic Development Achievement Awards:

Caren Franzini, former Executive Director of the NJ Economic Development Authority for her economic development achievements and longtime public service to the State of New Jersey. Caren Franzini has been in public service for over 20 years and has won nothing but praise from Republican and Democratic administrations alike. She has always kept her vision of what a strong and economically vibrant New Jersey should look like, and her track record of accomplishment has put NJ on the path toward that vision. Under her leadership, the NJ Economic Development Authority adopted several incentive programs, including the flagship Urban Hub Tax Credit (UHTC). Since the program's inception, 19 projects have been approved, helping to create 4,900 estimated new permanent jobs and 10,300 construction jobs, while sparking the revitalization of the State's urban centers.

Environmental Achievement Awards:

Ridgewood Green LLC for their innovative partnership to convert waste into electricity. Middlesex Water Company, Natural Systems Utilities and the Village of Ridgewood formed a unique public-private partnership to improve air quality, reduce dependence on chemicals, and reduce energy costs at the Village of Ridgewood's wastewater treatment plant. Like many wastewater treatment plants, the Ridgewood plant used chemicals to treat the water and burned off the methane gas that was produced from the wastewater. Ridgewood saw an opportunity to form a public-private partnership, making possible the needed capital investment for the plant to use an anaerobic digestion process to convert methane gas to electricity, use ultraviolet light to treat the wastewater effluent, and install solar panels to supplement the plant's electricity needs. The result is a fully self-sufficient treatment plant and a financially sustainable project.

Monmouth University for their initiatives in creating a green campus. Monmouth University has become a leader in environmental responsibility among New Jersey's educational institutions. The University has completed a number of impressive projects, including the recent installation of a new solar system and energy-efficient building renovations. The University also has made strides in recycling, conserving water, and shutting off equipment and lights when not in use. Monmouth University extends its green practices to its teaching. They teach their students to lead environmentally-conscious lives by promoting awareness and offering academic programs, such as the newly created Global Sustainability Minor. Finally, Monmouth is dedicated to promoting environmental responsibility beyond their campus boundaries. The Urban Coast Institute engages in projects and activities to support good coastal zone management in New Jersey's communities.

Resource Efficiency Achievement Award:

Novo Nordisk and partners (LCOR, Ivy Equities, and Intercontinental Real Estate Corporation) for the adaptive reuse of the former Merrill Lynch site into a new 770,000 square foot office building, to serve as Novo Nordisk's expanded US headquarters. Over the past decade, Novo Nordisk's US business has steadily grown. Their Princeton area headquarters has grown from 390 people in 2001 to over 1,000 people in 2011. A few years ago, they started to plan for new

space to accommodate their growth. After considering a variety of sites in the Princeton area, they settled upon the adaptive reuse of the old Merrill Lynch site in Plainsboro. Revitalization of the property matched their social, financial, and environmental values. Factors that drove them to redevelop the site included reducing their carbon footprint, access to major transportation networks, proximity to preserved land, and a dramatically truncated permit approval process. The project has created 500 union construction jobs, contributed to Plainsboro's tax base, and will produce an environmentally-friendly building redeveloped to LEED silver standards.

Regional Equity Achievement Award:

Sandra Persichetti, retiring Executive Director of Princeton Community Housing, for her leadership in providing affordable housing. Ms. Persichetti has served as the Executive Director of Princeton Community Housing for the last 10 years. Under Sandra's leadership, Princeton Community Housing has formed lasting partnerships with Princeton Borough and Township. PCH now owns and manages 466 rental units for people with low and moderate incomes. During Ms. Persichetti's tenure, Princeton Community Housing has expanded into property management, and now provides quality property management for all its own properties as well as other non-PCH-owned affordable housing properties. Thanks to her efforts, hundreds of families and seniors now have the opportunity to live in quality affordable housing as part of the Princeton community.

Lucy Vandenberg, Executive Director of PlanSmart NJ, noted, "Our awardees embody smart growth here in NJ. These are the types of projects and visionary leadership that PlanSmart NJ champions. We hope to see more strategic investment and sound public policy in the future to support this type of innovative work in our State."

Event sponsors include: Title Sponsor: Novo Nordisk; Presenting: Partners of Scudders Holdings, New Jersey American Water, New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company, New Jersey Natural Gas, PSE&G, and Van-Note Harvey Associates

PlanSmart NJ is an independent, non-profit civic planning and research organization committed to improving the quality of community life through the advancement of sound land use planning and regional cooperation.

Drawing on over 40 years experience, PlanSmart NJ concentrates on land use, transportation, housing, environmental conservation, and related issues throughout the state of NJ. PlanSmart NJ is the state's premier source of cutting edge and pragmatic ways to transform the forces behind suburban sprawl and urban deterioration into laws and actions that foster natural resource conservation, economic vitality, and improved quality of life for all citizens, and the optimal use of private and public resources.

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