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California Smart Growth Advocate Receives National Planning Award

WASHINGTON, DC — While hers is not a household name, Judy Corbett's efforts to create safer, healthier and more livable communities have affected innumerable households throughout California and the nation. For nearly three decades, Corbett has promoted both resource-efficient land use and building design, and energy conservation in her quest to shape vibrant communities.

For her efforts, Judy Corbett has been selected the 2005 recipient of the American Planning Association's (APA) National Planning Award for Distinguished Leadership by a Citizen Planner. Corbett will be honored at a luncheon ceremony March 22 at the Moscone West convention center in San Francisco. In addition, a special 30-minute video about all of APA's 2005 National Planning Awards recipients will be shown at the luncheon. Accomplishments of the awardees also will be highlighted in the March 2005 issue of *Planning* magazine.

Corbett's Local Government Commission (LGC) is an institution that exists nowhere else in the country. It has successfully brought together politicians of all parties and ideologies for the sole purpose of solving global problems at the local level.

"As its founder and executive director, Ms. Corbett has built the Local Government Commission into a groundbreaking organization that fuels innovation in communities throughout California," said APA Awards Committee Co-Chair Bruce Knight, FAICP. "Although not a planner by training, Ms. Corbett has embraced and advanced planning concepts, carrying the planning message to municipalities both large and small."

"Ms. Corbett's work pushes the limits of current practice and challenges all of us to consider community viability in new and different ways," said APA Awards Committee Co-Chair Carol Rhea, AICP. "Her innovative approaches will continue to shape planning practice and community livability for years to come."

The LGC may be best known for its 1991 development of the "Ahwahnee Principles for Resource Efficient Communities." This set of 19 guidelines helped pave the way for the Smart Growth movement, which encourages cities and counties to adopt policies and plans that discourage sprawling development patterns. To encourage local government to adopt and implement the principles, the LGC established the Center for Livable Communities.

At least 200 California communities, and several other states, have incorporated the principles into their planning documents.

In 1998, the LGC drafted the "Ahwahnee Principles for Smart Economic Development," an innovative model that, among other things, recognized the economic value of natural and human capital, and embraced economic, social and environmental responsibility. The following year Corbett was named a "Hero for the Planet" by *Time* magazine.

Since developing its first set of Ahwahnee principles, LGC has drafted the "Ahwahnee Principles for Water," which will encourage local elected officials to develop greater self-sufficiency in community water resources.

In 2002, Corbett began producing an annual "New Partners for Smart Growth Conference," in partnership with the APA, the Urban Land Institute, EPA, and many others. This pioneering, national event took the smart growth and livable communities movement a step further by approaching the design of the urban environment from the perspective of public health and safety. More recent conferences have added new partners including seniors, youth, labor, air and water quality professionals. The 2005 conference will be held in Miami Beach, Florida, in January.

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Corbett's interest in sustainability dates back to 1974 while a graduate student in ecology at the University of California at Davis. At that time Corbett and her partner Michael Corbett planned and developed the 60-acre Village Homes, a resource-efficient neighborhood in Davis, California.

Village Homes combined residential, commercial and agricultural elements in what was, at the time, an unprecedented mix. The houses themselves used the latest in solar-heating technology and were built in clusters with backyards oriented towards large common areas. Green space and community gardens were maintained through water collected by natural drainage, with excess water flowing into ditches and ponds instead of concrete storm sewers. Corbett has authored several books describing the project including "Sustainable Development: Learning from Village Homes" and "Village Homes: Solar House Designs."

The APA National Awards for Planning are part of a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago. The awards program, which recognizes outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts and individuals for their leadership on planning issues, attracted more than 130 entries nationwide this year.

Contact

Roberta Rewers, Public Affairs Associate, 312-786-6395; rrewers@planning.org
Judith A. Corbett, Local Government Commission, 916-448-1198

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