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American Planning Association Recognizes British Columbia's UniverCity With 2008 National Planning Award

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The American Planning Association (APA) has named UniverCity in Burnaby, British Columbia, recipient of the 2008 National Planning Excellence Award for Innovation in Green Community Planning. Developed through a collaborative planning process led by Simon Fraser University, UniverCity demonstrates how readily compact, pedestrian friendly and mixed-use neighborhoods can be built.

“UniverCity demonstrates to citizens around the world that we don't have to wait for technological breakthroughs in order to create communities today that lower our carbon footprint,” said Carol Rhea, AICP, chair of the 2008 National Planning Awards jury. “We are excited to recognize UniverCity’s leadership and innovation in green community planning.”

Representatives from Simon Fraser University and UniverCity will receive their award at a luncheon ceremony April 30 during APA’s National Planning Conference. A 30-minute video about all 11 of the 2008 National Planning Excellence, Achievement, and Leadership Awardees will be shown at the luncheon. Accomplishments of the award recipients also will be highlighted in the April 2008 issue of *Planning* magazine and on the APA website (www.planning.org).

"Our approach is to make sure that every innovation and sustainable design solution at UniverCity is developed in consultation with and approved by the City of Burnaby to ensure that lessons learned here are fully transferable to other places and do not remain as one-off's or demonstrations existing in isolation," said Dale Mikkelsen, Manager of Planning & Sustainability for the Simon Fraser University Community Trust.

UniverCity is designed around transit corridors and facilities, and an extensive pathway system.

Each neighborhood of the community is within easy walking distance of a town square, elementary school, community and childcare center, and neighborhood parks and tot lots. University facilities and a large, natural conservation area are also nearby and accessible to those living there. Residents also can purchase significantly discounted transit passes, and there is a cooperatively owned automobile program in the community.

Some of the many innovations adopted by UniverCity include:

- zoning bylaws that permits affordable, legalized secondary suites in multi-story apartments and town homes;
- a village-style commercial High Street, with individually designed storefronts, and locally based owners and operators;
- an award winning storm-water management system, including ‘green streets’ that allow bio-filtration through pervious pavers; landscaped bio-swales; green roofs; and innovative approaches to on-site water retention;
- Green Building Guidelines that are enshrined in the municipal zoning bylaws, resulting in significant energy and water conservation; the use of resource efficient materials; and reduced waste;
- a variety of housing types and styles to meet a wide range of needs including singles, families, and lower-income households;
- higher residential development standards to ensure environmental quality, durability, enhanced occupant health, and improved indoor air quality measures; and
- innovative financing for energy efficiency components in residential buildings.

“Without a doubt,” added Rhea “UniverCity represents a veritable treasure chest of viable alternatives for planners, government officials, residents and businesses to use in achieving their green community goals.”

For a list of all 2008 National Planning Excellence, Achievement, and Leadership Award recipients, visit www.planning.org/awards/2008winners.htm. APA’s national awards program, considered to be the profession’s highest honor, began more than 50 years ago to recognize outstanding community plans, and planning leaders.

The American Planning Association 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., Chicago, Ill., and Shanghai, China. For more information, visit its website at www.planning.org.