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## Richmond Revitalization Program Receives HUD Secretary's Award

**WASHINGTON, DC** — The American Planning Association (APA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development have selected the City of Richmond, Virginia's Neighborhoods in Bloom program as the 2006 recipient of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award.

A joint recognition of HUD and APA, the Opportunity and Empowerment Award is given annually to a project that, as a direct result of the effort, demonstrates improved quality of life for low- and moderate-income community residents.

"Neighborhoods in Bloom is an outstanding example of how cities can revitalize blight-ridden neighborhoods while recovering the investment costs over time," said Carol Rhea, AICP, chair of the APA Awards Committee.

The Neighborhoods in Bloom program was recognized at APA's National Planning Conference during a luncheon ceremony April 25 in San Antonio, Texas. At that luncheon event a 30-minute video about all of APA's 2006 National Planning Awards recipients was shown.

The concept behind Neighborhoods in Bloom is simple — concentrate enough public funds over a long enough period in a particular neighborhood in order to improve the livability of the area and attract a critical mass of public investment necessary to promote private-market interest. Once the area has stabilized, public resources can be shifted to another area. Since it began five years ago Richmond has invested approximately \$15 million in the program.

Neighborhoods in Bloom improves neighborhood stability by focusing on community leadership, public safety, homeownership, and blight removal through housing construction and rehabilitation, aggressive code enforcement, and infrastructure improvements.

A 2005 study, sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, shows that Neighborhoods in Bloom is making a difference in its six neighborhoods. Crime has decreased 19 percent compared with 6 percent citywide, and housing prices in the targeted areas have appreciated nearly 10 percent faster than the city's average.

The APA National Awards for Planning are part of a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago, recognizing outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives,

public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

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