



U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS AND THE HOME DEPOT FOUNDATION ANNOUNCE WINNERS OF FIRST ANNUAL COMMUNITY TREES AWARD

Baltimore, Md., Portland, Ore., Norwalk, Conn. and Davenport, Iowa Receive \$200,000

LAS VEGAS, June, 2006 – The U.S. Conference of Mayors and The Home Depot® Foundation today announced the winners of the first annual Awards of Excellence for Community Trees and Urban Forestry at the Conference of Mayors 74th Annual Meeting in Las Vegas.

Grants were awarded to mayors and their respective city's nonprofit partner to further the goal of promoting healthy communities through tree planting and the management of the urban forest. The city of Baltimore, Md. and the city of Norwalk, Conn. won first place in the large and small city category, respectively; each city received a \$75,000 grant. The runner-up cities of Portland, Ore. (large) and Davenport, Iowa (small) each received a \$25,000 grant. Award categories were determined by population – one category for large cities with populations more than 100,000, and the other for small cities with populations less than 100,000.

Project winners were selected by an independent advisory committee comprised of experts in the field of urban forestry, environment and sustainable community development. Committee members include representatives from the USDA Forest Service, National Arbor Day Foundation and The Enterprise Foundation, among others.

Tom Cochran, executive director of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, praised the program saying, "These awards give us the opportunity to highlight community-driven projects that recognize the importance of trees to quality of life in our nation's cities. We salute The Home Depot Foundation for this opportunity to demonstrate that trees are a valuable part of the infrastructure of our cities."

"The Home Depot Foundation believes that community trees make enormous contributions to our social, economic and overall well-being and that the urban forest is one of the essential building blocks for healthy, livable communities," said Kelly Caffarelli, executive director, The Home Depot Foundation. "We created this award to identify, recognize and showcase the outstanding, innovative work of public and private partnerships engaged in enhancing and strengthening communities through the strategic use of trees. Our hope is that by recognizing cities and their local urban forestry programs, we will be able to improve the visibility and effectiveness of urban forestry in America's cities."

In addition to the Awards of Excellence, the Conference, in partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, established a task force of mayors to further examine the benefits of community trees, to identify ways that mayors can better promote community forestry programs in their cities and to share best practices. Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann will act as chairman of the committee.

The Award of Excellence for Community Trees and Urban Forestry recognition program was announced in January at the conference's winter meeting in Washington, D.C. Information about the application process for the 2007 Awards of Excellence will be available in November at www.homedepotfoundation.org.

National Winner - Large City Category (population 100,000 plus)

City of Baltimore, Md. / Park & People Foundation - Nonprofit Partner

The city of Baltimore and the Parks & People Foundation's Watershed 263 project is a unique, visionary collaboration that not only brings together a diverse group of stakeholders (56 organizations to date) and demonstrates exceptional public/private partnerships, but also shows the comprehensive integration of the social, economic and environmental restoration that can be achieved through the use of trees. Watershed 263 focuses on revitalizing inner city communities by using urban forestry watershed projects to measurably improve both water quality and quality of life. The project began in 2003 and is scheduled to be complete by 2008 with the implementation of 107 forestry projects that will accomplish a 25 percent reduction in storm water pollution.

National Runner-up - Large City Category

City of Portland, Ore. / Friends of Trees - Nonprofit Partner

The city of Portland has demonstrated its commitment to expanding its urban tree canopy and has worked closely with the Friends of Trees (FOT) for the past 16 years. The FOT's Neighborhood Tree program (NT) is designed to address the historic loss of canopy cover in Portland neighborhoods by working to plant street, yard and school trees in the neediest communities of the city. Each year FOT works with over 2,100 community volunteers that contribute more than 20,000 hours of service. Between 2003-2005 FOT planted 5,671 trees in 52 different neighborhoods. Since its inception in 1990, FOT has planted over 330,000 trees, plants and shrubs.

National Winner - Small City Category (population 100,000 or less)

City of Norwalk, Conn. / Norwalk Tree Alliance - Nonprofit Partner

The city of Norwalk's sizable and protected harbors invited industrialization and commercialization that were accompanied by deforesting large tracts of land to accommodate factories, offices and shipyards. With soaring property values in surrounding communities, interest in Norwalk's residential development has grown exponentially and with it a renewed interest in "quality of life" issues. In 2004 the city of Norwalk recognized that greater benefits could be achieved if existing tree-related programs were coordinated, and so the city developed the Urban Forest Improvement Project. The objectives of the project are to restore trees in barren residential and commercial areas of the city, restore the canopy to once, tree-lined streets; and educate citizens and children on the important role of trees to the health of communities. Annually, the city provides capital funds for the purchase and planting of trees through its Free Tree program. Tree liaisons work with over 22 neighborhood associations to locate homes that need trees. In addition, the city coordinates communication and interaction between city departments of parks, public works, planning and zoning, as well as the Redevelopment Agency, the Norwalk Tree Alliance, Clean & Green, the Chamber of Commerce and the Norwalk Neighborhood Association.

National Runner-up - Small City

City of Davenport, Iowa / Greenway Habitat - Nonprofit Partner

Realizing the value of the community trees to the economic, health and overall success of its community, the city of Davenport developed a goal in 1992 to fully stock the city's urban forest by 2010, concentrating after that on replacement and new development trees. At that time, the city established a budget for tree planting and worked with the Home Building Association and local developers to enact a restoration fee to raise funds for tree plantings in new subdivisions. This fee is unique to the State of Iowa and most of the United States. With the help of the Greenway Habitat, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised, over 10,000 trees have been planted, and the city is within four years of reaching its goal of a completely stocked urban forest. In addition to the planting of trees, Greenway Habitat also focuses on the maintenance of trees with a volunteer work force that prunes over 500 trees annually.

About The Home Depot Foundation

The Home Depot Foundation was created in 2002 to further the community-building goals of The Home Depot by providing additional resources to assist nonprofit organizations building affordable, efficient and healthy homes throughout the United States and Canada. The Home Depot Foundation administers grant-making programs in the areas of “Affordable Housing, Built Responsibly” and “Community Trees – Healthy Neighborhoods.” Since its formation, The Home Depot Foundation has granted more than \$25 million to nonprofit and government organizations throughout North America.

About U.S. Conference of Mayors

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor.

###

For more information, contact:

Elena Temple
U.S. Conference of Mayors
(202)861-6719
etemple@usmayors.org

Caroline Counihan
The Home Depot
(770)384-2944
caroline_counihan@homedepot.com