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American Planning Association's Top 2008 National Planning Award Goes To Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Washington, D.C. – The American Planning Association (APA) has named the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan recipient of the 2008 Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan, the organization's top national planning award. The corridor plan honors the Erie Canal, considered by many as the most historically significant and influential canal system in the U.S.

The canal system was an early 19th Century engineering marvel and critical water transportation network that linked New England, New York, and the West. APA's most prestigious award is named in honor of America's most famous planner, Daniel Burnham, who developed the renowned 1909 Burnham Plan for the City of Chicago.

“The ambitious Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan not only is an innovative approach to preserving the cultural and historic treasures of yesterday's working canal system, but for energizing and enhancing the strength of the communities it connects today and tomorrow,” said 2008 National Planning Awards Jury Chairperson Carol Rhea, AICP. “The plan provides a much needed model for others involved in the growing trend of heritage tourism and historic resources preservation,” she added.

Representatives involved with the Canalway Plan 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.

"The plan reflects the tremendous energy and enthusiasm demonstrated all along the Canalway Corridor to draw upon our past and bring forth the best of what we can be," said Eric Mower, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission Chairman. "We're proud to accept the award on behalf of the many people who are working diligently with us to enhance and celebrate the Erie Canalway for all to use and enjoy."

National heritage areas and corridors are large-scale, community-centered initiatives that promote collaboration across political boundaries to protect nationally important landscapes and cultures. As such, they represent a significant advance in conservation and historic preservation. U.S. Congressman James T. Walsh, R-NY, praised the Erie Canalway Plan noting, "The plan represents an enormous effort in regional planning for a resource of tremendous importance to the state and nation."

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is one of only 37 federally designated National Heritage Areas in the nation, and includes 4,834 square miles in 23 counties, 234 canal-adjacent cities with a combined population of 2.7 million people. The area includes the largest and some of the most economically challenged population centers in Upstate New York. The plan resulted from three years of planning that included extensive public outreach and participation. The plan demonstrates how to garner region-wide cooperation and support from multiple jurisdictions.

"This plan is resounding proof," added Palmyra, New York, Mayor Vicky Daly, that "together we can do so much more than any of us can do alone." Plan implementation is anticipated to leverage both new development and adaptive reuse of waterfronts, town centers, parks, and other locations that combine historic, natural, and recreational resources.

For a list of all 2008 National Planning Excellence, Achievement, and Leadership Award recipients, visit www.planning.org/awards/2008winners.htm.

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.

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