

3 South Jersey Projects Honored for Planning

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CAMDEN -- A statewide group is giving "Smart Growth" awards to three South Jersey planning and development projects.

The North Camden neighborhood plan and Fairview Village development in Camden, along with the Rowan Boulevard project in Glassboro, are being cited by New Jersey Future.

The research and policy group honors local officials, developers and others who resist "status quo growth patterns," according to its Web site.

Projects are judged on their proximity to existing infrastructure, range of housing options, mix of development uses, open space protection, enhancement of transportation and respect for community character.

Three organizations -- Camden Lutheran Housing Inc., Cooper's Ferry Development Association and Save Our Waterfront -- were honored for their work creating a long-range vision for North Camden.

More than 225 residents and stakeholders in 47 groups spent seven months developing the plan. It calls for roughly \$2 billion worth of public and private investments over the next 20 years, including waterfront parks, up to 3,000 new homes, rehabilitation of existing homes and more.

Currently, one component of the 308-page plan has been completed -- a job-training center. With Riverfront State Prison expected to close this summer, ongoing housing projects and upcoming renovations at two parks, residents should see more improvements soon, said Jenny Greenberg, project coordinator for Cooper's Ferry.

"It's pretty high-level recognition in the state," she said of the Smart Growth award in the "Participatory Neighborhood Plan" category. The award is to be presented Wednesday in Newark.

The Camden Redevelopment Agency, New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency and RPM Development were cited for creative affordable housing and neighborhood preservation in Fairview Village.

In 2001, the three agencies prepared a four-phase redevelopment effort for the area, which was built in 1919 to house shipyard workers.

In recent years, builders have restored and constructed 225 homes and apartments, all with high-efficiency heating and cooling. They added trees, lighting, signs and trash cans to Yorkship Square. They opened a 3,000-square-foot community center that now hosts youth art and literacy programs as well as exercise classes for seniors. The final phase of the project will include 15 single-family homes and 36 apartments for seniors.

The Borough of Glassboro, Rowan University and SORA Holdings were recognized for community-university partnership on the quarter-mile-long boulevard that will connect the campus to the business district. The project eventually is expected to feature about 500 market-rate homes and more than 200,000 square feet of new retail and office space.

Construction is to begin on a bookstore this summer and a 107-room hotel/conference center this fall. An apartment building for almost 900 students is also under way.

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