

Thank you to all our Excellence Award judges!

Dee Blackwell

Mr. Blackwell is the Executive Director of Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) in North Carolina and is responsible for directing the overall operations of the COG in the four-county Hickory Metro region. Mr. Blackwell has been with WPCOG since 1974 and has also served as Assistant Executive Director. Among many Professional Memberships and Public Service activities, Mr. Blackwell is on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), is a certified professional planner (AICP), is a 2006 AICP National Historic Planning Landmark and Pioneer Awards Jury Member and a 2007 APA National Planning Awards Jury Member.

Jim Edwards

Mr. Edwards is the Executive Director of the Isothermal Planning & Development Commission in North Carolina. The Commission serves Cleveland, McDowell, Polk and Rutherford counties. Mr. Edwards received his undergraduate degree from Davidson College, and completed a masters degree in public administration at UNC-Charlotte. He has spent most of his professional career in western North Carolina, and now lives near Rutherfordton. He is a proponent of economic development that preserves the special character of our land and its citizens.

Randy Imler

Mr. Imler is the Executive Director of the Catawba Regional COG in South Carolina.

Clean Cities

A separate committee reviewed and selected the winner of the Clean Cities Award. This committee included: Dave Navey, CCFC Chair (Duke Energy) and Michael Dehnert, CCFC Stakeholder (Air Components & Systems, Inc). The Clean Fuels Coalition appreciates the work of this committee and thanks them for their time and participation in the awards program.

More Information on CCOG

Centralina Council of Governments is the state-designated lead regional organization for our nine county region and is one of 16 regional councils in the state. CCOG represents more than 60 county and municipal governments and encompasses a population of close to two million people.

CCOG's role in the region

CCOG serves as a bridge between federal, state and local governments. This is an increasingly critical role as we manage the growth in our region. CCOG:

- Provides a platform for formulating, implementing, and coordinating regional public policies.
- Provides a forum for networking and problem solving for local jurisdictions.
- Serves as a conduit of state and federal grants in areas of aging, workforce development, economic development, environment and planning.

The organization concentrates its efforts on forming greater collaborative partnerships to address and find solutions to regional issues. Recognizing the importance of Regionalism and setting regional priorities, CCOG provides a number of award-winning services and has embarked upon a number of program initiatives to further this concept.

Centralina Council of Governments (CCOG)

Serving Anson, Cabarrus, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union Counties and the municipalities throughout the region.



2013 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

Controlling the Cost of Government

Town of Cramerton

*Two Rivers Utilities
Partnership*

Growing the Economy

City of Gastonia

*Technology Park
Initiative*

Improving Quality of Life

City of Statesville

*Downtown Streetscape
Project*

Clean Cities

*Benfield Sanitation
Services*

8TH ANNUAL

REGION OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

MAY 8, 2013

BACKGROUND

Centralina COG celebrates the work of member governments through the Excellence Awards. These awards honor the outstanding achievements that work collectively to achieve regional goals.

Elected officials, managers and other staff from our member governments were encouraged to nominate innovative projects implemented by their jurisdictions that contribute to significant and positive advancements in the community.

A panel of impartial judges reviewed each submittal and selected award winning projects based on the following award criteria:

- Innovation and creativity
- Commitment to goals
- Contributions to regionalism
- Program successes and sustainable benefits
- Engagement of community members
- Interaction with public/private partners

Our judges this year included: Jim Edwards, Executive Director of Isothermal Planning and Economic Development Commission, H. DeWitt (Dee) Blackwell, Jr., Executive Director of Western Piedmont COG, and Randy Imler, Executive Director of Catawba Regional COG. A separate committee reviewed and selected the winner of the Clean Cities Award.

EXCELLENCE AWARD CATEGORIES

“Controlling the Cost of Government”

The recipient of this award has been creative in implementing a new or innovative program or initiative that is effective and delivers the most value with public funds. Such program exemplifies efficiency through: utilizing economies of scale; partnering with other local governments to maximize the impact of public funds; and/or encouraging best practices to maintain or expand services.

“Growing the Economy”

The recipient of this award has implemented innovative solutions to community development/investment challenges and engages in best practice strategies that: utilize public/private sector partnerships to maximize investment opportunities; prepares existing sites and infrastructure to meet the needs of target industries; and/or implements economic development including job creation/retention initiatives, etc.

“Improving Quality of Life”

The recipient of this award best leverages resources to improve the quality of life for citizens. The award recipient has implemented innovative program offerings such as those that: enhance social equity; encourage community participation through public and private sector leadership; develop solutions that build on the community's strengths and improve upon its weaknesses; or use cooperative volunteerism to maintain or expand services.

“Clean Cities”

The recipient of this award best recognizes the environmental and economic benefits of reducing consumption of fossil fuels. This recipient has lowered the use of traditional transportation fuels by: purchasing alternative fuel and/or fuel efficient vehicles, using alternative fuels in their fleet, implementing idle reduction policies and/or has partnered with fuel providers to expand alternative fuel availability.

“Controlling the Cost of Government”

Town of Cramerton Two Rivers Utilities

The Two Rivers Utilities was created through municipal partnerships of the Town of Cramerton and the City of Gastonia in an effort to effectively manage rising industry costs and take advantage of economy of scale.

The name, Two Rivers Utilities, was selected because it represents the regional approach and the scope and intent of the municipal partnership. The name also acknowledges the region’s two important water resources, the South Fork and Catawba Rivers.

This project has ultimately resulted in a substantial cost savings for the citizens of the Town of Cramerton. Through rate relief, the citizens of the Town have realized an annual reoccurring savings of over \$400,000, which is equal to \$0.10 on the tax rate. Additionally, the partnership has offered the City of Gastonia an opportunity to have the necessary improved infrastructure in place to accommodate future growth while acting as an environmental steward.

This cooperative partnership serves as an example of how government entities can reduce costs and increase efficiency by working together.



“Improving Quality of Life”

City of Statesville Downtown Streetscape Project

The City of Statesville’s Streetscape Improvement Project is a multi-phase redevelopment plan for enhancing the beauty and public image of Downtown Statesville and NC-115. Over \$4.9 million has been invested in Phase I of the Downtown Statesville Streetscape Project, which is a major overhaul to the sidewalks, downtown streets and the infrastructure. Construction on this project Phase I, began in January 2011 and was completed in August 2012.

The project involved replacement of aging water, storm water and electric lines, which were placed underground and new waterlines were added on both sides of the street. The above ground improvements included narrowing the streets from four lanes to three, widening of the sidewalks.

The improved streetscape enhances the charm of Statesville and establishes the importance of the pedestrian by creating an environment that would encourage more pedestrians to shop and spend additional time in Downtown.

The project was also recently awarded a 2012 North Carolina Main Street Award of Merit for Best Outdoor Space Improvement.



“Growing the Economy”

City of Gastonia Gastonia Technology Park

The Gastonia Technology Park (GTP) is the leading center for economic growth with over \$100 million in investment and over 300 new high-paying jobs. The Technology Park has become the premier location for industrial business in the region.

GTP is listed as a NC Certified Site and is a Class A, shovel ready development, designed for advanced manufacturing and technology activities. The GTP holds the distinction of being a Prime Power Park, offering 12MW of free back-up generation. The 422 acre park was developed with a campus-like design with park covenants, extensive landscaping, street trees and sidewalks.

GTP has seen tremendous success and has brought needed jobs and investment to the community. Development of the GTP has been through cooperation of the City of Gastonia, Gaston County and Electricities of North Carolina. From this partnership, the GTP has grown from one industry to five state of the art industries with strong international ties.

Both the City and County offer strong Business Retention programs, which continue to help maintain strong relationships with new industries.



“Clean Cities” Benfield Sanitation Services

In 2012, Benfield Sanitation Services partnered with CCFC stakeholder, PSNC Energy, to install a Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Fueling Station in Statesville. The station installation was completed by Vocation Energy.

Like coal and oil, natural gas is a fossil fuel. Natural gas has higher flammability due to its greater hydrogen content by volume; however, since it is a gas, it has a lower energy density than coal or oil. Unlike fossil fuels, natural gas is a clean-burning fuel and emits lower levels of harmful by-products into the air.

Benfield Sanitation Services’ new CNG fueled sanitation trucks have been purchased and are in use, costing an average of \$1.90 - \$2.00 per gallon of fuel in comparison to the diesel trucks that were replaced costing an average of \$3.85 per gallon. The new station and trucks are a five-year investment with payback set to be complete in year six. The CNG station and trucks serve the City of Statesville, City of Concord, Town of Harmony and Town of Troutman, now with cleaner burner fuel that is better for local air quality in the community.

