LEED for Neighborhood Development and the 2013 CNU Charter Awards

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Each year the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) recognizes excellence in urban design through its Charter Awards. The program recognizes "outstanding architectural, landscape, and urban designs built in harmony with their physical and social contexts." Winning projects embody the characteristics walkable, sustainable, and vibrant places at all scales – from vast, interconnected urban regions to well-designed buildings and city blocks.

With its emphasis on location, connectivity, street design, and walkablility, the LEED for Neighborhood Development rating system encourages many new urbanist principles in project planning, design, and construction. Projects certified under this rating system are well suited for the Charter Awards selection process. An example of this is Melrose Commons, a LEED for Neighborhood Development pilot project that received an Honorable Mention from CNU in 2012.

The application period for the 2013 Charter Awards closes Wednesday, January 30th. Winners will be honored during a special ceremony at CNU 21 in Salt Lake City on Thursday, May 30th. The Grand Prize winner receives $5,000 and the Academic Prize winner receives $3,000. Project teams that are interested in submitting a project for consideration can learn more about the award requirements and selection guidelines on the CNU website.

About Melrose Commons

A 30-block urban renewal project in the South Bronx, New York, Melrose Commons is characterized by incremental, sustainable infill development since the neighborhood revitalization plan was formally adopted by the New York City Planning Commission in 1994. It is a strong example of affordable housing development through its inclusion of low- and middle-income townhomes, condominiums, and apartments, and exemplifies inclusive housing practices with units dedicated to the formerly homeless and the elderly. Accompanying this residential development is community space and ground-floor retail. Community involvement in the planning process was essential to the success of the project, as it led to attention to building uses as well as their architectural style and the design of the urban context in which they were constructed.

The collaborative design team, led by Magnusson Architecture and Planning, asserts that Melrose Commons embodies the tenets of the Charter of the New Urbanism through:

- Livable streets arranged in compact, walkable blocks;
- A range of housing choices to support diversity;
- Schools, stores, and other services accessible by walking, bicycling or transit service;
- An affirming, human scale public realm.

It certified at the Silver level through the LEED-ND Pilot Program in February 2010.

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