



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Al Zelinka, City of Riverside Feted for “Turning Red Tape Into Red Carpet”

Regional awards recognize Assistant City Manager, economic development team

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside Assistant City Manager Al Zelinka received the prestigious “Leadership Award for Public Service” and several city employees and departments also were honored during the “Turning Red Tape Into Red Carpet Awards” Wednesday night.

Zelinka, whose duties include oversight of the Community and Economic Development Department, or CEDD, which works to support and enhance existing businesses and to attract new businesses to Riverside, played a major role in two significant economic development victories for Riverside.

He was instrumental in the cooperative effort with the City, County, UC Riverside, and the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce to attract to Riverside the new, \$419 million headquarters for the California Air Resources Board, along with 460 high-paying jobs; and he led an effort to open of a One Stop Shop at Riverside City Hall that streamlines development by centralizing all development-related city departments in one location.

Zelinka called the award “a reflection of the exceptional team of professionals, dedicated community partners, and empowering leaders with whom I work to advance Riverside’s quality of life.”

“Al Zelinka is changing the way Riverside does business,” City Manager John Russo said. “His own leadership, as well as his ability to build a first-rate team, is strengthening our local economy, creating jobs and letting the development community know that Riverside is a place that is worthy of investment.”

The awards from the Inland Empire Economic Partnership recognize public agencies from around the region that proactively reduce bureaucratic red tape to facilitate business growth, economic growth and job creation in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

In addition to the One Stop Shop, Riverside’s CEDD was recognized for the innovative Grow Riverside Program, which seeks to maximize urban agriculture in Riverside in support of a local food system that brings fresh fruits and vegetables to local tables.

Riverside Public Utilities and the Public Works Department also were recognized for expansion of the city's fiber optics network and for a fuel cell project.

"Riverside is a leader in implementing innovative solutions that foster business growth and job creation, and it is gratifying to see our employees recognized for their good work," Mayor Rusty Bailey said. "Al Zelinka and all the City employees whose work is being celebrated are definitely deserving of such honors."

The awards, as well as the individual city employees who were recognized, include:

- 1st place, Cooperation Among Cities, Counties or Agencies -- CARB (Al Zelinka, City Manager's Office)
- 1st place, Sustainable and Green Development -- GrowRiverside (Joyce Jong, CEDD)
- 2nd place, Business Retention -- One Stop Shop (Steve Coffey, CEDD)
- 2nd place, Smart City/Smart County -- Fiber Optic Expansion Project (Girish Balachandran/Riverside Public Utilities and Kris Martinez/Public Works)
- 3rd place, Sustainable and Green Development -- Fuel Cell (Girish Balachandran/RPU & Kris Martinez/Public Works)

"It's great to see the region recognize what we have been seeing in Riverside all along," Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said. "Riverside's commitment to innovation and economic development is second to none."