

Environment prize goes to light rail

By Shaun McKinnon

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The Valley's light-rail system received the top prize Saturday night in Valley Forward's Environmental Excellence Awards, a program that honors contributions to livability and sustainability.

The rail system, which opened less than a year ago, was recognized for connecting Phoenix, Mesa and Tempe with a transportation network that contest judges noted had already exceeded expectations.

"While light rail won't solve the Valley's transportation challenges, it offers a flexible and cost-effective alternative to the automobile and was designed to be integrated with all modes of transport," said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward, a community group that works on livability and sustainability issues.

The group presents its awards in more than a dozen categories each year to cities, community groups and private businesses. From among the category winners, the judges choose one to receive the President's Award, the contest's best-in-show recognition.

Metro Light Rail won a first place in the Livable Communities, Multimodal Transportation and Connectivity category. The awards are named "Crescordia," a Greek term that means "to grow in harmony."

More than 150 entries were submitted for the awards.

The rest of the winners:

» The Tempe Transportation Center won two first-place awards, one for industrial and public works buildings and structures, and one for its rooftop landscaping in the site development category.

» Arizona State University's Taylor Place, a student housing complex at the school's downtown Phoenix campus, won for multi-family residential building.

» Hanny's, a restaurant and lounge in

downtown Phoenix, won for its adaptive reuse of a historic building.

» The headquarters of Sundt, a Tempe-based contractor, was recognized for its green-building achievements, which included energy-saving features and efficient use of materials.

» ASU's Polytechnic Campus was honored for transforming a site on the former Williams Air Force Base into what the judges described as a walkable, shady campus.

» A remodeled Sunnyslope office building was recognized for its side development and landscape at the remodeled 40-year-old building. Imirzian and Associates architects and Ten Eyck Landscape Architects were named in the award.

» Habitat, the living wall and garden at the Phoenix Convention Center, was recognized for its design and use of resources to provide a comfortable gathering place.

» The Gateway to the McDowell Sonoran Preserve in Scottsdale was recognized for the work done to re-vegetate the site, the use of rainwater harvesting for water and solar energy to provide its power needs.

» Civic Space Park, a 2.8-acre public space near Central Avenue and Fillmore Street in Phoenix, was honored for its mix of gathering spaces and storefronts, built with efficient use of materials.

» Her Secret is Patience, the billowing outdoor sculpture suspended above Phoenix's Civic Space Park, won the top public-art honor. The judges saw "an important statement about fostering sense of place, community and pride."

» ASU's campus solarization project was honored for an effort to generate more renewable power on the school's Tempe campus.

» Burgis Envirolutions was honored in



the environmental-technologies category for its organic-refuse conversion process, which transforms more than a ton of food waste each day into a nutrient-rich effluent.

» Phoenix's Bag Central Station, a campaign to recycle plastic bags, was honored in the environmental education and communication category.

For a complete list of categories with merit award winners, go to www.valley-forward.org.



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