INDIANAPOLIS NAMED 2009 MOST DISABILITY FRIENDLY CITY

City tops six other finalists in national competition, receives $25,000 to further access and inclusion initiatives

INDIANAPOLIS – Mayor Greg Ballard today accepted congratulations from the president of the National Organization on Disability (NOD) in recognition of Indianapolis’s selection as the national model of a disability-friendly city. Sponsored by NOD, the 8th annual Accessible America competition showcases best practices in accessibility and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in community life.

“Indianapolis is honored to be recognized with the National Organization on Disability’s Accessible America Award,” said Mayor Ballard. “A commitment to make our city more inclusive for people with disabilities and the aging population has spanned generations, and I am pleased our collective efforts are benefiting both our residents and visitors.”

Approximately 20 percent of Indianapolis residents have a disability, and that number is expected to increase as medical technology saves more lives, baby boomers age and veterans return from combat.

NOD applauded Indianapolis for its historic commitment to access, including the creation of the Indianapolis Business Leadership Network, a business-led endeavor which promotes employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. It also highlighted the universally accessible features along the Cultural Trail and the efforts of Mayor’s Advisory Council on Disability in distinguishing Indianapolis from other communities. Additionally, NOD cited the City’s partnerships with the Veterans Administration, Bosma Enterprises and the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in providing internships for students and adult jobseekers with disabilities, as well as training exercises for contractors regarding physical access.

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Carol Glazer, NOD president remarked, “The National Organization on Disability is dedicated to recognizing best practices through which communities offer people with disabilities major footholds to an independent lifestyle, such as education and employment. We commend Indianapolis as a city that has worked hard to achieve a vision where opportunities are available to people of all abilities.”

As part of the recognition from NOD, the City will receive a check for $25,000. The funds will be presented to Mayor Ballard and representatives of the disability community by NOD at a future ceremony in Indianapolis. The money will be used to support access and inclusion for persons with disabilities and seniors in Indianapolis.

The six other finalists in the competition included: Alexandria, Virginia; Denver, Colorado; Louisville, Kentucky; New Haven, Connecticut; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and Surprise, Arizona. AARP is the sponsor of this year’s competition. The mission of NOD is to expand the participation and contribution of America’s 54 million men, women and children with disabilities in all aspects of life. NOD created the Accessible America Competition in 2001 to identify cities, towns or counties that value, recognize and promote the economic, social and cultural contribution that people with disabilities represent. The purpose of the Accessible America Competition is to recognize exemplary community practices that facilitate the comprehensive involvement of citizens with disabilities in community life and promote replication of best practices and innovative ideas to communities, nationwide.

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