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Miami 21 zoning overhaul wins award

The city of Miami's pedestrian-friendly zoning overhaul, which went into effect in 2010 after years of often-contentious debate, has hauled in another big national award, this one from the American Planning Association.

The planning profession's main organization this week named Miami 21 the winner of its 2011 National Planning Excellence Award for Best Practice, one of the group's top awards.

The APA's announcement hailed the new zoning code for paying ``particular attention to interaction between the public and private realms, especially to encourage walkable and vibrant streetscapes.'

The Miami 21 code, a cornerstone of former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz's administration, replaced an antiquated code that critics said encouraged haphazard, overscale development and fostered an urban environment that favored autos over pedestrians. The new, urban-oriented code requires new buildings to have pedestrian-friendly, sidewalk-hugging frontages to foster street activity.

Among other awards, Miami 21 previously garnered an American Architectural Foundation award for Diaz, and led Governing magazine to recognize former planning director Ana Gelabert-Sanchez, who shepherded the code to enactment, as its Top Public Official of the Year.

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