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**Davenport Institute Awards Platinum Public Engagement to
City of San Luis Obispo**

Los Angeles, CA – The Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University School of Public Policy is pleased to announce that the City of San Luis Obispo has earned **Platinum Public Engagement**, the Institute’s highest engagement award. The City is being honored with the award because of its dedication to involving residents in local decision-making through the employment of advanced public engagement policies and techniques.

“San Luis Obispo is a city that seeks to place residents at the center of policy making,” said Davenport Institute Executive Director Ashley Trim. “Public engagement is never easy, and there is always room for continued growth. But San Luis Obispo is setting an example of how to create a culture of participation city-wide. It’s an example we hope others will follow.”

The Davenport Institute launched its “How Are WE Doing?” public engagement evaluation and award program last May in response to frequent requests from local leaders seeking to take a “30,000 foot view” of their government’s public engagement practices. Through the Platinum Award, the Davenport Institute recognizes that the City of San Luis Obispo has scored highly on more than 17 of the 20 criteria listed on the [Institute’s Public Engagement Evaluation Platform](#), creating an environment amongst the City staff that promotes ongoing resident engagement.

In its application, San Luis Obispo demonstrated specific ways that it has created a culture of public engagement within City administration. It has formally prioritized public engagement in key staff job descriptions for the Administration Department, the Community Development Department, and for all city planners.

The City has also created responsibility and accountability for engagement beyond formal job descriptions through its Public Engagement and Noticing (PEN) manual. PEN serves to create a shared vision of engagement across departments and offers direction for broadening public outreach on various projects and policy initiatives throughout the City.

City of San Luis Obispo Receives Platinum Award for Public Engagement

The City has adopted best practices and creative techniques for engaging the public beyond city council meetings and public hearings and has prioritized public outreach beyond the “usual suspects” to include a diverse cross-section of the population. These include an active array of citizen advisory bodies and task forces, a willingness engage residents outside of city hall, and a commitment to both transparency and engagement online.

“The City is thrilled to receive this honor because it shows that our efforts to get the community involved in local government have been noticed,” said Mayor Heidi Harmon. “Allowing people to have a greater say in the decisions that impact their lives is a mainstay of democracy, and we’re pleased that the Davenport Institute is doing such a great job promoting involvement.”

In what is very much a college town, the City has ongoing active partnerships with both Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and Cuesta Community College. The city also partners with local non-profits and civic organizations, and seeks to build capacity for engagement through a neighborhood matching grant program.

“I appreciate all the efforts of our staff to make public engagement a priority in everything they do,” said City Manager Katie Lichtig. “Our goal is to ensure the public feels that City Hall is accessible. Our work better reflects the community we service when citizens are engaged and informed.”

For nearly a decade, the Davenport Institute has been researching, training, and consulting with public officials to improve ways in which local governments involve their residents in making difficult policy decisions. In May of this year, the Davenport Institute launched the “How are WE Doing? Public Engagement Evaluation Platform” to help cities and local government agencies evaluate public engagement efforts. The platform includes the opportunity for recognition as part of an awards program.

To learn more about the Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University visit the website [here](#). To learn more about the “How are We Doing? Public Engagement Evaluation Platform” or to submit a city for recognition visit the platform [here](#).

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