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Envision Utah wins Harvard's 'Bright Ideas' award

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Envision Utah has received Harvard University's "Bright Ideas" award, an honor that recognizes creative government initiatives and partnerships around the country.

In all, 36 organizations earned the award, an initiative of the Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center, which celebrates unique, government programs making a difference in daily lives.

Envision Utah is a public-private partnership that pioneered the process of regional visioning to address the challenges and strategies associated with rapid growth in the Beehive State.

"We're just thrilled," Kevin Fayles, Envision's community-relations manager, said Tuesday. "Any success we have is because of our partnerships."

Fayles notes Envision officials have met with representatives from 14 countries, and says their interactive planning model has influenced nearly 100 regions across the nation.

"Our collaborative, grass-roots process," he said, "has been very influential."

Other recipients include groups working to curb high school dropout rates in Philadelphia, promote health and wellness in Washington's King County, and empower Bostonians to beautify their city through a smartphone application.

Last week, Envision Utah, along with the Economic Development Corporation of Utah, Salt Lake Chamber and Utah Transit Authority, played host to government and business officials from Florida. The visitors later praised the Wasatch Front for its transportation and planning prowess.

"Utah is a great example of how different forms of transit can work together successfully to address congestion," Seminole County Commissioner Bob Dallari said in a statement. "It is clear that these transportation choices must be a key component of central Florida's future system."

The 54 visitors rode TRAX, FrontRunner and buses to get a feel for the system. They toured downtown Salt Lake City, South Jordan's Daybreak development, the university light-rail line, and rail stations in Davis County to learn about future development plans at those hubs.

“By sharing what they have learned and experienced in their quest to develop and implement a regional vision,” Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said in a statement, “central Floridians will benefit from their example.”

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