Senior Planner receives City Manager Leadership Award for the month of May

City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly presented the May City Manager Leadership Award to Senior Planner Michelle Halligan.

“Michelle is an unstoppable force, with a keen understanding that it can take a lot of small steps to achieve a greater goal,” Gallardo-Daly said. “Her clear passion and enthusiasm as a public servant is demonstrated in everything she works on, creating lasting and meaningful impacts in the Costa Mesa community. I’m honored to present her with this award.”

Michelle began working for the City in 2019 as a consultant in Current Planning, then acting as the Planning Division’s Cannabis subject matter expert, processing numerous cannabis applications, and providing guidance on cannabis entitlements. In January 2024, Michelle became a permanent member of the Costa Mesa family as a Senior Planner in the Advanced Planning & Housing Division.

Over the last two years, Michelle has project manager for various key advanced planning efforts including implementation of the City’s Housing Element, managing the City’s Neighborhoods Where We All Belong effort to rezone the City’s Housing Element and Measure K sites, supporting the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP).

Michelle has spearheaded outreach for the neighborhoods effort, including branding, maximizing our social media and CMTV assets, and hosting several pop-up events across the City.

When the City received a letter from HCD, requesting a faster pathway for Housing Element certification, she quickly jumped

in to help pivot and set a new schedule for rezoning the Housing Element sites.

She met the HCD’s timeline and got the Housing Element rezoning approved by City Council in March.

The mother of twins, Michelle is also on the Orange Coast Mother’s of Multiples Board and the Friends of Casa Holiday Luncheon Committee that raised over $700,000 for foster care programs in Orange County last year.

Michelle has a bachelor’s degree in City and Regional Planning from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and over 18 years of dedicated planning experience.