



American Planning Association  
**Economic Development Division**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

A black silhouette of a city skyline with various building shapes, including a prominent skyscraper on the right side, set against a light gray background.

# Best Practices in Economic Development Awards

**2023**



## Best Practices in Economic Development Awards

### OVERVIEW

The American Planning Association Economic Development Division's mission is to advance the practice and state of the art of economic development planning by increasing the understanding of economic development as a key element of public policy at all levels of government, and to promote it as a critical element of the neighborhood, community, regional and national planning process.

Economic development consists of policies and actions which strive to improve the overall quality of life for a community or region by raising its standard of living, reducing inequality and using resources in a sustainable manner. Each year, the Economic Development Division recognizes communities that exemplify these qualities in its annual **Best Practices in Economic Development Awards** program.

#### The 2023 Award Categories are:

1. Best Practices
2. Innovation

***Note: One project from either of the two above categories will be honored with the Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development Award.***

3. Student Project

Deadline for submission: 5:00 p.m. (EST) on Friday, February 3rd, 2023. All nominations shall be submitted using the form provided.

The winners of the awards are announced at the 2023 Annual National APA Planning conference to be held in Philadelphia from April 1-4. We strongly recommend but do not require awardees to attend the national conference.

Award recipients will receive an awards certificate, be featured in the Economic Development Division's quarterly newsletter and be given the opportunity to participate in a webinar discussing their award-winning project.

## ELIGIBILITY

### **Nomination Guidelines:**

1. Any nominated effort must have been adopted, implemented, or completed, as relevant, within three years of the deadline for submission of nominations.
2. Competition entries are not eligible for nomination unless they have been fully adopted as a plan or are moving forward into implementation.
3. A nominated effort may only be entered in one award category per award year.
4. Projects or programs may be related to locations within the United States or internationally.
5. To ensure efficient review, all pieces of the submission must be provided in English.
6. Only APA members may submit nominations.

### **Requirements for all categories:**

1. Current members of the APA staff, APA Board of Directors, and AICP Commission are not eligible to make nominations or receive awards.
2. Any other individuals or organizations may submit nominations, subject to other eligibility requirements.

**For more information about eligibility, please contact ED Division Awards Committee member, Sharmili Reddy, AICP, at [apacondev@gmail.com](mailto:apacondev@gmail.com).**

## REVIEW AND SELECTION

**The awards selection committee will consist of leaders and experts in the area of economic development. The review process will generally consist of the following:**

1. Each nomination will be reviewed by at least three individuals from the selection committee.
2. The committee may choose to recognize any number of entries in each category except for the Donald E. Hunter Excellence award which will be awarded only to one entry.
3. The selection committee reserves the right to move an award nomination into a category other than the one under which it was submitted.
4. The selection committee may elect to not present an award in any category, or several categories, regardless of the number of submissions in that category.
5. Contact with members of the selection committee to discuss an award nomination is strongly discouraged.
6. The chair of the Awards Committee will notify the nominator of the status of their award submission by late February 2023.

## DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION

**Entries will be accepted through 5:00 p.m. (EST) on Friday, February 3rd, 2023. All nominations shall be submitted via the form provided. The form can be found at [economic.planning.org](http://economic.planning.org). The nomination form and supporting materials shall be emailed to [apaecondev@gmail.com](mailto:apaecondev@gmail.com).**

1. Be sure to review the eligibility and criteria requirements for the relevant award category prior to completing the form.
2. The form can be downloaded and saved on your computer. Please fill all the necessary information prior to sending the document.
3. If you submit the form once and would like to resubmit before the end of the nomination period, please feel free to do so. The selection committee will review only the most recently completed form.
4. There is no entry fee.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following pages contain a set of evaluation criteria for each award category. **Please make sure to explicitly and directly address how your project meets each criterion.** The selection committee will award each criterion response a score based on the below:

- Narrative description = 20 points
- Project elements = 75 points (each element worth 15 points)
- Additional supporting materials = 5 points

Submissions eligible for the Hunter award will be assessed for an additional 50 points for vision, leadership and display of exemplary commitment to the cause of furthering innovation in the field of economic development.

## Donald E. Hunter Excellence in Economic Development

The award is named to honor Don Hunter, a long-time planner and economic developer who contributed a great deal of his time and wisdom to the APA, including serving as Chair of the Division. Don Hunter passed away on December 30, 2009.

This award honors a project or program that demonstrates vision, leadership, innovation and commitment to the field of economic development that has a strong foundation in planning principles. Eligible nominations shall exemplify every single project element — high impact, originality, embraces equity and inclusion, high success and demonstrates a significant contribution to the community.

One project or program that is submitted in the Best Practice or Innovation category will be recognized with this award. There is no separate submission for this award.

## CATEGORY: BEST PRACTICE

This award category is reserved for projects or programs that exemplify best practices in the field of economic development.

### Criteria:

1. **Narrative description of the plan or project** (Max. 250 words) that shall fit one or both of the following definitions:
  - a. Economic Development Planning Project: A series of deliberate policies leading to initiatives that enhance the jurisdiction's economic opportunities and quality of life.
  - b. Economic Development Implementation Project: Programs or activities that enhance a community's quality of life.
  
2. **Project elements**
  - a. Impact: Economic impact on community such as number of jobs created or increase in tax base.
  - b. Originality: Unique concept or appreciable refinement of existing techniques or procedures.
  - c. Equity and inclusion: Focus on underrepresented population or area and addresses improving their quality of life.
  - d. Implementation and results: Effectiveness of work proposals that have been carried out or show the promise of being carried out.
  - e. Contribution to community: Demonstrates application to community needs and desires.
  
3. **Letters of support**

At least one letter of support is required but up to three may be submitted.
  
4. **Additional supporting materials** (Refer to information provided in nomination form)

Applicants may provide letters of support, news clippings, brochures, slides, videos, etc. in electronic format. Applicants agree to allowing the use of materials for promotional purposes by APA.

## CATEGORY: INNOVATION

This award category is reserved for projects or programs that are creative and establish new pathways in addressing unique economic development needs.

### Criteria:

1. **Narrative description of the plan or project** (Max. 250 words) that shall fit one or both of the following definitions:
  - a. Economic Development Planning Project: A series of deliberate policies leading to initiatives that enhance the jurisdiction's economic opportunities and quality of life.
  - b. Economic Development Implementation Project: Programs or activities that enhance a community's quality of life.
  
2. **Project elements**
  - a. Impact: Strong economic impact on the community in a distinct way.
  - b. Originality: Unique concept or appreciable refinement of existing techniques or procedures.
  - c. Equity and inclusion: Focus on underrepresented population or area and addresses improving their quality of life in a manner that has not been previously done.
  - d. Implementation and results: Effectiveness of work proposals that have been carried out or show the promise of being carried out in an extraordinary way.
  - e. Contribution to community: Demonstrates application to community needs and desires in a unique way.
  
3. **Letters of support**

At least one letter of support is required but up to three may be submitted.
  
4. **Additional supporting materials** (Refer to information provided in nomination form)

Applicants may provide letters of support, news clippings, brochures, slides, videos, etc. in electronic format. Applicants agree to allowing the use of materials for promotional purposes by APA.

## CATEGORY: STUDENT PROJECT

This award category is reserved for an outstanding class project or program or paper completed by a student or group of students in Planning Accreditation Board-accredited planning programs. The work shall primarily be carried out by a student or group of students under the guidance of a faculty member or practicing professional. Nominated individuals do not need to be current students but projects must have been completed within the past two years.

### Criteria:

1. **Narrative description of the plan or project** (Max. 250 words) that shall fit one or both of the following definitions:
  - a. Economic Development Planning Project: A series of deliberate policies leading to initiatives that enhance the jurisdiction's economic opportunities and quality of life.
  - b. Economic Development Implementation Project: Programs or activities that enhance a community's quality of life.
  
2. **Project elements**
  - a. Impact: Economic impact on community such as number of jobs created or increase in tax base.
  - b. Originality: Unique concept or appreciable refinement of existing techniques or procedures.
  - c. Equity and inclusion: Focus on underrepresented population or area and addresses improving their quality of life.
  - d. Implementation and results: Effectiveness of work proposals that have been carried out or show the promise of being carried out.
  - e. Contribution to community: Demonstrates application to community needs and desires.
  
3. **Letters of support**

At least one letter of support is required from a faculty member but up to three may be submitted.
  
4. **Additional supporting materials** (Refer to information provided in nomination form)

Applicants may provide letters of support, news clippings, brochures, slides, videos, etc. in electronic format. Applicants agree to allowing the use of materials for promotional purposes by APA.

## NOMINATION INFORMATION

**Applicants are strongly encouraged to read these instructions prior to completing the form.**

1. All information must be submitted in its entirety to be considered for the award. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
2. Only APA members may submit an application.
3. Nomination form and supporting materials shall be emailed to [apaecondev@gmail.com](mailto:apaecondev@gmail.com).
4. The maximum size of all files, including the nomination form and supporting materials, may not exceed a total of 10 MB.
5. Letters of support (at least one is required, up to three are allowed) — maximum two pages each
  - a. Must be saved as a PDF file and included.
  - b. May not be written by the person submitting the nomination or another individual at the same organization, by the nominated individual, or by anyone who directly worked on the project (project team, consultant team, planning department staff, client, or anyone that had daily interaction/oversight). APA staff may not provide a letter of support.
  - c. Student award submissions must include a letter of support from a faculty member.
6. Digital images with captions:
  - a. Up to five (5) digital images may be submitted. They may be photos, graphics, etc. Please do not include photo collages.
  - b. Images should provide context and show the nominee's positive or intended outcomes.
  - c. Submit only images which may be reproduced by APA ED Division without a fee, charge, or copyright infringement.
  - d. Each image must be in JPEG format.
  - e. Please use a standard name for all photos – "Last Name of Submitter – Photo #" (Example: "Smith – Photo 3").
  - f. Each image must have an associated caption. Captions should be between 15 and 25 words each, with a maximum of 250 characters, including spaces.
7. Other materials are optional, and may include up to five letter-sized pages of press clips, brochures, posters, design guidelines, fact sheets, etc.
8. All applicants will receive a confirmation email within 48 hours upon submission. If you do not receive a confirmation, please email [apaecondev@gmail.com](mailto:apaecondev@gmail.com). Only winners will be notified when they are selected.

**Questions or issues related to your submission should be directed via email to Economic Development Division Awards Committee member Sharmili Reddy, AICP, at [apaecondev@gmail.com](mailto:apaecondev@gmail.com).**