



## APA Arizona Chapter Awards Program - the stage for showcasing great achievements and outstanding contributors to planning in Arizona

Recognizing our strengths as leaders of forward looking and lasting change enables us to meet future challenges and anticipate opportunities within our planning profession. The American Planning Association, Arizona Chapter (APA Arizona) seeks award submittals that demonstrate exceptional contributions to our state over the past year. This peer celebration will be held in person this year in conjunction with the State Planning Conference at the Awards Luncheon on Thursday, November 5, 2026. A variety of categories provide different opportunities for recognition.

## DEADLINE

The submission deadline for entries (all delivery methods) and accompanying materials is **Friday, July 10, 2026** by 4:00 p.m. Any application forms or supporting material received after this deadline will not be accepted.

**American Planning Association, Arizona Chapter**  
17235 N. 75th Avenue, Suite D145  
Glendale, Arizona 85308

## SUBMIT ONLINE

We are encouraging all submissions to be made on line. **To submit online, please [click here](#).**

## JUDGING

All submittals will be evaluated by APA Arizona's Awards Committee. The Committee's deliberations are open to observers; however, no presentations or comments are allowed. The awards evaluation meeting will take place in mid August 2026. The Awards Committee's selection process typically lasts two to six hours. All persons nominating award entries will be notified in writing of the Committee's decisions within two weeks of the deliberations. If sufficient quality applications are received by the Committee, the Committee may award Honorable Mentions in any or all categories, and the Awards Committee reserves the right to present multiple awards for each category. **The Awards Committee is under no obligation to grant an award in any category and may also award multiples to the Planning Excellence category.** In the event there are not an adequate number of nominations for the Distinguished Contributors to Arizona Planning, the Committee may function as the ad hoc nominating committee.

## ENTRY FEES

- Entry fee is \$95 per entry and \$20 for student submittal; the submission is not complete until the entry fee has been paid.
- No entry fee is required for any of the four Distinguished Contributors to Arizona planning categories. A payment window will open upon digital submission. For additional information, contact the APA Arizona Office at (602) 866-7188.

Every year, the Arizona Chapter of the American Planning Association honors Arizonans who have made outstanding planning contributions to the profession and to their communities. The APA Arizona awards program celebrates the work of professional planners, citizen planners and others in making our communities better places to live.

The APA AZ Board of Directors urges private consultants, local governments, organizations, universities and individuals to submit entries for the 2026 awards program. Then, please join us at our annual conference where we will showcase these award-winning achievements from across our state. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank you for your hard work and dedication to excellent planning, and we look forward to seeing you in November!

Sarah Ann Meggison, AICP  
President of the American Planning Association,  
Arizona Chapter



## 2026 AWARD CATEGORIES

### **Great Public Places Arizona**

Planning is behind the places communities value most. This category serves to recognize streets and public spaces that make communities stronger and bring people together through good planning. A Great Place demonstrates the importance of planning, provides an opportunity for promotion and tourism, and illustrates how local policies strengthen our communities. Entries should describe the planning story, and why it is worthy of a Great Places designation. This category is intended for plans that have been implemented and celebrate the results.

---

### **Planning Excellence**

This award acknowledges innovation, originality, new methods, deeper engagement, and effective results. This category is an opportunity for the nominee to make the case for what was innovative and groundbreaking for their context, what positively influenced our communities. This category demonstrates how planning great communities should be recognized for the quality of their built environment, care and sensitive treatment of the natural environment, and attention to the creation of equitable and sustainable communities and economies. Breaking barriers is different in every location based on the history, culture, and built environment of the context planners work in. Eligible submittals should describe the status quo, draw a contrast between previous work and the groundbreaking work, describe the impact the groundbreaking work made in the organization, people, and/or place.

Examples: Affordable housing plan, growth management or design guidelines, applications of technology, fostering greater public engagement in planning processes, transportation options, or efforts that create a sense of place.

---

### **Strengthening Communities: Resilience & Sustainability**

This award acknowledges plans that strengthen existing communities from within. A plan with a foundation of sustainable metrics, environmental justice, historic preservation, revitalization/reuse, infill, historic preservation, or an operating program. This category recognizes strategy that creates a more sustainable community and/or increases the ability of a community to recover from and adapt to shocks and stresses (economic impacts, natural disasters, human-caused disasters, climate change, etc.), resulting in it becoming stronger, more equitable, and better prepared for the future. Eligible submittals should identify innovative approaches for addressing a community's specific needs or reducing its risks. Describe what steps were taken to build momentum and support for your entry. Explain how planners helped facilitate outcomes that gained support for planning practices. Demonstrate how the initiative has strengthened the resiliency of the community. Identify what benchmarks were used to determine success and be explicit about how the results have made a difference in the lives of people affected.

Examples: A comprehensive plan, climate adaptation plan, or other plan that addresses resilience in substantive and innovative ways; a program or project such as use of green infrastructure to protect a community from hazards and build resilience; community engagement that increases understanding of resilience and leads to action; public health efforts or economic development plans or initiatives that improve the overall human and fiscal health of the community, etc..



## Regional or General or Comprehensive Plan

*(Jurisdiction population 50,000 and over)*

*(Jurisdiction population 49,999 or less)*

**A REGIONAL PLAN** is a collaborative plan, project, or study by two or more organizations creating a coordinated effort across jurisdictional boundaries to improve something such as air quality, travel, economic growth, and land-use compatibility. Examples include: joint county/city planning, private/public and public/public partnerships, multi-agency processes.

Any Regional or General or Comprehensive Plan or plan update prepared with applicable Arizona statutes and adopted and ratified by the jurisdiction for which it was prepared. reduction programs.

---

## Student Planning Project

Any distinctive student plan, project, ordinance, regulation, or program showing exceptional quality may be submitted. Entries may be for any area of planning (i.e. general plan, transportation plan, specific area plan, master plan, historic plan, design guidelines, policy document, public outreach, etc.) and will be evaluated in accordance with the submission and eligibility requirements delineated in this application. Work submitted by a student, student group, or their educational institution must be entered in the Student Planning category. While there will be one overall student project winner, the Committee may select additional student projects submitted for a Certificate of Exceptional Work.

---

## Distinguished Contributors to Arizona Planning

### **Distinguished Citizen Planner**

An individual advancing or promoting the cause of planning in the public arena. This includes commissioners, boards of zoning appeals members, economic development boards, or other appointed officials.

### **Distinguished Professional Planner**

An individual making sustained contributions to the profession through distinguished practice, teaching, or writing.

### **Distinguished Public Official**

An individual elected or appointed to public office contributing significantly to planning.

### **Distinguished Planning Pioneer**

An individual making significant contributions to the planning profession for more than 25 years.



## NOMINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL AWARDS

Each submission may be entered in only one award category. Entries must be made using the embedded digital APA Arizona Nomination application form. Forms can be filled out electronically and then printed to be attached to the nomination materials submitted. Handwritten applications are not accepted. Nominations must be complete. Incomplete submittals will not be considered by the Committee. This is no different than agency requirements to submit a complete application for an entitlement. It ensures a level playing field for each submission. Applications must include a maximum two-page, minimum 10-point font size, written summary of the project. This is the opportunity to promote the nomination by explaining how the submission meets each of the following judging criteria.

### Judging Criteria

- Originality / Innovation
- Transferability
- Quality
- Comprehensiveness
- Public Participation
- Role of Planners
- Effectiveness/Results

Nominations may also include letters of support, photos, news clippings, or visual or digital media illustrating the achievement and are encouraged. For Distinguished Contributors to Arizona Planning, please include the names, mailing addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails of two references who may be contacted for additional information.

### **A Complete Nomination Application**

Please follow these instructions exactly for **hard copy** submittals. Incomplete nominations will not be considered.

A complete nomination application must include:

1. One (1) paper copy of the completed Nomination Application Form.
2. One (1) paper copy of a Narrative (2-page maximum).
3. One (1) paper copy of the entire submittal including all exhibits and supplemental supporting materials (letters, photographs, etc.).
4. One (1) digital copy of the entire submittal (including all of the items listed above) saved on a CD or flash drive. Please provide all digital files as a \*.pdf.
5. All submittals must be properly secured and organized within closable folder or binder. APA Arizona is not responsible for assembling or copying submission materials.
6. Please note:
  - All submissions become the property of APA Arizona.
  - Nomination materials will not be returned.
  - Committee policies prohibit any communication with any committee member on behalf of a nomination.
  - Questions can be directed to the APA Arizona office.

For online submittals, please [click here](#).



## ELIGIBILITY

- Nominators may submit more than one entry per category. Each submission counts as one entry. If entering the same entry in multiple categories, each submission is treated as a separate nomination and the appropriate fees and copies are needed.
- Any plan, project, or program entered must have been adopted or accepted within the last five years.
- Student efforts submitted by public or private practicing planners, public agencies or municipalities must be entered in an appropriate awards category other than Student Planning. The Student Planning category is reserved for classroom projects.
- Duplicate awards or certificates may be requested at an additional cost. Please call the APA Arizona office for details.
- **At the Committee's discretion, more than one award may be given in a category to recognize planning excellence.**
- **The Committee is not required to make an award if it finds that none of the submittals in a category meet the evaluation criteria for an award.**
- The Committee recognizes that economic conditions result in planners finding unique and unusual niches in which to work. However, merely being a planner responsible for a project does not qualify the project for nomination. The work itself must meet the standards of the categories.
- It is possible for Distinguished Contributor awards to be granted posthumously.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

### **ORIGINALITY / INNOVATION**

"Thinking outside the box" resulting in committed creative solutions taking unconventional approaches to community issue solutions. The nomination's principles demonstrate willingness for risk taking with the ultimate goal of enhanced community livability.

### **TRANSFERABILITY**

The ability to use plans, projects, policies, programs, or studies (portions of or entirely) in other jurisdictions to achieve the same or similar planning goals.

### **QUALITY**

Excellence of thought, clarity of analysis, quality of writing, graphics, and professional character of the presentation.

### **COMPREHENSIVENESS**

The extent that the plan, project, program, or study addresses the planning issue(s) in a comprehensive manner.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The extent that the plan, project, program, or study included and/or involved the public.

### **ROLE OF PLANNERS**

The function or functions performed by the planner or planners throughout the plan project, program, or study.

### **EFFECTIVENESS / RESULTS**

The importance of the submittal on furthering planning and its impact to furthering state, regional, or local planning goals and principles. Document the success of the submittal or its ability to be carried out.



American Planning Association  
Arizona Chapter  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

# 2026 AWARDS

The Annual Awards of the American Planning Association, Arizona Chapter

## ADDITIONAL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTORS

The candidates for any of the four Distinguished Contributor to Arizona Planner Awards will be evaluated using the following factors:

- Application of the goals and responsibilities of the profession
- Contribution to planning in Arizona
- Outstanding service
- Commitment
- Effectiveness
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Significance
- Long-term results

### **PUBLICIZING AWARD WINNERS**

In addition to the actual award or honorable mention, the Awards Committee sends a news release to media in local communities and throughout the state announcing the awards and providing local contact information for winners for each category.

### **GETTING THE NOMINATIONS TO APA ARIZONA**

Nominator is wholly responsible for ensuring the nomination materials arrive on time. APA Arizona is not responsible for late delivery, misdirected submissions, or failure of delivery agent to meet committed delivery deadline. All nominations must be received in the APA Arizona office no later than 4:00 p.m. on Monday, June 2, 2025.

### **AWARD WINNER REQUIREMENTS**

APA Arizona will ask all award winners to submit a 90-120 second video highlighting their project to be shown during the presentation of Awards.

### **PREVIOUS AWARD WINNERS**

Previous APA Arizona award winners are listed on our website at:

<https://arizona.planning.org/community/apa-arizona-chapter-awards/>



## NOMINATION APPLICATION FORM

**Nomination name:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This is the name that will appear any time the award is mentioned, including on awards and certificates, at the award luncheon, on any programs, and within any news releases. Please ensure spelling is correct. Maximum of 75 characters, including spaces. Entries with the bold line are on the award.*

**Category:**

- Great Public Places Arizona
- Regional or General or Comprehensive Plan  
(Jurisdiction population 50,000 and over)
- Regional or General or Comprehensive Plan  
(Jurisdiction population 49,999 or less)
- Planning Excellence
- Strengthening Communities: Resilience & Sustainability
- Student Planning Project
- Distinguished Citizen Planner
- Distinguished Professional Planner
- Distinguished Public Official
- Distinguished Planning Pioneer

**Nominee:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person (Nominator): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Business or organization submitting nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Fee enclosed:  \$95.00     \$20.00 (STUDENTS)

**A check must accompany all hard copy submissions. You may also call the office to make payment.**

**REMEMBER TO INCLUDE A MAXIMUM TWO-PAGE, MINIMUM 10 POINT FONT-SIZE NARRATIVE**

The Nominee is the only one who will receive the physical award. Please provide text for award engraving with a 75-character maximum including spaces. Duplicate copies of awards are available, at cost, from APA Arizona. Category, nomination name, and nominee will be selected

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Category:</b>        |  |
| <b>Nomination name:</b> |  |
| <b>Nominee:</b>         |  |

Example: Public Participation Program

**SUBMITTALS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN 4:00 PM, FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2026**

[Submit Online Here](#)

APA Arizona

17235 N. 75th Avenue, Suite D-145, Glendale, Arizona 85308

(602) 866-7188 • info@azplanning.org