



2026 NORTHERN AWARDS PROGRAM

ATTACHMENT A

STATE-ELIGIBLE AWARD CATEGORIES

NOTE: The California Chapter Awards Program will require an Excellence (first place) award at the section level to proceed to the Chapter awards program for several specific categories. For information regarding the California Chapter application process, please visit apacalifornia.org/news-media/news-announcements/awards

Opportunity and Empowerment Award

For a plan, program, or project that improved quality of life for low-and moderate-income community residents. Emphasis is placed on how creative housing, economic development, and private investments have been used in or with a comprehensive community development plan to empower a community. This award also emphasizes tangible results and recognizes the planning discipline and its contribution as a community strategy. The strategy should have been in effect for a minimum of three years.

***Examples:** Implementation of general plans, specific plans, strategic plans, or economic plans; Regulatory reform; workforce development; affordable housing preservation; growth management; public-private partnerships; transportation innovations; economic recovery initiatives, commercial district revitalization, capital improvements; community participation; and diverse housing planning.*

Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan Award

To a comprehensive plan or general plan that advances the science and art of planning. The award honors America's most famous planner, Daniel Burnham, for his contributions to the planning profession and to a greater awareness of the benefits of good planning. The nominated effort helps advance communities toward a safe, stronger, and more equitable future.

***Examples:** General Plan updates and Specific Plans.*

Implementation Award

Recognizing an effort that demonstrates a significant achievement for an area—a single community or a region—in accomplishing positive changes because of planning. This award emphasizes long-term, measurable results. Nominated efforts should have been in continuous effect for a minimum of three (3) years, not including the time for plan preparation and approval.

***Examples:** Implementation of general plans, specific plans, strategic plans, or economic plans; smart growth, urban design, or signage; farmland preservation, wetland mitigation, or resource conservation; capital improvements, economic recovery initiatives, commercial district revitalization; citizen participation, neighborhood improvement, ; transportation management or sustained economic development.*

Resilience and Sustainability Award

This award recognizes a 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.

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.*

Transportation Planning Award

This award honors efforts to increase transportation choices for all populations, reducing dependence on private automobiles and helping to ease congestion and reducing climate change impacts.

Examples: *Transportation studies, complete streets plans or projects, plans for pedestrian, streets, highways, aviation, parking, maritime, transit or rail; development and expansion of transportation systems, development and expansion of trail systems.*

Planning Excellence Award

This award recognizes how planning is essential to addressing desires, needs, or challenges within a community, county, region, or specific geographic location. This category emphasizes outcomes and demonstrates how planning helps to create stronger, more equitable communities.

Examples: *Affordable housing plans, 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.*

Grassroots Initiative Award

Honoring an initiative that illustrates how an individual, neighborhood, community group or other local non-governmental entity utilized the planning process to address a specific need or issue within the community, or to advance or promote the cause of planning in the public arena. Emphasis is placed on the success of planning in new or different settings, with total project budget (including staff, consultant, and direct expenses) not exceeding \$200,000.

Examples: *Community policing or drug prevention, neighborhood outreach initiatives, programs designed for special populations, public art or cultural efforts, community festivals, environmental or conservation initiatives, summer recreational initiatives for children, vacant lot management, transportation innovations, or focused tourism ventures; or exhibition, videos, films, or public campaigns/petitions.*

Urban Design Award

This award honors efforts to create a sense of place, whether downtown, street, public space, neighborhood, or campus effort.

Examples: Streetscape plans, design guidelines, objective design standards, downtown and neighborhood districts, public space plans, hospital, college or other campus plans.

Planning Firm Award (private sector)

Honors a planning firm that has produced distinguished work that continues to influence the professional practice of planning.

NOTE: Requires first place win at the Section level (no ties) for the same year. This category only offers Excellence Award at the Chapter level.

Planning Agency Award (public sector)

This award honors the work of a public sector planning agency that has continually produced a program of exceptional work that has elevated awareness about planning.

Examples: Metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning associations, planning department, planning board, zoning board.

NOTE: Requires first place win at the Section level (no ties) for the same year. This category only offers Excellence Award at the Chapter level.

Advancing Diversity and Social Change in Honor of Paul Davidoff Award

This award honors an individual, project, group, or organization that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. The nominated effort demonstrates a sustained commitment to advocacy by addressing the concerns of women or minority groups through specific actions or contributions within the planning profession or through planning practice. The award honors the late APA member, Paul Davidoff, for his contributions to the planning profession.

Examples: A general or comprehensive plan that improves the living conditions of those in an underrepresented neighborhood; an individual working to improve the lives of others (e.g. engaged citizens demonstrating outstanding leadership and impacts in a community, region, or state; members of planning commissions, board of appeals, economic development boards, environmental or historic preservation boards, commissions or committees, or other appointed officials; elected officials holding office at the local, regional, or state level; citizen activists or neighborhood leaders), a policy that addresses a need not currently met through other efforts (e.g. Community policing or drug prevention, programs designed for special populations, public art or cultural efforts, community festivals, summer recreational initiatives for children, vacant lot management, transportation innovations, or focused tourism ventures).

Academic Award

To faculty and/or students to recognize outstanding work done in planning schools on an individual or collective basis. If the nominated work has a specific beneficiary, the nomination should be submitted in the Section where the beneficiary of the work is located. If there is no specific beneficiary of the work, the nomination should be submitted in the Section where the school is located.

Examples: *research, tool, or project that benefit real-world city planning at large; collaboration with public or private sectors through academic activities; academic programs/curriculums that create long-term positive impacts on generations of emerging planners.*

Communications Initiative and Outreach Award

This award honors an individual, project, or program that uses information and education about the value of planning to create greater awareness among citizens or specific segments of the public. The award celebrates how planning improves a community's quality of life. This award also honors efforts to "tell the planning story" and increase awareness and understanding about the planning profession.

Examples: *Newspaper articles, series of blog posts or a planning-focused blog, publications (books or magazines), websites, podcasts, films, curricula designed to teach children about planning, neighborhood empowerment programs, use of technology to expand public participation in planning, or Broad community efforts showing how planning can make a difference.*

Planning Landmark and Planning Pioneer Awards

Nominations for Planning Landmark Awards may only be submitted for those projects, initiatives, or endeavors located in the Section, and nominations for Pioneer Awards may only be submitted for those individuals that are current, retired, or deceased Section members. Special criteria have been established for these two award categories.

- A. **Planning Landmark Award:** The Planning Landmark Award is for a planning project, initiative, or endeavor that is at least 25 years old that is historically significant, initiated a new direction in planning or impacted American planning, cities or regions over a broad range of time or space.
- B. **Planning Pioneer Award:** Presented to pioneers of the profession who have made personal and direct innovations in American planning that have significantly and positively redirected planning practices, education or theory with long-term results.