American Planning Association
Pennsylvania Chapter
Making Great Communities Happen

2025 Planning Awards
Call for Nominations

Honoring
The Best & Brightest in Pennsylvania Planning

The PA Chapter of APA is pleased to invite nominations for the **2025 PA Chapter of APA Planning Awards**, to be presented at the Annual Conference, October 12-14, 2025, in Harrisburg. It is the opportunity to showcase distinguished individuals and successful projects – **the best and brightest in Pennsylvania planning!**

Nominations are encouraged for:

- Compelling **Plans**.
- Innovative **Projects, Programs, and Practices**.
- Inspiring **Leaders**.

It isn't hard to submit a nomination.

1. Enter information on the online form.
2. Attach a narrative.
3. Attach support docs and images that help tell the story.

We look forward to receiving your award nomination by the Friday, May 16th deadline.

Thank you.

Craig D. Peiffer,
Awards Committee Chair

Award Winners

- Are leaders
- Are innovators
- Overcome challenges
- Have positive outlooks
- Learn from mistakes
- Are adaptable
- Set and pursue goals
- Get things done
- Make a difference

Successful planning organizations have them. They may be elected officials, planning commission members, agency or firm staff, or citizen advocates.

You know them. Submit their nominations in 2025!

Pennsylvania Chapter Awards Committee Members

Craig Peiffer, AICP
Deputy Planning Director
City of Bethlehem

David Hunter, AICP
Executive Director
Berks County Planning Commission

Jeff Raykes, D.Ed., AICP
Managing Principal
Stewart Group Consulting, LLC

Martha Cross, AICP
Principal
MAKE Advisory Services, LLC

Jonathan Heilman, AICP, PMP
Client Manager
C.S. Davidson, Inc.

Mary Liz Donato
Planning Manager
Lackawanna County Planning Commission

2025 PA Chapter Awards Guidelines

Submission Requirements:

- **Complete the on-line submission form and attach required documents.** Go to www.planningpa.org, Events & Training, Annual Awards and follow instructions.
- **Brevity and simplicity are strongly encouraged.** Nominations should not exceed the maximum of words indicated below. Nominators should consider including only enough referenced information to demonstrate adherence with the published criteria.

All Nominations MUST Include:

1. **Submission form** – PA Chapter Awards Submission form completed online.
2. **Narrative** – A narrative in Microsoft Word or PDF format (1,200 words maximum). It must include a summary describing purpose, process, responsible parties, products, results, etc. for a nominated plan, project, or effort, or significant work and accomplishments for a nominated person; plus, a justification describing how the nomination meets each of the published criteria for the category in which the award is sought. Nominators should cite specific examples that illustrate those points.
3. **Plan or Document** – A complete copy of a nominated plan or document in PDF format, or a reliable, working URL link to the complete document on a publicly-accessible web site.
4. **Letters of Support** – At least two (2) but no more than five (5) one-page letters of support in PDF or JPG format. Letters should be original and offer support for the value of the nominated effort. Letters may not be written by the nominator of the submission, by the nominated individual, or by anyone who directly performed the nominated work.
5. **Supporting Documents** – Nominations may include newspaper articles or other support documents in PDF or JPG format testifying to the nominated effort or person.
6. **Supporting Images** – Nominations may include images that provide context and help describe the significant work and results of the nominated effort or person. Captions must be included for each image. Images and captions may be arranged in MS Word or PDF format or submitted as JPGs.

Award Winners:

- Should the nomination be selected for an award, the nominator will be required to submit up to 10 images for a plan, project, or effort, or one photo of the nominated individual plus 5 representative images. Images must be copyright-free and in JPG format.

Awards Eligibility:

- Awards are open to PA Chapter of APA members and non-members except where noted.
- Any person, agency, firm, or organization may submit a nomination. Persons may not nominate themselves for individual awards. Only PA Chapter members may nominate other members for a Distinguished Service Award.
- Members of the PA Chapter Awards Committee, staff, and Board of Directors are not eligible to enter or be nominated to receive individual awards.
- All applications must be certified by the nominator. Submissions lacking certification may be rejected.
- Any nominated plan, program, project, tool, process, report, or ordinance must have been published, implemented, or completed within three years of the date of submission, and should address a Pennsylvania community, region, or subject matter.
- The PA Chapter Awards Committee intends to convey multiple awards in each of the three major categories – Plans; Projects, Programs, and Practices; and Leaders. Awards will be given for the most exceptional nominations with no guarantee given for the number of awards per type of plan or project or subcategory of leader.
- Recipients of a Leaders Award are ineligible to receive the same award for ten years after accepting it.
- Plans, programs, projects, tools, processes, reports, or ordinances are ineligible to receive the same award more than once.
- The Awards Committee's procedures prohibit any communication with jurors on behalf of a nominee. Such communication is reason for disqualification.
- Winning submissions become the property of the PA Chapter and will not be returned. Exceptions will be considered only upon consultation with the Chapter.

Submission Deadline:

Completed nomination entries and all accompanying materials must be received via on-line submission by 11:59 PM, May 16, 2025. Application forms and supporting materials received after that date will not be accepted.

Awards For Plans

This category of awards recognizes plans that advance the science and art of planning and will have a significant positive impact on a community. The category includes comprehensive plans, as well as plans that address specific functions, topics, or areas of a community. Plans should provide guidance to a community while identifying needs or issues and specific recommendations for addressing these needs or issues. The awards are given for group achievement and may be made to a local government, planning agency, planning team or firm, community group, or public authority. There are no limits on the size of jurisdiction.

Examples:

Comprehensive plans
Downtown revitalization plans
Neighborhood plans
Corridor plans
Open space plans
Economic development plans
Housing plans
Transportation plans
Urban design plans
Green infrastructure plans
Recreation plans
Historic preservation plans

Criteria:

- **Originality and innovation.** Document how your plan presents a visionary approach or innovative concept to address needs. Specify how planning principles and concepts have been incorporated into the plan.
- **Engagement and participation.** Explain how various public interests were involved and the extent of that involvement. Competitive entries demonstrate a strong effort to solicit input from those who historically have been left out of the planning process. Show how the nominated plan obtained public and private support. Demonstrate the connection between the effort's success and overall planning initiatives in the community.
- **Implementation.** Address what steps have been taken to implement the plan. Describe any aspects of the plan that were specifically designed to aid in plan implementation.
- **Results and effectiveness.** State how your entry addressed problems or issues that prompted its initiation. Demonstrate how useful and implementable recommendations were included in the plan. Show how the results have made or will make a difference in the lives of the people affected.

Awards for Projects, Programs, and Practices

This category of awards recognizes projects, programs and practices that agencies and groups have implemented to create communities that enrich people's lives. The category covers a wide range of planning, implementation, and planning-related activities that are exemplary and worthy of recognition. Entries in this category should emphasize results and demonstrate how innovative and state-of-the-art planning methods and practices help to create communities of lasting value and governments that operate with efficiency and effectiveness. The awards are given for group achievement and may be made to a local government, planning agency, planning team or firm, community group, or public authority.

Examples:

Regulations and codes
Use of technology and data
Tax policies or initiatives
Growth management practices
Design guidelines
Implementation projects
Land acquisition efforts
Public-private partnerships
Public information and education
Public outreach and engagement
Grassroots initiatives
Initiatives for social change and diversity

Criteria:

- **Originality and innovation.** Demonstrate the planning process that led to the specific project being nominated. Document how your entry addresses a need using a visionary approach or an innovative concept or how it combines existing ideas or tools in new ways. Explain how the originality or innovation of the entry led to an outcome that was not likely using existing approaches, concepts, or tools. Explain how the entry pushed the boundaries of standard practice to achieve its goals.
- **Transferability.** Illustrate how the entry can serve as an example for other people, groups, or organizations to emulate to address similar issues in their communities. Describe the aspects of the program that are most easily transferred to another location. Describe any features that were specifically added to the entry to improve the transferability. How did the program overcome difficulties that may be encountered when attempting to implement a similar program in another area?
- **Results and effectiveness.** State how well your entry addressed the need or problem that prompted its initiation. Be explicit about how the results have made a difference in the lives of the people affected. Convey the level of effectiveness your entry is expected to have over time.
- **Engagement and participation.** Explain how various public interests were involved and the extent of that involvement. Describe how your entry obtained public and private support. If appropriate for the entry, demonstrate a strong effort to solicit input from those who historically have been left out of the planning process. Clarify the role, significance, and participation of planners. Demonstrate the connection between the effort's success and increased awareness in the community of planners and planning.
- **Implementation.** Address what steps were taken to build momentum and public support for your entry. Describe how the implementation efforts made a distinct or measurable change in public acceptance and support.

Awards for Leaders

This category of awards recognizes people and their efforts to achieve exemplary planning through professional practice; teaching, research, or writing; efforts in the public arena; and community leadership. The category honors professional and lay planners and students for outstanding, innovative, and sustained contributions to, and in support of, planning and the community or region they serve.

Subcategories:

Professional Planner
Nominated individuals must be employed within the practice of planning, whether in the public, for-profit, or nonprofit sector.

Citizen Planner
Nominees may be citizen members of planning commissions, zoning boards, economic development boards, environmental or historic preservation councils, or other appointed officials. Nominees may also include citizen activists or neighborhood leaders.

Elected Official
Nominees must be elected officials – local, county, or state – whose planning contributions and achievements occurred in that role.

Emerging Planner
Nominees must have been active in planning – as a professional, citizen planner, or elected official – for 7 (seven) years or less.

Student
Nominations may include class projects, planning activities, research, or papers by a student or group of students, graduate or undergraduate.

Distinguished Service
This is the Pennsylvania Chapter's highest honor. It recognizes a Chapter member who contributed to planning in Pennsylvania and the development and mission of the Pennsylvania Chapter in a substantial manner over a sustained period.

Criteria:

- **Support of planning and planners.** Illustrate how the nominee's work has increased the understanding of both the principles of good planning and the planning process. Indicate how the nominee has shown a clear understanding of, and support for, the role of planners in society.
- **Effectiveness and results.** Describe the extent to which the nominee has been effective in formulating and implementing plans and ideas to further excellence in planning. Identify the level of influence achieved by the nominee within different segments of the community and the extent to which planning principles have been observed, especially in considering a project's effects on other public objectives.
- **Support of Planning.** Detail how the nominee's participation in, and contribution to, the Chapter furthered the cause of the organization.
- **Innovation.** Explain how the nominee used originality and creativity to refine common planning techniques or procedures as well as establish new techniques.
- **Applicability.** Explain how the nominee's work can be applied to other jurisdictions, projects, or areas of planning interest.