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APA OHIO PRESENTS INAUGURAL GREAT PLACES AWARDS

Four communities recognized as great places across Ohio

CINCINNATI, OH (October 3, 2018) – The Ohio Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Ohio) is pleased to announce winners of the inaugural Great Places in Ohio awards. The biennial awards program honors outstanding physical spaces throughout the state that planners have created and nurtured through careful planning and unbridled imagination. Because we plan, great places exist all across Ohio.

APA Ohio presented four awards at the 2018 Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (OKI) Regional Planning Conference in Cincinnati on October 3. APA Ohio President Kimberly Lieber, AICP, shared “The inaugural Great Places Awards Program is meant not only to recognize and celebrate the important work of Ohio planners but also to raise awareness among residents, community stakeholders and state and local officials regarding the transformative power of planning.”

Thirteen award nominations representing areas statewide were submitted across three categories: Commercial Districts, Public Spaces and Residential Neighborhoods. The eight-member Awards Committee of APA Ohio reviewed and evaluated the nominations based on the following criteria:

- Character and personality of the place
- Uniqueness of the place
- Special history
- How the space is used
- Planning initiative

The following four nominations were selected as the 2018 Great Places in Ohio Award winners:

Downtown Delaware, Delaware – The City of Delaware nominated Downtown Delaware in the Commercial District category. Delaware City is a growing community of 40,000 people 25 miles north of Columbus. It celebrates the historical context of the community by integrating its past into current and future success. This 210-year-old dynamic downtown has leveraged private investments to benefit the public realm since 1856, when the proceeds from a presentation by Frederick Douglass went to support the Underground Railroad. Since that time, community and city leadership have collaborated with local businesses and Ohio Wesleyan University through savvy uses of planning tools and funding opportunities. The vibrancy of this commercial district is a result of

planning efforts to update historic façades, implement streetscape improvements, install wayfinding signage and preserve the century-old Strand Theater.

Bridge Street, Ashtabula – The Lift Bridge Community Association nominated Ashtabula’s Bridge Street in the Commercial District Category. The Port of Ashtabula has played a vital role in the northeast Ohio shipping industry for centuries. Shifting world economies and introduction of technology that allowed faster and cheaper loading and unloading of cargo kept the port a critical link in the north coast shipping industry. Decline in the economy after the recession spurred the community into action, especially when ODOT closed the lift bridge for repairs lasting nearly a year. By embracing its history and invigorating local involvement through festivals and community pride, this near victim of the rust belt economy is now thriving.

Wade Oval, University Circle, Cleveland - Wade Oval was nominated by University Circle Inc., in the category of Public Space. Wade Oval is a seven-acre park that dates back to 1874, when pioneer Newell Cozad spent \$60,000 of his own money to lay the groundwork for a park. Cozad's concept was advanced when philanthropist Jephtha Wade, co-founder of the Western-Union telegraph company, donated the land to the City of Cleveland in 1882. Over the next 80 years, the parkland became the front lawn to Cleveland’s Museum of Art, History Center, Museum of Natural History and Botanical Garden. In 2000, University Circle Inc., a non-profit organization, initiated a strategic plan and capital improvement program to give Wade Oval its own identity. Subsequent transit and non-vehicular transportation improvements better link the park to the museums that ring it. Now, Wade Oval is a gathering place for music, play and picnicking for thousands in the midst of the cultural temples of Cleveland.

Wildwood Metropark, Toledo - Wildwood was nominated by Metroparks Toledo in the Public Space category. Surrounded by suburban development, Wildwood is an oasis balancing rich natural areas with historical, cultural and recreational opportunities. The 493-acre park exists because of a grass roots effort to preserve the estate of Champion Sparkplug magnate Robert Stranahan. The former manor home, built in 1938, serves as the centerpiece of the park and as the headquarters for the Toledo Metroparks. Once private bridle trails are now public hiking trails, attracting over a million visitors every year to explore the surrounding prairie lands. The property also boasts a formal garden designed by Ellen Biddle Shipman, hailed as the "dean of American women landscape architects." The garden at Wildwood is one of only four of her 600+ gardens that retain their original integrity.

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About APA Ohio:

APA Ohio is a statewide, non-profit association of citizens and professional planners committed to promoting and enhancing planning in order to maintain and improve the quality of life for all Ohioans. APA Ohio is a state chapter of the American Planning Association. APA Ohio operates under the guidance of a volunteer Board of Trustees elected from the general membership. Chapter sections include Akron, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Miami Valley and Northwest Ohio. Visit www.ohioplanning.org for additional information.