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APA OHIO PRESENTS OHIO PLANNING AWARDS AND GREAT PLACES IN OHIO

CLEVELAND, OH (September 29, 2023) – The Ohio Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Ohio) is pleased to announce winners of the 2023 APA Ohio Planning Awards and Great Places awards. The biennial awards program honors outstanding physical spaces that planners have made permanent through careful planning and unbridled imagination in Ohio.

APA Ohio presented the following awards at the 2023 APA Ohio Planning Conference on September 29, 2023 in Columbus, Ohio.

Award nominations were submitted, representing areas throughout the state, with multiple submissions in each of the categories. The applications were reviewed and scored by members of both APA Illinois and APA Michigan. They evaluated the nominations based on the following criteria:

Great Places in Ohio

- Character, personality of place
- Uniqueness of the place
- Special history
- How the space is used
- Planning initiative
- Visual attributes through photographs

Ohio Planning Awards

- Demonstrate creative problem solving
- Are well presented, clear & accurate, and communicate ideas successfully
- Include an interactive public feedback process
- Demonstrate appropriate and applicable solutions to common issues
- Illustrate successful planning processes

The following nominations were selected as the 2023 APA Ohio Planning Award Winners:

Best Practice – Lee Road Action Plan, Community Engagement

This Best Practice Award recognizes the community engagement portion of the Lee Road Action Plan, a plan focused on the predominantly black Lomond and Moreland neighborhoods. For many decades, residents felt neglected by their leaders, left out of the greater Shaker community, and overlooked for the investment they saw elsewhere. Over the last decade, the City of Shaker Heights has dedicated staff to creating sustained engagement, supporting neighbors, fostering partnerships, and building trust with those who have mistrusted the government.

The community engagement’s multipronged approach was conceived to show the city listened to input, set expectations for involvement in future plans, and solidified that citizens can affect the future of their neighborhoods.

Jurors commented, “Residents of the Moreland and Lomond neighborhoods in Shaker Heights deserve to be proud of this plan, which was prepared with their active involvement throughout the planning process.”

Comprehensive Planning | Large Jurisdiction – Cuyahoga County Lakefront Access Plan

Cuyahoga County encompasses 30 miles of the Lake Erie shoreline. Historic, often discriminatory development patterns and economic pressure resulted in only 22% of the lakeshore being publicly accessible – a number that decreases to 13% outside downtown Cleveland. As concerns rose over inequities in public lakefront access, so did coastal erosion that continues to threaten properties, buildings, and infrastructure.

The Lakefront Public Access Plan engaged residents, lakefront landowners, municipalities, and key regional stakeholders to create a framework prioritizing investment in public access and erosion control.

When reviewing the plan, one juror commented the, “numerous maps and other visual aids help convey lots of information rather than text,” and, “The plan focuses on not just one solution, but alternatives to help provide flexibility and guidance to incrementally realize the collaborative vision.”

Recommended outcomes increase public access to 50% of the Cuyahoga County shoreline and support direct access for underserved and underinvested populations.

Comprehensive Planning | Small Jurisdiction – Plan Springdale

Plan Springdale defines the community's wish to enliven Springdale's city centers into more vibrant and thriving spaces.

The identified challenges, recommended strategies, reinvestment opportunities, design guidelines, and action items were driven by engagement and resulted in a plan with community

ownership. One juror commented, “I appreciate the specific elements that take the plan’s recommendations to the next level.”

Discussing the final document itself, a juror stated, “By laying out the plan thematically, readers are well engaged and the implementation steps are logical and apparent. The plan uses design well to set out a hierarchy of recommendations. The plan should be considered a best practice for the profession moving forward.”

Planning Student(s) Showcase – Balancing Broadway

Balancing Broadway is a comprehensive planning process focusing on the historic downtown district of Lorain, Ohio. The project was a partnership between the City of Lorain and capstone students, envisioning a vibrant downtown that balances the city’s rich history with its environmental assets.

The team collected and analyzed the city’s history and market data, culminating in a comprehensive current conditions report and market study. Building on this, an extensive public engagement process was undertaken, including tabling at the Lorain Public Library, a survey that gained 481 responses, and a series of interviews with key community leaders and officials. The jury commented that the robust community engagement process was impressive, especially for a project with a short four-month timeline.

For many of the 10-student team, this was their first real-world experience with a planning project. Since the plan’s conclusion, the City of Lorain has moved forward, implementing several of the recommended actions.

Norman Krumholz Equity Award – Kareem Usher

Dr. Usher’s accolades are best exemplified in these excerpts from a letter written by Dr. Jennifer Clarke of the Knowlton School recognizing his outstanding record of extensive community outreach and engagement anchored in equity planning. “Though Kareem is a professor in the City and Regional Planning Section of the Knowlton School, he is also a planner embedded in Columbus’ communities, focusing on the nexus of food, the built environment, and social interactions.”

“This nomination is motivated by Dr. Usher’s well-established, impactful work here in Ohio with the underserved Linden neighborhood. Kareem leads efforts to develop a ‘food processing hub’ that would provide employment for previously incarcerated persons of color while supporting Ohio State University’s efforts to increase the amount of local and sustainable food served to its students.”

Dr. Usher leads the collaboration between OSU’s Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT) and Building Responsibility, Equality and Dignity (B.R.E.A.D.) a nonprofit coalition of 40 diverse religious congregations in Franklin County. In working with community coalitions beyond the traditional public sector partners, Dr. Usher and his team establish a foundation for sustained and sustainable community outreach.”

One juror noted: “Dr. Usher is a reflection of Norman Krumholz - An advocate for aiding minority populations who need it most.

Another commented: “Dr. Kareem Usher appears to be one of those rare individuals who is intrigued by complex societal problems and is fully capable of devising unique solutions to those problems. Dr. Usher's success reflects great intelligence, expansive thinking, and compassion for fellow human beings.”

President’s Award – Joyce Braverman

Ms. Braverman is the Director of Planning for the City of Shaker Heights, but that’s only part of the many reasons we are honoring her. Through her time at Shaker Joyce has united transit-oriented development, parks planning, grant writing, short- and long-term planning, zoning, design guidelines, transit infrastructure, and public participation to transform the city – constantly looking towards a sustainable future. This includes projects ranging from the massive VanAken District redevelopment to the grass roots community engagement efforts.

Following a Bachelor of Urban Planning from the University of Cincinnati and a Master of Public Administration from Cleveland State University Joyce joined the APA in 1980. Since that time, she has donated countless hours furthering the APA’s efforts in education, legislation, advocacy, empowering new planners, and ensuring we’ve all had fun together along the way! She was on the APA Ohio Board of Trustees from 1994 – 2022 – (28 years!) - serving as President of APA Ohio from 1998-2000. Joyce’s legacy in the Cleveland Chapter’s leadership has shaped the organization and region, and she continues to inspire us all through her insight, motivation, and friendship.

The following nominations were selected as the 2023 Great Places in Ohio Award Winners:

Commercial District – Uptown Westerville

Uptown Westerville is one of the most well-preserved town centers in Ohio. It is home to public anchors including Westerville City Hall, the Public Library, and Otterbein University. Residents, students, and visitors alike are drawn to Uptown because of its inviting scale, colorful history, and the many shops, restaurants, galleries, and other businesses that bring the area to life. In 2019, it earned a spot on the National Register of Historic Places.

Since 2004 the Westerville Industry and Commerce Corporation, the City’s community improvement corporation, has facilitated a grant program resulting in over 60 private investments adding over \$1.7 million in projects that have restored and reactivated historic properties.

Since the Uptown Plan’s adoption almost 10 years ago, the district has been thriving, thanks to the efforts of thoughtful City policies, proactive and collaborative planning and infrastructure investment, and numerous partnerships – and today is recognized as a Great Place in Ohio!

Public Space – Lakewood Park

The crown jewel of Lakewood, Lakewood Park is a 31-acre lakefront park located on a bluff overlooking Lake Erie. Lakewood Park is a community park in the true sense of the word. It has become a regional destination for visitors with its expansive trail network, greenspace,

recreational courts and fields, lakefront promenade, and the most prominent feature of the park: the Solstice Steps.

Lakewood Park was acquired in 1918 for \$214,500, with the city dump once lying below the park on the shoreline between the 1920s and 1960s. When the dump was removed, it created room for more parkland and an extension down to the shoreline. Since that time, the City has continued to expand the park's amenities, creating a place that serves people of all ages and abilities. A hub for many city-wide and regional events, residents also perceive of it as an extension of their backyards.

Residential Neighborhood – Upper Arlington Historic District

The Upper Arlington Historic District is a premier historic neighborhood that has remained a unique and special place since its inception over 100 years ago. Upper Arlington was originally planned and developed by two brothers, King and Ben Thompson, who purchased 840 acres of land 1913, designing a community complemented by parks, schools, civic and shopping facilities anchored within a residential area.

King Thompson presented the city plan at the National Conference on City Planning in June 1915.

Century homes of varying styles, tree-lined streets, and the Mallway commercial district anchored by businesses and civic uses have been carefully preserved throughout the central historic district, and serve as a backdrop for festivals and city-wide events.

Upper Arlington City Manager Steven Schoeny put it best, saying: "The Historic District grounds us to our past while providing a place that connects our community today. It shows that timeless designs from 100 years ago can bring people together to talk, celebrate and become a community when we need to do those things more than ever."

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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 and the quality of planning for all governmental entities 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). APA Ohio encourages legislation and action programs to enhance sound planning at the state, regional and local levels. APA Ohio operates under the guidance of a volunteer Board of Trustees elected from the general membership. Chapter sections include Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Miami Valley and Northwest. Visit www.ohioplanning.org for additional information.