



American Planning Association
Nevada Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

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HENDERSON, NV –The Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) is proud to announce the winners of the 2025 DeBoer Excellence in Planning Awards. Named after Saco Reink DeBoer, a master city planner of the twentieth century and author of the Boulder City plan, the DeBoer Excellence in Planning Awards honor outstanding planning projects and individual initiatives that positively impact Nevada. In conjunction with National Community Planning Month, these awards celebrate the best efforts in the planning community, recognizing originality, innovation, engagement, implementation, and effectiveness. These awards are a longstanding and proud tradition of the Chapter and represent the highest honor for planning and community development in Nevada.

- **Elected Official Award:** Sparks Councilmember Dian VanderWell.
Councilmember VanderWell is honored for her leadership in advancing innovative zoning code amendments and her steadfast commitment to diversifying Northern Nevada's economy.
- **Professional Planner Award:** Cathy Laughlin, City Planner for the City of Elko.
Cathy Laughlin is honored for her instrumental role in revitalizing downtown Elko. Through her leadership, Elko has seen renewed investment, improved walkability, and a stronger sense of place. Her collaborative approach has brought together stakeholders to reimagine the city's core as a vibrant and historic destination.
- **Citizen Planner Award:** Maureen Casey, Douglas County Planning Commissioner.
Maureen Casey is celebrated for her deep commitment to public service and her advocacy for land use planning process. As a long-serving member of the State Land Use Planning Advisory Council, she has also helped shape statewide planning policy while championing transparency and community involvement at the local level.
- **President's Award:** Alfredo Melesio Jr., AICP.
Alfredo Melesio Jr. receives this prestigious award for his exceptional service to the planning profession across Nevada. His leadership, mentorship, and dedication to advancing planning practices have made a lasting impact on communities and professionals throughout the state.

- Special President's Award: John Hester, AICP.

John Hester is recognized for his decades-long contributions to planning in Nevada. His work has influenced regional planning frameworks, sustainability initiatives, and community development strategies. His legacy includes a commitment to innovation, equity, and collaboration throughout Nevada.

- Outstanding Plan: The Let's Go 2050 Regional Transportation Plan by the RTC of Southern Nevada.

This regional transportation plan sets a bold vision for the future of transportation in Southern Nevada. This plan reflects extensive community input and provides a roadmap for sustainable, multimodal investments that align with the region's growth, environmental goals, and quality of life priorities.

- Outstanding Public Outreach and Journalism: Dr. Alicia Barber, author of *The Barber Brief*.

Dr. Barber is honored for her exceptional work in making complex planning topics accessible to the public. Through *The Barber Brief*, she has fostered civic engagement, increased transparency, and empowered residents to participate meaningfully in Reno's land use and development decisions.

- Outstanding Cultural or Environmental Plan: Open Space and Trails Plan by the City of Henderson.

This plan is recognized for its innovative and inclusive approach to enhancing outdoor recreation and connectivity throughout the city. The plan prioritizes equitable access to green spaces, preserves natural resources, and supports active lifestyles, contributing to Henderson's identity as a livable and sustainable city.

"Each recipient of the DeBoer Excellence in Planning Awards exemplifies the highest standards of innovation, dedication, and community engagement in planning across Nevada," said Scott Carey, AICP, President of the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association. "These individuals and projects showcase the innovative, community-driven work that defines our profession and reflect the commitment of planners statewide who work every day to ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for our state. It's an honor to recognize and celebrate their achievements, which inspire our members in both rural and urban communities to continue shaping a better Nevada for all. On behalf of the Nevada Chapter of APA, I extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the honorees for their outstanding contributions to the field of planning in Nevada".

The 2025 DeBoer Excellence in Planning Awards will be presented at a special banquet during the 53rd Annual Nevada State Planning Conference, held October 23–24, 2025, at the Carson Valley Inn in Minden. This year's theme, "Home Grown Nevada: Planning Today for Nevada's Tomorrow," and will bring planners together from across the state to address key issues and share forward-thinking solutions. For details and registration, visit www.nevada.planning.org.

About the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association

The Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association is Nevada's oldest and largest professional development organization representing the interests of planning across the Silver State. The Chapter represents professional planners, employed by both the public and private sectors, as well as planning students, planning commissioners, elected officials, and citizens involved in planning. The Chapter's mission is to promote public involvement and excellence in planning and to improve the quality of life in Nevada through professional development and education. For more information to become a member please visit www.nevada.planning.org.

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For more information about the DeBoer Excellence in Planning Awards and the Nevada Chapter of the American Planning Association, please contact Scott Carey, Chapter President at 775-830-4369 or email at shcarey@sbcglobal.net.