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LAEDC Announces 14 Finalists for 2026 Most Business-Friendly City Award

Fourteen cities recognized for leadership in creating the conditions for businesses to start, grow and invest in Los Angeles County; 2026 honorees will be announced November 4 at the 31st Annual EDDY Awards

LOS ANGELES, CA - The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) today announced 14 finalists for its 2026 Most Business-Friendly City Award, recognizing cities across Los Angeles County that are taking meaningful action to support businesses, strengthen their local economies and create greater opportunity for the communities they serve.

This year's finalists represent the diversity of Los Angeles County and the many ways cities are responding to the needs of businesses and entrepreneurs. From streamlining permitting and modernizing city services to strengthening workforce pipelines, supporting small businesses and attracting new investment, each finalist is demonstrating how local leadership can help create the conditions for economic growth.

An independent Blue-Ribbon Committee reviewed the applications, with seven cities advancing in each of two categories based on city size, resources and organizational capacity.

2026 FINALISTS

SMALL CITY FINALISTS	LARGE CITY FINALISTS
Calabasas Lean service model, direct City access and fast plan review.	Burbank Business concierge, targeted recruitment and creative-industry engagement.
Commerce Low-cost operating climate, one-stop development support and targeted incentives.	Carson Strategic-plan execution, faster plan checks and entrepreneurship support.
Culver City Ombudsperson support, permit reimbursement, technical assistance and placemaking.	El Monte Modernized zoning, digital permitting and a Business Resource Center supporting investment.
Signal Hill Opportunity Overlay Zones, shop-local rewards and streamlined pathways for small firms.	Palmdale Aerospace incentives, workforce pipelines, film growth and small-business programs.
South El Monte Expedited approvals, business ombudsman support and regional resource connections.	Santa Clarita Integrated retention and recruitment, workforce alignment and one-stop permitting.
South Pasadena Digital permitting, five-day service access and Chamber-led economic development.	Santa Monica Fee relief, concierge support, commercial activation and faster permit review.
West Hollywood Market intelligence, broker engagement and accelerated review for qualifying projects.	Torrance Coordinated permit services, digital tools and support for a diverse industry base.

A COUNTYWIDE STANDARD FOR BUSINESS-FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT

"Los Angeles County's economic strength depends on cities that understand how to turn opportunity into action. These finalists are demonstrating what business-friendly government looks like in practice: removing barriers, responding to employers, and creating the conditions for businesses to invest, grow and create jobs. Their leadership strengthens not only their own communities, but our region as a whole."

Stephen Cheung | President & CEO, LAEDC and WTCLA

Together, the 14 finalists demonstrate that there is no single model for building a strong local economy. What they share is a commitment to understanding what businesses need, responding with solutions and creating an environment where employers and entrepreneurs can succeed.

The Most Business-Friendly City Award allows LAEDC to recognize that leadership while elevating practices that can be shared across Los Angeles County's 88 cities, strengthening the region's collective ability to attract investment, support job creation and expand economic opportunity.

How Finalists Were Selected

An independent Blue-Ribbon Committee evaluated each application across five equally weighted areas: overall business-friendly approach; support for existing businesses; strategies to attract new businesses; partnerships that advance regional economic growth; and efforts to reduce red tape and make it easier for businesses to open or expand.

Finalists were considered within the context of their city's size, resources and organizational capacity, recognizing that effective economic development can take different forms across Los Angeles County.

Honorees Announced November 4

The 2026 Most Business-Friendly City honorees will be announced at LAEDC's 31st Annual EDDY Awards on Wednesday, November 4, 2026, at the Rose Bowl.

The EDDY Awards bring together leaders from business, government, education, labor and community institutions to recognize the people and organizations shaping Los Angeles County's economy and advancing opportunity across the region.

About the Most Business-Friendly City Award

LAEDC's Most Business-Friendly City Award recognizes municipalities that are creating environments where businesses can start, stay, grow and invest. The award celebrates effective policies, responsive services, strong partnerships and innovative approaches to economic development, while elevating practices that can strengthen communities throughout Los Angeles County.

About LAEDC

The Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) is a 501(c)(3) public benefit non-profit organization working to advance opportunity and shared prosperity across Los Angeles County. Through economic research, business growth and competitiveness, workforce development, international trade and investment, and strategic engagement, LAEDC brings together leaders across business, government, education, labor and community to strengthen the region's economy. Serving as a trusted regional convener, LAEDC connects people, ideas and resources across Los Angeles County's 88 cities to translate insight into action, build regional capacity and create an economy that works for everyone.

LAEDC's vision: an Economy for All.

LAEDC.ORG | 31ST ANNUAL EDDY AWARDS