



2026 Renaissance and Starr Awards

The Georgia Cities Foundation (GCF) is presently soliciting nominations for its 2026 Renaissance and Starr Awards.

- The **Renaissance Award**, established in 2003, recognizes an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to the revitalization of one or more downtowns in Georgia. Individuals and organizations from the private sector, non-profit, civic, philanthropic and private academic communities are eligible to receive the award. Governmental agencies and their staff are not eligible.
- The **Starr Award**, established in 2019, recognizes an individual who has made a significant contribution toward creating a unique and vibrant environment in the downtown area of a city in Georgia. The award is given annually in memory of Mike Starr, who served as the Georgia Cities Foundation's President for two decades until his death in 2019. The Georgia Cities Foundation seeks to create this permanent legacy in President Starr's memory by celebrating those who emulate his best traits: visionary, innovator, servant leader, and champion for downtowns.

The Renaissance and Starr awards will be presented in Savannah during the Georgia Municipal Association's Annual Convention, which will be held June 26-30, 2026. The deadline for submittal of nominations is **Friday, March 20th, 2026 by 5PM**. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Higdon at (678) 651-1018 or Cindy Eidson at (678) 686-6207.

Georgia Cities Foundation

2026 Awards Program Summary

Award Program	Renaissance Award	The Starr Award
Purpose	The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual or organization that has made a significant contribution to the revitalization of one or more downtowns in Georgia.	The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual who has made a significant contribution toward creating a unique and vibrant environment in the downtown area of a city in Georgia. The award is given annually in memory of Mike Starr, who served as the Georgia Cities Foundation’s President for two decades until his death in 2019. The Georgia Cities Foundation seeks to create this permanent legacy in President Starr’s memory by celebrating those who emulate his best traits: visionary, innovator, servant leader, and champion for downtowns.
Eligibility	Individuals and organizations from the private sector, non-profit, civic, philanthropic, and private academic communities are eligible to receive the award. Governmental agencies, public colleges / universities, and their staff are NOT eligible for this award.	Current or retired municipal elected officials, appointed staff, downtown development managers, and downtown development authority board members are eligible to receive the award.
Criteria for Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has demonstrated a passion for vibrant, healthy downtowns or activity centers within the city and through his or her leadership efforts have played an integral role in the redevelopment of one or more Georgia communities. <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has committed significant financial or in-kind resources to projects that have stimulated quality development and investment in one or more downtowns in Georgia. <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has led innovative and forward-thinking approaches to planning, development, preservation, smart growth, quality of life, citizen participation, philanthropy or financing that have stimulated reinvestment in Georgia’s cities. <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has partnered with municipal officials to create a vision for one or more cities and has actively worked with all elements of the community (business, civic, government, neighborhoods, etc.) to build community consensus and support for the vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has demonstrated passionate leadership and a relentless commitment for vibrant, healthy downtowns and through his or her leadership efforts has played an integral role in the revitalization of the downtown area in his or her community. <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has led innovative and forward-thinking approaches to planning, development, redevelopment, preservation, smart growth, quality of life, citizen participation, and/or placemaking that have stimulated reinvestment in the downtown area. <input type="checkbox"/> The recipient has partnered with other municipal officials to create a vision for his or her city and has actively worked with all elements of the community (business, civic, government, neighborhoods, etc.) to build community consensus and support for the vision.
Selection	GCF Awards Committee	GCF Awards Committee
Application Deadline	Friday, March 20th, 2026 by 5PM	Friday, March 20th, 2026 by 5PM

Georgia Cities Foundation

2026 Renaissance & Starr Award Nomination

Instructions: Please complete the following information and attach a typed narrative (not exceeding 1,000 words) which demonstrates how the nominee meets eligibility and selection criteria listed above and why the nominee should be considered for either the Renaissance Award or the Starr Award. Nominations must include the narrative in order to be considered by the Awards Committee. Self-nominations will not be accepted.

Award Category (Select One):

Renaissance Award

Starr Award

Nominee: _____
Individual (Renaissance or Starr Award) or Organization/Business (Renaissance Award only)

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Name of Person Submitting Nomination: _____

Title: _____ City/Organization: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Digital photos may be submitted in support of a nomination. Please submit no more than six (6) photos. Nomination forms must be received by **Friday, March 20th, 2026 by 5PM**

Georgia Cities Foundation
Attention: Chris Higdon and Cindy Eidson
P.O. Box 105377
Atlanta, GA 30348
E-mail: chigdon@gacities.com AND ceidson@gacities.com

For GCF Use Only:

Date Nomination Form Received: _____ Initials: _____