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Develop Fulton Earns 2026 IEDC Gold Award for RYSE Creative Village

International honor recognizes innovative neighborhood development and the power of creative investment to strengthen communities

ATLANTA, GA — Develop Fulton, the Development Authority of Fulton County, has been named a 2026 Gold Winner for Excellence in Economic Development by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for its work supporting RYSE Creative Village.

RYSE Creative Village is a dynamic, tech-enabled content production studio and development incubator specifically designed for Creative Professionals in Georgia's film, entertainment, gaming, and digital media industry. RYSE Creative Village grew from the transformation of the former APS Arkwright Elementary School, a long-vacant property that surrounding residents welcome being returned to productive use as a resource for community and economic opportunity. Develop Fulton provided early grant funding to support RYSE's vision, helping catalyze additional support from the City of Atlanta and other partners and advance the redevelopment of the former school into a hub for creatives, entrepreneurs and the surrounding community.

Develop Fulton received the 2026 Gold IEDC Excellence in Economic Development Award in the Neighborhood Development category, recognizing RYSE Creative Village as an innovative approach to creating economic opportunity, supporting the creative economy and investing in the long-term vitality of Fulton County communities.

The prestigious international honor recognizes economic development organizations, initiatives and programs demonstrating excellence, innovation and meaningful community impact. The award further underscores Develop Fulton's work to advance investments that create and retain jobs, strengthen neighborhoods and expand economic opportunity throughout Fulton County.

"Develop Fulton is leading the field of excellence in economic development with its RYSE Creative Village



Develop Fulton was named a Gold Winner for the IEDC Excellence Awards.

project. This award shines a spotlight on Develop Fulton's commitment to its community and showcases the significant impact of economic development," said Nathan Ohle, IEDC President and CEO. "IEDC is honored to present this award to Develop Fulton to celebrate their leadership and innovation in the field."

"This Gold Award is a powerful validation of what can happen when economic development is about more than a single project. It is about creating lasting opportunity," said Kwanza Hall, chairman of Develop Fulton. "RYSE Creative Village demonstrates how strategic investment can strengthen a neighborhood, support entrepreneurs and creators, generate economic activity and build an ecosystem where talent and opportunity can grow together. We are dedicated to seeing Fulton County thrive, and projects like RYSE show how thoughtful economic development can deliver benefits that extend well beyond a project's footprint."

RYSE Creative Village represents an approach to neighborhood development that connects the creative economy with community investment and economic opportunity. By creating space for creatives, entrepreneurs and emerging businesses to grow, connect and build, the project demonstrates how development can become a platform for broader neighborhood and economic impact.



Rendering of the RYSE Creative Village.

"The vision for RYSE Creative Village was built around the belief that creativity can be a powerful economic engine and that the communities where creative talent lives should share in that growth," said Jay Jackson, leader of the RYSE initiative. "This recognition is bigger than RYSE. It celebrates the creators, entrepreneurs and community partners who are helping build an ecosystem rooted in opportunity. Develop Fulton understood that vision and recognized the potential to create something that strengthens both the creative economy and the surrounding community."

Since 2017, Develop Fulton has helped support the creation or retention of more than 117,000 jobs and more than \$13.22 billion in investment across Fulton County. Its work spans communities and industries throughout the county, helping position Fulton as a destination for major employers, emerging industries, entrepreneurs and investments that contribute to a stronger local economy and tax base.

Develop Fulton will be formally recognized during the IEDC 2026 Annual Conference, Oct. 25-28 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Each year, IEDC honors economic development organizations, government entities, initiatives and programs that consistently demonstrate excellence in the field. Honorees represent projects and strategies that strengthen communities while advancing the practice of economic development.

The 2026 awards carry additional significance as IEDC celebrates its 100th anniversary. Through this year's Excellence in Economic Development Awards, IEDC is recognizing successful programs and organizations that are helping shape the next century of economic development.

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About Develop Fulton

Develop Fulton, the Development Authority of Fulton County, works to advance economic development throughout Fulton County by supporting business investment, job creation and retention, and projects that strengthen the county's economic competitiveness and tax base. Through strategic economic development tools and collaboration with public and private-sector partners, Develop Fulton helps facilitate investments that create opportunity and contribute to the long-term economic strength of communities across Fulton County.

About the International Economic Development Council

Based in Washington, D.C., the International Economic Development Council is the world's largest association for economic developers. Originating a century ago, IEDC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization representing the entire economic development profession. Members include practitioners in economic development through local, state, provincial and federal governments, nonprofits, public-private partnerships, entrepreneurial support organizations, chambers of commerce, utilities, universities and other organizations.

IEDC is a leading voice in driving the future of the field. IEDC provides professional development through courses and certifications, networking, conferences, research, policy advocacy, partnerships and other resources to economic development professionals across the globe.