



## Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission

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# Press Release

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## **Maryland Sustainable Growth Awards Presented Today in Annapolis**

*Awards Recognize People, Projects that Advance Sustainable Growth and Conservation in Maryland*

ANNAPOLIS, MD – The Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission today presented awards for leadership, community planning, and conservation at its sixth annual awards ceremony at the Maryland State House in Annapolis. The awards recognize individuals, organizations, and programs that exemplify well-planned economic and community development initiatives throughout the state.

"These award recipients from across Maryland represent creativity, innovation, and passion – traits that we see in leaders across our great state," said Governor Larry Hogan. "My administration is proud to celebrate their contributions and their commitment to helping change Maryland for the better."

The six winners are individuals and organizations that demonstrate their commitment to sustainable growth – development or redevelopment that is compact, walkable, and takes advantage of existing infrastructure while preserving the rural landscape – in Maryland.

"The commission and I are thrilled to recognize these outstanding Maryland projects," said Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission Chair Susan Summers. "These awards are the highest level of recognition for well-planned economic and community development and sustainability in the state."

"Today's recipients characterize the resourcefulness, imagination, and originality that makes Maryland a leader in cultural preservation, community and economic development, and environmental stewardship," said Wendi Peters, Special Secretary of Smart Growth. "I join the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission in celebrating today's award winners who demonstrate what can happen when great ideas and local vision come together in the spirit of creating economic opportunities, robust communities, and a superior quality of life for Marylanders."

The 2018 Maryland Sustainable Growth Awards winners are below:

**Leadership & Service:** For activities or accomplishments that advance public appreciation, understanding, or involvement in promoting smart growth and sustainable communities at the state, regional, or local level.

**Rock Hall Mayor Brian Jones** – In three short years, Rock Hall Mayor Brian Jones has made a generational impact on the historic waterfront town of 1,300 year-round residents on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Since his election in May 2015, Jones has charted a new course for Rock Hall while embracing and celebrating its authenticity and historic character. With urgency, focus, and tireless energy, Jones is leading an effort to create and implement a comprehensive strategy to revitalize, diversify, and strengthen Rock Hall and turn its economy toward tourism.

The mayor launched this strategy by appointing a Sustainable Community Workgroup of diverse talents and experience to analyze the town’s strengths and weaknesses and develop action plans for the environment, economy, transportation, housing, and quality of life. The Town applied to the State for a Sustainable Communities designation in 2015 and received it in 2016.

**Sustainable Communities:** For facilitating or creating development that addresses at least one or more of Maryland’s 12 Planning Visions.

**Anacostia River Trail, Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens Segment** – Before the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens Trail section of the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail was constructed, cyclists and pedestrians from Maryland had no clear path to the District of Columbia along the Anacostia River. Grade-separated highways, Amtrak rail lines, and unconnected local streets prevented bicycle and pedestrian travel through the area. Parallel roadways were inhospitable to bicyclists and pedestrians, or, as in the case of U.S. 50 and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, laws (and common sense) prohibited bicycle and pedestrian use.

The completion of the four-mile, \$23 million segment created one of the longest metropolitan trail systems in the country and culminated more than 15 years of planning. Approximately 4,000 cyclists and pedestrians use the trail each week.

**Havre de Grace Opera House** – The top floor of the Havre de Grace Opera House has functioned as a theater for almost 150 years. Now, after an ambitious project to completely renovate the historic structure, the state-of-the-art cultural arts center reopened in 2017 with plans to serve more than 20,000 annual visitors in the heart of Havre de Grace’s Arts and Entertainment District.

By supporting the adaptive reuse of an historic theater, the project represents a substantial investment in the historic core of Havre de Grace. As patrons visit the reborn Opera House, local officials are building momentum to attract more visitors and developers to the community core and sparking further community investment by public and private groups.

The site is centrally located, walkable from Havre de Grace’s main street, and makes use of existing infrastructure and services. The project scope included installing a new sound and lighting system, creating an ADA-compliant entryway, and more.

**Parkway Theater** – For decades, the Parkway Theater in Baltimore sat vacant, its main floor seats replaced by concrete, most of its ornamental plaster damaged or removed, its historic status as one of the few surviving theaters from the early days of film hidden beneath years of modifications and neglect.

Today the Parkway stands proudly at the intersection of North Avenue and Charles Street as an anchor of the city’s revitalizing Arts and Entertainment District. Now owned by – and serving as the year-round home of – the Maryland Film Festival, the theater, built in 1915, functions as an activated arts hub and community space, attracting energy and investment to central Baltimore.

**R. House** – For generations of Baltimore-area motorists, a trip to the corner of West 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Remington Avenue meant a visit to the auto body shop, one stop in a quest to get their vehicle back on the road.

Since late 2016, however, the two-story building has been a destination of another kind. Known as R. House, it is a 350-seat food hall with roll-up garage doors, booths, communal tables, and a neighborhood bar, with offices on the second floor.

In its first year-plus of operation, R. House provided Remington with a popular destination for diners near and far, stimulating the local food supply chain and increasing foot traffic in the neighborhood. The rehabilitation of the building returned 50,000 square feet to active use, including a first-floor food hall with 10 food stalls, as well as 15,000 square feet of office space and 10,000 square feet of dance and yoga studio space.

**Preservation and Conservation:** For accomplishments in protecting or improving farms, forests, natural resources and the waters of Maryland.

**ECO City Farms** – Tucked within a residential neighborhood, adjacent to the Anacostia River on one side and a row of commercial uses on another, and far inside the Capital Beltway, is a one-acre farm that is trying to change how its neighbors grow and consume food.

ECO City Farms, or ECO, was established in 2010 with the mission, “We grow great food, farms and farmers.” The non-profit organization’s first farming operation began with an agreement with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to lease the property in Edmonston. Today, using simple “hoop houses,” a type of greenhouse, dozens of varieties of greens, lettuces, herbs, and root vegetables are being cultivated intensively to yield high volumes of organic products in a very small space.

Short videos about each award recipient are available at <http://bit.ly/18growthawards>

The Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission makes recommendations on growth and development issues and celebrates these achievements with an annual awards program. Commission members, who represent local and state government, business, and nonprofit organization sectors, promote coordination and cooperation regarding innovative and responsible growth and development throughout Maryland.

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