



INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

The Power of Knowledge and Leadership

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Media Release

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Sharon Harper Receives Leadership Award

Arizona Business Leader Recognized by Economic Development Industry

Sharon Harper, President and CEO of the Plaza Company, was awarded the Citizen Leadership Award by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for her extraordinary commitment in promoting economic development. The honor was presented on February 3 during the Keynote Luncheon at IEDC's Leadership Summit in Irvine, California.

"The Citizen Leadership Award celebrates a community or business leader, or an individual who is not an economic development specialist, but who plays a major leadership role in economic development pursuits," said Bill Sproull, IEDC chair. "Ms. Harper is a fine example of such an individual."

The Citizen Leadership Award recognizes a community or business leader, or an individual who is not an economic development practitioner, but who plays a key leadership role and has endeavored to further the profession.

Sharon Harper has been an exceptional force in the economic development arena in Phoenix, Arizona for more than 20 years. When she and other leaders recognized the need for a region-wide economic development organization in the Greater Phoenix market, they took the initiative, and in 1989, the Greater Phoenix Economic Council (GPEC) was born. Ms. Harper was a founding member of this award-winning public-private partnership focused on attracting jobs and investment to the greater Phoenix area. Since its creation, GPEC has assisted over 500 businesses, translating into thousands of jobs and generating billions of dollars in private capital investment. Ms. Harper has been a board member since GPEC's inception, including in her role as co-chair of the International Leadership Council.

Recognizing the importance of adapting to a changing economy, Ms. Harper led the advisory board to create a business toolkit for international companies. Available online, the toolkit serves as a resource for international businesses, outlining how to successfully conduct business in Phoenix and in United States. In the two weeks after the multi-language toolkit became available, it was downloaded 920 times, paving the way for new foreign direct investment in the Phoenix region.

Beyond her role in the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, Ms. Harper is a successful business executive in her own right. As a visionary, she co-founded the real estate firm Plaza Companies in the early 1980s in response to the scarcity of retirement care for seniors in Arizona. Plaza Companies developed some of the first continuing care communities in the Western United States. As President and CEO, Ms. Harper has led the company to diversify to include medical properties and emerging technology facilities. By 2013, Plaza Companies owned, leased, or managed over 5 million square feet of space.

In 2007, under Ms. Harper's direction, Plaza Companies and Arizona State University partnered to open SkySong. A large-scale incubator, SkySong encourages innovation and cooperation between emerging businesses and enterprises. With over 70 companies housed at the center, the facility is projected to generate \$9.9 billion for Scottsdale and the entire Phoenix region over the next 30 years.

Ms. Harper's leadership, selfless commitment to creating a better community, and stewardship in the State of Arizona has earned her the broad respect and admiration of her peers, as well as that of federal, state and local government, educational, and private sector leaders. In 2013, she was named as one of the most admired CEOs in Arizona. She was also recognized as one of the 50 most influential business women in the state.

Through her work at the Greater Phoenix Economic Council, as well as her own company, Ms. Harper has consistently demonstrated herself to be a dedicated leader by identifying innovative solutions for a technological and international economy in the greater Phoenix region. For this reason, the International Economic Development Council is honored to present the 2013 Citizen Leadership Award to Sharon Harper.

About the International Economic Development Council

The [International Economic Development Council](http://www.iedconline.org) (IEDC) is a non-profit membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 4,100 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind. Economic developers promote economic well-being and quality of life for their communities, by creating, retaining and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth and provide a stable tax base. From public to private, rural to urban, and local to international, IEDC's members are engaged in the full range of economic development experience. Given the breadth of economic development work, our members are employed in a wide variety of settings including local, state, provincial and federal governments, public private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities and a variety of other institutions. When we succeed, our members create high-quality jobs, develop vibrant communities, and improve the quality of life in their regions.

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