



Lifetime Achievement Award, Jay Garner | Garner Economics, LLC (GA)

Thank you for this extraordinary recognition.

I am so proud to have been in the economic development profession for more than 46 years.

These four decades have given me opportunities I never could have even imagined. Not long ago, I was thinking about what working in economic development has allowed me to experience in the profession I love:

- I've met two US presidents (before they were even president)
- Two heads of state of a foreign country (Singapore and Indonesia)
- Numerous Ministers of Trade from foreign countries
- And countless US Governors, mayors, and county commission chairs
- I've visited 39 countries on 5 continents
- And this may be a curse more than a blessing, but I have flown 3.1 million miles on Delta Airlines.
- But most importantly, I have been part of a team effort as a facilitator or catalyst in the economic improvement of people's lives.

What other profession would have allowed me to do all of that?

Economic developers are doers. They are change agents. You simply do not have successful communities without a professional economic developer as part of that community's team. IEDC is leading that charge in training economic developers, and it has always stood for excellence and innovation. Nathan, kudos to you for raising the bar.

This recognition is not just a reflection of my own efforts, but of the incredible colleagues, mentors, and partners who have inspired and supported me throughout my journey, including my team at Garner Economics.

I would be remiss if I did not personally thank several people who wrote letters of support for my nomination: Danielle Casey, Bryan Daniels, and some past recipients of this Lifetime Leadership Award who are also past chairs of IEDC - Mark Waterhouse, Jim Devine and Rick Weddle; and my two friends and past board members of IEDC, Julie Curtin, and David Leezer.

Of course, a special thank you to my wife of 44 years, Karen, who is my biggest cheerleader and my most vocal critic when needed.

As I look back, I am reminded that progress is built on collaboration, vision, and perseverance. I am grateful to be part of a community that is committed to making a lasting impact. Thank you again for this capstone of my career. God bless.

