



**HAYWARD**

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## **City of Hayward earns International Gold Award for innovation in economic development**

HAYWARD, Calif., Sept. 29, 2025— The City of Hayward received its first Gold Award of Excellence from the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) for its innovative Hashtag Hayward program, the highest honor in its category. The program was also nominated for Best in Show, IEDC's most prestigious award, out of more than 450 submissions this year from across the globe.

The Hashtag Hayward program provided grants of up to \$10,000 to small businesses for storefront improvements that inspire customers to share their experiences through social media, including adding murals and art installations, enhancing facades, lighting and signage, updating floor plans and revamping websites and social media accounts. The program also facilitates connections between businesses and local social media influencers to create viral marketing campaigns. The combination of enhanced visibility and community placemaking led to measurable increases in customer engagement, foot traffic and revenue growth for local businesses.

Since its inception, the program helped participating small businesses generate millions of social media views, grow their customer bases and become more deeply embedded as community anchors. Hashtag Hayward is part of the Economic Development division's larger portfolio of innovative programs that support a diverse and resilient business community.

IEDC is the world's largest organization serving economic development professionals, with more than 5,000 members worldwide. Since 2021, Hayward has earned a total of eight IEDC awards, underscoring the City's consistent leadership and innovation in creating programs that support businesses, residents and the broader community.

To learn more about economic development in the City of Hayward, visit the Economic Development Division [webpage](#).