



CITY OF DUNNELLON

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January 9, 2020

STaR Awards Committee
c/o Anna Laybourn
Design Workshop
120 East Main Street, Suite 100
Aspen, Colorado 81611

RE: 2020 APA Small Town & Rural Planning Division Award Nomination
2019 City of Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy – ***Distinctly Dunnellon***

Dear Ms. Laybourn and STaR Awards Committee:

With an approximate population of just 1,800 citizens, the City of Dunnellon is located in Marion County, Florida, home to one of the State's most popular natural attractions, Rainbow Springs State Park. Dunnellon is a quaint and quiet City that attracts many short-term visitors due to its beautiful eco-tourism opportunities. The people of Dunnellon wish for it to be more than that. Like other rural communities, Dunnellon struggles with limiting technical capabilities, financial funding for planning, strategic economic plans to focus on growth, and keeping families within the community.

In 2019, the City was thrilled to be selected for a grant through the Competitive Florida Partnership Program from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. With this award, the City was afforded the financial ability to hire consultants to work closely with the State and local stakeholders in preparing a strategic plan for Dunnellon. Through a vast amount of community engagement that had meeting rooms filled with citizens, elected officials, consultants and State agents, we worked together to identify and map the City's assets. The result was an asset-based Economic Development Strategy we refer to as "***Distinctly Dunnellon.***" This Economic Development Strategy has brought to light the wonderful assets that make us Dunnellon, and we developed a vision and strategy that will guide us to our bright future.

The City is extremely grateful for the efforts of our consultants, the State of Florida, and most importantly, our citizens. They were fully invested in the creation of the City's Economic Development Strategy. As Mayor of Dunnellon, I, with great enthusiasm and pride, provide this letter of support on behalf of the City for a ***Vernon Deines Award for Special Project Plan*** for the ***2019 City of Dunnellon Economic Development Strategy, Distinctly Dunnellon.*** Please do not hesitate to contact me at (352) 465-8500 with any questions you may have.

I sincerely thank you for your kind consideration of this nomination.

Mayor Curtis "Dale" Burns
City of Dunnellon

Cc: Lonnie Smith, Community Development/Code Enforcement, City of Dunnellon
Allison Megrath, AICP, Kimley-Horn