



GLOBAL AWARD

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CITIES
(SHANGHAI AWARD)

UN-HABITAT

Shanghai Municipal
People's Government

The Fourth Cycle of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award)

Call for Applications Rules and
Guidelines

March 2026



The Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) aims to accelerate the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). It focuses on advancing Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11), promoting the localization of SDGs, echoing on the Global Development Initiative (GDI), and incentivizing cities to find systematic solutions for sustainable urban development. The Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) also serves as a platform for advancing UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, flagship programmes and the Global Urban Monitoring Framework.

The establishment of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) was officially announced by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat at the first session of the 2022 Executive Board of UN-Habitat on 30 March 2022. In October 2023, UN-Habitat and China successfully completed the inaugural cycle of the award and co-organized the first award ceremony during the national Observance of World Cities Day in Shanghai. The second award ceremony was co-hosted by UN-Habitat and Egyptian Government during 2024 Global Observance of World Cities Day in Alexandria. The third award ceremony was co-hosted by UN-Habitat and Colombian Government at the opening session of 2025 Global Observance of World Cities Day in Bogotá, Colombia.

The Call for Applications for the fourth cycle of the award is **now open until 12 June 2026.**

I. Scope and Theme

The award is **open to cities all around the world** to recognize and honour their progress and achievements on implementing the SDGs and the NUA at the city level since 2016 when the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was formally initiated.

The overall theme of the award is **"Building a Sustainable Urban Future for All"**. Cities around the world striving for sustainable development are encouraged to apply to join the global discussion on sustainable urban development solutions.

Echoing the themes of World Cities Day 2026 and World Habitat Day 2026, in alignment with UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029, and in response to the emerging priorities in international urban sustainable development, **cities that have made significant progress in one or more of the following areas are particularly encouraged to apply:**

Area 1: Adequate housing for diverse needs

Including but not limited to:

a) ensure housing accessibility: expand the effective supply of safe, affordable, and adequate housing, giving priority to low-income families,

women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, fulfill the commitment to housing as a basic human right and public good.

b) transform informal settlements: systematically advance the transformation of informal settlements and slums, improve housing structural safety, basic sanitation and overall living environments, safeguard residents' basic rights, and promote social inclusion.

c) meet full life-cycle needs: fully respond to the diverse needs of different family structures and life stages through housing design, policies, and construction; promote universal design and age-friendly renovation to ensure long-term housing adaptability.

d) strengthen post-disaster housing support: integrate housing support into crisis response systems, provide temporary shelter and sustainable permanent housing solutions for internally displaced persons, refugees, and migrants affected by disasters and conflicts; support recovery and reconstruction.

e) promote "good housing": develop good standards, good design, good materials, good construction, and good maintenance and management; encourage the construction of new homes that meet the criteria of "good housing,"



as well as upgrading of older housing into "good housing" through various approaches, such as owner-led renovation or reconstruction on the original site, thereby enhancing housing quality.

Area 2: Promoting Urban Regeneration for Human Settlements Improvement

Including but not limited to:

a) implement integrated and inclusive urban regeneration: upgrade aging residential areas and declining spaces following integrated urban and sectoral planning, enhancing the quality and efficiency of existing urban areas; prioritize the provision of public services such as education, health care, and green spaces; enhance community health, safety, and well-being.

b) stimulate local economic vitality: unlock spatial resources through regeneration, supporting community-based small and micro businesses, social enterprises, and green economy; provide enabling environments for emerging industries including research and development, cultural and creative industries, and leisure and recreation; create decent jobs, and enhance community vitality.

c) optimize the multiple values of space: in line with the *New Urban Agenda*, develop policies and planning approaches to optimize the economic, ecological, and social functions of land; prevent disorderly sprawl, optimize urban structure, enhance urban quality and spatial efficiency.

d) cultivate community cultural resources: integrate cultural heritage protection into regeneration; protect and revitalize historic districts and cultural heritage; support community cultural expression and public space creation; enhance social cohesion and sense of belonging and empower communities to achieve long-term prosperity.

Area 3: Building Resilient Infrastructure Responding to Climate Change

Including but not limited to:

a) build green and resilient infrastructure: promote sustainable design, environmentally

friendly materials, and circular technologies, and integrate nature-based solutions across water supply and drainage, energy, transport and other infrastructure; enhance resilience to climate risks such as flooding and heatwaves.

b) ensure equitable access to service facilities: prioritize poor and vulnerable groups in the planning and construction of essential public facilities; ensure that all people and communities have equal access to basic services such as education, health care, and sports facilities.

c) Enhance the climate resilience of infrastructure: develop public infrastructure that serves both routine and emergency needs; strengthen climate-adaptive design and redundancy measures in public service facilities such as health care and emergency management to ensure their continuous and effective operation during and after crises, and to support rapid community recovery.

d) Strengthen the safety management of municipal infrastructure: develop urban infrastructure lifeline systems; promote the distributed layout of critical facilities, energy systems, and water sources; improve standards for disaster resistance and prevention to respond effectively to extreme climate events; enhance overall safety and security capacity.

e) promote smart service systems: leverage knowledge, data, and digital tools to establish disaster monitoring and early warning systems, and intelligent management platforms at the community level; strengthen preparedness and response capabilities to extreme climate events.

Area 4: Encouraging Multi-Stakeholder Participation to Strengthen Urban Governance

Including but not limited to:

a) strengthen multi-level governance and localization mechanisms: enhance the collaborative mechanism of multi-level participatory governance across national, regional and community levels; translate global agendas such as adequate housing into local action plans to accelerate the localization of the SDGs.

b) innovate integrated planning and financing: leverage planning, management, investment, and financing frameworks to guide land use; promote innovative financial instruments such as green bonds to catalyse public and private investments to ensure sustainable project financing.

c) build knowledge-driven and inclusive decision-making systems, strengthen knowledge, data, digitization, and capacity development to support evidence-based decision-making. Establish institutionalized mechanisms to ensure equitable participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups throughout the planning, implementation and monitoring process, advancing mainstreaming of gender equality.

d) strengthen partnerships and resource mobilization: build cross-sectoral partnerships and coalitions; enhance consensus-building and achieve effective resource mobilization through advocacy and communication; mobilize multi-stakeholder capacities and resources to jointly address the housing crisis and development challenges.

e) promote public engagement: encourage the active, meaningful, and innovative engagement of residents in urban governance, and explore new models for coordinated community management; improve institutional frameworks to facilitate the participation of residents, private sector, civil society organizations in urban governance; leverage the role of volunteer services, and broaden channels for employment.

II. Eligibility

Cities and municipalities around the world are eligible to be applicants for the award. Cities demonstrating the following are especially welcome to apply:

- Outstanding performance in social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable urban development since 2016.
- Remarkable progress and innovation in

sustainable urban development since 2016, with significant potential for further growth and development.

- A commitment to further realizing and advancing the ambitious goal of sustainable urban development.
- Best practices in sustainable urban development that can be promoted around the world to inspire and motivate other cities to jointly implement sustainable development actions.

III. Prize and award

The fourth cycle of the award will be given to no more than five cities. An award ceremony will be held during the World Cities Day 2026 observance, and winners of the fourth cycle will be presented with a plaque and a trophy. The outstanding practices and achievements in sustainable urban development from the winning cities will be added to the best practices database of the NUA platform and the Shanghai Manual 2026, which will further showcase and enhance the visibility of the cities' efforts on sustainable urban and human settlement development. The winning cities will also be invited to attend important international events, gaining potential opportunities, such as engaging in city networks, exchanging best practices with other cities, boosting potential investment, and creating new opportunities for local economic development.

IV. Application

(1) Application platform

The application form can be completed and submitted through the Shanghai Award official website at <https://www.shanghaiaward.org>, where more information, guidance and resources for the application process are also available. Cities are encouraged to align the application with their Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR).

(2) Application materials

The application includes two approaches: i) self-application; and ii) application with nomination. The Application Form can be completed on the online application portal of the award website, where applicants can also upload supporting materials. The application can be revised at any time before the Call for Applications closes. Requirements for the application are as follows:

a. Self-application:

All applicant cities/municipalities are required to submit an official Application Letter to confirm that the city/municipality decides to apply to the fourth cycle of the award. The Application Letter must include the official letterhead and an official stamp/signature of the mayor (or the equivalent) of the applicant city/municipality. A template for the Application Letter can be downloaded via the online application portal.

b. Application with nomination:

Member States of the United Nations (UN), UN agencies other than UN-Habitat, organisations and institutions that have consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or that have been specially invited by UN-Habitat can nominate. An official Nomination Letter and a Confirmation Letter by the city/municipality are required. The nominator must write an official Nomination Letter, with an official letterhead and the stamp of the nominator, to state that they nominate the city/municipality concerned to apply to the fourth cycle of the award and explain why they make the nomination. The Confirmation Letter must include the official letterhead and an official stamp/signature of the mayor (or the equivalent) of the applicant city/municipality and confirm that they agree to be nominated and apply to the award.

(3) Language of the application:

English

(4) Terms and conditions

- 1) The applicant city/municipality is responsible for completing and submitting the application following the Call for

Applications Rules and Guidelines.

- 2) The applicant city/municipality is responsible for the authenticity and legality of the submitted materials.
- 3) Applications will be disqualified in the following situations:
 - a. Failure to observe the Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines
 - b. Presenting misleading and false information regarding the supporting documents
 - c. Inability to provide sufficient information for the assessment of the application
 - d. Unethical behaviour, including undue pressure on any person involved in the evaluation and selection process.
- 4) Incomplete applications or late submissions will not be considered. The task force for the award may request supplementary materials from applications on the condition that the original application was completed according to the Rules and Guidelines and the timeline, and that additional information is helpful for further assessments of the application against the core selection criteria.
- 5) Questions marked with an * are required to answer, and the rest are optional. Please note that the applicant must answer all required questions. Incomplete applications will be disqualified. Applicants that fail to provide the required quantitative indicators in the questions should provide a brief description related to the conditions.
- 6) You are encouraged to provide supporting materials with your submission, for example, photographs, videos, media reports, promotional materials, procedural documents, supporting bylaws or city regulations and policies (brief), or working standards, etc. These are not compulsory but will help to strengthen your application.
- 7) The applications can be revised before the Call for Applications closes. Once the Call for Applications is closed, the materials submitted will not be returned. The applicant should back up the original documents as needed.

- 8) Where the Application Letter from the applicant city/municipality is submitted, all materials in the applications will be available for international exhibition, demonstration, publication, and media coverage. The award task force will cite the source of the information while using it but will not be required to seek further permission for any such use.
- 9) Where the submission of an application is made by someone assigned by the applicant city/municipality, it is assumed that they have been given permissions for the submission and the terms indicated in point (8) above.
- 10) The prize for the winning application will be awarded to the city/municipality named in the application form.

V. Selection criteria

The applications will be assessed according to four core criteria.

- (1) **Impact:** The achievements, progress, and proven impact on implementing the 2030 Agenda and the NUA.
- (2) **Sustainability:** The strategies, plans and actions that underpin the long-term implementation of the SDGs and the NUA in the city.

- (3) **Innovation:** The innovative approaches, methods, practices, technologies, or instruments to enable the realisation of the SDGs and the NUA.

- (4) **Adaptability:** The extent to which the city's experience can be replicated, adopted, or scaled up by other cities or in similar scenarios.

In addition to the core criteria, the applicants will be given bonus points if they have accomplishments in the areas that are closely related to the approaches that UN-Habitat promotes for realising the SDGs and the NUA.

VI. Selection process

After the closing date of the Call for Applications, the award task force will conduct an eligibility and compliance review. A technical review team will be set up to conduct initial shortlisting. Shortlisted cities will be required to submit video materials to demonstrate their achieved impact.

An International Jury will be established as the core assessment body of the award. The International Jury will give its review report and the recommendations for winners.

UN-Habitat will confirm the list of winning cities based on the International Jury Review Report after consulting with internal and external stakeholders.

The "Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award)" is jointly established by UN-Habitat and Chinese partners. Please visit the official website: <https://www.shanghaiaward.org> for this Application Rules and Guidelines (in six UN official languages). Should you have any questions or encounter any problems during the application process, you can **send your inquiries to the award task force at outreach@shanghaiaward.org**.

The Shanghai Award Task Force reserves the rights of final interpretation of the Fourth Cycle of the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) Call for Applications Rules and Guidelines.



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