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## **2021 Market Van Buren Business Recognition Awards Rules and Restrictions**

### **Overview**

To celebrate the hard-won successes of Van Buren County residents in 2020, Market Van Buren is excited to announce the first annual Market Van Buren Awards Program!

Through this program, there are two categories of awards which will be given to Van Buren County businesses by Market Van Buren. The first category of awards, “Investor Awards,” will be reserved for businesses that have invested in supporting the economic development work of Market Van Buren. The second category of awards, “Community Awards,” will be open to all businesses operating in Van Buren County – regardless of whether they are an investor of Market Van Buren.

Community Award nominees will be nominated by the public and subsequently vetted by a specialized committee comprised of Market Van Buren board members and community leaders. Investor Award nominees will be vetted by the same specialized subcommittee that oversees the Community Awards; nominees for Investor Awards will be selected without public input.

Semifinalists for each award category will be announced in early May. Semifinalists for all Market Van Buren awards are expected to attend the awards ceremony or have someone representing their business attend the ceremony. The awards ceremony is expected to occur early in the week of June 28, 2021 so long as an event can be held that is both safe and in compliance with any state or local restrictions on gatherings. If safety concerns or gathering restrictions do not permit a public awards ceremony, organizations must work with the staff of Market Van Buren to set a time for a private meeting to accept their award in a safe, socially distanced micro-event. Such an event will ideally take place either at the office of the winning organization or Market Van Buren. Failure to fulfill these obligations will result in disqualification from the awards program.

### **Community Awards |Rules & Guidelines**

For the 2021 Market Van Buren Awards, there will be one Community Award category: Best New Business. To be eligible for this award, businesses must have been operating for less than two years as of January 1, 2021. Eligible nominees must have a local presence, which means that they produce a product or provide a service in Van Buren County. Eligible nominees must employ a minimum of two people (this can include the business owner/owners). Home-based businesses are not eligible for nomination; the business must have a physical presence within Van Buren County that exists outside of a residential home.

A strong candidate for the “Best New Business” award will exhibit excellence in the following: strategic planning, employee development, community involvement, and customer service.

Self-nominations for the Best New Business Award are both accepted and encouraged. Community members are welcome to nominate more than one business for the Best New Business Award. However, should an individual submit multiple nominations for a single business, only the first nomination will be considered.

Winners will be selected based on the quality of the nominations which they receive from community members, their completion of the follow-up questionnaire, and their alignment with the

description of an ideal candidate for the award. The total number of nominations a business receives will NOT increase the likelihood that the business is selected as a winner, but the total number of unique, high quality nominations originating from community members will be considered in selecting the winner. In other words, nominating your own businesses or having a community member nominate your business 10 times will not increase your likelihood of winning, but having 10 community members submit nominations each with unique responses to open-ended questions can increase your likelihood of winning.

Do not solicit community members to complete the nomination form with answers that you have provided ahead of time; nominations with identical responses will not be considered.

Community members nominating a business will be required to provide their name and email address to verify their identity and prevent ballot stuffing. Community members nominating a business should also be prepared to describe why they think their nominee should be named “Best New Business.”

Nominee businesses will be contacted by the staff of Market Van Buren and asked to complete a brief questionnaire by March 12, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. ET to be considered for the “Best New Business” award. Questionnaires not completed by this deadline will not be considered. To increase the likelihood of winning, nominees should be sure to provide complete and thoughtful responses on the questionnaire. Responses to the questionnaire should be written in full and complete sentences unless another type of response is requested. It is a candidate’s responsibility to ensure that each question has been fully and appropriately answered. In addition to completeness, questionnaires will be also be vetted for honesty.

### **Investor Awards | Rules & Guidelines**

For the 2021 Investor Awards, there will be four award categories: Economic Development Pioneer of the Year, Business Resilience Leader of the Year, Business Innovator of the Year, Community Champion of the Year. To be eligible for these awards, businesses must have invested in supporting the economic development work of Market Van Buren. Nominees for these awards have been nominated by a specialized subcommittee of the board of Market Van Buren. If a nominated business would like to be fully eligible for an award, a simple questionnaire explaining why they are an excellent candidate for the award for which they have been nominated must be completed.

Nominees will be asked to complete and submit this questionnaire by March 12, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. ET. Questionnaires not completed by this deadline will not be considered. To increase the likelihood of winning, nominees should be sure to provide complete and thoughtful responses on the questionnaire. Responses to the questionnaire should be written in full and complete sentences unless another type of response is requested. It is a nominee’s responsibility to ensure that each question has been fully and appropriately answered. Winners will be selected based their completion of the questionnaire and their overall alignment with the description of an ideal candidate for the award. In addition to completeness, questionnaires will be vetted for honesty.

Below are descriptions of the Investor Award categories:

- *Economic Pioneer of the Year:* A strong candidate exhibits some or all the following traits: enabling significant growth in jobs, innovative solutions to retain employees or jobs during times of adversity, unique contributions that grow the local economy, support of product and service innovation, improvement in engaging and serving their customers and community.

- *Business Resiliency Leader of the Year:* A strong candidate has not only weathered the COVID-19 crisis but thrived through the year of adversity. This may have been achieved through the introduction of new or augmented processes, approaches, services, or products, or through other acts of courage, leadership, and out-of-the-box thinking.
- *Business Innovator of the Year:* A strong candidate will have demonstrated creative and timely responses to changing industry conditions, which could include adapting existing processes, approaches, services, or products or creating a totally new solution for a problem. Changing industry conditions may refer to changes in market demand, consumer preferences, new industry standards, etc.
- *Community Champion of the Year:* A strong candidate will have made a significant impact on their community in some or all of the following categories: workforce development, volunteer efforts, board service, innovative business models that promote social goals.

### **Judging and Celebrations**

Winners for both the Investor Awards and Best New Business Award will be selected by the board of Market Van Buren after being vetted by a specialized committee. Semifinalists for all awards will be announced in the first week of May. Semifinalists will be awarded the title of either “winner” or “honorable mention” at an awards ceremony the week of June 28, 2021.

Award winners and honorable mention businesses will receive a trophy, which can be displayed to commemorate their organization’s achievements in 2020. In addition, the winners and honorable mention businesses will be featured in Market Van Buren’s annual report, press releases, and social media accounts.