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Council's Portlaoise projects in line for prestigious awards

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Laois County Council is in contention to win national recognition in the Irish Planning Institute's annual Irish Planning Awards for Portlaoise projects.

The theme of the Institute's 2020 awards is 'Celebrating Excellence and Innovation in Irish Planning'. Two related Laois local authority Portlaoise projects have been nominated in three categories.

The Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond plan has been recognised in three categories: Participation and Engagement, Design, Planning and Economic Development.

The project sets out a 20 year plan for the county town and how public spaces can be reconfigured to improve the landscape and living environment of the town centre.

The second project to be nominated is related to the first. The rejuvenation of Fitzmaurice Place, which was completed in 2019, is nominated in the design section.

Laois County Council Chief Executive John Mulholland welcomed the nominations.

"It's always good to be

nominated for such prestigious awards and it would be even more gratifying if the Portlaoise projects could ultimately prevail.

"I believe the strength of our project Portlaoise 2040 and Beyond lies in its formulation through plan making at local level where members of the public, the Council and professional planners, taking a carte blanche approach, came forward with a new and exciting vision for the future development of the core town centre.

"I think it's a model that works, that can be seen to work and that induces buy in from main stakeholders who trade or live in the town centre. We hope to do well in the awards night itself but more importantly the coming year 2020 should see the commencement on the ground of a number of priority town centre projects funded from the Urban Regeneration Development Fund, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Laois County Council," said Mr Mulholland.

The Irish Planning Institute says it seeks, through the Irish Planning Awards, to highlight innovation and excellence in

Irish planning. It says the awards acknowledge a diverse range of projects and plans nationally taking place at a local, county and regional level in complex and dynamic environments. There has been a significant increase in the quantity and quality of projects submitted for consideration. In total, the Panel of Judges have shortlisted 34 projects across 7 categories from a total entry of 56 projects.

President of the Irish Planning Institute Joe Corr noted the higher standard of this years nominees.

"The calibre and quantity of projects submitted to the Irish Planning Awards has greatly improved this year, reflecting the output of the Planning Sector across the country. We feel these shortlisted projects clearly demonstrate the advantages of the participatory planning process, facilitated and enabled by professional planners.

"The shortlisted projects show how the cooperation and direct participation of stakeholders can have a synergistic effect of benefit to the whole planning process," he said.

The awards will be presented on February 27 in Dublin.



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The project team at the formal opening of the Fort Protector/Fitzmaurice Place conservation project in 2019 PICTURE: ALF HARVEY.