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## Local expert gets group's top award

Leader's work in economic development is commended

**By Betty Beard**

The Arizona Republic

Ioanna Morfessis, a longtime Phoenix economic-development expert, was honored Monday with a top award from the International Economic Development Council, a group with about 4,500 members.



**Ioanna Morfessis**

Morfessis is getting the lifetime-achievement award for "lifelong commitment to excellence in economic development" during the organization's annual conference in Charlotte, N.C.

"It's very humbling to be nominated and regarded by your peers," Morfessis said. "I am very fortunate to have been able to work with scores of leaders to improve the lives and livelihoods of the people and businesses who reside in the communities that I served."

Jeff Finkle, IEDC's president and CEO said, "Ioanna's professional career and personal passion for improving communities so all citizens can benefit from more jobs, increased opportunities for small business and enhanced civic pride is an inspiration for all of us in this field."

Since 2004, Morfessis has led an international consulting firm, I.O. Inc., based in

Phoenix.

She held several business-assistance and economic-development-related jobs in the Washington, D.C., and Maryland areas until she was recruited in 1985 to Phoenix to serve as the founding director of the Phoenix Economic Growth Corp., the city's first public-private partnership for economic development.

She led the city's first formal economic-development program and helped land 42 new companies, 8,000 jobs and \$2 billion in investments.

In the late 1980s, when the region was being buffeted by a recession and savings and loan scandals, Morfessis helped create the Greater Phoenix Economic Council,

one of the first such regional organizations in the country. It still exists.

Morfessis was appointed as GPEC's first president in 1989 and led it until 1997, when she left to become the first president of the Greater Baltimore Alliance, now the Economic Alliance of Greater Baltimore. She returned to Phoenix in 2004.

She has a doctorate degree from Arizona State University, Master of Public Administration from George Washington University and bachelor's degree from American University. Morfessis is an honorary lifetime member of the International Economic Development Council and served as its director from 1992 to 1994.

She also is active in several educational groups, including Helios Education Foundation and the board of the Arizona State University College of Public Programs.