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IDA Announces Winners of Top Industry Honors

The Downtown Achievement Awards Recognize Innovative Achievement in Urban Place Management

Washington, DC – The International Downtown Association (IDA) recognized 23 outstanding projects as winners of the 2024 Downtown Achievement Awards which identify improvements to urban centers by dedicated organizations around the globe. The top projects receive Pinnacle Awards, the industry's highest recognition, representing the most creative and inspiring innovations in urban place management.

Urban place management organizations are on the front lines of solving challenges related to placemaking, economic development, urban planning and branding. These organizations activate public spaces and make cities vibrant, healthy places for everyone. During a comprehensive review, this year's projects were awarded by a jury of IDA members in the following categories: economic development; marketing, communications and events; planning, design and infrastructure; and public space management and operations.

"These innovative projects received the IDA Pinnacle Award for setting the new standard for improving cities worldwide," said David Downey, IDA President and CEO. "Each award-winning effort has made an impact on its city and the people who live, work and play in the community, and displays the continued commitment to champion livable, vital and thriving urban centers."

Winners of this year's Pinnacle Awards are:

Project: *Path to Reconciliation*

Organization: Regina Downtown Business Improvement District – Regina, Saskatchewan

Category: Public Space Management and Operations

More than just a pandemic recovery project, this 325-foot mural on Regina Downtown BID's pedestrian mall became a symbol of reconciliation, diversity and community. Designed and installed by two Indigenous artists, and supported by nearly 200 volunteers, the *Path to Reconciliation* reflects traditional beadwork, fostering dialogue, encouraging reflection, educating community, and creating a lasting impact. The project concluded with a dedication ceremony on National Indigenous People's Day in Regina.

Project: *The Crossing at East Cut*

Organizations: The East Cut Community Benefit District – San Francisco, CA

Category: Public Space Management and Operations

The Crossing at East Cut is a three-acre city block, and a once temporary bus terminal, within one of San Francisco's newest multi-use, transit-oriented neighborhoods. This free, public space, operated by The East Cut Community Benefit District, has become a central hub for community activities and programs becoming the heart of the community. What would have been a fenced

off, undeveloped city block, now serves as a thriving incubator for small businesses, a lunchtime oasis for nearby workers, and a welcoming outdoor space for residents to connect.

Project: *Seattle City Makers Podcast*

Organizations: Downtown Seattle Association – Seattle, WA

Category: Marketing, Communications and Events

The Seattle City Makers Podcast launched as downtown was emerging from the pandemic, providing a platform for meaningful conversations with leaders from a wide range of sectors influencing the Seattle of today and tomorrow. The podcast allows the Downtown Seattle Association to go beyond headlines with deeper perspective regarding downtown's revitalization. Season two witnessed a phenomenal rise in listenership, with a 92% increase across platforms and an 85% jump in subscribers. These numbers stand as a testament to the podcast's success in amplifying the organization's exposure and effectively producing content about downtown stories that might not have otherwise reached thousands in the community.

Project: *Storefront Improvements*

Organizations: U District Partnership – Seattle, WA

Category: Economic Development

With unprecedented private development pressure, consumer loss, rising costs, and persistent ground-floor vacancies, businesses in Seattle's University District needed a lifeline to survive and thrive in a post-pandemic economy. Leveraging its strong connection to the local business community, the U District Partnership secured \$5M from the Washington State Department of Commerce's Small Business Innovation Fund and created three strategic grant programs. This initiative supported over 130 businesses, revitalizing more than 75 storefronts, filling 11 retail spaces, adding over 450 outdoor dining seats, and reinvigorating the district, with a boost in foot traffic and consumer demand.

Project: *Reclaim, Restore, Repurpose: Uptown's River Project*

Organizations: Uptown Columbus, Inc. – Columbus, GA

Category: Planning, Design and Infrastructure

In 2001, the last textile mill in Uptown Columbus closed, marking a low point for the area. In response, Uptown Columbus devised an audacious plan to reclaim, restore and repurpose natural water flows to the Chattahoochee River and introduce whitewater rafting. A decade after completing the project, the project had reached a new high. The once-industrial waterway had become a vibrant hub for outdoor recreation. Uptown raised \$26.3 million, hired engineers to design a whitewater course, and gained approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This success led to the creation of ziplines, playgrounds, splashpads, and expanded bike paths. In 2023, Uptown was chosen 23 to host the freestyle kayak world championships, drawing international attention.

In addition to the above Pinnacle Award winners, 18 projects were awarded an Excellence Award for their outstanding response to an industry challenge.

IDA's members have a proven track record of creating collaborative public-private partnerships to tackle weighty issues. More than 2,500 downtown management districts exist in cities throughout the U.S. and Canada. Place management organizations affect significant change in every major metropolitan area throughout North America in an industry that is growing rapidly around the globe. Place management work touches every discipline of city building, including economic development, leadership, marketing, events, public space management, policy, planning and infrastructure.

Additional information on the Pinnacle award winners can be found online at downtown.org. The 2024 IDA Downtown Achievement Awards are sponsored by [American Christmas](https://americanchristmas.com).

About IDA

IDA is the premier organization for urban place professionals who are shaping and activating dynamic city center districts. Our members are city builders and downtown champions who bring urban centers to life, bridging the gap between the public and private sectors. We represent an industry of more than 2,500 place management organizations, employing 100,000 people throughout North America and growing rapidly around the world. Founded in 1954, IDA is a resource center for ideas and innovative best practices in urban place management. For more information, visit downtown.org.

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