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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 15 outstanding projects as winners of the 2026 Downtown Achievement Awards which identify improvements to urban centers by dedicated organizations around the globe. Seven projects received 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; planning, design and infrastructure; public space management and operations; and policy and advocacy.

"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: *Anthem Row. Reimagined. Reclaimed. Reborn as Downtown DC's Creative Hub.*
Organizations: DowntownDC BID – Washington, DC
Category: Marketing, Communications and Events
What began as an overlooked downtown corridor became a destination of global attention, welcoming more than 159,000 visitors in 10 months, increasing foot traffic by 22%, generating over $67,000 in business revenue and directing $430,000 to DC Certified Business Enterprises.

Project: *A New Standard for Community-Driven Engagement: Repairing the Past and Shaping the Future*

Organization: Downtown Detroit Partnership – Detroit, Michigan
Category: Policy and Advocacy
Every city faces moments that define its future. When the I-375 redesign sparked concern, the Downtown Detroit Partnership brought together residents, data and national expertise to chart a new path. Their independent review helped reshape the project, improve pedestrian design and secure a community-driven framework for the future.

Project: *Downtown Durham Blueprint: 2035*
Organization: Downtown Durham, Inc. – Durham, North Carolina
Category: Planning, Design and Infrastructure
In response to hybrid work, rising housing costs, disconnected public spaces and concerns about preserving identity – Downtown Durham, Inc. led an extensive public process to shape a 10-year plan rooted in equity and implementation. The result was a city-adopted roadmap already driving action – from safety ambassadors and alley activation to small business support and mixed-income housing.

Project: *Emerging Producers*
Organization: River City Company – Chattanooga, Tennessee
Category: Economic Development
What if the most powerful way to activate downtown was empowering the people behind them? That's how the River City Company's Emerging Producers program began. This cohort-based program combines training, mentorship and real-world experience to help new leaders launch activations in Downtown Chattanooga. Designed to lower barriers to entry, the program equips aspiring producers, artists and small organizations with event experience.

Project: *Garage Racing National Championships*
Organization: National Landing BID – Arlington, Virginia
Category: Economic Development
National Landing transformed an ordinary parking garage into the Garage Racing National Championships. Combining cycling, placemaking and community activation, it's the only event of its kind in the U.S. Since its post-pandemic relaunch, attendance has grown year over year, drawing more than 1,000 spectators and 200 racers in 2026. The website attracted over 5,000 unique visitors in a day, and the event created 26 media placements, and 7.29 million impressions – reinforcing National Landing's reputation as a forward-thinking district.

Project: *Jacobson Plaza*
Organization: Downtown Sioux Falls, Inc. – Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Category: Public Space Management and Operations
In Sioux Falls, Downtown Sioux Falls Partnership, Inc. transformed Jacobson Plaza, a forgotten brownfield, into a dynamic civic destination where people of all ages and abilities can gather year-round. The seven-acre park includes the city's first outdoor refrigerated ice ribbon, its largest splash pad, the region's largest inclusive playground and welcoming community spaces.

Since opening in 2025, it has attracted more than 200,000 visitors, becoming one of the city's most active public spaces.

Project: *The Community Safety Hosts Initiative*
Organization: Zoongizi Ode & Persons Community Solutions Ltd. – Winnipeg, Manitoba
Category: Public Space Management and Operations
Traditional security approaches often fail when trust, care and community connection are what's needed. In partnership with an Indigenous-led partnership program, Persons Community Solutions Ltd. created Community Safety Hosts: a professional role to support public spaces through relationships, de-escalation and lived experience. Hosts receive training, mentorship and living wages - bringing dignity and professionalism to frontline care. In just three and a half years, the initiative has achieved a 74% de-escalation success rate.

In addition to the above Pinnacle Award winners, 8 projects were awarded an Excellence Award for their outstanding response to an industry challenge.

IDA convened this month in Toronto for *Intersections: Where Districts, Disciplines and Ideas Converge,* a three-day conference to discuss emerging trends, challenges and solutions in place management. Winners were recognized during the Downtown Achievement Awards ceremony at the 72nd Annual Conference & Marketplace, the premier gathering for professional place managers and urban champions creating vibrant and healthy cities around the world.

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.

About IDA

The International Downtown Association (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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