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Downtown’s “Brighten the Passage” wins International Downtown Association Award of Excellence in Urban Place Management

Murals, aesthetic lighting, programming and landscape upgrades are internationally recognized for enhancing connectivity between the central business district and Historic Third Ward

MILWAUKEE (September 22, 2021) – The International Downtown Association (IDA) recognized Milwaukee Downtown, Inc. and its partner, the Historic Third Ward BID #2, with the Downtown Achievement Award of Excellence for its resourceful approaches related to its “Brighten the Passage” project. A jury of peer professionals reviewed, deliberated and evaluated all entries in the 2021 Downtown Achievement Awards. The Award of Excellence acknowledges an excellent response to an urban place management challenge, demonstrating application of industry knowledge and exceeding the jury criteria.

“Brighten the Passage” was among a pool of qualified entries in the category of Planning, Design and Infrastructure, which IDA identifies as one of the seven professional urban place management practice areas. This category called for unique organizational approaches and projects in the areas of downtown master planning, streetscape improvements, sustainable infrastructure and wayfinding.

In fall 2020, the four I-794 freeway support piers that frame Broadway were transformed with art installations that have created one of the most unique outdoor urban art collections in the region. Tia Richardson, The Couto Brothers, Josephine Rice and Dave Watkins brought their individual styles to life during the first phase of the improvement project.

In January 2021, the second phase of the “Brighten the Passage” project was completed with the installation of 75 programmable aesthetic lighting under I-794 at both Broadway and Water Street to create an enhanced sense of place and further fulfill project goals. The dynamic lighting array, which was designed by Ring & DuChateau, installed by Lemberg and programmed by Main Stage, can now be viewed nightly.

“‘Brighten the Passage’ is an implementation of the vision embodied in the City’s Downtown Area Plan, which was further developed by the neighborhood BIDs to bolster downtown’s daytime and nightlife economies,” said Matt Dorner, economic development director of Milwaukee Downtown. “Improving underutilized zones that discourage pedestrian activity is a goal advanced with this project. We want residents, workers and visitors alike to not only feel like they are in a unique and vibrant place, but we also want to create new and interesting attractions that draw more patrons to the area for our businesses.”

MORE

“Brighten the Passage” wins IDA Award / ADD ONE

“Milwaukee Downtown and its partners have demonstrated skillful application of urban place management principles with its ‘Brighten the Passage’ initiative,” said David Downey, IDA President and CEO. “‘Brighten the Passage’ should serve as a framework to all member communities within IDA.”

Washington, DC-based IDA is the premier organization for urban place professionals who are shaping and activating dynamic city center districts. Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is the urban place management organization representing the interests of downtown property owners in the City of Milwaukee. “Brighten the Passage” and the other award winners will be detailed on the IDA website during the week of October 18th, prior to the award celebration at the 2021 IDA National Conference in Tampa, FL.

Milwaukee Downtown and the Historic Third Ward BID #2 continue to strengthen neighborhood connections under I-794. Beyond the “Brighten the Passage” project, other public spaces under the freeway are being reimagined. Pickleball courts recently opened just west of the Milwaukee Public Market at Riverwalk Commons, renovations to Pompeii Square that created a new gateway into downtown and the Historic Third Ward just wrapped up, and the organizations are now working on their most ambitious project to date – a fundraising campaign for downtown’s first public dog park under I-794, along the west side of the Milwaukee River. Details on the project and donation opportunities are available as www.MKEDogPark.com.

More information on the “Brighten the Passage” project is available at www.brightenthepassage.com.

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About Milwaukee Downtown, Inc.

Milwaukee Downtown, Business Improvement District #21 is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown is a management district organization that oversees approximately 150 square blocks representing nearly 500 property owners in the center of downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe and friendly downtown. More info is available at www.milwaukeedowntown.com

About Historic Third Ward BID #2

Historic Third Ward Business Improvement District No. 2 (BID) is a state statute-enabled entity created in 1987 by the City, which has the power to levy assessments on business property. The nine-member board is appointed by the Mayor of Milwaukee, subject to Common Council approval. Each year the BID is responsible for submitting an operating plan, which includes the budget and goals for the year, to the Common Council as part of the City's budget. The operating plan includes any proposed assessments, which the BID Board has approved and the assessment formulas, which determine the assessments paid by individual property owners. The BID is classified as a quasi-governmental body, which is treated as an extension of the City. BID #2 operates and maintains the Milwaukee Public Market, two parking structures, and nearly a dozen pocket parks and public spaces throughout the district.

About IDA

The International Downtown Association 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.