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29th Annual Roses and Lemon Awards Breakfast

Thursday, April 2nd, 2009
Millennium Biltmore Hotel
Los Angeles

WELCOME

Jim Rabe, President

OPENING REMARKS

Clare DeBriere & Jim White, Program Co-Chairs

MILESTONE AWARD

Michelle Isenberg, Presenter
Philippe The Original

PRESENTATION OF ROSE AWARDS

EAT !

Lori Tierny & Gary Conrad, Presenters
Drago Centro
Church & State
Provecho

PLAY !

Melani Smith & Patrick Spillane, Presenters
Association
Lucky Strike • Lanes & Lounge
Remedy

LIVE !

Linda Sybrandt & Jim Rabe, Presenters
717 Olympic
Evo
The Roosevelt Residences

GOOD IDEAS-- We'd like to see more!

Barbara Bundy & David Prosser, Presenters
Urban Spaces / Events / Projects

PRESENTATION OF LEMON AWARD

Hal Bastian & David Lemmond, Presenters

Adjournment

The Downtown Breakfast Club is an organization of professionals whose main purpose is to recognize, foster and encourage the orderly and planned growth of Downtown Los Angeles. The group consists of individual representatives of all the major fields of development, from real estate, banking, international investment, architects & engineers, urban planners, investment brokers, insurance, development organizations to governmental agencies. Meeting on a bi-monthly basis, the group maintains a profile of current business activity through featured guest speakers as recruited by its members. This type of professional interface encourages and supports sound principles of developing a better quality of life for downtown Los Angeles.

www.DowntownBreakfastClub.com

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Days of Lemon and Roses

Breakfast Club Honors Three Downtown Developments, and Jabs Another

by Ryan Vaillancourt
Apr 3, 2009



The continued non-opening of the Angels Flight railway received the Lemon award from the Downtown Breakfast Club. The funicular has been shuttered since 2001 and multiple announced reopening dates have come and gone. *Photo Gary Leonard.*

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - And the roses go to — sound the trumpets — the upscale, eco-friendly condominium building Evo, the high-powered Italian eatery Drago Centro and the Prohibition-era speakeasy-style lounge the Association.

The three entities took home the honors at the Downtown Breakfast Club's 29th annual Roses and Lemon Awards breakfast held in the Crystal Room at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel on April 2. The Lemon went to a project that has been repeatedly delayed.

The event, which each year draws hundreds of Downtown Los Angeles boosters and business leaders, was marked by its usual blend of trumpeting the award nominees, interspersed with actual trumpets, and playfully delivered criticism of projects or entities that the DBC found deserving of a little finger wagging.



The Lemon recipient was Angels Flight and its failure to reopen: The historic funicular, which closed in 2001 following a fatal accident, has been beset by repeated delays, and as pointed out in a DBC slide show, the railway that connects Bunker Hill and the Historic Core still boasts a public notice promising an opening by the end of 2007.

“When we give a lemon it’s not intended to be mean,” said Hal Bastian, a DBC member who helps present the Lemon each year. “It’s intended to be an opportunity for improvement.”

Case in point, Bastian said, was last year’s Lemon recipient, the city Department of Recreation and Parks for its failure to spend some \$15 million in Downtown Quimby funds (the fees charged to developers for future park development in the area). In the past year, Bastian noted, Quimby fees were put to work as the department purchased a plot on Spring Street that will be turned into a park.

John Welborne, president of the Angels Flight Railway Foundation had his own criticism for the DBC, noting that three of the club's members have donated funds to the restoration.

"It would be nice if some of the other members of the Downtown Breakfast Club would write a check," he said, adding that the foundation still has to raise about \$240,000 to cover its \$3.5 million restoration budget. "Talk is cheap."

Welborne said the ongoing refurbishments, which have been delayed by construction-related hurdles and not financial setbacks, are nearly complete.

"We're very close," said Welborne. He declined to give a specific timeline for the opening.

Good Ideas

The DBC opened the presentation by giving the club's Milestone Award to the restaurant Philippe The Original in honor of its 100th anniversary last year. In the "Good Ideas, We'd Like to See More" category, Roses were dispensed to a collection of social service providers, including Chrysalis, the Downtown Women's Center and Skid Row Housing Trust, which were all lauded for their work supporting the homeless. Other Good Ideas recipients were a Halloween party for kids organized by the Downtown Center Business Improvement District and a playground at Orthopaedic Hospital designed to let all children, including those in wheelchairs or faced with other conditions, play.



This year's main Rose recipients came out of three categories: Eat, Play and Live.

Drago Centro, the new restaurant from chef and co-owner Celestino Drago at City National Plaza, beat out nominees Church and State, the Arts District bistro, and Provecho, which offers a creative spin on Mexican cuisine.

Drago Centro has quickly made a name for itself since opening in November. It is a place where Downtown power players might be seen trying to close a deal over lunch, next to curious foodies indulging in oxtail ravioli or risotto cakes with octopus.

Matteo Fernandi, a partner in the restaurant, paid tribute to the other nominees and thanked the club.

"I'm thrilled to be a part of this community of Downtown, which is the most dynamic community in Los Angeles," Fernandi said.

Developer the South Group took home a Rose for its \$160 million Evo condo building in South Park. The development beat out Milbank Real Estate's Roosevelt Lofts and the Hanover Company's 717 Olympic.

In the Play category, the Rose went to the Association, a new lounge in the Pacific Electric Building where English pub meets old Los Angeles speakeasy. The other nominees were Lucky Strike Lanes & Lounge at L.A. Live and the Remedy lounge, which is attached to Provecho.

"We certainly prefer a rose to a lemon," said Edmundo Macias, the Association's general manager. "But I do guarantee if we had gotten a lemon, our bartenders would have made a hell of a cocktail out of it."

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