

Inside Business

The Hampton Roads Business Journal

Urban design consultant Gindroz is Norfolk's Downtowner of the Year

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May 18, 2018



Steve Earley | The Virginian-Pilot
The downtown Norfolk skyline, looking down Waterside Drive, photographed from the Berkley Bridge on Monday, Nov. 28, 2016.



Ray Gindroz will receive the Downtowner of the Year award on June 13.

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was downtown Norfolk.

Raymond Gindroz, principal emeritus at Urban Design Associates, can attest to that.

A pioneer and visionary, Gindroz will be the recipient of the Peter G. Decker Jr. Downtowner of the Year award presented at the Downtown Norfolk Council's annual meeting June 13 at the Norfolk Hilton The Main.

Gindroz, who is traveling abroad, will be unable to attend the ceremony. Video conferencing arrangements have been made.

The council is a private, nonprofit membership organization made up of businesses and individuals focused on creating a flourishing cultural, commercial and residential hub in downtown.

Since 1990 the award has been bestowed upon an individual or organizations that have made a substantial contribution to Downtown Norfolk's growth and vitality through economic and cultural development.

This theme of this year's awards program, Success by Design, is a nod to Gindroz and his design work for the city's renaissance which dates back to the mid-80s.

Mel Price, principal with Work Program Architects, said in a news release this is the perfect time to honor Gindroz.

"He built his career around the belief that true mixed-income and mixed-use development is the way to bring all people up to an equal level," Price said. "He has waited a lifetime to see our public housing transformed into something that lifts people up and builds a stronger community. With the city's renewed focus on redeveloping the St. Paul's/Churchview area into a truly resilient neighborhood and community, Ray is able to share with Norfolk his passion and absolute expertise that will lead us to a sustainable design for the future."

Also the urban design consultant to Work Program Architects, Gindroz is credited with helping the city form the Pattern Book for Downtown which created good design precedent for residential development.

Among his contributions are the Downtown 2000, 2010 and 2020 Plans that have fashioned and steered development for years.

He campaigned for street-friendly facades on notable properties including Monticello Arcade, MacArthur Center and Heritage at Freemason Harbour.

A past chair of the Congress for the New Urbanism, Gindroz has served on a variety of boards, taught specialized courses at universities and foundations and wrote two textbooks on urban design.

Theresa W. Whibley, who will soon retire, will also be recognized during the event. She has represented Ward 2 on the Norfolk City Council for 22 years and was elected vice mayor in 2016.

Whibley is the council's representative to The Planning Council and served on the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

The annual meeting, which draws close to 500 supporters of the downtown

area, begins at 11:15 a.m. for registration and exhibits. The luncheon and program start at 12:15.

To buy tickets, contact Noel Gramlich at 757-623-1757 or ngramlich@downtownnorfolk.org by June 6. Tickets cost \$45 for Downtown Norfolk Council members and \$60 for nonmembers. After June 6 all tickets are \$60.