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## DLBA Announces 2022 “Spirit of Downtown” Honorees Making a Difference in Downtown Long Beach

*Three individuals and one organization to be recognized at Celebrate Downtown event on March 23*

**(LONG BEACH, CA – March 20, 2023)** The Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) today announced four honorees (seven people in total) for its annual Spirit of Downtown Award, the group’s highest honor given annually to those who have significantly influenced and shaped the Downtown community.

“The community nominated these four recipients for the positive and lasting impact they made on Downtown in 2022,” said DLBA President and CEO Austin Metoyer. “Our inspiring honorees have found new and creative ways to spur a Downtown resurgence following a difficult three years. We’re looking forward to celebrating and honoring each one as we work towards a brighter future.”

The following honorees for 2022 will be formally recognized as part of a brief DLBA presentation during Celebrate Downtown on Thursday, March 23 from 5:30 to 8:30 PM in Lincoln Park. The award program will begin at approximately 6:30 PM.

- **Carole Sergy, Beautify Pine** – The planters on North Pine Avenue have never looked so green and good, thanks to the volunteer efforts of the new grassroots community group, Beautify Pine. Sergy, a dynamic coordinator and communicator, was nominated for bringing the community together, including Mosaic developers and Council District I, to beautify one of Downtown’s key corridors through regular planter maintenance and cleanup efforts.
- **Debra Kahookele** – A longtime local resident and outstanding community advocate, Kahookele currently serves on several boards and committees that have shaped and continue to positively impact the Downtown community. Just to name a couple, Kahookele is acting President for the Promenade Area Residents Association and played a major role in making Downtown’s first playground a reality. As a longtime advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, Kahookele is co-chair of the Harvey Milk Park committee and has volunteered for numerous Long Beach Pride festivals, once as a 2018 parade commentator. As an LGBTQ+ Asian American, her volunteer work fighting for civil rights and much needed local projects has made a lasting impression on Downtown.

- **Henry Walker, Farmers & Merchants Bank** – As fourth-generation President at Farmers & Merchants Bank, Henry has been a stalwart figure in the Downtown. His brother, Daniel K. Walker, who serves as the head of the organization and will be accepting the award on Henry's behalf, serves as F&M Bank's Chairman of the Board and CEO. This landmark financial institution will be celebrating 100 years in Downtown this coming April. Embodying the spirit of being a good neighbor, partner and advocate for the local community, F&M Bank partnered with DLBA to support its Small Business and Women-Owned Business Grant programs and pivoted during the pandemic to provide economic relief to struggling businesses, leaving a lasting positive impact when the Downtown community needed it most.
- **Orsa Modica, Joe Harding, Nancy Downs and Julia Goto, East Village Arts District Community Watch Group** – When a community bands together to solve immediate issues in their neighborhood, oftentimes a much-needed camaraderie is created. Spearheaded by Modica and team, the new 115-member community watch group meets monthly to keep members informed of local happenings and discuss productive solutions for real-time concerns, increasing the overall feeling of safety and community in the East Village Arts District.

### **Spirit of Downtown Award**

The DLBA Spirit of Downtown award was established in 2012 to posthumously recognize four individuals that the Long Beach community had sadly lost that year: Shaun Lumachi, founder of the Long Beach Post; Larry Allison, long-respected Editor of the Press-Telegram; Bill Baker, a famed volunteer and redevelopment master; and Mark Bixby, DLBA Director and Long Beach's bicycling guru who largely headed the creation of our City's massive biking infrastructure and culture. The award honors members and organizations of the Downtown Long Beach community that have demonstrated significant achievements in the past and perpetually look ahead toward a more promising future.

A list of past winners and more information on Celebrate Downtown are on the DLBA website [here](#).

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**About the Downtown Long Beach Alliance:** DLBA is a non-profit, community-based organization whose mission is to cultivate, preserve and promote a healthy, safe, and prosperous Downtown for all. By balancing the interests of the residents, as well as businesses, the DLBA creates tangible progress by way of vested interest and solidified partnerships across local, municipal, and commercial lines. For additional information, visit [www.downtownlongbeach.org](http://www.downtownlongbeach.org), or follow on Facebook [@downtownlongbeach](#), and on Twitter [@DLBA](#) and Instagram [@DLBA](#).