

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Forest City Beautiful

RACVB Launches Business is Blooming

*Multi-year program aims to honor community
for innovation and beautification efforts*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2017

ROCKFORD, IL — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) announced today a new pilot program to further build on the Forest City Beautiful efforts aimed to beautify the Rockford region. **Business is Blooming** exists to build a culture of community involvement and visually appealing environments for our city. The program supports and acknowledges the positive values and efforts displayed by our business owners to make Rockford a beautiful and enjoyable place to live, work and play. Rewarding activity that strengthens civic pride is one of the vital links to long-term success in the Rockford region.

A team of judges visited the exterior grounds of selected businesses in the **River District Association**, **Midtown District** and **Coronado Haskell Neighborhood Association** to be considered for this designation. Out of 23 businesses, six were chosen in select categories: Small Business (1-10 employees) **The Loc Shop** and **Community Foundation of Northern Illinois**; Large Business (26+ employees) **Holmstrom & Kennedy**; Restaurant Outdoor Dining **Abreo** and **Prairie Street Brewing Company (tied)** and Special Recognition **Woodfire Brick Oven Pizza**.

Judging is based on the following criteria:

- Well-maintained landscaping – trimmed and weed-free
- No litter around entire perimeter (fence line, tree line, sidewalk, parking lot)
- Well-maintained façade, and graffiti-free exteriors
- Well-maintained hardscape – lighting, benches, walkways, signage, fences, etc.
- WOW factor – impressive overall first impression or impact
 - Overall cleanliness
 - Neat, tidy walkways and parking lot
 - Clean windows
 - Attractiveness, e.g. flowers, plants, fresh paint, etc.
 - Inviting signage
 - Creative exterior, e.g. colors, design, signage
 - Exterior music, if applicable

Winners receive a prize package including a trophy, window cling, and online promotions valued at \$1,850. The 2017 program recognizes “Businesses of Distinction” to serve as models for the contest that will take place in 2018.

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“Our hope is that this program will inspire business owners, operators and property owners to think about the ways they can participate in the coming years. This is an opportunity for all of us to be mindful of the ways each business can make a difference in their interiors, facades and landscapes,” said Tana Vettore, RACVB director of destination development. “The Businesses of Distinction that we honored today have already invested in this concept of beautification and are excellent models within our community. They have taken their standard to the next level by incorporating elements like parklets, beautiful outdoor patios and appealing landscapes.”

This multi-year program aims to develop and maintain a partnership among RACVB, businesses, neighborhood advocacy groups, schools, non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, etc. to share in the vision and maintenance of this program. As a result, they will serve as exemplary models to inspire more people to do the same. The program will recognize and incentivize businesses, organizations and property owners to improve the landscaping and facades of their building and properties; promote the goal of year-round activity/maintenance such as proper snow removal at businesses for customer access as well as lush summer landscapes and weed-free, litter-free environments; and select and reward outstanding or innovative beautification achievements.

“We are honored to be named one of the businesses of distinction for this new program. Our team continuously brainstorms ways to improve the customer experience in – and outside of – the restaurant,” said Joe D’Astice, Woodfire Brick Oven Pizza owner. “The parklets outside of our space are definitely more visually appealing and create an inviting atmosphere with more seating options for our customers. Being that we’re surrounded by other local downtown businesses these types of outdoor features encourage people to come out, sit in an open-air casual dining experience and, most of all, stay awhile.”

Long-term, the goal is for the program to expand city-wide. In the pilot year it is focused on the central city. The 2018 program is in a contest format, with judging in July. Business owners are encouraged to visit forestcitybeautiful.com/bloom to get more information about the program and to register to participate.

***Forest City Beautiful** is a multi-year initiative aimed at creating and maintaining beautiful landscapes in downtown Rockford. RACVB leads the effort in collaboration with the City of Rockford. As part of the initiative, RACVB has the responsibility to plan, install and maintain landscaping in public spaces. The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. More information can be found at forestcitybeautiful.com.*

***RACVB exists** to drive quality of life and economic growth for the citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County through tourism marketing and destination development. gorockford.com*

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