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July 12, 2016

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Renton's Unique "Library Over The River" Wins Governor's Smart Communities Award

Renton, WA – The downtown Renton library, already revered for its unique design that spans the Cedar River, is the recipient of the 2016 [Governor's Smart Communities Award](#) by Washington Governor Jay Inslee.

The award recognizes the partnership between the City of Renton and the King County Library System (KCLS). The two entities worked together to completely refurbish the library's interior and exterior, while maintaining the integrity of the river and surrounding area.

"This award is a reflection of the considerable work by city staff and KCLS," said Renton Mayor Denis Law. "They successfully juggled our growth management requirements with the unique challenges posed by siting a library over the river. The result is a first-class library that will benefit our community for years to come."

Gary Wasdin, Director of the King County Library System, added "KCLS was pleased to partner with the City of Renton on this exciting project. The beautiful Renton Library, affectionately known as the 'library over the river' is a welcoming community resource and a genuine treasure for the citizens of Renton."

The Governor's Award is the second honor in 2016 for the local landmark. In April, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the American Library Association (ALA) awarded it one of seven [Library Building Awards](#).

This is the fifth consecutive year the City of Renton has won a Smart Communities Award.

The Governor's Smart Communities Award

The Governor's Smart Communities Award recognizes outstanding efforts of counties, cities and towns, and their partners throughout the state to create quality communities through achieving the goals of the Growth Management Act and other community development objectives. The award has been given annually since 2006. Only seven Washington cities were honored in 2016.

Judges' Comments

In announcing the award, the judges praised the uniqueness of the library's location, the effectiveness of the design and the strong partnership between the city and the KCLS, which brought the whole project together.

Some of their comments included:

“The original concept of the library as a bridge is very powerful, yet it feels as if it took this redesign for the library to fully reach its potential... this iconic location now connects the downtown district to the city park, bringing life and activity to the spaces within and around the library ... the project impressively was able to effect a major renovation without disrupting the habitat and hydraulics of the river below ... this project/partnership is thoroughly impressive ... being able to retain the original location and use while being sensitive to environmental and energy concerns—remarkable! ... great use of focus groups to get opinions of diverse groups, online survey, and library advisory board ... what a gorgeous structure!”

Project History

Based on the use the library had received since opening in 1966, it was proposed to relocate to a larger downtown building. When the community overwhelmingly expressed a desire for the city to keep the library over the river, the City Council abandoned their original idea to move the library downtown and the decision was made to keep it across the Cedar River. The building underwent a complete renovation of both its interior and exterior, essentially creating a new library around the structural core. The renovation work took 15 months, with the grand re-opening on August 22, 2015.

The city provided the funding for the architectural, engineering and landscape design of the new building; supervised the permitting process; and provided construction and project management.

KCLS worked with the architectural, engineering and landscape architectural team to provide the exterior and interior building and programming design. They also provided new computers, printers, electronic systems, new collection materials, furniture and artwork.

The total cost of the project was \$11.8 million, with \$10.2 million from the city and \$1.6 million from KCLS.

About the City of Renton

The City of Renton, Washington is located on the southeast shore of Lake Washington with a population just over 100,000. Renton's strong economic base, diverse marketplace and favorable business climate have attracted the attention of nationally recognized companies that are looking to provide employees and their families with an outstanding quality of life. It is the home of Boeing, IKEA, the Seattle Seahawks, and the eternal resting place of Jimi Hendrix. More information can be found at rentonwa.gov.

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