Group salutes the pioneers of Armory Square revival

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The Downtown Committee of Syracuse last week honored individuals for their commitment to growth, diversity and the continued revitalization of the city's downtown area.

The committee, a non-profit downtown management organization representing property owners and tenants within the central business district, handed out its Downtown Awards of Excellence during its annual meeting, attended by 365 people, at the Marriott Syracuse Downtown.

The Urban Innovation Award went to Robert Doucette and George Curry, who were the major drivers of the development of a seedy warehouse district on the west side of downtown into the neighborhood now known as Armory Square.

Doucette and Curry restored the Labor Temple Building in 1984. With eight apartments, it was the first residential space in the square, which now boasts a high concentration of bars, restaurants, small shops, apartments and offices.

The Heart of Downtown Award was given to Dennis Connors, who will retire as curator of history for the Onondaga Historical Association at the end of the year.

Connors is Syracuse's foremost historian and was at the forefront of the effort to save historic Hanover Square from demolition in the 1960s.

Metro Fitness owner Randy Sabatini and his team received the Perfect Partner Award for "their creative programming to instill healthy habits and wellness initiatives throughout the downtown community." Those initiatives include the Free Wellness Wednesdays' fitness classes offered by Metro Fitness during the summer in Clinton Square.

The committee's Newsmaker Award went to the following group of entrepreneurs who helped to make South Warren Street a destination with retail shops and restaurants:

• Karhie Morris, of The Changing Room
• Shavana Diliberto and Susan Hodell, of Vintage Love
• Natalie Evans and Jen Walls, of The Sweet Praxis
• Johanna Yorke, of Otro Cinco
• Cheryl Hassett, of Soup & Salads
• Gina Cerio, of Markowitz Florist

Dennis Connors, who is retiring at the end of the year as curator of history for the Onondaga Historical Association, received the Heart of Downtown Award. Ellen M. Bleich/ebleich@syracuse.com