PRESS RELEASE

2019 IOC IAKS Award goes to Vancouver Laneways

HCMA & DVBIA’s ‘More Awesome Now’ laneway activations Alley-Oop and Ackery’s Alley commended by the international sports community

COLOGNE, GERMANY, November 6, 2019 – HCMA together with Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association (DVBIA) are proud to receive the 2019 IOC IAKS Bronze Award for More Awesome Now, two laneway activations in the heart of downtown Vancouver.

Presented by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities (IAKS), the award is considered one of the world’s top international prizes for sports, leisure, and recreational facilities.

While laneways serve important business functions, they are unused for most of the day. More Awesome Now – a collaboration by HCMA, an architecture and design firm with offices in Vancouver, Victoria, and Edmonton; the DVBIA, and the City of Vancouver – transforms these underutilized laneways into engaging, accessible public spaces. The project sought to find out whether making these spaces more appealing would attract greater use by the general public, and demonstrated how simple changes enhance life in the city.

Located on Granville and West Hastings, Alley-Oop is a pink-and-yellow laneway that features basketball hoops and hopscotch courts, whose fun and vibrant design has made it a popular haunt for Instagram-snapping passersby.

Behind the Orpheum Theatre, Ackery’s Alley – named after Ivan Ackery, the theatre’s famous impresario and manager – features a red ground surface, walls painted with an ‘S’ pattern, gold panels, and FIELD, a permanent, interactive light art installation produced with help from crowdfunding.

The project came about as a result of Re-Imagine Downtown Vancouver, a public engagement project that saw more than 11,000 individuals share ideas for what they wanted for their city. Among them were the need for more welcoming public spaces, resulting in the partnership between the DVBIA and HCMA with the City of Vancouver.

“Laneways emerged as a top priority for the DVBIA after our 2015 ‘Re-Imagine Downtown Vancouver’ engagement process,” says Charles Gauthier, President and CEO of the DVBIA. “When we learned that alleys could add 30 per cent more space to Downtown Vancouver’s public realm, we knew we had a tremendous opportunity on our hands. Seeing the incredible success of Alley-Oop has only served to strengthen our vision to transform underutilized public spaces, which is why the DVBIA has committed to revitalizing one laneway each year as part of our placemaking program.”

Today, the previously grey corridors are used by people from all walks of life, from servicepersons and commuters to professionals, students, and tourists. Since opening in 2016,
hourly traffic along Alley-Oop has more than doubled, while the number of female users has increased by 50%.

“This award recognizes the profound impact that the re-imagined laneways can have on the City of Vancouver,” says HCMA architect Paul Fast, Principal-in-Charge of More Awesome Now. “These are spaces that will change the way in which we move, live and work. They provide an opportunity to reconnect neglected urban spaces to the fabric of the city and to create environments that are inviting to all.”

Of the 98 entries submitted from 14 countries, seven facilities were recognized by the jury with the Gold award, six with Silver, and seven with Bronze. The IPC IAKS Distinction, presented to sports facilities with accessible features, was also awarded to five participants.

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