Local Luminaries Headline LoDo District Annual Meeting and Limelight Awards

By Ellen Wilensky

The overture to the 20th anniversary of the Lower Downtown Historic District is this year's **LoDo District Annual Meeting and *Limelight Awards***, to be held March 12, 2008 at the Chambers Grant Salon at the Ellie Caulkin's Opera House. Presented by Kevin Taylor Catering and Centerplate, the event will be a fitting tribute to the creation of the Historic District and the two decades of lyric drama and community involvement behind today's thriving mixed-use neighborhood.

Headlining the event will be downtown diva, **Dana Crawford**, and Denver's leading man, **Mayor John Hickenlooper**, as keynote speakers. Both are widely acclaimed citizens who have been involved with LoDo in various roles since before the neighborhood was designated a historic district.

Mayor Hickenlooper is best known in LoDo as a founder of the Wynkoop Brewing Company, the first brewpub in the Rocky Mountains, and developer of the Wynkoop Lofts at a time when development in LoDo was considered risky business. He developed and lived in LoDo's Titanium Lofts with his wife **Helen Thorpe** and son **Teddy**. **Hickenlooper** was an early LoDo District board member and has served on many other civic boards. He was the only Mayor named by *Governing Magazine* as one of the Top Public Officials of the Year in 2005. *TIME Magazine* named him one of the top five "big-city" mayors in America. In recognition of his efforts supporting preservation in Denver and elsewhere, **Hickenlooper** received a National Preservation Award from the National

Trust for Historic Preservation in 1997. Since his election as Mayor, he has reduced Denver's budget deficit, worked to modernize its personnel system, supported growth at DIA, implemented sweeping police reforms and commenced a campaign to end homelessness. His thoughts on the future of LoDo are sure to be enlightening.

Dana Crawford is famous in Denver for developing Larimer Square in the '70's, saving it from destruction by the urban renewal policies of the time. After the success of Larimer Square, this determined preservationist turned her attention to other well-known LoDo landmarks. The Oxford Hotel, the groundbreaking Edbrooke and Acme Lofts, The Ice House, Market Center, and The Hungarian Flour Mill in the Platte Valley have all benefited from Crawford's skill at the adaptive-reuse of historic properties. She is a founding member of Historic Denver and recipient of the Louis de Pont Crowninshield Award, the nation's highest award in historic preservation. Along with **Mayor Hickenlooper**, **Crawford** also served as an early board member with organizations that preceded and led to the formation of today's LoDo District, Inc. With over thirty years of work at the forefront of urban revival in Denver, **Dana Crawford's** forecasts for LoDo will make for a compelling keynote speech.

For nearly 20 years, LoDo District's annual meetings and award ceremonies have been well attended by members and non-members alike who value the vintage treasure that is Lower Downtown. For some, it is a once-yearly opportunity to visit with old friends, colleagues, and neighbors. For the newly arrived, it's a way to meet other LoDo-ites for the first time. And for yet others, it is an occasion to recognize those whose volunteerism

and generosity ensure that the neighborhood continues to thrive. The LoDo Annual Meeting and Limelight Awards is The District's major annual fund raising event. We count on supporters to show up and sustain our continuing efforts on behalf of those who live, work, and visit in LoDo.

This year, the curtain rises at a cocktail reception in the **Chambers Grant Salon** at the historic and lovingly restored **Ellie Caulkins Opera House**. The Salon is located on the lower level of the Ellie at the **Denver Performing Arts Complex** where, 100 years ago, construction workers and civic leaders scrambled to complete construction of what was then known as the Denver Municipal Auditorium in time for the 1908 Democratic National Convention. Enclosed in the sandstone foundation walls of the original structure, the Salon is accessed through a stunning glass and terrazzo staircase from the main lobby of the opera house. Monumental paintings by Vance Kirkland and colorful costumes from past opera performances set the stage.

Act two is dinner, compliments of **Kevin Taylor Catering and Centerplate**. Fans of **Kevin Taylor**, or those who are new to his talents, should not miss an opportunity to sample this outstanding chef's cuisine. Nationally reputed for his creative, unpretentious approach to American cuisine, **Kevin Taylor** is a Colorado native who burst on the scene in 1985, opening Zenith at the age of 25. His followers now enjoy his culinary creations at restaurants such as Kevin Taylor, Prima Ristorante, Palettes, and his newest venue, coincidentally named Limelight Supper Club and Lounge, also in the Denver Performing Arts Complex.

Following dinner, our veteran emcee, **Bill Clarke**, formerly of 7 News, will once again take the helm of the annual **Limelight Awards**. Bill's humor and gracious manner are certain to spice up this ceremony, which honors those outstanding people and projects that have contributed to the enhancement of the unique LoDo lifestyle and environment. Be there to recognize the award winners' efforts and to take inspiration from their creativity and civic spirit.

During the action and before the last act, guests will have a chance to support LoDo by participating in a silent auction that is sure to include fabulous deals on desirable items, large and small.

So…a great cause, distinguished speakers, fabulous food, fascinating guests, and a spectacular setting will ensure a sold-out event. Don't let the curtain fall this year without you! Everyone will be talking about it afterwards. For reservations and information, call our **Event Hotline at 303-628-5424.**