



## *Los Angeles Downtown News Honors Notable Projects With Downtowners of Distinction Awards*

**by Jon Regardie**

When looking back at 2006 in Downtown, the most striking thing is how many new projects and efforts debuted. The second most interesting aspect about the year may be that, while housing once again garnered the most attention from local, national and even international media, new residential complexes comprised only a portion of what arrived.

In fact, Downtown Los Angeles in 2006 witnessed the completion and debut of projects in virtually every category: luxury condominiums and low-income apartment complexes; upscale restaurants and grab-and-go eateries; big-budget museum shows and street-level arts endeavors; multi-million dollar office renovations and advances in law enforcement.

With so many accomplishments, it was not easy to select the winners of *Los Angeles Downtown News*' sixth annual Downtowners of Distinction awards. There were a plethora of projects, and behind each were dozens of people doing the dirty detail work to make them come alive. The difficulty lies in the challenge of naming the best of the best.

### **Figueroa Corridor**

*Winner: Galen Center*

This district saw several significant projects in 2006, including the opening of Shammass Group's new auto dealerships. But nothing had a bigger impact on the neighborhood than the October debut of USC's \$140 million Galen Center. The instant landmark at Figueroa Street and Jefferson Boulevard is a state-of-the-art sports arena with an attractive brick façade and, inside, a huge window providing one of the best views you'll ever see of the Downtown skyline. This new home for the USC men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams seats more than 10,000 people and will bring not just new fans, but other high-profile events to Downtown. Even though it is only a single building, the Galen Center, designed by the Downtown office of architecture firm HNTB, brings the heart of Downtown and USC closer together.

### **Union Station/El Pueblo**

*Winner: California Endowment's New Headquarters*

Not only did the California Endowment buck a trend by leaving the Valley for Downtown, it did so with style: The nonprofit's \$80 million new headquarters is an attractive 6.5-acre campus that draws inspiration from California's natural resources - it includes river rocks in the landscaping and pavement from the Sierra Nevadas - and features a pacific interior courtyard. The design by Rios Clementi Hale Studios provides ample room for hundreds of workers and visitors to the Endowment and its Center for Healthy Communities. It's a wonderful new Downtown home for an organization that has dispensed more than \$1.6 billion in grants since it was founded nearly a decade ago. But its gift to the community is that it enhances the eastern edge of Downtown.