

MICHIGAN
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan Downtown Association Honors Molly LaLone and Nate Mack for Downtown Management Certificate of Completion

North Branch, Mich., January 16, 2024 -- During the Michigan Downtown Association's (MDA) Annual Conference held in downtown Birmingham, MI, Main Street Oakland County (MSOC) Executive Directors Molly LaLone of Southfield DDA and Nate Mack of South Lyon DDA received their Certificate of Completion from the MDA Professional Management Program (MiPDM).

"In 2018, the MDA created the MiPDM program to provide training in the essential knowledge areas for downtown professionals and to elevate the stature and value of Michigan downtown professionals," Dana Walker, director of the MDA, said. "There isn't a specific college course or program that specifically outlines all that a director of a downtown management organization must understand so the MDA created the program after several years of committee work, research and conversations," she continued.

Every September, the MDA receives applications from individuals interested in starting the MiPDM program. To participate, the applicant (or community represented) must be a member of the MDA, complete the application, and submit a \$200 application fee.

The program consists of 15 areas of proficiency with content ranging from Meeting Management, Placemaking, Historic Preservation, Municipal Finance, and Planning. The topics are presented during MDA workshops, conferences and webinars and the cycle could take up to three years for an individual to complete all 15 courses.

"The MiPDM program is rigorous and challenging to ensure that the result, a Certificate of Completion, means that the recipient has gained the necessary skills and experience to be considered a well-rounded expert in downtown management," Walker explained. "Molly LaLone and Nate Mack completed all areas of proficiency, met the level of downtown management experience necessary, and completed their Capstone Project and therefore have earned the Certificate of Completion."

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LaLone's Capstone Project was a series of educational infographics she created that the MDA will use within documents or social media posts that clearly and succinctly explain the importance of downtown development authorities and Tax Increment Financing.

"It is my hope that these graphics can be a tool for use by downtown managers and DDA supporters to help reinforce the economic development benefits of a DDA," LaLone said of her Capstone Project.

In a written essay, Mack explored the importance of public spaces in downtown economic development. The document provides downtown managers with the tools needed to successfully advocate for the implementation of public spaces downtown by building a broad coalition of support bolstered by economic data.

When asked why he chose to research the topic, Mack explained, "Public spaces in a downtown are vital to its economic success. They bring people together and foster greater community understanding."

Currently, the MDA boasts 28 participants in the MiPDM program, with seven of the individuals receiving a Certificate of Completion. To maintain the Certificate of Completion, everyone is required to participate in six hours of education related to downtown management every year.

"We had our first 'graduating' class in November of 2023," Walker said. "To see the Program come to fruition is truly amazing and the MDA is thrilled to honor these MSOC leaders for their hard work and commitment to downtown."

Founded in 1980, the Michigan Downtown Association (MDA) is a state-wide, non-profit organization and a driving force in the interest and growth of downtowns and communities throughout Michigan. The MDA encourages the development, redevelopment and continuing improvement of Michigan communities and downtowns. Its members support economic development within the State of Michigan. For more information regarding the MDA, please contact Dana Walker, director, at 248-838-9711 or visit www.michigandowntowns.com.

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