

Innovators honored with 'Impact' awards

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By R. MICHELLE BREYER
American-Statesman Staff

The Stephen F. Austin Hotel was hardly the easiest of projects to undertake.

The 75-year-old hotel was in shambles when Highgate Holdings initially looked at it, a victim of a decade of neglect.

Led by Austin real estate developer Tom Stacy, Highgate decided to purchase the historic hotel and to spend close to \$20 million to return it to its former glory. When it opens in June at the northeast corner of Seventh Street and Congress Avenue, the 191-room hotel will be one of the state's most



Tom Stacy:
Has led resurrection of Stephen F. Austin Hotel.

luxurious hotels.

"A project like this adds meaning to your career — to your life,"



Dick Clark:
'Reigning architect of the Austin restaurant scene.'

said Stacy, winner of the Downtown Austin Alliance's Downtown Individual Impact Award.

Stacy, like the other winners of the 1999 Downtown Impact Awards, has not shied away from challenging projects.

The awards honor individuals, organizations or projects that have had a ripple effect and a positive impact on the downtown community. The winners, who were chosen by their downtown peers, will be honored today at a luncheon at the Four Seasons Hotel.

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The LBJ Holding Co. will receive the Project Impact Award for its renovation of the historic Brown Building at Eighth and Colorado streets. After a \$11.5 million renovation, the long-vacant, 60-year-old office building has been transformed into trendy loft apartments — the first major residential project to open in downtown Austin in more than a decade.

Architect Dick Clark, who has transformed old office buildings and warehouses into some of Austin's most popular eateries and bars, is receiving the Design Impact Award for a variety of projects. His resume includes

Mezzaluna, Bitter End Bistro & Brewery, Star Bar, Nimfa's, The Speakeasy and the new Ruth's Chris Steak House. Texas Architect magazine has called Clark "the reigning architect of the Austin restaurant scene."

The Chair Emeritus Impact Award is being given to "The Three J's." Jo Anne Christian, Jane Sibley and Jare Smith.

These three women have led a long crusade to turn Palmer Auditorium into a state-of-the-art performing arts center for Austin. Largely because of their efforts, voters approved the Town Lake Plan last November, which includes the conversion of Palmer into Arts*Center Stage.

While the Stephen F. Austin Hotel is considered one of downtown's most important projects, it is not Stacy's only contribution to the area. Stacy, the former chairman of the Downtown Austin Alliance, has been an outspoken advocate for downtown.

He provided a temporary home for the Austin Museum of Art at 823 Congress Ave., which Highgate Holdings purchased in 1994. He brought Schlotzsky's Deli to Highgate's Littlefield Building and planned a dramatic renovation of the Perry Brooks Building, at Brazos and Seventh streets.

You may contact R. Michelle Breyer at mbreyer@statesman.com or 445-3856.