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MEREDA honors Vogel, Pitzer and Bunker for contributions to real estate development and policy in Maine

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Portland, ME The Maine Real Estate and Development Association (MEREDA) recognized three individuals and a joint select committee for their contributions to real estate development in the state of Maine. The awards were presented at this year's forecast conference at the Holiday Inn By the Bay, which was attended by over 800 real estate professionals.

Gary Vogel was selected for this year's Robert B. Patterson Jr. Founder's Award, for his commitment and dedication to MEREDA over the years.

Vogel has been practicing law in Portland for over 30 years and is a shareholder at the law firm of Drummond Woodsum. His practice is concentrated in real estate, real estate development, finance transactions, commercial transactions, mergers and acquisitions, and commercial law. Vogel's work often involves developments utilizing the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Federal and

State Historic Tax Credits and New Market Tax Credits.

Since joining the MEREDA board in 2004, Vogel has been an integral part of MEREDA, serving as chair of the legislative committee for over a decade, as well as serving two years as president. MEREDA is grateful for his unwavering dedication to these voluntary leadership roles. Under his leadership, MEREDA achieved many legislative accomplishments that have greatly benefited both Maine and real estate development in the state. Vogel was selected to receive MEREDA's Public Policy Award in both 2006 and 2011, as well as the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2010, and the President's Award in 2014. Over the years, Vogel has generously offered his valuable time and expertise, playing a pivotal role in helping MEREDA thrive. His deep understanding of developmental challenges in Maine, along with his extensive institutional knowledge and experience with MEREDA's legislative history, have made Vogel's contributions invaluable to all MEREDA members.

The MEREDA Public Policy Award is presented each year to an individual or group whose efforts have made a significant impact on public policy changes that benefit responsible real estate development and ownership in Maine. This year we recognize the joint select committee on housing for their leadership around creating housing in Maine.

The joint select committee on housing, or the housing committee, comes out of the second regular session of the 131st legislature. Led by its chairs, senator Theresa Pierce and representative Traci Gere, the housing committee, has been tasked with prioritizing housing creation in Maine. The group has undertaken its mission with determination and demonstrated exceptional leadership in policy making. The housing committee has taken testimony from all sectors of Maine's housing economy, and has shown repeated bipartisanship support for pragmatic and sensible solutions. They have worked to tackle emergency and subsidized housing assistance, and are turning their attention to land use and its role in housing creation.

MEREDA believes that the concentrated and pragmatic approach to problem-solving demonstrated by the housing committee is a model for lawmaking. Their work has made a practical impact in Mainers' lives and encouraged the development of affordable housing. MEREDA is eager to continue to work with the housing committee and its exceptionally committed members.

The Volunteer of the Year Award is awarded to those who generously share their time, talents, and energy with MEREDA. This year we honor the contributions of Matt Pitzer.

Pitzer is an architect and senior project manager at Simpson, Gumpertz & Heger. He has a background as a designer specializing in preservation and envelope restoration of prominent historic structures and is committed to design that confers broad social benefits.

At MEREDA, Pitzer has been an active and engaged participant, serving on MEREDA's board of directors since 2019. More recently, he has taken on the role of DevelopME committee co-chair. Pitzer's leadership has made a difference in creating professional development opportunities within MEREDA for the next generation of industry professionals. MEREDA's DevelopME committee

encourages Maine's real estate emerging leaders to become more engaged in the State's commercial real estate industry. The committee meets on a monthly basis and provides educational "Lunch & Learn" seminars, networking opportunities with peers, and access to MEREDA's board of directors, as well as the opportunity to participate in MEREDA's advocacy efforts. Pitzer's dedication to his Co-Chair role has been instrumental in the success of the committee, and MEREDA is grateful for his contributions.

The President's Award is given by MEREDA's current president, Craig Young of The Boulos Company, in recognition of someone who has made significant contributions on MEREDA's behalf. This year's President's Award goes to Kevin Bunker for his leadership in building affordable housing and for his support of MEREDA's efforts.

Bunker is founding principal of Developers Collaborative with projects that run the gamut from residential to industrial, and is known as one of the preeminent builders of affordable housing in southern Maine. His experience in complex financing models, including tax increment financing, the use of tax credits, and other public-private partnerships, have led to creative projects that build community and strengthen the Maine economy in innovative ways. His recent projects include the new homeless shelter and a home dedicated for asylum seekers, both in Portland. Bunker is also an activist promoting the causes of smart growth and downtowns at the state and local levels.

MEREDA is honored to recognize Bunker's contributions to our state; his commitment to building affordable housing is an example of responsible development in action. As a guest on the MEREDA Matters podcast, as well as a panelist for a Morning Menu discussion on the complexities involved with providing housing and social services for asylum seekers and the unhoused, Bunker has deepened the conversation around financing the development of affordable housing in Maine. We are grateful that he is willing to share his expertise with MEREDA members and is dedicated to doing this important work in our state.

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