



Alaska Railroad Corporation *News Release*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Alaska Railroad presents inaugural Mears Award to team responsible for Historic Freight Shed renovation

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) President & CEO Christopher Aadnesen presented the inaugural Colonel Frederick Mears Award for Excellence to a team of ARRC employees and an Alaskan architectural firm for their work on revitalizing the Historic Freight Shed in Ship Creek, located at 155 W. First Avenue.

The Mears Award recognizes people and projects that move the Alaska Railroad forward and contribute to the greater good of Alaska and railbelt communities. Aadnesen presented the awards to recipients today during a ribbon-cutting ceremony that marks the U.S. Forest Service move into new office space within the Historic Freight Shed.

Employees from ARRC Real Estate & Facilities and Finance departments that were recognized include:

- Vice President Real Estate & Facilities Jim Kubitz
- Facilities Director Paul Farnsworth
- Leasing Manager Andy Donovan
- Corporate Finance Manager Barbara Amy

The Mears Award was also presented to ECI/Hyer Architecture & Interiors for its work to maintain the building's historic nature while ensuring renovation met the high environmental standards established by Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) criteria. Incorporating both historic preservation and contemporary design was crucial to the successful transformation of an empty, aging warehouse into a modern, environmentally-friendly office building.

The project began in 2008, when the railroad sought to salvage the 70-year-old freight shed as a key element of the overall Ship Creek redevelopment plan. Built in 1941, the ARRC Historic Freight Shed had neither insulation nor running water and was used simply for storage. ARRC decided to pursue renovation efforts that would meet national LEED standards as part of ARRC's ongoing effort to conserve fuel and lower emissions (and expenses) through facilities upgrades.

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The Colonel Frederick Mears Award is named after the former Alaska Engineering Commission chairman and chief engineer who is credited with overseeing Alaska Railroad construction from 1914 to 1923. Mears was widely recognized for remarkable engineering feats accomplished under his direction, including the Mears Memorial Bridge, which spans the Tanana River. While completing the Alaska Railroad, Mears kept in mind the best interests of local Alaska railbelt communities and the fledgling territory as a whole.

“This first Mears Award offers a tribute to the vision and persistence required to see such a community-minded project come to fruition,” said Aadnesen. “It took insight and foresight to insist upon the freight shed’s preservation. Where many saw an outmoded relic that warranted demolition, this team saw promise in a structure that was tremendously important to Alaska’s early freight transportation and distribution system.”

“The project effectively blends the building’s historic heavy-timber character with the innovative use of recycled and green materials and exceptional energy efficiency,” added Aadnesen. “This is an extraordinary feat made all the more remarkable by its completion on time and on budget. This team’s efforts reflect the undaunted spirit of the award’s namesake, and they are very deserving of this special recognition.”

The Alaska Humanities Forum moved in to the Freight Shed in late 2010, followed by the U.S. Forest Service in July 2012. The Freight Shed is currently 93 percent leased. The remaining 2,700 square feet of unoccupied space at the west end of the building will house a café or small restaurant, if ARRC Real Estate Vice President Jim Kubitz has his way.

“This is part of an overall development plan for Ship Creek that we think will bring visitors and residents alike to the Ship Creek area,” Kubitz said. “We’re happy to welcome the U.S. Forest Service to the neighborhood and look forward to further growth throughout Ship Creek.”

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Award recipients, left to right: ARRC Leasing Manager Andrew Donovan, ARRC Facilities Director Paul Farnsworth, ARRC Corporate Finance Manager Barbara Amy, ARRC Vice President of Real Estate & Facilities Jim Kubitz, and ECY/Hyer Partner Brian Meissner. (Photo courtesy of the Alaska Railroad)

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