



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 21 NOVEMBER 2022

## FIRST+MAIN FILMS ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE 2022 BETTER CITIES FILM FESTIVAL

*Ropes in Brown Hands* and *Raised/Razed* win top honors.

NOVEMBER 21, 2022, DETROIT, MI - Today First+Main Films announced the winning films from the 2022 *Better Cities Film Festival*. The Grand Prize Best Feature Film award goes to *Raised/Razed*, written and directed by filmmaker Lorenzo Dickerson and journalist Jordy Yager, is a documentary about the lasting effects of urban renewal through the lens of Vinegar Hill, an African-American neighborhood in Charlottesville, Virginia and the Hayti neighborhood in Durham, North Carolina. The Grand Prize Best Short Film award goes to *Ropes in Brown Hands*, a documentary by Alexandra Leah Travis about a small Oklahoma town that's home to one of the nation's oldest African-American rodeos.

The *Better Cities Film Festival* is an annual film festival screening the world's most inspiring stories about making cities, towns and neighborhoods better. The 2022 edition ran from October 20-23rd in Detroit, Michigan.

Additional awards were given to the following best in category films: Better Environment – *Together We Grow*; Better Planning & Design – *Reimagining Freedom West*; Better Transportation – *Reimagining Albany's Waterfront*; Better Communities – *Wetlands*; Better Economies For All – *Ropes in Brown Hands*; Better Technology & Innovation – *Greens for Good*.

Special film festival awards were given to the following films: Spirit of the Fest Award - *Ainsworth*; Best Civic Story Award – *Transforming Cincinnati*; Best Student Film Award – *Bike Yourself*; Best Comedy Film Award – *Sea of Parking*; Director Debut Award – *Framing on the Urban Edge*; Best Bicycle Film Award – *Let Pamela Ride*; Emerging Ideas Award – *It Takes a Village*; Audience Favorite – *Remnants of Memory*.

“We congratulate all the filmmakers, the award-winners and those that received official selection honors,” said Josh Paget, director of the festival. “We’re very proud to give these stories a platform, and share them with audiences and civic leaders.”

“We launched *Better Cities Film Festival*, because we believe in the power of storytelling

to inspire and empower cities and communities.”

Beyond films, the 2022 festival included tours, talks and events co-created by numerous national and Detroit-based organizations, including the Michigan Chapter of CNU, The Siren Hotel, Woodward Original, Emerging New Urbanists, PlacemakingUS, Congressional Black Caucus for New Urbanism, PlacemakingX, the Congress for the New Urbanism, and Pontiac Holonomy Incubator.

The festival has been hosted in Detroit since 2021, and will return in October 2023. “The story of Detroit, and its resilience and revitalization, is emblematic of our film festival’s purpose and theme, so it’s the perfect home for the *Better Cities Film Festival*,” said Dr. Chris Elisara, co-founder of First+Main Films which produces the festival.

While the flagship four-day festival occurs annually in Detroit, throughout the remainder of the year the *Better Cities Film Festival* travels to smaller cities and towns throughout America and the world, screening a 75-minute Best of Fest reel. “*Better Cities Film Festival* works with local governments, organizations and groups to enable communities everywhere to screen these stories and inspire conversation and change in their hometowns,” said John Paget, co-founding partner of First+Main Films.

---

**Attachments: list of award winners.**

**Better Cities Film Festival**

*Better Cities Film Festival* curates the best films from around the world on the theme of making cities and towns better places to work, live and play. It was originally founded in Los Angeles in 2013 by Joshua Paget, currently the festival director.

More info at: [www.bettercitiesfilmfestival.com](http://www.bettercitiesfilmfestival.com).

**First+Main Films**

Founded by John Paget and Chris Elisara in 2010, *First+Main Films* is a creative studio specializing in storytelling for cities, towns, and neighborhoods through films that foster civic pride, build community and spark imagination. In 2020, *First+Main Films* began producing the *Better Cities Film Festival*.

More info at: [www.firstmainfilms.com](http://www.firstmainfilms.com)

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Chris Elisara, Founder / Producer

First+Main Films and Better Cities Film Festival

760-822-2817 | [chris@firstmainfilms.com](mailto:chris@firstmainfilms.com)

##



2022 BETTER CITIES FILM FESTIVAL  
OFFICIAL AWARDS LIST

Best Feature Film  
Best Short Film

*Raised / Razed*  
*Ropes in Brown Hands*

Hero Award  
Spirit of the Fest Award  
Emerging Idea Award

*If You Have*  
*Ainsworth*  
*It Takes A Village*

Better Communities  
Better Environment  
Better Economies for All  
Better Planning & Design  
Better Technology & Innovation  
Better Transportation

*Wetlands*  
*Together We Grow*  
*Ropes in Brown Hands*  
*Reimagining Freedom West*  
*Greens for Good*  
*Reimagining Albany's Waterfront*

Best Bicycle Film  
Best Civic Story  
Best Human Story  
Best Student Film  
Best Comedy  
Director Debut  
Audience Favorite

*Let Pamela Ride*  
*Transforming Cincinnati*  
*In Bloom*  
*Bike Yourself*  
*Sea of Parking*  
*Farming on the Urban Edge*  
*Remnants of Memory*