



Photo by Devon Ford

# For Stephen McNair, Historic Preservation Means Progress

**Stephen McNair** has always had a natural interest in historic buildings and neighborhoods. He's using that interest to help fuel the revitalization of Mobile's downtown area and historic neighborhoods.

McNair's company, McNair Historic Preservation Inc., has been involved in more than 15 restoration projects utilizing the state's Historic Tax Credit in the Mobile area, turning crumbling buildings into fully functional showpieces. McNair says the tax credit is leading to a renaissance of revitalization in Mobile and across the state.

"For the first time in a generation across Alabama, we are witnessing a renewed interest in historic urban centers and rural main streets, thanks to these historic development initiatives."

Founded in 2015 and still with only one full-time

employee, McNair's firm also specializes in National Register nominations, architectural design, regulatory compliance and government relations, along with the historic tax credit work.

McNair Historic Preservation is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

After studying historic preservation at The University of Alabama and Tulane University and interning during the summers with the Mobile Historic Development Commission, McNair participated in the post-Katrina recovery in New Orleans while working with the city's Historic District Landmarks Commission and Vieux Carré Commission as an architectural plans reviewer and architectural historian.

While his role there was focused on regulatory issues, compliance and historic design guidelines, his experience

working with private developers led him to return to Mobile and open his own consulting firm.

"The field of historic preservation is important to me because it allows for creative solutions for preserving our architectural heritage, all the while preserving and promoting the historic character of neighborhoods," he said. "When viewed from a pragmatic lens, historic preservation is about progress, job creation, increasing quality of life and preserving architectural character."

McNair, whose firm now has clients in five states, is also giving back to the Mobile community through support of the Downtown Mobile Alliance and pro bono services, such as evaluating All Saints Episcopal Church as part of a preservation master plan and helping to save and relocate the Mon Luis Island schoolhouse.

He says restoring old buildings downtown can ultimately spread renewal throughout the city, if given a chance.

"Based on what we have seen in other communities, the economic impact of downtown revitalization will soon spread to adjacent neighborhoods, creating a 'halo effect' of rejuvenation and economic activity," he said.

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