



# INNOVATION PORTAL

MOBILE, ALABAMA

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## **Mobile's Entrepreneurial Center Begins Renovation & New Construction on Permanent Facility**

[Mobile, Ala., 02.27.2019] Innovation PortAL reached another major milestone in its quest to retain, support and accelerate the central Gulf Coast's highest-performing startups. Community, business and education leaders celebrated with the PortAL team at the organization's groundbreaking Wednesday, Feb. 27.

**Frank Lott** with Heritage Homes, who serves as both PortAL board chair and the Mobile Area Chamber Foundation chair, credits the Chamber's 2014 Leaders Exchange in St. Louis, Mo., as the catalyst to getting the program started. As Chamber board chair in 2015, he assembled a team of volunteers willing to get what is today Innovation PortAL started.

"Innovation PortAL is modern day economic development," said Lott, during his opening comments. "When this facility is complete – there will be very few, if any, like it in the Southeast."

Signaling the start of a modern day meets historic transformation at 358 St. Louis St., the 30,000-square-foot facility will be home to Class A office space, collaborative workspaces and a classroom. Located in the heart of Mobile's burgeoning technology corridor, other amenities will include event spaces, conference rooms, open areas and two courtyards.

Expected to open in spring 2020, Rogers & Willard is serving as the lead contractor. The construction of PortAL's state-of-the-art innovation center is partially funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. In addition, a number

of location foundations and In the interim, the program will continue serving entrepreneurial ventures from its temporary offices at the Fuse Factory and the Chamber.

Most important, said **Hayley Van Antwerp**, PortAL’s executive director, “The space will give a permanent home to the organization’s entrepreneurial-focused individual, group and community programs. I am thrilled to see Innovation PortAL coming to life, and am confident the opportunity before us can move the needle for our regional economy.”

During the groundbreaking, Van Antwerp also shared several recent developments, starting with the news PortAL was granted 501(c)3 status and was launching the PortAL Fund, a campaign to raise early-stage funding for high-growth startups. The organization also re-launched its website, [www.innovation-portal.com](http://www.innovation-portal.com).

“Innovation PortAL is the embodiment of our region’s burgeoning startup community. And the most exciting thing is its role as the hub of our entrepreneurial ecosystem, said **Bill Sisson**, Chamber president and CEO. “Without question, Innovation PortAL will help ensure Mobile’s economic place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

In addition, the crowd heard from two program clients – **Trey Byrum**, founder and CEO of Global Inspections, the parent company of Scottsman Tools and Alabama Pipe Welders Academy, and **Andrea Moore**, president and chief operating officer of M2 Solutions, a company working with owners and investors of new or existing structures to reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Both entrepreneurs credited the program for the personal assistance, strategic guidance and introductions to mentors and potential investors.

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#### ***About Innovation PortAL***

Innovation PortAL (IP), a program of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation, is a nonprofit innovation and entrepreneurial hub accelerating startup growth in southwest Alabama and the central Gulf Coast through targeted programming, funding opportunities, networking and community events. Innovation Portal provides entrepreneurs access to expertise, resources and funding, allowing them to rapidly scale their ventures to regional, national and international markets. The construction of IP's state-of-the-art innovation center is partially-funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration and is subject to associated federal laws and regulations. Innovation PortAL serves an eight southwest Alabama county-area, including Baldwin, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Escambia, Monroe, Washington and Mobile. Find us on Facebook @innovationportALMobile, Instagram @innovationportal, Twitter @InnovateAL and at [www.innovation-portal.com](http://www.innovation-portal.com)