



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Announces 2021 Florida  
Preservation Award Winners at Preservation on Main Street**

**New Port Richey, Fla., July 26, 2021** - The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation announced its 2021 Florida Preservation Awards at the Florida Secretary of State Awards and Florida Preservation Awards at the Preservation on Main Street Conference in New Port Richey July 22.

Nominations for the awards are made by the public with award recipients selected by a five-member jury from around the state representing a variety of backgrounds and experience. Preservationists and projects were awarded in these categories: Restoration/Rehabilitation, Adaptive Use, Resilient Preservation, Preservation Education/Media, Historic Landscapes and Organizational Achievement.

“The Florida Trust is proud to recognize these tremendous preservation projects and the people and communities that made them a reality,” said Florida Trust Board President Friederike Mittner. “This year’s winners represent some of the best work being done to protect Florida’s extraordinary history and heritage.”

**Legacy Award**

**Bert L. Bender, Architect**

The **Legacy Award** is the Trust’s most prestigious award for an individual and is awarded by its Board of Trustees. The award honors a person whose life exemplifies the guardianship of Florida’s historic properties through philosophy and actions. This year, the Board was proud to present the Legacy Award to Bert Bender.

Bender is a champion of Florida’s historic architecture and historic places. As the founder of Bender & Associates Architects, P.A., based in Key West, Bender is recognized for his exemplary historic preservation and architectural work, such as Fort Zachary Taylor, the Key West Custom House, the Cape Florida Light House, the Jupiter Light House and the Key West Light House. Bender has been a tireless advocate for conserving Florida’s history and heritage resources,



generously donating his time and expertise to numerous communities and to preservation projects and causes across the state.

Bert Bender established an architectural firm in Flagstaff, Arizona, in 1975 and ten years later moved his practice to Key West. Bender's internship with visionary architect Paolo Soleri in 1971 and 1972 infused the firm's philosophy of environmentally sensitive and ecologically responsible design. Historic preservation is the natural expansion of this philosophy: sustainability through protection of our existing buildings and historic resources. The firm's original philosophy of environmentally sensitive and ecologically responsible design is maintained as the guiding principle for the firm's work.

Bender has concentrated his professional career on historic preservation and restoration, developing a special expertise in that field. The vast majority of awards received by Bender & Associates Architects are for work with historic properties and he is considered by many to be an expert in the field.

Over the years, Bender has been recognized for his architectural contributions and talent with numerous awards. In addition to receiving the 2021 Legacy Award from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation, Bender has received numerous awards including a *Sustainability Legend Award* from the U.S Green Building Council in 2021; an *Individual Distinguished Service Award* from the Florida Trust in 2005; *The Wright Langley Award* for Outstanding Service Preserving the Cultural and Historic Values of the Florida Keys, 2000.

His work has been published in *Preservation News* a National Trust for Historic Preservation publication, several books on light houses and numerous newspapers and magazines across the Florida.

Bender's design approach is to produce quality architectural and planning projects that are community and ecologically oriented and timeless in their designs. Every project undertaken by Bender & Associates receives the same attention to exacting detail as their nationally known award-winning preservation projects.

In addition to his service as a Trustee for the Florida Trust, Bender has served on the Monroe County Historic Preservation Committee, Key West Historic Architectural Review Committee, the Technical Advisory Committee on Disaster Mitigation for Historic Resources: Protection Strategies and the Flagstaff Historic Sites Commission.

## **Adaptive Reuse**

### **Outstanding Achievement: Boynton Beach High School Cultural Center | REG Architects**

#### *Boynton Beach*

Built in 1927 as a high school, this building has undergone a historic rehabilitation and adaptive reuse and now serves as a community hub for the City of Boynton Beach. The plan for adaptive



use includes spaces for city offices, an event center, community meeting/event spaces, dance studios, art classes/studios, and a business incubator area.

### **Meritorious Achievement: Jake Gaither Museum | Jack Gaither Memorial House Foundation**

*Tallahassee*

The Jake Gaither Memorial House Foundation rehabilitated and adaptively used the historic home of the late Alonzo “Jake” Gaither, the legendary coach of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, as a house museum. It is through the dedication of Cornelius and Reché Jones, officers of the foundation and FAMU graduates, who worked with several community leaders, preservation professionals and partners to rehabilitate the structure. Originally constructed in 1954, the building has been meticulously restored to reflect the era when Gaither and his FAMU professor wife Sadie, lived in it. The house is now listed on the Leon County Register of Historic Places, the National Register of Historic Places and has received a Florida Historical Marker.

### **Meritorious Achievement: 500 Orange Avenue | REG Architects**

*Fort Pierce*

The Old Fort Pierce Post Office was built in 1935 by the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal agency created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935 to put Americans back to work after the Great Depression. The post office was designed by Louis A. Simon in a Mission Revival style. In addition to serving as a post office, the building also held civic functions for the town of Fort Pierce. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural significance in 2002. This successful adaptive reuse now anchors the Peacock Cultural Art Neighborhood, as an event center. By preserving, repurposing and revitalizing this important community landmark, the commitment of these private owners to the project exemplifies the economic benefits inherent in historic preservation, including job creation and spurring further investment in the area.

## **Historic Landscapes**

### **Outstanding Achievement: Greynolds Park | Gurri Matute PA**

*Miami*

This project, with a wide-ranging scope of work completed over the course of a decade, has successfully recreated this significant historic landscape at Greynolds Park, a Miami Dade Parks Heritage Park. The 265-acre park on the banks of the Oleta River was designed by William Lyman Phillips and constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps between 1936 and 1939. In earlier days, Tequesta Indians used this land and the river for transportation. It later became a Seminole Indian trading post and then a rock quarry. The park was named for A.O. Greynolds, owner of the local quarry. It is one of the last well-protected natural areas of northern Miami-Dade County. An archaeological site and a designated archaeological zone are located within the



park. At 46 feet above sea level, the park's Outlook Mound and Tower remains the highest publicly accessible landform in South Florida offering views of the surrounding lagoons and pine forests.

## **Organizational Achievement**

### **Outstanding Achievement: Memorial Park Association**

*Jacksonville*

The organization works through the dedicated service of the Memorial Park Association, to achieve the mission of Memorial Park to preserve, enhance and promote this premier historic city park in Jacksonville as Florida's only monument to the World War I Florida Fallen. Highlighted projects commemorating the 2024 Centennial Celebration of the park include the \$2.5 million Spirit of Victory capital campaign for landscape restoration and endowment, rescue and restoration of the Florida Fallen Scrolls and additional research of the Florida Fallen and a historically accurate reconstruction of the park balustrade.

### **Meritorious Achievement: Chattahoochee Main Street**

*Chattahoochee*

The Chattahoochee Main Street program worked creatively in spearheading a number of successful projects to revitalize the community. Chattahoochee Main Street developed a Strategic Community Vision Plan through a DEO Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant. Subsequent projects included the placement of historical markers, the grant-funded River Landing Heritage Trail and completion of two grant-funded historic structures surveys that led to Chattahoochee being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2020. Other highlighted projects include a collaboration with Gadsen County on a facade grant program for properties in the historic downtown. CMS also spearheaded the Highway 90 Eastern and Western Gateway Beautification project through an FDOT grant, as well as the Galvanizing Gadsden Consortium and Symposium. The design excellence of the display panels for the River Landing Heritage Trail is included in the Organizational Achievement award for Chattahoochee Main Street

### **Noteworthy: St. Augustine Meldrim Cottage| Florida Agricultural Museum**

*St. Augustine*

The project is notable for the collaboration between the various organizations, with the participation of the property owners (private and public), a non-profit recipient, and strong community support. As a result of this collaboration, this significant vernacular structure representing the legacy of the early 20 century turpentine industry in Florida, has been successfully relocated and interpreted in an appropriate setting. The original vernacular cottage was built around 1946 in St Augustine and was held by the Meldrim family until 2018. Threatened with demolition, the cottage was successfully moved to property owned by the Florida Agricultural Museum and restored. The character of the building matches building patterns of



## **Preservation Education/ Media**

### **Outstanding Achievement: Building Eden | Editor Rocco Ceo**

This book captures the history and beauty of the formation and development of Miami-Dade's Heritage Parks and the people who shaped them. From the first transformation of a former quarry to the dramatic opening of a hidden beachfront through its mangrove hammock, *Building Eden: The Beginning of Miami-Dade County's Visionary Park System* documents this heritage with deeply-researched text, period photographs and new documentation drawings, and promotes the stewardship of these historic resources and the importance of advocacy for ongoing preservation initiatives.

### **Outstanding Achievement: *Landmarks Discovered* | Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach**

The Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach's *Landmarks Discovered* virtual series explores the works of Palm Beach architects and how they have shaped the character of the town. Each episode focuses on a landmarked building and shares the history of the property through a virtual tour, archival materials and expert commentary. The virtual format allows the Foundation to connect with a broader audience and create a dialogue about how architecture defines the community, and utilizes innovative communication strategies to promote the significance of the landmarks and their designers.

### **Noteworthy: Camp Gordon Johnson | Camp Gordon Johnson Association Carrabelle**

The mission of the Camp Gordon Johnston WWII Museum is to honor and preserve the heritage of the men and women who trained at Camp Gordon Johnston. As part of its museum development efforts, the Camp Gordon Johnston Association successfully obtained funding to research, design, produce and install exhibits featuring ten interior panels, a retractable banner display unit, 3,000 new informational brochures and the fabrication and installation of six outdoor interpretive signs, display structures, graphic panels and design standards manuals. Both the indoor and outdoor panels have furthered the educational component of the recently opened CGJA museum with new research and interpretation presented in a professionally designed format. These educational efforts are especially important as the former installation is largely non-extant and there are increasingly fewer WWII veterans to participate in reunions.

## **Resilient Preservation**

### **Outstanding Achievement: Resilient Heritage in America's Oldest City | City of St Augustine**

*St. Augustine*



This project exemplifies best practices and sets a high standard for resiliency strategies for historic districts across the country. The report *Resilient Heritage in the Nation's Oldest City* integrates historic preservation considerations into hazard mitigation planning as a necessary strategy for the city's continued resilience. City-wide vulnerability assessments, adaptation strategies and mitigation planning for flooding and sea level rise are valuable sources of information for the City's policymakers and the community's property owners. Created by the multidisciplinary team led by Taylor Engineering, focused on creating a document that identifies methods for prioritizing archaeological sites threatened by rising seas, outlines the economic impacts of previous and future flooding events and recommends potential solutions such as mitigation strategies and policy revisions. All of this was accompanied through a public education online platform.

## **Restoration / Rehabilitation**

### **Meritorious Achievement: St. John's Episcopal Church**

*Tallahassee*

St. John's Episcopal Church has been an active social and cultural center since 1827. The historic sanctuary was constructed in 1881 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Leon County Register of Historic Places. It is one of the few historic brick Gothic Revival churches in Florida and is Florida's first Episcopal cathedral. The result of the restoration is the successful preservation of a historic anchor in Tallahassee's downtown that utilized traditional techniques and innovative materials while carefully adhering to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

## **Individual Distinguished Service Award**

### **Rick E. Gonzalez, AIA**

Rick Gonzalez, AIA, has dedicated his architectural career to the preservation and revitalization of Florida's Historic resources. He is a tireless advocate for Florida's historic communities and has generously shared his expertise in defending the state's architectural heritage. Gonzalez exemplifies the guardianship of Florida's historic properties through his philosophy and actions with over 100 historic architectural restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse projects, completed in over 30 years in practice. Although he is best known for high profile projects such as Donald Trump's Winter White House, Mar-a-Lago, his firm has provided designs for such community projects as the 1916 Palm Beach County Court House, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Plaza in West Palm Beach and the Old City Hall in Belle Glade. An advocate for the heritage of underrepresented communities he has worked to preserve places like the Historic Lincoln Theatre in Ft. Pierce and the Historic Sunset Lounge, Cotton Club of the South, in West Palm Beach. For his tireless efforts in historic preservation in 2017 he was awarded the Judge James Knott prize, the highest award in Palm Beach County for an individual who has excelled in a lifetime of contributions to historic preservation.



Gonzalez further demonstrates his leadership and commitment by traveling throughout Florida testifying on behalf of endangered buildings such as the Coconut Grove Playhouse, the Miami Herald Building and the Belleview Hotel in Belleair. He volunteers with many historic preservation organizations, is a past president of the Florida Trust, a past Vice Chair and current board member of the Florida Historic Commission and member of the UF Historic St. Augustine Board. Gonzalez is also active in educating on the importance of historic preservation. He regularly gives lectures and community design workshops. To educate the next generation on the value of heritage places he personally mentors two architectural interns each year in the field of historic architecture. He has also been involved with the ACE mentoring program which exposes high school age students to the fields of architecture, historic preservation and engineering. In addition to writing articles for local publications, he is frequently contacted by local, state and national media to comment on historic preservation issues.

*Note:* Photos for all awards are available at [FloridaTrust.org/awards](http://FloridaTrust.org/awards).

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### **About the Florida Trust**

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation is the state's non-profit dedicated to protecting Florida's extraordinary heritage and history. Founded in 1978, the Florida Trust has collaborated to save irreplaceable Florida treasures like the Historic Florida Capitol and is a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Learn more at [www.FloridaTrust.org](http://www.FloridaTrust.org) and follow on Twitter: @FloridaTrustHP.