

Alabama Gospel Center Awards Architectural Design Contract

The Alabama Gospel Music Cultural Arts Center has announced the selection of Birmingham's Hoskins Architecture as the lead architect for its concept design phase in collaboration with Skolnick Architecture+Design Partnership, a New York firm that will serve as interpretive and exhibition designers.

The contract was awarded June 23 at the McCoy Center for Community Service, which occupies a portion of the historic former church in the city's western section, the building that will serve as the future Gospel Center.

"Hoskins Architecture and Skolnick were selected following an interview process conducted by a specially selected panel," said Constance Moore, president of the Gospel Center. "The team is expected to complete the design phase over the next 12 weeks, at which time they will present a plan for phasing in construction of the Center's various elements, an estimate of construction costs, and renderings of the proposed facilities."

Primary funding for the Design Plan has come in the form of grants from the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation, Alabama State Council on the Arts, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Daniel Foundation, Hill Crest Foundation and Sixth Avenue Baptist Church.

The Alabama Gospel Music Cultural Arts Center was incorporated in 2004 and received its independent status as a nonprofit organization in 2009. AGMCAC will renovate the former McCoy United Methodist Church sanctuary and adjacent Sunday School building into a world-class gospel music performance and training center, reception facility, museum and recording studio.

The building, currently owned by the City of Birmingham, houses several social service agencies managed by the McCoy Center for Community Service, the organization that has mentored development of the Gospel Center. Neighboring Birmingham-Southern College has been a strong advocate of the Center's plans and has collaborated on many of the steps that have resulted in the awarding of the design contract.

Hoskins Architecture was incorporated in 2009 by noted local architect Creig Hoskins, whose 24 years as partner in a major Birmingham firm produced such high-profile projects as the Boy Scout Headquarters in Liberty Park, the Birmingham Zoo, Carver High School, and the Children's Hospital Parking Deck.

Skolnick has more than 30 years' experience specializing in planning, design, program development and interpretive exhibition services to museums, corporate offices, visitor centers and educational institutions. Their clients have included SONY Wonder Technology Lab, the Smithsonian Institution, American Museum of National History and the Paley Museum of Design.

In addition to nurturing local talent and providing a venue for gospel music performances, the Alabama Gospel Center will sponsor educational programs that reach

out to underserved populations, support local artists, preserve the genre of gospel music and provide a lynchpin for community development in a declining neighborhood.

Through renovation of an existing historically significant building, the Gospel Center will not only impact the cultural climate of Alabama and surrounding states, but also the area's economic development, primarily through concert and recording operations.