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Kirk Dooley: Park Cities builder shifts focus from new homes to old

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By **KIRK DOOLEY** / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News
kirkdooley@sbcglobal.net

Dan McKeithen is on a crusade.

He wants to save older homes in Highland Park and University Park from being torn down, an unusual quest for a resident homebuilder.

But after spending 10 years as a banker and 11 years as a production homebuilder for [Centex](#), Mr. McKeithen bought an old home on the 4300 block of Windsor Parkway, gutted and refitted it, and felt the warm glow of accomplishment when he was finished bringing it back to life.

"I found that my passion for saving the old exceeded my passion for building the new," he said.

So in August 2006, he left Centex and created Provenance Properties LLC with the goal of preserving and enhancing the architectural heritage of the Park Cities through the rehabilitation of older homes.

Provenance is a reference to origin, history or derivation.

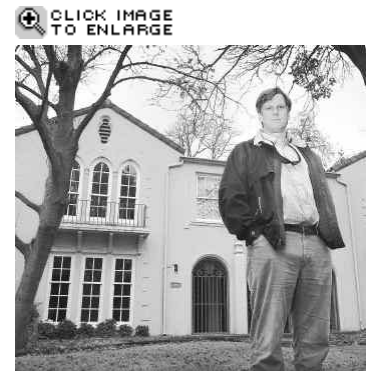
"With a home, it means who designed it, who built it, who lived in it," Mr. McKeithen said. "The provenance of a property is its history. We're trying to preserve and honor the history and legacy of a property."

And he's doing a good job at it. The National Association of the Remodeling Industry just named Provenance as 2008 Regional Contractor of the Year in two categories: entire house with project budget \$250,000 to \$500,000, and residential historical renovation/restoration.

The company will compete with winners from six other regions for National Contractor of the Year awards on March 15 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Not bad for his first year in business.

Provenance Properties completed a renovation of 3424 Princeton Ave., which sold last month. Across the street, though, was a beautiful old Georgian that Provenance missed out on – and another true gem was torn down.



JIM MAHONEY/DMN

He is approaching the renovation at 3510 Drexel Drive with great passion. The home, designed by Foshee & Cheek, is where Ted and Alice Ann Bibby raised their family a generation after one of the early Highland Park mayors lived there. A few months ago, when Mrs. Bibby moved, the family took a stand and said it would not sell to anyone who would bulldoze the home.

Mr. McKeithen is now renovating the home, much to the pleasure of preservationists.

"There is an architectural heritage and a family heritage in a home like this which should not be relegated to photo albums and scrapbooks," he said.

With his right-hand man, director of operations James Hammell, and old-school architect David Oswalt, Mr. McKeithen can handle three home restorations at a time. Provenance is renovating another Foshee & Cheek home at 4405 Belclaire Ave. and is knee-deep in rehabbing the home at 3210 Beverly Drive.

While his wife, Polly, oversees family operations – daughters Mary Catharine, 12, and Emily, 7 – Dan McKeithen is in search of old Park Cities homes to save from bulldozers.

"These are old homes where people have raised their families," he said. "I have sort of a reverence and respect for the people who have lived in these homes.

"I think of the time and energy and thought and care they put into their homes and how they lived in them."

Kirk Dooley is a freelance writer in University Park.

kirk@texmexbook.com.