

## Tulane alumni team up to reimagine a midcentury Lakeview gem

September 26, 2025 9:00 AM Molly McCrory  
mmccrory@tulane.edu



Tulane grad Sorrell Brown worked with a team of fellow alumni to restore a 1956 Lakeview home designed by the late George Saunders, architect and Tulane professor. (Photos courtesy of Rellestate Renovations)

During the renovation of a 1956 Lakeview home designed by noted New Orleans architect and Tulane professor, George Saunders, Tulane alumni packed the midcentury modern's three floors — drafting blueprints, sketching courtyard plans and leading construction crews.

The group was brought together by contractor and Tulane alum Sorrell Brown. He knew the large and complex project would require a lot of trust and expertise, so he

turned to his community of mentors and collaborators, people he knew would do the best job possible.

Brown, a former Green Wave football player and Tulane 34 recipient, is the founder and president of Rellestate Renovations, a New Orleans contracting company. Though his football career was cut short by injuries, the setback opened unexpected doors. “It gave me opportunities to participate in more of campus life,” said the 2022 business management and environmental studies grad.

Through the connections he made at Tulane and mentorship from professors, Brown learned the value of community. Today, he channels that lesson by filling his projects with trusted collaborators, many of whom also trace their roots back to Tulane.

One of those collaborators is Michael Bosio, his longtime mentor who helped teach Brown the importance of community. “I like to build...businesses, ideas, people, buildings,” Bosio said.

Bosio is a Tulane alum who met Brown when he was a professor in what is now the School of Architecture and Built Environment. “Sorrell became an employee of my office, and he became someone that I mentored. And then he went out and started his own company,” he said.

When Brown needed an architect on this renovation project, he called Bosio. “He has always been a mentor, but it was cool to see that flip once I started getting enough knowledge where I wasn’t coming to him for advice but as a partner,” said Brown.

Brown also turned to friend and design consultant Ibby Ali, a former Green Wave basketball player sidelined after a career-ending ACL injury. Ali and Brown went through their parallel experiences at the same time as undergrads.

When his injury gave him more time outside of athletics, Ali began taking design classes.

“I’ve always been a designer,” he said. “Since I was a child in Nigeria, I even made my own toys, and that has led me to explore both technical and visual creative work throughout my professional career.” Ali’s design style — diasporic modernism, a branch of Afrofuturism — was exactly what Brown’s client was looking for. Ali was hired to design the house’s courtyard and began working as an art director for the

project alongside another Tulane alum, Malcolm J., to help visually bring the project's completion to life.

Brown, Bosio and Ali were only three of the many Tulanians working on this project. The entirety of the accounting, design, videography and jobsite management teams were Tulane alumni. The project manager, Aidan Pachino, and bookkeeper, Karryn Joelson, are Tulane alumni. Brown has also gotten particular mentorship from [Harold Asher](#), his CPA who is himself a former Green Wave football player.

"It was really cool, the lineage of generations that came through Tulane and got to work on the same project in the same city," said Ali. "I think in a way, we got to pay homage to [Saunders]."

All three credit their experiences at Tulane — academic, athletic and social — for setting them on their current path. "You go to school for the education, but you also hopefully go to a school that really takes care of you and really participates in your success and your wellbeing," Brown said, "and I feel like Tulane does a really good job at that."



A team of Tulane alumni came together to breathe new life into the historic property, originally designed by late Tulane professor George Saunders. (Photos



courtesy of Rellestate Renovations)

It was really cool, the lineage of generations that came through Tulane and got to work on the same project in the same city. I think in a way, we got to pay homage to [Saunders].

Ibby Ali



Former Green Wave basketball player Ibby Ali designed the house's courtyard, which offers a verdant view that blends seamlessly with the interior. (Photos courtesy of Rellestate Renovations)