Belinda Stewart has inspired and enabled small towns and communities to value and restore their built environment, see the beauty and significance of their uniqueness, and celebrate their embodied history and energy.

In the mid-80’s Belinda Stewart began a career that has focused on improving the quality of life in rural towns and communities embattled by a changing economy and plagued with its end result – a lost sense of identity and possibility. She demonstrates a passion for architecture and preservation and for small towns and the people who live there. Belinda is eligible for elevation to Fellowship through Object 4 - “To ensure the advancement of the living standards of people through their environment”. This mission guides her career and her life. She made a personal choice to channel her understanding and deep respect for small towns into both a career and into public service.

Belinda began her career in North Carolina, where she spent five years working for leading firms, and developing her skill and passion for historic preservation. Through strong mentors, she learned that perseverance and hard work, often accomplished behind the scenes, can lead to extraordinary results. In 1990, Belinda brought her knowledge back home, establishing her practice in Eupora, Mississippi (population 2,197). She began with a focus on other small towns and rural locations, which often are underserved by our profession. Belinda Stewart Architects, PA now employs 14 people. In its 22 years, the firm has helped launch the careers of several up and coming architects. Since opening her office in the downtown core of Eupora, and as a result of her efforts, the downtown has evolved from a dying “main street” with more than 20 empty storefronts to a full thriving mix of retail, office and residential uses.

Belinda serves small towns and communities by providing excellence in design, inspiring them to see the potential around them and enabling them to take action to bring their goals to reality – starting with her own community. She is now in her fourth term as Mayor of the Village of Walthall, the county-seat of Webster County, located just outside Eupora. As a small town mayor she brings quality design and empowerment to her community as well as an understanding of the challenges facing small town governments and what it takes to bring about change for the better. She serves her community, her state and her region through her involvement in many related boards, committees and organizations, some of which she helped create. Additionally, her success has proved to be a role model for architects in small towns across America as well as for young women in architecture.

She recognizes that architecture is a vehicle for the advancement of living standards, provides for a tangible increase in pride for a community and can provide an anchor and a process for economic growth. Nowhere is this more important than in Mississippi, which is largely made up of small towns and communities with dwindling industries and populations from which to fuel growth. Belinda focuses on helping local citizens understand that they have the ability to change their environment for the better.

Belinda understands that like good design, inspiring communities is a process. She encourages them to look at the beauty and uniqueness that may have been hidden or overlooked for decades, helping them appreciate and celebrate the high aspirations and the energy that went into the initial design and construction. The restoration of structures that have served as the backdrop for communities and families for generations inspires people. They begin to look at other existing potential in their community, and to appreciate the life span that good quality design and construction can provide.

A quiet force for excellence and renewal, Belinda is reigniting a passion and commitment to design - one small town at a time.