

Michael B. Kennedy, Jr.

At a young age, Michael B. Kennedy, Jr. became fascinated with the construction process, having accompanied his architect father on numerous trips to building sites around the St. Louis area. In his twenties, Kennedy realized that his career's ambition was to transform urban distressed environments and promote diversity within the construction industry.

Michael went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management from Hampton University, where he also participated in a four-year internship at GE Capital through St. Louis-based INROADS organization.

Following graduation, Michael assumed the position of Business Development at his father's firm KAI Design & Build, headquartered in St. Louis.

At age 26, Michael set out on his first real estate endeavor to develop eight townhomes in the city's historic Gaslight Square district. Working with a local banker to secure financing for the project, Kennedy constructed the 1,700 to 2,000-square-foot townhomes, which sold for about \$300,000 each, and helped breathe life back into the once vibrant neighborhood.

After nearly three years in business development at KAI, Michael was promoted to Manager of Administration, then to Vice President - Sales and Operations. By the age of 30, Michael was named president of KAI Design & Build, which provides architecture; mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection engineering; interior design; and program/construction management services.

As president, Michael embraces change in this ever-evolving industry. His innovative and entrepreneurial spirit has helped make KAI a technology front-runner through the early adoption of Building Information Modeling (BIM) and other cutting-edge technologies.

A second-generation leader, Michael works closely with his father, Michael Sr., KAI's Chairman & CEO, to position KAI for future success. He spends much of his time leading KAI's strategic vision, business alignment, expanding into new markets, developing new clients, and promoting diversity within the industry workforce.

As a Minority Business Enterprise, KAI started and has continued under Michael to serve the urban core of cities to transform depressed neighborhoods into thriving communities. Through working with Community Development Councils, higher education and K-12 schools, commercial office clients, health centers, retail outlets, HUD and public housing authorities nationally.

In late 2012, Michael produced a documentary that included 17 local politicians, historians, business owners, financial consultants and organization leaders to produce an educational video titled, "Building a Better St. Louis for the Future." The video captured opinions and candid discussions from the diverse group on the state of St. Louis' minority construction industry, its history and possible solutions. The goal of the video was to enlighten, reinforce and identify solutions to narrow the gap in economic

opportunities for minority contractors. As a result, Michael was presented with a Diversity Champion Award from the St. Louis Council of Construction Consumers in 2013.

Michael has expanded KAI's outreach nationwide with the opening of branch offices in San Antonio, TX; Atlanta, GA and Omaha, NE and grown a diverse staff from 60 to well over 100. He has also grown the firm's revenue from \$8 million in his first year as president, to more than \$25 million.

Acquiring companies has also become one of Michael's areas of expertise. Since becoming president, he has orchestrated the acquisition of four companies, and has plans in the works to acquire a fifth.

In 2011, Michael founded a new holding company called The UP Companies, LLC, resulting from the acquisition of two companies, that is comprised of Square Up Builders, Power UP Electrical Contractors and Keep UP Services. Since its founding, he has grown The UP Company's revenue from \$3.7 million in its first year, to more than \$28 million. Through a complete company re-branding effort and a focus on talent acquisition, training and staff diversification, he grew the company from 34 employees to well over 200 office staff and workers in the field. The UP Companies focuses primarily on commercial and governmental building projects.

In 2016, Michael doubled KAI's staff of mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) engineers through the acquisition of the engineering group at United Excel Design, PC (UED). The acquisition made KAI one of the region's largest hospital engineering firms and provided additional expertise and a portfolio to compete for significant government/military projects nationwide.

Involvement in the construction industry and his community has always been important to Michael who currently serves on the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of Missouri Board of Directors and the AGC of America Diversity & Inclusion Council Steering Committee. He also serves on the Urban Land Institute (ULI) St. Louis Chapter Board, Christian Activity Center Board and BJC Children's Hospital Board and is an active member of the Young Presidents Organization. He has also been an active mentor to children since 2007 through such organizations as Big Brothers Big Sisters, Voices for Children and Youth Lifeline America.

When not working, Michael spends time at home in St. Louis with his son Titus, competes in triathlons and participates in intramural sports and martial arts. As a St. Louis native, he is an avid St. Louis Cardinals Baseball and Blues Hockey fan. When not cheering on his favorite teams, Mike is often found enjoying a game of golf with his dad and traveling.