

# The Boss: How Jared Bradley’s skateboard led him to the sketchbook

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Sophia Young



By [Sophia Young](#) – Reporter, Nashville Business Journal  
Dec 15, 2023

*What do skateboarding and architecture have in common? Jared Bradley can tell you. Bradley grew up an avid skateboarder. Though he didn’t realize it at the time, the shapes, transitions and work ethic involved in skating led to him developing a passion for architecture. Bradley is now the president of architecture firm The Bradley Projects, The Bradley Development Group and Certified Construction Services, which he founded in San Diego. After moving his businesses to Nashville in 2012, Bradley has fallen in love everything about Nashville — everything, that is, except the “tall and skinny” homes.*

**Where did you grow up and what was it like?** I was born and raised in Western Kentucky, a little small town called Owensboro. It’s across the river from Evansville, Indiana. I grew up in a very faith-based background when I was younger. The first 15 years of my life were pretty impressionable. I also grew up a very avid skateboarder. Back in the ’80s, we were sort of inventing that sport. Because I have little boys now that skateboard, I’ve thought

about this a lot. People are like, “Why did you become an architect?” And I say, “I don’t really know why.” I never grew up playing with Lincoln Logs like every classic architect. I never thought about what I wanted to be. But when I go backwards, and I think about why I got into architecture to begin with, I think there’s a direct correlation to skateboarding.

**What is the correlation?** We would leave our small little town and go to Evansville or we would drive south and go down to Nashville, the big cities, and we would skateboard in the cities. We would make things in the city, so that we could actually skate them. We started building ramps — the curvature, transitions and all the forms of skateboarding, the mechanics and the structure of all of it, and really the rigor and the work ethic — that sort of paved the way to architecture and development and construction.

**Before moving to Nashville, you were in Southern California for a while. Do you see any similarities between the two cities?** The similarities between Southern California and here are much more obvious now and make me happier to be here than when I first moved here. [Nashville] has transformed into a wonderful metropolitan city that’s still founded on loving each other and taking care of each other, and as long as we keep that going, then that’s what we should keep pushing for is this different kind of city with different principles and different morals and different roots and different cultural things that make it uniquely Nashville.

**What are the best and the worst parts of new Nashville?** The best part of new Nashville is the density. The density really creates a thriving city. It creates synergies with people, and it creates community. Out of that we see a lot of communities thriving because they support each other, and there’s a sense of pride about what part of the community you live in. ... I grew up in my career working in the inner city of San Diego and really working with communities that had been neglected. As architects, we’re obligated to go in and try to help build community there.

**What are your thoughts on architecture in Nashville?** When I moved here, I moved to a city that had very loose rules. Lots of land, lots of opportunity and then the local homebuilder groups started buying big parcels of land and then it developed its own vernacular of “Nashville tall and skinny,” and it’s garbage. It is so important to establish an architecture that’s contextually significant to the neighborhood and to the location. I think the bar is set so low in Nashville amongst other builders and other developers. People are buying, it didn’t matter what it looked like, they just were thinking location, location, location and you just see a hot mess across the city. The infill stuff is becoming more interesting because now these pieces of land are going up in value, and they’re surrounded by this nonsense. It’s like, “How do we reverse engineer the problem here architecturally?”

**How does Nashville address its issues with architecture?** It’s finally to a point where Nashville is on such a global radar that we are able to bring in better resources for art and architecture. Now, everyone’s going to have to be very intentional about what we’re doing in

the city because we've created this low-quality temporary fabric, but now, over the next 10 or 20 years, we're going to be removing some of that stuff and putting in something better. I've studied a lot of urban planning, and I've never been able to be study a city that's grown like this in 10 years. It's gone from a sleepy little Southern town to a dramatic metropolitan core. That's ridiculous. I think developers try to do like these enclaves of suburban neighborhoods in five or ten years, but not a whole city. I have huge respect for Metro. I have no idea how they've done it, and they've done a pretty good job at it.

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## **About Bradley**

**Title:** President and founder

**Companies:** The Bradley Projects, The Bradley Development Group and Certified Construction Services

**Age:** 48

**Hometown:** Owensboro, Kentucky

**Website:** [Verticallybuilt.com](http://Verticallybuilt.com)

**Education:** University of Kentucky

**Employees:** 22