



# A publication of Main Street Mobile, Inc.

# DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE NEWS

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## RESIDENTIAL MARKET STUDY AT A GLANCE

By Rhonda Davis

'Build it and they will come' is an adage that we have heard for years, albeit from a movie and related to cornfields and baseball. For downtown, that simple statement has turned into the war chant of downtown redevelopment proponents, business owners and real estate developers. 'Build it and they will live downtown.' 'Build it and new retail shops will open.' 'Built it and new businesses will relocate.' And build it they are doing. Construction projects in downtown Mobile are at an all-time high. Leading the way are new residential developments that are currently under construction and on the drawing boards.

To make sure developers have the right information to formulate successful residential developments; know who their market is and will be in the next few years; and to make sure we get it right, the Downtown Mobile Alliance commissioned a residential market study by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc., a leading consulting firm in residential development. On Thursday, November 9 the Residential Market Potential Study for Downtown Mobile was unveiled by the Downtown Mobile Alliance and presented by Laurie Volk, a principle in the consulting firm. Here is brief review of the analysis.

The Residential Market Potential Study determined:

- Where the potential renters and buyers for the new housing units are likely to move from.
- Who these people are and what they are like.
- How many people have the potential to move into downtown if the housing units were available.
- What their housing preferences are – rental units, purchase units, single family dwellings or multi-family units.
- What their alternatives are – new construction or existing housing in downtown and in the nearby areas of the city.
- What these people will pay to live in downtown Mobile.
- How quickly they will rent or purchase the new units.

It is important that as you read this account to keep in mind the effect that Hurricane Katrina has had on our area. From studying migration and mobility patterns from 2000 through 2004 the findings determined that movement into Mobile County fell, but after Hurricane Katrina relocation of households into Mobile and Baldwin Counties rose dramatically. People from Louisiana, south Mississippi and Florida have moved in great numbers to our area, along with many from Baldwin County. Please note that the post Katrina figures are not documented in the tables used for this report.

As you read this study one important fact to note is that in excess of 24,000 people work inside the area of study, the Hank Aaron Loop.

The results of the study determined that up to 2,760 households represent the annual potential market for new and existing market-rate housing units in downtown.

The market for downtown housing is being fueled by two generations - the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; and the Millennials, born between 1977 and 1996. The older group is looking to down size their large homes and experience urban living. This new lifestyle change for them includes rediscovering urban living, being engaged in cultural events, and experiencing a neighborhood filled with great restaurants and events. The younger group has been raised in the post-70's world of the cul-de-sac neighborhoods and malls, all fueled by a car-driven society. The younger generation is looking for a new life experience. Because of the high cost of living in our nation's largest cities, these young people are discovering and moving to smaller cities. They are able to have the lifestyles they are searching for in second, third and fourth tier cities, including Mobile.

Household groups that comprise the potential market for downtown are:

- Younger singles and childless couples - 52%
- Empty nesters and retirees – 32%
- A range of urban families – 16%

To determine what the rents and selling prices should be in downtown the study examined several factors. The recommendation is based on the socio-economic and lifestyle characteristics of the target market, the downtown residential mix, supply-side context, and general range of rents and sale prices for newly-developed market rate res-

idential units. The rents and prices are in 2006 dollars and are exclusive of upgrades and floor and location premiums. They also cover a broad range of rents and prices currently sustainable by the downtown market.

Housing Types	Rent/Price	Size
<i>Rentals</i>		
Hard Lofts	\$650 - \$1,050	600 - 1,000 sf
Soft Lofts	\$800 - \$1,275	650 - 1,100 sf
Luxury Apartments	\$1,200 - \$2,250	850 - 1,750 sf
<i>For-Sale</i>		
Hard Lofts	\$115,000 - \$165,000	650 - 1,000 sf
Soft Lofts	\$150,000 - \$275,000	700 - 1,350 sf
Luxury Condominiums	\$325,000 - \$500,000	1,400 - 2,200 sf
Rowhouse/Townhouse	\$195,000 - \$350,000	950 - 1,750 sf
Urban Housing	\$225,000 - \$475,000	1,100 - 2,100 sf

It was determined that to draw the target market, an effective housing strategy should include:

- The creation of a variety of housing types. This should include properties for rent and for sale, from upscale options to affordable housing, with all types built throughout downtown.
- Preserve our existing buildings. Restore and preserve our historic buildings downtown and use them for residential developments including adaptive re-use.
- Encourage Mixed-use development. Include a residential component within mixed-use buildings for both new construction and adaptive re-use.
- Establish general neighborhood guidelines to assure the compatibility of every scale and type of housing.
- Development of new programs and policies that encourage the creation of downtown housing and continue using existing programs that support residential development.

It was stressed that in order to achieve the maximum positive impact for downtown housing, three elements must be carefully considered and executed: locations, design and marketing. The city should evaluate target areas for residential development; ensure the appropriate urban design; and lastly, market and monitor downtown.

Zimmerman/Volk Associates has determined that an annual capture of between 10 and 15 percent of the potential market, depending on housing type, is achievable. Based on those capture rates, downtown should be able to support up to 255 new units per year over the next five years as follows:

Housing Type	Number of Households	Capture Rate	Number of New Units
Rental Multi-Family (lofts/apartments, leaseholder)	630	15%	95
For-Sale Multi-Family (lofts/apartments, condo/co-op ownership)	540	15%	81
For-Sale Single-Family Attached (townhouses/rowhouses, fee-simple ownership)	450	10%	45
For-Sale Single-Family Detached (urban houses, fee-simple ownership)	340	10%	34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,960</b>		<b>255</b>

It is important to state that downtown is already having success in the residential market. Most units are filled and have waiting lists established. The surrounding neighborhoods adjacent to downtown are experiencing a demand for housing on a continual basis. We know that people want to live close to the city's central business district, where many work and play. Zimmerman/Volk Associates documented the following rental property statistics from July 2006 for downtown and the mid-town area.

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# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

By Elizabeth Sanders

## HOTEL SCENE UNDERGOING DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION

My, oh my how the hotel scene has changed. When I moved here in 1990 a convention center was in the works and all of the talk was about the need for another adjacent convention-class hotel. We needed 200 more rooms, preferably in an adjacent full-service hotel. Of course this just happened to coincide with a national melt down in the national hotel scene. At the time we had a Stouffer name on the decade-old Riverview Hotel; the Admiral Semmes had several years before been renovated and had the Radisson name; the round hotel was about to be renovated as a Holiday Inn; the Malaga Inn was as quaint and charming as it remains today; and the current Ramada Inn was about to be purchased by Ben Meisler and operate under the Holiday Inn Express name. The Outlaw Convention Center was built and the much needed convention class hotel was chased, but never found.

Move forward to 2007 and the hotel picture is dramatically different. The Riverview Hotel is undergoing a \$70 million (yes that is the correct figure!) renovation that is nothing short of miraculous. Recently, General Manager Jeff Mayers took the Downtown Alliance Board on a personal tour of the hotel. Many floors have been completed and they are fabulous. The meeting rooms are all being renovated and the lobby is completely torn up and hidden behind temporary plastic and wood walls. Behind these walls a dramatic lobby is being built that will knock the socks off the visitor. The great change for downtown is the reorientation of the entrance from a Water Street to a Royal Street orientation. This will increase traffic (in the good way) on Royal Street. Later this year The Riverview will begin operations as a Renaissance.

Just up the street, the beautiful Battle House Hotel is undergoing an equally miraculous renovation. Ron Blount, RSA Project Director, recently took the Alliance Board on a tour of the hotel and the RSA Tower. This \$170 million project is certainly the development of the century for downtown Mobile. The Battle House is exactly the kind of historic upscale hotel that will bring business and leisure travelers to our downtown. The rooms are beautifully appointed and the lobby and meeting areas are breathtaking. Floors four through seven of the RSA Tower have hotel rooms so the complex offers the ideal mix of historic and new. The Spa and athletic facilities in the Battle House will be large and lavish. This is a project well beyond the aspirations of 1990. This will also open in the spring under the Renaissance name.

These two developments, brought to us by the big thinking Dr. David Bronner and his team at the Retirement Systems of Alabama, are dream developments for this city.

Mike Dow also deserves a world of credit for keeping these projects moving forward in spite of many derailments.

Another big thinking investor is Theodora Mallick. This enterprising woman from Hawaii fell in love with Mobile and bought the decrepit Lafayette Plaza hotel. This iconic building was spiraling into serious decline before Ms. Mallick purchased it and began a \$10 million renovation. The culmination of this investment is the rebranding of the hotel as one of the new Holiday Inns – a hotel chain that is reviving its brand and its buildings. The rooms have undergone extensive renovations; the exterior has been completely re clad; and the Skyview Lounge offers glorious views for the mature audience. This renovation project has been hindered by two major hurricane events after which Mobile was the nearest major city that was left functioning. Through it all the doors have been open; guests have been accommodated; and the renovation has progressed.

The great new news is that Cowart Development will be building a beautiful new Hampton Inn on Royal Street. (See article below.) Ideally situated across the street from the Riverview, the hotel will address the corner of Conti and Royal Streets. The 150 room hotel is being designed by a Memphis firm and will be similar to the very attractive Beale Street Hampton Inn. How fabulous it is to have an active, traffic generating use such as this on this prominent corner!

So you can see what a different hotel scene we have than the one we started with in 1990. Nationally, hotels are expanding; old names are reinventing themselves; and new concepts are being introduced every month. I was recently in Louisville, Kentucky and was taken through the 21c Museum Hotel in downtown. This place defines cool. The whole theme is contemporary art. I want to go back to Louisville just to stay in this hotel! I have high hopes that maybe the Centre for the Living Arts can come up with something like this for the former Mobile Register building where they have their great contemporary gallery – Space 301. It would be perfect.

But back to reality, even that is pretty dreamy. Three hotels under massive renovation and another about to start construction – the outlook for tourism is mighty bright in downtown Mobile. Couple that with the tremendous interest in living downtown, and it seems that everybody wants to enjoy the charm of downtown Mobile!

## HAMPTON INN COMING DOWNTOWN

by Rhonda Davis

There is going to be an addition to downtown Mobile's hospitality industry when the new Hampton Inn opens in 2008. Developer Mike Cowart of Cowart Hospitality Services expects to break ground this May on the new seven story hotel that will sit on the corner of Royal Street and Conti Street. "The hotel is designed by LLW Architects of Memphis, Tennessee. They are a wonderful firm that understands hotels. They have specialized in designing Hilton Hotels," explained Cowart. "This firm designed the Hampton Inn & Suites Beale Street Hotel in downtown Memphis, the property that the Mobile hotel has been modeled after."

Although the hotel is not located within a historic district, the design is compatible with the neighboring historic buildings. The hotel will feature an L-shaped design that includes a curved front addressing the corner. The ground floor will have retail space available for lease that will open onto the street. The parking area adjacent to the hotel will be located within the historic district and will meet all the requirements set forth by the Architectural Review Board and the Mobile Historic Development Commission. Construction of the hotel will take 14 months to complete.

The hotel is being developed by Cowart Hospitality  
*continued on page 7*

# REAL ESTATE REVIEW

Each edition of the Downtown Alliance News will feature a different downtown property. The goal of this feature is to provide information to the public on real estate options in the downtown area. If you would like more information on the property featured, please contact the management company or leasing agent directly.

## THE WACHOVIA BUILDING

**Address:** 61 St. Joseph Street

**Owner:** WaterSouth Associates, L.L.C.

**Management:** John Toomey Company, Inc.

**Telephone Number:** (251) 342-7229

**Year Built:** 1945-1948 – Art Deco Style featuring seven kinds of marble

**Occupancy Rate:** 85%

**Available Square Footage for Lease:** approximately 9,750

**Leasing Rate:** competitive rates, call for more information

**Leasing Agent:** Jill Meeks, Vice President, John Toomey Company, Inc.

**Leasing Telephone Number:** (251) 342-7229

For many Mobilians of a certain age, the Wachovia Building will always be referred to as the Waterman Building, a landmark building known for the huge globe that once occupied the ground floor. Many will remember what a treat it would be to look into the windows of the building and watch the globe turning on its axis underneath the beautiful constellations painted on the ceiling, or to study the dramatic murals painted on the walls depicting the history of Mobile. The globe now has a new home in the Mitchell Center on the campus of the University of South Alabama, and the first floor of the Waterman Building is home to Wachovia Bank.

Waterman Steamship Company commissioned architects Paul Phillippe Cret and Plat Roberts to design a building that would serve as its worldwide headquarters. Art deco in style with heavy geometric design features, the building was constructed at 61 St. Joseph Street, overlooking Bienville Square. Construction began in 1945 and was completed in 1948. The construction cost, approximately \$5,000,000, was unheard of at that time. With strict ties to the maritime industry, the building features many elements that nod to shipbuilding: the heavy use of brass; the construction techniques executed; and the seven types of marble imported and used throughout the building. Even the craftsmen that built the building were hand-picked by Mr. Waterman from the Waterman shipyard. The Waterman Steamship Company later named the building in honor of its chairman, E. A. Roberts. As time passed the company and the building were sold.



Photo compliments of John Toomey Company, Inc.

## MEETING AND CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Scheduled for the  
Arthur Outlaw Convention Center

### FEBRUARY

**Southern Association of  
Agricultural Scientists**  
February 4-6

**Central Gulf Coast Safety and  
Health Seminar and Expo**  
February 11-13

**Long Lewis Hardware Tradeshow**  
February 22-25

### MARCH

**Gulf Coast Home Product Expo**  
March 1-21

**Springdale Travel Meeting**  
March 3

**Gulf Coast Boat Show**  
March 8-11

**Mary Kay Cosmetic Show**  
March 15-17

**Alabama Rural Water Association**  
March 17-21

**Jamfest Cheerleading Competition**  
March 23-25

**Hollywood Connection**  
March 23-25

Decades later, this magnificent building remains an elegant part of the downtown skyline. Nestled in the center of what is now downtown's financial district, the E. A. Roberts Building is currently owned by WaterSouth Associates, LLC of New York. The building was renamed the SouthTrust Bank Building a decade ago. With the acquisition of SouthTrust Bank by Wachovia Bank, the building's name was changed to the Wachovia Building almost two years ago.

The architectural significance of this building is important to downtown and to the country. According to Jill Meeks, Vice President of John Toomey Company, the leasing agent of the Wachovia Building, "there are only 15 buildings of this art deco style left in the United States, most of which are found in the northeast. The Wachovia Building is the only building of this style in the south."

**"{Downtown} you can walk to lunch, walk through the parks, walk everywhere and you can't do that in west Mobile." - Jill Meeks, VP, Toomey Company"**

Although the owners of the building live across the country, their dedication to the Wachovia Building is apparent. "It continues to be an honor to steward the historic Wachovia Building (AKA the Waterman Building) as she approaches her 60th birthday next year," stated David Topping, Managing Partner of WaterSouth L.L.C. "Our prestigious tenant roster reflects the caliber and uniqueness of the property, which many notable architectural historians consider to be the leading example of art deco style in all

of the south."

Besides its beautiful design, the Wachovia Building has much to offer. The 18 story building has 16 leaseable floors representing 65,000 rentable square feet. "This building is built like a ship. It also has hurricane shutters that protect the windows," explained Meeks. "We have had no hurricane damage to this building." Among the many perks offered to tenants, "This building has small floor plates and you can create your own presence. We renovate the floors to suit the tenant. That means we are constantly upgrading the floors," stressed Meeks. "We also have on-site maintenance and our cleaning company is a tenant in the building. We have a cleaning lady that works during the day to care for tenants who need service during working hours. These people take great personal interest in the building and have great loyalty to the building and the tenants. Our maintenance supervisor loves this building so much he spent the night in it during Hurricane Ivan, leaving his family to make sure the building was safe."

"With the RSA Building coming on-line we have had increased activity at the Wachovia Building," stated Meeks. "I think the revitalization of downtown is wonderful. The whole feeling of downtown has changed. It is exciting," Meeks said. "Downtown is so unique; it has a personality of its own. You can walk to lunch, walk through the parks, walk everywhere and you can't do that in west Mobile. I am very proud to be associated with downtown. When you are downtown you feel a part of the whole city."

### Wachovia Building Tenants

Wachovia Bank  
Regions Morgan Keegan Trust Retirement Services Group  
Brady Radcliff & Brown, L.L.P.  
Parsons Engineering  
*New Tenants*  
TradeLanes  
Mobile Works  
NuVox

To make downtown a place conducive to both downtown living and residential development, Zimmerman/Volk Associates Inc. sighted policies and programs that have successfully been created and instituted in other cities. These changes have helped with residential development by addressing regulatory policy and obstacles that can be overcome. The policies and programs cover everything from pre-development meetings to creating an adaptive re-use handbook for developers and building professionals to use.

Tax incentives and tax exemption and abatement programs used by other cities are briefly outlined along with a list of improvements that need to be made in the infrastructure of downtowns in general.

Although long in text, the information provided by the study has reinforced the ideas that DMDMC and investors have regarding our downtown and will be used for development, planning, marketing, and creating a 'hit-list' for much needed infrastructure improvements by city and county government.

The study also talked about how important downtown events, art-related activities, well-kept and functional parks, and recreational opportunities are to the target market and to the success of downtown residential development. Clean and safe factors like street level lighting were highlighted along with the importance of internet access and great building design. These are all things that will attract people to downtown. And of course the need for resident services – grocery stores, dry cleaners, great and accessible restaurants, and retail stores – were discussed.

The study is a valuable document that will be used as a benchmark for research and a guide for development.

For a complete copy of the Residential Market Potential Study by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. please visit [www.downtownmobile.org](http://www.downtownmobile.org), or stop by the DMDMC Office at 261 Dauphin Street.

The methodology used to compile the Residential Market Potential Study is sighted in the report by Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc.

**SUMMARY OF SELECTED RENTAL PROPERTIES  
JULY 2006**

Property/ Address	Number of Units	Reported Base Rent	Reported Unit Size	Occupancy
6 N. Jackson Street	4	2 @ \$495 Studio/ Hard Loft 2 @ \$595	350 SF 650 SF	100% occupancy
459 Dauphin Street	3	\$845-995	900-1200 SF	100% occupancy
St. Emanuel Place	11	1 @ \$600 7 @ \$775 3 @ \$975	600 SF 775 SF 975 SF	Waiting List
Tower on Ryan Park 758 St. Michael St.	141 Studio 1BR/1BA 1BR/2BA 2BR/2BA	\$580-725 \$735-875 \$1,050 \$1300-1600	440 SF 650-675 SF 900 SF 1100-1200 SF	90% occupancy (20 corporate units, which are vacant)
St. Charles Place 963 Government	44 Studio 1BR/1BA 2BR/2/BA	\$550 \$650 \$850	650 SF 800 SF 1200 SF	Under Renovation
Azalea Court	24 Studio 1BR/1BA 2BR/1BA	\$550 \$650 \$750	500 SF 800 SF 1000 SF	92% occupancy

**RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE DATABASE**

DMDMC is compiling a residential database to be used as a reference guide for people seeking housing downtown. The list includes property name, location, contact information, total units, rental or sales pricing. If you have residential information important to this database, please contact our office at 434-8498. The DMDMC office is being used as a point of inquiry for people interested in moving downtown. Many people are utilizing our website to begin their housing search. Having this information available will help us direct potential residents to landlords and leasing agents. This is just one of the many services the DMDMC is providing to help with the revitalization of downtown Mobile.

**RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS TAKE SHAPE**

by Carol Hunter

With the demand for residential units in downtown Mobile growing, developers are responding with multiple projects under way or on the drawing board. From the conversion of long-abandoned stores and office buildings, to brand new construction, folks wanting to live downtown have the kinds of options not available in any other area of Mobile.

Loft-living has long been popular in major urban centers across the country and downtown Mobile is about to join that trend in a major way. Ann Bedsole converted the second floor of the old Franklin Fire House on Bienville Square into two lofts, each about 1000 square feet. And Tilmon Brown has turned the old Campbell Pharmacy into St. Emanuel Place, a three-story building with 11 loft units, ranging from 600 to 975 square feet. Both of these projects are rental units, with rents averaging about \$1/SF.

10 years ago, except for the downtown residential districts of DeTonti Square and Church Street East, you would have been hard pressed to find a residence to buy. That picture has improved a great deal and is about to change radically. Work is moving quickly on the Mattress Factory Lofts, which will house 25 units. The former Mobile Fixture building is being converted to 21 units, to be known as St. Louis Lofts. The Oakleigh

Venture Revolving fund is nearing completion on four brand new townhouses in the heart of LoDa. The O'Gwyn building will become 12 condominium units, the Carriage House seven units and the large Buick Building will ultimately be home to 30 condos.

Downtown living has always been an exciting prospect. Now, with the number and variety of residences coming on line and on the drawing board, it will be luxurious, bohemian or eclectic as well.

*continued on page 7*



*The old Mattress Factory on Dauphin Street will be converted to 25 condominium units*



*The new Clarkson Townhouses feature historic architecture with modern amenities.*



*An upstairs bedroom of the Clarkson Townhouses features a balcony overlooking Dauphin Street*

# WEAVING THE FABRIC OF DOWNTOWN MOBILE

By Rhonda Davis

Each issue of Downtown Alliance News will feature a brief profile on a downtown business, a non-profit organization and a resident. Look for this profile to discover more about our community and our neighbors.

## ATTRACTIONS

In 1991 Monica Setterstrom opened a children's apparel store, Attractions, at 205 Dauphin Street, leaving behind a teaching position at a local Catholic elementary school to join her downtown merchant family, the Namans. At a time when many storefronts were shuttered, Setterstrom saw a need for children's apparel and took a chance.

Setterstrom thought that specializing in children's clothes was a natural fit for downtown Mobile. With Naman's Department Store and another family-owned business, The Ritz, providing clothes for men; and other downtown retailers selling women's clothing, Setterstrom noted that there was no one carrying children's clothing on the east end of Dauphin Street. Located just a few steps from Bienville Square and the

***"Downtown is full of history and personality. It is never the same place twice." – Monica Setterstrom, Downtown Merchant***

bus transfer station, and a short stroll from the financial district, Setterstrom knew there would be many people within walking distance of the store. She knew the concept of Attractions could be a formula for retail success. Over the years Attractions grew and a few years ago the store moved next door into a larger space at 207 Dauphin Street.

Attractions carries some of the most recognizable traditional children's clothing on the market. Lines like Feltman Brothers, Carriage Boutique, Will'beth and Lida fill the racks. Along with these quality lines, Attractions also carries more trendy clothes for the Urban Hip customer. "We carry clothing from infant to hard to fit sizes," smiled Setterstrom. "We can fit anyone. We also carry 1/2 sizes for girls and husky sizes for boys." Among the most unique apparel that Attractions has are pageant dresses, party dresses and wedding apparel for miniature brides, flower girls and ring bearers. When you step inside the store you are overwhelmed by the fancy dresses and beautiful gowns that fill the walls. There is also an expansive line of accessories including ruffled panties, girl's handbags, tights, bows of every color, and fluffy socks. They also carry suits for boys. Shoes to complete the ensemble, from black patent leather Mary Janes to small lace-ups for babies to casual shoes for both boys and girls. With Easter around the corner, the store is filled with sweet dresses for girls and Easter apparel for boys.

When asked what has made Attractions succeed in downtown, Setterstrom responded, "We are a very personable store. We wait on our customers. Our customers can bring me their children and we can dress them from head to toe. Personal service is our main focus." Setterstrom happily noted, "When I first opened my store I dressed children who are now grown with chil-

dren of their own and they now come to me to dress their children." Keeping it in the family is one thing that Setterstrom does well. "When the boys out-grow Attractions we send them across the street to Naman's to shop. They carry clothing for men," reminded Setterstrom.

When asked why she opened her business in downtown Mobile instead of west Mobile or Spring Hill, Setterstrom explained, "Downtown is full of history and personality. It is never the same place twice." Setterstrom stressed, "There is one thing that I want people to know. Downtown is safe. Safe for mothers to bring their child to and stroll in the park, eat, and shop."

Attractions also has a website for your online shopping convenience. Visit [attractions@bellsouth.net](mailto:attractions@bellsouth.net) or drop by the store at 207 Dauphin Street.



Attractions, located at 207 Dauphin Street, carries a wide variety of children's clothing including traditional and urban hip. Monica Setterstrom, owner, opened the store in 1991.

## MOBILE BAYKEEPER

Mobile Baykeeper has grown from a small group of community activists that banded together to fight unhealthy industrial growth to a strong and well defined organization that fights for the public health of our citizens and for our environment. Its mission is to provide citizens a means to protect the beauty, health, and heritage of the Mobile Bay watershed.

Mobile Baykeeper was formed in 1997 as West Bay Watch when a group of concerned citizens joined forces to fight the construction of a chemical facility at the Theodore Industrial Park. As the group investigated the environmental implications of the plant, it discovered that for decades Mobile County's economic leaders had focused their industrial recruiting efforts almost exclusively on smokestack industries. The West Bay Watch members soon realized that Mobile County faced problems far greater than one new chemical facility. The volunteers expanded their mission and in 1998 changed the organization's name to Mobile Bay Watch, Inc. (MBW), to express the reality that air and water quality

***"I work downtown, I shop downtown, I lunch downtown, I play downtown, and I even got married downtown." – Casi Callaway, Mobile Baykeeper***

issues affect the east and west sides of the Bay equally. The volunteers grew their membership to over 3,000 people, hired a full time executive director, and applied for and received their 501(c)(3) status.

In September 1999, Mobile Bay Watch, Inc. affiliated with the international organization, Waterkeeper Alliance. The Alliance's mission of championing clean water and protecting the watershed's communities, ecosystems, and water quality fit well with MBW's mission. In November of 2003 MBW moved its office from west Mobile to downtown Mobile. In December of 2005 the board of directors voted to change the organization's name to Mobile Baykeeper to better reflect their focus on issues that affect our watershed.

Mobile Baykeeper is located at 300 Dauphin Street, Suite 200, on the corner of Dauphin and Jackson Streets. They currently occupy the former home of the Mobile Arts Council. When asked what was the motivation of Mobile Baykeeper to move downtown, Casi (K.C.) Callaway, Executive Director and Baykeeper replied, "We wanted to be as close to the Bay as possible and to Baldwin County. We are a multi-county organization and being downtown helps us serve everyone in the two counties. We feel downtown and the causeway represent the center of our service area and being downtown helps us with the sharing of counties."

Protecting the environment has long been a passion of Callaway's, as is downtown Mobile. "I am a downtown girl," Callaway enthusiastically pointed out. "I work downtown, I shop downtown, I lunch downtown, I play downtown, and I even got married downtown. Last November I held my wedding ceremony in Cathedral Square and held my wedding reception at Space 301. It was wonderful," she glowed as she recalled the memory. "I am downtown's biggest fan. I love being here. I even help find downtown office space for my friends and peers."



Casi Callaway, Executive Director and Baykeeper, Mobile Baykeeper, stands in front of a painting of a beautiful blue heron in the Mobile Baykeeper offices. The blue heron has become the symbol identified with Mobile Baykeeper.

Mobile Baykeeper is currently considering an issue in the forefront of many downtown property owners' and residents' minds - the construction of the new high-rise bridge proposed by the Alabama Department of Transportation that would span the south side of downtown Mobile. The impact of the bridge to Mobile Bay and to our environment is being monitored closely by the organization. A public participation forum was held in January at the request of Mobile Baykeeper to ensure that the public has a voice in the planning process with the Alabama Department of Transportation. For more information on this issue and on Mobile Baykeeper please visit [www.mobilebaykeeper.org](http://www.mobilebaykeeper.org).

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## LIVING LA VIDA LODA

Suzanne Holtz left her home in Springhill in September 2005 and moved into an apartment on Dauphin Street to live with Walter Anderson, the love of her life. In November 2005 Anderson died unexpectedly while running with a group of friends. The death of Anderson, a long-time employee of the Press-Register, left Holtz with the need to be near the place she and Anderson shared so many happy times together. "I wanted to stay because of Walter. I wanted to be where we created so many memories," explained Holtz. "I wanted to stay here where our memories are, so I did. I moved all my things in here and it has become my own. I love it down here."

Of the many things that Holtz likes about living on Dauphin Street is seeing her neighbors, seeing business people come and go, and seeing downtown people. "I love the sounds of downtown too. I love hearing the cars, the trains and the boats," she adds.

Holtz is an educator and administrator at Grand Bay Middle School where she works as the Title 1 Facilitator. Asked about the daily commute, she shrugs it off saying, "I go to the Downtown Y to work out in the mornings and then go on to work. It doesn't bother me in the least." The trade-off for the daily drive is the apartment's balcony overlooking Dauphin Street. "I love to sit on the balcony every afternoon and watch the sunset and listen to the bells ringing from the Cathedral. When my friends come down to visit they can't believe it. They attribute it to the feeling of New Orleans," stated Holtz. "It is interesting to see their reaction and what they perceive down-

town to be and what it is like."

Holtz does admit that her friends had concerns about her living downtown alone. "They wanted me to move back into my vacant house in Springhill. They were concerned about my safety. They didn't

***"I love to sit on the balcony every afternoon and watch the sunset and listen to the bells ringing from the Cathedral." - Suzanne Holtz, Downtown Resident***

understand that downtown Mobile is safe," said Holtz. "I am very secure here."

Living downtown also allows Holtz to keep some of the traditions started by Anderson alive. One tradition is the First Light Marathon Breakfast. Holtz invites their friends, most of whom are runners and run the half-marathon, to come to the loft for breakfast and mimosas to cheer on the marathon runners coming down Dauphin Street racing toward the finish line at Bienville Square, a few blocks down the street.

"I love it down here. There are all kinds of opportunities in downtown. I walk to the farmer's market in the spring and fall, I walk to Heroes or to the Thai restaurant (Busaba's) for lunch," explained Holtz. "I am excited about the new apartments going above the old Alabama Upholstery and the new taverns opening at the old Soul Kitchen and O'Rourke's locations. I am pleased with the residential development on Dauphin Street - the Mattress Factory, the Middlebrooks' law firm project; and townhouse development behind Barton Academy. I really think more and more people are going to

want to live down here."

But most of all she loves Anderson and loves her apartment in the heart of LoDa.



*Among the things that Suzanne Holtz likes about living downtown is watching the afternoon sunsets from her balcony and listening to the bells ringing from the Cathedral.*

# PLANTINGS BEAUTIFY DOWNTOWN

by Carol Hunter

In too many areas of downtown Mobile, pedestrians are faced with blank concrete sidewalks and building fronts, but landscape projects, both large and small, are beginning to have a real impact on the look and feel of our neighborhood. The beds surrounding the palm trees along AmSouth Bank are now bright with colorful annuals thanks to Region's Bank President Bill Seifert and the Alliance Stewards.

In a project that may set a new standard for private landscaping, Ann Bedsole has installed a design that will bloom with color all year long in her courtyard on St. Joseph Street. Jubilee Landscaping has combined classic Mobile perennials with seasonal annuals in planters to create a restful oasis amidst all the concrete.

Smaller scale plantings can also make a major statement. Pedestrians accustomed to walking briskly along blank buildings will naturally slow down when passing a beautifully blooming planter. Without even realizing it, their experience of downtown has been enhanced. The Project for Public Spaces has long encouraged downtowns to begin the revitalization process by simply planting petunias:

*"Why petunias? Because it's the little things you do--like planting petunias in your window box--that add up to big differences in your community. There are few things more fulfilling than watching the seeds of your work take root and bloom. It's wonderful to see the contagious joy that spreads through a neighborhood when people take pride in their public spaces." - Project for Public Spaces*



*Top: The courtyard between Ann Bedsole's two buildings include native perennials and flowering annuals designed to provide color throughout the year. Above: The entrance to the Hawkins Law Firm on St. Francis Street is made inviting by a landscape that includes color and texture. Left: The color-filled planters on the St. Francis Street side of the Taylor Martino Kuykendall building draw the eye upward.*



*Sidewalk planters can have a dramatic impact on the pedestrian experience in downtown.*



*Planters in front of Tom Mason Communication on upper Dauphin Street add color and texture to the streetscape.*

# REGENTS AND STEWARDS TACKLE BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS

by Carol Hunter

The Crews of Regents and Stewards ended 2006 with an impressive list of accomplishments. Dozens of neglected rights-of-way areas throughout the Business Improvement District have been maintained; tons of trash, garbage and debris were removed, and thousands of folks living, working in or visiting the District were assisted.

The goals for 2007 are even more ambitious. Beautification projects at key spots in the District have been identified and landscape plans have been developed. Now that our sidewalks and parking lots are cleaner than they've ever been, the Regents and Stewards are making them more beautiful than they've been in decades.

One of the most visible projects is along the Royal Street and St. Francis Street entrances of the AmSouth Bank Building. Stewards have planted and are maintaining blooming annuals that add color and texture to beds surrounding trees throughout the District. Larger projects at key intersections, such as the parking lot at the corner of Conception and St. Francis Streets, have been drawn and are being fine-tuned for implementation.

As Mardi Gras approaches, the Regents and Stewards prepare for one of the busiest times of the year. In order to reduce the mountain of trash and garbage collected after Fat Tuesday, the Stewards will once again put out between 75 and 100 garbage cans for parade-goers to use during Carnival. The cans will be emptied daily, drastically reducing the amount of litter that winds up on our streets and sidewalks after every parade.

Regents are also gearing up for the potential 1-million visitors to downtown who may need assistance during Mardi Gras. They'll be doing every-



Stewards and Regents plant blooming annuals at the intersection of Royal and St. Francis Streets.



thing from giving directions, to taking photos, to assisting stranded motorists. To familiarize themselves with the latest attractions and events, the Stewards have attended a special preview of the Pompeii exhibit at the Gulf Coast Exploreum.

Our team of "purple and gold" is certainly making downtown Mobile the kind of beautiful and welcoming neighborhood we all desire!



Before (above left) and after planting at the intersection of Royal and St. Francis Streets.

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The second floor of the old Franklin Firehouse features wide-open living space and a gourmet kitchen.



St. Emanuel Place offers 11 units, each with unique features, including one with a spiral staircase. Developer Tilmon Brown discusses the project with Angela Eberhardt.



The O'Gwyn Building will anchor the corner of Conception and Conti Streets with 12 condo units.



All of the units of St. Emanuel Place are lofts or "soft" lofts, which means some walls have been added to the open floor plan.



The former Mobile Fixture building covers most of a city block and will feature a variety of floor plans, all at least 1000 square feet and several as large as 1600 square feet.

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Services and is owned by Edmonds Enterprises and the Edmonds family of Centerville, Alabama. The Edmonds will also operate the hotel once it is open. Edmonds Enterprises owns and operates three Hampton Inns, a Comfort Suites in Gadsden and several Windwood Inns, including one in Baldwin County.

"We felt like Mobile was on the verge of revitalization. When RSA announced the development of the Battle House Hotel and Tower, it took the guess work out of the project for us," stated Cowart. "We saw high-end hotels going up and we knew we could be successful with a middle range hotel with a strong brand attached to it. There is a need for a high quality hotel like the Hampton Inn in downtown Mobile," Cowart continued. "The owners did the same thing in downtown Florence," said Cowart referring to the successful Hampton Inn located in northern Alabama owned by the Edmonds.

"One block can seem like one mile in a downtown," explained Cowart. "When most conventions moved from the Mobile Civic Center to the new Convention Center the focus of the hotels changed. Now, Royal Street and Water Street are the focus of convention traffic with Dauphin Street being the place where the action is."

One of the most important factors of the new development that Cowart wants people to know about is the financing. "This is a \$20 million project that is financed locally by Regions Bank," emphasized Cowart. "We took the project to John Arendall at Regions; he saw it as a good project and said 'we can get it done,' so a good project can get financed locally."

"We are looking forward to the opening of the hotel; the Edmonds will run a good operation in a well-designed hotel. It is a good investment. We have a lot of anticipation surrounding this project," stressed Cowart. "This is not a roll of the dice, but an actual happening."



The downtown Mobile Hampton Inn will have a design similar to this Hampton Inn in Memphis, Tenn. Both properties are developed by Cowart Hospitality Services.

# DOWNTOWN EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

Through February 20 – Mardi Gras Parades & Festivities  
 Through June 3 – *A Day in Pompeii*, Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center  
 Through April 15 – *Sense of Place II: Materials at Hand*, Space 301 Off Centre, 6 S. Joachim St.  
 February 5 through March 2 – *Opening: Paintings by Jamie Kirk*, Mobile Arts Council  
 February 3 through September 3 – *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas*, The Museum of Mobile  
 February 9 – *LoDa Artwalk*, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District  
 February 23 – Ray Price, concert, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre  
 February 23 & 24 – FMX-Freestyle Motocross, Mobile Civic Center Arena  
 February 24 – *Fourth Saturday in the Square*, 9:00 a.m. – Noon, Cathedral Square

## MARCH

March 1 – *Izhak Perlman* presented by Mobile Symphony, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre  
 March 3 – *The 18th Annual Chili Cook-Off* presented by the American Cancer Society, 9:00 a.m., Bienville Square  
 March 5 through March 30 – *Opening: Youth Art Month*, Mobile Arts Council  
 March 9 – *LoDa ArtWalk*, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District  
 March 10 & 11 – *Cinderella* presented by Mobile Ballet, 7:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theatre  
 March 17 – *Luck of the Irish 5K Race*, 8:00 a.m. Bienville Square  
*Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Parade*, 11:00 a.m., begins from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception ...  
*Luck of the Irish Irish Stew Cook-Off*, 11:00 a.m., Bienville Square  
*Luck of the Irish Parade*, 2:00 p.m.  
 March 22 & 24 - *Il Trovatore* presented by Mobile Opera, 7:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theatre  
 March 24 – *Azalea Trail Run*, 8:00 a.m., Mobile Civic Center Arena  
 March 24 – *Fourth Saturday in the Square*, 9:00 a.m. until Noon, Cathedral Square  
 March 31 – *The End of the World* presented by Mobile Symphony, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## CLASSES

Alabama Contemporary Dance Company, 9 South Joachim Street is offering the following classes:

Hip Hop.....Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.  
 Salsa .....Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.

\*No partner necessary  
 Fee: \$10 per class  
 For more information contact ACDC at 432-6706 or [www.aldance.org](http://www.aldance.org)

*For a working email update on events happening downtown and throughout the metropolitan area contact Charlie Smoke at the Mobile Arts Council.*

**If you would like to be added to the *Downtown Alliance News* mailing list, please call (251) 434-8498.**

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**CALL THE ALLIANCE'S REGENTS DISTRICT HOTLINE 251-327-SAFE (251-327-7233)**

The Regents provide motorist aid, escorts to vehicles and visitor information.

Keychain tags with the telephone number printed on it are available at DMDMC office. Pick one up the next time you walk by. The Hotline phone service is provided by Cingular Wireless.

**STREETS OF DOWNTOWN WILL BE FILLED WITH GREEN ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY**

The streets of downtown will turn green on Saturday, March 17 as Mobile celebrates St. Patrick's Day. Activities will begin at 8:00 a.m. in Bienville Square as the "Luck of the Irish" 5K Race takes off and runs through the streets of downtown. "Luck of the Irish" Irish Stew Cook-Off will begin at 11:00 a.m., also in Bienville Square, with teams competing for the title of Best Irish Stew. The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Parade will march at 11:00 a.m. from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and wind through downtown. These jolly men dressed in green always throw a festive parade that is a longstanding Mobile tradition. If this parade isn't enough for you, stick around, at 2:00 p.m. there will be another parade, The Luck of the Irish Parade, featuring grand marshals Dan & Shelby from WKSI.

The "Luck of the Irish" events are produced by the Exchange Club of Mobile and are fundraising events that benefit the Family Center, an organization that works to help prevent child abuse. If you are interested in running in the 5K race, please contact the Port City Pacers at [www.pcpacers.org](http://www.pcpacers.org). If you would like to enter a team in the Irish Stew Cook-Off, or if you would like to sponsor a float in the "Luck of the Irish" Parade please call the Family Center at (251) 479-5700. Last year these events raised \$25,000 for the Family Center.



*Photo courtesy of the Exchange Club and the Press-Register.*