Ketchum Fountain

The Ketchum Fountain in the center of Bienville Square is the most beloved feature of the historic public space and has become an icon for the City of Mobile. The “Acanthus Fountain” was placed in honor of Dr. George A. Ketchum, a prominent physician, civic leader and president of the Bienville Water Works. One hundred years later, its much-needed restoration was undertaken by Main Street Mobile and completed in 1993.
Opened in 1996, Cathedral Square has since been the site of matrimonial celebrations, peaceful demonstrations, vegetable sales, and joyful play by children in the cool waters of the fountain. Once a block of buildings, the site was cleared in the 1970s and sold to the city with the requirement to build a public square in front of the cathedral. After the planting of some trees, work stopped until the early 1990s when we decided to build a performing arts park. Main Street Mobile sold engraved bricks and stones to raise the moneys necessary to build this much loved public square. Even today, people can be observed staring down at the pavers – presumably reading the names of those who made the square possible.
In 2013, Main Street Mobile partnered with the Mobile Bay Oyster Gardening Program to establish an “Oyster Trail” throughout Downtown Mobile. The trail is made up of a dozen (of course) fiberglass replicas of the Gulf Coast’s most popular bi-valve, each painted by a local artist. The trail is designed to educate the public about the value of oysters to our region while at the same time creating one of the nation’s best themed outdoor art displays.
**Little Colt**  The Little Colt is one of Mobile’s most charming pieces of public art. In 1967, it was presented to the City of Mobile by the City of Cordoba, Spain, whose official symbol is a Little Colt. The sculpture was placed on a pedestal in Spanish Plaza, which was dedicated in March 1968.

The Little Colt was removed from the park after it was damaged in Hurricane Fredric in 1979, and was essentially lost to the city for many years. The statue was located in a private warehouse in 2001 and Main Street Mobile undertook the restoration with funding from the Wayne D. McRae Philanthropic Fund. The tiny equine was reinstalled in Spanish Plaza in 2010.
Benches in Bienville Square

At one time, more than 100 cast iron benches lined the walkways of Bienville Square. Over time benches were lost and by the 1990s only 12 remained. Main Street Mobile led the effort to find historic patterns for the unique benches, organized the recasting of the benches, and returned control of the patterns to the City of Mobile. Today 30 of these benches grace the tree lined walkways of the square.
Rotary Clock

Photographs show that for many years a beautiful clock stood at the corner of Dauphin and Royal streets. The Rotary Club placed the clock in 1919 and it stood on the corner until 1964. Replicating the clock was only “something we should do one day” until Bestor Ward decided to take it on as a project during his year as President of Rotary Club of Mobile in 2002. The Rotary Club raised the money to pay for the clock, organized its reconstruction, and paid for part of the installation along with the city of Mobile. Main Street Mobile assisted the Rotary Club in coordinating the installation of this charming landmark on its historic corner.
Crescent Theater  After an early morning fire in 2004 left a popular restaurant in ruins, the Harris Family donated the building’s shell to Main Street Mobile. Main Street sought proposals to renovate the space and accepted one from JSMM LLC that envisioned an independent movie theater on the ground floor with two apartments above. The theater opened in 2008 and has been wildly successful. The block has been enlivened ever since.
Sentry

Local fine art sculptor Bruce Larson specializes in creating works from materials found in his environment. “Sentry” stands guard over Mobile’s Contemporary Art Center, a striking assemblage of artifacts that is both modern and classical, and a reminder that recycling can be beautiful. “Sentry” was acquired by Main Street Mobile in 2010.
THREE SISTERS  Charles Smith is one of Mobile’s most revered artists, with works in the Smithsonian Institution’s permanent collection. Usually an artist who works in clay, Smith ventured into different metals for “Three Sisters.” The three figures pay homage to women, who have been the cultural foundation of societies through the ages. Smith says the abstract nature of the trio allows each viewer to insert his or her own experience in the story, but for him, the Three Sisters represent loyalty, prosperity and justice. The sculpture was installed in front of Government Plaza in 2011 thanks to funding from Herndon Inge III and Mobile County Commission.
After years of largely unsuccessful attempts to recruit established retailers to downtown, the Downtown Mobile Alliance decided to cultivate its own budding entrepreneurs. The Urban Emporium was established in 2011 as Mobile's only retail incubator, and has nurtured dozens of small retailers in a highly supportive environment since then. The shop has also demonstrated to other independent retailers that the downtown market is indeed one worth pursuing.
Artful Bike Racks

The five artful renditions of a big-wheeled cycle near the Gulf Coast Exploreum were crafted by America Jones in 2005. They are part of a series of artist designed “bike racks” that Main Street Mobile has commissioned over the past 20 years. The Admiral is looking on with an approving gaze!
Facade Improvement Program

No one can imagine the degree of decrepitude that existed in the buildings downtown 25 years ago. Main Street Mobile facilitated a facade grant program that encouraged property owners to restore LoDa’s architectural heritage. Most of Mobile’s iron galleries had been melted down for the war effort in the 40s. A deliberate effort was made to bring this signature architectural feature back to downtown. Dozens of buildings were renovated and a rebirth was begun.
Market on the Square began modestly in 2001 with just a few farmers in a parking lot. Main Street Mobile’s goal then, as now, was to bring fresh, locally grown and produced foods to the center city’s residents and visitors. The market has since moved to Cathedral Square and now features artworks, breads, seafood, meats, cheeses, and shrubbery, along with locally grown fruits and vegetables. Something magical happens every market day when city residents are able to interact directly with the rural farmers who have grown the foods being purchased.
Decorative Lamp Posts

In 1990, the city council adopted a study that envisioned a restoration of downtown’s public infrastructure to an era in keeping with the historic district’s period of significance. At the time, Dauphin Street’s lighting consisted of interstate style “Cobra Lights” designed to light the street. In order to promote a walkable environment in 1992, a shorter cast iron light pole with a fixture that would cast light on the sidewalks was desired. Using historic photography and a casting of a historic pole in the city’s inventory, replica lights were installed along Dauphin Street and beyond. Since that time a nighttime dining scene has flourished as pedestrians feel ever more comfortable in the new light fixture’s glow.
Dismayed by the boring commercial signs along Dauphin Street, the Downtown Mobile Alliance initiated a signage improvement grant program in 2011. Since then, eight well-designed, lighted signs have been installed along Dauphin and Royal streets. The eye-catching signs have added to the vibrancy of downtown and encourage potential customers to step inside.
moda! The dilemma was: “How do we connect the east and west ends of LoDa so that workers and visitors may enjoy all of the offerings?” An all electric fleet of trolleys seemed like a good idea. Working with Wave Transit, it was decided that the trolleys would be given a modern name and look. The made up word moda! and a sassy color scheme gave these new trolleys a 21st century feel.
Heroes Deck  How to create a sidewalk café scene where the adjacent sidewalks are narrow? That was the question in the early 2000s. In 2003, Main Street Mobile commissioned a design for Heroes Sports Bar & Grille that was controversial - to say the least. Taking over several parking spaces and a bit of sidewalk along Jackson Street, a deck was proposed that would provide Heroes’ owner the long desired outdoor dining space. Nearly every city department opposed the idea, but Mayor Mike Dow, said, “Let’s do it!” The result has been thousands of meals enjoyed while overlooking beautiful Cathedral Square.
Horse Trough  Found in a disheveled state at a country auction, the historic horse trough which was once located on St. Joseph Street was purchased by Main Street Mobile. The late Grace Ashley donated the moneys needed to restore the inner workings of the fountain and to have her placed downtown. The fountain now sits at the corner of St. Francis and Conception streets and features a separate faucet for horses, humans, and dogs.
In 2002, Project for Public Spaces recommended better connections between surrounding cafes and Cathedral Square. A key suggestion was a raised crosswalk mid-block on Dauphin Street and an expansion of Spot of Tea’s outdoor dining. Change is hard for some folks as there were many who fought the raised crosswalk. Approval was gained and this area is a dining hotspot most days, but especially on farmers market Saturdays.
Decorative Trash Receptacles

With all of the attention being paid to downtown’s public infrastructure in the early 1990s, it was decided that new trash receptacles were in order. Pebbly, concrete monoliths and rusty oil drums just didn’t fit the historic image. Main Street Mobile commissioned a local design that mimicked the historic fencing around the Ketchum Fountain in Bienville Square. In the years since, the custom cans have been placed throughout downtown.
The Business Improvement District (BID) Services team, known to downtown regulars as the “people in purple and yellow,” work tirelessly to create a clean, beautiful, welcoming and safe environment. Every day in the BID litter is collected, weeds are removed, flowers are watered, visitors and motorists are assisted, and all sorts of nuisances are addressed. The fact that Downtown Mobile is truly a lovely and vibrant place is a testament to their tireless efforts.
The biggest undertaking of Main Street Mobile in the early 90s was improvements to the streetscape. Along with the installation of decorative street lamps, sidewalks were repaired, flagstone edging and granite curbs were added and tree wells with decorative metal grates were created. Today these tree wells also serve as flower beds, creating a soft edge to the urban environment and eye-catching seasonal color.
The Downtown Mobile Alliance was created in 2005 as an expansion of Main Street Mobile’s 15 year mission to revitalize Downtown Mobile. The Alliance continues downtown’s redevelopment through marketing, advocacy and the management of Business Improvement District Services. Every day its staff focuses on the singular goal of creating a great experience for everyone who lives, visits or works in this historic city center.