



Downtown Mobile Alliance
President & CEO
Elizabeth Stevens to Leave at Year's End

Downtown Mobile Alliance President and Chief Executive Officer Elizabeth P. Stevens announced that she is stepping down from the position she has held since the inception of the organization in 2005 but will stay on through the end of the year as President & CEO Emeritus to assist with the transition. Talks between Stevens and the board of directors have been ongoing for a number of weeks, and the two parties mutually reached an agreement last week.

“Downtown Mobile Alliance has been my home for nearly 20 years,” Stevens said. “I’m so proud of all that we have accomplished, both at the Alliance and at Main Street Mobile during the 15 years prior to the formation of the Business Improvement District. Now it is time for me to move on to allow the Alliance to transition to its next chapter.”

Downtown Mobile Alliance Chairman of the Board Matt LeMond thanked Stevens for her years of visionary leadership. “Elizabeth’s outstanding contributions to the redevelopment and growth of downtown are too numerous to list, but suffice it to say that without her efforts, Downtown Mobile would be a very different place today. She can be proud of her legacy in leading the Downtown Mobile Alliance and facilitating the work of the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation and Main Street Mobile. Thanks to Elizabeth’s vision and hard work, with the support of the board, the City Council, the Mayor’s Office, and the Mobile County Commission, downtown Mobile now thrives as a business, arts, and entertainment district, welcoming visitors, residents, and new businesses to a clean, friendly, and vibrant urban setting.”

The current staff and board are committed to continuing the remarkable revitalization of downtown. LeMond and Stevens expressed their confidence in the organization’s ability to maintain current programs and meet ever more ambitious goals.

Stevens said that she believes the organization has achieved so much more than she initially set out to accomplish. She agreed that those accomplishments are too varied and numerous to list, but she noted that several milestones stand out for her. “Of course, top of the list would be the creation of the Downtown Mobile Self-Help Business Improvement District (BID), including passage of enabling legislation in 2004 and a successful petition process during which a majority of the property owners signed a petition asking the City Council to create the district; setting up an office from scratch; creating the BID Services Team; and guiding the organization through three renewals in 2009, 2014, and 2019.

“Next up would be raising the funds, through my involvement with the Barton Academy Foundation, necessary to fund the renovation of Barton Academy for the establishment of the Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies. Having another school downtown brings more parents and children downtown and really adds a special vitality during the school year.

“Creating Historic Mobile LLC is another highlight that enabled the revolving fund to acquire between 15 and 20 properties that were then purchased by buyers willing to renovate the existing structures, or in the case of vacant lots, to build a new building. Right now, 15 buildings on former Historic Mobile land, mostly residences, are either under construction, in permitting, or have been completed. It is truly gratifying to see these once-dilapidated buildings or vacant lots brought back to life!

“And, finally, passage of the Alabama Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit in 2013 and its renewal and expansion over the years has literally changed the face of downtown Mobile, with \$140 million in redevelopment investment in Mobile alone and nearly \$1 billion statewide. The AHRTC made possible the renovation of long-vacant and decrepit buildings such as the Buick Building, Merchant’s Plaza, Kazoola, Marine Street Lofts, the Admiral Hotel, the Steeple on St. Francis, Old Shell Road School, Staples-Pake Building, Precision Engineering, Wheeler Building, Nash Building – Olde Mobile Antiques, Greer’s St. Louis Market, The Cheese Cottage, and Lewis Communications,” Stevens added.

In spite of the challenges of a post-COVID world, Downtown Mobile has continued to thrive. In just the past five years:

- a. 201 New Residential Units open or under construction
- b. 694 New Residential units on the drawing board
- c. Office building occupancy has gone from 83.6% in 2019 to 87% in 2023
- d. Office rent per square foot has risen during the same time
- e. Downtown Mobile shows a 99% return to office (Source: Placer.ai)
 - i. 2019 – 21.7K workers
 - ii. 2024 – 21.5K workers

Because of the organization’s focus on improving the public realm, downtown is now a place of public art large and small. There is the five-story mural featuring Dr. E.O. Wilson called “Discovery” on Conception Street and the dozens of traffic signal boxes painted by a variety of local artists. There are “artistic bike racks” and sculptures representing African women (“Three Sisters” by Charles Smith).

After decades of promoting the importance of creating an engaging pedestrian environment, the community has embraced walkability. The 2020-21 study by Jeff Speck is called “Optimizing Our Streets for Safety and Development” and was funded by a grant to Main Street Mobile by the J.L. Bedsole Foundation. The study provides a template for redesigning every street in downtown in a manner that will optimize the street for the safety of all users – pedestrian, cyclist, and motorized – in a manner that is most conducive to development of the adjacent properties. The report emphasized that buildings built in the walkable urban context cannot flourish if the street is not pedestrian friendly. The city embraced this plan, engaged Volkert to develop the construction documents, and funded the plan’s implementation in the TIF Renewal Plan adopted by the city council in 2023.

Looking back over the past 34 years of transforming Downtown Mobile into a dining destination, a stable office market, and highly sought-after residential neighborhood, Stevens said, “It’s been a heck of a ride.”