

DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE NEWS

A Publication of the Downtown Mobile Alliance

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TOURISM – A Traveler's Observations

By Rhonda Davis

This summer my personal travels have taken me to new destinations and to cities I've long wanted to visit. With an eye of a traveler interested in historic preservation and armed with a background in downtown Mobile's revitalization, I kept a photo journal and a mental list of the things I thought were well done and of sites I found inspiring. All these things, not completely unique, but well-executed, could be reinterpreted and adapted for Mobile.

Here is a list of things I found that made my traveling experience easy and memorable:

Directional Sign Systems

Knowing where you are going, or rather, where you want to go, is important to any traveler. A well thought-out directional sign system, designed for both pedestrians and vehicles, is a primary component in successfully moving tourists, business travelers and new residents around any city. The vision for a well-developed directional sign system should be: let's provide good customer service by helping people find our attractions and destinations while branding our city. Oh, and let's show them where to park and how much it's going to cost while we are at it.

Greenville, South Carolina had the most thoroughly developed and easy-to-read system I've seen. The signs were large and well placed, the color key worked, and parking was identified and easy to find. It made finding your way around their downtown easy as pie.

Well Marked Streets

Every city, town and neighborhood should have street signs. They are essential to finding your way around a community. If you don't have streets that are well marked a map or GPS system is of no use. You can't follow directions or reach a destination if you don't have street signs to navigate by – no matter how simple the directions are.

Charlotte had the best street signs I've ever seen. They are oversized, LED lit signs that are posted over every major street throughout the city. I would guess they were about four feet long. For secondary roads and interior roads, all the street signs were also large and easy to read. This is very important to me and to my husband because we are both blind as bats and searching for street names can be impossible if you can't read

them. And guess what? All of Charlotte's street signs had crowns on them – their city's logo. In my opinion, they have taken branding to a new level.

Parking Made Easy

Parking is always the most stressful part of traveling to a new city. This problem is easier to fix than most people think. The solution is good signage coupled with good parking lots. As a visitor, I want to know where I can park, how much it's going to cost me and that my car going to be safe while I'm gone.

Again, Greenville does an outstanding job with public parking. Their directional sign system, large and colorful, directs you to public parking lots that are equally well-marked with signs that include the parking fees. It makes parking an easy experience.

Savannah has great on-street parking with new meters that can access debit cards if you are out of change. They also do something I think is wonderful – if you are a visitor and your meter has expired, the parking police leave a visitors packet on your windshield that includes maps to parking garages and a warning ticket. It's a delightful way to gently slap you on the wrist for a parking violation while helping you make better parking decisions. Great customer service and tourist management rolled into one!



Charlotte, North Carolina is known as the Queen's City with crowns everywhere. Here, you see that the directional sign system it topped with the crown, the city's logo. This directional sign system is easy to spot, has color-coded information on it, and is very tall in keeping with the downtown's streetscape. And, it continues Charlotte's successful branding campaign.

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Director's Letter

Authentic Tourism

Recently an article came across my screen from the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) that said, "Architects of retail centers must make sure that their designs reflect the local culture, weather, and history in order to cultivate authenticity and appeal." It made me think about how fortunate we at the Downtown Mobile Alliance really are. We are charged with nurturing the growth of an authentic place in Downtown Mobile. Our district has a 300 year history of responding to the local culture, weather, and history. How important this is, we know, for creating a place where people want to be!

This month's issue of "Downtown Alliance News" focuses on tourism. We have comments from state director of tourism Lee Sentell, local tourism statistics, and musings from a local traveler on what was appealing in places visited on a recent vacation. You will see that the theme throughout all of the articles is authenticity of place. Create an authentic place and people will enjoy visiting that place.

The ICSC article went on to say, "RTKL's Jeff Gunning cited 'what we call globalization fatigue, with shoppers looking for authenticity. There is a desire for a real local experience when it comes to shopping.'" How true this is. Those of us in the downtown revitalization and heritage tourism fields have been tracking this growing trend for the last few decades, but it is significant that the shopping center industry recognizes the importance of authenticity as well.

As you read through this issue, please think about Downtown Mobile and what kind of enhancements you can make to your customer's experience or improvements that you would like to see the municipality, the museums, the restaurants, and the entertainment venues make in order to make this place an authentic and delightful destination. Jot them down and send your ideas to us. Your ideas are important to us as we begin the implementation plan for our 2015 plan.

Visitors and locals have many of the same needs. Visitors only need more overt education/promotion as to the offerings than locals. If we make Downtown Mobile a place where locals of all ages are welcome and comfortable, visitors will feel the same way. After all, think about your own travels, and how enjoyable it is visiting a place and immersing yourself in the local culture! We in Downtown Mobile should every day strive to make our commercial district a place of great experiences and beautiful sights.

Finally, the ICSC author talks about the fact that consumers are looking for "higher quality dining alternatives" and that shopping centers are combining the "dining seating area with shoppers' traffic." In downtown we call that a sidewalk café and restaurants that can offer one are wildly popular with downtown employees and conventioners starved for fresh air and blue sky.

In Downtown Mobile, through projects large and small, authenticity of place has been re-established. The Downtown Mobile Alliance has been one key player among many in getting the district on the path to success. Just as shopping centers have to be managed and promoted, downtown districts most certainly have to be. The Downtown Mobile Alliance, through the funding that comes from the BID assessments and payments-in-lieu as well as business members and sponsors, works every day to clean, beautify, and make more hospitable the area for customers, visitors, and residents. The Downtown Alliance staff members promote the downtown in everything they do and are constantly thinking about how to take downtown's marketplace to the next level of success. Our advertising campaign, "Downtown Mobile: It's a Life with Style," is attracting heaps of attention and this will only grow as we increase the promotions surrounding the campaign.

It would be very easy to forget the herculean effort it has taken to rebuild Downtown Mobile over the past 20 or so years. Downtown Mobile is poised to come out of this economic downturn as the center of the region. I encourage all with a vision of a vibrant and thriving center city to get behind the Alliance and its initiatives to make Downtown Mobile a place of constant delight. Become a member or a donor today. Help us make this authentic place ever more wonderful.



Finding a trolley in Charlotte is very easy with these trolley stop signs. The trolley system, known as the Gold Rush, runs a circulator route that loops through downtown. The trolley stop signs include a map, rider information, and are tall, making them easy to spot. The trolley stop is not connected with the bus stops, which keeps confusion at a minimum for tourists and helps keep congestion at the bus stops low for local bus riders.

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Downtown Trolley Service

Every city with a downtown should consider a downtown transportation system that runs dedicated routes. This is a trend that began over 10 years ago and is proving to be a very

successful traffic management tool, benefiting both tourists and a downtown workforce. Having a transportation system integrated into a parking plan also helps keep traffic manageable and moves people easily around during peak times, like the lunch hour, with minimal congestion.

This summer I used both Charlotte's and Montgomery's downtown trolley service – both cute, branded for each city, and both with pre-recorded tourist information playing. Charlotte's Gold Rush Line had well-marked stops, whereas Montgomery's signage was small and hard to find. Charlotte's was free and Montgomery's had a \$1.00 unlimited usage ticket for the day. Both made moving through downtown and to tourist attractions simple and stress-free. And did I mention they were cute, easy to recognize, and very clean? And the drivers were so friendly and helpful. My trolley riding experiences definitely elevated my opinion of each city.

Besides providing good customer service, local merchants benefit from a transportation service too. A dependable downtown circulator route will easily bring more customers to their door, which leads to higher revenue generated for the business, which leads to higher taxes being paid, which leads to more city improvements. It's a good business practice!

Great Maps

My husband loves maps. Wherever we go, the first place he heads to is the Welcome Center for a map of the area we are visiting. Without a map, he won't begin exploring a new city. He wants to know where he is at all times. That way we don't overlook something interesting, and he can keep track of all my wandering. For Doug, he wants maps that are easy to understand, shows all of the tourist attractions and points of interest, has well-marked public parking and public bathrooms, and shows the route and stops of the downtown transportation system. It also must be easy to handle, printed in type that is large enough to read and printed on stock that is sturdy enough to take a little handling over the course of a few days.

The most innovative thing we saw was the downtown Charlotte map plastered on the entire side of the Information Center in the heart of downtown – on the outside wall. A visitor could just stroll up to the map, see

where they were and chart where they want to go with no hassle at all.

In my world, a good map is worth its weight in gold.

Welcome Centers that Work

This is a common sense thing. A Welcome Center, the repository of tourist information, should be easy to find and close to the tourists. It should have plenty of available public parking nearby and clean, clean public restrooms. Whether it's located on the interstate or in the heart of a city, it should be well-marked and have directional signs pointing the way to it. I mean, come on, if you can't find the Welcome Center, how are you to find anything else?

Throughout Virginia, all the Welcome Centers we visited along the interstates were designed in that beautiful Federal architecture that replicates the Christopher Wren Building on the campus of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, the oldest building in the United States. They had custom-made iron benches with the state map of Virginia centered on the back. From the design of the building to the details in the furniture, you knew where you were.

One of my favorite Welcome Centers is in Savannah. Located in an old cotton warehouse at the train depot, this welcome center truly reflects Savannah. It is charming, has large public bathrooms, a nice little gift shop with both branded items and hand-made items made by local crafts people, a spacious information display area, a theater that shows a film on the history of Savannah, and is very clean. It also serves as the hub for all the various bus tour companies. Most of all, it has enthusiastic and well-versed people who work there. There is also lots of public parking, which is a must.

Self-Guided Tours

Having an easy-to-follow self-guided tour makes exploring a new area a breeze. The key is to make sure the guide map and information gets into the hands of the visitor. Offering self-guided tours really engages visitors on several levels: they are free, visitors can work them into their schedule easily, and they give the visitor a nice introduction to the city. This is a pressure-free way for visitors to learn more about a downtown or historic district. And again, they are free – a nice perk in this economic climate.

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The Tourist Information Center for downtown Charlotte sports a huge map that is plastered across the outside of the building. This map makes finding your way downtown easy for tourists and first-time visitors.

Tourism by the Numbers

Recent findings from the Alabama Department of Tourism and Travel demonstrate that tourism continues to be a growing area of our state's economy.

- Over the past 10 years, tourism expenditures have increased 77%, with \$944 million spent in Mobile alone
- Travel industry payroll - \$3.7 billion statewide/\$367 million in Mobile
- Travel-related jobs statewide – 170,000/16,442 in Mobile
- Travel generated state and local tax collections - \$702 million
- State lodging tax - \$46.8 million
- Mobile ranks third in tourism numbers (behind Baldwin and Jefferson counties) with 2.6 million visitors in 2008

All of this adds up the fact that tourism pays in Alabama!

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Public Art

As a visitor, one of the ways I gauge a city's success is by the installations of public art. To me, a city that has good public art says to the world, 'our citizens are important to us and we want them to live and work in an environment that is lovely and stimulating. We want children to see that art is good for a community, accessible, and something that everyone can enjoy. We value our artists and celebrate their contributions.'

I have never seen so much good public art as I have in Charlotte. Every building had it – from large contemporary art pieces to a small brick sculpture of children exploring a book in front of the downtown mini public library. It was varied, in good taste and reflective of the community.

At the main intersection of downtown Charlotte, four huge bronze statues, approximately four stories tall, stood on pedestals in the heart of downtown. The statues were symbolic of the people of Charlotte, and represented who they were and where they came from. It was breath-taking to see art of this magnitude standing on the busiest corners of their city.

Say it with Flowers

Flowers are a simple way to dress up a downtown. Flowers say 'I care.' If there is one thing Mobilians can do (and that includes the City, property owners and retail businesses) to improve downtown, it is to plant lots of and tend to their flowers. The results are immediate and the message is clear – we love our community.

The most amazing thing I saw on my travels this summer was the millions and millions of day lilies planted along the interstates and highways of North Carolina. All in full bloom! Along Interstate 85 alone I saw day lilies planted around every overpass and around every exit ramp, random beds stretched for hundreds of yards in the medians, embankments were bathed in them, and the Welcome Centers and Rest Stops were just engulfed with them. Now I've seen this profusion of day lilies before while traveling through North Carolina, and once again, it reinforced my im-

pression that this is a clean, safe and proud state.

If you don't have flowers planted at your home or business – do it. The impact is amazing and will brighten everyone's day. Including yours!

Events, Events, Events

Having a program of activities that are accessible to both residents and tourists is one way to enhance a downtown, increase spending in local businesses, and create memorable experiences for both local residents and tourists. During my summer travels I noted that there were outdoor concerts planned in downtown parks and merchant squares in Williamsburg, Charlotte and Greenville; outdoor movies on the river walk in Montgomery; and a host of diverse programming in Birmingham. Many activities were geared to children and families – giving people another opportunity, or excuse, to spend another day at a destination.

To me, the special events planned in the cities I visited were like little gifts. It was a pleasure to see an array of 'extra' things offered for people to do. Some were small and intimate and others rather large in scale. Some free to attend, others required paid admission. Some were just plan casual and fun, others were grand. But the overall impression was very delightful. The events were like lagniappe – something a little extra added to our experience.

Tell Everyone

In today's world, the internet makes travel planning easy and interesting. As travelers create their own travel agendas and customize their visitor experience, nothing is more important than updated, attractive and current websites. From a city's official convention website to a funky local restaurant website, travelers are visiting them with more and more regularity.

I used the convention and visitor websites for all the destinations I visited this summer to order guide books, subscribed to their E-newsletters, and
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This cute display case has a self-guided walking tour posted under Plexiglas. The case stands in a gateway park with small ground fountains and benches in it, and leads you into Charlotte's downtown residential historic district. The case replicates the Victorian architecture found in the historic district and also contains maps that visitors can take for the self-guided tour.



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.

Regions Building

Address: 106 St. Francis Street

Owner: JP Mobile

Management: John Toomey & Company

Year Built: 1928

Leaseable Square Footage: 180,755

Occupancy Rate: 75%

Leasing Rate: \$14.00 per square foot (full service)

Leasing Agent: Josh Hall

Contact information: (251) 342-7229

The Regions Building fills an entire city block, filling the area bordered by Royal Street, St. Francis Street, St. Michael Street and St. Joseph Street. This 23-story skyscraper was constructed in 1928 and is designed with Neo-Classical elements. On the street level you will find Corinthian columns, stepped upper stories, and a pyramidal roof. Dark brick accents create Art Deco patterns at the upper level. To most Mobilians, they just think about the building with the large time and temperature sign on the corner of the building.

The Regions Building is one of the most charming buildings in downtown.

Tenants

Regions Bank

Jacksoco Oil

Vickers, Riis, Murray, and Curran

Scott, Sullivan, Streetman & Fox

Lattoff & Lattoff

Prince, McKean, McKenna &

Broughton

Integrity Adjusters

Lyons and Crane

Inge, Twitty, & Duffy

D. Dawson Enterprises

Paul Thompson Real Estate

Kate Middleton Fund

Joe H. Little, Jr.

Global Maritime Logistics

Tri-State Maritime Services

John Toomey & Company

It still is home to Regions Bank, located on the ground floor, and has the most beautiful brass elevator doors in the lobby. When you stand in the building's lobby and look at those doors, you can just see women with fox stoles draped around their shoulders, wearing hats and gloves, teetering across the lobby in their peep-towed pumps – 1930 glamour at its height.

Today the Regions Building is going through some changes. "The building is owned by JP Mobile out of Texas," reports Josh Hall, leasing agent, John Toomey & Company.

"These are great owners, familiar with Mobile. They also own 1 Saint

Louis Centre, one of the finest office buildings in downtown Mobile."

JP Mobile, in partnership with John Toomey & Company, is working now on new leasing plans that they will release in a few months. They are now working to spruce up the building – working on the floors, upgrading the elevator cabs, painting and installing a new building directory. But not to



The Regions Building, constructed in 1928, is one of the most charming buildings in downtown Mobile. It's proximity to Bienville Square, the Federal Court House and the financial district makes it appealing to businesses of all kinds.

worry, they won't be touching the beautiful brass elevator doors. "We are sprucing up without affecting the historic integrity of the building," reassures Hall.

Among the amenities that the Regions Building has to offer prospective tenants is a parking garage with a covered walkway that joins the Regions Building, protecting people from the elements – coveted by the downtown workforce. Their lease rate is also very competitive for the downtown office market.

Watch for new leasing information to be released within the next two to three months.

Weaving the Fabric

By Rhonda Davis

Each issue of the 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.

Three George's Southern Chocolates

Address: 226 Dauphin Street

Telephone: (251) 433-6725

Website: www.threegeorges.com

Three George's Southern Chocolates is truly a downtown institution. For generations, Mobilians have been enjoying chocolate delights produced at this charming candy shop. From the fancy chocolate bunnies at Easter, to decadent pecan pies during Thanksgiving, to their legendary Heavenly Hash wrapped up as Christmas gifts, Three George's has been part of Mobile life for over 90 years.



Three George's Southern Chocolates stands as a confectionary legend for generations of Mobilians. Founded in 1917 by three men that shared the name of George, this candy shop has stood the test of time and still proves that their candies are the best in town.

his death, and taught the new owners all of the family's secrets.

Today, Three George's still carries on the traditions that generations of Mobilians have grown up with. The candy shop still has the original thick marble slabs that the candy is cooled and cut on. They have the same mahogany and marble display cases, antique candy canisters, and most importantly, the tried-and-true recipes that make Three George's an institution.

When you visit Three George's today you'll find an ice cream counter where sandwiches are also sold. There are cakes, pies, nuts and my personal favorite, their tasty cheese straws. They still carry wonderful chocolates and 'penny' candy that are displayed in the lovely antique cases and canisters too.

A trip to Three George's is a trip into the hearts of Mobilians – wherever they live.

Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center

Address: 65 Government Street

Telephone: (251) 208-6873

Website: www.exploreum.com

The Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center's mission is to promote science literacy among the people of south Alabama and the Gulf Coast region.

What started in 1976 as a concept to promote science to the children of Mobile has evolved over the years into downtown's top tourist attraction. With seed money from the Junior League of Mobile, the concept of founding a science museum for children was explored. Today, that concept is fully realized. The Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center stands at the foot of Government Street, housing over 150 interactive exhibits and an IMAX Theater. Last year over 196,000 people came through the doors of the Exploreum.

The Exploreum has also hosted world-class traveling exhibits, thanks to the leadership of their board of directors and Mike Sullivan, their newly-retired executive director. The blockbuster exhibits hosted by the Exploreum range from the China! 7000 Years of Innovation in 2002 to the current Bob the Builder exhibit, and have established the Exploreum as a world-class science museum, and introduced tourists to Mobile. From the Dead Sea Scrolls in 2005 to the current Bob the Builder exhibit, The Exploreum continues to grow and expand as their board of directors strives to meet and expand their mission. Today, the Exploreum has a host of permanent exhibits for children of all ages. You can visit the Bio Lab, participate in interactive stations at Hands On Hall, younger visitors can play at the Wharf of Wonder, and everyone can learn in the Virtual Journey's Digital Theater and The Ciba Lab. One can even explore how your body works in the My Body Works exhibit, the latest addition to the museum's offerings.



Bob the Builder will be on exhibit through January 3 at the Gulf Coast Exploreum. Photo courtesy of Gulf Coast Exploreum.

Active Senior Loves Downtown Living.

Name: Elmo Hammer

Address: Cathedral Place Apartments

Elmo Hammer is one of those delightful people you always enjoy encountering. And these days, many people have an opportunity to meet him. You'll meet him at Fort Conde's Welcome Center, you'll see him during performances at the Saenger Theatre, and you may even run into him while touring Space 301. Mr. Hammer is everywhere!

Mr. Hammer moved into Cathedral Place Apartments two years ago after spending 22 years living in the charming subdivision of Meadowbrook, located near Bel Air Mall. After retiring as a purchasing agent for a paint manufacturing facility, the world of volunteering opened up a new world for him.

"I've volunteered through RSVP before, and now I spend my time volunteering downtown. I volunteer about 20 hours a week," explained Mr. Hammer. When asked about his downtown activities he graciously explained that because he lived so near to the mall area he never came downtown. After moving into Cathedral Place, he never leaves downtown. "Everything I need is here," he pointed out. "I can walk to the Library, when it's not too hot. I shop at Save-A-Lot. I have a nice apartment. I appreciate that I have to walk because I need the exercise," he teased.

"People ask me how I like living downtown – I love it. Just look at BayFest and Mardi Gras," he joked. "I watched every Mardi Gras parade last year. I still have moon pies in my freezer."



Elmo Hammer was named Volunteer of the Year during the Mobile Arts Council yearly Art Awards. Mr. Hammer, an avid volunteer, was presented the award in Cathedral Square by Bobby Williams, a member of the Arts Council board of directors. Photo courtesy of the Mobile Arts Council.

When I asked him about his impression of living downtown he commented that he likes the lighting, "It feels safe. I walk my dog about three times a day in the Square, sometimes late at night," he explained. "And when more people move downtown, more retailers will come. You have to have people before your shops improve," he continued thoughtfully. "Also, I am encouraged to see the renovations going on with the buildings. If I won the lottery, I would buy a condo downtown. I love it all."



Tourism and Downtown Mobile: An interview with Lee Sentell, Director, Alabama Tourism Department

By Rhonda Davis

The Downtown Mobile Alliance believes strongly that Downtown Mobile has it all – from quality museums to funky art galleries, from fine dining restaurants to great country-cooking diners, from quality hotel rooms to attractive convention space. To

help us capitalize on downtown's role as a tourist destination, we went straight to the expert, Lee Sentell, Director of the Alabama Tourism Department, to ask his advice. Here's what Lee had to say:

Tourism is a growing market for Downtown Mobile. What key elements would you recommend Mobile focusing on to draw more visitors to downtown?

Do free guided walking tours year round. It's one way to get people who may be over-nighting near the interstate to come downtown and learn about the museums. The Retirement Systems of Alabama has invested heavily in downtown hotels to attract tourists and convention delegates. More people would stay downtown.

What can downtown property owners and merchants do to help create a more inviting environment for tourists?

They can look to Fairhope and even Foley for one simple idea: put more colorful plants on the street. Pots and window boxes are an easy way to brighten a business entrance and make a business more inviting. With Mobile's semi-tropical climate, everything grows. Your newspaper is blessed with a great garden writer Bill Finch. More businesses should implement his suggestions.

What innovative trends do you see being successful in other areas that could be replicated in downtown Mobile?

Fine-dining restaurants have changed the image of Birmingham. Highlands Bar & Grill was one of five finalists for the best restaurant in America this year. Last year, Highlands chef Frank Stitt was finalist for best chef in America, and Chris Hastings of Hot & Hot Fish Club was finalist for best chef in the South. Highlands won best in the South a few years ago. A growing number of people from Houston to Atlanta make trips to Birmingham primarily to dine. Lulu's in Gulf Shores seeks out local beef and

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Main Street Mobile Awards Presented

For the past 14 years Main Street Mobile has recognized individuals, businesses and organizations that have made significant contributions to the revitalization of Downtown Mobile. This year during our Annual Meeting, held on September 2 at the Battle House Hotel, the 2009 award winners were celebrated before a record-breaking crowd of attendees.

We would like to congratulate all of our award winners this year, and thank them for their outstanding leadership and dedication to Downtown Mobile. This year's winners are:

President's Awards – presented in recognition of projects that have improved buildings, opened new businesses or created new opportunities.

InSide Up
O'Gwynn Condominiums
A Spot of Tea and Club Insanity
DeTonti Square Neighborhood Association for
their Community Garden
Christ Church Cathedral
Gulf Coast Building Venture for 2 South Water Street
Coastal Bank & Trust and the Athelstan Club
Brad Robertson Gallery
The Bull
Carriage Works Condominiums
John Lee for the renovations of his DeTonti Square Office
Mobile Bar Pilots
Mobile Housing Board's Downtown Renaissance project
in Church Street East
Baptist Oaks
Cathedral Place Apartments
Huka Entertainment
Leavell Investment Management
Dunbar Magnet School for Creative and Performing Arts
Royal Goes Red
Fort Conde Village
Commonwealth Bank
Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Delashmet & Marchand
Veet's



The Leadership Achievement Award was presented to Hargrove Engineers & Constructors for the extensive renovation of two long-vacant buildings on Royal Street

Leadership Achievement Award – presented to an individual, organization or business that has made an outstanding contribution to the vitality of Downtown Mobile.

Hargrove Engineers and Constructors
Hampton Inn



The Leadership Achievement Award was presented to the Hampton Inn for the construction of a new hotel and for the leadership of its employees in downtown initiatives.

Downtown Innovation Award – presented to an individual, organization or business that has exhibited great foresight in undertaking a successful project in downtown Mobile.

Crescent Theater
American Cancer Society's Chili Cookoff
Mobile 311 and City Smart



The American Cancer Society's Chili Cookoff was presented the Downtown Innovation Award for its success in bringing thousands of visitors downtown every year for an event that has raised millions for Cancer research and patient support.



Above: The Downtown Innovation Award was presented to the Crescent Theater for the development of an entirely new entertainment venue for downtown.

Right: The Downtown Innovation Award was presented to Mobile 311/CitiSmart for creating a mechanism for the reporting of maintenance issues and their timely resolution.



The Bienville Award was presented to Mobile City Councilman Fred Richardson for his determination to bring thousands of citizens and visitors together to ring in the New Year with the MoonPie Drop.



Bienville Award – named after the ‘heart’ of downtown, this is presented to an individual, organization or business that positively affects the lives of people in downtown Mobile.

Councilor Fred Richardson

Holiday Events Fill Downtown

The number of holiday events coming up in Downtown Mobile would fill this newsletter, so we’ve highlighted two of the biggest and inviting you to sign up for our electronic newsletter for weekly updates. You can also become a fan of the Downtown Mobile Alliance on Facebook for all the upcoming events and activities. To sign up for the newsletter, just email chunter@downtownmobile.org and ask to be added to the list.

Christmas and Holiday Parade

Saturday, December 19th

1:00 p.m.

Streets of downtown

MoonPie over Mobile

Thursday, December 31st

A full evening of activities with the MoonPie Drop at midnight
Cooper Riverside Park



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produce for the freshest “farm to table” dining. Hastings says Mobile is positioned to be the next hot spot for fine dining because Baldwin and Mobile counties grow some of the best produce in the South. Seafood can’t get any fresher. Constantine’s was world famous a generation ago. Mobile is transitioning from a “club” entertaining tradition to one focused on restaurants. As the young business leaders of Mobile rise in prominence, they will demand and support more sophisticated dining like Birmingham and New Orleans have.

How does Mobile fit into the marketing plans for the Alabama Tourism Department?

Mobile has so many great elements that it’s easy for us to promote. When we plan our annual calendar of events book, we rely on Mobile events to showcase in the early months of the year because few cities in central and north Alabama plan big annual events. The Battle House, Mardi Gras, Bellingrath, the Senior Bowl and the cruise industry are just a few of the city’s assets

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checked their calendar of events. I used discount coupons printed from the websites and used the links to visit all the tourist attractions I thought looked interesting. The internet gave me the ability to learn more about each area I traveled to and through, and empowered me with knowledge that travelers 10 or 20 years ago didn’t have.

And lastly, The Rule of 10

So with these travel tools in place, the visitors experience should be positive and rewarding. Remember, the Rule of 10 - - every time a visitor visits our city, they go home and tell 10 of their friends who tell 10 of their friends. And then our streets are either filled with people, or not.

Alliance Welcomes New Board Members

The 2009-2010 board of directors of the Downtown Mobile Alliance has been installed and is hard at work to continue the remarkable redevelopment of downtown. We'd like to welcome the following new directors:

Laura Brabner: Laura has lived downtown since 1981...her entire life (save for those years spent at an institution in Tuscaloosa). She is now raising her daughter, who represents a third generation of Brabners in DeTonti Square. She is currently the office manager of Springhill Medical Center Rehabilitation and has been serving on various committees of the Alliance for a couple of years.

Richard Stimpson: Richard has worked in financial markets for 20 years and is currently an investment counselor with Leavell Investment Management. He was instrumental in the firm's recent renovation of its new offices on St. Joseph Street, which resulted in the transformation of a fairly unremarkable building into an exceptional one.

Sheila Dean-Rosenbohm: We have Hurricane Katrina to thank for Sheila's presence in Mobile. She moved to the Port City from New Orleans when International Shipholding relocated its offices to the RSA Tower in 2007. Currently the Vice President of Planning with ISH, Sheila has also been involved in several civic organizations and has gladly assumed leadership roles in many of the efforts to move Mobile forward.

Mike Johnson: Mike has experienced the evolution of downtown first hand, since he has worked downtown for 35 years, all of them in the banking industry. Currently Mike is the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of BankTrust and serves on the boards of several civic organizations, many of which are helping the redevelopment of our city center.

Frank Leatherbury: Frank is a lifelong resident on Fish River in Fairhope and has been active in regional Economic development with Envision Coastal Alabama and Baldwin Economic Development Alliance. He has

been a leading voice in "green" land use and planning initiatives and is currently involved in commercial and residential development sales and construction. More recently Frank has been training retrievers and operating a dance studio.

Barbara Drummond: From journalist to key advisor to Mayor Sam Jones, Barbara has been on the front lines of the action for more than 20 years. She currently serves as Director of Administrative Services and Neighborhood and Community Services, which keeps her in the middle of the action and in charge of many of the events and activities downtown.

Tyrone Fenderson: After working in banks throughout Alabama, Tyrone joined Commonwealth National Bank in February of this year as its president and CEO. Commonwealth opened a branch on St. Joseph Street earlier this year. Tyrone was recently recognized as one of Mobile's hottest rising stars by Mobile Bay Monthly when he was named to its first list of 40 under 40.

Wanda Cochran: Wanda has been a fixture in the DeTonti Square neighborhood for 20 years, having raised her children in the historic district. While serving on Mayor Mike Dow's legal staff, Wanda helped develop many of the policies that have encouraged the renaissance we are now experiencing downtown. She is now in private practice, but we welcome her past experience with the intricacies of city hall.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the outgoing board members who have served downtown and the Alliance so well over the years: Joe Mareno, Brian Metcalfe, Ann Bedsole, John Klotz and Palmer Hamilton.