

DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE NEWS

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Celebrating Barton Academy

Barton Academy – Alabama’s Symbol of Public Education

Barton Academy is part of Mobile’s extraordinary Greek Revival flowering of the 1830s. Like Government Street Presbyterian Church, Barton Academy was designed by the talented architectural team of James and Charles Dakin, and James Gallier, a trio of New York builders newly trans-

planted to the Gulf Coast. Ever since its completion, Barton Academy’s colonnaded rotunda has been visible from as far away as the river, floating above the oak canopy. As it stands, the building is an important example of antebellum wealth, taste and commitment to public education. – **John Sledge, architectural historian, author of *The Pillared City, Greek Revival Mobile*.**



Last May, the Downtown Mobile Alliance held a photo op at Barton Academy during the ‘This Place Matters’ campaign for endangered properties and submitted the photograph to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Over 250 people showed up for the photograph, saying ‘this place matters to Mobile.’

There is no question that this iconic building is one of Mobile’s most debated historic structures. The concern and emotion that the state of Barton Academy elicits from people range from passionate to pragmatic, with lots of ‘what ifs’ thrown in for good measure. Twice listed on the Alabama Historical Commission’s Places in Peril, a grass roots movement is building that will help the community leaders make a wise choice for the 21st century life of this remarkable treasure.

Jaime Betbeze, a local attorney and historic preservation advocate, has taken the helm of the restoration movement and serves as Chairman of the Barton Academy Historic Preservation and Restoration Committee. He, along with a committee of interested movers and shakers, is working closely with Dr. Roy Nichols and representatives from the Mobile County Public School System to think strategically about the best reuse for the two very important buildings on the site – Barton Academy and the Yerby Building.

Since the passage of a bill giving the Mobile County Public School System the ability to sell or lease the building, Dr. Nichols and Betbeze have had a series of meetings with representatives of higher education institutions and workforce development organizations. “We have had very productive meetings developing ideas for partnering,” reported Betbeze. “Our primary goal is to identify and implement an appropriate use for the building. Our preference is to continue to use Barton in the historical context it was designed for: education.”

Along with the search for a new purpose for the building, efforts are also being made to develop a new public relations and community outreach plan that the committee hopes will educate the community on the historical and architectural significance of the building, and help raise much needed capital to maintain and restore Barton.

Mobile’s oldest school building has even entered the age of social media
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Director's Letter

Send in Your Census Forms

Surely there are many out there who look at the decennial federal exercise of counting Americans as an irritation at least and a threat at worst. We look at it as crucial to our future. For you see, the census count haunts or helps our economic development efforts for the next ten years. Arguably, the impact may actually be longer than that for those who look at trends and attempt to predict the future.

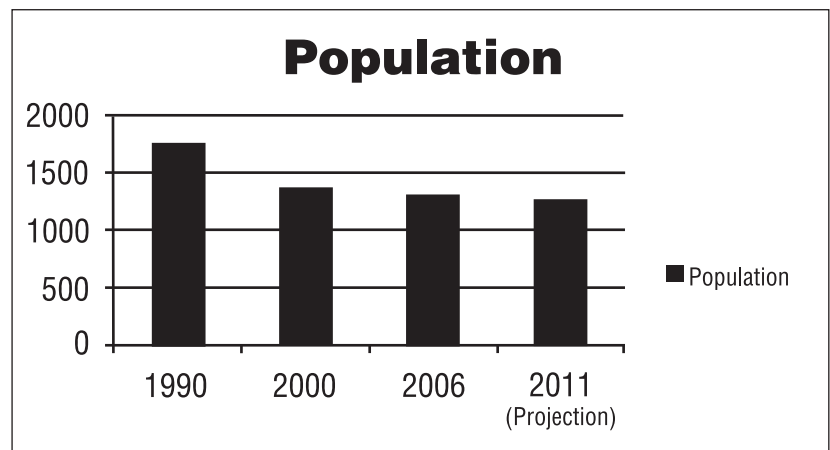
Since 1980, the census has been showing a steady decline in downtown residents. Because of this, when parties in the economic development fields invest in demographic reports, the predictions for the next 15 years in Mobile are for a declining urban population. Most developers and retailers look to invest in growing places, not declining ones. This impacts our economic development efforts.

We started asking ourselves when reviewing demographic reports, "How could this decline in residents be correct?" I have lived in Mobile since 1990. In those 20 years, dozens of above storefront apartments have been constructed and occupied. Similarly, dozens of new houses have been constructed in the south and north parts of Downtown Mobile, which we define as the area within the Hank Aaron Loop (Canal to Broad to Beauregard to Water). And finally, hundreds of residential units have been completed in multi-unit developments such as St. Francis Place, Mattress Factory Lofts, Carriage Works, O'Gwynn Place, Clarkson Townhouses, St. Louis Lofts, and the Warehouse Lofts. During that same 20 year window of study, we see no occupied residential structures that were removed from inventory.

One thing that we believe may be happening is that people are not being counted for various reasons. Downtown Mobile in particular must be a peculiar place to find people, for they live in the darndest places. For this reason, we are asking everyone who lives in or near downtown to be counted in the 2010 Census. If you received a form and you have not sent it in, do so now. It is not too late! If you have not received a form, you may call 1-866-872-6868 to provide your information over the phone. If you have tenants, please encourage them to complete their census form or if a form was not received, please give them the toll-free number above. As a business owner, you can encourage your employees to participate.

Undoubtedly, we have hundreds of new residents. We must be able to prove it in an objective forum and our residents participating in the 2010 Census is the first step to this growth showing up in an objective report. All of the major reporting firms start with US Census data to build their demographic reports. Every company that develops property, retail establishments, or industrial sites starts with demographic reports.

Our message to all readers, please participate in the 2010 Census. Whether you live in Downtown Mobile, Midtown, or Cottage Hill, your household is important to the business decision makers who will shape our future for the next decade and beyond. Call us and let us know if you did not receive a form or know of a downtown resident who did not. We are happy to help show that Downtown Mobile is a growing, happening place.



A New Five Year Focus – The Vision for Downtown, 2015

As the Downtown Mobile Business Improvement District approached its fifth year of operation, we began the process of renewal, which is required every five years. The process requires the submission of a new five year management plan to property owners in the Business Improvement District and approval by the Mobile City Council. Going through the renewal gave everyone a chance to take a step back and evaluate the program of work offered to the Downtown Mobile stakeholders over the past five years. It also gave the corporation's leadership and stakeholders an opportunity to ponder where Downtown Mobile should be in 2015.

Several months before the renewal process began in earnest, the Downtown Mobile Alliance conducted a survey to gauge perceptions of downtown and determine what our stakeholders desired in their community. More than 260 people responded to the survey, many in great detail. Urban Place Consulting Group, Inc. was then hired to help craft the Management Plan for the Downtown Mobile Self-Help Business Improvement District based on the survey results and through a series of planning meetings with the Renewal Steering Committee.

During the process, the Alliance was forced to think bigger, broader and with a more long-term approach to the BID programs. The first step in moving forward was to craft the new Vision Statement for downtown in 2015. The vision now provides the guiding principles for our daily work.

The Renewal Committee envisions a Downtown Mobile in 2015 that will:

- Have active, positive, street level uses on all major streets downtown;
- Be a very walkable downtown, both day and night, in which pedestrians have priority over automobiles;
- Be a place where women, families, children and their pets feel comfortable and are using the downtown on a daily basis;
- Be a place that is alive both during the week and also weekends with a high number of events and activities;
- Be a place that has increased residential opportunities at all levels; and
- Be a place that is better connected to its waterfront.

From this point an operating budget and activity plan was developed. To help manage the program of work, activities will now be housed in three areas: User Experience, Economic Development and Story Telling.

Here is a breakdown of our program goals with the correlating budget commitment.

- **User Experience** - encompassing Safety, Maintenance, Landscaping Programs and Public Space Programming - 61%
- **Economic Development** – including a proactive recruitment and business retention program; a partnership with the City to improve permitting, inspection and zoning practices; and serving as a liaison between downtown stakeholders to facilitate sustainable development – 16%



Events such as the inaugural Easter in the Squares help market downtown to a new audience.

- **Story Telling** – the creation of a communications and marketing plan that engages the public in the story of downtown, including the promotion of existing events and the creation of new ones (the fun and games component) – 15%
- **Office Expense** – 8%

"The management plan for the BID is our commitment to what we will accomplish over the next five years," stated Sam Covert, president of the board of directors. "It is not only a commitment of Elizabeth [Sanders, President and CEO of the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation] and our staff, but also of our board, both current and future members. It clearly articulates our VISION for Mobile's downtown, and we all know that a vision is the first step to improving any situation."

"I have seen a tremendous improvement in the downtown area over these last five years. It started with a commitment to Clean-Safe-Beautification and has resulted in a tremendous investment in new growth and development," stressed Covert. "Everywhere you look the streets are becoming increasingly more active and you can feel a new spirit in the air. A bold decision five years ago by the City Council, in creating the BID, has paid off through a lot of hard work and perseverance and we are a better City because of that. Serving on this board, and collaborating with all of our many stakeholders has been a lot of fun and very rewarding."

For a **complete copy of the Management Plan** for the Downtown Mobile Self-Help Business Improvement District, contact the Downtown Mobile Alliance office, (251) 434-8498 or visit www.downtownmobile.org.

Crossing Government Street – To Be Safe or Not To Be Safe? That Is the Question

The Downtown Mobile Alliance recently received the Government Street Pedestrian Safety & Access Report prepared by the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. The audit was prepared by a team who gauged the safety of Government Street and the Water Street corridor for both bicyclists and pedestrians.

The team, with a survey and camera in hand, visited busy intersections along Government Street and walked the area of study, documenting observations of both the physical environment, and how locals approached and used our sidewalks and intersections. We all know that Government Street is really pedestrian unfriendly, and that it's a little scary to ride a bicycle on Government Street, but now we have documentation and photographs from an outside organization to help us advocate for the needed changes that will help fulfill the vision of creating a viable and people-friendly downtown.

The audit outlines, in detail, what changes need to be made. They list everything from just simply changing the timing of traffic signals to upgrading our public transportation stops. Some improvements are more costly, like upgrading the cross walks and making intersections ADA compliant. Adding bicycling lanes is also another hot topic for consideration.

As downtown continues to grow, we must learn to manage and meet the needs of the people who live and work downtown. The younger generations embrace green practices, and they are more likely to bike to work and walk, instead of drive. Likewise, as our population ages, people will need non-automotive options for moving about our city.

The list of benefits go on and on – better air quality; good for our majestic oaks; people feel comfortable so they walk around more, which then creates a safer community; more people on the streets equal more businesses opening along Government Street; more walking and bicycling equals healthier

people; and we can all save money on fossil fuel.

For a copy of the Government Street Pedestrian Safety & Access Report, contact the Alliance office at 251-434-8498 or read it on our website at www.downtownmobile.org (click on News and Reports on the Home page, then Reports and Studies)

The audit is part of the Healthy Coastal Connections project and is a partnership between Smart Coast and the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. The purpose of the partnership is to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity in Baldwin and Mobile counties over the next five years by helping to create walkable neighborhoods and cities. For more information on these organizations, visit their websites at www.smartcoast.org, www.bikewalk.org and www.activelivingresources.org.



The National Center for Biking and Walking audit of the intersection at Government and Broad Streets indicated multiple problems: the pedestrian signals don't allow adequate time to cross the street, the crosswalks are poorly marked and traffic moves too fast.

"Barton" continued from page 1

with a facebook page. To date, well over 300 fans have joined the **"Save Barton Academy"** Face Book page. The site gives updates on Barton activities and fundraisers, and it allows fans to share Barton stories.

Stacy Wellborn of Wellborn Ideas, a member of the public relations committee, has developed a new website for Barton Academy – www.savebartonacademy.org. The website will be used as an information clearinghouse on Barton.

Work is also underway to create a Barton Academy Alumni Association, with volunteers working now to build a membership base. Allan Gustin, a member of the Barton Restoration committee, has organized the Oakleigh Belles to help comb through Barton records of students from the 1950s and 1960s. Alumni contact information is also being collected through facebook, the website, and by alumni themselves.

In an effort to inform Mobilians of the historical significance of this building, Cart Blackwell, architectural historian for the MHDC, will be offering a presentation on historic Barton Academy free of charge to all civic organizations in our area. Blackwell has done extensive research on Barton Academy and the Yerby Building, the structure that sits directly behind Barton.

"Barton Academy is important to the city of Mobile and the state of Alabama," stated Ken Megginson, District 1 Commissioner, MCPSS. "It was the first public school in Alabama. It's the foundation on which our state's public education system is based. We are the mother. To lose that treasure would be tragic."

For More Information:

www.savebartonacademy.org

facebook: Save Barton Academy

Barton Academy Alumni Association: 251-208-7281 (at MHDC)

"History of Barton Academy" by Cart Blackwell: 251-208-7281

Leadership Circle - Leading the Way in Downtown's Movement

Two of the Downtown Mobile Alliance's most fervent supporters, Alabama Power Company and Armbrecht Jackson LLP, are investing in downtown in more ways than one. It is a pleasure to recognize both businesses as Leadership Circle contributors.

Alabama Power Company

Alabama Power Company has had a downtown presence as long as anyone can remember. There isn't a person in the downtown community who hasn't window shopped for a new appliance, stopped by their customer service desk and asked for help with a problem, or swung through their drive-up window during lunch time to pay a power bill. But, Alabama Power Company is more than just a convenience.

Today, approximately 110 employees work in the Alabama Power Building, 150 St. Joseph Street. The downtown office is the headquarters for the Mobile Division, which includes the eight counties of Southwest Alabama. The team of downtown employees includes the Marketing Department, Power Delivery Engineering, Transmission Engineering, Accounting, Corporate Real Estate, Human Resources, and of course, Customer Service and Appliance Sales.

Founded over 100 years ago, Alabama Power continues to practice the motto "Developing Alabama," a motto that is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. "We understand our role in doing our part in community leadership and involvement," stated Sam Covert, Area Manager. Covert leads by example. Since coming to Mobile, he has been actively involved in long-term planning for the city, working on everything from workforce development to our downtown revitalization movement. Covert currently



Alabama Power is quick to respond to esthetic issues when customer service and safety are not at stake. This unattractive and unnecessary support was removed, creating a more pleasing streetscape.



Sam Covert, Alabama Power Company's Area Manager is currently serving as the Chairman of the Board of the Downtown Mobile Alliance. He has been actively involved in community leadership positions since coming to Mobile. He is a man that leads by example.

serves as the Chairman of the Board of the Downtown Mobile Alliance's group of organizations.



Armbrecht Jackson LLP

William H. Armbrecht, a personal injury defense lawyer for the M&O Railroad, founded what is today known as Armbrrecht Jackson LLP in 1897. Originally created as a litigation defense firm, Armbrrecht Jackson today offers legal services in specialized fields from admiralty and maritime law to trusts, tax and estate planning. With 30 attorneys and an army of supporting employees, Armbrrecht Jackson LLP is one of the cornerstones of Mobile's legal community.

Located at 63 S. Royal Street, in the Riverview Office Building, the firm continues the tradition of excellent legal counsel. Along with the downtown office, Armbrrecht Jackson LLP has offices in Fairhope, Foley and New Orleans.

Armbrecht Jackson LLP also plays an important role in improving the condition of our community. They practice 'giving back' in ways large and small. Their philanthropic support includes assisting with longstanding Mobile events like the Senior Bowl to fun-filled fundraisers like the American Cancer Society's Chili Cook-off. Firm members serve on a number of YMCA boards, they work with Habitat for Humanity of Baldwin County and the American Red Cross, and a host of other organizations to numerous to mention.

"Armbrecht Jackson LLP has maintained its law offices in downtown Mobile for more than 100 years," emphasized E. B. Peebles, a partner with the firm. "We share the Alliance's vision of a revitalized downtown area that will improve the quality of life of all those who live, work or visit downtown. It is our privilege to support the Alliance."



Members of Armbrrecht Jackson LLP celebrate during the 2010 American Cancer Society's Chili Cook-off in Bienville Square. Supporting the community through volunteer service is an Armbrrecht Jackson trademark.

Weaving the Fabric

By Rhonda Davis

Bienville Books

Address: 109 Dauphin Street

Telephone: (251) 438-2904

Website: www.bienvillebooks.com

Twitter: [bienvillebooks](https://twitter.com/bienvillebooks)

Russ Adams is a Mobile boy whose fascination with writing began early in life. At the age of 15 he began working as a volunteer at the Mobile Public Library. His first retail job was working in a college book store. Russ, a graduate of UMS, left for Vanderbilt University where he attended school for several years before heading to New York to attend the Parsons School of Design, where he earned a bachelor of Fine Arts degree. While in New York he worked at Barnes & Noble before enrolling in NYU, pursuing a masters degree in dramatic writing – writing for television and sitcoms.



Bienville Books carries used and new editions, including Mobile-centric books on everything from restaurants to history. They also publish their own line of postcards.

Writing took him from New York to California. Then Mobile began calling him home. Russ returned to be with his father, a man he dearly loved, as his father's health began to fail. Being back in Mobile, Russ remembered the Haunted Bookstore, a locally owned bookstore that operated in downtown from 1941 until 1991. As he contemplated his future, he drew on his life experience and passion, and that is where the idea of Bienville Books was born.

Russ opened Bienville Books in September 2002. Since then, the bookstore has become a constant in the downtown retail community. Bienville Books has carved out a niche by stocking first edition, out-of-print, and Mobile-inspired books. Bienville Books is, hands down, the largest retailer of Junior League cookbooks (where? In the city, region?), including the retired and hard-to-find editions. They specialize in carrying books on regional and Mobile history, and books by local authors. If you are look-

ing for a current book, not carried by the big box stores, this is the place you will likely find it. And if you don't, Russ will happily order it for you.

Russ works hard to keep Bienville Books viable. "About half of my business comes from out-of-towners. We work hard to have eclectic books, new books and things not being carried at other retailers," Russ explained. "We also have a large selection of Eugene Walter's work, including his cookbook."

Bellingrath Gardens and Home

Address: 12401 Bellingrath Gardens Road, Theodore

Telephone: (251) 973-2217 or (800) 247-8420

Website: www.bellingrath.org

Bellingrath Gardens may not be located in downtown Mobile, but the significance of the breath-taking gardens and the historic Bellingrath home play a vital role in the tourism industry along the Alabama Gulf Coast. Like our sugar white beaches, the proud USS Alabama and Mardi Gras, Bellingrath entices visitors from near and far to Mobile.

Bellingrath's story began in 1903 when Walter Bellingrath began Mobile's first Coca-Cola bottling operation. After years of hard work and the stress of WWI on the business climate, Mr. Bellingrath developed health issues. In 1917, Mr. Bellingrath's physician recommended that he purchase a hunting camp along the banks of Fowl River and use it for rest and relaxation. That real estate acquisition, along with Mrs. Bellingrath's love of gardening and inspiration drawn from a recent tour of European gardens, soon transformed that undeveloped plot of land into the showplace of the south. In 1932 Bellingrath Gardens opened its gates to the public. And the rest, as the Bellingrath story goes, is history.

Today Bellingrath Gardens and Home features 65 acres of enchanting gardens, complete with moss draped oaks, a profusion of heirloom and seasonal flowers, and a yearly calendar of special events. The Bellingrath Home, designed by renowned Mobile architect George B. Rogers, is also open for tours. Today the home's garage space serves as the Delchamps



Bellingrath Gardens and Home continues to be one of Alabama's top tourist attractions. From the spectacular Magic Christmas in Lights each December to the brilliant mum displays in the fall, each season at Bellingrath is a visual feast – including our legendary springs.

Gallery of Edward Marshall Boehm Porcelain, the finest collection of Boehm Porcelain assembled in the country.

"We applaud what the Downtown Mobile Alliance is doing to promote urban beautification and enhancement," stated Dr. William Barrick, Executive Director of Bellingrath Gardens and Home. "Their efforts have dramatically improved civic pride and enhanced the city of Mobile as a destination for tourism and visitation to Bellingrath."

For a complete calendar of special events and seminars, ticket information and a map visit www.bellingrath.org

Giving New Life in DeTonti Square

Name: Dick and Johnna Rogers

Address: 250 St. Anthony Street – Does the house have a name?

Most people give old homes new life, but for Dick and Johnna Rogers, their old home gave them a new life.

The Rogers left Alabama in the 1960s as Dick, a recent college graduate, pursued a career as a chemist. Johnna, a quintessential Southern Belle, completed her college degree and taught school while Dick's career took the family to cities in Wisconsin, California and Indiana. As time passed, the couple never lost sight of their native state and planned to retire in the south.

Johnna, a native of Demopolis, had always been taken with Mobile. "I was always enchanted with Mobile as a child, driving through to go to the Gulf or coming to shop," Johnna explained. Then more than eight and a half years ago, Johnna and Dick visited Mobile and fell in love with the DeTonti Square Historic District. They were introduced to Diane Horst, a real estate agent and preservationist, who in turn, introduced them to a grand unrestored 1830s Italianate home.

"We always wanted to restore a historic home," Johnna explained. "We wanted to give back to the state that gave so much to us. We wanted to give back a great home and mentor others who are interested in restoring a historic house." And that is just what they are doing.



Johnna and Dick Rogers have transformed an unrestored 1830s home into the center of their social life. After living outside of the south for decades, this couple returned with gusto and with the true heart of preservationists.

Dick now works as a chemistry professor at the University of South Alabama and is on the Dean's Council. Johnna is a wonderful community volunteer and is totally engaged in historic preservation. Both are active in the DeTonti Square Neighborhood Association and the Historic Mobile Preservation Society.

The Rogers are generous with their home, opening it for fundraising events, parties, and to just show it to people interested in preserving a historic building. "When you save it – you share it. That's our philosophy," Johnna smiled. "Most of our activities revolve around the house," shared Johnna. And it is true. The house has been on the Mobile Historic Homes Tour, has been the sight of fundraisers for Mobile Aids Support Services, and has been open during Mardi Gras for friends and neighbors.

"When you have a chance to restore a home, no matter how large or small, the joy is indescribable. The history you feel," stressed Johnna. It is worth twenty times what you put into it in money and labor."

Mardi Gras Crowns Enhance Bienville Square

You may have noticed that Bienville Square was a little more adorned this Carnival season with the addition of 15 custom-made lighted crowns. We have long believed that downtown should decorate for Mardi Gras just as it does for the holidays, especially since Fat Tuesday arrives in the midst of our most challenging season for flowers.

This year, with donations from the **Hearin Chandler Foundation** and the **Mobile Carnival Association**, we were able to order the special crowns from Blachere Illumination, the international design firm which lights up Cinderella's Castle for Disney World. A patient crew from the city's **Electrical Department** carefully installed the crowns to create maximum impact in such a large space.

We hope to expand on this program next year with the goal of filling the square with these vibrant symbols of our Mardi Gras season. If you'd like to donate to the effort, please contact Carol Hunter at chunter@down-

townmobile.org or 251-434-8498. The smaller crowns can be sponsored for \$800 and the larger ones for \$1200.



Lighted crowns, donated by the Hearin Chandler Foundation and Mobile Carnival Association fill Bienville Square with nighttime appeal

New Incentives Are Designed to Spur Retail Development

Great cities, no matter where they might be located on the globe, have at least four common denominators: plentiful sidewalk cafes, a lively nightlife, a diverse retail scene and a lovely streetscape (flowers, well maintained sidewalks and lighting, and public art). The Downtown Mobile Alliance is working to improve all four aspects of our city center, but we now have new tools to focus on one in particular...retail development.

The Alliance has created a **Retail Forgivable Loan Program** which is designed to promote new and additional retail businesses in selected areas of Downtown Mobile. As we all know, opening a new business or expanding an existing one is an expensive proposition, and many a good idea has been left on the drawing board because of a lack of initial funding. The Program will offer loans of up to \$20,000, which can be forgiven with no principal or interest due if the business remains in operation for at least five years. The borrower must provide a dollar of his or her own funds for every dollar borrowed, up to \$20,000. The funds can be used for leasehold improvements and equipment or for start-up expenses.

"Downtown Mobile has more retailers than many people realize, but it's not concentrated enough to create the critical mass necessary for a true 'retail destination'," according to Fred Rendfrey, Director of Downtown Economic Development for the Alliance. He believes that by targeting certain streets and certain types of businesses, we can begin to create the same kind of shopping experience you might find in Fairhope or Ocean Springs.

The types of retailers being sought include:

- Apparel and accessories
- Home Furnishing and Home Accessories
- Specialty Retail & Gift Stores
- Electronics
- Health & Personal Care (salons, spas, athletic equipment & apparel)
- Used Merchandise Stores
- Vintage Clothing

To maximize the impact of the program, the Alliance has created two Targeted Retail Areas (TRA) within the program boundary. These consist of ground floor retail tenants on Dauphin Street (between Water Street and Cedar Street) and



Great signs such as this one for a stationary store are eye catching and informational.

Royal Street (between Government Street and St. Louis Street).

Downtown Mobile was once a happy riot of activity and visual stimulation. Signs of all shapes, sizes and tastes directed customers and entertained passersby. We would like to reenergize our street scene through a second incentive program designed to recapture the liveliness of our retail glory days. The **Signage Grant Program** is seeking projects that will have a significant aesthetic impact on the Downtown Mobile retail environment and that fall into the same TRA as the Forgivable Loan Program.

The maximum grant amount is \$8000 which can be used for such improvements as prepping and painting, exterior lighting, signage restoration/ rehabilitation, signage replacement, architectural/design fees, building permits/planning fees, other signage and related façade improvements. Eligible businesses include the same categories as the Forgivable Loan Program is targeting.

For complete details and application forms for both programs, please visit the homepage of our website: www.downtownmobile.org or call our office at 251-434-8498.

Alliance Sponsorship & Advertising Opportunities

Tickets to the **Downtown Mobile Alliance's Annual Meeting** are always much in demand and we expect this year to be an early sell out. The September 2nd luncheon will feature keynote speaker Andres Duany. Duany, recognized as one of the most influential architects in the world, is best known locally for creating the concept and design of Seaside, Florida, an award winning development that changed the way we look at the urban and suburban environment.

We are not yet selling tickets to this event, but if you would like to be a sponsor, which will include a table of ten, contact Elizabeth Sanders at esanders@downtownmobile.org or 251-434-8498. Sponsorships begin at \$1000 for members.

Our **LoDa Dining and Shopping Guide** is one of the most reliable ways to get your name in front of customers. Each year we print 30,000 booklets

that serve as a visitors' guide to downtown attractions and a listing of the shopping, dining, finance, lodging and entertainment options. The Guides are distributed to area businesses as well as the Alabama Welcome Centers and the Mobile Visitors' Center. Rates are \$275 for Alliance members and \$325 for non-members. Call 251-434-8498 for more information. Many thanks to Liquid Lounge and the Dauphin Street Taqueria for once again sponsoring the back cover.

We are now offering advertising in this very publication, **Downtown Alliance News**. Thousands of these well-read newsletters are distributed in businesses throughout downtown. The publication is also available on our website. A quarter-page ad is \$255 for Alliance members and \$295 for non-members. A business card-sized ad is \$100 for members and \$150 for non-members.



The Downtown Mobile Alliance is currently working on a project that will, for the first time, provide valuable information on the office space segment of downtown Mobile's real estate market. The research project is headed by the Alliance's Fred Renfrey, Director of Downtown Economic Development.

"This project loosely began when the AmSouth Building went up for sale and Harbert Realty became interested in purchasing the building. Harbert Realty began putting together an informal market analysis for downtown so they could be educated on our market for their clients," explained Renfrey. "This became the catalyst. Then, after networking with our peers at the International Downtown Association conference this year, we learned that Houston has a similar program that has been highly successful in their market. Their program is the model that we are adapting for downtown Mobile."

The Office Market Research Plan will be comprised of two components.

Office Market Research Plan Underway

First, buildings will be cataloged by land, including geographic location, size of lot and stage of development; and then by tenant, including government use, true office space and owner of the property. The second stage of the analysis will catalog the square footage of each building. This stage will include accumulated data on the total square footage of each building, leasable square footage, occupancy rate and office class determination. "This is very important for our downtown real estate market because we will, for the first time, be able to track both the absorption rate and vacancy rate of office buildings in downtown," stressed Renfrey.

The Office Market Research Plan will be the first time that documented statistics on downtown's office space have been compiled and managed by an independent source. The information will be used to show a demand for potential office space in downtown, a helpful tool for developers and real estate investors looking at our market.

"The Office Market Research Plan will also give us the ability to track downtown's daytime employment numbers and workforce," included Renfrey. "Currently we are seeing two major trends going on downtown. Engineering firms are moving here because they consider downtown the center of the region for their workforce, bridging Mobile and Baldwin counties. Public Relations firms are moving downtown because they are young and hip, and downtown is a young and hip place to be."

The research plan is being funded by the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation and will take an estimated six months to complete. Work is currently underway on stage one of the program. Upon completion, an Executive Summary will be provided for any interested user. If you would like to reserve a copy of the Executive Summary, please contact Fred Renfrey, Downtown Mobile Alliance, (251) 434-8498.

Little Colt Returns to Spanish Plaza

One of Mobile's most charming pieces of public art was finally returned to Spanish Plaza 31 years after it was removed following Hurricane Fredric. A crowd of on-lookers cheered as the drape was removed from the Little Colt on a glorious March morning in one of downtown's most significant parks. The statue, which had stood in the plaza since its dedication in 1968, was a gift to the city from the city of Cordoba, Spain, a city filled with images of this little colt.

The statue was damaged during the 1979 hurricane and removed for repairs, but decades later, it seemed all but lost forever. However, thanks to some dedicated detective work by Elizabeth Sanders, then Executive Director of Main Street Mobile, the Little Colt was finally located in a private warehouse in 2001. Sanders secured funding for repairs from the Wayne D. McRae Philanthropic Fund, an especially appropriate source since McRae had been a planner with the city of Mobile for years and a big fan of downtown.

During the dedication, Mayor Sam Jones remarked on the symbol of the Little Colt and its presence in a park dedicated to the Spanish influence on our city. He reminded those in attendance that Mobile had long been an international city and was poised to continue to be a place that welcomed



The charming Little Colt statue is returned to Spanish Plaza after a 31 year absence.

and benefited greatly from ties to other countries.

Spanish Plaza is a beautifully designed urban park now in need of reinvestment from our community. Please let us know if you are interested in participating in a restoration campaign for this beautiful homage to our Spanish heritage.

Main Street Mobile, Inc.
P. O. Box 112
Mobile, Alabama 36601

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Make It a Weekend in Downtown

Summer is often a season without a great deal of activity downtown, but this June will be an exception. On Friday, the 11th, up to 3000 hot rods and classic cars will be filling the streets for the final stop on the 2010 **Hot Rod Power Tour** sponsored by Hot Rod Magazine. This annual event attracts thousands of spectators all along the seven city tour which begins in Iowa on June 5th.

The map to the right shows the area of downtown where the cars will be parked for public viewing, including portions of the Civic Center parking lot. Many of these streets will be closed to through traffic, and I-165 could even back up a bit between 2:00 and 4:00, so be sure to plan to park outside the event perimeter. Better yet, take a shuttle from Ladd Stadium for \$5.00 each way.

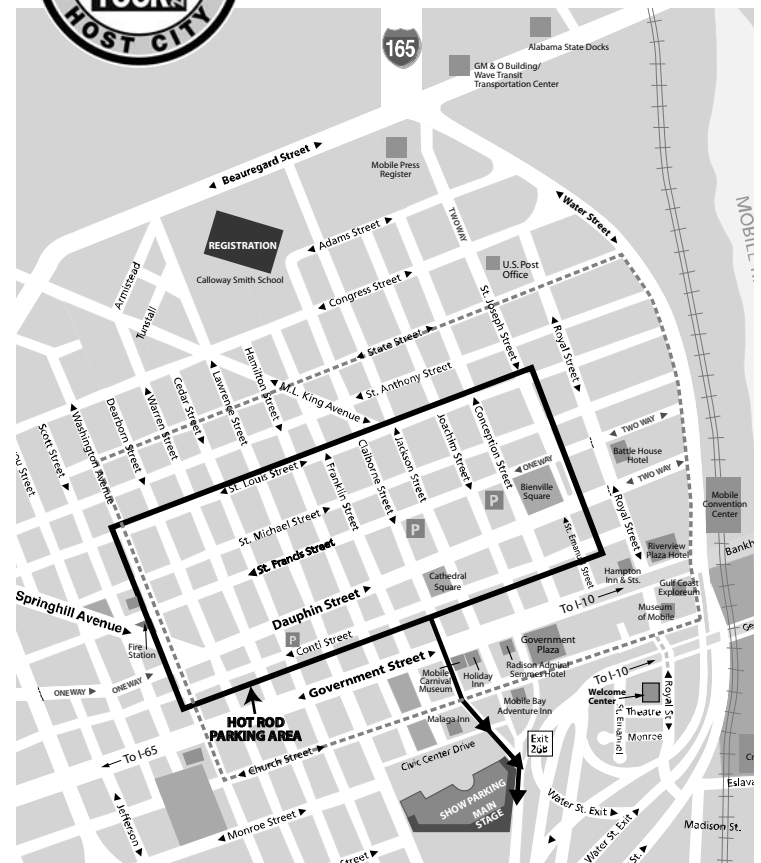
The cars will begin arriving around noon on Friday, with all of them in place by 3:30 p.m. Tour them at your leisure and visit with these fans of the American muscle car. There is no charge to attend this event, but be sure to get downtown before 7:00 p.m. when the cars begin leaving for the evening. For more information, visit www.mobile.org.

At 6:00 p.m. you can turn your attention to more artistic pursuits at the LoDa Artwalk! Tour galleries and businesses in the Cathedral Square Arts District to sample the best of our local and regional artists.

You might even want to spend the night in one of our many fabulous hotels so you'll be ready for the inaugural **Red Dress Sashay** Saturday morning. This ever so clever event is a fund raiser for the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women campaign. Wear your finest or funkier red dress (women and men!) and sashay through the streets of downtown where complimentary food and beverage will be served. The event kicks off at 10:30 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m. with more food and music in Bienville Square. Entry fee is \$55. Check out Red Dress Sashay on facebook, or visit <http://reddressashay.yolasite.com> for details and registration information.



Hot Rod Power Tour Friday, June 11, 2010



— Hot Rod Parking Area

P Parking lots for show vehicles only (less L-shaped lot and Police parking behind Police precinct.)

--- MODA! Free downtown transportation route.