

[<Back](#)[Print](#)

December 2007

Downtown Update

The Latest News about Downtown Mobile

In This Issue

[Downtown Developments](#)

[Working Group Tackles Parking Issues](#)

[Cathedral Square Decked Out for Holidays](#)

[New Plan for Old Mobile Moving Forward](#)

[Public Art Project Receives Large Donation](#)

[Sign of the Times](#)

[Downtown Beautification Continues](#)

[Downtown Doings](#)

[Christmas Tree Recycling](#)

Quick Links

[Downtown Alliance Web Site](#)

[Business and Development](#)

[Explore Downtown](#)

Dear Carol,

Even though much of December's weather has been no indication, the holiday season is well upon us. Greenery is decking the halls, balconies and windows of downtown businesses. Kudos to the many property and business owners who have added to the city's lights and wreaths so that our neighborhood is truly festive this year.

Downtown Developments



Development activity usually slows a bit during the holiday season and this year's holiday season is the longest in many years, running from an early Thanksgiving straight through to an early Fat Tuesday on February 5th. Nonetheless, new projects in downtown are continuing at a record pace. Here's a sample of what's in the works.

- A dramatic change is underway for the Cathedral Square Arts District as the **Center for the Living Arts** continues with the renovation of the former Press-Register building on Conti Street. An impressive, two-story glass wall will soon be installed that will create a new focal point for the district.

Downtown Real Estate

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Phase one of the current renovation, which includes the creation of new gallery space, administrative offices, workshop/classroom space, a large auditorium and rooftop terrace, will be finished by early June.

- 453 Dauphin Street will soon be home to a new concept for downtown Mobile--a coffee and wine bar. **The Muddy Vine** will feature a wide variety of coffee and tea, a retail wine store, wine tastings and classes, and a venue for local artists and musicians. Owner Luke Fondren is also planning two apartments on the second floor. The Muddy Vine, which will open early in the New Year, looks like the perfect spot to begin and end your day!
- Larry Posner, the developer of Fort Conde Village, is proceeding with renovation of the **Spear Barter House and the Hall Ford House**. These two buildings are two of the most significant in the Village and will require the most extensive renovations yet. Poser will convert the houses into an inn, and already has received approval for his plans.
- One of downtown's oldest and most popular eateries is expanding. **Wintzell's** will convert former corporate offices next door to the restaurant into banquet facilities.
- **DeTonti Square** is one of Mobile's hottest residential districts, and one of the few places downtown with a fairly good supply of rental units. That number will be increasing soon as Etsie Foreman begins work on a four-plex on Congress Street.
- The retail picture in downtown will look a little brighter with the addition of the **Inside Up Gift Shop**. The shop will open in August 2008 at 7 N. Conception Street with a residential unit upstairs.
- The western end of downtown will soon be anchored by an impressive three-story residence at **758 Government Street**. Max Morey, who is also one of the developers of the Crescent Theater project on Dauphin Street, will be building the residence for himself.
- **Le Rose European Cafe and Deli** will open early next month in the GM&O Building. Swiss master chef Max Zueling has leased the 1,100 square foot space and will serve breakfast and lunch.

[Find Out More](#)

Working Group Tackles Parking Issues

One of most pressing issues facing downtowns everywhere is parking. No matter where you go, the complaints are the same: there isn't enough, it's too expensive, it's not convenient and enforcement is too strict. To help address these



issues, Mayor Sam Jones is working with the Downtown Mobile Alliance and has formed a Mayor's Downtown Parking Working Group.

The task force grew out of a parking management analysis conducted by Urban Place Consulting for the Alliance earlier this year, and its first goal was to develop a mission statement to guide the process: **Downtown parking exists to support economic development and a high quality of life for our residents by providing a downtown parking system that values each customer and provides a positive parking experience for all who visit the area.**

One of the first and most important recommendations of the Working Group, changing the management structure of on-street parking, has already been enacted by the Mayor. Three officers, under direct supervision of the police department, now patrol the meters on foot and though they have written more than 2500 tickets in the past few months, very few complaints has been registered by the department.

The Working Group, composed of downtown property and business owners, city employees, residents and members of the Alliance staff, is now moving forward with phase two of the process and will begin to develop solutions to both long and short term parking issues. The first goal will be to create additional on-street parking, which will require an accurate inventory of current parking, loading zones, red zones, handicap spaces, etc. By January the Mayor's Downtown Parking Working Group will recommend changes to the on-street parking situation and will begin discussions on enforcement issues.

If you're interested in participating in the Mayor's Downtown Parking Working Group, please contact Elizabeth Sanders at esanders@downtownmobile.org.

Cathedral Square Decked Out for Holidays



Cathedral Square has traded in her fall wardrobe for a festive winter one, complete with low-energy, LED lights. The cascade mums provided by Bellingrath Gardens have been replaced by lovely Leland Cypress trees and holly bushes donated by Flowerwood Nursery.

Crews from the Downtown Mobile Alliance planted the evergreens and laced the branches with holiday lights to create a pleasing landscape both day and night. The Alliance is planning more seasonal plantings for Cathedral Square to create new interest in the green space every few weeks.

For information on Flowerwood Nursery

New Plan for Old Mobile Moving Forward

The Mobile City Council this week approved the contract with EDSA, Inc. for the city's new master plan for downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. ESDA is expected to begin work shortly on "A New Plan for Old Mobile: An Urban Planning, Design and Economic Development Plan." As a downtown stakeholder, you'll have an opportunity to participate in the planning process.



Since a new master plan is so vital to the future of downtown, the Downtown Mobile Alliance has made a commitment to contribute \$100,000 to help pay for the plan. Two foundations have already stepped forward to contribute to that commitment, the Alabama Power Foundation and the Ben May Charitable Trust. If you would also like to help, please contact Elizabeth Sanders at esanders@downtownmobile.org or 251-434-8498.

Public Art Project Receives Large Donation



The sidewalks and other public spaces in downtown Mobile will soon be graced with more public art thanks to an anonymous donor. Two Mobile businessmen, saying "This city has been so good to us that the only right thing to do is to give something back," have decided to make a

multi-year, annual donation to the Downtown Mobile Alliance.

According to Elizabeth Sanders, Executive Director of the Alliance, "Knowing we'll have such a significant amount of money each year to spend on public art allows us to systematically create a place of constant delight." Since more bicycles are being seen on the streets of downtown, the first installation will be a fanciful bike rack in the 250 block of Dauphin Street.

Sign of the Times

A great sign has always communicated more than the name of a business. Sometimes it reflects the goods sold, the actual nature of the business, even the personality of the owner.



Take a look at photos of downtown Mobile from decades past, when the streets and sidewalks were bustling with activity. The storefront and business signs were bold, perhaps even tacky by today's standards, but they signaled a healthy, vibrant retail and business community.

The sign for Hurricane Brewery might seem a bit of a cruel joke, coming so soon after Hurricane Katrina, but success in business often means playing to your strengths. And since there's no changing where we sit on the globe, we might as well make the best of our tropical storm prone location by offering such brews as Storm Surge Stout and Insurance Adjustor Ale. Even though we might not

recognize a single other signal flag we all know what this sign means!

Downtown Beautification Continues

For the past few years downtown Mobile's streetscape has been a little less green with the loss of so many trees after Hurricanes Ivan and Katrina (not to mention the occasional wayward car or truck). But the crews of the Downtown Mobile Alliance have been busy recreating the "City under the Trees" by planting 40 pond cypresses in the empty tree wells along Dauphin Street and around the new Community Foundation offices on St. Joseph Street



Funding for the trees was provided by grants from the Alabama Power Foundation and Keep Mobile Beautiful with funds from the Hearin Chandler Foundation. Now that Dauphin Street's sidewalks will be properly shaded, some downtown side streets will be addressed.

Downtown Doings

Some upcoming events in downtown Mobile

Dec 31, 10 PM - Midnight, *New Year's Eve in Downtown Mobile.* The evening's festivities, including live music by local band Emerge, will kick off in the Fort Conde Parking lot. Then fireworks will light up the night sky as we celebrate the end of a wonderful 2007 and look forward to an even better 2008! For more information, please contact the City of Mobile's Neighborhood & Community Services Department at: 470-7730.

Dec 31, 8:00 PM - 1:00 AM, *An Enchanted New Year's Eve.* Jazz (featuring Brienn Perry & the E.B. Coleman Orchestra with Theodore Arthur, Jr.), gourmet dinner with wine, party favors and champagne toast at midnight; cash bar available. L'Estrade Dinner Theatre (310 Dauphin St - rear of Spot of Tea). Reservations required. \$125. Tickets

available at Spot of Tea (310 Dauphin St) or by phone. Contact: 251-694-0457 (David Calametti) or 847-337-9102 (Sharon Patterson)

Dec 31, 8:30 PM, Dr. John with special guest Jon Cleary at the Saenger Theatre. Ring in the New Year with legendary New Orleans recording artist Dr. John. Tickets are now on sale at all Ticketmaster outlets and at ticketmaster.com. For info visit www.saengermobile.com or call 251-208- 5600.

Dec 20, 7 PM - 9 PM, Mobile Bay Young Professionals will hold its December meeting at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza. Young professionals are invited to get to know one another during the Dirty Santa Gift Exchange. Cost is \$5 for members, \$10 for non-members. MBYP seeks to create and promote an environment that highlights social networking, professional development and community investment for young professionals dedicated to seeing this area grow. For information visit www.myspace.com/mbyp.

Through Jan 6, Contexture: Fabric, Fashion and Fantasy, Space 301 Off Centre, works by Pinky Bass, Matt Posey and Alex Podesta. 6 South Joachim Street. Gallery closed Monday and Tuesday. www.space301.com.

Through Dec 31, Human Grossology: The Impolite Science of the Human Body, at the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center. This child-friendly exhibit features sophisticated animatronics, interactive exhibits and hard science. Grossology explores the good, the bad and the downright ugly ways the human body works. www.exploreum.net

Through Jan 10, Seamonsters: A Prehistoric Adventure, at the Gulf Coast Exploreum IMAX Theatre. Accompany a team of paleontologists as they work to solve an 82 million year-old mystery. Go to www.exploreum.net for showtimes.

Through May 1 - Daily Cruises on the Spirit of LaSalle. The Spirit of LaSalle has arrived in Mobile Bay! Come experience a one-of-a-kind tour of the Mobile Bay area from the water. Different types of cruises are offered six days a week. Cruises depart from the Mobile Convention Center. To book your spot on a cruise, or for prices and more details, please visit the website or call (251) 438-3060. Visit the web site for information on the special **New Year's Eve Cruise.** www.spiritoflasalle.com

Through Jan 2- Santa vs. The Snowman, an Animated IMAX® Family Film! The Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center and Imax® Theater is proud to feature the first-ever IMAX animated holiday film, *Santa vs. the Snowman*,

this holiday season. This film will be shown throughout the holidays in the J.L. Bedsole IMAX® Dome Theater at the Exploreum. This film is great entertainment for the whole family. For more information please call 1-877-625-4FUN or visit www.exploreum.net.

Jan 11 - May 11, *OUR BODY: The Universe Within*, an awe-inspiring blockbuster exhibit featuring actual human bodies, will premiere at the Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness the elegant design of the human body's form and function up-close in an artful, compelling and dignified environment. *OUR BODY: The Universe Within* is an educational exhibit featuring actual human bodies. Spanning more than 7,500 square feet, the inspirational human anatomy lesson is comprised of more than 11 whole-body specimens and 75 anatomical displays that have been preserved through polymer impregnation. For more information please call 1 (877)625-4FUN or visit www.exploreum.net.

Through Feb 5 - *SHADOWS OF GREATNESS: THE JIMINI COLLECTION*. Silhouette oil paintings of legendary musicians by Jim Maurer. Veet's Bar & Grill (66 S Royal St) Through Feb 5. Mon, 11 AM - 10 PM; Tue, 11 AM - midnight; Wed - Sat, 11 AM - 2 AM; Sun, noon - 2 PM. Contact: www.thejiminicollection.com

Through May 26, *We Remember*, a World War II photographic exhibit at the Museum of Mobile. This moving exhibition features seventy-five black and white photographs offering a glimpse into life during World War II. From the battlefield to the home front, this exhibit creates windows back to the people and events that shaped history and the modern world. For more information please call (251) 208-7686 or visit the website below. www.museumofmobile.com

Jan 12 - 8:00 PM, *Bruce Hornsby and Ricky Skaggs at the Saenger Theatre*. Virginia cool meets Kentucky thunder in a collaboration between genre-bending pianist Bruce Hornsby and multi- instrumental virtuoso Ricky Skaggs that expands the terrain of bluegrass. Call the Saenger Box Office at 251-208-5600.

Jan 26 - 9:00 PM, *Indigo Girls with special guest Brandi Carlile at the Saenger Theatre*. Tickets are on sale now at the Box Office, all TicketMaster outlets, and Ticketmaster.com. For info visit www.saengermobile.com or call 251-208- 5600.

Jan 4 - *Murder at the Mardi Gras Museum*. Looking for a good stocking stuffer? Try tickets to a fun evening at Mobile's Mardi Gras Museum which includes a tour of the museum, food and wine catered by The Pillars, and the

play. Come dressed casual or in costume or mask. The cost is about \$50. per person. Call 479-3212 for reservations and information.

For a complete list of events...

Christmas Tree Recycling

Keep Mobile Beautiful Collects Trees at Several Locations



Keep Mobile Beautiful wants you to recycle your used Christmas Tree! Save valuable landfill space and we will convert your old tree into garden mulch. Tree recycling is easy and convenient. Take your old tree to one of the recycling stations anytime between December 25 and January 6.

JANUARY 6 IS THE LAST DAY TO TURN IN TREES.

Volunteers will be on hand from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday December 29 & 30 and January 5 & 6 to help unload trees.

Be a GOOD recycler and please remove the stand, all lights, ornaments and tinsel.

Please deliver your old tree to one of these locations:

- Parkway Plaza - 2655 Dauphin Island Parkway
- Food World - 2501 Government Boulevard
- Wildwood Place - Food World - 4055 Cottage Hill
- Azalea Center - Airport at Azalea
- Regency Center Bruno's - Airport at University
- Westwood Plaza - Airport at Schillinger
- Park Forest Center - Moffet at Forest Hill Drive
- Clover Leaf Plaza - Tillman's Corner
- Sears Essentials - 951 U.S. Highway 43, Saraland

The Downtown Mobile Alliance is a not-for-profit membership organization representing businesses and organizations in creating and sustaining exposure for the downtown business community through marketing and education. Membership is open to businesses and individuals interested in the welfare and development of our city center and is the ideal way to contribute to the revitalization of downtown. Membership support is a vital ongoing investment in our city's future.

Sincerely,

Carol Hunter
Downtown Mobile Alliance

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