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November 2007

Downtown Update

The Latest News about Downtown Mobile

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Dear Carol,

Where did the Fall go? One minute you're getting the children ready to start school, the next you're shopping for the holidays. The pace hasn't slowed in downtown either. Events and new developments are keeping us all busy, with the holiday season promising to be the best ever.

Downtown Developments



The downtown landscape and skyline are changing rapidly as the Hampton Inn is out of the ground and on schedule as Hugh Edmonds declared it would be when he broke ground in August. Additionally and equally exciting, much work is being done inside dark, long-vacant buildings.

Demolition has begun on the interior of the Gayfer's Building, the Neisner Building and the new Senior Bowl offices on Dauphin Street. Downtown's latest transformation is well underway!

- We have mentioned this project in the past, but **Parkside Home and Garden** (pictured above) is progressing rapidly now and is becoming more lovely by the day. Developer Tim Burt of Birmingham had planned to replace iron columns he found in old photographs of the building, but was delighted to

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discover that they were still there hiding under some long forgotten façade renovation. The store, which will feature home and garden accessories, will be a great addition to the growing shopping options downtown.

- The Gulf Coast is home to the finest seafood in the land, but who knew Mobilians would take to the raw version like a sumo wrestler to a super buffet? Downtown's third sushi restaurant will soon be opening at the corner of Joachim and Conti Streets, in the former Alabama Contemporary Dance studio. **House of Sushi** is promising 100 varieties of the colorful, tasty rolls.
- Speaking of great ethnic food, the Walker brothers have expanded the offerings at the OK Bicycle Shop by adding the **Dauphin Street Taqueria**, featuring tradition Mexican dishes. Currently the "South of the Border" offerings are available only on weekends, but look for week day service before Chirstmas.
- The former Megginson's Snack Bar in the former AmSouth Building is now **Paradise Popcorn** in the Regions Bank Building. Bill Kivette has stocked treats to satisfy your every snacking desire.
- Ann Bedsole's renovated Franklin Fire House on Bienville Square is now home to the **Hearin Chandler Foundation**. Tom VanAntwerp moved the offices from west Mobile to the prime downtown spot that was originally renovated as a spacious apartment.
- We'd like to welcome **Congressman Jo Bonner** and his staff to the neighborhood. Congressman Bonner recently moved his local office from west Mobile to the RSA Battle House Office Tower. The new address is 11 North Water Street, Suite 15290, Mobile, AL 36602. The phone number is 251-690-2811.
- The remarkable conversion of the **Mattress Factory** into chic lofts was celebrated last week at an open house hosted by developer Mike Anderson and contractor Tilmon Brown. Though most of the units will be residential, **Dauphin Realty** is opening a new downtown office in one of the ground floor units.

[Find Out More](#)

A Bit of Bellingrath Blooms Downtown

The planters of Cathedral Square have been transformed into a mini Bellingrath Gardens thanks to the



Gardens' Executive Director Bill

Barrick and Dan Otto with the City's Parks Department. Dr. Barrick delivered some of Bellingrath's world-famous cascade mums to the City for installation in the beds, and the effect is stunning.

If you find the downtown display inspiring, be sure to visit Bellingrath Gardens and Home soon to see the full effect of this magnificent floral showcase. The mums are peaking this week, and the Christmas Lights are just around the corner. Many thanks to the folks at Bellingrath for sharing their fall beauty and bounty with us!

For information on Bellingrath

New Plan for Historic Hannah Houses



Two of downtown's most beautiful homes have been vacant for a few years, awaiting the construction of the new federal courthouse on St. Louis Street. Since empty buildings are often magnets for vagrants, local preservationists and the federal government have become increasingly concerned about how much longer the buildings would remain standing. A new plan however, would preserve the homes while contributing to the developing arts community.

The General Services Administration (GSA), which handles real estate for the Federal Government, is in the process of restoring the houses and has agreed to lease them to the Mobile Arts Council until the full courthouse construction is underway. The Council in turn will create an "Art as Business" incubator. Two enterprises are already on board. Arts Council Executive Director Bob Burnett says he'd like to establish a resource center for the growing number of independent film makers in Mobile, providing informal meeting space and even film and editing equipment if funding allows.

Two local photographers, Michael Mastro and Ron Hosford, also will be setting up shop to help visual artists create portfolios to market their works. The professional photographs of paintings or sculptures can be used in physical portfolios or on web sites. Burnett says he's also planning office space for organizations to share.

By working with the Mobile Chamber of Commerce's Small

Business Development office, the incubator will nurture the economic aspect of the artistic endeavor. Artists may be notoriously bad businesspeople, but as Burnett says, "This is an opportunity to prepare them to operate a viable business."

The Arts Council will be seeking grants and donations to support the Hannah Houses project. If you'd like to help, or would like more information, contact Bob Burnett at 251-432-9796 or bburnett@mobilearts.org.

For more information

New Plan for Old Mobile Moving Forward

The city has hired Dan Dealy of DSD Services Group to guide the master planning process for downtown and the surrounding historic neighborhoods. The City Council is expected to vote on a contract with a planning firm in the next couple of weeks.



A new master plan for downtown and the neighborhoods that surround it is considered essential to insure that the current development explosion will result in the kind of sustainable community we all desire. The planning process will require not only input from all of downtown's stakeholders, but also some additional funding.

Because a new master plan is so crucial to the future of downtown, the Downtown Mobile Alliance has made a commitment to contribute \$100,000 toward the cost of the plan. We will begin the fundraising process soon, but if you would like to sign up early on, please contact Susan Daniels at sdaniels@downtownmobile.org or 251-434-8498.

New LoDa Guides are Available



The new LoDa Dining and Shopping Guides are in! The most comprehensive listing of downtown attractions, restaurants, retailers and other

services is available for pick up at our office at 261 Dauphin Street. If you'd like to advertise in our next edition, please contact Susan Daniels at 251-434-8498 or sdaniels@downtownmobile.org.

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.

Naman's Department Store is among a handful of retailers that remained downtown long after most stores had abandoned the city center for what appeared to be greener pastures in the suburbs. Its sign is a reflection of that pre-flight era -- big and bold. In the daylight it almost blends in with the rest of the urban landscape, but becomes a night time landmark when the sun goes down.

A Dog's Eye-View

It's often instructive to take a look at the city we know and love through the eyes of someone else, but have you ever wondered how Mobile looks from a canine point of view? Two creative Mobilians, writer Sue Walker and artist Kate Seawell, wondered just that and have created a whimsical, beautiful book starring downtown Mobile's most famous quadruped.



Ruben and Teddy Lee (you decide who owns

whom) are downtown fixtures - Ruben a 150 pound harlequin Great Dane and Teddy a third generation Mobilian. Through Walker's lyrical poetry and Seawell's luminous watercolors, the new book, *Ruben's Mobile*, presents a Mobile any dog would love: beautiful downtown parks, welcoming shop owners and strolls past historic architecture.

The books are available at the Mobile Arts Council at 316 Dauphin Street and at Bienville Books at 109 Dauphin Street. What a great Christmas present for someone who thinks Mobile is going to the dogs!

To purchase Ruben's Book...

Downtown Doings

Some upcoming events in downtown Mobile



THROUGH NOV 30TH - RETURN TO THE ATELIER: RECENT WORKS AND NEW DIRECTIONS and EYES OF THE STORM: A COMMUNITY SURVIVES AFTER KATRINA

Two exhibitions: paintings by Fr. Daniel A. Creagan, S.J. and photographs and poems by students at Alba Middle School and Elm Place Middle School (Highland Park, IL) Mobile Arts Council (318 Dauphin St) Through Fri, Nov 30. Mon - Fri, 9 AM - 5 PM. Contact: 251-432-9796/ www.mobilearts.org

THOUGH NOV 30TH - JOYFUL TINTS Work of 50 local and regional artists in all media and styles; featured artists: Suzanne Damrich, Beverly Endie Hall, Gordon House, Laurie Khalsa, Jane Shaw, Susan Wertelecki and Suzanne Wright. Cathedral Square Gallery (260 Dauphin St.) Through Fri, Nov 30. Mon - Sat, 10 AM - 4 PM. Free. Contact: 251-694-0278/lhall699@aol.com (Linda Hall Tenhundfeld)

THROUGH FEB 5TH - 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 NOV 26TH - NEW WORKS BY PETER ANDERSON Chesser Gallery (306 Dauphin St) Through Mon, Nov 26. Tue, Thu, Sat, 11 AM - 2 PM; by appointment. Contact: 251-591-7877/ www.chesserartgallery.org

THROUGH NOV 29TH - DIA DE LOS MUERTOS Seasonal works by local artists, curated by Mary Elizabeth Kimbrough.

Chesser Gallery (306 Dauphin St.) Through Thu, Nov 29. Tue & Thu, 11 AM - 4 PM; Sat, 11 AM - 2 PM. Free. Contact: 251-591-7877/ www.chesserartgallery.org

THROUGH JAN 6, 2008, 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, 2008, 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.

NOV 22ND - PHAR FLETCHER Live music. 11 PM. Monsoon's (9 N Jackson St) \$5 cover. Contact: 251-438-5500/ www.monsoonsmobile.com **NOV 23RD - ECHOING BLUE** Live music. 11 PM. Boo Radley's (256 Dauphin St) No cover. Contact: 251-432-1996/www.booradleysmobile.com **NOV 24TH - LOCK 13** Live music. 11 PM. Grand Central (256 Dauphin St) No cover. Contact: 251-432-6999/ www.myspace.com/grandcentralmobile **NOV 24TH - BAAK GWAI + STALE FASHION + TBA** Live music. 9 PM. The Blind Mule (57 N Claiborne St) Cover TBA. Contact: 251-694-6853/ www.myspace.com/theblindmule

NOV 26TH - JAZZ JAMBALAYA: CASSANDRA WILSON featuring Cynthia Neves & The Guffman Trio; program developer: Donna Walker. Monthly jazz program. Fourth Mon, 6:30 PM. MOJO (Mystic Order of the Jazz Obsessed) Gulf City Lodge (601 State St.) Members/ \$7; nonmembers/ \$10 (includes a jambalaya dinner) Contact: www.msnusers.com/MOJOMOBILE

NOV 27TH - FILM: LOVE ACTUALLY starring Alan Rickman, Colin Firth and Emma Thompson; 135 minutes; rated R. Not Your Typical Holiday Films: Dinner & a Movie. 5:45 PM: Dinner in the Creative Cafe (\$5.50) 6:45 PM: Film. Ben May Main Library (701 Government St) Contact: 251-208-7097/ www.mplonline.org

NOV 28TH - WORKSHOP: EXPERIMENT WITH TEXTURED PICTURES for ages 7 and up. Experience Art! Create Art! Exhibit Art! This project is inspired by *A Bruce Larsen Christmas* 4 PM. Ben May Main Library (701

Government St) Registration required. Contact: 251-208-7086/ www.mplonline.org

NOV 29TH - A DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS: A VICTORIAN CELEBRATION WITH THE FEZZIWIGS A

period celebration inspired by a portion of Dickens' A Christmas Carol with a holiday meal (featuring roast goose, prepared by Creative Catering); music (including performances by Mobile's Singing Children), dancing, parlor games, ornament making, and readings from Dickens. Benefits Mobile's Singing Children and the Mobile Public Library. 6:30 - 8:30 PM. Ben May Main Library (701 Government St) Adults/ \$25; children 6 - 12/ \$7. Contact: 251-208-7097/ www.mplonline.org

DEC 1ST & 2ND - CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS AT

OAKLEIGH Historic Mobile Preservation Society Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Step back into a festive 19th-century holiday celebration at Oakleigh Historic Complex. Daily activities, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., will feature seasonal music, horse-drawn carriage rides, guided tours, Victorian Santa, exhibitors on the lawn and refreshments. Tours of the Oakleigh Museum by Candlelight are 6:30 to 8 p.m. Day admission: HMPS members, \$5; non-member adults, \$10, children, \$5. Candlelight Tour admission: HMPS members,\$7; non- member adults, \$12, children, \$5. HMPS frequently adds programs throughout the year. To see the latest events and information visit our website at www.historicmobile.org

DEC 1ST - RICHARDS DAR HOUSE CHRISTMAS

CELEBRATION featuring a creche in each room, in a variety of styles and materials; a 12-foot tree; a bake sale; door prizes; spiced tea and refreshments; seasonal music by singers and instrumentalists; treats from Santa. 10 AM - 5 PM. Richards DAR House (256 N Joachim St.) \$5. Contact: 251-208-7320

DEC 13, 7 PM, Mithril Benefit Concert for Government

Street United Methodist Church. Mobile's own Celtic ensemble presents a program celebrating winter and the holiday season. Proceeds will benefit the ministries of The Bee Hive. Email thebeehive@thebeehive.com.

For a complete list of events...

GO Zone Update

The first round of projects in downtown Mobile's pool of Gulf Opportunity (GO) Zone financing is moving forward, with four projects expected to close in about two months. These

projects represent \$3.4 million eligible for the lower interest loans. The final list of terms is being developed and will be presented to those on the list in the next few days.

Other developments on the current list will be funded as their projects proceed. If you'd like to be added to the downtown Mobile GO Zone pool, please contact Denise Browning at db@hunterventures.net or (312) 371-6555.

The Downtown Mobile Alliance is a non-profit partnership between the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation and Main Street Mobile, Inc., whose purpose is to create more exposure for downtown redevelopment efforts, both within the downtown community and throughout the city at large.

Sincerely,

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