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October 2007

Downtown Update

The Latest News about Downtown Mobile

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Dear Carol,

No one needs a thermometer to know cooler temperatures have arrived. Just look outside and see the increased numbers of folks walking downtown! While you're at it, take a look at the increased number of folks *living* downtown. The urban lifestyle is attracting more and more converts across the country, with downtown Mobile on track to add about 80 residential units this year. Catch all the excitement at **Living Downtown - The Tour this Saturday, October 20th**. The second article has all the details!

Downtown Developments



The mix of downtown developments grows more interesting by the day. This month we have new retail, restaurants, a tattoo gallery and the unveiling of plans for the redevelopment of a major downtown landmark. Downtown Mobile is nothing if not diverse!

- The long-vacant **Gayfers** building is about to begin its transformation into what developers Bo Wilson and Shaul Zislin describe as "first class condominiums and commercial space." The renovation is being designed by HDS Architecture out of Boston and will feature the kind of up scale amenities common in residences in

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larger cities.

- **Alexander's Decorative Arts** is now open at 360 Dauphin Street. This boutique offers a fine collection of furniture, art, antiques, architectural, and home and garden accessories. The store is located in the historic bottling plant across from the Cathedral. Hours are Wednesday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 2 p.m. beginning October 20th.
- The beautiful new **Ben May Main Library** is now open Sundays from 1:00 p.m. until 5 p.m. With delightful children's areas and a stunning reading room, what better way to begin or end a Sunday visit to downtown?
- The folks that opened the impressive **River City Granite** facility earlier this year have grand plans for the cluster of dilapidated homes across Washington Street from their showroom. Architect Douglas Kearley is drawing plans for the five buildings that include three duplexes, one fourplex and a 3-room shotgun house. The exteriors will be restored to their original facades and the site will feature lush landscaping and a picket fence.
- The Cell Block, one of downtown's hottest spots for live music, has changed names and formats. The **Manhattan Club and Ultra Lounge** is now set to become downtown's most chic, upscale dance club.
- **Hargrove and Associates** has been named to Inc. Magazine's list of America's 500 fastest growing private companies. With 150 employees, this downtown company has experienced a three year growth rate of 641%. Hargrove and Associates will soon have a new home in the heart of the Central Business District after the renovation of the Neisner Building on Royal Street is complete.
- One of Mobile's best known chefs will soon be heating up the kitchen in one of Mobile's favorite dining spots. Courtland Inge is back in Mobile, after stints in Chicago and Seattle, to open **The Courtyard** in the former Gus's Azalea Manor at 751 Dauphin Street. Building owner Eddie Cornell has been renovating the space to update restaurant and has added a covered courtyard with two fireplaces.

[Find Out More](#)

Living Downtown: The Tour

RBC Centura Joins the Inaugural Tour as Title Sponsor

Ever wonder about all the buzz



surrounding downtown living? Then you won't want to miss the **Living Downtown Tour, sponsored by RBC Centura, Saturday, October 20, 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.**

Experience one of the hottest residential trends across the country by touring some of downtown Mobile's finest examples of urban living. You'll be able to walk through up to 30 contemporary lofts, spacious townhouses, luxurious condominiums and beautifully restored historic homes--all within minutes of banking, shopping, fine restaurants and arts events. Tickets are \$15 if purchased before the tour, \$20 on the day of the tour and may be purchased on line at www.downtownmobile.org or at the following locations:

- Downtown Mobile Alliance - 261 Dauphin Street
- Dauphin Realty - 2569 Dauphin Street and 6207 Cottage Hill Road in Mobile; 559 North Section Street and 19452 Scenic Highway 98 in Fairhope
- Fort Conde Welcome Center
- Wells Fargo Home Mortgage - 1111 Hillcrest Road
- Spring Hill Lighting - East Beltline Highway between Old Shell Road and Springhill Avenue

Many thanks to our sponsors for making this event possible: **RBC Centura, Starbucks Coffee, 95-KSJ, Lite Mix 99.9, LLB&B Realty, Lamar Advertising News Radio 710, WKRG News 5**, 250 St. Francis Street - A Condominium, Cornerstone Investment Management and Consulting, Dauphin Realty, The Guarantee Title Company, Makeda Nichols State Farm Insurance, St. Louis Lofts - A Condominium, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage and WHL Architects & Interiors

While you're downtown for the tour, please stop in our restaurant and retail sponsors: The Courtyard (coming soon), Cafe Royal, NoJa, Spring Hill Lighting, Wintzell's Oyster House.

Living Downtown -- The Tour is also a great volunteer opportunity. We need folks to help with registration and to staff the properties on tour. Of course volunteers can tour the properties for **free!** To volunteer, contact Althea Kingsmill at akingsmill@downtownmobile.org.

For more tour information

Gulf Coast Antiques, Food and Wine Festival

While you're downtown for the Living Tour, you have the



perfect opportunity to look for furniture for your new place at the **Gulf Coast Antiques, Food and Wine Festival**. This inaugural festival is sure to please those with refined taste, or those who'd like to sample fine living only for a weekend. The Mobile Convention Center will be transformed into a showcase of fine living on **October 19, 20 and 21** when the new Gulf Coast Antiques, Food and Wine Festival takes place. According to David Calametti, Chair of the Festival Planning Committee, the event will showcase some of the finest 18th and 19th century antique dealers in the country. Expect to find furniture, paintings, porcelain, oriental rugs, linens, pottery, glass, silver, jewelry, collectables, and architectural and garden pieces.

There will also be nine wine distributors participating in the wine tasting, and samplings from some of the best restaurants in our region. Along with the Antiques Village and the food and wine tastings, there will be a host of specialty foods and products that will be showcased in the Gourmet Marketplace along with the latest in kitchen and culinary appliances and accessories.

The Gulf Coast Antiques, Food and Wine Festival hours are Friday, October 19, 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.; Saturday, October 20, 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.; and Sunday, October 21, Noon until 5:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for a weekend pass. VIP Patron Weekend Passes are \$75. Tickets to the Cigar Bar "Tasting" Party, on Saturday afternoon are \$50.

For more information

Portier House Undergoes Major Renovation

One of Mobile's oldest and most beautiful buildings is undergoing a facelift that will have her ready for all sorts of events by mid-November. The Portier House, owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Mobile, is a classic Greek Revival Creole structure



that served as the residence of the Bishop of Mobile from 1834 until the first decade of the 20th century. Named for the first Bishop of the diocese, the construction date of the home is unknown, but it seems certain that it had been standing for some time before its purchase by the Church.

As soon as the renovation is complete, the Portier House at 307 Conti Street will be available for parties and receptions. The facility will handle up to 50 guests for a seated dinner or 75-100 guests for a standing reception. To reserve the Portier House, please contact Karen Carlisle at 251-434-1585 or 251- 767-3040. What better place to host a Christmas party!

St. Louis Street Now Two-Way



The second phase of the re-direction of traffic in downtown Mobile is now complete with the conversion of St. Louis Street from one-way to two-way traffic. St. Louis runs from Water to Broad Streets and is one of the widest streets in downtown.

The cost of the conversion project is \$125,000 for signal work which is still being installed. Until the signalization is complete, the intersections of Conception and St. Louis and St. Joseph and St. Louis Streets will function as 4-way stops. This latest conversion is part of Mayor Sam Jones' plan to make downtown Mobile more pedestrian friendly and increase the opportunity for continued redevelopment.

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.

Creative minds are behind this sign that has recently gone up at 202 Government Street. This may not tell us exactly whose home it will be, but we are intrigued. And since the renovation process can take many months, this sign begins to tell the story long before the firm has moved in.

Baldwin County Residents Soon to Ride the Wave

Imagine a hassle-free commute across the Bay -- reading the newspaper or working on your laptop, even engrossed in the latest best-seller. Sound impossible? It won't be for long. It took an act of Congress, but Mobile and Baldwin Counties will soon be connected by bus service known as Baylinc. Baldwin Rural Area Transportation System (BRATS) will begin traveling between Eastern Shore cities and downtown Mobile Tuesday, November 6th.



The very first bus, which will pick up passengers in Fairhope, Daphne and Spanish Fort, will arrive at 7:45 a.m. at Bienville Square. From there riders will be able to connect with the Wave Transit System buses to other parts of Mobile. Baylinc will be running two busses in the morning and two in the afternoon with one-way fares ranging from \$1.50 to \$3.00. This new service was developed through the efforts of Envision Coastal Alabama.

One of the worst things about waiting for the bus is not knowing how long you'll actually have to wait. The Wave Transit has eliminated that problem at three downtown stops with electronic Wayside signs that list the route, destination, time of the next bus, and real time. As driving your own car becomes more aggravating and expensive, The Wave is working to make public transportation as user friendly as

possible.

[For information about the Wave...](#)

Downtown Doings

Some upcoming events in downtown Mobile



Living Downtown -- the Tour, sponsored by RBC Centura, Saturday, October 20, 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Visit 30 downtown properties open for public tours. Tickets in advance/ \$15, tickets on day of event/ \$20. For more information call 251-434-8498 or visit

www.downtownmobile.org.

Gulf Coast Antiques Food and Wine Festival, October 19, 20, and 21 at Mobile Convention Center. Weekend pass/ \$10. Celebrating fine antiques, fine food and fine wine, this festival presents a 50,000 square foot shopping village of high-quality antiques and collectables in concert with a culinary marketplace featuring gourmet foods, fine wines, state-of-the-art appliances and accessories. Demonstration stages will feature celebrity chefs creating their signature dishes and sharing kitchen secrets alternating with renowned antiques and design experts offering their insights and advice on the care and feeding of your special pieces. For more information please call (251) 694-0457 or visit www.gcafw.com.

Founder's Day Colonial Mobile, November 10, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. in Bienville Square. The Crichton Optimist Club is sponsoring this inaugural event celebrating colonial Mobile. This family friendly day features entertainment, exhibitions, art shows, vendors and other living history attractions. Proceeds will benefit the Boys and Girls Club. Call 251-454-9872 for information.

YMCA Wing Bowl III Chicken Wing Cookoff, November 17 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. in Bienville Square. This competition offers awards in "Backyard Expert, Professional, Hottest, and People's Choice" categories. Music and kids' activities. Proceeds will benefit YMCA Strong Kids. 251-518-WING or www.ymcaofsouthalabama.org.

Contexture: Fabric, Fashion and Fantasy, Space 301 Off Centre, October 12, 2007 - January 6, 2008. Works by Pinky Bass, Matt Posey and Alex Podesta. 6 South Joachim Street. Gallery closed Monday and Tuesday. www.space301.com.

Human Grossology: The Impolite Science of the Human

Body, *October 5 - December 31 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

Seamonsters: A Prehistoric Adventure, *October 5 - January 10, 2008 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.

Arts!Alive, *Friday, October 26, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Cathedral Square Arts District.* Hands on art activities for the entire family. Artists and other vendors under tents along the Square.

Market on the Square, *Each Saturday in Cathedral Square throughout October and November, 8 a.m. to noon.* Get to the farmers' market early for the best pickings of this year's fall crop! For more information, call (251)208-7540.

Brown Bag in Bienville Square, *11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.* Bring a lunch and enjoy live music under the trees. For more information, call (251) 470-7730.

Third Ward, TX, a documentary, *Tuesday, October 23, 6:45 p.m. in Bernheim Hall at the Ben May Main Library.* Filmmaker Andrew Garrison will be on hand to discuss his documentary and "The Power of Art in Revitalizing a Community." Sponsored by the Mobile Arts Council and the Mobile Public Library. www.mobilearts.org

Mithril Benefit Concert for Government Street United Methodist Church, *Thursday, December 13 at 7 p.m.* 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...

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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