



# A publication of Main Street Mobile, Inc. DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE NEWS

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## THE ARTS EDITION

By Rhonda Davis

I have been waiting for months to write an arts edition for the Downtown Alliance News, and I am happy to present information to you that I have found both solid and thought provoking. This edition takes a look at the role that art plays in the revitalization of downtown Mobile. I have included hard numbers on construction projects by our cultural institutions that show the commitment that their respective boards of directors and our community leaders have to downtown Mobile. I am happy to report the results of an

economic impact study on the arts compiled by Mobile United. I am delighted to share the conversation I had with Thomas Harrison, our resident authority on the arts in Mobile. I have included a look at how a music festival has turned into a huge economic engine for downtown.

The next time you attend a concert at the Saenger, a Friday evening LoDa ArtWalk!, or visit one of our unique art galleries, I hope you remember the impact that you make to both the art community and to downtown Mobile.

## ART AND DOWNTOWN

By Rhonda Davis

### In the Beginning

The beginning was the early 1990s. Main Street Mobile and the Mobile Historic Development Commission worked to establish the Cathedral Square Arts District in downtown. The concept was to dedicate an area of downtown with the vision that it would be developed into a hub for arts activities. The district was bound by Dauphin Street, Conti Street, Joachim Street and Lawrence Street with the historic Saenger Theatre anchoring the area as a performing arts hub.

Then there was the development of Cathedral Square, at that time a block of undeveloped land that lay at the foot of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. This property was destined to be a new public performance park. Following a successful fundraising campaign, Cathedral Square, a beautiful new public space was dedicated in 1996. The new downtown park was immediately embraced by Mobilians.

Then came the construction projects by the cultural power-houses. The Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center with the new IMAX Theater was constructed downtown in 1998. The Museum of Mobile opened in the newly restored and expanded Old Southern Market a few years later. The beginning phases of restoration of the Saenger Theatre began and continued. In 2002, a shuttered storefront on Dauphin Street became the Larkins Music Center, the new home to the Mobile Opera and Mobile Symphony. Then came the move by the Alabama Contemporary Dance Company to their new studio on Joachim Street, across from their performance home the Saenger Theatre. Finally, the conversion of the old Press Register building into the new contemporary art gallery, Space 301 in 2003. Major capital construction projects totaling an impressive \$55,741,022 have been invested in downtown.

In-fill by smaller art galleries began to come and go as downtown grew. A big



Space 301 opened on the inaugural arts event Arts Alive! in November 2003. Space 301 is Mobile's contemporary art gallery.

move by the Mobile Arts Council to a visible space on Dauphin Street and the opening of their Skinny Gallery helped solidify downtown as the arts district of Mobile. By 2006 all of our performing arts organizations were either housed downtown or used downtown facilities as their performance homes. This includes Mobile Ballet who performs in the Mobile Civic Center Theater and Playhouse in the Park, our youth's theater group, who now stages two performances a year at the Saenger Theatre. What has the impact of these large-scale projects been on downtown Mobile? They have helped drive development in downtown and filled the street with people. And, where people are, money usually follows.

### A Museum Working as an Economic Engine

When the Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center and the J. L. Bedsole IMAX Theater opened in October of 1998, it was a sparkling moment for Mobile. Little did we know the dynamic impact this new museum and children's science center would have on the next decade of development downtown. With an initial construction cost

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### CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN BY ART ORGANIZATIONS

1998	Gulf Coast Exploreum	Initial Construction	\$ 17,000,000
2000	Museum of Mobile	Restoration/ Addition	\$ 11,000,000
2001	Saenger Theatre	Phase I	\$ 242,267
2002	Larkins Music Center	Renovation	\$ 1,300,000
	Saenger Theatre	Phase III	\$ 16,800
2003	Saenger Theatre	Phase II	\$ 179,063
	Saenger Theatre	Phase III	\$ 21,169
	Space 301	Phase I Renovations	\$ 1,457,533
	Gulf Coast Exploreum	Upgrades	\$ 2,500,000
2004	Saenger Theatre	Phase III	\$ 5,290,681
	Saenger Theatre	General Services/ Administration	\$ 993,050
2005	Saenger Theatre	Phase IV	\$ 547,562
	Mobile Arts Council	Skinny Gallery/Offices	\$ 50,000
	Space 301 Off Centre	Phase V	\$ 142,897
2007	Space 301	Phase II	\$ 5,000,000
	Ben May Main Library	Expansion/Renovation	\$ 10,000,000
		<b>TOTAL INVESTMENT</b>	<b>\$ 55,741,022</b>

### SUGGESTED READING LIST

*The Rise of the Creative Class - and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* by Richard Florida

*The Great Neighbor Book - A Do It Yourself Guide For Placemaking* by Jay Walljasper, Senior Fellow, Project for Public Spaces

*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte, Project for Public Space

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# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

By Elizabeth Sanders

## DOWNTOWN PARKING GENERATES DEBATE

Ah, Parking – the bane of every downtown advocate's existence. Last fall after repeated conversations about parking issues with people of all walks of life, we decided to venture into the discussion in a meaningful way. We contacted our old friend Steve Gibson with Urban Place Consulting who had been working with a number of cities, including most recently our neighbor to the east, Pensacola, on analyses of parking management in their respective downtowns. After a bit of negotiation and discussion in the fall, we had an agreement and started work in early 2007. We created a committee, "Parking and Transportation" (original isn't it), and started work.

Meetings have been had with everyone from the Mayor and City Councilors to the parking contractor to the Police to interested business owners and residents. We also conducted an email survey that went out to about 500 individuals to which we received an incredible 216 responses – an amazing response rate for a survey. The findings were presented by the committee and Mr. Gibson at an Alliance Breakfast Briefing on the 24th of July (after this went to print so I have no details, but I am sure it was an extraordinary morning.)

### The Study

Suffice it to say, we have some work to do. I know this will come as a surprise to all of you, but the management of on-street parking could be improved. There was a strong effort to communicate that there is nothing wrong with the company managing the on-street contract with the city, just that the agreement leaves an unclear chain-of-command and is based on a set of criteria that is perhaps inconsistent with a pro-development/pro-customer service agenda. The committee, which was composed of business owners, residents, city officials, and property owners, came up, after much discussion, with a mission statement of values that they think should guide the attitude about downtown parking from here forward.

***The Downtown Parking Mission is 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.***

The Committee was mindful of the fact that parking must be managed so that the people who work downtown do not take up spaces that need to be available for frequent turnover for customers. To do this, employee parking must be well integrated into the downtown employment center locations so that it is convenient and accessible. However, there are examples of cities that are balancing the many competing interests of parking with positive effect.

One city cited in the study was Greenville, SC, where the city decided in the 1970s to partner with the business community and invest heavily in parking infrastructure. On-street spaces are not metered, but time limited and there is a well managed surface lot and garage infrastructure managed by the "Parking Services Division" of the City of Greenville. I do not know how many of you have been to Greenville, SC, but it has a thriving downtown. This type of attitude is one reason why.

The main recommendation is to involve the downtown stakeholders in some meaningful way in parking decisions and operations. How this is done will come out of further discussions between all of the parking stakeholders. The options are many and there are good examples all over the country.

The authors also recommended strongly that a comprehensive look at upgrading the requirements of the design of private parking lots along with a come-in-to-compliance period needs to be undertaken along with a block-by-block analysis of the allocation of street spaces, loading zones, angle parking, etc. This analysis when followed up with a remarking of on-street spaces, will probably create additional spaces available to the public. Finally, a demand analysis needs to be undertaken that takes into account the many new developments that are planned that will take old surface lot parking out of the offering in key high-use blocks—the Hampton Inn and RSA sites, for example.

### The Survey

The survey was most interesting. People were very generous with their time in providing thoughtful answers to the open-ended questions and as a result we have some excellent feed-back on how people feel about downtown. The bottom line is that downtown parking is a stress inducer that causes people to make other choices for their consumer decisions. One respondent put it as follows: **"I just choose to go outside of downtown to eat or shop or whatever it is I need. It's terrible that parking would be such a dissuasion from visiting downtown businesses."** This is an attitude often communicated and it is one we must address if we are to move forward with becoming something more than a downtown for office workers.

There were lots of comments about the condition of the off-street parking lots. Comments like this were typical, **"There are plenty of off-street parking lots, but the majority are not well-lit, are dirty, not clearly striped, and not manned with attendants. Citizens who don't frequent downtown are confused by the signage at the lots and don't feel comfortable using them."** Parking in downtown Mobile is about as confusing as I have ever seen it. It is hard to tell where you can park and the lots are often simply the ruins of some long lost building. Study after study has recommended providing some type of incentive to encourage commercial parking owners to landscape, light, and pave their lots.

Usually people say, "There's just no parking downtown." Well actually there are 18,480 parking spaces in the area known as the Hank Aaron Loop - 3418 spaces on the curb, 12,122 in lots, and 3028 in garages. We had someone count them. The real issue is price and location. We have parking lots where someone demolished a building.

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# A CONVERSATION WITH THOMAS HARRISON

By Rhonda Davis

As I began thinking about the arts in Mobile and how the arts community has contributed to the development of downtown Mobile there was one person's thoughts and opinion I was interested in hearing. That person is Thomas Harrison, Arts Editor of the Press-Register. Harrison is celebrating his tenth anniversary with the Press-Register and has witnessed firsthand and in detail the ups and downs of our arts community and our downtown growth. I was delighted to spend some time hearing what he had to say.

## How do you think the arts have affected the revitalization of downtown Mobile?

Favorably, for the most part. Mobile has a long way to go before its downtown can be justifiably described as "revitalized," but there are encouraging signs of progress. The LoDa Artwalks and twice-a-year Arts Alive! festivals bring people together downtown, and the energy level is up.

The Gulf Coast Exploreum is a community resource, not only for special exhibitions such as *Pompeii* and *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, but as a venue for special events and the only place you can see an IMAX movie on a domed ceiling. The museum's economic impact on cultural tourism downtown has been astonishing. The Museum of Mobile, fully restored after Hurricane Katrina, has raised its profile as well.

I do think the loss of Alabama Contemporary Dance will be deeply felt, and it would be a sign of progress if some of the smaller arts groups find homes downtown. A dance studio or a school-affiliated facility would be a terrific boost to the growth of downtown.

The Saenger Theatre is a beautiful and intimate concert setting; and the adjacent Larkins Music Center, home to Mobile Opera and Mobile Symphony, is a nerve center for the music community. Add to that the presence of Cathedral Square Gallery, the Chesser Gallery and now Space 301 Off Centre (adjacent to the Saenger), and downtown Mobile is slowly becoming a place people want to spend time.

The Mobile Arts Council, ideally located on Cathedral Square, is a mandatory stop for anyone taking a downtown "walking tour." The MAC's Skinny Gallery is one of the better visual arts venues around, easily seen by passers-by on Dauphin Street.

## In the 10 years that you have been in Mobile, what significant changes have you seen in the arts community?

The most obvious change is the presence of new or renovated facilities, starting with the creation of Space 301 in the old Mobile Press-Register building, and the multimillion-dollar makeover of the Saenger Theatre. Both are run by the nonprofit Centre for the Living Arts, and both facilities are valuable assets to a downtown that has no "art movie" theater, no coffee-house culture, no everyday community newsstand/gathering place.

Mobile remains a special-events town, but that might change as well. Most of the major arts organizations around here, and I include the Mobile Public Library, have upgraded their facilities or built anew.

The "jewel in the crown" is the Mobile Museum of Art in Langan Park in west Mobile. It might surprise people when I describe the MMA as one of the best-kept secrets around. A splendid arts venue, the museum is well respected by out-of-towners and admired by visitors, but often taken for granted by Mobilians. The Exploreum relocated to its downtown home in 1998, and the Museum of Mobile moved into the adjacent Old City Hall/Southern Market in fall 2001.

Other significant changes:

The arrival of Scott Speck as music director of the MSO cannot be overstated. The reconstituted orchestra has improved steadily under his guidance, and audiences love the MSO programs. Along with that, the departure of Christina Littlejohn, a guiding hand as executive director of the orchestra; and the arrival of the experienced Stephen Hedrick.

The extraordinary contributions of Jerome Shannon as general director and now artistic director of Mobile Opera. His vision, personality and ability to attract stellar voices to the opera stage is immeasurable. The onstage results are sometimes spectacular. He leaves in 2008, and the opera must find a suitable successor.

Winthrop Corey's young dancers at Mobile Ballet have improved year by year, and Corey also attracts astonishing talent to Mobile, and audiences appreciate the level of artistry on stage at the Mobile Civic Center.

## What art related events or performances do you think have had the greatest impact on downtown?

Mobile Symphony Orchestra brought Yo-Yo Ma to town in 2005 and Itzhak Perlman in 2007. Both played to sellout audiences at the Saenger Theatre. Next season the MSO will bring violinist Joshua Bell for a showcase concert on March 20, 2008. A year later another violinist, Midori will come to town for a week-long residency in spring 2009. These are world-class musicians, and they have a major impact on how outsiders perceive Mobile, and how the city sees itself.

Mobile Opera has enjoyed a few highlights as well, such as the wonderful staging of Orff's "Carmina Burana" (in collaboration with Mobile Ballet); along with productions of "Turandot," "La Traviata" and "H.M.S. Pinafore," among others.

On the visual arts side, the November 2003 opening of Space 301 coincided with the first Arts Alive! festival on a magical night. Great weather, fantastic crowds, and a huge energy buzz for Mobile.

For box-office success, no one does it better than the Gulf Coast Exploreum, who brings in one major event after another: *China: 7,000 Years of Innovation*, *American Accents*, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, *Mummy: the Inside Story*, *A Day in Pompeii* – high-impact, high-profile exhibits and IMAX movies, lecture series and imaginative programming.

## How do you see the relationship between the arts and the downtown community working?

Probably better than it worked a decade ago, although I wish the relationship would blossom as it has in other cities such as Charleston, Savannah or even nearby Pensacola. Our town needs more public art, ala the "Art Takes Flight" pelican project in nearby Fairhope; and more art in public places, as with the Battle House featuring artwork by Alabama artists.

## Why not transform some of downtown Mobile's abandoned buildings into a community art project? Let art students, architects and volunteers use a building or a block of buildings as their "urban canvas," or create public artwork for downtown parks?

Mobile-Baldwin should get behind the idea of a full-blown arts festival on the scale of BayFest or Mardi Gras, although most of us would be delighted with a Friday-through-Sunday festival of art, music, theater, dance and film. Arts Alive! should be nurtured so the festival can grow, expand and evolve.

## Where do you think we are heading in the next five years? Ten years?

Anyone would love to see that far ahead - to see ideas become reality. For Mobile that will require vision, bold and difficult decisions and a lot of "new blood" in key positions of authority. Arrogance and back-room politics have impeded the city's progress, and that must change before Mobile takes a quantum leap forward.

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of \$17 million, this facility was the first of the major projects to come on-line. Through expanding their facility, constantly upgrading their permanent exhibit halls and bringing in acclaimed blockbuster exhibits, the Gulf Coast Exploreum has seen 1.6 million people come through their doors through the end of June.

"The Museum is drawing people to downtown on a consistent basis," reported Mike Sullivan, Executive Director. "The cultural/arts exhibits that we showcase have established downtown as an arts destination. People living in the I-10 corridor are always asking for and looking for annual exhibits at the Exploreum," explained Sullivan. "Of the people who come here, 65-70% are coming from outside the Mobile – Baldwin county area. We are constantly changing programming and have offered 22 different traveling exhibits since our opening in 1998."

The Exploreum's formula for success is working for downtown. According to University of South Alabama economist Semoon Chang, the economic impact to Mobile from the *Dead Sea Scrolls* exhibit was an estimated \$16 million. During the most recent exhibit of *Pompeii*, the Exploreum was experiencing an average of 3,000 visitors each weekend. During a blockbuster event the exhibit will be attended by 70% adults – who spend money in the gift shop, have lunch, and linger in downtown. During non-blockbuster time, 68% of the attendance is by children under the age of 12 who are accompanied by a parent, grandparent or other adult. The mix is interesting because the Exploreum continues to draw people with their IMAX films and permanent children's exhibits like Hands On Hall and the Wharf of Wonder during non-blockbuster seasons. "People driving from Pensacola and the Navarre Beach area and Hattiesburg come for the day and spend at least three-and-a-half to four hours in the building," Sullivan stated. "The Exploreum is building our own audience. We have been voted #1 Family Destination by the Press Register Readers for the past four years."

Since opening, The Exploreum has invested another \$2.5 million in upgrades and expansions. They are currently in the planning stages for a new \$3 million gallery that will house the traveling exhibits.

Here is an attendance comparison between 1998 and 2006 that show attendance records of some of our downtown cultural attractions.

	Exploreum	Fort Conde	Museum of Mobile	Phoenix Fire Museum
1998	62,649	56,857	0	0
2006	151,184	336,225	18,688	7,454

\*Note that the Museum of Mobile was closed due to damage sustained from Hurricane Katrina. Figures provided by the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### Arts Events Bring People Downtown

Arts events have been used for years as a tool to attract people to downtown areas. One of Mobile's largest events was developed with this in mind. Thirteen years ago when BayFest, our three-day outdoor music festival was formulated, the goal was two-fold. First the leaders wanted to bring people downtown in an effort to boost the downtown economy, and secondly, they wanted to offer Mobile a new cultural experience. That concept worked. The first year BayFest was introduced 55,000 people attended the three-day outdoor music festival held in the streets of downtown. Last year that number soared to over 220,000 people.

"The influx of people into downtown has been successful. In the beginning many people who came to BayFest would only come downtown once or twice a year," explained Bobby Bostwick, the festival's corporation president. "By coming to BayFest they suddenly saw all the changes occurring in downtown and said 'wow.' Now they come downtown more often to eat in downtown restaurants and enjoy other events besides BayFest."

Over the past twelve years, BayFest has had an estimated economic impact of over \$100 million according to a study commissioned by the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The merchants have told me that BayFest weekend is the biggest days of the year for them," stressed Boswick. "Last year we had people buy on-line tickets from 24 different states outside of Alabama. They come to Mobile, stay in our hotels, eat in our restaurants and spend money in our city."

BayFest has also contributed more than \$900,000 to local non-profit organizations through special donations, honoraria, and by offering the groups the opportunity to rean commissions by wokring in the food and beverage booths.

This year, BayFest's volunteer Board of Directors expects to draw over 225,000 people to the festival. Tickets for this year's BayFest go on sale August 1 for on-line purchases and September 4 at the official BayFest outlets. For more information visit the BayFest website at [www.bayfest.com](http://www.bayfest.com).

Another music festival that is growing every year is the Gulf Coast Ethnic & Heritage Jazz Festival, held in August. This young festival began as a small event and

is growing into a multi-concert event with local and national artists performing. The music is high quality with concerts being held in different downtown venues, including Bienville Square. This event is another example of how diverse art can be and how much people enjoy choices in their entertainment and cultural activities. Keep your eye on this festival. For more information visit their website at [www.gcejazzfest.com](http://www.gcejazzfest.com).

### Part of the Plan

One of the major components to the Public Space Action Plan for Downtown Mobile. One example cited in the Plan was the concept of converting part of Conti Street into an open-air street market featuring artist booths. Taking that suggestion, a group of art activists and property owners came together and formulated the concept of Arts Alive!, a free outdoor art market and entertainment production. Arts Alive! is presented twice a year, in the fall and spring. This outdoor celebration of the arts includes performances, art exhibits, food and fun. Each event has a different theme, but with one



*BayFest, the three-day music festival, has served as a huge economic engine for Mobile. This year festival organizers estimate over 225,000 people will fill the streets of downtown on the first weekend of October.*

common thread – it is centered at Cathedral Square, our performing arts park. The event has included the opening of Space 301, outdoor concerts by the Mobile Symphony, gallery exhibit openings and theatrical productions. The event draws several thousand people downtown and gives the public a great sampling of our performing arts and visual artist's works.

"Having art as part of the mix is what makes a city great," stated Cynthia Nikitin, Vice President, Project for Public Spaces, the organization that developed the Public Space Action Plan for Downtown. "To borrow the tagline from the National Endowment for the Arts, 'a great nation deserves great art,' we say a great city deserves great art. Art and art events generate money. In many cases art is the only reason some people come to downtowns." Nikitin explained that by 'throwing open the streets' and giving downtowns a feel of flexibility for activities, more activity will be generated and people are more likely to stay downtown after work and come downtown from other areas of the community to attend those activities. "Success is in the series of small weekly events. That is how you get people into downtowns consistently. We know that if you create a venue, space follows (parks, restaurants, etc.), and then people will come. By focusing on smaller events the impact is great and continuous. Big events like festivals then become icing on the cake."

Another popular art event that is drawing people downtown is the LoDa ArtWalk, a Friday evening open house that is produced once a month. Galleries, restaurants and our downtown arts organizations open their doors offering music, complimentary refreshments and art in a grass-roots effort to connect the public with our area artists. If you haven't attended a LoDa ArtWalk please do. It is held the second Friday of each month from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. in and around the Cathedral Square Arts District.

### Children and the Arts

When you keep children at the heart of a community you intuitively provide them with safe and inspiring experiences. All of our cultural organizations have outreach programs designed to introduce art to children. The Junior League of Mobile sponsors a Musical Petting Zoo prior to dress rehearsals of concerts by the Mobile Symphony. The Petting Zoo gives children an opportunity to examine musical instruments played by the musicians, hear the instruments, and talk to the musicians. Prior to major productions, the Mobile Opera tours schools, performing and introducing their "stars" to elementary school children. These are just a sampling of the children's programming that all of our art organizations have included in their strategic plans to help grow their audiences.

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# 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.



One St. Louis Center celebrates its 100th birthday this year. The building originally known as the McGowin-Lyon Building was a part of the Southern Hardware & Supply.

Photo courtesy of John Toomey Company, Inc.

## ONE ST. LOUIS CENTRE

**Address:** 1 St. Louis Street

**Owner:** Domain One St. Louis LP

**Management:** John Toomey Company, Inc.

**Telephone Number:** (251) 342-7229

**Year Built:** 1907

**Total Square Footage:** 105,000

**Occupancy Rate:** 95%

**Available Square Footage for Lease:** 5,130

**Leasing Rate:** \$17 to \$18

**Leasing Agent:** Jill Meeks, Vice President,  
John Toomey Company, Inc.

**Leasing Telephone Number:** (251) 342-7229

This year One St. Louis Centre celebrates its 100th birthday. This elegant building situated on the corner of Water Street and St. Louis Street hasn't always been the premier office building that it is today. Originally constructed in 1907 as the McGowin-Lyons Building, it was part of the Southern Hardware & Supply business and was built in the American Movement/ Commercial Style of architecture that was common at that time.

Over the years the building was abandoned and had received damage from Hurricane Fredric. In the early 1980s, local developer Jim Mattei began restoring the building, one of the first

buildings to be restored in the beginning of downtown's revitalization pilgrimage.

"One of the most memorable events during the project was the day we found the original beams in the building - they were solid and signed by the carpenters who originally built the building," explained Robert Meeks of Mobile Construction Management. He also shared the fact that the building was built on top of cotton bales - an interesting fact to be sure. Meeks worked as a sub-contractor restoring the building under Mattei's direction. "We were one of many contractors' that Mattei used on the project," explained Meeks.

**"This is a good time for Mobile and a good time for Mobilains ..."**

The quality of the restoration of One St. Louis Centre can be seen throughout the building. "Mattei had marble brought in from Italy for the floors," recalled Meeks, "and Italians brought in with it for the installation. The Italians wouldn't let us touch the marble. They were true craftsmen."

One St. Louis Centre is now home to an array of influential businesses.

The law firms of Sirote & Permutt and Alford, Clausen & McDonald are housed there as well as Strachan Shipping.

"We found the old restored building had more charm than any other building we had seen downtown. It also had convenient and reasonably priced parking, Davis & Sons did the building maintenance and cleanup, it was convenient to the courthouses, restaurants, and hotels; we were sold," said Jay McDonald of Alford, Clausen & McDonald. "Clients and other lawyers also find the building easily accessible via St. Louis Street, I-165 and I-10."

"With shipping being a huge market for Mobile, One St. Louis Street allows easy access to downtown and to the waterfront," explained Meeks. "This is a good time for Mobile and a good time for Mobilians, and we are happy to be here," Meeks stated with confidence.

### TENANT DIRECTORY

Alford, Clausen & McDonald  
Adams Reese LLP  
Sirote & Permutt P. C.  
Hudson & Watts LLP  
First Securities  
Strachan Shipping  
John C. McAleer - Chapter 13

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And I mean grow as in exposing children to art with the intention of instilling a love of art that will blossom as the child grows into adulthood.

Many downtown events - from BayFest to Kids Days In Bienville to Arts Alive! - have hands-on art activities and performances designed especially for children. These events capitalize on the opportunity to introduce children to a wide spectrum of art. The children may dance with a member of the Alabama Contemporary Dance Company or paint with one of the many art teachers hired to manage the art activities during an event.

One of the most significant and overlooked facts about children, art and downtown Mobile is the fact that Dunbar Magnet School for the Performing Arts is located within the downtown area. Dunbar Magnet School, located at 500 St. Anthony Street, is "the" performing arts school for grades 4 through 6 and serves as the only performing arts middle school in the Mobile County Public School System. The fine arts curriculum is overlaid into the educational experience and gives children throughout the county the opportunity to pursue an arts enriched public education. The art education that these young students are receiving at Dunbar will help ensure that the arts in our community will continue to thrive.

The Mobile Arts Council works as an advocate for art and children by awarding Arts in Education Grants. They also actively develop teaching guides that are distributed to the schools for special art exhibits at our area museums. This brings children

into downtown to experience programs they may otherwise not have the opportunity to experience.

An impressive fact that everyone should know is that the Mobile County Public Library has the largest Summer Reading Program in the state of Alabama. The effort of the Library staff to organize and execute a reading program of such magnitude shows their dedication to literacy and to our children. The newly expanded Ben May Main Library is a fine example of how important children are to the Library. The new children's area has grown greatly and includes a family room, a larger story-time room, more child-friendly computers, and of course, more books and literacy programming.

### Art as Evidence

With the tremendous capital investments by our art and cultural institutions into downtown Mobile; the fact that art and culture bring people into downtown as shown by the MBCVB records; and the significant economic impact of the arts, there should be no doubt that the arts serve as one of the primary catalysts for downtown revitalization. The vision of the organizations' leaders; the loyalty of the public to attend events, the dedication of the volunteers who invest their time is evidence that art is important to Mobile. Without these groups of people and pioneers, downtown would not be poised on the edge of the new future we are destined to have.



# WEAVING THE FABRIC OF DOWNTOWN MOBILE

By Rhonda Davis

Each issue of 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.

## CATHEDRAL SQUARE GALLERY

The concept of opening a co-operative art gallery in downtown was born when three Mobile ladies, Betty Walker, Jane Shaw and Suzanne Wright, got together. All are well-traveled Mobile artists. With the thought of 'if they can do it in Seattle, why can't we do it here' in mind, they opened the doors of Cathedral Square Gallery in 1995. Twelve years later the Gallery is still thriving in the heart of the Cathedral Square Arts District.

"Cathedral Square Gallery allows artists to produce

**"We feel that we are making a difference in downtown Mobile"**

and sell their art. It gives consumers the opportunity to view a large variety of artwork, learn about our talented regional artists and purchase pieces for their own collection," explained Linda. "We offer art in all price ranges. From hand-made scarves, to very affordable prints, to large-scale pieces from some of our area's most collected artists," stressed Linda. "People who buy consistently come back - they know the artists and begin their collections from the walls of Cathedral Square Gallery."

When asked what she thought was the key to the Gallery, Linda explained, "Having the Gallery allows all of this art to come downtown. We feel that we are making a difference in downtown."

The Gallery is open Monday through Saturday, from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. or by appointment.



One of Cathedral Square Gallery's 50 regional artists gets inspiration from the sidewalk.

## CENTRE FOR THE LIVING ARTS

One day Mobile businessman Palmer Bedsole was reading Newsweek and it happened to include a listing of the 300 most livable cities in the United States. When he saw Mobile listed as number 34 in regards to sports, he was pleased. When he saw Mobile listed as 278 in regards to the arts, he was livid. That was when he decided we needed to do something.

After gathering together a group of the city's most influential businessmen and gaining a commitment from the J. L. Bedsole Foundation for \$500,000 per year to invest in the project, he founded the new non-profit



*The Saenger Theatre hosts up to 115 events a year. It is a favorite performance hall of many nationally touring musicians and is the performance home to the Mobile Symphony and Alabama Contemporary Dance Company.*

organization Centre for the Living Arts in October 1999. The organization's purpose was to focus on developing the performing and visual arts. Working within that frame-work, the Centre for the Living Arts now manages the historic Saenger Theatre as their performing arts headquarters and is the creator of Mobile's contemporary art complex and Space 301. Community activist and non-profit leader Carlos Parkman serves as the Executive Director of the Centre for the Living Arts.

"The most positive thing about the CLA is its entertainment. And people love entertainment. That is the most rewarding thing to experience," described Parkman when asked about the CLA.

The diversity of the performance schedule at the Saenger has worked to bring the greatest cross-section of people into downtown Mobile. "The diversity of the audience who attends Saenger events is amazing to watch," explained Chris Penton, Box Office Manager. "When you have a performer like B. B. King come in you have old and young, black and white, multi-generations of families coming together. It's great. And we offer everything from the classics - opera and symphony to children's plays here."

Because the Saenger is embedded in the heart of downtown Mobile, it plays an important part in the economic well-being of our downtown. "Our success bleeds over into the parking lots, restaurants, and down-

**"Our success bleeds over into the parking lots, restaurants, and downtown businesses."**

town businesses," explained Penton. "On a Saenger night, the streets are filled with people. The City and the Stewarts and Regents make sure everything is clean and well-lit. It's exciting to be downtown."

In 2003, the Mobile Register donated the old Register building to CLA. This allowed CLA to begin creating an exciting contemporary art facility that fills the second part of their mission. Since opening, Space 301 has attracted over 25,000 visitors.

Currently the exhibit *A Time for War, A Time For Peace* is open.

If you are interested in learning more about the Centre for the Living Arts, the historic Saenger Theatre, or Space 301; or you are interested in becoming a member of CLA, please visit their website at [www.centreforthelivingarts.com](http://www.centreforthelivingarts.com).

## A PHOTOGRAPHER IN RESIDENCE

David Trimmier's name is known to many. He is the Chief Photographer at Lagniappe, a Respiratory Therapy Supervisor at USA Children's and Women's hospital, and a talented local photographer whose work hangs in the Hurricane Brewing Company and other downtown locations. Trimmier's work was featured recently in a haunting exhibit called Apparitions in the Mobile Art Council's Skinny Gallery. Trimmier is also one of downtown's artists in residence. In this context that means he is an artist who lives downtown, in an airy apartment over Three George's, 226 Dauphin Street.

When I asked Trimmier why he chose to live downtown he answered honestly "because I can." This November will be the third anniversary of his move to Dauphin Street. "As a child I took guitar lessons at Rutz Music on Dauphin Street. I loved downtown. Then they

**"Moving here grabbed me. There is an underlying thread of energy."**

drained Wragg Swamp and the monoliths began to be build out west," he reminisced, thinking of the decline of downtown. "Then in my late teens DeTonti Square was getting started and my Aunt and Uncle retired and moved there. I thought that was cool."

"The idea of the revitalization of old areas fascinates me, and it seems like the right thing to do. I love Charleston and Savannah and all places where historic preservation takes place," Trimmier explained.

When asked what he liked best about living downtown he paused and thoughtfully replied, "Moving here grabbed me. There is an underlying thread of energy, and to borrow a physics term, great potential for energy." He continued, "The only reason I get in my vehicle is to go to work. I've made wonderful friends down here."

One of the most appealing advantages Trimmier sees to living downtown is the people he meets. "I love interacting with people - meeting new people. One of my favorite things to do is to sit at a table in front of Spot of Tea on a Saturday morning." So if you see a smiling man with a thick head of fabulous hair enjoying his neighbors and the morning street scene, stop and say hello, it's probably David.

To view Trimmier's photography visit his website at [www.davidtrimmier.com](http://www.davidtrimmier.com) and go to his portfolio.



Trimmier's photographs can be seen hanging on walls throughout downtown. For a sampling of his work visit Hurricane Brewing Company located at Dauphin and Joachim Streets.

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ARTS

By Rhonda Davis

Below are the results of an economic impact of the arts survey conducted and compiled by the Recreation and Culture Committee of Mobile United. The survey was done in part to update one section of a survey compiled in 2000 by Wolf, Keens & Co. and reported in "Strengthening Culture: A Cultural Plan for Mobile" released in February 2001.

Not all of the results are listed below. This is just a sampling of data to show the documented economic impact that our arts organizations and our art patrons have on Mobile. For a complete report, please contact Mobile United at 432-1638.

The Downtown Mobile Alliance would like to thank Mobile United for sharing this information with us. We would also like to thank the six cultural organizations who participated in the survey and who were kind enough to share information on their organizations. Those organizations include: Mobile Symphony, Mobile Opera, Mobile Ballet, Gulf Coast Exploreum, Museum of Mobile and the Centre for the Living Arts. The significance of their participation is that they are all arts groups who operate downtown (with the exception of Mobile Ballet), and perform downtown.

## Economic Contribution

Spending by arts organizations:*	\$8,496,115
Admissions purchases by audience:	\$3,613,073
	-----
Total direct spending:	\$12,109,188
Indirect/induced spending:**	\$10,171,718
	-----
Total economic contribution:	\$22,280,906

\*All data are for Fiscal Year 2006

\*\*Assuming a regional incomes multiplier of 1.84

## Facts at a Glance

Number of full-time employees.....	52
Number of part-time employees.....	84
Number of volunteers.....	643
Hours per year contributed by volunteers.....	36,470

*continued from page 2*

That's the extent of the planning that went into parking. Better signage and a marketing campaign are recommendations of the study and this will take cooperation of the many parking lot owners/managers but will help the consumer navigate the area more effectively and with less stress.

We have shockingly few garages. Downtown Greenville for example has 9 parking structures owned by the city and downtown Roanoke has 6. These are towns with populations of 56,000 people and 94,000 people respectively! (For those of you who do not know, Mobile's population is just under 200,000.) Mobile had 1 city-owned parking structure (now leased to RSA) and the County has 1 (managed by the Radisson Admiral Semmes.) All other structures are privately owned and managed for specific uses.

The point being that our parking offering sprawls out over the whole downtown and is not concentrated in the areas where the highest worker-per-block concentrations are. We are fortunate that the city of Mobile had the foresight to waive the parking requirement for development in the core area, but simultaneously the city needed to get into the parking business to strategically provide parking where needed. This is a planning and development flaw that we will now be able to address in the master planning process beginning this fall.

Paying for parking does put downtown businesses at a distinct disadvantage to competitors located in any other place in the city. People hate paying for parking. They just hate it. Some have resigned themselves to it and let's face it, if we want density, land will be valuable and parking will come at a price. BUT, if we want a successful consumer environment, we need to address the consumer issues. The dialogue has begun. There are many players, and we are just the advocates. If you are interested in getting involved in this discussion, please let me know. We need your input.

Review the entire Parking Management Analysis and the Parking Perception Survey on our website – [www.downtownmobile.org](http://www.downtownmobile.org).

# SAVE THE DATE

THE POWER OF  
VISION



The Downtown Mobile Alliance and  
Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation  
Annual Meeting and Main Street Mobile Awards Celebration

Join us as we celebrate the Renaissance of  
downtown Mobile and experience the Power of Vision!

Monday, August 13, 12:00 p.m.

Check-in begins at 11:30 a.m.

Battle House Hotel, Moonlight Ballroom

26 N. Royal Street

Keynote Speaker: The Honorable Richard Shelby

\$50 per person/\$400 for a table of 8

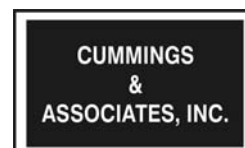
Please call 251-434-8498 for information

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# DOWNTOWN EVENTS

## AUGUST

**1 through 20** – *Auditions: Mobile Symphony Youth Orchestra*, Larkins Music Center, for details contact sarah@mobilesymphony.org

**Through September 3** – *Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas*, The Museum of Mobile

**August 2 through 5** – *Gulf Coast Ethnic & Heritage Jazz Festival*, several events and concerts throughout downtown, for a complete schedule visit [www.gcehjazfest.com](http://www.gcehjazfest.com)

**August 4** – *Café @ the Library – Cooking Demo*, 2:00 p.m., Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library

**August 5** – *Saenger Summer Film Series: On the Waterfront*, 3:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

**August 10** – *Book Signing: Scott O. Brown*, 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., Mobile Arts Council

**August 10** – *LoDa ArtWalk*, 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District

**August 12** – *Second Sunday at the Space*, noon until 2:30 p.m., Space 301

**August 12** – *Saenger Summer Film Series: It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, 3:00 p.m. Saenger Theatre

**August 13** – *Classics Revisited*, 6:30 p.m., Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library

**August 14** – *Dinner & a Movie: Bread and Tulips*, 5:45 p.m. film discussion in Library Café, 6:45 p.m. film screening in Bernheim Hall, Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library

**August 19** – *Saenger Summer Film Series: The Magnificent Seven*, 3:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

**August 21** – *Dinner & a Movie: I'm Not Scared*, 5:45 p.m. film discussion in Library Café, 6:45 p.m. film screening in Bernheim Hall, Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library

**August 23** – *Readers & Writers: author Daniel Wallace* – book discussion, book signing and reception, 7:00 p.m., Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library's Bernheim Hall

**August 25** – *10th Annual Dauphin Street International Beer Festival*, 6:00 p.m., Dauphin Street, Downtown

**August 25** – *Concert: John Prine*, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

**August 27** – *Jazz Jambalaya: The Marsalis Family, Mystic Order of the Jazz Obsessed*, 6:30 p.m., Gulf City Lodge

**August 28** – *Dinner & a Movie: Keys to the House*, 5:45 film discussion in Library Café, 6:45 p.m. film screening in Bernheim Hall, Mobile Public Library Ben May Main Library

**August 30** – *Concert: Kansas*, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## SEPTEMBER

**September 1** – *Second Annual Unity Walk Event*, 6:15 a.m., Spanish Plaza Park

**September 7 through 9** – *Alabama Trophy Hunters Extravaganza*, Mobile Convention Center

**September 8** – *Pictures at an Exhibition* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

**September 8** – *Rickey Smiley & Friends*, time not announced, Mobile Civic Center Theater

**September 9** – *Second Sunday at the Space*, noon until 2:30 p.m., Space 301

**September 14** – *LoDa ArtWalk*, 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District

**September 18** – *Film: The Short Films of Roger Beebe: Documents, Experiments and Wisecracks* presented by the Mobile Arts Council and the Mobile Public Library, Ben May Main Library's Bernheim Hall

**September 20** – *Friends of the Mobile Public Library Gala*, 6:00 p.m., Battle House Hotel

**September 22 and 23** – *The Magical Music of Walt Disney* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. respectively, Saenger Theatre

**September 24** – *Jazz Jam IV*, Mystic Order of the Jazz Obsessed, TBA

**September 28** – *Concert: Emmylou Harris*, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## CLASSES

Weekly Rehearsal: Gulf Coast Gay Men's Chorus, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., 15 N. Joachim Street, for more information contact [www.GulfCoastGayMensChorus.org](http://www.GulfCoastGayMensChorus.org)

Class: Salsa Dance, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Martini's, \$10 per class



10th Annual

Saturday, August 25th

Beer Tasting 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Dauphin Street Entertainment District

Tickets \$15

## NEED HELP?

**CALL THE  
ALLIANCE'S  
REGENTS  
DISTRICT HOTLINE  
251-327-SAFE  
(251-327-7233)**

The Regents provide motorist aid, escorts to vehicles and visitor information.

Keychain tags with the telephone number printed on it are available at the DMDMC office. Pick one up the next time you walk by. The Hotline phone service is provided by AT&T Wireless.

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