



A publication of Main Street Mobile, Inc.

# DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE NEWS

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## GLOBAL TRENDS AFFECTING DOWNTOWN MOBILE

By Carol Hunter

With today's international trade, instant communications and intercontinental travel, global trends affect all of us, even in Mobile. Whether those affects are positive or negative depends on how we prepare for them. Progressive Urban Management Associates, in consultation with the International Downtown Association, has developed a body of research that identifies major global trends affecting downtowns and recommends tangible actions. The following is a summary of the research with recommendations adapted for downtown Mobile.



Baby boomers and their children will be driving the downtown housing market.

### Changing American Demographics.

Three generations are shaping America and the growth of downtowns, each with distinctly different demographics and behaviors. The 77 million Baby Boomers are now retiring at a rate of 10 million a year, with many of the more affluent moving to

urban environments, thus creating a demand for new types of housing and stimulating a boom in cultural amenities. Downtown Mobile will benefit as older boomers look to urban environments both as a way to downsize and to connect to a "neighborhood" of others, providing a social safety net in place of family.

Many of the 44 million Generation Xers, born between 1961 and 1981 are now in their peak earning years. They currently spend nearly \$125 billion per year on goods and services, outspending the average consumer in eating out, clothing, transportation, entertainment and housing. The majority of Gen Xers now have children, making them less likely to choose urban housing, though downtowns that offer cultural and entertainment amenities will be successful in attracting them.

The 70 million Millennials, born between 1977 and 2003, are the most multi-cultural, ethnically diverse generation in American history. This generation tends to be more optimistic, tolerant and open minded than previous generations, and they believe they can make a difference in the world. As America becomes more culturally and ethnically diverse, downtowns such as Mobile's, which welcome, accommodate and celebrate diversity will have an advantage. One caveat: downtown housing must have diverse price points, including rental, to attract multi-skilled, younger residents.



Members of the "Creative Class," especially young women, will help re-invent downtown.

### Changes within the "Creative Class"

Diverse, tolerant, innovative and vibrant environments will attract creative workers, such as entrepreneurs who may staff or start innovative growing companies. Today, this so-called "Creative Class" represents roughly 30% of the U.S. workforce and young, single women are emerging as influential leaders of this group.

To be competitive, downtown Mobile must look for ways to appeal to young women in all facets of the downtown experience, including physical improvements, environmental stability (clean & safe), retail, residential, recreation and entertainment offerings.

Current trends in education, however, are troubling. At a time when the knowledge-based economy is demanding more college graduates with higher math and science

skills, American universities are graduating fewer students in science and engineering. Downtown Mobile should consider harnessing the power of local institutions of higher learning by housing facilities to foster research and education in the city center. We are particularly well poised to develop a relationship with the fine arts departments of our colleges and universities.



As gas prices and congestion increase, more smart cars may be seen downtown.

### Traffic Congestion and the Value of Time

Traffic congestion cost Americans \$63 billion and 47 hours of average annual delay in 2003, and experts suggest that building more roads is doing little to stem rising traffic congestion. Additionally, a commuter living an hour's drive from work annually spends the equivalent of 12 work weeks in the car. It is not uncommon to have an hour's commute in Mobile and Baldwin Counties.

The good news is recent studies show that for the first time ever, national transit ridership exceeded growth in driving. Today 27 metro areas have transit systems and 15 more are planning new ones, even cities not much larger than Mobile. This trend suggests that cities with comprehensive transit systems will be well positioned for the future. Downtown Mobile must figure out how to implement comprehensive transit solutions that focus on integrated approaches that include regional and neighborhood transit links.

### Trends in Healthcare/ Wellness/Recreation



Because of walkability, urban settings can be healthier than the suburbs.

Health care delivery systems have changed dramatically over the last decade. More health care is being delivered on an outpatient basis, and through retail health clinics and e-medicine. A doctor and nurse shortage is imminent, even as the aging population increases the demand for services.

Although Americans are living longer, the baby boom generation is active and would like to walk and bike more. Research has found a connection between urban living and health, and that residents living in sprawling communities weighed more than their urban counterparts.

Downtowns are being encouraged to attract medical clinics, and Mobile is actually ahead of the curve on this trend with two hospital-affiliated clinics as well as the Mobile County Health Department located downtown. We need to work, however, on improving our overall pedestrian appeal, including streetscapes and connections. Active recreational areas that accommodate a variety of pursuits ranging from sports to dog parks will be increasingly important.



Sidewalk cafes create the energy many tourists seek.

### The Growth of Tourism

Tourism is the world's largest employer, generating nearly 200 million jobs, or 10% of jobs globally. Looking ahead, an expanding global middle class will increase tourism worldwide. Cultural heritage tourism is growing, with 81% of U.S. adults who traveled in

2002 falling into this category. These visitors tend to stay longer and spend more money than other kinds of tourists.

To take advantage of growing international tourism, downtown Mobile should work "Global" continued on page 3

## STAFF

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**Carol Hunter**, Communications Manager  
**Heather Bolton**, Marketing Assistant  
**Susan Daniels**, Membership and Fund Raising Director  
**Fred Rendfrey**, Director of Downtown Economic Development  
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\* DMDMC Board Member

## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

By Elizabeth Sanders

### CELEBRATE THE YEAR THEN LOOK AHEAD

We are now concluding 2007 and what a year it has been! Mobile won the mega race for the ThyssenKrupp steel mill. We celebrated in grand fashion the opening of the Battle House and the Riverview Renaissance Hotel; the flagging of the Holiday Inn; and the ground breaking for the Hampton Inn. We celebrated the completion of several key residential projects – St. Emanuel Place, Mattress Factory Lofts, Clarkson Townhouses, and St. Louis Lofts. And as the year ends the RSA Battle House Tower is filling with tenants including the welcome addition of International Shipholding Corporation to our community. Lest you think I am too high on Three Georges' chocolates, there were frustrations and disappointments to be sure, but this year has to rank right up there as once of the best in our 300 year history for a corner turning collection of positive developments.

What should we learn from this year? What should we be mindful of for next year? What trends will impact our success?

I think the most important lesson of the year is the power of vision coupled with persistence and patience. Many years ago, when I first moved here Mike Dow vowed that the Battle House would not go down on his watch. Many people are responsible for the beautiful hotel we now have on Royal Street, but the fact is that many people told me over and over and over again that the Battle House should be torn down. If the Mayor had wanted this, that site would be just another addition to downtown Mobile's acres and acres of ugly parking lots where once a historic building stood - that is the kind of power that the Mayor's office has. The city aimed high and sought a developer in the RSA with the wherewithal to invest for the long term and undertake the kind of development on the site that sets a standard that is aspirational for our community. For too long, downtown Mobile has been the place where it was cheap to buy and/or hold property; undertake a poor quality renovation; or open an undercapitalized business. The standard has been raised by this project and a key collection of investments large and small.

As we look ahead, everyone must be mindful of the opportunities that we have to market our downtown in new and innovative ways. This opportunity comes with a price tag and we will need everyone's help to meet the challenge. Our downtown image has improved greatly, but we must be aware of the fact that we need far greater numbers of customers if the quality hotels, restaurants, shops, and professional businesses that we have and everyone says they want are to thrive and grow. I am often amazed to look around and see not a car on the street, not in a travel lane or a parking space. I would like to think that this means that the customers have come to downtown by foot, bike, or The Wave, but realistically I think it means that there is no one on the street.

The Downtown Mobile Alliance has been formed to raise membership and sponsorship dollars specifically to market and advertise downtown to potential customers, employees, and residents. We will be asking every business in downtown or with an interest in downtown's success to become a member and help take downtown's strive for vibrancy and delightfulness to the next level.

Finally as far as trends, please read Carol Hunter's article on global trends that affect downtowns. This is an excellent synopsis of the many things happening throughout the world that will more than likely impact downtown Mobile. One that I think we should be particularly mindful of is the demographic changes that will impact the workforce. There is much that needs to be done to position Mobile as a competitor in the global marketplace. (There is much that has been accomplished, but with everybody else progressing we can only celebrate for so long!) The downtown property and business owners who take a leadership role in improving the quality of the experience of daily life and employment in downtown Mobile will be best positioned for success in a tightening marketplace for highly educated workers. This goes beyond the basics of clean and safe and moves into fun, spectacular, meaningful, and inspirational. Downtown can provide all of these experiences to our customers, employees, residents, etc., but it will take additional resources, ever more creativity, and a willingness to listen to new voices.

We are committing to a much enhanced educational role for you, our constituents, who are interested in city life. In 2008, we will offer more opportunities to hear from people knowledgeable about various topics impacting downtown Mobile. Please contact us with topics in which you are interested. Happy New Year!

## HORTICULTURIST JOINS BID SERVICES TEAM

Not content with simply cleaning the Business Improvement District, the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation is actively making it more beautiful as well. Kristy Cade has joined the BID Services team as an assistant manager and resident horticulturist. Kristy is more than happy to consult with property owners who might have questions about landscaping or materials for planters. Give Kristy a call at 434-8498.

Our stewards have been doing such a great job of keeping the Business Improvement District clean that we sometimes forget they're there...unless, of course there is a problem that needs attention. If such a situation occurs, please call Clayton Ratledge, BID Services Manager, at 434-8498 or 370-7541. Clayton and his team take great pride in the look and feel of downtown and they're eager to help with "clean and safe" issues that detract from our neighborhood.



Kristy Cade is on hand to help with landscaping issues.

"Global" continued from page 1

to create an environment that welcomes and accommodates visitors with diverse cultures, languages and lifestyles. Additionally, the increase of conventions center space in the U.S. will require Mobile to create demand through increased event promotion resources and marketing budget allocations.

### The Emergence of China, India and a Planetary Middle Class

In the 21st century Asia, led by China and India, will experience unprecedented growth in economic and military power. This means that resources such as oil, steel and cement will be gobbled up by these nations. Job outsourcing will continue to be an issue – by 2010 U.S. outsourcing to India is expected to quadruple. In that same year, India will become the country with the most English speakers in the world.

However, the growing global middle class will create new markets for the U.S. and we can still thrive if we invent new industries to stay one step ahead. Attracting, retaining and growing small businesses will continue to be a key for promoting job growth and remaining globally competitive. Downtown Mobile should explore ways to broaden support to small businesses and startups through a variety of means, including technical assistance, incentives and/or designation of formal "innovation or creativity" zones.

### Continued Advances in Technology

21st century technologies have "flattened" or connected our world, and globalization has been driven by individuals who can do business instantly with millions of other people across the planet. Broader distribution of information technologies is encouraging "bottom-up" innovation from entrepreneurs throughout the globe. Education will be key in ensuring that America remains competitive, and cities that make connections to institutions of higher learning will benefit.

Downtown Mobile is poised to attract "creative" vocations if it can offer a business climate favorable to the incubation and growth of small, dynamic enterprises. The emerging importance of young women and Millennials in the American professional class creates opportunities for designing, programming and managing vibrant urban environments.

### Environmentalism, Sustainability and Climate Change

Despite generating less carbon dioxide emissions per person - largely due to more sustainable modes of transit - cities are still responsible for nearly 80% of the carbon emissions worldwide, with the major offenders being buildings, not automobiles. Once dismissed by developers as too expensive, green buildings will become "a must" as tenants, lenders, residents and even investors push for more sustainability. As construction prices increase world wide, the reuse of existing buildings will become relatively more affordable and will become increasingly attractive for post-1950s buildings, including office high rises.

The United States' transportation system is 97% dependent on oil, and at current consumption rates worldwide oil demand is expected to increase 50% over the next two decades. Increasing petroleum and construction costs are likely to contribute to dramatically affect American lifestyles, making traditional suburban land use and transportation patterns increasingly expensive and inefficient.

Mobile will need to look to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and explore sustainable development, including transit-oriented development. Vibrant downtowns, as Mobile is becoming, are well positioned to capitalize on an economic imperative to downsize our consumption, while still offering the lifestyle advantages of entertainment, culture, recreation and human interaction.



Downtown is well positioned to capitalize on the new emphasis on sustainability.

## LIVING TOUR BRINGS HUNDREDS DOWNTOWN

On October 20th the Downtown Mobile Alliance hosted *Living Downtown...* the Tour, presented by RBC Centura Bank. The tour featured 25 lofts, apartments, townhouses and beautifully restored historic residences that reflected the variety and energy of urban living. 500 people participated in the self-guided walking tour through the journey of the past, present and future of the living downtown experience. Some of the residences were still under construction and some had just been completed, so people could really see the metamorphosis in action.

Partakers had wonderful things to say about downtown Mobile. Ms. Judith Kay from San Francisco, California said, "I am charmed by downtown Mobile, I didn't think I'd like Mobile at all, but I am just charmed. I think the architecture is exciting. I think the revitalization is exciting. People should shop here and live here. It is important that Main Streets are the heart of a city. I have worked in the Main Street Program in California and helped with several Main Street Programs there. I see the importance of a revitalized downtown." Ms. Sue Cooper of Cooper Real Estate, here in Mobile said, "I like the variety of properties. We like what we've seen. St. Francis Place has been my favorite. Downtown living? I think we'll be doing some of it."

Overall everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and the weather was fantastic. There were defiantly some people who fell in love with the properties and decided that downtown living was for them.

Special thank-you to all of the sponsors: RBC Centura, 95 KSJ, Lamar Advertising, L L B & B Real Estate, Starbucks, WKRG, Lite Mix 99.9 and News Radio 710. You all helped to make "*The Living Downtown Tour*" a huge success! If you missed our inaugural tour, don't worry. Response was so positive that we're already planning our next sampling for 2008.



Top: Urban gardens are hidden treasures. Above: Two examples of loft living now available downtown. Below: Luxurious, spacious condominiums offer gracious living options.



# DOWNTOWN MOBILE ALLIANCE ELECTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

**Dee Gambill** of Regions Bank will be leading the Downtown Mobile Alliance as president this year, after having served as vice president of its partner organizations, the Downtown Mobile District Management Corporation and Main Street Mobile, Inc. Vice President for Development is **David Constantine** of Lyons, Pipes and Cook, Vice President for Public Spaces is **John Peebles** of Grubb & Ellis/Peebles & Cameron, Vice President for Marketing is **Sydney Raine** of Mobile Works. **Sam Covert** of Alabama Power will be serving as Secretary and **Joe Mareno** of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce will be Treasurer.

The Board of Directors of the Alliance also adds 11 new members this year.



Mary Anne Ball

Native Mobilian **Mary Anne Ball** is a partner in Bienville Properties. She graduated from Julius T. Wright School and obtained her B.A. from Tulane University and her law degree from Cumberland School of Law. Mary Anne worked at the Federal Public Defender's Office in New Orleans and served as the Chairman of the Board of the Parenting Center at Children's Hospital.

Mary Anne moved to Mobile in 1992 and began her career as a community volunteer. She is currently serving on the board of the Preschool for the Sensory Impaired and the Tulane University Alumni Association and is a member of the University of Virginia Parent Association, the Tulane University Parent Council and the St. Paul's Episcopal School Parent Council. She also works as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children in the Juvenile Court System. Mary Anne and husband Dr. Stuart F. Ball have four children.



Brenden Chambers

**Brendan Chambers** serves as regional president of Commercial Markets at RBC Centura. In this position, he is responsible for all aspects of the bank's commercial markets operations in Alabama, leading his team to ensure successful execution of RBC Centura's goals and objectives. Prior to coming to Mobile, Chambers served as a Commercial Markets Account Manager with RBC in Atlanta.

Born in up in upstate New York, Chambers graduated from St. Bonaventure University. He is an active community member and is currently serving on the Board of Trustees for the United Way of Southwest Alabama and is on the Board of Advisors for the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce. Chambers now resides in Spring Hill with his wife and son and daughter.



Johnny W. Cook

The Very Reverend **Johnny W. Cook** has served as Dean of Christ Church Cathedral since July 2003 and is president of the Mobile Interfaith Council. He graduated from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest with a Master of Divinity

1984 and the University of Texas at Austin with a BA in 1967. After serving parishes in Texas for several years, Rev. Cook and his wife Mary arrived in Mobile. They have four married children and five grandchildren.

Prior to attending seminary, Rev. Cook spent 12 years as a District Manager with Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. in Houston, TX and AT&T in New York City and 2 years in banking in Austin as a Business Development Officer. He is currently a member of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, the Executive Council of the Boy Scouts of America in Mobile and the Senior Bowl Committee.



Angus R. Cooper, III

**Angus R. Cooper, III** is President of Cooper Marine and Timberlands. He is a native of Mobile and attended UMS Wright Preparatory School, graduating in 1991. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama in 1996. After graduation from college, he joined Herfurth & Co. Shipping GmbH in Antwerp, Belgium. He also worked in the management training program for Regions Bank and later joined Cooper/T. Smith Corporation, serving in various divisions.

He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Regions Bank, NAWA Board, UMS Wright Preparatory School, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, and The Salvation Army. He serves on the Culverhouse College of Commerce International Advisory Board and is a member of the World Trade Center, Mobile Country Club and the Yale Club of New York. He is also a Director of the Alabama Wildlife Federation. Angus and his wife, the former Gretchen VanBrackle of Richmond, Virginia have three children.



Robert Drew

**Robert Drew** serves as president & CEO of Willis of Alabama, Inc. and president and CEO of Willis of Louisiana, Inc. He graduated high school from UMS Preparatory School in Mobile before attending Auburn University graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Finance. Robert joined Willis of Alabama, Inc. 14 years ago and is presently responsible for the management of the Mobile, Montgomery, Birmingham and New Orleans offices. Willis is a leading global insurance broker with over 300 offices in 100 countries with 15,800 associates serving clients in over 180 countries.

Robert has been and remains active in several community and civic organizations and is married to Paige C. Drew. They have three sons.



Chuck Harmon

**Chuck Harmon** is the Mobile, Alabama Market President of Wachovia Bank. He is a financial service professional with more than 28 years of experience in the banking industry. Currently Harmon oversees the overall banking operation for Wachovia Bank in Mobile.

He joined Wachovia in 1984 and has held numerous leadership roles within the bank.

Harmon is a graduate of North Carolina State University where he earned a B.A. in business management. He is active in many community organizations, including the United Way, Boy Scouts of America, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Mobile Area Education Council. He and his wife, Betsy, have two sons.



Michelle Herman

**Michelle Herman** has served as Director of Finance for Mobile County Commission since 2002. She is a native of Mobile, earning a Bachelors Degree at Spring Hill College and an MBA at the University of South Alabama. Michelle became a Certified Public Accountant in 1987. After living in Atlanta for 10 years, Michelle and her husband, Louis, returned to Mobile in 2002.

Michelle is a member of the Leadership Mobile class of 2004, serves as treasurer of Mobile United, and served as co-chair of the finance committee of Mayor Sam Jones' transition team in 2005.



Sydney Raine

**Sydney Raine** is a native Mobilian, a 1963 graduate of Central High School and a 1967 graduate of Grambling State University in Grambling, Louisiana. Mr. Raine is President of Mobile Works, Inc. His employment history extends back to the early seventies when from 1971-74, he was Job Developer and Monitor for the Emergency Employment Act Program, in 1975, Director for the Cooperative Area Manpower Planning System, and from 1975-2000, Director of the Mobile Consortium.

Sydney is involved in numerous business and civic related activities and serves on the Board of the several community organizations including the Mobile County Personnel Board, the Franklin Memorial Primary Health Center and the Homeless Coalition of the Gulf Coast. He is the active Chairman of the Mobile County Public School System's Career Technical Education Advisory Board. Sydney has also received numerous awards such as the 1976 Outstanding Young Men of America Award, the 1991 Distinguished Leadership Award from the National Association for Community Leadership, the 1991 Superior Individual Performance Award from the National Alumni Council, UNCF, Inc. and the 1992 Outstanding Service Award from the National Association of Counties. Most recently he received the Partners in Progress Award from the State Office of Workforce Development. Sydney is married and has two children.



Randy Setterstrom

**Randy P. Setterstrom** is a native Mobilian who has been active in downtown Mobile for the past quarter of century. Randy and his wife, Monica Naman Setterstrom are business and property

"Boards" continued on page 5

# 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.



## LACLEDE HOTEL

**Address:** 150 Government Street

**Owner:** LaClede Investors, LLC

**Management:** LaClede Investors LLC

**Telephone Number:** (251) 432-0871

**Year Built:** 1855-1856

**Total Square Footage:** Approximately 39,000

**Occupancy Rate:** 97%

**Available Square Footage for Lease:**

Approximately 1,500

**Leasing Rate:** Negotiable

The LaClede Hotel stands as an image that many people associate with the deep south. The graceful building, overlooking Government Street and the entrance of the Bankhead Tunnel, is known for the signature upper galleries that extend the length of the building. Constructed in 1855, the LaClede was originally two separate buildings. One building housed a fruit and liquor business, and the second building was used as a residence. In 1871 the two buildings were joined to function as a hotel.

In the early 1980s, T. Leavell and Associates restored the building. The restoration project included the preservation of the courtyard and of the original

*The LaClede Hotel still serves as an architectural reminder of days-gone-by, allowing visitors to the city to feel what it must have been like to stroll down the streets of Mobile when cotton was king and Mobile was a thriving metropolis.*

hotel lobby, which can be seen through the front windows of the building. The most significant part of the restoration was the preservation of the lacy ironwork that dresses the galleries and gives the building its romantic and distinctive appearance. To modernize the building, a new attached parking garage was added to the rear of the building and modern conveniences were installed to create a full-service office building. The restoration of the LaClede Hotel was one of the first major restoration projects in downtown Mobile, and it has set the bar for restoration projects throughout downtown.

The LaClede Hotel is now owned by LaClede Investors LLC, a subsidiary of Helmsing, Leach, Herlong, Newman & Rouse, PC. Located across the street from Government Plaza and the Mobile Bar Association, the tenant list includes some of Mobile's most recognizable attorneys, as well as, T. Leavell & Associates, the visionary financial investment firm that originally restored the building.

The building remains one of downtown's most beautiful and well-cared for buildings. "It is a privilege to own one of the most significant architectural landmarks in the City of Mobile during this exciting time of downtown development," stated Robert Rouse, one of the owners of the building.

The LaClede Hotel still serves as an architectural reminder of days-gone-by, allowing visitors to the city to feel what it must have been like to stroll down the streets of Mobile when cotton was king and Mobile was a thriving metropolis.

### TENANT DIRECTORY

Helmsing, Leach, Herlong, Newman & Rouse, PC

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Omega Properties, Inc.

BB&T Insurance Services, Inc.

Gary E. Porter, Esq.

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Marcus E. McCrory, Esq.

Thomas R. Bollar, Esq.

D. Brad Hardin, Esq.

Fannie Mae

Brent T. Day, Esq.

Tyler L. Cox, Esq.

Joseph M. Bolton, Jr., Esq.

***"It is a privilege to own one of the most significant architectural landmarks in the City of Mobile during this exciting time of downtown development."***

*"Board" continued from page 4*

owners in the lower Dauphin Street District.

Randy is excited about the direction of Downtown Mobile and the new energy being generated by business people and professionals who are taking the heart of the city to a new level.

**Chris Gill** is a member of Hand Arendall, L.L.C., where he concentrates his legal practice in the areas of real estate acquisition, financing and development and planning and zoning matters. Chris was born and raised in Mobile. Following his graduation from Shaw High School, Chris received his B.S. (summa cum laude, 1997) and his J.D. (summa cum laude, 2000) from the University of Alabama.

Chris is active in numerous civic affairs including service as a member of the



Chris Gill



Steve Clements

board of directors of the Mobile Medical Museum. He is also an active member of Trinity Episcopal Church.

**Steve Clements** is president of 301 St. Louis Street, LLC and an attorney whose offices occupy the recently renovated St. Louis Street building at that address. Steve graduated with a B.S. from the University of South Alabama and a J.D. from the University of Alabama School of Law.

Beyond renovating a prominent downtown building and operating a law practice, Steve's downtown interests extend into its nightlife. He is co-owner of Pat's Downtown Grill on Dauphin Street. He is also a co-owner of the newly opened Wine Loft in Legacy Village. Steve is past president of the University of South Alabama National Alumni Association and past president of the Jaguar Athletic Club.

# 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.

## BEING A PART OF THE SOLUTION

**Name:** Jim Barnes Enterprises dba McDonald's  
**Address:** 658 Government Street  
**Telephone:** (251) 433-8573

Jim Barnes is an unusual man. This compact powerhouse is the successful owner of a string of McDonald restaurants, including the newly constructed store on Government Street, in downtown Mobile. A tough-minded business man, Barnes also has a heart as big as Mobile Bay. His volunteer work in Mobile has had a significant impact on downtown and on how visitors see his adopted hometown. Barnes lives by an interesting mantra – If you complain about a problem, be a part of the solution.

Jim Barnes grew up in a small town in Massachusetts. After high school, he headed south to Florida to attend Rollins College. A pre-med major, Barnes began bussing tables at a local restaurant to earn extra money while in school. "I remember one summer telling my parents - I know one thing, I will never work in the restaurant business," Barnes recalled, laughing. Being the son of a doctor and coming from a family of doctors, it was a given that Barnes would pursue a career in medicine. Eventually he dropped his pre-med

**"The BID has been a success and I think it has changed people's perceptions. Downtown is clean and safe. You see people walking around!"**

curriculum and earned an undergraduate degree in English and history then an MBA from Rollins. He later married a home-town girl and went to work for McDonald's in their corporate office. After four years, he moved to take a position with, the now closed, Steak & Ale restaurant chain where he worked for four more years, saving money for his future. In 1982 Barnes was awarded his first McDonald's store in Jennings, Louisiana. This began a long and very successful career under the golden arches, including ownership of a store



Rebuilt two years ago, McDonald's on Government Street is owned by downtown advocate Jim Barnes.

in downtown Mobile.

"I believe that the downtown area of any city is the face of that city, and that you must put your best face forward," stated Barnes matter-of-factly. "Downtowns are always an interesting place anywhere you go. There is always something special about them - great buildings, the atmosphere, the history. Mobile is no exception." Through his leadership and dedication, Main Street Mobile, Inc. was able to move downtown forward and form the business improvement district. "I don't think we'll recognize downtown Mobile in five years," he added enthusiastically. "It's like planting a garden and watching it grow."

"It's a foregone conclusion that downtown is back. With residential as the missing piece in place, it's coming on strong," Barnes noted. "People's attitudes are changing. The BID has been a success and I think it has changed people's perceptions. Downtown is clean and safe. You see people walking around."

As many of you may remember, two years ago Barnes bulldozed a perfectly good McDonald's and rebuilt a better facility, complete with lovely new landscaping. Although his friends thought he was crazy, Barnes was making an investment in downtown. "You must see financial return if you are a business person, but people are restoring buildings downtown because they love them and not for a financial return," Barnes stressed. "Take pride in downtown. I take pride in downtown. I feel like I'm a native Mobilian."

Barnes's volunteer work has had a significant impact on downtown Mobile as well. He has served as the President of the Board of Directors for Main Street Mobile, Inc. He sits on the Board of Directors of America's Junior Miss Program, has served on the Board of Directors of the Museum of Mobile, and has built a room at Wings of Life to help serve our homeless population. Barnes has spent the past ten years as a member of the Ronald McDonald House Board of Directors and helped develop and build the house in Mobile. These are just a few of the things that he will admit too. The full scope of his philanthropic work he holds close to the vest.

On a personal note, Barnes brags about his children. His daughter has just been approved as an owner-operator and awarded her first McDonald's. His son, a full-time student, is following in his father's footsteps and attending Rollins College.

## MOBILE CARNIVAL MUSEUM

**Name:** Mobile Carnival Museum  
**Address:** 355 Government Street  
**Telephone:** (251) 432-3324  
**Website address:** [www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com](http://www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com)

In the lovely yellow historic Bernstein House on Government Street stands the Mobile Carnival Museum. Opened in 2005, the Mobile Carnival Museum serves as a repository of Mobile's Mardi Gras history. It houses the regal robes, gowns, crowns and scepters of those lucky young Mobilians who have ruled over this 300-year old celebration. The rooms of the home serve as galleries that exhibit the regalia of the current King and Queen of the Mobile Carnival Association and of the Mobile Area Mardi Gras Association. There are rooms filled with the history of Mardi Gras and of the many mystic societies that entertain Mobilians with public parades and masked

**"Mardi Gras serves not only as part of our cultural heritage, but it also has a significant economic impact on our city."**

balls. You will find float drawings, costumes representing each society's Emblem, and memorabilia that spans over 100 years. Most recently, the museum has opened the Tatum Gallery in memory of Gordan Tatum, Jr., the beloved first curator of the museum. This gallery will feature exhibits that rotate every two months.

In the back of the Museum there is a replica of a real Mardi Gras float that you can board to see just how it feels to ride a float in a parade. It even rocks and tilts. There is a children's area called the Little Mystics Den that is set-up for birthday party rental, complete with costumes for the children to try on, an arts-and-crafts area, and of course, a float to board.



The Mobile Carnival Museum opened in 2005 and holds the history of Mobile's Mardi Gras celebrations. Photo compliments of the Mobile Carnival Museum.

"One of the things that the Carnival Museum does is highlight the artistry of Mardi Gras," stated Edward Ladd, Curator of the museum. "The costumes, floats and jewelry are all designed and executed by local artists. The float design and construction is one component, the costume design another. The robes are all hand sewn one-of-a-kind designs created especially for that person by talented local designers and seamstresses. Tommy Cain of Dynasty Collection creates the crowns and scepters, from the design to the actual production, to match the robes," Ladd stressed. "All of these artists are working together to create the magic of Mardi Gras, and some of these skills are becoming a lost art form. We want to showcase our artisans."

"Mardi Gras serves not only as part of our cultural heritage, but it also has a significant economic impact on our city," explained Judi Gullede, Executive Director, Mobile Carnival Association. "An economic impact study we commissioned from the University of Alabama's Associate Business Center found that more than \$220 million was directly spent in the Mobile/Baldwin county area during Mardi Gras 2005. This represents a 3.4% chunk of Alabama's \$6.7 billion tourism industry."

The Mobile Carnival Museum is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., and other times by appointment. It is open for school field trips by reservation. The facility is available to rent for social functions and night time events. The

"Weaving" continued on page 7

"Weaving" continued from page 6

museum can accommodate up to 150 people. And of course, it is on the Mardi Gras parade route and is available for rental during the parade season. The museum also operates a Gift Shoppe, managed by Toomey's Mardi Gras, Mobile's premier Mardi Gras supply headquarters.

To become a supporter of the Mobile Carnival Museum, please visit their website at [www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com](http://www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com) and go to Order of Joy. The Mobile Carnival Museum is funded in part by the Mobile Carnival Association and through generous contributions from supporters.

## ONE COUPLE - ONE VISION

**Name:** Robin and Cheryl Visel

**Address:** 7 St. Emmanuel Street

This couple shares a daring vision that many empty-nesters now have: to live in the heart of downtown. And that is just what they have done. Robin and Cheryl Visel moved into St. Emmanuel Place last June.

"In 1992 Robin and I moved from Mobile to Dallas. At that time our daughter was still in school. As time passed, we knew we wanted to open our own business. Our family was here, our daughter is now grown and living out-of-state, and it just made more sense to come back to Mobile to do that," explained Cheryl. "When we moved back, we lived out in west Mobile and just dreamed of living downtown. When we lived in Dallas we watched the incredible revitalization of downtown Fort Worth and we always wanted to live downtown, but we knew it was too costly to live downtown there. When we came back to Mobile we knew this was our chance, so we put our furniture in two storage units and came downtown," Cheryl smiled.

"Finding an apartment was a miracle," stressed Cheryl. And the story she told could only be a downtown story: While having lunch one Sunday at Café 615, Cheryl lamented to her husband Robin that they were never going to find a place to live downtown. "Either everything was occupied, or if something was for rent, it was leased by the time it was listed in the paper, or had a waiting list three people long," explained Cheryl. As they left the restaurant a lady stopped them, apologized for eavesdropping on their conversation, and told them "I know the most divine place." Cheryl was taken aback by the lady, but still asked her to please call her friend. The lady whipped out her cell phone and made the call. The friend happened to be Jamie Brown, developer Tilmon Brown's wife, and indeed the Brown's had space available for lease in their new development, St. Emmanuel Place. Now this part could only happen downtown. Jamie, who lives downtown in a restored fire station, was out riding her bike and told the Visels she would meet them at St. Emmanuel Place, gave them directions, and bicycled over. The Visels loved the building, and being in the

process of renovation, just picked out an apartment that they liked and rented it. And don't you know, the lady in the restaurant had just leased a space from Jamie and would now be their new neighbor. Only in downtown Mobile. And there's more. Come to find out, Robin and Tilmon played in a band together when they were in school, so a friendship was rekindled to boot.

**"Living downtown is like going on vacation and not going home. If we had room service it would be perfect."**

"We have gone from a 3,000 square foot house to an 800 square foot apartment," laughed Cheryl. "I didn't know how we'd like it, but we love it. I didn't know if it would be feasible to downsize." Robin and Cheryl now live in one of the apartments located on the back corner of St. Emmanuel Place. Their new home features 14 inch thick brick and plaster walls, the original wood floor, and the original ceiling, which is 16 feet high. They have five windows, each 12 feet tall. They also have a roof-top deck, complete with bistro lighting and tables and chairs.

"We love to entertain and everybody wants to come visit," giggled Cheryl. "This is something new for our friends and they are all curious about our new life. They like to come down for the Saenger events."

"For me, being downtown brings back memories of being a kid," reminisced Robin. "I used to take guitar lessons at Ritz Music as a boy. I worked during school at the O.K. Bicycle Shop putting together bikes. During Christmas I would deliver them to all the doctor's houses on Christmas Eve. My grandfather worked in Civil Defense and had a truck in every Mardi Gras parade. I'd ride in the truck with him. That was a big deal. And he loved to eat at Wintzell's, it was the place to go, and we'd go out to eat there," Robin added. "Downtown was busy then."



Robin and Cheryl Visel gave up a 3,000 square foot house, put their belongings in storage and moved into an 800 square foot apartment in the heart of downtown. Photo courtesy of Robin Visel.

The Visels both agreed on several downtown points. "The good thing about downtown is it's 10 to 15 minutes from Fairhope and from the Mall area," Cheryl added. Cheryl works for Aaron Oil Company, located behind Bel Air Mall; and Robin opened Aaron Media Services, (no connection to Aaron Oil Company). "We are going to move our offices into the RSA Tower as soon as the office space is constructed," Cheryl stated. "Then I can just walk to work, or take the moda! when it's raining." Now how many people can say that?

"Living downtown is like going on vacation and not going home. If we had room service it would be perfect," they both said at the same time laughing.

# MEETING AND CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Scheduled for the  
Arthur Outlaw Convention Center

## JANUARY

Gulf States Horticultural Expo, Inc.  
January 14 -20

# MARDI GRAS 2008

January 18	Conde Cavaliers Parade	6:30 p.m.
January 19	Bayport Parading Society	2:30 p.m.
	Pharaoh's Mystic Society Parade	6:30 p.m.
	Conde Explorers Parade	7:00 p.m.
January 24	Order of Polka Dots Parade	6:30 p.m.
January 25	Order of Inca Parade	6:30 p.m.
January 26	Mobile Mystics Parade	2:00 p.m.
	Krewe of Marry Mates	2:30 p.m.
	Maids of Mirth Parade	6:30 p.m.
	Mobile Married Mystics Parade	7:00 p.m.
	Order of Butterfly Maidens Parade	7:30 p.m.
January 27	Neptune's Daughters Parade	6:30 p.m.
January 28	Mystical Ladies Parade	6:30 p.m.
	Order of Venus Parade	7:00 p.m.
January 29	Order of LaShe Parade	6:30 p.m.
January 31	Mystic Striper Parade	6:30 p.m.
February 1	Crewe of Columbus Parade	6:30 p.m.
February 2	Floral Parade	12:00 noon
	Knights of Mobile Parade	12:30 p.m.
	Order of Angels Parade	1:00 p.m.
	Mystics of Time Parade	6:00 p.m.
	Coronation of King Felix III and Queen,	
	Mobile Convention Center	6:30 p.m.
February 3	MAGMA -Arrival of King Elexis I	2:00 p.m.
	Joe Cain Parade	2:30 p.m.
	La Krewe de Bienville Parade	5:00 p.m.
	Krewe of Admiral Semmes	5:15 p.m.
	Coronation of King Elexis I and Queen,	
	Mobile Civic Center	8:15 p.m.
February 4	Floral Parade	12:00 noon
	Arrival of King Felix III and Parade	12:00 noon
	Infant Mystics Parade	6:45 p.m.
February 5	Order of Athena Parade	10:30 a.m.
	Knights of Revelry Parade	12:30 p.m.
	Comic Cowboys Parade	12:45 p.m.
	King Felix Parade	1:00 p.m.
	Mammoth Parade	2:00 p.m.
	Order of Myths Parade	6:30 p.m.

Parade schedule compliments of the  
Mobile Carnival Association.

For a complete schedule of Mardi Gras events, please refer to the daily schedule listed in the Mobile Register.

## CORRECTION

In the Main Street Inc. endowment list from our last newsletter, the name of **205 NCS, LLC** was omitted. We are very sorry for this omission.

# DOWNTOWN EVENTS

## DECEMBER

- Through December 31** – *Human Grossology*, Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center
- Through December 31** – *On Display: Red, Green & In-Between*, Cathedral Square Gallery
- Through January 6** – *Contexture: Fabric, Fashion & Fantasy*, works by Pinky Bass, Matt Posey & Alex Podesta, Space 301 Off Centre
- Through January 10** – *Sea Monsters*, J. L. Bedsole IMAX Dome Theater
- Through February 5** – *Shadows of Greatness: The Jimini Collection*, silhouette oil paintings of legendary musicians by Jim Maurer, Veets Bar & Grill
- December 1** – *Santa Chase 5K Run*, 8:00 a.m., Fort Conde Welcome Center
- December 1** – *Richards DAR House Christmas Celebration*, 10:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m., Richards DAR House
- December 1** – *The Rat Pack: A Tribute to Frank, Dean and Sammy*, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre
- December 2** – *Historic Holiday Open House*, 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Museum of Mobile
- December 2** – *John Turner*, concert, 7:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre
- December 3 through December 28** – *Smell the Love by J. D. Crowe and The Sway and the Swell by Sheesh*, Mobile Arts Council
- December 8** – *Doodlepops Live* presented by Feld, 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Arena
- December 8 and 9** – *The Nutcracker* presented by Mobile Ballet, 2:30 p.m., 7:00 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., respectively, Mobile Civic Center Theater
- December 8** – *Jethro Tull*, concert, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre
- December 9** – *Christmas with the Aaron Neville Quintet* featuring Charles Neville, concert, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre
- December 10** – *Messiah Sing-In* presented by Mobile Opera Chorus and Members of the Mobile Symphony, Conductor: Jerome Shannon, 7:00 p.m., First Baptist Church
- December 14** – *LoDa ArtWalk*, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District
- December 14** - Artists Reception: *Smell the Love and The Sway and the Swell*, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Mobile Arts Council
- December 15** – *Mobile Christmas and Holiday Parade*, 1:30 p.m., downtown
- December 15** – *Maddie's Pet Rescue Project's Santa Pet Adoption*, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Bienville Square.
- December 15 & 16** – *Holiday Pops Concert* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 p.m. & 2:00 p.m., respectively, Saenger Theatre
- December 17** – *Holiday Jam* presented by Mystic Order of the Jazz Obsessed, 6:30 p.m., Gulf City Lodge
- December 21** – *Gala Christmas Concert* presented by Musica Sacra Choir & Chamber Orchestra with soprano Melanie Zoghby Cummins, Mobile's Singing Children and McGill Chamber Choir, Music Director: Christopher Uhl, 8:15 p.m., Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
- December 28** – *Jeff Dunham – Spark of Insanity*, comedy, 8:00 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theater
- December 28** – *The Nutcracker Charity Ball* presented by Mobile Ballet, 8:00 p.m., Mobile Convention Center
- December 31** – *Dr. John*, concert, 8:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## JANUARY

- January 6** – *Cirque Dreams Jungle Fantasy*, 6:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Arena
- January 11 through May 11** – *Our Body: The Universe Within - Actual Human Bodies*, Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center
- January 12** – *Bruce Hornsby & Ricky Skaggs*, concert, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre
- January 26** – *59th Annual Senior Bowl*, kick-off 3:00 p.m., Mobile Ladd-Peebles Stadium
- January 26** – *Indigo Girls*, concert, 9:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## CLASSES

- Salsa Dance, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. Martini's, \$10
- Weekly Rehearsal: Gulf Coast Gay Men's Chorus, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., for more information contact [www.GulfCoastGMC@comcast.net](http://www.GulfCoastGMC@comcast.net)

**[www.downtownmobile.org](http://www.downtownmobile.org)**  
**261 Dauphin Street**  
**251-434-8498**

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P. O. Box 112  
Mobile, Alabama 36601

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The new Dining and Shopping Guides are here. If you would like to have a copy, stop by the Downtown Mobile Alliance office, Ft. Conde Welcome Center or many downtown restaurants to pick one up.

**If you would like to be added to the *Downtown Alliance News* mailing list, please call (251) 434-8498.**

## SAVE THE DATE

**Holiday Breakfast with Mayor Sam Jones "State of Downtown" Address**

**Wednesday, December 12th  
7:30 a.m.**

**New Regions Bank Board Room  
RSA Tower, 29th Floor**

See the views from Region's new offices in Alabama's tallest building and hear the Mayor's plans for downtown in the coming year.

Call the Downtown Mobile Alliance at 251-434-8498 for information

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## 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.