

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

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## THE GREENING OF DOWNTOWN

By Carol Hunter

"Green" is the color of the moment, but it is of course, much more than a shade in the spectrum these days. It is a concept, indeed a mandate that we live more lightly on this planet. Green buildings are going up across the country, with energy efficiency and environmentally friendly materials at the core of the design. Here in Mobile, White-Spinner Construction is using U.S. Green Building Council standards in its new headquarters off of I-65.

It can be more difficult to rehab an existing structure using green building concepts, but the developers of the Gayfer's project are making plans to incorporate environmental designs into the residential and commercial building.



The developers of the Gayfers project are using green building principles wherever possible and will even have a roof top pool.

the side bar story for ideas, many of which we've put into place at the Downtown Mobile Alliance office.

And as the cost of new building materials increases, it becomes more economically feasible to renovate an older building using Green Building Council guidelines.

Helping the environment isn't entirely up to big developers, however. There are many small things we can all do, both at work and at home, to reduce our impact on the environment. See



This intersection at Water and Government Streets will be landscaped to create an attractive gateway to the city and a more pedestrian friendly crossing.

The "green" movement also involves increasing or incorporating plant material in our working and living environments, often for good economic and safety reasons. Studies indicate businesses on treescaped streets show 12% higher income stream than similar businesses with no trees. Greenery also lowers crime by helping people relax and thus reducing aggression. Green spaces bring people together outdoors, increasing natural surveillance and discouraging criminals.

Though our downtown parks have long provided a much needed respite from the ever-present concrete, the Alliance is focusing this year on efforts to improve and increase downtown plantings and streetscapes. We kicked off the plan last fall in Cathedral Square with the help of Bellingrath Gardens and its contribution of the world-famous cascade mums. For the holidays the Square was transformed into a winter landscape with evergreens donated by Flowerwood Nursery and lights that mimicked stars in the night sky. Our intent is to change the plantings in the Square seasonally to add color and interest several times a year.

Attractive, dramatic plantings can also create a sense of arrival when used at downtown gateways. Currently drivers entering Water Street from I-10 or I-165 are greeted by minimally landscaped medians that more often than not are used as parking

continued on page 4

## CREATE A GREEN OFFICE OR HOUSEHOLD

Early on in our operations, the Downtown Mobile Alliance decided to be a "green" as possible. Even though, as tenants, there's not much we can do with the building itself, operationally there are many small things we've discovered that have reduced our carbon footprint and increased the sustainability of our neighborhood. Many of the following tips are recommendations of the Sierra Club:

- Replace all incandescent lights with compact florescent lights. Even though they cost more, they have the dual benefit of being more energy efficient and lasting many times longer.
- Recycle all paper and cardboard. We shred all sensitive documents before recycling and take everything to Keep Mobile Beautiful's Recycling Center on Government Street.
- Use 100% post consumer recycled paper. Most letterhead and copy paper have some recycled content, but ask for 100% recycled content.
- Take the bus. This a new concept for Mobile commuters, but workers all over the country routinely leave their cars at home or in a commuter lot and hop on the bus or train. The number of passengers taking advantage of the new Bay Link bus service from Baldwin County to downtown Mobile is growing steadily.
- Carpool pooling saves gas and turns traffic delays into socializing opportunities. Find fellow riders at [goloco.org](http://goloco.org) and [zimride.com](http://zimride.com).
- Junk the junk mail. Inundated by too many catalogs to call each one to be removed from their lists? Just register with [catalogchoice.org](http://catalogchoice.org) and they'll do the work for

you. (Services such as [greendimes.com](http://greendimes.com) and [41pounds.org](http://41pounds.org) stop other kinds of junk mail as well...for a fee.)

- Learn to share. At [neighborrow.com](http://neighborrow.com) and [borrowme.com](http://borrowme.com), you can find neighbors willing to lend you books, tools, or other things you'd rather not buy.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room for more than 15 minutes. Artificial lighting accounts for 44% of the electricity use in office buildings.
- Set your monitor or laptop to go automatically into sleep mode during short breaks, and turn off your computer, monitor and power strip when you leave for the day.
- Print on both sides of paper or use the back side of old documents for drafts and notes. Conserve toner by printing in econo or draft mode when feasible.
- Instead of taking plastic bags from stores home, bring reusable cloth bags into the store with you. They're much sturdier and easier to carry.
- Recycle your glass, plastic, and aluminum. We have bins throughout the office. The Stewards take the bottles and cans from our office plus that they pick up on their daily rounds on the streets to the city's Recycling Center. If you want your recycling picked up at your door, call Earth Resources for weekly pick-up. The cost is only \$15 per month.
- Install low-flow toilets and urinals when undertaking a bathroom redo. You will save money on your water bill while preserving a precious resource – fresh drinking water.
- Install programmable thermostats and learn how to use them. Save money by not

continued on page 5

## STAFF

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**Angela Eberhardt**, Office Manager  
**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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## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

*By Elizabeth Sanders*

### MOBILE MAKING GREAT GREEN STRIDES

These are weird times. In December, Walmart, that bastion of main-stream America, published a slick 23 page magazine entitled "Green for the Holidays: Environmentally Friendly Ideas for Celebrating the Season" and Forbes ranks Alabama as the third most environmentally retarded state in the nation. Here we sit in Mobile with our economy booming from announcements of steel plants, military contracts for industry, and the dramatic revival of our downtown sparked by the opening of the Battle House and RSA Tower. Things seem good, finally for Mobile. And yet, if we are, as Forbes says, suffering "from a mix of toxic waste, lots of pollution and consumption and no clear plans to do anything about it," what are we to think of our future?

Well being the crazy optimist that I am, I remain positive for Mobile and its environs. (The rest of Alabama is another matter all together!) There are many positive signs for environmental awareness and the importance of good stewardship of this beautiful place we call home.

First, and most important, is the incredible resurgence of interest in re-urbanizing our community. The Gayfer's Building, Mattress Factory Lofts, The O'Gwynn, and 250 St. Francis Condominiums are but a sampling of the residential projects underway in formerly vacant or underused properties. Study after study has shown that the traditional "downtown" style of development – buildings built to the sidewalk line and connected to one another; mixes of uses in the same buildings/blocks; verticality of construction; and traffic calmed streets with sidewalks and on-street parking – is the most cost effective design of "city-building" and the "greenest" way to live. There is a sharing of resources that is simply not possible in the suburban-style of city-building. Rebuilding downtown is especially useful as there is a tremendous public investment in existing infrastructure – streets, sidewalks, traffic signals, storm drainage, electrical and gas service, fiber optic cable, and parks. All of these aspects of the municipal infrastructure are able to handle extraordinary growth in capacity with no to minimal additional investment. This means more income generated for little or no new investment, depending on the infrastructure component. We all win when the government is running at maximum efficiency. Likewise, we all win when our cost of heating and cooling our buildings is held to a minimum because of the embedded efficiencies of dense urban design.

The second significant sign is the momentum behind "green" development in the region. The production of the GreenCoast Conference in April by the SmartCoast organization is a bold and necessary move. Education is the key to all informed decision-making and this conference will serve to educate our developers, contractors, property owners, and elected officials on the advantages, costs, savings, benefits, and value of pursuing "green" development. In concert with GreenCoast, the U. S. Green Buildings Council is holding a training session for professionals on their certification process called Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED as it is commonly known. The USGBC certifies buildings and developments under this LEED system, which has become the gold standard for best development practices in the U.S. The system has a four pronged approach – LEED Certified, Silver, Gold, or Platinum - the highest certification awarded. Many governmental entities, including the Federal Government, have adopted some level of LEED certification as the minimum standards for future construction. Locally, White-Spinner Construction is building a new corporate office (not downtown, unfortunately) and is seeking LEED certification. Downtown, two developers are talking of seeking LEED certification for projects. A local chapter of the USGBC is being formed. This will create a climate in which our design professionals and development community will have access to education and accurate information about LEED certification and its associated expenses and savings. Congratulations to Charlene Lee and Wendy Allen at SmartCoast for keeping up the promotion of "Smart Growth" and "Green" development principles. Their conferences are well organized and feature significant speakers of interest to anyone planning to develop property in downtown Mobile. I encourage you to sign up for the GreenCoast conference by going to [www.smartcoast.org](http://www.smartcoast.org).

Finally, I have to congratulate all involved for what is going on with public transit in the municipalities and counties around Mobile Bay. Thanks to years of planning and creative thinking, Mobile has a beautiful fleet of energy efficient buses. A re-imaging campaign has significantly changed the perception of the system, now called The Wave. More work needs to be done to educate the driving public on how to use the system and to design a system that works for all of the citizens of Mobile, but I believe that we have a Mayor committed to this challenge. The Bayline is another remarkable move by our friends in Baldwin County. Workers at all rungs of the pay scale are taking this convenient transportation service from the Eastern Shore to downtown Mobile. The camaraderie being built and the savings being realized by these riders will have positive ripple effects throughout our community and economy. This is in addition to the savings in carbon emissions from getting all of these single occupancy vehicles off of the road for 50 miles of driving per work day. A great big "THANK YOU" to the leaders of Baldwin County and the Mobile entities who are making this link possible. I just want them to run the service on Saturdays so that people can go back and forth for recreational purposes as well. But that is for another blue sky day.

So you see, things are progressing on the environmental front here. We can all get behind these individuals and programs. Check out some of the suggestions elsewhere in this edition of Downtown Alliance News, and put them into action. Our little piece of the world is a beautiful one, the Downtown Alliance is committed to doing all that we can do to protect its health for future generations, but we need your actions too. Together we can be leaders is moving Alabama up toward the top of the Forbes list of the most environmentally progressive states in the nation.

# RETAIL RECRUITMENT – IMPLEMENTING A PLAN

By Rhonda Davis

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?

For downtown Mobile, the debate of which comes first, retail businesses or residents, has been ongoing for years. In a pro-active move, The Downtown Mobile Alliance hired consultant Mike Berne, principle of MJB Consulting, to evaluate downtown and prepare a retail analysis that would help define the steps needed to bring downtown's retail component to life.

The analysis contains an outline of traffic patterns in downtown, including pedestrian counts and parking availability. It determined the trade area boundaries and reviewed the current demographics and psychographics of the area. It contains recommendations for marketing downtown and a strategy for attracting new retail businesses. The analysis, which was recently completed, is in the beginning stages of implementation.

One of the first moves made by the Alliance to strengthen retail recruitment was to hire new staff member Fred Rendfrey as Director of Downtown Economic Development. Rendfrey has been working with Berne, the Alliance staff and the Alliance Retail Committee to make sure the ground work is being laid for retail success in downtown. "The Alliance will serve as information brokers for businesses looking at downtown," stressed Rendfrey.

The first major component recommended in the retail strategy was the development of a downtown property inventory. The property inventory, which has been maintained since early Main Street Mobile days, has been completely updated. Rendfrey and Berne have met with downtown property owners to find out what the long term goals for their property are, what kind of rental rates they desire and what kind of condition the buildings are in. "It is our job to understand where vacancies are and where businesses could thrive," explained Rendfrey. This component is now complete and available free-of-charge to anyone interested in information on downtown properties.

The second component in the plan is the development of a target list of successful retail businesses that could be recruited to downtown. The outline for the merchant-mix includes traditional retail stores, grocery markets and perishable goods stores, restaurants and entertainment establishments located in our region. With the help of the Retail Committee, this list has been developed and has 11 viable businesses targeted for recruitment into downtown Mobile. The list includes popular creative arts and clothing boutiques and a national clothing retailer with creative site selection (no malls or strip centers required). Businesses in the Pensacola, New Orleans and Birmingham markets are specifically being targeted for recruitment to downtown Mobile.

The third component of the retail recruitment strategy is the development of a retail brochure on downtown Mobile. This is the first time a marketing tool has been developed solely for the purpose of business recruitment to downtown. The new brochure outlines the main traffic drivers for downtown, includes a map, has a statement on our underserved office-worker market, describes the current residential growth, and includes a link to the Alliance website for access to the property

inventory. The new brochure is currently in its final stages of development.

Marketing downtown to new retailers will be a main area of focus for the Downtown Mobile Alliance in 2008. Plans are being made to promote downtown Mobile during the International Council of Shopping Centers regional conference in New Orleans this spring. This is the retail industry's largest membership organization and a source of valuable networking. Work will continue through the Retail Committee to do business-to-business recruiting, and the Alliance will continue working with the downtown property owners, area realtors, and the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce to field inquiries on downtown and market downtown to people interested in opportunities here.

We anticipate that this year we will begin to see a migration of new retail business into the downtown area. With strong marketing tools in place, a hard-working Retail Committee with their finger on the pulse of downtown's customers, and the backing of the Downtown Mobile Alliance members and property owners, this should be a year of positive growth. Retail businesses or residents? I think we will see both.



*If you are interested in browsing the downtown property inventory, visit the "Real Estate" property section on our website at [www.downtownmobile.org](http://www.downtownmobile.org). For more information contact Fred Rendfrey at (251)434-8498 or [fred@downtownmobile.org](mailto:fred@downtownmobile.org)*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

If you've been thinking about incorporating green building concepts into a new or existing building, you won't want to miss the GreenCoast 2008 Conference and Expo. The conference is designed to inspire, educate and inform participants from Alabama, Mississippi and Northwest Florida about the economic savings and environmental benefits of green building.



**GreenCoast Conference**

**April 9-10**

**Arthur Outlaw Convention Center**

Visit [www.greencoastonline.com](http://www.greencoastonline.com) or call 251-928-2309 for more information.

## MASTER PLAN CONTRACT APPROVED

### Planners to Begin Work this Month

The City of Mobile has entered into a contract with the planning firm of EDSA, Inc. to develop a "New Plan for Old Mobile." The area currently included in the master planning process is bordered by the Mobile River on the east, Three Mile Creek on the north, Houston Street on the west and I-10 on the south. The plan will focus on major arteries in the area, such as Broad Street, Dauphin Street, Springhill Avenue and Government Street.

Mayor Sam Jones says the plan is critical to the city's future growth and development, and will help identify infrastructure and planning needs. Some developers interested in investing in large projects in the city are hesitant to commit without a master plan in place.

According to Dan Dealy, the consultant hired by the city to manage the process, planners with EDSA will be in Mobile in March to begin the interviews with various stakeholders. Several large community meetings are also planned, though schedules have not yet been determined.

Since the process will take several months and such a large area is included in the plan, it's no surprise that the total price tag will approach \$400,000. And since not doing the plan would be far costlier in the long run, the Downtown Mobile Alliance has committed to raise \$100,000 for the project. Several organizations have already made donations...if you'd like to join the effort, please contact Elizabeth Sanders at 251-434-8498.

**Call 251-327-SAFE (7233)  
for assistance in the BID**

# BECOME AN ALLIANCE MEMBER

Often we are asked, "How can I become involved in downtown's revitalization?" Well, here is a way. Become a member of the Downtown Mobile Alliance. Late this summer the Membership program was developed and is now being offered as a way to give downtown businesses an opportunity to become active and engaged in the downtown movement. Membership to the Alliance is another way to ensure that downtown's businesses and cultural offerings are marketed and promoted to potential customers, giving every opportunity to participate in and be informed about everything going on in this dynamic part of our city.

The mission of the Downtown Mobile Alliance Membership Program is to generate sustainable revenue growth for the member businesses and to position downtown as the best place in the region to live, work and play. Through marketing, public relations, education, and advocacy, the Alliance will promote businesses, services, events, and activities offered in downtown.

Membership is offered to associations, partnerships, firms, corporations and businesses interested in the welfare and development of downtown Mobile. To join, you

may select one of five tiered membership categories offered. The tiered system has been developed as a way to match your ability and desire to support downtown improvement programs.

Among the many benefits members will receive are: a listing in the Alliance Annual Report and on our website; discounts for ads in the LoDa Shopping and Dining Guide, advance invitations and admission discounts to the Annual Meeting, Breakfast Briefings, mixers and events; use of the Alliance board room for your meetings and presentations; the ability to participate on Alliance committees and task forces; discounts on downtown logoed merchandise; and eligibility for election to the Downtown Mobile Alliance Board of Directors. Most importantly your business will be contributing to the dramatic changes taking place downtown.

If you are interested in exploring the Downtown Mobile Alliance Membership Program, or would like to request a membership application, please call Susan J. Daniels, Membership and Fundraising Director, (251) 434-8489, or email her at sdaniels@downtownmobile.org.

## LARGE DONATION BOOSTS BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS

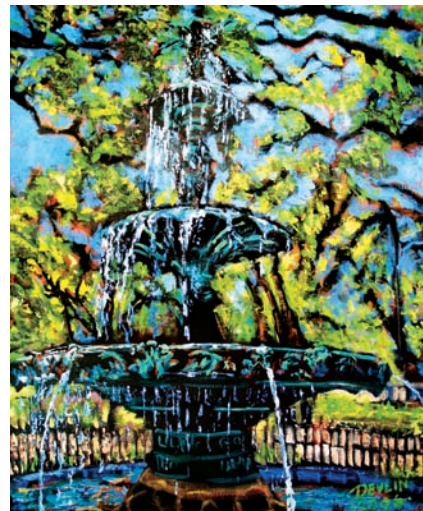
Herndon Inge, Jr. believes in sharing the wealth. "I've had a good year and felt that it was important to give back to the city that has given me so much," he says. There are, of course, dozens of deserving non-profits, but Inge was encouraged to support downtown after reading about two businessmen who had made an anonymous contribution to the Downtown Mobile Alliance for public art. Inge decided right then to donate \$10,000 to the Alliance for beautification projects. "I've been so delighted with all the progress the Alliance has made in the redevelopment of downtown, that I wanted to contribute directly to the effort," Inge says.

"A contribution such as Herndon's allows us to proceed with projects we've been anxious to start," says Elizabeth Sanders, Executive Director of the Alliance, "and will help us begin a dramatic phase of transformation." Inge says the beauty of public art and grand landscaping projects are a benefit to the entire community and serve as a reminder of what can happen when citizens desire to improve their neighborhood.

*Attorney Herndon Inge, III on the porch of his downtown office. Inge's donation will provide the initial funding for a major beautification project.*



## NEW DOWNTOWN MOBILE T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE



Be Green and look fashionable! The Alliance has just received new 100% organic cotton t-shirts featuring Devlin's dramatic painting of the Ketchum Fountain in Bienville Square and printed using non-toxic water-based ink.

Water-based inks are dyes and pigments in a suspension with water as the solvent. The evaporation of the water is necessary to set or cure the ink. It is environmentally friendly and does not contain ozone-depleting chemicals such as CFC's and HCFC's, aromatic hydrocarbons or any other volatile solvents.

In comparison, other t-shirts are typically printed using plastisol inks which contain PVC and plasticizer that essentially contain no solvent at all. This means that the ink can not cure by itself and if it is discarded in the uncured state, hazardous chemical regulations must be followed.

So make a statement about your support of downtown and the environment and come by and get your shirt today! The shirts come in black, pink & green and in sizes S, M, L, XL & XXL. They are \$24 for non-members and \$20 for members.

*continued from page 1*

lots during peak capacity events such as Mardi Gras. It sends a message that we don't really care much about first impressions! But thanks to a \$10,000 donation from downtown attorney Herndon Inge, III (see see article above) and funding from the Main Street Mobile Endowment, we are able to begin the process of transforming our gateways into welcoming, memorable entrances to downtown.

The gateway projects, at the intersections of Water and Government Streets and Water and Beauregard Streets, will have the added benefit of making those intersections more pedestrian friendly. Is there a more intimidating street to cross than Water Street?! Appropriate plantings, pedestrian zones, and crosswalks in contrasting materials and colors all have the effect of slowing vehicular traffic and making those on foot feel more comfortable. If we are ever to reconnect our citizens and visitors to the waterfront, we will have to make the waterfront more accessible. Elevated pedestrian crosswalks are one, much-discussed answer, but landscaping and street level crosswalk redesign are far less costly.

The Alliance has entered into a contract with landscape architect Jim Crowe to develop a conceptual plan for the gateways. In the next few weeks we will be planning a community planning session for input from various downtown stakeholders.

Some projects don't need a great deal of conceptualization...they just need

action. Such was the case with the replacement of about 30 trees along Dauphin and around the Community Foundation on St. Joseph Street. Trees lost from two hurricanes and the occasional wayward vehicle had created a series of unsightly holes in the sidewalk, not to mention the loss of much needed shade for pedestrians on a sunny August day. Over a two week period last month, Regents and Stewards from BID Services dug out the tree wells and carefully planted dozens of trees. The purchase of the pond cypress trees was made possible with funding from Keep Mobile Beautiful through a grant from the Hearin Chandler Foundation. After Mardi Gras, another 30 trees will be planted on side streets within the BID.



*Planting trees throughout downtown Mobile is one way that the BID helps improve the quality of life for downtown's workforce and residents. In January the Regents and Stewards planted over 50 new trees throughout the district.*

# 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.



## BAYPORT BUILDING

**Address:** Five Dauphin Street  
**Owner:** Historic Dauphin 33  
**Management:** Metcalfe and Company Inc.  
**Telephone Number:** (251) 432-2600  
**Year Built:** 1903  
**Total Square Footage:** 15,000 square feet  
**Occupancy Rate:** 98%  
**Available Square Footage**  
     **for Lease:** 2,589 square feet  
**Leasing Rate:** \$18.50 per square foot  
**Leasing Agent:** Metcalfe and Company  
**Leasing Telephone Number:** (251) 433-4478

*"The Pollock & Bernheimer six story building on the south side of Dauphin Street, between Royal and Water, was commenced on January 4 and will be completed externally and internally today. It is the highest mercantile building in the city and was constructed from the plans of Rudolf Benz & Sons. The firm for which it was built enjoys the distinction of having the biggest wholesale dry goods and notions house in the South." Mobile Register, September 1, 1904*

Bayport Building, Five Dauphin Street, features one of the most elegant facades in downtown. The building was designed by Rudolf Benz & Sons and built in 1903 as the Pollock Bernheimer Building, the largest mercantile house in the South. Photo courtesy of Metcalfe and Company.

When the Pollock & Bernheimer Building was constructed in Mobile, it was one of the most sturdy and elegant buildings of its time. Designed with three even bays, the front of the building features hydraulic pressed brick and Bowling Green stone with a highly ornamental entrance and lower floor front. The building was designed with rows of cast iron columns on the bottom three floors and was constructed with steel beams topped by stone capitals that were fashioned in a new design for the period. Originally, the building contained 40,367 square feet and was built in an L design. A new feature included in the construction of the building was a new electric elevator that could carry 2,500 pounds, necessary for the large mercantile company.

The beautiful six story building fell into disrepair and in 1950 suffered a severe loss of integrity when the three upper floors and elaborate cornice were removed. All that remains today of the classical detailing once found on the façade is at the storefront level.

Even so, the building stands as one of downtown's most elegant and tasteful architectural gems.

Today the Pollock & Bernheimer Building is known as Bayport Building and is home to Metcalfe and Company, one of south Alabama's most active commercial real estate companies. "My partners and I purchased and restored the building in 1985 before the practice became so popular in Downtown Mobile," explained Brian Metcalfe. "Although

we began the development without any third party tenants in-place, the building has consistently maintained a high occupancy level, with very little tenant turnover."

Metcalfe and Company moved into the Bayport Building after their original offices on St. Francis Street were flooded during Hurricane Ivan. Close to downtown's courts and financial district, Bayport Building is adjacent to the Riverview Parking Garage. This gives tenants and clients easy access to the building and plenty of parking opportunities. "Our tenants enjoy quality office space with convenient parking and in a great location. Being located directly across the street from the RSA Battle House Tower and Hotel is a great amenity for our tenants and clients," added Metcalfe.

### TENANT DIRECTORY

Metcalfe and Company  
 Claude Boone  
 Johnston & Druhan  
 Zieman, Speegle,  
 Jackson & Hoffman

*"Our tenants enjoy quality office space with convenient parking and in a great location."*

### Create a green office continued from page 1

heating or cooling your building when it is empty.

- When it is time to repaint use a low VOC paint. You will avoid that awful smell and do something good for the environment at the same time. A number of these paints are manufactured in the region.
- Serve filtered tap water at meetings instead of handing out water in plastic bottles. You will save lots of money on the cost of the water and save important energy resources for better uses than yet another plastic bottle to dispose of. Most bottle water is municipal water from somewhere.
- Install window film on your windows that face the summer sun. We installed a 3M product on our second floor windows and reduced the heat penetration by almost

50%. There are many window films now that have low reflectivity and yet are highly effective. No longer do you have to have that "mirrored" effect.

- When it is time to renovate the kitchen or bathroom, look into a countertop made from recycled materials. There are lots of cool options out there like recycled glass aggregates, composites made from old money or organic bamboo, and recycled stainless steel or wood countertops.
- As those cheap twinkle lights for your holiday decorations die, switch to LED (Light Emitting Diode) Lights. These are slightly more expensive (although the price is coming down rapidly), but they last a very long time, emit no heat, and use a fraction of the energy. The lights used in the Cathedral Square winter display were white LED strands

# 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.

## Bellwether Group

**Name:** Bellwether Group

**Address:** 354 ½ Dauphin Street

**Telephone Number:** (251) 433-3993

**Website:** www.bellwether-group.com

Fairhope native Mary Mullins worked for 13 years in Washington D.C. after graduating from Vanderbilt University. The first three years of her career were spent in a general public relations congressional firm and the next ten years at E. Bruce Harrison Company, a public affairs firm specializing in environmental concerns, where she served as Senior Vice President of Operations. While visiting her family in Baldwin County, Mary was stunned by what was going on in her own back yard – the Estuary being established, homebuilding increasing and accelerated growth throughout Baldwin County. While attending a dinner party, Mullins had a chance meeting with John Lewis of Lewis Communications. During the course of the evening, Mary became engaged in a conversation with him about the environment and the need for proper representation to organizations working on environmentally sensitive issues. “There was no one specializing in environmental communications in the area. The nearest firm was in Jackson, Mississippi,” explained Mary.

The chance meeting with John Lewis led to a major

*“We are a regional community and Downtown Mobile is the center of that.”*

life change for Mary and in 1996 she moved back to Baldwin County and started a small division of environmental public affairs for Lewis Communications. After several successful years Mary left Lewis Communications, and in February 2001 she and co-worker Kinnon Phillips opened the doors to Bellwether Group.

Today, Bellwether Group is a name synonymous with environmental affairs. Whether it is a local non-profit organization or an industrial plant, Bellwether Group is usually engaged if environmental concerns are at play.



Fairhope native Mary Mullins founded the Bellwether Group, an environmental public affairs agency, in 2001. Located on Dauphin Street, Bellwether Group serves as a facilitator of environmental issues.

“We represent non-profit organizations, activists, industry and business,” Mary continued. “We are a facilitator. We try to bring people together.” Their list of clients can attest to that. They represent the Alabama State Port Authority, Ciba Specialty Chemicals, Duke Energy, Envision Coastal Alabama, Mobile Area Water and Sewer System, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, The Nature Conservancy, Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation and Wolf Bay Watershed Watch, just to give you a sample. Among the services they offer are community relations and outreach, special events, marketing research, developing environmental reporting, benchmarking and research, and media relations.

Bellwether Group has definitely found their niche in today's business world. Mary attributes part of their success to the reputation that Mobile has outside our region for caring for the environment. A big part of that reputation she credits to the Press-Register and the people that work on the environmental desk. Through their publication of environmental concerns and issues in the Press-Register, the public has become more aware of the environment and is becoming educated on the issues facing the Mobile Bay delta, the Gulf of Mexico and our regional woodlands. When business or industry comes into the area, they want the public to be aware of their environmental practices and Bellwether Group is where they go to make that happen. When ThyssenKrupp announced it was building their new steel plant in Alabama, they chose Bellwether Group to represent them. Most recently Dr. George Crozier, former executive director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, joined Bellwether Group as a consultant.

Being located downtown has been an asset for both Mary and the Bellwether staff. “We are a regional community and Downtown Mobile is the center of that. We need to feed it,” exclaimed Mary. “We work all over the region and that is why we are located downtown. That, and the fact that I live in Baldwin County and my partner lives in Mobile,” she smiled.

Mary is one of several Baldwin County residents who rides the Bayline transport during her work-week. But that is another story for another issue.

**Side note:** Mary Mullins was instrumental in the writing of the 1993 publication **Going Green: How to Communicate Your Company's Environmental Commitment**.

## The Nature Conservancy

**Name:** The Nature Conservancy,

Alabama Coastal Programs Office

**Address:** 257A St. Francis Street

**Telephone Number:** (251) 433-1150

**Website:** www.nature.org/alabama

How lucky we are to have The Nature Conservancy in Mobile. Before I met the staff of our local office I had no idea what this organization was about. I was so impressed with their commitment to the earth and the effectiveness of their program of work that I didn't want to leave their office. I wanted to stay and learn more.

To begin with I learned that The Nature Conservancy is the world's largest conservation organization. It is a world-wide organization with programs in Alabama, including a Coastal Programs Office in Mobile. Their mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Not bound by politics or borders, The Nature Conservancy

*“Being in downtown is good for our donors, and is a great location for us.”*

works with the world's leading scientists to preserve our global environment. I learned that the Mobile Bay Delta is the second environmental hotspot in the world, behind South America. Another shocking statistic, of all the extinctions that occurred in the United States during the 1900s, over 50% were found in the Mobile River Delta. The paradox is that even though we have lost 50% of our species, we are so rich in nature that we still have more species living here than anywhere else on earth.

The Nature Conservancy of Alabama relocated their Coastal Programs Office to downtown in August of 2006 where Linda Mayson, State Philanthropy Director; Mary Austill Lott, Coastal Programs Director; and the new State Conservation Officer Bill Finch now work. “Being in downtown is good for our donors, and is a great location for us,” explained Mayson. “It is more active in the way



The Nature Conservancy moved into their new home, 257A St. Francis Street, in August 2006. Bill Finch, State Conservation Officer and Linda Mayson, State Philanthropy Director are pictured outside their new digs. The Nature Conservancy is a world-wide conservation organization.

we like it.” Lott agreed as she reminded me that the office was so conveniently located she rides her bike to work from her Mid-town home. And of course, working in a historic building falls into their conservation and preservation mind-set.

During my conversations with these two ladies I learned about local programs being directed by Mary Austill Lott and about programs throughout the state. Among the most critical programs Lott is working on are the restoration of our oyster reefs, the restoration of sea grass beds and the protection of the Red Bellied turtles – a species only found in the Mobile Bay delta and a member of the endangered species list.

Along with restoration programs, The Nature Conservancy works to buy properties for wildlife refuges. The Nature Conservancy serves as a middle man of sorts - they buy properties when they become available, hold them until the appropriate agency can organize their funding, and then sells the property to those organizations. They most recently acquired 14,000 acres on the Perdido River. They also own the Bon Secure Wildlife Refuge, a 7,000 acre property.

Working with an amazing team who are experts in aquatic/marine life, forest management and land management, The Nature Conservancy has an active scientific community that they use as resources. Among the

partners that they work with are the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Alabama Department of Conservation and National Resources, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Alabama Sea Grant, Alabama Coastal Foundation, Mobile Baykeeper, and Coastal Conservation Association. "We have amazing leadership too," explained Linda Mayson. "There are 31 trustees that serve on the state board and six live on the Gulf coast."

For more information on The Nature Conservancy and a list of Alabama projects visit [www.nature.org/alabama](http://www.nature.org/alabama).

## Living, Working and Playing in Downtown

**Name:** The Madden Family

**Address:** 255 North Conception Street

When you think of living in downtown Mobile there is always one family that comes to mind – Wanda Cochran, Arthur Madden and their three children, Leo – now 19 and a freshman at the University of Alabama, Keenan – 15 and a student at Murphy High School and sweet baby Cora - now 12 and a student at St. Mary's.

The Madden family moved to DeTonti Square 13 years ago this past January. Before that, they lived for almost 10 years on Dauphin Street. "I have lived my entire grown-up life in the central business district," Wanda smiled. "I have raised three children downtown and now my Mother has built a house and moved next door."

Arthur's law office has been on Dauphin Street for years and Wanda, who recently left her position as an attorney for the City of Mobile, now shares office space with her husband and his partners Domingo (Dom) Soto and Peter Madden. This makes them a family that truly lives, works and plays in downtown Mobile.

"Something that most people don't know is that downtown's neighborhoods are very quiet places. There's not a lot of traffic. It's convenient to my office. It is nice to walk to dinner and to work," she explained. While working in Government Plaza, Wanda commonly rode her bicycle to work – before it was fashionably cool. "I still love to walk to work when the weather is good and walk to dinner as a family," Wanda added.

Through the years Wanda has seen many changes in downtown noting one of the best has been the formation of the business improvement district. "The BID keeps everything looking spiffy. We live in the BID and love seeing the purple people walking around," said Wanda referring to the Crew of Regents, part of the Clean and Safe team.

*"Something that most people don't know is that downtown is a very quite place. It's not a lot of traffic. It's convenient to my office. It is nice to walk to dinner and to work",*

"We love living downtown. I love going to the Saturday morning Farmers' Market. It's fun going to parades. We love hearing the sounds of downtown: the Cathedral bells chiming, the ship horns blowing and the trains rumbling through at night. What is really nice is the gorgeous view of the RSA Tower from my yard. It is the little things that make living downtown so special," she continued.

Wanda's mother recently built a new house in DeTonti Square, next to Wanda, Arthur and their children. "After school my girls go over to her house and watch Oprah together and have a

snack. It is a new afternoon ritual. They love to watch Oprah," Wanda laughed. "Mom loves living downtown too. There is always something going on for her to do. She has a new set of downtown friends and she enjoys going to the Y."

Live. Work. Play. For Wanda, Arthur, their three children and now Wanda's Mother, downtown is where they do it all.



Wanda Cochran and Arthur Madden have lived in downtown for over 20 years. They have raised three children downtown. They work downtown. They play downtown. They are the quintessential downtown family.

## FOR MORE GREEN INFORMATION GO TO:

### For information on environmental organizations in Alabama visit:

- Conservation Alabama  
[www.conservationalabama.org](http://www.conservationalabama.org)
- Alabama Environmental Council  
[www.aeconline.ws](http://www.aeconline.ws)
- Legacy Partners in Environmental Education  
[www.legacyenved.org](http://www.legacyenved.org)
- Sierra Club – Alabama Chapter  
[www.alabama.sierraclub.org](http://www.alabama.sierraclub.org)
- Alabama Forestry Commission  
[www.forestryalabama.gov](http://www.forestryalabama.gov)
- Alabama Wildlife Federation  
[www.alabamawildlife.org](http://www.alabamawildlife.org)
- Mobile Bay National Estuary Program  
[www.mobilebaynep.com](http://www.mobilebaynep.com)
- Keep Mobile Beautiful  
[www.keeppmobilebeautiful.com](http://www.keeppmobilebeautiful.com)

### For tips on Green Living visit:

- National Geographic  
[www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)
- Environmental Protection Agency  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)
- Organic Living for Life  
[www.organiclivingforlife.com-products](http://www.organiclivingforlife.com-products)
- Natural Resources Defense Council  
[www.nrdc.org/greenliving](http://www.nrdc.org/greenliving)
- Low Impact Living  
[www.lowimpactliving.com](http://www.lowimpactliving.com)
- Green Living Tips  
[www.greenlivingtips.com](http://www.greenlivingtips.com)
- Global Green  
[www.globalgreen.org](http://www.globalgreen.org)
- Green Biz  
[www.GreenBiz.com](http://www.GreenBiz.com)
- U.S. Green Building Council  
[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)
- Green Real Estate News  
[www.greenrealestatenews.com](http://www.greenrealestatenews.com)
- Urban Land Institute  
[www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)
- Greener Buildings  
[www.GreenerBuildings.com](http://www.GreenerBuildings.com)
- Climate Biz  
[www.ClimateBiz.com](http://www.ClimateBiz.com)
- Greener Computing  
[www.GreenerComputing.com](http://www.GreenerComputing.com)
- Green Business Leaders  
[www.GreenBizLeaders.com](http://www.GreenBizLeaders.com)
- Green Driving  
[Greenercars.org](http://Greenercars.org) or [40mpg.org](http://40mpg.org) or [Carsharing.net](http://Carsharing.net)
- Green Hotels  
[Greenhotels.com](http://Greenhotels.com)
- Dry Cleaning  
[Greenearthcleaning.com](http://Greenearthcleaning.com)
- Green Products  
[Greenfeet.com](http://Greenfeet.com) or [Saveourevironment.org](http://Saveourevironment.org)
- Green home buying & remodeling  
[Greenhomeguide.com](http://Greenhomeguide.com)
- Renewable energy suppliers  
[Green-e.org](http://Green-e.org)
- Reduce cigarette litter  
[Preventcigarettelitter.org](http://Preventcigarettelitter.org)
- Green agriculture  
[Csacenter.org](http://Csacenter.org)

# DOWNTOWN EVENTS

## FEBRUARY

February 8, 9, 16, 23 – *Murder at the Music Hall*, murder mystery dinner presented by the Mobile Carnival Museum and catered by The Pillars, 7:00 p.m., Mobile Carnival Museum

Through March 9 – *Registering the Invisible: Works by Alabama artists and more than 500 area students*, Space 301 Off Centre

Through May 11 – *Our Body: The Universe Within – Actual Human Bodies*, Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center

Through May 11 – *Wired to Win*, movie, J. L. Bedsole IMAX Dome Theater, Gulf Coast Exploreum and Science Center

Through May 26 – *We Remember: a World War II photographic exhibit and The Belle. The Bomb.* inspired by Ken Burns' PBS documentary *The War*, see how our town became a war town, Museum of Mobile

February 7 – *George Jones and The Jones Boys*, concert, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre

February 8 – *LoDa ArtWalk*, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., Cathedral Square Arts District

February 8 – *Film: Apparition of the Eternal Church*, Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers presented by Mobile Arts Council and Mobile Public Library, 6:45 p.m., Bernheim Hall

February 9 – *Life Story of Luther Vandross*, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

February 11 – *The Hermitage Russian Ballet*, 7:00 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theater

February 14 – *Some Enchanted Valentine* presented by Mobile Opera, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre

February 16 & 17 – *Legendary Love* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra featuring soloist Olga Kern, 8:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. respectively, Saenger Theatre

February 21 – 24 – *Boat Show*, Mobile Convention Center

February 22 – *Keb' Mo*, concert, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

February 23 – *19th Annual American Cancer Society Chili Cook-Off*, 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Bienville Square

February 23 – *Professional Bull Riding – Super Bowl Series*, 7:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Arena

February 27 – *Hotel California "A Salute to the Eagles,"* concert, 7:30 p.m., Saenger Theatre

## MARCH

March 1 & 2 – *Coppelia* presented by Mobile Ballet, 7:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. respectively, Mobile Civic Center Theater

March 2 – *Afternoon of Stars*, Mobile Opera presents the cast of Andrea Chenier, 3:00 p.m., Bernheim Hall

March 3 – *Wilco*, concert, 7:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theater

March 7 – *Playhouse Disney Live!*, 3:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Arena

March 8 – *Overture to Spring* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

March 11 – *Teen Night/Sneak Preview: Andrea Chenier* presented by Mobile Opera, 7:00 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theater

March 13 & 15 – *Andrea Chenier* presented by Mobile Opera, 7:30 p.m., Mobile Civic Center Theater

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

March 14 & 15 – *Mobile Historic Homes Tour*, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., for list of homes visit [www.historicmobile.org](http://www.historicmobile.org)

March 15 – *7th Annual Luck of the Irish Celebration: 5K Run, Irish Stew Cook-Off and St. Patty's Parade* presented by the Exchange Club of Mobile, activities begin at 9:00 a.m., Bienville Square

March 17 – *Friendly Sons of St. Patrick Parade*, begins at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, see Mobile Register for details

March 18 – *Film: Kamp Katrina and Tour of Homes*, Southern Circuit Tour of Independent Filmmakers presented by Mobile Arts Council and Mobile Public Library, 6:45 p.m., Bernheim Hall

March 20 – *Joshua Bell & The MSO* presented by Mobile Symphony Orchestra, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

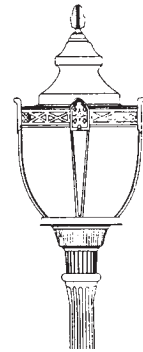
March 28 – *Brian Regan*, comedian, 8:00 p.m., Saenger Theatre

March 29 – *Azalea Trail Run*, 8:00 a.m., downtown Mobile



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.



## MEETING AND CONVENTION SCHEDULE

Scheduled for the Arthur Outlaw Convention Center

### FEBRUARY

Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast  
February 22-24

### MARCH

Pentecostal Churches of Apostolic Faith  
March 3-8

Alabama Rural Water Association  
March 15-20

Mary Kay Cosmetics, Inc.  
March 26-30

[www.downtownmobile.org](http://www.downtownmobile.org)  
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