



Downtown Redux

Mobile's city center is electric

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Downtowns that people like to live in are downtowns that people like to visit. That's why Mobile has been focused on reviving its downtown to make it a place that locals love—and it's working.

Mobile has been a city for over 300 years, but its largest transformation has been in the last 20. Many folks who knew the Downtown Mobile of the 90's are blown away by the changes it's made. Downtown is now home to James Beard nominated restaurants and independent theatres, unique museums and intimate music venues—and that's just scratching the surface.

When you first set foot into downtown Mobile, you might think you're a world away. The 150 year old cathedral, wrought iron fences, tree lined streets, and spanish moss feel very European, but the quirky energy of the city sets it apart. To say it's a hidden gem is an understatement.

The downtown entertainment district is home to the Crescent Theater. The building has housed everything from entertainment to restaurants since 1885, but it's most recent iteration—an independent theater—opened in 2008. There, you can see independent films, locally produced cinema, international films, and live performances. It's a well-loved monument to Downtown Mobile's thriving arts scene.

Downtown is also home to the Mobile Opera, one of the oldest performing arts organizations in the country. They focus on music education as much as they do on their incredible performances. If op-

era isn't your style, the Saenger Theatre is worth a visit. The symphony, comedy shows, live music—you can see it all at this unique venue. At 1900 seats, it fits a crowd, but the atmosphere still feels intimate.

There's a wealth of restaurants to enjoy, but you should start with the James Beard Semifinalist Southern National. Head Chef, Duane Nutter, received his own nomination in 2020. With locally-sourced seafood and handcrafted cocktails, their menu is hard to beat. For an afternoon treat, swing by Mo'Bay Beignet for a coffee and beignets. Grab a New York style slice for lunch at Pizzeria Delphina. Whatever you're craving, you can find it downtown.

Though most people might associate Mardi Gras with New Orleans, Mobile is the birthplace. The history is treasured and documented in downtown's Mobile Carnival Museum. It's a museum that you can't find anywhere else, full of photos, videos, costumes, and stories that dig into the rich history of Mardi Gras in Mobile.

The shopping is great too. The Haunted Book Shop, Sophiella Gallery, and the Urban Emporium are just a few places you can enjoy—and the retail sector is continuing to grow even more each year. With the support the city offers, entrepreneurs are flocking to the area.

The history, the culture, and the architecture are drawing people in. The last five years have brought 650+ housing units to downtown, and it just keeps growing. The reason why? Locals know that Downtown Mobile is a great place to live—and that means it's a great place to visit. **GG**