

# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

APRIL 2020

**SILVER SHIPS  
WINS CONTRACTS**

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**STADIUM NEARS  
COMPLETION**

**REAL ESTATE  
GROWTH IN MOBILE**





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# BUSINESSVIEW

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

APRIL 2020

## IN THE ISSUE

- 5 News
- 10 Small Business of the Month:  
Coldsmith, Ryder and Assoc.
- 12 Real Estate in Mobile Continues to Evolve
- 13 Buying in Mobile's Real Estate Market
- 17 10 Reasons to Invest in the Mobile Real Estate Market
- 20 Chamber Works with Economic Development Partnership of Alabama on Commercial Site Database
- 22 Guest Column: Real Estate Snapshot
- 27 Transformative Real Estate in Mobile's Historic Neighborhoods
- 30 Transforming USA – Hancock Whitney Stadium
- 35 Investor Focus: LLB&B Inc. Real Estate
- 37 Executive Profile: RaShawn Figures, Dortch, Figures & Sons Inc.
- 40 Chamber at Work
- 42 Tour Portugal with the Chamber
- 44 Board of Advisors
- 47 Calendar
- 48 Member News
- 51 New Members



## 30 ON THE COVER:

Randy Moon, Joel Erdmann and Scott Weldon, all with University of South Alabama, have worked to get the new Hancock Whitney Stadium ready for the first USA Jaguars football game on Sept. 12. Read more about the stadium's progress on pg. 30.  
Cover photo by FusionPoint Media LLC.



## ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE:

# REAL ESTATE REMAINS STRONG IN MOBILE

Bill Sisson, President & CEO, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce

The strength of any economy comes, fundamentally, from what it can produce. Can Mobile still produce real estate? The answer is yes.

Real estate across the region in both the residential and commercial sectors continues to expand in exciting new ways. If slow and steady wins the race, our real estate market wins the gold medal over the past few years. That constant and dependable growth says a lot about the viability of our economy, and in many ways is a harbinger for our continued expansion.

The Gulf Coast is in a particularly good place to see growth. More and more

people want to live on the coasts, but land is hard to come by in many of our crowded, coastal metropolitan areas like Boston, Los Angeles, New York and the San Francisco Bay area.

In Mobile, we can boast a great combination of available jobs and real estate prices that are still extremely competitive, even compared with other cities along the coastlines of the South.

Here's the bottom line: Mobile's real estate future is bright, and we are positioning ourselves better than most cities to catalyze our healthy economy and achieve continued growth and prosperity.



## SILVER SHIPS BUILDS IN NEW SPACE AND WITH NEW EMPLOYEES

Silver Ships often sails under the radar when it comes to the area's boat builders. The Mobile-headquartered company has made some significant additions over the past few years, including an engineering department and a new storage facility that freed up 9,600 square feet of manufacturing space. It also won several major contracts and hired additional employees.

The largest contract comes from the company's three-decade relationship with various U.S. military divisions. In 2019, the U.S. Navy awarded the aluminum boat builder an \$11 million contract for up to 160 high-speed maneuverable surface targets (HSMST), including the accessories and deployment spare parts needed for the vessels. With options, the contract has the potential to increase to \$19.7 million.

The HSMST is a remotely operated vessel used for target practice by naval or air forces.

**Steven Clarke**, owner and chief financial officer, said, "While federal contracts used to represent 80-90 percent of our business, it now is down to 50-60 percent thanks to efforts to diversify and produce workboats for other marine sectors."



Over the past year, the company has also built and delivered six fire rescue boats, designed to accommodate each department's systems and rescue missions to customers in Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri and Texas.





## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION BEGINS CONSTRUCTION ON \$3 MILLION FACILITY

The Community Foundation of South Alabama kicked off construction on its new building in downtown Mobile. The existing building at 212 St. Joseph St. was demolished, and the new facility is going up at the same location.

“Our roots are downtown. We wanted to stay downtown,” says **Rebecca Byrne**, the foundation’s president and CEO. “We own the property and feel it is conveniently located for our service area.”

Designed by Walcott Adams Verneville Architects, the \$3 million project will be 6,919 square feet with parking. In addition to housing foundation offices, two-thirds of the new facility will be dedicated to meeting space available to area nonprofit organizations and businesses. The building will also feature a partially covered rooftop terrace facing the Mobile River.

The projected completion date is estimated for early 2021.

## CITY UNVEILS NEW WEBSITE FOR WOMEN- AND MINORITY-OWNED FIRMS

The City of Mobile’s office of supplier diversity unveiled a new, mobile-friendly website to improve the contracting and certification process for companies interested in working with the city, especially women- and minority-owned firms.

“We want to change the perception of city contracting to something that is friendly, addressable and manageable,” says **Archnique Kidd**, supplier diversity manager. “This website makes it easier for small businesses to stay engaged with the City of Mobile by reducing the burden of research and document preparation.”

Through the new site, businesses receive:

- timely and relevant support;
- connection with city agencies,
- the ability to choose their commodity codes and understand how to assemble a bid;
- tailored information; and
- training and education online.

Learn more, create a login and find additional resources at [workwith.cityofmobile.org](http://workwith.cityofmobile.org).



# GET COUNTED – CENSUS 2020

This year Alabama residents have an opportunity to affect our state's future for the next 10 years and beyond. How? By taking less than 10 minutes to complete a 2020 Census form.

Data collected during the census is used in a variety of ways that affect decisions regarding community services provided to residents and the distribution of more than \$675 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year. This funding supports local programs for schools, health care, community assistance, infrastructure and other important needs. The census also determines the number of representatives each state will have in Congress.

The census counts every person – both adults and children – living in the U.S. Beginning last month, Alabama households received a postcard from the U.S. Census Bureau with instructions for how to complete it. You may respond in three ways: online, telephone or traditional paper form.



Here are just a couple reasons to get counted:

## CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATION

The population count taken in the 2020 Census will determine the allocation of the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. States with the most population gains are projected to gain additional seats while states with population losses or slow growth are at risk of losing seats.

A projected slowed population growth in Alabama has put the state in danger of losing one of our seven congressional seats after the 2020 Census. The loss would mean one less critical voice advocating for Alabama on the national stage.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Data collected by the Census Bureau is considered by the Mobile Area Chamber's economic development team as valuable, unbiased data collected by a neutral third party. An improvement in a community's Census data could mean additional retail and restaurant growth as well as more consideration from companies wishing to expand or relocate, creating job opportunities.

To learn more about the census or to download materials to help your employees understand why they need to be counted, go to [www.alabama2020census.com](http://www.alabama2020census.com).

  
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# KEEP MOBILE BEAUTIFUL PLANTS AREA'S FIRST URBAN ORCHARD

An investment in the land surrounding Strickland Youth Center will bear fruit in a spring season or two. Keep Mobile Beautiful planted more than 150 fruit trees and blueberry bushes, creating the area's first urban orchard.

While the orchard will provide fresh figs, persimmons, blueberries and kumquats to neighborhood residents, the real harvest is helping at-risk youth learn marketable job skills, says **Dianne Martin**, president of Keep Mobile Beautiful.

At-risk probationary youth from the center will tend the orchard with the help and guidance of Keep Mobile Beautiful volunteers and personnel from UPS and Alabama Power. Strickland's gardening program will offer horticulture and agriculture certifications.

Grants from Keep America Beautiful, UPS and the Alabama Power Foundation funded the project.



*Judge Edmond Naman (center with shovel) was key to establishing Mobile's first urban orchard. He is pictured with Keep Mobile Beautiful volunteers who won the grants and coordinated the project.*





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# COLDSMITH, RYDER AND ASSOCIATES HELPS CLIENTS REACH FINANCIAL GOALS

A track and cross country head coaching job at the University of South Alabama initially brought **Bruce Coldsmith** to the Mobile area. Later, when he and his wife started a family, he decided it was time to be home more regularly. He answered an ad seeking a financial planning professional, and his new career began.

"In many ways, I still feel like I teach and coach in this position," says Coldsmith, who founded Coldsmith, Ryder & Associates in 1992.

The company is the Mobile Area Chamber's Small Business of the Month.

For nearly 30 years, the financial advice team at Coldsmith, Ryder & Associates has helped its clients reach financial and investment goals. The firm is a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, an American diversified financial services company headquartered in Minneapolis.

Partner **Jennifer Ryder**, who joined the firm in 2008, says industry trends have changed over the past five to 10 years. "People want more than investment advice," she says. "They want to know if they should refinance their house, contribute to a pretax or Roth 401k and how to make sure they have enough money to retire. That's the value we provide. And it's very rewarding."





Photos by FusionPoint Media Inc.

Both Coldsmith and Ryder are certified financial planners who offer a comprehensive approach to helping clients reach their investment goals, says Coldsmith.

The firm's clients are primarily individuals, many of them small business owners. Planning options available include retirement, education and small business succession. "We focus on providing quality, client-specific and actionable advice, as well as excellent service," says Coldsmith.

**"We focus on providing quality, client-specific and actionable advice, as well as excellent service," says Coldsmith.**

Each of the firm's seven employees is involved with an area charity, says Coldsmith, and everyone participates in the Dog River Clearwater Revival and Ronald McDonald House.

"The Chamber has helped us gain a broader and deeper understanding of the vibrant business community in Mobile," he says. "The Chamber also creates a great platform to meet and network with other businesses, government and community members."



**COMPANY NAME:** Coldsmith, Ryder & Associates - Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.

**OWNER:** Bruce Coldsmith

**PHONE:** 251.344.5551

**WEBSITE:** [www.ameripriseadvisors.com/team/coldsmith-associates](http://www.ameripriseadvisors.com/team/coldsmith-associates)

# RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE



Wynfield by Truland Homes

## REAL ESTATE IN MOBILE CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

**M**obile's real estate market is constantly evolving, whether it's emerging markets for new investment; a diverse commercial and residential market that continues to make adjustments to meet ever-changing demands; or new investments that will have long-term effects on the population of people living around it.

The Mobile Area Chamber's editorial team for the *Business View* set out to look at trends and changes in the real estate market by breaking them down into three specific areas – commercial, residential and transformative projects. All impact one another, and the editorial team believes two key real estate projects – the \$70-plus million Hancock Whitney Stadium at the University of South Alabama in west Mobile and the revitalization of blighted homes and neighborhoods around the Oakleigh and downtown Mobile districts – will have far-reaching impacts.

Today, business is good in Mobile for development. According to **Allan Gustin**, president of Associated General Contractors and vice president of Dunn Building Co. LLC, local contractors are busy and there are more opportunities for local participation on key projects in the Mobile area. A key challenge he acknowledges is finding and training craft laborers to complete the area's ever-growing construction demands.

When it comes to the Chamber's work in recruiting new companies to locate here, and helping existing industries expand, having the right piece of real estate – for the business and its employees – is critical. Beyond that, as the Chamber develops a program to recruit talent to Mobile, continued investment by commercial developers and construction and renovation of new and existing homes are key to success.



# BUYING IN MOBILE'S REAL ESTATE MARKET

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

If you know anything about real estate, you know that location is important. But what else is important? How do you start the process of buying or selling a home? The *Business View* editorial team sat down with two residential real estate agents who have worked as ambassadors for the Mobile Area Chamber to try to cut through the confusion of buying and selling a home, and to find out what not to do.

Meet **Emily Hatcher**, a Realtor with **Keller Williams Realty Mobile**, and **Tricia Graham**, associate broker with **Roberts Brothers**. Both are members of the National Association of Realtors. Hatcher is new to real estate but has more than five years in sales. Graham is a graduate of the Graduate Realty Institute (GRI), Short Sales and Foreclosure Resource (SFR) certified and a member of the Senior Real Estate Service (SRES) and has 11 years of experience as an agent.

### What is the main misconception about real estate agents?

**Hatcher:** Many people fail to understand the value brought to a real estate transaction by a licensed Realtor. For example, research provided could help ensure the buyer doesn't pay too much for a property or a seller to sell for too little, leaving money on the table. Also, there are many issues related to securing proper title, insurance and financing that a Realtor can help educate buyers and sellers during a transaction.

*Emily Hatcher with Keller Williams Realty and Tricia Graham with Roberts Brothers sat down to talk with the Business View about residential real estate in Mobile.*

## How do agents get paid?

**Hatcher:** Depending on how many agents are involved in the sale, the commission is split between the various agents or brokers who are involved. Additionally, agents pay a monthly fee to their company for office space, training and marketing support from the percentage they earn. If you are the listing and selling agent, the split is with your company and not another agent.

**“Many people fail to understand the value brought to a real estate transaction by a licensed Realtor.”**

– Emily Hatcher

## What all is involved in the process of buying a home?

**Graham:** When I meet with a buyer to discuss purchasing a home, I explain the buying process and I listen to the buyer to find out what he/she would like in a house. Also, I ask if they want a short commute to work or school. Once I understand the needs, I show houses that fit their criteria. When the buyer finds the perfect house, I assist them with the offer process to purchase it.

## What is involved in selling your home?

**Hatcher:** The first step in selling your home is making sure it is in good condition to be attractive to a buyer. Small “fix-up” items can pay off in a big way once we start to show the home. Then a market analysis of what has recently sold in your area and for how much and then agreeing on what the listing price should be. The next most important part is having a company that knows how to market your home. There are many things involved, from placing it in the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) so all Realtors have access to your listing, holding open houses and using social media and other forms of advertising to get the word out.

## What other agencies are involved in a real estate transaction?

Both agree that most real estate transactions can have a host of people and companies involved in the process: title companies, insurance companies, mortgage lenders, contractors, appraisers, home inspectors and even other real estate agents.

## What advice do you have for someone who wants to sell their own home?

**Hatcher:** Many people believe they can save money by selling their house on their own, and for a few people that is a successful strategy. However, according to the National Association of Realtors, data shows that a licensed Realtor can often net you 13 percent more in a shorter period of time than doing it yourself.

**Graham:** I always say to the seller to look at the house through a buyer’s eyes. I explain that a house should be neat and clean to show well. If they have to declutter the house, then it’s a good idea to categorize the items as keep, donate, discard.

## What are some trends you are seeing that people are looking for in buying a home now?

Both Hatcher and Graham believe HGTV and other television shows about “doing it yourself” are extremely popular and influential in how homeowners are decorating their homes to sell. “Today’s color trends are white and light grey. Buyers like updated bathrooms and kitchens,” says Graham, adding that most buyers want a house in “move-in condition.” “Buyers are doing their research and using web-based tools like Zillow and others to shop before they call their agent,” says Hatcher.

**“Realtors help make the process of buying or selling a home to go smoothly.”**

– Tricia Graham

## How important is location?

**Hatcher:** Location relates back to lifestyle. For some people, it’s Midtown or downtown, but for others Saraland or out in the country may be what they are looking for. This is always a significant factor in the final decision.



## What are the hot residential areas right now in the Mobile area?

Both agree Midtown, Spring Hill, Saraland and “pockets” in west Mobile, but it really depends on where people want to be located within the area.

## What are some warning signs you see when you look at a house that would make it difficult to sell?

**Hatcher:** Visible repairs needed, landscaping, lack of curb appeal, extreme clutter on the interior of the home, stained carpets.

## What is the main piece of advice you give someone buying or selling a home?

**Hatcher:** After all the considerations we have discussed above, I always recommend that a buyer or seller have an independent home inspection completed by a licensed inspector to ensure that there is never a misunderstanding between the buyer and seller.

**Graham:** Realtors help make the process of buying or selling a home to go smoothly.

*To contact a Realtor, visit the Chamber's website at [mobilechamber.com/search](http://mobilechamber.com/search) and search “Real Estate” for a complete list of member real estate companies.*





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# 10 REASONS TO INVEST IN THE MOBILE REAL ESTATE MARKET\*

## 1. DIVERSE ECONOMY

Mobile is home to the 11<sup>th</sup> largest port by volume in the United States. It has seen a renaissance of shipbuilding since 2000. There are several military contractors at the 1,650-acre Mobile Aeroplex, home to more than 70 companies. As a large metropolitan area, Mobile is home to several hospitals employing thousands of people. A side benefit of the diverse economy is that the job market doesn't see booms and busts like cities dependent on tourism or oil.



Photo by Jeff Tesney

## 3. PROPORTIONED MILITARY MARKET

The military keeps its people on the move, and that leaves most of them to rent instead of buy their homes. The nearly 1,000 U.S. Coast Guard and other military members at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile create significant demand for rental properties in the area. After all, those coming for aviation training aren't even going to stay in the area on a two- or three-year assignment.



## 4. AFFORDABLE REAL ESTATE

The Mobile real estate market is affordable. The average home value is \$120,000, which includes a lot of older homes. If you include new homes that represent a large share of properties for sale, the median home price is around \$160,000.

## 2. LARGE STUDENT MARKET

The University of South Alabama employs more than 106,000 people. Around 15,000 students attend the school. Spring Hill College and University of Mobile have just over 1,500 students. Little schools dot the area. This creates a large, permanent class of renters for Mobile rental properties.



## 5. BETTER THAN AVERAGE ROI

The return on investment in the Mobile housing market is better than the state average. The median Alabama rent is less than \$800, while the median rent in the city of Mobile is around \$900. Note that you'd receive more for a single-family detached home than a one- or two-bedroom apartment. Yet the median home price in the market is 7 percent less than the state average. This means you'll see higher ROI from rental properties than rentals elsewhere in the state.



## 6. POSITIVE APPRECIATION TRENDS

A point in favor of the Mobile housing market is the strong appreciation trend. Real estate is affordable, but it is going up in value. Appreciation was between 7% and 8% in 2018, and the forecasted appreciation rate for 2019 was around 6%. Rents demanded for properties are expected to go up 6% over the next year, as well.

## 7. COMPLEX ECONOMICS OF THE AREA

Mobile offers a wide variety of jobs, but the housing market isn't bid up by a large number of high-paying oil field jobs or high-tech firms. The home-to-price income ratio is greater than 3:1.

This in turn explains why only 55 percent of residents own their homes; the rental rate in the market is well below the two-thirds average for the United States. This creates significant demand for rental properties that won't be solved anytime soon.



## 8. LANDLORD FRIENDLINESS

Alabama, like many Southern states, is landlord friendly, and the state has considered becoming even more so. State law previously said they could only have four curable breaches of the lease in a year, while a proposed rule would have lowered it to just two such breaches or else they'd have to move out. Alabama already allows you to evict someone in as little as 19 days.

## 9. THE OPTION TO PROFIT FROM SHORT-TERM RENTALS

Mobile is a beautiful community with water access points from Mobile Bay to Dog and Fish Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico. What makes it unusual is that several Mobile suburbs have come to agreements with Airbnb regarding taxes.

## 10. LOWER TAXES

It isn't what you earn in the Mobile housing market that matters, it's what you keep. Fortunately, taxes are low in the Mobile real estate market. Property taxes on owner-occupied properties are less than half a percent of assessed value. Without the owner-occupied exemption, the property tax rate on rental properties averages 0.77%.

*\*Information according to Norada, a real estate investment firm based in California that provides investors with new and refurbished investment properties across the country. To learn more, go to [https://www.noradarealestate.com/blog/mobile-al-real-estate-market/#Best\\_Places\\_In\\_Alabama\\_To\\_Invest\\_In\\_Real\\_Estate](https://www.noradarealestate.com/blog/mobile-al-real-estate-market/#Best_Places_In_Alabama_To_Invest_In_Real_Estate)*





# In Mobile Bay, we give oysters the royal treatment.

Did you know oysters fight erosion and filter water,  
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Alabama Power teamed up with The Nature  
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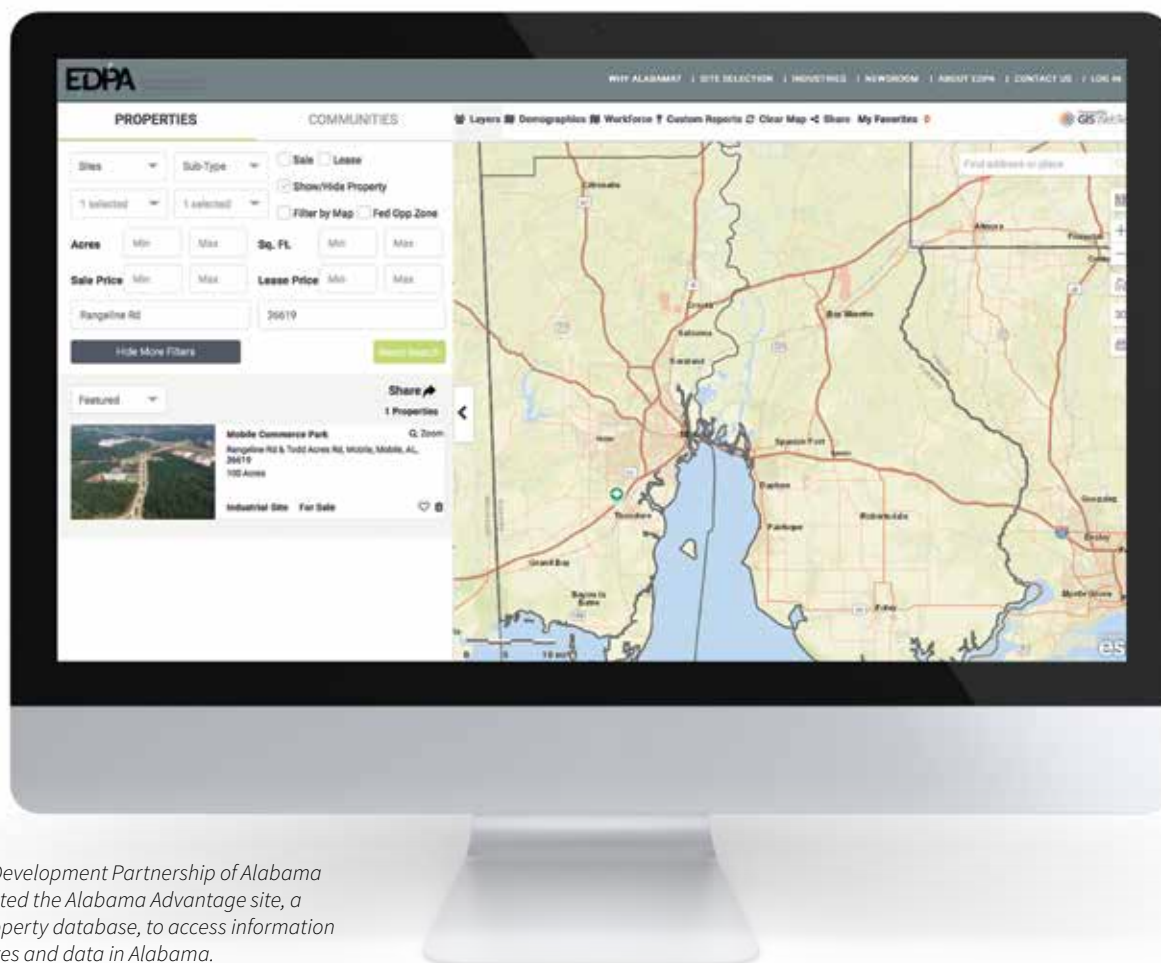
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## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE



The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EPDA) has created the Alabama Advantage site, a commercial property database, to access information on buildings, sites and data in Alabama.

## ALABAMA ADVANTAGE WEBSITE MAKES COMMERCIAL PROPERTY SEARCHES EASY

According to **Kayla Morgan**, the Mobile Area Chamber's marketing and research manager, having the right piece of real estate – for a business and its employees – is critical.

With that in mind, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama (EPDA) has created the Advantage Alabama database is an important tool for narrowing down available sites and buildings across Alabama.

EDPA is a private, nonprofit organization funded by more than 60 Alabama companies that works to attract, retain and grow jobs in Alabama. The Chamber is the local host supporting the state site.

"The Advantage Alabama property database is an integral component of the state's economic development system and serves as an 'electronic storefront' where anyone across the globe can access information on available buildings and sites as well as initial community overview data," said **Ernie Cowart**, EDPA's vice president and director of business information.

**"The Advantage Alabama property database is an integral component of the state's economic development system and serves as an 'electronic storefront' where anyone across the globe can access information on available buildings and sites as well as initial community overview data,"**

**Ernie Cowart**, vice president and director of business information, EDPA

If the building or site meets the requirements, some types of properties that can be added to the database include industrial buildings, industrial sites and office space.

Recently, Advantage Alabama was re-launched, allowing qualifying buildings and sites to be easily accessed and researched in just a few clicks. If you would like more information about the database or how to add a property to it, contact Morgan at [kmorgan@mobilechamber.com](mailto:kmorgan@mobilechamber.com) or 251.431.8602.



# AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL SITE

## MOBILE COMMERCE PARK



Rangeline Rd & Todd Acres Rd, Mobile, Mobile, AL, 36619

### Sale / Lease

For Sale: Yes  
Sale Price: \$40,000.00 per acre  
Pricing Information:

### Zoning

Zoning: None

### Property Details

Latitude: 30.569300  
Longitude: -88.149500  
Total Acreage: 300 Acre(s)  
Available Acres: 100 Acre(s)  
Largest Tract Available: 50 Acre(s)  
Smallest Tract Available: 1 Acre(s)  
Expandable: No  
Wetlands: No  
Phase 1 Audit Done: Yes

Desired

**WIN** with Alabama

**EDPA** Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

The Alabama Advantage online database also provides the ability for business owners and real estate professionals to download site overview brochures on available buildings and sites, like the one shown here for an industrial site ready for development at Mobile Commerce Park.

# AVAILABLE INDUSTRIAL SITE

## MOBILE COMMERCE PARK



Rangeline Rd & Todd Acres Rd, Mobile, Mobile, AL, 36619



Rangeline Rd & Todd Acres Rd, Mobile, Mobile, AL, 36619

### Interstate/Highway

Interstate: I-10  
To Interstate (miles): 1 Mile(s)  
Interstate #2: I-65  
To Interstate #2 (miles): 3.00 Mile(s)  
Highway: 193  
To Highway (miles): On-Site

### Rail

Carrier: Unknown

### Electric

Provider: Alabama Power Company

### Natural Gas

Provider: Mobile Gas Corporation  
Pressure (bars): 60 Psi  
Size of Main: 2"

### Water

Provider: Mobile Water Service  
Size of Main: 12"

### Telecommunications

Provider: AT&T  
Fiber Available: Yes  
DSL Available:

### Sewer

Provider: Mobile Water Service  
Size of Main: 6"

**WIN** with Alabama

**EDPA** Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

### For more information, please contact:

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# REAL ESTATE SNAPSHOT

by Dr. Reid Cummings

Real estate markets on both sides of Mobile Bay were quite active in 2019, experiencing persistent seller's market conditions throughout the year – rising prices and decreasing inventories.

The total value of all real estate transactions recorded at the Mobile and Baldwin County probate courts, including those closed by real estate professionals, was \$5.12 billion – a 6.1% increase over 2018 regional totals. Sales activity was robust throughout the region, with most real estate categories experiencing growth.

The big question is what happens next? We scanned multiple publications and found some interesting outlooks. Housing affordability will be a progressively concerning problem in markets throughout the country, not

**Housing affordability will be a progressively concerning problem in markets throughout the country, not just in big cities.**

just in big cities. New single-family home sizes will continue to decrease. It's believed that mortgage interest rates will remain low, fueling demand. Home sales, property values and residential rents will grow, albeit more slowly.

Challenges for the retail real estate sector will increase significantly. Environmental and social concerns will heighten emphasis on real estate sustainability, increasing communities' and developers' focus on adaptive reuse as a viable real estate development alternative.



Source: Metro Market Trends - Copyright © University of South Alabama Center for Real Estate and Economic Development.



Source: Metro Market Trends - Copyright © University of South Alabama Center for Real Estate and Economic Development.

## ABOUT THE EXPERT



*Dr. Reid Cummings is an associate professor of finance and real estate and the director of the Center for Real Estate and Economic Development at the University of South Alabama. He has more than 36 years of experience in real estate development, leasing, management, brokerage, financial consulting, mortgage lending and construction services. He has served as a member of the Alabama Real Estate Commission since 2011 and is an advisory board member of The University of Alabama Center for Insurance Information and Research. He can be reached at [cummings@southalabama.edu](mailto:cummings@southalabama.edu) or 251.460.6710.*



# RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE IN MOBILE AND BALDWIN COUNTIES

In Mobile County in 2019, there were 6,677 single-family homes sold, totaling \$897 million.

- The median sales price rose slightly to close at \$116,200, and the average sales price finished up 7.7 percent to end the year at \$134,900.
- New home sales volume totaled \$74.9 million on 310 transactions.
- The median sales price was \$224,600, while the average sales price rose sharply to finish at \$242,100.
- There were 177 condominium sales totaling \$27.7 million. The median sales price was \$210,800, and the average sales price was \$161,400.

In Baldwin County in 2019, there were 5,553 single-family homes sold, totaling \$1.64 billion.

- Median prices rose 13.1 percent, to \$220,000 while average prices ended the year at \$290,000, an 18.9 percent increase.
- A total of 1,402 new homes were sold, generating total sales volume of \$381.8 million.
- The median sales price was \$239,200, and the average sales price was \$272,900.
- Although condominium sales were up only slightly, total sales volume jumped 5.6 percent to end the year at \$880.2 million. The median sales price rose to \$305,000 and the average sales price finished at \$354,900.



## MOBILE COUNTY

RESIDENTIAL  
Mobile County 2019



## BALDWIN COUNTY

RESIDENTIAL  
Baldwin County 2019

### Single-Family Homes



**\$116,200**

median home price

**\$134,900**

average home price



### Single-Family Homes

**\$220,000**

median home price

**\$290,200**

average home price

### New Homes



**\$224,600**

median home price

**\$242,100**

average home price



### New Homes

**\$239,200**

median home price

**\$272,900**

average home price

## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS (BY COUNTY)

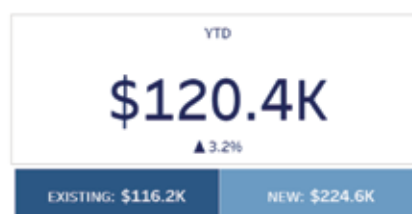
Total Value | Mobile County, Alabama



Source: Metro Market Trends - Copyright © University of South Alabama Center for Real Estate and Economic Development.

## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS (BY COUNTY)

Median Price | Mobile County, Alabama



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**Sales activity was robust throughout the region, with most real estate categories experiencing growth.**

## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS (BY COUNTY)

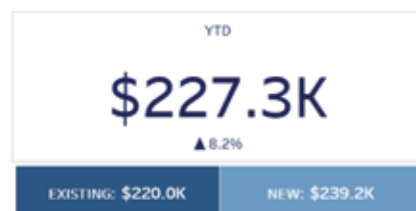
Total Value | Baldwin County, Alabama



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## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS (BY COUNTY)

Median Price | Baldwin County, Alabama



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**Challenges for the retail real estate sector will increase significantly. Environmental and social concerns will heighten emphasis on real estate sustainability, increasing communities' and developers' focus on adaptive reuse as a viable real estate development alternative.**



# COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE IN MOBILE AND BALDWIN COUNTIES

In 2019, there were 420 Mobile County commercial real estate transactions totaling \$341.9 million.

- The median sales value ended the year at \$334,800, and the average sales value finished at \$803,600.
- The 1,479 vacant land sales produced total sales volume of \$126.5 million.
- The median sales value ended 2019 at \$42,000, and the average sales price value was \$84,400.

In 2019, 368 Baldwin County commercial properties were sold, totaling \$334.8 million.

- The median transaction value was \$244,800, and the average sales price closed the year at \$898,600.
- Vacant land sales volume totaled \$415.4 million.
- The median sales price was \$68,000 and the average sales price was \$173,100.

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS Mobile County 2019



**\$334,800**

median sales value

**\$803,600**

average sales value

## COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS Baldwin County 2019



**\$244,800**

median sales value

**\$898,600**

average sales value



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## HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS ARE A HOTSPOT FOR RENOVATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

Research shows one rundown house on a street can lower property values for everyone. **Mike Rogers** and **Brian Giattina** are betting that the opposite is also true.

The two teamed up to create Porchlight as a tool to buy and manage property, with a plan to reinvigorate Mobile's historic urban core.

Their first stop is the Oakleigh Garden District and Texas Hills area, bound by Government Street, Ann Street, Broad Street and Magnolia Cemetery. Since 2017, Porchlight bought between 35 and 40 properties, cleaned up dozens more and began building its fourth new home.

Rogers is the president of Rogers and Willard Construction, and Giattina is the chief financial officer of Giattina Aycock Architecture Studio in Birmingham. The two met while working on conceptual projects for a couple of Mobile's high-tech companies. Late one night, their conversation turned from work to hobbies to a shared zeal for housing and revitalization.

The existing structures purchased by Porchlight included boarded-up homes, an eight-unit apartment building and a few commercial properties. The company has taken on restoring some and selling others.

"It's not an overnight fix. Not a get-rich-quick scheme. Not for the faint of heart," says Rogers.

He says he has walked the streets building relationships with longtime residents and working to earn their trust. Buying these properties means finding the owners, most of whom have moved away, and convincing them to sell in order to establish a clear, lien-free title.



*Brian Giattina and Mike Rogers are partners in Porchlight, a company investing in Mobile's residential historic core.*

On the empty lots or those with blighted houses that had to be torn down, Porchlight is building new, energy-efficient homes ranging from one bedroom and one bath to three bedrooms and two baths, and from 900 square feet to 1,800 square feet.

“This is 2020. We’re giving a nod to historic architecture but not replicating it,” says Rogers.

Want to know more? Learn about Porchlight’s offerings at [porchlightliving.com](http://porchlightliving.com).

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

**Sydney Betbeze**, executive director of Restore Mobile, counts Porchlight and the work of other investors as part of her organization’s success.

Over the past 10 years, the nonprofit organization has purchased multiple endangered and threatened properties in the same Oakleigh-Texas Hills area.

“When we started, there was no investment. We go in to stabilize the market so private investment can come in,” she says.

With private money and grants, Restore Mobile fully restores and sells the homes, offering a “you-finish” option for fixer-



Photo by FusionPoint Media Inc.

uppers and empty lots for those who want to build their own. “As a nonprofit, we can afford to go in and take a risk.”

“Everyone wants walkable, sustainable and livable communities. Mobile has this, and so close to downtown. That’s the lifestyle people want all over the country.”

This year, Betbeze says her organization will be focusing activity in Oakdale, another of Mobile’s historic neighborhoods, now that interest in Oakleigh and Texas Hills is taking off.

Find the details on Restore Mobile’s properties at [restoremobile.org](http://restoremobile.org).

**“Everyone wants walkable, sustainable and livable communities. Mobile has this, and so close to downtown. That’s the lifestyle people want all over the country.”**

**Sydney Betbeze**

*Executive director, Restore Mobile*



Photo by FusionPoint Media Inc.



Sydney Betbeze with Restore Mobile and Vernetta Greene with EXIT Realty Lyon showcase one of their recently-restored homes in Oakleigh.

## DEMAND

"We've seen a trend over the past five years of people moving from west Mobile, even Spring Hill, to Midtown or one of Mobile's seven historic districts," says **Sam Winter** of Sam Winter and Co. Real Estate.

"All ages," he adds. "Young professionals to empty-nesters."

Winter, the listing agent for Porchlight, has helped a client buy a home from Restore Mobile. "Both provide a needed housing product, and several Restore Mobile and Porchlight homes are side by side," he says.

"Downtown is a hip and cool place, and people want to be closer to activities and restaurants."

**"Downtown is a hip and cool place, and people want to be closer to activities and restaurants."**

**Sam Winter**

Sam Winter and Co. Real Estate.

Sam Winter, right, with Sam Winter Real Estate is working with Porchlight to market and sell the company's restored homes.



Photo by FusionPoint Media Inc.

# NEW STADIUM POISED TO TRANSFORM THE CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY



**W**hen the University of South Alabama (USA) Jaguars football team took the field in 2009, it was far-fetched to think that 10 years later a \$75-plus-million stadium would be under construction on campus. That reality is now nearly here with Hancock Whitney Stadium poised to host its first Jags football game on Sept. 12 against Grambling.

“This is a culmination of five to six years of purposeful, focused efforts that includes thousands of people,” said USA Athletic Director **Joel Erdmann**.

When it opens, the stadium will change the face of not only the campus, but also the community surrounding it.

“From a campus standpoint, (this project) touches all areas... as well as partnerships that have been formed with the

community,” said **Scott Weldon**, vice president of finance and administration for USA. “Every little detail that our construction group and our athletic department came up with, I don’t think most folks would have thought of when going in a project like this. To go into this depth of understanding and detail has been pretty incredible.”

Weldon noted the stadium is the largest single project on the USA campus. As a new build and not retrofitting an existing structure, it’s also the envy of colleges across the country. Some of the stadium’s assets include:

- Michelob Ultra Terrace – a six-level area in the south endzone of the stadium that can be used for standing-room viewing of football games, concert viewing areas and special events.
- State-of-the-art locker rooms and administrative offices located in a building attached just behind the north end zone.
- On-campus corporate and family tailgating near the stadium.
- State-of-the-art videoboard on the south end zone and ribbon boards running the length of the east and west sides of the field.

Beyond the stadium project, around \$30 million in infrastructure projects have taken place throughout campus and the area leading into it, to help with continued growth and

## FACTS ABOUT HANCOCK WHITNEY STADIUM

**Seating:** 25,000

**Standing Room (Terrace):** 771

**Suites/Loge/Chairback Seating:** Sold Out

**Benchback Seating on East and West Sidelines:** Available

**Tickets:** [jaguarathleticfund.com](http://jaguarathleticfund.com)



# FORM



Photos by FusionPoint Media Inc.



## CHAMBER MEMBER CONTRACTORS ON THE HANCOCK WHITNEY STADIUM PROJECT

- Gulf Electric
- James B. Donaghey Inc.
- Mark Davis Construction
- Mobile Fixture & Equipment Co.
- Mobile Glass LLC
- Persons Services Corp.
- Southern Earth Sciences
- Superior Masonry
- Triple A Fire Protection
- Wrico Signs Inc.

Source: University of South Alabama

\*\*As of 3/2/2020

managing traffic. This includes an additional on-campus road constructed at Foreman and Old Shell roads that will open this fall, as well as years of investments by the City of Mobile, Mobile County and Alabama Department of Transportation to help businesses and residents in the area more easily navigate campus traffic.

“The infrastructure you are seeing already invested in a wide area from University and Airport (boulevards) to Highway 98 to Cody Road, are setting this area up for additional investment,” said **Allan Gustin**, president of the Associated General Contractors LLC and vice president of the Gulf Coast Area for Dunn Building Co. He said the residential market surrounding USA remains strong and, as the campus continues to grow, so will the entertainment sector around it, employing more people.

“(The stadium) sets in place the tone for a longer-term draw of people who have not been out to USA campus, and also changes the picture for campus life,” said Gustin.

Both Weldon and Erdmann agree growth in west Mobile near the campus will continue as USA grows. Weldon pointed to a free-standing USA Health emergency department under construction just off campus near Hillcrest and Old Shell roads.

“Businesses go where people go, and this is in the radius. The ripple effect will be felt,” said Erdmann.



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Photos by Devon Ford Photography



Recognized as Mobile and Baldwin County's premier, upscale real estate company since 1986, LLB&B prides itself on people and versatility. Pictured above are owners Julie Minto (left) and Melissa Morrisette (right).

# LLB&B INC. REAL ESTATE

**Company officials:** Julie Minto and Melissa Morrisette

**Address:** 3315-A Old Shell Rd., Mobile

**Number of Employees:** 39 (in Mobile)

**Website:** [www.llbb.com](http://www.llbb.com)

**Years in business:** Since 1986

**Brief company description:** LLB&B was established in 1986 by its founding principals, Lucy Lyons, Shirley Lane, Carolyn Bullock and Beverley Burton doing business as Lane, Lyons, Burton and Bullock, a small, boutique real estate agency in Spring Hill. Julie Minto, who had worked as a Realtor with the company for 23 years, and Melissa Morrisette, who had experience in pharmaceutical sales and management, purchased the company in 2003 and changed the name to LLB&B Inc. Real Estate. The company lists and sells real estate and has a property management division as well. LLB&B is a member of the Leading Real Estate Companies of the World.

**Why do you support the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth Initiative?** "With the belief that a thriving economy is the cornerstone of a healthy, prosperous community, LLB&B proudly supports the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce's Partners for Growth Initiative to make Mobile and the Mobile business community the best it can be," said Morrisette.

**How long have you been a continuous Mobile Area Chamber Member?** Since 1986

**About Partners For Growth:** Growing Global, Investing Local 2018-2022, Partners For Growth is a five-year, public-private



initiative of the Mobile Area Chamber, to grow and diversify Mobile's economy. Its five pillars include: 1) new business recruitment and investment attraction; 2) existing industry support, innovation and entrepreneurship; 3) workforce attraction, retention and development; 4) diverse business development; and 5) business advocacy and quality of place.

Join the Chamber's economic development investors by contacting David Rodgers, vice president, economic development, at 251.431.8657 or [drodgers@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drodgers@mobilechamber.com).

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Easter Sunrise Service: **April 12**

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# RASHAWN FIGURES

## DORTCH, FIGURES & SONS INC.

**TITLE:** CEO

**HOMETOWN:** Mobile

**EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in computer science and political science from The University of Alabama

**FIRST JOB:** Page in the Alabama State Senate

**PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE:** Project manager at Global Construction & Roofing and as lead consultant at Figures Investments Inc.

**WHO/WHAT INSPIRES YOU?** I am inspired by businessmen in my community that have shown me it's possible to be successful: Council Powell, Frank Seltzer, Preston Hughes, Norman Figures, Michael Figures, Gen. Gary Cooper and Thomas Figures. A lot of my success can be attributed to having great role models growing up.

**SECRET TO SUCCESS:** Hard work and being dedicated to your craft. Success does not come overnight. Have a long-term plan and see it through to the end. On your journey, treat everyone with respect, regardless of their social or economic status. I never forget that my family started from very humble beginnings.

**WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?** My passion is mentoring young professionals in the construction industry. I believe that having mentors is key in business. It provides you a wealth of knowledge from professionals in your field of expertise. This knowledge shortens the learning curve.

**WHAT TALENT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE?**

Playing the piano.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST**

**ACHIEVEMENT?** Building a construction firm that has completed multi-million-dollar construction projects throughout the state of Alabama.

**WHAT QUALITY DO YOU MOST LIKE IN PEOPLE?**

Honesty.

**BRIEF COMPANY DESCRIPTION:** Dortch, Figures & Sons Inc. is a full-service general contracting firm based in Mobile. The company provides general construction and design-build services to a multitude of markets that include manufacturing, institutional, aviation, municipal, educational and healthcare. It is family and community-oriented with a continued commitment to improving the economic and social well-being of Mobile and the surrounding areas.





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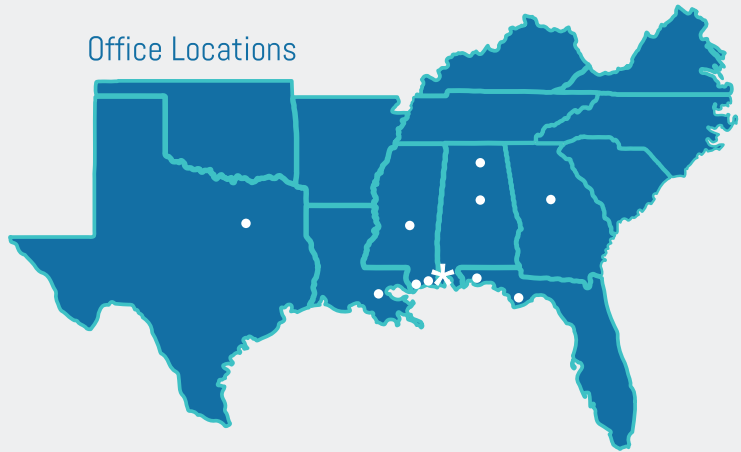
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# CHAMBER AT WORK



1

## 1 MOBILE AREA CHAMBER HOSTS LEGISLATORS DURING MARDI GRAS

The community and governmental affairs department worked with Coastal Alabama Partnership, Alabama State Port Authority, Business Council of Alabama and Austal to host an annual Mardi Gras event for legislators across the state in Mobile. The weekend included a port tour by boat, Austal tour, presentation by Airbus and several Mardi Gras parades.

**INDUSTRY RECRUITING IN GERMANY** The Chamber's director of business development participated in an aviation forum in Munich, Germany, in partnership with the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance and the state of Alabama. While there, the team hosted several events, and had various one-on-one meetings with aerospace executives to promote the Mobile Bay region.



2

## 2 DELEGATION FROM QUEBEC COMES TO MOBILE

The international business division of the Chamber hosted nine Quebec-based aerospace companies in Mobile, coordinating with the Québec Government Office in Atlanta. The incoming trade mission exposed the Canadian companies to the region's diverse aerospace industry and introduced them to key aerospace players in Mobile and Baldwin counties.





### 3 CHAMBER HOSTS RECEPTION HONORING CURRENT AND PAST BOARD CHAIR

Following an orientation of new Chamber board of directors, Daniel Dennis with Roberts Brothers Inc. and Terry Harbin with BancorpSouth were honored at a chairman's reception sponsored by Trustmark Bank.

**CHAMBER ATTENDS WORKBOAT SHOW** The director of existing industry and vice president of economic development met with 25 local businesses and prospects while attending the international Workboat Show in New Orleans. This is the largest show in the world for commercial vessel owners, operators and builders, as well as industry vendors and suppliers. With Mobile's large shipbuilding industry, the show is a way for the Chamber to support its members and recruit economic development prospects.

**MEETING WITH CONSUL GENERAL FROM THE NETHERLANDS** The Chamber's director of international business was invited to Montgomery to meet with the consul general and deputy consul general from the Netherlands Consulate General in Atlanta to discuss opportunities to engage with Dutch companies interested in locating operations in the Southeast.

### CHAMBER NAMES NEW BOARD OF ADVISORS

The Chamber announced several new board of advisors members, bringing the number to 261. They are Daher Aerospace, Morale Resource and Naval Aviation Museum Foundation. To learn more about this group of influential members, contact Shelly Mattingly at 251.431.8655 or smattingly@mobilechamber.com.



### MEMBER RIBBON CUTTINGS AND GRAND OPENINGS

Chamber staff and ambassadors helped cut ribbons and celebrate grand openings at 22<sup>nd</sup> State Bank, Ronald McDonald House, Ascension Funeral Home and Mo'Bay Beignet Co. For assistance hosting your ribbon cutting or grand opening, contact Dawn Rencher at 251.431.8649 or drencher@mobilechamber.com.

### CHAMBER NAMES NEW AMBASSADORS

Sandy Caruso with Hampton Inn & Suites Saraland and John Garrett with Edward Jones were named Chamber ambassadors. Ambassadors are a group of volunteer members who assist the Chamber with a variety of projects, including event registration, member visits and attending ribbon cuttings. To learn more about this group, contact Dawn Rencher at 251.431.8649 or drencher@mobilechamber.com.

### EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS AVERAGE 40 ATTENDEES

Attendance has been robust at recent Executive Roundtable meetings held at the Chamber for member small business owners and managers. Recent presenters included Dr. Reggie Sykes, president of Bishop State, who discussed new initiatives and programs at the college; Bill Sisson, president and CEO of the Chamber, who gave an economic update; Cheryl Nicholls, the Chamber's director of education and workforce development, who talked about the Chamber's new talent attraction effort; and Dr. Tony Waldrop, University of South Alabama president, who presented the many programs, projects and new initiatives being planned.

# TOUR OF PORTUGAL



## 9-DAY LUXURY TOUR - NOV. 14-23

Lisbon | Cascais | Obidos | Sintra | Evora | Alentejo | Lagos | Faro | Tavira

**I**n an effort to meet the ever-growing demand for group travel, the Mobile Area Chamber announced an eight-night tour of Portugal leaving Mobile on Saturday, Nov. 14, and returning home Monday, Nov. 23. Cost of the trip is \$2,999 per person, based on double occupancy, and as of press time only six seats remain. The price includes flights from Mobile, all hotel stays, tours and 12 meals (8 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 3 dinners).

The group will fly into Lisbon before traveling to the Portuguese Riviera,

specifically to Cascais, for three nights. Day trips during the three-night stay include a day tour of Lisbon, Obidos and Sintra. From there it's on to Evora, where guests will learn about cork harvesting and travel up to Algarve region. In Lagos for three nights, you'll spend days in Monsaraz, Faro and Tavira enjoying quaint fishing villages, seaside cliffs and Roman walled towns. The tour ends with a night in Lisbon before flying home, or staying in Portugal for another four nights in Madeira Island.

### ITINERARY

3 Nights in Cascais

1 Night in Evora

3 Nights in Lagos

1 Night in Lisbon

For more information or to sign up, contact **Leigh Perry-Herndon** at [lherndon@mobilechamber.com](mailto:lherndon@mobilechamber.com) or 251.431.8645.





### Some of the trip highlights include:

- Spend the night in Evora, known as the “Museum City of Portugal.”
- Taste the wines of the Alentejo region during a winery tour.
- Venture to Lagos, where Prince Henry the Navigator began his explorations.
- Admire the stunning Cape St. Vincent, where 200-foot cliffs plunge into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Savor the flavors of the Algarve with a tasting menu featuring iconic local dishes, liquors and pastries.
- Tour Lisbon, Portugal’s capital overlooking the Tagus River.







## ANDREW BETTS

### HPM

**Andrew Betts** is a senior manager at HPM, formerly known as Hoar Program Management. Although based in Mobile, he has worked on large capital improvement projects throughout the southeastern United States. Betts has more than 10 years of experience in managing developments for the aviation, industrial, healthcare and commercial markets. Betts has a bachelor's degree in building science from Auburn University.

## THOMAS G. JOHNSON JR.

### MOBILE PAINT MANUFACTURING CO.

**Thomas G. Johnson Jr.** is president, CEO and member of the board of Mobile Paint Manufacturing Co. Johnson is a graduate of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School and Auburn University. Prior to joining Mobile Paint, he began his career with Mobil Oil Corp., CooperSmith Corp. and Sara Lee Bakery Group. In 2003, he became president and co-owner of Marshall Biscuit Co. When Marshall Biscuit was acquired by T. Marzetti Co., he served as vice president of operations until March 2017, overseeing such familiar Marzetti brands as Sister Schuberts, New York Pizzeria, Reames, Flatout and Angelic.



## DANIEL WRIGHT

### WRIGHT TRANSPORTATION INC.

**Daniel Wright** is president of Wright Transportation Inc. He began his career with the company in 2009 and was named president in 2017. Wright graduated from Auburn University with bachelor's degrees in supply chain management and accounting. He is a board member of the Alabama Trucking Association, and American Trucking Association LEAD graduate and a member of the Truckload Carriers Association.





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## 9 MEMBERSHIP 101

*Come meet other members and Chamber staff to learn about the many ways to benefit from your membership.*

**When:** 8 to 9 a.m.

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Contact:** Carolyn Golson at 251-431-8622 or [cgolson@mobilechamber.com](mailto:cgolson@mobilechamber.com)

*No charge, but seating is limited. RSVP requested. Free parking.*

## 14 USING DATA TO DRIVE BUSINESS GROWTH

*In this interactive workshop, you will understand how to analyze trends, incorporate this data into your marketing plan, select tools to help you find the answers you need and de-mystify Google Analytics to achieve your growth objectives.*

**When:** 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251-431-8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*No charge, but RSVP requested. Free parking.*

## 21 EXECUTIVE ROUNDTABLE

*\*Members Only*

*A monthly forum exclusively for Chamber-member small business owners and managers.*

**When:** 8 to 9 a.m.

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Speaker:** Chris Curry, President, Mobile Airport Authority

**Topic:** "Update on Mobile Aeroplex and Airport Projects."

**Contact:** Brenda Rembert at 251.431.8607 or [brembert@mobilechamber.com](mailto:brembert@mobilechamber.com)

*No charge, but RSVP requested. Free parking.*

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## 28-29 AIDT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRAINING LSI

*AIDT Leadership Development training programs introduce team leaders, supervisors and managers to effective leadership responsibilities, communication skills, team work and motivation techniques.*

**When:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days

**Where:** Mobile Area Chamber, 451 Government St.

**Cost:** \$50 per person for members/\$60 for nonmembers, includes course materials, lunch and snacks

**Contact:** Molly Dixon at 251-431-8650 or [mdixon@mobilechamber.com](mailto:mdixon@mobilechamber.com)

*Reservations are required and no cancellations after April 6. Class size is limited to 25.*

## 30 BUSINESS AFTER HOURS

**When:** 5:30 to 7 p.m.

**Where:** Mobile Marriott, 3101 Airport Blvd.

**Cost:** \$5 for members and \$10 for potential members

**Contact:** Dawn Rencher at 251-431-8649 or [drencher@mobilechamber.com](mailto:drencher@mobilechamber.com)

*Reservations are not needed.*

**Sponsor:** Mobile Marriott

*This magazine went to the printer in mid-March just as the Coronavirus was forcing events to cancel. Please refer to the Mobile Area Chamber's website – [mobilechamber.com](http://mobilechamber.com) – and social media pages for the most up-to-date details on Chamber-hosted events.*

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## WHO'S NEW

## Regions Bank Names Christian White Mobile Market Executive



White

**Christian White**, senior vice president of commercial banking for **Regions**, was promoted to market executive for the bank in Mobile and surrounding communities. White is a graduate of Hampden-Sydney College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in economics.

## Connor Raley Joins RTBH



Raley

The partners of **Russell Thompson Butler & Houston** announced the addition of **Connor Raley** as a staff accountant. Raley is a recent graduate of Spring Hill College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in accounting.

## Merrill Lynch Adds Managing Director and VP



Whiting



Bradford

**Palmer G. Whiting**, wealth management advisor, was named director of the **Merrill Lynch** Mobile

office. He was also named to the *Forbes* "Best in State Wealth Advisors" list in January. Also **D. Austin Bradford**, wealth management advisor, was recently named vice president of Merrill Lynch.

## Sarah Schmohl Named Firm Administrator



Schmohl

**Maynard Cooper & Gale** welcomed **Sarah Schmohl** as the firm administrator. Schmohl is a graduate of Auburn University with a bachelor's degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing.

## Battiste-Green Gets Promotion



Battiste-Green

**Pamela Battiste-Green** was promoted to office manager of the **Mobile County Legislative Delegation Office**. She previously served as legislative assistant in the delegation's office. Battiste-Green holds a bachelor's degree in social science from the University of Mobile.

## Armstrong Joins Renasant as Branch Manager - Lending



Armstrong

**Renasant Bank** hired **Ivy Armstrong** as branch manager - lending of the bank's new Fairhope location at 508 Fairhope Ave. She brings more than 11 years of banking experience to this position.

## UM Welcome Barnes-Witherspoon and DeLong



Barnes-Witherspoon



DeLong

The **University of Mobile School of Nursing** announced alumna and professor of nursing

**Dr. Sarah Barnes-Witherspoon** was named the school's dean. She earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in nursing from the University of Mobile. She holds a doctorate in nursing education and nursing administration from William Carey University.

In addition, UM's school of health and sports science selected associate professor **Dr. Lori DeLong** as dean. DeLong also serves as chair of the department of kinesiology. DeLong holds a doctorate in pedagogy in kinesiology from Louisiana State University, a master's degree in exercise science from Northeast Louisiana University, and a bachelor's degree in adapted physical education, health and physical education with teacher's certification from Louisiana College.

## Doug Thomas Named Coastal Region President



Thomas

**Doug Thomas** was recently promoted to coastal region president for **River Bank & Trust**.

Thomas earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Auburn University and a master's degree in business administration from Capella University. The 2017 Leadership Baldwin County graduate completed the Alabama Bankers Association leadership program as part of its inaugural class.

## Hub International Promotes Kitsos



Kitsos

**Jerrime Kitsos** was recently promoted to senior vice president of **Hub International's Gulf South** operations. Kitsos joined HUB in 2010 and serves as the real estate practice leader for the Southeast.

## USA Health Names Director of Staff Development



Bullock

**Betty Bullock** was appointed director of staff development for **USA Health**.

Bullock earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of South Alabama and a master's degree in nursing from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

## Promotions and New Hires at Wilkins Miller LLC



Byrd



Kitchens



Ramer



McCarty



Hill



Kline

The accounting and advisory firm **Wilkins Miller LLC** promoted **Sallie Byrd** to supervisor; and **Drew Kitchens** and **Avril Ramer**, both to senior accountants.

The firm also hired **Jordynne McCarty**, **Lindsey Hill** and **Bradly Kline**. McCarty earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in accounting from the University of Southern Mississippi. Hill earned a bachelor's degree in business administration in accounting from the University of South Alabama. Kline earned a bachelor's degree of science in business administration in accounting from the University of South Alabama.

## BUSINESS ENDEAVORS

## Funds Allocated for the Port of Mobile

The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)** allocated \$274.3 million for the Port of Mobile in its Fiscal Year 2020 Work Plan, officially providing the resources to dredge Alabama's seaport. The funding - which accounts for the full federal share of the project cost - will initiate and complete construction of the deepening and widening of the navigation channel. The Port of Mobile is one of the nation's fastest growing container seaports and has an economic impact of \$22.4 billion, according to port officials. The harbor channel construction project, which will allow for more goods to be shipped and sold through Mobile, is financed by a split of 75 percent federal funds and 25 percent state-sponsored funds.



## Weather Research Center Moves to New Location

The **Alabama Power USA Coastal Weather Research Center** recently moved from the USA Mitchell Center to a newly renovated space at the Science Laboratory Building. The location allows the staff to develop an emergency alert center that will include a video wall for displaying maps and models, as well as an area to hold briefings.

## Specialty Pharmacy Achieves URAC Accreditation

**USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute** achieved accreditation from the Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC) for its specialty pharmacy by having demonstrated a comprehensive commitment to quality care, improved processes and better patient outcomes. Located at the main MCI office in Mobile, the pharmacy fills prescriptions for oral oncology, or chemotherapy taken by mouth, as well as supportive medications for cancer patients and serves patients at MCI's Fairhope and Springhill locations.

## UWSWA Launches New Blog

The **United Way of Southwest Alabama (UWSWA)** launched a new blog, *From the President's Desk* and a monthly publication that UWSWA President and CEO **Jill Chenoweth** is writing about important issues facing our community. She will dive into initiatives that United Way is spearheading with partner agencies and other community groups in response to those issues.

## Burton Property Group Acquires Spring Hill Oaks Condos

**Burton Property Group**, a Southeast-based real estate development firm, purchased 52 units in Spring Hill Oaks Condominiums with plans to complete a renovation of the complex and units, in excess of \$4 million. A property-wide renovation of the buildings and grounds is slated to begin Spring 2020. **Kym Trest** and **Chris S. King** of **Roberts Brothers Inc.** will handle the marketing & sales of the newly renovated units.

## USA Mitchell Cancer Institute to Test Anti-Cancer Compound

An anti-cancer compound with immunotherapy in lung cancer is being tested at **USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute**. **Antonio Ward**, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Drug Discovery Research Center at MCI, has been testing its effectiveness through research funded by a supplemental grant from the National Institutes of Health intended to promote diversity in health-related research.

## Spring Hill College Creates eSports Team

**Spring Hill College** created its first collegiate eSports team, joining the National Association of Collegiate eSports. The program will be the first of its kind in Alabama and provide a unique opportunity to students who want to advance their eSports career.

## WELL DONE

### UM Marine Science Program Ranked a Top 20 Value in Nation

The **University of Mobile's (UM)** bachelor of science degree in marine science was named a Top 20 Value in the nation for 2020. College Values Online ranked the UM bachelor's degree in marine science as 12<sup>th</sup> in the top 20 list of 85 colleges and universities. Programs were ranked on affordability, regional accreditation and school or program ranking with a major publication like *U.S. News and World Report*.

### Transworld Business Advisors Moved

Transworld Business Advisors have relocated to their newly renovated office at 60 St. Francis Street. Adjacent to the RSA Tower and Battle House Hotel, the two-story building is just shy of 2,000 sq. ft. per floor.

### The Floor Trader Gets Sterling Award

**The Floor Trader** recently won the Sterling Award at CCA Global Partners ConneXtion 2020. The award recognizes expertise in the flooring industry, involvement in the community and participation in the flooring co-op programs.


## RTBH Named One of America's Top Firms

The CPA firm **Russell Thompson Butler and Houston LLP (RTBH)** was named one of "America's Top Recommended Tax and Accounting Firms 2020" by Forbes. RTBH is one of just seven Alabama firms to make the list and the only one in the Mobile Bay area.

## Rees Receives Lifetime Achievement Award

The **Alabama Coastal Foundation** board of directors awarded **Dr. Susan Rees** its Lifetime of Conservation Achievement Award for her efforts to improve coastal ecosystems. Rees retired recently from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and has served in an advisory capacity to several places including the Alabama Center for Estuarine Studies, Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium.

Submission deadline for Member News is two months prior to publication. News releases should be one or two brief paragraphs. Photos must be professional headshots labeled with the person's first and last name, and must be 300 dpi at full size and saved in an eps, tiff or jpg format. Send your information to [news@mobilechamber.com](mailto:news@mobilechamber.com)



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## FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHER

### BRIAN D. JORDAN

Brian Jordan, a photography and videography professional with FusionPoint Media, has been capturing moments his entire life. Shortly after college graduation, Jordan started his own company to provide video and photo services to Mobile-area businesses. This began an almost 40-year career behind the lens.

In 1999, Jordan started FusionPoint Media, a creative services firm known for providing comprehensive marketing support solutions backed with a personal touch. In this role, he has truly gotten to showcase a wide range of expertise as he supports clients both locally and across the country.

With this longevity in the business, Jordan has had the opportunity to get to know Mobile, Alabama, its businesses and people in depth. His skills include proficiency in staged, candid and action photography; in-studio and on-location production; and photography and videography for a broad range of mediums.

In this issue, Jordan's work can be seen on the cover, as well as featured stories on real estate, the USA stadium and Small Business of the Month. To see more of his portfolio, visit [fusionpointmedia.com/services](http://fusionpointmedia.com/services).

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The Mobile Area Chamber was awarded the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's highest designation. Of the 6,936 chambers in the U.S., only 3 percent achieved five-star distinction.

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