

Dear members, friends, and prospective members,

I want to update you on our efforts to free up waterfront access for recreational use on the western shore of Mobile Bay. As you may recall, the Committee to Restore Historic Monroe Park was established in 2001 to reduce the impact of the new container yard that the State Docks proposed to build on Choctaw Point. The Committee helped fight to preserve areas at the site with historical significance, as well as to reserve land for recreational use and to mitigate wetland destruction. In the end, the Docks agreed to create a wetlands mitigation area at the headwaters of the bay and a public access point associated with the wetlands area (Arlington Point). At this time, the Alabama State Docks has a bid request out to construct the wetlands mitigation area. The historically significant Civil War fort site will be preserved, but how that will be accomplished is unclear. The remaining wing of the Frascatti House will be moved to another site.

Back in 2001, we hoped that the creation of one area of waterfront access would catalyze a reaction that would lead to enhanced public access along the bay all the way from I-10 and Broad to the Dog River. However, a lot has happened in Mobile since that time, and now there are even more obstacles to increased public waterfront. It may be that an area of wetland mitigation with a walkway into the wetlands area and possibly a place to put a kayak into the water is the best we can get.

- The access proposed by the Alabama State Docks is relatively small (approximately 40 acres) and the hoped-for inclusion of additional property south of the Coast Guard base did not take place. Instead, EADS constructed their building on a site that had remained vacant since 1965, and EADS/Northrop Grumman is now looking at building the KC-45 Tanker assembly line very close to the USA Brookley property.
- All of this activity has increased the potential value of this property, making it less likely to be used for recreation.
- EADS/Northrop Grumman has proposed using the pier at Arlington to import components of their tanker, creating the possibility of a new industrial corridor that did not exist when the Alabama State Docks proposed their container yard.
- The prospect of either Northrop Grumman or another large jet manufacturer coming to Mobile will likely keep the entire Brookley area tied up for industrial purposes (or speculation on the possibility of such) for a number of years.

Clearly, while the tanker award contract was great news economically for Mobile, it presents some serious obstacles for recreational waterfront access along the west side of

Mobile Bay. Nevertheless, we're not ready to give up yet. Our executive council has recommended that we partner with the Downtown Mobile Alliance to sponsor "A New Plan for Old Mobile" (<http://www.newmobileplan.com>) in hopes of working towards improving waterfront access. As some of you may already know, consultants have been hired to study an urban planning area including not only the historic downtown and midtown area but also the "Down the Bay" and Oakdale areas, which are near the old Monroe Park site. The results of their intensive study (which includes public input) will be called "A New Plan for Old Mobile." We have pledged \$1,000 over the next 18 months to help fund this study. I have been attending the public meetings, and the consultant group (EDSA) seems very well informed and interested in improving Mobile's public spaces, which will include downtown waterfront venues and biking and hiking trails. Additionally, they are aware of the need for improved waterfront access and can offer leverage in a way that that our organization independently will never have the clout to do. By making it clear that we are interested in improving the public outdoor space through our donations as well as our attendance at public meetings, we can influence the process and draw attention to the need for waterfront access.

Our organization's current bank balance of \$250 is already committed to the cost of this affiliation with the Downtown Mobile Alliance, and I will be soliciting donations over the next couple of months to help cover the rest of our pledge. If you are interested in more information, or would like to see old pictures of Monroe Park, please feel free to contact me. And if you know of someone who might be interested in our efforts, please forward this e-mail. I've also put together a slide show highlighting the changes to the Mobile recreational waterfront over time, which helps to visualize the process. It can be accessed at <http://www.fammed.usouthal.edu/GarrowsBend/Waterfronttalk3.pdf> (if the link doesn't work it can be pasted into your browser)

Keeping up the good fight,

Allen Perkins

Committee to Restore Monroe Park