

APPLICATION



City Name City of Gulfport

Population Under 10,000 Over 10,000

Category Public Safety Planning & Economic Development
 City Spirit Public Works

Title of Entry Our Urban Living Room - A Community Project

Description of Project A few years ago a Resource Team came to Gulfport.

The City had an idea to help spur growth, economic opportunities and to improve our quality of life.

What we needed was a plan to implement, a way to take that idea to the next level.

With those efforts came forth a utility alley that was made into a destination,
a melting pot for artists to display their many talents, and a place for the community to meet and enjoy.

Project Summary (use additional pages if necessary) See attached

Signature of Chief Elected or Appointed Official 

Please provide the following information in case of questions about the application.

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City Gulfport Zip 39502

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"Our Urban Living Room" A Community Project
Submitted to MML Excellence Awards
City of Gulfport/Gulfport Main Street Association

Fishbone Alley is a one block long and a 20 foot wide alley, located in historic downtown Gulfport that connects 13th and 14th Streets. Before the alley was revitalized, it was a common place for illegal dumping, tons of trash; rodents were always present, as well as some other unsavory activities. Now it's a ***Funky Little Destination*** that backs up to a number of restaurants and bars located around the alley. The businesses that back up to the alley have an "entrance" to a most exciting location.

Fishbone Alley, originally a utility alley used for trash and maintenance, was conceived to be, not only a destination for visitors, but a heartbeat in the middle of downtown Gulfport, drawing the community to be part in creating the ultimate "Urban Living Room" in a location where there was once nothing but trash. The alley was designed in mind to enhance our quality of life by connecting communities in more social atmospheres.

The restoration of Fishbone Alley is the brainchild of Economic Development Director, David Parker, and is a dream-come true for the City of Gulfport. The City's Economic Development Department and Gulfport Main Street spearheaded the alley revitalization effort. The redesign of the alley created a pedestrian only right-of-way with century-old brick pavers, pedestrian scale lighting, creative dumpster corrals, decorative lighting and local art, in the form of murals, displayed throughout the entire alley.

Where there was once broken concrete, there is now a path laid with some of the 100 year old bricks used to build the city in 1906. The initial budget expenses projected for the concrete, equaled the amount that would be spent on the already present 100 year old bricks, so the choice was made to use the original bricks. Where there was once ugly broken utility lights, we now have beautiful string lights, supplying the same security lighting, but in an esthetically pleasing way. When construction was completed in 2016, the costs were approximately \$250,000. The initial budget was part of the city's streetscape program which brought about improvements to drainage, street lighting and other infrastructure improvements.

The creative Fishbone Alley signs and the art were made possible by a grant from the Knight Foundation via the Gulf Coast Community Foundation to help complete this community project. The Foundation awards grants for the specific purpose of benefiting the community and affecting the quality of life in a positive approach. The impact on this improvement can be observed on a daily basis with the increased activity in downtown and the economic impact to the individual businesses.

When the construction was finally complete, after a little more than a year in development, we started the process of working on the art programs. Artists (and non-artists) from all over the coast have been invited to "leave their mark" in the alley, with murals, panels and the painted shutter program. The *Call to Artists* is an ongoing program allowing us to see the organic nature of the alley through the eyes of our community.

Located in the heart of downtown and the business district, this space encourages the community to come together, whether it's lunch or afternoon coffee, listening to music or watching a movie. Fishbone Alley, and our Urban Living Room, is creating a social interaction of space, bringing the entire area together, connecting the dots to outlining communities and neighborhoods as well.

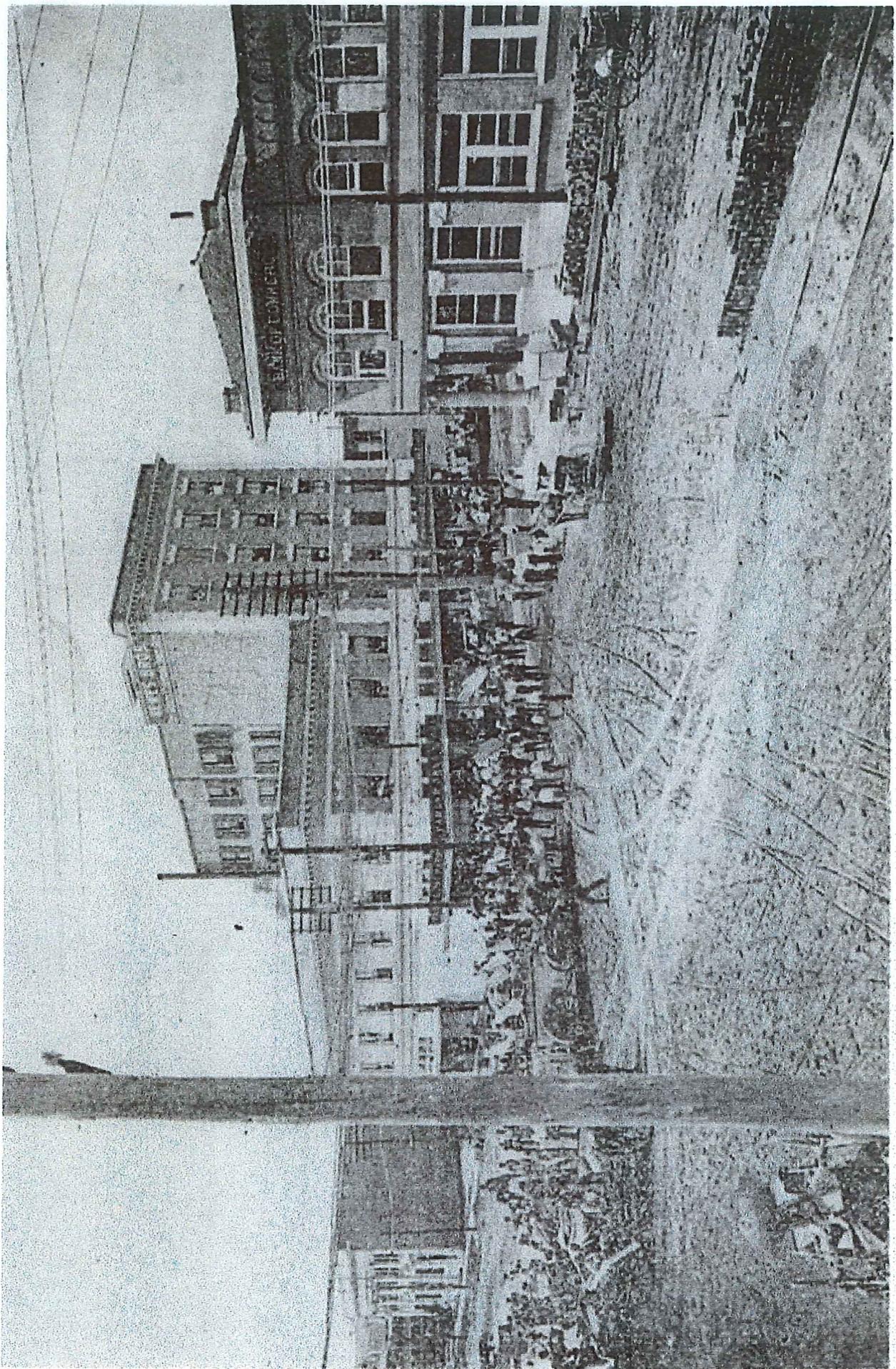
Our grand opening drew thousands of locals and visitors alike who wanted to experience the unique essence of Fishbone Alley, which is unlike any other alley on the Gulf Coast.

Gulfport Main Street is working with the City's Urban Planning Department to coordinate public use permits as well as other on-going monthly events. Annual commitments from the City of Gulfport and the City Council have yielded sufficient funding to maintain the infrastructure; however, plans are under-way to set up a sustainable process with the funds dedicated to the maintenance of Fishbone Alley.

The developmental success of Fishbone Alley was due to the investment resurgence in downtown Gulfport after Katrina. The natural location of Fishbone Alley is in itself an advantage to the businesses that are "attached" to and affected by the alley. The public/private relationship between the City of Gulfport and Gulfport Main Street allowed for the evolution of the community art programs and the special events taking place downtown. The combination of all these factors contributed to the success and should always be considered if duplicating.

Ambitious marketing programs with many events are scheduled throughout the year with events like ***3rd Saturdays***, where we celebrate the music and culture of our heritage in a unique way each month. Top it off with "***Multi-Cultural & Heritage Festival***", an event to promote our state's unique heritage as celebrated in music, food and art. This is just the beginning of many wonderful events and programs that are taking place in historic downtown Gulfport and Fishbone Alley. On May 3, 2017, Gulfport Main Street was presented with a national award, "Innovation on Main Street", for their contributions to Fishbone Alley. The artistic murals and additions, as well as the fishbone Alley signage, was made possible via a grant from the Knight Foundation through the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. It truly takes a village!

"Life and community in downtown Gulfport is growing in very exciting ways", said Main Street Director Laurie Tous, "from the newest addition of Fishbone Alley to the revived interest of our community in our cultural and heritage, Gulfport has a lot to offer!"



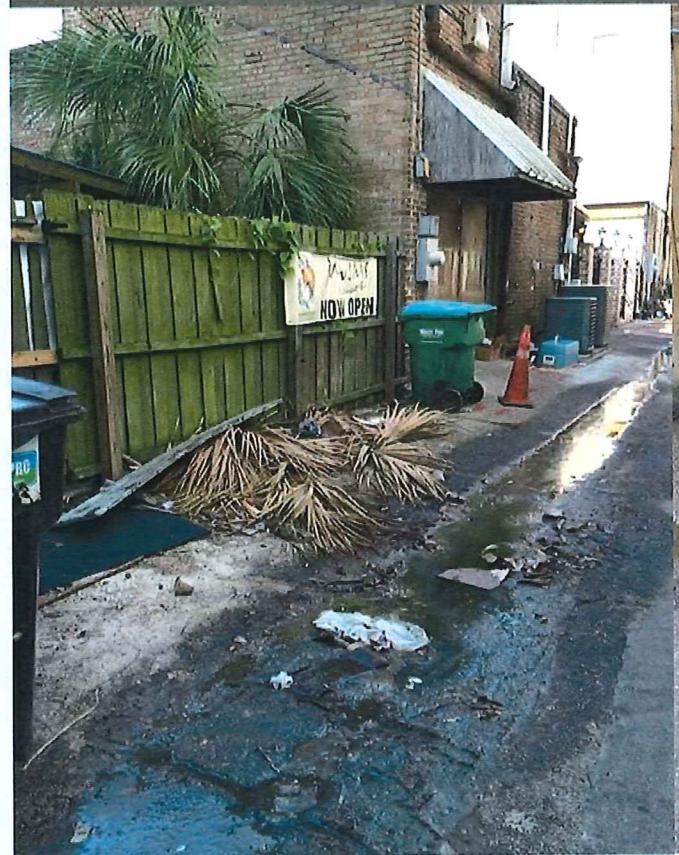
Fishbone Alley is rooted in our history, by using some of the original bricks used to build the city in 1908!

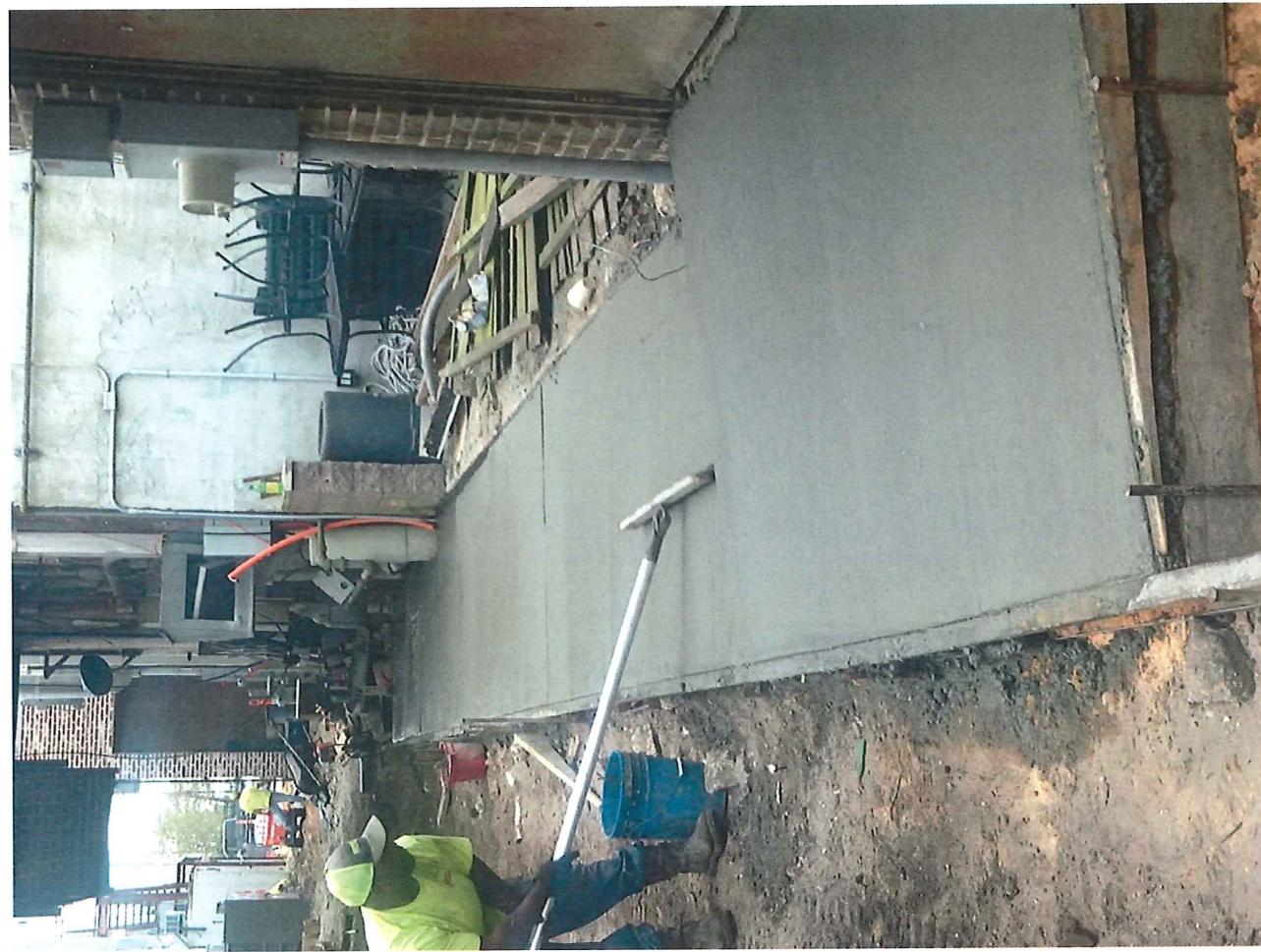
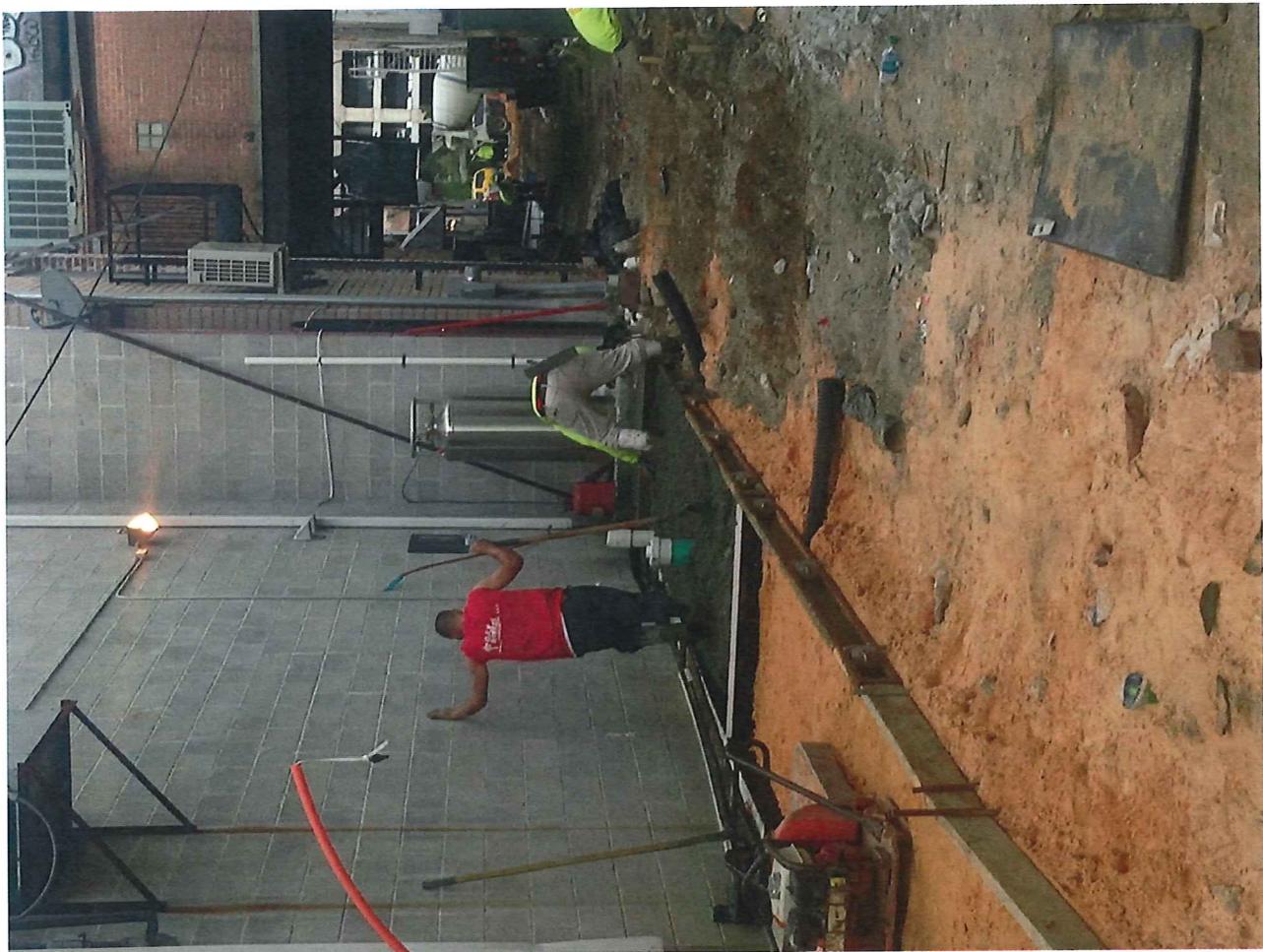
The first street paving program in Gulfport began in 1908. Bricks were used as a surface for 24th through 30th avenues south of the L & N tracks and 13th and 14th streets from 24th to 27th Avenue.

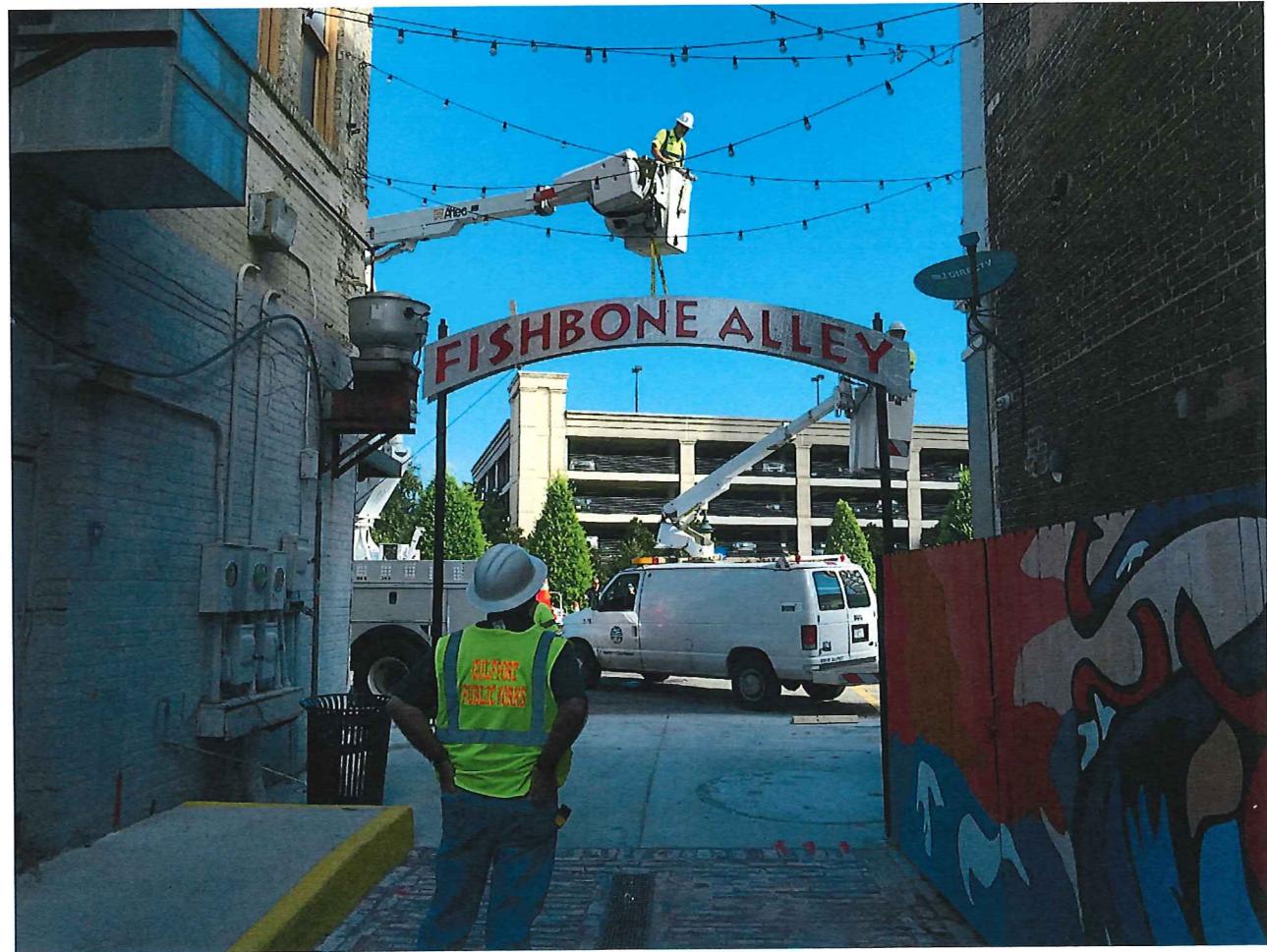


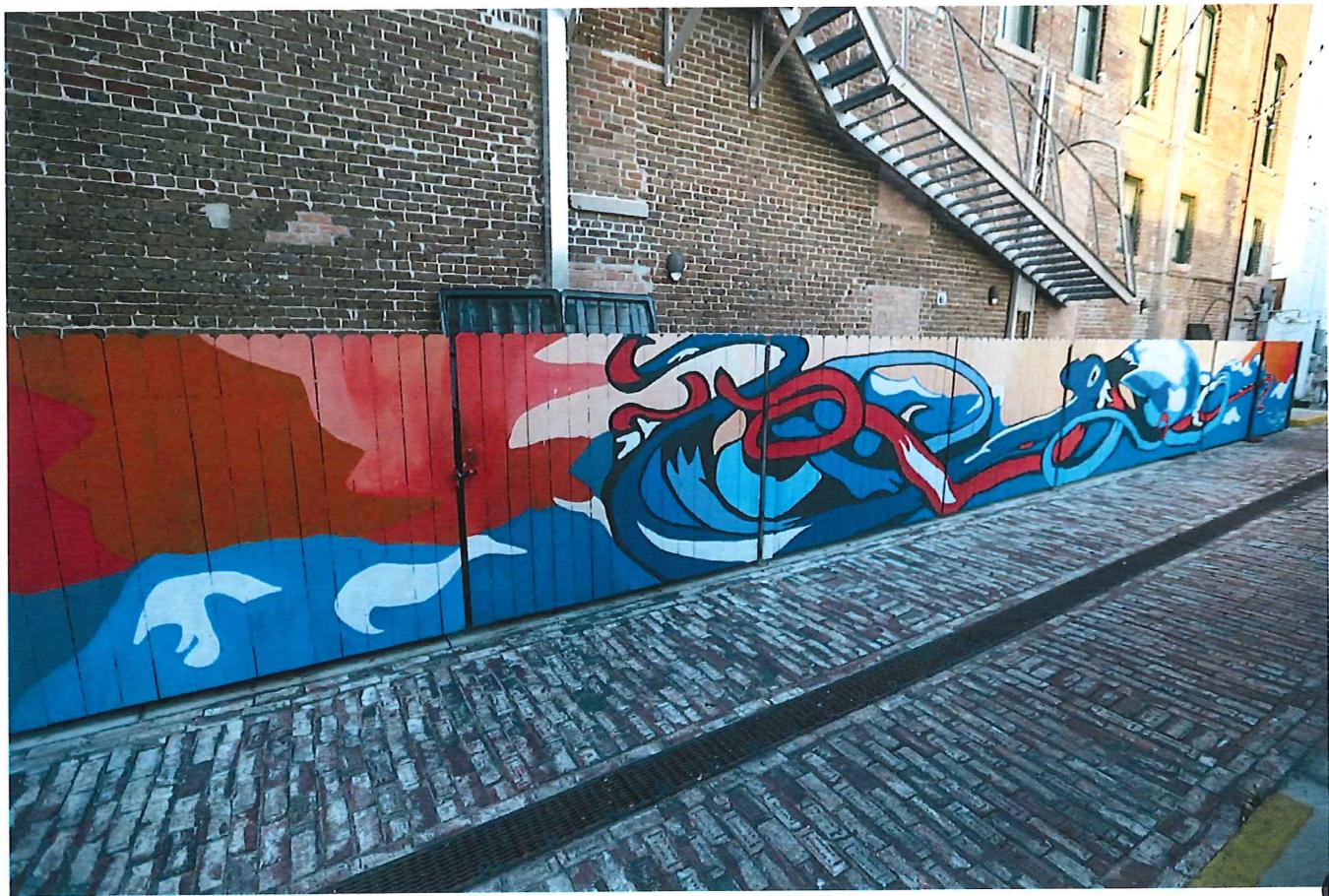


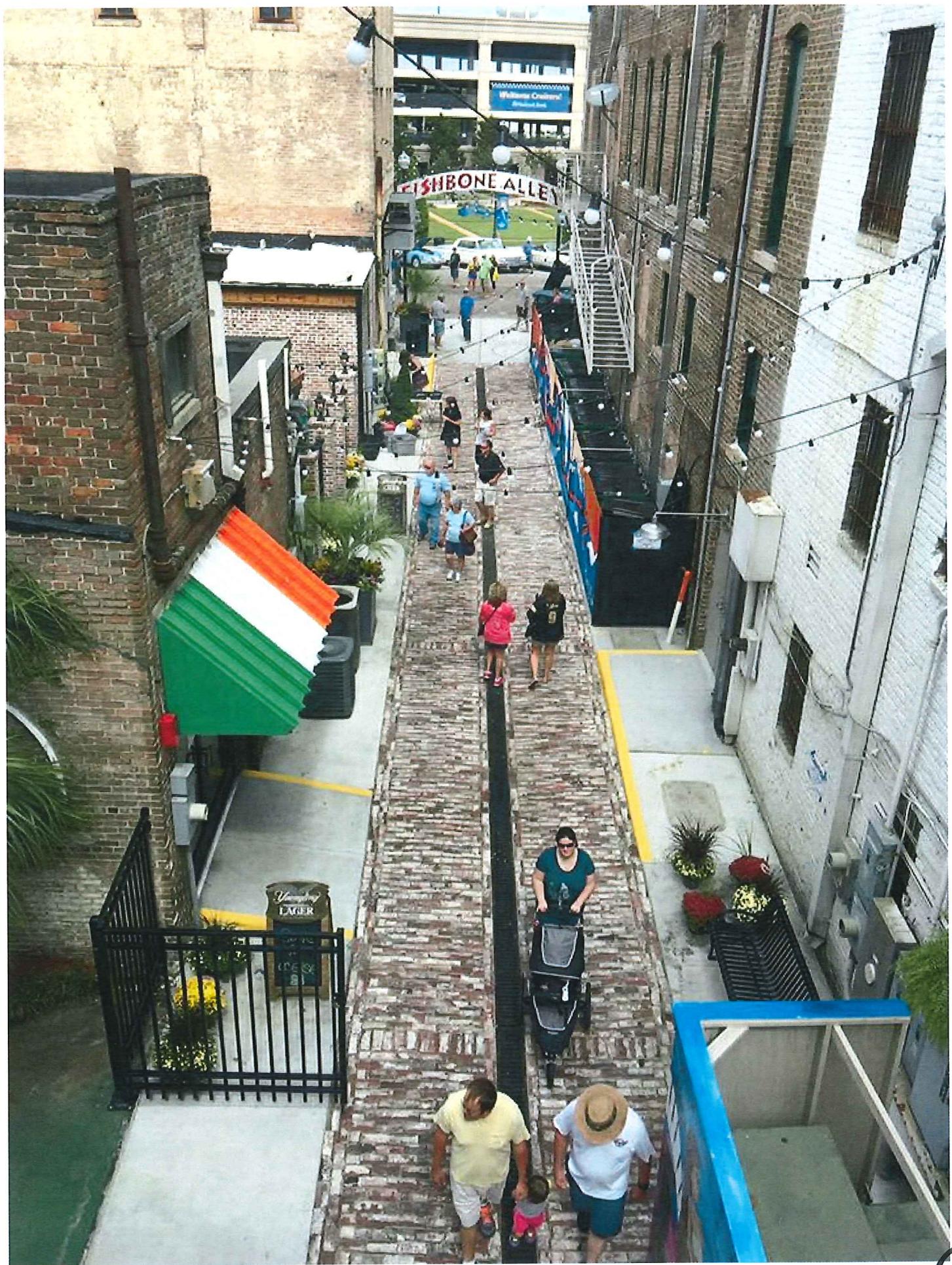
In the beginning.....

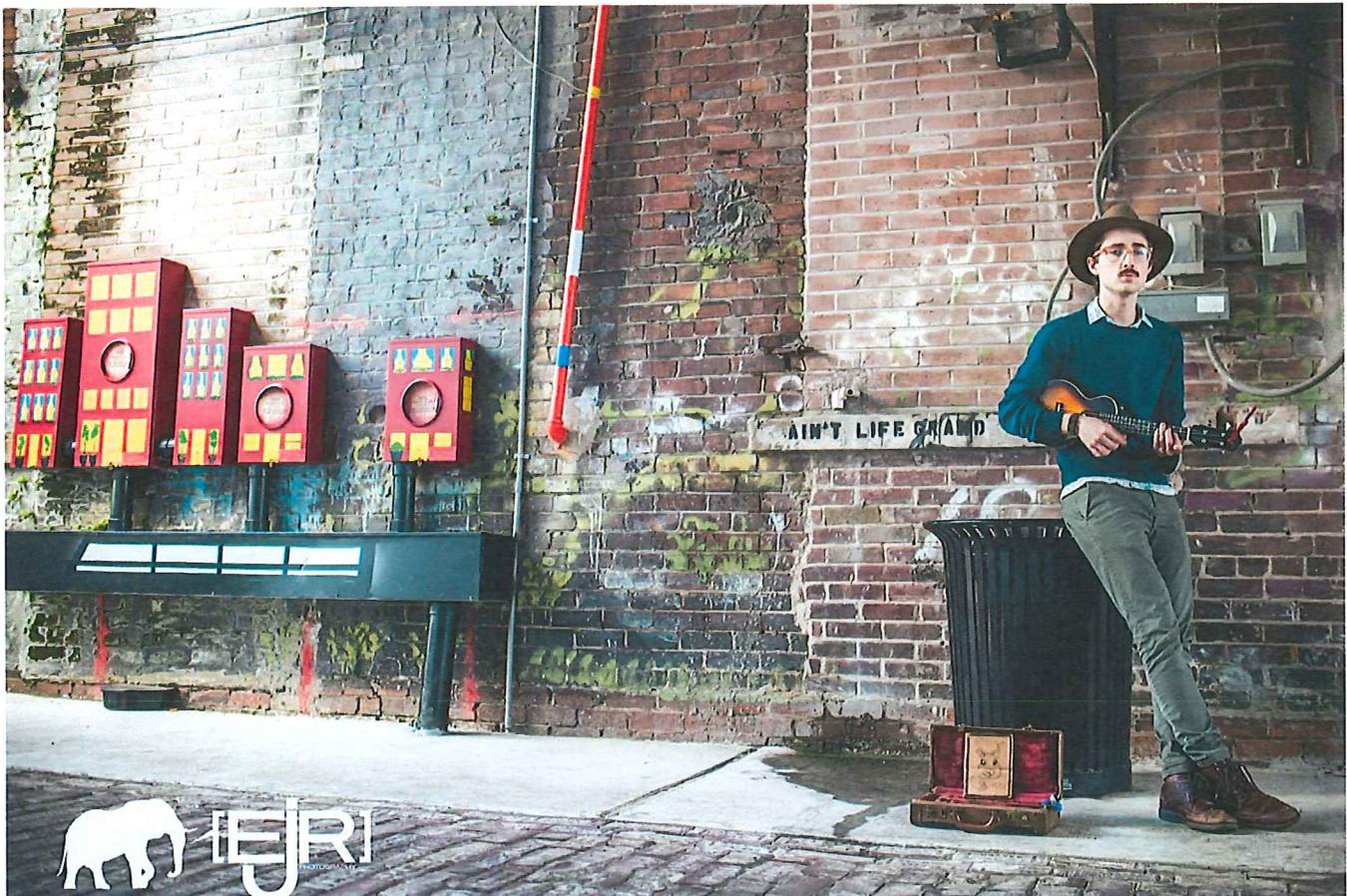




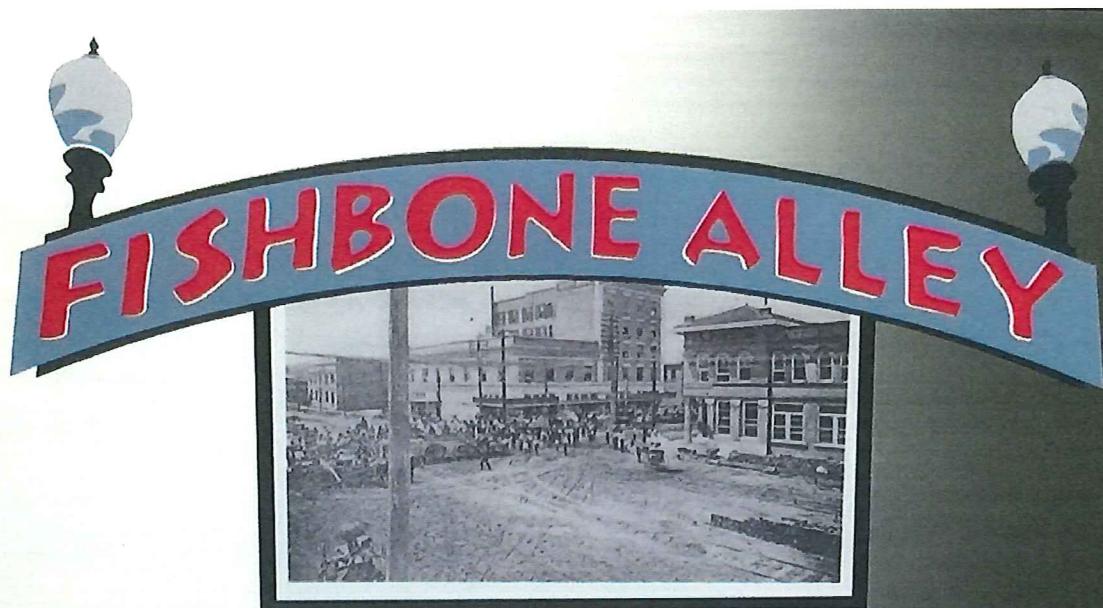












The first street paving program in Gulfport began in 1908. Bricks were used as a surface for 24th through 30th Avenues south of the L & N tracks and 13th and 14th streets from 24th to 27th Avenue. These bricks were installed by Graves Brick Company and they were in business from (1890 – 1920).

HISTORY OF GRAVES BRICK CO.

The Graves Brick Company was organized by William H. Graves in the early twentieth century. A native of Knoxville, Tennessee, Graves earned a law degree at the College of William and Mary, and returned to Tennessee to open a law firm. After the Civil War, he moved to Montgomery, Alabama, and then relocated to Birmingham, in 1890. Graves maintained his law practice and invested in real estate. Soon, he began constructing buildings for investment and on speculation, and organized a brick company to supply materials for those projects. The City of Birmingham's street paving program offered additional opportunities in the manufacturing of vitrified bricks. By 1901, Graves had organized the Graves Shale Brick Company. Over the following two decades, he also organized the Graves-Matthews Paving Company and the Graves-Gunster Paving Company, both with men who married his daughters. H.S. Matthews briefly served as general manager for the brick and paving businesses before moving to Florida. By 1915, the Graves Company had sold millions of bricks, both the common type for use in the construction of buildings and vitrified type for street and road construction. Eventually, Graves combined the brick and paving businesses, which he closed about 1920.

SALVAGING THE BRICK PAVERS AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA

When Hurricane Katrina struck the coast in 2005, the infrastructure in downtown Gulfport had to be replaced. While the construction was underway, the crews discovered these old pavers under the asphalt in 2008. Mayor Brent Warr and then Public Works Director Kris Riemann decided to save the pavers to be used for a special project one day, rather than discard them. Our Chief Administrative Officer, Dr. John Kelly, suggested that we store them at the Public Works Office to avoid them "walking off" one brick at a time. When the Economic Development Director, David Parker, started talking about creating "Fishbone Alley" in 2016, the pavers seemed like the perfect fit and Mayor Billy Hewes agreed. Now that the old pavers have been refreshed and relocated to Fishbone Alley, residents can see first-hand how Gulfport streets looked in 1908.

FISHBONE ALLEY

Parker had a vision to transform this simple, run-down alleyway into a funky, lively place where the community could come together to enjoy downtown amenities. He proposed that the alley development would be an opportunity to bring diverse groups of people and ideas together to benefit the city and better the community. City employees, engineers, contractors, volunteers, and local artists joined in a common effort to convert the outdated alley into something beautiful – a space where all are welcome to enjoy art, food, and local venues year-around. City officials hired local engineering firm Brown, Mitchell & Alexander, Inc. to design the renovations. Local contracting company, Gulf Breeze Landscaping, executed the designs over the course of one year. When the alley renovation neared completion, in October 2016, the City of Gulfport Traffic Department put the finishing touches on the project, including string lighting and the alley's crown jewel – a 20-foot-long metal sign heralding the space as "Fishbone Alley", which was gifted to the city by Gulfport Main Street via a grant from the Knight Foundation. Local artists were then invited to make their mark, painting numerous murals throughout the space, including the alley's now iconic "No Bones" – a 60-foot-long octopus painted by local Gulfport artist Ryan D. Merrill. Fishbone alley was officially opened to the public on October 2, 2016, during Gulfport's annual View the Cruise event, a massive block party which serves as the kick-off for Cruisin' the Coast (the country's largest classic car show). Residents were in awe and quickly filled the alley with the energy Parker had envisioned. Today, Fishbone Alley maintains that vision as a centerpiece for culture, creativity and cuisine in Downtown Gulfport.

Mayor: Billy Hewes

Chief Administrative Officer: Dr. John Kelly

Council Members:

Kenneth "Truck" Casey, Sr. - Ward 1

Ricky Dombrowski - Ward 2

Ella Holmes-Hines - Ward 3

F.B. "Rusty" Walker IV - Ward 4

Myles Sharp - Ward 5

"R.Lee" Flowers - Ward 6

Cara L. Pucheu - Ward 7

Economic Development Director: David Parker

Gulfport Main Street Director: Laurie Toups

Public Information Officer: Chris Vignes

Engineering Director: Kris Riemann, P.E.

Public Works Director: Wayne Miller, P.E.

Engineering Firm: Brown, Mitchell & Alexander, Inc.

Contractor: Gulf Breeze Landscaping

#fishbonealley #makeitfunky #downtowngulfport #nobones

