

# River District Alliance

Membership Monthly



## Art Walk Wins \$15,000 Grant

For the third year in a row, Art Walk is pleased to announce winning a \$15,000 Arts & Attraction grant from the Southwest Florida Community Foundation and the Visitor and Convention Bureau.



The grant recognizes this monthly event as a fixture in the River District social scene. The funding may be used for marketing and advertising of both the event and the galleries included within it. In its sixth year, Art Walk draws between 3,000 – 5,000 attendees during season and 1,000 – 3,000 attendees off-season.

This monthly event brings social activity to downtown and a tremendous positive financial impact for our merchants. Art Walk is funded through monthly dues from River District galleries, art partners, and sponsors.

**For more information, contact:** Claudia Goode  
cgoode@actabuse.com, 239-337-5050

## Gardner's Park Pop Up Bazaar

A soon-to-be tradition will begin on Friday, October 3rd in Gardner's Park with the start of a weekly bazaar.

Baked goods, fruits & veggies, flea market items, arts, crafts, and many other items are anticipated to be a part of the event.

Scheduled for every Friday, year round, the bazaar will enhance the offerings within the River District and create a driven concentration of shoppers to experience the charm of Gardner's Park.

## SATURDAY ART FAIR RETURNS

The annual Saturday Art Fair begins again this month on October 18th. They are looking for vibrant, accomplished artists and crafters to set up in Downtown to sell the works they create.

Artists will set-up on the First Street sidewalks and crafters will set up on Hendry Street. Acceptable works include fine art, jewelry, ceramics, designer wear, and unique artsy fine crafts. Prints from original works are also acceptable.

Art vendors will be placed on the sidewalk at prominent businesses on First Street starting at Jackson Street and ending at Dean Street. Crafters will set up on Hendry Street starting at the



Open Door Shoppes and continue to First Street. Vendors will be given a 9 foot long by 3 foot wide space on the sidewalk. Vendor's presentation space must be approved by the Saturday Art Fair Committee jurying committee. Sign up NOW!

Saturday Art Fair will be a seasonal event starting in October 2014 and will continue during season, ending in April 2015.

**For more information, contact:** Claudia Goode  
cgoode@actabuse.com 239-337-5050



**When:** Fridays, 3 PM - 8 PM.  
**Where:** Second & Fowler  
**Contact:** Patsy; 239-561-3663  
mapeggysemporium@aol.com

## CRA Downtown Hotel Update

On September 15, 2014 the City Council approved a 60-year ground lease with FMCC Developer, LLC, for the construction of a 225 room, full service convention center hotel and a 200 + space parking garage. The hotel will be managed by Sheraton, a member of the Starwood Hotel Group. Two additional documents are in the final stages of drafting: a parking garage lease agreement and a Harborside lease agreement. The City will lease the hotel parking garage from the developer and operate it as public parking facility. Sheraton will take over the management of Harborside, saving the City over \$850,000 a year. In conjunction with the hotel development, the City will undertake a complete upgrade of the Harborside Event Center. The work is expected to cost approximately \$8 million. The County has offered to pay for up to \$4 million of the improvements and City Council will vote on the Interlocal Agreement for the funding on October 6th. The County is scheduled to take action on October 7th. The Interlocal requires the City to retain ownership of Harborside and to accommodate annual community events that have traditionally used Harborside. Construction may begin by late spring 2015.



Don Paight, CRA

**RDA Voicemail:** During a recent audit of our phone system and provider, a disconnect between messages left and some messages received was discovered. The Board takes this very seriously and wants to be certain our membership knows, that to the best of our knowledge, this has been remedied.

If you personally have left a message, or hear of others who have and not had returned calls, please extend our apologies.

## Message from the President:

Dear Members:

Welcome to River District Alliance and joining us to help promote and enhance the development of the Historic River District as a hub of economic, social, and cultural activity!

The River District, a place where irreplaceable Old Florida charm meets trendy today, is continuing its internationally award-winning renaissance. From a prestigious designation on the National Register of Historic Places to our state-of-the-art redevelopment, the River District is truly a one-of-a-kind destination in Southwest Florida.

We continue to welcome the many unique new businesses that line our quaint streets, the forthcoming hotel, and the subsequent expansion of the Harborside Event Center. As our economic return stabilizes, we're seeing exciting projects once stalled, build early momentum, residential neighborhoods adjacent to core downtown becoming engaged in revitalization, and terrific opportunities for expanded partnerships.

This year you will also see new and expanded programs introduced downtown, enhanced outreach and member participation opportunities, and an expanded role working within the City of Fort Myers. We believe this is an exciting year to come!

As a voice for downtown merchants, residents, and property owners, we want to hear from you. Please contact me, any member of the Board of Directors, or our Administrative Coordinator with your input!

Sincerely,

Kevin Boyd  
President



## Downtown Entertainment: Public Forum Summary: by Jim Peters

According to Jim Peters, president of Responsible Hospitality Institute, who returned to Fort Myers from an earlier visit when the streets and sidewalks were in final stages of construction, the city is at a crucial junction between "no longer and not yet." Progressive city planners created a wonderful palette for building a regional downtown destination that is vibrant with great potential for culinary and celebratory tourism. Historic buildings, wide sidewalks, natural assets with the riverfront, supported by dedicated business and community leaders seeking to preserve a rich heritage and create new opportunities for entrepreneurs to be part of Fort Myers renaissance, brings promise of an even greater future.

Lingering memories of past encounters with a more youthful clientele at the larger social venues creates reservations of changing direction to embrace more late-night social activity, and a desire to sustain the more mature social activity created through events and early evening dining and entertainment.

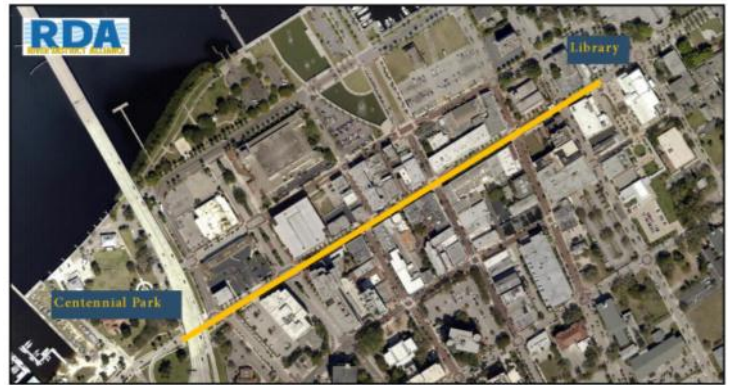
Beyond this debate lies an even greater area of challenge. How will continued mixed-use development with the new hotel and planned downtown residential projects mesh with existing and anticipated growth in restaurants and entertainment venues? What resources, code updates, and conflict resolution strategies are necessary to plan for the growth in people on the streets?

The event on Monday convened a broad spectrum of interests, and presented with the realities of changing demographics, lifestyles and need for new industries to come to the



region, perhaps the same talented individuals who brought success to Fort Myers can be more open to working together in agreeing on how to manage this success into the future.

## Veterans Day Parade, 1st Since 1971!



Mark your calendars for Tuesday, November 11th, when the RDA will bring back a Veterans Day parade to downtown for the first time since 1971!

The event will begin at Centennial Park at 2:00 pm and will end on the streets between the SBDAC and the library. The parade will include music, food, children's activities, and fun!

Be advised, First Street will be closed from noon until just prior to 5:00 pm.

**For more information, contact:** Kevin Boyd  
Post0038@yahoo.com or 239-851-7073

## ZombiCon Returns October 18th

Organized by Pushing Daizies, Inc, ZombiCon 8, Voodoo Nightmare will return to downtown Fort Myers on Saturday, October 18th.

[www.zombicon.com](http://www.zombicon.com)

### Membership Renewal

Membership dues for 2014-2015 are here! If you have not renewed your membership, forms are available at:  
[www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com](http://www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com)

## RDA "Mystery" Event

The RDA Board is bringing the components together to launch a fabulous kick-off for the third monthly event in the River District on Friday, December 12th! Still a mystery to those outside of planning the event, be prepared for something fun, unique, exciting, and changing every month...hence the "Mystery" in it!

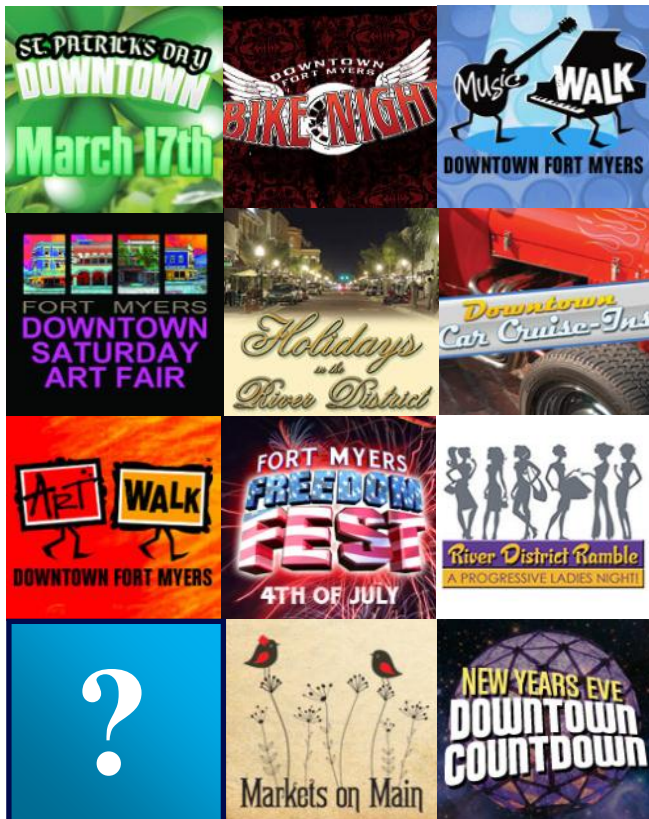


**For event information, contact:** Rene' Miville  
rmiville@comcast.net 239-233-5105

**For sponsorship information, contact:** Jared Beck  
jtravisbeck@gmail.com 239-821-2765

## Volunteers Welcomed!

The RDA values the numerous volunteers that help produce the events we undertake, and as the number of events grow, so does the need for more volunteers. If you would like to help with any existing or future events, please speak with any member of the RDA



**Downtown Fort Myers Bike Night sponsorships and vendor space available for 2014-2015!**

**Sponsorship info:** [thefrench@comcast.net](mailto:thefrench@comcast.net)

**Vendor info:** [kruisinwithkati@aol.com](mailto:kruisinwithkati@aol.com)

[www.downtownfortmyersbikenight.com](http://www.downtownfortmyersbikenight.com)

## RIVER DISTRICT ALLIANCE

The River District Alliance is the non-profit entity representing downtown merchants and interested individuals or groups within the River District, with a common goal of promoting and enhancing the continued development of the historic downtown as a hub of economic, social, and cultural activity.

The Alliance is comprised of a 15 member board, elected for two year terms. Each board member is required to own property or a business, be a resident, or an employee representing an organization located downtown.

As a collective group, we are an independent organization, and therefore are guided entirely by our own approved by-laws, policies, and programs.

We encourage becoming engaged with the Alliance, and welcome you to join any of our of board or committee meetings, volunteer, or be inspired to challenge us with new ideas



[www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com](http://www.fortmyersriverdistrictalliance.com)

## Holiday Cheer in the River District, Planning Underway

Although it seems that school has just started, the RDA is finalizing plans for the annual holiday decorations downtown. Recognizing the continued reinvestment and excitement building around core downtown, the Board has made a commitment to continue expanding the holiday decorations to further reach throughout the River District.

While excited to do this, the Board also realizes the cost associated with commercial grade decorations, and the need for quality that will last our continual sun exposure, which quickly fades and discolors decorations, as well as turns them brittle prematurely. Unlike earlier years when multiple storefronts along First Street were unoccupied and awnings were draped with garland and bows to distract from the vacancies, we now have a vibrant and near completely occupied street. As such, this year the Board has opted to not fund decorating the awnings, and will use those savings to wrap additional street poles.

Following past tradition and the historic nature of downtown, you will again see the charming green garland with white LED lights wrapping the poles topped with red bows. The goal for the immediate year is to wrap poles along the following:

**First Street;** Monroe Street to Fowler Avenue

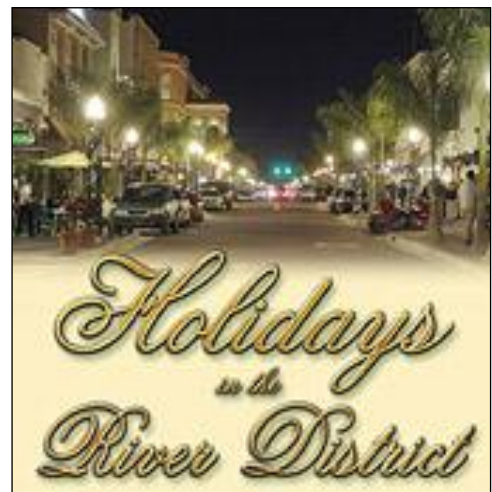
**Dean Street;** Bay Street to First Street

**Broadway Street;** First to Main Streets

**Hendry Street;** Edwards Drive to Second Street

**Jackson Street;** Bay Street to Main Street

**Main Street;** Broadway Street to Jackson Street



The annual tree will also be in place this year, and although pending partnership approval, the RDA is hopeful that it will be in a fantastic new location that will become its permanent location for years to come!

Understanding the charm that the holiday decorations bring to downtown, the RDA has arranged with our decorating firm to allow you to be a part of expanding the holiday scene with one of the following:

Buy-a-Pole: sponsorships are available if you would like to help us expand the reach of our holiday decorations by "buying" a pole. Cost: \$150 per pole Awnings: the decorating firm has agreed to decorate awnings within core downtown as have been done in the past, per private building owner, at owner cost equivalent to the RDA non-profit rate.

Stayed tuned as the RDA is working on a holiday wreath program yet to come this year! To "buy-a-pole" or request cost to have your awnings decorated, please contact: Jared Beck, 239-821-2765

## October & November Dates to Know:



October & November Events: All indications show for a busy season, with October and November scheduled for a strong start. Although not necessarily all-inclusive, and not all RDA events, there are several large planned events to be aware of:

### October:

Friday, 3rd: Art Walk

Friday, 17th: Music Walk

Saturday, 18th: Downtown Art Fair

Saturday, 18th: Zombicon

Saturday, 25th: Car Cruise-In

### November:

Saturday, 1st: Taste of Lee

Saturday, 1st: Pink Heals

Sunday, 2nd: Streets Alive

Friday, 7th: Art Walk

Saturday, 8th: Bike Night

Tuesday, 11th: Veteran's Day Parade

Thursday, 13th - 16th: 42nd Fort Myers Boat Show

Saturday, 15th: Downtown Art Fair

Friday, 21st: Music Walk

Saturday, 22nd: Car Cruise-In

Saturday, 29th: Christmas in the Park & Holiday Stroll

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River District Alliance  
PO Box 1686  
Fort Myers, FL 33902