

Mobile Moves On Up

Having long sat in the shadows of other major Southern cities, Mobile, Ala., is primed for a debutante ball. Slowly but surely, the city is bolstering its national image as it focuses on changing the face of its Downtown—where activity has remained relatively flat for a quarter of a century.

Much of the buzz centers around the RSA Battle House Tower, a \$162 million, 534,000-square-foot Class A speculative office and hotel tower. The

Southeast

project is not set to deliver until early summer, but its effect has already kicked in. “It has raised the bar and increased the awareness of better office space,” explained Grubb & Ellis|Peebles & Cameron partner Allan Cameron, noting that many office owners are redeveloping space to match the quality of RSA Battle House, while several new projects are on the drawing board.

There have also been more residents moving out of the surrounding suburbs and back Downtown, leading to an office-to-residential conversion trend that will deliver about 200 units per year for the next five years, noted Bill Sisson, vice president for the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce’s economic development department.

Residential growth and a 75-block Business Improvement District have recruited significant interest in Downtown from both local and national developers, Cameron said. Approximately \$282 million worth of major developments have recently come online, are under construction or are planned to break ground in 2007.

—Amanda Marsh