



## RSA BankTrust building to get \$45 million overhaul

Published: Thursday, August 26, 2010, 7:01 AM



**Kathy Jumper, Press-Register**



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(Press-Register/Mike Kittrell)

Mobile's second-tallest office tower became the RSA-BankTrust Building Wednesday, August 25, 2010, as the bank signed an agreement to lease 72,000-square feet in the 34-story structure at 107 St. Francis St. in downtown Mobile, Ala. RSA Chief David Bronner, left, and W. Bibb Lamar Jr., chief executive officer of BankTrust, shake after signing the lease.

The newly named RSA BankTrust Building will get a \$45 million overhaul by the time BankTrust moves into the 34-story building next fall, according to David Bronner, chief of the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

"The building will be upgraded, and it will be something the bank and the city will be proud of," Bronner said at a lease-signing ceremony Wednesday.

RSA paid \$6.5 million for the circa 1965 building in February 2009. Formerly the AmSouth building, Bronner dubbed it the GM building, the reverse initials of Mardi Gras, a local tradition he plans to honor in the building's public spaces.

BankTrust will be the largest tenant, with 72,000 square feet of leased space, including the first floor and floors 25 through 31, according to W. Bibb Lamar Jr., president and chief executive officer of BancTrust Financial Group, a publicly traded company.

The bank has outgrown its downtown offices and will consolidate and move 100 employees into the building, Lamar said. John Toomey and Kate Irvine of Toomey & Co. were the leasing agents for BankTrust in the transaction.

"Dr. Bronner is making a large commitment to downtown Mobile, and we are pleased to be a part of that commitment," Lamar said.

Recruiting a company's corporate headquarters to downtown is key to bringing people and jobs to the area, according to Bronner. "When I can pour money into the state, it creates jobs," he said. "Without growth you have no jobs."

The RSA BankTrust building is about 75 percent leased, and renovations are under way and should be complete by September 2011, according to Bronner and Joe Toole, leasing agent for RSA. The architectural firm of Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood worked with RSA on the project.

The entire building, at 107 St. Francis St., will be upgraded, including new windows on every floor, new air conditioning and heating systems, a modern façade, improvements to the 434-space parking garage, and a BankTrust drive-up banking facility at the corner of St. Joseph and St. Francis streets, according to RSA.

Bronner said the building will not be topped with a crown like the RSA Tower and the RSA-owned Riverview Renaissance Hotel, a 375-room hotel on Royal Street. But, he said, he wants all the RSA buildings to feature colorful exterior lights or torches to help make downtown a center for events such as Mardi Gras and New Year's Eve's celebration.

"The key is to bring more people to Mobile," Bronner said. He is working with Mobile Mayor Sam Jones, the Mobile City Council and the Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau to bring more conventions to the city.

In fact, Bronner said, he sent three people to Korea to work on luring a conference to Mobile that would bring 4,000 to 5,000 visitors here for a week. He expects an announcement on the convention in the next couple of months.

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