

# What’s the history behind the Washington Street Mall?

(Editor’s note: In last week’s Star and Wave the last part of this story was inadvertently left out. Here is the article in its entirety. We regret any inconvenience.)

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – When the ribbon was cut to open the Washington Street Mall, not everyone was thrilled, former mayor Frank Gauvry said.

Gauvry was mayor from 1964 to 1972, and was mayor when the Washington Street Mall was constructed – not former mayor Bruce Minnix, as previously reported.

According to Gauvry, the city hired planning consultants Kendree and Shepherd to draw up some plans for a “revitalization project. He said it was the consultants’ recommendation to turn the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Washington Street into a pedestrian mall.

“That is where it originally started,” Gauvry said.

The former mayor said the city had to sell the public and the merchants on the idea because it was a totally new concept.

“The town had survived for 300 years and the mall idea was totally new to the merchants,” he said. “At the time people thought would not be successful. They were all nervous about shutting down

street, and (the merchants) wondered if we were going to open for summer of ‘71.”

At the time, just as was done this winter, the street was torn up in order to lay new utility lines.

Former mayor Arthur “Mickey” Blomkvist, who was a councilman during the Gauvry administration, said that former Ugly Mug owner Sam Kahn came to a city council meeting at the beginning of the mall project complaining about what it was doing to his business.

“Sam Kahn came up to council and the mall was in the condition it is now – mud, board walks, everyone complaining,” Blomkvist said.

“Sam told us, ‘You boys have ruined my business’. Then in August he came back, and said, ‘My god it’s the best year I ever had’.”

Gauvry laughed, recalling the same story.

“Sam died not too long ago. He was a grand guy. Yes, he complained in the beginning, but he came back and commended us saying what a great deal it was,” Gauvry said.

Gauvry said when the mall opened the merchants business doubled – or more.

“What people didn’t realize at the time,” Blomkvist said, “was that when urban renewal came through, that’s when the mall came about. There were a lot of empty lots in city, no Victorian Towers, and the city was trying to fill

spaces. They had torn down stores that had been there for years. Frank Gauvry really went through a lot.”

Gauvry said during his administration the city saw the construction of low cost housing, the Acme shopping mall, and the existing Convention Hall.

“Those three things were completed in my first administration. In my second administration we started the mall and built Victorian Towers. I had two administrations filled with groundbreaking precedents,” he said.

Asked about public reaction to the projects in light of the potential impact on local property taxes, Gauvry said he didn’t really know if people were upset over those projects or not, adding, “We went ahead and did what we had to and the town was better off for it.”

“There are always people who object when you are doing what you think is the right thing. But all indications were we needed something to revitalize the town,” he said.

“Prior to mall downtown looked like high noon...like Gary Cooper was going to step out at any minute.”

Referring to recent conflict over the present mall revitalization project, Gauvry said, “I’m amazed they are getting started because they are having so many roadblocks. There is so much dissention over what they want to do.



Christopher SouthCape May Star and Wave

Sidewalk was removed up to the storefronts in the 300 block of the Washington Street Mall where concrete is being poured this week.

But you have to do what you think is best for the community. The mall proved that,” he said.

Gauvry said when his administration created the mall there was federal grant money for the project, specifically to put in new water and

sewer lines.

When the opening day came in June 1971, people were lined up to visit the new mall. The Coast Guard Band played and the ribbon was cut despite there being some things not quite finished.

“Not everything was com-

plete, but we had to open for the summer,” Gauvry said.

At that time, Labor Day was the end of the season. He said once the mall was completed, tour buses started coming into town and the merchants stayed open after Labor Day.

## Hall

Continued from page A1

nate the “taking” issue from the lawsuit.

Attorneys for the developers argued the denial was based on CAFRA and the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act did not apply. The Superior Court agreed with the developers, and the

Appellate Court passed on the case, sending it back to the DEP with the instructions to make the same offer under CAFRA. The case went to court-ordered mediation, where Monzo said it has been for six or seven years.

Monzo said the American

Littoral Society joined the case representing environmental groups that want to minimize development in certain areas. Monzo said the city was attempting, with the Nature Conservancy and Green Acres program, to buy the property with financing

made available through the Environmental Infrastructure Trust.

Monzo said there was never any attempt by city to spend \$16 million for the tract, and there was never a formal offer made to the owners. He said the city would have been

reimbursed by the state, but needed to have the bond ordinance in place. He said the city’s contribution would have been about what it would have to spend on utility lines for the development project.

## Free

Continued from page A1

Councilman David Kurkowski said the policy

was a “new rule of order,” and not an attempt to stifle free speech. He said it was meant to make public comment time more productive.

“And it has been,” he said. “Questions have been less rhetorical – more focused.”

Mayor Jerry Inderwies echoed Kurkowski’s comments.

“This rule is not meant to stifle anyone. Things had gotten out of hand, and it was difficult for some people to stop speaking...people would

ramble on.”

Inderwies did say Powick’s comments were productive, and three minutes was enough time for people to give public comment.

THE FLYING FISH STUDIO

COME SEE OUR  
NEW LOOK &  
CHECK OUT OUR  
NEW DESIGNS!

\$5.00 OFF ANY  
PURCHASE OVER  
\$25.00 WITH THIS  
AD

130 PARK BLVD. W. CAPE MAY  
ACROSS FROM C.W.S.  
609-884-2760  
OPEN DAILY

Cape May StarsWave

153 Years Old  
1854-2007

600 Park Blvd. #28  
W. Cape May, NJ 08204  
PHONE: 609-884-3466  
FAX: (609) 884-2893  
Entered at Post Office in  
Cape May, NJ 08204 as a  
periodical  
(USPS 519020)

SUBSCRIPTION  
PRICES: By mail in Cape  
May County: \$22; East of  
Mississippi, \$25; West of  
Mississippi: \$29, Mail  
subscriptions paid in  
advance.  
Newsstand price: \$.50  
per copy.

PUBLICATIONS  
SCHEDULE:  
Weekly, every Thursday.

POSTMASTER:  
Send address change to  
Cape May Star and Wave,  
600 Park Blvd. #28, West  
Cape May, NJ 08204.

ASSISTANCE:  
For information on start-  
ing mail home delivery of  
the Cape May Star and  
Wave, call (609) 884-  
3466 weekdays from 9  
a.m. to 5 p.m.

Beach Theatre

Cape May's home for movies since 1950.

Now with HD Digital  
Projection in Cinema I  
Open every Friday - Sunday  
Showtimes for Jan. 18, 19 & 20

Everything's Cool  
(NR)  
4:00 p.m. Fri/Sat/Sun

Ira & Abby (R)  
6:00 p.m. Fri/Sat/Sun

Beauty Remains  
(NR) with subtitles  
8:15 p.m. Fri/Sat

PLUS:  
Winner of 7 Oscars!

Peter O'Toole is  
Lawrence of  
Arabia  
3:15 & 7:30 p.m. - Fri/Sat  
5 p.m. - Sun.

711 Beach Avenue Cape May, NJ 609-884-4403  
www.beachboxoffice.com 800-838-3006

If you love Cape May

Cape May Magazine

You'll love  
Cape May Magazine!

Visit [www.capemaymag.com](http://www.capemaymag.com) to subscribe  
to Cape May's only full color glossy  
magazine or call 1-888-898-2997

Copper Fish

SEAFOOD & STEAKS

OPEN Thursday, Friday & Saturday 5PM

Chef Demo & Guest Former Executive Chef  
Bill Walters of Southern Mansion  
Wednesday • 6:30PM • \$25/ person  
Geoffrey Johnson • Executive Chef

Thursday & Friday Jazz Nights with  
Geno White Trio  
Feb. 2 & Feb. 14 (Valentine's Night)  
Music by Franky LA  
Celebrate Valentine's Day All Week

1246 Rt. 109 South Cape May 609-898-0354  
(Just over the Bridge)

Thanks!

to all of you who have made us  
your "hometown" confection  
shop and  
Welcome! to all our  
new friends and customers!

CUSTOMER  
APPRECIATION  
Days

Friday, Saturday & Sunday  
January 25, 26 & 27

50% OFF

everything in all of our stores including  
our world-famous  
HAND-WHIPPED CREAMY FUDGE  
(Valentine items not included)

The Original FUDGE & KITCHEN

Homemade in your Hometown!

OUR STORE IS OPEN DURING MALL CONSTRUCTION  
Open every day, year round on the Boardwalk  
& The Washington Street Mall in Cape May  
1-800-23-FUDGE