

Federal money will help in the short-term, but long-term development will require good plans that attract private investment. If we do it right, we can expect 30 to 40 billion dollars to pour into the region in the next 10 years. We've got a great start on the plans.

We have proven ourselves self-sufficient and motivated. We are blessed with superb leadership that will make this happen. Therefore, we have every reason to believe that together we can create communities that are more beautiful and economically vibrant in Biloxi and the Gulf Coast.

Mayor Holloway has described this South Mississippi Renaissance this way: We survived an unprecedented event and it has made us a stronger community. We are now in a position where we can realize unprecedented potential. Personally, these are tragic times, but exciting times. Working together, we will make our home the envy of the nation. To make this happen, the Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee was activated.

#### Committee work

The committee chairpersons were selected from some of Biloxi's most knowledgeable leaders. The call went out to all citizens of Biloxi to join this effort.

Over 500 people attended the first public meeting at the Saenger Theater. We had over 200 in that group to volunteer to serve on the 20+ committees/sub-committees to work all issues. We immediately got to work since the deadline was just a short time away.

Committee chairpersons were very innovative. They scheduled their meetings around already hectic schedules of work and recovery. We had a lot of meetings in the evenings and during lunch hours. Soon, the pressing issues and potential recommendations began to surface. At that point, these potential recommendations were taken to the people in three separate town hall meetings that covered all the Wards of the City. These comments were returned to the committees to re-visit and revise the recommendations accordingly.

#### The product

As stated, this report summarizes countless hours of discussion, deliberation, and research by over 200 of your neighbors and friends. Therefore, we respectfully present our conclusions and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council as they lead us in the recovery of our wonderful city. There are more than 160 recommendations in this report, some of which are outlined in this State of the City report.

A special thanks to all who participated. You were

thorough, deliberate, and innovative in your work. You also left out any personal agendas, personal bias, and pre-conceived conclusions out of the discussions. Bottom line, you accomplished your mission with excellence and you can all be proud of what you have done for your City.

A second report, titled Moving Forward, represents the work of Living Cities and Goody Clancy and contains recommendations for the rebuilding of East Biloxi. This Reviving the Renaissance committee is responsible for developing plans for the entire city of Biloxi; Living Cities was charged with developing specific plans of East Biloxi.

As you read both plans, you'll notice there is a great deal of duplication – and that is by design. It was anticipated that most of what can work in East Biloxi can be applied throughout the city, and vice versa. Where there are specific needs, the separate approaches allow those issues to be addressed.

#### The results

History will reflect what the committee and others have accomplished. History will also reflect the results. The hard choices we ducked after Camille await us today. Will we get it right this time? We firmly believe the recommendations will help guide our City to the right decisions this time. We owe it to our people.

## Mixed-use development headed for downtown Biloxi

One of the recurring recommendations from the Governor's Commission, Living Cities and the overall Reviving the Renaissance initiatives has been a suggestion to move toward mixed use zoning. The concept, which has also been advocated repeatedly over the years as a tool to revitalize downtown Biloxi, allows a mix of residential, retail and professional office in close proximity. Now, as a result of Hurricane Katrina, the recommendation appears headed for reality. Weeks ago, the Biloxi City Council approved a mixed-use development that would include 220 residential condominiums and commercial uses on a three-acre site off Water Street in downtown Biloxi. The development, known as City Place, would involve the former Dees Chevrolet site and land stretching along Water Street from Main to Dukate streets. Two buildings – one five-stories and one standing 11 stories – would house commercial uses on the ground floor, with one-, two- and three-bedroom residential condominiums above.



# Reviving the Renaissance Recommendations

Here are the recommendations from the committees of 200 Biloxians involved in the Reviving the Renaissance initiative. The complete report is available online.

#### HOUSING

- Adopt the ABFE (Advisory Base Flood Elevations).
- Utilize existing GPS Mapping System to advise citizen property owners of elevation requirements and available financial assistance
- Assess workforce housing needs throughout Biloxi
- Utilize "scattered site" multi-family and single-family low-income tax credit projects
- Work with Modular Housing providers to streamline the application and approval process
- Rehabilitate and repair low-income projects damaged by Hurricane Katrina
- Utilize the Biloxi Housing Authority to build additional units using the Hope IV model
- Resist the efforts of developers to convert apartments into condominiums
- Develop a land bank.

#### TRANSPORTATION

- Relocate the rail traffic from the CSX corridor
- Establish a new boulevard system throughout the peninsula and complete the Back Bay boulevard extension to Hwy 90
- Enhance Beach Boulevard as a world-class scenic thoroughfare from Gulfport to the eastern point of Biloxi
- Establish a tram along the beach connecting all the commercial centers
- Reduce the number of at-grade RR crossings (Until CSX traffic is moved.)
- Maintain the elevated height of the rail corridor (Until CSX traffic is moved.)
- Improve all the existing at-grade rail crossings to have active warning devices (Until CSX traffic is moved.)
- Establish an additional East Harrison County connector to I-10
- Improve the D'Iberville interchange to include a "Texas U-Turn"
- Construct a loop ramp for southbound traffic off I-110
- Reconfigure the southbound I-110 to Westbound Hwy 90 ramp for better safety
- Pedestrian and bicycle paths should be part of Hwy 90 improvements
- Move the main gate to Keesler AFB to Division Street
- Complete the East Biloxi Transportation Loop
- Provide aesthetic and pedestrian features on all new roadways
- Re-establish Howard Avenue as two-way traffic
- Establish an effective Inter-Modal Public Transportation System
- Develop a "park once" system
- Launch a Streetcar Trolley system, primarily along the waterfront
- Make Hwy 90 an Inter-Modal Thoroughfare and Gulf Coast Walkway/Bikeway
- Launch a public Airport Bus Service
- Launch a Work Transportation System
- Biloxi should be part of a Gulf Coast Regional Commuter Rail
- Begin with a tri-county light rail commuter system on the CSX rail bed

#### LAND USE

- Adopt Advisory Based Flood Elevation (ABFE) maps and regulations.
- Encourage and accommodate mixed use.
- Increase water and sewer capability.
- Establish a new Commercial Residential Zone.
- Support relocation of the CSX rail.
- Maintain the Old Biloxi Architectural style.
- Preserve the public view and the sand beach.
- Establish neighborhood nodes at select intersections.
- Promote walkability and interconnectivity.

#### PRESERVATION

- Review and define the historical districts and strictly adhere to the zoning and the Design Review Guidelines.
- Strictly avoid granting any commercial zoning along the beachfront in

areas already zoned as residential.

- Historical Preservation:
- Respond to the urgency of stabilizing and securing the city-owned damaged historical
- Landmarks/structures to stop further deterioration.
- Consider these structures as priorities for preservation and restoration or rebuilding: Dantler House, Tullis-Toledano Manor, Magnolia Hotel, Old Brick House, Bond House, Biloxi Lighthouse, Lighthouse Keeper's House, Swetman House, US Coast Guard Station, Saenger Theater, Brielmaier House, Creole Cottage, Biloxi City Hall, Biloxi Library, #3 Fire Company. (See Appendix A.)
- Obtain right of first refusal for the City when privately owned historic properties such as the Old Biloxi Library are up for sale.
- Gain agreement to establish building codes, which will create unity of design and maintain a Sense of place as recommended by the Governor's Commission.
- Keep the integrity of historical neighborhoods by placing all utilities underground.
- Avoid moving the Magnolia Hotel in order not to place it in harm's way.
- Attempt to acquire the properties at the east and west corner of Porter and directly behind the east corner of Porter to add to the visitors center complex. If these properties cannot be acquired, structures built must adhere to the AHRC Design Recommendations and meet the City's building codes.
- Begin collecting Biloxi historic artifacts that were salvaged from homes and businesses for display in the Biloxi Museum.
- Strongly enforce current signage codes and strengthen these codes if necessary to ensure signage is appropriate for historical areas.
- Beachfront property zoned residential must remain residential. Commercial businesses must not be given variances in these areas, especially businesses such as pawnshops and service stations.
- Place historical markers downtown to create a walking and driving tour.
- Strongly encourage knowledge and enforcement of ordinances and laws governing the preservation of existing structures and construction of compatible infill in the City's historic districts and around all historic resources.
- Conduct a comprehensive update of the City's six (6) locally-designated historic districts to identify remaining contributing structures; review the 1754 locally designated landmarks and the additional new designations; and reevaluate district boundaries for updating the Biloxi Land Development Ordinance and the Architectural and Historical Review Commission's "Design Review Guidelines." (See Appendix C.)
- Support the concept of leaving the Town Green as green space.
- Support the development of a Visitor's Center/museum complex on the grounds of the Dantler House/Chamber of Commerce Property.
- Buildings that were destroyed should be reviewed and the feasibility of building replicas should be determined.
- **Trees, Green Space and Gardens:**
- Strongly encourage the preservation of the City's green spaces and century trees by enforcing tree ordinances. Restore the beauty of Beach Boulevard by nurturing damaged oaks and replace where appropriate.
- Protect and preserve our century trees. The City must not allow these trees to be replaced by saplings even when enticed by developers who promise a fifty to one ratio of replanting.
- Do not give variances to remove trees for development.
- Support the development of parks, gardens and green space.
- Support the development of the Mississippi Renaissance Gardens and Horticultural Center.
- **Funding:**
- Use FEMA monies at 90% to restore or rebuild City-owned historical buildings.
- Use FEMA Emergency funds to shore up those buildings, which are in danger of further deterioration.
- Use funds from Historical Preservation Trusts and organizations to restore City-owned historical buildings.
- Seek foundation and corporate grants such as the Kellogg Foundation

and AT&T Corporate Responsibility program.

- Fund any remaining historic preservation needs with local, county or state appropriations.

#### TOURISM

- Replace, restore or repair the City's historic sites and attractions to provide tourists with a unique experience
- Work with local attractions to create a marketing program funded by a 1% food and beverage tax
- Expand the Point Cadet Marina and create a Waterfront area attraction, funded grants from the Tideland Trust Fund or bonds repaid by leases.
- Build fishing reefs using debris from the Biloxi Bay Bridge and old fishing bridge.
- Expedite the process for approving and permitting project proposals.
- Zone East Biloxi and downtown Biloxi for mixed use and create TIF Bond Districts.
- Revise the City's parking requirements for Condomotels.
- Support and encourage immediate expansion of the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center and create a "Convention Center District."
- Determine feasibility of an East Biloxi Convention Center.
- Extend hotel tax to include condomotels.
- Commit property in East Biloxi for a privately developed minor league baseball stadium.
- Work with CTA to create a "Park Once" transportation systems for tourists.
- Replace the H-tracker connector route.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

- Lobby Congress to seek changes in the HUBZone regulations to have the entire City of Biloxi designated as a HUBZone area.
- Expand the scope of the new Community Center in East Biloxi to become a multi-purpose, multi-story building to meet many needs of the community.
- Encourage USM Gulf Coast to investigate the relocation of the campus to the City of Biloxi.
- Develop a plan to upgrade wireless Internet access throughout the City to create "hot spots" for connectivity.
- Develop a commerce park in the northern portion of the City to give businesses location options outside potential flood area.
- Provide better communications and distribution of information for small businesses in Biloxi to assure all citizens are aware of the resources are available from various agencies.
- Investigate and implement grants/tax credits to small companies for employment including hiring and retaining family members as these parties are excluded as part of the Go Zone legislation.
- Adopt a residential and commercial rent stabilization ordinance to offer affordable housing and office space for small businesses.
- Adopt a vacancy fine for commercial locations to encourage property owners to lease or sell available property.
- Monitor legal issues including non-regulation of business insurance, wages paid by FEMA, and unemployment tax rate increases.
- Review and update the City's sign ordinance.
- Encourage diversity of small business in the City of Biloxi and provide assistance to all businesses.
- Revitalize the Vieux Marche area.

#### SEAFOOD INDUSTRY

- Increase dock space for shrimp boats.
- Develop land use for fuel, ice and an unloading facility.
- Develop a Seafood Industry Cluster
- Develop land space for shipyard exams.
- Expand the dock space at Point Cadet Marina.
- Reinstall power at Point Cadet Marina.
- Maximize use of Point Cadet Marina to encourage retail seafood, a Farmer's Market and restaurants.

#### MILITARY/GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

- Supplement available Keesler on-base housing through public or private sources at a price range in line with current government housing allowances.
- Review Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) plans for North/South Connector routes to ensure Keesler's near- and long-term plans (particularly housing needs) are not adversely affected.
- Support Keesler's airspace management requirements to protect the integrity of Keesler's flying mission and its potential impact on the future of Keesler Air Force Base.
- Work closely with Keesler AFB on land use issues including Keesler gate locations, additional family housing and recreational needs.
- Pursue Keesler's medical vision for the Mississippi Coast and work with Keesler, the U.S. Veterans Administration and the University of Mississippi Medical School to coordinate common needs and explore other viable options to provide and enhance available medical support.

#### EDUCATION

- Provide instruction on knowledge and skills for the workforce that is available after regular work hours for the City's residents.
- Provide instruction on leisure activities and hobbies available after regular work hours for the City's residents.
- Participate in the educational offerings of the Mississippi Renaissance Garden and Horticultural Center.
- Clearly define "technology training" so the public understands the nature of the training and survey employers and the community to determine the type of instruction or classes to be offered. Enhance the continuing education opportunities already offered by Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.
- Training will occur at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC), Biloxi Public Schools (BPS), or where a computer lab is located. Training will be delivered, in some cases, to individuals as online courses.
- Encourage private pre-school education providers to use the Mississippi Department of Education's Pre-Kindergarten curriculum.
- Offer pre-school instruction for 3 and 4 year olds at local schools as space permits.
- Determine if the local school district can absorb costs to offer pre-school classes. (State funds are not available for pre-kindergarten classes.)
- Determine the feasibility of reconfiguring of school grades to accommodate classes in elementary schools, i.e. serving grades 9-12 at Biloxi High School, grades 7-8 at Biloxi Junior High School, and serving grade 6 at Michel.
- Consider a pilot program at the elementary school having the greatest percentage of free and reduced lunch students.
- Assist Harrison County Head Start's efforts to locate housing in the Biloxi area to reopen its programs in Biloxi.
- Develop a planned program of remedial or extended instruction for students in after-school programs.
- Include rudimentary nutrition instruction appropriate for students served.
- Teach skills using methods that complement school instruction and utilize alternative strategies for instructional delivery.
- Providers could include Boys & Girls Club in Biloxi or similar entities. (The Boys and Girls Club currently offers after-school programs in some Biloxi schools.)
- Approach local industries to offer assistance in establishing educational child care for their employees.
- Acknowledge quality GED programs already in place at MGCCC or already in place for enrolled students who meet eligibility requirements at Biloxi High School.
- Continue having all GED students receive a college counseling session prior to taking GED exams. As a part of the counseling session, add to this a tour of the college including detailed "how-to" information on such topics as registering, applying for financial aide, etc.
- Research the need for additional locations in the evening for the convenience of prospective students.

- Identify industries in Biloxi whose employees work 24-hour shifts and need child care for their children, i.e. gaming industry, Keesler Air Force Base, etc.
- Offer industries educational assistance to set up day care programs at their work places.
- Explore the possibility of combining the efforts of industries and educational entities to develop a citywide 24-hour child care program.
- Encourage all childcare programs to use the Mississippi Department of Education's pre-kindergarten curriculum.
- Investigate partnerships with local industries to provide shuttle services between child care sites and local schools when parents/guardians are working non-traditional hours.
- Lobby state legislature for statutory approval of gaming coursework
- Gain approval/support from State Board for Community and Junior Colleges and from the Board of Trustees of the state Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) for gaming coursework

#### HEALTH CARE

- To better facilitate disaster communication, a designated City representative should be appointed to serve as the primary liaison between Biloxi healthcare facilities and the Mayor's office, two-way communication available between the healthcare facilities and this person once storms enter the Gulf.
- Develop a plan to address the needs of "Special Needs" patients, including shelter designation, medical staffing of the clinic, and supplies/medical equipment that will be needed by these patients. A schedule of who will be working in these shelters (doctors, nurses, etc.) will need to be developed and the staging of medical supplies and replenishing of those supplies will need to be addressed.
- Designate medical personnel as first responders following a disaster to help support their mission of taking care of the medical needs of the community.
- Develop a Healthcare clearinghouse locally, as well as a satellite center outside of the disaster affected area, for contact information for all healthcare providers to assist patients in finding their physician and medical information after the storm.
- Work with the local Universities and with available federal grant money to increase the size of Clinical Programs, (i.e., Nursing, Respiratory, Radiology, etc.) on the Coast.
- Implement recommendations made in this report from the affordable housing committee.
- Replacement of the Biloxi/Ocean Springs Bridge is imperative for the long-term stability of the healthcare providers on the Coast.
- Work collaboratively with the public and private healthcare systems on the Coast to establish a Medical School and Residency Program for physicians.
- Continued growth in the annexed areas of Biloxi will increase the demand for healthcare services on the Coast. Additional resources will be needed to meet this demand.
- It is imperative that support be given to the rebuilding efforts of Keesler Medical Center. Keesler has been a major contributor to the past growth of Biloxi. A strong Keesler Medical Center will continue to support our local economy for many years to come.

#### NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Develop a clearinghouse for non-profits to coordinate services to clients, coordinate volunteers, and disseminate information among agencies and clients.
- Reinstated social services funding from the City to address the unmet needs of children, families, seniors, and the homeless.
- Provide resources to address the problems of homelessness and hunger, including land in the inner city for additional shelters and assistance in eliminating contractor abuse of homeless workers.
- To address affordable childcare and after-school care, locate an interim site for Moore Community House and expedite permits for reconstruction.

- Restore social service funding and encourage the casino industry to support childcare for employees.
- Address problems facing senior citizens by re-instituting senior programs and senior centers, reestablishing the "Meals on Wheels" program, supporting the Mental Health Association and other senior providers, and prosecuting dishonest contractors.
- Assist citizens with disabilities by encouraging developers to build affordable homes, improving transportation to the disabled population in Biloxi, and provide homeowners and renters assistance with home modifications.
- Support programs that help people move from continued emergency services to self-sufficiency and offer an exception to the City codes for housing volunteers.
- Help provide low-cost health care by encouraging contractors to provide insurance to employees and fine or rescind, if possible, the licenses of contractors who are taking advantage of workers; insure that contractors carry workers' compensation insurance or rescind their licenses to work in the City; and help disseminate information within the City about available services and how to obtain those services by way of the City newsletter.
- Provide funding to support transportation programs in areas where a higher percentage of the population use public transportation.
- Create plans for transportation to shelters in the event of a hurricane.
- Develop strategies to prevent predatory lending, including limiting the number of lenders allowed in the city and supporting city, county and statewide legislation that limits excessive fees, abusive pre-payment penalties and harmful refinance loans.
- Address rising mental health issues by distributing "Coping with Disaster" information; by promoting available mental health services through mailings, e-mails and the city's Website; and by funding mental health programs where appropriate.

#### FINANCE

- The Biloxi City Council should make a decision on the new base flood elevations.
- Officials from the City of Biloxi should begin meeting with representatives from the gaming industry to discuss work force housing and with representatives from Keesler AFB to discuss their housing needs.
- Formulate a letter from the Reviving the Renaissance Commission to FEMA requesting a current mailing list and contact information of tele-registered people who lived in the Biloxi at the time of Hurricane Katrina.
- All residents of Biloxi who think they may be eligible for the Katrina Homeowners Grant Program Phase I should complete an application for funding and set an appointment to have that application processed.
- The City of Biloxi should continue to lobby for Phase II of the Katrina Homeowners Program administered by the Mississippi Development Authority.
- The City of Biloxi should move as quickly as possible to complete infrastructure improvements (water and sewer) to the Woolmarket area, North of Interstate 10, in order to provide housing and economic development opportunities.
- Explore the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) bonds to finance infrastructure improvements and/or purchase real estate to stimulate private investment.
- The City Planning Department and City Council should explore establishing a "Rebuild Biloxi Enhancement Fee" for the approval/granting of variances that exceed the provisions of the current Land Development Ordinance (LDO).
- Continue to pursue private developers and investment groups and help expedite their development efforts.
- Work with local financial institutions to find solutions.