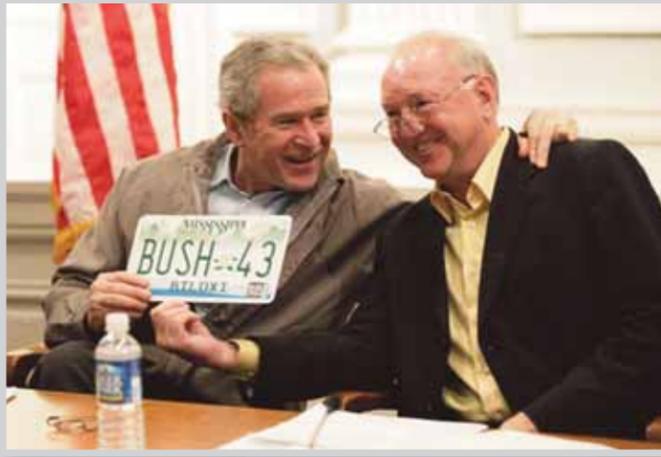


A quick snapshot of the Biloxi recovery

The Biloxi recovery has seen its share of milestones in the months since Aug. 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Here, at the 20-month mark, is a snapshot of the Biloxi story:

- 98 percent of the debris has been removed. In all, more than 2.92 million cubic yards has been hauled, enough to cover a football field and stand more than 137 stories high. The remaining five percent involves cases where property owners have yet to resolve issues with insurance, grants or financing before making a decision on whether to repair, rebuild or sell before moving to higher ground.
- The city has \$153.7 million in requests pending with FEMA. Of those requests, \$124.5 million has been obligated (which includes a \$2.5 million state contribution and a \$2.5 million local match). A total of \$52.1 million in federal reimbursements has been received.
- 19 days after the storm, half of the 6,100 pre-Katrina students were back in classrooms at Biloxi public schools. Today, 78 percent of the student body has returned, and we expect that number to continue to increase as more and more issues of the recovery – housing and insurance, namely – are resolved.
- The mainstays of Biloxi's economy – the casino resort industry and Keesler Air Force Base – are excelling.



Mayor Holloway presents President Bush a Biloxi commemorative license tag during the president's March 1 visit to Biloxi.

- The casino industry, with seven of the nine resorts back in operation, with nearly 15,000 people back at work in that industry, is at pre-Katrina levels, in employment and revenue.

- Six of the last seven months have been record-breaking months in terms of casino revenue. Our sales tax is about 85 percent of its pre-Katrina levels, and it will continue to grow as more and more amenities build back.

- About 55 percent of Coast hotels are back up and running – 70 percent of the major hotels, but about only 25 percent of the smaller independent hotels are back in business at this point.

- Keesler, the Air Force's electronics training headquarters and home to its second largest medical center, graduated more than 26,000 students in 2006, and in September embarked on the largest military housing construction program in the history of the Air Force.

- 6,000 of 25,000 homes and businesses in Biloxi were destroyed as a result of the storm.

Today, nearly 8,500 residences are in the works. In the past 19 months, the city has issued more than 13,000 permits overall, including 8,500 storm-repair permits alone.

- Today, there are eight condominium developments representing about 550 units in Biloxi. Four more condo developments under construction right now, accounting for another 868 units. And working their way through the review process are 26 developments representing more than 12,000 units.

Progress being made on RTR recommendations

By Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Clark Griffith
Reviving the Renaissance Chair



The Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee Report and the Living Cities East Biloxi Plan were both submitted to the Mayor and City Council on July 20, 2006.

Many people have asked; "what is the status of these plans?" On March 14, 2007, we had a meeting of several hundred citizens of Biloxi at the Howard

Avenue Community Center.

At that time, the status of both plans was discussed along with an extensive update on affordable housing initiatives by Bobby Hensley, the Biloxi Housing Authority Director.

We are pleased to share this exciting information with you since it clearly shows that Biloxi is on its way back!

First, let's discuss the Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee progress. If you have reviewed this report, you know there were 167 recommendations presented by over 200 Biloxi residents. Of these, 118 are actively being pursued for implementation at this time.

Some of the front burner projects:

FEMA Flood Elevations: The City Council approved the Advisory Flood Elevations, but subsequently reversed that decision to give the citizens in Wards 1, 2, & 7 more time to build back at lower standards. We are encouraged that the Council is on board to approve these standards once the final FEMA Maps are produced.

Rebuild Fishing Bridge at Point Cadet: FEMA has approved a City of Biloxi request for \$5.2 million to rebuild the old Biloxi-Ocean Springs fishing bridge at Point Cadet. This was major recommendation of the RTR to rebuild our sport fishing that will become a reality – thanks to our Mayor and Council.

Repair/Improve Point Cadet Marina and Small Craft Harbor: Work will begin soon on a \$10 million project by the City to improve the Point Cadet Marina and the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor. This work is the first phase of restoring city-owned, storm-ravaged harbors, piers and boat ramps.

New Community Center with Library: There was a plan before Katrina to build a new Community Center in East Biloxi and this is still the plan, but with additions that were presented in the RTR plan. Why not include the Biloxi Library and other useful organization offices for recovery as well as some retail shops? This is on the front burner and will be presented for approval in the near future.

Restore the Lighthouse, Old Brick House, and other historical sites: One of the most active committees of our group was chaired by Lucy Denton, a long-time Biloxi leader. Her historical committee presented the foundation of our motto: Building our future – Embracing our Past. From their recommendations the Mayor and City Council have approved restoring the Lighthouse, establishing a Lighthouse District, hiring architects to restore the Old Brick House, as well as other historical sites. Thanks, Lucy, and your committee.

Caillavet Street nearing completion: One of the most aggressive projects before the storm was to make Caillavet Street a four lane boulevard that connects the business on Highway 90 with the businesses on Bayview Avenue. This is about done and looks great. This is just the start! Our recommendation is to do this around the entire peninsula where we will have a "business" circle where everyone can enjoy the amenities of East Biloxi. This will include a museum district, a fishing district, and tie all the casinos together with a tram that provides transportation to all without having to "fire-up" your SUV to get there.

Museum District: Latest is the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum will rebuild at their prior location. Still up in the air is where the Seafood Museum will go. All of this will be worked out in future debates and decisions. All of you should stay close to this since it will determine how our City will look after our recovery.

Cultural Center at the present Library with a Katrina Café: Our library will relocate into the new Dukate Community Center. One great idea is to establish a cultural center in the old library with a Katrina Café or other retail sites. Stand by for more on this one.

Keesler Building Boom: This update would not be complete if we didn't include the superb work that the folks at Keesler Air Force Base are doing to restore that base. If you are not aware, Keesler AFB sustained almost \$1 billion dollars in losses due to Katrina. Paramount in these losses were over 50% of base housing, the Medical Center, the Commissary, Base Exchange and most of the amenities of the base. Some of you might not realize what this means to Biloxi. The year before the storm the economic impact of Keesler was \$1.7 billion dollars to the Biloxi community. Needless to say we must get this valuable economic engine back on line. More importantly, the Keesler family and the local retirees provide so much to our community that without them we will suffer.

Our congratulations and praise to Brigadier General Paul Capasso and his staff for their hard work and devotion to rebuilding our Coast.

Last, but not least, our Mayor and City Council have presented and secured funding to totally redo the Biloxi Comprehensive Plan. This will include revamping our Land Development Ordinance that dictates zoning, building densities height standards, etc. that will determine how our City will look like in the future.

The Mayor announced at the March 14 meeting that the Reviving the Renaissance Report will be a "foundation that can be built on" as we restructure our City's building plans.

So, what does this mean for Biloxi? Your Mayor established a Steering committee to guide us on how to rebuild our City. We provided that and many of the recommendations are being implemented. We all know there is so much more to do – and we will do it!

There is one overriding factor to all of this that will not be overlooked. Biloxi will recover – and it will be because of the leadership in our City and our citizens who step up every day to make it happen. I am so proud to be a part of such a great team.

You can read the entire RTR report online at biloxi.ms.us