

# Moving



# Forward

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
REBUILDING EAST BILOXI

## CONTRIBUTORS

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- The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Mississippi Development Authority
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- Treasure Bay Casino
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- Regions Bank
- Page, Mannino, Peresich

July 20, 2006

Mayor A.J. Holloway  
and Members of the City Council  
City of Biloxi City Hall  
140 Lameuse Street  
Biloxi, Miss. 39530

Gentlemen:

Jack Knight believed, as I think you do, that a well-informed community is a better community. He and his brother Jim ran their newspapers in order to, as Jack said, “bestir the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests.”

Jack and Jim Knight were passionate about journalism and communities. The foundation that they also started – separate from their newspaper company and independently run – benefits from having strong local roots in communities like Biloxi. I believe the Knight brothers would approve of the intent, the inclination toward action and the focus on community of this report, commissioned by Mayor Holloway from Living Cities and Goody Clancy.

This is an *action plan* for East Biloxi – a balanced road map for rebuilding the city’s economic heart and keeping intact its cultural soul. It includes recommendations for essential affordable housing as a key element in economic recovery, a land-use road map and tools to strengthen the city’s management of development. The report and its recommendations provide information and inspiration that the city, its businesses and residents can use to make informed decisions about the future.

Almost 20 years ago, Knight Foundation was among the founding members of Living Cities. We admire their record of nearly two decades of experience and expertise in rebuilding urban communities. That’s why we introduced them in South Mississippi after Katrina and we have been gratified by the reaction of Mayor Holloway and other leaders in working with them.

Goody Clancy is a nationally respected, Boston-based architecture, planning and preservation firm that includes as its clients the City of Miami and the University of Akron; both are Knight communities. The firm won a 2006 Charter Award from the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Knight Foundation was committed to the people of Biloxi for many years, long before any hurricane. We wish you every success in making Biloxi and South Mississippi as vibrant a



community as its people deserve, and we promise you that just as our commitment goes way back, we will stand with you long into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alberto Ibarguen', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Alberto Ibarguen  
President  
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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# Introduction

**B**iloxi's citizens are justifiably proud of a city built on a lively history, shared cultural values, and the strength of a diverse population.

In the early 1990s Biloxi began to experience a renaissance of economic growth. Hurricane Katrina dealt a severe blow to this resurgence, but it also inspired the City's determination to rebuild itself, better than ever.

This report documents Biloxi's potential to become a major American destination for people seeking a mix of tourist and entertainment activities.

The question is whether that future Biloxi will be a city built on its original core values of hard work, economic diversity, and respect for its rich cultural legacy—or if it will be a city like many others, where development has proceeded unmindful of the character and traditions that give a city its defining sense of place.

Many have a deep concern that the Biloxi of the future will be a city given over to unlimited economic development at the expense of its history and culture—and at the expense of the long-term residents who would struggle to re-establish themselves in a new, high-priced landscape of hotels and tourist attractions.

That could happen, but it need not. Future growth can benefit all of the city's residents as well as the sources of private capital that will drive that growth. In order to accomplish this goal, the City will need to define publicly and adopt officially a vision for its future.

**Future growth can benefit all residents as well as the sources of private capital that will drive that growth—but for that to happen the City will need to define publicly and adopt officially a vision for its future.**

Biloxi has two of the three ingredients needed to cultivate economic development—strong investment and a predictable customer base. The critical missing ingredient, however, is the expanded workforce needed to support major growth. By moving forward aggressively to plan and build mixed-income neighborhoods in East Biloxi to house its workforce, the city can become a national model for communities seeking to create economic opportunity for individuals while supporting the growth of a citywide economy. Living Cities’ experience in urban neighborhoods across America underlines the strong connection between addressing housing needs at all income levels and sustaining economic development.

These recommendations for East Biloxi describe the future that can be built by expanding tourism; providing broad housing choice in safe and attractive neighborhoods; renewing downtown; restoring the seafood industry; introducing major new open spaces; and strengthening public access to a great waterfront. This document then plots a course for reaching that future, based on the belief that economic growth—when channeled wisely—is good business for everyone: the city, its residents, and its investors.

# Planning Context

## PRIOR AND ONGOING PLANNING EFFORTS

The Living Cities planning process has been undertaken within the context established by three related post-Katrina planning efforts that are taking place on the regional, citywide, and local levels:

- Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal.** Immediately after the storm Governor Haley Barbour established the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal. Funding for the commission came from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Jim Barksdale. The commission reflected on both the great challenges and opportunities associated with recovery and it urged local communities to make the difficult choices needed to reduce vulnerability to future storms. Its comprehensive report, *After Katrina: Building Back Better Than Ever*, included nearly 240 separate recommendations. During the report's development more than 130 planners and architects affiliated with the Congress for the New Urbanism organized and conducted design charrettes for each of Mississippi's eleven coastal cities. The Biloxi charrette produced extensive recommendations for rebuilding. Information on the findings of this effort is available at [www.mississippirenewal.com/info/plansReports.html](http://www.mississippirenewal.com/info/plansReports.html). The ideas for East Biloxi contained in the report of the Mississippi Renewal Forum provided an important reference point for the work undertaken by Living Cities.

Out of this terrible disaster, beyond all imagination, comes our opportunity. And I beg you not to let Mississippi miss it. I'm determined we will not fail to seize this opportunity.

GOVERNOR HALEY BARBOUR

Our mission: Forge a way through the pain this hurricane visited on our citizens, so that in 30 years, the legacy of the work we now begin is a Mississippi that enjoys higher prosperity and a better quality of life than we dared imagine before August 29, 2005.

JIM BARKSDALE, CHAIRMAN  
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
RECOVERY, REBUILDING, AND RENEWAL

- **Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee:** In his State of the City speech in February 2006, Mayor A.J. Holloway launched the Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee planning effort, a citywide process to



shape recommendations for Biloxi's future. Under the leadership of Lt. General Clark Griffith, this effort has brought together more than 200 volunteers who have developed recommendations for rebuilding the city. The committee's work was carried out by eleven subcommittees, organized

to mirror the structure established by the Governor's Commission. The Mayor and Lt. General Griffith sought to make appointments that would reflect a broad cross-section of the community, and encouraged others to join when they expressed an interest in participating as the work moved forward. The committee's report has been submitted to Mayor Holloway, and it is anticipated that ongoing public discussion will link it to the recommendations in this document.

- **East Biloxi Coordination and Relief Center Community Planning Process:**

Launched in February under the leadership of Councilor Bill Stallworth, Executive Director of the center, this process examined the needs of

No one is going to come from Washington or Jackson to lift the burden of choices from local communities and transport them magically into the future. ...[L]ocal citizens have to support—have to demand—tough choices from mayors, aldermen, and county supervisors. This report is nothing if not a call to arms for exactly that kind of responsible citizenship.

JIM BARKSDALE, CHAIRMAN  
GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON  
RECOVERY, REBUILDING, AND RENEWAL

neighborhood residents and businesses directly affected by the storm. The process was managed by center staff with participation from consultant planners and the Mississippi State University Design Center and its students. As part of this process, a survey of East Biloxi residents documented five areas of primary concern: rebuilding housing stock; creating a safer neighborhood; developing additional jobs in redevelopment industries; creating a more diverse economic base, with a healthy balance of gaming industry and neighborhood-friendly retail businesses; and encouraging quality, community-based services, schools, and recreational programs. This information served as another important reference point for the Living Cities recommendations.

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## LIVING CITIES PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process that led to the development of these recommendations was made up of several related activities:

- Informal discussions with community stakeholders
- Community meetings
- Coordination with community planning processes within the city
- Technical analyses

### Informal discussions

Throughout the four-month period that began with the Mayor's announcement, members of the Living Cities team attended meetings of the subcommittees of the Reviving the Renaissance Committee, of the City Council, and of business and civic groups, and met informally with a broad cross-section of community leaders, to better understand the city from a variety of perspectives.

### Community Meetings

The Living Cities team initiated a community-based planning process in April 2006. In five public meetings held at the East Biloxi Community Center on Howard Avenue, the team presented information, sought community input, and reported on the findings of technical studies, where available. Attendance at each of the meetings ranged between 60 and 100 people, with



strong participation from East Biloxi residents. The topics of these meetings were broadly as follows:

- April 27 Introduction to the Process
- May 4 Potential Development Models
- May 11 Planning Framework
- May 18 Revised Planning Framework
- June 1 Planning Framework/Housing Cost Analyses

Each of these meetings presented an opportunity for community input and discussion. Key findings from these discussions include:

- Many residents prefer single-family-type residential development as the model for neighborhood rebuilding.
- Residents are concerned that the advisory flood elevations developed by



FEMA will limit the viability of single-family development in some areas—particularly for elderly residents who may have difficulty entering and leaving elevated structures.

- Community residents would like to see new commercial and residential development that is designed to be compatible with Biloxi's historic character and identity.
- Preserved and expanded public waterfront access is a high priority for residents. Efforts to improve access should include consideration of areas that are already developed; future development should not block waterfront view corridors.

The information developed over the course of these meetings supplied an important source of feedback for the preparation of the Planning Framework presented in this report.

### **Coordination with Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee**

Throughout the planning effort, Living Cities coordinated its work with the Reviving the Renaissance Steering Committee, chaired by Lt. General Clark Griffith. Living Cities worked closely with Lt. General Griffith and the subcommittee chairs and participated directly in subcommittee meetings, particularly those of the Land Use and Affordable Housing subcommittees.

## Coordination with the East Biloxi Coordination and Relief Center's community planning process

Living Cities coordinated its effort with the community planning process undertaken by the East Biloxi Coordination and Relief Center. The planning process represented an extension of the center's efforts to provide support to residents with a broad range of short- and longer-term needs in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Living Cities met with Councilman Bill Stallworth, Executive Director of the center, and with center staff and consultants. Representatives of the Coordination and Relief Center also attended and participated in public meetings hosted by Living Cities.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina caused unprecedented damage in Biloxi. East Biloxi—defined as the area east of the I-110 connector and south of Back Bay—was especially hard hit. East Biloxi encompasses a land area of approximately two square miles comprising residential neighborhoods, the city's historic downtown, large casino facilities and associated hotels, and a waterfront that mixes beaches, marinas, and dock space for the commercial fishing industry.

Pre-Katrina, East Biloxi was home to approximately 8,500 residents in 3,500 households. Approximately four of every five residential structures were damaged to some extent by the hurricane, with about half of



all structures "substantially damaged" or completely destroyed. The nature

and extent of damage differs significantly from one part of the peninsula to another.

Median household income in East Biloxi is much lower than that of the city as a whole or of Harrison County. In 2005, the median household income in East Biloxi was \$26,700 as compared with a citywide median of \$38,300 and the Harrison County median of \$39,600.

Pre-Katrina, approximately 51% of East Biloxi households were renters, comparable to a citywide percentage of 50% but higher than Harrison County, where renters account for 36% of households.

East Biloxi was more racially diverse than the city or Harrison County in 2005. East Biloxi's population was 39% African American, 39% White and 19% Asian. The city's population was 20% African American, 69% White and 6% Asian. Harrison County's population was 22% African American, 71% White and 3% Asian.

The median age of East Biloxi residents, 38.9 years, is older than that of the City of Biloxi as a whole (33.7 years), or of Harrison County (34.8 years). At 17%, the proportion of persons over 65 is also well above average in East Biloxi.

### **Floodplain regulations**

Biloxi has a long history of coastal storms. Almost every decade of the city's history has been marked by a major storm accounting for some level of damage to the community. Prior to Katrina, however, only a relatively small portion of East Biloxi was located within the 100-year floodplain as established by FEMA's 1983 Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM). The 100-year floodplain defines the area estimated to have a 1% chance of flooding in any given year.

In 2005, soon after the storm, FEMA produced Advisory Base Flood Elevation maps (ABFE). These ABFE maps are the outcome of analyzing storm activity along the coast for the past 20 years and are the precursors to updating Mississippi's 1983 FIRM maps. The ABFEs are "notice" to public officials of what the updated Flood Insurance Rate Maps will be when

the drafts are released in late 2006. Structures that are not in compliance with appropriate provisions of the regulations are not eligible for flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The federal government mandates that lenders require flood insurance as a condition of providing loans on properties within the floodplain. Regulation of development in floodplain areas is usually further controlled through local land use ordinances. Effective local management of development in the floodplain—to minimize risks associated with flood damage—qualifies property owners in communities that participate in the NFIP to receive discounted rates on flood insurance for properties within the floodplain. Prior to Katrina, the City’s efforts to manage development within the floodplain had translated into a 15% discount on flood insurance premiums for Biloxi residents.

*New regulations will expand the flood zone and require that buildings be raised significantly higher than was the case under 1983 regulations.*

The ABFE maps reclassify most of East Biloxi as being located within the 100-year floodplain (the diagram below shows how they extend the 1983 delineation of the floodplain), establishing standards and guidelines for redevelopment. The ABFEs indicate



locations where, once the regulations are enacted into law, future structures will need to be elevated above the base flood elevation and incorporate other flood-impact-mitigation measures. When formally adopted, the new floodplain maps will require that most new development be elevated substantially above grade. Required elevations will vary considerably from place to place but new development in more than half of East Biloxi will need to be raised at least 10 feet above grade and substantially higher in several locations. These new regulations will play a significant role in defining the type of development that can be undertaken within the area. Property owners wishing to use federal HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding administered by the Mississippi Development Authority must comply with the ABFE elevations in order to qualify for the program.

### **Gaming legislation**

Prior to Katrina, Mississippi law prohibited land-based gaming facilities in Biloxi. It allowed them on barges, with associated hotel and support activities located on land. In the wake of the storm, the state enacted legislation that allows location of the gaming elements of new development on land in a zone extending approximately 800 feet from the shore. Zoning provides the City with the ability to control where—and whether—gaming facilities may be located within the 800-foot zone.

### **Zoning**

The City of Biloxi regulates development through its Land Development Ordinance (LDO). The LDO regulates allowable uses throughout East Biloxi and establishes additional requirements for heights, setbacks, building design, and other factors, as well as procedural requirements for development proposals. The ordinance regulates gaming establishments, which are only permitted within the waterfront zone, and imposes more stringent limits on allowable locations for such facilities than does the state gaming legislation.

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## TECHNICAL ANALYSES

The Living Cities team undertook a series of analyses to provide a basis for these recommendations. The following summaries provides a brief overview of this work; full versions of each report appear at the end of this document.

The firm of Goody Clancy, specialists in architecture, planning and preservation, produced a series of studies and analyses that it presented at each community meeting. The outcome of this work is incorporated in the *Planning Framework* section of this report.

### Gaming Market Analysis

Economics Research Associates (ERA), specialists in all aspects of market analysis, produced two reports documenting market potential for Biloxi, the larger market area, and East Biloxi itself. *Technical Report 1* evaluated the gaming market in the Biloxi area. ERA's analysis places Biloxi's gaming industry within a regional and national context and reviews the likely scope and character of future expansion of gaming within the community. ERA's full analysis, including associated assumptions, is included in the technical report. Some highlights of its findings:

- The Gulf Coast in general, and Biloxi in particular, had grown into a super-regional casino destination prior to Hurricane Katrina, thanks in part to firm expansion plans for Gulfport International Airport. On top of rising gaming revenues, new developments were already in the planning stages, and visitor origins and overnight percentages had been shifting away from a purely regional market.
- Katrina affected nearly every casino in the Gulf Coast market, but by early 2006 regional gaming revenues had already rebounded to about two thirds of historic highs.
- The Gulf Coast market, and Biloxi in particular, is poised for full recovery and possibly significant growth because:
  - > Changes in state law for land-based casinos make development conditions extremely favorable for operators, relative to other U.S. jurisdictions.
  - > Key operators have made significant progress in major destination-style casino developments and most have the financial resources to carry them out.

- > The Gulf Coast is well situated as a super-regional destination, with more than 48 million people in metro areas within two hours' flying time.
- Assuming a conservative scenario, with limited development of key major projects in advanced stages of development, ERA projects that revenues in the Biloxi gaming market could recover to historic levels in the short-term and grow to \$1.4 billion in 2009.
- As a super-regional destination with commensurate penetration of target metro-area markets, ERA projects that the development of high-quality destination casino resorts could help the Biloxi gaming market exceed \$2 billion in revenues.

ERA projected two scenarios for the Biloxi market:

- > Its conservative scenario assumed 12 casinos, 12,000 casino hotel rooms, 300 acres of developed site, and employment of 16,000.
- > Its aggressive scenario assumed 17 casinos, more than 30,000 hotel rooms, 600 acres of developed site, and employment of 25,000.

These findings highlight the very significant potential for continued growth of Biloxi as a tourism destination.

### **Real Estate Market Analysis**

ERA's *Technical Report 2* focuses on real estate demand in the Biloxi market over the next decade *independent of demand generated by the gaming industry*. This section provides a brief overview of its conclusions.

- **Workplace (professional office):** Assuming that the city's **50.4% fair share** allocation (*i.e.*, the proportion of existing employment in Biloxi relative to Harrison County) stays constant through 2015, Biloxi could expect future demand for approximately **4,650,000 sq. ft.** of office space in the city. Next, non-casino employment in East Biloxi comprises 13% of the city's total job base. Maintenance of this share of the job base suggests a demand for **590,000 sq. ft.** of office space in East Biloxi over the next 10 years. Public-sector efforts, however—such as city-sponsored incentives, ongoing planning initiatives, and infrastructure improvements—could further enhance opportunities for additional development in East Biloxi. ERA's experience suggests that such programs generally produce a 10% to 20% bump in fair share, meaning that the market could support an additional 50,000 to 100,000 sq. ft. of office space by 2015.

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- **Workplace (general industrial):** ERA estimates that East Biloxi contains 600,000 sq. ft. of general industrial space, used mainly for warehousing and distribution, construction/contracting, light manufacturing, and utility storage, with demand driven by key employers like Keesler AFB. *Assuming that appropriate available parcels can be located*, employment growth between 2006 and 2015 would generate demand for another **985,000 to 1,100,000 sq. ft. of general industrial space**. It is not clear that sufficient buildable land exists in East Biloxi to accommodate demand of this magnitude in light of FEMA's pending flood-elevation guidelines.
  - **Hotel/lodging:** The projected growth in the two workplace categories could be expected to generate demand for hotel room-nights requiring 130 to 180 additional rooms. Given near-term uncertainties in the hotel market because of storm-recovery efforts, demand from future workplace growth will be important as a means of diversifying East Biloxi's lodging opportunities beyond the core markets of casino and leisure visitors.
  - **Market-rate housing:** ERA's fair-share analysis suggests a nominal increase in East Biloxi's population over the next 10 years, roughly 500 additional residents in 256 new households. The Moderate Scenario assumes that all pipeline housing units "in process" in East Biloxi (*i.e.*, Holley Street/Paulson, Vieux Carre Plaza, and Vue Crescente) will be built, providing another 870 new units in addition to these 250+ units generated by fair-share growth. This yields demand for roughly 1,000 new units over the next 10 years. Under an induced-demand scenario, assumptions include full recovery, construction of 100% of the pipeline-housing units, and the addition of another 50% to reflect higher-density development opportunities on selected waterfront parcels, yielding market potential for up to 1,500 new housing units over the next 10 years.
  - **Non-casino retail and restaurants:** ERA's demand analysis for general retail (convenience, service) and restaurants estimates opportunities for new retail development in East Biloxi generated by five key market segments, including existing residents, new residents, new office and industrial employees, new non-casino visitors, and other city households. At reasonable capture rates, ranging from 20% to 45%, plus incremental

demand created by “inflow,” 150,000 to 300,000 sq. ft. from all market segments is market supportable by 2015. This suggests careful consideration of locations for new retail development in East Biloxi. Planning parameters include “100% corner” locations that provide strong street visibility and frontage, such as along Beach Boulevard, proximity to key demand generators such as the casinos, adjacent and adequate parking, and clustering retailers to create synergy among tenants.

These findings highlight important opportunities for non-casino-based growth. The magnitude of this growth, however, is relatively modest by comparison to casino-related growth potentials.

### **Housing Analysis**

An available workforce is the critical missing component of Biloxi’s rebounding local economy. Producing housing that is affordable to households with a range of incomes will, in turn, play a critical role in supporting that workforce.

In preparing this document, a second significant observation about housing emerged early and clearly: residents of East Biloxi face immediate and difficult choices about where to live, given the realities of storm damage and anticipated constraints on rebuilding. A large number of property owners indicated a strong desire to remain in East Biloxi, preferably in place, as did a large proportion of renters. Some residents have already chosen to relocate or intend to do so, and the preferences of some who relocated after the hurricane remain unknown.

*Technical Report 3* addresses these issues with two detailed sets of information. Lamar Wilson of Wilson Associates prepared the first set, detailed data on the costs of different rebuilding strategies—from repair of single-family homes to new construction at greater but still moderate densities. He also calculated development costs associated with subsidy needs for the two early-action catalyst projects described elsewhere in the Planning Framework section.

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A second section of that report lays out initial ideas, developed by John Davis of Burlington Associates, about the options for property owners facing difficult choices about what to do. He also outlines a set of strategies and tools that could help the City manage and direct the overall rebuilding effort.

Living Cities' perspective grows out of years of experience in revitalizing distressed urban neighborhoods. That perspective stresses the value of building diverse neighborhoods available to households with a broad mix of incomes, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Development that concentrates lower-income populations has historically failed both individual residents and the public sector, which must shoulder with the costs of providing support and services. Numerous examples around the country attest to the fact that well-conceived and -managed mixed-income developments can offer high-quality design; create a more stable social environment than isolated developments designed exclusively for low-income households; and offer ample opportunity for developers to turn a profit.

### **Social Needs Analysis**

A consistent and understandable theme of the public meetings was the concern and fear among the East Biloxi residents as they came to grips with the reality of lost homes and disrupted lives. The lack of reliable information about possible choices, combined with perceptions of widespread speculative real estate activity, made it difficult to think about any future beyond the immediate crisis of finding decent and safe housing. The recommendations in this report focus on a longer-term future, but there remains a pressing need for immediate steps to restore the disrupted lives of families and individuals. Thus this report also incorporates recommendations for moving quickly to establish programs that provide immediate assistance. Further discussion of this topic is included in *Technical Report 4*.

### **Transportation Analysis**

Kittelson Associates, specialists in transportation planning and traffic engineering, analyzed available transportation information for East Biloxi and the region. The resulting *East Biloxi Transportation Strategy* appears as *Technical Report 5* and provides a context for transportation planning and infrastructure development within the area.

## PLANNING ISSUES

### Physical Planning and Urban Design Analysis

The firm of Goody Clancy, specialists in architecture, planning and preservation, produced a series of studies and analyses presented at each of the community meetings. The outcome of this work is incorporated in the *Planning Framework* section of this report; Key assumptions include:

- **Rebuilding housing.** A large number of East Biloxi residents lost their homes in the storm and have an immediate need for permanent new housing. These housing needs should be addressed through strategies that rebuild East Biloxi as a mixed-income community, broadening its economic diversity. Increasing housing density in appropriate locations can help meet diversification and rehousing goals simultaneously.
- **Flood elevations.** The advisory flood elevations issued by FEMA add greatly to the complexity of rebuilding in East Biloxi and pose considerable design challenges in shaping a cohesive post-Katrina neighborhood. The Biloxi City Council has adopted an interim regulation establishing somewhat greater elevation requirements. This report assumes that the regulations for floodplain management ultimately adopted by FEMA will broadly reflect the ABFEs. These new flood elevations will enhance protections from flood damage for both residential and commercial properties.
- **Gaming.** The gaming industry represents a key engine of growth for the regional economy, with the highest concentration of activity within East Biloxi. Accommodating the industry's growth—and capturing the benefits of new investment—will require significant additional land. Allocating land to accommodate this growth while establishing limits for its expansion offers the benefit of providing for growth while protecting adjacent neighborhoods from the destabilizing affects of land speculation. Growth in gaming will also increase demand for workforce housing adjacent to new facilities; development designed to meet a reasonable portion of new housing demand for casino employees should be accommodated within East Biloxi.

- **Seafood industry.** East Biloxi has long been home to both the commercial elements of the seafood industry and to the residents who work in it. Supporting efforts to restore this important segment of the economy is a critical aspect of the planning framework; the proposed Seafood Village represents a key element of this strategy.

## Design Challenges

Rebuilding East Biloxi as a cohesive and attractive community presents multiple and complex design challenges. Some of the most significant include:

- **Elevating buildings to meet floodplain design criteria:** Most new development in East Biloxi must be raised significantly above grade to provide enhanced protection against flood damage. Within existing neighborhoods, variations in elevation between existing and future buildings could create a discordant effect, but careful design can help overcome potential problems. Changes in elevation of even six or seven feet can generally be accommodated while maintaining compatibility with traditional neighborhood character. Where elevations exceed 10 feet and/or floodplain regulations require that space below buildings remain free of obstructions, there are significant challenges to re-creating the type of residential neighborhood that once existed in these areas. New development models will be needed to establish an attractive and cohesive pattern of development.
- **Transitions in scale:** The peninsula contains some stark and awkward design contrasts, where very tall buildings loom over fragile-looking single-family homes. More gradual height transitions are needed.
- **Building character:** The design of many large commercial structures reflects little of Biloxi's character or architectural traditions. Design guidelines are needed to establish a framework for compatible new design.
- **Improved access to the water's edge:** Development has in some cases eliminated public access to the water's edge and walled the city off from its waterfront. New development proposals should incorporate continuous public access to the water's edge for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **View corridors to the water:** Some large developments along the waterfront have blocked view corridors to the water along public streets, diminishing the sense of connection between residential areas and the oceanfront.
- **Beachfront identity:** Beach Boulevard, with its fine trees and four-lane cross-section, is a character-defining element of East Biloxi. As traffic volume increases, the boulevard will approach its capacity as a four-lane roadway and pressures will increase to widen it to six lanes to match the width of the Ocean Springs Bridge. Such a widening would severely limit pedestrian connections between neighborhoods and the beach and destroy the corridor's identity. Alternative solutions will be needed that distribute some of this traffic to other roadways.

An East Biloxi in which a thriving tourist industry creates the economic basis for a vibrant local community whose look and feel are rooted in the city's historic character.

## VISION

The special combination of hotels, casinos, and other resort attractions with a unique and authentic local character will, in turn, set East Biloxi apart from other Gulf Coast and casino resort areas. The gaming industry and local residents will thus realize maximum mutual benefit.

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# Planning Framework

**B**iloxians are optimistic about the future and share a commitment to rebuilding a community that is better, safer, and stronger than before. Collaboration among individual citizens, governmental agencies, developers, businesses, and nonprofit community groups will play an essential role in this effort—as will a shared vision and a guiding framework for development.

Many businesses—and the tax and employment base associated with the gaming and entertainment industries—are already springing back to life and contributing to the city’s revival. Their resurgence can provide momentum that carries the community into a better future: building new housing, strengthening downtown, restoring the beauty of older neighborhoods, introducing new open spaces that enrich community life, and enhancing waterfront access.

This section outlines an overall design vision for East Biloxi, identifies key design challenges, and defines a framework for moving forward. The framework reflects community goals and aspirations, design considerations, market and economic factors, environmental risk management, and infrastructure and transportation needs.

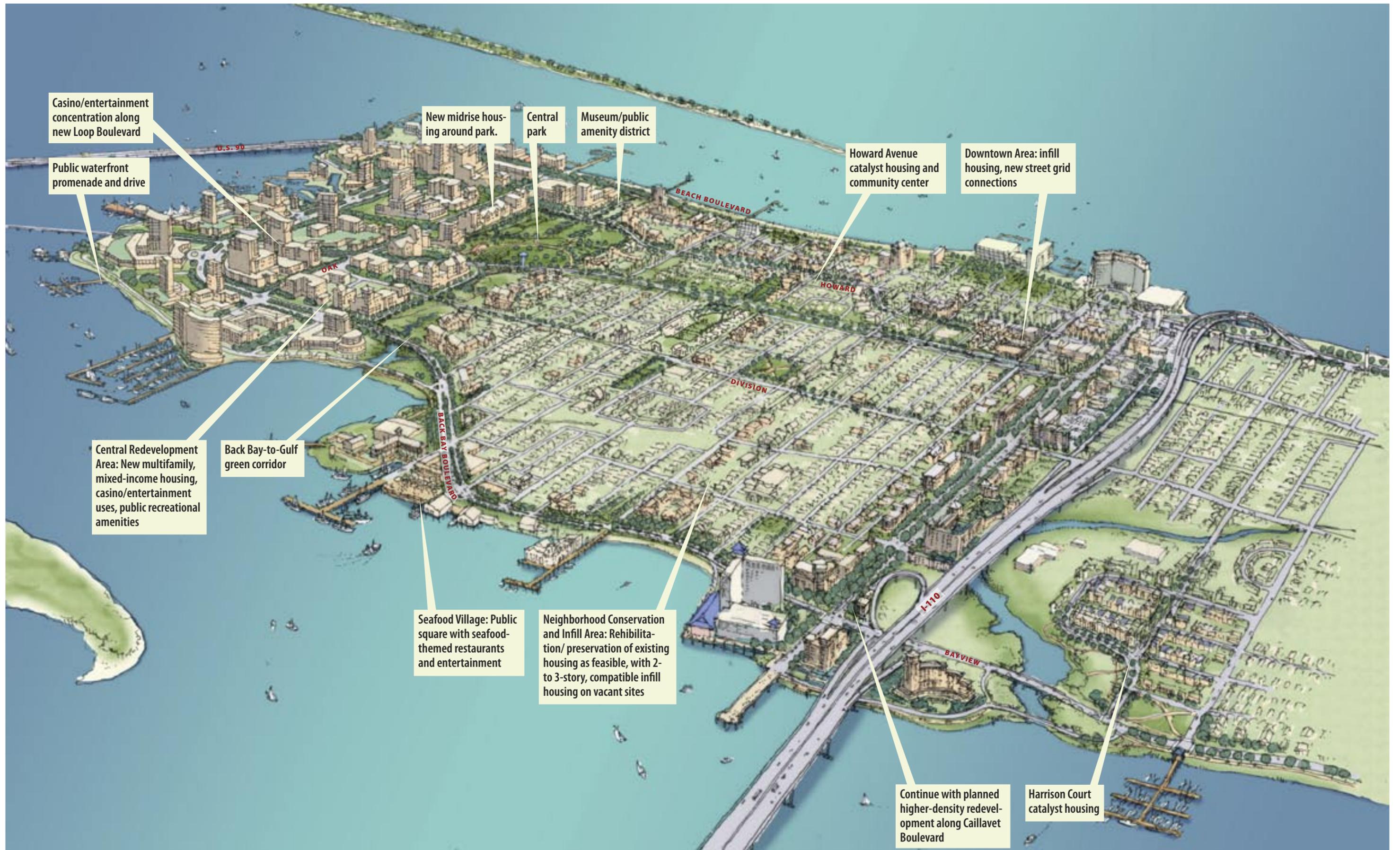
## **COMMUNITY VISION**

This vision for East Biloxi seeks to shape a future that preserves and enhances the city’s historic identity, character and values; integrates larger-scale development tied to a major expansion of its gaming and tourism industries; and realizes maximum benefits for local residents. Key aspects of this vision include:

## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE VISION FOR EAST BILOXI

- **A new tourism, entertainment, and gaming district of national stature** located at the eastern edge of the peninsula, incorporating approximately 250 acres of land and dedicated to accommodating expansion of the city's major growth industry.
- **An expansion of East Biloxi's housing stock** from its pre-Katrina level of 3,500 units to more than 5,500 units, including single-family houses, townhouses, and multifamily units reflecting designs sympathetic to the city's historic architecture. New lower-density housing would be incorporated into the fabric of existing neighborhoods on less flood-prone higher ground. Mid-rise and higher-density housing would be built around new parks and along the waterfront. Housing would be targeted to serve residents at every income level.

- **A vital, attractive downtown**—incorporating new housing and cultural attractions—that serves as a destination for visitors and a center of community life.
- **A seafood village, a new destination on the Back Bay waterfront** that combines berthing space and support facilities for the commercial fishing fleet, seafood restaurants and retail outlets, and commercial processing space.
- **A great public waterfront with access all along the water's edge**—a great promenade and bikeway linking the city's diverse waterfront destinations—providing residents and visitors with access to the city's defining asset.
- **A new "central park" at the heart of the peninsula** that becomes part of a network of open spaces linking the Back Bay and Gulf waterfronts. Located on low-lying land that is vulnerable to flooding, this signature community destination will provide an enhanced setting for new housing and commercial uses.
- **A continuous "loop" boulevard that links East Biloxi's major destinations to the regional transportation network, enhancing transportation capacity and serving as a visual amenity**—inspired by the landscaped beauty of Beach Boulevard with its stately trees, generous setbacks and views of the water. Additional transportation improvements, including reuse of the CSX rail corridor, will support growth while protecting the integrity of new and rebuilt neighborhoods.
- **New development that is sympathetic to Biloxi's character and heritage and builds on its architectural traditions**—shaped by enhanced regulatory tools and design guidelines.
- **An overall approach to land use that mitigates the potential for future flood damage**—concentrating more fragile single-family houses on higher ground, and locating open space and more robust structures on low-lying land and close to the water.



Casino/entertainment concentration along new Loop Boulevard

Public waterfront promenade and drive

New midrise housing around park.

Central park

Museum/public amenity district

Howard Avenue catalyst housing and community center

Downtown Area: infill housing, new street grid connections

Central Redevelopment Area: New multifamily, mixed-income housing, casino/entertainment uses, public recreational amenities

Back Bay-to-Gulf green corridor

Seafood Village: Public square with seafood-themed restaurants and entertainment

Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area: Rehabilitation/preservation of existing housing as feasible, with 2- to 3-story, compatible infill housing on vacant sites

Continue with planned higher-density redevelopment along Caillavet Boulevard

Harrison Court catalyst housing

# STREET AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK FOR EAST BILOXI

- **Principal existing streets, landmarks and districts.**
- **Relationship of public streets and open space to developed blocks.**

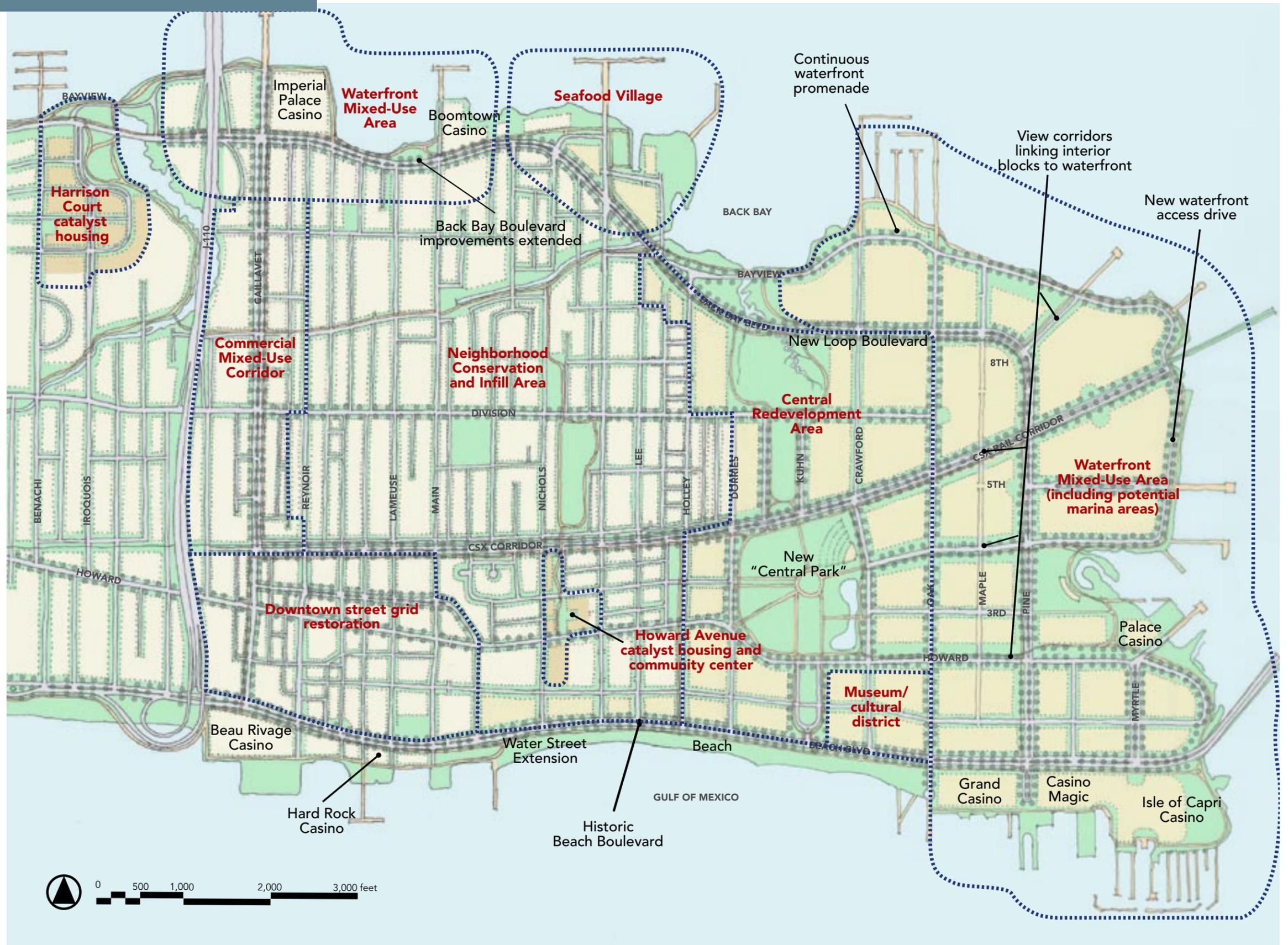
> **BLOCK COLOR INDICATES DEGREE OF REDEVELOPMENT.** More extensive redevelopment generally corresponds to more extensive storm damage, lower ground elevation, and higher elevation requirements for new structures.

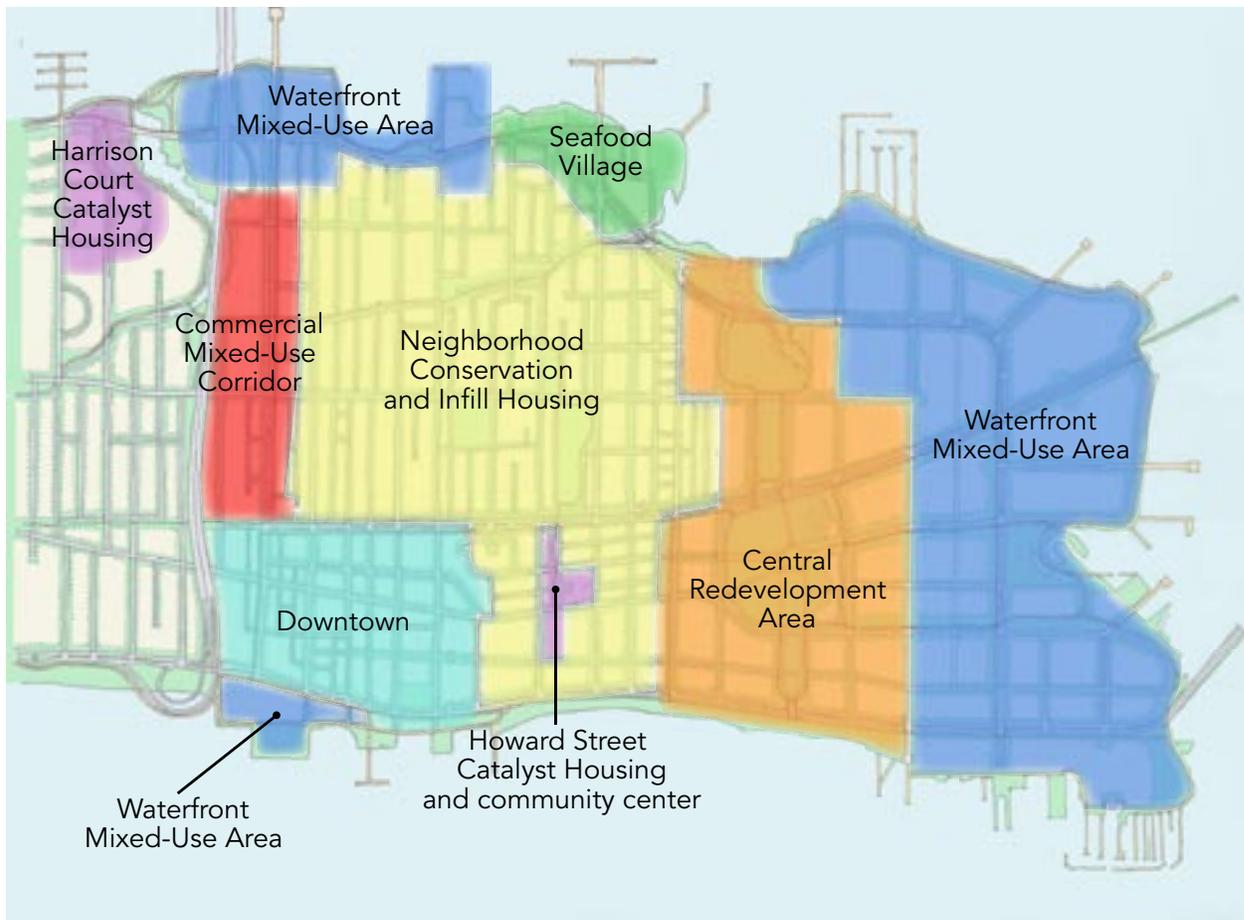
- PREDOMINANTLY RESTORED EXISTING BUILDINGS; OCCASIONAL NEW INFILL CONSTRUCTION
- PREDOMINANTLY NEW DEVELOPMENT; OCCASIONAL EXISTING BUILDINGS RESTORED AS FEASIBLE
- NEW DEVELOPMENT ON VACANT PUBLIC SITES

> **BLOCK PATTERNS REFLECT DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS.** In areas where existing homes predominate, blocks tend to be long, linear, and run north/south. This pattern accommodates numerous compact residential buildings and creates waterfront views along most streets. Much development downtown focuses on its more frequent east/west corridors, but downtown blocks are also strongly defined by north/south streets that link to the waterfront. **Proposed new blocks**, which will host mostly new development, are generally larger and less linear. This pattern will accommodate anticipated large entertainment and parking structures and significant open space on larger parcels. Major street corridors in these areas have deeper setbacks. This allows them to accommodate landscaped transitions to the higher building elevations required by flood regulations, as well as more generous view and recreational corridors extending to the waterfront.

> **AN EXPANDED PUBLIC REALM** enhances traditional neighborhoods and new development alike. Existing beach and waterfront park areas grow into a band of continuous public waterfront access to capitalize on one of Biloxi's most important assets. Additional inland park and public-use areas convert some of the lowest-lying areas that are hardest to rebuild into resources that increase the value of adjacent redevelopment and serve the entire community. Streetscape improvements—most notably completion of a planned continuous-loop boulevard—further extend a high-quality public realm that serves residents and visitors alike and provides a grand setting for significant new entertainment-related development.

- **Key redevelopment initiatives.** Specific catalyst projects and districts with distinctive qualities that reinforce near- and long-term goals for the ongoing redevelopment process, building a Biloxi that is better than ever.





## STRATEGY FOR REBUILDING

Each area of East Biloxi presents different challenges and opportunities; With a consistent overall rebuilding plan, each area can contribute to the city's future.

- The **Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area** (together with Downtown) encompasses most of the higher ground within East Biloxi. Much of the built environment here—single-family houses, churches, community facilities, and small commercial buildings— though greatly damaged by Katrina, remains relatively intact. Efforts here should focus on preservation, repair, and reconstruction of houses and other structures, and incorporation of compatible new residential development.

- 
- Situated on the highest ground in East Biloxi, **downtown** was the area least directly affected by Katrina. Downtown's revitalization was an important community priority prior to the storm and can best be advanced by the addition of significant new housing and would be an excellent location for incorporating new cultural and public uses, offices, and retail space.
  - The **Commercial Mixed-use Corridor** is centered along Caillavet Avenue on relatively high ground and has the potential to accommodate a mix of commercial and residential development and mixed-use buildings.
  - The **Central Redevelopment Area** encompasses former residential neighborhoods on low-lying land that were almost totally destroyed by the storm and where the risk of future flooding is significant. Rebuilding efforts should focus on creation of a major new central park for East Biloxi, combined with higher-density housing that is designed to limit the impact of future flooding. This pattern will be supplemented by some rebuilt homes and commercial buildings. The area can create a transition in scale from Biloxi's traditional low-rise neighborhoods to the west and new, larger-scale development along the waterfront to the east.
  - The **Waterfront Mixed-use Area** will incorporate larger gaming and entertainment facilities, associated hotels, a diverse range of boating and recreational uses, and public waterfront access. Like the Central Redevelopment Area, this area is also very susceptible to flooding and is best suited to larger commercial and waterfront facilities that can be designed in ways that will limit future flood damage.
  - The **Seafood Village** will combine dedicated berthing space for the commercial fishing fleet, associated activities such as processing, a seafood market, and restaurants.

### **Areawide issues**

This section outlines an approach to area-wide issues and considerations as they apply to the planning areas described above. Key area-wide issues include:



- **Waterfront.** Biloxi’s waterfront is its most distinctive asset and amenity, combining a working waterfront, scenic beachfront and boulevards, commercial and recreational marinas, cultural destinations, wetlands and natural areas, and large gaming and entertainment venues and associated hotel facilities. The waterfront does not fulfill its true potential as one of

*Waterfront promenades have become well-loved destinations in other communities.*



the most diverse and lively public waterfronts in the nation—showcasing Biloxi’s rich traditions and history; many of its most attractive locations remain poorly connected to one another and impossible to experience as a network of compelling and distinctive destinations. By developing a grand waterfront promenade that encircles the peninsula and provides pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections, Biloxi could establish itself among the upper tier of notable

public waterfronts. Accomplishing such a goal will require a commitment to incorporating waterfront public access as an essential element in all new development projects and working with existing property owners where waterfront access is not provided to provide that access over time.

- **Open space.** East Biloxi contains several modest open spaces that serve the immediate recreational needs of existing neighborhoods. Yet it lacks a larger defining open space that could serve as a major civic focus for the peninsula. Creation of a “Central Park,” a distinctive landscape setting that incorporates areas for public recreation and entertainment, potentially including a minor-league ballpark, represents a potentially good use for flood-prone land. Such a space could also be combined through links to existing parks to create a new “green corridor” linking the Gulf to the Back Bay. It could also provide a location that brings together a set of museum and other cultural facilities, in the vicinity of the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum

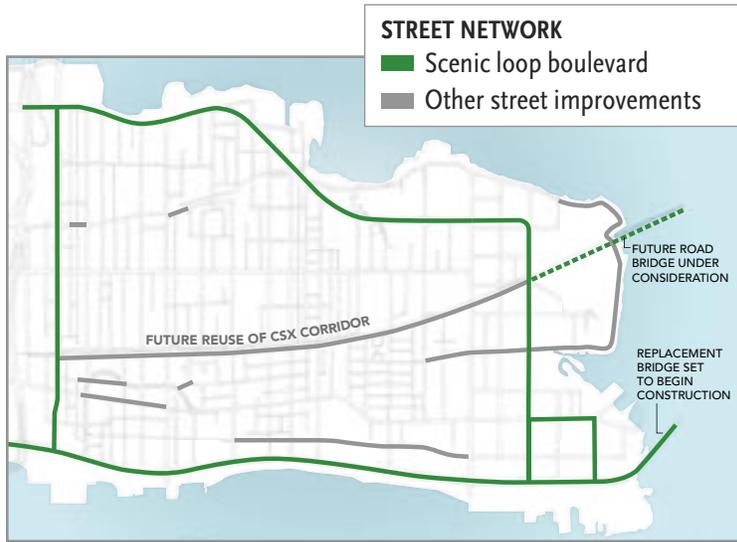


*A new “Central Park” can become a community-defining feature that encourages new residential and commercial development around it (Savannah Georgia).*

- **Scenic loop boulevard.** Establishment of a vehicular loop that links Beach Boulevard and Back Bay Boulevard to Caillavet Boulevard and the I-110 ramps is a transportation necessity in order to provide additional roadway capacity to serve existing and future development. Introducing this loop can also relieve congestion on Beach Boulevard, averting pressure to consider widening the boulevard beyond four lanes along the beachfront in East Biloxi, an important priority in preserving and enhancing the attractiveness of the beachfront. Lined with stately trees, this loop roadway should be envisioned as a scenic amenity that incorporates transit service as well as pedestrian and bicycle access. Development along the boulevard should be set back significantly from the roadway. Lower building elements, no taller than 40 to 60 feet, should line the boulevard, with taller elements set further back. This combination of setbacks and limitations on building heights directly

adjacent to the corridor—with taller buildings set back from the street—can will help create a unified look and feel that respects Biloxi’s historic scale and character while accommodating large-scale development.

- **Street network.** East Biloxi’s fine-grained block structure and street

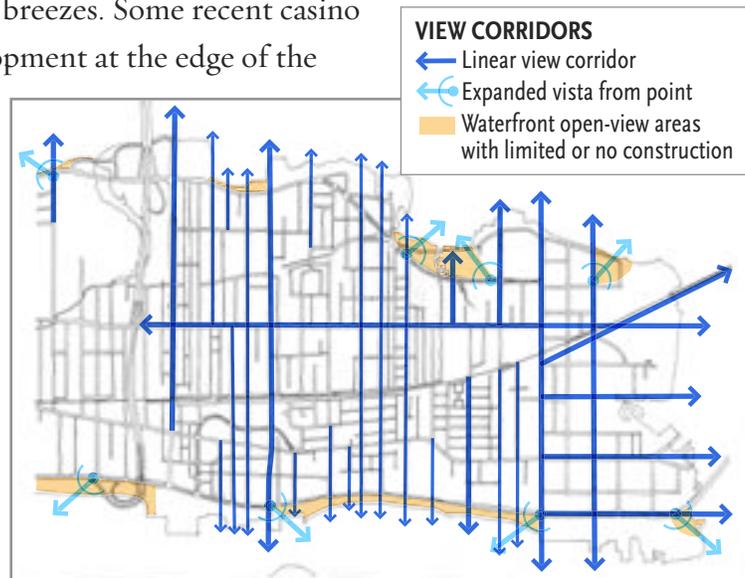


network represent an important community asset that contributes directly to the identity and livability of its neighborhoods. In some areas, links within this network have been broken or destroyed, reducing the inter-connectivity of neighborhoods. These links should be reestablished where possible, and new links should be forged. Enhanced connections between the residential street grid and the waterfront,

especially through former industrial or commercial properties now being redeveloped, present a significant opportunity.

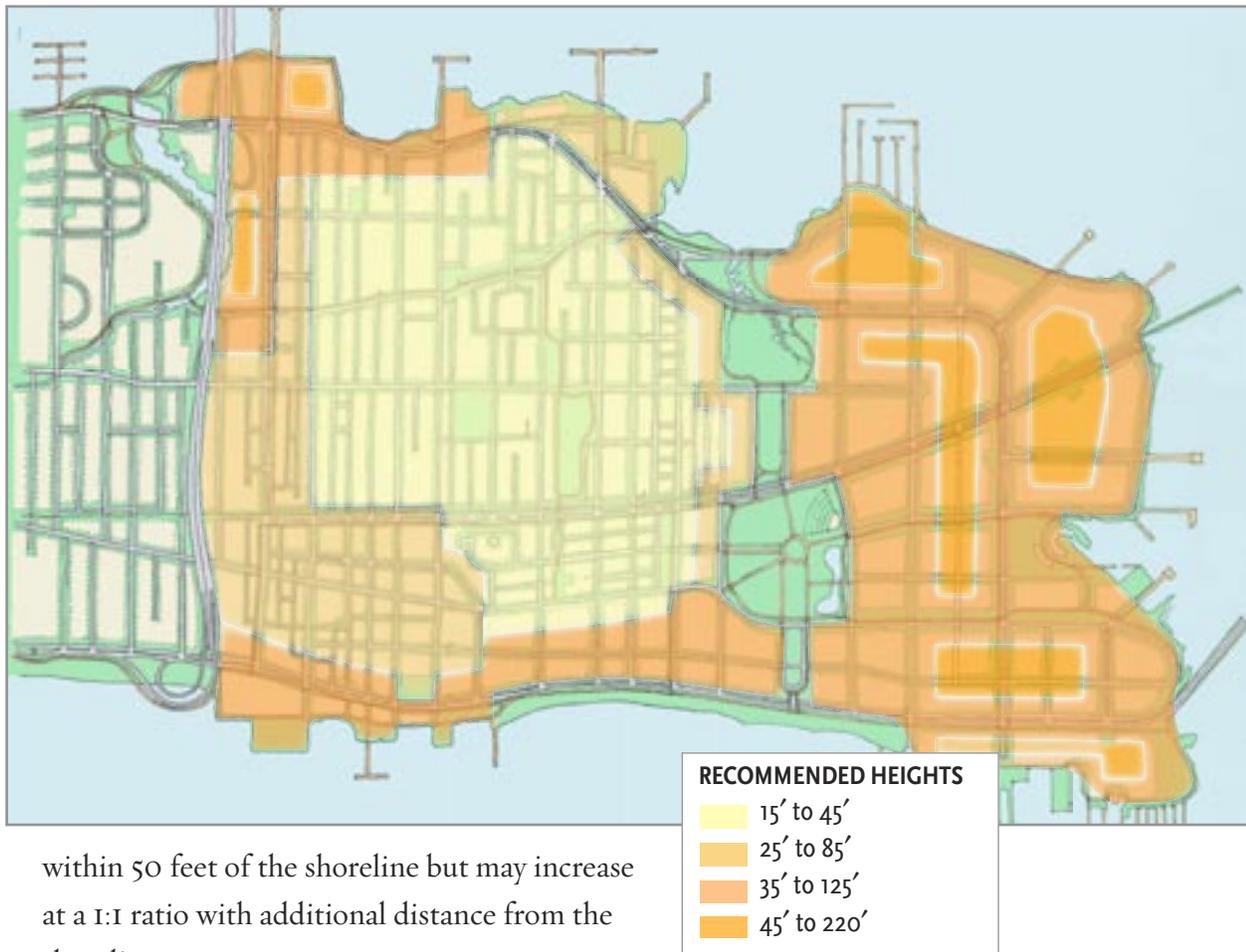
- **View corridors.** Many of the streets that make up the grid of East Biloxi lead to the waterfront, connecting the fabric of the city to the serene beauty of the Gulf and Back Bay. Vistas along these streets connect neighborhoods to the water, create views, and open the interior of the peninsula to sea breezes. Some recent casino and hotel development at the edge of the

waterfront has blocked these views and created a sense of the waterfront’s being walled off from the city’s downtown



and neighborhoods. Design for new waterfront development should ensure that these important view corridors to the water remain unblocked.

- **Heights.** In addition to the height recommendations shown on the map, new buildings along the waterfront should be limited to 35 feet in height



within 50 feet of the shoreline but may increase at a 1:I ratio with additional distance from the shoreline.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION AND INFILL AREA

The Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area covers roughly half of the land area of East Biloxi, characterized by single-family homes on small lots interspersed with the churches, community buildings, and small businesses that line major streets such as Division Street and Howard Avenue. While homes and other buildings sustained extensive storm damage, many structures remain relatively intact or have been repaired or reoccupied. Residents continue to work tirelessly to repair damage to properties, often

living on site in FEMA trailers as rebuilding moves slowly forward. Situated mostly on relatively high ground, this area did not suffer the widespread devastation visible in lower-lying areas.

The Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area broadly corresponds to the anticipated boundaries of the A and AE floodplain zones and some higher ground located outside the floodplain under the ABFEs issued by FEMA. Designing to these standards—involving elevation of existing structures—represents the best strategy for rebuilding in a way that reduces the risk of flood damage from future storms. Wherever possible, even prior to enactment of the new flood elevations by FEMA, new construction and rebuilding in this area should use the ABFEs as the standard for development. Rebuilding



*Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area*

to the new flood standards will elevate structures to different levels throughout the area but most new structures will not need to be raised more than seven feet above grade, and many areas will require even less elevation. This requirement will present a design challenge: raised structures will sit next to others situated at grade, creating a sense of visual discontinuity. Over time, however, as more structures are raised, the issue will diminish.

The Neighborhood Conservation and Infill Area presents an opportunity to rebuild in the image of Biloxi's traditional neighborhoods. Building designs should draw from traditional residential prototypes that have been success-

ful in East Biloxi, incorporating porches and other design elements that reflect the community's architectural heritage and social customs.



### Redevelopment

opportunities are not confined to the repair and rebuilding of structures damaged during the storm but can include redevelopment of formerly vacant lots or other commercial or residential properties that were underutilized prior to the storm. Many potential redevelopment sites are visible along Division Street, Howard Avenue, Main Street and comparable streets. Using this strategy, the number of residential properties can be increased above pre-Katrina level. New housing added within this area should generally reflect the modestly-scaled, traditional fabric of existing neighborhoods, reflecting the housing preferences of many East Biloxi residents. Housing types may include groupings of single-family homes, duplexes and townhouses—ranging in height from one to three stories. The HOPE VI development completed in this area already establishes a model for how sensitively designed new housing can be integrated into the fabric of the existing neighborhood.



*New infill residential development can be successfully woven into the fabric of the neighborhood on vacant and underutilized sites, expanding the number of housing units beyond pre-Katrina levels. Future structures should be elevated to provide enhanced flood protection.*

Several larger sites within the area—and directly adjacent to it across I-110—represent significant near- and medium-term opportunities to create new permanent housing. Three *catalyst sites* alone could establish momentum and accommodate approximately 750 housing units, almost one quarter of East Biloxi's pre-Katrina housing stock.

Key catalyst sites and the issues they present include:

- **Howard Avenue:** This city-owned ten-acre parcel, formerly occupied by a school facility, has the potential to accommodate 200 housing units—including senior housing—and a community center already being planned



**Howard Avenue:** This city-owned 10-acre parcel, formerly occupied by a school facility, has the potential to accommodate 150 to 200 housing units—including senior housing—and a community center already being planned by the City.

by the City of Biloxi. Among the possible uses for this center could be the proposed Family Resource Center, described elsewhere in this document. Design studies have been developed to evaluate the character and scale of housing that might be a good fit for this property at a very visible location on Howard Avenue, surrounded by some of the neighborhood's most notable older homes. The Howard Avenue frontage is the best location for multifamily

senior housing, with single-family development on the rear edges of the site, blending back into the surrounding fabric of single family homes. The existing community center site on the south side of Howard Avenue could also be incorporated within this redevelopment project. Building heights would generally be limited to three stories.

- **Harrison Court:** This 44-acre parcel on Benachi Avenue, owned by the Air Force, was once occupied by housing for Keesler personnel. In the wake of Katrina, the Air Force has decided not to rebuild housing here, opening the possibility of public acquisition of the property to accommodate a mixed-income housing development. Sitting on relatively higher ground

**Harrison Court:** Sitting on relatively higher ground than most of the area, this Air Force-owned parcel could accommodate up to 500 units of new housing as well as community facilities and open space built on a traditional neighborhood model.



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than most of the area, this parcel offers the potential to accommodate up to 500 units of new housing as well as community facilities and open space built on a traditional neighborhood model. Capturing this very significant development opportunity will require agreement of the Air Force and transfer of ownership of the property to a designated development entity.

- **North Main Street:** This area was designated an Urban Renewal Area in 1998, but no work has been undertaken to plan and implement a project. Given its status, it seems an appropriate site for developing an example of how to revitalize an area through a combination of repair, rebuilding and infill development. Initial analysis suggests that approximately 50 units could be provided on this site, combining both rehabilitation and new construction.

Redevelopment of these properties offers an opportunity to advance development of new mixed-income housing in East Biloxi, a potential model for other communities along the Gulf Coast, combining a mix of market-rate and affordable units, potentially both rental and ownership properties.

## CENTRAL REDEVELOPMENT AREA

The Central Redevelopment Area extends from Back Bay to Beach Boulevard, approximately between Holley and Dorries streets to the west and Oak Street to the east, making up approximately one fifth of the land area of East Biloxi. The pre-storm neighborhoods of small single-family homes throughout much of this area were completely destroyed or severely damaged, with only trees remaining; very limited rebuilding activity is underway in most parts of the area. Situated on low-lying ground, this area suffered devastating impacts from the storm, and continues to be very vulnerable to future flooding.

All of the Central Redevelopment Area falls within the 100-year floodplain in the FEMA ABFEs, and almost the entire area is likely to be classified as a VE (velocity zone), subject to “high-velocity wave actions” from storms, when final flood maps are issued. Rebuilding to the new flood standards will require that buildings be raised a minimum of 7–12 feet above grade in most parts of the area and higher in some locations. Areas beneath elevated

buildings will be required to remain free of obstructions; consequently, space below buildings will be limited to use as open space or for parking. In view of the high flooding hazard and the inherent difficulties of rebuilding single-



*Central Redevelopment Area*

family neighborhoods on a large scale in such areas, future development within the area should be different from the pattern that preceded the storm.

The Central Redevelopment Area has the potential to be redeveloped as an attractive, higher-density residential neighborhood built around a major new “Central Park” for East Biloxi, a signature

open space that serves as a community meeting ground and recreation area. New parkland can provide a very attractive setting for the development of new mixed-income housing around its edges, accommodating up to 2,000 new residential units in buildings ranging from approximately four to twelve stories, all served by elevators. Housing along the eastern edge of the park would range in height from four to six stories, with taller buildings set back from the park edge. Lower buildings limited to four stories could be accommodated on the western edge of the park.

Residential development along the edges of the park would be set back from the street to create a wide and attractive landscaped setback, limiting the visibility of parking located below buildings within the floodplain. This mix of parkland and larger residential buildings can lessen the vulnerability of property in the area to flood damage and can provide a transition between the lower-scale residential neighborhoods to the west and larger scale commercial development that is anticipated to the east. Establishment of a museum/cultural district between the park and Beach Boulevard—including the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum and potentially the Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum—could further enrich the character of the area and link the new parkland and the beachfront.

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This park should encompass at least 50 acres. In conjunction with existing parkland north of the CSX rail line, it would establish a green corridor linking the Back Bay and Gulf waterfronts. A minor-league baseball stadium with up to 5,000 seats could be accommodated as an attractive element of the large central park area, reinforcing the park as an important community destination. If determined to be feasible, such a facility could be a significant economic-development amenity, combining both local and tourism-driven participation.

The need to elevate housing significantly above grade and provide open ground levels that are free of obstructions other than building entries will require thoughtful and unconventional design solutions and the development of new building prototypes that respond to the area's unique conditions. This pattern of development will be combined with rebuilt single-family homes and commercial village centers.

## **WATERFRONT MIXED-USE AREA**

The Waterfront Mixed Use area extends from Oak Street to the eastern end of the peninsula. Before the storm, this area hosted a mix of casino development, industrial locations, marinas and residential areas. Larger casino buildings sustained significant storm damage, much of it associated with barges that supported gaming facilities. Many residential areas were almost entirely destroyed, and very limited rebuilding of homes has occurred.

All of the Waterfront Mixed Use Area falls within the 100-year floodplain in the FEMA ABFEs and almost the entire area is likely to be classified as a VE (velocity zone), subject to "high-velocity wave actions" from storms, when final flood maps are issued. Rebuilding to the new flood standards will require raising buildings a minimum of 10–15 feet above grade in most of the area and higher in some spots. New regulations will require land beneath elevated buildings to remain free of obstructions, so that space will be limited to open space or parking. In view of the high flooding hazard and the inherent difficulties of rebuilding single-family neighborhoods in such areas, future development within this area should depart from the pattern established before the storm.



*Waterfront  
Mixed-use Area*

This area provides the best setting for a major expansion of Biloxi’s tourism industry, including new gaming and entertainment venues, hotels, marinas and other waterfront-related uses. The area encompasses approximately one quarter of East Biloxi and could accommodate 250 acres of new development, approximately half of the potential growth of the industry within the region. The availability of well-located land to support

expansion of these uses represents a critical factor in tapping the growth potential of these uses as a central element of Biloxi’s economy.

A key aspect of development within this area will be efforts to provide enhanced access to the waterfront, creating a continuous public promenade at the water’s edge—serving pedestrians, bicyclists and others—that links marinas, open space, and new entertainment venues.

A new “scenic loop” boulevard along Pine and Myrtle streets will form the area’s spine, with transit service that connects to all of the city’s main

*Buildings would step down to the proposed loop boulevard to create a better transition between new development and the more modest scale of much of Biloxi.*



attractions. Higher-density development (up to approximately 220 feet high) is appropriate on either side of the loop boulevard, but buildings should step

down both to the street and the waterfront, with building elements directly on the boulevard limited to 40-60 feet in height. These lower heights along the boulevard—complemented by wide landscaped setbacks—can help to create a more appealing transition between larger new structures and the more modest scale and historic character of much of Biloxi.

## DOWNTOWN AREA

With its location on higher ground almost entirely outside the floodplain, downtown suffered less damage than other areas within the community. It is the one area of East Biloxi where new floodplain regulations will not play a major role in shaping the character of future development. Consequently, downtown represents the area of East Biloxi best suited to creation of a

*Downtown Area*

mixed-use environment, with active ground-level retail linked together by a streetscape of high quality. Efforts to strengthen connections between downtown and activities along the waterfront will also be important.



The Biloxi charrette conducted in October

2005 recognized the importance of downtown to Biloxi's overall vitality and advocated several strategies that remain directly relevant to efforts to enliven it:

- *Introduce housing* to provide an enhanced base of support for existing and future downtown businesses; include shops and offices.
- *Institute a "park once" system* to create shared public parking and reduce overall downtown parking needs.
- *Consider removing the existing loop road* and reestablishing the downtown grid as a means of enhancing connectivity and opening up additional land for development of new housing and other uses.

Downtown represents an excellent location for accommodating new residential and commercial growth identified by ERA in its market analysis. Its combination of commercial and residential growth with tourism potential will create a strong environment for attracting new specialty retailers and restaurants. Additional consideration should include identification of other attractions or cultural destination that could enhance downtown.

## COMMERCIAL MIXED-USE CORRIDOR

The Caillavet Boulevard corridor provides a potentially attractive location for attracting mixed-use commercial and residential development at moderately higher densities than surrounding neighborhoods. The boulevard will serve as an integral element of the transportation loop that encircles East Biloxi.

## SEAFOOD VILLAGE AREA

The seafood village can be an area that unites all aspects of Biloxi's seafood industry—expanded berthing space for shrimp boats, processing facilities, support facilities the supply fuel and ice, a seafood market, restaurants, and other attractions. This combination of working waterfront and tourism

*Seafood Village Area*



can highlight a unique aspect of Biloxi's history that continues to play an important role in its economy. New buildings in this area will need to be built above flood elevations but use of tents or other temporary structures offers the option of creating a unique environment and avoiding conflicts with flood regulations.

*The Seafood Village can create a lively visitor destination, enhancing the visibility and viability of Biloxi's seafood industry.*



## TRANSPORTATION

This section provides a brief summary of the East Biloxi Transportation Strategy and action plan incorporated in full as an appendix to this document. It offers an overview of the East Biloxi context and identifies

Focus	Strategy	Strategy Description
<b>City of Biloxi Initiatives</b>		
Biloxi Street Network	<b>Transportation Impact Analysis</b>	Prepare developer Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) requirements to go beyond traffic impacts and frontage mitigation, to include parking demand and pedestrian and transit connectivity and circulation.
	<b>System Development Charge</b>	Establish a System Development Charge or other mechanism to pool developer contributions and permit timely and orderly implementation of transportation improvements during this important redevelopment window.
	<b>CSX ROW Planning</b>	Plan for future CSX ROW that will preserve community character, relieve US 90, and convey bicycle and transit across the peninsula (recommend no larger than two-lanes with median).
	<b>Back Bay Blvd Arterial Loop</b>	Complete the planning, design, and construction of the Back Bay Boulevard loop with the connection to US 90 at Myrtle Street (Isle of Capri). Include pedestrian, bicycle and transit stop zones.
	<b>Division Street Extension</b>	Extend Division Street to meet Back Bay Boulevard.
Downtown Street Network	<b>North-South Collector Streets</b>	Establish well-spaced north-south connections (possibly Walker Street, Crawford Street and Holley Street) to orient traffic and pedestrian crossings to future signalized intersections and allow for traffic progression and speed management through signal timing.
	<b>Downtown Street Connections</b>	Re-establish key vehicular circulation to and through downtown beginning with two-way travel on Howard Street, and including strong north south links from the Multimodal Transfer Center across MLK and key access & gateway intersection improvements.
	<b>Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd Realignment</b>	Introduce on-street parking, adjacent street connections and related geometric improvements to MLK Blvd to improve intersection operations and safety, and to calm traffic.
Parking	<b>Parking Policy for New Development</b>	Establish parking policy for new development to set maximum parking rates, to require interface with transit, and to specifically address employee parking.
	<b>Surface Parking Mitigation</b>	Reduce and buffer surface parking impacts on primary pedestrian routes.
	<b>Downtown Parking Management</b>	Re-evaluate downtown parking supply management including restrictions to improve customer parking options and decisions.
	<b>Off-site Public Parking</b>	Identify new parking locations and/or improve existing parking facilities in the vicinity of I-110 portals to capture employee and day trip visitors with East Biloxi circulator option.

the values implicit in thinking about a future direction. Finally, this section summarizes specific program and project ideas that should be considered a starting point for further development by the City of Biloxi.

Short-term Action	Priority	Timeframe	Cost Range
Review TIA best practices and adopt approach best suited for Biloxi.	3	Immediate	\$25,000-50,000
Organize and provide technical support to a working committee that includes members of the development community to review options and determine approaches best suited for Biloxi.		6 months	\$50,000-100,000
Have GRPC multimodal study address ROW questions and public perceptions of ideas and opportunities for CSX ROW and adjacent public roadways.		6 months	City Staff
Initiate Back Bay Blvd design and implementation plans including coordination with MDOT for Myrtle Street intersection design. Timing should be coordinated with casino redevelopment.		18 months	\$500,000-900,000
Plan as part of Back Bay extension.		18 months	
Prepare a circulation plan for East Biloxi to identify arterial/boulevard and collector/avenue roadway hierarchy to guide driveway orientation for mixed use & entertainment development as part of East Biloxi's concept development. Continue public involvement.		6 months	\$50,000-100,000
Prepare a downtown focused circulation plan to improve circulation, parking, delivery and strolling.		18 months	\$50,000-100,000
Evaluate feasibility of concepts to improve circulation downtown and prepare schematic designs with community/business owner/property owner involvement.		18 months	\$100,000-150,000
As part of TIA process above, consider best practices and Biloxi context to establish policy and regulations.		6 months	\$50,000-100,000
Identify the key pedestrian spines downtown to provide guidance during site plan review.		18 months	Included in Downtown Street Connections
Work with property and business owners to revise parking policies to target supply to preferred users.		18 months	\$20,000-50,000
Review public parking needs and appropriate locations for overflow and off-site parking		18 months	\$50,000-\$100,000

Focus	Strategy	Strategy Description
<b>City of Biloxi Initiatives</b>		
Pedestrian and Bicycle Network	<b>Continuous Waterfront Promenade</b>	Plan for a continuous waterfront pedestrian promenade and bicycle route free of barriers and major detours.
	<b>Pedestrian Scale Blocks</b>	Preserve and reinforce the block structure, particularly between important pedestrian destinations.
	<b>Bicycle Circulation Network</b>	Provide bicycle parking in commercial, employment and civic areas and add signing and lane markings on arterial functioning streets as part of a comprehensive bicycle system.
	<b>US 90 Intersection Spacing</b>	Develop regularly spaced signalized intersections along US 90 to provide safe pedestrian crossings to the waterfront promenade and casinos.
	<b>CSX Service Road Bicycle Route</b>	Bridge the missing links along the CSX sideroads to create a continuous low-speed bicycle-friendly service road for internal travel.
<b>MDOT Initiatives</b>		
Regional Access	<b>Biloxi-Ocean Springs Bridge Design</b>	Ensure that the design details of the BOS bridge produce an attractive gateway to the City, limit pressure to widen US 90 in the future and support an attractive auto/pedestrian link under bridge approaches for uninterrupted public access to Cadet Point.
	<b>CSX Crossing Safety</b>	Improve safety at CSX grade crossings.
	<b>I-110 Corridor Study</b>	Distribute traffic among the three existing I-110 interchanges in Biloxi with improved directional signs & Intelligent Transportation System technology and provide safety improvements to interchanges at Division Street & Bayview Avenue/Back Bay Boulevard.
	<b>East Harrison Co Connector</b>	USSR 90 and I-10 west of Biloxi to permit project to move to the next phase.

Short-term Action	Priority	Timeframe	Cost Range
Prepare a feasibility plan evaluating potential for sea wall side improvements on US 90, opportunity areas along cleared areas of Cadet Point & Seafood Village, and requirements for continuous paths through private development.		6 months	\$50,000-\$100,000
Prepare more detailed concept development that establishes pedestrian scaled blocks and linkages.		18 months	Included in urban design plan
Prepare City-wide bicycle policy for adding bicycle accommodation and amenities to all City and private projects and update current project plans.		18 months	\$20,000-80,000
With public participation, continue concept development to locate most appropriate collector network, particularly for north-south orientation between Back Bay Boulevard and US 90.		18 months	Included in North-South Collector Streets
Evaluate CSX side road connections for possible improvements.		18 months	\$20,000-50,000
Arrange a schedule for regular design review meetings with MDOT project manager. Obtain architectural/engineering assistance to aid City leadership and participate in BOS bridge design decisions.	1	<b>Immediate</b>	\$50,000-100,000
Organize with coastal communities through GRPC to have safety improvements designed and funded.	2	<b>Immediate</b>	City Staff
Engage in upcoming MDOT Corridor Study to identify goals and needs.		6 months	\$50,000-100,000
Resolve any outstanding East Harrison County Connector alignment issues to support that most favorable to City interests.		6 months	City Staff

Focus	Strategy	Strategy Description
<b>GRPC Initiatives</b>		
Regional Transportation Planning	Regional Transportation Model	Establish a future transportation model and identify transportation improvements needed to support the expected growth.
	CSX Passenger Rail	Investigate use of CSX track to reestablish Amtrak service and potential for long term plans for DMX type commuter rail.
<b>CTA Initiatives</b>		
Transit Service, Incentives, and Amenities	<b>Regional Transit Development Plan</b>	Provide input into the FTA Transit Development Plan so that it fits with local goals and values.
	<b>Transit Incentives</b>	Target marketing and employee/customer incentive programs that encourage transit use
	<b>East Biloxi Circulator</b>	Plan and implement special services such as a Casino Circulator with attractive comfortable transit vehicles, waiting areas, and customer information to project a positive image of transit.
	<b>Transit Amenities</b>	Make improvements such as real-time arrival information, low floor vehicles, and shelters in response to user desires.

Short-term Action	Priority	Timeframe	Cost Range
Use GRPC model results (due in July) to develop a multimodal improvement plan to support desired growth pattern	4	Immediate	\$200,000-400,000
Investigate Amtrak return of service and agreements with CSX for alternate service as part of GRPC Transit Study		18 months	City Staff
Assign City representative to advise and advocate for more and better transit options available to residents, employees and tourists in Biloxi.		6 months	Volunteer or City Staff
Assist CTA in efforts to work with major employers and resorts to identify user travel patterns		6 months	City Staff or Public Official
Assist with obtaining any needed ROW and/or permits for waiting areas at optimal locations, establish development review procedures that include transit access and pick up locations.		18 months	\$50,000-75,000
Provide option for developer traffic impact mitigation that includes transit upgrades such as these.		18 months	Included in System Development Charge



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# Recommendations

**B**iloxi is on the brink of vast economic expansion, led by the gaming and resort industries. The current 4,000 hotel rooms are predicted to grow to 12,000 by 2010 and potentially reach 30,000.

It is clear that East Biloxi can expect economic growth unlike any it has experienced in both scale and pace. The main objective of the recommendations that follow is to *harness that growth to provide the greatest benefit to local residents*. On one hand this means creating a climate of incentives for the tourist and gaming industry; on the other, it means preserving—and, where necessary, reviving—East Biloxi’s distinctive heritage.

It is local residents who have the roots, history, and long-term investment in Biloxi, and who sacrificed everything to Katrina. Biloxi residents returning to their jobs and businesses must have permanent homes. Expansion of the tourist industry means an even larger workforce will seek homes in reasonable proximity to new job sites.

Decisions and commitments made now by the City of Biloxi will resonate far into the future. Objective, independent analysis of market trends confirms that economic stability is within Biloxi’s grasp. There is a clear opportunity to plan for and shape success in this city. Starting with East Biloxi, there can emerge a locality that is both a leading resort destination *and* a thriving, economically diverse residential community. Done right, Biloxi’s recovery will make history.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 Understand and support the nature and scale of impending economic development.

- *The gaming and entertainment industries will power growth.* Just before Hurricane Katrina, Biloxi was a rising star among American tourist destinations: gaming revenues were climbing, developers were lining up with new proposals, and, as reflected by the hotel industry's steady growth, visitors were traveling farther to stay longer. With more than 48 million Americans living within a two-hour plane ride of the Gulf Coast, Biloxi sat poised to enter the major leagues of American resort towns.

Biloxi's tourism sector has shown impressive resilience in spite of Katrina. A study conducted by Economics Research Associates (ERA) demonstrates that the gaming industry, in particular, has led Biloxi's economic revival, with gaming revenues now at two-thirds of their pre-Katrina level.

ERA predicts that Mississippi's casino-related laws—together with the eagerness of major developers to build large, destination-style attractions—will incite rapid growth in East Biloxi's gaming and resort market. A conservative projection puts Biloxi's gaming revenues at \$1.4 billion in 2009, with twelve casinos supporting 12,000 casino hotel rooms, 300 acres of site development, and 16,000 jobs. If key projects already in development continue as planned, the gaming industry will likely grow even more rapidly, with up to 17 casinos generating over 30,000 hotel rooms, 600 acres of site development, and 25,000 jobs.

- *The return of the shrimping industry is vital to recovery,* in part because it is an element of the traditional social and economic character that East Biloxi relies upon to distinguish itself from other destinations. The establishment of a "Seafood Village"—an area that brings together berthing space for shrimp boats, processing facilities, a seafood market, and restaurants—would contribute to this goal. This development would

need to be constructed above flood elevations. Potential solutions include locating restaurants in tents or other temporary structures that would create an interesting environment while complying with flood regulations.

## 2 Shepherd growth.

- *Put a road map in place.* Following public review and discussion, the City Council should formally adopt in principle the Planning Framework described in this report. With that action, the vision for the rebuilding of East Biloxi would become a standard to guide subsequent individual development proposals. The Planning Framework should rest on the following foundation:
  - > *A new tourism, entertainment, and gaming district of national stature* located at the eastern end of the peninsula, incorporating approximately 250 acres of land and dedicated to accommodating expansion of the city's major growth industry.
  - > *An expansion of East Biloxi's housing stock* from its pre-Katrina level of 3,500 units to more than 5,500 units, including single-family houses, townhouses, and multifamily units built on designs sympathetic to the city's historic architecture. New lower-density housing would be incorporated into the fabric of existing neighborhoods on less flood-prone higher ground. Mid-rise and higher-density housing would be built around new parks and along the waterfront. Housing would be targeted to serve residents at every income level.
  - > *A vital, attractive downtown*—incorporating new housing and cultural attractions—that serves as a destination for visitors and a center of community life.
  - > *A seafood village, a new destination on the Back Bay waterfront* that combines berthing space for the commercial fishing fleet, seafood restaurants and retailers, and commercial processing space.
  - > *A great public waterfront with access all along the water's edge.* This great promenade and bikeway should link the city's diverse waterfront destinations, providing residents and visitors with access to the city's defining asset.
  - > *A new "central park" at the heart of the peninsula* that becomes part of a network of open spaces linking the Back Bay and Gulf waterfronts. Located on low-lying land that is vulnerable to flooding, this signature community

destination will provide an enhanced setting for new housing and commercial buildings.

>*A continuous “loop” boulevard that links East Biloxi’s major destinations to the regional transportation network, enhancing transportation capacity and serving as a visual amenity—inspired by the landscaped beauty of Beach Boulevard, with its stately trees, generous setbacks and views of the water. Additional transportation improvements will support growth while protecting the integrity of new and rebuilt neighborhoods.*

>*New development that is sympathetic to Biloxi’s character and heritage and builds on its architectural traditions—shaped by enhanced regulatory tools and design guidelines.*

>*An overall approach to land use that mitigates the potential for future flood damage.*

Concentrate more fragile single-family houses on higher ground, and locate open space and more robust structures on low-lying land and close to the water.

- *Establish an Advisory Board to serve as a resource to the Mayor and City Council to maximize the lessons learned from the work in East Biloxi for the benefit of the rest of the city. This body could serve as the next generation for the work of the Reviving the Renaissance Committee. It might be called *Renaissance 2010*, suggesting both the *ongoing rebuilding process and a sense of urgency with respect to timely implementation.**
- *Implement the East Biloxi Transportation Strategy.* East Biloxi residents don’t have to choose between livable neighborhoods and economic opportunity. With comprehensive planning, the City can accommodate the increased traffic brought on by tourism while preserving Biloxi’s residential heart. The plan includes guidelines for street-design, resource management, and strategic partnerships between state and local agencies.

### **3 Strengthen the City’s tools for managing development**

The City has in place a workable system for processing and reviewing new development proposals. There are opportunities to strengthen the system, to provide greater predictability for developers and greater ability for the city to protect its longer-term interests.

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- *The City Council should modify the existing Land Development Ordinance and associated design review process* to strengthen design guidelines and associated review procedures, committing to design excellence as a goal of every new development or public project, and incorporating requirements for the provision of affordable units in all residential developments, or payments in lieu of such provision to assist in supporting the cost of other developments that provide affordable units.
  
  - *Establish and fund a mechanism for acquiring land from willing sellers*, either outright or with the stipulation that the seller may reside in a new development on the property. The proposed system could also provide for pooling of land by abutting property owners or other owners with a common interest. The pace of residential redevelopment in the most severely damaged sections of East Biloxi has been very slow over the last year in dramatic contrast to the aggressive rebuilding effort underway in many of Biloxi's large casino projects. The slow pace reflects uncertainty about the future and the absence of a clear plan and vision for the area, financial constraints for the large number of owners of small properties, and the challenges associated with redevelopment under anticipated new flood elevations. Other cities have successfully accelerated development in distressed communities; some case studies of these initiatives appear in the appendix to this report.
  
  - *Formally designate the Central Redevelopment Area—described in the Planning Framework section—as an urban renewal area.* Existing conditions, limitations on the nature of physical development and the scope of potential uses in this area indicate the need for a comprehensive approach to rebuilding in this area. Establishing a public redevelopment entity will provide the City the ability to manage the redevelopment process in accordance with a publicly adopted plan and provide the predictability that developers will need.
    - > *Establish boundaries of the redevelopment area and prepare a master plan to guide redevelopment.* The master plan would define the nature of planned development, associated infrastructure, and open space.
  
  - *Establish clear and specific guidelines for the limited use of eminent domain powers in conjunction with rebuilding and redevelopment activity.* Community

leaders have been reluctant to consider eminent domain as a tool for advancing redevelopment. This reluctance is understandable yet the limited use of eminent domain can be a very important tool in assisting redevelopment efforts that have widespread public support. We do not recommend sweeping and undefined use of this power. In certain locations, however, and within precise criteria written to protect the rights of existing owners, eminent domain becomes an important tool for directing development in concert with the proposed Planning Framework.

- Linked to the incentives for development, *put in place a provision for including affordable units in all residential development proposals*. Incentives should aim to support a minimum of 20% of units developed as affordable. Developers could either incorporate these units as a component of a project or make a contribution to a Housing Trust Fund, at a level to be established, to support affordable housing developed at another location. The trust fund can play a key role in bringing order and predictability to the provision of subsidies for developing housing that is accessible to occupants across a range of incomes. Living Cities is prepared to continue its commitment to the City by providing the technical support needed to develop this concept in detail.
- *Use density bonuses and other incentives to promote affordable housing as a component of new market-rate developments*. The availability of affordable housing to meet the needs of current residents is a key issue for the East Biloxi community. An incentive program to support affordable development would ensure that the supply of affordable housing grows as East Biloxi grows. The City should consider a variety of incentives, including density bonuses for incorporation of affordable units, in conjunction with major new developments.

#### **4 Make affordable housing a cornerstone of economic recovery.**

A gaming industry that produces 25,000 jobs in a city at the forefront of American economic development will create an urgent demand for housing at all cost levels. Clearly not all of the workforce-housing need can be met in East Biloxi. Indeed, some of the provisions for affordable housing recommended here for

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East Biloxi could be applied profitably to the rest of Biloxi and the region. The measures that follow would ensure that all residents of East Biloxi—whether casino employees, families stationed at Keesler Air Force Base, or retirees—will have a place worth coming home to. True success for Biloxi will mean restoring economic vitality while creating expanded housing choices throughout the city.

- *Establish a program that combines HOME, CDBG, Section 8, and private grant funds for homeowners and small developers seeking to rehabilitate existing housing.* In addition, support efforts of homeowners in the Neighborhood Conservation Area (as described in the Planning Framework section of this document) to repair and return to their homes, with additional funding made available through the use of CDBG funds. This program could be linked to the introduction of the proposed Housing Trust fund.
- *Initiate a large-scale housing development program under public leadership.* Development of at least 700 mixed market-rate and affordable units on key publicly owned parcels over the next 18 months would serve as a model for regional redevelopment efforts and as a catalyst for wider investment in East Biloxi. The Biloxi Housing Authority (BHA) can play a major role in this effort. The authority has experience working with private developers to create affordable housing. Further, it has access to federal subsidies and below-market-rate funds that are needed to create successful mixed-income housing.
- Three sites represent particularly significant near-term development opportunities:
  - > *Howard Avenue.* Redevelop this city-owned, ten-acre property in conjunction with a new community center to accommodate 150–200 units of housing.
  - > *Harrison Court.* Redeveloping this Air Force-owned 44-acre property on Benachi Avenue would require land transfer from the USAF, but if such a transaction could be accomplished quickly this property could accommodate over 500 new residential units and serve as a strong catalyst for East Biloxi redevelopment. There is an immediate need for a formal exploration of the feasibility, timing, and conditions associated with such a transfer.
  - > *North Main Street Urban Renewal Area.* The existing designation of this area presents an opportunity to create a pilot project that showcases the effectiveness of combining repair, rebuilding, and small-scale infill. The site has the potential to accommodate approximately 50 new units.

An additional 900 residential units are already moving through the East Biloxi permitting process. The City should assist these developers in their good-faith efforts to allocate 20% of the new units to households with incomes at or below 60% of the area's median.

The City will need to establish formal standards around the meaning of the term affordable for the purpose of housing development. Incorporation of units that serve households at or below 80% of the area's median income could make developers eligible for favorable financing for these units. The availability of well-located affordable units is an important factor for employers considering opening new facilities or expanding existing operations within the region.

## **5 Integrate programs and services and provide resources for resident recovery**

Building on the recommendations of the Nongovernmental Organizations Subcommittee, this reports proposes an important first step toward meeting the immediate housing needs of residents, creating follow-on opportunities to meet other non-housing needs, and helping existing service agencies to better coordinate their work in East Biloxi.

- *Secure long-term funding commitments necessary to support a Family Resource Center in East Biloxi, offering services, support, information, and opportunities in four areas: housing assistance, family self-sufficiency support, small business assistance, and redevelopment information.*

## **6 Moving forward**

Initial implementation must balance two realities. First, there is an urgent need for prompt action to respond to the immediate needs of East Biloxi residents. The proposed Family Resource Center is the key element in this strategy. The two early-action housing development initiatives are also important, and they reflect a second reality: that realizing such projects will

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take time (and fully rebuilding East Biloxi will take years). To turn the long-term vision into reality, the City's leadership will need to settle on steps to ensure that the future Biloxi will meet citizens' expectations for a city that balances economic vigor with fidelity to the community's cultural and historic roots.

The recommendations above constitute a limited but ambitious set of actions based on the proposals in this report, but it is unrealistic to expect that the City can undertake all at once. In this section we identify a more focused set of actions that we believe will establish a strong foundation for moving forward in a manner consistent with the scale and pace of the larger rebuilding agenda.

- > **Formally adopt the land-use Planning Framework.** Following public review, the land-use Planning Framework should be formally presented to the City Council for adoption in principle. This action will eliminate any uncertainty about the City's commitment to a positive and creative rebuilding program.
  
- **Strengthen the city's regulations and review procedures.** Satisfactory systems for reviewing development proposals exist, but they will need strengthening. Once the Planning Framework is in place, work should begin promptly to determine what changes will better equip the city to manage both rebuilding of existing stock and new construction in a timely fashion and in a way that reflects the overall community vision. The scale and pace of the work will require that the City streamline these procedures and add personnel.
  
- **Put needed tools in place.** Along with the review process suggested above, an assessment should begin immediately to determine the best way to fund and put in place a mechanism for receiving land from willing sellers and assembling parcels for new development. Similarly, the City should begin devising a mechanism for holding in trust funds made available to help fill gaps in the financing of affordable housing.

- **Pursue and confirm essential funding commitments.** Adopting the land-use Planning Framework will send an important signal to potential funders that their investments will be used effectively under a unified approach to the rebuilding of East Biloxi. Living Cities has secured funding and strong expressions of interest from national organizations, but continuing outreach and cultivation of interested investors is needed. Living Cities will work with the Mayor's office to transfer this information and build capacity in the office to pursue this work on a permanent basis.
- **Open the Family Resource Center.** The Resource Center offers the promise of a coordinated response to the most pressing concerns of East

Words to guide the rebuilding effort:

- Outreach
- Marketing
- Leverage
- Transparency
- Accountability

Biloxi residents, as well as an opportunity to establish a permanent resource to help residents achieve greater economic independence. The City should begin by holding discussions with service providers to determine how best to capitalize on existing structures. Given the strength and experience of groups already on the ground, it would be far more useful to build on what exists than to add yet another player. The goal should be coordination of private and public services to avoid duplication and to gain maximum leverage from the dollars that are committed.

- > **Take advantage of the experience and capabilities of the Biloxi Housing Authority to move forward with housing activities.** Experienced and interested, the BHA should use available tools, financing programs and technical assistance for capacity building to play a stronger role in building new mixed-income housing and coordinating efforts to repair and rebuild existing housing. The agency should be asked to prepare within 60 days a) a plan for developing the two early-action sites identified in this report and, b) through discussions with other housing organizations, an outline of its approach to coordinating reconstruction efforts in the Neighborhood Conservation Area. No housing authority

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in the nation has been asked to take on a task of such magnitude in such urgent circumstances. It is worth noting again that scale and pace will require stronger management systems, enhanced financing mechanisms, and added personnel. Since Katrina, the strain on existing staff has been severe. The immediate challenge of meeting the day-to-day workload is now complicated by a stream of new development proposals. As the development pipeline continues to fill, the need for additional staff in both areas will become even more critical.

- > **Review the plan with state officials.** The city should promptly schedule a briefing for state officials to discuss this report and related needs for financial support. In particular, this step should include the uses for CDBG funding identified in the report. The demands of scale and pace require predictability and efficiency in the use of public resources. The goal should be for Biloxi and the State to have a unified strategy, with coordinated messages, for outreach to both federal funders and private investors.
  
- > **Learn from the relevant experience of other cities.** There is no single way to manage rebuilding and development on the scale and under the time pressure facing Biloxi. Other cities in similar situations, however, have developed effective management systems, and it makes sense for Biloxi to learn about these approaches as a way to design a better system for itself. One immediately available resource is The Mayors' Institute on City Design, which has expressed interest in bringing to Biloxi a group of mayors and their senior staff to share their experiences and offer specific examples of how they addressed design and development challenges in their communities. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has also expressed interest in helping; it could provide assistance in the revitalization of the downtown through its Main Street program.

Prompt action on this list will provide strong confirmation of the city's intention to protect the interests of its citizens and its long-term future. Responsibility for some the most critical steps clearly rests with the City. Living Cities stands ready to assist in providing the technical support the City will need to complete these first steps.



# Living Cities

**L**iving Cities: The National Community Development Initiative is a unique investment collaborative of major foundations, financial institutions, and government agencies committed to improving the vitality of cities and urban neighborhoods, creating opportunities for prosperity in a changing global economy.

Since 1991, Living Cities has invested \$374 million in the work of community development corporations, leveraging \$14.3 billion of additional private and public funds through two intermediary organizations, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and The Enterprise Foundation.



Living Cities' investments are used by community-based organizations to build new homes, retail stores, schools, and community facilities for daycare, health care and job training in communities across the country. A major goal of Living Cities is to help build local skills and expertise by increasing the capacity of community-based organizations and their leaders.

Living Cities uses the lessons of its work to engage in national policy development. The organization also supports research, analysis, and innovation to understand the results of its investments, learn what is working, and develop new ideas and mechanisms that build on the successes in the community development field.

Living Cities invests in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus (Ohio), Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Portland (Oregon), San Antonio, San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

At the invitation of Mayor Holloway, Living Cities has assembled a team of consultants with diverse experience in planning for the rebuilding of urban neighborhoods. By the end of July, the Living Cities team will prepare an action plan and investment strategy to guide the rebuilding of East Biloxi, the area west of the I-110 connector.

Investment partners in Living Cities include AXA Community Investment Program, Bank of America, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Deutsche Bank, Fannie Mae Foundation, The Ford Foundation, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Prudential Financial, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

For more information about Living Cities, visit [www.livingcities.org](http://www.livingcities.org) or contact Reese Fayde, Chief Executive Officer, at 646-442-2201 or [fayde@livingcities.org](mailto:fayde@livingcities.org).

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