

- These trees will be ready for planting in October and/or November.
- > The process of becoming a non-profit foundation has been started.

APPENDIX B

East Biloxi Community Center Expansion

(from the Small Business Committee)

As a redevelopment tool for downtown and East Biloxi, the new community center that is being planned and considered should serve several purposes in a multi-story facility. The facility would be located on the Dukate school site on Howard Avenue.

Ground level / 1st floor

A community center similar to the layout currently found on Howard Avenue would be the main use of the 1st floor. This facility would be used for Mardi Gras balls, city events, weddings, meetings, fundraisers, etc. The space would have a large open floor with a stage and other necessary amenities including restrooms, office space, dressing rooms, etc. A covered portico would provide protection from the weather when dropping of guests for weddings or school children for tours and field trips.

In addition to the community center space, rental retail space could take advantage of the storefront façade and traffic of Howard Avenue. Several rental spaces would be available for businesses that could also serve as vendors to the activities held at the community center. A restaurant that served meals during the week could serve as the caterer to a wedding held on the weekend. A kitchen would still need to be place in the center for other caterers to use. A florist, gift shop, business services store (like UPS store or Kinkos) would create traffic during the day when the community center might not have much activity.

Second floor

The second level would serve as viewing and seating for the community center similar to the current facility. Also, large dressing rooms could be used as meeting rooms or classroom space depending on the event.

Third & fourth floors

These floors (and more if space is needed) would house the Main Branch of the Biloxi Library. The downtown branch was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina. Prior to Katrina, the HVAC and the roof both were not working very well. This would free up space in downtown Biloxi for other uses.

An elevator in the lobby would access the library floors. The books and resources would be out of harm's way from floodwaters. The library could have windows looking out over downtown Biloxi. The library would be closer to residents to use and parking would be much more accessible.

Classrooms or meeting rooms might be available for groups to meet or seminars and training to be held. A computer lab could be used for research as well as for training session on various software programs. A small business library could be included for research for existing and potential entrepreneurs.

Other ideas

A top floor might feature a rooftop garden with a covered patio space to be rented for events / parties / weddings. Restrooms and a small facility for storage / catering might be included. Why have an empty roof when you can make all your space useable (and revenue generating)?

Advantages

You would have a facility that could be utilized all day long with various activities and visitors for various tenants in the building. All

would share the parking lot. Revenues could be generated from the retail and the rooftop rental as well as the community center rental. You can replace the damaged library closer to the residents that use it and free up the limited parking downtown. You could replace the library facility with something more conducive to downtown. With the library on the upper floors, you protect the resources from flooding waters and you gain a great view of downtown Biloxi.

Cost & Timeline

I have no idea what the cost would be on such a facility. I know the Donal Snyder Community Center cost over \$10 million to complete, so I suspect this facility could be double that amount. The City of Biloxi was planning on building a new community center prior to Katrina, so funding may already be allocated for a portion of the project. I would assume there would be some insurance proceeds to cover the damage to the library. Other possible funding sources include HUD and Community Development Block Grant. There may be grant funds available through foundations for library facilities, inventory, resources, equipment and literacy programs.

I feel the timeline could be a few years from design of the facility to construction to the ribbon cutting.