

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Andrew Gilich
Jerry Creel, Director of Community Development
Eric Nolan, Arborist
All Members of the City Council
Mike Leonard, CAO

From: City of Biloxi Tree Committee
Carroll Campbell, Chair
Matt Dubaz, Vice-Chair
Tracy Wyman, Secretary
Robin Rodolfich
Mary Kinney
James "Bernie" Marinovich
Juli Bocek

Date: March 23, 2018

Re: Recommendations Regarding the Proposed Pedestrian Walkway at the Santa Maria site and Biloxi Small Craft Harbor

On March 22, 2018, Tree Committee members Robin Rodolfich, Bernie Marinovich, Tracy Wyman and Carroll Campbell met with City Arborist Eric Nolan at the site of the proposed pedestrian walkway traversing Highway 90 from the Santa Maria site to the World War II Memorial at the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor. After reviewing this proposal and examining the site with Eric, the Tree Committee finds as follows:

Pedestrian walkways are highly desirable in urban settings, and we strongly encourage their construction in Biloxi. This effort to improve pedestrian access to City sites is very much appreciated. However, in this instance we find procedural issues as well as substantive problems in terms of tree conservation:

- 1) This proposal was not submitted to the Development Review Committee, as city code requires. The revised proposal must be submitted for review by DRC and by the Tree Committee according to procedure established in the Biloxi Land Development Ordinance.
- 2) The northern stairwell is well positioned and does not impact specimen trees. However, the site plan shows the southern stairwell without reference to the canopy of the healthy specimen live oak tree directly south of its proposed position, which would be severely impacted by the structure. According to Eric, three leaders and one 8' limb would have to be removed in order for the stairwell to be situated

as shown. The stairwell would also have to be built directly over the root system, which will unacceptably impact this large and well-established high-value tree.

- 3) In light of the problems, we propose the following three options for a revised site plan:
- a. Relocate the pedestrian walkway well to the west, with a north stairwell on the Biloxi Town Green and a south stairwell at the Hard Rock parking garage. This will benefit the Hard Rock, facilitating visits by visitors' center patrons to the casino. It will also benefit the City, as visitors parking at the Hard Rock will be able to easily cross and visit the town green and downtown area where they can spend time at our local restaurants, see our downtown historic sites, or enjoy festivals.
 - b. Shift the south stairwell to the west and situate it in the three northeast parking spaces just north of the World War II Memorial. Pedestrians will exit the stairwell directly north of the Memorial.
 - c. The south stairwell can be shifted slightly to the east so that it is outside the area of the canopy and root system of the healthy live oak yet is still at a workable angle for the walkway. There is an unhealthy live oak to the east, but we are less concerned about impacts to this tree because of its obvious decline. The City must, however, perform mitigation for this tree if it is destroyed, as it is still alive. There is ample room at the World War II Memorial environs for mitigation at the current required ratio of three to one. Tree Committee requests mitigation with live oak (*quercus virginiana*) or magnolias (*magnolia grandiflora*).