

**DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Jerry Creel, Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Development Department is the city department charged with overseeing orderly growth and development in the City of Biloxi. The divisions that comprise this department include: Economic Development, Planning, Zoning, Building Permits and Inspections, Code Enforcement, Floodplain Management, CRS, Stormwater Management, Business Licensing, Historic Preservation, Tree Preservation, and Cultural Affairs (The Biloxi Visitors Center, Mardi Gras Museum, The Old Brick House, Civic Center and Library). There are currently 30 full-time employees, and 1 part-time, within the department.

In 2019, the City of Biloxi experienced Commercial and Residential growth throughout the city, including a number of new commercial construction projects, renovations of blighted structures, single family residential homes, and improvements to the services we provide. Our Comprehensive Plan, and Land Development Ordinance, along with our customer friendly environment, continues to create a positive climate for encouraging economic growth and development.

Economic Development Projects

Year 2019 experienced the completion of a number of new Commercial Construction Projects. As a result, Certificates of Occupancy were issued for the new Hilton Garden Inn Hotel, the new City of Biloxi Fire Station #10, the new Brick and Spoon restaurant located near Edgewater Mall, along with the new Kay Jewelers and the new Verizon Wireless store, the newly constructed Solid Rock Baptist Church, a

new Waffle House on Beach Boulevard, Dr. Frigo's new Orthodontics office, the new Tubb Insurance Agency in Woolmarket, 21 new pads to the existing Gulf Beach RV Resort RV, The Sugar Factory inside of Hard Rock Casino, the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art – Pod W, the conversion of the old Walmart into a Climate Control Warehouse with Boat and RV storage, the re-location of Knight Abbey to Edgewater Village, the new Biloxi Small Craft Harbor Pedestrian Overpass, the new MGM Pedestrian Overpass, and the new Mike Frtiz Mixed Use Development on Croesus Street.

New Construction Commercial Projects that were issued permits in 2019, and are currently still under construction include, the new Main Branch of Community Bank located at the corner of Lameuse Street and Howard Avenue scheduled to open in December 2020, the new Margaritaville Amusement Park and Parking Garage projected to open in Spring of 2021, a new Performing Arts Center for Biloxi Public Schools, the new Gulf Coast Veterinary Pet Crematorium, a new J Mart Chevron Convenience Store and Gas Station on Hwy 67, a new 140 unit RV Park on Veterans Avenue, and the new Camp David RV Park with 57 new parking pads.

New Construction Commercial Projects that were issued permits prior to 2019 and are currently still under construction, but are expected to receive a Certificate of Occupancy in 2020 include, the new Blake at Biloxi assisted living facility, Hotel Legends (formerly the Santa Maria Del Mar) 154 suites scheduled to open in March 2020, the new City of Biloxi Fire Station #7, the new Beach Vista Apartments on Briarfield Avenue, Marshall Funeral Home, the new City of Biloxi Boardwalk located on Veterans Avenue, the new three unit retail space on Shriners Boulevard, and the new Sky Zone trampoline park located inside of Edgewater Mall.

Major Commercial Additions in 2019 include, a new Bed and Breakfast remodel on Rue Magnolia, new façade and addition to the City of Biloxi Library located on Kayleigh Cove, a new office drive-thru and swimming pool addition to the Flamingo Beach Inn Hotel, an addition to Advanced Collision, an expansion to Caterpillar Development Center Daycare-Woolmarket location, and a new restroom facility addition to the City of Biloxi John Henry Beck Park.

Commercial remodels and renovations in 2019 include exterior renovations to the City of Biloxi Saenger Theater, exterior renovations to multiple locations for units of the Biloxi Housing Authority, interior remodel of existing location into Virtual Golf inside of Beau Rivage, exterior renovations to Edgewater Mall, interior renovations and remodel to the existing hospital pharmacy at Merit Health, interior remodel on Barthes Street for the new V & L Biloxi CrossFit Gym, exterior, interior renovations of second level apartments on Howard Avenue, and interior remodel to Mississippi Music.

In addition to the commercial development in 2019, new residential construction continued to thrive and provide balance to the local economy as 156 building permits were issued for new single family houses. Other residential improvements included Final Plats for five subdivisions as follows: Eastland Subdivision located on Old Hwy 67 (86 new single family residential lots and one commercial lot), Glen Eagle Phase II Subdivision also located on Old Hwy 67 (88 lots), Kaybree Cove Subdivision on Rosalie Maria Drive (5 lots), Natures Trail Subdivision on Wash Fayard Road (43 lots) and River Ridge Subdivision off of Shorecrest Road (15 lots), also a new Planned District Overlay Plat was approved for Bertucci Park, a 43 acre, three phase Mixed Use Development to be located at the corner of Popp's Ferry Road and Atkinson Road.

There are many exciting projects in the review and discussion phase that should be ready for permitting in 2020, such as the addition of Fun Time USA amusement park, “The District” Howard Avenue Project, an expansion and improvements to the to the former Margaritaville Casino, and Pep Boys at Edgewater Mall.

The following individual division reports document our progress during 2019:

PLANNING DIVISION

The Planning Commission was again active during calendar year 2019, reviewing and processing a number of proposals. Five (5) Final Subdivision Plats were approved that created 195 new single family lots. There were 17 Map Amendments, and 19 applications for Conditional Use Permits. With the City Council approval of the new Short-Term Rental Ordinance, 301 applications have been received, of which 261 licenses were issued in 2019 as compared with 21 which were licensed in 2018. The increase resulted from the newly adopted ordinance along with enhanced enforcement of the new regulations.

The Planning Commission conducted public hearings and prepared recommendations to the City Council for a total of 62 cases in 2019. These cases, classified by type, are as follows:

<i>Type of Request</i>	<i>Cases in 2019</i>
<i>Variances</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Map Amendments</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Conditional Uses</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Text Changes</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Street/ Right-of-Way Vacation/Easement Vacations</i>	<i>0</i>

<i>Master Plan Update – Gaming</i>	1
<i>Single Family Residential Subdivisions</i>	2
<i>Mixed Use Subdivisions</i>	0
<i>Commercial Subdivisions</i>	1
<i>Minor Subdivisions</i>	7
<i>Appeals</i>	0
<i>PD-TNT</i>	1
<i>Street Name Change</i>	1
<i>Cases not heard</i>	3
Total	72

****Ten (10) of these cases were for recording purposes only – consent agenda items*

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Development Review Committee (DRC) was formed to provide technical assistance and review of all proposed commercial projects, residential subdivisions, multi-family developments, and commercial “change in use” projects. Development review is a service provided to assist developers in a “one stop” setting in addressing the Land Development Ordinance requirements of the City of Biloxi. The committee is comprised of representatives from Biloxi’s Engineering, Planning, Building, Police and Fire Departments. One representative from the Biloxi Tree Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the DRC.

In FY 2019, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed 59 projects and approved 32 site plans. A breakdown of the reviewed projects is presented in the following table.

2019 DRC Case Log Summary

Project Type	Number of Projects
<i>Church</i>	2
<i>Communications</i>	0
<i>Educational/Day Care</i>	2
<i>Entertainment</i>	6
<i>General Commercial</i>	11
<i>Government Projects</i>	1
<i>Mixed-Use Development</i>	0
<i>Multi-family Projects</i>	5
<i>Office</i>	1
<i>Other</i>	12
<i>Planned Development - Residential</i>	4
<i>Recreational</i>	1
<i>Residential Subdivisions</i>	3
<i>Restaurants</i>	9
<i>Retail</i>	2

ARBORICULTURAL

The City issued 93 Residential and 13 Commercial Tree permits this year, and spent \$80,000 for contractual tree trimming and removals to make Biloxi's streets, parks and greenways safer for the public.

For the 31st year we hosted the Arbor Day Run. We also distributed 300 trees to over 200 runners/walkers and the general public to celebrate Arbor Day, and for the 35th straight year we have received the designation of "Tree City USA".

Document Imaging

The Community Development Department has continued to make strides in the quest to become as paperless as possible. We are archiving all of our past Planning Commission Files, Code Enforcement and Development Review Commission Files. Also, we are continuing the process of scanning and indexing all of the Building Division permit applications. This will make us more efficient at accessing information to better serve our customers.

BUILDING DIVISION

The Building Division provides life safety on the front end of all construction projects by ensuring that all permitted buildings are built in compliance with adopted codes and ordinances. Required inspections are performed prior to enclosure of foundations and walls to ensure that all systems (building, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, other) comply with the International Building Codes. Final inspection approval for each system is required prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for all commercial and residential structures.

The Building Division is comprised of one (1) commercial, and one (1) residential inspector in each of the following areas: Building, electrical and plumbing/mechanical. Additionally, we have one (1) Plans Examiner for commercial and residential, a Floodplain Administrator, a CRS Coordinator, a Stormwater Management Inspector and one (1) Permit Clerk.

Building Permits

2019

<i>Commercial Building Permits</i>	<i>221</i>
<i>Residential Building Permits</i>	<i>770</i>
<i>Plumbing Permits</i>	<i>573</i>
<i>Electrical Permits</i>	<i>515</i>
<i>Mechanical Permits</i>	<i>389</i>
<i>Certificate of Occupancy</i>	<i>808</i>
<i>Other Permits (hood systems, Sprinkler Systems, etc.)</i>	<i>236</i>
<i>Total permits issued for 2019</i>	<i>3,512</i>

Although the 3,512 building permits issued in 2019 was an increase of 256 over the total for 2018, the total construction valuation decreased from \$95,402,818 in 2018 to \$79,934,180 in 2019.

Of the 2019 total, \$42,964,950 was for commercial construction, and \$36,969,230 was for residential. Permit fees realized by the City of Biloxi for all permits issued was \$387,011.

In 2019, the Building Division maintained its class rating of “4” with the Mississippi State Building Department Rating Bureau. This excellent class rating provides owners of structures built under this grade, premium discounts on their building insurance policies.

Plans Review

Building plans for all new and altered commercial and residential structures are reviewed prior to permitting for compliance with the adopted building codes. A field copy with notations of the reviewed plans is returned to the applicant at the time of permit issuance.

Building plans reviewed for code compliance in 2019 are as follows:

Commercial:

Plans Reviewed: 85

Over the Counter/Other Reviews: 39

Residential:

Plans Reviewed: 172

Over the Counter/Other Reviews: 362

Note: *Over the counter/other, includes minor repair, cosmetic improvements, signs, and accessory structures, etc.*

BUSINESS LICENSE DIVISION

In 2019, the licensing division had a total of 2,285 active business licenses, of which 555 were issued to “New Businesses” and 261 of those licenses were for Short-Term Rentals. The total fees collected for licensing in 2019 was \$124,770.

The monthly totals for new business licenses are as follows:

	<u>2019</u>
<i>January</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>February</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>July</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>October</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>December</i>	<i>26</i>

CODE ENFORCEMENT

The Code Enforcement Division is charged with ensuring that properties and structures in Biloxi are maintained in compliance with City adopted standards. The division is comprised of four field officers and one coordinator.

Code Enforcement Cases Resolved for 2019

<i>Total requests processed</i>	<i>9,786</i>
<i>Structures Demolished</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Structures Rehabilitated</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Structures Secured</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Accessory Structures</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Sub-Standard Structures</i>	<i>426</i>
<i>Weeds/Debris</i>	<i>7,483</i>
<i>Other Violations</i>	<i>1,825</i>
<i>Open Violations</i>	<i>1,241</i>
<i>Resolved Violations</i>	<i>8,545</i>

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT/CRS 2019

There are currently 1,874 flood elevation certificates contained in our database inventory. We continue to implement an “Outreach Project Strategy” and have adopted higher standards to the City’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Additionally, Biloxi has 4,986 effective flood insurance policies; (1,412 are located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), and 3,574 are outside the SFHA). The total annual premiums for all flood insurance policies were \$3,428,696.

In 2019, the City of Biloxi maintained its “State Best” Class “5” rating in the Community Rating System (CRS).

Under the class “5” rating, flood insurance policy holders in the SFHA receive a 25% discount, and 10% discount on policies in non-SFHA. By maintaining a class “5” rating in 2019, the City of Biloxi saved property owners with flood insurance policies, a total of \$599,696. Biloxi currently has a total of 122 Repetitive Loss Properties. We continue to seek available grants to mitigate repetitive loss properties through buy-outs or elevation, and are continuing to work with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium to identify areas to improve our rating.

In 2019, the Floodplain Administrator conducted 157 field inspections and reviewed 59 Development Review Committee (DRC) cases to insure compliance with the City’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

Historic Preservation

In 2019, the Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) issued 108 Certificates of Appropriateness for construction in historical districts or within the context area of a historic landmark which was an increase of 42% over the previous year.

The Museums Division continued the Annual Preservation in May program. This month long celebration of our community's history and culture, which incorporated a series of five weekly events, attracted capacity crowds. This annual program is a joint venture with the City of Biloxi, Biloxi Bay Chamber of Commerce, Biloxi Public Library-Local History and Genealogy Department, Biloxi Public School District, University of Southern Mississippi, and Biloxi Main Street District.

The 2019 series kicked off Thursday, May 2nd with a packed house for Biloxi Trivia Night at Southport Line Restaurant on Howard Avenue. The next event, Bon Appetite Biloxi, took place at the Biloxi Community Market. Participants learned more about Biloxi's culture and community through its food ways. Some of the best cooks in the city created traditional Biloxi dishes from a 1950s Biloxi Blessing of the Fleet brochure including authentic Biloxi shrimp salad and spicy creole jambalaya.

The series ended at the Maritime & Seafood Industry Museum's Schooner pier complex where program attendees enjoyed a beautiful sunset cruise aboard a Biloxi schooner. These authentic replicas of Biloxi oyster schooners harken back to the time when Biloxi was the "Seafood Capital of the World". In addition to the cruise, there was a presentation from the late local historian Edmond Boudreaux on the history of oyster

harvesting in Biloxi as well as a demonstration by Mike and Anita Arguelles of French Hermit Oyster on the future of oystering and new oyster aquaculture industry.

The Museums Division also continued to organize the annual Cemetery Tour. The program which is in its 13th year was themed “Biloxi’s Colorful Past”. This self-guided tour features re-enactors portraying 16 characters sharing the stories of the history of gambling, the lack of prohibition and other “questionable behaviors”. The tour was held over two days and welcomed over 5,000 visitors to the cemetery.

This year also saw the restoration of two historic cemetery tombs and the completion of the “Voice from Our Past” self-guided digital cemetery tour. The tour, partially funded by a grant from the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, utilizes scrips and videos from past annual cemetery or online from anywhere in the world through our web portal. In 2019, a project to survey the entire cemetery continued thanks to a Certified Local Government grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. To date surveys have mapped approximately half of the cemetery providing real time data that is available through the city website to researchers or anyone attempting to locate a burial in the Biloxi Cemetery.

Museums/Historic Sites

In the current year, the Museums Division has continued to oversee the preservation of the City’s museums and historic properties.

The Biloxi Lighthouse remains popular with visitors and locals. In 2019, 2,365 guests climbed to the top of the lighthouse to learn about its history and enjoy the breathtaking view.

The Museums Division continued to work with the design team lead by Dale Partners Architects on the restoration of the Saenger Theater. The project has begun with phase one scheduled to be completed in late 2020. Phase one included exterior renovations.

The year saw the transition of the Biloxi Mardi Gras Museum from a city run operation to a standalone organization named the Coastal Mississippi Mardi Gras Museum operated by a non-profit board of directors.

The Museum Division continued to sponsor a number of highly successful events in celebration of our community heritage including the annual Twelfth Night Celebration, Biloxi Children's Mardi Gras Walking Parade and the Mississippi Coast Historical and Cultural Exposition at the Biloxi Civic Center, which included 25 historical, cultural and environmental organizations telling the story of the coast.

Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitors Center

Despite the tourism season being adversely affected by the algae bloom in 2019, the Biloxi Visitors Center still welcomed 121,424 locals and tourists. While the facility remains a much sought after venue for a wide variety of events including, wedding receptions and parties, as well as corporate and community meetings. The facility hosted 277 public and private events with a combined total of 17,128 guests generating \$77,450 in rental revenue. Sales at the Visitors Center gift shop were on par with the previous year with gross sales of \$202,087.86.

Biloxi Civic Center

The Biloxi Civic Center continues to be a popular venue for a variety of events including Mardi Gras balls, weddings, corporate conferences, and dance competitions just to name a few. In 2019, the center hosted 85 public and private events with 32,902 attendees. The facility generated \$169,005 in rental revenue in 2019, an increase of 12.5% over the previous year.