

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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 2020, 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

New Commercial Construction Projects that were issued permits prior to 2020 and are still under construction include, the new Blake Assisted Living & Memory Care Community, Marshall Funeral Home, the new Main Branch of Community Bank located at the corner of Lameuse Street and Howard Avenue, the new Margaritaville Amusement Park Phase II and Parking Garage, a new Performing Arts Center for Biloxi Public Schools, a new RV Park on Veterans Avenue, the new Camp David RV Park and the exterior renovations to the Saenger Theater.

New Commercial Construction Projects that were issued permits in 2020, and are still under construction include, the new Go Kart Track and Pit Buildings for Big Play Family Fun Center, a new multi-tenant building for RDH Holdings at 2572 Pass Road, Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art build-out of POD Y, Augusta House Remodel, Souvenir City Warehouse and improvements, Fields Flights Restaurant located in the old Mardi Gras Museum, Camp David Clubhouse, and a new Martini Bar at 918 Howard Avenue.

Year 2020 experienced the completion of a number of new Commercial Construction Projects. As a result, Certificates of Occupancy were issued for the new 30 unit Beach Vista Apartments located on Briarfield Avenue, the newly constructed J Mart Convenience Store & Chevron Service located on Highway 67, City of Biloxi Fire Station #7 on Popp's Ferry Road, the new Pep Boys Automotive Center, the new Shipley Donuts in the former Popp's Ferry Car Wash location, Desporte's Seafood at their new location on Caillavet Street, The Cannery Bar n' Grill on Shriners Boulevard, the new

Gulf Coast Veterinary Pet Crematorium on East Oaklawn Road, and Building B addition to Caterpillar Development Center at their Woolmarket location.

In addition to the commercial development in 2020, New Residential Construction continued to thrive and provide balance to the local economy as 261 building permits were issued for new single-family houses. Other residential improvements included Final Plats for two subdivisions as follows: Ixolib Subdivision Phase I located on Waters View Drive (7 lots) and Cedar Crescent Subdivision located on Old Highway 67 (30 lots).

There are many exciting projects in the review and discussion phase that should be ready for permitting in 2020.

The following individual division reports document our progress during 2020:

PLANNING DIVISION

The Planning Commission was again active during calendar year 2020, reviewing and processing a number of proposals. Two (2) Final Subdivision Plats were approved that created thirty-seven (37) new single-family lots. There were eight (8) Map Amendments, and fifteen (15) applications for Conditional Use Permits. With the City Council approval of the new Short-Term Rental Ordinance, 323 licenses were issued for Short-Term Rentals in 2020.

The Planning Commission conducted public hearings and prepared recommendations to the City Council for a total of 56 cases in 2020. These cases, classified by type, are as follows:

Type of Request	Cases in 2020
Variances	9
Map Amendments	8
Conditional Uses	15
Text Changes	6
Street/ Right-of-Way Vacation/Easement Vacations	3
Master Plan Update – Gaming	0
Single Family Residential Subdivisions	2
Mixed Use Subdivisions	0
Commercial Subdivisions	0
Minor Subdivisions	10
Appeals	1
PD-TNT	0
Street Name Change	0
Cases not heard	2
Total	56

***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 2020, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed projects and approved site plans. A breakdown of the reviewed projects is presented in the following table.

2020 DRC Case Log Summary

Project Type	Number of Projects
Church	2
Communications	0
Educational/Day Care	3
Entertainment	3
General Commercial	11
Government Projects	2
Mixed-Use Development	0
Multi-family Projects	3
Office	0
Other	7
Planned Development - Residential	0
Recreational	3
Residential Subdivisions	2
Restaurants	1
Retail	0

ARBORICULTURAL

The City issued 104 Residential and 8 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 32nd year we hosted the Arbor Day Run. We also distributed 300 trees to 216 runners/walkers and the general public to celebrate Arbor Day, and for the 36th 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

2020

Commercial Building Permits	465
Residential Building Permits	968
Plumbing Permits	728
Electrical Permits	625
Mechanical Permits	479
Certificate of Occupancy	861
Other Permits (hood systems, Sprinkler Systems, etc.)	340
Total permits issued for 2020	4,466

The 4,466 building permits issued in 2020 were an increase of 954 over the 2019. The total construction valuation increased from \$79,934,180 in 2019, to \$110,784,969 in 2020.

Of the 2020 total, \$57,713,500 was for commercial construction, and \$53,071,469 was for residential. Permit fees realized by the City of Biloxi for all permits issued was \$421,695.

In 2020, 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 2020 are as follows:

Commercial:

Plans Reviewed:	45
Over the Counter/Other Reviews:	57

Residential:

Plans Reviewed:	297
Over the Counter/Other Reviews:	439

Permits for Storm Damage Consultation:	128
--	-----

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

BUSINESS LICENSE DIVISION

In 2020, the Licensing Division had a total of 2,358 active business licenses, of which 313 were issued to “New Businesses”, and 323 licenses were for Short-Term Rentals. The total fees collected for licensing in 2020 was \$120,371.44.

The monthly totals for new business licenses are as follows:

	<u>2020</u>
January	30
February	19
March	20
April	19
May	29
June	35
July	31
August	26
September	26
October	31
November	23
December	24

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 for 2020

Total requests processed	6,379
Structures Demolished	57
Structures Rehabilitated	21
Structures Secured	10
Accessory Structures	68
Sub-Standard Structures	513
Weeds/Debris	4,172
Other Violations	1,596
Open Violations	1,420
Resolved Violations	4,929

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT/CRS 2020

There are currently 1,892 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 5,029 effective flood insurance policies; (1,440 are located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), and 3,589 are outside the SFHA). The total annual premiums for all flood insurance policies were \$3,518,472.

In 2020, 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 2020, the City of Biloxi saved property owners with flood insurance policies, a total of \$625,085. Biloxi currently has a total of 125 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 2020, the Floodplain Administrator conducted 102 field inspections and reviewed 36 Development Review Committee (DRC) cases to insure compliance with the City’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

Historic Preservation

In 2020, the Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) issued 69 Certificates of Appropriateness for construction in historical districts or within the context area of a historic landmark which was an increase of 36% over the previous year.

The Museums Division also continued to organize the Annual Cemetery Tour. The program which is in its 14th year was themed “Legends and Lore 2”. This self-guided tour shifted to virtual this year in response to the global pandemic. Participants were offered the opportunity to enjoy the tour on BTV and on the internet.

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 2020, 883 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 to replace the roof which was partly funded with a grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History was completed and the grant was closed out. The overall project for the exterior repairs of the theater is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Prior to the beginning of the pandemic, the Museum Division sponsored 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 devastation to the tourism industry caused by the pandemic, the Biloxi Visitors Center still welcomed 48,755 guests! While the facility remains a much sought-after venue for a wide variety of events, the City was forced to close the center to events for a 6-month period in an effort to help control the spread of COVID-19. The facility did begin hosting events in the fall but at significantly reduced occupancy. In spite of the challenges faced, the facility hosted 92 public and private events with a combined total of 4,469 guests generating \$26,550 in rental revenue. Total sales at the Visitors Center gift shop in 2020 were \$101,978.15.

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 2020, the center hosted 29 public and private events with 13,800 attendees. The facility generated \$89,765 in rental revenue in 2020.