

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Jerry Creel, Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Biloxi Community Development Department is the city department charged with overseeing orderly growth and development. The divisions that comprise this department include: Economic Development, Planning, Zoning, Building Permits and Inspections, Code Enforcement, Community Court, Floodplain Management, CRS, Stormwater Management, Business Licensing, Historic Preservation, Tree Preservation, and Cultural Affairs (the Biloxi Visitors Center and the Old Brick House). There are currently 31 full-time employees, and 1 part-time, within the department.

In 2022, the City of Biloxi experienced Commercial and Residential growth throughout the city, including a number of new commercial construction projects, renovations of blighted structures, new single family residential homes, and improvements to the services we provide. Our Comprehensive Plan, and Land Development Ordinance, along with our customer friendly environment continue to create a positive climate for encouraging economic growth and development.

Economic Development Projects

New Commercial Projects that were issued permits prior to 2022, and are still under construction include:

- The Margaritaville Amusement Park
- Saenger Theatre Renovation
- Arbor Landing Apartments Phases II & III

Projects that were issued Building Permits in 2022 include:

- Renovations to the Barq Building on Howard Avenue.
- Conversion of the Former Wells Fargo structure on Howard Avenue into Condominiums (The Bella) (13 units)
- A large arcade expansion for Big Play Family Fun Center
- A new Trampoline Park at Edgewater Mall
- A new 48 Unit Apartment Complex on Briarfield Avenue
- A new Townhouse Development on Eula Cove (50 units)
- A new three-unit Medical Facility on Popps Ferry Road
- Pointe Breeze, a 39 Single Family Home development on Beach Boulevard
- A new Field House for Biloxi High School

Projects Completed in 2022 include:

- New Division Street Entrance to Keesler Air Force Base
- Howard Avenue Apartments in the former Josette's Building (19 units)
- Fields Steak & Oyster Bar in the former Mardi Gras Museum

- New Climate Control Storage Facility on Popps Ferry Road
- New B & G Climate Control Storage Facility on Tommy Munro
- New Slim Chickens Restaurant on Cedar Lake Road
- A new Zip Line feature at Finish Line Go Cart Track

Year 2022 experienced the completion of a number of Commercial Construction Projects. As a result, many new businesses opened including the new Community Bank on Howard Avenue, the Ground Zero Blues Club and the new Slim Chickens Restaurant on Cedar Lake Road.

In addition to the commercial development in 2022, New Residential Construction continued to thrive and provide balance to the local economy as 89 building permits were issued for new single-family houses.

There are many exciting Commercial and Residential projects in the review and discussion phase that should be ready for permitting in 2023.

The following individual division reports document our progress during 2022:

PLANNING DIVISION

The Planning Commission was active during calendar year 2022, reviewing and processing a number of proposals. Four (4) Subdivision Plats were approved that includes 135 new single-family lots. There were ten (10) Map Amendments (zoning changes) and thirty-seven (37) Conditional Uses submitted, several of which were for Short-Term Rentals.

The Planning Commission conducted public hearings and prepared recommendations to the City Council for a total of 105 cases in 2022. These cases, classified by type, are as follows:

Type of Request	Cases in 2022
Variances	20
Map Amendments	10
Conditional Uses	37
Text Changes	9
Street/ Right-of-Way Vacation/Easement Vacations	5
Master Plan Update	0
Single Family Residential Subdivisions	6
Mixed Use Subdivisions	0
Commercial Subdivisions	1
Minor Subdivisions/Consent Agendas	8
Appeals	1
PD	3
Street Name Change	0
Cases not heard	3
Cases Withdrawn	2
Total	105

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Development Review Committee (DRC) was created 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 2022, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed 84 projects and approved site plans. A breakdown of the reviewed projects is presented in the following table.

2022 DRC Case Log Summary

Project Type	Number of Projects
Church	3
Communications	0
Educational/Day Care	4
Entertainment	0
General Commercial	21
Government Projects	0
Mixed-Use Development	4
Multi-family Projects	10
Office	7
Other	3
Planned Development - Residential	2
Recreational	3
Residential Subdivisions	6
Restaurants	4
Retail	6
Cannabis Dispensary	5
Cannabis Cultivation	1
Hotels	5

ARBORICULTURAL

The City issued 66 Residential and 12 Commercial Tree permits this year, and spent \$82,350 for contractual tree trimming and removals to make Biloxi's streets, parks and greenways safer for the public.

For the 34th year we hosted the Arbor Day Run which attracted over 200 participants, and for the 38th 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 reviewing commercial and residential plans, a Floodplain Administrator, a CRS Coordinator, a Stormwater Management Inspector and one (1) Permit Clerk.

Building Permits

2022

Commercial Building Permits	334
Residential Building Permits	1,100
Plumbing Permits	527
Electrical Permits	583
Mechanical Permits	370
Certificates of Occupancy	413
Short Term Rental COO & Renewals	418
Other Permits (hood systems, Sprinkler Systems, etc.)	368
Total permits issued for 2022	4,113

The 4,113 building permits issued in 2022 were a decrease of 444 over the 2021. The total construction valuation decreased slightly from \$95,616,457 to \$94,071,747 in 2022.

Of the 2022 total, \$28,718,450 was for commercial construction, and \$65,353,297 was for residential. Permit fees realized by the City of Biloxi for all permits issued was \$525,307.60.

In 2022, 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 discounts on their building insurance premiums.

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 2022 are as follows:

Commercial:

Plans Reviewed:	72
Over the Counter/Other Reviews:	43

Residential:

Plans Reviewed:	169
Over the Counter/Other Reviews:	303

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

BUSINESS LICENSE DIVISION

In 2022, the Licensing Division had a total of 2,344 active business licenses, of which, 338 were issued to “New Businesses”, and 373 licenses were for Short-Term Rentals.

The monthly totals for new business licenses are as follows:

	<u>2022</u>
January	23
February	21
March	33
April	42
May	22
June	27
July	29
August	35
September	41
October	19
November	15
<u>December</u>	<u>31</u>
Total:	338

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 one Code Enforcement Administrator, one Code Enforcement Coordinator and three Code Enforcement Officers.

Code Enforcement Cases for 2022

Total requests processed	3,869
Structures Demolished	72
Structures Rehabilitated	26
Structures Secured	5
Accessory Structures	135
Sub-Standard Structures	271
Weeds/Debris	1,448
Other Violations	1,175

Open Violations	601
Resolved Violations	2,637

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT/CRS 2022

The City of Biloxi has maintained its Class “6” rating in the Community Rating System (CRS). We are finishing up a CAV (Community Assistance Visit) with MEMA (Mississippi Emergency Management Agency) and are continuing to work with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium to identify areas to improve our rating.

At the end of year 2022, we have 1,923 flood elevation certificates in the system., an increase of 36 over year 2021 and we are scanning them in to Munis Property Master. We continue to scan all property files into Laserfiche as one of the CRS rating activities (Off Site Storage). The National Flood Insurance Program has implemented a new program called RISK 2.0. We are using our “Outreach Project Strategy” to educate policyholders and the General Public on RISK 2.0. We have looked for and attempted to adopt higher standards to the City’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance to regain our Class 5. Biloxi had 4,245 effective flood insurance policies; (1,373 are located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), and 2,872 were outside the SFHA). The total annual premiums for all flood insurance policies were \$3,193,972.

Under the class “6” rating that became effective in 2022, flood insurance policy holders in both the SFHA and non-SFHA received a 20% discount. By maintaining a class “6” rating, the City of Biloxi saved property owners with flood insurance policies, a total of \$490,214 in 2022. Biloxi currently has a total of 122 Repetitive Loss Properties. We are working with MEMA on the SWIFT Grants to elevate four (4) of these Repetitive

Loss Properties in order to mitigate repetitive loss properties through elevation. It is a 4 million dollar state wide project.

In 2022, the Floodplain Administrator conducted 51 field inspections and reviewed 94 Development Review Committee (DRC) cases to ensure compliance with the City's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

Historic Preservation

In 2022, the Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) issued 77 Certificates of Appropriateness for construction in historical districts or within the context area of a historic landmark which was a decrease of 33% as compared to 2021.

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, which included 25 historical, cultural and environmental organizations, telling the story of the coast and attracting over 1,500 guests. The popular Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour celebrated Biloxi's musical legacy hosting over 2,500 participants for the two- day event in October.

Museums/Historic Site

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 2022, 2,521 guests climbed to the top of the lighthouse to learn about its history and enjoy the breathtaking view.

The Old Brick House was reopened for events in the fall of this year after Hurricane Zeta repairs were complete. The house has been the site for five private events since reopening in September of 2022. Plans are currently in the works for additional maintenance projects as well as a few public events in 2023 to build awareness of the house and its history.

Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitors Center

The Biloxi Visitors Center welcomed 101,459 guests from all over the world. While the visitors center operations were hampered by \$1.03 million in construction to replace the roof and repair other damage from Hurricane Zeta, the facility remains a much sought-after venue for a wide variety of events. In 2022, the Visitors Center hosted 265 public and private events with a combined total of 18,280 guests generating \$73,125 in rental revenue. The Visitors Center gift shop saw a significant increase in sales 2022 ending the year with gross sales of \$199,795.97. Despite a two-month period at the end of the summer where in-house events were canceled and no new bookings were scheduled to allow the contractors access to the lobby and ballroom for flooring replacement, the visitors center gift shop sales and event rentals have almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.