

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

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

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 and the Old Brick House). There are currently 29 full-time employees, and 1 part-time, within the department.

In 2021, 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 2021 and are still under construction include, the new Main Branch of Community Bank, expected to be completed in early 2022, the new Margaritaville Amusement Park Phase II and Parking Garage, expected to be completed in the Spring of 2022, Fields Flights Restaurant, the new Camp David RV Park, Marshall Funeral Home and the exterior renovations to the Saenger Theater, all expected to be completed in 2022.

New Commercial Construction Projects that were issued permits in 2021, and are still under construction include, Arbor Landing Apartments Phase 2, expected to be completed in 2023 and Poppo's Ferry Climate Control Storage, which was recently completed. Other projects expected to be completed in 2022 include: Howard Avenue Apartments (former Josette's) and improvements to a new multi-tenant building for RDH Holdings at 2572 Pass Road, Edgewater Square Shopping Center, Housing Authority, First Baptist Church, Ellzey's Hardware, Palace Casino, Imperial Palace, Chateau Le Grande Condominiums, Ochsner Medical Center, Jia Noodle Bar, AAA Storage and a new Martini Bar at 918 Howard Avenue.

Year 2021 experienced the completion of a number of new Commercial Construction Projects. As a result, Certificates of Occupancy were issued for The Blake Assisted Living and Memory Care Community, The Legends Hotel, Fast Pace Urgent Care on Pass Road, a new Starbucks Restaurant at Edgewater Mall, a new Auto Zone on Cedar Lake Road, America's Thrift Store at Edgewater Village and a new T-Mobile Retailer on Beach Boulevard.

In addition to the commercial development in 2021, 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 2022.

The following individual division reports document our progress during 2021:

PLANNING DIVISION

The Planning Commission was active during calendar year 2021, reviewing and processing a number of proposals. Three (3) Subdivision Plats and two (2) Planned Districts Plats were approved that includes 265 new single-family lots. There were nine (9) Map Amendments, and fourteen (14) applications for Conditional Use Permits, 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 74 cases in 2021. These cases, classified by type, are as follows:

Type of Request	Cases in 2021
Variances	22
Map Amendments	9
Conditional Uses	14
Text Changes	6
Street/ Right-of-Way Vacation/Easement Vacations	1
Master Plan Update – Gaming	1
Single Family Residential Subdivisions	5*
Mixed Use Subdivisions	0
Commercial Subdivisions	0

Minor Subdivisions	9
Appeals	1
PD	2
Street Name Change	0
Cases not heard	2
Cases Withdrawn	2*
Total	74

*One (1) Subdivision application was withdrawn by applicant.

*One (1) Variance request was withdrawn by applicant.

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 2021, the Development Review Committee (DRC) reviewed projects and approved site plans. A breakdown of the reviewed projects is presented in the following table.

2021 DRC Case Log Summary

Project Type	Number of Projects
Church	1
Communications	0
Educational/Day Care	0
Entertainment	1
General Commercial	20
Government Projects	1
Mixed-Use Development	1
Multi-family Projects	3
Office	0
Other	15
Planned Development - Residential	1
Recreational	3
Residential Subdivisions	7
Restaurants	8
Retail	5

ARBORICULTURAL

The City issued 110 Residential and 7 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 33RD year we hosted the Arbor Day Run which attracted over 200 participants, and for the 37th 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

2021

Commercial Building Permits	338
Residential Building Permits	1,942
Plumbing Permits	384
Electrical Permits	452
Mechanical Permits	293
Certificates of Occupancy	832
Other Permits (hood systems, Sprinkler Systems, etc.)	316
 Total permits issued for 2021	 4,557

The 4,557 building permits issued in 2021 were an increase of 97 over the 2020.

The total construction valuation decreased from \$110,784,969 to \$95,616,457 in 2021.

Of the 2021 total, \$15,445,400 were for commercial construction, and \$80,171,057 were for residential. Permit fees realized by the City of Biloxi for all permits issued was \$466,362.

In 2021, 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 2021 are as follows:

Commercial:

Plans Reviewed: 35

Over the Counter/Other Reviews: 49

Residential:

Plans Reviewed: 206

Over the Counter/Other Reviews: 364

Permits for Storm Damage Consultation: 189

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

BUSINESS LICENSE DIVISION

In 2021, the Licensing Division had a total of 2,285 active business licenses, of which 276 were issued to “New Businesses”, and 315 licenses were for Short-Term Rentals. The total fees collected for licensing in 2021 was \$121,703.77.

The monthly totals for new business licenses are as follows:

	<u>2021</u>
January	18
February	17
March	35
April	19
May	12
June	27
July	20
August	24
September	25
October	28
November	19
December	31

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 2021

Total requests processed	11,358
Structures Demolished	98
Structures Rehabilitated	75
Structures Secured	23
Accessory Structures	600
Sub-Standard Structures	1,349
Weeds/Debris	5,507
Other Violations	3,902
Open Violations	3,385
Resolved Violations	7,973

FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT/CRS 2021

In 2021, the City of Biloxi was retrograded to a Class “6” rating in the Community Rating System (CRS). This was due to changes to the CRS manual and point values for activities. We are continuing to work with the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium to identify areas to improve our rating.

There are currently 1,887 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 to regain our Class “5” rating in the Community rating System (CRS). Additionally, Biloxi had 5,029 effective flood insurance policies, of which 1,440 were located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), and 3,589 were outside the SFHA. The total annual premiums for all flood insurance policies were \$3,518,472.

Under the class “6” rating that will become effective in 2022, all flood insurance policy holders will receive a 20% discount. By maintaining a class “6” rating, the City of Biloxi saves property owners with flood insurance policies, a total of \$593,831. 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.

In 2021, the Floodplain Administrator conducted 46 field inspections and reviewed 66 Development Review Committee (DRC) cases to insure compliance with the City’s Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

Historic Preservation

In 2021, the Architectural and Historical Review Commission (AHRC) issued 100 Certificates of Appropriateness for construction in historical districts or within the context area of a historic landmark which was an increase of 45% over the previous year.

The Museums Division also continued to organize the Annual Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour. This year the program was presented in-person with over 2,000 participants. Additionally, the City hosted the Annual Mississippi Gulf Coast Historical Exposition at the Biloxi Visitors Center which attracted over 1,300 participants.

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 2021, 2,492 guests climbed to the top of the lighthouse to learn about its history and enjoy the breathtaking view.

Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitors Center

The Biloxi Visitors Center welcomed 81,914 guests from all over the world. The facility remains a much sought-after venue for a wide variety of events. In 2021 the Visitors Center hosted 202 public and private events with a combined total of 15,693 guests generating \$55,650 in rental revenue. The Visitors Center gift shop saw a significant increase in sales in the second half of 2021 ending the year with gross sales of \$170,111.28.