

The City of Biloxi, MS is located in Harrison County along the Mississippi Sound, which is separated from the Gulf of Mexico by a series of barrier islands. Biloxi's coastal location and waterways, including Biloxi Bay, the Back Bay of Biloxi, and the rivers and streams that flow into them, shape its landscape and heritage. The City is about 46.5 square miles, of which 82% is land and 18% is water.

Biloxi abuts the City of Gulfport to the west, unincorporated Harrison County to the north, and the City of D'Iberville to the northeast. It is part of the larger Gulfport-Biloxi Metropolitan Area, which includes three counties: Hancock, Harrison, and Stone. Figure 1.1 shows the location of Biloxi in the region. Figure 1.2 illustrates the City's present municipal boundary, its major waterways, and transportation corridors.

1.1 / PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City of Biloxi's last comprehensive plan, *Vision 2020*, was adopted in 1996 to provide "a statement and illustration of public policy regarding future development of the City...and the adjacent planning area into which it can reasonably be expected to expand during the plan's time horizon." The mid-1990s marked the start of a decade of population growth and prosperity in Biloxi. During this period, Biloxi's resort and hotel industry developed and grew. The City and its residents invested in new schools and technology, transportation, heritage and culture, historic neighborhoods, affordable housing, public safety, and recreation. Then, on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina massively impacted the City, destroying over 20% of Biloxi's homes and businesses. The Biloxi Peninsula, in particular, suffered catastrophic damage.

Given the major changes that have taken place since 1996—most notably, the impacts of Katrina, after which Biloxi will never be the same—a new comprehensive plan is needed to enable the City to set a new course for the future in a time of environmental, economic, and social uncertainty and change. *Reviving the Renaissance* and other plans have been prepared since 2005 to guide recovery and rebuilding of Biloxi after Katrina, and major projects such as reconstruction of the City's infrastructure and extension of water and sewer lines north to serve Woolmarket are moving forward. The new Comprehensive Plan builds on and integrates these previous planning initiatives and ongoing implementation projects by asking and answering a key question:

How can the many initiatives and projects fit together into a unified framework consisting of an overall vision and plan for the future of Biloxi?

Towards this end, the plan sets a common direction or “roadmap” that can be used by the City to proactively manage future change. Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan provides:

- 1/A reflection of shared **community values and aspirations** in the form of a vision of what Biloxi will be 20–25 years in the future, based on public input received during the planning process.
- 2/A **guide for policy and decision-making** on matters impacting Biloxi’s future by city leaders, officials, and stakeholders.
- 3/A **“to-do” list** defining short, mid, and long-term actions to be taken to move the vision of Biloxi’s future forward to reality.



The plan is comprehensive in the topics that it addresses—land use and transportation; natural, cultural, and historic resources; community facilities and services; and housing and economic development—and in its geographic scope, addressing Biloxi as a whole, smaller “Planning Areas” within the City, and the area within unincorporated Harrison County into which Biloxi may logically expand in the future.

The legal authority for the Comprehensive Plan is found under Section 17-1-1 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, as amended. Mississippi requires that the plan, at a minimum, include:

- Goals and objectives for the long-range (20–25 years) that address, at a minimum, residential, commercial and industrial development; parks, open space and recreation; street or road improvements; and public schools and community facilities;
- A land use plan with projections of population and economic growth for the planning area;
- A transportation plan, depicting all existing and proposed improvements, which shall be a basis for a capital improvements program; and
- A community facilities plan, depicting housing, schools, parks and recreation, public buildings and facilities, and utilities and drainage, which shall be a basis for a capital improvements program.

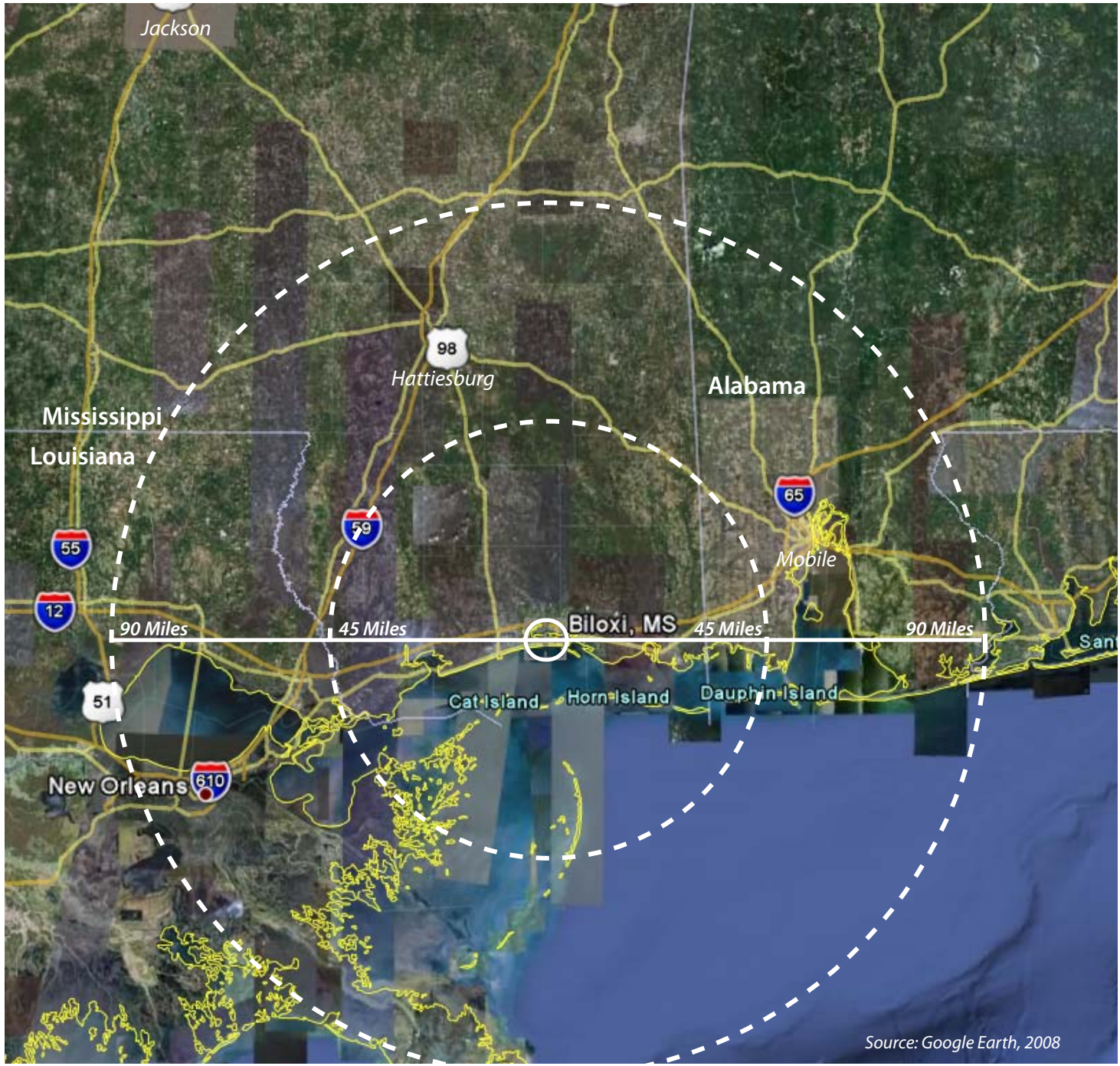


FIGURE 1.1/REGIONAL LOCATION

1.2/PLAN ORGANIZATION

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2 (Vision Statement)** establishes a positive image of Biloxi's future based on the direct input of citizens during the planning process. The Vision Statement establishes the mandate and direction (*"what we want to be"*) for the objectives, strategies, and actions set forth in the rest of the Comprehensive Plan (*"what we must do to achieve the Vision"*).
- **Chapters 3 to 8 (Plan Elements)** define long-range goals, objectives, and implementing actions for the following Comprehensive Plan subject areas:
 - Land Use (Chapter 3)
 - Transportation (Chapter 4)
 - Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources (Chapter 5)
 - Community Facilities and Services (Chapter 6)
 - Housing (Chapter 7)
 - Economic Development (Chapter 8)

While these subject areas are presented separately, there are many synergies and connections between topics such as land use and transportation and these interrelationships are taken into account in the elements (e.g., through cross-referencing between related objectives and actions).

- **Chapters 9 and 10 (Planning Areas)** present concepts and strategies for the improvement of smaller geographic areas in the City of Biloxi within the citywide policy framework set by the Plan Elements. Chapter 9 addresses the four neighborhood areas into which the City is divided for planning purposes: East Biloxi, West Biloxi, North Biloxi, and Woolmarket. Chapter 10 presents a concept and strategy for revitalization of Downtown Biloxi.

- **Chapter 11 (Greater Biloxi Planning Area)** defines the area into which the City could logically choose to expand in the future. While any future annexations will be subject to further study, designating this area allows the City to consider land use and population trends beyond Biloxi's city limits over a 20–25 year period.
- **Chapter 12 (Implementation)** presents guidance for use of the Comprehensive Plan by the City in policy and decision-making; an action plan that integrates the recommendations of the Plan Elements; a framework for revising the City's Capital Improvements Program to be consistent with the plan; and a process for monitoring progress in plan implementation.



1.3 / PLANNING PROCESS

Biloxi's new comprehensive plan has been prepared through a process consisting of three primary phases, as follows:

1/ Existing Conditions, Trends, and Issues: In this phase a host of information on population and development trends in Biloxi and the region, conditions and trends related to the subject areas of the Plan Elements, and current plans and regulations was reviewed. In addition, various means of public outreach were used to solicit input from citizens on key issues for Biloxi's future. The results of this phase are summarized in the *Existing Conditions, Trends, and Issues Report* (November 2008).

2/ Vision and Long-Range Goals and Objectives: In this phase a Vision Statement for Biloxi's future was formulated based on the analysis and community input received in Phase 1. In addition, Long-Range Goals and Objectives were developed for each Plan Element in support of the Vision.

3/ Comprehensive Plan Development: In this phase a complete draft Comprehensive Plan was prepared for public review and comment. The draft plan synthesizes the results of the previous two phases. Following the review period, revisions to the draft will be made to address public comments and a final Comprehensive Plan will be adopted by City Council.

The planning process has included extensive opportunities for community input:

- A random, statistically valid survey of 500 voters on issues and ideas for Biloxi's future was conducted at the onset of the process by Market Research Insight.
- Key person interviews were conducted with approximately 70 persons having a background and knowledge of issues affecting all aspects of Biloxi (public safety, community development, parks and recreation, schools, etc.).
- Focus group discussions were conducted with representatives of the Vietnamese and Hispanic communities and East Biloxi neighborhood block captains to gain additional insight into East Biloxi issues.
- Two series of public workshops, each in three different locations within the City, were conducted in September and December 2008 to gather public input on issues and ideas for development in the Comprehensive Plan. A third series of three public workshops will be held to solicit feedback on the Draft Comprehensive Plan.

The results of the above outreach are presented in the *Existing Conditions and Trends Report*. In addition to input from the broader community, a Comprehensive Plan Resource Group comprised of citizens with different perspectives on Biloxi met at key points in the process to provide a "sounding board" and direction for plan development.

1.4/THE BIG ISSUES

A reminder of such past storms as Camille and a possible harbinger of future storms to come, Hurricane Katrina’s landfall irrevocably changed the face of Biloxi. The spirit and resiliency of Biloxians is reflected in the tremendous progress that has been made in rebuilding the City since 2005. Nevertheless, an overarching concern of citizens heard throughout the process is the impact of the change the City continues to experience on what makes Biloxi unique: its history, character, sense of place, and the spirit and hospitality of the people.

Echoing the central theme of *Reviving the Renaissance—Building Our Future, Embracing the Past*—the goals, objectives, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan are designed to address this concern by directing recovery, rebuilding, and new development to preserve, restore, and strengthen Biloxi’s natural, cultural, and historic heritage. In doing so the plan addresses three key questions (the “big issues”):

1/ Storm Vulnerability: How can Biloxi reduce its vulnerability to future storms through nonstructural and structural protection measures?

2/ Rebuilding the Peninsula: How can areas of West Biloxi and East Biloxi in particular that were impacted by Katrina be redeveloped to retain character, reinforce community, and resist future storm damage?

3/ Managing Growth North of the Bay: How can a sustainable development pattern that is cost-effectively served by public infrastructure and services be created as Biloxi grows to the north away from its traditional core on the Peninsula?

The answers to these questions are interwoven throughout the Plan Elements and the improvement and revitalization strategies for the Planning Areas.



VISION STATEMENT / 2

The Vision Statement articulates in clear, simple terms the kind of place Biloxians want their city to be 20–25 years in the future (the time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan). As an expression of shared community values and motivations, it provides the policy touchstone and guide for the goals, objectives, strategies, and actions that are detailed in the remainder of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Vision Statement was prepared based on citizen input and reviewed at a series of public meetings conducted in December 2008. Reflecting Biloxi's place in a time of economic, environmental, and social uncertainty and change - as manifested in the impacts of Katrina in 2005 and the global recession that started in 2008 - it establishes **resilience** as the overarching direction that will enable the City to succeed and prosper in the 21st century.¹



Vision Statement

The best of Biloxi's past—its cultural heritage, natural resources, and the spirit of its people—is carried forward and enhanced in a **prosperous, resilient** city for the 21st century. The City's 21st century renaissance is based on:

- A **diverse, thriving economy** that capitalizes on Biloxi's assets: its natural and cultural resources, economic anchors, status as a premiere visitor destination, and the entrepreneurial spirit of its people.
- A **healthy environment** that supports quality of life, sustains the economy, and protects against storm damage and flooding.
- A **welcoming community** that celebrates Biloxi's unique character and sense of place; provides opportunities for all citizens; and takes care of those in need.



¹ Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines resilience as "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."

