

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES / 9

The Comprehensive Plan addresses the City of Biloxi at several different scales, including the current municipal boundaries, broader regional planning context, and geographic subareas within the City. For planning purposes, the City is divided into four neighborhood subareas: East Biloxi, West Biloxi, North Biloxi, and Woolmarket (see Figure 9.1 Neighborhood Planning Areas). Both East and West Biloxi are located on the peninsula between the Mississippi Sound and the Back Bay of Biloxi. North Biloxi and Woolmarket are located north of the Back Bay. For each neighborhood, this chapter presents existing conditions information, an overall vision and concept, and specific strategies designed to help realize the vision.

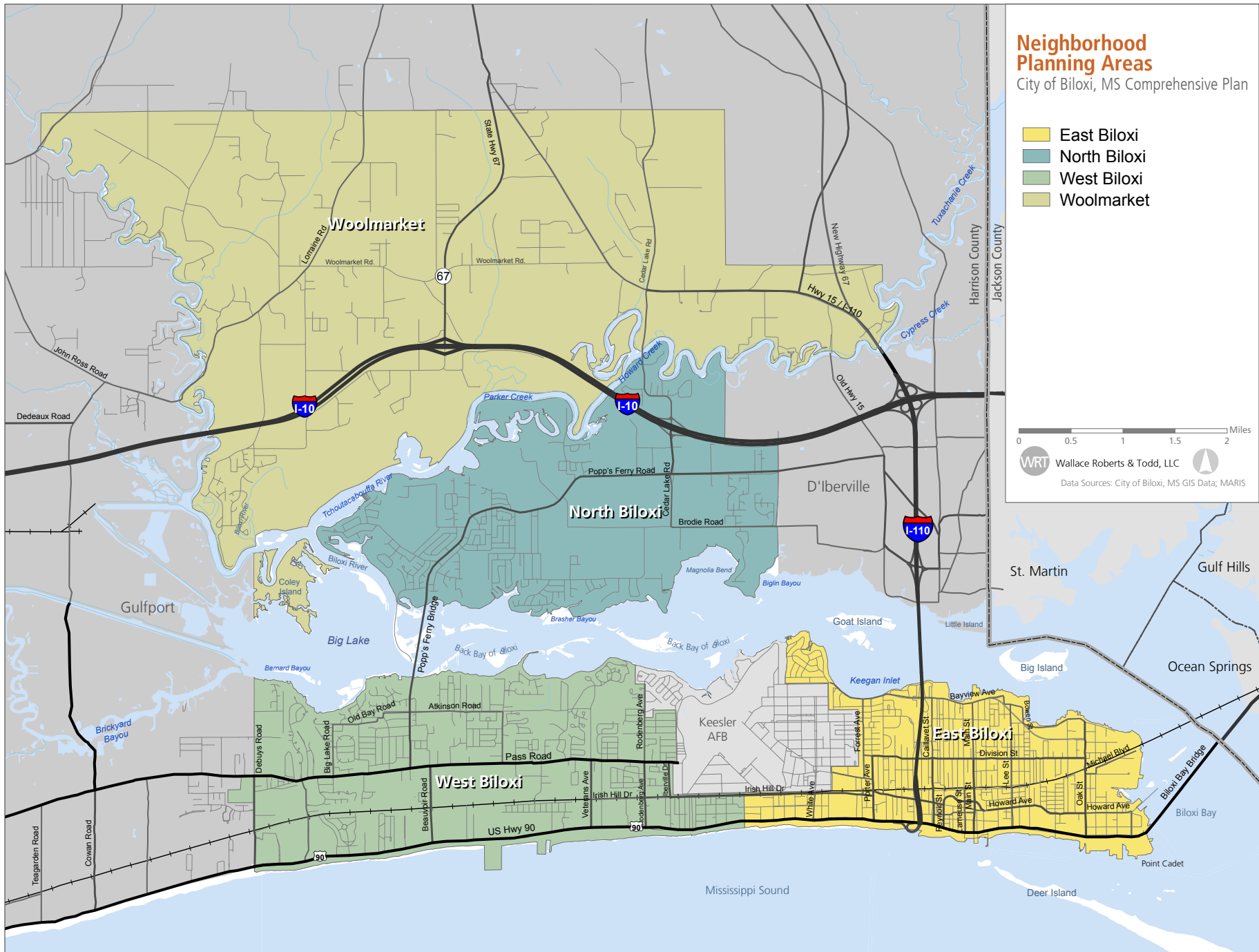


FIGURE 9.1/NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREAS

9.1/EAST BILOXI NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Overview

Land Use

East Biloxi is the area of the City that was most damaged by Hurricane Katrina. A large portion of East Biloxi (primarily east of I-110) is within flood hazard areas where floodplain construction requirements and the high cost of insurance have stymied reconstruction efforts, resulting in a predominance of vacant land and buildings. An overview of land use in East Biloxi shows mainly single-family residential land uses in the interior of the peninsula crossed by scattered commercial uses along major corridors, including Caillavet Street, Howard Avenue, Oak Street, and Division Street. Keesler Air Force Base is a large institutional land use that abuts East Biloxi to the west. Existing land uses along the waterfront perimeter of East Biloxi include Casino/Hotel and Industrial/Commercial Seafood. Downtown Biloxi lies within the bounds of East Biloxi but is addressed separately in Chapter 10.

Key Issues

- The high proportion of undeveloped land, vacant land, and vacant buildings is the most salient and urgent land use issue in East Biloxi.
- Hurricane Katrina’s destruction significantly changed East Biloxi’s land use pattern. A comprehensive framework to guide the ongoing redevelopment effort must take into account the need for resilient land uses that can resist future storm threats.
- Casinos rebuilt quickly after the storm. Now there is a need to diversify land uses, offer tourism and entertainment options, and increase open space and recreation on the peninsula. Diversifying and providing new entertainment options will offer a better quality of life for residents and help to establish Biloxi as a premiere destination.

Transportation

Major east-west connections within East Biloxi are Highway 90/Beach Boulevard, Howard Avenue, Division Street, and Bayview Avenue. Among these, Highway 90/Beach Boulevard is the only connection west to West Biloxi and east to Ocean Springs via the Biloxi Bay Bridge. Major north-south connections within East Biloxi are I-110, Caillavet Street, Main Street, and Oak Street, with I-110 providing the only access out of East Biloxi to the north. An active CSX rail line cuts east-west across East Biloxi.

Rebuilding of Biloxi following Katrina is proceeding with pedestrian and bicycle circulation in mind. Most notably for East Biloxi, the new Biloxi Bay Bridge was constructed with a 10-foot pedestrian and bicycle path. Highway 90/Beach Boulevard is being improved with a pedestrian and bicycle path. The Coast Transit Authority (CTA) provides two bus routes in East Biloxi (Route 31 Blue and Route 31 Red) and the “Casino Hopper” route, which connects all of the casinos in East Biloxi. East Biloxi’s water transportation system, which consists of a network of piers, boat ramps, docks, and marinas, was severely impacted by Katrina and is being reconstructed.

Key Issues

- An issue related to the limited number of connections to the peninsula is the lack of a direct north-south connection between Interstate 10 and Highway 90 other than I-110. In addition, east-west connections across the City and the County are limited by various waterways (rivers and bays) and federal land restrictions (Air Force and Navy bases). These constraints affect mobility and emergency evacuation in East Biloxi.
- The pedestrian/bicycle path across the new Biloxi Bay Bridge is heavily used and there is great potential to develop additional pedestrian and bicycle facilities in East Biloxi as an alternative to automobile use.

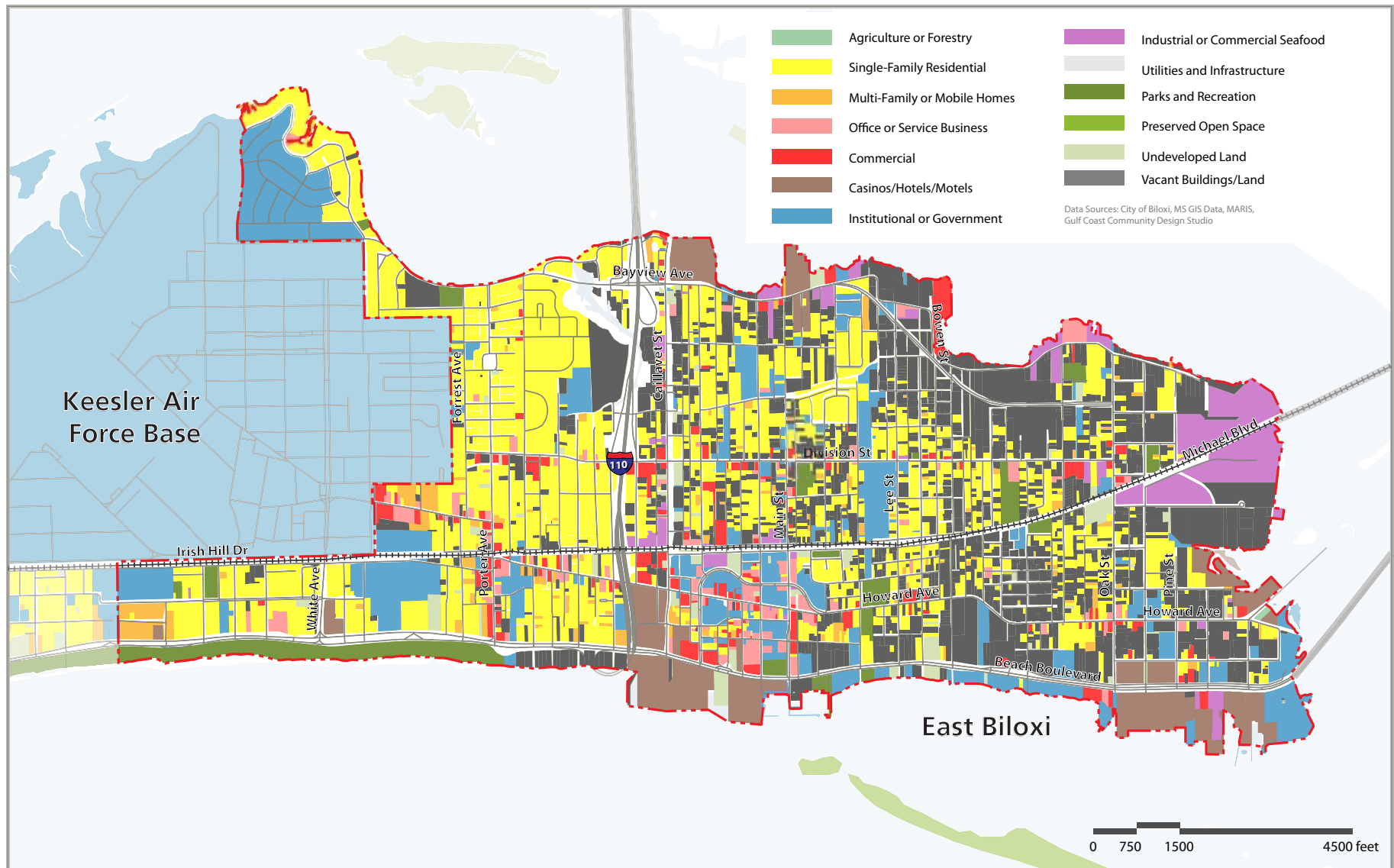


FIGURE 9.1.1/EAST BILOXI EXISTING LAND USE (2008)

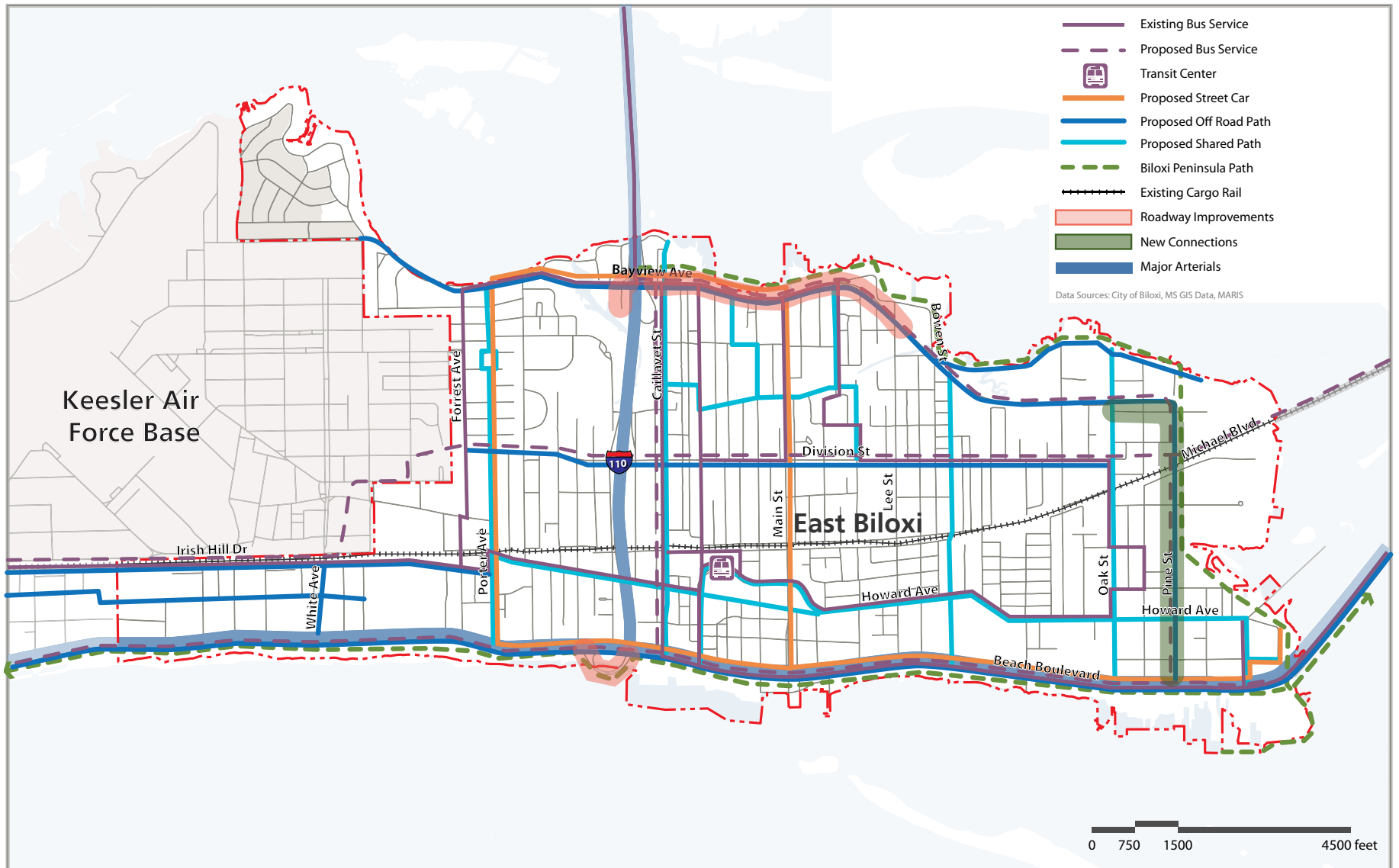


FIGURE 9.1.2/EAST BILOXI EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK WITH PLANNED/PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Natural, Historic, and Cultural Resources

Water resources—the Mississippi Sound, Biloxi Bay, and the Back Bay of Biloxi—shape East Biloxi’s boundaries and support the local tourism and seafood industries. Most of East Biloxi is located within the 100-year floodplain and much of its terrain is located seven feet or more below the base (100-year) flood elevation as defined by the revised FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Since Hurricane Katrina, the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) has tracked building and vacancy trends in East Biloxi. GCCDS found that of the buildings destroyed or later demolished as a result of Katrina, over 65% were located on land less than 10 feet above sea level.

As a result of East Biloxi’s low-lying topography, tidal marsh areas (freshwater, brackish, saline, and intermediate marsh) occur along its perimeter and in inland depressions. Many of these areas provide habitat for native plants and animals. Live oaks are a particularly important native species and natural resource, adding scenic value and helping to control erosion and stormwater runoff. The Sand Beach Authority/Parkway Commission and the Department of Transportation are currently assessing each live oak tree as part of their ongoing Hurricane Katrina recovery plan. Other important natural resources include the Sand Beach and the offshore Deer Island Coastal Preserve.

The earliest European colonists settled on the peninsula in and around what is now East Biloxi. East Biloxi was the center of Biloxi over the subsequent centuries and as a result has a wealth of historic and cultural resources, including five local historic overlay districts—West Beach, West Central, Down-

town, East Central, and Point Cadet. Of these, West Beach, West Central, and Downtown are also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. East Biloxi also contains multiple properties on the National Register. Many of these properties were damaged or destroyed in Hurricane Katrina.

In East Biloxi, a museum district is emerging along Beach Boulevard east of Downtown. Plans for the Ohr-O’Keefe Museum of Art, the Biloxi Maritime and Seafood Industry Museum, Katrina Museum, and the Mardi Gras Museum are underway at this location. Other cultural landmarks in East Biloxi include the Biloxi Lighthouse, the Saenger Theatre for the Performing Arts, the Biloxi Little Theater, Vieux Marche, and Rue Magnolia. In addition, a number of events celebrating local heritage, culture, and history take place in East Biloxi each year. The Biloxi Seafood Festival and Mardi Gras celebrations are two among these many special events.

Key Issues

- East Biloxi’s water features, such as Sand Beach, Point Cadet, Keegan Inlet, and other tidal inlets and wetlands, are important components of the natural ecology and key to sustaining local identity, heritage, economy, and environmental health.
- Abundant historic resources and Biloxi’s close ties to its past are a major asset important to the quality of life of residents and to the economy. The City has historic preservation standards and regulations in place to protect these important resources.
- The emerging museum district along Highway 90 will expand the cultural experiences available to residents and visitors.

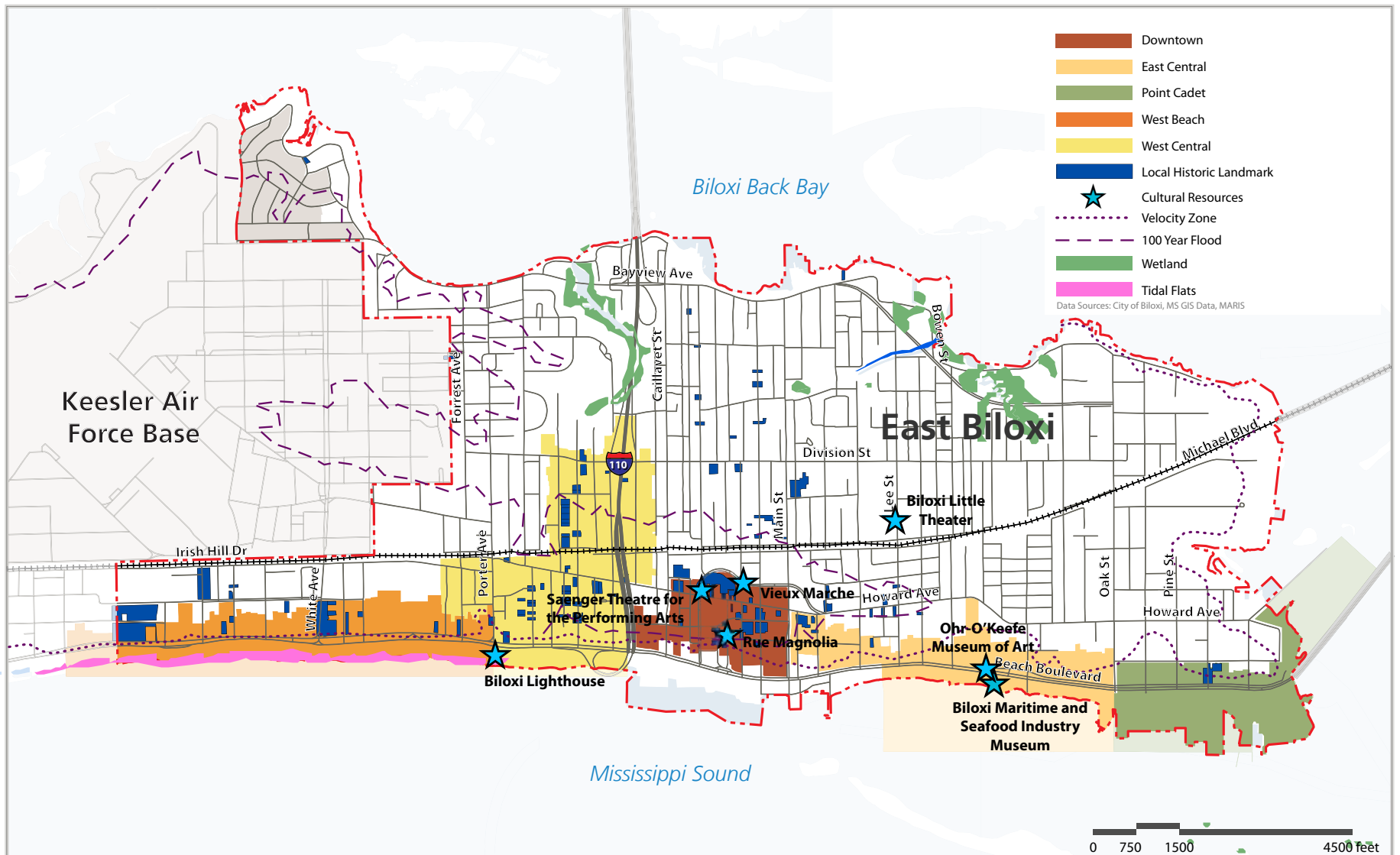


FIGURE 9.1.3/EAST BILOXI NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

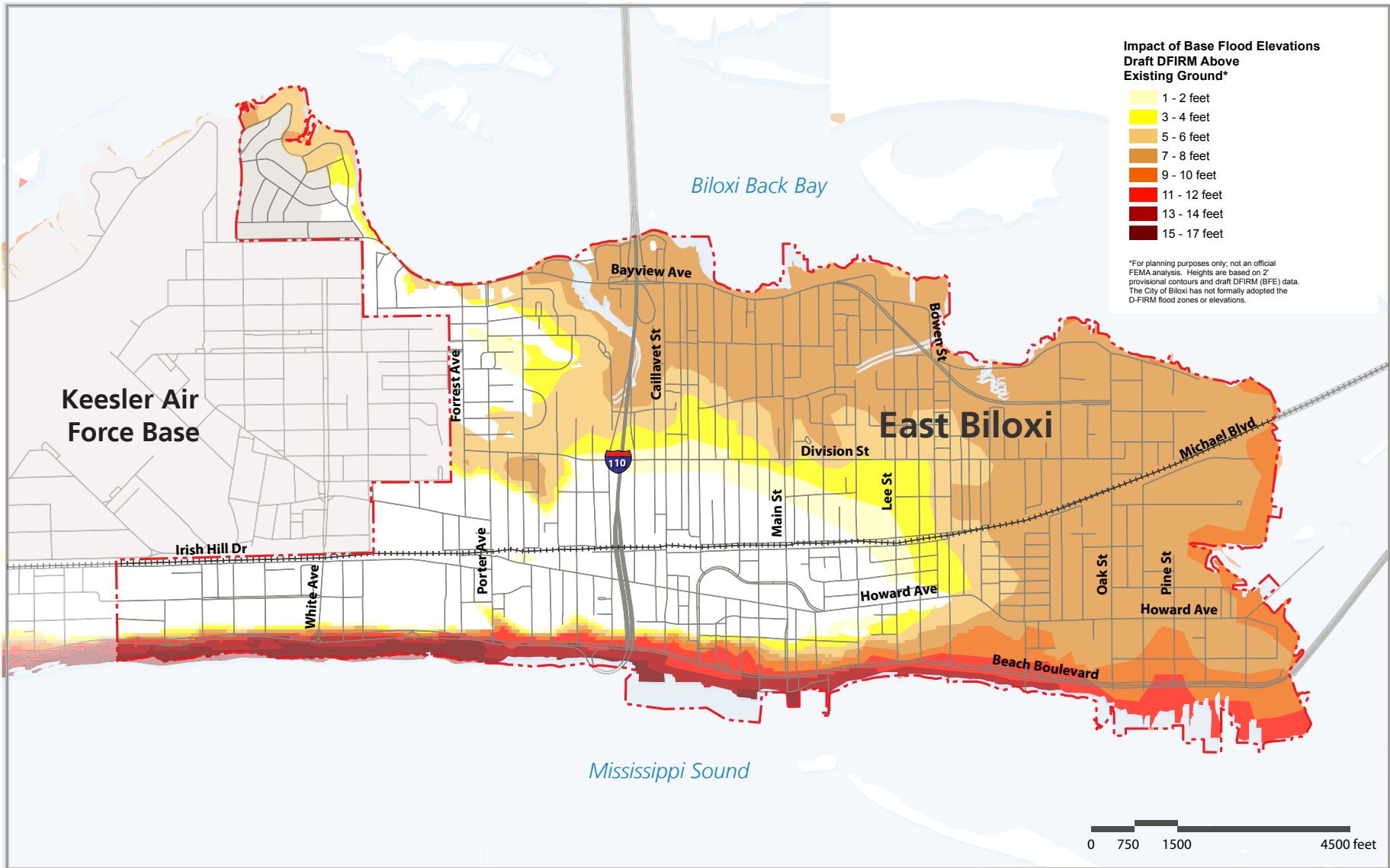


FIGURE 9.1.4/EAST BILOXI BASE FLOOD ELEVATIONS

Community Facilities and Services

The Biloxi Police Department is headquartered in East Biloxi at the Lopez-Quave Public Safety Center, located on Porter Avenue. The Biloxi Fire Department operates three fire districts in East Biloxi (Fire Districts 1, 2, and 3). The major focus of emergency preparedness in Biloxi is to reduce hazards and prepare the City and its residents for future storm and flood risks. This is particularly important in East Biloxi due to its vulnerability to future storms. The Biloxi Regional Medical Center, a 24-hour emergency services and 153-bed acute care facility, is located in the Downtown.

East Biloxi is fully served by an infrastructure network consisting of water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, power and telecommunications systems. These systems, particularly sewer and water lines within the storm surge area, were damaged during Hurricane Katrina and are being reconstructed.

Biloxi's Department of Parks and Recreation and its Ports Division oversee numerous parks and marina facilities in East Biloxi. Town Green is located on the landward side of Beach Boulevard between Lameuse and Main Streets, across from the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor (a public marina operated by the Ports Division). The Sand Beach Trail (proposed by the Comprehensive Plan to be part of a larger Biloxi Peninsula Path) and Biloxi Bay Bridge walkways are two popular pedestrian and bicycle paths in East Biloxi.

Biloxi's public libraries are part of the larger Harrison County system. The East Biloxi Library was irreparably damaged during Hurricane Katrina and has been demolished. It has been replaced by a temporary library on Howard Avenue pending construction of a combined library/civic center. East Biloxi is served by the Biloxi Public School District and is home to three elementary schools and one middle school.

Key Issues

- The City has allocated \$300 million to repair storm-damaged infrastructure systems. In the context of many vacant properties that have been slow to rebuild, the City should strategically focus short-term infrastructure repairs in East Biloxi to support priority development areas.
- The impacts of sanitary sewer and stormwater facilities on water quality and quantity (runoff from developed areas during storms) are issues of concern in East Biloxi given its water resources and vulnerability to flooding. The City is addressing these issues on an ongoing basis through initiatives such as the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and repair or replacement of sewer, water, and storm drainage facilities damaged by Katrina.



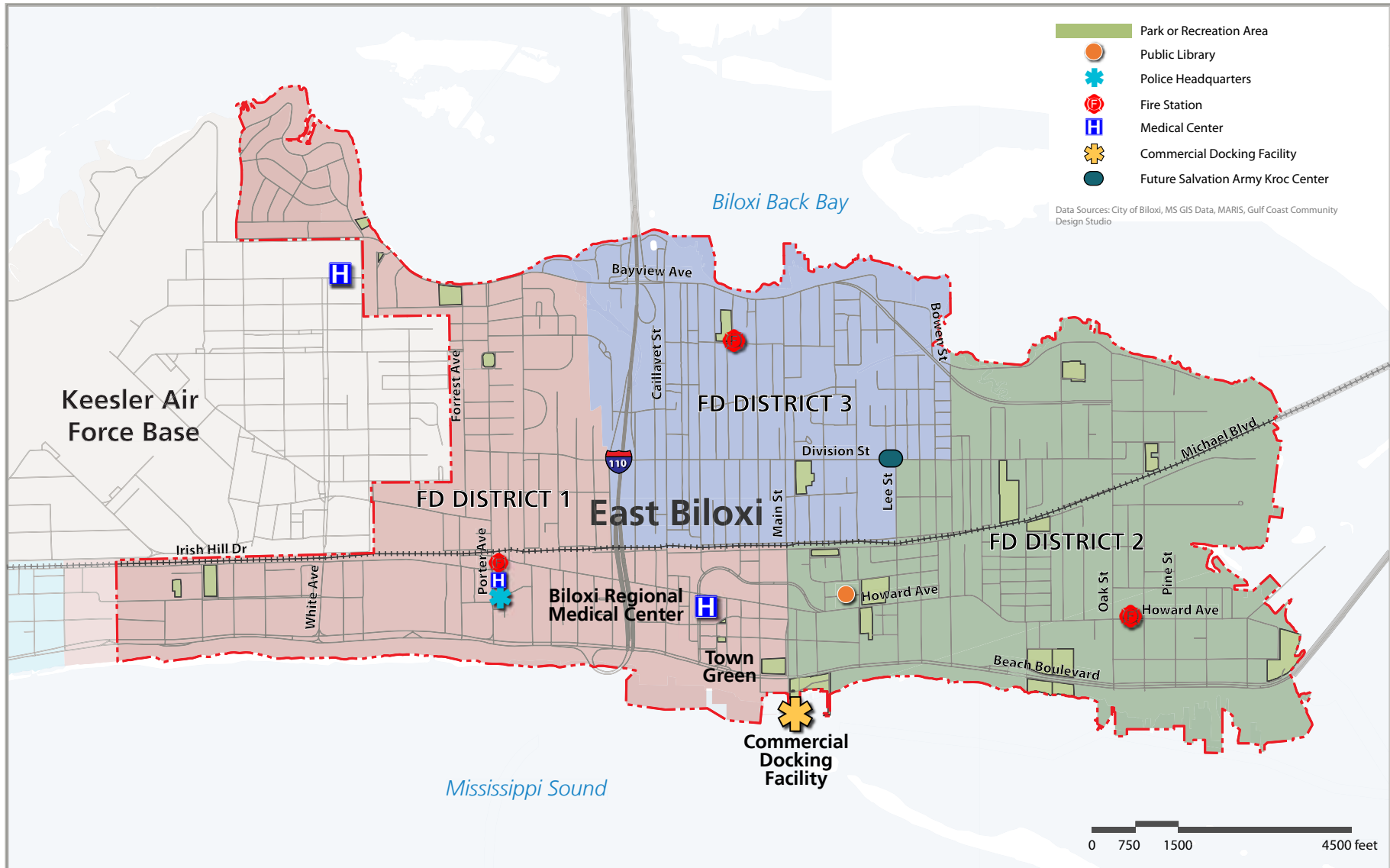


FIGURE 9.1.5/EAST BILOXI COMMUNITY FACILITIES