

9.2/WEST BILOXI

Overview

Land Use

West Biloxi's existing land use pattern is diverse and somewhat disjointed. In general, it consists of:

- A “destination district” with attractions and higher-density development along Highway 90 and the Mississippi Sound;
- A commercial corridor along Pass Road, just east of Edgewater Mall; and
- Single-family residential neighborhoods located mainly north of Pass Road.

Damage from Hurricane Katrina primarily affected the Highway 90 corridor where rebuilding is underway. Treasure Bay Casino relocated quickly to its upper building levels after the



storm, but hotel and condominium construction has been affected by the economic downturn. Currently there is a mix of commercial, casino, hotel/motel, multi-family, and institutional land uses along Highway 90. Major anchors include the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center, Edgewater Mall, and the restored Beauvoir historic property. Pass Road supports scattered commercial land uses interspersed with residential, institutional, and vacant land.

Key Issues

- There is a need to promote a more coherent land use pattern in West Biloxi, especially along Highway 90 and Pass Road. A key challenge to development along Highway 90 is to balance commercial and residential development with maintaining the scenic quality and accessibility of the Sand Beach. Land use decisions along Pass Road should focus on promoting its redevelopment into an attractive, retail/mixed-use corridor over time.
- There is a significant amount of undeveloped land in West Biloxi, much with natural features such as floodplain or wetland but also including approximately 570 acres that are environmentally unconstrained. Much of this land has been the subject of recent development proposals and how it is developed will significantly affect West Biloxi's future.
- Mississippi Coast Coliseum, Edgewater Mall, and Beauvoir are regional destinations on Highway 90 in West Biloxi located near each other. Land use and regulatory decisions in this area should be coordinated with physical improvements with the goal of creating a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly district.

Transportation

Highway 90 and Pass Road are major east-west connections in West Biloxi, with Highway 90 being the only continuous link between West and East Biloxi. Storm damage from Hurricane Katrina rendered Highway 90 impassable for an extended period of time but the roadway has been reconstructed with improved pedestrian/bicycle connections. Popp's Ferry Road is West Biloxi's only north-south connector across Back Bay. An active CSX rail line cuts east-west across West Biloxi and has been proposed as a future multi-modal transportation corridor. Coast Transit Authority (CTA) provides a Route 24/Keesler Express bus route that connects residents of West Biloxi to jobs at Keesler Air Force Base via Pass Road.



Key Issues

- Keesler Air Force Base and the Back Bay of Biloxi are physical barriers that restrict vehicular connections from West Biloxi to East and North Biloxi. Improving transportation corridors within West Biloxi and connections from West Biloxi to inland routes is crucial to timely evacuations during storm events as well as easing peak hour congestion. Priority transportation projects include:
 - Extension of Popp's Ferry Road to Highway 90 timed with the expansion of the Coliseum
 - Widening of the Popp's Ferry bridge
 - Roadway improvements along Pass Road and Highway 90
- Improving multi-modal transportation options, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit service, is a priority for West Biloxi. Long-range transit improvements proposed in CTA's Gulf Coast Transit Development Plan include a Coliseum District Streetcar Line serving the West Biloxi Convention Center District and east-west bus rapid transit or high-speed rail service along the existing CSX railroad corridor.

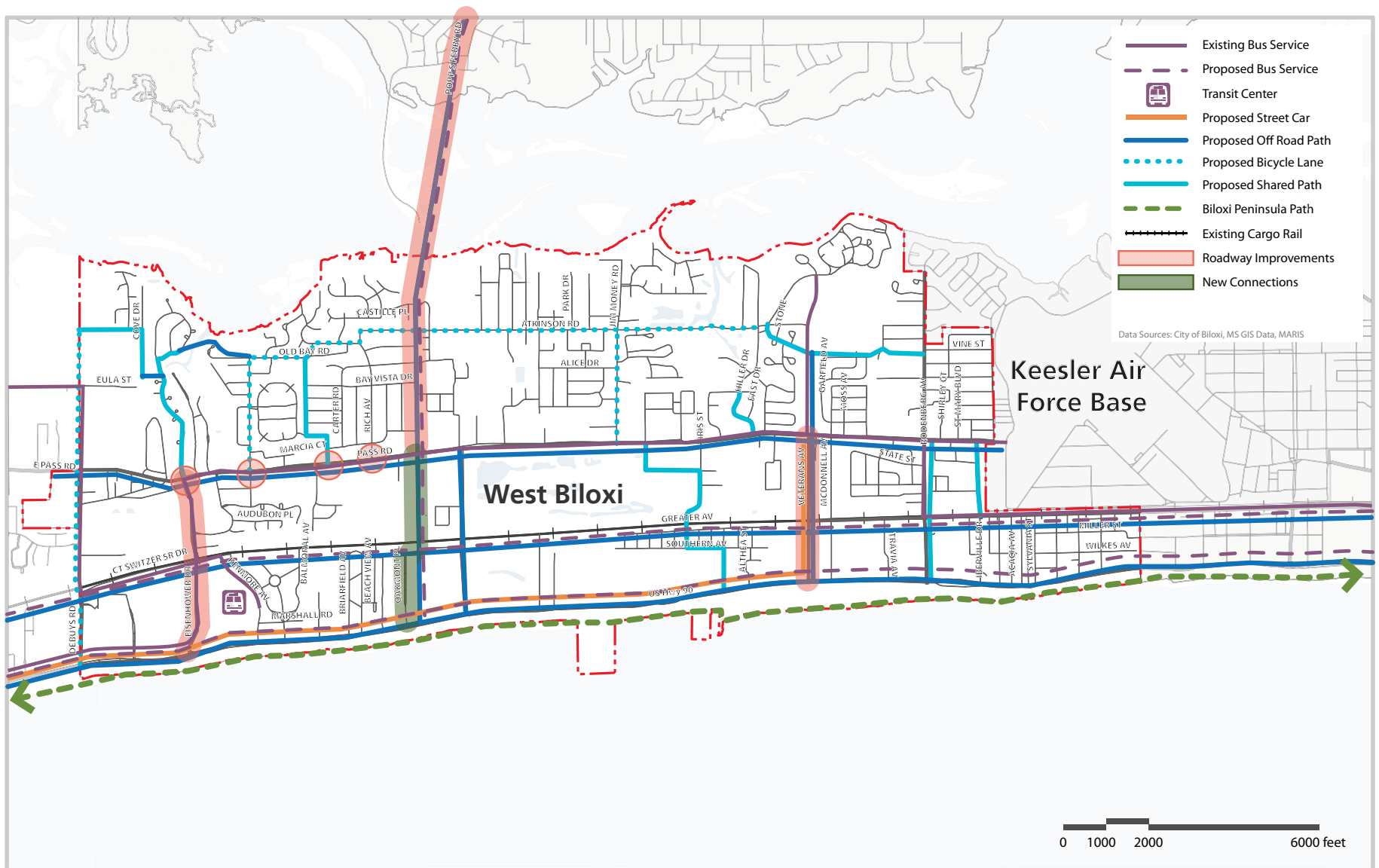


FIGURE 9.2.2/WEST BILOXI EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK WITH PLANNED/PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS



Natural, Historic, and Cultural Resources

The Mississippi Sound and Back Bay of Biloxi form West Biloxi's southern and northern boundaries, providing a scenic context for development. While most of West Biloxi is located outside of designated flood hazard areas, the south side of Highway 90 and portions of the north side fall within the Velocity Zone. In addition, areas between Pass Road and the CSX rail line are located within the 100-year floodplain, as are areas along the Back Bay. Edgewater Park, Hiller Park, and President Broadwater Golf Club are the largest open space features in West Biloxi and home to many live oak trees. Other important natural resources in East Biloxi include the Sand Beach and wetlands located along the Back Bay and in low-lying areas between Pass Road and the CSX line.

Historic and cultural resources in West Biloxi include Edgewater Park, the Mississippi Coast Coliseum, the National Cemetery on the VA property, and Beauvoir—an historic mansion, museum, and library dedicated to preserving the legacy of Confederate president Jefferson Davis.

Key Issues

- West Biloxi's natural, historic and cultural resources—including the Sand Beach, Beauvoir, the National Cemetery, and the Mississippi Coast Coliseum—are regional attractions. Preserving and promoting these resources is important to West Biloxi's economy and identity.
- While most of West Biloxi is higher than East Biloxi, vulnerability to major storms is still a major issue, particularly along Highway 90. Low-lying wetlands and other areas within the floodplain perform an important environmental service by absorbing water during storm events. In addition, the beach and dunes along the Sand Beach constitute a natural "line of defense."

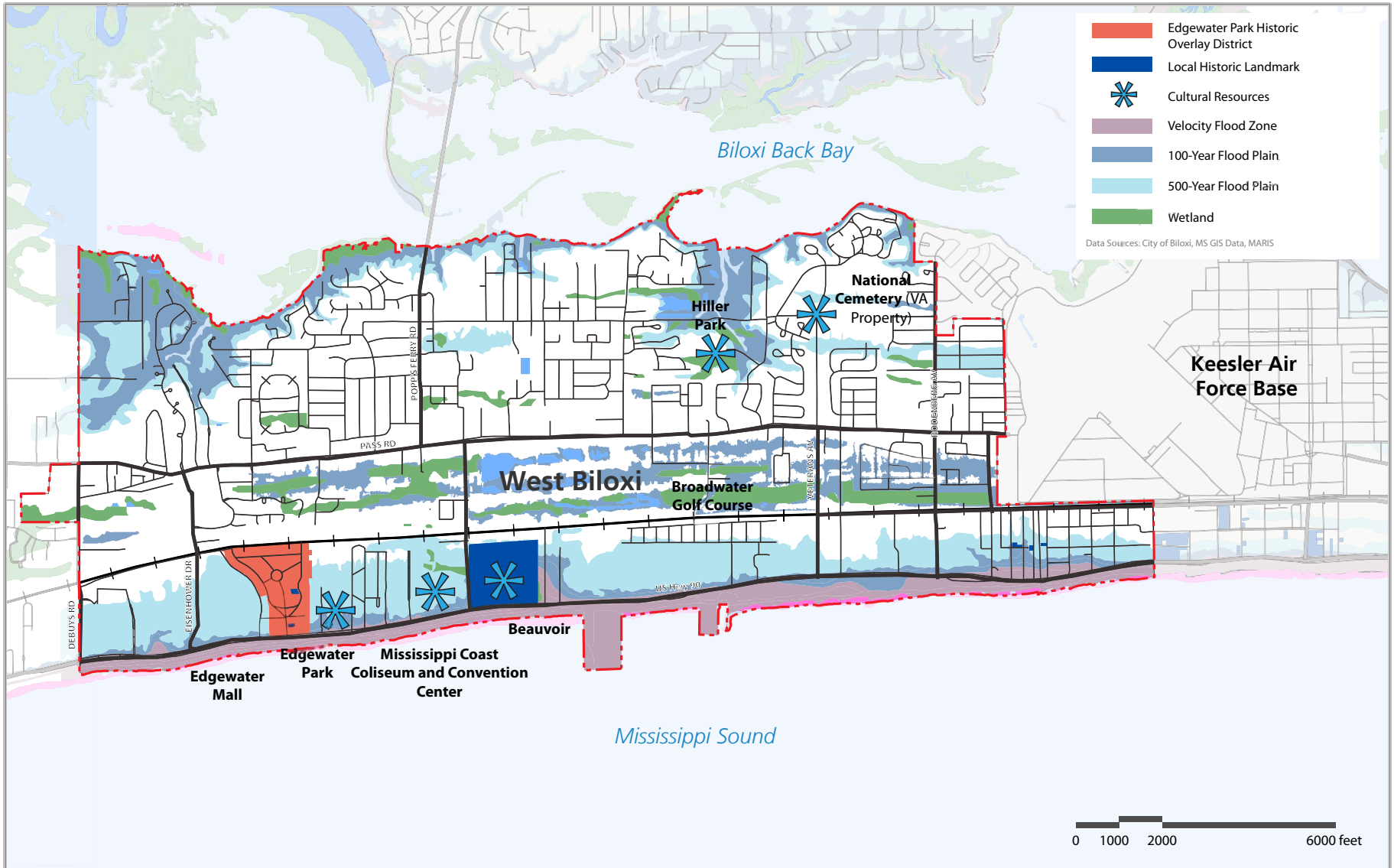


FIGURE 9.2.3/WEST BILOXI NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Community Facilities and Services

The Biloxi Fire Department operates two fire districts in West Biloxi (Fire Districts 4 and 5). In addition, West Biloxi is home to the Veterans Affairs Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, a hospital providing medical and patient care services to over 50,000 veterans in the region.

West 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 oversees a number of parks in West Biloxi, the largest of which is Hiller Park, and the Donal M. Snyder Community Center on Pass Road. The Sand Beach Trail (proposed by the Comprehensive Plan to be part of a larger Peninsula Path) is a popular pedestrian and bicycle path in West Biloxi. However, West Biloxi otherwise lacks a network of paths, open space connections, or bikeways for public use. The West Biloxi Library and five elementary schools are located in West Biloxi.

Key Issues

- Hiller Park is Biloxi's largest park but is relatively inaccessible as it lacks frontage on a major road. The Mississippi Renaissance Garden Foundation has plans to develop a model botanical garden and horticultural center in this park on land provided by the City.
- Aside from the Sand Beach walkway, West Biloxi lacks a continuous open space network of greenways and recreational paths or routes for bicyclists and pedestrians.

