

Parks & Recreation

With an average of 219 sunny days a year, sand beaches and fresh water rivers that feed into the Gulf of Mexico, Biloxi has tremendous natural resources that are enhanced by public amenities. Residents and visitors who enjoy golf and/or fishing can take to the greens or dip their hooks year 'round thanks to Biloxi's mild winters and the proliferation of golf courses and numerous species of salt and fresh water fish. A wide variety of charter boats are available for rent for four, six or eight hours or extended overnight excursions for those who would rather concentrate on fishing than on navigating.

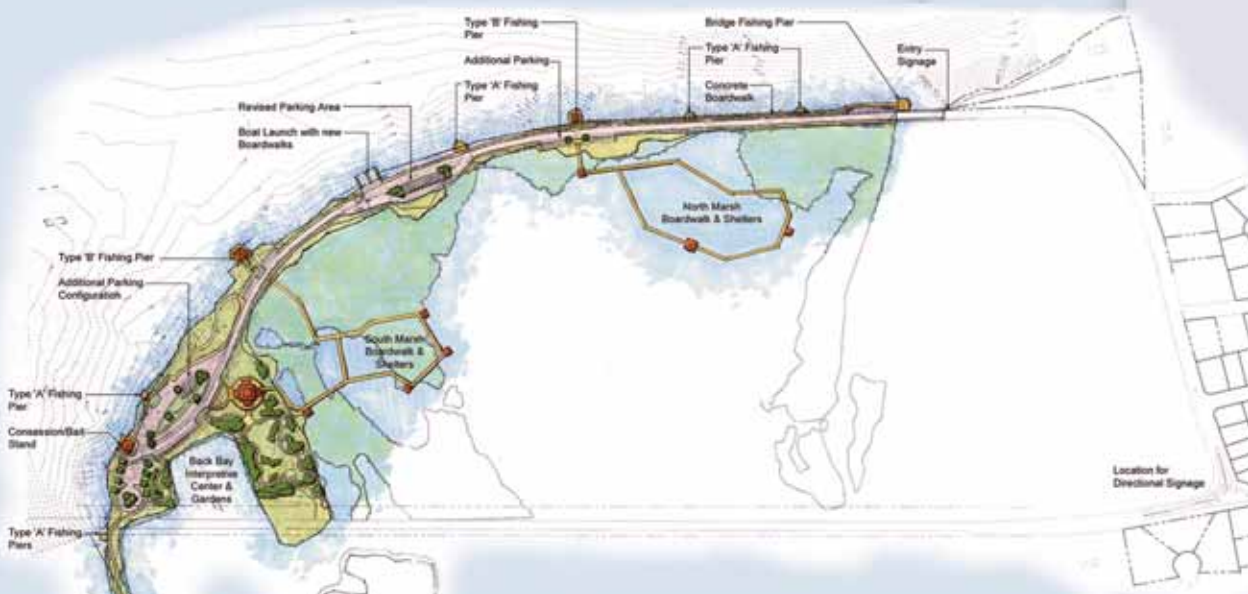
The City provides geographically diverse recreational amenities that include 258 acres of large and small parks, 42 well-equipped ballfields and playgrounds, two public marinas, and piers and boat launches on both front beach and the Back Bay of Biloxi.

For those who prefer indoor recreational activities, the **Donal Snyder Community Center** in West Biloxi provides residents access to a four-lane lap pool, an indoor walking track and exercise rooms equipped with state-of-the-art equipment. Almost all community centers include indoor basketball courts and space for exercise classes such as aerobics and strength training. A new community center is being constructed on Howard Avenue to expand indoor recreational amenities in East Biloxi and to house the main branch of the **Biloxi Library**. The existing **Howard Avenue Community Center** then will be renovated to support senior citizen activities.

In addition to modern community centers, residents enjoy the **Biloxi Natatorium**, Mississippi's only municipally-owned Olympic size all-weather pool, protected with a retractable roof, which is home to the Biloxi Swim Team and is open every day except Sunday for recreational swimming.

To encourage greater youth participation in **City recreation leagues**, Biloxi eliminated all registration fees for residents' children several years ago and now more than 5800 children play in one or more of the football, baseball, softball, basketball, swimming and soccer leagues. Through the City's **Start Smart Program**, Koosh products are used to teach basic sports skills, helping children ages 3-6 learn to play organized sports including baseball, soccer and basketball.

In 2000, the City of Biloxi purchased the 10-acre **Popp's Ferry Causeway Park** property to preserve this popular fishing area on the Back Bay of Biloxi as a public park. Since then, the City has secured several grants to leverage municipal and county funds to enhance the public's enjoyment of the park through construction of fishing and crabbing piers, improved boat launch ramps, the provision of new walking trails and raised boardwalks over salt marshes and construction of open air, covered pavilions. A masterplan is in place to guide the environmentally-sensitive development of this site for the continued enjoyment of the passive nature observer as well as active boat and fishing enthusiasts.



Popp's Ferry Causeway Park Master Plan



Marina and Harbor Improvements

Post-Katrina repairs and improvements at the **Biloxi Small Craft Harbor** and **Point Cadet Marina** are estimated to cost \$10 million and will provide the boating public with safer access to the waterfront. The Marina and harbor depths will range from 10-12 feet, new electrical systems will be installed at higher elevations, and the reconfiguration of piers will accommodate larger vessels. As part of the Small Craft Harbor work, a new bait shop and fuel dock will be constructed.

Biloxi Visitors Center and Lighthouse Park

With the masterplan for the new **Biloxi Visitors Center and Lighthouse Park** complete, the City is proceeding with acquisition of necessary property to house the new 25,300 square foot center to be located just north of the Biloxi Lighthouse. In addition to providing open space for recreational activities, the park will provide unobstructed views of one of the Coast's few remaining landmarks, the Biloxi Lighthouse, while improving pedestrian and vehicular safety in this high-traffic area that serves as the southwest corner of the Biloxi Main Street District. The new visitors center will consolidate visitors information with chamber and other community information services at an intersection that is easily accessible to the driving public from both U.S. Highway 90 and I-110.



Artist's rendering of Lighthouse Park and Visitors Center

