

Despite storm, value of land will increase throughout city

Property owners who fear that Hurricane Katrina's wrath may have decimated the value of land just as badly as the storm devastated homes and businesses are in for a surprise.

Mayor A.J. Holloway and Community Development Director Jerry Creel say that interest in Biloxi among developers was unfazed by the storm, and members of the Biloxi City Council have taken steps to quash unfounded concerns that some property owners, particularly those in east Biloxi, have about future plans for Point Cadet area.

In fact, in the wake of the storm, council members passed a resolution declaring that the city has no plans to eminent domain any property in east Biloxi for commercial use, such as condominium development.

"Some of the national media wondered if we were concerned about land speculators coming into hard-hit

areas of Biloxi and trying to buy up property," Holloway said. "The fact is, we had people looking to buy property – and people looking to see property – well before the storm. That's free enterprise.

"The advice that the City Council and I have for property owners is this: Don't make any hasty decisions about whether to sell your property. This storm didn't diminish the value of property in Biloxi, particularly in east Biloxi. If anything, land values stand to increase as a result of this storm.

"There's a great deal of opportunity and excitement about our future, and longtime property owners should determine their best options on how they can share in that opportunity and excitement."

Although on-shore gaming has been legalized, any proposals to establish on-shore gaming sites would require

public hearings before a decision would be made on whether a particular parcel might be re-zoned. As part of the process, nearby property owners would be notified of any proposals and interested residents would be given opportunities to voice their position.

Although the mayor and City Council supported the measure to allow casinos to be located within 800 feet of the shoreline, the prospect of re-zoning property would originate with property owners, not the city.

In fact, Mayor Holloway recently said that he is opposed to any wholesale zoning changes to create more casino-zoned areas of the city, noting that a significant amount of unused casino-zoned property currently exists in Biloxi. You can see a current citywide zoning map on the city's website at biloxi.ms.us.

You can get free how-to info on preparation and construction

Need more information about flood preparation and construction? The city has assembled a wealth of free how-to booklets about steps that you can take to minimize damage from storms and flooding.

The books are available at these locations:

- Community Development Department, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Municipal Building, 435-6280.
- City Hall lobby, Lameuse Street.
- Donal Snyder Sr. Community Center, Pass Road
- Biloxi public libraries (Lameuse Street, Popp's Ferry Road, Division Street and Pass Road).
- Woolmarket Fire Station, 8479 Woolmarket Road

You can also contact the City's Building or Code Enforcement divisions online at biloxi.ms.us/communitydevelopment.

For detailed info on building permits and construction requirements, contact the Building and Code Enforcement divisions at the Community Development Department, 435-6270 or online at building@biloxi.ms.us. Those planning work in a flood-prone area should contact floodplain manager Scott Underwood at sunderwood@biloxi.ms.us or at 435-6280.

You can obtain a number of helpful emergency preparedness brochures online at FEMA's website (www.fema.gov) or from the National Hurricane Center (www.noaa.nhc.gov).

Storm, disaster info can be kid stuff, thanks to website

It's never too soon to begin the education process about storms and the damage they can cause, and a host of educational activities especially for children are now available online.

The Flood and Storm section of Biloxi's web site (<http://biloxi.ms.us>) includes a direct link to

FEMA for Kids, which features Herman, "the spokescrab" and kid-style information on how to be prepared for disasters and how you can prevent disaster damage.

Parents and teachers will find a number of family or classroom activities for groups.

To see the FEMA for Kids site, visit <http://biloxi.ms.us/floodstorm> and click on For Kids at the top right.



Cable One Cable TV Advertising staffers Mike Kommersmith, left, and Vester Wentzell tape Mayor A.J. Holloway near the Camille memorial for a segment that aired Aug. 17, 2005, a mere 12 days before Hurricane Katrina destroyed the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer and bell tower, and leveled the Camille memorial, shown in the background at left.

City, Cable One to retire 'Camille' broadcast

For the past several years on the Aug. 17 anniversary of Hurricane Camille, Cable One has broadcast the documentary "A Lady Called Camille" to help educate new residents and remind longtime residents the dangers of storms and flooding.

With Hurricane Katrina establishing a new highwater mark in the annals of storm history, this year will mark the final presentation of the 30-minute documentary. In fact, this year's cablecast will feature a two-minute introduction by Mayor A.J. Holloway, that was taped last year at the site of the Hurricane Camille memorial on the grounds of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer. Hurricane Katrina struck 12 days after the program aired.

Biloxi residents will have one last to revisit the devastation wrought by Hurricane Camille during the cablecast of the documentary "A Lady Called Camille," which Cable One will air on its Biloxi system on Aug. 17, 2006, the 38th anniversary of the Category 5 storm making landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The program, which features actual footage from the aftermath of a Category 5 storm, will air at 10 a.m., 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. on Cable 13 in Biloxi. Cable One is airing it as a public service to help educate residents on the dangers of hurricanes.

Camille, with winds in excess of 200 mph and a 25-foot storm surge, swept across the Coast on the night of Aug. 17, 1969. The storm, which at the time was the most severe to strike the U.S., caused billions of dollars in damage, with 134 deaths and 23 persons missing from the Gulf Coast area. A nationwide relief effort, which included scores of military and civilian volunteers and businesses, helped Biloxi and surrounding communities in the aftermath of the storm. President Richard M. Nixon also visited the Coast in the days after the storm.

"A Lady Called Camille," which was created by the National Office of Civil Defense shortly after the hurricane, shows preparation and recovery efforts that were organized largely by the legendary Wade Guice, former Harrison County Civil Defense Director whose wife, Julia, served as Biloxi Civil Defense Director at the time. The duo are seen at their posts at the outset of the film.

Said Mayor Holloway: "By airing this documentary each year, Cable One has performed an invaluable public service in helping the city educate residents about the dangers of storms and flooding. We appreciate their contributions on this project, and, unfortunately, we'll be retiring that Aug. 17 cablecast with a new one each year, to take place on Aug. 29. We'll have more news on that as the date gets closer."

Federal agencies encouraging residents to use direct deposit

In those critical days after Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. Treasury Department worked with the Social Security Administration to get displaced Social Security and other federal benefit checks to recipients, as quickly as possible. But those who already were using direct deposit had immediate access to their funds from virtually anywhere, thanks to ATMs and financial institution networks.

That's why the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks – through **Go Direct** – are urging Social Security check

recipients who live along the Gulf Coast to switch to direct deposit. The recommendation, offered in light of last year's devastating hurricanes, is aimed at ensuring citizens receive their federal benefits without disruption.

Go Direct makes it easy to sign up for direct deposit. People can sign up by calling the toll-free **Go Direct** helpline at (800) 333-1795 or by visiting www.GoDirect.org to sign up online. To learn more about **Go Direct**, visit www.GoDirect.org.