

Assessing Gulf Coast Comprehensive Plans on Regional Livability



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What does the scale mean?



20 40 60 80

The comprehensive plans for the communities of the Mississippi Gulf Coast have been reviewed and evaluated for the degree to which they meet the livability principles as established by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Throughout this document thermometer scales are presented. Each scale represents the percent of possible points for that indicator that have been achieved. A 100 percent green scale represents that 100 percent of the possible points have been achieved for that indicator.

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Introduction

This assessment examines each of the fourteen comprehensive plans created on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Each of the communities of the Mississippi Gulf Coast is unique and has different priorities when it thinks of its future. The comprehensive planning process provides the opportunity for communities to imagine their future and decide what their priorities are and where they want to be in 20 to 30 years. Each city and county on the coast has a comprehensive plan to guide its growth and development in the future. Each plan celebrates what is good in the community and strives to better itself in many different areas from housing, to job creation, to natural resources.

While each community can work individually to improve its livability, there are many issues that require regional collaboration to improve the lives of those in the region. The Plan for Opportunity seeks to look regionally at the opportunities for increasing livability. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development developed six Livability principles, listed below.

1. Provide more transportation choices.

Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

3. Enhance economic competitiveness.

Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.

4. Support existing communities.

Target federal funding toward existing communities—

through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

In order to support the Plan for Opportunity an important first step is evaluating where the Mississippi Gulf Coast stands with planning for livability. In order to understand how the coast is planning for livability, each of the local governments on the Gulf Coast were contacted in the winter of 2011 to request a copy of their comprehensive plan. All of the 14 jurisdictions participated by providing copies of the comprehensive plans. Note that some of the communities were in the process of reviewing drafts of their comprehensive plans. These draft versions were reviewed for the purposes of this evaluation. In addition to the comprehensive plans, other specialized plans such as the Gulf Coast Area Transportation Study were obtained and evaluated. The goal of this evaluation is to provide an overview of what areas of livability are receiving significant attention in community-level comprehensive planning and to identify opportunities for further regional planning to support enhanced livability.

In order to systematically evaluate the integration of the livability principles into the comprehensive plans, the methodology relies on a detailed plan evaluation protocol. This protocol is built on the idea that livability can best be

planned for in a comprehensive plan if the community's plan creates a factual basis to support decision-making, set goals and objectives that support livability, and identify implementation strategies that will advance livability. The method used in this study utilizes the protocols developed in previous evaluations of comprehensive plans by a range of researchers. In order to develop criteria to evaluate plans, the author examined indicators used in the previous studies and examined indicators developed to measure healthy and sustainable communities, such as the Healthy Development Measurement Tool used by the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Sustainable Community Development Code Framework.

There are a wide array of potential implementation policies and strategies that can support livability. The implementation policies and strategies were grouped into broad categories, such as regulatory and incentive based.

A total of 101 indicators are used to evaluate the plans, 36 indicators of factual basis, 36 indicators of goals and objectives, and 29 indicators of strategies and policies. For each livability principle there are six factual basis and six goal indicators. While each plan is unique and may address livability in slightly different terms, a sample of indicators has been selected that represent some of the concepts which are held within the livability principle. The factual basis indicators are used to evaluate the factual basis, which assists in providing adequate information upon which goals and policies can be set. Each plan indicator was evaluated on a scale of zero to two. For the factual basis, a score of zero indicates that the criteria was absent in the plan, one indicates that criteria was present but not detailed, and two indicates that the criteria was present and detailed. For example, if a plan does not include road networks a score of zero would be marked. If the plan mentions the road network, but provides no detail, it would receive a one as the score. For a plan that has a detailed explanation or map of the road network, a two would be marked. For goals, a zero is assigned if that indicator was absent, one indicates that the indicator was present and related, and two indicates that the criteria was present and detailed. For example, one of the indicators is the promoting physical

activity through design. The Long Beach comprehensive plan received a score of two on this goal because it has the following: "Promote healthy lifestyle choices by improving walkability and connectivity throughout the community."

Scores were calculated by summing the scores across the comprehensive plans to understand how the region as a whole is addressing particular livability principles. For example, on the preserve natural amenities indicator the region received 17 out of 28 points across the 14 comprehensive plans. A percentage score was calculated and is included in this report. The scale symbol is used to represent the degree to which the region is planning for the individual indicators.

Many strategies and policies can work to achieve multiple livability principles. Strategies to achieve livability goals include, for example, land recycling, to support brownfield redevelopment or infill development. The presence of an implementation strategy or policy received a score of zero or one. A score of zero indicates that the indicator was not included and a score of one if the strategy/policy is mentioned in the plan. There are many different strategies and policies that can work to achieve the same livability goal. Therefore, the strategies and policies have been grouped into categories, such as regulatory and incentive based.

The specialized plans were not included in the score calculation as each plan has focus on one or two of the livability principles rather than looking comprehensively. This report highlights where these plans are focused on livability.

The end result found on the following pages highlights the region's successes in planning for livability and sustainability. Alongside the results for each indicator are highlights from two communities that are successfully planning to increase livability. These stories are designed to celebrate the future of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. This assessment concludes with a discussion of opportunities for the region to increase livability.

1

Provide more transportation choices.

Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

Factual Basis Indicators

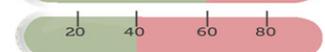
Existing road networks



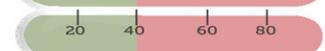
Alternative transportation networks



Mobility options for non-drivers



Vehicle miles traveled



Portion of trips by automobile, transit, walking and bicycling



Proportion of households within 1/4 mile of public transit



Plan Goals

Promote multi-modal transportation options



Promote mixed uses within proximity to transportation access



Support provision of transportation for seniors and disabled



Coordinate transportation projects with regional plans



Decrease vehicle miles traveled



Create safe environment for walking and biking



Transportation alternatives considered across plans

Gulfport encourages alternative transportation

Gulfport’s plan highlights the importance of a multi-modal transportation system. The City intends to accomplish this by implementing a Complete Streets approach, which is supported by a complementary Thoroughfare Plan, Transit Plan, and Bicycle Plan. As described in the plan, “Unlike conventional traffic planning and engineering approaches that focus narrowly on addressing regional travel needs and alleviating congestion, a Complete Streets approach reintroduces the notion of the street as a shared public space with the potential to serve a variety of users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, as well as motorists.”

Gulfport intends to use this approach to transform existing thoroughfares into “great streets” that are tree-lined, accommodate moderate vehicle speeds, and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use. While Complete Streets are not intended to be car-free, this approach will support a menu of transit choices that enhance the mobility options that serve drivers as well as those who

cannot drive, such as children and elderly who want options to driving for everyday needs. Key strategies in implementing this approach include designing short block lengths, narrow travel lanes that help in managing vehicle speeds. Gulfport strives to provide an environment where alternative transportation modes can be activated safely and efficiently.



The communities on the coast are committed to providing alternative modes of transportation.

Bay St. Louis promotes safe streets for pedestrians

The City of Bay St. Louis is planning for other forms of transportation, specifically walking and biking, to help reduce traffic problems and pollution and encourage tourist-related activities. The plan has a key goal of making the City safer for bicycles by creating a network of sidewalks and bike paths. To help implement this land use goal of creating safer streets for alternative transportation options, Bay St. Louis is investigating the use of Traditional Neighborhood Development for rebuilding in select areas of the City. As the plan notes, a Traditional Neighborhood Development is generally compact, designed for human scale, provides a mix of uses in proximity to one another within the neighborhood, and incorporates a system of relatively narrow interconnected streets with sidewalks, bikeways.

The impact of this plan has the potential to improve the safety of the youth of Bay St. Louis. According to the plan, Bay St. Louis intends to work with the Bay-Waveland School District to plan their Safe Routes to School Program and to obtain funding to implement walking and biking routes. Embracing the goals of the Traditional Neighborhood Development, Bay St. Louis will focus on enforcing subdivision regulations that require sidewalks between subdivisions and neighborhoods, and providing new sidewalks to link neighborhoods with commercial areas, thereby increasing connectivity and safe options for walkers and bikers.

2

Promote equitable, affordable housing.

Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

Factual Basis Indicators

Demographic analysis of residents	
Proximity of services to residential locations	
Population Projection	
Percent homeownership	
Allocation of affordable housing stock	
Housing burden, purchase capacity based on income	

Plan Goals

Invest in expanding affordable housing choices	
Provide energy-efficient housing options for all incomes	
Provide affordable location-efficient housing near community services and amenities	
Reduce the combined costs of housing and transportation	
Provide a variety of housing options that are accessible to different ages or abilities	
Assure access to quality housing	

Long term affordability of a home is a priority

Moss Point embraces energy efficiency

Moss Point's plan envisions safe and sustainable neighborhoods that provide a diversity of housing options that maintain their value over time. As one approach to stabilize and improve neighborhood housing conditions, Moss Point plans to help residents improve current substandard housing conditions by providing opportunities for new energy efficient construction. To help moderate and low income residents renovate their homes, the City is establishing a public-private partnership program that will retrofit existing homes with energy efficient technologies.

Recognizing the role of education in finding support for green technologies, Moss Point highlights the importance of working with residents in the community to explain the significance of energy efficient construction, such as the potential financial savings on monthly energy bills. The City plans to adopt the Renaissance Builder & Development Guild standards, which focuses on closing the affordable

workforce-housing gap in South Mississippi, for subdivision and multi-family development to ensure that affordable housing is sustainable and contributes to the community. The City's focus on creating new and innovative ways to provide diverse and high quality housing options to its residents will help Moss Point achieve its goal of sustainable neighborhoods that accommodate all ages and economic conditions.



Providing a diversity of housing options allows for sustainable neighborhoods.

Pass Christian makes housing accessible

Pass Christian is focused on planning for growth and quality of life for citizens of all ages to live, work and play. The plan finds that the population is on the rise for 60 to 74 year old residents and that the City should anticipate future growth and increasing services for senior housing and services. Currently Pass Christian has a Senior Citizen Center located on Clarke Avenue, which provides arts, crafts and other activities for senior citizens. The City recommends expansion of the Center and the provision of additional activity centers due to the fact that seniors are living longer and staying more active than in the past.

As the plan states, quality of life "must encompass all facets of urban development to provide a well-balanced, orderly and efficient pattern of land uses, transportation networks, and community facilities." Pass Christian has embraced the goal of providing these facets of quality of life to its seniors through various land use and housing strategies. The City plans to expand its sidewalks and pedestrian access to facilities including development or designation of pathways that interconnect neighborhoods to the parks, senior citizen center, schools, and library. By making senior housing and services accessible through connectivity, Pass Christian is enabling its seniors to maintain independence and quality of life.

3

Enhance economic competitiveness.

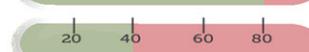
Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

Factual Basis Indicators

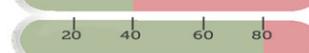
Location of current job centers



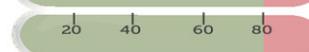
Location of workforce housing



Education attainment by workforce



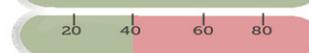
Unemployment rates



Identification of major employers



Location of dependent care facilities



Plan Goals

Catalyze economic development and job creation



Promote workforce education opportunities to enhance economic competition



Coordinate reliable transportation access with business sites



Diversify economic opportunities



Expand economic opportunities to spur redevelopment or infill



Provide access to basic needs of workers



Communities support workforce development

Pascagoula advances support services for success

The City of Pascagoula is committed to providing support services to see its workforce succeed. The City has seen an increased demand for quality child care services, which may be attributed to the increasing number of women in the workforce and the increase in the number of families with children. Many of these workers are relying on quality and convenient child care so they can be employed. As the plan explains, “As transportation and traffic issues demand more comprehensive solutions, the provision of child care close to homes and/or work places will emerge as one of the components of a multifaceted program for child care.” The City is committed to promoting the provision of comprehensive child care services by public and private providers, including employers and the Pascagoula School District.

As the number of children and working parents in Pascagoula increases, the City is finding ways to meet the

Waveland supports workforce education

One of the overarching goals of Waveland’s plan is to strengthen the City’s economy through preparing a competitive workforce. Waveland recognizes that a requirement to increase economic competitiveness of its workforce is adequate access to higher education. As articulated in the plan, “Changing technologies require that technical employees have access to two-year, four-year, graduate and certificate programs to insure that they have the skills needed by their employers.” As such, as Waveland is dedicated to supporting local and regional efforts to enhance education and training of the workforce.

The City of Waveland and Hancock County are part of the Pearl River Community College System. The Community College’s main campus is located in Poplarville, about forty miles north of the City of Waveland. Pearl River Community College has two Workforce Development Campus sites,

demand for child care support services by developing a Child Care Master Plan to guide the delivery of child care services. As part of this approach, child care services will be encouraged in new residential and neighborhood commercial developments. Pascagoula will create development incentives (i.e., increased Floor Area Ratio or reduced parking requirements) for employers or developers who include child care facilities in the design of new housing and commercial developments. By supporting the needs of working parents in Pascagoula, the City is advancing its potential to increase economic competitiveness of the City’s workforce.



Communities are working to enhance child care services to ensure the workforce has the support it needs.

one located in Hattiesburg and a second is located in Waveland. The City anticipates expanding the educational offerings utilizing these facilities, by partnering with the University of Southern Mississippi Cross Creek Campus to provide technical classes needed for degree programs and technology certification programs. By taking the initiative to support its workforce utilizing both local and regional amenities, Waveland is committing to ensure that the City’s workforce can continually enhance their technical education and skills.

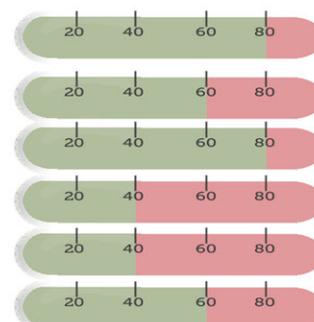
4

Support existing communities.

Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

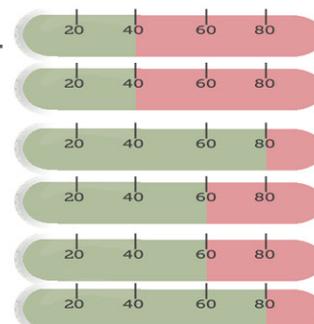
Factual Basis Indicators

- Identification of current retail environment
- Location of public transportation options
- Access to community services
- Existing housing data
- Physical building condition analysis
- Location of vacant or underutilized land



Plan Goals

- Focus public investment toward revitalization
- Encourage infill development
- Retrofit areas with alternative transportation
- Retrofit areas with mixed uses
- Infill interconnected street system
- Add parks/public spaces in existing areas



Comprehensive plans support existing communities

Gautier invests in community

Gautier is focused on infill development. Its plan recognizes the importance of infilling existing neighborhoods with development that fits appropriately. The plan notes, “Many established neighborhoods contain lots and land which was passed over when the original development occurred because of size, topography or other factors. Existing large lots in desirable areas may be further subdivided into smaller lots if development regulations permit. Some types of infill development are desired; however, care must be taken to insure the new development “fits-in” contextually with existing development.”

Gautier has identified specific locations that should be targeted for infill development. For example, the City identified a site north of US Highway 90 across from Shell Landing that should become a residential mixed use center. The new center would also create street linkages linking the soccer fields with the Singing River mall. The

D’Iberville and Ocean Springs promote downtown

D’Iberville’s plan focuses on the importance of downtown. The plan has a key goal of creating and promoting a downtown areas as a center of retail, entertainment and cultural activity. D’Iberville wants to establish a sense of continuing activity in the downtown areas. This includes encouraging entertainment uses in downtown that will promote a sense of activity and enhance the city’s tax base. The City also wants to encourage pedestrian activity in downtown. In order to achieve this the City recognizes that it needs to “create a built environment that is pedestrian friendly, aesthetically pleasing, multi-functional, and attractive to a variety of development markets.”

Beyond the downtown, the City recognizes the need to enhance the bikability of the City and calls for the addition

plan recognizes the importance of interconnected street systems and calls for improving the existing street network by adding connecting streets between downtown and key destinations throughout the city. Gautier through community revitalization and effective public investment plans for increased connectivity and livability in the city.



Bicycle lanes enhance accessibility and promote physical activity.

of bicycle lanes city-wide. The City is also calling for the adaptive reuse of vacant buildings. By focusing on existing development areas the city seeks to strategically enhance livability.

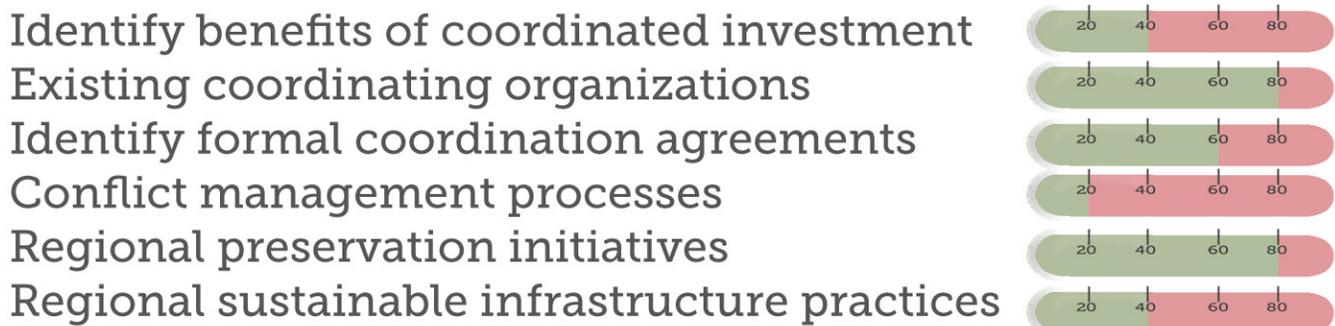
Ocean Springs is promoting the gradual evolution of existing, auto-dominated strip commercial areas into company, multi-modal mixed use areas. Infill development would be consistent with the character of the existing neighborhood. In fill development would accommodate apartments, lofts, and other uses in the upper levels of buildings. As part of redevelopment, the City is promoting the incorporation of public spaces. Ocean Springs imagines a variety of public spaces, such as plazas, public parks and courtyards.

5

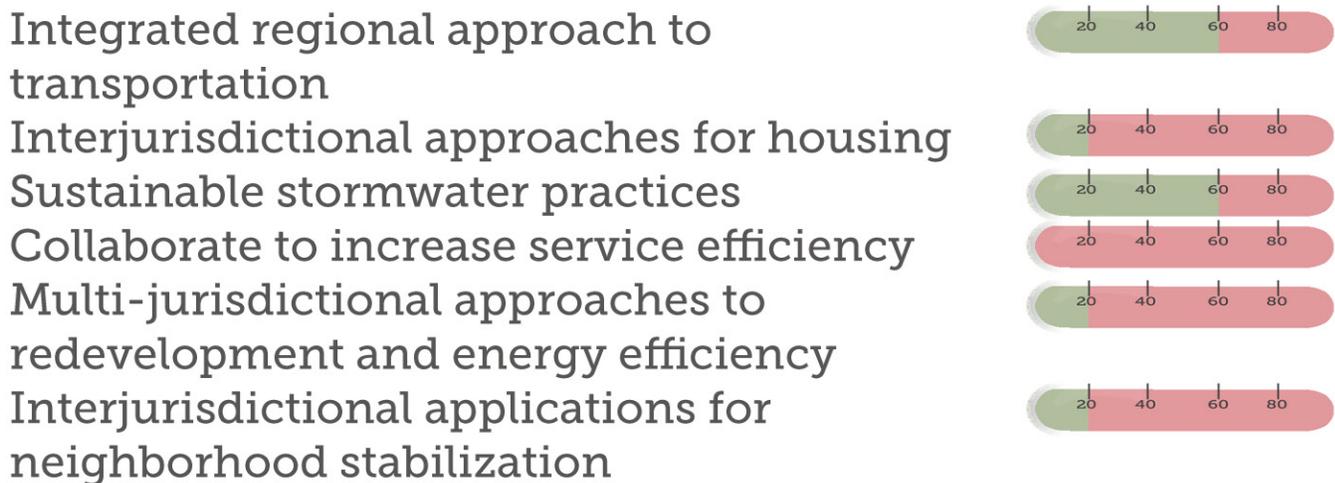
Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

Factual Basis Indicators



Plan Goals



Coordination found across the region

Harrison County collaborates

Harrison County's comprehensive plan recognizes the importance of coordinating with otherstoaddresschallenges and opportunities in the county. Their plan devotes an entire chapter to intergovernmental cooperation. This chapter identifies collaboration opportunities at the local, school, regional, state and federal level, as well as with non-profit and private sectors.

For example, the County identifies the importance of collaborating on safety. The plan calls for working with regional and state officials to address safety issues on highly traveled roads. It also calls for coordinating with the Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks; and the De Soto National Forest, to encourage Firewise communities in the County.

Along blueways, the County recognizes the importance of coordinating with the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, the Wolf River Conservation Society and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources to acquire conservation easements to provide public access to

waterways as part of a regional blueway system. To help protect waterways, the County encourages developers to use Low Impact Development techniques such as pervious surfaces, rain gardens, restored wetlands, and bioswales to protect water quality. To cleanup brownfields, the County seeks to use state and federal grants.



Coordination amongst several different agencies has helped to protect the regional blueway system.

Biloxi thinks regionally

Biloxi understands the importance of a regional transportation system. Their plan calls for balancing the need for regional mobility with demands for local access onto major transportation corridors. Biloxi calls for the establishment of the Biloxi Transit Center as a multimodal transportation hub for buses and a future regional transit service along the east-west rail corridor. The City recognizes the importance of an adequate regional network of roadways to support the safe evacuation of residents during storms. To support regional access, the City proposes to widen Popp's Ferry Road and replace

the Popp's Ferry Bridge, as well as creating a north-south roadway connection across the Tchoutacabouffa River to Popp's Ferry Road.

Biloxi calls for working with the Mississippi Development Authority and other regional housing organizations and non-profit agencies to replace housing on the coast. And they call for making the public aware of available assistance through these organizations, in partnership with the City.

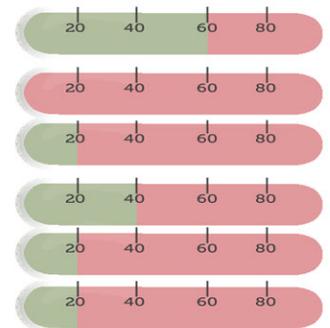
6

Value communities and neighborhoods.

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

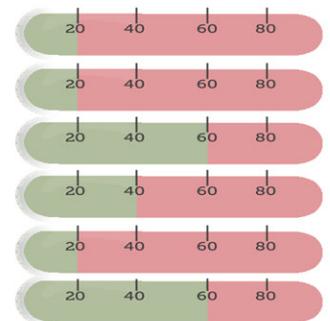
Factual Basis Indicators

- Identify areas for food production
- Households within one mile of healthy food
- Assessment of hazard exposure
- Crime rate
- Health status of residents
- Location of pedestrian sheds



Plan Goals

- Create sustainable food system
- Promote physical activity through design
- Preserve natural amenities
- Reduce damage through hazard adaptation
- Separate development from rural areas
- Promote ecotourism



Healthy neighborhoods are essential

Long Beach values community

Long Beach’s plan recognizes the importance of taking action to enhance the unique characteristics of its neighborhoods. One of the key goals of the plan is focused on community, noting that the City “welcome newcomers and visitors without diminishing the values and lifestyle of current residents by strengthening existing neighborhoods and fostering distinctive, attractive development that builds upon and preserves the City’s character.”

The plan also recognizes the importance of creating walkable communities. The plan promotes “healthy lifestyle choices by improving walkability and connectivity throughout the community.”

Long Beach has a range of types of communities. The plan recognizes “the importance of the natural environment

through the preservation of open spaces, farm land, and critical environmental areas.” To help achieve this, the City intends to direct future urban growth to defined areas that can be served by municipal services and preserving rural areas.

Community valued across the region

Waveland is focused on rebuilding its neighborhoods and community. One key goal for the City is to “encourage rebuilding, and protect, maintain and enhance the amenities that attract visitors to the City of Waveland. These amenities include the Waveland beachfront, the Coleman District and the City’s green spaces and parks.” In order to achieve this goal the City intends to require development to mitigate negative impacts on natural resources. To help redevelopment to fit into existing neighborhoods, the City will ensure that this development matches the design and characteristics of the neighborhood. The City wants particular focus on street design to complement the distinctive character of the City’s “districts, neighborhoods, and corridors.” To enhance existing neighborhoods, the



The local beaches are among the amenities that attract visitors to the region.

City would like to install public art throughout the city. By achieving this goal, the City will achieve rebuilding, but also create attractive, healthy neighborhoods.

Both Hancock and Jackson Counties recognize the importance of ecotourism to protect their natural resources and promote economic development within the communities of the coast. Jackson County proposes to work with the National Parks Service and National Forestry Service to develop hiking, biking, and/or camping areas. Hancock County is focused on maintaining unspoiled beaches and promoting historic and cultural tourism that values the existing resources in its communities.

Livability in Select Focused Plans

The comprehensive plans for the communities across the coast provide a broad view of the goals for improving livability. In some instances there is a need for focused attention on particular topics. For example, the Biloxi Consolidated Plan focuses on affordable housing and community development, while the Mississippi Gulf Coast Area Transportation Study examines the region's transportation system. This section highlights examples of how the region's plans are promoting livability.

1. Provide more transportation choices

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Areas Transportation Study focuses on creating a transportation system that is safe, secure, reliable, economically feasible, and which complements the character of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Support for the goal of more transportation choices is facilitated by attention to availability, attractiveness and efficiency of public transit. Attention is also paid to accessibility of public transit for non-drivers, such as elderly, disabled, and children. Moreover, the Transportation Study acknowledges the importance of decreasing household transportation costs. Reduced costs can be realized through increased accessibility of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, regional connectivity between different parts of the metropolitan area, and ensuring connection between employment centers, commercial and service centers, and residential areas by roadways and transit systems.

2. Promote equitable, affordable housing

The City of Biloxi Five Year Consolidated Plan identifies the housing, homeless, supportive service, and non-housing community development needs of the City, and provides a comprehensive strategy for the allocation and utilization of all available resources for development and redevelopment. The function of the plan is to promote a collaborative effort between the City of Biloxi, neighboring local governments, and housing and supportive service providers to foster the support of government and private resources to meet housing needs of the City of Biloxi. The Plan focuses on meeting the needs of low and moderate income residents, many of which focus on the provision of equitable, affordable housing: affordable housing for rent or purchase, emergency shelters for homeless, additional ADA compliant housing and sidewalks, affordable senior housing, and continued housing rehabilitation. Allowing the community to have a voice in the promotion of equitable, affordable housing, measures were taken to provide an opportunity and encourage citizens, particularly those of low and moderate income, to play a role in the activities to be carried out in portions of the five-year plan.

3. Enhance economic competitiveness

The Southern Mississippi Planning and Development District's plan of action for economic competitiveness is captured in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Using regional analysis and strategic findings, the CEDS proposes goals and objectives that highlight the importance of job creation and training. To achieve these important goals, the CEDS suggests nurturing of entrepreneurship through financial assistance programs for small business and partnerships with community colleges to encourage new business start-ups. A focus is also placed on educational opportunities to raise competitiveness through increased availability and participation in workforce training. Therefore, strategies for recruiting younger people will be employed to ensure an adequate number of people of workforce age are retained. This includes parental educational campaigns about careers in technical and vocational careers, and K-12 programs that focus on building strong work ethics. This plan assists the development of expanded opportunity for a diverse and regional economy.



4. Support existing communities

The Gulf Coast Area Transportation Study recognizes the value of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing transportation system. They support increasing infill development, expanding the bicycle and pedestrian system in existing communities, and encouraging local governments to identify suitable locations for public transit. This goal is echoed in the Biloxi Consolidated Plan which calls for improving public transit and other means of transportation. The Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy recognizes the need to "support and create a strong retail and service entrepreneurship that will foster downtown, commercial and tourism development." The Harrison County Stormwater Management Plan recognizes there is a need for additional parks and recreation areas to support existing communities. These plans recognize the importance of supporting livability in existing communities.

5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment

The Harrison County Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the need to coordinate federal policies and leverage investments in order to increase the effectiveness of government to plan for the future. They support an integrated regional approach to transportation, an inter-jurisdictional approach to housing, sustainable storm water practices and multi-jurisdictional approaches to redevelopment and energy efficiency. These objectives are also noted in Wavelands Comprehensive Plan which calls for strengthening regional connections through transit. The Biloxi Comprehensive Plan also calls for encouraging sustainable land development practices that increase energy efficiency and otherwise reduce environmental impacts. These plans identify the value of aligning federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration.

6. Value communities and neighborhoods

The Harrison County Comprehensive Plan identifies the importance of valuing communities and neighborhoods. They support valuing communities and neighborhoods through creating a sustainable food system, promoting physical activity through design, preserving natural amenities, reducing damage through hazard adaptation, and promoting ecotourism. These goals are also reflected in the Long Beach Comprehensive Plan which recommends promoting healthy lifestyle choices by improving walkability and connectivity throughout the community. The Gulfport Comprehensive Plan has also identified goals and strategies to help preserve the area's unique assets and promote heritage tourism and eco-tourism. These plans acknowledge the need to enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods— rural, urban, or suburban.

Opportunities to Improve Livability

1. Provide more transportation choices

Throughout the region, communities are paying attention to the demands and opportunities of increase transportation options. Despite efforts by both local and regional agencies, the overall investment in public transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is limited compared to investment in roads and highways. Few communities strive to reduce vehicle miles traveled for their residents, even though alternative transportation options reduce vehicle emissions, can reduce transportation costs and promote increase accessibility for residents who cannot drive. More in depth education about the benefits of alternative transportation could assist in garnering political will to support investments in transportation choice. As one example, the American Public Transportation Association offers a calculator that compares the cost of using public transportation with the price of gas and parking. Integrating this information in assessing existing conditions of commuting trends and availability of households within walking distance of public transit could inform future plan goals.

2. Promote equitable, affordable housing

Many communities have invested in new housing over the last several years. There are many ways to expand housing choice, and while new construction is certainly one method, especially in a post-disaster region, investment in expanding housing choice also includes retrofitting existing housing for people of all ages and incomes. Several Gulf Coast communities acknowledge the existing demographics of their residents, but fewer identify the location of their affordable housing opportunities. The physical location of affordable housing is important to identify location efficiency – or the availability of services and employment in proximity to the housing that can lower the combined costs of housing and transportation. Many plans adopt the assumption that housing costs less than 30 percent of household income are affordable, however, given the combined costs of housing and transportation, this assumption provides an incomplete account of how much housing really costs. Residents of location efficient neighborhoods have less need to drive than people living in more inefficient locations, so they pay less on transportation costs.

3. Enhance economic competitiveness

Sustainable economic competitiveness means coordinating investments – the right business, services, transportation assets, workforce, and educational opportunities. The Gulf Coast region is working hard to identify the current job centers and employers that will support economic growth and job creation. While communities are striving to diversify economic opportunities and providing workforce education to meet the demands of future jobs, one challenge remains the provision of services and basic needs that support the workforce and allow them to compete. Few plans identified the location of dependent care facilities, which are essential for workers with children or with dependent adults that need daily care while they are at work. Prioritizing reliable and affordable transportation access is also an opportunity for the region. Especially with so many residents working and living in different parts of the region, increasing alternative transportation coordination with business and employment centers will enhance the economic competitiveness of neighborhoods and the region as a whole.



4. Support existing communities

A lot has changed on the coast since Hurricane Katrina. Housing has been rebuilt, while others remain vacant. What is the current condition of the buildings of the coast? What is the state of existing housing across the region? This information could support the region's communities in their efforts to recycle land and support revitalization. While the comprehensive plans recognize rebuilding, there could be a regional focus on public investment aimed at revitalization. The region as a whole could be encouraging infill development. This would support the continued rebuilding of existing communities, encourage efficient use of existing infrastructure, and help to safeguard the region's rural landscapes.

5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment

The communities of the Mississippi Gulf Coast frequently come together to work in partnership to address challenges in the region. One opportunity is to examine how to manage conflict when it does occur on issues that impact the entire region. Infrastructure investment is an example of something that can influence the entire region. Regional sustainable infrastructure practices could promote environmental health and increase efficiency of infrastructure. The residents of the Mississippi Gulf Coast may live in one community and commute to another for work. Major employers are spread throughout the region. The region as a whole needs to ensure that there is a variety of housing to support the workforce. The region should work together to develop interjurisdictional approaches to meeting the region's housing needs. The region can work together on interjurisdictional neighborhood stabilization to promote a healthy region. Regional approaches to supporting energy efficiency, through building codes, transportation investments, and renewable energy utilization can support the health of the region.

6. Value communities and neighborhoods

As a region, communities want to enhance their unique characteristics and invest in their neighborhoods. In reviewing the region's comprehensive plans, there are opportunities to enhance understanding of existing conditions. For example, better understanding the health status of the regions residents, such as: are there pockets of high rates of asthma that a community should be concerned about? While plans promote mixed use development, there is an opportunity to better understand the location of pedestrian sheds. Community hazard mitigation plans address hazards, but these often have not made it into the comprehensive plans. The region as a whole can work together to understand and plan for its hazard exposure. In looking at the goals of the communities in the region, there are opportunities to enhance the health, safety and walkability of neighborhoods. Communities can actively promote physical activity through the design of neighborhoods. Communities can promote the health of their residents through providing support to access fresh food. The region is expected to grow and while all of the plans support development, the region has the opportunity to examine how to best preserve rural communities.

Appendix

A total of 101 indicators are used to evaluate the plans, 36 indicators of factual basis, 36 indicators of goals and objectives, and 29 indicators of strategies and policies. While each plan is unique and may address livability in slightly different terms, a sample of indicators has been selected that represent some of the concepts which are held within the livability principle.

Factual Basis

Access to community services (libraries, cultural amenities, recreation, public health facilities)
Allocation of affordable housing stock (below market-rate or public)
Alternative transportation networks
Assessment of hazard exposure
Conflict management processes
Crime rate
Demographic analysis of residents (age, race, or ethnicity)
Education attainment by workforce
Existing coordinating organizations
Existing housing data (Ownership/rentals/vacancies)
Existing road networks
Health status of residents
Households within one mile of healthy food
Housing burden (% income spent on housing), purchase capacity based on income
Identification of current retail environment
Identification of major employers
Identify areas for food production
Identify benefits of coordinated investment
Identify formal coordination agreements
Location of current job centers
Location of dependent care (adult, child care) facilities
Location of pedestrian sheds
Location of public transportation options within community
Location of vacant or underutilized land
Location of workforce housing
Mobility options for non-drivers (children, senior, handicapped)
Percent homeownership
Physical building condition analysis
Population Projection
Portion of trips by automobile, transit, walking and bicycling
Proportion of households within 1/4 mile of public transit
Proximity of services (work/life) to residential locations
Regional preservation initiatives
Regional sustainable infrastructure practices
Unemployment rates
Vehicle miles traveled (average, per capita or hh)

Goals & Objectives

Assure access to quality housing
Catalyze economic development and job creation
Collaborate to increase service efficiency
Coordinate reliable transportation access with business sites
Coordinate transportation projects with regional plans
Create safe environment for walking and biking

Create sustainable food system
Decrease vehicle miles traveled
Diversify economic opportunities
Encourage infill development for vacant, underutilized or abandoned parcels
Expand economic opportunities to spur redevelopment or infill
Focus public investment toward revitalization in existing communities
Integrated regional approach to transportation
Interjurisdictional applications for neighborhood stabilization
Interjurisdictional approaches for housing
Invest in expanding affordable housing choices
Multi-jurisdictional approaches to redevelopment and energy efficiency
Preserve natural amenities
Promote ecotourism
Promote mixed uses within proximity to transportation access
Promote multi-modal transportation options
Promote physical activity through design
Promote workforce education opportunities to enhance economic competition
Provide a variety of housing options that are accessible to different ages or abilities
Provide access to basic needs of workers (i.e., child care, services).
Provide affordable location-efficient housing near community services and amenities
Provide energy-efficient housing options for all incomes
Reduce damage through hazard adaptation
Reduce the combined costs of housing and transportation
Retrofit areas with alternative transportation options
Retrofit communities with interconnected street system
Retrofit communities with parks or public spaces
Retrofit with mixed uses (housing, employment, services)
Separate development from rural areas
Support provision of transportation for seniors and disabled (i.e., paratransit)
Sustainable stormwater practices

Implementation Strategies

Buffer Requirements
Building environment review standards
Business Improvement District
Cluster development
Complete Streets
Conservation easements
Design Guidelines/Regulations
Educational partnerships to increase vocational and entrepreneurial training
Energy Efficient or Location Efficient Mortgages
Fee simple or acquisition of development rights
Hazard warning and response program
Housing Choice Vouchers
Incentive zoning
Inter-jurisdictional cooperation (transportation, recreation, conservation, overlays, foreclosure issues, etc.)
Land recycling (Brownfield development, infill, etc.)
Main Street Program



Mixed use zoning

Placement of new housing near mixed-use and employment centers

Provide technical assistance to leverage private sector investment

Public-private partnerships

Restoration/Re-creation of wetlands, dunes, and other natural areas

Revenue sharing

Safe routes to schools

Storm water management, LID (rain gardens, permeable pavement, swales, etc.)

TDR

Technical assistance to developers/property owners

TIF

TOD

Tree protection/Tree Canopy Restoration

Urban agriculture (community gardens, urban farms, CSAs, farmers markets)