An Analysis of the Howard Avenue Commercial Corridor in Downtown Biloxi

Prepared for:
Gulf Coast Community Design Studio
May 2014

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Executive Summary

The Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) is an outreach organization that has been providing design assistance to communities along the Mississippi coast since Hurricane Katrina devastated the region in 2005. More recently, the GCCDS has been working on a plan for the redevelopment of downtown Biloxi, MS. Since the loss of most retail businesses in the 1970s, the main street downtown, Howard Avenue, has been plagued with high vacancy rates, low traffic exposure, and outdated infrastructure. This paper will analyze the commercial component of Howard Avenue from Reynoir Street to Main Street, focusing on three main aspects: A parking supply analysis along the corridor, the current state of funding sources for commercial development, and the implications of Biloxi’s upcoming MGM minor league baseball stadium.

The parking supply analysis:

- Identifies the amount of space, currently used as surface parking, that may be reintroduced as revenue-generating property for private development
- Supports the suggestion to redesign GE Ohr Street to contain this new property and restore the natural grid around Howard Avenue

The funding source for commercial development section:

- Identifies and describes multiple sources of federal, state, and local funding to encourage private development along the street
- Suggests a means of organizing and presenting said incentives so developers may be inclined to further explore properties along Howard Avenue for redevelopment

The MGM baseball stadium section:

- Analyzes minor league stadiums in Birmingham, AL and Pensacola, FL and the development implications said stadiums have had on the cities in term of geographic location, marketing, and accompanying projects
Introduction

Biloxi, Mississippi is located along the gulf coast and is home to approximately 45,766 people, making it the fifth largest city in Mississippi in 2011. Despite significant economic and physical damage from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the city does experience an influx of visitors, many of which are drawn to the city’s nine casino resorts. One such resort is the Beaux Rivage, which has recently partnered with the city to bring a 6,000-seat minor league baseball stadium to the downtown area. The baseball stadium may be catalytic in supporting the revitalization efforts of Biloxi’s downtown, where development has been inhibited due to high insurance costs and high land costs (amongst other factors) for some time.¹

Downtown Biloxi is considered to be the area from Beach Boulevard north to Esters Boulevard and Reynoir Street east past Main Street, to the end of the Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard loop.² The downtown district is located just off Interstate 110, and is in close proximity to the Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport, Keesler Air Force Base, and Biloxi’s many casinos. Despite the casino boom in the past 25 years, however, the population of Biloxi has declined at an annual average rate of .54 percent from 1990 to 2011. This is due both to the after effects of Hurricane Katrina, as well as the overall state of the city; exemplified by the neglected downtown corridor.³

² Howard Avenue, Biloxi Mississippi, Downtown Design + Development, report (Gulf Coast Studio Design Studio, June 25, 2011).
The main street traversing downtown is Howard Avenue, often referred to as Vieux Marché. From the 1880s through the 1960s, Howard Avenue was the heart of downtown activity. The street was home to major anchor retailers such as JC Penney, Woolworth, Kress, and various other clothing and shoe stores. When the regional mall drew the retailers away from downtown in the 1960s, Howard Avenue suffered tremendously. As in many cities experiencing similar downtown economic decline, Biloxi responded by turning a stretch of Howard Avenue into a pedestrian mall, closing the street to all traffic and constructing Dr Martin Luther King Boulevard to direct traffic around, and consequentially away from, Howard Avenue. This pedestrian mall became known as the Vieux Marché, and served to only accelerate the decline of downtown Biloxi until there were only a few retailers left on Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street. In 1997 the

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4 *Howard Avenue, Biloxi Mississippi, Downtown Design + Development*, report (Gulf Coast Studio Design Studio, June 25, 2011).
street was restored to one-way traffic, but the structural and economic damage was done. Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, there has been growing momentum around downtown revitalization efforts.\textsuperscript{5} Three entities have been working on redevelopment research and plans: Main Street Biloxi, the City of Biloxi, and the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio. In the fall of 2013 these entities came together and determined that a unified approach would be employed, and the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) office would serve as the database for revitalization efforts.\textsuperscript{6}

The Gulf Coast Community Design Studio is a community outreach program born from the Architecture, Art + Design College at Mississippi State University. The service was established in Biloxi after Hurricane Katrina to aid the recovering community with planning, design, and landscape assistance. The GCCDS works with non-profits, local governments, developers, universities, and other partners such as Main Street Biloxi to provide professional expertise along Mississippi's gulf coast. Currently the GCCDS has devised a master plan for downtown Biloxi that includes a thoroughfare proposal, streetscape improvement plan, infill-housing proposal, and a parking study. To date, Main Street Biloxi and the GCCDS have conceived a phased plan for downtown; beginning with streetscape and infrastructure improvements for Howard Avenue. The first step in the process is to restore Howard Avenue to two-way traffic, which will take considerable sidewalk and infrastructure renovations, but is universally considered (by all aforementioned parties) to be the most pressing issue in terms of downtown revitalization.\textsuperscript{7}

The contents of this research has been composed for the purposes of the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, and will focus on the commercial corridor stretch of Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street to the west and Main Street to the east. This paper will refer to this specific section of Howard Avenue as \textit{the stretch of Howard Avenue}, and the aforementioned boundaries

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} Britton Jones, "Interview with Britton Jones, Gulf Coast Community Design Studio," telephone interview by author, February 2014.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
apply in each instance unless otherwise noted. Research will consist of three main sections: a parking supply analysis, an examination of funding sources for commercial development, and a study of factors that may spur or hinder development in cities that have constructed a minor league baseball stadium in close proximity to downtown.

Figure 2: The Stretch of Howard Avenue

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8 Howard Avenue, Biloxi Mississippi, Downtown Design + Development, report (Gulf Coast Studio Design Studio, June 25, 2011)
Howard Avenue Parking Supply Analysis

Zoning

Howard Avenue is zoned as a downtown district, intended to encourage walkability and mixed-use developments. Despite the city’s aspirations for the street, at present there are virtually no operating mixed-use buildings along the stretch of Howard Avenue. The allowed uses vary but primarily focus on retail, office, healthcare and dining on the ground level with residential on the upper floors. The district requirements are appropriately configured to encourage development; there are no lot width or depth minimums, and no front, corner, side or rear setback requirements. The FAR (floor area ratio) is five, and the maximum height is quite liberal at 75 feet. While these more relaxed zoning requirements may make the development process easier on developers, they do not come without directive. Howard Avenue, from Reynoir Street to Main Street, also lies in the Architectural/ Historic Overlay District. This district ensures that a Certificate of Appropriateness (in accordance with section 23-2-4(G) of the Mississippi Code of 1972) must be obtained before any construction, alteration, restoration, demolition or landscaping can take place.\(^9\) Perhaps the most influential feature of the zoning ordinance is that there are no parking requirements for the downtown district.\(^10\) Seeing that parking requirements are often hindrances for downtown development, the city has composed zoning ordinances to encourage this needed redevelopment rather than impede it.

Parking Supply

One reason the City of Biloxi is able to allow a downtown zoning ordinance with no parking requirements is because of the off-street surface parking currently found downtown, most notably

\(^9\) City of Biloxi, MS, Land Development Ordinance, Article 23-3: Zoning Districts.
\(^10\) Ed Shambra, "Interview with Ed Shambra, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, March 26, 2014.
surrounding the once-pedestrian mall strip of Howard Avenue. The amount of available off-street parking, however, needs to be appropriate for the size and needs of the intended area.¹¹

The stretch of Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street has 14 remote parking lots of various sizes backing up to buildings along the street, which are used or shared by the various businesses along the road. These 14 lots provide a total of 837 off-street parking spaces. Using data from a parking study performed on a Tuesday morning at 11:00am in May 2013, only 381 of these available 837 parking spaces were in use, a mere 46 percent.¹²

Surplus parking is often thought of as an asset to a redeveloping community, but it is in actuality a problem. Parking problems can be diagnosed as either a parking supply problem or a parking management problem (either way it is better for parking demand to be greater than parking supply). Currently the stretch of Howard Avenue faces a parking supply problem, but an appropriate number of parking spaces can be derived from the current number of spaces. There are two main ways to analyze parking supply. One is in terms of population, the other in terms of commercial floor space. The approach most commonly used by developers to calculate an appropriate parking figure is the commercial floor space approach.¹³

Parking Supply Analysis: Commercial Floor Space Approach

To determine an appropriate number of parking spaces per square foot of commercial space, regional shopping malls use a ratio that represents the first or second busiest shopping day of the year. This requires five to seven parking spaces per 1,0000 square feet of floor area.

Regional mall tenants, however, have higher gross sales and correspondingly higher rents than

¹¹ Andrew L. Dono and Linda S. Glisson, Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner’s Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization (Washington, DC: Main Street, National Trust for Historic Preservation/National Trust Main Street Center, 2009), pg. #180.
¹² Howard Avenue, Biloxi Mississippi, Downtown Design + Development, report (Gulf Coast Studio Design Studio, June 25, 2011).
¹³ Andrew L. Dono and Linda S. Glisson, Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner’s Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization (Washington, DC: Main Street, National Trust for Historic Preservation/National Trust Main Street Center, 2009), pg. #180.
downtown business district tenants. The National Trust Main Street Center reviewed the parking ratio for successful older downtowns and found the typical parking range to be from two to three spots per 1,000 square feet of floor area as indicated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial Setting</th>
<th>Parking Spaces per 1,000 Square Feet of Floor Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Shopping Mall</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Strip</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Business District</td>
<td>2 - 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Typical Parking Spaces per 1000 Square Feet \(^{14}\)

Beyond the commercial parking recommendation, offices and residential units have been quite successful providing two or less parking spaces per 1000 square feet of floor area.\(^ {15}\) Such a range (two spaces or fewer) for office and residential uses along the stretch of Howard Avenue may prove to be quite adequate due to the proximity of the Greyhound bus station located directly north of Howard Avenue along Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.

Currently, there is a total of 352,000 gross square feet of commercial space along the stretch of Howard Avenue from Reynoir Street to Main Street. This figure accounts for 195,000 square feet of ground floor space, 145,000 square feet of second floor space, and 12,000 square feet of third floor space.\(^ {16}\) For this analysis, and following mixed-use downtown design standards, the 195,000 square feet of ground floor will be deemed commercial (two to three spots per 1000 square feet),

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\(^{14}\) Ibid.


\(^{16}\) Britton Jones, *Building Square Footages*, March 25, 14, Howard Avenue, Reynoir Street to Main Street.
and the 157,000 square feet of second and third floor space will be deemed office/residential (two or fewer spots per 1000 square feet).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Spaces per 1000 Square Feet</th>
<th>Appropriate Number of Parking Spaces</th>
<th>Total Appropriate Number of Parking Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground Floor Commercial</td>
<td>195,000 SF</td>
<td>2-3 Spaces</td>
<td>488 Parking Spaces (average in range)</td>
<td>724 Parking Spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Floor Office/Residential</td>
<td>157,000 SF</td>
<td>2-1 Spaces</td>
<td>236 Parking Spaces (average in range)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Parking Space Necessity per Square Feet

Using the average of the ranges above, 724 may be an appropriate number of parking spaces for the stretch of Howard Avenue if it is to reach full mixed-use occupancy. After the implementation of additional on-street parking spaces proposed by GCCDS, there will be approximately 886 parking spaces, either on-street or in remote parking lots, surrounding the stretch of Howard Ave. Using this floor-space approach, the city could reduce the remote lot parking by 162 spaces and still be within the viable range. Since parking lots typically require 350 square feet per car, the city could reclaim 56,700 square feet of developable land currently being used as remote parking and reintroduce it as developable space. Because, however, increased real estate translates to increased parking to accommodate it, this figure may be reduced to approximately 36,700 square feet. The appeal of 36,700 square feet of potential new construction in the heart of downtown could be enticing to developers, especially if granted as part of a Request For Proposal (RFP) submitted by the city, and may spur further development interest in the area.

Beyond contributing to the redevelopment momentum, decreasing the excessive parking and

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17 Andrew L. Dono and Linda S. Glisson, *Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner’s Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization* (Washington, DC: Main Street, National Trust for Historic Preservation/National Trust Main Street Center, 2009), pg. #185.

18 It should be noted that these calculations are for the gross square footage along Howard Avenue between Reynoir and Main Streets, and may therefore be inflated.

19 Andrew L. Dono and Linda S. Glisson, *Revitalizing Main Street: A Practitioner’s Guide to Comprehensive Commercial District Revitalization* (Washington, DC: Main Street, National Trust for Historic Preservation/National Trust Main Street Center, 2009), pg. #185.

20 This figure factors in the parking the hypothetical new construction will demand.
introducing new buildings would create another source of revenue for the city through property
taxes.

**The Cost of Excessive Parking**

To elaborate on this notion that excess parking detracts from possible city revenue, the
National Trust Main Street Center created a table that illustrates the economic cost of excessive
parking as seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity for New Building</th>
<th>Per Parking Space (10/x 20' + circulation)</th>
<th>Per 1,000 Square Feet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>350 SF</td>
<td>1000 SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Building Construction</td>
<td>$125 / SF</td>
<td>$125 / SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Value</td>
<td>$43,750</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxable Value (50%)</td>
<td>$21,875</td>
<td>$62,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Millage</td>
<td>.022532</td>
<td>.022532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Revenue</td>
<td>$493</td>
<td>$1,408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Economic Cost of Excessive Parking\(^{21}\)

Using the above table and the 36,700 square feet measure, we can calculate the cost of the
excessive parking along the stretch of Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street. It
should be noted that some figures have been changed from the table above to appropriately reflect
current figures in Biloxi as of April 2014. The new building construction was raised to $140 dollars
per square foot, per the suggestion of a gulf coast project manager with experience in new
construction.\(^{22}\) The taxable value was obtained through the Harrison Country Values and Taxes

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 185.
\(^{22}\) Sara-Meadows Tolleson, "New Building Construction Cost, Gulf Coast," interview by author, April 7, 2014.
webpage for Class III Properties (business and industrial personal property). The millage rate for Biloxi (inside city limits) was obtained through the Harrison Country Tax Assessor webpage.\textsuperscript{23}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Unclaimed Square Footage</th>
<th>36,700</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Building Construction</td>
<td>$140.00 /SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Value</td>
<td>5,138,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxable Value (15%)</td>
<td>770,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Millage</td>
<td>.10910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual City Tax Revenue</td>
<td>$84,083.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Economic Cost of Excessive Parking Along the Stretch of Howard Avenue

This analysis demonstrates that if the City of Biloxi developed productive buildings on this 36,700 square feet of underutilized off-street parking space, the city would increase it’s property tax revenue by almost $85,000 dollars per year, which could in turn be invested back into downtown improvements and increase the gains even further. Taxable new construction would also contribute to the new sales tax revenue and that of other taxing jurisdictions. Beyond the monetary gains of reducing the excessive off-street parking surrounding the stretch of Howard Avenue and introducing new developable space, there may be positive street grid and design implications as well.

**Strategic Location of new Construction**

An optimal place to reduce excess parking and introduce street-fronting real estate is along GE Ohr Street between Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard and Howard Avenue. This would require restoring GE Ohr Street as an accessible thoroughfare; as of right now it awkwardly jets into

\textsuperscript{23} Harrison County Board of Supervisors, "Tax Assessor," Harrison County Mississippi, accessed April 05, 2014, http://co.harrison.ms.us/elected/taxassessor/values.asp.
a parking lot to the north of Howard Avenue and resumes after Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.

GCCDS recommends restoring GE Ohr Street, which includes widening and straightening the street and eliminating the awkward interruption caused by the parking lot. This parking lot may serve as an ideal location to introduce the proposed 36,700 square feet of street-fronting buildings.

Figure 3: GE Ohr Street Current

Figure 4: GE Ohr Street Proposed

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24 Howard Avenue, Biloxi Mississippi, Downtown Design + Development, report (Gulf Coast Studio Design Studio, June 25, 2011)
25 Ibid.
Restoring the street will not only promote the natural downtown grid, but also vehicular access to Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street. Currently, this stretch of Howard Avenue experiences a significant reduction in daily vehicular exposure starting at Reynoir Street. Within a 24-hour period on a weekday, Howard Avenue experienced a traffic count of 5,600 cars, which dropped to 1,300 cars after the intersection at Reynoir (marking the beginning of what was once the Vieux Marche pedestrian mall). The data implies that this entrance to the stretch of Howard Avenue is not viable in terms of traffic exposure. A reimagined GE Ohr Street may serve to increase exposure by acting as another means of access to Howard Avenue. Thus reinstating Howard Avenue to two-way traffic and simultaneously restoring/developing along GE Ohr Street may increase the momentum of downtown redevelopment.\textsuperscript{26}

**Conclusion**

The stretch of Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street is appropriately zoned to encourage mixed-use redevelopment along the corridor, which is virtually nonexistent at present. The intentional omission of parking requirements eliminates a common deterrent for developers, yet is indicative of the parking over-supply surrounding the stretch of Howard Avenue. By reducing the parking surplus and introducing approximately 36,700 square feet of new construction (and possibly granting this land through an RFP), the city may spur development along the stretch of Howard Avenue and increase the annual revenue by $84,000 dollars. This new construction should compliment the intended nature of downtown as a mixed-use corridor and invigorate development along the predominantly vacant stretch of Howard Avenue. Straightening, widening, and extending GE Ohr Street through to Dr Martin Luther King Boulevard will not only serve to restore the grid that was compromised when Howard Avenue was made into a pedestrian mall, but also provide sites for revenue-generating, ground up development. These layout changes

\textsuperscript{26} Kelsey Johnson, *Howard Avenue Traffic Count*, February 2014, Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, Biloxi, MS.
may be catalytic for development along the stretch of Howard Avenue, but should be synchronized with other measures to entice developers to the area; such as readily available funding incentives. The following section will analyze the current availability of such funding information and present a brief synopsis of what commercial development financing mechanisms are available and applicable to the stretch of Howard Avenue.
Funding Sources for Commercial Development Along the Stretch of Howard Avenue

The value of easily accessible and regularly updated development incentives and financing mechanisms available for properties located along the stretch of Howard Avenue is of paramount importance. Incentives can make a huge difference for developers who often face many financial obstacles and setbacks while developing a property. This research on potential city, state, and federal incentives proved to be a process that was at times inconclusive or led to outdated policies. At times phone inquiries concluded with circuitous directions and internet searches resulted in a miscellany of funding information rather than a convenient compendium. This lack of congregated online information may be an impediment for potential developers. Despite the challenges encountered during the research, it was discovered that Biloxi actually has a number of incentives already in place for downtown development that pertain to the stretch of Howard Avenue. Information about said incentives, however, is difficult to come by. In early April the city did in fact print a compilation of incentives, but it has not been published on Biloxi’s city website. Assigning an entity to present and maintain such a collection, whether it is a business improvement district or other related agency, could bolster redevelopment efforts downtown. The following is a general compilation of such funding mechanisms that may serve to support commercial development along the stretch of Howard Avenue.

Business Improvement Districts

Business improvement districts, or BIDs, can only be created in states that have BID legislation. The creation requirements and administrative contractor requirements vary from state to state. BIDs are commercial areas that collect an elective tax from all property owners located within the BID. This tax is in turn used to fund programs and improvements within the district, ideally improving revitalization efforts and overall economic conditions.
Mississippi does have enabling legislation for BIDs, under section 21-43-(1-133) of the Mississippi Code of 1972. The proceeds from such a BID are authorized towards the general promotion of retail activities in the area. An advisory board comprised of five businesspersons acts as the governing authority and decides how the revenue from the tax will be used. According to the Business Improvement District Act, Mississippi requires 60% property owner approval to establish a BID. Districts are authorized for ten years, and must seek reauthorization per the initial requirements on the tenth year. The city of Biloxi had Business Improvement Districts in the past, but there are no more to date.27 28

Business Improvement District Case Study: Jackson, MS

An example of a successful business improvement district in Mississippi is Downtown Jackson Partners. Downtown Jackson Partners Business Improvement District is comprised of 61 blocks in the heart of downtown Jackson. Since the district’s formation in the early 1990s, downtown Jackson has experienced over $600 million dollars in economic development. The district currently contains a third of the downtown’s offices, most government facilities, and many cultural amenities. The BID helps finance a website that acts as a source for real estate development, business recruitment, detailed marketing data, event assistance and more. It shows all available commercial listings, and provides a project sheet for each, displaying property information and the contact person for further inquires. One of the greatest assets of the site is a list and descriptions of several economic development resources, descriptions of current development projects, and a page dedicated to development incentives and funding sources. The BID has organized a compendium of relevant, up-to-date, and easily navigable resources to entice developers to the area. Such incentives include a partial ad valorem (property tax) abatement, a

27 Ed Shambra, "Interview with Ed Shambra, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, April 11, 2014.
conversion of commercial buildings to residential partial tax exemption, a rehabilitation of historic assets partial tax abatement, and storefront façade grants. The convenience of this resource for developers encourages real estate investment in an area that may otherwise have difficult-to-find market data, zoning ordinances, funding mechanisms, and so forth.29

Ad Valorem Tax Abatements

The Biloxi Chamber of Commerce lists various development and small business incentives that can be applied to the stretch of Howard Avenue. One such inducement is a tax abatement incentives program.30 Ordinance No. 2155 was adopted in April of 2010, and establishes a district to utilize tax exemptions under section 17-21-5(2) of the Mississippi Code of 1972. The eligible district contains the Back Bay area, the Beach Boulevard area, the Caillavet Street area, the Division Street area, the Howard Avenue areas (both East and West), the Downtown area, the Judge Sekul Avenue area, the Oak Street area, the Porter Avenue area, the Point Cadet area, and the Woolmarket Road area. The stretch of Howard Avenue is entirely included in this district.

The city council is looking for economy-generating businesses, such as restaurants and retail stores for tax abatement approval. Businesses that create a significant amount of job employment will also be considered for tax abatements. After written application to the Municipal Clerk, the City Council may approve the tax abatement for commercial and hospitality industry uses only. Residential developments alone will not qualify, although mixed-use developments may qualify. The exemption comes from subtracting the assessed value of the property from the assessed value of the property after improvements as they appear on the Harrison County Land Roll after re-assessment. The tax exemption can last for up to a maximum of seven years and can exempt anywhere from 10 percent to 100 percent of ad valorem taxes. Exclusions from this

abatement include school district taxes and those previously pledged to a Tax Increment Financing plan, which Biloxi has not used in some years and is not inclined to use presently.\(^{31, 32}\)

Harrison County also has a tax exemption program that must be approved by the Harrison County Development Board of Supervisors. The county tax exemption can be applied with or without the city tax exemption, but it is a separate entity that must approve eligibility and terms. Furthermore, approval from one entity (be it the city or county) has no affect on approval from the other entity.\(^{33}\)

**Tax Increment Financing**

Tax increment financing (TIF) can be a valuable funding mechanism to leverage district amenities associated with development projects. A city or county may issue bonds to pay for an amenity associated with a particular development. The bond amount is determined based on the anticipated property tax appreciation (within a designated district) that will be generated by said development. After project completion, the property tax increase associated with the development, or any portion of the sales tax, is dispensed back into the property itself as repayment for those bonds (as with ad valorem taxes, Biloxi’s school district taxes are excluded). Furthermore, a developer may use private funds to construct a part of the development, and the city may use tax increment financing to repay the developer.\(^{34}\)

**Tax Increment Financing Case Study: Greenville, SC**

An example of a successful tax increment financing district, in terms of downtown redevelopment, is found in Greenville South Carolina. The city of Greenville has three TIF districts

\(^{31}\) Ed Shamba, "Interview with Ed Shamba, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, April 11, 2014.


\(^{33}\) Ed Shamba, "Interview with Ed Shamba, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, April 11, 2014.

within the city limits. The largest, and oldest, is the central business district, established in 1986 and located in downtown Greenville. The term of the district is 35 years, meaning it will expire in 2021. Just as in Biloxi, downtown Greenville experienced the affects of suburban sprawl in the 1970s. Facing blight and high vacancy levels, main street revitalization efforts began with streetscape re-design. According to the city website, the new streetscape completion, coupled with a hotel and parking garage development leveraged with federal funding, changed the trajectory of downtown Greenville.

The central business district TIF has funded a variety of projects, overseen by multiple city agencies. Downtown beautification projects are amongst the most significant. Additional landscaping and its maintenance, curb extensions to allow for more landscaping and street framing, and park upkeep have all been financed through the TIF funds. Greenville’s central business district TIF has also been significant in supporting the downtown parking garage, which has taken pressure off the public sector to provide parking and made development efforts easier. According to the Department of Economic Development in Greenville, the central business district TIF has been the single most successful funding tool used in Greenville’s revitalization efforts. The intention of the TIF district was to reduce blight and vacancies and has been qualitatively successful, although there is no quantitative market data on the effects of the TIF itself. The district will expire in 2021, and will undoubtedly leave a gap in the funding sources it has come to rely on. One possible solution is to establish a business improvement district and use the elected tax revenue to continue to fund the streetscape and parking garage projects.

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Biloxi has used TIFs in the past; the city granted bonds in the amount of $350,000 dollars to the Walmart developed on Pass Road in the 1980s to extend the access road for the site.\textsuperscript{37} Currently the City's stance is that the process is complicated and convoluted by state regulations and requirements, and that it is easier to negotiate individually with a developer concerning local government participation for project funding.\textsuperscript{38} The downside to using tax abatements rather than TIF districts is that money from tax abatements often may never be collected, thus it is not invested back into the community. When tax increment financing is utilized, however, the bonds issued to the developer are intended for amenities that will directly impact the economy of the larger area, such as the streetscape projects proposed by GCCDS. Tax increment financing bonds can be issued by both Harrison County and the City of Biloxi. There are a number of considerations specific to the Mississippi Code of 1972, section 21-45-5; the bond term may not exceed 30 years, and tax increment financing law supersedes any conflicting law. This is relevant to Biloxi's preferred use of tax exemptions; should the city begin enacting tax increment financing districts in the downtown area, their stance on individually granted tax exemptions would need reconsideration, as property taxes in TIF districts do not qualify for exemption.

\textbf{Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits}

Federal and State Historic Tax Credits were authorized by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, and are available to owners and developers who rehabilitate approved historic buildings to an income producing status. Buildings that were built before 1936 may qualify for federal tax credits equal to ten percent of qualified rehabilitation expenses. Buildings that are considered historic, and are registered with the National Register of Historic Places are eligible for a tax credit equal to 20 percent of qualified rehabilitation expenses. These tax credits can either be used by the developer


\textsuperscript{38} Ed Shambra, "Interview with Ed Shambra, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, April 11, 2014.
individually (according to the Economic Recovery Act of 2008) or bought by an investor who in turn fronts the money in the form of equity.39 If the tax credits are sold to an investor, the tax credit investor and building owner form a limited partnership or a limited liability corporation. Federal Historic Tax Credit investors receive a dollar tax credit for every $0.95 - $0.99 cents of equity they put into the project.40 More information on federal rehabilitation tax credits can be found on the website for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior.

The stretch of Howard Avenue between Reynoir Street and Main Street has 17 buildings listed on the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) National Register as part of the Biloxi Downtown District. Of these 17 buildings along the stretch of Howard Avenue, 11 have a contributing status.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Peoples Bank Building</td>
<td>750 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(later Elizay's Hardware, Elizey's Building)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>758 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>759 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*First National Bank of Biloxi</td>
<td>760 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>non-contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>763-771 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwan Building</td>
<td>772 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>781 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>784 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*commercial building</td>
<td>784 B Howard Avenue</td>
<td>non-contributing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Buildings Along the Stretch of Howard Avenue in the Biloxi Downtown District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Description</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>785 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*former fire station commercial building</td>
<td>786 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>non-contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former J.W. Swetman’s Drug Store</td>
<td>788 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old Masonic Temple (Magnolia Lodge No. 120)</td>
<td>796 A &amp; B Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commercial building</td>
<td>796 C Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*J.C. Penny #514</td>
<td>808 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>non-contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>former Kress Building</td>
<td>814 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Barq’s Building</td>
<td>834 – 838 Howard Avenue</td>
<td>non-contributing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These buildings with a contributing status can be considered for Federal and State Historic Tax credits. Buildings with a non-contributing status are either not old enough, or have been altered in a way that leaves them ineligible for the historic status. According to MDAH Preservation Division, some of the non-contributing buildings can re-apply to be considered contributing. If, for example, a false façade has been removed (such as the metal slip covers put over many buildings in the 60s and 70s) and the building is now sufficiently restored to its original character, the building status may be amended. Tax credits are often required funding in terms of project feasibility, so an investigation into the possibility of re-designating some of the non-contributing buildings along the stretch of Howard Avenue may increase developer interest in some of the properties.41

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State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

Beyond the 20 percent federal rehabilitation tax credits, the State of Mississippi offers a 25 percent tax credit (of qualified rehab expenses) for rehabbed buildings used for income producing businesses or residences. The state automatically qualifies buildings for the 25 percent state tax credit that qualify for the 20 percent federal tax credit. Federal and State Historic Tax Credits vary regarding the investment cents on the tax credit dollar received. While Federal Historic Tax Credit investors receive a dollar tax credit for every $0.95 - $0.99 cents of equity they put into the project, State Historic Tax Credit investors will received a dollar tax credit for every $0.65 - $0.85 cents invested.

The qualifications are the same for federal and state credits, the building must have a contributing status or be individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. If an application has already been submitted for federal tax credits, the applicant need only submit the federal certification application along with a one page Statement of Intent form. If federal historic tax credits have not been sought, the applicant must complete a three-part application and submit necessary artifacts to receive the state historic tax credits alone. Both forms can be accessed at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History webpage.\(^\text{42}\)

There are stringent requirements during the planning, development, and operations phase for the investor to continue to receive the tax credits. Should the requirements not be met at any point in the process, the tax credits will be rescinded. The broadest requirements are outlined in the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. These are only the broadest requirements however; the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) will produce a comprehensive list of requirements specific to the site being developed. Should the requirements be met, the equity generated by these tax credits can be the difference between a dilapidated building and a

rehabilitated, revenue-generating building, as the combined savings from federal and state tax credits can reduce rehabilitation costs by 45 percent.

**Federal New Markets Tax Credits**

The New Markets Tax Credit Program was enacted in 2002 to promote economic opportunity in economically distressed areas. The federal government allocates income tax credits to intermediary organizations, called Community Development Entities (CDEs). These entities then partner with investors who make equity investments in qualifying business development projects in exchange for the tax credits. The amount of tax credits generated is 39 percent of the Qualified Equity Investments (essentially qualifying project costs). For every dollar of tax credits received, the investor will pay somewhere between $0.72 - $0.82 cents.43

By way of example, a $10 million dollar development project (a Qualified Equity Investment) would generate $3.9 million dollars in tax credits for an investor. The investor would then provide $0.72 cents for every tax credit dollar (although it is actually anywhere between $0.72 cents and $0.82 cents), totaling $2.8 million dollars as investment in the project. The intermediary between the developer and the investor in all this is the CDE, who determines which development project this equity supports.

The tax credits are dispensed over a seven-year period to the equity investor as a means of ensuring that the business is in fact providing the intended economic benefit. The CDE selects the projects from a wide range of applicants. Applicants must meet a number of specific tests to be eligible for Federal New Markets Tax Credits. First and foremost, the business development project must be in a qualifying low-income census tract as determined by the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). There are two tests to determine if a census tract is considered low-

43 Jonathan Leit and Michael Grote, "Debt & New Market Tax Credits" (lecture, Tulane University, New Orleans, October 2013).
income and therefore eligible for the tax credits: (1) the poverty rate must be at least 20 percent or (2) the median family income (MFI) does not exceed 80 percent of the state MFI or metro area median income (AMI). If either of these applies to the census tract in which the property is located, it may apply for the New Markets Tax Credits. The FFIEC provides access to census data systems, which provide demographic information by tract.44

According to the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, the stretch of Howard Avenue is located in census tract 0036.00. FFIEC provides the following information on this tract in Harrison County Mississippi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>$52,856</td>
<td>$54,700</td>
<td>58.33</td>
<td>48.77</td>
<td>$25,781</td>
<td>$26,677</td>
<td>$16,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: FFIEC Census Tract Data, NMTC Eligibility Determination45

As indicated in the table above, 58.33 percent of people living within this census tract are below the poverty line, passing the 20 percent poverty rate test. Also, the tract MFI for both the 2010 actual and the 2013 FFIEC estimation is well below 80 percent of the state MFI projects for 2010 and 2013. The census tract passes not only one, but both eligibility tests. In fact all of Howard Avenue, east of Interstate 110, is located within an eligible tract for New Markets Tax Credits.46

44 Ibid.
45 MSA- Metropolitan Statistical Area, MD - Metro Division
State New Markets Tax Credits

Mississippi is one of only fifteen states to offer New Markets Tax Credits on the state level as well. These tax credits apply to state income or insurance premium taxes, as a companion credit to federal tax credits (per the Mississippi Code of 1972 section 57-105-1). The Mississippi Development Authority certifies and awards Mississippi Equity Investment Tax Credits equal to 24 percent of the Qualified Equity Investment, also dispensed over a minimum of seven years. The maximum investment eligible for state tax credits for a project is $10 million dollars. Eligibility requirements and recapture events parallel those of the federal program.\(^\text{47}\) More information on the state tax credits is detailed in the Mississippi Tax Incentives, Exemption, and Credits section on the Mississippi Department of Revenue website.

The combination of both Federal and State New Markets Tax Credits has the potential to be a pivotal funding source for commercial projects along Howard Avenue. However the application process, and meeting the program requirements to ensure continued yearly tax credit distribution, can be a complex job. Often developers will hire a NMTC consultant to navigate this process. Should the tax credits be granted, it is often worth the consultation fee. A thorough compilation of developer incentives for the stretch of Howard Avenue may include advertisements from possible NMTC consultants.

**Façade, Small Business, and Re-occupancy Grants**

Various other small grants are available through the city of Biloxi for business currently open or planning to open in the downtown area. Although Biloxi’s population is below 50,000, the City has been awarded Community Development Block Grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development based on the pre-Katrina population and ongoing recovery assistance. One way the city dispensed this grant money is for façade upgrades. These small-scale façade

grants were awarded in the years following Hurricane Katrina to various commercial properties along Rue Magnolia and along Vieux Marche for $5,000 dollars. The city did not view these grants as a particularly successful measure, as much of the projects that the grant money was used for resulted in small-scale upgrades such a signage, rather than fulfilling the original intention (to alter the overall appearance of the existing building). In 2010 a new façade grant was structured with allocations as high as $30,000 dollars. As part of the new façade grant program, the city assigned approved businesses to an architectural firm with whom to work. The program lasted one year, and seven properties were allocated the full $30,000 dollar grant amount.

The information that was available on the city webpage, however, presented a misleading eligibility map that did not outline the stretch of Howard Avenue or many other downtown streets. This contradiction between the map and actual eligibility may have deterred potential applicants along Howard Avenue that may have benefitted from the grant and thereby enriched the overall appearance of the downtown area.

The Biloxi Chamber of Commerce offers additional small grants (each with a maximum award of $1,000 dollars): a Small Business Grant and a Re-Ocupancy Grant. There are requirements associated with each including Biloxi Chamber of Commerce membership (for the Small Business Grant), and lease agreement and square footage requirements (for the Re-Ocupancy Grant). More information and the application for each grant can be found at the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce webpage.

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48 Ed Shambra, "Interview with Ed Shambra, Biloxi Senior Planner- Biloxi Planning Division," telephone interview by author, April 11, 2014.
49 "Facade Grant Interview with Biloxi Programs Division Representative," telephone interview by author, April 16, 2014.
Conclusion

Various funding mechanisms that can support and promote the redevelopment of the stretch of Howard Avenue do exist under Mississippi legislation and many are currently utilized by the City of Biloxi. Finding information on these funding mechanisms, however, is not easy. There is not a comprehensive and easily accessible website that provides information on, or often updated links to, all relevant funding mechanisms available for properties within the city, much less those along Howard Avenue. Redevelopment efforts along the stretch of Howard Avenue may be bolstered if an entity is assigned with the task of compiling and maintaining an organized and clearly presented compilation of development funding incentives specific to Howard Avenue (or the downtown area as a whole). The first question developers ask themselves when considering a site for development is often, “is this venture financially feasible?” Due to the current vacancy rate, high acquisition prices, and overall market risk associated with developing along Howard Avenue, the answer may be “no” unless gap funding measures are clearly presented and attainable.

The incentives that developers can seek directly expand beyond the provided list, yet there are even more options for grant money if sought by municipalities and counties on behalf of industries. Should the City or Main Street Association desire to work in partnership with a particular business, industry, or developer along Howard Avenue, more grant funding is available. Likewise there is a myriad of tax credits, tax incentives, and loan options that can be sought by both developers and the City. A complete list of these funding sources is available on the Mississippi Development Authority’s webpage.52

Biloxi’s Upcoming MGM Stadium

In May 2015 a minor league baseball team, currently the Huntsville Stars of Alabama, will be moving to the new MGM Park being built at 875 Beach Blvd, a stone’s throw from downtown Biloxi and blocks from the stretch of Howard Avenue. The 6,000-seat stadium is projected to be complete by the beginning of May 2015, leaving only the first five home games to be played elsewhere. The MGM stadium will host around 70 home games a season, and is expected to be a catalytic development for Biloxi’s downtown revitalization efforts.53

Opinions on the potential affects that a sports stadium and team can have on a city vary. Multiple academic studies have shown no positive correlation between professional sports venues and the local economy (specifically there has been no effect on the growth rate of real per capita income). The results of these academic studies are often contrary to the findings of many economic impact studies commissioned by local governments.54 This proved to be a concern for some residents of Biloxi during discussions of the economic benefits of the planned stadium.55 C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc., the firm that completed the economic analysis for the proposed downtown baseball stadium, has composed reports for the city in the past and did in fact report that the stadium would be catalytic for downtown redevelopment; increasing the city revenue by $1.5 million dollars annually from fiscal tax and lease agreement revenues. It should be noted, however, that C.H. Johnson Consulting, Inc. did assert the following concerning the primacy of the stadium for economic rejuvenation; “Is the stadium itself the tipping point? No! But it communicates a shift in attitude for downtown that the City seeks a residential and retail base and it is taking steps to make

An investigation into two other southern cities with minor league baseball stadiums in close proximity to the downtown (Pensacola, FL and Birmingham, AL) suggests that there may be several factors at play in terms of successful downtown economic impact. It may be the high level of public subsidy put into a combination of projects, one being a minor league stadium, which triggers economic growth downtown. The position of the stadium relative to downtown and thus the general accessibility from multiple directions (or lack thereof) may be another factor. Lastly, the impact that the marketing of ensuing developments in a downtown district has on future momentum may also come into play. The following is a comparison between said cities and Biloxi, including information regarding the timing of downtown development directly following the installation of the minor league baseball stadiums.

**Regions Field**

In 2010 the City of Birmingham, AL (population 212,038) completed the $25 million dollar centrally located Railroad Park. The park became a symbol of downtown revitalization. Shortly after completion, plans were made to build a new minor league baseball stadium for the returning Birmingham Barons, adjacent to the 19-acre park. Regions Field, an 8,500-seat stadium, was completed in April of 2013. Beyond these two catalytic developments, Birmingham began envisioning a defined mixed-use district called Parkside, surrounding the park and stadium. The city of Birmingham has invested approximately $84 million dollars into this downtown district, and according to REV Birmingham (an economic development organization with the goal of revitalizing the city’s urban areas), the district has in turn experienced well over $100 million dollars in private development. The majority of private development is residential in nature, some projects possessing commercial components. The current projects are aligned with what Birmingham originally envisioned in terms of a mixed-use downtown district. REV Birmingham attributes this

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surge in private downtown development to the momentum from three major projects rather than the stadium alone. These major projects include Railroad Park, Regions Field, and (to a lesser extent) the Negro Southern League Museum, all clustered in the center of the downtown Parkside neighborhood. The following table shows the scale and time frame for the readily available key development projects, current and planned, which have directly followed the development of Railroad Park and Regions Field. All the information presented below was found, mostly on AL.com, by means of a simple Internet search for “downtown development in Birmingham”. After a general list was compiled, a REV Birmingham team member confirmed that these are in fact the main developments since the stadium came about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Project</th>
<th>Progress to Date</th>
<th>Location Relative to Stadium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Railroad Park</td>
<td>Opened in fall 2010</td>
<td>Adjacent to Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 acre park includes lakes, amphitheater, green space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regions Field Baseball Park</strong></td>
<td>Completed in April 2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8,500 seat minor league stadium</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westin Hotel and Entertainment District</td>
<td>Completed in spring 2013</td>
<td>10 blocks from Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70 million subsidized hotel/ commercial project (60,000 SF)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lyric</td>
<td>Anticipated completion in December 2014</td>
<td>3 blocks from Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$7 million historic theater renovation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIV Parkside</td>
<td>Construction started in spring 2014</td>
<td>2 blocks from Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed use residential (228 apartments)/ commercial (3,000 SF of retail space) + parking deck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro Southern League Museum</td>
<td>Design approval granted in January 2014</td>
<td>Adjacent to Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2 million museum and baseball themed restaurant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L&amp;N Parkside</td>
<td>Design approval granted in spring 2014</td>
<td>1 block from Regions Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed use residential (129 apartments)/ commercial (12,000 SF of retail space) + parking deck</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pensacola Bayfront Stadium

Pensacola, FL (population 52,340) completed their 5,000-seat minor league baseball stadium in 2012. The stadium is located directly on the Pensacola Bay, and thus only the north side, along Main Street, is directly exposed to potentially developable land. Much like in Birmingham, Pensacola Bayfront Stadium was built to accompany a park (Community Maritime Park) as part of a larger redevelopment project totaling $54 million dollars. The stadium is located within the park, which jets into the Pensacola bay on all but the north side. There is limited parking directly adjacent to the baseball field, and so many fans park downtown and take shuttles or Pedi cabs to the stadium. According to the economic impact report conducted by C.H. Johnson Consulting, a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue at the Ballpark</th>
<th>Design approval granted in spring 2014</th>
<th>2 blocks from Regions Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential (236 apartments)</td>
<td>Design approval granted in spring 2014</td>
<td>2 blocks from Regions Field</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Readily Available Information on Downtown Birmingham Developments, Post-Regions Field

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local news station interviewed several downtown business owners who applauded business exposure the necessitated downtown parking generates.61

Although located only about six blocks from the heart of downtown Pensacola, there is much less available information on development projects currently happening downtown. An Internet search similar to the one conducted for downtown Birmingham resulted in no news of development. It was discovered, upon further inquisition with the Pensacola Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Division, that there are currently new retail and restaurant establishments opening downtown. On top of this, University of West Florida’s football team will begin using the stadium in 2016. The specific large-scale developments suggested for further inquiry were the Community Maritime Park offices being partly developed by Pensacola Blue Wahoos owner Quint Studor, and two recently approved projects at the Port of Pensacola (the names of which were not disclosed).62 Upon recommendation, a phone call was made to the Downtown Improvement Board to learn more information, where it was reported that there is no knowledge of downtown development projects.63 According to an opinion piece on Pensacola Digest, there has been criticism that Maritime Park has not been properly marketed to potential for-profit developers since 2010.64 The following table lists the entirety of the developments uncovered by online searches and phone conversations with both the Economic Development Division of Pensacola’s Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Improvement Board.

62 “Pensacola Downtown Development Interview with Adam Myers, Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Division.” Telephone interview by author. April 23, 2014.
63 "Inquiry Phone Call to Pensacola Downtown Development Board, Information from Ron Butlin Relayed by Receptionist.” Telephone interview by author. April 23, 2014.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development Project</th>
<th>Progress to Date</th>
<th>Location Relative to Stadium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Maritime Park Offices</td>
<td>Development team assembled in Spring 2014</td>
<td>Within immediate proximity of Pensacola Bay Stadium (in Community Maritime Park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 story multi-tenant office building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Projects at Port of Pensacola\textsuperscript{65}</td>
<td>City approval granted in Spring 2014</td>
<td>Within 5 blocks of Pensacola Bay Stadium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Readily Available Information on Downtown Pensacola Developments, Post-Pensacola Bayfront Stadium\textsuperscript{66}

**Conclusion**

Biloxi is more similar to Pensacola in both size and geographic proximity to the waterfront. The proposed Biloxi stadium, unlike that of Pensacola, has downtown accessibility on nearly every side (excluding the side facing Beach Boulevard). This may increase the impact the stadium has on downtown in terms of the radial spread of fans and foot traffic before and after the games. Because the stadium will be adjacent to Interstate 110, the area to the west of the Interstate, which is being considered for inclusion in the Downtown Biloxi District, will also have fan exposure and increased foot traffic. This may be an important factor in terms of development spreading down Howard Avenue to the west as well as the east. This ability for development to radiate in multiple directions from the stadium may allow more prolific and rapid redevelopment of the downtown area immediately following completion of the stadium, as seen in Birmingham. Birmingham, however, completed Railroad Park well before the stadium was built. The draw of the large park undoubtedly factored into the rate of development seen in the area. Biloxi does have plans to develop a swath of downtown land into a small public park (at Bayhead Swamp) but the stadium will precede it. According to REV Birmingham, it was the combination of synchronized development geared at public recreation (park + stadium + museum) that created the drive for private sector development. The last important aspect derived from this comparison between the Birmingham

\textsuperscript{65} No further information available for either project

\textsuperscript{66} "Pensacola Downtown Development Interview with Adam Myers, Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Division." Telephone interview by author. April 23, 2014.
and Pensacola stadiums is the availability of information pertaining to development news. Birmingham has recent news coverage on almost every project in the above table, easily found after a perfunctory search. By contrast, information on the projects in Pensacola was not readily available by a cursory search. Thus the final recommendation, in terms of encouraging development that may follow the completion of MGM Stadium, is to coordinate (and market) the anticipated park at Bayhead Swamp, and assign an entity to promote and ensure media coverage of ensuing development momentum downtown post-stadium completion.
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