BILOXI LIGHTHOUSE PARK AND VISITOR'S CENTER PROJECT

FEMA DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROJECT NO. 6690.10

JUNE 2009

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

BILOXI LIGHTHOUSE PARK AND VISITOR'S CENTER
HARRISON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI
FEMA-1604-DR-MS

The City of Biloxi has applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance with a construction project for the proposed Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center in Biloxi, Harrison County, Mississippi.

The proposed project is intended to replace two municipal buildings previously located directly north of the Biloxi Lighthouse (on the proposed project location), which were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina: the historic Dantzler House (a municipal building used for various City of Biloxi functions and which included a Mardi Gras Museum) and the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce building.

FEMA proposes to provide assistance for this project through the Public Assistance Program (PA) under the Presidential Disaster Declaration FEMA-1604-DR-MS.

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for FEMA, Subpart B, Agency Implementing Procedures, Part 10.9, an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). The purpose of the EA is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the construction project, and to determine whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). In the EA process, FEMA considered two alternatives, the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action Alternative.

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi proposes to construct the new Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center to replace the municipal buildings destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. The project location consists of approximately 3.5 acres located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Porter Avenue and Beach Boulevard (Highway 90) in Biloxi, Mississippi. The 23,500-square foot Visitor's Center will include space for the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce; exhibit space allocated for the Dantzler House and the historic Tullis Manor (also destroyed by Hurricane Katrina); a large assembly room that may be used for exhibits, presentations, or community functions; and exhibit space displaying the history and treasures of Biloxi. The proposed project also includes a park, landscaping, lighting, parking facilities, streetscape improvements and passive recreation areas.

The 3.5-acre proposed project location is currently located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) AE with a base flood elevation (BFE) of 12' above mean sea level (amsl), plus a 1.0' freeboard requirement. However, based on the new Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (D-FIRMS) released by FEMA which will become effective later this year, the project lies within a

VE and AE zone, with BFEs ranging from 18' to 21' amsl. The proposed building will be constructed with a floor elevation of 22' amsl.

This proposed project as described in the EA was evaluated for any potential significant adverse impacts to existing land use, water resources (surface water, groundwater, waters of the United States, and floodplains), air quality, noise, biological resources (vegetation, fish and wildlife, State and Federally-listed threatened or endangered species and critical habitat), and cultural resources. It was also evaluated for safety and hazardous materials issues as well as for disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority or low income populations.

FINDINGS

Based on input and consultations with Federal and State resource agencies, and other identified sources documented in the attached EA and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act FEMA regulations (44 CFR Part 10) for environmental considerations, and executive orders on floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990) and environmental justice (EO 12898), FEMA has found that the proposed project with the prescribed mitigation measures as defined in the EA will have no significant impact on the natural or human environment. As a result of this Finding of No Significant Impact, an EIS will not be prepared and the proposed project with prescribed conditions may proceed. If a change in the scope of work occurs, the State and FEMA must be notified to evaluate if the proposed change would alter the potential impacts on the environment.

Recommended:

Michael Grisham Date

FEMA Environmental Liaison Officer

Approved

J. Randy Walker Date

FEMA Infrastructure Branch Chief
FEMA-1604-DR-MS

ABFE	Advisory Base Flood Elevation
ACHP	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
amsl	above mean sea level
APE	Area of Potential Effects
BMP	Best Management Practice
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
CAA	Clean Air Act
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CO	carbon monoxide
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
dB	decibel
DNL	Day-Night Average Sound Level
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Environmental Site Assessment
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
MDAH	Mississippi Department of Archives and History
MDEQ	Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
MDMR	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NISTAC	Nationwide Infrastructure Support Technical Assistance Consultants
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NO_2	nitrogen dioxide
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
O_3	ozone
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Pb	Lead
$PM_{2.5}$	particulate matter less than 2.5 microns
PM_{10}	particulate mater less than 10 microns
RCPs	reinforced concrete pipes
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Area
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SO_2	sulfur dioxide
SWPPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VOC	Volatile Organic Compound

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the southeastern coast of Louisiana and the southwestern coast of Mississippi on August 29, 2005, with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph. Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 105 miles from the center of the storm. Coastal storm surge flooding of 20 to 30 feet above normal tide levels, along with large and dangerous battering waves, occurred near and to the east of where the center of the storm made landfall. Widespread damage occurred, including beach erosion and damage and/or destruction of homes and infrastructure. A Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA-1604-DR-MS, was subsequently signed for Hurricane Katrina, making 81 Mississippi counties (including Harrison County) eligible for FEMA Public Assistance.

The City of Biloxi has submitted an application for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding under FEMA's Public Assistance program being administered in response to FEMA-1604-DR-MS for the proposed Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center.

In accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended and implementing regulations at 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 206, FEMA is required to review the environmental effects of the proposed action prior to making a funding decision. This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with FEMA's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations found in 44 CFR Part 10.

2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED

Two municipal buildings located directly north of the Biloxi Lighthouse (on the proposed project location) were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina: the historic Dantzler House (a 8,568 square-foot municipal building used for various city functions and which included a Mardi Gras Museum) and the 3,934 square-foot Biloxi Chamber of Commerce building. The Biloxi Lighthouse, erected in 1848, is a favorite landmark for the City of Biloxi as well as the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast. The City of Biloxi is applying for FEMA Public Assistance Program funding to construct a new Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center which will replace the two destroyed buildings and will enhance the lighthouse area by creating a focal point for local residents as well as tourists. This project will provide a pedestrian friendly atmosphere for those wishing to use the Visitor's Center and provide safer conditions for those wishing to visit the Biloxi Lighthouse.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi would not rebuild a facility to replace the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce building or the Dantzler House. The Biloxi Chamber of Commerce would continue to remain in temporary offices in Gulfport, and there would be no municipal facility at this location to provide a showcase of Biloxi's history and hospitality.

Alternative 2: Construct the Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center (Proposed Action)

Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the City of Biloxi proposes to construct Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center. The 24,866-square foot Visitor's Center will include space for the Biloxi Chamber of Commerce; exhibit space allocated for the Dantzler House and the historic Tullis Manor (also destroyed by Hurricane Katrina); a large assembly room that may be used for exhibits, presentations, or community functions; and exhibit space displaying the history and treasures of Biloxi. The proposed project also includes a park, landscaping, lighting, parking facilities, streetscape improvements and passive recreation areas.

Construction of New Facility

The project location consists of approximately 3.5 acres located on six (6) contiguous parcels in Section 32, Township 7 South, Range 9 West, latitude 30º23′42.2" North, longitude 88º54′5.4" West. The Tax Assessor's Parcel Numbers for the site are: 13101-01-033.000; 13101-01-033.001; 13101-01-033.002; 13101-01-034.000; 13101-01-016.000; and 13101-01-016.01. The location of the project is depicted on Figure1, Appendix A, and an aerial photograph is provided as Figure 2, Appendix A.

The site is bounded on the north by a vacant lot at 110 Porter Avenue; a residence at 135 Lestrade Place, a residence at 130 Lestrade Place, and Nativity BVM School at 1046 Beach Boulevard; on the east by a residence at 1034B Beach Boulevard and a vacant lot at 1034 Beach Boulevard; on the south by Beach Boulevard; and on the west by Porter Avenue and a vacant lot at 110 Porter Avenue and a vacant residence at 130 Porter Avenue.

Temporary office buildings and equipment and vehicles associated with the MDOT Beach Boulevard road construction project are currently located on the southern portion of the project site and will need to be re-located.

Plans include new curb/gutter, sidewalks, drainage improvements, lighting, landscaping, milling, and overlaying Porter Avenue. The plans also include the construction of two parking facilities, sidewalks, retaining walls, drainage infrastructure, lighting, and landscaping to serve the proposed Visitor's Center, and landscaping, sidewalks and cross walks around the Biloxi Lighthouse.

The project site is located in a Special Flood Hazard Area VE zone and AE Zone, with base flood elevation ranging from 18 to 21 feet above mean sea level (amsl). To comply with federal floodplain elevations, the finished floor elevation of the new Visitor's Center will be 22 feet amsl. The new 23,500-square foot Visitor's Center building will be constructed on a pier foundation; the first floor will be pre-cast panel slab and the second floor will be metal deck with concrete slab. The structural system will consists of twelve-inch CMU load bearing walls with interior steel columns and a pitched slate roof and built-up roof. Interior construction will consist of metal stud walls with gypsum board and interior ceilings consisting of acoustic panels, lay-in ceiling tiles and gypsum board. Flooring will be comprised of engineered wood, carpet and tile.

4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND IMPACTS

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action Alternative and conditions or mitigation measures to offset those impacts. Following the summary table, any areas where potential impacts were identified will be discussed in greater detail.

Table 1: Summary of Site Reconnaissance Observations

Affected Environment	Impacts	Mitigation
Geology and Soils	No impacts to geology. Short-term impacts to soil during the construction period.	Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately upon completion of construction to stabilize soils. No Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (AD-1006) is required since the project is located within city limits.
Surface Water	Short-term impacts to the Mississippi Sound would occur during the construction period due to soil erosion.	A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit must be obtained prior to construction; appropriate BMPs, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils, would minimize runoff.
Floodplains	Project site is located in a Special Flood Hazard Area VE and AE zone, with base flood elevations ranging from 18' to 21' amsl.	Finished floor elevation of the proposed structure will be built at an elevation of 22' amsl to comply with new federal floodplain regulations.
Waters of the U.S. Including Wetlands	No waters of the United States or wetlands occur on the proposed project site.	None

Transportation	Minor short-term increase in the volume of construction traffic on roads in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project site. Minor long-term impacts to traffic levels in the vicinity of the project site as a result of tourists and residents utilizing the facility.	Construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on-site during project construction and appropriate signage would be posted on affected roadways.
Public Health and Safety	No impacts to public health and safety are anticipated.	All construction activities would be performed using qualified personnel and in accordance with the standards specified in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations; appropriate signage and barriers would be in place prior to construction activities to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities.
Hazardous Materials	No adverse impacts to hazardous materials or wastes are anticipated. A Phase I ESA of the property conducted in December 2007 by Neel-Schaffer, Inc. (provided under separate cover) did not identify any recognized environmental conditions.	Excavation activities could expose or otherwise affect subsurface hazardous wastes or materials; any hazardous materials discovered, generated, or used during construction would be handled and disposed of in accordance with all applicable local, state and federal regulations.
Socioeconomic Resources	No adverse socioeconomic impacts are anticipated.	None
Environmental Justice	No disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations is anticipated.	None
Air Quality	Short-term impacts to air quality would occur during the construction period; no adverse long-term impacts are anticipated.	Construction contractors would be required to water down construction areas when necessary; fuel-burning equipment running times would be kept to a minimum; engines would be properly maintained.

Noise	Short-term impacts to noise would occur at the proposed project site during the construction period.	Construction would take place during normal business hours. Equipment would be maintained to meet all local, state, and federal noise regulations.
Biological Resources	There are no listed species or their habitats found on the project site.	Trees would only be removed as necessary for the project design, in accordance with the Biloxi Land Development Ordinance. Additional trees would be planted as part of the park project. All trees would be protected during construction.
Cultural Resources	The project is located within the West Central Historic District and the Beach Boulevard Historic District. Cultural resources identified within and adjacent to the project include the Moran Site (22Hr511), the Biloxi Lighthouse Keeper's House site (22Hr1026), the Chamber of Commerce-Biloxi Tourist Court site (22Hr998), and the Dantzler House site (22Hr1027).	Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) required design drawings for the proposed project, as well as photographs of any structures older than fifty years that are adjacent to or near the site. These design drawings and photographs have been submitted to MDAH. Archaeologists conducted monitoring during site demolition/preparation and conducted a cultural resources survey. The March 2009 cultural resources report was submitted to MDAH for review and is enclosed under separate cover. By letter of April 29, 2009, MDAH provided a letter of concurrence for the project, with compliance conditions to ensure that the project would result in no adverse effect on cultural resources identified in the project area. Monitored stripping would be conducted by archaeologists in order to avoid identified cultural resources. Should unrecorded cultural resources be encountered, all work would cease and MDAH would be notified immediately.

4.1 Geology and Soils

According to the 1969 "Geologic Map of Mississippi", published by the Mississippi Geological Survey, geologic units at the site have been mapped as undifferentiated Holocene coastal deposits, consisting of sand, loam, gravel and clay.

The proposed project site contains soil consisting predominantly of Lakeland fine sand (Lr). The Lakeland series consists of very deep, excessively drained, rapid to very rapidly permeable soils on uplands, characterized by slow runoff. They formed in thick beds of eolian or marine sands.

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) states Federal agencies must "minimize the extent to which Federal programs contribute to the unnecessary conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses." The Lakeland series is not classified as prime farmland within Harrison County (USDA/NRCS, Harrison County office, personal communication with Mr. Tyree Harrington on May 19, 2008). Furthermore, a Farmland Conversion Impact Rating Form (AD-1006) is not required (USDA/NRCS, 2007b) because the project location is within the city limits of Biloxi in an urban area.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to geology or soils are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to geology are anticipated; short-term impacts to soils are anticipated during the construction period. Appropriate best management practices (BMPs) would be used, such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils immediately upon completion of construction to stabilize soils.

4.2 Water Resources

4.2.1 Surface Water

The Clean Water Act (CWA), as amended in 1977, established the basic framework for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States.

According to a Class "A" survey of the proposed project site (see Appendix A) conducted by Montgomery Land Surveying on September 24, 2007, the project site slopes generally from north to south, with a maximum site elevation of 20 feet amsl in the northeastern corner and a minimum site elevation of 9 feet amsl along the southern property boundary. The proposed project site is located approximately 400 feet (0.08 mile) north of the Mississippi Sound. Surface water within the proposed project site drains south southwest towards Beach Boulevard and the Mississippi Sound via natural topography and underground stormwater drainage pipes. There are several stormwater inlets on the project site and on Beach Boulevard which are connected to 12-inch reinforced concrete pipes (RCPs) which discharge into the Mississippi Sound.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to surface water are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to the Mississippi Sound may occur during the construction period due to soil erosion. Existing stormwater inlets and associated underground RCPs located within the proposed project site

would be removed and reconfigured, to provide improved drainage and accommodate the proposed construction plans. The new drainage system would include the construction of new stormwater inlets. The applicant would be required to obtain an approved Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit prior to start of construction. To reduce impacts to the Mississippi Sound, the applicant would implement appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as installing silt fences and revegetating bare soils.

4.2.2 Floodplains

Executive Order (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management) requires Federal agencies to avoid direct or indirect support of development within the 100-year floodplain whenever there is a practicable alternative. FEMA uses Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) to identify the regulatory 100-year floodplain for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Based on information provided by Mr. Richard Stickler, CFM, Floodplain Administrator for the City of Biloxi, the proposed project site is located in Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) AE. According to the FIRM Map No. 2852520008 dated 1984, the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) is 12' amsl. The City of Biloxi had a 1.0' "freeboard" requirement which would make the elevation of the bottom of lowest finished floor 13'amsl. However on May 23, 2006 the Biloxi City Council voted to increase the freeboard requirement to 4' above the existing BFE which would now require the finish floor to be elevated to or above 16'amsl. This correspondence from Mr. Stickler is included in Appendix B.

Since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, FEMA has proposed new BFE levels throughout the coastal area. These proposed elevations have been released by FEMA and mandated throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Coastal communities have independently rejected or accepted these proposals as their local government entities have seen fit. VE is the 100 year flood zone along coastal areas subject to velocity hazard (wave action) where BFEs are provided on the Digital FIRM. This property has VE with BFE of 21' amsl, VE with BFE of 20' amsl, VE with BFE of 19' amsl and AE with BFE of 18' amsl. To comply with federal floodplain elevations, the finished floor elevation of the new Visitor's Center will be 22' amsl.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to the floodplain are anticipated because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, the project will be constructed within SFHA VE and AE. The Visitor's Center building would be constructed with a floor elevation of 22' amsl to comply with proposed federal floodplain regulations.

4.2.3 Waters of the U.S. Including Wetlands

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or filled material into water of the U.S., including wetlands, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Additionally, EO 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) required Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impact of wetlands.

The proposed project site is located approximately 400 feet (0.08 mile) north of the Mississippi Sound, which are considered to be Waters of the U.S. However, no jurisdictional wetlands are located on or adjacent to the proposed project site. The 1987 *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* requires the presence of all three parameters (greater than 50% dominance of hydrophytic vegetation, evidence of hydric soil, and hydrologic indicators) for an area to be

considered a wetland (USACE, 1987). The proposed project site contains soil consisting predominantly of Lakeland fine sand (Lr), which is not a listed hydric soil (http://soils.usda.gov/use/hydric/lists/state.html. A review of National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps indicates that no wetlands are located on or adjacent to the proposed project site (www.nwi.fws.gov). Furthermore, as a site developed prior to 1987, the proposed project site does not fall under the jurisdiction of Section 404 of the CWA.

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) enables coastal states, including Mississippi, to designate state coastal zone boundaries and develop coastal management programs to improve protection of sensitive shoreline resources and guide sustainable use of coastal areas. According to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the proposed project site is located within the Mississippi Coastal Zone (NOAA, 2007). The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) is the lead coastal management agency.

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG Environmental Assessment for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, March 15, 2007 requests for project review were sent to the USACE Mobile District and also to the MDMR. An updated request for project review was sent to the USACE Mobile District on May 21, 2008. A response letter, dated June 3, 2008 from Mr. John B. McFadyen of the USACE requested that a wetlands delineation be performed on the west side of Porter Avenue. Clarification regarding the project boundaries (the project is restricted to the east side of Porter Avenue) was provided to Mr. McFadyen, and the request for wetlands delineation was withdrawn. All agency correspondence is enclosed in Appendix B of this report.

On April 4, 2007, Ms. Willa Henriksen, Bureau Chief of the MDMR Wetlands Permitting Program provided correspondence (attached in Appendix B) stating no objections to the project, provided there are no direct or indirect impacts to coastal wetlands and no coastal program agency objects to the proposal.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands, would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – No waters of the U.S., including wetlands, occur on the proposed project site. Therefore, under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to waters of the U.S., including wetlands, would occur. Responses from the USACE Mobile District and from the MDMR indicate no agency objections.

4.3 Transportation

The proposed project site is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Beach Boulevard (U.S. Highway 90, which is a major four-lane thoroughfare), and Porter Avenue, a two-lane urban roadway.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no construction would occur and there would be no impacts to transportation.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, minor short-term impacts to transportation, site access, or traffic levels would occur during the construction period and minor long-term impacts to traffic levels would occur upon completion of the construction period as a result of the increased number of residents and tourists accessing the facility. Construction will take place during normal business hours. Proposed improvements include widening Porter Avenue between Highway 90 to Bolton Lane to provide on-street parking to

serve the Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center. Plans include new curb/gutter, sidewalks, drainage improvements, lighting, landscaping, milling and overlaying Porter Avenue. The plans also include the construction of two parking facilities, sidewalks, retaining walls, drainage infrastructure, lighting and landscaping to serve the proposed Visitor's Center and landscaping, sidewalks and cross walks around the Biloxi Lighthouse. To mitigate potential delays, construction vehicles and equipment would be stored on-site during project construction, appropriate signage would be posed on affected roadways and barriers would be in place prior to construction activities to alert pedestrians and motorists of project activities.

After construction is complete, moderate increased traffic levels in the vicinity of the proposed project would occur, due to the increased number of residents, employees and tourists accessing the facility. However, in large part the increase will be a resumption of pre-Katrina traffic volume, since the proposed building will replace the Chamber of Commerce building and Dantzler House previously located on the site. There is an existing signal light at the intersection of Beach Boulevard and Porter Avenue, and site ingress/egress cut-ins will be located as far from the corner as possible. Parking areas will be designed with the capacity to accommodate the increased number of vehicles.

4.4 Environmental Justice

EO 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) mandates that Federal agencies identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. Socioeconomic and demographic data for the project area were analyzed to determine if a disproportionate number of minority or low-income persons have the potential to be adversely affected by the proposed project.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effect on minority or low-income populations.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, there would be no disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income populations.

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG EA for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, March 15, 2007 a letter was sent to Mayor A.J. Holloway, with a request for comment on environmental justice issues associated with the proposed project. A response from Mayor Holloway (included in Appendix B of this report) indicated that the project would not adversely affect any minority or low income neighborhoods.

4.5 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires that states adopt ambient air quality standards. The standards have been established in order to protect the public from potentially harmful amounts of pollutants. Under the CAA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) establishes primary and secondary air quality standards. Primary air quality standards protect the public health, including the health of "sensitive populations, such as people with asthma, children, and older adults." Secondary air quality standards protect public welfare by promoting ecosystems health, and preventing decreased visibility and damage to crops and buildings. EPA has set national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for the following six criteria pollutants; ozone

(O_3), particulate matter ($PM_{2.5,}$ PM_{10}), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), and lead (Pb). The MDEQ monitors all of these except lead and carbon monoxide. These were monitored in the past; however, because the concentrations were so much lower than the air quality standard, it was determined by EPA and MDEQ that lead and carbon monoxide no longer needed to be monitored. According to MDEQ, the entire state of Mississippi is classified as in attainment with all Federal ambient air quality standards, meaning that criteria air pollutants do not exceed the NAAQS (MDEQ, 2008).

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG EA for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, a letter dated March 15, 2007 was sent to the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Air Toxics Branch, with a request for a determination on the proposed project. A response from Mr. Jason Speed is included in Appendix B of this report.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to air quality are anticipated since no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts to air quality would occur. Short-term impacts to air quality would occur during the construction period but would not be substantial enough to affect the attainment status of the six priority pollutants. To mitigate short-term impacts to air quality, construction contractors would be required to water down construction areas when necessary. Emissions from fuel-burning internal combustion engines (heavy equipment) could temporarily increase the levels of the criteria pollutants, including CO, $NO_{2,}$ $O_{3,}$ $PM_{2.5}$ and $PM_{10,}$ as well as non-criteria pollutants such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). To reduce the emission of criteria pollutants, fuel-burning equipment running times would be kept to a minimum and engines would be properly maintained.

4.6 Noise

Noise is generally defined as unwanted sound. Sound is most commonly measured in decibels (dB) on the A-weighted scale, which is the scale most similar to the range of sounds that the human ear can hear. The Day-Night Average Sound Level (DNL) is an average noise level over a 24-hour period. The DNL descriptor is accepted by Federal agencies as a standard for estimating sound impacts and establishing guidelines for compatible land uses. EPA guidelines, and those of many other Federal agencies, state that outdoor sound levels in excess of 55 dB DNL are "normally unacceptable" for noise-sensitive land uses such as residences, schools, or hospitals.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to noise are anticipated since no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, short-term impacts in noise levels would occur during the construction period. To reduce noise levels during that period, construction activities would take place during normal business hours. Equipment and machinery installed at the proposed site would meet all local, state and federal noise regulations.

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG Environmental Assessment for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, a March 15, 2007 request for project review was sent to Mr. Damon Torricelli, City

of Biloxi Engineer, regarding noise hazards and the proposed project. Mr. Torricelli responded that the project will have no effect on regulations (response is enclosed in Appendix B).

4.7 Biological Resources

The proposed project site has previously been developed. A gasoline retail facility, Chamber of Commerce offices, the Dantzler House, and a Catholic Diocesan residence facility were previously located on the site, along with associated parking and driveways.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists the following federally endangered (E) and threatened (T) species for Harrison County. Additional designations are as follows: (P) indicates Potential to occur; (C) indicates Candidate, CH indicates listed with critical habitat, and DPS indicates Distinct Vertebrate Population (source: http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/Countylists.htm)

E – West Indian manatee Trichechus manatus (P)

E – Red-cockaded woodpecker Picoides borealis

T – Bald eagle Haliaeetus leucophalus (Proposed to be delisted)

T – Eastern indigo snake Drymarchon corais couperi (P)

E – Brown pelican Pelecanus occidentalis

T – Gopher tortoise Gopherus polyphemus

T – Louisiana black bear Ursus a. luteolus

TCH – Piping Plover Charadrius melodus

E – Kemp's ridley Lepidochelys kempii

T – Green turtle Chelodania mydas (P)

T – Loggerhead turtle Caretta caretta

E – Louisiana quillwort Isoetes louisianensis

E – Mississippi gopher frog Rana capito sevosa (DPS)

C – Black pine snake Pituophis mealanoleucus ssp. Lodingi

TCH- Gulf sturgeon, Acipenser oxyrhynchus desotoi

E- Alabama red-bellied turtle Psuedemys Alabamensis

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG EA for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, a letter dated March 15, 2007 was sent to USFWS in Jackson, Mississippi. A response letter dated March 28, 2007 from Ms. Kathy W. Lunceford, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, indicated that there are no listed species or their habitats found on the project site. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts to biological resources because no construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – The proposed project site is disturbed, having been previously developed, and most of the surface was covered by pavement prior to commencement of this project. Impacts to biological resources would be minimal. No listed threatened or endangered species were determined to occur on the project site. However, three live oaks (10 inches, 30 inches and 48 inches in diameter) will be removed during the demolition phase of this project. According to the Section 23-16-11 (a) of the City of Biloxi Code of Ordinances (Adopted July 29, 2003, Effective September 3, 2003, and Amendments through July 6, 2005), "Any tree in or upon the streets, sidewalks or other publicly owned property of the City" is a protected tree. Therefore, the City of Biloxi would obtain a Tree Permit before removing the trees and would adhere to the tree replacement requirements. Other on-site trees would be protected during construction in accordance with Section 23-16-11 (f).

4.8 Cultural Resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, and implemented by 36 CFR Part 800, requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their actions on historic properties and provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) an opportunity to comment on Federal Projects that will have an effect on historic properties prior to implementation. Historic properties are defined as archeological sites, standing structures, or other historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

A Katrina Supplemental CDBG EA for this project dated June 2007 was prepared by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. During the CDBG EA preparation, a letter dated March 15, 2007 was sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) in Jackson, Mississippi. A response letter dated April 17, 2007 from Mr. Jim Woodrick, Review and Compliance Officer, stated that the project is located within the West Central Historic District and the Beach Boulevard Historic District, and that MDAH would require photos of any structures that are fifty years old or older that may be affected by the proposed project as well as design drawing for the proposed park. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B. Photographs were submitted to MDAH by Neel-Schaffer, Inc., and design drawings were submitted by Dale and Associates.

At the request of FEMA, Coastal Environments, Inc., (CEI) conducted a cultural resources survey of the project site in March 2009. The report (which is available for review under separate cover) was submitted to MDAH on March 30, 2009, for their review pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR Part 800. By letter of April 29, 2009, MDAH concurred with the eligibility determinations for each of the resources identified, and concurred that the proposed undertaking would have no adverse effect on the Moran site (22Hr511), the Biloxi Lighthouse Keeper's House site (22Hr1026), the Chamber of Commerce-Biloxi Tourist Court site (22Hr998), and the Dantzler House site (22Hr1027), provided that the City of Biloxi complies with the conditions outlined for avoidance through monitored stripping. With these conditions, MDAH stated that they have no objection with the proposed undertaking. The letter further stated that should unrecorded cultural resources be encountered during the project, the MDAH should be contacted immediately so that they could offer appropriate comments under 36 CFR. By letter of April 8, 2009 to Mr. Mike Womack of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, Mayor A.J. Holloway confirmed that the City of Biloxi would comply with the recommendations of CEI. as it pertains to this area, to avoid adverse effects to potentially eligible archaeological sites by having the construction contractors carefully strip

away APE soils and through archaeological monitoring of grading, utility trenching and footing installation activities in Lots A-2, B-1, B-2, and C. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

By letter of August 15, 2008, Mr. Kenneth H. Carleton, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, was initially contacted for comments on the proposed project. No response was received from Mr. Carleton. Correspondence is attached in Appendix B.

By letter of April 17, 2009, from Mr. Michael Grisham of FEMA, Mr. Carleton was again contacted. The letter detailed the findings of the May 2009 cultural resources report, including the project conditions recommended by CEI. FEMA asked for concurrence with their determination that the construction of the Biloxi Visitor's Center would have No Adverse Effect on Historic Properties (Standing Structures), and for concurrence with their determination of No Adverse Effect on Historic Properties (Archaeological Resources) on the condition that the City of Biloxi would agree to comply with the conditions recommended by CEI. No response has been received from the THPO.

No Action Alternative- Under the No Action Alternative, no impacts to archaeological or cultural resources are anticipated because no site construction would occur.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Proposed Action Alternative, no impacts to archaeological or cultural resources are anticipated, because the City of Biloxi has agreed to comply with CEI's recommended conditions during construction. If archeological artifacts or human remains were to be inadvertently discovered during the construction period, the applicant would stop work in the vicinity of the discovery and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize further harm to the finds. Work would not proceed until FEMA Historic Preservation staff complete consultation with the SHPO and the THPO.

5.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, cumulative impacts represent the "impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7)." In accordance with NEPA and to the extent reasonable and practical, this EA considered the combined effect of the Proposed Action Alternative and other actions occurring or proposed in the vicinity of the proposed project site.

The City of Biloxi and the entire Mississippi Gulf coast continue the recovery efforts after the extensive property damage caused by Hurricane Katrina. The recovery efforts in Biloxi include reconstruction of infrastructure, commercial and municipal buildings, and homes. These projects in combination with the proposed project may have a cumulative temporary impact on air quality and surface water in the Mississippi Sound by increasing criteria pollutants and increasing erosion potential during construction activities. No other cumulative effects are anticipated.

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

FEMA is the lead Federal agency for conducting the NEPA compliance process for the construction of the Biloxi Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center in Biloxi, Mississippi. It is the goal of the lead agency to expedite the preparation and review of NEPA documents and to be

responsive to the needs of the community and the purpose and need of the proposed action while meeting the intent of NEPA and complying with all NEPA provisions.

The City of Biloxi notified the public of the availability of the draft EA through publication of a public notice in a local newspaper. The public notice was published on June 4, 2009 and again on June 11, 2009 in *The Sun Herald* (see Appendix C). FEMA conducted an expedited public comment period on the initial date of publication of the public notice and ending on June 19, 2009. No comments from the public were received.

7.0 AGENCY COORDINATION AND PERMITS

The following agencies and organizations were contacted by letter requesting project review during the preparation of this EA. In order to avoid duplication of effort, many of the letters used in preparation of this EA were those received by Jimmy G. Gouras Urban Planning Consultants, Inc. during preparation of the Katrina Supplemental CDBG EA for this project dated June 2007.

- City of Biloxi Floodplain Administrator
- City of Biloxi Mayor
- City of Biloxi Engineer
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Management Division
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson Field Office
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
- United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Bureau of Wetlands Permitting
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control
- Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Air Toxics Branch

In accordance with applicable local, state, and Federal regulations, the applicant would be responsible for acquiring any necessary permits prior to commencing construction at the proposed project site.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

No impacts to geology, floodplains, water of the United States including wetlands, public health and safety, hazardous materials, socioeconomic resources, environmental justice, or cultural resources are anticipated with the Proposed Action Alternative. During the construction period, minor, short-term impacts to soils, transportation, surface water, air quality, and noise are anticipated. All short-term and minor impacts will require conditions to minimize and mitigate impacts to the proposed project site and surrounding areas. Long-term, minor impacts to biological resources (removal of several oak trees) and transportation (minor increase in traffic levels) are anticipated with the Proposed Action Alternative.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A

FIGURES

FIGURE 1

SITE LOCATION MAP


88°55'30"
88°55'0"
88°54'30"
88°54'0"
88°53'30"
88°53'0"
316000
317000
318000
319000
30°25'00"
30°24'30"
30°24'00"
30°23'30"
30°23'00"
30°22'30"
3366000
3365000
3364000
3363000
3362000
Point
B I L O X I
INDEFINITE
SUBMERGED PIPE
LAFAYETTE ST
Keesler Bayou
BAY VIEW DR
ELDER ST
Notre Dame High Sch
Tank
Sewage Disposal
LER AIR FORCE BASE
FOREST AVE
DIVISION ST
Auguste Bayou
BILOXI
BENACHI AVE
IROQUOIS AVE
BOHN ST
CATLLAVET ST
MAGNOLIA ST
NIXON ST
LEE ST
Cemetery
Cemetery
HOWARD AVE
XBM25
MAIN ST
City Hall
PO
BEACH BLVD
RTr
Lighthouse Park
Piling
Daybeacon
Daybeacon
Light
Light
Deer Isl
O U N D
1:24000 Scale
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles
0 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Kilometers
GN
TN 1°
MN 1°
Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) Projection Zone16
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
UTM Grid shown in Blue
Magnetic declination at center of map on December 19, 2007

FIGURE 2

2007 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

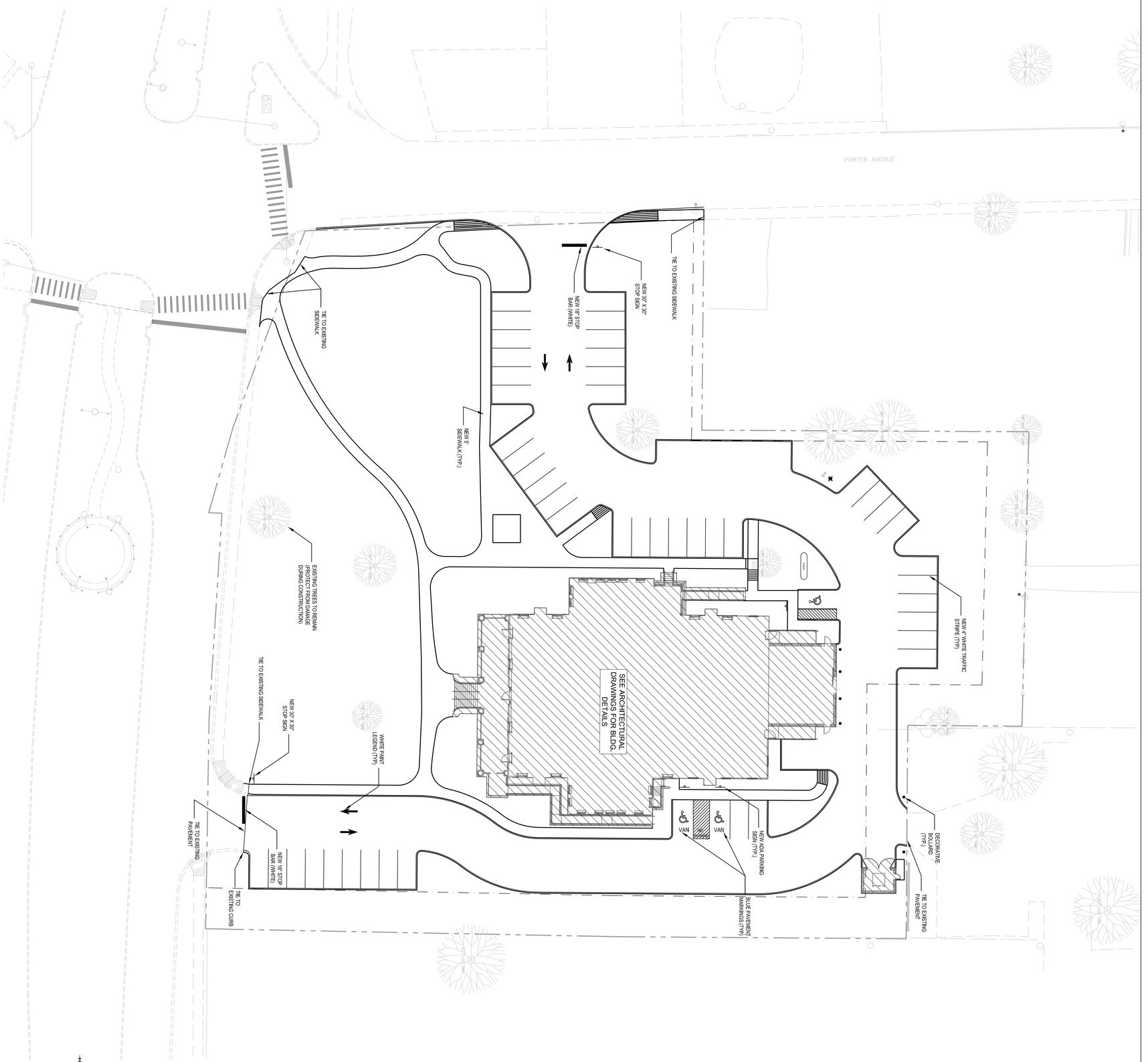
NEEL-SCHAFFER
Solutions you can build upon

Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center

FIGURE 2
AERIAL PHOTO
02/07

FIGURE 3

SITE PLAN



SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1"=20'

Lighthouse Park and Visitor's Center
Biloxi, Mississippi

NEEL-SCHAFFER
Solutions you can build upon

Project No:	6690
Date:	5-29-09
Drawn by:	JRH
Checked:	CDN
Revisions:	
Revisions:	
Revisions:	
Revisions:	

C-2
Sheet Number

FIGURE 4

ARCHITECTURAL CHECKSET

LIGHTHOUSE PARK AND VISITOR'S CENTER

BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI

100% ARCHITECTURAL CHECKSET

20 AUGUST 2008

DALE AND ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS P.A.