



THE BULLETIN

A DAILY NEWS UPDATE ON THE MISSISSIPPI RENEWAL FORUM IN BILOXI • OCTOBER 17, 2005

Boulevards proposed to solve regional transportation problems

Transportation and regional planners focused on a pair of proposed boulevards, one along the beach and the other on the current CSX railroad right of way, to tie together the coast communities. Mass transit is included in the plans for both boulevards, although the specific technology has yet to be determined.

A consensus has emerged to move the CSX line inland at a cost of just under a billion dollars, freeing up the current right of way for a multimodal thoroughfare. That road is designed as a naturalistic parkway as it travels through less developed areas, and is conceived as a boulevard in cities, according to transportation team member Rick Hall. In Gulfport, which has a dense network of streets, a four-lane thoroughfare would disrupt the grid, Hall says, so the planners have drawn two-lane sections. Planners are showing the parkway/boulevard with express transit running most of the length of the coast from Pascagoula through Bay St. Louis. The notion is to provide fast and comfortable connections among the communities allowing residents to get to work and visitors to reach

A rendering of the proposed waterfront boulevard with casinos on the north side.



MARIANNE CUSATO

CONTENTS

Boulevards proposed to solve regional transportation problems, page 1

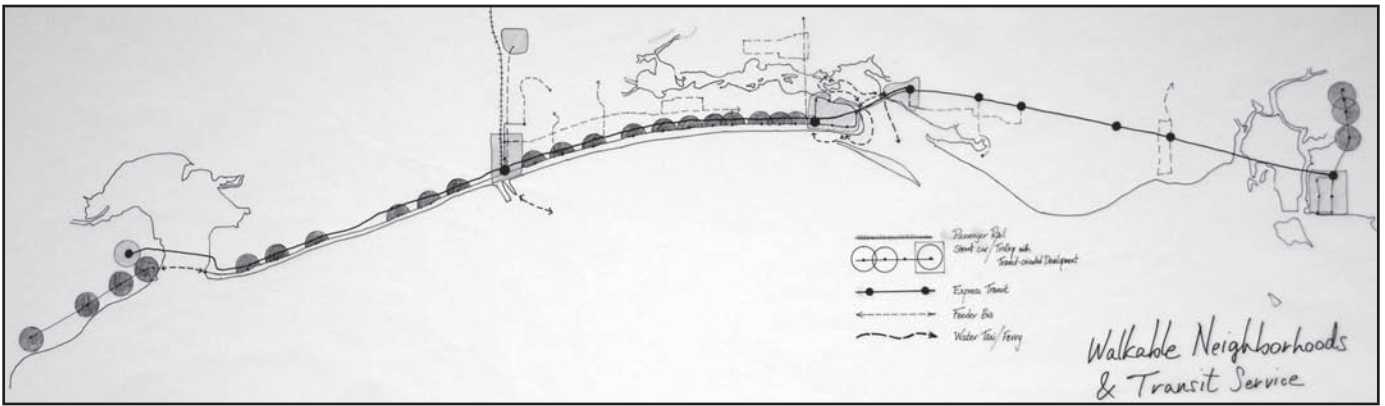
FEMA adopts neighborhood form, page 4

Economic Strategies for a Healthy Mississippi future, page 4

House designs yield energy savings, page 6

Architects respond to flood zone challenge, page 6

Quick Takes, page 8



COURTESY OF RICK HALL

The graphic above shows proposed transit routes on the Gulf coast, connecting towns and proposed walkable centers.

all points on the coast. The thoroughfare is designed to accommodate either bus rapid transit (BRT) or light rail, depending on which option is determined to be the best choice, Hall says. The transit technology also could start off with a less expensive mode, such as BRT, and change to light rail in the future.

One architect with local ties believes that a trolley on the beach is more feasible than light rail on the railroad right of way. "The trolley line is more viable than light rail," remarked Josie Holden, a Charlotte architect originally from Gulfport. "Because it is close to the beach, it will attract both tourist and local riders." The trol-

ley is part of a waterfront boulevard that is proposed between the bays on what is currently Route 90. Transportation team leader Rick Chellman is calling it Beach Boulevard. The trolley would run from Pass Christian to Biloxi, with possible extensions over the bridges. Local trolleys are also suggested for Moss Point and Pascagoula.

The planners are proposing Beach Boulevard be developed with building only on the north side, which would minimize flooding from storms. The south side is designed as a natural area with a bicycle/pedestrian path. Design guidelines would bring buildings close to the street in a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented fashion. The center of the thoroughfare would be planted with live oaks, says Chellman.

Codes that create urban fabric would help to mitigate the negative impact of moving casinos onto land, said Biloxi architect David Hardy. "If they were to do that, [the casinos] would have to address the street and be pedestrian-friendly and mixed, it would not be such a bad thing," he said.

How to save \$250 million

Three Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) proposals could be changed to save \$250 million to \$500 million and greatly improve the economic development potential of

THE BULLETIN

Editor: Robert Steuteville
 Head of Communications team: Ben Brown

Contributors: Philip Langdon, Jason Miller, Sandy Sorlien, Heather Smith, David Goldberg, Steve Filmanowicz, Ariel Diamond

The Mississippi Renewal Forum is a partnership of the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal and the Congress for the New Urbanism. It is funded largely by the Knight Foundation.

www.mississippirenewal.com

cities, Chellman said. A truck route is proposed from the port at Gulfport to I-10, which Chellman called a good idea. However, a new interchange is proposed east of the current interchange, which would involve a complex system of ramps that Chellman called "an engineer's dream." This option also brings the new highway spur through the heart of downtown and through a wetlands, he added. Instead, Chellman proposed a different truck route that connects to the current interchange. That option would avoid both the wetlands and "ripping the heart of Gulfport apart," he said. It would also save approximately \$250 million.

Another suggestion by Chellman is to replace the collapsed Route 90 bridge from Biloxi to Ocean Springs with a bridge that aligns with the CSX railroad right of way. He further recommended reducing this bridge from 6 lanes to 4 lanes, saving approximately \$30 million. The new alignment would open up developable land on the coast in both communities. One Realtor estimated \$700 million in new development potential from that shift in bridge location, Chellman said. The new bridge location would have the added benefit of taking traffic off the proposed Beach Boulevard to make it more pedestrian friendly, and shifting

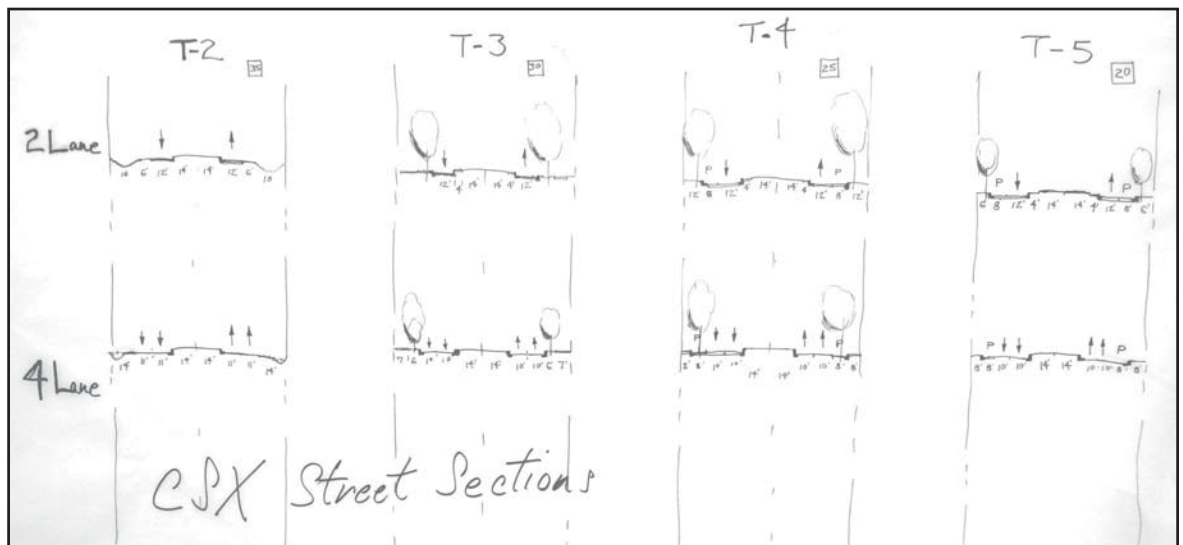
that traffic to the new railroad boulevard.

Finally, Chellman questioned the need for a 2-lane automobile bridge proposed by MDOT as a second deck over the current railroad bridge between Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian. A 4-lane automobile bridge destroyed in Katrina will be rebuilt, Chellman said, and if lanes are needed in the future they could be added at that time. The proposed additional two-lane bridge would severely impact property values in the two communities, Chellman said, and cost \$75 million or more. "I don't think you need it," he told local officials.

Humanizing an interstate

The transportation team is also recommending replacing the section of I-110 that bisects Biloxi with a boulevard, from Bayview Boulevard to the Gulf coast. At a demolition cost that transportation engineer Billy Hattaway estimated at \$15 million, this would open up substantial land in the middle of downtown for economic development. "That 400-foot corridor is completely worthless from an economic development standpoint, and it divides the city in half," Hattaway said. "The boulevard allows them to reclaim land for their tax base and real estate development."

Street sections of the proposed boulevard on the CSX rail line according to Transect zone and number of lanes.

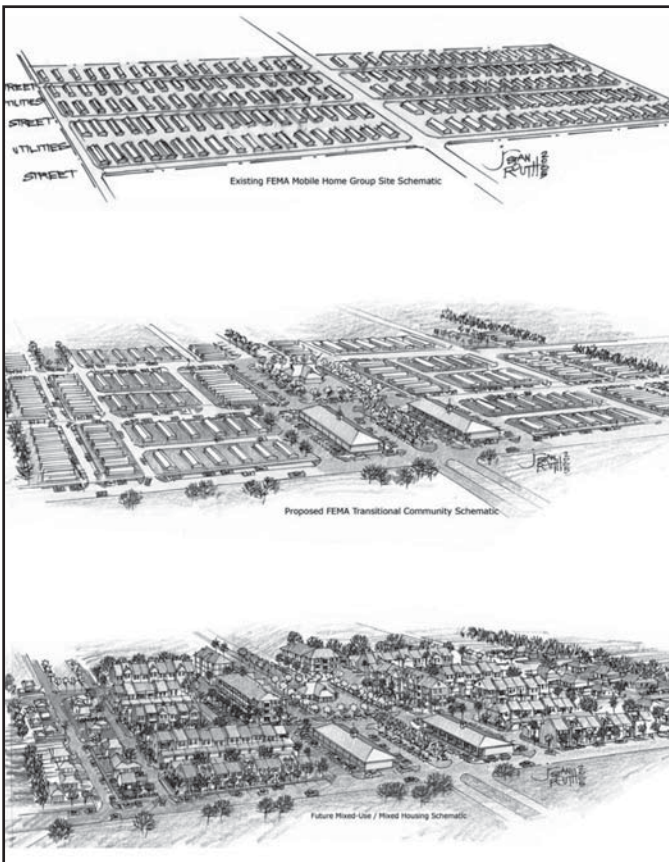


FEMA adopts neighborhood form

For the first time, the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) is proposing building emergency shelters in a neighborhood form that could evolve into permanent settlements over time. Experience with Hurricane Andrew shows that people tend to stay in temporary housing for a long time and children grow up in these units, yet they have the tendency to become rundown and devalued because of the design, Andres Duany said.

The old FEMA designs are single use and monotonous in the extreme (see top aerial rendering below). The new designs, illustrated by The Architectural Studio of Baton Rouge, use new urban principles to lay the units out in a neighborhood form with a village

FEMA standard plan, above, and new neighborhood plan, middle. That can evolve into a permanent neighborhood, bottom.



THE ARCHITECTURAL STUDIO

center (middle image). Over time, as permanent housing is built, it becomes a real neighborhood (bottom image).

The approach has been used for a proposed emergency housing village in Baton Rouge Parish, designed by Jorge Quintero for the Joint Housing Solutions Center. The 41-acre property has a village green with community center, surrounded by small blocks for mobile homes, travel trailers, or other single family housing.

Another major paradigm shift is to build smaller, infill developments in multiple locations instead of a few large trailer parks. Early on, there was talk of some very large emergency housing developments, but a backlash against that idea has FEMA focusing on sites with 200 or fewer units. In Mississippi, some of the beach communities are quite small and could not absorb large-scale development, says Michel St. Pierre of Bechtel Infrastructure Corp., which is working with FEMA. "It's a more modest approach, but a more appropriate approach," he says.

There's a need for 35,000 emergency units in Mississippi, FEMA officials said. They've already brought in 10,000 trailers and 6,000 are occupied.

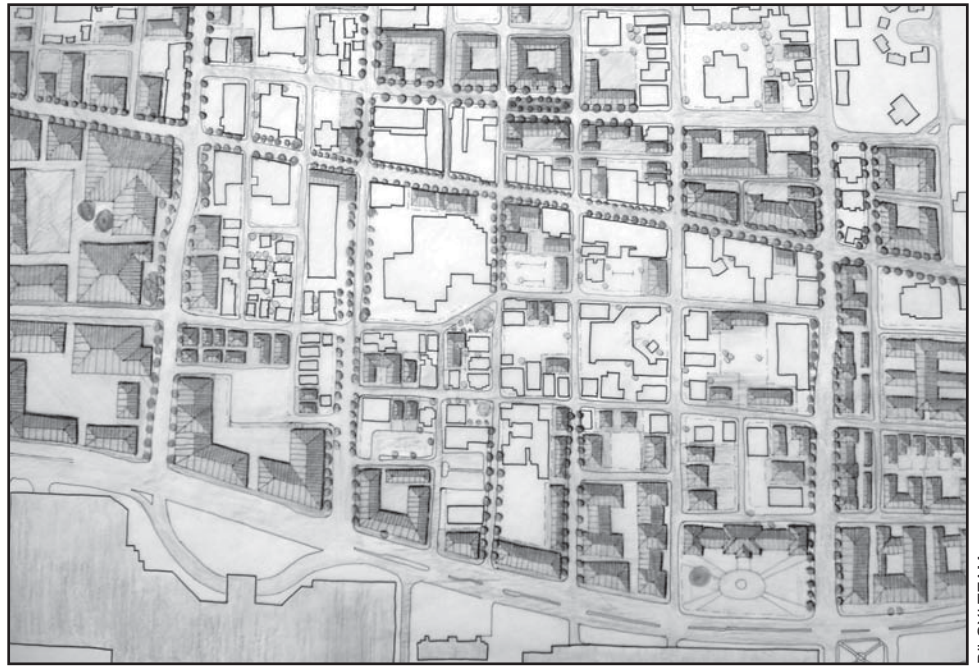
Duany was enthusiastic about the FEMA proposal, revealed to designers in Biloxi on Saturday. "It's the best thing FEMA has ever done," he said. "I think their offer to be flexible should be taken seriously."

Economic strategies for a healthy Mississippi future

With the State of Mississippi losing \$75 million per month, economic revitalization is essential to the Gulf Coast. Removing impediments to the rebuilding, creating predictable and consistent regulations and improving downtown and neighborhood retail were some of the top ideas that surfaced Sunday.

Leland Speed director of the Mis-

Biloxi downtown plan: one of the strategies is to restore a mix of uses with shops, restaurants, and cinemas.



BILOXI TEAM

Mississippi Development Authority said that revitalization will depend on a combination of factors including private investors, non-profits and other partners. "My mind is already six months ahead," he said, "after the charette has been designated a success and we are thinking about what we are going to do next." The funding for rebuilding will come from a combination of federal, private and non-profit sources. he added.

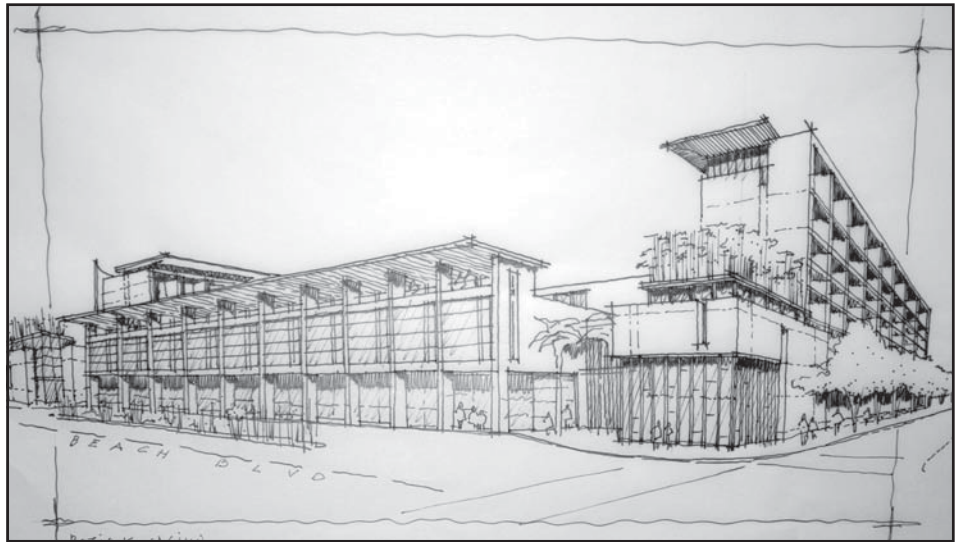
Bob Gibbs of Gibbs Planning Group recommended retail strategies for several communities. He said that residents are well served by retail, but there is an overabundance of commercially zoned property resulting in under performing centers. He also said that the tourist market is underserved. Despite the fact that shopping is the number one activity for tourists, he said "too many people probably still have limits on their credit cards when they leave." Gibbs recommends that towns capture more of their market share by creating the climate for vital historic centers, restaurants and neighborhood services.

Gibbs stressed that towns should use tools such as business improvement districts to create neighborhood scale

shopping. He said towns need to make local retail convenient. "Last year 75% of shopping occurred after 5pm," he said. He is working to create an incentive based toolkit for communities to develop local options within the neighborhood so that people can walk to get basics like shoes or milk.

How do these ideas translate into community level designs? David Siegel of the Pascagoula team said their group looked at the existing policy framework where officials wanted shopping, retail and entertainment opportunities within downtown Pascagoula. The planning team responded with a combination of residential, employment, shopping and entertainment uses within a core district that is walkable in scale and easily accessed by transit along the Pascagoula River.

Another huge factor for successful redevelopment is predictability for businesses. This translates into consistent sign ordinances, zoning codes and clear municipal leadership. John Chamberlain, a financial and economic consultant also emphasized consistency and a development process with minimal obstacles is key to getting the economy back on track. John presented overall short-term, medium-term and



A vision of a casino on Beach Boulevard.

JOHN ANDERSON

long-term strategies for the affected areas. The major recommendations are:

- *Short term (3 months):* Get citizens back on their feet and in gear and empower them to rebuild with fast permitting processes, and ready-to-build plans with minimal obstacles to redevelopment.

- *Medium term (3-12 months):* Ramp up reconstruction using local manufacturing and skill sets. Build robustly for the future to ensure sustainable and consistent businesses in the event of future hurricanes.

- *Long term (12 months and beyond):* Develop and enhance diverse and strong local industries to bring jobs and economic activity to the region on a long-term basis.

To facilitate quick rebuilding, one of the short-term recommendations is to create "one-stop" shops to process government payments, assist with claims and provide small business advice. Housing will be a critical component of the economy. This means getting builders their permits very quickly and getting people into their homes so that they can work, shop, and contribute to the economy as they did before Katrina. To help plug the gaps, Peter Werwath, Vice President of the Enterprise Foundation said that they are eager to contribute incentives such as financial counseling that will "maximize families ability to pay and

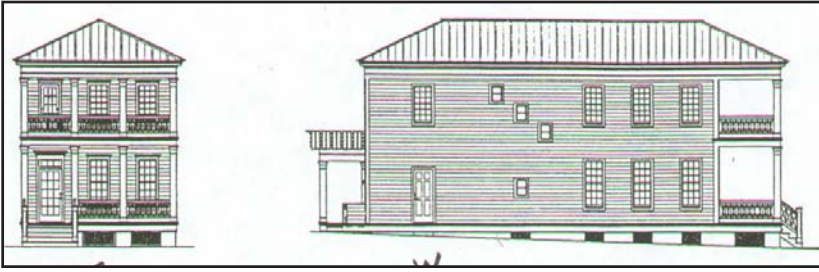
plug the gaps of public funding sources."

The economic experts at the charrette have a positive outlook for the future of the Gulf Coast and said that that fast track permitting, predictable retail and zoning regulations and getting people back in their homes will stimulate the Gulf Coast economy for years.

House designs yield energy savings

An energy analysis was conducted of two simple vernacular cottages designed at the charrette by Alabama architect Gary Justiss for moderate price construction. At the request of Doug Farr, head of the environmental team, Eta Engineers performed basic computer energy modeling of Justiss's Alchemy House and 2-story Shotgun. The modeling shows that the charrette design with R-19 walls and R-30 roofs yields annual utility bill savings of of \$270 to \$700 annually per building over cheaper construction (R-11 walls and roofs with no attention paid to infiltration barriers).

Further utility savings can be achieved through the use of ground source heat pumps (\$350 to \$600 per building annually), the engineers stated. A further advantage of the



Shotgun cottage by Gary Justiss.

ground source heat pump would be the absence of outdoor equipment that would be subject to the corrosive effects of moist, salt-laden breezes. The charrette designs also appear to satisfy the requirements of for an Energy Star rating, the engineers said.

Architects respond to flood zone challenge

When forum organizer Andres Duany put out the call for housing designs that could be built quickly and affordably yet still help Mississippians recover the character of hurricane-wrecked neighborhoods, the charrette was just two weeks away. Working from offices in Albuquerque, New York, Miami, and other points across the globe, the 12 future members of the forum's architecture team responded in force, sending electronic images and CAD files of dozens of designs of high-quality, efficiently assembled renditions of the Biloxi cottage and other traditional Mississippi types.

By the time the charrette opened on October 12, some of the designs had already been reviewed favorably by mobile home manufacturers at a meeting quickly convened by architect and team member Steve Mouzon of Miami - a gathering that ended with industry members asking for more detailed drawings so they could get to work upgrading their product (and their public image) by helping Mississippians and other customers build neighborhoods deserving of pride.

Innovative approaches abounded.

Designer Eric Moser of Beaufort, South Carolina, brought designs for a well-detailed kit home composed of addable modules, allowing a 300-square-foot temporary home to grow into a 6- or 7-room permanent residence. Developer R. John Anderson brought experience in developing mixed-use neighborhoods in California where construction techniques designed to make homes hurricane-proof have proven exportable. Modular homes can be secured to their foundations using seismic retrofit anchors normally used in California to earthquake-proof existing homes, says the Chico-based developer. "They cost about \$37 a piece and a house needs six of them, so it adds almost nothing to the cost."

Led by Albuquerque-based architect Susan Henderson of Placemakers, the architecture team has reacted to the beehive atmosphere of the charrette room by becoming even more productive, serving up designs that respond thoughtfully to issues the charrette's 11 community-focused teams have encountered in the field. Answering the oft-expressed yearning for alternatives to the coast's elephantine, internally focused casinos, the team has provided elegant sketches of grand hotels and casinos, even a design by John Anderson of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi for a sleek boutique hotel-casino that skirts the perimeter of one city block and creates a smart sidewalk scene worthy of a W Hotel.

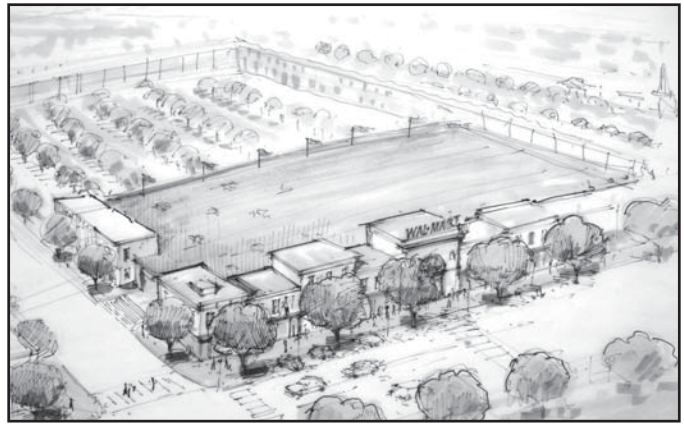
For the Andersons, the experience is about more than design. They sold their home in Waveland just months before it was demolished by Katrina and moved to nearby Bay St. Louis,

where their home was thoroughly flooded but salvageable. With other team members, they have responded to the emerging redrawn flood maps.

"When everyone began talking about the new FEMA maps and new height recommendations, people on the team began drawing buildings on stilts so high they wound up looking like ridiculous lighthouses," says John Anderson. To gain a true understanding of the challenge, the Andersons chose a stretch of a street in Waveland running from the Gulf to the point where the ground reaches about 20 feet, where homes would not require additional elevation. They created two panoramic, side-view drawing (called a "section" drawing by architects) covering six feet of wall space and a mile of Waveland, lot-by-lot. As one follows the line of buildings from land to sea, the beloved seaside houses of Mississippi begin looking progressively more insect-like, with great long legs and comparatively tiny bodies above - a form that would be as prohibitively expensive as it is unsightly. The diagram has become a must-see for mayors and other officials trying to get a handle on how new maps and rules will affect their communities. "It shows that that the existing traditions really can't continue in some places," says Henderson. "We need to work on establishing new traditions."

Quick takes

- Bechtel Corp., which is implementing emergency housing villages, has asked the charrette team to create a report on how FEMA standards need to change to allow modular housing instead of trailer parks. Unlike trailers, modular housing is placed on regular foundations and can be modified and expanded like stick-built housing, according to R. John Anderson, the charrette team member in charge of writing the report. FEMA is looking for ways to mitigate the so-



BEN PENTREATH

Aerial view of pedestrian-friendly Wal-Mart.

cial costs of trailer parks. "The additional benefits of modular housing offset the incremental costs," Anderson says.

- Visiting designer Ben Pentreath drew two versions of a replacement Wal-Mart for Pass Christian. One, in reaction to visiting Wal-Mart officials who insisted on retaining the parking and square footage requirements of a suburban store, can be built on the same site where the current Wal-Mart was wiped out by Katrina. In essence, Pentreath offers a design that brings the urbanism to the store by wrapping second-floor condos into the design.

- CNU is providing local Mississippi architects who joined the Renewal Forum teams with free one-year memberships. The local officials who participated in teams will be offered one-year memberships.

- Paul Crawford of the coding team is customizing and calibrating the SmartCode for the cities of Gulfport and Biloxi, starting with writing the descriptions of the Transect zones that are unique to those cities. In Gulfport, for example, there are two T4 zones, two T5 zones, two T6 zones, and 13 special districts, Crawford said. Customized codes will be provided for all of the other communities as well, but after the charrette, he says. This work will likely be done by the individual community teams.