SmartCode Charrette Book
Gulfport, Mississippi
February 23-28, 2006

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Background

August 29, 2005:  Hurrican Katrina hits the Mississippi Gulf Coast

October 11-17, 2005:  The Governor’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal and the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) organize the Mississippi Renewal Forum in Biloxi.

December 1, 2005:  Robert Alminana of HDR presents the Gulfport report to the community at St Joseph’s Church in Orange Grove.

January 19-20, 2006:  HDR facilitates a public downtown revitalization workshop sponsored by the City and the Gulfport Downtown Association.

February 23-28, 2006:  Our effort culminates with the 6-day SmartCode charrette.

This series of Post-Katrina events was aimed at helping the community:

1. Recover from and seize the opportunity created by the devastation;
2. Help citizens, community leaders, homeowners, property owners, and developers rebuild better than before Katrina.

Katrina's destruction on Gulfport's West Side

Gulfport Harbor Master's Station

Miss. Renewal Forum Team Leaders in Biloxi, Oct 05

Governor Haley Barbour addressing the Forum

Redevelopment Master Plan Charrette Book
Gulfport, Mississippi
31 October, 2005
Gulfport Report presented to the Gulfport Community on Dec 1, 2005

Gulfport, Mississippi
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The SmartCode Charrette Objectives

- To offer direct and immediate help to the homeowners in deciding whether to rebuild their damaged or destroyed properties and how best to do it.
- To listen to citizens, community leaders and elected officials over and over again, to hear what they have to say about their future.
- To publicly present and discuss ideas about the planning of the city.
- To offer some of the tools that will help Gulfport achieve a balanced development in a beautiful and prosperous environment.
- To help the community and its leaders prepare an updated urban development code in the form of a calibrated SmartCode.
- To help implement the visions and recommendations of ongoing planning efforts.

The SmartCode Charrette significantly relied and built on the work accomplished during the October 2005 Rebuilding Charrette (refer to the Redevelopment Master Plan Charrette Book for the Gulfport, MS of October 31, 2005).
Local Architectural Precedents

Great Southern Hotel, Gulfport - 1900's

Pine Hill Hotel on the Bay, Harrison County

Hotel Galvez, Galveston, TX

Great Southern Hotel, Gulfport - 1900's

Pine Hill Hotel on the Bay, Harrison County

Silvey's Apartments and Cottage, Gulfport - 1920's
General Urban and Architectural Precedents

Hotel in Cannes, France
Casino - Monte Carlo
Port of Nice, France

Hotel in Cannes, France
Casino - Monte Carlo
Port of Nice, France

Hotels and Residential Buildings in Cannes, France
Casino - Monte Carlo
Port of Nice, France
What SmartCode does:

- SmartCode makes Gulfport’s existing type of traditional neighborhoods legal to build on new sites.

- SmartCode enables the future vision and preserves and restores the past character of such neighborhoods.

- SmartCode enables sustainable plans for future development to accomplish the infilling of sprawl areas and hurricane-damaged areas while retaining local character.

- SmartCode protects the natural beauty of the area by keeping development compact.

- SmartCode reduces the infrastructure costs of growth to Gulfport by encouraging more compact development.

- SmartCode reduces congestion and driving time by moving ordinary destinations closer to where people live and by using street networks to move traffic rather than single arterial roads.

- SmartCode benefits both residents and developers because it lets both parties know what is expected and what to expect. The forms of building are specified at time of adoption, and so long as developers are willing to develop according to the residents’ vision, they may proceed quickly and without costly delays and uncertainty.

- SmartCode reduces acrimony and improves fairness of the development process by reducing variances and appeals, providing a better outcome and greater community harmony.

- SmartCode makes it possible for growth to improve the quality of life rather than degrade it.

- SmartCode results in streets and development which improve property values rather than reducing them.

- Provides a diversity of living options for residents on the Coast by keeping rural and sub-urban areas peaceful and keeping urban areas lively.
Code Calibration performed at the Charrette:
- We addressed questions and concerns about SmartCode in public/official meetings.
- We customized the SmartCode for Gulfport character such as its stunning natural beauty and historic urban form.
- We calibrated metrics of setbacks, height, lot widths, etc.
- We mapped the T-zones city-wide, working with Mayor, City Council, city planners, and citizens.
- We set aside the current Special Districts (current Industrial zones) such as the airport, the sites along
- We suggested a Restoration District associated with architectural standards/special requirements.
- We correlated the code to the regulating plan to make the plan operational.
- We legally connected the code to Gulfport regulations and named authorities for plan review and variance/warrant procedures in Gulfport.

Recommendations:
1. We recommend that the calibrated SmartCode be adopted as an optional overlay throughout the City, side by side with the existing Zoning Code. We believe that when offered a choice, developers and citizens will quickly realize that using the SmartCode is simpler and more predictable, therefore safer for their applications or their neighborhoods.

2. With the support of Mayor Warr and Councilwoman Libby Roland, we also recommend that the calibrated SmartCode be made mandatory in the Downtown south of the tracks.

3. We recommend a Design Review Process:
Architectural design review assures a level of quality, predictability, and therefore value, as does the SmartCode. Design review is recommended for strategic areas like T5, T6, and Historic Preservation or Restoration Districts. Developers and potential homeowners are more likely to invest if they can be reasonably sure of the development that will follow. A city may have an excellent plan and superb zoning ordinances, but without an official design review process, the built environment remains somewhat unpredictable.

Three options exist for design review that will assure the City of Gulfport of predictable, quality design:
A. Hire a Town Architect as a member of the Planning Department to perform reviews on an as-needed basis.
B. Form a Design Review Board (DRB) composed of a cross-section of local design and development professionals and City staff. The DRB would meet biweekly or monthly to review plans.
C. Contract with a remote Town Architect or Design Reviewer who visits Gulfport monthly for personal plan review with owners, builders, developers, and City Staff.

Examples of buildings and streetscapes illustrating the character and beauty of Gulfport, used ofr calibrating the SmartCode
A necessary precursor to the desired implementation of the Smart Code within the community is the mapping of the existing and proposed future conditions according to the zones defined by the Transect. As this map details, the majority of the city falls into the T3 (sub-urban zone) and T4 (general urban zone) zones. Areas adjacent to the primary vehicular corridors – in particular Highway 49, Pass Road, Cowan Road and Courthouse Road—as well as surrounding the downtown fall into the more intense T5 – Urban Center – zone, with the most urban intensity found in the Downtown and its immediate surroundings, the Urban Core (T6).

There are a number of Special Districts within the community, ranging from the Port, to the Airport, to the industrial areas along the Bayou and the retail and sport-related zones parallel to I-10. There are also distinct pockets of green within the city map, particularly in those areas deemed environmentally sensitive. Those areas that will never be developed and which can best be maintained in some form of their original state are depicted as T1 – Natural Zone. Other areas, which may be currently undeveloped, but which might at some future point be developed, are depicted as T2 – Rural Zone.
Improved Connectivity

Additional connectivity is needed both to facilitate movement within the city and to provide for several unique situations such as the movement of large quantities of freight to and from the Port in the least disruptive manner. It is also required to improve the local as well as regional south-north movement. Additional connectivity could be achieved by adding new sections of roads (orange lines) and enlarging portions of existing ones (brown lines).

Public Parks & Open Spaces

The proposed plan shows the existing parks, the proposed parks, and links between the parks and the communities. The network is a system of loops that make it feasible for a person to bike or walk continuously and end up where they began, on a large or small scale.

Note: This Page edited from the December 2005 Mississippi Renewal Forum Charrette Report
Jones Park is the little engine that has never made it up the hill. It has been over-loved and underutilized for years. Family reunions, carnivals, overflow parking and school picnics have abused what should be the “Central Park” of the coast. With no hierarchy of or defined public spaces, park goers are overwhelmed by the scale of the facility and feel no intimacy with the land.

The proposed design for Jones Park defines functional areas that will facilitate multiple uses. By minimizing the amount of impervious surfaces and managing stormwater in an environmentally holistic way, the park will be a model for future development along the coast. The ultimate goal for the space is to create a family-friendly park that meshes with surrounding development, while making a visual statement from Beach Boulevard.

The following list explains the amenities in and associated with the park:

The Horticultural Gardens will educate locals and tourists about the rich coastal landscape, and provide a meeting space for avid gardeners.

The Veteran’s Memorial is located for visibility from the road as well as accessibility from the park. The local chapter of the Veteran’s of Foreign Wars will update the monument to honor our fallen heroes.

The Pavilions will play an important role in bringing this large area to a human scale. These outdoor rooms will provide shade for picnics and people-watching as well as house public restrooms.

The Amphitheater will be a regional attraction. With the harbor as stage backdrop, concert goers will take in a beautiful view while listening to “Jazz in the Park”, watching a community performance, or just watching the boats come in.

The Community Lawn will provide several functional uses while framing the view of the Gulfport Harbor from Beach Boulevard.

1. Open Space for free-play: Frisbee, Football, or Picnicking.
2. Parade Ground for “Cruisin’ the Coast”: Reinforcing the lawn with a subsurface cell system will create an annual display area for the antique cars that have become a beloved tradition. The nine foot wide concrete walking track around the lawn will serve as a “Parade Loop” for the participants.
3. Friday Night Flicks: The lawn will become a “Walk-in” Theater on Friday nights during the summer. Families will bring their blankets and chairs to the lawn to watch family movies on a screen in front of the harbor. Local snow cone vendors, hotdog stands, and popcorn and cotton candy makers will pay a fee to the Parks Commission to enter the park and serve goods to the people to create a fun atmosphere for everyone.

The Fountain located in the center of the lawn will serve as a focal point from all angles of the lawn as well as from Beach Boulevard.

The Children’s Play Area adjacent to the lawn will include playground equipment and interactive fountains, and benches for supervising parents.

The Fisherman’s Village in the northeast corner of the harbor, centered around the relocated Ship Island Ferry Dock, will create a harbor haven for tourists and local fishermen and boaters. It will include a bait shop, fish market, deli, and other small retail shops.

Fishing Rodeo Pavilions will be located around a traffic circle in the main entrance to the park. These four pavilions will host the annual Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo and accommodate vendors for the event. The ‘circle’ will have a platform for the display of the trophy fish. When this area is not being used for events such as the Rodeo, the pavilions can be rented by the public for birthday parties, family reunions, or other public uses.

Park Maintenance
Although this is not an amenity, it is imperative that the park be maintained on a consistent basis. A maintenance plan will need to be structured and followed. The design confines lawn areas to eliminate any confusion on what should and shouldn’t be mowed.

Fredrick Law Olmsted, the father of landscape architecture, once said, “Such public grounds, are a necessity for civilized urban living.” A new Jones Park is such a necessity for the New Gulf Coast.
The Port & the Downtown

The Downtown and the Port of Gulfport are envisioned as the two halves of one strong, vibrant and memorable heart of Gulfport. They reinforce each other, knitting together a fabric that draws on the economic strength generated by the port, the business and cultural intensity of the downtown, the beauty of the beach and the new Jones Park, and all of the amenities and entertainment opportunities associated with the new heart of Gulfport.
The Port & the Downtown

1. Redesign 25th Avenue
2. Gateway to Port
3. Ferry Terminal
4. Redesign Beach Boulevard
5. Jones Park
6. 30th Avenue Truck Boulevard
7. 13th Street Redesign
8. 23rd Avenue Enhancement
9. Culture and Arts District
10. New Townhouses
11. Downtown Hotel(s)
12. Cruise Terminal
13. Small Craft Harbor
14. Mixed Use: Residential / Commercial
15. Palace Hotel

View of Downtown through Jones Park: New Hotels on old 1st Baptist Church site - by Knight Martorell
The Vision
The Port of Gulfport is envisioned as an extension of Downtown Gulfport, South of Beach Boulevard, destined to thrive on its unique character as well as reinforce and complement the Downtown. The Port and the Downtown together will be the engine that will distinguish Gulfport as an important regional and State center.

Enlarge West Pier for added Port capacity. Rail access would be re-routed for entry at 30th Avenue, which would become the main access point, at grade, for freight and commercial truck traffic as well.

Enlarge the Central Pier for added Port capacity accessible for trucks. Develop north Port into a mixed-use street and block pattern for casinos, hotels and related buildings. Address FEMA ABFE requirements with structured parking stacked with development above, and raised streets. Strengthen area as tourist destination with Aquarium and cruise ship terminal.

Jones Park: improved access and circulation, passive green space with amphitheater and horticulture gardens.

Reconfigure the East Pier to improve pedestrian and vehicle access and parking. Provide retail uses, boat launch facility, ferry terminal, marina, fishing, mooring for visiting boats, as well as ample parking for vehicles and boat trailers. Encourage residential “Citadel” development along end of pier.
Due to the FEMA Advisory Base Flood Elevations (ABFE), development in the Port Area will have to be raised above sea level. ABFEs for the area can be accommodated by building parking for the development below, with raised streets to maintain active uses at the ground level.
The Port of Gulfport

Bird's Eye View Illustrating a detail of the Vision for the Port of Gulfport - by Knight Martorell

Initial Design from October 2005 Renewal Charrette
Casinos

Note: This page has been edited from its corresponding section in the December 2005 Mississippi Renewal Forum Charrette Report.
A View of Broadway Looking South Towards the Port - by Knight Martorell
Proposed Plan of Downtown Gulfport

**30th Avenue**: Mixed-use boulevard functions as primary truck route to and from the port and accommodates multi-family residential and various commercial uses. 30th Avenue stays at-grade from the Port to meet the proposed elevated I-10 connector north of the urbanized area.

**13th Street**: Broad Boulevard with planted median, lined with a mix of civic, commercial and residential buildings; larger blocks to the south might accommodate performing arts center.

**15th Street**: Important eastern gateway into the downtown; civic focus with existing city hall, courthouse, and church.

**14th Street**: Central pedestrian-friendly main street: character changes from civic focus around 21st Ave to retail focus around the 25th Ave and entertainment focus around 27th Ave. It is terminated to the east with the library and a new proposed square.

**23rd Avenue**: Mixed-use boulevard, accommodates higher density residential as well as civic and some commercial uses.

**Broadway (25th Ave)**: Pedestrian-friendly mixed-use retail main street, tall buildings at Beach Blvd from southern gateway into downtown and the new harbor district.
Downtown - Streets

14th Street: Existing Condition

14th Street Typical Proposed Street Section

13th Street: Existing Condition

13th Street Typical Proposed Street Section
Downtown - Streets

30th Avenue: Existing Conditions

30th Avenue Proposed Street Section

Broadway Avenue: Existing Conditions

Broadway Avenue: Proposed Street Section
Proposed Strategy for Downtown Train Depot
Create a heart for the proposed downtown Culture and Arts District: form new plaza at existing train depot parking lot at 27th Ave between 13th and 14th Street for outdoor markets, concerts, etc.
**Northern Downtown:**
- 25th St/Pass Road: a mix of commercial and residential buildings with activity “nodes” at key intersections.
- 17th St: important connector to western neighborhoods.
- 19th St: local east-west route; eastern terminus is Soria City School.
- Pass Road: Key east-west route; existing commercial corridor presents a development opportunity for campus-like business or institutional use.
- 28th St: Northern gateway into downtown: beginning of palm trees in wide median.

**Old Oasis Casino Area**
- Site lined with row houses along 11th St and 37th Ave to transition to adjacent single-family neighborhood.
- New buildings fronting Beach Boulevard.
- Height limited at western edge forming transition to single family residential.
- Height builds toward the east.
- New residential development.
These neighborhoods, lying west of the Downtown and between the beach and the CSX Railroad, were hit very hard by Katrina. In most of this area, the first block or two nearest the shore were completely destroyed, leaving only mature trees and building foundations. The next block or two north of this destruction were also badly damaged, by water, wind and debris pushed from the shoreline blocks.

The preliminary flood surface elevation maps for West Beach include new, higher elevations for habitable floors in much of the frontage along Beach Boulevard. Not coincidentally, the destruction was generally greatest in these new areas mapped by FEMA.
The East Side

East Side: Areas of Intervention

View of Proposed Condominiums at Tegarden Plaza at East Beach Boulevard - by Victor Deupi
The Gulfport Veterans Administration Hospital campus is an approximately 147-acre site to the west of Courthouse Rd. in Gulfport. South to north it spans from the northern right of way of Beach Blvd (Hwy. 90) over the CSX railroad tracks to just south of the EC Elementary School. It was already scheduled to be abandoned by the VA by 2009, and since Hurricane Katrina, the VA has apparently decided to not re-occupy the site except for a possible small temporary mobile hospital unit.

Based on a cursory look around on 14 October 2005, most of the buildings appear to have survived Katrina though many have substantial wind and water damage. The historic chapel lost part of its south wall, the historic guard house is gone. The buildings adjacent to the coast appear to have been washed through, though exterior walls are fairly intact. Much of the Mediterranean detail in the buildings has survived intact and those should be conserved and reused as quickly as possible to avoid their continued degradation.

Several different possible uses have been suggested, all with the intent to keep the historic south campus in the public realm. Some Gulfport citizens have suggested the possibility of the campus continuing as a medical facility with a specific focus of either pediatrics or a clinic facility dedicated to the needs of retirees. Either would require a hard look at whether it is feasible for a medical facility, even a clinic, to lie right on the coast line, under threat of every storm that comes ashore. Others have proposed an educational focus for the facility. The primary goal is to avoid placing the south campus, with its picturesque Mediterranean buildings and impressive stand of live oaks, in the hands of a private developer who might choose to keep the grounds off limits to the general public.

With the primary goal of preserving and enhancing the historic 1917 buildings in mind, we suggest that a service entry road be brought in just to the south of the railroad tracks, on the wide right of way from Hewes Av. to the NW corner of the site. A parking deck can be sited to be accessible from this road, and all trucks could serve the site from it as well.

Note: This Page edited from the December 2005 Mississippi Renewal Forum Charrette Report
Cowan Road at East Beach Boulevard: Proposed Design Strategy

- Establish a traditional neighborhood development with resort amenities along the waterfront.

- Develop Cowan Road as a mixed-use, retail and commercial boulevard from the waterfront to the new Railroad Street extension.

- Reconstruct the damaged Fire Station at the intersection of Cowan and Township Roads, providing greater public presence and a higher architectural standard.

- Line the center aisle of Cowan Road with pavilions, trees, and plantings as necessary.

- Create a new Residential Square at the intersection of Township Road, and West Cedar and Laurel Drives.

- Provide a variety of residential types that include estate lots, cottages, townhouses, live-work units, apartment lofts and condominiums.

- Steadily increase the intensity as the neighborhood approaches the waterfront with 8-12 storey apartments, hotels and condominiums lining Beach Boulevard.

- Step back the apartments, hotels and condominiums along the waterfront so as to create a stunning skyline that respects the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhood, without blocking Gulf views from the public realm.

- Create a new Waterfront Green along Beach Boulevard where the apartments, hotels and condominiums meet the estate lots.

- Provide Cottage Closes at the Waterfront Green and Township Square as a transition from the urban to the residential.

Neighborhood Plan by Victor Deupi and Johnny Olsen
The East Side: Cowan Road

Cowan Road Elevation - by Johnny Olsen

Proposed Condominium building at Cowan Rd. and Beach Blvd by Victor Deupi

Proposed condominium building on Cowan Rd. between Township Road and Beach Blvd by Victor Deupi

View down Cowan Road - by Victor Deupi
The East Side: Tegarden Neighborhood Strategy

Tegarden Road at Each Beach Blvd: Proposed Design Strategy

- Establish a traditional neighborhood development with an arts and entertainment district by the waterfront.

- Create a new waterfront plaza at the intersection of Tegarden Road, 16th Street and Beach Boulevard.

- Develop Tegarden Road as a mixed-use, retail and commercial corridor from the waterfront to Railroad Street.

- Create a new Residential Square surrounding the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center.

- Provide a variety of residential types that include estate lots, cottages, townhouses, live-work units, apartment lofts and condominiums.

- Steadily increase the intensity as the neighborhood approaches Beach Boulevard with 8-12 story apartments and condominiums lining the waterfront plaza.

- Step back the apartment and condominiums along the waterfront to create a stunning skyline that respects the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhood, without blocking Gulf views from the public realm.
The East Side: Tegarden at East Beach Blvd.

Proposed condominium building at Tegarden and Beach Blvd. - by Victor Deupi

Proposed Pavillion - by Victor Deupi
Gulfport has many historic neighborhoods, such as the West Side, Gaston Point, Gulf Garden, Park Place, Central Gulfport, the Quarters, Soria City, Broadmoor, Second Street, Magnolia Grove, Hardy Court, Handboro, Mississippi City, Old North Gulfport, or Turkey Creek. Many, particularly those near the beach, have been severely, sometimes almost entirely destroyed by Katrina. The priority is to both rebuild those communities, respecting the traditional patterns of urbanism, and make them even better places than they were, by improving the infrastructure and bringing them to higher safety standards. The illustrations on this page demonstrate how some of these places could be built or rebuilt.

Note: This Page edited from the December 2005 Mississippi Renewal Forum Charrette Report.
The cottage court is an ideal solution for infill in historic neighborhoods. It provides a dignified solution to affordable housing. This location is proposed for Soria City at Pratt & 20th, and would add 15 new homes on 2/3 acre or 22 du/acre situated around a small park. It would work well for other historic neighborhoods such as Mississippi City.