

City of Gautier, Mississippi



RESTORE ACT

GAUTIER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Updated: June 13, 2013

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II. City of Gautier Overview

A. Introduction

Home to the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's Jackson County Campus, the City of Gautier is a rapidly growing municipality located on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in Jackson County just west of the Pascagoula River. At an average 11 feet above sea level with subdivisions along the river bluffs, Gautier boasts the highest elevation on the Coast. The existing population of 18,577 is expected to continue to grow to 23,700 by 2025, due in large part to Gautier's proximity to surrounding metropolitan areas and its manufacturing and service-based economy. The City's natural environment includes a 395-acre state park operated by the City, and the 20,000-acre Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge, in addition to rivers, bayous, marshes and neighborhood parks and trails.

Gautier offers many opportunities for recreation and eco-tourism, with over 200 miles of water frontage. With significant vacant land for development and national growth trends along the coastal areas, the city is primed for continued growth. Gautier's goal is to implement a cluster-industry approach around nodes of activity along Interstate-10, Town Center, and the waterfront, in order to insure that growth takes place in a way that is sustainable and promotes livability.

B. Community Size

Gautier is an incorporated area of approximately 32 square miles located at 30.38885 N, 088.63986 W. Prior to an annexation in 2002, the incorporated area was approximately 13 square miles.

C. Population and Demographics

Population density is relatively low, with little mixed-use development. The population of the city increased by 59 percent from 2000 (11,681) to 2010 (18,572). The diverse population includes 58.5 percent non-Hispanic white, 32.4 percent black, 4.2 percent other races and 5.3 percent Hispanic/Latino. Approximately two-thirds of all Gautier residents own their

own homes, and median household income is \$45,900. However, some 22.5 percent of persons residing in Gautier live in households with income below the poverty level. That exceeds the rate for the State of Mississippi as a whole (21.4 percent).

D. Gautier's Long Term Goals

Gautier's Highway 90 area is a major corridor between Biloxi, Ocean Spring, northern Jackson County, and Pascagoula. Based on the Governor's Mississippi Rebuild Forum post-Hurricane Katrina, Gautier has invested post Katrina recovery dollars in town center revitalization and infrastructure improvements for residents, business people, college students and visitors. Below are some of Gautier's long-term goals:

1. Provide clear drinking water for Gautier residents with a clear water ion exchange filtration system, the latest in technology with significantly lower annual O & M costs.
2. Utilize a cluster-industry strategy for sustainable development around the town center, waterfront, and Interstate 10.
3. Town Center: The 2010 master plan was formed to capitalize on a redeveloping Singing River Mall with shopping and entertainment venues, anchored by natural amenities including festival lawns, restored natural spring-fed tributaries, multi-use boardwalks and outdoor ecological classrooms.
4. Recreation and Waterfront: Continue to implement the state's master plan for Shepard State Park and also acquire adjacent waterfront properties for a riverwalk, recreational harbor and shoreline restoration.
5. Interstate-10: Provide future water and utility capacity for growth along the I-10/Hwy 57 Corridor to build upon the medical campus and plastics industries cluster.
6. Inter-jurisdictional Multi-Modal Trails: Develop "complete streets" with a multi-modal transportation system, including a multi-use lane from the Pascagoula River to Biloxi Bay, crossing the city limits of both Gautier and Ocean Springs by way of Old Spanish Trail.

E. Recent Improvements and Economic Development

Below is a list of completed and on-going projects in the City of Gautier that will assist Gautier with realizing their goals:

1. *The Gautier Town Center* – The City is in the process of creating a town center/downtown area to create a sense of community. The City has passed a resolution authorizing a TIF bond of up to \$20 million to create a Town Center. The City is seeking alternate funds to limit the city’s long term debt, but is committed to the project.
2. *Gautier Streetscape Phase 1-2* – The project is a \$6.2 million CDBG Hurricane Katrina Recovery Project administered through the Mississippi Development Authority. The project includes a multi-use pathway, decorative lighting, a traffic roundabout with a sculpture and fountain in the center island, rest/bus stop shelters, a Veterans Memorial clock tower, and other streetscape amenities.
3. *Gautier Streetscape Phase 3* – The project is a \$.5 million Transportation Enhancement project administered through the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The project will include landscaping, educational markers, and directional signage through the Downtown/Town Center area.
4. *Town Center Land Acquisition*– The City recently purchased 32 acres of ecologically-sensitive lands north of the mall and west of the Community College that includes wetlands and tributaries feeding Mary Walker Bayou. The project enables the Town Center Public Areas to be used for amphitheater area, festival area, tributary/multi-use boardwalks, and public parking. Additionally, landowners donated the necessary right-of-way for transportation improvements.
5. *Singing River Mall Redevelopment* – This project is private redevelopment using private funds on private property. The mall has committed to redevelop Singing River Mall. Singing River Mall was once the hub of the city and attracted business from all of the surrounding areas along the coast and the northern portions of the county. The mall has declined over the past decade due to changes in mall trends and lack of renovations. The mall is under new ownership and the new owners have shared their plans with the city to redevelop the vital piece of the City’s Town Center. The new mall owners will invest \$90 million on 67 acres, creating 200 full and part-time jobs with an annual payroll in excess of \$6 million.

Construction jobs will generate an estimated payroll of \$31.5 million. Assuming 75% of the projected \$125 million dollars of retail sales are new to the State and region, the project will place approximately \$6.56 million of additional sales taxes to the State Treasury annually.

6. *Bienville Medical Complex* – The Bienville Medical Complex is currently under construction at the northeast intersection of I-10 and Highway 57. Once completed, the complex will have 100,000 square feet of building space and an ambulatory center. The physicians/owners previously developed Cedar Lake in Gulfport.
7. *B & D Plastics* – B & D Plastics is an existing industrial facility located at the northeast intersection of I-10 and Highway 57. The facility's recent expansion garnered a Mississippi Economic Development Council Award for Job Retention and Expansion.

III. RESTORE Act Gautier Project Selection Process

The projects selected will improve livability of the community, enhance sustainability, promote long-term growth, and improve conditions of existing transportation facilities and systems.

Based on the projects proposed below, as a Condition of the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012*, we are prepared to certify the following:

1. The projects selected will be designed to restore and protect the economy of the Gulf Coast.
2. The projects selected will carry out one or more of the activities described in clauses (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (B) of the *Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act of 2012*.
 - a. All of the projects listed will restore and protect natural resources, ecosystems, fisheries, marine and wild life habitats, beaches, and coastal wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, as applicable. *Refer to item (I) of the sub-paragraphs listed above of the Act.*
 - b. All of the projects listed will assist with workforce development and job creation. *Refer to item (IV) of the sub-paragraphs listed above of the Act.*

- c. All of the projects listed will provide infrastructure (soft and hard) benefiting the economy or ecological resources. *Refer to item (VI) of the subparagraphs listed above of the Act.*
3. The projects were selected based on meaningful input from the public, including broad-based participation from individuals, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.
4. Where natural resources will be protected or restored, on any project listed, the method of protection and/or restoration will be based on the best available science.

IV. RESTORE Act Gautier Project Summary of Costs

| PROJECT NAME | PROJECT COST |
|--|----------------------|
| A. Water Clarity and Filtration System | \$4.5 million |
| B. Town Center Revitalization | \$25 million |
| C. Shepard State Park and Riverwalk | \$6 million |
| D. Medical & Technology Corridor | \$25 million |
| E. Swetman Beach Restoration | \$5 million |
| F. Old Spanish Trail Restoration | \$31.5 million |
| G. De La Pointe Streetscape Improvements | \$4.3 million |
| H. Establishment of Wetlands Bank | \$20 million |
| I. Graveline Bayou Restoration | <u>\$7.2 million</u> |
| Total Anticipated Cost of Projects | \$128.5 million |

V. RESTORE Act Gautier Project Detailed Overview

The City of Gautier proposes the following projects be funded through the RESTORE Act.

A. WATER CLARITY AND FILTRATION SYSTEM-- \$4.5 Million

In August 2011, the City Council adopted a Clear Water Filtration Plan that utilizes ion exchange filtration technology in order to provide clear drinking water with much lower annual operating and maintenance costs than osmosis. (See Exhibit 1.) Today, the brownish tint in Gautier's potable wells has impeded economic development such as hotel, restaurant and residential development. Due to the debt incurred when the City incorporated and assumed the previous utility authority, the City has not previously been able to afford the expense of an osmosis treatment facility. The newer technology of ion exchange has taken off in states such as Florida. Gautier will be the first government in Mississippi utilizing ion exchange technology to provide water clarity. The system is planned in three phases. The first phase will provide a filter system treating one million gallons per day, projected to treat 80% of the City's demand and costing \$2.8 million. The second and third phases will serve the remaining population along the HWY 57/I-10 corridor and loop the filtration system for future capacity. The total cost of the three phase project is estimated to be \$4.5 million.

B. TOWN CENTER--\$25 million

The Gautier Town Center Project, located in Gautier's central business district just 13 miles from the Alabama state line, consists of the construction of five roadways totaling 14,665 linear feet in order to create a street grid for commercial traffic on 233.6 acres north of an existing regional mall, big box retailers, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College. The existing mall is outdated and now undergoing a \$90+ million facelift into an open-air mall with national tenants to attract interstate commerce. The planned roadways will facilitate new town center commercial development in close proximity to Interstate 10, and also provide a connector from Gautier-Vancleave Road to Beasley Road, a dead-end road that currently provides the only ingress/egress for the County's landfill, municipal buildings, residential neighborhoods, and heavy commercial uses. The purpose of this project is to develop a multi-modal

street grid with town center attractions to facilitate the further revitalization of Gautier's urban core in proximity to MGCCC and civic buildings. This "streetgrid" mirrors a small traditional downtown with service alleys and walkability.

The Gautier Town Center Project will be anchored by a tree-lined central lawn, spring-fed tributaries with walkways, and educational tree houses to create a destination place for eco-tourism at the break-line between 280 acres of wetlands and existing high-density commercial development.

The project incorporates 2.5 miles of roadway, 1.3 miles of multi-use pathway and a transit link in a 96-acre area to tie retail, residential and recreational areas together. The project will provide the transportation infrastructure necessary for the creation of a traditional downtown in Gautier with an improved living and working environment that has multiple transportation options. The project has included appurtenances such as roadway lighting and landscaping with funding from Hurricane Katrina recovery dollars. This town center area is currently anchored by municipal buildings, commercial strip centers, the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, and the Singing River Mall.

The city has just purchased 32 acres to develop the central lawn, an outdoor amphitheatre/classroom, and bicycle paths/walks around the spring-fed tributaries which will be funded with a Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant. (See Exhibit 2.) The new transportation network will provide access to existing anchors and new recreational areas by constructing urban transportation corridors with street parking and sidewalks as an alternative to the high speed multi-lane arterials such as Gautier-Vancleave Road and US Hwy 90. This infrastructure along with appropriate zoning will bring high density mixed use development creating a much needed "downtown" area. (See Exhibit 3.)

C. SHEPARD STATE PARK & RIVERWALK--\$6 million

The City of Gautier assumed the daily operations and management of Shepard State Park in January of 2013. Shepard State Park is a 395-acre park located south of US 90 on Graveline Road in Gautier. The park is open year-round and currently has a mix of developed campsites and primitive camping sites. The park offers approximately eight miles of trails over five different locations and features live oaks, long leaf pines, and magnolias as well as a variety of coastal plants and wildlife. (Exhibit 4.)

In order to maintain and enhance public access to park amenities, the City of Gautier requires funding for improvements that include shoreline restoration and wildlife observation decks, road repair, clearing underbrush and invasive species, adding water lines, sewer lines, power, and lights; and the addition of a bathroom, pavilion, and a playground area.

In addition, Gautier desires to preserve the 35 waterfront acres just south of Shepard Park, owned by the Shepard family, south of Graveline Road. These tidally-influenced lands would be preserved and a riverwalk constructed for eco-tourism, to increase the out-of-state visitors who already visit the park annually. The park's trails, wetlands, and wildlife offer unique educational opportunities. (See Exhibit 5.)

D. INTERSTATE 10/HWY 57 COMMERCE & TECHNOLOGY CORRIDOR--

\$25 million

With over 6 miles of interstate frontage, the City of Gautier only has access to 2 interstate interchanges. At these interchanges, the only opportunity for interstate frontage development is at the northeast corner of Highway 57/Interstate 10.

One large development in this area is underway and another existing development is expanding. The Bienville Medical Complex will be over 100,000 square feet with an ambulatory center, located on 16 acres of land.

The City has adopted a master plan for the smart growth of this area, and requires the installation of a water tank, fiber optics and utilities in order to provide adequate levels of surface for the anticipated growth in this area. See the attached Exhibit 6 showing the Master Plan for the area. The project will provide new streets, drainage, utilities, lighting, a multi-use pathway and recreational amenities around the existing lake, and other related improvements.

E. SWETMAN BEACH RESTORATION--\$5 million

Swetman Beach is located in Historic Gautier, south of Ladnier Road, at the convergence of several bayous. Swetman Beach is currently threatened by invasive species, negligence and encroachment. There are

fourteen beach parcels along the Gulf of Mexico that are for sale and in need of restoration. The conservation and restoration of these beachfront properties will protect ecologically-sensitive lands from residential encroachment. Improvements will require the re-alignment of the entry road, public parking, street lights, and a restroom, in addition to a living shoreline restoration. (See Exhibit 7.)

F. HWY 57/OLD SPANISH TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS--\$31.5 million

Old Spanish Trail is an east-west corridor that connects Ocean Springs and Gautier. Several residential areas have easy access to the connector including, Shell Landing, Gulf Park Estates, St. Andrews, Magnolia Bayou, Heron Bayou, and downtown Ocean Springs. The roadway is the former U.S. Highway 90 and currently extends from Washington Avenue in Ocean Springs to Graveline Road in Gautier. The corridor is approximately 14 miles in length. The portion within the city limits of Gautier is approximately 7 miles in length. See the attached Exhibit 8.

The corridor is currently underutilized with ADT's ranging from 3900 to 5400 vehicles per day. If the corridor were better utilized, Old Spanish Trail could relieve some of the congestion along Highway 90 and promote mixed-use development along the roadway.

The City of Gautier intends to improve the corridor to promote usage and encourage development along the roadway. The following additions are proposed to address the deficiencies listed above:

1. Improvements to Improve Sense of Safety - We plan to add curb & gutter and subsurface drainage along the roadway, so users do not feel like they are going to run off of the roadway.
2. Improvements to Limit Delays and Allow Continuous Through Traffic – We plan to add a continuous center median, turn lanes, and periodic passing lanes to channelize turning movements, remove the turning traffic from the main thoroughfare, and allow passing of slower moving traffic.
3. Improve Aesthetics – Even with the above listed improvements, a user must have additional incentive to travel along Old Spanish Trail instead of Highway 90. With the addition of curb & gutter, subsurface drainage, a center median, and turn lanes, a few more small additions

such as street trees, pockets of landscaping, and decorative lighting will give the corridor more of a local road feel instead of a highway.

See the attached Exhibit 9 for the proposed improvements. We strongly believe that these improvements will increase use of this much under-utilized roadway, which in turn will promote economic development along the roadway.

G. DE LA POINTE STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS--\$4.3 million

De La Pointe is a street on the north side of Highway 90 that splits off of Highway 90, curves northerly then loops back into Highway 90. The segment of street north of Highway 90 is approximately 1 mile in length. The roadway serves as an entrance to City Park which contains the City's public boat launches, pier, picnic pavilions, playground, and Senior Citizen's Center. See the attached Exhibit 10 for the location map.

The street currently looks like an aging residential street instead of the entrance to a major city park. In addition, the street contains several businesses and vacant land with the potential to develop if the street were improved.

The City intends to revitalize the street with a streetscape project adding, curb & gutter, drainage improvements, decorative lighting, sidewalks, street trees, pockets of landscaping, hanging baskets, seasonal banners. In addition, the City plans to improve access for boat trailers and delivery trucks and improve signage directing visitors to the park and recreational area. See the attached Exhibit 11 for the proposed improvements.

We strongly believe that these improvements will increase visibility, access, and use of this public recreational facility and promote economic development along the roadway.

H. ESTABLISHMENT OF WETLANDS BANK--\$20 million

The City of Gautier contains large tracts of land that are currently "undevelopable" due to wetlands scattered throughout the tracts. The wetlands mitigation procedures are very costly and time consuming for developers. Being a coastal city, the City of Gautier is very sensitive to the balance between protecting natural resources and fostering development

and growth. The wetlands scattered around the large tracts of land are considered to be lower class wetlands. While lower class wetlands sometimes provide important functions and benefits, they also can be classified as a “wetland” because a map designated the area to be a wetland and the vegetation and field conditions are not indicative of “wetlands”. Higher class wetlands provide the greatest level of benefits and are afforded a higher level of protection.

The City of Gautier would like to perform a regional wetlands mitigation plan to encourage development and protect high quality natural resources. As a part of the regional mitigation plan, the City would like to purchase a tract of land adjacent to the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge and create a high quality wetlands mitigation bank. The regional wetlands mitigation along with the local mitigation bank will simplify an otherwise daunting task for developers and encourage development of these otherwise “undevelopable” properties. The tract is approximately 490 acres. The locations of the wetlands bank will provide additional buffer for the Sandhill Crane Refuge which will in turn provide protection for the mitigation bank’s eco- system. (See Exhibits 12 and 13.)

I. GRAVELINE BAYOU RESTORATION--\$7.2 million

Graveline Bayou is located in the southwest corner of the City of Gautier. The bayou is an intricate network of waterways that contain marsh habitats, deeper water habitats, and adjacent coastal habitat for native wildlife. The bayou empties into the Mississippi Sound which is a part of the Gulf of Mexico. Historically, the bayou provided direct easy accessibility to the Gulf of Mexico for commercial and recreational fishermen, as well as sailing, kayaking, and ecological viewing. This allowed commercial fishermen to anchor their boats at their residences, saving harbor fees & slip rental, transportation fees, etc., thereby reducing product costs to the consumer. Due to the deterioration of the bayou, accessibility has been severely compromised or completely blocked and the natural habits have changed in character. What was once a thriving ecological, commercial, and recreational hub has been reduced to residences with a water view, without the benefit of the Gulf access. The main factors contributing to the deterioration of the bayou:

1. Sediment accumulation at the mouth of the bayou due to sediment transport westward by the prevailing southeast wind, and the associated wave action, has eliminated the ability of most passenger

- boats and commercial vessels to navigate out of the bayou to the open Gulf.
2. Erosion of upstream drainage channels due to bank erosion is continuously depositing sediment into the upper reaches of the bayou, which then travels further downstream during subsequent rain events, filling in the channel and reducing the allowable depth for navigation.
 3. The closure of the mouth of the bayou during the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Crisis compounded the sediment accumulation problem removing any agitation of the bayou by boat traffic which may re-suspend and flush out the newly deposited sediment. Boat traffic was greatly diminished on Graveline Bayou in the spring and summer of 2010 because of the fear that oil in the bayou from the blowout could damage engines. As a result, this shallow bayou did not receive the normal bottom sediment scouring associated with boat traffic and the subsequent flushing with the tidal cycle. Now that the bayou depth is less than 3 ft, scouring is still minimal because boats can no longer navigate the bayou. During an average tidal cycle, approximately 40% of Graveline Bayou is flushed and replaced. This would include any re-suspended sediment present in the water.
 4. The depth of Graveline Bayou presents a flood hazard. Following Hurricane Katrina, the bayou began silting in more rapidly than in preceding years. This problem was further exacerbated by the Deepwater Horizon incident. Now, the bayou is so shallow it no longer affords protection to shoreline properties from flooding.

In order to restore the bayou, the siltation needs to be removed from the bayou and the area adjacent to the mouth, to restore the bayou and outlet depths. Any compromised banks need to be stabilized and protection measures need to be implemented to prevent re-siltation. (See Exhibit 14.)

VII. RESTORE Act Gautier Project Detailed Overview

(See Attached)

Exhibit 1- Water Clarity and Filtration System (Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood)

Exhibit 2- Town Center (Preliminary Program Sketch)

Exhibit 3- Town Center (Concept Drawing)

Exhibit 4- Shepard State Park (Map)

Exhibit 5- Shepard State Park (Potential Land Acquisition)

Exhibit 6- Interstate 10/Highway 57 Infrastructure Master Plan

Exhibit 7- Swetman Beach Map

Exhibit 8- Old Spanish Trail Roadway Restoration Map

Exhibit 9- Old Spanish Trail Roadway (Typical Section)

Exhibit 10- De La Pointe Streetscape Improvements (Map)

Exhibit 11- De La Pointe (Typical Section)

Exhibit 12- Wetlands Bank (Map)

Exhibit 13- Wetlands Bank (Concept Drawing)

Exhibit 14- Graveline Bayou (Map)