Gulfport, Mississippi

Gulfport, Mississippi, located on the Gulf of Mexico, sustained significant damage from Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 and is in the process of rebuilding. Founded by a railroad tycoon and a Civil War captain, Gulfport is the second-largest city in Mississippi.

Many redevelopment efforts have begun in downtown Gulfport since the hurricane, including the restoration of more than 80 exteriors on downtown buildings, the installation of new streetlights and landscaped sidewalks, and the recreation of the city's historic landscaped boulevards. In addition, the Court House, also destroyed by the hurricane, is being reconstructed. A custom-designed lighthouse fountain that symbolizes the Gulf Coast's Hurricane Katrina experience and the remarkable resilience of the region's people was installed in Lighthouse Park, located at Hancock Bank. Black pavers among the park's gray stone walkways honor each Mississippian lost in the storm.

In addition, the city plans to conserve and reuse at least 10 historic buildings that survived Katrina at the site of the former VA Hospital property and to transform the property into a center of commercial and community activity. The city is also renovating Grass Lawn, a historical home owned by the city.

Gulfport has many cultural attractions in addition to its miles of white-sand beaches. Museums include the Seabee Memorial Museum, which depicts the history of the U.S. Navy's Civil Engineer Corps and the Seabees from its beginnings in World War II until the present; the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center, the first children's museum in Mississippi, which has been repaired and reopened; and the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies, which offers public education, conservation, and research on marine mammals in the wild and under human care. Gulfport Little Theatre offers musicals, comedies, dramas, and a children's program. Gulfport also hosts the Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra. Arts under the Dome is a performing arts series that sponsors five concerts a year.

GULFPORT NEIGHBORHOODS

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, Handsboro, Mississippi City, Old North Gulfport, and Turkey Creek. Many, particularly those near the beach, were severely damaged or almost entirely destroyed by Katrina. The city plans to rebuild those communities, respecting the traditional patterns of urbanism, and improve the infrastructure to bring them to higher safety standards.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The city has 38 ball fields, 31 parks, 5 tennis courts, 3 gymnasiums, 7 walking tracks, a fitness center, a senior center, a swimming pool, a public golf course, and more than 600 acres of parks and recreational areas. The

Harrison County Skate Park and Hockey Complex is an indoor inline hockey rink and home of the Mississippi Beachdogs (inline hockey).

Located along the waterfront, Jones Park also incurred damage as a result of Katrina. Gulfport is planning to revitalize the park to become a central park for the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Other recreational opportunities include Gulf Islands Waterpark, Gulf Coast Motor Sports Park, Gulfport Dragway, and Island View Casino Resort.

Eleven in-shore fishing reefs are located within the city limits.

EDUCATION

Gulfport School District serves over 5,500 students with 6 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 high school. The district also offers a GED program, a full continuum of services for students with disabilities, and programs for gifted students.

Harrison County School District educates students in the rural areas of the county and some Gulfport neighborhoods. Harrison County operates 5 elementary schools and 1 middle, 1 high, and 1 vocational–technical school in Gulfport.

Higher education opportunities include the University of Southern Mississippi–Gulf Park campus and William Carey University, which offer undergraduate and graduate degrees, and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (MGCCC), which offers a variety of technical and other programs for diplomas or associate degrees.

HEALTH CARE

Gulfport is served by 2 medical centers with approximately 570 acute care beds. The community also has a long-term acute care facility.

CITY STATS	2007
City Population	66,271
Metropolitan Statistical Area	231,656
Per capita personal income, Gulfport–Biloxi, MS MSA	$36,133

Photo courtesy of City of Gulfport