

Gulfport Chooses Developers for Rebuilding Efforts

Submitted by [Filmanowicz](#) on Mon, 2007-07-23 14:59. [development](#) | [Gulfport](#) | [In the News](#) | [infill](#) | [Mississippi](#) | [post-Katrina planning](#)

Gulfport appears to be getting serious about implementing its post-Katrina rebuilding plans, which continue to be heavily influenced by new urbanists. The Mississippi Coast's leading newspaper the Sun-Herald reports that the Gulfport City Council has voted to engage three developers, including Henry Turley of Harbor Town fame as a citywide design consultant "to guide citywide rebuilding in an effort to revitalize neighborhoods and develop walkable communities." Although you'd think his natural role would be developing projects in Gulfport, he's known for excellent work (Harbor Town won a 2007 CNU Charter Award and was praised as one of the most fully implemented examples of a new urbanist neighborhood development) so his presence in Gulfport is a very promising sign.



In further news, the biggest name behind the revitalization of the warehouse district in New Orleans (and behind a less-than-illustrious Hope VI project near the Garden District), Pres Kabacoff gets the job of redeveloping the 92-acre former Veterans Administration site on Beach Boulevard (Route 90).

Duany Plater Zyberk and Hall-Alminana are consulting on the project, which will aim to preserve as many of the historic VA buildings as possible in an urbanized district likely to include conference and health-care facilities as well as new residences.

The third developer Corporex will create a hotel-based "major-downtown development" -- one that would do well to respect and repair the frayed urban fabric of downtown where there are prime opportunities to begin extending city life and investment to the waterfront. That's been Mayor Brent Warr's vision since he became smitten with Michael Imber's rendering of a Monte Carlo-style casino at the big Biloxi charrette (shown to the right). Nice to see the council's vote get applause from Gulfport residents.

Watch for Gulfport's continuing process in implementing the form-based SmartCode to generate news soon.

Here's the story:

Gulfport approves 3 developers

City Council vote is unanimous

By RYAN LaFONTAINE
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GULFPORT --In one fell swoop, the City Council agreed Tuesday to negotiate deals with three development heavyweights on steering the reconstruction of Gulfport.

The council voted unanimously to accept a recommendation from a special selection committee on the city's development future in what is arguably the boldest leap forward since Hurricane Katrina.

But before the vote, some council members took time to clear up the controversy that has played out in recent headlines.

The confirmation vote means the council can now begin talks with New Orleans developer Pres Kabacoff, known for converting old warehou

and factories into dapper communities, on a contract to overhaul the 92-acre Veterans Affairs property on U.S. 90.

Negotiations also will begin with Kentucky-based Corporex, which has completed dozens of Hyatt, Marriott and Hilton hotels, on a major development downtown.

And the council will start working a deal with Memphis New Urbanism mogul Henry Turley on becoming the city's design consultant to guide citywide rebuilding in an effort to revitalize neighborhoods and develop walkable communities.

Hiring each firm will be done mostly through federal grants and city leaders expect to see drastic signs of recovery and progress - real brick mortar - sprouting up before the year is out.

The selection committee began work in February under a confidentiality agreement for fear that leaked information could anger developers & sink a potential deal. Some council members grew bitter about being kept in the dark during the selection process.

The council delayed a decision last week until it could review the developers' backgrounds. Members of the selection committee said locals were growing frustrated because of the city's sluggish recovery efforts.

"There were at least two articles in the newspaper in the past few days that I take exception to," Councilwoman Barbara Nalley said. "Just because we asked for six additional days (to review developer histories) all of a sudden we are holding everything up."

Nalley said she had received "nothing but compliments from my constituency," and she later read one adoring comment from a sunherald.com message board at Tuesday's meeting.

Before the vote, Councilwoman Ella Holmes-Hines said knowing what was being discussed in the selection meetings was "imperative" to making Tuesday's decision and Councilman Neil Resh said he was late to last week's meeting - when the first vote ended in a tie - only because he "couldn't get off of work."

Councilman Brian Carriere first suggested accepting the recommendation after he attached a list of stipulations.

"Upon approval, we would like to see public hearings on what we plan to do with these properties," he said. "And all uses, conceptual and actual, would need to be approved by (the council)."

In addition, Carriere said the council must be kept in the loop on potential funding sources and work should not begin on the VA property before the federal government has officially deeded the land to the city.

The council's vote was met with applause from locals who gathered at City Hall on what Mayor Brent Warr called "a historic day for Gulfport.

Attachment	Size
Gulfportcasino.jpg	61.09 KB

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