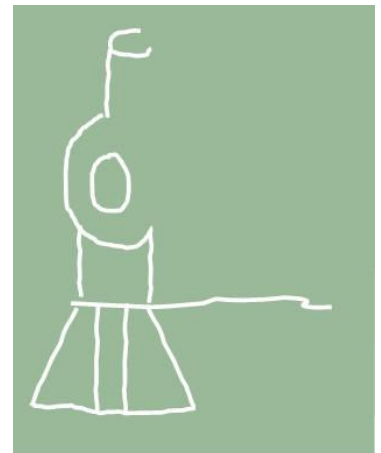


Chapter 9: Community Facilities and Services



All Aboard!

Community Facilities and Services



Photo: Hattiesburg City Hall.



Photo: Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center in Downtown Hattiesburg

Overview

Community facilities are public and quasi-public facilities that provide a wide range of community services. These facilities are owned by public entities—federal, state, county or city governments—or quasi-public, private, or non-profit agencies.

A survey of existing community facilities was conducted to evaluate the current and future needs of the city of Hattiesburg. The recommended implementation actions and short-term needs identified in this section comprise the *Community Facilities Plan*. The plan is an evaluation of existing conditions and future needs for public and quasi-public facilities in Hattiesburg. The maintenance and operation of public facilities is the responsibility of governmental entities at the federal, state, county, or municipal levels. Certain quasi-public facilities are maintained and operated by quasi-public or private agencies.

Community Centers, Public Buildings and Cultural Facilities

Hattiesburg has a number of public and quasi-public buildings and facilities used for community, neighborhood and family gatherings, education and learning, arts, cultural events, and other public uses.

This section lists and describes the buildings and resources that exist for community centers, public buildings and cultural facilities, and includes future plans to meet the needs of the city's growing population.

Community Centers

The City of Hattiesburg owns and operates five community centers. The centers are managed through the City's Parks and Recreation department. The centers are used for a variety of purposes, including the following: community events, public meetings, family reunions, class reunions, live performances, weddings and receptions, conference programs, recreation classes and activities, cultural events, and school dances.

A complete list of community centers and amenities is included under Figure 24.

Other City-Owned Facilities

In addition to community centers, there are many other types of public facilities that are owned and operated by the City of Hattiesburg. The following facilities are managed under the City's Parks and Recreation Department:

- › Administrative offices;
- › Parks and recreation facilities;
- › City-owned cemeteries;
- › Kamper Park and Hattiesburg Zoo; and
- › Public rights-of-way and landscaped areas.

Administrative Offices

The City's administration, city departments and staff are housed in multiple buildings: City Hall, the Public Services office (the Centennial Building), and the Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center are located downtown. In addition, the City has contracted to purchase the recently-vacated First Baptist Church on Pine Street near Downtown Hattiesburg. Details about these facilities are listed below.

› *City Hall*

Prior to 1921, Hattiesburg's City Hall was located at the corner of Forrest and Pine Streets. At that time, the site of the current City Hall was occupied by an opera house and the Southern Hotel.

Hattiesburg's current City Hall building was constructed in 1921. All City departments were originally housed in City Hall. The police department and jail were located on the first level, in an area that is now occupied by the Information Systems office and Code Enforcement division offices. The fire department was originally located on the second floor, and the municipal court occupied the third floor.

Over time, the police and fire departments were relocated to their current facilities (see pages 152 and 158 for police and fire facilities). At present, there are approximately 55 employees housed at City Hall in the following departments and divisions:

- › Administration, including Information Technology, City Clerk, Tax, Parking, Human Resources, and Risk Management Divisions

Figure 24. City-Owned Community Centers³

Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center

Location	220 West Front Street
Amenities	Auditorium (5,000 sq. ft.), dining/meeting room, conference rooms (2), full service kitchen and serving room.

C.E. Roy Community Center

Location	300 East 5th Street
Amenities	Auditorium (3,500 sq. ft.), dance studio, classrooms (4), and full service kitchen.

W.U. Sigler Community Center

Location	315 Conti Street
Amenities	Auditorium (2,800 sq. ft.), conference room, catering preparation room.

Ben McNair Recreation Center

Location	300 North 12th Avenue
Amenities	Auditorium (2,000 sq. ft.), gymnasium, dance studio, classrooms (4), full service kitchen.

Hattiesburg Cultural Center

Location	722 North Main Street
Amenities	Large meeting room (10,000 sq. ft.)

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- › Clerk of Council; and
- › Urban Development, including Code Enforcement, Community Development, Land Development Code, Building and Planning/Zoning Divisions.

The City Hall building is in good condition, requiring only routine maintenance and upkeep. The City plans to waterproof the exterior of the building by the end of 2009 and funds for this project are budgeted. No other major improvements are planned in the near term.

The City recently acquired the former First Baptist Church facility on Pine Street and plans to relocate certain offices to this facility. A description of the church facility may be found at the bottom of this page. After the new facility is occupied, City Hall will only house divisions under the Administration Department; the department's Accounting/Purchasing division will return to City Hall from its current location in the Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center.¹

- › *Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center*

Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center was built in the early 1940s as a United Service Organization (USO) for white military personnel. The building, equipped with rooms and showers on the basement level, served as a "home away from home." The facility's second floor currently houses the Accounting/Purchasing division of the City's Department of Administration.²

- › *Former First Baptist Church Facility*

The City of Hattiesburg is in the process of purchasing the former First Baptist Church facility on Pine Street. It is anticipated that the purchase will be finalized by December 2008; City offices could occupy the facility by the end of 2009, after renovations are completed.¹

The building has a floor area of 103,000 square feet: the first and second floors each have 45,262 square feet, and the third floor has an area of 6,579 square feet.

The church facility could support a new City Council meeting room with seating for approximately 200

persons. The meeting room could also be used for public meetings and hearings for the city's appointed boards and commissions and other city assemblies.

Renovation costs should be included in the 2009 fiscal year budget and included in the city's *capital improvement program*.

The City plans to locate the following departments/activities in the First Baptist Church facility:¹

- › Hattiesburg Fire Department administrative offices;
- › The Department of Urban Development;
- › Hattiesburg Police Department administrative offices;
- › Municipal court operations; and
- › Public meeting facilities (yet to be determined).

Forrest County Facilities

Forrest County owns and maintains a number of buildings and facilities in Hattiesburg. Administrative buildings and offices are located in Downtown Hattiesburg, including the Paul B. Johnson Chancery Building, Forrest County Tax Assessor's Office, Sheriff's office and jail, Forrest County Courthouse, and Masonic Lodge. The county also owns and maintains the Forrest County Multi-Purpose Center and a number of other offices and maintenance facilities throughout the city and county.

Educational Facilities

Hattiesburg Public School District

A majority of the land area in Hattiesburg is within the Hattiesburg Public School District. The district maintains six elementary schools, one middle school, one ninth grade academy, and one high school. The locations of the schools are shown under Figure 25.

Buildings and Facilities

Both minor and major renovations will be needed to many school facilities within the next 20 years. All of the elementary schools were constructed between 1949 and 1963, and Hattiesburg High School was constructed in 1959. The newer schools—N.R. Burger Middle School and the Ninth Grade Academy—were constructed in 2002; these facilities should only require

Community Facilities and Services

Community Centers, Public Buildings and Cultural Facilities

Community Facilities and Services

Figure 25. Public Schools, Hattiesburg Public School District.

Lillie Burney Elementary School

Location 901 Ida Avenue
Year Constructed 1963

Grace Christian Elementary School

Location 2207 West 7th Street
Year Constructed 1958

Hawkins Elementary School

Location 526 Forrest Street
Year Constructed 1951

Rowan Elementary School

Location 500 Martin Luther King Drive
Year Constructed 1951

Thames Elementary School

Location 2900 Jamestown Road
Year Constructed 1963

Woodley Elementary School

Location 2006 O'Ferrall Street
Year Constructed 1949

N.R. Burger Middle School

Location 174 WFS Tatum Road
Year Constructed 2002

Ninth Grade Academy

Location 301 Hutchinson Avenue
Year Constructed 2002

Hattiesburg High School

Location 301 Hutchinson Avenue
Year Constructed 1959

Mary Bethune Attendance Center

Location 610 Dumas Avenue
Year Constructed 1950

minor maintenance and upkeep.

Additionally, certain elementary schools currently have too many students; others have too few. The school district plans to study the current school attendance boundaries and make adjustments.

Forrest County School District

A small area of land in southern Hattiesburg that was annexed in the early 1990s is located within the Forrest County School District. Earl Travillion Attendance Center, in the Forrest County School District, is located at 316 Travillion Drive. Current enrollment at the school is 280.

Private Schools

The following private schools are located within the city of Hattiesburg.

› *Presbyterian Christian School*⁴

Address: 3901 Lincoln Road (K-6)
221 Bonhomie Road (7-12)

Grades: Kindergarten through 12th grade
Enrollment: over 800 students total

› *Sacred Heart Catholic School*⁵

Address: 608 Southern Avenue
Grades: Kindergarten through 12th grade
Enrollment: 530

› *Alpha Christian School*

Address: 1101 Main Street
Grades: Kindergarten through 12th grade
Enrollment: 249

› *Central Baptist School*

Address: 35 P.D. Freeman Road
Grades: Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade
Enrollment: 90

› *Montessori Children's House*

Address: 323 South 23rd Avenue
Grades: Pre-Kindergarten through Kindergarten
Enrollment: 42

The Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County

The Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County is a source of pride for all residents.

There are approximately 37,000 cardholders. The number of people in the service area is 75,000.⁸

Originally located on Main Street (see description of Hattiesburg Cultural Center, below), the library was relocated to an impressive new building on Hardy Street in 1996. A description of the building appears under Figure 26.

Programs and services

There are six organized book clubs at the library. Three clubs read general subjects, one specializes in history, one specializes in teen books, and one reads MONJA Japanese graphics.

The library has 41 public access computers in two locations in the library. The computers are linked to web-based materials catalogs (i.e. Magnolia). Magnolia is a state based academic research database and the cost is incurred by the State of Mississippi.

There are also numerous non-academic databases. Reference USA is another database that is offered to users. These databases list the number of businesses that have opened in the last 30 days.

The library makes wireless internet available to visitors and estimates between ten and twelve users per day.

Arts and Cultural Facilities

Hattiesburg Cultural Center

The Hattiesburg Cultural Center is located at 723 Main Street. The building was constructed in 1928 as the city's first stand-alone public library. Earlier libraries were housed within other facilities.

The center currently houses the Hattiesburg Arts Council Gallery, Hattiesburg Area Historical Society Museum, and offices for Hattiesburg Arts Council and Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association. There are large areas on the second floor and mezzanine levels available for public use.²

East Sixth Street USO Club

The East Sixth Street USO Club is owned by the City of Hattiesburg and managed by the Hattiesburg Convention Commission. The building is a cultural treasure for Hattiesburg as it is one of only two surviving buildings in the United States built as a USO

Figure 26. The Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County

Excerpts from information prepared by the Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County.

“On March 2, 1996, the doors to a new 54,000 square foot building were opened to the community. The building, set back from Hardy Street in a landscaped environment, serves as a *Gateway to Downtown Hattiesburg*. Constructed of St. Joe brick, with large thermal windows and a clay tile roof, the architect, Larry Albert, drew upon the design elements prominent in Hattiesburg’s original 1930’s library and the community’s architectural heritage.”

“The building’s three levels respond to the library’s primary service areas. In this respect, the building’s design is a classic example of “form follows function.” The lower level houses children’s services with an emphasis on creating space where children are introduced to the love of reading. The entry level displays new books, videos, books on tape and large print in a town square setting. The upper level houses information resources, including the reference and non-fiction collections, a ten-station electronic information system, three computer rooms providing Internet access, and the periodicals reading room.”

“A curved staircase, providing the primary access between the library’s three levels, is a full scale replica of the original 1930s library’s exterior staircase. Every detail has been carefully recreated in wood by local craftsmen.”



Photo: Interior Staircase, The Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County.

Community Facilities and Services

club for African-American military personnel. Built in 1943, the facility was managed by full-time professional staff plus many volunteers.²

The USO Club is currently being renovated; it has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places and will be considered for National Landmark status after renovations are completed. There are plans for the facility to house an African-American Military History Museum.²

Eureka School

Eureka School is owned and managed by the Hattiesburg Convention Commission. When founded in 1921, Eureka School was one of only two high schools for African-American students in Mississippi.⁴ The building was used as a school until 1987, when Hattiesburg Public School District's desegregation plan called for its use to be discontinued. The school became a community education center until the mid-1990s, then remained in use to house various education programs.⁴ Renovations began in February 2008 to prepare the building to be used as an "African-American Heritage and Cultural Museum and interpretive center for the Civil Rights movement, particularly the activities of Freedom Summer 1964."⁵

The initiative to restore the school is being undertaken by the following entities:

- › Hattiesburg Convention Commission;
- › EURO (Eureka-Royal Street-Rowan) Alumni Association;
- › Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association;
- › SMART Partnership;
- › Mobile-Bouie Street Neighborhood Association; and
- › City of Hattiesburg.

Public Parks and Hattiesburg Zoo

Parks and Recreation Department

Overview

The mission of the Hattiesburg Parks and Recreation Department is "to enhance the lives of all citizens by providing quality programs that promote physical fitness, social interaction, and cultural enrichment."

Public parks and recreation facilities—including the Hattiesburg Zoo—are managed under the City’s Parks and Recreation Department. The Department is divided into five divisions—Administration/ Programming, Maintenance, Cemetery/Forestry, Hattiesburg Zoo, and Cultural Affairs—and employs a staff of more than 106 persons.

The city also utilizes a Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to act in an advisory capacity to the Mayor with regard to parks and recreation issues. The board contains three representatives from each of the city’s five wards. Membership appointments are made by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council.⁹

Department Activities

The Parks and Recreation Department is charged with maintaining the city’s community facilities and lands, including community centers, landscaping at community facilities, parklands and recreation facilities, and public rights-of-way. This requires a high level of coordination and adequate staff, equipment and resources. The work performed by this department is visible to all. Therefore, residents’ and visitors’ opinion of the city is influenced greatly by the quality and beauty of public spaces and community facilities.

Each of the department’s five divisions have specialized duties and distinct staffing and equipment needs. Issues and challenges are listed below for each division:

- › **Administration/Programming Division**
This division handles the creation and administration of programs for youth, adults, and special events and activities.⁹
- › **Recreation Maintenance Division**
This division manages all landscaping, mowing and facility maintenance activities for the city. The division estimates its man-hour needs based upon the areas that must be mowed and maintained. Peak mowing season is from March to September, though the division over-seeds all enhancement areas and playing fields during the winter. This requires year-round mowing. The division mows 531 acres of parkland each week, mows 300 acres of public right-of-way, and maintains 250 landscaped beds.⁹



Photo: Town Square Park walking trail.

Figure 27. Parks and Recreation Programs

Youth Programs

- Tackle Football
- Flag Football
- Softball
- Teeball
- Basketball
- Day Camp
- Golf
- Tennis
- Swimming

Adult Programs

- Softball
- Flag Football
- Basketball

Special Programs

- Zoo Boo
- Senior Fair
- Very Special Arts
- Zoo Lights
- Senior Prom
- Ceramics
- Mayor’s Golf Cup
- Mayor’s Bowling
- Bridge Club
- Senior Art Class
- Senior Aerobics
- Easter Egg Hunt

Community Facilities and Services

Figure 28. Parks and Recreation Master Plan Key Findings

The following are the key findings and from Phase I of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

Key Findings

1. According to the telephone survey, 70% of Hattiesburg citizens prefer to renovate, upgrade, and improve existing facilities versus buying and developing new facilities.
2. According to the telephone survey, 35% of Hattiesburg citizens rate Neighborhood Parks as the most important priority.
3. Recreational programming needs improvement for teens and elderly citizens.
4. Adequate funding and staffing for the Parks and Recreation Department needs to be addressed.
5. The highest rate of participation by Hattiesburg citizens is in the wellness activities group, such as aerobics, weight training, yoga, walking and jogging.
6. The lowest rate of participation by Hattiesburg citizens is in the active sports group, such as tennis, baseball, soccer, golf, basketball and disc golf, has the lowest rate of participation.
7. Durable materials and design for renovations to existing facilities or new construction should be a high priority.
8. Safety, security and vandalism at City facilities are a concern for citizens.
9. According to the telephone survey, 51% of Hattiesburg citizens prefer to use public facilities rather than private facilities for their recreation activities.

Source: *Parks and Recreation Master Plan Report*, prepared by Weatherford / McDade, Ltd., and CREATEs.

Additionally, division staff maintains playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, walking trails, and playing fields for soccer, baseball, football and softball.⁹

Three “seasonal enhancement” employees are hired between April and August of each year, and three seasonal ballfield employees are hired between March and September. Additional manpower—up to 65% of the division’s labor force—is provided by prison inmates.¹⁰

› Cemetery/Forestry Division

The Cemetery/Forestry Division maintains the city’s six cemeteries. In all, this division mows 190 acres of cemetery land and maintains the areas around more than 58,000 headstone/burial sites.⁹ There are approximately 320 burials each year, and the cemeteries are maintained by a seven-person crew.

Urban forestry duties in this division include managing more than 40,000 trees on public property and rights-of-way, planting around 400 new trees annually, and trimming trees along the street right-of-way (tunnel-cutting). These duties are performed with a five-person crew.⁹

The urban forestry crew addresses all tree requests received by the City’s Action Center (see page 195 for a description the Action Center). These requests include tree planting, tree trimming, tree removal, tree assessment, and stump removal. Detailed information on the city’s urban forestry program are included under Chapter 6 (Natural Environment) of this document.

› Hattiesburg Zoo Division

The Hattiesburg Zoo Division maintains the city’s zoo and all its exhibits. Detailed information on the zoo is included in this chapter on page 165.

› Cultural Affairs Division

This division manages the city’s five community and recreation centers. Figure 24 includes a list of community centers and amenities. Division staff provide assistance and coordination for an average of 2,300 events annually, including meetings, weddings, reunions, and live performances.⁹

Personnel and Staffing

The Department of Parks and Recreation currently employs 106.25 staff positions. Below is a list of the number of employees in each division:¹⁰

Division	Personnel
Administration/Programming Division	17.25
Maintenance Division	29.5
Cemetery/Forestry Division	17
Hattiesburg Zoo Division	29
Cultural Affairs Division	13.5

According to the findings of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (see full description on page 164), the Maintenance Division does not have adequate staff and financial resources to maintain public parks and recreation spaces to the optimum level. The department estimates an additional nine persons should be added to the division to meet current mowing and maintenance needs.

Vehicles and Equipment

The Parks and Recreation Department utilizes certain specialized types of equipment, including walkie-talkie radios, cellular telephones, weed-eaters, blowers, chain saws, floor buffer machines, and a train at the Hattiesburg Zoo.¹⁰

Below is a list of the vehicles utilized by the department:¹⁰

Vehicle/Equipment	Purpose
Mowers (60" to 72")	Mowing rights-of-way areas and parks
Tractors (32 horsepower)	Moving dirt, bushhog, fertilizer, herbicides
Knuckle-Boom	Moving large tree debris
Bucket Truck	Lifting crews and equipment for tree maintenance
Chipper	Chips tree/limb debris
Stump Grinder	Grinds and removes stumps left when trees are removed
Top Dresser	Spreads sand/dirt over playing field areas
Crew-Cab 3/4-Ton Pick-up Trucks	Used to carry crew and equipment to job sites

List continued on next page

Figure 29. Parks and Recreation Facilities

Source: Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Weatherford/McDade, Ltd., and CREATEs.

Facility	# of Acres
9th Street Park	8
Beverly Hills Walking Trail	3
C.E. Roy Community Center	2
Dahmer Park	35
Eastside Park	12
Kamper Park and Hattiesburg Zoo	40
Duncan Lake	41
Lee Circle Gazebo	0.3
Smokie Herrington Field	2
Oseola McCarty Park	6
People's Park	5
San Antonio Field	5
Jaycee Park	8
Tatum Park	300
Timberton Complex	18
Town Square Park	3
Thames Playground	2
Lilac Street Playground	2
Hope Park	3
Ruth Brown Park	4
Cultural Arts Center	0.3
Veteran's Park	1.3
Chain Park	40
Fountain Park	0.3

Community Facilities and Services

List continued from previous page

Vehicle/Equipment	Purpose
1/2-Ton Cargo Vans	Used to transport equipment to community centers
1/2-Ton Pick-up Trucks	Used to carry crew and equipment to job sites
Scissor Lift	Rented to reach high ceilings/roofs at facilities
Boom Lift	Rented to reach ballfield lights
Backhoe	Used to dig graves and various duties around parks
Dump Truck	Used in cemeteries to haul dirt and other duties
Open Body Trucks	Used to haul tree/limb debris
Bob Cat	Used to haul waste, etc. at the Hattiesburg Zoo

Short-Term Equipment Needs:

- › Purchase three mowers (72”).
- › Purchase one 25-foot scissor lift.
- › Purchase one 70-foot bucket truck.
- › Purchase one 1-ton dump truck.
- › Purchase three 3/4-ton crew cab pick-up trucks.

10-Year Equipment Needs:

- › Purchase six mowers (72”).
- › Purchase six 1/2-ton pick-up trucks.
- › Purchase two 3/4-ton crew cab pick-up trucks.
- › Purchase one backhoe.
- › Purchase two 48-horsepower tractors.

15-Year Equipment Needs:

- › Purchase six 1/2-ton pick-up trucks.
- › Purchase two 3/4-ton crew cab pick-up trucks.
- › Purchase one knuckle-boom lift.
- › Purchase two cargo vans.
- › Purchase nine mowers (72”).
- › Purchase two open body dump trucks.
- › Purchase one 6-yard dump truck.

20-Year Equipment Needs:

- › Purchase six 1/2-ton pick-up trucks.
- › Purchase two 3/4-ton crew cab pick-up trucks.

- Purchase one 48-horsepower tractors.
- Purchase nine mowers (72").

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The first phase of a master plan for parks and recreation facilities was adopted in October 2007. The consultants conducting the master plan included Weatherford / McDade, Ltd., and CREATeS (College of Health, University of Southern Mississippi).

The first phase included consultations with the Parks and Recreation Board, an inventory of facilities, a physical facilities reconnaissance survey, the collection of demographic information, a telephone survey, and a series of questionnaires distributed to the Hattiesburg Public School District and area neighborhood association members. In addition, five public meetings were held—one in each ward—to solicit community input.³

The Phase 1 report includes key findings, recommendations and conclusions. One recommendation is to continue the process with Phase 2—a comprehensive parks and recreation vision plan—that would contain specific recommendations for new facilities and programs, facility improvement, and maintenance. In addition, the Phase 2 vision plan would include strategies for plan implementation and phasing and include a cost estimate for the initial phase of implementation.³

As the city is involved in an on-going planning program for parks and recreation, research in this area was not repeated for the city's 2008 comprehensive plan. Through the comprehensive planning process, many residents have commented on desires for additional recreation facilities. In addition, there appears to be widespread support for public parks and recreation facilities. The Vision Advisory Team used current public input and information from Phase 1 of the Master Plan to identify the goals, objectives and implementation actions contained in Chapter 4 of this plan.

This comprehensive plan seeks to be consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and support all the recommendations contained therein. Any additional comments or recommendations gathered through this comprehensive planning process can be used in Phase 2 of the Master Plan process.

Figure 30. At the Hattiesburg Zoo

Animals at the Hattiesburg Zoo:

African Section

- Emus
- Galapagos tortoises
- Zebra
- Elands
- Ostrich
- Colobus monkey
- DeBrazza Guenon monkey
- Blue Duiker
- Serval

South American Section

- Black lemurs
- Black and white ruffed lemurs
- Crowned lemurs
- Red ruffed lemurs
- Ring-tailed lemurs
- Muscovy ducks
- Capybara
- Tapir
- Llamas
- Black Howlers
- Blue and Gold Macaws
- Scarlet Macaw
- Jaguar

Tiger Boardwalk

- Tigers
- Gibbons
- Kookaburra
- Cockatoo
- African Grey Parrot
- Monk Parakeet
- Blue-fronted Amazon Parrot
- Red-tailed Hawks
- Screech Owls
- North American Alligators
- Mallard Ducks
- Black Swans
- Mute Swans
- Domestic Geese
- Brown Pelican
- American White Pelican

Other Visible Animals

- Prairie Dogs
- Helmeted Guinea Fowl
- Peafowl
- Domestic Chickens
- Great Horned Owls

Community Facilities and Services

Implementation Actions:

- › Implement recommendations contained in Phase 1 of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- › Initiate Phase 2 of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (estimated cost—\$67,000.00).

Public Parks

The City of Hattiesburg owns and maintains approximately 541 acres of land dedicated to parks and recreation, including 30 individual recreation areas ranging in size from .3 acres (Lee Circle Gazebo) to 300 acres (Tatum Park).³

A complete list of parks and recreation facilities appears under Figure 29.

Hattiesburg Zoo at Kamper Park

The Hattiesburg Zoo is the only zoo in Mississippi that is both owned and operated by a city government. The zoo is located within the 40-acre Kamper Park. In addition to the zoo, the park also offers a baseball diamond, a walking track, six tennis courts, shelters and pavilion, and an accessible playground.¹¹

Land for Kamper Park was donated in 1902 by John Kamper. He deeded 40 acres of land to several persons as trustees for the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC). Mr. Kamper stipulated that the land was to be improved and used as a public park, to be named Kamper Park.¹¹ In 1908, the UDC transferred the land to the City of Hattiesburg. The UDC and the City of Hattiesburg were to share equally all revenues from the park. On September 1, 1913, Kamper Park officially opened as a public park.¹¹

The zoo opened on Easter Sunday in 1950. In 1954, the Lion's Club donated a pair of lions to the zoo. In 1958, the club sponsored the drive to get an elephant, llamas, elk, buffalo, and an African white goat.¹¹ Today, the 12-acre Hattiesburg Zoo at Kamper Park houses 21 exhibits displaying 49 different species of animals. A full list of all the animal species appears under Figure 27.³

The zoo is an educational facility, seeking to inform visitors about the wonders of the natural environment and its inhabitants. Zoo officials estimate an average of 110,000 visitors each year. Of total the number of

zoo guests in 2007, more than 11,000 visited with school programs.¹⁰

Figure 27 displays the animals currently found at the Hattiesburg Zoo. There are over 160 animals housed at the zoo, with more exhibits planned. The zoo is currently planning a new Asia exhibit with a new tiger, gibbon, and Asian watergarden, and a Mississippi exhibit will house native animals. In addition, there are plans to renovate the existing tiger habitat to house African lions.¹²

Short-term goals for the zoo include building and enhancing education and conservation programs, maintaining and upgrading all current exhibits to provide safe and clean environments for animals and zoo visitors, and achieving accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Accreditation will also enable the zoo to obtain permits to exhibit native mammals.³

To enhance education programs, zoo officials plan to build an education building/discovery area to house and exhibit the zoo's growing educational animal collection. Also planned is a new hospital/quarantine complex. There is currently no facility to quarantine or treat large animals, such as large cats, large hoof stock, and large primates.¹² Zoo officials are considering locations in Kamper Park that are isolated and have good vehicular access for delivering the animals.

The zoo also envisions long-term expansion goals. To continue to expand exhibit areas and enhance park safety, the physical boundaries of the park must be expanded. The next phase of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (see page 164) should address possible locations for park and zoo expansion.

Additionally, to decrease the amount of non-zoo traffic around the playground area, the City of Hattiesburg plans to relocate the current traffic signal from the intersection of Hardy Street and Park Avenue. The new signal will be located along the eastern park boundary at Hardy Street and 17th Avenue.¹⁰

Implementation Actions:

- › Include the zoo's capital projects in the city's *capital improvement program*; budget needed funds and seek additional funding sources to fully implement

Community Facilities and Services

Hattiesburg Zoo and Kamper Park



Photo: Duncan Lake

Community Facilities and Services

plans to improve the zoo's educational programs and expand animal exhibits.

- › Aggressively market the zoo for its tourism potential and its unique education and learning opportunities.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Relocate the traffic signal at Hardy Street and Park Avenue to Hardy Street and 17th Avenue.
- › Seek a location and funding source to construct a hospital/quarantine complex.
- › Initiate a physical master planning effort to identify areas for long-term park/zoo expansion and facility enhancement.

Chain Park at Twin Forks

Chain Park at Twin Forks is planned to be created on 47 acres of land in the northeast portion of Hattiesburg. Thirty-seven acres of land for the park was donated by Mayor Bobby L. Chain and family. This beautiful site is bordered by the Leaf River to the east, Gordon's Creek, Downtown Hattiesburg, and the Newman-Buschman neighborhood to the south, and the Mobile-Bouie neighborhood to the west. The property has 2,643 feet of river frontage and approximately 1.5 acres of wetlands. A plan of the future park is included under Appendix C.

Because of its location, Chain Park at Twin Forks promises to be an accessible, convenient place for residents of the entire city to exercise, recreate, and enjoy the views of the Leaf River. The park location is within convenient distance to many downtown neighborhoods, including Mobile-Bouie neighborhood, North Main Street neighborhood, Newman-Buschman neighborhood, Hattiesburg Historic neighborhood, East Jerusalem neighborhood, and Downtown Hattiesburg. In addition, the planned extension of the Longleaf Trace will allow users of the multi-use trail to access the park by bicycle from more distant locations in the city.

Public Safety

Police Protection

Overview

The Hattiesburg Police Department's mission is "to continually strive to serve the public in the most

effective, efficient and professional manner possible and to work cooperatively with the public to provide a safe environment for all our citizens.”

In 2007, the department conducted a total of 121,731 investigations.¹⁴ The following table shows the change in the number of investigations in each category from 2006 to 2007:

Category	2006	2007
911 Calls	10,948	8,416
Phone Calls to Department	30,811	31,273
Officer Initiated Investigations	67,263	82,024
Total	110,708	121,731

The total number of investigations increased by 11,023 from 2006 to 2007. The department expects the number of investigations to continue to increase as the population of the city and surrounding areas grows. Also, as additional officers are hired, the number of officer-initiated investigations will rise, increasing the total number of investigations.

The officers’ service area within the city limits is 55 square miles. The area is divided into 9 service areas, or beats. The average area of a beat is 6 square miles. The department estimates that officers respond to between 9,000 and 10,000 incidents monthly and each detective has 100 or more active cases at any one time.¹³

Facilities

The Hattiesburg Police Department utilizes space in six facilities: the main police station, a training academy building, the Neighborhood Enhancement Team office space provided by the Hattiesburg Housing Authority, office space at Fire Station #8 in West Hattiesburg, an outdoor training facility, and the new police substation located across from the Hattiesburg Depot.

In recent years, the police department has highlighted the need for a new police station. The current station, formerly the Methodist Hospital, is located at #1 Government Plaza at the junction of James and Edwards Streets. The historic hospital building was constructed in 1900 as a sanitarium. For the next 20 years, the structure served the community under three



Photo: Police Substation across from Hattiesburg Depot.

Community Facilities and Services Public Safety

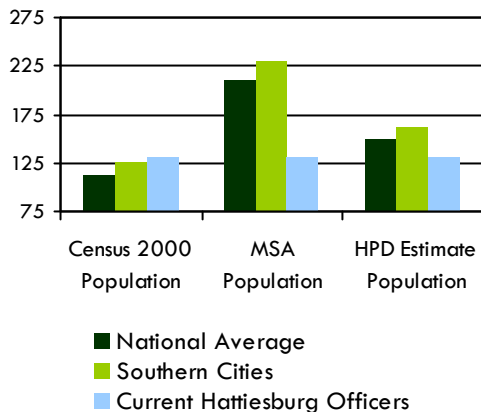
Community Facilities and Services

Figure 31. Average Number of Officers and Employees Per Resident

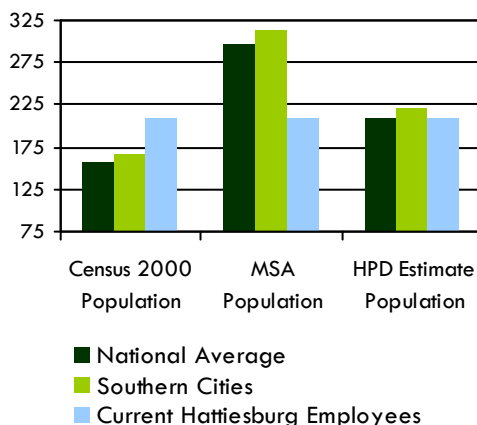
The below graphs show how the current number of Hattiesburg Police Department officers and employees compare to the average numbers found nationwide and in other Southern cities. The numbers are calculated using three different population estimates.

The “National Average” and “Southern Cities” bars show how many officers and total employees the Hattiesburg Police Department would have if the numbers were calculated using those employee-to-resident ratios. The “Current Hattiesburg” bars show the current number of officers and total employees in the Hattiesburg Police Department.

Police Department Officers



Police Department Employees



separate hospital administrations until 1921 when it became the Methodist Hospital. Three sections of the building were constructed between the late 1920s and early 1930s and the last section was completed in the late 1950s/early 1960s.¹³ The City of Hattiesburg purchased the building in the 1980s.

For a number of reasons—most importantly the building’s age and that it was not originally designed to be a police station—problems with the facility have, over the years, grown more acute. The department has plans for a new facility to replace the existing department. Due to funding constraints, it has not yet been determined when a new building could be constructed.

The need for a new station was recognized by *Progress Hattiesburg*, a citizen committee that was convened to identify and prioritize capital projects that could be funded through bonds retired by a local option sales tax. Though consensus has not been reached by Hattiesburg officials on how to fund this and other capital projects, the construction of a new station is still considered to be a short-term need that should be addressed within the next five years.

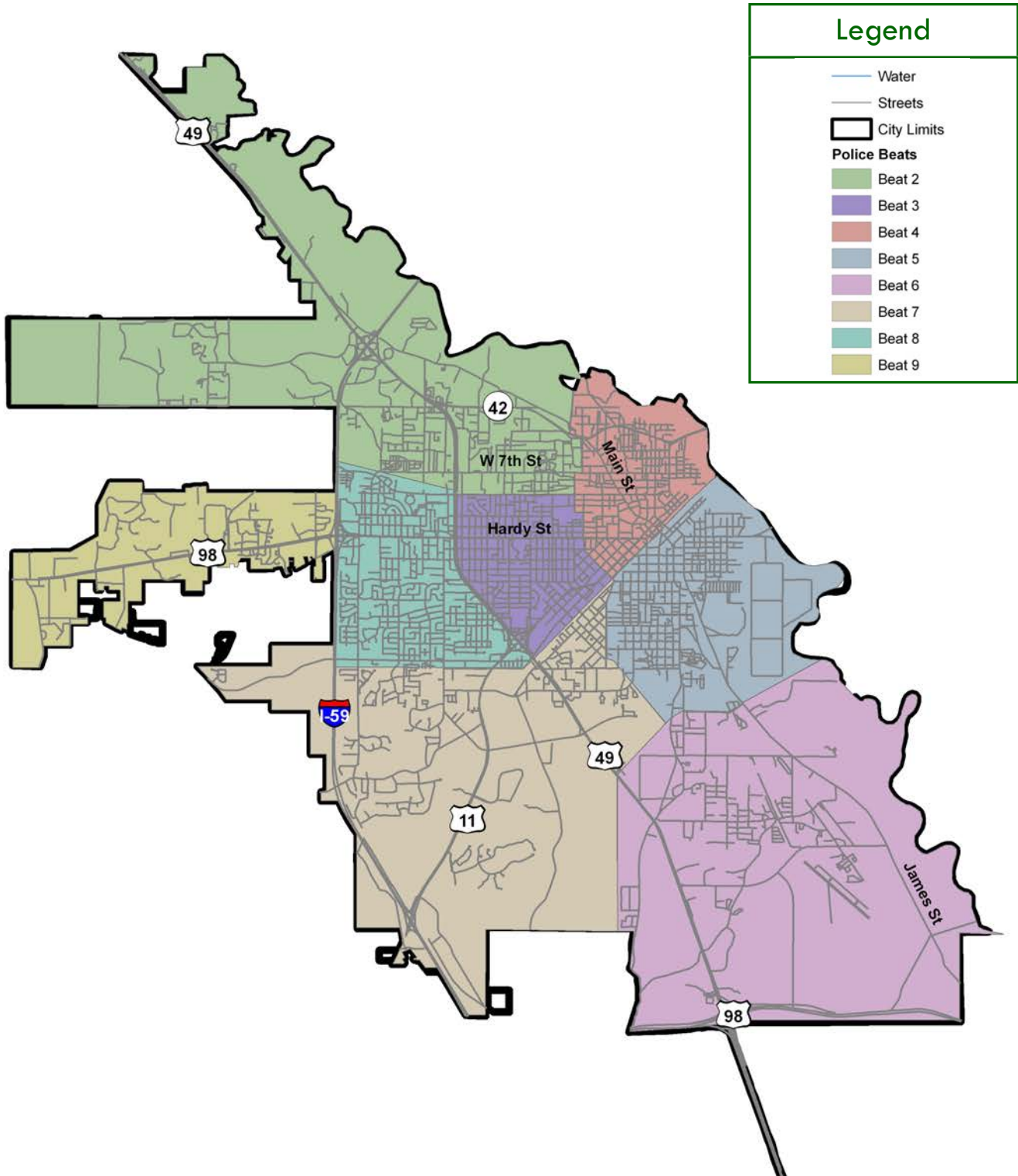
Personnel and Staffing

The department currently has a staff of 210, including 130 sworn and 80 non-sworn personnel.¹⁴ The department is able to fill a total of 140 sworn positions. Of the current number of employees, eleven officers are on active military leave. The department regularly seeks applicants and conducts one basic training class each year.

Hattiesburg is the third largest city in Mississippi, and there is considerable competition among police departments in the region to locate and train good officers. Hattiesburg’s starting pay for police officers is not the highest in the region, making it an impediment to retaining employees.¹³

According to the United States Department of Justice, the national average number of police officers per 1,000 residents is 2.5.¹³ Among cities in the South, the average is 2.7 officers per 1,000 residents. Total department employment figures nationwide and among Southern cities are 3.5 and 3.7, respectively.¹³ The Hattiesburg Police Department has calculated its

Map 4. Police Beats



Community Facilities and Services

recommended number of employees based on the national and regional averages and using various population estimates for Hattiesburg. Figure 31 on page 169 shows how Hattiesburg's current number of officers and employees compare to nationwide and regional averages.

Training Requirements

The State of Mississippi requires police officers to undergo 400 hours of basic training; the Hattiesburg Police Department Academy consists of 560 training hours. Once trainees complete basic training, they participate in 12 weeks of field training.¹³

Additionally, officers are required to complete six in-service training sessions per year. The training sessions include mandatory skills, refresher courses, updates and new training platforms. Special certification is provided for certain positions, including such areas as animal control, accident reconstruction, Driving Under the Influence (DUI) enforcement, dispatch, motorcycle, and bicycle.

Vehicles and Equipment

The department currently has a fleet of 127 vehicles with model years ranging from 1993 to 2007.¹⁴ Below is a list of the number of vehicles assigned to each division or use:

Vehicle Use/Division	Number
Administration	8
Community Relations	3
Training	4
Warrants	2
Patrol	48
Detectives	16
Maintenance	4
Animal Control	5
Traffic Motorcycles	4
Cars	10
Neighborhood Enhancement Team	8
Other	16
Total	128

Patrol cars are equipped with in-vehicle laptops and officers are issued hand-held global positioning system (GPS) receivers. The department desires to improve its technological capabilities by being able to locate

vehicles in “real time” using laptop computers.¹⁴ This is a mid- to long-range goal, as the technology is primarily used by larger cities and hardware/software costs are high. As the technology improves and becomes more widely used, it may be feasible for the city to purchase the equipment.

Implementation Actions:

- › Construct a modern police station to replace the station currently housed in the former Methodist hospital building.
- › Fully staff the police department and offer competitive salaries to retain officers.
- › Upgrade Training Academy to Level One (requires ability to provide lodging and meals).

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Create a permanent dispatch facility with information technology. The department’s facility was damaged beyond repair as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Dispatchers are currently in a temporary facility awaiting the funds to begin construction of a permanent facility.
- › Conversion to electronic data storage (paperless). The department’s current system requires officers to enter in report data at the police station. The ability to submit reports electronically from the officer’s laptop would greatly improve efficiency and accuracy.
- › Satellite-based wireless communication system. Invest in new technology to improve efficiency and investigation capacity, including the following: “real-time” GIS mapping and tracking; “real-time” satellite scene and building views; and linking technology for video systems.
- › Separate the Police Department from municipal court system to eliminate the potential for conflicts of interest and increase the *perception* of fair and equitable justice.
- › Purchase a response vehicle for the department’s tactical team. This large truck would be equipped with safety seating for each responder and specific storage areas for needed weapons, devices and equipment.
- › Create a maintenance facility for response vehicles. The facility would be able to maintain the department’s fleet and install/uninstall lights and

Community Facilities and Services

Figure 32. Current Fire Department Personnel by Category and Position.

Category and Position	Available Positions
Sworn	
Fire Chief	1
Assistant Chief	1
Logistics Officer (Lieutenant)	1
Fire Marshal (Battalion Chief)	1
Battalion Chief of Training/Hazmat	1
Training Officer	1
Shirt Commanders	3
District Captains (two per shift)	6
Lieutenants (station managers, six per shift)	18
Engineers (driver-operators, ten per shift)	30
<u>Firefighters</u>	<u>56+/-</u>
Total	119
Non-Sworn	
Inspector Investigators	2
Inspector/Fire Educators	2
<u>Administrative Assistants</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	6

- special equipment more efficiently and effectively than using private vendors.
- › Ordnance (explosive/bomb) detection and disposal equipment. The department currently has the ability to clear an area, but not deactivate an explosive device.
- › Accident investigation and reconstruction equipment. This equipment, called a “total station,” contains all the necessary supplies to investigate an accident site and to document and preserve evidence.
- › Public Surveillance System, in the form of cameras on buildings and poles, particularly in high-crime areas, such as schools, parking lots and public events.
- › Enhance the intelligence network with local and regional agencies to assist in developing a statewide electronic database for all offenders.
- › Jail and holding space at the Hattiesburg Police Department.
- › Upgrade current driving training area to incorporate advanced technology, realistic scenarios (i.e. red lights, pedestrians), and realistic weather conditions.
- › Renovate firing range to include indoor range.
- › Facial Recognition Technology to improve investigative capacity.

Fire Protection

Overview

The mission of the Hattiesburg Fire Department is “to provide suppression, rescue, first responder emergency medical response, hazardous materials response, and fire prevention and education services to the citizens of Hattiesburg.”¹⁵

The city has four divisions: Administration, Suppression, Fire Prevention, and Training. Hattiesburg firefighters work 24-hour shifts, with 48 hours off between each shift. The department can employ up to 119 sworn and 6 unsworn employees.¹⁶

The Hattiesburg Fire Department provides fire protection to residences and businesses within the city of Hattiesburg. In addition, the department has mutual aid agreements with Petal Fire Department, Rawls Springs Volunteer Fire Department, North Forrest Volunteer Fire Department, Dixie Volunteer Fire Department, and other adjacent jurisdictions. Under

these agreements, the department responds as needed to residential or roadway incidents. The department automatically responds to incidents involving commercial structures in adjoining jurisdictions in Lamar County.¹⁷

Hattiesburg currently has a Level 4 Fire Protection Rating. Fire protection ratings are scaled 1 through 10. A rating of "10" indicates that a district or jurisdiction has no or minimal fire protection capacity and would lead generally to the highest level of premium rate on insurance. A rating of "1" indicates the highest level of fire protection capacity and would lead generally to the lowest level of premium rate.¹⁹

To achieve a Level 3 rating, certain improvements would have to be made to the city's water system, inspection regimens for water system gate valves and hydrants, dispatcher services, and staffing levels, and a new station would have to be constructed in the northern part of the city.¹⁷

The Level 3 rating would provide both direct and indirect benefits to the citizens of Hattiesburg. Direct benefits would be in the form of possible reductions in insurance premium costs. Lower fire protection ratings also can be attractive to potential developers and investors, enhancing a community's efforts at economic and community development. The impact to the economy and the overall enhancement to a community's quality of life are indirect benefits.¹⁸

The issues of greatest importance to the fire department are facilities, equipment and manpower.¹⁶ New facilities and equipment require substantial capital investments, and additional manpower requires increases in annual budgets.

Issues and Challenges

- › *Physical Impediments to Rapid Response*
The department has identified certain physical and geographic barriers that have been shown to lengthen response times, even when incidents are within close range of a fire station. For example, the heavy traffic on Hardy Street and Highway 98, west of Highway 49, can slow response times in responding to incidents.¹⁷

This is due mainly to the character of development in the area and the nature of the roadways that

Figure 33. Hattiesburg Fire Stations

<u>Fire Station #1</u>	<u>810 Main Street</u>
Use/Details	Central fire station
Year Constructed	Unknown. Converted from a motel to a fire station in 1979.
Current Condition	Damaged during Hurricane Katrina; slated for demolition.
<u>Fire Station #2</u>	<u>111 Arledge Street</u>
Use/Details	Engine company, 2 bays, living quarters for 3-4.
Year Constructed	Late 1960s or early 1970s
Current Condition	In use.
<u>Fire Station #3</u>	<u>53 Academy Drive, Suite 1</u>
Use/Details	Engine company, 2 bays, living quarters for 3-4.
Year Constructed	Early 1980s
Current Condition	Heavily damaged by Hurricane Katrina; renovated.
<u>Fire Station #4</u>	<u>5033 Highway 42</u>
Use/Details	Engine company, 2 bays, living quarters for 3-4.
Year Constructed	Early 1980s
Current Condition	In use.
<u>Fire Station #5</u>	<u>922 East Hardy Street</u>
Use/Details	Houses engine company with living quarters for 3-4.
Year Constructed	Early 1960s; 2 renovations
Current Condition	In use.
<u>Fire Station #6</u>	<u>3804 Montague Boulevard</u>
Use/Details	Western district headquarters, ladder/rescue companies, living quarters for 7.
Year Constructed	Late 1990s
Current Condition	In use.
<u>Fire Station #7</u>	<u>46 Parkway Boulevard</u>
Use/Details	Engine company, 2 bays, living quarters for 3-4.
Year Constructed	Mid-1990s
Current Condition	In use.
<u>Fire Station #8</u>	<u>104 Lamar Boulevard</u>
Use/Details	Engine company, 3 bays, living quarters for 8; HPD substation.
Year Constructed	2004
Current Condition	In use.

Community Facilities and Services

Figure 34. Frequency of Fire Incidents from 2005 to 2007.

The below chart shows the number of fire incidents from 2005 to 2007. The Hattiesburg Fire Department attributes the increase in recent years to the increased population and at-risk property following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

Year	Structure Fires	Vehicle Fires	Other Fires
2005	59	50	185
2006	85	62	211
2007	137	77	137

serve these businesses. Retail and service businesses developed in a linear pattern along the Hardy Street/Highway 98 commercial corridor. The corridor contains strip malls, hotels, shopping malls, and automobile sales lots.

Few parallel east/west corridors currently exist that have the capacity and level of access to draw motorists away from the Hardy Street/Highway 98 corridor. The construction of Station #8 in western Hattiesburg has somewhat improved response time, though problems still exist.¹⁷

The most critical threat to the department's response time is the large number of at-grade railroad crossings in eastern Hattiesburg. Trains routinely cause delays for all types of emergency vehicles—fire, police, and emergency medical services.¹⁷

The fire department has adjusted to this challenge by attempting to maintain at least one pumper unit on the east side of the Kansas City Southern rail line.¹⁷ This issue underscores the need for overpasses to be constructed along certain corridors. It is not simply an issue of convenience for motorists, but it can be a serious, if not fatal, risk to life and property.

› *Improving Investigation Capabilities*

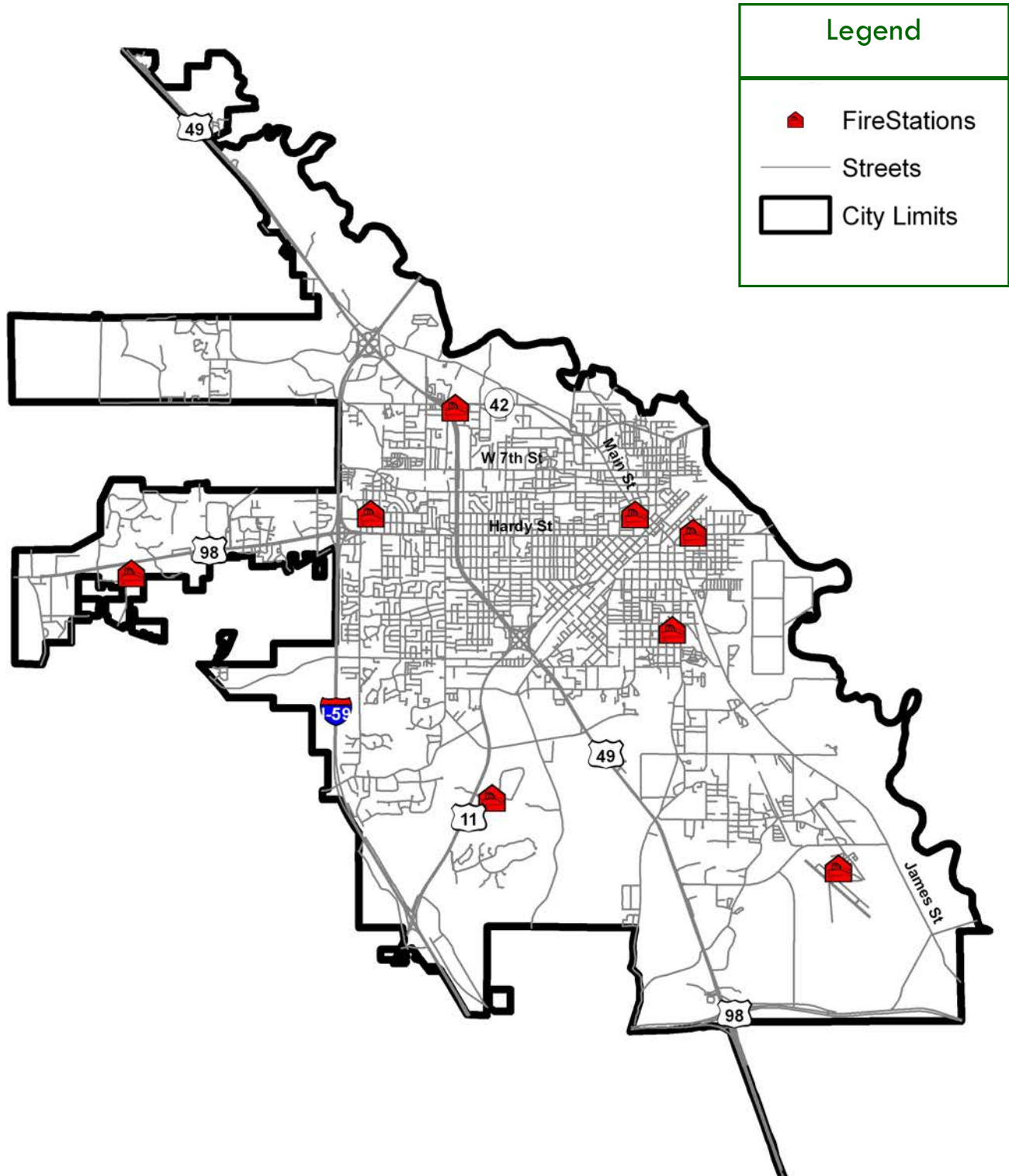
Additionally, the department noted an increase in high-profile arson activity in 2007. Between May and July 2007, two structures and three vehicles were damaged or destroyed by arson. One of the two structures was the old Hattiesburg High School, which was undergoing long-awaited renovations. The department has successfully investigated many of the incidents, and considers the continuing improvement of investigation capabilities to be the best deterrent to future arson events.¹⁷

Facilities

Hattiesburg Fire Department maintains eight stations in addition to office space for other divisions. Figure 33 contains information about the location, construction, and use of each station.¹⁷

The fire department's training academy facility, located at 53 Academy Drive, is shared with the Hattiesburg Police Department. Constructed in the

Map 5. Fire Stations



Community Facilities and Services

Figure 35. Hattiesburg Fire Department Prevention Programs.

- › **Code Enforcement:**
One key to successful fire prevention is ensuring that codes designed to protect public health and safety are enforced. The Hattiesburg Fire Department reviews new building and site development plans, investigates the causes of fires, and annually inspects commercial properties in the city.
- › **Public Education:**
The second key to preventing fires is educating the public. The fire department has on-going programs for introducing fire safety information to school children and at assisted-living facilities.

early 1980s, the facility contains staff offices, a library, a kitchen, classrooms, a weight room, and an assembly room. A five-story drill tower and other training equipment is located on the site.¹⁷

The department's central fire station—heavily damaged during Hurricane Katrina—is still unusable. The department is functioning in the interim out of temporary trailers originally provided by the Army Corps of Engineers. The repair or reconstruction of the central fire station (Station #1) is the most crucial short-term facility need. The City plans to demolish Station #1 after a new central fire station is constructed behind the existing building, on property that is currently used as a police department service center.¹⁷

› *New Stations in Underserved Areas*

The map of fire stations under Appendix C shows the current locations of stations in Hattiesburg. Much new development is occurring in what the Fire Department considers to be the “north quadrant” of the city, north of Interstate 59 and adjacent to U.S. Highway 49. The closest station to this area is located along the Highway 42 bypass—Fire Station # 4. To reduce response time to properties in the north quadrant, a new fire station must be located in that area.¹⁷

Additionally, there is an underserved area toward the city's central core.¹⁷ In the next 5 to 10 years, the city should identify a location for a new station within a half-mile to one-mile radius of the intersection of Hardy Street and U.S. Highway 49.

Personnel and Staffing

The Hattiesburg Fire Department currently employs 109 sworn and 4 non-sworn employees. The department is able to employ ten additional sworn employees (firefighters) and two additional non-sworn employees. Figure 32 shows the categories of personnel employed in the department and the number of available slots for each category.¹⁷

At any one time, a minimum of 28 firefighters and one shift supervisor must be on duty. During times of staffing shortages, firefighters work overtime to maintain this minimum standard. It is essential for the department to staff a sufficient number of employees to maintain the current Level 4 fire protection rating.

Should the City seek a Level 3 rating, an additional 36 firefighters must be hired.¹⁷

› *Addressing Staffing Challenges*

Hattiesburg Fire Department faces similar staffing challenges to other fire departments across the state. In a competitive labor market, cities with lower starting salaries find it difficult to attract and retain qualified employees.¹⁸ As other cities in the region offer higher starting salaries, it becomes increasingly more difficult for the City of Hattiesburg to attract new firefighters.

The current staffing level is considered adequate for the city's Level 4 fire rating. As the city seeks to improve its rating to Level 3, the staffing level will have to be increased to provide a minimum of four persons per apparatus (pumper, aerial or rescue unit). This would require an increase of 36 sworn personnel.¹⁷

Vehicles and Equipment

The department currently operates six engine companies, two aerial companies, and two rescue pumpers. Each aerial company is staffed with a minimum of three firefighters and each rescue pumper is staffed with a minimum of two firefighters. The department maintains one engine and one aerial in reserve for times when "front line" apparatus is not in service due to maintenance or repairs. Additionally, the department maintains eight vehicles—pick-up trucks and sedans—that are capable of emergency response.¹⁷

› *Vehicle and Apparatus Replacement*

Each engine, aerial and rescue pumper should be replaced at the time the apparatus reaches fifteen years of age. There are two funding sources available for vehicle and equipment replacement: the municipal fire protection fund and a fire protection fee from the University of Southern Mississippi.¹⁷

Through the municipal fire protection fund, an annual rebate is sent to Mississippi municipalities from a statewide insurance pool. Hattiesburg's 2007 allocation was \$210,943. Additionally, the university, as an entity of the state, pays a fire

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protection fee to the City of Hattiesburg for fire protection services.¹⁷

The department will have a need to replace three engines and one ladder truck within the next six years at an estimated cost of \$1.8 million in 2008 dollars. Those funds, in addition to funds needed to construct and equip at least one additional station, will require the City to identify other funding sources.¹⁷

› *Information Technology*

The fire department currently has data management software, though it is not being utilized to its full potential. The software has the capability to allow the department to store and remotely access digital information collected from inspections, pre-incident planning, and past responses. If data terminals were placed on every responding unit, the information could be available to firefighters as they respond to emergencies. Equipment and software upgrades and employee training is needed to fully utilize the software.¹⁷

Implementation Actions:

- › Ensure that the Hattiesburg Fire Department is fully staffed and equipped at all times.
- › Build/locate and maintain stations in areas that are underserved.
- › Provide adequate resources to develop new fire prevention programs for citizens and school children.
- › Take advantage of Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants to expand the number of fire department personnel.
- › Fully utilize existing data management software to build and maintain an information system containing data collected from inspections, pre-incident planning, and past responses.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Locate a fire station in northern Hattiesburg between Interstate 59 and U.S. Highway 49 to serve neighborhoods and new developments around Classic Drive and businesses along U.S. Highway 49.
- › Provide a minimum of four persons per apparatus.
- › Locate a smaller substation in the central core of Hattiesburg within a half-mile to one-mile radius of

the intersection of U.S. Highway 49 and Hardy Street.

- › Add an aerial device in the southern area to serve the Industrial Park.
- › Include anticipated vehicle and apparatus replacement costs in a *capital improvements program*: replace two to three engines by 2010, replace an aerial device by 2015, and replace remaining apparatus by 2028.
- › As fire prevention and training divisions expand, purchase and maintain additional non-emergency vehicles.
- › Seek a location to store hazardous materials and Regional Response Team-related (RRT) supplies and equipment. Note: RRT is a funded entity under the state Homeland Security department).

City Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

Information Technology

Overview

The Information Technology Division's mission is to strive to provide high-quality technology services and support. This is done by maintaining a high level of knowledge through continuing education, researching new technologies, maintaining quality equipment/software, and providing service and support within a reasonable time in a professional, courteous manner.

Personnel and Staffing

The Information Technology Division (ITD) currently has a staff of four personnel. This staff is comprised of an information technology manager, one systems analyst, one programmer and one systems technician.

Department Activities

The ITD is responsible for servicing 43 different City divisions. The ITD maintains 10 different servers that provide Internet, email, antivirus/spam/spyware filtering, water billing software, internal software applications, fleet management applications, etc. The ITD is responsible for over 833 personal computers, laptops, printers, and other peripherals.

The ITD provides telecommunication support for the City's various PBX/telephone equipment located within each department.

Community Facilities and Services

City Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

Community Facilities and Services

Figure 36. Wireless “Hot Spot” Locations in Hattiesburg.

Wireless internet service is provided by the City of Hattiesburg at the following locations:

- › Bobby L. Chain Municipal Airport
29 Academy Drive
- › C.E. Roy Community Center
300 East 5th Street
- › Hattiesburg Cultural Center
722 North Main Street
- › East 6th Street USO Club
305 East 6th Street
- › Historic Hattiesburg Train Depot
308 Newman Street
- › Jackie Dole Sherrill Community Center
220 West Front Street
- › Kamper Park Pavilion/Playground Area
107 South 17th Avenue
- › Town Square Park
Corner of Buschman Street and Main Street

Issues and Challenges

The following are the issues of greatest importance to the Information Technology Division: data security; the upgrading of equipment and software for various departments to enhance productivity and efficiency; and, obtaining technical training and certifications to ensure that the ITD staff maintains a high level of knowledge to keep up with technology as it changes. Each of these issues requires substantial funds to implement or obtain which means increasing the annual operating budget or obtaining monies from alternate funding sources.

Implementation Actions:

- › Access the technology needs of each individual division and make recommendations as needed.
- › Increase the ITD’s operating budget to provide funding for upgrading out-dated personal computer equipment and operating system and application software.
- › Upgrade network monitoring software and data encryption software to ensure data security.
- › Provide for the continuing education and certifications of the ITD staff

Short-Term Software and Equipment Needs:

- › Assist the Fire Department in utilizing their data management software to its fullest potential by providing a network connectivity source, whether through a city-provided wireless access point or a commercial access point from an ISP provider; upgrading software modules if needed; purchasing mobile data terminals; and, by providing software training and technical support to Fire Department staff.
- › Assist the Department of Urban Development in purchasing and implementing a centralized software system for building permits, inspections, code enforcement, floodplain management and zoning management.
- › Assist the Tax Office in purchasing and implementing business licensing software that, once implemented, would integrate with the Department of Urban Development’s software.
- › Assist the Public Services Department in purchasing and implementing an automated meter reading system for the Water Plant and Water Customer Accounts Office.

- › Assist the Parks and Recreation Department in purchasing and implementing sports management software that would assist the sports program staff in maintaining program participant records, tournament scheduling and provide data analysis capability.
- › Upgrade existing application software to the latest version to increase productivity and efficiency.
- › Upgrade older personal computer equipment within all City departments and recycle old equipment.
- › Assist the HPFL-MPO (see description on page 167) in purchasing and implementing an integrated geographic information system and global positioning system units.
- › Assist the Land Code Administration Office and the Code Enforcement Office in purchasing laptop computers for inspectors to use in the field.
- › Assist the Neighborhood Development Coordinator in using the City's website as an information tool to circulate to a large number of residents programs and initiatives that affect their neighborhood.

Long-Term Needs

- › Create a wireless mesh network throughout the city for municipal use.
- › Increase number of wireless "hot spots" equally throughout each ward for citizen use.
- › Implement an internal records management program for the preservation of documents and for the efficiency of data retrieval.
- › Adopt a formal disaster recovery plan for the areas of technology and telecommunication.
- › Implement an intranet website that would establish a centralized location for all city departmental information that would serve as a more efficient tool for employees.
- › Enhance the City's website to allow the capability to accept on-line payments for various City services.
- › Implement an automated vehicle locating system for the monitoring of city vehicles to make sure resources are being preserved to the fullest extent.

Department of Public Services

Overview

The Hattiesburg Department of Public Services coordinates the city's water, sewer, construction, traffic, and airport programs and services. A detailed

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City Services and Intergovernmental Coordination

Community Facilities and Services

description of these individual programs may be found under Chapter 6, Natural Environment, and Chapter 8, Infrastructure.

Department of Urban Development

Overview

The guiding principle of the Urban Development Department is to protect the “public health, safety and welfare” within the built environment and for its citizens. The department demonstrates the legal, administrative and implementation authority relating to every lot, parcel or tract of land within the city.

The Urban Development Department is divided into six divisions—Planning and Zoning, Land Development/ Building Inspections, Metropolitan Planning Organization, Mass Transit, and Code Enforcement—and employs a staff of 45 persons.

Department Activities

The activities of the Department of Urban Development impact every resident and property owner in the city of Hattiesburg. The department is charged with the administration and implementation of federal and state monies relating to future transportation plans through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars for housing and infrastructure.

Department employees administer and enforce the Hattiesburg Code of Ordinances and the Land Development Code relating to land use, land development, zoning, building codes, and property maintenance. The department is accountable for the comprehensive, orderly growth of the built environment, while incorporating the principles of Smart Growth (see Figure 37).

Every staff member of the department interacts with the general public on a “one-to-one” basis. Each of the department’s six divisions have specialized duties and distinct staffing and equipment needs. Issues and challenges are listed below for each division:

Below is a detailed description of the specific activities undertaken by each division in the department:

Community Development Division

As an Entitlement City, Hattiesburg receives an annual allocation from the U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development (HUD) for two programs: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) programs. The amount allocated to the city is calculated on a formula basis and is determined by the overall HUD budget approved by the United States Congress based upon current and anticipated needs and input from citizens, business owners, and elected officials.

The City of Hattiesburg attributes the overall quality of the CDBG and HOME programs to the successful partnerships that have been cultivated across all segments of the community.

The Community Development Division educates and assists citizens to become homeowners, repair homes, obtain tax credits, protect themselves from identity theft, know their fair housing rights, gain disability awareness, and learn about city, county and state services. The Community Development Division also employs a part-time Disability Advocate to assist with educating the city officers and residents on the services provided to disabled citizens in our communities.

Funding is the greatest challenge for the Community Development Division. In 2000, the City's Entitlement allocation was approximately \$1.6 million. In 2007, the funding was approximately \$970,000. The second greatest challenge is the lack of available, decent, safe, affordable housing stock in and around Hattiesburg.

Implementation Actions:

- Conduct a detailed city-wide housing study.
- Provide tax credits or incentives for affordable housing developers.
- Partner with existing agencies and organizations to pool resources in order to provide repair, construction, and reconstruction of housing.
- Demolish dilapidated housing to aid in the revitalization of neighborhoods.
- Assist with revitalization of small neighborhood businesses.
- Create pedestrian-friendly routes for all citizens from neighborhoods to shopping, medical and entertainment facilities.
- Expand and improve mass transit services.

Figure 37. Smart Growth Principles.

The following are the Smart Growth principles that were developed by the Smart Growth Network and have been further explored in five publications of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Smart Growth Network:

1. Mix land uses;
2. Take advantage of compact building design;
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
4. Create walkable neighborhoods;
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas;
7. Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective; and
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

Source: *Smart Growth Network*, www.smartgrowth.org; and *International City/County Management Association*, www.icma.org.

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Figure 38. Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are regional transportation planning agencies that provide a forum for cooperative decision-making concerning area-wide transportation issues. MPOs were created by federal and state law to develop transportation plans and programs that encourage and promote the implementation of transportation systems that embrace the various modes of transportation in a manner that will maximize the mobility of people and goods.

The federal legislation focuses on planning for urban areas, rather than individual cities. Every urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 persons must have a designated MPO to qualify for federal highway or transit assistance. All transportation projects should be supported and coordinated with the MPO's long-range plans to be eligible for federal funds.

- › Develop a long-term plan to secure funding to build and support a series of Youth Centers accessible from every neighborhood and provide educational programming for financial management, tutoring, job skills training, small business enterprise, arts and self-sufficiency courses.
- › Continue coordinating training classes to help families become successful homeowners through Mississippi Development Authority-Approved (MDA) homeowner education programs.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Community Development Division is seeking to automate as many of its processes for housing evaluation and repair to have more time for staff to seek further partnerships and additional funding sources.
- › Continue and expand the existing partnerships such as World Changers-United Way/Red Cross-faith based efforts. Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), Rural Development, Habitat for Humanity and Pearl River Valley Opportunity (PRVO).
- › Create and strengthen demolition/reconstruction partnerships to address unsafe homes, dilapidated homes, homes with lead based paint hazards which house children 6 and under; the number of structures and homes are increasing that fit into these categories.
- › Tool sheds in partnership w/Greek organizations, churches and other interested community partners. Offices and Churches Adopt a Home. Reconstruction, Lead based paint workshops, Emergency repairs, recruit more volunteer groups.
- › Improve and expand coordination with other agencies, and/or other city departments as a dedicated unit/team. Conduct monthly district meetings, offer workshops to educate homeowners and volunteer groups concerning building codes and home maintenance, and expand workshops involving lead paint and safe work.
- › Continue to support efforts with time and money to address issues on Aids, poverty and homelessness.

Metropolitan Planning Organization

Mississippi Governor William Winter established the Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization (HPFL-MPO) in August 1982, when the

Hattiesburg area reached a population of more than 50,000. The HPFL-MPO area consists of the following entities: City of Hattiesburg, City of Petal, a portion of Forrest County, and a portion of Lamar County (see MPO Study Area Map in Appendix C). The office is located in the newly-renovated Hattiesburg Depot on Buschman Street. The HPFL-MPO staff manages the city's geographic information system (GIS).

HPFL-MPO is the smallest MPO in Mississippi. In addition to the member cities and counties, representatives from the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration are involved in HPFL-MPO's transportation planning process. The organization's purpose is to provide effective leadership in the development of transportation plans and programs and implement the regulations of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The MPO primary functions are as follows: establish goals, objectives and policies governing transportation planning; approve Annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); direct the preparation and adoption of the short-range and long-range transportation plan; recommend transportation projects for implementation through the adoption of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP); and ensure the MPO is in compliance with the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act—a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The MPO is responsible for ensuring all modes of transportation and transportation-related projects are included in the planning process.

The HPFL-MPO Policy Committee consists of the mayors of the cities of Hattiesburg and Petal, presidents of the Forrest County and Lamar County Boards of Supervisors, the executive director of the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the executive director of HPFL-MPO, and a representative of the Federal Highway Administration (non-voting member). This is the primary committee responsible for developing policies and procedures to guide transportation planning for the Hattiesburg urbanized area. MPO staff and a Technical Committee assist the Policy Committee with planning and recommendations.

Implementation Actions:

Figure 39. Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

Below are the requirements of SAFETEA-LU—a 2005 federal law creating new transportation planning standards and funding programs. The act requires that the “metropolitan transportation planning process shall be continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive” and address the following factors:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system.

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- › Administer and coordinate the Hattiesburg Metropolitan Transportation Plan—MTP 2030.
- › Update GIS data and promote the use of GIS as a major planning tool for the MPO urbanized area; use GIS to enhance policy- and decision-making capabilities on transportation issues.
- › Integrate and maintain existing databases with GIS spatial data to ensure accurate, up-to-date displays, to facilitate day-to-day decision-making, and to improve public access to information.
- › Use GIS to increase the efficiency of locating and processing geo-referenced information in all city departments and to coordinate all geographic information and maps.
- › Provide outreach/education to the public on transportation issues in the urbanized area.
- › Use global positioning system (GPS) technology to collect and process data.
- › Employ adequate staff to improve the division's in-house transportation planning capabilities.
- › Promote Hattiesburg as an “intermodal/multimodal” city.
- › Promote the “Context Sensitive Solutions” (CSS) as a community goal for transportation plans and adopt the Principles of CSS (see Figure 16 and detailed description under Chapter 8, Infrastructure).
- › Promote pedestrian and bicycle connections south of the Longleaf Trace Rails-to-Trails to several activity nodes, including Downtown Hattiesburg, William Carey University, Library of Hattiesburg, Petal and Forrest County, Hattiesburg Zoo at Kamper Park, 28th Avenue medical district, and the University Mall.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Work with the Information Technology Division to purchase the software to implement an integrated GIS and provide access to information via the City's website.
- › Purchase Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment and software to enable field data collection.
- › Purchase traffic counters to initiate traffic counting program.
- › Provide training to MPO Policy and Technical committee members.

Mass Transit Division

The Mass Transit Division manages Hub City Transit (HCT). A description of the transit system appears under Chapter 8.

Land Code Administration Division

The function of the Land Code Administration Division is to administer the city's codes related to new development and construction through the issuance of permits for new construction, renovations, remodeling, repairs, demolition, commercial signage, and the moving of structures.

The division processes business license applications in coordination with the Tax Department, Planning Division, Fire Department and Police Department. The Land Development Division processes contractor license applications and maintains records of contractors licensed to do business in the city.

Applications for permits require submittal of plans, including site plans and building plans and/or a description of the scope of work to be performed. Most commercial and industrial projects require approval by the Site Plan Review Committee administered by the Planning Division.

The division's staff of technical inspectors performs periodic inspections during the development and construction phase to ensure compliance with codes. The following codes are currently adopted by the City of Hattiesburg:

- › 2003 International Building Code, including subsidiary codes (Mechanical, Plumbing, and Fuel Gas); and
- › 2005 National Electrical Code.

Inspectors coordinate with the Planning Division and Code Enforcement Division to administer and enforce the Land Development Code and the Hattiesburg Code of Ordinances. In addition to locally-adopted codes, the division aids in the implementation of some state and federal codes related to the regulation of contractors, architects, engineers, business licenses, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended.

The Land Development Administration Division is located on the first floor of City Hall. Its staff currently

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consists of the Land Development Administrator, the Office Manager, two Permit Technicians, a Plans Examiner, and three Technical Inspectors. In addition to the routine operations of the division, some staff serve as advisors to boards and committees at the local and state level.

The greatest challenges facing the division are a shortage of staff, funding and equipment. The salary range offered for technical positions makes it difficult to hire and retain qualified employees. Because the staff and funding are so limited, it is very difficult to find the time or the money to provide the necessary training. New software and updated information systems are badly needed to improve staff efficiency in maintaining and retrieving information.

Implementation Actions:

- › Evaluate and provide adequate funding for sufficient, qualified staff.
- › Purchase and maintain modern systems and software to efficiently manage information.
- › Provide the means for staff to pursue certifications and continuing education.
- › Update brochures to provide more comprehensive information.
- › Update applications to be more user friendly.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Purchase one additional truck to accommodate current inspection staff.
- › Purchase updated inspection and permitting software.
- › Provide funding for technical training and certifications.

Code Enforcement Division

The Code Enforcement Division's duties include protecting property values and maintaining a pleasing community environment through the administration and enforcement of the Hattiesburg Code of Ordinances, Land Development Code, and the International Property Maintenance Code. Code inspectors are charged to protect the "public health, safety and welfare" of all city residents. On a daily basis, inspectors routinely checking areas of the city for evidence of violations or respond to complaints from

other departments or the general public.

The three most frequent code violations cited are as follows: 1) abandoned/non-operational vehicles, 2) abandoned/dilapidated structures, and 3) overgrown lots. Code violations exist in every section of the City of Hattiesburg. Typical violations in business districts include illegal temporary signs/banners, outdoor sales, and working without license/permit. In residential areas, typical violations may include abandoned structures/buildings, and dilapidated structures.

The issues and challenges for the code enforcement office is a shortage of office staff, inspectors and vehicles.

Implementation Actions:

- › Provide adequate funding to hire and train sufficient code inspectors and office staff.
- › Provide and maintain adequate vehicles for conducting inspections.
- › Provide inspectors with training in public relations.
- › Amend existing ordinances as needed to facilitate implementation and administration and ensure that intent of the ordinance is consistent with the text.
- › Identify and adopt a code enforcement model from a comparable city and require training and certification for all code inspectors.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Purchase one additional vehicle.
- › Hire one additional inspector.
- › Use advanced technology to manage all code enforcement tasks and provide laptops to inspectors in the field.
- › Provide ongoing training to building and code division inspectors and require certification of inspectors.

Planning and Zoning Division

The planning and zoning office is located on the second floor of City Hall. The following six offices are under this division:

- › Site Plan Review/Stormwater Management;
- › Land Use/Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment;

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- › Historic Preservation/Historic Conservation Commission;
- › Neighborhood Improvement,
- › Action Center; and
- › Floodplain Program Management.

All but two of these offices—Action Center and Neighborhood Improvement—are directly related to enforcing city, state and federal regulations relating to land use and development.

The Site Plan Review office receives applications for two-family, multi-family and commercial construction projects, new development, and re-development. The Site Plan Review Committee consists of representatives from the following departments/offices: planning, zoning, building, engineering, public services, fire, police, arborist and disability advocacy. Committee members review projects for compliance with applicable codes, ordinances, regulations, and industry technical standards.

Technical review is required to enforce the Land Development Code, stormwater ordinance, tree ordinance, sediment and erosion control ordinance, infrastructure specifications, public safety, and handicap accessibility regulations. The review brings all the technical reviewers to the table similar to a “one-stop-shop” for the developer.

Land Use Planning/Zoning

The Land Use Planning/Zoning office validates zoning classifications and permitted land uses and staffs the Hattiesburg Planning Commission and Land Development Code Board of Adjustments. The following land use and development petitions are processed by the office:

- › Zoning changes;
- › Uses permitted upon review by the Planning Commission;
- › Variances;
- › Subdivisions;
- › Street closings/vacations;
- › Planned Unit Developments; and
- › Planned Residential Developments.

Both the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustments submit recommendations to the Hattiesburg City Council.

As development has increased in recent years, the office faces increasing challenges to meet required deadlines for publishing legal notices and submitting adequate information to the commission and board. The following are the greatest issues for the Land Use Planning office:

- › Processing requests and meeting date-sensitive deadlines for the Planning Commission, Board of Adjustments, and Site Plan Review Committee. Since Hurricane Katrina, there has been an increase in development activity; additionally, recent annexations have incorporated a considerable amount of vacant land that is quickly being developed. These conditions have increased the volume of requests for zoning changes, variances, site-plan reviews, and subdivisions.
- › Ensuring that properties are developed according to an approved site plan.
- › Reducing variance requests and adhering to stringent review criteria.
- › Integrating Geographic Information System capabilities with planning and zoning activities.
- › Ensuring that the city's Official Zoning Map is up-to-date to include information on zoning changes, new subdivisions, and new streets.
- › Updating and amending the existing Land Development Code.
- › Disseminating and clarifying information for the general public.
- › Providing adequate training for planners and promoting technical certification.

Implementation Actions:

- › Expand the review and decision-making authority of professional and technical staff under the Land Development Code.
- › Investigate combining the Hattiesburg Planning Commission and Land Development Code Board of Adjustments.
- › Adopt an updated Land Development Code to incorporate Smart Growth and New Urbanism principles;
- › Encourage Planners to receive national planning training and pursue AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) certification and GIS training

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Figure 40. Local Historic Conservation Districts

Below is a list of the city's historic conservation districts and the years the districts were formed.

- › 1986—Hattiesburg Historic Neighborhood District
- › 1994—North Main Street Historic District
- › 1997—Oaks Historic District
- › 1999—Newman-Buschman Railroad Historic District

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Provide adequate funding for a long-range planner to regularly update the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.
- › Provide adequate funding for a Zoning and Sign Inspector.
- › Purchase a vehicle for use by planning and zoning staff for field inspections.
- › Provide adequate funding for an additional administrative employee.
- › Ensure that adequate office space is reserved for the Planning and Zoning Office as space in City Hall or other facilities is reallocated.

Historic Preservation

The office of Historic Preservation is located in the Planning and Zoning Division on the second floor of City Hall. The planner maintains an inventory of buildings and structures located in locally-designated historic districts, Mississippi Landmarks, and properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

There are four local historic conservation districts in Hattiesburg and an additional district—Parkhaven—is under consideration. Parkhaven neighborhood is in the Avenues/Hardy Street District.

Hattiesburg adopted a Historic Conservation Ordinance (No. 2193) in 1985. The ordinance provides authority for establishing a Historic Conservation Commission and a system for the review of proposed alterations to sites and buildings in historic districts. This creates a layer of protection at the local level that is not provided by listing with the National Register.

The Historic Conservation Commission is a nine-member board of volunteers, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council, to guide the conservation of historic resources.

Since the late 1980s, the City of Hattiesburg has been designated as a Certified Local Government (CLG), one of the historic preservation programs of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior.

It is vital that the historic preservation office is staffed by an individual with the knowledge, skills and

aptitude to administer local historic preservation/conservation programs, including a familiarity with historic architecture, building methods and materials, and state and federal programs and offices.

Implementation Actions:

- › Develop brochures to distribute to citizens on proper procedures for historic renovations and repairs.
- › Seek funding sources to evaluate the historic resources in potentially-eligible neighborhoods.

Short-Term Facilities, Equipment and Program Needs:

- › Improve the office's ability to implement the historic preservation ordinance and proactive programs to protect the city's historic resources.

Neighborhood Development Coordinator

The Neighborhood Development Coordinator plays a vital role in providing support to existing neighborhoods and helping neighborhoods create new associations. Much like a planning liaison, the coordinator assists by providing information for organizing associations and neighborhood watch groups. There are currently 25 active neighborhoods. Including inactive groups, there are a total of 37 neighborhood associations citywide. A map of the city's neighborhoods may be found under Appendix C.

The coordinator staffs the Council of Neighborhoods, which was established by Mayor DuPree during his first term of office and is now run by the coalition of neighborhood associations. The council meets quarterly to afford the associations an opportunity to sit at the table and listen to presentations geared to the interests and concerns of the neighborhoods. The neighborhood coordinator's office also provides the associations with information about new developments, new ordinances and upcoming issues and events that will affect their neighborhood, such as zoning changes and road improvements.

National Night Out is celebrated annually and has been successful in getting neighborhoods, churches, businesses and community organizations involved. In addition to the role of neighborhood liaison, the Neighborhood Development Coordinator serves as the National Night Out Coordinator. Initiatives such as the

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Mayor's Financial Education Initiative, C.A.P. (Campaign Against Poverty), Unity in the Community, Get Healthy Hattiesburg, and Pine Belt Coalition on Homelessness are supported by the neighborhood coordinator's office.

One goal for the office of neighborhood coordinator is to expand the network by promoting the creation of new neighborhood associations. Additionally, in order to provide needed support to neighborhood leaders and residents, adequate resources and training opportunities should be made available to the Neighborhood Development Coordinator.

Implementation Actions:

- › Attend neighborhood national, regional and state conferences to find new or enhanced programs or outreach to help with neighborhood issues in the City.
- › Provide a link on the City's websites or use the City's website as an information tool to circulate to a large number of residents programs and initiatives that affect their neighborhood.
- › Support the restructuring of leadership in the Council of Neighborhoods to enable neighborhood residents to assume the role of meeting facilitators. The council will encourage community-driven issues for discussion, set policies, and seek partnerships for resources.
- › Promote a healthy Hattiesburg. Partnership with various agencies to agree on a theme, provide advertising from all media sources, maybe schedule an event to motivate citizens.

The Action Center

The Action Center is a "hot line" used to provide a forum for citizens to call in and get information or to provide comments on issues or concerns with city services.

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