

## East Biloxi Studio

Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, Spring 2008

In its architectural and community planning work in East Biloxi, the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio has identified low-lying areas of the peninsula as presenting special challenges. Base flood requirements are directly related to topography such that houses in low areas may be elevated as much as 17'-0" above the ground, increasing the costs and difficulty of construction, and presenting challenges to neighborhood design. Low-lying areas also present increased risk of future damage during even mild storm events. The low-lying areas historically absorb the overflow of nearby wetlands during storm events, and development in these areas hinders that function, ultimately intensifying storm impacts.



Responding to similar concerns, FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is predicated on the idea that destroyed buildings on high-risk sites should not be rebuilt. Instead the land should become open space, protected from future development. However, without a comprehensive planning process, mitigated properties would become a haphazard set of vacant lots and would not create community benefits, either socially or ecologically. The Planning Studio will create a carefully considered mosaic of three well-defined land uses:

- preserved wetlands connected to the Gulf which would be large enough and have enough continuity to be ecologically complete;
- programmed public space such as walking trails, playgrounds, and meeting places that would create a connected landscape that would be well-used and well-loved by the community; and
- complete neighborhoods of elevated buildings taking full advantage of the nearby open space.

Part One.	Site Analysis.
January 7	<p><b>Empirical observation as methodology, developing an understanding of place.</b></p> <p>Reading: <i>The Language of Landscape</i>, Anne Whiston Spirn. (Yale, New Haven; 2000)</p> <p>Assignment 1: Cognitive maps of Auguste Bayou</p>
January 14	<p><b>Empirical observation, collecting residents' personal narratives to understand place.</b></p> <p>Assignment 2: Collect and graphically display bayou landscape stories from 4 individuals.</p>
January 21	<p><b>Site research and information collection.</b></p> <p>Mapping &amp; graphics as means of storytelling.</p> <p>Reading: Excerpt from "Sustainability of Urban Wetlands," by Marjorie M. Holland and Raymond W. Prach, in <i>The Ecological City: Preserving and Restoring Urban Biodiversity.</i> (UMass, Amherst; 1994)</p> <p>Assignment 3: Identify, locate, and collect information for site analysis. Assignment 4: Build site map/model for use throughout semester.</p>
January 28	<p><b>MIT Site Planning Studio Visit.</b></p> <p><i>Monday.</i> Introduction; coastal ecology info session; canoeing the bay &amp; bayous. <i>Tuesday.</i> Info sessions with city development director, city flood plain manager, state marine resources person; work sessions <i>Wednesday.</i> Work sessions; info session on other coastal wetlands restoration efforts <i>Thursday.</i> Work sessions. Afternoon presentation of work. <i>Friday.</i> Wrap-up and next steps.</p> <p>Work in groups in four general categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Landscape conditions</li> <li>- Transitions/edges</li> <li>- Back Bay waterfront</li> <li>- Division Street/mixed-use/neighborhood development</li> </ul>
Part Two.	Proposal Development.
February 4	<p><b>Designing with ecology.</b></p> <p>Reading: "Wetlands in the Urban Landscape of the United States," by James A. Schmid in in <i>The Ecological City: Preserving and Restoring Urban Biodiversity.</i> (UMass, Amherst; 1994)</p>

*Landscape Ecology Principles in Landscape Architecture and Land-Use Planning* by Wenche E. Dramstad, James D. Olson, Richard T.T. Forman (GSD/Island Press, Cambridge; 1996)  
(*designing with ecology, cont'd*)

How much and what type of land area is required to restore an ecologically productive wetland? What land areas should be removed from development to avoid future harm? What parameters should be considered in identifying areas to be preserved, developed for low-intensity use, and developed for higher-intensity use?

February 11     **The politics of park design.**

Reading: "Uncertain Parks: Disturbed Sites, Citizens, and Risk Society," by Elizabeth K. Meyer in *Large Parks*, Edited by Julia Czerniak and George Hargreaves. (Princeton Architectural Press, New York; 2007)

Whose stories, experiences, and needs are reflected in the design of public spaces? What are the needs of the East Biloxi community? The tourism market? The city? The flora and fauna of the bayous? How do you incorporate these needs into the design of public space? How do you integrate the needs of various communities?

February 18     **Issues in neighborhood design and development.**

Reading: LEED Standards for Neighborhood Development.

*A Reconstruction Plan for Biloxi, Mississippi*, Mississippi Renewal Forum/CNU report. Also, *Codes*. Mississippi Renewal Forum/CNU report.

*Moving Forward: Recommendations for Rebuilding East Biloxi*. Living Cities & Good Clancy. July 2006.

Randall Arendt. *Conservation Design for Subdivisions*.

Others, TBD.

Critical analysis of various approaches and value systems applied to neighborhood development, both as proposed for Biloxi and for elsewhere.

New Orleans visit (tentative).

February 25     **Mechanisms for implementation.**

Readings, TBD.

How can this proposal be implemented? What mechanisms exist for the purchase, transfer, and holding of land? What partnerships will facilitate implementation? How can environmental and social justice issues be addressed and negative impacts mitigated? Besides land owners, what

other players can or should be engaged in the process?

Identify land owners in area, and approach them about the project.  
Investigate details of FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

**March 3**

**Mid-Term Review** (Tentative)

Visit Arboretum in Picayune (tentative).

**March 10**

**MSU Spring Break**

Part Three. Developing Details.

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March 17 TBD

March 24 TBD  
(MIT Spring Break)

March 31 TBD

April 7 Interim Review/Pin-up

Rural Studio Visit (sometime in April)

April 14 Production.

April 21 Production.

April 28 **Final Review & Community Meeting.**